# The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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### Accord of Immense **Potential**

At last the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for elimination of child labour from the country's garment industry has been signed. The involvement of the international labour organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the accord provides strength to this long-awaited deal. The Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BCMEA) is indeed going to set a precedent in the history of child labour by responding to the call of the time. Its business interest though was the prime mover in getting rid of child labour - on which it heavily relied and still does and even thrived - it has admirably responded to address the problem that is going to follow the sacking of the underaged workers.

With the help of the two UN organisations the BGMEA is taking up a rehabilitation programme for the terminated children. Each of these child workers will receive Tk 300 per month for their schooling. This should be quite a satisfying deal for the children out of job. During the schooling period they will have opportunities to receive the much-needed education for progressing further in their profession when they will be back to their work-place. What is specially heart-warming is assured schooling for the sacked children. And no child can be sacked before 25 survey teams have been satisfied about the accuracy of the list of children to be sacked

These are welcome developments. But the issue because of its complex nature — will demand working out the details flawlessly. The three-year schooling, as has been agreed upon ought to be fully utilised for their preparation for life - both in garment factories and the wider world outside of it. This is an opportunity that can be availed of if a special educational programme rather than the conventional type is introduced. We hope the good work done by the BG-MEA, the ILO and the UNICEF will be complemented by a well-devised method of education.

On the other side of the MOU, lies the Bangladesh garment industry's interests abroad, particularly in the USA. Now that the MOU has been signed there is need for wide publicity of this in America. The Bangladesh Embassy and the UNICEF in the US can carry out the campaign for Bangladeshi garment products. The US-based organisations like the Child Labour Coalition which threatened to boycott garments from Bangladesh with the child labour input, should not only reverse their position now but also work for the promotion of Bangladeshi garment products. The bottomline is to offset the damaging campaign against our garments, that was launched earlier on. We hope the parties concerned will be alive to this imperative need.

### Why not Private Ferries?

There is little in this land of epic grandeur. Go to Aricha, the ghat on the Padma that is, and you will meet some spectacle on the epic scale. Unfortunately for us the play down there is a tragedy without an end and is frustrating rather than filling all the way. Hundreds of trucks and buses and a motley other vehicles littering a scene of world's all the muck and slime converging together. And this is but a mirrorimage of the situation at both Nagarbari and Daulatdia. The nightmarish transport bottleneck at Aricha and the other two ghats is chronic and every so often it slumps to a near collapse as it has done this current

The spectacle has also its elevating aspect, however. See the drivers and the ferrymen make do of that impossibly inadequate and maddeningly uncared for state of the facilities. And you will marvel. At the moment 2500 vehicles come daily to be ferried across the Padma by a fleet of 17 vessels in all - 10 of them somewhat sizeable RoRoes and the others small and old. Working 24 hours a day they can get across 1500 at the outside and the unrelenting pressure makes most of the ferries hurt and fatigued and are withdrawn every now and then for rest and repair.

There is a weight limit to any carrier vessel or vehicle. There is none for these that service the Padma ferry-load. These ferry boats are crammed to their last milimetre by trucks and buses. As a matter of rule five-tonners carry up to eight tons in Bangladesh. There is no weighing devices and facilities at any of these ghats. The boats are all the time carrying absurd overloads contributing to the ill health of the operation. All remains to happen is the sinking of a ferry.

The pressure at these ghats beggars description. And it exacts an economic price of billions of Taka. The vehicles pay their way across the great river. One expects that R&H do not charge them as if they were running a charity. It completely beats our understanding why the operation should not be run on a sound commercial basis and the fleet is not enlarged. If government is out of funds to bill the needed purchases, which cannot be the case at all, why not let the private sector participate in the operation which promises very lucrative business and at the same time a halt to a perpetual bleeding of the national economy.

#### Handsome Win for Major

Prime Minister John Major has got more than he had gambled for. No one thought John Redwood would indeed upset him and the challenger's stance was as such taken as part heroics and part ritual. The ritual part was not as hollow as rituals usually are. And Redwood's wasn't either all sacrifice to fulfil the call of a rite.

In that ritual of John Major resigning as Tory chief all to give a test of the strength of his following before he can take on Labour at the polls - we in Bangladesh have much to learn. Democracy is the most printed word in this nation's media and the most touted noun in the public meetings. While democracy at the governance level remains as yet very very elusive and tentative at its very best, it is decidedly absent at the party level. Autocracy reigns unchallenged at most of the major parties' inner working while one or two are downright fascistic in their in-house dispensation.

John Major's calling for a vote on his party leadership question and winning it handsomely has allowed him to recoup a face of respectability out of an already hopeless case. Appealing to democracy has served him wonderfully in his dire circumstances. John Redwood's miserable showing of 89 is not as poor as it appears. It forcefully marks that there is a fissure in the Tory approach to Europe which is far from dismissable. This sign of a thriving dissent makes it a party open to debate and self-doubt, not quite closed conservative traits. Pause for a moment and think what will happen if such dissent shows up in Bangladesh's ruling party.

The resuscitated Major is not feared to present any problem to Tony Blair. All that will accrue from this confirmation of democratic norms and values is a healthy and firm run-up to the polls.

#### nts concerning the media and press freedom have recently taken place in Pakistan. During "the Night of the Long Knives" the PM Ms Benazir Bhutto, replaced the whole team of her media-handlers, from the Secretary Information, Hussain Haqqani, downwards the only escapee being friend Farhat Ullah Babar, the PM's

loyal Press Secretary. Farhat

is such a mild and honest soul

WO momentous eve-

that the PM's hand may have been stayed by some angel. Congratulations are in order to former PM Mian Nawaz Sharif because the incumbent PM has brought back into information power almost the whole team who had made her life miserable successfully during his tenure as PM. The PM kept one surprise choice up her sleeve, the aberration of Ms Rana Shaikh was transformed from being Secretary Culture to being the 22nd Managing Director of PTV since 1964. A former TV actress and pro ducer/director, this was a natural end reward for the Herculean PR efforts of the wife of the Foreign Secretary, Mr Naimuddin Sheikh, to display the liberal side of Pakistan culture by a special "song and dance" fashion show during the PM's US Yatra a designerclothing performance that could not be seen (being banned for TV viewing in Pakistan by the likes of Maulana Fazlur Rahman lest he forget his only vows of abstinence from such worldly pursuits. Ms Rana Shaikh shrugged off accusation of plagiarism, when you copy from many plagiarism turns

into research. The second major event to rock the boat was the banning of six Urdu eveningers of Karachi by "competent authority" because of publication of news detrimental to the "Maintenance of Public Order" and some such. The net result is that all the newspapers have jointly declared a strike on Wednesday and Pakistan will be without any newspaper on Thursday, a first for a democratic govern-

It is fantasy to assume that the 'dream merchants' invariably mange to convert a frog into a prince, the basic product has to have an inherent potential of acceptability by the masses for it to be successfully promoted. What happens is that in the attempt to promote an image, the imagemakers overdo the presentation and it usually backfires. public eye for free. Whether you have people like Hussain Haggani and Farhad Zaidi or Haji Akram and Rana Shaikh, the basic credibility problem remains, if the government is

ment in Pakistan. The government media has very little credibility, to further erode it by trying to change or colour facts is asking for a media-disaster. The govt media is usually quite adept at (diverting attention, ignoring issues completely may provoke wild rumours that are counterproductive and prove far more damaging for the government's image. G-men are prisoners of the bad circumstances (and vibes) that their leaders in government create for them by bad decisionmaking, they can hardly be expected to take the blame for the originating of an event or for failing to project images in a light taken favourably by the masses. It is fantasy to assume that the "dream merchants" invariably mange to convert a frog into a prince, the basic product has to have an inherent potential of acceptability by the masses for it to be successfully promoted. What happens is that in the attempt to promote an image, the image-makers overdo the presentation and it usually backfires. A good example in Pakistan was the backlash of the decade of reforms in 1968 at the fag end of the Ayubian Regime. People got thoroughly sick of (1) seeing the Field Marshal's image day after night after day on the TV screen and (2) hearing about him (and his deeds) ad-nauseum over the government-controlled radio, that revulsion hastened Ayub Khan's downfall. More than a quarter century later the Ads comparing Ms Benazir's performance with that of her predecessor has ensured that the Ms Benazir regime pays for the photographs of Mian

hell-bent on breaking the very democratic principles it loudly espoused while in Opposition, the damage control necessity becomes much more acute and frequent. When handling personalities who have used the powers of office to made their future bright, media-handlers soon discover that these people also are very anxious to make their pasts bright. The syndicate soution for our Satcchi and

to attract an audience that had already read the morning dailies in some depth Eveningers do tend to border on the fail-safe line with respect to public sensibilities. However, to quote Ms Benazir on the rule of law whenever someone in Opposition is accused of wrongdoing, "they must address the courts of law for succour". Conversely, what was stopping GOP from taking all these eveningers to court for any number of reasons instead of administrative misadventure by using the edict of the deputy commissioners. Ms Bhutto has suc ceeded in alienating and unit-

### AS I SEE IT

The Wind Cannot Read

#### Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

Satcchi-type local image-makers is to portray their clients time as gentlemen farmers of substance deeply involved in benevolent concern for issues that bedevil the common man this may make for good international copy but is seen as sheer hypocrisy locally).

Ms Benazir's regime took a spectacular nose-dive from its pedestal with respect to freedom of the press on the banning of 6 Urdu eveningers in Karachi. In all fairness it must be said that one or two publications were on the fact-safe line with respect to incitement to violence, enthusiasm can be the only polite word to use for rampant sensationalism. Eveningers, Urdu and English, survive only on the basis of lurid headlines and scandal, their penchant is to scream out material that aims ing) the entire national print media against her government, a rather unfortunate faux pas (and predicament) for a democratic government. The loyal Press Secretary, Farhat Ullah Babar, expressed as much surprise as anyone also and attempted to distance his boss from the media quicksand by giving the blunder a local provincial colour rather than it being any Bhutto "Farman". Given the slavish track record of the Abdullah Shah government and its endearing habit of waiting for Federal Diktat for even going to the rest rooms this would seem a vain and ludicrous (though admirable) attempt by friend Babar. Not only is the government now a target of approbation within the country, organisations outside the country have been quick to rise to the de-

tence of the Fourth Estate. The only honourable and pragmatic course is to sound full retreat and thereby limit the damage to Ms Benazir's reputation as one of the world's foremost advocates of democracy. The PNPO and NECP have echoed the protests of its rival organisations as APNS and CFNE saying that "the banning is a serious blow to press freedom in Pakistan."

The timing of friend

Haggani's dismissal as Secre-

tary Information thus becomes rather unfortunate for the Ms Benazir regime. As a working journalist aware of the backlash and repercussions, he would hardly have been seen condoning this drastic action. Coming immediately after his transfer as Chairman House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC), it gives an impression that he was opposed (though he denies it) to such a draconian sweeping measure. Hussain Haqqani is a brilliant right wing ideologue who has excelled in keeping the opponents of his clients at bay. Mian Nawaz Sharif should neyer have let him go, by the same token Ms Bhutto should never have kept him. Having moved him into her inner circle of the PPP regime, attempting to put him out to pasture will have serious consequences for the PPP even though the PML (N) may be averse to using his services again. While Mushahid Hussain has done a remarkable job in shoring up his client, on the matter of points scored Haqqani had a clear edge since Mushahid's basic tactics remain a gentlemanly media campaign that is intellectual but not offensive in letter or spirit as against an aggressive

no-holds barred streetfighter posture that Haqqani brings forth. If Mr Haggani should ever be lured away from Ms Bhutto, a Mushahid-Haqqani combination would be lethal for PPP Would things in the media

discipline he better under

Mian Nawaz Sharif or for that matter anyone else? The problem lies in the quality of leadership we are blessed with. Pakistan has some outstanding leadership potential but personality clashes and severe divergence of views in short on principle and long on childishness. It is rapidly polarising this nation and threatening its existence. We have young leader who lack vision despite their protestations to the contrary, their aides are mostly sycophants who are best at anticipating their leader's desires and then falling over themselves in carrying them out. Instead of discussions and debate being institutionalised, governance continues to remain a day-today occurrence dependant upon the whims and caprices of the rulers, there being no depth in the thought process or maturity that must be the essence of decision-making in government. Above all, our leaders never seem to read warning signs or be amenable to listening to any warning

The print media provides regular warning signs, now its own freedom is under threat. To quote a Chinese saying "Though on the signboard it is written, do not pluck the flowers, it is useless against the wind which cannot read." It is becoming increasingly clear that the major Pakistani leaders are like the wind, they do not read the warning signs, and if they do, they do not heed them. Given that, no individual is above the integrity and well-being of the country, the survival of our nation may well depend upon another period of politics in limbo. Ms Benazir's regime has shown the way by imposing curbs on press freedom, next a curb on democracy? And, by whom?

# Monitoring and Evaluation of Development Activities

The Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) should no longer be located in the Planning Ministry. In a free market economy, there is no need for a large Planning Commission and Planning Ministry. We should instead emphasize on strengthening the planning capability of the individual Ministries.

activities in Bangladesh are done mostly at donors' insistence and hence fail to reflect the country's real requirements. These will have to be improved more than the present situation permits if we are to make optimal use of scarce resources. With declining foreign aid and increasing use of domestic resources in development financing, this assumes added urgency and importance.

Unfortunately, despite the weakness in these two functions they have not as yet received the attention they deserve, although it is very much possible to make these two interrelated activities far more effective within the existing resource constraints. A number of suggestions are, therefore, in order in this context. Firstly, the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) should no longer be located in the Planning Ministry. In a free market economy, there is no need for a large Planning Commission and Planning Ministry. As I argued earlier, we should instead emphasize on strengthening the planning capability of the individual Ministries. Since in a parlia-

must oversee the implementation of all important public sector development projects and programmes of different Ministries, the IMED, as an effective tool of the chief executive, should be located in the PM's Office rather than in the Planning Ministry. This arrangement will also impart to it the required prestige, authority and self-confidence to get on with their work effectively. It will also no more be seen as a dumping ground for incompetents.

Nawaz Sharif being plastered

in the major newspapers day.

after day, keeping him in the

Secondly, we must put an end to the plethora of monitoring forms that have been imposed on different development agencies by different bosses. I have seen one organization supplying information to eleven different clients including the parent Ministry and donor agencies) in eleven different formats, each more elaborate than the other. And every time an MIS consultant reviews the existing situation, all that you get is either an extra form or more columns tor new information in the

existing form. In such a situa tion, the MIS becomes more costly in terms of time, manpower and money, the quality of information deteriorates and information gathering degenerates into a burdensome ritual. The time has, therefore, come to review the MIS of all development agencies in Bangladesh in order to stan dardize formats, emphasize

## by no means an easy task but Making Government Work

quality rather than quantity, identify key concerns and ar range for computerization of data at all levels so that these can be electronically transferred, retrieved and used, to the best advantage of all. In all these efforts, IMED will obviously have to take the lead, with the active involvement of evaluation and monitoring units of different development organizations. The IMED will have to sit

given the "will" and with patient and knowledge-based handling of the situation, the IMED can bring about the much required discipline in this filed without compromising the main objectives of

with them individually as well

as collectively in order to di-

agnose both organization spe-

cific as well as common

problems. Since the insistence

of donors is, to a great extent,

responsible for different MIS

in our development organiza-

tions, they will also have to

be brought to the negotiation

table during this exercise. It is

Thirdly, it is not foreign consultants but IMED which has to continuously improve evaluation techniques to suit our country's concrete condi-

tions. For example, in case of poverty alleviation projects, the usual drill is to go for detailed pre and post-project bench mark surveys and then to compare them. This is both time-consuming as well as costly. On the other hand, an alternative approach would be to concentrate on highly selective but clearly revealing indicators such as distress sale, usurious money-lending, wage rate, terms of share cropping, prices of most relevant consumer goods, etc. Similarly, for other types of projects also, cost effective "short cuts", without compromising the essential objectives of evaluation, will have to be innovated. However, to carry out such quick evaluations and yet to be able to get to the bottom of the truth, involvement of the beneficiaries and the common man will be a major prerequisite.

Fourthly, the IMED must ultimately emerge as the key trainer in monitoring and evaluation for development agencies in Bangladesh. However, at the present moment, its capacity for training others is rather limited. Before attempting to train others, it needs to train its own officers both at home and abroad. Obviously, greater emphasis should be placed on exhausting the in-country training capacity by tapping the expertise already available in various development agencies, training organizations and research institutes. Regarding relevant foreign training, study tour of successful development monitoring and evaluation models in developing countries such as Malaysia, India, Indonesia, etc. appear a better option than classroom lecture-based courses offered by foreign universities.

Finally, strict supervision of the work of monitoring and evaluation by senior officers is of crucial importance in maintaining high professional standards. Otherwise, these can easily degenerate into either rituals or a crutch for justifying half-truths. Strict supervision can be ensured only if IMED's top leadership is fiercely independent and of the highest professional calibre. The government should consider the option of lateral entry if the permanent civil service is unable to provide such personnel for the IMED.

the consequent period of non-

return by all the opposition

parties taking exception to a

remark of a ruling party

Minister be construed as

'absent' from Parliament

without leave of Parliament

# Full Text of the President's Letter to the Supreme Court

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mentary democracy, the PM

AND WHEREAS the first meeting of the Parliament took place on 5th April, 1991 and the duration of Parliament is 5 (five) years since that date as provided in Article 72 (3) of the Cons-

titution; AND WHEREAS Parliament comprised of members belonging to different political parties and elected as independent as noted below: **AWAMI LEAGUE** 

IATIYA PARTY IAMAAT-E-ISLAMI COMMUNIST PARTY **GANATANTRI PARTY** ISLAMI OIKYA JOTE JATIYA SAMAZTAN-TRIK DAL **WORKERS PARTY** NATIONALIST **DEMOCRATIC PARTY** NATIONAL AWAMI

PARTY (M)

INDEPENDENT AND WHEREAS in deference to the wishes of all sections of the people of the country BNP Government with the support and Co-operation of all other political parties represented in the Parliament, enacted the historic Twelfth Amendment Act, 1991 (Act XXVIII of 1991) on 18th September, 1991 thus switching over to the multi-party parliamentary system, thereby effecting significant changes which for obvious reasons necessiated wide ranging consequential amendments of the Consti-

AND WHEREAS these amendments to the Constitution required, as provided in the Constitution, reference

to be made to a referendum and accordingly the Acting President referred it to referendum and the voters enthusiastically participated in the referendum in large number and voted in favour of the amendments, thereby supporting the amendments passed by the parliament and thus giving the Constitution its present shape;

AND WHEREAS from a reading of the Constitution, it appears that the basic concept as to the governance of the country is by the elected representatives of the people and transfer or power by one elected government to the next elected government has been clearly enshrined in the Constitution;

AND WHEREAS on 1st March, 1994 while there was a discussion in Parliament on call attention notice on the killings in Hebron, there was uproar over a part of the statement made by the then Information Minister and the Deputy Leader of the House requested the Deputy Speaker to expunge the relevant part of the statement from the proceedings of the House and the Information Minister himself expressed his regret and also sought expunction of the statement, yet Leader of the opposition along with all members of the opposition except Mr. Suranjit Sen Gupta staged a Walkout. The Deputy Speaker announced expunction of the statement to which opposition parties had taken exception but the opposition members did not return to the House. They also did not join the House on

the following day and de-

manded that unless the Information Minister had tendered unconditional apology they would not return to

Parliament:

AND WHEREAS the opposition members while so acting, by-election to Magura constituency was held and the opposition parties made certain allegations to the Election Commission and the Election Commission after causing enquiry and having found the allegations not true declared the final result whereupon the opposition parties declared that unless fresh election was held in Magura by cancelling the result declared by the Election Commission, they would not return to Parliament;

AND WHEREAS negotiation between the parties were being held for resolving the problem, the opposition parties added yet a new demand, namely the ruling party must introduce a Bill in Parliament amending the constitution to provide for holding at least three future parliamentary elections under caretaker government; AND WHEREAS to com-

pel the ruling party to concede to their aforesaid demand they started boycotting sessions of Parliament;

AND WHEREAS the ruling party took the stand that it is against the very concept of democracy that minority members by resorting to boycott of the sessions should try to impose its decision upon the majority members and if such undemocratic demand was accepted it would destroy the basic structure of democracy and governance of the

country would never be possible through democratic process which is the expressed. will of the people as stipulated

in the Constitution; , AND WHEREAS the opposition parties continued boycott of the sessions of Parliament;

AND WHEREAS all nego-

tiations to arrive at a settle-

ment within the framework of constitutional provisions did not yield any fruitful result; AND WHEREAS on 28.12.94 leaders of the three opposition parties, namely, Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamat-e-Islami handed

over three files purportedly containing resignation letters of members belonging to their parties to the Speaker, AND WHEREAS the Speaker after examining these

resignation letters found that all these were on the identical ground, namely, the failure of the ruling party to introduce a bill to the Parliament for amending the Constitution to provide for holding general elections to Parliament under a neutral, non partisan government comprising nominated persons;

AND WHEREAS on 23rd February, 1995 the Speaker informed the House that in his view en masse resignations on such ground is not contemplated by Article 67 (2) of the Constitution as according to him the Constitution cannot contain any provision which will enable a member or members to frustrate the working of the Parliament and further that all the provisions of the Constitution require working in a manner to

achieve the objects following

the principles of democracy as

setforth in the Constitution; AND WHEREAS the members of the Opposition parties continued to boycott all the Sessions of the Parliament as noted below with number of

sittings in each session: Session Commencement of sitting date 5th February 1994 13th 4th May 1994 6th June 1994 15th 30th August 1994 12th November 1994 17th 23rd January 1995 24th April 1995 19th 15th June 1995

Number of Date of boycott days Prorogation 7th March 1994 15th May 1994 11th July 1994 14th Sept. 1994 8th December 1994 23rd February 1995

27th April 1995

3rd July 1995

AND WHEREAS as a result of the said boycott question has arisen whether this boycott is 'absent' from Parliament and what should be the basis of computing ninety consecutive sitting days occurring in Article 67

AND WHEREAS in view of what is stated hereinbefore it appears to me that the following question of law has arisen and are of such nature and of such public importance that it is expedient that the opinion of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh should be obtained thereon;

NOW, THEREFORE, per suant to the powers conferred on me by Article 106 of the Constitution, I, Abdur Rahman Biswas, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh hereby refer the said questions to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh to report its opinion thereon, namely

"(1) Can the Walkout and

occurring in Article 67 11 (b) of the Constitution resulting in vacation of their seats in Parliament?

"(2) Does boycott of the Parliament by all members of the opposition parties mean absent' from the Parliament without leave of Parliament within the meaning of Article 67 (1) (b) of the Constitution resulting in vacation of their seats in Parliament?

"(3) Whether ninety consecutive sitting days be computed excluding or including the period between two sessions intervened by proroga tion of the Parliament within the meaning of article 67 [1] (b) read with the defination of Sessions' and 'sittings de fined under Article 152 [1] of the Constitution

"(4) Whether the Speaker or Parliament will compute and determine the period of absence?

President Bangladesh

People's Republic of