

Human Trafficking

Trafficking of women and children seems to be on the rise. The other day a leading Bangla daily informed that five thousand females and minors have been smuggled out of the country in the last six months.

Why are we unable to make any headway against trafficking? Many feel it is not the want of laws that handicap us fighting this social scourge. Trafficking can be dealt with effectively if laws of the land can be strictly enforced.

But mere sensitising of the law enforcing agency or regional cooperation will not solve the problem. It has been observed before that in order to combat trafficking of women and children effectively, authorities have to attach great importance to the social and economic factors of the challenge.

Quota Forgery

It has become a trait with us. We end up doing something basic only when pressured by a Pandora's Box opening right before our face, which we could and should have done at the first opportunity in an unembarrassed frame of mind.

All of this comes to mind when reacting to the BGMEA's belated initiative to keep an online vigil on export quota utilisation which is alleged to have been defrauded in respect of a specific consignment to the USA.

It is alright that the BGMEA has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Amcham to implement the automation project which operatively involves the US port authorities and the US importers but this effort should in no way detract us from the cardinal need for a thorough investigation into the matter.

Whether it is a human error on the documentation side or a deliberate act of fraudulence by a third party or a country using the name of Bangladesh, the truth simply cannot come out by merely airing suspicions or making conjectures.

Alarming

Something is wrong in the sea water. Large number of dead sea fish have reportedly been found floating on the water around coastal areas like Kutubdia, Maheshkhali, Anwara and Sandwip. This is an alarming piece of news.

Forming a committee comprising experts in marine zoology will be the first step in that direction. The work has reportedly begun. Samples of the dead fishes have been collected for that purpose.

The American Presidency Beyond the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky Scandal

by M. Rashiduzzaman

At the end of a bitter impeachment hearing, the Americans may have to settle for a politically hurt and weakened presidency that cannot act with initiative and dexterity. He will lose his credibility as a leader who can deliver.

WITH an impeachment inquiry hanging over the White House, Bill Clinton's presidency is reeling under the Monica Lewinsky scandal that has sent shock waves throughout America.

We were glued to the TV watching the high drama of American politics when my host, though a registered Democrat, also felt sorry by the sight of a Republican president leaving in shame, and, in a reflective mood, asked me: "Rashid, how do you feel about the whole development? Will it destabilize the American form of government, forever? You are not an American, do you have a different perspective?"

When the founding fathers put together the U.S. Constitution, they did not anticipate the enormous power of the media that can keep on "exposing" the

government has changed little. The coming weeks, possibly months will be grueling for the president, and the American political precincts will be topsy-turvy, but it will not dramatically destabilize the U.S. political system itself.

The old doctrine of executive privilege has been dwindling, and the future presidential aides will think twice before carrying out such responsibilities that would have any potential for controversies and inquest.

government leaders' wrongdoing evidently for a better governance but also for sensationalism, and better ratings that bring the industry more advertisement revenue.

The old doctrine of executive privilege has been dwindling, and the future presidential aides will think twice before carrying out such responsibilities that would have any potential for controversies and inquest.

Numerous observers conclude that the Congress is now more partisan than ever before

and the old buckle of give and take that links the executive and legislative branches will be weaker in the future.

The White House crisis really put America at the crossroads of history between an acquisitorial Congress and a hounding media on the one hand, and the American public on the other.

Notwithstanding Clinton's calamity, few would doubt the underlying solidity of the American political system that survived over 200 years.

power. There are born-again skeptics about the congressional ability to lead the nation in place of the president.

Impeachment is uncharted water in American politics, and nobody is certain whether Clinton can be readily removed from office unless he opts for a resignation on his own.

At the end of a bitter impeachment hearing, the Americans may have to settle for a politically hurt and weakened presidency that cannot act with initiative and dexterity.

Notwithstanding Clinton's calamity, few would doubt the underlying solidity of the American political system that survived over 200 years.

the Watergate crisis, the Iran-Contra scandal and occasional legislative-executive deadlocks, both during Reagan and Clinton presidencies. I have heard a few despairing over their checks and balances that promote more conflict than accommodation, but most Americans love their form of government.

Finally, a weakened presidency does not necessarily indicate an institutional collapse for the United States. Two recent American presidencies represented by Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter respectively were viewed by many as weak.

The author writes from Glassboro, New Jersey, USA

Speeches Won't Save Kosovo's Victims

Bosnia very nearly became the graveyard of the western world's moral reputation. Today, three years after that war, the US and its NATO allies are marching toward the same graveyard, acting as though they have seen nothing and learned nothing.

POLITICIANS, of all shades and ideological beliefs, love to make speeches about human rights and freedom. Such speeches give them an opportunity to deliver idealistic phrases about the dignity of the human species.

Human rights speeches may occur more frequently in coming months, with the approach of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations in December, 1948.

Only two reactions would be suitable if any such speech should be made now by the leaders of the so-called 'free world' — Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Kofi Annan, or any other leader of the West.

In the name of wiping out the Muslim members of the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), the Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic has unleashed a terror campaign by cracking down on the ethnic Albanian population in Kosovo.

Since the beginning of this year, Milosevic has tried to wipe out the ethnic Albanian people in Kosovo by conducting a village-to-village attrition war. He seems determined to punish the civilian population. More than a thousand people have been killed while another half of a million have been forced to flee from their homes.

Images of Serbian police rampaging through the Muslim homes in an orgy of destruction has been flashed on TV screens around the world. Bosniads of Albanian women, dragging their tattered belongings and holding on to their innocent children have fled Kosovo. Rather than confront the ethnic cleansing and genocide, the western leaders initially pretended that it wasn't happening.

Only in the face of universal outrage, the western leaders were forced to confront reality and demand that Milosevic cease all military action against the civilians or face grave consequences.

However, Milosevic is anything but naive. He called the western bluff and continued with his heinous act. From time to time he would make a verbal commitment to agree to a cease-

fire, only to renege as soon the international pressure on him was softened. Although the atrocities perpetrated in Kosovo doesn't yet match the horror unleashed in Bosnia, the latest episodes of civilian massacres point out to the potential for another catastrophe in the region.

Only in the face of universal outrage, the western leaders were forced to confront reality and demand that Milosevic cease all military action against the civilians or face grave consequences.

The international community needs to be galvanised to face up to Milosevic and ratchet up the pressure on him. However, the reaction that we see from the NATO and other international leaders can only be described as timid and toothless.

Why has NATO stepped up its verbal rhetoric and is calling for air strikes? I can think of only two reasons. First, the shame and guilt of not acting

earlier in saving the lives of many innocent victims is finally getting to them. Second, the Kosovo episode gives NATO an opportunity to redeem some of its diminished credibility.

It is possible that their delayed reaction may be due to the fact that the victims of the atrocities are primarily Muslims. We could only imagine the speed at which they would have acted if only the perpetrators were Muslims!

Despite the rhetoric, the possibility of NATO air strikes are remote. Russia is making a last ditch effort to save its traditional ally — the Serbs. Given the already cool relations between the West and Russia due to the financial chaos in the Russian economy, it is unlikely that the West would want to antagonise Russia any further.

Hence it is time to say to the western leaders that, please spare us — above all, spare the victims of Kosovo — the talk. The time for action, for rescue, is now. Bosnia very nearly became the graveyard of the western world's moral reputation. Today, three years after that war, the US and its NATO allies are marching toward the same graveyard, acting as though they have seen nothing and learned nothing.

ever, the reaction that we see from the NATO and other international leaders can only be described as timid and toothless. Now, as before, the outside world is fretting and doing little more. The government of the United States urged "a strong and decisive end to what is happening," and Britain has called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council.

But it seems that Milosevic has called the bluff of the western leaders and is playing the classic game of making false promises in order to come out from the tight situation. He has done this before and knows that he can get away with it.

Why has NATO stepped up its verbal rhetoric and is calling for air strikes? I can think of only two reasons. First, the shame and guilt of not acting

earlier in saving the lives of many innocent victims is finally getting to them. Second, the Kosovo episode gives NATO an opportunity to redeem some of its diminished credibility.

Despite the rhetoric, the possibility of NATO air strikes are remote. Russia is making a last ditch effort to save its traditional ally — the Serbs. Given the already cool relations between the West and Russia due to the financial chaos in the Russian economy, it is unlikely that the West would want to antagonise Russia any further.

Hence it is time to say to the western leaders that, please spare us — above all, spare the victims of Kosovo — the talk. The time for action, for rescue, is now. Bosnia very nearly became the graveyard of the western world's moral reputation. Today, three years after that war, the US and its NATO allies are marching toward the same graveyard, acting as though they have seen nothing and learned nothing.

To the Editor...

One day weekly holiday

Sir, The present government after assuming power implemented two day weekly holiday which was not their election pledge. The move was rather criticised than hailed by different quarters.

My question is, when the head of the government's office can remain open throughout the week, then why the Divisional Commissioner, District Commissioner and other government offices are not ordered to enjoy one-day weekly holiday for intensive supervision of relief distribution?

Due to century's worst flood that engulfed the entire country for more than two months, communication network has totally broken down. Among the government utility services only the railway authority demonstrated their sincerity with their limited resources to keep the train communication operative despite inundation of rail track by flood water at various points.

tributing letters at the remotest places to the flood-affected people whose near and dear ones are away from them as an incident of job, business or due to devastating flood.

Md Lutfar Rahman Malnichhera Tea Estate, Sylhet

National Savings Bureau

Sir, Unlike the previous regime, the present government has launched an attractive scheme to motivate people by inducing them to purchase various National Saving Certificates at lucrative interest rates.

But there lies the crunch when the half-yearly and quarterly interest becomes due... and the person has to proceed to the Bureau for drawing the amount, along with the coupon. At the Bureau, the person concerned has to wait and kick the heels for considerable time.

simply bearer cheque to any bank according to the convenience of the client. If such a system is adopted, it will go a long way to mitigate the hardship and suffering of the oppressed and harassed clients. The Finance Minister S A M S Kibria and the Governor of Bangladesh Bank can work out the modalities in conjunction of the Director of National Savings Bureau.

N.H. Sufi 17/16 C, Tajmahal Road, Md Pur, Dhaka-1207.

Employment Bank

Sir, The Employment Bank — the name which indicates its speciality, has been inaugurated lately by the government through accumulating a capital of 100 crore taka. The target group of the bank will be the unemployed youths who have latent potential to operate a successful venture but have no financial support.

The establishment of the employment bank is a timely effort as well as a bold step too. Default culture spreads over in such a way that 38 per cent of the disbursed loans fall in this category, of the government's commercial banks.

disbursed to the right people who present viable projects, considering socio-economic conditions of the country. Such projects contribute to the poverty alleviation of the country and also open up more employment opportunities. It is praiseworthy that the bank will provide loans to farming, poultry, fisheries, small business on agriculture and other sectors, especially in computer business. A network of the bank allow the country would accelerate economic activities in the country and would also bring social order.

Mohammad Arif Uddin 1167 East Nasirabad, Chittagong

Nelson Mandela shows the way

Sir, Addressing the 12th Non-aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Durban, South Africa, the lion of African continent Nelson Mandela without any flourish said: "all NAM members are concerned that the Kashmir issue should be solved through peaceful negotiations."

Nelson Mandela spoke nothing against India or Pakistan. He simply, from the core of his heart, expressed the need for the solution of Kashmir problem on humanitarian ground.

O. H. Kabir 6, Hare Street, Wari, Dhaka-1203.

OPINION Strike When the Iron is Hot

AZabr

Mother Nature had spoiled the Bengalees for thousands of generations to become lazy, since the formation of the delta in the region millions of years ago, by providing plenty of water, natural silt as fertiliser (much more eco-friendly than chemical fertilisers), fertile and flat arable land, and plenty of spare time for culture and art flourish (the badrakoh mentality is ecologically related).

Our work efficiency and standard of work ethics is much lower than normal, therefore we have to work longer, and harder, to raise the standard of the country, which is statistically positioned at the bottom group of ten of the UN list.

Empty brain is a devil's workshop. Keep the people busy, for their own good. We must remember we are shirkers basically inside (phaki mentality).

This is the time to be strict and enforce existing rules and regulations to ensure that routine jobs are done in a routine manner, without the popularity syndrome interfering in diluting the sense of duty. Undue political interference should be made a punishable offence. The staff, workers, and wage earners have to be hammered with the awareness aspect of responsibility carried by each and every post in the public or private service. The incumbents should realize the simple message: work, or get out. We are too soft on the implementation side (trying for cheap popularity through nepotism).

There are too many examples to cite here where the administration has failed to deliver the goods — cannot make the people work! The city's perennial traffic jam is due to soft-peddling the existing regulations, and misplaced human kindness. The authority is trying to please whom?