

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka Wednesday, February 11, 1998

### **A Milestone**

February 10, 1998 was a great day for Bangladesh. It was a very solid and big stepping stone for this small nation to become a truly great one. For on this day, this state resolved a bloody and tricky confrontation with wisdom, generosity and enlightenment — a problem bedevilling most nations of the world and to which satisfying answers are still eluding many of them. The ethnic minority problem is a historic one spanning centuries. When we recall the predicaments of the Kurds or, nearer home, of Sri Lanka with its belligerent Tamils, we get an idea of the importance of the Accord and yesterday's arms surrender. The two parties that became one on Tuesday had an equal share in the wisdom, generosity and yes, enlightenment that made the national integration take a great stride through a recognition of ethnico-cultural diversity.

And it took courage. First on the part of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She went straight for the difficult thing and never faltered till the whole thing was wrapped up and delivered as an accomplished covenant of peace in the hills. Not that other options were not open to her — of letting the thing pass through unmeaning exercises in palaver while our people kept on dying in the hills and civic life was devastated through pervasive insecurity. She chose peace — the choice of the truly

What has been achieved is significant. But to keep it and translate it into practice will need sustained grit and resoluteness. And as the accord will start taking effect as pieces of law, many will be the lacunae discovered along the way. As such the implementation will need creativity as well on the part of not only the government but also the JS. The success of the accord, to be available tangibly in the overall development of the area and its people as also culturally in the shape of education and artistic-scientific development would, however, depend very fundamentally on the good neighbourliness between the hill people and the settlers from the plains.

Cessation of armed hostility in the hills on Tuesday is possibly the first great and immensely significant vindication of the spirit and the ideals of the Liberation War. We, the hill people very much included, have done unto ourselves a glorious turn and set a proud example to the world. Let a prosperous hill region contribute to Bangladesh's strivings to get out of poverty's way and peaceful bountiful future for us all.

#### What a Precedent to Set!

We are frankly more outraged than bemused by BNP MP Hasibur Rahman Swapan's jaunty ride to Deputy Ministership in the AL government. By one fell stroke of mutual back-scratching political expediency national politics and parliamentary ethics, already under heavy clouds of incredibility, have slid yet another notch lower. We do not know how much of a nadir we might still reach in this free fall of political virtues.

This surpasses all the classical numbers of political opportunism we have had on our racks in the very unique sense that both the beneficiary and the benefactor apparently acted in the belief that loss of parliamentary membership would not be involved in the switch Hasibur Rahman made. For, Article 70 of the Constitution envisages loss of membership only in the event of resignation from the party or for voting against the party whip. Technically he has done neither but BNP has expelled him on disciplinary ground. So one has to perhaps wait and see as to how that action by BNP impacts on his status as a parliament member. At any rate, a non-MP can also be a minister. So, it has been a calculated risk in that kind of a hypothetical scenario. Basically though the deliberateness of the act makes it look worse than floorcrossing or horse-trading. Although the first one is precluded by our anti-defection law, it nonetheless connotes a modicum of dissenting conviction and bravado and the second is done only in a context of poll results having produced a hung parliament.

We have in the past seen quite a few disreputable switches in party loyalties almost like changing of clothes but these were inconsequential compared to the bad precedent set now by the AL having enticed a sitting BNP member to its fold by the lure of deputy ministership. So, the government is to blame more than Rahman. As for the toast of a convert Rahman is now to the AL all we have to say is he could be on a moral perch like Akhtaruzzaman in criticising BNP's boycott of parliament from inside the party. But no, he allowed himself to be succumbed to the enticement. We do not want politicians like him.

## Why So Late?

Finally the government has lived up to it. But not before an awfully long lapse of time. The rape and murder of Yasmeen — the case that would probably go down the history as the first 'official and collective' dawning of our consciousness against repression on women - seemed to have petered into oblivion after a court in Rangpur acquitted the accused members of the law enforcing agency. Various women's rights groups contested the verdict and rumbled in protests. We lent our voice to the uproar because in a suit of justice the verdict is only as good as the manner in which the case was presented and there was and is no doubt that Yasmeen murder case reeked of some foul play right through.

Belatedly though the government seems to have finally risen to its duty of ensuring the fundamental rights of the citizen and fight any attempt to undermine these by any individual or quarter. It has filed an appeal before the High Court against the verdict of the District and Sessions judge of Rangpur. We welcome this legalistic activism on the part of the government.

Having said that we can't help observe that it did not exactly stem from a steadfast commitment to the cause of impartiality, fairness or a systemic moral obligation. Rather the pressure and moral goading from outside which has somewhat 'forced' it into seeking a legal recourse. A state is morally bound for the preservation of the rights of its citizen. This is a sacrosanct bond between the republic and its members which is immune to discrimination by gender, religion or whatever.

# Niazi Had Two Options

Niazi says: 'Ordered to lay down arms by the President to save West Pakistan, my mind swung between the two options — risk West Pakistan being further overrun, or jeopardise my reputation, my career, my future, and the high tradition of the Pakistan Army by submitting to the orders. I had accepted a task beset with hazards and difficulties, when East Pakistan was in disarray and disorder."

War - have written on what led to the surrender of Dhaka. Lt Gen A A K Niazi, who commanded the Pakistan forces in the then East Pakistan, is probably the last one to was not told of the preemptive strike and start of operations in give his version in a book, The Betrayal of East Pakistan in west Pakistan before they took place". As a matter of fact, he which he alleges that former Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali had advised his government against starting any full-scale Bhutto and General Yahya operations for if these were Khan, Pakistan's C-in-C at that time "hatched a conspiracy" at launched then "East Pakistan would have to bear the force of Larkana, Bhutto's home town, to lose East Pakistan intenmajor Indian offensive which tionally. Niazi argues that the he would not be able to cope government in power did not with his existing resources.' take the case of Indian invasion There is no regret of remorse to the UN Security Council expressed by Niazi for his debacle. Instead, he says: "Our west straight away because the motive was to give India "enough Pakistan army let us down by not launching the offensive to time to win the encounter." He

win the battle of East Pakistan

the time to reach New York and in the west, which they were not pressuring the pro-Paksupposed to do and for which they had enough forces, ample istani countries at the UN to neresource and initiative. He says: gotiate a cease-fire. Niazi confirms Pakistan "We at least saved West Pak-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's istan by pinning down 12 Inrecent admission after returndian divisions." He points out ing from Dhaka that it was a that the advisers from Russia mistake not to have handed were "working with the Indian over power to Sheikh Mujibur forces. Rahman's Awami League after The impression that Niazi it secured a majority in the was waiting for the Chinese in-1970 polls in the erstwhile East tervention is confirmed from Pakistan. "It was a consistent his account. He reproduces what policy of all the rulers to dehe had written on December 5. prive the East Pakistanis of

T EARLY all of them —

▲ Bangladesh Liberation

attacks Bhutto for taking all

those who fought in the

1971. "...I am informed by GHQ their legitimate right of particthat Chinese help will soon be ipation in the governance and forthcoming. This is farce, just decision making process of the a picture painted to mislead us when in truth nothing is hapcountry," says Niazi. That India attacked Pakpening." Niazi also recalls the istan in the west has been the assurance he was given before contention of Islamabad. Niazi hostilities that Islamabad says it was Pakistan which would stay in touch with his started the war: "I fail to underforces "via the hump route over stand why GHQ fed us with false China and Tibet. He says: report that India had initiated a "When the Indians did impose war in the west. In actual fact the blockade, I spoke to General we had attacked India in the Hamid (next to General Yahya Khan) about using the 'hump west." Niazi's interrogation which Indians held after his route'. He said, 'Sorry, Niazi, we surrender also reveals that "he cannot use the route, you are on

your own, carry on with whatever you have - good luck.' I was

abandoned in midstream." Niazi has a poor opinion of our commanders, who planned and executed the Bangladesh operation. The Indian military plans, he says, were based not on proper appreciation but on pre-conceived ideas. "Their plan suffered from numerous inadequacies and flaws, failing to take into account the terrain, the communication system, and the fighting capability of the Pakistani soldiers. Having the full support of local popula-

book, Surrender at Dhaka, that he (Aurora) was "completely over-awed by General S H F Manekshaw." Jacob narrates an incident when Manekshaw admonished senior officers and Aurora "remained silent". Jacob says: "This incident further strained relations between some formation commanders and the army commander

(Aurora) as they have expected some support from him." Niazi gives an interesting insight into Bhutto's mind when the two met in Sukkur

# Jail before his internment.

## Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

BETWEEN THE LINES

tion and access to local resources and complete upto-date information about us, conducive circumstances, and a preponderance in everything. they over-assessed their fighting abilities and their chances of gaining a quick victory.

He singles out Lt Gen J S Aurora, incharge of Bangladesh operation, for his stock criticism. He says that Aurora "frittered away all his resources against unimportant objectives. Had he concentrated all his armour in Rangpur-Hilli and Tura-Mymensingh sector. which were ideal tank terrains. he would have achieved better results." Lt Gen J F L Jacob, the number two to Aurora, has also not spoken well about Aurora's leadership. Jacob says in his

Bhutto said: "Niazi. I am really sorry for being hard on you. When we go back, we will work together'. I said, 'Mr Bhutto, how can we work together? We have got quite different views. we are more or less enemies.' He said. Niazi, I realized my mistake and tried to compensate you but you refuse my offers...' I said. 'Now you tell me why you sent me to jail'. He said: 'You were becoming dangerous to

The worst indictment that Niazi makes is that of General Zia-ul-Haq. He says that "Zia was neither a good General nor a good administrator, nor did he do anything good for the country. He kept promising democracy but never delivered it, and he made a mockery of Islam. He left behind death and mortgages, hunger and unemployment, exploitation and discrimination, smuggling and nepotism. He introduced Kalashnikovs and heroin to the country, made his relatives rich and gave Siachin to the Indi-

When Niazi says that he objected to the idea of a 'surrender ceremony' and that the Indians were adamant to hold one, he is on firm ground. Jacob, who discussed the terms of Pakistan's surrender, concedes that Niazi insisted on having a cease-fire and that there was an understanding that the document to be signed would take out his wishes. Jacob says that he communicated this to General Manekshaw, who was "noncommittal". Jacob expected something less than surrender. "I took a careful look at the documents and was aghast to see the heading which read "Instrument of Surrender," complains Jacob. Niazi says that he had to agree to a surrender ceremony. "They (Indians), blackmailed us by threatening to kill the loyal Bengalis. In fact,

Dhaka was the key to Niazi's strategy. He describes at length how he had prepared for its defence. Jacob laments that the importance of Dhaka, the final objective, was not even considered by the Chiefs of Staff in Delhi. They were more concerned with the capture of towns and territory. "The capture of towns is time consuming and costly in lives..." Jacob agrees with Niazi that the capture of Dhaka should have been given the top most priority.

young men were butchered and we were told that all the civilians would be handed over to the Mukti Bahini.

Niazi skips the surrender ceremony. However, Jacob describes it thus: "I looked at my watch. It showed a time of 1655 hours. Niazi then undid his epaulette and removed his .39 revolver with attached lanyard and handed it over to Aurora. There were tears in his eyes. It was getting dark. The crowd on the Race Course started shouting anti-Niazi and anti-Pakistan slogans and abuses. We were concerned about Niazi's safety, there being hardly any troops available at the Race Course. We senior officers formed a cordon around Niazi and escorted him to an Indian

Army jeep."
Recalling those moments, Niazi says: "Ordered to lay down arms by the President to save West Pakistan, my mind swung between the two options - risk West Pakistan being further overrun, or jeopardise my reputation, my career, my future, and the high tradition of the Pakistan Army by submitting to the orders. I had accepted a task beset with hazards and difficulties, when East Pakistan was in disarray and disorder." He does not explain why his forces killed hundreds of Bengali intellectuals a couple of days before the surrender. However during the interrogation when asked why he had armed so many unreliable Razakars. he said this was under the orders of the central and provin-

cial governments. Of course, Niazi defends himself all the way and takes satisfaction in the reported remark made by Aurora that: "He had an impossible task under extremely difficult conditions. Any other general in these circumstances could not have done better."

# LETTER FROM AMERICA

better part of two years.

force not from the Palestinians.

but from Jordan. The UN Secu-

rity Council Resolution 242 in

the aftermath of the 1967 "six-

day war" called upon Israel to

withdraw from the occupied

territories, which Israel has

not; something to keep in mind

as the West demands full com-

pliance from Iraq with all the

bantustans for the Palestini-

ans, with no political or eco-

nomic viability. Netanyahu

further demanded that before

any withdrawal the Palestinian

authority must hand over

Palestinians accused of terror-

ism in Israel. Israelis arrested

for killing Palestinians will

not, however, be turned over to

the Palestinian authority.

Another Netanyahu demand is

that the Palestinian authority

suppress hostile propaganda, by

journalists and preachers. Ne-

tanyahu will not silence the Is-

raelis hostile to the Palestini-

ans, or control extremist Is-

raelis of the kind that called

Yitzhak Rabin a traitor and as-

sassinated him for signing the

ity" Netanyahu demanded that

tougher security measures

against terrorism. When the

the Palestinian authority take

Under the guise of "reciproc-

Not content with creating

UN resolutions.

# Netanyahu Imperils ME Peace with More Bad Manners

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton For the sake of his place in history, President Clinton may be hesitant to take on the Israeli juggernaut. Here is an inconvenient thought for the President: how can history be kind to a timid President who fails to stand

TN an attempt to offset the cool reception that Israeli Prime Minister expected to receive at the hands of President Bill Clinton at the White House last month, Netanyahu's first act upon reaching the US soil was to meet up with people well known for their dislike of Clinton, the Palestinians and the Muslims

Netanyahu's first meeting was with the Pat Robertson's Coalition, followed by meetings with House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and the founder of Moral Majority. Jerry Falwell — all well-known haters' of Muslims in general. and the Palestinians in particular. Falwell promised to mobilize Christian Right to oppose ceding another inch of land to the Palestinians. Later, Netanyahu met with Senator Jesse Helms, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. to make sure that the flow of the annual three and a half billion dollars of the US tax payers' money to Israel continues unimpeded, regardless of his disagreements with President Clinton.

Israel is the only country in the world, whose Prime Minister can come to the US, campaign vigorously against the stated policy of the United States government, and continue to receive Congressional support, and the annual three and a half billion dollars in aid. By contrast, just for the crime of professing neutrality during the Gulf War, the US Congress promptly cancelled the measly 50 million dollars that was supposed to have gone to Jordan

One has to be incredibly stupid not to realize by now that Netanyahu is not interested in making peace with the Palestinians. Of course, master of the glib has been telling Americans that he is all peace. But the only formula for attaining peace is land Netanyahu's "peace" has no land in mind for the Palestinians. This is hoax he has been successfully perpetuating on the world for

up to a rogue like Netanyahu! Israeli government officials ne-The Netanyahu cabinet regotiated a detailed security prosolved that Israel must retain tocol with the authority, Netanyahu rejected it. He could control of all Jewish settlements, routes for not afford to have Yasser Arafat future highways, security zones accede to any of his demands! on borders and "enveloping Netanyahu has thus far kept Jerusalem", water and other afloat a clever dual deception. infrastructure and historic For the sake of the relations sites sacred to the Jews. Simply with the US, he is keeping alive put, more than 70 per cent of the illusion that he is ready for the West Bank, leaving the peace. On the other hand, he Palestinians just about what has told his right wing cabinet they have now. Lost in the Isthat the peace negotiations are raeli rhetoric is the fact that the a hoax. West Bank is an occupied terri-Realizing full well that tory that Israel captured by

sooner or later the Palestinians are going to react unfavourably to his deception. Netanyahu has devised three plans for countering Palestinian unrest, according to Israeli Press reports. Code name "Molten Steel" is for a response to specific and limited incident, "Indian Summer" for an uprising that did not require entering Palestinian areas, and "Field of Thorns" for an all-out attack on Palestinian towns. Mr. Netanyahu is clearly itching to inflict the might of the Israeli military on the unarmed Palestinian civilians.

Benjamin Netanyahu has always led a charmed life. The Netanyahus left Israel when the Prime Minister was a boy and settled in Philadelphia USA. Netanyahu kids went to school in Cheltenham, about forty miles from where the writer lives. Upon high school graduation, Benjamin went to MIT for his college degree. I was after the six-day war in 1967, that the Netanyahus returned to Israel. Now, if a Palestinian family had undertaken the same journey, they would have been banned from reentering their homeland for ever. So much for Israeli jus-

Perhaps we are asking too much from Israel. To expect a

country - founded on stealing land forcibly from the Palestinians — to be fair, let alone generous, is asking for too A staunch supporter and friend of Israel, President

Clinton must be feeling used. Netanyahu has ignored American demand for "credible" withdrawal from West Bank. On the contrary, he takes these meetings with Clinton as opportunities to defy the US President, thus becoming a greater hero in Israel.

Palestinian authority President Yassir Arafat also came to Washington, and reminded President Clinton that Netanyahu's Israel is going back on what it agreed to do under the Oslo accord. The President gave him a patient hearing, and read him the Israeli demands.

The President's mind seemed to be elsewhere - he was distracted by the latest allegation of sexual misconduct against

As far as Israel is concerned. a US President is useful as long as he is an uncritical supporter of Israel. If he wavers, the Israeli lobby begins to make life. very difficult for him. Prior to ganizations took out full page ads in dailies such as the New York Times warning Mr. Clinton not to pressure Netanyahu. With Vice President Al Gore, an out and out Israeli supporter for political expediency (he

tanyahu seemed to be telling President Clinton is: "give me my three and a half billion dollars, and shut up!"

There are recourses open to a US President if he decides to take those. If a US President really decides to confront an Israeli government, that Israeli government is history. Just ask Yitzhak Shamir — the recipient of President Bush's wrath, that spelled the collapse of his government in early 1992.

For the sake of his place in history, President Clinton may be hesitant to take on the Israeli juggernaut. Here is an in-Mr. Netanyahu's meeting with convenient thought for the President Clinton, Jewish or President: how can history be kind to a timid President who fails to stand up to a rogue like

Netanyahu! What happens next in the Middle East? Now that the grown-ups have failed, it is up to the sixteen year-old Palestinians with stones in hand or a bomb strapped to their

Yitzhak Rabin, why have

## **OPINION**

# The UN and the Garment Industry

cised for public awareness.

wants Jewish support for his

Presidential bid) watching the

President's every move like a

hawk, President Clinton has

very few options. What Mr. Ne-

It is very rare to read in the press about the initiative taken by the vast UN system on improving the working conditions of the millions of ready-made garment workers in the Third World. One of the core aims of the UN is to eradicate poverty; which translates into better wages and job opportunities. better working conditions and better amenities and facilities. The result is that the garment industry in a developing country is putting the Administration to constant pressure throughout each year to compete globally, as the situation is exploited by the rich importers. with standard of living many times higher.

This responsibility may now have been transferred to WTO. The latter appears to be very keen to push the interest of the richer developed and industrialised countries, led by the famous or infamous) Harkin's Law on the use of child labour. The global markets are being prised open in the developing

planning. In that plan, she also

has developed infrastructure as

well as technology for keeping

those aircraft air-worthy and

in operational-readiness. Be-

sides, they have also developed

necessary weapons/retrofits to

suit their operational require-

ments in a self-reliant manner.

But for our country, in weapon

planning, following queries

may arise: - A) Will this aircraft

fit in the overall strategic plan

of our country? B) Do we have

adequate infrastructure to sup-

A Husnain countries. How WTO is helping the LDCs? A series of seminars would throw more light on this elusive issue. Bangladesh's efforts at the UN have to be publi-

The local garment industry cannot provide most of the benefits and enhanced working conditions due to financial constraints and rock-bottom export prices which deny the workers decent minimum wages; unless the minimum FOB export prices are agreed upon internationally through mutually agreed working formulas, so that undercutting may not be practised in any exporting country, putting another poor countries into disadvantage. Some guidelines are necessary from the world body. and the importers penalised for under-priced garment exports.

It may be recalled that the garment importers make a huge profit on each garment sold, the disparity between the retail

price and the import cost is several times higher; while the importers are always under pressure, and the workers work under sub-human conditions. The end product is the development of the human resources, not the

product itself.

The administrator of a single country cannot solve these problems economically or financially, without the active cooperation of the importers and the world bodies. This im-port-export forum or body has to make itself visible. The UN system is weak in 2-way action. and weaker in enforcing decisions in favour of the Third World.

The international garments export association, if there is any, may start a publicity campaign, and put pressure on world opinion to get a fair deal for the garment worker, most of them women; considering that a prime objective of the UN is empowerment of women.

Let us see both sides of the

#### "House Rent Hike"

Sir, The editional on 20 January, 1998 was very timely indeed. Please accept my hearty congratulations on being very positive and forceful against "house rent hike" in present times. Being a retired person, like many, I cannot afford to pay any extra amount for the house rent at Uttara model

now kept apart from my own brother and sister who desire to help my family in times of need and emergency. But under compelling situations I have been living here with the divine blessings in my old age, I am grateful to the owner of the house for his compassionate and sensible approach to the

tenants such as myself. The owner of my apartment is a university teacher. He is a noble soul worth emulating by others. I strongly believe that there are many such houseowners who have been playing a vital role in maintaining social harmony in this "useless

society." Good tenants are much better than so-called tenants with evil motives. The 1963 House Rent Ordinance should be made effectively operative in all cases for the benefit of the retired persons or the middle class and the lower middle class people.

The government should come to their rescue for reducing the hardship and sufferings of the "have-nots". The evil doers among the house-owners must be dealt with the law of the land. The sooner, the better.

Abul Ashraf Noor Uttara, Dhaka

Oslo accord.

#### Russia and the Russians

Sir. As a regular reader of For the obvious reasons I am objectivity and depth of its articles especially on politics and economy across the world. But I was dismayed at the way Anatoly Chubais, Russia's former finance minister, was presented in its issue of 22 November

It wanted to say that the name of Mr Chubais was synonymous with Russia's economic reform. It also described him as the most effective reformer of Russia. But what have learnt from competent and reliable sources is other-

People in Russia have taken it for granted that although Mr Chubais is a very ambitious man, his contributions to economic reform there is almost zero. They think that endeavours for economic reform are about to tumble down because of his policies and actions.

Abu Mohamed Obaydullah S-8 Park Plaza Apartment 31 Banani, Road 17, Dhaka-1213

#### IFAD's support to small NGOs

Sir, We are pleased to see a news item in the front page of on 18th January, 1998 to the effect that IFAD (International Fund Agricultural Development) will now assist and fi nance small NGOs working at the grassroots level for poverty alleviation in the country. According to Mr Fawzi Hamad Al-Sultan, the IFAD chief, the organisation has so far implemented projects through big organisations like Grameen Bank, BRAC, Proshika for development activities in Bangladesh, and now it will take small NGOs as working partners, as poverty alleviation is still the greatest challenge facing the world.

This is indeed a good news for small NGOs that really need fund and assistance for poverty alleviation at the grassroots level. Small NGOs can hardly approach funding agencies like WFP, WHO, CEC, World Bank as these organisations do not fund or assist small NGOs directly. We sincerely appreciate the new approach of IFAD and this will enable the organisation to be acquainted with the real social structure and status of the poor in the countryside.

A N M Fazlullah FCMA Tangail Rural Development PO. Putiazani Bazar.

PS. Delduar, Dist. Tangail

#### MIG-29 in Our Armed Forces Recently, on two occasions

AR Choudhury in the Defence Services Comport this hi-tech aircraft for our mand and Staff College, hontype of operations? C) Against whom can this weapon system ourable PM has declared that our Airforce will be equipped be effectively (strength as well with MIG-29 aircraft as a part as efficiency) used? D) Will we of modernization programme. be able to train our airmen and The said aircraft is an expenconduct operational exercises sive sophisticated Supersonicin realistic scenario? E) The Fighter-Ground-Attack airother related considerations craft. Soviet Union developed it are: (1) What are the source of to deploy against the then project's fund and the source of NATO threat for specific role supply of this aircraft (whether and tasks. Soviet Unions relisupply pipeline would remain able ally and our nearest neighopen during peace as well as in bour received this aircraft as conflict)? (2) What would be the well as its technology from extent of operational, mainte-USSR on the basis of the then nance and training cost for ef-USSR's global strategy and mufective utilization of this airtual benefit. Thus, our neighcraft and the source of fund to bour got it on very easy terms meet that? for her own long-term force

A diplomat was heard saying, on technical ground, it would be tight and prodigal for Bangladesh to operate and maintain this aircraft from her own resources, unless it is procured from the manufacturer and also Bangladesh having a long term friendly defence pact with that manufacturing country. Politically, will it not be difficult to convince friendly neighbours, if aircraft introduced for real business? More over it is true for all flying machines (more for sophisticated

ones) that if one small critical spare becomes unavailable. then it cannot work even as push cart. Again, if it becomes burden during real time operation, then why not we have a flexible, useful and affordable one? On this issue, the leader of the opposition has also quipped that present government has decided to introduce this aircraft in our armed forces only to benefit certain quarters who are not the manufacturer, but have only facility of repair and overhaul. Should we not then determine our most immediate national priority first, at the backdrop of our economic strength and strategy, before we go for such expensive shopping with hard currency? In this connection, an "Opin-

ion" appeared in in The Daily Star(Jan 28), captioned "Can We Peep into the Shopping Bag" of Dr Shahdeen Malik, has attracted my attention and I fully agree with his views because of prevailing scenario. I also hoped, Brig. Hafiz who was once the chief of BISS and now a column writer of DS, would throw some light on the above decision of PM, in the backdrop of our strategic need, but yet to see any spark from his tinder box.