

Aid Disbursement

The most tangible proof of dividends reaped from a largely trouble-free atmosphere is provided by the news that aid disbursement in the first quarter of '96-'97 has exceeded the corresponding levels of last four years.

The other factors attributed to this auspicious uptick in aid disbursement are improved showings in project implementation and the largesse of big fund releases. But are these not germane to political stability itself?

The World Bank is to be thanked for their marked spontaneity in making large payments under four very important credit programmes.

Smaller projects are also receiving a good deal of attention from the multilateral or bilateral aid-givers. This is amply illustrated by the record availability of funds to agriculture projects — at 6.08 per cent of the undisbursed opening balance during the first quarter of 1996-97 outstripping the average 1 to 3 per cent during the preceding four years.

Much as the donor community has been critical of our limited aid absorption capacity which created a pipeline bulge, we for our part, have complained of procedural rigidities imposed by them.

The bottom-line though is that there is no substitute for efficient project implementation.

Flood of Fake Certificates

The seizure of more than six lakh forged certificates, mark sheets etc. of different universities and education boards by the police comes as an alarming news. The report carried in a Bangla daily says that the organised gang involved in the forgery of documents has already made a fortune amounting to crores of takas.

However, a few measures can be of help. To identify the employees—both in government and private services—who had used fake educational documents for appointment, the authorities can ask everyday under their employ to produce their original certificates once again for verification.

As for dealing with the racketeering, the police have done a marvelous job by unearthing a factory and a press so long used for the purpose. Five of the gang members have also been arrested.

Planning Flaws

The Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) had to lift huge concrete slabs weighing at least two tonnes each and leave them tangentially two feet above the level they had originally been on the storm sewerage of the Panthopath.

The problem arises because the engineers responsible for construction of the tunnel did not have any idea that methane and phosphine could be produced inside. This is exactly happening now.

So, here is a problem of not planning things. When a danger is imminent, the instant reaction is to deal with it by a piece-meal solution, no matter if that turns out to be an invitation for other kinds of danger.

We are now used to pot-holes but when a whole chunk of road gets dented and continues to precariously dangle, we know how the contractors or engineers had compromised with the quality of construction materials or the original design.

The Dream that Failed

Moscow is opulent and relaxed. Religion, opium for masses, is beginning to recast its spell. Why did a mighty country like the Soviet Union break into pieces? There are many reasons why it happened.

capitalists' and blood-sucking imperialists' have won. Not only that they are dependent on them — America and Germany for trade and the World Bank and the IMF for local currency loans.

Even this humiliation would not have got them down if their standard of living had not deteriorated. Nearly 35 per cent of them live below the poverty line.

So hard up are scientists and technicians that nuclear experts have been found serving as chauffeurs and night guards. It is said that if a vehicle in Moscow is not government's, it is available as a taxi.

Still, Moscow is opulent and relaxed. Religion, opium for masses, is beginning to recast its spell.

Why did a mighty country like the Soviet Union break into pieces? There are many reasons why it happened. One, it is not military competitiveness which left very little for economic development.

Moscow preferred bullet to bread to stay as a super power. But man does not live by bullet alone. Two, it was the ambition of the Soviet Union with the break up of Pakistan.

Of further collapse. That is the reason they are not letting Chechnya to secede. "Once it goes, many other regions will follow," says a political commentator.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

of communist leaders in various republics that ripped the country apart. They wanted to be prime ministers and all that went with the office.

One historian in Moscow compared the disintegration of the Soviet Union with the break up of Pakistan. His argument was that if Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had accepted the prime ministership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the country would have remained one.

165 million tonnes of the erstwhile Soviet Union is down to half. The fall is not so much due to the loss of acreage but due to farmers' lack of interest as well as paucity of inputs.

Today the Russians are afraid of further collapse. That is the reason they are not letting Chechnya to secede.

Gorbachev is the most neglected, if not hated, person. He is held responsible for the plight in which Russians are today.

This is apart from the money which is embezzled or misappropriated. Official figures are that the Chechnya operation has cost \$ 2 billion. Responsible statements have been made to allege that 90 per cent of the amount has gone into certain pockets.

Rethinking Indo-Bangla Relations

by Brig (Retd) M Abdul Hafiz

Gujral in his characteristic way made some noble gestures and lofty pronouncements during his visit and touched upon some of the fundamentals of Indo-Bangla relations when he repeatedly told us not to be the 'captive of the past'. Indeed, we must be able to part with the past and face up the challenges of the future.

IT is typical of Inder Kumar Gujral, the redoubtable External Affairs Minister of India. He can easily cast a spell of optimism, as he did during his recent visit to Dhaka, in absence of anything corporeal.

also in the past and they seldom lacked in diplomatic niceties and social pleasantries although Gujral seems to have scored the full mark. He abundantly indicated his government's willingness to resolve all outstanding problems with Bangladesh thus bringing about a 'new chapter' in our relationship.

about to elapse it had been virtually the never never land of Indo-Bangladesh relationship. Gujral's short trip? While we have to wait for sometimes to find an answer, he has however been able to generate quite some trusts in Bangladesh which, at the receiving end, would earnestly hope that those trusts are not misplaced.

its election plan was to condemn BNP for its inability to get even a litre of lean season water from the Ganges during its five years of rule.

Every nation has its own vital national interests to defend and can have its own perception of security. It was tended to be denied in South Asia where an undeclared Monroe doctrine was in place to ensure India's overlordship of the region since the exit of the British from the sub-continent.

To the Editor

The BRAC question Sir, Mr Tajul Islam's response (26 September) to Mr Lutful Quadir's letter is ingenious as well as disingenuous. Some observations: Self-reliance is an admirable aim but the path thereto must be realistic and based on the basic ideals of the Gospels.

deal of good and BRAC's founder CEO is among the most plausible and pleasant person one will have the fortune to meet.

Harun Azim Banani

Right and wrong

Sir, Immediately after winning the general elections under a caretaker government, the Awami League — which returned to power with people's mandate long after 21 years — blamed the then ruling party BNP for all ills in the country for last five years.

Now that the Awami League government is only 100-day-old, most of its ministers, MPs and some top bureaucrats have started accusing all previous governments of past 21 years for all types of ills in the country.

OH Kabir 6, Hare street, Wari, Dhaka-1203

Unnecessary changes in administration

Sir, Massive reshuffle is going on in every sector from the day the present government was formed.

BRAC has been doing a great deal of good and BRAC's founder CEO is among the most plausible and pleasant person one will have the fortune to meet.

But, my question is, who are these persons whom the Prime Minister is giving appointments? People have no doubt that those are the active members of the Awami League or have given their allegiance to the ruling party.

So, is it not itself an act of 'Dajali Karan'?

Nur Jahan 1390, East Nastrabad, Chittagong

Statistics of road accidents

Sir, I like to bring to your notice about the data published in your newspaper on 22nd September (Page 2) regarding rate of fatality stated to be 55 persons per 10,000 vehicle for the year 1995 in Bangladesh as per the study conducted by BRTA which appears to be very much on the low side.

M Bazlur Rahman Ex Addl. Chief Engineer, RHD, House No. 9C, Road 13A, Uttara, Dhaka.

Joint venture

Sir, Publicity is being made for the past several weeks in respect of joint venture projects with China since the Prime Minister came back from an official tour to People's Republic of China.

Justice Shahabuddin. But till today, no interest on debenture as promised in the prospectus, has been paid.

The paper mill is yet to be streamlined though China has the experience and paper-making even before the birth of Christ.

Under the above facts, let the new government punish the culprits according to the law.

Ahmedul Alam 14, Eskatun Garden, Dhaka-1000

Japan, not India

Sir, Two Asian countries — Indian and Japan — are trying to become permanent member of UN Security Council.

India has already turned the northern part of our country into desert by building embankments on the upstream of 57 rivers. They have handed over Tinbhiga to us though we handed over Berubari as per the treaty, they occupied Talpatti illegally and they are allegedly assisting Shantibahini by supplying arms.

AM Nazmul Haq 5/42 New Khanpur, Narayanganj

Art Buchwald's COLUMN Dole-ing Out Taxes

WHAT this country (US) needs is a balanced budget, a tax cut and a chicken in every pot. The one person who can deliver all this is Bob Dole.