

Speak with One Voice

THE Chamber leaders' initiative for a dialogue between the opposition and the government to end their political stand-off by way of improving the country's business environment has drawn a blank.

Opposition Leader Begum Khaleda Zia rejected the business community's entreaties for talks with the Prime Minister on the ground that those came too late in the day.

Our instant reaction to this would be that political dialogues are held between adversaries and that these can always take place so long as the bone of contention between them remains unresolved.

That said, when the federating body of the chambers of commerce and industries, the FBCCI, announced the move some important component units did not readily express their solidarity with it.

The move should have been well-conceived from the very start to be in with any chance whatsoever. It is the disunity among the businessmen that has sealed the fate of an otherwise highly desirable initiative.

Not a Friendly Move

INDIA has taken steps to fence off its border along neighbouring Bangladesh. This has been an on-and-off affair with India. She has a plan to erect barbed wire fences along a large tract of the 1600-mile border with Bangladesh with the express purpose of stopping 'cross-border smuggling and trespassing'.

ATELTY the public have formed a rather uncharitable image of the police workforce, as its performance is deteriorating and not coming up to public expectation.

The workload on crimes have increased and the additional processing is beyond the current handling capacity of the police system.

Indian government is not aware of all these realities on the ground. So there has to be some other reasons and that brings us to 'trespassing', meaning that Bangladeshi citizens have been allegedly illegally entering into India and staying there.

We believe the government will effectively protest the inexplicable Indian action instead of expressing a mere dissatisfaction over it at a press conference like the foreign minister did.

Restore Sanity at

Shahjalal University

MONDAY'S meeting between the education minister and the authorities of Shahjalal University of Engineering & Technology highlighted a disquieting reality: the situation still remains tense at the university and the teachers, especially ones on the syndicate, are in fear of mortal danger.

As we have commented in an earlier editorial, the position taken against the syndicate decision is doubly disquieting. Firstly, it undermines the authority of the syndicate and secondly, and disturbingly, it smacks of anti-liberation sentiments.

We demand an immediate end to the standoff and request the authorities to force the violence-mongers to back off. The government should take it as a breach of law and order and political parties should refrain from adding political colour to the issue.

INDIA celebrates January 26 as the Republic Day because it adopted on that day in 1930 the constitution, which converted the country into a republic.

But the real significance of January 26 is that Jawaharlal Nehru, then Congress president, declared on that day in 1930 from the bank of the Ravi that India would only accept purna swaraj, full independence, and not Dominion Status, and the goal placed before the British rulers till then.

The flag was three-coloured — white, green and saffron. White represented purity, green the Muslims and the saffron the Hindus.

The Gandhites, who are observing a fast on January 26 at the Raj Ghat, where the Mahatma was cremated, are underlining the point that independence has not given India what the national struggle had promised.

Indeed, in numbers, we have more hungry, more uneducated and more unsheltered people than we had at the time of independence. Neither the policy of self-sufficiency, nor that of liberalisation, has freed the country from poverty.

It is a strange thing that industries are sick but the industrialists are rich; the tillers are

Amend the Constitution?

The people of India have demonstrated through elections that they have the ability to run the institutions that the constitution has devised. The real problem is how to inculcate the values of democracy, especially among politicians who are interested only in grabbing power and sustaining it by hook or by crook.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

and more self-sufficient. No constitutional amendment was recommended by the commission. All the suggestions remain unimplemented even after 16 years of the commission's report.

It shows that amendments to the constitution are not necessary. Administrative measures can be devised to get over the deficiencies.

Dr Rajendra Prasad, who presided over the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly, had warned that the future of the constitution would depend on its working.

Even when suggestions have been made to sort out problems without amending the constitution, little attention has been paid to them.

their acceptability with the electorate through fresh polls. Parliaments and assemblies are a means to an end, not the end itself.

Our constitution states, as does the Irish constitution, that the Directive Principles are not judicially enforceable.

The farmers of our constitution specifically laid down that such principles were fundamental in the governance of the country, and that it was the duty of the state to implement them by legislation.

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John Gotti: "Ditto."

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The Pressures on the Police Workforce

by Abul M Ahmad

No system can remain in operation without public support, including the politicians. The trained police force is not being allowed by those in power to run the show in a professional manner, as can be seen in other stable countries.

The inputs are within the design parameters (can't face an SMG with a .303 rifle). But a changing system (any system, in frequency and characteristics) needs fast feedbacks and deployment teams for instant corrective action.

The police, as controller of a criminal situation, have to change and act faster than the changing society, to have enough reserves for contingencies (unhindered by the politicians in power).

Why the open moral degradation at the proper levels was not so high, as it is observed today, when the autocrats ruled, is an issue which the politicians must analyse in the parliament and at the ministerial level.

Which trends, political or otherwise, encouraged indiscipline and eroded moral values have to be spotted by the social scientists, for the proper enforcement of the law.

The day to day police service in Bangladesh today is totally unfit, morally, mentally, logistically, and technically; to maintain the law and order situation in the fast changing society (the tempo and the frequency of occurrences have risen exponentially).

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point at others, and are above the reach of the police. The conclusion is clear enough: interference with public duties.

The return of the rusted, fogged, frustrated and lustful politicians to power after 16 years encouraged and enlarged different types of criminal and unsocial activities not noticeable before in such volume.

Naturally the shady sections of the politicians in power (euphemistically called the representatives of the good and innocent people) will hesitate to support directly, strongly and openly the immediate moral rearmament of the police service.

There is some sort of unanimity in the assumption that the police have been spoiled by the successive regimes, struggling ruthlessly to remain in power.

When badra mastans rule it is an ominous sign (the bad posing as good). Bad governance is like evil and autocratic zamindari (as the students of the British Permanent Settlement movement are aware).

To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Plantation on road-dividers

Sir, One would notice that the government is trying to plant and raise trees on road-dividers in the city. Indeed, it is a good attempt. But the point is, how will the root of these trees expand and will the saplings get enough nutrients to grow on such small space?

In our opinion, instead of planting big trees, green grass, shrub and other small flower plants may be planted on the road-dividers which will not only increase the beauty but will also help in keeping the atmosphere clean and healthy.

Hence, it is expected that the relevant department will pay proper attention to the issue.

Zahidul Haque Associate Professor Bangladesh Agricultural Institute Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Transshipment facility to India

Sir, As a young Bengali teenager, grown up in western ways of London, I love my country of birth. I try my best to stay

Cross-eyed cross-border trade

Sir, The government has to take some firm and long-term policy decisions on cross-border trade around Bangladesh. There is more trading of smuggled goods than through the official trade channels and the total export of Bangladeshi goods

and services to the neighbours is perhaps less than five per cent of our exports.

The recent DS report on the organised high-volume smuggling of London brand of English cigarettes across the Myanmar border is no surprise to the citizens, the smugglers and the border security teams.

The unpleasant fact is Bangladesh's volume of yearly trade with the neighbours is a microscopic percentage of the country's total volume of import and export (the figures are not properly publicised). On the other hand, the ruling regime is keen to assure the public that the relations with the neighbouring countries are friendly — in all respects except trade.

This is the problem with the SAARC member-countries — the amity is all on paper, and cannot be translated into reality. The main obstacle is the animosity between India and Pakistan, and India's patronising treatment of the smaller members.

The import restrictions in India have been severe since the Partition. Another subjective attitude is its intention to capture the neighbours' markets. This is not the way to lead the region, if that is what it intends to do. India has to show the way, and make some sacrifice.

The Vajpayee government should hold discussions with the state chief ministers because they will face the 'brunt' of the amendments.

Without meaning any disrespect to former President R. Venkataraman, it is unfair to make him the chairman. He was the top leader in the South when the emergency was imposed.

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OPINION

The TSC Saga—Millennium at its Best!

Dr Deepika, writes from Middlesex, London

No matter which part of the world we are living in, no matter which race or religion we belong to, no matter which caste or creed one is familiar with, but the 31st (December) night happens to be a moment which brings new hope, new joy, new dreams and new resolution amongst us all.

When one sees the grotesque pictures, printed in the dailies, of a half striped woman fleeing from the grasps of savage and barbaric men in the TSC area of the Dhaka University, as well as reads about all the horrifying incidents related to it, then one fails to comprehend the reality of this day.

Mugging, snatching of valuables and murder is somewhat a common yet unwanted act throughout the world. But the act carried out by some students of a prestigious university upon a somewhat innocent woman who at that time was passing by hand in hand with her companion has shocked the hearts and souls of all the peace loving people of our country.

When in Rome act like a Roman — a phrase we have come across many times in life. Of course it will look strange if one dresses like an Eskimo and wanders along the Sahara desert, it would be equally funny if dressed up as an Australian native is seen amongst the crowd in the Holy

There is nothing on record to show that he protested publicly against what Mrs Gandhi did or her son, Sanjay Gandhi, did when they hijacked the constitution.

The people of India have demonstrated through elections that they have the ability to run the institutions that the constitution has devised. The real problem is how to inculcate the values of democracy, especially among politicians who are interested only in grabbing power and sustaining it by hook or by crook.

The nation faces many problems. The Centre should not indulge in futile exercises like the constitution amendment. Probably it is an attempt to divert the people's attention from the real issues. Let's implement the Constituent Assembly's first resolution. It said that the 'residual powers' be given to the states. India is at present a 'Union of States'. It should be a 'federation of states'. People feel that too much power is concentrated in New Delhi.



Art Buchwald's COLUMN

Unsung and Unsaid

LOTS of things were said in the last millennium that never got any publicity. Here are some of them: Orville Wright to his brother: "OK, we can make the plane fly, but how can we feed the passengers?"

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