

The Daily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Friday, June 11, 1999

Caught Napping by Globalisation

It is in the mind of man that a battle is either won or lost. To meet the challenge of globalisation we certainly have to think globally before we can act globally. But the national thought-process is still unprepared to catch up with the globalisation process started as early as in 1993 with the Uruguay Round. So flawed and perfunctory has been our approach to globalisation that we risk being sucked into it, ill-prepared, if not completely thrown by the wayside.

This is one subject of supreme importance to our national life, economy, nay, survival, that unfortunately has been the least talked about. Why? Are the points at issue here too stiff, enormously complex and far too difficult for a layman to understand those. We certainly don't think they are. In fact, in this editorial we proceed from the assumption that globalisation is not an exclusive preserve of sophisticated intellectuals and professional experts. Ironically though, even at the expert level the subject has been discussed only intermittently and half-heartedly scarcely with an eye to developing a broad-based consensual strategy to benefit by globalisation. Politicians did not take it up because they thought it was politically drab; intellectuals trapped in their conventional wisdom, failed to see how Bangladesh could fit into the global scheme of things; bureaucrats who are like the moon taking light from the sun did not warm up to it; and, introspectively, the media failed to rise to the occasion.

Yet all is not lost. We believe we can make up for the lost time and attune ourselves to it if we launch a full-scale campaign to educate and sensitise people about globalisation, its implications for them, what it requires of them to do and what benefits they can derive if they assimilate into the process. The farmers, workers, consumers must, out of sheer necessity, understand the full implications of free and liberalised trade envisaged by the WTO, so that they can fend for themselves through the teething phase of relaxed controls and lacked subsidisation in a burgeoning open market context. Ideally, if the entrepreneurs cry hoarse for a level-playing field there is no reason why the producers would not like to have one for them in a globalised economy.

The information campaign to exercise the public mind on globalisation has to move in tandem with efforts undertaken at the top levels of both public and private sectors to enhance our negotiating capabilities at the WTO forum and outside it.

Apart from the mental conditioning we suggest four specific preparatory steps to globalisation. First, the relationship between the public and private sectors will have to be redefined. It is not enough to say that the public sector will play a facilitatory role for the private sector; in fact, to all intents and purposes, the private sector has to play not just a leading, but a dominant role interacting on its own strength with private sectors in other countries. Secondly, while we set up backward linkages to the garments industries on a double-quick basis to be self-reliant in the manufacturing process before the MFA's quota cover goes by 2005, our critical dependence on the RMG sector for up to 70 per cent of our export-earning must also be brought to end. We should diversify into cut-flowers, fruits, vegetables, and even toys, the last named alone yielding an export bonanza for Singapore. Thirdly, we can use the regional window of SAPTA or SAFTA to tie up with other free trade zones in a bid to gain the widest possible access to world market.

Last but not the least, our cost of production will have to be competitive with that of our trade partners. We can only ensure this through efficiency and fiscal support.

Dawn of Democracy in Indonesia

by Harun ur Rashid

Indonesia has adopted a different voting system from that of Bangladesh. For the election of national Parliament, the Indonesians vote for a party, not a candidate and parties win seats on the basis of the proportion of votes they win in each province (27 in number). Accordingly, almost half of the total seats will come from the less populated outer islands. There are 500 seats in the national parliament, of which 38 are reserved for appointees from the military.

their own choice. For the time they have tasted democratic election.

The poorer section of the community did not bother whether the elected representative would be able to bring prosperity to them. Many of them believed that their economic situation might not change with the new government but the very fact that they were able to vote according to their will was new and ecstatic to them. The people were ebulliently optimistic of the democratic future of the country. They were proud that Indonesia would become the third largest democracy in the world.

The concern of violence during the election was misplaced. The Indonesian people conducted themselves in a dignified manner and the procession and gathering of 48 parties on different days in the capital city were peaceful and colourful.

The foreign media was surprised that party supporters were determined to abide by the rules on the streets. In one day 2 million people were on the streets supporting Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri and with such huge number of people anything could happen. But nothing did.

The election was by and large free and fair and the armed forces remained neutral because its political role had diminished to a large extent. They are reconciled to accept any opposition leader as the new President of the country. The foreign election monitors headed by former President Carter of the United States were satisfied that a credible election was organised by the Indonesian government and credit should go to the present government of President B.J. Habibie and the people of Indonesia. However concern was expressed about slow counting of votes and there is an apprehension

that the result might be tampered. The Indonesian authorities rejected this misconceived concern.

Political analysts believe that the election will not, however, provide any party a clear-cut majority in the parliament. Any future government is likely to be a coalition among the parties. The predictions are that PDI-P of Ms Megawati will attract more votes than other parties. Some believe that PDI-P may secure nearly 35-40 per cent, PKB of Gus Dur 20 per cent, Golkar 20 per cent, PAN of Dr Rais 15 per cent. There is a view that the final result may surprise the poll predictions.

Although the election campaign and the poll took place free of violence, the result may create tension in the community if the expectations of the party supporters go wrong. The real test will come when the particular parties did not poll

as well as the supporters thought that parties would. If the ruling party wins more seats than the other parties, tension might rise leading to political instability. It is likely that PDI-P, PAN AND PKB may join hands to form the new government. Another view is if Golkar is able to secure large number of seats it may form an alliance with other parties to hold on power.

The question is: what are the major issues which are likely to be faced by the new government?

First is the economy. The crisis-plagued economy has to be revived with the IMF's supervision. The government has to undertake major reforms in banking and financial sectors, insolvency laws and monitoring bank's activities are imperative to restore the confidence of foreign investors. The private sector needs to be overhauled and accountability,

transparency and fiscal discipline must be observed.

Second, the decentralisation of power from Jakarta to the provinces appears to be another issue which the government will have to deal with. The laws relating to decentralisation was passed by the last parliament and the new government has to be bold enough to implement it. There could be opposition from some section of the community as they suspect that the decentralisation may disintegrate the territorial integrity of Indonesia.

Third, the armed forces need to be further reformed. The country needs armed forces but their political role is required to be curtailed. The armed forces have themselves underwent many reformative changes as they realised that no body would be able to stop the democratic process in the country brought about by 'people's power'.

Finally the political 'hot potatoes' are the province of Aceh in the western tip of the Sumatra island and East Timor. Aceh was a part of Dutch Indonesia and when Dutch left Indonesia in 1949, Aceh became a part of Indonesia. Aceh is a oil rich land and a section of people of the province claim that they did not derive any benefits from oil resources. The Aceh Muslim separatists demand independence from Indonesia through a referendum. They called for a poll boycott and vow to press their demand for independence. Free Aceh separatists have been engaged in armed struggle with the security forces. This is an issue which needs to be handled with care and sensitivity.

With regard to East Timor, it stands on a different footing as it was a Portuguese colony and Indonesia annexed it in 1976. Indonesia recently agreed to hold a referendum some time in August under the UN and if the majority of them want independence, Indonesia has no objection to it. But there is a growing fear that violence may erupt in East Timor as there are large number of people with arms who wish to maintain the status quo.

Indonesia is a giant in the region and is the largest Muslim country in the world. Indonesia's first President Sukarno was one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement and played a critical role on behalf of Asia in the 50s. It has been endowed with huge natural resources and a democratic Indonesia could be an engine of growth in South East Asia and its impact on the stability in the region is enormous. We wish all the success for Indonesian people on their march to democracy, peace, freedom and prosperity.

The writer, a Barrister, is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.



Achenese children and people look on at Indonesian army soldiers patrolling their village of Seuneudon in northern Aceh on the last day of extended voting for the Indonesian election 09 June 1999 as violence left at least three more security personnel dead. About 95 percent Achenese boycotted the first democratic election in more than 40 years in Indonesia, requesting referendum for independence instead.

AFP PHOTO/Omar

What is in a Name!

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk introduced sweeping reforms in Turkey. One such reform, accepted without virtually any dissent, has been the introduction of names. . . . In order to distinguish one citizen from another Mustafa Kemal decreed that all citizens of Turkey must adopt a family name.

SOVEREIGN, independent state of Bangladesh came into existence on 26 March 1971. It is high time that we looked into state structures.

The state is for the citizens. In this case we are all Bengalee citizens. If we look at our immediate past we see that our former masters, the British, were satisfied with administering the then British India. They did not pay much attention to the citizens. Census, that is taking a head count of the citizens from time to time had been practised. But nothing much more has happened.

It is high time that we took stock of the situation. To begin with there is no credible system of birth registration. In other words the state is blissfully unaware of its citizens and its composition. In well organised states carrying a birth certificate is a must for any citizen. Thus we read regularly in newspaper reports about frequent road or waterway accidents. In most cases the victims remain unidentified because they have never had an 'identity card'. Yet in developed countries this is one of the essential documents in the possession of any and every citizen. The state must know who their citizens are at any given moment.

A modern state is unthinkable without a valid document of identity card on the person. It is high time that the administration got together its act

to launch an effective campaign for issuing 'identity cards' to its citizens. The Home Minister has launched a laudable campaign to root out terrorism. How much simplified the task would become for his security forces, if the citizens were under an obligation to carry an 'identity card'.

The absence of the system of 'identity card' for that matter any proper registration can be explained by the fact that during the period of colonialism, the people were at best statistics. No need was felt to issue 'identity cards' because people were considered as chattel. Now that we have a state of our own and attempting to build it into a modern state, we must introduce the system of 'identity card'.

On the question of names handed down from father to son we are landing in a kind of jungle from which we may find ourselves unable to extricate. This matter of naming our children defy all logic. We have just to look around us to discover how bewildering the names are. There is an infinitesimal number of people, who sport their father's name and this is of recent origin. The overwhelming majority of people name their

children as it strikes their fancy. Thus five sons from the same father can have different names without any rhyme or reason.

The names are given for tracing ancestry. Names are also important for state documentation and for tracing papers for cases like inheritance.



The Horizon This Week

Arshad-uz Zaman

birth, death etc. It is high time that the state looked into this matter seriously. On top of our names received from our fathers, here in Bangladesh, we have the habit of giving nicknames. In many cases nicknames become so important that people forget altogether the real names! For instance during the World Cup Cricket, whereas foreign commentators have been talking about our cricketers by calling by their real names, our own commentators have been telling about Opi, Babu etc. And to add to the confusion in most cases the public here know their cricketers by their nicknames but unaware of their real names.

Citizens of Bangladesh are travelling all over the world and

have valid passports. In how many cases they face tragicomic situations because of their names in the passports, which are different from their fathers.

In well organised states throughout the world, they have solved the problem by adopting a single father's name and handing it down to the children.

Thus a citizen of say France can trace his ancestry right upto the Middle Ages by following the names. Thus a family lineage is firmly established.

In order not to get lost in the maze of outlandish names, it is high time that we passed legislation making it mandatory to adopt names. Sooner the better. The passage of time is making it more complicated and is rendering a solution all the more difficult. We as a nation will have to accept that we deserve to be counted, each one of us. We must have our identity papers and most important our names, which we shall inherit from our fathers. It will not be an act of fantasy but follow

some logic. In this fashion what is taking place in an infinitesimal number of families will become universal. The family line will be firmly established.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk introduced sweeping reforms in Turkey. One such reform, accepted without virtually any dissent, has been the introduction of names. His argument was that he was born Mustafa Kemal. There are thousands upon thousands of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey. Indeed here in Bangladesh there are many who have taken the name Kamal after Mustafa Kemal. In order to distinguish one citizen from another Mustafa Kemal decreed that all citizens of Turkey must adopt a family name. Thus he adopted the name Ataturk (meaning Father of the Turks). The entire Turkish nation adopted family names and it has become a part of their names ever since. There are many comic names which have entered the families but have managed to survive all these decades. For example one such comic name is 'aldikacti' (took and fled).

Taking a leaf out of the reforms of Atatürk, I strongly suggest that here in Bangladesh we pass legislation making it mandatory to adopt family names. In this fashion we shall do service to our posterity. We shall cease to become statistics but become human beings.

Friday Mailbox

A lingering legacy

Sir, I was not physically present at Northampton during the unbelievable victory by the Bangladesh team over the Pakistanis. After hearing the news, I, like the entire Bengali/Bangladeshi population around the world, erupted in jubilation. My elder brother who works for the UNDP in Dhanmondi sent me an e-mail stating that the entire country had gone wild. Individuals from Bangladesh, Bengali, Pakistani and Indian Internet newsgroups posted messages of nothing but praise for the Bangladesh team.

It was indeed a very proud moment for our beloved country.

The morning of 5th June 1999, saw the meeting of the two tournaments' favourites, Pakistan and South Africa, for the first time. What struck me with overwhelming pride is that our country is continually mentioned in interviews with Imran Khan, former Pakistan captain, together with Wasim Akram, the captain of Pakistan; even after the departure of the Bangladesh side from the green fields of England.

An unknown country in the world of cricket has indeed left its mark amongst the giants and, here in the UK, afforded an opportunity for the Bengalis/Bangladeshi to hold their heads high amongst the British Asian population. It is, however, a shame that the whole celebratory event was highly politicised back in Bangladesh.

Irrespective, my heartiest congratulations to the Bangladesh cricket team.

Abdul M. Ismail,
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England, UK

Don't mix politics with game

Sir, I am entranced by the stunning performance of Bangladesh boys against Pakistan (one of the two most favourite teams of this year's World Cup). The jubilant euphoria shown after the victory by the whole nation only reminds me of winning the liberation war in 1971. The way we celebrated reflects not only a mere victory in a simple game but it is also coupled with something that is not explicit perhaps.

Though, I was one of the millions to celebrate, yet to my utter dismay I also noticed that something along the line is not going right. The person who is the architect of all these is the famous Gordon Greenidge, the coach of Bangladesh team is not getting his due and right share of the credit. Instead, the way the whole situation has been evolving only reveals how narrow minded we are. We understand quite well that BCB had gone so far that they did not bother to sack him straightaway before completing his full term as the coach.

This only shows how vindictive they are. These, all happens because of the personal relations between the coach and the BCB officials and this has nothing to do with the game. If BCB, thinks he (GG) should be penalized for the statement he made regarding the Test status of Bangladesh then Bangladesh team manager should be penalized as well for his comment on the performance of Bangladesh team in the World Cup prior to leaving for London.

If the team manager could say that we don't expect to win even a single match in the World Cup then how on earth we expect Gordon to convince the decision makers in ICC to provide us with the Test status? BCB fired Gordon on the day we won the historical match. However, the strain relation between the coach and the BCB started long ago. Fortunately, it did not

involve the players nor any other organizations outside BCB. However, the situation is no longer the same.

I would suggest a proper farewell to Gordon (once who was given the nationality by the PM) in a style and say good-bye just to show a little respect that he deserves, and to show that as a nation we are not ungrateful.

Dr. Md. Kamrul Hassan
Shahjalal University of Science and
Technology
Sylhet

Funny and clever US

Sir, The recent war between NATO (led by the US) and Yugoslavia smells funny since the beginning. Why are US attacking Yugoslavia? What's the reason behind the attack? Humanitarian reasons? Whether the attack was really initiated by NATO's own decision or NATO was insisted by the great power US.

If the US is really worried about humanitarian issues it would have invaded Somalia, East Timor, Ethiopia, Kashmir, Palestine, etc, long time ago. People of Somalia and Ethiopia die of hunger because all the foods are stolen by the government. Two or three of East Timor population were decimated by the government. The people of Palestine are hungry of their motherland. The issue of Kashmir has recently come under fire.

Not to mention Bosnia and Niger. The US has some economical interest in Yugoslavia. It just doesn't care about humanitarian issues. NATO is bombing houses and killing civilians while talking about 'humanitarian tragedy'. The real tragedy is the people in Yugoslavia paying for the US political and economical interest.

The problem in Yugoslavia is an internal one. Invading Yugoslavia because of an internal problem is like bombing the South of the US because of racial problems there.

Worst of all are the lies and obscure news from the western media. Yugoslavia expelled all the western journalists. Because of that all the western newspapers, radios and TVs have accepted the information from NATO as 'the truth'. It is hardly so.

NATO has been talking about 'ethnic cleaning', but up till now has shown no trace of evidence to corroborate that. This week NATO showed a photograph that they identified as a 'mass grave'. I couldn't identify the same thing looking at that photograph.

Kazi Faisal Quayes,
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Narayanganj

Where're KZI and AH

Sir, In all the celebration of our victory against Pakistan, there's no mention of the contribution made to Bangladesh cricket by Mr Islam and Syed Ashraf Haque. Mr K Z Islam promoted the sport with huge amount of money throughout the 1970s and 1980s, well before it became fashionable.

Syed Ashraf Haque's efforts on world forums like MCC and ICCB ensured that our team got invited to play in major tournaments. With this exposure they gained confidence and experience enabling them to put up a good performance against the best teams in the world.

Today our cricket has reached a point where we have not only played in a World Cup tournament but also beaten Pakistan we should not forget those who worked hard to make it possible.

Imran Ispahani
Church Road
Richmond, UK

OPINION

Are We Really Ready for Professional Cricket?

Jalal Alamgir

LIKE many Bengalis living in America, I was glued to the TV in the early hours of the morning, savoring the Bangladesh-Pakistan match. Like many others, I could hardly hold back the tears of pride in my eyes, watching the spectacular victory we pulled off. But unlike many, I suspect, I also felt a jab of bitterness, thinking how disgracefully and unprofessionally the lords at BCB continue to conduct themselves. Bangladesh's victory over Pakistan is indeed a remarkable achievement. Yet, BCB's handling of coach Gordon Greenidge has tarnished the otherwise excellent reputation we have as a cricketing nation.

The sacking of Greenidge in the middle of the tournament, and its official announcement right on the heels of the Pakistan match, showed downright bad taste, to say the least. Greenidge has clearly contributed a lot toward improving the skills of our cricketers. As coach he has every right to alert us about the team's strengths as well as weaknesses, and by doing so, he merely performs his professional duties. His opinion that the team is not yet up to meeting the rigours of five-day Tests must be interpreted as professional diagnosis from the coach.

BCB cannot expect one of the greatest and most respectable Test batsmen of all time to sweetly garnish his opinion about the team with useless euphemisms. By expecting that and by portraying his judgment as a malicious attempt to thwart our bid for Test status, Mr. Ashraf Haque and our Sports Minister Mr. Obaidul Qader have shown that they

themselves, as the helmsmen of Bangladesh's cricket, are not ready to treat criticism constructively and conduct themselves professionally.

Perhaps we should not expect anything better from BCB. After all, look at its record. Its actions mirror dutifully the backbiting and corrupt nature of politics in our society. Remember the fiasco over the inclusion of Minhazul Abedin? Well, Abedin had the last word on that, carved wondrously from the two half-centuries he scored in the World Cup. He collected 140 runs for the team, the highest, as well as the highest individual total, 68 not-out, and a world-class average of 70, not beaten by anyone else in our side. And BCB's selectors had dropped him from the team initially, with the juvenile excuse that he is difficult to get along with! The two conclusions we can draw from this are quite

simple. One, like most other organisations in the country, BCB is not a professional but a political organisation that likes to make decisions based on who can get along with the top brass. And two, BCB is not a good judge of players. That's not very comforting, when you contrast what it has to say against what a professional like Greenidge has to say about the team. Or, take the example of the World Cup sponsors of the Bangladesh Cup, an obscure outfit called VeeTee. BCB sold our jersey and our name for the paltry, ludicrous sum of 15,000 pounds. Any moderately successful businessman in Bangladesh could have beaten that by a wide margin. Maybe I am just a jaded sceptic — but in a world of large, bountiful corporate sponsors, BCB's virtual giveaway of the team's sponsorship to VeeTee spells little else but patronage and dishonesty.

Does all this mean we have no hope? We do, and our cricketers proved it, with a kind of poise and integrity that their regulators desperately lack. Our cricket managers need to graduate from silly infantism into mature reflection. They should take seriously Greenidge's opinion as a professional cricketer, and reflect introspectively and objectively on both the strengths and weaknesses of the team. Yes, we have beaten Pakistan, but surely, we need a more consistent record against strong teams to support our Test bid. Yes, we do want our cricketers to play on par with the world's best, but not when they themselves have virtually no experience in playing five-day matches even in domestic cricket.

The writer is a student of Brown University, USA.

Views expressed in this column are the writers' own. The Editor may or may not subscribe to those views. The Editor reserves the right to decide which letters should be published.