

Time for Bold Steps

The Indian foreign minister's comment to this newspaper that he will open a new chapter in Bangladesh-India relations during his current visit has created a spirit of optimism in all of us.

To get straight to the point, Bangladesh can show a great deal of understanding in many areas, except Ganges water where the Indian side will have to show the courage and new thinking.

As we understand, the Indian position is that the flow of water at Farakka has decreased to the extent that Bangladesh's demands cannot be met.

There is another point that needs to be made. The actual period during which water sharing really becomes a crisis is maximum 30 to 45 days.

The Indian Foreign Minister and his team must move away from their "mindset", as he had put it, which will encourage us move away from ours.

While we do not expect the solution of all outstanding problems immediately, we definitely expect a very useful, and hopefully dramatic, start towards solving our problems.

Arrest Peace

Hopefully, Dhaka University will reopen on Monday. Fugitive peace, flown out by the report of gunshots, looks set to return to the campus.

We are hopeful because the latest contract of restraint is not exactly a twice told tale. There are one or two features in the ten-point package which look new and effective provided they are stuck to sincerely and generally.

Novelties no longer remain novelties when they get lost in the labyrinth of futile familiarities. The beleaguered process of peace may prove a fragile china if the country's cicqueas react irresponsibly.

A Disaster, Indeed

Hilsa fish worth Tk 2 crore has rotted in three days in the greater Barisal district owing to fall in ice production, says a report.

One reason why the Bengalees are a great fish-eaters without their having either tuna or salmon on the daily dish is possibly that they have one world-beater species — and in plenty.

Recent experience says in a fish-famine condition that began from Hilsa eaters doubling in number from 10 to 20 crore on both sides of Radcliffe Line and the drying up of rivers, it has been only the Hilsa which sustained the Bengalee.

And in such a time, for Hilsa worth Tk 2 crore to rot is nothing short of a disaster. A big shortfall in ice production at the Barguna, Patuakhali and Patharghata plants, all owing to electricity loadshedding, led to this tragedy.

Will the district authorities please look into the matter before the Prime Minister is ultimately need to intervene?

Trade Liberalization and Environment: Friend or Foe?

"In effect, countries suffer from underinvestment in institutional capacity and infrastructure for environment management. The problem is one of underinvestment, in that the averted damages and costs would generously repay the needed expenditures."

THERE is now available a growing literature on the effects of trade liberalization on environment. The success stories of the so-called "Asian tigers" that have displayed robust rates of economic growth for decades with their outward-looking trade strategy have, of late, begun to unveil the negative state of their respective environment.

It is being argued that the boom in exports resulted in the doom for environment and, in consequence, the benefits of trade expansion (mainly through exports) seem to have been partly submerged by the costs in terms of environmental hazards.

Robert Repetto of the World Resources Institute appears to draw our attention to the trade-environment nexus and submit some valuable views on an environment friendly trade regime ("Trade and Sustainable Development" in M G Quibria ed. Critical Issues in Asian Development, OUP). Repetto cited few examples of rapid growth at the cost of environment and figured at Thailand: "rapid industrial growth in Thailand has raised hazardous waste generation to 9 million tons per year in 1990 and industry's share has doubled to 58 per cent in a decade. A four fold increase in the volume of hazardous waste is expected by 2001."

In his thought provoking article, Repetto also succinctly brought to the fore the ramifications of an outward-looking trade strategy on environment in China, Indonesia and some other countries. He views that increased openness to trade invited several problems for China. For example, "industrial waste water discharges more than doubled in the latter half of the 1980s, far outstripping treatment capacities and heavily polluting surface and ground waters... consequently, most of the urban Chinese population depends on unsafe drinking water, with severe health consequences. For example, a massive epidemic of hepatitis A in Shanghai afflicted 300,000 people." Repetto goes on to show that in PRC and Indonesia there continues to be bulge in exports while the critical issue

of environment is kept at bay. Openness of the economy is growingly contributing to some of the world's highest concentrations of fine particulates and sulphur oxides, some of the most acid rainfalls in the world etc. Industrial and household effluent loadings, allegedly, have grossly polluted most urban surface and ground water supplies. In Jakarta, for example, 28 per cent of women and

looking strategies have contributed to a dramatic reduction in poverty to a substantial rise in standard of living of a large fraction of people. The challenge is to ensure that newly created resources and capabilities, are used to contain and diminish environmental pressures. And the challenge can mostly be faced through an arsenal of regulations to contain environmental degradation.

tries generated enormous pollution. Misguided centrally planned management of agriculture, forests and other sectors led to severe resources degradation. What about India? Till the country decided to open up, slow growth in income and high rate of environmental degradation swept Indian society. Pervasive rural and urban poverty, prevalence of out-dated old technologies, lack of effective environmental outlook etc could be added to much of the hazards. But with opening up, chances are that new technologies would pave ways to contain the hazards and institutional capabilities would also rise to the need of the hour. It is, therefore, not correct to argue that an inward-looking trade strategy could necessarily be superior to an outward strategy.

The implication is to adopt an outward looking trade strategy to boost per capita income growth, allow uninterrupted flow of technologies and discourage deep extraction of natural resources. The most interesting observation made by Repetto is that trade barriers in DCs exacerbate environmental pressure in LDCs by forcing them to intensify exports of natural resource-based commodities. Eliminating these barriers would have significant economic and environmental benefits. It follows, therefore, that a freer world economy is likely to contribute to a environmentally better world for mankind. It is where the State should step into for actions.

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes



children suffer from respiratory diseases — an outgrowth of rapid increase in energy use, especially, by vehicle. Should openness of the economy and hence trade liberalization be made responsible for the woes to occur? Repetto tends to hold the view that "these growing environmental problems by no means imply that trade liberalization and its associated outward looking development strategy have been a mistake or are inconsistent with sustainable development." As we are aware, outward-

Available evidence tend to show that pollution control costs rarely exceed two per cent of the value of sales. Problems mount because in most cases, environmental standards are vague, monitoring is inadequate and enforcement is lax, discriminatory or sometimes non-existent. A government can bank on land use regulations to minimize environmental risks. With effective land use controls, ecologically vulnerable and vital areas can be protected, environmentally damaging activities can be restricted to loca-

A group of the "hard core" environmentalists tend to attack outward looking strategies and seem to point to an inward looking strategy as an alternative to contain environmental hazards. Nothing would, possibly, be far from the truth if one hews on that line of argument. Take the case of PRC when, in the years prior to economic reform, it lived with acute environmental degradation. Inefficient state-owned heavy indus-

Improving the Law and Order

by M Arshad Ali

WORK impartially with absolute freedom, arrest and punish the terrorist, whoever he might be. Even a minister giving shelter to terrorists won't be spared. This was the clarion call made by the Prime Minister, timely voicing the sentiment of the broad masses of people who have vested their awful majesty in her to fulfill their hopes and aspirations to lead them to the desideratum. Here she administers to the popular needs by way of a directive to the administration and law enforcing agencies. The directive needs to be carried out in letter and spirit to hold the edifice of the state from falling apart, particularly so when the nation building institutions like universities and colleges are being closed one after another consequent upon acts of terrorism.

ship and no nook and corner, niche and curve is there that is not permeated by law. From the child's primer to the latest newspaper, come within the purview of law. What is necessary is proper enforcement of the law coupled with adequate respect and allegiance that it deserves in exchange of inestimable service it renders. It is in this respect that we have been failing and that accounts for our failure to the flowering of the genius of our people and instead of constructing happy abode of peace we have erected a dark dungeon well-nigh unfit for human dwelling.

sumed such a gigantic proportion that honest and less properties are beginning to find the race of election a competition of inequity. In the educational arena despite the existence of adequate rules, admissions are made on donations and influences to the detriment of the meritorious and of the ultimate good of the nation at large. In many of the top colleges of the country a vast chunk of the seats are doled out to the so-called student leaders who get inferior students admitted either in exchange of illegal gratification or in prospect of netting them within their fold to carry out nefarious designs. Forcible and

quirement of attendance in classes of a certain per cent. Classes are unattended, studies neglected and examinations appeared at through masscopying. In the social plane, the goons and hoodlums have made a conquest over the saner elements. Social conventions were that whenever any feud and altercation occurred in the rural areas those were settled by the elderly people amicably preventing those from taking a serious turn and aggravating into litigation at courts. The village society is now so littered by the thugs and ruffians that the abjectness has put handkerchief to the mouth of the judicious el-

causing erosion in their sense of values like patriotism and pride in the nationhood. In the transport and communication sector which supplies the lifeblood of the economy arson and vandalism have become regular affairs. Extortion, road blockade, frequent strikes have been shocking the system of communication beyond the absorption limit and the poor country's shoulder seems to be breaking down. The inter-city train, for example, does not touch at a particular station, but a goon has to get down there; he pulls the chain and stalks the sideways while the railway police onlook his entire proceeding either unwilling or failing to arrest him giving him a boost for the future. The litte-

shares even in wheat doled among the vulnerable mothers and widows — the poorest of the poor and in the food for education distributed among poorest primary school going children however inhuman these are. We have been accustomed to seeing meetings held in the capital city on its main roads where the Prime Minister with her Cabinet or the Leader of the Opposition with shadow ministry addresses the people to bring succour to them though the resultant traffic jam for hours together may hasten the end of life of persons requiring immediate hospitalisation. Why do we fail to understand little sacrifice weighs ill with immense gain?

We have been accustomed to seeing meetings held in the capital city on its main roads where the Prime Minister with her Cabinet or the Leader of the Opposition with shadow ministry addresses the people to bring succour to them though the resultant traffic jam for hours together may hasten the end of life of persons requiring immediate hospitalisation.

Ours is a democratic polity. In a democratic dispensation the perfect maintenance of law and order is an indispensable necessity. Democracy — the system of governance by the people, of the people and for the people — aims to enable the individual to be his best. This objective of democracy remains unfulfilled unless there is the rule of law to provide for equality not only of justice but also of rights in all spheres of life — political, economic, social and moral. The best possible development of the individual demands the existence of a condition of life which is characterised by peace and tranquillity, for an individual can exercise his talents fully only when he is not only provided with opportunities to do so but also kept undisturbed in the course of continuance of his practice so long as his pursuit does not encroach upon others. The work-place of the individual, and for that matter the entire country since it is the work-place of all the individuals within the national boundary, should be an abode where peace forever dwells, not a pandemonium, chaotic and confusive.

illegal occupation of seats in the residential halls in colleges and universities has been a recurrent feature assuming such a catastrophic proportion that a day hardly passes when one or more institutions are not closed down. Brilliant lives are cut down in the prime, classes suspended in the peak sessions, academic calendars nullified, examinations postponed, session jams labyrinthised, doubling and tripling in the hall seats ensued and above all the law-abiding students and their guardians made to bear the unforeseen and undesirable extra burden of educational costs. The family, the society and the country are deprived of the services of the timely passed out graduates as well as of the optimum utilization of the human and physical facilities that the poor nation arranges and allocates for those institutions. Hoiganism in the educational institutions has rendered normal educational process ineffective so such that the best examinations to select students to be sent up for the public examinations are hardly held not to speak of the fulfilment of re-

quires and tragic scenes are frequently acted upon leading to loss of life and property. Yes, our society has by now mastered Gresham's law that bad money drives good money out of circulation. The rowdy activities have even driven out many village families to migrate to towns and cities adding to floating population and busters. Society is often made dumb witness to heinous incidents of even minor girls being raped and murdered, the houses looted ransacked and burnt, the inmates assaulted, tortured and violated. Terrorist elements in the industrial areas are found to be engaging in actions that unmove the wheel of production not infrequently. The poor country loses outputs, the import bill rises, the foreign exchange dwindles. The factories become sick, the banks suffer from defaulters and the people from unemployment. The country is flooded with foreign goods and the people are made to suffer from a guilty conscience that there is something wrong with them, that they are incapable of producing even pins

faqe dated 31-8-96 carries an appeal of the Ghabti Dhaka Cattle Merchant's Multipurpose Co-operatives Society urging upon the Prime Minister to save them from the clutches of the extortionists so that the people can buy each cow at least Tk. 2000 less with which the businessmen are bound to appease the greed of the anti-socials during transit. Undue tolls are collected on roads by both mustans and police. In the field of development works lion's share of funds are being grabbed by the musclemen enjoying the patronage of the so-called leaders. Murders are committed as a result of row over distribution of construction booty. Failure to satisfy the demands of extortionists keeps development works suspended beyond time limit resulting not only in the escalation of costs but also in the detraction of the quality of work. Very few people in the cities and towns undertaking house building work are taking possession of newly purchased land have escaped the paws of the extortionists. The hoodlums must have their

All these and many more crimes that render listing impossible here can be adequately combated if law is allowed to take its own course. Cross dams are, however, raised to the free flow of law by persons wielding power both inside and outside the government and the society is silted up resulting in desertification which cannot but by non-congenial to life. Peace and stability which sustain life are only possible if the government enforces law completely unbiased and the major opposition extends co-operation whole heartedly simultaneously. And herein the importance of consensus between the two. Consensus on this issue is alone potent enough to bring the desired change on the face of the nation and consensus on this issue will have reason to open avenues for the same on others thereby fulfilling the dream of the nation. Hopefully, both the parties are talking in this line. May their profession wed with practice.

The writer is Inspector of Colleges (off), DU.

To the Editor

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Reaching out

Sir, Banga Bir Kader Siddiqui's heart warming gesture in the Jatiya Sangsad in paying tribute to Ziaur Rahman has set a good example which the high officials of AL should follow. It has been appreciated by BNP and eased the tension to some extent. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina must understand that, while in power, one of her prime functions is to reach out to the Opposition BNP with some noble gestures and try to heal the enormous wound her party had inflicted on the economy and the polity as a whole during the period of agitation lasting over two years. In the name of democracy what AL had committed will require pages to describe. The amount of abuse that they showered on BNP in public meetings and in graffiti is nobody's business. Even the President, powerless as he was, was not spared. AL made mockery of the fifth Jatiya Sangsad. Such vital national issue as election under caretaker government was not even raised inside the Sangsad. They spurned all offers of talks and shifted their stand frequently so that no negotiation can succeed. In fact, they availed every opportunity to bait and humiliate the BNP Government. In do-

ing so AL virtually damaged the economy and image, bad as it was, of the country. In real life, one does not forget humiliation easily. Being out of power, it will indeed be noble of BNP if they do not try to pay back AL in the same coin. People will appreciate even more if BNP, considering the country's economy and image, confine their firework inside the Sangsad as an Opposition party, playing positive role. Sheikh Hasina's grandiose schemes will not succeed if she does not get some measure of cooperation from the opposition. In 12 June election, people had voted AL to power after 21 years. It was only to give it another chance out of guilty feeling and sympathy that Bangabandhu was so brutally assassinated along with so many of his family. Sheikh Hasina's demonstrative humility and sanctimonious get up had also helped. Now is the time for her to reach out to the Opposition in goodwill to arrive at a modus operandi — AL must appreciate that BNP has deep roots in the country and many of their stalwarts had commendable contribution in our War of Liberation and later in nurturing the democratic institution. Without doubt, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

remains our undisputed leader, head and shoulder above others, but Ziaur Rahman has had solid contribution in our national heritage. In spite of AL agitation for the last two years, the BNP government has solid economic achievements to show. All these undeniable facts should be openly admitted by AL and only then the wound will start to heal. Khaleeda Zia must be given chance to speak inside the Sangsad so that she does not have to take it to the street like AL did before. Iskandar Meah Gulshan North, Dhaka

"Have you seen..."

Sir, Thank you very much for publishing "Have you seen this — Mr Mayor." It should be continued until the problems are solved. Thank you once again. A reader, Dhaka

"Daily Star's stand"

Sir, I endorse my heartfelt gratitude for giving me some space in your "To the Editor" column on August 23, 1996 for the letter I had captioned "Have you seen this...?" On that very day your Weekend Magazine carried a cover story "The Killing of a Lake". Bere the story began, it was in bold letters printed: "Dhannondil Lake offers only tales of... cattle raising and..." But on that very evening, walking around the lake, I failed to see any cattle head un-

like the past years. No cow dung, no polluted atmosphere! Who would believe that cattle head roamed the Dhannondil lake for years together and then used to be reared in and around the area. Incidentally, the cattle head disappeared two days before August 23, 1996 came! The front-page picture on August 24, 1996 (DS) captioned: "Rain or no Rain..." is a very excellent example of good journalism and fairness of the print media. Your provocative caption in the past may have pleased many but surely it betrayed the very norm, following which is the sacred duty of a newspaper. And, in reply to Mizanur Rahman's letter of August 25 under the caption "Daily Star's Stand" I can honestly say: "It is better to be offensive (in writing) when someone is being provocative, rather than start shooting bullet and killing innocent people of this beloved nation! Thanks for allowing all these writings." Let us pray that law and order situation become normal and life turned into happiness with sufferings of the common people staying at bay in a country where rain water keeps destroying our roads and the habits of some citizens worsen the situation all the more. And attention is being drawn to page 3 of August 26 (DS) about "Road works being carried out at a by-lane in... Naya Paltan area." And, on August 26, 1996... "Mr Mayor..." reappears, as already mentioned. And the DS did not caption it with that heading instead at the bottom of the picture there was something that reads: "For months... deliberately avoiding the

words "for years" (it would be interesting to let us know for how long the Gullistan bus terminal remained in that pitiable condition). Nahtasha Kamal Wart, Dhaka

Ban student politics

Sir, I refer to the editorial entitled "Fairness is the Key" published in the Daily Star of 26 August 1996. Without mentioning whether or not one should be partisan in his approach to solve the campus violence I would like to say that for the development of the country we don't need students politics. In fact, we have seen too much of students politics in our country. In no other country of the world, student community becomes so much involved in state affairs as, unfortunately, in ours. There are many countries even in Asia where the students are not doing any politics at all. In fact in countries like Malaysia, Singapore etc. it is unimaginable that the student community is doing any politics. In those countries there is no session congestion; only one way traffic in so far as academic session is concerned. No session is stopped and delayed. Everything goes smoothly. Students do their studies only and nothing else. But in the name of student politics our wards in educational institutions are doing the job of killers, snatchers, being abused by so called leaders in exchange of money, etc. They do so many ugly things as they have lot of time to do so, as they do not study at all. The re-

sult has been tremendously harmful. Should we not ban student politics altogether for the sake of the country?

Can the 12 crore people of the country become so brave to say the truth so loudly?

A Concerned Citizen Noorjahan Road, Moham-madpur, Dhaka

The Speaker's responsibility

Sir, After the Bengali news on the BTV many people watch the proceedings of the Parliament will disgust. Very often we are aghast to watch the obnoxious behaviour of few MPs who claim to be our representatives. They often go beyond the parliamentary norms with very personal attack to one another. I have seen the proceedings of many European parliaments. But never had I witnessed such irritant behaviour. Instead of watching their activities helplessly the honourable Speaker has sergeant-at-arms at his disposal to throw the recalcitrant and disturbing MPs out of the House. Such instance will discipline them and only then decency and decorum will prevail in the Parliament. G M F Abdur Rob New DOHS Mohakhali, Dhaka