

DHAKA SATURDAY AUGUST 3, 2002

VCs coming and going has become a tradition

The university must come before the party

ND now that the battle to remove Prof. Anwarullah Chowdhury from presiding over one of the lesser moments of Dhaka University has been won, one is faced with the unenviable task of having to stare at the fact that since 1971 as many as twelve VCs have held the job and all have left before completing their full term. And all because of politics of the partisan variety. While the students celebrate the departure of the person, under whose reign police attempted to impose law and order by beating up students, teachers and journalists, we may have to ponder the fact that the top post of the Dhaka University has all but ceased to be the apex seat of academics presiding over scholars and students. It has primarily become the elected chair for the favourite of any one political party looking after the interest of the same.

The last VC's entry into the post was controversial though maybe legal as he pointed out but the job certainly seemed worth grabbing the way he did taking the chair by storm tactics. It was unseemly of any academic and his departure is the exact reaction to his entry. But by agreeing to this process of entry, all others involved and this includes the government, are blame-worthy.

But this particular government in time didn't invent the system of VC election and the inevitable politics that arrives with it in a country crippled by partisanism. Those who happen to be the most educated are strangely the most partisan as well. Somewhere along the way partisanism has been accorded the status of patriotism and given the reward system that is in place, this may not go away soon.

The hunt for a new VC is on and many are already lobbying which makes the next choice equally vulnerable. Till a system is found which is not dependent on party politics and the teachers decide to put the University before the party, things that ail us and make us weep will not, with the change of a single man, make us smile.

Asif has made us smile

Amidst sporting gloom, there's a victory SIF Hossain Khan, the teenage sensation in sports, has presented us with a gold medal at the Commonwealth games after 12 years, the proverbial 'joog' in Bangla measurement of time. As our other sportsmen provide us with plenty of reasons to feel downcast, his shooting performance at the Commonwealth is extremely laudable. Congratulations to the young and gifted boy who will provide inspiration to many, and perhaps shame to a few others, to inspire an achievement or two. We could certainly do with them.

Asif is a student of Bangladesh Krira Siksha Protisthan (BKSP) which though well funded hasn't exactly provided so many victors given that it's exclusively devoted to sports. But this victory does make that outfit proud and one should now look into how to make it do better.

During this Commonwealth games held at Manchester, Bandladesh in fact reached international headlines immediately when five members of the contingent disappeared causing national shame. However, one returned, and the government has announced stiff measure to make sure that this isn't repeated. Otherwise our sportsmen may not get visas to participate anywhere else, again.

That's why, Asif Khan's victory is so sweet and it's also a testament to the individual's mindset and class which make him so special. He beat a number of world-class players and this was possible because he never allowed pressure to get to him. This is an exemplary display from



HARUN UR RASHID

RESIDENT General Pervez Musharraf expressed regrets of "excesses" committed during the period of 1971. The media has publicised widely the statements. He did it first while he visited the National Mausoleum at Savar and second time during the banquet hosted by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Centre.

Let us consider carefully the statements of President Musharraf, in particular the language reportedly used on both occasions

At Savar the relevant extracts of what President wrote in the visitor's book were: "Your brothers and sisters in Pakistan share the pain of the events of 1971. The excesses during the unfortunate period are regrettable." The significant phrases in the statement appear to be "events of 1971" and " the excesses of the unfortunate period".

Nowhere in the above statement it appears that there was any nexus between the excesses committed in Bangladesh and Pakistani armed forces in 1971. Furthermore, the phrase "events of 1971" appears to open to various interpretations. Many of us in Bangladesh may imply that the phrase refers to "the Liberation War", while in Pakistan

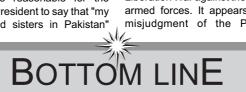
the people may rightfully interpret "the disintegration of united Paki-

Bangladesh from Pakistan. Secondly, the President wrote about the "excesses during the unfortunate period". The word "excesses" has not been qualified. that is to say excesses by whom and

What does it actually mean?

stan" in 1971. Therefore it is quite "parameters" used in relation to the "events of 1971" may mean that the logical to the Pakistanis that when their President wrote that " Your events of the Liberation War of 1971 brothers and sisters in Pakistan went beyond the parameters of the share the pain of events of 1971" original purpose or objective, they will mean the disintegration of according to Pakistani people. In united Pakistan or secession of other words, it may imply that "independence" of Bangladesh was not within the parameters of the events of 1971. In that circumstance it seems quite reasonable for the Pakistan's President to say that "my brothers and sisters in Pakistan"

Expression of regrets by President Musharraf



It appears that President Musharraf missed again an opportunity to heal the wounds of the people of

Bangladesh. It seems that he took a safe bet for his armed forces in Pakistan...The genuine expression

of regret must emanate from the leaders of Pakistan on realisation that stable and sound bilateral

relations must have the support from the people for a democratic government in Bangladesh.

Adequate measures should be the first priority to create an environment of trust and respect for each

other and only in that environment bilateral relations can move forward from strength to strength.

country in 1971. The generation that fought during the Liberation War are alive and can never forget what actually happened in 1971.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had personal experiences of the consequences of 1971 Liberation War and her husband the former late President Ziaur Rahman was a valiant freedom fighter during the Liberation War against the Pakistani armed forces. It appears to be a misjudgment of the Pakistan's

President not to come clean of the

brutal role of Pakistani armed forces

It seems that during the early

towards the people of Bangladesh.

period when the Tripartite Agree-

ment of 1974 was signed the follow-

ing statements went further than

what President Musharraf said

during his three-day visit in Bangla-

desh about the events of 1971. The

relevant extracts from paragraphs

14 and 15 of the 1974 Agreement

...The Prime Minister of Pakistan

declared that he would visit Bangla-

desh in response to the invitation of

the Prime Minister of Bangladesh

and appealed to the people of

Bangladesh to forgive and forget the

mistakes of the past in order to

promote reconciliation. Similarly the

Prime Minister of Bangladesh had

declared with regard to the atrocities

Paragraph 14:

are quoted below:

and destruction committed in Bangladesh in 1971 that he wanted the people to forget the past and to nake a fresh start, stating that the people of Bangladesh knew how to foraive"

Paragraph 15: " In the light of the foregoing and in particular, having regard to the appeal of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to the people of Bangladesh to forgive and forget the mistakes of the past, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh stated that

the Government of Bangladesh had

decided not to proceed with the

It was quite generous for the then

Prime Minister of Bangladesh to

express his desire for genuine

reconciliation with Pakistan in 1974.

However that spirit of reconciliation

was misunderstood by the then

Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto of

Pakistan. During his visit to Bangla-

desh in July 1974, he was reportedly

reluctant to visit the Savar National

Mausoleum and when it was told

that there would be the boycott of a

return dinner, he was obliged to go

to Savar. Even when he was at the

Mausoleum, he was reportedly not

properly dressed to show respect to

the martyrs of the Liberation War.

(Critical Times, Fakhruddin Ahmed,

P.124, University Press Limited

trials as an act of clemency.

Pakistan recognised Bangladesh in 1974, it opened its diplomatic mission in Bangladesh only after the tragic episode of 15th August in Bangladesh, All these bilateral events seem to demonstrate that Pakistani leaders have remained insensitive to the hurt feelings of the people of Banaladesh

The expression of aenuine rearet or apology of past unfortunate events from the leaders of countries is nothing new. Japan apologised to South Korea and China of its past events in those countries. The Pope expressed apology to Jews and Muslims for the past abuses committed by the Christians under earlier Popes. Germany has apologised for holocaust committed by Hitler's regime. The apologies are not sign of weakness for the present generation. Rather it tantamounts to expression of genuine reconciliation with the affected countries

It appears that President Musharraf missed again an opportunity to heal the wounds of the people of Bangladesh. It seems that he took a safe bet for his armed forces in Pakistan. The Bangladesh Foreign Minister Morshed Khan was right when he reportedly said to the media that the government did not wish to embarrass a visiting head of a state from a SAARC country. The genuine expression of regret must emanate from the leaders of Pakistan on realisation that stable and sound bilateral relations must have the support from the people for a democratic government in Bangladesh. Adequate measures should be the first priority to create an environment of trust and respect for each other and only in that environment bilateral relations can move forward from strength to strength.

It may be noted that although

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Banglades Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

Increase in the number of

reserved seats for women, techno-

crats and the ulema must also be

appreciated. The return of educated

people with diverse backgrounds

will greatly help in improving the

quality of debates in the parliament.

However, the new measure can

produce really good results if it was

used to give the representation to

agitation

to whom. Is it the excesses or atrocishare profound grief over the "paties committed by the Pakistani rameters of events of 1971". But for armed forces in Bangladesh ? The the people of Bangladesh indeterm "armed forces of Pakistan" pendence was the only option after seems to be significantly absent in the Pakistani military crackdown on 25th March 1971 in Bangladesh. his expression of regret

At the banquet the President appeared to have repeated almost similar sentiments and the relevant extracts from his speech were : " My brothers and sisters in Pakistan share with their fellow brothers and sisters in Bangladesh profound grief over the parameters of events of 1971. We feel sorry for the tragedy and the pain it caused to both our peoples". Here he used the phrase "the parameters of events of 1971" and the word " tragedy".

The dictionary meaning of "parameters" is "boundary or limiting factor" (e.g. a designer must work within the parameter of the budget). It appears that the expression

Constitutional amendments: The debate is on

Furthermore the President used

the words "we feel for the tragedy".

To which "tragedy" he was referring

to ? Is it the atrocities and destruc-

tion committed in Bangladesh in

1971? Or the separation of Bangla-

desh from Pakistan? The language

employed by the President appears

to be open ended for the people to

reach their own conclusion as they

the President have raised more

questions than they answer. It

seems that language casuistry

neither helps nor relieves the

wounds of the people of Bangla-

desh about what occurred in the

It appears that the statements of

deem fit

critics with logic and sincerity.

HE government has proposed a constitutional

package for the country that is quite comprehensive. It has positive aspects that, the government said, will help smoothen functioning of state

President General Pervez one has ever been, except of course in a military rule. In support Musharraf has launched a series of meetings with the leaders of public opinion to ascertain the people's views, which are sometimes very outlandish but he listens to all with patience and tries to satisfy the The main objective of the amendments proposed is to strengthen the

state institutions, which in turn, it is the army would not have intervened

ate action if it found something amiss. But this exactly is not the case. The proposed NSC, which will be composed of the most senior offices of the state including the leader of the opposition would have no executive authority. It would not even be an advisory body, its role would be consultative. The NSC will provide a forum to the highest state functionaries to discuss problems relating to security, finance and

meant to make the 1973 constitution more practical and responsive to the changing times. It would not be of great concern as to who the authors of these proposals are. Every proposal should be examined on its own merits. This should be worth remembering that whatever final shape the constitutional package may take, in the end it would have to pass the parliamentary test too.

Dhaka, 1994)

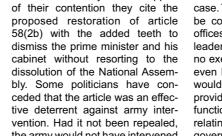
One new thing the proposed

people belonging to various walks of life/professions rather than trying to use it for imposing the elite or sections of the established political families

The proposals show that the government is keen to provide constitutional cover to some of the key positions in the polity to insulate them from political interference and ensure continuity in policies. In fact ant of the i the second inst

posals substantially raises the

number of such constitutional





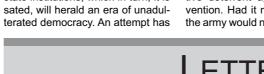
The new measure can produce really good results if it was used to give the representation to people belonging to various walks of life/professions rather than trying to use it for imposing the elite or sections of the established political families...Once the party leadership will swallow the bitter pill of democracy in

party structure, they will surely start seeing the benefits of the proposed reforms. Or perhaps new

leadership will have to emerge, for the current undemocratic structures have perpetuated political



M.J. ZAHEDI



a young boy that others need to learn and emulate.

One really wishes our most pampered sportsmen -- the cricketers -- would learn a few things from his performance as they seem to have made up their mind that nothing can make them perform well. One asks only for spirit, calm and application of skills from them but, as global commentators are saying, this team just doesn't have it now or yet. If the Sri Lanka second string thrashes it this way, one wonders whether we are really qualified to be in the same league. Just because there is money to pour doesn't mean we should claim what isn't ours, the right to rub shoulders with the adults of the cricket world.

Meanwhile we also remember Abdus Sattar 'Nini' and Atigur Rahman who brought us the first gold medal a dozen years ago in shooting too. One only hopes we won't have to wait another dozen years to get the next medal

Thank you Asif Hossain Khan from all of us in Bangladesh.

institutions, including both houses of parliament. Naturally, majority of political parties and politicians have strongly reacted to the package.

The government's argument for the proposed constitutional amendments is that the amendments proposed a system of checks and balances between the institutions to prevent interruptions in the democratic process and to stabilise the political process.

Nevertheless, the package suggested by the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) has literally involved the entire nation in an to numerous constitutional and unprecedented debate. Of course this bodes well for democracy and political crises. has been welcomed by the people.

prayer and sent him back to

Only two days ago, the Opposi-

tion walked out from the parliament

subordinate judiciary. If today,

subordinate judiciary was sepa-

rated from the executive, there

would have been no opportunity of

raising a question about the arrest of

critical political situation again. After

However the arrest has created a

a law maker or a leader.

Shariatour iail

Some critics of the government's (expressed through the NRB) Both the print and the electronic proposal say that it would make the media are presenting all points of President all powerful, rather the view ranging from total support to outright rejection of the proposed most powerful person in the counamendments. In addition, the try, in fact more powerful than any

dynasties!

been made, it is said, to attain this in October 1999. Again, the assemblies would be saved from premaobjective to establish a mechanism of checks and balances between ture death by the proposed addithe offices of the president and the tional clause empowering the Presiprime minister. This, it is pointed dent to dismiss the prime minister out, hitherto has not been present in without dissolving the national any of the earlier constitutions. This assembly. The prime ministers and mechanism will. It will ensure, it is chief ministers may come and go stated, that neither office transbut the assemblies would remain gresses its constitutional authority. and complete their respective Such a tendency in the past has led terms.

> Some quarters have strongly criticized the proposal to establish a National Security Council (NSC) They have tried to depict the NSC as the Big Brother (as in George Orwell's book) who will watch and monitor the parliament and the

prime minister and will take immedi-

NSC members would air their respective views on the problem under discussion and it will be the President who will make the final judgment.

The scenario is likely to be like this: the prime minister when he makes up his mind, no cabinet minister would dare to challenge his judgment, especially when the prime minister is heavily mandated. The NSC members on the other hand would not be beholden to the prime minister for their jobs; they will speak up their minds with fear or favour.

The constitutional package non-performing representatives at should be viewed and judged the time of election rather than impartially keeping in mind that it is going to the streets and resorting to

offices. Such offices are important for upholding permanent values and interests of the state and their amendments seek to introduce is holders need to be protected reduction in the size of constituenagainst governmental or partisan cies and the tenure of the legislative nterference. assemblies. These are bound to The reform package envisages yield political results. A short tenure enormous power for the political and elections at regular intervals may help eliminate the element of

parties. It is only natural that those whose stakes are in jeopardy will be agitation from the politicians in up against it. Once the party leaderaddition to proportionately reducing ship will swallow the bitter pill of democracy in party structure, they Canvassing will be less costly and will surely start seeing the benefits easier in smaller constituencies of the proposed reforms. Or perhaps new leadership will have to emerge, for the current undemotenure was short too, the people cratic structures have perpetuated would tend to wait to vote out the political dynasties!

> M J Zahedi is an eminent columnist in Pakistan and formerly the Editor of the Khaleez Times

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

Isn't BNP following AL?

One of the most important election manifestos of BNP coalition government was to allow autonomy of Radio and TV. The major fault of the previous government (AL) that led them to defeat in the general election was the nepotism in Radio and TV. So the people of Bangladesh hoped that the new four party alliance government would do something about it allow autonomy to these institutions. But there is no sign of any change.

BTV's performance is the same. It telecasts AL news during AL government and now it is all about BNP. Does the government think that whatever its ministers do is more important than everything else? People want news not information about Ministers

People whom we did not see during last five years are now on TV and everyday. It is notable that they are given chance not according to their merit but because they belong to the BNP government. Does the Information Minister realise what will be the compensation for such blunder? Md. Foyaz Ahmed

Economics Department, DU Public toilets

Inadequate number of public toilets is a major problem in metropolitan Dhaka. And what is more shocking these toilets are in a deplorable condition. It is really tough to enter these cesspools to use them

Mayor to have a look at these toilets personally and take immediate actions for their renovation and proper maintenance. People will not mind to pay Tk 2 per person if these are kept clean and in a hygienic condition

Further the city is growing fast and better facilities. Mrs. S Haq

Dhaka

ciary

A senior lawmaker of Awami League Shawkat Ali was arrested in Shariatpur town in connection with a murder case filed against him during the last general election.

Earlier, the High Court granted the MP's anticipatory bail and arrested him to appear before the trial court by July 23. Following a directive by the high court division, Ali appeared before the court but the Magistrate court rejected the bail

Therefore I would request the city

protesting the Chair's biased role. When the ruling party gave a fresh offer for a dialogue aimed at resolving the political crisis, at that time arrest of a senior lawmaker was not a wise decision for the ruling party.

new toilets should be installed where necessary to cater to the needs of the large population. You may possibly request some NGO's to assist you for construction and maintenance of new toilets with

Separation of Judi-

a long time, seeing the opposition in the parliament, people of the country had become hopeful about a stable political situation. But the people are frustrated.

We urge the government to take initiative to release the MP and give a chance to the Opposition for ioining the parliament. Beside that. we want to see the verdict of the Supreme Court implemented immediately about the separation of subordinate judiciary. Rafiq Bin Hai, Mymensingh

Stop farce against education

As the proverb goes "Education is the backbone of a nation" where as it has now been the mean of personal benefit. Individuals, particu-Though it was a judicial order and larly some teachers, related to the matter, we know that subordinate area, consider and education as a judiciary is not independent in our business matter. They neglect the country. So it is normal to raise rights of students. question about transparency of

For sheer negligence of few teachers of IER, Dhaka University, the students are now deprived from getting a job at PSC (Public Service Commission) as the subject (Education) is not registered yet, though it was to be included much before. A team of 4 teachers was formed earlier to take necessary steps for the purpose, but they did not do anything. We already have fallen back 3 months from the semester calendar because of the former VC The present VC and pro-VC are also

not cordial to the problem, and for that the students have been boycotting classes for a long time. It's surprising that no official step has been taken to calm the situation, to persuade the students to return to their classes. As a result, it is increasing the tension of the guardian. So my request to the Education Minister is: please give the acknowl edgement of the valuable subject and ensure a successful life of every student by accepting the rightful

> claims SM Mosharaf DL

Gambling

Although man is the finest creation of Allah, some times our deeds bring us down to the level of animals. The activities that corrupt and demoralise the society are many, starting from employing unfair means in the examination to gambling, drinking and rape, etc.

To prevent these sorts of activities the government must take strict measures that may eliminate violence from the root. But it is a matter of regret that in the name of maintaining Union Parishads, Thana Parishads and some times District Parishads gambling is going on in Gaibandha district, mainly in

Sadullapur Thana of this district, in the name of Baishakhv Mela at the same places again and again. As a consequence unsocial activities and crime like snatching and raping have increased in the area.

I hope the government will look into the matter and would take measures to prevent gambling. Md. Kamrul Islam, Gaibandha

Can the politicians save society?

Can the politicians save society? I don't think so. Some internal cleansing is necessary. Political activists are actually terrorists and toll collectors belonging to different areas. Tragic that politics has become more like fast food business. No waiting for the investment return as hardly any investment is necessary in this toll collection business and no procedure demanded except sharing parts of the loot.

Now the DCC ward commissioners are scared and are seeking police protection. Why? Many of the candidates now elected are said not to have clean background. Evil attracts evil

The fall out is that honest persons and leaders will shy away from public services, leaving it to the

Editor's prerogative

olitics that has been accumulating for years and is now posing a problem for succeeding regimes. The rulers know what should be done, but can they do it? Political perverse influence is eating away the nation's morale. And only God knows what's next? Abul M Ahmad

Fighting corruption

Thank you for the editorial on Mig-29. The Article written by Muslehuddin Ahmed titled, "Corruption: Enough is enough high time to stop it" is also praiseworthy for its elaborate discussion on the prevailing disorder. The activities of DESA, PDB, Titas Gas, Petro-Bangla, BTTB, Police, mismanagement in the banking system, Text Book Board now all have become like cancer to the nation. The UNDP matter with BTTB is a glaring example of the present state. The T9 report is another.

Therefore, we urge the government to place Anti-Corruption Bureau under the office of the ombudsman as early as possible with a retired justice as the head. MAli, Dhaka

An editor has the right to change a

letter when he does it for the sake of reducing the size of a letter, to accommodate it in the short space, expurgating what may injure the feelings of the general readers and cause uncalled-for furore, stamping on falsehood, and occasionally making the letter more lucid, particularly when it may steam off on an unintelligible tack. Of course, some not-so-honest editor may try to prevent exposure of his foibles, if

To me the editor of DS appears to be very honest. Let me give one example. The other day, an inordinately semantically irate reader wrote that "bloated" in a headline should be replaced by "inflated" or "ambitious". To be sure, "bloated" was used perfectly. Such use is common, and even Nobel-laureate economist Samuelson used it in this sense in "Newsweek". Yet, scathing as the remarks were, the learned

editor of DS published it! Thank you for this dispassionate overture, dear Editor. Eklimur Raza, Dhaka

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

goons. The basic cause is bad

the use of money during elections.

where the candidate will be usually

familiar to the electorate. If the