

Consensus: Still a Cliche

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria has made almost a deck-cleaning observation at the Bhorer Kagoj roundtable on World Bank report entitled "Bangladesh: An Agenda for Action".

Basically, we believe, the doors to consensus with the BNP on taking forward the reform agenda, could be opened if the present finance minister sets the ball rolling by giving his predecessor his due and then builds on the forward foot-holds reached in the realm of reform during his tenure.

So, there has to be a holistic approach to consensus-building in order that it sounds genuine in the first place. A composite spirit of tolerance, accommodation and give-and-take should replace the culture of one major political party concentrating its energy on the single agenda of ensuring the failure or debacle of another.

Reaching consensus on national issues does not mean going out of steam politically, a fact that is unfortunately yet to dawn on the political parties.

For Sporting Glory

The Sixth Bangladesh Games, the biggest national sports extravaganza, got off to a colourful beginning on Wednesday. If the number of participants at the four-yearly meet is any indication — 4,000 sportsmen and sportswomen having registered for 23 games — then it is surely representative of the national enthusiasm for the big event.

Sports and games are often a reflection of a nation's health and prosperity. But there are natural talents too, who, when confronted with a hostile or not so supportive government, may not fully realise their full potential but make a mark of sorts all the same.

Of course, there is a need for increasing the facilities for sports and games. This should be the primary responsibility of the sports bodies and the government alike while the industrialists and private companies chipped in for finding talents and developing the sports infrastructure.

Why Foreigners As Pawns?

The hostage drama that began at the Japanese ambassador's residence in the Peruvian capital Lima has once again violated the diplomatic sanctity enjoyed by embassy or high commission staff in a host country.

If the rebel group is anxious to get international publicity through this act of fool-hardy dare-devilry, it has had enough of it in the negative direction. The countries whose ambassadors it has taken hostage, will not surely support the cause.

Such incidents are most unfortunate. Even if rebel groups are fighting for a national cause, they must not draw foreigners into it. Let the international law in this regard be fully respected and all the captives released soon.

A bull, a mad bull in fact was running at full speed in the stock market. It is inevitable that the bull will collapse — it is a matter of time only.

The bull run in Bangladesh stock market was not an isolated phenomenon; neither it was an event without any precedence. In the emerging markets elsewhere in the world, particularly within the vicinity of our Asia and the Pacific region, bright prospects of economic growth and opening of abundant investment and trading opportunities as a result of economic liberalisation have led to enormous flow of investment funds to stock markets.

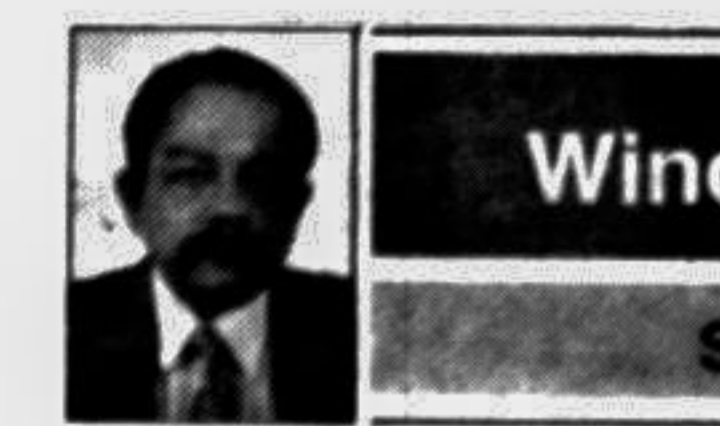
There were some additional development which are again not unknown in other East and South-east Asian markets. The rising share prices primarily due to scarce supplies, attracted

The Taming of the Bull

The possibilities of political stability after the election early this year combined with liberal economic policies already put in place by the previous government (which were not likely to be impaired by the current government) implied that the stock market is likely to be boosted by flow of new funds from sources both within and outside the country.

small savers to withdraw their fixed deposits as well as postponed their acquisition of new assets (consumer durable, in particular). They all rushed to the market to buy shares when the going is good, with the expectation that prices will simply keep on rising and they would all cash in for the big kill.

The rising market should have been sustained by only moderating the rise in prices. Instead of directly interfering with the market with a heavy hand which is bound to succeed in terms of an overkill, the policy should have been to influence the market by first and foremost, rapidly increasing the flow of shares and securities into the market.



Window on Asia

Shahed Latif

load shares and stocks held by the government. Second, restructure quickly many public sector companies and make public offerings of a limited portion of the ownership of such companies to the public in general.

level of efficiency first, before promoting securities markets in the country. Perhaps, we should not have set up the stock market in Chittagong, before augmenting the small volume of total transaction first.

Mountbatten Saw Birth of Bangladesh

Mountbatten recalled how he had warned Jinnah that it would be very difficult to hold together the two wings with no land connection and 1,000 miles of alien territory in between. After all, except for religion, there was nothing common between the two.

SURRENDER at Dhaka is the title of the book that Lt Gen J F R Jacob has published to recall the Bangladesh war which split Pakistan asunder.

I asked Jacob if the Bangladesh soldiers, who fought along with the Indian forces, ever said anything to regret Pakistan. He said: "No, not even indirectly!"

Still Lord Mountbatten, the last British governor general, reminisced before me: "I told Jinnah that his moth-eaten Pakistan will not last more than 25 years."

You know, Rajaji wrote to me the other day to say that my prophecy had come true, and I replied that I remembered that distinctly.

me and Mountbatten and it has come after 25 years. But if Mountbatten did feel the way he says he did, he must have spoken to very few people about it.

I checked with Cyril Radcliffe, who gave the verdict on the dividing lines between the two Punjab and the two Bengalis — the only two states of India that were split after the partition.

When I went to Pakistan in March 1972, I sought corroboration from H K Khurshid, Jinnah's private secretary till the partition.

Mountbatten recalled how he had warned Jinnah that it would be very difficult to hold together the two wings with no land connection and 1,000 miles of alien territory in between. After all, except for religion, there was nothing common between the two.

tion, there was nothing common between the two. The Bengalis' cultural ties are too strong, you know Curzon tried and failed."

Apparently, the argument was lost on Jinnah. Mountbatten recalled that the main discussion was on Bengal and Punjab. He insisted on partitioning the two provinces on the same principles as had been applied to the subcontinent, and Jinnah

on keeping them whole in Pakistan. "We argued back and forth," the Mountbatten papers record. "Mr Jinnah's main point being that I must make his Pakistan viable."

What else could he have done when Jinnah himself had remained silent on a question posed by Mahatma Gandhi in a

letter asking whether Bengalis, Tamilians or Maharashtrians would cease to have their special characteristics if all of them become converts to Islam.

Whatever the facts, East Pakistan was the backbone of the movement for the creation of Pakistan. It was at Dhaka where the Muslim League was founded on December 30, 1906.

Fuelling his campaign for underlining the differences between Muslims and Hindus, Jinnah made the Muslim League celebrate on Friday, December 22, 1939, as the 'Day of Deliverance'.

The other day, luckily we were saved from being run over by the same vehicle. Nowadays it is a common practice with the drivers of such vehicles to frighten women and children at Uttara with their reckless driving.

May I request the authorities concerned to impose fine-punishment in respect of reckless driving. We can eliminate many of our problems by honest desires and efforts in every sphere of our lives in Bangladesh.

A Citizen Ameer Complex, Uttara, Dhaka.

Liberation War Museum

Sir, The Liberation War Museum has become very popular to us — the new generation. This is very heartening to see that we have become concerned about our Liberation War and thereby we are concentrating in this regard. Undoubtedly, we all should know what happened in 1971.

Mostafa Sohel Banani, Dhaka-1213

Ebrahim of the Muslim League would a resolution to commend Jinnah's efforts. Dalit leader Dr B R Ambedkar of the Independent Labour Party seconded it.

However, Jinnah began to face the realities. The Muslim population of Assam was only 31.8 per cent of that province's total population, while the Burdwan Division of Bengal was "overwhelmingly Hindu."

That, precisely happened. Both Bengalis and Punjabis were divided on the basis of religion, the Muslim majority districts going to Pakistan and the Hindu-majority to India.

OPINION

Historic Water Treaty

In the Silver Jubilee month of our victory over the Pakistani occupation army, everywhere there are signs of jubilation and celebration all over the country as if our victory 25 years ago is back again and is being felt and enjoyed through our innumerable festivals, discussion meetings, programmes and cultural functions on road sides venues to auditoriums in the metropolitan city, and elsewhere all over the country.

While people in general are impressed by a number of decisions of the government like, selection of non-partisan persons in important positions and the conclusion of the latest water-sharing agreement. People are eager to get quick results in a number of areas, first begin law and order. Adequate credit-ability has been earned to take drastic steps to stem crimes and criminals from our society as far as possible, and at the earliest.

People are closely following every step taken or being taken by the government. The Prime Minister has made a vow to present a corruption-free society and to this end she has been keeping a close eye on her associates and party men so much that it attracted critical comments from the press. But nevertheless the Prime Minister is right and she should continue watching her associates to ward off any chance of financial irregularities which may tarnish the image of her team.