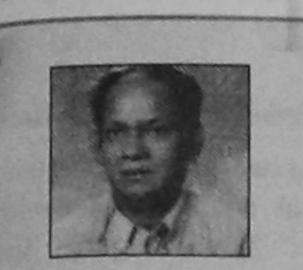
Pahela Baishakh 1408



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

AHELA Baishakh 1408 is bound to remain engraved in the memory of Bangalees for avery long time. It is not an ordinary event by any stretch of imagination.

Pahela Baishakh is the advent of the Bangla New Year. It has to do with the harvesting and in rural Bengal it is a very joyous occasion. Historians point out that Emperor Akbar, who throughout Dhaka and other large would have triggered a major tragwas the greatest of the Moghuls and brought in changes throughout the length and breadth of the Empire, thought about starting a new the West, here in Bangladesh the Bangalee calendar. His initiative was New Year's Day arrives with the so far-reaching that it has survived rising of the sun and in its capital through centuries and taken hold on the Bangalee people. The Bangalees introduced 'hal khata', opening of pew account books and gradually bebrations on the occasion gained

The celebration of Bengali New campus, the entire area becomes a Year in the cities and particularly the capital city Dhaka is of more recent origin. It can be traced back to the early sixties and the advent of the cultural organisation Chhayanaut. Rapidly Chhayanaut moved to its present venue of celebration the Batamul (very appropriately, under the ancient Banyan tree).

further grounds.

In a completely indigenous style Batamul has been attracting an ever growing public full of enthusiasm, finely dressed men, women and children. It is the celebration of a New Year, which has few parallel. Unlike in the West, where the New Year is ushered in smoke filled rooms, at the dead of night, through dancing and lot of boozing, here in Bangladesh it has developed into a

A M M SHAHABUDDIN,

casual visitor to Kolkata can

feel it. The West Bengal State

Assembly election is practically

waiting round the corner scheduled

to be held in the last week of April

the Left government, led by CPM,

continued to remain in power under

the leadership of that legendary

communist leader, Jvoti Basu. But

what now when Comrade Basu had

already stepped down on health

grounds making room for a rising

'icon', Buddhadev Bhattacharya.

Will he be able to steer clear, or sink

in mid-stream facing the heavily

powerful emerging forces?'

'stormy weather', created by other

It would be a tough up and down

game, in which the leftists, now

holding the 'championship trophy'

for the last 24 years, would try their

best to retain it, while the emerging

rightist democratic forces would

also try to put up a better show of

their strength to gain it. It seems to

be a straight fight between the two

opposing forces, one, the ruling

party led by Buddhadev and the

other by that aggressive emerging

leader, Mamata Baneriee of

Trinamul Congress, a splinter of the

Indian National Congress. It is more

> question of 'do-or-die' for the Left

In this 'show-down' game, there will

be hardly any room for a third front

to throw its hat in the ring. Of course,

there was and there will be a power-

ful third contributing force, the

minorities, particularly Muslims,

who constitute about 20 per cent of

government, led by CPM.

Minorities

on return from Kolkata

State Assembly Election

HE heat is already on. Even a them are showing their 'trump card'

this regard. Many other cultural groups have come up in the row of are the Rishiz Goshti, holding culbringing out procession with colourful masks by Arts College students and many others. Every year Pahela Baishakh witnesses an explosion of gaiety and colour

cities of Bangladesh.

ered in at the strike of midnight in

Dhaka pours forth from the stage at

the Batamul the unforgettable song

of Rabindranath Tagore Esho he

Baisakh esho (O! Baisakh come,

come). The huge Ramna Park, the

Suhrawardy Uddyan, the university

sea of humanity. The senior citizens

make it a point to reach the Ramna

green to greet their fiends, relations

and others. The occasion is one of

joy, camaraderie and friendly feeling

party has grown enormously in size

and starting at 6 am it continues

upto 10 am. Through this New Year's

party the Bangalees have found a

way to express their fellow feelings at

least once a year and this single

event has established the identity of

this nation. Pahela Baishakh has

thus become the focal point of the

the hundreds of thousands of peo-

ple assembled in Ramna Batamul

and they were listening in rapt

They would, undoubtedly, be a

lucrative target as a solid 'vote bank'

for the contesting parties. So both of

(secular card) to this 'vote bank' to

allure it to their respective side. But

will this 'secular card' alone succeed

to mobilise the minorities or the

Muslim votes in favour of either of

not. The Muslims of West Bengal

mostly aligning themselves with the

Left government for last 24 years,

seem to have been disillusioned.

They want something more than the

red rhetorics' and the 'secular card.'

here that CPM, during its 24-year

rule, has built up a solid grassroots

base, particularly in the rural areas,

thereby winning the support of the

Muslim population. The Muslim

youths had been granted 'cadre'

force status and they willingly serve

as a 'fighting force' whenever neces-

sary. The recent alleged 'massacre'

in Midnapore and some other dis-

tricts, was said to have been com-

mitted by this 'cadre' fore of CPM

and the victims had been the activ-

ists of Mamata's Trinamul Congress.

Former Chief Minister Jyoti Basu

had denied of any such allegation,

saying he had no information of

such 'massacre' during his tenure of

office. Whether Jvoti Babu knows it

or not; 'massacre' is said to have

occurred there and it is open secret

But these poor and illiterate Muslim

youths who had served as loyal

activists of the Left government have

gradually started looking at things

from a different angle. Illiteracy and

poverty are still rampant among

them. There have been no educa-

tional advancement, no economic

who were behind the scene.

Secular Card

One thing must be mentioned

this year. For the last 24 years such the contending parties? Perhaps and communal harmony exists. But

On Pahela Baishakh 1408, when

Over the years the New Year's

towards one and all.

unity of the people.

totally family occasion and initial attention to the rendering of popuentertainment is provided by lar Bengali songs welcoming the Chhayanaut, which is the pioneer in new year, there was an explosion of a bomb. The music was so overpowering that people were unable to celebration most notable of whom determine the nature of the blast or its intensity. Soon to their horror, tural function, Arts College students they witnessed seven horribly mangled bodies, and the entire place in pool a sea of blood. The people took a little time to absorb the shock but interestingly did not panick nor start running helter and skelter. For that

edy as the exits from park are narrow

through those exits hundreds would have been victims of stampede. Somebody with the microphone had the presence of mind to announce that everybody should stay calm and the programme would continue. And indeed the programme continued while arrangements were being made to remove the dead and tend the injured. The New Year celebration turned into one of protest against the ghastly murder of innocent

THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

Over last few years we have witnessed foul political murders in various parts of the country. They all seem to form a

chain. It is surprising that the authorities dealing with law and order are unable to take appropriate action.

a well laid out plot to create mayhem at a place considered nearly holy by the Bangalees. Over decades sentiments have been woven around Chhayanaut and people spontaneously attend the Pahela Baishakh celebration at Batamul. Thus hitting at Chhayanaut's Pohela Boishakh is as grave as hitting at Ekushey celebrations. Interestingly this was the first time in nearly 40-year history of Chhayanaut that it became the target of cowardly attack. It is worth

recalling that since 1952, when the

Language Movement offered its first

martyrs to Pakistani authorities, the

Shahid Minar has been repeatedly vandalized by them, the last time on the night of 25 March 1971. Pahela Baishakh celebration under the aegis of Chhayanaut has never been attacked the way it did on Pahela Baishakh 1408. It is an event that should make us

sit up. For the assasins through their bomb blast have hit at the cultural citadel of Bangladesh. In the recent past the plotters have selected targets whose aim would appear to be to destabilise the state. We have witnessed last year in Jessore the assasins hands at the Udichi function. There have been murder of a reputed journalist in Jessore Shamsur Rahman. Murder has visited the Communist Party meeting in Dhaka and even a Qadiani mosque has seen gory murder of its followers in Khulna. We know about the planting of a huge bomb at Kotalipara, near the dais from where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was due to speak.

All these appear to be links in a chain only objective of which appears to be to destabilise the state. Fingers continue to be pointed to the never ending trial of the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who according to The Sunday Times are reported to be plotting to assassinate Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Over last few years we have witnessed foul political murders in various parts of the country. They all seem to form a chain. It is surprising that the authorities dealing with law and order are unable to take appropriate action. It is reported that Ramna Batamul was thoroughly screened the day before Pahela Baishakh. Why no vigil was kept thereafter? How is it that the bomb carrying assassins pushed through crowd and met no security personnel? These are troubling questions.

As Bangladesh appears to stabilize her position at home and abroad she also continues to attract hostility and plotters are on the prowl to destabilise her. We must not forget that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

Rift in CPM widening?

Perhaps a section of the CPM lead-

ers had already realised what is up in

the forthcoming events. A widening

rift is already visible in the CPM.

Some democratic minded leaders of

the party are now trying to have a

strong block at least to save them-

selves from sinking. Mr Saifuddin

Chaudhury, one of the well known

CPM leaders, have already set up his

Jantar Mancha (people's stage) to

create awareness among the people

about their rights and demands.

Similarly Transport Minister

Shubhash Babu, another rebel, has

started holding public meetings,

separately from the CPM. And the

way the vernacular dailies are giving

him prominence shows that the

smoldering fire within the CPM has

been ignited, making the rift much

the people of West Bengal to decide

what they want to make the future of

their province (state) brighter in the

fields of education, economy and

industries. Political leaders belong-

ing to the major parties are running

from one end of the province to the

other making lofty promises. The

people had their bitter or sweet

tastes of promises during the last

more than two decades. They had

seen, during the 24-year CPM

regime, and earlier during Congress

government, led by Shiddhartha

Sankar Ray in the seventies, how

promises, like pie crust had been

laughs last. Only time will show who

enjoys the best laugh in West Bengal.

merely of political mistakes but of

The writer is a retired UN official.

As they say, he laughs best who

Now, all told and written, it is for

wider than expected.



tions like RSS and Bajrang Dal. How

far Mamata will be able to show a

brave face in the upcoming election,

Benerjee is that the move from the

Indian Congress to make a common

cause with Trinamul Congress to

give a united front against CPM and

BJP has succeeded. However,

Bajpayee's BJP has been further

weakened, particularly in West

Bengal where it had practically no

locus standi and was venturing in

the West Bengal politics keeping

Mamata as a front-guide. And the

Tehelka revelation of arms scandal,

in which some top BJP leaders were

involved, has made BJP more shaky

and doubtful as a potential force in

Basu's exit, 'Undemocratic'?

Meanwhile, Left forces, led by CPM,

are tightening their belt to pull all

their resources to face a turbulent

situation in the up-coming election.

And the rather unexpected 'exit' of

former Chief Minister Jyoti Basu is

considered by many as a part of this

manouvering. According to them,

'entry' of Buddhadev as new Chief

Minister will bolster the public

relationing campaign under his

more 'clean' leadership. Jvoti Basu

was considered by many as a 'liabil-

ity' than an 'asset' in the present

context of things when many stories

are afloat about 'amassing of wealth'

by his son Chandan under the popu-

lar shadow of his father, who has

although been looked upon as 'Mr

Clean' and nobody has been able to

accuse him directly of any corrup-

tion. And his exit from power has

been dubbed as undemocratic by no

less a person than the State

Transport Minister Subhas

Chakravarty who has already

But a plus point for Mamata

only time will show.

the next election.

From reports gleaned from

Ramna Batamul: After the blast ...

Which way West Bengal goes this time, right or left?

opportunities. Just go round the

slum areas, inhabited by them, there

is nothing but signs of frustration

and despondency. So the 'myth' of

the CPM's 'secular card' had been

exploded. It must, however, be

admitted that because of the

Communist Party rule, there has

been no communal tension there

that's a different thing. One bright

picture does not make the whole

scene. To complete the circle, they

need food, shelter, clothing and

above all good education and

respectable jobs. In short, the

Muslims in West Bengal are lagging

far behind, both economically,

educationally and socially, com-

pared to the Muslims in other states

of India. Although a large number of

Muslims had been recruited to serve

as teachers in some primary and

secondary schools, but in other

departments their presence is negli-

Taking advantage of this deplorable

situation, Trinamul Congress leader

Mamata Benerjee had made a big

thrust to win over these frustrated

Muslims. And in some areas, where

she had made a whirlwind tour to

address Muslim gatherings,

Mamata had made tremendous

progress in winning over the Muslim

youths because of her assurance of

economic, educational and job

opportunities. She even ventured to

go deep in the heavily populated

Muslim areas to address them. But

some are still doubtful about her

sincerity, and take it as Mamata's

'election drama'. Recalling her close

ties, till the other day, with BJP and

her silent role as a youth Congress

leader, when Babri Masjid was razed

to ground by Hindu zealots belong-

Mamata's Thrust!

PHOTO: STAR

Ultimately it would be the 'voice'

of the majority of the people that

would dictate the future shape of

things to emerge in West Bengal

That would depend how they ana-

lyse the state of performance by the

CPM government during the last 24

years. Are they happy over what West

Bengal had achieved in the field of

industrial development, educa-

tional advancement and economic

progress compared to other Indian

states? The answer by the majority to

this question will be the deciding

factor. Can the people judge for

themselves and come to a right

itive ads by two dairy farms for

One company ad said 'Drink our

milk and be devil'. Another, in reply,

came out with the ad 'You needn't be

a devil to drink our milk'. So that's

the bottom line. You needn't be an

economist to assess the economic

condition of West Bengal. Indeed, it

presents a rather gloomy picture

when compared with other states

being industrially and technologi-

cally advanced. Instead of adding

more industries to create more job

opportunities, dozens of industries

had been closed down in West

Bengal for one reason or the other.

Many are gasping for breath. Many

industrialists and investors mostly

form other states, are said to be

shifting their capital to other lucra-

tive provinces, thus creating more

unemployment and economic

problems. A few bright spots here

and there do not give a correct pic-

ture about a region's progress and

prosperity. So the people must be

looking for a change for the better.

This psyche for a change is now a

dominant feature among the people

of West Bengal.

marketing their pasteurized milk.

There is a joke about the compet-

decision? Perhaps yes.

Dr. Rubaiul Murshed

All health information to keep you up to date

For women only

Breastfeeding is nature's way of feeding babies. Your milk has so much more than the basic bodybuilding substances protein for growth, fat and lactose for energy. It contains miraculous ingredients that cannot be imitated in formula milks.

Mother's milk is special: Mother's milk has special substances to fight infection in your baby: white cells to gobble up bacteria; antibodies to defend him against illnesses; special enzymes to safeguard the precious trace of iron in your milk and even to rob the germs of the iron they need to survive result, the germs die and your baby gains iron to make new red blood cells as he needs them. He is protected, too, from gastroenteritis. Babies find it difficult to digest fats but breast milk comes with its own fat-digesting enzyme to make it easy.

Amarvellous start in life: Breastfed babies get a marvellous start in life. They are less prone to coids and coughs, bowel diseases and heart disease, even as life goes on into later years. And the relationship between you is such a close one.

Your milk alters to suit your baby's needs perfectly: Give your baby your very special mother's milk which alters day by day to meet his needs. It even changes during each feed a more watery drink first to quench his thirst, a richer mixture as he continues to suckle to satisfy his hunger.

There's nothing to compare with breast milk for your and your

⊅It doesn't have to be bought.

Breastfeeding is best for you as well. It helps your uterus to go back to normal and helps you to get your weight down. All it takes from you is a little time to learn the womanly art of breast-

feeding. Your midwife will help you to become confident, skilled and contented as your baby will be. There is no finer investment

Next: Around the world

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer Dhaka PWD Division-1, Dhaka

PWD Notice Inviting Tender

Tender No New 94 of 2000-2001

Sealed tenders are hereby invited in Bangladesh Form No 2911 for the under-mentioned work as per terms and conditions stated below. The schedules and other terms and conditions should be seen in the premise offices during office hours before selling of tenders and the tender may be purchased by the contractor himself or his representative bearing the original authorisation with contractor signature and producing up-to-date enlistment book and TIN certificate.

Name of work

Estimated cost

Earnest money Time allowed for

completion of the

Price of schedule

Place of selling of

tender schedule

Construction of 4th floor over the existing 3rd floor of Telecommunication Bldg at Rajarbagh, Dhaka. Tk 63,56,000/-

Tk 1,27,120/-

240 (Two hundred-forty) days from the date of issue of the work order.

Tk 750/- per set of schedule & Tk 25/per set of Bangladesh Form No 2911

(Non-refundable). a) Office of the undersigned as well as

Executive Engineer, Dhaka PWD Division-II/III/IV/Azimpur/ City/Eden Bldg/Motijheel/ Mohakhali/ Medical Mirpur/Maintenance/ Resource/ Savar/ Gazipur/ N'ganj/ Manikganj/ Chief Arboriculturist, Arboriculture Divisional Division/ Office, Segun Commissioner Bagicha, Dhaka/ Staff Officer, PWD Dhaka Zone, Dhaka/Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Div-I/II/III/PWD Sub-Division PWD Division-Narshingdi, IV/Munshiganj/ Mymensingh/Tangail/ Kishoregani Sherpur/Jamalpur/ Netrokona Chittagong, PWD Division-III, under Chittagong PWD Zone, Chittagong/ Khulna PWD Division-I under Khulna

Place of receiving tender

Zone, Rajshahi. b) The undersigned as well as by the Executive Engineer, Dhaka PWD Division-II/III/IV/ Azimpur/ City/Eden Bldq/Motijheel/ Mohakhali/ Medical/ Mirpur/Maintenance/Resource/Savar /Gazipur/N'gani/Manikgani/Chief Arboriculturist, Arboriculture PWD Division/ Divisional Commissioner Office, Segun Bagicha, Dhaka/Staff Officer, PWD Dhaka Zone, Dhaka/ Sher-e-Bangla Nagar PWD Division-

PWD Zone, Khulna/Rajshahi PWD

Division-I, under Rajshahi PWD

Last date

selling tender Date of receiving tender

Lottery

Eligibility

DFP-9902-16/4

G-720

Receive up to 12.00 Noon on 10-05-2001 BC and will be opened on the same day at 12.15 PM in presence of tenderer (if any). If more than one tenders are received

rates stand

During office hours up to 09-05-2001

having same quoted lowest, selection will be made by lottery to be held on 17-05-2001 BC at 2.30 PM in the office of the Superintending Engineer, Dhaka PWD Circle-1, Dhaka

1/11/111/Dhaka.

who like to be present. Special class/class-I, combined & class-

in presence of the intending tenderers

I, approved bldg contractors of PWD. contractors/firms to be compete in

the tender The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason.

This tender has been invited considering the urgency of the work with approximate/probable estimated amount. It is therefore, implied and binding upon the contractors that he/they are agreed to execute the work as per technically approved estimated amount by competent authority. The work order will be issued after getting allotment of fund of the said work from the concerned authority.

Md Anwar Hossain **Executive Engineer** Dhaka PWD Division-1, Dhaka Phone-9558221

ing to BJP and its sister organizathe total population of West Bengal. development and no new job become an 'eyesore' with the CPM. Excerpts from the 'declassified' main report of Hamoodur Rahman Commission

POLITICAL BACKGROUND-XXII campaign to take place on that very Issue and even after East Pakistan voted almost solidly in favour of the ernment. Awami League's view point he seriousness of that verdict or the fact that it conflicted with his own Legal Framework Order and yet now, after

that it failed to make provision on blithely took upon himself not people. what was likely to be the most merely the government of a country

appeared not to realize either the fore, that between June and August the attempt should have been made Pakistan. It has been said that the advice from foreign powers, includ-

URING this broadcast the procrastinations, violence and then not only to outside political General said that he had counter violence during the course observers but even to those in govcome to the conclusion that of which a great number of innocent ernment, as they have now deposed the task of framing the Constitution lives were sacrificed both of East before us including General Yahya by the Assembly was not feasible Pakistanis and of Pakistani soldiers. himself, that a military action could and that, therefore, he would be a great deal of property subjected to only be justified as a means of securforced to frame a Constitution wanton destruction, General Yahya ing an atmosphere peaceful enough himself subject to amendments to comes to the conclusion that the to attempt once again a political be passed, if at all, by the Assembly people of Pakistan are incapable of solution. Political problems do not on the basis of an amending proce- framing a Constitution and that one admit of any but political solutions dure to be laid down in the must be given to them. This is not and a military solution, even if it was Constitution itself, i.e. by himself. the time or the place to consider the possible, could be proper only to an promised to consult the various validity of that conclusion. We pause external power which had, by force Parties on the draft when it was only to remark upon the political of arms, arrogated to itself the govready. It is surprising that the understanding and capacity of a ernment of the country. It was cer-General had started with a Legal man when such tragic events could tainly not the prerogative of the Framework Order which virtually convince of this incapacity of the government of a country to use gave the Constitution itself except Pakistani people and yet who military powers against its own No serious attempt, however,

inflammable issue which would after so severe a political crisis as seems to have been made then or arise. He then went on to allow a occurred early in 1969 but also later to resume negotiations with undertook to steer it through that the Awami League and in the face of crisis to an era of democratic gov- the public statement of General been. We make the point that no Yahya that there was no question of a attempt at all was made to negotiate We would have imagined, there- fresh election, we are unable to see with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. who else was competent to negoti-1971, was the ideal time at which are on behalf of the people of East that the General was receiving towards reconciliation. It is obvious real difficulty in such a settlement ing those who were most friendly to

cleared and who was available in Pakistan, as most of these had fled across the border and were either in India or in foreign countries propainfluencing world opinion in their favour. Indeed the main leaders of the party were admittedly in India with the exception of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Dr Kamal Hussain. We are not impressed with this explanation. It is futile to say that the main leaders were not available when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a prisoner at the disposal of General Yahya any time that he wished. It is possible, of course, that if asked to negotiate with General Yahya, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman might have been bitter and unresponsive and indeed might have refused point-blank to talk at all. We do not, however, think that such a result should have been taken for granted. We of course do not take it upon ourselves to state with certainty what his reaction would have We have it now on good authority

months of postponement and not only now but it was obvious even was the fact that there was hardly us, urging upon him the importance Rahman had indeed been guilty not Next POLITICAL BACKGROUND-XIII

any Awami Leaguer who had been and even the necessity of finding a political solution and, if not expressly at any rate in terms of clear implication, the suggestion was being made to him that he must talk gating their cause with a view to with Sheikh Mujib. Although the General in his answers assured such dignitaries that he was committed to the pursuit of a political solution, upon this one point, however, General Yahya was absolutely adamant; the one person to whom he would not talk was Mujibur Rahman, Instead Mujibur Rahman was arraigned before a military tribunal for high crimes including treason. We are not for a moment attempting to judge whether, as a matter of pure law, the Sheikh was or was not guilty of treason. Although we are all Judges ourselves we are only too conscious of the fact that the legal definition of crime, particularly treason, has little meaningful relationship to the political crisis that the country was then facing and we have in any case not examined the evidence led at the trial, a consideration of which alone can justify a proper finding. But what after all was the purpose of the trial? Was it merely to punish Sheikh Mujib in the same ordinary way in which the law takes cognizance of all crimes or was it to prove to the world and to tion in the trial. the people of Pakistan that Mujibur

serious and anti- national crime? If this was the purpose it was hardly served by trying him before a military court which was held in camera and about whose proceedings the public received not the slightest information. We contrast this with the earlier trial of Sheikh Mujib in the Agartala Conspiracy case which was presided over by three judges of the Superior Courts of Pakistan and which was given abundant publicity in the press. Here, instead the public was not even aware as to when and where the trial commenced or when it ended. Great fanfare was made of the fact that a counsel of Mujibur Rahman's own choice and an eminent advocate in his own right was engaged at government cost to defend him, but the evidence before us shows that, although at first Sheikh Mujib did participate in the trial, after he had learned that General Yahya had made a broadcast, to which we have referred already on the 26th March, 1971, and in which he publicly branded Mujibur Rahman as a traitor and declared that his crime would not go unpunished, he disassociated himself from any further participa-