Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Monday, July 8, 1995

Unbuilding Future

The percentage of success at the SSC Examinations of Dhaka Board is 42.20 and that under the Jessore Board stands at 43.99. In absolute numbers, 79,989 failed and 58,411 succeeded under Dhaka Board while 41,980 flunked and 32,971 passed in Jessore Board.

The glass is evidently more empty than filled and that's where the flipside shows. Much as we congratulate the successful students we fell obliged nonetheless to express our disappointment over the graphic emptiness of the glass.

This is a reflection of not the failure of the students but the failure of the system as a whole. What better results could be obtained from a system that operated through an apology for class room instructions aggravated by the lack of compensatory coaching, non-engaging curricula, delayed supply of text-books including the flawed ones, dearth of educational aids and equipment, and above all, yawning quality gaps between the urban and rural schools.

According to a study by Unicef our annual schooling time is 400 hours as against China's 1400 hours and India's and Pakistan's between 500 and 600 hours. School vacations, weekly holidays, sudden closures, and the time taken by teachers for roll-call and handing over the homework scripts to students excluded, the actual instructional hours make for that horrendously paltry figure of 400 hrs per year.

If, at the end of every year, out of a total of four secondary education boards two of them yield a total of 1,21,969 failed students on top of the drop-out rate of 50 per cent in the terminal year reckoned from the point of entry to the primary stage then imagine the magnitude of the educational waste!

In the endless cycle of annual failures we are unbuilding our national future within the institutions themselves, let alone the increase in the number of youth idlers vulnerable to invitations of a pernicious life-style.

The acid-test of quality education lies in a high rate of success rather than in the liabilities of incremental failures. It is not enough to have abolished the question-bank system and made much about blocking the way to easy success. We want a commission set up to go into the failure epidemic and help us stem the tide of human resource wastes.

Step in the Right Direction

The airport ceremonies held on occasion of the embarkation or disembarkation of the Prime Minister to and from foreign lands have been undersized by the government. In the first place, one does not know why should there be such ceremonies at all or what is so ceremonious in a Prime Minister's returning to her own domain?

We welcome the government decision that from now on only 16 persons would be required for the airport ceremony. That will certainly make Sheikh Hasina a far more self-evident Prime Minister of a country now seriously on its way to democracy. We remember with satisfaction her earlier decision not to block roads while her car passes. These all are steps in the right direction. And these encourage us to expect some more of the sort.

We feel, for example, that the style of her and her ministers' domestic travels are also very important. There is absolutely no need for the PM to be accompanied on any inland tour by more than one minister — the minister who charge she might be liking to have a look at. And, while on official trip she should be better not accompanied, an official on unofficial expense, by party demagogues or other henchmen. At the same time we want to see her security arrangements leave no gap. If this applies to the PM, this should apply more to the minister except for the fact of security. Their popularity and good work should be their best guarantee against physical harm.

Now to the most important part of the favours business. For two long decades assorted riffraffs have been rewarded for loyalty and underhand jobs by taking them on foreign trips - as part of the entourage of the President or PM, whichever was the case. This must be stopped forthwith. The entourage must be cut at least to a size matching the reduction in the airport ceremonies - roughly to one-third. And the whole of a Biman flight must not be requisitioned for carrying ten or twelve persons. Will it sound radical if we suggest the government buy the PM and her entourage individual tickets from the Biman in cash? We assure the PM, there will come a time when these small things will count - immeasur-

A Win but How Lasting?

A very ailing Boris Yeltsin has managed to be in the saddle for another term as Russia's President. And the universal opinion is that his win will not last that long - for he will have been lost to this world in the meantime. What will then happen to Russia? From an errant Yeltsin to a powercrazy perhaps fascistic -Lebed? The great Russian

people deserve a far better deal.

And Yeltsin has bought it all himself, offering Russia's destiny as the price. He used the whole state machinery - and Russia still has only one such machinery, growth of other institutions being years away — to promote his cause. And the still by and large conformist Russian middle class and urbanite western-aspiration types readily obliged. But that compromising the democratization of Russia, very gravely, failed to save the day for Boris. He still needed some horse-trading of the worst kind to win the run-off second round. He just bought up the third contender, General Lebed. But it is now appearing that perhaps Lebed has played a double trick - it is he who has bought Boris and instead of paying a price, has exacted a hefty one, Vice-Presidentship, which has all the making of landing him on the Presidentship of Russia in case of Boris's disablement or death.

Has America backed the wrong horse again? Most likely. The result? Another humiliation?

Transparency: Prime Minister's First 15 Days

Corruption undermines democracy and it becomes ungovernable when mere profession of democracy lacks

power of a few citizens and the lenience of all".

virtue. As Montesquieu said, "Without virtue republic is an empty shell and its strength becomes merely the Hasina has taken some important decisions. In the cabinet form of government, prime sance Italy, prevention of corminister is the primus enter ruption was considered to be a pares (first among equals). matter of social control and She thus took all the major national ethos. In order that corruption can be minimised, decisions in the Cabinet, in lieu of the Parliament, which is sometimes the members of the to be convened only on July city council and assemblies 14. A good start no doubt. She were selected by drawing lots has particularly earned the rather than by election - in gratitude of the people in the hope that this would guarrestoring the name of the faantee some amount of imparther of the nation. By visiting tiality. The method was of Tungipara along with her cabicourse not very satisfactory.

TPON assuming the office

of the chief executive.

Prime Minister Sheikh

net and party MPs, she

honoured not only Bangaba-

ndhu but honoured the hallo-

wed memory of the 3 million

martyrs. The oath they took by

touching the good earth of

Bangabandhu's tomb to realise

his dreams would act, one be-

lieves, as a conscience-keeper

in ensuring freedom of speech

and movement for the people

of Bangladesh together with

adequate provision for food

and shelter to the poor and

transports, the cabinet mem-

bers set a rare example. By

paying the helicopter fares for

her family members, the PM

warned everybody that abuse of

power will not be tolerated. By

requiring the ministers and

state ministers to file periodic

statements of their assets and

liabilities she set vet another

example towards ensuring

transparency in her govern

ment. She will do well by mak

ing her MPs, senior party

members and all government

officers, joint secretaries and

above, to declare their assets,

movable and immovable, both

declared policy of war on cor-

ruption. Corruption can never

be fully contained. It is as old

as humanity. Cronism and

clientelism are the beginning

of abuse of power, breeding

corruption. Scottish philoso-

pher David Hume made the

point clear in 1742 by stating

that rulers have strong com-

mitment to those who are

closer to them - family

friends and neighbours. In an-

cient city-states like Athens.

Rome or city-states in Renais

HIS is not the first

witnessed the forma-

tion of a coalition government.

time that India has

Most important of all is her

at home and abroad.

By travelling in private

the underprivileged.

It was left to Montesquieu. a magistrate from Bondeaux. France, who, frustrated with the inability of the state to root out corruption, asked for separation of powers and total freedom of information. An a priori condition for proper functioning of the state, Legislature. Executive and Judiciary should be separated. It is in this context that the new government's pledge to separate Judiciary from the executive assumes particular significance. Constitutional amendment in this regard, will need I understand, two-thirds ma jority in the Parliament. Opposition BNP, will I am sure, play, which it has already promised, a constructive role

Democracy by definition is

in this regard.

a government accountable to the people. But in a country like ours the system very often gets jolted because the bureaucracy is so poorly paid. The fact that Nordic countries with Sweden on top, are the most corruption-free democracies of the world, can easily be traced to governmental responsibility. accountability, and easily available juridical defence. As the World Bank report on Bangladesh has very clearly underlined, petty restrictions red tapism and a plethora of rules and regulations account for the pervasive network of corruption that we notice in the administration. It is said that the hidden cost that is incurred on greasing the way towards getting a decision in poor countries like Bangladesh, adds up towards the cost of production and inefficient implementation of projects. This situation cannot easily be corrected by governmental flat. While ministerial accountability must be ensured in broad public view. government should, part passu. evolve a system in which bureaucracy is adequately paid for maintaining a decent stan-

dard of living. Corruption undermines democracy and it becomes ungovernable when mere profession of democracy lacks virtue. As Montesquieu said, "Without virtue republic is an empty shell and its strength becomes merely the power of a few citizens and the lenience of all" A corrupt system thus legitimises the nomenklatura by rewarding those who play the

more royal than the king. They have thus lost all the credibility in using tax payers money only to promote the rulingparty or the ruling elite. This is boring and noisome.

I read with great enthusiasm about a recent meeting in which the chairman of a national English daily called upon his compatriots to pursue healthy and constructive journalism. The role of journalism is so important in nurturing democracy that it is called the Fourth Estate. As someone said, when a journalist is killed, not only does a person die, but a voice is silenced and a part of democracy disappears. I was thus saddened when I read in a national English daily a news item on

loaded. Gregory Efinovitch Rasputinn, the Siberia Monk close ally of Tsar Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra, must be turning under the ice of Neva. The icy chill of the hake may have kept the odour of the poisonous cake and wine with which he was inebriated before being shot, intact! Beware my friends! The said official is known for his uncompromising nature, as well as his integrity and honesty. He stood up against military autocracy as much as he refused to accept and legitimise the farcical election of February 15, as most of the democracyloving citizens of the country. As Sher-e-Bangia A K Fazlul Huq said about Ananda Bazar Patrika - If they criticise me for something I do for the people, then it is good news. If they praise me for something I become cautious! Fourth estate would do well in helping the government through constructive criticism to steer the ship of the state. They could, for example, bare the bureaucratic malfeasance of a lumped coterie in the past regime who took the jobs of over a hundred

As the recent judgement by the Honourable Justice Ansaruddin, head of appellate division of the administrative tribunal, in IG Gholam Morshed's case, and earlier in DIG Mamoon's case, has stated. forced retirement under 25year rule was an abuse of power and such action was ilmost arbitrarily and even ille-

senior officers and a thousand

other officials between '91-'95.

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As the recent judgement by the Honourable Justice Ansaruddin, head of appellate division of the administrative tribunal, in IG Gholam Morshed's case, and earlier in DIG Mamoon's case, has stated. forced retirement under 25year rule was an abuse of power and such action was illegal, malafides and inoperative. Lot of grist for the mill of

investigative journalism.

The PM has also given a new direction to the Radio TV. The last cabinet meeting was not shown on the TV screen. A rare feat. With the promised autonomy to the electronic media we are already getting a whill of fresh air - creativity and innovativeness which will bring our TV up to certain healthy standard, if not world standard. About protocol facilities at the airport for Head of State/Govt departure/arrival only the relevant ministers will be required to go, what a poor sight it was when all the Cabinet members were lined up. come hail or high water, to receive or welcome the head of government. A colossal waste of time and energy. A sort of marked show of sycophancy. In no country, which prides itself on its democratic values and self-respect, this kind of protocol is required.

Her address at the Army Headquarter was most significant. She called upon the officers of our patriotic Defence Service to work for the country's defence and security by eschewing groupings. She lauded their contribution in the UN peace-keeping operations from Haiti to Angola, from Bosnia to Cambodia. At any given time as many as 10,000 members of our valiant armed forces are working under the Blue Flag for maintaining international peace and security. She mentioned with great pride their contribution in the War of Liberation, where our courageous soldiers fought shoulder-to-shoulder alongside the Mukti Bahini, to realise the thousand-year-old Bengalee

Foreign Minister Syed Abdus Samad Azad also redeemed his pledge, in response to the protestations of 105 professors of Dhaka University as made on the floor of the Parliament, on March 2, 1993 - along with former opposition Chief Whip. Mohammad Nasim, by recalling those ex-servicemen, involved in the events of August 15, 1975.

Transparency, like charity, begins at home. The nation will be with the PM in her efforts to infuse new vibrancy and dynamism in the search for rediscovering our roots.

ENCHIRIDION

Waliur Rahman

game and punishing those who don't Bangladesh has been a mirror image of this situation in the past years. In the absence of any moral underpinning in the governance of the state, the fertiliser scam of 1995 or the Yasmeen cover-up

was only natural. The fourth estate will play a significant role by providing information and doing investigative reportings in this regard. Although journalists are always likely to promote sectarian views as John Stewart Mill often apprehended, the flow of information would always be 'undulating' to avoid any persistent manipulation! The decision of the government to hand over the Trust papers in Bangladesh to private ownership has to be evaluated and perhaps hastened in this context. No matter how much we may dislike it, the Trust papers have always been

made on a bureaucrat attached to the office of the new PM. I wouldn't have worried much about this item if it were published as a commentary or editorial since as Walter Lippman said. "News is sacred but views personal." To call him a Rasputin' within 10 days of his taking charge makes one believe that there hangs a tale Some vested quarters seem to be unhappy. I am certain that the chairman/owner of the newspaper or the editor was unaware about filing of this

July 2 in which an attack was

Politicians, it is said, have many layers of defence. A bureaucrat has none - except his reputation and integrity. Who steals my purse steals trash'. but who steals my honesty steals virtue. It is bad news for any democracy.

The story of July 2, 1996, seems to be is motivated and

Coalition Politics and the Police

T Ananthachari writes from New Delhi

Over the years, the police has been looked upon by almost all the political parties primarily as an instrument of political manipulations and settling political scores. None of the parties has yet shown any evidence of its anxiety to reform and restructures the police to make it an instrument of public service.

There have been many such experiments at the State level. Kerala and West Bengal have proved such experiments a success. Following the elections held after the Emergency (1975-77), the Janata govern-There have been numerous ment at the Centre was a instances when change in the coalition government. So were party in power led to diametthe later governments headed rically opposite decisions even by V P Singh and Chandin the field of registration and rasekhar. It was often said investigation of criminal cases. (particularly by the late. including cases of corruption lamented minno Masani) that involving political personalithe Congress party itself was a ties. This has been the expericoalition since that Party had ence even recently when well-defined groups of persons Congress (I) government resubscribing to ideologies and placed the Janata Dal governprogrammes from the Right to ment in Orissa. As generally the Left and all the shades in anticipated, the Congress [I] government got the pending cases of corruption withdrawn The present coalition at the against Congressmen, includ-Centre, however, appears to be ing JB Patnaik. The tradition, one with a difference. Apart if one can call it so, was comfrom the differences in attiplete with the Congress (I) tude and approach to issues. government registering cases

which may at times be conof corruption against the previous Janata Dal C M Biju Pattrary to ideologies and policies pursued by individual constituent parties of the coalition Incidentally, there was at the Centre, the composition hardly any change in the inof coalition partners in a parvestigation set up-not at all an ticular state and then state in-enviable task for those level interests and priorities forming part of the may bring to surface conflicts investigation teams. Readers which can have serious impact can easily recall how Mrs on rule of law and police neu-Gandhi's government went

authority.

about winding up numerous cases started by the Janata regime in 1977,79. The only saving grace was that many of the decision-making officers in the CBI were replaced as also the counsel in the Court, to carry out the new dictate. Problems of this kind can get aggravated significantly in the type of environment arising out of the complexities closely associated with the coalition governments at the Centre and in the State.

Situations of this kind put law enforcement officers, particularly the police, to serious predicaments. Over the years, the police has been looked upon by almost all the political parties primarily as an instrument of political manipulations and settling political scores. None of the parties has yet shown any evidence of its anxiety to reform and restructures the police to make it an instrument of public service.

In an environment of opportunistic coalition efforts with an eye on enlarging sec-

toral political interests in the near future, one cannot rule out efforts to misuse police to subserve narrowest of narrow interests. Recently, the newspapers were full about how a particular political leading light was keen on becoming the Union Home Minister with a view to set up a network of officers in his native state to exploit them to his benefit in the elections which are due shortly in that State! So blatant have we become! Did not such leaders, in the name of social justice, create communal and caste divided not only in the police but among the civil services in general?

Incidentally, it would be appropriate to recall as to what happened in the West Bengal in the 1960s.At that' time a coalition government was in position in that state and we witnessed the extra-ordinary spectacle of the then Chief Minister (Ajay Mukherjee) sitting in dharna against the decisions and policies of his own Dy C M in the field of law and order. The trauma which the WB Police and its officers have gone throughout should be worth recalling by those in service currently. It was during this period that the Union government had to initiate extra-ordinary measures to protect the Central properties and installations, even though the states are responsible for law and order. The purpose of recalling

such developments is to draw attention to certain realities inherent in the Indian context. It is clear that the only way to deal with complicated, complex and delicate situations with predominant political overtons and opportunism is to strictly adhere to the basic requirements of rule of law and accountability to law, backed by openness in matters of public interest. It is also time that the police serve a purpose, even as a matter of expediency if not tired by higher considerations, in getting close to the public rather be a mere footmat of the political masters.

The Courts in India particularly the Supreme

Court, have given enough evidence of the need for the policemen to scrupulously adhere to the dictates of law. All these cast onerous responsibilities on the leadership levels in the police. Time and again, it has been seen that the lead given by higher levels invariably influences those below, even if it is little time taking. Even greater responsibilities lies on the shoulders of the member of the IPS in this regard.

There is a role for the media too. They have to constantly create public opinion in the country so that the general atmosphere is conducive for strict adherence to law. Caste and communal considerations which are often the basics of enlarging one's vote bank and political base, should not be allowed to come in the way of the growth of a professional and efficient police.

It is clear that with the coming into being of coalition politics, the job is cut out for the police. The coming months will be crucial and al those who are concerned with good governance would watch with great concern as to how the police conduct themselves.

> Mandira The writer IPS (Retd) is former Director-General of Border Security Force.

On electronic media

Sir, The Awami League has committed in its election manifesto that it will give autonomy to the Radio and TV, if elected by the people. The party is now in power. So, we the voters now hope that the AL will honour its commitments.

I myself, however, find something wrong in giving full autonomy to the electronic media. Because the government has to inform the government programmes to the people. The government should not have to request again and again to the autonomous authority of Radio and TV to do

Therefore, I should like to offer a suggestion. The Radio has three channels. The government may broadcast its programmes through a single channel and the other two may be given autonomy. Likewise, the BTV must have at least two channels one of which would be run by the government and the other by the autonomous body.

I think the all or none principle will he dangerous, hence the suggestion for distribution of authority.

MAS Molla Member, BAAS, Dhaka

Practising justice

family and I are fully indebted for our happiness to several of my colleagues while working in Chittagong Steel Mills Limited during 1974-77. Unfortunately, five senior officials were suspended in the first week of August '75. The Ministry of Industries gave the orders to the corporation though the ministry is not the appointing authority. The corporation obe-

Only a few months ago the

Sir, The members of my yed the orders, though illegal.

High Court gave a verdict in respect of premature retirement of an official of shipping corporation, maintaining that Ministry of Shipping has no au thority in removing shipping corporation officials, since the ministry is not the appointing

Only recently, the chairman of the Human Rights Commission of India has ordered the Uttar Pradesh government to pay a sum of rupees 3000 to an Indian citizen as he was illegally arrested by a police official. This money is to be realised from that culprit police official. Our Prime Minister has just spoke over radio and TV on 24th June '96 about fairplay, justice and so on. Against this backdrop, let us hope that culprits of same sort may be brought to book and political oppression to innocent and honest officials are not practised again!

Ahmed Alam 14. Eskaton Garden Dhaka-1000

"Mayor — for people or for political party"

Sir. The Mayor of the Dhaka City Corporation played a vital role in the fall of the government elected through the 15th February election by establishing the Janatar Mancha. But unfortunately, he is so unsuccessful at his own role as. Mayor as he has failed to solve any of the following problems faced by the city-dwellers: a) creating a mosquito-free environment,

b) water-logging problems. c) ensuring the street light for every lane,

d)freeing the footpath from the illegal occupants, vendors/hawkers/garage owners/real estate businessmen etc., who have raised their own Mancha on the streets at the cost of public convenience.

e) construction of car parking building.

f) traffic jam,

g) proper and timely clearing of garbage, h) coordinating the activities of different utility services like WASA, DESA, T & T, Titas, etc.,

i) earmarking places for holding political meetings. j) maintenance of the lakes (specially the Dhanmondi

k) construction of public toilets. On the other hand, the mayor of the Chittagong City launched a Corporation movement and gave an ultimatum to the then government that if his '19-point demand' were not fulfilled he would cut off Chittagong from other parts of the country. Now his own party is in power, but he is si-

now goes. These two incidents led us to believe that the 'mayors are not for the people but for the political party.

lent about his '19-point de-

mand'. Let us see how far he

God forbid, if the mayors of Khulna and Rajshahi follow the path of the other two mayors. government would see the damaging effects of the musical concert of their own cre-

Kamrul Anam Khan 2/E WAPDA Colony. Paribagh, Dhaka-1000

Slum-dwellers Sir, It is estimated that one

tenth or one eleventh of the population of this metropolitan city of Dhaka - about 12 to 15 lakh people - are living in subhuman conditions. These poverty-stricken city-dwellers. mostly rickshaw drivers, day labourers, vendors and hawkers, along with their wives and children live in hundreds of dark, shanties and sheds, old

and dilapidated structures, verandahs and godowns in dirty, stinking and unhealthy slum areas. They are even deprived of basic necessities of life - drinking water, electricity, ventilation, sun light and sanitation facilities.

We would request the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives and the Dhaka City Corporation to help alleviate the long-standing sufferings of the people living in the slum areas by providing them with at least basic civic amenities for their survival.

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

Shocked

Sir, On 26th June 1996 under the banner of 'Projonmo '71' (organisation of the children of the martyrs of 1971) a few of us (shaheed families) went to show respect to our beloved janani Jahanara Imam who, before her death, was vocal and stood up against all anti-liberation forces. Our janani is our pride and there is no scope of any controversy that she is the pioneer of our movement against the anti-liberation forces in Bangladesh.

The present situation, where we are now, is definitely mainly her contribution. I anybody denies that, then s/he is denying the reality of our pro-liberation struggle. We expected the turnout of the people as well as the pro-liberation forces would be quite large, but we were shocked to see that only few organisations or political parties came scatteredly to place wreath at the mazar of our Janani. Further, the media coverage was also very poor. This is not what the

shaheed janani deserves. Md Anwarül Kabir Shajahan Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Buchwald's COLUMNI



Secondary Smoking

HE Philip Morris tobacco company has just made America an offer it cannot refuse. In exchange for controlling its advertising to teenagers, the company wants the Food and Drug Administration to get out of the cigarette-regulatory business.

Philip Morris is not the only one anxious to make a deal with the government. The Charlie Choke Cigarette Company also has offered to get in the picture. Charlie Choke's spokes-person, Rufus Dare, has just an-

nounced that the Choke Company is willing to cut down on children breathing "secondary smoke." "We are concerned about secondary smoke affecting our youth," Dare said. "So Choke proposes that no one under 18

years of age be permitted to inhale. "How do you intend to enforce that?" Rufus was asked. "No teenagers will be permitted to inhale from another person's cigarette without photo identification."

"But secondary smoke is everywhere." a reporter "The Choke Company is aware of that. We intend to have laws passed that children cannot play near bars, boxing stadiums or sit in the smoking part of a restaurant. If they are

caught doing so, they will be subject to a one-year jail term and a \$10,000 fine." "You're even tougher than Philip Morris. Do you plan to

withhold Choke advertising from magazines? "Yes, we do. Our mascot, the laughing dragon who smokes two cigarettes at a time, will no longer be featured in ads in

Playboy and Penthous. Those two publications are the ones that most teenage inhalers read. We also intend to stop sponsoring the Soap Box Derby. We want the country to know that. while for adults inhaling secondary smoke is a pleasurable experience, young people could easily become addicted without being aware of it."

"In exchange for your proposal, what does the Choke Com-We want the complete shutdown of the National Institutes

of Health, the immediate indictment of the Surgeon General as a war criminal and a full pardon for the Maribror Man."
"That sounds reasonable." "It the tobacco companies can't prevent young people from

inhaling secondary smoke, who can?" By arrangement with Los Angeles Time Syndicate and UNB