

What's holding DU re-opening?

Shadow of sessions jam lengthening

IT'S ten full days that Prof. AFM Yousuf Haider has become the acting vice-chancellor of Dhaka University. The university was shuttered down on July 28. The former vice-chancellor Prof. Anwarullah Chowdhury did it without consulting the Syndicate when the situation had become untenable for him following mid-night police swoop on female students at the Shamsunnahar Hall. In other words, it has been for straight two weeks plus another six days since the police action on July 23 -- making it altogether twenty days -- that the DU has remained non-functional.

What this has meant is that the series of examinations scheduled for July 28 had to be postponed. Judging by past experience a full month's unscheduled closure of the university, which in the present case is only ten days away, will have the extremely disquieting concomitant effect of a sessions jam of at least six months' duration. It is not just the academic examination and classroom tangles that stare as in the face, the problem centring around dormitory accommodation for the students could be coiled up, too.

Painstakingly Dhaka University had worked off the academic backlogs of yesteryears and an iota of return to the same old days cannot be countenanced anymore.

In the ten days since he came to office the acting vice-chancellor has met the Syndicate, Deans Committee and the Provost Standing Committee. He plans to meet other key bodies like the Academic Committee comprising the heads of departments and institutions and the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) to take stock of things before reopening the university. Finally, the Syndicate sits to decide on the date of re-opening the institution.

We understand there is no short-circuiting the process of consultations once embarked upon; but there certainly is scope for expediting it to reach a decision sooner than later. It would be presumptive to think that the DU authorities are awaiting the judicial probe body's report before resuming DU classes. But if that is the case then we wonder why reopening of the DU will have to be contingent upon the judicial body's report which is at least a week away.

Indigenous people's rights

These are our sacred trust

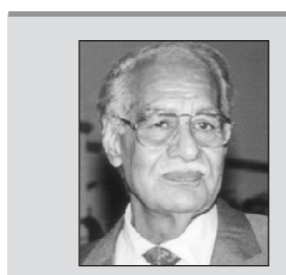
THE UN-designated international indigenous peoples' day was observed with great fervour on Friday in Bangladesh. A colourful cross-section of aborigine communities performed to the wonderful rhythm of their culture at a big rally in Dhaka that Prof Sirajul Islam inaugurated. The presence of Dr. Kamal Hossain, Santu Larma, Mani Swapan Dewan and Raja Dubashish Rao was as appropriate as that of UNDP resident chief Jorgen Lissner and Danish Embassy's charge 'd affaires Ove Larason was inspiring.

The festivities marking the montage of cultural functions brought out the essence of their rich heritage and self-identity which are a pride of our national possessions. The UN, for its part, only recently brought together representatives of indigenous peoples from all over the globe under its canopy to listen to their concerns for self-development in view of their being sidelined in their national societies. Some of the aborigine tribes going extinct has left human civilisation that much poorer, the organisers of the global conference felt and that's why they wanted to protect the aborigines from atrophy.

This year's theme has been devoted to recognising the ancestral land rights of the indigenous people. As well as having such people in our hilly region we have them on the plain-land. There must be strong safeguards against encroachment on their land and dispossessing them of their hearths and homes.

The Bangladeshi perspective naturally came under discussion with a focus around non-implementation of the CHT peace accord for the most part. It is believed that there has been an under-enumeration of the indigenous population. As it is, the census which put their total number at 12 lakh five thousand nine hundred and seventy-eight dated back to 1991. It needs to be updated to enhance their self-esteem as well as to arrive at the right kind of basis so as to provide them with all the developmental facilities they so richly deserve. We would like to see pro-active policies for their all-round advancement in the society based on full respect shown to their rights and cultural sensibilities. The ultimate test of civilised conduct lies in how the majority behaves with the minority in a society.

The trial of Mountbatten



KULDEEP NAYYAR
writes from New Delhi

THERE is a serious proposal in certain academic circles to hold a trial of Lord Mountbatten, inviting scholars from Pakistan and Great Britain to participate in it. The purpose is not to apportion blame to the last Viceroy for India's division -- something which he could not help -- but to delineate his role in the murder of more than 10 lakh people and the uprooting of another two crore. The charge against him is that the holocaust was due to Mountbatten's wrong decision to advance the date of partition from June 3, 1948 to August 15, 1947, some 10 months earlier.

I recall how Mountbatten's announcement came as a bombshell to us in Sialkot city, now part of Pakistan. There was suddenly a sense of fear and insecurity. The borders of India and Pakistan had yet to be demarcated, and the fate of the entire population of Punjab, Bengal and Assam hung in the balance. Both Hindus and Muslims began to pass anxious moments because they did not know through which area the dividing line would run.

Rumours were so strong that people were willing to believe even

the impossible. They were confused. That partition was inevitable was beginning to seep into their mind. But they were not preparing to leave their home or hearth. By advancing the date by 10 months, he had unwittingly caused the murder of one million people. I told this to Mountbatten when I interviewed him at his sprawling mansion in Broadlands near London in October 1971, for my book, *Distant Neighbours*.

could not hold the country together. "Things were slipping from my hands." The great Calcutta Killing, one year before partition, had taken place and communal tension prevailed all over. On top of it, there had been the announcement that the British were leaving. "Therefore, I myself decided to quit sooner," said Mountbatten. "This was not to the liking of Lord Attlee (then the British Prime Minister) but he had given me full powers."

riots were bound to find a vent. At least government servants should not have been allowed to move from one country to another on the basis of their religion. Both Hindus and Muslims in the military, the police and other security forces had got contaminated over the years. To expect them to be impartial and punish the guilty from their own community was to hope for the impossible, particularly when they knew that they would go scot-free in

appeared more interested in becoming the common Governor General of India and Pakistan -- an office that Jinnah did not let him have -- than dousing the fire of communalism.

The Punjab Boundary force, which Mountbatten formed on August 1, 1947, to quell the riots, did little to stop the killings of men, women and children. In its report, it said the defence of the force is: "Throughout the killing was pre-

ders between the Punjabs, Bengals and the Assam-Sylhet sector, added more fuel to the fire. Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer who chaired the commission, earned the wrath of both the Congress and the Muslim League.

After failing to get the UN to nominate the Boundary Commission's members, Jinnah had suggested to Mountbatten the name of Radcliffe, whom he had seen arguing intricate cases in London courts. Nehru had also approved his name after consulting "that sneaky fellow Krishna Menon," as Radcliffe put it during his talk with me at his flat in London in October 1971.

Hindus were expecting Lahore to be included in India and Muslims were thinking that Calcutta would go to Pakistan. Both were disappointed. Radcliffe told me that he never had the slightest doubt from the beginning that Calcutta (Jinnah had said earlier it was no use having East Bengal without Calcutta) should go to India and Lahore to Pakistan. "I had to give them Lahore because they had to have a big city in West Punjab," he said.

After deciding that the rest of the job was only to draw the lines, he did what "came to that much." He was so "rushed" that he had "no time" to go into the "details," Radcliffe said. "Even accurate district maps were not there and what material there was, was also inadequate. What could I do in one and a half months?" True, but what a way to divide the subcontinent and decide the future of millions of people. The trial of Mountbatten may assuage the feelings of people in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. They still believe that the blood of lakhs of people is on Mountbatten's head.

Kuldeep Nayyar is an eminent Indian columnist.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Looking back, however, one cannot but blame Mountbatten for doing so little to ensure protection for the minorities. He had assured Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a top leader in the Congress, "I shall not use merely the armed police, I will order the army and the air force to act and I will use tanks and aeroplanes to suppress anybody who wants to create trouble." Not a fraction of that happened. It was a free-for-all.

As if I had touched a raw nerve, he felt uncomfortable and lapsed into silence. He admitted that at least one million people died during partition. But his defence was strange: He had saved from starvation three times the numbers during the 1943 Bengal famine by giving 10 per cent of space in his ships for the transport of food grains. This was despite the opposition of Churchill, the then Prime Minister. Mountbatten was then Chief of the Allies Naval Operations in South Asia.

"Well, before Providence, I can say that the balance is in my favour," said Mountbatten. And then he added: "Wherever colonial rule has ended, bloodshed has been there. This is the price you pay."

Why did he advance the date? I asked Mountbatten. He said he

The comment by first Indian Governor General Chakravarti Rajagopalachari was: "If you had not transferred power when you did, there would have been no power to transfer." When I checked with Campbell-Johnson, Mountbatten's press secretary, the reason for advancing the date, he said that August 15 was the date when Mountbatten had heard for the first time in Churchill's room the news of the Japanese surrender, which ended the Second World War. However, the impression of some British foreign office men was that Mountbatten was in a hurry to get back to a bigger position in the British Navy.

What Mountbatten did not realise was that the pent-up feelings in the hearts of Hindus and Muslims in the wake of communal propaganda and

their "own country."

Looking back, however, one cannot but blame Mountbatten for doing so little to ensure protection for the minorities. He had assured Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a top leader in the Congress, "I shall not use merely the armed police, I will order the army and the air force to act and I will use tanks and aeroplanes to suppress anybody who wants to create trouble." Not a fraction of that happened. It was a free-for-all.

When Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founder, begged Mountbatten to "shoot Muslims" if necessary and when Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, suggested handing over the cities to the military, Mountbatten's response was feeble. It may be an uncharitable remark to make but he

medieval in its ferocity. Neither age nor sex was spared; mothers with babies in the arms were cut down, speared or shot... both sides were equally merciless."

In terms of men, the force had strength of 55,000 including Brigadier Mohammad Ayub Khan, who later became Pakistan's first martial law administrator. The force had a high proportion of British officers. In fact, this proved to be its undoing. The officers were interested in repatriation to Britain, not in an operation that might tie them down to the subcontinent for some more time. The British commander of the force, General Rees, had reportedly instructions not to get involved and to protect only "European lives."

The reports of the Boundary Commission, appointed soon after the partition, to delineate the bor-

Muslim world in the post nine-eleven era

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

IN the aftermath of September eleven events, deplored by one and all, the Islamic world appears to have been placed on the dock. Tales abound of Muslims (particularly from the Middle East and South Asia) of not being hired for jobs; refused lodgings; denied entry visas; personal life intruded upon through invisible monitoring of their daily life; bank accounts scrutinised to find out if they are acting as safe havens for terrorist funds etc. These are only some of the obvious means of harassment. Clearly there are others. A lady who has just returned from a visit to the United States (both her children live in the US) unhesitatingly declared that the American Dream was fast becoming an American Nightmare for many sub-continental people. A bearded Muslim (college teacher) was reportedly interrogated several times by the authorities and asked why he kept his beard so long and why he went to the mosque so frequently. Being a devout Muslim his reply to these questions was obvious. That he was an American citizen apparently made no difference at all. Immediately after Nine-Eleven a Sikh (mistaken to be a Muslim) was killed. Muslim women have been advised by friends to take off the hijab (scarf hiding the face) and many among those who refused to do so have been subjected to taunts and sometimes threatened with physical violence. Many Muslim Americans (including those born and bred in the US) suddenly find themselves being treated as aliens in their own country. This fear psychosis about Muslims, albeit more pronounced in the USA, has also surfaced in other Western countries. As if the entire Muslim world is seen as the "enemy" and as "followers/supporters" of Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaida group despite the universal condemnation (all Muslim countries included) of the horrific events of Nine-Eleven and the fact that at the World Trade

Centre many non-American Muslims (e.g. Bangladeshis) also lost their lives.

If terrorism is defined as violent acts aimed at achieving political ends or to force a government to act; then September eleven events were some of the most mindless acts of violence in the annals of the history of terrorism. But then one should revisit the 1998 bombings of US embassies at Nairobi and Dares Salam, allegedly masterminded by Osama bin Laden, which left more than two hundred people dead. Global response was unanimous. UN Security Council

One political analyst posed the question, "If violence as part of a freedom struggle could be interpreted as terrorism?" (Nityapriya Ghosh-To Define Terrorism). The Hamas, Laskar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Shining Path or LTTE and others would argue that violence is essential to counter state violence and violence against an oppressive state is not terrorism. Societal negation of such assertion is universal. Violence be it for overthrow of an oppressive regime or as part of freedom struggle or self-determination cannot be accepted. But then if sanctioned by

Sharon notably President Bush's call on the Palestinians to dump Yasser Arafat as their leader. Arafat responded by calling for Presidential elections and a bewildered world responded by reiterating its conviction in the democratic rights of a people to choose its own leader. The people of the world is now wondering: where will it end and when?

Professor John Esposito of Georgetown University (*Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism*) noted the causes of Islamic resurgence in "widespread feeling of failure and loss of self esteem in many Muslim

opened countries are diminishing both in amount and quality. While the number of donors remains the same the number of recipients have increased manifold. Balkan countries; the former East Europeans already enveloped in NATO and the hopefuls; the prospective candidates for the European Union have prior claim for attention of the developed world. Africa looms large on G-8's political and economic agenda. There are also other non-Muslims like East Timor and ex-foes like Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. When the time comes to allocate the tax payers money

youths from non-Muslim and Christian developing countries. But if such a situation were to continue for long then the great religious divide of the medieval ages between Islam and Christianity may be repeated. Moderate Islamic countries, particularly those of significance to the West because of oil could be destabilised with power passing into unpredictable hands requiring constant monitoring and policing. Extremist groups could multiply armed with latent popular sympathy, willing to take unimaginable risks in order to harm Western interests. Variety of doomsday scenarios may be sketched.

It is, therefore, necessary to counsel restraint upon the Western leaders. While there should be no let up on the pursuit of terrorists, pursuers have to avoid their own transformation into evil in their fight to eliminate evil. Moderation should not be sacrificed at alter of extremism. Secularism should not have to give way to fundamentalism. World leaders may consider advising their citizens to beware of the entrapment of bigotry as Thomas Jefferson had written to John Adams so long ago "Bigotry is the disease of ignorance, of morbid minds; enthusiasm of the free and buoyant". Perhaps in this still subterranean conflict of religions the Pope has a role to play as the leader of eight hundred million Catholics. He could initiate conflict resolution measures in his inimitable way and succeed where political leaders may fail. Supplementary to these efforts the world should aim at arresting the possible decline of Islamic world due to pursuit of policies based on fallacious premises and to provide it with the dignity it deserves enabling it to play its role as an equal on the global stage.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a retired Secretary to the Bangladesh Government and a former ambassador.

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sanctions of October 1999 were imposed on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan for their refusal to deliver Osama bin Laden to the American authorities or to a third country to stand trial. Early in July that year President Clinton imposed trade sanctions against the Taliban. The ban, however, did not cover agricultural commodities, medicine and medical products. Earlier decade (e.g. 1982) many terrorist activities occurred unrelated to the Middle East crisis. For example, two Turkish diplomats were killed in the US and a third in Canada; in Guatemala Brazilian ambassador and several others were held hostage; and the Polish embassy was seized in Switzerland. Violence against diplomats led to the conference on terrorism held at Madrid. The conference noted that these terrorist acts were essentially acts of political violence seeking redress of political grievances and in most cases occurred when peaceful means of resolving conflicts between the terrorists and the concerned government were either ineffective or unavailable.

UNSC or NATO then international intervention as in Iraq, Kosovo and most recently in Afghanistan in retaliation of violent acts by perpetrators, be those state sponsored (Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussain in Iraq) or group sponsored (Al-Qaida, Shining Path, LTTE, Hamas etc) would be justified even if the "collateral damages" are huge (bombing Afghanistan to stone age). Undoubtedly the departure of the Taliban, incomparably odious and repressive like the Nero, was universally welcomed by a world which lives by civilised precepts. Yet the ferocity of the American response in Afghanistan and their continuing crusade beggars the question that perhaps the Taliban would not have felt the full weight of American might if Al-Qaida had not struck in the US mainland, a repeat of the Japanese folly of Pearl Harbour. President Bush is now raring to finish the unfinished task of his father in Iraq against the advice of his Arab and European allies. One does not fail to note that the current US policy on Palestine is being scripted by Ariel

societies" and no less in the "United States" support for authoritarian Muslim rulers such as Iran's Reza Shah Pahlavi as well as its pro-Israel policy". He found fault with people who fail to discriminate between moderate Islamic groups who participate within the bounds of established and well recognised rules and the violent revolutionaries. In the process such failure leads to radicalisation of moderate Islamic groups and could induce the moderates to be introverted as they are indiscriminately inflicted with indignities which should have been reserved for the guilty. The term "fundamentalism" originated in Christianity and not in Islam. Aberrant practices in the name of Islam by few people should not be seen as quintessentially Islamic and the entire Islamic world should not be held up for ransom.

The Muslim world (particularly the poorer part) is justifiably concerned that they may be punished for the misdeeds of the delinquents. As it is aid and assistance from the developed world to the developing and the least devel-

can the governments of the Western countries be oblivious of the taxpayers' anti-Muslim sentiments, however ill-informed they may be?

Traditionally the bright and the wealthy from developing countries went for educational pilgrimage to the land of their former colonial masters. Lately the United States had become the Mecca for these students. Nine-Eleven has totally changed this scenario. Almost with casual disdain students are being denied entry visa regardless of the status of their admission in the American educational institutions. The message appears to be loud and clear: you are not needed. Such blanket rejection could be read by the Muslim youths as reflection of Western animus towards Islam. Consequent frustrations aided by evil designs could further radicalise moderate Muslim societies with the added risk of moderate leaders being painted as impotent and incompetent. The West may not care at the exclusion and alienation of the Muslim youth because the consequent void, if any, can easily be filled up by

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

"Why do we need universities?"

I write in response to Kireti's letter (August 6). Although one cannot but agree with Kireti about the sad decline of DU and much of what he/she has stated, I am afraid I must disagree with the idea that all students must embark on vocational courses in order to find a job after graduation. University education should broaden minds and not force those minds into straitjackets. Studying of Farsi literature (or for that matter, English, Sanskrit or Pali) may not determine a place in the job market but will, one hope, instill academic discipline and a thirst for learning for learning's sake.

Kireti may also be interested to know that, contrary to his belief, many British pupils continue to study Latin or Philosophy at Oxbridge Colleges and other premier universities in the United Kingdom. Latin, in particular, is acknowledged to be necessary for those who wish to study modern European languages.

The problem appears to lie with the "mindset" of many Bangladeshis. The guardians are determined to see that their offspring become doctors, engineers, computer engineers etc. I have not come across a single parent who can acknowledge that their child may be better off being a farmer, a nurse, a teacher, a paramedic, an electrician, a plumber and so on. The ones who have no option but to take up careers or jobs that are less revered are frequently treated with contempt and disdain (note the disgraceful comment made about "garment workers" by the erstwhile VC of DU). I well remember the reaction, some years ago, when I suggested that a member of my family would be better off undertaking a secretarial course instead of a BA in something or other. There was great consternation at the very thought of a young woman from a "good" family becoming a Secretary or God forbid a mere typist. She eventually went on to obtain a degree but has not gained economic independence. Never mind though - family honour has been satisfied!

Mita Chowdhury Guemsey, Channal Islands Farmgate Park

This is in reference to your report "Anything but a Park" (July 28) and my letter (July 31) on the above subject. So this Park is the responsibility of the PWD and they have miserably failed to protect this Park and allowed it to decay. The condition of the Park demands immediate intervention.

I request the PWD Minister Mirza Abbas to institute an enquiry to fix responsibility for the sad state of the Park and punish the guilty persons for negligence in duty. Meanwhile I request the environment activists like Profs Abdullah Abu Saeed and Sirajul Islam Chowdhury to come forward to save this Park which is no less important than Osmany Uddyan. **QSAhmed** Boro Bagh, Mirpur

Minister opens Sweeden Aslam's wife's hotel!

It has been widely reported in the press that on July 28 Mr Barkat Ullah Bulu, the State Minister for Commerce went as the chief guest to open 'Cafe Samrat Hotel and Restaurant', a newly established hotel at 4/A Indira Road, Dhaka. (Doesn't a minister have anything worthwhile to do than going for the opening of a roadside restaurant?). The owner of the hotel is none but Mrs Aisha Aslam, the second wife of Sweden Aslam. Sweden Aslam is one of the most dangerous terrorists of the country. For public security he is being kept in the jail since May, 1997.

It is highly unbecoming of a minister, to say the least, to attend such a ceremony where a top terrorist's wife is the hostess. When questioned by the newsmen Mr Bulu said that he did not know who exactly was the owner of the said hotel (reference the daily Prothom Alo dated August 4, 2002). What a legend of naivety! A minister of a country goes to attend a ceremony without caring to ascertain the

identity of the organiser(s) of the ceremony, while all state machinery are available to him to find out the real identity of such hosts! **Ashraf** New DOHS, Mahakhali, Dhaka

A nation so sharply divided

I refer to the two "BAF fighter purchase: not again" by Mr. F. Hussain and "August 15 holiday" by Mr. Islam. Contents of both the letters indicate the most undesirable extent and nature of dangerously navigating the future course of perhaps still one of the poorest nations of the world. Such actions on the part of both the main or major political parties as we may like to call them are only forcing the nation gradually to ever-increasing as well as unnecessary sharp divisions.

With the unique advantages of having the most homogeneous population among the countries of the region Bangladesh perhaps can also achieve economic miracle if only the leaders could adopt the right course of actions by giving up

politics of hatred and self-interests.

For the reconciliation and development of our country our leaders should look at Chile now considered the most stable economy and a flourishing democracy among still troubled Latin American countries. Chile probably went through worse tragic past and more severe/longer military rule and still trying to find a balance without dividing the nation like we are doing. Nelson Mandela's South Africa is another example we can follow for national reconciliation. But the question is do we have the wisdom and will to save our nation and the people. **Z. Rahman** USA

Vote for youngsters

The current system in Bangladesh cricket will only breed one-day batsmen. Thus we will continue to face the humiliation in Test cricket.

The only way our batsmen can cultivate a Test mentality is to change the domestic club cricket to a longer version (may be 3 day game) game. This should include all the divisions. Financially we may

not be able to do it right away. So our Bangladesh Cricket Board can gradually implement it. Create a five-year plan (budget also).

1. First two years make the game to 60 overs.

2. Third and fourth years make it a two-day game (one innings).

3. Fifth year three-day game (two-innings). Three foreign players should be allowed and only two can play at a time.

4. There has to be good facilities for the players. (Playing fields, weight rooms, smart scheduling-not on rainy seasons when matches are washed out, enough rest). Given the opportunity our players will surely shine.

These should be stepping-stones to a glorious history. BCB should have a clear vision and mission. They should clearly focus on the national team's strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. All the members and involved groups should make sure that the mission is fulfilled with utmost sincerity. Rather than forcefully bringing in new younger players, pressuring them to perform and perform well, if

our system can create good players, automatically we will be competitive no matter who is in the national team. Young or old they will surely be battle tested. **Mijanul Akbar** On e-mail

Why students are needed in political movements

I went through the article of Syed Kamaluddin Ahmed where he was pursuing his advocacy against the proposed ban on student politics. Well, we still remember the glorious days of student politics, which helped our political leaders to strengthen their movements. My question is somewhat different. Why do our political leaders need students beside them in their movements? And in a broad sense, why should they rely on movements like rallies, procession, strikes and hartals where the students will be on the frontline? **Nazmul** Japan