

Closed Door Opens Slightly

Prime minister's renewed offer of talks, and Sheikh Hasina's not rejecting it right away, give us some reasons to hope that the door of talks, closed for so long, may at last open a bit.

It is our view that the opposition should, instead of trivialising the offer, respond by saying that it is also ready for talks and select its own team for pre-talks negotiations.

We totally disagree with the PM when she says that the country is functioning normally, and that the opposition's agitation and its en masse resignation of MPs have had no impact on the country.

Last four years of our democratic experiment, and the last one year of opposition's agitation should convince both sides that neither can have it its own way.

SSC Exam Hiccup

The SSC examinations began yesterday with several hundred students failing to appear in these because they didn't have any admit cards.

If these were just isolated cases coming up inadvertently, there would have been at least some consolation. But these were apparently deliberately done by some teachers in collusion with a few dishonest employees of the board.

Sadly, this has not been the only dishonest means adopted to launder ineligible candidates, in fact all kinds of duplication, and submission of false names and dates of birth have also been restored to.

Matter of Right

A report in a vernacular daily has it to the effect that some anti-liberation forces have successfully resisted the holding of a public reception for poet Shamsur Rahman in Sylhet.

Now the question is: why are they opposed to someone whom the whole nation has accepted as our prime poet? It is the poet's belief in secularism and his liberal attitude to life that have angered them.

After all the organisers of the event did not go to hurt anyone's feeling by according reception to a poet. So why are these excesses? The administration cannot turn a blind eye to these anymore.

Democracy, Good Governance and Development in the post-Cold War Era

by M Saifur Rahman

WHAT Neville Chamberlain said about the outcome of armed conflicts is equally true about the Cold War: "In war, whichever side may call itself the victor, there are no winners, but all are losers".

The quest for social justice and equitable order for the poor and deprived remains as elusive as ever. There are more poor people today than the total world population in the mid-nineteenth century when Marx and Engels wrote the Communist Manifesto.

The pangs and trauma of poverty in the post capitalist society are, much more poignant and agonising than ever. For the poor, it is excruciatingly painful to reconcile with the shame of stark deprivation in a world basking in glittering abundance and extraordinary potentialities.

PARITY split, the country is waiting anxiously for Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's next move as the Congress president. He is in the sort of trouble that makes Benazir Bhutto's job look easy by comparison.

Still more embarrassing for Rao is ND Tewari, the senior-most Congress leader in the country's largest state, Uttar Pradesh. He has resigned from all offices of the party but not from the party. He has also made Rao sit on pins and needles by joining hands with Arjun Singh openly.

Rao's usual response not to recognise a problem is too casual for the incipient revolt that is spreading in Congress.

will begin to travel without passport, in many unpleasant forms: drugs, diseases, terrorism, migration. Poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere."

Poverty is both a consequence as well as a cause of environmental degradation in the context of struggle for survival. Immediate requirements of the poor tend to overshadow any concern for the environmental future.

Good governance, however, cannot be imposed from above. There is no single recipe for good governance. The erosion of public confidence in the governmental system is not unique to developing countries, it is equally true about affluent societies who are also trying to reinvent the government.

On balance the recent shifts in the post-capitalist society are not wholly unfavourable to developing countries. Some of these changes have actually opened new windows of opportunities for economic transformation.

Of late, there has been considerable revisionism on the role of foreign aid. Undeniably, there are many instances of inefficient utilization of external assistance. Aid fatigue in the affluent societies is, therefore, natural.

Despite these promising changes, the odds of economic development should not be underestimated. The forces

that created the widening gap between the affluent and developing societies did not originate in the Third World. They are the products of industrial societies. Underdevelopment is not an original state, it was created by the developed countries themselves.

The process of interaction between developing and affluent societies has often been oversimplified. The widening gap between these societies was not produced by economic exploitation of imperial powers alone.

World economic order, the rich in the affluent societies is getting richer whereas the absolute number of the poor in the developing countries is swelling.

It is highly unlikely that most of the developing countries will be able to raise the resources for providing and maintaining minimum physical and social infrastructure for sustainable development.

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low income countries received only 59 per cent of official aid, the rest went to countries who do not deserve aid on economic considerations alone. Secondly, the most generous per capita allocation of aid does not necessarily go to the poorest countries.

Good governance, however, cannot be imposed from above. There is no single recipe for good governance. The erosion of public confidence in the governmental system is not unique to developing countries, it is equally true about affluent societies who are also trying to reinvent the government.

Historical experience indicates that democratic governments tend to be more responsive to the needs of the people. Democracy is not, however, a one shot affair. It is not a matter of single decision or a hurriedly arranged election. It is a long and arduous process.

Because of ever-increasing bureaucratic failures and the appalling inefficiencies and losses of state-owned enter-

prises, the process of development inevitably involves the ordeal of undoing what has been laboriously done in the past: decrease regulation, privatize the public sector enterprises, and reduce the size of the government.

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discriminations against the socially disadvantaged. Legal systems need to be modernised with changing socio-economic circumstances, bureaucratic constraints need to be reduced and discriminatory social norms and practices must be discouraged.

Another precondition of good governance through democratic process is decentralization of power. First, more authority needs to be transferred from capital cities to local governments in regions, towns and villages.

Ultimately, good governance will have to be nourished and sustained by the people themselves. At this crucial juncture of history, patriotism is not enough.

Without citizenship there cannot be that responsible commitment which in the last analysis holds together the body politic. Citizenship means an active commitment to one's community, to one's country as well as to the world at large.

The above write-up is based on a presentation by M Saifur Rahman, Minister of Finance at Overseas Development Institute in London yesterday.

The Indian Political Scene

Still Rao has to find a way to save Congress from splitting. The scene may look quiet but turmoil is building up. Before long some one will bell the cat. No amount of smiling blandness will smother the cries for improving Congress.

He does not want a tall person like Tewari to quit. Nor does he like the challenge thrown to him go unanswered. He will require some thoughtful thugery. He cannot afford to be Mr Nice to Tewari and Mr Nasty to Arjun Singh.

Otherwise, there is no difference between the two in running down the Congress government or the party apparatus.

Congress reverses in state elections have weakened Rao. He has begun to realise his limitations. And he has learnt to adjust. He did not want J-B Patnaik to be Orissa's chief minister and told Congress observer Pranab Mukherjee to have anyone except Patnaik.

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No amount of smiling blandness will smother the cries for improving Congress. Rao has to do something to recover his and the party's image between now and the parliamentary election in mid-1996.

Rao is building bridges with some of non-Congress leaders for adjustment of seats. He met

Subramaniam Swamy, who has got the permission to prosecute Jayalalitha. Even the case can be kept hanging.

Apparently, Rao does not want to have a formal alliance with the Janata Dal. This would have given Congress a new image - and strength. The impediment seems to be V P

chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, N T Rama Rao, recently. He has already met UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. And he is also in touch with Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav.

The permission to prosecute Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalitha, cleared with Rao, is a sword placed on her head so that she sees "the advantage" of an alliance with Congress for the parliamentary polls.

of problems on the way to their professional and career development. Because there are no specific clauses in BARI's service rule for evaluating the performances of the teachers who are doing a fully different type of job in teaching under-graduate level students.

In the aforesaid state of affairs, we would fervently call upon the Ministry of Agriculture to kindly fix the status of Agri Colleges i. e. whether these will be 'autonomous' or

communists are averse to having any trick with Congress. The two were together till 1977 but gone apart since, particularly from 1991, because of economic reforms which are seen anti-people.

Time alone will tell whether the communists succeed in their effort or whether Rao will win over some state leaders and partly Janata Dal and its breakaway group, the Samta Party.

The problem with the third alternative is its uncertain future. Twice before it has been tried, first in 1977 and then in 1989. Both times it collapsed following personal animosities and group rivalries.

Despite the rhetoric, the BJP has not said anything at its Goa meeting which could give faith to the minorities. A commitment to secularism is not mere part of tactics. It must reflect in its pronouncement and action.

Congress ire over Bal Thackeray's recent observations

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

To the Editor...

Fix the status of BAI

Sir, During the late seventies, the then Directorate of Agriculture (Research and Education) was converted into an autonomous organisation called Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI). At that time Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (BAI), Dhaka was under the administrative control of the Directorate of Agriculture but no mention was made about the fate of BAI in BARI's ordinance. Later on BAI was placed under the

administrative control of BARI vide an executive order.

Now the Ministry of Agriculture has taken over the administrative control of BAI and other two agri colleges by creating an Agri Education Wing. Of course, a recent ministerial order has asked BARI to continue to look after the administration and management of the Agri Colleges including BAI. As the services of the teachers is governed by the BARI's service rule, the teachers are facing a number

M Zahidul Haque General Secretary BAI Teachers' Association