

Bangladesh election in Pakistani newspaper To have your cake and eat it too

League) has not overcome its hang-ups about 1971.

The BNP, according to newspaper reports, has won a two-thirds majority in the election which over 200 foreign observers have certified to be 'free, fair and peaceful' and the defeated party led by Sheikh Hasina has alleged widespread irregularity in the polls and has vowed to pay Begum Zia back in her own coin (an allusion to the three-year boycott of the previous parliament by a four-

have been killed in two of the four coups. There have been experiments with presidential system and parliamentary democracy. Economic policies too went through radical changes; it started with nationalisation and socialism and has now come round to free market capitalism, and it has been a success.

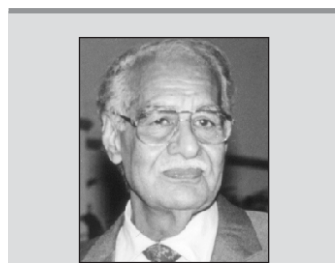
The most intriguing feature has been the development of an institutionalised caretaker government

has by no means been perfect but it seems set to take a quantum leap forwards with the BNP-led government. The paper has hoped that the new government becomes the second after its predecessor to complete a full term in office. However 'The News' saw some worrying signs as well. It referred to the worsted Awami League's refusal to accept the verdict, alleging vote rigging, result-manipulation and fraud. Such outcries, the paper said, are to an extent, an unfortunate but instinctive sub-continental reaction of the loser to face save. The charges are, in any case, unlikely to carry weight in view of the landslide nature of the victory. The verdict of the international observers in this respect is positive. No much more could be done to ensure free and fare elections, said 'The News' and hoped that Shaikh Hasina will resist the temptation of emulating her opponent who remained in almost constant boycott of the last parliament Shaikh Hasina's government had presided over at alarming state of lawlessness and had remained impervious to the charges of nepotism and corruption among her party; these allegations had swept away the economic and foreign policy gains on which her re-election bid was based.

The charges are unlikely to carry much weight in view of the landslide nature of the victory and, most importantly, the fact that the polls were conducted by a neutral caretaker administration installed by Shaikh Hasina herself in consultation with the opposition, the BNP.

Not much more could have been done to ensure fair and free elections, 'The News' remarked and hoped that she 'will resist the temptation of emulating her opponent'. 'Dawn' said the Awami League must learn to accept the people's verdict in good grace and play constructive role as the main opposition party in the new parliament. As for the BNP, 'Dawn' said, it is expected to show moderation and humility in its hour of triumph and prepare in all seriousness to grapple with the multiple political, economic and social problems facing Bangladesh in an increasingly complex regional and world context.

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KULDEEP NAYAR
writes from New Delhi

A US official has said, "You cannot win Afghanistan and lose Pakistan." Whatever it means, the fight against the Taliban was bound to bring this predicament in public. They are essentially Islamabad's creation. If you try to save them, you save in the process the fundamentalist tendencies which have been instilled in them.

Perhaps Islamabad did not want the Taliban have a one-track mind, hidebound, living in the domain of Islamic clerics and command. Faith tempered with a sense of accommodation, gives the believers strength. But fanaticism is such a heady wine that its consumption is seldom in small doses. Pakistan's own top military officer, former ISI chief Gul Hamid, was a midwife. He had turned Afghanistan into an extremist Islamic country and would have gone beyond if liberal Benazir Butto had not removed him soon after assuming power. But even she did not dismantle the madrasas, the breeding ground of fundamentalism, or the ISI special cell which has continued to guide the Taliban. She probably felt secure in having a Muslim state covering Pakistan's northern flank. Little did she imagine that Islamic Kabul would go one day out of her hand. Making Afghanistan a fundamentalist state was, in fact, the idea of General Zia-ul-Huq, Benazir Bhutto's predecessor. When he started extending support to the mujahideen, who were fighting against the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan, Zia's aim was to push back the Russian forces, which were coming down south, closer to the Pakistani border.

As the Soviet withdrawal became a real possibility, Zia's ambitions expanded. He came to believe that he could, for the first time since 1947, have an Afghan regime genuinely friendly to Pakistan. This would, indeed, give Islamabad the "strategic depth" against India, a goal the Pakistani military planners pursued. Zia also hoped that the

new government in Kabul would reflect his Islamic leanings far more than any previous Afghan regime had and far more than he had been able to impose on his own country. The Pakistan rulers felt happy in having Kabul under Islamabad's influence. The ISI used the distant Afghanistan, beyond the gaze of the world, as a training ground for terrorists. They became useful in Chechnya to confront Russia and to bleed India in Kashmir.

People in Pakistan woke up to the danger when the tide of fundamen-

is still pursuing two opposite paths at the same time. Musharraf is trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, as the saying goes. Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar has warned saying that "any decision on the part of any foreign power to give assistance to one side or another is a recipe for great suffering for the Afghan people." He may be right but the Taliban are the one who have been getting military, economic and political assistance. Islamabad has helped them, even by fighting their war to establish their

Muhammad Omar, has already declared jihad against the Americans and the Jews. And to tell the world that the Taliban meant business, they have even set fire to the deserted American embassy at Kabul.

Afghanistan needs to be retrieved. Fanatics of the right and the left have used its gullible people. They have a culture that accommodates the Pashtoons, the Tajiks, Uzbeks and dozens of other smaller tribes in the Afghan ethos of sturdy independence. But there is no place for the Taliban.

Perhaps the solution lies in having a composite government at Kabul. Leading tribes need to participate in the government. Islamabad is not averse to it but it would have to jettison the Taliban, however useful they are in Islamabad's scheme of things. King Zahir, ousted from Afghanistan some 30 years ago, has already given a call for peace and unity. He can be the head of a loosely knit Afghanistan. Northern Alliance leader Rabbani has also come round to accept them.

The real impediment will, however, be imposing discipline in a country that has known none, and removing fundamentalism, which has been imposed on the Afghans. Sattar should not be pleading the case of the Taliban because they will destroy what does not conform to their fanatic outlook. It would be better to tackle the tribal leaders directly because they are more tribal than Islamic.

Sometimes it looks as if history may repeat itself. The Soviet Union was not ready to intervene in Afghanistan in December 1979. The state communist party Parcham, headed by local leftist leader Babrak, forced it to do so because the party presented Moscow with a fait accompli. Parcham had already revolted against the then Afghanistan President Hafizullah Amin and had poisoned him. America too has been compelled to come in now because it was left with no choice after Osama's men struck at the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington.

One only hopes that the US will not get stuck as the Soviet Union did. If it does the world is in for a lot of trouble. As regards terrorism, every country will have to look from within. None has a clean slate. All nations must clamp down on their own extremists. It is a war of values, institutions and human behaviour and not against territory.

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LETTER FROM KARACHI

'Dawn' said the Awami League must learn to accept the people's verdict in good grace and play constructive role as the main opposition party in the new parliament. As for the BNP, 'Dawn' said, it is expected to show moderation and humility in its hour of triumph and prepare in all seriousness to grapple with the multiple political, economic and social problems facing Bangladesh in an increasingly complex regional and world context.

party opposition alliance headed by Begum Zia in support of mid-term election. Bitter rivalries and a spirit of personal vendetta between the two main leaders have been the bane of Bangladesh's evolving democratic scenario. True democracy in Bangladesh is not perfect. The election campaign was marred by nearly 150 deaths and Shaikh Hasina has cried foul. Pakistani elections are much more peaceful, though the loser's cries of foul play are as loud. Pakistan's journey has been interrupted, among other things, by the fear of sitting governments becoming so powerful that they perpetuate themselves. The daily, 'The Nation', has hoped that some similar (as in Bangladesh) constitutional provisions were made in Pakistan, under which an automatically neutral government would take over and hold the ring at election time, then that fear at least would be dispelled. The paper hoped that the next parliament should provide for similar provisions.

The Bangladeshi experience has not all been peaceful, it has been violently turbulent also. Presidents

system which is mandatory. As against this, in Pakistan it is invoked only by premature presidential dissolution of the assemblies. Unlike Pakistan, where the choice of a caretaker PM is in the president's discretion, even if he dissolves on the PM's advice (including the options of retaining the PM), in Bangladesh the most recently retired chief justice takes over as chief executive, and forms a council of advisers of limited size. The government does not embark on a wide-ranging series of reforms, or accountability witch-hunts, but conducts the elections and handles urgent and routine affairs. Political pundits had predicted a very close contest.

But they have been confounded and Begum Zia's BNP has won two-thirds majority. Some had said that the voters were disgusted and the winner will emerge more by voter default than design. But things have gone otherwise and, crucially, an international group of 200 observers gave the thumbs up to the poll.

All these, according to 'The News', are good signs for democracy in Bangladesh. The process

LAST week the local papers were full with news about and comments on the just-concluded national elections in Bangladesh. The papers fully covered the pre- and post-election activities of the major political parties; also they gave all news about the country. Such as the new ministers will formally take oath on Monday.

The elections, rather the resounding victory of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), presents to the rest of the world 'an object lesson in how a third world country can move from politics of coups to the politics of the ballot', one newspaper, 'The Nation', said. It commented that the phenomenon particularly deserved to be studied in Pakistan because the two countries had a common history and numerous similarities in their political and cultural structures. The paper referred to the possible shift of the balance ('Bangladesh's foreign policy is now likely to be more inclined towards Pakistan and away from India although, the paper said that 'it was not likely to produce a diplomatic revolution'.

The BNP may be more conservative and more inclined towards Islam, as evidenced by the components of its electoral alliance (which included the Jamaat-i-Islami), but it also is a moderate enough party to have a woman (Begum Khalida Zia, wife of former President Zia-ur Rahman) as its head. Past experience shows that the Awami League, led by the outgoing prime minister Shaikh Hasina Wajed, is no longer the firebrand, doctrinaire socialist party it was under her father, the late Shaikh Mujibur Rahman. It is also true that the BNP is certainly not anti-Indian and the party (the Awami

Challenges before health care delivery system Inherent lack of our understanding

DR. A.M. ZAKIR HASSAN

LIKE any other system health care delivery system also has problems that are unique to it. This is naturally compounded when issues evolve in a third world country, like in Bangladesh, where management as a system and as a discipline is taken rather casually, specially in the health service delivery system, where physicians who are not trained as managers, are bestowed with the responsibility of managing a system.

Problems and issues are dynamic by nature in every sphere of our life and in case any thing that revolves around our lives. They are more dynamic and therefore more complex if they occur every day in our life. Health is such an area. Health is a more complex issue for a system approach than many would understand. It is not a science perse and in fact most of its ramifications are not. Excepting the occurrence of disease and its technical management and the relevant researches nothing that relates to human health is pure science. Unfortunately the fact that health is a social as well as economic asset is not completely appreciated in our countries due to the lack of theoretical exposure and analytic deductions across the different strata of population.

In juxtapose to the above notion if we match the issues stated above with our intervention policies, programs, strategies and interventions or activities themselves then it would be very easily noticeable to any one who really ponders as to how weak, half-hearted, inadequate and inappropriate our intentions and efforts are! This does not mean that good intentions or efforts are totally

absent in our system. There are occasions when good, committed and well thought out attempts have been undertaken but due to myriad of reasons they have failed in the end. Our experience is that there will be very few examples that one would be able to cite to show that an endeavor that was undertaken was a complete success. Most of them, in fact almost all of the interventions that we take, either boil down to complete failure or end up in partial success. The reasons, as has been stated earlier, may be many, but a few of them are very vivid. A very important one of them being failure to understand priority of an intervention and sub-interventions and the second one is the lack of vision to understand the political implication of an undertaking. The third most important one being failure to put the right man in the right place, at the right time, who could steer well.

We come across the health care delivery system only when we feel unwell. This, in fact, is the irony. What we contend is that, whether in health or in sickness, irrespective of the state, we always need health care delivery system to come to our assistance either to maintain it, strengthen (improve) it or provide amelioration (in sickness). Either we have to be told what is good for preserving health and/or preventing disease or what we should resort to in order to get cured from a malady. Since science, and for that matter knowledge, is constantly leap frogging almost everyday, some new knowledge/information is generated more frequently than we anticipate and appreciate. If we are late in grasping them we will fall way behind and instead of being on the top of it we will be trampled under it.

Instead of blessing this information will soon appear as bane to us in the competitive market that exists around us. One example is the effect and impact of the so-called globalization on poor countries. It shows how a technologically advanced country with its technical prowess and knowledge, that

includes information and marketing technology, uses a poor country as its global market.

We need to know what are the causes of our own problems ourselves the apparent ones, and the reasons behind these causes? What attempts were taken to alleviate these, if any at all? What were the experiences thereof? Were these experiences used in solving our problems down the line? What happened as a result? Why despite the fact that a poor country like Bangladesh has no dearth of genuine and intelligent people we cannot solve our own problems? Why we do not listen to ourselves but on the other hand when some one comes from abroad, collects the facts from us, synthesizes them for us and lays them before us we are all ears for those? Why do we think that our problems are understood better by those who come from other countries? (By this statement we do not mean that expatriates are not useful, what we assert is that we should

listen to ourselves first, and that is what we are not doing right at this time).

Why we do not understand and what to do

The challenge is not that of understanding. Although it is true that most of us do not understand and envision our larger interests for

even create impediments in the ways of those who would solve these problems. This is our societal problem! This is how we are shaped up in a family, in a society and in this nation. This comes from our educational, societal and national environment. From our learning, from our mores, attitudes and deep seated

thoughts. If our education system does not take this into account then there is no way we can come out of this bizarre behavior.

In medical education nothing is taught about the society that we are living in, that we will have to live and work in. Just after 12 years of schooling we throw our general learning by the way side and dive into a professional education that does not tell us anything more on humanities, philosophy or history. So there ends the development of our analytic faculty, common sense, sense of humanities and pride in our past and consequently in ourselves and our present and our future.

We have to assess the effect of each and every action and every word that we take or utter and take remedial measures in the light of our past experience that is facilitated by institutional memory something that we are oblivious of! No mistake might be condoned, since we cannot and should not afford it, so that they are not repeated. This tenet

should be adhered to with a religious fervor and practice if we want to be efficient, i.e., achieve more with less expenditure. But alas, "we learn from history that we do not learn from history".

The other very cogent reason why we do not understand is that we do not have the time to understand.

recommendations given by others get an audience more easily, and hence we invite more of those 'others' who would not be in a position to know exactly where the shoe is pinching, to tell us where the shoe is pinching, what to do about it and how to do it.

We do not also understand or do not like to understand, above all, due to the conflict of interest among ourselves, issues that come into play in our decision making and we do not understand the harm that is inflicted on the system and to the development process *inter alia* due to our non intervention in the system. Our personal profits are more important to us than the collective gains and it is always safer to play it safe and not irk others with our decisions. The best therefore, is not to take any decisions; and let others do this dangerous job for us!

Right people, at right place at right time is the call of the day. There are right people, but they cannot be put in right place because of the strange public service rule that deters placing right people, in right place, at right time. At the same time we might not forget that none of the great efforts will come to fruition if there is no political commitment and support. "LEADERS DO RIGHT THINGS AND MANAGERS DO THINGS RIGHT." If our leaders, and which, by implication, means political leaders, do not lead us right, managers will only do as the leaders tell them to do. Right decision, at right time by the leaders - political and managerial, is the pivotal point for the success of any great endeavor and momentum. We have to have great people with great dreams and great courage if we really want to be great achievers.

There is no other alternative or short cut to greatness.

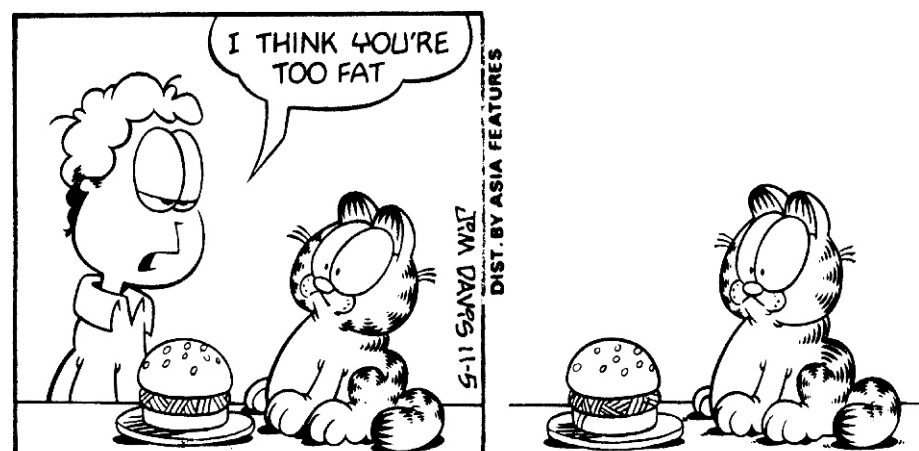
We have tried to discuss some fundamental problems in our health care management system. This notion however, might be equally applicable in other spheres of this nation. We will conclude this discussion with an example taken from the way the present five year development plan is managed by the Ministry of Health & Family welfare, i.e., the Health & Population Sector program (HPSP). Without speaking specifically and analytically, as a general comment, we might say that HPSP is a feasible and practical dream but to actualize this dream one needs to cherish and share the dream and have a vision which consequently will shape up a mission for all; that will engender dedication and commitment leading to hard work. All of these however, need honesty of purpose, to begin with, as the point of departure. These are the pre requisites for the success of a great (but feasible) dream that so many of us have dreamt and are still dreaming.

For implementation of a great plan we need a group of great people. Greatness does not come out of greatness however. Like Spinoza ones said - something cannot come out of nothing. This is our failure. We have dreamt big but forgot to identify big people and put them to hold the reign to bring that big dream to reality. No dose of advise and review will work as an alternative.

For understanding one needs to see, read, listen, study, examine, analyze, deduct and if possible induct. These need time, willingness and a basic level of common sense and capacity. In developing countries, one might wonder, if we have plenty of such people. Many of those few who have these faculties might be in problem, on the other hand, if they really want to lead us towards a bright future. Most of us in fact, face problems and wait for some one else to solve the problem for us. It is observed in specific in the area of our planning and policy making. So naturally therefore most of us would not understand these problems their nature, extent, cause, ramifications etc. because understanding comes from pondering and as an experience when one solves the problems oneself. Since we do not learn from our practical situations that we face so very commonly, so we do not develop vision. Somebody else lends us that. This probably is the reason that

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