

Precarious Balancing Act

A national budget is more than an account of receipts and expenditure. It is very much expected to embody certain principles concerning how the money is to be arranged and how it will be spent... all within a year's time-frame.

Generally the government's non-development expenditure has gone up. Foreign debt is also fearfully on the rise with the balance of payment support from the IMF emerging as a reality.

The budget sounds pro-industry and business-friendly. It seeks to fiscally incentivise the local industries by reducing import duty on a plethora of raw materials and intermediate goods.

The service sector which grew at a very slow pace during the outgoing fiscal would be hurt by the casting of a VAT net over it.

The farm sector will benefit from Tk 129 crore in subsidies to the crop sub-sector and the proposed special financial support to jute exports by both public and private sectors.

We urge a greater effectiveness in the loan recovery exercise and hope that the higher allocation to the police department will be matched by an improvement in law and order.

Pipeline Collapse

There may be differences of opinion about its magnitude as an engineering failure but very little doubt that Thursday's BMB gas pipeline accident has left us with both the chance to thank our stars and ask for a cautionary check of the technological input used in the construction of the eleventh largest bridge of the world.

If the post-haste finishing touches were any yardstick by which the quality of the work is to be judged, then one must say an accident like this was not really off the map.

It is not a healthy sign that there still runs an unassuaged frenzy among the authorities to make sure BMB is unveiled in its fullest splendour — with gas pipe line, railway tracks all in place — on time.

A Big Big Non-starter

More than a week has passed since the opening of the anti-black smoke campaign in the city. The opening function was quite impressive, as manifested in the picture of Environ Minister Sajeda Chowdhury coming out in about all the newspapers.

A week later, how is the health of the programme? No one has seen a black-smoke check-post at its desired place on the Manik Mia Avenue, except at the time of the inauguration.

The overriding reason why the matter is not that easy is this: anti-emission thing involves motorised vehicles — which involve power and influence and money. The environment minister was being naive in choosing to box with its own shadow.

Finance Minister Kibria should have been approached in due time making a special allocation under a head of modernisation and replacement of government vehicles.

Govt's Mistakes Visit on the Country

The mistake which the BJP led coalition has committed by holding nuclear tests is many times worse. The country will have to pay for it for at least two or three generations.

LET'S talk about norms for a change. Take the ruling BJP first. It still claims to occupy the high ground of morality.

Until recently, a member elected to the Rajya Sabha from the State from where he or she was returned. Now the BJP High Command has a different criterion.

Congress has done a bit better because it has brought at least one woman in the recent round.

may well influence the sitting Judges to go along with the executive so as to garner rewards after retirement.

In fact, the norms have to be applied more strictly when it comes to the judiciary because it provides sinews to democracy.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

Justices of five high courts. He consulted his two senior most colleagues, Justice S C Aggarwal and Justice G N Ray of Judges.

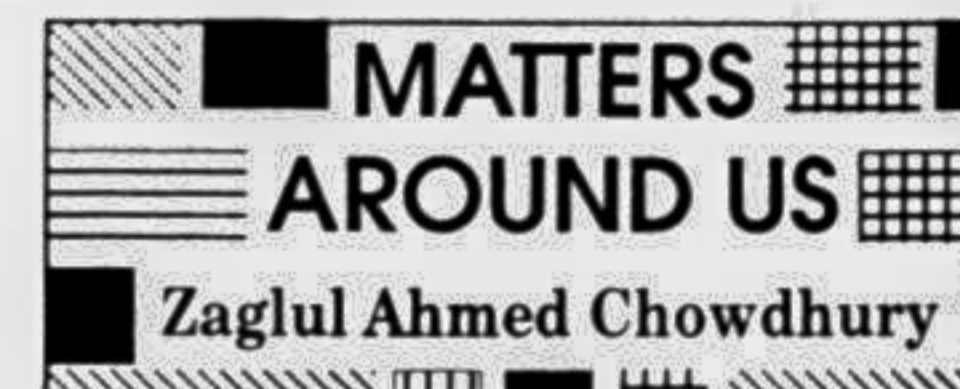
Chief Justice Punchhi has, however, adopted a novel method: he has consulted the outgoing Justice Ray and Justice Aggarwal to fill the vacancies.

matters members of bars in different states and the intelligentsia would have kept a vigilant eye.

It is that 'vigilant eye' which has put the BJP on the mat. Some people have found it convincing at the building of a Ram temple at Ayodhya.

Indo-Pak Ties at Newest Nadir

Culminations out of the newly-acquired nuclear capability will not lead any one of them to a position of strength and respect in real terms as far as the neighbours and others are concerned.



MATTERS AROUND US

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury

litical climate in the South Asian region?

There are several opportunities which can be utilised for the purpose of normalising the New Delhi-Islamabad ties.

It was the last SAARC summit that provided the opportunity of meeting of former Indian prime minister Inder Kumar Gujral and Mr Sharif which proved to be useful in promoting the ties.

Against this background, is there any possibility of a thaw in their current trend of relationship which is marked by escalatory tensions?

high powered government teams and the process of its nationalisations were done smoothly.

Would our Prime Minister kindly look into the matter seriously for nationalisation of these colleges for greater interest of the nation soon?

Formerly different types of birds used to flock in the area. Attention of the government is drawn.

Would the PM look into it? Sir, The proposed sadar headquarters private women colleges in 16 districts have not yet been nationalised even after three years.

The government assured that the proposed private women colleges would be nationalised soon for the higher education for women.

Stop shooting? Sir, For the last few days a couple of middle-aged foreign nationals have been shooting birds openly with air guns from the trees situated on both sides of the road inside the residential houses in Banani residential area.

SM Chowdhury Dhaka.

where the Babri Masjid stood before demolition. He has declared that no power on earth, including the Supreme Court, could prevent them from achieving their goal.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has tried to allay the fears by saying that there was no construction activity anywhere near the disputed site.

It is a tragedy that when the nation's attention is focused on what the Security Council or the G8 is trying to do to chastise India, the RSS parivar, which includes the BJP and VHP, is busy implementing its nefarious agenda.

Results of the 51 assembly by-elections should be a warning to the BJP. The polling took place after nuclear tests.

It is ironic but sad that the country has to atone for the mistakes the governments mistake. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi pushed India into the cauldron of emergency in June 1975 and made it suffer for two and half years when she and her son, Sanjay Gandhi, became the law unto themselves.

The mistake which the BJP led coalition has committed by holding nuclear tests is many times worse. The country will have to pay for it for at least two or three generations.

The arms race with Pakistan has begun. It means crores of rupees which a poor country of like India cannot afford.

could be a positive step from two countries in the given situation where provocative utterances and belligerent postures have become the order of the day.

Two countries can also utilise other scopes like the decisions by both on self-imposed moratorium towards further nuclear explosions as good gestures while seeking to facilitate dialogue.

OPINION

Delighted! ... and Disappointed

Hamida Rahman

As an old student of Dhaka University, I was delighted to attend the inaugural function of the Dhaka University Alumni Convention at the Teachers-Student Centre on the morning of 6th June 1998.

I must congratulate the organisers of this convention for holding a function of this kind for the first time.

While attending the inaugural session I was however a little bit surprised when neither the Convenor nor the current President of the Dhaka University Alumni Association, which was originally called "The

Dhaka University Old Boys Association" mentioned the name of the founder president (From 1949-1962) of this organisation — late Justice Muhammad Ibrahim.

He was very closely associated with the Dhaka University as a student and a part-time teacher. He also served as the Vice-Chancellor of this university during the period of 1956-58.

I personally felt that people like him and the founder secretary Mr Mizanur Rahman deserved even briefly to be specially remembered on this particular day for having taken the initiative and practical steps to form such a body which survives till today.

While listening to the very learned presentations of informed speakers, I was again disappointed as while relating the history of the Dhaka University, no one mentioned the names of two very important personalities of this region, viz. Nawab Khawja Salimullah

and Sayed Nawab Ali Chowdhury who had laboured incessantly behind the scene for the establishment of Dhaka University.

I got the detailed information about the inception and formation of the Dhaka University from a research work titled "The Dhaka University Studies, part A, volume XXX (1984) by Dr Sofia Ahmed. They could have also mentioned how many of our Alumni members became National Professors.

I also feel that it needs to be pointed out that the Dhaka University was not the first but one of the first teaching and residential universities established on the model of the universities in England. Aligarh University in Northern India modelled in the same mould was founded in 1920 and the Dhaka University was established a year later in July 1921.

Lastly, I must thank and congratulate the organisers again for presenting us with the gift of "Sharanika". It is very well compiled, informative and interesting piece of work.

Strangers on the Streets

This mega city of ours, with its persistent chaos, presents innumerable problems and difficulties to its citizens especially for girls and women, who have to face many unusual ones which men rarely go through or can even understand.

The girls women can't even go to college, school or work comfortably because of the teasers and many guys just staring at them, as if they have never seen a girl or a woman walk! So, many girls prefer to take a rickshaw even for a short distance and pull up its hood to escape such stares, and nothing else. Walking is common everywhere in the world.

But here girls feel safer hidden completely under the hood of a rickshaw! Nowadays the harassment has gone to such an extent that they are even kidnapped from roads and raped. Unbelievable! Where else in the world are girls so unsafe? If the distance is long than the poor girls are in a tougher position.

For buses are so packed with men up to their doors, even spilling out of the doors, that a girl has hardly any way to step into the vehicle. If she does succeed in that, she will hardly find any place to sit or stand even, without brushing against other men. This is most unbearable to any girl.

themselves and they don't mind standing there, even if it is jam-packed — but only with girls. But in Bangladesh even after twenty six years of our independence no one ever thought of any such convenience for girls, let alone arrange for it.

If you happen to be a lady driver in the streets of Dhaka, you are bound to feel like a strange new animal who has just escaped from the Dhaka Zoo, causing all heads to turn towards you! Especially of the chauffeurs, the freezing look that they give you, means that you are threatening their very profession, by making a feminine invasion into it!

When a lady-driven car has a punctured wheel or breaks down in the middle of the road, there won't be any deficiency of spectators mobbed around her. To watch how she changes the wheel but just to stand and watch — for fun sake. Never to offer a helping hand to a lady in

distress. For changing a wheel is quite a manual job that needs some degree of strength, which the unlucky frail lady is short of. In other countries when a lady's car breaks down, local guys would come and offer "Madam, shall we push?"

But never in the streets of Dhaka, Guys will be many but only for watching and sneering! Making fun of the poor damsel. Offering of a few notes does help though — thank God, for that. Otherwise the car and the lady would just have to stand in the middle of the road, for God knows how long.

One day a college girl had her veil or 'orna' all wound up in the rear wheel of the rickshaw. In spite of holding tight to her veil the speed of the rickshaw tore the whole thing out of her grasp. She was feeling very embarrassed and nervous without her veil as the rickshaw pulled her veil down to unwind it from the rear wheel. It was quite a difficult job for him to do single-handedly.

A hand could have been given for humanitarian reason at least, for only a couple of minutes at most. Would that have cost anybody anything? But would have meant a heavenly hand to the damsel in distress.

Dr. Sabrina Q Rashid