

Clearing the Fog at DU

Dhaka University's teachers are deeply divided on political lines. Political rivalries between groups of teachers over contentious issues, however, has not stopped or unduly hampered the normal functioning of this highest seat of learning.

The VC's concern for coming out clean on the appointment of his daughter and son-in-law must be appreciated. But his seeming diffidence to stay clear of the fuller thrust of allegations against him somewhat dilutes the spirit.

That the VC has already expressed his willingness to seek the attorney general's opinion on whether the senate can form a probe body is nevertheless very encouraging. What he can do is to expedite the process of seeking the learned opinion.

Black Money

The Gano Forum has drawn the caretaker government's attention to the need for exercising an effective control over the use of black money during the election. Its concern should be shared by all who want a free and fair election.

The election commission has made it clear that it is determined to remove the influence of money-power on the electioneering process. Infiltration of black money is therefore doubly unwelcome.

This is a very useful suggestion. The submission of expenditure returns immediately after the election and the preceding disclosure of sources of funding should help check the intrusion of black money into the election campaign.

To Literature and Culture

Tagore is not to be sought for company in times of leisure and idling but to be taken refuge of when one is down, cast adrift from all light and hope. Nations do have such times and the Bengalees are fortunate in that they have in Tagore not only a well-spring of inspiration but a fund of wisdom and knowledge that they are at present in so much need for.

Shall we consult Tagore for, say, a way out of our educational problems? The best and the most modern tenets — reaching out to future centuries — of how best to initiate the new generation into the lores and achievements of all past generations and, at the same time, into the growth process of the intellect and emotion — are to be found in Tagore. It's all there just for the asking. When shall we do so much as ask for these?

For an insight into the working of a society and interpersonal relationship — sympathy to wit — Tagore is unbeatable. Take up galpoguchcha or Ghorey-Bairey or see the theatre groups perform Rakto-Karobi, you will be far far better equipped to contend with your realities, collective and individual. Look at his paintings a whole new world will be revealed before your eyes. Listen to his songs and you will be rejuvenated.

This above and much much more of the Tagore potential is going by default and receding far into irretrievability by the fact of our being loaded by exigencies and having no use for the essentials. The modicum of Tagore that lives around us, gets its purchase of time by being entertaining and a travesty of the real life-giving Rabindranath. With an inevitable spread of education and return to culture this will certainly change.

Yesterday was Ponchishey Baishakh as the poet himself christened the day of his birth. To literature and culture we urge our nation on the occasion.

The Ganges Water-sharing: Facts and Fiction

by Professor M Maniruzzaman Miah

In the early 70's, after independence, we were deceived, if I am allowed to say so, to a muddy ground. We could disentangle ourselves from there only in 1977 when an agreement of water-sharing, clearly defined in terms of quantity for each 10-day period during the dry season, was reached.

would be pertinent therefore to discuss the facts in this regard so as to dispel any confusion in the public mind. Here, we will confine ourselves only to the oldest unsolved problem, between Bangladesh and India, that is, the Ganges water-sharing.

The origin of this dates back to as early as 1951 when it came to the knowledge of the Pakistan Government that India was contemplating to build a barrage across the Ganges at Farakka, 17 miles upstream of the point of entry of the river within Bangladesh.

During the next one decade Pakistan tried to discuss the matter at a high political level with a view to finding a possible solution to the problem. Indian chauvinism successfully dodged the issue by diplomatic juggling. At independence, Bangladesh thus inherited this problem which India earlier refused even to discuss at the political level.

In the euphoria of Indo-Bangladesh friendship after our liberation, one would normally expect a quick resolution of the long-standing conflict so that it might not envenom our relationship. But our big neighbour was evidently not in a hurry as its upper-riparian status gave it a commanding position. Later events only show that we have been a victim of Indian chicanery. During the first few years after independence a large number of meetings were held between India and Bangladesh at various levels including that of the prime ministers of the two countries.

The first was a meeting in Delhi between the two prime ministers of India and

Bangladesh after the Simla conference. The joint communiqué released after this mentioned agreements on several counts relating to the Ganges water issue.

One, that the quantity of water available at Farakka was not adequate to meet the requirements of both Bangladesh and India. And therefore it would be necessary, the prime ministers agreed, to augment the Ganges water. Two, there would be a water-sharing agreement between the two countries before the Farakka barrage was commissioned. This was in May, 1974. The first of the two points above has since raised a debate as to whether it yet came to an end. And the second has been torpedoed by Indian diplomatic ruses later, to say most innocuously.

A year later there was another agreement at the level of ministers of irrigation in terms of which Bangladesh allowed India to withdraw and divert a quantum of between 11 and 16 thousand cusecs of water for the pretended purpose of testing the Farakka. Thus for the first time Bangladesh yielded to Indian pressure to allow them to divert waters

from the normal flow of the Ganges through our country and secondly acquiesced to commissioning the Farakka in the name of test-running in contravention of a previous agreement a year ago. Once these concessions were made, India merrily continued to withdraw water to the fullest capacity of the feeder canal even after 31st May, 1975 when the agreement was to be invalid and turned a deaf ear to charge the situation till 1977.

The new government that came to power in Bangladesh in August, 1975 was faced with a popular upsurge of anti-Indian feelings consequent upon Ganges water diversion by India. They knew that they could not expect any money for jam. They therefore set on a propaganda offensive both internally and externally. A brief was prepared and efforts were made to bring home the justification of our case to the friendly and internationally influential countries. Bangladesh also tried to settle the contentious issue of water-sharing bilaterally. Having failed to do so it was raised at the UN where a consensus resolution urged both the countries to solve the problem through ne-

gotiations. Several meetings were held to that end. Finally in April, 1977 an understanding between the head of an Indian delegation Mr Jagjivan Ram, minister of defence of the newly installed Janata government in New Delhi and General Ziaur Rahman, at that time Chief Martial Law Administrator, was reached to share the Ganges water in terms of which Bangladesh would receive, during the dry season, a quantum of 34,500 cusecs. A formal agreement to this effect was signed in November 1977.

To sum up, a decade passed between 1951 and 1961 during which the Indians did not even admit the existence of their Farakka-plan. The next decade was a decade of fruitless negotiations. In the early 70's, after independence, we were deceived, if I am allowed to say so, to a muddy ground. We could disentangle ourselves from there only in 1977 when an agreement of water-sharing, clearly defined in terms of quantity for each 10-day period during the dry season, was reached.

These are the facts about Farakka water-sharing. Since there was no agreement as to sharing the Ganges water before 1977, any claim by some quarters that they snatched away from India an amount more than 34,500 cusecs is simply a fiction.

The writer is a former Vice-Chancellor, University of Dhaka and a former ambassador to Senegal.

Recurring Song, Fresh Singer

Ms Benazir's first reaction was to question Imran's lack of Parliamentary support in the same manner that Stalin queried sarcastically as to how many divisions the Pope commanded, conveniently missing the point that the struggle for every cause starts on the bedrock of a moral force.

CONFIRMING widespread speculation, cricketing hero turned social worker and philanthropist, Imran Khan finally took the plunge into politics in Pakistan. Addressing a crowded Press Conference in the historic city of Lahore a few days after the bomb blast that destroyed the OPD of Shaikh Khanum Memorial Hospital (SKMT), he launched a political movement Tehrik-i-Insaf (Movement for Justice), ostensibly to change the much-disfigured face of Pakistan politics. Most nations face a moral crisis of sorts in varying degree, blatant nepotism and corruption has made our particular descent rather precipitous to a level once associated with the so-called 'Banania republics' of Latin and South America.

With the track record of our political parties rather bleak and without moral authority as a check, excess has reached new heights. With the Opposition repeatedly failing to mount a credible challenge to stem the decay of the fabric of the nation, Imran Khan's advent into politics thus fills a vacuum of sorts. We are in such desperate straits that any person or organization willing and able (with his/her eyes open) to take us out of this morass is more than welcome to try.

By opting for a 'movement' instead of a political party, Imran wisely stays above the political fray in pursuit of a greater cause than narrow political ambitions in simply chasing after political office. Despite appropriate public pronouncements, his appearance on the political scene has not been well received by either side of the political spectrum. If the bomb was a crude warning delivered by the "More loyal than the Queen" Brigade on the Becket pattern of "who will rid me of this mad priest?" it had the opposite effect. In an actual exercise of adult franchise, analysts say he would wear away more votes from PML (N) than PPP, for the moment his campaign against various wrongs will

help PML (N) put enormous pressure on the incumbent PPP Government. Riven with avarice and greed, the soul of our political parties is encapsulated in the ever increasing outrageous demands of our Parliamentarians, taking us deeper into an economic black hole. Desperate to cling to office, principles of ethical governments have been compromised by successive incumbents lacking the moral strength to take a tough stand.

The theoretical touchstone for advancement in a merit-based society is competition, here it is a farcical sop meant as a palliative for the masses since only a privileged few with connections take prized appointments irrespective of performance. The latest example are the 60 candidates chosen for PIA notwithstanding the fact that flying passengers is a discipline where it is fatal to compromise on skill and experience. Some people do advance in the face of the prevalent norm (a la Gen Jahangir Karamat, the present COAS) but these are exceptions, in his case not only because of sheer merit but because the 'court favourite' was too horrible an alternative for the public (and the Army) to stomach. Merit is not only a disqualifier it is also suspect in an environment where the law with merit who do rise find themselves on the receiving end of jealousy and suspicion, being perceived as a threat by those who have risen on the nepotism-route and refuse to accept that success can be possible without favouritism and/or manipulation.

Quotas in Pakistan are meant to protect the rights of the minority, instead they are flagrantly misused to perpetuate the dominance of a privileged elite and their clientele, an extension of the feudal system into democracy. The vast majority within Parliament are a privileged elite of tax-ex-

empt feudals who have the freedom to impose legislation to tax the not so influential salaried class and the self-employed. Unless this feudal gridlock on the country's spine is broken, this country is doomed. The major objective of contriving to position the wrong people in the right places is to checkmate any opposition in the wholesale looting of the public till at will, corruption being the Siamese twin on nepotism. Dr Mahbubul Haq, former finance minister in Junjo's cabinet and a world class technocrat, estimated annual loss to the national exchequer due to corruption

leaf of "Constitutional obligations" does not make them any less culpable, their fawning empathy makes them as much guilty as those whom it helps to loot this nation. Into this evil-dominated cauldron steps a new flag-bearer for the oppressed, Imran Khan, in the mould of handsome Sir Lancelot entering the fray. In the field of cricket, Imran excelled, both in his individual capacity as a player and as a leader of men. Taking to socio-philanthropy, Imran's charisma became apparent as a crowd-puller during the successful fund-raising process to build a state-of-the-

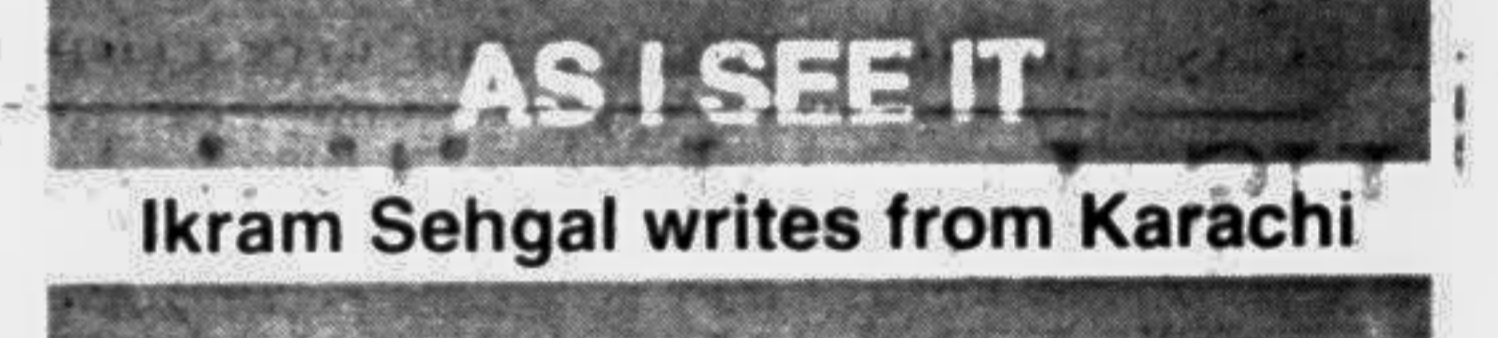
rooms of the rich and famous with a bevy of beautiful women in tow (2) his 'foreign connections' propping him up as an acceptable "Third force" to replace the growing unpopularity of the present regime as an alternate to the nuclear proliferation suspicions in the west that Mian Nawaz Sharif cannot seem to shrug off and (3) his "lack" of political and administrative experience as a handicap to national leadership in the immediate future, forgetting that Ms Benazir's first job in life was as PM.

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Other credible leaders are willing (but unable) to lead a Jihad (or crusade) against the root cause of our decay as a society and as a nation, Imran Khan's personality is a welcome and refreshing entrant into our political lives. The song he sings, the message he delivers, to mobilise public opinion while staying "Within constitutional parameters" should matter much more than the image on offer. Why should we doubt his word about his stated version to both (1) dynastic politics and (2) the dominance of personalities over ideas? What he proposes should not be, at least theoretically, anathema to any of the major political parties, why should they feel threatened? If they are really true to their commitment to the people let them synchronise their own accountability process with the aims of Tehrik-i-Insaf. Instead of trying to macro-manage a complete overhaul of the system with his limited human and material resources, Imran Khan would do well to stay

firm on the selection and maintenance of his aim. He should remain focussed on one single issue, to actively monitor the quality and integrity of elected representatives at each level of government. By keeping to the good old American KISS (Keep it simple, stupid) formula, Tehrik-i-Insaf should focus on the corrupt and greedy without discrimination to political affiliations, inviting the political parties to share the evidence at hand. Tehrik-i-Insaf could change the demographics by mobilizing the 10-15 per cent swing vote in every constituency against those blacklisted, forcing the political parties to field candidates of honesty and integrity who will have a reciprocal commitment to the constituency and their constituents rather than to their own pockets. Self-accountability by the parties will act as a cleansing process with a trickle-down gravity effect down every tier of government.

Imran must remember the saying "Physician, heal thyself" because of a genuine fear among a generally sympathetic intelligentsia and public that political out-casts/chameleons may rush to coalesce around his rising star. Association with such opportunists and adventurers will cause Imran to lose credibility. Accountability as applied to his own "clean team" as a continuous process will help weed out such people. The credibility of his associates can be enhanced if they would publicly forswear personal ambition. With abundant charisma and known integrity, Imran will attract people of great value who not only believe in his lofty aims and ideals but will practice what he preaches. It has the potential of a "Dream Team" of motivated people from all over the country that will include (why not?) bi-partisan support from both the major political groupings to bring this nation back to its great promise as a democratic country and lead it to economic emancipation of its people.



AS I SEE IT Ikrar Sehgal writes from Karachi

conservatively at Rs. 40 billion in 1988, today it could be well over Rs. 100 billion. A decade or so ago one had to pay a bribe to get something wrong done, now it utter contain if the law even something that is right can only get done by greasing the right palms. Ill-gotten wealth was kept hidden in overseas accounts, now it is flouted openly and proudly in luxury trappings by the nouveau rich. The silent majority may not be corrupt but compromise their self-respect to pay homage at the feet of those in power, institutionalizing corruption by making it socially acceptable to be corrupt. Those who abrogate their right as citizens (and functionaries) to voice their protest in the 'see no evil, hear no evil and do no evil' syndrome are a pathetic lot beneath contempt. Wearing blinkers behind the flimsy fig-

art (at least for the third world) Cancer Hospital named after his mother. For aspirant leaders, charisma is crucial, Dr Mahbubul Haq is certainly better qualified to be a leader, but does he have charisma? Imran Khan charted his views on a wide range of subjects carried by almost the entire print media in Pakistan. Marriage to the wealthy Jemima, daughter of Sir James Goldsmith, part Jewish Anglo-French, billionaire financier with political ambitions of his own, was optimistically considered a political liability by a whole bunch of jealous detractors. Blending into the Pakistani culture, Haika (the Muslim name of convertee Jemima) force-multiplies Imran's potency as a political "Third force." Skeptics point to various "Disqualifiers" viz (1) his playboy image in the 80s frequenting the drawing

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.

AL's manifesto

Sir, I read with interest the 21 point election manifesto of Awami League as declared by Sheikh Hasina. No doubt her pledge covered almost all good points in the sphere of national life. But like me many would be intrigued by her silence on the sharing of Ganges water. The scarcity of water in the northern region is turning the green land into a desert. Therefore this is not only a question of survival of the population of northern region but also a question of survival of the nation as a whole.

We are at a loss to understand why Sheikh Hasina has not enumerated this vital point into her 21-point manifesto. If voted to power what steps will she undertake to realize our due share of Ganges water? We are baffled by her omission of this point in her foreign policy programme.

The nation expects an explicit programme on this point which is unquestionably vital for our survival.

G.M.F. Abdur Rob, 233, Moghbazar, Dhaka

The caretaker virus

Sir, I would like to thank Mr Mohiuddin Ahmed for his above captioned article pub-

lished in your esteemed daily on April 27th.

It is true that the caretaker virus has infected the different sections of our national and private life. All sections of people are trying very hard to show their neutrality, especially the members of 'intellectuals'. Otherwise I do not see any reason why Dr. Al-Muti Sharifuddin did not collect the state award from a particular person?

The article 'A school for Advisers' by Mr. Showkat Hossain published in the Friday 19th April issue of The Daily Star was undoubtedly a good one. But I am afraid that the excellent article may encourage some prospective investor to open up a new kind of 'coaching centre' in the country for 'genetic engineering' of the caretaker virus and the 'mutation' of that virus may cause disastrous effect in this poor country!

M M Karim, 1164/A, Malibagh Chowdhury Para, Dhaka-1219

Political activities of government servants

Sir, Of late, we have come across news of a political party and some of your readers urging the caretaker government

to take disciplinary action against some civil servants who actively participated in recent non-cooperation movement of the opposition political parties.

Yes, some of the employees of the State engaged in the limits of the Civil Servant Conduct Rules while participating in the movement, which was almost taking the form of civil uprising.

There are three types of State employees, firstly are those who are given 'rifles' to protect the life of the citizens against external aggressors, the second category are those who are given 'pen' and thirdly, the manual labourers. Previous governments in our country have not taken any disciplinary action against the first category who flouted the Constitution, the highest law of the country, to become what may be called 'armed bureaucrats'. Were they punished? Some of them even avenged personal grudge by killing a prime minister, some ministers and some of their family members including a minor son. The government that followed did not take any punitive action against the killers. It even promulgated an ordinance debaring the law-enforcing department of the State to institute criminal cases against the killers. Bravo! What a civilised action! Not only this, it sent the killers abroad as Ambassadors of the country. Subsequent government even allegedly promoted them to higher positions and last one got one of them elected as a member of the Parliament.

In the civil uprising of 'Ninety' also a good number of civil servants participated. But the government that followed did not punish them, rather some of them were rewarded by accelerated promotion or coveted postings. So, we will urge the present government to issue a Rule mandating the recent activities of the civil servants who participated in the civil uprising in the last week of March, 1996.

Abu Ahmed, 23, Juarshahara, Dhaka

Call for disciplinary action

Sir, A considerable period of time has passed since the assumption of office of the Chief Adviser Md Habibur Rahman in accordance with the provisions made in the Constitution following passing of the 13th Amendment Bill 1996, better known as the Caretaker Government Bill.

This government is a legacy of the BNP government headed by Begum Khaleda Zia. It is known to everybody that a small number of government high officials including secretaries, defying the rules and regulations of the country, had boycotted their offices and left the Secretariat, the heart of the Republic's administration. They joined and expressed solidarity with the so-called 'Janatar Mancha' platform of Awami League. Such violation of service rules by the high officials calls for severe disciplinary action. But it is a matter of grave concern that no step has yet been taken in this regard.

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Demand for police action

Sir, Although I am a Bengali and a strong believer of Bengali nationalism, my heart aches when I find a handful ethnic minority known as 'Stranded Pakistanis' still suffering and facing trouble one after another even after 25 years. They are entirely on our mercy. I am happy to note that the trial of Shamim Ahmed's murder case started in the 5th Additional District Judge Court and we hope that the widow of Shamim Ahmed will receive justice from the learned Additional District Judge.

Shamim Ahmed succumbed to injuries at Shahid Suhrawardi Hospital on 2nd June 1995. His widow was under constant threat since then. On 11.3.1996 she was attacked by the terrorists, who are involved in the murder case.

She was physically tortured. Her blouse was torn. The matter was reported to the Pallabi police station. The torn blouse is deposited as an 'alamat' in the police station (Pallabi). Medical certificate was also submitted and a prima facie case was registered, but nothing has so far been done by the police to nab the criminals although they are roaming scot-free in the locality. Similarly, the Stranded

Pakistanis of Madrasa Camp of Mirpur Section 10 are in trouble. The DRRO and the police administration failed to bring confidence in these unfortunate people.

I appeal to the Chief Adviser Justice Md Habibur Rahman and his colleagues to save these small chunk of humanity from further destruction and catastrophe.

Mahmood Alam Chowdhury, Section No 10, Mirpur, Dhaka

On mayor's range of authority

Sir, Addressing at a public meeting during the recent movement, the Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Mohammad Hanif declared that he was the elected mayor and representative of 80 lakh people of Dhaka and as desired by the Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina, the employees of WASA, T & T and Dhaka Electric Supply would henceforth work under his (mayor's) instructions.

We do not know whether the WASA, T & T and DESA worked or are now working under the elected mayor of DCC. If not, why? If yes, under what legal, constitutional and democratic norms? We would also request the Awami League in particular and the Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party in general, to kindly tell us in clear terms their future plans and programmes for development, supervision and control of WASA, T & T and DESA in the greater interest of smooth and efficient public utility services for the city dwellers.

O H Kabir, 6, Hare Street, Wari, Dhaka-1203