

## Garments Death, Again

Someone must take the responsibility of this. It's regular murder and someone must be perpetrating it. If this murder continues serially and no one is found to be committing the crime, it is the government that must answer for these. Garments deaths so far have been due purely to criminal negligence on the part of the owners of the factories. The responsibility for worker Rina's death on Monday at Jahanara garments must also fall on its owners. Patently because it was the inadequacy or lack of maintenance of the electrical installations of the plant that caused the fire. And also because they had not made any improvements in their factory in reply to requirements prescribed by BGMEA and government to avert such tragedies.

It is no use lecturing the government or the BGMEA or the factory owners on the ways for preventing such accidents. By now all of them have the knowledge of the needful. The question is now one of criminal negligence, first, directly by the factory owners and then by the government through its failure to regularly inspect the factories and monitor their progress towards safety — and how this negligence can be totally eliminated.

The building which houses Jahanara garments also has other factories in its seven storeys. Only two months back fire in another of these caused death to 27 workers. And even after that these factories have done nothing to lessen the risk of another tragedy. They must all be punished. The earlier fire and death have naturally made the workers of all these factories to react with extra panic.

As it has been observed at the beginning of this leader, this is murder by neglect, plain and simple. Garments owners have to do something immediately to stop this seemingly ceaseless tale of wanton 'killing' due to sheer indifference. If they do not make a move on their own to stop the recurrence of these irreparable losses of human lives, the government must make sure that they did. Otherwise, people would hold it responsible for being insensitive to citizens' lives.

## PM and the Teachers

The Prime Minister has asked the teachers not to protect the terrorists. How ironic! We want to state it loud and clear that teachers do not protect terrorists. It is the politicians who harbour the criminals for their petty ends. Today teachers are unable to discharge their duties because of terrorism. They like others are harried by the terrorists. By asking them Monday last not to protect these forces of darkness, the PM has actually sprinkled salt in an old and festering wound.

Nobody knows it better than the Prime Minister herself that the key to the problem of terrorism lies with the political parties. Things have gone so bad that traditional tools like law enforcing agency is not of use any longer. Whether the politicians would take the trouble of bottling the *jinn* of their own creation is an altogether different issue but to ask the teachers to keep the pervasive spirit of terrorism at bay is tantamount to putting the cart before the horse.

The Prime Minister did a world of good to her profile as a crusader against terrorism when some months back she made that now ironically reverberative call to the law enforcing agency that it should not hesitate to nab the terrorist even if he belonged to her party. We chimed in with the conscience of the nation in fulsome praise of the call. But to every one's dismay, it was not followed by any dramatic change in the reality. True, some terrorists were nabbed here and there. But by and large her timely and generous utterance has remained a fond memory. Only the other day, newspapers were replete with reports of armed clashes between rival factions of the pro-government Bangladesh Chhatra League at Dhaka University. Tension since then has gripped the campus afresh.

We had urged the BNP when it was in power to sever all links with terrorists and delink itself from its student front but the party did not pay heed. The situation has been worse for that. We are going by the beaten track once again by reminding the premier that if she is sincere about fighting terrorism effectively she has to begin from her own party. Like charity, it has to begin at home. Once she purges her party of the criminals and terrorists and delinks AL from its armed student front she will have automatically asserted the moral right to ask others to follow suit.

## Our Sympathies

Sunday's tornado at the Tongi *Ijtema* ground, which by its very localised nature was outside the pale of Met office predictability, caused an unprecedented havoc with tin-shed make-shift structures and the devotees' lives. Flying saucers of corrugated iron-sheets, whizzing missiles of variegated articles and bamboo lengths in the vast open expanse by the Turag river created such catastrophic circumstances of an appalling human dimension that our hearts go spontaneously out in sympathy for them. The tragedy is all the greater because in a day's time all the devotees will have left after the last *munajat* (final supplication), they having by the time the storm lashed away already spent the stipulated 10 days on the *Ijtema* ground.

While partaking of the universal condolences at the premature and extremely saddening death of 17 devotees and expressing our sympathy to their bereaved families and those who sustained injuries, we would urge all concerned to urgently set about repairing the damages, both mental and material, wrought by a disaster of the frightfully recalled Demra and Manikganj proportions.

*Biswa Ijtema* is the second largest congregation of Muslims after the Hajj. Dhaka has had the singular distinction of hosting it year after year giving the devotees of the country a feel and glimpse of the great event at first-hand. Sunday's congregation was preparatory to that. The organisers will only have to take safeguards against any recurrence of such a disaster when the *Biswa Ijtema* is held.

**T**HANKS to World Bank President James Wolfensohn's current visit to Bangladesh — the economy appears to have regained the centre-stage of national discourse. As if aimed at drumming up of his visit, two authoritative evaluations on Bangladesh economy — one from the World Bank's Dhaka Mission and the other from a panel of local economists — surfaced immediately before Mr Wolfensohn landed in Dhaka. Unfortunately, the government's economic performance as well as future plans received less than satisfactory marks from both of them.

### World Bank Economic Update

The Dhaka Mission of the World Bank — in its report titled Annual Economic Update 1997 — categorically described the current economic condition in the country as "not conducive to support private sector-led high growth." It is highly critical of poor economic, administrative and legal reforms, dwindling foreign exchange reserves, infrastructural bottlenecks, deficiencies in public sector institutions, increased government borrowing from the banking system and slow pace in privatisation of state-owned enterprises.

The Economic Update, that usually forms a basis for ascertaining the need for the country's foreign assistance at the donor's consortium — usually held in Paris, but this year scheduled to take place in Dhaka early next month — cautioned the government that the country's macroeconomic fundamentals remain fragile. According to the Update, the country's critically low forex reserve might face further pressure with expected recovery in the industrial sector and the high-level of non-performing assets and undercapitalisation of the banking system seriously threatens macroeconomic sta-

## Both the Donor and the Recipient Need Far-reaching Reforms

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bility. It also criticised the ADP for containing many low-priority and low-quality public spending programmes, and poor industrial growth as an area of major concern for the country.

### Panel of Economists

The Panel of Economists — appointed by the government to review the Draft Fifth Five Year Plan under the leadership of eminent economist Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud — appears to have come up with some nonsense criticism of hurriedly prepared, inadequately thought-out, statistically disjointed and overly ambitious Plan. According to the Panel, the Plan failed to reflect the radical changes that took place in development planning in the context of market-oriented liberalised policy environment. The Plan gives the impression of "telling what the government should do rather than what the government actually proposes to do," and it hardly expresses the government's determination to implement a set of time bound well-reasoned programmes of action, the experts commented.

The Panel is highly critical of the Plan's overly ambitious character. The Plan envisages an average annual GDP growth of 7.3 per cent, which sharply contrasts with the trend growth rate of about 4 per cent annually achieved over the last 15 years. The Plan projected a sudden jump in the investment rate

— it intends to increase investment by as much as 22 per cent during the Plan period, whereas the historical trend rate of growth of investment in the economy was 13.5 per cent between 1980 and 1995.

The Panel also raised questions about resource mobilisation — domestic savings, aid inflow and revenue generation — for financing the projected investment and maintaining macroeconomic stability. The projection of the current account deficit in the balance of payments, the Panel main-

provide the visiting World Bank chief with some concrete ideas about the present economic conditions and the future economic outlook of the country. He will have ample opportunities to "take the pulse of development firsthand" when he meets with government leaders and officials, business representatives, media people, academia, NGOs, donors and opposition leader of the country. His success in the "Challenge of Inclusion," as he prefers to call it, would however depend on a number of other

these projects, the people at large still remains in dark about the ways the money was spent and the objectives accomplished. Is it too much to ask the visiting chief of the World Bank to publish a comprehensive list of the projects and funds that it handled for Bangladesh for the last 25 years — so that those could be brought right out into the sun-shine of public scrutiny?

Second, one of the cherished goals of Mr Wolfensohn's term in office is that he wants to transform the World Bank into a "Knowledge Bank". Besides committing funds, he wants the Bank to provide developing countries with knowledge and lessons learned about the developmental challenges and how to address them. He, therefore, is sharply critical of old-style technical assistance that relied too heavily on foreign consultants. He rather emphasises that the developing countries themselves build their own capacity to design and implement their own development. He wants them to exercise their own choice and set their own objectives for development.

**Wolfensohn's Challenge of Inclusion**

While these reports will

taints, is grossly inconsistent with the assumptions made in the Plan regarding the net inflow of foreign capital. According to the Panel, the Plan projects inexplicable large jump in the growth of government's revenue generation and the government may not be willing to implement the required revenue-generating measures for implementing projected development programmes.

While these reports will

factors as well.

The World Bank — that now serves about 4.7 billion people in over 100 countries — has been the largest multinational donor agency that provided Bangladesh with aid and interest-free loans worth billions of dollars over the decades. Moreover, it presides over the annual consortium meeting of the Aid Group to Bangladesh that finances hundreds of development projects. Although it is likely that the World Bank would have its own appraisal of the actual progress made by

asked the Bank Group to curtail its level of support to a country that shows unwillingness to take appropriate action against corruption. "We must fight it wherever we find it," he told his audience in Hong Kong last month. Mr Wolfensohn, you would find a plenty of it in this aid-dependent country, please let us know how you are going to fight against it. Every knowledgeable person of this society knows how powerfully corruption — a systemic phenomenon in the country — undermines development objectives in every sphere of the nation.

The visiting World Bank chief has also initiated another far-reaching reform of the World Bank itself. In order to bring the Bank closer to its clients, to focus on quality and to be more accountable for the result of its work, he launched what he calls the "Strategic Compact" aimed at decentralising the Bank. Already 18 out of its 48 Country Directors, perhaps including Bangladesh, have been delegated decision-making authority in country offices. Of course, it's a giant step towards enhancing effectiveness and commitment of the World Bank to its clients.

But another aspect also deserves attention of the World Bank chief. The Bank — in its headquarters as well as country offices — still follows a highly non-competitive and exceptionally selective recruitment policy. How can the Bank that misses no chance to point out irregularities and lack of transparency in the conduct of business of client countries, hire its own staff and other human resources in a non-transparent manner? Perhaps, attention to these matters will help Mr Wolfensohn in realising his goal to renew World Bank's values and commitment to development and improve the Bank's overall effectiveness and image throughout the world.

### CROSSCURRENTS

by CAF Dowlah



## BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

### Verbatim Text of Cross Examination of Twenty-first and Twenty-second prosecution Witnesses

**Continued from Friday**

Following are the excerpts from cross examination of PW-21 in Bangabandhu murder case Lance Naik (retd) Abdul Khaleq by advocate Khan Saifur Rahman, defence lawyer for accused Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farroquar Rahman:

Q: Are the areas of civilian and military separate?  
A: Yes.  
Q: Are the scheduled programme and emergency duty separate?  
A: Yes.  
Q: You took retirement in 1988. Did you discharge your duty under any martial-law?  
A: I can't recall.  
G: Didn't you ever see martial-law during your service life?  
A: I can't recall whether I served under martial-law. However, I discharged election duties.

Q: Didn't you discharge duty in civil area, excepting the election job?  
A: No, I didn't work.

Q: What had you been told when you were assigned an emergency duty in civil area on August 15?  
A: We were not told about any specific duty. We were only told about an emergency duty.

Court: What had you been asked?  
A: We were asked not to allow any one on road.

Q: On which road?  
A: I didn't know the road. We were told Dhammandi road number 32.

Q: Did you go to any house there on that morning?  
A: We went to one house and came to know it was of Bangabandhu.

Q: Were you equipped with loaded arms?  
A: Yes.  
Q: Was it the first duty for you in a civil area.  
A: Yes.

Q: Was your duty place changed? If changed when?  
A: Our duty place was not changed. However, we went to Bangabandhu's house for once.

Q: Did you fire any one on road on that morning?  
A: We didn't see the entire

ground floor.

Q: You, along with your accomplices, went to Bangabandhu's house for looting.

A: This is not true. We didn't commit any looting.

Q: You left the place as you went for looting.  
A: Not true.

Q: You didn't deposit your ammunition. You spent all of your ammunition.

A: Not true.

Q: Or, you didn't come out from cantonment on that night.  
A: Your statement is not correct.

Q: You came to duty after proclamation of martial-law in the morning.

A: I don't know if there was any martial-law.

Q: Did you yourself inform the CID that you might be a witness in Bangabandhu murder case?

A: No.

Examination of Lance Naik Abdul Khaleq, by advocate Abdur Razzak Khan, defence counsel for accused Lt Col (retd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan:

Q: What was your post in 1975?  
A: I was a soldier.

Q: Where was the 2 Field Artillery situated?  
A: Beside Kachukhet in Cantonment.

Q: Where was the Headquarters of the 46 Brigade?  
A: I don't know the exact position. However, I heard that it was on the south of our unit.

Q: Did you discharge duty earlier in the town with ammunition?  
A: No.

Q: Did you or any other army personnel ask why you had to do duty with ammunition?  
A: No.

Q: Did you also not served lunch?  
A: No.

Q: Nobody barred you while entering Bangabandhu's house?  
A: No, none barred us.

Q: Did you go to the upstairs after watching the ground floor?  
A: We didn't see the entire

A: No, we started altogether and were separated later.

Q: How far was Bangabandhu's house where you discharged duty?  
A: After three to four houses.

Q: Was there any Artillery barracks where you discharged duty?  
A: I didn't notice. I also don't know if there was any barracks or not.

Q: Who discharged duties east of you?  
A: I don't know. But they were army personnel.

Q: Do you know how did the body of Col Jamil arrive at Bangabandhu's house? By helicopter?  
A: No, I can't say.

Q: All army personnel have rank badge.

A: The soldiers have no rank badge, but the rest have.

Q: Is the rank badge of Subedar Major and Major different?  
A: The "Shapla" is the same. But a Subedar Major also wears a red ribbon.

Q: Is there any prohibition for army personnel to salute police officers?  
A: I don't know. However, we salute police officer to show respect.

Q: Did you see any police officer at the house of incident?  
A: I didn't notice.

Q: How many times you gave salute on that day?  
A: I gave salute to an officer when I was introduced with him by others.

Q: Had you to make any statement to army for the incident?  
A: No, I had not.

Q: Was the CID investigation officer the first person who recorded your statement on 23/11/96?  
A: The CID was the first. Perhaps, it was 23/11/96.

Q: You are an accused. You have no right to be a witness.  
A: This is not true.

Q: It's not true that you heard the names of Shahriar Rashid and others.  
A: Your statement is not

true.

Q: You don't know Shahriar Rashid sahib. You also didn't hear his name.  
A: I don't know him. But I heard his name.

Advocate Sharifuddin Mukul, defence lawyer for accused former state minister Taheruddin Thakur, declined to cross examine the witness.

**Twenty-second Prosecution Witness**

Following are the excerpts of Havilder (retd) Abdul Aziz PW-22 by state defence counsel for absconding accused Col (retd) Khandaq Abdur Rashid:

Q: When you were informed that you will have to give a statement to the CO to inspect the night parade?  
A: In 1996. I don't remember the date.

Q: At what time you went to Bangabandhu's residence?  
A: At about 7 to 7:15 am.

Q: You can't break your duty without permission?  
A: Guard Commander knew it.

Q: Major Noor was not at Bangabandhu's residence at 7 am.  
A: He was there.

Following are the excerpts of Havilder (retd) Abdul Aziz by Khan Saifur Rahman, defence counsel for Lt Col (dis) Syed Farroquar Rahman:

Q: You used to stay in barracks at the cantonment.<br