

Prudent Decision

About the three dissent 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.

Mystery still shrouds as to why Nazmul Huda did what he did, especially after being told not to release his interview in the first instance.

BNP has so far dealt with the case of the three dissenters 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

The Mirpur Bazar Road mishap originating in a home-made oven that burned to ashes some twenty shanties brought about a somewhat limited destruction.

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.

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?

During the run-up to the November 15 second informal summit of the leaders of APEC, the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation 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.

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.

To go by these accounts, APEC will not be a free trade area but a free-trading area, whatever may that imply.

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 works.

to reassure nations outside the region that APEC's free-trade pledge is not going to impact their economies eventually? The 18-member APEC forum groups nine high-income (1992 per capita above \$8,355) economies — Australia, Brunel, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan and the United States, four upper-middle-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.

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.

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

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.

At first sight, the concept of open regionalism looks simple enough. It postulates that trade concessions made within APEC would be extended to those outside the forum too; there would be no discrimination.

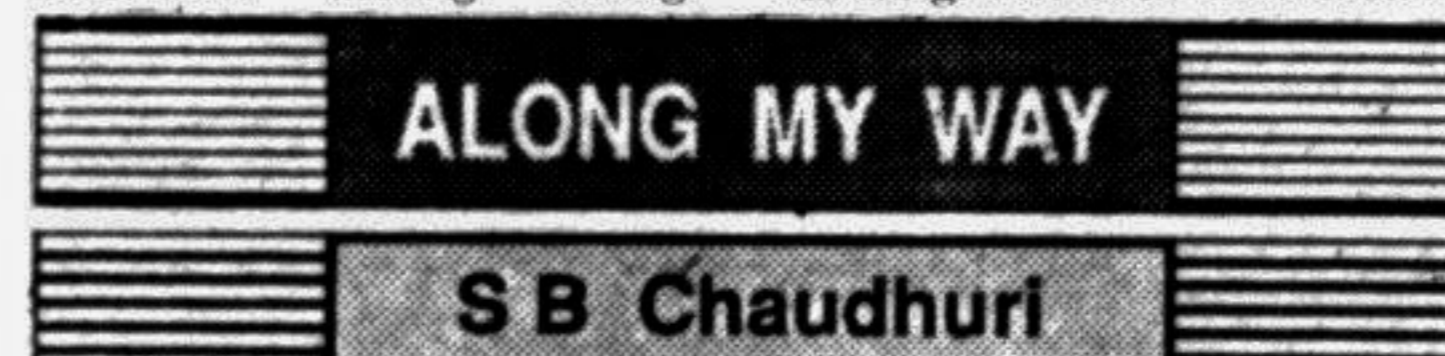
With a view to promoting free flow of goods and services among their economies, the APEC leaders have endorsed an extensive programme for trade facilitation and easing of procedural requirements which often pose as non-tariff barriers.

are still some members who favour extending concessions unilaterally but there are others who prefer the principle of binding reciprocity. If 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.

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

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.

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.



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?

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.

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Disarray in the Face of the White Guy's Revenge

Mohamed Hamaludin writes from Miami

It has not taken long for Americans to learn the fate some Republicans have planned for their country's social and international aid policies.

Even before the full results of the United States mid-term elections were announced, conservative Senator Jesse Helms said Washington should substantially cut its foreign aid 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 Corps, 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 created a culture of poverty and a culture of violence which is destructive of this civilization and have to be replaced thoroughly from the ground up," he said.

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!"

Clinton is under pressure from both the right and left-wings 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

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: New power

Republican President Ronald Reagan. "Once again we have to fashion creative bipartisan strategies," he told The Miami Herald.

Teri Jude Radevic, executive 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 stake.

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 his 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 Republican party, prompting some analysts to call the elec-

tion the "revenge of the white guy".

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 un-

der 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.

OPINION

Challenge to Our Intellectuals

I write regarding my concerns about the people's role in 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.

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 this. The government that we now have was elected under a caretaker government, what difference will it make who comes into power regardless 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 simply a demonstration of small mindedness. Childish tantrums of spoiled 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 that.

But why have the people put up with this insult to their

intelligence for so long? And 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 turning your back. Perhaps you too are no different, and the time is right for people to take 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.

The writer is a photographer of international repute.

To the Editor

Sustainable development and non-formal education

Sir, For the last few years, I have been silently observing the effectiveness of ABCS (Association of British Council Scholars) leadership in organising, guiding and directing the association in its efforts to achieve more visibility, recognition and partnership in the overall development dimension of Bangladesh. This is a good initiative and my appreciation certainly goes to every one associated with the ABCS and its activities.

More recently, I have come 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 nation building efforts. Given

the growing complexities and challenges of human survival, especially in the developing world, the widening of the gap between the haves and the have-nots, 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 renewal 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 user-friendly, culturally sensitive, operationally productive, affordable, etc., could provide inter alia the catalytic support to our efforts in fine-tuning the presentation of ourselves in every-day life. The reason why I am saying this now, is mainly to put further emphasis on the greater use of non-formal education, besides the formal one. In our context, the use of non-formal 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 area 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 Haq 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 were repaired and recarpeted

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 cables.

Our Dhaka City Mayor Mr Mohammad Hanif rightly emphasise the need for co-ordination of works among RAJUK,

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