doomsday disaster on a national

scale. The real reason, about

which there was calculated

The Baily Star Founder-Editor : Late S.M. Ali

Dhaka, Friday, November 10, 2000

Godspeed to Test Debut

THIS is not a moment for exhortation. Nor is it for I darkening our mood through a recap of Bangladesh cricket's heart-breaking debacles. Rather it is an occasion to refresh our cricket from any pallor of the past and break the mental barrier of babyhood to step into the adult world of Test cricket. If indeed we have to go down the memory lane today then we better revisit the brighter spots - the ICC Championship Trophy lifted in 1997, win against a formidable Pakistan side in the World Cup 1999. and the Test status conferred on us last June.

So much for the festive mood, so much to feel part of the ceremonial ambience marked by the august presence of ICC observers, former coaches for Bangladesh side like Gordon Greenidge and Amarnath, and as if to rhyme with the historic occasion, Steve Bucknor of West Indies and David Shepherd of England are umpiring our debut in Test cricket.

Christening is obviously the initiation into Test cricket and it is only now that our baptism through fire begins. And what a baptism ceremony are we into. Not only is it the maiden Test match we are playing in world cricket and it is also our first test of mettle in the five-day version of the game. The whole lot of our cricketing ammunition - skill, stamina, big game temperament and capacity to play to a game plan - will all be arrayed against those of India, a prestigious name in world cricket. Our records in three or four-day matches show that we ran out of steam as in South Africa. So we need to do something special to prove our five-day staying power.

There is always a first time with a difficult outing and once we cross that hurdle we shall be in a position to adapt to the challenge of Test cricket. The Bangladesh team must know that their compatriots do not expect them to perform a miracle against a Tendulkar-Ganguly-Dravid-studded Indian side. All we want is that they play to the best of their abilities in all departments of the game and show the promise of truly and squarely living up to their new-found status as Test-playing nation.

The cricket world would like to be reassured that conferment of Test status on Bangladesh was entirely based on the latter's deserving it rather than attributable to a so-called act of cricket diplomacy on her part as some detractors would have liked to believe.

We felicitate the Indian cricket authorities on their gesture to play against Bangladesh in the inaugural Test just as they did against Zimbabwe after it had earned Test status.

Hopefully, our Test-playing experience with India will have propelled the beginning of some tangible improvement in our cricketing infrastructure along with an impetus provided to competitive, longer version cricket at the district, divisional and national levels across the country. The clinching factor will be a strong base at home.

Friday Mailbox

"Compensate Her for

the Loss"

item concerning the theft at the ZIA International

Airport of the savings and valuables of Zarina

Khatun which she was bringing home in a suitcase

from Abu Dhabi. In this regard, I endorse Daily

Star's views wholeheartedly and echo the demand

mentioned in the editorial that someone will have

to take responsibility for the pilferage of the money

and that the victim needs to be adequately com-

inform the readers that I, myself also became a

victim of similar nature. On 7 October last, I flew to

London from ZIA via Dubai. When I reached my

destination, I was horrified to find that my suitcase

was ransacked and all my gifts and valuables had

been missing. Immediately, I wrote a letter to the

Emirates office in London detailing the pilferage

and claiming appropriate compensation. The

Emirates' customer relations' manager duly

replied me saying that in accordance with their

'Conditions of Carriage', the carrier was not liable

for pilferage of money, jewellery or any other valu-

ables which are included in the passenger's bag-

gage with or without the carrier's knowledge. I was

What prompted me to write this letter is to

pensated.

occur again.

Sir, I am extremely shocked to read the news

Circling the Wagon

Even if some policy decisions are taken to put restriction on certain types of films or programmes on the ground of their being puerile or salacious, there is no way that a wholesale ban can be announced on satellite based cable channels. Here the local film industry can hardly argue from a moral high ground as most of the films produced in Bangladesh beat the worst of foreign films hollow in terms of obscenities, violence and outrageous fantasy.

censors. Perhaps because of this and loss. The authority, as usual, guilt-feeling the filmmakers did not mobilise themselves and march off to the office of the authority concerned with slogans of protest. It would have been natural for them to at least point with but are up against a force population, particularly their out the pirated copies of fereign films that were being rented out by video shops at every street corners. Their silence even on this score was puzzling.

As they mulled over the predicament a new and a more potent threat made its appearance, this time in the form of satellite dish and cable channels. The rapid development in the information superhighway that almost brought the whole world into the drawing and bed-rooms of even middle-class families took them by surprise. Not only interesting sitcom, dramas, video games and musicals were being telecast nonstop over a large number of channels but films, old and not so old, from Hollywood and Bollywood were also attracting viewers of all ages. Some films even outdid them with scenes of violence and raunchy sex. Utterly perplexed, they could not make up their minds about what should be done. After a long interval when foreign language channels were joined by Bengali ones from both sides of the border they have now fallen back on the only defence tactics with which they are famil-

videos available not only enter- lovian reaction a delegation from tained a large number of people the beleaguered industry again gathered before a TV, they also dutifully went to their past savrevealed that many of our film lour. They met the authority with makers were copying the foreign funereal gloom and after the films merrily without the knowl- usual hand-wringing and breastedge of the viewers and also the beating told their tale of sorrow gave a patient hearing to the pampered constituency. But both the authority and the protesters know that this time they do not have the "usual suspects" to deal

their being puerile or salacious, there is no way that a wholesale ban can be announced on satellite based cable channels. Here the local film industry can hardly argue from a moral high ground as most of the films produced in Bangladesh beat the worst of foreign films hollow in terms of obscenities, violence and outrageous fantasy. They should thank their stars that the majority of our

INMYVIEW



hold of. China and Singapore are and therefore faithfully throng to known to have imposed some the cinema houses to be forcedkind of censorship on satellite fed with the garbage produced by generated TV programme. But them. But this may not last long their inveterate censors are not and their rearguard action to able to play even cat and mouse keep them captive cannot sucwith the Internet which is so ceed forever. As regards the viewprivate that Big brother cannot ing of films on PC using required come anywhere near it, not to software and CD the freedom of by the authority was abject in so writers. All that can be said is that speak of breathing down its neck. viewers is unlimited and the Hooked up through the secrecy impenetrable. Even protectionist lobby was weak and puzzling alliances. Writers and cyberspace with Internet a PC pirated films in CDs are being their argument spurious. It was publishers being bedfellows such owner can download and see any bought and sold with such ease hardly convincing to insist, as alliances may not be strange after film or programme using appro- that copyright holders are at a was done by the protesters, that a all. Ten birds in hand are better priate software. Then there are loss as to what can be done single foreign book publisher in than one in the bush, however the easily available CDs of films beyond exhorting foreign governthat fit into the PCs. The last nail ments to protect their intellectual firm posed thread to the entire might have reasoned. That was a in the coffin of censorship thus property. In this high-tech game has already been struck. What is high-minded censors became more, it is irreversible. superannuated long ago and they

programmes on the ground of though they won a few battle in the past, the war is now lost and over. It is pointless and futile for them to circle the wagon.

> The more they do so in desperation the more will their behavlour resemble that of the Luddites who fought against new inventions in the UK in the eighteenth century and lost. The march of technological progress is inexorable and possesses awesome power. Even if some in the society may suffer adversely during transition the great majority stand to benefit. Trying to adjust and adapt to the new order is the key to survival and ensures sharing of the blessings that new technology brings. To resist is to postpone the peaceful and relatively less painful transition. A higher price to be paid and a greater inconvenience to be suffered await those who refuse to accept the inevitable. Some may even perish in the technological

subvert our culture and ideology.

silence, was of course, fear of competition. Book publishers in Bangladesh remain preoccupied primarily with publication of textbooks. For them publishing literary books is a seasonal affair. just before the Book Fair in February. They were afraid that the new joint venture company would start publishing literary works throughout the year attracting manuscripts of well-known and promising writers leaving few available until before the Book Fair. It was also apprehended that the new publisher would not be pusillanimous in paying royalty to the authors adequately and timely, thus setting a precedent uncomfortable for many local publishers. Finally, the quality of production maintained by the new publisher was likely to be of a high order, judged by their record in the home country. The xenophobia demonstrated by the local publishers was thus based on the primal fear of losing their turf, an oligopolistic business. It had little to do with national interests, security and ideology as were bandled about by the protectionist lobby. What is surprising is not their circling of the wagon, which was caused by an Not all is however bad news for exaggerated sense of paranoia, the protectionists. On another but the support they got from front they scored a resounding many writers. If there was any victory after concerted agitation class who were going to benefit before which the government from the opening up of the book gave up at the end. The surrender publishing industry it was the far as the case represented by the business sometimes makes for collaboration with a Bangladeshi pretty it might be, the writers book publishing industry in shortsighted view, to say the Bangladesh. Nor was it credible least, one that aims at preserving that the joint-venture firm could the status quo. The present, very

the price of the VCP came down Even it some policy decisions should now retire with dignity. rarely, offers the better, not to iar, protection through imposiare taken to put restriction on The protectionist lobby of film and it became an ubiquitous item It defied all reasoning as to how speak the best. Change in the tion of ban. So almost with Pavcertain types of films or industry should realise that even of entertainment provider. The could a single company spell right direction does. Why Can't We Have the Bangladeshi Dream?

A national dream is therefore important, which lodged in the hearts of every citizen, must run like

a thread from the heart of the father to that of his son. It's not enough to be patriotic, because its

passion merely tells that one is in love with one's country. It's not enough to be nationalistic,

NSCRIBED on the inner wall of Washington Monument in Washington DC is a celebrated quote from the American poet and philosopher Carl Sandburg, "The republic is a dream. Nothing happens unless first a dream.' Does it mean that there is an oneiromancy rooted in every republic, a kind of prophetic divination that emanates from the collective dream of its population? Do revolutionaries immo-

HE news item was a bit

absurdity involved. A dele-

gation from our film industry met

the authority to stop exhibition of

films in various channels in tele-

vision. It is obvious that they are

feeling threatened by the invasion

from cyberspace. Mercifully, no

scary script was followed by the

protesters as was done by Orson

Wells for his radio programme

War of the Worlds in New York in

the middle of the last century over

an imaginary attack by aliens

from the outer space. But the

reaction has been the same one of

desperately looking for cover and

circling the wagon for protection

thirty years old. It held its own

against the films from Lahore

during the Pakistan period.

Though phlegmatic, it made

steady progress taking the formi-

dable competition in stride. Came

Liberation in 1971 and the Lahori

menace was over, but another

and a more powerful threat

appeared on the horizon. Big

budget films from Bombay with

glamorous heroes and heroines

were about to descend like

locusts and devastate the film-

land. Under the familiar argu-

ment of infant industry the local

filmmakers persuaded the

authorities of the day to round up

tive distributors) by imposing

embargo. Ever since, import and

exhibition of foreign films

remained in the prohibited list in

our import policy with a few

exceptions being made for a

limited number of films in Eng-

sumer electronics for entertain-

ment almost played havoc with

the protected film industry. The

trickle of films from Bombay and

Hollywood that came in the form

of video soon became a flood as

Then in the early eighties con-

the 'usual suspects' (the prospec-

Cur film industry is more than

of the family.

startling because of the

because its zeal only tells that one is in love with one's love of the country. The dream alone tells us dream, or patriots give their lives to sustain it? And what tran-

What is that dream inlaid in the political sensitivity of a republic, which shatters when the republic is in danger and ings and everyday as a life in conflicts and he wanted to mark everything from father of the it the same dream politicians embellish during the election years but forget to deliver, which nevertheless pulsates in the hearts of people? During the Great Depression of the 1940s. the American Dream was under criticism as the crisis of that time had prompted people to revisit its success and failure. Whereas earlier in Scott Fitzerald's The Great Gatsby, the most profound American novel of its time. Gatsby's dream was connected with his "Platonic conception of himself," with the dream of the discoverers of America.

The dream is thus inherent in every citizen, who tries to stay connected in the ontological scheme of things, which matters for him. Historians who speak of Machiavelli only as an immoralist overlook the extent to which he was a man with a dream, a republican dream. Rousseau recognised this when he spoke of The Prince as a "handbook for republicans." Machiavelli's dream was to see revived in modern Italy a republic as glorious as that of ancient Rome and he suggested that it could be achieved only by

INCE all voters are not

majority do not take active

part in politics, they get the

political feedback through the

mass media and public speeches.

The pre-election campaign is now

getting into gear, and from the

fare served by the political

leaders, the voting prospects are

not all appetising. The politicians

are not projecting the right image

bent on divide-and-rule policies,

trying to annihilate the

opponents with anti-state

accusations. This is also dividing

the society, and there are cracks

in the national unity. Unless and

until the political parties and the

civil society can work in

harmony, physical and cultural

development of the nation will be

the politicians spend more time

on themselves, accusing one

another, with ad hoc and

sporadic demonstrations of

interest in national development

projects. Politics in Dhaka is

passing through a formative and

It is already slowing down as

hampered.

The present political culture is

in approach and ideologies.

politicians, and the vast

The American playwright Eugene O'Neill describes life as a bad dream between two awakenstrengthens when it prospers? Is miniature. In that manner, every man is a slice of the world, his existence embodying its miniature. The ecology of that individualistic world is the stuff of his dream, and when that dream is big enough to encompass the

its beginning by shedding his own nation to future of gas reserve? blood first.

That explains the passion, which heralds the martyrs towards their sacrifice. If our martyrs died for our freedom, what dream must have anointed

CROSSTALK

country, it becomes the national dream. The American Dream simply underscores the aspiration that the country must be more prosperous every time it changes hand from progenitor to

give up the most precious thing of their life for the country: their own lives. Che Guevara had refused to settle down with comfort and power because he dreamt of not just one exploitation-free country but an entire world. In his relentless pursuit of that dream, he would be eventually ambushed by the Bolivian police, and die in the shootout while his other comrades including Fidel Castro of Cuba would go on living

and enjoying power. Where is then the dream of our nation, which drew the martyrs to

world would someday become bullets so that we could become a free from all exploitations and contentious nation, fighting over

> Oneiromancy is based on the belief that dreams are messages sent to the soul by gods or the dead, most often as warnings. In the highly developed oneiromancy of ancient Greece, Egypt, and Babylonia, the class of diviners or seers responsible for dream interpretation often had great political and social influence. The bestknown instance of oneiromancy preserved in ancient literature is the biblical account of Pharaoh's dream of seven fat and seven lean cows, explained as foretelling of years of plenty to be followed by years of famine.

If the dreams of our martyrs were messages from their anceshope to bring to our children?

tors died in order to secure our future, and, that is the least we can do for our children. But we also owe it to our ancestors to

leave behind a better world for our children like they had done for us. Is that what we are doing in our scramble for material progress, when in the mad rush to secure the future of our respective children, we are jeopardising the future of the children of oth-

A national dream is therefore important, which lodged in the hearts of every citizen, must run like a thread from the heart of the father to that of his son. It's not enough to be patriotic, because its passion merely tells that one is in love with one's country. It's not enough to be nationalistic. because its zeal only tells that one is in love with one's love of the country. The dream alone tells us the inner mystery of both, that one loves one's country because one is in love with one's own self.

Thus the dream connects a

citizen to his country, and prompts him to believe that his fate is deeply entwined with that of it. And like children learn how to dream from storytelling, adults learn how to tell their stories from the dream. We don't have any stories to tell because our lives are inured to nightmares. Russian writer Yevgeny Zamyatin said that true literature could exist only where it was created not by diligent and trustworthy officials, but by madmen, heretics, dreamers, rebels and sceptics. What is common between literature and republic is passion. We have the passion of every kind in this country. There are trustworthy officials who work diligently for vested interests; we have madmen, heretics, rebels and sceptics. What we need is dreamers who will tell us about the Bangladeshi dream and make us feel proud once again as patriots and nationalists.

advised to contact my insurer, if there was any, who would be able to assist me in this matter. Unfortunately, I did not have any cover for my baggage and I had to forget about the whole epi-I am very much certain that the theft had been committed at the ZIA immediately after I had checked in. I would, therefore, not only advise the passengers traveling abroad to be more careful about their luggage but also would request the

authorities concerned at ZIA to be more vigilant in

handling the baggage so that such incidents never

Anis Ahmad

Dhaka-1214

Sir, This letter is to express our sincere appreciation for your timely editorial Compensate Her for the Loss (DS, 6 November). You have vindicated the feeling of anguish, resentment, contempt and frustration of the society in a succinct manner by boldly stating that 'We are not going to stop merely by commenting emotionally on the misdeed" which unfortunately has become the norm of the

In this regard, may we put a suggestion for your consideration that you continue to display Zarina Khatun's wailing face with caption on the front page of your esteemed daily to rekindle our collective conscience, till the victim is compensated and the guilty party brought to book.

> Yawer Sayeed Aims of Bangladesh

Maiming the youth of a nation

Sir, There is some truth in the opposition's allegation (DS report, Nov 1) that the youth of the country are being targeted by enemies in and efficiency as future administrators of the nation.

outside the country to impair their potentiality and

Malaysia, in the decade of the 1980s had to face the drug menace godfathered through multimillion dollar secret projects to undermine the nation's youth. The government had to impose death penalty to deal with the underground men-

In our country, the import of drugs across the border is a well planned secret project of the enemies, but the government attitude towards the cumulative damage is rather indifferent. This is a political issue and needs consensus for control and eradication.

The UN and other international agencies have to be brought in to help our police tackle the alarming situation.

The student community is also being spoiled through unhealthy political patronisation and the teachers are hardly making any noise (politically not neutral).

The problem with politics in Dhaka is that the politicians talk from the branches, and refuse to come down to the root causes. Politics has to provide many national solutions, but the needed orientation and cooperation are not forthcoming. The cleansing has to be carried through the next elections, to save Sonar Bangla.

> AMA Dhaka

"Utilising NMT"

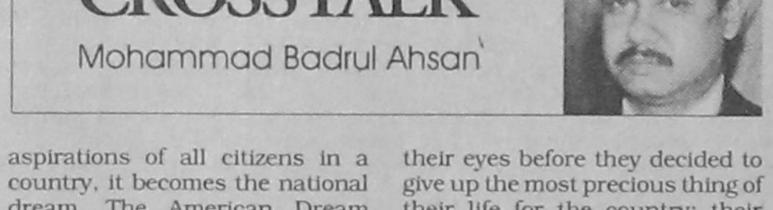
Sir, I am very much impressed with the letter Utilising NMT by Mohsin J Sarker appeared in the DS issue of 4 November. The well-written letter has several new information and the writer has proposed a few useful measures. Taking cue from him, I would like to offer a few more measures regarding the NMT (non-motorised transport) issue in our country.

The rickshaws occupy a large proportion of the city's road surface, but are not accorded due recognition! They must bear the same status as other users of the road. They should have licenses, to be carried in original, all the time and be identifiable like any other vehicles. The rickshaw-pullers should be provided with some training (about use of road, sharing with others) and licenses. They should follow the traffic rules like right turning, one-way regulations, parking at specified places etc. Rickshaws, being environment-friendly, should be encouraged to increase, but with pay ment of required fees and obeying set rules. Good administration is needed to facilitate walking for short distance commuters. The footpaths should be free and clean. Muggers, vendors and antisocial elements (eve teasers, for example) should not have the control of the footpath. Roadside, adjacent to the footpath, should not be allowed for permanent garaging of vehicles as well. I agree with Mr Sarker that private cars are to be discouraged. Higher registration charges, parking fees and easily available alternatives will achieve this end. State-owned, welfare-oriented bus service is a very good idea. The operators should be polite and well behaved so that children and women find it easy to use those public transporta-

> MAH Dhaka

the inner mystery of both, that one loves one's country because one is in love with one's own self. late themselves to attain this means of a revolution that had cated revolutionary, whose their deaths while we continue to the strength of will to liquidate its breathtaking revolutionary live in the benefits of their sacrienemies. Machiavelli was the first career lasted for only two years, fice? Did they die so that we could spires in the rite of passage when to link ideology with terror, but he wanted to die as a supreme pro- succumb to greed and corrupthe republic changes hand from did it in the desperate bid to justest against a world of blood and tion, and cut our own fellow present generation to posterity? tears. In his bewitched mind, beings like dicing up carrots or tify his dream. Kaliyaev had a dream that the radishes? Did they bite the enemy

Mohammad Badrul Ahsan'



When Russian revolutionary Kaliyaev climbed the scaffold at two o'clock in the morning and entirely dressed in black wearing a felt hat, he told Father Florinsky, who had offered him the crucifix, that he had finished with life and was prepared for death. This unbelievably dedi-

tors who were dead, what are the messages from the martyrs to us? If we observe the Independence Day, the Language Day, and the Victory Day, how do these observances signify our own existence? What legacy have we got from our ancestors and what legacy do we The answer is that our ances-

nations, the politicians are not

sensitive enough to the lasting

value of two-way communication

Monitoring the Political Climate Abul M Ahmad In the under-developed nations, the politicians are not sensitive enough gap (the ideas do not hit them). In the under-developed

to the lasting value of two-way communication network, but always depend on one-way imposition. The naive electorate cannot be bluffed time and again. Now we are facing the funny situation that the opposition is anti-national! People won't buy this line. Also, the political assassination syndrome is proving to be a stumbling block to better understanding between the politicians and the people.

stabilising stage, hence the focus is rather inwards confined to the skirmishes within the political field. The highly charged, emotionally subjective public meetings by the politicians are more concerned with washing the dirty political linen, than reorientation towards the welfare of the subjugated people. Lots of theories are thrown about at the empty bellies of the masses hovering near the poverty line.

For example, a fossilised political party comes into power after one and a half decades, and tries to find fault with everything done before, thereby disturbing the continuity of the development process (regardless of its quantity and quality). Do we need so many nagging leaders in each party?

Solve your own problems and but diverging day to day; come to us with clean serving hands, not with debatable agendas to grind, squeezing the voters into polarised thinking, after three decades of independence. Why the pending list is so long, and is lasting too long? The politicians and their leaders are becoming a problem for the naive voters, and this tendency to exploit the innocents is still working powerfully in the different political camps.

enemy today is lack of political consensus due to ego-driven charismatic stances; and the political leaders cannot evade their share of the responsibility differences are not converging, due to one-way communication the solutions.

supported by clandestine black arms and money, controlled by hidden godfathers. The egoistic political leaders always consider themselves to be too clever, and fondly imagine that their gift of the gab will carry them along. Oratory and viciousness cannot take a country forward.

Today the political consciousness of the people is so high that it cannot be compared to that prevailing even two The country's number one decades ago. Planning under static and dynamic conditions are quite different. When it comes to field strategies to face the semiliterate and the illiterate voters (the vast majority), the high flown (or irresponsibility). The theories do not hold much water,

network, but always depend on one-way imposition. The naive electorate cannot be bluffed time and again. Now we are facing the funny situation that the opposition is anti-national! People won't buy this line. Also, the political assassination syndrome is proving to be a stumbling block to better understanding between the politicians and the people.

The three points of this divergency triangle has to coincide, before Bangladesh can take off the nation is ready to take off but the politicians are in the way blocking the runway.

They have to solve their problems first before approaching the public. The washing of the dirty linen cannot go on even after 30 years. The issue has to be closed, and the politicians have to come up with

Views expressed in this column are the writers' own. The Editor may or may not subscribe to those views. The Editor reserves the right to decide which letters should be published