

Prime Minister Can Help Avert this Confrontation

by M Amir-ul Islam

HERE is hardly 4 days to go before the opposition would tender their resignations in the Parliament...

Chechnya's Moral Win

In the face of air and ground attacks by the Russian troops the fall of Chechnyan capital Grozny is perhaps just a matter of time...

The question that has been looming large since before the Russian invasion began a couple of weeks back, is, if Chechnya is going to be another Afghanistan for Russia...

To go by the self-determination trend in the former Soviet Union's republics, Chechnya has committed no crime. As early as in 1992 did the republic opt for secession from Russia...

Since the Russian leadership has opted for a military solution to the problem, it will have difficulty backing out. But what is surprising is the absence of any — even mild — reactions to this invasion from the western countries...

Happy Christmas

The birth of Christ, to which the Christian faith has its umbilical cord, is being celebrated today. It coincides with a vastly increased importance being attached lately to peace, tolerance and co-existence in a strife-torn world...

The messages that Lord Christ delivered to the world through the poignancy of an excruciating physical pain and mental agony he personally suffered are a priceless heritage for all mankind...

The sheer force of the spirit over the matter, with its intended application in real-life situations, forms the essence of Christ's appeal. His messages urge a constant introspection over what is and what ought to be...

Christian values of justice, fair-play, compassion for others under testing and provocative circumstances, let alone what we ordinarily understand by fellow-feeling, have illumined many a dark mind, within the Christendom itself, over hundreds of years...

Whether it is Bosnia, Chechnya, Middle East, Somalia, Rwanda, Jaffna or Haiti the needs of the hour are peace and conciliation in place of violence, turbulence and blood-letting...

Ensnared Ceasefire

The ceasefire in Bosnia, catalysed by a Jimmy Carter mission, holds out the promise of a four-month cessation of hostilities between the Muslim-led Bosnian government and the Serbian occupation force...

One only hopes this ceasefire holds. Pessimism creeps in for two other reasons: One on a core issue and the other on a rather peripheral but portentous one...

With a ceasefire coming into effect, the Bangladesh troops, trapped in the besieged town of Velika Kladusa, should be able to evacuate smoothly...

have been too many interruptions and disruptions in the Constitutional process in our history. People of Bangladesh may be spared this time another collapse of the democratic process...

Uncertainty looms large on the political horizon. Future of country's Fifth Parliament is unpredictable, more so is the future of democracy...

CONSTITUTION which the Prime Minister often is referring to "are apt to prove frail structure" in the hands of those major actors who do not know how to work the Constitution...

In absence of this consultative process consensus itself gets weakened thus defeating the process and destroying the basis of democracy as S.A. de Smit writes in his book "Constitution and Administrative Law" that...

One would like to appeal to the leaders and particularly the Prime Minister that there

grow for an interim government to do the holding over till the successor Prime Minister is sworn in.

Demand for Neutral Administration

In view of the abuses, electoral fraud, hypocrisy, treachery and sabotage, twist and frustration as has been experienced in the electoral history of our recent past there is a popular demand initiated by all the opposition parties for a neutral caretaker government...

The present government, which is beneficiary of such an election held in 1991 under a caretaker government, now opposes such a proposal initiated by the opposition. Opposition, on the other hand, boycotts the Parliament and started a movement of hartal and blockade in order to paralyse the government...

The demand for a caretaker government which arises from the past experience of "made up elections" through election engineering adopted by the autocratic regime in the past, needs to be understood in the context of those tragedies. Problem is primarily to restore confidence and credibility in the election system...

The need for a caretaker and neutral government for the interim period for holding the election is no doubt a legitimate and popular demand as the people, and particularly all the opposition political parties, believe that such a government only can ensure the neutrality of Administration...

There are indeed different examples and models for such an interim caretaker government; but what is needed is the political will to be able to hold free and fair elections under a democracy and through Constitutional means...

There are also proposals for change. The opposition on the other hand insists on a neutral government by bringing a change in the Constitution. Begum Khaleda Zia is uncompromising on the issue of changing the Constitution...

As a matter of fact, if one would look closely, it is possible to find the element of caretaker government even under the present dispensation of our own Constitution. Suppose, on the advice of the Prime Minister the Parliament is dissolved today or is dissolved at the end of five years then, as under the present dispensation, there is nothing to prevent Begum Khaleda Zia, the present Prime Minister, to continue in office under Article 57 (3) of the Constitution...

Instead, the government chose to spring the decision on the people and their representatives in Parliament. In the two sessions of Parliament till now this year, not a hint was dropped that a legislative proposal of this nature was forthcoming. No hint was dropped presumably because the government did not feel that a situation of any exigency existed as far as the functioning of the Industrial Development Bank of India was concerned...

Why Parliament at all?

Ashok Mitra writes from Delhi

The government deliberately decided to take what can with justification be called the lawless road, thereby demonstrating its contempt for established democratic conventions.

IN the hoopla of one-day cricket and the frenzy the State Assembly elections have generated, issues of substances, which ought to have received the media's attention, have tended to be pushed to the background. The nation's parliamentarians have been equally absent-minded...

This development has its positive aspects, since it can be argued that, without waiting for a Parliament's slow-moving processes to reflect their wishes, the people themselves take the initiative to indicate to the government what the nation's priorities are. It is not without significance that parliamentary sessions have of late got shortened...

Whether it is Bosnia, Chechnya, Middle East, Somalia, Rwanda, Jaffna or Haiti the needs of the hour are peace and conciliation in place of violence, turbulence and blood-letting. Innocent people are dying like flies in God's good earth as hate rankles in communities led by men with their own prejudices...

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.

Referendum on hartal/blockade. Sir, Strikes and blockades have brought the country down to the point of destruction. Opposition calls strike/blockade in the cities and sometimes throughout the country...

Exams and hartals. Sir, Our GCE 'O' level exams will start about a fortnight from now. The current political situation in our country seems to indicate that there will be a number of hartals in the near future. If such a hartal is called on an exam day, what are we, the examinees, supposed to do? Are we expected to camp outside the examination hall on the British Council premises? What an awful thought! If we, the children of today, cannot give our exams...

private sector. Laying down such fresh guidelines for the institution and drastically changing its structure may be good or bad; it can conceivably hasten the pace of industrial development, or have a reverse effect. Whatever way it works out, the government, as long as it is in office and enjoys the confidence of Parliament, is entitled to translate its intent into reality. No quarrel can be picked on that score...

What does the move portend? There are clear-cut rules and conventions for issuing ordinances. It is only when circumstances are compelling and the nation's interests would be adversely affected in a grievous manner, that, with Parliament not in session, an ordinance is normally supposed to be issued. In the present instance, no such compelling circumstances existed. The ordinance converting the IDBI into a private corporate entity must therefore have been motivated by the sole intention to by-pass Parliament and parliamentary procedures...

General elections. Sir, How much amount of money was spent from our public exchequer for holding the last general elections, 1991, under a caretaker government? Some persons say it cost us over nine hundred crore Taka some claim it to be Taka five hundred crore. We do not know the exact figure. Our government has never let us know the actual amount of public money spent from the government treasury...

Forest Policy. Sir, The new National Forest Policy, 1994 announced by the Minister of Environment and Forests on 15.12.94 at a press conference at the ministry's conference room is of vital concern for the nation, as forests play a significant role in meeting the economic, environmental protection and social needs of the country. People's participation is a pre-requisite for formulating a people-oriented forest policy. Effective implementation of such a policy also requires involvement as well as full support of the people...

Tk 1 coin. Sir, The Bangladesh Bank has recently released coins of Taka One denomination. I am not aware how far it is true but it is heard that these coins are being smuggled out to a neighbouring country because the metal value of One-Taka coin is more than Taka three as the metal of these coins can be used to manufacture spoons and other similar utensils. I would request the relevant authority to verify the apprehension. M Zahedul Haque Asst Prof. BAI, Dhaka.

RA Choudhury Dhanmoudi R/A, Dhaka-1205. O'H Kabir Dhaka-1203. Sir, The new National Forest Policy, 1994 announced by the Minister of Environment and Forests on 15.12.94 at a press conference at the ministry's conference room is of vital concern for the nation, as forests play a significant role in meeting the economic, environmental protection and social needs of the country. People's participation is a pre-requisite for formulating a people-oriented forest policy. Effective implementation of such a policy also requires involvement as well as full support of the people...