

Do we mean to contain corruption?

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

BAKLADESH is known so far in the media around the globe as being a country of catastrophes, hunger and poverty, over population and in constant need of foreign aid. Immediately after the birth of the independent state many western pundits predicated that this country, when left to itself, could not survive long. In spite of all these adverse remarks Bangladesh has survived because of massive aid from the international donor community, but the position of the country in the comity of nations is disgraceful. Last year the country was adjudged as the number one corrupt country. This year cabinet minister in the ruling party was charged by a foreign donor country as corrupt person. Where does the country stand actually?

Rampant corruption by the politicians, police, customs and officers of different ministries has made the country practically sick. General masses are frustrated to see corrupt politicians, who come to power, to grab as much as possible. They simply do not care for the welfare of the people. They are equally not concerned about the proper development of the economy. The number of unemployed working force is increasing by leaps and bounds. There is little prospect for setting up industries either in the private or public sector. Because of political uncertainty and absence of good governance entrepreneurs are not feeling secured to invest in new project. Business community, by and large, has been experiencing hard days because of competitiveness externally and internal restrictions in the form of levies and taxes. The Minister for Finance has directed different revenue collecting agencies to realise as much revenue as possible internally to meet the expenditure of the government because there will be no aid from external sources in the coming months if there is no improvement of law and order situation, human rights records.

Both BNP and Awami League in their political manifestos made it clear to the voters and general masses in unambiguous terms that when voted to power, their priority would be to find out ways and means to contain law and order

situation and eliminate corruption.

The important yardstick of good governance is to ensure rule of law in the society. Without rule of law no government can claim to have the country governed democratically. If the rule of law does not prevail, a jungle law will work instead. To maintain rule of law in the country judiciary should be separated from the executive and work independently without fear or favour. In the constitution of Bangladesh it has been stated clearly in article 22 that the state shall ensure the separation of the judiciary from the executive organ of the state. In this connection, I would like to draw attention of the policy makers to basic principles

executive for small favour."

Since both the ruling and opposition parties are committed to separate judiciary from the executive branch it should be done sooner than later. Without separation of judiciary corruption in the country will continue unabated. Whenever a new government is voted to power, many belonging to front organizations of the political party and over and above, Central Bargaining Agents (CBAs) of sector organisations leaning to the party tend to get involved in a series of corruptions. As a result, a meter reader or line-man could amass huge wealth at the cost of poor taxpayers. A thorough judicial inquiry is required to

process of harassment.

Political parties, in their turn encourage the practice of corruption. The immediate past government filed number of corruption cases against its predecessor Prime Minister, Ministers, MPs etc. Charge sheets were submitted by the bureau of anti-corruption with the consent of the incumbent Prime Minister. The process of submitting the cases to the court of law takes long time. This type of filing corruption cases appears to be a tactic by the ruling party to tame the opposition party because cases are not taken up at the court of law as seriously as these cases demand during the tenure of the ruling party. As soon as another newly elected government takes over power the cases filed during the period of immediate past government are withdrawn without completing due process of law. The people are amazed to see the game of politics which actually help breed corruption.

It is understood that a case is filed on the basis of evidences and documents. Why then it is not contested in the court of law to prove that these cases are filed not to harass leading members of the opposition party? Please remember that one cannot fool the people all the time. In a way they are making fool of themselves in the ultimate analysis. No body will take seriously the white paper prepared by the 4-party alliance on the corruption by the immediate past government if the allegations are not proved in the court of law. Therefore, it turns out that cases filed by the ruling party against the members of the opposition party are designed to manipulate and coerce them. The tactic is not conducive to curbing corruption. Rather, this would increase corruption.

Therefore, independent anti-corruption commission as conceived by BNP in its political manifesto should be implemented and judiciary should be separated from the executive branch. If these schemes are implemented by the present coalition government with promptitude and sincerity, they will go down in the annals of the nation in red letters.

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on the independence of judiciary adopted at the 7th UN congress on prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders. There were seven principles, which were unanimously endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1985. Of the principles, the relevant one is that the independence of the judiciary shall be guaranteed by the states and enshrined in the constitution or the law of the country. It is the duty of all government and other institutions to respect and observe the independence of the judiciary.

In the case of Bangladesh where judiciary is not separated from the executive organ of the country, there is a big question mark as to what extent judiciary could function independently. Possibility of manipulation of the due process of law by the executive branch cannot be ruled out. According to Justice

Abdur Rahman Chowdhury (*Democracy, Rule of Law and Human Rights* P-10), "no judge can be expected to act without fear or favour with a sword of Damocles hanging overhead and more so, when he is dependent upon the

take stock of their assets compared to their take-home salary. It is really a matter of surprise and shock to find out that these people became overnight part of opulent society. One day a member (Administration) in T&T Board, who subsequently retired as chairman, confided to this writer that he had no power to transfer his pen from his working place to another working place. Officers are practically working at the mercy of the leaders of the union because they have direct access to the leaders of the ruling party. Therefore, transfers, postings and awarding of tender to such and such favourite parties are influenced by the union leaders, who enjoy the blessings of the political leaders. There is hardly any need to emphasise the need for banning the activities of student fronts and trade unions.

Another den of corruption is the settlement office where allegedly by bribing handsomely the ownership of landed property can be changed. The actual owner has to make another appeal thus incurring expenditure and pass through a

From OAU to AU: A change for the better?

A M M SHAHABUDDIN

"YOU cannot tell a book by its cover," so goes the time honoured adage. It is the contents that make a book memorable and praiseworthy and place it at an enviable position. So it would be too early to comment on the creation of a new organisation, called African Union (AU), at a recent African Summit held in Durban, South Africa, burying the 40-year old 53-nation Organization of African Union (OAU). The Durban Summit of OAU leaders signed the death-warrant of the old 'dame' and gave it a rather unceremonious burial, giving birth to the new body, with lofty ideals of ending poverty, corruption, abuse of human rights, ethnic conflicts and civil war and establishment of democracy and civil rights. It is rather difficult to predict how many of these objectives would come true. Even some of the founders of the new organisation are not sure about their fulfilment.

In fact, the whole operation, I mean, the changing of the sign-board is neither a 'change of guards', nor does it indicate a 'change of hearts'. It can at best be dubbed as a 'change of mind' to create something new to cope with the problems, where the OAU had failed. As the 'old guards' of OAU, who happen to be the key-players on the African political chess-board, will be in full force, in their respective positions, in the new organisation, to play their 'game', as they had done so far, it becomes all the more unpredictable.

AU to replicate EU?

The sponsors of the AU are said to be aiming 'to replicate' the EU (European Union) to bring about economic prosperity and democracy through social, economic and regional integration. It is too high an ambition, no doubt, to have a 'replica' of EU in Africa. And it is not as easy as it looks. That is why they say: 'If wishes were horses, then the beggars could ride it'. Anyway, mine is not a discouraging note but just to point out the 'pitfalls' on the way. It cannot be denied that the EU and the new-born AU have their own basic strength and weaknesses, both economic and socio-political. The big contrast between the two is that EU carries a much cleaner slate than AU, in the sense that it is free from any internal or ethnic conflict, civil war, violation of human rights, whereas AU is infested with all these evils, besides widespread poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy. Moreover, EU has built up a strong economic base with its new common currency Euro, which although has not yet been able to become a rival of US Dollar, but already has started asserting its big weight felt on world economy, trade and commerce. That is why South African daily *Sunday Times* had pointed out that the new organisation will inherit an ineffectual structure, a continent riddled with corruption, disregard for the most basic tastes of democracy ... what is worrying is that some of the leaders who will commit themselves to the AU's objectives are themselves 'dictators, murderers and thieves'. It is true that 'Rome was not built in a day'. Only firm dedication and commitment on the part of new emerging African leadership can make their long-march a success.

Big departure

However, the only big departure that the new body has made from its predecessors' traditional path, at least on paper so far, is that the new Union "will have the right to intervene in member states in cases of genocide and war crimes, and, so in

theory, be better placed to tackle abuses". But before the 'new baby' could settle down on its 'cradle', some of the African leaders are reported to have expressed doubts about their "readiness to get tough" with each other over the question of intervention in member states in cases of genocide, and war crimes as well as any other 'wrong doings' in the African continent. What is, therefore, most needed for the African leaders is to maintain solidarity among them at any cost because lack of which in the late OAU had caused a great setback and created hindrance to its activi-

end the tragedy overtaking the continent. To mention a few, these include the UN peace-keeping operations launched in a number of feuding African States, where OAU and UN worked together. Similarly, in the rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes launched by the UN, in a number of war-ravaged African countries, OAU was also involved. Unfortunately, some of the African countries have not yet been able to free themselves from the deadly legacies left by the former colonial rulers. Many think that the 'hidden hands' of the evil forces want to keep the pot boiling to

The success of the gigantic task, undertaken by the newly formed body, AU, in putting the much-grilled socio-economic and political situation on the right track largely depends on the unity and solidarity of all the African leaders to face the national calamity boldly and squarely. For this, on one hand, they will have to shun the present suicidal policy of bloody war-path, and on the other they will have to

serve as an excuse for their re-entry into their lost territory, if not as rules, but as traders, to open their 'market' for sale of arms and ammunitions, to fan the fire.

OAU and Apartheid: The most important achievement of OAU, however, has been the abolition of the most cursed and hated apartheid system, which was worst type of institutionalised racial discrimination practised shamelessly by the minority white racist government on the majority black people, and that also as an official policy since 1948, showing least regard to all UN actions against the racist regime. But ultimately, they had to give in. Under this system, the black people who were, so to say, sons of the soil, were reduced literally to slaves of the ruling people. Nelson Mandela, that ever green legend of South African leadership, continued his struggle against the racist system and had to suffer prison terms for over two decades. However, in 1994, Mandela became first black President of South Africa, ending the supremacy of the white racists

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Student politics: Assorted thoughts

ZAKARIA KHONDKER

MANy of us want a ban on student politics without even knowing the nature of the ban. Does that ban mean students will no longer be able to organise and protest against any misdeeds of the politicians?

What we have seen that BNP and AL mostly imposed favoured boys on the students from their own political interests. I don't see much of harm if students do their own politics and don't shout slogans for BNP or AL. There was a time, the ancient days, students were meant for studies only and lived like hermits, totally isolated from social lives. Nowadays this ideology no longer exists. Students need to know what's going on, need to learn gradually how to deal with the situation long before starting a career. There still will be people who believe student politics should be totally banned rather than just isolating from partisan politics. I am against that and I have reasons to explain.

Dhaka University can't accommodate most of its students. Many students who don't have hope to get a seat until third year or masters have two options. They can either reside off campus or join a student party for doubling or flooring. Most of them have chosen the second option. They have to join processions occasionally and can stay on campus with better socialisation and further orientation to the campus culture. They also have to spend less money, travel time and have better chances to make up for studies. Few of them choose politics and/or extortion as careers and mostly don't worry about studies.

Some capitalise from the situation and perform outstanding, who are no longer required to take part in party activities. They become assets for parties' reputations. They would not have done better otherwise. Most of them perform average and join party activities and socialise themselves on campus. They would not do better living off campus either. Many join politics out of frustration; they could have been drug addicts otherwise.

The Dhaka based middle class, which is the most vocal group against student politics, will never realise the nature and intensity of the residency problems faced by students coming from the rest of the country. What will be the solution for them when student politics will be totally banned?

Let's look through the session jam. I can see the vivid picture of a professor walking downstairs just before our class started, every day until two months before the final exam. He had no problems with that, as he was holding a political banner. Another of my teachers could not finish his course because of irregularity and the exams of the whole Science Faculty had to end two months later. Teachers can get promotion through "Bangabandhu Parishad" or "Zia Parishad" or "Jamaat connection" without having a Ph.D. or taking regular classes. Most departments publish results several months after the exams are over as teacher are too busy to spend enough time to grade the papers. Why are they too busy? Doing research or pushing on politics?

The greatest potential danger with banning all student activities is

the potential rise of religious extremism. They use religion as a cover for all kinds of backward, cruel, unpatriotic, and tyrannical activities. These extremists call on children as early as primary school. Their children wing, starts enrolling children, paying or convincing parents, and gradually incorporate their perversity in their (student) minds. These kids grow up as disciples and wherever they go they preach. These religion traders will arrange food and lodging for university students facing residency problems driven from ban on student politics and will gradually grasp them. Unlike progressive and democratic forces they can work underground and don't need any formal platform to work on.

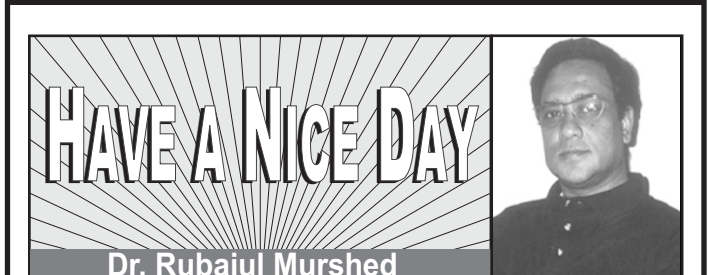
When teachers don't take classes, don't grade the papers on time and close the university for more and longer family vacations, student politics is to blame for piled up session jam. When autocrats close the campus for months, student politics is to blame. Hundred percent of the gun battles in Dhaka University campus was caused by tenders and extortion since '90s. You won't be able to show me any single example of gun battle caused by student politics in that period. Again the student politics is to blame. Can we stop the extortion, tender hijacking and gun battles just by banning student activities? Most of us take the easy task of blaming student politics for everything negative on campuses; a superficial swimming on the surface without having the idea of what lies beneath. When the whole pond is full of mosses can you keep a specific area clean forever?

We need to stop gun battles,

extortion and terrorism in the name of student politics. We want to see no high school dropout imposed as a student leader. We want to see student politics isolated from our dirty national politics. If intention is not honest, ban may lure more students to off campus locality politics and more to extortion.

Whenever we had a national crisis, whenever our matured political leaders and intellectuals failed students came forward to fill the vacuum. It was seen in British ruled India, under the whole period of Pakistani rule, in our liberation war and in pulling out a military autocrat like Ershad. Are we sure that no such crisis like dynasty driven monarchy or religious extremism is on the horizon? That we don't need any student movement to build awareness against these potential dangers? When there is no need, students will not fool around for movements; automatically they will go back to studies. Let the students decide what political movements they will purport, isolate them from AL or BNP and see what happens. Let's see what happens after separating students from AL and BNP and go step by step so that mistakes can be corrected readily. Let the students choose if they want to join politics rather than commanding our thoughts on them. Let's not pretend that our boys are immature and incapable of taking care of themselves. Ban on student politics should be based on evidence not assumptions.

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All health information to keep you up to date

Its about DNA

'DNA' is the basis for all living things. All living matters on this earth from tiny worms to big elephants to humans share this, which is a basic thing in common. According to the scientists, human DNA is 98 per cent identical to that of chimpanzee's. DNA from both plant and animal comes from the same physical units known as A, C, G and T. These are four base chemicals constructing our genes. Believe it or not, we share the same number of genes as the common mustard weed. If the entire DNA in the human body were put end to end, it would reach the sun and back 600 times. It is interesting to note that we all share about 99.9 percent of the same DNA as our neighbour, and even more with our parents and children. Difference may sound very little but it stands for three million dissimilarities in the three billion long DNA chain.

Forensic-DNA typing, a revolutionary concept, was first used in 1986 in England in the case of Colin Pitchfork, who was eventually convicted of the sexual assault and murder of two teenage girls. On the other hand, recently a young man who had wrongly confessed to a murder was saved by this technology in Canada. With the DNA-typing technique it is possible to prove the real criminal or murderer. This is also helpful in the identification of missing persons and human remains.

Next : Children first.