

Reprise on black money

Does it stand to reason?

WITH the budget's passage through parliament only a day away, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman's occasionally heard ethical murmurs over whitening black money have evaporated into thin air.

Ever since the minister put the proposal for extending amnesty to unearned and undeclared income holders for another year on the table, there has been an avalanche of negative reaction to the move from all quarters. From economic experts and planners through chamber and industry body leaders to his own party men, there raged a relentless stridency across the board. All of this tended to breed an expectation in the public mind that maybe the idea would be dropped, or at least the tax rate at a pampering 7.5 per cent will be raised so as to stop short of a complete sell-out to the deviant.

The very fact that no questions will be asked on the sources of unearned incomes if made public, is itself a huge favour proposed to be done to the corrupt and delinquent money merchants. Those who are genuinely interested in surfacing overland for their own good from the dark underworld would have grabbed the amnesty opportunity with both hands; they wouldn't even link it to concessionary interest rate. The opportunity itself is a bonus.

The point is that those who feel they have a stake in coming out clean would do it anyway, regardless of the rate of interest.

This is a case of reverse discrimination against honest income tax payers who have to pay at a flat 10 per cent rate, to say nothing of corporate taxes ranging from 22-40 per cent for the conscientious and law-abiding business houses. Why should we reward illegal incomes?

The proposed amnesty to black money-holders is an open admission of failure to stem the tide of corruption and an abdication of responsibility on the part of government for maintaining transparency and accountability in economic management. But to top it off with a concessionary rate of interest makes it all the more assailable, untenable, and ultimately self-defeating.

Let us not forget that in the three years preceding January last, Tk 1800 crore worth of black money got whitened as against a conservatively estimated whopping Tk 50,000 to 60,000 crore which awaits mopping up.

Industrial pollution backlog

How do we face the present challenge?

THE revelation by Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam at the parliament on industrial pollution evokes mixed reaction. It is undoubtedly good news that more than 60 percent of the polluting industrial units have complied with the government directives to follow the environmental management action plan. But the flip-side to the news is that the process of appraisal relates to a list of industries prepared as far back as in 1997.

What has happened in the years gone by so as to determine the cumulative magnitude of industrial pollution to date? What action could the government take against those who failed to comply with its directives in the interregnum? Needless to say, many new industries have come up between 1997 and now. Have they got any effluent treatment plant?

It is highly imperative that we have an updated list of industries causing pollution to environment through their wastes, together with identification of those that are actually following the rules. What's the use having an 'environmental management action plan' if its not implemented contemporaneously? We want its fuller implementation. We understand it involves a huge task, like relocating certain industries away from habitats and compelling other industries in good locations to have effluent treatment plants that are missing. The need for these now is more than ever.

Let's take the opportunity here of expressing our concern over another major source of pollution. The mushrooming private clinics, which have almost taken the shape of an industry, do not have any adequate garbage disposal system, so that they are creating a serious public health hazard.

We want the problem taken up in earnest and resolved as early as possible.

Indo-Bangladesh confidence building measures?



HARUN UR RASHID

THE two-day meeting at the Foreign Secretary-level between Bangladesh and India took place in New Delhi on 21-22 June after a gap of two years. It is the right step to sort out pending issues that have put bilateral relations on strains. Such meetings are always welcome and constitute a part of confidence-building measures.

The two-day meeting in New Delhi was held in the backdrop of deterioration of relations between the two countries for sometime. What has been worrying for Bangladesh is the unstable security situation at the border and it has been reported that since 2000, 394 Bangladeshi nationals were killed. This is unacceptable, given the 1974 Mujib-Indira Land Boundary Demarcation Agreement and the 1975 Indo-Bangladesh Border Guidelines.

The outcome of the talks seems to be positive and forward-looking. It has hopefully brought back to enhanced momentum to bilateral issues in almost all fronts. Dhaka and Delhi agreed to cooperate in security, peaceful border management, sharing of waters of common rivers and economic exchange. The statement reported in the media contains 26-agreed plan of action that needs to be implemented. Time will only tell how soon and to what extent proposed actions are put in place on the ground.

Need for frequent meetings

In inter-state relations, political and economic relations cannot be separated because they are intertwined. Most often good political relations lead to sound economic relations. What to be recognised is that suspicious relations have their own momentum to the detriment of interests of both countries, unless intervened.

Continuing good relations are not taken for granted and need to be sustained constantly. Relations are

compared to nurturing a plant that needs regular attention and if left unattended, it will either not grow or wither away.

It is not understood why a long interval of two years has elapsed before the senior officials met. Whatever the state of relations, good or strained, between neighbouring countries, at least annual, if not six monthly meeting at Foreign Secretary level ought to be routinely held.

casts a long shadow on bilateral relations.

Furthermore, most young people (born after 1975) in Bangladesh have witnessed "big brotherly" attitude from India, whether in the matter of sharing waters of common rivers or in the border areas or in economic matters. They have perceived India, often dictating to Bangladesh what needs to be done and what India wants from Bangladesh. This perception among major-

hood envisages their own security and development in cooperation with India or hostility to India or by seeking to isolate themselves from India against the logic of our geography?

Although the Foreign Secretary did not name the countries of South Asia, it is not difficult to say that reference to "some states" certainly means Pakistan and may possibly include Bangladesh.

This implies that Bangladesh

threat to its security. Has India done border fencing with Pakistan in the Punjab and Sindh or with lower terrain in Nepal? The insistence of India does not seem to be a friendly gesture towards Bangladesh and is likely to be misunderstood by people.

Although India expressed satisfaction over the commencement of coordinated patrolling by the border forces of the two countries during the talks, India suspects presence

Nigeria, and the US with their small and economically weak neighbours stand on the same foot.

Furthermore, Bangladesh is surrounded by India on three sides and on the fourth open side to the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh faces a strong and powerful India navy. It requires any small country in such geographical situation to make efforts in developing stable bilateral relations unless the big neighbour appreciates the reality of situation of small neighbours. Bangladesh perceives that India with its dominant position tends to extract unfair concessions from Bangladesh. Whether the perception is right or wrong, that may be a debatable proposition.

India needs to recognise that reciprocity is not always possible for a small country and as a big neighbour it has certain responsibility towards its smaller neighbours. Power and responsibility go together. It is in the interests of both countries outstanding relations need to be resolved with fairness and justice. Good relations cannot be imposed because they are based on principles of mutual respect and equality.

Former Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral appeared to have recognised the sensitivity of small countries when he stated that "First with neighbours like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, we do not ask for reciprocity but give what we can in good faith" (He did not mention Pakistan).

Conclusion

Bangladesh and India are neighbours and they are destined to live as neighbours. No one can change the fundamental reality. If Bangladesh is prosperous, it is good for India as it provides good market for India. Bangladesh has no competition with India but at the same time no country including Bangladesh appreciates being pushed around by a big neighbour.

While Bangladesh has consistently denied presence of anti-Indian militants in the country and other allegations, India is not impressed by the denials. Bangladesh on the other hand complained about providing "safe haven" to criminals from Bangladesh and not returning them to Bangladesh authorities. It is hoped that allegations and counter-allegations will now stop between the two countries.

Bangladesh does not perceive in the way India chooses to link bilateral issues. The sharing of waters of common rivers, according to Bangladesh, stands on its own legitimate right not only under rules of international law but also in terms of the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (Article 9 of the Treaty). Furthermore Bangladesh perceives linking issues as an unfair and unequal bargain advantage on the part of India.

On 14th February of this year, India's current Foreign Secretary was candid about India's security perception while addressing at the India International Centre. He said, in part:

"The countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and hence a common security doctrine... In security, at least some of the states perceive security threats as arising from within the region... Do countries in our neighbour-

hood not have the same security perception as that of India. Unless the big picture is sorted out, it seems Bangladesh's relations with India are likely to be difficult.

Another factor in bilateral relations appears to be that India wants to link various bilateral issues with one another. This means, for example, that if Bangladesh wants sharing of waters of common rivers, in return Bangladesh should provide transit facilities to northeastern states. This is based on India's doctrine of reciprocity. That implies if Bangladesh wants anything from India, India should receive in return something.

Bangladesh does not perceive in the way India chooses to link bilateral issues. The sharing of waters of common rivers, according to Bangladesh, stands on its own legitimate right not only under rules of international law but also in terms of the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (Article 9 of the Treaty). Furthermore Bangladesh perceives linking issues as an unfair and unequal bargain advantage on the part of India.

On 14th February of this year, India's current Foreign Secretary was candid about India's security perception while addressing at the India International Centre. He said, in part:

"The countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and hence a common security doctrine... In security, at least some of the states perceive security threats as arising from within the region... Do countries in our neighbour-

hood not have the same security perception as that of India. Unless the big picture is sorted out, it seems Bangladesh's relations with India are likely to be difficult.

Another factor in bilateral relations appears to be that India wants to link various bilateral issues with one another. This means, for example, that if Bangladesh wants sharing of waters of common rivers, in return Bangladesh should provide transit facilities to northeastern states. This is based on India's doctrine of reciprocity. That implies if Bangladesh wants anything from India, India should receive in return something.

Bangladesh does not perceive in the way India chooses to link bilateral issues. The sharing of waters of common rivers, according to Bangladesh, stands on its own legitimate right not only under rules of international law but also in terms of the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (Article 9 of the Treaty). Furthermore Bangladesh perceives linking issues as an unfair and unequal bargain advantage on the part of India.

On 14th February of this year, India's current Foreign Secretary was candid about India's security perception while addressing at the India International Centre. He said, in part:

"The countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and hence a common security doctrine... In security, at least some of the states perceive security threats as arising from within the region... Do countries in our neighbour-

hood not have the same security perception as that of India. Unless the big picture is sorted out, it seems Bangladesh's relations with India are likely to be difficult.

Another factor in bilateral relations appears to be that India wants to link various bilateral issues with one another. This means, for example, that if Bangladesh wants sharing of waters of common rivers, in return Bangladesh should provide transit facilities to northeastern states. This is based on India's doctrine of reciprocity. That implies if Bangladesh wants anything from India, India should receive in return something.

Bangladesh does not perceive in the way India chooses to link bilateral issues. The sharing of waters of common rivers, according to Bangladesh, stands on its own legitimate right not only under rules of international law but also in terms of the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (Article 9 of the Treaty). Furthermore Bangladesh perceives linking issues as an unfair and unequal bargain advantage on the part of India.

On 14th February of this year, India's current Foreign Secretary was candid about India's security perception while addressing at the India International Centre. He said, in part:

"The countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and hence a common security doctrine... In security, at least some of the states perceive security threats as arising from within the region... Do countries in our neighbour-

hood not have the same security perception as that of India. Unless the big picture is sorted out, it seems Bangladesh's relations with India are likely to be difficult.

Another factor in bilateral relations appears to be that India wants to link various bilateral issues with one another. This means, for example, that if Bangladesh wants sharing of waters of common rivers, in return Bangladesh should provide transit facilities to northeastern states. This is based on India's doctrine of reciprocity. That implies if Bangladesh wants anything from India, India should receive in return something.

Bangladesh does not perceive in the way India chooses to link bilateral issues. The sharing of waters of common rivers, according to Bangladesh, stands on its own legitimate right not only under rules of international law but also in terms of the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (Article 9 of the Treaty). Furthermore Bangladesh perceives linking issues as an unfair and unequal bargain advantage on the part of India.

On 14th February of this year, India's current Foreign Secretary was candid about India's security perception while addressing at the India International Centre. He said, in part:

"The countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and hence a common security doctrine... In security, at least some of the states perceive security threats as arising from within the region... Do countries in our neighbour-

hood not have the same security perception as that of India. Unless the big picture is sorted out, it seems Bangladesh's relations with India are likely to be difficult.

Another factor in bilateral relations appears to be that India wants to link various bilateral issues with one another. This means, for example, that if Bangladesh wants sharing of waters of common rivers, in return Bangladesh should provide transit facilities to northeastern states. This is based on India's doctrine of reciprocity. That implies if Bangladesh wants anything from India, India should receive in return something.

Bangladesh does not perceive in the way India chooses to link bilateral issues. The sharing of waters of common rivers, according to Bangladesh, stands on its own legitimate right not only under rules of international law but also in terms of the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (Article 9 of the Treaty). Furthermore Bangladesh perceives linking issues as an unfair and unequal bargain advantage on the part of India.

On 14th February of this year, India's current Foreign Secretary was candid about India's security perception while addressing at the India International Centre. He said, in part:

"The countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and hence a common security doctrine... In security, at least some of the states perceive security threats as arising from within the region... Do countries in our neighbour-

hood not have the same security perception as that of India. Unless the big picture is sorted out, it seems Bangladesh's relations with India are likely to be difficult.

Another factor in bilateral relations appears to be that India wants to link various bilateral issues with one another. This means, for example, that if Bangladesh wants sharing of waters of common rivers, in return Bangladesh should provide transit facilities to northeastern states. This is based on India's doctrine of reciprocity. That implies if Bangladesh wants anything from India, India should receive in return something.

Bangladesh does not perceive in the way India chooses to link bilateral issues. The sharing of waters of common rivers, according to Bangladesh, stands on its own legitimate right not only under rules of international law but also in terms of the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (Article 9 of the Treaty). Furthermore Bangladesh perceives linking issues as an unfair and unequal bargain advantage on the part of India.

On 14th February of this year, India's current Foreign Secretary was candid about India's security perception while addressing at the India International Centre. He said, in part:

"The countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and hence a common security doctrine... In security, at least some of the states perceive security threats as arising from within the region... Do countries in our neighbour-

hood not have the same security perception as that of India. Unless the big picture is sorted out, it seems Bangladesh's relations with India are likely to be difficult.

Another factor in bilateral relations appears to be that India wants to link various bilateral issues with one another. This means, for example, that if Bangladesh wants sharing of waters of common rivers, in return Bangladesh should provide transit facilities to northeastern states. This is based on India's doctrine of reciprocity. That implies if Bangladesh wants anything from India, India should receive in return something.

Bangladesh does not perceive in the way India chooses to link bilateral issues. The sharing of waters of common rivers, according to Bangladesh, stands on its own legitimate right not only under rules of international law but also in terms of the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (Article 9 of the Treaty). Furthermore Bangladesh perceives linking issues as an unfair and unequal bargain advantage on the part of India.

On 14th February of this year, India's current Foreign Secretary was candid about India's security perception while addressing at the India International Centre. He said, in part:

"The countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and hence a common security doctrine... In security, at least some of the states perceive security threats as arising from within the region... Do countries in our neighbour-

hood not have the same security perception as that of India. Unless the big picture is sorted out, it seems Bangladesh's relations with India are likely to be difficult.

Another factor in bilateral relations appears to be that India wants to link various bilateral issues with one another. This means, for example, that if Bangladesh wants sharing of waters of common rivers, in return Bangladesh should provide transit facilities to northeastern states. This is based on India's doctrine of reciprocity. That implies if Bangladesh wants anything from India, India should receive in return something.

Bangladesh does not perceive in the way India chooses to link bilateral issues. The sharing of waters of common rivers, according to Bangladesh, stands on its own legitimate right not only under rules of international law but also in terms of the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (Article 9 of the Treaty). Furthermore Bangladesh perceives linking issues as an unfair and unequal bargain advantage on the part of India.

On 14th February of this year, India's current Foreign Secretary was candid about India's security perception while addressing at the India International Centre. He said, in part:

"The countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and hence a common security doctrine... In security, at least some of the states perceive security threats as arising from within the region... Do countries in our neighbour-

hood not have the same security perception as that of India. Unless the big picture is sorted out, it seems Bangladesh's relations with India are likely to be difficult.

Another factor in bilateral relations appears to be that India wants to link various bilateral issues with one another. This means, for example, that if Bangladesh wants sharing of waters of common rivers, in return Bangladesh should provide transit facilities to northeastern states. This is based on India's doctrine of reciprocity. That implies if Bangladesh wants anything from India, India should receive in return something.

Bangladesh does not perceive in the way India chooses to link bilateral issues. The sharing of waters of common rivers, according to Bangladesh, stands on its own legitimate right not only under rules of international law but also in terms of the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (Article 9 of the Treaty). Furthermore Bangladesh perceives linking issues as an unfair and unequal bargain advantage on the part of India.

On 14th February of this year, India's current Foreign Secretary was candid about India's security perception while addressing at the India International Centre. He said, in part:

"The countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and hence a common security doctrine... In security, at least some of the states perceive security threats as arising from within the region... Do countries in our neighbour-

hood not have the same security perception as that of India. Unless the big picture is sorted out, it seems Bangladesh's relations with India are likely to be difficult.