Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Thursday, October 15, 1998 Epochal Verdict in 25 Days

On November 8 verdict is to be given in the Bangabandhu Murder Case. Very naturally the hearings and arguments etc. took a long 149 days. But it is nothing compared with the 279 months the nation had to wait for the trial in the most traumatising crime perpetrated in Bangladesh ever. The material accumulated during the lengthy hearing must be of a gargantuan size. To pronounce a profound verdict on this epoch-making case and after sifting through such a pile of material only in 25 days will be a herculean task. We have no doubt the learned Judge has made such a commitment considering the supreme importance of the case to the nation.

The en masse murder of the architect of this state together with his family was a crime that has been sitting heavy on the conscience of the nation and a dark and shameful blotch has been largely robbing law and government of validity. While the failure to bring such a crime to justice was all the time making our state and society appear as bereft of civilisation in the eyes of the world it was constantly and dangerously eroding our moral right to aspire to the supremacy of law.

The indemnity ordinance protecting the assassins and their conspiring cohort was the most shamefully uncivilised anti-law thing that was ever transformed into official print in a way to stay the operation of the Constitution and in the process maul it fundamentally. That part of our national scandal had first to be rectified before the trial could be held.

Whatever the verdict, the 23-year-old moral and legal nightmare will be over on November 8. The way the accused were allowed to have full and free defence has doubtlessly bolstered the cause of democracy and rule of law. The conduct of this case must leave its imprint on the similarly thwarted Jail Killing Case. One hopes that — and the others promised by the Prime Minister — would be conducted with equal dispatch. All the evil remnants, spin-offs and effects of coups d'état and military dictatorship and autocracy must be wiped off the face of this land sanctified by the blood of three million martyrs. Let the rule of law prevail over everything else.

For Transparent Elections

As the FBCCI voters go to the poll today to elect their organisation's President, Vice-President and E. ecutive Committee for a two-year term, all eyes get transfixed on the event at once. If the excitement level is high, thanks to a controversial background, an introspection is also due on the run-up we have just left behind.

The FBCCI grew in stature over the years as a powerful spokesman of the private sector often leveraging vis-a-vis the government's decisionmaking process in order that an enabling environment were created for it to operate effectively in a free market system. Government's reform agenda, on the other hand, demanded that it kept a consultative process going with the private sector business leadership. Things worked well on both levels with the FBCCI emerging as an important federating apex of various local associations and chamber bodies of the country.

On the flip-side we have seen a certain degeneracy gripping the electoral process, more precisely, the election campaign, which, needless to say, impacted adversely on the FBCCI image. Marked politicisation of this year's run-up to the poll with outside influence brought to bear on it and mudslinging to top it off has created misgivings in the public mind about the sanctity of the electoral process. What happened a couple of days ago by way of a vilification campaign must have vitiated the atmosphere to no small a degree.

Now, we want the polls to pass smoothly giving rise to no questions whatsoever about the transparency of the process and the fairness of the conduct of the election machinery. At the end of the day we would like the victor and the vanquished to part with a handshake.

We hope that by virtue of a fully transparent election the controversies will have dissolved in the thin air as dignity is restored to the executive offices and to the very institution of FBCCI itself.

ACC Victory

The outcome was never in doubt. Nobody, not even the staunchest believer in the glorious uncertainty of the game expected Bangladesh to finish as anything other than champions in the ACC trophy. Congratulations to Aminul Islam and his boys for not stopping short of achieving what was expected of them and doing it with an unmistak-

able stamp of authority.

Performance of the national cricket team in the last few months had been so uninspiring that even the relatively simple task of reigning supreme among minnows in international cricket did not appear as simple as it ought to be. Players' inability to perform up to their ability as exemplified in the twin tours of New Zealand and UK coupled with Board officials' whimsicality made a complete mess of Bangladesh's cricketing ambitions. The persistent whisper that Bangladesh has been awarded more than she deserved — obviously critics meant one day status bestowed on her — became a noise. All those smiling faces and showering hands underwent ugly transformation. There were even loud calls to withdraw prizes lavished on them after the ICC success. Even after admitting that public memory is short and people can be unforgiving it has to be maintained the cricketers were really caught in an awful stretch of poor form.

The victory — Bangladesh' second consecutive win in this meet — should help cricketers regain their lost confidence. Although there was no pressure in terms of the strength of the opposition there still was a fight to be won — the fight against their fidgety nerves and their nightmares. Then there was the question of earning the right to play in the infinitely different competition of Asia Cup comprising Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India.

But it would be courting disaster once again if any quarter tries to make any mileage out of this victory. There is no scope to be under any illusion. Efforts have to be kept under a state of vigil to develop the game in this country. Bangladesh have to go a long way.

Overview of Bangladesh from Abroad

A Strange Experience Stymied by Stark Reality

Parriotic people are generally highly protective of their land, people and It was a matter of gratification to note that the principal opposition party, the BNP, had proposed to the government to make joint and concerted efforts of both the ruling and the opposition parties resources. Sometimes, a deep within an institutional framework to plan and to carry out relief operations. sense of feelings take them to But to the dismay of many, the government declined the offer. uncanny heights. They appear to soar so high in the sky in

their imagination that a drop on the grim reality of earth the world press and media being often turns into a painful and a highly competitive forum, both substantive and sensational news as well as their In ancient times, China considered herself to be the centre analyses vie strongly against of the globe. That is why the one another for space. Bangladesh, being a small word China, 'Chungwa' in Chinese language, is written with a country with meagre resources relatively easy symbol of a verand no muscles to flex, is always shunted off the path by the tical straight line cutting mighty and the rich. Our perthrough a rectangle, representpetual want, deprivation and ing earth, in half. The Greeks, vagaries, however, figure out Romans and the Ottomans in their heydays prided them-selves as being the pivot of the now and then mainly as a measure to invoke compassion. world. With the rise of Euro-This time, in the wake of the pean powers in the Middle Ages, worst floods in the living memtheir potentates also viewed ory in Bangladesh, there aptheir own realms likewise. peared to have been an excep-

> It was strange but true. The reasons may have lied in the fact that Bangladesh was unable to compete successfully this time with the rest of the world in terms of securing its customary space, however little may it have been. In America, the presidential scandal became so overpowering and was made so by the all-powerful media that the people were almost made to believe that no developments worth reckoning

at all took place elsewhere in

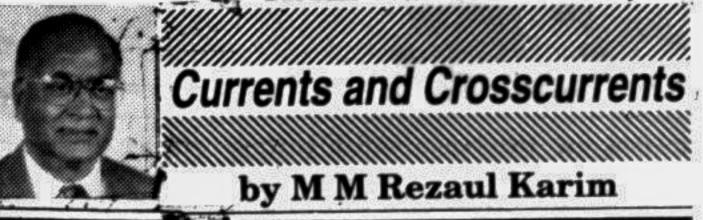
tion in terms of painfully low

coverage in world media.

the world. The British and the Europeans were engrossed with their own union and were cautiously anticipating the effects of the forthcoming introduction of a common Euro currency. The Russians found themselves more deeply entrenched in their political and economic debacles. The mighty Japan and the emerging Asian Tigers were still in the throes of

to expect. And it happened that

Some references were indeed made in the international media. One had to make efforts to look for them. Some well known quarters expressed sympathy. The United Nations and several donor countries noted the magnitude of the loss and distress. They made pledges of funds and materials. Their



severe monetary crisis. The principal actors on the scene of South Asia were then locked in a bitter struggle for attaining nuclear supremacy, rendering regional peace and economic well-being of their own people to a secondary importance. How could poor Bangladesh get a small space for giving vent to their woes during the currency of the most unprecedented of the natural calamities that befell its people? It was too much

priority, however, was assigned to NGOs as recipients and distributors of relief materials and services. The sad experience of corruption, favouritism and pilferage through government channel loomed large in the horizon of their mind. The opposition parties also rallied round to help and succour the flood victims within their lim-

One would try to keep abreast with developments in

the country mainly from the webside internet which provided the text of The Daily Star on computer. But for a traveller it was not possible to have constant access to a computer, unless he or she was carrying a laptop. It was a matter of gratification to note that the principal opposition party, the BNP, had proposed to the government to make joint and concerted efforts of both the ruling and the opposition parties within an institutional framework to plan and to carry out relief operations. But to the dismay of many, the government declined the offer. A rare opportunity for the government and the opposition to work together was lost. But, strangely enough only a few days ago Prime Minister called upon the opposition parties to join hands in relief. The belated overture was confusing. But most people take it for a propaganda ploy. Yet, the government sources and the large friendly media are full of praise for government sponsored relief operations. The opposition claims it to be both partisan

and inadequate. Some international quarters, however, while paying lip service to government efforts, commended highly the operations conducted by the NGOs.

After returning home, one witnessed a great commotion following the arrest and detention of two BNP leaders. Obaidur Rahman and Nurul Islam Manjur, and a leader of the dissident faction of the Jatiya Party, Shah Moazzem Hossain. Though the case will go to court after the detainees are charge sheeted, the opposition view this action as a planned operation to gag the opposition and to cripple the latter's plan for a mass movement against the government. They also viewed the action to be partisan, as Awami League leaders under similar circumstances were left untouched. They pointed out that the government had earlier arrested three BNP leaders in order to prevent the first halfday hartal called by the opposition. The effort was aborted and the government, for the first time in history, had to pay fine, under orders of the High Court, for unlawful arrest on ridiculous grounds. Such action is most unfortunate. It would only further tarnish the image of the ruling party and hinder the aspired growth of democracy for the nation.

China and Taiwan: A Sign of Thawing Relations?

by Barrister Harun ur Rashid

Many experts believe that whether there will be sound relations between China and Taiwan in the 21st century is likely to depend on whether they can begin negotiations on reunification.

HINA'S President Jiang Zemin is scheduled to meet a top Taiwan negotiator in Beijing on 18 October and it is considered to be the highest level contact between the two sides since 1949. It may be recalled that Beijing cancelled the talks after Taiwan's President Mr. Lee Teng-hui made a controversial visit to the US in 1995. Beijing is reported to have arranged the meeting between a Taiwan industrialist and the chairman of the semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation, Mr. Koo Chen-fu and President Jiang as part of its initiative to improve ties with Taiwan and pave the way for eventual reunification.

sordid experience.

Even the Moguls in India and

the Mauryas long before them

perhaps nurtured identical

thoughts. We, the Bangladeshis,

being among the poorest of na-

illusions in professing the

faintest insight of this nature.

Nevertheless, we still hope that

the world would pay heed, even

cursorily, to some of the most

serious calamities affecting the

country. Unfortunately, it did

continuously for weeks, nay

months, one naturally yearned

for news from home. No doubt,

Having had to stay abroad

not happen that way.

tions, indeed, can or do have no

It could be argued that China's policy towards Taiwan oscillates between toughness and sweetness. In 1996, China conducted live missile tests off Taiwan to demonstrate its displeasure at Taiwan's apparent efforts towards independence. The US fleet came to Taiwan's aid against Chinese "aggression" as perceived by Taiwan. President Clinton's statement during his visit to China in last June made it clear that the US would not support the independence of Taiwan. The statement pleased the Chinese leaders.

There appears to be several reasons which has propelled both sides for bilateral talks. Chinese leaders feel some pressure to make headway on reunification partly because of next vear's scheduled union with Macau and last year's successful reunion with Hong Kong.. Both China and Taiwan kept a semblance of stability in the financial crisis that developed in South East and North Asia. The crisis has put pressure on both parties to adopt sustainable growth-oriented policies in cooperation with each other. Although globalisation is sweeping all over the world, China and Taiwan appear to be hesitant to accept the whole gamut of globalisation. Both regime derived their popular support from economic successes. With their economic performance slowed down, it could be argued that their economic policy will be questioned within the coun- Yunlin had urged Taiwan to be- UN in Geneva.

try. Another area in which the financial turmoil has an impact is security and this might have induced both China and Taiwan to come to the negotiating table.

Although there are compelling reasons for China and Taiwan to iron out their differences, negotiations between the two sides are perceived to be among the most complex and sensitive in international diplomacy because political analysts believe that both sides enter into negotiations with

different agenda. Taiwan wants regular negotiations over technical issues and disputes between the two sides while China wants the talks to concentrate on the ground rules for political talks for reunification. Many experts believe that whether there will be sound relations between China and Taiwan in the 21st century is likely to depend on whether they can begin negotiations on reunification. It was reported that China's policymaker on Taiwan Mr. Chen

gin political talks. China is willing to pursue "one China but two systems" policy towards Taiwan. Taiwan shares the goal of unity provided China becomes democratic in its political system. This demand appears to be the biggest hurdle in the process of reunification.

The uneasy relationship between China and Taiwan remains one of the world's most sensitive flashpoints. China has refused to rule out the use of force if Taiwan declares its independence while the US made it clear that no force should be used against Taiwan for its reunification with China. In the context of this political environment, it is good to see that the planned negotiations signal the thawing of ties between China and Taiwan. We, hope that the visit of the Taiwanese negotiator will strengthen the working relationship between the two sides, leading to the reunification of Taiwan with China through peaceful means.

The writer is former Bangladesh Ambassador to the

Polybags

Sir, The shopping polythene bags are being so extensively used at all levels that it has become a social problem during this decade. It is a big industry involving several lakhs of peo-

The main attraction is that it is offered free of charge during shopping, and after use or re-use it is thrown away. It appears to have become a very cheap substitute in the underdeveloped countries for daily use. Now we cannot live without the polybags. Even these bags were used in millions to provide food packets during and after the recent floods.

But the great nuisance is that these bags are not perishable environmentally, and do not disappear after a while like other garbage. Its greatest nuisance value is that it blocks drains and outlets of water, and have to be removed using manpower, costing a great deal of time, money and energy.

The ban or restriction on such social success cannot be implemented quickly and directly on such a large scale, without first introducing an acceptable substitute equally handy, cheap, and disposable. All users cannot be expected to spend some money and buy substitutes at regular intervals, once they have been spoiled by using polybags. That is the price of freedom - getting anything

useful free of charge! Modified jute bags may be a good substitute, but considerate research and development have to be carried out to make it cheap, abundant and disposable. May be it could be mixed with rags or waste paper or products, to make it cheaper, but at the same time strong enough to be used a couple of times. It must also have another property: wet-proof for a

limited period. The project of commercialising the conversion of green jute to crude paper could not take off successfully for reasons best know to the authorities. It may be now be examined whether the scheme may be revived, and the options available be placed before the government for taking the right decision in public interest. Jump-start decisions may not work.

A Zabr Dhaka

Another Guatemala?

Sir, You may have noticed the recent incident in Guatemala stadium which took more than one hundred and eight lives.

In this context, I want to bring it in your kind notice that to make their shops look more gorgeous and spacious some dishonest and greedy businessmen have dismembered some of the main pillars of Bangabandhu National Stadium without giving much thought to the safety and security of the people who come to watch the game in thousands over their head in the galleries.

On October 24, '98, BCB has arranged a tournament "Wills International Cup" in which all the nine Test playing nations are participating. Such an event has never been held in our country. This is going to be a real amusement for the Bangalees as well as for the foreign cricket lovers who will be able to watch the game live on televisions and in the Bangabandhu National stadium. As is expected, the gallery of that green field is certainly going to be a packed one in all the games. Just knowing the passion of the Bangalees towards the cricket bonanza, I fear that it is not impossible of occurring another mournful event as Guatemala, in Bangabandhu

National Stadium. So on behalf of every conscious people I urge the authority concerned to look into the matter carefully and take necessary steps to avoid any unexpected and unfortunate event.

Sanjay Kumar Basak Reliance Insurance Limited 8 Rajuk Avenue, Dhaka-1000.

Afghanistan and **Indian mediation**

Sir, Charity begins at home. We are astounded that on the one hand India has offered its mediation to end conflict in Afghanistan saying, "A broadbased international effort, through the United Nations is required at this stage to address Afghanistan situation" and on the other hand, it (India) has abruptly rejected any mediation by the UN, US, Japan, Germany, UK, Egypt or any other country to help solve Kashmir problem which is polluting and hampering peace, progress stability and alleviating of poverty of millions of people in South Asia.

Following the dangerous and destructive nuclear tests by India and reply thereof by tit-fortat acts by Pakistan the whole world has got alarmed and urged India and Pakistan to give up their demonical nuclear arms race and to resolve their half-a-century-old Kashmir dispute through a third party mediation consistent with the

aims, objectives and principles of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human rights but the unfortunate New Delhi's continuous arrogant and belligerent attitude not to solve the problem through mediation but to insist on solution of the long standing dispute through bilateral talks and dictating Pakistan to accept New Delhi's terms and condition have cast a spell of gloom all over the world and unmasked the evil designs and heinous ambitions of India.

Whatever have been the situation. Let bygones be bygones. We agree to India's offer of mediation to end conflict in Afghanistan and simultaneously once again call upon India to accept UNs offer of mediation to end violence and bloodshed also in Kashmir.

O.H .Kabir, 6. Hare Street. Wari, Dhaka-1203

"Ombudsman Ball Game"

Sir, The write-up by Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, titled "Ombudsman Ball Game" published in the DS issue of 9 October, '98 was very timely indeed. It so happened that I read with interest the same topic in a weekly on 25 September, 1998. The offensive and brutal comment made by its Special Correspondent on the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and chief adviser of the Caretaker Government prior to the election was as good as character assassination. I strongly protest against the weekly's re-

Everybody knows that Justice Habibur Rahman is a genius. His vision, courage, wisdom and political impartiality are admired by all. We are very proud of him as the son of the

Abul Ashraf Noor House#9, Road# 4 Sector# 5, Uttara, Dhaka-1230.

Voting verses Consensus

Sir, We are hearing a lot about the word "consensus" in connection with the polls of FBCCI.

In ancient time, consensus was practised to elect representative but it had its shortcomings so was discarded. Consen-

sus means imposing the decision of the influential to others. This is particularly true in our country. There should be campaign and meetings to convince the voters to vote for a particular candidate instead of convincing them to support the consensus candidate bypassing

the voting process. We have also seen in the Dhaka Stock Exchange case where a consensus panel was elected bypassing the voting process and this cannot be called democracy.

There are hardly a few hundred voters in these two organisations and if democracy cannot be established here, how can we expect democracy at the national level?

D N Afzal Dhanmondi

Raising potatoes without soil

Sir, A recent Xinhua despatch from Harbin reported that the Chinese scientists have developed techniques to grow potatoes without soil. Under the new technique, potato buds are being cultivated in tubes and then put in rock and sawdust. The buds are given water with nutrients and then placed inside the greenroom where they grow rapidly in sealed and disease-free environment with weights that are five times heavier than that of potatoes cultivated with the common

technique. I think that Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) should undertake such a project to try and adapt the above mentioned new scientific technique for profitable potato farming without soil.

M Zahidul Haque BAI, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Dhaka-1207.

National album on flood '98

Sir, I request to all concerned who have taken pictures, made video etc., on the flood 1998; please submit a copy of each photograph to government to produce a National Album on the flood 1998. And to government, may I please make such a general call to all concerned to produce a National Album.

Dr M A Khaleque Shuvo Medicare Chowrangee Market Savar, Dhaka

OPINION Constructing an Unreal Reality

leading daily like The Daily Star could print a poorly written, biased and naive editorial (Sunday, Oct 11, 1998) on harbouring criminals like abductors at the University of Dhaka. It was written not with a first nand knowledge and verified information, but on a news item published more than a week earlier in a Bangla daily with whom, I presume, The Daily Star cannot have any business, at least not in exchanging stories. Such practice of basing an editorial on unverified and secondary information is not definitely one that journalism can be proud of. If the writer of this piece of editoral could follow the news published in that Bangla daily, s/he could easily have discovered the statement of the Uni-

The incident referred to is under investigation by the university authority, and once that is complete the media would be informed after which they can make their own inquiries. In the last two years, no criminal (after being proved) has managed to go scot free and the same can be expected of the persons involved in the present 'abduction' case.

The writer of the said editothe reality?

Buchwald's COLUMN I My Summer Vacation

HAT I Did on My Summer Vacation: President Bill Clintion: "I had a great summer, I played golf, read and attacked Sudan. When I wasn't doing anything important. I testified to the grand jury and won the hearts and minds of the American people.

"The high light of the summer was giving a TV broadcast with the highest TV rating of my administration.

"Hillary said it was the best speech I had ever given, though she didn't understand the entire thing. The big moment came when I admitted to telling a 'fib' in front of everyone. For punishment I said I wouldn't have a Burger King Whopper of three days. When I asked forgiveness for not telling the truth, everyone gave it to me.

Kenneth Starr: "I had a swell summer subpoenaing everyone in Washington, including the Redskins' pompom girls, the mounted police at the Lincoln Memorial and the plebe class at

Annapolis "I travelled a lot, going from the grand jury to another. I also acquired a terrific tape collection that I'm going to trade for a

set of Mark McGwire baseball cards." Monica Lewinsky: "My summer was the best I ever had. I played on the White House intern volleyball team, helped the president restore the Japanese yen and picked out targets in Afghanistan. It was very spicy, and at the end I was chosen 'Miss Congeniality by the White House staff.'

"I guess the best part of my summer was being granted immunity for anything I said, My dream is to become a national security adviser and the president's eyes and ears in the Oval Of-

Linda Tripp: "I couldn't have had a better summer, and I intend to sell the details to Mrs. Goldberg for a bundle. I met a neat friend this summer named Monica Lewinsky, and I took down everything she told me about archery and free-style swimming. Monica and I promised to stay close when camp was over.

"I'm glad it's finished because the tape machine I'm wearing is getting heavy."

By arrangement with Los Angeles Times Syndicate and UNB

Fazlul Alam continent, the DU teachers and students enjoy high recognition

It is incomprehensible how a for their academic excellence. The writer has failed to note various disciplinary actions that the DU authority have taken in the recent past without showing any favour of any The writer has confused issues of morality and lawlessness. Morality is related with the sacred, law and order with man made system. The sacred commands punishing people who fall short of the morality standard set by pretenders of the sacred, and it is usually the women on whom the venoms of the sacred are practised. Till now, the trend has not been stopped or reversed. Law and order is a different matter with

versity authority a day after.

rial has exposed his/her verbosity (with one gross grammatical error — just one, but is it permissible in the editorial and generalised in a manner that would make Socrates cry. A far-fetched example of Jahangirnagar University has been brought up equating their situation with the situation at the University of Dhaka: JU is harbouring rapists and DU is harbouring abductors!! Is that

The editorial piece lacks many insights, particularly those about the society and the time we are living in. DU is a community, and like any community it is lived in by both good and bad persons, just as they do in the broader society Bad persons in the society cannot always be caught and punished. A crime free community or society is unthinkable in the present time, and of course, the media is having heyday reporting the activities of the "baddies". To them, "goodies" are not "news". At the same time, the write-up shows total ignorance about the progress made in the last two years in the DU. It has failed to note that DU has been ranked highest among Asian universities in matters of admission. Throughout the sub-

shaws and hawkers) in the last couple of years, though more positive actions are needed to "stem the rot" set in motion by the legacy of unconstitutional and undemocratic power holders of the past. If the external appearance is doubted, one may even go deeper by talking to teachers and students. One may even walk into the office of the Vice-Chancellor to see him surrounded not only by 'blues', but 'whites' and 'pinks' as well. One may even visit the offices of the provosts of the halls and of the Deans of various faculties to observe the new lease of life injected recently after years of the "pathetic degeneracy" Whoever wrote the editorial,

strict procedural limitations in

catching and punishing the

lawbreakers. Communities like

the universities have their own

system of enforcing 'their' law

and order, and in more cases

the law and order of the broader

society are used when appropri-

ate. But the use of societal law

and order cannot always be im-

posed since a private prosecu-

tion is often needed on techni-

cal ground. It is a good sign that

in the university in question,

the pretenders of the sacred

have lost their ground totally to

enable us practice what our

constitution has proclaimed,

'equality and equal opportunity

campus is now-a-days surprized

at the crowded calm and noisy

peace. The campus clearly re-

flects changes in most fronts

(except in uncontrolled rick-

Anyone stepping in the DU

for men and women'.

I hope it is not the editor himself, must wake up to the reality of the present DU, and not try to create an unreal reality with ideological bias or plain igno-