

## Festering Wounds

We never thought the incident that day at the Dhaka University, of a group of students attacking the VC, could itself have an equal and opposite version. If we can believe responsible and eminent dailies of Dhaka, exactly that kind of a reverse thing occurred in the Islamic University at Kushtia on Sunday. It was allegedly the Vice-Chancellor who did the attacking with a thirtyish group of mercenaries and stormed into his long-locked up office-room. This he had not been able to do for consecutive 52 days because of ceaseless teacher and student protest. That was not a wise thing for the VC to do as, when receiving news of the VC's escape, hundreds of students rushed to the scene, chased the VC's hirelings out and even manhandled the VC. He was put into his car, already battered by angry students, forced to sign a blank paper saying he was resigning and asked to drive straight to Dhaka.

It is in truth not at all that the situation has to be clearly understood before fixing responsibilities in the 52-day standstill at the IU and its ugly outcome on Sunday. The fourth villain we can identify without much ado. The wound is a long-standing one — much more than 52 days old and the government has allowed it to happily fester to the present state. If Dr Inamul Haq, the VC had not preempted dire student action, the students by now would have been well on their way to a fast unto death *satyagraha*. The government has now expressed its desire to soon set up a probe into the allegations against the VC. Why now and not at least a month back? If the government felt shy to respond to a Students League-led anti-VC action, why didn't it take the opportunity when the university teachers association joined the action? IU's is the only case so far, perhaps where Chhatra Shibir has joined hands with a BCL movement. The government could respond to that and take the situation in hand. With a government duly functioning in the country and with the campus situation being what it has been for long, no university must go unmonitored even for a week.

We believe the education ministry knows all about what has been plaguing the universities. All of them. What's the bane of RU or CU? How is the Agri-varsity of Mymensingh ailing and where? Or the unsatisfactory goings-on in some of the private universities. The question is what the supreme control of this nation's education is doing in the matter. They are allowing things to degenerate. Why? Reason number one possibly is, they don't know well about the role they must play in this and they don't have either a total picture of what they want our higher education to be like.

This wouldn't simply do.

## Stop this Haemorrhage

Petrobangla has got a chink in its technical, monitoring and negotiating armour from a loss of some of its skilled top-brass to the lure of jobs offered by foreign oil and gas companies which are still in an exploratory mould here though.

Given that the foreign companies are yet to pitch their tents all over the potential blocks of hydrocarbons, the loss of technical hands threatens to snowball as an exodus and, apparently peevishly, within our own frontiers.

But is it really so very exceptional an occurrence? Not quite, if one surveys the neighbouring scenario: some prestigious government-run scientific and research organisations in India are running dry of their skilled manpower being mopped up frequently by foreign private companies with hugely enticing salaries or benefits the former had only dreamt of as life-time savings rather than a month's take-home pay. On the one hand, the vital segments of public sector are raising their levels of job incentives to compare favourably with the private corporate sector's offerings. On the other, the private sector employers in India seem close to making an upward revision in the existing salaries and perks structure for the sake of retaining experts in the face of the pooling onslaught of giant transnational conglomerates. Our dilemma is still not as testing and complicated as India's given our not-quite-so blooming privatisation with foreign capital; yet we hear the rumblings of a stormy exodus already.

This comes at the most inopportune time. Our gas and oil prospects have been attracting several potential investors to the country. Whereas we ought to have a thorough-bred institutional capacity commensurate with such a bright outlook, we are making a mess of whatever organisational base we have got. Petrobangla as the nodal agency for safeguarding the country's hydrocarbon interests has to bring to bear all the monitoring and negotiatory skills it can manage to develop on the offers made by foreign oil and gas companies in response to our invitations to them.

Let there be rethinking and restructuring in Petrobangla to make the organisation work with some of the highly proficient people it still has by retaining them with adequate remuneration.

## Whither Flayed Tempers?

The truckers were in an ugly mood at Satrasta intersection in Tejgaon day before yesterday engaging policemen in violent duels wherever they could along the stretch, on the Tongi Diversion Road in particular. It was warlike situation The Daily Star front-page photograph depicted on Monday with smokes billowing from tyres burnt and tear-gas shells lobbed by the riot police.

Why, what went wrong between the two sides? They must be credited with having learnt to live with each other by a tenuous, if often, greased arrangements of coexistence under stressful traffic-related circumstances. The incidents reportedly originated in some policemen's exacting demands for gratification. A counter-vailing version for the police was that they faced stiff resistance of truckers when asking them to show they were operating with valid documents.

Why should the truck drivers and workers feel like holy cows, above any earthly criticism, and beyond the normal reach of any regulatory swipe. If the policemen have been incurably oppressive with their insatiable appetite for tolls there must be ways to drum sense into their ears.

All in all, the rowdy street scenes must be addressed, here and now.

MID-AUGUST 1947, 50 years back was a historic occasion for the sub-continent. It was the end of the British Raj. Two independent countries were born. They became sovereign states. The end of colonialism from the world had begun. It was a momentous event. We were very much part of that milestone development. In mid-August 1947, we also thought to have become part of the independent sovereign state of Pakistan. With all hopes and aspirations, we were very much involved in the struggle and sufferings for achieving the independent nationhood. Little did we realize what was waiting for us.

If we go back to history, we will find that it was the Muslims of Bengal who fought the most for Pakistan. It may be recalled that non-Muslim League provincial legislatures were dominating in the Muslim majority provinces of Punjab, Sind and North West Frontier Province, while Baluchistan was too tribalised and backward to take any meaningful part in the struggle for Pakistan. It was us, the people of Bangladesh today, who had the lead role in the freedom struggle of 1940s.

However, never in the history of human struggle for freedom and independence were the dreams and aspirations shattered so quickly.

Within a year only, the struggle began for the most basic of all rights — the right to the use of our own mother tongue. There is no need to repeat what began in 1948 which 24 years later, on 16 December 1971, led to the emergence of our own true independence and sovereignty.

The fateful event of mid-August, 50 years ago therefore proved to be a fatal attraction — leading to death, destruction and agony with losses to count and no gains to cherish. We failed to realize at the time of the birth of Pakistan that what we were gaining in terms of the demise of British colonialism would be totally negated by a new form of domination and denial — a neo-colonialism of an extraordinary kind where the majority had no access to the real seat of power, authority and resources.

The incredibly poor East Pakistan generated export surplus in merchandise trade all throughout 1950s which was diverted to the western segment of the country. Through wrong and harmful policies, the raw jute trade was ruined. The jute mills were located in India while 90 per cent of raw jute was produced in East Bengal. Pakistani rulers never cared for the poor jute growers and they were denied access to the main market in India. As a result, India promoted jute cultivation and within a decade emerged as a major raw jute producer which was totally unnecessary if Pakistan had pursued correct trade policies. It was most unfortunate that jute farmers were sacrificed at the altar of Indo-Pak conflicts. It was a policy worst than the indigo policy of the British since number of growers involved were too few compared to millions of jute farmers of the 1950s.

We remained poor and backward. Our fate was worst than

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any other part of the sub-continent. This was due to what happened on the fateful mid-August of 1947. The liberation of Bangladesh after over two decades of sufferings was an event more significant today than the end of the British Raj. However, the fateful mid-August keeps on lurking behind. The enemies within can be far more dangerous. For us, mid-August seems to be fateful for more than one reason. It is the end of the month of Shraavan — the end of the major period of rainfall in the country and we know our fate if we should go hungry or not for the rest of the

bandhu and his family which tried to take away that same freedom and independence for the second time. In historical terms, it is a fact that every revolution is followed by a counter revolution. August 15, 1975 was the day of that counter-revolution. It never succeeded.

Revolution of 1971 was tarnished beyond redemption. Mid-August 1975 constituted the day of the great national tragedy and worst still is the fact that we were able to observe it in a befitting manner only after 21 years of the event. Now we must remain fully aware of the after effects of that great national tragedy.

The painful event of mid-August 1975 established the possibility of change of guards through assassination. The tragedy did occur again. It is extremely painful but true that the two leading political parties of the country have so gravely suffered from death through assassination. Both parties should therefore be united to remain ever watchful. There must never be third such national tragedy.

To get back to the fateful mid-August, we should take careful note of the timing of the two mid-August events. A coincidence? But truth is stranger

than fiction! The liberation of Bangladesh was soaked in blood, sweat and tears. The divorce had a smell of death. The event of mid-August 1947 was a veritable disaster for us. In the same month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing Memory and desire, stirring Dull roots with spring rain."

Vigilance is the best safeguard against conspiracy. The exceedingly high August humidity perhaps provides the ideal condition for promotion of fungus as well as evil designs against the nation — induced by fungus-ridden brains of the disoriented few. No doubt there are strong forces against Bangladesh. We are aware of the elements in our society who are not yet reconciled to the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. On the other hand, a hegemony over Bangladesh is becoming increasingly relevant. We are living on top of a huge energy cauldron. It is feasible to transport natural gas to rest of the world through pipelines planned for the future without involving expensive liquid gas plants. The location of Bangladesh as the gateway to Bay of Bengal has also assumed new importance. Our ports can provide critical access to not only the north-eastern parts of the sub-continent but beyond to Tibet, Yunnan province and

other south-central parts of China. The territories north of Bangladesh are vast and underpopulated. Their resource potentials are yet to be fully assessed.

The huge population of Bangladesh can eventually, and if politically feasible, move northward for employment and income. There can be a sea change on the "Roof of the World". For developed and capital rich countries this would mean opportunities for investment on a vastly expanded scale. For us this opens up an immense opportunity to move out of poverty and backwardness. There is no doubt about it. However, the mid-August syndrome must be carefully noted. Like the mid-August, 50 years back, we must not ever be misled. We have learned many useful lessons during the last 50 years of turmoil. We have been baptized in blood and tears and should know what is best for us.

East India Company, back in 18th century could have enabled India to emerge as a mercantilist-trading nation of the world. Manufacturing of goods and services could have flourished for markets in Europe. Instead of destroying the weaving industry of Bengal, mechanized weaving might have emerged provided a powerful nation state was well established in India, instead of the weak Moghul Empire, and East India Company remained a trading firm although expanding their volume of business. History took a different turn which was reversed only 200 years later although without any advantage to us.

The fateful mid-August has taught us many cruel lessons. Hope we remember them for the future.



## Window on Asia

Shahed Latif

year (Thank God! We had good rains during Shraavan this year). In mid-August, prices received by farmers for jute determine the fate of the annual cash income of millions of rural families of the country. The August moon remains so deceptive, shrouded by a veil of cloud. The weather is hot, humid and sultry.

Clearly, August could be a cruel month and fateful mid-August, the cruellest segment of that cruel month. Two fateful events which sealed our fate occurred in mid-August. Birth of Pakistan which never gave us our independence and freedom; and, the killing of Banga-

lution, a new breed of persons was born inspired with a fiery imagination in search of a dream. Russia's rich and varied experience during the post-revolution period provides a rare and fascinating insight into the complex nature of human behaviour.

Over the centuries, Russia has played a leading role in the world stage and made a remarkable contribution to the heritage of mankind enriching the world cultural repository. The pageantry and the kaleidosc-

Moreover, in direct response to socialism the rigours and extremes of the capitalistic system in its pristine form were moderated and mitigated to a considerable extent by incorporating into the system such concepts as social welfare system and social unrest and discontent from boiling over and content from boiling over and to ensure social justice and provide equal opportunity to all the citizens as far as practicable. Thus socialism's classic role has been to put a restraint on the unbridled propensity of an acquisitive and anti-grabbing society that feeds itself on the miseries of the poorer section and makes fortune at the cost of the toiling masses. Socialism has lent a humane face to the ugliness of the capitalist world obsessed with and driven by the motives of profiteering and windfalls. Russian Revolution has brought the world nearer to the long-cherished dream of building a society founded on fairness, equity and justice free from all forms of exploitation and oppression. It sought and succeeded, to a great extent, in delivering the struggling class from the bondage of subservience and ignominy.

We should draw appropriate lessons from the Russian history to gain a wealth of wisdom, erudition and maturity. Out of the throes of the Russian Revolution, a new breed of persons was born inspired with a fiery imagination in search of a dream. Russia's rich and varied experience during the post-revolution period provides a rare and fascinating insight into the complex nature of human behaviour.

# Bangladesh-Russia Relations and Lessons from History

by Amanullah Khan

**Although the transition to the new system has given rise to some destabilisation and disruptions in Russia causing a distressful experience for its citizens in a number of ways, it is undoubtedly an unavoidable and transitory phenomenon which the brave Russians are learning to live with.**

BANGLADESH and Russia share traditional bonds and historical ties which go back to the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 when Russia extended its unqualified and unstinted support to Bangladesh. It also assisted Bangladesh in its post-liberation rehabilitation and reconstruction and during the subsequent periods. Russia has proved to be a trusted friend of Bangladesh, always ready to stand by in the hour of need. Indeed forging strategic alliance and building enduring relations with Russia has been one of the main planks of Bangladesh's foreign policy. The closer the peoples of these two great nations are drawn together, through frequent cultural exchanges and extensive cooperative efforts, the greater the dividends such contacts will yield in terms of interchange of mutually beneficial information and ideas and learning from each other's experience in various fields like economic, social, political and cultural.

Few foreign missions in Bangladesh, perhaps, have been culturally more active and conscious than the Russian one. As a connoisseur of the arts and a patron of culture, the Russian embassy unveiled its cultural centre in Dhaka in early '70s which has turned into a cultural hub and a centre for entertainment and learning. A highly popular venue for holding cultural events in Dhaka, the place has become synonymous with the word 'culture' in Bangladesh. In fulfilment of its commitment to the promotion of cultural links, the Cultural Section of the Russian embassy organises and supports numerous cultural and educational programmes. These programmes are designed not only to portray an authentic and true view of the Russian art and culture in Bangladesh but also to build the cultural bridge between the two nations by highlighting the common elements in the heritages and ethos of each nation. Russia has employed cultural diplomacy to foster closer fraternal ties with Bangladesh in a way no other foreign missions have done here.

The dramatic changes that unfolded across Russia in recent years have had far-reaching

ing, persevering and talented people. It is a land of great opportunities and bright prospects. Those who take a narrow and rigid view of the Russian history hold that the Russia's experiment in the recent past with collectivism and socialism has been in vain, a totally wasteful effort and a meaningless piece of episode signifying nothing. However, before we sit in judgment, we should set the Russian scene against the background of a long-term historical perspective. A closer look at the forces that unleashed the Russian revolution would reveal that the revolution had a definite purpose and a predestined design in human history and that the world civilisation owes a great deal to what had happened in Russia.

With a bold, unique and full blown experiment set in motion and the empirical evidence gathered from it, Russia became a great human laboratory shaping the present with powerful portents for the future of mankind. Socialism in action revolutionised human thinking and profoundly influenced the course of recorded history. It set the seal for a crucial stage in human development and represented a giant step along the long and bumpy road to the evolutionary process.

Before the October 1917 Revolution in Russia the working class in general was subjugated and suppressed by owners of capital. The interests of workers were utterly neglected with their condition deteriorating to a point where life became almost an unbearable burden for a vast majority. As a factor of production and an adjunct to the productive unit, labour was grossly undervalued and relegated in importance to other considerations weighing with the capitalist owners who mostly exploited them to satisfy their greed for wealth. The Russian Revolution which grew out of a historical necessity not only brought about a radical improvement in the living

conditions of the workers leading to their empowerment, they also became through the state the real owners of mills, factories and business establishments. The exploitation of workers and the gross injustice done to them by their capitalist masters were abolished under the socialist system. This had a tremendous impact on societies not practising socialism as a state policy as the trade union movement took root, gained in strength and became widespread changing the lot of the workers for the better and guaranteeing them a dignified, decent and comfortable life hitherto unknown and unimaginable.

Moreover, in direct response to socialism the rigours and extremes of the capitalistic system in its pristine form were moderated and mitigated to a considerable extent by incorporating into the system such concepts as social welfare system and social unrest and discontent from boiling over and content from boiling over and to ensure social justice and provide equal opportunity to all the citizens as far as practicable. Thus socialism's classic role has been to put a restraint on the unbridled propensity of an acquisitive and anti-grabbing society that feeds itself on the miseries of the poorer section and makes fortune at the cost of the toiling masses. Socialism has lent a humane face to the ugliness of the capitalist world obsessed with and driven by the motives of profiteering and windfalls. Russian Revolution has brought the world nearer to the long-cherished dream of building a society founded on fairness, equity and justice free from all forms of exploitation and oppression. It sought and succeeded, to a great extent, in delivering the struggling class from the bondage of subservience and ignominy.

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Which was signed in December 1996 long after 24 years at the cost of untold sufferings of millions of people of Bangladesh.

Where does Bangladesh stand today? Why don't we go to UN without further delay for the peaceful solution of our life and death 'the Ganges water' — problem?

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## Source of terrorism

Sir, We the common people are observing that our home minister has accomplished some works apprehending several infamous terrorists like Sweden Aslam and Bikash. Mr Home Minister, you know very well that such type of apprehension will never root out terrorism from our moth-eaten society. It is easy to arrest a terrorist but not his godfather. Because these godfathers are apparently out of your reach.

After having arrested Aslam and Bikash they have divulged such godfathers who are potential political leaders, elite and businessmen by profession. So, instead of concentrating on unnecessary arrest you have to invade the source of terrorism (nourishing fathers) which is

## Garbage problem in Khulna city

Sir, It is a matter to worry that heaped up garbage, scattered on roads and streets in Khulna city, is making the environment polluted, unhygienic and unpleasant day by day. There are not enough dustbins, garbage-removing equipments and vehicles, and necessary personnel in Khulna City Corporation. The activities of garbage removal are run in the day time instead of night. Hundreds of passers-by in the broad day light have to come at a contact distance with the vehicles, carrying garbage almost everywhere.

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## To the Editor...

### City roads

Sir, Your editorial on damaged roads of Dhaka city has drawn my attention. It is experimentally proved that road can get longer life if design specification is really followed. Maintenance is of two types: periodic and preventive. Preventive maintenance can save money and increase effectiveness of roads. Sincerely check list of road condition if not routinely prepared then unscheduled and untimely works cannot be avoided.

Repairing of city or town roads at early interval is perennial problem. After one lengthy shower, a repaired road loses its effectiveness and we have to suffer. Time of repair and unspecified works seem to be main two culprits that give pains and help plunder taxpayers' money.

Properly constructed asphalt surface treatments (repairing mainly done in our country) have lasting and water proofing effect of the base. Type of surface treatment range from single, light applications of fluid asphalt to multiple surface courses made up of alternate applications of asphalt and aggregates. They all seal and add life to road surfaces but each type has one or more special purposes. Drainage problem also will add to the effectiveness of road repair. Quality control lies here and it is engineering science if we cannot be

accountable, then all efforts will be in vain.

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### Water dispute

Sir, The recently-held 1st meeting of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission in seven years and the 32nd meeting since the forum for consultation on water-related matters was set up between the two countries in 1972, has politically and technically proved and confirmed that the historic 30-year Ganges Water treaty between Bangladesh and India signed in New Delhi in December 1996 has taken a 'U' turn. India has failed to implement the provisions of the so-called historic treaty which is practically good for nothing. Bangladesh's rightful share of the Ganges water fully depends on the whims of the New Delhi leaders and everything is yet to be decided by the Joint Rivers Commission in the future.

We wonder why the Indian Water Resources Minister and Bangladesh Water Resources Minister have failed to prove their wisdom, efficiency and sincerity to do away with the bottlenecks in the implementation of the Ganges Water treaty

## OPINION

## Development of Human Resources in Bangladesh

KB Ahmed

The only skilled manpower in Bangladesh are the farmers who are trained by TRADITION and EXPERIENCE. They have been the backbone of the economy and any difficulty they face affects the GDP/GNP; and as yet no attempt has been made to facilitate these very important work forces with access to capital, technology, marketing know-how or training to grow any management expertise. A very large scope is available to introduce a programme for the development of human resources in the farming community alongside the thrust given to the Rural Development Programmes. The Rural Development Programmes mainly designed to introduce alternative and complementary sources of income to the main farming activity. As such, no proper consideration has been successfully given to the development of the main skills of farming.

The industrial work forces are not given any formal or skill training. They begin with on-the-job-taunting and progress sometimes by dint of their latent talent, but mostly by patronage.

As such during large-scale redundancies and/or failures in any sector leave the work forces in the lurch. There is no facility

for re-training of skill or job switching. The culture of management by patronage in employing always results in the employment of kins without skill than engaging a skilled worker.

Entrepreneurs have no skill either. Management as a concept and as a science has not been accepted beyond the realm of formal education. As such academic qualification has not yet offered any reward. However, a large pool of human hands are available unutilized in the country. Many are trying to migrate or get employment elsewhere where they can learn some skill or get an opportunity to enhance their skills. This has become the secure source for personal betterment and coincidentally boost the national coffers.

There is a great opportunity to develop human resources in Bangladesh. Primarily by arranging to give vocational skills to export manpower to overseas. Secondly offer skill-training for industrial workforces and lastly by offering management training to the young entrepreneurs and mid-level management personnel with both public and private employers.

## English Medium Schools

A Guardian

The English medium schools seem to be highly popular in our developing society in a global environment where English has become practically the single global language for international communication. Such schools are mushrooming faster than mosquitoes, devoid of regulation and control, as pointed out by Ms Yasmeen Murrshid in her well drafted commentary (DS, Aug. 1).

She had a considerable experience in the field, and her observations should spur the government to set into motion proper survey, monitoring, and Code mechanisms to get a grip on the sad state of affairs in this burgeoning private sector. Besides the quality of teaching, the exploitative factor has crept in. One could get one's money's worth, regardless of the free market competition.

English medium education today is a reality and it has to be absorbed into the mainstream of formal education (today it is practically without *maabap*), to stand the test of time for at least the next 10 years (the prospective investors need to study the rules of the game). Ms Murrshid has made a number of valuable and practical suggestions to generate

enough interest in the public sector to legitimise this type of education in the country. The Education Department might be inadequate to monitor and regulate this sector without an English wing for day-to-day liaison.

As the guardian of a son educated first abroad in the primary stage in the English medium, and then in Dhaka (the secondary stage), it is felt that the students need to be motivated sufficiently through the integrated syllabi to maintain the national identity and develop attachment to their motherland (cultural roots), even after the subsequent phase of tertiary higher education abroad (for those who can afford it). In the global village of today, it is a greater challenge to the local teachers to deal with the changing cultural mores. The stance cultivated and developed in such local schools are subconsciously carried forward into the local private universities (which few can afford).

This is the right time to tackle the English-medium education in the country, along with the proposed national educational reforms, now in the drafting stage.