The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

The Islamic Bogey

Dhaka, Thursday, November 27, 1997

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 reappearance, so it looks like. This is also taking a leaf out of the records book of successive governments in Bangladesh slanging 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 unbigotedly 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 ambiance 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 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

HE latest round of talks between the government's A National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Janasanghati Samity resumed yesterday. Hopes were raised by both sides that the current negotiations would bear fruition and an agreement would be

duly signed on its conclusion. 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 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 de-

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 sevenparty ofkya 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 an issue the nation considers

The ruling party, on the

Continued from Tuesday

cross-examination of Major

(dismissed) AH Ziauddin

Ahmed by Advocate Khan Sai-

fur Rahman, defence counsel

Q: Which one was more dis-

for Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Fa-

tant from Dhaka University -

between distances of the two

places from the university in

iment deployed at Joydevpur

Rajbari at that time was under

46 Brigade and 1st East Bengal

places who was the Vice Presi-

dent of Bangabandhu govern-ment during the time of oc-

fice contact Syed Nazrul Islam

come the Acting President after

A: Syed Nazrul Islam.

on August 15 morning?

A: I don't know.

the incident?

A: No.

sibility.

go to the Army HQ.

our discussion.

A: Yes.

responsibility.

responsibilities.

A: I don't know.

upon my responsibility.

A: Yes.

A: Yes.

A: No.

Road-32.

role in it.

bull story.

oath of allegiance.

ter the incident.

made over radio.

thinking it right.

Q: The 16th East Bengal Reg-

A: That was not know to me.

Q: Was the headquarters of

A: No, those were at different

Q: Did anyone from DGFI of-

Q: Did Syed Nazrul Islam be-

Q: Was the Vice-President in-

A: I don't know whether it

Q: As a DGFI officer did you

formed of the conspiracy being

hatched against the President?

was communicated to him or

know that Dr Kamal Hossain

without joining BKSAL left the

country before the incident and

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

A: That was not my respon-

Q: From your own initiative

A: I made the request during

Q: You made the request

Q: You didn't think it logical

A: That was not within my

Q: Were you a party to the or-

A: No. I carried out DGFI's

Q: Did you know that Syed

Q: You took part in protect-

Q: To protect the existing

Q: Was there any civil war af-

Q: Was any mass resistance

A: There was curfew when

Q: Did you know the time

A: No, it was not know to me.

Q: DGFI was expecting a

visible during the radio an-

nouncements after the inci-

announcements were being

when the incident took place at

changeover of the government

and they welcomed the change

that came through the incident

and in the process of the

changeover they made full co-

operation and you also had a

A: This is just a cock-and-

Following are the excerpts

government was also in the

ing the constitutional continu-

ity even after of such an inci-

Farooqur Rahman contested

the Presidential polls in 1986?

ders, directives, discussion and

meetings that took place at the

cantonment after the incident?

to phone Syed Nazrul Islam.

you requested the DGFI Chief to

A: No, I don't know that.

came back after that?

from the officers' mess.

A: Five unimites.

rooqur Rahman:

cers' mess?

terms of time

the 46 Brigade.

in the same place?

Following are excerpts from

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.

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 fulfil 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 ap-

prehensions of the opposition political parties? They suspect strongly that the government party is acceding 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 or 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 nontribal 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 or 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

A: This is not true.

A: I don't know.

Q : Khaled Mosharraf or-

dered the supply of ammunition

for tanks from Joydevpur and it

was so done in early hours of

the leadership of Brig Khaled

Mosharraf on November 3,

was out of Dhaka since Novem-

took place on November 7.

Q: There was a mutiny under

A : I heard about it later. I

Q: A sepoy-people revolution

A: I also heard about it later.

staff officer of Gen Osmany af-

Shahriyar at the radio station

when you went there with JRB

were held protesting the

changeover of the government

meetings were banned through

August 15 morning after the

Q : You did not see Major

Q: No gathering or meetings

A: Holding of rallies and

Q: Was there any protest on

A: There was curfew at that

Q : You didn't see him

Q: How long have you per-

A: Till November 11 or 12,

Q: You did the protocol duty

A : No. I performed my intel-

Q: Most of those who were in

Q: Basically you were re-

A: This is not true. The vil-

sponsible for observing the Au-

gust 15 operation in the Dhaka

lain and Mir Jafar of contem-

porary history, Khandaker

Mushtaque Ahmed, along with

his associates and many of his

relatives engineered the inci-

from cross-examination of PW-

42 Major (dismissed) AH Ziaud-

din Ahmed by Advocate Shar-

fuddin Mukul, defence counsel

had seen Khandaker Mustaque

Ahmed, Taheruddin Thakur

and others were discussing at

the President's office room in

have said that Brig Rouf told

you about a conspiracy 10 to 12

days before the August 15 inci-

Q: It is not true, what you

A: What I said is absolutely

true. I have said what I saw.

Q: Did you tell the IO that you

for Taheruddin Thakur:

Following are the excerpts

dent (of August 15).

Bangabhaban?

A: I told.

A: It is true.

the cabinet before August 15

joined the Mushtaque cabinet.

A: I don't remember.

of the new President at Bangab-

(Shahriyar) with Khandaker

Mushtaque Ahmed at Bangab-

formed the duty as the Dhaka

: Major Shahriyar was the

cantonments, which are located at inconvenient distances. The Prime Minister has in-

deed 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 this 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 troubletorn 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

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.

August 14 whether Col Jamil or

Brig Rouf was the Director Gen-

A: Four and a half years.

leased me giving an announce-

ment through radio and televi-

Q: Were you released by ap-

Q: You are in business and

eral of DGF1.

A: Brig Rouf.

BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

Verbatim Text of Cross Examination of 42nd Prosecution Witness

August 15.

ter August 15.

director Hasan.

A: I don't know.

A: I had seen him.

after August 15 incident.

radio announcement?

A: I had seen him.

Detachment OC of DGFI?

ligence duty.

from cross-examination of Major (dismissed) AH Ziauddin Ahmed by Advocate Abdur Razzak Khan, the defence counsel

the DGFI barracks or the offifor Hon Capt (retd), Abdul Wa-A: University was more far hab Joardar: Q: How long were you at Q: What was the difference

jumma prayer.

August 15? A: For about 25-30 minutes. Q: What was the time? A: After 11 am and before

Bangabandhu's residence on

Q: Did you face any non-cooperation on that day while performing your duty at Banga-

bandhu'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 (retd) 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: Rakkhi 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

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: That did not shoulder A: Possibly. Q: MP was in charge of the Q: Did you take oath while security of the Army Chief. joining as an officer in the

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 Shafiullah from the Army HQ during the time of occurrence? A: About two kilometres. Q: Can you say when Shafi-

ullah reached the Army HQ

from his house on the day of oc-

currence? A: No, I can't say. Q: The official residence of the Naval Chief was at Eskaton

Garden. A : Yes. Q: What was the distance of Army Chief's office from the Naval Chief's office?

A: About three kilometres. Q: Where was the residence of Air Chief? A: Opposite to the Army

Chief's residence. Q: How far was the office of Air Chief from his residence? A: About three kilometres. Q: Chiefs of the three ser-

vices 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

A: No. Q : Did you go to the control room on August 14 and 15?

university.

for Bangabandhu's visit to the

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 Rakkhi 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. a gazette notification. Q : Did you collect the names and identifications of the crew?

A : Yes. Q: Were the names and ad-

dresses of the leaders of Rakkhi Bahini stationed near the radio 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 Jalil 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.

Q: Gen Osmany was appointed Defence Adviser to the President on August 15, 1975. A: I don't know.

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

A: No. I didn't see. Q: Did you hear about that? Q: Who was the Defence Min-

ister after August 15? A: I don't remember. Q: Can't you name any of the ministers of Mushtaque cabi-

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

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.

Q: The time and sequence At this stage, Judge Kazi Goyou mentioned describing the lam Rasul wanted to know incident after the killing of when the Martial Law was pro-Bangabandhu was not correct mulgated. In reply, the witness rather you have narrated the said on August 20. story prepared by the prosecu-Q: Did you know that the

Chief Justice conducted oath to a new cabinet on August 15? A: I don't remember.

ment on August 15?

A: I don't know.

raf was controlling the army by

since August 15 morning.

giving different assignments

Q: Against his (Thakur) will and to make him a victim, he Q: You continued in the serwas brought to the radio station vice under Martial Law which to serve the purpose and was was gazetted on August 20, 1975. forced to carryout the orders. A: I continued with my job like all other people of different A: It is not true. Taheruddin professions.

Thakur, as a very close associ-Q: Did the army adminisate of Khandaker Mushtaque tration take any action against Ahmed, was seen to work with a those who supplied arms and great zeal on August 15. ammunition from the canton-Q: You didn't see Thakur working with a great zeal. A: I had seen. Q: CGS Brig Khaled Moshar-

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

was convicted with Col Taher. A: Yes. Q: How many years were you officers, including you, sat at

the 46 Brigade HQ and was wait-Q: What was your convicing for the order of the high A: Life-term. A: It is not true. An abnor-Q: How did you get free? mai situation was prevailing A: The government, which there following the killing of was in power in 1979-80, rethe 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 Mosharraf. 46 Brigade Commandar Col Shafait Jamil, heads of different units and staff officers of the Brigade HQ were present.

Q: Where did you go from there? A: At Rakkhi Bahini HQ to take JRB Director Hasan to Radio Station. Q: How long you did your

duty at Bangabhaban on August A: Till 9:30 to 10 pm. Q: For how many days you

did you duty at Bangabhaban? A: About one and a half

Q: Thakur was a very close associate of Bangabandhu. A: It is not true. History says Taheruddin Thakur was more

close to Khandaker Mustaque Ahmed. Q: On the night following

peal or the government remitted the conviction. A: Through an announcement given over radio and television.

Q: For deriving business benefit and looking back to your past activities you have been allured to give a false evidence and you gave your statement as asked by the prosecu-

A: It is not true. Q: You did not personally go to the radio station and Bangabhaban.

A: I have gone and done my What you have said

against Taheruddin Thakur is false.

A: It is absolutely true.

Further text of cross-examination shall be published as and when received.

OPINION

A Plea for Reason in Oil/Gas Decisions

Two Concerned Bangladeshis

We are dismayed by the confusing situation being reported in The Daily Star regularly on awarding of gas exploration blocks in Bangladesh. Our concerns are heightened by the following 1996 financial and manpower data.

Company

Chevron

Texaco

Mobil

Revenue

\$42.782 Billion

this, one must look at its present financial status, its technological capability, and its record of past performance (financial and technical) worldwide and in its own country. 2) Does the company have

43,019

the right plan? For example, 1996 Financial Data of a Few Companies Number of Net Income (or Profit) **Employees** (or Gross Sales)

\$81.503 Billion **\$2.964 Billion** \$2.018 Billion \$45.500 Billion \$5.300 Billion \$456 Million UNOCAL \$152 Million \$1,008 Billion **Union Texas** \$230 Thousand (Loss) Maersk Oil UK \$680 Thousand (Loss) \$57.8 Thousand Pangaea Ltd Tullow Oil PLC \$9.841 Million \$3.933 Millions

\$2.607 Billion

Source : Maersk, Pangaea, and Tullow Oil PLC data are from Dun and Bradstreet on-line database. The data for others are from the World Wide Web site.

The Daily Star reported on November 3 that Tullow Oil has with modern seismic and other been awarded Block 9. According to its report, this is the most coveted block. Tullow, with less than 4 million US dollars in net income, is going to invest 58 million dollars to drill 10 wells in the first year! They seem to have won out over oil giants such as Mobil. Chevron, and Texaco with a net 1996 income of \$2.96 billion, \$2.61 billion, and \$2.02 billion, respectively.

The situation with another small company named Pangaea Energy LLC that may be awarded Blocks 8 and 11 is equally interesting. Usual financial databases revealed no such company but there were a number of Pangaea companies. One, Pangaea Ltd, listed above had a net loss of \$680 thousand! Similarly Maersk that appears to be a front-runner for Blocks 19 and 20 had a loss of

\$230 thousand! In view of the above, we feel the following questions must be answered before a company is selected:

to fulfill its promises? To judge

1) Will the company be financially and technically able technologies, is it necessary to drill a large number of wells to acquire data as suggested by some? This would be of particular concern in Bangladesh with a high population density and a scarce land resource. * . 3) Does the company have

the ability to address the complex issues of infrastructure, safety, environment, social impact, abandonment, technology transfer, etc., that arise in hydrocarbon exploration and production?

It is absolutely essential to resolve the above issues to avoid a catastrophe. We firmly believe that arrangements can be found to address the fear of creating monopolies that some have expressed, while benefiting from the enormous financial and technological resources some of the large companies would oring. Countries such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Australia. Great Britain and others are doing precisely that. We fervently hope that Bangladesh

does not let this rare opportunity pass. This country deserves better.