refrain from creating further compli-

cations arising out of past historical

that have to be addressed. In the

recent past, there has been an

increase in the rate of unemployment

and a fall in land, property, and stock

Koizumi will have many problems

LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY OCTOBER 15, 2005

Message-laden UNFPA report

A job cut out for us

T is heartening to learn about the decline in the population growth rate in Bangladesh as reflected in the recentlylaunched UNFPA World Population Report, 2005. But just. For, although if the trend continues the total population of the country by 2050 is expected to be less than projected, it will still hover around 240 million plus. Indeed, a horrifying prospect

Alongside the decrease in population growth there has also been a fall in infant and child mortality rates. As gratified as we may be, considering those improved indicators, we still have serious concerns about population growth in Bangladesh. We are indeed sitting on a veritable demographic time bomb.

Despite the limited success, spearheaded primarily by the NGO community, the overall empowerment of women through use of micro-credit and windows of income generating activities, the realities of gender equality and women's emancipation still continue to be sordid, far from satisfactory. If we are to attain a sustainable success with our programmes for containment of population growth, we do need to address the weak points in the strategy we have followed so far. Early marriages are a serious impediment to containing birth rates and population growth. Of the total 45 million young people in Bangladesh, 48 percent are girls and are married before the age of 16 and become mothers before 19. See how immobilised they are!

Investments should also cover the male segment of the population by way providing them with jobs. This will have the spinoff in terms of checking terrorism; most of the perpetrators at the ground level being young of age, of poor economic background, and vulnerable to being duped by offers of money for a bad cause. We must, therefore, focus our attention on further closing the gender gaps alongside empowerment of women and creation of income generating opportunities across the

Dealing with the whole gamut of population growth in a resource-poor country like Bangladesh in a trouble-torn global context is a daunting challenge -- complex and arduous at the same time. Still, we have made some initial headway to take heart from; but let us not forget that there is no room for complacency in such a gigantic undertaking. We must continue to strive harder and harder, now that we know that we have to succeed in order to survive as a self-respecting nation.

Extra-judicial killings

Law cannot be disregarded in maintaining law and order

HE figure of the deaths in the last four years of the coalition rule at the hands of the law enforcement agencies reported in a leading Bangla daily is mind boggling and legally untenable. The 707 deaths were either in custody of the joint operation forces during 'Operation Clean Heart' or in RAB 'crossfire' or in police custody. These figures, regrettably, point to the utter disregard of the government towards the rule of law in its effort to combat lawlessness, crime, and violence in the soci-

What is as unpardonable and reprehensible as the deaths without trial, are mechanisms to sanctify the killings and put those responsible for the killings above the law through the promulgation of the Indemnity Law following 'Operation Clean Heart' and the institution of departmental investigation of these deaths. It is a pathetic state of human rights when the executive acts as the judge, jury, and executioner.

The greatest blow to the rule of law in this regard is the Indemnity Act, which has all but closed the door of legal succor to the relatives of the victims. Not only that, the Act has validated these killings. Moreover, the departmental investigations of the custodial deaths that the police conduct are a convenient ploy to prevent those policemen from facing justice in the court

These deaths can not only be deemed as a violation of human rights, but also something that can only bring the image of the country into disrepute which is otherwise eminently avoidable.

Nobody can contest the need for the government to tackle the law and order situation that is less than satisfactory. But why, might we ask, can crime and violence not be combated through the normal corpus of the law and the well defined methods without having to resort to unconstitutional means that are likely to be projected by many as a form of state terrorism?

No civilised society can accept a situation where lawlessness is sought to be tackled by means that are themselves illegal. It is our hope that the government would review all the cases of deaths without trial and bring those responsible under the purview of the law.

Koizumi breaks new ground in Japanese politics



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

APANESE Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi stormed to victory in the latest Japanese general elections held on September 11. He called the snap election nearly two years ahead of schedule to push forward his plan to privatise the national post office. He did so out of the belief that such a move would not only inject new life into the world's second biggest economy, but also help to clean up a culture of political patronage that has ruled Japanese politics for over fifty years.

Believing in the unusual, the media-savvy Koizumi also pulled out an interesting rabbit out of his hat. He enlisted a stream of celebrity candidates to counter dour dissenters within his own party. These individuals were dubbed as "shikaku" or assassins and used as weapons by the astute Prime Minister against the stolid non-charismatic rebels within his party. Ultimately, the election became a shadow play, a kabuki of good versus evil. It was, in more ways than one, a form of grandiose revenge drama, acted out against the backdrop of a political and economic landscape desperately in need of

This election has seen the Japanese Prime Minister at his best. He has finally been able to bring off a sea-

change in political style. He has also initiated the fundamental steps towards his own vision of a resurgent Japan with a modernised ruling party. This mandate will enable him to carry out re-structuring measures pertaining to Japan Post, financial services giant (that employs 261,940 as of the beginning of April this year compared to the 253,180 personnel in the Japanese armed forces) that includes a savings bank and insurance business with a combined US dollar 3 trillion in assets. It may be mentioned here that

This election has also assumed importance because of the record number of 43 women who have now entered parliament. Japan has been known in the past for having the developed world's lowest female representation in its legislature. This time round all 26 LDP female candidates have won their seats, including many with no past political experience. It may be recalled here that the previous House had only 33 female lawmakers with 9 of them from the

to ride out the storm of reducing trade surplus as it has done in the past. There is increased optimism that Koizumi will now be able to balance his books by selling under-performing state assets, cutting government debts and giving companies a bigger role in spurring growth.

The re-elected Prime Minister has already indicated in the Japanese parliament towards the end of September that he intends to announce in November this year a plan to reform the government affiliated banks by

It is also likely that he might move further to the right and consequently be less flexible over controversial issues like disputes over energy, textbooks, strategic support for Taiwan, and his visits to the Yasukuni

Bejing is now likely to find itself in a bit of a bind. China for some years has refrained from exchange of visits at the leadership level with Japan. They have also opposed Japan's entry into the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member. With his re-

prices. There has also been greater migration from rural to urban areas which has created complications for the rural economy. He knows that these are issues which can easily deteriorate over time unless attended to promptly. His task will not be made easier by the fact that he also faces the challenges arising from an ageing

population and declining birth-rate. Nevertheless, what is important is the manner is which Koizumi and Japan has carried out the electoral obligations. It has been an excellent example of how democratic institutions are supposed to function. There was very little time in between the decision to go the polls and for the election to take place. Yet, the process was completed smoothly and without associated problems. Despite the presence of entrenched vested interests, representative politics has post-election mud-slinging have not been noticed. In a way, this has been a lesson for all of us in Bangladesh

Japan, through this election has again underlined its pre-eminence in the context of Asian politics. It has restated through its action that it believes in good governance, in a strong, neutral election commission, and fair polls. It has also demonstrated that state institutions do not have to over-step their areas of responsibility and jeopardise available democratic options

Mohammad Zamir is a former Secretary and

POST BREAKFAST

What is important is the manner is which Koizumi and Japan has carried out the electoral obligations. It has been an excellent example of how democratic institutions are supposed to function. There was very little time in between the decision to go the polls and for the election to take place. Yet, the process was completed smoothly and without associated problems. Despite the presence of entrenched vested interests, representative politics has ushered in a new era. Rancour and post-election mud-slinging have not been noticed. In a way, this has been a lesson for all of us in Bangladesh.

it will also permit him to take steps about reforming the facets of social insurance, the civil service, public sector outsourcing, and other government financial institutions.

On this, the fiftieth anniversary year of the founding of his party, the LDP, Koizumi has proven that despite his unconventional approach towards politics, he enjoys support from rural Japan as well as the industrial belts. He has won 296 seats (59 more than in 2003) in the 480 seat Lower House of the Japanese parliament. His coalition partner -- New Komeito led by Takanori Karzaki has also taken 31 seats. This will allow the ruling bloc to dominate the chamber with majorities in all committees and also to override if necessary, the Upper House.

The past few days have indicated that Japanese investors have responded positively to the electoral victory. The benchmark Nikkei-225 index has gained by nearly 2 per cent. The Japanese currency has also gained against the US dollar.

Analysts are now predicting an upward revision in Japanese growth data in real price-adjusted terms. It is also clear that, with reforms, there is a possibility of stronger domestic demand. It is also clear that with reforms, there is a possibility of stronger domestic demand. It is being predicated that higher oil prices might affect some of the future growth, but, in all probability, Japan's energy efficient economy, under Koizumi's continued management will be able

that he plans to exercise his authority and push reform beyond only privatisation of the state-owned post office. This proposed move would provide an important boost for the country's private sector banks, which have been undermined by government backed financial institutions that have, according to David Ibison of the Financial Times, "cannibalised their customer base and undercut their prices.

2008 -- one of the first concrete signs

Koizumi's victory will however not be received with great delight by Japan's neighbours, South Korea and China. Chen Zilei, an analyst at the Shangai Institute of International Relations has pointed out that Koizumi will now feel more confident.

holders involved in this equation. South Korea will also have to do some serious re-thinking. While China and the Republic of Korea ponder over the future, Japan and its leadership should also take steps to identify how it can co-exist with better understanding with its neighbours. I believe that it is not seeking hegemonic power as is being

alleged, but at the same time it should

election, China will be faced with the

dilemma as to whether they should

persist in their strong opposition to

Koizumi and his politics for the next

few years. They will have to do so not

only because of the massive increase

in bilateral trade between the two

countries, but also for the steep

increase in the number of stake-

Blood is thicker than water



KULDIP NAYAR writes from New Delhi

UFFERINGS efface identities. I thought something like that would happen when the earthquake struck Islamabad and both sides of Kashmir, more Pakistan's than

India's. I imagined that there would be an unending queue of trucks carrying tents, food, medicine, and other things passing through the Wagah horder, followed by a o of doctors and volunteers. But I did not realise that Islamabad would spurn New Delhi's offer for joint relief and rehabilitation. How could I have thought that Pakistan would say "no" to even a British television presenter of Indian origin? Even the Line of Control was not softened for the army men to reach the cut off areas.

The Pakistani president was ebullient in his appeals for help from the West, but sparing in his words when it came to India. He made it clear that the helicopters, which he hadly needed, were not welcome from India because of "sensitivities." He should know that satellite cameras have already pictured every nook

My worry is that if the two countries do not warm up even during

times of adversity, there is something basically wrong with them. Despite people to people contact, they still have not overcome the bias and prejudice which they have nourished since they parted company in August 1947.

So many meetings between the two governments, so many visits of non-official delegations, and so many conclaves of dialogue should have evoked the spirit of kinship in the

I am sure some of the insurgents measure up to this description. In fact I believe that even the uprising in 1989 contained elements of nationalism, although the weapons supplied and the training imparted were from Pakistan. Even the other day they deliberately picked up Hindus as their targets.

How many innocents were killed by the militants was on their conscience. I do not want to go into how series of meetings which started with General Musharraf, continued with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and were followed up again with General Musharraf. He is due to meet Manmohan Singh again, probably after the Saarc meeting which is scheduled for the first week in November at Dhaka. Both General and Manmohan Singh are scheduled to review confidence-building measures, including Kashmir.

applied to the state, Jammu and Ladakh will separate themselves from the Valley

Whether we like it or not, it is resurrecting the two nation theory of partition days which killed one million people and ousted 20 million that the ultimate solution should be on the basis of the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. But when aspirations avoid realities, they

contact with intelligence agencies, both indigenous and foreign, and have money to finance any movement or uprising to undermine the unity of a particular country. They could be of help to their country of origin if they were to abandon their

What India and Pakistan require are people who can span the distance between the two and who can help create conditions in the subcontinent which makes it move towards economic union. The countries in the region should stay sovereign and continue to have their own identity, but pool their resources economic, technical, and othersfor the development of the area as a whole. As in Europe, borders should be soft, allowing for the free movement of people and goods.

Students of one country should be able to study in another. I recall when Oaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah came to the law college in Lahore where I was studying after articulating the demand for Pakistan. he invited questions. I asked him: The manner in which Hindus and Muslims hate each other means it would take them no time to jump at each other's throats once the British leave. He replied assuringly, "Young man, you know about Germany and France. They fought each other for hundreds of years and now they are the best of friends. That's history, remember blood is thicker than

Kuldip Nayar is an eminent Indian columnis

BETWEEN THE LINES

My worry is that if the two countries do not warm up even during times of adversity, there is something basically wrong with them. Despite people to people contact, they still have not overcome the bias and prejudice which they have nourished since they parted company in August 1947. So many meetings between the two governments, so many visits of non-official delegations, and so many conclaves of dialogue should have evoked the spirit of kinship in the people who have shared the same history, same culture, and same land going back for centuries.

people who have shared the same nistory, same culture, and same land going back for centuries.

Although disappointed, I was not surprised when at the European Union meeting on Kashmir, before the earthquake, I found delegates from Azad Kashmir, the Kashmiri expatriates, and some Kashmiri leaders from our side articulating the same kind of animus.

True, our security forces have not been a paragon of virtue and have indulged in excesses which are not becoming of democratic and secular India. But there was not a single word of condemnation at the Brussels meeting for terrorists who were described by speakers as "freedom many were killed by the terrorists or the security forces because every killing is a scar on humanity. What I have not been able to make out is why the European parliament held what it characterised as the "World Discourse on Kashmir.'

At the first session of this discourse last year at Brussels, I made it clear that no third party was welcome and that insistence on the European Union's participation would complicate matters. I made the same point this time also and beseeched the delegates to wait for the outcome of talks between India and Pakistan. which are now more than one year Today even the Hurrivat has been involved, in the sense that its president Mirwaiz Farooq has had a

What surprised me at Brussels was the observation by Mirwaiz that he welcomed third party intervention. "Azadi" (independence) was one word used by him and other Kashmiri leaders from both sides. Without questioning the representative capacity of these delegates, I want to bring to their attention that General reportedly Pervez himself has observed at a closed meeting that "azadi" is out of the question. The phrase "self determination" has been voiced repeatedly. What does it mean? In today's world of the 21s century when nations are forming larger groups and unions, any suggestion of secession sounds archaic and represents jingoistic nationalism. If the logic of self-determination is

melt into willow the wisp dreams. The fact is that rightly or wrongly the state acceded to India, and after 60 years it cannot be turned around into a status that is founded on religion.

However weak, India's polity is secular. It cannot accept a settlement which may undo the country itself. What amazed me at Brusselsand I have watched this at other conclaves on Kashmiris the intransigent stand of Kashmiri expatriates. They even suspect India and Pakistan of coming to a settlement which they believe will be against the wishes of Kashmiris. Their attitude reminds me of many Sikh expatriates who still go on financing the demand for

Their plus point is that they have

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

about all the bomb blasts and cor-

ruptions and political cartoons; I am

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Ongoing traffic month

Traffic month is going on in the city with only visible banners sponsored by Grameenphone when the traffic controllers are roaming around in the streets in a happy mood as usual. No sign of activities were seen to regulate the pedestrians or the traffic. Behind the billboard police personnel are shouting over microphone to make the traffic month successful creating sound pollution. Number of community polices are seen in the street to help the DMP traffic personnel to do the Eid banijja

Previously there used to be traffic week. I don't know with what idea it has been stretched over a month. Maybe one week is not sufficient to do the Eid baniiia. Therefore it has been dragged up to Eid ul Fitr as I understand.

Few days of traffic month have

change. If traffic day, week, month remains same every day than why not to declare the whole year as traffic year?

passed without any significant

Our second hand

limping fleet of ageing and sick aircrafts? These days we regularly see newspaper reports of Biman aircrafts stuck up in New York, Brussels and other airports for mechanical or other technical faults including a tarmac traffic accident in Dhaka! Humorously, we may say that it is a case of patchwork with wire and chewing gum keeping things together as done by flight pioneers in early last century! Jokes aside, I take

my hats off to the cockpit and ground

maintenance crew for their ingenuity

in keeping Biman flying at all! Even

the near fatal crash of a DC 10 in

How long will Biman carry on with a

Chittagong, possibly related to landing gear fault and an overconfident and questionable commander (as reported in the press), has not woken up the government from its deep slumber. Now the detention of a DC 10 at New York at the insistence of FAA for unreliable technical standards has also not upset our government. Who in this case is responsible for shattering Bangladesh's image overseas? Maybe, the opposition parties have managed the FAA to ground the DC 10, if the usual government logic can be a yardstick! Airline passengers have just one

option left, and that it is not to fly Biman at any cost! Unfortunately expatriate Bangladeshis living abroad possibly have lesser options, but I am sure they are also getting

wise to the fact, as reflected in the large number of such passengers May be the authorities can save money by either privatizing Biman or winding it up. Otherwise one can just

see an international incident coming up which will take Biman's image to a final nose dive (aeronautically speak-S.A. Mansoor

Gulshan, Dhaka

Wet underarm of **BD** celebrities TV commercial models, actresses,

newscasters, singers, nearly all of them are an embarrassment to me with their wet underarms on the TV screen. It is not only embarrassing it also tells me that they most likely smell bad if you get close to them. Can't they afford to buy an antiperspirant or deodorant? Excretion of sweat from underarm creates bad odour and in today's world this is not acceptable. In the US many people take a deep breath when they see an Indian looking face (Bangladeshi, Indian, Pak) approaching because they are offended by either body odour or curry smell. Although generalising people is not right, then again who would want to take a chance? Even when I lived in the US and attended Bangladesh conventions, concerts, and other programs, I used to take a deep breath and hold it in as long as possible in the elevator when I would see Bangladeshi artists taking the elevator with me. Dear Editor, it is a serious matter, I hope you understand.

A few simple cautions can improve their image: first of all use an anti-perspirant and deodorant. Deodorants only attempt to conceal the odour, but an anti-perspirant will stop the sweat completely. These are widely available in Bangladesh and even local companies are manufacturing them. Secondly, keep clothing well away from the cooking area and have them dry cleaned or washed regularly. Finally, do not spray cologne or perfume on dirty clothes. It makes them smell worse. Perfume and cologne should only be sprayed or used on the body. Even in years past Mahatma Gandhi and both of

dies to stop odours. Ehsan Imdad Banani, Dhaka

my grandfathers used natural reme-

Only the dead have seen the end of war I live away from home. Thanks to

technological development, now we can know what is happening in our country before the people of our country know! It is possible because of the time difference we enjoy. Sometimes I really don't feel that I'm thousands of miles away from my family, friends, in one word from my country. I thank the newspapers, their journalists for their courage dedication, and innovation in telling stories. But sometimes I wish I didn't have all these to read. When I was in Dhaka I used to read only one or two newspaper, here I read or try to read as many as possible. Unfortunately some stories, not some the main stories of everyday in Bangladesh really, make me sad. I am not talking

talking about stories like the fate of Dipali. I can't believe how low a human can feel about herself when she has to take her own life just to be free from life itself. As if to her life had become a burden, a burden about which God forgot to tell her. Those of us who live as expatriates, we leave our country to live a better life. At least we had something called life back in Bangladesh, but for Dipali we couldn't even ensure that basic need, which was her right. A teenager and her family ate food by rotation just to stay alive! Where as a fellow human being, a fellow countryman I should hide the shame. God forbids, we are not like many African countries, where nature is cruel with us. We have resources, we had become selfsufficient in food before, then why do we have to read stories of Dipalis? Do we really know how many Dipalis are there in Bangladesh? After her death now many are promising support for

her family, I thank those from the bottom of my heart and pray for their well being. I read that the neighbours learned many of the stories of the family's poverty. My question is for the neighbours to feel the pain of hunger of that family, they had to wait for Dipali to give her life? Where was the local initiative, where was humanity? When would we realise that small initiatives are what Bangladesh need? This is the month of Ramadan, I am sure already the country is in full

flow of yummy Iftars. Many of the parents are already having a hard time to pick the perfect, unique dress for their child. And vet we have stories like Dipali's. I always believe only the dead has seen the end of war. Dipali's tender shoulder was just not strong enough to fight any more, so she had to end her war against life itself. This Ramadan Dipali has taught me what life is all about. Did you all learn the lesson, too? Nayeem Hossain

California, USA