

Surprise Results in Turkish Elections

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CIH Epidemic

It came as a bolt from the blue, and before anyone could realise what was happening, some 10,000 computers across the country (some reports say more) were rendered inoperative, their "hard-disk partition" destroyed. Operations at quite a few big establishments, including the US Embassy, were hampered. As computer-users queued up at different service providers to have their machines reactivated and the lost data retrieved, one cruel truth surfaced: we are not yet equipped to fend off menaces of technological advancement. Moreover, accentuated was the dire need for a watchdog to pronounce prior warning of such invasion.

Invasion of CIH 1.2 was a new phenomenon and indeed adds a new dimension to our fledgling consciousness about information technology. Cyber-cynics, essentially out of an in-built phobia of computers, would surely resort to a reinvigorated campaign against overdose of hi-tech. However, the fact of the matter is these are snags we have to negotiate if we are to keep pace with others on the information highway. Instead of a speak-no-evil-hear-no-evil-see-no-evil attitude, what we need is a defence mechanism against such inevitable, yet remediable menaces.

That the virus, which originated from Taiwan in 1998 and spread through the Internet and software piracy, was designed to hit on April 26 to mark the 13th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster was forecast world-wide long time back. Measures had been devised to fight it. Still, it wrought havoc in our country. Why? Because we have not yet developed an effective warning system, let alone defence mechanism against such computer maladies. The Bangladesh Computer Society had tried their best, and so did the Bengali news daily the Bhorer Kagoj, who ran a report on the imminent attack of the virus. Their efforts have proved inadequate. There should be a cell at the Ministry of Science and Technology to constantly monitor developments in this regard and issue prior warnings to users. Monday's experience was indeed a shocker. The bright side of it however is, hopefully it has made each one of us wiser.

Extremists Still at Large

They were kidnapped in the darkness of night, lined up in a high school compound, shot at, and then slaughtered to make sure they died. Why did those seven middle-aged villagers in Chuadanga district fall victim to an act of such wantonly retribution by an extremist group?

It is learnt that the dead persons were all close to Ali Hassan, the Juranpur UP chairman, who has been a supporter of Nantu, the founder of the recently reorganised Banglar Communist Party. Nantu has had a rival in the Sabuj group which is believed to have executed the mayhem. It is conjectured that Nantu group having been at a disadvantage owing to the joint combing operation of the BDR and the police, Sabuj group tried to seize the leadership by terrorising a Nantu support-base or stronghold. While targeting the principal feud of an outlawed organisation, the mop-up strategy had better not gloss over the possible machinations of lesser groups perhaps itching in the wings to make their presence felt. When a strong group is in a badway, the weaker one tries to settle old scores with it. Also, feeling threatened by the combing operation they are likely to redouble their efforts to survive the crackdown.

The murderous onslaught takes place four days after Home Minister Mohammad Nasim's call to the extremists for a return to normal life by turning in their weapons and in the thick of the special combing operations. There is nothing wrong either with the offer made to the extremists to return to normal life or the mop-up operation that is going on. But what we would like to see is an effective and successful completion of the process that has been set afoot. The statistics of recovered arms and ammunition and of the arrests made would mean little unless political gangsterism erupting under revolutionary labels and feuding tutelages is excised from the scene, root and branch. This is a specialised job requiring to be done with a robust will and special kind of skill.

The present combing operation must not be allowed to end the way the earlier ones had gone. If this happened, the outlawed will be further emboldened in their pursuits of gangsterism.

For the Good Name of BUET

SOME students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) went on a rampage at a number of administrative buildings and living quarters of teachers, so reported the newspapers on Tuesday. The students were demonstrating against authorities who had expelled a student of civil engineering deptt. for one year for his alleged 'impersonation' of a girl student in a class test. According to rules of the institution, it was a grave offence and the minimum punishment was awarded to the offender. The stern attitude of the administration in the face of demands by agitating students for withdrawal of the order is considered to have triggered rowdysm and indiscipline on the campus; but according to reports and statements of some teachers there is more to it than meets the eye. The unity of all the student organisations and EUCSU in demanding the withdrawal of the expulsion order and also the 'expulsion' of the teacher who caught the impersonator red-handed, point to further complications on the campus. Even a provost of a dormitory has been alleged to have inspired the trouble as part of a deeper conspiracy to remove the present Vice-Chancellor and install someone of their own choice. The situation went totally out of control and the institution has been closed sine die. It has been alleged by the university authorities that police did not come to the rescue despite repeated requests.

A large member of students have been disappointed at the untimely closure of the university ahead of their final examinations for graduation. Rightly so. We strongly condemn the attitude of indiscipline students who disrupted the normal academic atmosphere and urge them to behave responsibly in keeping with the good name of their institution.

THE result of the latest elections in Turkey is a mixture of the predictable and the unpredictable. The voters in Turkey have succeeded in taking everybody by surprise.

Bulent Ecevit, the Prime Minister and his Left Democratic Party (DSP), has come out on top. He has obtained 22.2 per cent of the votes and will have 135 members in the Grand National Assembly, where the total will be 550 members. Compared to the last elections in 1995, DSP has improved its score by 10 per cent points. It is thus pretty much certain that Ecevit will continue as Prime Minister in a new coalition government.

The great surprise of the election is the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which has come a close second with 17.7 per cent and 131 MPs. Compared to the 1995 elections they have doubled their score. In 1995 elections they were unable to win a single seat as the Turkish electoral law stipulates that for a party to enter the Parliament it must get at least 10 per cent of total votes cast throughout the country. The arrival of the MHP is the great unknown in the Turkish political scene.

The founder of the party late Alparslan Turkes was an ultranationalist and had built the party in his image. He was involved in the 1960 coup which overthrew the elected Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. He also was an open advocate of Turks as a superior race. He could be compared with Zhirinovskiy of Russia. It is in order

to soften the racist image of MHP that the new leader Delvet Bahceli has stated following the elections, "History has rejected fascist and racist ideologies. It is not intelligent to defend ideas which stand rejected".

The other parties which have crossed the 10 per cent barrage are the Virtue Party (FP) of Recai Kutan, True Path Party (DYP) of Tansu Ciller, Motherland Party (ANAP) of Mesut Yilmaz. The big loser in the election is FP, which in the 1995 election had emerged as the number one party signalling significant changes in the Turkish political scene. FP has obtained 15.41 per cent votes and will have 109 members. DYP with 12.26 per cent 89 members and ANAP with 13.42 per cent votes 85 members. The pro-Kurdish party HADEP and the People's Republican Party (CHP) founded by the founder of modern Turkey Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, have both failed to cross the 10 per cent barrage and are, therefore, eliminated from the Parliament.

It is evident that President Suleyman Demirel will call upon Bulent Ecevit to form the next government of Turkey. The most likely coalition appears to be between DSP, MHP and ANAP. Bulent Ecevit and Mesut Yilmaz have run a smooth coalition until the latest elections. Delvet Bahceli, the new star on the Turkish political horizon, will have to be included in the coalition. He has been making friendly noises since the election results were announced.

The question that Ecevit must be weighing in his mind is if he will be prepared to travel as far right where MHP is located. MHP has been pretty close to the powerful Turkish armed forces establishment. They have a record of violent street battles in the seventies

on Cyprus. Yet it could not outdo the performance of Ecevit. For it was Ecevit as Prime Minister, who has sent Turkish troops into Cyprus in 1974. The result has been the partitioning of the island, one-third known as Turkish Republic of Cyprus owes its existence to the permanent stationing of 50,000 Turkish troops. For this single act Ecevit has won the everlasting gratitude of the powerful Turkish military establishment. Bulent Ecevit is uncompromising on the question of secularism, something that endears him enormously in the eyes of the Turkish armed forces, who consider them, as the guardians of Ataturk's reforms, principally secularism.

From the time Ecevit was a journalist in Ankara's daily Uulus and established friendship with him as Pakistan Embassy Press Attache, I have watched with admiration his stature grow and his services to the state. His latest exploit as Prime Minister in capturing the Kurdish fugitive Abdullah

MHP takes a militant stand

against the Leftists, when Turkey was ravaged by near civil war. These incidents cleared the path for take over by armed forces in 1980.

Bulent Ecevit has been Prime Minister in the seventies as leader of the now defeated CHP of Ataturk. His own party is called Left Socialist Party, a far cry from the ultra-nationalist of MHP. Bulent Ecevit has matured into a brilliant statesman and has freed his party from ideological battles and placed it virtually in the centre of Turkish political spectrum.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of Turkic Republics, a profound change has been taking place in Turkey. The newly-emerged Republics, after 70 years of Soviet domination, are looking for a place in the sun. Turkey has taken big strides to come closer to them. These states, which are land locked and have contacts with the outside world, through Russia, are busily searching alternative routes through Turkey and Iran. Most of them are very rich in hydrocarbon and the Caspian sea is reported to be another Kuwait.

Turkey has joined a battle for the pipelines with Russia. MHP is expected to bring a more strident voice to the Turkish policy. MHP policy is expected to be laced with a lot of romanticism for a past Ottoman empire, which stretched throughout the Arab world, vast areas of southern Europe and particularly the Balkans.

Turkish foreign policy has remained for a very long time remarkably consistent with a clear direction. In pursuit of this policy, Turkey has remained unwavering. For instance one of her goals has been integration with Europe. In spite of repeated roadblocks Turkey is expected to follow this course.

I feel comfortable that the destiny of this friendly people, at this juncture, has been placed in the hands of my friend Bulent Ecevit. He is an admirer of our Turkey and has close cultural connections with us. His is a steady hand and I am confident that he will steer the ship of state flawlessly.



The Horizon This Week Arshad-uz Zaman

India Cannot but Encourage Pluralistic Thinking

Pulling down a government is not a crime. But is the purpose to do so to replace one set of bad rulers with another? Do principles come anywhere? Some norms in public life are important because they alone provide sinews to any democratic system.

COALITIONS are like poor relations who do not know how to live and when to die. India's experience is no better. In the past of one decade, five coalition governments have collapsed. Even when they were alive, they breathed precariously. They met an untimely death because they did not know how to live. The span of a coalition's life in the country is indeed, short.

Still, of late, particularly after the governments of regional parties have emerged, it has become fashionable to argue that the diversities in India necessitate coalitions. It is a theory invented to fit the facts. It is rationalisation of action from irrational motives. This is the doctrine of 'dialectical materialism' which says political theory is not prior, but posterior, to political fact. That is the reason why it is far from the reality.

No doubt, all-India parties have got weakened over the years. Local organisations have come up. But it does not mean that the genius of India lies in the politics of coalition. Many intellectuals in the country and abroad have adumbrated the thesis of periphery states getting stronger than the mainland. This may be partially true. But it does not follow the coalitions have come about because of such factors.

Had this been the case, ruling regional parties like the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar and Samajwadi Party in UP should have been part of the Vajpayee-led coalition. But they are nowhere in the picture. Instead, some rump parties joined the government. This was not peculiar to the BJP-led government. Such has been the pattern

of coalitions all along. The assertion of regional aspirations has little to do with coalitions. Chautala's Indian National Lok Dal (INDL) in Haryana, which changed sides one day before the vote of confidence, reflect except opportunism? The DMK revised its attitude towards the BJP, once shunned as a communal party, because the AIADMK the DMK's rival in the state, went to the opposition. Similarly, most of those who forged an BJP-led coalition, were motivated by the same desire: power. Their action was, in no way, guided by principles. Nor is there anything altruistic about regional forces. They too want their share in the booty at the Centre. In fact, the worst part is the horse-trading. It happens whenever a coalition faces a collapse.

Coalitions in India primarily owe their existence to a set of determined people, who combine to govern for personal and party ends. The unifying force is power. It is the pooling of ambitions. That regional parties are sharing power at the Centre and helping in the process of consensus is not true. They do not necessarily participate in the governance of the country as a whole. They stay parochial in their outlook even when working on the larger canvas. Populism is their method to gather support and they do it with a vengeance. And they demand the pound of flesh, as Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress from West

Bengal and the Telugu Desam from Andhra Pradesh did. There is no reason why a country with diverse communities should have a coalition government. America is a land of different peoples. Their two-party system has given the country a firm, cohesive, government. Men and women, coming from different lands, go through a crucible, which make them Americans. We lack that. We have yet to develop the spirit of Indianness. If the BJP were to

dissociate itself from the RSS and shed its Hindu chauvinism, it could develop into an alternative. Then India could also have two political parties, claiming the loyalty of the electorate.

Still, political situations, however irrational, are not uncaused. They are themselves the product of something more fundamental. I wish the basic could be economic forces. But it is not. Communal, caste and criminal elements have come together to enjoy the fruits of power and to make money. They pounce upon the intellectuals who expose their methods. A typical example is the attack by former Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav on budhijivis (intellectuals) in parliament during the debate on the vote of confidence motion. He held

them responsible for the country's ills. Such attacks are going to increase as the days go by. This is one method to silence the critics. The Congress tried it during the emergency. The RSS has its own methods to attack people through vilification. It has intellos from roughnecks, have very little influence. Yet, the society is to make progress economically, culturally or otherwise, it has to respect their say. They are ones who come up

with new ideas. It is they who make the nation tick. But very few political parties tolerate the thinking type. Those who are there have to sing master's tune. Therefore, discipline in the party has become important. Dissent is neither encouraged nor tolerated. Both Communists as well as anti-Communists seem to imagine that a principle can only be stoutly defended by condemning those who do not accept it. For both of them there are no shades. There is only black and white. This is the old approach of the bigoted. It is not the approach of tolerance, of feeling that perhaps others might also have some share of the truth. I can see the distance developing in the student community, the faculty, bureaucrats and, of

course, MPs. This will hurt the country in the long run. If India is to stay a pluralistic society, it cannot but encourage pluralistic thinking. Different points of view have to be recognised and respected. To coalesce them without destroying their individuality or entity is necessary so that the mosaic of cultures that India represents remains intact. Coalition of such people, who think differently but work within the larger frame of India, is the real coalition. It will also bring understanding, without which no coalition can work.

In a country of our size, one-party rule does not represent the democratic ethos of people. The Congress suffered because it became undemocratic in an effort to stay undivided. The re-

proposal for a national government was discussed many a time before. Were the BJP to give up its communal agenda and some other parties their caste obsession, India can have a government supported by all political parties.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

OPINION

Is NATO Stumbling in Kosovo?

Dr M Zakir Husain

The Kosovo crisis is turning into an unmitigated humanitarian catastrophe. Well into the fifth week of air campaign, there is no respite for the refugees - harassed, deprived of dignity and hope. While the adversaries to the conflict mount propaganda war, the chronicle of atrocities and destruction rolls on; the world community may even become de-sensitised before long.

Indeed, NATO might have stumbled into a war and miscalculation in Kosovo. But that is no longer the point; having now incurred an obligation to see this crisis through. Otherwise, history will continue to hold NATO responsible for precipitating the worst humanitarian catastrophe of recent times. But to see it through will require the Western Alliance to take risks. So far, NATO has refused to do so. A new lexicon has been invented: war without risk to pilots, war in good weather, war that demonises the adversary and eulogises the protagonist. But who says this (Kosovo) war is without civilian casualties? Thousands have reportedly perished, countless women raped, hundreds of thousands deported. Are these mere statistics and not human casualties of this undeclared war? Still, there is endless and perverse talk of safe war, safe only for the few who wish to enjoy a swim without getting into water.

One sympathises with General Wesley Clark; who has been charged with conduct of a war without authority to commit troops to win that war. Politicians do not have the stomach for inevitable war casualties but they want to win. No General commands a war without being ready for casualties. There are no safe options in a war especially in a war that is raging in numerous villages and towns in Kosovo. Is it not strange that NATO is bombing Belgrade to stop paramilitary and police in Kosovo to deport unarmed villagers and urban dwellers? NATO is meticulous in protecting the pilots, sparing the civilian lives, yet it is the civilian lives that are being perished day after day. There is much gloating over the precision of smart bombs and other technical wizardry. And now NATO troops are doing relief work in the safety of Albania and Macedonia.

The efficacy of these sanitised strikes seem to impress none but the NATO spokespersons in their daily briefing for the press. It may well entertain the TV viewers but it does offer very little to the tortured refugees who have made a perilous journey. Something bizarre is going on: NATO

wishes to subdue Milosevic which he continues to defy, yet NATO is afraid to commit troops where Milosevic remains unchallenged. NATO Supreme Commander, time and again, indicated that this war cannot conclude without ground attack.

Which ever way the current military conflict goes, at the end of the day, only a political solution to the Kosovo crisis will prevail. That may indeed be self-rule, autonomy, or independence, but each of these must be a political agreement, secured with international guarantees. For that reason, I doubt the creation of a separate international body as a good idea.

The hot spots of festering ethnic conflicts in the world as in Kashmir, East Timor, Cyprus etc., confirm that political solutions is the key; no amount of military can ensure durable peace. Therefore, before the current Kosovo crisis turns into yet another festering sore, many of the rethinking are assigned to permanent exile, the West must make up its mind and commit itself to bring the conflict to an early end. It will not only be cheaper but also redeem a moral prerogative. But by remaining unable, or unwilling, to commit troops, the West is going to solve conflict.

Rambouillet is dead and gone now; the future peace agreement may well be more of a surrender document than a negotiated agreement. But that does not mean it has to be an unjust or unfair peace, for that will not last either. Even after a military victory, the only way to arrive at a historically significant reconciliation and just peace is through relentless and patient political process with unwavering and enduring international backing - most preferably through the United Nations - which, in spite of the sceptics, remains the only forum to adjudicate international law and order.

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.

Change in Delhi

Sir, India is the largest democratic country in the world. It has proved time and again that it could withstand the perils, pitfalls and prospects of the western parliamentary form of democracy. Could she manage this latest roller coaster rides in the change of government with no absolute majority?

The election Bharatiya Janata Party proved that the secular India is strong enough to play with the volatile mixture of fundamentalism of religion and politics. Now the recent defeat of the BJP-led coalition government on a non-confidence vote has opened the possibility of a new and interesting dimension. Never since the time of driving the foreign rule out of India she faced with the prospect of the same again.

India has taken very successful economic and political measures to use local made products of every kind and not depend on the import. But the fate of India may prove to be otherwise. At the approach of the millennium, India might lead the world in showing by example that she is not only ready to import foreign products and ideas, 'India mangay more!!'

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Poor projects

Sir, Mayor Hanif is always ingenious to blame differently on different occasions to hide his inefficiency and partisan role in ruining city affairs. In the past, he was blaming the hierarchy of the BNP government for non-cooperation and later he raised a plea of court injunctions for his inability to implement hundreds of development projects!

What's the actual position vis-a-vis the administration, and the DCC mayor, the citizens would like to know from him. But I feel it's he who is to be blamed and held responsible for his most inefficient handling of the Dhaka metropolis who is by title, unfortunately called 'the father of the city'. He was referring to the unfinished construction of many shopping centres, markets etc and also commented of his law section - 'of unfortunately not doing enough' when asked of their inaction. My question is if there was possibility of injunction of the like in cases, why at all he went for such constructions at a heavy cost? He did not mention of one project i.e. construction of 'over bridges' (for pedestrians) at many important and unimportant sections of the city roads, which I am convinced was undertaken only to feed a section of the contractors.

A F Rahman Dhaka

Social workers, indeed!

Sir, Those who help the people in distress are called social workers. We have some social workers who are found roaming around the examination centres while the examination are held. They induce the examinees to send the question papers outside as soon as the examination starts. When the question papers are sent outside, the so-called social workers solve the questions and supply them to the examinees. Thousands of such suppliers remain active and wait outside the examination centre to supply copy. As a result the good and studious students cannot keep pace and become frustrated.

These suppliers are the relatives and near and dear ones of the examinees. They do not take care of their children throughout the year but become up and doing to make their children get higher marks in the SSC/HSC/degree examinations adopting unfair means.

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Bank as defaulters

Sir, We are tired of reading and hearing about bank loan defaulters. But we have not heard much about banks as defaulters of the first degree. A good number of banks raised share capital a decade back through initial public offering of shares among general public. Unfortunately most of these banks have failed to give any dividend during these years. Some have failed to give it in cash or as stock. All these banks do realise Tk 15 for each one hundred taka borrowed at the year end but they cannot pay one Taka to their share holders at the end of the year.

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Sickening

Sir, I would like to draw your attention to the practices of the authorities of Dhaka Zoo. I recently visited Dhaka Zoo with my family. Instead of enjoyment, we came back with a sick feeling. The zoo authorities were feeding live chickens to snakes. We saw in two cages, there were a pair of snakes in both cages and there were about fifteen chickens of about 1 or 2 days old in each cage. Some chickens were already dead and some are moving in agonizing pain. The horrible scene cannot be described in words. I have seen many zoos in different countries but I have never seen the authorities feeding live animal to other animals.

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