

MP's arrest smacks of political victimisation

After all he submitted himself to legal process in good faith

THE chronology of facts and circumstances leading up to the arrest of opposition AL MP Shawqat Ali speak for themselves. In other words, an impression gets inescapably formed, much that one might try to shake it off -- out of respect for judiciary that some kind of a politico-executive hang-up got the better of best judgement there.

Here is the tell-tale sequence of events proximate to the arrest. On the directive of High Court Division, which had granted him anticipatory bail until July 23, the MP appears before the local magistrate court with a prayer for bail.

The magistrate has acted in his best wisdom, but without any prejudice to the case we feel duty-bound to underline the sensitivity about the lower judiciary being under the control of the executive.

It is also essential to point out by way of putting things in perspective that there were two cases filed on the murder of Delwar Hossain in a clash between supporters of Shawqat Ali and those of an independent candidate who contested the former in the last general election.

Why fiddle with Viqarunnisa?

It's a threat to good school education

ONE of the few schools in Dhaka that has gained a tradition of excellence is Viqarunnisa. In the last five decades it has emerged as one of the most sterling examples of providing school education successfully and its reputation goes beyond the borders.

It appears that a move is on to hand over the job to a more politically pliable person.

Hamida Ali's contract has run out and although an extension was favoured by the school management body and the local MP, and was sent to the Chairman of the School Education Board Md. Junayad for approval, he has refused to endorse it.

Media reports that the guardians and students support the popular Hamida Ali and many have become disconcerted at the thought that the person who has led the school to its present stage in the last 19 years may be gone and an appointment based on cronyism will replace it.

It takes years to build a school. But it takes very little time to destroy a reputation and demolish the structure of an institution. In this case the course seems to be that of patronage before education.

Politics has managed to destroy almost every sector of public education in Bangladesh. Fortunately, some schools had managed to avert this because many children of the powerful study in local schools still and they have a stake in the system.

For the sake of children let's not tinker with what is functioning well. Children deserve something better than this politics.

The crassness of our political class



M ABDUL HAFIZ

hot and cold as its current mode of politics with the fond hope of returning again to power. The pattern has gone unchanged during the democracy's roller coaster ride in Bangladesh through last two decades.

Even as the country goes through the spasm of deepening crises, strangely the perks and

problem of its chronic under-development, the problem of nation-building and so on -- remaining indefinitely unaddressed. The stagnation that follows provides a field day to the self-serving politicians with their greedy fingers stuck in the ever-shrinking national pie.

politics. Moreover, increasingly the imperious conduct of the ruling coalition negates many of the norms of democracy which seems to have become orphan with an inconsistent opposition and inarticulate civil society.

The restoration of democracy from the clutches of long autocratic rule in 1990 had been a great political development for this country. It

taka to be paid annually as subsidy for AJM why it did not show the same anxiety for the recovery of 24,000 crore taka of defaulted bank loan for years?

Several crucial developments are taking place in the country when the important decision making has been quietly shifted to the Prime Minister's Office or at the best the cabinet is making a mockery of the

ponents' party and individual interests are taken care of. The opposition whose hands are stained earlier has little moral authority to register protest and the observation made by it is often reduced to platitude.

There is, of course, no instant cure for the malady. It is, however, clear that unless we can rid our politics of the present self-serving lot more calamities will overtake the polity till it succumbs to an evil force -- hitherto unthought of. The European democracies between the two great wars fell to such forces for their long neglect of the parliament.

We have a great potential for democracy and the history is a pointer to it. Let us not lose it through neglect, mutual bickering and diabolical greed for power and riches. We know what it is only when it is no more there.

Big (ret'd) Hafiz is former DG of BIIS.

PERSPECTIVES

There is indeed no room for complacency only with a label of democracy unless we make it functional by fostering first a democratic culture through respect, love and compassion for each other and their points of view. Democracy is a way of life and it can be embraced only with large heartedness and certainly not through letting each other down -- the only trait we have acquired in our parliamentary conduct.

privileges of the MPs and ministers are the staple of the political discourse and parliamentary debate while mutual mud-slinging is the favourite pastime of the politicians. The floor of the parliament is dominated by abuse and counter abuses which the honourable members have so far excelled in.

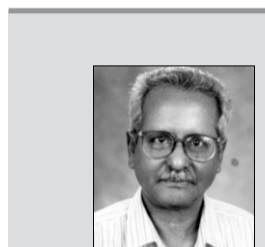
Where do we go from here? Once we hoped against hope that with the passage of time the nation would mature and some enlightened leadership committed to the national interests would emerge to replace the moribund one awaiting its extinction or some metamorphosis would take place in its outlook.

sparked new hopes, showed path to the nation groping for direction and gave confidence to the people of their democratic talent. But it soon aberrated in the hands of inept political leaders who have brought the nation to its present pass when the country's constitution is denigrated in removing its President.

parliament which is bypassed or ignored in the name of expedition. It is going to inexorably erode the spirit of the parliamentary democracy in this country and encourage the autocratic tendencies in the government. Yet while this practice is already in vogue, curiously the same sense of urgency is seldom shown in combating either the terrorism or corruption -- the twin menace for the country.

thinking of finding a new president as Nawaz Sharif cannot lead the party any more. Syed Zafar Ali Shah, a central leader of the party, thinks that Nawaz's younger brother Shahbaz Sharif might replace the elder brother as he was fully qualified to lead it.

Eligibility bar



M.J. ZAHEDI

the law is specifically directed against their leaders, a contention supported by 'Dawn'. The paper said that 'the law appears designed less as a constitutional safeguard against over-ambitious politicians monopolising power at the federal or provincial level, and more as a vindictive action against two leading party heads'.

degree-holders but because there was lack of decorum in both houses and the members, both present and absent, included non-graduates and graduates. Even politicians who underwent corruption cases and even those who were convicted were both graduates and non-graduates.

elections. Prominent among them are former NA Speaker Gohar Ayub Khan, the deputy chairman of the Senate and several other MNAs and Senators.

Dawn has come out very clearly against the latest law. It said there is already provision in the constitution to bar election of convicts to parliament. In view of this a separate law specifically debarring someone from holding a pm's or cm's office was wholly unnecessary.

LETTER FROM KARACHI

These laws and regulations are being taken recourse of to ensure a pliant parliament and prime minister... any law that snatches away the right to contest election from 98 per cent of the population cannot possibly be a good law. It is voters alone, and not arbitrary laws, that should decide who is best qualified to represent them in parliament and other legislatures.

TWO recent decisions of the Pakistan government seem to have thrown a shadow over the coming restoration of democracy. One of the decisions bans anyone with more than two terms as prime minister of the country or chief minister of a province from holding either office ever again.

In the defunct parliament, 79 MNAs and 22 Senators including Benazir Bhutto did not possess a bachelor's degree, a threshold of qualification for contesting October elections. The Supreme Court has upheld the threshold. Of course there are conflicting claims on whether Benazir has a qualification equivalent to a bachelor's degree.

bar. It said the relevant law is misconceived and therefor 'highly controversial', posing a question mark over the future of a large number of veteran politicians as well as aspiring newcomers. This is too sweeping a move and violates one of the tenets of parliamentary democracy.

Naturally it has created a serious problem for the political parties as now they will have to bring new leaders against many offices and review the provisional list of their candidates. The Supreme Court's verdict will result in the rolling of many heads in the parties' set up. It would not be easy for any political party to find graduates both for candidates to fill assembly seats as well as to fill party offices.

also the party's Punjab president also have to go. What however seems certain is that the effective control of the party will remain with the deposed prime minister, though indirectly. The PPP also is faced with the same problem. Benazir's presidency is already a matter of question, several other leaders also are faced with the same fate.

REFORM PROGRAMME MUST BE FOR MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

FOREIGN office as a matter of fact receives very often attention of the critics for obvious reasons as many feel foreign service officials enjoy luxurious life abroad and supposedly consider themselves as exotic to an extent while residing at home.

background information or news analysis coming from different foreign sources are invariably slanted to meet the needs of their masters.

Therefore, there is hardly any need to emphasise on the importance of research wing in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The library equally plays an important role in disseminating background information on important matters if it is equipped with reference books, world almanac, Kissing archives, who's who, important journals etc.

integrated with the foreign office or should be sent back to their parent ministry. Similarly press posts in Bangladesh embassies remain under the administrative control of the Ministry of Information while the External Publicity Wing has been reverted back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

had fallen vacant following the retirement of the last legal advisor. As a stop gap arrangement a retired Foreign Secretary held the post for quite some time but his emoluments could not be decided upon as the status of the post is at the level of additional secretary.

aries. The officer, who also has qualification in law, should fill in the post of senior assistant secretary in the legal wing.

groom the budding diplomats are declining as the administration refuses to accept fellowships on the plea of shortage of manpower.

required to restructure the ministry in order to induce energetic and intelligent young officers to make the ministry dynamic and performance-oriented.

In the recent past as many as four committees had been formed to look into the affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs along with other ministries and they recommended suggestions for improvement. The committees were Brigadier Enam Committee, Mustafizur Rahman Committee, Rashid Committee and Morshed Khan Committee... No attention was given to improve the quality of working force and structure of the Foreign Ministry.

publicity set-up defeats the purpose of the wing itself. The important publication of the external publicity viz., Bangladesh Documents, which serves as very useful reference, has ceased with the departure of a political party from power.

the past. Recently the post of deputy legal advisor was filled in by an officer from administrative service who has legal background. The posts of legal advisor and deputy legal advisor should be filled in by selecting from among professional leading lawyers, who have background in international law as well as knowledge about law of the sea.

expect good performance in the given circumstance. Recruitment policy needs to be changed for Foreign Service cadre. The objective should be to build a work force that reflects the excellence and high professional standard.

tion of the administration is drawn to the academic atmosphere of the Foreign Service Academy, which has also been reverted back to the fold of the ministry.

In view of the present condition of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reform programmes would be

OPINION

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