

Short on Action

Incidents of gruesome and mysterious murder have increasingly been making newspaper headlines for quite sometime.

Home Minister Rafiqul Islam appears to be alive to the situation. At a discussion meeting at the PG hospital auditorium, he declared that he would quit the job if he fails to discharge the responsibilities of his ministry.

That the minister has already done some ground-work for a crusade against the country's number one social problem, terrorism that is, must not be overlooked.

The Bangla daily Bhorer Kagoj carried a series of reports on the chain of terrorists and their operational mechanism. In the report accusing finger has been pointed at just a score of mafia-like bosses who enjoy high social standing.

Is the home minister ready to take up the challenge? In the United Kingdom, one incident of killing of school children in Dunblane has moved the House of Commons to pass a law banning almost all types of handguns.

powerful he may be — can evade it.

Mission to Myanmar

Bangladesh and Myanmar, it is hoped, would sign a bilateral trade agreement later this month. Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed, who is going to Yangon for the signing, said on Tuesday in Dhaka Bangladesh would strive to attain prosperity marching in step with its neighbours.

Neighbours are the best natural partners in business and in overall economic progress, which is but a step short of cultural and total societal enrichment. As a part of Pakistan we could not open up to possibilities of such shared progress.

And what a neighbour we have in Myanmar! That big big country with the most unrealised economic potential of perhaps all of world's nations. We have a common border that has for centuries provided cushion for healthy and hefty border trade.

It is true that for the decades following the fall of U Nu, Myanmar has been closing itself up inwards — a self-exile into isolation. Lately things there have been moving towards more intercourse with the outside world.

So, all our good wishes for our first meaningful extension of ties with Myanmar.

Thackeray Antic

Mr Bal Thackeray is no relation of India-born Nobel Laureate William Makepeace Thackeray. The possibility of confusion has long been very ably removed by the former through a brand of violently communal politics basing itself on sheer religious bigotry.

The fundamentalist leader has shot into world headlines for the umpteenth time, this time for the unlikeliest of reasons. He has come out in defence of the virulently attacked idea of holding the Miss World contest in Bangalore.

But why does he welcome it? Because the Indians will get a chance of seeing so many beautiful women from all around the globe and from close quarters. Not a bad plea really and it may not be far from the inspirations that lead to make beauty contests the success they are.

And he sounds appropriately enough the male chauvinist that he is. However, we take delight in daring any Muslim fundamentalist to match Thackeray on his beauty contest antic.

MAYOR Mohammad Hanif never had it so good, but only till recently. The city father of the metropolis Dhaka had a series of successes since the day he was led sweets by his defeated rival and predecessor, Mirza Abbas, following his election victory almost three years ago.

The dilemma of the Mayor is that his ambitions to promote well-being of the city dwellers are high but he is unable to generate adequate resources and to bring about necessary institutional changes to meet the challenge firmly and squarely.

The other side sees his desire and machinations for quick ascendancy to the high alter of power with suspicion. They seemingly regard his ambition to do good for the people identified with his personal ambition. They advocated him to exercise caution and themselves decided to go slow.

How and why did the dilemma crop up at all? The Mayor had a vision. The vision was to transform this city into a going rank among the first ten most populous megalopolis of the world in the first quarter of the coming century into a modern city of the present-day world.

however, we foresee no such

MAYOR HANIF'S DILEMMA Disillusionment of High Expectations

The Mayor had a vision. The vision was to transform this city which is going to rank among the first ten most populous megalopolis of the world in the first quarter of the coming century into a modern city of the present-day world.

they enjoy, influence they wield in national politics and the status of a constituent state or province some of them are allowed.

The Mayor wants all these and as promptly as it is possible. He wants the authority to commensurate with the traditional and new age responsibilities he wants to carry out. He may have set his sights on major cities like Washington, New York, London, Moscow and Beijing.

During the tenure of my diplomatic assignments to all these cities during the past 27 years I had the opportunity of obtaining some firsthand knowledge of mayoral predilections and chagrins in megalopolis.

When later, Boris Yeltsin then Chairman of the Moscow City Council, whom I had known during meetings with Ambassadors, had but not entirely different problem. A hot gossip ran in Moscow for some time, that frequent interference by Raisa, wife of Soviet chief Gorbachev, in the work of Mayor Yeltsin aggravated tension, leading to the eventual rift with his erstwhile boss in the case of our present government.

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Currents and Crosscurrents

by M M Rezaul Karim

problems though. Mayor Hanif should be able to learn lessons from others. Many of those who are holding similar jobs have varied experience but somewhat similar frustrations. It is natural for him to desire assumption of greater responsibilities to meet ever-increasing demands for old and new services of the people.

The Mayor has quite a few alternatives open to him. Under the circumstances, the best would perhaps be, while continuing negotiations with the government to prove his administrative worth and general greater popular support in favour of his demands.

His proposing having been rejected, he retaliated by boycotting meeting of a similar coordinating body chaired by the LGRD Minister. He is stated to have considered not worth his salt to attend meeting of a body of which he is co-chairman, unless he himself was made the boss.

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OPINION

"Prosperity or Politics? Choice is Yours"

Abdul Latif Molla

I have been a bit tempted to express my views on the opinions expressed by Mr Anam A Chowdhury under the above headline in The Daily Star on 2 October, '96. I agree with his wise suggestions on what the present government should take up for the prosperity of the country.

When Mr Chowdhury mentions H M Ershad living in a five star sub-jail being accused by him as the president of the most grotesquely corrupt administration for long nine years and in that context he caustically predicts a widespread public outrage in anticipation of BNP chairperson Khaleeda Zia's being charged by the present government for alleged illegal enrichment then one thing becomes deductively clear that as the present government has apparently compromised with a corrupt so it cannot proceed further to sue another alleged corrupt anyway.

In that context, the present government seems to have laid its foundation on the running sands which may collapse anytime to sway itself into the same old swoop of corruption. We may assume that next it may be the present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed for whom the same music will be played by the political analysts.

Unfortunately, this is the legacy of politics in our country. Political leaders like Ershad and Khaleeda Zia who ascend the throne with eloquent pledges to extirpate all evils from the country and find themselves plunged into corruption and evils within a short period of time emanate from the same origin i.e. the exploiters. Mysteriously they are the people who always hold the shields and always have steering to protect themselves.

If we shift back to BNP rule of late Justice M A Sattar, we remember the then president openly branded his ministers as corrupts and expressed his inability to run the administration with those people. Ershad dabbled in politics being in uniform and finally usurped power removing president Justice M A Sattar accusing the BNP government.

If the overall SL (system loss) can be brought down from 30 to 20 per cent, then import of such sensitive utility service would not be necessary. Charity begins at home.

The Supreme Court of India recently gave a verdict which has created sensation throughout India. The Court has given its opinion that ageless patients could seek monetary damage from doctors or hospitals for deficient treatment rendered by them, under the Consumers' Protection Act recently introduced in the country.

erment with unbridled corruption. There was no public outrage against him. He pledged all chastity, sanctity and austerity but finally succumbed to the state as described by Mr Chowdhury. Even then he remained as it appeared from the public meetings, newspapers, radio, TV and sycophants' propaganda, as the unparalleled popular leader of the country. But when he was put behind the bars, his favourites did not even organise protests against the action.

How can the public now will express profound love for another alleged autocrat and corrupt and revolt in outrage against the present government when the generals alleged equal counterpart vaunting on similar claims will be sued by it for the same causes is not understood. Did the people find any duck, laying golden eggs during the reign of Khaleeda Zia which Ershad concealed? Do the people see any difference between the two in the question of alleged misrule and corruption?

After coming to power, the BNP government filed case after case apparently in vengeance, against the ex-president for corruption when allegedly they plunged themselves into the same evil and adopted all possible tricks and misuse of power to prevent exposure of their alleged misdeeds. They did not even spare to profane the mentality of the Speaker, the President, sanctity of the Constitution by misusing the provision of so-called act of God and unfounded natural calamity to prolong their one-party rule with the aim of plundering public wealth. They played the capricious broken record of so-called 'democratic' government elected by the people to befool everyone. But it was not a secret that they formed the government with the help of the anti-liberation forces.

Governance of the country was not only the BNP's responsibility and nobody gave the party a sole agency to perpetuate its autocratic rule on the people. If it would have been their fair intention to rule the country democratically and honestly, then they could do what they did after the Feb 15 elections to avoid national losses before the resignation of the opposition MPs. Last we should not forget their lofty pledges before coming to power.

It appears difficult for me to delve into any logical ground as to why one should be prosecuted and another exonerated for alleged commission of identical offences. On the part of the pre-

arrangement what is usually known as 'commission'. They arrange the process in such a way that patients are compelled to go to those selected clinics. The patients cannot protest because they are scared because by doing so, they will invite doctor's displeasure. It is natural to feel so as it is the patient's life which is at stake. They cannot go anywhere because no law exists out of which they can expect a salvation. So the humanity continues to go on crying.

If we open the pages of newspapers, we come across lots of reports telling of corruption, negligence, heartlessness of doctors and maltreatment rendered by them.

encroachments. There are many more ways the city can earn praise of its dwellers. What are needed more are imagination, perseverance, pragmatism and dedication. The Mayor should be megalomaniac in his pursuits, not so much to ponder on how many ministers should be on his committees but how many officials he can motivate to do their job effectively. The question of placing the Metropolitan Police under his authority is still premature. In any case, he can no longer show the on his past excuse that the anti-party government donned a stepmotherly attitude to him. Let him wrest cooperation from his own party government. People await the outcome with patience.

sent government it seems improper to show weakness to deal with any one for his/her misdeeds. Everyone should face the law invariably for their committed offences and if found guilty should face the consequences also. Any attempt to evade justice and enforcement of law on the part of this government will open the dark avenues for its own members to indulge in same evils and it may not claim an exception. We saw 'Jatiya Corruption', 'Jatiya-atadabi Corruption' and have no intention to see now another — 'Awami Corruption'.

The frenzied invectives from the flamboyant 'Jatiyatadabi' neo-tycoons to conflagrate the whole country if their leader is sued for alleged corruption, sound highly seditious which should have been sufficient to bring the utterers before the law of the land. These sorts of unlawful threats will not be able to involve the public to incite any outrage against any lawful action of the government. If at all the people revolt against the lawful actions of the government, the government may prefer to relinquish the office to pave the way for the corrupts to rule over the public, as then that will be desired by them.

Even then the daughter of the father of the nation may not be wise to shake hands with corrupts as she said time and again and that is like a real leader that she was always ready to shed her last drop of blood for the cause of the people. Now it seems to be the right time to face the test. Life of a true leader is very short but what the leader achieves for the nation lasts forever. Father of the present Prime Minister is the best example. He would have not been able to achieve the independent Bangladesh if he had compromised with the illegal rulers.

But things seem to be moving following the way Mr Chowdhury suggested. The present government appears to be no exception. It pledges much but acts less following the footprints of the predecessors. What I want to say, the politicians either in government or in opposition have all things in common. They are the exploiters who exploit the common people for their self-interest, play the music of democracy, honesty and stream of development while in power, and play the music of autocracy, dishonesty and conspiracy while in opposition. But they never realise that the common people have no time and ability to dance or cry with their wedding or funeral music tunes as they have to fight for their existence always.

For Enactment of Law against Maltreatment by Medicos

Prof S A Khaleque

The Supreme Court of India recently gave a verdict which has created sensation throughout India. The Court has given its opinion that ageless patients could seek monetary damage from doctors or hospitals for deficient treatment rendered by them, under the Consumers' Protection Act recently introduced in the country.

It may be mentioned that lately many instances of gross malpractice, professional negligence, causing severe damage to patients have been surfaced and widely reported in the newspapers in our country.

In the West, there exists strict penal regulation governing the practice of the medicos. Doctors in those countries have to pay penalty for gross negligence and malpractice. That is one reason why doctors in those countries are precisely careful while handling of their patients. Patients come out of doctors' chambers and hospitals with full satisfaction and confidence because they get proper and adequate treatment.

Reduce system-loss

Sir, While in agreement with the criticism of Mr Mohammad Yusuf (Star, letter, Oct 14); as a citizen, I feel aggrieved that our government, instead of taking deterrent administrative action to reduce the human system-loss in this public sector, are trying to woo the public to import electricity from India — the country where Farakka is situated (the implication is transparent!).

How many officials of PDB/DESA have been subjected to disciplinary action, including punitive transfers, as we see in the BCS? Why two governments cannot break up the co-terie?

If the overall SL (system loss) can be brought down from 30 to 20 per cent, then import of such sensitive utility service would not be necessary. Charity begins at home.

A Zabr Dhaka

Devaluation policy and price-hike

Sir, With the continuous devaluation of our currency Taka for the last twenty-five years, we wonder as to whether we are really making any economic progress in the country?

Are our industry, trade, commerce and banking being revitalised? Are we boosting up our exports, earning more for foreign exchange and lessening down our burden of foreign loans? Are we able to alleviate the untold miseries and sufferings of our poor people? Or are we moving towards an uncertain future?

Can't we take any measure, any step to check and stop the trend of devaluation which spawns price-hike of both local and foreign goods and commodities and adds agonies to our people manifold?

To the Editor...

BUET situation

Sir, My attention has been drawn to the news items such as 'Stalemate prevails at BUET' (The Daily Star, 12th October, 1996), 'BUET syndicate members refuse to attend meet chaired by VC' (DS 14th October), 'Teachers ask BUET VC to resign' and the letter by M. Ali in BUET on 'Stalemate at BUET' (D.S. 17th October) and subsequent rejoinders by the BUET authorities on October 13, 15 and 19 refuting allegations of corrupt practices, discriminatory attitude, abuse of power and autocratic excesses by the BUET VC Dr. M. Shahjahan as well as ultimatum by BUET teachers for resignation of the VC by 28th October published in a section of vernacular press on 22nd October.

As a concerned guardian and ex-student of BUET and as one who has some knowledge about the situation that continues to cripple BUET, a standard institution of this region, I can hardly keep myself aloof from the sickening affairs in BUET.

Dr. M. Shahjahan was appointed as VC, BUET in 1991. It is alleged that his preceding VC sent a panel of eight senior professors where Dr. Shahjahan's name was at the seventh place and he was appointed virtually superseding all others. Then he retained his appointment or gained re-appointment for the second term through 'recommendation' from the erstwhile government and has indulged in many irregularities during his long tenure. Against such allegation that Dr. M. Shahjahan received huge amount of money as consultant in all the projects of the Water Resources Engineering Department and IFCDR (Institute of Flood Control and Drainage Research) of BUET during the tenure as Vice-Chancellor, one would like to know if the VC, without appraising the government, could be a beneficiary of the consultancy jobs under his executive tiers, and really how many man-hours Dr. M. Shahjahan had spent for these consultancy jobs. Allegations are also there that Dr. M. Shahjahan had never done a single piece of study but when it came to sharing of fees among the consultants, he had obstinately forced the concerned head of the department to put his name as a consultant and put the amount of fees against his name. People around him perhaps had to abide by because any amount of protest and dithering on their part would have thrown them out from his grace.

It is further alleged that Dr. M. Shahjahan as vice-chancellor during his trips abroad had received huge amount of money as T.A. and D.A. from his organisation although such tours were fully sponsored by outside agencies and the GO issued by the Ministry of Education unambiguously stated that neither the Government of Bangladesh nor BUET would bear any financial responsibility towards such travel and stay abroad. And that during such a tour in 1979 he overstayed taking a job in an Iraqi University and was dismissed from BUET. Later on however, he was re-appointed as a teacher.

These are all gross irregularities, and more so in case of

More telephone connections

Sir, Although the Rural Electrification Board has been extending full cooperation in keeping uninterrupted electricity supply to the campus of Haji Mohammad Danesh Agriculture College (HMDAC) Dinajpur, still, due to compulsory load-shedding the students in the hostel and academicians on the campus are experiencing great misery. Hence it is strongly felt that a generator should be installed in side the campus with a view to meet electricity requirements during emergency hours, such as, examinations periods.

Another problem of the HMDAC campus is telephone. At present, there is only one telephone line for the entire campus. When approached to the local T&T authority, they informed that there is no cable to provide another telephone connection to HMDAC. Under this situation we would fervently request the higher T&T authority to kindly arrange to provide at least two more telephone connections to HMDAC considering the greater academic interest of the higher agricultural education institution situated in the northern region of Bangladesh.

M Zaidul Haque Associate Professor Haji Mohammad Danesh Agriculture College Dinajpur.

PM and BTW

Sir, The Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured the nation repeatedly that Radio and Television would be given autonomy in due course and she would not utilise these media for her personal gains.

But on Oct 18, 1996 BTW telecast live of the birthday functions of her 10-year-old brother Master Russel who was killed along with his family members, is there any justification to use BTW for showing the live function of the birthday anniversary of Russel?

Since the Prime Minister herself took active part in the said function, the bureaucrats and sycophants of Rampura cannot be held responsible for using BTW for the dynastic glorification of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The conclusion I have drawn is very sour. Like all other heads of the government of Bangladesh since independence, Sheikh Hasina has also become victim of the political chicanery of the bureaucrats and sycophants. If sanity does