Dhaka, Monday, March 1, 1993

New Chapter for Seoul

In more ways than one, South Korea has turned a new chapter in its contemporary history President Kim Young-sam who was inaugurated on Thursday as the republic's first civilian head of state in more than three decades, replacing Roh Tae-woo, a former army general, has started setting up his administration with a good deal of innovative spirit. In a series of surprise moves, he has just named university professors to three important — and sensitive — posts, such as Minister for Unification Board, Foreign Minister and National Intelligence Chief.

As if taking a cue from President Bill Clinton, Kim is said to be making an effort to pick people from all walks of life as well as from all different regions of the country, giving "special considerations" to choosing women and distinguished personalities from the academic world. They are not being put on back seats either. After all, few countries in the world would think of naming a university teacher as the National Intelligence Chief with the mandate to reform and reorganise what, for past 30 years, had remained one of the most secretive and shady areas of the administration.

All this augurs well for South Korea's civilian government. In the first place, the republic needs to reemerge as an open society, a process which was somewhat half-heartedly launched by the last president, Roh Tae-woo. In bringing about this change, the policies of the administration must indeed be transparent and truly democratic, especially when they relate to labour laws, student politics and security regulations. Many of these changes cannot be brought about in a matter of months. But a start appears to have been made.

By now, President Kim would realise that the changes in his country's domestic politics and external relations must come through well-defined stages, rather than too suddenly and too soon. In the first place, the administration's main concern should surely be to avoid any slow-down in the economic boom, whether it relates to the industrial production or export trade. In some of the sectors where the wages have been low, by Japanese standards, and working hours longer than in most other industrialised countries, there will be a clamour for changes. One hopes that the new government will handle such a situation in a style that does credit to the civilian head of state.

For South Korea, bigger problems lie in its external relations, first with North Korea and secondly, with the United States. In principle, both the Koreas are committed to the unification of the divided country. Having named a cabinet minister for the Unification Board, Kim has set the stage for further moves aimed at bringing the two parts together. Whatever steps have been taken so far, mostly in the form of high-level meetings among officials and ministers, have not yet | fuced an acceptable framework for unification. ere still exists just too much distrust between ngyang and Seoul, on such questions as the nuclear programme of North Korea and Washington-Seoul defence ties. A possible change of leadership in Pyongyang, from President Kim Il Sung to his son, Kim Jong II, adds to the uncertainties facing the region. They concern the whole of East Asia, especially Japan and what is now known as the Pacific rim countries.

One cannot underestimate the challenges facing Kim Young-sam and his administration. A country like Bangladesh which has maintained good relations with both Seoul and Pyongyang, in trade, commerce and even in cultural exchanges, would certainly hope that the two Koreas will come together through their own mutually agreed agenda for unification, in the best interest of their people — and the region as a whole.

Of Goat and Man

"Anything there that a crazy one wouldn't say or the goatie wouldn't eat?" So says a very popular Bengali wisdom. Sukumar Ray, the incomparable. not so much because he was the father of the one and only Satyajit Ray but for his own achievement as some Lewis Carrol and Edward Lear and many another rolled into one - turned this turn of speech upside down projecting Ba-karon Sing, the goat, as protesting: "There are lots that we na-khai- do not eat -rather than kee-na khai nothing that we don't eat." And the bearded Mrs Sing — drawn so strikingly by Sukumar himself in Haw-Jaw-Baw-Raw-Law, goes on to catalogue the items her species don't relish devouring. Metal pots and pans were on her list. It is quite possible that cockroaches, like the krishnachura or the water hyacinth, were a rather recent import into Bengal for otherwise the wiseacres coining the wisecrack wouldn't have implicated the innocent goat. It is universal knowledge that the cockroaches do eat metal - and the hardest of them too - steel. We are waiting reports from worldwide researches into the science of materials whether the ubiquitous fellow flying out of their lovely abode inside the recesses of the lavaratory commode also partake of tungsten and platinum and titanium — the still harder metals.

But the goat is indeed unbeatably voracious in some very innovative ways. The latest proof of that is reported by Reuter from Nairobi. One venerable member of that spices, goatied a la carte and after the Sukumar Ray drawing, no doubt, stole 105 shillings from a lady's bag the other day Please note her discriminating taste - she didn't go for the bag but dipped her mouth into it and chose the shilling notes and left the place as would any pickpocket of burglar. It is likely that the lady robbed and the judge she went with her complaint to, both were convinced of her guilt by the way of her retreat. To paraphrase a newspaper cliche - she made bad her escape. If the intention was only to eat, that couldn't be that bad a crime. But she actually fled with the money and then ate it. Her intention was more criminal than

mere eating. If the goat is celebrated as anybody's fool for nothing beside her voraciousness, how shall we celebrate man — the Homo Sapiens — a member of which species sentenced her to two day's incarceration?

Clinton's Inaugural Address: Is there Something for Us to Learn?

most powerful nation in the world. To my mind however there three very good reasons for the world wide interest. the subject, there are I believe much to learn from it for us in First, the American news Bangladesh. After all, out of the media, the CNN and the news last twenty one years of our magazines such as the Times independence, how many and the Newsweek have audience and readership spyears did we live under a truly read out all over the world democratic government? The global coverage and imconsider it only logical that we pact of the news media is an should look to those successful important phenomenon of the democracies for insight about present day world. Secondly, the system. So today I wish to the American election is one of take a look at Bill Clinton's inaugural address. The first the most vivid demonstrations of the peaceful succession of hundred days of an American president is considered so It is democracy at work at important for his success that its finest. In England, for his words and actions are example, the monarchy blurs scrutinized with hawk eyes by the peaceful succession of friends and foes alike. In the power but in the United States midst of the spate of activities one can see how, for long two during this period the hundred years, the American memories of the colourful people have had an unbroken inaugural ceremony is fast record of peaceful transfer of receding to the background. power. Thirdly and perhaps But the address, in my view, this is the most important for deserves to be examined most people, the American carefully. I find it to be a election procedure is exciting, treasure house full of clues to interesting and open. the presidents basic philo-For almost one long year sophy as well as thinking on

attract a lot of attention

A around the world. Per-

rious about the richest and

the election drama is played

out on the nation-wide stage.

The primaries, the gruelling

race for nomination, the mud-

slinging and scandal-mon-

gering and finally the con-

ventions are all part of this

drama. In recent years the

debate between the candidates

have become a high light of the

election campaign. The col-

ourful inauguration ceremony

is also an important part of the

democratic process of cons-

In some of my articles I

have written about different

aspects of American elections.

Apart from general interest in

T 74, veteran politician

Glafcos Clerides has

found himself catapul-

ted on to the world stage as

the new President of Cyprus by

a mere 2,000 votes. He

inherits the problem of the

divided island at a critical

moment in negotiations with

He also faces the task of

chairing the summit meeting

of the 50-nation Common-

wealth which Cyprus is hosting

at the end of October. The

meeting will bring to the

island the biggest gathering by

far of presidents and prime

Democratic Rally (DYSY), de-

Teated President George

Vassiliou in the second round

of elections and becomes the

country's fourth elected presi-

crowning achievement of 40

years of single-minded dedica-

tion to politics. Clerides

helped draft the country's con-

stitution in 1960 and failed in

earlier bids for the presidency

This time he trailed

Vassiliou in the first round of

the three-candidate race, and

then garnered a large number

of switchover votes following

in 1983 and 1988.

His surprise victory was the

Clerides, head of the

ministers it has ever seen.

the United Nations.

titutional transfer of power.

haps it is natural to be

A writer in an English language weekly commented on my article and said that one must not compare situations in America and Europe with those in Bangladesh. I find it odd because the very concept of democracy as it is understood and practiced in the world today has been borrowed by us from the western countries. Why should

we not then try to learn from

different national and inter-

national issues. In one of my

earlier articles I spoke about

the spirit of democracy which

seems to be sadly lacking in

our country.

their experience? Clinton began his speech by paying a gracious tribute to his predecessor. "On behalf of the nation", he said, "I salute my predecessor, President Bush, for his half-century of service to America." In one short

sentence he united the nation and put all the rancour and rivalry of the election campaign behind him. He made it abundantly clear that he was president of the United States of America and not the

ment or from each other". "Let us all he urged fellow Americans, take more responsibility, not only for ourselves and our families but for our commu nities and our country". Perhaps it is a legacy of the colonial period but it is certainly a fact that in Bangladesh we usually turn to the government for almost every thing under the sun. When we want a public facility, be it a school or a hospital or a public library or an orphanage, we petition the

ON THE RECORD

by Shah AMS Kibria

leader of a political party. Can we not learn from this to put

ountry before party?
In Bangladesh today the principle that holds sway is my party, right or wrong. I can see the underlying motive for this policy. One can secure one's grip over power almost indefinitely if the party becomes a reliable instrument in the hand of a leader. We have seen however that this is too short sighted a policy. There have been many "president for life" but few of these ambitious rulers could end their life in office. The Marcoses and Ershads of the world have all had sad ends. But do we learn from history?

The next point that seems relevant for us is when he said, "It is time to break the bad habit of expecting something for nothing, from our governauthorities.

The concept of local initiative behind a local cause means, regrettably, lobbying in Dhaka with the minister or secretary for allocation of funds. The idea of building up an institution with public support and contribution is somehow very unattractive to us. One can see that even our entrepreneurs believe in the philosophy of getting something for nothing because that is how they expect their enterprises to be financed. I wish we would reflect on this and stop expecting something for nothing. May be we can become self-reliant as a nation if we could act on this bit of advice. If this was good for the Americans it cannot be bad for the Bengalees.

It was significant indeed that he talked about demo

cracy. To renew America, he said, 'we must revitalize our democracy". Even after two hundred years of success in running a democratic government he felt it necessary to invite his compatriots to revitalize American democracy. He reminded the audience that the "toil and sweat" of the ordinary men and women support the powerful people engaged in the 'intrigue and calculation" of the capital. We also talk about democracy but it is usually the democracy of the elite or at best the urban upper and middle class.

The price of rice has fallen below the cost of production but who cares? This is only a minor irritant for the practitioners of urban and elitist democracy. If we value democracy we will think hard, as President Clinton has called upon his countrymen, to resolve to reform politics "so that power and privilege no longer shout down the voice of

the people". Do we hear the voice of the people in Bangladesh today? The newspapers are full of speeches by the high and mighty. It is their voice that we hear in the media. It is literally true in the case of the television because most of the time it is used for giving publicity to the ministers and others in authority. Have we heard statements by the ministers on the price of rice or tomato or potato or the hardships that they are facing due to the withdrawal of subsidies on fertilizers and other agricultural inputs? Do

we show on the television the actual condition of the rural health centres or the roofless: school house? Some newspapers do try but these unglamorous news is relegated to the inside page where it can be safely ignored. Actually the whole system is now designed to serve those who are supposed to serve the people.

The last point that touched me deeply in his thoughtprovoking address was when he summoned his nation to work by referring to the American idea, "an idea tempered by the knowledge that, but for fate, we - the fortunate and the unfortunate - might have been each other". It is a thought that many of us would not perhaps like to think. True compassion cannot but be based on a comprehension of this basic truth. In a country where eighty percent of the people live below the poverty line. how can we have any other politics but that of eradicating this scourge? We must set our priorities right.

I have said this often and even at the risk of repetition I would like to stress once again that all our efforts for "development" will be abortive when most of the people who are to enjoy the fruits of development are illiterate. under nourished and often living in sub-human conditions. The young American president reminded us that but for fate, we the fortunate might have been the unfortunate; living in conditions we would not wish to even contemplate. It is a sobering thought but it is useful to be reminded about it from time to time. Indeed all of us and especially our leaders will find much food for thought in Clinton's speech if we all care to read and reflect on it.

Tough Days Ahead for Veteran Clerides

by Annie Charalambous in Nicosia and Derek Ingram in London

In a surprise election result 74-year-old Glafcos Clerides (sworn in as President on February 28) has become President of Cyprus. He won by fewer than 2,000 votes. He is a veteran of countless negotiations with the Turkish Cypriots, and now finds himself taking over at a time when the UN peace plan is in the balance. He also faces the daunting task of hosting the 50-nation Commonwealth summit later in the year.



178,945 50.31 Registered voters: 367,474 Turnout: 93.27%

the elimination of businessman Paschalis Paschalides. He polled 50.3 per cent of votes on February 14 while Vassiliou got 49.7 per cent.

The UN-sponsored peace talks between Greek and Turkish leaders on the island, divided since 1974, were a key issue in the election. The talks broke down in September.

Although Clerides's party is considered right-wing, he is generally looked on as a modcrate with long experience in negotiations and a deep knowledge of constitutional is-

Following his first meeting with the outgoing Vassiliou, Clerides told reporters that talks may not resume in March, as expected, but most probably in April. He said: "On my part here was never an intention of getting off the trail of the UN-sponsored negotiating process aiming towards a

peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem".

Clerides wants to hold consultations in Cyprus and Athens before resuming formal peace talks. The situation has acquired extra urgency since Canada gave notice that it would begin pulling its troops out of the UN peacekeeping force on June 15. The Danish contingent has already begun

The 30-year-old Cyprus problem took its most scrious turn when Turkey invaded the island in 1974. The or mation of the northern half mas continued ever since. The UN force has been holding the ring in Cyprus since 1964.

Although the Commonwealth summit may find itself meeting at a critical time in Cypriot affairs, it will not want to find itself becoming involved in the 30-year-old Cyprus problem. The Commonwealth stand has always been

clear: it supports the UN resolutions calling for Turkish withdrawal.

Clerides, a British-trained lawyer, will need to use all his considerable diplomatic skills in the months ahead.

He is the son of another distinguished Nicosian lawyer, loannis Clerides. He was in London at the outbreak of World War Two and joined the Royal Air Force in 1939, serving as a gunner and radio operator. He was shot down in the 1942 bombing of Hamburg and taken prisoner. He escaped twice, but was recaptured.

Clerides completed his studies after the war and was called to the bar in 1951. In London, he met and married his wife Lifa. Their daughter Kate, now a member of the House of Representatives, moved back to Cyprus in 1951.

Clerides played an active role in the four-year Eoka struggle in the late 1950s against British colonial rule

the Beira corridor and occa-

sional bunching of trains at

and was among the lawyers to defend Eoka fighters in court.

He has held a series of high-profile positions in a long political career, including a stint as Minister of Justice in the country's first transitional government in 1960, followed by a 16-year posting as president of the House of Representatives.

in this capacity, he served many times as acting president of the republic in the absence of the late Archbishop Makarios, who had taken Cyprus to independence in 1961. Between 1968 and 1976, he was the Greek Cypriot negotiator in peace talks with the Turkish Cypriot

In July 1974, in the wake of the coup that forced Makarios into exile, Clerides took over as acting president. Makarios returned in December of the same year and resumed his duties as president of a divided

Clerides is former president of the Cyprus Red Cross and was also awarded the Gold Medal of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre by Pope John XXIII for his services to the Roman

Catholic Church in Cyprus. - GEMINI NEWS

ANNIE CHARALAMBOUS is a Cypriot journalist based in Nicosia.

Southern Africa Puts Act Together to Ease Largest Food Relief

T was the largest relief ef fort in Africa - some 4.9 million tons of cereals and imported items intended for drought-affected countries in southern Africa.

Yet, Malawi risks a critical shortage of food in February because the country was late in placing commercial orders for food. Thus warns a report re-

leased by the World Food Programme and the Southern African Development Community through the Logistics Advisory Centre (LAC) based here. The report notes that

pledges of food aid for the market sector in Malawi and the delivery rates achieved to date do not cover the country's needs — even if there was enough food in the pipeline.

But the drought-related imports, the LAC reports, have been delivered to regional

ports between April and December 1992 through unprecedented regional coopera-

The report was reviewed in mid-January at a meeting of agriculture and transport ministers. A similar meeting held in April 1992 in Lusaka set up the LAC as part of the regional response to the drought. The LAC coordinates relief logistics throughout the region, linking donors, governments shipping agents and transport services in the effort to move aid smoothly.

The report analyses the performance of six transport corridors and nine ports (Dar es Salaam, Nacala, Beira and Maputo, East London, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Walvis Bay) serving the region.

Beira continues to rank first in handling drought-related imports (commercial food, food aid and fertilizer) since it Mercedes Sayagues writes from Harare

Regional cooperation has been given a boost. When warned of the impending crisis in Malawi, southern African countries loaned grains and gave priority to Malawi-bound shipments

overtook Durban in June. Between April and December, Beira received nearly 900,000 tons of drought-related commodities; Durban ranked second with 847,200 tons and Maputo third with 735,600. However, congestion at Beira translates into berthing delays of up to three weeks at peak times. Maputo also has chronic congestion.

More than 85 per cent of the flows into landlocked countries have been by rail. Slightly less than half of the imports for Zimbabwe from Beira moved by road and virtually all shipments for Malawi have been transhipped from

rail to road near Harare or at

Mbeya in Tanzania. The link connecting the South African railway system with the national railways of Zimbabwe at Beitbridge has been the most utilised, having carried 37 per cent of total drought-related imports to date for Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

Despite the huge additional demand (close to 3.5 million tons more than a normal year) placed on the regional transport system, it has coped very well except for minor bottlenecks such as low offtake on Tazara rail (northern corridor), lack of locomotives along Beithbridge (southern corridor). The good performance is mainly due to large investments in the improvement of infrastructure and training of transport professionals during the 1980s.

The LAC has obtained funds from donors to eliminate transport bottlenecks. The LAC has made it possible to buy, lease or borrow equipment; install communication and signalling systems; repair rail wagons and tracks; buy stacking machines, weighing scales tarpaulins, radios and faxes and to repair and maintain roads and bridges.

The LAC itself is a unique cooperative mechanism linking different agencies with a common goal, namely, to bring aid to the needy and ward off the effects of a cruel drought

Amount of new loans is in-

on the regional economies.

The weekly shipping bulletin issued by the LAC contains up-to-date, detailed information on all drought-related shipments (commodities, volume, destination port, arrival and discharge dates, etc.). Obtaining, checking and collating this vast amount of information (more than 1,000 consignments with 25,000 information elements) is a major undertaking that involves daily contact with ports, railways,

shippers and donors. Regional cooperation has also been given a boost - the very idea behind the new regional goal of economic integration. For example, when warned by LAC of the impending crisis in Malawi, Southern African countries agreed to give priority to Malawi-bound shipment and to loan Malawi grain from built-up reserves.

- Depthnews Asia

Migratory birds

Sir, It is often heard from bird-meat lovers and from crop conservers that it is wiser to eat up birds (migratory) to save crops. The logic is really absurd. Killing birds for the sake of saving crops is a senseless preservation idea at the angle of Nature's food webs rule view.

The rule describes that autotrophic producers (selfnourished plants), placed in the primary level, supply food first to herbivores (cat plants birds) which supply food to carnivores (eat animals-owl).

The omnivores (eat both plants and animals-man) depend on all three previous levels for food. (Most simplified food webs description, avoiding cross-linkages). To make the I rule perform soundly, ecosystem provides highest amount at the primary level gradually lessening to the upper. The figurative form of the rule can be shown as follows:

a) Net primary productivity (plants): 270 g. b) Every year herbivores eat

c) Net herbivore productivity: 6 g. d) Net carnivore productivity 0.4 g.

29 g.

The productivities are given for 1m2 of field in one year in a Tennessee field (productivity differs on varied ecosystems, generally increases from a low in the arctic region to a high in the tropics).

So it is clear that birds have the natural right to consume crops and fish but on the contrary, man has not that right

because he is no more can keep himself a pure natural creature.

It is true, the guest birds consume our ready-made crops, but it is we who turned their natural sources of food into our food sources. So we have nothing but permitting them to share with our food for the sake of balance in nature - breakup of which may endanger the life of omnivore man as well.

Tasmim Siddigui (naturelover)

Aung San Suu Kyi

Sir. We extend our moral support to the call made by eight Nobel laureates including South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former

Costa Ricai, President Oscar Arias to free Burma's prodemocracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi who has been detained since July 1989 by the Burmese junta.

We sincerely hope that the Burmese authorities will immediately free the detained leader Suu Kyi in the greater interest and welfare of the Burmese people.

M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor, Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka

HBFC loans

Sir, Of late House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC) has started issuing fresh loans to the applicants after a sus pension for three years

creased to Taka 12 lakh from 10 lakh. The rate of cost per square feet is also increased and the period of repayment of loans is decreased to 18 years from 30 years. But it is unfortunate that those who submitted their applications before the date of fixation of new rates, are given fresh loans at the old rates and for them the maximum limit is Taka ten lakh, the old limit being considered. Old rates and limits are

considered for them on the plea that the applicants earlier submitted applications on the basis of the old rates and limit. But it is unfortunate that the construction will now have to be made according to the present market prices of materials and labour. Moreover, when old rates are considered, the limit of new period of payment

i.e. 18 years instead of 30 years is preferred. How? This discriminatory attitude towards the old applicants should be given up by the authority and both the old and new groups of applicants should be treated equally because both the groups will now enjoy the fresh loans to meet the present market cost of materials and labour.

Minister for Finance, Govt of Bangladesh and HBFC Authority are requested to kindly take immediate steps to remove the discrimination and revise provision of loans at new rates to the applicants whose loans are sanctioned recently of old rates and who have not yet taken the 1st cheque and have not mortgaged their

Some applicants