

## A Warm Welcome

Mr H D Deve Gowda, the Indian Prime Minister, arrives in Dhaka Today on a two-day state visit on an invitation from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Coming in the wake of what will for posterity constitute a landmark in Indo-Bangla relations — the water treaty — the visit hopefully would be an important step in the consummation of the process set in motion in Delhi by the signing of that treaty. That process for Bangladesh is one of opening up to the subcontinent and the region but for which this nation's forays into the world abroad always missed a sense of reality as also 'ith and moment' — to borrow it from Shakespeare.

Mr Deve Gowda is therefore not just any prime minister for us. He represents new thinking on the part of Indian leadership. And this new thinking has been a work well executed by him and his colleagues in the coalition as also by Mr Jyoti Basu. The numerous outstanding issues between our two nations, once seen as bedeviling our relations, may now usefully form the substances around which the oyster of growing Indo-Bangla friendship can shape lustrous pearls. What we have so far been oblivious of, very foolishly indeed, is that outstanding issues are not all of the problems and possibilities that would crop up as we trudge along the roads of our national fulfillment. Nothing short of a strong and enduring friendship based on independence, mutual respect and understanding of each other's needs can take care of those to the good of both our countries.

The Ganges problem has been solved to the satisfaction of both nations. But the problems of 53 other rivers remain and the two nations will hopefully solve those in the spirit of the December treaty. Chakma refugees' return home must be facilitated. There have been welcome developments in our hills to assure for them a return to property and security. Add to this the Indian appreciation that Bangladesh is not offering ground for insurgency to develop in Eastern India — and the Chakma problem should not take time to heal.

Much more time and persisting care would be warranted to bridge the yawning trade gap between our two nations. Bangladesh would need to push its production base, for which it needs access to Indian market in a big way.

Mr Deve Gowda and his government have infused a much awaited dynamism into the overall performance of their state and have brought us two nations to the threshold of a new vista, full with promises of a mutually fashioned prosperity of both minds and materials.

We take great pleasure to welcome the Prime Minister of a nation that was a sacrificing partner in our war of independence.

## A Matter of Attitude

Friday's rather timely Roundtable on the Jatiya Sangsad and its business' sponsored by a leading Bengali daily quite unexpectedly generated a few suggestions and assurances. The most reassuring feature of it being Telecommunication Minister Md Nasim's disclosure that his party would hold talks with the BNP for an immediate breakthrough in the present political impasse. We wish the talks will take place sooner than later and help restore normal parliamentary practice which is absolutely essential for democracy.

The path of democracy is never strewn with roses. Thorns are its readier associations as they are in the cases of all good enterprises. Parliamentary practice as a culture too has its share of problems in Bangladesh. But a marked change in the atmosphere can be effected rightaway if only our parliamentarians, specially the representatives of the ruling Awami League and the main opposition BNP snap out of their habit of considering each other as enemies. They must unlearn that political opposition does not necessarily mean vilification to the point of portraying the rivals as national enemies. We have seen in the past political parties taking interest in the Parliament as long it served their purpose. The moment the house gave signs of having run out of its resources to prove useful to them, a general apathy in everything related to the hub of pluralistic politics seemed to set in.

In an atmosphere replete with calls from all directions for practices that will contribute to the nourishment of an infant democracy, BNP's recent behaviour gives rise to a question over its leadership's faith in the parliamentary process itself. At least parliamentary practices went unhindered for the first two and a half years when the BNP was in the treasury bench. Now that the tables have been turned, clouds of uncertainty have gathered over the future of the parliament barely six months after its onset. This brings BNP's commitment to parliament, to democracy under serious doubt.

What we understand, behavioural pattern of our politicians has to change radically and rapidly if parliament and for that matter democracy has to live in Bangladesh. We would like to point out that the ruling party also needs to review its own performance and ask whether it could do more to bring BNP back to the parliament.

## Sad, Untimely Departure

It was coming. Inexorably. But when it came on the morning of June 4, nobody would believe it. For nobody could take this death of the prince of Bangladeshi fiction writers. Fifty-three the world over is but the prime of life. And why should he depart at a time more truly the prime of his life as a writer? The question would continue to disquiet us for long specially as we were never sure the fantastic powers of modern medicine were exhaustively employed for keeping him actively alive.

Aktheruzzaman Ilyas celebrated life in his writings couched as these were in the *avant garde* idioms of Bengali prose. If his literary strivings did not always allow us a peep into the jolly good playfulness life, as a friend and committed intellectual he was among the most congenial and soft of men and manners. He was facile enough socially as well as with the pen to become a phenomenon in popularity with dozens dying with his death. He spurned that path altogether from the very outset. In fact, he was the very opposite of a smart alec enjoying his influence on teenagers.

Where then did he find the strength to be so self-effacing? In his ideas and convictions. The society or precisely the literate of Bangladesh and West Bengal accepted his eminence but perhaps without caring much either for his art or his message. In death let him inspire us to go closer to him, for our own good.

Our heartfelt condolences for the bereaved family.

ISTANBUL (12 September 1996): As US Stealth bombers stand poised to strike at Baghdad, secret negotiations between Turkey and emissaries of President Saddam Hussein of Iraq have taken a decisive turn. At stake is Turkish proposal for a swathe of Iraqi territory in Northern Iraq from which Turkish forces are to operate against PKK Kurdish guerrillas.

The sweep of the forces of Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) of Massoud Barzani with the help of forces of Saddam Hussein from Northern Iraq has produced a totally new situation in this war-torn territory. The forces of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of Jalal Talabani assisted by Iranian forces have been driven out of Suleymanieh into Iran. Refugees estimated anywhere around 10,000 have entered Iran. After the fall of Erbil, the capital of Northern Iraq, into the hands of joint forces of Barzani and Iraq, the route in Suleymanieh has totally demoralised the forces of Talabani.

The fall of Erbil has meant the withdrawal of Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) from its forward position in Zakho in Northern Iraq inside Turkey. It

may be recalled that OPC was set up in 1991 following the defeat of Saddam Hussein. The OPC was to provide an umbrella to the Kurds of Northern Iraq from attack by Iraqi forces. This ostensible purpose was blown away with the fall of Erbil into the hands of forces of Barzani, who achieved his objective with the help of Iraqi forces. OPC which is composed of planes provided by the US, Britain, France and Turkey, has been the object of strong criticism within Turkey. OPC whose headquarters are the Incirlik base in Turkey, has been regularly renewed every six months. It was the object of strong criticism of the senior coalition partner Welfare Party (RP) and the RP leadership had to bend over backwards to renew the mandate.

Newspapers of December 12 report of secret army of 2000/Peshmergas set up and financed by the US, whose purpose was to establish a sovereign Kurdistan. With the

# Storm Signals in Iraq

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fall of Erbil into the hands of the forces of Barzani, these Peshmergas were stranded and faced the danger of extermination. Now the Peshmergas are supposed to be transferred to the US with the assistance of Turkey.

Meanwhile, Hamed Youssef Hammadi, advisor to President

carrying on a murderous campaign in southeastern Turkey. More than 20,000 have died in these operations where nearly a quarter-million Turkish troops are battling the PKK. How secure the border to be policed by forces of Barzani will be in the newly to be created autonomous zone of Northern

technical assistance and weapons. In exchange, Barzani is reported to have offered to deal with PKK in a manner that would eliminate Turkish concerns in this regard.

Writing in the large circulation Turkish daily *Hürriyet*, under the caption *Winners and Losers*, Ertugrul Ozkok stated losers are Talabani, Iran, the US. And the winners? At the top, Saddam. Even if he withdraws from Northern Iraq, he has succeeded in establishing his moral authority. Of course, Barzani. He has succeeded in establishing himself in Northern Iraq as the Kurdish leader.

There is an outsider, who has come out a winner. That is Turkey. For years Turkey has been advocating Northern Iraq as part of Iraq. Finally that has been established, pointing out that the world suffered from a Kurdish Phobia, he stated. With the departure of OPC this photo has also disappeared.

These dramatic developments have taken place in great

silence mostly behind closed doors. There is consensus that in Northern Iraq the fall-out of the war of 1991 between the US-led coalition and Iraq, have largely been swept away thanks to the victory of the forces of Barzani and Saddam Hussein against the forces of Talabani. The edifice built around OPC has crumbled. The years of power struggle between Barzani and Talabani has ended with a clear victory of Barzani with the help of Saddam Hussein.

Irqi media has been quick to point out for the benefit of her neighbours not to play the Kurdish card. Warning Turkey against the concept of a security zone, Saddam's eldest son Uday wrote in his newspaper *Babel*: Iraqis shall never accept measures for the vicious buffer zone under any circumstances and pretenses. The Turkish side has to reconsider its cards and calculations.

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## Family Scarred by War Struggles to Hide the Pain

The siege of Sarajevo, which once dominated the headlines, is now largely forgotten by the outside world. But those who lived through it can never forget. While they struggle to recreate a normal life, the tears are never far away, writes **Edith Simmons** from Sarajevo.

THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD Samra sits with her older sister Lejla and mother Namira, and speaks in a soft, clear voice. Every detail of the tragic incidents which changed her life remain crystal clear in her mind.

Surviving under siege in Sarajevo during the Bosnian civil war was particularly hard for children who had to stay indoors most of the time, often sheltering in cellars. Going out to play was dangerous. They could be hit by a grenade or a sniper's bullet.

About 1,600 children were killed and 10,000 wounded during the 40-month siege, the longest in Europe this century. When there was a lull in the fighting, children would go out to meet friends, play football, fetch water and wood, or simply take a breath of fresh air. But it was never safe.

On such a day, in July 1993, Lejla and Samra went to visit

their friend Ivana. In the garden was a tree laden with ripe cherries — a wonderful and unexpected treat for children who had been deprived of fruit since the siege began in April 1992.

But the children's games and laughter were cut short. Samra recalls: "We were playing, when suddenly we saw a shell land on Ivana's house. The detonation threw us over. I was covered in blood and then I lost consciousness."

Four other children were also wounded by the blast. "When I came to, I found out I had lost my left leg," says Samra, staring at her lap.

She underwent three operations and was in hospital for 35 days. At first, she walked with

crutches, but now she has been fitted with a prosthesis.

Her mother says: "I could feel her suffer, and it was very hard for me to look at my beautiful little girl having lost a leg. She could not walk by herself, she could not play with her friends and she could not wear her skirts and dresses. I felt so helpless."

Samra's electrician father, Ekrem, had spent time on the front line. "He was a wonderful father who loved his family, but he could not bear to see his child suffer," recalls Namira.

Ekrem never recovered from the trauma of seeing his amputee daughter. Soon after, he

succumbed to a serious heart condition. He needed surgery and was discharged from the army. The operation could not be performed under siege, and the family was put on the evacuation list.

They waited 11 months, and when they finally made it to the airport to be flown out, Ekrem collapsed and died. He was 40.

They returned home to bury him. Their lives were shattered. Back under siege, they often wondered how they could bear it all and carry on living. As the shelling continued, they slept together in their tiny hall, away from the windows, and rarely went out. They survived on humanitarian aid.

Today, Samra is back at school. She is a diligent child, and her best subjects are English and computer studies. Her favourite computer game is *SimCity*, and educational game which involves building a city.

"You have to plan everything," she says with a smile — "where the post office, the hospital, the school will stand. I love it."

Like her art-student sister, Samra tries hard to remain strong and cheerful in front of their grieving mother. But their pain and sorrow are vivid.

Samra is getting ready to go out with her friends. They have planned a trip to the cinema which has recently re-opened. Before leaving the flat, Samra re-adjusts her prosthesis which comes just above the knee, but which is not noticeable inside her jeans, socks and trainers. She explains that it hurts sometimes, especially when it is hot. The artificial leg needs to be changed about every six months, depending on how fast she grows.

When both daughters are out, Namira cries. She says: "Every day, when she takes her prosthesis off in the evening, and puts it back on in the morning, or when I help her in the bathroom, I think, 'Why her? Why not me?' But it's no use. She does not want us to get upset and she is making every effort to be like the others. She even has a nickname for her prosthesis — Kico."

Namira continues: "It hurts so much — me, her mother, who could not protect her. If I met the person who wounded Samra, I do not know what I would do... I cannot understand why anyone would want to shoot at children. Do you know why?"

It is hard to imagine how the family survives on Namira's monthly widow's pension of 30 Deutschemarks. Like everyone else in Sarajevo, they grow vegetables on every window sill. They also receive humanitarian aid — flour, rice, cheese and oil — and get some extra help from relatives growing food outside the city.

Although her neighbours stopped paying rent sometime ago, Namira insists on meeting her commitments regardless. "Our rent is DM14 a month and my husband and I have always paid it regularly," she explains. "If I cannot manage to do it, what does it make me? I shall have no dignity left."

**GEMINI NEWS**  
The writer is a freelance journalist and a consultant for the United Nations Children's Fund. She spent a year in the former Yugoslavia during the fighting in the early 1990s, travelling widely, including 12 missions to the besieged Sarajevo.

## Passing Away of a Veteran Civil Servant

by **M M Rezaul Karim**

**C** HOWDHURY A K M Aminul Haq, a former member of the caretaker government of President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, breathed his last on the first day of the New Year — 1997 — and coincidentally on the same day of his birth. An astute, honest and highly efficient government officer, Chowdhury left his relatives and friends in an utter state of bewilderment and shock by his sudden demise. He had been maintaining a fairly good health and it was thought that he would live many us. As providence would have it: the fate decided otherwise.

Chowdhury's intelligence, knowledge and straightforwardness in the application of laws, rules and regulations to his work was almost proverbially sound, just and praiseworthy. Yet, he was widely known for pursuing a low profile in the society. Having joined the Income Tax Service about 40 years ago, he was inducted into the Economic Pool and elevated himself eventually to the post of Chairman of the

Despite the mental agony they undergo, they also have to suffer immensely because the treatment facilities available in our country are not up to the mark. The patients usually go abroad for treatment and after coming back they face the same problems as the facilities for their proper follow-up are also

The patients who are on immunosuppressive drugs are in constant risk of contracting any kind of infection. So they must live a sheltered life under the proper care of a competent physician. But in most of the cases, these patients meet tragic ends because of lack of proper care.

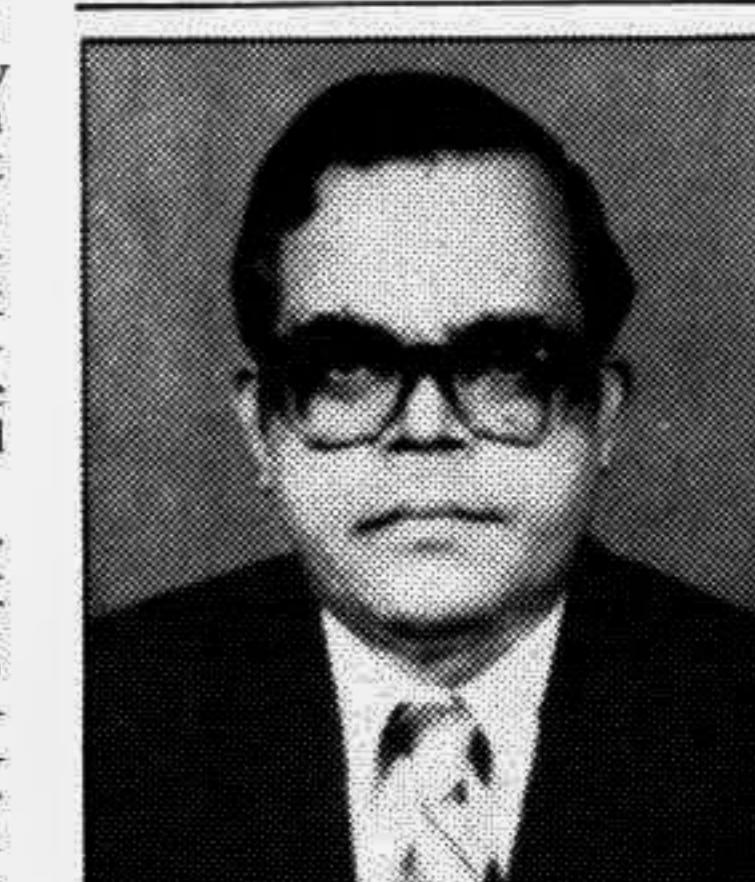
What we need for them is a hospital with all the modern facilities and some sincere and competent physicians who are capable of managing the immunocompromised patients. I only wonder why what is being possible in our neighbouring countries is not possible here in Bangladesh. We are not lacking in doctors and persons who are willing to donate for good purpose. What we only need is some sincere efforts by some dedicated persons.

We really feel proud that such a universally benevolent moral issue has emerged from our Bangladeshi culture. There is no doubt that today or tomorrow, the whole world population, for the sake of its peaceful and meaningful existence, will have to follow the guidelines of this universal moral development programme.

We wholeheartedly congratulate Prof. Dr. Abu Obaidul Huque, the founder president of the FMDA, for propagating such a noble idea of universal moral development approach in the greater welfare of mankind at all levels of all times.

We don't want to lose our near and dear ones for the lack of treatment. I do wish and pray that a centre for the kidney patients will be established soon where dialysis and safe kidney transplantation with proper follow-up facilities will be possible. I am sure that this is not only my dream but also the heartiest wish of many who have gone through such mental agonies. Nothing in this world is more valuable than the life of the person you love.

Raka  
Uttara, Dhaka



**Chowdhury A K M Aminul Haq**

leagues. We were in the University together in early '50s. Since then, to the best of our knowledge, none ever heard him shout at anyone in reprimand. His amiable manner earned him new friends and strengthened friendship with the existing ones.

Despite his flair, interest and expertise in financial and economic matters, he made outstanding contribution to the field of education, rather education in the private sector. He was a founding father of the North-South University. Perhaps, he received inspiration from his learned wife, Munira who has devoted her life to the promotion of education. May be that is why his younger daughter was married to an educationist, but the elder one, for a change, to a diplomat.

As the time flies in its own speed till eternity, death, which is an inevitable end to life, must come. The world becomes denuded of good people fast and the demise of Chowdhury speeds up the process faster. As all good men are destined for heaven, so is Chowdhury. Let the Almighty bestow His infinite blessings upon the departed soul. Amen.

## He Was a Good Man

by **Forrest Cookson**

**T**HIS is a note of affection and admiration for Chowdhury A K M Aminul Haque, a man with whom I had the honor to be associated closely these last few years.

I will not dwell much on CAH's distinguished career as a civil servant. The details will be covered in his formal obituary. He has, however, often discussed with me the events of the 1980s and the difficulties that the civil service faced in maintaining principle and orderly process during the many years of military rule in Bangladesh and previously in Pakistan. The "cold" war against expediency and directed irregular administrative transactions was fought by the senior civil service unheralded and little recognized to this day. Bangladesh owes much to men like CAH who fought this "cold" war, walking the tight rope between compromise and principle. These choices of morality and principle were ones that he constantly worried about and sought to understand how to choose for the good of the nation in the absence of democratic accountability. Those were hard and difficult years during which he strove very hard to uphold the tradition of good government. It is very difficult to rationalize what he saw as a self defeating system of taxation of financial institutions.

In a world increasing focus

on accumulation of private wealth as an end in itself, in superficial analysis and thought, CAH often expressed to me his concerns and distaste for the loss of values that was overtaking so many nations. Wealth, as an end in itself without social responsibility, would he feared, create a world where what he treasured — family, culture, knowledge, and friendship — were rejected and replaced by the worship of the god of material things.

His children were a source of high pride to him. Their accomplishments and happiness was always upper most in his mind. Like many of us who are older and looking back, he wondered about the world we are handing over to our children. He