

The Daily Star

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Vanguarding the LDC Cause

Bangladesh being both a 'typical' and 'model' LDC, has had the unique distinction to be the spokesman and for coordinator of the least developed countries which comprise as much as 80 per cent of the 132-member WTO.

Bangladesh's privileged position among the LDCs is also an 'unenviable' position because the honour carries a responsibility premium. Her role breaks into two parts: first, she has to see that the LDCs have concerted their positions to yield a common plank for negotiations with the rich countries.

There is a crucial need for capacity-building in this area. We have to develop the knowledge base to be able to meaningfully participate in the discussions where the industrialised countries are seen to figure not merely as tough customers but as knowledgeable customers as well.

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A nightmare visits me and revisits. A city of grave is expanding its acre. Clouds stop moving and the shadows pause. Trees stop breathing. They are dying as well.

I stand before my window and watch the sun glow. I hear the distant whirr of an ice-cream van spinning its mechanical tune over and over.

the asphalt road. There is nothing except the sun at the end of the deserted street, nothing but the glare of emptiness and a hot sea framed between decaying houses and a file of ash-coloured files.

A distant thunder rumbles. Stale wind smells of gunpowder and shredded bombs. Lightning strikes, sharp and swift like an executioner's knife.

My father lies near the thorn-grave and my mother, by a dying



river. Now so many deaths, nothing short of a massacre from the wild scythe flailing friends, flowers and grass. And the city of graves expands its area.

It is a good place to die in? Yet, to my surprise, the day-break returns. To my surprise and betrayal at once. A squirrel comes to my window-sill. Comes and goes like a question mark.

around the cool eyes. Or, is that fatigue? She is tired, she is thirsty. At nightfall she goes back to her mother, sweaty and exhausted. Mother lights up and pounces on her. "How much? How much have you brought?"

The dusk lengthens its shroud, I come back home. I recede like a snail flattening its inquiring horns from nervous injuries. I fold like a moth's envelope into the seam of

branches. I return to my childhood and remember a far-away rain. I lie face up in bed muffled the thunder of a clouded heart.

The nightmarer returns and the death-spiral. Death by fire and death by knife. A dead squirrel plastered to the window-sill like a grisly stamp; my broken watch lying on top a junk to be thrown out; a dead dove that cooed, by the telephone pole; gravestones with a dead person under everyone.

Is it a good place to live and die in?

Understanding Euro: What is It?

ELEVEN currencies of Europe have been converted into one single currency called euro. After three years, only euro will reign supreme among the European countries.

This has been a bold new experiment as the conclusion of a far reaching process of economic integration which began in the 1950s after the end of the second world war. The European economic union, commonly known as EEC, steadily developed from a common market to the common economy of Western Europe over the last 50 years.

Euro means single monetary economy for 11 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain) at the moment.

currencies and no risk associated with exchange rate fluctuations. The trade among these eleven European countries have now become internal trade within a single market where prices can be compared for goods and services across national borders.

At the moment, the European economic growth has slowed down to only 1.5 per cent from 2 per cent a year earlier and the rate of unemployment is hovering around 10 per cent of the total work force.

Euro should promote more trade within these eleven countries due to reduced transaction cost as well as greater competition. More trade in turn should favourably influence economic growth and at the same time create more jobs.

Euro means one economy and there are definite benefits to be drawn from becoming parts of a large economy. For example, Ireland with 3.7 million inhabitants is now a part of the European economy with 290 million consumers.

ture of give and take among the neighbouring countries who wish to maintain the economic unity at all cost.

Price uniformity will be another big advantage of the single currency. All over Europe, price of aspirin or mineral water will be fully comparable since it will be in euro with the same exchange value everywhere.

The investment opportunities in the Euro zone are enormous. The European bond market in particular will face strong favourable impact. According to Wall Street Journal, "a common currency will result in roughly \$ 6 trillion euro bond market from Europe's current collection of highly balkanised, national bond markets."

Euro is now the world's second most important currency after United States dollar. Given the opportunities it would generate, its value is likely to go up.

A strong euro will call for economic reform. In particular, the enormously expanded market size would intensify competition which in turn will expose inefficient enterprises as well as prevailing market distortions.

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What are the lessons that we should learn from the latest intensification of European economic union? Its international impact are noteworthy.

First, as the second most important currency of the world (next to the United States dollar) European countries now have a much greater stake in maintaining stability of the global economy, in particular, improving world monetary management.

Europe because of its huge single market size, may tend to become isolationist. However, the experts are of the opinion that it has become much more outward looking in matters of international trade. It is likely to open more

to the outside world. EEC is an important trading partner of Bangladesh and given our own domestic political stability, we may also expect growth in our exports to that market due to the single currency and reduced transaction cost of international trade.

Second, euro, dollar and yen — the three dominant currencies of the world — now form a sort of tripartite world currency system which could effectively provide the global flows of all types. Their cooperation is likely to reduce frequency of turmoil in money markets round the world.

Beginning with the crisis of Thailand in mid-1997, there were several such financial breakdowns during the last two years involving other countries of ASEAN, Russia, Brazil and now Mexico. We are now faced with the challenge of a unipolar world which is indeed of a unique kind.

The three-currency cooperation is a matter of extreme urgency to evolve the new financial system for the new world order of the 21st century.

Finally euro may emerge as the alternative global currency and in strong competition with the dollar. Therefore instead of cooperation, it will result in trade wars and currency flights across the Atlantic? The answer seems to be NO since half a century of cooperation after the end of the second world war have created a strong common understanding which is not likely to be vitiated even after the end of the Cold War.

Letter From America

Impeached, then Acquitted, President Clinton has the Last Laugh

Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

Republicans remained deaf to the message that was coming loud and clear: President Clinton did not commit a crime; he committed a sin. What the President did was not "high crime and misdemeanor;" it was low crime with Miss Lewinsky!

REPUBLICAN Congress persons learned a painful lesson — that it is easy to impeach a President in the House of Representatives (which requires a simple majority), but extremely difficult to convict him in the Senate (which requires two-thirds majority).

First, a word about impeachment. Earl of Suffolk (Michael de la Pole) was the first person to be impeached in medieval England in 1386. The Earl's offense was not salacious and sexual; it was misuse of public funds. The Earl, like President Clinton, was accused of "high crimes and misdemeanors" — "the first appearance of that vague and contentious phrase in the canon of English law."

Warren Hastings, the first British Governor General of India, was the last person to stand trial for impeachment in 1788. Hastings was charged with "maladministration, corruption in office and cruelty towards the people of India."

Direct attack on King being unthinkable, save by the path that led Charles I to the block, Parliament indulged in the fiction that the King could do no wrong but was misled by ministers. "Sounds familiar?"

As soon as the British system evolved into a parliamentary system, impeachment fell away. Growing power of the parliament and the decline of the despotic monarchical rule allowed legislators to remove ministers through confidence votes. In the United States, today impeachment represents a weapon in the perennial battle between the executive and the legislative branches of the government.

Hillary Clinton, who is considering a run for the Senate from New York in 2000, was partially right. There was a conspiracy involving a few right-wingers, although not a "vast right-wing conspiracy," to oust her husband. They had many reasons. First, they hate Clinton. For them, he did not have the right pedigree. They were especially lively because he had defeated a man of true blue blood — son of a Senator, World War II pilot and a millionaire, George Bush. Bill Clinton, the "draft-dodger," was the son of a traveling salesman, who died before Clinton was born. His mother remarried. Clinton took the last name of his stepfather, a violent alcoholic. Raised dirt poor (with mounting legal bills, President Clinton is still not rich), Clinton is a self-made man. His successes — visit to the White House to meet President Kennedy in 1963 as a top High School student in the nation, education at Georgetown, Oxford (as a Rhodes Scholar), Yale Law School, Governor of Arkansas, and finally two-term President of the United States — were too much for the stomach of the right-wingers.

Although he always seems to win at the end, Clinton, a self-destructive man, made the job of his enemies easy. Cornered, his first instinct is not to tell the truth; although he would couch words in such a way that it could not be "proven" as perjury in a court of law. As the whole

universe now knows, the 52-year old President is an adolescent who cannot look at a skirt without getting sexy!

Clinton infuriated the Republicans further by stealing their agenda. He balanced the budget, put 100,000 more policemen on the beat, "mended" affirmative action, replaced welfare with "work fare" and increased defense spending — issues Republicans hold dear. Clinton has been extremely good to women, minorities and immigrants — people who do not show up on the Republican radar screen. As the Republican party was being driven right by the very well organized and financed anti-abortion, socially-conservative Christian right, Clinton steered the Democratic party towards the centre, where most of the American people were. Unable to outsmart Clinton on the issues Americans cared about, the anti-Clintonites went after the person of the President.

Clinton's enemies triggered the appointment of Clinton-hater Republican Kenneth Starr to investigate Whitewater, Travelgate, FBI flegate or any other gate, to look for Presidential wrong-doing. Starr came up empty, and wanted to pursue other interests. As they pumped dollars into Paula Jones' sexual harassment case against the President, the right-wingers persuaded Starr to stay. Linda Tripp, the "friend" who taped Monica Lewinsky's phone conversation with her, tipped off Paula Jones' attorney and Starr about President Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky. At the Paula Jones' deposition in January, 1998, the President was surprised at the incisive questions about Monica Lewinsky, before the scandal was public. The Jones lawyers, in collusion with Starr, set the President up in a perjury trap.

In their zeal to "get" the President, the Republicans left the American people behind. Even after their unprecedented defeat in the mid-term elections of November, 1998, they refused to be chastened. Against the wishes of the people, in December, 1998, they rammed through the impeachment of the

President in the House of Representatives, on a partisan basis. This after Henry Hyde had earlier vowed that impeachment of the President would have to be bipartisan.

The Republicans believed that after the impeachment, there would be a clamour for the President to resign. Wrong again! Americans believed that he was wrongly impeached, and should not be removed. With a Presidential approval rating of 70 per cent, impeachment and removal was dead on arrival at the Senate. Unlike in the House, in the Senate the President's lawyers mounted a very effective defense, that tore gaping holes in the House case.

The thirteen House Managers, all Republican right-wingers, foolishly believed that they would be able to convince at least twelve Democratic Senators to vote to remove the President. They convinced none. On the contrary, five Republicans joined 45 Democrats to defeat the obstruction of justice charge (50-50) and ten Republicans joined the 45 Democrats to defeat the perjury charge (55-45). Instead of the two-thirds majority to remove the President, none of the articles of impeachment received a simple majority. Posterity will judge President Clinton to have been a victim of the Republican vendetta, just as President Andrew Johnson was one hundred years ago. Clinton has not even been censured by the Senate. His acquittal by the Senate took the teeth and taint out of the House's impeachment.

The Republican Senators who voted to acquit President Clinton are mostly from the North-East USA, where more highly educated Americans live. Clinton's enemies — Tom Delay, Newt Gingrich, Bob Livingston, Bob Barr, Asa Hutchinson, Lindsey Graham — are all from the South. There is a realignment taking place in American politics. The "redneck" South used to be solidly Democratic, the party of protest and change; and the blacks used to belong to the Republican Party, the party of Abraham Lincoln. (I once asked a

"redneck." They abuse women, sympathize with the racist Ku Klux Klan and torture animals," he said). President Franklin Roosevelt wooed the blacks to the Democratic Party with his "New Deal." President Lyndon Johnson was the last Democratic President for whom the majority of the Southern whites voted (1964). Starting with Ronald Reagan's Presidency (1981), the South has been turning into a solidly Republican territory.

America will have to sort through some inconvenient fallout from the Clinton impeachment-acquittal. The Supreme Court's 1997 decision that a sitting President is not immune from a private civil lawsuit (Paula Jones case), will make all future Presidents vulnerable. The path has been made easy for Presidential enemies: find a plaintiff, pour money into the case, and demand that the President be removed from office. Kenneth Starr succeeded in piercing lawyer-client privilege, demanded that the Secret Service, employed to protect the President, be a relentless prosecutor's spy, and prosecuted anyone who disagreed with his version of the law. The contrast between an amorous Mr Clinton and overzealous Starr can be summed up thus: Mr Clinton can knock at your door late at night and ask to see your daughter; so can Mr Starr. You can say "no" to Mr Clinton; you cannot say "no" to Mr Starr!

Through all the lunacy, the American people remained remarkably sane and consistent. Through 60-70 per cent Presidential approval ratings, they repeatedly told their legislators to move on to the nation's business; that what the President did was wrong, but did not warrant his removal from office. At their future electoral peril, the Republicans remained deaf to the message that was coming loud and clear: President Clinton did not commit a crime; he committed a sin. What the President did was not "high crime and misdemeanor;" it was low crime with Miss Lewinsky!

Friday Mailbox

Breach of election rules

Sir, The Prothom Alo on 23rd February published a news item regarding a report on the Babna Z by-election, released in a press conference by FEMA. It was absent in the DS. FEMA complained about serious irregularities in the by-election. The 75 per cent given vote margin smells of malpractice. Normally about 80 people can vote per hour but there the voting rate exceeded 100 per hour. In 6 centres, 92.82 per cent votes were cast, 98.93 per cent of which were in favour of the ruling party! In some centres, no voters were seen after mid-day but they reported 85 to 90 per cent votes cast.

FEMA also revealed serious breach of election rules by two ruling party ministers. Surely no one can accuse FEMA of pro-opposition bias? The partisanship of the present Election Commission is amply demonstrated by many other reports. If one still demands concrete proofs from an intellectually deficient opposition then I must say nothing will convince him.

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Truly foreign

Sir, For a small country like Bangladesh the importance of a diplomatic mission is paramount. Recent handling of King Hussein by our Foreign Ministry proved it once again. It is indeed appalling to know that the all too intricate job of opening a new mission in Jordan have been entrusted to two non-professionals. Both our Ambassador and his Deputy at our embassy in Jordan are new in the world of diplomacy. The Ambassador is a political recruit of the ruling party and his Deputy is a non-Foreign Affairs officer without any training on diplomacy. While the ruling party may pick its own cadre as Head of Mission, the ruling party should have backed him with a professional diplomat.

One wonders whether there are such shortage of professionals in our diplomatic hub of Segun Bagicha. Media reports suggest that soon after the ascendancy of Mr Aziz to the helm of Segun Bagicha there has been an ongoing process of lateral entry of officers belonging to different cadres by default of their AL connections.

Asif Rahman Dhaka

A fish a day might keep the psychiatrist away

Sir, Like the proverb "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," a fish a day might keep the psychiatrist away. Mental health researchers are discovering a link between diet and mental illnesses such as depression, bipolar disorder and schizo-phrenia. People who suffer from these illnesses might have low levels of the nutrient Omega-3. Omega-3 is an essential poly-unsaturated fatty acid that the body must consume in the diet. It is found primarily in fish and some vegetables. Researchers have found that some mental patients who took fish oil supplements to lower Omega-3s had some relief from symptoms of their disorders.

According to Jerry Cott, who heads the Adult Psycho-pharmacology Research Program at the US National Institute of Mental Health, Omega-3 fatty acids make up an important part of cells within the nervous system. These are part of the cell walls that are known as cell membranes. The fatty acids have a very important role as a structural component. It is like the bricks and the mortar of the membrane itself. And if the structure of the membrane is not right, then the membrane itself doesn't work properly. If the membrane doesn't work properly, the nervous system can't work properly either. Mr Cott says that researchers are not sure exactly how Omega-3s improve symptoms of mental disorders. And he says, mental patients might need to eat fairly large amounts of Omega-3 to make up for their already low levels of the nutrient. They might find it easier to take supplements of fish oil than to eat a lot of fish every day. Cott further says, the use of fish oil supplements to treat mental illness is a very new subject for research, and it will be some time before the practice will be widespread. For some people, good mental health might be only a filet away. Cott says, healthy, non-deficient people might only need to eat fish once or twice a week to maintain their normal body reserves of Omega-3.

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But Sachin was not out

Sir, As a fair minded Indian, I fully agree with the title of Syed Mahbub Murshed's view. At least for the next ten years, Eden Gardens should be blacklisted. Even after this period, if international cricket is restored at the Gardens, there better be a very good reason.

However, I disagree with the views expressed regarding Sachin's dismissal.

Here is why — I am pretty disappointed that many of the experts have overlooked a rather straightforward clause in the Run Out Law which gives the batsmen some protection against collisions. Law 38 regarding Run Out is very clear. It states: "Either batsman shall be out Run Out if in running or at any time while the ball is in play — except in the circumstances described in Law 39. (Stumped) — he is out of his ground and his wicket is put down by the opposite side. If, however, a batsman in running makes good his ground he shall not be out Run Out, if he subsequently leaves his ground, in order to avoid injury, and the wicket is put down. The last clause is very important. A batsman is NOT run out if he completes a run and is subsequently out of his ground to avoid injury."

Let us examine the two questions that need to be answered according to Law 38. Did Sachin make good his ground? The replays show that he grounded his bat close to the crease. It was impossible to determine if the bat was outside or inside the crease. The benefit of doubt goes to the batsman. Therefore the answer to this question is: Yes, Sachin made his ground.

Now, to the second question. Did he leave his ground to avoid injury? During any collision, whatever action a person takes is with intention of avoiding (or at least minimising) injury. Often, this happens as reflexive action. Let's face it, if Sachin had steadfastly held his bat to the ground, he might have ended up with a broken wrist. Therefore, there is sufficient reason to believe that the batsman raised his bat to avoid an injury. In this case, as a reflex action, this is enough to induce doubt/confusion in the third umpire's mind. Going by the golden rule of cricket umpiring, the benefit goes to the batsman.

Ergo, SACHIN WAS NOT OUT. Why was he given out by the third umpire? My contention is that K T Francis completely overlooked the above clause and proceeded to give a decision based purely on whether the bat was grounded when the stumps were broken. It is also possible that umpire Bucknor requested the third umpire just to check if the bat was grounded when the stumps were broken. This would mean that the third umpire didn't really have control over the entire decision but just a part of it. This is one of those instances in sports where several experts got it horribly wrong. The decision, they say, was made according to the rules of the game.

But if the rules had been followed to the entirety, SACHIN SHOULD HAVE BEEN DECLARED NOT OUT. I constructed a somewhat different situation to highlight the absurdity of the decision. Let us say A & B are batting. A is the striker. He drops the ball on his feet and takes off for a quick single. B has backed up and comes rushing in. Meanwhile, the ball comes to rest on the crease. The closest fielder is at short point. He charges in to run B out. When the fielder grabs the ball B just makes it. However, the fielder rams into B's hand holding the bat. Remember, none of this is deliberate. B's bat goes flying and B himself, is knocked back. He falls, with his body completely outside the crease. The fielder, in one continuous motion, throws the ball onto the stumps. Is B out?

Ananth Nagarajan

How many more Noor Hossains?

Sir, I ask this question to the leaders of Bangladesh: how many sacrificial lambs, more specifically Noor Hossains do you need to satiate your thirst for blood? Please tell us, how many more you need?

Why do you not use your own children or grand children as your Noor Hossains? Is it because they are in the safe haven and cannot be brought back home or from the pouch area of the city where your programmes cannot reach?

Vox Populi