

Solidarity for Nation Building

The national revolution and solidarity day will be observed in the country today, as it has been since 1975. The events of the day, eighteen years ago, was triggered by a coup attempt by Brigadier Khaled Musharraf started on 3rd November...

Elections in Pakistan in the Eye of a Bangladeshi Observer

by Enayetullah Khan

Another striking aspect of this election is that, besides helping to crystallize the politics of Pakistan into two-party system, it has completely routed splinter groups and parties as well as the fundamentalist ones that have been thriving in that country by trading on religion...

The elections held in Pakistan early last month, at an estimated expenditure of a staggering one billion dollars stir up a question in most minds in South Asian countries today...

consisting of 15 members is formed by the Independents. PML(N) tried in vain to muster support of splinter groups parties and independent candidates to form the government in Islamabad.

ban based political leader who has little appeal in rural Pakistan.

tribal and clannish pulls and pressures and exercise their right of franchise freely without threats of intimidation and coercion.

eration and not on intolerance and confrontation between the government and the opposition. The two major parties namely, PPP and PML (N), must bear it in mind that they will run counter to the electoral verdict of the people...

The polling, which is universally acclaimed as the fairest with no interference or effort at rigging from any quarters, has proved beyond doubt that there is no national party as such in Pakistan which wields support equally in all her four provinces to form governments there as well as at the centre on its own strength.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), which is being led by late Zulifkari Ali Bhutto's Oxford-educated daughter, Benazir, managed to capture 86 seats in the National Assembly of Pakistan, while Pakistan Muslim League of Mian Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) bagged 72 seats to emerge as runners-up in this race for power.

The seats captured by the two major parties bring to light inability of either of them to form government at the centre on its own strength. PPP has formed government at the centre with the support of its electoral ally PML (N) and other splinter groups and independent candidates...

The failure of both the parties to form government on their own strength points unmistakably to the incontrovertible fact that neither enjoys mass support and confidence equally in all the four provinces. Despite populist image of Pakistan People's Party which perpetuates the Bhutto legend, people refused to give it a clean walkover to power...

Thus the election-1993, clearly signifies aversion of the electorate in Pakistan against delegating sweeping power to one party which, as has happened in the past, degenerates into worst form of dictatorship.

A noteworthy aspect of the just concluded poll in Pakistan is that the armed forces, which have been playing predominant role in the politics of that country right from its outset, have remained completely detached from the process of electioneering...

Soon after the election Benazir Bhutto told this writer, who had been to Pakistan during the election at the invitation of the government of Pakistan, that she would like to see in the Parliament a strong opposition which, she thought, was a sin quo non for the healthy growth and smooth functioning of democracy.

Another striking aspect of this election is that, besides helping to crystallize the politics of Pakistan into two-party system, it has completely routed splinter groups and parties as well as the fundamentalist ones that have been thriving in that country by trading on religion.

The tragic predicament of Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islami, which has suffered a total catastrophe in the poll, is a case in point. Three Jamaatites with great difficulty managed to struggle their way to the parliament, not on Jamaat's ticket but on PIF nominations.

They were on duty only to ensure free and fair polling without any violence or interference from any quarters. But they never interposed at any stage. This insular attitude of the military not only contributed to the free and fair polling, but also encouraged voters to turn out in larger numbers and cast their votes for the candidates of their own choice freely.

Benazir hoped the opposition would extend its unstinted support and cooperation to her move to introduce democratic reforms in the constitution. Both Benazir and Nawaz Sharif suffered the presidential excesses and therefore, the two leaders from the two sides of the fences should come up and ungrudgingly cooperate with each other in amending the constitution to democratize it and thereby, give birth to a truly sovereign parliament.

The election result, therefore, implies clearly growing political maturity of the electorate in Pakistan. In Pakistani society, which is essentially feudal in character, landlords, industrial and big business bring their influence to bear on the electoral process in its every step.

The two-party system, as has emerged from the heat and dust of the election-1993, is the result of popular will, the two-party system, it must be noted, can work only on the basis of patient negotiation on points of differences, tolerance and cooperation.

Benazir's post-election statement urging cooperation with the opposition clearly indicates that she has mellowed down to maturity which she is expected to display in taking lead to strengthen the foundation of democracy at home, as also in

dealing with the Hazratbal crisis which she is confronted with on her assumption of office as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The deepening Hazratbal crisis, which is causing further deterioration in the already strained Indo-Pakistan relations is going to cast its shadow on the proposed talks between the two countries suggested by the Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao.

The United States' latest pronouncement questioning the validity of Kashmir's accession to India and New Delhi's reaffirmation of its position declaring it in unequivocal terms, that Kashmir is an integral part of India, are going to make things infinitely more difficult for Benazir in the coming months.

The author, who is Chief Editor UNB, visited Pakistan as an observer during election at the invitation of the government of Pakistan.

NOTICE Due to his travel abroad, the regular column 'On the Record', by Shah A M S Kibriya will not be published for the next two weeks. The column will reappear on his return.

The most important thing about the Jordanian general election is that it is taking place at all.

Jericho Deal Dominates Jordan Election

Michael Jansen writes from Nicosia

King Hussein took his country by surprise by deciding to go ahead with Jordanian election on schedule. Twenty parties have registered, this being the first election since 1957 in which political parties are permitted to stand. As Gemini News Service reports, campaigning has centred on the PLO-Israeli deal and Palestinians, who form the majority in the kingdom, are concerned about their future.



KING HUSSEIN Party time

and Palestinians were politically mature enough to vote responsibly at a time of change, and the Islamic Action Front, dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, the largest party in the outgoing parliament.

ing communists, capitalists, Islamists and tribal coalitions. Still, the majority of the 555 candidates contesting the 80 seats in the lower house are again standing as independents.

lost in 1989. One of the most colourful women to put herself forward then and again this time is Toujan al-Faisal, a television presenter.

The Brotherhood, registered as a religious and charitable movement, also had the advantage of being permitted to operate as a political party at a time when parties were still banned. Tribal candidates secured 20 seats and Arab nationalists and leftists won 15.

PLO-Israeli accords has alienated the 60 per cent of Jordanians of Palestinian origin who support the accords.

Because secular political parties are not in a position to challenge the Brotherhood in this election, the only way the Islamists can be checked will be for secularists, who are a majority in the country, to participate heavily in the poll. If voter turnout is high, over 60 per cent, the Islamists could be reduced to 15 seats while if turnout is low they could take as many as 30.

This poll is being closely watched by countries like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates, who abominate democratisation, and by semi-democratic states, like Egypt and Tunisia, where Islamist groupings present a challenge to the government.

If secular electors committed to democracy vote in strength to reduce the number of Islamist seats in parliament, the democratisation process will be given a boost in the Middle East and the entire Muslim world.

MICHAEL JANSEN has covered the Middle East for many years.

Pressure for postponement began to build in late August when the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel reached agreement in Oslo on self-rule for the Palestinians in the occupied territories and Israeli troop withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the town of Jericho in the West Bank.

The signing of the PLO-Israeli accords on September 13 plunged King Hussein into two weeks of indecision.

This is because Jordanians distrust political parties, regarding them as either mouthpieces of the monarchy or opponents bent on its overthrow. There is still no concept of independent-minded loyalists operating in competition with a loyal opposition.

The issue at the forefront is the peace process and the PLO-Israeli accords. Depending on whether voters are for or against it, Jordanians of Palestinian origin, more than half the population, must decide where they belong while Jordanian nationalists must work out a new relationship to the Palestinians living in Jordan.

The Brotherhood may not, however, have these advantages in this poll. Jordanian analysts argue that it has not augmented its constituency in the past four years because of the poor performance of its ministers and deputies. More recently, they say, Islamist opposition to the

He wanted to press ahead with the democratisation programme he initiated four years ago when Jordan held its free and fair general election. Influential politicians loyal to the King were, however, urging him to postpone the election arguing that it would turn into a referendum on the PLO-Israeli accords rather than a true consultation of the Jordanian electorate.

The election to be held on November 8, will be the first since 1957 in which political parties are permitted to stand. In 1989 candidates stood as independents, although they were allowed to be listed in groups known to be affiliated with one party or another.

Furthermore, Jordanians consider party politicians dishonest and corrupt while they believe that committed independents are more prepared to provide services to their constituents. As a result less than two per cent of registered voters joined parties once they were legalised.

Non-voters generally secular and liberal, had little faith in the democratisation process and did not believe that the king, who rules rather than

Turn-out of voters will be a crucial factor in the outcome, as it was in 1989. Then only about 40 per cent of the eligible voters bothered to go to the polling booths, the majority of them Islamists committed to the platform of the Brotherhood.

Postponement was also supported by secularists who feared that the Islamic Action Front would capture the votes of Palestinian refugees who opposed the accords as a 'sell out'.

Under a new party law 20 parties have registered, including

The major parties fielding official candidates are the Islamic Action Front which has put forward 36, the largest number, and the Democratic and Popular Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine and the communists which have nominated three each.

Another neglected aspect is that the number of vessels plying daily is not enough for the prevailing density of population/passengers, resulting in constant overcrowding/overloading. The civic sense has not yet developed to the stage of relying on self-regulatory practices. The supply-and-demand ratio has to be respected and recognised to ensure safe journeys.

These activities should go on in the background in a routine manner, away from the newspaper headlines. There is a tendency to be noisy with small matters in the political publicity campaigns indulged in, in the name of government activity. It neither benefits nor impresses anybody. The government is expected to work in a quiet and systematic manner, informing the public from time to time on issues of public interest. Frolicking with trivialities and credit-seeking postures are not the signs of good governance.

To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Despite this, its road maintenance is very poor. Roads even in the heart of the town like Bandar Bazar Road, Zinda Bazar Road and many others beggar description. This is mainly due to apathy of the Pourashava management. They are not at all concerned about maintenance of the roads and cleanliness of the town. The whole town is giving a dirty look and there is no sign that municipal authorities will give up their lethargy and inaction.

Another neglected aspect is that the number of vessels plying daily is not enough for the prevailing density of population/passengers, resulting in constant overcrowding/overloading. The civic sense has not yet developed to the stage of relying on self-regulatory practices. The supply-and-demand ratio has to be respected and recognised to ensure safe journeys.

OPINION Investment and ICB Affairs

Shahabuddin Mahtab

Bangladesh has one of the lowest investment: GDP ratio in the world. The country cannot be at a take off point, unless the domestic savings is at least ten per cent of the GDP. Concerning Bangladesh, it is being repeatedly said in the different forums by the concerned ministers and also by our Prime Minister himself that all opportunities, concessions etc. are being offered to the foreign investors to come to Bangladesh.

Taka convertibility

Sir, The much talked about introduction of 'open Taka convertibility' has been deferred twice. This proves the lack of expertise, authenticity and confidence of the authorities concerned on this vital financial policy decision.

It is high time that the government should supersede the Pourashava and take over the administration directly for two or three years to inculcate efficiency, speed and discipline in Pourashava administration of the town.

These activities should go on in the background in a routine manner, away from the newspaper headlines. There is a tendency to be noisy with small matters in the political publicity campaigns indulged in, in the name of government activity. It neither benefits nor impresses anybody. The government is expected to work in a quiet and systematic manner, informing the public from time to time on issues of public interest. Frolicking with trivialities and credit-seeking postures are not the signs of good governance.

Now we may turn to another issue which concerns the middle class savers. Whatever this class of people have, they try to invest in the Post Office or the government controlled investment Corporation of Bangladesh. In the mid-eighties the ICB was declaring very high rates of dividends for its units. But the so called dividends were totally artificial. The Unit funds were invested in the shares of the different companies, and at that time the public limited companies were hardly earning any profit.

possible, and a respect for fundamental values of life. Nothing will come to our aid, if we cannot meet the very essence of truth.

About twenty thousand people opened investors' account with the ICB, with the hope that the hard earned money of the small investors will be invested in good companies. The people's trust was due to the fact that the Ministry of Finance was overseeing its activities, and also that the Board of Directors of the ICB were appointed by the Government.

But what happened, in fact, was that the small investors' money was 'invested' in all losing and worthless companies leading to the huge losses of the investors. A share which was not even worth Tk. 300/00, was purchased for Tk. 1000/00. Shares have also, reportedly, been purchased for non-existent companies (Magura Textiles). In simple terms, the poor investors' money was plundered. What was the Board of Directors doing all the time, and the Ministry of Finance also? Who were the people, who did all the bungling? What has happened to them? What action has been taken against all concerned? Are the losses recoverable, from the persons concerned? We would urge upon the government to present the full facts to the nation, if it genuinely desires for the industrial development of this country.

Undoubtedly the 'open Taka convertibility' is quite a new subject for us all. We never underwent such a monetary exercise in the practical field.

Another neglected aspect is that the number of vessels plying daily is not enough for the prevailing density of population/passengers, resulting in constant overcrowding/overloading. The civic sense has not yet developed to the stage of relying on self-regulatory practices. The supply-and-demand ratio has to be respected and recognised to ensure safe journeys.

These activities should go on in the background in a routine manner, away from the newspaper headlines. There is a tendency to be noisy with small matters in the political publicity campaigns indulged in, in the name of government activity. It neither benefits nor impresses anybody. The government is expected to work in a quiet and systematic manner, informing the public from time to time on issues of public interest. Frolicking with trivialities and credit-seeking postures are not the signs of good governance.

Let us be very clear about one thing. Good governance and management is also dependent on personal integrity and discipline, a vision for the future, a grasp for what is essential and

Sylhet municipal roads

Sir, Sylhet is a big Pourashava (municipality). It is more resourceful than most of the Pourashavas of the country,

Coastal passenger vessels

Sir, The latest launch tragedy in Bhola off-shore island once again brings into focus two pending projects which are not getting higher priority, resulting in loss of lives. One is the formation of a Coast Guard network; and the other is to review the hull design of coastal vessels carrying passengers.

These activities should go on in the background in a routine manner, away from the newspaper headlines. There is a tendency to be noisy with small matters in the political publicity campaigns indulged in, in the name of government activity. It neither benefits nor impresses anybody. The government is expected to work in a quiet and systematic manner, informing the public from time to time on issues of public interest. Frolicking with trivialities and credit-seeking postures are not the signs of good governance.

Let us be very clear about one thing. Good governance and management is also dependent on personal integrity and discipline, a vision for the future, a grasp for what is essential and