Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

# Code of Conduct

Dhaka, Friday, November 3, 1995

A code of conduct has been announced by the Election Commission in good time for the next polls. The framework of rules seems to be in line with the electoral traditions of established democracies, responsive to the requirement of our situation, and exhaustive by the yardstick of our own high expectations. Correct readings of the public pulse and the well-thought-out written suggestions from the political parties were all grist to the mill that churned out the code of conduct. The very pluralistic and highly transparent process through which we are getting the COC in place, should make it morally binding as a gentleman's agreement for all those who had a part in it. If the opposition political parties feel the need for some minor modifications to the code they should be welcome to suggest these even at this stage, given the extra-ordinary situation prevailing in the country.

Even on the sensitive issue of banning contests by bank loan defaulters the ruling party and the opposition have seen eye to eye with each other. The rest of the ground rules should, we believe, be easy to follow and abide by. The BNP stands automatically committed to implementing and complying with all the do's and don'ts incorporated in the COC, but as the party in power it has the crucial obligation to set the trend. The opposition has a very powerful reason to own up the code of conduct and greet it as well because it is actually a product of their two-year-long struggle for free and fair polls.

For its part, the Election Commission will be well-advised to publish full details of the COC in low-priced brochure form, disseminate these through radio and television, and hold seminars on its salient features at the district and thana levels. Side by side with the sharpening of public sensitivity to ensure their vigil in the matter, officials of the EC and those of various administrative tiers ought be sufficiently motivated to deliver as a test-case for their neutrality rating.

All these will be made easy by a willing cooperation from the political parties, based on their mutual acceptance of the binding nature of the code of conduct.

### Saved from What?

Canada has been saved in a very close encounter from being pushed down from what it is today - the world's richest nation. That is generally the perception of the Quebeckan referendum situation. And that has been reinforced by Federalists carrying the day there is no way now to know what a separatist win could lead to.

The hair's breadth defeat would only whet the separatists' thrust towards their goal and keep the tension mounting. As it is, and for long, Quebec has been Quebec and not quite Canada. It can hardly be more than that even with independence. But the pressure will be on now to make it more Quebec. How? By banning altogether the English language which already is being discouraged in not quite a democratic manner? By reserving every position of importance and all business with promise exclusively for French speakers? An independent Quebec would hardly go for such. But now the heat will be on just such improbable and undesirable goals.

Quebec Prime Minister Parizou typifies one set of separatists' mindset. He couldn't take the two-inch defeat that he signified with his fingers and charged that money and worse, ethnic intolerance, had a hand in the vote's outcome. But there was such an uproar against this blunt accusation from within his own camp that he resigned the very next day.

How these exercises in secession and holism recall to mind the travails of the Bengalee people in 1971. A state mounted a nine-month genocide killing people it would take 20 rounds of the continuing Serb-ethnic cleansing to match, to thwart what it termed secession. Imagine Ottawa spilling one man's blood to resist what is a celebrated long-standing movement for secession. One can as well remember parting of the ways by Slovenia and the Czech Republic both of whom are doing just fine, may be because they parted in the best of friendly manners.

## **High Hop for Biennial**

The seventh Asian Art Biennial was opened yesterday in Dhaka. A total of 300 works of art, predominantly painting, will be up for exhibition in three venues: The Shilpakala gallery, the Osmany Memorial and the National Museum.

By the sixth biennial, the show had come of age notwithstanding its flimsy and isolated origin in 1981. It had by then started eliciting genuine interest in the people involved in the visual and plastic arts in this region. And for Bangladesh artists it is a great festival every one of them looks forward to. The Cultural Affairs Ministry and the Shilpakala Academy, the organisers of the show, can take genuine pride in consistently turning up something both genuinely international and successful, a glaring exception among the government's myriad doings.

This success has, however, so far failed to improve the government's attitude towards the arts. A national gallery has yet to materialise and the government has done next to little in promoting the visual arts. A national theatre is still a thing to dream about. It is rather wary of the dramatic art as betrayed by its treatment of the nation's true folk theater — the jatra. The less said about music the better.

The UN Must Be Ready for New Role

by Nilratan Halder

The UN must need reform. But the point is, at whose expense? Do the fund-cutting and trimming of the UN agencies as much as possible. But don't throw away the baby along with the bath-water.

HE United Nations had had a gala celebr ation of its 50th founding anniversary in New York, the city that houses its headquarters. accommodate all the various official formalities and functions the occasion began a day earlier and ended a day later, i.e on October 23 and 25 respectively Represented by as many as 185 countries. it was the largest gathering of heads of government/state and their entourage on earth. This fact alone speaks of the UN body's prominent position on the world stage. For an organisation of its size and stature to continue its life for 50 years is no mean achievement. During the time it has to its credit many an accomplishment but none so great as its deterrent to a third world war. This risks to be an ex-

treme view, given the UN agencies' various development, educational, health and economic programmes. But averting a war in which unclear weapons were to be used with the result of reducing the world to rubbles means resources could be made available for those programmes. So, when the UN looks forward to the role of a supra-national body for itself to maintain a conflict-free world, it is doing its professed job. Moreover, it justi fies the creation of a body out of the ashes of the last great Holocaust man invited on his kind. Up to this the argument is quite irrefutable.

However, on a second look a new world with new realities emerges. Not to be mindful to those realities can simply spell disaster for large parts of the world. It is clear that the spectra of an all-consuming war has been replaced by many localised theatres of conflict. National resources of substantial amount get drained away in such troubled spots. Left to themselves the nations at war with themselves may indeed fall way behind the rest of the world in terms of creation of wealth, of well-being of their peoples and the overall national prosperity. So the policing job for the UN is not going to vanish yet. Both diplomatic, including economic sanctions, trade embargoes etc., and military leverages must be applied as a balancing act to bring those feuding parties in order. That requires money. And the simple truth is that money is hard to come by. Now here is an ambiva-

lence, a dilemma for most of the world but politics of contradiction for some of the countries. The ambivalence and dilemma concern the prioritisation of national objectives; and the political contradiction involves a choice between national and international commitments. Everyone is concerned that the contribution to the UN fund finds its optimal use.

Nothing wrong with such a desire. But when that desire is governed by motives other than the stated one, the spirit and principles of the UN get undermined. Otherwise, why make a mountain out of a mole-hill? The policing act costs but compared with the expenditure on armament of the cold war era this is almost insignificant. So when the US Congress moves to slash the originally - committed \$ 1.25 billion contribution (the largest share) to the UN on this or that pretext, there is every reason to smell rat in the move. In fact, the UN is in its worst financial crisis since its foundation 50 years ago. The fact that US President Bill Clinton wants to get the full amount of 1.2 billion dollars released is to support mainly his international military commitment. That means a further squeeze almost to the point of drying up - on international fund-

Alarm bells have been sounded from different parts armed conflicts is a - but not the only - condition for world prosperity. But even more deciding is the inception and fruition of democracy at the backyard of the rich nations. Before democracy takes roots and consolidates its gains through rational distribution of wealth among peoples of the poor nations withdrawal of support - economic in particular - will lead to undesirable consequences. The hollowness of policies of the nations more equal than others are however better illustrated by the fact that they used to be unduly generous to many of the less privileged nations when the two superpowers were at their most competitive edge. The two blocs used to woo the poor at costs of fabulous sums. Even today a country like oil-rich Kuwait can elicit prompt and ruthless response from the powerful nations against its enemy Iraq; but countries like Somalia or Bosnia with nothing material resources to offer or with no stakes of strategic importance can be ignored for long or totally abandoned.

The troubling question is where from all those funds used to come? It cannot be a sudden collapse. What is to be taken into consideration is that the rich nations are bent on making the most propi tious bargain out of this emerging chaos. They are hardly serious about what they preach. Trade wars and the competitive edge of cheap labour in the developing countries have brought

them face to face with a new set of economic compulsions At the UN the developing na tions have raised their voices for a reform of the organisa tion. Their concern is to press for their rights they have been denied so far, thanks to the veto power enjoyed by the big five countries. They allege that these members of the privileged club use the Security Council for carrying out their special will or agenda. That process must come to an end; and this is possible if countries such as India and others representing Africa and Latin America are included in the Security Council as permanent members with veto rights. On the other hand, the

rich countries too are crying hoarse for the UN's reform. Their objection is to the organisation's overgrowth. In the name of cutting expenditure they want to close down many of the UN's widely acclaimed programmes. May be important areas like Primary education, health care, family planning will also be hardest hit in many of the developing countries. They point out that private investment will increase to create wealth in those countries, the benefit of which will go to those sectors ultimately. We do not know about the long-term

benefit but experiences so far have been bitter and painful. In countries like Bangladesh the poor are becoming poorer and before they can derive any benefit from longterm creation of national wealth, permanent damage will be done to the health and minds of the underprivileged class. Already a nation burdened with an over-size population, it will face the double bane of an underproductive army of population. That is a most dreaded prospect. A world inhabited by unproductive or underproductive men and women can be to some people's advantage, but for a civilisation of exceptional achievement and also for humanity this is disgraceful. The UN must need re-

form. But the point is, at whose expense? Do the fundcutting and trimming of the UN agencies as much as possible. But don't throw away the baby along with the bathwater. Development programmes cannot be abandoned at a time when the close regimes and societies are opening up across the globe. The organisation's reform is called for it to be equal to the task of meeting new challenges in the socioeconomic sector. Its non-effective military role must now be replaced by efficient handling and mediation of trade negotiations, socioeconomic and environmental collaborations between and among its agencies and governments. It is time for the UN to turn a human face instead of a military one.

# Any Policy on Class IV Government Employees?

All kinds of problems are now associated with Class IV employees . . . . Government should address these problems squarely and effectively now and come up with a cogent policy commensurate with good governance and a productive economy.

LASS IV employees. also known as Members of the Lower Subordinate Services (MLSS) are engaged in the following types of work: Security services (Darwans, Nightguards, etc); cleaning/janitorial services (Jamadars, Farashes, Jharudars, etc); inter-office despatch services (despatch riders, peons, etc); specialized services (mechanics, machine operators, gardeners, khanshamas, electricians, drivers, etc; general office services (peons, Chaprasis, bearers, Ardalis, etc).

in this group. Employees 4Ho this group are entitled to Atype rent-free accommodation. They get liveries, washing allowance, overtime, etc. in addition to their pay. Like other categories of government servants, they are entitled to pension, leave and other benefits as per government rules. There are over one million government employees in Bangladesh. About 35 per cent of them are Class IV employees. The ratio between officers (Class I and Class II employees together) and class IV employees is 1:3. It was particularly after independence that both the number of Class IV employees and their proportion to officers began to swell rapidly. This was obviously not out of any deliberate action on the part of the government. On the one hand, a general expansion of the government took place, when a provincial outfit had to be transformed into a national one, while on the other. there was the silent and unconscious response to a massive increases in population, poverty and rural-urban migration in a situation of (a) limited employment opportunities in both formal and informal sectors; and (b) the

ployment. All kinds of problems are now associated with Class IV employees. However, these are being generally ignored by the government, as if they did not exist. The fact is that Class IV employees have both use and nuisance values, and it is, therefore, only proper

allurement of maximum se-

curity in government em-

that government should address these problems squarely and effectively now and come up with a cogent policy commensurate with good governance and a productive economy. The most serious of the problems posed by them is unhealthy trade unionism, which means flexing of muscles provided by numerical strength. This their many lapses.

has resulted in lawlessness, loss of work ethic, indeco-There are four payscales or rous behavior, unauthorized absence and general indiscipline in the office. Tackling these rather than pursuing wider organizational objectives has now become the full time pre-occupation of the heads of organizations.

> Secondly, many Class IV employees are practically doing nothing, whatever maybe their job description. In other words, they are being paid salaries and other emoluments for doing no work, and in the process their idle brains have turned into the devil's workshop. Thirdly, owing to lack of supervision by Administrative Officers. Office Superintendents and Caretakers in an unhealthy trade union environment, most of them do not perform their work well. Thus, there are plenty of night guards and doormen but immoral activities on office premises outside office hours and petty thefts within the office are quite rampant, and the graffiti is thick on the outside office walls. It is alleged that in many such activities, there is active connivance of these security men. Some of the offices in Bangladesh are worse than stables though Jharudars, Farashes and Jamadars have been provided to keep them clean. And similarly, items in the mail are either delayed or go missing although the messengers are paid to look after them. Fourthly, despite clear government instructions to the contrary, many of them are being employed for the personal and domestic worked of bosses. Carrying the

home, accompanying children to school guarding the house while the boss and his family are away, purchasing the daily necessaries from the bazaar, attending sick relatives of the boss in hospi tal, etc are among the many personal errands that MLSS are required to do. And obviously when such services are rendered by them, the bosses become morally too weak to hold them accountable for

Fifthly, some class IV employees engaged in corrupt practices quite openly. For example, many government

ment should be accordingly curtailed. The government should take a tough stand on any demand for a pay rise by class IV employees or for that matter by any class of employees, since such a pay rise only results in inflation, given that they are not contributing to increasing the productive

and their so-called entitle-

in a remote sense primino post · The government should make an honest attempt to convert them into Class III employees whenever such an opportunity arises.

capacity of the economy even

self/herself.

Tea/refreshments should be served by the Personal Assistant as it is done elsewhere in the world. Within small offices. file/paper despatch should be handled either by the officer or a designated class III employee. Similarly. machines should be operated by either officers themselves or designated Class III empleyees. In this way, non-recruitment of Class IV employees in future maybe compensated for.

 Wherever possible, government offices should be encouraged to buy services from the market, for example, in the case of cleaning. security, despatch, driving and repair services, etc. rather than take on the unnecessary burden of permanently employing people to render these services. Of course, in the new arrangement, the supervision work has to be far more strict so that value for money is ob-

tained. Class IV employees

should be persuaded to contribute to productive labour within the office compound during spare time. Tree planting, gardening and other work relating to facelift of the office could be done through them easily, provided officers also take a keen interest and provide leadership in these activities.

The main idea behind the above suggestions is to drastically reduced the number of Class IV employees in the government over the next ten years, but as painlessly as possible, for it is their unmanageable number in the context of poor productivity. which is at the root of many problems. But this strategy will work out only if employment in the private sector picks up substantially during the coming years. However, if such downsizing becomes feasible across the board (that is, including Class I, II and III employees), it will then be very much possible on the part of the government to (a) provide much higher salaries and other emoluments to its remaining employees; and (b) also extract a much higher productivity from them in return.

# Making Government Work

by Analyst

drivers are notorious for obtaining "upri" through theit of car parts and petrol. In certain government offices frequented by businessmen and contractors, the darwan/peon will not let you in, despite a prior appointment, unless a substantial baksheesh is paid. Similarly, a travesty of propriety is maintained in the name of overtime bills. Sixthly, although most of them have some education (the recent entrants are generally school graduates) and are intelligent, their quality generally stagnates or deteriorates over time because of lack of opportunities for advancement both in and outside the government organizations.

In the light of the above discussion, the policy towards Class IV employees should incorporate the fol-

lowing: A ten-year moratorium should be placed on fresh recruitment of Class IV employees in government offices, whatever may be the sanctioned strength and normal retirement. There should be no work-charged (temporary) Class IV employees in any government offices except in project situations. Officers should be asked to share the services of MLSS

 The government should organize extensive training facilities during their leisure hours and holidays in order to upgrade their skills. Typing, computer sills, electrical repair, operation of office machines, driving, plumbing, etc may perhaps be some of the areas to concentrate on. But obviously, a proper needs survey should be first conducted before starting the training programme. No fees should be charged for the training. The general idea here is to encourage both horizontal and vertical mobility through skills develop-

 Exemplary punishment should be meted out to officers using MLSS for their personal work. But before that, a serious and well publicized warning should be sent out. MLSS should be encouraged to report violations of the rule and consultations should be held with their representative bodies in order to identify further ways and means to stop this evil practice.

· Many of the work done by MLSS should be handled by officers and Class III employees. For example, no one should carry the brief case of the boss. The boss should also open doors all by him-

# Buchwald's Winning is Nothing

ROFESSOR James Geddes of Belching University has just done a study on rudeness and has come to the conclusion that people are getting more illmannered than ever before. "We see it in the sports arenas, the political theater and

on the streets of our towns. Except for the sales clerks at Nordstrom's, no one says 'thank you' any more."

"Why should I?" I said. "Nobody thanks me for saying thank you." Professor Geddes said, "You're not going to believe this,

but I blame all our troubles on Vince Lombardi."

"Why?" I asked. "He kept saying Winning isn't everything, it's the only

thing.' As soon as the American people bought his philosophy, the country slid downhill. The kids developed a vengeful attitude toward sports, dirty tricks became acceptable, and no athlete without a \$10 million sneaker contract was admired. We live in an age when parents keep urging their children, 'Be a poor sport so that people will respect you.

"I remember the day when Little League baseball became a contact sport," I sighed.

Professor Geddes said, "When the kids grew up, they became part of the big, mean, baby-boomer society. If you ran for public office, you were urged by your campaign manager to kick the other guy in the groin. In business you never gave another guy an even break, and a handshake to close a deal was followed by a lawsuit, and a half-million dollar legal feel."

"People even lied to their ministers," I told him. "And their doctors. Only suckers told the truth and

successful people wanted nothing to do with them.' "Talk show radio hasn't made us better people," I said. "A lot of radio station owners maintain the public believes that if their radio announcers don't spit out snake venom,

they should stay the heck off the air." "Let's not forget vindictive store clerks who charge you sales tax when you're sending something out of state."

"And over-the-counter drugs companies who charge you

\$15 for two aspirin. I asked my friend, James, "Do you believe that we will ever be able to stop the rot?"

"Not in this generation - maybe the next. Perhaps some great football coach in the future will say. Winning is good. but it isn't everything. 'Maybe once again people will say things like Nice guys may finish last, but they sleep better at night. It isn't how you play rummy - what really counts is if you smile when your grandmother yells. 'Gin'.

By arrangement with Los Angeles Times Syndicate and

#### The Constitution held or arranged. government when it comes BNP Government have and the Opposition to power by Ballot-process tried their best to convince and it is likely to follow the the parties or the opposition

Sir, The Constitution of a country is an instrument embodying the rules framed by the highest body of the elected representatives of the country. The highest body is the Jatiya Sangsad (parliament), where people have sent their representatives by exercising their voting right. The same body also frames rules for the governance of the country. Therefore the constitution and the rules framed thereunder are as much sacred and pure as

they are legal and just. A political crisis now grips the nation over the demand of election under a caretaker nonpartisan government, but such a provision does not exist in the Constitution. Unless the Constitution is amended such an election cannot be

trio the Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamat-e-Islami who are demanding something which is ultravires of the Constitution, Unfortunately the opposition combine are very much adamant to amend the Constitution

Sahib's briefcase, opening

doors, bringing food from

only to attain something out of grudge, seemingly. After the ouster of the autocratic government of Er-

shad in 1990, the country is now very much on a path to establish constitutional framework. The last general election was held under a caretaker and non-partisan government headed by Acting President Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed which was a necessity to fill in the vacuum since no constitutional government existed at that time.

The people welcome a democratic process. But when someone usurps power by overthrowing an elected government by bullet people do not welcome such a government. That is why an extraordinary movement supported by all strata of people had to be launched to end the Jatiya Party misrule.

When an elected democratic government is now ruling the country, it is dangerous to follow any measure which is retrograde in nature.

The opposition stalwarts who are wise, prudent, seasoned in nature and experienced should consider the prose and cons and should themselves find out how best the impasse can be solved without harming the Consti-

Ibne Ahmed 14, Mahakhali, Dhaka

tution.

#### BTV serials

Sir, A section of the BTV viewers still insist on watching their favourite internationally famed serials 'Dark Justice' and 'Time Trax' on Wednesdays and Sundays respectively. Indeed these are most popular serials, which hardly one can miss. These movies have stories with value, good acting and other sterling qualities. We had all our praise for the BTV.

But God knows why on earth the BTV has dubbed these two films in Bangla. Please, for heaven's sake do not lay your hands on each and every serial if you want to survive.

Flt. Lt. (R) Mohtuddin Dhaka-1206