### Dhaka, Friday, November 13, 1992

Evidence against Ershad That Ershad was a notorious man was known to all. His notoriety brought his downfall and the entire country rose in anger against him. But once brought down, the chilling details of his crimes have not been brought to the light. Only the cheap hewspapers were busy publishing juicy stories concerning the fallen dictator's escapades and several other diversions. But with a reputation of yellow journalism, those papers had hardly any credibility to make people convinced of the more serious matters they sometimes dwelt upon. Yet in the aftermath of the people's victory, theirs was a natural desire to know where and how the once all-powerful man erred. Of the charges against him, the misappropriation of huge state fund was a most important one. But the issue was not pursued with the seriousness it surely deserved. The Fairfax was engaged by the government to dig out the inside story of Ershad's siphoning out of the kickbacks he received from contracts and various other deals to foreign banks. Mysteriously, though, the investi-

ernment to the Fairfax. Now the US Senate sub-committee in Washington has found fresh evidence that Ershad channelled as much as 520 million US dollars out of the country through the suspended Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI). Equivalent to Tk 2000 crore, this huge amount has been transferred in collusion with a number of his cronies and close associates, besides senior BCCI bankers.

gation bogged down over the payment by the gov-

Yet the troubling question is : why did we not take up the case ourselves for bringing out the facts soon? After two long years it is the US Senate that does the job in proxy. Surely, the Senate has its own reason to get into the matter; and the reason is to look into the BCCI scandal. One wonders if the Senate had none of its own compulsion for investigation, how Ershad's money matter would have ended up. With their enviable reputation for uncovering great financial scandals, the Fairfax in this case however has not made much of a headway, or at least that is what we are led to believe. By our own standard even, it should be considered disgraceful that we cannot carry a campaign of vitally national importance to its logical conclusion. To ascertain our home truth, we have to look for foreign findings in the same way we depend on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) or Voice of America (VOA) for knowing the objective version of any incident at home.

The fact Ershad smuggled out money with active help from people in key positions can under no circumstances be lost sight of. Those accomplices of his in innumerable crimes are still there and are busy wielding power to cover up the misdeeds. It is the government that has patently and miserably failed to trace out those culprits and has not been able to match - deliberately or not - its earlier promise on the issue with postelection action. Sending Ershad into jail for offences like illegal possession of arms and money beyond any known source of income - Tk one crore and 93 lakh in cash were recovered from his Cantonment residence - is to penalise him for a lesser crime than the most serious ones he committed. By doing so the crime against the people and the country is lightly considered. The lesson from such a treachery against the nation by men in power should have been reinforced if the matter were taken in all seriousness.

In this connection, let us make it a point that the accountability of the public representatives is a key question for good and right governance. Crimes against the state by the custodian of public wealth must come under public scrutiny and be dealt properly for the sake of unfettered growth of all institutions. The large-scale capital flight that came in news has gone unaccounted for. Therefore, the declaration of assets by the ministers and elected public representatives may be a right approach to bolstering the public confidence in them the people elect.

## Game of Good Hope

History of a sporting kind is being created today at the Kinghead Stadium in the city of Durban on the Cape of Good Hope. It is a piece of doubleedged history. On the one hand, South Africa today fully re-enters the wonderful world of Test cricket, from which it had been unceremoniously banished over two decades ago ( the re-entry which began with a Test match in the West Indies earlier in the year, is completed today, this match being the first official Test to be played on South African soil since 1970, when Bobby Simpson's Australians received a thorough drubbing). On the other hand, the Durban Test, against India, will establish South Africa's first ever Test link with the cricket-crazy South Asian sub-continent.

The tumultuous reception accorded to the Indian team by the people of Durban, many of whom are of Indian descent and long deprived of basic civil rights under South Africa's apartheid system of the not-so-distant past, was a good omen. Nearly all the tickets at the 28,000-seat stadium have reportedly been sold out, promising to make the match and the tour as a whole a success. This is however no more than the Indians deserved after the crucial role they played in bringing South Africa back to the fold during last year's meeting of the International Cricket Conference, the game's governing body.

South Africa's return, like in all other sports, was linked to the progress in dismantling the last vestiges of apartheid from public life. But the country's sport is not yet totally out of the woods.

Negotiations between the government and the African National Congress of Nelson Mandela has been bogged down for months now, and repeated massacres of blacks by police or pro-government black groups, have threatened to send the country back to the bad old days of repression and denial of rights. And that would inevitably force the world community to shut out South African sports once again. Despite the optimism expressed by the Durban crowd and the captains of the two teams, the country's links with world sports remain on a knife's edge. But while the politicians, both black and white, sort out the country's political future, cricket fans are reaping the fruits of reform even before the people in general do. India's tour is likely to ensure a clearcut understanding and appreciation of international sporting links by the South African people, and hopefully, that may play some part in preventing any move to revert the country back to its inglorious past.

# Seventh Round — Israel Indicates "Withdrawal"

HE 7th Round of M-East Peace Talk was adjourned as serious tension surfaced in the negotiation due to violence in selfdeclared Israeli security zone in southern Lebanon and also in the West Bank. Though there is a general feeling that nothing was achieved in the 7th round, one can not overlook some positive changes in Israel's negotiating position. This is the first time Israel mentioned the word "Withdrawal" in presenting their negotiating document relating to Syrian Golan Heights which Israel captured in 1967 war. Various interpretations of the word "Withdrawal" have appeared in subsequent press briefings by Israeli negotiators and Politicians but Prime Minister Rabin came out with his inner thought on the issue of "Withdrawal" when he reacted on the killings of five Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon. He said - "Israel would not fully (mark the word fully) pull back from the Golan Heights, even though it has raised the possibility of withdrawal in its peace negotiations with Syria. As far as Israel is concerned complete withdrawal is out of question. Therefore, in any future negotiations the Arabs will have to keep this in view and bid for the maximum. But in any case they will have to be prepared for necessary concessions. Territories occupied quarter of a century back by a power historically hostile to all the neighbours are not expected to be surrendered in full through

M-E Peace Talk

justments are needed. The extent of adjustments

negotiations. Therefore, ad-

HOUSANDS of Portugu-

watching developments there

following its first ever general

ese who once lived in

Angola are anxiously

There is going to be another peace talk before the new US Administration takes over but one does not expect any substantial progress there. The new Administration will have its own agenda though it said it would strive for continuity in US foreign policy.

would depend on two things: (a) how much land Arabs are agreeable to sacrifice (b) the extent of security zone Israel needs. The first point needs no elaboration; presently the land occupied by Israel is outside the control of Arabs though legally the land belongs to the Arabs. Therefore, the effort should be recover-as much land as you can and that also through negotiations as nothing can be recovered by force.

The character and the pace of the peace negotiation might change with the departure of President Bush from the White House, who had almost a personal commitment for achieving some form of peace between Israel and Arabs. Bill Clinton's approach to the negotiations is not quite clear yet though he said he would also pursue the peace process set by the Bush Administration. But his stand against Israel in a case such as Loan Guarantee may not be as tough as that of Bush. It would make a lot of difference.

In the 7th round one detected Israeli effort to pursue Camp David style of negotiations when they indicated the idea of "Withdrawal" from Golan Heights. They talked about separate peace in real terms with Syria with normal diplomatic, trading and cultural relations and mutual security. Israeli chief negotiator said, "When our quest for peace and our quest for security are satisfied, we will not

shy away from introducing the element of withdrawal into the settlement" All these are intended to induce Syria to have a separate peace agreement like the one with Egypt. Though Syria rejected the Israeli withdrawal position (no direct offer yet as no document was handed over by Israel to Syria) by terming it "unsatisfactory", there is no doubt that this raised hopes in the minds of the Syrians. Any separate agreement with Syria,

try to put up a joint front of some sort and look for a comprehensive solution of the M-East problems. Any deviation will make Arab position extremely weak.

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## SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE BAST

## Muslehuddin Ahmad

which can not be ruled out totally as President Assad of Syria may be prepared to do anything to get back his strategic Golan Heights. Palestinian interest will suffer and indeed the character of the entire peace process will change. Once giant Syria is neutralized through separate peace agreement, even it means major territorial concessions by Israel in Golan Heights, Israel's total attitude towards rest of the occupied territories may change. And with the change in the US Administration on January 20, there will be no Bush-Baker pressure on Israel and within Israel itself forces against territorial concessions may gain strength with the uncertain future of the Israeli settlers. Therefore, the Arabs should

For Bill Clinton too M-East should be a top priority agenda item. Of course, in one of Clinton's campaign statement he laid emphasis on M-East peace process. Clinton Administration must be aware that the US and the allies fought one war there only recently. If anyone believes in what an Indian astrologer said, "US goes to war in 94 days' -M-East remains a good possibility after Balkan area. Therefore, Clinton should pursue not only Bush-Baker policy on M-East peace process but indeed should make it a first success target in his foreign policy arena. He stands a good chance to deliver peace in M-East. The environment is good. Yitzhak Rabin's attitude so far towards peace process appears positive despite his adverse

reactions on recent killings of Israeli soldiers in south Lebanon. The Arabs also appear determined to pursue the peace process with all serious-

The best course for the new Administration would be to start a dialogue with PLO. This will induce Prime Minster Rabin to move forward towards PLO. His government has already shown some flexibility in this respect by dealing leniently with those Israelis who had earlier established contacts with PLO despite legals prohibitions.

As a "confidence" building measure the new Administration should indeed encourage adversaries in M-East to start having direct contacts. It is good to have formal peace negotiations but positive and quick results can only be achieved through direct contacts between leaders who are in a position to give decision. This leads one to suggest an informal summit of Arab and Israeli leaders particularly involving King Hussein of Jordan, President Hafez Al-Assad of Syria and Chairman Yaseer Arafat of PLO. Such a summit could take place in East Jerusalem. In such a summit efforts could be made to lift economic sanctions by the Arabs on Israel against firm commitment by Israel on settlement freeze. Efforts could also be made to reach some understanding on the issue of "WITHDRAWAL" - how much

land the Arabs are willing to sacrifice to meet Israel's security concern. Israel should also realise that it is the "confidence" that is more important than a patch of land big or small - as security zone. Israel's self-declared security zone in south Lebanon cold not stop killings of Israelis

If some understanding

could be reached or at least unnecessary misgivings could be removed through discussions at summit level, the peace talk could gather pace and be meaningful. Otherwise the peace talks could continue for years without any meaningful result, it will also be helpful if the peace talk could be held for longer period - say six months if necessary, which could allow the parties to concentrate meaningfully on various substantive issues. Breaks after two to three weeks disrupt the negotiations and create new problems. Regular consultations with capitals could be maintained through special representatives in each negotiating team.

All these are possible if the new Administration takes serious interest in the peace process and puts it as a top agenda item in its foreign policy matters. The idea of nominating a special envoy, namely former president Jimy Carter or even asking James Baker, because of his intense knowledge and experience of the M-East issues, to continue his work, deserves consideration. Such a step would, indeed, signal a genuine eagerness on the part of the new Administration in solving the M-E problems.

# Thousands of Portuguese Wait to Go Back to Angola

David Orr writes from Luanda

In Angola's first elections since independence in 1975 President Eduardo dos Santos just failed to win the required 10 per cent majority. South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha has tried to broker a power-sharing deal. But violence is breaking out again and real peace remains uncertain. Gemini News Service reports on the Portuguese who want to return to

### elections. If the situation there remains ultimately calm and hostilities are not renewed between the MPLA govehelp rebuild the country. rnment and the Unita opposition, up to 30,000 may return in the first half of next Lusophone Africa Most Portuguese left Angola at independence in 1975 and 10,000 have gone back since the civil war ended last year. Spry 68-year old business-Cape Verde man Alfonso Cameiro first ar-July 5 1975 rived in Angola on Christmas Day 1953. He says: "I lived in the north of Portugal, a very Portugal's African poor region with no opportunities. I came here to make a colonies became better life for myself." In this he succeeded be-Lisbon coup of 1974 yond his wildest dreams, building up an empire which, by his own reckoning, was

worth \$ 40 million at its height. He made his home in Saurimo in the north eastern province of Lunde Sul. In addition to a prosperous construction company, he had warehouses, 216 apartments, thousands of acres of land and countless head of cattle. Unlike the Kenyan Highlands which were settled

by upper-and middle-class Britons, Angola was essentially the province of uneducated peasants. For the 500,000 Portuguese who lived there from the 1950s until the mid-1970s, Angola was a land of boundless opportunity. But when fighting started in

1975 between the MPLA and FLNA rebels (at that time allied to Unita). Alfonso and his family fled in fear of their lives. MPLA soldiers looted Alfonso's business and slaughtered his cattle. Fortunately, he said, he had invested a small part of his fortune abroad.

When he returned to Portugal in 1975, he says,

independent following Guinea-Bissau Sept 23 1973 (Unilateral) Sao Tome & Principe July 12 1975 Angola Mozambique Nov 11 1975 June 25 1975 M 2794

some people regarded him as stupid because he had not brought back enough wealth. To others he was a rogue because he had "stolen" from black Angolans.

Now he is returning to start up import business and reclaim the property he left behind. So far, however, he has

been granted only one warehouse. His own home was confiscated by the local MPLA governor who suspects him of holding Unita sympathics. This Alfonso strongly denies.

He says: "I'm a businessman and I just want to get on with my work. I don't hold any grudges against any one for

what happened in the past." But the country to which Alfonso Carneiro is returning is very different from the one he left 17 years ago. In his day, Angola was almost self-sufficient in agriculture with crop surpluses for export. It was the worlds fourth largest coffee producer.

The huge fron ore mines at Cassinga have been closed and

official production of diamonds has fallen sharply. Manufacturing output has been decimated and now suffers severely from shortage of spare parts, lack of investment and a dearth of skilled personnel. Only the oil output from the northern enclave of Cabinda is

keeping the Angolan economy

Alfonso looks around at the piles of rotting garbage in the streets of the capital, Luanda, and says: "I'm very sad. This country used to be highly productive and efficient. It used to be a really great place to live. Now it's miserable. Nothing works. All the people with knowhow have left."

The people with knowhow to whom he refers are those like himself who left when civil war broke out. The whites ran Angola in those days. Even menial jobs such as hairdressing, driving taxis and bartending were held by the Portuguese. About the only jobs available to the seven million black Angolans were as servants, cleaners and plantation workers.

. At independence, after four centuries of Portuguese colonialism, 98 per cent of the

blacks were illiterate. Few had any technical or administrative

When the Portuguese left in the largest white migration Africa had ever known they took with them not just their knowhow but everything they could lay their hands on. Telephones were pulled from their sockets, office furniture packed away and light bulbs removed from their fittings.

Alfonso Carneiro does not defend his countrymen's record. Before independence, the Portuguese shamelessly took the profits from Angola's natural resources and forced the local people to work on coffee, sisal and maize plantations. Alfonso insists he has nothing to be ashamed of.

He says: "I employed 250 men and I paid them decent wages. We brought more development to Angola during the Fifties and Sixties than the country had got in the previous four centuries."

The new Angola he surveys is the product not just of 400 years of colonial exploitation. It is also the result of nearly three decades of war and 17 years of economic mismanagement by an autocratic government.

The war of independence was succeeded by a brutal civil war between the ruling MPLA and rebel groups. The government was, supported by the Soviet bloc and 50,000 Cuban troops, the rebels by the United States and South Africa. By the time the MPLA and the Unita rebels signed a ceasefire last year, the country lay in

ruins with tens of thousands dead and countless billions of dollars squandered on arma-

Alfonso Carneiro says: Things are in a bad way, but I'm optimistic about the future. Angola has great potential. This could be one of the richest countries in Africa. It's got tremendous resources: oil, diamonds, all sorts of minerals."

The coming months will be crucial if Angola is to have a chance to rebuild itself and attract foreign investment. While some hold bitter memories of the Portuguese presence in their country, most Angolans live comfortably alongside those who decided to stay and are willing to welcome back those who wish to

return. Perhaps more than any other African country, Angola is an integrated society with no overt tensions between white, black and mestizos (people of mixed African and

Portuguese ancestry). "I love this country, I owe it a lot," says Alfonso Carneiro, who wants his son, Ilidio, to follow in his expatriate footsteps. "I am an Angolan first

and a Portuguese second." What happens on the political front will have much bearing on whether people like the Carneiro family are able to pursue their African dreams. In the aftermath of the election victory of President Dos Santos and the MPLA, a role has yet to be found for Jonas Savimbi and his Unita opposi-

Instability or a renewed outbreak of hostilities could prove fatal for the rebuilding programme. But with strong leadership and the right direction, Angola could be one of Africa's success stories. Is if ultimately likely?

DAVID ORR is freelance British journalist who recently visited Angola.

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.

## Right to express

Sir, This is in response to the letter of Mr Kamal Haque, which was published in the 16th October issue of your paper. I would like to thank him for his support of Naheed Kamal's article called "No one can forbid us the future" and express my gratitude for his understanding of the issue she was trying to get across to the readers of the article.

I can guess of many people who would like to think of the "Rising Stars" page as one based on things which seem conventional for children and thus require that it be written in a style suitable for "young eyes only". But when regular contributors to the page, such as Naheed and myself, were requested to write, we were told that a fresh approach and style was required, so that readers would know that young people were writing the page

for themselves and that it was not just another "junior" page published by adults who think they know the young of today so well and write on mostly what they themselves experienced when they were young, or whatever seems 'ethical' for a young person to read about in a national daily.

Today's world does not allow for the naivete which yesterday's did. The key to survival is awareness and the right thing for us who can make others aware of the things they should know, via the press, is to do just that. Naheed's article on premarital romance could hardly have come as much of a shock to the average Dhakaite teenager for it was a relation of what he/she was going through at the time, although the majority will play the innocent when questioned on the topic. People who write about the offence such articles cause the young readers are very wrong

for while they may call it the offence of the innocent, I am doubtless that it is plainly their own indignation at the changing trend in society which they are trying to express.

My advice to such offended persons is simple: open your eyes to the real world. Teenage romance may often take place behind the backs of the prohibiting parents but it is not a crime one may deserve capital punishment for. And so, if the media wants to publicise it, so be it. Freedom of speech in what we believe is a right cannot be withheld simply because the issues raise a few eyebrows. Your case may be for a number of reforms in our government or the educational system: whatever it is, it is something you feel strongly about. Therefore, respect the wishes of the young and allow us to voice our opinions on whatever issue is important to us. A reader like Mr Kamal Haque is an example of an open mind towards the criteria of the younger generation; although he may very well be one senior to us by many years, would once more like to thank him for taking a civilized stance on our side and shunning senseless bigotry against those who only want to be

heard and understood. The former generations may have plans for many of us, but in no way does that mean that we will abandon our own desires. It should not mean it.

Judith G DeCosta Dhaka

## Senile ramblings and CNN

Sir, The life span of Bangladeshis being what it is, I calculate that I have been waiting for the Grim Reaper for about 25 years. Perhaps, some angelic bureaucrat long ago must have marked my file "put up" and quite naturally, a mutant junior assistant secretary, with 'red tape', instead of wings, must have 'put it up' on some remote cloud there to gather celestial dust. To those of us in this state of limbo, mornings are an obnoxious and trying time. We seem to get in everyone's way; the Begum's tongue is specially sharp as she commands the help to clean up the overnight dust, which always seems to be where I am either sitting or lying. CNN has, therefore, come as a welcome relief and a life-saver.

I watch CNN for about three hours daily and would like to

pass comment on some glaring deficiencies, which, I am sure, other viewers must also have noticed. South and West Asian affairs, especially the SAARC countries are totally ignored, and I doubt if there has been a single story from this region during the last few weeks. Kashmir, Punjab, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, the Kurds etc contributed their share of blood, but, evidently, this is not to the taste of CNN. Even the 'global' weather report ignores South and West Asia. They go from East Asia straight to Europe or America.

However, CNN's lengthy and wide coverage of the US presidential elections is understandable and I have thoroughly enjoyed the candidates being put under the microscope.

Quazi Akhlaque-uz Azeem Anderkilla, Chittagong

## "The Fall of a Titan'

Sir, A splendid article ('The Fall of a Titan', The Daily Star, Sept 23), troubling and thought provoking touched our hearts. The ignorance and cruelty the campus community shows in matter of trees perturb us. Early this year, in a teachers' quarter compound, two nice trees were felled for

no reason whatsoever.

How can man cut down so lovely a creation out of his whims, we wonder. These people who live here, are all enlightened and intellectuals. Some intellectuals murdering trees! Your article, we hope, will enlighten some of them. Keep on the good work. The Earth thanks you. Kids' for Saving the Earth Club

No-33355 Dhaka (Varsity campus)

## School students

Sir. We have noticed with great concern that disciplinary condition has not only deteriorated in the universities and colleges but in the schools as well. It should not be forgotten that the school is the basic home for implanting foundation of education, values, manners, character etc among the children.

We would sincerely call upon the government and the school authorities to take strict measures for maintaining and perpetuating discipline among the school stu-

M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor, Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka