Founder-Ec

Dhaka, Sund

litor: Late S. M. Ali ay, February 12, 1995

The much-awaite

Bridge (JMB) is have human resettlement i placement of people zone. The matter need

Reports carried in revealing how and whe at this preparatory stag tion. Here we just con rehabilitation programi ple may have run into stems from the projec tance to move to the 1 fected people have not a but there is no scope choice of not living in th selected for the purpose

There are indeed two problem may be a genui with some ulterior moti authority and the affected their respective shares creation of the problem. V the people to be rehabili given a choice prior to se rehabilitation. Compensati such cases prove to Experiences show that package of the governme end receivers quite proper the displaced people also t ry to take as much advantage as they can by ra ising their demand for compensation against a 1 highly inflated loss of their properties. One of our reports highlighted a fake settlement to put up

We do sympathise with the people who have to undergo the trauma of I osing for good their ancestral homes and also make some readjustments in their traditional w ay of life. There is no point dumping them to an y place the authority has liked but which in their opinion is worse than where they were residing. I he important issue is to provide for an attractive and livable place. At the same time, these peop le must realize that they should not cash in und uly on something that is vitally important for the coountry's progress as a cohesive entity. A thorou gh look into these aspects will show how the resettlement issue can be better addressed and solv ed.

JMB's Rese ettlement Issue Jamuna Multipurpose ing to negotiate through a ssue that arises out of disfrom its huge construction s addressing very seriously. this newspaper have been re things have gone wrong ge of the bridge's construccentrate on the hitch the

me for the displaced peo-. The problem reportedly t-affected people's relucesettlement site. The afreally made an issue of it for undermining their e place the authority has

sides to this issue. The ne one or a created one ves. Both the resettling d people might have had of responsibility in the Ve would like to know if tated were consulted or lecting the site for their on and rehabilitation in be quite intriguing. the declared benefits does not reach the nt ly. On the other hand, claims for compensa-

Unmitigated B1 utalization

With the might of the Rus sian military prowess turned on tiny Chechnya, the unfolding scenario of brutalization upon a freedo im-loving populace of some 2 million is already a blot on human conscience. It is dreadful to this ik, there is more to come. The deserted capital city Grozny, with its blown up buildings, scarred and scrawny look and strewn corpses and the underground cellarlivir vg of a diminished few ha ving nowhere to go, has the classical look of a ghost town after an atomic holocaust.

The Russian airforce pla nes are dropping bombs to checkmate the sou th-ward movement of Che chen fighters from Greezny; mines are all around as an entrapped pop ulation anxious to move ou t to safety slide deep into total helplessness. Th ousands upon thousands have died or been me timed. Humanitaria in aid flows to Chechnya committed by a few developed countries are choked as these are to be routed through the Russian force on the ground. At any rate, a situation as warlike as that cannot permit relief work. So the scale of the tragedy is beyond any civilised comprehension.

We don't to understand why the UN security council is still silent when this war bears all the signs of an esc alation not only in Chechnya but also in the cauc asus region and that with an attendant implicat on of exodus of refugees, criteria that usually pron. pt the apex of the world body to

Basically a Rus sian restraint is called for in Chechnya in the hight of its failure at the CIS summit to get the n rember-republics to agree on common borders and a unified defence strategy. Russia's blundering will only deepen into an Afghanistan-type quic ksand if it were to ignore the same-side reactions to the war in Moscow itself and among the troc ps which have deserted. Cashing in on the Check en offer for peaceful negotiations Kremlin bette r settle for immediate talks with them.

How Dare They Do It?

The savage mistreatment of the Kuwait Airways staff with Bangladesh-born U S national of a lady passenger. Leena Jamali, is a in ever-opener inci-

dent on many counts.

The lone woman's handbag, and purse having been checked thrice and cleare d by the securitymen, she went up to her sea t in the aircraft when came another round of ru, mmaging of the same by the pilot in association with some crew members. They found nothing obje ctionable. Yet, when she complained, in a pr aise-worthily upright fashion, of the hassle, w hich she, of

course, had a right to do having paid that much money for the flight, insulting ren tarks were hurled at her, and she was even man, handled to the point of her saree getting torn, according to some reports.

She was then ordered out of the aircra tt and a

notice was slapped on 249 other passenge TS can-

celling the flight altogether for 15 straight hours

in what was obviously a duffer-like rage that few

people are capable of. In the fall-out, despite provocations from the Kuwait Airways men and their embassy officia us, the latter allegedly assaulting one of our aviation officials, the local civil aviation people acted ap 'propriately. They were quite right in demanding a written explanation for offloading the victimised lady and in reminding them that it was against international civil aviation rules to suspend a flight without good reasons causing untold inconvenience to so many passengers.

The Kuwait Airways officials' adamancy after their crude misbehaviour with Leena is highly deprecable. This is against service sector norms in a sophisticated business where courtesy is at a premium because of options for other airlines. Secondly, there is an emotional cost in goodwill to be paid where the misbehaviour affects someone on the very soil of her birth.

Earlier, we had published stories about KLM official tearing off the passport of a Bangladeshi passenger or a passenger offloaded for no good reason. This misbehaviour pattern of some foreign airlines has to change.

MMENSE discussion has taken place and a good L deal has been written in the media about the prevailing

the mode of the next general

election. The political parties

The politically conscious citi-

zens have expressed concerns

and distress. The media have

been informative about these

all and acted as means of

exchange of views. My friend

and fellow economist Professor

Rehman Sobhan is the latest to

offer his views on the subject

as published the other day in

The Daily Star. He has mostly

dwelt on what could or should

have been done by whom and

when, and tried to clarify the

issues. The present attempt is

not to analyse the past but to

explore what is necessary for a

wavout of the impasse. The

most necessary thing is clear

thinking about the relevant

National Objective

tive is to achieve a credible

national election to constitute

the next Parliament. This is,

essential for continuous demo-

cratic governance and pursuit

of party politics under accept

able norms. There is no ques-

tions about this objective, but

there are numerous question

about how to achieve it. Many

issues crop up needing dispus-

signate consideration for their

solution. Let me attempt to

treat some of them in as all

orderly farmon as I am expuble

Who should Conduct

the Election

contentious issue is who

should conduct the next na-

tional election. Normally, it

should not be an issue, the sit

ting government should have

the right and responsibility to

do it. But under the present

political conditions in

Bangladesh, it has become the

major issue. Whether it should

become an issue is now irrele-

vant to raise. It is enough to

accept the fact that the oppo-

sition parties do not have con-

fidence an the ruling party's

honesty to conduct a fair elec-

ECENT developments

The most pressing and

Clearly the national objec-

matters and issues.

Current Political Impasse — a Wayout Possible with Clear Thinking political impasse centering on have become effective on subhave played their maneuvers... tion. The question should be by R.H.Khandker

what are the possible alternatives to this constitutional and conventional authority to run elections. The opposition parties have demanded election under a neutral caretaker government. Two other alternatives have also been mentioned. One is the Ninian formula to constitute a government drawing equal number of MPs from both side, headed by the ruling Prime Minister. A variant of this is a same kind of government with a different Prime Minister from among the ruling party MPs. This has become the official proposal of the ruling BNP after the Prime Minister has offered to resign 30 days before the election. The other remaining alternative is to run the election under the direction of the President, with the assistance of the Secretaries to the Gov ernment. In all the cases, the Election Commission is to conduct the actual election under the rule of the different forms of government proposed. Let us defer the discussion on the relative merits of the proposed forms of government to supervise the national election and treat some other related issues, which

may lead to a logical answer. **Need for Constitutional**

Amendment All the alternatives discussed above, apart from a government formed with sitting MPs, will require amendments to the Constitution. The Constitution does not provide for a caretaker government, nor does it vest executive power in the President which is required if he is charged with the responsibility of ruling and supervising any election conducted by the Election Commission. The ruling BNP was adamantly opposed to amending the Constitution. which prevented reaching a consensus on the proposal for a carctaker government. Now

the position has changed with the Prime Minister's offer to resign before the national election. The BNP appears to be favourably disposed to holding an election under the supervision of the President should the opposition decline to join a government with BNP under a BNP MP as the Prime Minister. It implies that BNP is now ready to concede to

amending the Constitution

should it be necessary. If BNP does not insist on presiding over the election and does not intend to influence the outcome. It has no moral ground to refuse to go for an election under a neutral caretaker government, now that the principle of not amending the Constitution has been, at least implicitly, given up by the party. Since the epposition parties have rejected joining a government with BNT to rule during the election period, the remaining alternatives are to have an election either under an executive Presi dent or under a caretaker government. Both the forms are essentially non-party in character and to that extent neu-

The opposition parties have already accepted the principle of having the incumbent President as the head of a caretaker government. There should therefore be no objection to his heading a government of officials, if that is considered neutral enough to accept. Government officials, posted in their positions without the consideration of influencing the election to favour a certain party should be considered fairly neutral and not sufficiently powerful over a fair minded Election Commission If the BNP should have no ex cuse against a caretater gov ernment, the opposition should likewise have no objection to a non-party government

composed of officials. The precedence of the 1991 Election under a caretaker government headed by Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed lends mighty weights on the proposal of a caretaker government. However, the question remains whether an amendment of this Constitution is now feasible after the submission and the resignation of

Resignation of Opposition MPs

the issue of the resignation of

the opposition as the most

The above analysis makes

147 opposition MPs.

crucial and deciding one. The Constitution must be amended whether the government is to preside over an election composed of non-party neutral personalities or officials under President, An amondmon Citic Constitution trimmes the vous of ... ! "981 two thirds of the me. " of the Parliament With he res-MPs, the Parliament reduced to a body of min it is s than the required two thirds. If the resignations are considered effective, will it be Constitutional to amend the constitutio, n by a Parliament composed of 183 (330-147) or less. MPs with affirmative votes of two-thirds of those present and voting for the amendment? Even if legal points declare such an amendment constitutional. it will be clearly a national forc e. It will lack political legitima cy if 147 MPs are opposed to it. Even if they are not opposed, the legiti-

ment into a really. The debate on whether the resignations of the 147 MPs

macy will be ter wous. If this

line of argument holds, the

147 resigning MI's must re-

turn to the Parliannent which

is required to bring their de-

mand for a caretak er govern-

mission, or should be accepted or rejected by the Speaker or strould it be decided by the Sup.reme Court, has become futile, if the resigning MPs have to return to the Parliament to amend the Constitution to pa've the way for a form of government under which all the parties can participate in the election. The resignations must be with drawn, or rejected by the Speaker with the consent of the resigning MPs. The political parties must choose to accept without any delay the course to reach a consensus in favour of a caretaker government, he it composed of officials or non-official and non-party persons. Making the resignations effective will block the way to holding itt election except under the rm ing BNP which is admittedly politically non-feasible. The way out from the political impasse is not through the resig-

drawal of such resignations. Timing of the General Elections

nations of the opposition MPs.

rather it is through the with-

The opposition is clamouring for inquediate dissolution of the Parliament and holding an election under a caretaker government. That seems to be an unreal demand for both practical and constitutional reasons. Election Commission will take months, may be a year, to be ready to hold a fair election. In the meantime, the BNP has complicated the matter by its bid in the maneuver of avoiding the call for a change in the government to hold a fair election. It has enacted a legislation making the issuance of voter ID cards as binding for holding a "fatr" election. The timing of any cirction is now dependent on the timing of the issuance of voter ID cards. This has become evident in the current session of the Parliament

fill the vacancies of the 147 resigning MPs, that will not be possible without voter ID cards. If this is correct, BNP has been caught in the cobweb of its own mancuvers.

where the Law Minister at

tempted and then withdrew a

bill to bypass the requirement

tends to hold by-elections to

of voter ID. Even if BNP in

The Wayout

I am not a lawyer. The argument put in the preceding section may not be valid in the legal sense. Whether it is valid or not, there is no doubt that the only possible way out is, in a logical order, the following: (1) reach an agreement on the form of a non-party government to preside over the election, composed of either neutral non-official personalities or officials under an executive President (2) withdraw the resignations of the opposition MPs to restore the full house of the Parliament to amend the Constitution (3) amend the Constitution to validate the formation of the agreed form of government (4) Jorna the agreed government to risk the country until the election has been completed and a new legislature is elected; and (5) conduct the election as fairly as possible. The tenure of this government and the timing of the ejection will depend on the ability of the Election Commission to complete the arrangements to hold a fau election. If voter ID card is le gally a requirement for the cleaned, the time needs and it will determine the digrinus of the election.

Accepting resignations Q the opposition MPs should not be an issue, it will only block the path for a solution to the impasse. The withdrawal of the resignations following an immediate consensus on the form of non-party government can perhaps still be achieved. To the present writer, this seems to be the only way out to avert a constitutional and political anarchy.

The writer is an economist and a former sentor official of the Planning Commission and

economic policies in the coun-

try, we need to have a decent

Politics, Economics and Development: Indian Perspective

Arun Ghosh writes from New Delhi

Economic development cannot be considered apart from the social and politic ul development of the country. India needs a decent, decentralised polity for the economy to flower.

throw away prices — of the

in India, especially over I the past couple of years, appear to indicate the futility of seeking purely economic explanations, as well as solutions to the problem of India's economic development. This is exemplified by a point made recently by a friend high up in the planning Commission hierarchy. "The argument", he said, "is no longer one of economic logic or economic validity. Your economic arguments may be valid in theory but they are impractical and therefore irrelevant. The argument should be one of political feasibility." And he added, significantly, "What you have to look for, in a political democracy with adult franchise is what are the dominant political interests that are leading the country along a certain path, no matter what the consequences are to divergent silent (for quiescent) sections of the population? What you have to understand is that each single policy initiative, each single transaction today involves the transfer of thousands of crores of rupecs to a few people or a few groups of people. The point to understand is, why is this accepted by some 800 odd representatives of people in Parliament, and a lew thousand legislators in the State legislative assem-

The point was well expressed, for I was discussing two developments: first, the sudden decision to privatise telecommunication services by giving franchises to private (foreign) bidders in the 18 telecom circles into which the country is divided, even though the existing (cable network and other) facilities could not be either separated or duplicated or even parcelled out, requiring the "basic services" to be still owned and operated by the government, with a "fee" for transmission: and secondly, the sale - at

equity of highly prized public sector enterprises. Since that discussion with the Planning Commission official, events have moved somewhat dramatically; and suddenly we find a window being prised open. Suddenly, three ministers of the Union Cabinet are forced to resign. And these ministers - publicly indicted by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (in respect of two) and a former Comptroller and Auditor General (in respect of

one) — may be stated to have been relatively minor actors in a high drama of enormous proportions. The major actors in the drama today are those responsible for power policies and power projects, oil policies and oil projects. telecommunication project, railway purchases and contracts, defence purchases and contracts, and the policy pertaining to the financial sector banking and insurance and to public sector enterprises generally. We have many high profile actors; and even as the country is moving inexorably towards money making on a large scale, with scant attention to where the interests of the people of this country lie, we have a minor tremor. That tremor is a sign that there is some internal dissension within the dominant political interests in the

country. The news that Arjun Singh. a senior minister of the Union Cabinet has resigned, two of the several grounds being, (a) that the recent liberalisation efforts have in effect become liberalisation of corruption. and (b) that there is no inner democracy within the ruling party, the leadership playing a dubious role in communal poli-

The truth is that the common people of this country have enormous wisdom. That wisdom was demonstrated in 1977, in 1980, and again in 1989. (In 1985, after the assassination of Indira Gandhi: and again in 1991, after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. the electorate was swayed by emotion). Once again, the electorate has spoken in the State level elections in Andhra Pradesh, in Karnataka, in Sikkim and in Goa, in November/December 1994. And finally, with elections due in Gujarat, Bihar and Maharashtra this month, the people have another opportunity to express themselves. Meanwhile, a chink has appeared in the armour of the ruling caucus. Those in power until parliamentary elections become mandatory in mid 1996 do not yet appear to have taken note of the verdict of the people in November/December 1994. though some among the dominant political interests in the

We need, therefore, to reassess the political framework of economic development. And, in that context, we need to take note of two important desiderata. The first important point to note is the viewpoint of the upcoming generation. the generation born after the founding of the Republic of India in January 1950; a generation that knows nothing of the freedom struggle, knows nothing of Mahatma Gandhi, knows nothing of the dreams and plans of the planners of yore; a generation that has faced problems and new challenges of enormous competition with very few opportunities, a gen-

eration that is aware of the

cording to Shahed Latil. this

type of open university pro-

country appear to have got a

little shaken.

prosperity of the outside world and of some people within t he country) through the 1 V screen, a generation that is not able to comprehend man things (including the reasons for the backwardness of this country), also a generation that is very largely a deprived lot. mired in ignorance, in illhealth and disease, in poverty, in miserable living conditions.

We thus have a new generation that is impatient of the past, a generation that wants to break free of the shackles of deprivation, the shackles of

The second desideratum is a fall-out of the first, coupled with the social milieu fostered by the dominant political inselfishness, of corruption, of lack of ethical values, of 'self' before everything. The result is cynicism, and contempt for moral principles among large segments of youth. But the bulk of the population - largely rural, largely

traditional - has been search-

ing for an alternative. That

terests today; a world of crass

search; expressed in the electoral results of 1977, 1980, 19:89 and now again in 1994. has so far been in vain. The perceptive view, expre-sed by the senior Planning Commission official, has im-

portant lessons. Economics has no meaning outside of a given socio-political framework. If we want worthwhile Commission.

political framework. And that framework, in a democracy, must be people-oriented. people-centric. Such a framework calls for much greater effective decentralisation of politics - down to the local level — than we have had so far. (That may well be a precursor to a pond in every village within a year, in lieu of a gigantic Sardar Sarovar dam or a Tehri dam after twenty years.

but, we digress). Economic development cannot be considered apart from the social and political development of the country. India needs a decent, decentralised polity for the economy

ARUN GHOSH is a former Member of Indian Planning

- Mentelira

It's Chocs Away as the 1,725th V-day Approaches by Nicola Cole

Acres of red roses, tonnes of gift-wrapped chocolates, Champagne by the bucket — all these and more will be tactically deployed by those with the wit to woo as February 14 Valentine's Day approaches. A Gemini News Service correspondent muses on a festival almost as old as love itself...

ED roses. Champagne or a year's supply of L best Belgian chocolates - as St Valentine's Day approaches for the 1,725th time, all come close to topping the charts for favourite February 14 enticer.

With V-day in view, it's chocs away to the tune of about 100 million tonnes worldwide - with mint the most popular flavour (it is said to be as potent an aphrodisiae as powdered rhino horn).

Britain, Denmark and Holland harbour the hottest chocolate-lovers; they curl upon sofas with more soft centres than any other nation. Champagne is also a first choice with romantics — and

not just because it is traditionally "the wine of kings and king of wines". An ardent, anonymous

suitor has given us this tribute: "Chocolates may be sweeter, but champagne is quicker." French and American men pour more bubbly into their womenfolk than any others — a key part of the more than 150 million bottlefulls they buy ev-

Jeanne de Pompadour, the aristocratic 18th-century French courtesan, declared Champagne to be "the only wine that leaves a woman beautiful after drinking it."

As for red roses, the total is uncounted - but more are sent now than at any other time of year and demand is great

enough to give a boost to Israeli and South American ex-Subtle seducers will meanwhile be laying siege via air tickets to the Seychelles, sup-

posedly the original Garden of

Eden, or with collectable old

Valentine cards - lace-decked Victorian ones that bear charming couplets like "May love your footsteps sweetly tend/And guide you ever. dearest friend" now fetch up to **\$250** api ece.

A more recent example sent by actress Marilyn Monroe and inscribed "My heart belongs to daddy, but I love you tonight", netted double that sum not k mg ago.

Such sifts instantly establish the giver as someone of taste and wealth, and wealth can be as big a turn-on as power - e ven bigger than love itself, if you I can believe surveys suggesting many couples put cash before passion in mar-

But are we truly, madly and deeply as r nercenary as this? Interest sol ely in the size of a lover's CD collection? Fascinated only lay how much folding money it takes to produce that intrigui ng bulge in pocket

contours? Put it this way: the gold rush isn't o'ver yet. For every dozen maidens modestly insisting it is his charm, his smile, his personality or his sense of humour that are the knock-outs, there is one ruthless realist thinking: "Be an angle. Valentine honey, skip the card, send me money."

For better or worse, she'll, been linked with the day inget what she wants: a hunk with a heart-of-gold and a matching bank account.

"Nature has wired us for one special per son," says psycho-biologist Ar ithony Walsh of Idaho's Boise Sitate University in the US; if we fail to find the perfect partner, our brain circuitry goes on hunting for the best alternative. When all the right bells ring, we're hooked.

Psychiatrists say a young woman chooses a lover who is the image of her dad — except for the traits in him she dis-

likes most. "Like heat-seeking missiles we will almost certainly find partners who treat us much as our parents did," says Dr Harville Hendrix, author of Getting the Love You Want.

Our goal in life is to return to "that original state of relaxed joyfulness" we remember from early days.

Reaching it involves a voyage of self-discovery and damage-limitation, of overcoming hurts and insecurities.

For many, the voyage will start with a Valentine card. The original notion of what

Valentine's Day stood for has now virtually been lost. A learned few still associate the day with the Roman saint who was imprisoned for his beliefs, and even fewer will recollect the story of how he fell in love with the jailor's blind daughter and, on the eve before his exe-

cution, sent her a note with the message: "With love from your Valentine. Another claim is that the sending of love letters and cards has nothing to do with St Valentine himself and that the custom originated during Europe's Middle Ages, having

the belief that it opened the mating season for birds. Either way, more than one billion messages will soon be winging their way through the post worldwide.

NICOLA COLE is a British freelance writer who has worked for 'The Times' of London and the London bureau

of 'The Australian'.

To resolve the crisis

Sir, That under Article 7(2) the Constitution of the country is the solemn expression of the Supreme Will of the people and Supreme Law of the Land and we are to abide by, and maintain the sanctity of the Constitution.

That the resignation of 147 Mios has created a social, political and constitutional crisis in the country and the Parliament has become inactive and practically lost one of its two legs. thus the continuation of the Parlia nent with one leg is not fair, juist and desirable in the ey'e of law and norms of der noch acy.

1 hat the constitutional crisis avriv ed at, can be solved within the frame-work of the Consti tut ion which my be described as follows: That under Article 57(2)

the Prin te Minister may advise the Pres icient to dissolve the Parliame at and after dissolution, the President under Article 93 of t he Constitution may make and promulgate Ordinances for a neutral caretaker

government under him (President) and in this context the Prime Minister under Article 57(1) of the Constitution may resign giving directives to the President to act according to the Constitution under Article 56(4) having a neutral caretaker government to run the general election and after the election all the activities of that government shall be laid before the Parliament in its first session and be passed and adopted in the Constitution as 13th Amendment.

Advocate Helal Uddin Ahmed General Secretary, DHRC, Dhaka

Ho Chi Minh type open university Sir. Many thanks to Shahed

Latif for his "Window on Asia" article under the headline "Expanding Education on a Broadfront" which appeared in your esteemed daily on 8th Dec '94. The Ho Chi Minh type of open university is really applicable in our country. Ac-

vides skilled manpower and make available to the expanding service and manufacturing sectors, the required trained people. As the university offers reasonable fees, the poor students can get degree from the university. There will be no restriction on admission. Any body paying the required fees should be allowed to be enrolled in any course. The late learner can also be a student of this university. It can avoid the political violence which is a common scenario in almost all the universities of our country. Here the capital investment is very little. The fees collected from the students can meet the salaries of the teachers and other recurrent costs.

I think this kind of university is very much needed in our country. The government and appropriate authorities should ponder over it very deeply.

S M Kamal Sarwar Kazol, East Nasirabad, Chittagong