

The Code of Conduct

All the political parties, contesting the February parliamentary election, have taken a significant step by agreeing to a 12-point draft Code of Conduct which is designed to help in the holding of a free and fair polls. Credit goes to the Election Commission for bringing together the senior representatives of the parties on Thursday and persuading them to adopt the draft. The move which will be welcomed by people in all walks of life should, we hope, raise the credibility and strengthen the commitment of all political parties, especially the major ones, in relation to the forthcoming election. Since the Code adopted on Thursday is only a draft, it is assumed that the document will now be taken up for a detailed discussion. We hope that such a deliberation will be short and that the Code will be finally approved in the shortest possible time.

As reported yesterday, the 12-point draft covers a fairly wide ground, although, one may say, some of the suggested provisions are indeed a little too general and are likely to be open to divergent interpretations. For instance, one provision lays down that "Every one must respect others' democratic rights", while another says, "Any attempt to buy votes in any form will be prevented." Several other provisions incorporated in the draft also appear to be more general guidelines than specific commitments. Perhaps they will be enlarged when the draft is finalised and adopted. Here, many experts will be wondering if an all-party coordination council, as proposed in the draft, will be effective enough to settle any dispute that may arise during the campaign. Perhaps not. But, then, one would assume that any dispute that cannot be resolved by the proposed Council will automatically go before the Election Commission for arbitration.

Here, let us hasten to point out that a mere formal adoption of the Code of Conduct by all political parties would not be enough to ensure that election at all different stages, from the campaign to the polling, will be free and fair, and totally free from intimidations and pressures. Again, as many people say in private, the political parties would only give lip service to any code of conduct and would find all dubious ways of violating it. It is for the political parties to disprove this notion. In this context, it is important that leaders of the parties — and indeed the Election Commission — take immediate steps to circulate and explain the Code at the grassroot level, impressing upon all political workers, even at the village level, the supreme importance of holding a free and fair polls, thus helping the country to make the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in a credible manner.

The adoption and the observance of the Code of Conduct should also produce a salutary effect on the election campaign as a whole. If the candidates and their supporters refrain from personal attacks on their rivals, thus reducing the mud slinging to the minimum — the campaign may well become somewhat more issue-oriented than we had seen in the past. In other words, candidates should now feel obliged to focus their attention on their manifestoes and programmes and explain their parties' positions on problems and challenges facing our country, instead of indulging in hollow rhetoric and personal accusations. We see this as an essential part of the political education not only for candidates of different parties but also for the entire electorate, which has never received much attention in this country. It is a pity that we have taken so long in getting started on this exercise. Let us hope, it is not too late yet to use the election for helping our people understand what a democratic system is all about.

Boost For Theatre Movement

We would like to pay tribute to our theatre movement for its commitment to and sustained struggle for the social and cultural advancement of our people. A product of our liberation war, the theatre activists, through their "peoples theatres", street corner performances and commercial staging of serious plays made laudable contribution in raising public consciousness and political awareness against autocratic rule and the overall degeneration of our values that we sadly witnessed during the last decade.

Given its commitment to mass cultural advancement, it is only natural that no official assistance has been extended to the theatre movement so far. Well, time has changed, or at least we would like to think that it has. We should not put off any longer the genuine demand of our theatre activists and lovers for a permanent stage with modern technical facilities. Side by side we also strongly support the demand for the establishment of a theatre academy which will provide opportunities for research and training for our talented performers. Assistance for taking our plays abroad should also be extended. Exchange programmes with theatre groups of SAARC, Southeast Asian and other countries should also be encouraged. Help from international professional bodies and UNESCO can be sought in this effort.

We draw the attention of our cultural ministry and also of the private sector for the realisation of the above demands. In many countries a healthy government and private sector cooperation exists in promoting the arts. As the commercial viability of a permanent stage is well established, a joint government and private cooperation should not be too difficult to bring about. Also, the wisdom of setting up a theatre academy should not be seen from the narrow perspective of improving the quality of our theatre only but also that of our TV dramas and of the cinema.

We invite urgent actions from government, the theatre movement and the private sector to give this necessary boost to our theatre movement.

The Gulf war is one of the most significant military conflicts of modern times in which Arab has faced Arab. Experts believe the political order of the Middle East will be turned upside down, regardless of the outcome of the war.

The direct involvement of Saudi, Syrian, Moroccan, Kuwaiti and Gulf-state forces in the US-dominated coalition confronting Saddam Hussein is unlike anything seen before in the Arab world.

Said Eberhard Kienle, a lecturer in Middle East Politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London: "I'm not very confident that the defeat of Iraq would be positive for political life in many of these countries."

The attack against Iraq now will have negative repercussions on the stability of other Arab regimes. In Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia there are numerous groups of people who are sided with Saddam and it's hard to say if these governments can rely on their internal repression apparatus. It may take a long time to secure the stability of these regimes."

Added Roger Owen, a lecturer in Middle East Economics at Oxford University: "It matters so much whether it's a long war or a short war...it could de-legitimise the Saudi, Egyptian and Syrian rulers."

Owen said the current confrontation is vastly different from other occasions when Arabs have been matched against each other. "I think the times are different, the number of issues involved are vastly different. The think the

times are different. The question is whether that leads to an outcome that causes other things to happen. Numerous serious confrontations between Arab states have taken place since the end of the Ottoman empire, the League of Nations mandates and the creation of Israel — an era during which the region changed dramatically in a few decades. Most of the intra Arab

Saddam Makes his Mark on the Arab History Books

by Allan Thompson

Though there is a long history of conflict within the Arab world, the Gulf war is likely to mark a turning point in Arab history. It is not so much a question of whether Iraq is defeated, but rather one of the nature of the political fallout from the war.

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disputes to lead to military conflict since then have involved border disputes and struggles for regional superiority. One of the most famous — particularly in light of current events — was the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, starting in 1961, over the sovereignty of Kuwait and its hold on the islands of Warba and Bubiyan in the northern Gulf.

On June 25, 1961, the Iraqi leader General Kassem made a claim of sovereignty over the newly independent Kuwait, saying that Iraq had inherited Kuwait from the Ottoman empire, which ruled it as part of the province of Basra. Kassem moved troops to the Kuwaiti border, but eventually backed down after British troops, and later an Arab League force, came on the scene.

Iraq withdrew its representatives from all countries that recognized Kuwait. Two years later, the overthrow of Kassem eased frictions between Iraq and Kuwait. Iraq recognized its neighbour, but ownership of the islands and the Rumaila oilfield were never clear.

Iraq pressed the matter again in 1973 when its troops seized a Kuwaiti border post but was forced to withdraw because of widespread Arab disapproval. Iraq's third attempt to assert control of Kuwait is quickly becoming part of history as well.

There were other disputes leading to conflict. From 1962 to 1967, Nasser's Egypt and Saudi Arabia of King Faisal were at loggerheads over the change of government in Yemen. Loyalist tribes supporting the old regime of

Iman Ahmad had the support of Saudi Arabia, while Egypt sent more than 50,000 troops to Yemen to assist republicans.

Only in 1967, when the President and the King agreed to disengage themselves from the civil war in Yemen, did Egyptian troops withdraw.

After Algerian independence in 1962, a Moroccan claim to territory containing Gara Djebilet iron ore deposits, south of the Oued Draa, erupted into a brief armed conflict in 1963. Relations were not regulated until 1969 and Morocco renounced the claim in 1972.

Meantime, Algeria and Morocco had been waging a proxy battle in the Western Sahara, where Morocco fought for sovereignty against the Algerian-backed Polisario movement.

One of the most brutal clashes occurred during the Black September civil war in Jordan in 1970 when King Hussein battled the burgeoning Palestinian guerrilla movement. There was a brief confrontation in southern Tunisia in the early Eighties when Libyan-backed rebels captured a small area.

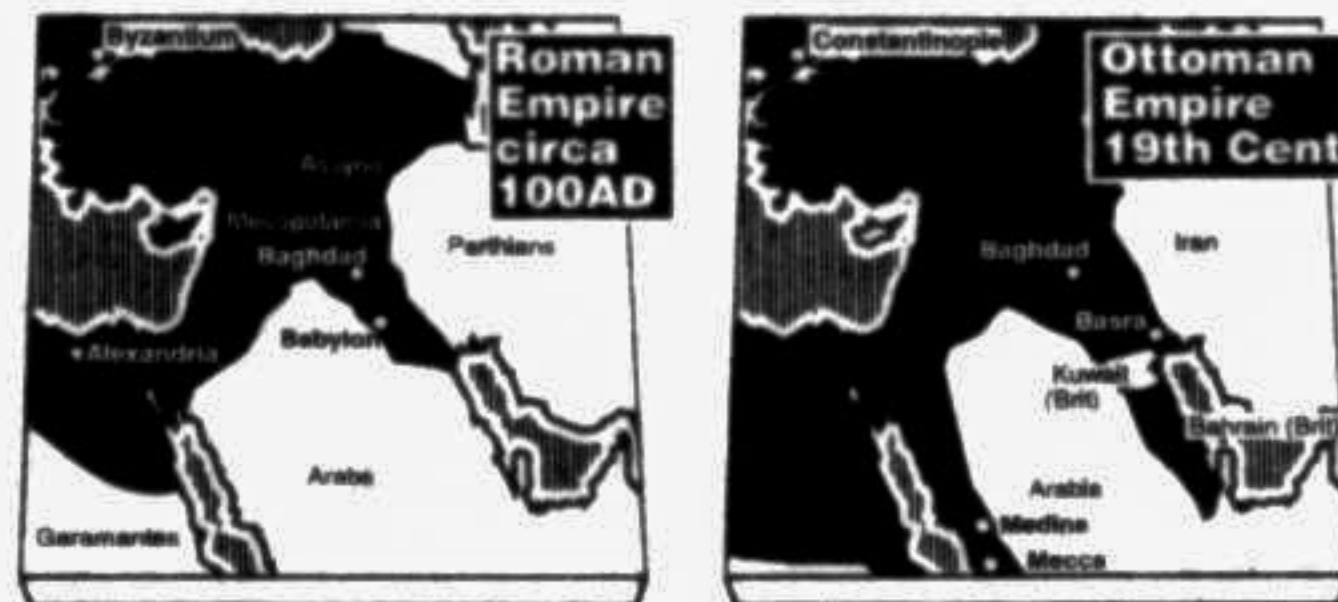
Syria, for its part, backed Iran throughout its eight-year war with Iraq. And Syria has occupied most of Lebanon — under the guise of an Arab League peacekeeping mandate since 1976. And following the ejection of Christian leader Michel Aoun last October, the Syrians took control of much of the rest of the country. — GEMINI NEWS.

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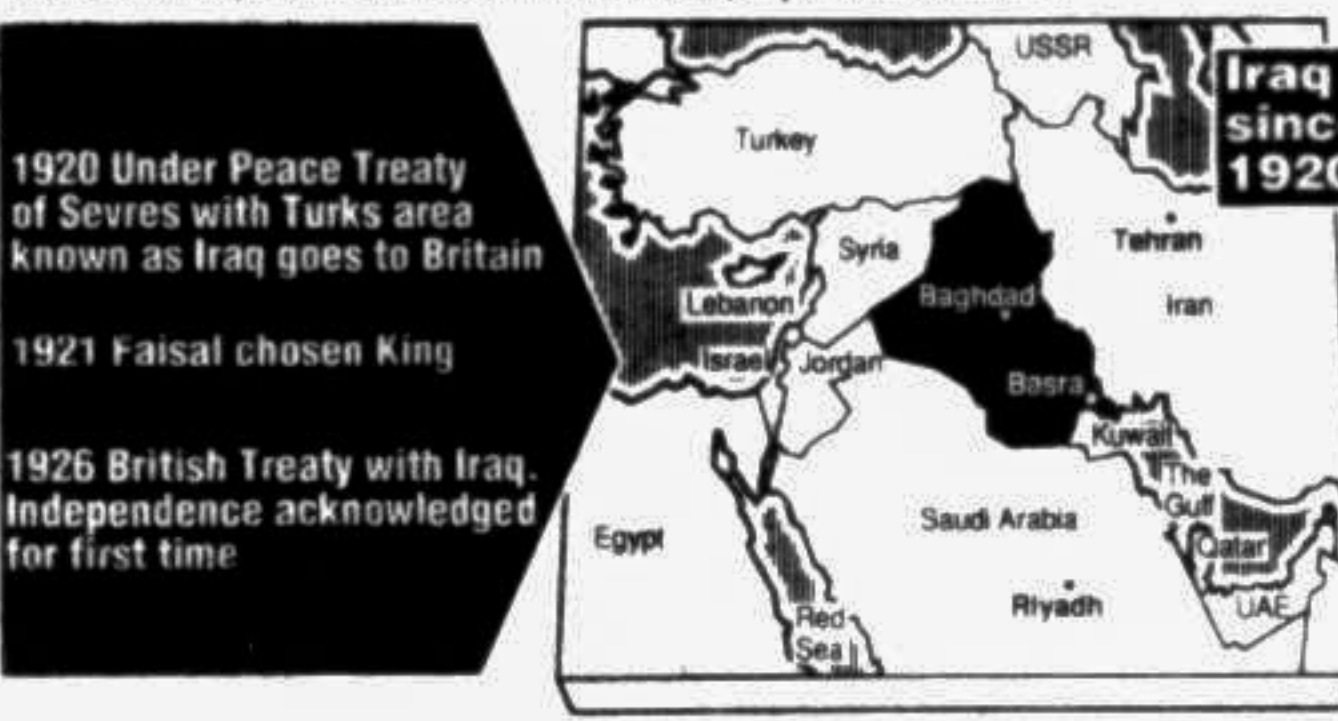
The making of Iraq

In 8th Cent Baghdad in Mesopotamia became Arab capital and great centre of culture

After Genghis Khan, empire disintegrated in 13th Cent



18th Cent-20th Cent. Region unified under Ottoman Turks 1915-17 in World War One British land of Basra, expel Turks from Gulf



1920 Under Peace Treaty of Sevres with Turks area known as Iraq goes to Britain 1921 Faisal chosen King 1926 British Treaty with Iraq independence acknowledged for first time

1932 Mandate ends. British keep some rights 1933 Faisal dies 1939 Son Ghazi dies in car crash. Boy Faisal II succeeds under British-aid. Iraq sides with Britain in World War Two 1941 German-inspired coup. British desert columns enter Baghdad. Faisals flee 1948 Anglo-Iraq treaty signed, then dissolved 1958 Coup by General Abdul Qasim. Royal family executed 1959 Qasim proclaims Kuwait part of Iraq. British land there and evacuate him 1963 Qasim overthrown and shot 1968 Baath party seize power 1979 President resigns, succeeded by Vice-President Saddam Hussein 1980-88 Iraq attacks Iran. Eight-year war follows 1990 Iraq seizes Kuwait 1991 Jan 16 Joint assault on Iraq

White collar crimes and corruptions are very much there in our land as in many others. It will not be out of place to say that moral degradation spreading through the sewers of the society even doesn't spare responsible and dependable businessmen. There appear to be a general breakdown of effective social control over corrupt practices. We cannot also disagree with one who poignantly observes the truth that 'criminals get off while righteous people are never paid anything for being good.' Instead he has to pay a lot for his goodness where crimes in the open streets, drinking bouts, gambling, drug trafficking delinquency and vandalism are on the increase than being contained.

Judging from this angle, the need for observance of a morality week to recover from illegal arms and ammunitions from musclemen and miscreants in order to create a congenial situation throughout the country is immense. Though it was long over due, still the morality week has an added importance now in view of the ensuing elections. The relevant authorities should at this time also feel the need for attracting the public attention to the subject. The effort will undoubtedly produce some results. It may give us an opportunity to make the entire society realize through holding of seminars and discussions and writings in the media and talks over T.V. and radio, that with-

People and right

Sir, Allow me to congratulate Justice Abdur Rahman Chowdhury through your columns for such excellent and thought provoking article on 'People and Rights' published in your esteemed paper on January 21, 1991. He has dealt with such an important subject matter in a simple and lucid language which is indeed admirable. We do hope that you will be able to persuade Justice Chowdhury to continue his thoughtful writings in future to serve as a guide line for our country and the intelligentsia in particular. S.M. Fakhruddin, Dhaka.

Mosquito menace

Sir, Mosquitoes are a menace in everyday life. This is more evident in winter season. Perhaps they breed more during this time. Therefore, measures should be taken before the beginning of this

time to prevent such a situation. Swamps are places where mosquitoes breed most. Such places should be cleaned regularly. This matter should be given importance, as mosquitoes are carriers of a number of very serious diseases. We urge the authorities concerned to take urgent measures to solve this problem, so that localities are not beset with the menace often as is happening now. Azam Rahman, Matlab Comilla.

Traffic jam

Sir, Dhaka is fast growing into a big city with a huge population. About 20 years back it was impossible to even imagine, that Dhaka would one day be as congested as it is now. All this has happened in a very short span of time. Over-bridges connecting two pavements, is a phenomena of recent times.

Quality Programmes on TV

Sir, Television is an important medium and means of entertainment in our country. For a long time now, we are not generally having good programmes, barring some exceptions, despite repeated reminders and requests. Even couple of years back we did have the opportunity to watch some very informative, interesting, as well as enjoyable programmes, both local as well as imported ones.

Winter and its chill

Sir, Every winter brings with it a bite, i.e. its chill. Those few days are indeed terrible for a poor country like ours. Generally it is discomforting, having to wear more clothes than required on a sunny day. It is worse for the poor, as they can hardly afford to buy any warm clothes, even at a second, third, hand rate.

I am sure many will agree with me.

Jahangir Ahmed Shiekhghat Sylhet

Let us go back to those days when even people is our neighbouring countries, would love to watch our lo-

cal items. Now, we tend to watch theirs! More programmes of standard needed for our TV to check a cultural intrusion. Zafar Ahmed Talola, Khulna

Social Awareness Needed to Curb White Collar Crimes

by Syed Zinat Ali

out the commonman's positive abhorrence of crime and immorality only law enforcing bodies cannot cope with this regrettable national situation.

A great leap is needed to overcome this great social danger that we face to-day. We must gird-up our loins against this.

At this hour of national transition, political parties, government machineries in collaboration with the common people should launch an united effort to recover the illegal arms and ammunitions from the miscreants and free the nation of vandalism to create a congenial atmosphere for a free and impartial election.

The recent mass-movement headed by all political parties and student community succeeded to overthrow the Ershad regime but the former President's stooges in the administration are still active to foil the gained victory. At this hour, patience, perseverance, unity, faith, co-operation, good manner and behaviour amongst all political parties and students' community are badly needed to maintain a congenial situation for holding

free and fair election and thus to usher the long awaited democracy in the country.

We are to see facts boldly, combat vigorously the corrupt and stop malpractices once for all. Other wise, the only alternative is chaos, confusion, troubles and eventual emergence of a society beneficial to none.

Fortunately crimes enumerated above are still viewed as crime and those indulge in them either suffer in law or face atleast some social stigma. They have a guilty conscience and in the inmost recesses of the heart, feel some sort of moral embarrassment. They are aware of their wrong doing to the extent that generally they do not come forward with any defensible excuses. These are not actually areas of moral erosion but more correctly areas of conscious moral flaws or lapses amounting to indulgence in wrong acts viewed as such.

The real arena of moral erosion are cases of commitment of many crimes, which are not consciously counted as crimes or only as trivial crimes or fringe corruption of innocuous nature.

APUS statement

Sir, It seems that APUS leaders are issuing statements without verification of facts. I know of one case where a recent press statement attributed to APUS has accused a Secretary to the Government of being an accomplice of the previous had of state, whereas I know for certain that the officer concerned was particularly disliked by the previous Government because he consistently refused to tow their line and as a result he got pushed around from one ministry to another. It is a matter of record that the officer maintained a very low profile throughout the tenure of the previous regime.

APUS statement

My appeal to APSU leaders is that they should not tarnish at all the glorious image of their recent leadership by making any unscrutinised statement. An APUS admirer, Dhaka

Sometimes these crimes serve not only individual but group interest and benefits accruing to individuals or groups are of such high magnitude that they consider their benefactor who commits the crime, something like a demi-god.

Edwin H. Sutherland, American sociologist, refers to white-collar crimes as crimes that persons of respectability and high social status commit in the course of their occupations. We further maintains that white-collar crime is mainly a violation of trust. The examples of white-collar crimes are: misrepresentation in financial statements of a company, manipulation in the stock exchange, commercial bribery, bribery of public officials, short weights, misgrading of commodities, tax frauds and evasions, and so on.

These types of corruptions are widely prevalent in our land as in many others. We seldom realize that financial loss to society from white-collar crimes is perhaps greater than the financial loss from crimes committed by the lower socio-economic class.

Financial loss is great, and

damage it causes to social morality is far greater. It creates distrust, and produces a chain reaction of chaos and confusion.

Our newspapers are full of awful account of white-collar corruption in the land. Still the corruption continues. Some are bold enough to assert their right to be bad. Some genuinely believe that circumstances had pushed them there and they now have right to be bad for sheer survival. Many make an open and honest confession. The push of poverty and awareness of limited opportunities, changing mores and values in which possession of money gives a man greatest social recognition and prestige, they argue, have led them to be corrupt.

Moreover the knowledge that violators of law on occasions evade punishment has emboldened them. Common people are somewhat disrespectful of the law enforcing agencies because of their failure to combat and take all evil doers to task.

But toning up morality is not the job of police or court alone, they help the society to guard against anti-social elements when their numbers are within limits. The multidimensional and generic corruption, which we face to-day, can be corrected only through vigorous efforts of all good men at the home, the school, the places of worship and the government.

Looking to War and Beyond

The start of war does not indeed, it cannot - extinguish our conviction that President Bush switched too soon from embargo to war. But President Bush chose otherwise. He did so after Congress had passionately debated all the options and given him the clear authority to do so. Not even his critics will be able to say that he exceeded his constitutional authority.

Now too without rancor or partisanship, Americans can join in hoping that this war will end soon, that the United Nations will achieve its objective of liberating Kuwait and that the human toll on all sides will be less than feared. — The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Sometimes, as with Churchill during the Second World War and Mrs. Thatcher during the Falklands, prime ministers have seemed to relish the task of governing in time of battle. [Prime Minister John] Major displays no such relish, but that does not mean that he is unequal to the challenge. His obvious lack of personal belligerence is appropriate to the current situation. — The Daily Telegraph (London).

The war provides an opportunity to create a regional security order in which all Middle Eastern countries can have a stake and which prevents the emergence of a single power that can pose an overwhelming military threat to others. Iraq's fate is significant in this context. While it appears tightly knitted, it is actually a centrifugal society, below the surface. That fragile unity could snap under the impact of war. A chaotic or disintegrating Iraq would fuel Iranian ambitions of regional hegemony. The destruction of Iraq would therefore be unwise. — The Straits Times (Singapore).

A Step Backward in Argentina

Only in the last few years have civilian leaders tried to assert authority over the generals, so it is disappointing that President Carlos Saul Menem began the 1990s with a step backward. [He] pardoned generals who oversaw the so-called 'dirty war' against leftist subversion in which 6,960 people are acknowledged to have died, many after being methodically tortured. Many Argentines fear that Mr. Menem pardoned the junta leaders to placate a new generation of military officers. It is hard to shake the feeling that Mr. Menem has made a rather grave error. — Los Angeles Times.