

Wake up to the Groundwater Sign

The groundwater level in more than half of Bangladesh's land mass has registered unprecedented falls — up to an inconceivable 26 meters.

We have long been harping on this constant theme of an unliveable and unliving physical reality fast overtaking our dear dank and verdant land without raking up any disquiet seemingly in any quarter.

The total volume of water, sustained and renewed and running, available to this Gangetic delta, has been declining over the years.

The government's failure to respond to the urgency of the situation will not be forgiven by our progeny.

Signals of State Polls in India

A series of election reversals for India's ruling Congress Party at the state level has made that country's political future quite uncertain.

A weakened Congress Party and the Hindu revivalism have a whole lot of adverse implications not only on India as a secular, advanced and modern country but on its relations with other countries.

Obviously the Hindu revivalist parties have set their eyes on the power at the centre. The task may not be as easy for those parties.

A Thousand Death-traps

A loss of a million Taka a year is less than paltry for such gigantic organisations as the Dhaka City Corporation or the Dhaka WASA, specially when the bill is shared by the two.

Sources close to WASA say that round the clock guarding of the manholes are impracticable and as such public awareness was the only insurance against the vanishing covers.

Is it beyond fin de siècle technology to develop a pilferproof manhole-cover? That cannot be.

We are simply nurturing manhole-cover theft may be for the simple reason that it doesn't cost much or that its elimination would not come to anyone's profit.

Least Governance is Not Always the Best

by Nilratan Halder

THE government of Begum Khaleda Zia seems to do have no intention to do any injustice to its prolonged reputation for sitting on problems and desperately bringing its acts together at the last moment when things are out of control.

At a time when the country's north suffered successive bouts of flood and drought, the government kept its hands withdrawn. Even newspaper reports on famine in a wide area of the north only drew the government's customary response.

That was the beginning. The drought caused food shortage but the government was in no mood to admit the shortfall. It had all through been claiming that the country had plenty of food reserve and the harvest did not give any cause to be unduly concerned.

In a sellers' market like ours the traders took the fullest advantage of this. It was made easier by the government's hasty decision to do away with the system of paddy procurement.

This is worse still, because a government must not only come clean on an issue of such gravity but also take remedial measures well in advance to avoid large-scale scarcity of foodgrains and the related adverse impact on their prices.

As if it was not enough. To make the matter worse has come on the heels the fertilizer crisis. Here the government by default is even more glaring.

Now is the time for IRRI cultivation. It is common knowledge this particular variety of paddy is absolutely dependent on chemical fertilizer.

One is right to smell rat in the development that brings the fertilizer crisis to coincide with the cultivation season of IRRI. But here was chance for substantially making up for the crop failure due to drought in the Aman cultivation season.

fixed rate — is not going to earn the government many a sympathiser.

Not surprisingly, infuriated farmers have gone to the extent of clashing with the men responsible for distribution of fertilizer and even looting the item from trucks in broad daylight.

Over the years all those autocratic institutions have not only remained intact, those have been further fortified during the successive autocratic regimes.

According to John Locke government is the civil ruler or the sovereign with power entrusted to it by the people through formation of political societies.

In these and like cases where the government is dissolved, the people are at liberty to provide for themselves by erecting a new legislative, differing from the other by the change of persons or form or both as they shall find it most for their safety and good.

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manipulative means has nothing to do with privatisation. It is the lack of government's proper role in curbing the illegal manipulation that is to be blamed.

The question one might ask if the government has picked up the idea that the best governance is the one that governs less. Unfortunately, the government is in no mood of doing so where it really should exercise less power and influence.

March towards Independence

March 16, 1995

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on invitation from General Yahya Khan, went to the President House in Dhaka to discuss with General Yahya. At this time, Sheikh Mujib was accompanied by a few members of his advisory committee — Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad, Khondoker Mushtaq Ahmed, Mansoor Ali, A H M Quamruzzaman, and Dr Kamal Hossain.

In the afternoon, a slogan-charged procession went by the President House; the procession consisted of the common people and the student activists of the Chhatra League.

The Dawn featured an account of a press conference addressed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was quoted as saying that he had all the support for the withdrawal of Martial Law and for the transference of power to the elected representatives of the people.

(Compiled by Urme Hussain)

Untying the Gordian Knot of Our Politics

A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS AND ARTICLES ON THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS

'Caretaker Govt and Sovereign EC — Need of the Hour'

by Mohammed Abu Hena Secretary General, PROKRICHI-BCS Central Council



THE Quixotic idea of building parliamentary democracy on an autocratic mould lies at the root of the current political crisis.

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and a fair and impartial execution of the laws made by it." In the light of John Locke's observation one may ask, is there in this country a comprehensive representative body of tax payers to authorise taxation? Asked that way it deserves an answer. It is said that the members of the parliament who abstained from the parliament for last one year represent 69% of the voters who cast votes in the last election.

For laws not being made for themselves, but to be by the society for the benefit of the body politic in its due place and function, when that totally ceases, the government visibly ceases, and the people become a confused multitude without order or connexion.

In the absence of any clarity about the future events to follow, the people seem to be a confused multitude without order or connexion.

In these and like cases where the government is dissolved, the people are at liberty to provide for themselves by erecting a new legislative, differing from the other by the change of persons or form or both as they shall find it most for their safety and good.

election, therefore, is to keep such people away from the election arena. The second requirement is to conduct the election by a neutral government which will have no direct or indirect stakes in the election.

The third requirement is a code of conduct to be enforced rigidly. Proper, and up-to-date electoral roll is a must and identity cards can certainly help identify the citizens not only for election purpose but also for many other civic requirements.

At present, in the interest of the bureaucracy, even the most basic governmental functions have been ritualised to an absurd degree. This hot-house atmosphere may produce some monstrous fruit unless the proper place of individual citizens is recognised and established as the legitimate basis of government.

A neutral caretaker government and a sovereign Election Commission free from all interference of the administrative branch of the government, can enable the individual citizens to enter into such a compact through a free and fair election.

John Locke has very precisely suggested what seems to be the way out from such a situation. The consent of the ruled is a must for the ruler to rule. To obtain the consent in a representative form of democracy a free, fair and impartial election is the only way.

children was purchased with a US\$2.1 million grant from the Rotary Foundation in Turkey in September, 1985. 2,500 Turkish Rotarians managed immunisation posts in 27 cities. They provided equipment, fuel, transport, official work and lunches for the medical volunteers.

The world's 27,000 Rotary Clubs celebrated with joy their effectiveness and contribution as partners in a historic medical milestone announced on September 29, 1994 at the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Washington, DC headquarters.

Through the Polioplus Programme, the Rotary Foundation supports the World Health Organization's (WHO) Polio Eradication Initiative, in cooperation with UNICEF, the Pan American Health Organization, national governments, the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Task Force for Child Survival and Development and other organisations.

Immediately after the programme was launched, Rotary had two initial successes. In Mexico, 32 million doses of vaccine and 900 refrigerators to keep the vaccines viable were provided by the Rotary Foundation. More than 400 Mexican Rotary Clubs were involved in two national days of polio immunisation and about 12 million children were immunised against polio.

National Immunisation Day Rotary Dreams of a World without Polio

by Rtn M Mosharraf Hossain

MANKIND is at its closest point to welcome a world free of polio. Rotarians of the world have been working since 1979 to accomplish "a dream" of protecting all the world's children from a cruel, crippling disease, poliomyelitis.

One may not know that behind fever, cold and headache of a child is hidden the cruel scourge — which takes away 111,000 lives every year and 250,000 more bear its effects throughout their lives.

Oral vaccine is the treatment. To children, this vaccine looks like a little white sugar pill. This is a vaccine — infused pill, pulverised and spoon-fed to infants (0-5 years of age), two doses four to six weeks apart.

Rotary volunteers numbering over 50,000 are continuing to play a key role in India's immunisation force. In 1995, 38 nations plan to administer polio vaccine to more than 200 million children during National Immunisation Days (NIDs).

National Immunisation Day had been considered as the effective strategy for providing all out coverage of polio immunisation at national level. The strategy for polio eradication consists of three objectives: 1) High coverage with Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV); 2) Effective surveillance systems to identify and investigate all possible polio cases; 3) Conduct supplementary immunisation.

Many countries of the world have already initiated and conducted NID. Included are China, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Pakistan, India (partial), Iran, Thailand. Polio has been eradicated in South and Central America by using NID approach.

In Vietnam, National Immunisation Days were conducted on November 13-15 and December 18-20, 1993. Ten million children under age five each received two doses of OPV.

National Immunisation Day

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