Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka Sunday, July 5, 1998

## 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, it is nevertheless true that the government has been nabbing on and off top terrors as well as gangs of criminals over the last two years. This good work, however, is being defeated by the fact that even the most vicious of the criminals, arrested on charge of multiple murder, are being enlarged on bail quite often. And cases against some are simply falling through and the blokes set free, nullifying life-risking police enterprise. The society is thus returned to a situation of terror and the situation gets more insecure with the stomping culprits threatening every potential helper to prosecution. It is Home Minster Rafiqul Islam who is being hurt the most by such bails for he is on a personal crusade against these and every bail pushes him and the society into a bad defeat.

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 bails. The CMM has identified 11 points responsible for making the judges prefer bail.

The list starts with erratic GD entries and ends with inordinate delay in chargesheeting or even a failure to chargesheet. In between there are such classic bloomers as more than one complaints claiming the same culprits' presence at more than one place at the same time to absence of government witnesses on hearing dates. Inefficiency and incompetence may be at the root of such inexcusable failures and outright dereliction of duty. But chances are overwhelmingly great that these failures are deliberate and well-designed to benefit the criminals. Benefits accruing salivating kick-offs.

The CMM has recommended setting up of a prosecution cadre that will be charged with filing cases and the conduct of them until disposal. A specially trained cadre this will be. We wholeheartedly endorse the proposal and request the Home Minister to expedite the launching of this andre. By the by, what happened to the Seema Choudhury murder case in which government was promise-bound to appeal against the court verdict of acquittal for all who were charged? After all, this verdict was the first authoritative document indicting government of presenting deliberately weakened prosecution for very transparent coverup reasons.

### 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 it is now the depreciation in the value of Indian and Pakistani Rupee that has impelled us to do it again. This time by 80 poisha, evidently the second biggest slump in taka value among the 13 devaluations carried out by this government in the last two years.

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. But they hardly compare with the free fall in currency value stomached in East Asia or the extent of devaluation resorted to by Pakistan and India under constraints of economic sanctions applied against these two countries after their nuclear tests in May.

We are caught in a whirlpool of currency fluctuations that require of us to frequently readjust the par value of taka with other currencies. The frequency with which devaluations are being carried out these days could make one take them in stride, and somewhat casually, too. But as a matter of fact the value of a country's currency is pivotal to its macro-economic health and its future course of

management. Devaluation promotes export, encourages remittances of foreign currencies by Bangladeshi expatriate workers and helps increase the forex reserve. On the flip-side, however, it discourages imports causing a fall in government's revenue earning, and with procurements from abroad becoming costlier, the supply prices go right up inducing higher inflation into the economy. Since import is an extensive economic necessity by itself and a large measure of export activity is critically import-dependent we have to strike a balance between the two with great finesse. Let banking, fiscal and infrastructural facilities be operated with maximum efficiency to boost export while a quick-reflex monetary policy is put in place to reduce infla-

### tionary pressures. Inferno on River

Both history and romantic association went into flames Wednesday night when a big fire at the IWTC quay at Narayanganj engulfed four steamers including Gazi and Kiwi. It is too early to know the exact reason behind the fire although possibilities ranging from short circuit to sabotage have been aired. Hopefully the enquiry committee which is due to submit its report in a week's time will put us in the picture. Nevertheless some questions crop up and do not really wait for the verification of the real cause of accident.

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. Reportedly there is no telephone at the dockyard. Since there was no fire brigade on the river little wonder no extinguishing aid could be summoned quickly to put down the blaze. Actually we have escaped a far greater casualty. It really could have been worse. With the dock labourers untying 15 other ships anchored there to save them from the fire that had already caught with four, a whole range of potentially explosive possibilities were opened. Imagine what would have happened with any of these free floating vessels colliding with an oil tanker!

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. All these point finger at a complete breakdown of management marked by indecision and free play of insidious intent. We want the authorities to bolster the slack management of the ports and the vessels immediately.

# 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.

ENRY Kissinger has likened the Hindu mind, L in his autobiography, to the intricate architecture of temples. The finely carved Hindu temples have nooks and corners whose seemingly endless detail conveys no single view or meaning, he says. Such a complexity of mind is aptly illustrated by India's nuclear development programme which, at least partly, vindicates the observation of former secretary of state.

Set up at the dawn of nuclear age in 1948 with the genius Homi Bhaba 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 manufacturer of self-defeating devices with no trace of its contribution to any developmental effort. Seldom has there been a nuclear programme so much obfuscated by 'hide and seek', if not total secrecy and warped in its purpose.

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 undertook her military nuclear programme. Even when India exploded her first nuclear bomb in 1974 Indira Gandhi called it peaceful'. Baffled at the contradictions, much of the humanity remained unconvinced of Mrs Gandhi's innocence beof the sleazy track record of her country which, among others, already coerced Kashmir, Hyderabad, Junagarh, Goa and Sikkim into submission, one after another, under military threat or political scheming. It was difficult to trust a country which persecuted its minorities and smothered their separate cultural identities to the extent that a 5century old mosque at Ayodhya

could be demolished, although at a later stage, under the nose of a 'secular' government at the centre. Many remained sceptical of the 'peaceful' bomb of India which at the slightest instance twists even its small neighbours' to reduce them to the status of its vassals.

Yet the world community. enamoured with India's great heritage of Ashoka who renounced war, violence and bloodshed as means of power relation as far back as in 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. Fascinated also by the creeds of 'ahimsha' and 'satyagraha' of Mahatma Gandhi with which he waged his unique independence struggle against the British, it desperately hoped that India would not, after all, tread a dangerous nuclear track. Those hopes now lie buried under the radioactive

sands of Pokhran.

After fifty years of mumbling and mincing of words India has now the nukes in its arsenal. Why? The reason has been made abundantly clear by codifying Pokhran II 'Shakti'. The BJP government representing the most original of Hindu mind has now invoked the goddess of power. In Indian mythology 'Shakti' and its myriad incarnations are destroyers of evil. But in destroying the evils the post-Pokhran shock has destroyed the only visible virtue: a non-weaponised nuclear deterrence of South Asia and created the worst evil by plunging the region into a nuclear abyss. In more than one way the BJP has inflicted a nuclear humiliation upon the re-

In post-Pokhran euphoria an anachronistic trio of the BJP — prime minister Vajpayee, L K Advani and Khushabhan 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 they chickened and quickly offered to talk, once only one of the adversaries. Pakistan retaliated exposing BJP to inevitable humiliation inherent in a power game. And it was all for power!

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? Many including responsible Indians doubt. It is however true that India is a big country with almost one billion population. It is the largest democracy of the world with sound industrial and technological base. The country has the fourth largest armed forces of the world with a bluewater navy. She has since launched her rocket into the space and hurtled across the continent her intermediate range ballistic missile. India has produced luminaries in various disciplines of knowledge and expertise. But then her predicaments are equally pronounced and limitations enormous.

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. With the coming wave of 'Hindutva' there is no binding glue for its diverse people. And a crisis is indeed rife with its national identity trapped between composite culture and cultural nationalism. Its governance is poor, politics criminalised and leaders corrupt. There is hardly an internal order. The political horse trading is rampant. The prime minister and chief ministers are chargesheeted for corruption. While there is no leader of national stature, the regional satraps dominate the political scene. Can such nation be among the great powers of the world?

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. India's Satellite TV channels sometimes project their miseries alternately with the programmes of Kamasutrian extravaganza. There is hardly any social justice apparatus in the country to address the problems of many

more deprived - the lower castes, the backward castes, the dalits and the tribals who live in perpetual agony. More than fifty per cent of its population are illiterate and many more are steeped in prejudice, ignorance and numerous social taboos. Can such a nation be among the great powers of the

The BJP government has

been trying to placate a hostile international opinion and dissents 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. This threat must be assumed to include Pakistan.

China and nuclear weaponequipped navies of four other nuclear weapon states prowling in and around Indian Ocean. But according to India-watchers there has been no perceptible adverse change in India's security environment in recent years justifying a radical shift in India's military posture; neither can that vindicate Pokhran II which is totally devoid of strategic rationale. On the contrary India today is more secure militarily with the improvement of relations with China as well as smaller neighbours in the region. Even with Pakistan a nuclear deterrence was at work and it kept peace between the two countries for the longest time in their chequered relation.

Given this backdrop BJP's decision to go nuclear for security' has been 'strategically irrational, politically outrageous and morally repugnant'. Moreover, nuclear arms were not essential for the insecurity, if any, for India or any other state. It has, if anything, only compromised India's security. With Pokhran II India has degraded its security, turned friends and allies into enemy and diverted resources away from urgent priorities. The Pokhran tests have earned India opprobrium, suspicion, resentment and hatred, and certainly not respect both from major powers and also smaller states - which once regarded India to be an exemplary moral force. They may now look upon her as treacherous, deceptive and hypocritical with hegemonic ambitions.

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. She seems to have learnt no lesson from the setbacks suffered by other nuclear powers — the US defeat in Vietnam, China having a bloody nose in the same country in 1979 and Soviet Union's humiliating retreat from Afghanistan. The mighty Soviet Union could not even ensure her own survival despite its awesome nuclear arsenal and Britain, even with her nuclear arsenal, is progressively reduced to the position of a second rate power. On the other hand Japan, Germany and some of EU countries enjoy much more clout in decisionmaking at a global level. The bombs alone do not anymore provide either power or secu-

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. It has lost the moral high ground it held so far for being anti-nuclear just for the sake of cheap popularity to cling to the citadel of power. Once the euphoria over the dangerous powerplay is over, the BJP is sure to find itself almost unclad in the glare of reviving sanity and rationality. Till then the hopeless millions both in India and elsewhere perhaps will have to keep their fingers crossed.

# 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.

HE "Guiral 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. Mr Inder Kumar Guiral, the scholar turned diplomat and politician, was twice external affairs, minister for India before becoming the prime minister for the largest democracy, which is also the biggest country in the South Asian region. It is not a question of an individual but a principle that provides a political stance in the area which would do away with the misconception and mistrust, as far as possible, existing among the countries of the region and bind

them in good neighbourliness. Arguably, different countries including India often speak about this principle as a kind of cornerstone of their foreign policy and hence one can ask, what is the new the 'doctrine' that has come to be known after an individual? One can also rightly point out that all the Indian prime ministers or for that matters key figures like the foreign and defence ministers were not jingoistic in their approach or less friendly in attitude as far as niehgbours are concerned and certainly some of them did want and also worked for promotion of New Delhi's ties with the neighbours. If it comes down to the external affairs ministers then one can refer to Sardar Swaran Singh, Mohammad Currim Chagla, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Narasimha Rao, N D Tiwari, or Dinesh Singh and this may be

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. Still, why his stint as external affairs minister and later as prime minister is often talked about to the extent that certain expression has become synonymous with his declared policy relating to the neighbours? What special relevance does it make to the scenario that involves the neighbouring nations of India? And why is there no doubt that this is referred to by the small neighbours of India with a large degree of acclamation? And why is it so when Mr Gujral or for that matter the governments that he represented had done nothing extraordinary like going totally out of the way to promote ties with the neighbours except that the feelings and sentiments of others were respected and taken into account?

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 misunderstanding.

MATTERS ## AROUND US Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury 

Mr Guiral 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. And in doing so, India need not have to ignore its interest as a large country. It becomes quite clear from execution of the Indian foreign policy by different governments, including those that Mr Gujral represented, that New Delhi had not compromised its basic positions while resolving problems with others or initiating efforts to promote ties. For instance, India under Mr Gujral's leadership has steadfastly refused to sign the CTBT even though countries of the region other than two principal ones -India and Pakistan - favour this and are calling for making the region a nuclear-free zone.

There is no doubt that some ripples have come to the fore after a new government took over in New Delhi last March for the reason that many thought the BJP-led administration will be somewhat different from the previous UF or even the earlier Congress government in dealing with the neighbours. The

fears were not totally unfounded as harsh comments by important figures in the authority caused fresh tensions or at least undercurrent of uneasiness in several countries. New Delhi's ties with Islamabad have been always hostile and to an extent belligerent, and there is nothing new about this given their historical past.

However, efforts also continue from time to time to mend the fences although improvement in the relationship is a herculean task. As prime minister Gujral and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in the last SAARC summit took several measures like setting up hotlines between the two hostile neighbours to ease tensions. The idea was to normalise relations as far as possible in different areas while the complex issues thwarting a solution can be put in the backburner. This helped maintain certain degree of normality in their behaviour even though the crux of the disputes remain as before.

The unexpected nuclear tests by the new Indian government changed the scenario and tensions between them took a cli-

max. India set off several explosions in mid May and Pakistan responded by a set of tests in late May. As the tensions heightened, some comments from both the countries exacerbated the situation. Some remarks by Indian home minister L K Advani and Pakistani foreign minister Gauhar Ayub Khan contributed to this situation. Tensions now persist with the hope that they may lessen when two prime ministers meet in the next SAARC summit later this month on the sidelines of the conference.

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. The disputes with China were wellknown but efforts were underway to normalise ties and that worked well. New Delhi-Yangon relations were trouble free but defence minister George Fernandes's several comments insinuating a conspiracy between China and Myanmar against India drew reactions from both the countries. Some remarks by a top BJP policy maker on the situation in Sri Lanka also raised new fears in Colombo whether the new Indian government wants to interfere in the affairs of its small neighbours. In Bangladesh, the leadership was assured that the new government would abide by the

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. All these happened when the head of the government is a person who can rightly claim that his tenure as the foreign minister way back in the late seventies was one of the most successful as far as New Delhi's ties with neighbours are concerned. May be, all in the coalition government do not see eye to eye on the issue of dealing with the neighbours and also may not be within the dominant BJP party. Mr Vajpayee is holding the portfolio of the external affairs ministry but hawkish approach may be coming from other quarters within the government.

ages a healthy relationship within the region but not by sacrificing each others own interest and position. It encourages goodwill and fraternity in an area whose people are otherwise bound by commonality despite today's differences and rivalries. After all more than one billion people in the South Asian region are promise bound to move together for common good since most of them are mired in abject poverty. The "Gujral Doctrine" should be held high because it envisions such a practical future for India's neighbours which the biggest nation in this area can pursue to earn confidence of the smaller neighbours without losing anything much.

The "Guiral Doctrine" envis-

### 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. Efforts by the government, donor agencies. NGO's (or the Bangladesh Diabetic Association) are just inadequate for serving the people.

As a concerned citizen 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. Upto 50 samples of each of the above three varieties of test materials are being tested by myself and my students everyday. Interested persons may contact me in my department or through - Phone: 9661900-59/Ext 6002, Fax: 880-2-865583/883907. E-mail: duregstr@ bangla. net/anando@ citechco.net.

Prof. SSMA Khorasani Dhaka University.

### 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. That situation or irregularity has occurred this time too. Then political masters were more responsible

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. The action was illegal because the promotion committee took into account a higher benchmark consideration which was framed illegally to debar the seniors. An officer's promotion is

guided by his seniority and satisfactory service records. Anything short of this would breed contempt, injustice and a ratrace to please superiors to win promotion. Further, the benchmark system has limitations too. For instance, the marking system in the present ACR (annual confidential report) are as follows: 95-100 (extraordinary). (excellent/very good), 61-84 (good), 41-60 (average) and 40above (below average). Now if the promotion is whimsically guided by numeracy than by the qualitative terminology like average, good etc. then it will be difficult to do proper justice since there are very fine lines of differences between average and good rating. For instance one bagging 60 is rated as average while the one having 61 is rated as good. Can this numerical difference of plus one, justify the qualitative difference between the two officers to give advantage to the junior having 61 marks against the senior getting 60 marks? This is nega-

tional. Thus in the interest of justice to all, bureaucracy should be made free from political influence. And the career prospects of the officers should

tion of equity, justice and fair-

play and hence unconstitu-

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. Thus gross injustice has been done to the seniors and hence the promotion made of 154 officers should be reviewed and the seniors left out accommodated, and thereby justice done to safeguard the interest of all else. The people in power should remember that, "the wheels of justice grinds slowly but steadily". Therefore, in their own interest too they should revert to just practices.

Faqeer Abdul Mannan Dhaka

"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-used ready-made slogans to hail or reject the budget as soon as it is placed in the Parliament.

While the ruling party terms it 'pro-people' the opposition calls it 'anti-people'; the former describes it 'historical' and 'full of new directions' and the latter expresses their sheer frustration as it does not offer anything 'new' and shows no 'specific direction'.

While the opposition remarks that this budget will make the poor poorer and the rich richer, the government party claims that this budget will unfailingly shorten the gap between the poor and the rich.

However, anyone can add to this list because this is not a new phenomenon in our reaction culture. Both the ruling 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 we say and do are

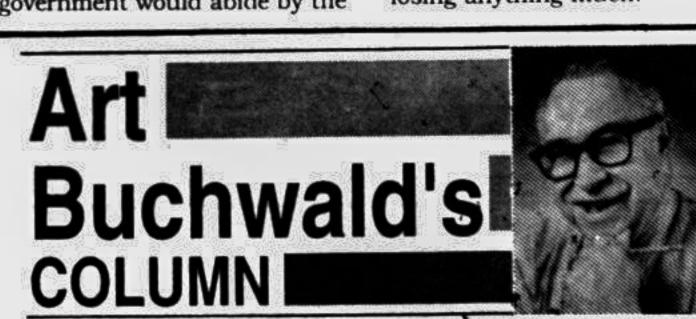
Shamim Ahsan 64/M, R K Mission Road Gopibagh, Dhaka-1203

### 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 than apologising. Who is a bank defaulter? and who are going to setup rules defining a company as a bank defaulter for ultimate penalization? What about the public sector? Bureaucrats are bureaucrats, and they are bailing the private sectors for all

the ills in the economy. The funny part is that Bangladesh Bank has also started meddling into the normal banking relationship between a client and a bank. Now all the managers of the banks are afraid to exceed any sort of cooperation to even good clients. And the invisible expenses have risen manifold due to its vigilance team, VAT and customs vigilance teams and many other vigilance teams constituted by the government which is adding up to harassments and costs to the industrialists.

Badshah Habibur Rahman 92. West Dhanmondi Dhaka



# 'My Fellow Graduates'

VERY 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. For the first time in history, the college student is truly in demand. No matter what you studied in school, the headhunters want you.

Hang tough when the job recruiters make a house call. Tell them that you wish to start at the same salary they pay Michael Jordan, plus whatever Nike will pay you to wear their sneakers. You will be respected for wanting to begin at the top, and, besides, what choice do the recruiters have when it is so empty in

the executive suite? Once you take a job that appeals to you, buy a Porsche or a Mercedes to make a statement to your family, who never thought you would make it in the real world. If you can't afford a brand-new car, ask your parents to buy you one. After all, they paid \$40,000 a year to put you through school, there is no reason they can't fork over another 40 as a graduation present.

Now I know what's on all your minds. What should you do about Monica Lewinsky? The answer is, don't do anything about Monica until Ken Star decides whether or not he is going to give her a job.

As for the president, you must not judge him on his private life, as long as gasoline is a dollar a gallon. You are the first generation who has access to Viagra. Like all drugs, it is good unless you take too much in a 24-hour pe-

riod. An overdose could give you an acid stomach or an Excedrin headache. As you go out into the world, think of the little people - Bill Gates, for example, who is being beaten up by the Justice Department. According to Mr Gates, your lives hang by a thread if he can't install his Internet browser on your computer. Trust

him — he would never lie to you. I know everyone in this class may not become president of Walt Disney or Victoria's Secret, but if you follow the yellow brick road you will find the happiness and success you so richly deserve — provided you buckle your seat belt, floss your teeth

and cook your hamburgers at more than 150 degrees. By arrangement with UNB and Los Angels Times Syndicate