IN MEMORIAM

The Baily Star

Dhaka, Wednesday, October 20, 1993

Carnage at CMC

The saga of bloody student politics, vengeance murder and retribution shows no sign of ending Monday's carnage at the Chittagong Medical College(CMC) campus barely a month after a nightly raid on the college hostel confirms the unending hostility between and among the rival student groups. Evidently, student politics here as else-where — is governed by the pernicious motive of establishing the respective students wing's superior muscle might rather than the merits of their party programmes. In this case, the ominous sign of such politically-triggered violence is all too evident. The fact that such terrorism and intimidation are paying - albeit in the short-term - in recruiting a large following explains why ultimately all the tall talks against campus violence by our political leaders fizzle out into no action or inaction.

No wonder, the political parties are becoming a party to this cult of violence - even though not all of them are a willing supporter of this murderous practice. One paradox here is that, this ghastly crime committed by the most promising and, perhaps, talented section of our population either hardly finds its relation to the guilty conscience befitting it or carries the punishment heavy enough to act as a deterrent. On the other hand, society appears to be abetting this heinous crime, thus indirectly encouraging more such violence.

Only the day before the CMC incident, Dhaka University after a considerably long gap also witnessed a rehearsal of arms wielding and the demonstration of firepower by a student group. Rival parties will not take long to respond to this provocation and once again the university seems to be preparing for armed clashes between the confusingly many-sided contending parties. There is hardly a university or a college in the country now which is free from bitter hostilities between different student groups. And hardly a single day passes by without skirmishes taking place on any college campus. Nobody can say the campus situation has in the least improved during the recent times. In certain cases, such as at Jahangirnagar University. the government's performance was awful, to say the least.

Then there is no reason to think that other political parties did any better by putting forward a political agenda or programme that merited to be, on the one hand, an alternative to the perpetuation of the practice of violence; and on the other, taken seriously by the government for revision of its own programmes. Against such a backdrop, the campus violence far from lessening, is bound to aggravate. The political parties have compromised on an issue deserving to be a first priority for their immediate gain. The gain in this case is increasing the strongholds of their student wings in the hope that the control of educational institutions will ensure the establishment of the parent organisation's influence as well.

Strangely enough, a section of our society has not rejected this 'Rambo' culture, rather, has succumbed to its ugly invasion. It is on this count that we all have failed in our duties to resist the unwanted. This exposes the bankruptcy of the nation's soul. But the political parties will be held specially blamable for brutalizing, dehumanising and corrupting our student community which has a glorious tradition. We have time and again appealed to the major political parties not to use, or abuse, the students for their political ends. We once again urge them to sit together for reaching a consensus about eliminating this evil responsible for eating into the very vital of our education sys-

Let the politics be a little fairer and freer from petty party considerations. If the parties cannot keep the country's interest above those of an individual or groups, we are really heading for a disas-

Traffic Blockages

Movement in the capital city is a regular odyssey at the end of which there is no knowing if the hero would return to his Penelope in one piece or not. It was at first thought that rickshaws contributed most to both the danger and the jams on the city roads. But as rickshaw-riders far outnumber the other vehicle-users on the road, it is democratic that the rickshaws could pass the blame on the motorised vehicles. Then the hawkers and vendors filling the footpaths and spilling on to the roads, were held to be culprits and have in the meantime been eliminated from their crowded haunts. At the Farm Gate area the traffic administration, unable to cope with the daily jams, has tried to heal the headache by chopping off the head. They have cut the city in two for all not owning a car or plebian enough to ride a bus or take a shared tempo journey. Specially for women, the main patron of the rickshaws but for which contraption movement of women would have been seriously restricted in the capital city, a serious blow it could be to the cause of narrowing the gender gap.

It is good to witness from time to time innovation and other signs of manipulations affected by the traffic authorities on the pattern of road use. These experiments seem to be geared to realising one big and good point - keeping the traffic all the time moving. In ensuring that they have often overlooked the convenience of the road-users and yet failed to reap good results so far, thanks to their ignoring the road behaviour of the vehicle drivers. The buses do stop whenever and wherever they feel like — in the middle of the road. At the stoppage they stop two or three abreast, choking off all

movement on the road, including pedestrian. Still we fully support the principle that everything should be done for a continuous and free flow of traffic on the road at all times of the day although the authorities themselves often break it, for instance, when the Prime Minister moves from one of her engagements to another. All their good work in this matter comes to nought if the roads are not eminently negotiable. Traffic is slowed down and a slow traffic forces a fast pile-up of jostling cars and buses and rickshaws and what not.

And the roads are not the trafficwallah's charge. Now that the rains are finally away, roads emerge from their watery cover with a pathetic, nay danger-spitting mien. Every other minute of your journey you will need to dead-stop your vehicle to save the trap from breaking down. There are two other contributors to the slowness of road traffic. Bad lighting and coverless manholes. Coverless manholes and roads pockmarked with minihills and minidales do stifle the speed and flow of traffic very effectively. But these are nothing to compare with when the traffic constables cannot help a crowded situation. Most of the daily jams are a glowing tribute to their ineffectuality.

Pakistan Elections: Widely Accepted as Free and Fair

OR the second time, found myself visiting The essential difference between the Bangladesh Pakistan as a member of elections of 1991 and the Pakistani elections of 1993 is SAARC non-government that the first was the outcome of a papular will, and team for the observation of that the latter was held at the behest of the army; in its bid Country's National Assembly elections. This took place on the to end the bickerings amongst the two main parties. 6th October, followed by the election to the Provincial Ass-

> the third time in the course of five years. Both the PPP government that came into office as, a result of the 1988 elections. and the LJI (mainly Muslim League) government that did so as a result of the 1990 elections, were dismissed by the President, and the National Assembly dissolved. Where was the guarantee that the same will not happen for the third time? Dismissing an elected government before the expiry of its term and dissolving a National Assembly has a history in Pakistan going farther back. and Presidential highhandedness, to which political parties had succumbed tamely (except in the recent case when Nawaz Sharif challenged his dismissal.

ties, too, have come to accept it since there is no mutual trust amongst them, and the Election Commission itself appears to have lost all credibility, having been too much and too long. under the dictates of those who have called the tune from behind. It reminds us of the state of subjugation to which our own EC was reduced under army

That Pakistan's election was held under a caretaker government, as we had ours under a similar dispensation early in 1991, forces some comparisons. But the comparison will not take us far. The socio-political situations of the two countries Bangladesh and Pakistan are very different. Apart from

PASSING CLOUDS Zillur Rahman Siddiqui

and his position was upheld by the High Court) and prevailing politics had no answer. The Army's role, whether expressed through a General occupying the President's chair, or through a civilian like Gholam Ishaq Khan fully guarding the interests of the army, had remained unchanged. There was a perception shared by many in Pakistan that the armed services have undergone a change of attitude; they were now prepared to leave more room for the civilian parties without abdicating their core interests. In fact, the current developments the two crucial resignations leading to the dissolution of the NA, and the fresh elections. were patently "army brokered". and the election itself was held under the auspices of a civilian care-taker government with the full backing of the military. In fact, the army's physical presence was a part of the electoral arrangements, to ensure that the polling was free and fair. It seems that the Army by now has assumed a purely guardianship role in respect of

Pakistan's politics, and the par-

illiteracy, poverty and all the accompanying ills, there is not much in common. As a polity, Bangladesh is infinitely more cohesive. Pakistan's diversity. ethnic, linguistic, social and economic, is so vast that it is difficult for us to comprehend.

Social mores in the tribal areas are impenetrably obscure. Womenfolk in those areas are kept out of franchise by common consent among the parties. Politics, in vast areas of Pakistan, outside the tribal regions, are based on persons. not parties. These persons, immutable constants despite all changes, change their political cloaks as easily as they do their apparel, and this causes no scandal. The essential difference between Bangladesh elections of 1991 and Pakistani elections of 1993 is that the first was the outcome of a papular will, and the latter was held at the behest of the army, in its bid to end the bickerings amongst the two main parties. There was more to it, though, Nawaz Sharif's challenge to

Presidential powers which the

8th amendment had given him. Since both the parties, one led by Benazir Bhutto, and the other led by Nawaz Shartf, have been in power in recent years, and since both have done little in ameliorating the condition of the masses. little credence is given to the electoral promises held out by either of them. The common man is apt to look upon the whole scenario as a colourful, and very expressive 'tamasha.' As for Bangladesh, though I would admit that the pattern of our own politics is fast changing to Pakistan's. big money playing the big role - yet politics here have managed to remain more articulate (in a strictly political scene) than is the case in Pakistan.

By the time this report

comes out in print, the hung Parliament of Pakistan will have chosen a Prime-Minister, unless things go haplessly awry. Many fear that there may be a repetition of the 1990 scene, - Benazir in Islamabad as Pakistan's Prime Minister, and Nawaz Sharif or his nominee in Punjab, as the Chief Minister of the most populous and the richest province, negating the centre's hold in the most vital part of the country. If that happens, stability once again will be at stake. But, meanwhile, it will be right to remember that this election has been widely accepted as free and fair, something which cannot be said about the election of 1990. The President, Gholam Ishaqe Khan, and the powers-behind him, did everything in their power to foil Benazir's bid to return to power and they got what they wished It was all very different this time. Transparency in the whole procedure was there to a remarkable degree, and the popular verdict was that this was the best, since the election of 1970. Evidently, credibility has been largely restored in election as part of the democratic process, and whichever party comes to powers, will have legitimacy in the public eye. That by itself is a big step toward democratic freedom. For Pakistan, the path is steep, if only for the unchanging role of the army. As one Indian observer remarked, this has been a good election, but Bangladesh's was better. It was an election entirely managed by civilian authorities. When will Pakistan reach that stage?

He Dedicated His Life to the Profession

by Mohammad Amjad Hossain



T HENEVER I paid a visit to his room in The Daily Star either at Toynbee Circular Road or later at Dhanmondi, I found S M Ali bent on his typewriter. Very often he used to complain that he could not go to his residence for lunch. A working editor, indeed. Perhaps overworking - to accomplish his mission to serve. serve the nation.

After placing order for a cup of tea for me S M Ali would continued to type out his editorial comments or column for the next day issue. I understood 1800 hours was the deadline for handing over his manuscript for printing. At the same breath Ali Bhai would have chit chat with me covering wide range of sub-

Many times how humbly he said that he had only offered me a cup of tea and gathered interesting information on topical interest. He told me, a month before his departure for Bangkok. that next-time we would have a lunch together. As promised SM All will not be able to entertain me ever after coming from Bangkok where once he served as the Managing Editor of the Bangkok Post, for a considerable period of time, and breathed his last on October 17 Yet the essence of intimate generosity is never to die down.

He had a wide vision for establishing The Daily Star as an international standard newspa per. He had a strong commitment to serve better the cause of righteousness. His idea was to cater to the needs of more people (readers) with varied choices. In his demise, the nation has lost a patriotic journalist par excellence. He served the region and left his mark while serving the Hong Kong Standard and the Bangkok Post as Managing Editor and Asia Press Foundation in Manila as its Chief Executive and the UNESCO as Regional Adviser, for Asia and Pacific with his headquarters at Kuala Lumpur.

He had always in mind this region including Bangladesh when he accepted the international position at UNESCO. This has been amply reflected in his letter to this writer: below: " look upon my new assignment as a challenge. Hopefully, it will give me an opportunity to be closely associated with continuing efforts to create new communication structures which can serve the needs of our region, especially of a country like ours' dated 10 Nov. 1981.

During Director General

Amadou's time UNESCO was

faced with severe criticism by Western countries and media as well. The criticism was not fair and unduly hostile against the Director General in particular S M Ali as an 'international bureaucrat' felt it necessary to clarify the correct position of UNESCO in dealing with the imbalance in flow of information. Knowing fully well of the pressure of Western countries particularly the United States of America, he faced the situation boldly and made public the correct position of UNESCO without fear or favour. One is tempted to quote the following from his article which appeare in the Arab News on 20 March. 1984: 'The question underlines a grave misconception that the entire programme of UNESCO. that of the Communication sector, is nothing more and nothing less than a brainchild of UNESCO Secretariat It is a misconception, because the programme of UNESCO, drafted by the Secretariat and scrutinised by the 51-member Executive Council must be approved by the general conference before it is put into effect." Pointing out some of the projects initiated by UNESCO, 5 M All said it was hard to think that any of these projects could be seen by any section of the U5 media as an attempt to muzzle the free press or to deny access of western news agencies to the Asian market.

S M Ali had a facile and powerful pen. As he never hesitated to pinpoint the shortcomings or atrocity of the administration and actors in the international political arena so he ever tried to keep his readers at par with feelings and memories so intimate to him. Lest we forget him and his columns "At Home and Abroad" and "My World" in The Daily Star! We, nay, the nation owes him much He dedicted his life to the profession. I join all others in paying my deepest tributes to S

and brief study tours abroad. To

Population Boom Overwhelms Fight against World Hunger the current level of 1.7 per cent Ian Steele writes from New York

EARS that population growth is overwhelming the fight against world hunger have been supported by a disturbing new round of data published by the Washington-

emblies on the 9th. The ob-

servation team did not concern

itself with the latter event.

though most of the members

We were a team of forty, ten

were still in Pakistan on the

drawn from each of the four

countries participating in the

exercise: Bangladesh, India.

Nepal and Sri Lanka, It looked

like an enlarged version of the

1990 team, new faces slightly

outnumbering the old ones. As

one of the 'repeaters'. I am in a

position to compare and con-

trast the two experiences. The

scenario of 1993 was markedly

different from that of 1990.

Before I come to that, I wish to

Before we formed 20 sub-

say a few words about the ex-

groups, two in each group, and

before we started for our re-

spective destinations all over

Pakistan, we had, according to

the date and hour of our arrival

in Karachi, one or two days'

briefing time, and a time for

meeting with the Governor of

Sind, the Chief Election Commi

ssioner of the Province, a dele-

gation from the Mohajir Qaumi

Movement (MQM), spokesmen

from the PPP, and, most impor-

tantly, from our bosts, the

Human Rights Commission of

Pakistan. A drive through some

of the poorest areas of Karachi

was useful in the same that if

dispelled one notion circulating

in the cosy corridors of Pearl

Intercontinental: a general apa-

thy of voters about the elec-

Karachi, we not only saw nu-

tions. In the poorer districts of

merous election booths full of

activists, but we also came

across huge processions of

party-workers moving in motor-

cades. In a sense, these scenes

belied the idea of a general apa-

thy, but, taking the country as

a whole, and with figures now

available of the percentage of

votes cast, one has to admit

About this general apathy, a

that the prognosis was correct.

simple explanation was offered:

the country was being asked to

elect a National Assembly for

ercise itself.

9th.

based Worldwatch Institute. In a book Vital Signs 1993 -The Trends That Are Shaping Our Future the Institute reports that efforts to slow world population growth have lost momentum and that average per capita food consumption is declining under the stress.

The authors - Lester R Brown, Hal Kane and Ed Ayres - report that efforts to expand output of all basic foods face emerging environmental constraints, including the capacity of the oceans to yield seafood, of grasslands to support livestock. of crops to use fertiliser, and of nature to produce fresh water. As a result, the food needs of an additional 91 million people each year are being satisfied partly by reducing the intake of those already here.

World grain output per capita has fallen by 8 per cent over the past 8 years after a 40 per cent increase between 1950 and 1984. The decline is attributed to stagnant growth in areas under crops, diminishing water supplies for irrigation and the reduced effectiveness of fertilisers.

The authors note there are no new technologies in sight that could restore the 3 per cent annual growth in world grain harvests that prevailed from 1950 to 1984 and substantially reduced world hunger and mainutrition.

Among their findings:

** Grasslands necessary for

Constraints include the capacity of oceans to yield seafood, of grasslands to support livestock, of crops to use fertiliser and of nature to produce fresh water

range-fed beef and sheep are being pushed to or beyond their limits on every continent slowing meat production and leaving little potential for further expansion. Between 1950 and 1990, world production of beef, mutton, pork and poultry grew almost four-fold from 18 to 32 kilogrammes per capita Between 1990 and 1992 world meat production fell almost per cent as both beef and mut-

ton production dropped. .. Fish catches from the world's oceans grew almost 4.6fold after 1950 when nations sent their fleets further afield with ever more sophisticated technologies to meet demand.

Marine biologists at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimate, however, that the record 1989 harvest of 100 million tons was the most that oceanic fisheries can sustain Since then, per capita seafood supplies have fallen from 19.2 kilogrammes to 17.8 kilogrammes — a 7 per cent drop in three years.

If the FAO analysts are correct, the fish catch per person will decline as long as population growth continues. The only new growth is likely to come from aquaculture (fish farming).

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) recently reported that the world's population reached 5.7 billion

people in 1993 - a disturbing figure for the Worldwatch Institute: 'Throughout the Sixties and Seventies, declining fertility held out hope for getting the brakes on population growth before it began to undermine living standards.

The Eighties, however, turned out to be a lost decade, one in which the United States not only abdicated its leadership role, but also withdrew all financial support from UNFPA and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. This deprived millions of couples in the Third World of access to the family planning services needed to control the number and tim-

ing of their children. Vital Sings 1993 observes that everyone born before 1950 has seen the world's population double, with annual increments climbing from 13 million in 1900 to 37 million in 1950 and 91 million in 1992. The authors note that if the declining fertility rates achieved in the 1960s and 1970s had been sustained, zero population growth for the world as a whole could have been achieved in 2030 at a more manageable level of 6.7 billion

But the slowdown in the growth rate stalled in the Eighties. The figure of 6.7 billion is now likely to be reached in 2005. And by 2030, if the annual growth rate remains at

- Depthnews Asia OPINION

Seventies continued.

world population could reach

10.7 billion — 4 billion more

people than would have been

here had the trend of the

Development of Science and Technology

Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology and published in The Daily Star of 15th September, I could not resist the urge to express my reaction to its contents. The secretary has stated the holistic intentions of the government and outlined the policies and programmes to promote science and technology in the country, but the proposed objectives will not be fulfilled because the basic conditions required for building up a strong technological base do not exist at present. In support of my statement. I draw the attention of the enlightened readers to the follow ing facts most of which are either

known or easily verifiable. The profession of scientific research/teaching is different from other professions. An ideal researcher/university teacher has to remain busy with work beyond office hours almost throughout his/her career. The socio-economic conditions of the country is not congenial for producing scientific 'missionaries': there are many solvable problems that are hindering their

progress. In Bangladesh, as in other developing countries, scientific research is carried out mostly in the universities and the research institutes. According to the secretary, there are more than 60 scientific institutions in the country, but none of them is in good health. In the present day world, meaningful research requires good physical facilities and peaceful atmosphere. In most of our research institutes and universities the scientists are engaged in bitter 'dog fights' for capturing the limited opportunities that these organizations are able to offer. There are also factional grouping for domination by disciplines and even by regions. There are good souls among the researchers but they are virtually forced to join one or the other group. Consequently, research activities under such a situation assume secondary importance.

Even a few years ago, political parties used to utilize only the students of universities for their ends. Now they are trying to get the teachers involved. A dangerous game of politicising ate actions.

research institutes. in the research institutes, promotion of scientists is tions to international conference

On reading the article entitled still based on the age-old system Technology policies and plans in of seniority and ACR. There is no Bangladesh" written by the mechanism of objective evaluation. As a result, one does not feel the urge to work hard for quick enhancement of career The system thus favours the inefficient and is a serious disincentive for the honest. Moreover the existing rules governing promotion are violated, often allegedly, in collaboration with dishonest officials. The universities have, however, devised a system of quick promotion by taking advantage of their autonomy and using a tool they call restructuring.

> The unstable political situation, irrational administrative system and indiscipline in the research institutes/universities have produced a group of socalled scientists who, by virtue of their seniority, past reputation and good social and political linkages, may get involved with and manipulate policies and programmes taken up at the higher level in the area of science and technology.

In recent years the professional integrity of the scientists has deteriorated to an alarmingly low level and this is reflected in their activities. For instance, every year the Bangladesh Academy of Science awards gold medals for scientific achievements through big ceremonies but they are very shy in telling the public clearly how the country has benefitted from the work of their awardees. The Bangladesh Association for the Advancement of Science is an other organization which holds big conferences every year by spending lakhs of Taka, but the association has so far failed to produce any realistic science and technology programme for the

country 7. As in the political and ad-

ministration sectors, there is no system of accountability for the research institutes. 8. A thorough analysis will

show that the administrative ministries are mostly responsible for the rot in the research institutes. It seems the ministers and the bureaucrats are least interested in the development of S&T. However, there are conscientious people among the bureaucrats who try to do good but they get transferred by the time they unvery recent development is the derstand the problems and initi-

> 9. Due to the very nature of their job, scientists get invita

avail these opportunities, scientists often have to go through agonizing and humiliating experiences in the controlling ministries. Cases of senior scientists move upto the prime minister The government can easily make the process simple without hurting the interest of the country and thereby relieving the scientists of unnecessary frustration. In this connection, I wish to cite a story about the famous Indian agricultural scientist Dr Swaminathan. I heard it from an Indian friend. When Dr Swaminathan was going to retire from the post of Vice-chairman, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the government decided to extended his services. The prime minister of India wrote him a request letter which started like this: "The Government of India will feel honoured if you kindly agree to our request for extending your service ... etc." By honouring the people of scientific profession we will not lose anything, but get better services from them.

10. The politicians and top bureaucrats often preach the need for establishing science in every walk of our daily life but do little to translate their idea into

As one spent three decades in this field I feel that the creation of the new ministry of science and technology may not do any good for the country. If the government really desires to develop S &T in the country it may take the following steps at the earliest:

a) Create congenial atmosphere in the existing research institutes.

b) Eliminate 'god fathers' or 'trouble makers' if any, from the institutes through a system of fair evaluation of the performance of the scientists.

c) Replace the system of promotion on the basis of length of service and ACR with a modern system of objective evaluation.

d) Increase fund allocation to the institutes to create better physical facilities. e) Revise educational curric-

ula upto SSC level to accommodate more topics of popular science of applied nature. f) Identify honest and capable

scientists in the universities and provide them with liberal research grants. g) Guard against politicising

of research institutes. One who is concerned

For peace

Sir. The Muslim Palestinians and Jews Israelis signed the historic peace accord the other day. In his inaugural and invocation speech President Clinton declared the end of a phase in man's history when man used to kill man on religions rifts. He rather categorically pointed out how the evolutionary process works in our history, and also how it ought to work in future

In a deliberate, rational yet sensational mood he pointed at the guest-children seated in the White House auditorium, trying to draw the attention of the great political leaders of the current day world to the need of bringing about peace and harmony in their life as a matter of symbol of a better new world to usher in.

Clinton's world leadership. apart from whatever political character he has, got established on the day, witnessed by other world leaders, past and present. The supremacy of his vision and the urgency of his zeal for world-peace has sufficiently and proficiently "touched the future". His call was a call to "the human race for a civic sense", and as I feel -

Towards a total civic sense. A uniform code of common For a blissful blossom of an

gelic brothers With angelic virtues throughout the world.

Mostafa Tofayel Hossain Kafiluddinpara, Pabna. **Israel changes**

Let us pray for peace.

position Sir, Israel's permission to publicly celebrate Prophet Mohammad's (SM) birthday, in a long time revealed the flexibility in her attitude toward Muslims

Religious freedom has been respected in the Universal Human Rights (as a right to practise personal faith), but ironic as it is obvious from the violation of that right in one or

more countries that are identifled as civilized nations in this late 20th century!

Islam — the second largest religion with Prophet Mohammad. (SM) as the greatest leader among a hundred thousand plus prophets who descended through times - is lately faced with too many socio-political crises unlike other religions are.

Having been one of the holiest occasions among Islamic rites, the Prophet's birthday festivities underscore the significance of Muslim Ummah which is evidenced by the spontaneous jubilation across the world as has been reinforced by this year's public ceremony in the controversial land that is sacred to more than one spiritual faith.

The positive change in Israel's policy at this time leading to conciliatory diplomacy about Palestinians' autonomy is a realistic position for diminishing communal hostility.

M Rahman Zila School Road, Mymensingh