Three cheers for democracy
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On the eve of the visit of Mrs Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, to the US, The Washington Post carried a two-page special on Bangladesh, which highlighted the opportunities for US business in that country. It also described the political evolution of Bangladesh as a nation and prominently displays a picture of and eulogy to Sheikh Majibur Rahman, the founder and first prime minister of that nation.

I was living in the US when Bangladesh was born in the bloody torture and carnage that the people of that impoverished nation had to suffer before emerging as an independent country. At the time, with Nixon’s tilt towards Pakistan, there were in the US a large number of voices that doomed Bangladesh to eternal misery. Kissinger’s labelling of the country as an ‘international basket case’ only expressed what most influential Americans felt at the time. Today, Bangladeshi products are found in several stores in the US carrying the label ‘Made in Bangladesh’. According to the write-up in The Washington Post, US companies are the largest foreign investors in Bangladesh. This is a major departure from the picture of an international basket case printed in 1971/72. President Clinton was the first US president to visit Bangladesh when he went there early this year.

Coincidentally, the same issue of The Washington Post carries an editorial on Pakistan, expressing the view that General Musharraf, despite the lofty promises he made when seizing power last year, has turned out to be just another dictator. Three cheers for democracy!