## Dhaka, Monday, January 29, 1996 Hasina's Warning

In a sudden, though not uncharacteristic, swipe at the diplomats, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina blamed the donors for what she alleged to be their support for BNP's one party election. What caused Hasina's vehement outburst? Opposition had calculated all along that if BNP should go for an one party election, Western democracies, especially USA and UK, would try their best to dissuade it from following such a course. At least, AL expected, these countries would make it clear to the ruling party that the government which will follow, would not command respect and credibility in the international community.

More than anything else, it is Sheikh Hasina's statement of Saturday which makes it abundantly clear that Western democracies are decidedly not in sympathy with the opposition's wishes and aims, and may have made it known to the AL. Otherwise why should Sheikh Hasina suddenly decide to go public in

this matter.

It is the fact of going public, and so acrimoniously at that, which gives rise to serious questions in the public mind as to how wide is the rift between the opposition and the donors? On the contrary by speaking out as she did, Hasina has given the impression that some powerful donors are staunchly behind the government, which may not be the case. Normally the AL chief could have written a hard-hitting letter to them. In a more extreme case she could have written to the US State Department directly, protesting the recent statement of its spokesman.

While we agree with the opposition point of view that US State Department's comment that voters should be allowed to vote peacefully for their "chosen candidates" was thoroughly misconceived in the absence of any candidate from the opposition, yet we cannot accept that as a justification for such a sweeping castigation of donors' role in the

economy of Bangladesh.

As a potential Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina needs to be more circumspect in her public utterances, and more leader-like in her comments. If donors are involved in our political negotiations, it is not without our invitation, and hence the fault is ours. Till the other day both sides happily accepted the facilitating role of Ambassador Merrill and thought nothing of even meetings in his house. To suddenly make an about face and give out all sorts of 'warnings' just because serious differences of opinion have emerged, is not fair. Donor countries' diplomats in Dhaka are mostly a serious lot. Some are very devoted to the development of Bangladesh. Let us not insult them, and definitely not entangle them in our domestic politics.

### A Point of Security

The security arrangements made on January 24 to see through the Prime Minister's launching of the ruling party's election campaign gave Sylhet the look of an embattled town. And 40 persons were injured in police actions aimed at muffling militant protest there. Hardly four days passed before the PM's visit to Khulna occasioned another security situation in which 50 were injured and one got killed.

Of course, the Prime Minister must be ensured foolproof security. The state owes it to the PM. And pray what kind of security requires uniformed people to bring down black flags from housetops? The party and its chief is seemingly making light of the Election Commission requirement that election campaign be not mixed up with governmental powers and facilities.

The Prime Minister's election tours are election activity where the government may very advisedly not repeat the usual anti-hartal regime. In reality, her election tours are being attended by very-quick-to-the-touch police preparedness. Why this? Why this flouting of

the spirit of the EC's regulations.

There is no doubt that opposition militancy in stalking Khaleda's every step since the Sylhet action, is partly responsible for police accesses. He who is hurt or is killed in the protests is the opposition's very own people. Cannot the opposition act in a manner that would not let the blood of its own activists? They have, to date, shown very little concern for the security of their own cadre. Why so? The 14-year-old boy killed in Khulna is entitled also to security, exactly as anybody else is. Let no one, be it the PM or the opposition leader, be forgetful of this. This is the first requirement of democracy.

Good Neighbourliness

Neighbours in the subcontinent cannot but be concerned over the escalation of border tension between India and Pakistan. The long confrontationist position of the two armies across the Kashmir border can wear out the nerves of those manning that difficult and uncongenial terrain and frayed nerves can lead to unpleasant eventualities in spite of the best of political intentions to keep away from such.

Pakistan has been a chronic case of instability at top as well at the social level. India has, of late, been shaken by corruption scandals and its leadership has been sapped of the composure that comes from assiduous abidance by what is morally correct. An escalation along the borders at such precarious times

can be anything but reassuring.

Anti-Indianism is a congenitally received mindset of both the state and society of Pakistan. Whatever can dissipate this will add to

the good of the subcontinent. India has the Kashmir. It has only as something of a constant drain on not only its coffers and patience but also its image. End of a Kashmiri confrontation will free India to forge

a more spectacular social and economic

progress.

The escalation on the borders must be defused if only to minimise the possibilities of a flare-up on a wider scale between the two neighbours. We are sure one that will take more initiative in dissipating the tension will score over the others in so many ways.

## Protect the UN Charter or Promote Separatist Movements?

## Questions of Quebec, LTTE and Chechnya Pose a Moral Dilemma

While discussing the separatist movements one comes face to face with certain moral

questions like human rights and the question of rights of ethnic and religious minorities.

These concerns are raised more often than not by certain human rights groups. They often

forget that cities like Dresden and Coventry were destroyed to save and secure democracy and

human rights...

HE 1848 Revolution in Europe heralded the demise of the dynastic authority over peoples as the monarchical right lost its so-called divine sanction over subjects on July 14, 1789. Lamartine exclaimed we are making together the sublimest of poems' : both Nationalism and Socialism were the product of 1848.

The covenants of the League of Nations put together following the World War I had implicit in it the principle of self-determination. The UN Charter is more specific about the sovereignty of the UN member nations, inviolability of internationally recognised borders and the guarantee of human rights severally and collectively. For once humanity thought that World War II was the last of all the wars. In actual reality it has not happened exactly that way. Between the surrender of the Axis powers in 1945 and the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, more people have died in regional conflicts than those of the two great world conflagrations put together : but there was a difference. Most of the wars, following 1945, have been proxy wars, or conflicts arising out of irredentist movements, or as seen recently wars of ethnic character latest being the civil wars in the Balkan peninsula and those in Rwanda and Burundi.

There is another variety of conflict which is fought in the name of the right of self determination but in the ma trix of the organized nationstate based on the Charter principles. These conflicts inevitably tend to destabilise the existing system of nation-

The franchise granted by Louis Phillipe was taken too liberally and people around the globe wanted at breakneck speed to translate into action Lamartie's declaration that 'people must be left free to make mistakes!'. They blithely forgot that an a priori condition for the establishment of a stable civil society is an orderly and secure social framework. Otherwise the situation accepted and honoured by the international community wedded to the principles of the Charter of

the United Nations as well as the UN Charter, greater the Covenant of Human sense of responsibility, na-Rights, social, political and tional and international, preeconomic, will be jeoparvailed over narrow and The recent separatist movements in Sri Lanka spearheaded by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the movement in Quebec to break away from mainland Canada and the separatist movement in Chechnya - each seems to

fall in a category of its own.

A Franco-phone region.

the Quebecoise chose the

constitutional path to make a

mistake! Rene Leveque lost

by a wide margin perhaps of

60 - 40% voting and in the

latest polls the separatist lost

 $50\frac{1}{9}$  -  $49\frac{1}{9}$ . Its feader Mon-

slear Parezeau bowed out in

admission of his failure. Both

the US and nations around

the world heaved a sigh of

relief. The Canadians made

As a founder-member of

The making of Chechnya

7: Communist revolution, Republic of North Caus-

34: Chechen Inquish Autonomous Region (IBM) Propie

and Kazakhstan - 200 000 die. Reputric abox

94 Dec: 40:003 Russian troops move in

June-July: Agreement on partial Russian pu

6: Russian commandir declares Chechens bandi

bearing the family name Sin-

cari — arrived among about

400 Kurds who sought politi-

cal asylum, claiming they had

suffered persecution in Iraq.

repression and chemical at-

tacks on Kurdish villages by

the regime of Saddam Hus-

sein, the Swedish authorities

granted asylum. The Sincari

men brought in their wives

and 10 children. They went

to live in the village of Asele

in northern Sweden. The

adults went about seeking

employment, and another

tion board became suspi-

cious, and discovered that

the families had come from

Turkey, rather than Iraq. The

authorities said they had

been associating with the

Kurdish Workers' Party, the

PKK, which is fighting a se-

cessionist guerilla war. The

Sincairis' asylum status was

their origins and used the

children to get asylum," said

Carlsson, justifying the expul-

sions. "So they must take re-

sponsibility. This is a signal

horrified at the scenes of

Television viewers were

"The parents lied about

But the Swedish immigra-

child was born.

revoked.

to others.

Chechnys's population in 708,0 Another 300,000 live in Russia, 25,000 in Yurkey and 25,000 in

the right decision.

parochial dispensation there, A United Canada can serve its citizens better in larger freedom at home and abroad. Quebec has occupied a place of honor in history. It was here that Churchill and Roosevelt met along with their chiefs of staff in 1943 and 1944. Weighty decisions were made on Mussolini, invasion of Europe, operations in Burma and the Philippines, Lend-Lease Act etc. It was here that US Treasury

the government of India! Japanese president of Peru. stolen the thunder of met him in my capacity as Body of World Food Prohis honour by then IFAD convinced us all about his Path zealots. And he seems to

Tamil Nadu, independent of Prabhakaran likened himself to the Percivian Shining Path Movement. It was left to a second generation — Alberto Fujimoro to have Sandello Luminoso. When I president of the Governing gramme at a lunch given in president Idriss Jazairy, he policy of taming the Shining

Waliur Rahman

Secretary Hans Mongethaw proposed the physical removal of Germany's means of industrial production - the means of War Machine! Leaders like Pierre Trudeau and the present Prime Minister Jean Chretien are also Quebegoise. The Ghost of Charles De Gaulle seems to be still haunting many Quebegoise for an independent nationhood! The present interregnum will provide them valuable time to pouse and ponder. It is another paradox of history where a most important and vibrant part the country wants to separate. Don't we remember that the Roman Empire was provided with three of ats greatest Emperors - Diocletian. Constantine and Justinian by Illyrian, modern ex-Yugoslavia?

Tamil Tigers on the coattail of Prabhakaran chased something that was not achievable. An independent Eelam could have soon led to the demand for a sovereign have done it successfully. The defeat suffered by the

Tamil Tigers in Jaffna peninsula was also predictable. The Tigers lost much of the sympathy, if there was any, after their refusal to accept the devolution package offered them by President Chandrika Kumaratunga. She was courageous and candid. We have no reason to disbelieve her sincerity. Her address at the BI-ISS on March 29, 1995 during her state visit to Bangladesh, left no doubt about her statesman like perception of the problem Tamil Tigers seem to have forgotten one thing, that the differences between the Sinhalese and the Tamils may be many, but they are not visceral or atavistic.

The events in Chechnya are even more deplorable. Chechen leader Dudayev seemed to have made grevi ous miscalculation. Legitimate hopes and aspirations of a people, of an ethnic minor-

ity in particular, are important in any political dispensation. The million-strong population of Chechnya, in the election of 17 December, 1995, made clear their opposition to Mr Dudayev. About 60% voters participated in the voting, including capital Grozny and elected Mr Zaugavev as Head of State. Majority Chechens opted for addressing their demands through peaceful means. By bringing their internal problem to the neighbouring Turkish territory, by seizing the Black Sea ferry 'Avraasia' they not only embarrassed the Turkish government. they also invited universal condemnation. The Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Cillar rightly said. "I condemn any act putting the lives of innocent people in jeopardy. Whatever its causes might be." Whereas certain amount of sympathy of some Turkish population of the Chechen cause is understandable, the government of Turkey has clearly stated its total support for the territorial integrity of Russia. While the residual sympathy for the former subjects of the Magnificent Ottoman Empire is understandable, the Turkish government has reiterated its desire to see a peaceful set-

tlement The Turkish government heir to the great Kamal Ataturk is fully conscious of the fact that the unity forged between the Muslims and the Christian Janissaries, to a large extent accounted for the phenomenal success of the Ottoman Empire in establishing its rule over a large portion of the world. The Christian Jannissaries provided the backbone of the military superiority of the Ottoman Empire. No wonder that Busbequius, the Roman Ambassador to the court of the Sultan of Turkey, said 'christendom subsisted precariously by the goodwill of the SOPHY - the king of Persia whose ambitions in

from his Western conquests! Ottoman Empire's rule was based largely on secular approach. Modera Turkey remembers that very well. The message of thanks by President Yeltsin to President Suleiman Demyrel for the dexterity with which the Turkish government had handled the situation in saving innocent lives, men. women, and children was there. The Russians have also shown great understanding in withholding any support to Kurdish rebels fighting for an independent Kurdistan. One would hasten to add that Mr Dudayev and others supporting him would do better to follow the footsteps of president Nazarbiev of Kazakhstan. His leadership, mixed with vision and realism has given him a role in the CIS much larger than himself. A place in greater Russian Federation ensures better future and better quality of life for the ethnic minorities in Russia. While discussing these separatist movements one

the East continually called

the Sultan of Turkey back

comes face to face with certain moral questions like human rights and the question of rights of ethnic and religious minorities. These concerns are raised more often than not by certain starry eyed human rights groups. They often forget that cities like Dresden and Coventry were destroyed to save and secure democracy and human rights and rightly so A few hundred years ago the same people colonised one country after another, in Asia. Africa and Latin America with the Bible in one hand and gun in the other. True that concerns of human rights are more focused today but the innate values of democracy have not changed with the passage of time. Democracy is not only universal adult suffrage. It is also a gateway to stability and peace where ethnic minorities along with the majority communities would exercise their rights for a better pre-

The Charter of the United Nations and Human Rights covenants amply provide conditions for the realisation of these objectives.

sent and brighter future.

# Refugee Haven 'Closes its Door'

Moussa Awuonda writes from Stockholm

Sweden's reputation as a sanctuary for refugees with a deep humanitarian conscience has been badly tarnished by its deportation of two Kurdish families to Turkey. The move signals a less-welcoming stand, but pressure is growing on the government to back down.

outrage by deporting Kurdish families to Turkey in a move reflecting a tough new policy towards refugees and migrants. Many of the ruling Social

→ WEDEN'S government

has sparked public

Democrats' traditional supporters have bitterly criticised the mid-January expulsions of two couples and their 11 children.

Lisbet Palme, widow of the Swedish Premier assassinated in 1986, who now chairs the national support committee for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has branded the deportations as "outrageous

and inhuman". In a letter to Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson, she condemned a "brutal and insensitive measure which shows how poorly the UN Convention on the Rights of the

child is observed in Sweden. Observers believe that Carlsson, who played a major role in steering the childrights convention through the UN General Assembly in 1989, has been damaged by the affair in a country that prides itself on having a humanitarian conscience of world renown.

There is no doubt that Sweden is closing its doors. says Eva Singer, an official of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Stockholm, citing other expulsions. "The

trend is worrying." The two deported Kurdish families came to Sweden in 1994. Two men — relatives.

Swedish police manhandling women and frightened children and battling support groups to enforce deportations to Turkey, a country Amid evidence of brutal that has itself been strongly criticised by human rights

> the Kurds The families were bundled on to a rickety old chartered aircraft that broke down for several hours in Bucharest during the flight to Ankara. "It was torture for them," said Dr Lars Gustavsson, a member of the Paediatricians Society that has joined

groups for its treatment of

the chorus of condemnation. The case posed serious questions of medical ethics. he said. The government had ignored experts' reports on the children's psychological state, said the doctor, adding: 'I couldn't believe this was happening in Sweden".

An Airican diplomat in Stockholm said: "Sweden has lost its moral power. It cannot claim social injustice against governments abroad any longer."

And the Expressen newspaper suggested Carlsson should consider resigning in view of the fact that his only supporters for the action

were the right-wing Conservative Party and racist groups. It said the Social Democratic Party had lost touch with its liberal-left roots.

Despite attacks from most

major political parties, Carlsson remained unrepentant. "It was a hard decision to make," he was reported as saying. "But the government had only two bad alternatives.

"The worst alternative would have been to allow the families to stay in Sweden."

However, political pres sure is growing on him to back down and bring the deportees back from Turkey, One suggestion is that individual families, rather than the state, could be their

Palme — whose intervention has shaken the Social Democrats — and other child welfare organisations are pressing for a meeting with Carlsson, at which such a compromise is likely to be

Signs of a toughening of immigration policy have been growing. In December, a Kenyan woman and her two half-Swedish children were kicked out, and there are fears that any flaw in the asylum records of other refugees might lead to their deporta-

tion. Until recently, Sweden's booming economy in an underpopulated country of less than nine million people drew in large numbers of

refugees and migrants to work in factories or undertake various menial jobs. But as the number of asylumseekers has increased - the figure swelled to more than 70,000 in 1993, partly due to the war in former Yugoslavia - economic problems have grown, and this has undoubtedly influenced government policy.

For decades, Sweden had a far more liberal immigration policy than, say, Britain. But one distillusioned African political exile said: "It's frightening to see the pace at which Sweden is changing into an inhospitable country for refugees.

"We are seeing overt discrimination against immigrants in the labour market by government agencies, yet not a single MP has raised this in parliament. This is not the society we ran to 10 years ago." — Gemini news

MOUSSA AWUONDA is a Kenyan journalist currently studying in Sweden.

## A Reader Reacts

The shocking news of the death of a 14-year-old boy in Khulna during demonstration is enough to shake the conscience of all the citizens in an independent country like Bangladesh. How long do we have see and stand the use of innocent children by the political parties? The struggle for might and power have shunned all of our conscience and we are indiscriminately

using our younger citizens. The political parties are constantly using our children for slogans, hartals, processions, elections, opposition campaigns and throwing or carrying bombs and so on. If they say 'no' to this accusation, how can the children become the victims of these fierce occurrences? The children are not supposed to be present in any such places where adult protesters demonstrate their protests! Should we think that the lawenforceing people entered children's homes to kill them? Or, mothers carried their children to the spots to be killed?

Even if the children enter the trouble-spots as curious visitors or on-lookers, is it not the political party adults' obligations to see that underaged children don't step in the scene? How can the children become active members of political parties? Instead, how can they enter as active participants in rallies? In both cases, we are using them for meeting our needs.

The children are not voters. They have nothing to do with political demonstrations, unless they are used. Is it the case that children are being used for the survival of political parties? In the name of children's brutal killings. our leaders make statemer years after years and survive for political fronts - we have seen these in most of our

struggles for freedom from

varied chains. History starts

Shamima Islam Who are these children that are so easily used? They

are poor - so poor that they cannot even eat one full meal a day. They eat the leftovers the political leaders talk rights with of food bowl in their hands or not food and a cup of hot tea for warming up, these children wait for our garbage to be thrown on the streets or dustbins so that they can pick up something to sell and earn for the day to fill their stomachs This search is never ending. and they get injuries in this search. They sleep on 'chats' torn plastics, used papers and so on, while leaders or semi-leaders go back home end of the demonstration. In chilly winter, while leaders go out with a sweater on, the poor children, the street children, barely use a torn dirty shirt for protection from cold. They are happy, if be used is fun to them and we, the sensible adults, who

victims of torture, or the next day after their brutal murders? Are we, the sensible good-intentioned adults playing the roles of coolheaded murderers? If not, we would have protected the minor citizens of this free nation. If not, we would have not sent our own children in the fore front. We are gaining our political image in many different ways, among which use of children is one promi-

nent method. Let us ask ourselves what happens in our own homes? In situations of parental quarrels, we try to keep our children at a distance — is it not? In situation of expected danger, we remove our own children from danger spots much ahead of time. Even in times of natural calamities, parents, especially mothers, die while protecting their own children. It is responsibility of all the citizens, regardless of sex, religion, complexion, to protect children — no matter which political fronts they belong to or ideals they hold! And, what are we doing here? The children are in the fore-front of many demonstrations, picketing, which have been called by adult political leaders.

The use of minor non-voters by political powerhunters should stop immediately. The political parties are abusing children and are violating children's rights like anything. The time has come that all the sensible citizens should hate them. Let us protect our poor malnourished. ill-nourished, under-nourished innocent children from political abuse. They are already over-used and abused in the quest for power. I don't want to see children being used anymore. The search for children's liberation from hunger should not rob them of their right to

### Asafuddowlah's suggestions

Sir, In a recent article published in your paper on the country's political crisis written by Mr Asafuddowlah, a number of suggestions to review and amend the Constitution were made. I and most of my colleagues agree with him that this political stalemate should make us take a practical look at the constitutional voids.

The upward revision of age, fixation of graduation as the minimum level of education, barring of successive terms in office and voting by party symbols and allocation of parliamentary seats to parties on the basis of percentage of total votes received -are all relevant in order to stop repetition of the same situation in the future.

We express our solidarity behind these suggestions put forward by a respected civil

servant of the country. M Ali Kabir

## Not fair

Shahjalal University, Sylhet

Sir, It is now apparently clear that there is nothing left in the world that can solve or ease the long political impasse in the country. The PM's speech to the nation on 23rd of January cre-

ated a spell of fire all over. Why the PM had to add more fuel to the fire which has already been burning. With this, she can be held responsible to jeopardise the very sanctity of the Holy month of

Ramadan. The date of general elections should have never been fixed during the month of Ramadan. The question now arises: should not the ruling party try to win people's sentiments or should they be account for the discreditability

of losing public sentiment? Nevertheless, the Holy month of Ramadan should have at least been considered and kept free from politics which only causes violence. May Allah help us all.

Moinuddin Dhaka

## Election '96

Sir, I was away from the

country for treatment when the list of voters was being prepared by house-to-house check. I returned from abroad on the 26th September '95 and found out that my name could not be enlisted in the voters list. I immediately tried to be enlisted and filled in the forms and submitted the same at 10/10 Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur on the 2nd November '95. During the photography sessions in

our area (Tejkunipara-Tejgaon), I found my name missing from the list.

I visited the Election Office at Mohammadpur and was told that the revised voters list would be published in or around the 25th January 1996. To my understanding, the voters list is incomplete.

I therefore ask: "How can an election be held even when the voters list is not final. Is this not a farce?" Thaddeus Rozario

Co-Chairman of Bangladesh Hindu Boddhay Christian Okyo Parishad 5 Tejkunipara, Dhaka —1215

## 'Disney Time'

Sir, I liked your "Disney Time" — a full-coloured page but the writing weren't clear, so I couldn't see the riddles So please type the writing more clearly. And I'm sending two jokes What driver can never

be arrested for speeding?

(A screwdriver) 2. Teacher: What do you get from Germany? Student: Germ—any. I do like the page where

you give comics (Garlfield

Maha Matin Cl-6-B Radiant International School,

and Tom and Jerry)

to take shape and we hate the brutal killings but not those who use our children for making their balls run.

from workers, employers in many places. Half a plate rice and 'daal' is a palatable dish to many of them who are abandoned by families. They sleep on the streets, roads, foot-paths, market places, bus-stops and so on. While about lack of freedom and to take a good sleep at the they get chance to earn some 5-10-20 take per head for their participation in the demonstrations, more happy if they get one meal a day! To boast of struggling for human rights, forget about children's rights while torturing them politically. Is it not that we

use their unlimited poverty,

for making speeches and

statements when they are