

Let this hartal be the last Stop punishing the people

We have suffered enough. The economy has been damaged, the people exposed to hardships of every kind and the entire country compelled to undergo uncalled for disruptions and losses. All in the name of relentless hartals. On this third day of yet another 72-hour stoppage, we call upon the Opposition to finally take heed of a message that we have been repeating: stop punishing the people.

Stop making us prisoners inside our homes. Stop ignoring the reality that these hartals go against the will of the people. Yes, people do stay off the streets and businesses do remain idle. But there is nothing remotely spontaneous or voluntary about this so-called 'observance'. People comply under duress, simply because they are afraid of violence. The Opposition has not 'won' the people's so-called cooperation to these hartals, but has exacted it, forcibly, through intimidation.

The damage done by these hartals cannot be underscored enough. They have wrought unimaginable hardships on people from all walks of life, be they students, professionals, entrepreneurs or workers. The setback to trade and commerce, especially to our export-oriented concerns, has been enormous and in some instances, irreparable.

The time has come to put an end to this meaningless and wasteful punishment on the country and the people. The fact that from the second day of this hartal, rickshaws, rickshaw vans and carts have been allowed to ply without obstruction, must indicate ground realities. We urge the Opposition to acknowledge these factors and to heed the groundswell of opinion against these hartals.

No matter what the Opposition may wish to believe, the truth is that these hartals have no focus and their only tangible effect is to badger and coerce ordinary people into compliance and to deprive them of their freedoms. What is the justification for continuing with an increasingly futile exercise and in the process, exacting such a harsh price from the country?

Will the Opposition wake up to this reality? We strongly urge it to do so. We hope the Opposition will let better sense prevail and give up this aimless tactic. We hope it will stop punishing the people. Let this hartal be the last.

Same culpable indifference

Photographed gunslingers still at large

PRIME Minister Sheikh Hasina once said that there was no place for terrorists in her party. Unfortunately, as if to prove her wrong, it is terrorism that featured in a recent incident of ruling party activism. It took place when Awami League-backed gunslingers sprayed bullets on a pro-hartal procession near Shaheb Bazaar zero point in Rajshahi on the final day of the opposition alliance's 72-hour hartal on April 11. It was almost a repeat of the February 13 incident at Malibagh in the city where armed youths from anti-hartal procession, led by a ruling party legislator, fired indiscriminately on a pro-hartal march, killing four on the spot and injuring many others.

The other common aspect to the two incidents lies in the fact that although photographs of the gunslingers were carried on the front page of leading national dailies, none has so far been arrested. While they roam around freely, police seem to have 'difficulty' in tracking them down. Interestingly, in the Rajshahi incident, one of the armed youths, photographed while shooting at the opposition procession, joined the inauguration of the divisional stadium apparently with security clearance from police where the prime minister was the chief guest.

Obviously, these criminal elements know where to be present at the right time. The Rajshahi police commissioner, for example, sees no reason to arrest one of the armed youths who was present in the pro-government procession, saying there is no case against him. But there are three cases lodged with the Rajshahi Metropolitan Police against this man, so it has been learnt on some good authority. The local allegation is when he hobnobs with the police commissioner who dares arrest him!

We wonder whether the prime minister had any inkling of it and realises that such incidents actually tell on the credibility of not only her government but also put her own credibility on the line. Therefore, she should intervene immediately and make sure that these gun-runners are arrested, tried and put behind the bar. We want to believe she meant every word when she said there was no place for terrorists in her party.

The plutocrats and the parliamentary election 2001



DILARA CHOUDHURY

GRAVE concerns are abounding in Bangladesh about the prospects of a free and fair general election i.e. if the election is held as per the constitutional provisions. Some of the factors that may hamper such electioneering process in the country are: alleged politicization of the administration by the government; possible intimidation and threats of terrorism; non-compliance of code of conduct by the political parties; non registration of the political parties with EC; EC's over all dependence on Establishment Ministry for vital man power; ineffectiveness of the election tribunals; influence of black money and, most importantly, the apprehension about the use of small arms that are already plentiful in the country and, according to one report, are now being assembled in Ukhia area of CHIT for cheap and easy procurement. Indeed it is long list of impediments, which need to be resolved, if the political parties, especially the party in power wants to have a qualitative election that would serve as the crucial instrument of democracy. In a nutshell it is implied that everyone the contenders for power as well as the other organizations and the rules that encourage communication and cooperation must work hand in gloves to achieve that goal.

But so far, the proposed electoral reforms put forward by NGOs like Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) and governance coalition as well as the opposition have remained unheeded and no such urgency or willingness to remove these detriments on the part of the executive is discernible. On the contrary, the present political scenario centering the general election has made an already murky situation murkier. And the obvious has happened. People are besieged with

inertia and alienation to a point that the voices demanding overhauling of the electoral process have become feeble and receded in the backstage. What kind of election would we then end up with if all these present political 'bum drums' suddenly give way to election and it takes place without carrying out any significant electoral reforms? The answer is not too far to seek. Given the situation it would be a ritualistic one at best. And like in all ritualistic elections peoples' effective influence in policy making or for that

above is more complex. The plutocrats in these countries are mostly the products of 'kleptocracy', a term used by political scientist Stanislaw Andrewski, who while analyzing the politics of the developing countries dubbed it (kleptocracy) as a system that allows the use of political power to extract economic surplus. We are familiar with 'kleptomaniacs' (the ones who impulsively steal even if they do not need it), which gives us the clue that in 'kleptocracy' those who hold the political power beginning from the highest position to a

years the system is not immune from the cancer of corruption. It, too, is periodically rocked by corruption scandals. The latest one that embarrassed the country again is the corruption by highly placed NDA people as exposed by an Internet media. These scandals provide rare glimpses of how the politicians use their political power to extract enormous economic benefits, which (power of money) later is used to keep their political power intact and shield them from the hands of law. Corruption, in all

drug smuggling and human trafficking that have been made possible thanks to the use of power of money. These plutocrats of Bangladesh, with shadowy past, would now definitely want to get hold of the state power by making their large scale entry into the parliament, first, to control state power, which is still the focal institution in a developing country, having the power to distribution array of privileges and patronage, and second, because of their own survival through use of law enforcing agencies as well as

parties hesitate in giving them the nomination? Our main political parties seem oblivious of the fact that these candidates, once elected i.e. they themselves becoming the power-holders, would extract a heavy price from the polity, in terms of protecting their own privileges and other paraphernalia that goes with them. Indeed, in such eventualities, democracy's main thrust, which is to diminish inequalities or gap between the rich and the poor, would be seriously thwarted.

In this context the civil society has long been propagating the reform in electoral laws, especially to stop use of black money in election by increasing the campaign ceiling from Tk 3 lacs to 6 lacs. Most people, however, feel that it is not going to work since the candidates would find ways to spend more than what the ceiling would be. For example, many plutocrats and aspirant candidates have already started distributing privileges both in kind and cash in their respective constituencies. One aspirant plutocrat, as the story goes, has already distributed Tk 3 lacs worth of T-shirts in his would be constituency. This seemingly invincible power of money on the outcome of the election can only be thwarted if plutocrats with shadowy money-baggage like the bank defaulters, drug dealers and smugglers are not given nominations by the political parties. Such propositions have been reflected in the recommendations of the national and divisional level workshop arranged by the Governance Coalition. But so far, they have fallen on deaf ears.

The question is when would our political parties, for the sake of democracy, pay attention to this dangerous trend in our politics and act accordingly? Will they realize that when the power-holders and policy-makers become rich through corruption, the policies will less likely be people oriented or target poverty alleviation? Do they know that, on the contrary, the state machinery would be tuned to the needs of these few rather than the many?

PANORAMA

The question is when would our political parties, for the sake of democracy, pay attention to the dangerous trend in our politics and act accordingly? Will they realize that when the power-holders and policy-makers become rich through corruption, the policies will less likely be people oriented or target poverty alleviation? Do they know that, on the contrary, the state machinery would be tuned to the needs of these few rather than the many?

matter participation in politics of the country, would certainly be compromised where a small group would be masquerading under the facade of democracy. One such crucial issue that would make the outcome of the election somewhat redundant is the influence of black money.

Influence of money by the plutocrats on election is not a unique phenomenon. Even in the most developed democracies chances of winning by candidates with huge campaign fund can be considerably enhanced. The enormous amount of money spent by some senatorial candidates in the U.S., during the recent election, has demonstrated the dramatic effect the power of money can have on the election results. In these instances, however, no foul play like vote buying or intimidation, are used but sense of discomfort arises from the fact that most super rich, once elected, excepting perhaps a few idealists, work in favour of protecting their privileges instead of devoting to democracy's real cause like equitable distribution of resources and justice. As such, voices are usually raised to bring about necessary reforms in order to curb the influence of money in the political process of the given country.

In developing countries, including Bangladesh, the problem cited

lowly fourth class employee milk the state rather impulsively and without any qualm of conscience. That means corruption is pervasive and entire public edifice is like a bad infestation of woodworm. Everybody is affected in this system excepting the ones who hold the political power and public offices. Anyone who lives in Bangladesh does not need further explanation for what is like to live in a system where money-power decides everything beginning from the application of law to getting a job in the public sector or receiving the services for which the ordinary citizens have already paid. Actually it means the higher the offices the mightier the prices. Examples abound.

In Pakistan, between Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif \$3.00 billion was plundered from the country. They are, however, neither the first or would be the last offenders of such heinous crimes as evidenced by the fact that an astonishing amount of \$50.00 billion, during the past 20 years, disappeared abroad into off shore tax shelters and investments through front companies and third party. The practice of corruption by the holders of high public offices is, thus, at the root of Pakistan's notoriously unstable political system and other evils. Even in India where democracy has been flourishing for more than fifty

these countries, thus, creates a vicious cycle of an unholy alliance of political and economic power, whereby money buys influence and power attracts money. Plutocrats of these countries do not always have a clean record of their financial success rather they, as mentioned earlier, are the product of 'kleptocracy', having more destabilizing effects on the system.

In this respect Bangladesh has not, by any means, stayed behind. Unfortunate fact is that, Bangladesh, according to Transparency International, is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. The survey indicated that out of 54 countries Bangladesh has the distinction of occupying the fourth position i.e. of being less corrupt than Kenya, Pakistan and Nigeria but more corrupt than India and Russia. One is hardly surprised at Transparency International findings when we know that over the last 30 years around 75 per cent of the total foreign aid i.e. Tk. 135,000 crore was 'looted in an organized way' (The Daily Star, February 11, 2001). It is now anybody's guess who have committed these crimes. Then we have our bank defaulters who made their so-called 'fortunes' at the cost of banking and financial discipline. Moreover, this 'get rich quick' mentality indulged people into other shadowy lucrative business like

influencing the policy formulation.

The discussion above is not surreal in Bangladesh's context. The plutocrats have already made an unholy inroad into the mainstream political parties' folds since our nascent democracy was installed in 1991. They have done so through their contribution to the campaign funds of the major political parties. The parties, on the other hand, had no difficulties in accepting huge funds from this *nouveau-riche* due to their lack of non-registration with EC and consequently total absence of their financial accountability. They were, thus, somewhat compelled to manipulate the state power to protect the interest of the campaign contributors. Obviously, the parties have been constricted in carrying out the social reforms as propagated in their election manifestoes. This was the case until 1996 election. We are now apprehensive that during this election the parties would not hesitate to give nominations to the plutocrats, even to the ones with shadowy background due to the present cadre-based politics and continued infiltration of crime syndicates in politics. Since political parties' motto is to win the election by hook or crook, these are the people who would be, according to calculation, able to get the desired results through vote buying, intimidation and use of arms. So why the

Agreement on demarcation of Bangladesh-India land boundary 1974

Act No. LXXIV of 1974
Agreement

Between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of India concerning the Demarcation of the Land Boundary between Bangladesh and India and Related matters.

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of India.

Bearing in mind the friendly relations existing between the two countries.

Desiring to define more accurately at certain points and to complete the demarcation of the land boundary between Bangladesh and India.

Have agreed as follows:

- Article 1**
The land boundary between Bangladesh and India in the areas mentioned below shall be demarcated in the following manner:
1. **Mizoram-Bangladesh Sector.** Demarcation should be completed on the basis of the latest pre-partition notifications and records.
2. **Tripura-Sylhet Sector.** Demarcation which is already in progress in this area on the agreed basis, should be completed as early as possible.
3. **Bhagalpur Railway Line.** The boundary should be demarcated at a distance of 73 feet parallel to the toe of the railway embankment towards the east.
4. **Sibpur-Gaurangala Sector.** The boundary should be demarcated in continuation of the process started in 1951-52 on the basis of the District Settlement Maps of 1915/1918.
5. **Muhuri River (Belonia) Sector.** The boundary in this area should be demarcated along the mid-stream of the course of Muhuri River at the time of demarcation. This boundary will be a fixed boundary. The two Governments should raise embankments on their respective sides with a view to stabilising the river in its present course.
6. **Remaining portion of the Tripura-Noakhali/Comilla Sector.** The demarcation in this sector should be completed on the basis of Chakla-Roshanabad Estate Maps of 1929-94 and the District Settlement Maps of 1915-1918 for areas not covered by the Chakla-Roshanabad Maps.
7. **Fenny River.** The boundary should be demarcated along the mid-stream of the course at the time of demarcation of that branch of the Fenny River indicated as the Fenny River on Survey of India Map sheet No. 79 M/15, 1" Edition 1935, till it joins the stream shown as Asalong C on the said map. From that point on, downstream, the boundary should be demarcated along the mid-stream of the course of the Fenny River at the time of demarcation of the boundary. The boundary in this sector will be a fixed boundary.
8. **Rest of Tripura-Chittagong Hill Tracts Sector.** The boundary will follow the mid-stream of that branch of the Fenny River, referred to in para 7 above, up to Grid reference 009779 (map sheet as in para 7 above) from where the

boundary will follow the mid-stream of the eastern-most tributary. From the source of this tributary, the boundary will run along the shortest distance to the mid-stream of the stream marked Bayan Asalong, on the map referred to above, and thence will run generally northwards along the mid-stream of this river till it reaches its source on the ridge (indicated by grid reference 046810 on the map referred to above). From there it will run along the crest of this ridge up to Boghoban Trig Station. From Boghoban Trig Station up to the tri-junction of the Bangladesh-Assam-Tripura boundary (Khan Talang Trig Station), the boundary will run along the water-shed of the river systems of the two countries. In case of any differences between the map and the ground, the ground shall prevail. The boundary will be a fixed boundary in this sector.

9. **Beambazar-Karimganj Sector.** The undemarcated portion of the boundary west of Umapati village should be demarcated in accordance with the agreed basis of demarcation, leaving Umapati village in India.

10. **Hakar Khal.** The boundary should be demarcated in accordance with the Nehru-Noon agreement of September, 1958, treating Hakar Khal as a geographical feature distinct from the Ichhamati River. The boundary will be a fixed boundary.

11. **Baikari Khal.** In the Baikari Khal, the boundary should be demarcated on the agreed basis and principles, namely, that the ground shall prevail, i.e. as per the agreement reached between the Directors of Land Records and Surveys of West Bengal and erstwhile East Pakistan in 1949. The boundary will be a fixed boundary.

12. **Enclaves.** The Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and the Bangladesh enclaves in India should be exchanged expeditiously, excepting the enclaves mentioned in paragraph 14 without claim to compensation for the additional area going to Bangladesh.

13. **Hilli.** The area will be demarcated in accordance with Redcliffe Award and the line drawn by him on the map.

14. **Berubari.** India will retain the southern half of South Berubari Union No. 12 and the adjacent enclaves, measuring an area of 2.64 square miles approximately, and in exchange Bangladesh will retain the Dahagram and Angapota enclaves. India will lease in perpetuity to Bangladesh an area of 178 metres X 85 metres near 'Tin Bigha' to connect Dahagram with Panbari Mouza (PS Patgram) of Bangladesh.

15. **Lathiulla-Dumabari.** From point Y (the last demarcated boundary pillar position), the boundary shall run southwards along the Patheria Hills RF boundary up to the point where it meets the western boundary of Dumabari Mouza. Thence, along the same Mouza boundary up to the tri-junction of Mouzas Dumabari, Lathiulla and Bara Putnigaon through the junction of the two Mouzas Dumabari and Lathiulla. From this point it shall run along the shortest distance to meet the mid-stream of Putni Chara.

Thence it shall run generally southwards along the mid-stream of the course of Putni Chara at the time of demarcation, till it meets the boundary between Sylhet (Bangladesh) and Tripura (India).

Article 2
The Governments of Bangladesh and India agree that territories in adverse possession in areas already demarcated in respect of which boundary strip maps are already prepared, shall be exchanged within six months of the signing of the boundary strip maps by the plenipotentiaries. They may sign the relevant maps as early as possible and in any case not later than the 31st December, 1974. Early measures may be taken to print maps in respect of other area where demarcation has already taken place. These should be printed by 31st May, 1975 and signed by the plenipotentiaries thereafter in order that the exchange of adversely held possessions in these areas may take place by the 31st December, 1975. In sectors still to be demarcated transfer of territorial jurisdiction may take place within six months of the signature by plenipotentiaries on the concerned boundary strip maps.

Article 3
The Governments of Bangladesh and India agree that when areas are transferred, the people in these areas shall be given the right of staying on where they are, as nationals of the State to which the areas are transferred. Pending demarcation of the boundary and exchange of territory by mutual agreement, there should be no disturbance of the status quo and peaceful conditions shall be maintained in the border regions. Necessary instructions in this regard shall be issued to the local authorities on the border by the two countries.

Article 4
The Governments of Bangladesh and India agree that any dispute concerning the interpretation or implementation of this Agreement shall be settled peacefully through mutual consultations.

Article 5
This Agreement shall be subject to ratification by the Governments of Bangladesh and India and Instruments of Ratification shall be exchanged as early as possible. The Agreement shall take effect from the date of the exchange of the Instruments of Ratification.

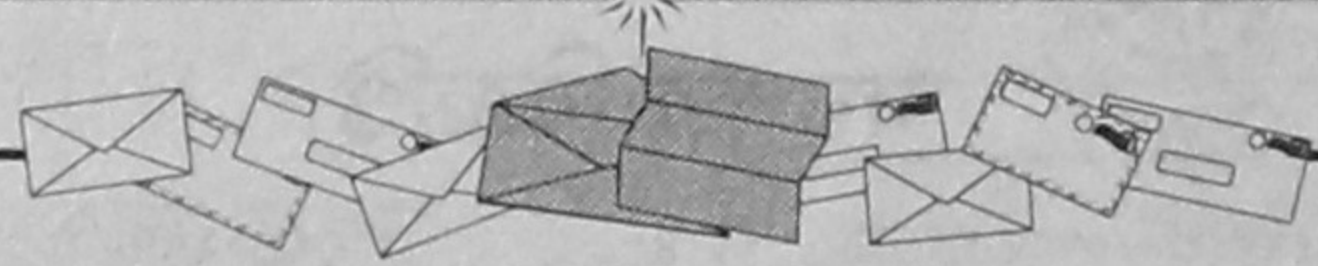
Signed in New Delhi on May 16, 1974, in two originals each of which is equally authentic.

For the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh,
(Sheikh Mujibur Rahman)
Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

For the Government of the Republic of India,
(Indira Gandhi)
Prime Minister of India.

Source: The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



PHOTORIAL

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.



Rest day!

STAR PHOTO: S. K. ENAMUL HAQ

These porters at Karwan Bazar are taking a nap on a hartal day, but on an empty stomach. Daily labourers earn their bread by means of hard labour. But continuous political unrest snatches away their right to earn their living. Politics is supposed to ensure peoples' rights, not create a starving nation. We demand an end to this destructive political means, hartals, for once and for all.

Dubious joint venture

Magura Paper Mill, a joint venture enterprise with a Peoples Republic of China, raised share capital through sale of shares and debentures in January '91.

Unfortunately Magura Paper Mill has not paid any interest on debentures during the past ten years. As a holder of shares and debentures it is not known whether the plant exists at all. The shares and debentures are not yet listed in our stock exchanges and we cannot dispose off the shares and debentures whatever may be the price. Unfortunately, no return on investments has been received against shares and debentures of Magura Paper Mill though one is to pay 15 per cent interest in case of bank borrowings.

It is time to do something about it.

Mahbubur Rahman
Dasani, Bagerhat

Deliver or retire!

FBCCI leaders are thinking of telling the leaders of the two major political parties to shun the political hartal philosophy. This call cannot be ignored.

One party showed the way, and the other party is keen to show that it is

equal to the task. Hartal has become a face-saving device.

The local political pundits, in their arrogance, think that they can control all situations under all circumstances, at all times. The credibility of the political leaders are at an all time low, and they should take healthy steps for reforming the game of politics as it is played. No use blaming circumstances, environmental handicaps and past history. They are supposed to handle all types of transferred liabilities and adverse conditions, regardless of party affiliation. The voters basically vote for national causes, and not for the party.

Citizen
Dhaka.

Medical discovery

Discovery Channel often shows a programme related to medical science. But it is not aired at a time convenient to us. Many do not have cable connection as well. If BTV could show this programme on Friday evening, it would enlighten us by giving us insights on global progress in medical science.

Lailun Nahar
Dhaka