

Open, Hopefully Forever

Our country has been closed - closed for production, business, work, studies, seminars, cultural activities. In fact we have been closed for everything except politics. Now we declare ourselves open, and hopefully forever.

As for our immediate future, the challenge is to create a proper climate to hold a free and fair election for which the opposition parties have been struggling for the last three years, and for which the nation had to make such a huge sacrifice.

It is to this difficulty that we would like to draw the attention of all concerned. It will be a huge blunder to think that getting the non-party government in place accomplishes our task.

A Longing for Normalcy

O, how good it is to return to the din and bustle of Dhaka. To the Dhaka of traffic jams and frayed nerves. One felt so free on the first morning of people's victory that one took a long breath filling in the lungs with the noxious black fume that passes for air here.

Over three weeks of asahajog and the long two years punctuated by hartals most people went through a duality of feeling both good and bad at the same time about the same thing - after Neels Bohr's complementarity principle perhaps.

With victory shining bright on March 31 morning that duality was gone. Now is come the time for normalcy. How we now want our days to become ordinary - far from the tensions of time burdened by a sense of duty and taut with intimations of greatness.

It is very good - and democratic - to be ordinary. And it is to ensure that this ordinariness of the people and of the days sustains, special junctures arrive making special demands of the people and their days and lives.

But ordinary does not always mean normal. For one thing, just any other day can hide what is very deceptively normal. Extremes of anger and poverty, the two worst aberrations of human society, look both normal and ordinary in Bangladesh.

The Turin Summit Draws New Map of Europe

The EU members would do well to remember that immigrants in the long run are not a burden. They are assets if properly utilised. They add to the improvement of the quality of life of their own people.

AS the 15-country EU has finished its meeting, most important since Maastricht, on March 29 and 30, one doesn't know if any of the leaders remembered to say the founder of Czechoslovakia.

The Czech leader was a strong believer in democracy as the rule of the people, but he always emphasised no democratic government could function without obedience and discipline.

The EU leaders in Turin have agreed to lend a hand to beleaguered Britain in resolving its problem of mad cow. The EU partners are certainly not unaware of the fact that Britain has always enjoyed itself to the continent during the war times.

There is a great deal of support in the move towards engagement of the Community. British monarch, her majesty

Queen Elizabeth assured the Poles about the British readiness to lend its hand to Poland to the Union. If must have been a historic moment for the Poles, within and without.

Others are not sitting idle. Otto Von Hapsburg, the last in the lineage of living Austro-Hungarian Hapsburg family is making all efforts to get Hungary into the EU.

Others like Malta and Cyprus are being accorded new recognition. Maltese beaches and Cypriot wines are attractive.

Turkey is also knocking at the door. she has been granted some customs facilities but full membership is miles away.

The other major problem that the leaders will have to tackle is the question of decision-making mechanism. Till now consensus is the rule which gives virtually a veto power to any member-state.

principle may be acceptable on all issues excepting such sensitive areas as foreign policy and defence policy.

While the EU will have to grapple with such questions as expansion, voting pattern, greater transparency in decision-making mechanism, the leaders will have to look over their shoulders with regard to the security aspect as well.



Waliur Rahman

is significant.

Europe was left mutilated and prostrate after World War II. The continent sustained two severe body blows. It lost its colonies and it lost Eastern Europe.

These citizens from former European colonies are actively engaged in contributing to the production of goods and services in these countries. But occasionally, spurts of supremacist attacks on them are not too infrequent.

Politics: Nothing Official About It

by Shamsad Mortuza

OF everything that is said and expressed, one can ask: Why? It is the simplest question-word that has the aura of pedantic inquisitiveness, and often idiosyncrasies.

The answer lies in the official move taken by the rival leverage, Coca Cola. Not understanding why the cricketing stars, including one veteran umpire, have started saying 'Nay' to the official drink, the Coke-walas lodge a case against Pepsi.

Our officious guardians, once awarded with the right to rule, can very well boast of their officialdom. They look back only to feel content that the people, though 31 per cent of them to be precise, flooded them with their rights to nurse the infant democracy.

The official holy book, however, is a bit rigid in this matter. It fixes the tenure of the officials and at the end of it there must be an election seeking new mandate of the people.

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Bangl like Walsh and others they yelled 'Nay' to the official move. But the umpire ruled out all the protest and the defending champion went back to the Louis I. Kahn designed pavilion.

A deft official move of holding the election on the eve of some holy holidays refrained the opposition from immediately taking to the streets.

It seems the whole country is engrossed in officialese, in theoretical jargons. When the Opposition leader alleged 'subtle rigging' in 1991, the whole country failed to understand it until it transformed into a gross one in 1996.

Our politicians speak in a language which is far from common people's apprehension. Every night, they flock near their radio sets thinking the overseas radio stations will give an interpretation of the political rhetoric.

The officials feel safe at the thought these distressed mass will form a pressure group against the agitators and they will be able to legitimize their 'official' move.

OPINION

Put the People First

Syed Maqsood Jamil

unlettered in politics could understand that the government adopted the policy of 'rope a dope', as successfully used by Muhammad Ali against George Foreman in 1974.

On the other hand, the opposition stuck to the policy of aiming hard at the pivotal point of the ruling party's power and prestige.

The situation was allowed to drift. Both the forces, the one in power, and the others out of power, pursued one goal, to humble the other. Even the

Shabaash Bangladesh!

Lt. Col. Mohammed A. Latif (Retd)

'SHABAASH Bangladesh!' The world looks at you with awe. That was the first line of a famous poem written by an equally famous poet - Shukanto Bhattacharya.

Five decades later since Shukanto wrote that line, the world still looks at Bangladesh with equal awe and amazement. It is the extraordinary level of sufferings this nation can endure that continues to amaze the rest of the world.

The political stalemate that paralysed the entire nation resulted from the monumental blunder of some of our political leaders who gave more importance of clinging to power over the national priorities.

Bangladesh may be a small country without much economic or strategic clout at the international arena. But today Bangladesh emerged as a great democratic nation with moral power.

The recent crisis was a self-purifying process for the nation. The nation showed an extraordinary self-reliance to find the solution of this crisis on its own.

extraordinary self-reliance to find the solution of this crisis on its own. The foreign mediators came to impose various versions of different alien formulae. But ultimately the nation found its own solution, however difficult and painful it may have been.

Bangladesh today is a proud nation. The name of Bangladesh is now associated with the revolutionary concept of Grameen Bank. A concept that was originated and tested in Bangladesh is now sought after all over the world to bring the poor out of age-old poverty.

The crisis is over. Now is the time to go back to work. The factories will open again. The shops will be busy with customers. Streets again will be full of vehicles.

no fault of theirs. History tells when madness rules, the ordinary are drafted as fodder. The present situation therefore demands reflection of great discipline, conscientious action guided by trust and respect.

To the Editor...

Dunblane and political decency Sir, You must have been seeing the reaction of the British Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition at the sad massacre of children at the Dunblane Primary School in Scotland by a psychotic person.

Stop killing...

Sir, Dr A K M A Quader, Professor of chemical engineering department, BUET, blamed Election Commission (EC) for all misdeeds done on February 15, in his letter 'Stop killing in the name of repolling' published in your esteemed daily on Saturday, March 16, 1996.

Corrigendum

In Sayyeda Tun Noor Sameera's article '1971 - A Tragedy and Its Consequences', published in this page on March 26, 1996, the professor of engineering named as Dr Md Nasser. Actually, it was late professor Dr Nurul Ula of Electrical and Electronics Department of BUET who took pictures of the Jagannath Hall Massacre in 1971.

Dhaka Day by Day

Vive Les Vendors

by Fayza Haq

It is not everybody in Dhaka who enjoys going to the big markets to do his or her shopping. Dilara Khan buys her vegetables from roving vendors near the Abahani Math (playground) and is pleased with herself.



HOW'S DAT?