Dhaka, Tuesday, May 3, 1994

# 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. The appeal is for the seemingly unwilling MPs to join the JS session. Clearly the call has come very late. But it is a call anyway and an attempt at thawing the icy relations that have been the hallmark of national politics in recent times. The move therefore is laudable. It will be more so if further serious attempts are made to build on this good work.

However we hasten to add that this last-moment goodwill gesture falls far short of initiating a serious dialogue for resolving the crisis. It gives the impression more of a perfunctory exercise than one vigorously pursued to get a positive result. Indeed, the prime minister said nothing new about the thorny issue of a national election under a caretaker government. However, she reveals that identity cards for voters will be introduced for the coming general election. No doubt the system of identity cards will be most welcome. Apart from a huge cost involved in the process, it calls for a lot of preparation over a considerable period of time for a fault-free issuance of ID cards to the electorate.

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. They may see no point asking the opposition parties to come to the JS only three days before it sits for the session. The same appeal issued earlier could set into motion the process of a negotiation, leading perhaps to a resolution of the stalemate.

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. In fact what she is talking about is an effective parliament. But her own JS attendance record somewhat belies what she is trying to justify. Even so, the fact that she makes a fresh offer to untangle some burning issues within the parliament should not be brushed aside.

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. The ruling party ought to share its portion of blame but the opposition too cannot exonerate itself from the irresponsibility it will have demonstrated by continually absenting from the House. To attend the JS session for an MP is as much a right as it is an obligation on his or her part. He owes his obligation to the people who have elected him and by extension he has an accountability to the nation.

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. The message is loud and clear that both of them may end up discrediting the system they have vowed to consolidate through their positive contributions. Whatever may be their respective strategy in dealing with each other is less important than how the government and the opposition give account of themselves to the people and to what extent they make parliament effective and functional. There is no place for offended ego and personal grudge in national politics. Let politics be pro-people.

# 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. The headline exulted in black italicised letters: Dapunia voters show way for the polls.

That is a very correct measure of how seriously we feel about the Election Commission's demonstration polls in Dapunia, Mymensingh as also how encouraged we, and the nation as well, have felt by the conduct of the Saturday election of a union parishad chairman.

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. First, there was no other election held anywhere in the nation on the same day allowing the EC as well as the administration to turn their attention full beam and in a sharp focus on a single union out of thousands. Things could have gotten worse even after that, had not the main contenders in the national politics decided to let Dapunia pass without any serious party-wise contest. Not one minister went to the demonstration plot, nor did any opposition stalwart - not to speak of the Prime Minister or the Leader of the opposition. Dapunia was not afterall Magura, the be-all and end-all of the parties' idea of prestige.

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. And what can be done to stop some quarters bent on beating the ID card problem by getting multiple ID cards issued to the same people making them eligible to vote at different centres? But these are nothing compared to the main thrusts mounted against the fairness of elections. First is effecting changes in the delimitation of the constituencies. Secondly there is going for a congenial local administration through transfers etc. Third and the most failsafe technique is to capture the polling centres and seal the ballots by the captors, the ID cards coming to no help.

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? To compromise the fairness of an election terrorising the voters into keeping to their homes — has been a very standard weapon. Who is there to ensure that this would not be anymore resorted to by anybody? It is not for the EC to do that. Unless the parties themselves stop this practice, mere administrative action cannot stop it.

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. The IDs can smother the way to free and fair elections provided that the entries into the computer will be fool-proof. If this exercise is not completed in a fail-safe way, it would do infinitely more harm than good to the electoral process.

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.



leaders are playing

with our future, instead

it. The sacred duty of leading

the nation has, in their hands,

been reduced to vitiating peo-

ple's mind about the "other

party". To them politics ap-

pears to be nothing but a

means of harassing the oppo-

nent, even if they end up ha-

rassing the general people, in

whose name they profess to be

doing politics in the first

supreme political personali-

ties. Khaleda Zia is our fore-

most political leader of the

moment, chosen by the people

to head the government for

five years. Unquestionably, till

another public poll changes

the verdict, she is the political

leader whom the people have

Though she got slightly higher

percentage of popular votes.

yet due to her seats in the par-

liament, she is, what is known

in parliamentary parlance, our

'shadow prime minister'. This

is much more than a title. It

signifies tremendous public

confidence and prestige. More

importantly, it reveals that

alternative leadership, a lead-

ership they may decide to put

into power if found to be bet-

these two leaders of ours?

What do any people expect

from their leaders? Is our ex-

pectation any different from

those of other nations? To put

it plainly, we expect our lead-

ers to lead - not to blind al-

levs, not to dead-ends, not to

social quagmire or to political

abyss. We expect them to lead

us forward, even if it be only

inches from where we were.

We expect them to make us

aware of the problems we are

faced with, but not to end

there. We expect them to show

us the way out also. When we.

the ordinary people, only see

the problems, we expect our

two leaders to also see the so-

not, expect our two leaders to

perform miracles. Never have

our people faulted any of our

leaders, for failing to achieve

the extraordinary. The tragedy

is that we do not seem to get

even the most basic, the most

fundamental, the most ordi-

We do not, I repeat, we do

What do we expect from

people expect her to provide

Then comes Sheikh Hasina.

chosen to lead us.

Let us take our two

of helping us to build

nary performances out of

Take the case of interac tions between these two centres of power — the so-called Position' and the Opposition. How they personally feel about each other is irrelevant. How they handle the public offices that people have given them is the real issue. In running the affairs of the state, they have to communicate with one another. But it is widely known that they are hardly on talking terms. Our two most important leaders, leaders on whom the future of the country lies, lead ers whose decisions affect our daily lives, and on whom rests the future of our children, do not show to one another, the most rudimentary courtesy of talking to one another. Can such a situation generate confidence in the public mind, that our future is in good hands? I am raising this issue of personal relations because I believe that with everything being the same, if these two leaders behaved as leaders then our political situation would have been far better.

Let us speculate for a moment what would happen if Begum Zia was to change her approach to Sheikh Hasina. Let us imagine that for every important national and international issue, the Prime Minister would invite the 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, for the fear that public opinion could go against her.

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". Here again, the worst the AL chief could have done was to hang up the phone. And, here again we in

parliament session was to start. Such an action would have triggered a whole flurry of activities at the party func tionary level, which could have led to a way out of the present impasse. In the absence of any move by the party chief, and since none in BNP has the credibility to speak on her behalf, the second tier leaders only second guessed each other as to what will happen, and could not take any initiative to break the deadlock. Yes, there were some talks, but the Opposition knew that it all lacked the power to deliver,

#### The Third View by Mahfuz Anam

the former for the attempt, and castigated the latter for her non-cooperation. I am trying to argue that even if Sheikh Hasina would take the most non-cooperative position (which politics would dictate that she did not), then also it would be worthwhile for the PM to take a more open and conciliatory posture.

It is in this context that 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. The most charitable remark one can make about it, is that "It is too little, too late." First, there is nothing new in what she said, except for the ID card issue. Though until now she has refrained from directly commenting on the caretaker government issue (pretending as if it did not exist), indirectly she has repeated more or less the same things she said last

But suppose she had made the same appeal weeks back and not three days before the 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. Thus the PM's latest appeal lacks credibility as being a genuine attempt to solve the political crisis that is staring us in the face for the moment.

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. The direct contact would have led to other topics, on which both could have expressed their views, and then the PM could have ended the call by saying to the Leader of the Opposition that 'Why don't you say on the floor of the Parliament, what



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

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. What the ruling party is not taking into its calculations is that there are multiple trends, as is natural within any political alliance or party, inside the opposition. It would be good politics to try and strengthen the hands of those who are in favour of a dialogue and understanding.

What prevents Begum Zia from taking such bold personal initiatives? I think it is a false sense of prestige of her posttion. And it comes, not so much from her own views, but from the coterie that surrounds her. Let me explain why I say so. On return from Japan, I was present in a meeting of members of her entourage, when one senior journalist, in the guise of asking her a question said "Madam why do you give so much importance to the Opposition by asking them to come to the House? Let them stay away if they like. Why should you ask them? It is below your dignity. was astounded by this unsolicited political advice that a journalist (who was not a member of the entourage) was

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.

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. That is the critical transition that Begum Zia has failed to make, from being the leader of those who voted for her, to being the Prime Minister of all the people of the country, including of those who voted against her and did not want her at the helm of af-

As I understand, in politics there are three parties. First is one's own, which includes the allies. The second in the opponent, 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. For the sake of the country and for democracy, getting snubbed by the opposition is no sign of WEAKNESS. It is, on the contrary, a sign of true leadership.

#### 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.

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

by ASM Nurunnabi

The North Korean problem appears to be a four-dimensional chess game where each of the major players —

the US, North and South Koreas and the IAEA — fears the political consequences of making concessions and

D URING the course of February, 1993, an impasse developed between the government of North Korea and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) over the latter's attempts to inspect two North Korean

nuclear sites.

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. Inspectors were anxious to visit the sites following the analysis of samples taken during the agency's six previous inspections. Analysis of the small amount of plutonium which North Korea had acknowledged having produced led experts to conclude that North Korea possessed more plutonium than it had hitherto declared.

After several days of fruitless negotiation the IAEA resolved to invoke its powers to demand "special inspection" of the relevant sites. The move marked the first occasion on which the UN agency had issued such a demand and carried with it the threat of UN sanctions if the North Korean government refused to comply. The North Korean government reacted by stating that the special inspection procedure and threat of sanctions meant that "the inviolable soil of our country is impinged upon by big powers" and, if pursued,

whole land of the North and the South into the holocaust of war."

the military consequences of getting tough.

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 North Korean government formally rejected the demand on the ground that it would amount to a "threat to the security" of the country, and stated that it would take "defensive measures" to protect its sovereignty. It insisted that its atomic programme was entirely peaceful.

The impasse between the IAEA and the North Korean government over the latter's refusal to submit its nuclear facilities to full inspection continued prompting the IAEA to refer the issue to the UN Security Council, which adopted a non-binding statement urging North Korea to allow full inspection. US and South Korean officials thought that the Council might take a stronger action, such as adopting a binding resolution if North Korea should continue with its refusal to comply.

The North Korean problem appears to be a four-dimen-

sional chess game where each of the tnajor players — the US. North and South Koreas and the IAEA — fears the political consequences of making concessions and the military consequences of getting tough.

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 US accordingly has decided that a gradual move from the purely diplomatic to economic and military pressures is still the best response. That seems to be the only way the Security Council might earn backing from China if sanction was needed later.

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 II, view an atomic programme as the trump card of their credibility and will not forego it for anything. Other experts think that Pyongyang might eventually give up its nuclear dream, but only in exchange for massive economic aid and a guarantee

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. The Clinton Administration still believes that North Korea can be persuaded to trade away its bomb for diplomatic recognition and reasonable financial

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. Right now, their wait-and-squeeze strategy has strong congressional support, but that could erode if the North were to escalate. After all, getting off track with North Korea could cause a war.

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. However, the US is reportedly making military preparation, should peaceful settlement come to a dead end. On its part, South Korea has put its 633,000 troops on alert. It has also accepted an American offer to deploy 48 Patriot missile launchers to defend against North Korean

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. In short, facts tell that the situation on the Korean peninsula resembles that on the eve of the past Korean war.

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. China, North Korea's only major ally, is considered best positioned to influence its neighbour. South Korean officials expect that China, a permanent member of the Security Council with power of veto. would be able to convince Pyongyang of follow Beijing's example of reform and open door policies. They also gave indications that South Korea would be willing to help North Korea develop is economy if it drops is nuclear ambitions. 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 inspec-

tions 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. Though indications in this behalf from the side of North Korea were rather lukewarm, support to the idea appeared more demonstrative in the South. The nuclear crisis has thrown into limbo any prospect of unification for the present. Another more depressing development is the creation of a zone of severe tension in a vitally important strategic area which seems to suggest that a sort of cold war in the present unipolar world order is threatening to emerge inasmuch as China and Russia have already expressed their support for communist North Korea in case of any showdown between the contending parties in the nuclear dispute.

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.

# 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. Many of them are bubbling and ecstatic about winning the lottery and going to America. So, there is a mad rush of people for submitting their applications (at the prescribed rate of Taka 1700,00 per person!) to try their luck and to make their individual dream come true.

If so, we do not know what number of applications have been submitted and what colossus amount of money would be remitted from our country to the USA for the Green Card lottery. In such a backdrop (or frontal?) often we tend to wonder whether our 'Open Taka Convertibility' which has been introduced for

the first time in our country by the Finance Minister since September last in the name of market economy has invited the foreign investors to establish in Bangladesh a US Green Card lottery industry!

We would request our honorable Finance Minister to kindly look into the affair, clarify the matter, and take all necessary steps to stop flight of capital from our country.

Dhaka

O H Kabir

# SSC scholarship

Sir, Under the education board of Jessore we sat for the SSC examination in 1991 and passed the exam. successfully with star marks. For this the government included our names for scholarship. But it is unbelievable that we have not

yet got the money.

The college authority made

us only hopeful saying many things everytime. As such often it seems that we have rather committed mistakes by making good results! Poor students as we are, this amount of

So, we urge proper steps from Prime Minister in this matter towards helping some poor students.

money would help us much.

Easir Arafath Ex-student of Government Science College, Dhaka

## 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 vellow cabs like Nawaz in Pakistan may be introduced, (1) 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.

Dhaka situation was reversed in Bengazi, Tripoli, Manila, Jakarta, Bangkok, Nairobi, Bombay, Lima, Rio, Caracas, Canton, Kingston, Macao etc.

"Law" will be with "order" stringently.

Ghulam Murshid Dhaka

# 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. Although many passengers pass through this station daily, the approach roads are left uncared for, specially the connecting road between the station and the old Mymensingh Road. For years together this road has not been repaired by Railway authority. At present it is thoroughly unusable. This station is the dirtiest spot of Dhaka city. The old Railway quarters

meant for residence of Railway employees are not habitable.

The inmates are compelled to use the choked drains as toilets in the absence of the sanitary latrines. The daily poultry

lets in the absence of the sanitary latrines. The daily poultry market sits in a place strewn with human excreta. In short the entire atmosphere smacks of a hell. Will the indolent Railway Administration take immediate steps to clean this augean stable?

M N Islam Holy Cross College Road, Tejgaon, Dhaka

## 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:

(i) Agriculture graduates are equivalent to other technical 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 Agrigraduate 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

M Zahidul Haque Gen Secy, BAI, Teachers' Assoc

relevant posts.

Dhaka

