The Baily Star

Founder-Editor : Late S. M: Ali

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The Incorrigible Campus

Assailants took away the life of Zakir Hossain, final year MA student and leader of BCL, on Thursday at Jagannath Hall. This is the third murder in the campus of resident students in the past two months. This latest case of criminal violence deserving to be met with nothing less than the capital punishment tells grievously upon the goodwill of the university as an institution The DU is for long legally very awkwardly placed in that it has been convicted in court for failing to provide necessary protection to its resident students in the case of seven murders committed firing squad-style soon after independence. Nothing has happened in the meantime that could improve upon the record of its dependability in the matter of resident security. On the contrary, with the three recent murders the university's claim to be a viable authority effectively controlling the condition of its scholars pursuit of lear ning has been robbed almost wholly of meaning.

With the situation being what it is, it wouldn't become the government or the ruling party or the university authorities to brag about their yeomen service in the cause of education for quite a Stop talking big and try to effectively arrest academic terror, that is what the Zakir murder is yelling at the people at the controls.

But then we must not be swayed by the horror of any situation of wanton killing and rather proceed coolly to heal the diseased areas of the campus life of our universities. We must appreciate that the process set in motion by Vice-Chancellor Emajuddin and teachers of the university and subsequently supported by all worthwhile student bodies has so far retained an effective pace in spite of some early setbacks. Barring incidents albeit fatal of internecine character with groups trying to settle scores with each other - no major student body has violated the process of ending terror. In fact the process, possibly for the first time in many years, hasn't even been covertly undermined. The last three murders as such should be treated apart from the mainstream process and remedies found to contain chances of further eruption of group vendetta. The major student bodies must be pressured into owning the moral responsibility of righting their own unsettled houses. Our guess is they are now in a frame of mind to yield to such pressure.

There is now an atmosphere of horrific violence vitiating life in Bangladesh, specially in the capital city. The Romena double murder case and the Isha murder committed by five school children, and others such taking place every day, have something to do with pacing the situation of violence in the DU campus as elsewhere in the country. On the same day Zakir was killed with bullet shots in Dhaka, Nurul Huda, a prominent JCD leader, was assaulted in Chittagong and left dangerously close to death with hands and legs broken and tendons cut - something very certainly pointing to the Shibir activists.

The government, it appears, is hardly interested in anything that doesn't hurt or benefit them directly. The opposition is adept in steering clear of any responsibility in even nation-sized problems. Terror and the current slide into a hole of violence have to be challenged by all. For a failure to do that would hurt the nation as a whole.

Energy Network Expands

Netrokona is the latest town to become 'a part of the natural gas supply network which has been gradually expanding over the last few years. Under the Brahmaputra Basin Project of the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company, natural gas supply in the greater Mymensingh area has got a tremendous boost. Only a few weeks back gas supply was instituted at Kishoregani and Jamalpur. According to official statements the Tk 322 crore Brahmaputra Basin Project aims at supplying gas to Jamuna Fertilizer Factory and to several other parts of the Mymensingh area.

We would like to commend the Titas gas authority, especially its top level management personnel for the drive and dynamism they have shown in expanding the gas transmission network. We fully agree with the Prime Minister's observation during the inauguration of the Netrokona facility, that natural gas supply can generate a whole range of productive economic activities, leading to an overall socio-economic transformation of the whole region. Cheap energy being the main driving force of production, it is only natural that its abundant supply should spurt a flurry of investment in the areas where

gas is being introduced. However, we are not fully convinced that best use is being made of this valuable natural resource. There is widespread allegation of its abuse and misuse. As for abuse the main contention is that of wastage - in production, in transmission and in its utilization. As for the first two the responsibility clearly lies with Titas Gas. Given the initial impression of abundance of our natural gas supply, there was lack of attention, especially in the early years, in enforcing strict wastage control measures. And since it was assumed that the gas supply was huge, the concern for leakage was hardly there. Thankfully such attitude gave way to a more stringent and cost-effective outlook. Under the current management leadership, significant progress has been made in preventing production and transmission wastage,

However, wastage continues to be rather high in the utilization process. Both industrial and domestic use of gas remains heavily underpriced. In the industrial sector, this leads to adoption of technologies which do not make the most efficient use of this scarce resource. The domestic tariff system of charging by the month regardless of the extent of use, leads to , burners being kept lit for hours on end without any need. The failure, a few years back, of Titas Gas to introduce gas meters in the household was a setback in controlling domestic wastage of our natural gas.

While we commend Titas Gas for the determination and efficiency with which it is bringing ever wider areas into the gas supply network, we would like to urge the energy ministry to invest necessary resources and expertise in looking for alternative sources of energy. The cost and efficiency of producing and using solar energy has dramatically improved over the last decade. We must remain fully abreast of this development and give special support to those of our companies and entrepreneurs willing to invest in this area. Biogas and wind are other sources of energy that also deserve to be tooked into. The main thing is to become aware that energy is an extremely valuable and scare resource and we must use what we have got, most judiciously.

Bangladesh Railway: Grappling with Groans?

LTHOUGH the relative importance has been on L h the wane, railways or trains still constitute one of the most important modes of transport all over the world The surge in interest in travel by train seems to rekindle, in recent years, with a growing feeling that this mode of transport appears relatively more environment friendly and less prone to risk'than its arch competitor, road transport. And since the operation and management of railway mostly lie at the hands of the public sector, it appears relatively more "welfare" oriented allowing more employment and cheaper fares. There was a time in Bangladesh when a train was almost "the" transport for any long distance. This dominance was further filliped by the cross boarder traffic (upto 1965) that helped the then EPR with more revenues and also with economies of scale. However, with the passage of time, our BR seems heading to be outclassed by the advent of time-saving and luxurious road transport. The BR network now is alleged to be bedeviled with inefficiency, higher operating costs and mismanagement. It is being alleged that BR is an incompetitive transport mode and a subsidy dependent infrastructure with low quality services While its importance is still so much felt, serious efforts at its graduation from a backward. uneconomic to a forward and

more economic looking status

recounts a litany of historical

slights Macedonia has suffered

at the hands of neighbours over

Tales of conspiracies, ag-

gression and treaties broken by

Serbs, Greeks, Albanians,

Turks. Romanians - complete

with dates, names and places -

roll off his tongue in much the

same way a US youth might re-

cite the batting averages of

and not care about Macedonia

is not normal," says Hristov.

chairman of the youth organi-

sation of the local chapter of the

Internal Macedonian Revolu-

its roots in the fight for the

rights of Slavic inhabitants of

the Ottoman Empire. Today.

Hristov and his comrades are

potential foot soldiers if the

Balkan conflict spreads to the

country that now bears the

name Macedonia: the former

Yugoslav republic whose fron-

tier lies just nine miles from the

south-western Bulgarian town

quilt of nationalities making up

the Balkan peninsula. The

Macedonia Question remains

especially convoluted. The name

'Macedonia', actually a geo-

graphical designation, is

claimed by citizens of three

countries. Greece, Bulgaria and

the newly independent Republic

of Macedonia all lie on the his-

The Greeks maintain the

name is an ancient Hellenic

designation and home of its

proudest historical figure:

Alexander the Great. Athens re-

fuses to recognise the Republic

of Macedonia, which it refers to

simply as Skopje, the name of

imposed an economic blockade

on Macedonia, cutting off the

country's access to the Aegean

south-western Bulgaria as 'Pirin

Macedonia, after the mountain

range that dominates the re-

Macedonia, in Bulgarian par-

lance, is known as 'Vardar

gion. The Republic

The Bulgarians refer to

To press its case. Greece has

that country's capital.

torical territory of Macedonia.

Even, on the complicated

of Blagoevgrad.

The 100-year-old group has

"For me, to be a Bulgarian

favourite baseball players.

tionary Organisation.

ENEATH towering portraits of warrior forefath-

ers. Vasil Hristov

is urgently called for.

the last 1,000 years.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), in its recent fifth dialogue, chose to deliberate on the current status of this vital transport mode of Bangladesh and for that to happen, there assembled all those who usually matter for BR. The basic premises upon which the ball of the dialogue rolled are: the relevance of BR for the present and the future. its ailments and the ways and means to make it a healthy enterprise. The following discussions draws upon the opinions of the participants in that dia-

Roots of the Rots

Several critical elements in the evolution of the rail transport system of the country are alleged to contribute to the present state of its uncompetitiveness, subsidy dependency and poor quality service. Prominent among those are reported to be: (a) a dual legacy of BR (Assam Bengal Railway and East Bengal Railway which were designed to connect Calcutta port with a vast hinterland in colonial India): (b) a dual track system - the meter gauge and the broad gauge systems - constraining the development of an integrated rail transport network; (c) a lack of interest in modernising and commercialising through rationalisation of routes and adoption of appropriate technological upgrading; (d) misallocation of resources to both fixed and rolling stocks; (e) lack of investment in key afeas such as upgrading of passenger

by Abdul Bayes

coaches and freight services investment in engines and electrification of lines : (f) poor maintenance and (g) weak organisational and operational systems. All of these negative attributes of BR are reported to have encouraged delay and low quality of service. that, on average, took between 13 and 18 days to complete a wagon journey of about 260 km (1990/91), and triggered off rampant corruption, revenue leakage and ticketless travel. Added to the piles of constraints are the political considerations outweighing economic viability considera-

It is being argued by some

that the gradual erosion of railway as the dominant transport system of the country and the faster growth of road transport network, contributed to a natural market failure for the BR and that the absence of east-west traffic across the Jamuna only exacerbated the plight. BR is now trailing with a deficit of about \$ 28 million in 1992 as compared to that of \$ 7 million in 1981. Besides, the working expenses are alleged to have risen by 44 per cent per annum over the last two decades in the backdrop of (i) a passenger traffic decline by about half (from 106 million to about million) and (ii) a decrease of freight traffic from 3.2 million tons to 2.5 million tons over the last one decade.

Challenges and Changes

Considering the fact that railway is environment friendly, less risky and also pro-poor transport mode, its importance could hardly be undermined in the context of a country like Bangladesh. BR could contribute to the attain ment of a 7 per cent sustain able growth rate. The construction of Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, the exploration of coal in the northern part and the introduction of container services at Chittagong port should inevitably raise the nobility of this transport. But it must equally be emphasized that with its present state of health, BR can rarely serve the nation at economic price Given the wide recognition by major political parties about the need for its major over hauling, the reform agenda should not lark far behind.

BR's comparative advantage in handling freight has been edged out, to a great extent, by other means. To regain a part of that lost empire, BR could arrange for better container handling, even provide door to door service and attempt to revise some of the tariffs. The users of this service tend to contend that because of (i) relatively cheaper rates and the special facilities for container service by BR (which led to a rise in container traffic); (ii) longer insurance coverage; and (iii)

rail receipt from BR being accepted from RMG exporters in case of a delivery under quota arrangements, there is a renewed interest in BR's service. The implementation of the long-term plan (up to the year 2008) to modernise BR through new investments in fixed and rolling stocks and the on going reforms, however, seem to enable BR to upgrade its services to the consumers. The example of India. where comprehensive at tempts are underway to convert meter gauge into broad gauge, could be a path finder

By and large, commerciali-

sation of BR should assume increasing attention. It is argued that BR can only survive by attaining commercial viability which is, in fact, a function of well planned and well implemented reform agenda. However, at the moment, commercialization may not imply profit-maximization. BR lives with certain public sector obligations and commercialisation should embrace "gradual reduction of government subsidy ultimately leading to coverage of its break-even cost of operation rather than through generating a high rate of return on investment." It may be mentioned here that in this sense BR was commercially viable till 1981.

Private Sector Co-operation

In its attempt to commercialise, first, BR could embark on private sector co-operation. Selected privatization of some

tion is reported to be already in practice Le contracting out sale of tickets is reported to have been approved by policy makers and awaiting implementation. Second leasing out some of the loss making lines could be another option to rule out free travels. Third, some of the economic lines could be identified and shut down. Fourth, prior to 1965. about one-fourth of the revenue was generated through cross border traffic and a revival of that could make BR relatively weather. However, such an attempt has wider political and economic ramifications that warrant attention in the long run. On the otherhand, the Internal Rate of Return of Jamuna Bridge is reported to go up by 18 per cent once the railway option is factored in. Thus cross border traffic and Jamuna Bridge should wave in good days for BR in the years to come. On institutional side, an introduction of a system of re-

of the services could be feasi-

ble given the current state of

affairs. An innovative privatisa-

ward and punishment could be another boon solicited. The division of labour and responsibility between GOB/Ministry of Communication, the Railway Board and the Railway Management should be clearly spelled out. And finally, political considerations and bureaucratic highhandedness should take leave and make room for more autonomy and economy as far as BR is con-

Knives on Macedonian Pie

Macedonia - after the main river that flows through the country - or, among some zealots, 'West Bulgaria'.

But the Bulgarian government has repeatedly made clear it harbours no territorial claims on its neighbour.

Bulgaria was the first country to recognise the Republic of Macedonia when it declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1992, and officials say both publicly and privately they do not want to become embroiled in any conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

Having fought four wars this century - the two Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913 and the two world wars - primarily over . the question of Macedonia, Bulgaria is reluctant to get involved there again.

"If Macedonia were to catch fire, if war were to break out there, it would be much worse than in Bosnia," said Mihail Ivanov, an adviser to Bulgarian President Zhelyu Zhelev on minority issues." This is why we were the first country in the world to recognise Macedonia, why we have declared the borders to be inviolable."

Nonetheless, many Bulgarian leaders see conflict in Macedonia as a real possibility. If the arms embargo on Bosnia-Hercegovina were to be lifted, or the delicate balance between Macedonia's Albanians and Slavs were to be upset, for example, Macedonia could get

drawn into the conflagration. And if that were to happen, it may be difficult to keep thousands of Bulgarian irregulars such as Hristov and his comrades from fighting alongside their brethren in Macedonia.

"Bulgaria, as a state, has an official political position that for the time being it is not prepared to fight," said Krasimir Karakachanov, the baby-faced 30-year-old national leader of the Internal Macedonian

Revolutionary Organisation. "But thousands of men are prepared to defend their brothers. The Bulgarian population can't remain uninvolved, "he Macedonia is shaping up to be the eye of a potentially violent Balkan hurricane. David Rocks reports for Inter Press Service from Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Brewing Balkan Storm



Karakachanov denied reports that his group is stockpiling weapons to prepare for such an eventuality. He said his group seeks to avoid conflict rather than promote it.

But Karakachanov nonetheless said he could mobilise thousands of men "in a short time" if a crisis were to erupt, and any Bulgarian leader who does not lead his nation into the fight would go down in history

as a traitor. "We have great potential," he said. "You have to remember that in Bulgaria there are a million and a half people of Macedonian origin, and these people have a great deal of importance in Bulgarian politics."

The matter is further complicated by the fact that. Macedonians themselves are not 100 percent convinced of the motives of their Bulgarian friends. While nearly every Bulgarian considers the two

peoples to constitute one and the same nation, many Macedonians believe they are a separate nationality — and take every possible opportunity to underline their differences.

Slavic natives of the two countries, for example, speak virtually the same language. But while Bulgarians maintain that the two tongues are indeed the same, Macedonians say theirs is a separate language.

To press the point, Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov, arrived in Sofia last spring with an interpreter akin to US President Bill Clinton showing up in London and asking someone to translate British Prime Minister John

Major's words to hint. The language issue has soured relations between the two countries, and several agreements between them have been held up due to questions

another day." The creation is

not justified. I thought to my-

self again, while still looking

down, but I soon realised that

"all such comforts, pleasures

and also sufferings are only

temporal. The ultimate benefi-

ciary is he whom Allah the

Almighty is satisfied with. And

the pleasure in the Heaven is

even greater, everlasting and

Now-a-days I lie mostly in

beyond human imagination.

about whether documents should be signed in one language or two.

Bulgarians say Macedonia is trying to usurp their history. By claiming Bulgarian traditions and national heroes as their own, Macedonians create tensions between two countries that should be good neighbours, Bulgarians argue.

"We understand that they want to prove themselves as a country, but we don't them todo so at the expense of our langnage, our history," said Konstantin Andreev, head of Balkan issues at Bulgaria's

can't create a nation by stealing parts of history from other national groups." Blagoevgrad members of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "You

Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, meanwhile, say that they too want to avoid conflict with the Republic of Macedonia - although they made clear their opposition to the country's government.

If Macedonians were allowed to speak freely, they claim, they would unanimously say they are Bulgarians. Only the leaders of the country are trying to create a separate Macedonian nationality.

"We are two states but one nation," group leader Kostadin Serafimov said. "We consider Vardar to be Bulgarian land."

Science, Miracles and Annihilation of Populations

The Daily Star published on phurous material are still visi-October 9, 1994, an article by ble in the Dead Sea. It was

somewhat erroneous.

through colonial exploitation, cultural activity difficult. ploitation, giving rise to the mentioned above annihilating problems of industrial pollu- large segments of world popution, destruction of environ- lations, none except one was mental balance, warming of linked with shortage of food or climate, etc. They are advising resources. The lone exception the underdeveloped countries is the recent drought in East to stabilise population growth. Africa. This event however as if the problems now faced cannot be linked with any of are the creations of population the phenomena mentioned by growth alone in the poor coun- Prof Kendall, such as depletion tries. It was also stated that if of resources, too much industhe population is not sta- trialisation, pollution or green bilised, nature will do it bru- revolution, etc. The drought of

 Yes, in the recorded history dictable as earthquakes taking of human race there were place all over the world these many instances of brutal an- days rather frequently. In fact nihilatiton of population, but as if Prof Kendall cares to think, we know there was no in- he will find that populations stance of annihilation due to are wiped out when they least food shortage or resource expect it. If someone predicts shortage. Josephus, a Jewish it, usually he is decried as historian of the first century doomsday prophet! AD reported about the complete destruction of a city is that the UN was found to be phurous material erupted from for wiping out of populations in the earth and there were the past. thunder storms from the sky which ignited the erupted material. As a result the whole city was reduced to ashes in a few hours. Traces of the sul-

Linda B Bolido of Depthnews widely believed that the city Asia, under the title "Science was destroyed for committing Has no Miracle Cure for sodomy which, unfortunately, World's Ills" covering some the UN seem to be interested lectures presented at the in promoting these days. About International Conference on a million Jews were killed by Population and Development the Roman conquerors. in held in Cairo in September Palestine in 70 AD, millions 1994. The writer attempted to were killed by Changiz Khan give a respectable look to the and his Mongol hordes in the agenda of the Conference, thirteenth century in Middle which was otherwise consid- East and Europe, plague killed ered by many as controversial, ten million in the middle ages by quoting statements from re- in Europe, earthquakes killed spectable scientists, namely millions in Japan, China, Nobel Prize winner Professor Georgia, Iran and Mexico sev-Henry Kendall of Massachu- eral times, six million Jews settes Institute of Fechnology were killed in Europe during (MIT) and Dr M S Swami- the Second World War, mannathan, former Director Ge- made famine killed ten million neral of International Rice in Bengal province of India in Research Institute (IRRI) at 1943, tidal bores wiped out millions in Bangladesh in 1970 As a former MIT man, I and 1992, millions have been have some comments on the killed by a process called ethstatements attributed to Prof nic cleansing in Europe' and Kendall. His observations about Africa during the last two damages to the earth are cor- years, the two World Wars of rect, but the conclusions are the century wiped out many millions in Europe, Asia and Science does not do any Africa. During 1943 there was miracles, man does. It is man no shortage of food in Bengal. who discovered the laws of na- The colonial government in ture, developed science and power, then fighting a war, technology, and used them for banned the movement of foodthe benefit of man. Man per- stuff which resulted in the formed miracles in the past. famine. During the last several There is now reason to think years, many people died in that human ingenuity has come East Africa due to starvation as to an end. The industrially de- enough food could not be proveloped countries plundered duced because of severe drothe resources of the earth first ught rendering normal agrithen through commercial ex- . Among the catastrophes

> East Africa was as unpre-The most surprising thing

named Qamran on the bank of trying to promote those factors the Dead Sea in about 2000 BC. in underdeveloped countries During a fateful night sul- which often served as reasons

> Mohammad Yusuf M S (MIT)-1955 Zikatala, Dhaka

Traffic problems

Sir, Dhaka is indeed a beautiful city, with its big and broad roads, nice looking commercial and private buildings. lovely shops and shopping arcades, trees and parks. Everything is fine with the city except for the rather disorganised traffic. It seems no serious plans and development has ever been entrusted upon to modernise and control the Dhaka traffic, except for the very few exceptions like. check on inter city speed limit and stopping of trucks during the day time, but this too disappeared on its own. There is only the routine traffic week. It certainly has its role, but it is not doing much for protecting lives, except for keeping an eagle watch on blue books and other related documents. Proper steps must be taken to improve the city traffic situation, that will bring a sigh of relief to the millions of its inhabitants. How about if the following steps are taken?

1. Reduce the flow of rickshaws, allowing only the licenced ones. This will greatly pull off the erratic rush of rickshaws. 2. Reintroduce inter/city speed limit, which should not exceed 50 mph. 3. Fix up proper bus stoppages and stands. We notice that buses stop right in the middle

of main roads, causing unexpected obstacles to others. 4. Stop plying of trucks during the day and not till 9 pm. 5. Stop plying push carts, vans and other sluggish carriers. 6. Prohibit illegal occupation of road side by vendors. 7. Caution motor car owners of the black smokes and reckless driving. 8. Create public awareness about the right use of the zebra crossing, which is absolutely ignored these days. 9. Impose heavy fine and punishment on defaulters, so that no one will dare to violate the law. And measures then should be properly monitored to ensure effectiveness. Such measures will not only check road accidents, but will also help grow the city dwellers' trust on the administration con-It's high time Dhaka enjoys

the fame of being a modern capital city.

Khawja Vigar Moinuddin Dhaka

The last wishes

Sir, One fine morning, as I woke up to begin my day's work I suddenly noticed an unusual growth on my back. near the spinal cord. Within a week or so it was getting

harder, bigger and painful and at the same time I was losing weight and feeling very weak. It soon became a grave concern to me.' I had to rush to a doctor. While being checked up, I also noticed a mark of concern on the doctor's face, just after the growth was shown. I was asked to have a biopsy and various kinds of blood tests. After about a week when I went to collect the reports, I was informed that I was suffering from a malignant tumour. I was not surprised at all, as my physical condition told so. After a few days, I was also flown to Woodlands. Calcutta, where the diagnosis was exactly the same. My wife, with whom I had some differences, has been away in Boston, USA. She has been informed about my illness but not the whole truth. My house is now full of relatives coming to see me.

so requested a friend to take me to his office at a high rise building in Motifheel. As I peeped down from the top of the floor, I enjoyed the scene: scores of people, rickshaws, cars, buses and pedestrians. I was thinking: 'Just a few day back I was among them.' thought to myself: "The day brings millions of dollars to some and to others it is just

my bed, recollecting memories of my best time of life, specially the childhood days. How time passes by! I could not do much in life. I live in a rented house in a locality where cars find it difficult to get in. By the way, I would like to make a request to the younger ones. whom life has so much to offer, that they "be good boys and girls, lead a decent life. Be good to your parents and neighbours. Concentrate more of your time to studies. The land needs you. Your parents love you." I don't know what is in store for me in the other

I hate being sympathised, world, but my wishes are: Gonna build myself a castle high in the sky. There'll be clouds outside my window. Gonna turn myself to shadow, so that I can see your face. Good bye.

> A departing soul Dhaka