

Let This be True Attention

Chittagong was overtaken by two big events on Saturday — a true double delight. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was on hand to both inaugurate the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) and lay the foundation of the Chittagong international airport. Capping these the busy Prime Minister also talked at length to a *Sudhi Sambesh* — a meeting of noted persons of the city. She was both at her best and most in stretching herself politically. The question, however, is will her hectic exertions in that neglected city answer in any manner the needs of that place?

Evidently, Chittagong is now becoming restive over what it feels to be its genuine demands. The international airport and the nation's second bourse at Chittagong will touch the life of that city only very tangentially and over a considerable course of time. How far can these act as a balm for long-felt pains?

Chittagong is far more to Bangladesh than what Bombay is to India. Still Bombay is the financial capital of India and the biggest city of the country. How come Chittagong — the only entrepot of a populous state, could not develop into even a worthy second city? Washington, Canberra, New Delhi were models for Dhaka to follow as a capital. Instead, it chose to combine Washington and New York and at the cost of Chittagong. The commissioning of the CSE will be a meaningful step towards remedying that developing imbalance.

If it was a case of choosing between modernisation of Chittagong port and an international airport, a Chittagong patriot would definitely go for the former. Simply because on the first depends the city's future.

Declaring Chittagong as the commercial capital of Bangladesh was silly both as a demand and its fulfilment. Let the delayed attention given to that city as indicated by Saturday's flurry of activity be a genuine beginning made to open up avenues that will help grow Chittagong truly into our commercial capital by itself.

A Symbol is Important

Kalu Mia, 37, of Purba Tengri in Ishurdi town has sold his infant daughter, for 500 Taka, through a sale deed executed on Tk 50 non-judicial stamp paper. The man is a manual labourer and drives a rickshaw whenever he can manage one. He already has a son and a daughter. Blessed, well he thought he was being cursed, with another daughter, the father of a chronically hungry family, Kalu let it be known all around that he would sell the newborn. Sona Mia, having no child in 13 years of conjugal life, promptly bought off the infant.

In situations of a famine condition all kinds of rumours get around — say of mothers abandoning children or even killing them, if not of cannibalism which is not altogether impossible. One knows about the exaggeration and takes all such with a grain of salt.

But this — as reported by a responsible national daily — looks authentic enough with particulars so detailed that the parties to the sale as well as the infant can be traced within hours. We take it that the sale has been made and wait only to see what the authorities do to annul this act and rescue not only the victim but also its father who is far from a culprit.

These are poverty-related abnormalities of the day. Why, didn't we have a mother who took out organs of her child to sell and buy herself a morsel? This harrowing hunger situation is out there in many many pockets of the interior. Some people, however small in number, must have been dying all the time due to hunger, which the infamous euphemism calls malnutrition. But one Basanti wearing a fishing net for a saree had made far bigger news than all those deaths. It is the kind of symbolism involved that made the trick.

Not so much hunger, but selling a child truly symbolises the utter worthlessness, the abject unliveability of society. Let the Prime Minister feel it and rush to blot out this and block other possible sale of human beings.

Keep it Up

Congratulations from all the millions of football fans of Bangladesh. The Yangon feat by our boys has done us proud as perhaps never before. And our jubilation mixes with our sense of gratitude to them.

It almost seemed that our team as if deliberately built up this immaculate drama — losing by 4-0 and then coming back into the tournament by razor's edge 1-0 victories in the remaining two encounters. All to take on the victors in a climax rare in the sporting world. Dreams are dreams as they are not, as a rule, reality. When Munna's dream came true with a nerve-wrecking 2-1 clincher over Myanmar — the drama was consummated in a way possible only in dreams. The formidability of the Myanmar outfit was established by their 4-0 wash-out of Bangladesh in the opening bout. This gave extra weight to the Bangladesh victory in the final, otherwise there were little to go wild over a four-nation meet with all the other three being at best of questionably unknown worth.

This dream victory gives credence to a suspicion long lurking in our mind. The best of Bangladesh players, we always believed and for good reason, were not inferior to any in the world, in any department of the game. But look at their team performance in the international arena: below more than a hundred nations and somewhere at the very bottom. What made the difference at Yangon? Very evidently it was the spirit which is absent whenever these players fight not for their clubs but for something far less tangible, namely, Bangladesh. Thank you Munna, thank you Mr Pfister — you have electrified your side by infusing in them a sense of true belonging.

Keep it up boys and the whole of Bangladesh's sporting arena will be a healthy and truly fetching world.

May the Road Rise to Meet You

In the spring of 1980, a frail looking man wearing black shawl and white pyjama was standing at the corner of the dining room of Bangladesh High Commission in London, Mr A R S Doha.

Ambassador Abul Ahsan and I were invited to have a meal with the High Commissioner. The gentleman introduced to us was Mr Zahurul Islam. All I remember about him is a wan smile totally unpretentious and sincere — never trying to impress us or the other guests present. Upon my return to the house of our hosts Juwena and Rafique I was trying to wrack my brain about the name. A little while later I remembered him as the same person who helped the Bangladesh ambassador-at-large Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury in establishing the first Bangladesh office at 24 Pembridge Gardens in London. It was a significant event in the history of our struggle for liberation.

With the loss of the status of 'Rulers of India', and particularly after the replacement of Persian by English in 1837 as the court language, the Bengali Muslims almost cocooned themselves into a world of their own. In the post-partition days, one of the few Bengali entrepreneurs who made a place for himself is Mr Zahurul Islam. And in today's Bangladesh Islam's name will be remembered as a legend. If architecture is a form of art, then Zahurul Islam cer-

tainly gave us nationalistic pride.

My second meeting with him was in Rome where he is remembered by all he came in contact with for his kindness and simplicity. James Ingram, then chief executive of World Food Programme called him 'noble'. Before his departure from Rome sometime in early '92, he requested me to think about some project which could help the people of Bangladesh. I didn't hear from him till the middle of 1995, when he wanted to have the name of Prince Norodom Sihanouk's herbal doctor in Beijing.

I remember how touched I felt when upon his return from Beijing Zahurul Islam rang me and requested me to send him a copy of a piece I had written about the mosque in Rome. I took him to this under construction mosque to say prayers. For a man who had so many projects and enterprises all over the globe, to remember what I had written while he was in China, shows the diverse interest of this successful, and yet a kind and sensitive man. Zahurul Islam's name will be remembered as one of the pioneers, as a man who breaks frontiers, who builds nations.

Hippocratic Oath

On way back from the *namaz-e-janaza* of Mr Zahurul Islam on October 21, at Baitul Mokarram mosque, I was remembering the solemn oath of that Greek physician born on the island of Cos, known as the father of medicine. Didn't he say,

"Whatever house I shall enter, it shall be for the good of the sick, to the utmost of my power. I am holding myself aloof from wrong, from corruption and from the temptation of others to vice... that I shall exercise my art solely for the cure of my patients, and will give no drug, perform no operation for a criminal purpose, even if solicited, far less suggest it." These lines were crowding my mind all the way to Green Road where another tragedy had struck the same day, a more personal and a family tragedy. My eldest sister-in-

The stature of the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in sending a bouquet of roses to welcome the coming of the baby is also beautiful and fair.

The Holy Family has a history of its own going back well into the initial days of our independence: how I was privileged to obtain the support of the Swiss Government (Swiss Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross) to assist and renovate the Holy Family! The hospital is remembered because of its critical role in organising the

organised in Dhaka in observance of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. I was invited to many — but I could manage to go to only two.

What struck me was the near absence of references to the UN's role in the initial days of Bangladesh. UN's humanitarian role, within and without. Tony Hagen's UN-ROD transmuted into Victor Umbricht's UNROB and John Kelly's UNHCR went almost unnoticed. The occasion of the golden jubilee had provided an ideal setting for us to remember and reminisce the UN and its positive contributions in the maintenance of international peace and security.

But the brighter side of the celebration was that the Prime Minister at the UN Headquarters on Oct 23, and the Leader of the Opposition on Oct 24 in Dhaka, more than made up, almost by design, in reiterating our total commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations, and thus rediscovers the umbilical link between the UN and Bangladesh.

Both the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader called upon the member-states to pressure the cause of disarmament and lauded the role of Bangladesh soldiers in various peacekeeping operations worldwide. At any given moment Bangladesh has over 10,000 troops with blue helmets keeping peace.

Referring to LDCs, the Prime Minister said, "The plight of the least developed countries assumes special importance in this mid-term review year of the action pro-

gramme for the 1990s. Their unabated crisis calls for urgent remedial action in the field of debt and trade. We hope that the subject of poverty and the plight of the LDCs will figure prominently on the agenda of the G-7 summit next year in Lyon." Touching on the security of small states the PM said, "Strengthening the rule of law is critical to preserve the security of smaller and weaker states. The enhanced role and contribution of the International Court of Justice thus assumes greater relevance. Measures for compulsory jurisdiction or arbitration through the ICJ or third party mediation is, therefore, important."

The Leader of the Opposition reminisced, "During our Liberation War more than 10 million people fled and had to take refuge in the neighbouring country. And no doubt the UN played a significant role there as well." She then made a clarion call, "Let us forget all our differences and all our animosities and work towards creating a happy and peaceful world."

With our renewed national commitment to the UN at 50, may we wish to see a more meaningful UN, a more democratised UN 100 years on? To achieve this we would have to invoke today, more than ever before, what Ralph Bunche said, and I paraphrase, "Peace, to have meaning for many who have known only suffering in both war and peace, must be translated into bread and rice, shelter, health and education as well freedom and human dignity..."

ENCHIRIDION

Waliur Rahman



law, Hasina Rahman had succumbed that very morning to an unfortunate surgical intervention in a local hospital. In death you cannot blame anybody except destiny but if it is an untimely death of which there are many in this land of ours, you console yourself saying only in death you find peace! Hippocrates, do you listen?

Renewal and Roses:

While death is inevitable and 'lays its icy hands on kings...', thy 'beauty's birth is heavenly'. Mirth and merriment were only natural at the Holy Family hospital with the birth of the grand-daughter of Prime Minister Begum Zia. 'And lovely is the rose, the moon doth with delight...'

despatch of a number of freedom fighters for treatment in Switzerland particularly in L'hospital Cantonal in Geneva, Zurich, and Neuchatel. One Dr Garst, whose name was first given to me by UN Secretary General's trouble-shooter Victor Umbricht, first came to Dhaka to upgrade and extend the Holy Family hospital and finally he ended up by helping the government to establish the much-needed Pongu hospital. Dr Garst is today a household name in this land.

United Nations and Security of Small States

This year a number of seminars and meetings were

Contest Among the Men Who Would Be King

Mohamed Hamaludin writes from Miami

With General Colin Powell expected to launched a bid to become the first black President of the United States, leadership of the troubled black community becomes a three-way race. Gemini News Service reports on a struggle for the soul of an embattled community.

Marching to a different tune



Jackson, Farrakhan, Powell: Leadership stakes

\* Black men earn an average annual wage of \$15,000, compared with \$23,000 for whites. Their jobless rate is 12 per cent, compared with 5.4 per cent for whites.

\* More than 60 per cent of black households with children are headed by single women.

Farrakhan preaches moral righteousness and self-reliance, and is seen by many in the black community as their most fearless and outspoken leader.

At the Washington rally, he announced his intention to register eight million blacks and form them into a "third political force" that would not be tied to the Democratic Party (which blacks traditionally support) or to the Republicans, which traditionally has ignored them. There is no doubt he could ride that support into some political office, although white opposition

prevents him from aspiring to national leadership.

Farrakhan frowns at the idea of any black seeking to manage a white reality, but Powell — like Farrakhan, of West Indian descent — clearly hopes to ride into the White House to lead not just blacks but the whole country.

The popular general, remembered by many as the man who beat Iraq's Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War, has never portrayed himself as a black leader and is unlikely to restrict himself to leading black people after commanding the world's most powerful military.

But he is comfortable with descriptions of him as a role model and as an example of how blacks can aspire to high office in the US.

If Powell does run for the presidency, he will be adopting a party that has undertaken to cut social benefits — a move that would hurt many in the US, but specifi-

cally blacks, who are among the poorest Americans. The party has also vowed to dismantle a host of civil rights programmes, including the "affirmative action" hiring of blacks and other non-whites.

How Powell deals with those policies is key to determining whether he can win the black vote. He avoided joining Farrakhan's march, on the grounds that he had a previously-scheduled book signing for his best-selling autobiography, *My American Journey*. But he accepts that there is acute inequality between the races, and the political positions he recently unveiled put him in the middle of the political spectrum.

The third man, Jackson, delivered a fiery speech at Farrakhan's rally and for long has been the most widely supported black leader in the country. He garnered eight million votes on one of his

presidential runs. He now finds himself being squeezed between the extremes of Farrakhan's policies of white-exclusion and Powell's bid to head an arch-conservative party whose membership is almost all white.

Jackson emerged from Martin Luther King's civil rights movement and continues to buck the country's conservative trend. His Na-

tional Rainbow Coalition is multiracial and liberal. But he is unlikely to win the Democratic presidential nomination or declare himself a third party candidate and risk taking votes away from the Democrats at a time when there is a tide of Republican popularity.

Black America is currently wandering in a political wilderness, and there is widespread desire for someone to lead them out of it. Each of the three men hopes to be that leader: all three may have a role to play.

MOHAMED HAMALUDIN is Managing Editor of the "Miami Times".

OPINION

Krishna Menon

A K M Jalaluddin

I write to thank Salahuddin Akbar for his comments on my write-up on Krishna Menon (30 Oct). Although somewhat belated, I am also that a well-informed reader has chosen to air his views on the personality profile.

Akbar's piece is highly readable despite the cobwebs of confusion and errors of judgement. A profile is a profile. It is a partial portrayal of the personality. The writer has no obligation to write exhaustively about the subject. And it does not, necessarily, have to be a eulogy or renunciation. I am comfortable with the profile I drew on Menon.

Akbar's reference to Menon's idiosyncrasies are well taken. But these deficiencies could not possibly come in conflict with his stature as an extraordinarily gifted intellectual. Anyone who has written about him, including Hengen, refers to his supers intellectual brilliance.

Menon was widely known in the British Labour Party as an ideologue and intellectual. He was one of its prominent members, if not one of the leading lights of its radical group. The quotes from Gen Kaul are recited for whatever they are worth. I had no opportunity to form my own judgement about Menon's intellectual prowess. (I was busy fending off his rudeness, euphemistically called idiosyncrasy, almost all the time during our conversation in 1973).

I have no problem in agreeing with Akbar when he refers to the intellectual stature of Nirad C Chaudhuri. Incidentally I had the opportunity to meet this living legend a couple of times in 1993 at his Oxford home. Fortunately, Chaudhuri did not lecture me on anything. I was pleasantly surprised to see his knowledge in medical matters. A real colossus (Chaudhuri was very humane — was all sympathy and understanding for my medical condition (i.e Parkinson's Disease)).

Just because Menon received the same honour (that too not of the earth-shaking variety) as did G B Shaw does not mean that Menon was

compared with Shaw. No scope for confusion here! G B S was brought in just to clarify to the reader that the honour was not shown lightly. G B S is held in high esteem by most despite some very uncomplimentary remarks by Russell (Bertrand Russell, *Portraits from Memory and other Essays*).

Menon attracted my attention in 1957 when he spoke for seven hours and fainted (because of exhaustion) at the UN Security Council — a feat hitherto not executed by any mortal of the first, second or third world in that august body. Menon, then India's minister without portfolio, travelled widely, created controversies ad infinitum — with gay abandon.

Menon received intensive attention of the international media when he contested, for a Bombay constituency in the Lok Sabha elections in 1962 against Acharya Kripalani. He was politically rootless; he contested parliamentary elections in constituencies as disparate as Bombay (Maharashtra) and Burdwan (Bengal) far from the coconut-cooled shores of the Kerala coast. All were agreed on two aspects: His extraordinary brilliant and rudeness.

Few remember that Menon influenced Atlee to appoint Mountbatten as the last Viceroy of India who secured the agreement to his partition plan of 03 June, 1947 from all sections of the Indian community — a remarkable achievement by itself. (Atlee, of course, knew India well having travelled all over the sub-continent as a member of the widely-boycotted all-white Simon Commission).

And Mountbatten knew — apart from Menon and Nehru — a bit of India as well having travelled with the Prince of Wales as his aide-de-camp throughout the sub-continent in the 20's (the Princes ascended the throne in 1937 and, as King Edward VIII, renounced it — before his coronation — for the woman I love.)

I hope this clarification would remove the 'confusion' that any reader may have had

'Bangladesh First'

Sir, Your commentary heading "Bangladesh First", caught my attention. I absolutely agree with you that our leaders should put forward the nation first. 'He', 'you' and 'I' are persons, and we will die, but the nation will exist. So persons should sacrifice for the nation.

There, our Constitution does not approve of holding general elections under a non-partisan administration, but there is no denying the fact that significant support has grown in favour of the idea that a neutral body to be in power just prior to, and during the next election. And it is clear that the nation has now divided into two equal platforms. Out of ten, five argue for the oppositions and five for the ruling party. So both sides must think the issue in a realistic point of view, and not pay heed to the enemy of the nation and then come forward to save the people from uncertainty. Let

the prime minister's letter be a real olive branch to the leader of the Awami League. Razzak Raza Zahurul Haque Hall Dhaka University

Cable operators vs subscribers

Sir, I refer to the letter dated October 7 published in your daily under the title 'Cable and Authority'. I entirely agree with its content and the views expressed there in.

It is understood that there exists a Cable Operators Association (COA) in Dhaka. We do not know what its function is. Is it to fleece the subscribers jointly? Then why does it not publish its address and telephone numbers, if any? They should give up the hush-hush attitude and be able to receive complaints about the misdeeds and malfunctions of cable operators in Dhaka city who are operating through back door particularly in areas like Az-

impur, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur and Lalmitia. The owner of the company does not make himself available to receive complaints and correct the fault. Because of the 'C' grade cheap equipments used by the operators the system goes bad and thereafter the owner does not spend a *poisha* on its upkeep or repairs. That a subscriber cannot see proper picture reflected on TV is not his headache. There is no uniformity in rates. Some charge Tk 150 per month others charge Tk 200 for the same time with no additional facilities. Take-it or leave-it attitude. I would request the COA to publish their address and telephone numbers in all the Bengali and English newspapers to enable the subscribers to contact them.

Subscriber feels every minute that he or she has put his/her money in the water and considers it a sheer waste. I had been both to India and Pakistan where there is hardly any complaint against the cable operators. There, service gets the priority over greed. Subscribers and operators are working hand in hand in perfect harmony. The cable operators are available at the beck and call of the subscribers to attend to their complaints. I feel there should be an association of cable subscribers here and both the associations should function in close co-operation.

Mira Faiz Dhaka

Dustbin or WP-basket?

Sir, S A M S Kibria, in his column, has taken the PM to task for bringing up the Farakka problem at UN-50. He used up almost half a page in his effort.

Why turn a waste paper basket into a dustbin? That is what is wrong with Awami League. The legendary party may be allowed to remain legendary. A Husnain Dhaka