

Rethinking Time for BNP

Slowly but surely politics is becoming violent. Everyday more and more reports are pouring into the national dailies from all over the country about clashes between the ruling and the opposition parties.

This paper appealed to the PM to rethink the opening of Ekushey Bô Mela, saying that she could do so with the help of the armed police and the BDR, but would it be wise for her to go in that direction?

BNP leaders must have realised by now that they are becoming more and more dependent on police and BDR for their own political activities. This dependence can only further isolate them from the public.

Rickshaw's in Focus

Rickshaw as a mode of transport may account for the least value addition but taken together these non-mechanised three wheelers have the highest contribution to the country's GDP.

One thing is clear: the manually driven transports — rickshaws and boats — carry the major burden of the movement of passengers and goods.

It is, however, futile to carry on a campaign against rickshaws in Dhaka city, given the realities of our transportation situation.

Collapsing Godowns

The string of godowns on the fast eroding western bank of river Shitalakkhya in Narayanganj are in danger. Already six of them have collapsed with their piles of goods killing three and hurting 150 labourers.

The vulnerability of the buildings is a given factor in that these are considerably worn out tin-shed structures whose dilapidation should have prompted an evacuation of the workers and dwellers by now.

Since erosion of a river bank cannot just be wished away it is the human response to such a vagary that is so crucial to saving life and property.

Basically, the construction of structures along the river banks need to follow certain rules.

Japan's Hashimoto and Kakuzo's Dreams

As a developing Asian country, Bangladesh is also benefitting from the generous support of Japan. From Kafco to Meghna Bridge, from BIRDEM to Cardiovascular Institute to Hotel Industry, Japan is a major player in our development plans.

IN July 1994 at the annual G7 Summit in Naples two leaders appeared on the world stage: one was the new Italian Prime Minister and summit host, media-mogul, Silvio Berlusconi and the other, the Japanese Minister for International Trade and Industry, Ryutaro Hashimoto.

With about a 5-trillion-dollar economy, Japan is a success story and that too a successful Asian story. Like in any democratic dispensation, Japan also took time to have a constitution where sovereignty resides with the people.

Prime Minister Hashimoto's task is not going to be very easy either — like his immediate predecessors.

With the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the chancelleries of the world are restructuring their agenda, their list of priorities. Japan faces a particular problem because like the Bourbons, their memory is very long.

But when faced with a question whether the same facility could have been obtained by a common Japanese, Premier-Hosokawa was faced with moral dilemma. Nobody could take him to court, nor could anybody have him chargesheeted today or tomorrow.

ENCHIRIDION

Waliur Rahman



own. Hosokawa's decision was made in the same tradition. Guarded by impenetrable ocean the Japanese, in their isolated splendour, perfected their arts, their religion, and their mode of life.

The Japanese could go and learn from Europe and later North America transcribed them from good imitators to creative innovators. Their economic success was phenomenal.

The Asians as the cradle of much older civilisations, did not attack importance towards the utility of technological innovativeness. The Europeans borrowed the art of printing and gunpowder from the Chinese.

In its early years, the Japanese, while investing in auto industries, even invited designers like Pininfarina from Italy — the designers of Ferrari and Maserati.

Japan devoted all its energy to improve its economic base. In spite of the present difficulties in the Japanese economy, they will very soon move towards further economic success.

As a developing Asian country, Bangladesh is also benefitting from the generous support of Japan. From Kafco to Meghna Bridge, from BIRDEM to Cardiovascular Institute to Hotel Industry, Japan is a major player in our development plans.

Japan is destined to play even a greater role not only in Asia but the world at large. Her effort to get a permanent

seat in the Security Council deserves serious consideration. In the context of larger and more durable role to be played by the Security Council, addition of countries like Japan and deserving countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America would render the highest decision-making body in the UN more democratic, more responsive.

Paul Kennedy's apprehension about what he said 'Japan's omnidirectional peaceful diplomacy or policy of being all things to all men seems to be misplaced. In her gradual assertive role in the world arena Japan is determined to address the bogey of scissors effect' reaction against its export-led economic success.

Scholars like Herman Kahn are so impressed that Japan, in their assessments, will be the number-one economic power in the twenty-first century. Unbelievable as it may seem, with only 3 per cent of the world population and 0.3 per cent of its habitable land, Japan has already reached a level of development which brings her in the vicinity of political scholar's prediction.

In the beginning of this century, Japanese artist Okakura Kakuzo started the world by declaring — 'Asia is one.' Premier Hashimoto seems destined to lend resonance to Herman Kahn's prediction and Kakuzo's dreams.

Not Your Marriage Party

Pinch of Salt

by Chintito



for not bringing that present. There's this man swaying uselessly a giant pankha six feet from the bridegroom. A fly continues to bother you. They are laying the groom's table. You scrape some polau

large green. No prizes for guessing whom I would like to stuff.

The food looks okay but your table mates don't. The bloke next to you picked his nose before filling his glass with borhani to the brim. A couple of the others change their pieces of chicken from unattended plates.

By the time you finish licking the last bit of payesh from the tip of your index finger, there is a long queue at the basins. A grinning waiter with one of those 'long forgotten' towels hanging on his shoulder, a bowl of water and a (believe it or not) full soap in his hand is most polite as he literally begs you to wash your hand then and there.

You look back at the basins. Unless you hurry you will miss the grand display. The problem is scores of others also want a good and close view of the show.

There's this fellow who is trying to match the call of a wolf in labour, another is pretending to be an elephant scooping the water with his trunk. (glah glah glaaah), one of them displays how to take a bath in a basin. Again, it is advisable not to contact the towel. Why of all things am I obsessed with a stupid towel? Well, once upon a time, in a public eating place like the I saw a guy putting the towel into his mouth and brushing his teeth with it, plucking out bits and pieces..... Go ahead, touch it.

So, as the show goes on, you find it more convenient to take a glass of water from the table, forget the soap, go to where the uninvited bare children are peeping from underneath the side screens, and wash the remnants of a hearty meal.

It is now time for a paan but all you are likely to get is some shuparees and lots of choon, a clear sign that other humans were there before you. Just as you light a cigarette to conclude the evening, you are face to face with the bride's father. It's no wonder he never approved of you. Before he realises he has seen you somewhere before, it is always a good idea for the beyadab to vanish into thin air.

In the cool night as your rickshaw passes the flowered Mercedes of the groom, you are mighty glad this was not your wedding. Ayejeje rickshawlah bhai, cigarette khudlan?

Again, the Bangabazar

Sir, We cannot complain against an accident as none is directly or consciously responsible for it. But an accident is no more so if it happens again and again and hence the fire at Bangabazar Monday night — 2nd time in three months cannot be called an accident.

The unlucky hawkers-turned-shop owners who had to lose everything in the November fire took heart and are in the way of rebuilding their lots. Most of them owe money to their friends and relatives as they had to begin all over again.

That the fire tragedy was a sabotage — so was the previous one is getting clear gradually. Perhaps a section of people failed to get allocation of shops in the market and many are, therefore, jealous of the market's liveliness. It is also reported that the shop-owners had been receiving anonymous phone-

calls threatening their lives. So it is time, the authorities should find out the culprits through proper investigation and punish them accordingly.

Should we let the Bangabazar traders die from the reason which they might not have caused even at the cost of their own lives?

Razzak Raza, S.M.Hall, University of Dhaka.

Drudgery

Sir Cleopatra's days have reincarnated in Bangladesh; only they come in pair these days; in tune with the natural law of day and night, winter and summer, sun and shade, but not male and female. The nation is beset with 'gender' problems, a word much in currency in the world of NGOs.

The look (in ancient Egypt) that could sail a thousand ships, cannot navigate a dozen Aricha ferries; but is capable of denuding a developing parliament.

A Husnain, Dhaka

Love for the country

Sir, On January 23, 1996, at 6-30 pm, people of Bangladesh waited in front of radio and television sets with drawn breath to hear Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's address to the nation, hoping against hope that it will contain solutions to the present political crisis.

We are afraid of a very bleak future, immediately after prime minister's address violence began — many vehicles were damaged and some were set on fire. It puzzles me, why those political parties, who are professing that they are demanding election under a caretaker government for our sake, think nothing of destroying huge private and public property which is a great blow to our economy.

ple to vote in a congenial atmosphere. If all the major political parties refrain from the election, people will lose enthusiasm and Sheikh Hasina even warned that those who will go to cast votes will have to do it at the risk of their lives.

The Election Commission has taken many steps to ensure free and fair election, voters' list has been made in a different system and in many places identity cards have also been provided. We think that with all these precautions it would not be possible to cast false votes.

I want to evoke the memory of Begum Zia and Sheikh Hasina of a popular story. It goes like this — two women were quarrelling over the custody of a child, at one stage they took the dispute to a judge. Listening to both sides, the judge decreed that the child must be halved and be given each a part. Hearing this one woman became very excited and implored to give the child to the other woman, she would be happy if the child remains alive, nothing matters more to her. A country is like a child to those who are at the top and control its destiny. We hope our political leaders have

enough love for their country to save it from destruction.

Nur Jahan, East Nazrabad, Chittagong

Room for Cabinet meeting

Sir, The Cabinet sits for a meeting presided over by the Prime Minister regularly on every Monday. Glimpses of the Cabinet meeting is telecast on the BTV. Cabinet meetings used to be held at Bangabhaban, where former President Ershad, with his usual extravagant flamboyant style, set up a special room for Cabinet meetings with latest electronic gadgets by spending huge amount of money.

Recently, we find another high-tech (with space-age setting) Cabinet meeting room has been set up in the PM's Tejgon office by spending over Taka 3 crore. It is very difficult to think such a huge amount has been spent to make a Cabinet meeting room where the meeting is held only once a week. What has happened to the room at Bangabhaban? Has it been dismantled, converting it for some other special purposes? Cabinet meetings could have easily been held in the facilities in the conference centre which is in fact part of PM's office complex. This poor country has more miseries to suffer due to flamboyant qualities of leadership.

May Allah save this country. MRR Khan, 38, Naya Paltan, Dhaka-1000.

The BOI guide

Sir, The Board of Investment (BOI) has published a guide called 'Guide to Investment in Bangladesh'. Our class teacher suggested to buy that guide from the cell of BOI at the international trade fair. But when I went there the guide was not available. A representative of BOI requested me to come to their office to get the book without any cost.

I went to the office on 24th January and I got a signboard on the table saying that 'Alpha Kathal Appake Anek Guruto Dewa Jode' (you will be given more importance if you are precise in words). I met the deputy director sitting at the table and requested him to deliver me a guide. He asked me to be satisfied.

I waited accordingly for about one hour. I was doing nothing important except making some (less important) telephone calls. And after one hour he left the office room silently and never came back. I was very surprised at his behaviour. My question is: which one should be changed — the inscription, or the behaviour of the director? Sheikh Shahjahan, Accounting Department, Dhaka University.