

Matter of Emphasis

One may be somewhat pleasantly surprised but will hardly be elated over the findings of a review made recently of the performance of our manufacturing sector between 1990 and 1996. The update sponsored by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and prepared by Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya of the BIDS shows that the industrial sector grew at an average annual rate of 6.86 per cent during said period. This bettered the average figure of 5.97 per cent per annum recorded over the whole decade between 1985-86 and 1990-96.

The modest industrial growth in the past six years which had actually peaked in 1992-93 with a rate of 9.1 per cent was notably achieved amidst the indecision-ridden political turmoil which followed that "best year".

So, the first lesson to draw here is that we should never again allow political uncertainties to snowball in a way that hinders industrial growth or, for that matter, the economic development of the country. The appeal is to both the ruling party and the opposition to see in this the wisdom of a bipartisan understanding on how to keep the productive sectors going under all circumstances.

The industrial indebtedness grew over the period and that is another headache we must attend to for the sake of growth without liabilities. It is a contradiction in terms that growth has to be propped up by bank-rolling and bad lending.

On the positive side, we have had the increases in the industrial use of electricity and in the consumption of gas in the manufacturing processes making possible that modest overall growth of the manufacturing sector.

Despite a nearly one-sided attention paid to the organised industrial sector its contribution to the GDP is yet to outstrip that of the largely unorganised industrial sector, comprising cottage and the whole lot of other micro-productive units.

For an all-round economic development of the country with poverty alleviation and social justice as our principal concerns we need to encourage small-scale undertakings on a top priority basis. That, for sure, is the golden path to take.

Security for Water Transport

In a riverine country with a long coastline, the need for river police and coast guards can hardly be overemphasised. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recognised this dire necessity while addressing a review meeting at the Bhola Circuit House on Wednesday relating to law and order and development initiatives in the Barisal division. River transports still carry the major share of the country's passengers and goods traffic. Add to this deep sea fishing that has grown in recent years, bolstered by the availability of the mechanised boats and trawlers. The technical innovation and improvement brought about in fishing and the preservation facilities have turned marine fishing into an industry located along the coastal belts.

The expansion of inland trade and economic activities on river routes have not, however, been matched by the strengthening of security for them. Similarly, the coast guards are no match for the pirates who swoop from time to time on trawlers engaged in sea fishing or on boats operating in the Sunderbans for commercial purposes. The pirates have virtually established an unchallenged reign of terror in the coastal areas to the south. Piracy there has to be dealt a blow soon if we want to see our sea fishing flourishing into a sustainable industry. The coast guards and river police together can protect the vital economic interests of the country.

So the stake is more than what is usually thought of. Not only do we need to raise the forces; but also the quality of their service through providing better training, equipment and fast-moving vessels to them.

At times the coast guards would be required to carry on rescue operations in challenging situations. Unless specially trained for that job, they would fail to perform. That aspect should also be taken into account, particularly when our coastal areas are often visited by natural calamities.

Arsenic Threat

The presence of arsenic in tubewell water in a village in Pabna has led to the death of 11 persons and illness for 100 others. This is an extremely alarming situation. We knew from earlier reports that not just one or two villages are affected by an unacceptably high level of arsenic pollution of water but a long stretch of our bordering villages with India has fallen prey to arsenic.

Once or twice the government made a half-hearted attempt to assess the situation, as if the problem will pass off if it is overlooked. Now the news of death caused by water contaminated with arsenic, and that too, in a northern district of Bangladesh is bound to create panic among our people.

So we suggest that an expert team or teams with proper equipment to examine arsenic level in water be rushed to the areas affected or suspected to be so. They will make sure that people do not drink water containing arsenic and at the same time declare where water is safe to drink or use for other purposes. In this regard, West Bengal's experience can be useful to us. How did the government there tackle the problem with the assistance of the WHO? We must need to know how water is freed of arsenic contents.

In the meantime the incident in Pabna should form part of an intense public information campaign so that no further death occurs.

A Visit of Immense Significance

After 14 years of fierce debate between India and Nepal over sharing their common river waters, the two countries are close at last to reaching an agreement made so much the easier by a consensus forged lately between the Congress party and the Communists in Nepal. We better take a leaf out of their book.

INDIAN External Affairs Minister I K Gujral arrives here at a propitious moment. The conventional rhetoric between Dhaka and New Delhi is ebbing to a virtual retreat, gradually but markedly giving way to a healthy bilateral resolve to substantiate their hitherto ill-fated relations. With such a vantage-point emerging in the philosophical outlook of the two countries, Gujral's four-day trip to Dhaka seems bound for a pride of place in the whole new process of rebuilding the bilateral ties launched with the change of governments in the two countries.

Significantly, the delegation which the Indian External Affairs Minister is leading in Dhaka includes two important

figures in Dhaka and South Block in Delhi. In fact, if one were to identify the distances they have covered so far in fine-tuning their approaches to certain hitherto intractable problems, one could hardly resist marveling at the splendid ground-work done.

The Ganges water sharing question has been de-linked from the augmentation issue, so that the Ganges-Brahmaputra link canal proposal by India stands dropped. The bracketing of the Ganges with other common rivers has also been dispensed with. It is only after the question of permanent sharing of the lean season water of the Ganges has been resolved that the issue of other rivers will be taken up.

49.5 kilometers of the land boundary hangs fire. West Bengal is keen on early demarcation of the border and the Indian government which is yet to ratify the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement through its Parliament seems willing to be doing it but after the border demarcation work is completed.

The outcome of the Gujral visit is most likely to be the establishment of a mechanism to discuss substantive issues, in a result-oriented manner.

As for the central issue of arriving at an agreement on the sharing of the lean season water of the Ganges there is bound to be some horse-trading on the quantum of water to be released to Bangladesh during the dry season. The Gordian Knot can only be untied at the high-



Time and Tide
Shah Husain Imam

personalities of the Track II diplomacy fame — I K Gujral himself and Somnath Chatterjee, the parliamentary leader of the CPM with West Bengal government's representation etched on the composition of the delegation.

The non-government second track initiative launched by eminent personages from both India and Bangladesh has already favourably impacted inter-governmentally through their interactions backed by issue-based expertise, research and insights. During his 1994 visit to Dhaka I K Gujral had expressed his highly positive views on trade imbalance and the water sharing issue. He also referred to the transit question, albeit without being remotely imposing on it in his characteristically suave manner.

The forward footholds reached on some of the outstanding issues of considerable concern to both governments must be matters of considerable satisfaction to the Foreign of-

Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan came back from a Delhi visit recently with a clear impression of an all-party consensus having emerged in India over the urgency to get the Ganges water sharing issue out of the way for the sake of addressing other issues.

There can be multi-track discussion on all the other issues raised by India such as transit, alleged North-East cross-border activities, etc. but without any prejudice to the most vital question of reaching an agreement on the lean season sharing of the Ganges water on a permanent basis.

On tariff reduction, India wants to effect it under the SAFTA but we are seeking bilateral concessions which are likely to be acceded to by India in the near future.

Decision on a number of enclaves other than Berubari, Dahagram and Angarpata remains pending under the Land Boundary Agreement of 1974. In other words, demarcation of

est political level.

The all-party consensus in India should ideally be reciprocated by an all-party consensus in Bangladesh, especially over the water issue. Although it may not be an absolute necessity in matters of inter-governmental negotiations, yet this is what a good, functioning democracy should be all about.

After 14 years of fierce debate between India and Nepal over sharing their common river waters, the two countries are close at last to reaching an agreement made so much the easier by a consensus forged lately between the Congress party and the Communists in Nepal. We better take a leaf out of their book.

The Indo-Nepal water agreement is going to embody a 'no harm' clause ruling out detrimental construction works on either side and the principle of arbitration in the event of a dispute. Quite a forward-looking example, worth perhaps emulating by us.

To the Editor...

We just want to study

Sir, The recent incidents at Dhaka University have given rise to a question that whether the government or the opposition is really interested in eliminating terrorism from the campus. Many believe that it is not a difficult task to remove the terrorists from the campus. Because only a few armed miscreants are creating terror on the campus. In fact, it is the lack of noble intention of some section that is making it impossible to ensure a terror-free campus.

We are already burdened with a session-jam due to many strikes called over the last couple of years. And we cannot afford any more. So, for the sake of 28,000 general students of Dhaka University, it is our earnest request to all parties concerned to stop these violence and indiscipline in the campus. We do not want to be victims anymore. We just want to study.

Torun
Finance & Banking Dept
Dhaka University.

Extra bumpers

Sir, The overwhelming logic in favour of 'extra bumpers' on cars has convinced me to fit my car up with them, as soon as I find some good reasoning for retaining the original ones.

I wish the learned readers/writers would enlighten me with equally sane logic in favour of: loud horns, wrong turns, embarking/dismarking in the middle of the road, random parking, speeding, if I choose to ignore cars emitting black smoke or blaring music — they are either too poor or too rich — not my type! overtaking — and many other such trivialities that spoil my day, because of my ignorance.

While it is crystal clear that the rear extra guard will protect my fancy car from getting bumped by slowly rickshaws — I could use the front one to give them a taste of their own medicine; and bump into them, and that should brighten my day!

How fuzzy-headed I've been, thinking that rickshaws belong on the road as much as I do (if not more); and rickshawpullers have some rights too (if not the same), as me and my driver.

I shall rectify that soon and teach myself and my driver all the tricks for keeping ahead on the road and ensure my supreme conveniences. Perhaps even acquire a flowery vocabulary for those who dare to get in my way, and while I'm at it, I shall fix a louder horn and learn to play a popular tune (mere gari kee samne kaun hai) on it and let the blind driver in front of me know that the lights have changed to green, and to turn my neighbours green with envy, when I blast my horn beligerently to awaken my darwan after midnight. Also I may take off the black tapes from the headlights, so that I can dazzle the oncoming drivers and blink them to 'Let me Pass-First'.

First, then don't blame me for my timidity on the road, since I've ridden rickshaws for over thirty years and am inclined to be considerate towards them. I

also suspect that everyone knows this and in the few years that I've burdened myself with a car, I've bumped by cars, buses and even trucks, more often than by rickshaws. Probably they misinterpret my 'I'm proud to be a Gregorian' sticker, as 'Former Rickshaw Rider.' I should also replace my 'Enjoy Rotary with Dhaka Central' sticker with 'Enjoy Your Ride — Behind Me' or perhaps even with one that proclaims 'I'm King of the Road.'

Munirul Haque
DOHS, Dhaka

P.S. I must remember to thank the lady in my lane, with the lovely voice, who dutifully warns us early every morning 'Attention please, this car is backing up.'

Munirul Haque
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DOHS (New), Dhaka

Spelling mistakes in Bar Council question paper

Sir, It is known to all that Bangladesh Bar Council is second to none in Bangladesh in awarding training to the new advocates of the country. Every alternate six months a written examination for enrolment as advocates is held under the authority of Bangladesh Bar Council. Its previous examination system was obviously praiseworthy. But the examination which was held on 28th June, 1996 has rather destroyed the previous reputation of the institution. There were gross and massive spelling mistakes in the printed question paper. I am giving here some examples to make the readers understand my allegation:

Given spelling: uncertainty, opinion, procedure, how, defendant, amendment, required, wheather, widrawal, permissible, shell, actual, woner, hom, relif, claimed, apple, facts, sought, equitate, rule, session, magistrate, defendant, provisions, observed, kidnapping, discuss, relebancy.

Correct spelling: uncertainty, opinion, procedure, how, defendant, amendment, required, whether, withdrawal, permissible, shall, actual, owner, whom, relief, claimed, appeal, facts, sought, etiquette, rule, session, magistrate, defendant, provisions, observed, kidnapping, discuss, relevancy.

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Matters to consider

Sir, I was really surprised by reading the letter of Md Mustafizur Rahman of Dhaka published in your paper on August 17 under the caption 'Matters to consider or not'. It could be assumed that he was a regular reader of The Daily Star, then he had missed my letter published on August 8, '96 under the heading 'Bangladesh Betar' and Joy Bangla', eludes me. In it I clearly stated my view points, why I thought it

was unnecessary to change Radio Bangladesh to Bangladesh Betar. I am quite aware about the true history and I know that Bangladesh Betar was changed to Radio Bangladesh by those persons who also fought for the liberation of our country and whose mother tongue was Bangla. So, could they have any hatred for Bangla words? May be the government thought Radio Bangladesh more suitable.

The writer expressed his hope that facts stated in his letter would help me to be positive to the government initiatives. But the changing of Bangladesh Betar to Radio Bangladesh was also a government initiative, so should I think that the writer is trying to imply that from 1975 to 1996 there was no government in Bangladesh?

Nur Jahan
East Nasirabad, Chittagong

An appeal to the prime minister

Sir, I am a student of 'Interior Design'. I have passed my HSC in '95. I have two more sisters. My mother was a teacher of Dhaka College. But two months ago, she was transferred to a college of Mysore. Now she has to go there every time.

My father also works outside Dhaka. It's creating a big problem in our family. My youngest sister is in Class V. So, it is very difficult for us to handle her as well as the household without my mother.

So I like request to the honourable prime minister to kindly give orders to the authority concerned so that they take necessary steps to bring back my mother in a college of Dhaka. I hope the magnanimous prime minister will take my humble appeal into her consideration.

Sonia Shakerena Kabir
356, Baitul Aman Housing Society,
Shamoly, Dhaka-1207

Health problem column

Sir, People of Bangladesh face many health problems. Since most of them are poor or at best belong to the lower middle-class families their capacity to take treatment under a doctor for every ailment is very limited. The young boys and the girls sometimes face many personal health problems that they hesitate to disclose to their guardians. Besides these, most of the people of Bangladesh live in villages, while most physicians live in the big cities or towns. The number of doctors for the people of Bangladesh is comparatively much less than in many other country of the world. As a regular reader and well wisher of your paper I want to put up a proposal. You may kindly open a new column in your weekly magazine, say, titled as 'Health problem', which will provide appropriate answers to various health questions.

Starting at 10/A Segun Bagicha in a tin-shed in February 1956, he introduced a system of advising patients to come and get physically and socially rehabilitated advice from medical prescription; he asked me to ride horses — perhaps he had prior knowledge of the stable my father maintained. But that is doctor Ibrahim.

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CTBT via Gunboat Diplomacy

India wants transit rights as much as we want similar reciprocity to let our trade flourish with Nepal and Bhutan. The latter are interested to operate across the Bay, through our ports if India allows it at all. These are to be treated with a positive mind-frame if global trends of geo-economics are to be respected.

IT was the Duke of Wellington who observed that after a battle was lost the next saddest thing is a battle won. New Delhi is realising this to its cost after winning at Geneva. All the five nuclear haves — America, China, France, Great Britain and Russia — have ganged up to pressure India. They are repeating the gun diplomacy when big countries would use their military power to force agreement on other nations.

The familiar distance between India and the US has begun to reappear. New Delhi is once again an obstacle for Washington. There are hints of chastisement. The American press, which mouths the official line on foreign affairs, has returned to its criticism of India. And if Washington Post is any guide, the advice given to the Clinton administration is 'to isolate it (India) and keep it squeezing.'

New Delhi's fault is that it has single handedly, rebuffed the efforts of nuclear powers to pass muster the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the sub-commission on disarmament.

weight behind the treaty, to push it down the throat of every nation.

Pakistan's role has been particularly pathetic. First it said it would not sign the treaty until India did. Then, it agreed to sign it when it found that India's stand in any pass would stall the treaty. In fact, it openly sided with nuclear powers and abused India, now a familiar diplomatic behaviour of Islamabad.

At least, political commentators in Pakistan have minced no words in telling Islamabad how wrong it was. One of them has said, 'why is it that Pakistan shows such timidity and a weakened approach to a vital security issue while India's opposition is more principled and honourable?' Another has said: 'Pakistan's attitude does not spring from the dictates of our own national interests on nuclear capability but instead regrettably betrays an expedient and opportunistic mindset which seeks to carry favour with the mighty West.'

New Delhi was reconciled to the position of going it alone. It expected that nuclear powers

America it can be a different ball game. At Geneva there were 61 nations. The UN general assembly has 180 odd. All of them cannot be managed by America or the other nuclear powers. Already the dissenting voices can be heard.

The reason why the Clinton administration is in a hurry and has got a special UN assembly session convened, 12 days before the regular session, is the US voter. President Clinton wants to use the CTBT as his poll plank. He wants to claim that he has secured the disarmament treaty and that he also has made the world 'free' of nuclear threats. Whatever it is worth, Clinton believes the CTBT to be a vote-catcher.

If a simple majority is required (some say it should be two-thirds), there is every likelihood of the CTBT being approved by the UN. This does not worry New Delhi. What bothers it is the clause that those members of the disarmament sub-commission which do not sign will be forced to do so. This is a new international order and defeats the very purpose of the UN charter.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

ment at Geneva. No pressure, no blandishment worked. In any case, it is an unequal treaty. It is unequal because the five powers continue to have nuclear arsenal. They reportedly possess among them 50,000 nuclear warheads, each a thousand tons more powerful than the ones which demolished Hiroshima and Nagasaki. India has vainly urged that the nuclear haves should also set a time-table for themselves within which they should eliminate their weapons of mass destruction.

The treaty is not even comprehensive. Testing on the ground and under the ground is banned. But it leaves out research or testing of nuclear device in a laboratory or on computers. Pakistan tested its bomb that way. When I asked A Q Khan, father of Pakistan's bomb, that there was no evidence of its explosion, he said that there were ways to test a bomb in a laboratory, just as planes are tested through simulators.

The sub-commission has debated the treaty for two and a half years, but has found no consensus, the criterion for the approval of a treaty. New Delhi's stand from the first day has been that all powers should be treated at par and that there should be no nuclear apartheid. This has not been acceptable to nuclear powers. They agree to the banning of testing but not to the destroying of weapons. In other words, they want to continue to detain the superiority which they have at present.

India's battle has been lonely. How one wishes some other countries had joined it to let the nuclear powers know that they do not lay the law in the world. But, as some of them told New Delhi privately, they were afraid to join issue with America, which put all its

would leave the matter at that. After all things did work out when India did not sign the non-proliferation treaty (NPT). This time the nuclear powers seem determined to make India sign the treaty.

That is the reason why a new clause was added to the CTBT around the middle of June to lay down that all the 61-member nation of the disarmament sub-commission would have to sign the treaty. India offered not to go in the way of a consensus at the sub-commission provided the enforcement clause was deleted from the treaty. But China, which has not shed its enmity towards India, insisted that New Delhi sign the treaty. This gave Beijing the advantage of possessing nuclear weapons and ensuring that India would not have them.

America accommodated China on the peaceful nuclear explosions and the inspection in the treaty. But India was not offered any concession. Washington's contention was that China was a nuclear power. In other words, India was punished for exercising restraint on making the bomb after having exploded the device in 1974. Only when the enforcement clause was added did India decide to block the treaty. Still, it made it clear that if the clause on forcing nations was dropped, it would not vote against the treaty, even though it would not sign it.

Now, Washington has circumvented the entire process. It has asked an obliging country, Australia, to sponsor the treaty at the UN without bringing the disarmament sub-commission's deadlock into the picture. But CTBT draft remains the same. How can this be legal? New Delhi will have no alternative except to oppose it on the floor of the assembly. Even for

The UN is a body of sovereign nations. Its charter says that no country can be soured into accepting something which it does not want to do so. If nuclear powers are so determined, then why have the force of the UN? They can sit in a room and announce their decision.

What they do not realise is that a country like India has a unanimous opinion against the treaty. All political parties have extended their full support to the government. How can a treaty be forced on a number of 950 million people, who are determined not to accept it?

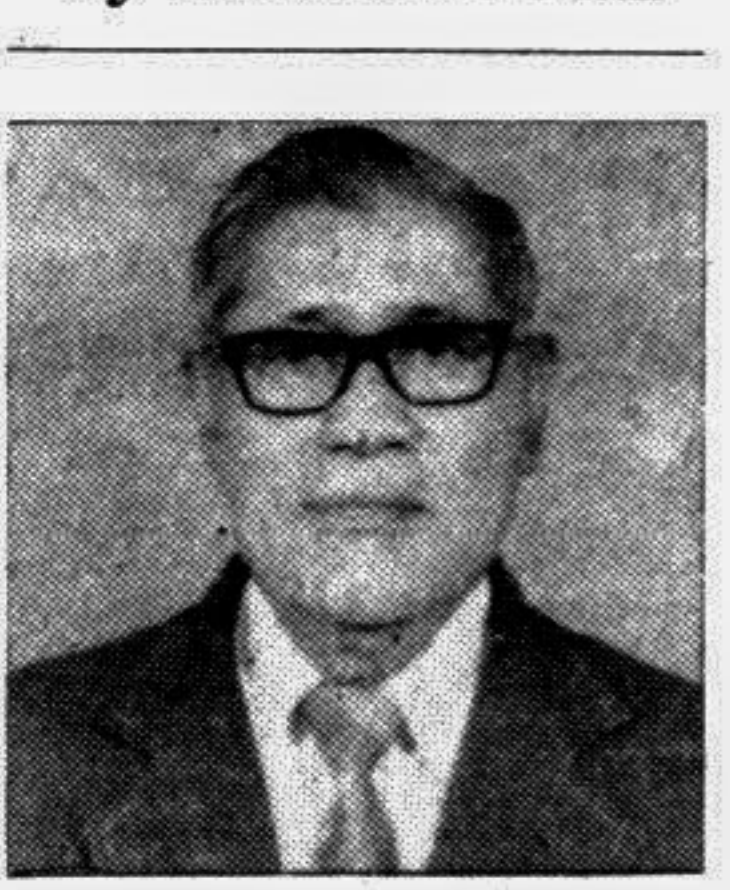
Still, if America bludgeons its way through the UN and forces the nations to sign it, India should seriously consider going to the International Court of Justice at the Hague. The enforcement clause is repugnant to the letter and spirit of the charter, ensuring equality to all nations.

India's fight is against exclusiveness. Why should the Gang of Five decide the fate of the world? The cold war emitted discrimination and dictation on the basis of ideology. It was suffocating. There was relief when it ended. Today another type of discrimination and dictation has been initiated in the name of nuclear peace. Still more annoying is the self-righteousness of nuclear powers. To quote Foreign Minister Inder Gujral, 'the sinners are talking about the virtues of chastity.'

I believe Washington is waking up to a united Indian opinion against the CTBT. There are efforts to break its solidarity on the one hand and pressure the Deve Gowda government on the other. This will not work because the opposition to CTBT has become a symbol of nationalism. India has never given in when it comes to the country.

BIRDEM: A Tribute to Dr Ibrahim

by Waliur Rahman



Bangladesh even by the most ultra-modern medical centres, was not so unique compared to other parts of the world. In Europe and America it is accepted almost as a norm — a patient's dossier with all his personal and confidential details only to be seen by the doctor and none else. Dr Ibrahim was a true disciple of the Greek father of medicine.

In his eventful life he had some difficult times as well. None other than the redoubtable governor of the then East Pakistan Mr Monem Khan found his spirit of social consciousness too much to bear. He was about to cross swords with him when president Ayub of Pakistan visited Dhaka to bless Ibrahim's son on his wedding with the daughter of Mr Nomani, who was earlier DM Jessore and had visited my village alma mater Benipur High School in Sallakupa thana. I read many of the books Nomani had donated.

Dr Ibrahim at heart was wedded to the spirit of the soil of Bengal. Born in 1911, the year of the reunification of Bengal, he carried in him a spirit of social justice, no nobly rehabilitating efforts in setting up the Diabetic Centre in Dhaka.

When an eight-crore-taka

heart-institute was set up in Islamabad in the '60s Dr Ibrahim started a silent movement which got louder in later years, on the disparity between East and West Pakistan. In 1970, a year before our glorious War of Liberation started, Ibrahim managed to get a sanction of 2½ crore rupees for a medical centre in Dhaka only to be told that the money would be given if a similar medical centre could be opened in Lahore as well!

After the independence of Bangladesh, the centre was granted some money by Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed. Soon Bangabandhu was apprised of the importance of the centre and in one of the ECNEC meetings in May 1975, the most important decision was made in order to give the centre a national stature under Bangabandhu's personal directives. Bangabandhu knew him from his Calcutta days, when at the height of the nationalist movement against the British, Bengali Muslims were all attracted to the great sons of Bengal — Hossain Shahzad Suhrawardy and AK Fazlul Huq. It is no coincidence that Dr Ibrahim was active along with Bangabandhu in helping Suhrawardy in reducing the impact of the bloody 1946 riots.

Today, quarter century on, BIRDEM is a premier centre of medical facilities, and research. Compared to most other medical centres of Bangladesh, BIRDEM stands out for its quality and reputation, for its service to the people. It is no surprise, therefore, that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, through her presence of the 7th anniversary of Dr Ibrahim's death, is paying tribute to not only the memory of the national professor but also to an idea. 'Our visionary perspective is the true realism and that is what we have got to pursue as Barbara Ward put it aptly. 'Sceptics may scoff but believe me, the world will build cathedrals. What else could have been a better tribute to Dr Ibrahim's memory?'