

Chittagong's Future

Though late, we seem to be waking up to the idea that something urgently needs to be done about the development of our port city.

We commend JICA for taking the initiative to draw up CIDP, and thank the Japanese government for its support in this regard.

An important recommendation of Saturday's meeting was to create a broad-based socio-political consensus to implement the CIDP.

The group raised another critical issue namely 'political will', which is a prerequisite for the success of any major undertaking.

In case of CIDP we want all government agencies and all political forces to work in unison to make development of Chittagong truly our gateway for progress.

Fertilizer Worry

On its part, the government has taken quite a number of steps to avert a fertilizer crisis like that of last year.

Already there has been competition in apportioning blame on each other by the administration — district and thana administrations — to be precise — and the association of fertilizer dealers.

There are other allegations. Now the fertilizer dealers want to talk to the Prime Minister on all such issues.

To get the desired benefits from the series of government measures, it is execution at the field level that must be fully ensured.

Saving the Past

At a seminar in the city, Mayor Mohammad Hanif has expressed the desire to create a special cell at the DCC for the preservation of architectural heritage.

In Britain Prince Charles came out of his customary role to make a scathing criticism of architectural incongruities and deformations in London.

Hanif, in his modest capacity, seems to have excellent ideas but in terms of delivering he cannot boast an equally high grading.

Our poverty should not be an excuse for the abject neglect of historical sites and architectural marvels.

Francois Mitterrand: The Last Gascoigne of France

THE death of Francois Mitterrand on January 8 did not come as a surprise. He was suffering from terminal cancer.

His conservatism was strong enough to make him state on the Algerian War of Independence "the only negotiation on Algeria is War."

As if it was not enough, some scatalogical enthusiasts tried to bare his cupboard about his extramarital liaison.

of admitting paternity of a 20-year-old daughter. Any revelation of this nature, or even of lesser magnitude of extra-marital relationships by an Anglo-Saxon leader would certainly have destroyed his political future.

Francis Mitterrand was essential by a pragmatist. Idealism for him was a tool

President Mitterrand's state visit to Dhaka in early 1990 would be remembered with great pride and satisfaction — being the first French President to have visited us.

which would only help him to reach towards realism. With Mikhail Gorbachev he tried in the beginning to block German unification.

Rene de Chateaubriand, in the Memoires d'Outre-Tombe said the French must be led by dreams — the words also dear to Charles de Gaulle.

ENCHIRIDION

Waliur Rahman



French GRANDEUR. To the detriment of normal economic sense he encouraged building of a glass pyramid near the Louvre and other big structures in Paris.

Thinking of France within a secure border, Mitterrand didn't hesitate for a moment in putting his weight behind Helmut Kohl of Germany for a united Europe — which he wanted to achieve through his motto La France Unie.

and baffling, difficult to imprison within neat definitions. It was also Mitterrand who along with Francesco Cossiga of Italy cooperated with Americans in installing cruise missiles in France and Italy to balance the Soviet SSI and SSII.

another Verdun, another Monte Casino. Helmut Kohl extended his hand. He was quite puzzled with his inability to bring in Margaret Thatcher on board, lock stock and barrel.



Francois Mitterrand: Bleeding heart liberal

are used to me'. Mitterrand was non-plussed with her loud stage-whisper and is reported to have said, "She has the voice of Marilyn Monroe and the eyes of Stalin!"

Mitterrand was quick to recognise the ODER-NIESSE line and vanquish Germany not with arms but through diplomacy.

With his wife Danielle, Mitterrand devoted considerable time to understand the problems of the developing world.

Francis Mitterrand seemed to have fully agreed with Gustave Flaubert that the French are 'Le premier peuple de l'univers' (the first people in the univers) and left the world remembering Victor Hugo, 'France France, sans toi le monde serait seul'.

Bluffs by Manmohan Singh

Nikhil Chakravarty writes from New Delhi

The Prime Minister can hardly afford to place a messed-up picture of the economy before the public when the general election is round the corner.

FOR over four years now, the Indian Finance Minister Manmohan Singh has been repeatedly telling the country how he and his government have rescued the country from the brink of utter bankruptcy.

Till very recently this has been the theme the Finance Minister constantly harped in the public. No doubt the foreign exchange reserve had almost touched the rock bottom in mid-1991.

Secondly, the Finance Minister had never amplified for the benefit of the public how and why the country's foreign exchange reserve had fallen so low.

Towards the later half of his tenure as prime minister, particularly since 1986, the Rajiv government had incurred a whole lot of short-term loans — mostly against the blue chips public-sector undertakings such as the SAIL, BEHL, the Railways and ONGC — and squandered the amount so collected on government account.

After preparing the ground by painting the harrowing prospect of bankruptcy, our Finance Minister swiftly introduced the entire World Bank prescription of Structural Adjustment of the economy.

fifties. This was particularly noticeable in the case of the public sector which the World Bank programme wanted to be dismantled.

All government allocations for the public sector undertakings were stopped, while a declared policy of disinvestment was initiated. What was intriguing in the Finance Minister's scheme of things is that even the shares of profit earning public sector undertakings like the BHEL and the SAIL were also put up for divestment.

speed Swiss engines turning down the much better offer of the BHEL, which had the support of the experts' committee.

For three years, it was a continuous sledge-hammer operation by the Finance Minister carrying out the dictates of the World Bank. When the controls and permit system was abolished, the government earned kudos from the public, particularly from the corporate sector.

For instance, the Enron project for the power station at Dabhol in Maharashtra involved no transfer of technology, but yet the government offered guaranteed return of 16 per cent — an unprecedented concession which no India company has ever received — though Indian cor-

porate giants like the Tatas could easily have invested in the power sector if the government had offered them even lower guaranteed returns.

For the last six months, things have not been looking up for Dr Manmohan Singh and his team. The first signs of dissonance within the government appeared when the Planning Commission drafted its midterm appraisal of the Eighth Plan.

So much for the genius that is Dr Manmohan Singh.

ernment has thought it prudent not to publicise the mid-term Plan appraisal so far, and consequently the meeting of the National Development Council has been deferred indefinitely.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister can hardly afford to place a messed-up picture of the economy before the public when the general election is round the corner.

The foreign exchange reserve has been seriously depleted through four years of virtual tax holiday and reckless imports.

So much for the genius that is Dr Manmohan Singh.

The writer is an Editor of 'Mainstream'.

To the Editor

On 'Take Care'

Sir, I was very delighted to read the letter 'Take Care' in the 6th January issue, not because I was informed about sexual harassment of a sort going on in educational institutions in my country.

In personal circles, I have heard about incidents of this kind from my friends who are/were students at institutions (both public and private) in Bangladesh.

Being a teaching assistant in a university, I was instructed to be careful about such matters — in not committing one, and not giving a student the chance to make a false allegation of this sort.

actions ranging from mild admonition to losing a job. In more serious cases, he/she would be tried in court of law.

The educational institutions of Bangladesh, not being outside human domain, cannot deny the occurrence of sexual harassment in them. There is no shame in recognising it when we are only human.

Enam Ahmed Chowdhury Dhaka-1205

The name United Nations

Sir, Recently we have observed the 50th birth anniversary of the United Nations Organisation. As far as my knowledge goes, this name 'United Nations' was proposed by Sir Winston Churchill who doesn't require any introduction.

the poet and the poem, but miserably failed.

I shall feel most obliged if any of the esteemed readers may please let me know through these columns the name of the poet and the last verse or the whole poem from which Sir Churchill had picked up the name. Was it Milton or any other poet?

K R Zakhami Khulna

Fly-overs needed

Sir, This is to draw your kind attention to the ever increasing traffic jam problem in Dhaka about which a lot has been said, although very little is done.

To solve this problem steps like traffic discipline and police vigilance have been increased but there is hardly any tangible improvement.

able people to get across roads but this will be far from any help in doing away with the jams.

What is most urgently needed is the construction of fly-overs at least at ten important intersections like Gullistan, Jatrabari, Mohakhali, Maghbazar and Farmgate.

Faruquddin Ahmed Minto Road, Dhaka

Imran's hospital

Sir, It is highly regrettable to learn that a democratically elected government itself is obstructing the very democratic practices it was supposed to allow.

Khan. Just under what ground is he being prevented from fund-raising in government schools and colleges when he had done so in the past?

The Pakistan premier's sports advisor, Sarfraz Nawaz released an unexplicable statement that no advertisements with 'political intention' can be entertained on TV.

ity, such policies are only robbing these poor people — who cannot afford such expensive cancer treatment — from their only chance of hope and survival.

We pray and hope, Imran and the hospital emerge a winner in their fight against cancer ... and petty politics!

Ayesha Farzana Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209

EC and FEMA

Sir, We are shocked and disappointed to know that the Election Commission (EC) will not allow independent, non-partisan observers like FEMA, to observe the elections as was allowed in 1991 by the interim government of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

This obviously suggests that the EC and the BNP government want to hide the balloting and counting process from the people.

M A Rahim 67, Manda, Dhaka