

Local Polls are not Playthings

THE parliament's malfunctioning and the derailment of national politics on to streets are a stab on the back of democracy.

Unfortunately this has obscured our concern for the inordinately delayed elections to various tiers of the local government system.

The Constitution envisages a representative local government system as the underpinning of democracy. To that end the original laws on the subject demanded that elections to each set of the local bodies be held within 180 days of the expiry of their terms.

What all this means is that the office bearers of those local bodies are working well beyond the tenure they were elected for.

Most of the reasons cited for the procrastination are lame excuses. Whichever way you look at it, the real cause behind the immobility is lack of political will.

A Queen amongst US

QUEEN Sophia of Spain is not a stranger to Bangladesh, and that she is not, has been amply conveyed to her by the villagers of Surabari in Gazipur.

Queen Sophia's visit to the Ashrayan project in Gazipur has certainly been a measure of keen interest she evinces in poverty alleviation projects.

Not every day people get the chance to meet the queen of a country. For the people of Surabari, it was surely a chance of a lifetime.

The Blackmail Boomerang

AN insidious blackmail plan that backfired in Chittagong made a story in the national press on Wednesday. The alleged blackmailer received bullet injury before being apprehended while his two female accomplices were arrested.

It is obvious that incidence of blackmail has been on the increase, particularly in the port city of Chittagong. There have been many cases in which people either lost their lives or had to pay dearly to stay alive.

President Clinton will Skip Pakistan, or will He?

by Harun ur Rashid

It is unlikely that a President of the US who loudly advocates for human rights and democracy will visit Pakistan, more so in an election year in America. But there is a possibility that President Clinton may halt for a few hours in Pakistan. Why?

THE White House announced that President Bill Clinton would be visiting at last the Indian sub-continent in March before his end of the term this year.

The question is: will the President visit Pakistan or not?

It is believed Pakistan's Chief Executive General Musharraf desperately wants President Clinton to stop, even briefly for a few hours, in Pakistan to provide his military government respectability and legitimacy which it so craves.

The image of the military was tarnished very badly when the Chief Justice together with a Justices of the Supreme Court were sacked because they refused to swear allegiance to the extra-constitutional military government brought about by a military coup.

stitution. What else could they do other than refusing to the dictates of the unconstitutional government?

The Judiciary is the symbol of individual freedom and dignity in a country. It is the judiciary which protects and preserves the rights of the citizens from the unwarranted and unlawful encroachments from the executive on their rights enshrined in the Constitution.

The Chief Executive is reluctant to indicate a timeframe by which he would transfer power to a government elected in a free and fair election.

10 years or so. So what the General is up to? Will he become another Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan's politics? Only time will tell.

In these circumstances, it is unlikely that a President of the US who loudly advocates for human rights and democracy will visit Pakistan, more so in an election year in the US.

Pakistan is a nuclear power in the whole Islamic world. It has clouts with the Islamic countries. China, one of the great powers, has accepted a visit from General Musharraf.

The current hijacking drama of an Afghan Ariana plane which landed in Stansted Airport in London is an instance in point.

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hand over to Pakistan. Taliban regime is not happy with Osama bin Laden as the UN has imposed sanctions on Afghanistan on that account.

This speculation appears to lend some substance by a media report that General Musharraf will visit Afghanistan "very soon". Pakistan is one of the only three countries (with the other two-Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) which recognises the Taliban regime.

The author, a Barrister, is former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN in Europe, Geneva.

Developments in Pakistan Increase Pressure on its Military Rulers

by A S M Nurunnabi

If actions are believed to be a better indicator of a man's intent than his words, General Musharraf does not seem to have any plan to slacken his grip on power. Rather he seems to be back-peddling on his promises, which might prove disastrous as far as Pakistan's standing in the international community is concerned.

SINCE Pakistan's October 12 coup last year, the West and Pakistan's regional allies adopted a 'wait-and-see' attitude. They have given the military government of General Pervez Musharraf time to implement reforms and benefit of the doubt over its commitment to a return to civilian rule.

To international observers, one reason is that Indo-Pakistan relations are at a boiling point after the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane last December by Kashmiri militants.

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order issued by Pakistan's army ruler General Musharraf. The army general ordered scores of judges to be sworn in again, this time under a provisional constitution that protects the military against legal action.

The removal of the Chief Justice and six other judges of the Supreme Court has widely been seen as a blatant clampdown on the country's judiciary.

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It has done, the regime has exposed its autocratic character which may lead further credence to the popular fear that it is up to something more than presiding over a transition to another civilian government.

However, there have been several legal incidents in recent weeks. The Supreme Court and provincial High Courts have entertained petitions from ousted politicians, who challenged army rule. The Shariat Court ruled that Pakistan's banking system was against the tenets of Islam and ordered the army government to impose a new system.

The last time Pakistan's judges were asked to retake their oath of office under a provisional constitution was during the rule of Gen Mohammad Ziaul Haq, Pakistan's previous military ruler. Zia ruled with an iron hand for 11 years until his death in a mysterious plane

crash in 1988. The crackdown on Pakistan's judiciary by General Musharraf has, for understandable reasons, invited carping criticism for not only the human rights groups but also the governments of a number of countries including the United States.

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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.

PSA and a possible way out

Sir, The Law and order situation is going from bad to worse. Something should be done. The PSA, as proposed recently, is not bad by itself. But in the hand of an already absolute corrupt force (and an incompetent bureaucracy) we are horrified at the prospect. One possible improvement will be the provision of bail with condition of daily reporting to a specified officer.

A Concerned Citizen Dhaka - 1205

Minimum for the majority?

Sir, The world at large is in the spirit of advancement of science and technology. Now, from the palm of our hand, we send words around the world, we cure diseases, we can destroy cities with a single weapon.

In the backdrop of this development, there are human beings all over the world who are relentlessly tortured, debilitated and more than hundred million people were killed on political reason. There are also 'reasons' for the makers of democratic principle a farce through enactment of draconian Public Safety Act and vowing to enforce it ruthlessly.

questionable ideals and disapprovals as grounds of mutual intolerance culminating in hatred that leads to bloodshed. Resultantly, we have seen the two world wars, the Korean war, three Indo-Pak wars, agency in Cambodia, Bosnia, Bangladesh, Chechnya and Rwanda, East Timor etc.

Societies, century after century, will have to bear the burden of atrocities on their conscience as perpetrated by one human group on the other. Even when there is no differentiation in a given cohesive society the bogey of 'pro and anti' is discovered and pursued relentlessly to the detriment of the healthy growth and even the existence of a society. In doing so, we tend to keep our eyes closed from what we do to harm others. We do not want to know the disastrous effect of our harmful acts on opponents in particular and the society at large. We shut our mind and assume that through our acts we are ensuring our peace of mind.

In reality, it is not so and in the core of our heart we know it is not giving us the peace we so ardently seek for ourselves. Yet the quest for determining right and constructive or wrong and destructive reasons, we plan our course of action and implement it with zeal. Whatever reason we have for our action there is no escape from human responsibility. In the process 'science and technology' is used for the welfare of the people or their destruction. In the developing world, 'science and technology' is mostly used for the benefit of the few and used least for the welfare of the most.

Syed Wajidullah Dhaka-1207

Blame it on women

Sir, We are astounded by the report 'Hazari's anti-thesis' published in The Daily Star on January 26, 2000. What Joyanal Abedin Hazari, an Awami League MP, said in the JS on January 25, 2000 about Badhan, the young girl assaulted at the Dhaka University campus on the night of 31st December, is most objectionable.

Mr Hajari said, "How could a Muslim woman go for an outing in the dead of the night during the month of Ramadan? Was it wrong that the drunk young men jumped on the lady who was dancing on the street with half of her body exposed?..." It was only natural that she was treated this way.

We resent this sort of remark and protest it vehemently. And as for Mr. Hazari's information — the young girl did not go to a jungle where ferocious beasts were roaming, rather she went to the university campus where one would naturally expect to be in the midst of civilised persons, not sex maniacs. Also, the victim was not 'dancing half naked' as Mr Hazari had said but she was being stripped by the 'drunk young men's' words.

In our religion drinking alcohol is considered to be a grave offence and looked upon as a sin. So those youngmen who not only drank in the month of Ramadan but went out in a drunken state should have been arrested and punished for that offence alone, even if they were not guilty of harassing a young woman. We are outraged that an MP of the ruling party did not consider the Hazari from this angle but only gave 'Fatwas' or how a woman should behave.

Women in our country have always been the victims of gross injustice. But when new 'Fatwas' are ushered from the JS and that too by the MP of the democratically elected government whose leader is a woman, the meagre hope of getting justice for all the suppression and oppression against women vanishes into the thin air.

Nur Jahan Chittagong.

"A Splendid Convergence"

Sir, My attention has been drawn to the above captioned letter from one Mr Abul Ashraf Noor of Uttara, Dhaka, published in your esteemed daily of February, 2000, wherein he has stated that the word, "Convergence" is not found in the English dictionary. I can only wonder which English dictionary he consults when he confronts a new word. Also I am equally surprised at how such a wrong rejoinder to your fine editorial comment has escaped your attention and was allowed to be printed in your Letters Column.

However, I would like to advise the concerned letter writer that he should look up Chambers dictionary, edited by William Geddies, M.A. B.Sc. and published by W&R Chambers Ltd, Edinburgh and London. There the word in question appears at page 230 adequately conveying the meaning of the same.

Masoudul Hossain Khan 105 New DOHS, Mohakhali Dhaka-1206.

Transhipment facility

Sir, It is wonderful to see that at last Bangladesh and India are cooperating for the development of the region. With the transhipment facility, both

the countries and their people are going to have economic gains, no matter how much. The attitude of the opposition is only to gain power. We don't want the politics that put obstacle on the progress of these two countries.

We should not forget that during undivided India, the industries in W. Bengal flourished by getting raw material from the then East Bengal. Why can't we increase cooperation through this facility?

Bimal Krishna Kundu 15, Harrison Ave, Apt # 6a Amityville NY 11701, USA

Arsenic contamination and water purifying pump machine

Sir, The sufferings of millions of our people especially those living in rural areas of northern Bengal know no bound due to arsenic contamination of drinking water.

The authorities concerned though made a hue and cry over it, but unfortunately they have not come up with any pragmatic and practical steps and specific remedy this contamination.

We've heard that a water purifying pump machine is available in USA, which purifies 24,000 liters of river water per hour. Can't we import this pump machine and use it in the arsenic contaminated areas?

Would the US Embassy in Dhaka and our Ministry of LGRD kindly enlighten us about the prospect and utility of the water purifying pump machine?

O H Kabir Dhaka Street, Wari Dhaka-1203

Good for the country

Sir, I'm Khaing Sabe. I'm 13 years old and I'm from Myanmar. One thing I like about Bangladesh is that there are many garments factories. It's good because women are able to work there and these factories help improve the country's economy as well. Many a times while I'm in my car, I look outside the window and see a group of Bengali women walking home from work, wearing their colourful saris along with their shimmering jewelry. I think all should respect these women and their contributions toward their family and the country. They are entitled to their rights and the men can't just keep them trapped at home working from dawn till midnight.

Khaing Sabe Graze 8 AIS/D

OPINION

Get Down to the Routine Level

A M M Aabad

IN management, there is something called silent efficiency. Work seems to get done gone smoothly and effortlessly. The whole processing system or circuit works with minimum expenditure of energy; as most of the operations have been brought down to the routine level, and is repetitive. The job may entail the issue of a document, or to provide a service at a counter.

It is immaterial whether this service is being provided in the public or private sector. The principles of the qualities of leadership are the same anywhere, for any assignment, whether it be in the armed forces, in the business and commercial sector, the secretary, the leadership of a country, or running a small business agency. While the approach is the same — to provide fast and quality service/output — the technical detail may differ in the assignment of the work.

Therefore a senior executive can run almost any type of office, once the basic principles of management are known and have been practised for some years, which is otherwise known as experience. Frequently, specialisation is confused with management. A managing director or a prime minister employ similar decision-making processes. A head need not be an expert in several fields to run the show, because expert analysis and advice are available to him from his teams.

There is the well-known story circulated some decades back in the UK of an accounts chief from a multinational chemical company being brought in to head a large automobile manufacturing company, as the latter had gone into the red. Within two years the car company was again making profit. The problem was not the quality of the vehicles, but weaknesses in the accounts and marketing sections of this large exporting firm.

Habit is a labour-saving device which is practised intuitively at the human level, at home and at the place of work. Boredom is reduced, energy is conserved, and repetition semi-automatically wrinkles out the procedure to the level of smoothness. But for technical operations, scientific studies are necessary, as, frequently, common sense cannot provide all the knowledge and answers. That is why there are so many diverse types of academic disciplines.

For example, in the factories, the Time-Motion Study (TMS) is a very useful tool to shave off minutes and seconds

from specific small operations in the mass production chain. This principle could also be used in the garment industry, to produce a shirt in 18 minutes instead of in 23 minutes — the cost saving in a lot of 100,000 shirts is enormous (lower system loss). Similar principle could be applied in the bill collection department; or in improving a product or service. Providing good service is more difficult, as human factors are involved; and one human segment is the customers who are outsiders and beyond the control of the sellers. That is why there is a hyperbolic motto 'The customer is always right'.

One is the technical side, and the other the human factor. In the developing countries the workers have to be trained to improve the human efficiency, in addition to the efficiency factor of the machines (say, electric power generation, transmission, distribution). Simply training is not enough, as there are other unpredictable human factors, such as lack of motivation, and corrupt practices. Good teamwork can greatly reduce system loss; this is vital while implementing big projects of the clients, at home or abroad.

A trained worker saves a lot of time and energy, not only his own, but that of the others in the chain. The strength of a chain is equal to the strength of the weakest link; as that is where the trouble would first occur. This brings in job categorisation, and further knowledge and training (the pyramid model). The first job of a new manager or in a new office is to bring the different kinds of jobs down to the routine level, and then look for improvements, and raising the efficiency. There are routine problems and unforeseen problems. A section cannot run from crisis to crisis. Technical problems are not reactive, as humans are, and ultimately it is easier to handle machinery than the staff. Human beings are unpredictable in their reactions. This is eliminated to a large extent through training courses, inculcation of discipline, and job motivation. Still there might be human frictions, isolated or sporadic.

Managers have to double as psychologists to read the human nature during office hours. Since a person has to earn his living, he has to work under another's control. Those who are self-employed have to be good managers to run their own office or business. Management is not a mystique like the feminine mystique. Once management is debugged, it runs faithfully, to a great extent.