

# Brinkmanship of the Man on the Brink

Much would depend on who would end up on top. The constitutional provisions and procedure in Russia are rather blurry. If the tussle between the presidency and Duma worsens it may result in the dissolution of the Duma and an early election. It will in all probability produce a parliament less inclined to cooperate with the president. But most eyes are now fixed on presidential election in the summer of 2000.

## Make Oxy Pay

IT is clear that Occidental is withdrawing from the country. It is also clear that Unocal is taking over the US oil company's concerns. What is hanging, however, is the fate of the Tk. 612 crore compensation claim on the Magurchara blow-out. Even worse, there has not been any official query about its status as yet. What the government and Petrobranga high-ups have been doing in the mean time remains anybody's guess. Their inertia amounts to no less than irresponsibility of the highest order and a gross negligence of national interest.

It is assumed in the case of a take-over that both assets and liabilities have passed on to the new company. Nevertheless, to avoid any future hitch on technicalities, the government should have taken the initiative in a changed context to get a clear picture regarding settlement of the compensation package, in particular. Unfortunately, it didn't. The responsibility surely falls squarely on the government.

The Magurchara disaster and its aftermath have unveiled the government's inadequacy in handling such an issue of vital national interest. Despite an unofficial Petrobranga calculation, which put the damage to the tune of 200 million US dollars, the energy ministry made no move whatsoever to officially assess the sub-soil damage caused by the blow-out. Later on, based on an environmental damage assessment by the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), the government made a claim for reforestation, to be paid over a period of 50 years. Is not five decades too long for realising compensation? What will be the value of such an amount when paid over such a long period? Unfortunately, "the government did not even bother to discuss the issue with Occidental", so it seems. It could also have delayed the US company's withdrawal until "a concrete understanding was reached", on the compensation question. It didn't do that, either. The whole episode also exposed the government's inadequacy in negotiating proper safeguards against such an unforeseen catastrophe which should have been incorporated in the production sharing contract (PSC) in the first place.

We expect the government to immediately take initiative to concretise payment procedure with Oxy. At the same time, we would like to believe that the Magurchara episode will leave them wiser and prepared to properly negotiate such deals in future.

## Stakes in Kashmir

ALTHOUGH we have greeted the news with trepidations we are hardly surprised that the New Delhi talks between Pakistan Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz and his Indian counterpart Jaswant Singh folded up on a negative note on Saturday. The situation along the Line of Control in Kashmir is far too complicated now to admit of an instant untangling leading to any immediate defusion of tension in Kargil, Dras and Batalik mountain slopes. But that the talks have at all been held in a highly recriminatory bilateral atmosphere is itself a sign of progress, let alone the fact that both sides were focused on the latest turn of events without being atavistic. What is most important is that they have fully utilised the opportunity to put on the table their differing perceptions of how the trouble began and how it snowballed into the present state of confrontation.

However unbridgeable their respective positions may look now, with further talks between them they would be in a position to better understand each other's view-points and jointly proceed to cross the latest hump in their relationship.

There is indeed so much that is at stake in Kashmir. A bottled-in conventional war can prove to be extremely attritional for both India and Pakistan. It is calibrated now; but who knows how long it will remain so? That they will do all in their powers to stop short of dropping nuclear payload on each other's territory to avoid self-destruction only implies two things: first, Kashmir may be a far worse battering ram with the indigenous people taking more of a brunt. Secondly, talks can drag on alongside an intensification in the war situation.

The geo-strategic importance of Kashmir can hardly be overemphasised. Russia and China are countries adjacent to it. South Asia is an important component of the global strategic interests of the United States of America. So, the Kashmir flash-point may have all sorts of ramifications, which is why we, in the SAARC, urge India and Pakistan to step back from brinkmanship in Kashmir.

## Two-stroke Polluters

THE budget for 1999-2000 fiscal has proposed doubling of import duty on the two-stroke engines from fifty per cent. The contribution these auto-rickshaw engines make to the pollution of environment, especially in the urban areas, has been a subject-matter for serious public discussions and editorial comments in the national press. They are agreed on one point to save the environment — banning of two-stroke engines.

The government has promised gradual withdrawal of these hazardous contraptions from roads over a period of four years but most people feel it is too long a period to live with this nuisance, especially when it is possible to rehabilitate the auto-rickshaw drivers. In the interest of public health and the health of this nation we urge the government to set a shorter time-table for phasing out this type of three-wheelers through an import ban. Imposition of higher duty and taxes will only increase the fare and the traveling public will suffer more. The use of lead-free petrol which the government is promise-bound to import from next month should be made compulsory. If we can weed out the unlicensed auto-rickshaws we shall be at a vantage point in terms of the phase-out operation.

In the meantime let's encourage import or local manufacture of four-stroke auto-rickshaws. We should also think of introducing battery driven auto-rickshaws as in Thailand and Nepal to help reduce air pollution and allow the people to inhale fresh air.

THAT Mr Yevgeny Primakov of Russia would anytime be fired by his mercurial boss was a matter of foregone conclusion. So there was hardly an element of surprise either in Russia or outside the country when he was actually dismissed early last month by an apparently vindictive Boris Yeltsin. There were however surprises as to why the President who dumped three of Primakov's predecessors almost in a row just within a year was taking that long to remove an unwanted thorn in the way of his schemes of things. How could he, after all, tolerate Primakov's growing popularity as evidenced from the opinion poll, his relative success in netting the President's venal cronies and the prospect that he — enjoying the limelight of Prime Minister's office — might himself be elected president in a year's time? It is somewhat mind boggling for Russia watchers that Yeltsin took eight months to decide about Primakov's dismissal.

Managing Russia since last August's economic collapse was no more a matter of bluffs the President had been adept in; neither could he rule a fast withering country with veiled presidential decrees. It was time to inject some sanity in the statecraft and shun the political gambles of the past to keep the ship of the state on an even keel in its journey through the choppy waters ahead. In the president's desperate search for a new helmman Primakov, considered a pragmatist, fitted the criteria.

Primakov, the new prime minister did bring a whiff of pragmatism in highly polarised Russian politics by striking a balance between an authoritative presidency and communist dominated hostile Duma and

made the best of a bad situation. Primakov was not miracle man but offered to the country a respite of stability which was good both for Russia and the world. Even the West grudgingly acknowledged his ability while he commanded respect at home for his impeccable honesty. In economic matters he proceeded cautiously and did not let Russia's economy sink inextricably. So, it was not any love's labour that his expert services were availed of while the president looked for an opportune time to strike.

How ripe the time was for sacking Primakov? Moscow was already desperately trying to secure \$4.8 billion from the IMF to reimburse its debts to the Fund due in May 1999. Unless the Russian government could reach a deal with the IMF before the deadline it would not be able to win agreement from private and sovereign creditors to restructure its other foreign liabilities currently standing at \$141 billion. According to analysts the US was blocking the granting of the IMF loan in the hope of bringing down Primakov who pursues a far too independent foreign policy for Washington's liking. The US' relation with Moscow strained with the selection of Primakov as prime minister in September last year. President Yeltsin's stand off with the prime minister during the latter's last days in the office interestingly coincided with the hardening of the IMF's stand on loan to Russia.

Primakov's problem with the IMF pertained more to the

perception of both about each other and in the wide gap of their approaches to the resolution of Russia's economic crises. Primakov did not tend to take the responsibility of loans that formed part of his predecessor's experiment in what he called a predatory capitalism. Moreover, according to him much of Russia's plights were precisely due to IMF and Western advice on such matters as budgetary stringency and blanch-

evoking Yeltsin's ire. The tycoons and their friends connected with the president or his family already grabbed many of the best assets of the old Soviet state and directed to their overseas bank accounts a large share of the foreign exchange Russia had earned from exports. Any new money to be borrowed either from the IMF or elsewhere will simply end up in the Swiss Bank account of the president's cronies. One of

owe their workers another 70 billion. Almost alone among the nations that privatised, Russia, got close to zero for the assets it divested — thanks to the privatisation programme carried out by Yeltsin and his two aides, Anatoly Chubais and Yegor Gaidar between 1992 and 1995. In a situation like this the IMF loan is useless and even irrelevant. It may enable Russia to roll over its foreign currency obligations but will not do anything for the country's underlying economic problem. It will not close the gap between what the government takes in and what it pays out.

So it was not by any means an easy task for Primakov to clean up this seething mess. And it is where he bumped into the minefield of his troubles. The prime minister came remarkably close to indict a number of notorious oligarchs for their banditry in the name of business under market conditions. And again it is here that the prime minister inevitably came in clash with his boss. As he approved an warrant for the arrest of Beresovskiy and a few other Yeltsin cronies, known for their close ties to the Kremlin, the president moved swiftly to pre-empt the move. Instead of their apprehension the president ensured through his Interior minister, loyalist Sergei Stepashin, that the chief prosecutor Yuri Scurator was implicated in an equally sleazy case. Earlier, the chief prosecutor threatened to bring corruption charges against members of

Yeltsin's inner circle — including his daughter Tatyana Dyachenko.

Last month, when Yeltsin at long last fired Primakov who was steadfastly supportive of the parliament, the president actually hoped to weaken the Duma — out to impeach him. Yeltsin did succeed in fending off the impending impeachment but he would find it hard to manage a furious Duma on a number of other issues including the acceptance of Sergei Stepashin as new prime minister. The crisis arising out of vacuum after Primakov's dismissal is no less acute for the West which is yet to find some one to replace a fitful distempored Yeltsin who came to power by democratic means but is anything but democratic and often an embarrassment for his Western patrons. His reforms are little more than a cover under which a gang of opportunists impoverished a richly endowed country with the acquiescence, if not abetment of the West.

With Primakov gone the IMF at the US' behest may now provide new multibillion dollar loan to Yeltsin government presumably to save Russia's democracy and keep its nuclear arms in safe hand. They would not achieve either. Much would depend on who would end up on top. The constitutional provisions and procedure in Russia are rather blurry. If the tussle between the presidency and Duma worsens it may result in the dissolution of the Duma and an early election. It will in all probability produce a parliament less inclined to cooperate with the president. But most eyes are now fixed on presidential election in the summer of 2000 — the most defining time in post-Soviet Russia.



## PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

ket privatisation — at least in short term. While Russia under Primakov found IMF insistence on higher taxes and lower revenue impractical the latter saw the main assumption in the country's budget on the exchange rate, inflation and revenue and spending as ridiculous. These differences could hardly be ironed out during Primakov's tenure.

Primakov, however, faced bigger problem at home in any of his steps directed towards an economic recovery or reconstruction. Billions of dollars were already borrowed earlier. There was another \$100m now frozen Soviet era debt. Where have they gone? No easy answer to this was possible without

the first priorities of any one tasked with rescuing the country's collapsed economy would be to bring those money back and undo the phoney privatisation that is tantamount to grand larceny.

Under communism the people had rouble but nothing to buy. Now the shops are full but the most people's wallets empty. Tens of millions of Russians are not paid even their miserable wages. Unpaid soldiers sell weapons, uniforms and even the tanks and aircraft to any willing buyer. According to an American study the Russian state owes its workers 77 billion roubles — equal to one third of all roubles now in circulation. Private sector industries

## Wars

Ardeshir Cowasjee writes from Karachi

Today we find some 500 men, having trained themselves in the art of war before falling from the heavens and landing upon a hilltop near Kargil in Kashmir on the other side of the line. And we find the Indians blaming us for having entrenched them there. Noises about 'jehad' are again being heard and the fear of an 'escalation of conflict' stalks the land. But what have we to fear? We have Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, surrounded by sycophants as was the Kaiser in 1914, and to aid him we have as supreme commander of our armed forces President Haji Rafiq Ahmad Tarar.

From Emperor: "Forced to grasp the sword, he says, to defend the honour of his monarchy." "Francis fears a Great War." "Army moves to the frontier." "Headlines from the NYT of August 2, 1914: 'Germany declares war on Russia, first shots are fired. France is mobilising and may be drawn in tomorrow; plans to rescue the 100,000 Americans now in Europe; England hesitates what course to take.' "Grey wants to throw the weight of great Navy at once in favour of Russia and France." (Messages from London). "France orders mobilisation after Germany asks her intentions." "Delcasse War Minister." "Clemenceau in Cabinet (The Tiger roared); President and Cabinet issue a manifesto to French nation, plain words to Germany - 'You are mobilising, we know it says Prime Minister to German Envoy.' "Poincare orders mobilisation telling France it is not war yet." (Messages from Paris).

Now, who in New York who had bought the NYT on the morning of June 29 for one cent or others who had bought it elsewhere for two cents could have dreamt that what they had read that day could lead to a world war which began on August 3 and would last for four long years, with such battles as were fought at the Somme, Ypres, Verdun, and Paschen-daele where one day's battle over 100,000 men could be killed or wounded. Verdun lasted ten months during which 700,000 men fell, its aim being to bleed the enemy than to bleed him to death.

Between June and August 1914, many believed that peace in Europe lay in the Kaiser's hands, but Wilhelm II, vain,

pompous and surrounded by sycophants, was at heart a warmonger. He took his nation to war, made it lose, impoverished and humiliated his people. Years later writing about his 'Great Contemporaries,' Churchill wrote on Wilhelm: "Imagine yourself brought up from childhood to believe you were appointed by God to be the ruler of a mighty nation... 'You are,' they say, 'the All-Highest.'... It is for you to choose the Chancellor, the ministers of State, it is for you to choose the chiefs of the Army and Navy. There is no office, great or small, throughout the Empire from which you cannot dismiss the occupant." Each word you utter is received by all present with rapture, and at least respect. You have but to form a desire, and it is granted... Should you weary of the grosser forms of flattery, far more subtle methods will be applied. Statesmen, generals, admirals, judges, divines, philosophers, scientists and financiers stand eager to impart their treasured knowledge and to receive with profound gratification any remark upon their various spheres which may occur to you. Intimate friends are at hand to report day by day how deeply impressed this of that great expert was with your marvellous grasp of his subject. The General Staff seem awed by your comprehension of the highest strategy... and this goes on day after day and year after year for thirty years."

Then, Churchill poses a question to his 'gentle reader': 'Are you quite sure, you would have withstood the treatment? Are you quite sure you would have remained a humble-minded man with no exaggerated idea of your own importance, with no undue reliance

upon your own opinion, practising the virtue of humility, and striving always for peace?' We jump thirty-three years to when Jinnah made Pakistan. Since then we have gone on three 'jehads' of our making, or, as some may say, which were forced upon us... These three ventures caused us to lose 143, 998 sq km of territory and gain 143, 998 sq km of territory and gain, but added humiliation, adding to the despair and distress of our people.

Today we find some 500 men, having trained themselves in the art of war before falling from the heavens and landing upon a hilltop near Kargil in Kashmir on the other side of the line. And we find the Indians blaming us for having entrenched them there. Noises about 'jehad' are again being heard and the fear of an 'escalation of conflict' stalks the land. But what have we to fear? We have Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, surrounded by sycophants as was the Kaiser in 1914, and to aid him we have as supreme commander of our armed forces President Haji Rafiq Ahmad Tarar.

Eighteen years ago Nawaz Sharif was picked up from his foundry by my friend Lt General Ghulam Jilani and converted into a politician. Jilani, who died last week, did us a good turn which was Bhutto's favourite chief of the ISI he kept his COAS, General Zia-ul-Haq informed of the destruction planned by Bhutto and gave him enough warning for him to act as he did on July 5, 1977.

It was during Jilani's time at the ISI that Bhutto, by an executive order, created a political cell to execute political dirty-tricks. This cell, in 1990, disbursed some Rs. 900 million of the people's money (with whose

permission and under what authority?) to Nawaz Sharif and his cronies to help them gain power. We are still waiting for the Supreme Court to establish who is responsible for this act, but the Court is not willing to dig out the truth, our Chief Justice-designate, Saifuddin Siddiqui, having proclaimed from the Bench that this is now 'history' and out of the domain of the Court (why? how?). He obviously holds so because Air Marshal Asghar Khan has filed a petition questioning the disbursement. Thus, the Supreme Court is not required to abide by its constitutional obligation (Article 187) and do "complete justice." Does he fear that his court will again be stormed by the Ruling Party?

As Governor of Punjab, General Jilani did much good for his province, and for that he deserves to be remembered with gratitude. Whilst discussing Nawaz's stupidities I often used to ask, 'What sort of a man have

you landed us with, General?' He would say, "Someone had to be found to neutralise Benazir and the PPP, and we thought a businessman, uncorrupted by politics, might do better, might help enrich the country and the people." That he enriched himself and his family is unforgivable. But then we all make mistakes.

Nawaz might now think that he has made himself impregnable by destroying every institution that could have stood in his way. He knows what wrong he has done, and knows that he rides a tiger from which he cannot dismount. The poorer the nation grows, the more will his desperation grow, and as it grows he will grow more oppressive.

Many people ask how and when and who will make him fall. I say, have faith in natural justice. "Most of our prime ministers have arisen from their beds in the morning not knowing that they would not go to sleep in the prime-ministerial bed that night — one went to bed as prime minister and was awoken to be told that he had been deposed."

The author is an eminent businessman turned-columnist in Pakistan. His columns are widely published in Pakistani newspapers. He has written this piece exclusively for The Daily Star.

BEFORE me lies the facsimile of the front-page of the New York Times published on Monday, June 29, 1914, claiming, as it still does, that it prints "All the News That's Fit to Print."

The leading story's headline: "Heir to Austrian throne is slain with his wife by a Bosnian youth to avenge seizure of his country." Sub-headlines read "Francis Ferdinand shot during state visit to Sarajevo." "Archduke saves his life first time by knocking aside a bomb hurled at his Auto." "Slain in second attempt." "Lad dashes at car as the royal couple return from Town Hall and kills both of them." "Heir warned not to go to Bosnia, where populace met him with Serbian flags." "Aged Emperor is stricken - Shock of tragedy, prostrates Francis Joseph, young assassin proud of his crime." (Messages from Sarajevo).

Sets of headlines from the NYT, July 29, 1914: "Austria formally declares war on Serbia, Russia threatens, already moving troops, peace of Europe now in Kaiser's hands." "Notice sent to the powers of the opening of hostilities." "Serbian vessels seized, sharp fighting begins along the River Drina on the Bosnian frontier." "Montenegro and Serb armies to invade Bosnia and start a rebellion there." "Grey's peace plan fails" [the was Britain's foreign secretary, as is Sartaj ours]; "Kaiser declines to join in conference to exert pressure on Austrian ally." "But reply is conciliatory." "And London still has faith that his influence will avert general conflict." (Messages from London). "Czar's forces mass on Eastern border, his capital expects war and counts confidently on England's aid." "Mobilisation order ready, German official says its issue would mean launching of Kaiser's army." (Messages from St Petersburg). "Austrian Emperor to take command at Vienna headquarters." "War fear at capital." "Crowds cheer outbreak of hostilities and demonstrate at friendly embassies." "Outbreak of food riots." "Prices soar as hostilities are declared and the government steps in to regulate them." "Manifesto

propagates foreign policy as an instrument to protect our national interest. He is in favour of 'Bangladesh First' policy. He even questioned the utility of solidarity by Bangladesh for the allegedly 'imaginary non-aligned, Arab, Muslim, Afro-Asian coalition.' I wish to contend his argument on two grounds. Firstly, I think it is our moral duty to express solidarity in all forms to the people struggling for freedom around the globe (should we forget the solidarity expressed by other nations during Bangladesh liberation war that made a lot of difference?). Secondly, it is the constitutional duty of any government in power in Bangladesh to do so since such action (to express solidarity for nations struggling for freedom) has been declared as the State-Policy in the Constitution.

However the writer has found Bangladesh foreign policy in the right direction during "one particularly notable occasion when Bangladesh extended a friendly hand to the US led alliance in 1991 against Saddam Hussein." I guess everyone remembers the events of Gulf War that erupted on 2 August, 1990 with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The United Nations formed a coalition force led by the United States to free Kuwait. Bangladesh joined the coalition and sent forces to take part in "Operation Desert Storm". What is really not easy to digest is the writer's endorsement of such action by Bangladesh (Remember, he doesn't support his country's move to support "Non aligned, Arab, Muslim, Afro-Asian coalition" or even

## To the Editor...

### Towards a "pro-American" foreign policy?

Sir, My attention has been drawn to the opinion published in the on 30 May. I wish to partially oppose some views expressed by Esam Sohail. The writer has started with a misconceived notion about Bangladesh foreign policy, stating ".....Bangladesh has long pursued a so-called non-aligned foreign policy which is based on several well known and long worn out themes: opposition to the United States....." and so on. Am I hearing (you) right?

Bangladesh foreign policy has come across many shifts and a few U-turns since independence but one policy remained in the same direction: foreign policy that is inclined towards the United States. One example might prove my point: even after the vehement opposition of the United States towards Bangladesh liberation war, the US Consul General in Dhaka was allowed to receive Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his (Bangabandhu) arrival from London on the 10 January, 1972. PM Tajuddin Ahmed's policy declaration of not accepting any aid from those countries who opposed Bangladesh liberation war might be considered as the single event by any policy maker that could be considered apparently an "anti-American" move. That utterance even didn't rise and later on, Tajuddin Ahmed failed to sustain his Cabinet position. The writer is a patriot as he

support for the just struggle for freedom by the Palestinians). Then why he supports Bangladesh's move to free Kuwait? Is that because the move was "pro-American"? And lastly I want to ask him: is that the type he wants Bangladesh foreign policy designed to be for the 21st century?

Kazi Golam Tousif Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000

### Unsporting sportsmanship

Sir, As a retired sportsman, I strongly condemn the way Gordon Greenidge (respected foreigner with Hon Citizenship of Bangladesh) was sacked publicly at the wrong time and place, too uncouthly, and in a manner devoid of all diplomatic tact: as strongly pointed out in the DS editorial of June 3.

Why there was no joint public reception to the cricket heroes on June 4?

Why our sport administration and management is so unsporting? Because non-sport persons dominate the office-bearership? What is disconcerting to note is that there is politics and politicisation everywhere, thanks to the strong patriotic spirit taught to the citizens through bad examples by our so-called leaders, who set the bad trends and then can't get out of it.

How to get out of this vicious cycle? We gained independence under unusual circumstances, but we seem not to have learnt any lessons out of the sacrifices of 3 million people; and the country and the nation are still suffering from the follies of the mighty leaders, who cannot even defend their own citadel against outside invasion (1975-90).

Without a new breed of honest and dedicated leaders, the country will go to the dogs, as it is already going.

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

### Congratulations

Sir, No home they brought the warrior dead but they brought laurels, pride, international prestige and honour for Bangladesh. Hats off to Bangladesh cricket heroes. The young Bangladesh cricketers have defeated the mighty Pakistan. They have made the impossible possible. "Try and try again, you would succeed at last" — our radiant faced cricketers have proved it within the shortest possible time.

On this historic occasion we also compliment Gordon Greenidge (who has been unfortunately and hastily sacked by BCB) for his untiring efforts to train, make and achieve Bangladesh team's excellence in the ICC trophy in 1997 at Kuala Lumpur and the win in the World Cup 1999 at Northampton. Everything is well that ends well. Let us all join hand-in-hand the great ecstasy, victory, euphoria and jubilation.

A. Zabr Dhaka

## OPINION Rag Tag Soldiers of Bangladesh

Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Bir Bikram

On the 31st May last the most favourite team in the Cricket World Cup had the beating of their life in the hands of a very new, almost untrained and virtually infant team. Perhaps the Pakistan cricket team took Bangladesh to lightly. They thought that the game with Bangladesh cricket team was a matter of foregone conclusion. It was for them a matter of taking Bangladesh on with a conclusive defeat. The number of overs to be played, wickets to be taken and the number of runs to be made was a matter of conjecture. It was as if for the Pakistanis to defeat Bangladesh in whatever way they wanted. That's why the skipper of Pakistan team uttered very unbecoming remarks about Bangladesh team on the day he arrived at Northampton. However, the surprise of his life was yet to come. The Bengal Tigers roared in triumph to prove their mettle. He perhaps forgot the history of cricket. There has been many upsets in this game. One of such upsets was the defeat of South Africa to Zimbabwe in the current World Cup cricket. According to the London Times' comment, the defeat of Pakistan in the hands of Bangladesh, "is one of the greatest upsets in the history of World Cup cricket."

The upset has been possible because the brave boys of Bangladesh played a superb game on the day. Their batting, bowling and fielding were of very high standard. This has been recognised by no less than a person like Hanif Mohammad of Pakistan who has the outstanding record in the history of world cricket. He said that Bangladesh won because they played well. There is no doubt that Bangladesh team improved their efficiency from one game to the other. In the first game they scored 116. In the second the runs went up to 182. Even against Australia they scored 184 and finally against Pakistan their score was 223. Any observer of cricket would call it a gradual development. This also underscores the fact that Bangladesh team could tide over its initial psychological ef-

fect of entrance into a World Cup competition. "The whole world knows that we Bengalis can stand up against odds in times of crises." "We have proved that in 1971. We proved it again in 1990, 1996 and 1998." In the face of worst deluge in the form of all pervading floods of 1998 we the whole nation got united under the leadership of our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and conquered the flood aftermath.

It may be worthwhile to recall here an incident and remark from the chapter of the greatest event of sacrifice and resolve of the nation. In the aftermath of the 25th March, 1971 crackdown by Pakistani army on the unarmed people of the then East Pakistan, the Bengali freedom fighters drawn from the ordinary peasant workers, students, government employees, police, Ansar, the then EPR fought a determined war of liberation to free the country from the occupation forces. In one such battle in Kushtia as elsewhere in the country the Pakistani soldiers were wiped out during March-April 1971. When the news reached his command post, Brig Salek, the Pakistan ISPR chief, made a sarcastic remark, "The most modern and trained army of Pakistan have been destroyed by the rag tag soldiers of Bangladesh."

In the case of cricket of 1999, I do not want to say that Pakistan has lost to the rag tag boys of Bangladesh. But considering the training, logistics and the amount of practice that our boys had and the amount of money we could afford to make this boys worthy of playing World Cup cricket, the comparison could well-nigh be similar. Bravo Bangladesh Cricket Team! Bravo Bengal Tigers! You had made us laugh in the past, you have made us yearn for World Cup Championship. You have at least broke the backbone of one of the best teams in the world. Keep up! The nation is with you in your future endeavours and laurels. Your victory has brought us extreme ecstasy. Long live Bangladesh Cricket.