

## Remembering Zia

We mourn the loss of a freedom fighter and nation builder

ONE of the many tragedies of Bangladesh is that the right party has to be in power to give honour to some particular leaders. So our heroes change with the changing political wind. Thus we saw that it took the Awami League to get elected so that Bangabandhu could get his due honour, for which the founder of the State of Bangladesh had to wait for good 21 years. Similarly during the last government we could hardly realise that there was a figure called Ziaur Rahman who deserved to be remembered by us. With the return to power of the party that Ziaur Rahman founded we see the return of this valiant freedom fighter back on the centre stage of national celebration. We are happy that Ziaur Rahman is being remembered for his contribution to our nation, but can we expect that it will not be at the cost of others who deserve our respect?

We have, regardless of the political wind, regularly paid our tribute to President Ziaur Rahman for three specific contributions. First he destroyed the fascistic BKSAL, the universally condemned one-party system that Bangabandhu had tragically introduced in early 1975, and restored multi-party politics. Second, and for this we in the press feel particularly gratified, he withdrew state monopoly from the print media and allowed private newspapers that were banned under BKSAL to resume publication. The third contribution he made was to restore chain of command in the army that was severely compromised by successive coups.

Prior to his entering the political scene Ziaur Rahman was remembered by a grateful nation for his role in our Liberation War. As a sector commander and as the organiser of the "Z" force he played a pivotal role in our freedom struggle. There was, and still is, a special place in our hearts for him for his radio announcement on March 27, 1971 in which he, in Bangabandhu's name, declared our independence.

Ziaur Rahman's tragic assassination deprived the nation of a leader who was able to restart our development process and renew our national reconstruction efforts. We pray for his eternal peace.

## Chittagong Port strike may cripple the economy

It's part of an overall crisis of mismanagement

BANGLADESH is about to experience a major problem as the Chittagong Port workers try to enforce a strike in protest against the permission to stevedore agencies to hire workers from outside in case of need. The workers unions are protesting on the ground that this goes against their interest and will lead to entry of outsiders. Negotiations have broken down and an indefinite strike is on.

Port is probably the most critical non-industrial unit in a country and every time they go on strike this hits the export industry and the importing market. Since Bangladesh has only one worthy port with Mongla moribund for long, the situation is all the more critical. There are other factors as well which have greatly caused concern in many quarters regarding the port. The speculation that a port terminal is going to be leased out to a foreign country or given far more access than normal has fuelled words that Bangladesh itself is going to lose control over it. Currently there is a court stay order on this. Even so, a strike causes greater anxiety.

But the perplexing issue is that of a port strike which is allowed to happen when everyone knows that the country can't afford one. In times of political crisis, the port workers' strike bodes greater ill for the economy as stoppage of export and import automatically makes it quite sluggish.

That may have been the reason to allow agencies to hire workers in case of strikes from outside. So this may well be a security move also and not just a matter of conflict arising out of wage increase dispute. Given the politicised atmosphere of the day this may soon become a crisis.

But that the Chittagong port will be a point of constant attention and instigation of all sorts is certain. The entire system of port management has been largely based on underhand dealings and corruption and many such practices have now reached a point whereby the port is not properly functional anymore.

What we are observing is the systemic breakdown of the infrastructure management system and this is reflected in all sections. As the tariff protected era comes to an end, we seem set to display our inability to adjust with it in terms of efficiency and capacity. The crisis at the Chittagong port is part of that. It can't be solved in parts but requires the attention of all parties concerned in ensuring economic efficiency.

Unless that is done, there is worse news to follow.

## TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

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## Zia death anniversary

I see that the BNP Secretary General has asked for his party members and fellow travellers to abstain from extorting on the occasion of President Zia's death anniversary. Last year we had to pay out in spades to commemorate Bangabandhu's one.

How much do you want to bet that no one will listen to him?

As the head of the Law and Order Committee he hasn't been able to improve either law or order. And now you expect me to believe I'll be spared from extortion?

Fat chance. I'll give you the names of the various parties who come and nothing will be done.

Mohammed Aye Khan  
Ottawa, Canada

happy to use the word 'Islamic terrorist'. When the name of one of the greatest religions is being portrayed in the west as a terrorist religion, I am shocked (my 11 years old son burst in to tears) but not surprised.

I am shocked, surprised and humiliated when I see, newspapers like yours, use the same terminology to define any violent action taken by freedom loving people in Kashmir or in Palestine. Have you forgotten the word freedom fighters? Please do not try to play ignorant when a very cruel and far-reaching conspiracy is going on the world over.

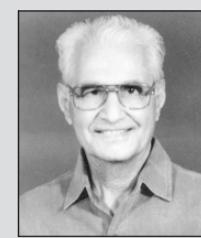
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## Right decision?

This is in response to Mr. Mohammad Rahman (May 22).

Mr. Rahman, I do not think the sweeping manner with which you delivered your opinions will be considered objective argument. You claim that our religious culture is being undermined by cable TV. If

## The evil they are

M B NAQVI  
writes from Karachi

NUCLEAR weapons in South Asia are at least four years old. Both India and Pakistan provided the world with audio-visual aid by detonating 11 nuclear devices in Rajasthan and Balochistan deserts in May 1998 – without consulting their people, of course. It is time to review what the two countries have achieved thereby.

Insofar as India is concerned, its motives remain a mystery. Some think atomic weapons are the currency of power and a status symbol. Others saw it as the pursuit of national greatness, conceived as amassing overwhelming military strength. Since atomic weapons seemed to fulfil this quest for power, it chose to go nuclear. Others had laid emphasis on its desire for a big league membership, with an application for the permanent membership of the UN Security Council pending. These theories are valid, though it leaves some dissatisfaction. Although Indian publicists claim Pakistan was not in the rickety BJP government's mind in April 1998, a suspicion survives that the immediate context was Pakistan's Kashmir problem. New Delhi perhaps wanted to demonstrate overwhelming strength to overawe Islamabad. Anyway, has India achieved the aims it had thereby?

Before examining India's achievements, Pakistan's motivation has a relevance. Pakistan's sole objective was to deter India. Paki-

stan Army had assessed that India was a radical threat to its national security. Given half a chance, India will somehow swallow Pakistan. It felt nuclear weapons would help in defying India's power vis-à-vis Kashmir. Some in Pakistan's military might be credited with an unavowed desire for eventually getting even with India; the defeat in 1971 war ranked. Anyway, the raison d'être of Pakistan's nuclearisation is deterring India

promoted with gusto, despite India's superiority in conventional armaments and in its larger nuclear capability. There was no noticeable increase in India's stature abroad because of its nuclear status, while the rest of the world habitually brackets India with Pakistan despite all inequalities.

Giving a hard look at Pakistan shows its stature too have actually deteriorated; nobody was impressed with Pakistan's new-

Pakistan have gone from one crisis to another ever since. Military tensions have continuously been rising. Kargil operations and their sequel have said it all. While initially the Kargil operations underlined Pakistan's insouciance, its sequel demonstrated a dramatic and humiliating climbdown, literally and figuratively. While Pakistan remains perky behind the atomic shield, the going has gotten too rough as India massed its entire armed forces in an

destabilising. Exposing the myths that surround these mass destruction weapons is now a necessity. There were many Bomb lovers in India and Pakistan -- otherwise hardliners and quite anti-Pakistan or anti-India in domestic contexts -- who promoted the fib that nuclear weapons, by their sheer destructiveness, would guarantee peace; neither side will dare go to war and both will stay deterred. All the two needed was to negotiate a nuclear

forward and nor can any go back. For six months the armies' forces of the two are confronting each other, eyeball-to-eyeball. No one knows what to do next, while the same common advice by all foreigners is somehow not accepted. The point emerges: so long as Indians and Pakistanis do not break out of the present vicious cycle of chauvinistic politics and stop relying on nuclear weapons, there may be no future for the Subcontinent.

New Delhi and Islamabad are unlikely to be rid of their fascination for the bogus doctrine of deterrence -- that has never worked for anyone at anytime. As Praful Bidawati maintains, both have to break out of the thrall of catchy slogans like Minimum Nuclear Deterrent. The fact is that it is neither minimum nor has it deterred anyone in both cases, such illusions make nuclear arms race unstoppable. Even the talk of a nuclear detente is nonsense. With four minutes flying time of missiles between the two countries, what

é tente. Peace will reign. Well, nothing of the kind has happened.

Amidst near-total sundering of relations, the two countries remain engaged in a ruinous arms race -- in both nuclear and conventional fields.

Look at the latest Pakistani missile tests; they cost a pretty penny. Whatever may happen to India's economy Pakistan economy cannot sustain such a growing burden, because nuclear weapons too need to be up-dated and increased in number along with their delivery mechanisms, whenever the adversary does so. Who can ignore that this armament race is relentless and unavoidable so long as the two believe in deterrence. Moreover, a new conventional arms build up is unavoidable after some nuclear deterrence has been achieved. This is the experience of all nuclear powers.

This huge delusion of deterrence has boxed both India and Pakistan in a no go situation. Neither can go

## PLAIN WORDS

To escape from this stultification it is vital to reorient politics. It would seem politics is too serious a business to be left to governments alone or to the political classes that play musical chairs. The common people have to stand up for their rights and assert the need for their desires' fulfillment -- that require peace and a radically reoriented economic effort. Only then will the Subcontinent have a future. The master formula is a people-to-people reconciliation between India and Pakistan by way of a start.

from possible aggression. Nukes are seen as a shield behind which Pakistan can safely keep India on the hop in Kashmir and were an insurance policy for Pakistan's national security. Four years on, a similar question arises: have the atomic weapons, with their Shaheen and Ghauri vehicles, done the job of safeguarding national security?

For India, the first result of Pakistan's counter explosions was that India degraded itself to Pakistan's level; both have stayed equated ever since. Despite much international massaging of Indian ego verbally, it is still not in the big league. The permanent seat in the UN SC is still up in the air and depends almost solely on a problematical consensus among the Big Five. Pakistanis were not overawed. Anyway, has India achieved the aims it had thereby?

Before examining India's achievements, Pakistan's motivation has a relevance. Pakistan's sole objective was to deter India. Paki-

found greatness. It invited horror at the combination of nuclear muscle with mass poverty, political instability and economic backwardness. Pakistan defaulted in its external debt liabilities in the year it gate-crashed into the nuclear club. Its economy remains precarious with IMF and World Bank administering help. Later 9/11 bestowed on it considerable largesse. The economy however remains in doldrums and the debt burden is still too high. Relief through rescheduling of debt payments has been a shot in the arm -- but only for the next few years. Pakistan was a pariah nation before that event. It is only marginally better; even the Chinese, their staunchest ally, are now wary of Pakistan's resumed special relationship with the US. The value of US friendship remains to be realistically assessed.

One aspect of Subcontinent's nuclear weapons is clear. Except for the brief interval of bus diplomacy and Lahore process, India and

attacking mode on Pakistan's borders, though happily, it has not had the courage to clinch the issue. Pakistan, despite membership of anti-Terror Coalition and resumed friendship with the US, remains in a *quid pro quo*, with no options.

Atomic capability has failed to sustain four key Pakistan policies: (i) the Taliban regime had to be left in the lurch; (ii) Islamabad has 'to do more' to stop infiltration into Indian-held Kashmir; (iii) it is strongly discouraging Islamic zealots domestically; and (iv) regime is going further in letting Americans pursue Al-Qaeda and Taliban inside Pakistan's FATA. Nuclear weapons have not saved these policies that were largely predicated on them. If India seems to have done relatively better, the reasons for that is not the panoply of its nuclear deterrent but India's own size, importance and others' needs. When, what or whom will the Bomb help?

The conclusion is irresistible that the nuclear weapons are inherently

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up the story of the so-called special

drive, Sir! And to top it, the traffic

police has been entrusted to check,

search and take appropriate action

against the criminals, if and when

found. Imagine, the same traffic

police which cannot even perform

its own specified duties properly, is

given additional powers to carry on

further!

Sometimes incidents, more

abrasive and even crueler than one

can visualize, do happen in our

society. I can cite at least fifty such

instance of excesses, but due to

paucity of time and space we have

to forego that exercise. What is

urgently needed is a solid briefing

session for the forces, who are

supposed to be so close to the

public, as the civil armed forces,

specifying to them the limits and the

realm of excess that they should not

cross at any given time; the politeness

that they should endure, and the guts

that they should exhibit at all times

to get hold of the real

criminals. This is very important,

including a clear warning that

excesses of any nature or wrongful

detention/arrests, could invite

severe punishment for the officer,

indulging in such carelessness or wilful

acts of negligence. And last but not

the least, the political control of the

police in any form should be

removed once for all and without

any delay in order to bring back the

dwindling confidence in all minds.

And this is possibly the minimum

that we can do or are expected to do