

Plight of Ordinary Students

"The situation at Dhaka University had gone beyond the control of university authorities."

The closure has earned the university a respite from a situation that looked set to spin completely out of orbit.

With the closure of the halls of residence, hundreds of students now find themselves without a roof under which to sleep, or a table at which to study.

The university authorities should now be extremely careful in dealing with the emerging situation.

In the meantime, the fate of Honours and Masters final examinations continue to hang in balance.

The university authorities should now set themselves two clear-cut priorities — return of students to the halls and holding of exams.

A Case of Unappreciated Innovation

Friday's issue of an English language national daily featured an eye-catching double-column headline in reverse-print.

Now, what are uses the shallow pump engines are being put to? The answer is all there in the news.

None of the above are quite useless jobs. On the contrary, they are not any less important than irrigation work.

When the small machines are being used in such a wide variety of jobs we can do better than walling over the 'abuse' of these.

Appropriate technology is a much talked about pet subject of seminars participated by 'experts' and administrators who would rather not move a straw from hither to thither.

THE government's 12th Amendment Bill, which is set to receive an affirmative vote in the House any day now, finally arrived on the floor without most of its undesirable spots.

With most of the undemocratic provisions ironed out of the bill, the path has been cleared for a safe passage through a parliament which is taking its task far more seriously than any of its four predecessors.

But, amid the euphoria, a nagging doubt or two remains. The bill, while rather good in its watered-down version, is far from perfect.

The opposition's challenge to the Treasury bill's provision to retain the present system of allowing 20 per cent of cabinet posts to be filled by un-elected nominees, was certainly quite heartening to note.

That perhaps involved a great deal of deliberations, with neither side wishing to give in completely, while at the same time not wanting to put any obstacles on the path of the emergence of a consensus.

Now, compromise is an essential ingredient of that

Compromise and Consensus, but Not Quite Perfect

by Sabir Mustafa

broth called democracy, which always means balancing conflicting views in a pluralistic society.

Contrary to standard practice in many other parliamentary dispensations, our 10 per centers will not even be required to get themselves elected within any given period of time.

Even the softened-up version of the 12th Amendment has failed to shed its mortal fear of that monster called floor-crossing.

But there is absolutely no reason to make the Speaker undemocratic at best, and at worst, betrays a sense of insecurity.

grouping is retained, ostensibly as a safeguard against instability, but in reality to prevent any credible challenge to the leader from taking shape within a party.

Existence of permanent caucuses within various parties, even less to make dissenters lose their parliamentary seats.

Of, course, the kind of grouping that sets itself up as an alternative to existing party leadership is a different thing.

But there is absolutely no reason to make the Speaker undemocratic at best, and at worst, betrays a sense of insecurity.

curity and mistrust of party MPs on the part of the leader who insisted on this provision in the first place.

The point is, if a party leader can maintain his position by the strength of his personality, leadership capability, and credibility with the population at large, then sub-groupings will be nothing more than a minor irritant for him.

The example of Chandrashekhar's revolt in the Janata Dal is often cited as proof of the instability sub-groupings can cause.

If anything, Chandrashekhar's grouping ensured governance of India for a crucial period of time, when nobody was prepared for an election.

done what he did, or had he not been allowed to do so, India would have had to face a general election at a time when riots related to the Mandal Commission and Babri Masjid-Ram Mandir were at their bloodiest peak.

But despite these hitches, it is a near miracle that there is indeed a consensus in parliament over as fundamental an issue as the form of government. Constitutional debate in this country has never been as lively or as productive as during the past seven months or so.

rate, when Bangladesh produced a constitution incorporating a high degree of liberal values within a year of independence (it took India three and Pakistan nine years to achieve the same feat).

At present no less than nine bills to amend the constitution are either before the Jatiya Sangsad or at the parliamentary secretariat.

The opposition has never managed to move an amendment bill on the floor of the House during the tenure of the four previous parliaments, either because the governments' massive majorities made the opposition quite ineffective (as in 1973, '79 and '88) or because parliament itself was not allowed to function in any meaningful manner (1986).

The present House is better-balanced, with the majority party having enough seats to theoretically ensure stable government, while the opposition is sufficient in numbers, and with a strong-enough sense of purpose to enable it to play a vigorous, even aggressive role.

The trend those amendments established — particularly the Second in 1973, the Fourth in '75, the Fifth in '79, the Seventh in '86 and the Eighth in '88 — was a negative one, systematically robbing the constitution of its liberal-democratic character and consolidating the legal base for authoritarian rule.

These amendments and others are coming up now because never before in our history, save perhaps for 1972-73, have we had a political environment as conducive to free thought and debate as during the past seven months or so.

But the crucial question will remain how the majority and opposition parties cooperate, without which none of the amendment bills will see the light of day.

Iraqi Opposition Want Saddam Monitored

by Gillian Forrester

"SEE, it's like a pencil," a nurse says, touching the leg of fragile baby. There is no muscle, only skin and bone.

The scene is from a video presented in London by Vanessa Redgrave, the British actress and political activist. She went to Iraq for nine days in June to witness the despair, sickness and poverty of the Iraqi people following the Gulf war.

She, UNICEF and the Iraqi government are among those calling for an end to sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations. She says food, medical supplies and materials needed to rebuild Iraq's water and power systems are not being allowed into the country.

Groups in opposition to Saddam Hussein are more united and active than ever before, and they too are calling for an end to sanctions. But they would also like to see a UN body set up to ensure that goods are distributed fairly throughout Iraq.

Opposition to Saddam Hussein has always consisted of many parties and groupings with widely differing political and religious views. Two years ago, however, they formed a united committee which is based in Damascus.

Despite large differences of opinion among them, this group, the Joint Action Committee for Iraqi Opposition, established some common goals at a conference in March. They are calling for a democratic government which respects the rights of all peoples within Iraq.

This is because they believe Saddam is responsible for the monumental disaster that has

The Iraqi government, opposition groups and international aid agencies all agree that current sanctions against Iraq should be lifted to spare the people further horror. But Iraqi opposition groups have banded together in their belief that Saddam is preventing supplies from reaching certain areas and therefore want the UN to monitor the distribution of goods.

Iraqi suffering continues



befallen the Iraqi people in the last year, and that he has himself done more damage to the country than the Allies did during the war.

A member of the Information Committee for the Iraqi Opposition living in London says the atrocities now occurring in Iraq are worse than in the last 20 years combined.

The 46-year-old Iraqi Shia left his home in 1968 to study, and did not return once Saddam's Ba'ath party came to power.

"The killing in the last few months is a million times worse than everything that's gone on in the last 20 years," he says. "We've never had this kind of thing before."

Now he and his wife devote their spare time to the political fight to remove Saddam Hussein. They belong to a network of several groups which has formed in London including the International Committee for the Incrimination of Saddam Hussein, the Information Committee for the Iraqi Opposition, and the International Committee for Free Iraq, which was launched

in the British parliament at the end of June.

Although UNICEF and the Gulf Peace Team said they had been allowed to go anywhere they requested within Iraq, Iraqi opposition groups believe there are people and places cut off from international aid and from any supplies that come into the country.

A report in the New Statesman and Society, focusing on a tour of the Gulf Peace Team through Iraq, said: "For every doctor in Iraq whose first loyalty is to the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad, for every administrator who creams off essential supplies for his own profit, there are dozens struggling in the face of overwhelming odds to bring basic health care to the people who need it."

Apart from the danger the Kurdish people face, a report in early July also stated that Iraqi forces had surrounded and were shelling between 30,000 and 100,000 Shia rebels and their families hiding in the marshes between Nasiriyah and Basra. The Shias

have been called 'Saddam's deadliest foe'.

In order to help Iraq achieve democracy, members of the opposition groups believe the world must call Hussein to answer for his crimes against humanity, including his use of chemical weapons, and his attacks on neighbouring countries and groups inside Iraq, especially in the south.

Because the water and sewage systems of Iraq are still in disrepair, millions of Iraqis are drinking contaminated water and sewage still floods many city streets and some homes.

Large numbers of babies were born prematurely because of the emotional stress of the fighting, and incubators had no power on which to run. Aid agencies were sending in kerosene refrigerators to keep antibiotics, insulin and drugs cool, but the destroyed power grid still restricts surgery to only emergencies.

Some newspapers claim a whole generation of children is being wiped out. It is estimated that 500,000 refugees will return to the crippled country by this month. UNICEF was looking for another US\$16 million to help with the crisis.

GILLIAN FORRESTER, from the University of Regina's School of Journalism and Communications in Canada, is working for Gemini on a television show.

OPINION Subdue Anarchists

It is a matter of deep concern that not a single sign of democratic perception has yet nourished in any sphere of our society. It seems that we are not any how interested in taking lessons from our past.

Right at this very moment, can any body point out a single degree-college which is free from the consequences of indiscreet acts of student politics? I wonder how many schools are yet left untouched?

Shall we forget the innumerable upheavals, pathos and pains that had to be passed through during the long nine years of autocratic regime? Shall we forget how our country was dragged, bullied and thrown into a long spell of political and socio-economic uncertainty, intrigue and foulplay by the devilish dictatorship? Weren't those nine years quite good enough for us to realise that fraud, anarchy and friction can do no ultimate good to a country, especially to a country like ours? Then why

shall all those dam practices of turmoil carry on without let or hindrance? Shall we be tempted to betray with the imperishable souls of Noor Hossain?

The Government very recently held a grand conference with all the political parties in quest of an appropriate solution to the constrained situation in the educational arena and withstand violence by all means. It is not at all surprising that no such solution will be available. How can a physician expect to cure others before healing his ownself? I fail to understand what hinders the political leaders to subdue the anarchists in their own parties?

However, I would like to draw everybody's notice to the well-established fact that social cohesion and socio-economic development of a country are strictly linked with its political stability. I, as a conscious citizen, urge to the politicians belonging to all camps and shades of opinion to shelve their petty party lines whenever the situation dictates and decide on a joint course which is the best for the present and the posterity. Let the hoisted flag of democracy uphold the spirit of unanimity and spread the message of peace and tranquillity, or else we shall not survive. May Allah bless us all.

Faheem H. Shahed Tikatooly, Dhaka.

To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Solar energy

Sir, Recent letters in this column of your issues of 13th June & 14th July, are of interest to us.

We are the leading manufacturer of Storage Batteries in Bangladesh and storage battery is the second major component for setting up solar system for availing electricity in remote regions of the country where grid electric supply is not available.

Solar panel consisting of photovoltaic cell is the major item of this solar system and this is yet required to be imported. We have been contacting various concerned government bodies and the National Board of Revenue for abolishing import tariff — as done in Pakistan and other

countries — so that solar systems are made available to our rural brethren at affordable cost. In villages solar systems can light up community centre, keep running power refrigerator facility to preserve life saving medicine and drugs, light up isolated panel mounted street light, homes etc. These facilities will help students and commercial activities in rural areas after dusk, thereby contributing to economic welfare. Delaying/reducing sleeping hours in our rural areas will also help in reducing population explosion!

We hope our decision makers discard penny-wise fiscal measures for greater social benefits.

Engr. Kazi Shaheen Anwar Rahimafrooz (Bangladesh) Ltd.

Guidance for both worlds

Sir, On the occasion of passing out parade of the young Army Officers on 20th June at the BMA, the Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Nooruddin Khan delivered lecture. His address was unlike his predecessors in Bangladesh or contemporaries in Pakistan, as far as our memory goes. In his speech, besides touching the professional aspects, he called upon the young officers for offering five times prayer, and following the other teachings of the Holy Quran and the Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SA). Indeed, prayer is for achieving mental peace, the prerequisite for building a successful and meaningful life.

These officers are now like well ploughed fertile piece of land. Whatever seeds are sown in this field will soon bloom into plants, and then well grown trees, providing sheds and fruits. Through them, may this spirit be imbibed and continued for generations to come. In return Gen. Nooruddin too, we believe, will

be showered with blessings in this world and hereafter. SA Hussain Bara Mogh Bazar, Dhaka.

Foolscape, no full-scape

Sir, The lead story "Amendment Bills cleared ..." in the Daily Star of July 28 had, no, not a printing-mistake, a lexical error. The jump of the story on page 10 gave information about the volume of the Parliamentary Select Committee Report on the Constitution Amendment Bills in US saying it contained seven pages of typed 'full-scape' paper. This would be 'foolscape', a term used for a sheet of paper of a certain measurement, 13X16 inches approximately, according to the Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary, though our local paper industries ordinarily did not keep up with this universal measurement.

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