

## Tough Days for India

The precariously narrow victory won by the government of PV Narasimha Rao over the no-confidence motion on Wednesday is, by no means, a case of the survival of the fittest. It merely gives the minority Congress (I) government a breathing time to set its house in order, perhaps on every front, from possible modifications in programme of its economic liberalisation to end of all doubts about alleged corruption charges against the Prime Minister, from a fight against Hindu fundamentalists led by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to the electoral contest in assemblies in four states which are now under presidential rule. Above all, it is the indecisive leadership of the 73-year old Rao which remains on test, with at least two rivals, Arjun Singh and Sharad Pawar, all set to enter the contest for the top job. These are formidable tasks facing Rao, any of which can break a younger — and a more experienced — politician than one who, two years ago, assumed power only as a compromise choice and eventually failed, almost miserably, to rise to the occasion.

What happens to Rao who will probably face another no-confidence motion after six months, the time limit necessary between one such motion and another, or a bitter challenge from within the party may not cause all that much of a concern to cross section of people in India. But how the minority government tackles the problems facing it today is another matter.

During his speech at the parliament on Wednesday, Rao vowed to fight Hindu fundamentalism and hinted that his government would propose a constitutional amendment that would ban parties and groups which would promote religious hatred. It may well be a commendable objective. However, many would treat it with some cynicism in the light of Rao's other failed promises, especially about the reconstruction of the Babri mosque, made in the past. Besides, how far can a minority government go in offering constitutional amendments? There is also a view, held by astute secularists inside India and outside, that New Delhi cannot fight any form of fundamentalism, promoted by either Hinduism or Islam, through legislation as such. However, an inflammatory appeal to religion for political gains must still be punishable under law. In the long run, the answer lies in establishing a grand coalition of secularists and democrats — and this applies to Bangladesh as much as it does to India — in a determined political fight against all forms of communalism. There are serious doubts if the Rao Government is capable of bringing about such an alliance, especially when one of the strongest partners in this possible coalition — the left front — has virtually deserted the administration on the question of its economic liberalisation.

Again, if the election to the four state assemblies which cannot be delayed indefinitely produce victories for the BJP, especially in the crucial Uttar Pradesh, the Congress (I) government is doomed. Politically and otherwise, India will then enter the world of dark shadows.

Much depends on how the secular and democratic forces, moderates and liberals, see these ominous signs and how they decide to act — hopefully through an enduring alliance — and restore cohesion and stability to the country. All said and done, let us not underestimate the capacity of India to meet a challenge. On many occasions in the past, its inherent strength has come to its rescue. It should be the same again.

## Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

The Orwellian maxim that some animals are more equal than others could not better suit any other times in the past than ours. Indeed, the futuristic writer's vision as yet may be in its embryonic form. But what we have already had as a share of the relations between the most rational of all and the rest of the animals is quite edgy if not appalling. When most other species are being pushed on the brink, a focus on the pets alone may serve our purpose. Sure enough, there are those more equal ones so fortunate that the average man of this country should legitimately be envious of.

As for the not-so-privileged pets or the abandoned animals or the stray dogs and cats, it is simply a hell of a life. Particularly pathetic becomes the life of an abandoned creature that has once known the cares but is unaccustomed to rummaging through the garbage for a morsel or two or even to fending for itself in a hostile world little known to it. The act of abandonment by the most intelligent animal surely does a great disservice to his superior standing in the order to the point of shaming his other glorious achievements. Not many people in the world have excelled homo sapiens of this part of the world in their cruelties to animals.

This hard fact illustrates the oxymoron when read against the famous saying by Swami Vivekananda: he who loves the forms of life, serves the creator. Little do we try to grasp the inner meaning of this well-profound theory in which man exists in relation to all other creatures — flora and fauna — and even objects of the universe. Vivekananda's message has apparently fallen on deaf ears. One sad thing is that parents rarely do teach their children how to be caring for the animals. On the other hand, the little ones are even encouraged to be notorious and cruel in their treatment with puppies and kittens. Sometimes their ingenuity to punish the animals only point to the diabolically predisposed mind or the potential criminal in the small soul.

Compared to the human population here the numbers of canine and feline population are not likely to be very high. And yet the sufferings of the animals of those two families of pets know no bounds. Yes, to mock the whole thing, perhaps there is a society to look after the prevention of cruelty to animals. But how? It simply exterminates the stray dogs — only in a clinically precise manner.

# Expurgation: A Grey Area in Parliamentary Coverage for the Media

by Nurul Kabir

*There is no rule as such either in the Constitution or in the JS Rules of Procedure that an "expurgated" portion cannot be reported by the media.*

EXPURGATION is a word frequently uttered at the Jatiya Sangsad (JS), especially by the Speaker, while removing part or whole of the legislators' speeches or comments, considered to be unparliamentary, from the proceedings of the House.

Such words and comments considered unparliamentary at the JS are those regarded as unethical in a civil society.

The civil society has no specific instrument at its disposal to completely control the every behaviour of citizens. But the parliament has a set of rules, formulated by members themselves, not necessarily in precise terms to guide the House while it is in session.

A chapter with eleven rules and more than a dozen of sub-rules is there in the 130-page Rules of Procedure of Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad to be followed by the MPs to guide them, particularly their personal conduct in the House, during JS sessions.

The rules of procedure has provided the parliament members with a total of 318 rules, including innumerable sub-rules, to conduct the business of the House in a manner befitting to the country's lawmakers.

The Speaker has been made, through the both constitution and rules of procedure, custodian of the House. He is supposed to control business of the House according to the rules enshrined in Rules of Procedure of Jatiya Sangsad.

The Speaker is empowered

by the rules, to expunge the words or comments of the legislators, which he or she feels unparliamentary, from the proceedings of the House. The Speaker is even empowered to physically remove the MPs from the House, with the help of Sergeant at Arms, in case the legislators fail to show due honour both to the Speaker and the rules.

How does the Chair decide which words and manners are parliamentary and which are not? Well, according to the rules, they relate to the personal behaviour of the members in the House, that specifically forbids the MPs to launch any personal attack against any colleague of any bench, resort to teasing or colleagues, make noise, use filthy words, even to read newspapers which are not relevant to the parliament's particular order of the day.

However, the legislators seldom follow the rules and therefore the Speaker has to frequently pronounce the word — expurgation!

Sometimes, the demand for expunging remarks of an MP comes from another who considers himself or herself a victim of an objectionable comment. The Speaker sometimes considers the appeal and sometimes does not. The authority of

expunging — partially or completely — any statement, comment or remark lies with the Speaker.

But the problem arises when the Speaker asks the journalists covering the parliament proceedings not to publish the expurgated versions.

There is no rule as such either in the country's constitution or in the Rules of Procedure of Jatiya Sangsad. Besi-

des, the rules of procedure of parliament, meant for the MPs, should have nothing to do with the journalists. The editors are there to decide which news items are to be published and which are not. This is our understanding of the situation.

There are arguments from the parliament secretariat that the expurgated versions of the proceedings are usually not published in the newspapers of different countries. Then why should the journalists of Bangladesh dare to violate the conventions?

Before replying to the question, let us discuss about an identical justification put forward by some members of the opposition who angrily stepped up to the rostrum of the Speaker in an extreme show of registering their protest against the Chair during the eighth session.

In a bid to justify the unusual behaviour, the angry opposition members told the newsmen later that such an action was not unusual in a parliamentary democracy. They cited more than one example of such incidents taking place in different parliaments of the world, including that of neighbouring India.

We are sure that none of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the present Jatiya Sangsad would love to entertain such unhealthy convention of parliamentary democracy which allows the MPs to register their angry protest against the Chair by rushing to the podium.

So, it is clear that not every convention is to be entertained. The convention of asking the media not to publish the expur-

gated versions of the parliament proceedings should not also be sacrosanct.

In the first place, it is a clear discrimination against those who fail to manage a visitors pass to watch the law makers debating on different issues in the House from the Parliament gallery. The Speaker can erase the objectionable words from the proceedings, but he can not expunge the undesirable incidents taking place in the House from the memories of the visitors sitting in the Parliament gallery. So, why should the Speaker deprive a citizen, who has failed to collect a pass, of getting the information about the happenings inside the House through news media the next day?

May be the Speaker, being guardian of the legislators, does not feel comfortable in informing the people about the MPs' "undesirable" behaviour.

In that case, we must say with due honour to the Chair, it is a negative approach to resolve the problem. The chair, instead of hiding the "bad" qualities of certain MPs from their voters, should rather concentrate on equipping them with the patterns of polished vis-a-vis desirable behaviours. Unlike the civil society outside the House, the Speaker has, at

his disposal, a set of rules to be followed by the MPs. If the lawmakers fail to abide by the rules made by themselves, they can not expect the people to show respect to the laws made by them can they?

Above all, according to the concept of classical democracy, it is not parliament, rather the 'general will of the people' which is sovereign. Parliament is subservient to the 'general will of the people'. So the 'general will of the people' has the right to minutely monitor the role of the country's lawmakers in parliament.

So, asking the media to suppress any information, good or bad, virtually amounts to the denial of the people's democratic right of their access to the country's all level informations, including to those inside Jatiya Sangsad.

In this connection, we also like to assert that the Speaker should not even expunge a single word of the legislators' speech from the official proceedings of the House. We believe that the Chair should be sensitive to the future generations' right to know about the level of cultural accomplishments of the today's Lawmakers.

We do not hesitate to admit that the Speaker must have some effective weapons at his disposal to conduct the business of the House in a disciplined manner. In that case, we only appeal to spare the weapon called — expurgation.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

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THE TURKISH Kurds have declared this summer of their discontent. In response to a declaration of all-out war against Ankara by Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan, Kurdish guerrillas resumed attacks against the Turkish army and its collaborators in eastern Turkey.

A new front was opened against tourists in western Turkey and Kurdish emigres attacked Turkish diplomatic missions and businesses in Europe and Australia.

Ocalan decreed this resumption of hostilities 12 weeks after proclaiming a unilateral ceasefire. From his base in the village of Bar Elias in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, he announced that this would be the "most ferocious of all our campaigns."

The ceasefire, the first in the nine-year civil war waged by guerrillas of Ocalan's Marxist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), was initially supposed to last for 26 days. That was to be time enough for Ankara and the Kurdish rebels to begin talks for a peaceful settlement, which would give Turkey's 12 million Kurds federal status within a unified Turkey.

It would also grant Kurds equality with the 48 million Turkish majority and abolish the state of emergency in Kurdish areas.

Turkey's war-weary Kurds greeted the ceasefire with enthusiasm, boosting Ocalan's waning popularity. More than 6,000 people, mostly Kurdish civilians, have died since the PKK began its insurrection in 1984.

Although the then Turkish Prime Minister, now President, Suleyman Demirel, initially adopted a conciliatory line towards the Kurds and, in May, the government proposed a limited amnesty for guerrillas who quit the PKK, both politicians and generals ignored Ocalan's initiative. Troops continued their attacks on Kurdish guerrillas.

Turkey said it would not negotiate with Kurdish terrorists. Ankara regarded the ceasefire as proof of PKK weakness after a successful season of campaigning against the rebels within Turkey and across the frontier in northern Iraq, where the Turkish army received help from the Iraqi Kurds.

During the 1992 and early 1993 Turkish offensive involving hot pursuit across the frontier into northern Iraq, 1,800 of the PKK's 10,000 guerrillas were reported killed and 1,500 surrendered to Iraqi Kurds, acting in concert with the Turkish army.

## To the Editor...

### On the banning of 'Lajja'

Sir, Oholam Azam bares his pious teeth and walks free while the souls of martyrs turn in their graves. Our Information Minister, addressing himself on this occasion to the members of the Washington-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs proclaims that his government believes in transparent politics devoid of the least taint of corruption. In the meantime, Taslima Nasreen's book 'Lajja' gets banned by the same government without so much as an explanation and seems to barely stir the conscience of the defenders of free speech — namely, the news media.

Just where are we headed? If, as someone informs me, the book was banned on the grounds that it had divulged state secrets — in this case, statistics relating to our armed forces — then my question is: what's so secret about it and

## Kurds Declare Total War against Ankara

Michael Jansen writes from Nicosia

*The war waged by guerrillas of the Marxist Kurdistan Workers Party against Ankara has intensified. The Turkish authorities have responded with greater military force. The PKK is demanding autonomy for Turkey's 12 million Kurds. Its guerrillas have struck at Turkish diplomats and offices abroad and targets in Turkey's cities. The war, now in its ninth year, continues and so does the state of emergency in Turkey's Kurdish areas.*

### Where the Kurds are



Kurds are mostly Sunni Muslims. As mountain people they had no political unity for centuries. Groups of villages owed allegiance to chiefs 400 BC. As Carduchi people they attacked retreating Greek leader Xenophon. Most famous scion was Saladin. Since 7th Cent name Kurd applied to West Iranians and others astride the Zagros. 1914-17: Turks raised Kurds to fight Russians. 1920: Treaty of Sevres. Turkey accepted scheme for Kurdish state, but it was stillborn. Since 1920 Kurds have staged many revolts to fight for independent Kurdistan.

### Who the Kurds are



The two main Iraqi Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) led by Massoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani, longtime allies of the West, are eager to maintain good relations with Ankara.

This being so Turkey will continue to grant bases to aircraft of the US-led coalition, which protects the Kurdish safe haven in northern Iraq from Baghdad.

Having no option but to accept defeat and a settlement dictated by Ankara, which is

prepared to grant the Kurds limited cultural expression but not political rights, the PKK decided to fight.

It broke its own ceasefire on May 24 when 150 commandos killed 30 Turkish soldiers and two civilians riding on a bus in the southeast of the country. This set off a spiral of reprisals by the army and retaliation by the Kurds. In two weeks, 300 people were left dead and Ocalan was compelled to declare total war.

Observers in Turkey suggested that Ocalan simply pre-

pared the Turkish army, which had made preparations for its own full-scale summer offensive against the Kurds.

The resulting campaign on three fronts is a departure from the traditional PKK strategy of confining its attacks to areas the Kurds consider their homeland. From time to time the PKK has struck at Turkish diplomats and offices abroad and targets in Turkey's cities. But these were tactical operations, designed to attract public attention rather than part and parcel of an overall strategy for all-out war.

By pressing its attacks on all three fronts the PKK aims to force the international community to take action against Ankara for suppression of its Kurds, cause nervous tourists to cancel holidays in Turkey, denying the country lucrative foreign exchange earnings, and maintain military pressure on the Turkish army in the south-east.

The PKK can call on its supporters among the half of Turkey's Kurds who have emigrated to the west of the country and form a potential Kurdish fifth column in the heartland and major cities.

The opening of a front against tourism was suggested by the experience of Egypt.

There Muslim militants trying to overthrow the secular government of President Hosni Mubarak, have reduced by at least 60 per cent tourism revenues which reached \$3 billion in 1992.

Turkey earned \$3.7 billion in 1992 from eight million tourists, recouping most of its losses due to the Gulf war and economic sanctions against Iraq, one of Turkey's major customers for foodstuffs.

Ocalan's summer offensive follows a sorry spring for Kurds not only in Turkey but also in Iraq and Iran. Iraqi Kurds suffered from Western "compassion fatigue," leading to reduction in economic help and a tightening of Baghdad's economic blockade against the Kurdish enclave.

Iraqi Kurdish villagers were caught in the crossfire between Turkish forces staging raids across the border to kill and capture PKK guerrillas. Kurdish villages in Iraq housing dissident Iranian Kurds were targeted in repeated air raids by the Iranian airforce.

Furthermore, Kurds were dismayed to discover that Western forces are prepared to protect them against attack from Iraqi forces only and not from the armies and airforces of either Turkey or Iran.

Although Kurdish leaders in

## OPINION

### What Bangladesh can Do for Bosnia

The British and French governments, for a variety of reasons, are the only governments giving the European Community any direction in regard to Bosnia. Despite the best efforts of concerned people in the USA, including American Jews who recognise the parallels in Bosnia to the Nazi holocaust of the Jews, a weak administration in Washington has shown no desire to oppose its European allies. Therefore, those two governments have effectively run Western policy towards Bosnia.

Unfortunately for Bosnia, the British and French governments have long had a preference for the long term existence in former Yugoslavia of a strong — therefore Greater Serbian — state, and have long had a perception that states such as Bosnia are inherently unstable. Any latent prejudices in members of those governments in regard to a conflict involving orthodox Christian Serbs, Catholic Christian Croats and Sunni Muslim Bosnians, would not have countered such a preference. And the knowledge of that perception has encouraged Serbia and Croatia in the destabilisation and destruction of Bosnia — and may encourage Serbia in future moves in Kosovo, the Sandjak and Macedonia.

Be that as it may, the British and French governments believe that the survival of Bosnia is not in their positive interest — not (at least in the case of the French) in the sense that they would actively welcome the destruction of the remnants of the Bosnian nation but in the sense that they see no positive advantage to them in that nation's continuance. Their attitude to-

wards Bosnia echoes that which they evinced towards Czechoslovakia before the Second World War. We can be absolutely certain that the destruction by the German Nazis of rump Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement will be visited in even greater force by their Serbian Chetnik successors on rump Bosnia after an agreement so-called for its partition. Any agreement signed by Milosevic and Karadzic is worth no more than the piece of paper signed by Hitler at Munich, and even as they force Bosnia into yet another capitulation, both Britain and France are well aware of his fact.

But even now it is not too late to reverse the slide into extinction of Bosnia. Even Bangladesh, small as its influence is on world affairs, can help ensure that the governments in London and Paris cease pushing the Bosnians into oblivion and that instead they will permit a reversal of that process. We can help ensure that the survival of Bosnia becomes perceived by Major and Balladur as being essential to their positive interests.

Let Bangladesh send its envoys to every Muslim and other Third World nation of economic importance which claims to be well disposed to the Bosnians. To each of them Bangladesh can put a simple proposal.

London and Paris should be told by the government of every such nation that they must either drop immediately their hostility to the arming and supply of Bosnia by Bosnia's friends, or face a limited boycott of British and French contractors. Under the terms of this limited boycott, no British or

all three countries insist that they are seeking autonomy or federation rather than separation and independence, none of their antagonist believes them. The call on June 24 by Salah Jmhor, a Kurdish spokesman in Geneva, for an international conference to settle the Kurdish issue as a whole — that is, of the region's 20 million Kurds — will deepen distrust of Kurdish intentions in Ankara, Tehran and Baghdad rather than ally suspicions.

Ever since they began their struggles with the nation states which emerged after World War One, the Kurds have been their own worst enemy. They have been undermined by tribalism, regionalism and conflicting alliances, some adopting Marxist ideologies as the PKK and Kurdistan Workers Party of Iran, others securing the support of the West, as the Iraqi Kurds have done.

These alliances and ideologies have caused the Kurds to fight one another rather than their non-Kurdish enemies. Leaders have also failed to secure the firm support of their people.

This is because they have been reluctant to define their objective as independence since this is unanimously rejected by all the countries where the Kurds live and by the major powers on the world scene.

The summer of discontent can bring only more suffering to a long suffering people and detention and death to guerrillas who are fighting for a cause they dare not acknowledge.

— GEMINI NEWS  
MICHAEL JANSEN was born in the US, lives in Cyprus, and has covered the Middle East for many years.

French company or individual will be considered for any contract, unless no alternative or reasonable alternative is available. One advantage of the scheme is that it cannot, as it becomes known generally, be considered anti-Western by opinion sensitive to such matters in the West. The direct beneficiaries of the boycott will be contractors from countries such as the USA, Germany and Japan, whose governments will, therefore, in private be far from displeased. This is a material consideration for many governments, friendly to Bosnia, which are reliant in one way or another on Western support. Another advantage (if the scheme has to be executed) is that it will impose little cost on the governments following the scheme, and yet will ensure that the economically powerful in Britain and France will be pressing their governments to help Bosnia.

Two things are essential to the success of the scheme. Firstly, there must be minimal official publicity at every stage; because governments, including those of France and Britain, do not like to be seen to give way to external pressure. Secondly, Bangladesh must act immediately, because the remaining Bosnian enclaves are becoming increasingly untenable. It is absolutely essential, if the Bangladesh government truly desires the assistance of Bosnia, that Dhaka should despatch its envoys forthwith, resisting all attempts at self-publicity.

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