

Code of Conduct

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.

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.

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.

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 Quebecan referendum situation. And that has been reinforced by Federalists carrying the day.

The hair's breadth defeat would only whet the separatists' thirst 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

THE United Nations had had a gala celebration of its 50th founding anniversary in New York, the city that houses its headquarters. To accommodate all the various official formalities and functions the occasion began a day earlier and ended a day later.

This risks to be an extreme 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 rubble means resources could be made available for those programmes.

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.

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.

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them face to face with a new set of economic compulsions. At the UN the developing nations have raised their voices for a reform of the organisation. 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.

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.

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 long-term creation of national wealth, permanent damage will be done to the health and minds of the underprivileged class.

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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.

CLASS 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).

There are four pay scales in this group. Employees in this group are entitled to A-type 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.

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

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.

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.

Fourthly, despite clear government instructions to the contrary, many of them are being employed for the personal and domestic work of bosses. Carrying the Sahib's briefcase, opening doors, bringing food from

home, accompanying children to school guarding the house while the boss and his family are away, purchasing the daily necessities from the bazaar, attending sick relatives of the boss in hospital, etc are among the many personal errands that MLSS are required to do.

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

and their so-called entitlement 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 capacity of the economy.

The government should make an honest attempt to convert them into Class III employees whenever such an opportunity arises.

Making Government Work

by Analyst

drivers are notorious for obtaining 'upri' through their 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.

In the light of the above discussion, the policy towards Class IV employees should incorporate the following:

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.

The government should organize extensive training facilities during their leisure hours and holidays in order to upgrade their skills. Typing, computer skills, electrical repair, operation of office machines, driving, plumbing, etc may perhaps be some of the areas to concentrate on.

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-

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 employees.

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 obtained.

Class IV employees

Art Buchwald's COLUMN

Winning is Nothing

PROFESSOR James Geddes of Belching University has just done a study on rudeness and has come to the conclusion that people are getting more ill-mannered 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 fee."

"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 rumny — what really counts is if you smile when your grandmother yells. 'Gin'."

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To the Editor...

The Constitution and 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

held or arranged.

BNP Government have tried their best to convince the parties of the opposition trio the Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamat-Islami who are demanding something which is ultravires of the Constitution. Unfortunately the opposition combine are very much adamant to amend the Constitution only to attain something out of grudge, seemingly.

After the ouster of the autocratic government of Ershad 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 government when it comes to power by Ballot-process and it is likely to follow the 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-

tution. Ibne Ahmed 14, Mahakhali, Dhaka

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.

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