

**Lesson that BJP Must Learn**

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has reiterated its position to build a temple for god Rama at Ayodhya, at the site of a 16th century mosque built by Emperor Babur, the founder of the Moghal dynasty. There is nothing new in what BJP said. What is new, however, is that now they have the capacity to actually carry out their threat. Following the recent elections the BJP has emerged as the second largest party in the Indian parliament — the Lok Sabha. It has also become the majority party in the crucial state of Uttar Pradesh. The Chief Minister of the state government Mr Kalyan Singh has vowed that the temple will be constructed as pledged and steps will soon be taken to remove the security personnel currently guarding the mosque complex.

There has always been a fundamentalist streak in Indian politics. But much to the credit of the Indian electorate, it has been kept in the outer fringes of politics. Throughout its 44 years of independent existence India was able to keep its religious parties confined to small voting blocs; their policies not really affecting the national political scene. What the BJP has been able to do is to bring this outer fringe into the mainstream of Indian politics, threatening some of the fundamental premises on which the modern Indian state has been based. Independent India's founders realised from the very outset that India was a multi-religious, multi-national, multi-racial country divided by many languages and diverse cultures. The only way this vast country could be kept together was through a secular and democratic political system. By playing the 'religious card' the BJP has been able to capture the votes of a certain section of the electorate thrown up by the rising tide of fundamentalism. But it has done so at great cost. For India to prosper and become a modern country it requires the active participation of all the people of India, especially of its nearly 100 million Muslims who have made invaluable contribution in various sectors of the Indian economy and culture.

Now that the BJP has emerged as the main opposition party at the national level, it is expected that they will take the country's interest into consideration and rise above its narrow and religious party interest. Opposition party, in a democratic system, can be considered as the 'alternative government'. In fact in parliamentary democracy, the opposition is very much a part of the overall machinery of government. To play the role of a true opposition party, the BJP must realise that ignoring the rights of the minority communities, especially the religious rights of the Muslim community, will not in any way help the proper governance of the country. It will only lead to bitterness and chaos.

India's integrity is now being threatened from many sides. After years of blood-letting, the Khalistan movement of the Sikhs remain as volatile as ever. The people of Kashmir are increasingly becoming restive. There are other disintegrating tendencies. Under these circumstances further fanning of the already complicated communal issue, especially between the Hindus and the Muslims, can only spell disaster for India.

Democracy is as much governing by the consent of the majority as it is tolerance of the rights of minorities. It is a system of accommodation and compromise. One of the reasons that democracy, as a form of government, has succeeded all over the world is because it is flexible. BJP must now show that flexibility. Electioneering is one thing, governing is something quite different. The faster BJP learns that lesson, the better it is for India.

**A Fair Deal for the Cow**

Some lakhs of cattlehead were lost in the recent tidal surge in our offshore areas. How many have been slaughtered ostensibly to comply with religious behests? Not even an intelligent guess can be hazarded. That we have livestock in a miserably poor proportion to what we need does not call for more than a casual proof of the hundreds of crores of takas worth of powdered milk that we import from abroad. This shortfall keeps on yawning wider and wider with mass slaughter augmented dangerously by a massive and radical change of the Bengalees from a fish-loving people to a flesh-eating one.

Requests were however made by a few quarters for trying to keep this year's religious slaughtering programme to a minimum and to make the value of the 'sacrifice' go to succour the distressed in the south as also to relieve the hard-pressed cattle situation of the land. But they were far too feeble and few to elicit any response. Possibly, most slaughtering are done impelled more by ostentation in mind rather than because of truly religious sentiments and a sense of sacrifice.

The cow's value, at least for the townspeople, has shrunk to its worth in eatable beefness — and nothing besides. There is much to go sentimental over such deterioration of mains relationship with that long serving friend of man. The qualitative degradation that is so much eloquently there however is lost on even the literate and more aware part of the society. But cannot our society be beseeched to respond in the name of enlightened self-interest?

It is rather foolish to repeat a school student's list for the uses of a cow. But a part of those that are far from activities in the fields very genuinely need to be educated in that. It gives you milk — the best after mother's which incidentally cannot be had at any market in the world. It gives you the best natural manure free of all adverse side effects, enriching, rejuvenating your soil. It also gives you good dependable fuel.

And, while reading a news report in a most widely circulated vernacular newspaper last week — it quoted information from three different areas of the country —, it seemed that the most important aspect of the cow's many uses is that it draws the plough. In Bhairav, Bagerhat and Cox's Bazar, for want of cows to plough, men are being yoked and made to draw the plough. It is not an altogether unknown thing to do but it never was a widespread practice and it always stood as the last resort at the worst of times.

Have we a national policy to fight this corroding menace? The awareness of the importance of letting the trees live and proliferate is gradually dawning on the apathetic mind of the masses. When shall we be able to make our people see that the cow deserves at least an equal deal? At least a fairer deal than now?

**A**FTER liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation there were questions in the minds of many Kuwaitis on the following lines: will liberated Kuwait emerge as a desperately needed Middle Eastern example of democracy where leaders are chosen in free elections, the press can print what it likes, government critics do not have to fear imprisonment, and merit, not political influence, is the hallmark of those who fill civil service posts? After their return from exile, Kuwaiti leaders made a lot of promises from re-building the damaged infrastructure to making progress in political reform. After his return from exile, Emir Jabir Al-Ahmad grudgingly aired the idea of "a new Kuwait".

The old Kuwait is now emerging from ruins and the new Kuwait is yet to be born. Among some Kuwaitis the Sabah clan is now jestingly called "the running family", because they fled into exile. For more than 230 years Kuwait has been ruled by the Sabah family, which came to power when this country was a poor outpost of traders and pearl divers. For generations the system worked well, because Sabahs' income came from leading Kuwaiti merchants whose purse strings kept a check on the family's political ambitions. But the oil wealth that came to Kuwait in the last four decades gave the Sabah a source of income in-

dependent of Kuwait's merchant class, fundamentally changing the family's relationship with its people. Gradually, the family acquired more and more power to put its own members in top positions regardless of competence. The Kuwaitis are probably still rich enough not to care too much what others think of them. So far all the Emir has offered is a fuzzy pledge to hold parliamentary elections during the coming year. The new government brought in to

tion, a diverse and mostly respectable group of people — ranging from Pan-Arabists and Shiites to merchants and western leaning moderates — who have been clamouring for a bit of say in the new Kuwait, did not get even a token position. There has been mounting resentment among opposition leaders that the new government would prove hostile to demands for greater democ-

the invasion and partial destruction of the country, the government seemed to be acting as though nothing had happened. The new government was also confronted with allegations of widespread violation of human rights. The human rights group Amnesty International investigated the allegations and said in its report that the majority of the

tional coalition unparalleled in almost 50 years and having undertaken the biggest military commitment since the Vietnam war, the US has a vested interest in what happens in this country. In this context, the US Secretary of State said "the ability of the US to support Kuwait politically and from a security standpoint could be enhanced if they (Kuwait government) evidenced full respect and commitment to the preservation of human rights." The Kuwaiti

the oil front. Two months after the Gulf war's finale, the emirate's oil fields reportedly look like ground zero on doomsday. More than 500 wells spew roaring tornadoes of flame like demonic genies whirling their scimitars. The town of Al-Ahmedi, an oil operations centre 20km south of Kuwait city, lies under darkness at noon as billows of thick, sulfurous smoke choke the atmosphere. Gallant efforts are being made by fire-fighting experts from abroad to douse what amounts to a country on fire.

Another threat to Kuwaiti oil has lately arisen. Causing long-term damage to Kuwaiti oil supply, underground water is increasingly surging into its uncapped wells, making oil more costly and difficult to produce in the future. The damage, caused as underground water displaces oil in an uncontrolled rush upward at uncapped wells, has been evident from the steam that can be seen alongside fires at some of the more than 500 oil-well fires set by the Iraqis before they were expelled from the country. Kuwaiti experts said that the dilution of the oil is a sign of irreversible damage to the wells. They said they apprehend substantial reduction in Kuwait's capacity to pump oil over the years to come.

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by A S M Nurunnabi

**The Kuwaitis are probably still rich enough not to care too much what others think of them. So far all the Emir has offered is a fuzzy pledge to hold parliamentary elections during the coming year. The new government brought in to replace the one that resigned recently turned out to be a little more than a family reshuffle.**

replace the one that resigned recently turned out to be a little more than a family reshuffle. Only five members of the royal family are now in the cabinet, but the family retains the top jobs: premiership, foreign affairs, defence and interior. Pro-democracy activists had been left out. Particularly galling was the promotion of Sheikh Salem Al Sabah — who squelched pro-democracy rallies in 1989 to Deputy Prime Minister. The exclusion of the Emir's brother, Deputy Premier Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah is seen as a sign of division of the top. According to a western observer, the Emir's branch came out weaker, while the Crown Prince's lot are holding the key posts.

Representatives of fundamentalist Kuwaiti Muslims, conservative businessmen, former resistance fighters and university leftists said that the new government was not acceptable. Opposition leaders said that they did not want to undermine the government or to remove the ruling family. They said they sought a check on the Sabah's power and a greater voice in the country's rebuilding and how its enormous oil revenues are spent. The opposition Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), a radical Sunni Muslim group spearheading the pro-democracy campaign, has been the most outspoken in rejecting the new cabinet and criticising the Jabar and Saad leadership. One opposition leader complained that in the wake of

victims were Palestinians, among them Jordanian passport holders. Although revenge for alleged collaboration might have been the motive in some cases, many people seemed to have been targeted simply because of their nationality. The group catalogued the misery of at least 600 people, mostly Palestinians, who had been detained, beaten, subjected to electric shock and burning with cigarettes and acid or threatened with assault and execution. The Emir and the Crown Prince expressed concern but said they were unable to control the thousands of gun-toting vigilantes.

What seems certain is that for the foreseeable future the US will be deeply involved in Kuwait. Having led an interna-

dissidents, however, are looking to Washington to ensure that their country moves towards a freer, more democratic system.

There is a further report that Kuwait would set war-crime trials. More than 600 Iraqi soldiers and others accused of war crimes during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait would stand trial soon and some could face the death penalty, Kuwaiti officials said. Charges included murder, torture, espionage, treason and terrorist operations, they said. According to Kuwaiti officials, some of the thousands of Iraqi prisoners of war held in Saudi Arabia might also be sent to Kuwait for trial on war crimes. The ravaged oil Sheikdom has other serious problems on

**Northern Somalia Goes it Alone, Ruined and Penniless**

by Alan Rake

*A new nation is being created, almost unnoticed, in the troubled Horn of Africa. The Republic of Somaliland has been declared by the rebel Somali National Movement out what was once British Somaliland. The problems for the fledgling state are enormous: it has no economy, no regular finance, is shattered by war and plagued by drought. And no one, it seems, wants to know....*

**W**HILE the international media concentrated on the flight of Mengistu Haile Mariam from Ethiopia and the downfall of his government, few newspapers noticed that Somalia was also changing the course of its history.

On May 18 the former British Somaliland, comprising the whole of northern Somalia, set up its own Republic of Somaliland. Since then it has confirmed that its decision to secede is irreversible and that it will not yield to the pleading of the Mogadishu government to preserve Somali unity.

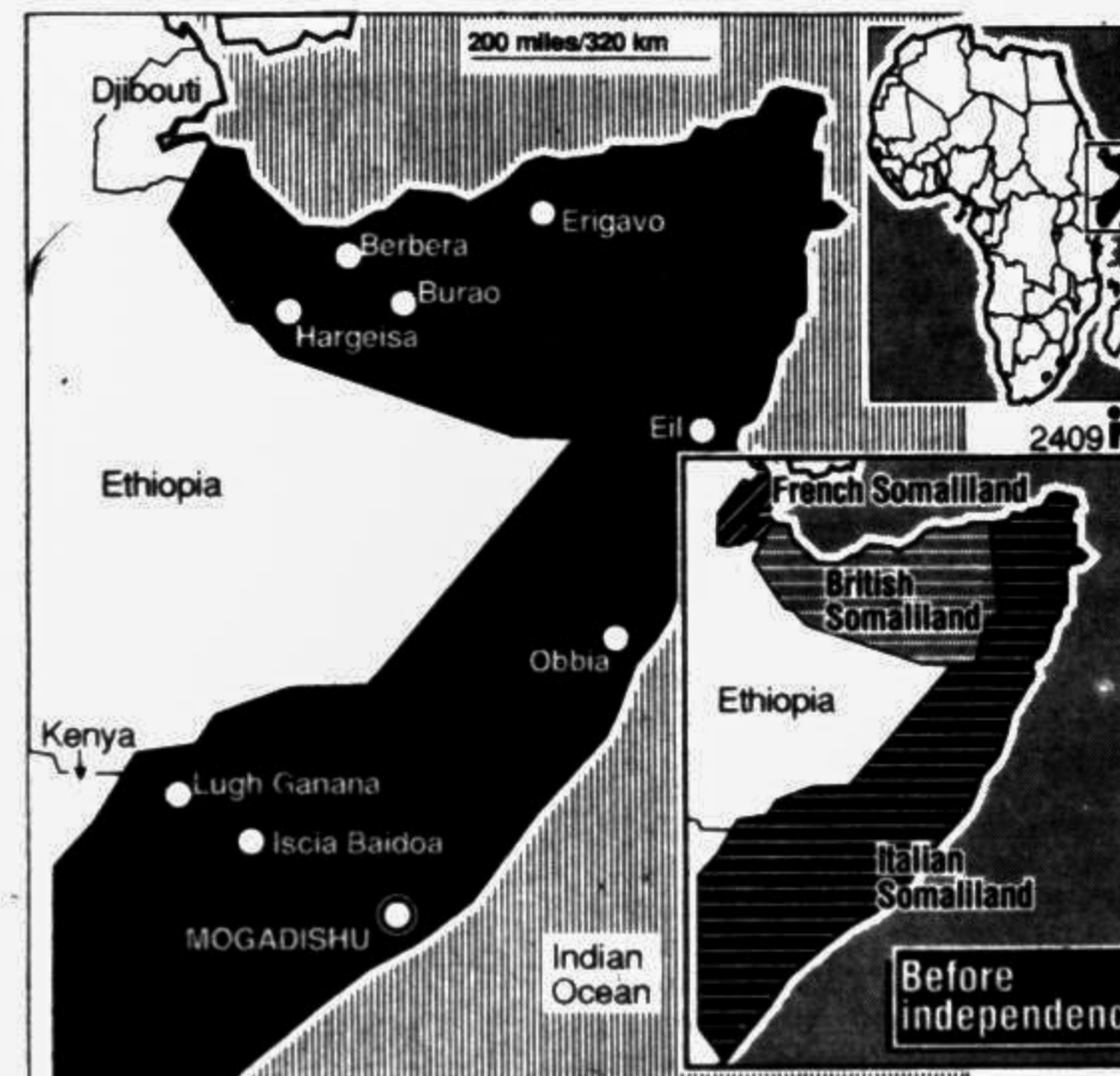
Like Eritrea in Ethiopia, the Somaliland Republic has been born out of a guerrilla struggle, by a people long estranged from the government at the centre. The new state is the creation of the Somali National Movement (SNM), a guerrilla organisation which at first fought the tyrannical government of Siyad Barre almost single-handedly.

The SNM was launched at a press conference in London in 1981. It was founded out of the disillusionment and demoralisation felt in Somali over the national defeat in the 1977/78 Ogaden war against Ethiopia. It felt Siyad Barre had pursued the wrong cause and been proved a loser.

The SNM was formed mainly by the Isaaq clan, though some of its top leaders came from other clan groups such as the Hawiye. They share a British, not Italian colonial tradition, and their second language is English.

Millions of Somali exiles live abroad. Many are Isaaqs living in Britain as students or political refugees. They are a dominant force in the renowned Somali service of the BBC.

In the early Eighties the SNM drew financial and logistical support from Ethiopia. It set up camps in the Ogaden desert, along the border of northern Somaliland and made daring raids attacking military



posts and blowing up strategic targets. The situation changed dramatically in April 1988 when Siyad persuaded Mengistu to sign a peace agreement. Under it both countries resolved to drop support for the rebel movements they harboured in their countries.

Ethiopia betrayed its former SNM allies and closed Radio Hagan that had been broadcasting SNM propaganda from Addis Ababa. The SNM leadership became afraid that it would be expelled from the country, or even arrested and

murdered. Such betrayals were a hallmark of the Mengistu regime.

Instead of waiting for the Ethiopians to drive them out, they simply put all units into action and invaded northern Somalia, their homeland.

Their action was so swift and decisive it took the Somali government entirely by surprise. With remarkable speed the SNM took the northern provincial capital of Hargeisa, Burao and other northern towns. They tried unsuccessfully to take the port of Berbera, where the US navy

has facilities. Siyad's response was swift and brutal. He hired foreign pilots, including South Africans, because many of his own airforce refused to bomb their fellow countrymen. He relentlessly bombed the northern cities, reducing them almost to rubble.

One visiting Dutch journalist said hardly a building left standing in Hargeisa was more than one storey tall. Siyad's troops followed, pursuing a deliberate policy of eliminating the Quirmis, a derogatory term used by Siyad's son-in-law General Morgan, meaning "the rotten ones."

Morgan's troops razed whole towns and villages. Using a typical Somali metaphor he said: "It is essential to sweep away the broken glass without leaving a single piece behind."

He unleashed officially sanctioned genocide against the northerners. There was even evidence that poisoned gas, supplied by Libya, had been

used in some raids. New African magazine published photographs of the test kits used by government troops to test for poison gas.

Northern Somalia was raped and traumatised by Siyad's troops. Mines were sown everywhere. In Hargeisa alone an estimated 50,000 people died in the bombardments and only five per cent of the buildings were left standing, according to officials estimates. Millions were left homeless and hundreds of thousands fled into Ethiopia.

When the United Somali Congress stormed to power in Mogadishu in February and put Siyad Barre to flight, there was a moment when a new, united Somalia could have been created. But the USC set up an interim government without consulting the SNM.

The SNM remembered when after independence in 1960, the southerners had taken the premiership and all the most important ministries for their own. That time they

had cooperated in the interests of Somali unity.

Some SNM central committee members wanted to continue the tradition of cooperation. Others wanted to seize the opportunity to break away.

The SNM knew it was the best organised, most homogeneous, and most viable of all the Somali liberation movements. After weeks of debate the hawk prevailed. Independence was declared.

Their country is shattered by war and plagued by the drought and famine. It has no economy or regular source of finance. War has prevented normal planting or harvesting. The new government is dependent mainly on the funds of Isaaq exiles, but many have lost their jobs in the upheavals of Kuwait, Iraq and the Gulf.

Diplomatically the world does not want yet another secessionist regime. The UN and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) are still trying to digest the much older and more justifiable claims of Eritrea that will soon be asking for its own independence.

They are worried about further secession and the fragmentation of the Horn of Africa. And the Arab League has already condemned the secessionist move. — GEMINI NEWS

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**To the Editor...**

**BMDC affairs**

Sir, Having read several reports and a number of letters in various newspapers about the mismanagement of Bangladesh Management Development Centre (BMDC), I was inspired to visit the Institute situated at Sobhanbag in the city. And I saw and heard nothing to be pleased with.

Although there has been a 'ban' on extravagance in all government-run organisations, austerity is not followed at BMDC. Construction works to beautify the Centre is going on in full swing while new items like swivel-chair, wall clock, new curtains, mats, and other fixtures are being bought at the cost of several lakh takas. The new DG reportedly using two cars and two drivers whole time.

Some employees of the Centre alleged that a certain Management Councillor along with one of the most Senior Management Councillors are engaged in doing various other works neglecting their own work. These two gentlemen have virtually kept the 'administration' inoperable it was alleged. Although there is a Senior Administrative Officer at the Centre he has nothing to do except 'sign papers' where these 'two officers' are

'officially' [as far as the Ministry of Industries is concerned] unqualified. Otherwise everything is supposed to be done by them. It is alleged that some of the bills of the employees have been held up while other expenses are taking place.

Allegations have been made about the Library of the Centre: books are taken by officials and their relatives but never returned. The PABX telephone system of the office is out of order for past six months. It is alleged that the 'line' has been cut because of non-payment of telephone bills. This, interestingly is not the first time the line has been cut off by the T&T authorities.

A very high level investigation was to take place to find out the actual happenings of the centre but for some mysterious reasons though three persons including a Joint Secretary has arrived to do the job nothing took place accordingly.

The DG's bungalow which remains unoccupied for more than four years has reportedly turned into a gambling-den for some employees. Presently the Management Councillors are trying to turn this bungalow into a 'club' which has infused indignation among the em-

ployees who demand that the bungalow be allotted to them since they have no proper place to live.

It is hoped that the Ministry of Industries will wake up soon to salvage the miseries of BMDC in the national interest.

Latifia Banoo, Dharmondi, Dhaka.

**City Corporation**

Sir, I went to see the new Mayor of Dhaka by appointment to inform him of the deplorable condition of road, lack of proper street lighting, huge accumulation of stinking garbage, mushrooming unauthorised butcher and other shops on the pavements etc. in my area. The secretary of the Mayor knew nothing about my appointment and was surprised to see me. He informed that the Mayor will not be available that day being busy with someone's anniversary elsewhere in the city. I, therefore, left a written report on the situation in my area for the Mayor with my card hoping he would have the courtesy to call me later. Regrettably the young Mayor has not lived up to my expectations.

M. Choudhury Dhaka.

**OPINION**

**UZ Courts : A Second Thought**

It is well circulated in the media that courts in the Upazilas are going to be abolished soon. Well, some attendant inconveniences and consequential adversities to accrue as resultant effects are as follows :-

Concentration of court officials in the districts and/or selected locations as the case may be will overcrowd the already existing staffing pattern there telling upon the efficient employment management and work environment.

Lawyers, mohrars, stamp vendors and other supporting service caterers will be largely unemployed as they are likely to find themselves as no match to their counterparts based in the districts or such selected localities.

People of the command areas of abolished courts will find it comparatively harder to seek relief elsewhere under their existing economic order. As a result lot of incidents will be suppressed or not buoy up and the aggrieved will not get redress. Torture, domination, intimidation, deprivation and lastly extinction of the weak by the strong in thousand and one direct and indirect ways will be firmly established.

Upazila Nirbahi Officers in their state of public functions free mixing and general works of all sorts if vested with the responsibilities of taking cognizance in criminal offences, granting bail and doing some other works of regular criminal justice on full time basis may aggravate the interests of the commoners and rather add to the subjugation of the weak by the strong as he in fact already

Asstt. Judges and Magistrates irrespective of the volume of business in their courts are apparently effective checks to crimes and connected consequences — at least the people are getting redress of their grievances at nominal expenses quickly and nearer to their homes even under the odds of weather conditions and communication hazards.

civil matters may be even worse.

The argument of heavy cost-structure involved in retaining these courts is not tenable as allocation for TA bills alone, not to speak of other heads of transferred subjects expenses, would involve much more heavy expenditure every financial year which can be sufficiently avoided from being wasted, misused and misappropriated. Proper cost control supervision and check and balance is sure to skim off a large margin which would otherwise be nothing but unearned income of the job holders in the name of superfluous TA bills, office contingencies and other payables; court budgets do not have such generous a extent giving rise to personal access to government money at will.

Again in the case of abolition of courts transfer of officials to the districts or selected places will not improve the national exchequer. Moreover the court establishments set up at heavy expenditures at the start of upazilas will remain vacant, unutilised or largely underutilised by other upazila level offices virtually in a leisurely manner as they are already housed well and working in their existing locations. The overhead and other expenditures of any single transferred department or office amount to more than those of a retained subject, say, in this case, a court.

The essence of democratic setup in this aspect that justice at the doorsteps of the common mass will vanish, colonial centralisation will replace popular decentralisation which will mean bouncing back to the discarded antipeople vested interests again. The concerned authorities are requested to formulate their policy decision judiciously after a wise analysis and synthesis of the pros and cons involved in the process taking into consideration the social, economic and political environment of the people and their welfare country.

Bani Mirpur, Dhaka.