

Focus on Corruption

On the sidelines of the annual meetings of the World Bank and IMF in Hong Kong, a news conference was held last Friday centring on the release of a WB report titled, 'Helping countries combat corruption'.

Cogently, we believe, the idea is gaining ground among the international community that the problem of big corruption or kick-backs has to be addressed at a global not bilateral level.

Even though the OECD is trying to evolve a mechanism against the laundering vice, ensuring a fool-proof result from the move could be a difficult proposition.

This does not preclude our responsibility in launching an effective crusade against corruption which in Bangladesh context has taken new, even innovative forms.

Why Has It to be So?

British Indian jails as a rule hardened the crime-world green horns. But those also groomed intellectuals and harboured political giants.

The Bangladesh jails, the Dhaka Penitentiary in particular, are special in that these spill quite a bit beyond their boundaries.

How can it be that there is no laid-down procedure of visiting the prisoners? There must be some system when a provision is there for prisoners to be visited.

What is the idea? Punishing the friends and relatives of the prisoner? What is their crime? You are restricting the prisoner's life as a punishment.

Let the Truth Emerge

The incredibly barbaric incident in Patuakhali which the nation was informed of through a leading Bengali daily first on the 25th of this month has raised possibilities of going awry.

It is now being said that the allegation was motivated. We find it difficult to buy. Why two commoners of the commoners would float a tale of such monstrous perversion against a powerful institution like the police?

Apart from a general enquiry committee with the president of the local bar council as its head, a departmental probe committee has also been formed to investigate into the matter.

The incident is reported to have taken place on August 24. Why did the authorities take such a long time to start investigation? Why a committee with proper civic representation was not formed earlier to investigate into the incident immediately?

Why are the police getting increasingly tangled in controversies over human rights violation? It is time the police administration addressed this question and found an answer to it.

Europe Turning Left : Search for an Alternative

Within less than a decade of capitalism's 'irreversible' triumph, it is under assault in its citadel. Europe has decisively turned its back to a long spell of right-wing politics patronising economic globalisation and Europe's neo-liberal projects. It is not without reasons.

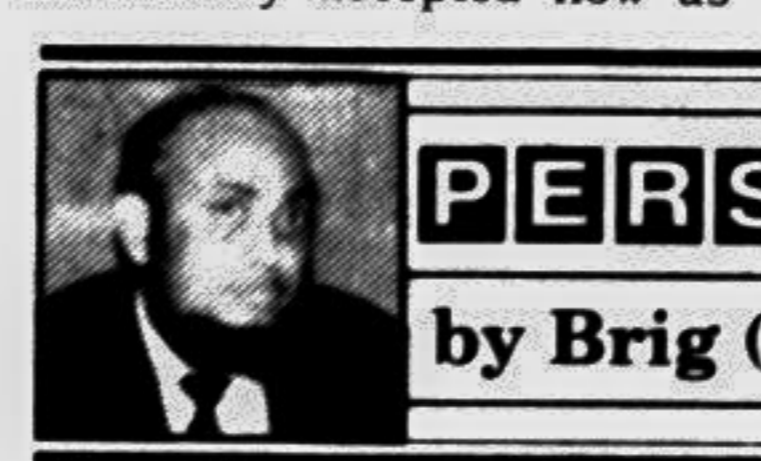
AS the end of the cold war symbolised by the fall of Berlin wall finally came, the end-of-history debate initiated by Francis Fukuyama took the world almost by storm.

End-of-history was essentially an intra-community debate for the industrialised countries of the North which, however, differ from each other with regard to their state of advancement.

tries, most of which lie in the South is nothing new, although the demise of the cold war bringing about the fall of the dominos in the Eastern Europe could have stirred afresh the democratic impulses of the people the world over.

There is, however, one area where the verdict of the great discourse scored instant success — the reorientation of much of the world to Bretton Woods prescription of economic conduct.

coming the norm of economic life in most of Third World countries. Caught in the tangled web of the numerous problems of underdevelopment, the people as well as their leaders in the Third World sought some succour from the regulated economy of socialism.



PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

humanity's inevitable destiny even by the headline former socialist stalwarts. Practically, none raised questions about the wisdom of a U-turn in the economic policy of various developing countries.

In the meantime, only within less than a decade of

capitalism's 'irreversible' triumph, it is under assault in its citadel. Europe has decisively turned its back to a long spell of right-wing politics patronising economic globalisation and Europe's neo-liberal projects.

multiple pressures today are slowing down, downstaging, belittling and, to cap it all, cut back in services. The growing despair and hopelessness emanate also from leadership failure bringing the legitimacy of entire political-economic system in question.

After the recent rejuvenation of capitalism, the income

disparities have become pronounced. Earlier in Western Europe, the society was composed of a third of the population suffering, another third gaining a little and the rest prospering.

Now that discontent has found a political expression. Europe has turned to left hoping that things would be better than what they have been living with.

nor Jose Maria Aznar's government has most electoral prospects for the future. This precisely returns Western Europe to immediate post-second world war situation for the first time in last half a century.

What does this ascendancy of the left mean? A return to an old style comradeship era of politics? An expansionist and big spending agenda for the government? No. Because the French socialist are deemed too antediluvian and British Labour party too rightist and fiscally conservative to make common cause with European socialist agenda.

Nevertheless, one thing is clear that the Europeans are desperately in search of an alternative which may not be the classical left politics of yester years. They would not mind any texture the newly-sought alternative may adopt.

Politics that Hurts a Nation

by Syed Badiuzzaman

The clash between Awami League and BNP is rooted in a clash between two legacies — the Mujib legacy and the Zia legacy. The two parties have been in a constant competition against each other to promote their respective legacy. The ultimate goal of each is to have the other's legacy outlived by its. Both are fighting a senseless battle.

BAD days are back to take their toll again on democracy in Bangladesh even though it hasn't had a chance yet to swing in these since it was born about seven years ago at the end of a prolonged military rule.

When the government following each free and fair poll made an attempt to establish its version of democracy, the opposition swiftly went on an offensive to undo it all.

When BNP came to power in 1991 winning what the widely-respected New York Times called the "freest and fairest elections in 20 years in Bangladesh," opposition Awami League found it very hard to adjust with its defeat and thus accepted the election results with resignation.

Now that Awami League is back to power after 21 years winning an equally free and fair elections as the first one as certified by prominent

of the people. In an apparent bid to give a tit for tat, BNP is now stepping into its arch rival's shoe to mount a similar anti-government campaign featuring the same kind of parliament boycott and street demonstrations it faced while in power as the ruling Awami League makes an attempt to bring Bangladesh into a process.

Caught in the collision between the two hostile parties are late of a fledgling democracy, an overbeaten economy and Bangladesh's reputation. Both parties are betting heavily on people putting their lives on the line for nothing other than the hollow promises of the self-seeking politician to fulfil their long-cherished dream for democracy and hopes for a better living and future.

When BNP was in power, Awami League took to streets with an accusation against the government of rigging a by-election. Now that Awami League is in power, streets went to BNP fighting for realization of a package of demands.

heart of a parliamentary democracy. So the functioning of a parliament in a regular and effective manner is vital for making democracy work.

A government-opposition cooperation is a pre-requisite for it. The going gets tough for a democratic system without that cooperation and understanding between the two. Democracy swings only when both join hands in sincere and honest efforts for its swinging and, of course, abide by its norms. In other words, democracy is a system that entrusts not only the government but also the opposition with a clearly defined responsibility to remove all obstacles standing in its way and take an equal load to carry it forward.

But boycott is the name of the game now for opposition BNP which also appears to be bent on organizing street rallies and demonstrations to press for realization of its demands and mount its pressure on the Awami League government forcing it to step down much ahead of its mandated tenure.

making imprudent moves through one after another provocative acts against the opposition.

Two such steps are renaming Zia International Airport already named after the founder of present country's biggest opposition party BNP late president Ziaur Rahman, and removal of a floating bridge over the Crescent Lake leading to the grave of Zia on the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar edge of Dhaka city.

Meanwhile, opposition leader Khaleda Zia and other stalwarts of BNP particularly Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury are misinterpreting the constitution of the country on people's democratic rights. Addressing a recent rally of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, the labour front of BNP, on a city street defying a ban, Prof. Chowdhury said: "There are provisions in the constitution that anybody can hold rallies and processions anywhere and anytime he or she likes."

cising that right.

In fact, there are no such provisions in the constitution that corroborate what Begum Zia or Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury claim. Article 37 under Fundamental Rights Section (part III) of Bangladesh Constitution (amended as of October 10, 1991) clearly states: "Every citizen shall have the right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of public order or public health."

An analysis of article 37 (part III) of the constitution shows that the freedom of assembly in Bangladesh is conditional with reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of public order. This is probably the same in all democratic and civilized nations in the world. Rights in a democracy must be exercised with utmost caution so that they do not curb other people's privileges.

political party will organize a rally on a city street encroaching upon other people's right to free movement and blocking traffic.

Bad news of Bangladesh always get a little space in American newspapers. The Boston Globe — one of the ten best newspapers in the United States — recently published a photograph of a BRTC bus set ablaze by the activists of opposition BNP during demonstrations in Dhaka.

The clash between Awami League and BNP is rooted in a clash between two legacies — the Mujib legacy and the Zia legacy. The two parties have been in a constant competition against each other to promote their respective legacy. The ultimate goal of each is to have the other's legacy outlived by its. Both are fighting a senseless battle.

To the Editor...

Unemployed technicians and tea gardens

Sir, In our country, tea is an export-oriented cash crop which earns huge foreign exchanges. Some developed countries as well as underdeveloped countries like India have introduced Tea Science in their university curriculum. They are growing better quality of tea by engaging technicians in this sector.

But in our country it is noted with dismay that tea planters are recruiting non-technicians, having no background of technical know-how of tea production. As a result, tea production in our country is declining and quality of tea is degrading day by day in the competitive market of the modern world.

Our unemployed technicians like agriculturists, engineers are eager to work in the tea gardens. So, steps should be taken to recruit technicians in this sector for utilising modern technology, upgrading the quality and getting a bumper production of tea.

Jahangir Alam Mondal, Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka-1207

Comments refuted

Sir, Our attention has been drawn to the news published in the front page of your esteemed daily on September 7, 1997 under the title "Land dispute: Armed gang creates terror at Rupshi". In the aforesaid news item, Manzurul Islam was quoted as stating that he had sent the men to recover his land which was illegally occupied.

prove it was my land", he said.

We the widow and daughters of late Mr Jahurul Islam hereby declare that our son and brother, Manzurul Islam's statement is false and baseless. In Rupshi, late Mr Jahurul Islam had 58 acres (approx) of land registered in his own name, mutated in the record of rights in his own name and khazna was paid by him in his own name up to his death also in 1995 and after his death also in his name by us. Out of the 58 acres our share (wife+4 daughters) comes to 41 acres approx as per law of the land and of which we are the owners in possession since the death of late Mr Jahurul Islam. Manzurul's share (only son) comes approximately to 17 acres. Out of our share of 41 acres we have given Mr Rouf Chowdhury our brother and uncle 17.5 acres approximately by registered deeds in May 1997 and duly handed over the possession to him. He had duly mutated his name in the record of rights as per law of the land and has paid up-to-date khazna. He has since been in peaceful possession of the land and we understand peace has been disturbed by armed terrorists on September 6 as reported in your esteemed daily accompanied by dacoity as recorded in the FIR of September 6 filed by Rouf Chowdhury in Rupganj Thana.

We also declare that we have full right to sell and do what we want with not only the 17.5 acres given to Mr Rouf Chowdhury but also the balance 24.5 acres out of our 41 acres share of the total 58 acres of land in late Mr. Jahurul Islam's name. We have not touched Manzurul's rightful share. He must not interfere with our shares. We would further state that Manzurul's statement that the

matter is being settled in court is false. This matter has not been taken any court.

The act of transfer of title and possession by us to Mr Rouf Chowdhury has been done as per law of the land.

It should also be clear that we have full rights to our due share in the other large land holdings in Rupshi owned by late Mr Jahurul Islam through companies owned by him. We will take necessary action to safeguard our rights in respect of those lands.

In this regard, we would also like to mention that the late Mr. Jahurul Islam had hundreds of acres of land in different parts of Dhaka city and its suburbs which are being illegally sold by Manzurul Islam without our knowledge and without we receiving even a paisa. We would like to bring this illegality and fraud to the notice of the government authorities concerned and seek their protection for preserving our rights as per law of the land.

Miss. Naima Islam — daughter of late Mr Jahurul Islam (on her own behalf and on behalf of her mother and sisters) House #8, Road #72, Gulshan-2, Dhaka.

IWT neglected

Sir, The importance of the inland water transport sector was not spotlighted in the budget, although these waters carry more passengers and cargo than the roads. The latter have developed in a satisfactory manner (as it should), and the impact of road development has been visibly felt in the nation's economy.

The development of the transport infrastructure has a long way to go in this delicate region of hundreds of rivers, only

15 feet above the sea level. IWT cannot be neglected with the addition of bridges, at least for one obvious reason: the direction of travel on the bridge and on the water below is 90 degrees out of phase, to use a scientific term.

The penetration ratio between the land and river routes is very high. River travel costs less, suiting the rural economy, for passengers and goods. The river transport crafts are out-moded, lacking R&D and private investment. The Planning Commission's projects do not seem to attract the investors. Like the choking rivers, some administrative dredging has to be done to fit in the modern development projects to strengthen the infrastructure.

The jetties and landing places (ghats) are primitive and the launches are not only uncomfortable, but insecure from the design point of view. Powered boats for carrying cargo are a rare sight. Inland container ports have yet to be developed. The country boat may be as visible as the bullock cart. What are we doing for the mahji-bhai (boatman) who moves us with his songs?

We talk a lot about water. But what is happening on the water surface? A Zabr Dhaka

Art Buchwald's COLUMN

Get Him Some Guests

MARTHA'S Vineyard, Massachusetts — It had to happen sooner or later. The president ran out of guests to entertain on Martha's Vineyard. He had been warned by the CIA that this could possibly occur.

In the war room at the White House, a briefing officer said, "Sir, Martha's Vineyard does not have a large enough population to support a three-week presidential vacation. We estimate you'll use up all your dinner guests in the first two weeks."

The president said, "You guys are always trying to ruin my vacation. As commander-in-chief I say, 'Damn the shortage of guests, and full steam ahead.'"

For once, the CIA was correct. Every man, woman and child had been invited to a presidential event, and with school starting, there was no one left to break bread with the president.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were called up from Washington and met the president in his boathouse.

"I have a week to go, and there's no one left on the Vineyard I haven't entertained," the president said.

The chief of naval operations said, "The aircraft carrier Nimitz is heading this way. We're going to bring over everyone from Nantucket. We checked the Nantucket people — they are good conversationalists, and many are closet Democrats."

Using a pointer, the air force general said, "We can deliver 2,000 golfers and Barbara Streisand by air."