Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Wednesday, October 9, 1996

# Sullen Mayor

Mayor Hanif's proposal for a metropolitan government with him as its head has not received the government's approval. It has been decided instead by the PM to constitute a new coordination committee for the city affairs under the chairmanship of the LGRD Minister with the Mayor designated as its co-chairman. In a prompt, albeit sullen reaction to this. Mayor Hanif has withdrawn his name from the committee predisposing it to be a nonstarter after being just christened.

Although the reasons cited by him for disassociating himself from the committee are inadequacies in the existing laws and of funds which, in his reckoning, are bound to render it virtually useless, his underlying feeling seems to be that his elective position and status has been compromised. Else, he would not have lamented his powerlessness as he has done in his initial, but pretty much excited, reaction. He hopes that his stand-off will persuade the PM to reconsider his proposal.

He is undisguisedly on a warpath with a party government to which, by political affiliations, he is loyalty-bound. That the government's decision has come about without having taken him sufficiently into confidence to head off an open dissent on the question makes us as unhappy as Hanif's public expression of it. It sends a wrong signal of a lack in the symbiotic relationship between the party government and an important civic body leadership.

This is an unfortunate turn of events in the handling of the affairs of a metropolis which is riddled with mounting civic problems. Mayor Hanif has stepped into the final year of his 4-year term and the martyr complex he had developed over the last nearly three years in relation to a BNP government seems inexplicably poised for a fresh lease under an Awami League government.

How long would the city be held ransom to Mayoral conflicts with governments? The civic life is so bedeviled that it cannot brook the uncertainty of even another year of disorder at the top. Let the disharmony be sorted out by the party leadership with a healthy sense of objectivity, so that it does not linger for another day.

# Security at the Garden

Even the Director of the National Botanical Garden has admitted that there is "some security problem" in the only facility of its kind in the country at the northern tip of Mirpur. The director obviously has reasons to make an understatement and to our knowledge the security problem he refers to could not be worse. Today, people at the ticket counter or employees of the garden regret that fewer visitors enter the botanical garden than before. The pointer has taken a very long time to come. By the time the whole garden has been reduced to a den of anti-social activities by organised gangs.

If the authorities had not turned a blind eye to the surge of criminal gangs inside the facility or given in to underhand dealings over a long period of time, the situation could not have been as deplorable as it is now.

There are 38 security guards in the garden. For such a security strength to ensure spot vigilance for the entire 208 acres of garden area is neither possible nor desirable. The problem actually lies in the fact that the guards do anything but the duty they are assigned to. The allegations that the criminal gangs are engaged in mugging and acts of harassment and even sexual assaults in collusion with a section of the guards should be thoroughly looked into.

It is a disgrace that we have failed to maintain security of a place meant for people's escape into nature's quietude from the city's hectic and tension-filled life. We feel that the vested interest groups can be effectively dealt with if the authority shows a seriousness of purpose there.

The garden's location gives an additional advantage for ensuring its security. The security staff must be held responsible for any incident of extortion or mugging within the garden's boundary. The boundary wall must be raised all around, allowing no easy trespassing by criminal intruders. After all, this is a spot that people visit in daytime, not at night.

## Good Thinking

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has initiated a move to hear complaints against its own members. Earlier, these had to be lodged with a police station. Now it is the police commissioner himself who will entertain complaints from aggrieved people. We do not know whether the new arrangement will be a routine one for the DMP. But it better be

Apparently this move is aimed at ensuring accountability of the police for their actions and boosting public confidence in them. We appreciate the attention being paid by the DMP to a much-neglected area in police-public relations. At the same time we would like to see that the new move not as a cosmetic PR exercise but something that actually addresses the grievances of people. Any member of the law enforcing agency, if and when found committing offences or indulging in corrupt practices. should be given appropriate punishment. Only then will they be extra careful to go by the rule. That is just one guarantee for their accountability.

More important is, however, the development of a system from within. This calls for qualitative improvement of each individual member of the force. Tougher educational criterion for their recruitment and the availability of modern training and equipment thereafter are essential for this purpose.

The approach is for a better rapport between the police and the public. Let this expand beyond the metropolis to cover the entire country.

# The Mechanics of Accountability

If we are to implement an accountability process in the country the mechanics must be clear, simple and concise. The mechanics of accountability have to focus on and attack the conduit, the person who has the most to lose with the least to show for it

check the rising tide of corruption engulfing the country, the President finally decided that enough was enough tion is that all government deand sent a message to the two Houses of Parliament to enact partments, irrespective of their effective measures for accountefficiency and neutrality, are ability. Instead of welcoming subject to influence and coerthe initiative by a person who cion by the factors of power. had not only remained a leader money and relationship. At the of their own party but was their end of the day, delivery of jusnominee for President in the tice is subjective, not objective. first place, the PPP reacted like This makes any accountability a wounded animal. In a rather process suspect. Money obsilly ploy, the ruling party went tained from corruption can not on a filibustering defensive. just disappear into thin air. it calling for a 'select committee' has to go to either 1) some bank to decide on the parameters. account or locker and/or 2) into Since all of us know that select real estate or other such incommissions vestment. Obviously the person committees" are safe euwho is taking the bribes, kickphemisms for relegating things backs, service charges, etc caninto the waste-paper basket, the not handle all the transactions PPP reaction was very suggeshimself, these have to be done tive that the rulers had somethrough a trusted person, in efthing definitive to hide. The fect a conduit for money laungeneral public perception is dering is necessary to whatever that PPP have someone they he chooses to be his secure want to protect, at the cost of haven, it can not be done in isotheir conscience, at the cost of lation. Of course, some people the credibility of their Party not used to wealth will always choose to flaunt their nouveau and at the cost of the economic hopes of the nation. wealth in vulgar fashion and

FTER months of cajo-

ling the PPP regime to

The US Permanent Repre-

sentative to the UN. Madeleine prospects for the exercise of ac-Albright, was extremely supcountability. portive of a UN Resolution on Nobody keeps money in forthe eradication of corruption eign accounts/lockers in which would make it incumbent his/her own name, these are upon member states to monitor mostly in numbered accounts the financial dealings of but since all banks are required citizens of other countries in to keep identification docutheir respective territories ments for withdrawal, usually particularly politicians and bucopies of the national passport. a UN Resolution on corruption reaucrats, maintaining large bank deposits or real estate becomes invaluable in locating holdings, making it illegal and previously hidden accounts. thus impossible to get away hid-Over the past three years, variing their ill-gotten gains with ous cronies have been put in the same impunity they do now charge of nationalized com-If such a UN Resolution should mercial banks (NCBBs) and become binding, it would strike public development finance ina tremendous blow for the poor. stitutions (DFIs). They not only downtrodden masses of the demade loans/credits to other veloped world whose leaders cronies, they help in facilitatfeed them with endless rhetoric ing illegal transactions of the while shamelessly stealing at mentor-in-chief. Since most of will from their country's cofthem cannot pass the test of fers. For starters we could posprofessionalism or that of necsibly circulate among memessary experience and have bers-countries the famous list been raised to exalted heights of 20 which has caused considpurely because their lack of erable apprehension in bureauhonesty and integrity as well as cratic circles and see whether it a total lack of loyalty to the inis really true that some of them stitution or the State, they are are billionaires (even if they are considered ideal material with not, some of them at least live respect to the factor of 'loyalty' and act like it). to their mentor only. Owing One of the things to rememtheir appointments and secu-

alty is focused to the exclusion of everything else. Unfortunately nepotism has not been confined to the public sector institutions only but also to many financial institutions, private and/or foreign, which stand to derive any benefit from the government, particularly in "consultancies" for the privatization exercise, lead bankers in a consortium etc. It is sickening to see executives of foreign banks falling over themselves to please those who matter. only Idi Amin's symbolic lifting in a chair by four Europeans was more demanding. Some senior banking executives, who had never lifted a cricket bat. became members of cricket committees for the World Cup. others became environmental

paign targeting some local symbols of nepotism and corruption in the banking sector squeezing them hard may find specific leads to some of the ac cused leaders of corruption These people are the weak spots merit and competence in the

we should be looking for in the war against corruption. Such people they will generally answer constantly negatively to some test questions, biz 1) was he senior enough to be promoted to his present post? 2) is his professional experience and competence exceeding that of his colleague? 2) is he maintaining a life style commensu rate to his pay and status? 4) is he living within the perquisites legally allowed to him by his institution? 5) does he rely on

petence.

of mine, one of the most glaring examples of nepotism gone astray with a vengeance is that of Khalid Igbal, presently Chairman National Development Finance Corporation (NDFC). Without accusing him specifically of corruption himself or being responsible for it, one is a little amazed at the good fortune that has come his way these last five years to the exclusion of much more deserving persons. Khalid Igbal was relatively a junior Muslim Commercial Bank (MCB), employee when he was picked out of the pack to be the Provincial Head of MCB in Punjab during the first PPP regime. In his provincial seat he is believed to have specialized in dishing out un-returnable loans, "with the consent of the Board" and ' having completed all formalities." When that government fell in 1990. Khalid Igbal escaped retribution and was brought to the Head Office. He cooled his heels in various innocuous posts within MCB Head Office during the Nawaz era but came back into prominence when to his good fortune the relation, wearing the uniform that matters, was posted to Karachi. That advantage was milked for all that it was worth. given the necessity of senior bankers to maintain contact with the powers that be. His real heyday started when the second PPP regime came to power in

Though a close uniformed

relation of a particular banker

happens to be a very good friend

Thereafter Khalid Iqbal's CV reads like a dream come true. Before leaving MCB he sought and got promotion, being deputed Chairman Regional Development Finance Corporation (RDFC). Thereafter he pushed onto greener pastures in Banker's Equity Limited (BEL) From there he has graduated to being Chairman NDFC, all this in less than three years. The reported misuse of "officially sanctioned prerequisites aside, such as drawing rent from NDFC while still using the RDFC Guest House. Khalid Igbal seems to have a fairy Godfather

mentor, paving his progress with gold. So why not focus enquiry on such a person? If he can justify all loan/credits dished out by him in these three institutions, RDFC, BEL, and NDFC, we will be very happy and seek atonement for our misdeed in targeting him as a model of bad financial governance. In the meantime, let separate private investigation teams look at his wealth tax and try and co-relate his real estate, liquid worth, etc with its real worth. The idea is that this cynosure by independent enquiries may convince this gentleman that while crime does not pay, it becomes such more easy on those who turn state's evidence. Even the World Bank has got

into the act in the war against corruption, labeling Pakistan as the second most corrupt country in the world. But how serious they are can be gauged from the fact that they have chosen SGS to do an audit. Why not ask the World Bank about the Hub Power Project and why it has become the most expensive project in the world on a comparative power (MW)-tomoney ratio? This inordinate escalation could not have happened without orchestration and/or active connivance of World Bank (WB) executives People take the name of a gentleman by the name of Ibrahim Elawan, an WB employee, was he the beneficially in any scam? WB would do well in doing an in house investigation. Since SGS has a lucrative con tract with the Pakistan government to check on quality and price of imports, what honesty of purpose should we expect in this "conflict of interest" situation. If we are to implement an accountability process in the country the mechanics must be clear, simple and concise. The mechanics of accountability have to focus on and attack the conduit, the person who has the most to lose with the least to show for it.

Once you have the conduit singing like a bird, the evidence that is required to bring his mentor to justice will fall into place. Then, and only then, when we have an approver in place, will the accountability process become meaningful. To put it bluntly, the mechanics of accountability must be right for the process to be effective.

person refused, in a high-

handed manner, to recognize

that the great sacrifice which the people of Bangladesh made

# AS I SEE IT

#### Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

specialists, etc. This is not only a shameless exhibition of opportunism but gives a seal of approval on corruption. Not all foreign banks have done this but they have paid for it in get ting less from this government

than others. Third World banks are regularly accused by the first world of money laundering, etc. in fact, many banks in the western world are not only money laundering illegal wealth with impunity through their local employees in branches in the developing countries but are keeping them as fixed term deposits no questions asked. These people and their parent institutions, who preach what they do not practice, are beneath contempt, though one dare says all this is covered ethically in the name of "business promotion" according to their holier-thanthou corporate HQs in New York, London, Paris, Zurich,

It would be in the fitness of things to start the accountabil ity process by a grassroots cam-

ing at his own merit and compe tence for advancement? etc. A short list of about dozen such people should be put to the closest scrutiny and investigation preferably by private sector investigators, since we all know what happens to official investigations. Most senior bankers having executive decision making powers in NCBs and DFIs have been promoted out of turn superseding much more deserv ing people. In almost all the cases they neither had the experience or professional competence for the posts they now fill. As regards their life style, a simple calculation of what their institution is spending on them on a day to day basis, would show it to be many times their legal perquisites. Very rarely the crooked banker will chose subordinate staff who have professional competence and merit, similarly he would look to do anything to please his mentor/mentors to seek his own advancement rather then rely on his own merit and com-

choice of his staff? 6) is he look

# The Colour of Nationalism

by Kazi Alauddin Ahmed

It is agreed that an independent and sovereign state was the ultimate goal of our Liberation War but it was the die-hard "Bangalee nationalism" that paved the way to ...

triotism, in my estima-synonymous they are different in their approaches. The first owes its origin to nationhood while the second to statehood Nevertheless, they are complimentary to each other. But, by degree, nationalism is a more crude expression of an individual citizen of his allegiance and lovalty to the nation he belongs. It is instantly orthodox in nature and often fringes on a militant exposure. It has almost a partisan characteristic feature and therefore, may not embrace all the nationalities living in an independent state. An almost parochial feeling and an obdurate state of mind seize the pa-

ber when dealing with corrup-

T ATIONALISM and pa-

Patriotism, on the other hand, has a universal phenomenon where religion, cast or creed do not have a major role to play. Instinctively, a patriot draws his inspiration from the degree of his loyalty to the state, its territorial integrity, sovereignty and forged compactness irrespective of diverse nationalities living in its geographical boundaries. A patriot can be devoid of the socalled nationalistic contour while a nationalist may not be necessarily without patriotic feelings.

Historically, nationalism saw its birth or so to say, its hybernation in early thirties in China after Generalasimo Chiang Kaishek seized power over throwing the last remnant of the Chinese emperor. He and his Kinsmen weilded absolute power breeding absolute corruption. Prior to him, the biggest country in Asia fought many bitter wars with Japan which literally ransacked it, its economy and its independent political entity. Chiang Kaishek's grabbing of power was supposed to rebuild the vast country and to put its economy on an even keel. But, unfortunately, the lot of the people did not change because of the limitless greed of his henchmen. Eventually, the population lived a sub-human

state of life. At such a critical juncture, a wave of resentment started brewing up amongst the poverty-stricken populace. They were eventually drawn to a desperate bid to survival. It came up at such an hour when Vladimir Lenin of Russia had already succeeded in bringing about the fall of the czar and transformed the country into a socialistic pattern of governance. It also coincided with the rise of Marxism-communism in many European countries consequent upon the unceremonious dismantling of monarchy in many. The post World War-II period saw a number of last European countries falling prey to communism at the direct intervention of So-

big powers. Germany was bifurcated while Poland - the first victim of Adolf Hitler. Czechoslovakia. Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria etc went enmasse to Soviet bloc being ruthlessly coerced and gagged into submission to

China, still under constant

communism.

rity to their mentor, this loy-

should be comparatively easier

threat of Japanese aggression while the situation in the rest of the world continued to be volatile, in consequence of the 2nd World War, was already deeply engaged with the guerrilla activities spearheaded by Mao Tse Tung since 1932. Surnamed War of Liberation by Mao and his followers gradually out numbering Chiang's Junta, the power base of the latter had simultaneously started shrinking. Eventually, Chiang Kaishek, who and his tollowers were branded as "reactionaries" by Mao, was overrun by the teeming millions of the already organised Peoples' Liberation Army joining his historic "Long March". It was indeed a total revolution against the so-called "nationalist" government of Generalassimo Chiang Kaishek.

Driven out of the mainland China by the long marchers in the Peoples' Liberation Army, the nationalist leader had to seek recluse in a distant island called Taiwan where he had the breather to rebuild and reorganize his power base in the later part of forties, Mao had decided not to Chase Chiang further because that would have entailed escalation of death tolls of innocent people lured away by "nationalistic syndrome" promising democratic living. The fabulous rise of Taiwan as an island-state occupying today an enviable position in the industrially developed superpowers, is ofcourse an eloquent testimony of a promise so squarely fulfilled. That is however, a different story - a tale of dedication, perseverance, diligence and honest endeavours of the people living in this tiny

island. But, inspite of the booming economy, the historically tarnished image of Generalassimo Chiang Kaishek as an 'autocrat' and 'reactionary' is yet to be reasonably salvaged. In fact Taiwan's stupendous march forward may not owe its ceremonial start to Chiang Kaishek' reign or so to say, to his military rule. It took off after he was out of the scene for good. Nevertheless, his spirit of "nationalism" could be a fore-runner

even though he could not have loreseen such a gigantic stride

ahead. However, from the point of view of the communists until the disintegration of USSR and induction of democracy and democratic institutions, in east European countries, nationalism or nationalistic spirit conlinued to carry the stigma of "reactionaries". The mounting waves of "democracy' all over the world since early nineties. did not spare even the hardliners in mainland China. By and large, they too are caught in the melee of democratic process.

And by virtue of the innate attraction of the terminology and its wider perspective. 'democracy' has been continuously gaining popularity all over the world while its twin 'nationalism' has been gradually receding into obscurity being scarcely practised. Still then, some of the third world countries are observed to have been clinging to this orthodox philosophy of nationhood. Such a stance being fastidiously pursued by them are seen by the adversaries as a mere tool to hoodwink the imagination of the people purporting to derive

uncertain political gains. Indeed it has turned out to be bogey to mislead the people that only the nationalists are real

patriots while others who do not subscribe to such an eerie interpretation dismiss it as a fanatically motivated conjecture to antagonize the people against them.

In Bangladesh, 'nationalism has been described in two different nomenclature. One is Bangalee nationalism and the other is Bangladeshi nationalism'. The former is apparently based on the 'lingua franca' of the people here while the latter on the geographical sovereignty' of the country or the nation.

Practically, Bangalee nationalism' is considered as a legitimate forerunner of our historic War of Liberation which saw its emergence in the Language movement of 1952 followed by 6-point demand of 1966, and mass upsurge of 1969. There is no denying the fact that this particular spirit and facet of nationalism has been a strong, binding factor besides being an indispensable catalyst forging insurmountable solidarity amongst the hapless people of the country against the Pakistani hegemony. On the other hand, "Bangla-

deshi nationalism" took its birth from the hatchery of a group after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975. Invariably, it owed its origin to

militaristic pattern of administration far away from the popular, democratic one. Its strength was gun and never vox populii. Clearly, its manouver could be attributed to a sordid agendum to wipe out the Himalayan popularity of the founder of the state from human memories. With its advent and at the first instance. calculated measures were taken to pervert the history of the War of Independence apportioning greater credit to the man who had lought it only as sector commander. It was a cunning and notorious salvo to defile the true history of our nationhood. Hypocrisy started pervading the entire body politic garnered by unfathomable lies. The towering personality of Sheikh Mujib stood as a formidable deterrent to the debasing offensive of the 'architect' of "Bangladeshi nationalism". It was inevitable that he went slow on his covert endeavour to instill this new edition of nationalism in peoples' minds. Ostensively, the plea of

"Bangladeshi nationalism" against "Bangalee nationalism" was to assign a distinctive mark to the people of Bangladesh is order to eventually segregate them from other Bengalee speaking people in the sub-continent. The aforenoted

for their mother tongue had no match in the global history not to speak of those Bangalees beyond our borders. So. most justifiably, the dawning of Bangalee nationalism by the people of Bangladesh was appropriate: There could not be a second opinion about such an absolute truth. It is agreed that an independent and sovereign state was the ultimate goal of our Liberation War but it was the die-hard "Bangalee nationalism" that paved the way to it spilling blood of 3 million innocent lives. Unfortunately, the protagonists of the so-called Bangladeshi nationalism' have been losing sight of such a massive sacrifice on the part of our people. They are happy with the end results being contemptibly oblivious of the means to that end. This is the height of their ingratitude to the whole nation. This is how they are most shamelessly wearing the garb of "Bangladeshi nationalism" which ornates Bangladesh both as a state and a nation while it very rudely ignores the prime component - the great people of Bangladesh who are very proud to be Bangalee first and Bangalee last. Our emergence and existence alike owe one hundred per cent to "Bangalee nationalism", that is, to the magical, unifying force of our language which eventually culminated into a sovereign country. So, here "Bangladeshi nationalism" is essentially a misnomer,

# This Day, a Quarter Century Ago by Kaiser Haq

October 9, 1971: Murti, a remote hill village on the Bhutan border. To the world at large neither the date nor the place mean anything. But for 61 Bangladeshis, then in the prime of youth, it was one of the most important days in their lives. Perhaps the most important. After 14 weeks of spartan training they were ready to become

Second Lieutenants in the

Bangladesh Army — the only

batch commissioned by the Bangladesh government in exile. They came to be known as the First Bangladesh War Course or First SS (Short Service Course).

Within days, the 61 subalterns were at the Front putting their training to use. The next

two months were a gruelling test of courage and endurance. but the 1st SS came through with flying colours. Sixteen received gallantry awards. Casualties: 3 shaheeds.

A special bond of comradeship unites those who train together to risk their lives in the service for a noble cause. But of

such fellow feeling was created the First Bangladesh war Course trust, which each year on 9th October arranges a reunion of all surviving members of the course and their families. It is a time to remember the dead and to Reminisce about what they shared in Murti; the hardship gladly borne, the jokes, the idealism, which sadly has given way nationwide to cynicism and despair.

an irritant concoction of our

War of Liberation.



Standing (from left): Abu Sadeque. Anisur Rahman, Didar Atoar Hossain, Mohmmod Ali, Mizanur Rahman. Ajizur Rahman, Abul Hossain. Ali Wakiuzzamun, Asaduzzaman, Md. Ahsanullah, Feroz Kamal, Aminul Islam, Zaliful Haq Khan, Niranjan Bhattacharya, Sayeed Ahmed, Sheikh Kamal, Mahbubul Alam, Jalalabadi, Shamsul Alam, Abdul Adad Chowdhury, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Ashfaqus Samad, Abdullah Kaiser, Abdul Kayum Khan, Munibur Rahman.

Middle row (from left) Jamil Din Hasan, Rafigul Islam, Masudur Rahman, Mansurul Agen, Sachin Karmakar, Mizanur Rahman, Hashmi Mostafa Kamal, Shahriar Huda, Fazlur Rahman, SM Khaled, Abdul Jalile Shakeul Huda Bachchu. Abu Baker. Sitting (from left): Taheruddin Akandji. Abdur Rouf, Raquibul Islam, Anisul Hasan, Kabir Uddin, Khondkar Md. Nurunnabi. Alik Kumar Gupta, Momtaj Hasan, Mahbubur Rahman, Manjur Ahmad, Mansurul Islam Majumdar, Taher Ahmed, Mohammod Mostafa, Fazle Hossain. Wakar Hasan, Selim Hasan, Nazrul Islam Bhuiya, Wali Ul Islam. Not in the picture: Shawkat Ali, Fazlur Rahman, Giashuddin.

### Incident at ZIA

viet Republic being one of the

Sir, This is to endorse the letter of Professor Alaul Hug Pramanik who was my colleague at the University of Chittagong and to request that the matter he given a serious consideration.

If I recall correctly. The Daily Star deplored the sad incidence at Zia International Airport where a British passport-holder of Bangladesh ori-

gin was killed reportedly by officials. Rough handling of Bangladesh passengers by Biman and making them suffer at their own airport have been observed by both Bangladesh and foreign observers. It's time something is done to stop such behaviour at the time of arrival and departure.

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