

Too Urgent for Ego-play

A front page news item in this paper on October 11 drew our attention: a slow-down in the distribution of VGF cards threatening to upset the timetable set for lean season feeding of starvation-prone people.

As a matter of fact, the row is not over NGO representation as such; curiously, it is having to do with the authority that should name the representatives to the local committees — the DC or ADAB?

We are inclined to treat this as a matter of formality because a thorough-bred monitoring mechanism is being put in place by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the government of Bangladesh.

A Policeman's Conscience

The Officer-in-Charge of Ramna Thana Mr Rafiqul Islam has filed complaints with his superior against eleven of his officer colleagues. The incident is a rare gem, we simply have no memory of such a police-against-police case.

It is for the Police Department or, in the last resort, the Home Ministry to judge the merit of Mr Islam's complaints and act accordingly. These are at the same time interesting and serious.

His colleagues, 10 SIs and one ASI, have been accused of impairing the image of the police and the Thana. All of them have been said to be negligent of duty and misbehaving with those who came to the Thana.

Very many things are happening in the Police Department. Rubel murder case, in fact, opened the Pandora's Box. An embarrassed Home Minister could only say that the department needed thorough reforms.

Dead Fowl Revulsion

This is certainly no revelation: We do not eat what we pay for at the hotels, restaurants and food joints in the city. A leading Bangla daily brought this issue under a sharper focus with a screamer on the front page yesterday: shabdhan mora murgir mangsho (Beware of dead fowl).

Apparently the problem is not insurmountable. The report contains specific highly particularized information about the people and places that come under the purview of this dangerous business.

No government official can perhaps tell how many food inspectors are there and what they do or if they at all function. We demand that the authorities stop this unscrupulous and eminently hazardous deception against the consumers.

THE Federal Republic of Germany which ultimately proved to be the successor state of the Third Reich had been almost and exclusive turf of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the party that dominated the country's politics since its birth in 1949 as a semi-sovereign state.

When Kohl sought reelection for the fifth term late last month his formidable credentials mattered little. Helmut Kohl could not kindle passion for him this time; neither his unique chemistry with conservative German electorate clicked in any more.

What kind of changes will Schroder bring about in German politics? It is equally unclear. SPD's slogan of 'innovation and justice' was meant to portray Schroder as a moderate reformer and protector of ordinary Germans.

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per cent overall and nearly double in some parts of former Eastern Germany. Schroder's idea of 'modernisation with social responsibility to parry this swelling unemployment is still to take a concrete shape.

As the German voters weren't sure as to what and how much change they really wanted, Schroder also, on the whole, remained ambiguous about what change he had in mind.

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German Election

A Desperate Search for an Alternative

One thing is clear that the Germans like others in European Union are desperately in search of an alternative which may not be a return to the classical left politics of the past. They would not mind any texture the newly sought alternative may adopt.



PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

der assault in its citadel — the European Union. The EU seems to have decisively turned its back to a long spell of right-wing politics patronising economic globalisation and Europe's neo-liberal projects.

After the recent reinvention of capitalism, the income disparities have become pronounced. Earlier in Western Europe, the society was composed of a third of the population suffering, another third gaining a little and the rest prospering. Now only one eighth does well and the rest faces an uncertain future.

Raiwind, We Have a Problem!

The best advice one can give to his handlers is to remember that whenever a Roman General entered Rome in triumph after his conquests, riding in a chariot and being acclaimed by the Roman world, an old man would stand next to the general, whispering in his ears "remember Caesar, thou art mortal!"

The decision-making process is hardly institutionalised or for that matter democratic. While it speaks very well of the Sharif brethren to give devoted respect to their father and to seek his advice about all the important issues, they hardly have the right to surrender the democratic mandate given to them by the people to the veto of one man.

forced to resign (alongwith GIK) in July 1993 by the then COAS Gen Waheed Kakar. This started a lifelong Sharif animosity for Waheed Kakar despite the fact that Kakar himself tried to be fair in insisting that both GIK (his mentor) and Mian Nawaz Sharif go.

1991. One contributing reason for dissatisfaction being the COAS' reluctance to use the Army to "chase shadows" in Karachi. Soon after the launch of Operation Clean-up in Karachi in 1992, relations worsened with Beg's successor Gen Asif Nawaz Janjua, who reportedly refused to accept a BMW given to him as a gift.

most part they have acquiesced meekly, knowing that the Sharifs do not take kindly to opposition in any form.

It was a foregone conclusion that the PM and his close colleagues would eventually turn to confrontation with the Army. Mian Nawaz Sharif has not had a happy relationship with any of the four Chiefs of Army Staff he has been privileged to serve with.

By late 1992, rumours of another imminent coup were circulating. Gen Asif Nawaz's death in early January 1993 only gave a temporary respite, the "agenda" to remove Mian Nawaz Sharif as PM was fulfilled by another mentor, then President Chuliam Ishaq Khan (GIK). Temporarily reprimed by the Supreme Court, the PM was

come to power. Mian Nawaz Sharif would never have become PM (Benazir for that matter would not have lasted long either).

Without taking anything away from the new COAS Gen Pervez Musharraf, who is an above par professional soldier, rising to the rank of Lt Gen on sheer merit, he has superseded comrades equal if not better than him, both excellent professional soldiers of pedigreed military lineage.

Nawaz Sharif by the sacking of Benazir the second time as PM in late 1996. All three are now gone.

AS I SEE IT

Ikrum Sehgal writes from Karachi

DESAs employees are making money at the cost of tax-payers and enjoying higher standard of living than their legal earnings permit. The DESA is accounting about 40 per cent systems loss due to inefficiency and corruptions of their system and employees.

Now, one simple question can be raised: Why the public/consumer pay the DESA/PDB employees to get electric supply? The answer is also simple — they need electricity! They also need water and gas for their consumption.

One study, as a precautionary exercise, would be to examine the overall integrated effect (positive and negative) of constructing hundreds of small and medium dams and embankments in Bangladesh during the last 50 years; remembering that we are located in a vast deltaic region, where any human tampering to natural flow (the flow is huge) might produce unexpected results.

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Given this backdrop it is not surprising that the Germans have voted for an alternative to their existing woes. Giving a political expression to the prevailing discontent, as a matter of fact the whole of Europe has turned to case left hoping that things would be better than what it has been living with.

Nevertheless, one thing is clear that the Germans like others in European Union are desperately in search of an alternative which may not be a return to the classical left politics of the past. They would not mind any texture the newly sought alternative may adopt.

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Congratulations to the Leader of the Opposition

Sir, The Leader of the Opposition deserves congratulations for her announcement to work unitedly with the government to mitigate the sufferings of the people at this time of national crisis.

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To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Traffic control

Sir, The administration must be appreciated for taking the necessary steps to deploy the Military Police personals in controlling the traffic in certain parts of the Dhaka metropolises. The mess that our streets have turned into due to the indiscipline and 'free for all attitude' of the vehicle drivers was becoming unacceptable.

It is already proven that the city roads need more discipline and respect to the law. Unfortunately we needed stern action to follow the system. I congratulate the Police, the Military and the Administration for working together to bring the city traffic under some semblance of control. The citizens should be congratulated too for adhering to the new strictness and appreciating the benefit in terms of time saving and hassle-free movement.

Planning for high flood cycles

Sir, If, as it appears, the high flood cycles are occurring after gaps of about 10 years (the last high floods occurred in 1988), it would be uneconomical to plan for 100 per cent for high waterlines, but the rate of silt rise per inch per year has to be kept in view for any 5- or 10-year Plan, realising that it is almost impossible to remove even one per cent of the silt from the selected operational areas.

On the other hand, the cyclone and flood/rain cycles shift also geographically from zone to zone as did the heavy cyclones of the 1970s, and shifted due East towards the China Sea and the Sea of Japan.

We have a pretty good acquaintance with the flood behaviour in this country, and had set up a framework of basic infrastructure during the last few decades, including damage control measures.

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Sharif perception.

Gen Pervez Musharraf has his work cut out for him as COAS, the most powerful post in Pakistan, Mian Nawaz Sharif's victory notwithstanding. The seat of the COAS endows awesome responsibility on a person loyalty first to the country and then to the Army, before that to any one individual.

Will he be able to control the young Turks who will tend to believe the "Observer" stories about corruption and thus demand accountability? Will he be able to stop the erosion of his own authority in Cardinal's club of Corps Commanders as they start being approached directly to ensure their loyalty? Will he be able to set the same standards of uprightness, competence and integrity of that of his immediate predecessor, a set of principle that led Gen Karamat to resign rather than accept the situation? And what are his own personal views about the sorry impasse that the present government has brought us into, internally and externally? Will he be able to separate, like Gen Karamat, conscience from responsibility in the final analysis?

And what about the "Giant-Killer" himself? Twice he has rid himself of recalcitrant COAS, will it go to Mian Nawaz Sharif's head that he is Omnipotent? The best advice one can give to his handlers is to remember that whenever a Roman General entered Rome in triumph after his conquests, riding in a chariot and being acclaimed by the Roman world, an old man would stand next to the general, whispering in his ears "remember Caesar, thou art mortal!"

"A Martyr of Rarest Kind"

Sir, The above titled editorial in the DS issue of 3 September, '98 was a unique tribute to late Saiful Islam Mukul, editor of Kushtia's Runner.

We have no adequate words to express our grief at the news of his death. He sacrificed his life for a noble cause of true journalism with courage and integrity. Like his father, Mukul is a martyr of rarest kind in true sense of the term.

Let us hope that his sacrifice and noble deeds will be acknowledged by naming a road after him in Kushtia. It would certainly groom the young journalists to work selflessly to fight out the evils of falsehood in our society.

We salute the editors of the national dailies for their thoughtfulness to attend his chelehium in a body at Kushtia. Meanwhile we look forward to seeing books on Mukul's life and his work in the field of journalism.

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