The Baily Star

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Fine-tune the Responses

After the dissolution of parliament the general expectations are that the government will freshen up its approach to the question of a non-partisan caretaker government and the opposition will withdraw their agitational programmes.

Just a few hours before the PM's address to the nation presaging the parliament's dissolution night before last, Awami League and Jamaat had announced their 12-day programmes for demonstrations beginning from November 28. The tougher elements of the plans are an indefinite countrywide shutdown of rail, road, waterway and air traffic from December 7 and a march to the PM's secretariat on December 9. Although the belligerent parts of the programmes are slated some two weeks away one cannot help wonder if their announcement was not a bit premature. The dismantling of parliament, and the government's assumption of a transitional role, as distinguished from its mandated all-pervasive executive functioning, were very much in the air to take heed and scale down the stridency accordingly.

On the other hand, the Prime Minister's speech remained non-committal on the basic question of forming a non-partisan caretaker government before the polls. Her oblique reference to that contentious issue was yet another iteration of the offer for talks.

Since there has been a qualitative change in the political setting after the dissolution of parliament, Begum Zia is now widely expected to unveil her plans, if any, to ensure participation of all political parties in the polls. After all, despite all the agitation, she has very nearly completed her tenure and that should be satisfying to her. She had to dissolve the parliament anyway and that she has done it sooner than later speaks well of her political sagacity in avoiding a precipitatory trouble she would have invited had she pressed on with the by-elections. In the same spirit, she can now close the deal with some added generosity winning the hearts of a grateful nation. Similarly, the opposition needs to pick up the threads of negotiation from where they left off and strike a deal in a genuine spirit of give and take thereby earning an equal measure of the nation's gratitude.

Dairies Doing Better

When economic or industrial productivity is in question, we hardly qualify to be super achievers. But at times our achievement may be quite impressive. After decades of miserable performance, the country's dairy sector is at last recording an upswing. Although it is yet to recover the ground it lost to imported powder milk, the livestock sector, according to a report, registered a growth rate of 9.5 per cent last year. This is due to an increase in the number of dairy farms from 5,000 in 1990 to 25,000 as at present.

If the country could reduce its annual import of powder milk from Tk 450 crore to Tk 100 crore over a period of five years - which, the report says, it has done - this is a remarkable achievement by any standard. However, the good news may not be entirely unblemished. We do not know how this has been achieved. Whether people are consuming the same amount of milk they used to do in the past or the reduction of import is at the cost of less consumption of the item. This is an important parameter. We do not know the amount of per capita consumption of milk in the country. But we do know that the per capita fish consumption a day is only 20-25

grams. Daily intake of milk for an individual is likely to be less than that.

The crux of the problem, therefore, lies here. We need to add more milk to our diet. The skyrocketing price of milk powder may have forced us to go for more and more dairies. But it is still far too short of retaining our old habit of almost a regular intake of milk or a milk preparation. Yet the development of dairy in the private sector has shown a way out. But to exploit its full potential we have a lot to do. The dairy sector has to be developed as a full-fledged agro-industry divided in small units and spread all across the country. A well-knit marketing system will then be required for ensuring a uniformly fair price for the commodity.

Why This Slide?

The number of black sheep in the police department seems to be on the rise despite its understandable anxiety to weed them out for an improvement of the image which has lately taken a dip. Some Bangla newspaper reports, of late, have highlighted an attempted blackmail of a businessman by a police SI and an ASI who allegedly detained him in a house to be photographed with a gay girl. Reportedly arrested, brought before the court and remanded, they have since been put under suspension as well.

While appreciating the prompt action against them, we cannot help being surprised at the brazen-faced villainy by police personnel who were supposed to be catching other

people doing it.

The police image brightens but rarely, it seems, through the exemplary pieces of work by the likes of armed constable late Sharif Ahmad of Khagrachhari who preferred dying to keeping mum over the rape of a girl. But they must know that they are expected to do good to the people in a work-a-day life. When such are the high expectations of them, can they afford to have any black sheep among them?

We really need a package of police reforms in place. In the meanwhile, the right tenor must percolate the lower levels from the top.

Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin

Menace of Religious Obsession

The Rabin murder case should be an eye-opener for the people of Bangladesh who must not harbour the illusion that they will escape the onslaught of these religious extremists. The nation must remain on guard against the danger looming on the horizon...

Yitzhak Rabin has evoked strong and emotional reaction in many parts of the world. Given the importance attached to Israel by the United States and other Western countries the international news media has given the tragic event very extensive coverage. Virtually all the Western leaders - Bill Clinton of the United States. Jacques Chirac of France, John Major and Prince Charles of Britain, Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia and Helmut Kohl of Germany were in Jerusalem for the moving funeral ceremony which was held on 6 November. The presence of King Hussein of Jordan and Presi dent Hosni Mubarak of Egypt nificance attached to the work that Yitzhak Rabin had underlined the sea-change that has taken place in the started but could not com-Middle East. A few days later plete. Yassir Arafat paid a quiet visit What was the task that to Mrs. Rabin and sperit a couple of hours with the bereaved family. It was said later that Arafat has "adopted" the family of Rabin. One does not know what is precisely meant by adoption but no-one can miss the warmth and sincerity of that gesture. Peace has transformed the Middle East in

HE assassination of Is

raeli Prime Minister

ways that is difficult even to recognise. Predictably, the funeral eulogies were full of praise for the fallen leader's great achievements. He was a brave soldier in the battle field but even a braver soldier of peace. No-one questions that the Nobel Peace Prize that he and Yassir Arafat jointly received was fully deserved. King Hussein of Jordan was perhaps the most eloquent speaker when he grieved the loss of "a brother, a colleague and a friend, a man, a soldier who met us on the opposite side of a divide, who we respected as he respected us..."As the leader of front line state confronting Israel for the last forty years King Hussein's statement that Mr

ANGLADESH can be

auditory canal.

Dhaka city, nay Bangladesh, is

the traffic signs practically

littered all over the streets.

What do these signs mean?

Why are they always fixed in

that typical leaning position?

When can they be violated

and when not? How does

someone know that it is not

an advertisement for the film

Extra Terrestrial(ET) but two

known as Mohan Mia.

dedicated his life for the

people. Active both in the

social and political arena, he

always placed the national in-

terest at the forefront. Today,

we observe the 24th death

anniversary of late Yusuf Ali

Chowdhury. He was born in

Chowdhury, father of Mohan

Mia breathed his last when

he was just 18 years old. At

that time, Mohan Mia was a

student of Class Ten. His

elder brother Lal Mia was en-

gaged in Congress politics. As

a result, the responsibility of

running the zamindari rested

tion of 'Baitul Aman' was held

at the suburb of Faridpur

town on 25th January, 1945

by the then Agricultural and

Industrial Minister of undi-

he had to shoulder the oner-

ous responsibility of main-

taining the big zamindary; his

pioneering role in the spread

Though at this tender age

vided Bengal.

on him.

Khan saheb Moijuddin

1906 and died in 1971.

ATE Yusuf Ali Chow-

dhury, more widely

Rabin "had courage. He had vision, and he had commitment to peace. And, standing here. I commit before you. before my people in Jordan. and before the world, myself to continue to do the utmost to ensure that we shall leave a similar legacy." The funeral oration of other world leaders as well as those of the newly elected prime minister of Israel Mr Shimon Peres were equally moving. The tributes paid by the world press clearly showed the sig-

Yitzhak Rabin had taken upon himself for which he was so ruthlessly gunned down by a Jewish extremist? He wanted peace for the people of Israel. He wanted an accommodation with the Palestinians whose land was occupied by Israel against all canons of law and justice. The Jewish youth Yigal Amir who pulled the trigger and his co-conspirators with whom he planned the murder did not want peace; they did not want any accommodation with the Arabs. One may think that these people must be freaks, some kind of nuts who were driven by their demented minds to commit this heinous crime. But that is not correct. These people are neither freaks nor misfits. Amir and his friends are young men of discipline and multiple gifts who thrived in the nation's mainstream and believed that they were serv-

ing Israel. Yigal Amir re-

ceived training in Orthodox

Jewish schools and like many

other youth learned a "crime

and punishment view of his-

tory" and the preeminence of

the Torah over civil law. The seeds of religious obsession was sown in his mind in these schools. In the Bar Ilan University's Institute for Advanced Torah Studies, he learned that the highest blessing is to do a task that others find too difficult. In the fanatical religious environment in which he lived he

non-Jews. There is also a doctrine mentioned in some Jewish scriptures that permitted a person to kill his pursuer before the pursuer can kill him. Yitzhak Rabin's murder was no ordinary crime. The killers probably believed in all these bizarre but venerable doctrines to justify the murder.



by Shah A M S Kibria

shared the prevailing belief that Mr. Rabin had hijacked the government from its people. According to Rabbi Aharon Katz, Amir's teacher. "In a place where there is no one else, try to be a man". This quotation is supposed to be taken from ancient Jewish Oral Law.

Yigal Amir obviously tried to live by the standard set by his mentor by carrying out the commands of the scriptures to save the Jewish people. It was religious obsession and not the sudden impulse of a mentally deranged man which was behind the conspiracy to assassinate the prime minister. Religious obsession leads to fanaticism which in turn goads people to commit all kinds of violent crimes. Crime is committed in the name of religion because these people believe that they are obeying divine law which is higher than civil law. In fact Amir believed that he had the sanction of religion in killing Mr Rabin because he relin-

quished holy Jewish land to

It is not a mere coincidence that Anwar Sadat, the martyred president of Egypt. was also assassinated by people obsessed by religious fanaticism. They did not like Sadat's bold initiative for peace with Israel though in hindsight one can see that Anwar Sadat had made the correct geo-political and historical assessment that Israel-Palestine accord was the central condition of real Arab-Israeli peace. There is remarkable similarity between what was said by the killers of Sadat and the killer of Rabin. Both declared that they were proud to have killed the traitor who had become an enemy of God by compromising. Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, it may be recalled, was also a religious fanatic, who believed that he was killing an enemy of Hinduism. Blinded by hatred against Muslims, the killer could not see Mahatma Gandhi's greatness.

Any one observing the contemporary world scene

country like Japan is not immune to the virus of religious obsession where a fanatical sect has emerged with obscure but very dangerous and murderous agenda against the society. The Rabin murder case should be an eye-opener for the people of Bangladesh who must not harbour the illusion that they will escape the onslaught of these religious extremists. The nation must remain on guard against the danger looming on the hori-Will the removal of Yitzhak

Rabin from the helm of Israel change the course of history in the Middle East? From all accounts its seems that the Rabin's successor Shimon Peres is as committed to the peace process as his fallen predecessor. According to media analyses, Israelis are not so confident about Peres who is considered to be a more dovish than Rabin. He vowed last week to "continue a great road paved by a great leader". Yassir Arafat, the other key actor on the stage, also seems to be firm in his commitment to the peace process. His mission will remain incomplete if the peace process falters at this stage because this will destroy, at least for the present, the chance of building a truly independent and sovereign state of Palestine. Rich in oil and located in the centre of three continents, the importance of peace in this vital area of the world can be hardly exaggerated. It is also the largest reservoir of hydrocarbon resources. Unfortunately however, it is also the centre of three of the great religions of the world which may exert, either directly or indirectly, conflicting pressures on the course of events in the region. The ongoing Bosnian tragedy shows that religious obsession does not exist only in the fringe but in the centre of even the most advanced

Idiots and Maniacs

by Chintito

Pinch of Salt

proud of many records and specialities. schoolchildren crossing the street? Responses to these One distinguishing character queries may be diverse but that separates its cities from there's conformity in ubiquiall others is that street red lights or the facing palm of tous violence. the traffic police do not carry Our drivers forget that the the universal meaning of horn is not a toy to draw ev-STOP. In either situation, the ervone else's attention. Some driver may always turn left at drivers, as has been said beany junction, go right at many fore in these columns, honk roundabouts and, believe it or not, at some chou-rasthas one may be waved on by the policeman to go straight. The problem with this administrative generosity is

every time they breathe in and breathe out. A German visiting Dhaka told me in the 80s that he had not heard a honk in his country for the past six months. In England, if you honk at somebody. that an out-of-town lawthat body will honk back beabiding driver may stop at a red light, only to be deafened cause honking is considered a rebuke. In Dhaka it is posby a cacophony of horns and verbal effluvium from the vesible to drive without blowing hicles behind him. Sohore a single horn because the nava aichen lagey (Looks like vehicle in front of yours will you are new in town) would move, swerve, U-turn, manoeuvre at its will in spite of be the darting remark of your honking. So is it not passing drivers as he tries to sensible not toohonk? The shake the decibels from his horn is meant only to warn others of any imminent dan-Another major problem ger. It has no, other purpose. with traffic management in

> Drivers in our streets consider it cameo stuff to switch on both the sidelights when they want to go straight. Any driver from where these cars come would think that the whole country was in some sort of danger. Because that is precisely what they are: hazard lights. They are meant

to be put on only when the vehicle or its occupants are in a peril. Actually, the foreigners do not mind at all. They soon find out that indeed the whole country is in all sorts of danger.

Using the hazard lights to signal that one is going straight has other dangerous possibilities. Often both the sidelights do not work. So. while the driver thinks he has put on a signal to say to the world that His Vehicularship is going straight ahead. it could be that only his right sidelight is blinking. This has led to accidents on many of our city junctions.

The roundabout, or moar as it is called here, is meant to allow cars to change direction. It is a very critical spot and requires extra attention of all drivers. But, this is the one place where our behaviour is the worst. Drivers start to honk as they approach a moar, the vehicles move to the right of the street about one hundred yards from the roundabout. nobody has a right of way and.

everyone is stuck. Then there are the ones who are in a hurry and they will cut a roundabout without going round it.

We can hardly blame our drivers, most of them illiterate. The ones who can read are no better. The ones with

air are perhaps the worst. Everybody thinks he is right and everyone else is wrong. So, in an on-the-street dispute, both parties are shouting, the third parties are velling and the policeman, in a hurry to go to his own party, signals you to drive on: Thank bhai, jaanga. kee aar

neckties and surrounded by

the ambience of conditioned

will be struck by the resur-

gence of religious obsession

One may use terms such as

fundamentalism in describing

the phenomenon but the

central point to bear in mind

is that the inspiration for vio-

lence comes from the mind.

from belief in laws and com-

mands held superior to civil

law. The western news media

seems to single out the Is-

lamic fundamentalists as

particularly dangerous but

one hopes their jaundiced

world view will be cleared by

the death of Yitzhak Rabin in

the hand of a Jewish fanatic.

Unfortunately, the number of

such persons obsessed with

self-righteous religious belief

is not small nor are they con-

fined to any particular reli-

gion. The Hindu extremists

in India have successfully

moved from the political

fringe to the centre stage of

political life and have become

a major actor on the nation's

political stage. The rise of

Shiv Sena in Maharashtra

state, for instance, cannot be

explained away as an isolated

incident. There is unmistak-

able evidence of a nation-

wide trend. The ideal of

secularism embraced by the

independence movement has

been put on the back burner

even by the main stream

political parties. The Babri

disturbing signal that the

secularists have been in

retreat in India. What is

happening in neighbouring

Pakistan is of course much

more complex. In Karachi,

for example, religious fanati-

cism is not the only impulse

motivating the people to kill

each other. Racial, linguistic

and historical enmities have

surfaced to intensify the in-

ternecine fights. Even

Mosque episode was

idealist leaders of

Korben? sider that the driver ahead of HONK!

driving very carefully and that the driver behind you is a maniac because he is honking to get past you. As far as I am concerned, most drivers on our streets are both idiots and maniacs. Of course, if you are driver yourself, you will surely take it for granted that I have not included you in the bracket of "most". Perhaps this is our biggest national problem; not the streets, but that each of us consider It does not help to con- oneself a cut above the rest.

you is an idiot because he is



In Memorium

Putting People at the Forefront

Mohan Mia's approach toof education did not meet wards bringing about social with any setback. It is inchange through education credulous and visionary that was very much pragmatic. such a sophisticated and With a view to make the socibenevolent project could ety economically self-reliant, have crept in his mind as he adroitly thought and conearly as in the year 1945 ceived of starting "Baitul which speaks eloquently of Aman" agricultural and indushis higher degree of perceptrial education project in tion and not the least a for-Faridpur town. The inaugura-

ward-looking outlook. Mohan Mia remained as Chairman of Baitul Aman for the long 13 years (1938 to 1953), which is remarkable for many reasons. He took bold steps in the construction of roads, digging of ponds, setting up of madrashas and charitable

medical dispensaries. The present Rajbari dis-

by Mashiar Rahman trict, previously within the Goalundo subdivision of Faridpur, was a den of Malaria and Kalajar. Due to Mohan Mia's concerted efforts. Rajbari got rid to these

menaces. It is deemed imperative to recall that Yusuf Ali Chowdhury though played a leading role in the framing of 1956 first Constitution of Pakistan. he was the only MNA in the constituent Assembly who was not a signatory to it since

he firmly believed that the Constitution did not properly and equitably reflect the rights aspiration of the people of the then East Pakistan. There has been widespread misgivings that Mohan Mia was the villain in the tragic episode that was enacted in the erstwhile East Pakistan Provincial Assembly

in 1958 that cost the life of late lamented Speaker Shahed Ali. To speak the truth, it was not Mohan Mia but Rsaraj Mandal who caused grievous injury to Shahed Ali by hurling paperweight at his forehead and he succumbed to the injury after being admitted into the hospital. I am sure that the contemporary legislatures of that period his struggle when others left.

would endorse it.

In the year 1956, the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan comprised of 80 members with 40 seats each from the two wings. Yusuf Ali Chowdhury was also elected as an MNA in the then Assembly. And with his personal initiative he helped make Hamidul Haq Chowdhury and Justice Sattar later President of Bangladesh, as members of the Assembly.

When the first sitting of the Assembly was held at Murree in West Pakistan, there was a long stalemate and impasse relating to the formation of a central government since none of the political parties got a determining majority. The situation was deeply plunging the

country into uncertainty. It is said that talent and brilliance are not enough to make a man achieve the real' goals. These yield results if they are augmented with the qualities of aggressiveness and resistance power. Mohan Mia maintained this stand against all odds fighting desperately and bravely even when things looked positively grim. He never flinched from

He did not lose hope when all the access were in the adversary's hand. He fought with full optimism and firm conviction when most people believed that it was impossible to bring down a autocrat and history's worst dictator from his formidable position. His strength was his unbending spirit, his firm conviction and his fortitude and the cause. He loved democracy and wanted to bring back democracy in place of autocracy. The people were with

Late Yusuf Ali Chowdhury widely known as the "kingmaker", was indeed a great soul. He always placed national interest at the fore-

front. Born in a rich and aristocratic family, the well-being of the poor always occupied a major part of his thoughts. The details of his long political career need to be compiled for posterity. He was so moved by the sufferings of the poor that he could not rest until he redressed their grievances. He founded the "Student Home", a hostel for the poor but meritorious students of Faridpur Rajendra College. He sunk many tubewells and established many

medicare centres. To impart religious teaching, he founded "Moijuddin Madrassah" of high school standard. He also established "Halima Girls' School" after the name of his mother for the educa-

tion of girls. The goal of his life was to serve humanity at large which he cherished till he breathed his last. We have many things to learn from

the life of this great man. He set up a branch of Anjuman-e-Mufidul-Islam which did a pioneering job for the burial and cremation of Muslims and Hindus alike. To say the least, Mohan Mia ranks most distinguished amongst the great men who did not bow down in the face of any resistance intimidation and

opposition. To evaluate it realistically, his death itself is msignificant since it is deemed as an inevitable process when none, as a law of nature, can

escape from its icy hand. Mohan Mia's mausoleum will forever standout with the brilliance of a shining beacon in the eternal evaluation of time. In fact, every house in Bangladesh and not only in Faridpur is his mausoleum and his sacred memory will always remain enshrined in the heart of every Bengalee

Mohan Mia, whom I used to call Mejo Chacha is no more today. My heart bleeds

for him.