## The Baily Star

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## Stampede Deaths

The several deaths and the physical mauling of many others in a stampede for Zakat clothes at the Motifheel Boys' School were outrageously tragic because these were avoidable. The victims were mostly children and women as they were bound to be. This lends yet another bit of poignancy to the disaster.

Leave aside the year-by-year heightening of the scramble for Zakat charities which served its own notice, the train of incidents in Monday's episode itself was full of forewarnings. Were one of these heeded, the catastrophe could have been surely avoided. For instance, the very size of the surge of people at the school gate, estimated to be around several thousands, was perhaps viewed as a mark of mobilisation success by the organisers while that was the last warning sounded to them for pre-emptive action. Before opening the gate, which was not quite flung open, the crowds needed to be disciplined first into beelines and then allowed the entry. Assuming that there was enough for everybody that should have been the approach; otherwise there should have been a total stoppage of the activity by an announcement the moment it became obvious to the organisers that they could not cope with it.

Earlier when each was pushing through the impregnable human wall to get to the front there were altercations and fisticuffing outside the gate for hours when it was the right time for the precautions to be taken with a high degree of man-

It appears that wide publicity was resorted to get the words around about the Zakat saree distribution which made it all a talk of the area. The interest spread in a rapid-fire fashion; even more as the date and the venue were changed.

When all these actions were taken unmindful of the consequences thereof, the onus surely lies with the organisers. One wonders why there was a laxity not to call the police in for help to keep the crowd in check, especially when it seems that the pious act was being intended by someone belonging to the ruling party. The police came and lathicharged anyway to contain the backlash. The question is: what stopped them from appearing on the scene earlier when they could play the much useful role of preventing it.

The sociological and image-oriented messages of the incident should not be lost on us. It did reflect on the extent of poverty and over-population in the country brought to their focal-point through the city's destitute and floating souls.

## **Opting for Science**

In Chittagong the Islami Thinkers and Researchers' Forum organised an important seminar the other day. Titled as "Scientific Research — a Zihad for Muslim Ummah", the seminar has drawn our attention to a subject we all know but choose to avoid because of the unpleasantness in volved. Our thanks to the participants at the seminar, who did not mince words in calling a spade a spade. Their contention that the Muslim world at large is backward in scientific tesearch and achievements has been supported by the various figures they took pains to collect. Whereas the whole Muslim world has only 45,136 scientists, Israel with a population of only 50.51,000 boasts as many as 34,000 such professionals.

Mass illiteracy, disunity, dependence on others and military expenditure — among others — have been held responsible for the lack of scientific advancement in the Islamic world. We would like to add to this list the education that falls far short of meeting the challenges of modern times. Most countries have retained an overwhelmingly obsolete education system that hardly inspires the students to take up scientific and technological disciplines. Dr Abu Saleh, who presented the keynote paper at the seminar, reckons that the Muslims ought to make at least 20 per cent of the world's scientific contributions in the first quarter of the 21st century and 50 per cent by the second quarter of the next century. Notably, the United States alone contributes 43 per cent among the 25 developed countries.

Evidently, Dr Saleh has demanded what would have been the ideal situation. But in reality, the Muslim countries are so backward in terms of fundamental research and experiments that they will only stand a chance of meeting his expectations by a radical transformation in those areas. Most Muslim countries are yet to be openminded enough to embrace scientific knowledge in a manner that would have given them the right kind of break. But humanity recognises with gratitude the contributions of men like Abul Raihan Al-Beruni, Abu Ali Ibne Sina, Al-Khwarizmi Abu Rushd and Omar Khaiam in the field of sciences. One way of coming out of the present conservative obsession is to emulate these great scientists and make provision for greater expenditure on scientific research.

## Campaign against Diabetes

Yesterday was Diabetic Awareness Day. The Bangladesh Diabetic Society has punctiliously been carrying a single-handed campaign against diabetes, considered to be the third killer disease world-wide after heart ailment and cancer. That 25 lakh people are suffering from the disease and only two lakh of them have been receiving treatment go to underline why people must be familiar with the a,b,c,d of this common killer. However, the diabetic society has been doing a sterling job, thanks to the initial effort of Dr Ibrahim.

In fact, it will go down in the country's history as one of the spectacular successes in the private sector. BIRDEM's enviable efficiency is perhaps the best achievement the society can boast of. The awareness it has created among people is no mean achievement. In fact, in the ultimate analysis, such conscious-raising campaign can do more good to the people than treating them in hospital

One good thing about the disease is that it can be kept from harming the patient's capacity to lead a normal life. The four categories of people those who get it through heredity, are overweight, do no physical labour and are over 40 years of age-all have need for disciplined living. The society is doing what it can. The government's supportive role has to be adequate. The electronic media can start an anti-diabetes campaign.

BIRDEM is overstretched to provide treatment to a huge army of patients. Better it would be if the regional centres were adequately equipped to independently treat patients.

# When will this Dialogue of the Deaf End?

On this day, one year ago, a walkout of the parliament, that later turned into a boycott,

started on an unfortunate but trivial comment of a former minister. Nobody visualised on that

occasion that the opposition's walkout would lead to a mass resignation of 147 MPs resulting

in the de facto demise of the Fifth Parliament. Today our political future looks uncertain with

the two major political parties still refusing to talk to one another. How much more suffering

The Third View by Mahfuz Anam

R. Badruddoza Chowdhury was his usual disarmingly jovial self, at his lftar party for the journalists at the Sangsad Bhaban last Sunday Rather reluctantly answering some questions from the journalists before rushing out for prayers, he said that BNP was waiting for a response from the opposition to the invitation by the Prime Minister. Dialogue on any solution to the present .political impasse depended on its response, he said. Some journalists asked if there was to be any formal invitation by the PM to Sheikh Hasina for such talks. Dr. Chowdhury responded by saving what can be more formal than a public invitation by the PM, on record. and from the floor of the Parliament. Some journalists pointed out that the opposition was not in the Parliament and which they have been boycotting for the last one year. Isn't it too much to expect that the opposition will accept a public statement as an invitation, especially given the present situation? The amiable Professor smilingly repeated himself, and that was

This is where the present all important political dialogue is stuck -on whether or not a proper invitation actually exists or not. Another issue. questioning the propriety of the invitation. refers to its total vagueness. There is no reference to the substance of the talks in the PM's public pronouncement.

So the game begins anew. The BNP's public posture will be, in the days to come, that the opposition has not responded to its open invitation. To this the opposition will say. there is no invitation at all, to which it can reply. We the public, will now be treated to the next act of the highly successful year-old play. "The Dialogue of the Deaf".

We would like to analyse the situation a bit for the benefit of our readers. The public statement of the PM at Jatiya Sangsad is a policy announcement. She has informed the half-empty parliament, and through the media coverage of it the nation and the world. about her intention to hold talks with the opposition, and if necessary even with the leader of the opposition herself. Having criticised her for the delay in taking this decision, we have however welcomed it. It is a positive step. But so far it remains a declaration of her welcome intent. It now has to be implemented. and for which a process has to

be started - meaning there will now have to be a formal invitation to the opposition to sit for talks. Just as a pious announcement that " anybody who wants to come and have dinner at my place is welcome" will not bring any selfrespecting person to the dinner table, so also an open, public announcement will not bring any politician of mini mum dignity to a discussion table. The ruling party is only fooling itself by thinking that it will work, and its leaders are further fooling themselves by assuming that the discerning

of our people will end this "Dialogue of the Deaf"?

dwindling credibility. What the public is finding so very difficult to understand is that having made the decision to go for talks, what harm is there for the ruling party to propose it formally? Then again, with all gains of negotitions of the last one year, what harm is there for the BNP to propose a concrete agenda for such talks on the basis of that Let the opposition see what is the agenda for the talks that is being proposed. Political observers feel that BNP can, and should, give a clear shape to the talks that it is proposing. The opposition will then be able to formulate its own response. In the process of either accepting or rejecting the proposal, it will have to give its own proposals, to which the ruling party can then react Such proposals and counter proposals will greatly help clarify the issues, and if we get lucky, even narrow them down. This process will actually prepare the ground for the

public will not see through it.

It will only lead to the public

questioning of sincerity of

BNP's intentions, resulting in

further corrosion of its already

summit level talks. We are at a point when nothing will move unless the ruling party does three things: First, it will have to extend a formal invitation, coming from an appropriate level, signed by the proper person. Second, the BNP will have to clearly specify the agenda for the talks. Third, it will have to put down its own stand on them. In other words, the commitment that the PM made in her public statements, after December 28, '94, will have to

given to the opposition. This third condition is not usual in political negotiations. It usually comes after talks begin. But in our case it must come before because prolonged negotia tions have already taken place. and it is quite legitimate for the opposition to know where the ruling party now stands on all that was agreed upon before. There is genuine confusion in the opposition as to what the status is, of several agreements reached during. both the Sir Ninian phase, and

BNP stalwarts will ask, to all their actions, what will the opposition do. Well, after receiving formal invitation, specific agenda, and clear BNP position, it will have to come out with its own position. This, itself. will set in motion the clarification process. Specific statements by each side will. and must, lead to a clearer counter statement, and this it-

self will-lead to narrowing of

positions and, hopefully, to so-

Every observer of our po-

litical scene will vouch that

one of the serious flaws in our

politics is that it gives so much

scope for the contending par-

ties to remain vague. This

complicates issues, negotia-

tions and the reaching of solu-

Often it appears, that the

intention, on either side, is

not to solve problems at hand.

but to try to outmaneuvre the

opponent. This has led to deep

seated suspicions, smearing

the atmosphere with venom

and acrimony. The current

level of mutual suspicion is

unbelievable. But both parties

must realise that there cannot

be watertight negotiations

which will take care of all their

suspicions. Some part of the

negotiations will have to be

built on trust. No negotiations

ever, even crossed the very

first step, without such a

rudimentary trust. This our

two leaders, and their camp

followers, must understand.

lutions.

litical impasse except to go for elections, and get a fresh mandate from the people. Therefore, all energies of the political leaders will now have to concentrate on how to hold that election freely and fairly. But to do so, a genuine dialogue is what is needed. To make such a dialogue possible we need the BNP to take the steps suggested above.

Looking back, we can characterise the politics of the past year as one of failure of the ruling party to grasp the seriousness of the opposition's demands, and the insensitivity of the opposition to Constitutional provisions. Compounding these two factors, was the overriding suspicion that each felt for the other, prompting leaders of both sides to look for ulterior motives to simple and straightforward demands. It was not the simple definitions of what was said, that dominated the minds of the

leaders of the two sides, but

the most devious interpre-

tations of them. The other

side was the 'devil incarnate

and that all virtues belonged

to us' was the mindset that

clouded all attempts at nego-

tiations. No attempt was made

on either side to understand

the opponent' and to discover

if there were any merit in what

was being said. The spirit was

A good example of how

misealculation led to disas

trous consequences is the

widely held view that BNP

never seriously believed that

the opposition, especially the

AL will actually resign. There

was thus an overriding consid

eration in the BNP hierarchy

for calling, what they thought

to be, the opposition's 'bluff'.

When they finally understood

that the threat was for real

the dye was cast, and the Fifth

Parliament fell off the

never really gave much impor

tance to BNP's principled po-

sition that the Constitution

Similarly, the opposition

precipice.

always to deride and berate.

at, should be within its framework. A literal interpretation of such populist views as 'Constitution is for the people, people are not for the Constitution" formed the thrust of opposition's propaganda campaign, depriving the movement of any chance of examining the BNP's position in a sober manner.

Frankly the opposition made light of the fact that Constitution, which can always be amended in times of need, should be treated as a very sacred document, and left untouched except under very special circumstances.

In the public, there ap-

peared to have been no attenipt on the part of the opposition to listen to any view that did not entail Constitutional amendment. The frequent, and justifiable citing of instances of how many times the Constitution was shoddily treated, and how atrocious amendments - like the Indemnity Bill- were in corporated into it by the previous BNP government seemed sufficient ground to justify opposition's demand for a similar amendment. In the ppposition's mind, for the BNP to suddenly become extremely respectful of the Constitution. was suspect, motivated, and indeed questionable. This line of thinking missed the underlying legal strength of the ruling party's position. However much appeal such arguments may have had to the party cadres, none of it answered the basic public concern, as to whether or not a solution could be found within the bounds of the present Constitution, which could accommodate all view points.

Frankly, the opposition, once it made up its mind to go for a Constitutional amendment was loath to hearing any other point of view. It was the justification of their position, not the correctness of it, that occupied their full energy.

Now the question is, are we going to continue through the same series of mistakes and misjudgments, or are we going to learn from the past mistakes and improve on our performances now?

pendence in 1947, contrary to

the expectation of the enlight-

ened section, nay the people of

the country, bureaucratic ma-

chinery bent and twisted itself

to serve the generals to rise

and prosper at the cost of the

people, making administra-

tion brazenly operating as a no-

holds-barred spoil system.

This is not the end. Disasters

are ahead in an environment of

disintegrating chaos — the

inevitable consequence of civil-

military clique rule opposed to

the enlightened concept of

elected representative gov-

ernment of the people, by the

Politics of Terror

path against the civil and mili-

tary dictators to get their

rights back. But one cannot be

oblivious of the lessons of his-

tory of mass agitations of

1960s, particularly 1969-71

The course of events of 1969

71 and of following years pro-

vides bitter experience that

constant agitation and the use

of terror as an instrument of

politics lead to catastrophe. In

the light of the past experi

The people are on the war

people and for the people.

At the risk of sounding

repetitive, we would like to say that the experience of the past four years teaches us , if anything, that there is no way that BNP and the AL can go forward unless they cooperate with each other. Yes. if they want to indulge in destructive politics, they can leave things be. For that, nobody needs to cooperate with anybody. Its took hundreds of thousands of hands, several decades to build the Pyramid. It will take only one pair to destroy them. But we are talking about building the country, and serving our poor and disadvantaged people. If the purpose is constructive, then there is no · other way but to cooperate. Hence, there is no alternative to holding talks with each

It is our earnest suggestion that both parties stop, being clever by half, and desist forthwith from thinking that all God's wisdom has been bestowed on them, and them alone. Nobody has all the answers. It is only a collective formula which will get us away from the present suicidal course. For that some semblance of sanity must be brought to prevail in the two camps.

As we have stated earlier

the ruling BNP must come out now with a clear formula for talks. We have already urged the opposition not to go beyond their position of the night of 28 December. As we have already seen pressure is being put on Sheikh Hasiria to move away from her publicly stated position of accepting the President as the head of the government to supervise the elections. This is a major shift from the opposition's original position of an outsider to hold that position. It is the composition of the members of that temporary government which remains to be settled. More important than membership in that government, are such issues as authentic voters' list (computerised, if possible), accountability of election funds, code of conduct for political parties, etc. Fundamental issues of independence of the Election Commission. control of police and the administrative machinery before and during elections

All this requires that the ruling party and the opposition must talk. Talks now hinges on a formal and clearly worked out invitation. Such an invitation cannot harm the ruling party. It can only help their public image.

remain to be resolved.

#### At the moment, there should not be tampered with, appears no way out of this pobe put together and formally and whatever solution arrived

A CASE FOR TRANSPARENT LEADERSHIP — II

# Cynical Thinking Needs to be Avoided

by Oli Ahad

The stranglehold of internal colonialism of the politico-civil-military-bureaucratic rule for the last 47 years since 1947 has totally destroyed the moral fibre of the nation establishing the predominance of corrupt elements in every walk of life.

politicians always at their service in return for enjoying the left-overs. Powerful forces defeat attempts to fight corruption and those attempting to do so are made to suffer and as a result of endemic frustration there is open general licence (OGL) for corruption. This cynical approach must be defeated. Barring few honourable exceptions in service and politics, top brasses of civil and defence service and politics are the top corrupt elements.

AMPANT corruption in

political, social, econo-

academic and intellectual life

helped sustain the Generals in

power and their surrogate

administrative.

This possibly explains why the Justice Ansar Commission Report has not been released even today. In spite of several public promises by Begum Zia's government about publishing a White Paper on the Commission's findings, nothing has yet

been made public. The corrupt people don't need salary, an appointment letter is enough to make the necessary income for their lavish life style to be continued without difficulty even after retirement from the government job. It is widely alleged that no government contract or licence is awarded unless the businessmen and industrialists heavily pay to fill the pockets of the persons in authority, files do not move from one to another table without palms being greased enough. So vicious is the circle that even the Vigilant Team itself is

not above board. Ministers convicted under MLR for corruption in 1982 by Lt Gen H M Ershad's Martial Law Administration were released well ahead of the expiry of the sentence, while others convicted under MLR are languishing in jail. Of course a

number of MLR convicts got destruction of the public and their sentences commuted or private property at the slightpardoned either because of est pretext. What is alarming is payment of heavy considerathe cynical use of mindless and tion money to the relevant aupotentially violent youth by althority or because of the assurmost all political parties as poance given to become camp litical muscle power. It is also followers of Gen Ershad to a fact that leaders are deliberhelp him get a footing at mass ately indiscriminate in recruiting their followers. This results in the hesitation of ad-**Muscle and Money Power** ministration especially the po-It is sad and common exlice to move against the terrorperience how the 'Muscle and ists promptly and firmly. A Money' play decisive role to considerable section of society score victory in the local level specially in urban areas avails elections of Union Parishads of a change to assert its presand Municipalities. This nexus ence through destruction and between politics, crime and violence. They graduate as problack money had the active fessional hoodlums over a peconnivance of the law and riod of time. Their service is order agency. It is not at all solicited by political parties, difficult to eliminate and effecthereby the political connectively check the gangsters and tion affords them administracorrupt elements in election if tive protection. When this the law and order agency is permissive climate of condonmobilised in right earnest. Acting and protecting the action ing President Justice Shaof the hoodlums and gangsters habuddin Ahmed could prerules the political parties, the sent a free and fair election (in administrative machinery loses law) to the nation because cothe courage, sense of service operation of political parties and professional objectivity. Lack of opportunity for

### Law should Take its Own Course

Impartial justice and service cannot be guaranteed and ensured from a pliable judiciary and bureaucracy as the records of communist and military or civil dictatorial countries will show. In strict adherence to laws and rules as laid down in the statute book,

judges and bureaucrats will discharge their duties entrusted with them without fear or favour. This means a strict observance of law, i.e. law takes its own course independent of any other consideration. In a democratic representative system of government government comes and goes after serving a stipulated period but the steel frame-bureaucracy carries on the governance as per provisions of the Constitution of the country. People's representative, i.e., government formulates the policies and the bureaucracy executes since the machinery of governance is the bureaucracy and for that reason bureaucracy is there to keep continuity of administration. It is in principle' least affected because of the change of government - the policy making body. In post-war France till the advent of De-Gaulle, there had been quick rise and fall of the government. It was, therefore, aptly described as overnight fall and rise of govt getting no breathing time to give policy direction. But, the machinery of governance i.e. permanent bureaucracy was in smooth working order. Therefore, administration of the country was the least affected

and country suffered least. Being active and willing

partner in the palace clique of capturing power to banish even the semblance of legislature since the dawn of inde-

ence, it can safely be predicted, recent happenings will strain the capacity (nay making it impossible) of politicians and political parties to carry out the civil functions of a democratic society and govt. Politics, being fought on the street, its principal strength is the muscle power and the financial capacity to mobilise instant crowd. This process unleashes politics of terror, which threatens decent and enlightened politics of democratic setting. Democratic politics requires self-restraint and strict observance of the rules of the game by all participants. If this condition is not met, there may be the repetition of the 1972-75 politics of terror. violence and killing, random

### Decisive Leadership Needed

The stranglehold of internal colonialism of the politicocivil-military-bureaucratic rule for the last 47 years since 1947 has totally destroyed the moral fibre of the nation establishing the predominance of

corrupt elements in every walk of life. Ethics of life has been consigned to a back seat. That is why only a particular section of musclemen and persons with black money are dominating the society, politics and the govt. To check them the honest elements of the enlightened section of the society have to come out of the cloistered life to give the correct and creative sense of direction to the bewildered and stagnant nation. To arrest the present drift

of events toward precipitous

decline and decay, this par-

ticular patriotic enlightened section must give a decisive leadership and to succeed, must blend flexibility with dogged determination. In doing so, they will have to brave the discouraging rough and tumble of political life with singleminded determination and dedication to salvage the crisis-ridden nation. Democracy is a way of life. The process of establishing elected representative government on multiparty culture demands, in the transition period, enlightened leadership to revolutionise the mental outlook to make the parliament a meaninglul guide of the nation. All questions must be thrashed out on the floor of the parliament with courage, knowledge and tolerance and not on the street. To do otherwise is to throttle the very process. Constitutional morality demands members of the parliament, defying all vexed questions, work seriously and sincerely to make the institution a success Future lies there. Street actions in preference to floor of the parliament is a riddle wrapped in mystery inside an enigma. It is for personal or group aggrandisement or for internal or external power

The country is now a captive of the corrupt and criminal elements while citizens groan under the dehumanizing stranglehold of abject poverty aggravated by urban chaos and rural neglect.

Before embarking on any comprehensive programme to regenerate the latent spirit of the nation there has to be critical appreciation by the parliament of what the developed world of democracy has achieved through three Industrial Revolutions in its forward march to post new milestones of civilisation and to attain greater new heights of culture and progress. Let us, particu larly the parliament must. ponder where does Bangladesh stand in the light of the aforesaid frontiers of advance in science and technology (Concluded)

### Sunset rule

Sir. Lately I have been reading in the newspapers about the female students protesting the sunset rule at the Dhaka University. It is a major problem that concerns all citizens. I am also a young student. I

have studied at Kodaikanal International School in India. I have been to Germany, Norway and some more countries. have lived in the USA most of my life. In every country there are rules and regulations for students living in the halls or dormitories. We as natural beings must abide by certain laws . and rules to make ourselves

, accustomed to the society that is surrounding us. While I was in Kodaikanal I had to abide by certain rules. We, both boys and girls, had to be in their respective dorms within the time. Our dorm parent would then go around, to all the rooms, for nightly routine checkups. In Norway, there are institutions of education where males and females must return to their dorms on time. In USA, in some college campuses there are time sched ules. If no one follows them then they lose points or cred-

could be enlisted.

gainful employment in the ru-

ral sector obliges rural unem-

ployed sections to migrate to

urban areas in search of in-

come. These economically de-

prived, socially unintegrated

and brutalised by the pressures

of a rootless urban existence

demonstrate extraordinary

tendency and proclivity to

senseless cruelty and wanton

We as individuals must remember that these sunset

rules were made for our own good. These and some other rules prepare us for the future. We must learn to abide by rules, so after we finish our education and go to our respective jobs or employment that we don't become unruly For, if we don't then we will . lose our future as well as financial well being. The sunset rule is very im-

portant. In the USA or in some other places of education where these rules do not exist. problems arise. Such problems like violent crimes, kidnapping, robbery or mugging, even rape. Because when students,

especially females, are late out at night in this society, many tings can happen. And in the future, if we have kids and especially if it is a girl and she stays in the dormitory, we will have great deal to worry about. How about our sisters or future marriage partners? If someunhappy life,

Rifat Halim Laurel Lalmatia. Dhaka

#### loot and anti-social activities thing were to happen to them we will live a very difficult, all around. I have a request to all the

females of the Dhaka University: Stick to the dorm rule, it is for your own safety and well-