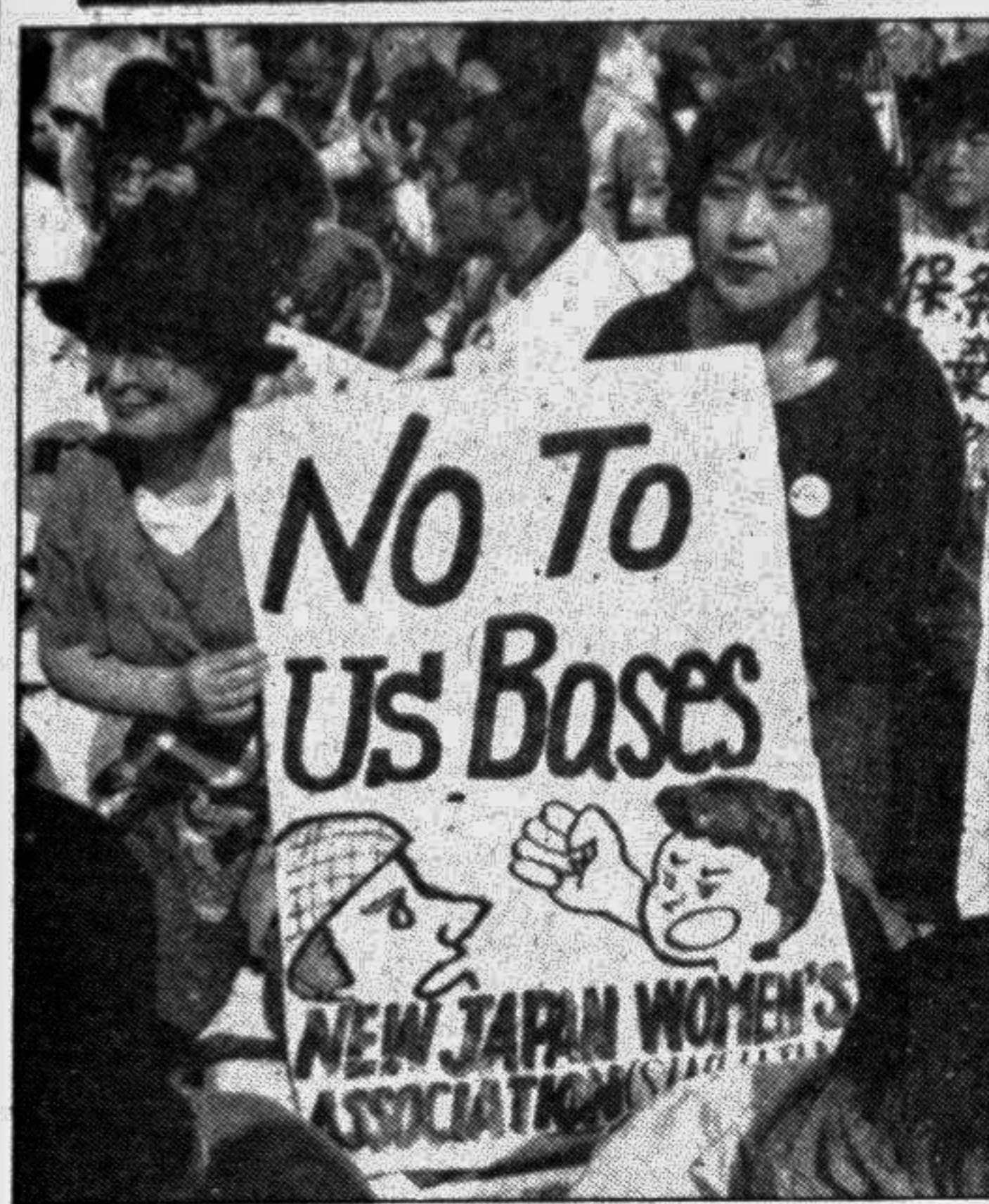


BRIEFLY



Protesters hold banner saying "No To U.S. Bases" during an anti-U.S. bases rally at a Tokyo park 31st on Sunday. Tens of thousands of Tokyo citizens attended the rally and a march in the city to protest against the huge U.S. military presence in the southern Japanese prefecture of Okinawa.

— AFP/UNB photo

Chun, Roh's trial resumes today:

The treason trial of two former presidents resumes Monday, with prosecutors set to grill the former leaders on how they set up martial law in 1980, AP reports from Seoul. The previous three sessions focused on the 1979 military coup that brought former Presidents Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, then army generals, to power. Both have denied any wrongdoing, as have their associates.

Rebels kill Bodo leader:

Suspected Bodo Security Force (BSDF) militants shot dead Baliram Boro, the BSMC (Bodoland Statehood Movement Council) vice president and party nominee for the Udalguri assembly constituency at his residence in Harisinga under Paneri police station of Darrang district last night, according to official sources, PTI reports from Guwahati.

Triplets killed in US road accident:

A semitrailer truck slammed into a family's stalled minivan, killing 3-year-old triplets inside, AP reports from Minden, Iowa.

The girls' father was trying to direct traffic around the van, which was stopped in the passing lane Saturday after hitting a guardrail. The truck was trying to pass another vehicle when it hit the van and pushed it into the median, the Iowa State Patrol said.

Clash leaves 9 killed in Burundi:

Eight rebel Hutus and a government soldier were killed in clashes in Gishubi, the Burundi press agency ABP reported Saturday, AFP reports from Bujumbura.

Fighting broke out Wednesday in the central Burundian region, birthplace of Burundi President Sylvester Ntubunganya.

Guatemalan peace talks end:

Peace talks between Guatemala's government and leftist guerrillas ended in Mexico city on Saturday with no major progress but with both sides optimistic that a breakthrough is possible soon, Reuters reports from Mexico City.

Government negotiators and guerrilla commanders spent three days discussing social reforms to reduce poverty in Guatemala an issue which has held up talks to end the country's 35 year civil war for over nine months.

4 killed in US plane crash:

A single-engine plane crashed into a car speeding down a Massachusetts highway Saturday, killing four people, including a child riding in a car, state police told AFP.

State trooper James Massari said police believe the plane's engine failed and "think the pilot tried to make an emergency landing."

Over refugee issue

Nepali, Bhutanese FM's to meet Apr 4

KATHMANDU, Mar 31: Foreign ministers of Nepal and Bhutan will meet in the Nepali capital on April 4, to discuss the problems of tens of thousands of Bhutanese refugees living in camps in east Nepal, officials said today, reports Reuters.

Bhutan's Foreign Minister Dawa Tshering will lead a four-member delegation for a four-day discussion with the Nepali Foreign Minister Prakash Chandra Laohani, a Nepali Foreign Ministry official said.

The two governments have held six rounds of talks over the past six years.

About 100,000 Bhutanese of ethnic Nepali origin have fled Bhutan since 1990 demanding democracy and ethnic equality. They are living in eight camps supervised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jhapa and Morang district in east Nepal.

Americans divided on burden of immigrants

WASHINGTON, Mar 31: Thirty-six per cent of American voters say new immigrants are a burden on their community services, according to a poll released Saturday, reports AP.

Thirty-one per cent gave recent immigrants credit for making a positive contribution to their community, and 33 per cent said immigrants don't seem to be an issue either way, according to Newsweek magazine. The magazine is publishing the poll in its April 8 issue, which will be on newsstands Monday.

The poll also found that respondents who have witnessed a recent influx of immigrants in their communities — 38 per cent — had more negative views toward immigration.

China opposes bill passed in US Congress

BEIJING, Mar 31: Beijing has voiced strong opposition to a bill passed by the US Congress last week which it says contains anti-China clauses and urged US President Bill Clinton to veto it, reports Reuters.

The Chinese government and people are firmly opposed to and will absolutely not accept such clauses, the official Xinhua news agency quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang as saying. The anti-China clauses pose gross encroachment upon China's sovereignty.

Taliban rocket Kabul: 4 killed

ISLAMABAD, Mar 31: Rebels fired a rocket at a southern suburb of the Afghan capital Kabul on Saturday, killing four people and wounding a fifth, the official Kabul radio said, reports Reuters.

The broadcast, monitored in Islamabad blamed the Taliban Islamic militia for firing the rocket, which it said also destroyed a house at the Chishtioun suburb.

LTTE attacks naval convoy, army base: 54 killed

COLOMBO, Mar 31: Tamil Tiger rebels staged a seaborne suicide raid and attacked a military base in eastern Sri Lanka, raising the death toll on both sides to at least 54 as the army geared for a major offensive, officials said today, reports AFP.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rammed an explosive laden boat against an Israeli built Dvora gunboat escorting a naval convoy off the northern town of Vettalkerni on Saturday, military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said.

He said 10 sailors, including two officials, were killed when the LTTE used a flotilla of eight boats, fitted with powerful outboard motors, to mount the surprise assault against the convoy taking supplies to the Jaffna Peninsula.

A military statement here Sunday said that MI-24 heli-

copter gunships and Puccara ground attack aircraft went to the rescue of the beleaguered navy convoy on Saturday, sinking eight rebel boats and claimed killing 35 Tigers.

And in the island's east, the LTTE attacked two military posts in the district of Batticaloa Sunday, killing three soldiers and six children, officials in Batticaloa, 303 kilometres (189 miles) east of here said by telephone.

Defence analysts said Saturday's attack was a setback to government plans to mount a fresh offensive against the LTTE in the Jaffna peninsula in a bid to wrest control over the entire area before the Sinhala and Tamil new year on April 13 and 14.

"All arrangements are in place to start the offensive. It can begin even tomorrow if the government so wishes," a defence source said, adding

that the Tigers had escalated their attacks to blunt the onslaught.

But the LTTE said that the army was trying to mount a big campaign in the Thendiarachchi and Vadamarachchi sectors of the Jaffna Peninsula and ordered Tamil civilians to leave the region.

Earlier AP says: At least 35 Tamil rebels and 10 sailors were killed when the separatist rebels launched a daring attack on a navy convoy in the sea off Sri Lanka's northeast coast, a military spokesman said Sunday.

Navy fast attack craft and gunships which were escorting the convoy, had repulsed an initial attack by Tamil Tiger rebels destroying two rebel boats. But after the first attack, another column of rebel boats launched the daring attack, said Dunuwille.



A man walks past a building destroyed by shelling in downtown Grozny on Saturday. Russian President Boris Yeltsin is expected to announce measures to bring peace to the rebel Chechnya region.

Perry hails Croatia's pledge on 7 war criminals' surrender

ZAGREB, Mar 31: Defence Secretary William J. Perry applauded Croatia's announcement Saturday that the most notorious of seven indicted Bosnian Croat war criminals will surrender this week. Perry hinted at stronger efforts to bring the most-wanted Bosnian Serb general to justice, too, reports AP.

After talks aboard Perry's plane en route here from Washington and again at his office, Defence Minister Gojko Susak announced that indicted Gen. Tihomir Blaskic would turn himself in Monday to the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands. Susak returned home with Perry after lung surgery in Washington.

Blaskic was commander of the Bosnian Croat forces in Bosnia until his indictment last November. He was charged with leading troops that murdered hundreds of Muslims and torched houses in central Bosnia in 1993. The general is still living in Zagreb and apparently met with Susak shortly before Susak's announcement.

"I talked to Blaskic himself and he still agrees to go to The Hague voluntarily. He will leave on Monday," Susak said. Referring to the six other indicted Bosnian Croats, Susak said, "Whether the others will decide to go, top, don't know."

Perry told reporters he had stressed to Susak that Croatia must cooperate more fully in turning over indicted war criminals or risk losing US support.

Standing beside Susak at a brief Defence Ministry news conference, Perry said Croatia had taken "appropriate action" in getting Blaskic to agree to surrender.

After a Saturday evening meeting with President Franjo Tudjman at a hilltop palace, Perry said he would actively support Croatia's request for membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme that establishes loose links to non-NATO countries aspiring to become full members. But Perry said his support depended on Croatia's "full compliance" with the Bosnia peace accords.

Reuters adds from Sarajevo: The UN War Crimes Tribunal for ex-Yugoslavia has achieved a double breakthrough this weekend in its struggle to obtain cooperation from the former warring factions in Bosnia.

Serbia turned over to a UN War Crimes Tribunal two witnesses to the slaughter of thousands of unarmed Muslim.

Off the Record

Scientists capture colours of universe during Big Bang

LONDON: British scientists have captured the colours of the universe during the Big Bang with a swirling, molten image of oranges, yellows and reds flecked with the darker spots of matter coming into existence, reports Reuters.

The historic image of ripples in the radiation left by the creation of the universe came from a technological breakthrough that gave the radio telescope at Cambridge University unprecedented detail in its mapping of the cosmos.

"This is a real breakthrough because previous photos were on far too large a scale to be really helpful," said Dr Paul Scott, Assistant Director of Research at the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory.

"Now we have for the first time detailed evidence of the kind of structure that will produce the clusters of galaxies we see today," he added.

The picture shows features thought to be the "seeds" of galaxy clusters which formed out of the Big Bang fireball.

Scientists have seen other pictures of the Big Bang's radiation traces, but never before with such detail.

The clarified images strengthen the hand of the scientific school that argued that when the universe came into being about 15 billion years ago, the galaxies began to form where matter and energy joined together.

Hizbollah rockets hit N Israel

Israeli Arabs blast closure of WB, Gaza

BETHLEHEM, West Bank, Mar 31: Israeli Arabs marched and held strikes Saturday to protest Israel's periodic confiscations of Arab land and its month-old closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, reports AP.

In Gaza City, the Palestinian Authority called for an immediate session of the UN Security Council to address the closure, said Yasser Abed Rabbo, a minister under Yasser Arafat.

Israel sealed off the West Bank and Gaza Strip after a series of deadly suicide bombings by Palestinian militants that killed 62 people in Israel between February 25 and March 4. The closure bars thousands of Palestinians from jobs in Israel and is straining the Palestinian economy.

People in 53 Israeli Arab

villages went on strike Saturday, while rallies were held in three villages in northern Israel to mark Land Day, and annual memorial to six Arabs killed in 1976 riots protesting Israeli land seizures. In the Bedouin villages of the southern Negev desert, the Arabs planted olive trees.

Earlier Reuters adds: A second barrage of Katyusha rockets hit northern Israel early this morning slightly injuring one civilian an Israeli army spokesman said.

He said the rockets hit the Galilee Panhandle and Israeli forces fired in return.

Hizbollah guerrillas had fired a first barrage of rockets on Saturday night at Israel after two Lebanese civilians were killed by Israeli shelling. No one was injured in that rocket attacks.

Rao faces rumblings in party ahead of polls

NEW DELHI, Mar 31: Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao is facing rumblings in his Congress (I) Party with general elections less than a month away, reports AFP.

The sudden tremors of disaffection have put the 74-year-old Rao, who is also president of the Congress, in a difficult spot, causing jubilation in the opposition that has vowed to unseat him.

The simultaneous eruption of violence in Kashmir, with the killing of more than 21 Muslim militants by troops on Saturday, has also upset Rao's plans to hold the first elections since 1989 in the Himalayan province.

Rao suffered a damaging blow in the southern state of Tamil Nadu after his party's local leaders rejected his backroom decision to forge an alliance with the region's ruling AIADMK Party led by a former movie star.

The Congress had hoped to contest 29 of Tamil Nadu's 39 parliamentary seats with the AIADMK's backing and leave the rest to the latter. A similar accord in 1991 helped the Congress grab 28 crucial seats in the state.

Within hours of Rao announcing the pact with the AIADMK on Wednesday, Congress supporters in Tamil Nadu launched violent protests, pulling down party flags and burning the premier in effigy.

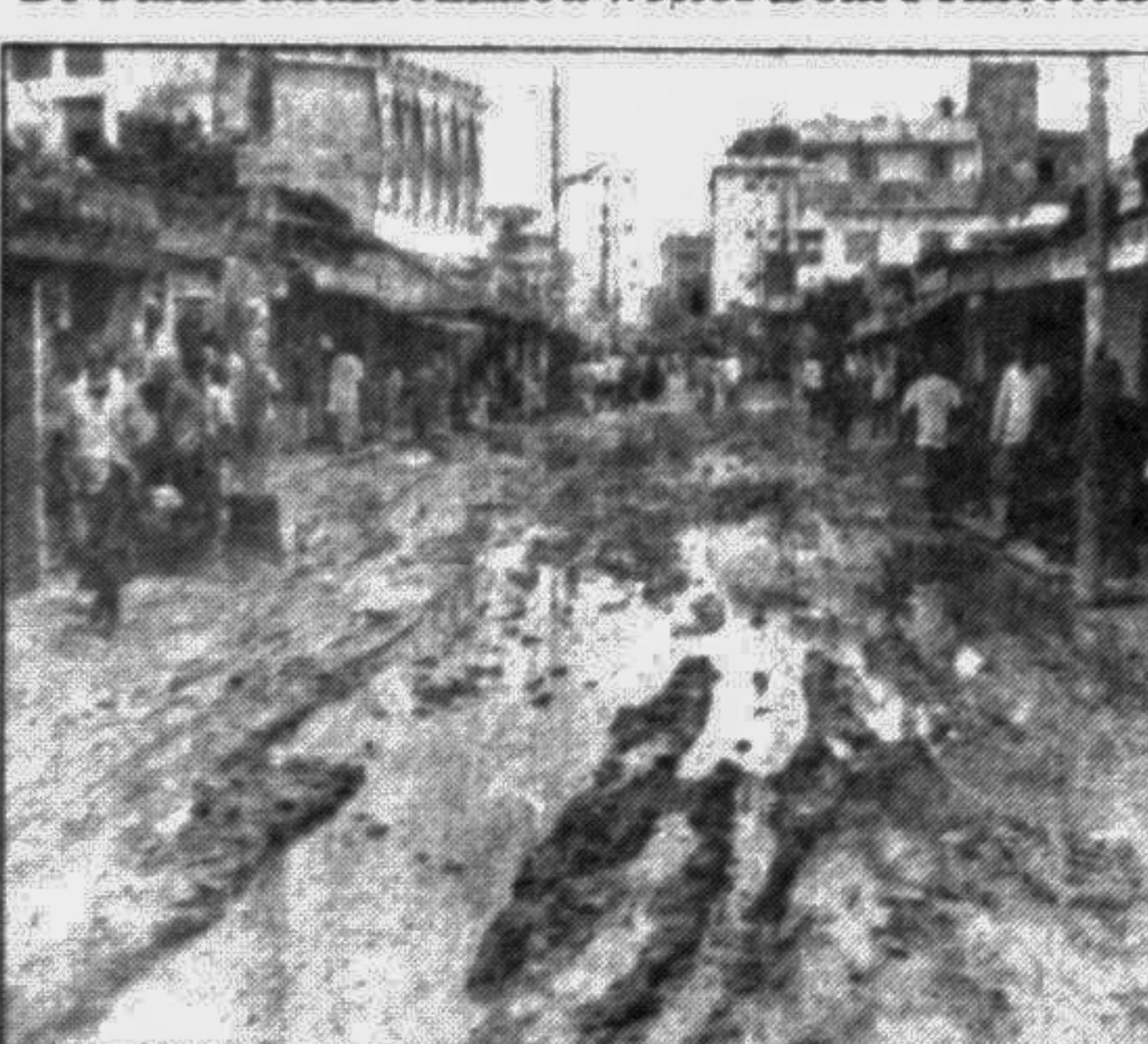
G.K. Moopanar, the top Congress leader in the state of 55 million people, said Tamils were eager to vote out the AIADMK and he would not agree to the alliance.

Congress leaders here have been stunned by the opposition to the election alliance with the AIADMK.

FOCUS

Pollution, Thy Name is Dhaka!

Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton



Dhaka. Concrete bulldozers over ponds. The land cries out for mercy!

Once pristine, Dhanmandi lake has been turned into a filthy "doba". There are rumours that the lake will be filled and sold for commerce. Let us not do it, because it will be a tragedy! The world's largest metropolis, New York City, boasts of a seven square mile park — Central Park — right in the centre of the city! Eco-crimes are irreversible. Whoever has heard of buildings being torn down and turned back into ponds and lakes?

Not so long ago, polluters had killed the Thames around London by dumping raw sewage in it. The stench was so unbearable that disinfecting saline cloth was hung around the parliament building to protect the law makers from the river's fury! Determined Britons have utilized nature's awesome healing power to nurse the Thames back to health. It is now clean and bursting with sea life. If there is a will, the Dhanmandi lake, too, can be easily revived. All we need to do is to inflict Singapore-like corporal punishment on the polluters. (Remember the American kid who was punished in Singapore for spraying graffiti on a car? Seventy per cent of the Americans were delighted that he was flogged!) If common sense prevails, recreational boats, not slopsam and jetsam, could be plying the waters of the Dhanmandi lake — just as in the lake in Central Park, New York!

lible frenzy. No one seems to care. The taxi lobby is too powerful, people say. May be so, but does that give them the right to slow-poison everybody, including themselves? Just because the livelihood of a few thousand people is at risk, does that justify the slow murder of over ten million people and a whole city? Someone, such as a naive expatriate, has to stand up and say "Enough is enough!" If nothing else gets the taxi driver's attention perhaps this should: A visitor or an occasional user of the taxi is exposed to the daily fumes only for a short period of time. He or she must protect himself or herself by wearing a face mask, as the writer did. What about the taxi drivers themselves? They inhale the filth all the time and are at the greatest risk! Surely, there are better ways of making a living than by killing others, and being killed by an invisible, all-encompassing enemy!

Dhaka must clean up its act, literally. The writer knows of many expatriates who develop respiratory ailments upon returning from their beloved home country. These are the ways the body lets us know something is wrong. Either we pay attention, rectify the problem now, or we perish later. There is no pride in inhaling toxic fumes. No one writes poetry extolling its virtue. It is death by stupidity.

The authorities must enforce emission standards and must not allow vehicles that use gasoline and oil as fuel to operate on the streets of Dhaka. In the interim, before they find a new trade, baby taxi drivers can pull rickshaws. If that slows down life in Dhaka, so much the better! After all, it is far better to be slow and living, than fast and dead!

The overriding health hazard in Dhaka is the toxic fumes. After a single trip through the busy streets of Dhaka, an unsuspecting visitor will not only be able to feel, but actually see the black and blue pollution for himself. Baby taxis, trucks and buses spew out exhaust in an uncon-

The writer, a Rhodes Scholar from Bangladesh, currently lives in New Jersey, USA

Till Mistrust Keeps Us Divided

by Ekram Kabir

WHAT happens if a foreign news agency reports, yes, on Bangladesh — "With the political leadership in the country bent on dragging the country down, anxieties about the future are heightened. One way or the other, it was hoped by many, the February 15 elections would be a watershed, but it was nothing of that sort. There is mounting resentment that while ordinary people have to live through hard times, politicians on either side of the barricade are unaffected..."

Well, by now, it's well understood that the politicians are least hurt by it in their conscience, and rather would be sitting more comfortably on their power-cushions, planning for the next possible ego battle. As the February 24, 1996 issue of *The Economist* of London said: "Some observers — usually male ones — claim that the trouble with Bangladeshi politics is that it is run by two women who loathe each other. Their backgrounds are of medieval brutality."

Now, aren't this loathing phenomenon, and the brutality associated with it, supposed to have ended twenty-five years ago when Bangladesh was born as a new, sovereign state? And isn't twenty-five years a period enough for a country to get matured politically, and emancipated economically? An honest — truly honest — retrospection should give clear answer to these haunted questions.

The March 25 genocide of Pakistan in 71 finally changed the course of history which was already in the making right since the Indo-Pak partition. Bangladesh's War of Independence had thrown up a crop of men and women many of whom had never seen a simple 'rice' before in their life. But the historical necessity put them on a pedestal that few in history could reach and were fit to stand on.

Nine months of war witnessed the bravery of students

and peasants, men and women, boys and girls, day-labourers and office-goers who stood against the despotic tyranny of Yahya Khan and his hordes. Some well-known words of Stalin of communist Russia even lose glamour before the 1971 heroism: "It is not heroes that make history, but history that makes heroes. It is not heroes that create a people, but the people who create heroes and move history forward." Like Bangladeshu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had said just before the war: "We shall not die like dogs, but shall die as worthy children of Bangla Maa." And in this regard, he matched the mood of the Bengalee people while involving the 'people' in the greatest event Bangladesh has experienced so far.

Yes, the mood of the people (we) of Bangladesh was always unreadable to foreigners, specially to those who came to rule this north-eastern quadrant of South Asia. On the other hand, it was quite telling that this people were expressive, emotional, sentimental and passionate. In the post-Liberation era, two more aspects have been (possibly) unknowingly added to their character — tolerant and unpredictable.

Tolerant because except for in 1990, they have digested all sorts of political impositions during this quarter-century history. Unpredictable because the mistrust, injected by the post-independence state practitioners who are also infected by it, that presently prevails among them has split them and made them ununderstandable. There's a phrase in Sanskrit scripture — *Atmanang Viddhi* (Know thyself). Yes, the old Socratic one. The last 25 years' socio-political-economic distress 'should' compel one to ask oneself some questions like, "Do I know myself? Do I trust the person who lives next door?"

And finally — Why are we still a basket-case as a nation?

Needless to say that there have been some talk-shop attempts to eradicate poverty by some policy measures that literally excluded 'people'. Frankly, the politicians who kept themselves bracketed into the 'upper-class' never bothered about people. The World Bank — on whose prescription we depend more than anything else — in a recent report on 'The Wealth of Nations' which studied 190 countries, point out that 16 per cent of global wealth comes from the physical capital (buildings, roads, machines), and 20 per cent from natural capital (minerals, forests and other resources). The rest 64 per cent of the wealth is human capital.

In this connection, Bangladesh, sometimes, hopes to become a South Korea. But that particular country invests 130 US dollars per person every year for basic education where Bangladesh's is 'two dollars'. The reason behind this is quite obvious: while students suffocate in windowless classrooms, people's representatives go about in air-conditioned cars.

There are some war veterans who often regret these days for wasting their worth in 71. They say, observing the present socio-economy: "We were financially much more well-off then, and when the Liberation couldn't change our lot, what was the use of all bloodshed?" The question as such is definitely one out of frustration and utter helplessness. When they fought, they didn't fight only to change their economic fate; it was because they felt to be free — to be on their own. The economic frustration followed later on in an independent country with successive unemancipating governments.

While the dreadful economy is one area of concern in once-

dreamt of Sonar Bangla, its destructive politics is another. There have been many evidences — orchestrated in political talk talks — that politics in this country still revolves around personalities, not ideas or institutions. And again, the practitioners of statecraft are very sharp at following, not guiding. The political parties now don't share the same values as was done 25 years ago. Wrestling and grappling over past governance keep on suppressing emergence of the real Bangladesh, which by this time could have become a nation with a capital N on earth.

Doubtless that political pluralism is essential for sustained economic development and it has to be steered by the people's representatives with people's consent, what happened on the contrary is that both — strong political commitment of the representatives and people's participation — have been absent till date. Now, don't the people want to participate? Look around with true intentions, not only in Dhaka but there from where the country's major production comes, and from where the representatives are elected. Those who came across a river of blood in 71 are sweating in hardships (of course, without composing any slogans) which they never dreamt of while fighting.

According to their judgement, the only impediment to Bangladesh's economic emancipation is its brand of politics — mistrust among the politicians and their paranoid stubbornness for power. They are already tired of present-day catch-phrases like 'fair election', 'emerging tiger', 'economic boost' etc. A nominal rise in GDP and a change in election system will not convince them unless their minimum living standard is enhanced. And as long as the negative rivalry keeps the politicians divided, the dream — people's expectations — will never come true.