

Do Not Let the JS Down

As a big question-mark hangs on the opposition's participation in the next Jatiya Sangsad session beginning tomorrow, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at last comes up with an appeal for a change of heart.

However we hasten to add that this last-moment goodwill gesture falls far short of initiating a serious dialogue for resolving the crisis.

The way Khaleda Zia has extended the invitation for the opposition to participate in the session may be viewed by many as a deliberate political move to shift the blame on the opposition.

If the prime minister believes that "all national problems and the ways to further improve the election procedure can be discussed and solved in the Jatiya Sangsad", she would have left no efforts unexpended to bring the opposition parties to the JS.

Yet there should be other stronger compulsions why the JS must not be let down. If all the opposition parties continue to boycott a session or sessions, the JS becomes woefully meaningless, its functioning ludicrous.

What the ruling party and the opposition therefore are doing now is something suicidal. The ruling party creates an environment where the opposition feels ignored or slighted and in its turn the opposition looks for ways of rendering the House inoperative.

Dapunia, the Fairest

It was the fairest of them all. And The Daily Star hailed the achievement fittingly by displaying the news on the front page bound comely within a doubt-column box featuring a handsome lady casting her vote.

That is a very correct measure of how seriously we feel about the Election Commission's demonstration polls in Dapunia.

The ID cards carrying photographs of the holders may have helped matters — but perhaps only marginally so. The election went off well because of the absence of many things rather than the presence of sufficient good points.

It was festival football rather than the final of a knockout championship. No intelligent soul would dare guarantee that the parties would allow any national election of whatever level to be transformed to bouts of the most sporting Jabbar Boli Khela of Chittagong.

The ID cards by themselves do not ensure fairness. It can only help check false voting — and that too in a very limited way. There are always the chances of chunks of voters being left out of the ID card net.

In spite of all such, Dapunia has indeed set an example of how well can the pollings go. A very necessary example to which the nation would be looking back both wistfully and with high hopes as any serious voting contest would approach on the nation's horizon.

Unless the parties themselves stop this practice, mere administrative action cannot stop it.

OUR leaders are playing with our future, instead of helping us to build it. The sacred duty of leading the nation has, in their hands, been reduced to vitiating people's mind about the "other party".

Let us take our two supreme political personalities. Khaleda Zia is our foremost political leader of the moment, chosen by the people to head the government for five years.

Then comes Sheikh Hasina. Though she got slightly higher percentage of popular votes, yet due to her seats in the parliament, she is, what is known in parliamentary parlance, our 'shadow prime minister'.

What do we expect from these two leaders of ours? What do any people expect from their leaders? Is our expectation any different from those of other nations? To put it plainly, we expect our leaders to lead — not to blind alleys, not to dead-ends, not to social quagmire or to political abyss.

We do not, I repeat, we do not, expect our two leaders to perform miracles. Never have our people faulted any of our leaders, for failing to achieve the extraordinary.

Concerns that North Korea, which is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, was continuing its alleged secret programme to develop nuclear weapons were heightened by its refusal to allow IAEA inspectors' access to two nuclear waste sites.

The IAEA formally rebuked the North Korean government for its failure to comply. Then the agency formally notified the North Korean authorities that they had one month to accede to the demand for a special inspection.

The West is now waiting to see whether Pyongyang backs down. Some analysts are sure the end of the diplomatic road has already been reached. They argue that the regime and especially its unproved heir apparent Kim Jong Il, view an atomic programme as the trump card of their credibility.

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.

US Green Card lottery

Sir, Once again the talk of the town is US Green Card lottery. Our young, adventurous and unemployed youth, both male and female, are quite enthusiastic about it.

The Dapunia exercise has registered a record polling — 80 per cent. Why is a very poor percentage polled at most times and in most parts and suddenly there are spurts in certain pockets?

If so, we do not know what number of applications have been submitted and what colossal amount of money would be remitted from our country to the USA for the Green Card lottery.

Our Leaders are Letting Us Down

This piece concentrates on the subject of personal relations between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. I raise this issue, being convinced, that everything else remaining the same — our poverty, illiteracy, inefficiency, divisiveness, and mind-boggling bureaucracy — we would have been far better off politically and administratively if, and only if, our two leaders — Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina — had a more normal — I am not suggesting ideal — personal relationship.



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Imagine also that for every political crisis the Leader of the House would pick up the phone and call her counterpart from the Opposition and say "Let's talk".

It is in this context that I would like to comment on the latest appeal of the Prime Minister, through a BSS interview, urging all members of the parliament to join the session and solve all contending issues inside the House.

Let us speculate for a moment what would happen if Begum Zia was to change her approach to Sheikh Hasina.

Leader of the Opposition to give her views. Could Sheikh Hasina have spurned such invitations? She would have to respond positively. For as a politician, she would not afford an image of non-cooperation.

Having waited till about three days to the opening of the Parliament session to make her move, and having done it through the medium of an interview (hardly) to the state controlled news agency, it looked more like a PR exercise, and one made to avoid criticism of having done nothing.

Even with all the delays in the PM's move, if she had made the same appeal, not through the impersonal, and one-way medium of the press, but through a more personal, and dialogue permitting medium of a direct phone call to the Leader of the Opposition, then the affect would have been dramatic.

But suppose she had made the same appeal weeks back and not three days before the

parliament session was to start. Such an action would have triggered a whole flurry of activities at the party functional level, which could have led to a way out of the present impasse.

And hence did not take them seriously. Having waited till about three days to the opening of the Parliament session to make her move, and having done it through the medium of an interview (hardly) to the state controlled news agency, it looked more like a PR exercise, and one made to avoid criticism of having done nothing.

What prevents Begum Zia from taking such bold personal initiatives? I think it is a false sense of prestige of her position. And it comes, not so much from her own views, but from the coterie that surrounds her.



you have just told to me over the telephone. I request you do so.

One result of such a move could be the same as now — continuance of the impasses. But on the other hand, the result could have also been dramatically different.

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The Third View by Mahfuz Anam

Row over North Korea's Nuclear Plan: Another Cold War in the Offing?

by A S M Nurunnabi

The North Korean problem appears to be a four-dimensional chess game where each of the major players — the US, North and South Korea and the IAEA — fears the political consequences of making concessions and the military consequences of getting tough.

could result in plunging the whole land of the North and the South into the holocaust of war.

The UN Security Council has the power to impose economic sanctions on the North for its recalcitrance. But since China, Pyongyang's friend, is likely to veto any such measure, the UN at present does not have such inclination.

The West is now waiting to see whether Pyongyang backs down. Some analysts are sure the end of the diplomatic road has already been reached. They argue that the regime and especially its unproved heir apparent Kim Jong Il, view an atomic programme as the trump card of their credibility.

of Western support for Kim Jong Il's succession and a withdrawal of US troops from the South — concessions neither Seoul nor Washington will be willing to accept.

According to observers, the task for the US administration is to keep prodding Pyongyang down that path without devoting so much attention to the problem that it raises the value of the North's nuclear card even higher.

While the US is pursuing the diplomatic path, it does not seem to be currently considering a preemptive strike to neutralise North Korea's nuclear threat.

Scud missiles and announced that it would resume planning for the Team Spirit military exercises with the US, suspended in February last to placate the North.

The US has reportedly worked out an operational plan to hurl 600,000 troops, more than 200 warships and 1000 aircraft and so on within 60 days in case of an emergency on the Korean peninsula.

China is expected to send a high-ranking delegation to North Korea during this month to help defuse the nuclear crisis. Chinese delegates are expected to urge North Korean leaders to resolve the nuclear issue through dialogue.

At the same time, they stepped up efforts to seek help from Japan, Russia and Western Europe in resolving the crisis. South Korea has lately said in its bid to break a tense standoff with the North, that it would no longer press North Korea to exchange envoys as a precondition for further talks.

It thinks that the move to drop the demand for envoy exchange would put more pressure on Pyongyang to clear suspicions over its nuclear programme by opening all of its nuclear facilities to inspections by IAEA.

Thus at present the whole scenario on the Korean peninsula seem to be void of clear directions. In the not distant past, there were sporadic talks of unification of the two Koreas like the case in Germany.

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Traffic hazards

Sir, Traffic hazards as a subject dominates newspapers. Remedies are: (a) Stopping rickshaws in downtown, main roads, streets, (b) stopping rickshaws with no papers and double or treble licences, (c) no slow, fast moving vehicles together, (d) snap check of all vehicles, (e) truck movement between 10 pm and 5 am, (f) signal abeyance and no stick to be shown by traffic police, (g) spot punishment without magistrate, (h) no public crossing, (i) Atlas should introduce improved Mishuk, (j) baby taxi should have meter, (k) mini yellow cabs like Nawaz in Pakistan may be introduced, (l) O/h bridges, (m) U/g tunnels, (n) all rly crossing to have o/h

bridges on prefabricated parts, (o) alternate provision to surplus rickshaw pullers, (p) no overtaking, (q) no violation of parking areas, (r) passenger buses will not stop in the middle of road for "in & out", (s) clear foot paths, no meeting on roads & U turn.

Neglected Tejgaon railway station

Sir, Tejgaon has been an important Railway Station since the British days. But owing to utter negligence of the Railway authority, it is highly dilapidated today.

Agri graduates Sir, Consequent upon the government's decision to introduce agriculture as a compulsory subject at school and college levels, both Govt and private schools and colleges have started recruiting agriculture graduates for teaching agriculture. In this connection, I would like to draw the kind attention of all the concerns which are recruiting agriculture graduates as teachers to the following points:

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giving the PM, almost goading her to be more non-cooperative stance. As if that would be better for the country. To her credit, Begum Zia replied that "It was my duty to try. Whether they (Opposition) come or not, is their decision."

I would like to appeal to this sentiment of the PM, which she expressed that day. Will the PM appear weak, if she telephones the Leader of the Opposition, and appeals to her for co-operation? Will she appear to be less in control if she consults Sheikh Hasina on important national and international issues confronting the country — like Farakka, Rohingyas, Push-in, increasing local investment, attracting foreign investment, etc. Rather than appearing to be weak, she will appear as the LEADER of the whole nation, and not just the leader of those who support her.

As I understand, in politics there are three parties. First is one's own, which includes the allies. The second in the opposition, which includes their allies. The third party is the PUBLIC, the VOTERS. How to win this third group to either side, is the name of the democracy game. The strongest weapon in winning the public over is to be clear in your policies, and be most flexible and accommodative in your dealings with the opponents. The public see that as a sign of maturity, wisdom, breadth of vision and openness of heart.

Next instalment: Role of the Leader of the Opposition.

Under unavoidable circumstances this week, the column "Passing Clouds" due for today will be published tomorrow and the column "Along My Way" which was due for Monday last, will appear on Thursday.

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graduates like medical, engineering etc. because they also complete a 40-year B. Sc. Ag. (Hons) course after HSC. (ii) The Govt. has approved the B. Sc. Ag. (Hons) Degree as the terminal degree and an Agri graduate can compete with a general university Masters degree holder for a job meant for agriculture related discipline. (iii) As approved by the government, on first appointment, a fresh Agri graduate will get the NNS of Tk 2850-5155/-. (iv) As a technical graduate, an Agri graduate is also entitled to get a 'technical pay' as per rule.

We will be very much grateful if all the recruiting agencies including PSC please consider the above mentioned points while putting ads for recruiting agriculture graduates and appointing them to relevant posts.