The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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It's People's Will

A human chain formed on Friday by citizens of all walks of life and age groups, excepting politicians and their partisan supporters, seeking an immediate solution to the country's political impasse, has been quite unprecedented. The nine-km long human chain gave a fair reflection of the sentiments of a large number of people, but those who joined hands were only a symbolic fraction of people feeling the same way over the long-running political crisis. Given the opportunity, millions and millions of them would have expressed their solidarity with this kind of a demonstration of popular will.

For the politicians of all shades and hues this is a very potent message to absorb. Politicians who seem to take immense satisfaction in holding the key to common people's fate may still choose to take note of such a genuine expression of public feelings about what must be done to step out of the woods. The human chains were by no means a publicity hype. It is time they empathise with the public sentiments and recognise the endless sufferings the stalemate has subjected the people to, and the economic loss the country has had to sustain already. There is an all-round dislocation leading to the spiralling of prices, a distortion of work ethics and a setback to educational pursuits.

People can no longer be blamed if they start viewing politics as something that has let people down. Politicians will do better if they come to regard the people's exasperation both as a remonstration against and a sort of noconfidence in politics and politicians as such. People's anguish over political naivety is just surfacing. Let the impasse be ended here and now. It has already tested people's patience. It is time the politicians gave up the rhetoric and realised that any serious mis-step could be the last straw in the camel's back. A further deterioration in the situation could push it beyond control. For nobody knows who will read what into the various political gambits and take advantage therefrom.

Dilara's Turn

This time it is 18-year-old Dilara, of Dighal-bagh village in Sheola union under the Beanibazar thana of Sylhet district, who got beaten blue with 101 lashes on Wednesday. Giving this dreadful news, a vernacular daily adds that she is now struggling for her life at the thana health complex. Thanks to a so-called verdict by a 3-member Salish board (informal local 'conciliation' body) on Dilara's refusal to marry somebody from an adjacent union, she is a potential martyr on the death row at the moment.

The Salish committee is said to have warned her father Tajub Ali against reporting the incident to the police. What an insult to the injury! There is another insufferable one: Dilara's uncle VDP commander Tahir Ali was the one whose services were requisitioned to beat her up.

Undeterred by the surge of global and national concerns for the defence of the rights of girl children in particular and those of women in general this mediaeval variety of rural salishi has manifested itself again. A traditional mechanism for conciliation between parties to a conflict arising out of small causes, salish the word literally meaning compromise — has degenerated into full-scale tyranny against women. It has had the blemish of delivering ex-parte decisions under the influence of local vested groups in matters land-based or economic, but that this one-sidedness is turning against girls or women with an increasing ferocity is what we regard as the most abominable anti-clock-wise development in the country.

This basically represents an administrative failure. None other than a union parishad member was on the Salish board. Could he not, as a member of the local self-government body, really act as one? Was not there any police outpost around? The police should establish sensitive contact points with the remote villages to ward off such obnoxious salishi. They need keeping in touch with the women's rights groups to do something about all this. Acting on newspaper reports is far from preemptive and hardly does them proud professionally.

Bravo Sri Lanka

What a brew Sri Lanka has prepared for herself and the rest of the cricketing world for the forthcoming World Cup by outclassing the dour, defending champions West Indies at the Singer three-nation trophy in Sharjah on Fri-

As a trail-blazer to this huge success, Sri Lanka mauled Pakistan's cricketing pride not just in Sharjah where the latter has been a consistently hot favourite with the largely expatriate people but in Pakistan's home ground as well. The Islanders made history by defeating her both in the tests and one day series. And, only in April, had they won a series against New Zealand to make it all dawn upon cricket-lovers that here indeed is a new giant on a seemingly endless winning streak.

It is a treat of rare joy for us for quite a few reasons: (a) the winning side is a subcontinental neighbour, a SAARC fellow-member with whom we have had the nicest of relations; (b) Bangladesh, only recently baptised in world cricket, can take a cue or two from the Sri Lankan success as babe-of-the-other-day in international cricket; and (c) what can be a greater morale booster for that country overshot with ethnic conflicts than the cricketing limelight, she has sprinted to

Perhaps historian Arnold Toynbee's challenge-and-response theory has proved itself among the Sri Lankans. Our hearty congratulations to them.

BOI: What it Should Be

BOI's responsibility should not be confined to promotion of foreign investment. If domestic investment is shy — why foreign investment would dare to enter the territory? . . . Therefore, BOI must first of all concentrate in the rapid promotion of domestic investment.

rooming multistoried buildings in many parts of Dhaka

N Thailand, the annual

inflow of several billion

dollars of foreign inves-

tments has been sustained

for the last two decades

Such huge investments have

been largely responsible for

rapid economic growth of the

country and in that process,

the Board of Investment

(BOI) of Thailand played a

key role in not only

facilitating the massive rush

of investible capital, but also

determined the important

programmes and priorities

behind the country's remar-

kable economic performance

Investment (BOI) has been

modelled after Thailand But

it all stops there. Air condi-

tioned office facilities have

dreds of files move around

the tables each day. The of-

fice work goes on at a brisk

pace but it does not mean

that investment would auto-

matically go up. In fact, it

may dive downward due to

additional interference by a

I think that the main con-

straint behind the lack lustre

performance of BOI is the

conspicuous absence of any

clear cut directive about what

it should do as opposed to

other agencies working in

the same general area of in-

vestment promotion. How-

ever, it is difficult, if not im-

possible, to put everything in

black and white. The institu-

tional role of BOI needs to be

build up through the process

of its own work whose quality

and intensity would automat-

ically bestow upon it, the im-

portance it deserves. First

deserve and then desire;

therefore the organization

must earn its own credibility

through solid achievements.

It seems that the Board has

still remained very close to

its infant status. No doubt, it

is still a new organization but

time is short — it should

strive to grow up almost

overnight like the mush-

O many things are

new entity called BOI.

been established, and hun-

The Bangladesh Board of

The question still remains - what BOI should do? There are still a great deal of confusion in the minds of concerned bureaucrats; while others have firmed up in their minds a limited view of the functions and responsibilities of the new organization. The limited view approach might create more problems for BOI since a query to the Law or Finance Ministry may effectively kill prospects of many investment proposals through sheer delay Decision delayed is decision denied. was told that the concept has

vanished these days from

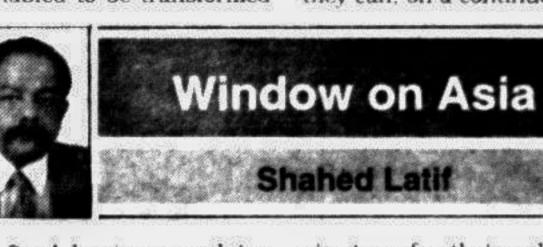
within the Bangladesh secre-

However, I am strongly of the opinion that like Thailand, BOI in Bangladesh can play perhaps the most decisive role in not only acceler ating investment, both domestic and foreign, but also in sustaining a high rate of economic growth for the country. Personally, I hold this optimistic view since I myself had completed the MILKVITA Cooperative Dairy Complex Project in record time under most difficult circumstances between 1973 and 1976. The preconditions for investment development are thousand times better now than in those days of turmoil and crisis. It can therefore be done. But we must first determine what BOI should do.

First, BOI's responsibility should not be confined to promotion of foreign investment. If domestic investment is shy — why foreign investment would dare to enter the territory? It just cannot be the case. Although it is true

that domestic savings rate in Thailand is still very low compared to the huge volume of foreign investment, the situation is not comparable with Bangladesh since foreign investment from private sector only would never out perform domestic investment. Thailand is a special case in this respect. Therefore. BOI must first of all concentrate in the rapid promotion of domestic investment. Thousands of crores of Taka laying as fixed deposits in the banks should be enabled to be transformed

ganic materials to improve soil fertility is also an invest ment and BOI promotional privileges are well deserved by private hospital and school companies. But no body talks about them. Investment of importance is not confined to the EPZ for the purpose of labour-intensive manufacturing only. The service sector has so far remained neglected where, for example, financial management firms could be assisted to provide accounting services to small firms. In the United States they can, on a continuous ba-



into fixed business and investment assets. It is useless to organize lavish meetings at five star hotels where the dinners will be well eaten no doubt, but there will be very little solid accomplishment in terms of enhanced capital flow. Let us build up domestic investment first through trust and confidence in BOL. Foreign investment would then follow, even without any lavish meeting.

Second, BOI should be concerned with Investment in general. There is a prevailing misconception that BOI should confine itself to manufacturing investment. In the agriculture sector, domestic investment, even in bits and pieces, can be of significant importance. There is a growing demand for quality health care and educational services where private commercial initiatives are also welcome. The addition of or-

sis, transfer their sales and expense data through the electronic mailing system. Thus an exportable service industry can be developed generating substantial employment and revenue. BOI should, in particular, seek and promote investment in the seed industry, poultry fishery and forest plantation. Export manufacturing is faced with stiff competition; while demand for agricultural commodities within the country is fairly large and there are extensive unmet demands

Third, Foreign investment should not be counted in terms of its dollar size only. At present, plenty of domestic capital can be mobilized for investment. Very large volumes of funds are lying idle in the banks. There is an excess of liquidity and banks are often forced to refuse funds as fixed deposits.

There is an urgent need for the right technology and management practices which combined with locally available funds, can really do wonders in terms of investment for economic growth. Therefore foreign joint venture partners bringing in very little capital but valuable technology and management capacity should be encouraged. It should fulfil the criteria of what BOI should do.

Fourth, as soon as possi-

ble. BOI should initiate the

setting up of a Factory Development Company, preferably in the private sector. There are several real estate companies engaged in the construction and sale of apartment buildings without any furnitures but with all the utilities intact. In the same way, it should be possible to build factory buildings along with electricity, water etc., available for sale or long term lease where the purchasing entrepreneurs will install machineries and equipment and be in business within a very short time. Whatever is possible in case of residential housing, should also be feasible in case of housing for factories as well as service enterprises. The Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand performs the functions similar to our EPZ authority, and the Factory Development Companies (several of them now exist in Thailand) along with the BOI playing the lead role, very well sustain the double-digit industrial

Fifth, in a poor country like Bangladesh, it may not be possible for one entrepreneur to mobilize the entire equity amount; while too much of borrowing might not contribute towards the financial viability of the en-

trepreneur is capable of providing for the entire equity out of his own resources, he may not be willing to put all his eggs in the same basket. Therefore, several businessmen should join hands and develop a particular enterprise. Unfortunately, there are not enough trust and cooperation. The corporate cuiture has only made a small beginning in the country. The BOI should be active in getting together businessmen and entrepreneurs; and through discussions, mediation and all other necessary support services, vigorously pursue the uphill task of building up the corporate sector in general and productive joint enterprises in particular.

terprise. Even if the en-

Sixth, it is not only the private businessman or individual with money but financial institutions, like banks and insurance companies. should also play the role of an investor. In fact, at the present stage of our industrialization, institutional investors are in a position to play a very useful pioneering role in seeking new or yet unexplored investment fields. BOI should immediately engage itself in the task of promoting institutional investment - first from within the country and then outside.

Lastly, financial engineering have now emerged as a specialized field of operation in order to secure required volumes of corporate investment. Our financial world is currently confined to Motitheel Commercial Area. Obviously, it is not enough and BOI can promote vital linkages between the nascent corporate sector of Motijheel and the expanding financial world outside, in particular. New forms of financing arrangements can be established in the country through initiatives from BOI.

Let the Politicians Make the People Suffer No More

by Mahfuzul H Chowdhury

It would be better for the opposition to separate their target the BNP and the government from the rest of the society and then try to pressurise them by applying all the tactics of hartals, gheraos, non-cooperation or whatever other alternatives they may consider feasible.

said, proposed and written on the issue of caretaker government and the role of the opposition and the ruling parties and their leaders in the current political crisis that one may feel annoyed to read something more on the subject. Yet as a powerless, law abiding and innocent citizen of this graceful country, I have dared to choose this safe space to share some of my humble views with anyone who has time to read this piece. I suppose this is about time for our politicians to think about their objectives. targets and proper strategies in their field of work: politics. Let us try to be specific here by directly picking up the issue of caretaker government. It is obvious that the three major opposition parties: the Awami League (AL), the Jatiya Party (JP). and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) want fair national elections which they believe can't happen under a government led by a political party which is the BNP.

The objective of the major opposition parties is to ensure fair national polls. They can't trust a partisan government to do this job. That is they believe that under a party government the polls are bound to be unfair, and biased. Therefore, it has to be under a non-partisan caretaker government for the sake of neutrality and fairness. To achieve this goal they proposed that the ruling party should bring legislation

in this regard and allow the caretaker government to conduct the national polls. But the ruling party rejected the proposal. So the opposition parties adopted various strategies to achieve their goal. Let us systematically review the strategies.

It is important for anyone in determining strategies of doing something to consider some factors such as: the objective to be made clear, the target to be identified and specified, the available alternatives to be examined properly and the best one has to be adopted. In this case, the opposition parties have made their objective clear that is to have caretaker government to conduct national polls. But their problem is that the ruling party is not willing to do this (we don't discuss here the views of the ruling party). Now what strategy the opposition parties have to adopt to make the ruling party accept their demand? Let us consider them.

The strategies so far adopted and considered by the AL, JP, and JI are: to raise the issue in the Parliament and find out a way to establish the caretaker government for the purpose

through legislation. They tried the strategy but failed (here again we intentionally refrain from discussing the causes). As a consequence to this they boycotted the Parliament and finally resigned en masse from it.

Another strategy the opposition parties have considered and adopted is agitation programmes to force the government or the ruling party to comply with their demand. We would like to focus on this strategy of the opposition parties. As it has been mentioned above the target of the opposition parties is the ruling party. But they (the opposition parties) need to do few things before launching their strategy to force the position to say 'yes' to their demand. The opposition should differentiate their target: I) the BNP from the people and the government, II) the private sector from the public sector, and III) the public interest from the BNP interest or the government's partisan interests. The strategy of hartal and agitation programme is applied repeatedly by the opposition parties recently on the issue of caretaker government. Thus we should consider this

one and will try to find out other alternatives available to them but not tried.

The clear target of the opposition parties is the BNP and its government (let us loosely use the term government here to mean the BNP people who have formed the government). Now to force them to do something, why should the opposition parties put the common people in trouble who do not belong either to the BNP or to the government? To make the government non-functional why a private physician who may responding to a call of a dying patient by a rickshaw, in the absence of an ambulance, to be intercepted by the picketers? Why a rickshawpuller whose rickshaw is not owned by either the government or by the BNP cannot be operated on the streets? Why a powerless, innocent citizen (for whose interest our leaders are ready to sacrificing their immortal lives) who needs to go to his non-governmental or private workplace be stopped from doing the same? Why a law abiding mother of an infant (created by Allah the Almighty as ever powerless) not to be allowed to pick up

some essentials for her kid/s? Why an ever poor Salimuddi should not be allowed to take his perishable fishes to a distant bazaar by a rickshaw in exchange of which he could buy some food for himself, and for his ailing mother, some medicine, the business which has nothing to do with the BNP or the government? Well, I don't want to raise more questions here rather let us try to justify these actions. Let us for argument's sake say that if little sacrifices are accepted by the poor innocent citizens great good goods are awaiting for them in the future to come. These little sacrifices will bring the government down and the BNP ever unpopular. May I ask with due modesty: is there any reason to believe that these sacrifices are going to make the government down? It is true that despite these hartals the BNP is ruling the country for so many months.

It would be better for the opposition to separate their target the BNP and the government from the rest of the society and then try to pressurise them by applying all the tactics of hartals, gheraos, non-cooperation or

whatever other alternatives they may consider feasible. But instead of doing this the opposition parties have mixed up the BNP and its government with the whole society and by doing that they have wrongly made the whole society their target. It is, therefore, a strategy of selfdefeating purpose. While they (the opposition parties) claim that their demand is people's demand they have made the people victim of their action, i.e., hartal.

Let us now consider other

options which the opposition parties may consider. The opposition could have stayed in the Parliament and could use the floor to focus on the alleged misdeeds of the government, could talk about the significance of a caretaker government and could speak about all other issues need to be discussed for public interest, for example, law and order situation, corruption, industrialisation, foreign assistance, economic liberalisation, bureaucratisation and police misconduct. They could organise seminars, mass demonstrations, processions, public gatherings, intellectual debates, and could publish their policies in the newspapers. Still they could talk about the caretaker government issue, and if not accepted, they could simply boycott the election and without their participation the elections would become a farce. Such strategy could save the people from the sufferings and the nation from economic deterioration.

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.

Bangla dubbed English movies

Sir, I am a Malaysian studying at one of the high

Referring to the letter written in The Daily Star by Dr S M Ashraf on October 11/10/95 captioned "BTV: Bangla dubbed English serial," I would like to clarify some mistakes about some facts in it.

In the article it was written that in some countries like Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Spain, Germany etc. nowadays a trend has been set to dub English series into their native language.

Frankly, I do not have much idea about countries other than my own regarding dubbing of English series. In Malaysia, English serial movies, weekly movies or special English movies are

never dubbed into Malay language but they are only subtitled retaining the original sound track. The only serials that are dubbed are series like Brazilian or Argentine movies and sometimes Japanese and Arabic movies and often these are also not dubbed but subtitled because there is an increase in number of people who can understand those languages thus subtitle is preferred. Those who are learning Japanese and Arabic can learn and practice the respective languages while enjoying the movies at the same time. To prove it, any one may turn on the Malaysian channel through Indonesian Palapa satellite by using one's satellite disk. As far as I know even In-

As far as I know even Indonesia retain the original sound track of English series. For Singapore, I do

not think that dubbing is necessary for this near English speaking country. These also can be checked through respective channels

It may be true for Thailand because there are so many of their viewers who do not understand English and furthermore they are not interested to learn English. About Spain and Germany, I do not have any idea about it. Rashed Yacoob

FEMA election monitoring

Sir, I have learnt about the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) from a friend who participated in a recent FEMA Training Seminar on election monitoring and also has seen some of their materials.

Amidst prevailing political crisis, mainly due to mutual mistrust among the political parties, the independent, non-partisan election observers can play a positive role in promoting free and fair election in the country.

fair election in the country.

Hundreds and thousands
of well trained citizens volun-

teering as poll observers, if can be mobilised during the elections, will not only deter frauds and cheating in the elections, but also instill public confidence in the electoral system, which has started to erode after the Magura by elections. Even the Election Commission has become controversial in the

I request all to join FEMA

— the initiative taken by conscious citizen groups and
stand against vote dacoity,
frauds, and manipulations
during the next general elections. We can be vigilant and
guard our own ballots.

Azizur Rahman Dhaka

Aman crop

Sir, Recent devastating floods have damaged Aman crop irreparably. Since time immemorial this has been the major crop of the country. Hence a serious disaster in the food front is apprehended. When the flood waters recede, sufficient seedling may not be available for transplantation in the northern region. To overcome this problem at least

partially it is suggested that seedling should be grown right now in other districts uneffected by floods under the patronage of the agriculture department with government subsidy.

When floods waters recede and the fields become ready for transplantation after tilling of the soil, these seedlings should be supplied to the farmers expeditiously to make up for the loss at least partially. This will reduce the rigour of the floods to a certain extent. Otherwise we can't afford to import unlimited quantities of food grains with the limited resources at our disposal. I therefore appeal to the cabinet to give a serious thought to the matter to prevent any catastrophy.

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury Dhaka Cantonment

BIRDEM branches

Sir, BIRDEM is perhaps the best privately managed hospital in Bangladesh. It provides efficient service at a reasonable cost. In sharp contrast with Dhaka Medical College or P G hospital, the hospital is neat and clean. A

patients for free treatment. Although the hospital has been expanded vertically recently and number of beds has increased still it is difficult to find a seat in the hospital readily. Outdoor of the hospital is not merely over crowded, it has become rather unmanageable. Hence it is left that two more BIR-DEM hospitals should be set up in the Metropolis to cope up with the growing need. One probable site may be in Mirpur or Mohammadpur area and another in Gulshan or Banani area. However the health experts will have the final word on the subject. So far financing is concerned, there should not be any dearth of financiers for such noble projects. Local and foreign financiers are likely to respond well if serious and sincere efforts are made by he Health Ministry.

certain percentage of seats

are also reserved for poor

spoon feeding. May we expect the Health Ministry to take initiative in a field which will be highly fruitful and productive.

There will be no need for

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury Dhaka Cantonment