DHAKA MONDAY APRIL 2, 2001

## Need for good governance

Failures leading to widespread ills

HE Daily Star Roundtable on "Good Governance: Need for Primacy of Law, Accountability and Transparency" has hammered home the critical impact of governance on all aspects of national life, from the individual's right to protection and redress under law, to the cumulative effects of corruption, misuse of powers, lack of accountability and discipline.

Governance has a unique centrality in the modern state. The mandate to govern, given by the people, incorporates much more than the mere acquisition of office through winning elections, issuing of directives, or the assumption of executive prerogatives. Governance is a proactive undertaking which the state is charged to discharge through positive instruments of order, protection, provision, redress and rule. These involve all the organs of state.

Unfortunately, the executive branch of the state has been not only encroaching on the constitutionally sanctioned powers of the legislative and the judiciary, it has pursued its own self-interested agenda and continually abdicated the true responsibilities of governance. The result has been a comprehensive failure in governance, at virtually all levels throughout the land.

The absence of security under the law is a failure of governance. The refusal of the law enforcement agency to register an FIR by an aggrieved individual, in spite of rulings by the courts, is a failure of governance. The erection of untold and insidious barriers of corruption against the normal discharge of everyday functions by citizens, such as paying bills, obtaining bank loans, pursuing legitimate economic interests for livelihood, are all failures in governance.

The bureaucracy has become mired in non-transparent and corrosive practices. Widespread financial indiscipline, deterioration of law and order, insecurity of individual rights, violation of rules on the road and in a vast range of activities, all have emerged as routine events in our national life. These are the result of a predatory approach to the responsibility of governance.

The basic reversal of these failures can only be achieved if governments are forced to live up to their responsibilities. They must recognise the cost, both in political and economic terms, of mis-governance. We remind the executive that it must fulfil its mandate to provide relevant, just and beneficial governance to the people. Failure to govern must be identified and rectified by mechanisms inside the state apparatus. At the same time, civil society must be mobilised on a sustained basis to exert pressure in the right quarters, and the economic impact of mis-governance must be stressed, over and over again. We strongly believe that the media and civil society must explode the mythical justifications that governments tend to adopt about their abuse of power and their salutary lack of proactive governance. We in the media have done our part on this critical question in the past and we will continue to do so in the future. We urge the citizenry to support positive efforts to bring about awareness of the importance of governance, and to sustain their interest and social activism in all areas that cry out for attention and commitment.

### Viva Tendulkar

Indian batting maestro not out on 10,105

ACHIN Tendulkar's latest feat--the Indian master batsman Saturday became the first player to score ten thousand runs in one-day international cricket--had a tinge of inevitability about it. From the pundit down to the avid fan, and perhaps even the one who takes very little interest in the game, everyone knew that if anyone could reach the milestone, the 27-year-old batting maestro from western Bombay would. It had just been a matter of time.

Tendulkar is simply way ahead of the chasing pack, in a class of his own - both in terms of runs scored, batting average and other quantitative indicators, and technique, temperament and likewise qualitative quotients. If 28 centuries and an average of 42.63 in one-day matches were indication of his sustained aggressiveness, then 25 tons and an average of almost 57 in Test cricket must be testimony to his determination and application.

Beyond the façade of the star that he is, Tendulkar is a compassionate man, who contribute immensely but silently to the cause of the distressed; a down-to-earth individual well aware of his roots; and a sensible person, who hasn't allowed fame to sweep him off his feet. He has struck a fine balance between his stardom and his personal life, not letting one interfere with the other.

When he walks into the stadium, wherever it is, Tendulkar generates expectations among the spectators, those in the stands and also the ones glued to television or radio - expectations for the unexpected. One knows this little man from the subcontinent can take on the world and elevate the game to a height never reached before. Tendulkar lends credence to the age-old cliché sky is the limit. Viva Sachin Tendulkar.

# Pakistan: Boomeranged by its Islamic politics



BRIG (RTD) M ABDUL HAFIZ

MONG the myriad of challenges that beset A Pakistan's military regime the most serious one comes from the extremist Islamic outfits of the country. Indeed, the religious seminaries (madrasas) operated by the religious parties and groups are the breeding grounds for gun-toting Islamists primed with radical demands. There are an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 madrasas in the country and the students graduate from them with a commitment to Jihad and training in the use of arms. Over the years they have become so powerful that they are now ranked next only to the Army in muscle power. They now assert that they would settle for nothing less than an Islamic revolution and a Sharia rule in the country. What makes them belligerent these days is their strong network also in the Army. Pakistani soldiers had always been religious but they are now turning doctrinaire Islamists. They together constitute a formidable force but the potentials of the madrasa products far exceed those of the military. Although both have guns to wield power, an Islamist has an unshakable indoctrination in "Jihadi Culture". If a soldier is deterred by the enemy's bullet, the Mujahids produced by vast network of madrasas are not; because it would give them martyrdom.

Notwithstanding such Islamic fervour there is already concern about the extent to which the products of religious seminaries have

infiltrated the ranks of the military. The authority is also exasperated with the question of the presence of 'hard-liners' and 'moderates' in the Army on key issues of concern to Pakistan such as nuclear, Kashmir and Afghanistan. The government has already started to feel the pinch as the extremist elements either in military or outside seek to dictate the agenda, enforce the latters' writ and in doing so undermine the credibility of the government. To utter embarrassment of the regime, in December last one of the extremist groups threatened to march to Islamabad with thousands of its

foreign students and stop sending students for arms training programme. But the religious parties and organisations who run the madrasas refused to cooperate. The baffled authority chose not to make an issue out of it and stir up a hornet's nest.

Emboldened by the government's helplessness all the major religious parties and their armed wings gathered at Akhora-Khattak on 10 January last to denounce the imposition of United Nations Security Council sanctions on the Talibans, considered 'spiritual sons' of staunch pro-Taliban leaders of

Khattak was intended to send a message to the US and all enemies of Islam. By all accounts the exercise at Islamabad turned out to be fiasco for Musharraf Government which ended up endorsing the agenda of militant groups. In response to far right's demand the minister promised to amend the constitution in order to enforce the Sharia. Pakistan has come to this pass and its govern ment started helplessly appeasing its religious groups after long years of politics politics of opportunism, expediency and power struggle, all in the name or religion. It would be worth going a bit deep into it.

In 1956 Pakistan was formally declared an 'Islamic Republic', the first of its kind in the world at that time. Under its first constitution the government was already vested with power to ensure that the Muslims in the country live in accordance with the fundamental principles of Islam. Ayub Khan, not particularly fond of Islam and confident of his unchallenged power base dispensed with the Islamic label in his 1962 constitution. Although the requirements of enabling the Muslims of Pakistan to order their lives according to there faith were fully met in 1973 constitution, Mr Z A Bhutto went

At the core of the problem of Islamisation today in Pakistan is the fact that it was introduced in the past by the people having no doctrinal conviction in the creed. Both of Pakistan's political elite and the military brass who ruled Pakistan and presided over its Islamisation had been more of a secular breed in their conduct, lifestyle and worldview. They gave lip-service to Islam only to reap the benefit of Islamisation but never wanted to make Islam their way of life. Neither the masses who never gave the Islamic parties more than 5 per cent of popular vote in elections were much fond of them as the country's ruling authority. Yet the country's Islamisation grew by leaps and bound under the patronage of the establishment. During the Afghan war, in the name of defending Islam President Ziaul Hug raised countless battalions of the faithful. Billions of dollars were spent on the project and the ideological warriors were armed to their teeth with most sophisticated weapons regardless of their consequences on the country's economy, society and polity. Even during the following decades they kept thriving as a pan-Islamic

The period witnessed a mushroom growth of religious organisations with their radical agenda which neither the government nor the military is now capable of containing. Even the society at large in Pakistan is still lagging far behind the new breed of Islamists in embracing doctrinal Islam. although it would not mind its use. for example, in siezing power internally or fighting the infidels externally. The regime of General Musharraf wanted to make use of Islamist forces in Pakistan for both the purposes, promoting at the same time the vision of a modern statehood in yet another phase of experimentation in Pakistan. There are signs that the increasingly powerful clerics will not let it happen particularly in the prevailing politi-

class of fighters thanks to the

patronage of military.

# PERSPECTIVES

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followers to press the government Pakistan. Some of the religious for the enforcement of Sharia. The leaders were escorted to the venue leader of the group, a non-descript of the gathering by hooded bodymoulana agreed to postpone the guards and with sophisticated the contenders. In common percepthe seminary and promised to fulfil his wish. The worse was still awaited. Qauzi Hussain Ahmad, the chief of the Jamat-e-Islami questioned the Islamic credential of General Pervez, the Chief Executive and called upon the Army's top brass to remove him as a security risk.

Things could not be allowed to go the way they were going. Some semblance of an order had to be restored even for the survival of the ruling regime. Therefore, in an effort to rein in the extremists and their activities the Musharraf government evolved an ambitious plan to bring the religious schools under its control. It announced in June last year a reform plan requiring all the madrasas to register with the government, disclose their sources of funding, seek permission to admit

in public. Alarmed at the developments Pakistan's Interior Minister Moinuddin Haider convened a conference of religious parties and groups of the country on 13 January last to seek their 'cooperation' to create what he called a tolerant society. In the Conference he virtually begged them to shed their militant image and respect the law of the land. The minister meekly raised the questions of 'Ak-47 culture', ethnic violence, sectarian clashes pursued by them only to buttress his arguments as to how such incidences undermined the image of the country and also Islam. The angry clerics did not seem much responsive.

Far from being defensive the religious leaders argued that the display of weapons at Akhora-

Interestingly, for all power struggles in Pakistan the religion of Islam had been the convenient weapon of march only after a minister visited weapons in defiance of the govern- tion Pakistan, a product of twoment instruction not to display guns nation theory, was already an Islamic state although the country's founding father Mr M A Jinnah very much wanted to make it a modern secular democracy. The first assault on Jinnah's vision of Pakistan was mounted by Mr Liagat Ali Khan, the country's first Prime Minister when he produced Objective Resolutions as a set of Basic Principles for constitution-making. The resolution heavily loaded with the precepts of Islam was conceived as a measure to suppress the debate generated by a clash of interest between those who wanted to centralise the power and those with regional aspirations. Obviously he and the successive rulers of Pakistan made the mistake of seeking refuge in religion without addressing the hard issues of the

steps further to Islamise Pakistan presumably to silence his opponents in conservative camp.

It was however General Ziaul Hug who undertook the mission with all earnestness and presented his plans to theocratise the country with his unusually strident slogan of Islamisation. General Zia established Federal Sharia Court and made Objective Resolution the substantive part of the constitution. Lacking legitimacy as a ruler bis purpose was to undermine the constitutional basis of the federation and put it under the edicts of the clerics of his own choosing. It would thus be seen that Pakistan was almost overIslamised by the time Zia was killed in mysterious plane crash. In retrospect, Pakistan's Islamisation programme seldom served the cause of Islam, even if it served the purpose of the rulers for whom Islam had been a convenient tool for siezing, consolidating and

## Forging an anti-left alliance in West Bengal



ZAGLUL AHMED CHOWDHURY

TEST Bengal is one of the five Indian states going to elections in April to choose new legislature and the pre-poll scenario has reached a feverish pitch with political parties seeking to evolve strategies in a bid to fare well in the hustings. Undeniably, the party or combine in power will spare no effort to retain people's mandate while the major opponents are hellbent on capturing power. In West Bengal the leftists are at the helm for an uninterrupted period of more than 22 years and this is something unique which the ruling front is trying to maintain despite the fact that it faces a tough challenge this time. Obviously, the main curiosity surrounding the coming polls in this state is whether the leftists succeed in continuing to govern the state considered as intellectually and politically advanced. With eyes on the elections, main players of the political spectrum are giving final touches to their alignment and realignment with other political forces and, interestingly, polarisation is taking place in a manner which appeared somewhat inconceivable not too long ago.

Evidently, the ruling left-front and the "Trinamul Congress" led by firebrand leader Ms. Mamata

Baneriee are two main forces in the state to reckon with at present. These two forces are deeply entreched in the political milieu the former making every effort to retain power and the latter to make history by dislodging the leftists from their citadel. Who has the bigger chance to rule the state through coming polls? Who is aligning with whom and under what conditions? How far interesting is the alignment of political parties which are now in the quest of new allies as well as parting ways with the old ones? Discussions and speculations on the political situation in West Bengal mainly

the state politics since independence of India till the emergence of the left-front as the ruling combine. The Congress had several notable politicians who adorned the post of the chief ministers like Dr. B.C. Roy, P.C.Sen, S.S. Ray and Amal Kumar Mukherjee but it was communist leader Jyoti Basu who remained at the helm of the government in the state for the longest period. The 86year-old leader of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) quit the position voluntarily only a few months ago on health ground but has not called it a day to politics as

and some other states too, but not strong enough to influence the political pattern there. Many feel that the left-front faces a real Herculean task this time because of the meteoric rise of Mamata and her party on one hand and certain setbacks in their own fold on the other. Some leaders of the CPM quit the organisation while some others often create problems from within by not seeing each other eve to eve on several issues of the state government which is composed of several left parties with the CPM as the driving force. Mamata with former

The main Congress dominated Tripura. They have bases in Bihar ment purchase scam involving Congress which gladly accepted it several ministers and top leaders of the NDA as clearly she did not want to be seen as an associate of the scandal-tainted ruling federal government ahead of the West Bengal polls. Her party pulled out of the ruling alliance even though it did not threaten Vajpayee administration which still enjoys comfortable majority in the house. But Mamata was ambivalent for some time on likely alliance in West Bengal centring the coming polls as some of her party leaders favoured continuing the understanding with BJP as they fought the previous federal elections

legitimising power.

for alliance because this has been related to the concept of third force in the state and the main Congress is equally averse of the left-front in the state. Finally, two sides have reached election alliance despite the fact that they could not stand each other till the other day. Elderly Congress leader A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury is a strong supporter of such alliance as he feels the ruling combine cannot be defeated without combined strength of the nonleft parties. All India Congress general secretary in charge of West Bengal Kamal Nath had a long meeting with Mamata at Kolkata on March 30 and alliance was struck with the consent of Congress president Sonia Gandhi. Details of the seat understanding may take some

## MATTERS AROUND US

Political scene in the state has taken already an interesting turn but further changes cannot be ruled out as the maxim "no permanent foes or friends in politics" stands good for West Bengal too. Can Mamata Banerjee, whose objective is to capture power in West Bengal and become the chief minister win the 'race'? Known for her simple life she has a good following, but can she effectively challenge the leftists and will the new alliance help her?

revolve around the prospects of the Mamata's "Trinamul Congress" because this breakaway faction from the main Indian National Congress shot into prominence in a short time although it is restricted only in the West Bengal state. Its leader Mamata Banerjee had fallen through the main Congress on personal and strategic political differences with elder Congress leaders of the state a few years ago and made significant inroads in the state's political base. During the last two elections for the lower house of the federal parliament (Lokshaba) Mamata's party showed tremendous clout particularly in capital Kolkata and gradually emerged as the main challenger to the ruling left-front.

such since he is still around working for strengthening the secular democratic forces on an all India scale. However, his departure from the governance has unquestionably weakened the left-front which is now led by new chief minister Bhuddhadev Bhattacharya, an able politician no doubt but he clearly lacks the charishma and experience of veteran Basu. The death of another elderly leftist leader Inderjit Gupta of the Communist Party of India (CPI) also came as a jolt for the front before the coming elections. Gupta, a member of the Indian parliament for eleven times, was an important force for the front.

Leftists are most strong in West Bengal followed by southern Kerala and tiny north-eastern state of

Congress leaders like Ajit Panja and Subrata Mukherjee set up the "Trinamul" and later allied with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Although a leader of a small party in a state, she enjoyed critical importance in the formation of the first multi-party national democratic government (NDA govt.) and later second government of the alliance both of which were headed by

Vajpayee. She tendered her resignation as the federal railway minister last year on the issue of raising the prices of petroleum products but was persuaded by the prime minister to withdraw the resignation. However, this time she resigned nearly three weeks ago over the defence equipunder alliance. This did not work on two counts collapse of the understanding at the federal level and disputes over seat adjustments. Where should Mamata go for the purpose of electoral alliance to "throw the leftists out"? Needless to say, she is vehemently anti-left and accuses them for the current "ills" of

With a solid base carefully nurtured over decades, the left-front cannot be easily dislodged and Mamata is aware of this although she achieved stunning success in recent polls in the urban areas of the state. The leftists remain strong in the rural areas because of a relatively honest administration and many welfare oriented programmes. The "Trinamul" turned to the main

Consequently, the political map of the state has now gone through drastic change with the left-front in one side, "Trinamul" and the main Congress alliance in the other, where also the BJP is going alone by itself. BJP is not a force to reckon with in West Bengal but had been benefitted by understanding with Mamata. Now the race is wide open, but the main battle lines are being drawn between the Front and the new alliance of two Congress which were at loggerheads ever-since Mamata broke away from the main party. Political scene in the state has taken already an interesting turn but further changes cannot be ruled out

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### Mosquito eradication

Last year dengue, a deadly disease caused by mosquito bites, broke out in almost an epidemic form and took its toll on many. Specialists have warned that if the larvae of the Aedes mosquito are not destroyed this year, dengue will strike more severely. But the authorities don't seem to care about these warnings. They remained unmoved last year, they are indifferent this year. In the meantime, the mosquito menace is increasing and so as peoples' sufferings. Will the authorities ever pay heed to the sufferings of the citizens?

Reshmi Das Gupta Old D.O.H.S. Dhaka

#### President should intervene

We fervently request President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed to intervene and end the abnormal situation prevailing in the political arena. People have become really frustrated and weary with the politicians. If this deadlock continues, people might even lose interest in

casting their votes in the upcoming general election.

We urge the President to see to it that the next general election is held under a caretaker government and that they are given enough time to organise a free and fair election.

Meanwhile we could only pray to almighty Allah so that sanity prevails and we restore to peace at last.

NurJahan Chittagong

#### Destruction of **Buddhist statues**

The destruction of ancient Buddhist statues in Afghanistan by the Talibans is really atrocious and condemnable. Islam has always preached respect for other religions. And by defying this teaching of Islam, the Taliban themselves have committed a crime. By its extremist religious policies, the Tailbans are indulging in a serious form of vandalism and doing serious harm to

Raihan Choudhury Jigatala, Dhaka

### Readers are invited to send in exclusive pictures, colour or black and white, of editorial value, with all relevant information including date, place and significance of subject matter. Pictures received will not be returned.

Star Photo: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Wasting time on a hartal day

Hartal means shutting down of everything. It also means no work for those who earn their living as day labourers. Finding no alternative, these young workers are wasting their time doing literally nothing all day. Political parties resort to hartal to carry home their demands. But do they ever think that by their actions, they are depriving the poor of their bread?

### Keep Dhaka clean and green

Here are some thoughts and suggestions for our otherwise sleeping city fathers so that they can wake up from their slumber to keep the city clean.

All obsolete, discoloured and useless banners and festoons should be removed. All billboards should be removed from the roadsides as well and be located atop buildings and along the highways. The government can earn substantial revenue by enacting or by enforcing existing laws, if there are any, for the banners, festoons and billboards.

More and more trees should be planted on the road islands Important city roads like Airport Road (Kazi Nazrul Avenue ). Maghbazaar Road, Biswa Road and Sonargaon road still lack trees. The road islands should be kept trimmed and clean and should also be properly grilled and refurbished periodically. Most of the road islands have become dumping ground for rubbish and garbage. Iron grills have disappeared and yet

to be replaced on many city roads. Neon hoarding should not be allowed to display on the road

islands. They should be displayed atop buildings and along the pavements. The footpaths should be cleared of hawkers and vendors and should be made user friendly. The surface drains and covered

drains should be periodically cleaned. Sweepers and their supervisors are hardly seen. The overflowing yellow bins and dustbins should be cleared regularly.

Anika Mariam Ahmed Bangla Motor, Dhaka

### Oppressive political practice

It is again hartal time and this time! is for 60-hours. The politicians claim that they are fighting for democracy and they will always remain beside the poor. But resorting to hartalism't democracy! Shutting everything and depriving the poor to earn their bread isn't remaining beside the poor! Politics in Bangladesh is nothing but vandalism and oppression. All the politicians care about are their own welfare and not the peo-

Hasin Khan Comilla