

Political customs and political problems

KHANDAKAR QUDRAT-I-ELAHI

DEMOCRACY is a political system in which the public chooses some of its fellow citizens to manage the business of the government. This constitutional law is founded on the belief that people are the sovereign authority of the state.

During our three-decade old political history, the 5th and the 7th parliamentary elections were most fair by all standards of our political life. Yet, neither of the two parliaments performed their assigned duties, which include analyzing legislative bills that eventually become new government policies and reviewing critically the government activities.

This situation is indeed subject to constant concerned criticisms. Yet, these criticisms do seem to investigate the serious constitutional question that this parliament-boycotting custom has created and the implications which it bears for the future political conditions in the country.

Democracy is described as a system of "majority rule". In our system, those candidates, who secure more votes than their rivals in general elections, are declared elected to the parliament. After the elections, President invites the leader of the political party, which commands absolute majority, to form the government.

Thus, all issues in the democratic political system are settled by the conceptions of "majority" and "majority rule". These conceptions raise an enormously interesting constitutional question

about the legitimacy of the past BNP government and the current AL government: They were certainly legitimate when they were sworn in, but when the opposition boycotted the parliament, their legitimacy immediately came under question. The reason is that the government derives its legitimacy from the parliament.

Therefore, the parliament-boycotting and the continuation of governments during the past decade were unconstitutional. If we accept these practices as constitutional, then we have very little to complain about what is happening in the country. This suggests that the parliament-boycotting and the continuation of the government practices are political customs which have been established during the past decade.

In addition to this constitutional question, these political customs have created an important political issue. This issue may be better explained in terms of employer-employee relationship. Once a person is offered a job, he/she is supposed to have the "right" to retain that job so long he/she fulfills the terms of the contract.

In the parliament-boycotting custom, this universal employer-employee relationship is being seriously violated. The public, being the sovereign authority of the state, chooses some of its fellow citizens to run the business of the government. This means that the public is the employer and the selected citizens are its employees.

The parliament-boycotting opposition members have no right to retain their seats and enjoy all the privileges which accrue to them due to their offices. And they have no right to seek reelection when next votes are held. The reason is they violate all customs, principles and laws concerning democratic governance.

Why and how has this parliament-boycotting custom developed in our society? This is the question that demands our utmost attention. If our politicians knew that they could not retain their parliamentary seats and seek reelection by boycotting parliamentary sessions, then they would not have resorted to this political tactics. And it does not seem to be in the best interest of

to be in opposition. These political customs must be changed if our political situation is to be improved. We all understand this. But what we really need to think with care is who can bring this change and how, because these 'who' and 'how' issues are not at all clear.

The most expected answer to the first part of this question, is apparently our politicians, as they are the leaders who bring about changes in society. But in this particular case, our politicians can hardly be expected to change this custom. The reasons have been hinted above. When government power changes through fair elections, politicians cannot afford to continue pursuing political tactics which might displease the public, for that will cause their defeat in elections.

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the opposition politicians' to let the government complete its so-called elected tenure. Therefore, politicians though obviously the perpetrators of these undesirable political customs, are not its ultimate cause. All politicians, have only one purpose to pursue - to control the government authority. When they need public consents to achieve this goal, they largely follow what the people want.

This line of reasoning points the responsibility to the public. The public must believe that a political party, if elected through fair polls, has the right to be in power no matter whether parliament works or not. And it must also believe that the opposition members of the parliament have the right to retain their parliamentary seats and seek reelection, even though they refuse to perform their duty. The parliament-boycotting phenomenon that has been created during the past decade is then the outcome of political customs which we, the public, have created.

BNP did not vacate the opposition seats, and called for by-elections, when the opposition boycotted parliamentary sessions en-masse. AL is now following BNP's footsteps. These BNP-AL actions should give us enough evidences that changing this custom is not in the best interests of our political parties. In other words, we cannot expect our politicians to voluntarily change their parliament-boycotting political strategy.

At this stage, we should perhaps specify the term, public, a bit clearly. In our country, 80 per cent of the people live in the rural areas, who are little concerned with what happens in government. Of the 20 per cent urban population, the vast majority, who are poor and the real victims of the opposition activities, have little or no power to say anything about it. Therefore, politicians care very little about them.

In Memoriam

Abul Khair-as I knew him

ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

I met for the first time Abul Khair in the beginning of 1970. I had joined the then Government of East Pakistan on deputation as Director of Public Relations and Joint Secretary. In fact I had sought this transfer myself from my post as Press Attache in the Pakistan Embassy in West Germany. Earlier in 1969 I had come on home leave to Dhaka and witnessed the popular upheaval, which freed Bangladesh from the trampled up charge of conspiracy at Agartala and had swept away the regime of Governor Monem Khan from power.

The film showed relief material being collected in West Pakistan and the concern for Pakistanis towards the people of East Pakistan. The truth was, however, quite the opposite and a gulf had been created between the people of the two wings. A Dhaka daily had graphically headlined 'ora elona' ("they did not come"). Abul Khair wanted to stop distribution of the film for it would cause great commotion among the Bangalee public.



I was determined to have as little to do as possible with censorship. The Brigadier told me that I would be the head of censorship. I told him that I had never seen censorship since I had worked in capitals like Istanbul, Paris, New York, Tokyo and Bonn. My globe trotting credentials seemed to impress the Brigadier. The censorship office was set up in the PID office and although I was technically the head I never set foot in that office. Throughout the nine months of our Liberation War the censorship was performed by Maj. Salek, who did information work on behalf of the Martial Law.

I agreed with him and informed the Chief Secretary (Shafi-ul-Azam) Maj. Salek saw the film and we decided that the film would be screened at the Governor's House and be seen by the Governor Admiral Ahsan and Martial Law Administrator Lt. Gen. Yakub Khan. After viewing the film it was decided that Maj. Salek and I would edit the film before release for public viewing. The film was put in cold storage and never saw the light of day.

The making of the film on poet Nazrul Islam took the whole of 1970 and a part of 1971. On 26 March 1971 the War of Liberation began. There was curfew imposed by the military authorities throughout East Pakistan and we stayed home. On the 28 March I believe, that a military jeep came to my house in Gulshan and took me to the cantonment. I was faced with a Brigadier of the Pakistan army. Since I was the senior-most officer, the Brigadier spoke to me. I found that from my Ministry there were officers like the Zaman brothers from Radio and TV, there was Hashim of the Associated Press of Pakistan and several others.

The Brigadier told me that as was customary in a Martial Law regime they would set up a censorship office and it would be located in my office. I told him that it would be a wrong move since the journalists were angry with the events and would resent coming to my office, going through the double protected

Developing hospitality industry and tourism

ALI M. IDRIS

HOSPITALITY Industry is now-a-days, one of the major industries in many countries of the world. This comprises operation of hotels, motels, resorts, guesthouses, rest houses, picnic and recreation spots etc. while industrialists, businessmen, professionals, working people and of course tourists are the principal customers. In fact in many countries, hospitality industry is the principal source of foreign exchange earning.

Tourism indicates touring activities by local inhabitants and foreign visitors throughout the country. In order to develop tourism many preconditions have to be fulfilled, such as proper infrastructure, abundant, cheap and secured commuter facilities road, rail, water and air abundant, cheap and secured staying places viz. hotels, motels, resorts etc. furnished with recreational and entertainment facilities; abundant and secured tourist spots viz. historical places, beaches, parks, waterfalls, lakes, rivers, hills and hill tracts etc. and lastly a peaceful political and administrative atmosphere in the country.

Hospitality industry and tourism are closely related, one cannot thrive without the development of the other. Hospitality industry cannot march forward without the foreign visitors and tourists, the local inhabitants form only a portion of the customers. Foreign exchange cannot be earned without influx of tourists and visitors from abroad. On the other hand tourism cannot thrive without first constructing the hotels, motels, resorts, guesthouses etc. So the two sectors are very closely interdependent.

National infrastructure and facilities: No country can develop without necessary infrastructure viz roads, highways and bridges; sea ports and airports; rivers and coastal waters worth navigation; airways and rail roads etc. These infrastructures are essential and should adequately connect the trade-centres as well as all important spots and resorts worth visitation by tourists and the local people.

As for Bangladesh the following infrastructures are badly needed at

the moment:

- (i) With completion of Bangabandhu Bridge steps should now be taken to build Padma-bridge, Bhaireab bridge and other small bridges on all national highways.
(ii) Highways and roads with necessary fly-overs and by-passes in the cities and inter-connections with tourist spots and places of interest should be further improved.
(iii) Rail link between Dhaka and

Table comparing existing and proposed hotels with room counts, meeting rooms, restaurants, etc.

The proposed new hotels include:

Table listing proposed hotels like Sonargaon hotel (Extension), Dhaka Sheraton hotel (Extension), West Inn, SKS Airport, Sheltec, Shugandha, Al-orchard with their status and guestroom counts.



Sonargaon Hotel

Cox's Bazar should be established. (iv) In addition to international airports at Chittagong and Sylhet, more airports should be built and/or the existing ones improved at Barisal, Rajshahi, Cox's Bazar, Rangpur, Khulna, Dinajpur etc. and number of flights increased.

(v) Railway transportation for commuters should be modernized and expanded.

(vi) Road transportation facilities with more air-conditioned buses, taxis, minibuses, etc. should be expanded.

(vii) River and coastal vessels for commuters/tourists should be modernized and their number increased.

(viii) Beaches in Cox's Bazar, Kuakata and other coastal spots should be developed for construction of more hotels, motels etc.

Arrival of visitors and forex earning: Total arrival of foreign visitors in Bangladesh amounted to 172,781 in 2000, it might go up to 180,000 this year. But this number looks like a drop in the ocean if compared with that of other countries of the world.

It is hoped that after the proposed hotels come into operation, the available rooms will increase substantially accommodating more visitors and tourists in the city.

Conclusion: Development of tourism is directly linked with and dependent upon development of infrastructure, transportation, economic and political environment etc. which are the backbone of national

growth. Bangladesh should not stay behind in reaping the benefits of tourism like other countries of the world. A positive national policy should be framed and implemented as early as possible in order to develop tourism as well as hospitality industry in the country.

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Know your medicines

Inhalers: Aerosol inhalers contain a solution or suspension of a drug under pressure. A valve mechanism ensures the delivery of the recommended dosage when the inhaler is activated. A mouthpiece fixed to the device facilitates inhalation of the drug as it is released from the canister. The correct technique is important; printed instructions should be followed carefully. Aerosol inhalers are used for respiratory conditions such as asthma.

Suppositories and pessaries: Suppositories and pessaries are solid, bullet-shaped drug forms specially designed for easy insertion into the rectum (rectal suppository) or vagina (pessary). They contain a drug and an inert (chemically inactive) substance that is often derived from cocoa butter or another type of vegetable oil. The active drug is gradually released in the rectum or vagina as the suppository or pessary dissolves at body temperature.

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