Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

## Opening Up Infrastructure

Dhaka, Wednesday, November 4, 1998

Two initiatives — one merely an idea and the other a concrete plan - took off on Monday which could herald the beginning of a new era of private sector participation in infrastructure development. Although one of these has a narrow focus, addressing only the issue of road maintenance, the cabinet decision to clear the proposed Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC) is likely to have a major impact on the development of basic economic infrastructure in the country.

Since the lack of a sound economic infrastructure is one of the principal reasons why Bangladesh's efforts to industrialise rapidly and attract foreign investment have been stalling, the initiative to facilitate private sector participation in roads, highways, telecommunications, power, port facilities etc., is a major step in the right direction. In that context, the idea of private sector road management, floated at a seminar organised by the Ministry of Communication and a number of international donor agencies, appears to be a highly innovative complement. But both of these would require careful nurturing.

On the face of it, the IIFC initiative, involving a 235 million dollar soft-loan window created by the World Bank to be disbursed through a governmentowned company, appears sound. Lack of access to funds, as well as lukewarm government attitude, have for long stifled private sector desire to enter the infrastructure market. In this context, the availability of funds through the World Bank window and promise of sound and speedy evaluation of project proposals by the IIFC would certainly help facilitate investment. But a number of other

thorny issues remain to be addressed. Roads and highways and land-based telecom have remained closed to the private sector, while a move to allow private investment in port facilities is faltering in the face of resistance from vested quarters. The situation in the power sector is little better. Bureaucratic tangles and political favouritism have all combined to make the situation pretty murky. Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria has even warned that the proposed Road Fund and Road Board to facilitate private sector management of roads and highways could falter due to vested interests. Clearly, unless these problems are addressed and policy gaps closed the IIFC initiative could come to naught. The government having taken a commendable policy decision to allow private participation in infrastructure, must now show steely determination to remove all legal anomalies and administrative obstacles to make the initiative a success.

A Great Prospect

Who did they kill on the night of November 3, twenty-three years ago? The entire provisional government at Mujibnagar, save one. This government, the historic Swadhin Bangla Sarkar declared the de jure independence of one nation, waged war against a bloody occupation, earned victory and drove out the invaders and carved out in the annals of world nations the name of a new one by obtaining recognition from abroad and by occupying the whole of what is now Bangladesh. Swadhin Bangla Sarkar was nothing if not the Liberation War itself and our victory in it and the establishment of independent Bangladesh. Those who killed its constituents or caused them to be killed were indeed after our hard-won independence, and not a bunch of Awami Leaguers.

And this was done to complete the assassination of the architect of our new state, fearing that if the four lived, especially Tajuddin who was Garibaldi and Mazzini and Cavour rolled into one the August 15 massacre would be infructuous. What fruits they expected to pluck? A Bangladesh that would not be true to its genesis, to its long history of democratic struggle, to its quest for a true identity and culture?

The nation welcomes the prospect at hand of bringing to justice the treacherous jail murder case. The murder of four citizens must be brought to trial. No less important is the need for healing the injury on our body-politic caused by allowing those to be murdered while in state custody. Last but not the least, punishment must be meted out for conspiracy to endanger and diminish the nation's security and independence.

The jail killing trial must not be allowed to be muddied by any desire finding its way to influence its proceedings and outcome. The nation and the world abroad must be convinced of the fairness of the trial which should be visible to all, irrespective of affiliations.

## Keep It Up

Given the ramifications of the CHT peace accord it will be foolhardy to expect that with its signing all differences were left behind and its implementation would be a cakewalk. Execution of a deal that seeks to replace old prejudices by pacific activism designed to radically change the quality of life in a previously embattled zone entails measured steps and concerted hardwork. What is important is to keep the clincher spirit alive at any cost; and if possible, enrich it by creative blan-

dishments. From that standpoint, we should be heartened by the mutually engaging talks taking place between the government and the PCJSS, regardless of the differences of opinion surfacing from time to time on ways to implement the CHT peace accord signed nearly a year ago. The fourth round of talks may not have bridged all the gaps between the two sides, but it is good augury that major hindrances were faced boldly with the minor ones consigned to the periphery. For instance, the controversy over three Bengali names appearing on the government's list of nominees for the interim regional council is no longer on; instead, substantive issues have come to the fore. And the government side has apparently succeeded in removing the PCJSS misgivings about the former's reneging on certain terms of the peace accord. The implementation committee has decided to take further steps in regard to establishing the Land Commission, release of imprisoned PCJSS members, withdrawal of cases and warrants of arrest, recovery and transfer of lands and rehabilitation of the returnee as well as the so-called 'internal' refugees.

The first anniversary of the accord signing ceremony falls due on December 2. The occasion better be celebrated rather than just remembered with an implemental breakthrough made in a month's time — before that great day arrived, that is.

# Blaming the Messenger for the Message

HE Honourable Finance Minister has taken the economists to task for stating what many people feel is obvious: in a country like Bangladesh where the export base is extremely narrow and imports include mostly commodities with highly inelastic demand, repeated devaluation

He has lashed out at economists for pointing out the risks involved in periodic devaluation. By raising the spectre of imported inflation, he believes, the economists are fueling inflationary fear in the

will not improve the trade bal-

economy. It is true, as the Minister has pointed out, that prices of several imported commodities, such as, oil, sugar, have declined in the world market. But the question is, has the savings. following lower import prices, been passed on to the consumers? I will leave it to the readers to decide for them-

Since July 1996, there have been more than a dozen devaluations lowering the value of taka by about 16 per cent. In all fairness, it should be pointed out that the policy of repeated devaluation has not been the innovation of the present administration. The previous administrations had also resorted to similar policies. For example, during the BNP regime, taka was devalued by about 25 per cent through a number of downward adjustments in its value:

In recent years, the rationale given for every devaluation has been almost identical — it is necessary in order to maintain the competitiveness of our exports following changes in both

▼ SRAELI Prime Minister Ben-

jamin Netanyahu triggered

L three different crises during

the recently concluded Wye

River plantation Middle East

summit. The first Netanyahu

threat came on Wednesday

October 21, when he ordered the

members of his team to pack

their bags in protest over what

he perceived as an American

ultimatum to conclude a deal

The second crisis came on

Thursday when President

Clinton became so angry at the

way Netanyahu was treating

Yassir Arafat that the President

"slammed down his papers and

angrily walked off, exclaiming

"This is despicable!"

Netanyahu engineered the third

crisis after the deal was

concluded, when he told

Clinton that he could not go

home without imprisoned Is-

raeli spy Jonathan Pollard

Clinton said, "No"; Netanyahu

replied, "No deal!" After seven

hours, as expected, Netanyahu

US secrets to Israel for six

years. He sent satellite pho-

tographs and intelligence re-

ports on Arab troop positions,

military installations and

other sensitive issues. He in-

clear programme, Iraq and

Iran's chemical programme.

the layout of PLO's headquar-

ters in Tunis (which Israel

bombed in 1985) and Libva's air

defense system (America

bombed Libya in 1986). Caught

in 1985, Pollard was defiant:

"The US had no business with-

holding these information

from Israel in the first place!",

fumed the traitor. His wife, a

coconspirator, explained their

motives further on television

news magazine, "60 Minutes."

As Jews, said Anne Pollard,

they had a duty to help Israel

any way they could. Even if

that meant betraying the coun-

try they were citizens of, the

United States! The Judge, in

1985, sentenced Jonathan Pol-

(now released) to a 5-year term.

Since then Pollard has become

a cause celebre among right-

wing Israelis. Even after Ne-

tanyahu's atrocious attempt at

blackmail, very few politicians

in the US dared to criticize him.

The only folks to protest were

from the intelligence agencies,

who argued that a freed Pollard

would still be able to divulge the

modus operandi of US intelli-

gence in the Middle East, in-

cluding names of agents. This

gives a little insight into the

power of the Israeli lobby in the

lard to life in prison, and Anne

formed Israel of Pakistan's nu-

Jonathan Pollard passed top

backed down.

By pointing fingers at the economists, there is an attempt to sidestep the real issues. The questions that need to be asked include, but are not limited to, the following: Do we need periodic devaluation? Whose interest does it serve?

the domestic and external economic situation. It has also been argued that devaluation will cut down our import costs and thus improve our external balances. Unfortunately, a cursory look at our trade balance would show the hollowness of such argument. Despite more devaluations (at least in numbers) than in any other neighbouring countries, our trade balance has, in fact, deterio-

This raises a pertinent question. If devaluation doesn't achieve the stated goals of the policy makers, why do they resort to devaluation so often? It appears that the reason is more political than economic. By pointing fingers at the economists, there is an attempt to sidestep the real issues. The questions that need to be asked include, but are not limited to, the following: Do we need periodic devaluation? Whose interests does it serve?

Last week, in this column, I argued, from an economic standpoint, why we do not need repeated devaluation and why it would not achieve the stated goals of the policy makers. This week, I would like to analyse the political reasons behind devaluation.

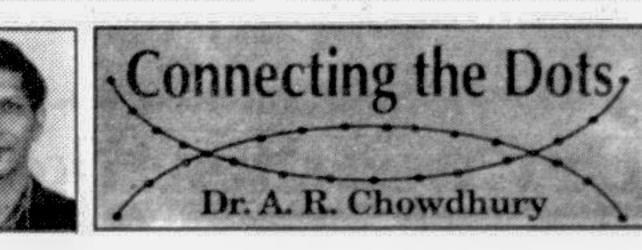
devaluation? Within the domestic economy, the ardent supporters of devaluation include the exporters of readymade garments. Among the outsiders, the IMF has been calling for devaluation in every developing country that it has

gone. It has never seen a devaluation that it didn't like!

The exporters of readymade garments have continuously argued that they cannot compete with the other devalued currencies in the region. As if, devaluation will give them a level-playing field with their competitors! If that is so, why after two dozen devaluations over the last decade, the nature of their grievances have not changed. Without repeating the arguments I presented in my

last column, it can be said that

uation has been the IMF. The use of devaluation as an instrument for accommodating weaknesses in an economy has been a standard IMF prescription for many years now. Whether it is the free falling rupiah in Indonesia or the current value of real in Brazil, the IMF's "one-size-fits-all" policy includes recommendation for the devaluation of local curreney and the formulation of restrictive monetary and fiscal policies. Recent evidences from Southeast Asia show the failure



the root of their problems lie not in the external value of taka, but in the structural bottlenecks that they face in ex-

porting their products.

These include, but are not limited to, the difficulties in getting bank credit, opening letters of credit, labour problems, work stoppage due to political First, let's ask, who wants unrest, inadequate transportation facilities, corruption at all levels, lack of containers for export, etc. It would be in the interest of everyone if they con centrate their attention and effort in removing these impedi-

Another advocate for deval-

of such a policy.

Policy makers Bangladesh obviously feel the pressure from the IMF and other donor agencies. But IMF has repeatedly left countries in limbo on the important issue of how they handle their currencies. Again and again as Asian countries fell into crisis, the IMF gave its approval to what turned into a spiral of competitive devaluation. These have by now left many Koreans unable to afford fuel even for heat and Indonesians strapped to pay for food.

Now let's look at the role of the government on this issue.

loans from the IMF under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility, it would only make sense for them to adjust the value of taka before going for such a loan. Why is an administration, both

past and present, so eager to de-

value? I can think of two rea-

of the most vocal, organised,

and powerful lobbying group in

our country - the garment ex-

porters. As I have mentioned

repeatedly, the real solution to

some of the genuine problems

facing the industry lies in re-

moving the export bottlenecks

that they face. However, remov-

ing them involves complex bu-

reaucratic maneuvers which no

administration seems willing

or ready to undertake. Hence,

the government cannot resist

the temptation of satisfying

this powerful lobbying group, at

least temporarily, by adjusting

the value of taka downward

with the stroke of a pen. The ex-

porters feel that their demand

has been satisfied while the

government is also able to alle-

viate some of the short-term

be heartening for some in the

short-run; but after all said and

done, the nation will have to

pay a price for this short-term,

ill-focused policy. Policy mak-

ers must resists the temptation

of finding an easy way out from

any crisis by simply adjusting

Another reason for the gov-

ernment's eagerness to resort to

devaluation is to show their

adherence to IMF's policy pre-

scription and thereby secure the

prospects for future loans.

Given the current administra-

tion's willingness to secure

the value of taka downwards.

This "feel-good" attitude may

pressure.

First, it helps to appease one

There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the garment exporters have genuinely contributed to the country's wellbeing through generating employment, creating positive entrepreneurial attitude, and earning valuable foreign exchange. They now need to realise that the long-term solution to their grievances lie in removing the structural impediments that they face. The value of taka is not one of those. The earlier they realise this, the better it would be for the rest of the country. By putting pressure on the government to simply adjust the value of taka, they are pressing the wrong buttons.

The Finance Minister must accept the fact that for the sake of the entire nation and the long-term prospects of our economy, the administration cannot continue to pander to the demand of a selected few. To him I would say, the exporters are trying to ride to prosperity on you back and at our expense. Trust me, they will be back at your door within a month asking for another devaluation. How far will you go for their cause? Many of your efforts, such as, exposing default culture, initiating bank reforms, streamlining the financial system, are laudable. But on the issue of devaluation, your emphasis is unfortunately misplaced. Your policy may only help a few but will definitely

Honourable Minister, the decision is yours, the fate is

hurt the rest.

#### LETTER FROM AMERICA

## Peace without Real Price, on Israeli Terms

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

Netanyahu has to convince the Jews that a smaller Israel at peace with the Palestinians and respected in the region will lead to the real Greater Israel. Netanyahu has to stop making excuses — such as his hands were forced — and adopt Rabin and Peres-like vision of a Israel at peace with its neighbours.

US. Had any other nation done so, their embassy personnel

would have been sent packing. According to Press reports, Israeli Trade and Labour Minister, Natan Sharansky's impassioned plea — that the Israeli demand for a comprehensive revision of the Palestinian Charter to excise the 26 articles calling for Israel's destruction was not a propaganda exercise but a fundamental insistence swayed Arafat and Clinton. Gaunt and hairless, cancerravaged King Hussein's emotional plea for peace also moved everyone. Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, the most moderate member of Netanyahu's cabinet, was crucial in drafting the complex security arrangement that the Israelis demanded as a major condition for relinquishing 13

per cent of West Bank land. Symbolism abounded at the talks. The Arabs, represented by Yassir Arafat, with lower lip shaking uncontrollably, and Jordan's King Hussein, portrayed weakness and frailty. Israel's Netanyahu and his patron President Clinton were embodiments of health, vigour and power. President Clinton, whom Netanyahu called, "a warrior for peace", demonstrated how trivial the Lewinsky episode is in the ultimate scope of things, and how good he can be for his country and the world when he puts his

mind to it. The 13 per cent withdrawal. only to be carried out after Netanvahu is satisfied with Arafat's security compliance, was an American compromise. The Palestinians were hoping for over 30 per cent. If this deal were to be consummated, 18 per cent of the West Bank would be under total Palestinian control, 22 percent under joint Israeli-Palestinian control, and a whopping 60 per cent under total Israeli control.

According to the New York Times columnist Tom Friedman, the day after he lost the election to Benjamin Netanyahu in May, 1996, the Labour Party leader Shimon Peres said: "The Israelis lost. The Jews won." Mr. Peres was

alluding to the fact that Israel had become a nation of "Jews"

and "Israelis." The "Israelis", says Friedman, are secular, with primary loyalty to Israel and their own individual and material ad vancement. "They see Israel's future in being in the peace process and in greater integration with the region and the world at large. The Israelis come in two varieties: the dovish, liberal Israelis (49%) and the conservative, security-hawk Israelis (25,5%). The doves liked Oslo as it was and voted for Peres; the security-hawk Israelis wanted a better Oslo, and voted for Bibi to make it happen." The "Jews" come from the

communities, the West Bank settlements and religious-Zionist movements. They are devoted to a traditional concept of Judaism and see the Israel state as a means to fulfil Judaism's commandments, not as an end itself. The Jews are skeptical of integration, which they equate with assimilation, and they see Israel fated to perpetually struggle with its non-Jewish neighbours. They were threatened by Oslo and voted for Bibi in hopes that he would kill it."

traditional and Orthodox

Bibi's heart always seemed to be with the Jews, but his head and his electoral future with the Israeli hawks and doves. For two years, he did all he could to avoid having to choose between them, but when finally forced to do so - when presented with a credible Palestinian security plan, undergirded by the C.I.A. - Mr. Netanyahu opted for a deal based on what most Israelis wanted (better Oslo), not on what most Jews wanted (no more Oslo). He brought the Israeli hawks into Oslo, adding them to the Israeli doves, who were already there, and thereby put the Oslo accords on a solid foundation of 75 per cent of the Israeli public."

For the new deal to work, Netanyahu has to treat the Palestinians as real partners, not adversaries to be defeated and humiliated, freeze settlements and rein in Jewish extremists. every bit as much as Yassir

Arafat has to rein in Hamas. He has to believe less in Israeli military might than its morality. (Ariel Sharon, Netanyahu's new Foreign Minister, still refuses to shake hands with President Arafat, whom he calls a "terrorist." The truth is, Mr. Sharon was responsible for more Arabs and Palestinian deaths than Yassir Arafat was for Israelis.) Netanyahu has to convince the Jews that a smaller Israel at peace with the Palestinians and respected in the region will lead to the real Greater Israel. Netanyahii has to stop making excuses - such as his hands were forced and adopt Rabin and Peres-like vi-

sion of a Israel at peace with its

neighbours.

Unlike Arafat-Rabin-Peres, there is absolutely no trust or goodwill between Arafat and Netanyahu (Arafat had unhesitatingly agreed to a delay in Hebron pullout in 1996 to aid Peres in the aftermath of a suicide bombing; only to regret it when Netanyahu took over.) A lot is being asked of ailing Yassir Arafat for a tiny piece of land that is rightfully his. Netanyahu could use Arafat's genuine difficulty in confronting Hamas, as non-compliance pretext and break the deal any

 Palestinians consider Israel as "a neighbourhood outpost of the American-dominated global economy." For a society built on land, clan, honour and

puritanism, Palestinians regard Israel a threat in a fundamental way. When the thorny issues, such as the sharing of water resources come up, the Israelis, who use five times as much water as the Palestinians. will give the Palestinians exactly what the Israelis can live with - peace without any real price. Netanyahu and Sharon have no long-term worry about a Palestinian state — because they know they will define it. If the Palestinians truly insist on their legitimate rights, the region will again drift back to

There were happier times in the Middle East peace process President Clinton likes to recall that just before they were to go out and shake hands at the White House lawn in September, 1993, he drew the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin aside. "Chairman Arafat is an emotional man, who might want to be demonstrative in front of the cameras", the President warned the Israeli leader. After a long pause Rabin replied: "All right, but no kissing (on the cheeks)!"

## A Tribute to M Anisuzzaman

by Sheikh Rakib Uddin

EATH is inevitable. The licy hand of death will touch everyone. The death of noted journalist M Anisuzzaman was tragic and untimely, particularly to those who came in close touch with him during his long chequered journalism career.

M Anisuzzaman started his journalism career in Calcutta in the Daily Ittehad, founded by great leader Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy. Late Abul Mansur Ahmed, a legendary figure in the domain of journalism and literature, was the editor of the daily. In the dawn of his career, Anisuzzaman also worked in the Times of India.

In early 50s, Anisuzzaman came to Dhaka with a renewed vow to establish himself as a journalist. He joined The Pakistan Observer, now The Bangladesh Observer. Thereafter, he joined the Daily Azad as a senior sub-editor. In the early '60s, he was promoted to the post of the news editor of the daily which virtually helped him flourish his talent and

As the news editor of the Azad, he played a role of a courageous journalist and brought about a radical change in the policy of the paper which ultimately facilitated it to fight for the causes of the people during the mass upsurge in 1969 and the historic Agartala Conspiracy Case.

He was arrested under the Pakistan Defence Act. But it was an irony of his fate that the day he resumed his duty after release, the Azad management terminated him. Later, he joined the then leading weekly the Jananta as its editor.

After the liberation of Bangladesh, Anisuzzaman came back to Daily Azad as its Chief Editor. He resigned from the daily in 1975 after the responsibility of its management was returned to the family members of Maulana Muhammad Akram Khan.

Anisuzzaman, though believing in a particular political doctrine of socialism, developed close links with a number political leaders, irrespective of

different shades of opinion, including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. As a son Maulana Ahmed Ali, the editor of the Daily Nabajug published from Calcutta during the last days of British rule, he was fortunate to see many top leaders of the sub-continent like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque.

His powerful writings impressed all his readers. After the crackdown by Pakistan army in the fateful night of March 25, 1971, Anis Bhai along with his sons and daughters took shelter at my

residence for a couple of days. He was arrested and tortured by the Pakistan army during the Liberation War. We pay high tributes to Anis

Bhai who always treated his colleagues as his dear ones. His role in journalism will act as a model of honest and ethical journalism and will, hopefully, inspire the present generation of journalists to adhere to high professional standards.

#### **OPINION**

#### Progress of Politics

A Husnain

ANKIND has been practising politics for many Many centuries, but it is hard to assert categorically that this elusive science or art has progressed much to solve the problems of societies and nations, and that its standard has elevated. The same has been the case with the various types of economics still being experimented upon at length, creating imbalances and disparities al-

most impossible to bridge. Let us start with our subcontinent. The world's largest democratic system is being practised here, namely in India. What is the progress? The curve of stability is not rising, since the initial establishment of the base after independence half a century ago. The two neighbours are in no better condition.

Down below the island sister nation is in the grip of twolegged tigers. Beyond Pakistan, the Afghans are desperately trying to come to grips with good governance. Bangladesh's other neighbour appears to be timefrozen, as if in a Buddhist trance. Further down and East, the ASEAN show of rising affluence received a jolt after the foreign money jinglers went dancing by. Up above this turbulent zone, Japan is in a recession and the Yen has gone wild;

The Koreans are dazed spec-

despite the sobriety of the Cabi-

tators, out of the playing field. Taiwan's fabricating industry is feeling the effect of market recession. Europe or EU has hardly anything to offer, being unable to exert any pressure on central Europe in the home front. Uncle Sam is suffering from Islamic malaria; and the quinine tablets taste bitter. South America has been rocked by Brazil's roulette — the US thinks it has Amazonian im-

plications. The western machinations have so far failed to crack open the Chinese brand of mysticism. Hong Kong continues to defy the speculative marauders. Turkey is drawing herself into vortex, for reasons best known to herself. Dry friction is the name of the game in oily Middle East. Tony Blair is practising 'Eyes Left' from 10 Downing Street — the name of the street

looks right for once. Two demons are at work against two-thirds of the world's population — the mere poor. They are getting all the attention, but the vacant gazes and the empty pockets confirm the stark reality - as depicted by a UNICEF specialist on futurology. The floods and the natural calamities appear to have some empathy with the South.

South Asia is heaving from deep slumber, and the yawns might disturb the G7. But the yawns would be swallowed, for mutual sustenance. The struggle for survival is a noble aim. however cruel the labour, and however nasty the means. Both parties would have to come to an agreement for mutual existence, side by side, or at a dis-Indian democracy got a bone

in the throat — Kashmir and the north-eastern states. Pakistan is flirting with religious experiments; while Dhaka is trying to stretch the cover of secularism to the breaking point. Turbulence has a time scale for setting down, and the theories are more scientific than political. There are two more years to

the millennium; too short for the verdict of history in these unpredictable times, tying men's minds, and letting loose evil forces. The letter is not a new comer, we were born with it. We have learnt to carry it and are still trying to get rid of it. Give and take, that is life; given a bit of latitude. One generation cannot complete the task of learning; that is why we have the future generations — to unlearn. Now politics and economics have to work together, for better or worse. We are short on both, so may God help us!

If that is the pattern of life, what is wrong with it?

#### Ironical, indeed Sir. The illegal government

of Khandekar Mushtaque was dislodged under the leadership of late Brigadier Khaled Mosharraf, Bir Uttam, on 2nd November 1975. This was a red letter day in the history of Bangladesh, which paved the way for all successive governments including the most recent government of Awami League. But a price was paid in blood by Brigadier Khaled Mosharraf, Bir Uttam, Colonel KN Huda, Bir Bikram, and Lt Col ATM Haider, Bir Uttam. They all had tremendous contribution in our Liberation War. They were dragged and brutally murdered on the early morning of November 7, 1975 under the banner of so-called Sepoy Biplob. This was reportedly instigated by late Colonel Abu Taher, Bir Uttam, (retd) of JSD. After being murdered in cold blood, these three were dubbed as Indian agents and the day marked for a long twenty-one years as national holiday for celebrations and Bara Khanas. Their comrades in arm, many of whom are still alive and the track record of these three can only confirm whether such pro-Indian feeling ever existed in Khaled, Huda, or Haider. But one thing for certain — they

were in no way pro-Pakistani.

Whenever an army officer is

dubbed as an agent provocateur, he is usually stripped of all his ranks and citations. Isn't it a double standard for Begum Khaleda Zia that, she on one hand formally handed over the medals of honour and on the other hand was merrily attending Bara Khanas on November 7. held in celebration of their

killings. While we do hold Colonel Abu Taher, Bir Uttam in high esteem for his role as a Sector Commander in the War of Liberation, we cannot condone his reported role in the premeditative killing of these three officers. He appeared to be at that time responsible for the martyrdom of Khaled, Huda, and Haider under the banner of his party's infamous slogan "Sepoy. Sepoy, Bhai, Bhai — Officer Der Rakto Chai". Ironically this very political party who were actively involved in branding Awami League as pro-Indian after 15th August, 1975, similarly branded Khaled, Huda, and Haider as Indian agents after they had successfully obliterated Khandekar Mushtaque

It is now disheartening to learn that our government, instead of trying to bring to books the killers of Khaled, Huda, and Haider, is now voicing for inquiry into the circumstances of Colonel Taher's hanging. May

be there are good reason for that, but certainly if priority is considered here, the issue of Khaled, Huda, and Haider precedes that of Taher, even by chronological order.

Hasan Abdullah Dhaka

#### Cultivating official formality

Sir, Citizens must have noted with satisfaction that formality is returning at the government and state levels. During the Prime Minister's address to the nation on the evening of October 16, it was noted that behind her, on the wall, was the official state crest.

Formal procedures have a philosphy behind its observance, and these take a long time to refine, and such environment leads to amicable official intercourse. It is hoped that the trend will be maintained without break. Everything has its due place,

without showing disrespect to any one person or situation on any occasion. A Senior Citizen

Dhaka