

## Nawaz Says It

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a major development of relations with Bangladesh has made a categorical announcement that 'Biharis' stranded in Bangladesh would now be repatriated to Pakistan. Quite sagaciously he has done so in Islamabad on his return from the Three-Nation Business Summit in Dhaka. The Pakistan Prime Minister has gratifyingly left no shadow of doubt about his visualising a wholesale repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis — of course, under a time-frame.

We welcome this refreshing change in the outlook of relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh vanguarded by Nawaz Sharif. To all intents and purposes this looks like a sea change from what had been a palpably demurring attitude of Benazir Bhutto's government to the vestigial remnants of our problems with Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif's excellent gesture comes through to us basically as a reiteration of the policy he had adopted on the question of repatriation during his earlier tenure as Prime Minister of Pakistan. Yet there is more to this demonstrative consistency of this man; for he has had a greater electoral mandate this time around than before and has emerged squarely vindicated lately through a test of strength with the former President and Chief Justice. So that he is eminently in a position to fulfil his commitments on an outstanding issue.

The Pakistan Prime Minister's acceptance of the obligation is predicated upon this operative sentence: "as soon as sufficient money is collected arrangements would be made to bring the stranded Pakistanis back". For all we know, the Rabita Alam Al Islami which is based in Saudi Arabia, had once played an active role in raising fund for the purpose and is also currently gearing up efforts to do the same, according to Pak Premier himself. In fact, we urge the whole international community, the UNHCR and the OIC in particular, to come forward in aid of Pakistan for the sake of undertaking this human settlement process of enormous contemporary relevance.

Nawaz Sharif has befriended Bangladesh by committing to resolve the long-standing question and has certainly got his image move up the humanitarian scale in eye of the rest of the world.

## Troubled Chittagong

Chittagong seems to be under the spell of an evil eye. Nothing is going right there. Country's premier port has been in the limbo for a long time. In addition to that, law and order situation has deteriorated drastically in the port city. Violence related death has shot up there at an alarming rate. Thirty-eight lives, reveals a Star report, have been lost over a period of ten weeks. An assortment of unfortunate occasions have led to this irreparable loss. If our indiscreet and unfeeling politicians took the stage as the ambassador of death first then the failure of the law enforcing agency to tackle social evils like extortion has certainly been the most abetting factor of late.

The business community in Chittagong seems to be the most vulnerable group. An organised gang is sponging businessmen with impunity. They are holding people to ransom and, when refused, are killing their 'targets' wantonly. This has been going for a long time.

We condemn the failure of the local administration to tide over this spate of violence that has gripped the people of Chittagong so terribly. Let alone the peace, security in the local context, what message are we giving to the world in view of the relentless government bleating about Bangladesh being some sort of a haven when it comes to investment? Is this the sanctuary we are trying to 'sell' to the world?

Law and order is essential for development. All our slogans for development will end in mere sound and fury if our premier port city remains caught in a cycle of violence round the year.

Problem in Chittagong has become too chronic and expansive to be a source of headache for the local authorities only. We feel time has come for the Ministry of Home to play a more assertive and cooperative role in this matter. A solo initiative on the part of the Home Minister would be a most welcome move to start with. From the reports published in the press so far it appears deterioration of law and order in Chittagong owes more to inefficiency of the local police force than sudden emboldening of the criminals. An administrative jolt in the law enforcing agency can bring a wholesome change.

## Good Little BOI Initiative

Farooq Sobhan's appointment as the executive chairman seems to have added a spring in BOI's (Board of Investment) stride. Under the leadership of the former foreign Secretary, the government agency primarily assigned to lure foreign investors has shown a welcome understanding of a few home truths. First impression often proves to be the determining factor in the future of any relationship, business or otherwise. And no place is better than country's international airport to do justice to this notion. And by setting up a counter at the Zia International Airport BOI has just done that. These little responses to common sense psychology can contribute significantly towards improving Bangladesh's business profile to the world.

We would like to interpret this as a kind of warming up in actual terms of the relevant agency to the government's agenda for establishing the country as an investment destination. Manned by BOI officials this counter, reportedly will work round the clock to provide services to the foreign investors. We hope the counter delivers the job in giving a real boost to our investment aspiration. The decision of distributing fliers containing business info in the Bangladesh-bound flights of different airlines is also a step in the right direction.

There may not be any guarantee to other variables like political stability to make sure that foreign investors remain focused on Bangladesh unfailingly but certainly a great deal can be done by way of giving a push here and nudge there. We look forward to more BOI activism.

# A Shattered Dream of India's Rise to Power

*Although India has a tremendous capacity for national regeneration and renewal, the current political decline in India together with enormous domestic problems and hostility from outside for her stands on nuclear issues make the realisation of the dream of the nation's founding fathers extremely difficult.*

At independence in 1947 India, one of the world's ancient civilisations further enriched by streams of conquering races, nationalities and religious communities, aspired in its own right to be a great power and began to chart its future course accordingly. A vanishing breed of India's national liberation leaders with a burning passion for the country's greatness in their hearts were convinced of its great power status hitherto deferred only by colonial subjugation. The country's continental size, its nearly one billion population, its command over Indian ocean — the traditional highway between the East and West — its strategic clout arising out of its proximity to Eurasian landmass and above all its democratic way — they all combined to sufficiently vindicate its aspirations. And the prospects seemed bright with Jawahar Lal Nehru, a visionary and a leader of the global stature at the helm. India, under Nehru's meticulous guidance laid down the foundation of an infrastructure that constitutes power. The idea of India's great power status had however been rife ever since when Indian leaders had been exhorting its place to be only alongside the world's great centres of power i.e. the USA, the West Europe and the former Soviet Union. With the British exit from the subcontinent India's elitist leadership was rather obsessed with finding India's 'place' in the world while setting priorities in nation building agenda. Nevertheless it was not oblivious of the history's pointer that China also would be a serious competitor in the race.

But in the aftermath of Second World War when an exhausted colonial power was obliged to grant India her freedom and she was eagerly wooed by the power blocs at the outset of a bipolarity in the international politics, today's China was not even born. Mao was still fighting the Chinese na-

tionalists aided by the imperialist powers in a bitter struggle to wrest power in China. In contrast, India, by then the largest democracy of the world, was already a darling of the west and the country was hailed as a new and major voice in the world. Notwithstanding the partition of the subcontinent, even a truncated India was revered in the international arena and her political ascendancy was meteoric while Pakistan was despised as a theoretic state of gross political aberration. Even when People's Republic of China liberated itself in 1949 it was India which practically held China by hand and brought her into the Afro-Asian community. Henceforth India scaled new heights as leader of non-aligned movement and as the catalyst or participant of many global events of consequence. It was when China was still looking for a window to the world.

Today fifty years hence, whereas America and other western countries view China as a power in its own right India is nearly always seen as one part of a troubled subcontinent or at the best a powerful rival of Pakistan in their bitter struggle over Kashmir. Instead of being a global power she remains at the most a regional power embroiled in managing her relationship with a bunch of recalcitrant neighbours. In the meantime a new centre of power with Japan as an economic superpower and East Asian tigers forming a prosperity zone in the Pacific put up formidable challenge to India's aspirations. A prosperous and reunified Germany also comes up as an independent pivot of power in Europe on the same counts as those of Britain and France. It is still undetermined as to where India stands during the post Second World War and post

cold war power configurations across the world.

India once wanted to be considered in the same league as the western powers. Now she is not equated even with China and often held at par with Pakistan much to the disdain of Indians. India was clearly outstripped by China when the latter afflicted her southern neighbour with a crushing defeat in 1962 Himalayan war. Two years later when China exploded her first nuclear bomb, Nehru died broken hearted with his world view and the vision of India as a great power lying in tatter. Now onward it was China's turn to be on the ascendancy. With her finger firmly fixed on nuclear button she was admitted into

the US Congress. He made a reference to the house of being honoured with the presence of greatmen in the past that included Nehru of India. Today an Indian Prime Minister has to wait for the US president's consent to have a 40-minute meeting which does not get a line in American press or a blip on American television. When the heads of state of two important countries meet usually the strategic issues figure prominently in the discussion. But the Prime Minister primed with strategic ideas seemed to be summarily disposed off after Clinton's pet sermons on the critical importance of India's economic reforms vis-a-vis global economic opportunities. The failure to use Clinton-Gu-

that India had at the most, a South Asia policy or a Pakistan policy. She has so much overplayed the security threat from Pakistan that her much superior status has perforce been trivialised. As a result the international community tends to see her as an entity comparable to Pakistan. Now she cannot even regain the respectability of being looked upon as a potential contender of China. She wants a permanent seat in UN Security Council but sets no moral standard of her conduct in the region where her smaller neighbours were twisted, caajoled or intimidated for decades on petty issues — let alone a display of her magnanimity for the weak.

It is not thus surprising that India's passion for rise to power has now turned into paranoid sense of insecurity — particularly at the spectre of a resurgent, fast growing China. Insecurity in other sense arises also from her nagging doubts that the outside world persistently refuses to accord India her due. China's indifference coupled with her steady progress on all fronts visibly wounds the pride and psyche of India's governing elite and fuels India's drive for her apparently purposeless, expensive defence build-up depriving vast multitude of her population even of the basic needs of life.

Although Nehru himself, cashing on the western sentiments against communist China, initiated the build-up soon after India's humiliating defeat in Sino-Indian war, his daughter Indira Gandhi is considered the real architect of modern India's world class military with an undisclosed number of nuclear bomb, indigenously designed or modified long range missiles, aircraft, tanks, artillery and defence electronics. India's fourth

largest military of the world owes a great deal to her for all the impulses she provided to its build up. Even India's military-industrial complex has now come off an age as evident from her ability to build launchers capable of putting a fully operational satellite into orbit late last year notwithstanding an US blockade of her deal for a powerful rocket engine technology from Russia some years ago. But the unfortunate part of the whole exercise is: To what purpose has this phenomenal military capability been built up? New Delhi has throughout been loathe to explain its defence aims. Also otherwise India has never succeeded in articulating or pursuing her defence goal in a coherent, disciplined fashion. Is it only because she is big?

While India's defence preparedness seems Pakistan-specific, she has at no stage abandoned its intention to achieve a 'symbolic power equivalence' with China obviously to approach a world power status. But as the experiences over half a century make it abundantly clear, the two would never go together. She has either to trivialise her position by targeting Pakistan and be happy at that or raise her sight to target China after amicably settling her differences with Pakistan as well as other South Asian neighbours. India has not done either. Instead, she is in a mad rush to augment her military perhaps to earn the dubious sobriquet of 'an upper volta with rockets' — a term the Americans coined for the Russians during the closing years of the Union.

Although India has a tremendous capacity for national regeneration and renewal, the current political decline in India together with enormous domestic problems and hostility from outside for her stands on nuclear issues make the realisation of the dream of the nation's founding fathers extremely difficult, if not totally unattainable.



## PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

highly exclusive nuclear club without much fuss. Her admission into UN Security Council was only matter of time. With Nixon's adoption of one China policy in 1972, China quietly slipped into the slot of Taiwan as a permanent member of security council. Within a time span of less than a quarter of a century China was a bonafide great power. India, on the contrary, was left to lurch in her inability even to catch up with China in half a century — what to talk of ever catching up with elite old traditional powers of the west.

India's disappointment is revealed in more graphic term when it comes to the specifics. There was a time when John F Kennedy took pleasure in mentioning Nehru during his speech

at a meeting in September last year to discuss security issues or India's possible role in regional or global security is viewed in New Delhi as one of continuing sets back in her power projection. Only two months later when Chinese President goes there Clinton puts in elaborate home work on what to talk to him and media overflows with Jiang's doing and sayings. Many Indians are baffled now at such a precipitation of their national status.

But the Indians are no less responsible for the decline in their fortune. For decades India has been so obsessed with subcontinental affairs that it had practically no foreign policy in global terms expected of an aspirant for a global status. Instead, its critics have said, derisively,

## The New Faces of Terror

by Md Asadullah Khan

*It would be appropriate to say that if political parties or some invisible "godfathers" are bankrolling terrorism as they did in the case of Tariqullah, Sweden Aslam, Joseph or Bikash, then there is very little left for the people to pin any further hope for peace, survival and development.*

THE killing of Tariqullah, a newly elected chairman of Aganagar in Keraniganj thana of Dhaka district followed by the retaliatory and gruesome killing of Noor Mohammad alias Noor Commander, a veteran freedom fighter on January 4 last in broad day light has sent chills up anybody's spines. Most horrifying to recount, people loyal to Tariqullah shoved Noor Mohammad into a gunny bag, after they had chopped him into pieces, and set it ablaze in presence of hundreds of stupefied and dumbfounded onlookers and even law enforcers.

People are horrified by this and other killings going on without respite in and outside the city. But are we really surprised? With so much of violence going on day in and day out in our streets and localities we have become a nation where one's problems or disagreements are too often resolved by taking the life of another human being. Sadly true, we as a nation perhaps have lost belief in the sanctity of life.

Reports gleaned from the law enforcement agency sources reveal that Tariqullah, lately a BNP supporter and the first elected chairman of the newly constituent Aganagar Union Parishad in the Keraniganj thana had been a known terrorist. He had changed sides too often and at every opportune moment to suit his needs and goals. In fact, lack of moral and virtually no prickle of conscience in our political parties had kept them busy wooing criminals like Tariqullah and his likes and striking alliances of convenience. That undoubtedly paid off for Tariqullah in as much as the fact that he rose, with an education of class V from a boatman to a moneyed man of uncounted treasure and assets.

There were at least half a dozen criminal cases against him, as the police sources now allege, in arms act, extortionism, land grabbing, smuggling, murder and rape and women trafficking. He was allegedly involved in the killing of one Ratan, a businessman in Badamtoli area of the Dhaka city. Tariqullah's rise as a gangster and mastan was meteoric, unhindered and unchallenged either by the law enforcement agency or by the people in his area. As reports reveal in fact, he unleashed a reign of terror right from the year 1975 till the time of his assassination. A focus on the reports may reveal how crime sets its trend in the society.

After the shocking upheaval in the country in 1975, as reports reveal, Tariqullah became a member of the clandestine 'oil-pilferage' group in the Sadarghat area of the Dhaka city. He made a fortune by selling pilfered oil in the market without any resistance from any quarters. His group ruled supreme right from the year 1977. He was implicated in a murder case in 1982 along with 'Galakata Kamal'. Kamal was

sentenced to death but Tariqullah escaped scot free and later he became the leader of the infamous and clandestine 'Tariqa group'. His activities spread to menacing proportions in 1984 when he grabbed lands in areas adjacent to 'Nagarmahal Cinema Hall' in the city and set up brothels in that area besides having total control of the ferry ghats of Keraniganj and Sadarghat launch terminals. Incensed by his nefarious designs, people living in the precincts of Nagar Mahal Cinema hall at that time set the brothels ablaze when he shifted his trafficking business to 'Agamash area'. Most intriguing and shocking, during Ershad regime, Tariqullah's clandestine activities were bolstered by the ruling party through granting him license for three fire arms. Tariqullah unleashed a reign of terror in the Keraniganj area — during '88 election through murder and taking control of the election booths and hijacking of ballot boxes. In the 1988 election, Tariqullah and his men, as reports are now available allegedly murdered at least 8 persons namely Baikuntha Beara, Bashar and others in the Keraniganj area. Reports further reveal that since deserting 'Jatiyo Party' in 1991, Tariqullah joined the then ruling party and collected tolls to the tune of Taka ten

lakh each month through granting route permit for launches and allowing docking in the Sadarghat and Badamtoli area. Reports further reveal that Tariqullah owns three 'luxury entertainment gardens' in the areas namely Kaliganj, Aganagar and Isphani premises and as a resort to keep law enforcement agency and other stalwarts happy he often threw 'entertainment parties'. 'Tariqa Bahini', it is now known maintained a cadre force of 450 members equipped with lethal arms. Most shocking, Tariqullah and his cadre forces were so powerful that no FIR was taken by the police when Javed and Nurul were killed during Ershad regime believably by his men. Shockingly, the past governments and law enforcement agency stood by silently watching these dastardly acts to rise to such a menacing proportion. People know and believe that crime breeds crime, and inevitably more criminal actions are plunging the society into chaos and disarray.

These dastardly criminal activities of a microscopic section of the populace should have alerted the politicians and administrators to re-evaluate the goals of democratic society. Everyday concerns of security and safety of the society should not have been mortgaged to the ideology of power, wealth and

violence. Future problems, people now sadly but increasingly believe, would be fought between and against different organisations and criminal groups. The sooner this reality is understood, the better. It is in this light that our leaders, politicians and custodians of the society must take appropriate measure to curb terrorism, including trafficking of all sorts.

Most people now say that the country is faced with a crisis of governance the root cause of which is the 'flawed design' of our democracy. While committing ourselves to the dictum of development, taking measures that would enable us to ensure law, order and stability, we tend to think that everything is fair in love, war and politics. The resulting situation is that most people in the country are now deeply distressed with the failure of the state to fulfil their expectations of good governance. In such an atmosphere of despair, cynicism, fear and paralysing consequences, one can see the biggest danger of muscle-manny and terrorism creeping into the society and overtaking state power and running a parallel administration. People now learn with shock and trepidation that a list of only thirty 'godfathers' prepared at the behest of the law enforcing agency can't be pub-

lished not to speak of arresting them, for reasons known to the administration only. It would therefore be appropriate to conclude that if political parties or some invisible 'godfathers' are bankrolling terrorism as they did in the case of Tariqullah, Sweden Aslam, Joseph or Bikash, then there is very little left for the people to pin any further hope for peace, survival and development.

How shocking is it that the law enforcers proved singularly incompetent in meeting the security needs of Badamtoli Fruit Merchant Association? In the face of repeated extortion raids by the musclemen, traders in that area had to arrange their own security by collecting people of their own hordes through sounding alarm bells like siren! That means law enforcers have given in to the extortionist forces who appear to be stronger by all counts! On the other hand our experience only shows that once an individual or a group of the business community pays a ransom, it only exposes its susceptibility to fear. And this is ceaselessly exploited by the extortionist group and the vicious cycle of threat and payment never ends. Thus by giving in the extortionists' demands for tolls, we only perpetuate the problem rather than solve it. So some people now think that enough damage has been done and one cannot allow them to wreak more havoc in the country. But the question is: should the people follow the Badamtoli fruit merchants or accept the law enforcers to act, for whom they pay taxes?

## To the Editor...

### Agonies of an old man

Sir, It is hard to carry the load of worries and agonies in present times. Let it be expressed in the form of a short poem.

Hark! Dear, Bangladeshi people Corruption, injustice and violence everywhere

My heart echoes the sound of a great fear

find it suffering humanity

You, she and I long for a lasting peace to bear.

Abu Ashraf Noor Uttara, Dhaka

### Guarantee for pure water

Sir, There has been lot of talks about pure drinking water. The national radio, television, newspapers, seminars etc., have been regularly propagating the importance of drinking pure water by all, and serious health hazards associated to polluted water are being pointed out.

Nowadays a lot of companies are marketing bottled water which are supposed to produce pure water and each of them claiming to be the best. There is no follow-up from the government or checking these claims. As a result consumers are totally confused. We want our government to verify these claims either through ICDDR,B, UNICEF, WHO, Microbiology departments of universities or NGOs concerned and regularly inform the people about these.

This will eliminate from the public mind, any fear or panic, about various pollutants including arsenic in our drinking

water and protect them from wasting money.

Adv Sheikh Aktarul Islam Bangladesh Supreme Court Room No: 26 Dhaka

### Pay-scale for Pourasabha employees

Sir, The government has been pleased to announce the new national pay-scale for all the employees of the government, semi-government and autonomous bodies. The decision has been implemented in almost all the organisations but the employees of the Pourasabha, especially of the Jessore Pourasabha, have not yet got the same. The Pourasabhas are playing most important role for maintaining all-round welfare of the town-dwellers concerned.

As a consequence of the sky-high prices of the daily commodities and essentials the employees concerned are suffering badly. The Government, especially the Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives are requested to look into the matter immediately so that the Pourasabha employees may get the new pay-scale before the ensuing holy Eid-ul-Fitr.

Md Abdul Latif Khalifa Jessore

### Dormitories for the shelterless

Sir, Bangladesh is already prone to floods. Now due to global climatic change our country is also hit by cold waves. In most of the times when any part of our country is

affected by flood, the flood victims are temporary accommodated in schools and colleges and they are also provided with ornary food by the government.

But unfortunately our government does not take any measures worth mentioning except distributing a handful of clothes and a few blankets to mitigate the sufferings of the poor.

In the metropolitan city of Dhaka alone, we see and find hundreds of shelterless poor children, old men and women passing their dreadful nights under the open sky on footpaths and roadsides at Gullistan, Stadium, Kamalapur Railway Station, Sadarghat and many other places. Their sufferings need no description.

We would request the government especially the Ministry of Works and Ministry of LGRD to kindly do something to save the helpless and needy people from the clutches of the cold wave.

We suggest that in some areas of Dhaka and other towns a few dormitory-type building/halls may be constructed enabling the destitutes and shelterless people to pass their nights under a roof and to protect themselves from the cold wave in winter and rains in monsoon.

O H Kabir 6, Hare Street Wari, Dhaka-1203

### Crime and punishment

Sir, Sadia Afrin Lovely, an HSC-passed student from Lal-matia Mohila College, was brutally killed in broad daylight on December 30, 1997 by a heart-

less lover, Nasir, after she turned down his marriage proposal. Nasir fled the scene and is still absconding.

The repression of women has been increasing day by day rather than decreasing, and the killing of Lovely is another addition to the series of cruelty done to women. This has already worried us about the security of women.

The culprit must be arrested without any delay, brought under trial and given exemplary punishment which would be a precedent to the crime-mongering people.

Md Aminul Islam Department of English Jahangirnagar University.

### Criticism for the Sake of Criticism?

Sir, Critics are always welcome in a society for without them no society can prosper and develop, but they must know their limits, must know where to stop. In other words, their criticism must be constructive instead of the popular destructive ones ruling our country. For example, the governing party in Bangladesh presently is playing the role of the greatest critic, as they always criticise every move of BNP, the largest opposition party of our country. And BTV seems to be the best in doing it! Each and every day there has to be a programme in BTV that must have something to say against BNP. Even the two main news do not spare BNP.

This has only made it lose its objective character that a news should be governed by. At least during BNP's rule BTV did not play such a desperate role and yet if we come to think of it, did

Awami League in the opposition play its due role? Did it not do all these that BNP is doing now and in fact even more? Can anyone forget the way they stripped an office-gar amidst hartal, not sparing even the aged ones, during the non-cooperation movement days? I admit that BNP did commit some excesses during its time but that does not mean that if BNP had eaten cow dung Awami League will have to follow suit.

Let us now come to BTV programmes. Everyday there is some programme or the other concerning the CHT and always the same party people involved in the discussion talk! Can this sort of ridiculous efforts and action of BTV convince the people of Bangladesh that this is thought to have established? One should not take for granted all people to be fools!

Naseem Farhad 259/3 Senpara Parbata Mirpur 10, Dhaka

### Almighty doctors!

Sir, There are many people across the country who call themselves doctors although they have not passed out from any medical college. According to their claims, they can cure any person no matter whatever diseases they are suffering from. They have even the remedy of cancer which the most advanced countries with their all-out efforts are yet to discover. These so-called doctors generally make their medicine being instructed in their dreams.

The literacy rate of our country is not above 40 per cent. These fake doctors, capitalising the ignorance and simplicity of common people have been de-

ceiving so openly that we have stopped to take any notice of them.

As far as my knowledge goes, the Health Ministry is entrusted to take care of this sort of social malady. So, the authority concerned must take strict measures so that these fake doctors cannot keep on practicing. Otherwise, innocent people will not only lose money but also put their lives at stake.

Shamim Ahsan 64/J R K Mission Road, Gopibagh, Dhaka-1203

### Special WC cricket

Sir, We know, the Special World Cup cricket tournament will be held in Bangladesh, instead of Sharjah, with nine Test-playing countries. It should be a good experience for our cricketers.

But Bangladesh does not have the chance to participate in the tournament! Why Bangladesh should not also be given an opportunity to play in the tournament as a host country?

Shohel Rana 509/1 Zia Hall Dhaka University

### A bag with a map

Sir, A lady's school-bag, with a map drawn on it, is being sold in Dhaka city has drew my attention, and as a conscious citizen, I am very much worried. It shows that Bangladesh is a part of neighbouring India. I think it has already tarnished the prestige of my beloved motherland. The authorities concerned are humbly requested to take a drastic step against those who are involved in such a deed.

Shuib Ahmed 98/1, East Raja Bazar Dhaka