

The Ghost in the Mustard

While it cannot be gainsaid that the nation's law and order situation, worst in decades, has yet to look up...

Now the chief Metropolitan Magistrate has, under instructions, prepared a report on the situation in which he places the fault squarely on the police and government itself for such fails.

The CMM has recommended setting up of a prosecution cadre that will be charged with filing cases and the conduct of them until disposal.

Devaluation

This had to happen. If on February 2 the South East Asian currencies' down-pegging to dollar had prompted us to devalue our own by 85 poisha...

By cautious and conservative standards, the latest downward adjustment of taka to a dollar and the one before that might look like deep slides to us.

We are caught in a whirlpool of currency fluctuations that require of us to frequently readjust the par value of taka with other currencies.

Devaluation promotes export, encourages remittances of foreign currencies by Bangladeshi expatriate workers and helps increase the forex reserve.

Inferno on River

Both history and romantic association went into flames Wednesday night when a big fire at the IWTG quay at Narayanganj engulfed four steamers including Gazi and Kiwi.

From the reports that have filtered through it is clear that one reason the fire raged for such a long time was the failure to inform the fire brigade quickly enough.

It does not make sense that a ship is kept high and dry on the dock for two long years for repairing purposes. And then all on a sudden you wake up to a disaster like this.

HENRY Kissinger has likened the Hindu mind, in his autobiography, to the intricate architecture of temples.

Set up at the dawn of nuclear age in 1948 with the genius Homi Bhabha and wisdom of Jawaharlal Nehru the Atomic Energy Commission of India pledged to be the vehicle of progress and development for the country's poor and backward millions but has finally turned out to be the manufacture of self-defeating devices with no trace of its contribution to any developmental effort.

During the decades of animated nuclear debate India always projected the idea of 'nuclear for peace and prosperity' and pleaded for total nuclear disarmament while at some stage of it she perhaps already underook military nuclear programme.

Dangerous Illusions for Power

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

India has never been internally weaker than it is today. Over the years the country has suffered a decline dipping its polity to all time low with its rampart of much haloed state values assaulted by growing political aberration, federal structure eroded and democracy desecrated.

could be demolished, although at a later stage, under the nose of a secular government at the centre.

Yet the world community, enamoured with India's great heritage of Ashoka who renounced war, violence and bloodshed as means of power relating as far back as to the third century BC and whose imperial symbols provide some of the outer trappings of Indian statecraft, wanted to grant India the benefit of doubt.

After fifty years of mumbled and muted words India has now the nukes in its arsenal. Why? The reason has been made abundantly clear by her codifying Pokhran II 'Shakti'.

In post-Pokhran euphoria an anarchistic trio of the BJP — prime minister Vajpayee, L K Advani and Khusabhabhan Thakre — boastfully declared India's nuclear status, asked the perceived adversaries to acknowledge the changed geopolitical reality as well as power balance and also prognosticated bringing the adversaries to their knees.

But can India be a power of the proportion she has been aspiring for — a place at the apex of the international power structure, a sixth seat in an extended nuclear club, a permanent seat in UN Security Council, the clout to be enjoyed as G-9 and so on?

India has never been internally weaker than it is today. Over the years the country has suffered a decline dipping its polity to all time low with its

been trying to placate a hostile international opinion and disents at home by building up an insecurity syndrome to justify nuclear bomb for the country. It has come up with the arguments of the country's security vulnerability to 'dangerous nuclear environment' in India's neighbourhood.

India often prided on the country's burgeoning middle class, the 250 million strong of which is considered an asset for attracting foreign investment — sanctions or no sanctions. One cannot however be oblivious of its 350 million absolute poor who live under poverty line in squalid conditions.

The BJP government has

China and nuclear weapons equipped navies of four other nuclear weapon states prowling in and around Indian Ocean.

Given this backdrop BJP's decision to go nuclear for 'security' has been 'strategically irrational, politically outrageous and morally repugnant'.

They have earned India opprobrium, suspicion, resentment and hatred, and cer-

tainly not respect both from major powers and also smaller states — which once regarded India to be an exemplary moral force.

Nuclear weapons are at the best a devalued currency today. India's dream of becoming a great power just on the basis of her possession of nuclear bomb is founded on quicksand.

By disregarding this fundamental truth India has tampered with stability — much needed for progress and prosperity of the nations — both at regional and global level. It has set in motion new tension for herself and others in her neighbourhood and smashed the prospects of nuclear disarmament — at least for the time being.

Gujral Doctrine: Good for Neighbours, Good for India, too

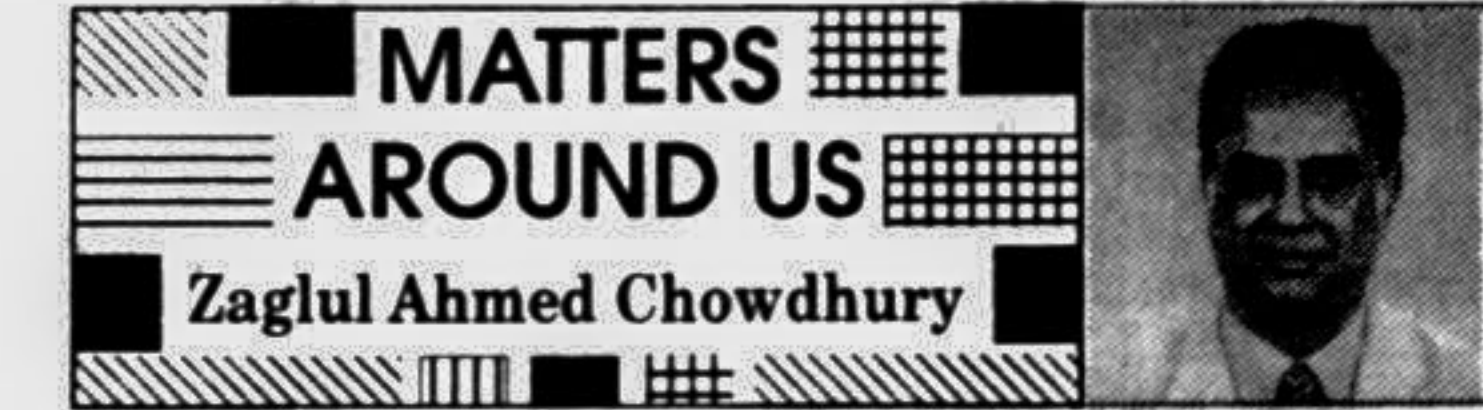
More than one billion people in the South Asian region are bound to move together for common good since most of them are mired in abject poverty.

THE 'Gujral Doctrine' that envisions a close relation for India with the neighbours came to be known after a person who espoused the idea for a healthy and happy political climate in this part of the world.

argued that some of them are known as outstanding or successful foreign ministers for India and some had also pleaded and worked for closer relations with neighbours.

In that context the tenures of Mr Gujral as external affairs minister twice were not very long and were not characterised as anything particularly significant.

Mr Gujral was here recently and he himself has touched upon the issue. He says the 'Gujral Doctrine' is nothing but a policy that could improve relations among the neighbours of the region which are in most cases otherwise riven by conflicts and misunderstandings.



Mr Gujral says not that problems between two particular neighbours will vanish overnight but what will happen is that tensions can be reduced, and overall environment improved considerably.

max. India set off several explosions in mid May and Pakistan responded by a set of tests in late May.

The new government in India rather invited fresh tensions with China and also Myanmar with whom New Delhi's relations had no problems as such in recent times.

agreement that the previous government had, signed with Dhaka on the water issue. There was an impression in this country too that the change of seat in New Delhi may not be favourable for it.

To the Editor...

Free iodine, arsenic, urine test

Sir, Iodine deficiency diseases (IDD), ground water pollution by arsenic and the large rate of increase in diabetes DM are three major health hazards confronting the nation now.

As a concerned citizen I have, therefore, personally set up a unit at my laboratory in the Dhaka University for free testing of samples of iodinated salt (for iodine), samples of water suspected to contain arsenic (for arsenic) and urine samples of people (for presence of reducing sugar-indication of DM) free of cost.

Promotion of 154 officers

Sir, The recent (early part of 1998) promotion of 154 officers to the posts of Deputy Secretary, Joint Secretary, Addl. Secretary and Secretary to the government by and large was considered unconstitutional, a case similar in nature to that of 1992 mass promotion where hundreds of juniors were promoted superseding several hundreds of seniors.

but this time the top bureaucracy influenced by the chosen juniors and blessings of the political masters dared to go for the helter skelter promotions where, too, very many seniors including even those who were subjected to deprivation in Feb 1992, were again superseded illegally.

This in the interest of justice to all, bureaucracy should be made free from political influence. And the career prospects of the officers should be guided by normal promotion practices and ethics of seniority-cum-merit and not by the whims of introducing arbitrary benchmark numbers to deprive good seniors.

and the opposition parties have been reacting in the same way, in the same language, using the same vocabulary, in the same meaningless and ludicrous manner.

The people on whom we have given the responsibility to guide us are misleading us — their attitude seems to be 'everything they do and say are right and everything they say and do are wrong'.

Shamin Ahsan 64/M, R.K Mission Road, Gopibagh, Dhaka-1203

Well...? well, what?

Sir, What is happening in the financial sector? It seems that the entire Finance Ministry has gone berserk. First the Bangladesh Bank has printed faulty defaulter list and then apologising.

Stop this Nonsense

Sir, Thanks for the editorial under the above title published on June 13. It pin-pointed the ridiculous way the political parties react to the national budget. Both the ruling and opposition parties are out with banners, posters, processions, chanting over-uses, ready-made slogans to hail or reject the budget as soon as it is placed in the Parliament.

Art Buchwald's COLUMN

'My Fellow Graduates'

EVERY year I have to change my graduation speech, depending on conditions in the country. My fellow graduates, The class of 1998 may be the luckiest one that ever graduated. Unemployment is down, the stock market is up, sunglasses are cheap and all you have to fear is fear itself, or Alan Greenspan raising interest rates.