Iran and Bangladesh: Fatwas and Free Speech

by Naeem Mohaiemen

Today, Iran is belatedly distancing itself from the Rushdie fatwa. But, in our corner of the world, some

Bangladeshis seem determined to outdo Iran in misguided religious fervor. Dhaka University's English

department, responding in craven fashion to protests, has dropped Rushdie's essay "Outside The Whale"

from its syllabus. Never mind that the essay has no connection to Islam...

II TT TE should consider Salman Rushdie issue as completely finished. announced Iranian President Khatami while addressing a press conference in New York. In a public statement the next week, Iranian foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi, reaffirmed:

"The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has no intention, nor is it going to take any action whatsoever to threaten the life of the author of 'The Satanic Verses' or anybody associated with his work, nor will it encourage or assist anybody to do so."

While Iran is gradually waking from the fever dream of the Khomeini years, a few clerics seem determined to have Bangladesh take over the Avatollah's mantle. The recent return of Taslima Nasreen has provided a target for these clerics. Overjoyed by the revival of their favorite issue, reactionary organizations have staged public demonstrations and revived her arrest warrant. While the Iranian government was able to overturn the Khomeini fatwa, the Bangladeshi clerics seem to be made of sterner stuff. In fact, madrassa leader Fazlul Hug Amini contradicted the Iranian stance by adamantly telling reporters, "Once a fatwa is announced it is only Allah who can withdraw the

Taslima Nasreen has been forced to go back underground in the face of these pronouncements. It was left to Salman Rushdie to speak up for persecuted writers everywhere. In a press conference in London after the removal of the fatwa, Rushdie spoke on various issues, including the continuing persecution of Taslima Nasreen. Addressing reporters, he said:

"Normality is a very simple thing, and yet it's the thing I've been denied...To do something at the precise moment that you feel like doing it, such as going for a walk"

Reflecting on the fatwa hysteria. Rushdie recalled. "It's an extraordinary thing to see people walking down the streets of foreign cities, carrying your picture with the eyes poked out and calling for your

death. It's as if somebody were agenda through anti-Taslima propaganda and misogynist

What should individual citizens do in this moment? Free thinkers owe it to themselves not to let religious clerics dictate the response to books they have not read. Read the book, and if you find the characterizations unfair, debate them -- through words, not through violent actions. In the case of Taslima, she has repeatedly insisted that Indian newspapers distorted her words on Islam. Bangladeshi civil society should now create the space for her to return to normal life 1990 appeal to the Muslim ummah, Salman

Rushdie wrote: "The 'Satanic Verses' was never intended as an insult... I appeal to all Muslims to join in the process of healing that we have begun. What I know of Islam is that tolerance, compassion and love are at its

very heart." Book-burnings and fatwas are distortions of those Islamic traditions of tolerance. This same view is argued repeatedly and eloquently in the collection of essays "For Rushdie: Essays by Arab and Muslim Writers in Defense of Free Speech" (Editions la Decouverte, 1993).

The Libyan writer Etel Adnan, in his essay "On the Subject of Rushdie" pointed out, "This condemnation is contrary to the spirit of Islam, in which the individual is ultimately responsible for his acts, morally speaking, to God alone. It is also contrary to the spirit of pardon, which is one of the divine attributes on which the Koran insists most strongly

Challenging the authority of the fatwa, Saudi sociologist Anouar Abdallah ("Why Is It Necessary to Defend Salman Rushdie?"), argued, "It is not given to any ulema, even a famous one, to be able to issue

to break your picture of the world, and everything you think about somehow ceases to be true. That's one definition of insanity." Dhaka streets now reverberate with our own brand of that insanity, as "fundamentalist" organizations further their own

fatwas that will be carried out by enforcers everywhere. The ulemas of al-Azhar in Cairo. for example, have issued dozens of 'religious opinions', including the one that authorized the shedding of the blood of Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba because he advocated back in 1965 making peace with Israel. That fatwa was never carried out by anyone, of course."

Palestinian writer Liana Badr, in "Rushdie on the Edge of the Abyss", reminded Mus-

lim Who can pretend to be able to apply divine justice with absolute certitude? Islam is associated with the system of Shura, or "consultation of wise men." On what kind of consultation is the condemnation of Rushdie based? Was it not possible to respond to Rushdie's writings with other writing, to subject what he advanced to discussion and debate?"

The fatwa was issued without any trial, without Rushdie being allowed to defend himself. Pointing out the historical precedent, Moroccan author Zhor Ben Chamsi ("Being Open to the Imagination"), explained:

"The trial of Al-Hallaj went on for nearly ten years before he was finally condemned to death. In the Rushdie case, a judge - a mortal man - has declared it to be a sacred duty of every Muslim to proceed to a murder and thus to substitute himself for God. So it is the fatwa itself that is the blasphemy. This is all the more the case in that Islam considers faith to be a fundamentally personal thing."

Tackling the alleged crime of apostasy. Tunisian historian Hichem Djait argued: "From the Islamic point of view, the notion of riddah, or apostasy, cannot really be applied to Rushdie. And even [in the case of apostasyl, repen-

tance was considered sufficient to efface the offense, according to the text of the Koran itself."

In the end, no less an authority than another Iranian Ayatollah questioned the legitimacy of Khomeini's fatwa. In a detailed theological rebuttal to Khomeini's fatwa, Ayatollah Djalal Gabdjeih

"Many observers noticed

immediately the essentially anti-religious and even inhuman nature of this incitement to murder, and they quite properly denounced the blind terrorism of the author of the fatwa...[consider] the true teachings of Islam and the markedly tolerant attitude of the Prophet toward thinkers and ideologues of all kinds, whether atheists, religious critics, polemicists, rebels, or even outright enemies of Islam... Such an order to carry out an assassination has neither value nor justification in the light of 'the pillars of Islam', the Sharia, and the

The forgotten history of Rushdie

In the first year of the Rushdie fatwa, I was a student at Dhaka University. I remember classmates in the Economics department condemning Rushdie in unequivocal terms. One particularly enlightened student informed me that the book was a "Zionist conspiracy". I wondered then, as I do now, how many had bothered to read anything by Rushdie before issuing blanket condemnations "Zionist conspiracy"? Rushdie is a longtime supporter of Palestinian rights — as shown in his 1986 interview with Edward Said, "On Palestinian

Identity." Pakistan, with its history of intolerance, became the scene of book burnings and

protest. Pakistani political parties, stung by Rushdie's unflattering portrait of their escapades in his previous novel "Shame", helped enflame those sentiments. Surprisingly, these protests were repeated on a smaller scale in Bangladesh as well. None of the protestors on Dhaka streets and in my university seemed aware of Rushdie's longstanding admiration for the Bangladesh liberation movement. This sentiment was explored in "Shame", where Rushdie eloquently described the Pakistani prejudices and machinations that led to the 1971 holocaust. Savagely satirizing Pakistani racial prejudices against Bengalis, Rushdie wrote:

"So overwhelming a victory that they ended up with more seats than Harappa had won in the West. Give people democracy and look what they do with it. The West in a state of shock, the sound of one Wing flapping, beset by the appalling notion of surrendering the government to a party of swamp aborigines, little dark men with their unpronounceable language of distorted vowels and slurred consonants; perhaps not foreigners exactly, but aliens without a

In his non-liction essays Rushdie was even more direct about the culprits of the 1971 genocide. In his 1988 review of Benazir Bhutto's autobiography "Daughter of the East". Rushdie wrote:

"In Benazir's version, the blame is placed firmly on the shoulders of Sheikh Mujib...You feel like using words of one syllable to explain. Listen, dear child, the man had won, and it was your father who dug in his heels. In the elections of 1970, the Awami League won an absolute majority. Mujib had every right to insist, 'obstinately', on being Prime Minister, and it was Bhutto and General Yahva

Khan who conspired to prevent this from happening. That was how the war of secession began, but you wouldn't know it from reading this book."

Rushdie also spoke out in defense of England's Bangladeshi immigrants. In a 1984 essay "An Unimportant Fire", he called for an investigation into the death by burning of a Bangladeshi family in London:

The fire was at 46 Gloucester Place, owned by London Lets. When it started, no alarm rang. It had been switched off. The fire extinguishers were empty. The fire exits were blocked. It was nighttime. But the stairs were in darkness, because there were no bulbs in the lighting sockets. And in the single cramped top-floor room, where the cooker was next to the bed, Mrs. Abdul Karim, a Bangladeshi woman, and her three-year-old daughter died of suffocation."

In the essay, Rushdie expressed his admiration for those who had occupied the council chambers, demanding an investigation into the deaths. In conclusion, he

wrote: is time people stopped having to die to prove they live in hideously unsatisfactory conditions. If the deaths of Mrs. Karim and her children are to be treated as murders. then many of us would say that the murderers are to be found in Camden Town Hall."

In his strident attacks on the endemic racism of Thatcher's government, Rushdie expressed solidarity with Britain's Black immigrants. In "The New Empire

Within Britain", he wrote: "In the streets of the new Empire, black women are abused and black children are beaten up on their way home from school. Britain is now two entirely different worlds. and the one you inhabit is determined by the colour of your skin... Until you, the whites... [face] up to and eradicate the prejudices within almost all of you, the citizens of your new, and last, Empire will be obliged to struggle against you. You could say that we are required to embark on a new

freedom movement." How ironic then that, while Rushdie earned the ire of England's white establishment for defending the rights of Asian immigrants, those same Asians rushed to set copies of "Satanic Verses" on fire. Who knew, perhaps there was even an Abdul Karim, like the one he had fought for, in that ravenous mob of book-burn-

Misguided Fervour

Today, Iran is belatedly distancing itself from the Rushdie fatwa. But, in our corner of the world, some Bangladeshis seem determined to outdo Iran in misguided religious fervor. Dhaka University's English department, responding in craven fashion to protests. has dropped Rushdie's essay "Outside The Whale" from its syllabus. Never mind that the essay has no connection to Islam. An indictment of romantic views about the end of British India, the essay reserves its sharpest barbs for films like 'Gandhi', 'Passage to India' and 'Far Pavilions':

"The view (which underlies many of these works) [is] that the British and Indians actually understood each other jolly well, and the end of the Empire was a sort of gentleman's agreement between old pals at the club; the revisionist theory that 'we, the British, weren't as bad as people make out'; the calumny, to which the use of rape-plots lend credence, that frail English roses were in constant sexual danger from lust-crazed wogs, and, above all, the fantasy that the British Empire represented something 'noble' or 'great' about Britain; that it was, in spite of all its flaws and meannesses and bigotries, fundamentally glamorous."

An essay that flails the British Empire, and defends the true history of the subcontinent's anti-Imperial struggle

- why should such an essay be removed from our syllabus? If the essay should offend anyone, it should be apologists for British imperialism! But now it becomes clear that none of the protestors ever bothered to read the essay in question. The name of Rushdie was enough of a red flag, spirit of open inquiry and debate be damned! One writer even wrote to the DAILY STAR congratulating his former teachers for removing the offending essay, misidentifying it as "Outside the Hole"

Meanwhile, the return of Taslima Nasreen has provided the "Islamist" movements with their favorite bogey (wo)man. Is all of Taslima's writings well thought out? No. some of it is naive and misinformed. But however misinformed some of her prose may be, it still has every right to be published. The issue is bigger than one writer. As Rushdie himself stated during his London press conference, "Some incredibly important things were being fought for here... the freedom of the imagination, and the great, overwhelming, overarching issue of freedom of speech. The right of human beings to walk down the street of their own country

For the last 10 years, the British government has provided round-the-clock security protection for Salman Rushdie. The Bangladesh government needs to provide the same for Taslima Nasreen and all other authors facing persecution. The previous government's ban on Lajja was illegitimate and morally bankrupt, as are death threats issued by "Islamic" organizations from my home district of Sylhet. The time has come to take a bold stance against these fatwas and speak up for every citizen's right to free

Faced with the realpolitik pressures of the global economy, Iran has finally been forced to emerge from the conservative theocracy that trampled individual rights. Bangladesh needs to take an even stronger stance against reactionary groups as we move towards a modern society

Let the Disaster Be a Wake-up Call

by Manzoor Ahmed

HE devastating flood of 1998 has been called the worst of the century. Given the total number of people affected and the economy of the damage to infrastructure, property and crop, it is provably the worst so far in the recorded history in this region. But are unprecedented duration and the extent of damage of the 1998 flood only coincidental? What are the probabilities of its recurrence with equal or greater ferocity?

Recent trends strongly indicate that the disastrous flood is not an unpredictable natural phenomenon, that may visit us occasionally due to accidental confluence of natural forces and about which not much can be done. Large-scale floods have become more frequent in recent decades in the eastern part of the South Asian subcontinent no doubt the effects of deforestation on the slopes of the Himalayas, siltation of riverbeds, and expansion of human habitation into the previously uninhabited flood plains.

The large area affected by the flood, and slow recession of water are tell-tale signs of the vulnerability the whole country may now face during every monsoon. A disaster did not turn into a catastrophe this time because the Demrabarely held. Will it hold the

Scientists and experts from Bangladesh and her neighbours must look closely and system atically at the precise causes and characteristics of the flood and what it indicates for longer-term trends. But as nation, having barely escaped a catastrophe of biblical proportions and having paid dearly in lost lives, human misery, and a major economic setback. should we not take the flood of 1998 as a wake-up call?

What does a wake-up call mean? At the very least, let us all particularly our political leaders, recognise the vulnerability and the grave threats the

Add to the causes that in-

monsoon floods the effects of global warming. Scientists do not dispute the reality of the threat of global warming: the debate is only about how fast the effects would be felt and how urgently remedial measures and gravity of the dangers should be taken. If the sea level in the Bay of Bengal rises by a few feet, which is a predicted consequence of rapid global warming, a normal monsoon flood would turn into the proverbial deluge for the people of Bangladesh.

Narayangang embankment

creasingly aggravate and magnify the dangers of natural

whole nation faces. Let the childish bickering, attempt to score a point over the adversary on every issue, using every problem for political advantage, vain glorification of personalities and one's own lovalists, and the relentless urge to take credit for oneself and to undermine others come to an

> An awareness of the urgency should be an impetus for us and our leaders to shun the petty venality, vanity, greed and meanness of spirit that dominate our life today. Those who have been placed in a position of leadership now must live up to the challenge of harnessing the total energy and resources of the nation to overcoming the dangers. It is not just a question of devising and implementing flood-control programme; or implementing a massive rehabilitation and reconstruction effort. These are essential and are huge challenges by them-

However, the flood of 1998 is more than just an accidental natural calamity; it is also symptomatic of the threats to our survival and prosperity as a nation. The threats arise from over-population, pervasive poverty, poor infrastructure how we safeguard our national interest on vital issues, how we

manage our natural resources. and how we harness science and technology for improving people's life.

Let us play the game of the state by the rules of representative democracy, to which our major political parties and most citizens profess their allegiance. In major issues on which there is a broad agreement, let there be cooperation between the government and the opposition parties. And there can be agreement on many issues, if an awareness of the imminent dangers and the interest of the nation, rather than partisan and individual gains, drive the politicians.

Where there are disagreements, let the differing positions be presented and debated openly and honestly in the parliament, in the media and public forums. Then let the people be the judge and the arbitrator through free and fair election at the due time. Muhammad Yunus and

Mahfuz Anam and others have called for a united effort and reviving the spirit of the liberatum struggle to overcome the dis ister. They voice the cry of the long suffering people of Bangladesh

The writer is the Director of the UNICEF Office for Japan.

The World of Colours

There is the Ozone Hole (OH) at one end high up in the heaven, and the bottomless basket (BB) at the other, where Bangladesh is located. Somebody miscalculated — we are too poor to be saddled with the floods and the BB (not Bangladesh Biman).

HIS world of ours has always been full of colours. L but perhaps it is getting more colourful, sided by the science laboratories. nature's VIBGYOR colours of the rainbow, human ingenuity has added an anti-rainbow (like sions. Leadership is on trial. anti-matter?) into our luture hopes. The big stick greenhouse effect is being displayed to the truant newcomers like Bangladesh who started developing late. The latest floods in Bangladesh. the worst in living memory, is being indirectly attributed to GH, abetted by El Nino and La

Nina. Then there is the Ozone Hole (OH) at one end high up in the heaven, and the bottomless basket (BB) at the other, where Bangladesh is located. Somebody miscalculated — we are too poor to be saddled with the floods and the BB (not Bangladesh Biman).

Recently the United States of America is enjoying, or suffering from the White House Effect (WHE), right up from the marginalised citizens to the lonely President. It is the Internet show of the year, potentially the most powerful use of the media vet in this information age, inaugurated by a presidential oversight.

This information explosion has the potentially of a nuclear bomb - its deterrent power: which can be vouched for by the US and Malaysia, both of which are facing similar critical mismonitored by the sex police. Who will take care of the cracks? The next phase may be the

Age of Transparency (AT) dur-, ing the next millennium just round the corner. Nature is lending a helping hand to clean up with cyclonic winds and plenty of portable water supplied by the tropical monsoon rains. Bangladesh was in the forefront of the fire-stone test, with two-thirds of the country under water, affecting 30 million people. We are staring with a new base, but it is at present limited to the physical infras-

tructure. How the other colours are affecting the 20th century civilization? Russia is passing through the Red Shift associated with the Doppler Effect caused by fast moving objects or transitions. What is the colour of Capitalism? The capitalists are watching for the red alert (but not from Russia). Moscow is also struck up with geometric problems: trying to fit a square meal into a round stomach; resulting in indigestion due to materialistic immaturity.

The Rouble was made flat to pile up, but it acts round and rolls away. All over the world there are examples of forcing square pegs into round holes. Man seeks geometric perfection, but the economic curves are unsteady and wavering. Perhaps Lewis Carroll is back with Alice in Wonderland, Ver-

The brown and yellow civilizations are much more ancient than the Asian version, if the scanty recorded histories of Lemuria and Atlantis are to be believed (earlier than Delhi's record of 2,500 years as a capital). Hebron, the world's oldest city (7,000 years old), is a wanton target of violence. Central Asia, of Samarkand and Bokhara fame, are waking up from Rip Van Winkle slumber. The land Columbus discovered are said to be assembling a fuel pipeline 7,000 miles long from the cradle of civilization to another modern cradle know as Singapore.

More yellow omen from the heaven. The sunspot activity is likely to flare up to an abnormal extent, raising the average temperature of the Earth, melting polar ice and disrupting wireless communication. according to the scientists. The natural calamities have

connived to pitch in during this and the coming decade, initiating more changes (the havoc factor is secondary on the Cosmic scale). The planets can also be represented by different colours. Five of these will align in a line in May 2000 causing unknown problems for humanity (the Acquarian Age).

Sane grey matter is in short supply everywhere; while the brown silt (fertilizer) is sought in the Third World. The orange fireball may be kept in mind the sign of the hydrogen bomb. the ultimate non-usable option left to all skins.

We need a tool which does not exist - neutral glasses to look deep into man's mind. The future looks bleak and black (the absence of all colours), including the silver lining we imagine we see everywhere.

Not gold, the root of all evils. Today the inner space is as turbulent as the outer. The microcosm inside is supposed to be am image of the macrocosm around. What happens when macrocosm and microcosm

Has Egypt Become an Economic "Tiger Cub" in the Region?

by Barrister Harun ur Rashid

¬HE stereotypical image of Egypt to many outsiders is a land of ancient civilisations Pyramids and belly-dancing. In recent years a popular perception is that the country is being torn by the Islamic militants and this understanding allows to obscure the sustained economic growth in the country for the last five years. Some have termed Egypt as an economic "tiger cub". Most of the media fail to take account the quiet revolution going on in its economic architecture.

With an estimated population about 56 million and an area of 386,659 square miles Egypt has been in recent years trying to speed up the pace of economic development. Some 96 per cent of the population live in the delta and Nile valley. Suez Canal shipping and tourism are important revenue earners.

The government has embarked on a market-based economy. Privatisation has been in full swing and about 90 enterprises have been privatised. The economic reforms carried out by the government included deregulation of domestic and foreign investments and liberal tax system. The liberalisation of the economy has attracted both foreign and Egyptian investors. Electricity supply and mobile telephones are a few favourites for the foreign

investors. It is believed that the investment in the mobile telephone sector alone would be worth of about \$500 million.

The new buildings are coming up near the Nile, infrastructures are built and there is a new economic environment which has been in the country for the last five years. The economy has been diversified and the untapped markets are being explored. The joint-venture operations are being carefully selected involving sophisticated technical know-how from the West. Egypt has become an engine of growth for the entire Arab region. The success in Egypt has influenced to a great extent the

and Lebanon. Jordan also joined this group. All these countries with their liberal economic policies and the active role of the private sector in the investment activities have brought large economic divi-The elite in Egypt live in is normal to spend \$15 thou-

economies of Morocco, Tunisia

luxurious style. At a wedding, it sand for a belly dancer for an hour. The expensive apartments near the Nile are being occupied by the elite. It is a life of great affluence for the elite. Most of them go for holidays in Europe. However, this newly emerging class is reported to have antagonised the poor and the perceived social injustice may lead to social and political instability.

Egypt is an Islamic country. While Egyptians have religious convictions of equal strength to Muslims anywhere in the world, Egyptian experience of Islam is more liberal than that

of many other parts of the Islamic world, in particular in the Middle East. It is this liberal approach which has disturbed a section of Islamic militants in the country which have become violent and bloodthirsty on its nationals and foreign tourists.

Furthermore the militants can also point at the weakness of market-based economy for the disparity of income between the rich and the poor and provide Islamic orthodoxy as an alternative to eradicate social and economic injustice in the country.

Like any other developing country, although there is economic growth, it did not filter to the poor people in Egypt. The trickle-down effect is minimal. The economic development has had beneficial effects on average income, but the overall income distribution remained unchanged. Some believe it has even widened between the rich and the poor.

An average poor Egyptian has to be content with \$15 per month. The rate of unemployment is between 10 per cent to 20 per cent, with half a million work force joining the labour market annually. There are landless peasants who eke out their existence with great anxiety. The majority of work force remains unskilled, the manufacturing base is narrow and the government servants are over regulated and sluggish. Within the Middle East region trade is only 3 per cent and about \$350 billion Arab capital rests with the banks in the West

and plays no part in the economic growth of the region. Despite the above negatives, Egypt has been able to register

about 6 per cent growth for the last five years or so. It is an achievement brought about by economic liberalisation and pragmatic policy pursued vigorously by the government From an economic point of view. Egypt could do much more if Israel brings about a political settlement with the Palestinians. Some economists believe that 60 per cent of the world economy is likely to experience economic recession during 1999.

If Israel does not set the stage for peace it is not difficult to imagine that Israel will be in a recession. I would argue that Israel should realise that peace would bring economic dividends to Israel and to the region as Egypt and other countries will be able to provide additional stimulus to trade and investment links

Egypt, an economy of about 56 million people, with a liberal economic policy has become an economic power-house in the region. Egypt may become more attractive to the West once peace is established in the Middle East. We hope, that Egypt with its liberalisation policies will continue apace for the benefit in the region and the world.

The writer is Former Bangladesh Ambassador to the United Nations in Europe, Geneva.

T / HAT is the difference // between management V and governance? It is a baited question, with traps. Is there any difference? The basic principles are not much different, with technical variation in applica-

tions. There are two main components: the leadership, and the system. Both have to click together (technically, in phase or tuned). A good system will not work well under a diffused leadership; and a good, trained leader may find the existing system not up to the mark; and he might be itching for improving the system, but an Operational department has no time for Research and Planning, trails and pruning. The cost of R&D is in the huge man-hours involved.

Who looks after management, governance, and overview of the network of systems in the public sector? If IBM spend several billion dollars a year on R&D, how much (percentage wise) a government should spend on providing better services to the people? It is not the statistics, it is the quality (vs quantity). An airline advertises "Smooth as silk" service. How to provide smooth silky service in the public sec-

The system includes both the human and the technical factors. That is why we read frequently about human 'systems loss' (in power, telephone and

bureaucratic sectors). In developing systems (in the emerging nations), human management is always a recurring problem. because the nation is building up a base, foundation, or bank

of trained human resources. It takes time for a person to behave like a machine; at least during his/her duty hours. A national public service network is elaborate and complex, providing many types and kinds of public services; therefore only an integrated approach will signs of improvement. There are some 'invisible' branches of governance: cooperation, coordination, filing and noting sys-

A routine operation might not be carefully monitored at higher analytical level (say, time-motion studies), simply because it had been running without much fuss; but the efficiency could be improved by. say, 10 per cent or more. Who is interested to point it out, and who will join in the processing? There are two flags to look for, the policy, and the motivation. A management journal, ly-

ing before me, received from my chartered institution, has mentioned about the 5Ps; in addition to the 5W2H formula doled out to the initiates. This group of five strategic planning tools used by the executives are Ploy. Play, Plan, Position, and Perspective; initially presented by Henry Mintzberg. Some of these terms are synonymous with

Play technique is used to outwit the competitor, while position is an environmental

Management vs Governance

by A M M Aabad

The system includes both the human and the technical factors. That is why we read frequently about human

'systems loss' (in power, telephone and bureaucratic sectors). In developing systems (in the emerging nations),

human management is always a recurring problem, because the nation is building up a base, foundation, or

bank of trained human resources.

variable. Plan is strategy formulated ahead in anticipation; while outsiders try to detect the pattern over a period of time. Perspective is the internal pervasive trend, integrating into a set of values. The three levels of strategy may comprise cooperative interface at the top level of a group of companies, followed by business strategy for one company in the group, descending into functional in-house strategy for each company.

We are all familiar in the local circles with Operation Salvage. A disaster occurs, or is suddenly discovered, and hectic manoeuvers are initiated waking up (and disturbing) everyone in and around, creating a lot of noise and movement. It is pandemonium let loose, or controlled. The crisis generates adverse publicity at peer level.

Planning for the worst-case scenario, judgement and foresight, together with the acquired taste for analysis (the modern term is system analysis) will contain the situation of budding problems in most cases, before seeking the assistance of superiors, and outer circles for help inside or outside the organisation. When the problems is small or just growing, it cannot be easily noticed from distance by others. A sapling can be pulled out and

thrown away - not an oak tree! The advise is to spot the problem when it is small.

Nip it in the bud, is a well known proverb. The quiz is: nip what? How to identify it through a well designed early warning monitoring system (EWMS). Mere routine monitoring is not enough, the Early Warning masala (spices) must be incorporated, the monitoring personnel and the system must have sensitivity levels suited for the assignment (a military operation, a disaster rehab project, or routine monitoring of the local or foreign markets).

The question arises whether the problem is within one's own or immediate control. Anticipation can be developed through systems analysis. The latter technique has to be studied, learned, and practised to gain experience and unlearn many fads. The discipline is something more than common sense, intuition, book knowledge or the sixth sense (hunch). The use of common sense is a first-aid for survival, with scanty input for proper diagnosis and non residual treatment. However, good management

techniques are not difficult to cultivate. The art can be practised and enjoyed once the basic science has created the right environment. It does not matter much what is the difference between management and governance.