

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.

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.

There can be, as there are indeed, differing perceptions of what Rafat and Arafat have been forging, Islamic Jihad 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

It is quite natural that a head of state or of a government would face both fine and foul weather during his/her tenure in office. The President of America, Mr Bill Clinton may not be an exception to the general norm concerning the political calculus of his society.

that President Bill Clinton is heading for healing some political wounds inflicted on him and on his party. So far the opponents and the observations are borne out by the recent opinion polls. The most important and productive life-jacket appears to have been provided by the Republican-baked balanced budget proposal that will make a huge cut on Medicare bills and tax payments.

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.

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.

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes



omy over the last couple of years. On the other hand, the news that the economy did not overheat and the inflation rate remained low is also something to crow about. These good economic indicators have enabled Mr President to sell his policies more confidently since good policies result in robust economic 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."

Pakistan Angry over 'Forgotten' Refugees

Tariq Butt writes from Islamabad

Fresh attacks on Kabul by the taliban militia have further shaken Afghanistan's stability and will hamper efforts to encourage people who fled earlier troubles to return home. Gemini News Service reports on Pakistan's concern over the drying up of international aid for refugees.

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

are stretched. A Pakistani delegation failed to win any promise of new assistance from the annual meeting of the UNHCR's executive committee 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.

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?"

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."

istan opened schools, hospitals, and other facilities. A special refugees' commission was set up to coordinate efforts. But with funds drying up, this is to cease functioning 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 them of its assistance."

returning from Pakistan. 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)."

Mohalla security toll

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 lightning 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 expenses.

If any organisation is kind 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 pay-slips to each head of family residing in the mohalla in the same manner of Electricity and Gas bill payment. It is not clear whether the 'model security services' company is a private company or an NGO. It needs an

investigation and open declaration 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 spectacular 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, an officer of the same scale on retirement now gets an equitable pension 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 these 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

pressure tactics for removing 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, Shanktpara 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

crop will be at least 26 lakh 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 without 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 Comprehensive 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 press, North Bengal was at last included in the policy.

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. Md Anwarul Afzal Raminagar, Naogaon

By and large, Bill Clinton

The columnist, presently, is in USA. He sent this writeup from Baltimore.

Art Buchwald's COLUMN Moses and His Gun W 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 looking 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 Calif. That would fit their image. Scriptwriter: How about having Moses give a demonstration 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 Uz 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