Dhaka, Thursday, September 12, 1996

## PM's China Visit

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's choice of China as the first country to pay a visit to since her assumption of office is full of significance. At a time when geo-politics is being influenced more and more by economic rather than defence considerations, the Bangladesh premier's China visit seems all set to generate greater economic co-operation between Dhaka and Beijing. The traditional exchange of visits by scholars from both lands since the beginning of civilisation in this part of the world, followed by a wide-ranging co-operation in areas like education, religion, culture and science. has historically proved highly beneficial for both countries. There is no reason why it should be any different in modern times - particularly when the Chinese technology is compatible with over needs, and promises to be better replicated here than in many other parts of the world.

China's emergence as an economic giant in the region as well as in the World - not to forget the expectation of still greater prospects for her shows that it is a key player not only in the regional but in the global context as well. Chinese success in creating special economic zones is again a highly compelling reason for Bangladesh to seek and strengthen its bilateral economic co-operation with her. Bangladesh is ready to welcome Chinese investment in such economic zones of her own and hopes to benefit from China's experiences in the line. This hope is likely to get a boost through the four agreements and a number of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to be signed during the premier's visit.

If Bangladesh presses for collaborative ventures, it should also look for an access of the Bangladeshi goods into Chinese market on a bigger scale. Our growing trade deficit with China is another compelling reason why export from our side has to be increased manifold. The 1995 understanding reached between the two countries for China to import more commodities from Bangladesh has to be implemented more energetically. The potential for economic co-operation between the two countries is immense. What is needed is to take the initiative for exploring the suitable areas for a fuller realisation of that potential.

## **Justice for our Heroes**

The CID has taken up the case of jail killings of November 3, 1975 and has already started moving. On their prayer warrants of arrest were issued against three former army officers now detained under SPA and two of them were remanded to CID custody for investigation purposes.

No one can say for sure how will this case shape and end. But the first great hurdle - that of reviving it -- has at least been engaged and 21 years after the incidence of the crime. And what crime! The indemnity ordinance stood in the way of prosecuting the criminals to be identified after due investigation. At least that was the idea behind the inaction in the matter of mass murder of the Acting President and Prime Minister and other two of the three ministers of the Swadhin Bangla Sarkar or the provisional government formed in exile. It was under this government's leadership and no other agency or persons or groups that we waged the Liberation War and carried it to a victorious triumph and carved a new state on the map of the world. The killing had multiple dimensions to its satanical design and execution. More than mere murder, this was murder in custody. And in state custody — custody of the only sovereign agency in the land. The killing violated the sovereignty and the sanctity of the state. And in killing the supreme leaders of the Liberation War, leaders who won us the war through unparalleled self-sacrifice, superb statesmanship and unsurpassed patriotism, it was the Liberation War and the founding of this state that were being attempted to be killed.

The indemnity abomination is still there. But that could not prevent the present government from initiating the revival of the case and hopefully to dispense it with full justice to the state, the society, the victims and the unfortunate ones that survived the four great heroes of our Liberation War.

Except for Bangabandhu there was no greater hero in our struggle for independence — both armed and constitutional — than Tajuddin Ahmed who led us invincibly in the war to freedom and statehood. We owe it specially to him that the culprits of November 3, 1975 be brought to justice.

## National Art Gallery

The demand for a national gallery of art is an old one. On Tuesday a nine-member delegation of painters repeated the same old thing to the State Minister for culture. It is a shame that the governments have not yet had the realisation that this sovereign nation of 120 million souls does not have a national gallery and has to be told of their duty in the matter year after year. All governments, specially after independence, had a culture ministry. Why was it there and what did it do - if it could completely close its eyes to the first-order national need for a national repository of visual and plastic arts?

The same applies to the government's waiting to be told that this nation — to be a nation — needs a national theatre for performing and presentational arts. And needs it here and now. What can these two things cost the government? Possibly in the lowest ranges of money in nine-digit figures. It's, by state standards, not quite reckonable money. So what is holding the present government

to do the job without anyone's asking or prodding. Mayor Hanif, not long ago, set a model for responsiveness to the city-dwellers' need for culture - by promising a number of theatres and stages. This has not yet been redeemed but we believe things are moving in the right direction — but very slowly. How can one hasten the process?

Cultural needs and necessities have a way to be ignored by governments and other agencies having the power to deliver. Yet expenditure on TV and radio and other, things that publicise government activity but nevertheless have a very undermining influence on culture have been increasing by an incredible factor of 10. This is foolish and must

## **OUTCOME OF BY-ELECTION**

# An Opportunity Lost for the New Government?

The CEC claimed that he visited all the polling centers one BNP candidate had wanted him to visit. He, in ns to the national Parliafact, did visit, but only 3 of the 17 centers in which allegations of irregularities were made. I ment on the 5th September have proved once again. sadly though, how much we specially in two constituencies Commission peacefully and humans have remained

of Chittagong-1 and Laxmipurvulnerable to our whims and

ESULTS of the by-electio-

caprices and how little have we

learned from history. In this

case, very recent history. This

pronouncements of the

authorities to ensure a free, fair

Election Commission, the elec-

tion was held smoothly and

fairly, except for some minor

untoward incidents at places

impact of which have been ig-

nored. According to election ob-

servers, who could do only

sample surveys, except for

recording some violences, dis-

turbances and obstructions in

some centers, they did not ob-

serve irregularities enough to

warrant repolling in any dis-

puted constituency. As per re-

ports of several journalists.

eyewitness accounts of attempts

at false voting, obstructions to

voters and other irregularities

were recorded, but no arrests

were made and the concerned

magistrates and presiding offi-

cers chose to remain anony-

mous. The BBC also reported of

violences in several polling ar-

eas. For the opposition BNP, the

by-election resulted in a mas-

TOT since the Zulu warrio-

earlier this century in South

Africa, has a mighty modern army been defeated by a bunch

of determined and daring ragtag

guerrillas, on its own soil!

Make no mistake. Russia's

recent "peace" treaty with the

predominantly Muslim

Chechen rebels is no more than

nya, the size of the state of Con-

necticut in the USA, are fiercely

independent-minded people

Twice in the past, they had tried

to free themselves of the shack-

les of Russia. Twice they paid

communist Russia brutally at-

tempted to smuff the life out

these indomitable people in-

habiting the Caucasus region of

southern Russia. The Russian

communist dictator Stalin did

so literally - he banished the

whole population of Chechnya

For centuries, czarist and

dearly for it.

The residents of tiny Chech-

a face-saving capitulation.

rs defeated the soldiers of

the British empire

To the government and the

and impartial election.

has happened, despite repeated

The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) in the very evening of the election day made a statement to the effect that the election had been conducted fairly and smoothly. To many, hardly before the election process had completed and election reports made, such remarks of the CEC appeared both sweeping and premature. The CEC claimed that he visited all the polling centers one BNP candidate had wanted him to visit. He, in fact, did visit, but only 3 of the 17 centers in which allegations of irregularities were made. In a later interview, the CEC hold on to his earlier assumption that the election had been "by and large" free, fair and impartial. The Awami League dismissed all BNP allegations summarily.

The BNP had already complained of massive rigging and demanded repolling in two disputed constituencies. They also asked for resignation of the CEC for having been either partial to the ruling party or for his failure to conduct election properly. In order to press their demand, they laid a seize sive rigging of various nature. (gherao) of the Election puses prices of essentials, liq BNP candidate about potential with a comfortable margin in years to reach that stage

demanded, with an ultimatum.

for re-polling in two seats. Let us try to analyse the situation objectively. Firstly, the Awami League won 8 seats in place of their 5 surrendered seats; both the BNP and the Jatiya Party each lost 3 out of their surrendered 5. lt. therefore, transpires that the ruling

uidity position in money market, investment climate and confidence building, export performance, and so on and so

in fact and as per published reports, the position, in most cases, appears just the opposite. It is therefore natural for the people to wonder as to how the



party ruled so well during the first two months of their rule that 60 per cent more of the electorate were converted as Awami Leaguers and 10 per cent of the BNP and the Jatiya Party supporters made volte face. It also suggests there should have been substantial, perceptible and proportionate improvement in national sectors or areas of high importance, such as, law and order, suppression of terrorism in and outside cam-

such massive popular endorsement of their post-election policies and actions without corresponding record and demonstration of good governance in so brief a period Consequently, many suspect, that too strongly, that the role of the Awami musclemen and of some self-seeking officials were prime movers in the elections thatre of 5 September.

Secondly, the CEC had been warned well in advance by the

trouble spots in Laximpur-2 and was advised to consider postponing polling in some of the centers. These included some in the area where an Awami League worker had been killed on the eve of election through their own party feuds and to the chagrin of BNP hopefuls. Heavy miking, in gross violation of code of conduct, on the previous evening urging people to refrain from voting aggravated the already tense situation there. No preventive or remedial actions were taken either by the CEC nor by the administration. Allegations were also lodged that in some centers occupied by the ruling party their workers domed

lodged in writing. Thirdly, the law visible turnout of voters due to intimidation, forcible prevention and insultation of potential voters. specially of the womenfolk, in contrast with the June 12 election, did not stir the authorities to take appropriate action. One needs to ponder why a candidate in Chittagong-I who had been elected to the Parliament

badges as BNP polling agents to

servers. Complaints have been

deceive visiting CEC and ob-

1991, decided to abandon the race shortly after mid-day and to hold a press conference to voice loud protest and accusation. Commonsense would dictate such drastic actions could not be resorted to without some valid reasons.

On the positive side of the government, the decision of the Prime Minister and ministers not to visit the constituencies before election was praiseworthy. Even in this matter, credit is shared by the CEC for having withdrawn protocol and other facilities that would have ordinarily been available during normal ministerial visits. I was quite impressed as an international observer when a sitting minister explained to me in Sri Lanka on the day of parliamentary election in 1994 that he was using his official transport

on payment for the day. One possible action to come out of the current cogmire would be to allow re-polling at least in some of the disputed centres. This would help substantiate Awami League's claim, without consequential political loss, for its adherence to the precepts and practices of democracy. Otherwise, the government might sow the seed of a tree of nightmare within twoand-a half months of coming to power, whereas its predecessor

## Shabash Chechnya, Err, Ichkeria!

Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

Russia retaliated by wiping out entire villages. Still, the Chechens remained a formidable foe. As in Afghanistan, the mothers of Russian soldiers on active duty in Chechnya took an active anti-war posture, forcing Kremlin into seek a non-military solution to the conflict.

Chechnya, unlike other distinct entities that made up the USSR, such as Ukraine and Georgia, and which broke away easily, Chechnya had the misfortune of being an integral part of the Russian Federation. Russia was not about to let its territorial integrity be violated.

For three years, Russia tried to overthrow Dudayev through its Chechen proxies. When that failed, Kremlin attacked Chechnya with 30,000 troops, in. December, 1994. The West, including the US, supported the primacy of Russia's territorial integrity. Russian generals boasted that it would take them "two hours" to subdue the Chechen resistance. It is coming up to two years! Who can forget those dark

to Siberia, killing half of them days of December, 1994, when the Russian bombs leveled Grozny, the Chechen capital. in the process. He, too, failed to 4 break their spirit. Finally, when the USSR Still, it took them months to broke asunder in 1991. Chechcapture Grozny in a hand to nya, under its elected leader hand combat. The Russian vic-Dzhokar Dudayev, a former tors could not sit tight. The General in the Russian Air rebels would invade the city at Force, declared its indepennight and pick off Russian soldence. Unfortunately for diers! Russia retaliated by wip-

ing out entire villages. Still, the Chechens remained formidable foe. As in Afghanistan, the mothers of Russian soldiers on active duty in 'Chechnya took an active anti-war posture, forcing Kremlin into seek a non-military solution to the conflict.

Numerous ceasefires came and went, with neither side trusting the other. The Chechen rebels did not limit their operations inside Chechnya. Twice they went outside into Russia proper, and took whole towns hostage, to publicise their cause. The especially audacious one by Shamil Basayev stunned the whole world, and humiliated Russia further.

Much reluctantly, Russian President Boris N Yeltsin, agreed to deal with Dudayev. Dzhokar Dudayev had no idea what kind of deal Mr Yeltsin had in mind for him. Dudayev used to negotiate over cellular phone. Earlier this year, the Russians lured him out of his bunker, in the pretext of negotiation with Kremlin's interme-

diary, a Moroccan Minister, located his position via satellite, and fired a missile at him! The killing of Dudayev would solve the Chechen problem, the Russians thought.

Were they wrong! Instead of folding, the Chechen rebels reorganised and did the unthinkable! They attacked and retook Grozny from the Russians, and then surrounded as many as 3,000 Russian soldiers in their barracks. There were little left for the mighty Russia to do but back away, or bomb Grozny and its own soldiers in it - to

In August, humiliated and desperate, the ailing Yeltsin empowered Russian national security adviser, former General Aleksandr I Lebed to negotiate with the rebels and end the war, Instead of following the Kremlin line and calling the Chechen rebels "bandits". Lebed referred to them as "skilled and dedicated fighters," earning their goodwill, and some trust.

The most recent peace agreement calls for the holding of a referendum within five

thinkers and lawyers to nego-

tiate with the students. Our stu-

dents are cream of the society.

They are always reasonable. So

I believe, they will co-operate

with us — ex-teachers and

18/2. Basiruddin Road, Kal-

Destructive students'

politics

Dhaka University my father

used to tell me, 'Never involve

yourself in student's politics.

That's why I couldn't do that.

But I had a bit desire to get my-

self involved in student's poli-

ther's advice and found that

student's politics was nothing

but a children's game in which

flat stones were made to skip

along water. Still. I believe that

student's politics is a destruc-

thing special that would save

our student's from this destruc-

Can anyone think some-

tive practice.

Mostofa Søhel

4/8 Bangladesh

Bank Officers Quarter

Banani, Dhaka-1213

Later on, I realised my fa-

Sir, When I was a student of

Prof Salma Chowdhury

years on the Republic's future. and for Russia to honour the result of the referendum. There is no question that Mr Lebed and his Muslim adversaries - who greeted the news of an agreement with shouts of "Allahu Akbar" and "Lebed for President!" - have taken a giant step towards peace. Nor is there any question that many big steps remain before the smoldering plains and the soaring peaks of the Caucasus can be safe again.

It was not the political negotiating that brought this conflict to this conclusion, not even the deft work of Mr Lebed. What ended the war for now is the decisive battle of Grozny the Russians lost it and could not continue. Having lost a war its citizens never supported, it is now possible for Russia to declare victory while slinking away! The Chechens are such ferocious fighters that they have managed to send tremors down the Russian spine!

Over the last decade, two Muslim guerrilla armies in two different countries pushed Europe's largest army into hum-

bling retreat. (The other was the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan). The Russian bear has been bloodied and mauled beyond recognition.

Although it is hard to imagine Russia rekindling its appetite for combat in Chechnya again. Chechnya's independence is not guaranteed. Russia may change its mind. Even if Russia does relent on the "territorial integrity" issue, independence will have come at a terrible price for the Chechens Ninety thousand of its citizens, mostly civilians, fell to the Russians. Three times as many have been injured. For a nation of only one million-plus people. that is someone in every family Chechens also lost their Father of the Nation, Dzhokar Dudayev, to the Russian mis-

Nevertheless, these days, as the Chechen rebels drive about in Grozny, their cars bear the rebel flag of Ichkeria, the name they would call their country. "The Russians can say what they want," said a rebel commander shooting his weapon in the air. "We won, and will drive them from our land!"

The writer is a Rhodes Scholar from Bangladesh, who currently lives in Princeton Junction, Jew Jersey, USA.

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

#### A couple of months of Awami League regime

Sir, It was very nice of Awami League administrators to offer their unconditional and sincere apology to the nation during their pre-election campaign for their misdeeds till 1975. They literally begged vote to the nation requesting to forget their past misdeeds. They assured the people that if voted to power they will emerge as a different Awami League this time. Time and again they appealed to the nation to try them once more and assured so many good things including controlling terrorism by rounding up all the terrorists in no time.

Since BNP government totally failed in salvaging the nation from the ditch in every respect during their term in power, the nation accepted the apology and voted AL to power

for the sake of a change. But now it seems that this government is also not honouring their promises. They miserably failed to control terrorism which is fast increasing throughout the country. It seems that terrorists have caught Home Ministry by neck instead of Home Ministry catch

terrorists by neck. Home Minister seems to lack experience and maturity. This post should have gone to any of the party's stalwarts instead of a novice. It is questionable that what weight the Home Minister carries within his own party His recent surprise visit was a total failure. He should have arrested the person on the spot and seized all the phensydil bottles when he was offered. He should have suspended a few police officers on the spot for negligence of duties. Publicity of the visit was unnecessarily too much and consequently all the smugglers have become very careful in dealing with their customers. His surprise visit caused adverse results to the interest of the country.

Now, a word about government's present policy. It looks like the government is busy in establishing the wrongdoings of BKSAL regime as right acts. through their speeches and a few recent moves. If the BKSAL regime was so good, why the present bunch of Awami League administrators appologised to

the nation and had requested to forget all about? It means the apology and begging votes were merely a bluff to the nation. This is the actual face of our politicians. They do not learn anything from history. The present government by this time must be aware that people of Bangladesh are not fools. They know exactly what was happening during pre-election period and what is happening now. The government must be very careful in their steps otherwise it may bring fatal consequences for them for the second

I suggest them to work honestly as promised by them forgetting all that happened during 72-75 and bring the country to a stable condition because opportunity comes only once.

MA Rouf Gashala. Fazhul Haq Road, Sirajgonj

#### Do you remember it Mr. Mayor?

Sir, I am a resident of Banani Model Town originally set up by RAJUK, the erstwhile DIT. It was supposed to be a residential area with all required amenities. During pre-Liberation days very few houses were there but now it has become a very crowdy place. No doubt vertical expansion is going on to accommodate ever increasing population.

According to the terms of RAJUK Lease Deed, the houses are to be exclusively used for residential purposes and violation of this term is supposed to cancel the lease.

Unfortunately, RAJUK does not bother to take notice of the matter as they are now busy in other works. Presently you will find offices, guest houses, health clinics, medical checkup centres everywhere in the area. To set up a commercialunit trade licence from the Dhaka City Corporation is required and most likely they have it. On several occasion I had personally tried to seek an appointment with the Mayor but without success. He is very

Either in August or December 1994 I had a chance to meet the Mayor on a British Airways flight. He was traveling to USA.

I had brought to his notice the ward and appoint ex-teachers. situation we are facing to live in the chaotic surroundings created by the man power agency offices, medical check-up units, guest houses, where from the early morning to late-night jobseekers hang around and to meet their requirements vendors have set up shops all around the place. I recall with gratitude the patient hearing Mr. Hanif had given me and pointed out that as most of these business houses have trade licence, at that stage it was very difficult to take any action. But once the validity of the trade licence expires on June 30 the following year, DCC has taken a decision not to renew them.

We all know from the early part of 1995. The Mayor was pre-occupied with politics and he did not have time to look after DCC affairs. I congratulate him for his wonderful achievement in putting his political party back to power after 21 years and he no longer has to work with a hostile govern-

We know the Mayor has a busy schedule. Will the Mayor now have time to depute some one from his office to move around Banani Model Town any time during the day or evening to see for himself the situation?

The report may be helpful to find out a solution to our prob-

Bangla

So I humbly offer my service

to serve as a councilor to bring

back pranee in this noble insti-

tution. The college has a her-

itage of Pritilata Wadedar,

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Begum Matia Chowdhury,

Beauty Menon, Poet Ferdous,

Writer Rizia Rahman, and other

prominent persons who were

istry. Women's Affairs and

Cultural Ministry to come for-

I request the Education Min-

K. Habibul Alam Banani , Dhaka

the country.

tion for decades.

once students.

#### Residential problem at Islamic University Appeal of an ex-head Sir, Although under the of the department of

Islamic University Ordinance 1980, it was established as a residential university, most of-Sir, Eden College is making the students are non-resident. It leaders, teachers, doctors, engiis a matter of great regret that neers for one century. All after long nine years, only three 85,000 villages and 105 towns residential halls have been of the country and their young constructed. The male students ones to be educated in this colreside at Saddam Hossein and lege. It was a piece of bliss for Ziaur Rahman halls and the female students reside at But in 1996 a few a snap-Khaleda Zia Hall. Out of 4500, shots in the media disturb us merely 875 students have resi tremendously, those who spent dential facilities. The teachers, their limes within the instituofficers and the employees are also suffering from serious

housing problem.

At present the number of the teachers, officers and employees are respectively 153, 57 and 360 (2nd class 149, 3rd class 211). Only 16 teachers, 6 officers and 26 employees (3rd class 18, 4th class 8) of them are getting housing facilities. Insufficiency of hall and quarter the residential problems of IU has become serious. Most of the students of IU live in Kushtia and Jhenidah both of

which are 25 km away from the campus. The students of this university have to travel 50-km everyday which is almost rare

The situation of the dining rooms of this university's halls are very low. Half of both of the dining rooms of Saddam Hossein and Ziaur Rahman halls is using as TV room. The environment and the food conditions of these halls are very bad. The medical centre reports that most of the residential students are suffering from dysentery, diarrhoea etc. The university authority does not give any subsidy to the students.

Md Shahjahan Kabir Dept. of English Ziaur Rahman Hall, IU

in Bangladesh.

### "Price control is better than new pay-scale"

Sir. After taking over the power the AL government has promised to declare new payscale for the government employees to lead their lives in a comfortable way to some extent It is mentionable here that the present pay-scale was declared in 1991. Though the present pay-scale was declared by the BNP government, infact, it was promulgated during the reign of

The price of the necessary commodities and the expendi ture of life have been increased tremendously. That's why, the claim of the proclamation of new pay-scale is quite rational and timeworthy. In a sense, the declaration of new pay-scale is a matter of pleasure for certain quarters of the people of Bangladesh, specially for the government employees. But in other sense, it's a matter of regret for those who are not government employees because with the declaration of the new pay-scale the price of the necessary commodities increased in an unbridled way

It should be borne in mind that a considerable number of people is not the government employees. So at present it is the claim of the conscious people to control the price-hike firstly and then if possible to declare the new pay-scale. If stern measures are taken against those who create artificial scarcity of commodities. the people of all quarters including the government employees will be able to breath of pleasure and happiness.

Md Mazibur Rahman 343, Zahurul Hug Hall, DU.

## To BTV

Sir, In our country football is the most popular game and Dhaka Premier Division Football League is considered the most attractive football tournament. Crores of football fans allaround the country eagerly wish to watch the big matches. But it is impossible for them to travel from a long distance and watch the game at Dhaka Stadium. Only possible way for them to enjoy the games is through BTV.

But it has been observed that BTV do not telecast any sports programme regularly which can be termed as insensitive, at best sports programmes and live telecast of important football, cricket or hockey matches can attract young generation into games instead of running their lines. So in this situation BTV can at least telecast the major football matches of top teams like Abahani. Mohammedan, Muktijoddah and

Brothers Union. We would like to mention here that except BTV, all the TV broadcasting centres all over the world telecast sports programme regularly through different channels. So it is earnestly expected that BTV would take necessary steps to telecast at least major matches at Dhaka football league regu-

Abu Gursel Siddigui Arab Bangladesh Bank Ltd. Station Road Branch, Chit-

## Millionairs in jail

Sir. The former president of

Bangladesh was living in the central jail for more than five years as a convicted. The jail cost was very high and the poor nation was to bear the bill. It is time to rewrite Jail Code prepared during British rule so that able and millionaires while in jail or custody, are compelled to bear the cost based on status and resources. Why a poor tax payer's money should be spent to provide balanced costly foods along with confortable living for those millionaires? Let the new government decide the issue meticulously as I am sure that the money and manpower used for former president, is sufficient to meet the healthcare of all the squatter settlers of Dhaka or so let the authority look into it seriously!

Ahmedul Alam 14. Eskaton Gardens Dhaka-1000