

Eid Mubarak to All

COMES again Eid-ul-Fitr with the promise of unalloyed joy and happiness for the Muslims across the globe. We hope the first Eid of the 21st century unites us all with a profound sense of fraternity cutting across socio-cultural and geo-political divides.

With Eid just round the corner, we expect our political leaders to elevate themselves above petty party and personal interest for the greater benefit of the people and lead us to that coveted bright tomorrow. Eid Mubarak to all.

Bumper Crop Management

IN a high-profile press conference last Tuesday, with his top aides flanking him, Finance Minister SAMS Kibria struck a populist note claiming that the rush of buyers in the market pointed to a good health of the economy. That was no sign of recession after all, seemed to be the finance minister's point of satisfaction.

So far as the containment of inflationary pressure is concerned, credit must go to the weather-induced record Aman harvest on top of an equally good Boro crop we had reaped earlier on. The government's fiscal policy intervention had but little to do with it, to put it mildly. Government's credit lies in timely helping the farmers with necessary inputs.

The record Aman harvest and the residual stocks of Boro rice bring to bold relief our limited storage capacity. This goes to handicap any big Aman procurement drive. Price support to the farmers might be lessened to that extent as the rural demand slumped with the attendant possibility of a recessionary trend setting in.

On the other hand, if the government should decide to energetically go for a procurement drive it would have to borrow from the banking system risking an upward push to inflation. This will neutralise the gain in the price index otherwise obtainable from the fall in food prices induced by a higher availability of cereals.

The government could have done with less borrowing from the banking sector had the revenue collection picture been satisfactory. But it is not.

Chairman of the National Board of Revenue Abdul Mueed Chowdhury said that revenue earning fell Tk 9.33 billion short of the target during six months to December, 1999 largely because of lower customs duty collection. Hence, as we see it, the predilection to government borrowing has increased that much more.

The government has to strike a balance between intake and offtake of cereals. This is to give the growers a price support together with an incentive for the future while ensuring that the food prices are stabilised at an affordable level for the common man.

Friday Mailbox

"Shame" Sir, If it is possible to detect a criminal by his fingerprint then why not the possible culprits of the picture 'Shame' (DS 2-1-2000) which clearly depicts the face of the culprits assaulting a woman on the 31st night? But the question is whether the authority concerned is ready to put them (the possible culprits) to trial which is their bounden duty.

Secondly, if the identified culprits are put to trial, if the trial should not be delayed because the picture itself is a witness to prove the heinous act committed willfully by those culprits. Besides media men who has in the meantime played an active role to trace the said culprits may stand as eye-witness in the trial.

Let us hope that this time there would be an exemplary punishment against the convicted culprits for committing repression on women.

Abdul Majid 13, Rajani Bose Lane Dhaka.

Welcoming the new millennium

Sir, The new millennium has finally arrived. How time has flown beyond one's comprehension but we have remained confined to our narrow political thinking and miserably failed to look beyond. I particularly mean the case of Bangladesh. A new nation was born in 1971 with a single language and culture. Our energy that could have been combined to bring economic emancipation for the teeming millions. Regrettably, the golden opportunity was lost by divergence in political thoughts, ideology, coups, counter-coups and self-interest above national interest.

The same section and the silent majority still think that if the political parties put away their differences and reach consensus on economic matters for at least few years, Bangladesh can be turned into a prosperous country. But this would perhaps never happen. The nation stands divided over petty matters.

Let us pray and hope that sanity prevails with the advent of the new millennium and our politicians and bureaucrats would look beyond their myopic outlook.

Parking dilemma

Sir, For the last 3 years, I've been parking my car on the street beside my office across from Teachers' Training Institute. Without being left with an alternative, I can't help park on one of the busiest streets of Dhaka, the Mirpur Road. Surely I'll admit, during Eid, my car along with all other cars of the office-goers of the building can do nothing but make the traffic situation worse than usual.

For the past two days, the police have been announcing on the loud speaker that all cars should park in the specified parking area. I went down and asked one of the constables where this specified parking area was and the answer was "I don't know". Yesterday, at about 1:30 pm when I came down to my car, I found that my front wheel was punctured and there was a Tk 100 penalty note on my windshield. A constable walked up to me laughing and saying "I didn't do it... the sergeant did". I asked him, "where am I supposed to park?" And the reply was, "How am I supposed to know?" The irony of the whole situation is that the sergeant not only gave me a ticket for a parking violation but also punctured my tyre so that I could stay there for even longer to change it!

It's not merely enough to put a sign stating "Do not park here." Before putting that sign up, a parking area must be created and also the whereabouts of that area available to the people should be made. What's the use of spending the tax payer's money on the rickshaw, the loud speaker and the microphone rent when instead the government should look into making long term investments into building multi-storied parking lots around busy areas like Motijheel, Dilkusha, New Market and Kawan Bazar. When will the authorities concerned begin to use some common sense and learn to think about long-term investments? At this rate, I'm afraid it'll take more than a couple of millenniums, and the equal amount of money.

O. H. Kabir Wari, Dhaka

Views expressed in this column are the writers' own. The Editor reserves the right to decide which letters should be published.

WTO: Free Trade or Fair Trade?

by Hafiz G.A. Siddiqi

Most of the benefits of trade liberalization goes to more powerful partners, and not to Bangladesh. In fact, open competition makes a weak partner like Bangladesh vulnerable when it is forced to compete with trading partners like India, Thailand, Malaysia or USA.

WTO Prefers Selective Application of Free Trade

As a result of implementation of the WTO rules, the manufacturing workers, including garment factory workers in the United States are in direct competition with the cheapest labour anywhere in the world. They lose their jobs when cheap imports from LDCs force their employers to close down the factories. In response the US government imposes tariff or non-tariff barriers on imports under reference. This is not unfair and the US is justified in doing so. But in the process free trade loses its meaning.

Why should free trade be limited to goods and only some selected types of services like banking and insurance? Why not free trade in professional services? Under free trade physicians, engineers, accountants, professors from Bangladesh should have equal chance to set up jobs in India or United States. In practice, it has not happened. It will not happen primarily because it is against the interest of the "interest groups" of the more powerful trading partners. For example, insurance companies, American Medical Association (AMA) and pharmaceutical companies of USA will not allow foreign doctors to be admitted freely based on open world competition, although this will benefit the US consumers enormously. According to an estimate published in *Foreign Affairs*, (Journal published in Chicago, vol. 24, No. 3, January 2000, p-21). If free trade is allowed in the movement of doctors' services, and as a result

doctors' salaries in USA could be brought down to the level of Western Europe, it would save consumers more than \$70 billion a year. In fact, if the question of efficiency is highlighted, the free trade in professional services should be at the top of the agenda. Why should the highest paid professionals like doctors, lawyers, accountants, benefit so much from protectionism when ordinary factory workers lose their jobs due to relocation of factories from USA to some developing countries?

WTO does Not Ensure Level Playing Field

Trade liberalization emphasizes free access to each other's market. But in reality, even in case of merchandise, market access has been very selective. For example, Malaysia, Thailand, India and other countries have almost free access to the Bangladesh markets because of its rapid implementation of trade liberalization policies. But due to lack of reciprocity, Bangladesh does not have free access to Indian markets. Therefore most of the benefits of trade liberalization goes to more powerful partners, and not to Bangladesh. In fact, open competition makes a weak partner like Bangladesh vulnerable when it is forced to compete with trading partners like India, Thailand, Malaysia or USA. It is argued that if Bangladesh is forced to compete openly without any support, it will be efficient in the long run. But it is unlikely to happen if one partner is too large and strong and the other is too small and weak. Free trade must provide level playing field. This can be provided through the application of Special Treatment provisions of WTO rules.

All these imply that it is not free trade, rather it is fair trade which should be emphasized by WTO to create an WIN-WIN situation for all countries, rich and poor.

The author is Pro Vice Chancellor, North South University, Dhaka

Economic Arguments Ignored

The GATT was created to reduce / eliminate trade barriers, ironically, although claims for free trade have been going on for long, no country has ever fully opted for free trade. The talk on free trade gains or loses momentum or changes its dimensions depending on the interests of the countries which dominate the world trading system. Historically, all the rich industrialized countries including the United States initially developed their manufacturing and technological bases under highly protectionist regime. When only they became strong enough to dominate the world trading system they start insisting on free trade.

Under the hegemony of the industrial powers, GATT framed the "codes of conduct" for regulating international trade. Through different GATT Rounds including the Uruguay Round (UR) trade liberalization has been emphasized; a mandatory and gradual reduction of tariff and dismantling of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) were in focus. Until the UR, the earlier Rounds mostly concentrated on the reduction of tariff barriers to cross border trading of manufactured items. Textile and apparel were made an exception under Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) which was a derogation to GATT principle of non-discrimination. MFA allowed industrialized countries like USA to use discriminatory measures, viz. quotas, etc. to protect their domestic textile and apparel industries. The MFA provided a privileged status to the least developed countries as far as market access is concerned. This means that the principle of free trade was applied in a restricted sense only. However, under the pressure of the NICs and the developing countries, the Final Acts of UR envisaged the phasing out of MFA by the end of 2004. This is an attempt to remove the discriminatory element in the world trading system. Besides, UR integrated into the GATT or WTO system the trade in agricultural products, trade in services (GATS), trade related aspects of investment measures (TRIMS) and trade related aspects of intellectual proprietary rights (TRIPS).

Own Rules

Free trade under the rules of WTO is not really free trade. The decision making process in WTO is not democratic. It is

highly dominated by the industrial powers. Often, the rules are bent to suit the interest of the interest groups in the developed countries. One example is MFA. There are many others. For example, in the recent Seattle meeting an attempt was made to include non-trade aspects like human rights, labour rights, environment, etc. as a condition of trade negotiations. (There is no provision in the Final Acts of UR which permits such inclusion). Inclusion of such non-trade aspects may create grounds for them to be used as NTBs. Although the LDCs have protested against this proposal, it is not yet clear whether the coalition of 48 least developed countries will eventually be able to stall this attempt of the developed countries.

WTO Protects Monopoly Interests The WTO provisions on TRIPS, as alleged by the protesters in Seattle are very protectionist (against free trade). The protesters alleged that WTO simply advances the corporate interests of the developed countries when it insists on implementing the copyright and patent protection clauses in the developing and least developed countries. Copyrights and patents are basically rent seeking devices and are enormously costly forms of protectionism.

A good example is the patented drugs sold by large pharmaceutical companies. Patents often raise the price of such drugs by several hundred or even thousand per cent compared with their free market price. In many cases, the people of the LDCs cannot afford to use lifesaving drugs because their prices are too high. By contrast, protection in the form of tariffs or quotas will rarely raise the prices of goods by more than 20 per cent after trade liberalization has been in place. This is a dilemma. The pharmaceutical companies, and similar other corporate capitalists invest lot of money to invent new drugs, etc. Therefore they must get the return through high prices which are guaranteed by copyrights and patents. But under this situation, free trade does not have any role to play; it becomes the monopoly game.

WTO Bends its Own Rules

Free trade under the rules of WTO is not really free trade. The decision making process in WTO is not democratic. It is

WTO Bends its Own Rules Free trade under the rules of WTO is not really free trade. The decision making process in WTO is not democratic. It is

WTO Protects Monopoly Interests The WTO provisions on TRIPS, as alleged by the protesters in Seattle are very protectionist (against free trade). The protesters alleged that WTO simply advances the corporate interests of the developed countries when it insists on implementing the copyright and patent protection clauses in the developing and least developed countries. Copyrights and patents are basically rent seeking devices and are enormously costly forms of protectionism.

A good example is the patented drugs sold by large pharmaceutical companies. Patents often raise the price of such drugs by several hundred or even thousand per cent compared with their free market price. In many cases, the people of the LDCs cannot afford to use lifesaving drugs because their prices are too high. By contrast, protection in the form of tariffs or quotas will rarely raise the prices of goods by more than 20 per cent after trade liberalization has been in place. This is a dilemma. The pharmaceutical companies, and similar other corporate capitalists invest lot of money to invent new drugs, etc. Therefore they must get the return through high prices which are guaranteed by copyrights and patents. But under this situation, free trade does not have any role to play; it becomes the monopoly game.

WTO Bends its Own Rules

Free trade under the rules of WTO is not really free trade. The decision making process in WTO is not democratic. It is

WTO Bends its Own Rules Free trade under the rules of WTO is not really free trade. The decision making process in WTO is not democratic. It is

WTO Protects Monopoly Interests The WTO provisions on TRIPS, as alleged by the protesters in Seattle are very protectionist (against free trade). The protesters alleged that WTO simply advances the corporate interests of the developed countries when it insists on implementing the copyright and patent protection clauses in the developing and least developed countries. Copyrights and patents are basically rent seeking devices and are enormously costly forms of protectionism.

A good example is the patented drugs sold by large pharmaceutical companies. Patents often raise the price of such drugs by several hundred or even thousand per cent compared with their free market price. In many cases, the people of the LDCs cannot afford to use lifesaving drugs because their prices are too high. By contrast, protection in the form of tariffs or quotas will rarely raise the prices of goods by more than 20 per cent after trade liberalization has been in place. This is a dilemma. The pharmaceutical companies, and similar other corporate capitalists invest lot of money to invent new drugs, etc. Therefore they must get the return through high prices which are guaranteed by copyrights and patents. But under this situation, free trade does not have any role to play; it becomes the monopoly game.

WTO Bends its Own Rules

Free trade under the rules of WTO is not really free trade. The decision making process in WTO is not democratic. It is

WTO Bends its Own Rules Free trade under the rules of WTO is not really free trade. The decision making process in WTO is not democratic. It is

WTO Protects Monopoly Interests The WTO provisions on TRIPS, as alleged by the protesters in Seattle are very protectionist (against free trade). The protesters alleged that WTO simply advances the corporate interests of the developed countries when it insists on implementing the copyright and patent protection clauses in the developing and least developed countries. Copyrights and patents are basically rent seeking devices and are enormously costly forms of protectionism.

A good example is the patented drugs sold by large pharmaceutical companies. Patents often raise the price of such drugs by several hundred or even thousand per cent compared with their free market price. In many cases, the people of the LDCs cannot afford to use lifesaving drugs because their prices are too high. By contrast, protection in the form of tariffs or quotas will rarely raise the prices of goods by more than 20 per cent after trade liberalization has been in place. This is a dilemma. The pharmaceutical companies, and similar other corporate capitalists invest lot of money to invent new drugs, etc. Therefore they must get the return through high prices which are guaranteed by copyrights and patents. But under this situation, free trade does not have any role to play; it becomes the monopoly game.

WTO Bends its Own Rules

Free trade under the rules of WTO is not really free trade. The decision making process in WTO is not democratic. It is

Minority Communities in South Asia

More Positive Assurance Needed

by ABMS Zahur

WITH the setting up of government of BJP-led alliance at the centre in India its minority communities are apprehending their uncertain political and economic future because of inclusion of certain fundamentalist Hindu leaders such as L K Advani, M M Joshi and Arun Jaitley. The role of Advani in the destruction of Babri Mosque has already been revealed. The real motive behind Joshi's Hindutva cultural project "Bharatiya culture" has been reflected in the district education programme "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" that this programme aims at imposing Hindu culture throughout India. Arun Jaitley's wish has been gradually revealed in various mass media programmes. Apart from this, BJP extremists are trying to disturb the communal harmony in West Bengal, Bihar, Gujarat, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. However, we wish that these Hindu fundamentalists cannot be effective in future because after the demolition of Babri Mosque BJP had to forsake its agenda to come to power and the present government is a coalition government which has to accommodate the wishes of the BJP allies.

Though apparently a two-nation theory is not to be too difficult to prove that Pakistan became a reality mainly because of (i) failure of Mohammad Ali Jinnah to fulfil his dream as a Congress leader; (ii) Jawaharlal Nehru's inadequate political foresight; and (iii) British government's wish to divide and rule to maintain economic control on the sub-continent (as long as possible). It was mainly

exploitation of religious sentiment of the common people, majority of whom were poor and illiterate and as such incapable of understanding political strategies and intricacies. Ever since the creation of Pakistan its senior politicians and bureaucrats were apprehensive of pressure from the people of its eastern part for a fair share in employment and economic activities with the rise of literacy. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who used to consider the eastern wing as an 'outpost' of Pakistan, advised them to make the western wing self-sufficient as quickly as possible so that west Pakistanis need not to depend for anything on the eastern wing. As such all policies (at least the major ones) were formulated mainly for the benefit of west Pakistanis only. Subsequent developments, particularly during the so-called 'golden era' of Ayub Khan prove the point.

The foundation of Pakistan was based more on sentiment and less on cool logic. A modern state can never flourish on the basis of religion alone. Other than religion east Pakistanis had nothing common with the west Pakistanis. Some twenty-five years back Clarence Maloney in his book *Peoples of South Asia* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, Inc. New York, 1974) rightly observed: "the disunity within Pakistan was apparent from the start. Religion proved inadequate to hold different peoples together in amity. The west Pakistanis tended to look down on Bengali Muslims as second class Muslims, descendants of converts and do not in the same direct line of religious family as those who brought Islam to the country. The Punjab Muslims see themselves as direct heirs to the ruling tradition of the Mughal territory. Thus there was deep seated cultural prejudice current at the birth of Pakistan." Bangladesh achieved its independence through a nine-month long liberation war in which more or less all the religious minorities contributed because they hoped that independent Bangladesh would be a secular democratic state where all its people would be free to lead a peaceful life with complete religious freedom and where all will be equal before law. After independence, however, things did not proceed as anticipated. Though the then AL government could adopt secularism as one of the state principles it did not get enough time to nullify the anti-Hindu Acts (such as Enemy Property Act) imposed by the then Pakistan. Far from redressing the problems of the Hindus Zia knocked out the principle of secularism. Both Zia and Ershad were interested in the Islamisation of the constitution and ignored the problems of the minorities. In fact Zia's ill-advised policy in regard to CHT increased the suffering of the tribals there. As CHT was a political problem it was beyond the capability of a military ruler like Ershad to solve it.

Geographically Bangladesh is surrounded on three sides by India and Myanmar. India is a Hindu-majority country and Myanmar is Buddhist dominated. It may further be added

that eastern part of India (bordering Bangladesh) is dominated by Buddhist Christians and tribals. It would, therefore, be most pragmatic for Bangladesh not only to tolerate these cultures but also to encourage development of their cultures so that political relations of Bangladesh with its neighbours are developed on a warmer and firmer footing. This will help her much to quicken the pace of development of trade and economic relations. It is indeed surprising that despite long experience of ruling the country for twenty years (11 yrs by BNP and 9 yrs by JP) both BNP and JP are trying to raise the issue of religion in the name of so called "nationalist parties". For them it may be useful to raise the religious sentiment of the illiterate and simple voters through publicising that Awami League is a pro-Indian and secular party and as such not enough committed to protect Islam, the religion of the majority people of Bangladesh, but it would certainly be harmful for the country in the long run.

Some may argue that while communal riots frequently occur in India (which is a secular state) why Bangladesh should try to be secular in letter and spirit. There may be good reasons as to why Bangladesh should not follow India in her policy toward the minorities. The following reasons may be identified: i) the constitution of Bangladesh is not based on two-nation theory; ii) the exodus of Hindus from Pakistan was because of anti-Hindu policies adopted by the then Pakistan governments; iii) it would be improper for Bangladesh to ig-

nore the moral and material support she received from Hindu dominated India, Buddhist dominated Myanmar and Japan and Christian democracies of UK, France and Australia and communist countries like Russia and the then East Germany; iv) it would be in the interest of Bangladesh to develop better relations with the peoples of the neighbouring states; and v) it cannot be denied that except from the Mughal ruler Akbar Hindus did not receive proper treatment from the Muslim rulers.

It may not be easy to establish absolutely amicable relationship among all the communities in South Asia because of the following constraints: (a) Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan; (b) Tamil uprising in Sri Lanka; (c) BJP-led DNA rule in India; and (d) Islamic fundamentalist dominated military rule in Pakistan. As Bangladesh appears to be free from any such constraints as quoted above it may be appropriate for her to initiate a proposal before coming SAARC summit for adopting resolutions aiming at eliminating any existing discriminatory policy (if there be any) and not to adopt any policy discriminating the minorities in future to improve communal relationship in the region. Though we may not get immediate result from such resolutions adoption of such resolutions would increase the confidence of the minorities and will make the SAARC more meaningful and powerful.

The writer is a retired Joint Secretary.

OPINION

Indians Constructing Dam in Barak River: Another Farakka in the Offing?

by Mohammad Mujibur Rahman

This refers to a news item published recently in various sections of the press. According to the reports, the Indians are going ahead with the plan to set up a power plant in the Tipaimukh area on the Brahmaputra river in the Barak in Assam. Experts say if the dam is constructed (i) the Barak's two major tributaries, the Surma and the Kushiara will lose their flow and consequently one-fourth area of our country from Sylhet to Barisal will turn into virtual desert; (ii) Sylhet region will experience frequent earthquake; (iii) power generation in Ashuganj plant and production in Fenchuganj Fertilizer factory will be threatened; (iv) production in 130 tea gardens of the greater Sylhet district will be seriously affected due to the adverse effect of the dam which will eventually prove to be another Farakka!

It may be recalled, in the Joint Indo-Bangladesh Prime Ministerial Declaration of May 16, 1974 it was recognized that the Ganges dry season flow would have to be augmented and Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) was asked to study the best means of such augmentation. But the mission failed because the Bangladesh team suggested one method of increasing the flow and India another. Bangladesh proposed that the dry season flow of the Ganges should be augmented by

construction of storage reservoirs on the Ganges Himalayan tributaries with the cooperation of a third party - Nepal. The monsoon waters of the tributaries could be stored in these reservoirs for release later in the dry season when water becomes scarce. The Indian teams opposed the concept apparently because in that event the control of the Ganges waters would mainly vest in Nepal and the Farakka Barrage would be redundant. The Indian proposal for augmenting the dry season flow of the Ganges consisted of a barrage across the river Brahmaputra at Gagghopa and a canal to take water from that river through the northern area of Bangladesh to Farakka. At a later stage India intended to construct three storage reservoirs by constructing three dams - one on the river Dihang, another on the Tipaimukh Dam in the Barak, a tributary of the river Meghna. The Indian scheme was not acceptable to Bangladesh mainly because it would represent a threat to the sovereignty of Bangladesh. The Farakka Barrage gave India nearly complete control over the dry season flow of one of Bangladesh's two major rivers, the Ganges. The proposed Brahmaputra Barrage could give India control over the other. (Sharing the Ganges by

Ben Crow). This contention is further substantiated by the fact that India planned to construct a dam in Tipaimukh area on the river Barak which would certainly not augment the flow of the Brahmaputra, but would enable India to control the waters of the Meghna, the third major river of our country and with it to complete the control of almost the entire river system of Bangladesh. It is essential to discuss international law and practice in this regard. The Harmon Doctrine of absolute territorial sovereignty over international river, which originated in the US in 1895 has in fact never been followed and practised by any state, not even by the US. Thus while resolving the Rio Grondo dispute, the US did agree to provide Mexico with waters equivalent to that which Mexico had used before the diversion of waters from the Rio Grondo for irrigation purposes in the US took place. The 1933 Montevideo declaration adopted by the Seventh International Conference of American States limits the right of utilization of common waters by the obligation not to infringe the legal right of utilization of other state. Similar views are also expressed by the Inter-American Bar Association, the Institute of International Law

and the International Law Association. The 1977 UN water conference at Mar del Plata has also accepted this view of basin state's responsibility in dealing with common waters. India started constructing the Farakka barrage on or before January 30, 1961, without giving prior notice and information to Pakistan about the project in total disregard to Article 7 of the 1933 Montevideo declaration of American States which provides that "the works which a state plans to perform in international waters shall be previously announced to the other riparian states". The 1957 Buenos Aires Resolution of Inter-American Bar Association requires the consent of a co-basin state when that state may suffer damage or injury as a result of a proposed work which a riparian state opposed the construction as it had a right to the waters of the Ganges on which rested primarily the Ganges Kobadak Project. But India did not suspend the construction and followed from the very beginning the strategy of procrastination by holding a series of fruitless discussions and meetings with Pakistan during the period from 1961 to 1970. Pakistan raised the issue at the United Nations and informed the superpowers of the dispute. The USSR President Kosygin wrote a letter

to Mrs Gandhi urging a settlement along the lines of the Indus Waters Treaty (i.e. through the mediation of the World Bank). Now the Indians are doing exactly the same thing - constructing a dam in the river Barak (and also in all over 53 common rivers) flouting all national and international laws and practice. It will not be incongruous to state here that as early as 1960 India concluded a water treaty called Indus Basin Water Treaty with Pakistan to share the waters of the Indus and its tributaries on permanent basis. But when it comes to sharing water with Bangladesh India adopts rather 'might is rights' attitude. In spite of its friendly relations with Bangladesh, India is reportedly constructing dams/barrages insidiously across all the rivers flowing into Bangladesh from Indian side apparently with a view to withdrawing waters unilaterally. Far from being friendly, India is in fact snubbing us. Bangladesh should lodge a strong protest to India, asking it to immediately stop constructing the dam in the Barak and conclude water treaties with us to share waters of all the 54 common rivers on just and equitable basis as per the existing international law and practice in this regard. The writer is a retired Collector of Customs.