

DHAKA SATURDAY JANUARY 19, 2002

# Setting the NGO house in order

#### Government must hold widespread consultation before framing new laws

IMPLY put, the NGOs have asked for what they are about to get -- new stringent laws governing their activities. What started off as a great way of reaching development aid to the very poor became a way of individual empire building, setting up diverse agenda only tangentially linked to poverty alleviation, getting into issues that had political overtones and, in some cases, indulging in self aggrandisement projects. All this has lead to serious questioning of NGO activities, eroding to a great extent the public goodwill that they had earned through their initial activities. The majority of the NGOs are not of course guilty of the above lapses. It is only a few but these few have done great damage to the overall image of the whole NGO community.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's meeting with some NGO leaders held last Thursday sets the tone for the emergence of a new relationship between the government and the development partners. We are heartened by what we read as to the outcome of that discussion. Frankly, we had feared a more hard line approach from the BNP-Alliance government as they were the direct victims of the activities of some of the NGOs. However the government has retained the bigger picture and did not allow its anger of the moment to get the better of its judgement. The PM captured the right spirit of NGO activities when she said that the latter were not a substitute for the government, nor were they its competitor but partners in the struggle for social advancement.

We would like to strongly urge that wayward activities of some of the NGOs should not be used to discredit their overall performance over the last nearly three decades. In fact some of their activities have been magnificent and have greatly added to enhancing our prestige abroad. However it cannot be denied that many of them lack accountability, especially financial. Very seldom are the audit reports of NGOs are made public and almost never to the press. Yes, there is an NGO Bureau which is supposed to supervise their activities, but it cannot do its job because of lack of adequate staff, necessary training and sufficient logistical support.

The PM's declaration that she will consult with NGO leaders in formulating the new policy is highly reassuring. We think she should also consult with a wider section of the society. However in an effort to make the NGOs more accountable we must not make the mistake of putting them under bureaucratic re-tape and thereby kill their spontaneity, flexibility and adaptability -- qualities that made the NGOs successful in the first place.

## For whom the partisan bell tolls?

### Administrative clean-up must be transparent

HE one man Committee headed by Enam A. Chowdhury, a retired Secretary and member of the

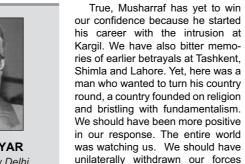
BNP Chairperson's Advisory Council has detected 107 'illegal' orders relating to appointment, promotion and transfers. The final report recommending actions on all of the orders will be formally submitted to the PM on January 23. The AL had decided to make the administration more party friendly when they came to power and now it's BNP's turn. It seems to be gaining the status of a must-do by a victorious political party.

Removing and installing politicized bureaucrats is a traditional practice in Bangladesh. But it began in earnest with AL's 1996 victory. The Awami League's Janatar Mancha made the process of partisanization a legitimate activity, blurring the division between political and administrative civil service. It looks like administrative revenge taking will further turn managing the state into a partisan activity. Once again, the governed are pushed to the background as the ruling oligarchs battle each other for supremacy in the name of the people. The Enam Committee will always lack credibility because a bureaucrat turned ruling party politician heads it. His decisions will always be read as such. The process will always be considered biased and BNP will have repeated the same error that the AL did. If the governing group really want to put an end to unfair hiring and firing in the bureaucratic world, they need to appoint a neutral person with universal credibility to look into the issue and decide independent of political pressure. Bangladesh has already managed to partisanize every sector and the deadly virus incubates happily in the governing apparatus. If they want to clean up the act, they must become transparent themselves first. Otherwise, the already weak structure will resemble a party subsidiary of officials disappearing every time power changes. Responsibility towards the system needs to be recognized immediately.

#### KULDIP NAYAR writes from New Delh

AS it necessary for the government to ask Chief of Army staff S Padmanabhan to give Pakistan a war-like message a day before President Pervez Musharraf was to make his broadcast speech? Although Defence Minister George Fernandes tried to tone down. reportedly at the asking of Washington, India sounded hawkish.

At a time when New Delhi was pursuing diplomatic efforts and succeeding with America and the UK, the army chief jumped the gun. Washington had conveyed to New Delhi a few days before the gist of Musharraf's speech, which he conveyed to the visiting US Senators. Still the army chief was not stopped. Even the reaction was slow. The government took nearly 18 hours to respond to the speech. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee could have consulted leaders of main political parties on the phone if he considered the exercise so necessary. Even after having been bitten at Agra, the government has not learnt how the media functions and how important it is to respond quickly to some of the announcements which Musharraf made. Our reply was timid, sparse and halting.



**Breaking the ice?** 

war against religious forces in Pakistan. It is a tough job because they have had complete freedom all along. The 11-year-old rule of General Zia-ul Hag strengthened them some even in the armed forces. Even Zufikar Ali Bhutto used

religion for his political purpose. He declared the Ahmedias non-Muslims and declared Friday a weekly holiday to placate the mullahs and maulvis. Musharraf may need some time in containing reli-

pointed out that jehad had a different connotation in India he stuck to his words. For him to say that jehad means an onslaught against poverty, hunger and ignorance, is quite a volte-face.

But when he has made a u-turn on Afghanistan in, what he called, "the national interest," he can do the same on Kashmir. His statement that he will not allow Pakistan to be used as a territory for interference in other countries is significant. This is,

Pakistan's former foreign minister, asked the Pakistanis sitting around our table how they felt about Kashmir. The people from Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Province shrugged their shoulders, while a Sindhi said it was too distant. Yaqub Khan turned to me and said: If you ask people in the south, or the non-Hindi speaking states, you will get the same answer. "The problem is between the Punjabis on the two sides," he said. "You should sort it

Muslim population. Had Jammu and Kashmir gone to Pakistan at the time of partition, people in India would have regretted it but would have taken it in their stride. Today, after 55 years, the state cannot be divided into three parts on the basis of religion. Can secular India allow the valley to secede on the demand that it has a Muslim majority? Such a course will harm our secular polity beyond redemption. The entire politics of the BJP and the Sangh parivar is anti-Muslim. The determination of the valley's future on the basis of religion will give it a card which it will play to destroy whatever secular polity we have built so far. The Hindutva forces will say that if Muslims in Kashmir want to opt out of India after 55 years, then why should the other 140 million Muslims be allowed to stav in the country? Even if all secularists in India lay down their lives in trying to protect them, millions of Muslims will be knocking at the door of Pakistan. Communal riots will become inevitable. The prospects are too horrendous to contemplate. It may be going back to partition which killed five million people on both sides and

Some way has to be found to sort out the Kashmir problem. But the solution does not have to be based on religion. Perhaps the governments on both sides can appoint some eminent people to work out a solution. After the Lahore agreement, Vajpayee's representative RK Mishra and Nawaz Sharif's nominee Niaz Naik almost found something acceptable to both sides. Vajpayee said at that time "we were almost there." An unofficial effort will do no harm.

Kuldip Nayar is an eminent Indian columnist.

uprooted 20 million others

BETWEEN THE LINES

Some way has to be found to sort out the Kashmir problem. But the solution does not have to be based on religion. Perhaps the governments on both sides can appoint some eminent people to work out a solution. After the Lahore agreement, Vajpayee's representative RK Mishra and Nawaz Sharif's nominee Niaz Naik almost found something acceptable to both sides. Vajpayee said at that time "we were almost there." An unofficial effort will do no harm.

from the eyeball-to-eyeball position. In the meantime, Musharraf carried accolades of approval practically from all over the world.

We have always wanted Pakistan to be a democratic and secular country. Is it happening? We will have to wait till October this year to find out whether Musharraf respects the Supreme Court verdict to hold elections by then. But as far as the secular aspect is concerned, he has said that religion and politics will not be mixed an attitude that is needed even in our country.

Qaide Azam Moahmmad Ali Jinnah announced on the eve of Pakistan's birth: You cease to be Muslims and Hindus. You are now either Pakistanis or Indians. His was a secular approach. But it practically died with him. Is Musharrf trying to be Jinnah II? He has announced a 

based on heavy emotionalism: the

Kashmir dispute was exploited and

an anti-India psychosis was pro-

moted that gradually yielded it the

Jihad in Kashmir, nuclear capability,

militarisation of the society, sectar-

ian terror, growing breakdown of law

and order. Jihadi culture, drugs and

Klashnikovs everywhere --- not

Logic of the change

that time. Large-scale arrests and sealing of offices will not satisfy India. It wants to see whether Musharraf's action would end crossborder terrorism. So far the axe has fallen on the terrorists working within Pakistan. Those who have committed terrorism in Kashmir have not been touched. In fact, some of the

challenged the Pakistan government. They are quite right in saying that the interpretation of jehad Musharraf gave till yesterday could not be changed overnight.

Musharrf had defended at Islamabad the jehadi violence in Kashmir before a gathering of iournalists from India. Pakistan. Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. He had argued that they were freedom fighters. Even when it was \*\*\*\*\*

and put paid to Taliban rule. Indians

have thought it to be the right time to

force the issue of Kashmir insur-

gency. US President George Bush

and British PM Tony Blair have

bought the Indian line hook, line and

sinker: what is going on in Kashmir

is terrorism and it is being supported

by Pakistan. The line also included

# banned terrorist organisations have

gious elements. He should be given lives up to his promise, the two countries can be friends again.

indeed, in his national interest. If he

The hostility with India has not helped Pakistan in any way. It has suffered economically and internationally. No doubt, the chapter of hate and hostility going back to 50 years cannot be closed overnight. Yet, much will depend on the education Pakistan imparts at schools and colleges. So far, there is too much hatred, too much distortion of history in the textbooks. The action against madrassas, however commendable, will not be enough. The content of instruction must change.

integrate with the rest of India, giving Mushrraf has said that Kashmir up the special status the state runs into the vein of every Pakistani. enjoys. Ladakh, a Buddhist-majority I am not so sure of that. During the state, is keen to become a union lunch hosted in honour of Indian territory, directly administered by delegates accompanying Vajpayee New Delhi. So we are left with the to Lahore. Sahibzada Yakub Khan. valley having a predominantly 

nists in the print medium or engag-

out between yourselves." Still Kash-

mir has plagued relations between

the two countries and it should be

discussed peacefully as Musharraf

has said. But once India's fears on

cross-border terrorism are set at

rest, there is no reason why the talks

on Kashmir cannot begin. The

agenda should cover all the pending

issues between India and Pakistan,

so that the subcontinent turns a new

become intractable over the years.

The state has got communalised.

The Hindu-majority Jammu wants to

The problem of Kashmir has

chapter of amity and cooperation.

ously based on new thinking --have to be thorough-going and all their concomitants have to be There are also grounds for a major

rethink. How and why it is that 54 years after independence Pakistan remains an unstable state where question of Jihad in Kashmir is democracy has not worked. It has the melancholy distinction of having indulged in what was a civil war and

PLAIN WORDS

Tolerance has to extend to all religions and other forms of beliefs. How to set up such a tolerant and plural society is the urgent task Gen. Musharraf has undertaken. He should mobilise reliable support

complete. Not that the world ignores the Kashmiris' wishes and desires for Azadi. Only, it does not approve

exception of China, which other

The latter's isolation on the

power stood behind Pakistan?

fourth military takeover. After the Umust. The new initiatives --- obviturn in Afghanistan policy and ing in political skullduggery of its Islamabad's joining of the World own. In short, no military agency, ISI Coalition against Terror, it was or MI, should have anything to do supposed that Pakistan was no with political matters longer isolated. But look again. Period Early in January, with the possible

implemented, if they have to succeed. Having made the departure from old postulates. there is no option but to ensure their success. The task is to transform the society as it now is into, at the very

least, what it was before Gen. Ziaul Hag's Islamisation of an otherwise quite Islamic country began. Zia's net contribution was to define Islam in orthodox (sectarian) terms. If we have to undo his mischief, we must think of what can replace it and how it is to be done. If sectarian terror is to be fought against, all that sustains sectarianism --- and indeed all religious intolerance --- has to be replaced with tolerant pluralism. Let all beliefs flourish and co-exist side by side peacefully and in amity. Tolerance has to extend to all religions and other forms of beliefs How to set up such a tolerant and plural society is the urgent task Gen. Musharraf has undertaken. He should mobilise reliable support and go on acting courageously. The political conditions that encourage and favour tolerance and pluralism have to ensure maximum and secure freedoms for all citizens without discrimination. Political institutions and procedures must not prefer one religion over others and the state or government ought not to be allowed to interfere with the people's beliefs or observances. The resources of the state must transparently be devoted to improvements in people's living conditions in an ambience where popular wishes are freely expressed and the government has to implement them.

and go on acting courageously. The political conditions that encourage and favour tolerance and pluralism have to ensure maximum and secure freedoms for all citizens without discrimination. Political institutions and procedures must not prefer one religion over others and the state or government ought not to be allowed to interfere with the people's beliefs or observances.

nationalists' campaign suspicion of Islamabad's complicity the methodology Pakistan has suffered a crushing military defeat regional against an unnecessarily strong the basis for an intended punitive employed in sympathising with -- and was dismembered. Its econmilitary campaign and massed Kashmiris. Credibility of the change omy is on a life-support drip, requircentre sans democracy. Now, this military government is embarking 700.000 troops on Pakistan bordemands one consequential, if ing much foreign support. It is in no on undoing all that --- if only it corders. The West did not overtly specific, measure: ridding Pakistan shape to bear the burden of the war rectly understands the politics of the blight that is inaccuthat India may still be threatening. endorse all the Indian charges but it concomitants of what is required to also did not express any clear rately expressed as 'agencies' or Indians know this and are more be done and how best to go about it. disbelief of Pakistan's possible ISI. Insofar as ISI is concerned, it confident in bullying Islamabad It is not an impossible task. But for culpability. Many Pakistanis subhas earned such a bad name that it rulers. The militaristic thinking that that there should be some accountscribe to the conspiracy theory that helped convert the peaceful has to be disbanded altogether. It is holds India's BJP government to be the mother of many evils; its hyster-Kashmiris' protest movement into ability of those who put the country on a course that yielded the current in cahoots with the US, Britain and ectomy is indicated. If counter insurgency circa 1990 was based on arrogance of power: 'now unsustainable situation. External others with the aim of knocking the espionage does require a separate manifestations of what they stuffing out of Islamic extremism military agency, in addition to the that we have acquired the nuclear achieved were two: Taliban rule in and its backers. This unsustainable federal government's civilian one, capability, we can do anything in Afghanistan and (violent) Jihad in situation has long been in the mak-Kashmir and, thanks to it, India can let them set up another. But it Kashmir, while a Jihadi culture and ing; it was the logical culmination of should have nothing to do with do nothing but writhe in pain'. Indians by their challenge on the boralmost perpetual military rule inside the militaristic mind set that has domestic political matters. Nor the country were the harvest in the ruled Pakistan ever since 1953. should it trespass into the field of ders have shown that they are no Pakistanis began talking seriously longer overawed by Pakistani domestic sphere. external relations. It should not do The Americans however pressof isolation in the wake of 1998 things that ISI has been doing: such Bomb. They have their own, only gauged Pakistan into a global antinuclear test explosions and Kargil as running a foreign policy of its larger. Both are back to square one of 1965. New thinking is therefore a Taliban and anti-Alqaeda campaign operations, complete with the own, raising a battalion of colum-

necessarily in this order. that last year's Dec 13 and Oct 1 Indeed, a pathological antiterrorist attacks on Indian Parlia-Hindu sentiment was promoted as ment and Srinagar Assembly were a glue that was to hold Pakistan masterminded by terrorist groups together and counteract the based in Pakistan. India made the

M B NAQVI

AST Saturday's (Jan 12's) speech by President Pervez Musharraf certainly represents a courageous new beginning by a general. Perhaps only a general could have done so. However, he has to pay the price of forfeiting the support of the much-hyped lobby that was puffed up by the socalled establishment far beyond its true strength. While Musharraf has to prosecute the new initiatives resolutely, he would need to mobilise the support of true modernists, liberals and other progressives

many of whom would insist on strict

rule of law, free and transparent elections and genuine democracy. Support of time servers, careerists and habitual like-minded (with the ruler of the day) is neither here nor there.

The general-President has also to anyhow cope with unrelenting American and Indian pressures for curbing Islamic fanaticism during the electioneering, polls and effecting amendments in the muchmangled constitution for legalising his own status. It is a bagful to do, no doubt. Curbing Islamic extremism by a non-democratic military government --- all the predecessors of which have fomented it --- can only be a tricky business. The kind of politics on which the permanent (or invisible) government of this hapless country has relied on was

MB Nagvi is a leading columist in Pakistan.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

#### **BAU** protest

Aside from the fact that this incident has shown that the BSS is simply a mouthpiece of the ruling party, I have another question. What is it about BAU being

called MAU that was so offensive? MA Dhaka

### Stop torturing the opposition

During the recent two hartals, the opposition leaders were beaten up mercilessly by the law-enforcing agencies. But as far as we have learnt in both the occasions the opposition's activities were peaceful. Then why did the government act so ruthlessly? It was not so long ago that the BNP was in the opposition and had to taste the same bitter experience by the then ruling Awami League. Shouldn't BNP learn from history?

Bangladesh is a democratic country and everyone has the right to hold rallies or processions as long as it is peaceful. Therefore I would like to request the government not to torture the opposition, forget all the differences and take part in developing the country

#### unitedly Moin ul Alam Mintoo Road, Dhaka

Home coming queen! 10th January 2002 was the home coming anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. And just two days later it was the home coming day of Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina after long 58 days happy absence from the country. agonv.

So long the country was yawning without her. Streets were slack. Black smoke turned white. Political agitation took gloomy mood. Anti government activities lost its life With her holy touch hope everything will regain life. We shall enjoy political agitation, non-stop hartal, casting aspersion to political oppo-

nents with slag language and undig-

nified remarks regarding Bangladesh. How happy the occasions will be that we the office-goers will not be needed to go to office. What's next?

> Nur Hossain Bangshal, Dhaka

#### A few words on Simi's death

Simi's tragic death has shaken our London in early January couldn't conscience. She tried to be indedent the image of Justice pendent, we tried to put her into Shahabuddin; it only confirms the shackles. She sought help from us, narrow-mindedness of a political we turned our face. Adding salt to party on more than one count: not her injury, her character was assasfacing the election result squarely sinated. With all the humiliation and (rigging is mostly marginal, not brutal harassment, she had no massive); and finding fault with a option but to kill herself. When I read president after ten years. AL Simi's last note "This harassment is appears to be trying to convince foreign deligation that the BNPworse than being raped". I visualised hundreds of women in our alliance government needs to be society passing their days in similar smashed, leaving a vacuum as usual Our politics is full of loopholes,

I am afraid, as soon as the media and the opposition culture has not hype is over Simi's death would be yet flowered. Both the major politiforgotten and our women would be cal parties are imitating each other facing the same old difficult time. It in the alternate roles. Fie on such is our responsibility to provide them politics! security and let them know that they Hus have equal rights Dhaka Parvez Ahmed

## What type of politics is this?

Savar

I do not understand the opposition propaganda on presence of the socalled Talibans as the MPs in the cabinet. Why aren't the lakhs of voters who voted for them criticised for disciplinary action?

The party is suffering from petty Sheikh Hasina's speech in leadership crisis and there is no

AL and Shahabuddin

After going through the statement of

former president Shahabuddin

Ahmed on AL, the Daily Star edito-

rial and AL response, I feel, as a

tired citizen, that it is time AL called it

auits, or it might be landing itself

inside the bottomless basket, from

which it can hardly come out.

relief in sight. The very approach was wrong: that the chanting of mantra of Sk Mujib's name would make the party faultless, and above judgement. This magic is not working, and won't work, as vindicated during the last general elections. A new brand of leadership has to

take over, not based on past sentimentalism. In fact, the very approach to the Bangladeshi political culture has to change: look into the future, and lead from the present

#### A Mawaz Dhaka

#### "Pakistan and Islam"

In Sahabnam Nadiya's letter (January 10), it has been stated that "to consider all Pakistanis as rapist and murderers is as idiotic as to think that Pakistan will not attack

Tajmohal as it is a Muslim artefact". But I consider and shall continue to consider all Pakistanis as rapists and murderers unless there is a formal apology from Pakistan. If the formal apology does not come, it means that the rest of the Pakistanis approve of the atrocities committed by their fellow countrymen in 1971.

In that case they are equally

guilty, though I know personally that many Pakistanis feel otherwise. It is the duty of the saner section of Pakistan to erase this shameful incident from the pages of history by exerting heavy pressure on their

government and convince them to tender a formal apology.

The same is equally true on the debate about dividng the country into Razakar and patriots. These Razakars can prove themselves patriot and loyal only by confessing that whatever they did in 1971 was wrong and they are sorry for it. Let them say so and no body will point finger at them any more.

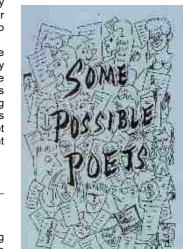
Sved Ahmed Faruque Dhaka

#### We sympathise poet

I am really touched after reading your mail, Mr Abul Ashraf Noor. The truth is, you are not only among those victims and needless to say, you are known to your achievement. I also have received a couple of invitation from Dr. Len Robertsbut for the time constraint I couldn't join those valuable conventions. I understand how are you feeling after being rejected VISA even after

Sarfaraz Khan achieving a tremendous honour. My

Denver, Colorado, USA whole-hearted consolation to the misery that you had to go through. Musharraf is a The compensation you are



EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

your reasonable agony. Please continue your writing and we know a poet lives within his/her work. Again, my all respect goes to your great work and I'm ashamed of the US Embassy's harsh behaviour to a visa seeker like vou.

true statesman demanding that has just come out of Musharraf's 12 January speech was the best under the current situation. He gave India a firm warning-- stay off otherwise you will

be dealt with iron hand. His stand on Kashmir issue is fully justified. His proposal to allow Amnesty and other Human Right organisations in Kashmir to stop India's state terrorism is praiseworthy. The UN peacekeeping forces should be posted to expose India's cross-border terrorism.

India wants to brand Kashmir movement as terrorism, but Musharraf's speech has hilighted this grave issue to world conscience once again.

He has banned jihadi outfits in Pakistan to show the world that the Kashmiris are fighting their own war of independence.

Lashkar was no doubt supporting Kashmiri struggle movement by sending volunteer fighters but the Kashmir movement is indigenous movement. It was before Lashkar or Jaish and it will continue without them until liberation of Kashmir from cruel rule of India is completed. Saadia Liagat İslamabad, Pakistan