

The President and the Precedence

At the moment, there is no substitute for a free and fair election. The only substitute, if at all, is anarchy, despotism and political mishaps.

Chafing Chittagong

Just at a time when the road to the June 12 elections looks destined to be deloused with all the threats of hidden and unforeseen trouble taken care of by the recent, reassuring avowal of the Chief Adviser, the report on election related violence in Chittagong comes as a downer for the spirit of an optimist and a real tonic for that of a cynic.

The drive for recovering illegal arms with a view to ensuring ideal atmosphere immune to the provocations and possibilities of violence at least until June 12, has apparently come ungunned to some extent if not wholly.

Given the milieu now prevailing there, the observation of one senior police official that violence is an indication of tough electoral contest sounds as an undesirable, untimely study in irrelevance and ineptitude.

The Recovery Rewards

Its good intentions notwithstanding, the teleads dangling lucrative cash rewards for information — not the real stuff — on illegal arms makes an eerie reading.

There is now news that it works. Taka ten lakh, out of double that amount allocated for the job, has been disbursed to the different police ranges.

We do not, however, say the cash rewards and the recovery of arms haven't any use. The recovery campaign and even the reward ads are indeed being instrumental in creating, together with the general election ambience, an atmosphere in which the cadre wouldn't feel encouraged to go into action on the election day.

That should be a great thing if it indeed comes to that. But the arms will continue to be there in the society, vitiating every post election day's prospect of building a stable and dynamic society.

Now is the Time

A recent study conducted by a group of Dhaka University students has brought under the spotlight five evils as the perpetrating sources of violence on the campus.

The whole country is poised for a transition and the party that is going to be in power will do a world of good to its future by taking some sincere steps to eradicate violence from the campus.

All eyes are now cast on 12 June 1996 — the day of a general election for Bangladesh. Within a span of only five months, two general elections would be recorded in our history.

The socio-economic and political ramifications of a free and fair general election in Bangladesh will be immense. It is likely to help establish a people's government with a proclivity towards transparency and accountability.

First, before the recent Indian general election, when the election schedule was announced the then Congress government sent some proposals to the President for approval.

The President of India thought that, once approved, these might have been more cautious in the wake of a number of complaints against him for being partisan.

Abdur Rahman Biswas, allegedly tarnished the image of the head of the Republic. He should have been more cautious in the wake of a number of complaints against him for being partisan.

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes

Biswas who assured them that the said college would be turned into a university very soon. Should the President have done that? It is, allegedly, a clear violation of the electoral rules of conduct.

majority in the parliament. For not a single moment, the Indian President seemed to have looked for an alternative to help his own party.

With No Malice.....

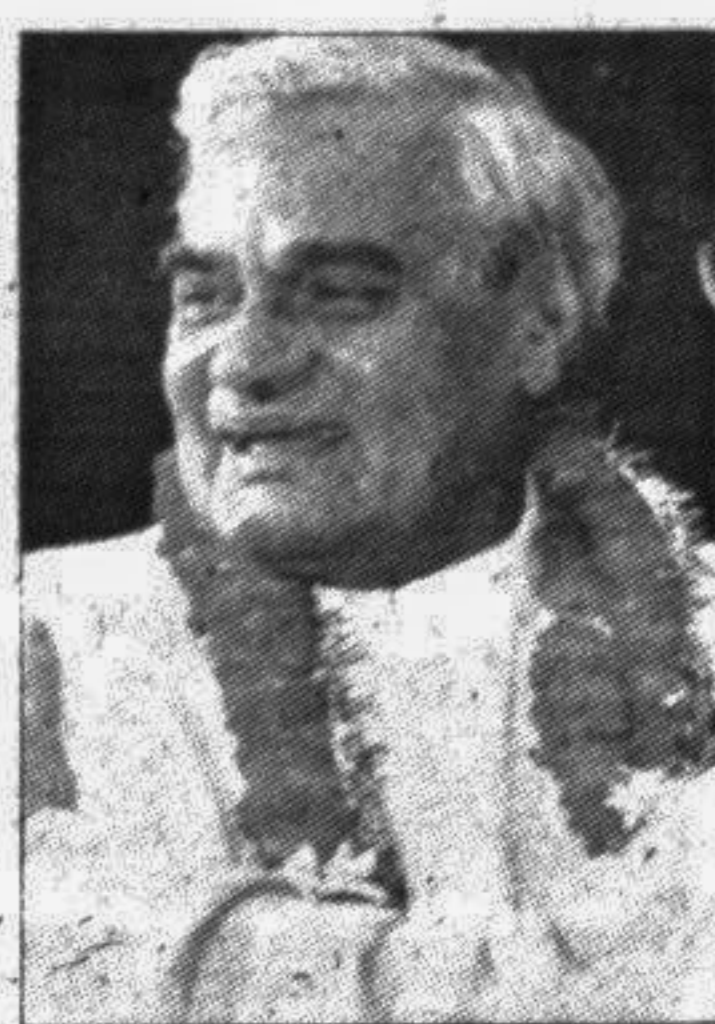
by Zaglul A. Chowdhury

Mr Vajpayee, as a person and a leader, is undeniably the most charismatic and honest politician in the Indian political scene today.

and going down in history as a prime minister who was given the chance but could not demonstrate the majority support in the floor of the House and instead preferred to resign rather than facing the test of confidence motion?

case). Mr Vajpayee stood out as a person of integrity. I had the opportunity of knowing Mr Vajpayee when I was posted in New Delhi as a Bangladesh journalist in the early '80s.

As I arrived in the Indian capital just before the 1980 general elections that saw the triumphant return of late Mrs Indira Gandhi to power, I attended several public meetings addressed by Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee.



Zahurul Alam, who was at that time in New Delhi attending a course, was with me. I introduced him to Mr Vajpayee, who immediately asked about Bangladesh, etc.

asked, 'Why? I am very fond of cooking — I often come to market and myself purchase the vegetables.' His simple way of life had charmed me.

MR Atal Bihari Vajpayee has been the prime minister of India for a very brief spell. When his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had formed the government in India's largest democracy, it sent tremors down the spines of several countries because for the first time a party perceived as communal rose to form a government in multireligious India.

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.

'President's Actions'

Sir, I have read your first editorial on May 22, 1996. I would like to say that it was not at all a right editorial at a right time, as Mr Rafique-ul Haq thought of. In my opinion, it was rather in 'Lightning Speed' and pre-mature.

The pre-maturity is always vulnerable to cause sudden death and I am afraid your views may have the same fate. It is always better not to have 'Lightning Speed' in commenting on 'Delicate', 'Sensitive', highly important 'National Matter'.

I do not know how the caretaker government and its Chief can be compared with that of a parliamentary form of government. In the parliamentary system the Chief should be a people's elected person, but in our case the concept of 'Non-party Caretaker Government' itself is contrary to that system.

As a layman I do not understand how one part of the amendment can be legal and another — illegal? In my opinion the 'Caretaker Government' and its chief in no way can be compared with the fact that the parliamentary system. Because he is not an elected person and he is meant only to hold a neutral election. In all country of the world, only EC is enough to hold election smoothly and

neutrally but not in Bangladesh. The question is why? Why we need a 'Caretaker Government', 'EC', 'Defence Ministry portfolio' and what not to have a neutral and smooth election? Is it due to the people of this country? Or due to the political people and the leaders? I think the poor and innocent people of this country are good but the fault is with the leaders and educated people who are having suspicious mind and not ready to accept the defeat.

Mrs H A Karim Malibagh Chowdhury Para Dhaka-1219

Benjamin's letter to the President

Sir, Mr Benjamin A Gilman, a member of the US House of Representatives, has written a letter to President Abdur Rahman Biswas regarding the trial of some top-ranking military officers who were allegedly involved in the recent incidents. In his letter he urged the President to make him certain whether the rights of the arrested army officers are respected and the trial process would be open, free and fair.

We do not know whether our President has sought any direction from him in this regard. Bangladesh may be a small country in comparison with the USA. But it is needless to say that Bangladesh is an independent and sovereign country. We have achieved independence at the cost of 3 million martyrs and had to fight for over 9 months to liberate our country from Pakistani butchers. We could not understand how Mr Benjamin can write such a letter to the President of 12-crore people. One cannot deny the fact that such letter is a clear interference in the activities of an independent and sovereign state. It cannot be the headache of Mr Benjamin to look whether the rights of accused military officers are respected or not and whether their trial will be open, free and fair or not, Bangladesh government knows it very well in which way their trial pro-

cess will take it course. We strongly discourage such interference. A M Kais Chowdhury Masdhair Gorsthan Road Narayanganj-1400

Vote for honest candidates

Sir It would be evident that candidates nominated by different political parties for the coming parliamentary elections are frequent to people's houses and coming to mosques especially on Jumma Days with a view to meet common people and to request them to vote. This is indeed a very good sign.

Actually we need to elect honest and patriots who after winning would organise the honest and patriotic forces of the country for working with the common people form poverty-free, peaceful and happy Bangladesh.

M Zahidul Haque Asstt Prof BAI, Dhaka

UN and AIDS prevention

Sir, You deserve congratulations for publishing a very timely letter under the above mentioned caption in The Daily Star on 25.5.1996. We fully agree with the letter writer who expressed that the recently declared worldwide AIDS prevention programme UNAIDS can never be successful if it is not touched upon by the essence of morality because according to the social scientists and medical doctors AIDS, in most cases, multiplies through immoral sexual interactions.

It reminds us of the miserable failure of the United Nations as regards the outcome of much expensive UN summits in Rio de Janeiro, Copenhagen, Cairo and Beijing, and very unsuccessful efforts of UN in tackling the inhumanity in Rwanda, Somalia, Chechnya, etc. Now the world people believe that all these failures were mainly because of absence of moral and human aspects in UN efforts and strategies. Now it is becoming clear to the people that no efforts of the UN or any other organisation can never achieve the targeted goals if it does not incorporate the moral and human approaches as a dimension in their strategies and programmes.

So, in this context, we want to draw the attention of the United Nations and all other organisations concerned to a recent widely talked-about

popular issue viz. 'a universal moral development proposal to UN' by Dr Abu Obaidul Huque from Bangladesh for solving all the crucial problems of mankind today. It may be noted here that the universal moral development proposal of Prof. Obaidul Huque is not only the main solution for worldwide AIDS prevention but also the ultimate solution to curb the disastrous problems of the contemporary world like poverty, environment pollution, violation of human rights, oppression on women, terrorism, drug abuses, smoking, etc. There is no denying the fact that this universal moral development proposal of Dr Huque is an 'integrated, comprehensive and package-deal approach' to combat almost all the severe ills and vices on the globe today and this proposal is the most important factor to promote the causes to ensure everlasting peace and justice for mankind at all times.

Ali Reza M. Talha President, Rajshahi University Newspaper Readers Forum, Rajshahi

Extra-powered EC and nation's expectations

Sir, This government — the CTG — is different from others. It has come up for ensuring an effective EC. In this EC is the OPI (office of prime importance). So EC has to ensure an impartial poll, by all means, on behalf of the CTG. For this, EC has been reorganised by placing a seasoned ex-CSP, against a Justice as CEC. Many premature postings were effected in EC and in the Civil Administration for the 'Poll-96' only. So, this EC has more power.

To make Poll-96 as an 'standard' for all future polls, the nation will expect from this EC to use all his gens, experience, skills and 'something special' befitting. Now onward, any lapses for rushing and shying at any event will insinuate many misgivings. More over, our CTG has attracted international attention, for that many dignitaries will come to observe CTG's performance very closely.

Citizens will expect, no poll is held, where trouble existed or started, so EC's directives, on this, must be loud and clear for all parties.

AR Chowdhury H# 39, Rd-11, Sec-4 Uttara-Dhaka -1230

OPINION For Democracy and Peace

Ever since Bangladesh came into being democracy had very little chance to govern the country, rather selfish interest, emotion, ego, lack of patriotism and even conspiracy against democracy became part of governance. Over the period this has given rise to nepotism, favouritism, corruption, terrorism and other serious anti-social activities. The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that now nobody seems concerned about corruption rather considers it as institutionalised in politics.

The seventh national parliament is in the offing through a supposedly free and fair election under the neutral caretaker government. Parliament shall be obsolete if it cannot give democracy an institutional shape: eradicate corruption, terrorism, lawlessness, and social injustice; establish elaborate rules and regulations regarding rights of citizens; set goals for upholding social, cultural, political values and provide effective guidance for economic emancipation. It should not overlook the social injustice such as wide gap between the rich and the poor, eroding rights of landless and homeless people, and also ensure rightful status of women in the society, and save the men behind the plough, the oppression food producing farmers, from of the social evils.

To translate these desires into action it would be imperative on the part of the next parliament members and the leader of the house to attend every sitting of the same and set apart at least one day of a week to give reply to public questions. Such practice was virtually absent in last parliament which retarded the process of democracy in the country. Moreover, parliamentary committees play a vital role in safeguarding national interest and smooth working of the parliament. Every sub-committee should be represented by members of different political parties and the chairman must not be the minister of the department but a member of parliament.

It may be mentioned that a parliament is the highest body in the country and so if it is run with parochial outlook to serve, say, the interest of the party in power, then anarchy would replace democracy. In view of the above fact it is obligatory on the part of every voter to choose and elect such members to the coming parliament who shall be ca-

capable to materialise the envisaged goals and programmes during their tenure. It may be mentioned that since 1947 to this date people of this part of the subcontinent, now Bangladesh, have acquired so much of experience through so much of struggle against corrupt power mongers and now, once again they should exercise their right of franchise peacefully and fairly and elect all members as per their choice, obviously guarding that by no means any member should belong to so called anti-social power-monger groups or be selfish and corrupt. This way the country can have true democracy for all sections of people and as such it will be institutionalised in the country and then the law of the land will be the guardian of the oppressed citizens.

In regards to the fair and peaceful election the neutral caretaker government and Election Commission rules and regulation are in favour of fair polls. I am hopeful that given full cooperation from all peace-loving and patriotic elements of the society, the EC will be able to conduct the election peacefully and fairly. However, like many, often I also feel worried if God forbid, any conspiracy is hatched to destabilise the process of democratisation, to come to power by evil means, then country will surely fall in a great social unrest. To avert that too a fair election is the only chance — to ward off political unrest and outside interference, whatsoever.

My appeal to all patriotic elements is to make the coming election peaceful and give people the chance to elect their chosen candidates. When it is ensured, it then becomes the duty of the electorate to choose the right and worthy candidate who can guide the country ably through its long and arduous journey towards peace and prosperity. A worthy parliament thus constituted by honest patriotic members, I am confident, will be able to eradicate corruption, nepotism and lawlessness from the society and it will then be possible to bring to trial all evil-doers, in the court of law. However, restraint must be exercised so that no one is unduly harassed and persecuted. Then only the law and justice must prevail in our country.

Dr. A K A Aziz Chairman Bangladesh Krishok Samaj