

Undimmed Importance of G-77

The Group of 77, better known as the G-77, the formation of developing countries in the United Nations system, has just observed the 30th anniversary of its founding.

The low-key appearance of the celebrations does not necessarily imply that the developing nations are losing their urge for cohesion in facing economic issues of common concern at global forums.

In recent years, developing countries have increasingly been coming up to share same economic and trade groupings with the world's leading industrial nations.

Some developing countries are thus getting into the big league alright. However, many more are being left out in the cold.

The recently concluded Uruguay Round global trade agreement did indeed create hopes for a new era of cooperation among all the trading nations of the world.

Times for distrust are not over yet. It would, not do to downsize G-77. At its 30th anniversary meeting, calls were issued for increased vigilance on the part of the developing countries.

Japan's Political Lunge

In a surprise denouement, produced by an apparently unlikely coalition between the Liberal Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party, Tomiichi Murayama, has become Japan's new Prime Minister by virtue of a parliamentary vote.

This development should not make us sit up. In fact, the words 'surprise' and 'unlikely' would start sounding fashionable the moment we recall how rapidly the options were shrinking for the divided Japanese leadership to come to terms with each other before the political crisis went out of their hands.

In the coming together of the long-time arch rivals LDP and SDP one discerns a certain change in the Japanese leadership psyche for a government of national reconciliation in place of an unalloyed party or partisan government.

Thirteen of the 22-member Murayama cabinet are going to be from the Liberal Democratic party, according to first reports from Tokyo.

Pundits are apt to say, the new socialist Prime Minister's stay for any good length of time hinges on the approach he takes to political and economic reforms.

Political Back-up Behind the Economy Missing

by Jalal Alamgir

WITH each productive day missed, the people of Bangladesh lose taka 271 crore in incomes. The lawmakers of a country which ranks in the lowest cluster of wealth and human development indices certainly cannot afford to waste a single hour in fruitless pursuits.

Always suspicious of one another, the political parties here — over one hundred of them — exist in a counter-productive environment that they themselves had created.

The present stalemate has gone beyond reasonable bounds. Add to it the Prokrichi movement and the fatwa gangs, the hartals and the characteristic general indecision of the ruling party, and you get a sum-total of economic costs which must be staggering.

has been the essence of democracy in Bangladesh. Ironically, these same conditions forced the playwright Vaclav Havel, orchestrator of the 'Velvet Revolution' for democracy in Czechoslovakia, to quit the Presidency. Not being a career politician, he could not put up with wasting valuable time, energy, and resources in prolonged quarrels.

The basis of such agreements can be formulated through some existing common goals of the major parties. As a start, both BNP and AL

politics something of a golden Handshake now going on in the public enterprises? The South African leaders foresaw the expenses involved in long political deadlocks. They therefore wanted the nascent democratic government to be a coalition, and agreed to keep cabinet seats for all parties that would get over 5 per cent of the national vote.

agree that the Election Commission needs to be strengthened in addition to enhanced powers. The Commission especially needs to grasp that an election dispute cannot be resolved in the courtroom manner; rather, it should emphasize dynamic decision-making involving more than just reports from the Returning Officer.

Politics, and all aspects public policymaking in a least developed country ultimately must centre on the issue of development. AL registered a concern about the growing number of absolute poor in the country. Surely they realize that at least a 7 per cent annual growth rate must be sustained in order to gradually reverse the situation.

Money Talks when the Strongest Meets the Largest

D K Joshi writes from New Delhi

India's rapid economic liberalisation offers the prospect of better relations with the US, mired for years in mutual suspicion. But, some sensitive issues remain, including Washington's policy on Kashmir and nuclear proliferation.

WHEN the leader of the world's largest democracy meets the head of the world's strongest democracy, economic issues will dominate the agenda.

It is the first Indo-US summit since India started its liberalisation programme after years of state control of the economy. Confident of its economic potential, Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao is keen to integrate India into the US-dominated global economy.

The need to improve relations with Washington has never been felt more acutely. As the economic liberalisation programme gains momentum, New Delhi expects the US to play a big role in its growth.

There is immense potential for building on these figures. US exports to India account for only 0.6 per cent of its total trade, and US investments total a meagre 0.3 per cent of its investments worldwide.

A huge domestic constituency in India favours closer ties, including the new outward-looking entrepreneurs, a growing middle class of more than 200 million bitten by the bug of consumerism, and professionals — India has the third largest technical and scientific workforce in the world.

But relations between the two countries have been poor for years, and many Indians are still suspicious of US motives, just as Washington was suspicious of India's close economic and military ties with the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

An echo of those old feelings came in Rao's statement to Parliament in May: 'The implications of the end of Cold



Narasimha Rao: Indian Prime Minister



Bill Clinton: US President

War are yet to unfold... the fact that there is only one super-power now is fraught with dangers for developing countries who have, therefore, to come together and become more vocal.

Certainly, India, as a founder member of the Non-Aligned Movement and an articulate voice of the developing world in international bodies, does not want to lose its traditional independence in foreign policy.

Indian suspicions are based on Washington's perceived support for India's arch-enemy Pakistan, and specifically by Washington's opposition to India's nuclear and missile programmes and its criticism of human rights violations in Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state.

Washington wants India to 'cap' its missile programme and sign the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). New Delhi opposes the Treaty on the grounds that it is discriminatory.

Many officials believe US efforts to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to deny

missile technology to Third World countries is designed to maintain its strategic superiority.

To allay opposition parties' apprehensions about the visit, Rao told Parliament that India would not accept any discriminatory NPT. He also ruled out capping the country's missile programme under pressure 'from any quarter'.

He said: 'Everything is misunderstood... there is not a word on capping our missile programme. Nor have they asked us to sign the NPT.'

Opposition parties consider Rao's denial of arm-twisting by Washington less than convincing in the light of the recent visit to India and Pakistan by US Deputy secretary of State Strobe Talbott and official talks in London between India and the US on nuclear non-proliferation.

Members of the right-wing Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party, the biggest opposition group in Parliament, say that Washington continues its 'tilt' towards Pakistan as reflected in a recent decision to supply 38 F16 bombers to

Washington's Cold War ally. The only political concession India seems to have received is on its dispute with Pakistan over control of the state of Kashmir. From disputing Kashmir's accession to India, Washington has now moved to the position that the dispute should be resolved 'in accordance with the Simla accord.' (Signed by India and Pakistan in 1972, the accord

says that the Kashmir issue should be discussed bilaterally and not in an international forum.)

Some policymakers, however, suspect the shift may be a ruse to divert attention from US efforts to open India's burgeoning consumer market to American products.

US President Bill Clinton might have had a more personal rapport with the youthful

Rajiv Gandhi — the last Indian Prime Minister to visit the US in 1985, who charmed the American media with his performance — rather than with the ageing, scholarly Rao.

Nevertheless, Rao is the first Indian premier to hold talks with a US president since the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union, and hopes are high that the meeting will help Indo-US relations emerge, according to Talbott's words, 'out of the mire of suspicion and neglect.'

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OPINION Market Forces: Reinventing Government

Nizam Ahmad

The great English political theorist Thomas Hobbes (1659) preached how people are required to be tamed, to be controlled, to be leashed or else, they be a perennial threat to peace and prosperity. He so argued that, men in their natural existence are self-seeking, brutish and constantly at war with one another.

This was in essence a plea for democracy, which bore fruit in the US constitution. Today the western or the first world, starting with the founding of USA are strong Lockean. They are all individualists and had long rejected the Hobbesian monarchism of past Europe, the very continent the present Americans fled to become independent equals.

Should nutrition deficiency be the most responsible factor for this 'dwarf syndrome' as well as for natal deformation besides gene limitation, majority of the populace surviving under subsistence level could not be treated as sick and should be taken care of as underprivileged instead.

This is not all about the human development in this robotic era, because physical features are only relative, i.e. short or tall, fat or slim, strong or weak, that do not bedevil the whole world, rather turn out to be savior from time to time.

Many a genius who were behind the growing civilization were short people, as are many record holders in various fields.

To this developing country, however, this unprecedented abnormal growth must not be the beginning of the end of everything, while she still has a plenty of reasons to live with, energized by a role model as giant as Simon's reinforced with the strength of Lilliputis coupled with her 'tallest man' on earth, that can help her incredible-shrinking-men-out-grow the odds in the upcoming periods.

time in over forty years. We the people are dearly paying around Taka ten thousand crore annually to maintain this bureaucracy. This large machinery produces files, delays and destroys projects and obstructs individual freedom and potential.

The people submit absolutely to the sovereign monarch and in the modern Third World context we submit to a centralised bureaucracy called the government. In sharp contrast to this, John Locke (1689), the English philosopher, the founder of British empiricism, the prophet of reason contradicts Hobbes by asserting man's inherent goodness, in strong individualism and equality without the need to be leashed by another group of men.

The State, he held, is formed by social contract and should be guided by belief in 'natural rights' — economic, social or political.

This was in essence a plea for democracy, which bore fruit in the US constitution. Today the western or the first world, starting with the founding of USA are strong Lockean. They are all individualists and had long rejected the Hobbesian monarchism of past Europe, the very continent the present Americans fled to become independent equals.

Grudgingly, India and Pakistan are now undertaking wide liberalisation programmes and, AL too must endeavour to explain what the free market and a reinvented government would mean lest they are once again quickly and wrongly blamed for servile designs of greater powers that is, if they win parliamentary majority in coming elections, a deregulated Bangladesh economy would mean massive trade and economic interaction with India and others. The benefit of this liberalisation would, most certainly be the common people's. They would enjoy low prices and an expanded trade, commerce and employment opportunities. A true free market not practised by this government, can offset initial advantages of India or others. Agile trading and manufacturing entrepreneurs, investing in research and technology, can happily invade the huge Indian market and other SAARC domains.

After recent economic liberalisation in India and

Pakistan, their exports have increased unexpectedly, imports did not flood home markets and foreign exchange reserves had soared. Their economists had viewed liberalisation differently only to prove again that, liberty uncaged is more rewarding than futuristic economic planning and bureaucratic spending.

Our basic infrastructural demand (the industrial backbone) would probably require two dozen capital intensive PDBs, DESAs, WASAs, T&Ts, gas companies, thousands of safe river and road transports, million hospital beds, more skilled doctors, more engineering universities (BUET) and scores of other skill acquiring institutions. These new investments will indirectly help develop new townships, shopping arcades, parking lots, warehouses, new trade and manufacturing, housing, hotel and restaurants, modernised ports, busier airports, banking and financial services, and finally upgrade our international ratings for scare free trade and investments.

Bangladesh can no longer be afraid of a close competition or association with Indians, Pakistanis or with the man from the West. We fought the bloodiest battle in 1971 to secure our cultural and economic rights. Our right to engage in commerce or industry is not obstructed or discriminated as before. Today we are on the same footing as others to compete with people and organisations of different cultural and economic backgrounds.

Unfortunately, we are still lured to believe in the government's ability to turn our economic despair and misfortunes, but not in the individual's — as in a free market. Government control, planning and protectionism are tricky and vast subjects. On the other hand, freedom and liberty are simple, easy and casual. Natural rights do not require everyday debates and lengthy speeches. What is natural and easy has been made complex and difficult. The majority of us are therefore voiceless, helpless, and poor.

The supremacy of the market can wash away the economic power structure of the government housed in the secretariat. The market is the natural rule of the people, denied by centralised bureaucracy continually deciding and harming economic interest of the individual. The consumer is refused his freedom of choice. The producer is obstructed in his freedom of action.

The government must be reinvented, services and utilities privatised, controls abolished, regulations relaxed and consequently the bureaucracy's power to control others de-centralised for everybody's prosperity.

The writer is ex chairman MOER.

To the Editor...

Judicial enquiry

Sir, The Government of Pakistan has recently instituted a judicial enquiry by a committee comprising five judges including the Supreme Court Judge as chairman so as to unearth the alleged corrupt practices of politicians, bureaucrats, defense highups etc in monetary transactions of Mehran Bank Limited. Only the other day a court in Abu Dhabi has penalised top officials of BCCI which collapsed two years back.

Under the above backdrops, there is no reason why such judicial enquiries or court cases are not instituted against Bangladesh Commerce and Investment Ltd. which has stopped all operations as per Govt. order. Lacs of depositors who have become penniless overnight but, it appears that, no proper action has yet been taken to recover the money of the clients.

In the context of accountability and transparency, so often preached by the peers of the government, it is time to translate those words into proper actions.

Sadiq Alee Maghbazar, Dhaka

Brain frequencies: Silva method

Sir, It has been revealed by the researchers of the western countries that a human brain vibrates at a certain rate depending on one's physical

condition. It has been observed that our brain vibrates at about 20 cycles per second when we are wide awake. When we retire for resting our brain frequency goes down and when we fall asleep the brain frequency goes below 14 cycles per second. When we are in deep sleep our brain frequency goes down to about 6/7 cycles per second. At this stage our repair mechanism of the body (immune mechanism) becomes very active and we become fresh after a sleep.

Jose Silva, an American researcher (born in Spain) has found that if lower frequencies below 14 cycles per second could be attained by a person when he is awake, instead of asleep, then his body repair mechanism could be activated when he is awake (and at work). Mr Silva has also devised procedures for attaining this low frequency state when a person is awake. People all over the world are being benefited from Mr Silva's devised method.

AHM Zahurul Haque Mohammadpur, Dhaka.

Dwarf nation!

Sir, Believe it or not, a nation is growing shorter, and the one and only nation that has developed this phenomenon is none but least developed Bangladesh.

The UN report reveals, average height of 12-year-old boys in rural areas dropped by 7% during 1937-82 period.

This agri-rich nation suffering from physical growth retardation obviously overgrows the discrepancy about the standard of the state's food values.

Should nutrition deficiency be the most responsible factor for this 'dwarf syndrome' as well as for natal deformation besides gene limitation, majority of the populace surviving under subsistence level could not be treated as sick and should be taken care of as underprivileged instead.

This is not all about the human development in this robotic era, because physical features are only relative, i.e. short or tall, fat or slim, strong or weak, that do not bedevil the whole world, rather turn out to be savior from time to time.

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