

Delayed Realisation

A reluctant government has at last decided to call for foreign assistance to help finance its post-flood economic recovery.

Government has been discreet in talking of help for post-flood recovery. But it is plain enough to see that we needed much to do during in-flood time.

That said, we expect the government to make a great success of the post-flood operations for which foreign assistance may now be forthcoming.

Some Cheer for BAPEX

BAPEX, the classic example of a local village sage not receiving any alms, has, at long last, been blessed with a kindly, benign stare from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Our hope is that this will not be a one-off buck-up for BAPEX; instead it would mark a solid beginning for a complete turn-around in its fate and profile sooner than later.

All this will take some doing because over the long haul BAPEX has undergone a regressive process of attrition specially in terms of qualified staff and gears.

Pathetic!

Flood this year has been a source of such major and mass suffering that stray accounts of family disasters do not really scramble for our priorities.

But, although Jamir could put up with the painful memories of his murderous act, his wife could not. She committed suicide.

An eye opener as it is to rural pauperisation, this probably underlines the greater intensity of female emotions in filial relationship, too.

BORIS Yeltsin has struck again! In a desperate attempt to show he is in control, Yeltsin has dismissed his entire cabinet including the newly appointed prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko.

Yeltsin has a long history of firing top aides when things are not going his way. Being aware of the political opposition and the need to take stern action in order to restore confidence in the financial market, he met in Kiriyenko his latest scape goat.

It is too early to say what effect this act will have on the financial crisis. Foreign investors trusted and respected Kiriyenko. They may now be forced to cut losses and leave.

THE whole world is watching suspensefully every development following Clinton's confession before the grand jury on 17 August of sexual relationship with white House intern Monica Lewinsky in 1995.

Whereas most of the congressmen expressed their dissatisfaction at President's speech, though Vice-President Al Gore appreciated President's courage to confess a mistake and begged all to move forward and House Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt inspired the congressmen to use energies to meaningful activities of the country.

There are reasons for this apparent variance. First, the Americans are a nation (typical nation) morally interested in world hegemony. They believe Clinton, despite moral lapses, is capable and intelligent enough to lead America internationally.

To the Editor...

Dhaka-Narayanganj train service

Sir, The government has handed over the charge of Dhaka-Narayanganj train service to the private sector in order to mitigate the sufferings of the passengers.

But the leasing company has suspended the Dhaka-bound train of 7 am and it causes untold misery to both male and female students who find it hard to be present in their respective schools and colleges.

In this regard I draw the kind attention of the relevant authority to take immediate action.

The compassion of a cultivated mind

Sir, When a celebrity passes away rather suddenly, a languorous benumbedness grips the nation, missing the absence of the head, and the presence of the heart.

Such deaths are not sudden, in reality. The compassionate of the lofty mind concealed the inner private suffering, and he left the world smiling and laughing, a gentle pose he had carefully cultivated for his audience, preparing them for the quiet withdrawal.

Why a successful and popular person should suffer from cancer, philosophically speaking, as the suffering is long and lingering? There are medical and spiritual causes for all diseases and ailments of the head and heart, the body merely providing the visual monitoring. To hide one's sorrows is an act of discretion — not to impose upon the society any remnant of the personal affliction.

The Russian Drama!

The patience shown by the Russian population up to this point has been surprising... It is difficult to say how long their patience will last.

Although the appointment of Chernomyrdin whom Yeltsin blamed for the current financial crisis may surprise many, it shows how desperate Yeltsin is at this moment. He is simply playing for time.

political parties in the parliament. It seems that he has been able to gain their support and his appointment is expected to be easily confirmed by the opposition-controlled parliament.

The devaluation of rouble followed calls from George Soros, the controversial US financier, for a devaluation and the setting up of a currency board. Initially, the central bank lashed out at Soros for suggesting a switch from a slowly depreciating peg of the rouble against the dollar to a fixed rouble at a rate of about 25 per cent lower than its current level.

About 40 per cent of Russia's exports are oil-related. The recent collapse in oil-price had undermined the rouble leading to a \$23 billion rescue package from the IMF. The rating agency Moody's downgraded its deposit and debt ratings for about a dozen Russian banks while Fitch IBCA cut Russia's foreign long-term debt rating.

During the last few days, Russian banks have shown clear signs of a liquidity crunch. Banks have stopped making short term loans and trading currencies with one another after several institutions surprised the market by failing to meet payments.

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Whereas the Republicans control both the houses of congress. They do not acknowledge America's world leadership will suffer if Clinton goes.

Further, they condemn Clinton had done very bad to attack Starr in his speech. They resent the President had not answered all the asked questions. They charge Clinton had perjured.

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Connecting the Dots

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The immediate concern is to help Russia stave off further devaluation of the rouble. If the Russian parliament passes tax-reform laws in the next few weeks, additional funding by either the IMF or G-7 countries is possible.

The Russian stock market has also collapsed as the leading Russian Trading System index crashed through the benchmark 100-point level at which it was launched in 1995.

The dilemma facing the new Russian government is that the steps necessary to deal with the banking and financial crisis is different from the actions that have been proposed in the IMF bailout package.

Will Clinton's Presidency be Salvaged?

by A R Shamsul Islam

Practically the "against" are much heavier than the "fors". Still there is an outside chance of rescuing the president. The Americans are a nation "to get to work and build the country". Clinton is doing well internationally and domestically and he has a further two years only to fulfil his term.

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private life. And now the investigation itself is under investigation. Such expressions are far from good and wise.

Second, hasn't Clinton lied under oath? During his deposition under oath in Paula Jones case in January last Clinton denied having any sexual encounter with Lewinsky. Doesn't it constitute perjury?

Third, was his confession "he had some inappropriate relations with Monica" spontaneous or forced upon him by ground realities? If spontaneous, why it was not delivered earlier?

Fourth, if condoned will Clinton rectify himself so as not to establish any morally repugnant relations with a lady in future. The affirmative expectation is afar come to mind. At present there are some to feel the need to review the case of Paula Jones.

Fifth, the Americans cannot possibly let down the Rule of Law on the plea of sparing the

country lots of pain that Clinton's elimination is associated with.

Clinton argued, "Even Presidents have private lives". There is none to dispute this. What people objected is with what a moral laxity Clinton exercised his so-called private life (with Lewinsky).

That is why Clinton is ridiculed as an "incubable teenager". Many greeted his televised speech with laughter, jeer, boos. One person screamed, "Bill, you are a phony".

Clinton was vacationing, on occasion of his 52nd birthday celebration, with Hillary and Chelsea whom the President has subjected to a sense of utter dishonour and disgrace by his base infidelity. He is alleged to be a master of giving stunts. He has worn a tie presented by Monica obviously to pose that he has not forgotten her who was hurt when he told in his testimony to the grand jury that he had no emotional ties with Monica. Again, while testifying to that jury, he declared that he was very concerned

about protecting his family which sometimes led him to act misleadingly.

In his speech, he assured "at no time did I ask anyone to lie, to hide or destroy evidence...". Monica also corroborated this. It is his plus point.

On the other hand, Lewinsky has given her second testimony to the grand jury. Again, Clinton may be asked by Starr to answer some specifics of dangerous intimacy as a symbol that he refused to give to the grand jury. Things are darkening a lot for Clinton who sticks to the point not to resign.

It is early to comment on what will finally happen to Clinton. Will his presidency be salvaged? Practically the "against" are much heavier than the "fors". Still there is an outside chance of rescuing the president. The Americans are a nation "to get to work and build the country". Clinton is doing well internationally and domestically and he has a further two years only to fulfil his term. Let the country spare a good deal of pain by avoiding the rigour and unpleasantness of Clinton's elimination is what may flare up as a winning sentiment of the matter-of-fact Americans.

The writer is retired Principal, Govt. Mohila College, Pabna

OPINION Safety in the US Capital

Sarwat Chowdhury

A few days before the US missile strikes on targets in Afghanistan and Sudan, a classmate had asked me to explain the difference between Sunni Muslims and Jihad. I thought what question! Especially since Jihad is not a synonym for the Shi'ite sects of Muslims.

During the past few days, life in Washington D.C., the nation's capital has become quite interesting. In the media, people are repeatedly being cautioned about their day-to-day safety within the country and abroad. In the metro-rail system, frequent announcements are being made asking people not to leave the bags unattended. Police officers wearing bright orange vests are making special rounds inside each station so that passengers can easily identify them in case they notice something suspicious.

Security has also been enhanced in favourite tourist spots such as the Washington Monument. Same goes for various federal buildings and other places where there is a large gathering including the three nearby airports. This high alert may continue as long as for the next six months.

Though these special precautionary measures are being taken due to the supposedly "international developments", Washingtonians have very recently experienced another safety breach in the July 24 shootings at the Capitol Hill. Russell Weston, Jr. a lone gunman, who reportedly lived in a cabin in Montana, opened fire in the US Capitol on a crowded Friday afternoon. The gunman shot his way past security guards, and entered a private area near the Republican offices in Congress. Weston was wounded while he traded shots with the security officers.

Unfortunately, he killed two police officers, and wounded a tourist. The slain officers Chestnut and Gibson, were later buried in the Arlington Cemetery with full honour. The

whole incident was a major shock to both the Washingtonians and visitors to the capital.

The US capital, a domed marble building stands as a symbol around the world for freedom and democracy, and to keep up that spirit, the capitol building opened as usual the next day for tourists.

While the capitol shootings had horrific results, it did not have any international consequences. It was very clear from the beginning that the shooter was a lone gunman, an American citizen. Things became almost normal the very next day. However, during the past few days, in addition to the President's personal problems, the Washington media is much more involved about actions of the newly emerged international figure Osama bin Laden.

It appears that the Saudi dissident bin Laden is actually affiliated with an organisation named "Islamic Jihad" which covers some principal elements of his work.

The very recent US attacks on the Afghan base of bin Laden, and the pharmaceutical factory in Sudan were of course, in retaliation of the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. However, even the local media acknowledged that the missile strikes divided the international community with the Russian president condemning the attacks as "indecent".

In his weekly radio address, President Clinton revealed that he signed an executive order putting bin Laden's Islamic Army and two of his main lieutenants on a list of terrorist groups. As a result of this move, the Treasury department can now block all financial transactions between US companies or individuals, and the Saudi-born millionaire.

In accordance with the new publicity campaign, Clinton asked the citizens to have realistic expectations about the effective measures being taken against terrorism and not to expect "the threat to go away quickly".

While the government announced that there could be more military responses to "terrorist" attacks, Washingtonians, and Americans as a whole are being asked to prepare and expect more of the latter.

What a national career we have! I think we should call this a "Flying Coffin".

Shagor Dhaka