

BNP's Preconditions

First the 10-point condition, and now the three-point precondition by the BNP to return to the parliament, basically, makes a mockery of the whole purpose and function of the parliamentary process.

Yet, we have to try our best to make the parliament function and go forward as best as we can. With that end in view, let us examine the BNP's three preconditions and see if we can go forward from there.

BNP's second precondition is that the government should start implementing the 10-point demand. Among the issues raised in the 10 points, the one to which we can immediately lend support is the demand for full TV coverage of parliament's proceedings.

As for congenial atmosphere — the BNP's third precondition — both sides will have to contribute so that no one can singularly be blamed for the deteriorating quality of our parliamentary debate.

But the real thing is sincerity. The BNP appears dangerously resolved to pay the AL back in its own coin. If this behavioural pattern remains unchanged, national interest is going to suffer, as it always does when partisan interest becomes superior to the national one.

Return of Farida

Farida, 41, was lured to New Delhi by women traffickers from her village in Barisal three years ago. There she soon got caught and landed in Tihar jail of the Indian capital.

We congratulate the Bangladesh Jatiya Mohila Ainjibi Samiti (BJMAS) for the role it has played in making this happen, and also all organisations and individuals who have helped Farida to regain her freedom.

The task before us is now two-fold. First, to make certain that Farida's ordeal is finally over. Whatever needs to be done to rehabilitate her must be done, including giving her skill training to enable her to pursue an independent career.

Secondly, we must learn from Farida's case and do everything we can to get many other similar victims of women trafficking out from prisons in Pakistan, India and probably the Middle East. These unfortunate victims of our extreme poverty are languishing in foreign prisons without any help.

Absurd Deaths

How safe are the city footpaths from the swooping cold hands of death? Years back, the news editor of a leading Bengali daily was looking for a vehicle to hire, standing on a particularly safe footpath near the Ramna Park area.

Traffic accident toll of life and property has gone up steeply. We have written tons and tons about these, recommending measures that can inhibit the frequency of both accident and death. The nation has availed nothing of that.

Three lives. Now they are not. Someone must take the blame. Who if not the driver and his vehicle? Such things go on happening because we do not put value on an individual's life and because traffic deaths are not proceeded against with persistence and insight.

Share Market: The Tragic Magic?

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months back, the demand for shares and debentures in stock markets reached astounding heights. The All Share Price Index of DSE, reportedly, increased from about 1194 in the second week of October 1996 to about 3416 in the first week of November.

severs might not succeed in the face of unprecedented hike in share market. Land and non-land fixed assets also might lose their good days.

In a recent article in this page Kabir U Ahmed cited a few contributory factors to this phenomenon. These are (a) expectation; (b) reduction in capital gains taxes in the budget; and (c) demand for shares lagging behind the supply of the

There are, for example, licensed brokers who do not have offices and small investors have to buy shares from the streets. There is allegedly acute shortage of facilities in the market. There is lack of transparency in the whole transaction process.

The Securities Exchange Commission should be strengthened further through revitalizing its structure. There should be provisions for independent auditing since the present auditing system is not transparent. Besides, the government has a definite and positive role to play in this respect.

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First, as far as possible, they should diversify their purchases. In other words, they should never put all their eggs in one basket. Second, they should educate themselves through examining the respective balance sheets of the firms whose share they are aiming to buy.

By and large, the recent surge in the share market is a good news for us. The industrial enterprises in Bangladesh should raise more funds from the public by floating shares. The health of an economy is reflected by the various options of portfolio adjustments.

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes



Tk 242 billion over the same period. Needless to mention here that the unprecedented growth in prices, volume of transaction and market capitalisation — all happened despite SEC's imposition of circuit breaker by one-tenth. Deposits in organized financial sectors is virtually threatened by the onslaughts of deposits and withdrawals and these institutions are now awaiting heavy liquidity crisis in the coming days.

The factor has both political and economic dimensions. People in general, as told earlier, expect that the new government has come to stay for five years. On the other hand, it is expected that the supply constraint that seemingly pervades the market might not evaporate overnight so that growing pressures are being injected into the share market.

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Looking Back — into the Past

When Gandhi wrote to Jinnah to enquire: 'Are you still the same Mr Jinnah... the staunchest of nationalists and the hope of both Hindus and Muslims?' he wrote back: 'Nationalism is not the monopoly of any single individual and in these days it is very difficult to define it.'

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

actions are not in conformity with its words. A Muslim League committee from Bihar in the Shereef Report was more acerbic and gave an account of atrocities perpetrated by Hindus at various places in Bihar.

By this time Jinnah had already joined issue with Mahatma Gandhi and Mahan, and had given ample evidence that he wanted to plough a

OPINION

Bangladeshis — a Forgetting, Forgiving Lot!

Onlooker

I have been an avid reader, fond of anything that is printed and make sense. In short, you can say that reading is my passion. But I have never been anywhere near writing, because that calls for style, knowledge, command over language, reasoning and many other hidden qualities.

been arrested for possessing illegal arms. (I believe, from her possession they found Col. Rashid's licensed arms). She has been taken on remand for questioning. Then my question is whether the licensed arm of husband can be kept at home during temporary absence of the husband or need to be deposited somewhere. What is the legal position? Let the police give out the finer points, or else many of our wives may also be subjected to such actions.

I was pleasantly surprised by a point raised by Maj. (ret'd) A Hafiz (VF), MP which resulted in a very lively debate on the floor of the Parliament. The point raised: "Two persons jailed for having taken active part against liberation war are now Ministers". The "two" are certainly sweating, but what about other members of the government party, who failed to recognise them, even failed to protest the induction of the two. Surely in government party majority of them are Freedom Fighters. (Forgetful/forgiving lot we are!)

When the civil servants were introduced the main theme must have been to have an efficient lot, who will run administration properly. Warlords would come and go but the mandarins in China were a class by themselves. In Bangladesh, we had inherited the civil service from Pakistan, who in turn inherited it from the British. Objective was same. But what we witness in Bangladesh is overzealous civil servants, who tend to go beyond the call of duty. Mr Waliur Rahman, in his recent article "Politics and Pilgrimage" printed in The Daily Star has tried to belittle the ex-Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. I must admit that is the right attitude of a civil servant. Serving the present might help him to get his job back. But how will he be able to negate the vision of those who had seen him visiting/frequenting the office and residences of the then PM and FM and spending hours and marshalling support for his own needs. The Daily Star editor should not be that forgetful of the articles this gentleman wrote against SAMS Kibria's comments trying to support the then government's stand during non-cooperation movement. (Forgetful and Forgiving lot we are!)

Now let me make a few comments with reference to articles published in the weekly "Holiday" dated 11 Nov. 1996. A renowned journalist like Mr Ataus Samad in his article "What is Or is Not Fit to print" has elaborated how journalists are commenting about other members. He talked about owners avoiding printing the truth. All I can say "go back to January, 1975 and you will get the answer." We have elected this government. (Forgiving and Forgetting lot we are!)

The article titled "Foreign Ministry's Woes" by Yasmin Chowdhury, associate professor, has really impressed me. The systematic synthesis leave hardly any doubt about the au-

thenticity of the write-up. The chronological details given in her commentary really takes the readers by surprise. Being one such reader my only comment is that she brings miles away — how is it possible for her to have such insight. Two possibilities — one that she has been fed by someone of Foreign Ministry or the other is that she may be serving in the ministry in cognito. If my both contentions are wrong, then she is really a research scholar. Be it so then she will also have good knowledge of Indian Foreign Service. In India most of Foreign Secretaries, before taking up assignments, have been those who served in the neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, etc. in last stages. Mr Dubey, Mr M N Dixit, Mr Srinivasan are few of them. Then why is it in Bangladesh Foreign Service posting in Washington, London, Paris, etc. appears to be so important? In order to keep the SAARC spirit alive, as commented by the PM recently, it is all the more reason for us to keep experienced senior ambassadors in and around Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh politics it is always the practice to condemn the previous regime. Therefore, I strongly contest against anyone who says that our PM is overlooking. She has to try to keep her politics and aims on course. She has every plausible ground to say that her previous government's policy has led to all the bad things that are happening in the country be it economy, law and order or any other issues. If I can recollect every Home Minister at the time of taking over invariably have assured us that he would ensure a better law and order situation. The present incumbent only recently in the Parliament has assured the members in an emotional choked voice that he would take a neutral stance in matter of who commits lawlessness. Bravo! saying in the Parliament at least assures me of his sincerity. Now the question arises whether he will be able to do so being a member of a party. In a party government, the biggest problem the Home Ministry faces is from within. Moreover, the law enforcing agencies, who have since liberation served different governments, on arrival of a new government, would try to prove that they are holier than thou. This results in the embarrassment of the Government. (I would like to warn the Hon'ble Home Minister by saying — be careful or else you will also prove my point! We are forgetful lot!)

Bravo! The Hon'ble Prime Minister! at your intervention, postings of five customs officials have been "stayed". Their fault was that they stood up against pressure from some influential minister to do something unethical. So far so good. Now the question arises, why only "stayed", when PM thinks it was wrong? We hope this action will not die down in the gallery, instead people are expecting to see some fireworks even against such ministers. (Let it prove my contention wrong at least once.)

LEAVE the Muslims alone," warned Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League president. His words were directed against Jawaharlal Nehru, president of the Congress Party, which had members of all communities, including Jinnah at one time. Nehru's sarcastic reply was: "What does the Muslim League stand for? Does it stand for independence of India?"

And Nehru himself went on to answer the question. "It represents a group of Muslims, no doubt highly estimable persons, for functioning in the higher sections of upper middle-classes and having no connection with the Muslim masses and few even within lower middle-classes." His last sentence was acerbic: "May I suggest to Mr Jinnah that I come into greater touch with the Muslim masses than most members of the League."

Jinnah neither forgot the words nor forgave Nehru for having uttered them. Instead, he dug in to muster support of the Muslims so that the League would have them all. He approached different provinces. The exclusion of the League from the Congress UP government after the 1937 elections had already reaped Jinnah a big harvest. Influential leaders like Khaliqzaman, who still worked for amity between Congress and the League, were now firmly on Jinnah's side.

It was Liaquat Ali Khan, who later became Pakistan's first prime minister. The biggest catch was Raja of Mohmadabad, a landlord who earned Rs 2 lakh a year at that time. He was appointed the League's treasurer and stayed in office with the formation of Pakistan.

It was at his house that Jinnah found a black Persian lamb cap, which he wore and which came to be known as 'Jinnah cap'. It was distinctively different from the khadi 'Gandhi cap'. Anything different, anything that made him convey a separate entity was to Jinnah's liking.

Knowing that UP was already in his bag, he went to Calcutta where the two state Muslim Leagues were vying with each other for supremacy. He was able to get Dacca's United Muslim League party in his League and brought into its ranks such leaders as M S Suhrawardy and Khawaja Nazimuddin. The first became Pakistan's prime minister and the other its governor general. Fazlul Haq, the Bengal premier, and his Krishak Praja Party (peasants and tenants party) were a hard nut to crack. He first joined the League but left it to have a separate entity. When he realised that he would lose the government, he joined the League. Jinnah could not pull

out the same arrangement in Punjab. Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, prime minister of Punjab, was too powerful and too entrenched to be taken lightly. His Unionist Party, which had a majority in the Punjab legislature as against two members of the League, had also Hindus and Sikhs as its members. The League, articulating the cause of Muslims, could not admit a party with secular outlook. But Jinnah could not afford to lose Punjab, heart of Pakistan, its core. Bengal was all right but too distant. Jinnah made a compromise. For Sikandar Hyat Khan's 'Yes' to his leadership, Jinnah gave full autonomy to the Unionist Party. The League could accommodate within its party a secular party. It was a peculiar arrangement. But if Jinnah wanted the Unionist Party and, above all, Sikandar Hyat Khan, this was the price he had to pay.

Irked by Congress, he was willing to do so. I was a student at that time. A few of my Muslim friends described how Jinnah sat glum and lonely when the council of the Muslim League passed the resolution for Punjab's autonomy with thunderous cheers. Jinnah's plan was to bring all Muslim leaders on one platform to prove to Congress, more so to Nehru, that the League or, for that matter, he represented the Muslims — and he alone. He went about his business relentlessly and with an evangelist-like zeal. Compromises did not matter.

Once the best ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity Jinnah was now an inveterate separatist. He said in his presidential address to the Lucknow meeting in 1937 that the Congress governments "were pursuing a policy which is exclusively Hindu" and that "the Mussalmans cannot expect any justice or fair play at their hands." He declared: "The present leadership of Congress, especially during the last 10 years, has been responsible for 'alienating the Mussalmans of India more and more, by pursuing a policy which is exclusively Hindu'."

A year later, he appointed an inquiry committee to report on the emotions and commissions of the Congress governments — the Hindu Raj, as he used to say. What came to be known as the Pirpur Report (since the chairman of the probe committee was Raja Sayed Mohammed Mehdi of Pirpur) said that the Congress failed "in spite of its oft-repeated resolution of guaranteeing religious and cultural liberty to the various communities because its

actions are not in conformity with its words. A Muslim League committee from Bihar in the Shereef Report was more acerbic and gave an account of atrocities perpetrated by Hindus at various places in Bihar.

We doubt these reports were exaggerated but they did reflect the mood of the Hindus at that time. After hundreds of years of subjugation, first by Muslims and then by the British, Hindus did feel emancipated even though they were enjoying only limited self-rule. And there were instances to show that chauvinistic trend, that had long been dormant were coming to the surface.

Maulana Azad, a Congress leader in his book, India Wins Freedom, criticises the Pirpur Report. He says: "Stories of atrocities circulated by the Muslim League were pure invention but two things happened at that time which left a bad impression about the attitude of the Provincial Congress committees. I have to admit with regret that both the Bihar and Bombay, the Congress did not come out fully successful in its test of nationalism."

The Maulana mentions how Nariman, leader of Congress in Bombay, was denied the state's premiership because he was a Parsi. The position was given to a Hindu, B G Khar. Similarly, in Bihar, Dr Syed Mahmud should have been the state's first Congress chief minister. But he was not appointed because he was a Muslim. Sri Krishna Sinha, a Hindu, was asked to head the government. "Rajendra Prasad played the same role in Bihar as Sardar Patel did in Bombay," said the Maulana.

Jinnah used the Pirpur and Shereef reports to highlight the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims and made it appear as if the Congress governments had been wreaking vengeance on "the helpless Muslim minority." Then they began submitting their resignations from October 28, 1939, to protest against Britain's declaration of war in India's name without consulting them. Jinnah used the opportunity to celebrate it as a "Day of Deliverance and Thanks Giving." To the surprise of the Congress, many non-Muslims including Hindus, joined in the

To the Editors

Newspaper holiday

Sir, Most of the people have developed a habit of reading newspapers 'everyday'. We fail to understand why a vast majority of people are deprived of their thirst for newspapers for days together on national holidays?

In this modern age of market economy, science and technology, latest computer, fax and telecommunications system and no shortage of man-power, why do we cease publication of newspapers on national holidays?

If the electricity, water supply, railways, air and bus services do not remain closed on national holidays in our country, and radio and TV can continue to operate without any disruption, why then the newspapers cannot continue their publication?

Cannot our newspaper owners, publishers, editors, journalists and media personalities find out ways and means to bring out newspapers on national holidays and meet the requirement of millions of people? The issue of grant of weekly and closed holidays for news media men is not a problem at

all. This can easily and amicably be sorted out and solved by all concerned through discussions.

We strongly feel and demand that there should not be any newspaper holiday in the future. If necessary we, the readers, may launch a countrywide campaign "No Newspaper Holiday" in the future. We would request our learned readers to kindly enlighten all concerned with their valuable opinions and suggestions on the matter.

OH Kabir Wari, Dhaka-1203

An appeal to Khaleda Zia

Sir, Since the installation of the Awami League government, Begum Khaleda Zia, the former prime minister and the present leader of the opposition has been found absenting herself from all important state functions on lame excuses. She didn't attend the opening ceremony of the seventh parliament. She took her oath after an unusual delay. She attended the oath-taking function of the present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina nor that of the President Justice Shahabuddin. The other day she once again was found

absenting from the parliament on the occasion of first day of the second session of the Jatiya Sangsad.

I do not think such behaviour will in any way come to her advantage or to BNP's interest. In democracy a government may be dragged down by the people through free and fair election even if its head might be a top-most politician. Many leaders of sterling qualities have been defeated by their rivals of less importance. Indira Gandhi was defeated by Morarji Desai, Bush by Clinton and recently Simon Peres of Israel lost to Benjamin.

A country is not the personal property of any politician. Governments come and go. Peoples verdict must be accepted by the defeated parties gracefully. It would be better for Begum Khaleda Zia to fulfill her national obligations by participating in politics wholeheartedly as the leader of the opposition. She must not feel rolled at the present situation to make fuss over picaresque matters ignoring burning problems faced by the nation. This will prove a bonanza for her.

K R Zakhmi Khatun