

## Looking at CHT Treaty through BNP's Eyes

by Dr Khandakar Quadrat-I Elahi

**BNP must prove conceptually and factually that CHT Treaty (i) threatens our National Integrity, (ii) undermines our Sovereignty and (iii) sacrifices our National Interests. Otherwise their objections are just meaningless propaganda, something it (BNP) has been doing since long.**

I love to debate and discuss but only with a few men and for my own sake. For I find it an especially unworthy profession for a man of honour to serve as a spectacle to the great and shamelessly parade of one's mind and one's prattling, says Michel de Montaigne, a 16th century French philosopher and essayist. The greatest historical significance of this philosopher lies in his role as one of the earliest philosophic architects of and propagandists for the modern Liberal doctrine and regime.

It is indeed futile to debate on BNP's accusations against the CHT Treaty; they are clearly motivated by its narrow and irresponsible power politics. We can appeal to their conscience — which the whole nation, including the Honourable President, is doing repeatedly — but they would not voluntarily come to reason.

My intentions in examining BNP's objections are not to refute them, but to understand them more clearly. I will do so in the light of BNP's own Political Philosophy: BANGLADESH JATIOTABAD. This I hope will dispel some of the confusions that BNP has created in the public mind.

BNP and its allies have erected three major objections: The CHT Treaty (i) threatens National Integrity, (ii) undermines Sovereignty and (iii) sacrifices National Interests. To understand and be able to comment on these objections, which primarily concern our Nation and its interests, we first must have a clear idea about the concept, Nation. Below three concepts are discussed in the sequence of their development: Nationalism, Nation and State.

Nationalism, as an intellectual and cultural concept, developed in the 18th century Europe and grew into a conscious political force during the French Revolution. It is the political belief that some group of people represents a natural community which should live under one political system and be independent of others.

Many social factors contribute to the development of a Nation, but following are the most important: culture, history, language, religion and ethnic character.

Two points should be noted. First, Nation represents a natural community, formed by common sympathies among its members, developed, over centuries perhaps, through sharing such societal factors as mentioned above. Second, the natural community desires to be governed by its own members.

Today's world political order is organized around a network of independent States, whose founding ideas are Nation and Nationalism. The State has four integral physical attributes: (i) identified people, (ii) defined territory (iii) a government and (iv) sovereignty.

There are fundamental differences between the Nation and the State. First, the Nation is a desired sovereign political society while the State is an actual sovereign body politic representing a single, often unique, political system. Second, a Nation is a naturally developed community; it can not be created by force. But the State is a political society created by humans, by consent or by force. Finally, a State can contain more than one Nations, but not vice versa. Many Nations, to achieve their socioeconomic goals, can join to form a State but many States cannot be forced or persuaded to form a Nation. A State representing many Nations definitely distinguishes it from a Nation.

I shall now look into Bangladesh Jatiotabad. My source is: BANGLADESH JATIOTABAD SMARAK GRANTHA, edited by Ahmed

Musa. Mr Musa describes the perspective and development of Bangladesh Jatiotabad in the following way:

Muslims in British India created Pakistan — based on Two-Nation Theory — to prevent Hindu domination while Bengalis in Pakistan created Bangladesh — based on Two-Nation Theory — to prevent Punjabi domination. But, people's Jatiotabadi consciousness did not change, what changed was their Jatiotabadi identity; Jatiotabad only changed its target. Jinnah named the desire of Muslims as Pakistani Jatiotabad or more properly Muslim Jatiotabad and Sheikh Mujib named the desire of the people of East Pakistan as Bengali Jatiotabad. When Bangladesh was created, Jatiotabad changed its target again. Ziaur Rahman named the desire of Bangladeshi people to resist the domination of foreign and neighbouring States as Bangladeshi Jatiotabad.

The above is the history and background of development of BNP's political philosophy, Bangladesh Jatiotabad. This political slogan was concocted under the leadership of General Ziaur Rahman when he seized power after President Sheikh Mujib was killed in 1975. Ziaur Rahman specifies seven integral elements of Bangladesh Jatiotabad: (i) race or people (ii) war of independence (iii) Bengali language (iv) religion (v) territory (vi) culture and (vii) economy.

It should be noted that Ziaur Rahman's conception of Nationalism is substantially different from its theoretical concept. He has either confused the concepts, State and Nation or combined them.

The ideas of Nation and Nationalism have been conceived and developed into conscious political movements to protect two fundamental demands of humanity: human freedom and human rights. These demands

are best achieved by allowing natural communities to rule themselves. Thus, the cardinal intellectual objective of the concepts, Nation and Nationalism, is to identify and isolate natural communities, which are candidates for independent States. BNP's political philosophy has the same objective.

Who are the people included in the natural community which BNP calls Race? They are first and foremost Muslims (religion), speaking Bengali (language), living in the area called Bangladesh (territory). All these combine to define their culture — Bengali Muslim. They fought the war of liberation against Pakistan to create their homeland.

Do the tribal people of CHT belong to BNP's Race? Their language, religion and culture are fundamentally different from BNP's Race. They did not participate in Pakistan movement. On the contrary, they protested when their territory was annexed to Pakistan. Their participation in the war of liberation was less than enthusiastic.

By the criterion set by BNP, the people of CHT then do not belong to its conception of Nation and hence do not subscribe its idea of Nationalism. On the contrary, they have their own Nation and idea of Nationalism. This clearly means that the State of Bangladesh has two distinct Nations whose territories are well defined and demarcated: (i) the people of CHT and (ii) the rest of the country.

It is an undeniable and unrefutable fact that the people of CHT constitute a separate Nation. By this virtue, they have the same right of self-rule as we have ours. Because they are part of the State of Bangladesh, the nature of self-rule shall be determined through political negotiations between representatives of the two Nations. Exactly these negotiations have taken place and been concluded

by the CHT Treaty.

BNP has continually refused, since its birth, to accept the Nationhood of CHT people and by that had strangled and trampled their demands for participation in governing themselves. BNP's CHT policy simply reflects its political philosophy and is just part of its overall politics. The question is: Should we deny the Fundamental Rights of CHT people — The Right of Self-Rule — because they are part of the state of Bangladesh? If we do, we will be both stupid and hypocrite. We will be stupid by failing to recognize the development of the world around us: Empires and states had disintegrated because they failed to meet the demands of all nations constituting them. We will be hypocrite by neglecting the fact that we succeeded from Pakistan only 27 years ago because Pakistani rulers refused to accept our demand for provincial autonomy.

DOES CHT TREATY THREATEN OUR NATIONAL INTEGRITY? The integrity of the State of Bangladesh means holding its entire territory together. This is only possible and desirable if the people of CHT voluntarily and willingly cooperate. These people, who refused to remain a part of our state, have now agreed to share our glory and our pride as an independent State. If this does not mean consolidating our National Integrity, then what the hell does the concept imply? The CHT Treaty is unquestionably and undeniably a bold step towards consolidating the integrity of the State of Bangladesh.

DOES THE CHT TREATY UNDERMINE OUR

SOVEREIGNTY? Sovereignty, which means the absolute power and authority to formulate and execute laws of the State, is its most important attribute; most important because, it is the key to maintain political order without which the society cannot exist. It has two aspects, external and internal. The State exercises its absolute power and authority upon members of the natural communities who have created it — the internal sovereignty. External sovereignty means the quality of independence from the control or interference of any other State in the conduct of international relations.

What is the source of sovereignty? We must know to understand BNP's allegations.

The people forming the State are the original and ultimate source of sovereignty. They appoint the government to exercise it on their behalf and the government can do so, so long as the people trust it. In other words, if people refuse to obey the government, it has no moral authority over them, meaning it loses its internal sovereignty authority. The measure of external sovereignty is the internal sovereignty. The external sovereignty authority of the government is substantially weakened if it lacks internal sovereignty.

The CHT Treaty has consolidated our National Integrity, as it fulfills the demands of CHT people. Both our internal sovereignty and external sovereignty are thus strengthened. We are now more capable to destroy the evil designs of India, if she has ones as BNP is continually telling us, to undermine our sovereignty. BNP's

accusations and apprehensions are conceptually unfounded and have never been substantiated with evidence that they really exist.

HAS CHT TREATY SACRIFICED OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS? This Treaty will impact upon three of our very important national interests — two political and one socio-economic. The two political interests are: integrity and sovereignty of the country, expected to be strengthened instead of being undermined. As to our socioeconomic interests, it requires just commonsense to understand that the political environment created by the CHT Treaty constitutes a boost in our efforts to improve our socioeconomic conditions. Political stability resulting from the CHT Treaty is the fundamental requirement for socioeconomic development. Then more economic resources will become available, internally and externally, as the military expenditures shrink and foreign governments become more generous. I overwhelmingly agree with French Ambassador Ms Renee Veyret, who, commenting on the Treaty, recently said, "What is good for CHT is also good for Bangladesh."

Before ending this essay, I wish to draw my readers' attention to the following questions:

First, Both BNP and JP have rejected the CHT Treaty. This problem originated and matured during the periods of their rule. Why had they allowed the problem to develop in the first place? And why they did not solve it in the way they think would be most favourable to our national interests?

JP first congratulated the Treaty and now has rejected it. What a marvellous political acumen it has demonstrated to us and the world!

Second, BNP is now refusing to discuss the CHT Treaty in the Parliament. The reason is: It demanded to expose the main

points of the Treaty before it were signed. Now that the Treaty has been signed, it is meaningless to discuss it. Has anybody ever heard that the contents of an intended treaty, particularly when it is political one, are released to the public before it is signed?

BNP's recent position on the CHT Treaty raises a fundamental question about our political system: Who are authorized to exercise the sovereignty of our State? The Government or the Opposition party? By demanding that it must be consulted before signing the Treaty, BNP is telling us that the Government does not have the authority to make treaties independently.

BNP has decided not to legally challenge the government for the signing the peace treaty with the tribal people of CHT. It has no other hand, decided to face the situation politically (Riaz Osmanli NFB December 14. An interesting note).

BNP's recent decision not to challenge the Treaty in the court simply testifies what we all know: The Constitution of Bangladesh gives all the authority to the Government to exercise its sovereignty. To fight the Government politically, BNP has decided to abandon the Parliament and take over the street. This raises another important question.

What is the difference between BNP and other PPs? Why should BNP's opinions carry more weights than other PPs? Because BNP is the elected official Opposition in the Parliament. If it abstains from joining the Parliament, it gives up this special status and the difference between BNP and other PPs vanishes. The government need not give any special attention to BNP's opinions or respond to its shouts from the streets.

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## A Pakistani Reporter's Maiden Visit to India

by Muhammad Najeeb

"WELCOME to India." The taxi driver's greeting was full-throated and his hand-shake enthusiastic after he realised I had arrived from Pakistan.

Fauji Singh was not the only person who greeted me with such gusto; all those I met during my maiden visit to India received me with warmth. The manner of partition finally seems to be a thing of the past. "No one will guess you are a foreigner in this country," a journalist said at the Press Club of India where I was treated as a special guest. The club's president, A.R. Wig, took me from table to table, introducing me to close to 100 journalists. "Hello," "namaskar," "aadab," I was greeted in every possible way.

The mood was one of nostalgia as some of the journalists spoke about cities and villages in Pakistan from where their parents had come to India after partition. "Several of my relatives are still in Lahore...I tried twice to meet them but was refused a visa," one journalist complained, his voice sad.

The general election was, naturally, the hot subject of discussion at the club, and two groups of journalists — one supporting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the other backing the Congress party — wanted me to take sides in the debate.

The BJP supporters pleaded that the party had given a chance to rule the country, while the other group was of the view that the Congress Party was best suited for the task, especially as all previous non-Congress governments had failed to complete their five-year terms. The

ruling United Front (UF) did not, somehow, figure in the discussions.

Elections in South Asian countries, by and large, bring with them a festive atmosphere. Blaring loud speakers, vehicles carrying portraits of party leaders, posters stuck everywhere, parades of film songs, life-size billboard cut-outs of politicians and flags in party colours — all these add to the festive feeling at election rallies.

However, except for those of the BJP's shadow Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and the Congress Party's Sonia Gandhi, the rallies in New Delhi lacked colour, probably because the election is being held less than two years after the last one.

During these rallies, the same slogans, promises, allegations and counter-allegations were the focus of speeches — again a hallmark of South Asian politics. And the way Sonia reminded the people of the assassination of her husband and her mother-in-law had me thinking of similar speeches by Benazir and Ghinva Bhutto in Pakistan, Hasina Wajed and Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh and Chandrika Kumaratunga in Sri Lanka.

Sonia's accent and wrong pronunciation also reminded me of Benazir's arrival in Lahore in 1986, where she held

her first political rally and read her Urdu speech — written in Roman script — with the same difficulty. But now, after two terms as prime minister, she knows how to deal with whom.

"They are liars...they are resorting to false propaganda...they are indulging in dirty politics...they are leveling false charges to gain power...woh ek aurat se dar gaye hain (they are now scared of a woman)," Sonia roared to thunderous applause. It may well have been Benazir.

When she appeared on stage, clad in fawn saree, she looked like any other Indian lady. "We have found another Indiraji," said a woman standing behind me. Sonia is, to my mind, a typical South Asian woman politician who portrays herself as 'mazloom' (oppressed). "There is no fun in the elections this time...the same old promises...nothing new," said another participant at the rally. "I'm not going to vote in this polls. I just came to have a glimpse of Soniji. After all, she is Indiraji's bahu (daughter-in-law)," the woman said.

Newspaper and electronic media reports speak of great festivity in other parts of the country where I am not allowed to go because of visa restrictions. Despite applying for a visa to visit five cities, the Indian High Commission in Islamabad allowed me to travel only to New Delhi.

A night before I came to India, my father called me in Islamabad from Bahawalpur, asking me to visit his ancestral town of Gurdaspur, in Punjab, to see if the haveli (mansion) built by his grandfather was still there. He even faxed me a map to guide me to the house. But despite the best efforts of an officer in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, I could not get permission to visit the town of my forefathers.

Who is to blame for this? Surely, it is the mistrust between the governments of the two countries. And one reason for this mistrust is Kashmir. People on both sides of the border feel that Kashmir — an issue that remains unresolved — is the main hurdle to normalisation of relations that have been marred by two wars.

My view that Kashmiris living on both sides of the border be given a chance to decide their own fate was shared by several journalists at the Press Club. "If they want independence, the two countries should not hinder that," said a journalist who advocated free border crossings between the two countries.

The Book Fair at Pragati Maidan was another attraction for me, and I spent almost five hours there. The Indian publishing industry, which provides books at prices lower than in Pakistan, seems to be unaffected by the giant strides taken by the electronic media.

Seeing the buyers and sellers who had flocked to the Book Fair in their hundreds, it seemed that the ascendancy of the audio-visual medium is not a threat to the future of books. — India Abroad News Service

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## Tom and Jerry



## by Jim Davis



## Attitude of politicians condemned

By Staff Correspondent  
Speakers at a seminar yesterday criticised the "hypocritical" attitudes of the politicians towards the human rights issues, says a press release.

The seminar on "Human Rights" organised by The Centre for Research and Analysis was held at the Jatiya Press Club.

Dr Munir Zaman, professor of Political Science of the Dhaka University, Shafiqe Rehman, former BBC correspondent and Editor of weekly Jai Jai Din and Ataus Samad, former BBC correspondent and a veteran journalist spoke at the seminar.

Dr Zaman said that the indifference, intolerance and cynicism of political leaders had created an enormous gulf between their rhetoric and reality of the human rights situation in the country.

Shafiqe Rehman said that the politicians were not committed towards the improvement of the human rights situation of the country. He said that violence and repression occasionally got sponsorship from the politicians.

## Manu Munshi dead

Veteran photo-journalist and a senior member of the Jatiya Press Club Manu Munshi died on Wednesday morning at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. He was 55, reports BSS.

Munshi had been suffering from various ailments including cardiac problem for a long time.

He left behind his wife, four sons, three daughters and a host of relatives and friends to mourn his death.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at the Jatiya Press Club premises after Magreb prayers yesterday.

He was buried at Azimpur graveyard.

Reazuddin Ahmed and Khondaker Manirul Alam, president and general secretary respectively of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday condoned the death of Manu Munshi.

The Jatiya Press Club will hold a discussion today on the life of Manu Munshi at the Press Club lounge after Magreb prayers. It will be followed by a *midah mahfil*.  
The *qulshuani* of Manu Munshi will be held on Friday next at 50-D Nawabganj in the city after Asr prayers.



Kendriya Khelaghar, a juvenile organisation, arranged a cultural programme at the central Shaheed Minar premises yesterday as part of a programme in observance of Amar Ekushey. — Star photo

## Nat'l Library policy making body submits report

The committee on formulation of national library policy and its implementation formally submitted its report yesterday to State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader, reports BSS.

The present government constituted the 11-member committee headed by Prof Dr Muntasir Mamoon of Dhaka University to recommend measures to formulate the policy, a PID handout said.

The minister thanked the committee, which made detailed recommendations to prepare an appropriate library policy for submitting the report within four months. It contained draft laws of the proposed library policy and things to be done for its implementation.

## German team meets Khasru

The visiting seven-member German parliamentary delegation led by Wolfgang Cruze yesterday expressed the keenness to increase the mutual cooperation on development of the judiciary system and parliamentary affairs between Bangladesh and Germany, reports BSS.

## Appeal for help

A freedom fighter and press worker Zahiruddin Babor of 99/2, South Jatrabari, has urged for financial help for the treatment of his minor daughter Jull, says a press release.

Jull is suffering from widespread birth-defects in her lip, nose and in other parts of her face.

She is also suffering from anaemia, Pneumothorax and other complexities. The child needs different types of treatment and therapy abroad. People willing to extend help for this ill-fated girl, have been requested to send money to the deposit number 71228/9, Agrani Bank, Head Office, Agrani Bhaban, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.

## Orientation programme of Queens Varsity held

By Staff Correspondent  
An orientation programme of Queens University was held at its campus in the city yesterday morning.

Vice-Chancellor of the university, Prof Syed Sufderul Huq, presided over the function arranged for the students of summer semester. Chairperson of the private university, Hamida Banu, spoke as the chief guest.

Queens University which was approved by the government in 1996 is now running four schools with more than 120 students and 32 faculty members.

## John Patrick Hastings dead

By Staff Correspondent  
Rev John Patrick Hastings, MBE, died of prostate cancer in England on Tuesday. He was 70, according to a press release.

A British citizen, Father John, spent some 50 years in this sub continent. John Hastings actively supported the freedom struggle of Bangladesh during 1971 and conducted relief work in refugee camps and helped receiving Bangladesh Volunteer Service Corp, the press release said.

Father John established an NGO for literacy programme "Nijera Shikhi" in Bangladesh and was awarded MBE by the Queen of England in 1985 for his life-long contribution in eradicating illiteracy.

He left behind his wife, two daughters, a son and innumerable friends and admirers to mourn his death.