

The End of an Era

by Zillur Rahman Siddiqui

If things move to their logical end, the results of this June's election signal the exit of Begum Khaleda Zia and the entry of Sheikh Hasina. This change of scene on the political stage should prove more than a mere change of scene. The era of Sheikh Mujib was short-lived. The era that followed, despite changes, did not in fact end with the fall of Ershad. Begum Khaleda's five-year is essentially a continuation of the post-Mujib era. Khaleda admittedly was mainly instrumental in pulling down Ershad but the conflict was basically an in-house affair. No amount of bitterness that is generated in the process can negate the fact that the overthrow of Ershad in which Khaleda played a leading, maybe a decisive, role and the latter's assumption of power in her capacity as Prime Minister, did not initiate a new politics. Persons changed, politics remained the same.

Obviously there is a paradox here. How can the overthrow and the overthrow be categorised the same? The answer lies in the nature of the act. Did Khaleda appear on the scene with a new policy, a new programme? It will be difficult to prove that she did. Why then did she initiate that relentless campaign against Ershad? She did because she regarded Ershad as a usurper. The fact that what Ershad did was almost a copybook repetition of what General Zia did earlier or, was it six? — years earlier did not condone his crime.

Ershad was one of the family, so what? Did it not make his betrayal all the more heinous? Why couldn't he remain busy with his golf and other pleasures? Who put it into his mind to leave his games for this higher and infinitely more heady game of politics? Who could have thought that he was equal if not superior to Zia in cool-

headed calculation? Why was it necessary to finish General Manu in such haste? Yes, the rise of Ershad was an act of betrayal, betrayal of one whose loyalty was taken for granted, making the betrayal all the more unforgivable.

Khaleda has maintained this stance about Ershad consistently ever since he dislodged President Sattar in that lightning action when his own position was threatened. The chain of events leading to Ershad's assumption of Presidency leaves no doubt about the in-house character of the whole thing. No politics other than the politics of survival, and no question of ideological import had anything to do with it. Just remember what the new man had to say in defence of his take-over: corruption in the corridors of power. The ineptness of the politics of politicians — the standard plea of soldiers seizing power — was not emphasised. A new set of aims and objectives was framed. Canal digging — a Zia fad — was dropped. Literacy campaign was shelved. Anti-liberation forces, already rehabilitated by Zia, continued to feel comfortable under the new dispensation.

The policy of underplaying the War of Liberation and the historic role of Mujib was followed scrupulously. In foreign relations, Zia's policy of warmth toward that part of the Islamic world that had opposed Bangladesh continued and its corollary, coolness toward India, remained a corner-stone of the same policy. Finally, Zia's rejection of secularism and induction of Islam into both the constitution as amended and political practice, was not only endorsed but carried a few steps further. Ershad projected himself as a high-profile Muslim, much to the amusement of others who knew him better.

The two generals shared a

common weakness, creating and projecting a self-image in a desperate bid for acceptability. The aim was the same, the style was different. The Zia image was one of austerity and incorruptibility. The Ershad image was a hybrid one in which the semitic God and the Greek god of poetry, Apollo, jostled their shoulders. Both did their best in their respective role-playing, while at the same time institutionalising political corruption, and undermining political institutions. Between the two, apart from some difference in emphasis, the basic political tenets, all derived from the politico-military culture of Pakistan, was one and the same. There is a good deal of irony in Khaleda-Ershad hatred and enmity, and devoid of a political or ideological content, it becomes a petty internal quarrel caused by personal clashes.

In the final analysis the era which to all appearances is ending this June, is one era. It will be seen in future as one drama, with a change in dramatic personae, starting on a high note and ending on a note of both pathos and bathos, in sharp contrast to the tragic end of the era of Sheikh Mujib.

When I say that in June 1996 we are witnessing the end of an era, I wish to emphasise that the next government will frame and follow a policy of governance very unlike the one marking the past regimes, beginning with Zia, through Ershad to Khaleda. A radical change in goal and style is inevitable, given the experience of past 20 years or so. The constitutional continuity will be there, on the surface. Deep down, a profound discontinuity, a clear change of direction will be initiated. And it is this which will cut off the Zia-Ershad-Khaleda era from the one that follows.

I am not going to make any

prediction as to what the new government will achieve. But I can safely predict that they are going to try. They are going to live up to the promises made. They have seen, the nation has seen, how brittle a government can be if it fails to deliver. Khaleda government made the mistake of concentrating all its energy on the economic front to the utter neglect of the political front, and thus perhaps repeated the mistake of the Soviet regime. The two demand equal attention, and economy cannot thrive where democracy languishes.

The failure on the political front of the past regimes forming a single era proved costly. The spirit of accommodation in conducting the Sangsad affairs was markedly absent. The Sangsad itself did not receive the kind of attention it deserved. The Speaker's authority was subject to a creeping erosion. The three opposition parties' desertion of the House left the ruling party high and dry, politically speaking, and isolation produced bitterness, belligerence and a stiffening of the artery presaging paralysis. All this only made the demand for a fresh election under a caretaker government irresistible. The country had to foot the bill of a totally unnecessary election in mid-February, and its consequences took a heavy toll of life and limbs, not to mention the losses on the economic front.

In June elections the voters rejected the hawks of the ruling party while endorsing the party's continued role in the politics of the land, — a yes and a no at the same time. I would interpret this as meaning, among other things, that the voters held those responsible for their suffering, without rejecting the party itself. This leads one to hope that the two parties together can still make the new era an era of march toward democracy, through the right functioning of the Sangsad.

Assam : Going Back to Blood and Tears

by Subrata Nagchoudhuri in Kokrajhar

HISTORY seems to repeat itself with alarming regularity in Assam. And each time, the unheeded message is the same: political promises when not kept only invite trouble. In the latest case, ethnic clashes in the state's Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon districts left more than 75 dead in the span of a week, jolting the newly installed ag Government led by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta — and Soviet regime. The two demand equal attention, and economy cannot thrive where democracy languishes.

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the British tea plantations in the area. The Adivasis now make up as much as 30 per cent of the region's population. With a growing shortage of agricultural land, the Bodos only stand to gain if the Adivasi shift from the area — even if this calls for violence to cause an exodus. Besides, the Bodos are also wary of a consolidation of Adivasi votes which could upset the Bodo appeccart in a number of pockets in Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon. In the recently concluded elections, for instance, Adivasi support is said to have been instrumental in the victory of a Congress candidate in Gossaigaon in Kokrajhar district. The Bodo leadership, though, denies any

lice, Kokrajhar, S.N. Singh: "We had as many as three encounters with armed Bodo youths who we knew were members of the Bodo Security Force (BSF). Soon we were grappling with 30,000 people who had fled their homes." Singh's statement testifies to the strength of the militant BOSF which operates in the area. And with the outfit lately joining hands with the ulfa — "The bosf are our brothers and we have to help them," ulfa chairman Aurobindo Rajkhowa recently told a local newspaper — the going can only get tougher for the chief minister. Although Mahanta may be in a position to tackle the bosf, reining in the ulfa would be a tough proposition for the AGP

streamlined its command structure with its leadership discarding the concept of district commands (which were easier to infiltrate), opting instead for battalion formations and zonal commands — on the lines of the bosf and the dreaded National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). This will make identification by security forces more difficult than before, for now ulfa cadres will be known only to their immediate bosses.

Given this scenario, Mahanta seems to have adopted a wait-and-watch strategy. He is opting for a political solution, saying that his government, together with the Centre, would like a "negotiated settlement" of the ULFA problem. But if there is anything the new chief minister has no illusions about,



Burning Adivasi village: Bodo refugees at a camp in Bongaigaon (below).

The flare-up, expectedly, was sparked by ethnic tensions which Mahanta's predecessor, Saikia, had barely managed to keep the lid on by deploying the army for the most part of his five years in power. But with the ag's election assurance to the people that the army won't be used to contain insurgency ("The army is only for fighting external forces and not for training its guns on us," says Mahanta), the security problem has taken on totally new dimensions.

Whatever the findings of the commission that Mahanta has set up to inquire into the violence at Kokrajhar, the state Government will have to take more than just increased security measures to bring the

Bodo problem under control. For one, the contentious issue of including the villages along the 10 km border with Bhutan in the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) remains to be sorted out. Something that the Saikia government failed to do, and over which the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) disowned the 1993 Bodo accord and reverted to the demand of a separate state. The People's Democratic Front and Bodo State Movement Council (BSMC) have united with the ABSU on the issue. But given the region's ground realities, success even on this front may provide little more than a breather for the Government.

Armed though they may be, the Bodos — who constitute 25 per cent of the region's population — have of late been outnumbered by the Adivasis, who migrated to the region in the early 18th century at the behest of Christian missionaries and later became labourers in

Government. As it is, there is a feeling in certain quarters that the AGP poll campaign had the tacit backing of the ULFA — the party's election manifesto spoke of the right to self-determination, which is also the ULFA's ultimate aim. In fact, many see in the latest killings signs that the ULFA may be out to prove that it can have its way even if it means putting the AGP Government's survival on the line — just as it had done over five years ago when the Mahanta ministry was sacked and President's rule imposed on grounds of widespread lawlessness.

This time round, the ULFA first struck on April 25, killing Binu Chetia, a Congress leader, along with four others at Ulup in Dibrugarh in Upper Assam. By May 17 it had targeted more than 50 people in the state. In fact, the outfit had not just survived two full-fledged army operations — Bajrang and Rhino — as well as a split engineered by Saikia, but also regained its strength. This time, however, ulfa cadres will have to contend with another enemy, the sulfa.

More than the administration, it is the ulfa that seems to have learnt from its past mistakes. Having taken a severe beating at the hands of the army during Bajrang and Rhino, the outfit, during the past few years when it lay low,

it must be the administrative pitfalls that await him. As if the ulfa rampage and the ethnic violence in Kokrajhar were not enough, top officials, including the chief secretary, DGP and IGP, went on leave simultaneously, no sooner than the election results had indicated the possibility of an agp government coming to power. Mahanta condemned it, saying that "their absence demonstrated the absence force and we are going to institute an inquiry into it," but the incident did bring into sharp focus the political divisions in the state's administrative machinery.

Clearly, Mahanta has his chief ministerial duties cut out: fight the ethnic brush fires in Kokrajhar while keeping the ULFA in check. And even as he addresses these issues, he must fulfil the election promise of implementing the Assam accord, something he had failed to do during his last stint as chief minister. This time, his task is not made easier by the fact that among his electoral allies are the communist parties and minority groupings, which have always opposed the Assam agitation, as well as the accord. But his poll promises will remain just that unless Mahanta can swiftly check the resurgence of violence in his state.

— with Pranab Bora

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Primary Education : Problems and Suggestions

by Prof Roushan Ara Hoque

PRIMARY education is the basis of all education. It is the foundation on which the future attitude of a child towards life depends. It is the only process by which the vast population of Bangladesh can be turned into valuable human resources essential for a developing country like ours. Educated human resources are often more useful than natural resources. Bangladesh being a signatory of the resolutions of the world conference on 'Education for All by the Year 2000' held at Thailand in 1990 is committed both nationally and internationally to ensure education for all.

Moreover, in the Summit on EPA held in November 1993 in New Delhi UNESCO and UNICEF had entrusted the heads governments of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Brazil, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico and Nigeria, the nine most populous countries of the world, to be involved in energising activities of their respective countries and to lend their prestige and authority to the worldwide effort. Indeed, by a statutory law in 1990, primary education has been made compulsory in Bangladesh.

A National Academy for Primary Education has been established and it has been entrusted to create awareness among the people about the

urgency of educating the children, both for national and individual interests.

According to statistics of the Education Department, there are 78,674 government and non-government primary schools, madrasas, mosque-maktabs, toles, secondary-school-branches etc. By the year 2000 the number of primary school-going children would cross two crore mark. So more class-rooms will have to be created to ensure education for all. Of the enrolled students, an average of 60 per cent drop out within 1st and 2nd year, 30 per cent between 3rd and 4th year and, finally, 10 per cent complete primary course. Girls consist more of the drop-outs than boys. To minimise this disparity, the government has already taken some steps, such as, education has been made free and compulsory and text books are supplied free of cost. A programme, namely, 'Food For Education' has been introduced in some schools in rural areas on experimental basis. According to a government statistics the rate of drop-outs has been reduced to 40 per cent. So more intensive efforts are to be taken by both the government and the people to this effect.

The main causes of such a huge drop-outs are: a)

Parental poverty considered as the most important factor; from the school; b) Lack of awareness of the parents about the need of educating their children; c) Domestic help to the parents provided by both the boys and the girls; d) Distance of schools from homes, discouraging the students; and e) Uninteresting reading materials and method of teaching.

In order to reducing the rate of drop-outs, the above problems have to be solved. According to primary school mapping there is only one school in every two kms. To minimise the distance, more primary schools are to be established. The mosques, market-sheds etc. may be utilised as off hours non-formal primary schools up to class III only having one teacher for about 30 students teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. This 'one class-room and one-teacher system' introduced by BRAC has been proved very successful in remote areas. The teacher would be local and the parents are to be motivated and actively involved in this process. The timing of the school should be fixed according to the convenience of incumbents and availability of the space.

For the attainment of uni-

versal primary education within shortest possible time a 'crash primary education' programme may be taken with the following steps:

a) With intensive publicity, schooling of all children should be declared as mandatory by law, the violation of which may be punishable.

b) Local administration should be entrusted for the application of the law by forming vigilant teams in every area to motivate/compel the students in going to school.

c) Parents should be accountable and may even be fined for their failure to send their children to schools.

d) Compensation may have to be given to the parents, as and when genuinely necessary, for the loss of income by the children.

e) So called employment of minor children in any job should be banned to make them go to school.

f) School-dresses, books, pencils, slates, exercise books, tiffins should be supplied at free of cost.

g) Extra incentives and special prizes should be given for regular attendance and good results, and

h) Working hours of the rural schools may be set in the afternoon to allow children the morning hours to work for the parents. In this way, to an appreciable extent, the goal may be achieved.

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Monday 24th June
(All programmes are in local time. We recommend programmes printed in bold. There may be changes in the programmes.)

BTV
3:00 Opening Announcement Al-Quran Programme Summary 3:10 Recitation From the Bible 3:15 Cartoon Film: Macrop 3:45 Drama Series: Retalcast of Selected Dramas 4:00 News in Bangla 4:45 RUMJHUM: Children's Dance Programme 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 News 5:50 Sports Programme 6:00 News in Bangla 6:30 Taruneya: Young-mel's Magazine Programme 7:00 The News 7:05 Open University 7:25 Shuk-Dhuker Nadi: Magazine Programme based on River 8:00 News in Bangla 8:40 Package Drama 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shashatatha 10:35 Janamat: Family planning programme 10:55 Comedy Series: Coach 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tuesday's programme 11:40 Close down

BBC
6:00 BBC World Newsroom inc. World Business Report: Asia Today (24 Hours) 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 The Money Programme 10:00 BBC Newsday 1:00pm BBC World News 1:15 The Money Programme 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: 2:30 Gear 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: More Rhinoceros Around Britain 4:00 BBC Newsday 6:00 BBC News Headlines 6:05 Correspondent 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC Newsroom Asia & Pacific 8:30 Time Out: One Foot in the Past 9:00 BBC World News 9:15 The Money Programme 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 11:00 The World Today 1:00 BBC World

CHANNEL V
7:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 8:00 Jump Start VJ Trey 10:00 Frame by Frame 12:00 News The Vibe VJ Luke 1:00 By Demand VJ Trey 2:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:00 By Demand VJ Trey 5:30 Rewind VJ Sophia 6:30 The Vibe VJ Luke 7:30 First Day First Show 8:00 Lunchpad 9:00 SPL Oyal 10:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 10:30 First Day First Show 11:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 11:30 The Ride VJ Trey 12:00pm Over The Edge VJ Sophia 12:30 Music Master Box Show 1:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 2:00 By Demand VJ Trey 3:00 Frame by Frame

STAR PLUS
6:30 Voltron 7:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 7:30 G.I. Joe 8:00 Sabar Rider And The Star Sheriff 8:30 The Adventures Of Black Beauty 9:00 Aerobics Oz Style 9:30 Nanny and the Professor 10:00 Mr. Belvedere 10:30 Mollie Kazen's Cooking 11:00 Videofashion News 11:30 Gabrielle 12:30 Santa Barbara 1:30

STAR MOVIES
7:30 Romance: More Things Change 187 (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Family Sinbad PG (Arabic Subtitles) 10:15 Family: The Casbah of Charlotte House PG 10:30 Comedy Follow That Camel 15 Hindi Subtitles 1:30 Classic: Miracle on 34th Street G Hindi Subtitles 3:30 Western: Against The Crooked Sky 15 Hindi Subtitles 5:30 Family: Rock A Doodle G (Hindi Subtitles) 7:15 18-45 Rha qwwk Rhi yWe 7:30 Film Fiction: The Water Babies PG (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 Deccan Dream 9:30 Comedy: Bona Baiser De-Hong Kong 187 (Hindi Subtitles) 11:30 100 Years of Cinema. UK. My beautiful Landette 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 1:30 World Cinema: Fort Sagamine 18 (English Subtitles) 4:30 Documentary: 100 Yrs of Cinema: USA PT. 3 (Arabic Subtitles) 5:30 After Dark: Rules of Obsession 18 (Arabic Subtitles)

ZEE TV
5:30pm Infotainment (TMM) 6:00 News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED: Naya A To Z 7:30 ZED: Networking 8:00 ZED: Naya A To Z 8:30 Dream Merchants 9:00 Hum Zamane 9:30 Game Anjane 10:00 Zalko Ka Salar 10:30 Selek 11:00 Deek Ghar 11:30 Gopofez 12:00 Jaanbaaz 12:30 Somo Somo Tring Tring 1:00 ZED: Chota Byle 1:30 Asian Sky

PTV
6:00 am Talawat Aur Tarjuma (Hindi/Urdu) 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabran 8:45 Abb Pata Challa 8:55 Khat Farmash 9:20 Sargam Sargam 9:45 Naaj-Bi-Ghuz Pakistan 10:05 Shab Dagh 10:25 English Film: Good Troop 10:55 Mali Naghma 11:00 Khabran 11:10 The Smart (Pogor Moor) 12:00 Shama (Drama Serial) 12:55pm Duran-e-Hakeem 1:02 Basmillah 1:15 Anand (Drama Serial) 2:00 Shehrad (Drama Serial) 2:50 The Face Of Cultural 3:15 Roushni 3:30 Paimaney 4:00 Gharderi 4:25 Biology for 10th/Geography Chemistry 5:55 Inter College Quiz 6:25 Adu Courses 7:00 Tarunam (Drama Serial) 7:45 English News 8:00 Potluck 8:20 Ab Baba 8:45 Tum So Kahan The (Serial) 9:00 Break for Headline News 10:00 Khabranama 11:15 Classics Drama Serial: Jungles 12:20 Special: TBA 1:00 Khas Khos Khabran/Close down

SONY ET
8:30am Yaadon Ki Baraat 9:00 The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 I Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Raja Ram Aur Joker 11:00 Sunday Ki Sanday (Serial) 11:30 Cine Melinae-Hindi Feature Film 2:30 Komal 3:00

DD7
8:05 Janmadin 8:10 Puratani Gaan 8:20 Binodan 8:25 Classical Music 8:30 Dik Darshan (Serial) 9:00 Janani (New Drama Serial) 9:30 Saptaahik 10:00 Shastriya Saugat 10:30 Parikrama 11:00 Ghar Bare 12:30 Ek Salye Onk Gaan 1:00 Janani (New Drama Serial) 1:30 Bengali Movie Club Film 5:00 Nepali Programme 5:30 News 5:35 Dosh Bidesher Khela 6:00 Pali Katha: TV Report 6:30 Dabaddha 6:55

TOM and JERRY
WHAT'S WRONG, SPK? I DON'T HAVE A FIREPLACE TO WARM MYSELF. HA-HA! THAT'S EASILY CORRECTED! THERE! IS THAT WARM ENOUGH FOR YOU? YES, BUT WHERE WILL I STAY WHEN IT RAINS!

James Bond
BY IAN FLEMING DRAWING BY MORAK
AS THE STOCKHOLDERS' BANQUET REVEALS UP TO A DRUNKEN ORGY, BOND SEIZES HIS CHANCE TO SLIP AWAY — UNNOTICED EXCEPT BY THE COOL EYES OF MR. HENDRICKS...

Zameer Asman 3:30 More Message Meri Geet 4:00 Surf Wheel Of Fortune (Game Show) 4:30 The Rasoi Show 5:00 The World Cup Countdown-Cricket 5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00 Dennis The Menace 6:30 Dream of Jeannie 7:00 Meri Message Meri Geet 7:30 Premier 8:00 Surf Wheel Of Fortune 8:30 Taak Jhaank 9:00 Dekh Tamasha Dekh 9:30 Yeh Sadi Nahi He Sakti 10:00 Zameer Badal Gaye 10:30 Cine Prime Hindi Feature Film 1:30 Mere Message Meri Geet 2:00 Yaadon Ki Baraat 2:30 Close

EL TV
00:30am Dance Dance 01:30 Jugal Jodi 02:30 R.D. Burman Special 03:30 Party Time 04:30 Tarane 05:30 Dance Dance 06:30 Jugal Jodi 07:30 R.D. Burman Special 08:30 Party Time 09:30 Tarane 10:30 Fantasy Kal

ZEE CINEMA
8:30 Taraana 9:00 Hit Hai Fit Hai 9:30 Sambandh (Cast): 12:15 Movies Masti Magic 12:45 Navrang 3:30 Film Chakkar 4:00 Mandira (Bengali) 6:45 Pandit Aur Pathan 9:30 Songs 10:00 Yaigaur 12:15 Aaj Anand Kal Khabad 12:45 Pati Patni Aur Tawaf!

Newsline 11:00 Amrabi Bachchan Special 12:00 Sargam