

Uncivilised Ways About Power

It's a regular and unmitigated shame what we do to the little electricity we produce. Whoever would believe that half of the 12 lakh consumers of Power Development Board's electricity use unmetered power. They pay a fixed monthly tariff. Well, what was the point in Khwaja Ahsanullah's gifting his townspeople electricity early in the century if he could not supply in advance all of the meters that would be needed for the better part of a century? It's a safe guess that in no civilised nation electric power is distributed and sold in packages of unmetered quantity. This meter thing is clearly disqualifying us from calling ourselves civilised. There should be no doubt about that anywhere.

Prepare yourself for a greater shock. Ninety per cent of the meters that are making do are old and out of date — and for the most part, out of order too. Giving us fantasies in place of readings all the time, and for how many years God Almighty knows. And all the while this or that dictator was bragging about the developmental miracles they were working. But dictators have a most enviable prerogative—that which allows them to be written off, if not always wiped off, together with their cavalier-fashion sins. Why should an organisation like the PDB be privy to that?

A weird enough Hamlet for a weird enough Denmark is it? You know how much power you generate in all—and transmit. You also know much of it will reach the consuming end—that's schoolboy physics. Elementary text-books say the difference is systems loss. Once you were called the white elephant—has the memory of those old pampered days dulled you into bundling up trading inefficiencies with a physical phenomenon? Otherwise why would you pass off the difference between generation and the billed amount as systems loss? Was that in the books?

But this is meaningless squabbling. Why was electricity distributed without proper metering arrangement in the first place? How could one get electricity without a meter — without anyone knowing how much of it he is going to consume? How could the number of such meterless connections grow to more than half a million — meaning maybe a quantity of at least 5000 megawatt-hours per month being distributed without any kind of tab on the thing? It is not that the consumer is not ready to pay for the meter. Then?

As for replacing the old unretainables which again confound your trading accounts and also lands you on technically unsure grounds — its a wonder that wheels turn and tubes light up on God's everyday in Bangladesh — the hitch is one of purely administrative nature rather than technical. The oldies were your meters, you want to replace them, go and do it. You are in business, aren't you? And aren't you getting your meter rentals or what? If PDB cannot marshal that much of money at a time it can always go to the banks. Or ask the consumers to go to bank who would be requested to way easy on meter loans coming in collective bulks.

But we don't propose to lecture it all on the wearer who knows where the shoe pinches. We want to make the point that packaging the whole problem of trading inefficiency as also some part of loss due to pilferage and bad maintenance under the misleading head of systems loss is foolish as well as injurious. The permissible unit of systems loss should not exceed 20 per cent for even a country like Bangladesh. Showing it at 40 per cent and more gives an altogether wrong picture. This problem can be sorted out in a jiffy once there is no distribution of unmetered power in the land. Arranging that is no engineer's grist. Why take the problem as well as the blame?

Child Immunization Programme

According to a survey result made public yesterday, the child immunization programme in Bangladesh has not achieved its target. It had set itself the task of immunizing 80 per cent of our children between the age of 12 and 17 months. The results showed that immunization in DPT-3 and measles was less than 69 and 65 per cent respectively as against the target of 80 per cent in each case. However in BCG the target was surpassed with 86 per cent of the children of the above age group being immunized. Given our record of missed targets and unachieved plans, performance of the immunization programme, though below the target, is not so bad.

According to the breakdown given in the survey, it appears that the Rajshahi division has done the best with the BCG, DPT-3 and measles immunization drive having achieved 97, 85 and 82 per cent of their targets respectively. It is said that UNICEF, SIDA and WHO independently supervised the survey. We can, therefore, expect it to contain a lesser margin of error as is sometimes the case with many of our other surveys.

As Rajshahi appears to lead the nation in the drive for child immunization, we should look closely into the factors behind its success and make sincere attempts to emulate them elsewhere in the country. We congratulate the persons and organisations in Rajshahi, responsible for this remarkable achievement in the neglected area of child care.

The importance of the immunization programme can be understood better if we remember that about 3.7 million babies are born here every year. About 2,400 young children die every day, making for 100 deaths every hour. Four per cent of under-1 deaths of the world occur in Bangladesh, about 4 lakhs a year or about one a minute.

The child health care scene is grim and the unfinished tasks are many and difficult. In the midst of it all whatever success the immunization programme has achieved deserves our appreciation. We express our wholehearted support to this laudable effort and stand ready to give it whatever media support it needs towards a complete success.

The two tiny Atlantic island republics of Cape Verde and Sao Tome-Principe have held their first multi-party elections and in both cases parties that ruled since independence from Portugal in 1975 were decisively voted out of power.

These gentle transitions to democracy contrasted with the process of forcible change unrolling in the Middle East and belied Africa's reputation as a continent beyond hope of freeing itself from tyrannical governments.

The change promises to spread to the rest of Portuguese-speaking Africa. It was appropriate that it began in Cape Verde.

The ten-island archipelago was the birthplace of Amilcar Cabral, the African humanist and theorist of liberation struggle in his homeland and other Portuguese colonies of Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome-Principe.

In the post-independence period, Cape Verde, of all the Lusophone countries, had a reputation of avoiding excesses in domestic policies and practising an open-minded foreign policy.

The election on January 13 was contested by the governing Partido Africano para a Independencia de Cape Verde (PAICV-African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde) and the Movimento Popular Democratico (MPD-Popular Democratic movement) led by Carlos Veiga, which swept in with 56 deputies elected, against the PAICV's 23.

President Aristides Pereira — the leader of the defeated party who himself faces overthrow in coming Presidential elections — declared himself satisfied with the result.

When asked how the party which led Cape Verde to independence could accept the situation, he replied: "Churchill led England through the war and was then defeated

Island States of Africa Vote out One-party Rule

by Jill Jolliffe writes from Lisbon

One by one the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, which all became independent after the Caetano regime in Lisbon was toppled in 1974, are moving toward multi-party rule. First to make the change was ten-island Cape Verde in the Atlantic Ocean, swiftly followed by Sao Tome-Principe off the coast of West Africa. In both cases the parties that initiated the changes leading to elections have come to power.

at the ballot box...we accept the rules of the democratic game."

Carlos Veiga, the new Prime Minister, is a 41-year-old Lisbon-trained lawyer who campaigned on a simple platform of abolishing the secret police, restoring civil liberties and modernising the economy.

His symbol was windmill used in Cape Verde to

transform wind power into electric energy. He is typical of a new generation impatient with the traditional inefficiency and denial of basic democratic rights common in much of post-colonial Africa.

The process was repeated in Sao Tome-Principe on January 20, when the founding Movimento de Liberacao de Sao Tome-Principe (MLSTP)

was defeated by the recently-formed Partido da Convergencia Democratica (PCD) which took around 70 per cent of the vote.

A smaller party, the Coligacao Democratica de Sao Tome-Principe won two seats in the 55-seat parliament. Like Cape Verde, Sao Tome-Principe now faces presidential elections in which Miguel Trovoada, founding

father of the MLSTP, who in 1979 was jailed for two years by President Pinto da Costa, has the assured support of the newly-elected parties.

In Guinea-Bissau, the PAIGCV (Partido Africano para a Independencia de Cape Verde e Guinea-Bissau), which retains its original title despite a schism with Cape Verde in 1981) has been slower to adapt to change.

In mid-January it held an extraordinary congress to discuss a multiparty system. President Joao "Nino" Vieira said he hoped to bring forward the date of elections, early promised for 1993.

Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome-Principe were heavily influenced by the Soviet system after independence, from Portugal and changes today reflect new Soviet policies.

The black peninsula has been expressed constitutional changes to precede elections; to separate ruling parties from the state machine, to allow free elections, to remove armies from party-political control and to introduce free enterprise.

Changes afoot in Angola and Mozambique are dependent on the outcome of peace talks paving the way for democracy.

Mozambique approved its new constitution in December, deleting all reference to socialism and outlining a framework for elections later this year, but now awaits the result of ceasefire talks in Rome with the Renamo opposition.

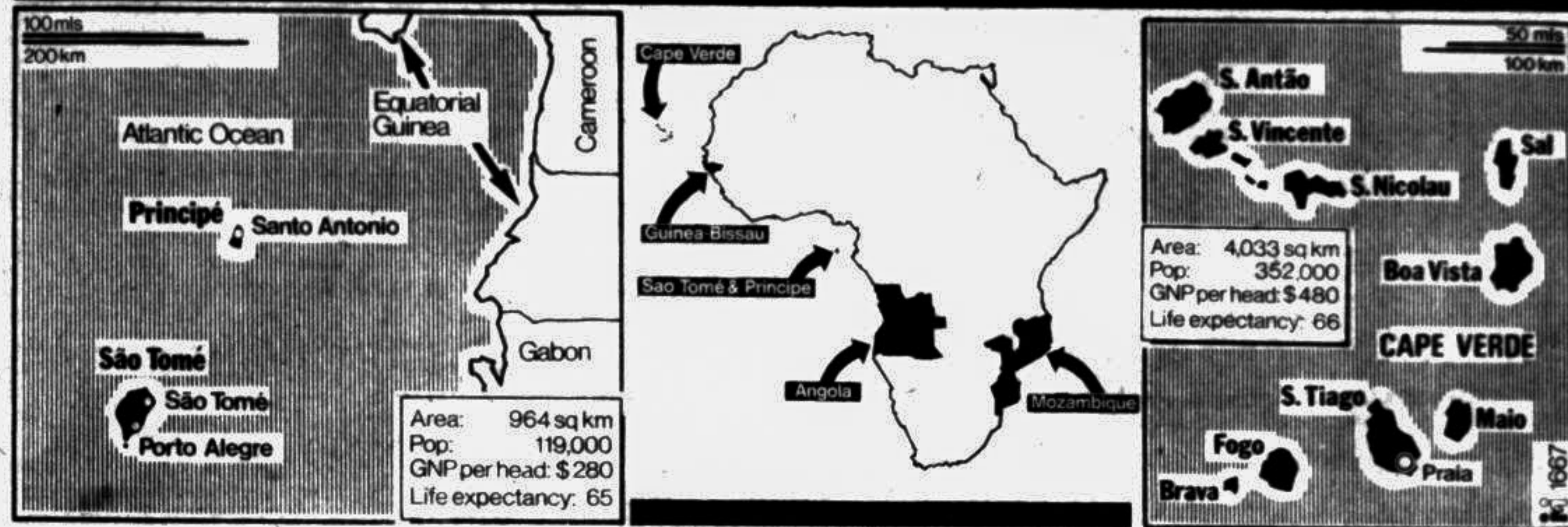
The Angola case is more complicated, given the scale and intensity of its 15-year-old civil war.

A new Angolan constitution will be introduced in May, but after five rounds of talks in Portugal, the MPLA government and UNITA led by Jonas Savimbi have been unable to agree on ceasefire terms which will allow UNITA to participate in elections.

Diplomats close to the talks are confident agreement on the final principles of a ceasefire will come from a new round in Lisbon in February.

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Lusophone Africa



Bangladesh, a small country area-wise, is obviously big in population and faces a simply grave demographic problem. Population explosion has been identified as the number one problem of the country and motivation efforts are afoot to control the boom although expected results are yet to come.

A recent World Bank study points out that the most serious longer-term problem facing Bangladesh is the extremely high and rising density of population — 800 persons per square mile.

One will just be astonished to note how population here rises in compound growth. The total population of Bangladesh has almost doubled within a period of 20 years, from 1961 to 1981. During 1901 the total population of this country was 2 crore 89 lakh which rose to 5 crore 8 lakh in 1961 showing an increase of 2 crore 19 lakh in a span of 60 years. From 1961 the rate of increase assumed pace and became quite rapid. The total population rose by 2 crore 19 lakh during a span of less than 14 years that is from 5 crore 8 lakh in 1961 to 7 crore 84 lakh in 1974 which again increased by 1 crore 35 lakh in six years and stood at 8 crore 99 lakh in 1981. The compound growth rate of population was 2.40 per cent compared to 2.70 per cent in the last census.

Now the population of Bangladesh is 11 crore 42 lakh

Population Explosion Threatens Socio-economic Development

by Abdur Rahman Khan

(in 1990) and the rate of growth, 2.16 per cent. If this growth rate continues, in less than thirty years the population will again be double to the present size. Imagine the proportion in the same land area! This gigantic population will be more inconsistent to both geographical area and resources of Bangladesh. To the contrary, modern economy demands a sizable population in the interest of development and progress. The truth remains that the high rate of population growth is the major barrier on the road to the socio-economic uplift more in case of Bangladesh. And despite notable advances in agriculture, food production and health sectors, it is not being possible to increase the growth rate of the economy by the same ratio. The pace of development is held back by a rather phenomenal increase in the population: 23 lakh new mouths each year added on the receiving end.

Under the Third Five-Year Plan (1985-90) the population growth rate was supposed to drop from 2.40% to 1.80%, but the desired target could

not be fully achieved. According to the recent official estimate even under the most optimistic assumptions vis-a-vis the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1990-95), the country's population will rise to a minimum of 13 crore 73 lakh which is obviously alarming. The average density will then rise to insupportable 953 per sq. mile by the year 2000.

In passing it may be recalled that we have a target "Health for all by the year 2000". But how, if more basic necessities like food, clothing, housing, become too short to meet the growing demand and all the other ingredients of civilised life. Although population is an essential ingredient of all development and is the best of all resources from manpower point of view, but in a country like Bangladesh, there may be little scope left then to turn the population into useful manpower for progress and prosperity. So, the country must have to maintain a balance between its population and resources. Stabilization of population is, in fact, the sine qua non not only for the socio-

economic development of the nation, but also for health target.

To check the population boom in Bangladesh, Family Planning programme started in 1953 on a voluntary initiative. After a few years government backing was added. All the successive governments have recognized the necessity of population control and emphasized upon such programmes. But, in the policy, with a view to controlling population and assuring family welfare, maximum emphasis has remained on family planning programmes; mother and child health care programme not so much integrated and expanded. But it is necessary that the infrastructure of this programme expand in a network and services reach the door-steps of locality dwellers. This would serve the family planning objective well. For instance, if maternal and child mortality is reduced, it would encourage reduction of birth rate. To this end, the family planning concerns should help educate mothers about the programme and give priority to child healthcare, with all

the implication that planned parenthood ensures better health and happiness.

However, the population control programme should be activated much more by bringing about changes particularly in its administration and planning. Side by side with effecting broader co-ordination between the health and the population control programmes, hearty participation in it by non-government voluntary organisation should be encouraged. As a result, it will be possible to achieve greater success in the programme's physical target and thus to keep present population of 11 crore 42 lakh limited to 13 crore 73 lakh by 2000 AD. But more hard work is required to attain the desired result.

Saving the nation from the dreadful consequences of population explosion needs a greater awareness among the people in general. Particularly, all sensible persons in the society will have to play the vanguard's role. The programme must be carried forward by the concerted efforts of social workers, people's representatives, local leadership, government and non-government organizations. Otherwise, if the control target is not achieved the high growth rate will take the population-land ratio to a state of no cure. Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition, poor sanitation and all other odds and ills shall be plaguing the prospect of living.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

The Gall of the Violators

No finer compliment has been paid Human Rights Watch than for its application for consultative status at the United Nations to be rejected. It was blocked by a minority of 19-member committee that has to decide unanimously which private groups should be allowed to address UN committees and circulate staff papers.

America's largest, most wide-ranging human rights organization was found wanting by six flagrant rights abusers: Cuba, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Algeria and Sudan.

Human Rights Watch has published devastating reports on violations of rudimentary norms in each of these countries except Libya, which first agreed and then refused to admit a monitoring team.

Cuba, which led the fight, castigated the organization or its "irreverent" criticism of China's massacre of student dissidents.

For gall, first prize goes to Iraq, where dissenters are gassed or disappear in tanks of acid. Iraq's spokesman alleged that some of the group's officers, because they are Jews, were hostile to certain Arab states. In any case, Watch monitors have prepared hard-hitting reports on Israel's violation of Palestinian rights in occupied territories. Indeed, the organization's reputation for fairness helps explain the support for its application from such longtime targets of its criticism as the Soviet Union and Chile. But with the Gang of Six, who needs friends?

—The New York Times.

Halt the Chemical Plague

Responsible countries will sign a convention against production of chemical weapons and allow, however grudgingly, inspection by the United Nations. But irresponsible regimes and secretive governments have proved that production of chemical weapons is easier to hide than construction of nuclear ones. The most terrifying part of the chemical weapon is its ease of delivery. The threat of chemical warfare in the Middle East conflict makes it clear that action is past due. The ability of potentially aggressive regimes to build arsenals which threaten the world is frightening. With the end of the Cold War, it is possible and thus urgent to approach nuclear, chemical and biological proliferation in a sane manner. The immediate aim is to ensure that only those who are responsible enough to hold them must be allowed to touch such weapons. The goal is to destroy them.

Bangkok Post.

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.

Plots in Uttara Model Town

Sir, In order to arrest the housing problem of Dhaka city, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakha (former D.I.T.) took up an ambitious plan of allotting plots to intending persons at Uttara Model Town in the year 1986. While issuing prospectus it was declared that the price per bigha of land would be Tk.10 lac and a deposit of Tk.30,000/- was required to be deposited along with the application for plot. A large number of people complied with the conditions and applied for the plots, and remained quite in darkness for about four years.

The RAJUK however, started allotting two sizes of plots one measuring 3 kathas and the other 5 kathas from December 1989 as per criterion of admissibility fixed by them. But to the utter surprise of the allottees the price per bigha of land had been fixed at Tk.16 lac instead of Tk. 10 lac as was advertised

in the prospectus. RAJUK demanded Tk.4 lac for 5 kathas of land if any allottee paid the money at a time including adjustment of Tk. 30,000/- earnest money deposited earlier. Those unable to pay the money at a time had been allowed 3 instalments subject to payment of interest at the rate of 16% after payment of Tk.2 lac including the adjustment of Tk.30,000/- paid as earnest money. In other words those who would pay by instalment are required to pay additional Tk.48,000/- and in that case the total payment will be Tk.4.48 lacs for 5 kathas of land.

According to clause 7 of the allotment letter RAJUK asked the allottees to take possession of plot within 90 days of payment of the full amount or 1st payment of the half amount of the price of land. But it is surprising that one full year has already passed RAJUK could not as yet prepare the land, lay road and demarcate size of the plots, what to speak of giving

possession. It has been reliably learnt that it will take at least one more year to get the matter finalised. Meanwhile many persons are going to be retired and will be deprived of getting facility of house building loan from their respective departments.

In our opinion charging of interest without making the plots ready and giving possession seems to be illogical and unjust from the point of fairplay. Had the plots been ready and fit for delivery and the allottees failed to pay the instalment in time, RAJUK could charge an interest, but here the matter is otherwise.

We appeal to the hon'ble Acting President to kindly instruct RAJUK to get Uttara plots ready quickly and not to charge interest for the rest amount. We may bring to his kind notice that over 75% allottees could not make payment at a time and availed facility of instalment. A sufferer

Voice of the children

Sir, I read with keen interest your second editorial published on February 10, 1991 under the above caption. While wholeheartedly supporting your suggestion to make our politicians face a question and answer ses-

sion conducted by our youngsters to let them hear what our young boys and girls are thinking about the future of the country and its politics, I would like to add that not only the politicians but the intellectuals of our society who are relentlessly trying to put their imprint on and mould our culture may likewise be made to face our children to listen to their thinking on what our culture should be or should not be.

This may produce some interesting revelations from our progeny for our politicians and intellectuals to ponder on. S. A. Moazzam 1/19, Pallabi, Dhaka.

What people want from leaders

Sir, Certainly the people of any country would desire the following from their leaders — political, social and religious leaders:

- a) Fundamental rights for all the citizens equally;
- b) human rights and the dignity for all the citizens equally;
- c) democracy of Laws, Rules and Moral Values (Justice);
- d) separation of the Judiciary from the Executive orders and also supremacy of the former over the latter;
- e) the government, parliament, judi-

The leadership ought to understand the difference between the Analogy and Analysis of the fundamental theory of leadership. However, it is wonderful that our present leadership fighting for the election of February 27, 1991 does not seem to care very much for these two orders of two words; and consequently we see a useless struggle on the word "Secularism", while in democracy "secularism" ought to mean the government, parliament, judiciary, administration, political leadership etc to be free from the "sectarianism" and "isms" of all sorts, when the people will live in peace. It is sometimes the leaders — political, social and religious — who create problems and not the ordinary people, in general.

Andrew D'Costa Dhaka 1100