

## This is a Farce

WE cannot go gaga over Akhtaruzzaman Babu being relieved of the post of industries and commerce secretary of the ruling party. This sounds diversionary. It is an eye-wash and we think it is designed to let him off the hook. That a man who is an accused in industrialist Humayun Zahir murder case and a defiant defaulter of several crore taka worth of bank loans could at all hold a party post is a blot on the ruling party, so that his removal from the post is downright inconsequential to us.

Leaving aside that question altogether, what we are absolutely dumbfounded by is that he remains at large even after that criminally outrageous storming of the UCBL board meeting last Thursday. He has to answer for his conduct on that day. But, has he been subjected to questioning either by the party leadership or by the police? Did he not mount an assault on the UCBL board meeting that day with 'mastaans' purportedly hired from Munshiganj and Chittagong to throw dust into the police eyes in Dhaka? Did not these storm troopers with lethal weapons in their hands force some good people at gunpoint to resign their directorship of the board?

None of these gangsters has been arrested since the incident took place a week back. Why? That some of them have been 'absconding' from Chittagong police having been on the 'wanted' list for their criminal records and yet surfaced in Dhaka to do Babu's bidding make a complete farce of law enforcement.

The fact that the AL has stripped him of a party post falling way short of expelling him from the party, let alone drawing legal proceedings against him makes us draw but one conclusion: soft-peddling of Akhtaruzzaman Babu's grave offence by the party reads like a signal to the law enforcers that he be not touched. For the citizens this is a test-case of law the government can only skirt to the complete ruination of its credibility.

## Army Back at Ctg Port

WITHIN two weeks of the formal withdrawal of 500 army and navy personnel stationed in the country's premier port since September last year to supervise food cargo handling and maintain security, situation there seems to have become too hot for the Chittagong Port Authority to handle. The latter's plea to the government for a re-deployment of army and the prime minister's approval of the same bear a strong testimony to that effect. Under the circumstances, deployment of 200 army personnel may be well justified; however, frequent requests of assistance from armed forces in such matters only underlines the failure of the designated authority to efficiently and effectively carry out its responsibility. In other words, by resorting to adhoc emergency measures on a rather regular basis, the port people have actually highlighted their inadequacy to handle the job they have been entrusted with. Similar is the scenario at the Aricha ferry terminal. In the wake of the inter-district truck drivers union's bid to reclaim control over truck-specific queuing system and anticipating a possible law and order situation, a BIWTC's request for BDR deployment has been met.

Developments at the Chittagong port and the Aricha ghat, for obvious reasons, lead to a string of questions: how long will the designated authorities continue to rely on such exceptional measures instead of opting for permanent solutions? Why does the government not try to identify the roots of the problems prevailing at these places? More importantly, why is it letting the law and order situation linger at such an important place like the port?

Looking for quick-fixes is bound to prove detrimental in the long run. The situation definitely demands identification of the sources of trouble and thereafter action to weed them out. Politicisation and trade unionism have been the root cause of trouble at Chittagong port. Unless we remove this we shall be keeping the problems alive. The army would need to be called again as the authorities concerned continued to shirk their given responsibility in the matter.

## Return of the Lions

IN a spectacular come-back drama the former world champions Sri Lanka put a spanner in the works of the mighty Australians and wrested the initiatives from the world champions to lift the Awa Cup at Colombo on Tuesday. The three-nation tourney, the major one since the World Cup in England last June, pitted the hosts against neighbours India and world beaters Australia who had a dream run of eleven victories on the trot including four at Colombo itself.

The Aussie juggernaut was finally halted by a new-look Sri Lanka led by master-blasters Sanath Jayasuriya. The sub-continental cricket powers took a hard look at their performance at World Cup and came down heavily on non-performers. Sri Lanka and hopefully Pakistan are going for a major surgery. India, too, are trying to rebuild their house by apparently jettisoning cricketers not in-form. Sachin Tendulkar in his second round of stint as the captain may have had a personal triumph but failed to inspire his side into the final. Jayasuriya, as the new leader of a comparatively newer team that is almost free from the influence of Ranatunga and De Silva, led Lankans from the front with glimpses of his batting prowess and bowling ability. It was no ordinary task to take the Australians by the scruff of the neck. Hearty congrats to Sanath and his pack of young lions.

# After the Century's Earthquake

Turkey is painfully emerging from the traumatic experience, after the century's Earthquake which has left a very deep scar, writes Arshad-uz-Zaman, in a special despatch from Istanbul.

settled for around 14,000; the injured are around 40,000. Miracles continue to happen daily even after weeks of the earthquake. The other day a boy of 5 was pulled out of the rubble, emaciated, without a spot of cloth on him and he had spent 156 hours inside the rubble. He was later dressed up for the occasion, with brand new colourful clothing and taken to his mother, herself pulled out of the rubble two days ago. She had lost her husband and two children and left with only one son and was recovering in a hospital. The emotional meeting of mother and child was of a kind that it was difficult to hold back

that the Turkish media has done a superb job in covering this gigantic event. The TV cameras and crew have been at the earthquake site day in and day out and have brought vivid pictures of the unfolding drama. The print media has not lagged behind. Yet the TV has come out with flying colours matching the performance of such giants as CNN, BBC and all the big ones from the West. It is acknowledged by everyone that the Turkish media has kept the public interest alive and continues to do a great job of educating the public. Like a bolt from the blue the Turkish administration picked on Chan-

ure is eight billion dollars. A massive campaign has been launched for assistance, financial and otherwise. There are moving examples of outpouring of sympathy like the entire Netherlands Royal household joining in prayer inside a church for the victims of the earthquake.

The earthquake has demonstrated that Turkey has powerful friends all over the world. President Bill Clinton offered every possible aid and demonstrated on the ground by sending men, material and even ordered warships to the earthquake region. In a live TV broadcast he called upon his

Turkey's Arab neighbours have been very slow to react. Saudi Arabia and her other Arab neighbours in the Gulf have at long last announced some assistance. There is honourable exception like Iraq, who have started pumping oil into Turkey through her pipeline linking her directly with Turkey. The oil is worth ten million dollars, the largest such aid from any Arab country. The wealthy Saudi attitude can be explained by her coolness towards the present government, who have treated the Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan rather harshly, eliminating him from the political scene.

are accused of supplying shoddy building material leading to wholesale massacre. For instance, next to a pile of rubble has remained erect buildings because of solid material used. The example of Japan is frequently quoted. In Japan they have succeeded in building earthquake proof buildings and also through efficient organisation have succeeded in reducing the damage to reasonable limits.

One amazing after-effect of the earthquake is the large number of Turks suffering from trauma. They are seized by fear complex. At 3.02 am of 17 August we woke up on our 10th floor flat with a violent shake. The 10th floor was violently going from side to side. It lasted an entire 45 seconds, an eternity. The electricity was gone and so was the telephone. Very carefully we descended into the garden and found all other inmates of the building. The Turks were seized by a collective trauma. That trauma, persists although a couple of weeks have passed. A friend of ours, who visits Istanbul every summer from New York, came to visit us the other day. They live on the top floor of a building. The violent shake has virtually unhinged the family. They have been sleeping with relations at a lower level. They are returning to New York two months ahead of the completion of their vacation.

After the earthquake of the century the Turks are picking up the pieces painfully. There is anger and bitterness, and it will no doubt take more time for the passions to cool. While picking up the dead from the rubble the Turks have discovered that they have solid friends throughout the world. This has greatly fortified them in times of great emotional stress.

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tears. The search for the living is just about over. Effort is concentrating on disposal of the dead bodies and clearing the vast rubble. The number of houses flattened range around 100,000. Finger pointing is going on. The person attracting the maximum flak is the health minister. As aid from the world over pours into Turkey, Orhan Durmus, the Minister, has been vocal and has refused to accept help from Greece, Armenia, Russia, the US, on one pretext or another. For instance three giant warships belonging to the US, carrying thousands of gallons of water to water starved Goleuk, were turned back on the Minister's orders. The head of the huge organisation Red Crescent has been a particular target of the media. The head of the organisation, in his late seventies, who has held the post for more than two decades, is reported to have supervised thousands of tents, belonging to the period of the Sultans of Turkey, that is more than a century old.

Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, who has an incorruptible image has come under severe attack on more than one count. It is acknowledged by everybody

nel 6 and ordered its closure for one week without assigning any reason. Channel 6 is a private channel. It has caused a roar of protest and the order has yet to be implemented. Similarly an earthquake tax was proposed and it brought such loud protest from all circles that the government appears to have beaten a hasty retreat. The argument advanced was that the tax would effectively work as a brake against the outpouring of sympathy and help that has been pouring from the Turks and foreign governments and aid organisations.

There are various figures handed about the extent of financial loss. The oft heard fig-

countrymen to offer assistance generously. Japan, the perennial target of earthquakes, was among the first to arrive with dogs, rubble removing equipment and trained people and went into action immediately. Israel has carried out its high profile assistance programme. As is to be expected it drew the maximum mileage out of its assistance effort. The most noteworthy has been the assistance pouring from Turkey's traditional hostile neighbour Greece. There has been outpouring of sympathy and concrete assistance on a national scale throughout Greece. It has astounded the average Greek and the average Turk.

Rebuilding of such a vast region will take many years. The problem that Turkey faces is that the entire area lies on the fault line. For instance the town of Adapazari, which received a massive blow this time, was nearly flattened a few years ago. The debate has started if it is wise to locate huge industries in a dangerously earthquake prone area. Yet the logistical advantages, easy communication by land and sea, may prove ultimately decisive. The fate of the large town of Adapazari seems to hang in the balance.

Frustrated, angered by frequent earthquakes, the Turks have trained their guns on the huge building societies. They

## Celebrating Janmashtami Hinduism and Lord Krishna by Prem Ranjan Dev

*Hinduism encompasses an entire civilization and way of life that has evolved since the dawn of human civilization. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita and the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata play an important role in the development and practice of Hinduism. These, the ancient holy scriptures of the world, uphold the eternal truth of the eternal existence of the Supreme Lord.*

THE Hindu culture and tradition does not derive from any one prophet or founder. It has neither a uniform creed nor any organized church. Its history rather prehistory is ageless. The Vedas, which are the scriptures of the Hindus, are unique in character. We find in the Vedas a great variety of subjects and a great flexibility of doctrines.

Everybody knows that there is no single human authority accepted by all the Hindus nor has there been any movement to create such a central authority. There is also no ecclesiastical or hierarchical binding authority. But, in spite of all the above considerations, there is a definite body of knowledge and common themes that can be clearly identified as Hinduism. This core of knowledge and practice that is common can be identified as such. The Rsis or Vedic seers functioned as a binding force. Authority rested with Rsis, and there were several of them. Rather than Viking for a complete monopoly on wisdom, they respected one another and worked collaboratively.

Rishhood in Hinduism is knowledge-based, and such knowledge can be cultivated. But methods of science and logic may be applied here. This knowledge is progressive and dynamic capable of continuous development. The Rsis could also cultivate supernatural faculties and are very important in Hindu tradition.

Festivals, ceremonies and rituals are integrating and uniting force in the Hindu tradition. Pilgrimages and temples play the same role. There is a huge literature of stories, mythologies and legends that affect the imaginative man. There is also integration at the conceptual level. At this level, many systems of philosophy are developed. The classical philoso-



phies like Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta come under this category. Again, there is no conflict over holding the single, universal truth. Rather, each system is recognized and respected by the others.

Hinduism encompasses an entire civilization and way of life that has evolved since the dawn of human civilization. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita and the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata play an important role in the development and practice of Hinduism. These, the ancient holy scriptures of the world, uphold the eternal truth of the eternal existence of the

Supreme Lord. "Owing to the eternal will to communicate God descends on earth to re-unite His Joyful Self with His created beings". Essentially God manifests Himself in human form to crush and annihilate worldly vices and revive eternal values. God in the incarnation of Lord Krishna has bound Himself to man and in that consists the greatest glory of human existence. He came down with His full Divine manifestations and raised human civilization to a celestial plane. Thus came Sri Gauranga and brought a heavenly unification of mankind irrespective of caste, creed and religion. The Bhakti movement of that time, espousing wholehearted devotion to God in one

aspect or another, opened up what was previously esoteric knowledge and practice for large numbers of people. Means were made available for everyone to realize God, with no conflict between knowledge and practice.

Sri Krishna focused on the unity of religions. His Gita is a deep reservoir of knowledge. There is also a wide range of spiritual disciplines and practices, such as Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Raja-Yoga and Tantra. These disciplines are significant to Hindus as well as practical and beneficial to all of humanity. The meanings and intention of the Gita have historically found elaboration and explication in the Smritis, the two great epics and various major and minor Puranas. Sri Krishna attracts all beings towards Himself so that they may realize the depth of His infinite mercy and love. He maintains as existence of concrete bliss. The entity of the creatures of the cosmos is part and parcel of Lord Krishna. There is a chronological order in the manifestation of the supreme Lord Krishna.

Modern civilization is now in a state of transition. If we are to survive, it is a moral and spiritual revolution which should embrace the whole of the world. In this context, a penetrating thought and look into the totality of Lord Sri Krishna can save the cosmic existence and sanctify the coming world. Philosophy of Sri Krishna can contribute so much to life and its fulfillment not only for the Hindu community, but for the emerging world community at large of the 21st century and beyond. Hindu ancient wisdom continues to be a catalytic force in the transformation of the universe.

The writer is President, Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Parishad

## To the Editor...

### The crore-taka MiGs

Sir, We have been reading a lot in the newspapers about Bangladesh procuring eight MiG-29s from Russia worth over Taka 607 crore. MiG-29 is one of the most advanced sophisticated combat fighter-bomber aeroplanes. It is compatible with America's F-16 and French Mirage-2000 which Pakistan is trying hard to get. They have even made advance payment to the US for 12 F-16 fighter planes, but the American Congress prevented the delivery to keep military balance of power between two neighbouring countries.

We wonder where Bangladesh will find the use for these powerful machines, and against whom? Moreover, it's normal operating speed is so high that by the time it reaches the operating optimum altitude, it will cross the border of Bangladesh.

Air Vice-Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed has given a lengthy interview when he tried his best to justify. But he failed to give any justifiable reason as to against which formidable enemy of Bangladesh is going to use this most advanced and powerful machines. He has given some comparison with the air-power of Myanmar which is a lame excuse. First of all we do not have any hostile relation with Myanmar nor do we have any territorial dispute with Pakistan and India or disputes over border between China and India. Moreover Burma does not have MiG-29 aeroplanes. To counter their air-power the old F-86 or Hunter would have been good enough. The price would be less than quarter of MiG-29 and fuel consumption and maintenance cost also would be much less.

A Muzahfar  
Dhaka

### Slum dwellers

Sir, One of my friends living in USA sent me an e-mail recently.

Excerpts: "first they concentrate all the significant institutions in one city and when it gets crowded they try to demolish dwellings of the poorest of the poor... I was wondering if the government is creating any alternative housing or other places for these people to go and live. Do you know what motivated this latest move of the government?"

Now my feeling is, if only our political leaders spared some thoughts for these poor as my friend has done living as a Bangladeshi in a far away country.

An Anxious Observer  
Chittagong

### "BAPEX eyes big blocks"

Sir, This refers to the report titled on the above subject in the DS. Bangladesh has limited gas reserve. We should develop our gas fields slowly by ourselves according to our own demand. We will be in a horrible position once gas fields become empty. Nature doesn't continuously produce gas. So once gas reserve is consumed, it is all over. Bangladesh uses gas for producing most important product Urea and we are surviving on its use. We are getting electricity by burning gas.

We know about UNOCOL and its WRIP project. UNOCOL is placing a booby trap through

WRIP to Bangladesh. At present Bangladesh earns foreign currency of about US \$5b (Tk twenty-five thousand crore). We spend more than US \$3b (Tk fifteen thousand) for importing food last year to face flood damage in 1998. We do not have enough USD to import food to feed our people and other commodities. Now if we sign this production sharing contract, Bangladesh will have no money to buy the share of gas own by UNOCOL so Bangladesh will be forced to export. One day we will have to import price at much higher gag if we export now.

A K M Khairul Anam  
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### G-8 and LDCs

Sir, It is a universal truth that the rich is becoming richer and the poor is becoming poorer day by day creating hatred, jealousy, enmity terrorism and hence threatening law and order and challenging peace all over the world.

The G-8 countries always advocate for democracy, free market economy, human rights and welfare of the people. But as a matter of fact, the differences of quality and standard of living, per capita income and wealth between the G-8 and least developed countries (LDCs) are continuously widening.

The G-8 countries in a summit meeting held in Cologne, Germany has decided to write off one hundred billion dollars of debt of the LDCs. Would the Finance Minister of the G-8 countries kindly let us know the total amount of debt of the LDCs? Would our Finance Minister also kindly let us know the total amount of foreign debt of Bangladesh?

We would request the G-8 countries to write off the total amount of interest on foreign debts of LDCs first and then to decrease and refix the interest on debts at a minimum rate in consultation with the LDCs.

O.H. Kabir  
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### Community clinics

Sir, Newspaper report says that the government is going to set up a few thousand community clinics throughout the country to take health service at the doorstep of the people. Theoretically this is a laudable step. But what is the real situation in our health sector?

Our medical colleges and district hospitals are very ill-equipped and ill-furnished. There is always excessive rush of patients, but the standard of treatment is extremely low.

There are thana health complexes at thana level. But very few people in the thana go there for treatment because most of the doctors remain absent and the rest are not interested in providing proper medicare to the patients. So far, the government has failed to restore discipline and efficiency in the thana health complexes despite the occasional talk-talks. It is thus felt that the state in the proposed community clinics will be far worse. Then why the government is in a hurry to spend huge sum of money on a project of doubtful utility. What I feel is that our medical colleges, hospitals and district hospitals should be improved and expanded on top priority rather than opening community clinics.

Mrs Momtaz Jahan  
Fulbari, Sylhet.

## OPINION

### Transshipment: Much Ado

A Z M Abdul Ali

Looks like almost everyone is very prompt in asking "what is there in it for Bangladesh?" when talking about the agreement to allow 'transshipment' of Indian goods through Bangladesh. That includes some of our newspapers and some of our 'experts'.

Some were very specific in claiming that mere monetary benefit wouldn't do, we (Bangladesh) should get more, like getting our trade imbalance straightened, assurance of Nepal traffic, corridor through Berubari etc. etc. I was wondering if India asked the same question during our war of liberation when she went out of her way to help us.

I also don't understand the logic that we shouldn't allow India to carry their own arms and ammunition to their side of the country through Bangladesh. In recent days many countries opened their country-bases for use of NATO arms and ammunition. None of those countries lost their sovereignty! Sovereignty is certainly not such a fragile commodity. In this context, I remember what Mr Saifur Rahman, the then finance minister, said once while speaking as a guest speaker at a seminar organized by UNAB (United Nations Association of Bangladesh). He said, "In these days of Aid-Consortia, no country in the world, other than the

G7 countries, are sovereign in the real sense of the term" — thus puncturing the inflated balloon of nationalistic chauvinism.

On the other hand, why are friendly countries there for? It is the duty of a friend to help a friend in solving his/her problem. We should help India in solving her problem with her eastern frontier states. Remember, just after 16th December 1971, our freedomfighters volunteered to fight for India in its western front. That was a friendly gesture! We mustn't forget that we are surrounded on three sides by India and it is to our interest that this surrounding area remains peaceful and tranquil. So, we may allow India carry her arms so that she can solve her problems and we get a peaceful eastern border for ourselves.

Another thing strikes me as unusual. Many of our 'concerned citizens' at home and abroad are calling this decision as 'critical', 'serious', 'grave', 'requiring national debate', hundreds of seminars and workshops' 'thread-bare examination' etc. etc. These seem to be nothing but hype! What is so 'critical' about allowing a friendly country to take its freight to a third country or to the same country passing

through our borders? In these days of globalization and communication-revolution every civilized country is doing it. If the economics of the decision is OK then everything is OK. Apart from raising some vague notions about increase in smuggling, nobody has brought any conclusion backed by any statistics that we will be loser financially by this decision.

And matter of national security? We, certainly, do have some antediluvian ideas about our national security. In these days of 'satellite surveillance' and 'global positioning systems' who needs road communication to spy on another country's activities? Certainly we are going to put restriction on things like drugs or nuclear wastes. Remember that, up to the 5th of September 1965 Indian trains daily entered the then East Pakistan at Darsana and exited at Chilahati border to Indian destinations. Nobody was afraid of losing sovereignty at that time. No corridor was given to India. No one sacrificed life or blood to stop those trains. Above all, there was no SAARC or SAPTA at that time. It was a bilateral decision between two neighbours, and not too friendly neighbours either.

To me, it appears, giving transshipment to India would increase our (Bangladesh's)

leverage to a considerable extent. Once Indian trade and commerce, especially those of West Bengal, get rid of the old twenty-one hundred kilometre route, they would be more and more dependent on the new seven-hundred kilometre route and we will have a bargaining chip in our hand.

Finally, to mention in passing, that it has any bearing on the current decision, sometimes back in December/January of 1980/81, this writer attended a meeting as a member of Bangladesh Railway delegation, with officials of Indian Railway Board, where detailed discussions took place on Indian trains entering Bangladesh from western border and again entering Tripura at Akhaura. Next day, a technical team consisting of BR and Indian Railway engineers went to Akhaura to select the site from where the new line to Tripura would take off and all technical details were finalised. I vaguely remember, there was, perhaps, a small news-item in the middle pages of our dailies, overlooked by all and sundry. It was a complete non-issue at that time. There is no reason to believe that it has suddenly become a big issue.

It is a pity, the then President was assassinated within four or five months of that meeting of ours and nothing moved after that.