The Daily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Sunday, April 28, 1996

Eid Pledge

This year's Eid-ul Azha comes in the 25th year of our independence and in a close proximity to a general election about to be held under an arrangement endorsed by all political parties. Both events mark the nation's progress through the times and this holy occasion provides substance to them. How? The country's independence was achieved at a sacrifice the nation was never asked to make before. Similarly the nation has endorsed the interim arrangement for holding elections after a long drawn-out ordeal marked by sacrifices in human and material terms.

The spirit of Eid-ul Azha relates to both these national events in that the underlying theme of this great religious occasion is sacrifice in its essence and variety. It is the negation of self for the sake of love to Allah, the Creator. The political leaders' avowed duty is also a kind of selfless service. On this occasion, therefore, we demand from our politicians a commitment duly sanctified by the spirit of sacrifice that inspired Hazrat Ibrahim (R) to fulfil a pledge. We have long been a witness to the fact that pledges are made by our politicians not always to be kept but just for the heck of it. Now here is a holy occasion to introspect and rededicate themselves, imbued with the spirit of Eid-ul Azha, to the cause of selfless public service.

We urge our politicians to make only those pledges they can keep — not the ones they cannot honour. For long the common people have been assured of a rosy future - particularly during the election campaign the rhetoric reaches a feverish pitch. That tradition must come to an end. The common man certainly deserves better. He has been deceived for much too long. Now is the time for reaching out to him or her on a humane level with humility and compassion. The sacrificial spirit will automatically create an environment of equality and social justice for all men and women in this small country.

Test for Secularism

With India going to polls for the eleventh consecutive time in her history, predictions are rife that the outcome could mean a dramatic change to the country's polity, based traditionally on the mutually reinforcing principles of secularism and unity in diversity.

The pollsters are saying almost in a chorus that it would be a hung parliament resulting in the formation of a rather fledgling coalition government. This by itself could not be that worrying given India's occasional stints with governments formed on a wafer-thin majority like in the case of V P Singh or of Narasimha Rao himself. But what makes one sit up and take note is the predicted scenario of the BJP emerging as the single largest party in Lok Sabha, maybe without enough of a majority to form government on its own but within a striking distance of power all the same. In the event such a forecast comes true one would be left seriously pondering over the amazing ascendency of the BJP power in Indian politics: from a couple of parliamentary seats secured at the polls in the mid-eighties to more than 80 bagged in those of 1989 and to being poised now for bettering even that considerable tally.

The secular forces are fighting the elections from different platforms and are predicted to be faring something like this: The ruling Congress could come second falling short of the BJP strength by 10-30 seats with the Rashtriya Morcha of the Left Front and the Janata Dal trailing the

Congress in the third position.

Although the public opinion surveys were based broadly on a wider sampling this time around — in one case as many as 28 thousand voters had been involved — these, nonetheless, must be taken with a pinch of salt when there are as many as 58 crore 19 lakh voters in the country. In more concrete terms, just how the third force plank of the Janata Dal and Left Front, the regional political alignments in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra, Punjab, Assam and Kerala, and the coalition of socially backward forces or lack of it, are going to affect the overall outcome of the polls remains largely a matter of guess-work at this stage.

The bed-rock of India's pluralistic co-existence and the safety-vault of democracy in that country have been its firmly-upheld secularist traditions. These have proved to be of immense benefit not only to the Indian society but also to intra-regional balance and equanimity. We put faith in the Indian voters' sense of judgement.

After HSC, What?

The prospects for admission to higher education this year look very bleak. Some two lakh HSCpassed students await entry into the portals of universities, colleges and institutes which are altogether having 65 thousand seats to offer. The unusually high number of admission-seekers is made up of 1,66,978 who came out successful in the 1995 HSC examinations to swell the ranks of those who had been frustrated in their attempts for admission last year.

The fact is most of them could not meet the stiff eligibility criteria in their earlier try and are hoping now that this time luck might smile on them or that they could perhaps manage to be admitted somehow. At any rate, there is only an outside chance for a very limited number of them to make it. They are willy-nilly slicing into the berths for the HSC-passed students of 1995.

Their craving for admission to higher education is only natural and the best way to cater to their need would be not only to increase the private sector participation in setting up more and more new educational facilities but also to incentivise it by lending bank money.

Basically though we would like higher education to be selective with a provision made for job-based terminal education at the post-HSC level for a large majority of students joining the vulnerable ranks of the unemployed youth. We can not let such a large and important segment of manpower to go waste before even sprouting into a bud.

Don't be Wobbly When it's Time to be Firm and Swift

OST people who expected a rapid change in the overall security situation in the country are getting increasingly concerned. The government of Mohammad Habibur Rahman seemed to start on a positive note but then all its initiatives have stalled. Neither the arms recovery drive nor the administrative changes are proceeding according to any coherent plan of action. The neutral caretaker government enjoys the goodwill and trust of the people. Indeed it is the fruit of a long struggle. People have made great sacrifices to bring it into being. Over 120 people

lost their lives. All they wanted was a peaceful and secure environment in which a free and fair election could be held. Given the hesitant action taken so far one wonders whether their sacrifices were in vain Notwithstanding the Chief Adviser's emotional appeal to the officials on 25 April, the impression of a wobbly government wilting under the pressure of the fallen BNP gov-

ernment continues to persist. One may of course say that these are biased comments.

not harassment if the armed terrorist belongs to some other political party. One wonders if the neutral government has accepted the logic of such arguments and this most novel definition of harassment. To put it rather bluntly, the BNP is challenging the neutrality and sense of fairness of the government headed by Habibur

What is the response of his government? Largely ineffectual gestures which neither lead to the recovery of arms nor to arrests! As a matter of fact, terrorists caught with illegal arms are being released on bail. Common sense suggests that these thugs should be held in detention at least until the election is over There is the precedent of Justice Shahabuddin's caretaker government which did not fumble on this point. Peace-loving and law abiding people are increasingly getting frustrated to see the BNP armed cadres brandishing

arms, as before, with impunity, Of course, it is ironic to hear these complaints of harassment by the BNP because for long five years they turned a deaf ear to such complaints

recovery drive. The links between the goons with arms and the officers who protected them has to be severed if the arms recovery campaign is to

Before concluding let me refer to a startling report in a Bengali daily, Bhorer Kagaj of 23 April, 1996. The report gives very precise and specific information on the number of criminals who have been released by presidential pardon on the fecommendation of the former BNP Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury

According to the report since the middle of 1994 until the end of 1995, 406 persons suffering prison sentence have been set free by the Home Minister using the president's prerogatives under article 49 of the Constitution. These criminals were sentenced to prison terms of various length for committing serious crimes such as murder, extortion and toll-taking, abduction, robbery, use of illegal firearms and crimes against women. Some of those set free by presidential pardon were sentenced in absentia. They have become free men without suffering even a day's imprisonment.

ON THE RECORD by Shah A M S Kibria

Let us therefore look at the question of recovery of illegal arms. In the midst of deepening concern about a host of problems faced by the citizens. it is the vast arsenal of illegal arms in the hands of terrorists which is uppermost in their mind. With the exception of the BNP, all other political parties are urging upon the authorities to take drastic action to recover illegal arms. They all believe that it not possible to hold a genuinely free election with such a huge quantity of arms in the hands of mastaans. Neither the restoration of normal law and order nor a sense of security will be possible under these

circumstances. BNP's support for arms recovery is not only lukewarm but it is reported to be conditional upon not harassing their party activists. Indeed, BNP leaders have been fulminating against the neutral caretaker government and its arms recovery drive on the ground that their party activists are being harassed in the name of arms recovery. What is the definition of harassment? Is it harassment if a terrorist belonging to BNP is apprehended with arms? Apparently, it is

by their political opponents Out of office, the BNP is claim ing that even the neutral care taker government is harassing their party activists. No other party wants to protect 4ts members who possess and use illegal arms. Why should the BNP be allowed to frustrate the recovery of arms from its armed cadres by raising these smoke-screens about harass

No one will be fooled by

these pleas unless one is de termined to see no evil and hear no evil. BNP leaders are vehemently protesting even the very limited transfers ordered by the neutral caretaker government. Why do they complain about these transfers? Do they have a special reason to keep the officers as they have placed them before quitting office? The motive is too obvious to need elaboration. BNP leaders do not want their favourite officers to be disturbed. If so, the neutral government should ensure the rapid neutralization of the administration. This is the task for which the nation has placed them in charge of the government at this critical time. This will also lead to greater success in the arms

The report further said that in granting pardon to these criminals, the normal procedure was not followed. In some cases the formality of seeking the views of the prison authorities was not observed. The nation will no doubt be shocked to learn that three of those set free were sentenced to life imprisonment

I have taken the liberty of quoting this case simply because it tells the story of five years of BNP rule more eloquently than anything else. Can any civilized government stoop so low as to throw overboard the very basic tenets of ethics and justice in order to patron ize its party members? It is this malaise that the neutral caretaker government should have borne in mind in map ping their campaign against the armed terrorists.

Can a government which is committed to holding a free and fair election, free from in timidation by armed hoodlums afford not to withdraw arms during election time? One hopes the neutral government will not let the nation down Surely they will not be neutral between armed goons and in nocent citizens!

political impasse is expected

to be settled. DUCSU election

may also be expected soon

with the co-operation of all

but for this a Press Conference

peace and sanity in the cam-

pus, this teacher like other

general and independent

teachers could only expect the

above senators and all other

teachers to work with a co-op-

erative spirit to address the

manifold problems of the uni-

versity and help solve them in-

ternally and desist from flash-

ing contradictory and baseless

news in the media which only

create suspicion and misun-

derstanding in the public

mind, smirching the very im-

age of not only the university

but also the corresponding

An Independent Teacher

teachers themselves.

University of Dhaka.

For the sake of establishing

was simply uncalled for

OPINION

32 DU Senators' Allegation Politically Motivated

This writer was dismayed at pursuing a fallacious allegation of "corruption, nepotism and partisan activities" made by 32 senators, out of 104 total senators of Dhaka University. appearing in various sections of the Press on April 20.

Firstly, the claim that the

Senators "had sent a notice to the VC to convene a meeting of the Senate to discuss these irregularities, but the VC did not respond" is a travesty of truth. It is well-known that unlike previous VCs, the present VC attaches more importance to democratic values, and is more responsive, accessible and rational in his approach to teachers of all shades of opinion and in addressing the administrative and academic problems. In response to the request of the above senators (belonging to the Blue Panel supporting Awami League), the VC, to our knowledge, announced a date, i.e. March 30, to convene a Senate meeting. but due to hartal and "non-cooperation movement" this meeting could not be held. When another date was being contemplated, the above senators, without discussing the matter with the VC, called a Press Conference to circulate canards in their usual way with the ultimate objective of tarnishing the image of the university administration. Obviously, when some administrative changes are being made at the national level by the caretaker government, the above faction of Senate members, by addressing the present neutral government, have attempted to politicalize the academic issues of the university and have aspired some sudden changes in the university's administrative structure. This inherent design is unfortunate, unproductive and malicious. It is usual to have hundreds of

these are to be solved internally with the cooperative participation of all. But unfortunately, without doing this, some politically motivated members of the Senate have circulated baseless allegations through Press Con-

If any investigation is to be made against the so-called irregularities and corpuption, let it be done for a period of 20 years, instead of five years. It could then be proved what the earlier VCs supporting the same political ideology as the 32 senators, have done or achieved during their tenure. The above senators should have appreciated one basic truth that the present administration, with the co-operation of teachers and students of all shades of opinion have been to some extent, successful in turning the violent campus of battlefield into a peaceful place of academic pursuit.

It is a matter of common prudence that appointments in the university are made by the Selection Boards and Syndicate in which members with the above political ideology also exist. Hence question of "corruption" does not generally arise, although, admittedly there might be some differences here and there. Rather, it statistics of appointments are made, it would reveal that the teachers of the Blue panel have been more benefitted than others. This is manifested in the recent appointments of provosts of Zahurul Haque Hall and Kuwait-Maitree Hall. But some teachers, instead of expressing gratitude, have the habit of remaining ungrateful all the time. It is also known to the people that a date was also announced for holding the DUCSU election, but unfortunately the election could not be held due to artificially created terrorism. Now that the

lothe between.

Accountability and transparency

problems of the university of

such a huge magnitude, and

Sir, Most of our BNP, AL, JI, JP and other political leaders make indiscriminate criticism

and allegations against each other, on the one hand and stress upon the need for accountability and transparency of works and functions of the government, on the other. We believe in freedom of

speech and freedom of press. We also believe in simple

'sense of proportion' as well as in the common saying 'charity

begins at home'. We would therefore request our all political parties to make accountability and transparency of their own deeds and activities apparent and simultaneously ask the government to make its works and functions accountable and transparent.

O H Kabir Dhaka-1203

Lebanon Bombing — Misguided Election Strategy of Shimon Peres

II T could not count the bodies. There were bodies without heads. There were people without arms or legs" - said Mikael Lindiall, a UN official who visited the UN compound in Qana, about 10 km from Tyre. in Lebanon. Horrified peace keepers and rescue workers wept as they collected limbs and pieces of flesh in plastic bags. The smell of blood was overpowering - reports Agence France Press. About 100 civilians were killed and hundreds injured that included women and children who took shelter at the UN base in Qana. The commander of the UN Force General Wozniak who looked 'shaken' said 'I cannot find words to describe what I feel after seeing this. After all "why civilians"? So far about 160 civilians have been killed and hundreds injured in Lebanon. Though Israeli war is really against Hezbollah guerillas only five guerillas have so far been killed and the Israeli bombing could not stop Hezbollah rock-

Incidentally, Israeli bombing of Lebanese villages started in response to a katyusha rocket fired by Hezbollah from southern Lebanon that landed at a village in northern Israel injuring one man and damaging parts of buildings. Of course. Hezbollah has been occasionally firing katyusha rockets which are most obsolete and terribly inaccurate to northern Israel in violation of the unwritten agreement of July 1993, brokered by US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, which was meant to stop Hezbollah and Israeli security forces attacks on each other's civilian targets. Hezbol lah leadership justifies such

deeply involved and also some European powers and particularly France have quite a different set of political and cultural interests than the US in the area immediate ceasefire

was not expected. Unfortunately, Labanon apparently belongs to every one else except the Lebanese. Lebanon torn by intense civil war for nearly two decades, stands occupied physically, militarily and politically - physically by Israel (South Lebanon security zone) and politically and militarily by Syria through stationing of about 35.000 Syrian troops in Lebanon and also by having unacceptable political control on the government in Lebanon. South Lebanon is also occupied by Iran by proxy through Hezbollah which is brain-washed, trained and financed by Iran. Iran is against M-E peace process brokered by the US and it instigates Hezbollah which has been fighting for Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon with the purpose of creating destabilising situation in the Middle

Iran's overall strategy has wider implications as it wants to counter anything that the US does in the Middle-East. The US is also bent upon cornering Iran diplomatically as it thinks that Iran has been engaged in state terrorism. In fact, the recent conference in Cairo on "terrorism" was directed mainly against Iran. Iran has good relation with Syria and Syria finds it convenient to use Iran for creating extra pressure on Israel. Having taken advantage of the differing positions of the US and Europe in Lebanon, Iran has indeed created a fairly strong position in the political and strategie game in Lebanon. The

ever, sustained efforts by Christopher and his team and support of some European powers including France ultimately brought the Lebanon misadventure to an end. It has just been announced (while completing the comment) that Israel, Syria and Lebanon agreed on the ceasefire draft. The agreement reached has the following main elements: (a) Both Hezbollah and Israel will not attack each other's civilians and civilian targets (b)

makov and Pakistani Prime

Minister Benazir Bhutto. How-

Labanon, US and France. This is basically the 1993 unwritten agreement now put in writing Lebanon, Israel and Syria are the parties to the agreement. Hezbollah also agreed to abide by the agree-

ment.

Civilian population areas not to

be used for launching the at-

tacks (c) Monitoring Commit-

tee consists of Israel, Syria

The point that may help Shimon Peres on May 29 election is that civilians in northern Israel may find respite at least for couple of weeks Peres would be happy if the ceasefire holds upto May 29.

However, during the last 16 days of Israeli bombing. Shimon Peres apparently did not score any point in terms of his political gam at home against Benjamin Netanyahu, the main rival in May 29 general election in fact, the last opinion poll shows Benjamin Netanyahu only 5 points behind Peres though in earlier poll he was 6-8 points behind Peres. Now everything would depend on how Israeli public react to the ceasefire. So far as Israeli Arabs are concerned he is facing boycott from them because of Lebanon bombing. Though



rocket attacks on Israel's occupation of South Lebanon as a self-declared security zone. Israel has been responding to such rocket attacks from time to time but the present Israeli army response to Hezbollah's katyusha rocket attacks was terribly disproportionate and undoubtedly a political one to boost Shimon Peres's election prospect on May 29, 1996. Shimon Peres thought he must act as he was already losing in Israeli public opinion because of repeated suicide bomb attacks by Hamas terrorists against Israeli civilians. Shimon Peres did take tough actions short of bombing Hamas establishments in West Bank but these were not enough to recover his flagging position among Israeli public. Hezbollah's rocket attacks gave him the chance and he acted immediately.

Shimon Peres took for granted that Israeli military action called "Operations grapes of Wrath" against Lebanon will not wreck the M-E peace process though he might lace international pressure at some point to stop this. But he thought such pressure would bring along some additional benefit i.e. halt in Hezbollah's katyusha rocket attacks against northern Israel at least temporarily up to his election time. This is what Shimon Peres needed. However, intensity of bombing and indeed wrong targeting by Israeli Air Force of UN base at Qana which killed innocent civilians including women and children indeed brought international "wrath" on Israel itself. Qana disaster also prompted France and other European powers to redouble their efforts for a ceasefire. But because it is Lebanon with Syria and Iran

matically as Russia and some European Foreign Ministers maintained contacts during ceasefire negotiations with Iranian Foreign Minister Whether the US likes it or not Iran has a solid role in Lebanon. Iran is a power in the region and its influence on Hamas, Hezbollah and other radical groups is big and strong. This cannot be ignored

Lebanese government also did not want to stop Hezbollah and probably it could not as Hezbollah has been fighting Lebanese government's war against Israel on Israeli occupation of a part of South Lebanon. However, last week Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri said that Lebanese government would stop Hezbollah operation if Israel vacates

As various reports indicate,

US felt uncomfortable diplopolitical experts say this is a temporary threat and might change with the ceasefire in Lebanon, still much would depend on how Shimon Peres behaves with Arabs in the next couple of weeks. However, despite Lebanon debacle. Shimon Peres stands a good chance on May 29 elec-

South Lebanon "security zone". Shimon Peres has really gambled in Lebanon. The serious crackdown on Hamas and

the closure of Israel-West Bank borders for weeks after the suicide bombings already antagonised the Palestinians. The attacks of Lebanon coupled with Qana disaster made things worse in terms of Israel's relations with rest of the Arab world. The action taken by the Arab League for a united position of all Arabs to oppose Israel's attack on Lebanon was indicative of the serious deterioration of Arab-Israeli relationship.

US Secretary of State was finding it hard to bring Syria in line with the US proposals for immediate ceasefire. Indeed, it was a diplomatic setback for Christopher when Hafez-Al Assad avoided meeting him early this week whereas Assad met Russian Foreign Minister Pri-

his "friend" Yasser Arafat who succeeded in getting overwhelming YES (504/54) from Palestinian National Council (PNC) in favour of revoking all provisions of 1968 PLO Charter which call for destruction of Israel. This is undoubtedly a brave action by Arafat at a time when a part of the Arab world (Lebanon) was facing Israeli bombs and Arafat himself with his Palestinian people was under collective punishment from Israel as West Bank borders with Israel stand closed bringing untold sufferings to the Palestinian people. Shimon Peres was very happy and said - PLO leader is a partner for peace. Hamas said, "Arafat had committed a crime". However a day after Palestinian National Council voted to annual the clauses that call for destruction of Israel. Peres' Labour Party dropped its opposition to the establishment of a Palestinian State. Peres said, "With the Palestinian, we wish to arrive not at vet another interim settlement but a permanent settlement, a fundamental solution". Negotiations for

determining the final status

will start in May, '96. If Labour

Party returns to power which

seems very likely now not be-

cause of Shimon Peres' bomb-

ing of Lebanon but because of

Palestinian National Council's

decision to share Palestinian

land with arch enemy — the

tion because of timely help by

Eid-ul Azha: The Spirit and Significance

by Abu Imran

OR the Muslims, there are two main festivals the Eid-ul Fitr and the Eid-ul Azha. In the strictest sense, Muslims' festivities are not the moments of unrestricted merry-making or crossing the limits of decency. In this sense, Muslim festivities are sort of thanks-giving to Allah for His kindness and bounties and sharing of joys and happiness with others even the poor and the helpless. In case of Eid-ul Fitr, it is marked by sighting of the moon, ending the observance of monthlong lasting meant to attain piety by self-restraint and paying 'Fitr' or a kind of dole at prescribed rate to the poor so that they can also share the joys of Eid (the happy moment) which is preceded by congressional prayer in the morning.

The other happy occasion should by Muslims the world over is Eid-ul Azha or the Qurbani (sacrificial) Eid. This is done in commemoration of Hazrat Ibrahim's (A.S.) great sacrifice which he offered to please Allah in terms of his instruction. Allah put Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S.) to several tests. The last test was severest of all. He dreamt of being asked to sacrifice in the name of Allah. He sacrificed a large number of dumbas (a kind of sheep). But he was again asked to do so. He sacrificed a large

number of camels. Then still

he was asked, and finally he could know that he was to sacrifice his dearest of the dear meaning his son, Ismail (AS) He then prepared himself for this, then told his son about his dream.

The son was not an ordinary child — he said to his beloved father, to carryout Allah's instructions, and he (Hazrat Ibrahim) would find him (Hazrat Ismail) patient calm and obedient, if Allah willing (Al-Quran). Then both the father and the son went to a lonely place. There, Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) blind-folded himself lest he got pity and failed to discharge the hard task, and placed the knife on the neck of Hazrat Ismail (AS) to cut him. But the more he (lbrahim) tried, the more he felt the knife not working. He then struggled. But Allah told him that he had turned out successful in the test and should open his eyes. He did so and was surprised to find a dumba slained in place of Ismail. That animal was sent by

Allah from the heaven The above story of supreme sacrifice in the way of Allah is an example to be followed by Muslims the world over that at the command of Allah, the faithful should sacrifice their dearest thing. And to let people keep remembering this supreme sacrifice, now the faithfuls of means are required to sacrifice halal animals like

goat, lamb, cow, camel etc., on Eid-ul Azha with the intention to please Allah. The meat of the sacrificed animal is required to be shared with relations, friends and the poor This, therefore, besides helping a faithful to re-invigorate his sense of sacrifice, also helps the poor people to share the joy of festivity. The poorest of the poor at least on this day can also partake a delicious dinner.

As said earlier, the sacrifice is meant to please Allah, and is never meant in any way to be a competition among the affluent lest its every purpose is defeated. But for the lack of knowledge and appreciation of the true spirit of Qurbani or sacrifice a tendency among some Muslims has become apparent to earn name and fame through this practice. It now even seems that buy the biggest and the costliest animal to win people's applause is an act of piety and religiousity forgetting whether such an intention would be acceptable to Allah or not. This sense of competition is never desirable since this creates a show-off devoid of the 'real intention of pleasing of Allah through sac-

rifice. Moreover, those who could not afford such luxury feel bad, their children think that their parents are not as worthy as others who are rich and could buy big animals. This breeds

frustration and a sense of deprivation. Therefore it is necessary that this sort of competition be avoided since it is said that only the good intention of sacrifice pleases Allah neither the blood nor the

Islam being a complete code of life, besides invoking Allah's pleasure, it also helps boost economy. For instance, it is said that alone in Lalbag area of Dhaka trading of hides and skin worth around Taka 200 crore takes place during Eid-ul Azha. The system thus also creates employment and trading opportunity for many. There, some of the poor people all the year round keep busy in rearing their goats and cattle for trading during the Qurbani Eid.

Besides, it is the time when Haij or Pilgrimage to Makkah takes place where Muslim's from all over the world assemble and pray to Almighty Allah and thus discharge one of their fundamental duties to Allah. This forges an international Muslim unity and is an unique instance in the world. Thus we see that the occasion of Qurbani Eid has its own unique characteristic of sacrifice to please Allah in seeking His mercies and bounties both here and here after, on one hand, and commenting international Islamic brother-hood, on the other.