Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka Wednesday, January 18, 1995

Belated, but Good Steps

The high-power national export council. chaired by the Prime Minister on Saturday, took some good steps to stimulate the sluggish export trade of the country. Sitting after a lapse of nearly one year, it obviously has had to clear some of the back-log on the demands the export houses had put forward to the government from time to time. In other words, it is at the highest political level that the key had to be turned to unlock some possibilities that were otherwise trapped in paper-work.

For instance, the exporters' long-standing demand that they be spared income tax levy at the source is being tultilled, up to 50 per cent, by the Prime Manister's intervention. We don't call it an aberration as such, knowing that the finance ministry lary to perform a difficult fiscal balancing act at the time of budgeting, but an earlier concession surely would have done the exporters a lot more good. Advance taxation amidst the monetary constraints our businessmen routinely face, does not sound like an economically principled step, far less a practical one, to boot. We shall have to see if the 50 per cent reduction in advance taxation at the source is good enough a stimulation for the export sector.

If the export houses do get the other facilities that are being contemplated for them in terms of the Prime Minister's green signals in principle, then, of course, the export business can pick up. The bank interest rate for the jute sector has been reduced from 12.5 per cent to nine per cent which is a good step alright but could'we ask for an extension of this concession to some other sectors on a selective basis. The idea of reducing debt burden on the frozen food industries, affected by the 1991 cyclone, sounds like something on the back-burner sprinting out to be a lively agenda.

Within the limits of our fiscal kitty concessions need to be showered on an evenly balanced blend of industries with new export promises and those of traditional nature.

Next to the reduction in advance income tax realisation, what we hail as a very good step is the elevation of agro-based farms, dealing in cut-flowers and vegetables, to the status of industries enabling them to draw bank loans among other facilities.

Enduring Spirit

The Lailatul Baraat was observed this time amid a gathering gloom in the country's political arena. So divisive has the politics been of late that the people felt genuinely concerned about it. A sense of uncertainty and insecurity has gripped the nation. Most people therefore must have prayed for an early recovery from this political mire on this night of nights. Indeed, as a nation we could not ask for a better gift from the Almighty. Sure enough, the national psyche has been enriched by the prayers' to torge ahead with fellow-feelings and cohesion in our society.

Can we also take the opportunity to ask our politicians to get imbued with the spirit of Shabe-Baraat. If they had lived by it, a national reconciliation would not have been hard to come by. The spirit of the occasion is so all-embracing that for once the political parties should relegate their acrimonious relations as a thing of the past. Unless such grace can be called in to resolve the feud, there is hardly any likelihood for them to share God's bounties.

The true meaning of the occasion can better be realized if the God's unreserved generosity on the night can be appreciated. Let us hope the devotees have made most of the occasion through prayers. Certainly the nation now needs to pray together to overcome the crisis.

However this year too the DMP's (Dhaka Metropolitan Police) appeal and instructions for not blasting crackers fell on deaf ears. The concentration of the followers of the faith in prayer was seriously disturbed by the non-stop blasts of crackers. It is not only a defiance of an administrative order but does also mar the sanctity of the occasion. Some mechanism has to be devised to bring an end to the practice that made light of the great occasion.

Crime, Innovative

This is new. Bank robbery western style is gunmen storming a bank working in full swing. take away the cash at gunpoint and clear up the vault by making bankmen open it. Bank robbery Dhaka-style was so long to wait for the prey to come out of the bank with a fat brief case and overpower him on the road. Thursday night's robbery attempt on the Sonali Bank corporate branch at WAPDA Bhavan was something new and at the same time ominous. It may well set a pattern.

The robbers broke into the bank at night and after killing Aziz, the only guard on duty, rummaged through the establishment and tried to drill their way into the vault. They failed and fled. That they could not set hands on any cash whatsoever may discourage others waiting for the cue. But there is no question about a bank-house being the most vulnerable when closed. That this group of goons could not undo the vault locks should not mean that there are not already smarter groups and will not soon be either. Crime is a very paying and rather risk-free occupation in Bangladesh and innovations in the field are being made on a higher frequency than Thomas Alva Edison's. It can be generally said that the society and economy in Bangladesh tick on during the pleasure of or at the courtesy of the criminal.

That Bangladesh hasn't already become a Sicily of the mafiosi is due to the fact that criminals here do not need to go that far. Every little thing

here is ever so helpful for them.

Insecurity in the villages is, however, a different story. The villages cannot be wholly policed. Rural criminality, specially the violent genres, are a bloody testament to the decline of the social mores and norms that ensure security to an unpoliced multitude of people. In the cities, because of high concentration of people, the civic norms and ideals subscribed to spontaneously by the citizen and enforced by police and a host of other agencies should have been at work without fail.

Our villages are dying fast and our cities are not really growing into cities. Poverty and attending degradation and criminality are the only things growing. Any government's first and final test wi-Il be in a meaningful appreciation of this malady.

The Return of the Hermit: US-DPRK Relations

by MN Mustafa

The US-DPRK nuclear accord has been ruthlessly criticised in the US. The Republican leaders including

Senator Bob Dole criticised the US promise for providing four billion dollars to DPRK for building safer energy

source and threatened withholding funds. But others rate it as a smart, tough deal which is the result of

perial rulers considered Korea as a dagger pointed at Japan's soft underbelly. To blunt that dag ger they annexed Korea, set ting worst example of what an invader could be like. Korea was freed and in the fifties was divided along the 38th paraliel creating two Koreas and providing the United Nations perhaps the quly non-controversial life-time halfway vic tory. Thanks to the absence of Russian representative in the Security Council session which voted the Korean war. The war created two Koreas, the ROK as the US-mentored child of free world and the DPRK, the communist torch bearer supported and succoured by

Russo-Chinese axis. Ever since 1954 North Korea built itself as a local bastion of what Marxist-Leninist doctrine stood for, used all ommunist jargons in national and international behaviours and shunned the prodigal capitalist norms, built a survival economic kit and learnt loathe openly what her cousin at the South did, aspired or acquired it was like any other communist regime including East German - depending on two ideological big brothers for guidance and largesse. Unlike East Germany, North Korea had to maintain a delicate balance for assistance between

HE Red Cross has laun-

ched an international

campaign against the

growing use of water and

access to water is often a po-

tential cause of conflict, espe-

cially between neighbouring

riverine states - as in the case

of the Nile, Jordan and

Senegal rivers - it is not often

realised that water can itself

be a more lethal weapon than

Committee of the Red Cross

(ICRC) claims that "the num-

ber and severity of modern

conflicts have made millions of

me which affects their very

Systemic - the shelling and

distribution of water facilities,

and depression of mainte-

tion whereby more people are

dying through the effects of

systems are often attacked.

destroyed or damaged delib-

erately for military advantage:

as a consequence, standards of

hygiene deteriorate, diseases

spread and mortality rates in-

Officer Dr Remi Russbach:

"Today's armed conflicts are

essentially wars on public

Damage to water and sant-

tation infrastructures height

ens the risk of epidemics. Life-

threatening diseases such as

cholera, typhoid, hepatitis and

dysentery are all linked to

inadequate clean water and

sanitation. Lack of water for

washing increases skin dis-

eases and pests such as ticks

Claims Chief Medical

We are now facing a situa-

The ICRC says that water

name for those lactities.

water than bullets."

crease."

people victims of a cruel prac-

International

bullets and bombs.

The

While it is well known that

sanitation as weapons of war.

patient and creative diplomacy. to expend, but not certainly below the poverty line of Western definition.

Despite all these, why have DPRK dangled the nuclear sword, the building cost of which she could easily divert for other economic development? The reply lies in singletrack arrogated US policy for four decades which sought to reduce recalcitrant DPRK as an international outcast with external doors of prosperity closed wherever possible and allowing its rearest cousin ROK to thrive economically, politically and militarily! In such a situation desperation for survival overtakes reason, legality and even political morality. Like the rejected street urchin dangling the forbidden pistol. DPRK isolated and with a noose around its neck, strove to prove its worth by going nuclear which could simultaneously give it some prestige. money and security. It was its nuclear programme which it surreptitiously undertook and developed as a bargaining tool.

The West and United States successfully contained DPRK for long four decades in close

collaboration with Japan and ROK It armed ROK to the teeth, developed it materially as a counter-poise without taking into account the ethnical affinity which bounds south with the north. One cousin's prosperity at the cost or because of another creates a jealous situation of highly explosive nature. DPRK in its forty year's existence however precarious, learnt to loathe ROK more intensely than its disliking for the US. In the process it defied, that was against its national interest and attempted to create its own standard and morals which the west did not accept

It is accused that the DPRK developed nuclear technology to blackmail. Partially true. it was the principal weapon with which it wanted to gain some importance - a carrot for bargain and also some kind of deterrent to show the militarily powerful neighbour. ROK. It had reportedly sold scud missiles to the middle east and more were in the pipeline. It was serious to develop muclear

capability and already extracted 800 fuel rods enough to make at least five bombs. The US, accused to be the lone policeman in world arena studied the consequences of this looming danger and the nuclear proliferation it could make. Leave alone ROK, Japan also came within the range of its Scud missiles. Under the US-DPRK nuclear agreement signed in October. Pyongyang is to give up its fifty MW and 200 MW reactors including 8000 fuel rods. These, many perhaps, eventually be sold to US in the same manner as did Kazakhstan. United States bought and brought 600 kilogram of uranium from Kazakhstan at a cost of 100 million US dollars and other forms of assistance. The DPRK nuclear programme ironically, brought DPRK closer to US bilaterally despite ROK's much disliking.

The US-DPRK nuclear accord has been ruthlessly criticised in the US. The Republican leaders including Senator Bob Dole criticised the US promise for providing four

funds. But others rate it as a smart, tough deal which is the result of patient and creative diplomacy. The deal is likely to bring DPRK to the comity of nations to honour international commitments and pave way to its internal economic development. DPRK has already invited foreign investment particularly in the Rajin-Songbong region. Several big companies such as Lucky-Goldstar, Daewoo. Samsung and Hyundai are already in the DPRK negotiating the deals. The investors claim that DPRK has défaulted on 1.2 billion dollars in foreign debt with no inclination to pay up. Greater contact with foreign investors will make DPRK a good pay master and an honourable dealer, claims a specialist in the University of Shizuoka: The US with its promised recognition and loans and largesse may break another socialistic fence: The secluded hermit may return to the comity of nations and perhaps one more danger for nuclear proliferation may be stopped or removed.

billion dollars to DPRK for

building safer energy source

and threatened withholding

The writer, former Director General, Radio Bangladesh, now works as Media Advisor. Bangladesh Open University and Correspondent World Broadcast News, New York.

When Water is a More Lethal Weapon than Bombs The waging of war against

Peter Moszynski writes from Montreux

Water as a weapon of war is the subject of a new campaign by the Red Cross. The organisation warns that destruction of water facilities often kills more people than bombs.



and fleas, which spread diseases like plague and typhus. Thirst, dehydration and diarrhoea add to the misery, as

in their own right.

Moscow and Beijing who got

logical and border dispute for a

long time particularly when

Nikita Khrushchev came to

power and backed India tacitly

on its border dispute with

Chana. Kim II Sung. the

founder, steered the country

for long forty years drawing

the favour and fortunes from

both feuding ideological com-

rades, taking side with

none. With extreme austerity

and long-term planning he

built up a sustainable above-

hunger-line economy which

hardly could be compared with

South Korea's exotic buoyancy

but cannot be dismissed also as

a pitless basket case. When the

UN threatened DPRK with

economic sanctions Pyongyang

told President Carter that

North Korea have had the po-

tential however small to sur

vive few decades closed door.

The boast was not empty but

logical and realistic. It pro-

duces everything of its own of

daily necessity, most of the

essential services are free or

given almost at unbelievable

ernment does not have enough

, cheap prices. The DPRK gov

lockéd themselves in an ideo-

As part of its campaign, the ICRC is cailing for humanitarian law to give engineers the same degree of neutrality and protection as doctors and medics, as their repairs to water systems generally save more lives than medical intervention.

well as being potentially lethal

Water and sanitation engineers play a vital role in reducing mortality during conflicts, yet their essential humanitarian work is seldom recognised. People need a minimum of 2-3 litres of drinking water each day to stay alive. Engineers are frequently deliberately targeted when attempting to repair water systems on the front line.

The provision of stand pipes, as have been supplied by the Red Cross to Bosnia, often attracts the lethal attention of snipers. Civilians in the besieged city of Sarajevo have to dodge bullets every day in their attempts to get drinking

In Afghanistan, whose centuries-old irrigation infrastructure has been deliberately targeted with anti-personnel mines by a succession of warring combatants, a major part of the land may never be usable

In one region of southern Sudan, only one of the hundreds of "donkey" hand pumps provided by the UN Children's Fund is still functioning, and all water storage facilities have been deliberately destroyed by government armies. Most

the estimated 1.5 million war related deaths in the last 12 years have been from disease, hunger and dehydration.

The use of water for offensive purposes is an ancient military strategy. Thirst is a traditional siege technique. and throwing dead bodies down wells to poison them is a method used since Biblical

But the increasing sophistication of both warfare and water and sanitation systems have caused a massive rise in waterinflicted fatalities.

Another major factor in the rising death toll is urbanisation. About 40 per cent of the world's population now live in cities, and have great problems coping when infrastructure is destroyed.

Conflicts now occur more frequently in urban environments such as Sarajevo, Aden.

offices. Corruption in appoint-

Mostar, Monrovia and Kigali. where complex water systems are hard of fix in combat situa-

Unlike military facilities. which usually have their own back-up generators, waterpumping and sanitation systems inevitably break down as they almost always rely on power from the national grid.

The Red Cross points out that "in times of war, water supplies are often interrupted or cut off altogether. Deprivation, contamination, damage or destruction of water supplies can have devastating affects. Sometimes the damage is incidental to the brutal process of war. At other times, tragically, it is quite intentional, despite the fact that such action is prohibited by international law.

Destroying water supplies also means that deaths and illness continue even after peace has broken out.

The US-led bombing offensive against Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War has left a legacy of three times the pre-war incidence of water-borne diseases and related deaths.

Prolonged warfare can destroy decades of development efforts. Disruption of water supplies can make entire communities destitute.

Says ICRC legal adviser Ameur Zemmali: "Humanitarian aid workers are all too aware that thirst can be a more lethal weapon than hunger.

water or by means of water can never be reconciled with the basic principles of international law.

A recent ICRC symposium on Water in Armed Conflicts. in Montreux, Switzerland, was designed to alert the international community to these problems, and to push for a tightening of the existing provisions of the rules of warfare.

The organisation is calling for provisions in humanitarian law - which prohibits interference to items indispensable to the survival of the civilian population" --- to be respected and tightened.

But the great majority of recent wars have been internal rather than international and civil conflicts do not attract the stringent provisions in international law that relate to war between states. Between 1989 and 1992, 79 off the 82 armed conflicts were purely domestic, and 90 per cent of casualties were civilian.

The international community may not be seriously interested in reducing the barbarity of modern warfare. The West has hardly set a good example with the doctrine of "Mutually Assured Destruction" adopted in its superpower confrontation with the Soviet

And as the war in Iraq showed, the supposedly civilised nations of the industrialised world are as capable of violating the existing rules of war as the dictatorships they oppose. - Gemini News

Peter Moszynski is a London-based freelance jour-

cause the imports were

banned in the early eighties.

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.

Martyrs and shaheeds

Sir. A certain news item captioned as 'Sena Kalyan Sangstha Stipend' published on the second page of the 8th January issue of your esteemed daily couldn't but draw my attention. I quote from the first paragraph — The Sena Kalyan Sangstha invites applications from the wives and children of the martyrs and ex-servicemen who are studying in various classes of school and mardrasha....", and from the third and fourth paragraphs - "For renewal, the stipendiaries from Class VI to Class IX will have to submit their promotion reports/mark sheets duly countersigned by..." and later, 'Mark sheets/ report cards should bear the stipend holding no. and father's particulars of service in the defence 1 have no problem regard-

ing the family members of the 'ex-servicemen', but let us look up the family members of the martyrs. Who does Sena Kalyan Sangstha regard as 'martyrs'? I would like to believe them to be the 'braves' who sacrificed their lives during our Liberation War only.

If so, let us do a little calculation. Our Liberation War ended over 23 years ago. So a martyr's child has to be at least 23 years of age. And a wife of a martyr? Can she be below the age of 35? Now my question is, can we imagine a person aged 23 years to remain a student of class IX? And is it possible for

someone of that age to still remain a student of Class VI? Someone may argue that there are non-formal schools in this country, which provide adult education. But as far as I know, none of these non-formal schools provide mark sheets-

/report cards whatsoever. It has become common practice now-a-days to call any victim (of even a minor political dispute) a shaheed, which I believe, is hampering the total greatness of the true shaheeds of this country, and also of the word itself! It is painful to see organisations like Sena Kalyan Sangstha making the same mistakes. They may argue that there are many Bangladeshi troops going abroad these days on UN and other missions. where they are also being killed. With all due respect to these brave soldiers, I would say that, these people are usually highly insured, and their families are paid so highly in case of such accidents, that they (families) can do without these petty stipends. Moreover, the education costs up until SSC level is not much

So I would like to suggest that, if organisations like Sena Kalyan Sangstha really want to help the families of the martyrs by providing stipends. tional or technical education.

high in this country as yet.

these should be provided to the children who are studying in higher classes such as medical or engineering colleges, or universities, or to those children who are going for voca-But before that, please stop

circulating these absurd no-

tices and please stop misusing the words martyr and shaheed! I would request all responsible journalists of this country too. to start a campaign against this misuse! And the time to start this campaign is — now!

Dr Nafeesur Rahman Shyamolibagh, Dhaka

Administration

Sir. Experience or knowledge of good administration and maladministration will streamline the effective administration in the way that people will learn good administration — maladministration will be replaced gradually by good administration. But the problem lies with the identification of maladministration such as corruption, unlawful acts. fraud, wrong order, irrelevant, untenable and unjustified decisions taken by the higher official or tier of officials or committee. Every administrative spot will obviously lead to some kinds of administrative faults causing either loss to the government or injury to the individual public official.

in article 21 of Bangladesh Constitution, it is mentioned that: 1) "It is the duty of every citizen to observe Constitution and the laws to maintain discipline, to perform public duties and to protect public property." 2) "Every person in the service of the Republic has a duty to strive at all times to serve the people."

. It indicates that citizens and public or government officials have a duty to serve the people and they are subject to degrading punishment for any wrong committed by them after judicial review. Hence the violations in all the spots of administration for different varieties of wrongs; faults, corruptions, fraud, irregularities should be identified for satisfactory job opportunity in the

ment is a single term but it includes i) violation of recruitment rule/service rules. ii selection of non-qualified person, iii) acceptance of forged certificate, iv) issue of interview cards after the lapse of interview date, v) improper scrutiny of application form for interview, vi) forged date of birth, vii) misinterpretation of experiences shown by the candidate etc. Similar gorruption, fraud, unlawful activities and favouring partisan activities can occur in fixation of seniority, promotion, grant of leave, medical leave, improper utilisation of budgetary funds etc. Thousands of such wrongs and irregularities may be identified in the offices of 38 ministers and secretaries, more than 100 government departments, 68 DC offices, about 470 TNO offices, 500 others offices, 500 audit offices, 30 corporations, 20 banks and its branches, 15 insurance offices and its branches, even services offices and private mills and factories etc.

country and the nation.

Dr M A Yahia

If both kinds of administration such as good administration and maladministration could be chalked out in all the spots, it will help all the sectors to gear up good administration for the benefit of the

Moreover, detailed knowledge of laws, rules, regulations, ordinances, circulars, office orders, office memo on administration and financial matters is essential for running good and effective administration. And this may be included, say, under head "Administration Spot" in one page, every week, of The Daily Star. This may also include law reports and judgements passed by the administrative Appellate Tribunals at Dhaka and Bogra, labour courts and District Judge's Courts.

43/D. Azimpur Colony, Dhaka

OPINION

Political Factors and Low Productivity

Shahabuddin Mahtab come to its present state, be-

Last year the study report of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry spelled out many disquieting features, which still call for serious consideration by the government, and all major political parties. It stated that during the period 1972-1991. 8.36 million man days were lost for labour disputes and unrest. It revealed that the percentage of strikes due to political factors were as low as 17.6 per cent in the seventies and but rose to 100 per cent in the last part of the eighties. In the face of so many other debilitating reasons leading to our poor productivity this avoidable factor is man made, and the major political parties cannot absolve themselves from this responsibility. While the private sector including the multinational companies maintained relative calm, the public sector corporations remained volatile. This led to large scale subsidies by the government at the tax payers' cost, just to keep afloat the inefficient public sector companies, which were riddled with burgeoning problems. Our productivity during the last two decades have been continuously declining. And the scene is more or less the same till now.

import of foreign goods without any restriction, are a real threat to our small manufacturing industries. There is an old adage which says "nurse the baby, protect the child and free the adult'. Open market operators have also to take into account the state of our industries and allow selective im port restrictions. For instance, the Bangladesh Insulator and Sanitary Factory could buly

Now we may look to our other limitations, with a view to eliminating, or at least reducing these. A serious concern for us is the lack of infrastructural facilities such as good roads and communication facilities, the availability of uninterrupted power supply etc. In today's world the most valuable resource of a country is a literate population. well qualified technologists, able managers, top scientists etc. As we have not been able to provide appropriate opportunities to our youth, there appears to be a serious brain drain. We have to create opportunities for the youth, to be the entrepreneurs. Our macro economic reforms, have not yet been able to bring ripples in the micro economic sectors. We have to address ourselves, as to how we can extricate ourselves from the present quagmire. There has to be continuous dialogue, between the government, the management and the labour Without co-ordinated efforts we cannot aspire to compete with the developed world, or the newly industrialised countries such as Thailand. Malaysia or Indonesia. Even The market forces, and the compared to the South Asian countries, we are lagging far Unfortunately for us, we

have an image problem, which is a negative one. Our frequent harrals and political unrests. frighten our own people, and discourages the would be donors and the direct foreign investors. The ball is very much in our court, and we have take the hard decisions. and the right initiatives.