The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Khaleda-Hasina Talks Imperative

Dhaka, Tuesday, November 28, 1995

The dissolution of the Parliament by the President, on the advice of the Prime Minister, has set the election clock ticking. All parties will have to do whatever they want, within the time-frame permitted by the Constitution. There is no doubt that everyone wants a free, fair, universally participated, and peaceful election. We can say, hopefully, that such is the wish of both the ruling party and the combined opposition.

The question that we must face now is what are the options available to us to fulfil that goal. The opposition has been insisting on a neutral caretaker government to oversee the elections. The real meaning of its demand, as we understand it, is that it wants to delink the ruling party from the levers of governmental machinery during the election so that BNP cannot abuse power to influence the outcome of polls. How can that desire of the opposition be fulfilled now, when the legal provisions before us are so very limited.

The option that remains is the holding of the election under the rule of the President, within the provision of the "doctrine of necessity." Some sort of residual power can legally be said to vest under this doctrine, which can empower the President to conduct the election, using either the bureaucracy, or a group

For the elections to be conducted by the President, we need the understanding of the ruling party and the opposition. The RM will have to agree to relinquish power, which she had promised repeatedly. The Opposition will have to agree to participate in the elections under a 'BNP' President, which it had agreed upon at one stage. If both sides examine the situation seriously, they will realise that they have very little option but to agree to some arrangement on the above lines.

Sheikh Hasina's letter, followed by the surprise phone call of last Sunday shows some renewed sense of urgency and conciliation, which the ruling party should not ignore. Her reference to the 25th anniversary of our independence, and the call to celebrate it unitedly, have immense political significance. The Prime Minister, on her part, has been able to drive home the point of the constitutional obligation of everyone to remain within its bounds.

The rhetoric aside, there can be no better way of electing a new government than going to the polls. An understanding between BNP and AL will energise the nation and enthuse the people to partake in the elections, and thereby not only solve our present political crisis, but also give democracy a new lease of

A Cheery Visit

Past the half-way mark of their probing seven-day visit to Bangladesh, the 37-member British trade, infrastructure and technology delegation must have had by now some wellformed impressions of where they might like to strengthen their partnership with us.

Their visit has been quite cheery for us taking place as it does in a rather difficult political situation here. It is also noteworthy that it coincides with a boom both sides are experiencing in their bilateral trade and follows, a British perception of Bangladesh's huge potential for the next ten years to attract foreign investments.

Fresh elections are in the offing in Bangladesh. Given the serious stake all the political parties have in these, it is reasonable to hope that they would soon strike a deal to ensure their fullest participation in the polls. With that happening, the other things required for embellishing the environment to induce greater business, investment and technology-sharing would follow as a matter of course.

The prospects for networking with Bangladesh as underlined by the British trade mission chief Peter Lee holds a lot of meaning for us as there ought to be substantial fund-raising to make the needed investments possible in Bangladesh.

The British entrepreneurs' attention is drawn to the good promise we hold out as a springboard for their marketing drive beyond this country, let alone a sizable market they can find in Bangladesh itself for their products and services generated here. How very welcome we must tell them would be their tech-"nical and monetary investments in helping us establish backward linkages to our 2400 garment industries and develop our energy, water resources, jute, leather, mining and tourism sectors.

Let sky be the limit for British-Bangla col-

laboration.

Neglect at Mongla

A Panamanian ship sank in the Mongla Port channel in July, 1994. The problem was compounded when two cement-loaded barges also sank alongside choking the passage through the channel. With the dry season setting in and water level falling these are impeding use of the port and constricting ship movement. It only the sunken vessels are moved a little to the east by the tides, ship movement would stop altogether.

A Dhaka firm was awarded the contract for removing the vessels and clearing the channel The job had to be completed by August this year. It is far from complete three months after that deadline. The way the ship is being dismantled part by part, it will take considerable time before it is finally removed. Until that happens the down flow carrying silt to the sea will only be depositing the same around the

sunken vessels. Nothing about Mongla moves the administration. Perhaps regional predominance of the state's political and executive power and entrenched vested interest can explain this. They seem to have almost written it off as a second entrepot of a nation whose growing trading activity will necessitate its use to the maximum.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Farewell to Arms

Agreement between the three parties of Bosnia-Herzegovina at the Wright Patterson Airbase in Dayton, Ohio. USA. rings down the curtain on warfare and opens the prospects of

This spectacular result was achieved after three weeks of tough bargaining by the adversaries under the prodding of US and personally by President Bill Clinton, who appeared to have put the authority of his high office on the line. At last it was three battle-scarred and weary leaders, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovich. Croatian President Franjo Tudiman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, who initialled the Agreement.

The Agreement stipulates: 1) Division of the territory along the old formula of 51% to the Muslim-Croat Federation and 49% to the Serbs:

2) A single federal State with one President, a bicameral legislature, a constitutional court and a single cur-

3) Withdrawal of all troops within 30 days of the final signing of the Agreement. The vacuum will be filled by 60000 NATO troops of which 20000 US and 3000 Russian under their own command:

4) Sarajevo will be the unified Muslim-Croat capital and remain open to all citizens. Gorazde will be linked with Sarajevo with a secure corridor. On the other hand the status of Brko, currently under Muslim control, will be determined by arbitration within one year:

5) No indicted War Crimi-

Y now there will be

found hardly any one

who is not abreast of

the latest political situation

in the country. The oppo-

sition parties want a

caretaker neutral govern-

ment to conduct the national

elections. They are adamant

on this issue. The govern-

ment is also equally adamant

pointing out that the consti-

tution does not provide for

any caretaker government

and it cannot do anything

which is not in the constitu-

tion. Both the parties made it

unequivocally clear that they

will not budge an inch from

their stand and there will be

no dialogue or discussion un-

less their respective posi-

crisis other than the well-

meaning persons who really

want its resolution through

dialogue and negotiations

finds two groups one sup-

porting the opposition de-

mand for caretaker govern-

ment and the other which

considers acceptance of the

opposition demand to be tan-

tamount to capitulation and

urges the government to use

its authority to firmly handle

the situation and hold the

elections on schedule

whether the opposition par-

ticipates or not. This ap-

proach asking the govern-

ment to take a rigid stand

may be termed as "a pre-

scription for paralysis and

possibly disaster." Is it as

simple as that? My humble

opinion is that the spirit of

the issue of holding free and

fair elections runs deeper

itself. It is a mechanism of

choosing leaders. It means

that the people without any

interference from any quar-

ter are free to exercise their

franchise to elect the per-

sons they think competent to

take care of their needs and

problems. To interfere in the

exercise of this fundamental

right is not only violation of

the constitution but it also

Election is not an end in

than it might seem.

So far discussion on the

tions are accepted.

As the grim-faced three leaders signed the Agreement and President Clinton announced the news before the TV cameras, there was no euphoria like it was when he had announced the Palestine-Israel agreement two years ago.

nal will be allowed to hold office in New Bosnia.

As the grim-faced three leaders signed the Agree ment and President Clinton announced the news before the TV cameras, there was no euphoria like it was when he had announced the Palestine-Israel agreement two years ago. It was no wonder that Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadjic, who had become a familiar figure on the TV screens, with his shock of hair and heavy weapons supplied abundantly by the other Serbs and their allies, was conspicuous by his absence. The War Crimes Tribunal has established him and his General as War Criminals. During the murderous War launched by them against the outnumbered and outgunned Muslims, the world learned a new expression 'ethnic cleansing'. One of the most horrendous aspects of this war, which has claimed 250,000 lives, and made two million homeless. has been rape on a massive scale of Muslim women by Serbian soldiers. The Serbs appeared to be seized by collective madness for revenge.

And what did the Muslims do to deserve this fate? orthodox Serbs have for centuries been fed on childhood tales of 'atrocities' perpetrated by the successors of Ottoman Sultan Fatih Mehmet, who conquered Bosnia in 1463, exactly ten years after the conquest of Istanbul. During my many visThe Horizon This Week Arshad-uz Zaman

its to former Yugoslavia, I have been often struck by this anti-Turkish syndrome among the Yugoslavs. In the immediate past there has been great resistance by the Serbs to the inclusion of Turkish forces in the UN-PROFOR. Bosnia has nurtured

Ottoman symbols while integrating fully within the former Yugoslavia, which was such a vibrant and modern state under the patriotic leadership of Josif Broz Tito Now Mostar bridge built by that master architect Sinan of the reign of Sultan Suley-

A divided land Serbian controlled area Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Krajina 'republic' UN Protected Areas MACEDONIA

As appeared in April '95

Under partial Serbian contro

man the Magnificient lies in rums. Hounded by the Serbs. Bosman Muslims have made Turkey their home of first choice There are nearly three million Bosnians in Turkey, that is more than the population of Bosnia.

If the Agreement will be

welcomed in Turkey, the entire Islamic world will heave a sigh of collective relief. No more switching off the TV because the pictures of Serbian brutalities were too much to behold. No single recent event has held one billion Muslims spellbound like the events in Bosnia. The expression double standard of the West became very common The 55 nation OIC has operated through its Contact Group and its members have willingly sent troops under UNPROFOR. Bangladesh sent 1250 troops and manned valiantly Bihac against Serbian threats. Bangladesh is a member of the recently created Assistance Mobilization Group for Bosnia within the OIC. It may be recalled that during an important meeting sponsored by UK last July in London, Bangladesh was the solitary OIC member invited to attend.

in retrospect what appears to have turned the tables was the total involvement of sole Superpower US in this Balkan conflict. The European Union appeared powerless to act collectively as the Serbs continued their

murderous spree. Last summer President Suleyman Demirel paid a visit to President Tudiman and the meeting was reported to have gone on very well. The alliance between the Muslims of Bosnia and Croatians was born. That alliance remains intact today. The immediate beneficiary was the Croats, who reconquered Krajina from the Serbs. On the battlefield Serbs started facing reverses for the first time. On the diplomatic front except for Russia nobody really stood openly by their

The Final Agreement is due to be signed in Paris next month. The Agreement has received cautious welcome from important world capitals including Moscow. After the release of so much pent up hatred, will the three principal ethnic and religious communities learn to live together? It is doubtful if anybody will hazard a bet. Old Yugoslavia already stands irritrevably splintered with the Serbs, Croats and Sloventans having their own states Bosnia-Herzegovina inhabited by the three ethnic groups presents the strange spects cle of retaining the fiction of a single state, but divided between the antagonists of yes terday with a very uncertain future. From this human tragedy of gigantic proportions has Kradjic learnt that by raking up the events of six centuries ago and plunging the people into murder and mayhem, he stands before humanity as a sordid criminal, who has already been judged and sentenced by the whole world?

Let Us Have a New Vision

reveals lack of respect for individual's right to enjoy his freedom. To do so also means as citizens of an independent country we lack respectability and prove ourselves un-

worthy of freedom. By rigging elections or interfering in the right of voting freely, no legitimate government can be created. Only free and fair polls can create a legitimate government. Now how to hold free and fair polls?

Unfortunately the Election Commission, a statutory body created by the constitution entrusted with the duty of holding national and local elections, could not maintain its neutrality in the performance of its functions. The people of this country witnessed the result of a referendum in which the incumit will be expressed in the action of the government to follow policies which will address the problems the people face in their day-to-day life. Democracy creates an environment providing opportunities for overall development of individuals, bring out the best in them, enable them to make full use of their potentialities dormant in each individual. If election in the form democracy takes

legitimacy is its substance. Only credible and impeccable elections reflecting the will of the people can provide substance to democracy. This will enable the government thus elected to provide basic services to the people as a whole and to stand up to special interests, such as big labour, the military establishment, the monied elite

by S M Ullah To address the problems faced by the nation and to solve them require an effective government manned by persons who can deliver. A government can acquire effectiveness only if it is legitimately elected.

> In our own times we have witnessed the majesty of the will of the people. On March, 1, 1971, the people were busy in their normal daily pursuits, each one in his occupation. At 1 pm the Radio Pakistan broadcast news that President Yahyia Khan had postponed the summoning of the constituent Assembly of Pakistan scheduled to meet on 03.03.71 to frame a constitution for Pakistan, in which the members elected by the Bengalees formed absolute majority. The people from one end of the country

a credible election, there is sort of spiritual unanimity of thought and action in both the electors and the elected An environment is created where the electors and the elected through co-operation try to achieve the goals set

before them. To us, the people of Bangladesh, democracy is not merely a form of government we view it as a system which focuses on freedom, sacredness of the individual and the power to be found in the individual. We just want to be able to go about our business freely and peacefully without anxiety and fear. We want basic human rights the exercise of which would guarantee a tranquil dignified existence free from want and fear Bangladesh is the embodiment of the democratic aspi-

rations of the Bengalees who

waged long and protracted

struggle during both the Bri-

tish and Pakistan period to

achieve basic human rights.

As the verdict the people

gave in favour of democracy

through polls was not

honoured, they realized it

through armed struggle.

Democracy was restored and

a constitution was framed

and passed by the members

The differences in the stand of both the government and opposition parties on the issue of holding free and fair elections are not really that insurmountable as certain circles are trying to have us believe. They are making much of the legality of the stand taken by the government though "not everything that is legal is right" as a famous judge of USA commented. Such attempt reveals the "sick ambitions of the failed politicians" to fish in troubled waters. In this case it seems as motivated actions aimed at widening the gap between the government and the opposition parties so that the crisis is not resolved.

It is very unfortunate that the Brime Minister who may go down in history as the only head of government to complete her term during the last 48 years of both the Pakistan and Bangladesh periods taken together to succumb to the distorted and illmotivated propaganda of those who put all the biame on the opposition for the present crisis. It is very sad that the Prime Minister accuses the opposition in the same language. "To blame the opposition is the oldest and the cheapest politician's trick" so goes the saying. Such attitude leaves no scope for negotiated settlement of the crists.

Some thinkers who sincerely want a resolution of the crisis have opined that ego is one of the factors that is complicating the situation. But I think it is time for all of us to "worry about saving people rather than saving

In democracy there is no scope for taking rigid attitude towards any issue. To quote J S Mill, "Visions of freedom and happiness must be constantly discussed, altered and changed as societies change lest nations fall into 'deep slumber of a decided opinion"."

Both the government and

the opposition parties are confidently proclaiming that their stand is right. As Amos Oz (Israeli novelist) has said, "Wherever there is a clash between right and right, a value higher than right ought to prevail, and this value is life itself." To allow life to prevail, there must be dialogue and negotiations if there are differences of opinions as to the approach or procedure to resolve the crisis. "You cannot establish a relationship with someone when you do not know how to listen or talk with the other party". We truly hope that we can pull together and overcome this crisis so that we can say Bangladesh is a small country, but our hearts are not. I like to conclude with some comments of L B Johnson (President of USA). having bearing on our present crisis. Lyndon Johnson was once asked in his most successful months how come he had lost a couple of minor skirmishes with Congress. 'You don't want to win them all", he said. "Give the other

side something, or there may

come a day when you won't

win anything."

To us, the people of Bangladesh, democracy is not merely a form of government we view it as a system which focuses on freedom, sacredness of the individual and the power to be found in the individual. We just want to be able to go about our business freely and peacefully without anxiety and fear

bent self-proclaimed president got more than 90 per cent of the votes cast. The story of the performance of the Election Commission in conducting elections is pathetic, to say the least.

Democracy in its essence and spirit is an expression of the supremacy of the will of the people reflected in the exercise of voting right without interference from any quarter. The autocratic and authoritarian regimes were never able to act with authority, even though they were armed with stringent laws,

for lack of legitimacy. The dictators saw with dismay the majesty of the will of the people when they were overthrown by popular movements. This is a pity that negative aspect of the majesty of the people was demonstrated in the overthrow of autocratic regimes. But the spirit of this basic element of democracy is that

arid organized crime. As Strode Talbott has stated. "When so much of the population fears death by starvation, disease or gunfire the state is not just weak, it has virtually ceased to exist. When the people see themselves as victims rather than beneficiaries of the system, they have little use for the ballot box and little regard of constitutional procedure. All they want is a modicum of safety, equity and discipline."

This country is now mired in grinding poverty and overpopulation, unemployment among young work force, intolerable law and order situation, near collapse of the educational system.

These problems require immediate attention and urgent and credible action plans are required to solve them. What Julius Nyerere said of his people, "we must run, while others walk," is also applicable to us.

major cities and towns simultaneously and spontaneously took to the streets condemning the action of the military government of Yahyia Khan. After the midnight of March 25,1971 when Pakistani military junta cracked down on the unarmed sleeping Bengalee people and the leader of the Bengalee members of the constituent Assembly was not allowed to form government in Pakistan, they framed the constitution, formed a government though temporarily in exile, waged a war and won it and Bangladesh, an independent country took its place in the comity of nations. An unbelievable and unimaginable feat of a people considered as

to the other, particularly in

This is the example of what legitimately elected people not even formally vested with power can do. In

rials. Time Trax and Dark

Justice, into Bangla, BTV

must be thinking that the

level (not to mention stan-

dard) of English in our coun-

try is very poor; but this is

partly wrong. However, there

are many among us who don't

know (or don't care) about

the correct pronunciations of

English words, just because

we are for Bangla (what an

excuse?!). These English

movies help this large sec-

tion of the younger genera-

been dubbed, seemingly, in

Moreover, the shows have

tion in our country.

nonmartial race, timid and

of the constituent Assembly elected through universal adult franchise for the newly born state. Thus democracy is inseparable from the existence of Bangladesh. The survival and salvation of the people of Bangladesh and solution of the problems faced by them lay in giving institutional shape to their aspirations in establishing and maintaining a democratic state guaranteeing basic human rights. There should not be any doubt in any body as to the indispensability of democracy

rations of the people. It is only credible and impeccable elections regularly held which will nurture the tender shoots of democracy and help it gradually to take Bangladesh. If the contrary is allowed to prevail, the country at large is in danger of decline into a morass of contral, impartial caretaker government to hold free and fair elections comes up. Had the Election Commission been neutral and impartial, and its performance in the past had proved that I was really neuhaps would have been no ernment today. Let us come

as a means to fulfil the aspi-

It has been observed lately that whenever the question of holding free, fair and impartial elections comes up certain quarters put unnatural and unrealistic emphasis on observance of constitutional provisions as if the constitution is a bar to holding fair election. This seems to be a clever manoeuvre to

root in the body politic of flict and chaos. In this connection the question of neutral and impartial, there perdemand for care-taker govright out and admit it.

divert attention from the real

Photographs of Language Movement

Sir, I took some photographs of the processions of the Language Movement, of 1952 when I was a student of the Dhaka University. I still have in my possession six negatives of the photographs. These have been published in different books, magazines and newspapers. In my view, these are the only photographs of the processions of the Language Movement from 1948-1952. I deem it essential to preserve these photographs with the negatives in the National Archives, as a document of our national movement. I wrote to the authorities concerned but till now no action has been taken in this regard. Daily Ittefaq published my article titled "Photographs of the Language Movement with Some Comments", in their Shaheed Day issue of 21st February, 1992. I wonder why the authorities concerned are reluctant to take

necessary action in preserv-

ing these historical documents.

The Bangla Academy spend a large sum for publication of books on EKUSHEY but I became astonished to know that they did never undertake any move to publish album of the photographs of the Language Movement!

It is no longer possible on my part to preserve these photographs and the negatives. I, therefore, intend to dispose of the same to the interested persons. In this respect I draw the attention of the authorities concerned, UNESCO, and the intelligentsia through your news-

Muhammad Taqiyyullah GPO Box No: 3134 Dhaka-1000

> Whither Muslim brotherhood?

Sir. Our Pakistani brethren are having some internal problems with the

Urdu speaking so-called Mohajirs in Karachi. Suddenly they seem to be having (or creating?) problem with

'Bangla speaking Muslims' The hot-headedness of the Pakistani brethren in so many years have only helped to increase their internal problems one after the other. And now they are against the so-called Bangali speaking populace who have been living in Pakistan for more than four decades, most of them probably knowing nothing but Urdu, the national language

of Pakistan. It is about time that the leaders of Pakistan came to their senses and once and for all accepted reality and recognised their weaknesses so as to put their internal turmoil to a peaceful settlement.

Nahtasha Kamal Wari, Dhaka

BTV film shows

Sir, The people at BTV seems to have the audacity to dub two popular English se-Dhaka

an outrageous form of Bangla. which makes it very difficult to understand the mood and sense of the scene, If BTV wants to be 'patriotic', it should take effort to produce some quality Bangla programmes or put Bangla sub-

titles in the English movies. Obsession never helps BTV should immediately re consider its decision.

Iftekhar Rashid South Breeze School