

The 'Digging' Season is Here!

by Parveen Anam

BAKLADESH is a land of many seasons. And certainly not the traditional four seasons. Its seasons are divided into six, with one extra thrown in. It is the extra season which is so fascinating because it is so completely at the mercy and whim of the selected few, who decide when the season is to begin and when it is to end. Normally, we, the masses see the beginning but seldom the end of this fascinating season of all seasons. And this season is the 'season of the diggers'. The road diggers, I mean.

Anybody who is in the field trying to compete with these very determined little guys, employed by the tax-payer, is either having a hey-time or regretting it, depending on which end he is. It is not very complicated; a twenty-minute rickshaw ride is enough to explain the intricacies of the matter. The seventeenth bone-jarring, teeth rattling bump, in that twenty minute ride, most clearly explains the myth of the fellows who are having a 'hey-time' because these are the entrepreneurs who make braces to hold the aching back and loosened teeth in place, of the innocent citizen going about his equally innocent chore on the trusted rickshaw.

Considering the prolific nature of the 'diggers' you could swear they were in league with these 'entrepreneurs' who undoubtedly can market those braces without let or hindrance for who can honestly say they can come home at night without feeling as though they have been through the rack, thanks to those 'diggers'. It is not the digging as such that we mind; we all know and realize it is in the greater interest of the

public, such 'development' work, it is the keen competition among the 'diggers' which leaves us sore — literally.

One fine morning, as we are on our way to earn our living, our heads full of noble thoughts and eyes revelling at the sight of the newly repaired road, which the 'relevant' (the department 'relevant' of the dept. is very relevant in all development work) has only just vacated, our horrified eyes



alight upon the ever-familiar 'digger' with his 'signs' placed lovingly at the critical spots, digging away as if his life depended upon it, with nary a thought about the fact that the construction dept. (?) had only just packed its bags after its endless digging and boring — nineteen months it took those little guys to 'repair' that stretch of road, twenty-seven

and half yards in length. With great haste you descend upon the 'digger', refrain yourself from shouting at him and rehearsing a few choice adjectives, and ask him between gritted teeth, exactly what he thinks he is up to. Chewing the eternal 'paan' and with a well aimed red 'spittle', in the vicinity of your lower extremities, which promptly raises your blood pressure and your laundry bill, he will in-

phone behaves, you could swear he was in a funny mood, those cables would put the 'age of the dinosaurs' to shame! Ah well.

He will ultimately go away. Or so you hope. But then you have not reckoned with the gas man, who will promptly descend with his tools to prove to his superiors and betters, that the pay the tax-payer dishes out to him at the end of each month, is not in vain.

But you got to give it to these fellows.

Although the average Bengalee has no clue about queues, their sense of 'queue' in the digging business is the envy of the Englishman, because hardly have the gas people turned the corner, than it is time for the electricity dept. (relevance?) to 'have a dig' with the water fellows patiently waiting their turn and the storm sewerage guys next in line.

And their memory could do with a bit of juggling, because it never fails to amaze you, how they just forget to put the road into a reasonable state before they take their leave.

Amongst all this 'digging' and 'diggers' the only semblance of sanity presented to you is by the 'entrepreneur' of the braces.

Remember? But then how can you forget, when your aching bones remind you of him and his wares at every bone-jarring, teeth rattling bump of the road?

ONE of the surest and yet most systematic search guides is a dictionary. To begin an inquiry into any branch of knowledge, a sensible act is to look it up in a dictionary. For knowledge begins with names of things and their functions. This dictionary has been defined as "a reference book listing alphabetically terms or names important to a particular subject or activity along with discussion of their meanings and applications" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary 1974, p. 316). The book under review is An Administrative Dictionary. The title gives an impression that it may be like Dictionary of Politics, Dictionary of Economics, Dictionary of Sociology - or for that matter, any other such dictionary. It is, indeed, not a general reference on Public Administration, per se, but a specific guidebook for those interested to know the terms used in everyday governmental business transactions in Bangladesh, their meanings and applications. These terms relate to "official matters pertaining to government Rules, Regulations, Ordinances, Acts and Manuals." There are as many as 308 terms under 26 headings arranged in alphabetic order, besides 12 annexures and one index. The purpose is to provide a handy guide to scholars, students, researchers, lawyers, and government officers in their effort to decipher the meaning and substance of off-used official terms in one place. For the general readers, the book offers non-technical explanations of technical and legal terms. In fairness, it must be conceded that Mr Mirza Md Al-Faruque has scored his first points in putting the first things first.

After the terms have been defined, their applications in specific situations are stated in clear language to indicate its relevance. Some examples will testify to it. (1) When a Government servant is allowed by the competent authority to remain absent from duty for a short period on account of sudden illness or on a piece of private business he is treated to be on casual leave. (2) During such leave a Government servant is treated to be on duty. (3) Casual leave shall not be given to an employee so as to cause an evasion of the rules regarding date of reckoning allowance. (Rule 27 and 27 BSR

Part-II), charge of office (Rule 28 (b)), commencement and end of leave, return to duty (Rule 152, 157 and 158 (b)) and extend the term of any leave (Rule 195, part-I).

(4) Government servants are allowed casual leave for 20 days in a calendar year subject to following conditions: then eleven conditions are specified (pp.224-225). A Pension ----- Pension means a pension whether contributory or not, of any kind whatsoever payable to or in respect of any person, and includes retired pay or gratuity so payable by way of the return or any addition thereto of subscriptions to provident fund (Article 152(1) of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh).

After this definition, the Government Order issued by the Ministry of Finance on rates of Daily Allowance and Road Mileage is quoted. This order shows TA/DA admissibility according to the grouping of Government officers by monthly salaries.

'Advance Increment'-Rule 49 (as amended) of the Bangladesh Service Rule (BSR) Part-I defines it as "save in exceptional circumstances and under specific orders of Government, no Government servant of a time scale of pay may be granted a premature increment in that time scale." At present, concurrence of the Ministry of Finance is required for granting any advance increment to a Government servant (p.25).

'Basic Pay'-BSR, Part-I Rule 5(6) - Basic pay means the pay, other than special pay, overseas pay, any other emoluments which may be specially granted as pay by Government or pay granted in view of personal considerations or qualification.

It is thus abundantly clear as to the special meaning of a term, its components and conditions under which it is operative. The terms have been explained legally and technically. The explanations are exhaustive and refer to legal or technical documents like the Constitution, BSR, etc as applicable. Such a treatment

Administrative Dictionary

An Administrative Dictionary. By M M Al-Faruque. First Edition. Dhaka: Paira Prokashani, 1991. 367+54+22=433 pp. Price Tk 200.00 US\$ 7.00.

Reviewed by Muhammad Anisuzzaman

adds to our knowledge of terms and conditions of official communications in minute details and thereby deepens our understanding of the significance of specifying applications, which has been sanctioned for a post held by a Government servant substantive or in an officiating capacity, or to which he is entitled by reason of his position in cadre (p.75).

'Leave(casual)'. Conditions under which casual leave is allowed are as follows: (1) When a Government servant is allowed by the competent authority to remain absent from duty for a short period on account of sudden illness or on a piece of private business he is treated to be on casual leave. (2) During such leave a Government servant is treated to be on duty. (3) Casual leave shall not be given to an employee so as to cause an evasion of the rules regarding date of reckoning allowance. (Rule 27 and 27 BSR

Besides the definition, explanation and application of terms which is the books major functions, it has some other attractions. They twelve annexures represent twelve legal documents which are of considerable relevance to topics/terms listed. Although the usual professional word for it is index, the author provides it under the caption "words where available"—which is rather unusual. Nonetheless, it does not detract from its index value. The names of 64 upazilas of Bangladesh shown

The author adds authenticity to his explanations by stating on the title page: "published with the permission of the Government" (GO No. ME/D4 Permission - 69/90-562 dt 26.9.90) which is further buttressed by a 'Foreword' written by the Chairman, Bangladesh Public Service Commission. Logically, then the book may pass for an official publication.

The author's long administrative experience and 24 other publications will lend further credence. Thus, the book stands a good chance of being accepted as an authoritative administrative directory on Bangladesh, thereby filling a void in this area.

Although the book is about Government servants and their official conduct, the term 'Government servant' has not been defined, although it has been used may a time throughout the book. An official definition of the term is called for in view of the recent challenge by some government servants that they are service-renderers to the state, not personal servants of anybody. The author's claim that the book is "the first of its kind in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Sri-Lanka" must be taken with a grain of salt.

In Bangladesh, his claim may be valid. But in India and Pakistan, there have been comparable works. The author's own listing of sources

consulted included one such work in Pakistan and other in India (item 52, 53 of his list).

As the book is written in English, its likely list of readers will include English speaking foreign scholars. Some items in the book are entirely in Bengali, some almost entirely in Bengali (e.g. pp. 10-11, 32, 46-47, et. passim).

Some topics are explained in English, but sources cited are in Bengali (e.g.p. 29,39,68). A times, topics/terms begin in English and end in Bengali without rendering any English version of the Bengali order (pp.94-95). Such bi-lingual treatment of several topics/terms might be misleading for some readers. A uniform style would have taken care of the Bengali explanations and their supporting sources incorporated in the text via translations.

The author recognizes and lists the sources consulted (Acts, Ordinances, Rules, Regulations, Manuals and books) in the preparation of this work.

He lists these by years of publication. Of the 53 such sources, 43 sources are dated and 10 sources are undated.

These could be categorized into (a) Acts/Organizations (b) Rules, Regulations, Manuals; and (c) books and other sources with the names of publisher, place and dates of publications shown against each source.

These minor points notwithstanding, the book serves as a useful research tool not only to teachers and researchers of Public Administration, but also to its appliers, viz., the Government officers in their day-to-day official work. This reviewer would plead for the replication of such an effort.

BOOK REVIEW

Everything ...

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simistic about the future. Actually it is not so much the future but the present they are worried about. How can they worry about the future if they don't even think there is a future to worry about?

So, where are we really? Answer: We are where we have always been, still thinking of Dhaka as the next Hong Kong while the traffic system collapses and telephones stop working; still threatening to wipe the smiles off the Asian Tigers' faces — as Moudud Ahmed did once when he was vice-president — while our GDP struggles to outpace that of Ethiopia; still aping Singapore with high-rise blocks, while roads get flooded at the first hint of a cloud in the sky.

But it is all a question of "clicking". We may be nowhere but everywhere at the same time, but once we "click" at the right time, then we will get somewhere in no time at all.

We do not yet know if the ECNEC, BIDS, BARD, BADC, BARC, UNDP, IMF, KGB (RIP), CIA and the rest have found the right way to effect this clicking. Until that happens, we remain where we are (or thereabouts).

The Restoration and the 18th Century Literature

by Sanchita Choudhury

ENGLISH literature between 1660 and 1800 may be thought to be a period when English neoclassical literature came into being and its critical principles were formulated. It is the period in which the great system of neo-classical spirit, as it was inherited from antiquity and built up and codified in Italy and France during the 16th and 17th centuries, emerged with new trends. The culmination of neo-classical literary movement was initiated by Dryden and his generations. Pope, Swift, and Congreve are the successors of Dryden. The neo-classical principles that were confronted by some new ideas, were crystallized into romantic movement in the 19th century.

At Restoration there seems a break with the past. It affected the English literature in the greatest degree; its subjects and style took a new spirit, and outlook, a different attitude and aim. Hence the post restoration is often set up as the converse and antithesis of the Elizabethan age. This is called the neo-classical literature, as opposed to the Elizabethan romanticism. Lacking the genius of Elizabethans, the authors of this time turned to the great classical writers, in particular, to the Latin writers, for guidance and inspiration. This tendency is quite noticeable during the age of Dryden and it deepened and hardened during the succeeding age of Pope so much that a new chapter in English literature began which we found as a reaction to the intricacy, obscurity and extravagance of the previous age.

The aim of neo-classicism was sound and right. It attempts the principle or the laws or rules of literature which are based on reasoning and experience. The neo-classical criticism assumed a stable psychology of human nature. The central concept of neo-classicism is an imitation of human nature. Imitation, the Aristotelian mimesis, does not of course, mean copying photographic naturalism but rather a representation of human nature itself. To the neo-classical writers nature serves as the universally representative element in the moral and intellectual experience of man. Nature is the truth in the sense that includes the permanent and enduring general truths which have, been, are and will be for all men of all time.

Dryden is the most celebrated figure of the Augustan age or of the neo-classical age. Dr Johnson said that Dryden did to English literature what Augustus did to Rome. In the writing of Dryden there is a strict care and accuracy in poetical technique an a

humble imitation of the style of the Latin classics. Like Homer, there is also a tendency in Dryden to imitate human nature. In many of his heroic couplets he has generalised universal comment on human nature. His heroic couplets in 'Absalom and Achitophel' read like aphorism on general human nature. Use of heroic couplets is one of the distinctive elements of Restoration and 18th century literature.

Following the footsteps of Dryden Pope attains a final test of excellence in creating his neo-classical models out of his own poetry. His is both imitating the classics as making the classics imitate him in a reciprocal way. He was dominated by the classics of Horace, Virgil and Homer. In Pops imitation of Horace we have arrived at the culmination of English tradition of literary imitation — certainly a series of central Augustan age. Pops imitation of human nature is intensified by neo-classical trends of the age. We know that imitation of nature in

modern time is often interpreted as realism. His 'Rape of the Lock' is a realistic representation on the contemporary morals and manners. His wit is keen; his satire burns like acid.

Dryden and his successors as Pope, Congreve tend to nourish a faculty of natural wit. The easy natural wit aims at delighting and surprising. It is the direct outcome of the development of naturalistic spirit. Both Dryden and Pope make a remarkable use of wit respectively in 'Absalom and Achitophel' and in 'Rape of the Lock.' Their wit appeal both to intellect and wisdom. The quickness and liveliness of their wit delights by their eloquence and brilliance.

The rationalistic temper is observed almost in the beginning of the 16th century. The spirit of rationalism is observed through the renaissance and the succeeding ages. The literary idea of swif's age were those of neo-classicism — restraint, rationality and a distrust of emotion and exuber-

ance. Swift's devotion to complete reason is seen in one of the extreme panegyric to reason in the period, 'Gulliver's Travels' Swift nourishes a rationalistic spirit in this book.

The neo-classical traits — imitation of nature, nourishment of easy natural wit, the use of heroic couplets, flourishing of rationalistic spirit are the distinguishing features of the Restoration and 18th century literature. The writings of the age abounds in neoclassical elements which renders a test excellence to Restoration and 18th century literature.

This is remarkable that all these tensions of the neoclassical traits broke out with greater violence and sharpness about the middle of 18th century. Again, it would be error to think that these diverse reinterpretations and innovations followed a logical or chronological order. Rather all these positions were taken up almost simultaneously and became sorted out only very slowly.

Bangladesh Book Fair in London

By Sagar Choudhury

A week-long fair of books published in Bangladesh was held recently in London at the Davenant Centre, which is situated in a part of the city where there is a fairly large Bangla speaking population. The organisers of the fair at the London end were a cultural group named 'Udichi', an offshoot of the Dhaka-based parent organisation of the same name, with the active co-operation of 'Jatiya Sahitya Prakashani', a reputed publishing house of Dhaka. This year's book-fair, held for five days between the 2nd and the 6th of October, is the second of its kind in London, the first having been organised in 1989 by 'Udichi' and 'Jatiya Sahitya Prakashani'.

The book-fair offered a variegated fare reflecting, on a limited scale, the character and quality of books being published today in Bangladesh. In a way it was also an interesting indicator of general readership taste, because those who are in the publishing business must try to give the readers what they want to read, and among the five thousand and odd titles exhibited in the fair, there were books for children and teen-agers as well as volumes of sort stories, poetry, plays rubbing shoulders with books on politics, sociology, religion, history, etc.

The book-fair was inaugurated by Mr Tassaduq Ahmed, MBE, a prominent social-worker of London. In his inaugural speech he said,

"Bangalees are accustomed to living in the world of poems and poets, in the world of romantic expectation of a realisable but yet unrealised future..... I am aware that poetry is essentially to refine our world of ethics and aesthetics. But too much of it can take us away from the world of realities and cripple us. Marketing books means promoting the spread of knowledge and cultural exchanges which can only enrich the multicultural content of our multicultural society...." And perhaps the essence of his words was eminently reflected by the crowds of people — a fair proportion of whom were teen-agers and youths-who came every day between three and eight p.m to look at, to browse over and also to buy Bangla books. In fact, the number of people visiting the fair this year was significantly larger than the number last year. Among them were men and women belonging to different age-groups, professions and clearly different backgrounds. These can surely be taken as signs that the interest of the expatriate Bangalees towards Bangla books and culture is on the in-

crease and that they are growing increasingly aware of the role of books in their lives.

The sale of books in this year's fair was perhaps not as much as the organisers had expected, but it was not at all disappointing. The largest buyers last year were the Community libraries and schools. But because of the acute economic recession at present pervading the whole of Britain and probably there are a few other reasons — the libraries and schools have lost substantial chunks of their yearly budgets and their purchasing power has been drastically reduced. Most of the buyers this year were individuals, and they were certainly not stringent with their purse.

All types of books displayed at the fair sold more or less, but books on the Liberation, War, children's and religious books sold more than the others. The demand for poetry and plays was somewhat less compared to last year's.

For five days, the Bangladesh Book Fair became a sort of meeting point-almost an "adda" — for the Bangalee intellectuals in London, and there are positive signs that it is on the way to becoming an annual ritual for the Bangalee community here, like the Eid or Durga Puja.

WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita,
I read and enjoy your columns very much but sometimes you seem to have no answer to some of the problems. For example what can you advise a woman who is very unhappy with her husband and wants to leave him but is financially dependent on him. No matter what you say, women still have to make all the sacrifices because of their dependent status.
Shahnaz Zafar, Dhaka.

Dear Shahnaz,
I agree that women have to make most of the sacrifices in order to have harmony at home. But despite of such constraints as financial dependence, and societal pressure she will have to slowly but firmly assert her independence. It is true that women's helplessness is because of our society but it is also because she has allowed herself to be treated as a "living doll" as someone who looks after the home and children and in return gets expensive gifts and is "looked after". It is not always easy to be independent and takes sacrifice, and determination.

Dear Mita,
After living many years abroad we returned home last year. I find things have changed a lot and so have my friends. They seem very superficial and self-centered to me. I don't have the energy to make new friends but find it difficult to get along with old ones. What can I do? Please advise.
Anonymus, Dhaka.

Dear Anonymus,
Your friends might have changed, but so have you. It is not always possible to pick up the threads from where you left, you have to take stock of each relationship and start from where your friends are at. Don't try to impose your values on them, it never works. True friendship often transcends time, but you will have to allow for some flexibility.

Dear Mita,
My husband has a very bad temper and I have learnt to live with it for the last 10 yrs. Recently this has become worse. He gets out of control and becomes violent. Recently he hit the servant and our 8-yr-old son. I am getting worried that this might get worse with age. Please advise.

Anonymous, Chittagong.
Dear Anonymus,
I have received many letters from women complaining of ill tempered husbands. One of the reasons men have such bad tempers is because they have been spoiled by their families and always got their way at home. When these people grow up they see that the world is not ready to bow down to their wishes all the time. Unfortunately the wife usually gets the wrong end of the deal. Of course there could be other reasons such as problems in office, with friends etc. What about a complete medical check up? Without being too aggressive, let him know his temper hurts you and creates disharmony in the family.

Dear Mita,
My son who is to only 18 wants to go to the States just because his friends have gone there. He passed his O-Levels last year and did very well. I am trying to persuade him to go to India or Singapore but he will not listen. I cannot make him understand that it will be too much of a financial burden. What can I do to make him understand?
Rina, Dhaka.

Dear Rina,
Peer pressure is still strong at this age and he will want to do what 'they do'. The attraction of going to the States is so strong that your young people are not willing to see reason. Don't rush him, give him time and meanwhile show him options which could be more attractive. You have a tough job ahead. Good luck.

Run by a trained and experienced Family and Marriage counsellor, assisted by a professional team of doctor, psychologist and lawyer, this column will answer questions relating to family, marriage, health, family laws, and social and interpersonal relationships. Please address letters to Mita, The Daily Star, GPO Box 3257 or to 28/1, Toynbee Circular Road, Motijheel, Dhaka-1000.