

Arrest the Rot

by Abashi

On the eve of the general election our political leaders are doing their best to sound pragmatic and sincere in highlighting policies to usher in an era of peace and prosperity. We beseech them to take a decision regarding their student fronts.

An insolent voice was raised, threats were uttered, a pistol was brandished, a bomb was burst and telephone line was snapped: all in a real life drama. The collapsible gate could have been locked, glass windows could have been smashed, the inmates could have been taken hostage. In these trying times it is no mean achievement to get back home safe from the clutch of a mugger or a hijacker. It is a more commendable attainment to get away unscathed by the wrath of a vested interest group whose path you have dared to cross.

The occasion: A committee meeting with some students Parishad leaders in view of the recommendations of Staff Council meeting to ensure a congenial atmosphere for study so that the students may do better in the examinations and to attract brighter students to the college.

It was the considered opinion of the Staff Council meeting that the activities of the students' fronts of the different political parties hampered academic atmosphere and did little in the way of brightening the college. Since it was felt that the college needed a good image and a peaceful atmosphere for academic pursuits, it was unanimously decided that the college premises should be freed from student-politics.

While this pandemonium was in progress, an unknown face appeared in the crowd and exhibited a firebrand's cracker was exploded outside and leaders thundered. Most of those towards whom these actions were directed were shocked but they judiciously recognised this to be sort of a signature tune of these young men.

Such insolent young men are a by-product of student-politics. Generally, they are not classroom attending students; they are pretenders with false papers. They consider themselves as student leaders and politicians under construction and hate to be reminded by teachers that they are students. They must have their way, they are opinionated and stubborn; they know they can have things their way because they are backed up by a formidable army of party activists who are, for all practical purposes, immune from police action. They know that the state machinery for enforcing law and order must halt on the other side of the threshold.

There is no reason at all why a young man in his late teens or early twenties will not sell his heart to Mephistopheles for all those lures of temporal pelf and power, into the vortex of this power-mirage

are drawn many an innocent boy who undergo a cruel metamorphosis overnight, ape their leaders and neglect their studies. They cry hoarse chanting party slogans in corridors that could reverberate with scholastic discussion. The atmosphere of teaching and learning is vitiated. So the first casualty of student-politics is the pursuit of knowledge and the second casualty is the peaceful academic environment.

Now, the protagonist of our drama 'Mr Insolent' does not care a straw for the Staff Council or any of its decisions. I say what I think right on my father's face. You are only teachers," he repeated again and again. Unmistakably, he is a problem child for the family. Such a character has been planted on the shoulder of the college administration like the old witch on Sindbad's back. Everybody has to digest his effrontery. He shouts down the teachers on the committee, brow-beats his party colleagues who try to be student-like in their conversation, whirls out of the room fuming with rage to instruct and organise his supporters walking inside and outside the room.

In any meeting with the administration they try to force the hands of the Principal to do what they want. Now, they are forever riding the high horse, cultivating rustic arrogance which, they know, open up the golden gate to personal aggrandizement. They are obsessed and incensed with a new-found power and will brook no opposition.

But those who care for a congenial academic environment feel that the presence of these political elements in the college campus is an unnecessary evil. They have always an axe to grind. Candidly put, they are after money and their prime job is to devise ways of grabbing it. Whenever necessary they are ready to run a parallel administration. To them universally supported academic activities like Science Club or Nature Study Club are anathema or suspect. They do not hesitate to pull down the science club signboard (sponsored by the college) and put their own in its place. All hopes and enthusiasm of students and teachers to create the right atmosphere for the pursuit of knowledge is thus nipped in the bud. No one dares protest loudly enough. Who has two heads on his shoulders?

It's time we took stock. Student-politics is a major cause of unrest among students both inside and outside the campus that eventually spills into the wider society. It is backed up by arms. As a result, intransigence and turbulence become a hallmark of student unions. These budding politicians rarely have any ideology. They are opportunists and change sides oftener than their mentors. They have a bloated image of themselves too early in life to face life's realities in the after-years. They may be able to grab certificates but they remain unfit for a good job. Being not amenable to discipline they

will create problems for the organisations into which they will force their ways. For, all they learn in their much vaunted college life is: scheming, extorting and humbugging. All they cultivate is to bear themselves with a vainglorious swagger and to maintain a hot-line with the powers that be whose backing they count on in their selfish exploits now and in future.

They do deliver their mentors the goods — they are quite honest about that. It's not for nothing that they hold office in these premises or swagger down the corridors. They try their utmost to entice the general students to their fold and convert them into slogan-chanting, fist-wielding political robots. That's why they could confidently brag about their influence with the general students.

"Give us election schedule immediately. You can in no way

ban student-politics here. We have more reasons to be here than you have to repudiate us. We challenge you to attempt that. The general students are in favour of politics. We can bring the college to a stand still any moment we like. If we give a call anytime, the classrooms will be emptied," they warned.

The bottomline of the warning was not lost on any of the listeners. They knew the power of such calls given even by a minor faction in our present 'democratic' dispensation.

On the eve of the general election our political leaders are doing their best to sound pragmatic and sincere in highlighting policies to usher in an era of peace and prosperity. We beseech them to take a decision regarding their student fronts. Probably in no other country in the world are the students engaged in politicking on such a scale. For the sake of proper academic environment in the educational institutions of this poor country, our leaders should for once reach a consensus to put an end to their fronts. If our politicians are unwilling to declare their policy on the matter, we urge the conscientious voters to reject them.

Election '96: Manifesto Analysis

All the major political parties, in their election manifestoes, have accepted free market policy as development philosophy, marking a virtual end to an ideological conflict in the country. Despite this development, manifestoes suffer from innumerable contradictions. News Network analyses the economic programme of major political parties on the eve of June 12 election.

IN Bangladesh, election manifesto has become merely a ritual to the political parties. They use to prepare manifesto hastily before the election. Since the accountability is still a far cry in so-called democracy in the country, politicians hardly care for what they said in the manifesto once they go to power. Manifestoes, in fact, do not have any significant impact on the voting behaviour. Legal problems, anti-Indian slurs and religious rhetoric click better in campaign.

A slight shift is evident this time. Political parties have tended to put major focus on economic issues in their election manifestoes. Candidates are trying to woo voters by their economic programmes during campaign. Major parties have become more explicit in their economic objectives. They seem to have become more appreciative of global realities. However, typical blunt attack on rivals and attempt to lure voters with commitment for short term

gains overshadowed policy issues in the manifestoes. Consensus on free market policy among the major political parties ahead of the elections is perhaps the most significant development in the politics of Bangladesh. With notable exception of the Left Democratic Front, all major political parties, in their election manifestoes, have pronounced overwhelming bias to free market economy as their development philosophy. The position of Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Jatiya Party was previously known. Awami League which opted for mixed economy prior to the 1991 election has formally switched its stance this time, although they, in fact, started to talk about free market policy immediately after their election debacle in 1991. BNP said it believed in 'liberal free market economy'. Awami League pledged it would 'follow free market economic policies'. Jamaat said almost the same but in a guarded tone. They spoke of free mar-

ket but remained uncompromising on Islamic principles which has free market. Despite this development, manifestoes suffer from various fundamental weaknesses, contradictions, paradoxes and vagueness. Proper groundwork and professionalism are absent. Many vital national issues are missing. The single biggest flaw of the manifestoes is the complete missing of the crucial issue of resource availability. Parties appear to have presented their programmes in a scattered way and more or less in a generalised term. Going through the manifestoes of major political parties — Awami League, BNP and Jatiya Party — a conscious voter might question the sincerity and commitment on the part of the parties in what they are saying.



Ekram Kabir reviews UNICEF's latest book on Bangladesh

Most of the 18 chosen characters — of whom seven are from NGOs — have profuse inclination for NGO-donor connections that may not sound very prudent. In one of the self-indulgent pieces, for example, Mohammad Abu Hena, former member of the Planning Commission and currently the Chief Election Commissioner, takes pride by saying: 'We talk to the donors on equal terms. And we try to convince each other. If there is any difference, we try to solve it through discussions and through dialogue. It's not someone talking from a high pedestal. Certainly not.' Well, this sounds pretty enthusiastic but far from the real situation.

Despite the UN agency's gender inequity in choosing the personalities — four of 18 are women — Visions & Hopes may well serve as a useful source of information and an outline for the future for the target readers who are, still, not commoners. Anybody who comes across the book would become a mature person on what to do about Bangladesh's next century.

The modus operandi for Bangladesh came up quite clear: economics and politics cannot be separated; leadership of the country has to be pro-people; women cannot be 'martyrs' anymore; right people should be in the right places; legislative change is necessary; priorities must be set right and the growth rate must be raised; industries have to be expanded; and the next generations of Bangladeshis — the children — need to be properly looked after. Well, given the impression that there is hope even in a wasteland, 'who' will water this

Hopes are Such Stuff that Visions are Made of

ALONG with the government, all the development agencies seem to believe firmly and make the people of Bangladesh to believe that all the problems of the country will be solved by the year 2000. All agents concerned of development, which is essentially the overall welfare of the teeming millions, impart that people's hopes and aspirations regarding their country will come true by the turn of the century.

This idea is arguable and the national commitment from every section, specially from the politicians, during the last 25 years are questionable. Efforts from the political 'practitioners' during this time-span have been 'one step forward and many steps backwards'. Sounds very much anti-life and anti-progress, right? If so, then these have to be averted through every possible positive means.

The UN Children's Fund's recent album Bangladesh: Visions & Hopes in the form of a collection of interviews conducted by Peter Stalker can be termed as pro-progress in this regard. But certainly, a conscious reader will face difficulties to eulogise the book as pro-people, although there are a plenty of people-oriented suggestions in it.

Ekram Kabir reviews UNICEF's latest book on Bangladesh

On the other hand, a reader may attach another adjective to the book being 'not-so-people' because of the ungracious absence of any common man and woman. But this is certainly not to suggest that there is anything wrong with the people hand-picked for the UNICEF's paperwork. Still questions remain. Like it's always easy for a person to hope for the future lying on his or her couch instead of going out to work, it's almost the same to jot quotes of some high-profile people down and juxtapose them in print. The interviews are of the same set (or, class?) of Dhaka-based brains which have been putting forward hopes for the nation for quite some time in the past.

Since Peter Stalker is very familiar with the socio-economic conditions of Bangladesh (he wrote a book in '94 titled A Fork in the Path: Human Development in Bangladesh), he could have gone out of the capital — Rangpur or Cox's Bazaar, for example — and talk to a few DCs or TNOs. This venture of his then could have become more convincing and acceptable. In this regard, if the book was meant for projecting hopes, desires, aspirations and expectations of a cross-section of Bangladeshi commoners, then Visions is grossly under-represented.

Like Dr A Moyeen Khan said at one point: 'We have made plans sitting here in the Planning Commission, worked things out, and then tried to

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Tuesday 11th June (All programmes are in local time. We recommend programmes printed in bold. There may be changes in the programmes)

Eden 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Wednesday programme 11:40 Close down

BBC 6:00am BBC Newsroom etc. World Business Report: Asia Today/24 Hours 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 Panorama 10:00 BBC Newsday 1:00 BBC World News 1:15 Panorama 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Nature 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 4:00 BBC Newsdesk 6:00pm BBC World News 6:15 The Money Programme 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 8:00 BBC News: South Asia & Pacific 8:30 Time Out: The Travel Show 9:30 BBC World News 9:15 Panorama 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Film '96 11:00 The World Today 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 Mini Series: Return To

Subtitles: 1:30 Family: Jack The Bear 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Comedy: The Hot Rock (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Classic: Three Hundred Spartans 6 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Family: Kentucky Woman 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 Hollywood 1 on 1 9:30 Action: Espion Love TD 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 11:15 The Bulletin 11:30 Action: Across The Tracks 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 1:30 Action: Enigma 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 3:30 Atter Dark: Parallel Lives 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 5:30 Film Club: The Five Heartbeats 18 (Arabic Subtitles)

mar School 4:20 Mitti: Sona 5:00 Allah Huma Labbaik 5:25 Oath Men Soochta Hoen 6:25 Aah Courses 7:00 Dhanak 7:45 English News 8:15 UN Quiz 8:45 Job (Drama Serial) 9:00 Break for Headline News 10:00 Khabar name & Commercial News & Khushal Pakistan 11:20 VCD Top Ten 12:30 Dr Qan 1:35 Khas Khas Khabri Close down

The Three Stooges 8:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 I Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Public Keya Bole 11:00 Panchan 11:30 Cine Matinee-Hindi Feature Film 2:30pm Kismet 3:00 Zaman Asman 3:30 Mere Message Meri Goe 4:00 Surf Wheel Of Fortune 4:30 Jai Banuman 5:00 10 Civil Lines 5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00 Dennis The Menace 6:30 I Dream Of Jeannie 7:00 Mere Message Meri Goe 7:30 Wheel Of Fortune 8:30 Cine Prime-Hindi feature Film 11:30 Jagr 12:00am Ape Jaso

Types 12:30 Siddhi 1:00 Sunday Ki Sunday 1:30 Mere Message Meri Goe 2:00 Khoya Khoya Chand 8:05am Janmadin 8:20 Binodan 8:30 Digo Nilangana 9:00 Janani 9:30 TBA 10:00 Adhunik Gaan 10:15 Instrumental Music 12:30 Prachar 1:00 Jaso (Serial) 1:30 Bengali Movie Club Film Show 5:05 Science Prog 5:30 News 5:35 Tale Play 6:00 Pali Katha

6:30 Chitrangali 6:55 Amake Dekhun 7:30 Bangla Sambad 7:55 Dinandha 8:00 Param Purosh Ramkrishna 8:30 Naari 9:00 Policar Dairy Theke (Drama Serial) 9:30 Nabi Ganer Daitiya (Serial) 10:00 Bengali Movie Club Film Show

BTV 2:00 Opening Announcement At Quran Programme Summary 3:10 Recitation From the Quran 3:15 Documentary Film: Cinema Europe 4:00 News in Bangla 4:15 Esho Para Shikhi: Mass Education 4:45 Cartoon Series: The animals of Parthwood 5:00 News in Bangla 5:20 Saugata: Modern Songs 6:00pm News in Bangla 6:05 National Television Debate Competition 7:00 The News 7:05 Open University 7:25 Comedy Series: Samridhi 8:00 News of Bangla 8:40 Drama Serial 10:00 News in English 10:30 Apan Priya 10:55 Mini Series: Return To

Channel V 7:00am Newsday Vj Sophya 8:00 Jump Start Vj Trey 10:00 Frame by Frame 12:00am The Vibe Vj Luke 1:00 By Demand Vj Trey 2:00 Rewind Vj Sophya 3:00 Big Bang Vj Alessandra 4:30 By Demand Vj Trey 5:30 Rewind Vj Sophya 6:30 First Day First Show 8:00 Big Bang Vj Alessandra 9:00 The Best Of Ek Ka Teen 9:30 Top Of The Pops 10:00 Big Bang Vj Alessandra 10:30 First Day First Show 11:00 Rewind Vj Sophya 11:30 The Hide Vj Trey 12:00am Over the Edge 12:30 Launchpad 1:30 Speak Easy 2:00 By Demand Vj Trey 3:00 Frame by Frame

STAR Sports 7:30 World Wrestling Federation Memorial 8:30 US PGA Tour The Memorial 9:30 The Race Of The Champions 10:30 WLAF Highlights 11:00 Marlboro League '96 Chinese National Football League Beijing vs Shenzhen @ Beijing 1:00 555 International Basketball Challenge Brazil v USA China v Russia 4:00 Live Cricket 95: Benson & Hedges Cup Semi-Finals 7:45 Football Mundial 8:30 Via Sky 10:00 Live Cricket 95: Benson & Hedges Cup Semi-Finals 12:00 1996 World Motorcycle Championship French Grand Prix Highlights From Paul Ricard, France 2:30 Asia Sport Show 3:00 Inside PGA Tour 4:00 Australian Football League Highlights 4:30 555 International Basketball Challenge Brazil v USA China v Russia

STAR MOVIES 7:30am Romance: Dream Date (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Family: The Fabulous Adventures Of Baron Munchausen PG7 (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Classic: Demetrius And The Gladiators 12 Hindi

PTV 8:00am (Hawat Aur Tarajami HandiNaat, 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabrain 8:45 Beauty Care 8:50 Fun Katha 9:10 Dhanak & Health Tips 10:05 Harizan Up Despak 10:30 English Film: Home Improvement 10:55 Mili Naipina 11:00 Khabrain 11:10 Aata (Serial) 12:00pm Sports Hour 12:55 Queen Helium 1:02 Binallah 1:15 The News Show 2:00 Yeh Jahan 2:25 Animated Classics 3:15 Geography & Ban-

James Bond BY IAN FLEMING DRAWING BY MORAK SCARAMANGA DELIVERS THE FINANCIAL REPORT TO HIS SENIEST CARIBBEAN COMBINE SO THERE'S THE PICTURE — TO FINISH THIS HOTEL LAUNDRY — WE'LL NEED ANOTHER TEN MILLION I PROPOSE WE RAISE THE MONEY ON A 10% NOTE PAYABLE IN TEN YEARS — THIS TO TAKE PRIORITY OVER ALL OTHER LOANS

Garfield by Jim Davis I'M NOT GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP

Garfield by Jim Davis LIKE HELL IT WILL — NOT OVER THE HILL! I'VE GOT MORE YEARS TO GO! I COULD TAKE A DEAL LIKE THAT BACK TO VEGAS?!