

A Plea for Due Recognition

Among the darkest spots in our nation's history, the jail killing of the four national leaders on the early morning of 4 November 1975, is definitely one. Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Mansur Ali and Kamruzzaman, leading figures of our war of liberation, were gunned down in their jail cells by a group of armed men...

Syed Nazrul Islam, a lifelong patriot and politician, was the acting president of the revolutionary government during the liberation war. Subsequently, he was the industries minister. Tajuddin Ahmed was the Prime Minister during the liberation war and was among the main architects of conducting the guerilla movement...

Captain Mansur Ali and Kamruzzaman were leaders who dedicated their lives to the gaining of the legitimate rights of our people. Throughout the fifties and sixties they participated in every democratic movement and anti-martial law struggle. They suffered jail terms as the two above, on several occasions, but never strayed from their patriotic duty.

If we rise up above our pretty politics and be fair to truth and to history then these four national leaders should be recognised as such and given their due status. Their patriotism, self-sacrifice, commitment to the rights of our people and dedication, are there for all of us to see and judge.

In addition to restoring them to their deserved place in history, there is the equally significant question of giving them their fundamental right of equality before law and right to justice. Associated with it is our own need as a people, as a nation and a part of the civilized community, to establish rule of law and the notion of supreme sanctity of life. If murder, under whatever pretext, and punishment of the known killers, under some legal manipulation, are allowed to get the better of our higher notion of justice and fairness, then we, as a society, as a people, as representatives of an advanced civilization and inheritors of a very high standard of values and ethics, become discredited and maligned.

The present government's most laudable and valuable credential is its legality. It has come through what is universally recognised as the most free and fair election. Therefore, upholding the fundamental laws and practice of ethics is what we expect from this government. There is absolutely no reason why this government should not take appropriate steps to bring to public knowledge how and why these four national leaders were so brutally killed. An appropriate judicial enquiry commission should be set up with full backing of the government, to reveal to us the perpetrators of the atrocities of that most sordid chapter in our history. Such a move will immensely enhance the prestige of Begum Zia's government.

Remembering Dr Khuda

The sixteenth death anniversary of Dr Muhammad Qudrat-e-Khuda went past this nation quietly on Wednesday. It is good that it was so. For an ostentatious remembrance would only have shamed the more conscientious amongst us. We have so far honoured the great man by neglecting all that he stood for.

His first claim to fame and glory came from his being the first Indian Muslim to get a D.Sc in chemistry from the University of London. This was, on hindsight, not quite the recognition of the real brilliance of the man as a scientist. However such dubious distinctions have a staying power and it effectively kept our nation's attention away from where his true achievements and contributions lay. Early in his career he set out for something out of step with the average science professional. He chose education and headed the administration of it in Bengal before partition of India.

From there to his pivotal role in this region as an organiser of scientific researches was but a natural development — in the later role he founded the BCSIR. We are not fully posted with the worthiness of the council as either a spawning ground of researchers as Zainul's Art Institute has been for budding painters, or something contributing mightily to the technology and economy of Bangladesh. Whatever BCSIR means today to Bangladesh, and one feels that it should mean much indeed, this nation is indebted to Dr Khuda for that. If BCSIR is not the shining thing it possibly could be, it serves as a first pointer to how we have let down his bequests to the nation. There are worse cases of that.

From the beginning of his career he took a firm stand on the issue of writing science in Bengali. In this he was very stoutly supported by stalwarts like Professor S N Bose. This indeed was a mission with him. We have not, as an independent sovereign nation, carried his mission to any spectacular success. Science writing in Bengali now seems almost to be a lost case.

The worst we have done is consigning the Khuda Commission Report on Education, done under the behest of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to a state of limbo. Education-wise we are still roaming in the wilderness. After that fatal step of rejecting the best that independence could do to our education, it is no wonder we haven't been able to take one single right step so far.

Any meaningful remembrance of Dr Khuda would, as such, essentially involve the acceptance of the Report, dynamic headway to be made in writing all books of science at least up to the master's level in Bengali and the flowering of the BCSIR into an organisation that would bring about a big change in the application of science benefiting our national economy as well as our technological capability.

BOI should Do its Bit in the Matter of Sick Industries

by Sohel Manzur

ALTHOUGH unusual, a new terminology that has replaced the mostly used and discussed 'sick industry' in the government documents, has created a cause of great concern for the entrepreneurs as well as those who are really concerned about the sick units.

What does a name matter? It is not perhaps well enough to justify the new term, 'inactive industry', or to console the entrepreneurs, who are suspecting a deep rooted motive in the re-naming of the sick projects. In fact, there is very little scope for setting aside such suspicion arising out of a number of reasons.

According to some entrepreneurs of sick industries, the government is unwilling to identify their industries as sick in order to avoid its responsibility as per the Industrial Policy, 1991.

The government is obliged to take necessary policy decisions and provide fresh loans in soft terms and conditions for rehabilitation of the sick industries as per its own industrial policy. The Industries Ministry is supposed to take necessary measures for identifying the sick in-

dustries and, in some cases, recommend for re-scheduling the overdue loans.

But the very existence of the sick industries is now at stake, since the well defined term 'sick industry' is being erased from the government documents by introducing a new terminology. The Industries Ministry is providing the sick industries with certificates where they are defined as 'inactive industry', not as 'sick industry'. The entrepreneurs of the sick units are being constrained to get legal support because of this new identification. In fact, this is the main reason for their concern.

Although the government is very much aware of the definition of the sick industries, it needs to be reiterated because of some comments often made by the Finance Minister in seminars and discussion meetings.

According to the Sick Industries Revival and Rehabilitation Cell (SIRRC), an industry which failed to reach normal production level with normal profit margin or failed to cross the break-even point even after six years of its installation due to reasons beyond the control of the entrepreneur,

will be considered as sick.

The Cell also identified as many as 17 common reasons for sickness of the industrial units. In most cases, either the government or the banks were found responsible for the mal-adies.

their rehabilitation while the banks were asked to rehabilitate them. The Finance Ministry felt that the rehabilitation should be on a bank-client relationship basis.

A review committee was also formed to consider the cases of

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

If the definition of sick industry by the Cell is accepted, all the 1556 sick units deserve immediate rehabilitation.

The report prepared by the cell, which was represented by the bankers, chamber leaders, entrepreneurs of the sick units and officials of concerned ministries and government agencies, was not perhaps accepted. The Finance Ministry announced a new formula, in the first half of last year, of rehabilitating the industries.

According to the new concept, the sick units were asked to apply to the concerned banks and financing institutions for

those entrepreneurs, who would be denied fresh loans for rehabilitation by the banks. The government also allocated Tk 100 crore which is supposed to be provided by the Bangladesh Bank for the sick units if the review committee recommends. This policy is, perhaps, conducive to the government policy of not forcing the banks to do anything. There is also very little scope for criticizing the new formula of rehabilitation. But, what progress the government could make in rehabilitating the industries which have become sick for reasons beyond the control of the entrepreneurs? Perhaps, the govern-

ment itself would say the progress is disappointing.

The Prime Minister's office has recently started monitoring the progress in this regard and, according to an official, it may even interfere into the matter if the poor progress continued to persist. According to the reports submitted by the banks to the Finance Ministry, a total of 508 sick units have been brought under the process of rehabilitation, of which 59 units are from the 1556 units, identified by the Sick Industries Cell. The review committee took decision on only about 70 units in the last one year out of the 400 applicants. A number of industries are also awaiting High Court decision on their writ petition against the decision of their banks and financing institutions.

Besides, the entrepreneurs of sick industries alleged that the statements given by the banks to the Finance Ministry regarding rehabilitation of sick industries are not true. In most cases, the entrepreneurs are unwilling to accept the conditionalities imposed by the banks and financing institutions for rehabilitation of their industries. So, the actual num-

ber of rehabilitation would be less than that mentioned by the banks. In short, this is all that has happened in the last two years.

Nobody will agree that the situation is not congenial for attracting new investment in the industrial sector. There are entrepreneurs who syphoned off bank money to other businesses, thereby pushing their industries towards sickness.

Besides, there are also the entrepreneurs who really took the business as a challenge. The government would have to identify them individually, treat them as they deserve and expose the genuine defaulters to the people. On the other hand, the government would also have to reactivate the key institution, the Board of Investment (BOI), which is performing far less than it is assigned for by the law under which it had been set up. In fact, the BOI should have handled the sick industries alone. The BOI is, in fact, given all the powers and authority under the law to do anything regarding investment and industrialisation. It does not even need to be strengthened further or given more power to do so.

Turkey — War in the South East

by Arshad-uz Zaman

N EARLY two months ago, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) declared all out war on Turkey. He has been true to his word. Violence in the South East of Turkey, which covers nearly 1/3 of Turkish territory, has escalated to a point that it is truly a war that is being fought by the PKK guerrillas against Turkish security forces.

The total number of guerrillas is estimated at 30,000 and the Turkish forces are nearly 150,000. The guerrillas operate with large teams of anywhere between 50 and more and has been raining death and destruction on civil and military and the daily casualty on both sides have gone upto at least 20 a day. Ghoulish pictures of PKK atrocities are splashed daily in the Turkish media.

In this 9 year old war PKK's latest and the highest ranking victim is General Aydin, who died under the hail of gunfire, while fighting the terrorists in a

small town called Lice. This latest incident has roused the entire nation and the Turkish authorities have vowed to crush the terrorists. The National Security Council, whose members include ranking civil and military leaders met under the chairmanship of President Suleyman Demirel, and decided to move forcefully in the region and crush the terrorists. The measures include a new anti-terrorism bill, around which the Government plans to build a national consensus, stringent measures to guard all the frontier posts and an end to outside assistance to the PKK.

The latest events have brought about the first major cabinet reshuffle and the ministers dealing with security matters like defence and interior have been shifted to other

posts. There is talk of a major cabinet shake up in November. One factor that is complicating the picture here is the fact that the Prime Minister, first time a lady, is only three months' in office and her coalition partner Murat Karayalcin, leader of the Social Democratic Party, is only a month old in office. They both are facing challenges within their own parties. Turkey has very important municipal elections in March next throughout the country. Today the security situation in the South East is such that holding of elections in one third of Turkey is unthinkable. This would totally vitiate the democratic process. This was uppermost in the minds of the Turkish authorities when they decided recently to extend the State of Emergency in the

region for another period of four months. There are voices in favour of Martial Law in the region, a current strongly resisted by the present Government.

PKK has given a new twist to her latest campaign to destabilise the Turkish Government. She has thrown out all the journalists from the region calling them partisan, stopped distribution of newspapers (there are mazing pictures on the TV of newspapers being distributed at the police stations). The Turkish press has energetically protested the PKK methods and the journalists association President along with a team went to the area and held a protest meeting. The PKK has also forced all the important political parties to close their offices in the region. PKK's

anger against the media is understandably for they are invariably described as a terrorist organisation and they seem to have lost all hope of influencing public opinion in their favour. The Turkish Government has made significant gain among western governments by branding the PKK as a terrorist organisation. President Bill Clinton called PKK a terrorist organisation during Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's recent visit to the US.

The latest round of blood letting grips the population with a sense of malaise. There is anger against the PKK but the feeling is gaining ground that some political gestures will have to be made towards the largely Kurdish population of the South East of Turkey, whose number is 1/4th of the total

population of Turkey. Taboos are breaking down. Introduction of the Kurdish language in the schools of the Kurdish majority areas, Kurdish programme on the national TV are being discussed freely as possible gestures towards national integration.

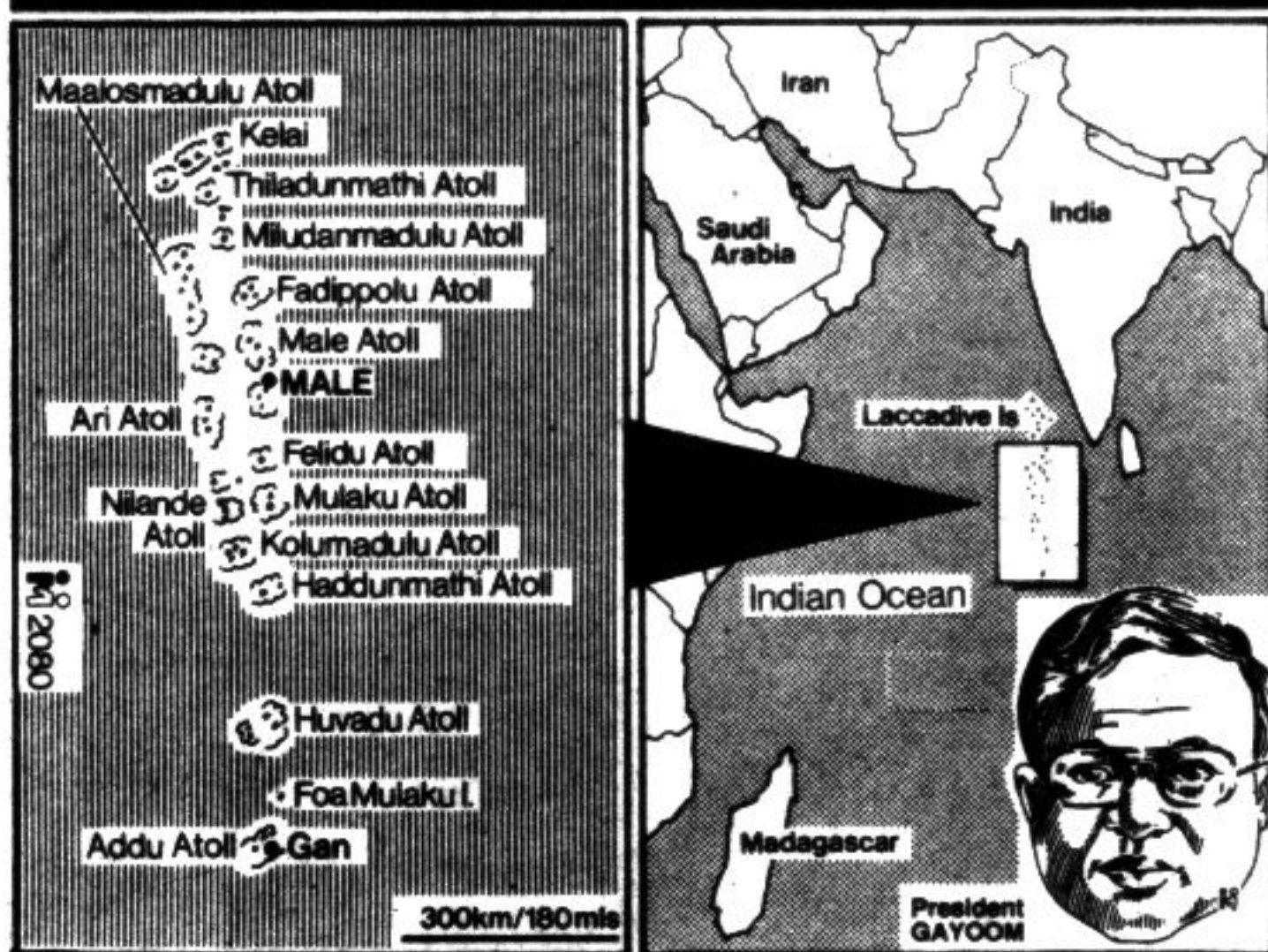
If there is consensus on a political solution, at the present time it is the guns that are talking. Footsteps of the harsh winter can be heard, when the South East will be snowed under. The PKK will have to descend from those snow covered mountains. The Turkish security forces appear readying for an all out assault. A specially trained team will be despatched in the region within two months. Turkey has already secured the support of her two important neighbours — Iraq and Iran that they will not harbour the fighters of Ocalan. A hot winter awaits the inhospitable South East of Turkey.

Vote Ends Power Struggle in Land of Atolls

Steve Percy writes from Male

A referendum in the Maldives has given President Maumoon Gayoom a fourth term in office. The vote followed a power struggle with a former minister who had been banished for violating the constitution. Maldives has changed dramatically in the last 15 years because of the success of tourism. Its tiny capital, is jammed with air-conditioned Japanese cars and radio taxis.

Maldives



change has swept the Maldives. A new prosperity has been born. It is something one can hardly miss in the congested capital of Male where more than 55,000 people pack 1.7 sq. kms. The narrow streets are jammed with air-conditioned Japanese cars and radio taxis which hardly ever get out of second gear. The per capita income of the country has grown from \$200 to \$650 over the last 15 years — a notable achievement in the con-

text of South Asia. What is more, everyone has work. This is largely thanks to tourism. Over the last two decades, the tropical perfection of the Maldives has become an exclusive destination for rich tourists. Tourism now brings in a quarter of government revenue.

The wave of new riches has not reached all the outer islands. Some schools and clinics have been built on the distant atolls, where people make a living chiefly from pole fishing for tuna and harvesting coconuts.

Development has lagged behind the capital and its nearby islands. As a powerful minister since early 1991, Ibrahim used his patronage to build a strong power base among the atoll chiefs.

Ibrahim's popularity may have been his downfall. In the lead up to the election, Gayoom removed him from office and charges were brought. In one case a woman was tried for allegedly using witchcraft to help Ibrahim's cause.

Ibrahim was tried in absentia and internally banished for 15-and-a-half years for allegedly violating the constitution by trying to influence the vote for nomination of the President.

Not that Ibrahim should necessarily be seen as an injured innocent. As a wealthy politician and businessman who had headed the State Trading Corporation, he abruptly left the country in 1990 when he was to have appeared before an inquiry into the misappropriation of government funds. Three months later he returned and was soon back in the Gayoom government, apparently cleared of guilt.

This time round it looks like the family estrangement is more complete. The severity of the banishment and two further

outstanding charges of financial impropriety suggest that Ibrahim's days in politics are over.

Nor will he be missed by the liberal, well-travelled elite of Male. For these people, Ibrahim represented an anti-democratic old guard which has held back democratic reform.

Gayoom needs to regain his credibility with those who have tasted Western-style democracy. Although he has embarked on a policy of opening up the economy and liberalising the traditional society, the scope and pace of change has fallen behind the expectations of the liberal elite.

The President has said he will reform the political system which owes much to the feudal system that was abolished in 1968. He has vowed "a complete transformation" of the one-candidate presidential electoral system that has kept him in power for so long.

He has made promises of further democratic reform before, but every time they have been abandoned. Even now many Maldivians cannot believe that they have seen the last of Ilyas Ibrahim. — GEMINI NEWS

STEVE PERCY works for the BBC World Service.

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.

Distribution of calendars

Sir, It is customary with the banks, insurance companies besides a good number of commercial concerns to print calendars for distribution amongst their account holders and clients. It is a sad experience with many account holders of banks, who despite repeated visits are mostly deprived of a calendar which they feel they are entitled to get.

It is perhaps better for the concerned managements to fix some formula to issue calendars to account holders at the counter at the time of making transactions. The managers or officers who are in charge of distribution of calendars when approached by the account holders, take a negative posture and ask them to visit again 'next week', 'after some days', 'next Saturday', 'next Monday' finally to tell that 'sorry, the stock is exhausted.' It is perhaps better for them to say at the outset that they have no room to accommodate request

of one and all for a calendar. The question is if all account holders cannot be supplied with a calendar each, the criteria should be selected as to who would be the fortunate recipients, so that others may be relieved of the tedious job of running after it again and again.

H Akhtar Mirpur, Dhaka

Rail crossings

Sir, We were deeply shocked at the tragic death of four persons at Kamalapur rail-crossing early last month. The concerned authority should pay due importance to the matter to stop further repetition of such tragic incidents.

Besides signaling and putting movable iron bar barriers on either side of the track at rail crossings, the Gatesmen need to be vigilant and well trained and their duty hours maintained religiously. And it is very important to note that shops and establishments near any rail-crossing need to be re-

moved at least 100 meters away from either side. If this is done, the approaching train will be more visible from a safe distance to alert the crossing traffic ahead, and thus further loss of life and property can be avoided to a great extent.

Motius Samad Chowdhury Housing Estate, Sylhet

S M Ali

Sir, During the last two years, even after democracy was restored, we have seen dark clouds hovering over the political horizon and sometimes clouding the vision of the most articulate men in the political arena. In the midst of such bewilderment gripping the nation, the Star editorial radiated sparks of hope and animation. I felt vastly impressed to see that the paper could speak out the truth overriding all challenges. This brought me closer to Mr S M Ali.

On two occasions I talked to him over telephone conveying my sense of gratification for the straight forward views expressed in the editorial on different national issues. Late Mr S M Ali reciprocated my feelings with all warmth.

Learning that I used to write for the Bangladesh Observer in pre-liberation and post liberation days, late Mr S M Ali inspired me to write for The Daily

Star, but alas it never came about while he was alive.

The nation lost him at a time when he was most needed.

Md Asadullah Khan Engineering University.

Taslina Nasreen's 'Lajja'

Sir, Of the usual crop of contradictory and confused press notes issued in recent months, the one on Taslima Nasreen and 'Lajja' appearing in the press earlier last week, last month; must surely be one of the worst.

There is nothing against Islam in 'Lajja.' It is an unqualified statement against communalism, which every citizen of this country should endorse. That communalism is on the rise in India or elsewhere in the world is absolutely no reason to allow its rise in Bangladesh. To deny its growth, is to give tacit approval.

The contention that the party which had openly put a price on Nasreen's head has since 'denied' it, thereby exonerating the government's inaction against it, speaks volumes of its inability to fulfil its basic mandate to the people — that of providing security to the individual citizen against groups who are a law unto themselves.

Ruby, Farhad and Farah Ghuznavi, Dhaka.

OPINION Campus Terrorism: Give Law a Chance

As is obviously and painfully clear, life on the campus these days is "nasty, brutish and short". Our regression into the medieval age of barbarism and innate brutality is becoming an almost accepted fact of life.

Mr Mahfuz Anam's commentary on the subject of Campus Terrorism (The Daily Star, Nov 4) touches but only the tip of the iceberg. Mr Anam speaks of the BNP Chairperson's inability to come to terms with the reality as it is perceived to be. But does not the problem lie elsewhere? A nation that prides itself on overthrowing established governments through assassinations, violence, mayhem, anarchy, hartals and the overbearing dominance of a culture that seeks solutions in the streets, is merely reaping the dubious rewards of the seeds that it has sown over the past several years.

Students have been given an overexaggerated sense of importance in our national life, and all for the wrong reasons. Political parties starved of any sustaining and credible ideologies have relied on and patronised two-bit thugs and common felons, flattering them with an umbrella within the student community. In return they are at the beck and call of the political dons, and at any given moment ready to rip the established social order apart. The only problem now is that, the Frankenstein has outgrown its mentor, and the genie is refusing to go back into the bottle. It is the middle aged student leaders who now call the shots.

The remedy to correct this illness is to let the long arm of the law, which has been systematically chopped short by successive governments, take its own course. Give the law enforcing agencies a chance. Let them wake up from their impotent slumber and look at reality straight in the eye. Let the police take a terrorist by the scruff of his neck and submit him to the processes of the law of the land, rather than glorifying him with the status of a "leader" of such and such political faction. There is no sight more sick and pathetic than armed policemen having ring side seats to murders and mayhem committed in broad daylight and not lifting a finger.

What we witness in our daily lives, are simply crimes; they are committed by criminals. In any other country, at any other time, criminals would have been punished, student or otherwise. Let us come to terms with the inescapable act that the state machinery has the ways and means to encounter these criminals, and is empowered and expected to do so, for the common good of the society at large.

Mr Anam should have posed the questions "Why is the government crippled by this fear psychosis; Why is the government a prisoner of its own shadow?" The answer should be forthcoming and forthright, if not for any reason other than the fact that it owes it to the nation.

Sharukh Khan Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka