

# BJP: Crack in Coalition?

Pallab Bhattacharya writes from New Delhi

**BJP-AIADMK ties have taken a firm knock. Although BJP leaders are putting on a brave front by saying that Jayalalitha has the right to express her views, they privately note that this was the sharpest criticism of BJP since the coalition assumed in March.**

**T**HE Bharatiya Janata Party is under intense fire from friends and foes alike. In both cases, the common thread is sustained pressure brought on Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee government by its allies. Trinamool Congress and AIADMK headed by Mamata Banerjee and Jai Ram Jayalalitha who steadfastly cling to their personal agenda of seeking to topple their arch-rivals from power in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu respectively.

Foes first: In an unprecedented development having implications on relations between the Central government and those in power in states, the Left Front government in West Bengal refused to cooperate with a team of senior Home Ministry officials sent by Vajpayee government to assess law and order situation in that state.

The central team was sent to West Bengal following allegations mainly by BJP and Trinamool Congress about large scale violence unleashed by the Left Front against political rivals in the run up to and after the last month's Panchayat elections in the state.

The West Bengal government described the visit of the central team as 'unconstitutional' saying the law and order was a subject within the purview of the state government as stipulated under the constitution.

The central team was rebuffed as the West Bengal government declined to answer questions relating to pre and post-panchayat violence in the state. West Bengal Home (Police) Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya said his government was surprised at the visit of the central team because only a week ago it had submitted a report on the law and order to Vajpayee government.

Under the Indian constitution, law and order comes under the jurisdiction of the state governments. But the centre is empowered to recommend dismissal of a state government on the ground of breakdown of the constitutional machinery in that state.

# Bridge on the Padma — an Imperative Now

by Q M Karamat Ali

**T**HE five-kilometer long, \$900 million, eleventh largest bridge of the world, the Bangabandhu Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge has been inaugurated on June 23 by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. It has been a remarkable milestone as the PM maintained, in the national endeavour towards the materialisation of 'Sonar Bangla' as dreamed by Bangabandhu. Surely, BJMB will be a fitting springboard for the nation's leap in the new millennium. Development of infrastructure is a sine qua non for economic progress of a nation. Balanced and equitable development of the various regions of a country and total integration of the nation should be the cardinal goal of any administration.

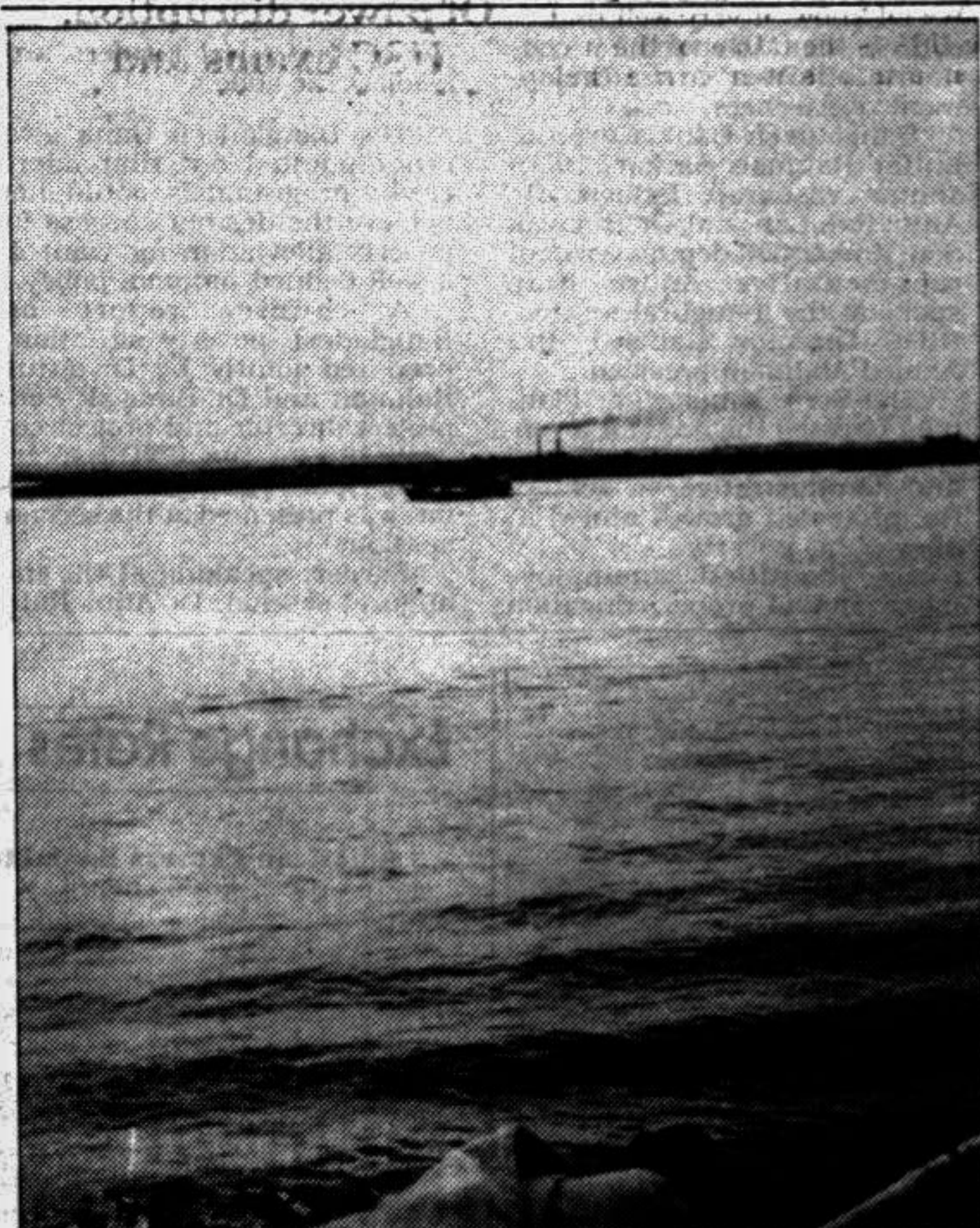
On the occasion of the joyful celebration of the inauguration of BJMB which will go a long way in the fulfilment of the above objectives. We cannot help paying our due and immediate attention to the Padma river barrier which impedes and handicaps a much greater chunk of the land area of the country measuring approx. 42,579 sq. km than the Jamuna which insulated approximately 32,513 sq km of Rajshahi Division. The much adored popular patriotic slogan which proclaims our national identity starts as, 'Padma, Meghna, Jamuna...' though authorities thought it fit to start with Meghna, and then Jamuna. Will not we think of Padma now and at the soonest? The PM herself also reiterated the importance of a bridge over the Padma while inaugurating the BJMB and assured that efforts will be soon made for its realisation.

The Mighty Meghna had been tamed and crossed by a bridge earlier catering to the needs of some 15 districts of Chittagong and Sylhet Divisions. The bridge has shortened almost by half the distance between the principal seaport Chittagong and the capital Dhaka promoting faster movement of men and materials.

The olden shores of doughty Jamuna have been joined on June 23 facilitating swifter communication between 16 districts of Rajshahi Division and the capital as well as south-eastern region of the country already in the realm of developmental surge. Teknaf and Tetulia will now be thriving and vibrating in the same vein with similar gusto.

It is now the longing banks of perilous Padma that needs to be joined for the greater good of the nation and interest of the people of 21 districts of Dhaka, Khulna and Barisal Divisions.

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in the world thereby lessening the dependence of our international trade on Chittagong which besides heavy congestions, seems to have regrettably and almost irretrievably fallen to partisan and factional squabbles, dangerous labour politics and machinations of mastans and vested interests.

Mongla's potentials as a transit port for use by Nepal and Bhutan will further brighten. The entire coastal belt of the South, an ideal ground for modern shrimp-culture with the prospects of surpassing RMG sector as a foreign exchange earner could be further exploited being easily frequented by more local and foreign entrepreneurs once a bridge is built over Padma.

The government has demonstrated ample awareness of the importance and necessity of developing the region by going with plans to construct a bridge over Rupsa — a long-felt demand of the area — and by recently laying the foundation of an EPZ at Mongla. Construction of a bridge over Padma will further hasten the process of development in the region.

The great Sunderbans, one of the largest mangroves of the world stretching along the coast of Khulna and Jessore, currently uncared and rather neglected will come closer unobscuring her boundless natural treasure and unending charm to the people of the country evoking loving concern and care from all concerned thereby giving a welcome boost to national tourism.

**Prospect for establishment of private ports in the coastal belt of Barisal will brighten:** As soon as Padma is bridged, the prospect for establishment of private ports in the coastal belt of Barisal will look up. Traditional ports like Chittagong and Mongla, government managed and sometimes mismanaged as they are, cannot always efficiently serve the needs of trade in the competitive global market of the day. So many countries of the world including some of our neighbours like India have gone for development of private ports. Coastal belt of Barisal holds bright prospect in this area as a destination of local and foreign investment. Bridging Padma will further enhance the possibilities.

**Benapole will enormously benefit:** An overwhelming bulk of our trade with India, currently our largest neighbouring trading partner is transacted through Benapole. This is also possibly the busiest point handling inter-country movement of people. The plans for introduction of bus-services between India and Bangladesh will further add to the rush. Spanning of the Padma will to a very great extent reduce the transport cost of men and materials between the two neighbours.

**A political and social obligation:** Politically and socially, it is now the South that needs to be soothed since it remains

# Containing Drug Abuse Needed a Coordinated International Effort

by Dr S H Mahmud

**All aspects of drugs should be dealt together; that is crop control, interdiction, law enforcement, education, psychological motivation must go hand in hand. Only an effort that is cooperative, vigorously enforced and truly international can successfully address the global drug problem.**

**T**HE widespread abuse of psychoactive drugs has become a human tragedy. Drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs are problems no longer confined to small segments of a given population.

Drugs entice, captivate and ultimately destroy people from all walks of life. Growing drug abuse is much more than a 'street problem'. It has invaded homes, workplaces and educational institutions affecting individuals of all ages and classes. Beyond destruction caused by drug dependence is the damage to traditional values, life styles and national economies. This growing menace transcends frontiers and cuts across political, economic and social boundaries.

## Drugs and International Fora

The international drug abuse situation ranks with environmental dangers as one of the most life threatening problems facing the nations of the world today. Since 1987, every year the United Nations anti-drug day is being observed on 26 June. In recent past the magnitude of the drug problem has become so alarming that it has led the United Nations to call a special session 'Drug Summit' this year from 8 to 10 June.

The summit is considered to be the largest multinational gathering ever held on combating illegal drug trafficking and abuse. Government leaders from 185 countries including Bangladesh participated in the New York Summit. The UN 'Drug Summit' marked a critical juncture in the global fight against drug supply and demand. For the first time national leaders from throughout the world assembled to agree to control drugs; the first international agreement on demand reduction; and the goal of substantially reducing and eventually eradicating the illicit cultivation of narcotic crops in the next 10 years.

Besides the UN, 'psychoactive drugs' has become priority area in the Commonwealth and SAARC forums. In Bangladesh, both within the government and organizations concerned with social issues there is a considerable evidence of a heightened awareness of the potential danger inherent in drug abuse. The government attitude is reflected both in the legal and institutional framework of drug abuse control.

The Government of Bangladesh with the assistance of United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) is preparing a Master Plan to deal with all aspects of psychoactive drugs, preventive education, treatment and rehabilitation and law enforcement and legal assistance. This five year plan at a cost of 1.7 million US dollars is due to be completed in 1998.



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changes radically. The person has acquired a new need that may be so powerful that all other concerns are ignored. He or she lives only for the next fix. The etiology of drug abuse is complex varying through time, geographic region and by demographic characteristics. The underlying causes of drug abuse are as diverse as the population they affect.

Research indicates that there is a causal relationship between many forms of drug abuse and anti social activities. Drug addicts seem to engage in crimes mainly to obtain money to support them. But even more dangerous to society than the criminal acts is the colossal loss of the human resources for constructive purposes.

As the ego structure of the drug addicts become increasingly weaker and mental strength progressively poorer, all kinds of high ambitions, morale and vitality extinguish prematurely. Drug dependence develops intense apathy to daily works, makes its consumer severely insensitive to social environment and responsibility and finally leads the person to be an unbearable liability to the family as well as to the society.

## Education and Prevention

The only long-term hope for dealing with the problem of drug misuse and abuse lies in the field of education. Education aimed at preventing the misuse of drugs has to be the initial intention. As society seeks to prevent drug abuse by limiting the availability of drugs, we are forced to recognise several other facts.

First, as long as there is a sizeable market for these substances there will be people to supply them. Thus only if we can teach people not to seek drugs we can discourage the sources of the problem.

Second, these substances will never disappear entirely. So we should try to teach people to live in a world that includes them.

Third, society has accepted the continued existence of tobacco, yet some people are harmed by them.

Can we teach people to live in such a way that their lives and health are not impaired by drugs? The apparent goal of most educational measures has not been just to impart information, but to convey only the type of message that was expected to create negative attitude towards drug use. In other words, the goal has usually been prevention of drug abuse rather than increase in knowledge for its own sake.

## Motivation and Consequences

The phenomenon is multifactorial in origin, involving a complex interweaving of sociological and psychological factors. While these factors may influence initial drug use, once an individual becomes physically dependent the motivation

about drug use, and these changed attitudes would be reflected in decreased drug using behaviour.

**Value clarification:** Teaching the persons to clarify their own values.

**Teaching alternatives to drug use:** We can see the possible alternatives are sensory awareness training, instruction in social customs, and study and practice of religion. However, the mode of alternatives depend on the background and the personality factors of the individual.

**Positive peer influence:** Learning to recognise peer pressure and teaching ways to minimise or to refuse drugs have been shown to be very effective in reducing number of drug users.

**Community remedies:** Obtaining cooperation from the public, civic groups, local media, parent groups and other interested parties.

It seems clear that these approaches should have an impact, but evaluating them has been difficult. Thus it appears that effective prevention strategy requires training, technical assistance, research into the problem and fund for projects.

## Security and Integrity

Despite recent success in some parts of the world in controlling the supply, diversion and trafficking of illegal drugs, the scope of the narcotics problem today transcends law enforcement and public health questions, posing a threat to the security and integrity of nations and regions.

The narcotics trade undermines government and officials through corruption, intimidation, and economic destabilisation. The erratic ebb and flow and sheer volume of drug money have a destabilising effect on the supply of money and exchange markets.

Moreover, the threat posed to individuals the world over by drug related acts of terrorism is very real. In the past, traffickers often viewed enforcement success in interrupting their operation. Now with stricter drug control and law enforcement measures around the world, some trafficking channels have been disrupted and their priority organisations are on the defensive in many areas.

In addition to devising new trafficking routes through less well guarded areas, they are now reacting not only with threats but also with acts of violence.

The UN 'Drug Summit' of June 1998 tells us that international community has come to understand that illegal drugs are a global problem and required a coordinated international response. All aspects of drugs should be dealt together; that is crop control, interdiction, law enforcement, education, psychological motivation must go hand in hand. Only an effort that is cooperative, vigorously enforced and truly international can successfully address the global drug problem.

## The writer is Professor of Psychology, University of Dhaka and Director, Drug Abuse Research Centre (DARC).

# Sri Lanka Gets Projected as Sex Paradise

Sugeeswara Senadhira writes from Colombo

**W**HEN the Sri Lankan government handed a European firm an image-building contract, little did it suspect that the island nation would be projected as a sex paradise.

Sri Lankans in Germany were shocked when the country's much publicised first promotion film handled by the European company turned out to be a semi-pornographic one portraying the island nation as a place where sex is easily accessible. 'Ina's Journey Through Sri Lanka,' produced by Manning, Salvage and Lee (MSL) and screened by Germany's RTL 2 television channel, had erotic pornographic scenes and portrayed Sri Lanka as a place where German men and women could seek sex easily.

Many are now questioning the necessity to hire a foreign public relations company to boost the country's image abroad when its action has ended up tarnishing Sri Lanka's image. The film, which was produced by MSL under its \$3.5 million contract, was filmed in Sri Lanka under the patronage of the Ceylon Tourist Board (CTB) and the national carrier Air Lanka. It starred German

porn actress Ina Werner who has been described as a Pamela Anderson clone. The film has scenes of female nudity as well as depiction of sexual intercourse inspired by the Kama Sutra.

Mahli Goonaratne, manager of the CTB office in Germany, was the first to alert the authorities that the film focussed exclusively on the alleged availability of easy sex in Sri Lanka.

CTB Chairman Henry Samaranyake claimed that in the televised documentary there were certain scenes which were not in the original footage approved by the National Film Corporation. 'We were horrified to learn that scenes of the Kama Sutra were included,' Samaranyake said.

'What they have done is a violation of the contract,' he said. However he admitted that Ina's scenes were filmed in Sri Lanka in the presence of a CTB official. Commenting on the fiasco, *The Sunday Times* said the tender for the image-building contract should be scrutinised. It pointed out that while early damage control measures were required, it was also essential to probe the whole issue and take action against those who

are responsible or those who failed to exercise enough responsibility, resulting in a tarnished image for Sri Lanka.

The MSL was given the image-building contract last year by the tourist board following approval from the cabinet. The company was first given a contract to handle the overall image of Sri Lanka, including propaganda against the secessionist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The company even handled the CNN interview for President Chandrika Kumaratunga in London when she went to Britain for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh in October 1997. The company charged \$19,000 for making arrangements for the interview.

The original contract for MSL included the overall image building for Sri Lanka — taking up part of the work from the ministries of Foreign Affairs, External Trade, Tourism and Finance (foreign investment promotion), some of which expressed dissatisfaction with MSL's work.

Trade Minister Kingsley Wickremaratne also supported the Foreign Ministry's position. —*India Abroad News Service*

# Bridges over Dhaleswari have already paved the way: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has already inaugurated one of the two Dhaleswari Bridges, while the other one is just a couple of spans away from completion, thereby paving the way to the Padma Bridge which could be constructed in any of the nearest sites suitable based on studies and surveys to be carried out by national and international experts.

Reportedly, a bridge over Padma will be much more cost-effective than the JMB, since

# Right initiative to be taken by the Prime Minister: The socio-politico-economic importance of the construction of a bridge over Padma can hardly be overemphasized. After Meghna and Jamuna, it is time for Padma to be pondered over.

The increased interest of overseas investors in the gas sector of the country — a peaceful delta pursuing economic prosperity in a region recently gripped by a fatal nuclear arms race — further highlights and adds to the urgency and significance of embarking on such a vital project.

