The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. All Dhaka, Wednesday, November 12, 1997

Good Work

Rules are simple. These become complicated only when they are broken making room for aberrations. Another seasoned but ironically lapsed thought about rules is that those who are privileged to apply them for or on others are themselves subject to norms set under the constitutional law of the land.

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 commission has now recommended that barring exceptional circumstances requiring more information or explanation for decision-making, the 2-week time-limit can be relaxed up to a month at the most with the proviso that the applicant has been fully kept posted of the developments. Importantly, in all cases, the justifiability of the decisions made must be communicated to the person who had approached any government department or ministry.

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, wellstocked and -manned information booths and complaint boxes. An efficient mail receiving centre at the entrance of the secretariat with acknowledgment receipts provided and a string of letter boxes to go with it can largely obviate the daily heavy crowding into the nerve-centre of governmental activity.

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. It's a good committee as has been evidenced by the first installment of its output. We urge the government to extend all kinds of logistical support to boost its remaining work.

Receding Promises

No, Mr Khan, your assurance of a load-sheddingfree 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. Rather than soothing as a balm it almost rubs salt in the national wound. When the present government-took-charge, the energy sector was critically ill. The dynamism it showed then convinced people that the suffering then caused was in truth none of the new government's doing and, more importantly, things would soon start looking up soon. What has happened to that early flash of dynamism?

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. Another big problem was lack of enough transmission grids to distribute the huge energy quantum produced by a rejuvenated Shikolbaha.

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. A very effective measure was announced by the government at the very outset. All shops and markets were to be shut down at six in the afternoon. Why didn't the government enforce it? If the business people felt unhappy with it, it could be pushed further into the evening. Why was this allowed to fiz-

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. Close shops at seven and eliminate fancy illumination and reduce lighting at government buildings and big establishments at night time and the nation will acknowledge your concern over load shedding as sincere.

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. Faction ridden Thai political elite were much too divided to bring out any clear winner. This delayed the choice of a new government which postponed the prospect of economic recovery.

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 has a reputation for honesty and integrity rare among other Thai leaders. But his main weakness is lack of decisiveness and being slow — two qualities that could prove to be disastrous at the moment. What Thailand needs now is a fast moving decisive leadership that will take some bitter and radical decisions to put the economy back on track.

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. If anything, Thailand needs a stable government and we really hope it gets one now. With the economy in shambles, if governments continue to change then Thailand will be in far greater trouble that it has so far faced. We hope that Thai leaders realise the need of the hour and stop their factional fight and put the interest of the country far above their own.

Why there is No Outrage against Crimes in the Education Sector

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?

manner?

Force, appointed by the current government — came out with a horrifying picture of the education boards of the country. It documented scores of examples — strewn across all the boards - that clearly indicate that these educational boards work like organised gangs where anything and everything is possible. Given appropriate incentives, they are ready to distort registration materials, lead out question papers, overlook examination rules, certify defective examination centres, manipulate results and merit lists, and counterfeit vital docu-If one accepts all these find-

rUST a few days ago — a Task

ings 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. That means that many of the smiling faces the people saw in the front pages of newspapers - after the publication of SSC or HSC results - may not be quite well deserving. It also indicates that the educational boards not only did a deplorable job over the years in measuring the academic performance of millions of students, the also literally defrauded the nation.

What is most surprising.

T HEN I think about the

future of Bangladesh 1

ded 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. This animal

tendency to assimilate, adapt

and accept everything around

us as natural is slowly choking

Bangladesh as a nation, and

will ultimately lead us to an

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

T appears from the first day

of 6th parliament session

unhealthy end.

am sometimes remin-

however, is not that the educational boards are routinely involved in such a travesty with national fate. Many other organisations, in which this hapless nation puts in undivided trust, are also doing the same. The problem is, people don't know much about those because they were not scrutinised by such scorching eyes of a Task Force. Why not appoint such Task Forces on the public universities? Don't the people have the rights to know what they are doing in the name of democracy or autonomy? Then again, so what? If all the dirts of all these organisations are dished out, sprinkled all over the city

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

or the country, what follows

from that?

squandering of its present and future without demonstrating sharpest possible infuriation? 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 apIn such a backdrop, it is,

however, encouraging to note that the government has recently decided to put in hold the results of thousands of 1995 HSC candidates, besides suspending 20 government college principals and withholding public-part of the salary of 260

propriate 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? Can the government give up this issue in the middle as it did with the stock market scam or bank defaulters? Can the gov-

by CAF Dowlah

private college principals. The charges against these people are gruesome by any standard these so-called teachers, administrators and students were involved in large-scale mockery with the public education system in the country. They helped each other in orchestrating a scam of unfair means in examination halls, falsifying registration and identification documents, and working out an elaborate network to bend the

whole system to their advan-

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-hold-

Or course, almost everything in the country is so hopelessly ravaged that is 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 for year after year, decade after

It all began immediately after the liberation war, every

knows it. Over the years, it grew in leaps and bounds in the absence of any formidable social outcry or governmental crackdown. Although unfortunate, none can deny the fact that many people - now steering the wheels of the country as civil servants, college and university teachers, doctors, engineers and other professions - intentionally or unintentionally took advantage of such a rotten system. No wonder, their offsprings also demand the same privilege! No wonder, the country's progress report is full of red marks! After all, what else could be more effective to destroy a nation's future than ravaging its education system?

conscious citizen of the country

Of course, is can't be true that nobody is outraged with the current state of education system in the country. Of course, there are millions of people out there who know in their hearts that the existing system is a recipe for permanent backwardness of their nation. Of course, 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?

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.

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. Crowded, swarming disorganized city streets. And there is no respite in the villages. Although the overall quality of life has gone up outside the cities, there is still an overwhelming presence of poverty, lack of education and dearth in the basic amenities

see the jubilation of the people. that we take for granted. the dream and hope etched out Bangladesh does not deserve this fate. The "emerging tiger" on their faces. Bengalis could finally fashion their destiny! label is only a fantasy now but Rather than grief for lost ones, I we can really achieve this tarsaw excitement about their fuget. The necessary ingredient ture and that of their generafor development and improvetions. They and their children ment are present today. With had been delivered from virtual cost of production rising in the slavery and could consider traditional manufacturing themselves independent citicountries, Bangladesh has bezens of an independent nation. come the next target of foreign A quarter century later I think investors. We are developing a we need to ask ourselves, have sound manufacturing philosotheir dreams come true. I don't phy and we have the advantage of a plentiful, cheap, conformwant to speak for all but to venture my own opinion - no. ing and cooperative labor force we have been sadly let down by to draw from. There is indicaour leaders. We need not go very tion that we have vast reserves

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

ernment treat the country's ed-

ucation system in the same

Without a good chef, the best of ingredients will produce an unsavory broth. Without sound strategy the most sophisticated

weapons will lose the battle. 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. The recent attitude of the donors, foreign banks and investors should make this quite clear.

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, blockages and other destructive cam-

paigns. 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 continuos 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?

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 it's 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

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 longterm 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 in-

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

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

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 is 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

There are good and honest

people in this country who are

capable to run its affairs effi-

ciently but the present system

allows them little scope to be

elected. There lies the problem.

Hence, a system should be in-

novated 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 wor-

thy. I urge upon the hon'ble

Prime Minister by expressing

my concern for one thing that

Bangabandhu has already been

glorified as father of the nation

Hence, renaming of 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

expected.

destruction.

Bangladesh Politics: Manifestation of Revenge, Whim and Caprice? by TMA Samad

▲ 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, true, and there is no doubt about national interest is going to it because the greatest asset of suffer as it always does when Bangladesh is its diligent and partisan interest overrides the painstaking people. Investment national one. The country must in human resources in not again slip into a state of Bangladesh is thus economiconfrontation because it has cally profitable and socially already paid a heavy price for it beneficial. But there have to be over the last few years. Political a strong political will, determiinstability has affected the nation and persistent efforts country adversely. Donor relating to opportunity. At prenations are still a big help but sent the employment opportuforeign investment has yet been nity is very meager. The boomshy. This has made the already ing garments industry and sluggish economy more shrimp and leather exports are sluggish. It is a stark reality facing a serious threat due to that the state of political GSP which of course the govstability and peace is the ernment is trying its level best precondition for foreign to resolve and, hopefully, might investment and unless and unbe able to resolve to some extil such situation prevailed in tent. Such efforts should be our country the possibility is made at all levels with sincerity not to be bright whatever consolations and assurances proto achieve success. In parliamentary democvided by leaders each time they

racy, 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

sense and "hartal" and "barricade" had become other regular activities which cause immense loss to the nation. In this context I fully endorse the views expressed by Mr Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star during a recent television discussion on hartal. He had rightly pointed out that Radio and TV should be made open for opposition's expression of views and the government should not undermine the status of opposition and refrain from provocative action, like removal of bailey bridge from the Crescent Lake. Noted columnist Mr Abed Khan's recent interview on student politics is another courageous programme and he deserves hanks for presenting such deliberations. In fact, journalists play the role of being, the conscience of a nation by unearthing the truth and presenting it before the society often taking risks on their own position and person.

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

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 wil annoy the people at large. No rational person can support the issue for holding meeting on road blocking the traffic. It has to be stopped at one stage and can not be continued any more and a consensus on this issue is inevitable.

Consensus on other issues like transit should also be arrived at. Since thousands of students and patients are going to India for education and treatment, there is little harm in providing transit facilities to them which will bring economic benefit to us in return. What is more important is that we need to develop genuine nationalist feeling and patriotism. The Netherlands is earning millions of dollars through transit facilities. Border relations between USA and Canada is superb. So why should we not be more pragmatic on this issues too? The main opposition party should keep one thing in their mind that the present government is not analogous with the BNP government in 1996. The BNP could possibly come to power again if they could accept the challenge of caretaker government proposition instead of holding a farcical election on February, 15, 1996. That provided the turning point for Awami League and became the real cause of fall of BNP government. The opposition leader

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) 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 o hoisting the national flag halfmast 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 posses high moral and integrity of. If any immoral activity is found within a person he/she is impeached or rejected by the peo-ple 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?] urge upon the intellectuals and conscientious 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"

anything else. As long as Bangladesh will exist his name cannot be wiped out from its training officer BARC, Dhaka

In this contact I would like to add a few more lines that since our ho'ble 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 parities 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." The writer is principal

Why not English?

return from visits abroad.

However, it is encouraging to

note the Dr Mahboobul Hague.

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

sources Development). The logic

behind his vision as far as I un-

derstand is what a Japanese

Economist opined "everything

increases in diminishing return

but if human skill and energy is

exploited it increases in

increasing return". Since we

have a vast population and if

they can be educated and turned

into a working force then cer-

tainly they will become a po-

tential economic force and his

(Dr. Haque's) vision will come

invests in HRD (Human Re-

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

qualitications i.e. 2nd class Honours with 2nd class Masters degree in English Literature are not eligible for the abovementioned 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.

Md Solaiman Khandaker Lecturer in English Comilia Cadet College, Comilia

Kashmir problem

Sir, India and Pakistan have been at daggers drawn since independence from the British colonial rule in 1947. Leaders of the two countries have been constantly meeting each other over half a century to solve the burning problem on Kashmir but all in vain.

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

And unfortunately the world

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 pro-

vide anything concrete for the

solution of Kashmir problem. We would urge the world leaders to kindly help create world public opinion, use their good offices and frame a time table that they would leave no stone unturned for a blissful and lawful solution of Kashmir dispute by the year 2000 for the welfare of the entire mankind.

O H Kabir Wari, Dhaka-1203