The Baily Star

Founder Editor : Late S. M. Ali Dhaka, Wednesday, November 27, 1996

IMF Viewpoint

We are watching with considerable interest the process that has got underway at the behest of the present government for a renewal of active relationship with the IMF after a time-lag of three years. For a large part of the interregnum, an alltime high foreign currency reserve made it possible for Bangladesh to do without any balance of payments support from the IMF. Then came the combined onslaught of poor export performance due to the strikes and emergency food imports necessitated by production short-falls on the forex position reducing the comfortable above-3 billion reserve by a third on more. Currently, it stands at 1.87 billion US dollar - thanks to last year's yawning export-import gap.

But the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) scheme which is now under consideration of the IMF in pursuit of a request made for it by our Finance Minister during his recent visit to the USA does not concern itself entirely with the balance of payments situation. This particular programme "would cover adjustment of fiscal and monitory policies, privatisation of stateowned enterprises, tax reform and other issues directly linked with growth of the economy." says Margaret R. Kelly, the head of the visiting Economic Review Mission of the IMF.

Margaret's mission to Dhaka is important because her review report would be the basis on which negotiations will take place between the government of Bangladesh and the IMF on the former's request for a soft-term loan of 600 million US dollar. And what has she found out on arrival here? In her initial remarks to the press she sounded appreciative of the export sector "overcoming the loss caused by the past strikes and inflation being down to 3 per cent" even bettering the government's target of containing it within 4 per

With a cautious pragmatism, the visiting IMF mission chief added that even though it was too early to determine the performance of the economy it could be said that it performed well so far. In other words, we have to consolidate and further the positive trend being observed in certain economic indicators by following the right policies and avoiding any rabid form of political confrontation.

Augurs III

The killing of a Polytechnic Institute student and the backlash that followed in the Tejgaon area on Monday underlined the steady rise of internecine bickering within Awami League, the party in power.

Ziaur Rahman, the third year student of the mechanical department was reportedly a leader of the Bangladesh Chhatra League unit of the Polytechnic Institute. He was shot dead from close range by unidentified miscreants.

Zia's followers and the workers of BCL, the student front of the ruling Awami League directed their retaliatory reactions towards the local ward commissioner by torching his office. This is only an addition to the list of some similar mishaps. And they unfailingly point the finger at one reality which is that infighting is waxing within the Awami League, particularly at the outer orbit of the party.

This could be an understandable opening of the pandora's box for the party that has returned to power after a long time. Twenty one years is a long spell to have spawned some malcontent or vested interests.

But the problem is as a party in power AL can ill afford to wait for time to take care of these internal chaos. Every time it will call for national unity or consensus cohesion or lack of it within the Awami League will come under watch. Clearly, the supporters of the assassinated student leader who reportedly accused the commissioner of the murder while emptying their phials of wrath on his office made the inmates thereof aware of the bad blood between the members of the same political group.

The ideal situation even in the event of such an unfortunate incident would have been united condemnation and a plea for justice by the local authority and the student front. Instead one is blaming the other for its alleged involvement.

Inner militancy can take away the underpinnings from a party's good intentions and efforts to give the country a direction. If you cannot set your house in order there is no way you can expect others doing it obligatorily.

It's Cricket

The timely and commendably clicked visual of Sri Lankan cricket captain Arjuna Ranatunga's dismissal in yesterday's front page of The Daily Star was a symbolic representation of the essence of this noble game.

Even in the highly improvised and batsmanfriendly world of one day game, it takes one ball to see the back of the batsman no matter how high is his stature. And this one ball can come by the arm of a rival whose profile is incomparably low as it happened in this case.

Ranatunga and Jayasuriya, the explosive opening batsman reestablished this truth in their failure to take the star-studded Mohammedans to the final of a tournament with their batting skills.

Ranatunga's doom was spelt when he missed a cut, as the picture suggest to a ball that was on the stumps. It was a shot purists will be loathe to think of and on this occasion the Sri Lankan paid for the hubris he committed against the cardinal principles of correct batsmanship. Mohammedans perhaps paid dearer.

But then this is the reality on which one day cricket has thrived so far. It is all in a day. The day you get it right you write your own law, you set your standard. It is protean, and always a case of skating on thin ice. All this, however, leads to one unchangeable reality: it is a great game of uncertainty. You are never always a king and never a pauper forever either.

The Undiminishing Leader of Man

by Waheedul Haque

He is an unresting powerhouse both of physical and intellectual labour — uninterrupted ever by indisposition or an idea that he has earned some holiday. This has been so for full half a century

socio-economic development thought to be largely congenial and progressive by the people of West Bengal, his very own pas-

HE diminutive last of

the Babu's in Indian po-

lities is, however, the

most undiminishing political

being that the world has seen

for ages. It is years that the

Soviet Union has collapsed and

China has steadily been conver-

ting itself into a capitalist

roader - the endearing epithet

it reserved for its estranged

comrade. Of the legendary

Haradhan's ten sons who

remained then? Cuba to be sure

and Vietnam of course. After

that ? Jyoti Basu and his

communist-led coalition gov-

ernment. Looked that way Basu is the rarest of rare birds and

for those that still somehow

cling to Marxism as a world-

view and an effective pro-

gramme for the working peo-

ple's emancipation, he is a hero

of our age. Negotiating a razor's

edge path between the parties to

the great socialist schism was

creditable enough. Jyoti Babu

did a mountain better than

that. The CPM government

continued as if to perpetuity.

and as unflappably as ever, un-

der Jyoti Basu's leadership. The

fall of Soviet communism

meant at least one nuisance less

- the Moscow-Beijing tug of war

for influence on smaller na

tional parties was gone for

his success lay in clinging to

power in spite of reversal suf-

fered the world over by the

communists. He endures but

very positively through great

innovative pragmatism, devel-

oping his Marxism to adjust to

quirky Indian political condi-

tion and producing an output of

HE great debate about

ntability should precede electi-

ons is on. Having swiftly en-

acted the Ehtasab (Accounta

bility) Ordinance, the caretaker

government have also appo-

inted as Chief Ehtasab Comm-

issioner, a respected non-

controversial retired Chief

Justice of the Lahore High

Court. Mr Ghulam Mujaddid

Mirza. Both the President and

the Caretaker PM Malik Meraj

Khalid have repeated the

intention of the caretaker

government to have the

February 3 elections as sched-

uled. Given the enormous task

of holding a whole slate of peo-

ple accountable since January

, 1986, it would seem logisti-

cally impossible to complete

the accountability process in

the next 70 days. How then do

ability are very cogent. This

nation had been looted in the

name of democracy under the

flimsy cover of the

Constitution. Given the enor-

mous wealth in the hand of the

looters they could conceivably

buy their way back into power

and thus frustrate the account-

ability process. We have seen

how Ms Benazir, without a

mandate from the people, was

manipulated into power by a

combination, of power and in-

trigue in 1993. Conceivably

money and intrigue could play a

part in foisting the likes of

Zardari on us again. Even in

First World countries like the

US, an election campaign war

chest is important to winning

elections, in Third World coun-

tries where voters are mostly

illiterate or ignorant on a rela-

tive basis, an enormous elec-

tion fund is more than likely to

ensure victory. To add insult to

injury, the looters will use a

classic "Judo play", using

money looted from the national

treasury to influence the voters

so that once in power they can

proceed to loot the nation even

more, inflicting more torture

on the populace. By itself, this

makes for good enough reason

to delay the elections until the

accountability process is com-

about accountability at the

hands of the people? Given that

Zardari has acquired a huge

On the other hand, what

plete. ·

The arguments for account-

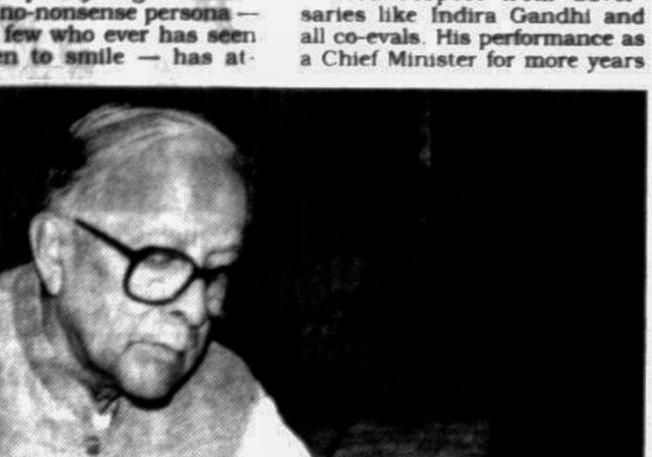
we reconcile this great divide?

whether elections should

be held first or accou-

That is not to suggest that

ture. His quality of governance and his no-nonsense persona -there is few who ever has seen him even to smile - has at-



Jyoti Basu: Unresting powerhouse of physical and intellectual labour

Star photo by A K M Mohsin

tracted respect from adver-

than all other Chief Ministers of Indian states, past and present, has lifted him to an unassailable all-Indian position of eminence. So much so that when the last Indian elections hit a seemingly unsurmountable impasse the Prime Ministership of India was offered him

on a platter.

And Jyoti Babu declined. But in a very Jyoti-ish style. He got his party to instruct him not to take the offer. That only added to his stature and saved him the trouble of riding a political rodeo holding out at best a very uncertain prospect. He became India's only politician to decline Prime Ministership and perhaps one of the very few to do so in the world - and that aura will be his even after he is

He is an unresting powerhouse both of physical and intellectual labour - uninterrupted ever by indisposition or an idea that he has earned some holiday This has been so for full half a century - ever since he and Gurung were the only two Communist members - he from Calcutta and Gurung from Darjeeling — in the 1946 Bengal assembly Theirs was then a very peripheral presence. From there to rise to pre-eminence in a matter of two decades - that too with a party that still doesn't quite go with the grain of an

India with a ponderous feudal hangover — is a lasting and refulgent memorial to Jyoti Babu's unique leadership.

With an uncanny feel for the right thing at the right moment he deliberately repudiated a career as a budding barrister just returned from England. If one asks for only one truth about this man who seems never to have suffered from nerves or self-doubt, what will that be ? Will it involve his one passion in life - Marxism? Perhaps not. His ever abiding first preoccupation was organisation with which he wanted man to be orchestrated to generate power from down below in order that he is liberated from the slave's discipline that capitalism im-

It is said he places man on top of what is in the Marxist scriptures finding it just works out wonderfully to the glory of Marxism. He is a promoter par excellence of the rise of bourgeoisie so that an industrial proletariat can engage it. Can it be that he is more a politician than a Marxist? But isn't it true that his realpolitik is inspired by Marxist premises and Marxist dreams

This son of Barodi, the village in what is now Narayanganj district, is decidedly one for us Bangladesh Bengalees to take genuine pride in. His daring and his assiduous application in translating his convic tions and wisdoms into brasstach things well accom plished is leaving a body of political governmental experi ments and performances we can learn from with great benefit.

Elections or Accountability?

Even in First World countries like the US, an election campaign war chest is important to winning elections, in Third World countries where voters are mostly illiterate or ignorant on a relative basis, an enormous election fund is more than likely to ensure victory.

war chest to ensure that he can frustrate the accountability process, do we hold the genius of the people in such low esteem that we accept that he would be able to buy off the loyalties of the whole nation? If that argument should hold then the whole process of adult franchise comes into question. Field Marshal Ayub Khan's Basic Democracy was formed on the assumption that given the illiteracy and ignorance among a majority of the eligible voters one could not expect a rational choice from them and the election of the President and the legislators should be the choice of an electoral college: by themselves voted for by the electorate. This argument deleats itself at its basic premise, if the electorate is good enough to elect the electoral college: what stops it from using that same genius for electing the legislators and the President? Moreover, would not an electoral college be more vulnerable to Ms Benazir's often repeated remark of "ch. mak" (flash of money) than the masses? The ultimate accountability must be at the hands of the electorate, the masses must decide who is good

or bad for them. Any delay in the electoral process will undercut the credibility of the President and the caretaker government, it may well hamper their ability to govern in the turmoil that will surely follow. While the Ehtasab Ordinance gives January 1, 1986, as its first day of purview, one believes that it would be in the fitness of things to start the process backward in time i.e. first take in the Benazir Government, then Moren Quershi's Caretakers and so on till we reach the period of late Junejo's Government post 1985. Accountability should start with Ms Benazir's three years of misrule and blatant corruption where her husband has left indelible marks of his greedy paws through the length and breadth of this nation on every institution but the Army. The

amassed illegal wealth to influence the electoral process must

be emasculated. Zardari cronies are well known and have been listed in numerous media reports, to all accounts he was very generous to his friends, not many people get to play "monarch" with un limited wealth and power at his disposal as Zardari could. without the responsibility to match. A crude but effective establishment of a Patron-Client relationship was seen even in influential social circles where this almost illiterate person hele sway as would a mythical "Godfather" in whose image he had molded himself from the almost penniless Grandee that he was when he married our

The Supreme Judicial Council is a fit enough forum for this. There has also been criticism about not including the Defence Services within the ambit of the law, there are cogent national security reasons why their dirty linen cannot be washed in public. At the same time, the Armed Forces maintain that they have an adequate military judicial system, the Judge Advocate General's (JAG's) Branch which as seen recently in both the Arshad Jameel/Tando Bahawa case and the Gen Abbasi conspiracy case, performs much better than comparable prosecutors in the civilian legal system. The main civilian accused in the Tando Bahawal case has

the developed world, why not

yet to be brought to justice while

AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

Unless the Caretaker Government brings to book his concentric circle of influential friends (particularly the bankers), who have not only helped Zardari acquire vast amounts of illegal wealth but remain free to funnel that wealth in his support. their vested interest will ensure Zardari returning to have nuisance value in the portals of

DOWLT. The President and the Governors should not be given immunity under the Ehtasab Ordinance. Since the President has voluntarily offered himself for accountability, let there be an amendment thereof to the Ordinance with certain safeguards, to prevent misuse thereof out of mischievous design rather than fact. As regards the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and High Courts and Judges thereof, they necessarily have to kept under the purview of a separate procedure as otherwise their capacity to render judgment can be emasculated.

Arshad Jameel has been executed. Several general officers have been sent to jail over the years while no comparable civilian officer has ever been incarcerated for corruption, etc.

The military does have a point. On the other hand, let us take the case of two incumbent Chiefs of the Air Force and the Navy, both of whom were promoted over the merits and claims of very deserving officers. The Air Force's Air Marshal Shafiq Haider and the Navy's Adm Khalid Mir lost out because of their integrity and professionalism, merit became a disqualifier. While prima facie controversy exists about Khattak in the Mirage-III deal. the Naval Chief Mansurul Haq has much to answer for in the scandalous purchase of submarines from France as well as a host of other Zardari-related events, the Navy was being made over in the Zardari image. The propensity of our intelligence community to settle personal differences and obtain

personal financial benefit must also be reined in. Possibly the worst perpetrator was the present Federal Secretary Science and Technology Lt Gen (Retd) Javed Ashraf Qazi who finessed this into a fine art, particularly in furthering his own career by defaming those in competition with him. A mechanism must be put into place to take into account such misdemeanors without subjecting the military to public cynosure and therefore compromising their ability to fulfil their national mission. As for other Armed Forces in

have an Office of the Inspector General Defence Services (IGDS) for Ehtasab purposes, the Inspector General (IG) being a retired officer of not less than three star rank appointed for a period of at least 5 years? Necessarily the IGDS must be a non-controversial and widely respected officer with adequate powers and resources to take on suo-moto cases of nepotism corruption, etc at the rank of Lt Col (and equivalent) and above. At present serving officers have the capacity to influence the outcome of any enquiry. Khattak and Mansurul Haq must be given the option to seek early retirement and if they do not, they must be compulsorily retired forthwith and the remainder of their terms served out (so as not to upset the seniority/promotion career planning) by recalling retired Shafiq Haider and Khalid Mir (still on active service). Why should they suffer just because they had integrity and more merit than the present incum-

We have to have elections as per schedule but must also carry out accountability, working out a pragmatic formula that will strike a reasonable balance. While having the Feb 3 elections on schedule, the Assemblies should not be called into session for at least another 90 days so that the accountability process of at least the electoral candidates should be completed. If in case, the due process of accountability about a particular candidate is not

to bring in performers from

other countries to meet our cul-

tural needs without any partic-

years of our independence and

it seems that our cultural in-

frastructure is still incapable of

supporting the national cul-

tural needs. I wonder how many

such auspicious evenings were

arranged by the authority con-

cerned (who have suddenly be-

come so active), with our own

artisties. I think a burning rea-

son as generally viewed by

many may be that our artisties

do not have the label 'Made in

they are not classified by our

so-called culture-loving high

society as presentable in special

occasions. It is time we wake up

and realise our faults. Some

may think that I am an ortho-

dox, but, is it so? What purpose

does it meet to bring in so many

foreign artisties in a regular

interval? Is it really enriching

Probably for this reason.

India attached with them.

W. have already passed 25

ular event?

completed by the time of his/her elections, this can continue post-elections. If the elected representative is found guilty by the Ehtasab Commissioner then by-elections can also be held under the aegis of the Caretaker Government, which can then complete the process of cleaning of the Parliamentary Aegean stables. This 90 days post-election period will also act as a restraint to political parties in putting up such candidates who they know will never pass the acid test of Ehtasab. At the same time the Assemblies that finally come into being will have a clean chit i.e. their members will be cleared of any history of wrongdoing, as such will be more ef lective in the business of legis lation. Some legal technical corrections may be necessary this can be either referred to the Supreme Court for adjudication as per Art 254 of the Constitution which allows flexibility in time under the 'doctrine of neces-As much as Ms Benazir

screams herself hoarse from every pulpit that she wants elections, she retains enough sanity to know that in the coming electoral process she is certain to face massive defeat. This is also the retrain of others who have no real hope at the polls. Her salvation lies in scuttling the electoral process and then calling out to high heaven that she has been "denied" success at the polls. Ms Benazir is fairly liberal with the truth. The PPP has split along the seams, the "King's Party" as she keeps claiming may well come into being not because of any effort made by President Faroog Leghari but by her own effort because the PPP rank and file is very upset at the shenanigans of her husband and herself. The original PPP seems to be coalescing around the forces of integrity and sobriety after being on the receiving end of a host of accusers because of the nepotism and corruption practiced by the leaders foisted on them because of the Benazir-Zardari marriage. The only way to make the odd couple accountable to the nation is by forcing them to bow before the verdict of the electorate. Let us not demand the genius of the people they can be fooled some of the time, but not all the time.

"Chinese Embassy donates land to RAJUK"

Sir. Above captioned news item in the DS (Nov-13) has drawn my attention. Dhakaites must thank the Chinese for this magnanimity. At the same time, it is a shame for us that when a foreign mission has spared their premises to help easing traffic jam, then our own people have encroached on roads and footpaths aggravating the traffic problem. The print media and the elite have identified the cause of this as. callousness and collusion of certain officials of RAJUK, DCC and DMP.

I'm not sure about this, but it is certain that there is a lack of sincerity in solving traffic congestion. I suspect, none in the helm of the affairs ever seeks expert views how to rectify and improve with affordable way and means. But it was seen a hurriedly expansion of road here and an overbridge there were done. Those didn't help but at some places aggravated the situation. A non-professional can hardly perceive all intricate variables.

Results of such unorthodox endeavour and experiments. attempted over and over again, can be seen around Farmgate and elsewhere. Whereas, an expert on related matter would have found enough space to plan a nice "circus" for easing the traffic congestion only changing the layout of present roads and lanes converged

At Moghbazar point, traffic

cannot be tamed unless: a) All approach roads are made straight, b) Footpaths of all the main roads are reduced to minimum required with and provided with waist high iron grill boundary, to contain pedestrians and to discourage shop displays" and hawkers alongs the footpath (actually, a wide footpath lures hawkers to spread their merchandise), c) A wide roundabout is made by acquiring necessary lands and a donation of land from the nearby mosque (if a portion becomes too critical to be included for the road).

potential of those who have

I hope, the authority concerned will endeavour to improve the road network keeping future growth in the mind and in a pragmatic way. I feel, if hassle-free befitting benefits are tendered beforehand all the citizens will cooperate with the authority. In this regard, I remember time of Gen Ershad. If we could do at that time, then why can't we do that now?

A R Choudhury H# 39, Rd#11, Sect#4, Uttara Dhaka-1230

Control the share market

Sir, Stock market is now the only subject for discussion everywhere. People are running after share business like anything. Number of some socalled new businessman is increasing day by day. They are getting unexpected return from those companies' certificates who hardly declare 15-20 per cent dividend annually!

What are the results? Gen-

eral trading is almost nil! Imports are being stopped, funds are being diverted into share market! All Fixed Deposits flied away to share market from bank, post office and defence or postal savings certificates! The commercial enterprises are passing days without business Without trading our country cannot survive. Everything is supplied in our country through the trading houses, even the raw materials of industries.

I would request the authorities concerned to kindly take some measures to control the share market.

Ekhlasul Hague H# 78/6. New Airport Road Banani, Dhaka 1213

Plight of the northern districts

Sir, Thakurgaon the remotest northern district, has an airstrip since the period of undivided India. The airstrip was operative during Pakistan period for carrying passengers from Dhaka to Thakurgaon. It was also operative during the early seventies. But after that the airfield with some small offices has been lying unutilised for years together. Recently some repair works were done to the re-open the airport. However the airport is still in a situation of shut-down.

It was assured sometime ago that the capacity of the Rangpur Betar Station would be increased but no progress in the matter was learnt since then. The people of Rangpur were demanding for establishment

of an administrative division and one full-fledged university in the district. But the demand of the people of Rangpur is yet to be materialised. The BTV relay station has also not been converted into a full-fledged one.

Some repair work at Lalmonirhat airport was carried out to open the same to air traffic, but nothing has been done to introduce any air service in the area. No TV station has yet been opened either at Bogra or Rajshahi. Ruppur nuclear power project is still standing on a vast area without any activity. This vast area of land could produce huge quantities of paddy, wheat and sugarcane had there been no construction at the field. Another vast area of land are also lying unutilised at Joypurhat where limestone and cement factory where nothing could have done even after 35 years.

If funds cannot be arranged from home and abroad please arrange to declare the projects as abandoned and go for alternative uses of land.

Mahbubul Hague Chowdhury Sonali Bank. Head Office Dhaka.

Open space at the Suhrawardi Udyan Made in India

Sir. In the past few days, the Sir. The erstwhile Race Cou-"Dhakites" have witnessed the so-called breathtaking perforrse, renamed as "Suhrawardi mance of some music and film Udyan" after Liberation, as we know, was entirely an open artisties from the neighbouring country. If we recollect, similar field. It is very intimately endeavours were made in the related with our history and years following 1971. I am not tradition in many ways. This is at all criticising the idea. But, is the field from where Banga it worth it? Is our own culture. bandhu delivered his historic so weak and poor that we have speech of the 7th March, 1971;

our culture?

Tahmina Islam

Uttara, Dhaka

it is the space where the barbaric Pakistani army surrendered to Combined Allied Forces: it is the place where Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of our neighbouring country gave her speech in 1973 and above all it played very important role to unite then East Pakistanis against the treacherous West Pakistanis. We do not know how such a historical field fell

a victim to conspiracy. The entire field was brought under plantation of trees. Apparently it seemed to have been a noble job. But we think that the act of plantation was aimed at putting an obstacle to people's gathering and raising their voice against the any govern-

How far the plan has succeeded is a matter of controversy, but the city-dwellers have been suffering a lot due to holding meeting anywhere and any time on the streets of the capital. It has also acted adversely on the trade and commerce and our national image

in the international arena The situation should imme diately be done away with. The Suhrawardi Udyan should immediately be emancipated from the conspiracy and converted into an open field by cut ting down the plants and trees By doing this, the Udyan will get back its tradition and polit ical parties will have enough space to hold meetings and

M Anisur Rahman North Shajahanpur Dhaka.

gatherings.