

## JU convocation: An afterthought

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

**B**OTH of the guests who adorned the second convocation ceremony of Jahangirnagar University are known for their clarity of vision and spelling out of such vision in plain, straightforward languages. The presence of President Shahabuddin Ahmed and former chief justice Habibur Rahman has no doubt inspired and encouraged the outgoing graduates, teachers, students, and staff of the university. Especially because there was a widespread rumour that both these guests have declined to take part in any ceremony of a university involved in a sex imbroglio.

It is probably wrong to call the Chancellor a guest since by ordinance he is the head of the Jahangirnagar family. He acted like the head indeed, reportedly ensuring that the black sheep of the family, involved in the crimes, do not get their certificates. On the eve of the convocation ceremony, vice chancellor Prof. Abdul Bayes declared that the students who were charged with rapes and sex abuses would not get certificates. Hats off to those who have made the declaration possible and prepared ground for it, including the students who earlier acted remarkably to press home their demands. The other guest, former Chief Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, in his keynote

paper also lauded the positive role of the 'general students' who united to make sure that the culprits are chastised and punished. The Chancellor also assured them that the nation would come forward in support of the students if they are doing right.

This is the silver lining. The cloud

number of female students on campus. The crime had already been condemned, protested, and those responsible had been punished according to university rules. It is true that criminal proceedings could not be taken against the criminals in lack of proper evidence. Circumstantial evidence was not

be wary so that similar sex offences do not take places on campus in future.

The keynote speaker maintains that guardians now go to examination halls with copies instead of tiffin; magistrates and teachers get beaten or even stabbed for resisting copying in public examinations. In all

few universities geared to become 'centres of excellence.' To my knowledge, there has been several researches and reports in this regard, which conveniently remained shelved and are not allowed to see the daylight. The recent success of different private universities, however, tells a differ-

ent tale: quality education can be provided by our teachers in politics-free-professional atmosphere. It is no surprise that public university teachers are teaching at the private universities with clear course objective and academic guideline. The catchword here is professional management of academic integrity. Conversely, our public universities are caught in a vortex of negative energy, which I am afraid is no better than our proverbial 'village-politics.'

In this culture, we embrace scandals and rumours, we cherish leg pulling and backbiting, and we storm over teacups: "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

But I feel sorry for my alma mater that bleeds with the shame of being rape-blemished. And I feel sorry when people of highest rank shrugs off shoulders over such misfortune. I

don't mind if common people share such sentiment. They probably do it, too: one indicator is the decline of the number of female applicants in the last two years. Their guardians do not think Jahangirnagar safe anymore. Thankfully, there are still many others who credit the positive roles of many and discredit the negative act of few.

I strongly feel that immediate steps should be taken to improve the tarnished image of the university. It includes, as the keynote speaker has mentioned, an appointment of a professional psychological counsellor who would understand the behavioural patterns of adolescent students who are undergoing hormone changes. The university has recently launched its website, which should carry the academic or other attainments of different teachers. Also, teachers of the university must come forward to write in different national dailies and magazines to send positive signals about the university. Each department should attempt to hold seminars, dialogues, and conferences on different academic and social issues to gather the think tanks in JU and orient its students with them. The university's alumni should also come forward to aid JU at the time of its need.

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that guards the silver line is the main concern of my afterthought. In Hawthorne's 'The Scarlet Letter', Hester Prynne was forced to wear an apron emblazoned with the letter "A" as a constant reminder of her adultery in a puritan New England. It appears that our society also holds a puritan attitude towards Jahangirnagar University. The university is yet to recover from the stigma attached to it because of sex offences of a few students. It has been more than two years that a group of students, belonging to the student organisation of the ruling party, raped and sexually abused a

sufficient to levy them with legal charges, which allowed the rapists to mock our whole legal system and get away with simple expulsion. One hoped that our dignitaries, with their judicial background, would point out the legal loopholes.

Instead, we had a reminiscing speaker in our convocation who mentioned how unlikely it was to have a sex offence in Oxford where he was a student. There were only three instances that were dealt severely by the university authority. He portrayed a dismal picture of education in Bangladesh. And the Chancellor advised the students to

probability, some of these dishonest students even get chance in the universities and pursue the maxim, 'old habits die hard.' At public universities, teachers get appointed as departmental or administrative heads even before they gather enough experience to run the show; mainstream political parties do encourage their student bodies to run amok.

The keynote speaker also mentions that the UGC or private organisations should come forward to find out the ills of our higher education, and emphasis should be given at primary and secondary levels with a

## Excerpts from the main report of Hamoodur Rahman Commission of Inquiry as declassified by Government of Pakistan

### POLITICAL BACKGROUND: II

**T**HE United States and Soviet Russia took keen interest in bringing about peace between India and Pakistan. The Prime Minister of Russia, Mr Kosygin, invited both President Ayub Khan and Prime Minister Shastri for peace talks at Tashkent, which culminated in the Tashkent Declaration of the 10th of January, 1966. Under the agreement reached at Tashkent, both India and Pakistan withdrew their forces from the areas occupied by them during the war, in the others' territory, but the agreement proved unpopular within the country and even the then Foreign Minister, Mr Z.A. Bhutto, joined in the resentment by resigning from the Cabinet on the 8th of July, 1966.

The resentment against the Tashkent Declaration gave another opportunity to the opposition parties to muster strength to condemn the government. A conference of all the opposition parties was convened by Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan at Lahore on the 5th of February, 1966, and it was at this conference that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for the first time put forward his "Six Points" and demanded full regional autonomy for East Pakistan. Most of the opposition leaders, including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, were arrested, under the powers derived from laws made to enforce the emergency declared on the 1st of September, 1965.

It has also to be mentioned here that with the coming into force of the new Constitution, changes in the governorships of the Provinces had also taken place. The Nawab of Kalabagh was appointed Governor of West Pakistan and Mr Monem Khan of East Pakistan. The former did not believe in democracy and the later was an extremely unpopular figure in East Pakistan, but both ruled with such ruthlessness that the image of the Field Marshal's regime was considerably tarnished. They freely arrested political leaders, closed down newspapers and even forfeited presses. Their

actions in no way helped to relax the mounting tension in the country.

Another factor which gave rise to considerable dissatisfaction at this stage was the part played by the sons of the Field Marshal themselves. They not only interfered with the day-to-day administration of the country but sought also to utilise their position for obtaining undue personal advantages for themselves. One of them was elected as a member of the National Assembly and even aspired to become an industrial magnate under the patronage of his father.

Apart from this, the rapid pace of industrial development of the country resulted in an unequal distribution of wealth. The wealth of the country gradually accumulated into the hands of a few families of West Pakistan. It was generally alleged that all the wealth of the country was concentrated in the hands of some 22 families in West Pakistan. Apparently, therefore, prosperity and development was more rapid in West Pakistan. The East Pakistanis dubbed them as exploiters of East Pakistan and built up their main propaganda of hatred of West Pakistanis on the basis of this economic disparity, combined with the fact that the Field Marshal ruled with the support of the Army consisting mainly of West Pakistanis.

Although Martial Law had avowedly come in to end corruption it is paradoxical that during the Constitutional regime of Ayub Khan, corruption increased at an alarming rate. The Basic Democracy System, it was said, had spread corruption into every nook and corner of the country. The government itself, it was further alleged connived at, if not, actually encouraged their corruption for they formed the Electoral College for the election of the President himself. They openly sold their votes to the highest bidder. The Field Marshal's policy of appeasement of the Army by giving them lands, increased pay and pension benefits and other venues of employment after retirement also

tended to create a feeling of resentment.

In East Pakistan Monem Khan continued his repressive measures. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with others were charged with a conspiracy to separate East Pakistan by a violent rebellion. The trial known as the Agartala Conspiracy Case opened in June, 1968. The agitation in West Pakistan also, in spite of the conciliatory measures taken by General Musa, continued to gather momentum and assumed serious proportions in November 1968. Almost every section of society joined the revolt. Lawyers, doctors, students all started coming out in processions, abusing the Field Marshal and demanding his resignation. The Field Marshal himself was fired upon at Peshawar while addressing a meeting. All efforts to suppress the agitation having failed, the government at last released all political detainees and invited the opposition leaders to a Round Table Conference to be held at Rawalpindi. The political parties, which had now formed a Direct Action Committee, demanded the lifting of the emergency as a condition precedent to the acceptance of the invitation to attend the Conference and continued their agitation. A countrywide strike was called for on the 14th of February, 1969.

The DAC now agreed to attend the Round Table Conference but the Peoples Party, the Awami League and the National Awami Party refused to attend the conference. Pre-Conference parleys held on the 19th February ended in a deadlock. The DAC then demanded that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman should also be brought to the Conference Table. The Sheikh at first agreed to come on parole but in the meantime another incident occurred. One of the accused in the Agartala Conspiracy Case was shot dead on the allegation that he was trying to escape. When his dead body was made over to his relatives it was taken away in procession. The mob

joined in and feelings ran so high that serious disturbances took place on the 19th of February, throughout East Pakistan. The police had to open fire in Dacca, Kushtia and Noakhali resulting in the death of nine persons and injuries to 51 others. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman refused to attend the Conference unless the case was withdrawn. On the 21st of February, Field Marshal Ayub Khan announced his decision not to contest the next elections for the Presidentship and on the 22nd, the Ordinance setting up the Tribunal to try the case against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his co-accused was repealed, with the result that the Sheikh was a free man, although neither acquitted nor discharged. The Sheikh attended the Conference at which the Field Marshal agreed to introduce the parliamentary system of government, to have the assemblies elected directly and to hold elections on the basis of adult franchise. Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan dissolved the Direct Action Committee but the Sheikh dissociated himself from the combined opposition on the ground that it had not supported his demand for regional autonomy and the break up of the One-Unit.

Field Marshal Ayub Khan, also replaced his Governors. The agitation, however, continued in East Pakistan and between the 10th and 20th of March, 39 persons were killed in Dacca and many cases of arson and looting took place.

The appointment of the new Governors had, as was expected, relaxed the tension somewhat and the movement was beginning to subside when suddenly on the 25th of March, 1969 the Field Marshal announced that he had relinquished his office and handed over power to the Commander in Chief, General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan. Thus ended the second republic and the rule of Ayub Khan.

Tomorrow: POLITICAL BACKGROUND: III



All health information to keep you up to date

### Do's and Don'ts

DO

- \* Tell your doctor about any medications you are already taking.
- \* Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, intending to become pregnant or breast feeding.
- \* Tell your doctor about any allergic reactions you have experienced to past drug treatments.
- \* Tell your doctor if you have a specific current health problem, such as liver or kidney disease, or if you think you might be at special risk from drug treatment for any other reason.

\* Discuss your drug treatment with your doctor and make sure you understand the reasons why you have been prescribed a particular drug and what benefits you can expect. People who do not understand the reasons for their treatment often fail to take their medication correctly.

DON'T

Leave your doctor's chamber without a clear understanding of how and when to take your medication.

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### Around the world

#### Spinal breakthrough

Researchers in America have found that a drug being tested to treat cancer is showing promise for the treatment of paralysis.

According to a report published in The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 24 out of 26 mice with new spinal-cord injuries recovered walking ability within 12 days after treatment with the drug CM101. The other two died. In comparison, of 14 mice with similar injuries that didn't receive the drug, 11 died and none of the three survivors recovered the function of their paralysed limbs.

"We are encouraged by the research," says Thomas Countee, executive director of the US National Spinal Cord Injury Association. He points out, though, that a lot of work remains to be done before the results might be extended to people.

Tomorrow: Tips on colds

### TOM & JERRY

