

Two-way Traffic

Experts, both local and foreign, were eloquent on globalisation challenges at two discussion-meets in the city, one held by the BIDS and USIS jointly on May 3 and another by the AmCham on May 5.

Never mind the style, a consensus was eventually reached through that series of lively discussions for which we must thank BIDS, USIS and AmCham.

It is interesting to note that Bangladesh's GDP growth has been outstripped by her growth in trade and that she is well-placed among the South Asian countries to reap the benefits of globalisation.

For this to happen we need to upgrade our infrastructure including power, gas and telecommunications sectors, improve the financial laws, privatise rapidly and create an enabling environment for investment, both foreign and local.

Those are the do's for us and there are do's for the developed countries as well. We are looking for an equitable distribution of globalisation dividends, to be precise. This can be achieved through a greater market access, better terms of trade, transfer of technology, assured free movement of labour, relocation of industries and production of complementary goods to allow manufacturing and trading leeways.

To the best of our understanding, globalisation means integration with the world market based on the concept of organised interdependence of economies, both developed and developing.

Drainage Tangle

It looks like this year too the rainy season will not see any change in Dhaka's denizens' fate. Within a month or two, when the ashen hue of the sky and the ceaseless rain drops become a regular feature, the too familiar pattern of suffering — water clogged city roads — promises to revisit the urban population like an irredeemable curse.

We know it is not an easy task for the authorities to fix the drainage system of a city that has gone awry from the twin devilry of managerial indifference and collective insensitivity of citizens; but why the authorities would be always found wanting in getting their act together? Is it tenable that just because the contractors were on a three month strike that they would not be able to get the job done within the stipulated time?

We believe they have been able to run this maddening show of inefficiency for years because there hasn't been accountability. With their job secure why would they bother to get a move on? It may not bother their conscience, but this is criminal because people pay for a minimum standard of living and the authorities are morally and legally bound to provide that.

A Day of Universal Grieving

Today is Ashura, the 10th of Muharram — the day Imam Hussain courted martyrdom. The day has continued for a millennium and a half as a day of endless grieving. And of revulsion at the heartlessness of Yazid and his horde.

The Muslims of Bangladesh are overwhelmingly Sunnis. And as such, the Ashura does not constitute as much of a significant event on their religious calendar as it is for the Shi'ites. Even then the tragedy on the Euphrates of all of Hussain's family dying a death of thirst as Yazid's men made sure no one got water from the river, has by its human appeal been dear to every Bengalee heart for centuries.

The result was a wonderful synthesis with Sunni women fasting on the day and their men folk joining the Tazia procession. The heroism in the sacrifice of Imam Hussain and his family appeals to all cutting across all barriers.

Let us learn from his example to be steadfast in our beliefs and principles.

Is the Autonomy of Educational Institutions at Peril?

THE en-masse resignation of the BUET's Vice-Chancellor Prof. Iqbal Mahmud and 71 other teachers of this prestigious institution of Bangladesh on the 4th instant came as a great surprise, rather a rude shock, to the people. It raised anew some important questions about the method and practice of what has been installed as democratic process in our country as well as the propriety of what has been happening inside BUET.

The Vice-Chancellor's statement and explanation were direct and unequivocal. He minced no words and laid bare the facts, or at least what he perceived as facts. The entire affair centred round the resignation of 13 teachers of the Department of Architecture in a bid to express solidarity with some striking students protesting against a change in the system of admission test for students in that Department.

It would not be a measure of weakness on the part of the government to ask the highly revered Vice Chancellor, who had very good reasons to be disenchanted, to withdraw resignation and keep this old and venerable institution running.

Dr. Malek, also talked to him in the same vein. Prof. Mahmud sought to explain the situation by saying that the Syndicate had earlier informed the teachers concerned that the correct procedure to revise the decision of the Syndicate would be to apply individually, and not in a body, for this purpose.

The Hon'ble Education Minister in his press conference stated that no pressure was brought to bear upon the Vice-Chancellor. The Minister, as he is a clever and conscientious person, this time — unlike his usual, sought to clarify a point cleverly but in vain.

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glaring pressure tactics to dictate a specific action to re-instate some teachers, without regard to the rules and regulations in vogue. When a Head of Government expresses a wish, that generally becomes a command to others. But the principle and respected Vice-Chancellor is an exception and does not belong to the group of "others".



Currents and Crosscurrents

by M M Rezaul Karim

As stated earlier, the two major points that emanate out of this event are two-fold. Firstly, it brings home to the public a case of gross interference of the government in the administration of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and, as the opposition clamours, other educational institutions in the country. This destroys the degree of autonomy they are supposed to enjoy, encourages undue politicking by students and teachers, vitiates the atmosphere of the campus and, finally, negates the very purpose of their study — to become good and well-qualified citizens.

Then again, the Minister said that if the Prime Minister could successfully amicably settle the question about the striking students earlier, then why her role in the matter of the 13 teachers who resigned be held as interference? This argument, however, does not appear to be tenable. The former was an issue in which a compromise between the two parties was sought, whereas the latter was a case of naked interference and

Yunus, on the Board of the PKSF (Palli Karma Shahayak Shangstha), the apex organisation in the country devoted to generate income and employment by way of granting funds through micro-credit operation of a thousand big and small organisations throughout Bangladesh. I happened to be Chairman of the PKSF for a short spell and all were happy and indebted to Prof. Mahmud for his sterling qualities as well as valued contributions. I have, therefore, no doubt his dealings in the BUET would be anything other than just and fair.

The University is virtually closed, except for the paraphernalia of admission. The BUET Teachers' Association asked the government to prevail upon the Vice-Chancellor not to resign and sentimentally declared that no other person would be acceptable to them in his place. The Education Minister, however, stated that the issue should be settled through discussion and compromise among the parties concerned.

Sri Lanka and BJP's "Friendly Concerns"

A Different Perspective

This is not to say that India does not have any stake in the resolution of the Tamil conflict. Because as a big neighbour with ethnic ties it would always have a say in such quagmire and a role to play. But that has to be in accordance with the national interests of the country concerned as well as the aspiration of people who are caught in a meaningless war.



PANORAMA

Dilara Chowdhury

ations. But given the then existing mistrust and suspicion in the neighbouring countries New Delhi's expectations were premature. Its neighbours could not appreciate India's security interests, especially in the absence of a regional security framework. Even in the post-cold war international order there has not been any dramatic change in South Asian security environment.

Unfortunately, India has miserably failed to live upto those expectations. Many Indians are often irritated, when reminded of their country's responsibility, and respond bluntly, and somewhat childishly argue that they cannot help for being big. Is it their fault that India dwarfs other South Asian states in all respects-geographic size, population, military capability and economic markets? Certainly not. What is expected of India is that it should use its asymmetries in a positive way.

Perhaps the reality began to sink into Indian elite psyche, and Gujral Doctrine was its pragmatic manifestation. South Asia felt that the Doctrine was the right step in the right direction. That neighbours should be left alone to sort out their own domestic problems without the overarching guidance of their giant neighbour.

The heart of BJP's present stance is its overt concerns about India's national security which are reminiscences of much debated 'Indira Doctrine' of early 1980s. During the cold war New Delhi had been obsessed with its hard core security. As a dominant regional power New Delhi expected that its neighbours should take its security concerns into consideration.

It is upset because ethnicity problem in Sri Lanka has long been a bone of contention in Indo-Sri Lankan relations, and it is fully aware of New Delhi's involvement in this island country's insurgency. Sri Lanka's Tamil minorities, who are waging a guerrilla war for an independent state of their own (Eelam), have had moral and material support from Indian state of Tamil Nadu which compelled Indian central government to have a sympathetic view. Besides the domestic factor, New Delhi's involvement in Sri Lankan affairs was also emanated, and more so, from US posture in the Indian Ocean and its friendly ties with Colombo. New Delhi thus, viewed the Indo-Sri Lanka accord of 1987 as one, which took due consideration to its legitimate security interest.

Relationship between man and woman has not been exactly defined by anybody since the creation of mankind. When Adam and Eve the first couple came into existence, no one was there to guide them, to tell them what to do or not to do. Only instinct or physical need made them eat, sleep and to have physical relationship. They were man and woman — equal in their status protected each other from the hostile nature, looked after each other. Then came the day when the woman became mother and the duties of a mother like carrying and giving birth to a child, breast-feeding the offsprings and rearing them up confined her at home. On the other hand, the man was busy doing other duties like bringing food for the family, arranging for shelter, clothes etc. But we cannot exclude woman's assistance and help in those activities.

So from the beginning of the creation of mankind the women were involved in all the activities of livelihood in addition to their exclusive responsibilities of bearing and rearing up children for which they possess some extra organs in their bodies. Other than that they are the same human being having a heart and other necessary biological organs to live in the world.

With the advancement of time men subjugated women by exploiting their weaknesses of their physical strength and other biological barriers, sentiments of motherhood, kept them in doors and took all the advantages whatever they could out of them. In early days of the world men's lust for women made women an object to be enjoyed although sometimes history tells us about the power of some women over men. But that was also power of beauty and physical attractiveness.

ethnicity has become a serious problem, and now considered being the greatest source of conflicts and instability in the Third World countries. India is no exception. Its religious and ethnic problems can hardly be exaggerated. Besides the intractable Kashmir conflict, the insurgencies in the North Eastern provinces, which are a bewildering patchwork of tribal and ethnic inhabitants, are all too well known. New Delhi accuses outside powers, on a regular basis, for fermenting these internal insurgencies and hope that these would be brought under control if external powers are not meddling into their internal affairs. Should not then India practice what it preaches.

We feel that it is best for all South Asian countries to leave each other alone so that these internal sources of conflict can be resolved peacefully and through negotiations. It should be kept in mind that any attempt to redraw the state boundaries on ethnic lines could be dangerous. Organization of African Unity realized this hard fact many years ago that attempts should be made by Afro-Asian nations to create multi-ethnic, multi-religious nations instead of trying to emulate the European nation

states of by-gone era. Building a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state is a gargantuan task. In our region, such endeavours are likely to be successful if there is no outside interference.

As such Sri Lanka should be left alone to deal with its vicious ethnic problem. This is not to say that India does not have any stake in the resolution of the Tamil conflict. Because as a big neighbour with ethnic ties it would always have a say in such quagmire and a role to play. But that has to be in accordance with the national interests of the country concerned as well as the aspiration of people who are caught in a meaningless war. Sure it is the responsibility of the majority of people of Sri Lanka, as it was the majority who created the problem, but it is also the responsibility of the neighbour to demonstrate its friendly concern in such a way that its friend does not take it otherwise. Sri Lanka's ethnic demography, like ethnicity anywhere, is very complex. A peaceful resolution to its problem would need protracted and intricate negotiations between the majority i.e. Sinhalese and the minority on one hand, and among the parties concerned — the Jaffna Tamils, Tamil-speaking Moors with a distinct identity and the Indian Tamils on the other. In such a complex situation New Delhi's only option, if any, should be to provide its good offices to all concerned parties for mediation, but with strict neutrality to all. The roles played by the governments of Great Britain and Ireland in hammering out the recent Northern Island Accord is a case in point.

OPINION

Men Versus Women?

Munira Khan

Relationship between man and woman has not been exactly defined by anybody since the creation of mankind. When Adam and Eve the first couple came into existence, no one was there to guide them, to tell them what to do or not to do. Only instinct or physical need made them eat, sleep and to have physical relationship. They were man and woman — equal in their status protected each other from the hostile nature, looked after each other. Then came the day when the woman became mother and the duties of a mother like carrying and giving birth to a child, breast-feeding the offsprings and rearing them up confined her at home.

People all over the world have advanced in their mind and thought. But still a woman is mostly being looked upon as a woman — not as a human being, not exactly equal like men, whereas the capacity of being a mother, carrying a child in their womb, giving birth to other humans, (Creator's best creation) should place them in higher stature, but it seems that it has placed them in lower status than men, fixed them in a fix, put them in many difficulties.

They cannot move freely, cannot behave in the same way men do, cannot be placed in the same position in spite of their abilities in many areas. Differences in physical appearance restricted their advancement only because of men's attitude towards women. Even a girl child is different in the eyes of men. Specially after growing up and getting married to a man, a woman almost loses her entity and becomes a wife of a husband. Her own wishes get blurred against her husband's wishes.

Recently I read a story about a princess whose father gave her hands to a hermit (Rishi) for going to heaven. The Rishi sold her three times to three kings, in exchange for three hundred rare horses to give to another Rishi for divine causes! The princess gave birth to three wealthy sons to the kings before returning to her original husband. But the husband, of course, could not take her back because she became a bad woman as she lived with other men. The princess went back to her father who wanted to arrange a 'Soyamber' (where she could choose her husband out of some men) but the princess instead chose to live in a jungle, as she thought men after all did not behave with her better than beasts.

Although this story depicted the attitude of men towards women in ancient time, yet in my opinion the real position of women in the society did not change much. Women still are not their own masters. When-

To the Editor...

Why not a Carmichael University?

Sir, We the people of Rangpur are really grateful to you for writing a timely editorial on the above subject.

Carmichael College is one of the oldest educational institutions of northern Bangladesh and is situated on 900 acres of land. The people of the area had been demanding for establishment of Carmichael College into a full-fledged university long before the independence of Bangladesh.

The then governor of the then East Pakistan Mr Azam Khan also argued in favour of turning this college into a full-fledged university. Many other heads of state or governments felt the necessity of Carmichael University, but nothing has

been done except introducing masters in some subjects.

Mahbubul Haque Chowdhury General Manager, Agrani Bank, Rajshahi

A Get-well card won't do

Sir, Shazneen's death has made us all the more nervous to open the newspapers in the morning. With a pang in your heart and shame on your self-esteem how can you begin your day with any enthusiasm or for any purpose? Neeman A Sobhan's beautifully written 'To Any Daughter Desecrated' (DS, April 27 '98) will touch anyone having a young daughter and many of the readers must be having one or more.

of whose wards are abroad and having nothing to fear, have the audacity to say that "nothing unusual is happening, only the media is giving more coverage to the item than they used to do before" or simply "it is a conspiracy by the enemies of democracy".

Then they visit the victims with a Get Well card and the media covers them with photographs. How funny and how pathetic! Unless a vaccine is found soon this human society of ours may turn into a Den of Beasts. I appeal to the sociologists, the economists, the environmentalists and all other 'ists' to come forward with their recommendations to eliminate this evil so that our political leaders shut their mouth and do something concrete for the nation. Ameen!

Mahnood Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka