

A Judge Under Siege!

FINALLY, the rattle snake has entered the precincts of a court, deemed in the civilised societies to be the sacrosanct citadel of justice. That an all time low has been touched by lawlessness was amply demonstrated on Monday in Satkhira. District and Sessions Judge Shahidur Rahman declining the request to grant bail to four persons accused in the 3-year old sensational murder case concerning Editor, 'Daily Patradut' was confined in his office for hours by hundreds of bus and truck workers who wanted the accused released forthwith. Not only did they give slogans against the Judge, they even held out a death threat to him.

The Judge held his ground firmly winning the whole nation's praise in abundant measure but obviously we cannot say the same thing about the local administration. In fact, the latter's conduct draws instant flak for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that they had a long enough notice to act preemptively rather than putting up a last-minute show to rescue the judge from the agitators' clutches. It seems when words got around about the four fugitives from law bracing up to surrender before the judge, their supporters kept a plan handy to react in the event the latter did not grant bail to them. Otherwise how could they appear in such strength, place the buses and trucks haphazardly in front of the court building, and lay a siege to it, — all in a close succession following the circulation of the news about the judge's decision to send them to the jail hajat? Either police intelligence failed or it was deliberately oblivious of what was brewing around. Even as a precaution they were supposed to be on full alert because notorious names associated with the crime world were involved in the case just as the victim was no non-descript, an editor of a local newspaper that he was.

We think the local administration is blameworthy for what appears to us to be a dereliction of duty, plain and simple. From a purely administrative point of view the whole township was held ransom to the tyranny of the lackeys of criminals. Even going beyond that, it was very much an attempt to strike fear in the heart of a judge with the sinister motive to have him act under duress — against his grain and best professional judgment. We condemn the tendentious development and urge the administration to draw the needed lesson from the Satkhira episode to deter its recurrence.

Repression on Sex Workers

THE government's drive to rehabilitate a 'select' group of sex workers from Nimgali and Tannazir brothels in Narayanganj has turned into an atrocious act of imposition of a lifestyle on them that amounts to violation of their fundamental human rights. Monday's rumpus at the vagrant centre in Kashimpur — where nearly 250 prostitutes have been taken to with a view to preparing them for a return to the mainstream of the society — cynical it may sound, was rather inevitable, given the way the administration has so far gone about the whole business of 'rehabilitation'. The Department of Social Services have failed to appreciate that rehabilitation ought to be a transitional process in which the sex workers have to be slowly but steadily helped, not forced, into the changed environment. Its approach, naive at best and hypocritical at worst, has borne counter-productive consequences. The clash at the vagrant centre, which left some 50 sex-workers nastily bruised and battered on being roughed up by the officials and employees, sends a wrong signal about the very intention of the whole exercise. Those among the outlawed inmates of the two brothels in question who may have thought of starting their lives afresh would, beyond doubt, give it a second thought. On the whole, the rehabilitation drive looks set to prove a futile exercise in the end with a sum total of few thousands more sex workers floating here and there.

The drive has followed a flawed path right from the start and it is getting more and more complicated with each passing day. Towards rectification of the situation — we hope it's not already too late — the Department of Social Services should immediately own up responsibilities for Monday's flare-up and publicly apologise. Then, investigation should be ordered into reported repression on the sex-workers perpetrated by the centre's officials and employees. Also, the journalists should, by no means, be denied access to the centre as they have reportedly been; for, people have a right to know about the fate of sex workers.

Unethical

DHAKA University teachers, a section of them at least, have been moon-lighting for quite a number of years now neglecting their normal duties as teachers of this pride seat of learning. This is highly unethical, specially for those who have been doing it without obtaining permission from the University authority. Any intellectual pursuit for a teacher in his own field of study is highly commendable provided he manages his primary responsibility of teaching his students properly. It has to be remembered that a teacher is hired by the university for a job that entails total commitment, honesty and sincerity on his or her part to deliver on it.

Unfortunately various corrective measures and repeated warnings against indiscriminate moon lighting have fallen on deaf ears. There have been a set of recommendations also but these 'could not be implemented as none bothered to follow them', said a Daily Star report on Tuesday. It has been alleged by a section of students that certain teachers even engage them in preparing the groundwork of their study in lieu of fees which are peanuts. In some cases they could be rewarded with better marks at the tests. This, perhaps, would be more unethical than skipping classes for consultancy work.

When the authorities are sympathetic to genuine cases why should there be instances of bad practices behind the back of the administration? We would like to believe the Vice Chancellor when he expresses his hope for a change for the better.

FOR ten years, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been issuing annual report on human development in its member countries. Like its predecessors, this year's survey also portrays, in elaborate and often fascinating detail, both the extent and the danger of the ever increasing gap between the world's richest and the poorest nations.

The report contends that economic globalisation, fostered by the communications revolution and other developments, is making the world more prosperous.

The Internet, which has become almost as familiar as the telephone, is the fastest growing communication tools ever, according to the survey. More than 140 million people surfed the Net last year, and that number will surpass 700 million by 2001. This will make possible an abundant flow of information to enormous numbers of people who previously lived out their lives in ignorance, with the impotence and misery that ignorance breeds.

The bad news about globalisation, however, is that it has widened the already wide gap between the rich and the poor. Some forty years ago, in 1960, the gap in income between the one-fifth of the human beings who lived in the world's richest

countries and the four-fifths who lived in the world's poorest nations was 30 to 1. In 1990, the gap had grown wider to 60 to 1. By 1997, it had grown to 74 to 1.

Look at another way. The three richest people in the world have more money than the combined wealth of the poorest nations, where 600 million people live.

There was a time when the poor simply endured — or tried to endure — their misery, when they looked upon their poverty not only as a fact of life, but as something fated and irremediable. Only rarely did they rebel against it. Poverty was the only life they knew, or knew about.

But poverty becomes intolerable when people conceive the possibility of easing it. That enticing possibility is being brought home to millions of people by movies, television, fax machines, cell phones, the Internet and the many other manifestations of the communications revolution.

Of the UNDP report's many findings, one of the most fasci-

Human Development A World Divided

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nating is that the single largest export industry for the United States is not aircraft or automobiles. It is entertainment: Hollywood films grossed more than \$30 billion worldwide in 1997.

When, thanks to the wondrous technology of communications, people in Asia, Africa and Latin America see vivid images of ordinary human beings like themselves living in

spacious homes, eating lavish meals, enjoying quality medical care, they may no longer tolerate being 74 times as poor.

It is no accident that 61 major armed conflicts were fought between 1989 and 1998. Thus far, the developed countries in the West have been able to avoid involvement in most of these

wars. But, as more of the world's poor find their burdens intolerable, wars may break out in regions that, in the past, the developed countries were able to ignore. If that seems impossible, ask yourself: five years ago, how likely seemed the possibility of NATO involvement in Kosovo?

The report raises at least three concerns. First, a huge number of people are caught up

world between 1989 and 1998, all but three were civil wars. Both misery and instability are posing a serious threat to the global society.

History teaches us that we can reject the complacent view that time would cure all ills. The UNDP report concentrates on finding solutions in improved global governance.

The growth process in the twentieth century has, indeed, opened up staggering gaps between the world's most and least developed countries. These gaps appear to continue to grow in the foreseeable future. So the fundamental challenge of development is to reverse the dire fate of failing states and to put them back onto the first rungs of the ladder of development.

The problem of failing states is not that they are small and weak, but that they are sometimes dysfunctional. They have been unable to provide the basic goods of political and social stability, protection of property, and personal and political freedom. They have also failed

to follow policies that would foster enterprise, trade, savings and investment.

Improved governance in these countries would definitely help in solving some of their immediate problems. Where countries are failing, the international community especially the developed nations should be willing to cover some of the costs of introducing good governance. Such operations could be mounted under UN auspices. Aid should be withdrawn from countries governed by corrupt and incompetent dictators, but should go, generously, to democracies with decent policies.

While the least developed countries are failing in their effort, the developed nations are also far from doing their obligation in advancing some sort of convergence in the world community. With only the most perfunctory debate, the legislatures in the developed countries vote billions of dollars for their armed forces, but they give only a pittance to international organisations like the UN that are engaged in work that can prevent human misery and foster stability.

If the developed countries can't or won't help in the task of human development, the globalisation of the world may be more violent and deadly than it needs to be.

be pulled back all to their home base. Because the whole operation nicely 'fits in' with wider American strategy in this region. Today, Pakistan might have fallen from America's grace. But tomorrow it might be pulled up and 'patted' again, if strategy demands so. It is an open history, how Pakistan was used thoroughly by America when the question of ousting the then Soviet Union's forces from Afghanistan was uppermost in America's strategy. Pakistan was then enjoying the highest privileges, including the unlimited US aid.

What Next?

So from here to where? Where to start and who is to take initiative? Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh has recently given a clear hint that as Pakistan has 'betrayed' the confidence built up so far, it is for Pakistan to take the initiative, after endorsing the 'inviability' of the LoC as a precondition to talks to start. So the ball is now in Pakistan's court. And Pakistan must be getting ready to 'serve'.

Meanwhile, Indian media commentators and analysts have predicted that BJP will try to keep the current upsurge of nationalism 'burning' until the elections are held in September-October next. And there are good indications that BJP will be bounced back to seat of power... But as resentment against Sharif's 'capitulation' before US pressure in Washington and the humiliation that he had brought to his country, rises in tempo, it is difficult to say how long he would be at the 'crease'.

In the next millennium, another 'cold-war' might be brewing in this region and the two 'contestants' will be India and China, inspite of their growing diplomatic hand-shakes and increasing economic cooperation.

Clinton's Gimmicks

Clinton should have remembered that international diplomacy is a challenging game and that every action has its reaction and when superpower, like America, takes on its role it covers a wider range of reaction. By taking up the cudgel on behalf of India, America has two long range views before it. India holds a very strategic vantage point in this region, both economically and politically. Economically, because India, with its about one billion people, is to be the largest potential consumer market for the West, particularly for America. Hence America has a keen eye on its potential expansion of trade with India in future.

Politically, India is considered as the 'largest democracy in the world', a rare thing in a developing Third World country, where army has never entered politics during last five decades since its independence from UK in 1947. America knows well that India would be a dependable 'bulwark' against rising Communist China in the entire Asia-Pacific region.

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