

Labour's Triumphant Return

Labour is back with a bang. We heartily rejoice under the triumphant return of the party to power...

Labour's dramatic resurgence has got a lot to do with the novelty in its approach and much of it has been injected by Mr Blair whose dynamism...

We welcome Britain's new leadership with the hope that Mr Blair will meet the millennial challenges with a touch of novelty and pragmatism...

Bride Trade

Getting young women ferried in herds for marriage to 'foreign' husbands, according to an agency news, is a thriving business in the border areas...

Once transported across the border, in some cases beyond that in Pakistan and some countries in the ME, most of these so-called brides...

Those working with the project identified attitudinal slackness of the law enforcing agency as the main abetting factor in this inhuman commercial practice.

We do agree that by exercising tougher enforcement of laws related with repression of women, bride trade as a phenomenon can be scaled down...

Rural women in our country have already proved that given the scope, they can play a major role in improving the economic condition of their families.

No to Blanket Ban

We very strongly oppose the government's blanket ban on all private initiatives to bring artistes from abroad to enrich our cultural scene.

Let there be well-enunciated policies, formulated on a true understanding of culture and, in this case, music — guiding the permissions to invite foreign artistes.

Some Suggestions for the AL Council Meeting

The reason for our piece today is to try and convince the AL leaders, especially Sheikh Hasina, to introduce a strong DEVELOPMENT AGENDA into the party deliberations and subsequently into its workings.

It is for the first time in 21 years, and perhaps only for the second time in its long history, that Awami League (AL) will be holding its national council session as a ruling party...

many of the distortions in our politics that we now have. One such distortion — and to us a critical one — is that fact that development issues ARE NOT on the centre stage of our parliamentary debates or in the public discourse.

our lives. The task is straightforward. Party cadres must be made aware of the development issues and trained to do voluntary work.

The Third View

by Mahfuz Anam

Party can claim longer history — AL has been in power for discontinued periods of maximum five plus years.

It is not our intention to discuss AL's history, but only to focus on the fact that Awami League is a political party which is long on experience of agitation and short on experience of administration.

It is such a party which is going for its council session on 6th of May. As we said earlier, it will be doing so as the ruling party.

The reason for our piece today is to try and convince the AL leaders, especially Sheikh Hasina, to introduce a strong DEVELOPMENT AGENDA into the party deliberations and subsequently into its workings.

We are not forgetting that AL has not been in power for 21 years and therefore it cannot be accused of being the cause of

Therefore we consider the Awami League council session, we repeat, first time as the ruling party after 21 years.

If we are making any sense to the decision makers of the ruling party, and if there is any genuine concern for development in them, then this is what they should do.

The first thing to realise is that mere preaching to the visiting councillors will not do the job. Factual presentations, in an easy to understand format, must be presented to the thousands of councillors who will converge to Dhaka on the occasion.

The national council session should then be followed by similar awareness building efforts on development issues at district, thana and union level committees.

As the ruling party Awami League must realise that 'GOVERNANCE IS FAR HARDER AND FAR MORE COMPLICATED THAN WINNING ELECTIONS.' The AL must also realise that until and unless all workers of the party, at all levels, can be mobilised to selflessly work for overcoming the stranglehold of poverty in our society, it will not be able to bring any meaningful change in

changing most of political workers and leaders 'From Talkers to Doers' and as such have a profound impact on the behaviour pattern of our political parties.

The key question is, will the ruling party use this important occasion to bring DEVELOPMENT on to the centre stage of its party and workers agenda? Will Sheikh Hasina realise that she can do wonders with thousands of her party followers if they are trained and motivated to dirty their hands in the fields and factories alongside the people, rather than doing what ruling party workers usually do?

For the record, the system did not fail, political manipulation of the system made it fail. The former Naval Chief's contrived promotion in the face of more deserving officers was an exercise in nepotism.

It is strange that no words of sympathy condemning the incidents of two such tragic deaths in the area of the leader of the opposition came either from the prime minister or from the home minister.

It is the sacred duty of the party in power to safeguard the security of the people irrespective of their party allegiance.

Whenever the time-tested selection and promotion process is tinkered with for political reasons, catastrophes are bound to happen. The system is not defective by itself, manipulation makes it defective to the detriment of the Service and the country.

A section of the Press is being fed with leaked rumours by vested interests to tar and feather the reputation of all the Services. This vilification process to be an organised campaign emanating from experts

Crisis of Confidence

By sweepingly spurning inter-state agreements born of Awami League initiatives, Begum Khaleda Zia is sending wrong signals to different audiences.

BEGUM Zia must have drawn a degree of public sympathy from the disturbances that all but wrecked her public meeting at Gafarganj last week. Expectedly, her speech emitted fire and by and large she was entitled to it.

Material Position In bottomline terms, her pointer is towards the South Asian Growth Quadrangle involving transit through Bangladesh, even though her party's passionate political preoccupation has been with the projection of the dark and suspi-

upper reaches of the Ganges within the Indian territory. If it is difficult to believe that any extra-ordinary variation in the dry season flow of the Ganges remained entirely unmapped in the formulation of the treaty writers.

As it is, a contingency JRC stock-staking has been provided for, let alone the first evaluation of the accord's operational aspects falling due at the end of the second year since its signing. Then, there is the significant provision for five-yearly reviews which, for all practical purposes, should be construed to mean opportunities for renewal, improvement or reconsideration of the agreement, regardless of the succession of governments.

By sweepingly spurning inter-state agreements born of Awami League initiatives, Begum Khaleda Zia is sending wrong signals to different audiences.

She is denying a legally constituted elected government its right to consummate any problem-solving accord courted from the opposition when she goes to power. The people are getting the impression that she is at best half-hearted in getting Bangladesh's problems with India resolved, if not totally averse to it.



Time and Tide Shah Husain Imam

national practices, then we would be proving our small-minded ignorance of what is happening around the world by way of negotiated settlement of bilateral questions. We shall also risk being dubbed as anti-progress no-changers basking in a self-glorified innocence of international law or norms for the conduct of bilateral relations.

Even when a revolutionary government is formed in a country after a convulsive upheaval, it is required to announce its abidance by inter-state or international agreements entered upon by the top-

Normative Pressures As it is, inter-state accords or treaties ratified by the parliaments of the contracting parties are legally and constitutionally binding on them for the stipulated period of their existence. They are also a part and parcel of the corpus of international law at a given time and, therefore, an applied manifestation of the principles of civilized conduct of international relations as enshrined in the UN charter.

The donor community and multilateral financing agencies taking note of Bangladesh's better foothold on water management and regional infrastructure-building in the sequel to the water accord with India and talks on the growth quadrangle are getting into a helpful frame of mind to usher Bangladesh into the 21st century. They also look to the opposition as a sound-board, so that its leader has to make responsible and prudent utterances behaving her position as a former prime minister, head of the opposition and that of a shadow government.

nationalist fervour, which evidently needs to be kept within the limits of sophistry. Was it not her husband who pioneered the SAARC idea and has it not been her government subsequently that signed the SAPTA agreement presaging the underpinnings of inter-state transit? Just as the present government is bound to adhere to all the agreements made by the previous BNP government with different parties, donors and governments, so also the future governments will have to abide by those consummated by the Awami League government.

From a cadet to being the topmost officer in any of the three Services is a long tiring journey. As one goes up the ladder, the physical pressures are exchanged for colossal mental ones. Like most Pakistanis, no time in anyone's career is the career officer really free of financial and family worries, at least till he reaches three-star rank. His personal requirements increase commensurate to his professional commitments. Most of the time, he lives in a public cockpit in a straitjacket of restraint imposed upon by the Service. Others can criticise him or his actions freely, he has to exercise personal restraint. More than any other Service, he is held accountable even for motives which can be labelled well-intentioned.

Dangerous Games?

AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

THE exit of the Naval Chief was forecast for some time now. The PM's decision to remove a festering sore from further tarnishing the Navy's reputation was neither unexpected nor, for that matter, unpopular.

most sacred cow of all, the Pakistan Army. To fulfil the historic mandate given by the people of the supremacy of civilian authority and/or the Supreme Court which has shown remarkable independence and needs to be brought under constitutional authority. The immediate gut reaction to such a rumour was that the PPP 'dirty tricks' machine was up to its usual campaign of creating disinformation to cause confrontation and conflict between the pillars of the State based on the deliberately planted rumour, very much like the 'Atta' crisis was blown into a full-fledged political disaster affecting the government's long-term credibility. A former professional intelligence operative, who having been frustrated in fulfilling his own ambitions in the military, is determined that both the man who won out from him and the delicate balance in the system comes to grief. Some experienced persons of the ruling inner circle may have fallen for this man's wiles and subterfuges, contributing enough grist for the rumour mills to function overtime.

On the one hand, those with frustrated ambitions and motivated interest may lead them into a trap. On the other hand, the Services are also being fed with contrary conclusions, that the inner circle is stoking the fires on which the continuing media trial is taking place. This situation is tailor-made for disaster, for reasons other than his own actions, the PM could conceivably and rapidly lose the confidence of the men who deeply respect him for his sincerity and patriotism. Not only are the Services being defamed, but they are being deliberately pushed into a set-piece collision course with the government, a two birds with one planted-rumour ploy. Having made a long and hard struggle in order to get to a position where he can serve the people, the PM must guard against the immaturity and inexperience of some of his gullible aides, who cannot differentiate friend from foe, it can land him very quickly into a no-win situation.

The government must move to exercise damage control, publicly disassociating from such a vile perception from proliferating. As much as cancer needs surgical intervention, the PM needs to physically boot out of his presence those responsible for such rumours to gain cur-

rence. This 'dirty tricks' scenario has all the hallmarks of the notorious person who failed in his own bid to be Chief of a Service and hates the present incumbent, the raison d'être for his frustrations.

Both Maj Gens Tajammal Hussain and Zahirul Islam Abbasi were good officers with patriotic motives, unfortunately their methodology violated military discipline and they went to jail. Maj Gen Asif Riaz Bokhari made a mistake many-make-many times, his brilliant career was ruined and he went home when he was unlucky to be found out. To his credit, he did not flinch punishment. Even our much-maligned Adm. Haq has gone home in an exercise of accountability, how many of the 87 bureaucrats nowadays suspended with great fanfare will walk the plank? Maj Arshad Jamil, accused in the Tando Bhalwal case went to the gallows, the main civilian accused is still absconding under known patronage of the civil administration. To put it bluntly, the military has almost always held its personnel accountable. It is time to raise cudgels on behalf of 'the great silent majority' who have to bear this unwarranted public exposure without any means of retaliation or recourse.

Stock market news on BTV

Sir, There are many investors across the country who eagerly want to know the daily trading results of individual shares at the main bourse, namely the DSE. BTV can provide this information after the evening news for selected blue chip companies and other active traded shares, giving their closing rates with the +/- change.

BTV may also introduce a weekly programme on the capital market, say, on Friday, giving a roundup of the weekly trading and other happenings relating to the stock market. The programme may invite the market regulators, member brokers, company directors/officers, analysts and general investors for an open and unrestricted discussions.

This will go a long way in ensuring transparency and credibility in the present scenario at the country's stock market.

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Feni carnage

Sir, Recently, two activists of BNP have been killed — one brutally murdered and the other killed in a broad daylight by an attack when a political procession was in progress at Feni. The description of the gruesome incident as received from different national dailies will make one's hair stand at its end when he recollects the grisly tales of killing a man by making holes in the body with a drill machine.