## The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka Wednesday, March 4, 1998

### Return to Jatiya Sangsad

We are quite delighted at the good tidings of rapprochement between ruling Awami League and opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party to make the Jatiya Sangsad meaningful. We wholeheartedly welcome the signing of the accord that is going to end the six months long boycott of the Parliament by the main opposition BNP, hopefully. Hopefully because the pattern we have witnessed so far is not conducive to robust optimism. Nevertheless we keep our fingers crossed. Felicitate as we the BNP for its change of heart we would still request it to guard against possible interpretations of its proparliament decision as a loss of face or something like eating the crow. We would like to believe BNP has taken the decision of returning to the JS from its own sense of obligation to democracy and people and not any stop gap strategic compromise.

AL too deserves commendation for showing the accommodative spirit it takes to thrive in a pluralistic political milieu. At this auspicious moment when the whole nation is looking forward for a real break from our eminently acrimonious and self destructive political culture, we would counsel AL to check the temptation of viewing it as some sort of a victory in a war of attrition. Seize the opportunity of boosting parliamentary politics by being humble and sober in your dealings with the opposition. Make sure the points that time and again led to puerile squabbling and feuding do not revisit the nation. For instance let the opposition have more than equal share of TV coverage. What's the harm? You would not lose a kingdom. Rather your public image would improve. A word or two on the role of the Speaker would be relevant on this occasion. Neutrality is sine qua non for the arbiter of the parliament. We urge the Speaker of the seventh parliament to be extra careful in his approach in order to fully live up to the expectation of parliamentary democracy.

We look forward to a collective effort from all concerned to uphold what has become the most ignored cliche on Bangladesh: parliament belongs to the people and not to the ruling party.

### A Gutsy Good Thing, but....

It seemed we had gone back to the good old age when mosques and churches, temples and viharas were the fountainhead not only of theological studies and training but also of general education, practical and liberal. For many years now there was this talk of the innumerable mosques in the villages and towns - it shouldn't be less than a good 250 thousand — being used in the cause of spreading literacy and primary education. We congratulate the government for realising that old and dear dream when Prime Minister Hasina inaugurated the mosque-based primary education project on Monday at the Osmani Memorial Hall.

We share in the hopes and vision. And because of this we want to sound a word or two of caution. There is hardly a mosque in this land where the imam and or the muezzin do not hold classes for kiddies, both boys and girls, and teach them beyond the first book of Arabic. What will happen to these classes? Will these be integrated into the primary course? Is that possible? What the mosque personnel conduct is a kind of maktab. Will that be transformed into a primary of general education, keeping Arabic as one of the subjects taught, not the only one? If possible, nothing like it. But will it be?

Are all incumbent imams qualified to take primary classes? How will they be able to impart nondenominational education — the crux of the difference between a maktab and a primary? Why shouldn't the mosque-based education be expanded to make it church and temple and vihara-based education too? Other places of worship are not as numerous as mosques. Not even primary schools. It is possible that there is not one primary in an area having a number of mosques as well as many non-Muslim families, where will the children of these families go? Cannot they go to the mosquerun primary? After all, in a way, this is also a government primary.

And then there is the danger of the cause of primary education being harmed rather than helped by the new project. With 250 thousand new classes set up and after spending a billion on these every year government will hardly be enthusiastic to go for more proper primaries. That will be a very bad thing to happen.

Education without monitoring is no education. Who is going to monitor performance of teachers as also of the students in these 250 thousand spots? When the nation is not still in a position to have its schools — not to speak of the madrasahs — inspected and monitored, these mosque-schools will be God only knows what.

These are some pointers for the education managers to get it all righted from the political author-

#### Break this Monopoly

Last week's unreasonable hike in the price of essentials has been somewhat arrested. Things reportedly took the course of normalcy once the government made review of the demand-supply situation and came out much to our assurance that there is enough stock of essentials like salt and rice. According to it there is no valid reason why the market should be so dear so suddenly. That leaves us with one conclusion: Something has gone awry in the distribution sector. It is a small group of people who are controlling the market and it is because of their egregious inclination for profiteering that the prices spiral more often than not. This monopoly has to be broken. We demand the government develops a mechanism to diversify the distribution sector. The culture of vague attribution like 'vested interest' or 'conspiracy against the government' has to be forgotten. A scientific approach based on market knowledge and research has to be adopted to meet all such challenges

Instead of waiting for a crisis to brew and burst, its department concerned should develop a market intelligence so that any glitch in the market situation is detected by its antenna before the common people actually pay for it. There is no way the government can plead ignorance in a situation like this. That is no excuse. Rather inefficiency at its height. It would do well to remember the very fact that things looked up immediately after governmental activism made it clear for all that a lot was left to be desired in the first place when it came to market monitoring.

Secularism-Anti-secularism Debate in Turkey

TH the closing down of the Welfare Party (RP) ▼ ▼ and its rebirth as Virtue Party (FP) Turkish politics has entered a new phase. The Constitutional Court, which pronounced the judgement barred the leader of RP Necmettin Erbakan and five of his colleagues from politics for six years. A lengthy trial took place following charges against Necmettin Erbakan and his party RP of violating the

constitution. Necmettin Erbakan ruled as Prime Minister of Turkey for nearly one year. He had as coalition partner former lady Prime Minister Tansu Ciller and her party True Path Party (DYP). DYP was founded by President Suleyman Demirel, who had taken his party to victory in the polls. Following the death of President Turgut Ozal. Demirel elevated himself to the position of the head of state and professor-turned-politician Tansu Ciller became Prime Minister. The coalition between Erbakan and Ciller - the former clearly fundamentalist and the latter secularist -- was strictly a marriage of convenience. For the post of Prime Minister Erbakan promised and dropped charges of corruption against Ciller originally brought to the Parliament by

RP rule of Turkey was a stormy one. On the domestic front RP's attempts to make cosmetic changes came against the powerful military establishment. In Foreign affairs, Erbakan undertook highly

N a recent article one

eminent Pakistani writer

commented that if BJP

comes to power following the

recently concluded eleventh

Loksabha election, 'Pakistan

would be much happier. At least

we would know where we stand

with them (India).' This particu-

lar statement needs to be seri-

ously analyzed in the context of

BJP's probable chances of form-

ing the next government in In-

dia. As much to the dismay of

many the prediction is that this

extreme-rightist Hindu Nation-

unholy and rather hypocritical

regional alliances (such as Lok-

shakti of former Karanataka

chief minister R K Hegde and

AIDMK of former chief minis-

ter of Tamil Nadu both of which

support secularism and shun

the politics of communalism),

and may end up bagging around

250 parliamentary seats in a

House of 573 (according to the

latest report BJP has gained

grounds). If that happens BJP

would be a serious contender of

power and try its best to forge

alliances with the regional par-

ties in order to master the nec-

essary strength of 273 seats.

One cannot rule out such possi-

bilities, as Bihar's Laloo Prasad

Yadav's strategy with his pro-

jected 20-25 block of seats still

is uncertain. This breakaway

UF alliance support would be

crucial for BJP. In any event

why would Pakistan be happy if

sections in Pakistan think that

it would solve the long-standing

ideological riddle, which em-

anated from South Asia's his-

torical legacy of unfortunate

Hindu-Muslim conflicts, and

has, haunted both India and

Pakistan since their birth in

1947. At the time of the parti-

tion two diametrically opposite

ideologies laid the foundation

of these two core South Asian

countries - former advocating

secularism while the latter es-

pousing it. India never accepted

'two-nation' theory, which

propagates that the Hindus and

Muslims are two distinct na-

tions. As such the very founda-

tions of these countries not

only created deep psychological

schism between the two but also

produced ideological riddle.

Since then both India and Pak-

istan are interlocked in the im-

ages created about each other at

the time of partition, and they

have been pursuing a bitter and

acrimonious relationship hin-

dering any meaningful regional

development. Pakistan feels

The reason being that some

it comes to power?

alist Party along with its twelve

publicised and strongly criticised visits to such leader as Gaddafi. Erbakan launched D8. a grouping within the OIC but shunned virtually by all the important Arab states of the Gulf including Saudi Arabia. Erbakan was not invited by a single western leader although Turkey has a very long tradi-

tion of friendship with western

Although RP was careful not to pursue any policy to antagonise the military establishment, she was unable to win them to its side. For instance wearing of the turban is a big issue in Turkey and the founder of modern Turkey prescribed dress code, where there is no place for a turban. Rather Ataturk abolished the traditional fez and replaced it with the western felt hat.

During his 15-year rule of Turkey, Ataturk totally transformed the Turkish society. Changing of alphabet from Arabic to Latin, civil code replacing sharia are some of the many such sweeping reforms. The Turkish armed forces, which enjoys genuine respect and affection of the masses, has been the jealous guardian of Ataturk's reforms lit could be called social revolution) for the

The military establishment, which is a heavy weight in Turkish politics, appeared headed on a collision course

with RP of Erbakan. The danger was averted by a steady departure of MPs belonging to coalition partner DYP, who became large enough to form a party of its own. The main opposition party Motherland Party (ANAP) with its leader Mesut Yilmaz formed the currently ruling coalition with centre left Democratic Left Party (DSP) of former Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit and the new splinter group, offshoot of DYP. There is a reasonable stable coalition Government in Turkey, al-

polls and has managed to maintain an image of the middle of the roader rather than that of a rabid fundamentalist. At the last general elections, RP emerged as the largest single party and the battle for leadership promises to be a tough one.

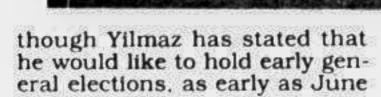
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RP has undoubtedly learnt an important lesson from the recent political events. In Ataturk's Turkey, with the Islamic label, she managed to form the government. It was shortlived due largely to the fragility of the coalition but

# The Horizon This Week

Arshad-uz Zaman



He may be tempted to go to the people taking advantage of the confusion that reigns within the ranks of the newlyformed Virtue Party (FP), the child of recently demised RP. There is a battle for leadership within the newly-formed FP with the Mayor of Istanbul Recep Tayib Erdogan having an edge. This ace footballerturned-politician had a stunning victory at the municipal

more importantly on account of the fact that it appeared to be heading towards a collision course with the armed forces. It must never be forgotten that the powerful military establishment is deeply wedded to Ataturk's reforms and will defend them to the last. During the brief government of Erbakan, his wife was unable to enter the cantonments because she wears a turban. Regularly the armed forces are purged of elements suspected of harbour-

ing fundamentalist ideas. With the birth of the new

Virtue Party, there is a bee line for MPs to join this party. Of the six debarred from politics Sevki Yilmaz is absconding and a red alert has been sounded through the Interpol 'to get him'. Sevki Yilmaz is a fire brand and has in the past used abusive language against

Ataturk. President Suleyman Demirel has stated that the Virtue Party is not a continuation of Welfare Party. He has thereby given the green light to the former MPs to continue politics. He has reminded his audience that the Constitutional Court while forbidding six MPs from involving in politics, 'has not taken away the right to political activities from the hands of the others'.

In 1998, Turkey is celebrating with great pomp the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Republic. Throughout Turkey and the Turkish missions abroad, many programmes are being organised to celebrate the occasion with great flourish. This will be another occasion for the Turks to rededicate themselves to the ideals and achievements of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey.

The question naturally arises how come that fundamentalism appears to have such a stranglehold on Algeria and Muslim countries at various stages of development, are

confronted with a challenge from forces of fundamentalism, but are unable to make a dent in Turkey. The basic answer lies in the fact that the Turks, a very proud people, were rescued from the clutches of foreign occupiers after the defeat in the first world war, by the brilliant leadership of Mustafa Kemal, called Ataturk (Father of the Turks) by a grateful nation.

Turkey was well on the road to westernisation during the Ottoman rule. Ataturk gave it a great impetus and launched sweeping reforms. He bequeathed those reforms to the youth, who have taken this to heart. The armed forces, the pride of the nation, cherishes those reforms dearly.

Sooner rather than later elections will be held in Turkey. The present coalition is a very weak and heterogeneous one. It emerged largely to replace the RP-DYP coalition. Politicians eyes are set on the votes that had gone to RP and may go to its successor FP. ANAP appears to be the front-runner. The leader Mesut Yilmaz has often been criticised for lack of charisma. Bulent Ecevit has a clean name but he leads a centre left party and Turkish electorate is almost always leaning to the

In this political game sits on top the master politician President Suleyman Demirel, who has been involved in Turkish politics for close to 35 years. And above everyone else sits the armed forces, guaranteeing the stability of the state.

## BJP and the Ideological Riddle in South Asia

Pakistan as well as other states in South Asia would be better off with a Congress-UF coalition government in India rather than a BJP one. A BJP government in India would not solve the long-standing ideological riddle in South Asia, as expected by some in Pakistan.

that India, the dominant country, is out to get it while from Indian perspective, Islamabad's sole aim has been to undermine India's dominance in the region and its ambition to play its rightful role in international arena. Kashmir problem is, thus, an endemic symptom of this riddle. The seemingly perpetual Indo-Pakistan conflicts. arms race in South Asia including nuclear are nothing but the manifestations of the historical animosity between the two. Outsiders view Indo-Pakistan conflicts from these perspective as one eminent South Asian expert pointed out that all three wars fought between India and Pakistan, twice over Kashmir and once over Bangladesh, have been no more than 'communal wars in armour." So with the advent of BJP

rule in India, some expect in

Pakistan that underlying factor

for the schism between New Delhi and Islamabad would be brought to the fore, and as such would be easier to deal with. Because unlike the credo of secularism BJP does not beat around the bush and calls it a spade. Its Hinduvta ideology propagating extreme form of Hindu nationalism calls for the creation of one solid Hindu nation. Hindustan is only for the Hindus, and all other religious minorities are expected to be subjugated to this nation culturally and otherwise. Muslims are a special target because it was the coming of Islam beginning in 1100 AD that capitulated and vilified then the homogenous Hindu nation. They must be dealt with so that proper Hindu culture can flourish. The destruction of Babri mosque at its instigation is. thus, a logical manifestation Although it has, during the recent election campaign, deviated from its prophesied principles in order to get support from regional alliance partners, its stand against the minorities particularly against the Muslims is well known. It is a common knowledge that the periodic communal riots between the Hindus and Muslims are allegedly instigated by its militant armed wing RSS. Its Mafia style in intimidation of

Dilara Chowhdury nothing but a blatant propagation of its underlying credo. Thus, the rise of BJP and its

prospect of becoming the next government in India have seemingly proved Pakistan's point of view. It is now being demonstrated that India's minority problems have not been solved within the context of its declared secularism. The minorities, especially Muslims would be in danger once India becomes independent had been the battle cry in Fakistan's independence movement. Pakistan kept on worrying about the fate of the Muslims under Nehru's secularism, and thought that it was nothing but a facade for Hindu rule. And although the Muslims were discriminated even during the long rule of secular Congress but on international plane or otherwise it was difficult for Pakistan to prove that point due to the very pretension of secular-

Now that facade is about to come off once BJP comes to power. It would be established that the nation-building process in India has been tenuous under secular rule. The hopes and aspirations of the minorities, religious or ethnic have not been fulfilled. They have not been integrated into one single Indian nation. The secession movements in Kashmir, Assam, Tripura and Punjab are the examples of this failure. By embracing extreme rightist na tionalism, out of frustration or otherwise, the Indians would just make the point that the minorities cannot coexist with the militant majority. The majority would, thus, enforce their way of life on the minorities whereby their cherished way of life would be severely undermined. The very fact that the Muslims of India wanted a homeland of their own. Once that fact is established the ideological riddle would be over and both India and Pakistan then would be able to sit down

and get about to do their business. For example, nuclear which is one of the contentious issues between the two would be easier to solve. BJP is in favour of India going openly nuclear which suits Pakistan's nuclear policy. Once the ambiguity is gone Islamabad can come out of its closet with legitimate rea-

It is, however, not that simple. BJP's coming to power would not really solve the ideological riddle. First, it has not mentioned anywhere in the manifesto that Muslims of India are a separate nation. Its stand on minority issue is rather ambiguous. It calls for

sons that it needs its nuclear

too for security interests.

one culture i.e. bringing the minorities within the fold Hindu culture meaning Indian culture. What it calls for is the Indianisation of all its minorities. Such moves are detrimental to the very essence of democracy. And obviously would be an anathema to all minorities especially for the Muslims who are proud of their culture, and may eventually enhance fissarious tendencies within Indian polity. But it is wrongly assumed by BJP that it would consolidate the nation-building process. Second, on the most contentious issue namely the Kashmir problem, its stand is even more stringent than the secular parties. Like all other political parties it not only considers Kashmir as an integral part of India but also goes one step further by calling for the abolition of the article 370 of Indian constitution which gives Kashmir a special status. Once the special status of Kashmir is evoked BJP expects to change the disputed area's

demography by encouraging Hindus to settle in the Vale of Kashmir.

Even on nuclear BJP's stand would only perpetuate the arms race in the region barring any meaningful dialogue between the two South Asian adversaries. Moreover, the fissarious tendencies, which may be enhanced because of BJP's, prophesied policy might eventually destabilize the entire region including Pakistan. I may conclude by stating that there are no such prospects to the solution of the ideological riddle in South Asia at the advent of BJP's coming to power. On the contrary, conflictual and confrontational politics would vitiate and poison any scope of cooperation and harmony in the region. Actually, Pakistan as well as other states in South Asia would be better off with a Congress-UF coalition government in India rather than a BJP one. A BJP government in India would not solve the long-standing ideological riddle in South Asia, as expected by some in Pakistan.

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#### **OPINION**

### Desecration at Shaheed Minar

I have read BNP advisor Mr. M.M. Rezaul Karim's post-editorial that appeared in the DS (Feb 26, 1998) on the indecorous incident at the Shaheed Minar with great interest. It may be the vocation of any political advisor to condone every delinquency of his partymen, but will that help invigorate healthy politics in Bangladesh,

anyway? In order to exonerate BNP backers and to implicate 'the invisible force' for the occurrence, he took recourse of the following syllogisms: "..... would it not be absurd to suggest that the BNP cadres would be deliberately engaged in such acts of national vilification and desecration of a national monument in the very presence of their own leader, thereby risking to tarnish her image? Why should the BNP leader indulge in an act, which even to a common man, will be regarded as politically suicidal?.....It could perhaps be easier to digest the fact that some young folks had been hired by interested quarters for enacting this horrible drama in exchange for

some material incentive."

Thanks to The Daily Star for

publishing Mr Rezaul Karim's

article 'Claims and Counter

I hope DS would not mind if I quote the following few sentences of DS editor expressed in his article This is politics gone mad' (Feb 24, 1998). I am doing so, because I have no better expressions to reply BNP advisor's questions than to quote what DS editor has asserted about the Shaheed Minar happenings:

"I have no doubt in my mind that the desecration was the work of BNP and JCD cadres. But I have also no doubt in my mind that it was NOT deliberate. And that is why we feel as worried as we are. An unthinking person is devoid of all logic, totally unpredictable and as such capable of doing anything including such self defeating acts as the one we saw last Sat-

urday. "BNP did not plan to desecrate the Shaheed Minar, or the memory of the martyrs. Yet it happened, and that also in the presence of no other person than the chief herself. It was possible because poisonous passion was allowed to hold sway that clouded rational judgment. In an outburst of over enthusiasm in expressing their hatred for Awami League.

Chhatra League and the government of Sheikh Hasina, they thought nothing of desecrating the most revered symbol of our nationhood, the Shaheed Minar. A madness overtook Khaleda Zia's supporters temporarily during which nothing mattered except denigrating the 'enemy' even if it meant hurting the feelings of millions for whom Shaheed Minar has become the ultimate symbol of all our struggles for

BNP advisor would have done a good service for his party by suggesting expulsion of unruly and rowdy elements responsible for their misadventure at the Shaheed Minar. There are leaders in BNP like Abdul Mannan Bhuyan to attempt to fool us, but we do not expect such exertion from an honorable advisor. We understand his predicament of being an advisor of BNP, but not to hand-in pen in all situations could be the best solution for

self assertion.

A Latif Sarker Shinshu University Nagano, Japan

### **BUET Admission**

Sir, Various reports, comments and letters related to BUET Admission Test have caught my eyes, particularly one letter by Mr Rahman on 1.3.98. Sitting in Badda, he knows so much of inside information. I wonder whether he is a more. As a concerned citizen, guardian and somebody close to the profession I cannot but refute many of the allegations labelled on a minority group who knowing the consequences of their actions, have the courage and determination to say no to somebody mighty and powerful because as I gathered the other side didn't even had a mood to listen to them. In some actions, there would always be somebody to carry the boss's umbrella, you shouldn't count them. It seems that the Engineering Teachers, as well as Mr Rahman, failed to understand that it is not a matter of trade off between physics and

drawing. It is a more fundamen-

tal issue. In engineering test, it

is a process of elimination

where all first 2000 students are

perhaps capable of becoming an

engineer. On the other hand in

architecture test, it is a process

of selection where none from

the first 500 may be good

enough the become an architect

because the profession warrants

somebody who is creative.

perceptive, intuitive, environ-

mentally aware and expressive. Just passing drawing cannot ensure students with the above qualities as Mr Rahman bluntly put. Somebody with high engineering marks can offset somebody who is better qualified and prepared to pursue a 5-years course in architecture. Being one related with education research, I know there are studies in UK and India that show that too much emphasis on science subjects has produced bad architects. With all 375/b Kazipara, West Qafrul, due respect to the BUET teach- Dhaka-1216 ers, I failed to understand why.

the Muslims that their safety

lies only with BJP in power is

Living 35 years side by side, they failed to understand each other, when so much information is available. Architecture as a profession and a discipline is different which may not perfectly fit in this scientific world because architects imagine things and create the future. Despite being known for their communication skills, I guess because of the system they have failed to make a case with their colleagues. We also don't understand why an established and tested system which so far has produced many architects who have made their presence known at home and abroad, suddenly not only was questioned, but was drastically changed. Have you thought of shattering somebody's dream who has prepared for getting admission into architecture all his/her life knowing that she

doesn't need physics, and can appear for architecture test even if (s) he has a humanities background.

In conclusion I insist and hope that good sense will prevail in all quarters. There is no problem on this earth that we cannot solve by dialogue that we have seen in recent Gulf impasse or the crisis in our parliament arena.

S M Abu Zafar

#### "The West's proving ground"

Sir, Thank you Dr. Fakruddin for "Iraq - the West's proving ground" printed on the 17th of February. Things are very much clearer now. The US wants another yet bloodier sequel to "Desert Storm". Iraqi:s want to survive like normal human beings. Some members of the Security Council are just waking up and speaking against the allied dictatorship.

There is no proof of weapons of mass destruction. Yet the war must go on. How else: are the US able to show off their brand new toys and engrave the idea of "who's the boss" in everyone's minds? How more of this can we take?

Masroor Ahmed Deepak Dhaka

Claims' (26-02-98) about the event that took place at the Shaheed Minar on 21-02-98. It has broken the monopoly of opinions and propaganda that followed it. I want to add a point or two to what Mr Karim has already said. In the two write-ups (editorial 23.02.98 and first page signed article, 24-02-98) in the D S about the event the editor stated with absolute certainty that it was the act of BNP supporters and accordingly chastised and advised the BNP leaders about the measures they should take to prevent any such future occurrences. The editor may have his reasons, but for us the ordinary citizens who gather their news from the national dailies and Radio and TV, things are quite different. It is exacerbated by the fact that

the state-owned TV commenta-

tor went further than anybody

else in the media by repeatedly

stating that the rowdyism at the

Shaheed Minar was led by the

opposition leader. However,

this statement later modified to

'in her presence'. But from the picture shown on the TV screen it cannot be even ascertained how the trouble was started - no question of ascertaining who started it. How could one be certain; in

this circumstances, that it was started by a particular group of people? What emerged clearly from the pictures is that some unruly people at the Shaheed Minar ground were randomly throwing and tearing away the wreaths placed there earlier and Begum Khaleda Zia was trying (who was hardly visible) to reach the podium to pay her homage to the martyrs of language movement by placing the wreath, but she was pushed back by the crowd and ultimately forced to retreat and then to withdraw.

How an ordinary citizen should view it? In the D S editorial of 23-02-98 it was stated that at the time Begum Zia looked 'perplexed'. Well she was, because she did not know what was happening. Begum Khaleda Zia, for that matter her party. has nothing to gain from it, rather she and her party have everything to lose politically. Logically therefore it does not seem that they had started it. The question is then who did it? Well, we cannot say! We can only guess. It can very well be the work of agent provocateurs. The use of agent provocateurs to demolish the opponents is not new. It was widely used in prewar Germany to malign, discredit and ultimately ban the opposition political parties. It

was used by the USA in the

Vietnam war to create the pretext for extensive bombing of North Vietnam ( recall the Gulf of Tonkin episode ) during the Johnson era, and in the campus violence to discredit the students when the students were protesting against the war in Vietnam during the Nixon era.

About the defection of two BNP MPs to Government side what we have to say, is this — it is in bad taste, it is bad politics and it is unethical. At the same time we must stress that we elected the MPs to sit in the parliament and to see there that our interests are adequately taken care of. Therefore our advice to the BNP leadership and MPs - please go back to the parliament and fight there for the rights of the people who voted for you. Let the people know what is your stand on SPA. Radio and TV autonomy, CHT accord, fuel price hike when the crude prices in the international market is continually falling, and the prices of essentials such as rice and onions, through the parliament. Do not let the nation down. Do not allow the parliamentary system to fail. If it does, it will be a great tragedy for us all. The generations to come will blame us, more particularly the politicians.

> Dr M D Hossain Dhaka