

Tribal Homecoming

We will allow ourselves an extra bit of sentimentality to say that we are elated to be greeting the tribal refugee arrivals on our soil from India.

What began as the first phase of repatriation with 1841 refugees making it to the CHT in February this year was historic no doubt.

Actually the propulsion behind the peace process basically came from the protracted and painstaking dialogues that took place between the all-party parliamentary committee headed by the Communications Minister Oli Ahmed.

All these are recapitulated to drive home the point that since we have come to this stage after an exacting and arduous process of negotiations, we cannot let the progress go down the drain by an impulsive action from any quarters whatsoever, far less any motivated one.

Through all these emerges a picture of not merely a forward point reached in our relationship with the ethnic tribals but also of an improvement in the bilateral ties with India.

Love of and for Animal

A moving piece of news came recently all the way from China. It is about a pair of birds which have demonstrated a quality rarely come by in any animal other than man.

Through this unusual sacrifice of their lives the birds have made a protest, a point and only those who care to take note of the same know how, for once, those small creatures have grown in stature far taller than the species at the top in order.

Yet the beautiful winged species have at times behaved — apart from performing their individual diverse roles such as patterned flights, acrobatics and melodious songs — in ways incomprehensible to man.

The similarity between the suicidal acts of the Orissa birds and their Chinese counterparts is startling. Man's unprecedented advancement in science and technology has left one cardinal point out of vision.

That we cannot read the language of animals is none of their fault, it is we who ought to admit the inability. Even in our time some people could do so.

THE annual summit of the Group of Seven (G-7) richest industrialized nations, held in Naples in Italy earlier this month, has brought the world's poorer countries a promise of gifts to come.

The Paris Club was set up in 1956 essentially as a forum for negotiations on requests coming from the debtor developing countries for rescheduling government-to-government loans.

Total debt relief by way of loan write-off was something unheard of during the early years of the Paris Club.

Largely overlooked in the obituaries was Kim's attempt to give reality to the Third World dream of self-reliance, non-alignment and independence.

Although — or perhaps because — he owed his power to the Soviet troops who occupied northern Korea after 1945, from the start Kim was anxious to escape Moscow's embrace.

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G-7 Naples Summit's Gift for Poorer Nations

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too many debts are falling due in one year, rendering the situation beyond its capacity to cope.

Rescheduling eased the problems of poorer countries in the grip of debt crisis only to a limited extent.

The first oil shock of 1973-74 severely jolted the debtor nations. Petroleum prices quadrupled. It did hurt the creditor nations too.

Many developing countries, particularly those in Latin America, also started borrowing from the banks in the West.

ements in the West encouraged their banks to lend to the poorer countries. Multilateral donor agencies also seemed happy with recycling.

Obviously the borrowing binge could not go on and on. The crunch came in 1982 when some of the Latin American countries defaulted on their loans and announced that

rowings from banks. All the same, they too were finding it difficult both to service their debts incurred through ODA and make outlays needed to achieve the desired rate of growth.

Committee (DAC) — 21 rich industrialized countries plus the European Commission — who give ODA to the poorer nations. To date, the Paris Club, their organisation for handling debt relief, has written off third-world loans of \$3 billion under the existing 50 per cent ceiling.

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The overall aid scenario remains bleak. True, tied aid as proportion of bilateral ODA, had been falling. Even then, an average of 28 per cent of bilateral aid commitments in 1989-91 remained tied to the procurement of goods and services from donor countries.

the technical assistance component of ODA, recipient countries still spend at least 75 per cent of the amount made available, on foreign consultants and for buying equipments from the donors.

ODA continues to fall short of the officially agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the donor community's gross domestic product each year.

Nor is there any indication that the ODA flows would increase. Rather, developing countries are being advised to tap global private capital flows to gain access to additional resources.

ALONG MY WAY

S B Chaudhuri

they were no longer in a position to repay their debts. Banks, in their turn, were quick to react and cut their lending.

However, that is not all to it. Not all the developing countries took to commercials bor-

port of goods under the programme. Besides, the debtor country pays on average around 15 per cent more than prevailing international prices for the import of such goods.

The Naples summit initiative on debt relief from the G-7 countries — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States — implies that benefits from the move to the poor nations, would accrue from the members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which also is Paris-based.

Self-reliance Teeters at the Grave-side

Aidan Foster-Carter writes from Seoul

With the Japanese Prime Minister cancelling foreign trips in order to maintain pressure on Pyongyang to give up its nuclear plans in the wake of Kim II Sung's death, the President's successor has virtually no breathing space before making tough choices.



North Korea's Kim Jong Il: Pressure to change

Twenty years ago Kim II Sung was riding high. Economically, juche seemed to be working, too, as evidenced by rapid growth rates and a higher per capita income than South Korea.

The issue that finally caused problems for North Korea is its suspected nuclear weapons programme. Kim may have genuinely believed that the smart and perhaps only way for a small country to safeguard its independence was by building the bomb.

North Korea's trade peaked in the late 1980s at around \$5 billion, and has since shrunk by half.

Part of the failure lies in the ending of Soviet credits in 1991. Moscow's pulling the plug was as disastrous for North Korea as it has proved for Cuba.

Politically, too, juche has proved to be a dead-end, with self-reliance turning into self-absorption and self-promotion.

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had signed, and go nuclear.

So instead of protecting his government, Kim's nuclear ambition has had the opposite effect. By arousing anxiety, he imperilled rather than strengthened his regime.

His son and heir Kim Jong II faces enormous pressures to change course. If he continues to pursue economic juche in current world conditions, the country will be actively opposed and the outcome will be further economic decline, with the possibility of unrest.

That leaves the path of market reforms. If he wants to resist, it will be no good looking to China or Vietnam, both of which seem satisfied that a degree of reform can provide a new lease of life and lead to rapid growth.

For Kim, however, such a path constituted revisionism. And the collapse of communist rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe only confirmed his view that watering down juche could have fatal consequences.

The truth is that though small and medium-size developing countries form the majority of the world community, in today's world they are not given the choice of going it alone.

In the 1990s, the wisdom or otherwise of choosing abso-

lute sovereignty does not arise: it is not an offer.

The only choice available is between opening up indiscriminately, as multilateral institutions such as the IMF have been urging

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OPINION Is Blasphemy Punishable by Human Being?

The streets in the Dhaka city are hot in the recent days by shouts of some "patriotic, law abiding and pious" quarters to hang all those who speak against our holy Prophet (SA) or the Holy Quran.

I, as an ordinary Muslim, became confused when looked to Quran and Sunnah (practices) of the Holy Prophet (SA) but do not find a single statement urged to hang or physically punish any person who denounces criticisms Islam, a religion of peace and tolerance, out of his ignorance.

Would any learned theologian kindly clarify the following points that struck in my mind:

- Was there any 'Blasphemy law' at the time of holy Prophet (SA) and his righteous caliphs?
Was any 'Murtad' punished by death at the time of holy Prophet (SA) without being a traitor?
Why did the holy Prophet (SA) not allow the son of Abdullah bin Ubayy to kill his

for the last decade, or finding forms of insertion into the global economy which will advance rather than retard local development.

On this, ironically, the world may have more to learn from South Korea, with its cussed determination to industrialise in its own way, than from the dream of juche which may not long outlive its begetter.

AIDAN FOSTER-CARTER is director of the Korea Project at Britain's Leeds University, senior analyst with Merit Consulting in Seoul, and main author of the monthly Korea Countdown newsletter.

father for his blasphemy against the holy prophet which was recorded in the Quran?

Why blasphemy law supporters give reference to British and Pakistani blasphemy law and not to Quran and Sunnah regarding blasphemy?

Why blasphemy law proposed in our parliament is true copy of Pakistani blasphemy law which was promulgated by a dictator and which is strongly criticised by all quarters of Pakistani people save the self-centered politics based Mullahs who are rejected by Pakistani people at the recent election?

Is freedom of speech and expression not granted unconditionally in Islam?

I will highly appreciate if any brother helps me to get proper guidance.

Engr. Md. Saifur Rahman Textile Engineering College Tejgaon Industrial Area Dhaka-1208.

To the Editor...

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.

Beggars Sir, John Major's declaration for a war against Britain's beggars stating that the beggars are down-and-out an eyesore who drive tourists and shoppers away, urged the people, police and prosecutors to use full force of law to keep them away from the streets.

That we cannot read the language of animals is none of their fault, it is we who ought to admit the inability. Even in our time some people could do so.

Green coconut contains water, mineral, carbohydrate, calcium, protein, phosphorous, iron etc. The green coconut water is an ideal natural beverage.

Although there is a coconut research centre in the country, the production of coconut as well as the number of trees have decreased during the last decades.

Green coconut is a good substitute for saline-glucose water during gastro-enteritis. It increases blood circulation in kidneys and causes diuresis.

BTV viewers

Sir, The number of BTV viewers are declining. The viewers now prefer to see Star TV, Zee TV, BBC and the CNN.

The standard of our TV programme has gone down like anything. The programmes are mostly boring and devoid of anything good and entertaining.

Most of BTV's programmes show the same old faces, old songs and some repeat programmes. It has been reported that the authority is trying to open new stations and new channels.

There are many creative people among us. Please try to know them. We request BTV to help the viewers who really want to see their own cultural values reflected on their own TV.

Mahbubul Haque Chowdhury Lake Circus, Kalabagan Dhaka

Girl murdered at Rajshahi park

Sir, A beautiful girl was murdered at Rajshahi Central Uddayan park on 25th June, 1994.

According to local several newspapers which published the photo of the murdered girl, she was murdered brutally and tactfully and her body was found lying on the staircase of the southern part of the mini hill in the park.

The dead body of the girl wore a standard saree, and golden ornaments, according

to the published reports.

What a pity that Rajshahi Metropolitan Police authority failed to trace out the culprits.

Rajshahi city inhabitants feel that they will get justice after creation of the long cherished Rajshahi Metropolitan Police administration. The Central Police authority also failed to perform their duty to combat the criminals as the photo of the said murdered girl was not arranged to be published in any top national dailies of the capital Dhaka for wide propaganda and identification.

Rajshahi Park authority did not take any necessary step about it. A Central CID branch did not rush to the spot. But a human life is most valuable to the society and the nation.

We, the Rajshahi Metropolitan inhabitants urge upon the government and the central police authority to take up this most tragic murder case and find out and punish the culprits immediately.

Would our national Human Rights body also look into the matter seriously?

Md. Abu Hena Rajshahi