The Baily Star

Dhaka, Wednesday, July 21, 1993

Japan at Crossroads

As widely expected and, indeed, perhaps hoped for by millions of voters, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has failed to gain an overall majority in the general election, marking the end of its monopoly of power it has enjoyed in Japan for past 35 years. In any other democracy, such a change would have been part of an established constitutional process, and healthy one at that, revitalising the system as a whole. Unfortunately, it is different in a country that is uncomfortable with a radical change or any major modification in the status quo. Again, here the fault lies clearly with the LDP, despite all the signals of rising popular disenchantment with the ruling party's refusal to undertake wide-ranging reforms, the defeat of the government of Kiichi Miyazawa in an unprecedented no-confidence motion and defection of powerful groups, with the former Finance Minister Tsutomu Hata leading the most important one, the government was still marking time, without offering anything new during the campaign.

The crisis faced by the LDP, causing it to lose its overall majority in the all-powerful Lower House of the parliament, was very much the making of the ruling party. It is hard to think of another democratic state where government leaders, one after another, have been linked to so many financial scandals, associated with the underworld mafia. What's worse, it is also hard to think of a ruling party which has so miserably failed to go beyond window-dressing in carrying out the much-needed reforms, at least in disassociating itself from the sources of scandalsthe shady industrial empires—which have caused so much havoc in the conservative politics of Japan.

The attention of Japan and, indeed, of the world at large is now focused on what happens next. Still by far the single largest party, occupying 223 seats in 511-member house, LDP will of course form the government within the 30-day time limit. It is unlikely to be a minority administration, enjoying tacit support of some splinter groups. Instead, it will go for coalition with one or more centre-right former LDP groups. Such an arrangement will turn the minority government into a stable one, but not necessarily a strong administration that can call the shots without worrying about the views of its partners. Even if the new partners of the LDP - all basically conservative in their outlook commit themselves to the continuity of existing policies, they will surely seek changes in emphasis and style, even, on some policy issues, in substance. After all, a young politician like Hata must demonstrate his potential as a future Prime Minister of Japan. There can be any number of issues on which the former Finance Minister can assert himself, whether he joins the coalition with LDP or remains in the opposition.

In the long run, it is the composition of the coalition which may prove most decisive for the parliamentary stability in Japan. During the campaign. Hata remained somewhat ambivalent on the question of joining the LDP-led coalition, probably unsure if the prime ministership would be within his reach. There are others who may be in the race, including Miyazawa who, having taken the blame for the party's defeat, still refuses to step down. However, the former Prime Minister's exit maybe only a question of time.

The fact that at long last Japan is set to experiment with the multiparty system has been sending shock-waves among its allies, especially the United States and Asian nations. No one should expect any shift in Tokyo's positions on such matters as trade liberalisation, aid to developing countries including Bangladesh — and commitment to the United Nations. However, we must be prepared for slower — more cautious — implementation of the country's policies, than what we had seen in the past. On the other hand, we may also see a new purposeful, a cleaner administration at work, setting a new model in transparency and accountability. If such a change is good for Japan, it should indeed be good for the world.

A Mining Project

Last week's decision of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) to sanction execution of the Modhyapara hard rock project in Rangpur, is welcome news, Work on the six-year 700 crore Taka project is expected to start in December next. It is also stated that work on the Barapukuria coal mine project in Dinajpur could very well begin by the year-end. These two projects will not only bring enormous benefits for the economy as a whole but will also provide a much needed boost to economic activities in the northern region of the country.

As the very first mining venture, the hard rock project also marks a milestone in our economy. We have our gas, of course, but that is not mining. In addition to hard rock, the quarry will yield granite. Hard rock extracted from the mine will undoubtedly turn out to be an economic asset for use in the construction and maintenance of coastal and town protection embankments, bridges, roads and highways. Had this hard rock been available right now, it would have probably even helped in the construction of the Jamuna bridge. It is said that the prospect of availability of stones and boulders from sources nearer home — from India — has brought price quotations in the latest tender for the river training component of Jamuna bridge, by nearly two hundred crore Taka. Availability of a material like hard rock in the country itself would have perhaps made even a bigger difference in the price.

Mines and quarries often cause environmental degradation. However, the hard rock project is being launched at a time of heightened awareness for the environment. As such, one can reasonably hope that this aspect would be fully taken care of. Nevertheless, we would urge upon the concerned authorities to pay special heed to this issue in their final preparations for the project, so that operation of the mine may not hurt the ecology and the people living in the area.

BUREAUCRACY-TECHNOCRACY TENSION

Need for a Conceptual Appreciation

by the specialists group on trivial issues is creating misunderstanding and confusion among the unenlightened members of the public.

LMOST daily reports are

published in the news-

A papers on the prevailing

tension between the techn-

ocrats and the bureaucrats.

'Prakrichi' and the members of

26 BCS cadres who prefer to be

known as technocrats or

specialists are issuing

statements against Bangla-desh

Civil Service (Admini-stration).

The responses from the

members of the administrative

cadre seem to be sporadic and

trregular. However, the tension

has taken the shape of

sentimental extravaganza and is

affecting the efficiency of the

entire civil service system of the

article is not to make a slur

upon anybody or any group but

to provide a conceptual clarifi-

cation on some of the basic is

The members of the BCS

(Administration) cadre only are

termed by the specialists as bu-

reaucrats without perceiving

the fact that the latter being

members of the Bangladesh

Civil Service are also members

of the Bangladesh bureaucracy

because conceptually the civil

service forms the major con-

stituent of the bureaucracy.

They object to the use of the

term 'zila prashasak' which is

customarily used as the Bangla

version of the English designa-

tion 'deputy commissioner' for

better understanding of the role

ascribed to the post.

Theoretically speaking, there is

nothing wrong with the word

'prashasak' about which an

elaborate clarification is made

in this article. The specialists

have proposed of dismantling or

abolishing the administrative

It appears that much of the

cadre itself for no valid reason.

crisis is emanating from the

theoretical ambiguity about or

mistaken notion of the role of

administration in managing the

public affairs. A kind of concep-

tual appreciation is therefore

needed to neutralize the tense

situation. Continuous harping,

(FAP) has become a national is-

sue of discussion at various

levels. This plan is a very big

venture of certain developed

countries wherein Bangladesh

say the project is still in its

study period. But the study

which will end in 1995, itself

has a total budget of US \$ 500

million for its 26 components

(extended to 33 components

informed experts, environ-

mentalists, journalists, re-

searchers and intellectuals

have expressed their deep

concern about FAP. Because all

the structural projects related

to "flood control drainage and

irrigation" (FCDI) in

Bangladesh have been accused

of making negative impact on

ecology, agriculture and fish-

ence that no structural project

so far has done any good to the

country or its people. Do they

want us to believe that building

making more and more people

landless and homeless is a

kind of development? Is the

structure programme some-

thing different from the na-

tional development plan? If

not so, if the structures too are

a part of the over all develop-

ment plan, then who would

explain the reason behind the

doubled number of landless

pared to the number of land-

creased salinity in both under-

ground and surface waters due

to the "coastal embankment

project" (CEP). We know about

the Kaptai Hydro-electric pro-

ject which is not capable of

producing electricity up to a

minimum expected level. We

have been pushed to construct

a thermal unit at Raujan with

Chinese assistance. But the

document of the Kaptai Hydro-

electric project envisaged (?)

export of electricity to parts of

Asia. And that was the justifi-

cation of drowning thousands

of acres of agricultural land as

well as human habitation in-

cluding the palace of the

We know about the in-

people in the country com-

less in the early sixties?

structures and in the process,

It has been our sad experi-

eries since the 60s.

Many people, especially

Initiators and contractors

is a guinea-pig partner.

later on ?).

Currently, Flood Action Plan

The objective of writing this

"Administration" is not a designation but a process of accomplishing specific goals of the government through coordination among agents or agencies engaged in implementing public policies. According to Brook Adams, "Administration is the capacity of coordinating many

... "Administration is a set of functions based on the philosophy of integration, synthesis and balance. In a sense all administration is bureaucratic because it involves practice of the rules and procedures and the values of objectivity and merit. Therefore, by all definition, the members of the "Prakricht" and 26-cadre are members of the civil service and very much constitute a segment of the bureaucracy. They have their individual administration at their respective agencies or offices which may be designated as micro-administration. An engineer while building bridges, roads etc. is an engineer but the same person assumes the role of a bureaucrat or administrator in his own domain as soon as he comes back to his desk and then examines files, writes notes, holds meetings, signs the minutes er makes administrative or financial decisions. Still this micro-administration needs to be supervised by an agent of the national government for coordination and control. Thus to negate administration is to negate coordination. Therefore, the person who seeks to disown bureaucracy practically disowns his own service. Luther Gulick, the living dean of American public administration

admonished back in 1937 say-

Chakma King at the bottom of

the Kaptai Lake forcing hun-

dreds and thousands of tribal

citizens to become landless

refugees. And now it has be-

come a violent political issue.

Also we know of the Ganga

Kapotaksmo Project (GK

Project). Now we can surely

believe that the consultants (?)

and engineers (?) who planned

and designed such projects

did not make any study of river

characteristics although they

designed the whole project

depending upon river water as

the sole back up resource to

continue as well as make it a

vested interest raise questions

about data and authenticity of

information from people who

often oppose dishonest de-

signs of consultants and ex-

perts! May we ask the con-

cerned experts (?) that how

much data and information

they have made available to the

public from their own shelf

that they have gathered (?)

spending huge amount of pub-

that creates concern is ob-

struction to the natural distri-

bution of monsoon water. The

issue has three dimensions.

Firstly, the issue of water-log-

ging. According to newspaper

reports as well as public opin

ion, water-logging in certain

parts of the country has been a

problem created by unplanned

and irrational construction of

rural roads and embankments.

Stories about Beel Dakatia,

Bhabodaha and Meghna-

Dhonagoda in relation to

water-logging problems have

become well known in the

country. In fact, water-logging

is a more acute problem in

greater districts of Rajshahi.

Pabna, Jessore, Khulna, My-

mensingh, Tangail, Jamalpur,

Dhaka, Sylhet and Comilla.

Department of Environment is

also of the opinion that, water-

logging is rather helping to

increase aridity and drought in

from Assam and West Bengal

cannot get past these areas

until and unless the water can

overlap hundreds and thou-

sands of rural roads and em-

Rain water coming down

Bangladesh.

The more important issue

lic money of Bangladesh?

Very often experts of the

by Syed Naquib Muslim

to govern experts."

It should, however, be re-

nance or administration con-

sists not in coercion but in per-

suasion and negotiation. It is

admitted that in a few cases

these are not being practised by

some members of the BCS

(Administration) who are still

traditional in their approach or

outlook and by some who did

not ever receive any training on

development and modern ad-

ministration and for this the

administrative cadre cannot be

There are hints in the state-

ments of the members of the

'Prakrichi" and 26-cadre mem-

bers that they are interested in

becoming deputy commission-

ers (DC) or thana nirbahi offi-

cers (TNO). It is not known if

there be any mechanism to help

them in fulfilling their ambi-

tions while it is found that they

already belong to specific cadres

having specific set of responsi-

bilities. At the entry point there,

of course, remains a probability

or chance for induction into the

BCS (Administration) cadre

through appearing in open

competition and the cadre is

decided by the Public Service

Commission (PSC) on merit,

aptitude and other factors. But

how can an engineer at the

mid-point of his career choose

or cherish to become TNO or

DC while he already belongs to

a specialized cadre and whose

job has been clearly differenti-

ated? Today we find that dozens

of agriculture graduates, engi-

neers, MBBS doetors are joining

BCS (Administration) cadre

held responsible.

perts is ... on tap not on top" This is the era of specialization. One needs to specialise in a specific field for one's meaningful survival whatever may be the field. Moreover, it has now become difficult to strictly compartmentalize the activities of the generalist and the special-

ing, "the true place of the ex-

Administration which was so long considered a generalist function has now become a specialist function with the society becoming complex, environment turning turbulent needs of the citizenry becoming diverse, and pressure groups

multiplying in number. Administration is never common sensical and automatic functioning. An adminis trator's speciality is method, not subject-matter; process, not content. Administrative activity involves a body of special skills such as interpersonal skills, coordination, motivation, persuasion, negotiation, teamwork without which administrators turn robots. As TP Shand aptly puts it, 'Administration is itself a form of-expertize with not only its own expert procedures but its own professional viewpoints." These views have been echoed by Ordway Tead, administration is a fine art because it summons an imposing body of special talents on behalf of a collaborative creation"... In fact, macro-administration is an intricate or delicate art because it has to supervise the work of the experts in the capacity of a coordinator who also embodies the institutional accountability of the district or the thana as the case may be. As Robert S. Lorch remarks, "It takes experts

through open competition in the civil service examinations conducted by the PSC. These engineers, doctors and agri-graduates with a lapse of some years membered that in the context will become TNOs or DCs. So of democratic administration there remains no room for any now being practised in despair for the specialists. Bangladesh, the art of gover-

Moods and emotions vented by the technocrats or specialists seem to be a reflection of their deep frustration. This perhaps stems from a feeling of isolation or altenation for which they themselves are not responsible it is the very nature of their job The case is different with a generalist-administrator because he has to interact with people of diverse disciplines for accomplishing his coordinative role and for solving various unpredictable problems. As Paul Appleby observes, frustration of some experts "is a reflection of an incapacity to impose the expert view; this is an unconscious authoritarianism in a syndicalist form."

The specialists argue that the word 'administration' contains a colonial flavour and so its use should be discontinued. This argument seems to spring from conceptual deficiency. The word "administration" originates from the Latin word 'administre' which means 'deliver services'

The essence of administration are coordination and service delivery. According to Rensis Likert, a generalist administrator is the linking pin between the people and the politicians. Specialists are supposed to aid the generalists in making decisions through their advice on technical matters. The relationship between specialist and a generalist is based on complementarity. A deputy commissioner needs the

untfunctional like that of an agricultural officer; he has to perform multifarious functions which are hard to specify. The challenges he faces in his dayto-day activities are not faced by others. Apart from performing his chartered duties, a deputy commissioner, for example, has to solve the problem of a helpless widow in disposing her marriageable daughter; he has to convince the members of, say, 'Sarbahara Party" to deposit arms to the local thana; he has to reach the cyclone-affected people with the succour at odd hours; it is the deputy commissioner who comes to the rescue of his district level colleagues belonging to other departments when they are harassed by the extra-constitutional forces; it is the deputy commissioner who has to handle intelligently and with nerveless patience a recalcitrant political muscleman who approaches him for illegal gains.

technical help or guidance of

the engineer on the construc-

tion of a bridge in the same way

an engineer requires the help of

the deputy commissioner for

mobilizing resources. A deputy

commissioner's function is not

ployee working in Qatar has written a letter to a deputy commissioner requesting him to ascertain whether his wife has committed suicide or she has been killed. In fact, he has to perform many non-routine and unspecified functions and meet many contingent or unpredictable situations. It is he who has, as the agent of the national government, to coordinate the activities of other agencies operating at the district level. Whether one likes it or not, there must be someone to coordinate, to lead, to embody the institutional accountability of the district or thana administration as the case may

Recently, a government em-

To be concluded tomorrow

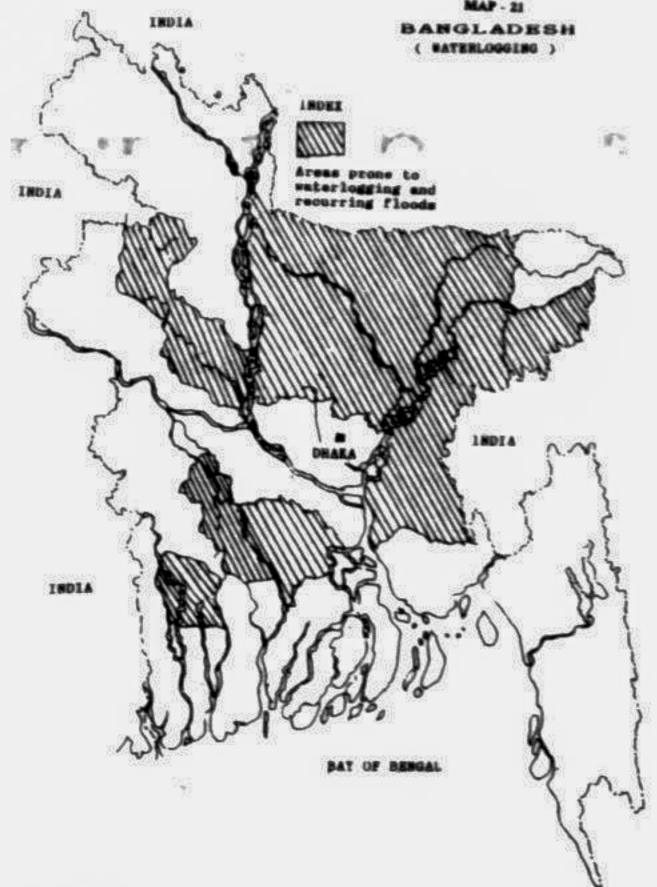
OPINION

Flood Action Plan

Sharif A Kafi

bankments. Logged water generally damages standing crops in an absolute sense. Since the flood of 1984, farmers in the mentioned areas, in general, needed to transplant aman crops three/four times during

80s suggest that the authorities did identify the issue of water-logging. But, the number of bridges and culverts constructed since then through food for works' programme are not enough by any standard



floods, whether localized or widespread. In 1990, Brahmanbaria district experienced five floods due to acute problem of water-logging. Inclusion of increased number of structures like bridges and culverts in "food for works" programmes since the mid

to allow adequate passage of the rain water. Lot more passage is required in order to make way for the rain water vis-a-vis diminishing the inci-

dence of water-logging. Secondly, implication of water-logging has been creating havoc in the south. During the

early rainy season, mainly the grater districts of Faridpur, Noakhalt and Bartsai thus face a water crisis in terms of aus cultivation and later on with aman cultivation as the water remains logged up in the north. These three greater districts have been regularly facing problems with standing aman crops and jute retting for want of water. In 1987, southern districts experienced drought while north-western and central-north districts had recurrent flooding during the early monsoon season. Then again during the late monsoon season, the north experience drought while the south had late floods.

Thirdly, water-logging has caused reduction in the angual production of natural water or water-borne fish.

Annual production of fish in 89-90 financial year has gone down by 9 per cent considering 72-73 as the index year (Statistical Year/Pocket Book-1991/1992, BBS, Dhaka). Once the amount of additional production of shrimp is deducted from the annual total production of fish, the picture is much more bleak. Obviously, a part of the damage done to natural water fish can be attributed to use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, but, that does not eliminate the harm being done by water-logging or disruption in balanced distribution and passage of natural water.

The attached map projects areas prone to water-logging and recurring floods. Waterlogging in Bangladesh has deep connection with the extensive FCDI and "Food for Works" projects, meaning construction of rural roads and embankments hither and thither almost all over the country. Areas corresponding to waterlogging conceded the most damage to crops during 1987 and '88 floods.

The practice by experts (?) of hiding project documents and information from the public, gives valid ground to doubt whether these experts (?) at all have any trustworthy data and information with them to

qualify projects recommended

Maybe, it is not the time yet to make any concluding comment on the FAP stnce the real project is yet to be implemented. Ironically, it may so happen that by the time a concluding comment will be possible to make with substantial evidences, the topography and ecology of Bangladesh will no more remain within a repairable shape. In this situation, we like to

put forward the following four point recommendations to the government of Bangladesh as well as the donors to the FAP:

The Government would

a) immediately withhold all activities relating to FAP; b) take immediate steps to translate all necessary information and documents relating to HAP into Bangla and make these available to the members of the public; c) allow equal opportunities of TV and Radio talks to all quarters for and against FAP to apprise the members of the public about the proposed FAP.

2. The government would put the issue of FAP on a national referendum whereby the citizens of the country would have chance of getting their voice heard.

If the people of the

country approve the FAP to go on, the government would make an inventory of the firm/organisation(s) and very specifically the experts/advisors involved with the project(s) relating to FAP and make this inventory available to the members of the

4. A provision is made in the FAP project document for a contract of agreement with donors/contractors that allows prosecution and penalizing of experts/advisers in Bangladesh or in their home countries for any act of damage/harm done to the ecology, environment an/or population of Bangladesh in terms of idea, advice, design or plan generated by them individually or collectively.

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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.

Computers

Sir, I write today to tell you how happy I was to see the special supplement brought out by you on computers. We have only to look around us to recognize that the age of computers is upon us and we can ig nore it only at the risk of falling further behind. The Daily Star has responded to a challenge of our time by introducing an innovative and timely feature. Please accept my sincere congratulations for your thoughtful and bold initiative.

I am no computer expert. I do have a desk top computer with a monitor and a printer which I use as a work processor. In fact, apart from the "Word Perfect" programme I know next to nothing about this

versatile miracle box. However, I am fully aware of the contribution that the proper and largescale application of computer technology can make in the economic growth of the nation. Indeed it can speed up the pace of life and increase efficiency in the mills, factories, offices and laboratories. Even some adults seem to love computer games which have become a growth industry in the advanced countries.

One notices a fairly large number of computer training centres in the city. Presumably there is a brisk demand for it. I am told there are a good number of firms who deal in these instruments. Some firms also undertake repairs. All these are good signs. All of us should encourage the use of computers in

as many fields as possible in order to bridge the gap that exists today between the developed and developing countries. In Europe and American even the high school students are familiar with the use of computers. Naturally the level of their skill is going to be much higher than that in Bangladesh where most high school students have not even seen a computer. The pioneering venture of The Daily Star should not only serve to disseminate knowledge and information on computers but help make our people more computer-con-

Once again, let me express my appreciation for your effort to set better standards of Journalism in the country. SAMS Kibria Dhaka

A disgrace

Sir, The Foreign Ministry has exposed itself with the dizzy height of its inefficiency. It has shown to the whole world that its records on the government dignitaries holding even the high office of the Prime Minister

are not maintained updated. The message of felicitation of no less a person than our Prime Minister to the French Prime Minister contained the name of a long deceased incumbent!

What a disgrace! The punishment said to have been awarded to two officers responsible for such an unthinkable and blatant error would not blot out the slur it brought to the whole nation. think, the Foreign Minister has had a vicarious responsibility both personally and departmentally. Making the bureaucrats in his ministry the inevitable scapegoats can never restore us the lost prestige. He must also share his responsibility for the damage done.

Kazi Alauddin Ahmed Shantinagar, Dhaka

"Mr Clinton, we are sorry'

Str. When Mr Clinton took leadership of the United States on the 20th of January last, great hopes were raised in the hearts of the American people, nay the entire world. With a

youthful President in his forties, the Americans had hoped that there will be lesser unemployment, a better health care system and, above all, that the USA shall lead the world. But things went wrong. Mr Clinton promised us many good things, but the action that followed it were not only inconsistent, but

For the first time in the history of mankind the USA became the unparalleled military power, with enormous firepower. The 27th June bombing of Baghdad has horrified all right thinking people, white, black, yellow or brown. The Arab world was jolted down from its slumber.

hesitant, slow and ineffective.

The 27th of June will go down in the history of mankind as a black day. The USA has suffered a moral defeat on the 159th day of Mr Clinton's presidency. Power and wealth can have enormous strength to raise a country to great economic heights, but it also contains

the seed of self destruction. For two years the Muslim majority country of Bosnia is bleeding towards death. Bosnian Muslims are being

murdered daily, as there is an arms embargo for the Bosnians. The Serbs are armed to the teeth. The EEC and the USA talk of safe havens for the Muslims, humanitarian aid, and have done a superb acting, which has convinced none. The Muslim majority of Bosnia is being decimated successfully. But this will never be the end of the story. Injustice and hypocrisy have many followers, and there may be (God forbid) blood letting throughout the world, in the years to come. I would like to say, "Mr Clinton, we are sorry.

I had the great privilege of talking to Bertrand Russell, some forty years ago. The theme that this great man chose in that cool London evening was "World Government". Lord Russell has passed away, and so has Wendell Wilkie, who also dreamt of one world.

But are we nearer to one world, and a 'bloodless' one? The answer will be clearly no. But yet we earnestly hope and pray that we are totally wrong.

Siddheswari Road, Dhaka

Shahabuddin Mahtab