

Bayonetting the Liberation War

Today is the infamous Jail Killing Day. This is the blackest day in the annals of this ancient nation...

But this day, November 3, has another and very elevating meaning for us. The leaders of the Liberation War, who were spared the fate of Bangabandhu...

When the protagonists of the August 15 massacre got convinced of not getting any of the four to bend, they put out what they believed to be the last flame of the resurgence of the Bengalees as a nation...

Among the killers were some who fought in the Liberation War. Didn't they know who were they killing? A process of ingratitude growing viciously into an all-enveloping amnesia spilled from the bloodied bayonets of the killers and made us all forget who were those that fell that night...

We can try to repay our debts to Tajuddin and his indomitable comrades, who together represent the Liberation War as no other groups of person do, by imbibing their patriotism and courage and total commitment to society and practising these in our life unflinchingly.

After the Bonanza What?

Bangladeshi tea never had it so good in the world market. Global output declining sharply due to drought in major tea-growing countries...

From a survival context they have emerged into the brilliance of a reawakening. All concerned with the tea industry must strive now to keep it afloat, lest it wore off as a mere fortuitous one-timer.

It is time the government sat down with the garden owners, traders and the workers' representatives on the specific agenda of adopting a modern approach to production, processing, blending and marketing of this highly popular beverage in the world.

The policy cover must bring within its ambit the workers' welfare including their security in the work-place currently being endangered by poachers and intruders.

For expanding bilateral sales, let's gear up for a fresh marketing drive.

Despicable

Unsporting behaviour of some players coupled with unnecessary police cruelty killed Saturday afternoon's prospect of an absorbing contest between two popular clubs in a group engagement of the curtain-raising tournament of the domestic cricket season.

If Minhaz's behaviour was another display of his trademark antics in similar situations, Mohammedan Sporting skipper Aminul Islam's instigating prolonged argument with the umpire was appallingly astounding. Getting involved in indecent public disagreement with umpires over a verdict is the last image that people who know the vice captain of the national team can think of.

To cap it all was the so-called police action. All afternoon members of law enforcing agency lazed around while missiles were being flung from the galleries. Just when the dust was settling down did they swing into action with indiscriminate lobbing of tear gas shells.

Bangladesh Cricket Board should conduct enquiry into Saturday's incident and deal with the authorities of the people responsible for both unruly and unsporting behaviour. If found guilty it should also severely deal with that club official who reportedly tried to attack a Board official over the adjudication of the man of the match award.

Storm in the World's Financial Market

Alan Greenspan, the highly experienced and knowledgeable Chairman of the US Federal Reserves has remarked about a week ago that the prevailing boom in the US stock market could not be sustained for too long.

His last week of October has witnessed a major storm in the financial markets of the rich countries of the world — North America, Europe, Far East and South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

It looks like the famous Kondrat long-period business cycle after every 50 or 60 years hasn't taken place this time following 1929 depression, which a few smart alecs were predicting in the United States, the capitalist world may be facing medium and short cycles only and that without much hardships on the life of the common people.

However, coming back to the events of the last week, although in the week of October 20-24, Hong Kong stock market experienced a substantial slide in its price index which some observers in various parts of the world thought had triggered the New York stock market's major shake up on Monday, October 27.

Over the last six and a half years or so, the Dow Jones's price index has been steadily growing from somewhere in the range of 3200-3400 to over 8200 breaking all the barriers, as it were. As Alan Greenspan, the highly experienced and knowledgeable Chairman of the US Federal Reserves has remarked about a week ago that the prevailing boom in the US stock market could not be sustained for too long.

The Pattern of Development

The report of the market development has been indicating that there was a kind of a leader-follower behaviour in the stock market. Monday's price correction in New York was followed by all the major markets in the rest of the world on Tuesday, October 28.

Reforming the jails

Sir, Two Jail Reform Commissions were set up — one during the then East Pakistan Government and the other by the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh with a view to modify/change the existing Jail Code Rules introduced during the British regime.

Both the Commissions visited different countries including some of the European countries and examined their existing system of Jail Administration and Jail Code Rules on the spot.

Fire in the factories

Sir, The authority concerned is taking steps to remove the problems from the garments factories although it is too late. Fire break-out is the main fear of the garments workers.

No end of experts

Sir, Jute Minister Faezul Huq seems to be expert in every line, from all angles and for making any kind of expert comment or sweeping remark, rendering him an all rounder.

Disappointing tour

Sir, Bangladesh Cricket team has finished their Kenya trip in an incongruous manner. We had a long-cherished desire that we shall earn a winning record in ODI. But we can't achieve that coveted distinction contending with the comparably mediocre teams in the world cricket arena.

Abdur Razzaque Retired Administrative Officer Prisons Directorate Bangladesh

pointment in the follower's markets because the New York market hasn't gained fully what it has lost on Monday.

One has to understand that the follower countries do have some equity and bond links with the US market but the situation in the US market has to reflect the internal strengths and weaknesses of the economy.

Similarly, the degree of currency over-valuation, over-investment in real-estate and other sectors in the Far Eastern markets and the external loan burdens are not the same in all countries. Therefore, the degree of price corrections in the US market cannot correct the internal mistakes in all other countries of the world.

Comparison Between 1929 and 1987 Crashes

The Economist of London of October 20-24, 1997, has observed that there was hardly any hardship after 1987 crash. On the contrary, there was a severe hardship following the 1929 crash. Investors quickly took advantage of the 1987 price decline in stock markets and benefited. Right now people are looking for another such opportunity to buy cheap shares after a 1987-type crash.

However, after 1987 crash the government, especially the United States government, supplied new cash to ease the market condition so that interest rate did not shoot up when the market became tight.

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China's Blue Water Plunge

If the Chinese have been expanding themselves in the Spratlys the true challenge to them would be, according to the observers, to hold the islands against a determined naval blockade which can be enacted only by the US Navy while using locally available naval and port facilities.

Even whole of Europe seemed small for Napoleon's conquest as the powers of Europe started to retreat before his feet. The dream of vast empire floated in his mind and the mystery, wealth and greatness of the East lured him irresistibly, especially those of Egypt and India.

But nothing substantial came out of it because of his powerlessness at sea. Napoleon was a very great general and a master of war on land, but on sea he was helpless. He did not understand it much. And it was the sea power that ultimately broke Napoleon.

Ever since sea became the high-way of the world and the commercial route between the East and the West it was, in fact, the mastery of the sea which dictated the rise and fall of powers. In the wake of Renaissance the revolutions and inventions shook Europe where people took to the discovery of oceans and unknown lands through their undaunted seafaring.

For Peoples Republic of China — the country frequently mentioned today to be a great power by the turn of the millennia — the point could not be lost sight of. Yet China with her priorities elsewhere and a typical continental mindset took unnecessarily long time to get over her sea blindness while among the Asian powers India made a giant leap forward in her maritime enterprise.

The Spratly Islands — a multitude of small islands and reefs, mostly uninhabited, between the coasts of Vietnam and the Philippines — already weighed heavily in China's strategic calculations. Now this importance grew manifold with the discovery of huge oil fields in those islands.

all economy and industrialisation of Asia-Pacific continues to expand with same rapid pace. It was no wonder that the PLA Navy's first ever offensive was to take place in the South China Sea of the Spratlys. Even if the Chinese have been expanding themselves in the Spratlys the true challenge to them would be, according to the observers, to hold the islands against a determined naval blockade which can be enacted only by the US Navy while using locally available naval and port facilities.

Although a joint command of PLA Navy and Airforce was busy building the permanent base in the Hainan island for the defence of the South China Sea which subsumed their concerns also for the Spratlys, the true expression of a sense of urgency for a rush to the high sea both with the CMC and PLA high command came in the wake of one of the largest scale naval warfare exercise conducted in the PRC in 1994.

Apart from the Spratlys and the sea lanes between the Pacific and Indian Ocean, Myanmar is the other main surge point of the PRC. With a very long coastline stretching along the Bay of Bengal and a few islands off shore Myanmar offer an ideal strategic staging point to control the western approaches to the strait of Malacca as well as to directly challenge the traditional custodians of Indian Ocean.

What is, however, of strategic importance is the Chinese development of the military infrastructure in Myanmar, particularly naval facilities. Another significant development of Sino-Myanmar strategic understanding is the PRC's upgrading of the road and railway system from China's Yunnan province to several ports along the Myanmar coast of Bay of Bengal.

PRC's drive through Myanmar to the coast of Bay of Bengal is distinctly reminiscent of Russia's century-old drive for the warm water of Indian Ocean, which got stuck in the rocky wilderness of the Hindukush. But what Russia could not achieve seems well within the reach of China due mainly to the latter's multidimensional structure of power build-up.

PERSPECTIVES by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

OPINION

Reservation on Reserved Seats

RECENTLY, I had the opportunity of attending a seminar on 'Electoral Law Reform in Bangladesh' where leaders of some political parties, MPs, lawyers ex-judices, activists and NGO workers participated.

I notice that the women politicians particularly the members of parliament who were the beneficiaries of the indirect method supported the system giving many reasons such as financial constraints etc., whereas activists who were not directly involved did not get nominations from the majority party for direct election.

As 50 per cent of the population of the country, women should be empowered with absolute and direct right to participate, act and share the governance of the country in way which is effective and meaningful. But how? That is a big question to be answered by the politicians and other conscientious people and need attention of those who want real democracy to be practiced in our country, who want the elimination of discrimination against women in every sphere of their lives in Bangladesh.

It would not be out of the way to mention how influential bureaucrats can serve all governments even after 3 years or more has elapsed, even on contract basis and even after being accused of contempt of court by the Supreme Court, High Court Division.

Cuisine on the Tower

Sir, On the top of Jiban Bima Tower (20th floor) one restaurant in the name of 'Tower International Cuisine' has been opened about 5 to 6 months back. Unfortunately the owner of the restaurant has not made adequate arrangements to emit the pungent smell of the cooked item discharges during the preparation process.

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more than anybody else. It needs planning, and strong and sincere determination for implementation of the plan accordingly.

We all understand that as a person cannot walk nor speak of running when one of his/her major organs of the body does not function well — a nation cannot progress unless and until the whole component of the society and nation progress at the same pace. For that the stronger section has to help, strengthen and pull up the weaker one with a good will.

Here in Bangladesh we all agree that women still belongs to a weaker section in the arena of politics. So the responsibilities lie not only with them but mainly with the male politicians if they really want progress of the nation. One may argue that nobody gives anything willingly and voluntarily. Why empower others when one can do without it? So women are to fight for their political right.

But again I will argue that for obtaining superiority and effective participation in politics, women will need some time and opportunities to be involved and congenial atmosphere. To achieve those, women need some concession, and that is why the issue of reserved seats crops up repeatedly. Like reserved seats for minority community in many countries, women's seats in the Parliament should be reserved for a longer period, but not by indirect election. First the seats should be increased from 30 to 150. In my opinion according to the proportion of increased women population, 150 seats in the Parliament is not much. Then in every two constituencies, one can be reserved for women candidates. That means every voter will cast two votes — one for the male candidate, one for a woman. A woman candidate will be common in two neighbouring constituencies.

In this way, reserved seat and direct election system many continue for some time say, for another two terms, and I am sure everybody will agree with me that this is not too much to ask. It is reasonable and necessary.

Women could have asked more but as I said earlier the weaker section of the community will have to wait until it gains more strength and becomes fully equipped with political knowledge and necessary qualities to share the responsibilities of running a government. For that women need co-operation goodwill and time — and they will get it, I am sure.