POINT *COUNTERPOINT

Power and authority of EC and role of CTG | Among the electricity and

Removing some misconceptions

DR. ALI ASGAR

uch of the present problem that has inflicted us and is perceived as a national crisis, originates from misconception and misinterpretation of the real situation. To overcome the present deadlock, we need to take a hard look at the crux of the problem.

I would first of all like to make a distinction between a problem and a crises. In my opinion, a situation gives rise to a crisis only when it is beyond comprehension and control and of which no rational solution appears to exist. A situation which is not beyond solution and there exists rational methods to overcome it, however hard that may be, is to be designated as a problem rather than a crisis. Let me, therefore begin by indicating that many aspects of the present situation are wrongly or intentionally painted as negative and sheer hopeless, which ,in fact , are

positive expression of democratic spirit. The present unrest of general public, their coming out in the street and protesting against any possible attempt or design to jeopardise a free and fair election should be hailed rather than be considered as a crisis by any person who sincerely believes in democracy. This is because the most important element of democracy is the conscious participation of the people and expression of their concern in matters related to the running of the country. This of course, involves administration, education, long term economic activity, justice, human rights, freedom of individuals, and all that are related to the welfare of the

Common people may not have the direct access to power but the embodiment of their power and the right to reflect their will and their judgement is to be sought in the general election. Election is a transient phenomenon but its effect is long lasting. It is like a Big Bang in the creation of the universe.

Democracy, in my opinion, is like a growing tree. It has its inner dead wood in its trunk as it has its components as also its flexible, growing, and living bark, branches and leaves. The dead wood of the trunk is important to keep the tree standing but it is the living, dynamic leaves and branches of the tree which connect it with the outer world through exchange of energy and the chemical elements as

food for growth. It has always been the practice in that past that the government in power conducted the election who were elected through partisanship. However, it is very unfortunate that the unfair practices of the past government snatched away the faith of the people in the conventional electoral process. It was under such circumstances that the concept of care taker government came into existence. The caretaker government is thus a result of the loss of confidence in the government, the responsibility of which lies entirely with the government in question which through their foul play shattered the old system of election.

Caretaker government is an invention to counter the foul play of

the party in power. Naturally, the

used to be carried out under the party based government is no longer tenable. I am talking about the spirit and the principle of the caretaker government which is solely intended to ensure a free and fair election. The caretaker government is assumed to be much more free of party influence than even the election commission which stands the possibility of being influenced or engineered by the party in power that selected them

In reality, whether that has happened or not is to be judged by the people. Here people are supreme. Confidence and faith is an endowment which has to be earned by persons in power and cannot be claimed by merely showing the official position. If a university professor or a reelected will overlook all the mistakes and misdeeds of the last tenure. On the other hand, if the opposition comes back to power they might victimise the opposition or be blamed of doing so.

We often hear loud voices expressing concern for the protection of the constitution while the main concern should have been the other way round as to why in spite of our constitution the democratic rights are in danger. In fact, no constitution works on its own unless people with honesty and integrity work behind it. Constitution is far more than a piece of governmental engineering and is rather an expression of our national consensus on political issues by people not only of the past but also of

People have not leased their democratic rights to any one, not to the election commission, nor to the caretaker government. In fact, there is no proxying in democracy, no discontinuity in its temporal flow, and therefore, no one for a moment can snatch away the rights of the people and captivate them, so long they maintain the courage to oppose.

emergence of the concept of caretaker government carries with it the bad memory of that past government who destroyed the confidence in the government. It is to be remembered and comprehended that the degraded the honour and prestige independence, the authority, and the long associated to these professions. power that were vested in the election commission during the period when party in power conducted the election was guided by the principle that the government should have as less freedom as possible in the affairs of conducting the election. But with the failure of the past party based government to hold a fair election in spite of all the constitutional rights and privileges given to the election commission, it was proved that election commission just like the government, lost the confidence of the voters in respect in their ability to conduct a free and fair

The emergence of the caretaker government, therefore, has its origin in the total lack of confidence in the system as a whole. The important point to note is that the constitutional power and independence given to the election commission when the election supreme court judge has failed to earn that confidence, or should I say. have failed to maintain their faith people usually attributed to these professions, the fault does not lie with the people but on those who have

Another important point to note is that the chief adviser of the caretaker government should not think of himself as a prime minister democratically elected. Neither should he choose the other advisers, in fact, all the advisers are equally responsible in representing the general public to ensure free and fair election. It is not the task of the caretaker government to only help the election commission as often is claimed by some members of some political parties. The caretaker government also have the freedom to scrutinise, on behalf of the people, the performance of the last government because they are likely to be most unbiased. This is a vantage point to look at things and act in quite a different way than a party government because the caretaker government belongs to all or to none.

There is always a risk or a possibility

that if the party that was in power is

those who are living now and are facing the challenge with open eyes and courage

Constitution is not to be used as a shield for the protection of jobs of some officials whose task was to protect the democratic right of the people to express their wills through voting but have failed to do so by bad intention or inefficiency. Preserving the iobs of such people occupying so called constitutional posts is not the purpose of the constitution but to uphold the whole democratic system with its functionality and spirit.

People have not leased their democratic rights to any one, not to the election commission, nor to the caretaker government. In fact, there is no proxying in democracy, no discontinuity in its temporal flow, and therefore, no one for a moment can snatch away the rights of the people and captivate them, so long they maintain the courage to

Bangladesh, in that sense, is not in a bad shape but is rather boiling with the spirit of democratic demand. One may try to denounce it as chaos but it is in a creative chaotic environment that innovations take place. When water boils, it transforms into vapour

from its whole body. It is a cooperative phenomenon, a phase of transition not to be mistaken as mere disorder.

I consider the present uprise of the people, their agitation for a fair and free election as a positive sign of democracy. because I have compared this situation with what I have seen in England on two occasions. I had the opportunity of witnessing two general elections there. Once when I was a Ph.D. student and again when I was there as Commonwealth Staff Fellow. I was shocked to observe that just because the weather was good, people, many of them, chose to go and enjoy holiday away from home than to go to the polls to cast their votes.

Their indifference, when compared with the sacrifice of our people for a free and fair election makes me optimistic, and one can surely see that this country is more prepared for democracy now than ever before and more ready than many other coun-

To appreciate this, we have to remember that democracy is possible only when people have capacity for justice and value it above personal and selfish ends. And also democracy is necessary because individuals, however high in their social position, have inclination for injustice and cannot be relied upon, leaving the people behind.

if you have a rotten rat in your bag, you have to throw it away. Use of artificial scent or handkerchief on your nose is no solution. Again, when the water boils in a kettle, don't keep the flame on and only tighten the lid, it will lead to an explosion. The thing to do is to remove the cause of it. It is no accident that steam chambers often burst; it is guided by simple thermodynamic law of minimising the free energy of the system. Social forces have to be recognised in the same way and the expressions of public discontent have to be recognised as signals for social uprise guided by inevitable social laws. It is important that we interpret the signals and act wisely before it is too late. One thing is for sure, one cannot defy the laws - physical or social - but take only one of the solutions that are permitted by nature.

Prof. Dr. Ali Asgar is Head, Dept. of Medical Physics & Bio Medical Engineering, Gond

computer engineers

plenary session and the conference

presentations will attract the atten-

telecommunication, bio-medical

engineering, industrial automation

and IT applications in all sectors. This

conference may initiate policy dia-

logues for proper planning and

implementation of policies so that we

can harvest the fruits of the feats of

contributing a lot and serving effi-

ciently in different parts of the world.

They can contribute significantly to

the national development. As far as I

know, BUET is free from corruption

and play an important role in solving

present power crisis, developing

electronic industries, and providing

Electricity has come to the use of

mankind as it has been more envi-

ronment friendly, safe and controlla-

ble source of energy, having advan-

tage of high conversion efficiency.

Today modern products like TV,

fridge, computers and many more

are not environment friendly. These

products at the end of their life cycle

are becoming environmental haz-

ards like automobiles and steel

products. For ostensible purpose of

improving and upgrading their

internet and other systems the

computer companies are producing

The graduates of BUET are

We are experiencing a boom in

tion of our policy makers.

these engineering.

consultancy services.



MUHAMMAD HABIBUR RAHMAN

N the sixteenth century when the Europeans came to Asia the conditions of the two continents were not that dissimilar. At that time Bengal was a prosperous though mismanaged country. It was not Kissinger's bottomless basket. On the contrary it was bottomless abyss for the European merchants who could not fill with their gold and silver for the Bengal goods.

Inspite of great strides in astronomy, mathematics and medicine the South Asians did not show their keen eagerness to know about of the outer world and the matter. With regard to China Professor Fung Yu Lan said the Chinese loved the certainty of perception, not that of conception, and therefore they would not, and did not, translate their concrete vision into the form of

In the early period of Soviet Union, the visionary leader Lenin used to say, "Soviet System plus Electricity is equal to Socialism". Mao Tse-tung, the great Chinese leader, made disastrous experiments with his Great Leap Forward (1958). Cultural Revolution and Anti-Rightist Campaign but took special care to protect the scientists. particularly those who returned from Europe and America, Nuclear and rocket scientists were treated extra well and given privileges superior even to those enjoyed.

The Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering of BUET together with technical cosponsorship of IEEE Bangladesh section, is organising the International Conference on Electrical and Computer Engineering (ICECE) on a regular basis with a view to exchanging ideas of modern developments in major areas of electrical and computer engineering. I believe that this will give the scientific and engineering communities of our country, opportunities to exchange ideas and open up cooperation and collaboration with their counterparts that still could be used are turned from abroad who participated in this obsolete. A computer may look year's conference (19 December small but as discussed it may be a great hazard. The nation needs a solution to

In 1930, talking to Albert Einstein in Germany

Tagore told him, "This world is a human world -- the

scientific view of its is also that of a scientific man."

Einstein did not agree. These days many

distinguished scientists are veering to that view.

Ilya Priogogine, a Noble laureate in chemistry, said

in 1984: 'Curiously enough, the present evolution

of science is running in the direction stated by the

For avoiding the environmental our current power crisis and I nazard and protecting the ecobelieve this conference can be a system we shall have to start diagood forum to discuss the causes of logue for imposing regulations. the crisis and find out remedies to codes, conducts and ethics. Only the problem. I am happy to know deliberations and documentation that, just after the opening of the will not solve our present and foreconference, there happened to be a seeable problems. It must also be plenary session to discuss about the ensured that we do implement the possible solutions of our acute guidelines that we talk about. power crisis. I expect the suggestions put forward from both the

Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian to receive Noble Prize for literature was not a scientist by training. He was an avid student of science. He wrote the Biswa Parichoy understanding the universe. Tagore insisted that science must in its application to society serve society, and not vice verse. In 1930, talking to Albert Einstein in Germany he told him. "This world is a human world -- the scientific view of its is also that of a scientific man. Einstein did not agree. These days many distinguished scientists are veering to that view.

Ilya Priogogine, a Noble laureate in chemistry, said in 1984: 'Curiously enough, the present evolution of science is running in the direction stated by the great Indian poet.' But it is a long way. Hamelink has correctly observed. "As with so many other 'global' events, if there is a global information revolution, the majority of the world's revolutions has not received an invitation.

For electrical and computer engineers a great challenge is waiting. By conjuring up cheap solar energy they may meet the challenge half way and that would be a great

Muhammad Habibur Rahman is former Chie Justice and head of caretaker government. The article is based on his speech as chief guest at the

Kashmir sans two-nation theory



KULDIP NAYAR writes from New Delhi

WAS at Lahore when President General Pervez Musharraf's proposal on Kashmir was carried by the Pakistan media. His remark that they never had any territorial claim on Kashmir was a jolt for religious and political parties, although most of the civil society was indifferent. What the proposal meant was that the K-word in Pakistan never stood for Kashmir nor did the argument that it was the unresolved agenda of partition. (Pakistan Foreign Office confirmed that "Pakistan does not claim Kashmir.")

Musharraf's formulation was a bolt from the blue because both the points had dominated the discussions in Pakistan practically from the time it came into existence. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, described Kashmir as a "jugular vein." Yet, Musharraf cannot be faulted because he has, contrary to general impression, retrieved the twonation theory in its original form, that is, Hindus and Muslims are two separate nations. Jinnah had, however, reinterpreted the two-nation theory after partition to mean that Pakistanis and the Indians constituted two different nations, not Muslims and Hindus. "You may belong to any religion or caste or creed. That has nothing to do with the business of the state," he had said. He

had even introduced the joint electorate, hitherto separate because of the

British intention to divide and rule. Following the two-nation thesis, Musharraf has suggested Kashmir to be separated from Jammu and Ladakh. His words are: "Let us first define Kashmir." He may have in mind the Chenab as the Kashmir's boundary on the one side and Doda of the Jammu region on the other. Whatever the boundary, Musharrat is talking about the valley when it comes to Kashmir. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has three regions _ the valley, Ladakh and

survive at Delhi if it agrees to divide the state religion-wise. The ethos of pluralism, India's pride possession during the independence struggle, falls flat. The country may even lose democracy if it ceases to be secular. Whatever the BJP's criticism at present, the party may come to accept Musharraf's formulation since it strengthens its ideology of Hindutva. It can go to town to propagate that if the Muslims in the valley can separate themselves after being part of India for 60 years, where is the guarantee that Indian Muslims would not do so when given the choice? The society

told Badal to take Jammu and Ladakh and give the valley to Pakistan. The latter replied he was too small to solve big questions like

The discussion would have ended there and then but I picked up the thread. I said: Sahahbaz Sahib, you could settle the Kashmir in any way you like but not on the basis of religion. I told him that I came from Sialkot and saw what happened to the minorities on both sides after partition which was done on religious lines. One million people were killed and 20 million uprooted. We in



A possible amicable solution is that India give all subjects to the state of Jammu and Kashmir except Foreign Affairs. Defence and Communications. Pakistan should do likewise in Kashmir and the northern areas on its side. The line of control should be made soft so that the border becomes irrelevant. The armed forces on both sides should withdraw first to the barracks and then to their own country to demilitarise the entire area.

Jammu. The valley has a preponderant majority of Muslims, roughly 95 per cent. If it is cut off from the state, Jammu and Ladakh would comprise the state. The first has the Hindu majority and the

The flaw in Musharraf's proposal is that it divides the state of Jammu and Kashmir on the basis of religion. He does not have to say that he has based his proposal on the basis of religion. If and when the valley is separated from Jammu and Ladakh, it will come to that. This may not be acceptable to India because, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said, he cannot entertain any division on the basis of religion. He is justified in saying so because no government of any political party can would be polarised, exposing Muslims to untold sufferings.

Secular parties cannot touch the proposal even with a bargepole. Their entire work of years will be nullified The communists did an irreparable damage to themselves when they supported partition. They had not been forgiven even after repeated apologies. Any compromise which has even a tinge of communalism will destroy the very base of secular parties. They should wake up now, not after the back channels finalise the deal.

I recall that a proposal on the lines of Musharraf's was offered to Prakash Singh Badal when he visited Pakistan along with Atal Behari Vaipavee by bus. At breakfast. then chief minister of Pakistan's Punjab India could not afford to face another partition. Nor would we be able to save pluralism which was already under pressure from communal forces. Musharraf may think that his proposal was a clever way to resurrect the twonation theory. But he should recall belonging to a family which migrated from Delhi the repercussions of a division. It would not only separate the Kashmiri Muslims from non-Muslims in Jammu and Ladakh, but go beyond the state and endanger India's integrity.

Manmohan Singh has welcomed Musharraf's proposal in a general way. It is meant to assure him that India is keen to normalise relations with Pakistan. This was necessary because the impression in that country

was that Musharraf was bending backwards to make up with New Delh which was not acknowledging any of his proposals.

People in the valley may be happy over Musharraf's proposal, although left to themselves they would like to have an independent state which Pakistan had rejected firmly. Still by stating that Pakistan had no territorial claim over Kashmir, Musharraf has strengthened the case of the valley for self-rule. In a way, he has thrown down the gauntlet to India. Whether it picks up the gauntlet or not is yet to be seen. but a new situation has been created. Foreign Minister Pranab Mukaherjee may have some answer when he visits Pakistan before the summit meeting between Manmohan Singh and Musharrafat Islamabad.

A possible amicable solution is that ndia give all subjects to the state of Jammu and Kashmir except Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. Pakistan should do likewise in Kashmir and the northern areas on its side. The line of control should be made soft so that the border becomes irrelevant. The armed forces on both sides should withdraw first to the barracks and then to their own country to demilitarise the entire area. The hardcore Pakistanis who demand Kashmir's integration with their country are willing to accept this or similar solution provided another choice is given to the Kashmiris after 10 years to have another look at the settlement. Indians may be opposed to this. The argument to win them over is that Kashmir will be solved once and for all if they accept the state's autonomy within India and soft borders.

Any proviso for subsequent revision will make them reject the proposal

Kuldip Nayar is an eminent Indian columnist

The Hajj: One of the five pillars of Islam

T the very outset I would like to state that it is only Islam which gives millions and millions of its followers from all over the world a golden opportunity to meet at a particular place during the holy lunar month of Zilhajj and supplicate Most Gracious and Merciful Allah in one voice for forgiveness of their sins and also for their good and welfare in this mundane world and in the Hereafter. It is obligatory on the part of every adult and eligible Muslim to perform Hajj at least once in his life time. The intending pilgrim must have enough money for going to Saudi Arabia and coming back after per-

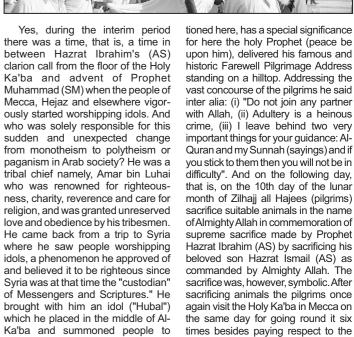
In this context it would be worthwhile to refer to Ayat (Verse) 26 and 27 of Sura (Chapter) Hajj of the Quran wherein Allah "Rabbul Alameen" (Lord of the worlds)

Ayat: 26 "Bechold! We gave the site, to Ibrahim, of the (Sacred) House, (saying) associate not anything (in worship) with Me, and sanctify of my House for those who compass it round or stand up, or prostrate themselves (there in prayer)."

Ayat: 27 "And proclaim the pilgrimage among men: They will come to Three on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways.

So, as enjoined by Almighty Allah in the aforesaid Ayat 27 of the Quran people came to the Sacred House (the Holy Ka'ba) from every quarter near and far "on account of temporal and spiritual benefits" as aptly observed by a world renowned commentator and translator of the Holy Quran Allama Abdullah

After bestowal of Prophethood the holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) started preaching and propounding his religion Islam initially among the idolaters or polytheists of Mecca and he did so for full 22 years (610-632 AD), and as a result people accepted monotheism and discarded "Shirq" (partnership with Allah). Now, a question may reasonably arise that if the people in Mecca particularly the people living around Almighty Allah's Sacred House (Al-Ka'ba) responded to Hazrat Ibrahim's clarion call as clearly indicated in the aforesaid Quranic Ayat and discarded association of anything (in worship) with Allah, then how and when they switched over again to polytheism and started to associate partners with Almighty Allah?



About the institution of Hajj it may be further stated that right form the departure from his home town a pilgrim has to pass through certain very important stages and formalities before he reaches the Holy Ka'ba in Mecca and other concerned holy places in Saudi Arabia including the holy city of Medina. Wearing a special unsown loose dress called "Ehram" and after shaving his head the pilgrim reaches the Holy Ka'ba which he circumambulates six times. On the 9th day of the lunar month of Zilhajj all the pilgrims assemble in the vast plain of Arafah and there they offer their "Zohar" (mid-day) and "Asar" (afternoon) prayers together and while praying they supplicate Merciful and Benian Allah to forgive their sins.

Another important aspect of Haji is that since Muslims from all over the world assemble in the holy city of Mecca as pilgrims it gives them a unique opportunity to exchange their views and discuss their problems with a view to finding solution. Since Hajj is one of the (five)

to their respective homes.

Sacred Mosque of the holy Prophet

(Masjid-e-Nabobi) and his holy grave

("Rowza Mubarak") before they return

strong pillars ("Rokons") on which the grand edifice of Islam stands it is hoped all eligible and adult Muslims in Bangladesh will perform Hajj during this holy lunar month of Zilhajj with due solemnity and fervour.

Kazi Aulad Hossain is a former Govt high official. Arafah, it may be specially men-

Fighting poverty with micro-credit

SHAILA PARVEEN

, along with many proud citizens of Bangladesh, watched the timestilling moment on television as micro-credit 'guru' Professor Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, received the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006 at Oslo City Hall. The Grameen Bank, which shared the award, has enabled millions of rural people, specially the poor women, to free themselves from the vicious circle of poverty through proper utilisation of micro-credit Besides the Grameen Bank, several leading non-government organisations in Bangladesh have been making significant contributions in creating socio-economic development from the grassroots level. wonder what are the factors that make small collateral-free loans an

effective weapon against poverty. That is why, my recent visit to the microfinance programmes of BRAC turned to be a fact-finding tour.

Through my visit I have seen that mutual trust is one of the basic factors that make a microfinance programme successful. A poor borrower, first of realises that the organisation lending money without any collateral has trusted her or him as a 'bankable' person. This has inspired her or him to repay this 'trust' through hard work and proper utilisation of the loan.

Village organisations which consist of poor, landless women are at the core of microfinance programme. Each village organisation includes eight to nine groups and each group consists of five members including the group leader. All members of a village organisation attend a meeting each week. The weekly meetings are not mere the place where members borrow without

paving any collateral and borrowers repay their loans in 46 weekly instalments. In fact, the weekly meetings invigorate the sense of discipline, participation and accountability required for making a microfinance programme effective.

At the beginning of each meeting the borrowers take an oath of improving their social, educational and hygienic conditions. Some of these tobe-achieved goals are family planning, no-dowry, education for children, cultivating kitchen garden and eating vegetables, drinking safe water and using sanitary latrine.

One of the special features of this microfinance programme is that it makes the borrowers develop a habit of saving. That is why, in addition to paying weekly instalments, each borrower is required to give a certain minimum amount of money to be saved. The leader of each group

keeps the accounts of money borrowed, repaid and saved. The borrowers also receive a certain percent of interest on their savings. Besides granting loans the organi-

sation provides training and support to the borrowers for reaping maximum benefits of their engagement in different productive activities. For example, if a borrower aims at poultry farming, the organisation will train her to breed the birds properly and to vaccinate the chicks timely. It also provides support through backward linkages (such as providing quality day-old chicks) and forward linkages (such as linking the rural vegetable producers with new markets).

Female borrowers receive multifarious facilities provided by BRAC. One female member of each village organisation is trained to be a shastho sebika' (health worker). At each weekly meeting borrowers car

have an interactive discussion about health problems with the 'shastho sebika. Besides, each borrower can receive Tk 100 - Tk 200 worth of medical treatment free of cost. Each borrower is encouraged to plant trees and provided with two plants free of cost. A female borrower who is also a VGD (Vulnerable Group Development) card holder gets 30 kilograms of rice per month provided by the organisation. By providing collateral-free loans,

training and support to the marginalised poor, mainly women in the rural areas, the microfinance programme is boosting their inner confidence, making them engaged in incomegenerating activities and empowering them to improve their standard of

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