

Habibur's Challenge

Chief Adviser's address to the District Commissioners (DCs) and Police Superintendents (SPs), held last Thursday, was timely, and perhaps critical for the successful holding of a free and fair election.

So the question is will or will not our DCs and SPs do their best to give the nation the grand prize of a free and fair election? They did once in '91, and we think they definitely will again if we can give them the type of support — both moral and material — that they need.

There has to be some additional allocation of funds. As for the morale of our administrators, we think that the caretaker government should undertake a massive publicity campaign — through radio and TV — seeking public cooperation for the tasks of the DCs and SPs.

When will Aricha Jam End?

There is no doubt this time Dhaka will have its greatest Eid-holiday exodus. It is going to be a long holiday even for the banks who do not close on many of usual holidays.

That prospect, however, has largely been dampened at the very outset. For one thing, there is an unbroken squally spell in Dhaka and adjoining districts that not only has marred the reputations of Eid jollity and mirthful anticipations of an outing, this has as well contributed viciously to the growing traffic jam at Aricha Ghat.

Must ferries need to be fixed now and must some of them hit some chars now? There must be something very gravely wrong somewhere. If a nation cannot pool its resources to ensure smooth passage for the lakhs that routinely take these holiday journeys — why is it there?

DCC's Drive

It is heartening to hear about DCC's decision to launch drive against all unauthorised structures including those set up by political parties in the name of temporary election camps.

There are other illegal occupants of road space — those who are constructing houses and flats. The first thing that these people do is to occupy the road in front to stack their supply of construction material — such as bricks, rod, cement, etc.

The day of the general election of the country draws closer. Political parties seem to be in the race to win voters' hearts. The think-tanks of the parties concerned are, possibly, busy in giving a final touch to the election manifestos to manifest their offerings to the nation in case they are elected by the voters for a five-year term.

What could be the most important issues that political parties need to focus in the upcoming general election campaign? The editor of The Daily Star Mr Mahfuz Anam asked us to suggest something and I take the liberty of placing these through this article.

The most important general issue — an issue that seemingly concerns citizens in general — is the deteriorating law and order situation. There is a strong feeling that our society is being held hostage to a handful of guns and goons.

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Such occasions put inhuman loads on the personnel manning the ferries. It is elevating to see them work unsparingly without a minute's respite. All this goes waste may be for lack of preparedness and planning on some upper level.

It is not surprising that the ex-PM has defended himself and the party as is done by almost everybody against whom charges are brought.

In most cases wrongdoers plead not-guilty. Only a few perhaps with high moral courage or simply unable to plead not-guilty anyway confess their guilt. In line with this, the allegations have to be viewed, and people should not be misled by mere denial of the person/persons accused.

In February 1992, hundreds of junior officers were promoted to the posts of deputy and joint secretaries to the government, superseding large number of seniors in violation of promotion practices and constitutional provision.

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The matter was taken to the court of law which, though late, in its judgement termed the appointment made in Feb 1992 as illegal.

Election Promises: Few Should be Fine

We would like to urge upon our learned politicians to jock all the issues they consider fit to allure voters but to master the few that may make a dent in people's mind. During the last general election, we heard much but, actually, got few. This time we want to hear few but get much.

ected government is voted to power, the sooner the law and order situation gravitates towards deterioration assuming that the situation under a caretaker government is a benchmark level. What specific methods or rules would be pursued to make the society relatively 'misanthropic'?

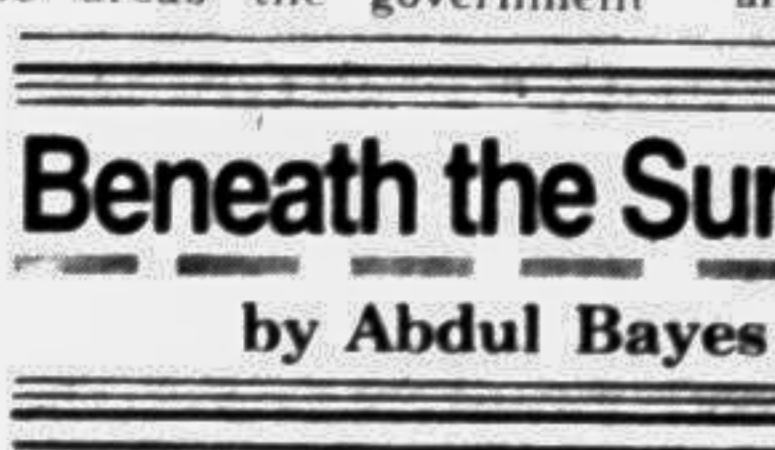
The second most important concern in the society seems to be the rampant growth of corruption. There is a general feeling, as it is elsewhere, that from the top to the bottom, only bribes and gifts determine access to the claims. How to deal with it? By merely saying that 'once voted to power we will wage war against corruption' tells nothing in fact but helps with a cliché over-

The on-going economic reform should breed clear-cut commitments from the political parties. The last government in power was not much vocal about reforms till it was throned to power. Once in power, the government, especially its FM, emerged as the vanguard of economic reforms and admittedly initiated some important steps towards that

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes

order situation, corruption and economic reforms should draw immediate attention of the political parties and warrant specific proposals to address them. Moving on to particular or sectoral issues, it is our view that stagnancy in agricultural production, food deficit and fertilizer crisis should capture important places in election agenda.



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The Caretaker Virus

by Mohiuddin Ahmed

THE West becomes aware of the turmoil in third world countries only when there is a coup or a rebellion, or a civil war in these countries. All this has to change now. Bravo Bangladesh! We have made contribution to democratic culture. We have given a new direction to fairness in people's franchise.

Fairness is an adorable quality. It helps to examine issues objectively. It means: above board, even handed, honest, impartial, just, lawful, unprejudiced, and unbiased. It also means coming clean and I think in any society it would be a tall order for any group of people to remain totally impartial. Our problem starts here.

Where do we find these 'fair' people to man the caretaker governments every five years — if not earlier? It took the present Chief Adviser quite a while to find the people who, in his opinion, could deliver impartial decisions.

The prospect of sharing power on equal footing should be very lucrative to AL as they had been political 'have-nots' for the last 21 years and this will be the last chance for the old guards.

In case of a coalition between BNP and AL, there will be no effective Opposition in the Parliament. Corruption and nepotism, unchecked as such, may descended on us like thick fog but it will still be better than frequent hartals, barricades and port closures.

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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.

"Allegation of corruption against BNP" Sir I refer to the news item on "Allegation of corruption against BNP" wherein it was said that BNP chairperson had brushed aside the Awami League's allegation of corruption against her and her party leaders and added that those were intended to malign them. She further said: "They had brought similar charges in the Fifth Parliament but failed to provide documents." (The Independent, dated 6.4.1996.)

The name of the game Sir. The agitation, blockade, hartal and non-cooperation launched by the opposition parties apparently had one objective as far as Awami League was concerned — to capture power immediately. However, no amount of talk about struggle for 'democracy' and for 'vote and food' could fool anyone. Unfortunately, AL made miscalculation about its strength and underestimated the intelligence of the people.

WASA water Sir, I was totally puzzled to find that a few centimetres of WASA water had accumulated during one night in this hot summer of 'Baishakh' in the underground water reservoir. Immediately, I rushed to WASA service centre, located a few hundred metres west of Ramna police station. The WASA official advised me to find a WASA water carrier lorry

consolation for the Springboks Sir, It's amazing how a country deprived of years of international cricket can come back so gallantly into the arena by outstandingly cricketing teams like India and Pakistan. The team I am speaking of is South Africa. Their recent victory at Sarjsh has proved the consistency of the team, as well as has dumboffed their critics, who rebuked the team's defeat to the West Indies at the quarter-final of the World Cup after a series of continuous victory by the team in the first round.

The Mayor and the 'Janata' Sir, The Dhaka Mayor, finished with his 'Janatara Mancha' may now please give attention to his 'Janata' of the city. As a city father, no doubt, he seems to be very kind and concerned for the poor. Because, forgetting 86 lac citizens he seems to have given so much attention to a few thousand hawkers, not only giving them the footpath but almost half of the main roads as well. Considering the hardship of his 'Janata' he has allowed 'kachabazar' to grow on almost all the footpaths so that the 'Janata' don't have to walk further for their shopping.

Mosquito menace Sir, I am very much thankful to Mr Mohammad Hanif, first elected Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation, for erecting the 'Janatara Mancha' in order to achieve the right cause of the people. Further, I will be very grateful if the honourable Mayor feels concerned about the plight of several lakhs of people of Sheikh Tek and Adabar areas (Mohammed Pisciculture, Baitul Aman and several other housing estates), those who are held as hostage of (trillions of) mosquitoes. The mosquito menace is so great that one cannot read a newspaper peacefully even in the morning without being beaten by them not to speak of what happens at night. The students are particularly the worst sufferers and they have to undergo a mosquito net even for study.

I would, therefore, request the honourable Mayor to come forward this time to rescue at least a few lakh people from small but menacing mosquitoes. M Shamsuzzoha 2/2A (KHAU). Pisciculture Housing, Mohammadpur, Dhaka