

Thorough Probe Needed

Jurain seems to be an area under a spell of unnatural death. About a month ago it was the gunning down of two young men within half an hour in crowded places at daytime which horrified us.

It could be or could not be that or it could be a combination of all the causes that have been referred to. But what sounds as unethical and to some extent insensitive also is the hell-bent attitude of the relevant quarters to shirk responsibility instead of waiting for the result of a proper investigation.

There is no doubt that this year's unusually long floods have played havoc with buildings and the underground transmission system of the utility services.

It would be to the interest of all concerned if the authorities take the accident as an eye-opener and go about a thorough investigation to fix the responsibility for the accident.

Frozen Fish Export

Even though Bangladesh's frozen fish exporters have a problem on the production-level itself, with so many shrimp beds, or 'ghers' as they are commonly known, having been washed away by the floods, they need not lose heart at all.

Of Bangladesh's total annual frozen fish export estimated at 30,000 tons world-wide, 14,000 tons go to European Union countries. But the EU has an active demand for three million tons with so much potential business remaining for Bangladesh to prise open before others did.

Only 17 of the 40 fish processing plants which were originally in the business before the ban came on, have been certified to work meaning that we are exporting at less than half of our capacity.

The EU's forthcoming inspection visit to Bangladesh should be construed as an opportunity by us to convince them of our steadfast adherence to their guidelines and thereby have them enlarge the list of approved fishing plants so as to get a bigger slice of the EU cake.

The prospect for higher assured dividends from the business should weigh with the banks to give credits to this sector secure in the knowledge that the loans stood a good chance of being recovered.

What Next in KL?

What was feared has happened. Dr Mahathir Mohamad's protege Anwar Ibrahim has been arrested. Anwar has been making it impossible not to arrest or otherwise restrain him, what with his catalysing unprecedented road demonstrations demanding, for the first time in 17 years, the resignation of Mahathir.

Malaysia under Mahathir worked miracles. From a poor backward sleepy country suffering from ethnic conflicts as well as all kinds of post-colonial hangovers, the sprawling nation of hills, seas and tropical forests was transformed economically and organisationally into one not very different from the island state of Singapore.

As Deputy Prime Minister and more so as a close confidant of Mahathir, Anwar played more than a life-size part in it. Only recently their paths seemed to be diverging. In Anwar west was finding an ally who did not go all the way with Mahathir's isolationist Malaysia vs west's economic policy.

How far can Anwar's populist resurgence for reformasi be able to liberalise Malaysian political culture is very difficult to surmise. One thing is clear: After 17 years the nation is again being subjected to street demonstrations, the last of which does not recall pleasant memories.

How will Mahathir contain his enfant terrible? And can he really and at what price?

The Third Way — a Modern Social Democracy

We embrace cooperation without denigrating patriotism. New Labour stands for a strong, decentralised Europe, enlarged to the east and able to tackle cross-border problems effectively but with integration only where necessary.

This is the Third Way. A new alliance between progress and justice. A new basis of support, reaching out to those who shared our values but doubted our capacity to implement them...

writes Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, Prime Minister of Great Britain



fundamentalist Left which saw state control as an end in itself, and a more moderate Left which accepted this essential direction but favoured compromise.

The old left and new right have taken — and continue to take — different forms across Europe. There is no single blueprint for the Third Way.

For many years in opposition, the British Labour Party

was seen — however unfairly — as the party of big government, nationalisation, anti-enterprise, soft on crime, uncommitted with family life, gripped by pressure groups, and favouring more tax and public spending across the board.

We were also regarded as poor managers of public services, under the thumb of trade unions and producer interests and too little concerned with choice and quality. The right was able to turn privatisation and free markets into universal panaceas.

A false opposition was set up between rights and responsibilities, between compassion and ambition, between the public and private sectors; between an enterprise economy and the attack on poverty and exclusion.

New Labour has sought to move ahead and apply its values in a different way.

Our work is at an early stage, and we are learning as we advance. But New Labour in government is putting the Third Way into practice.

In the economy, our approach is neither laissez-faire nor one of state interference. The government's role is to promote macro-economic stability; to develop tax and welfare policies that encourage independence, not dependence; to equip people for work by improving education and infrastructure; and to promote enterprise, particularly the knowledge-based industries of the future.

Education is a critical priority. Higher educational standards are the key to international competitiveness and an inclusive society for the future. Significant new investment is driving radical school reform, backed by targets and strong intervention in the case of failing schools, so that all citizens of the future have the basic skills they need to work and the great majority attain further and higher level qualifications.

In welfare and employment policy the Third Way means reforming social security to make it a pathway into work where possible. It promotes fair standards at work while making work pay by reducing the taxes and penalties that discourage work and the creation of jobs.

We must also reinvent government itself for the new age. Governments in the course of this century have been well-equipped to regulate money, send out benefit cheques, build houses, even fight wars and put men on the moon. Now they need to learn new skills: to work in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors; to share responsibility and answer to a much more demanding public; and to cooperate internationally in new ways.

At the international level the replacement of the old certainties of the Cold War by the more insidious threats of organised crime, terrorism, drugs and environmental degradation all require flexible forms of international cooperation.

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With courage, we can reverse our history without living in it, and build dynamic social democratic societies for the 21st century.

The writer is Prime Minister of United Kingdom.

World in Turmoil

While Russia is condemned to a long period of instability, bringing in its tow a large part of the globe, the one bastion of stability, the US, is also tottering due to immaturity of actors on the stage.

The Horizon This Week

Arshad-uz Zaman



change of the system. It was the collapse of an economic system built over seven decades.

The new Russia has been wrestling with the transition from communism to capitalism. Russia minus the departing states is still the largest state and such a massive change as from the communist system into capitalist system is very painful indeed.

Whether by design or by a combination of fortuitous circumstances, Russia has plunged into market economy. From a command economy, where everything was done by the state for its citizens to market economy where the forces of the market determine everything, is a transformation that is awe inspiring.

The champions of market economy in the West starting with the US, can ill afford to allow the passage of Russia into market economy, fail. They are, therefore, pumping funds into Russia by the billions.

The economic crisis of Russia is intimately linked with the political crisis. The fall of Gorbachev saw the emergence of Boris Yeltsin. He came to power when a military coup was looming in the horizon. He has got himself elected President since and Russia has adopted democratic trappings like multiparty free elections.

The elections to the Duma or

the Parliament has produced a very strong Communist Party. It is a measure of the groping of the people for a way out of the political crisis that the Communist Party, which was denounced for all the ills of the Soviet Union, returned with a bag.

The Russian constitution grants near dictatorial powers to the President. Boris Yeltsin has been using those powers to the hilt. His hand-picked Prime Minister is Victor Chernomyrdin, now twice rejected by the Duma. This assertion by the Duma of its powers to reject the nominee of the President, is a symptom of the deep crisis underlying the entire political scenario of present Russia. Like the economic transition, political transition promises to be painful.

The US is undergoing a totally manufactured crisis. President Bill Clinton was elected for a second term with a decisive majority. Nobody, not even his worst critics, has faulted him on the running of state affairs.

The US stands like a beacon of stability in a world full of uncertainties. The US economy is strong and the US dollar, the most powerful weapon in the US arsenal, is in a healthy condition. US citizens are enjoying unprecedented prosperity. US pre-eminence in the world gathers strength every passing day.

President Bill Clinton has become embroiled in a sex scandal, which is threatening his presidency. The whole affair looks like a carefully prepared plot. President Clinton is supposed to have a sexual affair with an employee of his office. It is not a case of seducing a virgin woman. Rather she has carefully preserved her dress with presidential sperm, handed it over to her mother and the two have handed the dress to the attorney, Ken Starr.

The whole affair is so sordid that it beggars description. The President has been hauled before the Grand Jury and has been grilled for hours. The principal tormentors of the

President has been the media, who have been playing the pivotal role in this plot. Now we find Congressmen speaking out. There is one Congressman who has described President Clinton's act as 'immoral'. If the Congressman looked around, he would find little justification for his pontificating posture.

Hounded by the media, President Clinton has repeatedly gone before the public and offer apologies. The remarkable fact is that Hillary Clinton, the wife, who should be the first to be concerned with extra marital activities of her husband, has stood solidly beside her husband. More importantly, the US public has stood solidly behind their elected President and his public approval rating has not shown

any decline.

The media should perhaps take some lesson from this. And the ladies and gentlemen of the Congress should definitely read popular signs carefully. The US prides itself for its democratic institutions and is ready to teach the world the fine points of democracy. How is it possible to push a democratically elected President from office, while his popular support remains as solid as ever?

Those who have carefully laid out a plot to evict the President from the White House, may have overplayed their hands.

While Russia is condemned to a long period of instability, bringing in its tow a large part of the globe, the one bastion of stability, the US, is also tottering due to immaturity of actors on the stage, who are determined to destroy their President. Let us hope good sense will dawn on them before it is too late.

Mending Ties

Pallab Bhattacharya writes from New Delhi

The Congress and former prime minister I K Gujral of Janata Dal, have of late stepped up the offensive against the government for "damaging" ties with China by what they said "needlessly adopting anti-Beijing postures."

In an unusual move, India's main opposition Congress, considering itself as the party-in-waiting, has embarked on a diplomatic venture seeking to mend the country's relations with China and South Africa.

Senior Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Sharad Pawar left for South Africa carrying a letter from party president Sonia Gandhi to President Nelson Mandela while K Natwar Singh, former minister of state for external affairs, was likely to lead a team of parliamentarians to China.

The visit of the Congress delegations assume significance in the backdrop of the party's strident criticism of the foreign policy "failures" of the BJP-led government and strains in India's ties with China following New Delhi's nuclear tests and sharp remarks about Beijing by some leaders of India's ruling coalition.

South Africa, which has been a traditional friend of India, took a knock recently when Mandela made a reference to the Kashmir issue at the non-aligned summit in Durban and India's sharp reaction to the South African President's speech.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee government's handling of ties with China after the nuclear tests by New Delhi in May and reaction to Mandela has set off a war of words between BJP and Congress which at times threatened to take an unseemly turn.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's reference to Kashmir issue in his annual review before the start of the 53rd session of the UN General Assembly only helped to further intensify the sabre-rattling between the lead partner of the ruling coalition and the main opposition party.

The opposition, especially the Congress and former prime minister I K Gujral of Janata Dal, have of late stepped up the offensive against the government for "damaging" ties with China by what they said "needlessly adopting anti-Beijing postures."

First, it was Defence Minister George Fernandes' strident criticism of Vajpayee's obvious, though unnamed, reference to China expressing concern over Beijing's nuclear programme in his letter to US President Bill Clinton were considered by the opposition as "diplomatic indiscretion" that worsened Sino-India relations.

The opposition also felt India should have refrained from hitting back at South Africa on the floor of the NAM summit after Mandela embarrassed Vaj-

payee and his delegation by mentioning the Kashmir issue.

Gujral said he did not agree with the interpretation that Mandela was advocating third party mediation in Indo-Pak disputes by urging developing nations to "lend all their strength to find a solution to the dispute between the two South Asian neighbours."

"I have seen the full text of Mandela's speech and think it has to be read in full. It is a statement of a very tall statesman who has tried to look at the world situation with compassion and concern for peace," he said.

Natwar Singh said India should have refrained from countering Mandela's remark on the floor of the summit and instead later tried to have convinced him of New Delhi's stand.

BJP, clearly embarrassed by Mandela's mention of Kashmir, took exception to the South African President's remark and said had Vajpayee not taken up the issue vigorously leading to an official apology by South Africa, others would have been "emboldened to interfere" in what was a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan.

The Vajpayee government's quick reaction to Mandela's remark found support from former prime minister Chandrashekhar who attacked the South African President for "violating" the convention of avoiding bilateral issues at the nonaligned gatherings.

When Kofi Annan clubbed the Kashmir issue with the unresolved problem in Cyprus, it saw another bout of war of attrition between BJP and Congress.

While Congress charged the BJP with "mishandling" the Kashmir issue virtually internationalising it when the United Nations had almost agreed to drop it from its agenda, the BJP accused the main opposition of indulging in petty politicking on a key issue of national interest instead of backing the government.

BJP spokesman M Venkalah Naidu, responding to Natwar Singh's criticism, said references to Kashmir in the UN annual report has been there since 1993 and claimed the Congress governments had at that time kept silent.

CORRIGENDUM

In the article "Are They Crying Wolf?" published yesterday, the food deficit was inadvertently printed as 13 million tons instead of 2 million tons.

To the Editor...

Manpower export

Sir, Over a period of years we have developed a deep sense of respect and fondness for The Daily Star because of the objectivity in reporting, fearlessness, honesty, fairness and neutrality in criticising both the Government and the Opposition and also for its positive attitude and professionalism in upholding the national interest with patriotic zeal and an uncompromising rigidity. Periodical Round Table Conferences organised by you on important national issues, and particularly on the younger generation is of tremendous importance. Utility and usefulness of such conferences can hardly be exaggerated.

However, the one-eyed policy including the negative approach in throwing wholesale aspersions on the recruitment profession in general and authorised/licensed recruiting agencies in particular in your editorial dated August 31, 1998 is regrettable. We consider it our responsibility to protest against the contents of the editorial, because we are confident that most of the blames blindly thrown on the members of our association are, in fact, done by the individuals, organisations or syndicates without having any valid recruiting licence.

BAIRA is a democratic association. The elected office-bearers and members of the executive committee of BAIRA do not look into this profession only on commercial basis. We are conscious people guided by business ethics and national feelings. The Appeal-cum-Demand of BAIRA to the Prime Minister published in the DS on August 10, 1998 about the recent government decision for outright stoppage of export of female workers may be treated as an example about our statement mentioned above. It will not be out of place to mention here about the gratifying news that about 500 members of our association having valid recruiting licence after depositing a huge amount of security money and after observing a lot of difficult formalities, are exporting more than 2,00,000 professionals, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers to different labour-importing countries of the world every year who, on an average, are remitting foreign exchange equivalent to 7000 crore annually. You may appreciate that we don't need any raw-materials like other

sectors in exporting the human resources. Back-to-Back L/C is absent in our profession. The foreign exchange repatriated by our workers are net which is enriching our foreign currency reserve apart from helping the country in a very big way in running the economy of the country. You may also agree that due to negligible rate of economic growth, employment generation in our country compared to the rate of unemployment is very discouraging.

Members of BAIRA, therefore, are contributing in a big way in earning foreign exchange, in solving the unemployment problem of the country and in conserving food-lodge-shelter due to out-flow of a huge number of population for employment abroad. We are also contributing greatly in arresting population boom by exporting the fertile population of the society. When we export unskilled and lazy workers, they don't remain unskilled or lazy. They come back to the country with skillfulness and positive outlook about life full of spirit and creativity.

The Daily Star is not just an ordinary newspaper. In our eyes, it is an extraordinary national newspaper nursed and backed by extraordinary journalistic personalities like Mr Mahfuz Anam and his worthy team founded by late Mr S M Ali, an illustrious son of the soil and hence we would expect that you would look into the affairs relating to the export of human resources from Bangladesh with a positive outlook.

In view of the facts stated above and in view of your inherent tendency in going deep and unearth potentialities of different professions, we would like to invite you to organise a Round Table Conference entitled "Export of Human Resources in the Coming Millennium: Problem, Prospect and Some Policy Guidelines" comprising of (1) BAIRA leaders, (2) Minister, Ministry of Labour and Manpower, (3) Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Manpower, (4) Director General of BMET, Members of the Editorial Board of The Daily Star, eminent social thinkers and intellectuals. We assure you that we shall participate in the proposed Round Table Conference

out of which may be considered by the government as a guideline for the formulation of

a long-term manpower policy and a code of conduct for the licensed recruiting agencies of the country.

Ghulam Mustafa Secretary General Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA)

In fact, a goodly part of all our citizens who venture abroad for employment are sent by, to quote the BAIRA Secy. Gen., 'individuals, organisations or syndicates without having any recruiting licence'. It is very difficult to know who the sufferers abroad were sent by. Ours were comments on the general situation and it may be quite so that the sufferers are men and women sent by unauthorised agents and not BAIRA members. There was a hint to this effect in the editorial. —Ed

Water inside DND area

Sir, With the heavy rainfall in the last couple of days added with the leakage of water from outside the DND dam area due to high pressure of rushing flood water the areas of Kadamtoli, Rasulpur, Shahibazar, Boubazar and Nchintapur inside the DND dam have been inundated with water. Most of the homesteads in the locality have been submerged. Since there is no proper drainage system the entire area has been waterlogged. As the water has mixed up with garbage wastes and sewerages it has become polluted posing serious health hazards particularly from water-borne diseases like diarrhoea and jaundice. It is mentionable that the water has already been discoloured and emitting very bad smell.

If the water so logged is not immediately pumped/drain out then there may be outbreak of the diseases so mentioned in endemic form.

Under these circumstances, it is humbly requested that the authorities concerned particularly the Health Department and the Disaster Management Department are requested to make immediate arrangement to pump/drain out the water from the areas mentioned earlier in order to save the people of the locality from being the victims of diseases.

Mrs Jesmin Razzak Dhaka

Kidney for a kidney

Sir, The inevitable has happened. The only kidney of Asma has been removed by a team of ignorant, over-enthusiastic doctors. They found the other kidney rudimentary. So the only logical and rational response should have been to consult an urologist or to close the abdomen and perform the needful later on after proper assessment. Then where was the hurry? May be, they were eager to hit a jackpot, finding a huge ovarian tumour, subsequent publicity and resultant proliferation of name and practice. Now, the whole medical community is maintaining a hush-hush attitude about this ignominious affair.

Our high-brow professors and super-specialists are strangely immune from any prosecution, disciplinary action etc.

The case of Asma will probably end up with an apology, deep expression of sorrow and grief, and some compensation and lots of assurances and promises. All will be well and forgotten. But mayhem and malpractice will go on unabated. How about a tooth for a tooth, eye for an eye, kidney for a kidney? Let (primitive) justice prevail!

S Nasrullah Dhaka

United action

Sir, The editorial titled "United Action" on 12 September, 1998 contains within itself the sign of unity and hope of understanding between the party in power and the opposition in fighting the natural disaster on war-footing. "A wonderful beginning to united action" may be the beginning of a new era of positive politics in our country.

We are tired of party politics. Since we are a brave nation, we should set an example for the rest of the Asian countries to follow us. Please don't neglect the youth-force — the creator of Bangladesh. All of us should take care of the youths who are the future builders of the country. Please don't use them for party interest.

Abul Ashraf Noor House#9, Road#4 Sector#5, Uttara Dhaka-1230.