

## The Islamic Bogey

Let Islam be in its own place and politics in its domain. The twin need not meet by force when they don't by nature. To opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia's latest bogey of Islam being in danger we have a one-liner advice to proffer: Let our people take care of Islam you better take care of politics. The latter has already lost touch with burning realities. It either be invested with some substance forthwith or be left to court total perdition.

With the raising of the Islamic apparition hammer and tong in tandem with incurable 'sale-out to India' sloganeering BNP politics reverts full circle to early Pakistan days. This resonates politics of Muslim League between fifties and sixties and of the collaborators during the Liberation War. The bug-bear of Islam-in-danger seen, by Yahya and Tikka Khans has effected a totally misplaced re-appearance, so it looks like. This is also taking a leaf out of the records book of successive governments in Bangladesh slinging a crutch of religion to get by in politics the gullible way. Zia used Islam and so did Ershad, even in their constitutional amendments, let alone in their political style imprinted with occasional appeals to religious sentiments of the common people. They basically took power rather than were democratically elected to it, needing defence mechanisms to see through their early days in the very least. But the perspective is entirely different for the BNP of today, led by Khaleda Zia, which is an elected and sure-footed opposition party to the national parliament. Her politics can and must afford to be responsible, and unbogotedly relevant to the issues of the day which don't burn with the fire of religion but by the ignition of the pressing circumstances.

Our people are deeply religious, but only in the liberal, harmonious and refreshingly apolitical sense of the term. How many times do they have to assert through their electoral verdicts that they are least interested in the use of religion for political purposes. And for, parties enjoying a high status by virtue of such election results it ought to be an article of faith to shun the expedient variety of politicised religiosity. A variant worse in our eye than the purely theological one whose ramifications are known enough to be taken guard against.

## A Regular Nightmare

It was a regular nightmare at the Rajshahi University campus on Monday night. Hundreds of bombs and cocktails and bullet shots rent the night in that sleepy and serene compound housing thousands of students and teachers and their dependents.

Is there a university at Rajshahi? Judging by what happens round the year at the beautiful and sprawling campus at Motihar, it will be either presumptuous or downright lying if one says that a university functions there. All you get is a Jamaat stranglehold, which spawns violent eruptions interminably, and running battles and cowardly murders all the year round. It's a battle ground of unceasing clashes in a thoroughly Jamaat land and is nothing but an anathema to learning and allied strivings to elevate the mind.

On Monday night when police went to vacate Shibir's forcible and violent occupation of the residential halls earlier on the night, Shibir opened fire on them and injured ten policemen including an OC and an SI. Of the students injured, condition of two was precarious.

We refuse to buy excuses for the continued supremacy of the Jamaat cadre there for over decades. This has resulted in complete breakdown, from time to time, of academic activity, not to speak of an ambience congenial for the blossoming of our culture. Failure of the Khaleda government in ridding the university of this curse is understandable. But how come this is continuing deep into the rule of AL?

This brings us to the question of the government's failure to free all the universities from the clutch of the terrorists backed by political parties. As long as AL is committed to protect BCL as also its armed activists, it will be failing miserably to do anything to let the universities be what they are there for. We counsel the government for the umpteenth time to distance them from the terrorists and as such earn the moral right and power to go after the other terrorists.

RU is a very good ground to begin the good work of eliminating campus terrorism. One hopes both government and RU to show us the path to sanity.

## UNESCO Role

Perhaps the visiting UNESCO DG could not have been more phrasally appropriate in articulating his world view when he called for global intellectual solidarity yesterday in his address on the occasion of DU's conferment of a honorary degree on him. This strife-torn old planet has seen how intellectual solidarity time and again came to humanity's aid. In the most critical juncture of world history when one man's maniacal pursuits were threatening the future of the world, physicists around the globe confederated to keep Hitler in the dark about the destructive potential of A-bomb. We may have moved away in time from those trying circumstances for civilisation but the spectral legacy remains. The ideas and incidences like ethnic cleansing, rise of neo-Nazism in the West, increasing global propensity to militarism, America's ironical alien allergy and the suicidal internecine bickering among the poor nations show that the impetus which was at work then is very much there today.

The chief reason behind the present global crisis is the relentless exploitation and lack of intellectual leadership to expose and redeem this trend. Some sort of global intellectual solidarity has to commence as Mr. Mayor so aptly said to make people see that the 80 per cent of world's resources are in the hands of 18 per cent of the total population. Also to do away with the campaign of conceptual distortion that is going on with a view to perpetuating exploitation of man by man.

Will UNESCO play an effective role in promoting global intellectual solidarity to fight all forms of degradation of human rights and values? Over the years it has played its role in that direction but a lot is left to be desired still.

# Negotiations on Chittagong Hill Tracts: Confusion Galore

What the BNP insists on is that it should be in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and shall be fair and equitable to all classes and types of citizens, so that they could enjoy equal rights and opportunities as enjoined under the constitution.

The latest round of talks between the government's National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Janasanghati Samity resumed yesterday. Hopes were raised by both sides that the current negotiations would bear fruit and an agreement would be duly signed on this occasion.

Concern, apprehension and even fear have been expressed by almost all quarters, except the government and its diehard supporters as to the nature and content of the proposed agreement. The complex situation has been rendered further complex by the government's refusal to accede to the widespread demand of bringing the principal provisions of the agreement to the notice of the general public in order to elicit their opinion and to place it at the Parliament for a debate before it is sealed, signed and delivered.

The opposition BNP and other major political parties, including Jamaat, the Left Front and even Ershad's Jatiya Party, have come out with this demand forcefully. The seven-party *oikya jote* led by the BNP have threatened to unleash country-wide political movement, unless their demand is met. They accuse the government of committing gross neglect of public demand and charge it with lack of transparency and accountability on this issue the nation considers vital.

The ruling party, on the

other hand, argue that the issue being highly sensitive, it would be prudent to shroud it with a film of secrecy during the course of negotiations and it will be made public and placed before the legislature only after the agreement is duly concluded. They also claim that their action was aimed to fulfill their election pledge and that the people have given them the mandate to rule in accordance with their judgement and choice. The opposition parties contest the points heavily and counterargue that the fate of such an important issue cannot be decided by only one political party and that should be decided in a spirit of national consensus, as far as possible. They severely resent the attempt of the government to present the issue of the nation as a *fait accompli*. It was also pointed out that the ruling Awami League obtained only 37 per cent of the total popular vote in the election and the rest of the populace cannot be taken for granted as supporters of all Awami League's programmes and actions.

What are the principal apprehensions of the opposition political parties? They suspect strongly that the government is according to the unjustified demands of the other party



## Currents and Crosscurrents

by M M Rezaul Karim

which they had resisted granting during the course of prolonged negotiations with the same party during the previous BNP regime. They will not tolerate any provision in the agreement that may tantamount to lead to the violation of the constitution and are repugnant to the interests of all segments and classes of citizens. Chakma is one of the 13 tribes, albeit the principal tribe, inhabiting the three territorial districts in Chittagong Hill Tracts. Besides, the non-hilly population coming from the plains in other areas since centuries, known in ordinary parlance as Bengalis, is of no mean number. They constitute about 47 per cent of the total population. In the event the power are vested in Chakma leaders to institute a *de facto* rule through the mechanism of the proposed Regional Council, the rest of the tribal and non-tribal population will be unduly and severely discriminated

against. They will not only have no say in deciding upon the important issues of the region, but may even be denied the right to vote and be renegade as second class citizens. This would be unfair, undemocratic and unconstitutional. Such a situation must be averted.

Then, there are also talks of withdrawing posts manned by armed forces personnel from among different places in the region. It would be perfect if such deployments are not needed, should peace be restored in the region. But what happens, if violence is resumed by the other party of a new law and order situation breaks out in a place there? It is an extremely hazardous and time consuming task to send personnel and vehicles through over an impassable terrain, once the existing facilities are withdrawn. The area will then be devoid of effective control of the administrative centres and

cantonments, which are located at inconvenient distances. The Prime Minister has indeed assured that armed forces will not be withdrawn from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is technically true, but what purpose would it serve if they are bottled up in far-flung areas and be of little use in times of need? The right to deploy armed forces is a fundamental right of an independent nation and cannot be given away at the dictates of others. If we compromise on this and bind our hands tight through any form of agreement with anyone inside or outside the country, we will stand to lose our very solemn and fundamental right. After all, armed forces, even if they are small and inadequately equipped, are not only a pride of a nation, but is universally regarded as the prestigious symbol of its sovereign independent status.

BNP is not against an agreement on this issue. On the contrary, it encourages to conclude an agreement by any government which will bring about a lasting peace in that troubled region. They themselves had tried to accomplish it during their regime through sustained negotiations, but refused to yield to undue and unreasonable demands of the other

party. What they insist on is that it should be in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and shall be fair and equitable to all classes and types of citizens, so that they could enjoy equal rights and opportunities as enjoined under the constitution. It is an axiomatic truth that people want peace and, therefore, political parties legitimately representing their will, should desire peace. But peace should be achieved with honour and not at any cost.

As for the composition of the National Committee, the Awami League advances strong argument that they had named two BNP members for inclusion, but the BNP refused to accept them as such. This was in stark contrast to the action of the Awami League who had fielded two members in the National Committee during the previous regime. They also suggested, though informally and later, that the BNP could have nominated two other members of their choice, but had not done so. The BNP leaders retort that the suggestion came late and that the party had not been approached formally for this purpose and, therefore, could not nominate members without running the risk of rejection.

One does not, unfortunately, help wonder that the difference being a procedural one and not substantive, could have been resolved, given a degree of goodwill on the part of either.

## BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

### Verbatim Text of Cross Examination of 42nd Prosecution Witness

Continued from Tuesday

Following are excerpts from cross-examination of Major (dismissed) AH Ziauddin Ahmed by Advocate Khan Sairur Rahman, defence counsel for Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooq Rahman:

Q: Which one was more distant from Dhaka University — the DGFI barracks or the officers' mess?

A: University was more far from the officers' mess.

Q: What was the difference between distances of the two places from the university in terms of time?

A: Five minutes.

Q: The 16th East Bengal Regiment deployed at Joydevpur Rajbari at that time was under the 46 Brigade.

A: That was not known to me.

Q: Was the headquarters of 46 Brigade and 1st East Bengal in the same place?

A: No, those were at different places.

Q: Who was the Vice-President of Bangabandhu government during the time of occurrence?

A: Syed Nazrul Islam.

Q: Did anyone from DGFI office contact Syed Nazrul Islam on August 15 morning?

A: I don't know.

Q: Did Syed Nazrul Islam become the Acting President after the incident?

A: No.

Q: Was the Vice-President informed of the conspiracy being hatched against the President?

A: I don't know whether it was communicated to him or not.

Q: As a DGFI officer did you know that Dr Kamal Hossain without joining BKSAL left the country before the incident and came back after that?

A: No, I don't know that.

Q: On the day of occurrence, when you were trying to contact your higher authorities over phone from the DGFI office, did you try to contact Syed Nazrul Islam?

A: That was not my responsibility.

Q: From your own initiative you requested the DGFI Chief to go to the Army HQ.

A: I made the request during our discussion.

Q: You made the request thinking it right.

A: Yes.

Q: How long were you at Bangabandhu's residence on August 15?

A: For about 25-30 minutes.

Q: What was the time?

A: After 11 am and before jumma prayer.

Q: Did you face any non-cooperation on that day while performing your duty at Bangabandhu's house?

A: No, we didn't face any non-cooperation in taking photographs.

Q: Did you go to the CMH on the day of occurrence or the day after to see any of the dead or injured?

A: No, I did not go, but other officers went there.

Q: Who was then in charge of CMH or who was his assistant?

A: I don't remember.

Q: How long were you with your unit in Comilla?

A: As a Lieutenant, I was with the Three Field Artillery for two years.

Q: Did you work with Abdul Wahab Joardar?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you see anything abnormal in Wahab's character?

A: No.

Following are the excerpts from cross-examination of Major (dismissed) AH Ziauddin Ahmed by Advocate Abdur Razzak Khan, the defence counsel for Lt Col (retired) Sultan Shahriyar Rashid Khan:

Q: What was the jurisdiction of CGS (Chief of General Staff)?

A: He was the third top man in the army.

Q: Rakhi Bahini was disbanded and absorbed in the army after August 15, 1975.

A: Yes.

Q: How the DGFI used to give their report to the President?

A: Every month a report was to be placed with the President and apart from that sometimes special reports also needed to be placed before him.

Q: Was the name identity of the duty officer in DGFI kept in files?

A: So it should be.

Q: Did you interrogate the duty officer after August 15?

A: There was no reason for interrogation.

Q: Who was the Provost Marshal of Military Police (MP) at that time?

A: I don't remember his name.

Q: Were his office and residence inside the cantonment?

A: Possibly.

Q: MP was in charge of the security of the Army Chief.

A: MP was responsible for escort duty of the Army Chief and different regiment was responsible for security job at his residence.

Q: How far was the residence of Army Chief Shafulah from the Army HQ during the time of occurrence?

A: About two kilometres.

Q: Can you say when Shafulah reached the Army HQ from his house on the day of occurrence?

A: About two kilometres.

Q: How far was the office of Air Chief from his residence?

A: About three kilometres.

Q: Chiefs of the three services went to the radio station at their own will.

A: This is not true.

Q: At that time, there was a control room at Suhrawardy Uddyan opposite to the present National Museum at Shahbag.

A: Yes.

Q: There was special deployment of Police and BDR at the control room on August 15 for Bangabandhu's visit to the university.

A: No.

Q: Did you go to the control room on August 14 and 15?

A: No.

Q: That means what you are saying about the deployment is based on supposition.

A: Yes, I would have seen if there was any deployment.

Q: Do you know when and by whose order two trucks full of Rakhi Bahini came near the radio station on August 15 morning?

A: No.

Q: Did you talk to the crew standing beside the tanks you had seen at Mohakhali?

A: No. Because, I felt it was more important to reach my place of duty.

Q: Did you collect the names and identifications of the crew?

A: Yes.

Q: Were the names and addresses of the leaders of Rakhi Bahini station collected? Did you give those to the IO?

A: Those were collected, but I didn't give those to the IO.

Q: Was any counter steps taken from armed forces side to protect the constitutional continuity of the State?

A: I don't know.

Q: When did Col Taher retire from the Army?

A: Perhaps in 1973.

Q: When did Major Jaill retire from the army?

A: In 1972.

Q: Gen Osmany was the Chief of Armed Forces during the War of Liberation and after that he joined politics.

A: Yes.

Q: Gen Osmany was appointed Defence Adviser to the President on August 15, 1975.

A: I don't know.

Q: But you have seen him performing state responsibilities and addressing the officers gatherings in cantonments.

A: No, I didn't see.

Q: Did you hear about that?

A: No.

Q: Perhaps was the Defence Minister after August 15?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Can't you name any of the ministers of Mushtaque cabinet.

A: Yes, I can say but then I will have to search my memory.

Q: Martial Law was promulgated on August 15 morning with support from the Armed Forces.

A: This is not true.

Q: Did you hear for radio on August 15 morning about the promulgation of Martial Law?

A: No, there was no such announcement from the radio.

At this stage, Judge Kazi Golam Rasul wanted to know when the Martial Law was promulgated. In reply, the witness said on August 20.

Q: Did you know that the Chief Justice conducted oath to a new cabinet on August 15?

A: I don't remember.

Q: You continued in the service under Martial Law which was gazetted on August 20, 1975.

A: I continued with my job like all other people of different professions.

Q: Did the army administration take any action against those who supplied arms and ammunition from the cantonment on August 15?

A: I don't know.

Q: CGS Brig Khaled Mosharrar was controlling the army by giving different assignments since August 15 morning.

A: This is not true.

Q: Khaled Mosharrar ordered the supply of ammunition for tanks from Joydevpur and it was so done in early hours of August 15.

A: I don't know.

Q: There was a mutiny under the leadership of Brig Khaled Mosharrar on November 3, 1975.

A: I heard about it later. I was out of Dhaka since November 2.

Q: A place-once revolution took place on November 7, 1975.

A: I also heard about it later.

Q: Major Shahriyar was the staff officer of Gen Osmany after August 15.

A: I don't know.

Q: You did not see Major Shahriyar at the radio station, when you went there with JRB director Hasan.

A: I had seen him.

Q: No gathering or meetings were held protesting the changeover of the government after August 15 incident.

A: Holding of rallies and meetings were banned through a gazette notification.

Q: Was there any protest on August 15 morning after the radio announcement?

A: There was curfew at that time.

Q: You didn't see him (Shahriyar) with Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed at Bangabhaban.

A: I had seen him.

Q: How long have you performed the duty as the Dhaka Detachment OC of DGFI?

A: Till November 11 or 12, 1975.

Q: You did the protocol duty of the new President at Bangabhaban.

A: No, I performed my intelligence duty.

Q: Most of those who were in the cabinet before August 15 joined the Mushtaque cabinet.

A: I don't remember.

Q: Basically you were responsible for observing the August 15 operation in the Dhaka city.

A: This is not true. The villain and Mir Jafar of contemporary history, Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed, along with his associates and many of his relatives engineered the incident (of August 15).

Following are the excerpts from cross-examination of PW-42 Major (dismissed) AH Ziauddin Ahmed by Advocate Shariyuddin Mukul, defence counsel for Taheruddin Thakur:

Q: Did you tell the IO that you had seen Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed, Taheruddin Thakur and others were discussing at the President's office room in Bangabhaban?

A: I told.

Q: It is not true, what you have said that Brig Rouf told you about a conspiracy 10 to 12 days before the August 15 incident.

A: It is true.

Q: The time and sequence you mentioned describing the incident after the killing of Bangabandhu was not correct rather you have narrated the story prepared by the prosecution.

A: What I said is absolutely true. I have said what I saw.

Q: Against his (Thakur) will and to make him a victim, he was brought to the radio station to serve the purpose and was forced to carryout the orders.

A: It is not true. Taheruddin Thakur, as a very close associate of Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed, was seen to work with a great zeal on August 15.

Q: You didn't see Thakur working with a great zeal.

A: I had seen.

Q: After chiefs of three services had left the 1st East Bengal regiment, all other senior

officers, including you, sat at the 46 Brigade HQ and was waiting for the order of the high command.

A: It is not true. An abnormal situation was prevailing there following the killing of the President. Everybody there was shocked and we were discussing about the situation evolved from the killing of Bangabandhu.

Q: How long were you at the 46 Brigade HQ and with whom?

A: I was there for 10 to 12 minutes. Brig Khaled Mosharrar, 46 Brigade Commander Col Shafiq Jamil, heads of different units and staff officers of the Brigade HQ were present.

Q: Where did you go from there?

A: At Rakhi Bahini HQ to take JRB Director Hasan to Radio Station.

Q: How long you did your duty at Bangabhaban on