

Good Sign

We can interpret the recent political news as a good sign because both the Awami League government and the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party have reportedly come closer to an understanding between them.

We would like to believe that the BNP's tough public stance is for the sake of toughness — nothing else. Let us understand that the BNP has kept its communication channel open and the government side too is eager to respond to the genuine grievances of the opposition. If we take an objective look at the situation, we can reasonably be convinced that the contentious issues have come down to a minimum. BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has mentioned only two conditions on the fulfilment of which his party will sit in the Parliament. The conditions are: 1) fair coverage of the opposition by the electronic media and 2) maintenance of neutrality of the speaker of the Parliament. As for the fair coverage by the electronic media, the prime minister has expressed her commitment. Now we reiterate that a necessary step to that end be immediately taken by the government. That will leave us with one issue — the neutrality of the JS speaker. We argued earlier that his neutrality must be tested in the house and unless the BNP joins the session, it remains untested.

The question therefore centres around whether every side — the government or the opposition — means serious business. If they do, they will have to begin anew and learn from past mistakes. The government and the opposition must learn the fundamentals of governance and bring into practice the democratic norms, they say, they prize so highly. We are looking forward to a consensual position arrived at through negotiations between the two sides.

Spare This Name

Haste was what pervaded everything from the brainwave to the kick-off on Tuesday of the Bangabandhu Cup soccer. This was writ large on the inaugural's every department.

The worst item on the lavish card was the theme song of the tournament. It was an indifferent ode to *Jair Janak Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*.

It appears to us that some quarters are seriously after making the name of one of the greatest leaders in our history bare and bereft of the sense of love and respect that it invokes. The trick is to make a surfeit of it so that it becomes a disgusting burden. If the government cannot immortalise the memories of the founder of this state by outdoing him in constructive governance, please spare for us and our posterity one magic name, that of Bangabandhu. Do not tarnish it by overuse, mindless use and use devised to harm everything that the name and the man meant and stood for.

A new international tournament materialised in Dhaka on the last day of the past year. How sports-lovers specially those having a football for their heart would wish this to perpetuate spilling past a generation! Welcome to the first foreign teams joining the tournament potent with promises of becoming a globally great one.

To associate such an event with the name of the supreme leader of our freedom struggle was a good thought. But this stopped short of being the best of thoughts. Far better could it be called simply the Mujib Cup, — like Nehru Cup et al — by which name the nations of the world remember our dear leader. The Prime Minister invited Annada Shankar Roy to Bangladesh to pay a debt of gratitude over his immortal rhymes celebrating Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and not a Bangabandhu. The same way to every valiant warrior of the Liberation War, on and off the front, the great one was dear and close — closer than kins — in his own substantial name and not by any epithet. It is undoubtedly a bad bargain to swamp the nation with the rather formal and ritualistic epithet and force the loved name into oblivion in exchange.

The subtitle of the logo was again unfortunate. If you choose to call it the Silver Jubilee of Independence tournament, you do not promise another round of it next year or ever. It could very well be called in full, Mujib Cup International Soccer Tournament and be a good candidate for FIFA recognition by its regular and competent holding every year or every two or four year. It has remained unclear as to how the organisers visualised it. All outward signs say this was planned to be a one-go affair. Why?

Death or Murder?

Sixteen elephants have died in Assam — of hunger. Wild animals can die for numerous and diverse reasons. Loss of the sustainability of their habitat is the main factor. Poaching is another. Man's preoccupation with the idea of keeping in size the population of certain animals, specially African elephants, is another source for animal death outside of the routine one connected with the food cycle. But the death in the famous Kaziranga Sanctuary did not come to elephants in a free and wild state. They were all the charge of the forest department of the state government. They were employed to help prevent the poaching of the endangered species of one-horned rhinoceros. There are 106 pachyderms on government employment for this purpose.

The elephants eat in quantity to keep their rather big bodies going. The department ran out of funds for feeding them. This cannot therefore, be called death. This has been patently a case of murder. But man is one animal which does not call the killing of any other animal by man, a murder. Why? If one knew about the IQ and other near-human traits of an elephant, it would be difficult for one not to label some killings of elephants as murders — in every meaning of the word.

Elephants, like dolphins and some species of whales, have all along been very near the best of humans in all their lifelong conduct. Most important of all, they have individuality which is to say they are not all instinct and nothing besides. And they have nuclear families and filial feelings for their offsprings.

Every death diminishes me, said the poet. So should every death of an elephant or dolphin. As mankind not as yet truly feels diminished with every death, so it cannot indeed care more for those that it calls beasts, for very unenlightened reasons.

Raging of Storm in Financial Sector -- Bangladesh Experience

The malaise in the financial sector of the economy appears all-pervading... The sharp rise and fall in the stock market, as evidenced recently in our country, indicates a grave setback to a balanced and rational behaviour of market forces.

THE jolt that the financial sector of the country received during the last several weeks is unfortunate and perhaps not experienced during the past five years. This has happened closely on the heels of the near debacle situation faced by the Dhaka stock market in recent months. Again, the shake-up of the top two positions of the Bangladesh Bank and the most recent suspension of the Managing Director of the Arab Bangladesh Bank have raised many eyebrows. People wonder as to what is happening in the banking sector, one of the most important sectors on which the progress of the economy as a whole hinges.

Knowledgeable sources thought that the then Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank had in him all the qualities and international monetary and central banking experiences that are characteristic of a suitable chief of the central bank of any country. That is why many expected him to succeed his boss, the last Governor, after the latter completed his tenure shortly. The professional bankers were looking forward to this occasion for obvious reasons. The post of Governor of the Bangladesh Bank had almost always been held by career bureaucrats, normally from the elite civil service. That represented an opportunity for a professional baker to reach this most coveted post in the banking sector of the country. The others would naturally hope

and find that their vistas being widely opened. Then came a surprise. The Deputy Governor was removed on charges of having committed irregularities in the discharge of his official duties. However, the government sought to salvage the situation later by appointing another eminent banker to the highest post.

The other surprise was bigger; it came as a shock to many. It was termination of the contractual service of the Governor of Bangladesh Bank only before a few weeks of the expiry of his contract. The order caught him completely unawares; a telephone call came from the Finance Ministry asking him to hand over charge abruptly to his successor almost immediately and a press conference was held hurriedly to explain reasons for his ignominious removal. No charge was proffered against him for allowing him to reply before taking the decision. He, as a dutiful civil servant, stepped down at once without having muttered a word in protest and without giving the slightest vent to his feelings to the press.

Such unceremonious ending

of the career of a highly reputable civil servant, with an impeccable service record, was most unfortunate. It manifests inherent weakness of the administration, which fails to give an opportunity to its victim to state his side of the case. As this does not always happen,

tary, ambassador, lawyer and leaders of professional, industrial and commercial groups. To all of them, the government action appears to be an error in judgment. The matter, therefore, deserves a closer and dispassionate scrutiny so that due redress is ensured and honour

normal rules and procedure, the central bank has to be convinced that there is a prima facie case for invoking such authority. This is normally done on the basis of findings of its own inspection of the functions of the bank in question or on having received incriminatory evidence from other sources. The Bangladesh Bank then formally investigates the irregularities and generally takes punitive actions after no satisfactory explanation is received. All the procedural requirements appear to have been circumvented. It is understood that the actions were taken at the explicit directive of Prime Minister's office which was relayed through the Finance Ministry to the Bangladesh Bank to carry out. This created an unhealthy precedent and violated the autonomy of the central bank of the land.

The malaise in the financial sector of the economy appears all-pervading. As the indices of economic and financial sectors move up slowly, it also goes down slowly in order to indicate a healthy growth or movement. The sharp rise and fall in

the stock market, as evidenced recently in our country, indicates a grave setback to a balanced and rational behaviour of market forces that are sine qua non for a growing economy.

As for the stock market, the less said the better it is. The government, however, of late, has taken some illogical steps to put the stock market back on its trail. Unfortunately, we do things, more often than not, which are either too little or too late. Of course, our lack of knowledge and experience in this field is also partly responsible for the cataclysm. It is not certain if and how soon the situation will return to normal. The government efforts in this regard may better be supplemented by the counsel of appropriate international experts, also for a better operation in future.

In regard to cases of irregularities in banks, all conscientious citizens would like malpractices, whose ultimate victims are law-abiding simple depositors, must stop. Therefore, all that may be arraigned for unethical, irregular and illegal actions in banking institutions in general should be identified, investigated and properly dealt with by a high powered impartial body, who could exercise its authority without fear, favour and discrimination. That is how one can retain confidence, both at home and abroad, which is imperative for a progressive and growing economy.



Currents and Crosscurrents

by M M Rezaul Karim

This singular case smacks of arbitrary action and discrimination. Those who have known the dismissed Governor, either at work or in school, cannot conceive of the possibility of such degradation. We studied together Economics in Dhaka University in early fifties and he was reputed to be one of the choicest students. Our honours class of 1954 with about 28 students can boast of having at least almost all classmates well placed in the society, many having attained the positions of minister, presidential adviser, secre-

of the dishonoured vindicated. Then came the incident about the AB Bank. By a perfunctory order, its Managing Director was removed from his office hastily and the Board was asked to explain conduct. The issue was alleged irregularity in granting loan to an industry. The High Court, however, issued a stay order holding in abeyance the order of the Bangladesh Bank.

The central bank, no doubt, is legally empowered to exercise such authority, but this has so far hardly been exercised. Un-

Parliament, Press Conference and Bones of Contention

by Kazi Alauddin Ahmed

THE new British High Commissioner in Bangladesh Mr David C Walker has rightly echoed the sentiment of the general people of the country that the national parliament should be transformed into an ideal forum for composing all urgent issues related to the economic development and welfare of the poor people. In tune with the prevalent desire of the whole nation he has urged both the opposition and the party in power that they refrain from making the streets venues to ventilate their grievances against each other. Mr Walker has reminded everybody that many potential foreign investors are eagerly waiting for a reassuring investment climate to come forward. To such end unfettered political stability was a sine qua non, he added.

It is not very difficult to understand the genuine feelings expressed by the diplomat. It is also easily discernible that despite the source, there is no diplomacy in it. Rather, we may consider Mr Walker's observations as friendly counsels to one of the member countries in the Commonwealth fraternity. Besides, Great Britain has been our development partner for long and it is only too natural that she longs to see us prosper, that we nurture our innate potentials for our economic emancipation.

Indeed, the general feeling of the people here is also identical. But unfortunately, they are being perpetually sandwiched by opposing political factors. They are constantly oscillating between unworshipful infatuation, hollow promises, cajoling on the one hand and on the other, deprivation, dejection and frustration.

I do not believe that our politicians, irrespective of their party affiliations, are unaware of such a stigmatic situation. Nor do I have any doubt that there is any shortfall in individual as well as collective patriotism. Still, the whole nation remains hostage to a perpetual state of uncertainty. The distant horizon continues frequently shadowed by illusive and misleading statements by some leaders.

For a case study we may select the historic 30-year Ganges water sharing treaty executed on 12th December, 1996 by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart H D Deve Gowda in New Delhi. The document was published in all the newspapers of Bangladesh and India. It was heartily welcomed in the Indian Lok Sabha unanimously without a single note of dissension. Likewise, it received almost universal acclaim from the political parties, socio-cultural organisations and numerous institu-

tional associations. BNP and Jamaat have been, as usual, the major exceptions. Leaving the latter one can take into consideration the reactions of BNP leadership on the agreement. At the first instance, the casual comments of BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan made immediately after the signing of the agreement, may be recalled. While frankly admitting that he was yet to study the terms of the agreement thoroughly, he had alluded to certain hypothetical aspects, though not on records, for discarding it. He accused the government and Awami League

undertone of threat to oust the present government on the water issue even though the actual strength of it could be discounted. However, when asked if BNP rejected the water treaty he chose a softer word saying "we do not accept" it. He also expressed his dejection at Awami League's failure to get a bigger share of the Ganges water which he expected it would, exploiting its 'special relations' with India. Coincidentally, his remarks have had a striking semblance with an almost similar version of Jamaat's Deputy Chief Abbas Ali Khan on the issue. He said: "The treaty proved

in tone between the two leaders. It is indeed heartening to note that Khandkar Delwar Hossain is very much willing to go for a dialogue if invited with 'sincerity' by the ruling party. Since Suranjit Sengupta has already stated that there was no dearth of sincerity on his party's part, Mr Hossain's repeated stress on this element shall lead us nowhere. It is mutual trust that should be the prime factor and which must be unconditional. If, however, another public statement by the ruling party would re-confirm its 'sincerity' and that is what BNP desired, there is no point

threadbare discussion of its draft in the Jatiya Sangsad. In this, they have not looked at the Indian scenario. None from either position or opposition raised similar outcries. They had rather unequivocally given thumping applause in the Indian Lok Sabha approving the agreement unanimously post-facto.

Another potent offensive that shall seize the Opposition benches in the Parliament, veers around the tragic episode in Jessore jail. In spite of the fact that the government had displayed patience and tolerance at the last deteriorating situation in the jail, the rebels continued their highly illegal

obstruction to the law enforcing forces in performing their duties.

The former Indian premier Narasimha Rao is also on the dock to defend CBI cases of corruption against him. The Congress president and other leaders of the party have considered Rao's involvement in corruption cases as a positive slur on the party. As a first step Rao was forced to resign from the presidency and later was voted out from the leadership of the Parliamentary party. The Congress leadership has set a unique example to let law take its own course, evidently allowing Rao to prove his innocence in the court which would remove all the present stumbling blocks to restore him to the party leadership. BNP, on the other hand, wants to quash the universality of the rule that none is above law. In the case of Ershad they feigned, rather pretended to believe in the philosophy of the rule of law. In their case, they forget it conveniently. They do not find any educative lesson from Mr Rao's case either. They are now demanding the government to grant immunity from legal proceedings to Begum Zia, in the same manner they got the Indemnity Act a berth in our Constitution. This is indeed an awe-inspiring attitude on their part that is fraught with a malevolent danger of putting our entire legal system into a state of anarchy; the people of the country must rise in protest against such hobnobbing with the law of the land. They would rather ask Begum Zia to prove her honesty and absolve herself of the charges of corruption. Such a stand on their part will earn her double the popularity she enjoys now. One wishes too, that she handles it with wisdom and not allow herself to be pampered by any inconsequential emotions.

Dialogue or no dialogue, we have to take cognizance of the rapidly changing situation ever since BNP's abstention from Jatiya Sangsad effective November 10, 1996. New and newer elements of discord have appeared on the scene giving the Opposition additional bones of contention.

of bowing down to Indian pressure and of selling out our sovereignty to them. Even he disputed the arithmetic figures about the quantum of sharing water at different times during the lean period. However, Mr Bhuiyan promised to the waiting journalists that he would very soon convene a formal press conference aided by expert opinion to present his party stand.

He kept his promise. Seemingly backed by unknown or scarcely known "experts", the BNP Secretary General reiterated his previous observations castigating the present government for allegedly giving in to the Indian pressure and sacrificing our national interest. In the same breath, he expressed pride that it was only for the groundwork prepared by BNP which made the agreement a reality. Describing it however as a mere jugglery of figures, he added that the BNP government was offered a bigger quantity which it rejected. Being evidently puzzled at hearing such a hitherto unknown story a journalist at once quipped: "What was the actual Indian offer?" Mr Bhuiyan found himself trapped in his own snare and fumbled for a reply. What he could ultimately manage was pitifully half-hearted and blatantly inconsistent. "It was only in the initial stage," he said. Obviously, he had no acceptable explanation for the stated rejection of the Indian offer when it was not actually made at all. Apparently unconvinced, another journalist wanted to know what would be BNP's next plan on the subject. "We are mobilizing public opinion and... if the people desire, we shall launch a movement against the government," he informed.

Summing up, the Press Conference was in itself a hoax by all standard. There was an

that India had no love for Bangladesh, it had so for Awami League.

And away from the forgotten press conference Mr Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan expressed a note of uncertainty about BNP MPs return to the next session of the 7th Assembly. Narrating BNP standpoint chronologically he observed that no formal initiative was so far taken by the ruling party to solve the crisis. Even they have not yet known if, subsequent to the meeting of the BNP delegation led by the Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia with the President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, the promised initiative by the latter has been taken. Nevertheless, he insisted that unless their demands were met BNP MPs would not return to Jatiya Sangsad. He appeared to be rigid on his contention.

On the other hand, the ruling party spokesman and Parliamentary Adviser to the Prime Minister Suranjit Sengupta, MP, alluded to the attempts earlier at settling the issue and said: "The offer is still there. Even we are ready to contact them once again. Nevertheless, I reiterate my party's call for discussion." Reacting to such observation the Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandkar Delwar Hossain said: "We want meaningful dialogue and for this the ruling party must show its sincerity." He, however, thought that "speaking of dialogue for public eyewash and continuing repression on our workers cannot go together." On the alleged "rigidity" of his party as per the version of the ruling party, Mr Delwar Hossain replied that: "We're not rigid on our demands... Let them call us to dialogue... we are ready to return to the House if our grievances including denial of our rights as law makers are removed through discussions." Besides the palpable difference

in dilly-dallying over it. The sooner it comes, the better.

Dialogue or no dialogue, we have to take cognizance of the rapidly changing situation ever since BNP's abstention from Jatiya Sangsad effective November 10, 1996. New and newer elements of discord have appeared on the scene giving the Opposition additional bones of contention. Among them, the signing of the water-sharing agreement on 12th December, 1996 is likely to take the major slice, rather, a most volatile part. The opposition BNP has already said that it did not 'accept' it even though its contentions against it are observed to have been charged more by emotions than by reasons. Notwithstanding the clear provisions and unambiguous commitment of the two parties in the document, the opposition BNP, upon its hypothetical plea, has accused the ruling party of taking unilateral decision on such a national issue without arranging a prior

activities and provocative overtures.

And last, not the least, the corruption case against BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, is sure to keep the situation boiling. Begum Zia returned from Saudi Arabia on 25th December, 1996 after medical treatment there. Meantime, the announcement of the case against her in particular (Abdul Matin Chowdhury — a co-accused), sparked off violent reaction amongst her party members. They went to the streets in protest and eventually on a rampage of damaging public and private vehicles, road-side shops and business houses. The encounter with the police that inevitably followed gave them an additional impetus to shout louder. Begum Zia's arrival was charged with loud demands for immediate programme from the party. Police have filed cases against Sadek Hossain Khoka, Mir Showkat Ali, Mirza Abbas and Goyeshwar Ray for their alleged

OPINION

Of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis

Twenty-five years have passed since Bangladesh gained independence. Pakistan has survived the emergence of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has survived the absence of patronage by Pakistan. Much of the irritants in the relationship between Pakistan and Bangladesh have either been forgotten or forsaken.

Bangladesh has its own agenda both for its domestic and foreign policies, so has Pakistan independent of each other in its essence and purpose. Pakistan and Bangladesh have come of age. For good or for worse one should be given the fullest opportunity of pursuing each other's goals without any undue external influence.

Yet one still sees and hears of extraordinary attitudes amongst a cross section of the people of both Bangladesh and Pakistan which often find rather odd and downright demeaning if not illogical and self-contradictory. Not only that they often tend to cast a shadow over the very logic behind creation of independent Bangladesh.

This write up is therefore an attempt to address specifically this class of gentry. There are those in Bangladesh who are continually lamenting over the misfortune which struck Bangladesh since East Pakistan got separated from Pakistan. These people have difficulty even acknowledging Bangladesh as an independent nation. They often say during the days of Pakistan they were better off economically and otherwise — there was no terrorism on the street, the educational institutions had a better academic atmosphere, consumer goods were plenty and cheaper etc. They also seem to pride themselves of having friends in Pakistan living in much better conditions and environment.

All this make me both angry and sad at the same time. These people not only have a wrong

emergence of Bangladesh. I have met senior Pakistani citizens who often most confidently declare that the separation of East Pakistan as they prefer to call it as nothing but a 'Hadsa' (meaning an accident).

On the other hand there is yet another category of Pakistanis who I have known strongly feel that we should have a strong armed forces and cause 'aggression' upon a particular neighbouring country at the very first opportunity or else our survival will be at jeopardy.

To this category I would like to humbly say that Pakistan should fight its own battles. Bangladesh no longer holds any brief for Pakistan. Likewise, she does not expect her to hold any brief for Bangladesh.

Finally, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan must understand the factual position of each other's status in the comity of nations in this region. First, for survival Bangladesh and Pakistan no longer depend on each other. Secondly, from the point of view of peaceful coexistence in the region Pakistan in a way has more need of Bangladesh than it has of Pakistan i.e. on the diplomatic front. Coming to the question of India its status is somewhat different. It does enjoy a privileged and a unique position.

To my estimation it is important for both Bangladesh and Pakistan to come to some viable and respectable arrangements with India which in the long run may prove to be beneficial both politically and economically for Pakistan and Bangladesh, more so for Pakistan. The fact however remains that the question of India its status in this region is somewhat different. It does enjoy a privileged and a unique position.

The other aspect I find rather strange and incomprehensible is the Pakistani concept of the genesis and the

To the Editor...

"Of Reality and Gratitude"

Sir, I read the article written by renowned writer Kuldip Nayar under the above title published in *The Daily Star* on 24 December, 1996. It is true that after the Liberation War, Bangladesh did not keep any symbol of Indian army by erecting any monument for those who laid their lives for Bangladesh. The political leaders, armed forces and even civil servants have forgotten the role of Indian armed forces. The following may be the main reasons:

- a) The fundamentalist reason that India has divided Pakistan to gain political, economic and other benefits.
- b) Many believe that Pakistan was highly powerful with a strong armed force which India couldn't tolerate.
- c) Up to 1971, Indian goods were not used by the then East Pakistanis.
- d) Many Rajakars and Albadris living in Bangladesh obviously do not like to see India

being remembered here. e) The last but not the least, the Muslim refugees from India do not like Indians.

But still Bangladesh is not ungrateful. There's already a road called "Indira Road" in Dhaka. There are existing relations through foreign offices, air links, visa systems and even import of goods. So it is not far away from the point when there will be monuments to commemorate the role of Indian army.

M Ali
Rajshahi

Tragedy of a high school

Sir, Raghunathpur High School was established in 1965 at Raghunathpur village under Fulbaria PS in Mymensingh. Within two decades, the institution's result of the SSC examination became gradually better by the tireless efforts of the teachers and the villagers.

Besides, the number of the students also increased day by day.

But during the last decade, the environment of the institution became corrupted by some local harmful elements. As a result, the number of students is being decreased and the result of the SSC examination is now very frustrating. It should be mentioned here that most of the teachers of this institution have been appointed by giving bribe which is known as 'donation'. So, some unfit-for-the-job teachers are working here.

As a result, students are suffering. At present the school is within the grip of some local cadres — who are notorious in many respects. The headmaster and the chairman of the managing committee are co-operating with the cadres. The fair environment of the school is in jeopardy. We hope, authority concerned would take proper steps to better the environment of the school.

A Citizen
Mymensingh