Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Monday, November 28, 1994

## **Prudent Decision**

About the three dissident BNP members of parliament, the party high command has decided to take a soft line on two, and temporarily suspend the primary membership of the third, Nurul Islam Moni. Losing the cabinet post was thought enough of a punishment for the former information minister Nazmul Huda. Maj (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman gets off the hook with reprimand and warning. Moni was a new-comer to the party, having been elected MP as an independent and, as such, was never thought to 'belong'. Though surprising, the soft line on the two other leaders was a wise move. Instead of further muddying the water, the decision to put the incident behind will serve the party well.

Mystery still shrouds as to why Nazmuł Huda did what he did, especially after being told not to release his interview in the first instance. Though given another chance. Huda's behaviour is not likely to be forgotten and much less forgiven. However, he has an excellent opportunity to regain his stature by serving the party well during the crisis that appears to loom large on the political horizon.

BNP has so far dealt with the case of the three dissidents only from the angle of discipline and party line. It will be a grave mistake on the part of the ruling party to dismiss what these people were actually trying to say. Huda may have broken party discipline in making public his thoughts, but what he said struck a resonating chord across political and ideological lines. Akhtaruzzaman's point of the MPs being nothing more than hand raisers or 'yes' shouters, should be considered seriously. There is a lot that can and needs to be done to make the BNP parliamentary party more active and participatory. A simple question as to how many times has the parliamentary party met since being elected, or how often have the MPs been consulted on major political and economic issues, will suffice to bring home the point as to why Moni's is not a lone voice.

To perform well in any future election, or to face political challenge by the opposition, BNP needs to smoothen out any dissension there is within the party. The decision on the dissidents is a good start. There remains much more to be done, especially in revamping party leadership, and making them pay some more attention to the party workers and mid-level leaders. At the moment too many party high-ups are too busy being ministers.

At Their Mercy

Free-style thuggery on Saturday evening at five shops in Kataban area and a private house at Swamibagh has left few citizens in doubt that armed goons are lording it over in the metropolis. They strike at a place and time of their choosing and, if your home, establishment or you have so far escaped the ordeal that is because their eyes have not fallen on you.

Mr Mohammad Baizid, a teacher of Management at the Uttara Dhakhin Khan Model College, was seated at his father-in-law's shop called Milon Traders. He was reportedly flung down on the floor and, with a gun pressed against his chest, shot at, after he had requested the goons to let go with Soleman, a peon of Ideal College. Soleman had invited their wrath by indicating his displeasure at what was happening around. So, here are two examples of rare courage shown by professor Baizid and Soleman, each in turn standing for no nonsense. Earlier, distraught with repeated extortions, Baizid's father-in-law had named 17 local miscreants to the police

station. In the Swamibagh incident, octogenarian Mailis Khan and his son were wounded with bomb splinters while his security guard and a passer-by sustained bullet injuries. The guard had raised a

hue and cry and passer-by Salam was holed in the eye by a sniper bullet.

Individual members of the public are facing up to the armed goons and, in the process, inviting instant and far-reaching dangers to their lives. When your backs are to the wall you only turn around and take on the perpetrator full-face. Law enforcers have ducked and wilted before them or resigned themselves to inactivity on one pretext or the other. When things happen with the police near by, people would be interested in physical actions not post-facto intellectual explanations. Whatever gap there may be in equipment can be made up by putting the scoundrels on the list and keeping tab on their activities in cooperation with the ward commissioners for a coordinated pre-emption. Our advice is, just give it a try and see what happens. We are sure, some effective formula would finally come out of it.

#### Tragic Fires

Inside of a week, we have seen so many fire incidents occur in the metropolis, caused by such a wide variety of factors, that our knowledge of the hazard is as fulsome now as a research paper

on the subject could provide.

Leave aside the charred frames of the shops at the Elephant Road corner, on Saturday alone, fires broke out in two bustee areas, one at Shahjahanpur and the other on the Mirpur Road, terrifying and impoverishing the already very marginal people of those two localities. And, much the same way that the Elephant Road fire had been caused, it was electrical short-circuit that made a cloth shop at Islampur catch it to the total loss of its stock. The Mirpur Bazar Road mishap originating in a

home-made oven that burned to ashes some twenty shanties brought about a somewhat limited destruction. Actually, loss of a horrendous proportion was reported from Shahjahanpur railway colony area where 200 huts were gutted with at least three times that number of souls thrown to the street. The pathetic thing is, the fire broke out as a police team were at their demolition work in presence of a magistrate.

It is suspected that some of the slum-dwellers might have put the place to torch out of frustration, and as a protest against the on-going physical eviction. The railway authorities had once leased out the land to the residents but later cancelled the arrangement, says our report. The police said advance notices were duly served on them to leave.

In the wake of such a devastating fire the authorities should feel morally obligated to go deeper into the tragedy. It is also expected of them to help the victims re-build their modest homes at an alternative location with due approval of the government.

APEC's Free Trade Accord: Will it Hurt Outsiders? URING the run up to Countries outside APEC understandably have reasons to be wary of any possibility of the giant forum turning the November 15 se inward-looking, be it by design or just as a fallout from the way its free-trading mechanism works.

cond informal summit of the leaders of APEC, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, held in Indonesia, Ali Alatas, the foreign minister of the host country, had said in an interview granted to the International Herald Tribune that the group would deliberate how to move toward freer trade and more liberalized investments in the region, not toward a free trade area, but freer trade in the area. Elaborating, he had stated that open regionalism would remain the operating principle of APEC — it would not move toward anything that would even be a semblance of a closed shop or a close trading

The Bogor Declaration of Common Resolve, named for the city in Indonesia where the APEC leaders held their summit, holds out a commitment to attain the goal of free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region no later than 2020. The Bogor Declaration also emphasises the group's opposition to the creation of an inward-looking trading bloc that would divert from the pursuit of global free trade. The Declaration further expresses a determination to pursue free and open trade and investment in Asia Pacific in a manner that would encourage and strengthen trade and investment liberalisation in the world as a whole. Thus, the Declaration asserts, the outcome of trade and investment liberalisation in Asia Pacific will not only be the actual reduction of barriers among APEC economies but also between APEC economies and non-APEC economies.

To go by these accounts. APEC will not be a free trade area but a free-trading area. whatever may that imply. Semantic quibbles aside, will all these enunciations suffice

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to reassure nations outside the region that APEC's free trade pledge in not going to impact their economies eventually? The 18-member APEC forum groups nine high-income (1992 per capita above \$8,355) economies Australia, Brunei, Canada, Hong

Kong, Japan, New Zealand. Singapore, Taiwan and the United States, four uppermiddle-income (per capita \$2,696-\$8,355) countries -Chile, Malaysia, Mexico and South Korea, three lower-middle-income (per capita \$676-\$2,695) nations — Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Thailand, two low-income (per capita \$675 or less) economies - China and Indonesia. Rich and relatively affluent economies thus predominate the forum. True, some among the high-income economies are still being classified as developing. However, they are recognised as the economic powerhouses of the region. Even both the low-income countries in the forum are growing fast.

APEC economies now command nearly half the global output. They accounted for some 46 per cent of total world exports in 1993. And these shares are growing rapidly. In short, the world's largest free-trading area is in the offing. Countries outside APEC understandably have reasons to be wary of any possibility of the giant forum turning inward-looking, be it by design or just as a fallout from the way its free-trading mechanism

For one thing, APEC has put a freeze on new membership. So the process of trade liberalization is being initiated in a closed community. Some of the developing countries in

could not get inside APEC, may now look askance at the exercise for freeing trade within the region. Within its own fold, APEC has taken into account the differing levels of economic development of its members while setting the pace of implementation of the programme. Industrialized economies have to complete the process of trade liberalisa tion by the year 2010, ahead of the developing economies who have time till 2020. There was a proposal on the table that the four newly industrializing economies (Hong Kong.

are still some members who favour extending concessions unflaterally but there are others who prefer the principle of binding reciprocity.lf the latter group's views prevail and reciprocity becomes a binding requirement, it would spell trouble for non-members. more so for the developing countries outside APEC. Intra APEC trade would grow but non-members could be effectively shut out.

APEC leaders also endorsed a common investment code at their Bogor informal summit meeting. The code covers such

### ALONG MY WAY

#### S B Chaudhuri

Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan) should meet the target by the year 2015. Apparently this did not get through. Will APEC show similar flexibility while dealing with the non-member developing countries in the region? Especially in applying its principle of open regionalism in trading with these nations?

At first sight, the concept of open regionalism looks simple enough. It postulates that trade would be extended to those outside the forum too; there would be no discrimination. In practice, the exercise would turn out to be much more complicated. For instance, as a group APEC would commit itself to lowering trade barriers against outsiders. However, APEC would extend concessions to outsiders similar to those its members allow each other, provided a non-member country offers reciprocal benefits. Within APEC itself, there

issues as investment incentives, expropriation and compensation, profit repatriation, treatment of expatriate staffs. settlement of disputes, technology transfer and avoidance of double taxation. In short, it is a blueprint for eventually attaining common standards and minimal regulations for foreign investment. In itself, the code is unobjectionable. Besides, it is non-binding. All the same. the code would work to draw into APEC member economies investment that might have otherwise gone to other developing countries. Investment related trade also would be di-

With a view to promoting free flow of goods and services among their economies, the APEC leaders have endorsed an extensive programme for trade facilitation and easing of procedural requirements which often pose as non-tariff barriers. The objective is to standardize product classifica-

verted to APEC economies.

tion, eliminate differences in testing procedures, unify packaging and labelling requirements, rationalise customs documentation and formalities, and so forth. All such measures make trade move faster and reduce cost of transactions. Indeed, this is a laudable move. The problem for outsiders would arise if the benefits from simplification and streamlining of procedures and standards apply only to traders from the APEC economies. For instance, will imports from non-APEC countries face a different set of standards and procedures than those applicable to member economies? It would be a clear case of discrimination. Exports rom non member nations to the APEC economies would suffer.

APEC embraces diverse

economies and grounds for

conflict of interests are evidently present. The Bogor declaration purposely uses broad terminology in setting out its goals. It has asked the ministers and officials of member economies to immediately begin preparing detailed proposals for implementing the decisions reached at the informal summit. The agenda so drawn up will be considered at the annual meeting to be held next year in Japan. Considered in this light, it could even be seen as premature to weigh the possible impact of APEC's free-trade programme on the outsiders' economies. Besides, the year 2020 is still pretty far away. Lots of happenings could take place between now and then. All the same, it would indeed be a pity it the APEC ministers and officials prepare a menu for free trade that could hurt outsiders, especially the poorer countries in the re-

HE European Union (EU) has plenty of reasons to be wary of an American-Asian alliance emerging from the APEC's agenda for freeing trade and investment in the region. The EU sent a top emissery to the East Asian capitals just before the APEC meeting. Earlier, EU had sought observer status with APEC. That did not materialise. Now EU plans to hold a summit with East Asian nations next year ASEAN, the Association of

South East Asian Nations, is set to remain at the hub of APEC. Among the South Asian countries, India explored the prospects of APEC membership. Apparently, nothing came out of it. As noted earlier, APEC is not admitting new members. Then again, APEC would probably restrict its membership only to the countries sitting on the Pacific Rim. However, India has also established a firm linkage with the ASEAN. Bilateral relations between India and ASEAN have already taken an institutional

Our share of the Asia Pacific trade comes to only a tiny fraction of the total. Yet, it may not always remain so. It also pays to prepare for the worst. It is important for us to forge closer bilateral relations with ASEAN. During her recent visit to Malaysia, the Prime Minister, who is also the current SAARC chairperson, had urged for establishment of institutional linkage between ASEAN and SAARC. This sounds all right. Nonetheless, firm bilateral ties with ASEAN would serve us even better. An institutionalised relationship with ASEAN could help ward off any possible adverse impact of free-trading in the APEC zone on our economy. At least more good than harm would flow from such a linkage.

# Disarray in the Face of the White Guy's Revenge T has not taken long for

Mohamed Hamaludin writes from Miami

The jibe that US politics is based on a single party with two right wings suddenly looks less realistic as the landslide winners of the mid-term election flourish the knife with which they want to cut anti-poverty programmes and international aid. There is even talk of the need for a third party.



Senator Jesse Helms:

up," he said.

created a culture of poverty and a culture of violence which is destructive of this civilisation and have to be replaced thoroughly from the ground

Gingrich articulates the stand of conservatives when he attacks welfare recipients by saying that the constitutional guarantee of the right to pursue happiness has "an active verb" in it "not happiness stamps, not a department of happiness, not therapy from happiness. Pursuit".

It is not clear how Clinton will respond to the conservative agenda. He has already called on the Republicans to meet him in the "middle of the dialogue" but Gingrich has responded by saying the Republicans are interested in cooperation but not compro-

Clinton is under pressure from both the right and leftwings of his party. More conservative Democrats, such as Ralph G. Neas, see the road ahead as similar to the one which, 12 years ago, found a Democratic-controlled Congress battling conservative

Republican President Ronald

"Once again we have to ashion creative bipartisan strategies," he told The Miami

Reagan.

Teri Jude Radecic, execuive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. says: "We are sounding an alarm within our community and the progressive civil rights community. We believe there could be further erosion of the civil rights laws in this country and efforts to roll back current protections of people of colour, women, the elderly and new immigrants."

Clinton could veto legislation he does not like and the Republicans do not have the two-thirds majority to override him easily. However, he, like the Republicans, must be looking beyond the results of the November 8 vote to 1996, when the presidency will be at

Veteran civil rights leader Jesse Jackson blames him for the election debacle, arguing that Clinton and his team were trying to remake the Democratic party into a pale imitation of its rival.

Jackson feels they have to move back to a liberal position and seek strength in the very achievements that the Republican party portrayed as the bane of American society welfare and social security. The Republicans' strength traditionally was in foreign policy and the military. With the Cold War over, they had to find an appeal which would lift their standing on domestic issues.

They chose "values" as their central theme and were able to dodge their image as the party of the rich and privileged to emerge as the champion of a US supposedly tired of crime, drugs, illegal immigrants and leaning toward godlessness and overall immorality.

They found strong allies in

the Christian Right. The Christian Coalition sent out 30 million brochures to churches the Sunday before the election with analyses of how incumbents (mostly Democrats) has voted on what were deemed moral issues. Two-thirds of white men voted for the

tion the "revenge of the white

Clinton can choose to play along with the Republicans in the hope of retaking those who defected from his party at the polls - or he could shift to the left. Whatever he does, the next two years could witness an intensified class warfare that had been simmering under the surface of American society as the nation's attention was engaged in the effort to win the Cold War.

Jackson and other liberal leaders are angry that Clinton and the leadership did not produce their own response when the Republicans were promoting their "Contract with America".

He has hinted that unless Clinton moves to the left, a third party will be formed to represent those who feel that the two existing parties do not articulate their positions.

 GEMINI NEWS MOHAMED HAMALUDIN is Editor of 'The Miami Times'.

intelligence for so long? And

# OPINION

Republican party, prompting

some analysts to call the elec-

### Challenge to Our Intellectuals

Shahidul Alam

ruption, nepotism, blatant

distortions and deliberate lies

propagated using public

money. Not a single party

when they have been in power

has desisted from these. The

government that we now have

was elected under a caretaker

government, what difference

has it made? More importantly

what difference will it make

who comes into power regard-

less of whether it is mediated

by a caretaker government or

not? That is not to say that the

issue is unimportant. A fair and

free election is an essential

prerequisite to any democracy.

But surely we are near enough

to an acceptable modus

operandum to simply get on

with it. The differences that

exist one way or another are

I write regarding my concerns about the people's rolein our present political impasse. While it is obvious that the two political opponents are bickering over their personal interests and not those of the nation, the stand off attitude of the so called 'intelligentsia' bothers me. For a nation's stability it needs a responsible government, a responsible opposition and responsible citizens. The parliamentarians have clearly forgotten that they are elected representatives of the people, but what of this elitist band of parasites who surface only when it is expedient? True, they too have taken to the streets at critical junctures but when the entire political establishment needs to be criticised, their silence is ominous and their loyalties must be questioned. Does their own political bias prevent them from making a general rejection of this mockery, or does the age old custom of backing the eventual winners require them to remain on the sidelines. It is pitiful if that be so for in this farce there will be no winners, and the losers will be those who have elected this selfish of bunch of impostors, and who they all purport to represent, the people.

simply a demonstration of small mindedness. Childish tantrums of spoilt kids. And the nation continues to suffer! All this is pretty academic however. The elected representatives have never been concerned about the nation's development. Blatant abuse of power on the one hand, and a determined effort to halt progress on the other, have provided ample evidence of But why have the people put

up with this insult to their

Where O Where are you intellectuals? You have marched the streets before. You have vehemently campaigned when your interests have been threatened. Are you so blind as to not see the suicidal spiral we are entering, or are your kinship bonds in this incestuous political soup, so strong that you would rather let the nation slide down (and that will happen, if this continues) than rise against your own clans?. You are the most guilty of all. Not because you are capable of more, but because this poor nation having been deceived by all the saviours of the past still had belief in you. They rallied behind you when it came to the crunch. And what fragile democracy exists does so because people supported you and had hope. A hope that you are crushing by

to the streets. Yes there will be anarchy (perhaps I am using the wrong tense here), and as in fighting all cancers some of the good will perish, but if that is what we must do to rid ourselves of this malignant growth, be it so.

turning your back. Perhaps you

too are no different, and the

time is right for people to take

The writer is a photographer of international repute.

# Sustainable

Sir. For the last few years. Scholars) leadership in organachieve more visibility, recogoverall development dimengood initiative and my appreciand its activities.

across an editorial in ABCS Newsletter (September, 1994) titled: Education for All. I think the Editor has rightly pointed out the importance of sustainable education in our

the growing complexities and challenges of human survival. especially in the developing world, the widening of the gap between the haves and the havenots, the limited access of most of the potential users to up-to-date technological advantages, the increasing incompatibility between the perceived and the actual development benefits, the declining world resources vis-a-vis the slow return from the renewable technological initiatives. and other related factors, I believe that the call for "each one teach one" in the editorial is not only a timely and appropriate development initiative but also fits very well with the UNDP's operational goals of sustainable human development (SHD). The multi-dimensional effects of education on the human development process have made it a viable

premise of people-centred development.

Education, which is userfriendly, culturally sensitive, operationally productive, affordable, etc., could provide inter alia the catalytic support to our efforts in fine-tuning the greater use of non-formal education, besides the formal one. In our context, the use of nonformal education is particularly crucial in order to sustain the growth and development of the informal sector which caters for a considerable number of the working population.

The continuing education is another potential areas for SHD intervention. Since the SHD environment is and will be constantly affected by numerous development variables

and challenges both in the present and foreseeable future. a continuous updating of knowledge and skills is, therefore, required for the development of desired sustainability in the people-centred development process. Dr M S Hag

The people have seen it all

before, misuse of power, cor-

Apia, Western Samoa

#### Development work and digging of roads

Sir. Round the year civic development works continue in Dhaka city. These may be divided into two categories : a) repair and recarpeting of the roads, and b) digging of the roads for sewage, water supply, installation of electric and telephone poles, telephone, gas line and destruction and construction of road islands.

Only six months ago most of the old and dilapidated roads

at Wari and the once known oldest posh residential area of Dhaka looked neat and clean and got a new lease of life.

But about a month ago digging work was taken at hand at Folder Street of Wari for construction of a drain. After completion of the construction work, however the heaped earth was levelled and the road was made comfortable for use of the members of the public. After sometime, DESA started digging big holes in another road of the area for replacement of old electric poles with new concrete poles. Now again for the last fortnight the road is once again being dug as we hear this time for the installation of underground electric

Our Dhaka City Mayor Mr Mohammad Hanif rightly emphasise the need for co-ordi-

WASA, DESA, Titas Gas, and Telephone Department and also DCC for various types of works. But who would coordinate the works of the whole metropolitan city of Dhaka?

We feel if the coordination work is entrusted to the Ward Commissioners of the respective areas we may overcome many problems and difficulties. Would our Minister for

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperative, the Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation and the Ward Commissioners sit together. discuss the matter and find out some ways and means to improve the civic amenities and facilities and also streamline the various public development works for the convenience of the city dwellers and also to save the wanton expenditure of the public exchequer?

O H Kabir Dhaka-1203

Asia and Latin America, who

and its contributions to the United Nations - already heavily in arrears. He also said that rather than invading Haiti. President Bill Clinton should have sent the Marines into Cuba.

Helms is used to making such statements. Now for the first time he will be in a position to translate them into policy. He is slated to become the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when the new Congress is

seated in January. For the first time in more than 40 years, the Republican party now controls both houses of Congress, with a blueprint that is the most conservative

in recent memory. Its "Contract with America" managed to make the elections a national referendum on Clinton, whose Democratic party was hurt by his own very low popularity rating.

Helms' ideas have wide support among Republicans. Bill Archer of Texas, who will head the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives, announced he will push for a \$190 billion tax cut for families with children,

for the elderly and for the rich. Newt Gingrich, a Congressman from Georgia credited with masterminding the Republican electoral campaign, says federal anti-poverty

programmes will be scrapped. He singled out such programmes as Medicaid, which provides medical care for the poor, Head Start, which helps the children of the poor in education, and the Job Crops, which helps the poor obtain job skills and employment.

The anti-poverty safety net, created over four decades ago, Gingrich says, is nothing but a "structure of bureaucracy". They ruined the poor. They

development and non-formal education

have been silently observing the effectiveness of ABCS (Association of British Council ising, guiding and directing the association in its efforts to nition and partnership in the sion of Bangladesh. This is a ation certainly goes to every one associated with the ABCS More recently, I have come

nation building efforts. Given

presentation of ourselves in every-day life. The reason why I am saying this now, is mainly to put further emphasis on the

were repaired and recarpeted

nation of works among RAJUK.