The Baily Star

Dhaka, Thursday, March 14, 1996

Exempt the Schools

The relaxation in the continual asahajog is most welcome as it is wise. Economy is not all of the things that must be saved from deep injury. When the non-cooperation programme can be comprehensive without shutting down the utility and essential and conservancy services, it can remain so if the list of exemptions be lengthened to include schools. Yes, schools must not be touched in any circumstances. The finest and the most improbable and glorious of war victories were won keeping schools open under conditions of carpet bombing, The victory of the Vietnamese people had its seed in their ideas of a war. During the legendary Chinese Long March, the schools did not close for a day.

For many reasons school days are lost interminably throughout the year. A good start has been made by certain schools not to close during Ramadan. Too many days are lost even after counting out the Ramadan break. Bangladesh holds unenviable records in the reverse in many a field. One of these is in the number of teaching hours a pupil gets in a year.

Non-cooperation as a political programme is not an everyday affair. There is no question of it doing regular harm to the young people who should be encouraged to consider going to school as a sacred duty. We are interested in formulating society-sustaining principles and holding on to them in the face of direst trials. Vicissitudes of the times — political and social or whatever — must not be allowed to come in the way of the schoolgoing habit. The schools must be made sacrosanct and they become schools only with their pupils and teachers taken as one.

There is a dangerous hangover from our glorious anti-colonial struggles. The movements used to start with activists getting the children out of the schools. Let it be a sign of our national independence that we would change that by ensuring that political and social convulsions rather than touching the schools would take special care that the pupil is offered a safe and enthusing journey to school.

Megasthenes wrote of Chandragupta Maurya's India that war was never allowed to involve a peasant nor were his fields allowed to be touched by the warring armies. Let us build a similar principle on the premise that of the things that come first for civilised man is education - specially education in the tender years.

Save it from Brink

Earlier on several occasions the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) had sent SOS calls to the politicians. Now the association feels desperate to issue an ultimatum for resolving the political crisis which has been responsible for bringing the industry — and the country's economy — on the verge of a collapse. As a virtually hundred per cent export-oriented industry and accounting for 60 per cent of the country's income from foreign trade, the sector has every reason to be specially treated. Like other export-oriented private industries the garments industry has been allowed a limited exemption. But such an exemption is not enough, particularly after so much disruption faced by the private sector. All industries and factories in the sector must need total exemption from the political programmes.

The garments industry was at the point of realising its potential to the full just before the political turmoil. Now we hear 500 factories have been closed down and the industry as a whole dares not count on the business it enjoyed before the set-back. Whatever may be the overall political position or stand of a party, here is a very crucial decision for the political leaders to make. Political leaders must see the point that once the foreign buyers have moved away, it would be extremely difficult to get them back. After all this is a competitive global market and there are others to seize the opportunity created by your incom-

petence or follies.

Politics should not be allowed to harm the brightest of our economic prospects that the garments industry represents. With a massive income generation for as many as 14 lakh people and a foreign exchange earning to the tune of two billion US dollars annually, the sector could be a guarantor of employment for people whose service hardly been recognised in our society. This industry has for the first time, with a massive pull, brought village and almost illiterate girls to the point of economic liberation. A social change and awakening initiated by the sector must not come to a premature end. If it does, society will have to pay very many costs besides the economic one. Considering all this, let us keep the wheels of the industry running without interruption.

Escapism of Sorts

Thanks to asahajog sine die, we never had such unpolluted air for days on end ever since the Second World War concluded in the mid-forties. The constant din and bustle in disease-making decibels are all gone with the fugitive cars and buses and trucks. And the shops and streets crammed with a consumeristic society's frenzied crowds suddenly vanished giving way to a daylong dawn of purity underlined by unending streams of that ultimate in environment-friendliness, the nosmoke and more silent than a Rolls moving contraption called the rickshaw.

Well, all this is an escape from so many bad things of a nasty and overcrowded and rowdy megalopolis. But this is too an escape from reality, which is hardly healthy for any man or woman or society. The everyday Dhaka is a reality with its streets jammed and sky darkened by a pall of ever present carbonmonoxide and other assorted poisons, with it police competing with the denizens of the underworld in mindlessness etc. etc. This is reality although not wholly formed by choice.

Ignorance and foolishness in meeting the challenges of newer times and a bulging population have turned this reality awry. The task is to rescue and reshape the reality and not to escape it — through commitment and co-operation and far-seeing vision. Let us build Dhaka as an international hub of economic and intellectual activity and yet clean and orderly and very wholesome.

From Crisis to Conflict: Some Reflections

HE political crisis that started in March. 1994. was supposed to end with the election of February 15. 1996; but it looks like it has only entered into a more violent phase than the one people have just been through. No one knows how and when What has if will end. gone wrong in a country which only five years ago had a popularly elected government. and showed vibrancy and economic dynamism in the first three, four years of its regime? It is high time that one takes a hard look at it, finds out what has driven it to such a dismal state and what lies ahead of it.

First Phase

The period from March 1991 to March, 1994 can be identified as the first phase of BNP administration which is marked by peaceful assumption of power through a genuinely democratic election, replacement of the presidential system by parliamentary system of government, and restructuring of the economy by substantial liberalisation in various sectors (as indicated below). Nevertheless, it looks like it was a bitter-sweet period for BNP government because it was during this time that the seeds of the crisis of the second phase were sown. The parliamentary boycott of the three major opposition parties which marked the wa tershed of the BNP administration began on March 1.1994.

What were the problems that the nascent parliamentary democracy faced during this period? The BNP government in its first three years was relatively clean, enthusiastic and forward-looking. It handled the devastating cyclone of 1991 without any charge of corruption from any responsible quarter; it adopted and implemented marketoriented economy quite successfully by introducing liberal trade, industry, tax, tariff and monetary policies which brought a wind of change in the economic climate of the country. It also tried to snap the loan defaulters of the decade of eighties and to realise their outstanding debts which nearly crippled the entire banking system. Although not all loans were recovered, the "default culture" has been given a good beating. The economy was showing signs of improvement in exports, domestic investment, production, resource mobilisation and trade and industrial activities with low inflation rate, stable exchange rate. Taka convertibility in the current account and growing foreign reserves.

But in the latter part of this phase of BNP administration. there were the rumblings of ministerial corruption and politicisation of administration brought up by opposition members in the parliament. No parliamentary committee has ever met, let alone investigate these charges. The Prime Minister rarely attended the parliament to participate in the debate and to answer questions. Clearly, these were serious mistakes which amounted to showing the government's indifference to its parliamentary duties and responsibilities. Although in the later stage the Prime Minister began to participate in the parliament, the Treasury Bench, by and large, treated the opposition with indifference and disrespect. This was a mistake on the part of the ruling party. However, frustrations, anger, memories of old wounds, and impatience gripped the opposition psy-

chology and attitude. On the other hand, when interests of both sides coincided, the members of parliament acted in harmony and unity: the parliament approved unanimously the salary raise of the members, duty free import permits for private vehicles and other perks, etc.

de an economic turna-

nomic domination, materially

1990s. Bangladesh ma-

ber some of the simple norms and conventions of parliamentary democracy. Once a party assumes power, it becomes the government of the entire nation and not of the ruling party alone. In the day to day running of the parliament, the opposition has a definite role to play by way of being vigilant on the lapses of the government in order to uphold the interests of the common people while the government has to respond to he opposition criticisms with respect, humility and correct information. There is no room for hushing up, twisting, distorting or withholding information, let alone lying to the parliament. because parliament is the highest legislative body to which government is accountable. The opposition is the watchdog of the Treasury Bench while the government has to be sensitive to opposition criticisms, and has to share with it important information and come to an understanding on all major national issues so that there prevails only one voice for the nation on important issues. Decency and decorum in language, demeanour and attitude on both sides have to be strictly maintained. Hidden party belligerency, which is common among political parties, has to be articulated in refined language and parliamentary decorum. On all these issues, there was a lot to be desired from both sides of the last parliament. Further, the opposition has to give the party in power a peaceful period of about three months (known as parliamentary honeymoon) to organise and saddle itself with responsibilities before they face barrages of questions and censure motions from the opposition. But such honeymoon was not granted to the ruling party during the Fifth Parliament. From the day one, the opposition was hell-bent on making the life of the new

It is important to remem-

government difficult. Fateful Period

The period from March, 1994 to January, 1996 was a fateful period for the country. It was marked by parliamentary boycott, mass resignations from the parliament, political turmoil on the streets, negotiations by foreigners and distinguished nationals for a peaceful settlement and finally the breakdown of all the negotiations followed by scheduling of February 15th election.

The opposition was complaining of irregularities in the Mirpur and Lalbagh by-elections, but it was the Magura byelection results that supposedly played the decisive role in the opposition's prolonged boycott. But the real reasons seem to be the frustrations. deep-seated hostility between BNP and the two major opposition parties (Awami League and Jatiya Party) and the latter's intention to overthrow the BNP government before the end of its tenure.

However, the most critical question that one has to ask is whether the continuous boycott of the parliament was constitutional and necessary? As far as 'constitutionality' is concerned, the Supreme Court did not give a verdict on this issue and hence remains unclear. The ruling party should have asked for its judgment on this issue. It will have to be found out because this time It has set a dangerous precedent for the country's democratic future. If it is constitutional to boycott the parliament for a prolonged period, then any major parliamentary party can replicate this example in future and cripple the working of the parliament. If this happens in every parliament then one can lorget about democracy and political stability in

the country. Coming to the 'necessity' aspect of the boycott by the three-party opposition in the by Kabir U Ahmad

fifth parliament, it seems the opposition alliance could have done a better job of harrying and mauling the ruling party within the parliament much more effectively than they have been able to do on the streets. Had this political war been fought within the four walls of the parliament, it would have saved the country from so many deaths and so much destructions inflicted so far. They chose not to do it inside the parliament because they wanted to overthrow the government from power by creating a 1990-type upheaval on the streets. But they haven't been able to achieve that although the ordinary people of the country have paid very dearly for this anarchy on the streets.

There seem to be three main reasons for this failure. Firstly, BNP was a popularly elected majority party working within a parliamentary system unlike the Jatiya Party in the fourth parliament working under a presidential system. Secondly, BNP seemed to have a substantial support among the students, youths and ordinary citizens which is quite comparable to what the three-party alliance had among the similar sets of people in the society. The three-party alliance perhaps didn't realise the deeper implications of these issues

But it must be said categorically that it was a serious mistake on the part of the ruling party first to ignore the demand for neutral caretaker government, then to dilly dally and finally to try to come to terms with the opposition alliance on this issue. Had the ruling party accepted this demand early on, and held the election under a neutral caretaker government, going by the results of the opinion surveys of that time, it would still have returned as a majority party in the parliament. It wouldn't have to suffer the loss of face and credibility that it is facing now. Facts also remain that whenever the ruling party offered some grounds for a negotiated settlement, the opposition never budged an inch, and, instead, added new conditions which was unhelpful

HE PM's last discourse

he earlier ones despite her

acceptance of a non-party car-

etaker government and her

offer for a fruitful dialogue with

Although the people had

seemingly been getting tired of

nearing the same rhetorics

over and over again enough

speculations this time around

became visibly rife in their

minds to expect something

more than the PM has

conceded. The people in their

prevailing mood wanted to

hear many other details and

and generosity in her

approach, taking stock of the

situation, howsoever late it

might appear to be. The one

and only positive thing that is

most urgent at this juncture is

the mutual trust and faith

needed to provide the right

impetus to the ongoing dia-

logue in search of a common

agreed ground for ending the

earlier uncompromising stand,

even if made at the peak of

crisis, could well be viewed as

a sign of her sincerity,

goodwill, grasp of the critical

state of chaos visibly going out

of control and the concern for

the sufferings of the country

and its people. This will of

course go down well as a

projection of her genuine and

earnest desire to solve the

present political impasse.

Should it be said that the PM

has fallen from grace by this

act? Far from it, although the

The scaling down from her

crisis.

The PM has shown courage

not just the acceptance alone.

the opposition parties.

to the nation was not

much different than all

tor a solution.

Culmination of Crisis

The period from February

to 15, 1996, brings the crisis to its culmination, all negotiations failed, only BNP and some nondescript parties and individuals participated while the three-party opposition alliance boycotted the election. Since there was no agreement between the ruling party and the main opposition alliance an election had to be held remaining within the time limits that the Constitution permitted, however one-sided the election might look like. Election Commission justified it as constitutional continuity. Obviously, the one-party election would satisfy the constitutional legitimacy but wouldn't be fully participatory which robs the very spirit of representative democracy. And hence the elected party having been fractionally represented may have gained weak constitutional legitimacy on its-side but not the moral authority. Even in this electoral out-

come, there are at least three fundamental issues: in the first place, the election ought to have been "free and fair" for it to assure the legitimacy that the government was seeking. but it wasn't. Both national and international observers have confirmed it. Voter turnout was poor, and ballot boxes were stuffed with ballot papers which is an election offence. Hence the election results do not give the elected party any moral authority. Whether it still serves the legality that government was seeking can be obtained by a reference to the Supreme Court. In the second place, the voter turnout was poor also because the opposition alliance was intimidating the voters. The opposition's slogan was "any one who would come to the polling booth would go back as a deadbody". And this slogan they enforced with violence organised under their general programme of "resistance". The moral problem it raises is how can the electoral outcome be called unfair by the opposition alliance when they themselves are the instruments of intimidation and violence? How can

the same people be in the position of offender and judge? In the third place, the polling officers who were appointed by the Election Commission could not go to the polling stations because their life was reportedly threatened by the opposition activists. Moreover, these activists were also snatching away the ballot boxes and ballot papers and throwing them into nearby ponds or in some cases

burning them. The most fundamental question now is whether "boycott" of and "resistance" to the election is democratic and legal? Boycott means withdrawal from participation. Whether one participates in an election or not is certainly within his democratic rights. But how does the "resistance" with physical violence to an election becomes a democratic right? Applying violence to someone else's free choice cannot be either democratic or legal. The dignity of peaceful protest and non-cooperation is simply lost by acting violently. Neither side has the moral grounds on the election issue.

One most unacceptable behaviour that one has observed among the activists of the movement is the destruction of other people's and public properties. What justifies such destruction? What legal authority have the agitators got to destroy other's property? Every sane person would agree that such destructive acts push the society back by a few years in accumulation of social wealth. Some national consensus should be reached sometime in future about stopping the destruction of social and individual assets during any political disturbances. Otherwise, society will never be able to accumulate capital for its progress.

Period of Rejection The period from February 16 to date is the period of rejection of the election results. which are claimed to be "free and fair" by the Election Commission and the ruling party, and the escalation of violence by the opposition al liance which is euphemistically called "non-cooperation". The planned "non-cooperation" will continue until the BNP government falls. The mistake of

the BNP government and the Election Commission has been to justify the election results as "free and fair" while it has been found not to be so by both the national and international observers, as pointed out above.

There is now an anarchy prevailing on the streets of the main cities. The government machinery seems to be too weak to enforce the law and order in the cities, ports and industrial areas. The simple right of every individual to live in peace and safety for life. limb, and property cannot be

guaranteed by the government.

The solution lies in tackling the problem at two levels, the political level and the law and order level. The Prime Minister should negotiate with the opposition through the good offices of the President, and come to an acceptable solution to both. There is definitely room for give-and-take now in the packages that the two sides have offered. For the sake of the country, which is now a hostage, she should accept the opposition's main demand of holding another fully participatory election as soon as possible, under a neutral (non-party) caretaker government. Even if this looks like a capitulation, this will be a mark of her statesmanship.

On the law and order side. the Prime Minister should immediately apply the law enforcement agencies with a firm hand so that ordinary citizens can live and work in peace and personal safety.

Conclusion

It would perhaps be appro-

priate to conclude with a general observation. In the first quarter of the century of its existence, the political history of Bangladesh has been marked by turmoil, popular upsurge, violence, bloodshed, illegal occupation of power, violent and disgraceful exit from power, and short-lived democratic episodes.lt looks like the rules of peaceful and civilized entry into, and exit from, power have not been much cared about. Let Khaleda Zia show the path of graceful exit; and that will ensure her of enough popular support in future for another graceful and civilised entry .'into power.

The Last Straw

by Hybat J Chowdhury

success of every action depends to a great extent on its exact timing and sensing that precise time is a great act of providence and a challenge to any leadership.

The PM has now taken one more step forward by requesting the President to start the process of dialogue with all the political parties in the country to solve the ongoing political crisis and with the initiative of the President the process is already getting underway. All the opposition parties have now met with the President at his request and placed their demands before him. But at the same time they have announced the continuation of the ongoing noncooperation movement until all

their demands are met. The opposition has also asked for immediate cancellation of the 15 February election as one of their demands, but the ruling party is insisting to uphold it as a transitional one in order to pass the required bill for the caretaker government. This has turned out yet as another chicken and egg puzzle. It all depends how the President reacts to it. One is not really expected to get everything at one go. The question remains as to whether it is valid in the present context. It is agreed that the opposition parties did come out with more demands with time

because the changing situation compelled them to do so. But did they ask for something entirely different, something out of the present context of democratic process and the basic rights of the people. their freedom of francaise,

salety, security and a decent

Obviously some legal com-

society at that?

pulsion have to be met for cancellation of 15 February election and the matter could very well be referred to the highest legal body, the country's Supreme Court, for the ruling. As it looks now, despite marked flexibility that both sides have so far shown the confrontation does not seem to be over yet and the fate of the country is still hanging by the thread and with it the destiny of the people whose sufferings have surpassed all limits. Could one disagree that the people and the people alone matter the most whether at the negotiating table or in the field? The people obviously take precedence over the country that holds them. In line with the popular saying one could firmly state that the country survives only when its people survive. Surely it is not the country which takes the people with it but the people that take the country with them, for better or for worse.

The onus is now on the

President upon whom all the

political parties seem to have reposed their full confidence and faith at this critical hour and he is left with no choice but to act real fast. He will surely go down in history as the only one who could bring for the first time all the warring parties at the negotiating table, at least set the process in motion. If successful in bringing about a solution to end the present political crisis he will be remembered with reverence for a long time to come. This appears to be the last straw left to hold on to as a final desperate bid by an otherwise viable and vibrant nation, now visibly getting into a drowning state.

Time is the greatest factor now before we allow the situation to go out of hand again. The amount of distress and agony that we all have gone through for long two years speak volume on our ability, wisdom, foresight, judgement and sincerity in our words and deeds so far.

Could we rightly foresee the destiny we would be heading for if we fail to rise up to the challenge now? One should shudder to mention the only and inevitable end towards which the country is steadily approaching unless it is checked now with all the firmness and power at the hands of all our leaders irrespective of their party affiliation. They must rise above the party interest and take the country as their prime concern. Only then they could salvage the nation from it's present predicament.

dent Biswas has written to the

two political ladies, inviting

them for talks to resolve the

issues. Accepting the Presi-

dent's initiative, Sheikh Hasina

has announced that nonethe-

less the complete shutdown

from Mar 9 will continue till

the overthrow of the Khaleda

Zia government. Such pressure

tactics have failed to dislodge

the incumbents in the past and

there is no real hope that it

will succeed, but it has frozen

economic activity to the

detriment of the country.

Hopefully, the presidential dia-

logue will remain short and

conclusive since the only re-

quirement is a simple agree-

ment on the composition of a

possible caretaker government

and (2) the schedule of elec-

tions. To assuage constitutional

mores, present Assembly must

pass the agreed amendment

without further debate, which

Assembly can then be dis-

solved by the President on the

advice of the PM. Hopefully the

agreed amendment will be a

full blown mechanism that will

avoid political deadlocks in the

future. On the other hand if

the present situation persists

and the economic slide to

apocalypse continues then we

have to fall back on "the Doc-

trine of Necessity" that was

annunciated by no less a per-

sona than US Supreme Court

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes

in his concept of dealing with

"Clear and Present Danger"

where the end justifies the

means when society as a whole

Whither Bangladesh?

round that made, a mockery of Henry Kissinger's scornful dismissal of the country in the 70s as "an international basket-case". Recent visitors were taken aback at the bustling economic activity. seeming to physically overwhelm the poverty in the streets, still quite discernible. Moving away from jute as a staple of the economic diet and shrugging off years of eco-

and psychologically. Bangladeshi entrepreneurs across the broad spectrum have been extremely successful in converting natural skills into profits, contributing to the economic prosperity of the country. Down the line, the masses have benefitted from the economic upturn, a cumulative end-result of pragmatic poli-

Begum Khaleda Zia. Nothing is more delightful to observe than the brimming confidence of the people in their own economic destiny. For a country used to endless misery over the last two centuries because of the vagaries of man and nature, to reach such a threshold of prosperity was by itself a remarkable achievement, a throwback to the era of "Sonar Bangla" (Golden Bengal) pre-19th centtury when Portuguese, Dutch and (later) English traders made a bee-line for a bountiful region that was the breadbasket for the whole of the South

cies by successive govern-

ments under late Gen Ziaur

Rahman, Gen Ershad and lately

The economic progress has almost gone up in smoke in the deepening political feud between Prime Minister

Asian sub-continent.

Khaleda Zia, leading the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Begum Hasina Wajed. Leader of the Opposition by virtue of heading the Awami League (AL), the largest among the coalition of the parties out of government, one of whose components is former President Gen Ershad's Jatiya Party

Just to get our history right, the Khaleda Zia-Hasina Wajed combine had united to bring down then President Ershad only five years ago. In the subsequent elections under a caretaker government, the most free and fair in the nation's turbulent history, Khaleda Zia's BNP had won the most seats, enough to form a squeak-through coalition majority with the help of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI).

During the subsequent legislative sessions no one seriously proposed that the fair mechanism that had husbanded the last elections (in which Gen Ershad won a number of seats by outright margins despite being in jail, winconstituency that the security deposits of his opponents were confiscated) be made law by act of Parliament. On the losing side, on the adage that "the enemy of an enemy is a friend". Awami League soon obtained the support of Ershad's JP, a fallout of the persistent, persecution of the former President by the Khaleda Zia administration. The re-structured Opposition launched a two year-long series of country-wide strike and demonstrations, culminating in the boycott of the Febru-

ASISEEIT Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi ary general elections this year. Affecting total confronta-

tion, almost the entire Opposition had already resigned from Parliament in early 1995, thereby triggering a constitutional crisis of sorts. Not to be outdone in shortsightedness and obduracy, the BNP government made no real move to respond to the demand of the opposition and reach some sort of understanding, to stemthe political and economic rot. To their credit they have yet to succumb to temptation.

a measure of their maturity, their sense of commitment to democracy and a pragmatic appraisal of the new world environment post-cold war which does not look kindly on military rule anymore. Whereas satisfaction can be ning such margins in each taken from attributing mis-

takes made, these cannot be laid wholesale at the doorstep of any one party or individual, each has contributed to the political mess. And who are suffering except the masses. being used as cannon fodder by their political handlers? Streets which were brim-

ming with hope for the future are now sprinkled with blood. the public reconciling themselves to the same miserable lot they have been used to over the centuries, their fate hostage to the shortcomings of their greedy, ego-centric, short-sighted and self-centred

leadership. For the record, the Opposition does not recognise the recently held general elections, wanting this exercise to be conducted under a genuinely neutral caretaker government. Khaleda Zia's answei is that there is no constitutional mechanism to effect this, mainly because Opposition members resigned in the last Parliament and as such the 2/3rd majority required was lacking.

The Bangladesh PM has offered to push through such an amendment with the overwhelming Parliamentary majority she now has (the less said about the modus operandi the better) and then resign and hold fresh polls. Partly because no time schedule was given but mainly because they do not trust her, the Opposition rejected this out of hand. asking the President to intervene, the constitutionality of which is not at all clear A man of law devoted to technical appreciation of the written word rather than the spirit of, the President has not yet obliged To give an example of the state of mutual obduracy, when Begum Khaleda Zia gave a call for a-BNP public meeting on Mar 6: the Opposition declared a hartal (strike). Consequently when she shifted it to Mar 7 to

avoid a confrontation leading to loss of lives, the Opposition decided to observe their closed day on Mar 7. It became a tragic-comedy of sorts when Begum Zia fell back to the Mar 6 date and the Opposition followed her, a singular determination to enter into confrontation, that bodes ill for the future of democracy in Bangladesh.

The Opposition has shown its street strength by repeated (and successful) calls for strikes, virtually closing down Bangladesh for days at an end. It actively tried to sabotage the election from being held by calling hartal on that day. Certainly there was rigging, comparable to the outright coercion by the Opposition to stop them from voting, two wrongs hardly making one right. Given the insecure environment. even this low turnout can be counted as an achievement. Moreover a significant number of people turned out for Khaleda Zia's Mar 6 public meeting despite the Opposition effort in strength to stop it. Translation, while the Opposition has considerable strength Khaleda Zia is no pushover politically, still commanding considerable popularity. The net effect is deep polarisation with Ershad's JP sitting pretty as the possible "Queen-maker", indeed why not a dark horse possible "King"? On the other hand, unless the issues are resolved what is to stop Khaleda Zia (in the Opposition) doing the same to whoever forms the government as is now being done to her administration?

To break the impasse Presi

It is in the interest of Bangladesh that President Biswas manages to resolve the political conflict within democratic parameters before irreparable damage is done to the economy Before Bangladesh falls to a lowly depth.

is put at risk.