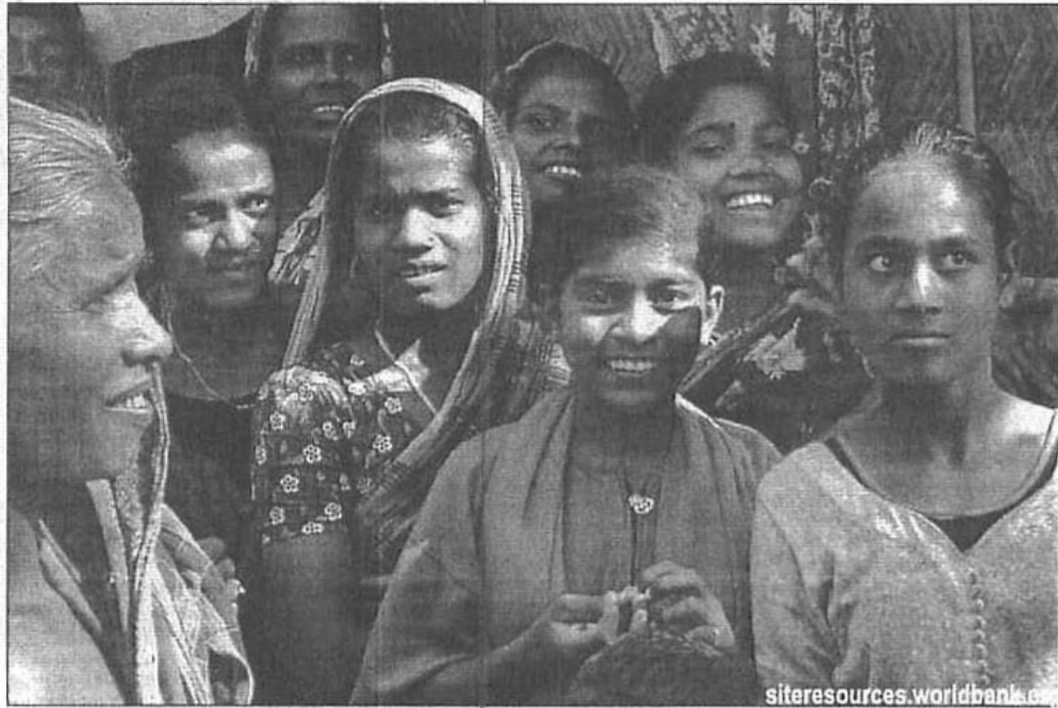




Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Violence against women



Acid throwing is a vicious form of violence against women (VAW). Although, we know that VAW is a universal phenomenon, what many of us

may not know is the extent and form the violence takes. Acid throwing is a particularly vicious and damaging form of VAW in Bangladesh. There are

cases of acid throwing in other countries but these are isolated incidents, nowhere near the number of attacks that occur in Bangladesh. The victims are

attacked for many reasons. In some cases, the attack takes place because a young girl or woman has spurned the sexual advances of a male or has rejected a proposal of marriage. Recently, however there have been acid attacks on children, older women and sometimes also men. These attacks are often the result of family or land disputes, dowry demands or a desire for revenge. The major victims are women (47%), men (26%) and children (27%). When acid is thrown on a person the results are horrifying. It causes the skin tissue to melt, often exposing the bones below the flesh, sometimes even dissolving the bone. Many acid attack survivors have lost one or both eyes.

The issue needs to be firmly dealt with. **Md. Anisur Rahman Shezan**
Mohakhali, Dhaka

Inzamam's last match

Inzamam-ul-Haq's decision to retire after the Lahore Test against South Africa means that world cricket will be bidding farewell to one of the greatest batsmen to have walked onto the cricket field. He has had an amazing career filled with numerous memorable innings, and he is on his way to crossing Miandad as the highest run-getter for Pakistan.

The unforgettable moments of his career according to him are the 1992 World Cup and the 2003 Test match against Bangladesh, where, he single-handedly saved Pakistan from the jaws of defeat by scoring the all important century. He has saved Pakistan from critical conditions on many occasions.

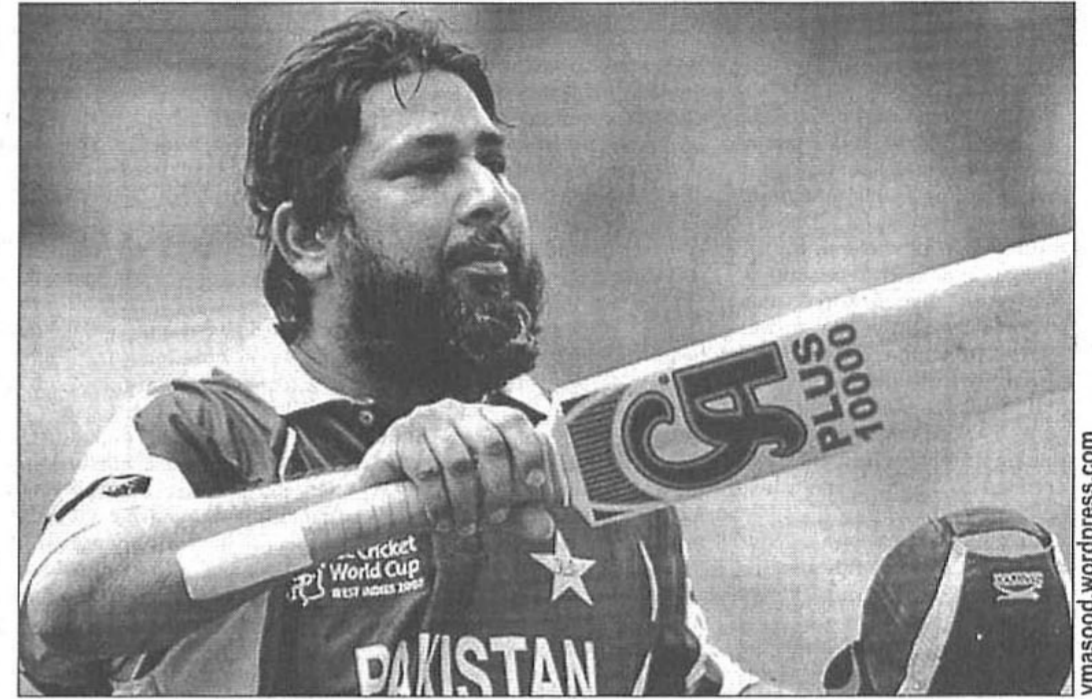
Now, he is set to leave. However, I feel, that he should have stayed for a few more years and right now his absence from the Test side has already caused serious problems for Pakistan's

batting-order. Their batsmen have looked uneasy against the South African bowling.

Though the PCB claims that there was no golden handshake, I personally feel

that Inzamam has been removed technically i.e. through some deal. After all said and done, the great batsman leaves behind a plethora of outstanding

innings, and all those memories he leaves behind are going to be cherished by his fans forever. **Wasif Wahed**
Old DOHS, Dhaka



Simmering "discontent"

The dictionary describes 'simmering' as bringing slowly to a boil. When this is coupled with 'discontent' the authorities should beware. We have already had a couple of manifestations of 'simmering discontent' in recent days that caused immense damage to national property and prestige. I am giving 4 more flash-points simmering fast.

1. The privileged have amassed wealth beyond imagination both here and outside by methods that are blatantly illegal. They include Bank Defaulters, Tax Dodgers, Political Touts and the like. Out of thousands such, just a few are being hauled up. The general feeling is, they too will be let off eventually to enjoy their ill-gotten gains after getting a slap on their wrists. In contrast, millions of poverty stricken people are being repressed and tortured for unpaid loans of small sums. Is this fair, is this just?

2. Most top moneyed people either pay no taxes or declare nominal amounts. Yet year after year they get the facility of paying a pittance to whiten their black money. This time, it is a mere 5%. In contrast those law-abiding people who regularly pay their taxes sometimes at the highest rate of 25%, get another 10% deducted from their savings. Is this fair, is this just?

3. Most main roads have been cleared of slow-moving vehicles to give easy passage for more than a 150,000 gas-guzzling monstrosities (GGMs), driving empty/half empty and causing horrendous traffic jams on city roads every day. Yet millions of rickshaw pullers, their families and service providers are debarred from earning a hard but honest living to appease those whose show of ill-gotten wealth is obscene and questionable. Is this fair, is this just?

4. Yesterday some elders were honoured on the occasion of UN day of old people. I hope they did not have to walk to collect their awards as they seemed to be car-

less people. Children's Day is also imminent. Will they also have to walk to their functions as 99% of our children and their families do not have cars. What an anomalous country we live in! We have all the rights to walk on any road we want without let or hindrance, but the moment we sit in a rickshaw, we lose this right. Is this fair, is this just?

I have lived 75 years without blemish. I still work 8-10 hours a day for my living while commuting daily by rickshaw from my rented flat in Niketon to office in Banani (I have no mobile phone, much less a car or a mansion). I have paid my taxes regularly for more than 50 years and what do I get in return another 10% deducted at source from my modest savings. This is not fair, this is not just! Is it not time that I get some relief?

In the last two months, the Mohakhali Road was 'declared' rickshaw free. I have been summarily forced to walk about a kilometer in searing heat or driving rain twice a day (I have undergone By-Pass operation). Thousands of men, women, children, old, disabled, sick, infirm and those with small loads have to do the same, dodging death from the raucous and racing vehicles and their ignorant drivers/insensitive owners. Is this fair, is this just?

On the First Ramadan on my way home at 4.30 PM, I finally rebelled. I told the cop that since he would not allow my rickshaw on the road and no footpath is available I would walk in the middle of the road. I did so and 3 others joined me. Next day, I did the same and this time more than 25 men, women, children, a disabled person and gray-beard musallis coming from Asr prayers joined me voluntarily in the middle of the road.

I have desisted thereafter because I did not want anyone to be hurt. We have lodged our protest and now Mr. Deputy Commissioner, Traffic, it is your turn to think seriously whether you serve just a few or the vast majority who make up this nation. What will happen when this 'simmering

'discontent' boils over? **Sikander Ahmed Niketon, Dhaka**

Teaching English

The PCP article by Chris Austin (3 Oct) is wonderful and it fills me with elation that others in the world do care about the common people of Bangladesh. The learning of English and its secrets as exposed by him and the other practical proposals of help will no doubt advance this most worthwhile objective for the betterment of Bangladesh and its technical manpower, as it has done for China and other countries in the region.

From my own experience of childhood I remember English as a subject which most of us approached with trepidation. There was never any love for the subject as was, say, for Bengali poets and poetry or the Bengali literature of the day including the "Dashu Mohan" series of adventures. English was a subject which needed to be learnt only for passing the examination, and there I think lies the crux of the matter.

Teachers and guardians must inculcate the beauty, efficacy and rewards of learning a foreign language to the students and allocate proper hours and machinery and trained personnel for this purpose. Knowing more than one language gives a better IQ and understanding of the world we live in.

Poet Rabindranath Tagore said somewhere which I can only paraphrase, "If one cannot write good English, one cannot write good Bengali either!" **Engineer Shafi Ahmed London, UK**

Two important issues

As per media news, two important decisions are in the process of consideration of the CTG. These are:

- a. Truth Commission
- b. National Economic Advisory

Commission. (NEAC)

a. The concept and purpose of the truth commission as very briefly mentioned by the law and information adviser has already invoked a mixed reaction from various organisations and forums.

However, one thing is very clear from the editorial of a daily that the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" formed in 1995 in South Africa had completely different perspective and purpose, and had all the necessary moral, legal and political force built-in to formulate that commission. Since there is a fundamental difference in the perspective and purpose of the truth commission idea in Bangladesh with that of South Africa, it would be advisable not to use the same name or idea if the government finally decides to give a formal shape to it.

b. Regarding the NEAC the finance adviser has given some highlights in his interview with the BBC Bengali Service and a local satellite TV channel. The TOR and the composition of the commission are yet to be finalised, and might be ready by mid-November this year as mentioned by the adviser.

Apparently, this would be an outfit in the MOF to be chaired by the adviser himself. The members might include notable economists from various groups including civil society, independent economic forum, etc. The main purpose would be to provide policy advice on micro-economic management to the MOF/government.

One expects that this would be an independent advisory body, and for that purpose it might be worth considering to make the chairperson from among the other members of the commission. It should not be difficult to determine the criteria of the members and chairperson. The position of chairperson can even be rotated as might be determined.

On the question of membership, the government has to keep in mind the professional credibility and he or she should be free from political inhibition or tilt as far as possible. Therefore, it might be useful to include at least 2-3 renowned new generation macro-economic analysts from independent economic forums to maintain the needed diversity in the commission. Representation of women should also be kept in mind. **Areader One-mail**

Aussies back to business

The rise of the Australian cricketers in India after lying very low for some time both at 20/20 in South Africa and elsewhere is indeed amazing.

In Pakistan, too, the situation is almost the same where the visiting South Africans have defeated Pakistan in the first Test and the runners-up in the 20/20 are reeling under the superb cricket delivered by South Africans.

The main issue here is: how come the champions and the runners-up are faring so badly at home, while the defeated teams, Australia and South Africa are showing brilliance with considerable ease in their opponents' grounds now.

One answer is that 20/20 is not meant to be played by international cricketers, but only by juniors, sub-juniors and school boys! **Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal JNU, Delhi**

TIB report

In this letter I would like to make a comment on the above report by

drawing information from the news published in your paper on Sunday, October 2, 2007 under the heading "TIB says its study not applicable to all NGOs". In particular, I will keep my comments within the limit of the methodology used to collect information.

According to Dr. Iftikhar, Director, TIB, a 'scientific methodology' was used to collect information. If we look into scientific research, we will find that scientific research includes, if not only but mainly, lab-based experimental research. Therefore, the mentioned scientific methodology sounds irrelevant in conducting research to gather information from any source which concerns human activities. It is clearly understandable that NGOs mostly deal with people; thus, TIB's 'scientific methodology' can be taken as an inappropriate effort to study NGOs.

It has been reported that TIB used 20 samples to study thousands of NGOs! It is really a gross mistake to claim a right to comment on 47,000 NGOs by doing research only on 20! Such generalisation is unacceptable. **Dr. Abul B. Siddique Development Consultant UK**

UN positions

On 6 October you wrote in support of Bangladesh's efforts to secure senior level positions in the UN by virtue of, among other things, Bangladesh's contribution to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations throughout the world. Without question, Bangladesh's contribution of troops has proven useful to the UN. Like Jordan, Nigeria, Pakistan and Kenya, all major troops contributing countries, Bangladeshi troops cost much less than troops from North America and the European Union.

However, instead of foisting a Bangladeshi bureaucrat or even a serving member of the ruling caretaker government upon the UN, Bangladesh should take a principled stance that officials of the UN should be hired on merit. The UN has too often been the repository of out-of-work or out-of-favour senior government officials.

This type of activity does not advance the noble causes of the UN, nor does it dignify the sacrifices made by the Bangladeshi troops. **Robert A. Johnson Gulshan, Dhaka**

Trade licence

I fully support Dr. Abdus Sattar Syed's opinion on this issue (Letters to the Editor page, June 19, The Daily Star) that the advance income tax of Tk. 1000 proposed on every fresh issuance or renewal of a trade licence should be withdrawn. I would like to go even further to propose that the requirement of trade licence be waived for very small starting enterprises (a suggested limit: fixed investment under Tk. 1.5 lakh). Unfortunately, we inherited a legacy of a top-down authoritarian rule of the colonial past which has not changed a little even after adoption of democracy. Field officials of the government have the authority to harass the general public if their corrupt demands are not met.

Our policymakers sitting in the capital would never understand what harassment a new entrepreneur has to undergo just to get a trade licence unless s/he is prepared to pay the demanded bribe money. This harassment that an entrepreneur faces at the very beginning of an enterprise puts him or her off. Since we need large scale proliferation of small

enterprises for poverty alleviation through mass employment, such a situation is not at all desirable.

Therefore, the above conditional waiver of trade licence should be given a serious thought. **Dr. K Siddique-e-Rabbani Professor of Physics Dhaka University**

Our workers in Malaysia

Just within a week of Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed's meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Mr. Abdullah Bin Ahmad Badawi in New York where, as reported in our media, the Malaysian PM assured our Chief Adviser of all possible help to assist Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia, comes the bad news of ban on our workers in that country.

Where does our foreign policy and diplomacy stand? Are our 'friends' taking us seriously? **Zobaida Jahan Melbourne, Australia**

TIB report & NGOs

It is an undeniable fact that some very remarkable accomplishments have been made by some NGOs in healthcare and education and expanding opportunities to the disadvantaged children of Bangladesh. Yet, no doubt, the TIB findings on corrupt practices of NGOs are well founded.

The large ones are undoubtedly corrupt and managed by autocratic and dictatorial personalities. They are mostly one man show. Those top guys surround themselves with their sycophants, relatives who are mostly inept, undereducated, ill-trained, but capable of managing and approving corrupt practices. Most of the mid-level managers (majority with Master's) are very ill paid. They earn one third of a driver's salary given in a multinational company. They work for those organisations with the clear understanding that they can manage their life quite well under bribery and corrupt practices. The majority of managers survive and prosper under the corrupt patronage of their seniors.

The NGOs hire lot of senior retired bureaucrats to manage things at the government level. These retired top civil servants are well looked after by their employers. Unfortunately, most of them have no experience or expertise to manage NGO activities, or commercial industrial ventures, to generate income to be reinvested in the core objectives of the organisation--- poverty alleviation and dispensation of basic health and education to the poor masses of the country.

It is time to look into the NGO activities and prevent misuse of donors' money. **Dr. K.C. Das Purkayastha New York City, US**

Ammonia pollution

Mr. Islam's report in your daily (Oct.3) on abnormal quantities of ammonia gas exhausts from Zia Fertiliser Co. Ltd., polluting the environment around ZFCL factory, is a deplorable news. What are the authorities doing about containing it? The surrounding cropland of about 200 acres is losing fertility due to excessive alkalinity. Fishes in ponds within this area are also reported to be dying unnaturally! People in the locality are suffering from skin diseases and respiratory problems. However, strangely, nothing was mentioned about the employees of the factory and their families who live in the factory location!

Is the concerned adviser aware of the situation? It will be best if he goes there for an on-the-spot investigation to ensure that what is needed is done urgently. Where is the government's act of responsibility for this act of criminal neglect? **S.A. Mansoor Retired engineer**

Misplaced priority

The politicians have again started to beat about the bush. Though the main problem of Bangladesh is now corruption, some politicians are saying undemocratic things. Whatever is good for this world is

permissible in Islam, then why do you question Islam's complete code of life? I think some people's hard line against Islam ignites Jihad among some fervent Muslims, which is creating dire situations in many countries.

What is most important at this juncture is to shun the age-old obscurantism, highhandedness, favoritism, and excel in good deeds. **Abdus Subhan Lalpur, Natore**

Business community

In Plato's Republic, the place of the business people was earmarked outside the city. May be their loyalty and patriotism were suspect. Modern day multinationals are, however, quite unabashed and unconcerned about it.

Have the traders upgraded their positions lately? And so very well... that a special truth commission is ordered just for them! But why do I have this feeling of a blind man in a dark room, chasing a black cat that may not be there? **WDAHmed Baridhara DOHS, Dhaka**

What's going on?

We were encouraged when the Malaysian Prime Minister assured the Chief Adviser in NY that all problems pertaining to the BD workers in that country would be solved, but now we hear that Malaysia has imposed a blanket ban on BD workers!! What is this? Why around 300,000 would be workers had to be put, in this situation? It seems that the present administration is more interested in pushing those hapless workers to different countries than engaging in wise and effective negotiations. We suggest the government immediately send officials to other manpower exporting countries, like the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Egypt...to learn as to how to ensure proper safeguards for our workers. **Dr. M. Hussain Canada**

Power shortfall

The alarming shortfall of power is making the economy stagnant and also acting as a deterrent to industrial growth in the country, especially in rural areas. The question of setting up backward linkage industries and expansion of poultry, fisheries and other livestock farming are at big challenge.

Modern technology and employment opportunities are absolutely power based. If generation and distribution of power become so costly and time consuming, we suggest use of solar energy to overcome this situation, at

least partially.

If we fail to make any breakthrough in this top priority area within a short time, the question of achieving the MDG and poverty reduction goal shall remain a far cry for years to come.

The power policy of the government to make the country self-sufficient by the year 2021 should be pursued vigorously. **Kumar Prithwiraj Nath Toronto, Canada**

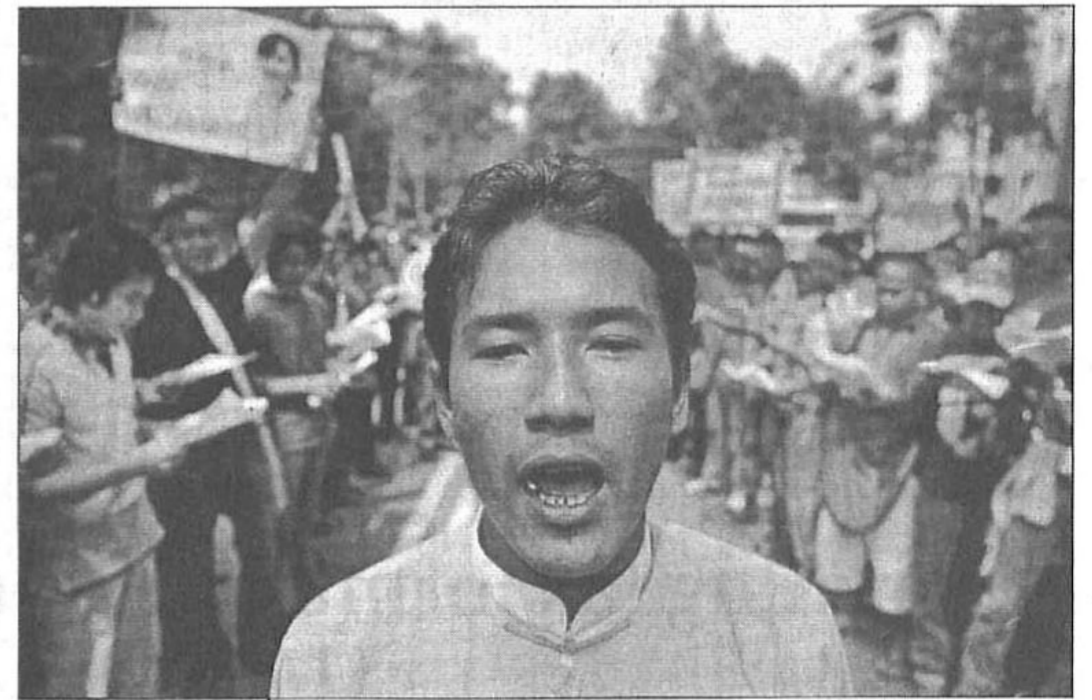
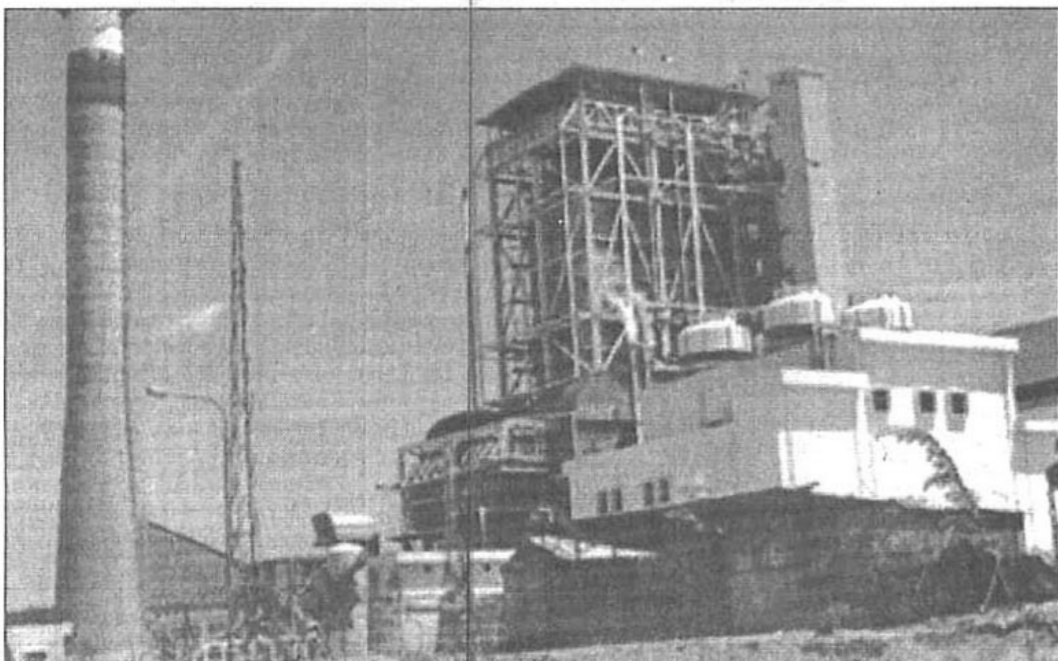


PHOTO: AFP

Myanmar people

In limiting their response to toothless sanctions and a strong disapproval of Myanmar's military dictatorship, our world leaders condemn to death not only the country's bloodied, unarmed monks and civilians, but also the fragile hopes of oppressed peoples everywhere, who will quickly learn that the world leaders cannot be counted on to back up their pre-democracy rhetoric with action.

Why are world's powers reluctant to support a people with an elected leader - in-waiting, the Noble Peace Prize winner, a burning desire for freedom and a willingness to die in peaceful protest against oppression, while world leaders impose these same values on other nations that don't want their help in the first place? No one is standing taller or braver than the Myanmar people today. **Gopal Sengupta Montreal, Canada**