

Rape of Conscience

What happened inside the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court building on Tuesday last was not only a barbaric assault on a six year old minor but also a violation of our conscience as a nation.

We are alarmed because the beastly paranoid assault on Maria is not a sporadic case of paedophilic perversion. There seems to be a pattern. More and more young girls, a great many of them minor, are becoming victims of men's carnal monstrosity.

It is true more complaints are being lodged these days but few wrong doers have actually been punished so far. That is because our society suffers from a heavy male bias and also because so little sensitivity actually percolates from the top.

Slum-dwellers' Fading Smile

We thought the government would go hammer and tong with this project materialising it in record short time. Alas, the exact opposite has been happening almost since the day one!

The slums are occupying land anyway and most of it is undoubtedly khas land, too. Here is a plan designed to give them a new life in earmarked project areas developed with improved sanitary conditions, living quarters and vocational training centres.

The truth is much of the government's khas land remains under illegal occupation of vested interests. The DCC's campaign for demolition of unauthorised structures stumbled against a wall of opposition a year or so ago.

We would urge the government nonetheless to make some of its unutilised land in the city readily available for the ADB project.

There it Goes Again

Fresh from the GSP scam, country's garment export industry has again gone under a cloud: 13 garment factories have reportedly made huge profit illegally through the export of manufactured garments to the US.

This latest unearthing makes us square up to a very pertinent question: did we learn the lessons of the last GSP furore which threatened the future of the RMG export sector? There are two possibilities. Either we did not learn any or we have forgotten them too quickly.

We feel it is time our business community had drawn a line between unscrupulous means of one-time windfall and long-term business based on mutual trust. Our exporters had better remembered that just because of the corrupt inclination of a few of them, the whole RMG sector industry was brought to a standstill.

While we hope that the indicted EPB employees would get their deserts, we urge the government and the BGMEA to make sure the faltering garment factory owners to pay for what they did for quick bucks. A timely step to set the house in order is an eminently better option than genuflecting late before international community and humiliating the whole nation for a bunch of crooks.

Commonwealth in the Third Millennium: Prospects and Challenges

There have been times when people wondered about and seriously questioned the very raison d'etre and further usefulness of the existence of the Commonwealth as such. It was alleged that the Commonwealth, as a body, had no teeth to bite the wicked and no resources to help the needy.

is destined to continue in the next millennium. The diversity of the Commonwealth, in fact, represents its underlying strength. With the pursuit of unity in diversity being the heart of the association's ethos, the Commonwealth, in the words of Nelson Mandela, can help to make the world safe for diversity.

In spite of apparent lack of homogeneity, the Commonwealth is bound by a strong set of shared values and ideals that are being generally practised by its members. The most notable of these fundamental political values, which had been originally set at the founding of the Commonwealth in 1949 and subsequently reiterated at CHOGMs in Singapore and Harare, are democracy, fundamental human rights, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, equality for women, and good governance.

All of the 54 members of the Commonwealth, except one, are practising democracy. The prodigal member, Nigeria, has to pay for it by having its membership suspended.

later, and recently Fiji's short bout of adventurism, manifest both the strength and the resilience of this august body. The prolonged and successful sanctions imposed on Southern Rhodesia's rebel regime bears glowing testimony to Commonwealth's resolve not to bow down on matters of ideals.

The Commonwealth does not itself command a huge fund of its own for the purpose of providing economic aid to its deserving members, though most of its members are developing nations. However, the



Currents and Crosscurrents

by M M Rezaul Karim

Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation has been established to aid its members, in the most cost effective way, in many fields of their prime need. Yet, the Commonwealth can and has been able to amass huge resources for development and benefit of its members.

bers and business forums being held in order to promote investment and trade. To start up small and medium type enterprises, some venture capital-type funds have been envisaged. The first such fund, the Commonwealth Africa Investment Fund, was launched last year.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of the Commonwealth which being a product of the unlikely prospect of falling short of people's realistic expectations, no one can underestimate or undermine the value of this organisation. After all, almost one-third of world's population live in the Commonwealth. The twenty-first century is a vast expanse of time.

It has also been reported that no less than thirteen of the fast growing economies of the world lie in the Commonwealth. Though the very recent currency debacles, specially in Asia, has slowed down the pace of development, we hope this would be a passing phase. To cite an example of growing prosperity, one can derive satisfaction to note the per-capita income of Singapore having risen to a fifth higher than that of Britain. Malaysia is fast catching up. Again, the Commonwealth is a haven for small states. Over half of its members are small states and almost 70 per cent of all multilateral Commonwealth assistance is channelled to them.

We, the people, the governments, the professionals and all others who are concerned, have good reasons to take pride in this institution. Together we will work and successfully we will face the challenges of the coming millennium.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Time Magazine Celebrates Seventy-five Years

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

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an original American idea that revolutionised the world. And made Time the premier news-magazine in the world. Time's philosophy was not to merely summarise the previous week's news. It was to go behind the scene and report on the driving forces behind the events, and present the readers insights into diverse field such as politics, art, religion and technology.

In his famous 1941 essay, "The American Century", Henry Luce, a Republican, laid out the foundation of Time's brand of journalism. He urged America to "engage in a global struggle on behalf of its values, most notably a love of freedom, a feeling for the equality of opportunities, a tradition of self-reliance and independence and also of cooperation."

Time introduced three novelties in journalism. Before Brit Hadden died in 1931, he formulated Time's policy on brevity; for instance, "in time's nick", in place of "in the nick of time." Time was the first magazine to take advantage of the richness of the English language—it was not bashful in using every word in the dictionary. Finally, Time elevated captions to an art form—its ingenious captions tell half the story.

To the Editor...

"SC verdict on detention of Ershad...." Sir, I was surprised to notice that some comments have been published in your esteemed newspaper on 6th March issue on the first page in the news item "SC Verdict on Detention of Ershad: Review Petition Likely" involving my professional integrity. In page twelve (last page) it is published that:

"Nabi said he and Dr Kamal Hossain are examining whether Barrister Rafiq-ul Haque can 'ethically as well as legally' conduct the case because he (Rafiq-ul Haque) was the attorney general till December 17, 1990 while, the order of detention of Ershad was issued on December 12, 1990."

This comment about me is baseless and malicious. Mr Nabi may not know but Dr Kamal Hossain knew very well that I never acted as Attorney General under the then Acting President. Dr Kamal Hossain and others were advising the Acting President at the relevant time. The actual fact is that I tendered my resignation to the President of Bangladesh on 4th

December, 1990 which was accepted by him on 6th December, 1990 before he resigned himself from that office. My resignation was accepted with immediate effect. So I acted as Attorney General upto 6th December, 1990 and not thereafter.

field, including LP and stereo. Words that Time coined include, "socialite", "male chauvinist", "guesstimate", "World War II" and "televangelist". Words that Time popularised include: "tycoon", "pundit", "kudos" and "smog". These days, the world looks to Time for the final word.

Time magazine's "Man of the Year" is awaited eagerly by the world. To be somebody, one has to make the cover of Time. Look at the people who did: inventor Thomas Edison, aviator Charles Lindbergh (Man of the Year 1928), Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Mohandas K. Gandhi, gangster Al Capone, Adolf Hitler (Man of the Year 1938), Benito Mussolini, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Picasso, Vivian Leigh, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Madonna, The Beatles and Bill Gates, to name only a very few. Each US Presidents made the cover several times—55 times by Richard Nixon is a Time record.

It's ten worst featured, Black Cultural Heritage (1994) (100, 827 copies), Baseball Strike (1994), Anguish Over Bosnia (1993), Nuclear Safety (1996), Benjamin Netanyahu (1996), Boris Yeltsin (1993), Somalia: Restoring Hope (1992), Advocates for Children (1996), GOP Front Runner Bob Dole (1995), and America's Economy (1994) (113,041 copies).

According to the New York Times, during Time's 75th birthday celebration Christian right activist Rev. Jerry Falwell was seen whispering into Muhammad Ali's ears. Former Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca posed for photographs with O. J. Simpson-Patty Hearst attorney F. Lee Bailey. Actress Sharon Stone, just adopted, posed in a zebra-striped dress, not far from Louis Farrakhan, a recent

accepted any such position under him nor he ever consulted me whether Mr H M Ershad should be detained or not. I don't want to disclose further information at this stage.

I hope Mr Nabi and Dr Kamal Hossain will take note of this and, if necessary, they may make further enquiry before making any such comments against a colleague in profession.

Rafiq-ul Haq Senior Advocate Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Genocide in Algeria

Sir, The dual standard of morality by the western rulers in supporting the military junta in Algeria is being increasingly questioned by the peace loving people who want to see the truth being unveiled. The recent disclosure in London-based The Observer, by three Algerian police officers seeking asylum in Britain that massacres on the helpless population are being done systematically by the ruling military junta in the guise of the banned Islamists. This they are doing to demean the Islamists and at the same time create terror

visitor to Bangladesh. Assisted suicide practitioner, Dr. Jack Kevoorkian, or "Dr. Death", was seen cavorting with Raquel Welch. Former Bosnia diplomat Richard Holbrooke came and inquired, "who is not here?" Recent celebs, such as Monica Lewinsky's lawyer, William Ginsburg, also attended, along with his heroes, General William Westmoreland of Vietnam war fame, and actor Sean Connery. "Bond, James Bond". Microsoft CEO Bill Gates made time for TIME, as did Mikhail S. Gorbachev and President Clinton, who met for the first time.

Many of the 1190 guests were on Time's cover. There were several tributes on the agenda, including one from literature Nobel Prize winner, Princeton University Professor Toni Morrison to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; one from Mr. Gorbachev to Vladimir Lenin and Mahatma Gandhi, and one from William H. Gates, who was appropriately invited via E-mail, to the Wright Brothers. "They transformed life itself", Bill Gates said of the Wright Brothers, adding that the creation of flight was "the first World Wide Web."

Muhammad Ali, the heavyweight boxing legend, who was on Time's cover three times, in 1963, 1971 and 1978, was a star attraction. Praising Ali's "float like a butterfly sting like a bee" boxing mantra, actor Tom Cruise suggested that Ali

Art Buchwald's COLUMN

Blowing Tax Smoke

ONE of the ways the president hopes to have a balanced budget is by putting a \$1.50 tax on cigarettes—as well as levying fines on tobacco companies to get the United States well.

If Clinton has his way, Americans will have to smoke one trillion, three hundred billion cigarettes just to break even.

The question arises as to how many Americans must continue smoking—or, worse still, go back to smoking—to balance the budget.

It has been the policy of this administration, as well as previous ones, to discourage the use of tobacco, particularly among teenagers.

But now the economic salvation of the country may need to take priority over poor health and misdemeanors.

In order to raise revenue from taxes, the government will have to kill all the "no-smoking" regulations in regards to public places.

The Marlboro Man might appear on dollar bills and 32-cent postage stamps. Joe Camel could show up on White House billboards.

If the president hopes to accomplish his goal, he might get Chelsea to start smoking, and when he is seen publicly with Hillary he could light two cigarettes and hand one to her.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright might light up a cigar during the State of the Union address, and sample packs of cigarettes would be handed out to our armed forces on land, sea and in the air.

Clinton does not necessarily have to come out for smoking. But he will send a message to the nation that the more they puff the larger the budget surplus will be.

It's obvious the tobacco companies are in a dither that their product was selected to give the United States financial security, but a government official said, "We had to tax either nicotine or arsenic."

The president of one of the largest tobacco companies said, "What is good for R J Reynolds is good for America. And this tax is no good."

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