

The caretaker government in an apprehensive polity



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

By all accounts and taking into view the highly charged circumstances of the immediate past week...

According to 'The Daily Star' report this adviser came down heavily on some political parties for setting a deadline for the advisers...

STRAIGHT LINE
We have to reconcile with the reality that the caretaker system is a scathing indictment on the unreliability of our political classes and the responsibility, it appears, now devolves on the much-maligned bureaucracy to lift the nation out of the all-encompassing morass.

inantly executive nature and thus subjected to full public comments and criticisms. Interestingly, this gentleman is perhaps oblivious of the fact that the 14-party combine has publicly stated that they would watch the activities of the President-cum-chief adviser to be sure of the latter's neutrality...

certified to the efficiency and neutrality of the council of advisers and has advised everybody to render assistance to them even before the latter body has started to work.

lect the demonstration of a women's activist group in front of Bangobhavan clamouring for one-third portfolios in the council of advisers hours before the swearing in ceremony.

Government shall give to the Election Commission all possible aid and assistance that may be required for holding the general election of members of Parliament peacefully, fairly and impartially."

Chief Adviser's office, Armed Forces Division, Cabinet Division, Election Commission Secretariat, NGO Affairs Bureau, Defence Ministry, Establishment Ministry, Bangladesh Public Service Commission and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Education.

forthrightly pointed out by Lt. General (Retd) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury in his first reaction to waiting newsmen after the swearing-in ceremony.

that our President is now perhaps uncomfortably wearing two hats. He is head of the government and head of the State. He is the functioning executive and also the superintending authority.

Voting with their feet

Why is it that we insist on employing children in the first place? Even if their impoverished families see a short-term gain in their meagre salary, the long-term advantages of education would outweigh these pittances hugely.

ANDREW MORRIS

POWERFUL things, words. They have the potential to create beauty, to inspire, to liberate and to conjure up lasting monuments to the best that humans can achieve.

you look a little further into the depths of this fine declaration you find the following. Article 19: States parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse.

or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Now, having applauded their muscularity and clarity, and having felt a warm glow that Bangladesh was an early signatory to the convention, ask yourself one simple question.

still unfolding. But before comfortably assuring ourselves that our own treatment of the children who work for us is a far cry from this, let's consider the less sensational stories: the banal, mundane tales that could be playing out, for example, in our own homes.

Perhaps this was in recognition of the fact that it had taken them six months to find Ritu, after a long gap without anyone to help. But here too, beneath the benign surface, things were not what they seemed. Ritu had already, two months into her new 'job,' declared her intention to leave.

place? Even if their impoverished families see a short-term gain in their meagre salary, the long-term advantages of education would outweigh these pittances hugely. Is it just that we as employers want cheap labour? Or have we simply failed to grasp yet what it really means to talk of children's rights?



ment. However, as long as they offer the same conditions, I suspect their search will be fruitless. Perhaps this is an opportune moment then to recognize that the convention Bangladesh signed up to was designed to have real teeth, and that it is simply unacceptable to employ children domestically in this way.

day. Surely it is time to recognize that this kind of intensive work deserves adequate compensation. It seems that the people who have been silently working for us for so long have already reached that conclusion without our help.

Population: Where is it heading to?

A great deal of population momentum is coming from the low income families, such as poor, ultra poor and other lower income groups who together comprise 50 percent of the society. They are the ones who have very little access to education beyond primary, health care services and other benefits which government and society usually offer to the individuals.

DR M A MABUD

WHAT is the most pressing problem in Bangladesh today? The answer, unhesitatingly given in one breath is: political unrest, corruption and violence.

trivial -- number of births was close to the number of deaths and resultant increase of population was less than one percent. Even in 1901, population census could report only 21.2 million people. Malaria, plague, typhoid, small pox and other deadly diseases took some 40/42 lives per 1000 population per annum.

of age. More young adults mean more births. Birth rate may decline further through programmatic means reinforced by non-family planning measures like female education, micro credit facilities for women, skill training, use of media etc.

while the working age population (15-64 years) will increase up to 155 million (as against 85 million now), aggravating further the strained labour market; and number of elderly population (i.e. 65 year+) shall be 29.8 million (as against 5.8 million now requiring old age supports and medical care from which no responsible government can get away).

while the working age population (15-64 years) will increase up to 155 million (as against 85 million now), aggravating further the strained labour market; and number of elderly population (i.e. 65 year+) shall be 29.8 million (as against 5.8 million now requiring old age supports and medical care from which no responsible government can get away).

years (i.e. number of births will be equal to number of deaths and resultant growth rate is zero). In medium variant projection, status of stationary population in Bangladesh is likely to be achieved around 2086 and thereafter, number of deaths will exceed number of births i.e. minus growth rate will begin which will eventually decelerate the country's population as is the case with Russia, Japan and some of the European countries now.

methods of contraception; even traditional methods help plan family size as in some countries. But for this to happen, education, use of media, arousing people's consciousness and democratisation of social and political institutions at all levels to allow the hitherto neglected people to participate and involve themselves in all kinds of state sponsored development works are essential. If we can create an enabling environment through such processes and other civilized means, demographic momentum effect can be significantly reduced and the timing for population stabilisation may be advanced a few years earlier.

Dr M A Mabud, a social scientist and demographer is professor of Public Health at North South University, Dhaka.

