

Some Change for WASA

Water supply and sewage system have assumed monstrous proportions as some of the lingering urban problems. In fact, the situation is so bad that any move designed to change the state of affairs in WASA, irrespective of the promise and potential of its effectiveness, is bound to be welcomed.

Apparently, it is a nomenclatural change of the highest executive slot of the body. The Water Supply and Sewerage Authority Bill '96 heralds the end of the days of chairman as the executive head of WASA.

More importantly, the executive committee will be consisted of thirteen members drawn from various professional and user groups. We welcome this touch of democracy inside an agency that has, over the years, been a classic study in mismanagement, inefficiency and loss.

Things are in a real bad shape on the water front. At present WASA is capable of meeting only 63 per cent of the total demand for water consumption which is a scary reality in the context of spiralling urban population and Dhaka's emergence as a megacity.

The water treatment plant at Sayedabad is likely to ameliorate the situation considerably when it will be fully functional and for that the legislation was inevitable because World Bank, the main financier of the project, made some changes as the preconditions for its assistance.

The Festering Wound

The Yasmin case is shaping into a tough test for the government. Dinajpur is again getting restive. The horror that was Yasmin's rape and murder by police personnel and its social sequel still haunts its inhabitants.

The case is looking like being transferred to somewhere outside Dinajpur for disposal which the Dinajpurians would never accept. The necessary approval of government for prosecution of the case against seven killings in the wake of the Yasmin incident is being delayed inordinately.

In the explosive Yasmin case — one that can harm the present government mortally if handled ineptly — things seem to have got into some unexplained meshes of administration. If the home and law ministries cannot sort it out between themselves as something screaming for priority treatment the Prime Minister will be badly needed to act.

Attack on Shabash Bangladesh

Of the handful of universities in Bangladesh, Rajshahi has been the most beleaguered by an inextinguishable and almost visible siege laid on it by fascist and anti-independence elements calling themselves students. This time they have gone a step further. The Shibir, student wing of the Jamaat, as is so painfully known to all, has damaged the plaque of the monumental sculpture — Shabash Bangladesh — that celebrates the Liberation War.

There is hardly anything more sacrosanct — politically as well as morally — to a citizen of Bangladesh than the Liberation War out of whose womb this state was born. Whatever Shibir's patrons may say about revising the position they took on the Liberation War, there cannot be a more eloquent testimony of their pathological hatred of that war than this piece of vandalism on Shabash Bangla.

In spite of RU's being specially vulnerable to unrelaxing Jamaat-Shibir muscle-power, the first Liberation War museum was opened there and it prides itself on its Shahid Minar, the grandest among the University Shahid Minars. In the absence of partisan intervention by government, which was the rule for over two decades, the students and teachers of RU should be able to mercilessly neutralise the anti-Bangladesh elements now calling all the shots in that heroic yet unfortunate campus.

Don't Ignore Diplomats

They helped us in 1991 in giving us a good election and they came to our rescue again in 1996 in our democratic transition. No amount of hand-wringing and closet-room criticism diminish the constructive role of our diplomat friends in Bangladesh during the critical days of May and June.

AMBASSADORS," said Demosthenes, "have no battleships at their disposal, or heavy infantry, or fortresses; their weapons are words and opportunities..."

Born in blood and sweat, as a sovereign independent country, Bangladesh stands out as the most eloquent witness to the musings of the Greek writer. At the height of the War of Liberation, Pakistani diplomats of Bengali origin started quitting the Pakistan Foreign Service, the most prestigious service of the day, in groups and singles from world chancelleries, in protest against the Pakistani military oppression in Bangladesh.

to them by the satraps, kings and queens and plenipotentiaries. Sometimes they were required to perform jobs not fully commensurate with their declared list of responsibilities — if only to satisfy their patrons at home. Taking of gifts for the monarchs or emperors was a tradition set in by the earliest envoys. The receiving countries also tried to impress the foreign ambassadors in various ways. In Turkey the rulers for a long time used their newfangled knowledge of gun-powder to impress the new ambassadors with the art of fireworks.

while going to present his credentials to the Ottoman Emperor with an entourage of 150 people along with a band of musicians to please the monarch, he reportedly lost half of the people at the hands of highwaymen, including the musicians! The monarch was so angry that reportedly he put the envoy in semi-isolation for a while in the castle of the Seven Towers. Soviet ambassador Ivan Maisky to the Court of St James, during World War II, was summoned to the

to procure these arms and ammunitions on an urgent basis from the underground arms bazaar. Same was the fate of the Pakistani diplomat in Prague. Later Pakistani Ambassador lost his job for writing a rather amorous book entitled, Love in the Ruins (Toro Romano). Many Bangladeshi diplomats have been reprimanded for not supplying shoes and bags and other merchandise to the visiting premier. Two diplomats lost their jobs for uncovering corrupt practices in the em-

banks and shoals. Diplomats by and large have to promote the interest of their countries in foreign lands — an interest that Churchill called the creation of convenience. But it is not always so very easy. Even in this age of instant communications, difficult decisions have to be made on the spot for promoting their country's interest. Sometimes you risk to tread on unknown terrain. As a result many diplomats have been the victims of ethnic violence, tribal wars and civil conflicts. It is said that more diplomats have died in the past 50 years in harness, than journalists killed in crossfires and boobytraps in battlefields. Diplomats are indeed the first line of defence of every sovereign country.

closet-room criticism diminish the constructive role of our diplomat friends in Bangladesh during the critical days of May and June. One of those persons who will be remembered by all decent men and women and democracy-loving citizens, is very soon going to leave us on completion of his four of duty. He is Peter J. Fowler, High Commissioner of Her Majesty's government. A graduate of Trinity College, Oxford, Peter Fowler came to Bangladesh with rich experience of the subcontinent. He served in Delhi and earlier in Calcutta when the Declaration of Independence was made by the Mujibnagar government. He will certainly be remembered for the extraordinary role he played along with our other G-7 friends, particularly the Italians and the Americans immediately after the February 15th event.

Stephen Solarz, Peter Shore, senator Zuluette, Japanese Ambassador, Commonwealth and SAARC Representatives all had made their UNROD set the rule as it were. The donor community, along with the World Bank and IMF do play a role very often larger than life, and sometimes our regret. But their role in promotion of democratic culture in our country is indeed praiseworthy. They helped us in 1991 in giving us a good election and they came to our rescue again in 1996 in our democratic transition. No amount of hand-wringing and



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Kremlin for a meeting with Stalin, Ambassador Maisky returned to London after a wait of two months without meeting Stalin! In the diplomatic history of the subcontinent, diplomats have had a variegated experience as well. During the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, Pakistan consul-general in Madrid reportedly incurred the displeasure of President Ayub because he furnished a shopping list of arms and armaments to the Spanish government. The Pakistani official was supposed

Very often people back home in the capitals tend to forget that diplomatic assignments carry an onerous burden with the jobs. True, the conventional diplomats receive conventional honour in the countries of their accreditation; their jobs nevertheless are strewn with difficult and sometimes hazardous sand-

Redeeming BTW's Lacklustre Imagination

by Farid Hossain

It appeared that a domestic news-drought hit the BTW news bulletin, even though the flood has not yet eased in every part of the country. It has rather deteriorated in one or two southern districts as the BTW news said

ON Friday night (9-8-96) the state-controlled BTW's Bangla bulletin failed to last its usual 30-minute duration. It ended five minutes earlier. No explanation was given. Nor was it expected. One may as well come to one's own conclusion. Parliament is in session, but there was no sitting on the weekend vacation. Until the bulletin the Prime Minister had no official activity. Most of the ministers except Education Minister A S H K Sadek and Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim must have been enjoying a break from their official functions.

For the BTW news bulletin did not broadcast anything about them, there was, however, a pleasant departure. The BTW sent its camera crew to a function attended by Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament. The

bulletin was otherwise dominated by events that happened in foreign lands, the swearing in of Russian President Boris Yeltsin amid the fighting in Chechnya being the main news of the night. It appeared that a domestic news-drought hit the BTW news bulletin, even though the flood has not yet eased in every part of the country. It has rather deteriorated in one or two southern districts as the BTW news said.

Bangladesh is and has always been a newsy country. The newspapers, most of them in the private sector, hardly run short of news. The BTW also remains under tremendous news pressure. But that is only when the prime minister and the ministers perform their functions. In doing so, they also make it easy for the BTW, which is not run by professional journalists. It is so difficult to cover the government ministers' functions because the BTW is used to it.

The BTW management runs short of its imagination only when either the prime minister or the ministers take their day-off. Because the BTW's news section is tuned to only covering the ministerial functions, it finds itself lost in a dark wood when there is no news made by the ministers.

This underlines the need for overhauling the BTW's news management. Ministers don't always make news. That does not mean that the BTW will leave a part of the time reserved for news bulletins unused. It can fill the gap with its creativity. For example, the five minutes that the BTW did not use on Friday night could have been devoted to the coverage of one of the myriad of the problems the people of Bangladesh endure every day.

Who or what is preventing them from doing so? The government? That's the excuse the BTW may offer. That is not

totally acceptable. The drought in the BTW's creativity and imagination is the main problem. While the people want the BTW to be free of the government's control, the BTW does not. Because it is to be controlled by the government, if one demands an inefficiency explanation it has the ready-made answer: the government wants it this way.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has promised to let the BTW to go an autonomous way. The reiteration came also the other day. This should have cheered the BTW. Unfortunately, it seems they are not. The people in the BTW are simply programme to be one-eyed. It sees only the government that controls it. True, it is only the government that can change the face of the BTW. Until it occurs, there is nothing wrong for the BTW people to demonstrate that is worth of becoming independent.

To the Editor...

Lock-in for foreign investors

Sir, Our attention has been drawn to a letter on the above subject written by one Mr Abu Ahmed and published in your esteemed daily dated 28th July 1996. As the contents of the letter may create misunderstanding in the minds of your readers, SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) clarifies the position as follows:

a) Lock-in policy was introduced by SEC to require the private foreign investors to pay a price for their privilege of getting 'private placement'. The price was locking-in the securities for a year.

b) After introduction of the policy, various foreign investors objected to it on various grounds.

c) The foreign investors did not participate in any foreign placement after introduction of the policy.

d) The foreign investors also withdrew largely from the secondary stock market of the country, especially, in the buying side. The net foreign portfolio investment flow became negative — the outflow being more than 2.5 times larger than the inflow.

e) These situations seriously affected the primary stock market, leading to under-subscription of big public issues.

f) Accordingly, it was thought expedient by SEC to omit its Lock-in policy, but to continue to restrict the foreign placement to one-third of IPO to protect the interests of local investors.

g) It may be mentioned here that there is no Lock-in for three years for foreign placement in India and Pakistan, as stated by the writer.

h) It is not also correct that SEC allowed companies to float shares at premium rates without proper examination as alleged by the writer. SEC allows floatation of shares at a premium on the basis of well-defined policy, after proper examination by its officials and approval by its Board. So, there was no question of encouraging the foreign investors and discouraging the local investors by the premium policy.

The other side of the coin

Sir, Often the government doctors are criticised for refusing to work outside the capital for negligence of duty by those posted outside the city etc. Please permit me to narrate a few instances as to what happens to those who do leave the city for their native town to serve the humanity at no extra pecuniary benefit.

A lady is working in one of the newly upgraded district hospitals. She is the only lady doctor in the hospital but has to share her consultation room with a male colleague. This is derogatory not only to the doctors but an insult to the respected female patients who naturally seek privacy.

2) A doctor couple are posted in two different thanas of Barisal and Chittagong divisions for more than two years. In spite of a standing government order, they have failed to be posted in the same district because they have refused to 'please' the officials concerned.

Better you should go to the Americans

Sir, The universities of London, had inaugurated an Education Fair from this year through the British High Commission in all over India, in order to encourage those who were interested to study in England for higher education in self-finance as well as under the scholarship schemes. The opportunities were open to all Indian students. The authority, along with them, had brought a selection Board to interview the interested and qualified candidates who would be taken to England for their admission after the selection. Most impressing or all these was that the leading universities or London as well as of the world, like the Cambridge University, the Oxford University, the

University of Leeds, the University of Liverpool, Essex University, etc. offered job guarantee after completing the respectable courses and if any candidate would fail to afford the tuition fees, would be granted a scholarship from the university fund.

Being a bona fide foreign student, studying English Honours in Jadavpur University, Calcutta, I attended the fair which was held at Park Circus, Calcutta.

There was a huge crowd in the fair. Students from all the Departments including BBA, MBA, Hotel Management, visited and were given prospectus and admission forms of the universities free of cost. The arrangement of the fair was wonderful. Each college or university had its own information Bureau but failed to distribute necessary materials due to the shortage. They took the addresses of the students with a promise to send the papers by post within one month, which I myself had received attorney residential address in due time.

In order to avoid communication gap I did not give my permanent address of Bangladesh. Instead of that I used my friends' address. Accordingly I went to the British High Commission, where I came to know that the opportunity is only for the students who are Indian by birth.

"I am Bangladeshi by birth" — was my reply when my interviewers asked me my nationality. "Your people never follow the British" — he said in an odd expression. "If I am not mistaken you follow the Americans," his tone was interrogative. "Yes, we practise American accent as well as system" was my reply. "Accent never matter in studying English literature." That's true but the opportunity is only for the Indians who follow British accent and system. Better you should go to the American and request them to inactivate an education fair on behalf of the American universities to encourage the students who follow their accent and system. Sorry young man, you try in that way," he told this try without taking any breath and with a mocking tone adding "If you were an Indian, you would have been lucky." I left the room giving him only a look of anger and saying "I must request the US government and the universities for a same education fair to be held in Bangladesh."

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Art Buchwald's COLUMN

Dunkin' Dough-nuts

THE members of the Billionaire Basketball Players and Athletic Club were sitting around the mahogany-paneled library after dinner.

Gregory Sonnabend, centre for the Washington Bullets, passed the port as he smoked a \$10 cigar. "Did anyone else find the red wine a touch cooler than room temperature?"

Leslie Torbend, forward to the Miami Heat, said, "I'm glad you mentioned it. At these prices, you'd think that the club could afford a decent Haut Brion 1949."

Walter Hildebrand, defense man for the Los Angeles Lakers, said, "I hadn't actually planned to be here this evening, but my Gulfstream is laid up in the shop."

Big Shoes Bogan said, "Weren't you supposed to play the Pistons tonight?"

"Only if I happen to be in Los Angeles at the time. My deal with the Lakers is that I get \$1 million each game, whether I play or not."

Nike Nichols of the New York Knicks said, "I used to love basketball until I bought a string of race horses."

"Now," he added "I'd rather win the Triple Crown than beat Michael Jordan in a jump up."

"Where is Michael, by the way?"

"He went to England, to be knighted by the Queen as the Most Valuable Knight of the Garter."

"What about Juwan Howard?"

"He's aboard his yacht in the Mediterranean."

"During the basketball season?"

"He just flies back on his Lear jet when it's his night to play."

Alonso Mourning said, "Don't you just love this game?"

"I never thought that tossing a basketball into a hoop would give me enough money to buy the Empire State Building."

"Does anyone want to play cribbage for their Pepsi Cola testimonial money?" One of the players asked.

Gary Payton said, "I'd love to, but I have to be up early and play polo tomorrow morning."

Shaquille O'Neal, centre for the Lakers, lit his cigar and said, "What I hate most about the government is that they're always thinking of new ways to tax the free agents. We do a lot more for this country than the poor."

"The media keeps writing about how much we get paid, but they never say anything about all the free throws most of us make."

"Or how much Gatorade we sell at the A&P?"

"I heard that they even object to us having this club with its leather chairs and Michelangelo murals."

"But if it allows us some privacy they have no right to complain."

One of the players said, "Who wants to go downstairs to the gym and shoot some baskets?"

O'Neal replied, "We've done that already. I'd rather play golf on the club's Robert Trent Jones course."

"Me too. Once you make one slam dunk, it's waste of money to make any more."

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OPINION

Some Suggestions for Improvement of Health Services

The government doctors of all ranks must be guided by service rules like other officers of the government.

Private clinics must have their own senior physicians, surgeons and gynecologists and senior government doctors must not be allowed to be attached to any private clinics for reason of corruption.

Government doctors must be at their respective place of duty for the specified period and must be available for evening round (to visit admission and operation cases).

Major operations must be done by professors/assistant professors.

The professors must complete the course in time, so that the students do not suffer through shifting of examination dates.

Principals of medical colleges must be from the basic science (Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology) and not from clinical sides (Medicine, Surgery, Gynaecology).

There must be officers from DG office to supervise attendance and performance of doctors from capital to sub-division level.

There should be mobile team of physicians, surgeons and gynaecologists who will trainup doctors in district hospitals and also render service to the patients in those hospitals.

In the universities, factories, mills etc there will be government doctors by deputation for three years, so that young post graduate doctors can be exposed to render better services in those areas.

The school health services for all the schools of the country is a must, so that defects in children, say, of heart, eye, ear and others can be detected earlier.

The Health Service should be divided into divisions like government doctors, to minimise corruption. Administration will be with the Divisional Directors, DG office will look after the policy, teaching and foreign affairs.

The alleged corruption in Central Medical Store can be stopped by placing the fund to the respective medical institutions for purchase of drug and other stores.

For each large and medium size medical institution (Medical College Hospital, District Hospital etc) there must be a governing board comprising — respectable persons of the areas.

AMC Officers must not have private chambers in civil areas (like in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) to attend patients for obvious reasons.

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