The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Tuesday, November 7, 1995

The Death will Strengthen Peace

All the world watched for years Rabin pursue peace in Middle East with the single mindedness of someone possessed — and came to admire him. By this he was indeed securing Israel's situation and continued rooting and prosperity in the Levant for which act Israelites and the Jewry round the world would ever remain grateful to him. And out of that society came his assassination. A parallel with the Gandhi assassination comes irresistibly to mind. Rabin fell soon after he had talked of peace to a brimming rally and came down singing with the crowd the song of peace. And we lost the statesman and politician and got instead an indelible name on the list of worthy martyrs of the world.

Although Dr Kissinger has said that in the Israeli leadership tandem Rabin was the strategist and Shimon epitomised wisdom, we believe Perez, who has been accepted by the ruling Likud Party as the Acting Prime Minister. will carry on with Rabin's politics of peace ably. With President Clinton we can say that this striving is our legacy from him and that a lasting peace in the Middle East would be a lasting monument to his memory.

There can be, as there are indeed, differing perceptions of what Rafat and Arafat have been forging, Islamic Jehad and Hamas or Hizbullah are names of those differing with the Arafat deal. All west call these men terrorists. Some members of these groups have only confirmed that appellation by saying they were not unhappy over the crime. Terrorists will be terrorists and never deliver any good to the cause they say they fight for.

Yitzhak Rabin was a very strong man, soft and shy. He was loved by all who came to know him from close. We join in his worldwide mourning. No assassination can be justified by even god-talk, let alone political expediency. Let the world be healed of such aberration. Defeat terrorism by strengthening the peace effort.

Agri Programme **Backfires**

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, known for his outspoken comments, has this time targeted agriculture sector's reform for criticism. He often takes such a liberty in making unpalatable comments on his own government's policies and failures. Selfcriticism apart, it gives the impression of playing to the gallery at times. But if he utters the truth with no malice, it also conveys a sense of urgency to chart the right course. Nothing explains better than the privatisation of irrigation by the government that the move has made a mockery of itself.

Why? First, investment in the sector has been few and far between. Lacking in competition the irrigation facilities have become highly costly. Second, a sharp drop in soil fertility in large parts of the country has accounted for the stagnation of agricultural output. There is a prospect of a production decline. However, this is not because the soil is losing its nutrients automatically. On the one hand, five to 10 per cent of our farmers use high yielding varieties of paddy seeds, and most of the small farmers can hardly afford costly inputs. On the other hand, overuse of chemical fertilizers and insecticides causes serious damage to agricultural land.

The overall picture is highly chaotic. All because, there is no agricultural policy as such based on the realities existing at the field level. The finance minister has lamented the inability of the poor farmers to have access to modern farming technology and inputs. While that poses to be a hindrance to the country's agricultural development, the lack of a sound agricultural policy accounts for the sector's poor performance. An excessive stress on production of paddy, for example, has given rise to serious anomalies in the sector. This has turned farming rather uneconomic, which may prove to be the last nail in the coffin of agriculture. Subsidies in agriculture is almost a world-wide practice. We alone cannot refuse

Pure Water for Dhaka

It is not at all surprising that the water supplied by the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) contains high proportion of harmful bacteria. What is rather surprising is that the samples taken from different areas of the city mostly contain fecal coliform — excreta-borne bacteria — at an alarming proportion. Tests carried out at the ICDDR,B, confirm as many as 1,000 such coliform, the highest, in a mililitre of water.

No explanation is needed to make one understand the causes of various stomach ailments, including diarrhoea, jaundice and typhoid in the post-monsoon Dhaka. A large portion of the city's inhabitants still do not use sanitary or water-sealed latrines. As the low lands around the city get flooded and water becomes contaminated with bacteria, there is no fail-safe method to stop that water from entering the WASA's supplying system.

Now to check the contamination process, measures are warranted at two points: a) to ensure that excreta does not get mixed with waterbodies or is left in the open; b) the faulty supplying pipes of the WASA are to be replaced. Both the tasks are costly, but for the sake of people's health these problems should be taken care of as urgently as possible.

Can Clinton Click a Comeback?

By and large, Bill Clinton has been making serious strides to stage a comeback to popularity that he seems to have lost over the years.

government would face both fine and foul weather during his/her tenure in that President Bill Clinton is heading for healing some pooffice. The President of America, Mr Bill Clinton may litical wounds inflicted on not be an exception to the him and on his party. So far the opponents and the obsergeneral norm concerning the vations are borne out by the political calculus of his society. Since the assumption recent opinion polls. The most important and producof power in 1992, he had been facing various challentive life-jacket appears tohave been provided by the ges both from in and outside Republican-baked balanced the country. The most budget proposal that will serious blow that he witnessed so far is, perhaps, make a huge cut on Medicare the debacle of his Democratic bills and tax payments. Needparty in the Congress. The less to mention, the Medicare proposal would addebacle robbed Democrats 50 versely effect the poor and years of supremacy in the the senior citizens of Amer-Congress. Republicans are ica. The tax cut proposal is new dominating it and with pro-rich and would make the this power with them, have already been embarking on tycoons eulogised. It is quite natural that Bill Clinton premaking Clinton's presidential pares to whip his opponents life difficult. All the bills with their own stick in the seem to tune Republican name of the poor and the song with the Democrats as seniors who are making up a audience — a situation that sizeable number of voters in would upset any president of America. There is no doubt. any country, perhaps. With a perhaps, that the Republiseries of attacks from the opponents, the popularity of cans have "economics" in Clinton and his party have their budget proposals but waned a couple of months Clinton seems to use polemics" to win over the ago. Then, none counted him for the second term. A hearts of the voters. And hapless Clinton seemed to since among the developed dragging on helplessly. In the countries income disparity in America is most skewed. mean time, as time passed. the rejoiced Republicans there is bright chance that "polemics" might defeat were awaiting a step into the "economics." The Republi-White House in which they cans, of course, are fighting lost control in 1992. The most recent happentooth and nail to convey to

proposals are not accepted the whole Social Security and Medicare system in America might go broke within next few years.

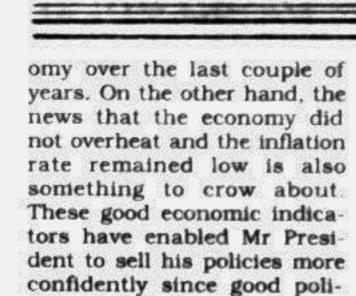
Clinton has also some good economic indicators to present to his nation. It is reported that the American economy of \$7 trillion, during the last quarter, witnessed a growth rate of 4.2 per cent. This growth is a big hike considering the performance of the American econ-

want to be again in the White House. The recipe owes, according to the celebrated TIME magazine, to a famous political scientist. Seymour Martin Lipset, who touted this formula back in the early 1980s. Mr Lipset suggested that to predict the electoral outcomes, one needs to add up the rates relating to unemployment and inflation. He daubed it as a "misery index". According to him, if

this index falls below 10, one

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes



in America (or for that matter anywhere) is very simple. Keep both unemployment and inflation levels low if you

cies result in robust eco-

nomic growth.

could hope for the incumbent and if it exceeds 10, the incumbent's place might not be in the White House. According to the TIME magazine. the misery index is just above eight these days, "the lowest in a quarter-century theoretically signifying a Nirvana-like America." The TIME also warned about the dark side of the tunnel: "For a couple of It is stated that the recipe decades now, economic for a presidential re-election growth has made the rich richer but has not been tricking down much to the rank

and file and hence, the two

trends Clinton has long fret-

ted over; stagnant middle income wages and rising income inequality." This is obviously a bad news for America but could be a good news for the Republicans in the next election campaign, so states the TIME.

To regain the lost political foothold, the American president is off to playing another card — the card for peace in Bosnia. His administration is suggesting to send 20,000 American troops to Bosnia in relation to the peacekeeping venture. The Congress does not seem to have any apetitite, as one analyst remarked, to swallow the decision of the Clinton administration but at the same time, does not have the stomach to stand on its way either. Already the contending parties (the Serbs. the Muslims and the Croats) are here to eke out a peace plan under the aegis of the US. Notwithstanding the utility of such peace efforts, criticisms seem to mount against sending troops in the backdrop of debacles in Somalia and Lebanon. Some analysts tend to argue that this could be largest and the riskiest military adventure that any American president could ever dare to make. But who knows, the hefty risk might breed lofty dividends for Mr Clinton.

By and large, Bill Clinton

to have lost over the years. Besides the fact that an incumbent always stands with some edge in the presidential election, the current episodes (excepting the risky element of peacel concerning socio-economic parameters in this country appear to favour Bill Clinton. His admirers are arguing that their president make little mistakes these days but he could also be misplaced again if mistakes are allowed to creep in. Meanwhile, the Republicans are not sitting idle. Their campaign for the balanced budget bill is putting heavy pressures on the president to love the bill or leave the bill. If he loves it, it would mean going by the Republican way but if he leaves it, which would mean bearing the burden of bankruptcy in welfare schemes. The 'solution, perhaps, lies in the middle: cut taxes but not so much and cut Medicare but not by that amount. The politicians of America might not be intrinsically better than those in countries like ours where politicians say things publicly quite different from what they chalk-out privately between them. Voters everywhere are made fools by the politicians. The columnist, presently,

has been making serious

strides to stage a comeback

to popularity that he seems

is in USA. He sent this writeup from Baltimore.

Pakistan Angry over 'Forgotten' Refugees returning from Pakistan.

Fresh attacks on Kabul by the talibaan militia have further shaken Afghanistan's stability and

will hamper efforts to encourage people who fled earlier troubles to return home. Gemini

Tariq Butt writes from Islamabad

AKISTAN has accused the world community of turning its back on a massive refugee crisis — a hangover from the 1980s conflict in Afghanistan.

ings, however, seem to show

T is quite natural that a

head of state or of a

Nearly 1.5 million Afghans remain in Pakistan, and Islamabad says it has been left to cope with the problem while international donors have shifted their attention to troubles in other parts of the world.

The complaint mirrors Islamabad's grievance that the West, particularly the United States, offered support for Pakistan while it was helping to fight the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul, but that Washington's interest ended with Moscow's withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has slashed assistance to \$4.7 million for the coming year - only a tenth of the aid provided before a repatriation programme began in 1990-91 after the Red Army pulled out of Afghanistan.

The UN says its resources

refugees. are stretched. A Pakistani delegation failed to win any promise of new assistance from the annual meeting of

mittee in Geneva in mid-October. A few weeks earlier, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) axed a general feeding programme for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. WFP has now started implementing a safety-net programme to cover only vulnerable groups

such as orphans, the sick and

the old.

the UNHCR's executive com-

the Americans that if their

The recent upsurge in fighting in Kabul, meanwhile, between forces loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani and the talibaan militia — the so-called army of religious students - will further discourage Afghans from return-

ing home. The war-ravaged country lacks stability and central authority, with some areas strewn with land mines and others under the control of rival groups.

"We want to return to our homeland without delay," says Rustum Shah, who hails from Kabul but who is currently living in Islamabad. "We want to build homes and start businesses there, but how can we go back unless there is peace and we can return in safety and dignity?"

More than six million refugees poured into Iran and Pakistan during the troubles sparked by the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Since the withdrawal of the Red Army, many refugees have gone home with the help of international

aid. But a considerable number have not returned. In Pakistan, many still live in tents in Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province, bordering Afghanistan.

Others have taken up residence in towns and cities. and have started small businesses. Thousands live in Islamabad.

"Despite the drying up of international assistance, we will not throw these refugees out," says a senior Pakistani official. We will try to persuade them to go home."

Many refugees, however, have become so assimilated into Pakistani society that they are unlikely to want to return to Afghanistan under

any circumstances. When international assistance was pouring in. Pak-

News Service reports on Pakistan's concern over the drying up of international aid for istan opened schools, hospitals, and other facilities. A special refugees' commission

> ing next year. "The refugees will not go back to Afghanistan while their country is still gripped by civil war," says Malik Abdul Qayyum, Minister for States and Frontier regions. "The international community

must bear this in mind and

review its decision to deprive

was set up to coordinate ef-

forts. But with funds drying

up, this is to cease function-

them of its assistance. "We want an early repatriation of the refugees, but we cannot forcibly push them into war zones.

In early October, the UN launched a \$130 million appeal in Geneva for emergency humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance for Afghanistan for 1995-96. UNHCR wants to provide a cash grant of about \$100,300 kilograms of WFP wheat and one plastic sheet for each family

Officials hope to entice home up to 250,000 refugees from Pakistan next year. But the appeal plan does

not include any extra assistance for the Afghan refugees who stay on in Pakistan. Said a senior UN official

Peter Hansen, who visited Pakistan and Afghanistan in early October: "The UN can give a package for repatriation of refugees, but it cannot sustain the feeding programme (in Pakistan). "All UN assistance has not

been stopped, but is being targeted as certain projects, added Hansen, UN Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

When the Soviets finally left Afghanistan, the country was gripped by civil war, and since then the interest of the international community had waned as other crises such as Yugoslavia and Rwanda have happened. It is not easy to mobilise international resources for Afghanistan as there are at present some 23 serious conflict areas in the world."

TARIQ BUTT is on the staff of 'The News,' Islam-

Sir, Adding to the Mohammadpur Resident's letter in The Daily Star of 26.10.95 on the above matter, another

instance is as follows: Sometime ago a number of gates (17 or 18) were constructed to restrict entry/exit to and from the Lalmatia area. It was understood that the Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) commissioner of the area has been very active in getting the necessary fund from the DCC. Under his guidance and supervision the nice gates were completed with guardrooms for the convenience of the guards. The properly dressed guards have been stationed at the gates for days and nights security and prevention of hijacking, mugging, theft etc. in the Lalmatia area. So far so good, and the residents thought that the DCC has become very active and it has taken up the function of providing security along with lightening and conservancy services.

Recently, the guards are visiting houses to collect their service fees at the rate of fifty taka per month per family and they are ready to give receipts for the money. On enquiry about their employers it was revealed that the commissioner's brother has floated a company in the name of 'model security services' at ward 45 and has appointed the guards costing the company lakhs of taka. The house-to-house collection of the toll is to meet the

enough to provide security to the citizens getting donation from abroad or with authority from the government, it should be regularised by open declaration from the government allotting mohallas to them by fixing fees per month/year and allotting banks, A/C numbers and payin-slips to each head of family residing in the mohalla in the same manner of Electricity and Gas bill payment.

If any organisation is kind

It is not clear whether the model security services company is a private company or an NGO. It needs an

Mohalla security toll investigation and open decla- pressure tactics for removing crops will be at least 26 lakh ration from the government regarding their authority to collect tolls. Shouldn't this responsibility of toll collection be legally of the government, DCC or the police? The matter needs a consideration.

> A Citizen Lalmatia, Dhaka

Plight of the pensioners

Sir, The inexpressibly miserable condition of the earlier pensioners consistently failed to attract the notice of the successive governments whose unjust and discriminatory treatment has cast a shadow of constant misery and privation on them as these ill-fated persons cannot provide even for the basic needs of their dependents.

The apparently spectacu-

lar relieving measure of June, 1985 has changed the total perspective of service life but the fate of the earlier pensioners has remained as dark and dismal as before. Moreover, they have on the contrary become the victim of new inflation arising out of the revision of pay-scale. It may be recalled that the officers of the first grade on retirement in 1961 got only Tk 350 or so with several subsequent pittance of 10 per cent. But after the revision of pay in June, 1985 with the benefits of cumulative timescale, a officer of the same scale on retirement now gets an equitable pen-

sion of Tk 1600 or so. But the earlier pensioners are almost at a standstill, and are at par with the pensioners of the 4th grade. This glaring inequality between this two classes cannot be justified even on the plea of socialistic pay structure. This disparity ought to have been removed by this time to meet the primary ends of justice, equity and fair-play. It has already been removed in India and Pakistan by proper adjustments.

These inoffensive pensioners cannot take resort to

their legitimate grievances such as repeated calls for hartal, street-corner meetings, squatting on the streets, staging real or fake hunger strikes on the steps of National Press Club and enlisting the support of the different political parties as these are alien to their thought and practice.

The unlucky pensioners welfare society got the verdict in their favour in the High Court in their suit but the government preferred an appeal against it with undue haste when all the distressed pensioners eagerly hoped that the government with all conceivable grace would accept the judgement and give its own employees the benefits they have won. It was the most unkindest cut of all that the government like the habitual village litigants began to run from court to court to prolong indefinitely the endless sufferings of the famished, withered and death-

facing pensioners. The nation will long remember some of the social welfare measures of this popular government. We do earnestly hope that at long last the government will initiate such ameliorating measure in this case also with a view to putting an end to our long-drawn distressful condition.

Amir Ali 51. Shankipara Mymensingh

Floods in North Bengal

Sir, Of late, floods in North Bengal hit 14 districts affecting 101 police stations, 80 lakh people. It destroyed totally 4 lakh 67 thousand 3 hundred 69 houses, and 5 lakh 62 thousand 7 hundred 18 houses partially. Paddy crops were totally destroyed on 8 lakh acres of land. It partially damaged 8 lakh acres of land. Roads of 2451 kilometres are totally destroyed. Fifteen hundred fifty-two bridges, culverts were totally swept away.

Shortage of production of

tonnes. Within this year unfortunately the floods were preceded by three more floods and one drought. North Bengal produces 80 per cent of total main crops of the country. On sugarcane, ginger, garlic, onion, tobacco, hides and skin, the country is totally dependent on North Bengal. As North Bengal is totally dependent on agriculture in absence of industries and made the hinterland of the eastern region, the peasants, labourers are now totally jobless with-

out any money and food. It is aggravated beyond any description by the rivers Brahmaputra, Jamuna, Tista. Dharla. Famine prevails. Villagers are dying due to want of food. Death takes place daily due to famine. But unfortunately cause of deaths is reported due to diarrhoea. What a curse it is!

This year's floods surpassed the floods in 1871, 1885, 1892, 1906-7, 1918, 1922, 1975, 1984, 1987. Relief materials are scanty and insignificant. Usual and routine manner of giving relief. arranging rehabilitation programmes and facing such colossal challenges will never ameliorate the untold sufferings. Declaration of North Bengal as a 'Disaster Zone' is the solution to render any valuable service there. It is unfortunate that to formulate a Comprehensivé Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) under the auspices of UNDP, UNICEF and the government, six zones dropping North Bengal totally were earlier earmarked by Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) formed by the government. After much heated discussion

In the prevailing circumstances, we urge upon the government to declare North Bengal as a 'disaster zone'. We urge upon the NGOs to visit the affected areas to have firsthand idea, information and to do the needful at the earliest.

in the press, North Bengal

was at last included in the

Md Anwarul Afzal Raninagar, Naogaon

policy.

Buchwald's COLUMN

Moses and His Gun

T T HENEVER I see Charlton Heston, I think of Moses actually Moses holding a semi-automatic AK-47. I think of him like this because nobody in Hollywood has devoted as much time to ensuring universal gun ownership for all Americans.

During the last congressional elections, Moses worked his heart out to defeat anyone who stood for gun control. While I don't know what effect he had on the electorate, he sure impressed me.

I have a hunch that they are going to do a remake of "The Ten Commandments," but with a few script changes to fit the new Moses image.

Here's how it might be rewritten: Heston: Why couldn't I be duck hunting by the Red Sea with a semi-automatic and as the Sea opens, I cross it look-

ing to shoot some rare wild mountain goats? Producer: It might work. We'll film it the old way as well as yours and test it out on the audience to see which version they prefer.

Heston: I'd like to freshen up the scene where God gives me the stone tablets. Let's say he hands me the Ten Commandments and I ask him to throw in an eleventh one for

good luck? Scriptwriter: What's the eleventh one? Heston: The right of the people to keep and bear arms should not be infringed, nor will they have to wait five days

in the Sinai to purchase a firearm. Producer: Can we make the Sinai a credible place to bear arms? Where will the Israelites be able to buy guns in the

desert? Heston: In Sinai, Virginia. In Biblical times that's where everyone went to purchase weapons. Scriptwriter: I didn't know that.

Heston: That's why I'm Moses and you aren't. We also have to figure out a big scene for the NRA, since I'm certain that all their members will go to the movie.

Producer: We could show them making a big contribution to the Golden Calf. That would fit their image Scriptwriter: How about having Moses give a demonstra-

tion with a semi-automatic to illustrate the safety of the Israelites' weapons? Producer: Besides the parting of the Red Sea, what other

kind of action scene have we got? Scriptwriter: We could have Moses shoot himself in the foot as he descends from the Mount

Heston: I really don't think that's necessary We'll end the film with me looking toward the Promised Land from a hill. As a flock of white doves flies overhead, I'll take out my Uzi and fire it into the air, killing all the birds because I know that I will never see the Land of Milk and Honey myself.

By arrangement with Los Angeles times Syndicate and UNB