

Good Work

Rules are simple. These become complicated only when they are broken making room for aberrations.

All of this truism finds an eloquent vindication in the recommendations the Public Administration Reforms Commission (PARC), headed by veteran civil servant Kazi Fazlur Rahman, submitted to the Prime Minister's Office on Monday.

The PARC has made no bones about the fact that if the existing secretariat manual were followed in terms of the two-week stipulation for delivery of a reply to or an action on 'any communication from any quarter,' the administration's accountability to people and its efficiency wouldn't have taken the dip these have.

The PARC has advanced some highly practical suggestions for reorganising the totally chaotic and deliberately secretive service delivery systems with ready reckoner type display boards, well-stocked and -manned information booths and complaint boxes.

A world of experience has been brought to bear on the set of preliminary recommendations placed before the government. These sound even more praise-worthy when one gets to know of the abject paucity of logistics and material support that stalked the commission's footstep from day one.

Receding Promises

No, Mr Khan, your assurance of a load-shedding-free Bangladesh by July next year cannot cool the frayed nerves of the nation's power consumers, from a manufacturer to an agriculturist to a student.

One big reason of the energy crisis was reaching necessary amount of natural gas to the turbines and the government executed an overdrive to build the needed gas pipelines for that.

Mr Nooruddin Khan, the minister, in his answer at the Jatiya Sangsad on Monday has based his optimism about load-shedding only on the barge-mounted plants. Why? What we need is a clear, detailed picture of the power situation.

There is a talk of power pilferage being a big factor in load-shedding. But the government has miserably failed to take small and easy steps that could greatly improve the awfully unbalanced demand-supply situation in the power sector.

How can a city go for wasteful and meaningless illumination round the year in the shopping arcades in a load-shedding situation? This was allowed to go on quite absurdly. Why? We believe the unannounced black-out-every-night programme could be greatly curbed if these two measures were enforced.

New Thai PM

Changing the government was one of the most urgent things that the Thais needed to do to stop the slide of their economy that started several months ago. But the problem was to choose who will form that government.

With the selection of Chuan Leekpai, an honest and well thought of politician, the Thais may have found a temporary solution. It must be remembered that Leekpai was the Prime Minister not too long ago and it was the present political elite that contrived to dislodge him.

Leekpai, leader of the Democrats Party, has finalised his coalition government, which is expected to be much more stable than that of his predecessor's. We really hope so.

Why there is No Outrage against Crimes in the Education Sector

JUST a few days ago — a Task Force, appointed by the current government — came out with a horrifying picture of the education boards of the country.

If one accepts all these findings of the Task Force to be true, then it would mean that the results of hundreds and thousands of students were manipulated systematically year after year by a section of unscrupulous officers, teachers, and other vested interests in the educational boards.

What is most surprising, however, is not that the educational boards are routinely involved in such a travesty with national fate. Many other organisations, in which this happens, are also doing the same.

proper actions are taken to stop all that and safeguard the nation's interest? What have the government done lately to revamp the educational boards, to stop such a disgraceful deterioration of moral as well as legal status of these institutions?

When I think about the future of Bangladesh I am sometimes reminded of a frog. Apparently, if you dump a frog into a pot of boiling water it will jump right out. But if it is put in a pot of cold water and the water is slowly brought to boiling point, the fatuous frog will just sit there till it is boiled to death.

With the present state of leadership and politics in Bangladesh, the state of impasse between our leading political parties, the lack of emphasis on infrastructure, the weakness in our education systems etc. etc, we cannot proceed with development or survive in the next millennia.

far for the answers. If I walk to a busy intersection during rush hour today, what will I see? A foul, polluted, noisy environment. Impatience, anger, anxiety and unhappiness on the peoples faces.

In 1971 many people gave up their lives to wrestle the fate of Bangladesh out of the hands of Pakistan I cannot remember the time, but in old footage I can see the jubilation of the people, the dream and hope etched out on their faces.

It appears from the first day of 6th parliament session i.e. August 30, 1997 and subsequent occurrences that BNP intends to pay the AL back in its own coin. If this behavioural pattern continued, national interest is going to suffer as it always does when partisan interest overrides the national one.

However, it is encouraging to note the Dr Mahboobul Haque, a renowned economist and former finance and planning minister of Pakistan recently said at a UNDP meeting that in the next 15 years Bangladesh might emerge as an economic force in Asia and it may even surpass Pakistan and India if it invests in HRD (Human Resources Development). The logic behind his vision as far as I understand is what a Japanese Economist opined "everything increases in diminishing return but if human skill and energy is exploited it increases in increasing return".

Why not English? Sir, Bangladesh Public Service Commission published advertisements inviting applications for the 18th BCS examination. The educational qualifications required for the post of "Research Officer (Economics)" were 2nd class Honours with 2nd class Masters degree in the disciplines of pure Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, Economics, Banking, Islamic History and Culture, Botany, Chemistry, Soil Science, Medical Science etc.

It is a matter of great regret that those who have the same

There are hundreds and thousands of well-educated, well-meaning people around the country who know that a well-managed modern education system could easily help the nation to land in prosperity and technological sophistication in a matter of a decade. The question is: why then nothing seems to be moving in the country in that direction?

squandering of its present and future without demonstrating the sharpest possible infatuation? And then, what is the role of the government in all these? The government appointed the Task Force, the government made its report public, isn't it the responsibility of the government to make sure that appropriate actions are taken to stop all that and safeguard the nation's interest?

It has been several weeks now that the report of the Task Force on educational boards was made public. What happened? In this city of sounds and furors, slogans and processions, meetings and conferences, who gave a damn to the report? Nobody cared to demonstrate anger, nobody was ashamed or outraged. Life is absolutely normal — so far this issue is concerned. The question is: how can a nation's conscience accept such a dreadful

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of natural gas. The list is familiar to all and it goes on. But this is not enough to ensure economic nirvana.

Without a good chef, the best of ingredients will produce an unsavoury broth. Without sound strategy the most sophisticated weapons will lose the battle.

It is no revelation that primarily we need political stability in our country. To reap full benefit of the present economic advantages of Bangladesh, the political parties need to amend their agendas. As the moment they have elucidated that, rather than constructive opposition, their main bargaining tool will be strikes, blockades and other destructive cam-

whole system to their advantage. But again, the same vernacular newspaper — that reported it on Saturday last — maintains that organised forces, along with their political sponsors, have been actively lobbying in the power corridors to make the government's decision ineffective. The problem is, if these people can get away by committing such a heinous crime against the nation and its future, what would be left for the nation to live with or live for? What the nation can do with a bunch of illiterate, uneducated and unlearned certificate-holders?

Or course, almost everything in the country is so hopelessly ravaged that it surprises nobody to know that thousands of students — spreading over hundreds of examination centres in rural as well as urban areas — regularly resort to unfair means as if it is part of their fundamental rights as citizens of the country. Otherwise, such a mockery with the nation's education system could not go on year after year, decade after decade.

It all began immediately after the liberation war, every

peoples fortunes. Pressure by the business community might secure some results, they can hold the politicians accountable for the funding they provide. At present there is a tendency of short term thinking among the business community. Everyone is interested in making a fast buck by using the politicians for leverage. In the meantime they are neglecting the long-term foundations that need to be put down for the country. But in this manner Bangladesh will soon be unfit to live in, let alone to do business in. And what will the subsequent generations inherit?

I warn our leaders to understand the urgency of political stability. This is a period of global economic turmoil and economic hardship. As we step into the next millennium there is a general sense of uncertainty in most regions. In this situation our country will have to work very hard to survive and develop. The people are obviously willing to struggle, now it is up to you — give us a chance. Let us work ourselves towards well being, if not prosperity. The way you are taking us will lead to poverty and, remember, poverty will only bring evil and destruction.

The author is a highly educated young entrepreneur in the garments sector

Since no alternatives have been put forth so far — I have a proposition. The Daily Star usually tries to portray itself as a paper with a conscience; an impartial voice. Well, for once, let it put its money where its mouth is. Let The Daily Star provide an audible voice to the people and be a vehicle to avoid the mishap that Bangladesh is heading towards. I suggest The Daily Star should pick a pressing issue, for instance "the stopping of hartals and the destruction of public property". Then it should lead a crusade against this. Dedicate a page, or a part of a page, every day to this subject till a suitable end is achieved. It can solicit articles from intellectuals, writers, journalists but, more importantly, from businessmen, business owners, factory owners, farmers, people in towns and in cities, people who are affected by the strikes, people who are tired of worrying and eager to see this country realize its potential. It will also have to take this message and convey it to the politicians, urge them to respond and take heed of the

should behave responsibly and should be more calculative, if she really wants to sustain her image as well as her party's. She has already become controversial with her date of birth. Even if her date of birth is 15th August, though possibly it is not, it was not befitting to celebrate it by cutting a 60 lb cake which do not fall in our culture particularly in a poor country (she is a leader of I like ours. Moreover, it was a national mourning day of recognized Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. So from all points of view celebration of controversial birth day is absolutely ridiculous. Moreover, not adhering to the norms of hoisting the national flag half-mast is another offense and violation of State discipline.

We should be guided by our conscience and not by emotion or revengeful attitude. It would have been more appreciable if she could express her sympathy to Sheikh Hasina on the day and that would reflect her greatness. Unfortunately this culture is missing in our country. Hence, I would like to suggest that our civic education should include law, democracy and human rights in order to build and strengthen a culture of political tolerance in our society at least for the coming generations.

Perhaps, it would not be exaggerating to mention here that even in USA, where many things are liberal and open yet the top leaders who aspire to run the country must possess high moral and integrity. If any immoral activity is found within a person he/she is impeached or rejected by the people for example, Nixon and Gary Hart, the then brightest candidate for presidency. But in a Muslim majority country like ours even one with a high record of all kind of mischievous activities aspire to regain power and speak about Islamic principles! What the general people will learn from such kind of leadership having no integrity rather hypocrisy? I urge upon the intellectuals and people of this country to reject this kind of leadership for good. Here, it is worth noting to quote from the speeches of George Washington, the first President of USA who once said, "Character is the governing element above genius. A person having high moral can contribute more than a corrupt person even if he is a genius"

leaders and the UN who always asseverate their good intention for the solution of Kashmir problem and always advocate human rights, freedom and democracy have failed to provide anything concrete for the solution of Kashmir problem.

We would urge the world leaders to kindly help create good offices and find a time table that they would never make an accord on Kashmir. So far there has been no consensus and no rapprochement over Kashmir that has bedevilled relation between the two giants of South East Asia.

And unfortunately the world

The Frog Syndrome

by Wasim Rahman

With the present state of leadership and politics in Bangladesh, the state of impasse between our leading political parties, the lack of emphasis on infrastructure, the weakness in our education systems etc. etc, we cannot proceed with development or survive in the next millennia.

Although they claim that it is the peoples' will, it is widely known that the people no longer support economically detrimental programs. For lack of imagination the leaders are forcing the same poisonous medicine down our throats and so far we have no say against this treatment. Countless articles against strikes etc have been written in most newspapers but have gone unheeded by our leaders. There has been no change, rather, with each call for sanity, we see fresh calls for agitation. It is a continuous and systematic blackmail of the people by the very representatives we have sent to power. But why is there no collective voice against this, together we should be stronger than the group of politicians, but instead we are held hostage by their absence of foresight. We do not support their agenda but we are not heard. Articles published in the papers have just been so much rhetoric; the problems remain. A concrete and positive step needs to be taken, someone has to venture forth and bell the cat. Question is — who will it be?

Can take all these into consideration while casting their votes in the future election. Calling frequent hartal, barricade and indulging in destructive programmes and actions will not definitely be a plus point for them rather these will annoy the people at large. No rational person can support the issue for holding meeting on road blocking the traffic. If has to be stopped at one stage and can not be continued any more and a consensus on this issue is inevitable.

Bangladesh Politics : Manifestation of Revenge, Whim and Caprice?

by T M A Samad

true, and there is no doubt about it because the greatest asset of Bangladesh is its diligent and painstaking people. Investment in human resources in Bangladesh is thus economically profitable and socially beneficial. But there have to be a strong political will, determination and persistent efforts relating to opportunity. At present the employment opportunity is very meager. The booming garments industry and shrimp and leather exports are facing a serious threat due to GSP which of course the government is trying its level best to resolve and, hopefully, might be able to resolve to some extent. Such efforts should be made at all levels with sincerity to achieve success.

In parliamentary democracy, the Speaker is a symbol of unity and governance by discussion. An impartial Speaker representing the dignity of the house would regulate the house since he is the king pin in the system. We all know that parliamentary democracy incorporates stout opposition and their unhindered expression of opinions and views is the healthy practice of democracy but at the same time we must remember that an essential basis of parliamentary democracy is cooperation between the opposition and the government.

Despite our political differences, we all should come forward to address national issues more emphatically. Unfortunately, instead of addressing the national issues, unnecessary bickerings take place in the session which carries no

It is worth mentioning that opposition leader is considered as the waiting Prime Minister in UK. The opposition should have the patience and wait for their turn in the next general election. Meanwhile, they must work in and outside the parliament in a constructive, well thought out manner and with non-violent attitude in the interest of the country and the people while continuing to log in ruling party's mistakes, whims, caprices and corruption, if any, and making people aware of them. At the same time they should project their plans and programmes, both political and economic, so that people

qualifications i.e. 2nd class Honours with 2nd class Masters degree in English Literature are not eligible for the above-mentioned post. But why? Why are the students of English Department neglected? Aren't the students of English Department suitable for research work? (Are Islamic History & Culture, Botany, Chemistry etc. more relevant for service in Economics?) It seems to me that PSC is discouraging English while virtually it is a must now for each and every job.

It appears that Indian and Pakistani leaders have made a pact that they would never make an accord on Kashmir. So far there has been no consensus and no rapprochement over Kashmir that has bedevilled relation between the two giants of South East Asia.

and Congressman Randolph who categorically said, "A man of splendid abilities, but utterly corrupt, shines and stinks like a rotten mackerel (a fish) by moonlight". If we look at Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, we see it due to their leadership that they have achieved so much progress. But it is a pity that this land has been blamed to be under corrupt politicians and dishonest civil servants. Unless we can come out of this vicious circle no breakthrough can be expected.

There are good and honest people in this country, who are capable to run its affairs efficiently but the present system allows them little scope to be elected. There lies the problem. Hence, a system should be innovated so that only the honest and dedicated people can come to power; otherwise, our future will be at stake. People at large of this country elected Awami League with an expectation that after 21 years of exile they would prove themselves worthy. I urge upon the honorable Prime Minister by expressing my concern for one thing that Bangabandhu has already been glorified as father of the nation. Hence, renaming institute, bridge etc. after him are not necessary; it will definitely not make him more glorified. After all a person having the highest honour i.e. becoming the Father of the Nation does not require anything else. As long as Bangladesh will exist his name cannot be wiped out from its history.

In this contact I would like to add a few more lines that since our noble President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed is well respected and accepted by every body for his honesty, integrity and proven capacity so the entire nation is believably looking towards him to resolve the misunderstanding between the government and opposition to avoid any possible confrontation which might lead to anarchy and third force get opportunity to intervene. I would, therefore, urge upon that he may kindly take an initiative to sit with all political parties across the table and try to make them understand that hartal, barricade are no solution rather these are creating a hatred towards the politicians among the people at large. If necessary hartal and barricade can be banned in the greater interest of the country in the spirit of Deniel Webster who has said, "Let our object be, our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country."

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