

## For Fair Comments

In her address to the public meeting at Chittagong Laidighi Maidan in Chittagong, former leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina has made two serious allegations against the erstwhile BNP government: (a) it had appointed partymen in the administrative service, and (b) during the BNP rule the home ministry issued as many as 20,000 arms licences to people of its choice. Hasina demands removal of the aforementioned officials to ensure success of the drive against illegal arms in the country.

We not only understand but also share Hasina's concern for the arms recovery. However, what is not so clear to us is the relation between the alleged party appointments and the arms recovery. This point needs to be clarified. Did the BNP make those appointments in breach of the Public Service Commission rules? Was the partisan recruitment true for a particular batch, or for several batches? If so which years were those recruitment made? It should be very much possible to identify such cases of misfeasance and the PSC can be asked for an explanation.

More to the point should be the alleged partisan approach in issuing licences of firearms. If this has happened, it is easier to detect and the culprits punished. We are talking about something which is a matter of record. If 20,000 arms licences were issued along the party line, the whole process ought to be brought out into the open. Its possible adverse influence on the election process cannot be taken lightly. Let there be an impartial investigative report on the matter to clear the air. The chief adviser himself should take up the issue because without sorting out such a thing it will be difficult for his administration to conduct the polls freely and fairly.

Meanwhile, we plead with both Khaleda and Hasina to avoid making comments that might muddy the water further, rather than help to move us forward. This will not help either their cause or the cause of the country's politics in general.

## Momentum for the ADP

The dismal performance in the ADP implementation cannot be wholly attributed to a long drawn-out political crisis, howsoever handy it may be to point all our failures in that direction. In fact one suspects that on top of the known snags in handling development projects, a certain precipitate attitude of resignation had set in prior to the advent of the caretaker government.

The noticeable thing is that it is during a relatively calmer political period between July, 1995 and January, 1996 that more than 50 per cent of the ADP projects had made no progress in physical or expenditure terms.

Of the total number of 1085 projects making up the ADP for 1995-96, 509 were reliant on foreign aid and 576 were to be domestically funded.

One cannot easily appreciate why aid disbursement should have been so badly affected by the local political commotion. At any rate, we surely could have given a better account of ourselves so far as the locally-funded projects went.

The details make even a worse reading. When we were seven months into the ADP, as many as 238 projects remained unapproved out of 322 that had been incorporated in the ADP but without any formal approval of the ECNEC. Why such foot-dragging and indolence about mandatory paperwork?

It appears also that monthly evaluation meetings were not held regularly by the ministries and divisions to pinpoint reasons behind any slowdown in the project implementation and take timely corrective measures thereon. Only 13 out of the 48 ministries and divisions having projects to implement ever came to hold any evaluation meeting.

The 50 high priority projects, taking up more than one third of the ADP outlay, seem to be in a dire strait.

Only three months are left of the 1995-1996 fiscal year. With the foreign aid disbursements hopefully resuming sooner than later and the internal resource back-up strengthened in good time, the ADP implementation should pick up in a compensatory fashion.

## Healthy Cities

The World Health Day which falls today is being dedicated to "Healthy Cities For Better Life". This is a goal, a concern and a theme of utmost importance for the future of humankind. At least 50 per cent of the global population would make cities their homes by the turn of the century risking their very existence to an array of health and environmental hazards.

Basically it is a process rather than a one-time goal that is sought to be introduced by the World Health Organisation. The process at this stage seems modelled on seven 'success cities' of which our Cox's Bazar is one. The township of 65,000 people has crafted 'a healthy city plan'.

Our success in the Expanded Programme of Immunisation, though already a catch-word for other developing countries, has to be lived up here and elsewhere as well for the sake of the teeming new births.

But we hear the footsteps of a problem of diminishing intelligence due to declining levels of nutrition, something which needs to be addressed at the soonest to stave off a national disaster looming on the horizon.

The WHO and other relevant organisations of the UN stand committed to carrying forward the 'healthy cities' programmes. They now need the inputs of coalitions to be formed by the local self-government institutions, NGOs and community associations in the countries of their concern. Let us provide these to them with the city corporations and the media playing a complementary role in the process.

# Where Do We Go from Here? — Some Reflections

Sheikh Hasina has clearly and categorically declared that no one including her own party men should be spared from the arms recovery drive. Begum Zia refused to make any such statement.

## ON THE RECORD

by Shah A M S Kibria



ago was arrested only after the fall of the BNP government. Who gave him protection all these years? So long as this situation persists, neither the candidates nor their workers and volunteers will feel secure;

certainly the voters will not feel safe. An environment free from the threat of violence is an essential pre-requisite for elections that are genuinely free. It is no secret that during

## Secretaries' Rebellion against an Elected and Lawful Government

by Oli Ahad

THE standard norm in a democracy is that elected and lawful government will come for a term, stay in office or go depending on the mandate of the electorate. But the bureaucracy will remain self-effacing, be apolitical and provide the "steel stream" of continuity and governance both in peace and war. They will carry out the routine administration, as per rules, give alternative policy option and spell out their implications, including the budgetary ones. They will then faithfully carry out the policy decisions and orders to the best of their ability. In this process of governance the government takes over the steering, while the bureaucracy takes the back seat and is never seen or heard in public. Hence, bureaucracy keeps serving as per rules irrespective of whoever enters or leaves the Prime Minister's office after periodic election.

The bureaucracy in Bangladesh has been following this tradition until very recently. Its actions in public since the end of March 1996, in sharp departure from the traditional norm. This unprecedented and unheard of step by 35 Secretaries — the pivot/nerve centre of the Civil Administration in contravention of the Government Servants Conduct Rules 1979 — is nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy in the language of the Architect of the Constitution of the Republic of India — Dr B R Ambedkar. 1990 Cabinet Secretary and others did the same, no action was taken by the then Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and this time Madam Prime Minister failed to take action pending proceedings drawn.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the paper is to maintain that:

i) The actions of the bureaucracy, specially the secretaries were in contravention of the government servants conduct rules, 1979.

ii) A dangerous precedent has been set-up for which the nation may continue to heavily pay and.

zens alike with the help of the cache of arms in their possession.

At polling time these arms will be used by the armed cadre to "capture" polling centres and intimidate voters. The ordinary people have been unable to protect themselves and express their hatred of the hooligans because for five years these criminal elements have enjoyed official protection and patronage.

The known thug who allegedly attempted to kill Sheikh Hasina by firing shots at her in Dhaka several years

the government servant conduct rules, 1979.

**Implication of the secretaries' rebellion:** Given the rules, tradition and precedent in Bangladesh itself since 1971 of being apolitical it is hard to understand the recent rebellion of the bureaucracy initiated and led by the secretaries who are the chief executives of their respective ministries. They are very experienced bureaucrats and are expected to be guided strictly by the rules and law of the land. A dangerous precedent has been set. Tomorrow they may be victims of this precedent. The subordinate staff may walk off, or close the gate of the secretariat, disconnect the utilities, tie them as hostages and oblige them to resign. A precedent, once set is hard to over ride.

Let us bear in mind that institutions and traditions are not built up over night — it takes a very long time. But they can be demolished in a trice as it has been done in Bangladesh. It is hard to be assured that our secretaries were not conscious of what they were doing and its long term damaging implications. All praise to the Defence Forces Chiefs (Army, Navy, Air), BDR DG, IGP and Heads of Radio & Television for their disciplined behaviours & loyalty to the service conduct rules against proddings & provocations from interested quarters.

**Request for a clarification:** Hence, it is possibly difficult to resist the inquisitive human nature to seek clarifications from them on besides others, certain select queries. What they have in their defence if they were asked, that by their conduct, they:

i) Subverted the sovereignty of the people, who are the supreme source of all power (Art. 7 of our Constitution).

ii) Further exceeded the concept of rule of law.

iii) Pronounced extra-judicial verdict regarding the legality or otherwise of the last

government since 15 February, 1996 and thus committed contempt of legal law.

iv) Acted in violation of the government servant rules 1979.

v) Openly sided with certain political parties, who are aspiring to be in power.

vi) Demolished centuries old traditions of being apolitical as public servants.

vii) Made them vulnerable of being obliged to resign or held hostage by their subordinate staff.

viii) Consciously or unconsciously played into the "invisible hands" which have definite interest to keep Bangladesh destabilised and stagnant, and

ix) Jeopardised the impartiality of the forthcoming general election.

**"Be you ever so high the law is above you":** One would expect the secretaries and leaders of various employees associations to publicly clarify these queries. If they are unable or unwilling to do so:

i) would it be too much for them either publicly repent and apologies or resign of their own, or

ii) for the caretaker government which is headed by a retired chief justice of Bangladesh to initiate the process of taking necessary disciplinary action and re-establish his own commitment to Rule of Law in Bangladesh in the interest of public service. Here is an acid test for him.

I have seen the Press Report of the address by the Honble Chief Advisor to the secretaries and others on 24.96. I feel encouraged to take the liberty to draw Justice Habibur Rahman's attention to the maxim "Be you ever so high the law is above you". That is what is being accepted in the Supreme Court of India. I fervently hope that Honble Justice Rahman will not fail the country.

The writer is a veteran politician and the President of Democratic League

## 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. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

### Civil servants

Sir, Woe be to the civil servants, especially the 35 senior secretaries who abdicated their responsibilities and joined the opposition bandwagon. As soon as the whiff of change tickled their bureaucratic nostrils, they caught the virus of boycott and stayed at home instead of performing their duties within the secretariat. It is a reflection on the quality of our civil servants who are a far cry from their counterparts in India and England.

The legacy of neutrality, dignity and dedication which marked the bureaucrats of yesteryears has been totally demolished. What remains now is a tradition of sycophancy, partisanship, opportunism and corruption. The future of Bangladesh is bleak indeed, thanks to the recent precedent set by our senior secretaries!

Hasina Zaman  
Dhaka

### Pakistani atrocities in 1971

Sir, My congratulations to the women of Bangladesh for filing charges against the government of Pakistan for atrocities committed by the Pakistani armed forces in 1971 in Bangladesh. And my congratulations to the business community for moral support to the women and looking to seek compensation from the Pakistani government for monetary losses incurred by the Bangladesh businesses in 1971.

The officers responsible for the most horrendous genocide in the world after Nazi Germany are today given shelter and "dignity" by the government of Pakistan. Gen Niazi walks in the Defence Polo Grounds in Lahore, every evening, to keep "healthy". Gen Gilani was made the Governor of Punjab, after his return from

the killing fields of Bangladesh. Army officers, both retired and serving, boast in the Punjab Club in Lahore, of their "conquests" in Bangladesh and openly admit committing atrocities there.

And there is a sense of shock and outrage in Pakistan, at Bangladesh 'daring' to bring charges against the 'martial race' — the 'martial race' which is only good at killing unarmed men, women and children.

The International War Crimes Tribunal should come forward as they have in Bosnia, to apprehend and try the war criminals whom Pakistan shelters, so that no nation can again be subjected to such atrocities as that unleashed by the Pakistani Army in Bangladesh.

My advice and request to Sigma Huda, Salma Ali, Khushi Kabir, all the other women activists and the business community in Bangladesh, keep up the good work. We are proud of you.

A concerned citizen  
Lahore, Pakistan

### Women's representation

Sir, We appreciate the Chief Adviser's decision to appoint a woman adviser to his team of advisers. We congratulate Dr Najma Chowdhury and of course the other advisers on their appointment.

The elections are going to be held in May or June and the political parties will give nominations to their members. We would like to request the major political parties that in keeping with global acknowledgment of women's contributions and for upholding their commitment to Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to nominate women.

To try and achieve wider representation and to be both inclusive and gender balanced

### Star TV's decision

Sir, We are awfully dismayed at STAR TV network's decision to take off the BBC World TV channel from its network, only to be replaced by another Indian channel which has little but stale Hindisong programmes and flake dramas. Just how much more hip-wiggling can one take? As one of the most reliable, neutral news channels in the world, the people of South Asia and the Middle East — being already starved of impartial news service in their own countries — would fall back on BBC for information and now even that is being denied.

Apart from news, BBC documentaries and entertainment programmes were undoubtedly one of the best in the network and proved extremely educative.

The new position of their satellite makes it difficult for dish-owners to change their positions for a single channel which would mean losing others as well. So it would be

highly appreciated if BTV would replace the CNN timings with BBC and reverb back to their old afternoon routine — that of telecasting BBC from 2 pm to 4 pm. CNN will hardly be missed by the viewers; who's interested in Jesse Jackson and CNN-available hotels anyway? CNN has little news about South Asia in the hour that they're shown, whereas, BBC has an hourly 'Asia Today' service from 7 am to 10 am. As for the afternoon timings, I'm sure most would prefer watching new BBC programmes than reruns of BTV's ancient programmes.

We hope, BTV would earnestly consider this request.

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### In Jail with no crime

Sir, "A rare example" — a news item published recently in the district news section of an English daily. It was reported that the Deputy Commissioner of Sherpur while paying a visit to the district central jail found a girl named Mena (14) whom the court had earlier sent to safe custody in jail as she could not give her whereabouts either to the man who brought her from the street or to the police.

But the girl had succeeded in telling her whereabouts to the DC who arranged to set her free and handed over Mena to her father (after tracing out) and paid a lump sum from his personal purse for the travel expenses of the poor girl and her father.

Meanwhile, there may be a number of such innocent fellows in jail who are passing sentences for no reason or without committing any crime. So, the rare example set by the above official, if followed by other administrators, would save many more who are living behind bars.

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the last five years of BNP rule, these armed hooligans had a free hand and crime, toll-taking and terrorism was on the rise. In fact the recent Amanullah Aman episode is only a tip of the iceberg, the incident in the secretariat led to an explosion of anger among the officials because of their frustration in dealing with the armed cadres. Ministerial intervention had always ensured that the accused would get away scot-free. It will, of course, be a curious footnote in the history of this period that these armed terrorists played a major role in expediting the down fall of the government of Begum Khaleda Zia.

Those who did not take the menace of the armed cadres seriously were astonished by the harsh public utterances of the BNP leaders after their fall from power. However, the bulk of the population had no illusions about BNP's patronage of the armed musclemen of its youth wings. That is why the shrill demand for the dismissal of the defiant civil servants was not only made by Begum Khaleda Zia and her long-standing deputy Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury but echoed by the Chhatradai and Jubadai leaders.

Here is an orchestrated campaign of intimidation. One would have expected that the responsible leaders of the party would have restrained these young men from making public threats but nothing of the sort was done. Instead, Begum Zia herself launched the campaign of intimidation. In her speech on 31 March, she exhorted her followers, "You must identify (those) who joined the Janataf Mancha. They are betrayers and enemies of the people". Following her address shots were fired at Dr Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir. Other senior officials are also under the shadow of such death threats.

Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury was equally provocative in his speech. He gave an ultimatum to the caretaker government to sack the officials concerned or face dire consequences. This was not the responsible language that one would expect from leaders who had run the administration of the country for five years. As a matter of fact, the soft-spoken doctor surprised people with his ultimatum because he was known to be a moderate man. But this time he lost his cool. Was he giving vent to some sort of pent-up frustration?

The statements made by BNP's student wing leaders as reported by most newspapers sent shivers down the spine of people across the country. Men and women were publicly targeted by name for elimination. These were public death threats! Must the police authorities wait till these threats are carried out? The caretaker government will, I hope, realise that it was the unchecked actions of these hooligans that

was a root cause of the demand for a neutral caretaker government. If these elements are able to threaten citizens as before and if the police remains paralysed as before, then the purpose of setting up the neutral government will be largely lost.

The president of Chhatradai used such obscene and tasteless language against highly respectable men and women that the press did not consider much of what he said fit for printing. And yet Begum Zia has asserted that her activists are being harassed by the authorities. All that the police has done is to make a few ineffective forays into the university halls to recover arms. Why should anybody complain about arms recovery? The whole nation is urging Justice Habibur Rahman to be firm in recovering illegal arms because neither the restoration of normal economic activity nor the holding of free and fair elections will be possible with such huge quantities of arms in the hands of these party activists.

Sheikh Hasina has clearly and categorically declared that no one including her own party men should be spared from the arms recovery drive. Begum Zia refused to make any such statement. Instead she is complaining a harassment of her party men because some of them were caught and handed with illegal arms in their possession.

The nation is eagerly waiting to go to polls to place an elected government in office. They believe that only an elected government, fully accountable to the electorate, will be able to fulfill their aspirations for economic and social development. But a peaceful environment, free from violence and intimidation, will remain a pipe dream if the arms recovery drive proves unsuccessful. Those who have made their violent and obscene threats because they possess arms. No one, neither politicians nor journalists writing on these issues will feel secure under those conditions. The nation has placed its trust in the neutral caretaker government because all the members of the Council of Advisers are distinguished persons, well known for their accomplishments, honesty and integrity. We don't have to tell them that all their efforts shall be in vain if the armed hooligans are not firmly and thoroughly curbed and disarmed.

They have already issued instructions to recover illegal arms regardless of party affiliation. While commending their prompt action, one must remind the political leaders in this venture, they must also play their proper role. Instead of fuming against the neutral caretaker government for alleged harassment of their activists, they must extend cooperation to it to apprehend the armed gangs which have terrorised the nation for years. Their failure to do so will no doubt be noted by the voters when they cast their votes at election time.

## EASTER SUNDAY

### The Feast of New Life

by Father Patrick Gomes

TODAY, April 7, the Christian community celebrates the feast of Christ's resurrection — the Easter. For forty days the faithful and devoted Christians through prayer, fasting and other acts of charity prepare themselves spiritually to celebrate this feast of New Life (Easter). Churches are decorated; curd, sweets and many other delicious foods are prepared. However, these external realities have meaning only if we can enter into the internal significance of the feast. And to do that we need to consider Good Friday without which Easter Sunday bears no meaning.

### Good Friday

On Good Friday, the whole reflection falls on the event of the death of Christ on the cross. According to the messianic promises, written in the Holy Bible, Christ is prefigured with all the characteristics of the suffering servant of Yahweh. The book of prophet Isaiah says of this suffering servant, "For my part I made no resistance, neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. The Lord God comes to my help..." (Isaiah 50:5-7). The book of prophet Jeremiah says of him, "I for my part was like a (fruitful) lamb being led to the slaughter house, not knowing the schemes they were plotting against me..." (Jeremiah 11:19-20). In and through Jesus all that has been said about the servant of Yahweh took their fulfillment. Jesus suffers; is betrayed by Judas, his own disciple; is denied by Peter. He takes up the cross, endures severe suffering and dies on the cross. The one and true revelation of God is being offered on the cross to deliver human race from the sinful state. He took up the cross only to gain victory over sin.

The cross becomes the sign of victory.

### Easter

According to Christian faith, death could not keep Jesus for long. With new life Jesus is risen only to demonstrate that victory was won over sin; mankind has seen the way to new life — the way to heaven. As the risen Lord is present among men, there is freshness of new life. Where there is the risen Lord, there is no existence of sin. One has to touch and see this risen Lord with eyes of faith.

### Apparition

Mary Magdalene in a fascinating and dramatic manner gets to know and see the resurrected Jesus. She is asked to let the disciples know this good news of Christ's resurrection. This Mary Magdalene becomes the first evangelizer. Peter and John run, come to the tomb and find it empty. And they believe. We all can see the apparition of the risen Lord if we try to see him with our deep faith.

### Conclusion

In the world we witness realities like pride, fight for power, and degradation of moral and religious values. Gradually people are becoming egocentric and closing their eyes to the needs of others. Sin gets wider in the circle of human society. The world, the society, each person needs to be redeemed from sins; they need to enter the state of new life where there is peace and justice, unity and brotherly communion.

Today when we celebrate the feast of new life, Easter, let us take up this determination of making our own self renewed, by making a revolutionary change and by bringing in authentic values and virtues. May the blessings of Easter remain now and always with each and everyone in our family, in our society, in the whole human kind.