

The Unclaimed Responsibility

For once he could have tried a new tack. But he did not. To be precise he could not. Some people, a misgone minority has indulged in such an irreversibly passionate game of self destruction that even if he wants to, he just cannot step out of the familiar track of uttering simple but unheeded words of wisdom and correction.

We are thankful to him because however repetitive he may sound but it is the voice of the nation's conscience that this fine champion of good sense and harmony harps all the time on with indefatigable energy.

The pity of it is every time Mr. Ahmed takes a course down the trodden line of correction we are ruefully reminded how little the response has so far been from those for whom the bells are tolled with such monotonous regularity.

It is indeed layman's knowledge today that students are getting increasingly involved in activities that do not behave them, thanks to a section of politicians who prefer self-aggrandisement to the interest of the country. The president could not have been more to the point when he observed that students today work for crime dons unhesitatingly.

Happily this is a minority syndrome in our politics. Unchecked, this can however overwhelm us as Mr. Ahmed while urging the scouts to use their idealism and training as a defence, pointed out that dark possibility.

But the unfailing pointedness with which Mr. Ahmed repeatedly highlights the problem whenever an occasion presents itself can miff the small but powerful clique responsible for corrupting the youths. We urge the political parties to own their responsibilities in the over all deterioration of the profile of our students. While hoping that the sense of discomfort of the misguided and criticised minority will never grow so powerful to hold sway over our conscience we exhort them not to make a waste of the President's penchant for truth and wisdom.

Dengue at the Door?

The aedes species among mosquitoes responsible for spreading encephalitis, yellow fever and dengue fever in humans, according to a recent report published in a leading vernacular daily has been sighted in parts of Dhaka. This brings city dwellers in the line of a possible health hazard.

Aedes is a rare variety among the urban distribution of mosquitoes. It looks like more or less like the culex, the type that carries the germ of filaria; it holds its body parallel with the surface with the proboscis bent down. The wings are uniformly coloured. But it is different from the culex in its silver thorax with marks and the spiracular bristle in the posterior. It is little unmanageable from the point of view of the city authorities like the corporation or the municipality because apart from floodwater, rain pools, marshes, aedes has a great fondness for household nooks and corners for spawning.

There is no reason to panic but there is no way it can be trifled with. Dhaka was once in the grip of dengue — in 1964. Not long ago, dengue spread in epidemic form in Delhi where around seven hundred people died of it.

Shake-hand Diplomacy

Whatever may be the high and low in their bilateral atmospherics or domestic political temperaments, whenever Indian Prime Minister IK Gujral and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif meet they invariably display warmth and cordiality between them. So long as they click inter-personally and keep meeting whenever an opportunity presents itself, hopes can be nurtured that something good will emerge from such persistent diplomacy at their high level.

Although their Edinburgh contact, second in a month since their New York one, on the sidelines of the UNGA session, has not marked any step forward in coming to grips with the substantive bilateral issues, we share the view that 'every meeting they hold is important'; for it gets them that much closer to a better understanding of each other's perspectives. Even the generalisations they are keeping to may have an important bearing on their future relationship. At Edinburgh they have agreed to keep the momentum going in their efforts to bring about a definitive improvement in their relations.

Between India and Pakistan technicalities often assume the importance of substantive issues. The Edinburgh meet failed to break any new ground because both sides could not decide whether Kashmir problem would go to a separate working committee as Pakistan wants or be dealt with as part of the general agenda which India favours. The whole world is waiting for India and Pakistan to constitute the eight working committees they stand committed to be forming soon, so that real work can begin to devise a mechanism for durable peace.

INDIAN POLITICAL SCENE

Janata Dal Experiment of Coalition Government

With the breakdown of the dominant party system, India, now obviously entered a transition period of fluid, fragmented political formation and unstable governments. The current government of NFILF is only a phase in that process... More than one development since the Lok Shava elections illustrate the fragility of the alliance. A mortal blow has now been afflicted to the Front with yet another split in Janata Dal...

body politics, particularly the linguistic re-organisation of the states in 1956 and later the redrawing of some states borders bringing territorial boundaries into close alignment with their socio-cultural coordinates thus sharpening political awareness of the educated regional elite. While the country's minority, hitherto considered merely vote bank, started realising their political clout. The unprecedented rise of the 'dalits', the backward castes and other deprived also significantly contributed towards the change. If the changes were somewhat hazy in the late-60s its contours were clearly identifiable after another 20 years.

ment of the Nehruvian consensus on both secularism and socialism led to the end of one-party dominance and fragmentation of the party system resulting in a period of uncertainty and minority government. All these changes are reflected in the results of 1989, 1991 and 1996 Lokshava and state assembly elections.

1992-93, the party further split with Mulayam Singh walking out to form his Samajwadi Party. Soon the trend spilled out to other states when in 1994 both in Bihar and Orissa, JD's splinter groups brought Samata Party into being.

The National Front that rules India today together with Left Front was not in existence even a year before 1996 election. The Front went into oblivion after the collapse of its government in 1990. Encouraged by Congress reverses in state assembly elections only in September 1995 the JD with the support of Telegu Desam Party and Left Front in West Bengal took initiative to revive the Front. It aimed at creating a 'third force' representing the non-Congress secular forces by including various regional groupings such as AIADMK, AGP, JMM, SP, BSP and others. It was, however, an impossibility to formulate a common minimum programme for so divergent groupings with their own political programmes and ideology. JD's ideological paper titled 'Towards New Politics', was rejected for differing views of the potential constituents on issues like private investment, the role of private sector and MNCs. Another document 'Towards New Politics - Agenda for a Third Force' which was prepared by a group of intellectuals also could not satisfy all partners of the proposed front. Finally the JD, SP and left parties decided merely to adopt a joint declaration on a common secular democratic alternative



PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

brief ideological experimentation. In spite of its phenomenal success within a short period of time, it however failed to emerge as an alternative to Congress. Now came in the scene the Janata Dal another constituent of Janata party and reorganised itself under the leadership of VP Singh in October '88 to occupy the vacated space of dwindling Congress party. The party's root lay in the BLD, a backward caste/rich peasant party in the North. The '80s witnessed a massive mobilisation of BC (backward caste) and OBC (other backward castes) all over northern India which constituted the Janata Dal and its victory in 1989 state

1990 both at the Centre and in the states leaving the party with an ineffectual leadership and independent regional units. Even with divergent views on major issues the factions of the party however retained the common slogan of social justice, implementation of Mandal report for backward castes and an opposition to BJP's Hindutva ideology. But the Janata slogans remained inconsequential because of innerparty squabbles leading to several more splits. After Chandra Sekhar's defection from the party in 1990 the Janata Dal again split at the end of 1991 mainly in Uttar Pradesh when Ajit Singh was expelled from the party. In

Terrorism : How Long Should the Society Suffer?

by Md Asadullah Khan

The present state of things that has rocked the society is anarchy. And anarchy, as all people know, is an excess of freedom, and absence of rules, ethics, morality. Those indulging and creating such state of affairs are psychic cases need to be sent to asylums, or they will one day turn the whole society into an 'asylum'.

only wonder how Shafiq could remain at large. In another incident reported by the media on October 14 last, Musa Howladar, a grocery shop owner in Maddhya Badda was killed allegedly by some 'mascans' of the locality in the early hours of September 11, just on some flimsy grounds. Reports indicated that the mascans had given him a ten taka currency note after buying cigarettes which he refused to accept. This infuriated the mascans and they at first beat him but hardly satisfied with the punishment inflicted, they came back after half an hour and shot him at point blank range that ultimately caused his death before any medical help could be given. This leads us to ponder how small is the price of life! Shafiq and Musa killings are among the latest in Dhaka city of at least scores of people, either rogue or innocent, killed in the country in the past weeks.

reminder of the vulnerability of people's safety and security on the road. Even if so called god-fathers continue to operate these terrorist attacks from a safe haven they must harbour in their mind, that assassinations may have the effect of controlling opponents for the time being but it is a rare event indeed when they are solved. People only wonder how these spate of killings, extortion and terrorist activities could go on unabated even when the country's newspapers, the moral voice of the suffering community, are full-throated in their vilification of the activities of a handful of dirty goons. How could the whole society become captive in the hands of a limited number of monstrously dreaded gangsters? All these grotesque incidents send shock waves through the spine of an improvised nation that has helplessly witnessed so much of these killing, robbing, atrocity and inhumanity in recent times.

assume our responsibilities for being indifferent to the circumstances that breed crimes of this sort. We must look to the communities that know nothing but frustration. We had some of our past Presidents, and stalwarts of the past regimes indulge in corruptions and immoral acts and then resign in the face of public protest. We had bureaucrats amassing wealth and siphoning that out of the country without accountability and with impunity. Many of our youngsters see that and act it out. Precisely speaking entire communities learn to find blame everywhere but in themselves.

— the support of the people. The country is still in an appalling physical shape — both politically and economically. Most important, in the absence of any understanding on major national issues with the main stream opposition party, the threat of renewed strife, factionalism hangs over and with it the possibility of the resurgence of defeated forces of the liberation war who have started coming out of their hibernation. Shockingly, beyond all national planning, economic reform measures and reconstruction activities were the sounds of a society falling apart. The mounting violence, killing, terrorism and extortion bids are no idle perception. Some 87 people about one third of them women were murdered throughout the country during the month of September. And in Dhaka City alone, as per report received from different Human Rights Organisations and police, 20 people were murdered during the period, which is almost double in comparison to that of the previous month. The incidence of mugging, robbery and extortion in the country, including in the capital city, increased during the month of September. Some 87 women, about half of them minor girls were raped and eight kidnaping cases were recorded during this period.

Pragmatists now feel that government should think about making over the youth training and employment oriented job training to some NGOs who can run a private outreach for these high risk youths. The country now needs a lot of such programmes to give these youngsters an alternative to shooting, dope and killing themselves. In retrospect, one only sees that the cynical leaderships in the past have only heightened factional-strifes, tensions, fundamentalist fervour and deepened corruption culture. The state is seen, as a vehicle for personal gain," says an octogenarian political leader. Seemingly, corruption is no stranger to this country. For years 'officials' and 'leaders' have stuffed their pockets with public funds and flown off to safe sanctuaries with impunity. But even by Bangladesh standards the so-called pilferage of public money by one ex-chief executive of the state is a shocker. He is stated to have stashed \$14 million in overseas banks at one time as disclosed in an affidavit in Pennsylvania by Saleh Naqvi, one top executive of the now-defunct BCCI Bank. All these revelations underscore the fact that there was never an understanding that the state must survive and is bigger than all of us. A handful of leaders of the past regimes created kleptocracies that siphoned resources from the crumbling infrastructures and installed an ethos of corruption from high level bureaucrats to the lowest functionaries. If that is the show of patriotism we still have for the country, then if has really a bleak future and as a nation we feel extremely concerned.

OPINION

A Post-mortem of Our Cricket

Md Erodut Ullah

The three-nation cricket tournament in Kenya is just over. Bangladesh played four matches and lost all and except one the results were unbelievably disappointing. The glimmer of hope that grew in the minds of millions of cricket lovers of the country on 13th April in 'Ghat Kilaab' Kullalumpur, were razed to the ground with shock defeats in the hands of Zimbabwe and Kenya. Probably none expected Bangladesh to win against Zimbabwe. But humiliating defeats against Kenya in both the matches were far beyond the imagination.

more records of defeat by wider margin. But why should we be complacent with such view? The government have given all possible facilities for improvement of cricket, to the BCB. Despite, our players have performed like school boys, disgracing the entire nation in the eye of other cricket-playing countries. A single tournament has completely tarnished the image of our cricket that was built up over the years. Gordon Greenidge, the able mentor, has at last recommended for a thorough reshuffle of the team before it is too late. In our opinion there is no other alternative but to listen to the suggestions of the coach.

of sheet anchor in the face of quick fall. A player whatever his skill or reputation cannot deliver goods unless he is committed to the task he is assigned to perform. This is the fundamental prerequisite of everything. Bangladesh has definitely a good batting side, but due to lack of commitment and application of mind, careless play, they miserably failed to put up their best. The shortcomings in bowling and fielding are chronic and leave lots of room for improvement. It is not that by batting well a match can always be won. Rather a battery of good bowlers aided by good fielding are more counted as match-winning factor.

How Bangladesh, which only 6 months ago beat Kenya and became ICC champion in a hard-fought battle, failed to score even 200 runs is a question that is haunting us. In the second encounter, the Kenyans restricted Bangladesh within 100 runs thus lost by 8 wickets. What a humiliating defeat indeed! This is not acceptable to even a person who has the slightest idea about Bangladesh cricket. Surprisingly Bangladesh batsmen showed their batting power by scoring 257 runs against Zimbabwe, the better side in their first match but crumbled in the second match by scoring paltry 92 runs suffering the biggest margin defeat in 18 limited over matches. Grave suspicion now lurks in the minds of many if Bangladesh cricket would meet similar fate as football in the international arena. The hard optimists, however, appear to hold that this is a temporary upset which usually happens in cricket since there are even 8

Yet, everything is not lost. I wish like others, I could only say that overcast gloom in our cricket is temporary and very soon our national team would be able to perform in keeping with the aspirations of millions. This may be possible, as Greenidge's comment, and application of mind, careful play, they miserably failed to put up their best. The shortcomings in bowling and fielding are chronic and leave lots of room for improvement. It is not that by batting well a match can always be won. Rather a battery of good bowlers aided by good fielding are more counted as match-winning factor.

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To the Editor...

Seema Chowdhury

Sir, I am writing to you to express my concern over the custodial rape and death in custody of Seema Chowdhury, in Chittagong Jail on 7 February 1997. I understand that the four policemen who were accused of her rape were acquitted, although the judge at the time reportedly deplored the fact that government lawyers had presented weak evidence and witnesses, effectively allowing the police to get away with this abuse.

hospital authorities have failed to protect Seema's human rights. It is time to bring to justice not only those who raped her, but those whose alleged negligence caused her death. Sue Lord 7 Faraday Rise, Richmond Nelson, New Zealand

1997, she died in suspicious circumstances. When the policemen were finally brought to trial on July 14th, 1997, they were acquitted. The judge himself took the government lawyers to task for their poor presentation of the case for the prosecution.

I understand that the Government of Bangladesh has issued statements to the effect that custodial rape and sexual abuse will not be tolerated, and perpetrators of such abuses brought to justice. It appears, from Seema's case, as though these promises have not been implemented. As a concerned citizen, I ask you to publicise this case and promote free discussion within the press to explore the issues surrounding this death. It appears that the police, the court, the jail administration and the

Amnesty International feels that the matter cannot be left there: Seema's attackers must be brought to justice and so too must those whose negligence caused her death. Furthermore, the Government of Bangladesh must be persuaded to investigate the failures which led up to both her rape and her death. While welcoming the Bangladesh government's public assurances that human rights violations will not be tolerated, Amnesty would urge them to take immediate practical measures to implement such assurances. I am sure your readers will want to support this recommendation. Mrs Mary Lee 11, Meltonwood Grove Southborough, Doncaster DN5 7PT, England