

Accept the Challenge

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has taken the BNP charge of repression and harassment very seriously. So much so that she took hefty chunks off her speech on the inaugural rally of silver jubilee celebrations of independence to talk about it.

The Prime Minister had also reacted very positively to the BNP stridency when soon after her return from Rome she knew BNP had moved the President on the point. She requested the President to himself go into the allegation and find out for himself the truth of the matter.

The opposition must not take time to prove that theirs is no irresponsible rhetoric. For the newspapers are reporting arrests of AL activists also and there is also news of AL elements being murdered.

If the opposition fails or doesn't care to substantiate its accusation all its cries of 'tiger, tiger' or selling the land out together with its sovereignty — weird as it is — will take a fatal beating.

Towards SAFTA

The second round of trade discussion among SAARC countries has ended on a highly positive note. The negotiators of the seven member-countries of the regional body — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka — came up with praiseworthy efforts in synchronising their positions to increase the number of the products coming under tariff concessions from 226 to about 1500.

Economic symbiosis is as much a reality as regional cooperation is in today's fast changing world. This is all the more applicable to the zone of South Asian nations that transact among themselves only 3.4 per cent of their global trade volume.

It is however, better late than never to get started and the news from Kathmandu comes with an extra bit of optimism in this respect because India alone is reported to have offered tariff cuts on 900 items.

The encouraging achievement in the Himalayan Kingdom injects a new dynamism into the process of realising the goal of launching the South Asian Free Trade Area by 2005.

A Suggestion to BTB

It will probably ask for a research of sorts to track when this saga of taking the mickey out of the viewers first began with the Bangladesh Television. It can be recalled readily and unsavourily though that the national electronic media on Sunday came up with something like that at a very interesting phase of a game of cricket it was telecasting live which evoked sighs of moaning, even undisguised annoyance from viewers.

Unless it is a purely entertainment one, a television channel will have news bulletins at the core of its programmes. BTB too is no exception. Its authorities probably have the most unenviable job of doing justice to all quarters having to work with a single channel where programmes are packed like sardines.

But Sunday's disruption of live telecast of a cricket match, that too at the final stage hammered home the necessity of being little sensible and flexible with the news hours. Particularly, during the winter, when live telecast of one or two domestic cricket matches is always on the cards, the idea of pushing one or two news bulletins out of any collision course should be entertained seriously.

It has been a bizarre experience to witness an unusual furore over the question of transit during the recent months. The importance and urgency accorded to it have indeed a tinge of mystery and enigma. Because the question of transit was never a major item on our foreign policy agenda — let alone its place and priority, if at all, as a national issue — although it could have existed in the peripheries of numerous policy discourses in the foreign office with regard to our bilateral relationship with India.

Most of the problems arising out of the debate have however been due to our lack of information as to what kind of transit is in question. We have talked apently about it in absence of a clearcut context and the issue has seldom been placed in perspective as a clearly defined case. It is all the more intriguing because some kind of transit protocol is already being in place between Bangladesh and India and it was there right from Pakistan period when it was however suspended following 1965 Indo-Pakistan war.

The promoters of the idea of going liberal on the question of transit to India have brought in the paradigms of Europe and North America to uphold the virtue of trans-national movements of commodities and personnel, seen in transit an economic boom and also argued that the country's sovereignty and security significantly lay in an economically integrated and interdependent subregion whether one calls it South-Asian North-East or South-Asia's growth triangle of Eastern Himalayan region. Ignoring

For the Better

Jyoti Basu

Sir, The visit of Mr Jyoti Basu to Bangladesh augurs well as he belongs to Bangladesh as well as he traces his ancestry from former East Bengal, now Bangladesh. The Irish descendant Americans still feel a very strong emotional attachment for the country of their origin and we feel Mr Basu must be having a soft corner for this country.

The people of Bangladesh welcomes Jyoti Basu as one of its great sons. It is our appeal to the Prime Minister to grant honorary nationality of Bangladesh to the visiting Chief Minister of West Bengal as a gesture of goodwill from the people of Bangladesh for his endeavour to settle the Ganges water dispute. We feel a permanent settlement of Ganges water dispute to the satisfaction of both India and Bangladesh shall remove the only irritant in the relationship of both the countries.

Al-Haj S M Khalid Choudhury Dharmad R/A, Dhaka

Making T&T corruption-free

Sir, Since The Daily Star is a paper dedicated entirely to the cause augmentation of public welfare in all walks of life, I, as usual, want to draw the attention all concerned to the exploitative nature of the T&T people. A letter published on Friday (20-9-96) last is a vivid story told by a respectable senior citizen. They don't care whether someone is a lonely old lady, a retired public servant or an innocent businessman. No one can easily get a telephone line without paying heavily or waiting for years and this is public knowledge. We were told that due to the introduction of computers, false billing had become difficult, but what about accepting a telephone line deliberately disconnected for months and billing the owner?

It is heartening to note that the government has decided to allow private telephone agencies. Here again you would notice the so-called T&T unions will raise, as they did before too, objections, stage demonstrations and resort to strikes. What is needed is firm action and public support. All the parties and citizens should support government's firm action against the culprits who want to hold the society in ransom. That they will do all the wrong things and yet they cannot be challenged, is an untenable situation. The T&T — like many other public enterprises, including the PDB cannot show any profit because a lot of the revenue is looted out and the public exchequer is deprived. The new government — especially the present T&T Minister — will surely appreciate that if all these crimes are uprooted, the government revenue will go

Of Transits and Port Facilities

The request for facilities like transit or use of port should usually be entertained among the regional countries if they are innocuous and in mutual interest of the countries concerned. However, the case of India asking transit through Bangladesh is somewhat extra-ordinary because she is not one the landlocked countries which ordinarily qualify for the grant of transit, writes Brig (Retd) M Abdul Hafiz.

The geopolitical implication of the issue they tend to consider its geo-economic advantages and are fascinated by Gujral's estimate of Taka 2000 crore of revenue for Bangladesh only from opening up Chittagong port facilities. They also estimate a few hundred crore to a few thousand crore of Taka of annual revenue earning if a large scale overland transit is granted to India. According to them, the SAPTA of which Bangladesh is a signatory already envisages such transit and the proposed Asian Highway in any case going to link up the countries and the continents providing trade network with similar facility given to each other.

And the great changes around the world? Nothing has fundamentally changed as far as the nation's vital interests are concerned. Even in Europe debates as to the EC's future enlargement, security and monetary system via a vis the member state's national interest seldom receded.

As regards the projected economic boom from the grant of transit and port facilities a modest question can be asked as to what does a nation do when it has no option of granting someone some kind of transit or port facility. A nation has to move entirely on its own steam. If only the enormous burlings that exist in various sectors of our economy can be straightened and streamlined the bait of transit revenue dangled before us would dim into insignificance. It is not much the question of geo-economy just now. For us it is essentially the question of good governance. For instance, if the pervasive smuggling that takes place across our border can be

up substantially and then it can undertake many public welfare activities without resorting to grants of any sort. There should be no compromise where public interest is concerned! And this is bound to brighten the image of the government and increase its transparency and augment public welfare which is the main commitment of the government.

Mosque for both the sexes

Sir, There is no denying that even in our present Muslim society, Muslim women are being deprived of many advantages (social as well as religious). In some religious practices, they have little access to perform their mandatory rituals and observances. To make my point I would like to draw the attention to the fact that nowadays women are hardly permitted in the mosques even in the pursuit of their religious purposes. It has been taken for granted that women should say their five-time prayers at home in privacy and they are not supposed to attend the congregations in the mosques.

Ahmed Dhaka

Unauthorised encroachments on government land

Sir, I would like to draw the kind attention of the authorities of the departments concerned to the fact that Uttara Model Town is now being turned into a non-model town beyond its original blueprint on account of following reasons: a. Unauthorised encroachments on the government land are going on in different sectors of Uttara by force.

Our demand, therefore, should be to ensure that we must not forget our friends in need, while we keep in mind that the government has already announced its willingness to invite them to join us in the ensuing occasion. We must share our rejoicing on this great occasion with our guests of honour.

Well, we have passed quite a long time in confusion and hesitation. Since the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman — the great helmsman of the then imperiled nation — we have just been ruled by the group of people who are morally divided into pro-liberation and anti-liberation factions. Naturally they failed miserably to guide us to grow a self-respected, self-sufficient nation. The original morale of Liberation was killed and buried with Bangabandhu. He is no more. But fortunately, the morale and inspiration has now awarded a

some so-called Muslim scholars regard women as 'full of sin' and hence women are not allowed in the mosque. In fact, Islam basically makes no difference between the sexes. Allah says, 'Verily I have exalted the bani-adam (children of Adam)'. This 'children of Adam' includes both sexes. It is admittedly true that when a person resorts to mosque for religious preoccupation he/she gets divine inspiration especially when he/she listens to Friday sermons. But women are being deprived of this desirable spiritual advantage. So there should be a change in the present adverse situation and we should get to the Madinan full-fledged Islamic society at the time of Prophet (S.A.W). The Muslim community should be sincere enough to accommodate women in the mosques for prayers and other religious practices.

A Citizen Ameer Complex, Uttara, Dhaka

stopped even partially through a sociopolitical movement, the loan recovery can be effected in nationalised banks or the tax evasion can be curbed to some extent, our revenue earnings would shoot up manifold. On the contrary the ready money of transit revenue that is alluring many of us may prove illusory. Who can after all guarantee that there would not be another burling there?

There has however been no headway. Each one of this prescriptions holds enormous prospect for reducing trade imbalance. Why then linking it up with transit or port revenue? Nevertheless, a blind opposition to transit to a neighbour country is indeed foolhardy and cannot be a healthy attitude in international politics. Any such request from another country merits attention and due consideration. The geopolitical imperatives of the region call for the kind of cooperation implicit in the grant of such facility. The request for facilities like transit or use of port should usually be entertained among the regional countries if they are innocuous and in mutual interest of the countries concerned.

with people; possibly his army background had something to do with it, besides acquisition of a natural trait of good upbringing. He was an affectionate father and worthy husband of a friendly and popular lady.

with people; possibly his army background had something to do with it, besides acquisition of a natural trait of good upbringing. He was an affectionate father and worthy husband of a friendly and popular lady.

with people; possibly his army background had something to do with it, besides acquisition of a natural trait of good upbringing. He was an affectionate father and worthy husband of a friendly and popular lady.

with people; possibly his army background had something to do with it, besides acquisition of a natural trait of good upbringing. He was an affectionate father and worthy husband of a friendly and popular lady.

OPINION

Silver Jubilee of Liberation : Longing for Belongings

Since long I have been thinking of saying something especially to two types our people: those who have successfully forgotten the history of the Liberation and secondly, those who are out to try with all their heart — to forget. They are still out to create chaos and confusion with lot of lies — to arouse cheap sentiment and to exploit that to meet their end.

Our country, our people must remain grateful to Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. We must remember her from the very core of our heart while the remembrance of the most vilious genocide will surely keep haunting us. What the great lady did for us was certainly a good lot more than she should have been expected to do politically, diplomatically, and above all, militarily. The new generation knows of her contribution to our independence. One may not know what a big risk she had to undergo, what a desperate move she had to make and what a fierce struggle she had to wage with many a contrary and disavowal. It is not I, after all, who wrote the history, so who am I to erase it? Owing to this greatness we honour the lady as a symbol, by constructing a stage in the Suhrawardi Udyan where she delivered a lecture to tens of thousands of her honouring audience. But have you ever found any trivial sign of that complementary gift presented to her up there or elsewhere in the country since the bloody coup of 1975? You have not, it was crushed.

Well, how and why should we have belittled ourselves with this silly ingratitude? What harm our gratefulness could have possibly done to our sovereignty and liberty? And in other words, what did we really achieve out of the arrogant pride and obstinate self-conceit? On this great occasion, therefore, it would not be wrong to urge upon that a personal representative of that great lady be invited to join us.

Let us be very frank about our history. We did not give battle to her by ourselves. Indian Army joined with us too. Thousands of Indian soldiers were killed on our land during the war. Why not another monument for those friends — those friends in need? Well, I don't think it would be any surprising proposition. We have graveyards and monuments of other foreign soldiers here in Bangladesh and I don't find any hesitation in innocent monuments of the heroes who sacrificed their lives to help us free our country from the barbarous foreign junta while we take care of a number of the same of others. I should not ask why it was not done in the past. I but I am quite sure our friends in the Indian Army who fought our war shoulder to shoulder should not have been rewarded with a mere flower or a trifling green coconut. They deserve a lot more.

Whoever among the following great persons are still alive should be invited to join us in the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of our Liberation War and Independence: General Aurora, General Oban, General Manekshaw and Lt. Col. H R Chakravarti (Commander of BSF 76 Battalion) posted then in Krishnanagar. We would expect Inspector General Kesry Singh and Lt. Col. Megh Singh and Major BN Bhattacharya to come. We should as well invite Brig Limaya and Brig BC Pande, and all those friends from the training camps of Melaghor, Dehradun, Shillong, Naihati and so on.

existence of certain political ambience and a level of mutual trust and understanding which are, however, missing in our region. In an era of growing interdependence nations can be at times desperately dependent on each other. A transit through Bangladesh to her North East, if granted, would perhaps be extremely useful for India the way our share of the Ganges water could be a boon to her impoverished economy. Hadn't its flow been obstructed by India, it is incredible that the country of India's greatness could be callously indifferent to the miseries of the millions in the lower Ganges basin in Bangladesh! India's water polky with Bangladesh for last quarter of a century has been anything but conducive to the creation of a political will — a coalition on both sides for a bold 'give and take'. Is it in any way compatible that India would be asking for a large scale transit route/routes piercing through the heartland of Bangladesh while erecting barbed wire fencing around her? India's political leaders make blistering comments on the so-called 'Bangladesh emigrants' and its government pushes them out to Bangladesh while expecting that Bangladesh would lay bare the whole length and breadth of the country for them and their goods. Does it work? What must precede the culture of transit and transitional free trade are trust and compassion for each other as well as their aspirations and interests. Let us work for the first. The transit, port facilities etc., would automatically follow.

IN MEMORIAM End of a Good Man, a Kind Man, a Pleasant Man

by M M Rezaul Karim

AS M Mostafizur Rahman breathed his last two nights ago at the CMH, with his near and dear ones by his bedside. By the standard of medical advancement of modern times, he died at an unripe age of 64. He suffered from diverse and complicated ailments for over a year and succumbed finally to dreaded cancer. His indomitable urge and firm determination to live longer kept the angel of death away for him for quite sometime.

A former Foreign Minister of Khaleda Zia's government, a Home Minister in her late husband's government and as a prominent policy-maker of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, he made positive contributions to the society. The fact that he effectively held such coveted positions for so long was a glowing testimony to his ability and dependability as a leader.

People who had the opportunity to come in contact with Mostafizur Rahman liked him perhaps more as a man than as one who held high positions in state service. He was well-mannered and polite in his dealings

with people; possibly his army background had something to do with it, besides acquisition of a natural trait of good upbringing. He was an affectionate father and worthy husband of a friendly and popular lady.

OPINION

Silver Jubilee of Liberation : Longing for Belongings

Since long I have been thinking of saying something especially to two types our people: those who have successfully forgotten the history of the Liberation and secondly, those who are out to try with all their heart — to forget. They are still out to create chaos and confusion with lot of lies — to arouse cheap sentiment and to exploit that to meet their end.

Our country, our people must remain grateful to Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. We must remember her from the very core of our heart while the remembrance of the most vilious genocide will surely keep haunting us. What the great lady did for us was certainly a good lot more than she should have been expected to do politically, diplomatically, and above all, militarily. The new generation knows of her contribution to our independence. One may not know what a big risk she had to undergo, what a desperate move she had to make and what a fierce struggle she had to wage with many a contrary and disavowal. It is not I, after all, who wrote the history, so who am I to erase it? Owing to this greatness we honour the lady as a symbol, by constructing a stage in the Suhrawardi Udyan where she delivered a lecture to tens of thousands of her honouring audience. But have you ever found any trivial sign of that complementary gift presented to her up there or elsewhere in the country since the bloody coup of 1975? You have not, it was crushed.

Well, how and why should we have belittled ourselves with this silly ingratitude? What harm our gratefulness could have possibly done to our sovereignty and liberty? And in other words, what did we really achieve out of the arrogant pride and obstinate self-conceit? On this great occasion, therefore, it would not be wrong to urge upon that a personal representative of that great lady be invited to join us.

Let us be very frank about our history. We did not give battle to her by ourselves. Indian Army joined with us too. Thousands of Indian soldiers were killed on our land during the war. Why not another monument for those friends — those friends in need? Well, I don't think it would be any surprising proposition. We have graveyards and monuments of other foreign soldiers here in Bangladesh and I don't find any hesitation in innocent monuments of the heroes who sacrificed their lives to help us free our country from the barbarous foreign junta while we take care of a number of the same of others. I should not ask why it was not done in the past. I but I am quite sure our friends in the Indian Army who fought our war shoulder to shoulder should not have been rewarded with a mere flower or a trifling green coconut. They deserve a lot more.

Whoever among the following great persons are still alive should be invited to join us in the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of our Liberation War and Independence: General Aurora, General Oban, General Manekshaw and Lt. Col. H R Chakravarti (Commander of BSF 76 Battalion) posted then in Krishnanagar. We would expect Inspector General Kesry Singh and Lt. Col. Megh Singh and Major BN Bhattacharya to come. We should as well invite Brig Limaya and Brig BC Pande, and all those friends from the training camps of Melaghor, Dehradun, Shillong, Naihati and so on.

IN MEMORIAM

End of a Good Man, a Kind Man, a Pleasant Man

by M M Rezaul Karim

AS M Mostafizur Rahman breathed his last two nights ago at the CMH, with his near and dear ones by his bedside. By the standard of medical advancement of modern times, he died at an unripe age of 64. He suffered from diverse and complicated ailments for over a year and succumbed finally to dreaded cancer. His indomitable urge and firm determination to live longer kept the angel of death away for him for quite sometime.

A former Foreign Minister of Khaleda Zia's government, a Home Minister in her late husband's government and as a prominent policy-maker of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, he made positive contributions to the society. The fact that he effectively held such coveted positions for so long was a glowing testimony to his ability and dependability as a leader.

People who had the opportunity to come in contact with Mostafizur Rahman liked him perhaps more as a man than as one who held high positions in state service. He was well-mannered and polite in his dealings

with people; possibly his army background had something to do with it, besides acquisition of a natural trait of good upbringing. He was an affectionate father and worthy husband of a friendly and popular lady.

OPINION

Silver Jubilee of Liberation : Longing for Belongings

Since long I have been thinking of saying something especially to two types our people: those who have successfully forgotten the history of the Liberation and secondly, those who are out to try with all their heart — to forget. They are still out to create chaos and confusion with lot of lies — to arouse cheap sentiment and to exploit that to meet their end.

Our country, our people must remain grateful to Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. We must remember her from the very core of our heart while the remembrance of the most vilious genocide will surely keep haunting us. What the great lady did for us was certainly a good lot more than she should have been expected to do politically, diplomatically, and above all, militarily. The new generation knows of her contribution to our independence. One may not know what a big risk she had to undergo, what a desperate move she had to make and what a fierce struggle she had to wage with many a contrary and disavowal. It is not I, after all, who wrote the history, so who am I to erase it? Owing to this greatness we honour the lady as a symbol, by constructing a stage in the Suhrawardi Udyan where she delivered a lecture to tens of thousands of her honouring audience. But have you ever found any trivial sign of that complementary gift presented to her up there or elsewhere in the country since the bloody coup of 1975? You have not, it was crushed.

Well, how and why should we have belittled ourselves with this silly ingratitude? What harm our gratefulness could have possibly done to our sovereignty and liberty? And in other words, what did we really achieve out of the arrogant pride and obstinate self-conceit? On this great occasion, therefore, it would not be wrong to urge upon that a personal representative of that great lady be invited to join us.

Let us be very frank about our history. We did not give battle to her by ourselves. Indian Army joined with us too. Thousands of Indian soldiers were killed on our land during the war. Why not another monument for those friends — those friends in need? Well, I don't think it would be any surprising proposition. We have graveyards and monuments of other foreign soldiers here in Bangladesh and I don't find any hesitation in innocent monuments of the heroes who sacrificed their lives to help us free our country from the barbarous foreign junta while we take care of a number of the same of others. I should not ask why it was not done in the past. I but I am quite sure our friends in the Indian Army who fought our war shoulder to shoulder should not have been rewarded with a mere flower or a trifling green coconut. They deserve a lot more.

Whoever among the following great persons are still alive should be invited to join us in the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of our Liberation War and Independence: General Aurora, General Oban, General Manekshaw and Lt. Col. H R Chakravarti (Commander of BSF 76 Battalion) posted then in Krishnanagar. We would expect Inspector General Kesry Singh and Lt. Col. Megh Singh and Major BN Bhattacharya to come. We should as well invite Brig Limaya and Brig BC Pande, and all those friends from the training camps of Melaghor, Dehradun, Shillong, Naihati and so on.

Maybe some of them are no more in this world. But their kins and folks should be assured that they will remain very much alive in all our remembrance as long as we live, as long as Bangladesh's graceful flag in green and red hoists in the sky.

Finally may I ask whoever is immortal? Should we not all die some day? Must we die. But should we die without receiving in full our just belonging — our absolute truthfulness, heroic since city and historic gratefulness? That is precisely the reason why I long, fervently long, for them — in the context of the great Silver Jubilee of our Liberation.