

Haemorrhage in Pakistan

Democracy in Pakistan seems unsafe today not because of any direct threat of a military putsch but in the hands of those who are expected to be its keepers. This is a tragedy unfolding in Pakistan that we find ourselves hard-put to accept. What is the worst part of the unceasing episode is their failure to rise above past rancours. The way in which they seemed hell-bent upon settling their old scores despite gracious climbdowns by the PM at an earlier stage, regardless of the misfortune all this is bringing along to the Pakistani people, has albeit left us completely dumbfounded. Incredible is also the scant regard shown to the likely world public opinion on such endless bickering undermining the institutions they represent.

Were these purely institutional assertions in matters of principle to uphold the jurisdictional rights over each other, one could have discerned at least a semblance of logic behind the antics. On contrary, they smack of personality clashes fed on personal umbrages taken of each other's moves and utterances. The President, Prime Minister and Chief Justice have been publicly reprimanding one another from such high pedestals that one wished with the Pakistani brethren that they had done so, if they at all had to, in a closeted manner through letters. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif went over the national TV to accuse President Leghari and Chief Justice Shah of conspiring against him. The president and chief justice have not minced words in publicly grilling the PM. Even the countervailing circumstances were not taken into consideration by the CJ to soften his attitude towards the PM after he actually responded to the Supreme Court's summons and expressed his regrets personally over misgivings caused by his comment on the CJ's suspension of the article on parliamentary defection.

The flurry of unilateral cancellation and suspension of each other's acts has perhaps no parallel in the constitutional histories of other countries. The chief justice suspended three laws passed by the parliament, President Leghari declined to give assent to a bill that went through the two houses of Parliament and the Supreme Court became mutinous against the chief justice himself. It is not merely democracy but even the statecraft that appears to be in danger. Let the collective good sense prevail in Pakistan.

Whose Purpose it Serves?

Yet another hartial. And once again the business leaders have registered their anxiety at this changeless pattern of frequent hartals. The question that should bother one is: does the country only belong to the businessmen? Don't the politicians need to think about the economy and the future of the country? It is sheer irony that AL and BNP who seem to have no problems in sharing the political belief that hartial is the most effective political tool to oppose and discomfit the government of the day find it so difficult to accept each other's political existence.

The series of violent clashes in the recent times which accounted for no less than seven deaths in less than a week's time amply shows what a blood thirsty psychology is at work in the activities of both AL and BNP. They seem to be out to efface each other. We are alarmed because this trend is spreading across the country at a frightening pace. Two days of violence saw seven people killed in Chittagong. Yesterday a five-hour long gunbattle between Bangladesh Chhatra League and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal cadres kept the port town Narayanganj rocking through the day. Where are we going? Is this a sign of civil society? Do the smug politicians have any idea what a recipe for destruction they have created only to do justice to their pettiness, ego and standpattism? For the inordinately long period over which they have shown their insensitivity it is clear they don't give a damn about the welfare of the people and the image of the country. What about their own future and their activists? Is the AL or BNP any better off for this sick streak of mind, this frictional blood letting trend of politics? Well, their leaderships seem to think so otherwise they would have abandoned these suicidal methods in the name of politics and opposition long ago. But this mindset is going to cost them dear, we can assure them.

AIDS and Us

If there is any single threat that looms large over all of man's achievement at this point of time it is no doubt the killer disease called Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Yesterday was world AIDS day—mankind's undesirable and panicky remembrance of the scourge's nightmarish presence. Should the AIDS break out in epidemic proportions, which the health experts consider as a very much on-the-cards reality, we along with other poor developing countries will be among the worst affected simply because of our larger population and greater ignorance.

The focus of this year's AIDS day was on children. It is assumed that one million children under the age of 15 are suspected to have had the HIV virus in the world now. That should be enough to drive the smugness we seem to have because we have such a big young population. Being underprivileged in every sense and caught in a relentless struggle with poverty our children are more vulnerable to the infection of the HIV virus than their counterparts elsewhere. Our problem is further complicated by the fact that we have been so chronically unable to see children's issue at the centre of all our activities. Every community of the society ranging from politicians to the ordinary individual has been guilty of this crime.

The government has formulated an AIDS policy but the awareness about the scourge is still minimal. Honestly it lacks seriousness and direction. We urge the government to live up to the spirit of this year's world AIDS day and take the children's issue seriously in its fight against AIDS. It should whip up its social welfare department into some sort of coordinated activity it has not shown so far. Let it, in tandem with the Health Department and the various non-governmental and voluntary organisations, give a real boost to the campaign against AIDS.

THE world has many fun places, full of ridiculous social and political norms. Such places are ideal playgrounds for PhD thesis writers. They have no dearth of subjects. Starting with no-work-days (similar to hartals in Bangladesh) and ending with near suicide rides in three-wheelers (similar to rickshaws in Bangladesh) — there is no end to interesting issues for thesis writers. They come in droves every year — dry months are the best.

No work is a wonderful way of life in Arcadia. Popularly known as fool's stop days but later on, there was a slight change of spelling and no-work-days are now called fool's stop days. In order to generate a fool's stop day, the prime mover has to be a big political issue. However, over the years, frequency of fool's stop days has ensured that such big political causes need not be genuine. Propaganda is the key; true or false — nobody bothers. After all, Arcadia, as the name implies, is a potentially rich country. Not only its land is fertile; there are plenty of resources underneath that land and on top. Millions of Arcadians, in particular, organised political thugs and their brain trust, although made from the scum of the earth, are rare specimen of human beings. The Arcadia Tourist Board is seriously considering to create a political zoo — as a unique attraction

which no other country can match.

In Singapore, there is an animal zoo which is built on a unique concept. One can visit the zoo only at night time because in majority of cases, animals remain awake and active at night. They tend to rest and sleep during day-light hours. A hartial-ridden society should also try to learn from clever animals. If there are too many hartals, it would be better to pull the curtains and sleep during the day and, like animals, become active and alive when it is dark. In Arcadia, the citizens have spontaneously decided to go the animal way. Office hours have been changed; from 2 to 10 pm or 6 pm to 2 am — depending on the timings of the fool's stop day.

Arcadians are using up their energy resources at a faster rate. However, the reversed patterns of life in Arcadia may also be insignificant innovative developments. In the forests, there is no light; animals remain active in spite of darkness since they have radar eyes, bionic ears and tremendous capacity to smell things from a distance. Eventually, the Arcadians feel, their night-time activism would also enable them to acquire rare instincts which

are now in the domain of animals only. For example, children in the schools at night would be able to play in the dark fields. A special type of radar glasses are being developed by Arcadian scientists for night time vision which may benefit the thieves as well. But there are other inventions under development — all based on great lessons from the kingdom of animals.



Window on Asia

Shahid Latif

Entry of any trespasser in private homes may immediately cause an alarm to ring so that thieves can be apprehended by members of private police companies who take the law in their own hands. It is strange but true that in Arcadia, the public police force is not considered efficient and reliable. Hence security services have been largely privatised and private police companies have devised their own mechanisms (torture included) to sort out the delinquents.

Otherwise, presence of the

Government of Arcadia is overwhelming. Newspapers carry screaming headlines about achievements of the government. Big projects are under implementation and their manifestations are everywhere. In the capital city, Archdoom, project vehicles are causing enormous traffic jams; new offices and jobs are getting created on a daily basis and expatriate advisers and consultants

wonderful means to deal with the crisis of the day and the first and foremost crisis is how to make a living. There are so many people and so few jobs. To face this immense problem, the capital city, Archdoom, has developed the most labour-intensive retail trading and transport system of the world. All pavements and any other vacant roadside space are all occupied by hawkers of all types. In addition, thousands of hawkers are on the move and carrying their goods as head loads, throughout the capital city of Arcadia. From tiger's milk to tooth paste — you can buy anything and everything from the hawkers of Archdoom.

Unfortunately, in Arcadia, democracy has become the domain of the perverts. It tends to become no-work days and no school days here. Politics is dragged out of the Parliament building and thrown as garbage out into the streets. Innocent citizens get killed and politicians feel so satisfied with all their misdeeds. It is hell let loose and ordinary citizens must rise up against it.

And at last, things are going to change. Days of hyper politics are going to be over since citizens of Arcadia have decided to become night birds. The fool's stop days are going to be beaten at last. If politicians decide in favour of fool's stop nights — so much the better. People of Arcadia would immediately revert back to the normal day time work and save a great deal of energy at the same time. After all, there is always a silver lining in the dark clouds. People of Arcadia strongly believe in it.

Politically Loaded Report

On November 28 Prime Minister I K Gujral resigned as Congress withdrew its support for his coalition. It demanded the United Front drop the Dravida Progressive Party, a coalition partner, accused of supporting the suspected assassins of Rajiv Gandhi. But the United Front refused to comply with the Congress demand.

WITHIN a few months of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, a book entitled, *The Assassination*, appeared in the market. It sold little but told much. The book fictionalised, reconstructed the events leading up to Rajiv Gandhi's killing. Although the names used were fictitious yet the personalities were recognisable. The excerpts I have seen in the press on the interim Jain Commission report tell far less about the assassination than the book did.

The book opens with the killing of Olaf Palme of Sweden, brings in godman Chandrashekhar and gives more space to Rajiv's murder. It is a coherent and plausible account. The Jain Commission report has told nothing new. There are no disclosures. A regular reader of newspapers would have found Justice Jain's observations familiar. But for his own *obiter dicta*, laced with political rhetorics, there is nothing new.

Surprisingly, the burden of Jain's report is that there was a security lapse. He did not have *Adabou the point*. Murder of public men is never an ordinary *lakshya*. Some people somewhere

plan it. No government machinery all over the world has ever been able to give adequate protection to stall such dastardly acts.

U.S. President John F Kennedy was shot dead despite elaborate arrangements. Punjab chief minister Beant Singh was killed when the mighty KPS Gill was the state Director General of Police.

What Jain had to assess was whether under the Special Protection Group (SPG) Act, covering former prime ministers, Rajiv Gandhi was given the type of security that the act had laid down. Instead of that, Jain makes certain assumptions,

imputes motives to V P Singh and underlines Chandrashekhar's negligence. Both were prime ministers long before Rajiv's assassination. What the hon'ble judge is suggesting is that the two allowed the violent end of Rajiv Gandhi to take place because they had failed to defeat him politically. The judge writes: "A very serious question which requires consideration by the Commission is whether V P Singh was actuated by malice, bias or antipathy in not providing of such nature and level as would have protected Rajiv Gandhi...." Is Jain justified to make such observations which are loaded, unsupported by any evidence and so much motivated? The paragon of justice adds in the same vein: "The nature and quality of security needed under the circumstances prevailing under Chandrashekhar's rule was not provided."

A government goes by the intelligence reports to assess circumstances and deploys security personnel accordingly. In Rajiv's case more men were posted than the SPG Act provided. Chandrashekhar, then prime minister, reportedly told Rajiv Gandhi more than once that he should be careful because the government repeatedly received reports on the threat to his life. Rajiv ignored the warnings.

But what "nature and level" Jain has in mind? No security assessment is adequate if the assailants are willing to commit a *hara-kiri*. In Rajiv's case, a woman laced with bomb em-

braced him. How could have any level of security saved him? Indira Gandhi had all the security but did not survive the bullets, which her own bodyguards showered on her. Nowhere in the extract have I seen Jain addressing himself the question whether the umbrella of security provided was there or not. Finding that he could not find fault on this score and wanting

documentary proof. He could not have invented one. "Can a member of parliament be allowed to speak if he likes in total disregard of the truth", says Jain. As a general statement I agree with him. But what is the truth? Should Jain's innocence be considered the truth?

That the DMK was close to

the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) in Sri Lanka is

Indian soil and tolerance of their wide-ranging criminal and anti-national activities," he is recalling the days of Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. The latter also met V Prabhakaran, the LTTE chief in New Delhi. During Karunanidhi's chief ministership, Rajiv visited Tamil Nadu many a time without fear. Nor did IB or RAW ever tell him not to tour the state because of the chief minister's "animosity" or "links with the LTTE".

On the other hand, I recall the conversation I had with Karunanidhi in 1991 after Rajiv's assassination. A few months earlier, when I was India's envoy in London, Sri Lankan High Commissioner D S Attygale had met me and sought the good offices of Karunanidhi to help sort out the Tamil problem. She trained and armed the LTTE cadre. She also provided shelter on Indian soil when the Lankan forces chased the LTTE militants in retaliation. The Tamil Nadu chief minister M Karunanidhi was only a conduit; Mrs Gandhi was the supplier. When Jain talks about the perpetration of the general political trend of indulging the Tamil militants on

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

to be a messiah to some, Jain left the field of fact and strayed to fiction. Even a newspaper commentator is more circumspect in his observations.

Jain says without any hesitation: "It appears that V P Singh, only extends lip sympathy when he says that he has the highest safeguard for the Gandhi family...." How is this remark relevant unless he is suggesting that V P Singh was a party to the conspiracy. Again Jain accuses Finance Minister P Chidambaram going "a little mild and soft in his deposition as compared to the contents of his speech" in parliament on the proclamation of President's rule in Tamil Nadu. This observation, too, is not justified when Chidambaram said before the Commission that he adhered to his speech. His evidence was "direct based on what he had heard or known. He had no

nothing new. But that was when Indira Gandhi, Rajiv's mother, had blessed the LTTE pogrom from Tamil Nadu against Sri Lanka. She trained and armed the LTTE cadre. She also provided shelter on Indian soil when the Lankan forces chased the LTTE militants in retaliation. The Tamil Nadu chief minister M Karunanidhi was only a conduit; Mrs Gandhi was the supplier. When Jain talks about the perpetration of the general political trend of indulging the Tamil militants on

the contempt it deserves. It should have treated the report with the nearest dustbin.

I have it from reliable sources that the RAW, India's CIA, was in league with the

OPINION

Global Financial Turmoil

Dr F H Chowdhury

not been rewarded with equal success in the Asia-Pacific region, which is a pity.

America's goldilock economy has produced sustained economic growth during the entire tenure of Clinton's presidency, although beyond its secure borders, it has preached liberalism in trade, within its own borders unfortunately some protectionism has raised its ugly head and the Republican dominated Congress has put obstacles in the President's way.

Effect of Recent Global Economic Crisis on Bangladesh: Bangladesh economy is, to a large extent, dependent on the economic growth of the developed countries. In the recent meeting of the donor countries, \$1.9 million was committed to Bangladesh for the current year. In the long run, however, if the world economy were to slow down, the developed world will find it difficult to sustain the massive aid programmes indefinitely.

Austerity Measures: The country will have to take recourse to austerity measures by regularising its own economy before IMF or the donor countries impose even harder conditions to implement for their continued aid.

Iraq, Israel and the US

A S M Nurunnabi

international observers that the US should not have followed a weak-kneed policy in all issues when Israel is concerned. Israel has been following an anti-Palestinian policy with impunity in all matters affecting Palestinian interests.

It has continued with its projected construction of new Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, withheld Palestinian share of revenues, blocked off Palestinian passage facilities within Palestinian held pockets of territories and beyond terminating Palestinian scope for employment outside their own territorial peripheries, dug an underground tunnel beneath a sacred religious edifice.

The peace process initiated by the slain Israeli Prime Minister Rabin came to a dead-end. The US took some diplomatic initiatives to end the deteriorating situation no doubt, but it is the general feeling of

There appears to be an intriguing contrast in the policies adopted by the United States towards Iraq and Israel. In the light of the recent happenings in the Middle East culminating in the expulsion of the UN arms inspectors from Iraq, the US has mobilised a massive military presence in the Gulf in the form of troops and aircraft carriers to force Iraq to bow down in the matter of allowing UN arms inspectors to return and to carry on their interrupted duties.

The Russian mediation helped to avert what looked like an inevitable showdown. The US made it clear there would be no softening of stand against Iraq for enforcing UN resolutions in the matter of elimination of reported Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

As against Iraq, what do we find in the US policy towards Israel? The softness of the US towards Israel is well-known. But it is the general feeling of

against which the US found itself helpless, has, for all practical purposes, thrown the peace process off the track. It is also held by many international observers without any denial that Israel also holds weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, biological and chemical arsenals. But who can dare touch Israel in its respect?

So the game of threatening Iraq with dire punishments if it does not toe the UN line and, on the other hand, appealing Israel even it cares very little for UN majority opinion, particularly on the question of construction of new Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, goes on. Yasser Arafat ran from door-to-door of some of the world leaders with his urgent appeal for help in restoring the peace process but to effect.

The world looks with growing unease on the glaring exercise of discrimination as between Iraq and Israel.

TV and earthquake
Sir, On 21st November, 97, at 5:20 PM a severe earthquake rocked Chittagong city and its adjoining area. Never in living memory Chittagong been struck with earthquake of such ferocity. The quake lasted for twenty-six seconds, which is quite a long time. People were terror-

stricken. Quite a number of people lost their lives and damage done to property is considerable. If the earthquake had lasted a few more seconds, we cringe to think what would have happened! But the mercy of Allah saved us. But TV's news casting about the quake surprised us. It should have been the first in the news headlines, but the news about the earthquake was not only last, it was termed as a 'mild tremor'. How could be a tremor of such violence could be termed as *mild*? We are outraged

Tele-talk!
Sir, The authority concerned is trying to let the cellular tele-communicating agencies get the benefit of enjoying one hundred per cent monopoly in running their business. No rightful move has been made to give way to the operation of cable telephone in Bangladesh. It is to our best of understanding that the hand sets used for the cellular telephone *damages* the brain for which in most advanced countries, these have become very unpopular and certain brands manufactured by well-known electronic companies have been

For a 5-year Caretaker Government
Sir, I fully endorse the views expressed in The Daily Star of Oct 29 by Shihabur Burkan in the editorial page under opinion 'For a 5-year Caretaker Government'.

Md Razzaq
Sonadanga, Khulna