Dhaka, Saturday, March 6, 1993

An Agenda from Clinton

In measured steps, President Bill Clinton has started moving towards striking a balance between protectionism against what Washington considers as unfair foreign competition and an open-door trade policy. Most of his recent speeches, especially the one delivered last Friday. have touched on this theme more effectively than many of his ardent admirers and staunch critics, especially in Europe and Japan, had expected There is no euphoria as such, but the mood is certainly one of expectation, the overall climate one of promise.

In this context, the live-point programme presented by the US leader calls for special attention. It offers "to set a new direction at home and to help create a new direction for the world." Furthermore, it includes greater Western support for economic reforms in Russia, stronger commercial relations with the developing world, and a more competitive US economy based on a combination of increased investment and a reduction in the federal budget deficit.

In short, it is a prescription for shared responsibility, in which Western Europe which tends to be inward-looking in the post-Cold War era, must take a pronounced role. The same goes for Japan

which has been urged "to promote global growth." All this should mean a great deal for the developing world if this sense of shared responsibility is translated from being a prescription into a reality in specific terms. Here, Clinton's statement that he is committed to "a prompt and successful completion of the Uruguay Round" of global trade negotiations offers a promise of a breakthrough in talks which have gone on for more than six years. Unless the talks are concluded, we would not know to what extent the agreement would boost wages and living standards in the United States and in other countries around the world. However, the promise offered by the proposed agreement cannot be underestimated

Significantly enough, Clinton has disproved the notion that had gained some ground during the campaign and even later that his overall concern for pressing domestic reforms would push global issues into the background. In fact, he has linked the two sets of problems, put them within the same framework and assured both his electorate at home and friends abroad that solution of one would not be — in fact, could not be — achieved at the cost of the other.

One interpretation is that the policy is to lead in terms of reaching agreements which actually open markets and require Washington's trading partners to do the same. The outside world should be pleased with this policy, notwithstand-

ing the lack of details at this stage.

in a relatively short time.

True, a good deal of what the new President is saying is rhetorical and, what's more, he is still selling his plan. However, there is little doubt that the overall reaction to Clinton's unfolding strategy, especially among the people in the United States, is undoubtedly positive. For once, there is a general appreciation in the country of the need for the reduction of federal deficit, an issue that had seemed rather academic during the Republican administration, and of the inevitability of a rise in taxes. Again, although hurt by some of the measures proposed or adopted by the new administration, most business executives appear to remain convinced that some negative aspects are outweighed by the leadership the Democrat leader has so far shown in handling the challenges facing his administration. Herein lies the credibility that Clinton needs badly - and which, judging by present trends, he has earned

Tax-free Car must Go the Pension Way

It was nice to see our honourable members of the parliament admitting their mistake. And passing a bill giving themselves lifelong pension after retirement was a mistake. In a move that showed that our MP's had the moral courage to take corrective measure against a wrong decision they took earlier, they passed a bill on Thursday, revoking their pension. It was also one of the rare occasions when we saw our elected representatives work in unison. The previous occasion when we saw such unity was when they were passing the same pension bill during the winter session last year.

The revoking of the pension provision is a very sensible move and we would like to commend the treasury bench for moving it and the opposition bench for unanimously backing it. This bill did create unnecessary misgivings in the public mind, giving the impression that our MPs cared for themselves more than they cared for the people they were elected to serve.

There are, however, some other privileges enjoyed by our parliamentarians that require revising also. We are referring to the provision of a tax free car that each member of the parliament is allowed to import. We have really never understood why this provision of the Ershad regime has still been retained by the democratic House. This provision was cleverly introduced by the past autocratic regime to literally bribe the MPs. Both the BNP and the AL, and all other parties except, of course, the JP, expressed similar views when they (JP) were out of power. Unfortunately, after the democratic transition, our newly elected MPs seem to have had change of heart about the tax free car issue. It must be remembered that paying tax is the duty of all law abiding citizens. It is more so for the law makers themselves. In no democratic country do the elected members enjoy such a privilege. It is only the diplomats and the UN officials that are given such favours. So the question is do our MPs want to be classified in that category?

Now that our honourable members have shown the way about correcting their mistakes, we look forward to their taking up the tax, free car issue soon and correcting this privilege. Already we had heard echos of the same favour from the UP chairmen, who wanted tax-free motor bikes for the same reason — work among their electorates. No, the tax-free mentality must go. And the MPs must take that move. They must remember that as MPs, they will not only have to be correct in their dealings, they will also have to be fair. And passing bills that add to their personal privileges or retaining ones that do the same, is not going to be viewed by the public as fair. And, do we have to remind them that it is to the public they will have to come in not too distant a future.

If You do Not Use it, You Lose it

drid night club till 2 o'clock in the morning. "It was awesome, they were not used any longer how do you do it?" amazed, I became ruins. On the other asked her. "My son, if you do hand. Rome is called the eternot use it, you lose it," her nal city. It has been under cheerful reply was immediate. continuous use since time im-Growing old is easy. It is inmemorial. Therefore, nothing evitable. Time and tide wait for is lost. Inspite of being annone. We grow old every mocient, Rome is still the "Citta Bella", the beautiful city -- like ment. So remain active as long the beautiful lady I met at a as you can since if you stop, vi-Madrid night club. tality is lost and stagnancy

AST October, I found a 72 year old American

Lady dancing at a Ma-

creeps in Inexorably, the loss

of vigour, both of the mind and

the body, cannot be prevented.

it, for the last three months I

have been pondering over the

shortest possible summation of

a life-style, which ought to be

the ideal for the present day

world on the brink of a new

century. I tried to superimpose

the concept of use or non-use

upon the patterns of living that

has evolved within my own

vicinity. Everywhere I found

how true was the old lady. If

the mind is inactive, the indi-

vidual would turn into a mo-

ron, while physical inactivity

will accelerate the arrival of

obesity. In mind and body, we

a village will turn into wilder-

ness - the abode of jackals and

snakes. Only because our agri-

cultural lands are all used for

cultivation with hardly any

piece left fallow, we do not

lose them. On the other hand,

the factories abandoned by

Pakistanis in 1971, if left un-

operational, would have be-

come useless junkyards long

time back. The most visible

examples are perhaps the an-

cient ruins. Due to war, plun-

der, natural calamities or other

causes, sometimes whole cities

were abandoned and because

lic of Macedonia for admission

to membership in the United

Nations under the denomina-

tion mentioned in its applica-

tion introduces an element of

further destabilization of the

REECE believes that

the application of the

former Yugoslav Repub-

we lose both.

must remain active, otherwise

An abandoned homestead in

If you do not use it, you lose

Made to Grow Old

Unfortunately, the relentless urge to remain young is so much alien to our culture. Particularly for the women of Bangladesh, it seems that there is a competition to grow old as fast as possible. The young girls are married off as early as 17 or 18 years of age: still teenagers, when they become mothers, and by carly forties or even late thirtees, the women are grand-mothers in our country. Compared to world standards, in countries where longevity has increased to eighty years, the women in their forties have just spent half their life-time only. Yet they must get fat, cannot dress up as much as they used to. and behave that they are old. The women very early in life are prevented to use life itself

and therefore they lose it. To remain pretty and young is a matter of strident efforts that must be nurtured very carefully; it is not the function of the exact age of a person. male or female. When in marriage party, both the mother and the bride would look (almost) equally young and pretty, only then the true meaning of "if you do not use it, you lose it" would be fully realised. Those days are how-, ever still a distant mirage.

Apart from looks, the women of our country tend to get old in their minds much earlier than they are due for it. This is primarily because of the non-use of their education. There are hundreds of women in the city of Dhaka with bach elor's and master's degree or even doctors and architects who are housewives, only confined to the kitchen and do mestic husbandry. Their minds have rusted beyond recognition entirely due to consistent lack of use for very many years

We do not use it, so we lose it: our attitude is against use of any kind. We keep our money as fixed deposits or gold or naments, both basically nonuse of such savings which should be invested for productive purposes generating additional output and employment In rural areas savings are used to buy lands which is simply a transfer payment without contributing anything to GDP. In urban areas, purchase of apartments, as the recent trend shows has expanded the

WINDOW ON ASIA **Shahed Latif**

Our men, on the other hand, are competing to prove themselves to be matured and experienced. They must pretend to be old, otherwise, perhaps chances of promotion might get very bleak. Once secured on a desk-bound job, all physical activities tend to come to an end. The day time is mostly spent in the office; otherwise relax with a steaming cup of tea while television and video have only reinforced the sedentary nature of our middle class lifestyle. Membership of Dhaka Club exceeds 1200 - not even 5 per cent of them regularly use the tennis courts, swimming pool or the exercise room, but everyone of them would use the lounge and of course enjoy the good cooking at the club dining room. An inactive body tends to make the mind inert and construction sector no doubt but in terms of economic growth, the vibrant base of manufacturing and service enterprises is still very much lacking. Thus every day that goes by, we are not using money the right way and we are losing it.

Leave aside money, since very few people have the money to bother about. But how about the brain which in physical terms we all possess in equal measure? After retiring at the age of 57, majority of the retirees find themselves at a loss: still in good health but there seems to be no alterna tive to an idle retirement with nothing to do except the morning walk, either at Ramna Green or at Sher-e-Bangla

Actually the problem is continued lack of use of the brain except routine office

work from the age of say 35 to 57 - a period of 32 years. On the other hand, I know of a colleague of mine who will attain the age of 60 in June 1993 and therefore retire from the services of the United Nations, However, he believes in no retirement; he calls it the next phase of his life and as a part of the preparation for that next phase, he joined the evening MBA programme, five years prior to his retirement. Now, after June 1993, he will set up his own business consultancy firm back home at Jakarta. Given the background of UN work and his latest MBA, he is well equipped to assist new entreprenuers seeking joint venture partners and various management support services.

No Retirement

Life is work. The workaholic Japaneese do not retire till they practically fall dead. They work six days a week, 12 to 14 hours a day. The top leader of the world's most populous country is more than 80 years old. The last two American Presidents were in their seventies. This may give the impression that retirement age at 57 in our country is perhaps too early. That is not the point at all. In fact there eannot be any retire ment from work as such and at 57 which could be earlier too one should merely switch over from one opportunity to another venture. Like my colleague at the UN, there must be advanced preparation for it through evening programmes for continuing education and training.

I do not think any one of the officers who retired during 1992 was computer literate. At the same time, after 30 years of no use, the capacity to acquire new knowledge and skills has been lost which in not too small measure, has been lost which in not too small measure, has been contributed by lack of physical exercise. The sedentary office job is the ideal breeding ground of no-use-all-lost post retirement At the same time.

Government rules allow public servants to retire from their job after 25 years of service entirely at the discretion of the officer concerned. It means that such retirees in their late forties or early fifties, can start off with a new carrier, primarily in the private sector.

We lack entrepreneurs. The retired Joint Secretaries. Colonels, DIGs, XENs etc., should constitute a strong core group promoting economic growth. The other day the Finance Minister said: "At micro level, we have an excellent investment environment, but my achillies heel is the private sector". Let the former Government servants initiate a new private sector, not constrained by the 'vested interests" mentioned by the Finance Minister.

The most tragic example of "If you do not use it, you lose it", is my longstanding school friend Raffque: a promising painter in his twenties, when tried again to dabble with brushes and paints after 32 years within the four walls of the office, he failed to revive his old talent. Artist Rafique had been long lost among the files and papers of the Secretariat

OPINION

Greek Stand on Macedonia

The following is the Memorandum submitted by Michael Papaconstantinou, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, to Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary General of the United Nations, reflecting the views and position of the Greek Government on the application of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRM) for admission to the United Nations.

southern Balkans both in a short and a long term perspective. Therefore, strongly objecting to this membership, Greece feels obliged to forward to the Security Council a number of pertinent considerations which point to the conclusion that the applicant should not be admitted to the UN prior to a settlement of certain outstanding issues, necessary for safeguarding peace and stability, as well as good neighbourly a greater Macedonia state relations in the region. When within the Yugoslav Federation. such a settlement is reached Greece would not oppose FYROM's admission to the United Nations and, indeed it

operation with this neighbouring country. In its request for admission to the United Nations the FYROM includes on the one hand a purported commitment to accept and observe all obligations deriving from the United Nations Charter and, on the other, a claim that its admission to UN membership would contribute towards a peaceful solution of the new crisis in the territory of former Yugoslavia.

would be ready to extend

recognition and establish co-

Whereas these are welcome declarations, nevertheless, past experiences and practices, as well as the constituent acts and policies of the new republic raise serious concerns about its willingness to fulfil the obligations arising

from the UN Charter. The new republic emerged as successor to the former Yugoslav Federative Republic of Macedonia. The philosophy of its Constitution, adopted on November 17, 1991, is based, inter alia, on the principles and the constituent declarations of that federative state which were endorsed in August 1944 by the "Antifascist Assembly of the National

Liberation of Macedonia" (AS-NOM). In these declarations, cited in the preamble of the Constitution, there are direct references to the annexation of the Macedonian provinces of Greece and Bulgaria, and to the establishment eventually of

In the 1940's, Tito's Yugoslavia, with the "People's Republic of Macedonia" in the vanguard, tried to accomplish these aims by supporting a communist uprising in Greece (which resulted in a three-year civil war) as a means of annexing Greek Macedonia. When the annexation of Greek lands failed in 1948, efforts continued in order to undermine Greek sovereignty over Greek Macedonia by attempts to monopolize the Macedonian name, thus staking a lasting claim to Greek territories and indeed, to Greek Macedonian heritage. It is worth recalling that this question had been on the agenda of the Security Council and the General Assembly from 1946 to 1950

Question". For forty years, such practices poisoned good neighbourly relations and stability in the region, particularly since officials of the republic continued, up to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, to express expansionist views. After the collapse of former Yugoslavia these extreme expansionist claims by nationalists in Skopje took afresh stronger impetus.

under the heading "The Greek

It is on such grounds and on such precedents that the former federative republic in Skopje proclaimed itself independent in 1991 and is now secking admission to the

United Nations. Since the declaration of independence, a series of initiatives taken by the authorities of Skopje have shown that there is a clear link and continuity of aims and actions in particular against Greece. Reference has already been made to the Constitution of FYROM which is based on the principles of ASNOM, of 1944. In this Constitution there are also references to the possibility of changing of borders while FYROM's territory remains "indivisible and inalienable" (Art 3) — and intervening in the internal affairs of neighbouring states on the pretext of issues concerning "the status and the rights" of alleged minorities (Art 49). There are numerous indications that the expansionist propaganda aimed at the neighbouring Macedonian province of Greece continues unabated. This is shown, in particular, through the wide circulation within FYROM of maps portraying a greater Macedonia i.e. incorporating parts of the territory of all its neighbouring states, and of hostile literature usurping Greek symbols and heritage. As recently as August 1992, the authorities in Skopje affixed on the new flag of the republic the emblem of the ancient Macedonian dynasty found in Greece in the

These are just a few examples which show that at this turning point, when the applicant is seeking membership to the United Nations, its authorities have not abandoned their

tomb of King Philip II.

long cherished ambitions to claim neighbouring territories.

The name of a state is a symbol. Thus, the fact that the authorities in Skopje have adopted the denomination "Republic of Macedonia" for their state is of paramount significance. It is important to note that they have explicitly adopted the name of a wider geographical region extending over four neighbouring countries, with only 38.5 per cent to be found in the territory of FY ROM. This fact by itself clearly undermines the sovereignty of neighbouring states to their respective Macedonian regions. To be precise, 51.5 per cent of the Macedonian geographical region is in Greece, with a population of over 2.5 million people, while the remaining 10 per cent in other neighbouring states. Moreover, the territory of FYROM, with the exception of a narrow strip in the south, had never been part of historic Macedonia. Nevertheless, FYROM insists on monopolizing the Macedonian name in the denomination of the state, and thus pretends to be the sole titledeed holder of a much wider geographical region. There is no doubt that the exclusive use of the Macedonian name in the republic's official denomination would be a stimulus for expansionist claims not only by present nationalist activists in Skopje but by future generations as well. After all, the name conveys in itself expansionist visions both over the land and the heritage of Macedonia through the cen-

To prevent such destabilizing situations from threatening

peace and good neighbourly relations in the area, the European Community, to which FYROM applied for recognition, has set prerequisites for the recognition of the applicant by the Community and its member states. These prerequisites are cited in the following Security Council documents: (\$/23293 (17 December 1991), 8/23880 (5 May 1992), S/24200 (29 June 1992), S/24960 (14 December 1992). Briefly, they stipulate that FY ROM should provide the necessary legal and political guarantees that it will harbour no territorial claims against Greece, that it will abstain from any hostile propaganda against this country and that it will not use the term Macedonia in the state's denomination. Unfortunately,

FYROM has failed to comply. During the past year, Greece has conveyed to Skopje, on a number of occasions, its sincere determination to proceed with the development of all round economic and political cooperation with the neighbouring republic, as soon as FYROM adopted the foregoing EC prerequisites for recognition. Moreover, Greece has taken the initiative so that all neighbouring states of FYROM make public declarations recognizing and guaranteeing as inviolable their respective frontiers. Furthermore, Greece has supported EC initiative to provide humanitarian and economic aid to this republic, while the Greek Prime Minister publicly extended a hand of cooperation to Skopje. In addition, Greece has supported a recent

Community and individual members of the community in seeking a peaceful way to settle the problem. Unfortunately, the authori-

effort by the European

ties of Skopje have persisted in pursuing an inflexible and uncooperative attitude by rejecting all proposals aiming at a peaceful settlement of the outstanding issues.

It is in the competence of the Security Council not only to resolve disputes but also to take necessary actions to prevent them as well. This is a clear case where preventive diplomacy is urgently needed. All efforts and all proposals in this direction should be explored. It should be noted that there have been cases in which application to membership has been subjected to prior fulfilment of certain conditions in the interest of peace and se-

Greece wishes to point out that the admission of FYROM to UN membership prior to meeting the necessary prerequisites, and in particular abandoning the use of the denomination "Republic of Macedonia", would perpetuate and increase friction and tension and would not be conductive to peace and stability in an already troubled region. Under these circumstances, Greece regretfully would not be able to

recognize this republic.

Greece strongly believes in maintaining good relations and enhancing cooperation with all its neighbours while attaching primary importance to the peaceful solution of disputes arising between them. It is confident that the Security Council, as the custodian of world peace and stability will take all appropriate steps and measures for the settlement of the issue on hand, in a way to prevent development which might impede a constructive solution through peaceful means. Finally, it expresses its readiness to offer its full support to the Security Council in its efforts towards this objec-

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Economic growth

Sir, Congratulations to Mr Shah A M S Kibria for his informative write-ups published in The Daily Star on different dates and the one "The Bangladesh Economy: How does it Look after Two Years of BNP Rule?" published on January 31. Congratulations also to Mr Mir Abdus Sattar for his "Opinion", published in The Daily Star on February 1, to express his views on the subjects and the views upheld by Mr Kibria in his write-ups. However, the following observations could easily be added to see the economic growth -Bangladesh style:

Mr Sattar is a banker as per the note that was put at the end of his write-up, and hence he has a better understanding about the money market and the various investment positions which the common people and the readers of the newspapers normally do not understand and some of them

are as under:

Exchange rate as on November 28, 1990 : buying US \$1.00 = Tk 35.44, selling at Tk 35.92; as on Feb 2, 1993 : buying US \$1.00 = Tk38.6339 OD transfer, selling BC at Tk 39.1326. So we common people will have to congratulate ourselves that we are now getting more taka for the same dollar!

The Price Index for the essentials (Daily Star Feb 2, 1993), explains our money market(?). However, the price of meat is not available with the Department of Agriculture Marketing possibly because meat is to be certified by the Health Department of the Municipality, and tea dust has been within the scope of the essentials.

Share market reports on jute mills and textile mills are wonderful and some have been marked as "not traded". The statements of Bangladesh Bank affairs show: (a) Govt. Deposit

Tk. 50,42,000/-. (b) Assets -Gold coin and bullion Tk. 88,62,19,000/-.

Certainly Mr Sattar has been aware that in Bangladesh there are nearly 203 policical parties/organizations and many of the newspapers are affected by the 'isms' of the political parties. The agility of Mr Sattar and The Daily Star had been proved through the write-up published on February 1, 1993 as non-partisan, fair, objective, balanced, non-biased. Such wonderful language, "cautious moderate terms", had been used that it has not been lifficult for the readers to see clearly that Mr Kibria was a former distinguished civil servant" and hence Mr Kibria has not been aware of the sting contained in the word "stagnation" and that Mr Sattar and/or any reader could be using the pungent language to remove the sting from the word "stagnation".... all these together the whole show has become wonderful for the common readers in Bangla-

journalists. Furthermore the money market and the financial activities of Bangladesh has gained some backward momenta; though we had expected that the scientific Budgets of 1991

desh, though it may not be the

same abroad, specially to the

92 93 would create the start ing points for the future.

Andrew D'Costa Hemendra Das Road, Dhaka

Autonomy of agriculture colleges

Sir, Congratulations to Mr Andrew D'Costa for selecting the art of writing criticism (as a hobby) on the write-ups of other people. Perhaps he could do better had he devoted himself to writing original

Well, in reply to his criticism (9/2/93) of my letter on the BAI's autonomy issue I would like to say that before going to write criticism on other's opinion/views, one should gather relevant information on the issue. Had Mr Costa been a regular reader of national newspapers or weeklies, he should know at least the background of BAI's proposal for sanctioning autonomy and its evolution. For his kind information I would like to say that a number of press statements/conferences had been organised jointly by the teachers and students of not only Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (BAI) but of other two Agricultural Colleges of the country namely Patuakhali

Krishi College and Haji Md

Danesh Krishi College to let the nation know why autonomy was being solicited for the Agriculture Colleges. The teachers, students and staff of these colleges went to the street in support of their autonomy demand. The authority assured them that necessary step would be taken to sanction autonomy for agri colleges. Accordingly a draft ordinance was prepared by the high-level committee and was placed before the Cabinet. But the Cabinet could not consider the case positively owing to the fact that the government is not satisfied with the performance of and prevailing situation in the autonomous educa-

I would once again honestly request the Chief Executive of the Government to kindly review the autonomy case of BAI and other two agri colleges in the greater interest of the na-

tional institutions.

M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor, Bangladesh Agricultural Institute. Dhaka

Bread or brick?

Sir, People of Royar Bazar/Gigatala area have been suffering miserably at the peak hours of day on account of paucity of Titas Gas flow in this area. At the cost of domestic

consumers Titas Gas authority gave gas connections to brick fields of this area, which consume bulk of the gas leaving only a little for domestic consumers, simply to the suffering of housewives.

Titas Gas authority should rectify/reverse their faulty decision. Alternately, load shedding may be imposed on brick fields during peak hours of day till capacity of main line of this area is raised, so that domestic gas consumers can heave a sigh of relief. Is there anybody to look into it?

K Ahmed Gigatala, Dhaka

ERRATA

In the column BEHIND THE HEADLINES' published yesterday (Friday), a line of the first sentence in the second para was inadvertently dropped. The sentence should be read as "The developments saw the virtual split in the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Dr Kamal Hossain's move to float a new political platform and the emergence of a rightist alliance that brings elderly politician Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed

back into limelight. The mechanical error is regretted. -Editor