

## Let Adamjee Jute Mills Run

The Adamjee Jute Mills is in convulsion. The whole industrial complex now is more a battle field than a productive unit. Like Mafia leaders, politically-backed union leaders are now busy establishing their hold on the jute mills and its colonies. In the latest gunbattle on Sunday, 50 people including 10 members of the law enforcing agencies were injured. This clash is one of a long series during the past three months. Since one of the groups established its stranglehold of the colonies known as Dhaka Baju Colony by driving out another group in last May, situation has ever remained highly explosive. In the last three months three people were killed in clashes. Chances are that more tragedy will follow.

It is a sad story of the country's largest industrial set-up accepting an inevitable fate of slow demise in such a manner. That the country's jute industry became the prime target of attack even in the early days of our liberation possibly throws some light on the subversive activities of forces inimical to the country's interests. But today, no such forces are required to hasten our destruction, the employees and workers themselves are able to speed up their own and mill's undoing. A legacy of the past, the political use or abuse of the workers in the name of trade unionism has been an impediment to national development.

True, jute has enjoyed a sagging demand in the international market due to the emergence on the scene of the plastic and polythene replacement. But that is not the whole truth. Troubled by such armed clashes between and among groups backed by political parties, the mills have unnecessarily suffered from a host of crises. Workers have been recruited in excess with allegiance for the parties in power just to get their respective ranks swelled. When such narrow considerations become the sole criterion, the industrial atmosphere is more than vitiated. That is exactly what has happened to our jute industry. The great prospect of finding a diversified use of jute was never really explored. This could be done in two ways, one complementing the other. First, it was research and experiment together with commercial production which stood a chance for regaining the lost glory for jute. Second, in the context of world-wide environmental consciousness, jute could indeed retain the once-enjoyed monopoly in international market. To do this, there was need for a concerted campaign.

The demand for jute both in the local market and the international market depends not only on the quality of the products but also on the various contractual obligations including timely supply. When the factories are in a shambles, production as well as supply line are disrupted causing the breach of trust. By simply avoiding industrial disturbances, situation could be substantially improved. Why should the people be made to pay for politically-sponsored violence that makes a mockery of the law and order and also causes loss to the industry? Something should be done not only to arrest the fighting in and around the mill complex but also about the loss. The authority has been left with the choice of either inviting a national catastrophe or act swiftly to bring the feuding parties to the negotiating table. Let sanity prevail.

## Paying for Woman-bashing

Four persons including the chairman of a union parishad were each sentenced to 12 years' jail recently by the judge of Special Tribunal No. 2 in Tangail. The charge was woman-bashing.

The report of the verdict, published by a vernacular national daily on Sunday, instantly arrested one's attention. Repression of women is a chronic social malaise. The underlying premise of a woman's inferiority to her male counterpart is almost universally believed by not only the men, who stand to benefit in a very nauseating manner from this, but also by the women of our country. This is the biggest reason why only about one case in a thousand is reported to police.

The police, as an institution, is conservative and is very naturally and acceptably a coercive instrument of the forces of status quo — and that status quo includes the disadvantaged status of woman. Unless the police is co-operative in an active manner, no cases of violent crime can result in punishment of the guilty. But the police has so little reason to see anything wrong in wife-bashing.

Newspapers, another social institution, are somewhat open to the new perceptions of the woman's place in society although a section of our press continues to be bastions of bigotry which would rather have the woman remain as they are. Newspapers, however, as a whole treat woman-bashing news as good copy having readership appeal. But they are not so interested in the follow-up which is drab compared to the sensation the crime creates. Barring a few nation-shaking crimes such as Rima murder, the development of woman-repression cases hardly find newspaper space.

Judiciary is the most stable of the instruments of the state. Its job is to be just and to dispense justice in a manner leading to the creation of a just society. It is a wonder that our judiciary, of all the various state and social institutions, apparently is reacting very positively to the crime of woman-repression. But for the press coverage of the Tangail verdict we wouldn't even know of that. The local police must also have done a good job of investigation and prosecution.

Torture of woman comes in strangely diverse appearances. In the present case the husband Khaleq called in three of his cronies, including the UP chairman, to give his wife a good lesson for not pestering her father for an extra 20 thousand Taka on top of a paid up dowry of 30 thousand. At the tail of this news report there was another report of similar punishment meted out to rapists. In Brahmanbaria, four persons pounced on a school girl and gang-raped her. All the four got seven years each.

It is the society's job to rid itself of this crime which subjects half its members to a life of unremitting fear and unfreedom and makes culprits of a fair size of the other half. It is the job of the police and administration to see that the crime is effectively thwarted. Literature and the media should have mounted an unrelenting campaign for setting the gender gap thing and all that follows from it right. These institutions as well are being found wanting. It is only judiciary that, through enforcing the letter of the law, is pushing things to the direction of social well-being, in its very very constricted way. We are grateful to it.

# Among the Medicos—Students' Union, Private Medical Colleges

**D**URING the past week, I was twice among the medicos. First, among the students of Dhaka Medical College, and then, among the students of Chittagong Medical College. On both the occasions, the respective principals and a number of professors gave the company a representative look, justifying my caption. My speaker's role has to be conditioned by the composition of the audience I am addressing. My experience is that the task is simpler when the audience is homogeneous, more or less. The more mixed it is the more of a problem it becomes to strike the correct note.

These two meetings I was invited to attend as chief guest were, both of them functions of the respective Students Unions. DMC Union has asked me to inaugurate their three day cultural programme. So I found myself drawn to the timeless topic of culture. Once I started, I found myself in deep waters. There was nothing wrong in choosing the topic. In fact it was the unavoidable topic, from the point of view of relevance. But has any one ever done it, I mean discuss culture, to one's satisfaction, particularly when the time is nearing noon, when the function is already late by an hour in getting started, and when the gallery, more empty than full, sends a clear warning to the speaker of restraining himself. But the speaker when he has come as a guest, however discouraging he may find the situation, must be correct in his demeanour, must look enormously pleased by every thing, and must not betray his true feelings.

These are the things I have learnt over the years. In my own institution, I can afford, in a similar situation, to give vent to my feelings, but never at a place where I am a guest. I have found that the hosts themselves, when things are

not going according to plans, are so embarrassed that it would be nothing short of cruelty to add to their embarrassment by putting on a long face. So I have learnt to be careful, and I have managed to find a topic which I have considered relevant to the occasion, and have been able to perorate for a while. I may have defaulted for having spoken not long enough, but hardly ever for being long-winded. I have managed to keep my equanimity on most occasions. My speech, at the DMC Union function, could be a bit shorter, but I was caught in my own web. My culture talk, once it was over, left me profoundly sad and frustrated. I thought my whole strategy was wrong, and I was secretly angry with myself. My speaker's vanity was badly ruffled.

My Chittagong trip has been far more satisfactory. They — the College authorities — had sent a letter of invitation to be with them, the occasion being the installation ceremony of the newly elected Students' Union. So this too was an official function, duly endorsed by the Principal's letter. I have been scrupulously avoiding meetings organised by student groups without the institutional stamp. This I do in deference to a teacher's code of conduct which imposes a non-partisan role on a teacher, serving an institution. It is all the more binding on a university teacher in the present situation.

Whether it is a University hall of residence or a college, union functions today are not what they used to be in our days. Elections for the unions are so politicised that even after the unions have been

formed, the reverberations of the election remain. We can see why this is so: the enduring linkage that has been forged between student groups within campuses and political parties outside. I thought I would have something to say on this dependency of student politics, this loss of independence which characterises student politics today and which has definitely contributed to the prevailing violence. But I did not. I had other things to say. And luckily, during my five and half hours train journey, I had time to map out the ground my

while the speaker was speaking, a habit I am afraid some of our city reporters here have developed; and as I was reading these reports I could reassure myself that I did not speak amiss.

What I said in my speech is of a limited significance to me now. I will admit that, especially on the topic of democracy and a democratic culture, I have been recently saying more or less the same things over and over again, perhaps couching the same thoughts in a different language, and presenting the same ideas in a manner they would appeal to a

administrative arrangement regarding the colleges is an old story. Too many authorities, too complicated a system, striking at the very root of excellence, of professional development and a regrettably thin connection with the universities. Will a medical university, under whose umbrella all the colleges will be united, remove some of the old grievances? Particularly the sense of neglect? Apparently, there was a glimmer of hope there. But some of the professors still thought that medical colleges as constituent — not affiliated — colleges of several universities was possibly a better idea.

About the five new medical colleges, there was a clearer thinking. Everybody seemed to consider this politically inspired and academically irrelevant. Six out of the existing eight colleges were chronically understaffed. The teaching hospitals were dismally impoverished in every respect. Wasn't it a far better idea, wasn't it far more urgent, to give attention to the problems of the existing colleges? Staff development was criminally neglected, a matter of real concern to those who worried over declining standards. Medical graduates were without jobs. More colleges will mean more jobless doctors. We needed many more trained nurses, and the doctor-nurse ratio in our hospitals were extremely unsatisfactory. An improved standard of medical care and hospital service was more important than this ill-conceived proliferation of facilities. Why not start hospitals first, since we needed more hospital beds. Colleges could follow, after a hospital has had a period of stabilising. Clearly a sense of priority was sacrificed at the altar of publicity and

popular applause. While I listened to all these views, and sympathised with all the old woes, I put in one question: You have your BMA. I know in the BMA's charter of demands, more medical colleges did not figure. That was the position a couple of years ago. Why do you not express your views through your accredited professional body?

I did not get a clear reply but I could gather that perhaps the BMA would see this as a sensitive issue. A negative stand might be interpreted as opposing a popular demand. I hope this is not the real difficulty. Maybe there is a lack of consensus on the question. But silence, in this case, is not golden.

The older and the younger medicos represented two generations. The students I found keen, alert, with their political pulse beating almost audibly. The professors, by contrast, were cautious, if not relaxed, and politically non-committal. Even professionally, they expressed their anxieties in a guarded language. That the local chapter of BMA now owned its own building, an impressive one, located in the city's prestigious plaza, was a source of happiness. The building has come up as a result of a shrewd piece of business deal: no financial encumbrances at all, while the Dhaka chapter is still in deep waters. The professors took the private medical college of Chittagong at its own worth: no partiality, no hostility either. It has acquired a very good site, extensive lands, formerly Railway's property, and the whole area was going to turn into a modern medical complex, — all under private initiative. Here was a spirit of acceptance. Anxiety of youth, acceptance tempered by questions of the middle-aged, — the two taken together perhaps made the picture complete.

## PASSING CLOUDS

Zillur Rahman Siddiqui

speech was going to cover. I was not going to repeat the mistake I made at the DMC function.

So I talked on the significance of the Unions, the importance of leadership formed through a well-managed election, the nation's need of a healthy democratic culture, my idea of a democratic culture, why I considered this as the basic requirement to be fulfilled before the persisting problems — poverty, hunger, health, housing and education — could be adequately tackled, accepting the grim fact that no government had the magic wand to solve all our problems overnight, and I sounded a note of warning that our failure this time to keep a firm grip on newly won democracy could be fatal in its consequences. I am pleased that the reporting next morning in the two leading dailies of Chittagong — *The Azadi* and *The Purba Kone* — was excellent. Obviously, the reporters were not dozing

particular audience. The young medicos I knew were full of politics, representing as they do the present generation. For them, politics are supremely important, virtually a question of life and death. And they are right in this perception. What about the senior medicos? How did they view some of the recent proposals affecting medical teaching, and the profession of medicine? At one time, not so very long ago, I had some contact with BMA, the professional body of medical men. In the absence of this contact, I wouldn't know whether the senior members of the profession are going to welcome the idea of a Medical University. Five new Medical Colleges have been announced, with a certain sense of urgency. How did they receive the news?

At both the places, before the actual ceremony, I met and talked with senior teachers of the two medical colleges. The unhappiness with the present

# Sectoral Adjustment Programme — Does it Really Help?

by Gholam Mohammad

**S**ECTORAL Adjustment Programme (SAP), you like it or not, is the conceptual basis for our financial planning which is supported by the donor agencies. It is difficult for our planners, whatever may be the rhetorics on the streets, to adopt a different strategy. SAP remains the formula in the ultimate analysis to secure funding for our projects.

In fact, SAP was envisaged as an 'effective' instrument to obtain recovery of loans provided by the donor countries to which their claim cannot be dismissed, either. They are not here to provide the financial cushion and then forget all about that. They mean business. No use hurling blames on the World Bank and IMF. The problem lies elsewhere.

SAP, as simple as anything, stresses on liberal imports and ignores agricultural development. The option is either you have it or leave it.

SAP prioritises foreign investment with a provision for repatriation of capital/profit, the option being again either you have it or leave it. There is no compulsion in SAP.

Others' money coming into our country in the shape of assistance is as hard-earned as our own.

Liberal imports knocking out local industries one after another and, for that matter,

completely side-tracking the plans for the country's agriculture, the mainstay of our economy, matters little to the donor agencies. It is our choice which has however, valid reasons. As a result of ASP, the community of importers, exporters of cash resource items stand to gain at the expense of local industries and agricultural development.

Business, power and debt servicing, knows no ethics. This explains facelessness. It is useless to speak of dominant human aspects in transactions which are basically and structurally financial. SAP, as a concept, precludes political, sociological or ecological considerations of the recipients. It focuses on the elitist segment of the economy.

From many parts of the Third World, SAP has received favourable response for the reasons mentioned.

SAP is now 10 years old. Let us examine its impact on a country under its spell. Zimbabwe should provide an interesting example. Its Five Year Plan seeks to achieve a reduction in the budget deficit and an annual growth of over 5 per cent. On the other hand, prices of essentials have skyrocketed. The economists over there, however, came forward with a consolation such as, "These first few years will demand sacrifices from everyone

and the people will have to tighten their belts".

## Zimbabwe Instance

The case study of Zimbabwe conducted by Chris Melvor on behalf of the German bi-monthly D+C (3/1992 issue) states that the prices of consumer products have escalated over the last few months beyond the pockets of many. Transport costs have more than doubled. Water and electricity rates have increased by a similar amount. The gap between the survival cost and the average wage, has widened fantastically (the average wage being 250 and survival cost around 500 Zimbabwe dollar). The Zimbabweans, according to Melvor wonder "why is it that when sacrifices have to be made, it is always the poor who have to suffer most?"

Crime statistic are one of the indications of the people's reaction to the financial indiscipline in the society. On this basis, Melvor finds a dramatic escalation in the crime situation by some 200-300 per cent in Harare and Bulawayo in 1991. There were restrictions on imports in Zimbabwe previously. As the government lifted the lid on imports, writes Melvor companies and individuals starved for the years that the controls were in place, went on a spending spree

ing millions are involved for their 'dal bhar' pursuits. Imports should not be allowed to knock out the local industries.

The people should know that they have to work very hard to improve their lots for which the leaders should, instead of talking, set examples themselves. Already the fortunes resulting from the quick or 'black' money, have come to be noticed surprisingly at the people's level. Private cars are the first targets of attack during the times of disturbance because it is considered by the 'have-nots', to symbolise riches at their expense.

To revert to the subject matter, the people shall have to work indeed very hard and sincerely and they should find it rewarding, too. In that talking through the electronic media or at public meetings without following the guiding path, will be an insult to the concept of leadership.

In conclusion, we are frustrated to see that we still lack in leadership. Maybe those really competent, have been subdued within the parties. On the other hand, the bright boys and girls are migrating from the country in quest of higher learning or earning abroad in large numbers. The medicos are thriving as a class, in the vacuum.

No wonder if under these circumstances, we remain condemned to SAP or even worse strategies.

Similarities between the Zimbabwean and Bangladesh situations are many, including the occurrence of natural calamities like droughts there and floods/cyclones here. Over and above, there is also SAP in both the places.

Finally, we are to blame ourselves and not SAP because, given free choice and will, we opted for it. Before we slide still deeper into more chaotic conditions, we should quickly examine if other options are left to us and if so, what are those and how to get out of this SAP tangle?

Consensus on Major Issues

Now we have parliamentary form of democracy in the country. It should be possible for both the government and the opposition to reach a consensus on the major issues one of which should be the development of agriculture and other sectors in which teen-

## 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.

## After the fall of USSR

Sir, The demise of the Soviet Union has brought about a spectacular change, like many other parts of the world, in the geo-political situation of the South Asian region.

India, a mighty member of this region, has been orphaned virtually overnight with the collapse of the superpower. V. I. Lenin, the architect of the USSR, had never been to India. But his diaries and some other writings reveal that India, in his vision, might be a potential ground for his socialistic order. His successors, with this end in view, had been pouring into India billion of Roubles in the form of economic assistance and military aid. They helped India build up a powerful armed force, industries and other infrastructures to reinforce its socialist drift. The new phenomena in the world order have rather induced India to make an abrupt change in its economic policy and search for new alliance especially with the US and China.

Pakistan, which has suffered albeit indirectly with the decline of the Soviet empire,

had so long been used by the US as a front-line-state to combat socialism in this zone. The USA is likely to withdraw its age-old support to Pakistan since Afghan conflict has come to an end. Washington seems to have already cooled its relation with Pakistan. As a result, Pakistan has begun distancing itself from the USA and looking forward to making a cordial relation with the Central Asian countries, mainly dominated by the Muslims.

Nitin Roy  
Fakirerpool, Dhaka

## Agriculture colleges

Sir, A section of the Press has published a news item quoting the reference of a decision taken in a recent cabinet meeting stating that all the agriculture colleges of the country will be placed under the direct control of the Ministry of Agriculture. At present, these are functioning under the administrative control of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and academic control of Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh. It may be mentioned here that the present democratic gov-

ernment had earlier decided to sanction both academic and administrative autonomy to all the agril colleges of the country including Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (BAI), Dhaka in the pattern of BITs. The teachers and students of these college have been demanding such type of autonomy since long.

Meanwhile, the press report has created some confusions among the teachers, students and staff of these colleges. It is honestly hoped that the government will decide the ultimate fate of the Agril Colleges including BAI after holding an open discussion with the representatives of all the three agril colleges to let everyone knows about the exact position and to avoid any misunderstanding which may arise after the government declaration.

M. Zahidul Haque  
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## "Why should I plant a tree"

Sir, This refers to the letter of Mr. S. Sikander Ahmed under the caption 'Why Should I Plant a Tree' in your esteemed daily on 8.7.92.

I appreciate and congratulate Mr Sikander for raising 100,000 trees on his 30 acres of land over the last 17 years. It appears he has been very much annoyed with the Forest Dept. for not issuing permit for harvesting his plants. It is not

clear what type of trees he has planted; it should be kept in mind that most of our trees like teak, mahogany, 'shishus' etc. out of which timber is extracted, do not mature in 12 years time. These trees are planted for future generations. In other words, we keep them for what we are consuming now. In this way, we repay our debt to our forefathers. There are trees like eucalyptus, epil epil, kadam etc. which grow fast and can easily mature in 12 years. These trees are used as fire wood in brick fields.

When we plant trees, we are to think for future baobab, red wood, eucalyptus live for hundreds of years. Even in rubber plantation one requires to wait up to seven years so that trees may attain the tappable girth. For extracting timber, trees require at least 25 years time to mature.

In planting trees, one should keep in mind that one has the right and responsibilities of raising a plant to a tree — but he has no right to cut a tree at his whim.

Last of all, it is a known fact that law of the jungle prevails in Forest Dept. even though there are a few honest and sincere people who deserve thanks of the nation.

I appeal to Mr Sikander to ignore all obstacles to his noble efforts and march forward to achieve what is right and noble.

Ahmed Kabir  
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## OPINION

### 100 Years of M C College

Like most of the literate Sylhetis, S. M. Ali is always concerned about low literacy rate in greater Sylhet district. On 17 July (My World) he was talking about his century old school in Moulvibazar that produced lot of great sons. The school is going to be 100 years old this year but so far there is no sign of preparation for its centenary celebration. His concern was not concentrated to his alma mata but he proposed to celebrate this sort of anniversaries to honour the great philanthropists. This is specially significant for a school like this because it is in an area where literacy rate is declining alarmingly because of en masse expatriation of boys to USA and other rich countries even before completion of their secondary education. This sort of initiative can contribute to motivate local people to send their children to schools.

Mr Ali forgot to mention about the centenary of the most prestigious institution of Sylhet — Morari Chand College. Better known as M C College, Sylhet, Morari Chand College was founded by a philanthropist in 1892. This college has contributed in Sylhet's educational arena for last one century. During its 100 years of glorious history it has taught low or three generations of a huge number of Sylhet families. But unfortunately there is no initiative so far to

celebrate the great event.

To look after the interest of Sylhet, there are many Dhaka based organisations like Jalalabad Association, Dhaka University Jalalabad Student Welfare Association etc. They can take interest in this issue and arrange a great programme in cooperation with the district authority. Such programme can be arranged in a way so that such sons of Sylhet as Dewan Md Azraf, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, S. B. Chowdhury and S. M. Ali himself can go to Sylhet, stay there for a couple of days and speak in front of a cross section of people. This can contribute in bringing awareness among people to give highest emphasis on education. Arrangement of something of this nature is not impossible. Every year Jalalabad Association arranges an annual get-together involving a few lac Taka. It can easily use this fund to arrange a programme of this kind in Sylhet.

Last of all, I want to request Mr. S. M. Ali to use his personal influence in this regard by writing a few lines on this issue in his weekly column 'My World' or any other way. Maybe The Daily Star readers are already bored of his Sylhet infatuation. Anyway, I congratulate it.

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