

DOWN TO EARTH Election camps for non-election uses

By Khalilur Rahman

Over nine months ago different political parties set up election camps at vantage points throughout the metropolises to conduct campaigns for the February 27 parliamentary polls. The by-election to two seats in the city was also held last month. But in some areas the camps still exist. These are functioning for a variety of purposes other than any political activities.



Most of the camps are made of bamboo fences erected on footpaths, wayside vacant lots owned either by government or private individuals or on parts of public thoroughfares. As these are temporary structures none felt that these would maintain their existence once the election was over.

The Daily Star correspondent visited some of the camps this week to know the activities of the occupants. Loudspeakers are not generally used because these have no need now. Only on special occasions mikes blare day and night almost non-stop. Then suddenly the loudspeakers cease to function after the particular event passes by much to the relief of the local residents.

The camp near Shishu Bitan-o-Shikhyangan School at Eskaton Garden Road is being used as a recreation centre for a group of people. The camp

was set up on a portion of the road before February 27 parliamentary polls. Groups of young men attend the camp since early morning till late in the evening. Sudden outbursts of laughter and huc and cry are heard frequently from inside. The visitors play cards and caroms for long hours. Residents of the locality, particularly the students of the Shikhyangan School, suffer from utter inconveniences due to the camp activities. In 1986 general election to the parliament similar camp was set up there. But the law enforcing agency dismantled the

keepers said.

The other camp near Kalabagan bus stoppage has been converted into a repairing shop-cum-garage for rickshaws. A cigarette shop is also being run. Here some of the shelterless people have found a place to stay at night. Open air tea stalls and betel-leaf shops have sprung up around the 'rickshaw garage' on the footpath. Fruit vendors have also found an ideal place to run their trade on this busy road at Kalabagan.

The camps which are still open in the metropolis have no sanction from the respec-

tive political parties. But the local party bosses who planned the setting up of those for electioneering did not remove the structures. Rather they allowed the party workers to use those for various purposes, sources said.

A senior police official said that functioning of camps on public places was unauthorised and could be removed forthwith. He told The Daily Star that it was the primary responsibility of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to evict all such unauthorised structures with police help. It was necessary for the sanitation as well as beautification. The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) rule also has provisions for taking action in such cases, he added.

structure on public complaint, some local people told the Star.

Another camp, situated just beside the main thoroughfare at Green Road, remains busy almost round the clock. This has been functioning like a club house. At night the camp is used for sleeping by several people on the kutcha floor, residents said.

Two big camps belonging to two political parties near Kalabagan bus stoppage serve commercial purposes. One of the camps has been turned into a big garage for autorickshaws. The camp is on the footpath. It has also encroached a small portion of the road. A few autorickshaws found inside were under repair while some others put on daily service, one of the garage

Opposition's demand

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tion in parliament must be scrapped to uphold the sanctity of election to the highest post of President and make it credible to all.

The government, they said, was forced to repeal the "undemocratic and unconstitutional" ordinance bowing to combined pressure from the public and opposition parties, lawyers and professional groups.

"Partial victory" have been achieved through the repeal of the ordinance, but the "final victory" will be achieved after scrapping the "black" Presidential Election Law.

They thanked the people, democratic forces and other opposition parties for their support to Awami League in its fight against the black ordinance.

The government should immediately scrap the Presidential Election Act to ensure sanctity and credibility of the election to the presidency, the Awami League leaders said.

Salauddin Quader

UNB adds: National Democratic Party (NDP) leader Salauddin Quader Choudhury MP, has said the government decision to repeal the Ordinance amending Presidential Election Act is a decision of a political government bowing before popular opinion.

"Responding to popular wishes cannot be manifested as a defect for any democratic government although it is definitely a victory of popular will," he said in a statement Thursday.

Choudhury urged Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to repeal the Presidential Election Act, 1991, and introduce fresh law for holding election to the presidency.

He said the presidential election law is an arbitrary Act

Suranjit

Ganantrani Party leader Suranjit Sengupta, MP, Thursday urged the government to scrap the Presidential Election Act immediately.

"The presidential election will not be credible unless the President Election Act, 1991 is also repealed and the sanctity of ballot ensured," he said in a statement.

Presidential election under this Act, he said, will not help eliminate the vulnerability of the presidency, nor will it bestow credibility to the process of election and the elected president.

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Nadine Gordimer wins Nobel

STOCKHOLM, Sweden, Oct 3: Nadine Gordimer, a white South African who dared to describe and defy apartheid, won the 1991 Nobel Prize Thursday.

"I'm really tremendously surprised and thrilled," Gordimer said Thursday in a telephone interview in New York, where she was lecturing.

Gordimer, an unwavering critic of apartheid and an outspoken advocate of black majority rule in South Africa, said she did not see the award as timed to the changes in South Africa, but as recognition for a body of work over the years.

The Swedish Academy awarded the prize to Gordimer, 67, who, it said, "through her magnificent epic writing has — in the words of Alfred Nobel — been of very great benefit to humanity."

The prize is worth 6 million donor (dhrs 1 million).

Gordimer "writes with intense immediacy about the extremely complicated personal and social relationships in her environment," the academy said. "At the same time as she feels a political involvement and takes action on that basis — she does not permit this to influence her writings."

"Nevertheless, her literary works, in giving profound insights into the historical process, help to shape this process," the only a half dozen women have been honored with the Nobel Prize in literature since its inception in 1901. Gordimer was the first woman in 25 years to win the prize.

Gordimer has written 10 novels in 38 years and more than 200 short stories.

In a review of "Jump," American novelist John Edgar Wideman said Gordimer brings a "moral intelligence" to descriptions of South Africa. In one story, a white jogger forced to live in a squalid township shack for a few hours buries the impulse to describe the experience. His silence is "transformed into raw, articulate pain," and then into violence, Wideman writes.

Gordimer, who unlike her character has striven to express her response to life in South Africa, made a dramatic demonstration of her convictions in December 1989. She testified as a defense witness for 11 black activists on trial for treason and terrorism.

She said she regarded Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo of the African National

Congress as her leaders and accepted the guerrilla movement's decision to use violence against South Africa's white government.

"Having lived here for 65 years," she said, "I am well aware for how long black people refrained from violence. We white people are responsible for it." Gordimer grew up in the mining town of Springs, the daughter of Jewish immigrants from England and Latvia.

Conservationist" of 1974, "Burger's Daughter" of 1979, and "July's People" of 1981.

The academy said these books "illustrate conceivable personal standpoints in the complicated spiritual and material environment of an Africa in which black consciousness is growing."

The academy also honored Gordimer for her shorter stories. "Compact and dense, they are extremely telling and show Gordimer at the height of her creative powers," the academy said. It mentioned "Selected Stories" of 1975.

Gordimer's specifically feminine experiences, her compassion and her outstanding literary style, characterize her short stories as well," the academy said. Gordimer has also published a few volumes of literary criticism, as well as a large number of articles, speech articles on different subjects.

Sture Allen, the academy's permanent secretary, said in announcing the prize, "Gordimer was awarded the prize for her great epic writings centering on the effects of the race relations in her society."

But he added the award has "nothing to do with the political relations in South Africa."

He said Gordimer herself is careful to make a clear distinction between her fiction and her work in politics and other areas.

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Short stories: Face to Face, 1949; The Soft Voice of the Serpent, 1952; Six Feet of the Country, 1956; Friday's Footprint, 1960; Not for Publication, 1965; Livingstone's Companions, 1971; Selected Stories, 1975; A Soldier's Embrace, 1980; Jump, 1991.

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Nadine Gordimer was to be a ballet dancer, but her mother forbade physical exertion because of an accelerated heart rate.

Gordimer, who had been writing since the age of 9, turned increasingly to books for companionship after she was withdrawn from school at the age of 11 because of her physical weakness.

She spent hours in the Springs library. She credits "The Jungle," Upton Sinclair's expose on the Chicago meat industry, for planting the seed of social awareness in her young mind.

Gordimer's first story was published when she was 15 in a literary magazine. When she was 27, her first book, "Face to Face," was published.

She now lives in Johannesburg with her second husband. She has two grown children.

The academy said that Gordimer, since the 1970s had developed a complex technique in her novels, which produced three masterpieces. The academy named "The

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CPB congress

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in favour of Marxism and Leninism and against the pro-Gorbachev forces, the inaugural session started at 4 pm, one hour behind the schedule.

Leaders of both the ruling and the opposition political parties attended the inaugural session which continued for over two hours.

Followed by a session of mass songs by the 'Udichi' members, the opening of the congress was marked by hoisting of the national flag by Saifuddin Ahmed Manik and the party flag by veteran communist leader Ashu Bharadwaj. When the national anthem was sung.

Chaired by Saifuddin Manik, the opening session was also addressed by the BNP Joint Secretary General and Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Awami League president member and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azad, Ganantrani Party President Syed Altaf Hossain, NAP General Secretary Pankaj Bhattacharya and United Communist League leader Bimol Biswas.

Besides, those present on the occasion include: Tofael Ahmed, MP, and Motta Choudhury, MP, of the Awami League, AFM Mahbulul Haq, Nirmal Sen, Mushataque Hossain, Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Dilip Barua, Tipu Biswas of the Five-party Alliance, Ali Akhsad of Peace Council, Gana-

tantri Party leader and Editor of the daily Sangbad Ahmedul Kabir and Prof Kabir Choudhury.

Saifuddin Manik announced that his party would carry forward the movement for people's economic emancipation upholding the ideals of socialism and communism in the context of national reality.

The party will continue open discussions on the ideological matters against the background of changes in the socialist countries, Manik said adding that his party had already given up the strategies of hiding the theoretical and political subjects.

Manik observed that the process of institutionalising democracy was being hindered as the presidential candidates were made without any consensus among the political parties. Moreover, promulgation of the new Ordinance showed undemocratic attitude of the ruling party, he added.

Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan recalled the contributions of the CPB in the anti-autocracy movement and wished success of its congress.

Abdus Samad Azad said all must work sincerely to put democracy on firm footing. Criticising the promulgation of the Presidential Election (Amendment) Ordinance, he said such a step by the democratically elected government had given the impression of its autocratic attitude.

Transport strike

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minibus, and auto-tempos will go off the roads from Sunday," a Federation leader said adding that "We are struggling to implement an existing law of the country."

He said that three owners' associations also urged their members to issue appointment letters to the workers by October 31.

Meanwhile, our Sirajganj, Rajshahi, Bogra, Thakurgaon, and Nawabganj correspondents report that the week-long transport strike has paralysed the northern parts of the country.

Relief operations in the flood-hit areas have been adversely affected by the strike although the vehicles carrying relief goods have been exempted from it.

The travelling public and the critical patients have been suffering a lot. Petrol pumps in many districts have dried up and prices of essentials have soared.

Students pledge

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gand.

Addressing the student leaders the Education Minister said Education Ministry would take necessary measures to restore peace on the campus. He said campus violence would cause an irreparable loss to the nation and degrade the standard of education in the university.

The Midnight File

Cops held for clandestine arms deal

GAIBANDHA, Oct 3: Three policemen were arrested Wednesday night in the Sadar upazila on charges of clandestine arms deal with miscreants. Constable Rustom Ali was trapped when waiting in a tea stall at Puratan Badakhali Bazar at about 8 pm allegedly for handing over a cut-rifle along with 6 bullet to his client. It was alleged that the cop of Gaibandha Police Lines had been making money by renting the gun to dacoits for a long time. Chairman of Monabadiakhali union Amanul Haq, on secret information, laid the trap in consultation with an ASP and caught Rustom Ali. He was handed over to police. Two other police personnel, including Habluder Nazrul, were also taken to custody for interrogation following the confessional statement of Rustom, reports UNB.

Soviet parliament session deferred

MOSCOW, Oct 3: The opening session of the re-modeled Soviet national legislature has been postponed until October 21 due to problems in some republics on selecting delegates, parliament spokesman Arkady Maslennikov said today. The session had been scheduled to open Tuesday, reports AFP.

AL, BNP leaders' residences attacked in Sirajganj: 10 hurt

SIRAJGANJ, Oct 3: At least 10 people were injured and a house was demolished during attacks on the houses of two political leaders in Sadar upazila early today, reports UNB.

The clashes ensued when a rival group gheraoed the house of local Awami League leader Abdul Bari, also Deputy Unit Commander of district Muktiyoddha Sangsad, at village Khaga Wednesday midnight.

Several bombs were exploded in the clashes, witnesses said. The house was completely damaged and all belongings were thrown into a nearby pond.

Falling to trace Bari, the attackers damaged the house and threw all belongings into the pond.

Meanwhile, another group attacked the house of BNP leader Abdus Salam but was chased back.

Police rushed to the spot and arrested two people.

Japanese grant

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Toshio Saiki discussed elaborately on the grant with the Food Minister, Shamsul Islam, at his Secretariat office today, the handout said.

They also discussed matters of bilateral interests.

The minister apprised the ambassador of various development policies and programmes adopted by the new democratic government.

The ambassador lauded the efforts of the Bangladesh government towards restoration of democracy and hoped that the existing bonds of friendship and cooperation between these two friendly countries would be further consolidated, the handout added.

Water transit

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Bangladesh under terms and conditions," it added.

"India has been using two water routes of Bangladesh since 1972 when the protocol was signed," an official said.

One route is from Raimangol in Khulna to Daikhawa in Kurigram district, (839 km) and another from Raimangol to Zakiganj in Sylhet (876 km).

India, for using the transit routes in next two years from October 4 will pay Tk 2.55 crore to Bangladesh as "maintenance cost" in local currency, the official said.

Tk 2.32 crore was paid by India in the last two years, he added.

Replying to a question, the official said: "Indian ships will be allowed to carry only merchandise through our water ways."

Similarly, Bangladesh ships will be allowed to carry commercial goods from Raimangol to Calcutta.

Writ

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It if the government also does that."

He said after getting the news about the government's decision to repeal the Ordinance, he had a brief exchange of ideas with his clients and they were of the opinion that the matter that aggrieved them was still there.

Attorney General Aminul Huq declined to disclose the points on which the government wants to defend its position.

He, however, said that the provision of open election was not unique in Bangladesh. The same mode was followed in respect of election of the President of the United States of America.

In America there were no legal restrictions to check voting against party candidates, but voters casting votes against their party candidates were declared as "faithless voters". And that was considered sufficient to politically doom a voter.

The first incident of "faithless voting" was recorded in the US in 1796 when a voter had voted against Thomas Jefferson, then a Democrat-Republican who had won against John Adams, a Federalist. Similar cases of "faithless voters" were recorded as late as 1972, the Attorney General said.

Shamsul Huq Choudhury, Convener, Coordination Council of the Bar Associations of Bangladesh while expressing his satisfaction over the government's decision to repeal the Ordinance said it was difficult to say if the Election of President Act 1991 could be set aside. That's a law passed by the parliament. The Ordinance was difficult to be defended, he said.

Khandakar Delwar Hossain, Chief Whip of the Treasury Bench in parliament told The Daily Star that the Election of President Act, 1991 was passed under a provision of the Constitution Twelfth Amendment Act. Election of president was not an ordinary election and the government would defend the law, he said.

Ordn repealed

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both in the Opposition and within the BNP were happy over the decision.

He, however, said that his party would continue the struggle for ensuring free and fair elections.

He said that the open ballot was against the spirit of free and fair polls. He called upon all to follow the principle of consensus at this nascent stage of democracy.

The overall reaction to the government decision was favourable although the Jatiya Party leader Moudud Ahmed termed it as a defeat for the ruling party.

Maulana Mattur Rahman Nizami, leader of the Jamaat Parliamentary Party, told The Daily Star that the repeal of the Ordinance was a victory of the democratic forces. He was happy that the ruling party showed respect to the wishes of the people.

Salauddin Quader Choudhury, leader of the National Democratic Party, said that the decision to repeal the Ordinance was the submission to popular will which could not be termed as a defeat for any democratic government.

Advocate Shamsul Haq Choudhury, Convener of the Coordination Council of the Bar Associations of Bangladesh, welcomed the decision of the government.

A cross-section of people saw the decision of the ruling party as a courageous one saying that it should not be termed as a defeat when a democratic government submits to popular will.

Khaleda Zia has done the same thing and has successfully taken the wind out of the Opposition sail, said the political observers.

The observers, however, feel that it will take quite some time for the ruling party to recover the shock it received through the promulgation of the Ordinance.