

Debating the Code of Conduct

The Election Commission has readied a draft 'Code of Conduct' to be followed by the political parties and the candidates at the time of the nation's general elections.

The EC, by writing the draft code, has taken a very necessary step towards the elections. And a very good step it is. Congratulations.

And that is very important. If the Code of Conduct has to play a positive role in the overall management and conduct of the polls, the political parties and the candidates will have first to commit themselves to it.

The Code of Conduct was one among the three things demanded by the opposition. In the code lies their recourse to rise to the power of fighting the government on an equal footing.

All parties have a great stake in seeing the code prevail. If they all uphold it, individual candidates wouldn't choose to be foolish.

Now the Policemen...

It was a small news item with a devastating effect. Really a block-buster that would have hugely embarrassed any government in an effective parliament.

For, who ever heard of policemen taking to the street, damaging vehicles and disrupting highway traffic for full five hours? They did exactly all these at Gazipur on Sunday, angered by a mini-bus hitting police sub-inspector Altaf Hossain and wounding him.

On the contrary, the policemen filed out of the nearby barracks and went on a rampage like street urchins and mastans totally unmindful of the hat they were wearing as the custodian of law and order and of public property.

As if that was not enough, the police are now on a law-breaking spree themselves. This is where the real danger lies. Who will the public turn to now? Surely not to such liveried mastans.

State Position on the Lake

The Dhanmondi Lake has another scavenger in human form hovering it. This time a government ministry or a party authorised by it is lying in wait to pounce on it.

The stealth with which they had apparently moved ahead with their hidden agenda smacks of criminal insensitivity to the feelings of Dhanmondi residents.

Before starting a crusade on this, we would like a public statement made by the works ministry on the misgivings arising out of the filling work in the lake area in the light of documents in our possession.

RECENTLY I spent about a month in the United States. Unlike earlier visits, short or long, it was a vacation — a holiday from any kind of obligation or responsibility.

Count Alexis de Tocqueville, the French aristocrat and political philosopher made the same study more than a hundred and fifty years ago.

In making the study, I had one advantage over Tocqueville. He had to travel over the length and the breadth of United States — although smaller in size than it is today.

I listened to countless chat-shows, debates, interviews and phone-ins covering almost all aspects of the economy, society, family and personal lives.

My personal experience of an encounter with the then segregationist US is worth recounting if only to highlight how remarkably the country transformed itself in the following decade or so.

My first visit to America was also the longest. John F Kennedy was the President. Despite the Bay of Pigs episode, it was an outward-looking, brashly confident America fully sure of its mission and destiny.

Yet, it was a fractured society. The American 'liberals' seemed to pretend that the black minority — 'Afro-American' is a much later coinage — was invisible.

And the red-neck America, particularly in the South, was still practising open segregation sanctioned by law and upheld by the government machinery.

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America Revisited

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(TVA) — one of the largest ever public sector projects in the USA.

We had booked accommodation, by letter, in the local YMCA. When we turned up there the lady at the reception looked at our face and was visibly upset.

We checked in a hotel and went out. For our evening meal, we entered a small restaurant and sat at an empty

table. We were not physically thrown out, but everyone in the restaurant, both the customers and the staff, behaved as if we were invisible.

The very next decade witnessed the crusade of Martin Luther King civil rights movement in which quite a few whites also joined.

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section of the white majority, enjoined upon the federal, state and local governments to take positive measures for ensuring integration in all walks of life.

All witnessed the impact of all these changes during my next long visit in 1973. It was amazing. Only in America, I mused, such a transformation could take place within such a short time.

America in 1995 seem to be reneging from its pledge to end segregations not only in law but also in fact. The poor, who overwhelmingly consist of ethnic minorities are poorer than any time in the recent memory.

Notwithstanding the tragic misadventure and debacle of Vietnam, America since the World War II has been supremely confident of its leadership of the non-communist world.

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Another Voice

Kazi Fazlur Rahman



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porting the worst of tyrants, and complicity in unsavory practices. Yet, now when the disappearance of the 'evil empire' made it the only natural contender for world leadership, it seems to be desperately seeking ways to abdicate most of its international roles and obligations.

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ally Muslim, must be responsible for it! Hispanics constitute the longest immigrant group. Yet during the last thirty years or so, there have been spectacular increase in the number of non-white Asian immigrants.

It was amazing to see so many South Asians, particularly Bangladeshis, in New York. One would meet Bangladeshi business executives, shopkeepers, teachers, students, cab drivers, and even women selling flowers and trinkets on the pavements.

Then there are the numerous Bangladeshi restaurants. What a contrast to my first visit to New York more than three decades ago.

What impressed Alexis de Tocqueville most about America was the process of the disappearance of class divisions and the spread of social consciousness and humanity.

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Victims of Sub-standard and Poisonous Foods

by Nilratan Halder

We have forgotten that if manufacturing spurious items is criminal, it is no less so to overlook the practice. Particularly when someone's job is to ensure quality and thereby the standard of life of the people.

EVEN without going to such extreme as 'people are what they eat', one can reasonably find it nauseating to live in this society.

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worth their money. It is not just a clear case of cheating but something more in that some profit-mongers are resorting to practices that are bound to tell very adversely on the nation's health.

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should do is to collect samples of products on a random basis and put them to test. But the office of the BSTI stands a witness that with its present staff strength, it can hardly perform such a demanding duty.

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comply with the specific standard, must be meted out exemplary punishment which is the best deterrent against adulteration of food.

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Art Buchwald's COLUMN House for Rent THE Clintons aren't coming to Martha's Vineyard, but the Danieles are. Helen and Everett Danieles are good friends of mine from Washington.

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.

'New Formula for Caretaker Government'

Sir, My attention was drawn to a news item published in The Daily Star of July 29th, 1995 under the above caption in which it was stated that Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed gave a formula for the formation of a caretaker government.

graph from my original write-up: 'Six months before dissolution of the Parliament, six Members of Parliament from the ruling party and five from the combined opposition will resign and the vacant constituencies will elect, unopposed, a total of eleven new non-partisan Members of Parliament, six nominated by the ruling party and five by the combined opposition, who will form a new caretaker non-partisan government immediately after dissolution of the Parliament.'

I would have been happier if Barrister Ishtiaq and his supporters came up with this proposal at the time of publication of my article. The implementation of this proposal at that time would have been much more easier and this could perhaps have changed the course of history of politics in Bangladesh.

electronic media, i.e. Bangladesh Radio and Television into autonomous bodies like the BBC and to adopt a code for politics in Bangladesh. Last, but not the least, the present Parliament and the Government could complete a full 5-year term.

Finally, I would say 'better late than never' and wish Barrister Ishtiaq success in his mission although I understand that his task has now become more difficult due to the presence of so many vacant seats in the Parliament compared to the number required to form a caretaker government.

Dr Elyur Abdul Matin Bara Mughbuzar, Dhaka