

Trade Fair Message

An international trade fair is an ideal global mart where the latest products and processes are put on display under the same roof, so to speak.

We wish the month-long Dhaka International Trade Fair '98 which was declared open on Sunday by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina were larger than it is: some 100 companies from 20 countries and 275 local business houses are participating in it.

We find ourselves in an inter-dependent world, politically economically and culturally; yet competition is very much the rule of the game.

Those clouds have lifted away lately by virtue of an efficient handling of the points at issue by the commerce ministry. Much as we thank them for it we also urge them to monitor progress on the child labour elimination programmes.

Treatment by Patches? No

The most celebrated nursery rhyme, one that sought to teach children numbers one to ten, occurs in Jogindranath Basu's equally celebrated Hashikhushi.

It is riddled with corruption and epitomises in itself all the ills that have been attributed to public sector enterprise by detractors from the free market camp.

Biman must turn its adverse times into a blessing by exerting itself and arriving at some well-deliberated, wise and pragmatic and perhaps radical vision — and go into a thorough overhaul.

When will the government take the Biman scandals seriously? Isn't it time that it took charge and threw its whole weight behind making it a viable, profitable and highly dependable corporation?

Death of a Cricketer

After having been in a state of coma for 48 hours Indian cricketer Raman Lamba was declared dead last afternoon. The Delhi cricketer who represented India in a number of one-day international matches was fatally injured on the head while taking part in a league match for Abahani here Friday last.

A seasoned professional cricketer with considerable experience what Raman did on that day, however, was courting a disaster. He chose to field at a 'dangerous' fielding position (forward short leg) without a headgear or helmet.

Death has a way of breaching the best of defences. But we would nevertheless ask why Lamba was not rushed to the best local neurosurgeon in the first place even though professor Rashiduddin Ahmed, reputedly the number one in this field was very much in town.

The sad eminently avoidable death of Lamba points finger at one overriding necessity of the moment: authorities have to adopt mandatory measures for close-in fieldsmen to use protective gears.

Besides, Board should also see that doctors are equipped with the skill, experience, courage and personality to tackle an emergency situation like this are readily available at the playing grounds.

We are deeply touched by his death and convey our heart-felt sympathies to the members of his bereaved family.

Devaluation: How it Works

The inflexible domestic markets both in case of export and import trade clearly indicate that there are far more important issues than devaluation. We should know how the devaluation will work in the economy which is vitiated by many other factors.

During July-November, 1997 period, exports from Bangladesh increased by over 20 per cent and foreign remittance by more than 7 per cent. Imports however declined by 5.63 per cent during the same period.

Consequently, pressure on foreign exchange reserve will intensify. The best option, under the circumstances, is to further increase export earnings and remittance from abroad.

But how far export supplies would respond to price incentives induced by devaluation? According to the former Finance Minister, we do not have export surplus while garment manufacturing and exports are based on back to back L/C.

Devaluation may still be useful for greater inflow of remittance from abroad. Again, this may not be true, since a latest study on the subject indicate, that the volume of remittance is much more influenced by the number of Bangladeshis working abroad and not the value of Taka in dollar terms.

But devaluation alone

cannot enhance export earnings. The easing of problems at Chittagong port, easy availability of working capital, its reduced cost, firm supply of electricity are equally, if not more, important than devaluation.

Regardless of the exchange rate, our manufacturing industries including those which cater to the export market, do not seem to be competitive in many instances with substitute products from other countries.

able at competitive prices — local or foreign does not matter — expansion of competitive manufacturing for both export and domestic market in textile, leather, plastic, ceramics, electronics, etc., should not be too difficult.

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On the other hand, if there is increased import of foodgrains, consumers will face higher prices. However, in international market, price of crude petroleum has fallen during last one year by as much as one third, while rice and wheat prices have declined by 16 per cent and 12 per cent respectively during the same period.

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Polls: An Essay at Division and Violence

Nothing has remained sacrosanct for political parties. The present lot — all of them — only wants to grab power, whatever the cost. A new formation is required because only then will there be a revival of values and idealism.

As the polling winds up towards the end, a feeling of uncertainty engrips the country. It is not confined to whether the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies or Congress or the United Front would form the government but spreads to where the nation would settle down to a serious, full five-year rule.

Still more urgent are the electoral reforms to reduce the role of money and crime. The minimum estimate this time is Rs 15,000 crore; Rs 4,500 crore is the maximum expenditure calculated on the basis of Rs 2 crore on each of the 543 constituencies.

Coming to crime, no political party is uncontaminated. Either it has suspects in its own ranks or it has entered into poll pacts with such parties as are not particular about clean methods.

The suggestion made by Gandhian Jayaprakash Narain also requires a serious attention. He wanted the electorate to have the right to recall the elected member. In other words, if in a particular constituency, a specific number of voters were to say in writing that their member had let them down, they would have the right to

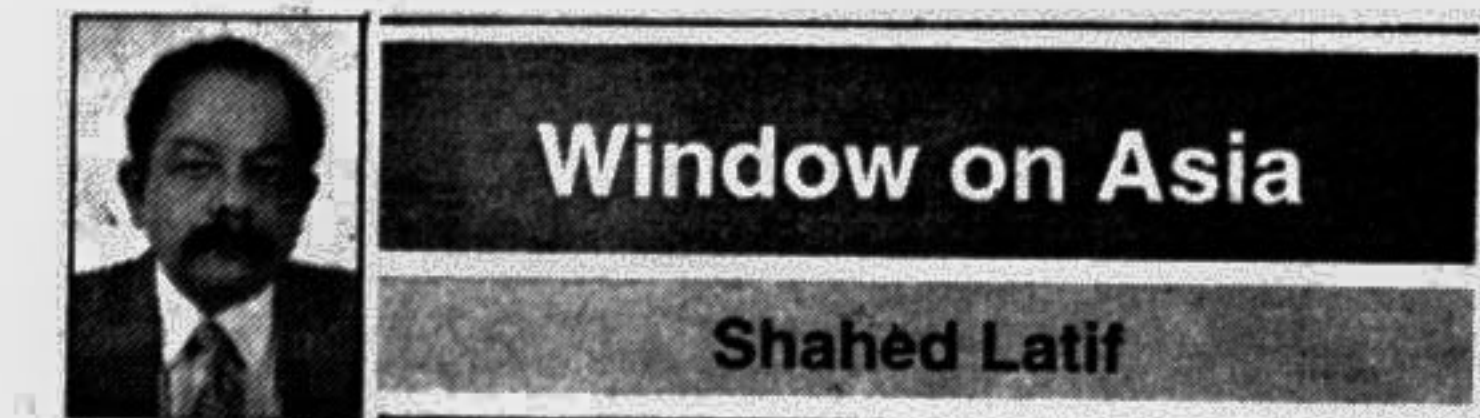
have fresh polls, where the sitting member could also participate. Some Scandinavian countries follow this practice. In India, this is needed all the more because a large number of candidates after election forget their constituency and do not show up at all during the full five-year-term.

What happened in Coimbatore, where more than 50 people died in a series of bomb blasts, is one example of communal hatred. The fire was smouldering for six months when a Hindu-Muslim rioting took place last. The caste clashes in Bihar are equally disconcerting.

Equally disturbing are the utterances made during the campaign. For example, Sonia Gandhi's observation that BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee is a liar was in bad taste. This is not part of the Indian culture. She is, in fact, lucky that the government is placed in such circumstances where it cannot give out the name of her husband, Rajiv Gandhi, as one of

the beneficiaries of kickbacks during the current election, it will take time to return to even its pre-election status quo. The question to be asked is whether there is a way to avoid the nation from being hauled over the coals.

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Window on Asia

Shahed Latif

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BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

Another drawback in election is the long period between the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and the formation of new elected government. To some extent, it cannot perhaps be helped because of the country's size and the uncooperative attitude of political parties.

There is a saying that 'you can fool all the people for sometime, some people for all the time, but you cannot fool all the people for all the time'.

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To the Editor

Misleading name

Sir, Like other newspapers of Bangladesh, the DS also uses a misleading term 'IRRI-BORO' to denote one of our rice-producing seasons — 'BORO'. IRRI is the abbreviation of 'International Rice Research Institute' located in the Philippines, whereas 'BORO' is one of the major three rice-producing seasons in Bangladesh.

But the scenario has changed after Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) located in Joydebpur, Gazipur came into being. Since its foundation in October, 1970, BRRI has developed more than 30 HYV rice, suitable not only for 'BORO' but also for 'AUS' and 'AMAN' seasons.

In usual notation these HYV rice are dubbed by two first letters of the abbreviated name of the research institutes from where they were developed, e.g., IR B, IR 20 for varieties developed by IRRI and BR11, BR12 etc., for varieties developed by BRRI.

We would earnestly request the admission committee to reconsider the decision and slick to last year's decision; the new decision can very well be put to use next academic year.

Why inflict the innocent Sir, We are really worried to see that the US is frequently threatening Iraq to strike for non-compliance of UN resolution. In fact, Iraq has allowed the chief inspector of UN inspection team to inspect all its possible installations. The chief inspector is taking a long time to complete the job.

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Do Something fast about health hazards

Sir, Our country is facing serious health hazards — arsenic is being found in ground water in many parts of the country which is making people seriously ill and pollution of the atmosphere by harmful particles has become a threat to healthy living and people are becoming sick from it.

But it seems that our government is not taking this seriously and no fruitful steps has been taken to combat these serious problems. We are really surprised by this attitude.

We know that in the UK thousands upon thousands of cattle were slaughtered when 'mad-cow disease' was reported and in Hong Kong, chickens were killed in great numbers when it was disclosed that a kind of flu originated from them.

I am afraid that if God forbid, our country ever fell victim to this sort of disease, then what will happen?

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Criminals' den?

Sir, Is Dhaka city turning into a den of criminals? Once my favourite city is now betraying me. My memory strikes me emotionally when I am venturing my old experience I encountered very recently.

A man with a smiling face approached me and sounded to be very much acquainted with me for a long time. His behaviour made me bound to be amiable as he expressed that compare to me he was serving a petty job and it is natural for me to forget him.

It was his pretension before snatching money from me by his gang. I pray to him — and in fine I say to God — Dhaka city.

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Also there is no reason why the Rajya Sabha, which is a council of states, should not meet during the period the Lok Sabha remains dissolved.

There is nothing in the constitution to say that the Upper house cannot meet on its own. The government has been following an illegal practice for the last 48 years. The Rajya Sabha represents Parliament till the other house is elected.

It is a pity that nothing has remained sacrosanct for political parties. The present lot — all of them — only wants to grab power, whatever the cost. A new formation is required because only then will there be a revival of values and idealism.

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