and unite with the West and others

to fight the common enemy --

unlikely to emerge from the

destructive acts of Osama bin

Efforts should be directed

towards achieving "global civic

ethics" as recommended by the

LATES. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY MARCH 20, 2005

Auditing Rajuk 10 years too late

A deeper and wider probe needed

THAT'S going on in Rajuk? Internal auditing has resumed after a lapse of 10 years, and the very surprising news is that over 200 highly important files have disappeared from it in the interregnum, indicating the depths into which corruption

It is really strange that the working and financial dealings of an organisation that plays a pivotal role in real estate management have gone unmonitored for a full decade. All because of the fact that an office order was passed to keep the important exercise on hold. Now the question to ask is under what authority the order was passed and who did it.

Rajuk's activities have changed the city landscape during the last 10 years. They have turned residential plots into commercial ones and allotted reclaimed or filled up low-lands to people, deviating from urban plans and impinging on environmental norms. So, Rajuk has worked as the central institution, determining which way the city would grow and how, with the DCC playing a peripheral

Against the backdrop, while welcoming the resumption of audit, we would urge the government to institute a wider and deeper probe into all kinds of activities undertaken by Rajuk during the last 10 years. It is a matter of great concern that the missing files contained vital information regarding Rajuk's financial transactions. It would be in the fitness of things for the government to have a task force go into the Rajuk affairs, so that (a) the suspected foul play is fully unearthed and the culprits are punished; and (b) the organisation is overhauled to enable it to play its designated role under some effective supervisory authority.

The response to the syndrome of missing files must be a vigorous one because it is symptomatic of eating into the vitals of an organisation crucially responsible for urban development into the new millennium.

Applauding the business leaders

They have done the nation proud

HE importance of recognising leaders of business for their innovative and creative ascent from virtual scratches can not be over-emphasised. Because they can serve as role models for the upcoming generations of entrepreneurs. We recognise them because they scaled to the top against all odds. Undeterred by policy inadequacies, political unrest including hartals, deteriorating law and order, high cost of business and a high incidence of corruption, they reached admirable heights in their respective fields. They have generated employment, stepped up production, and increased export earnings for the country.

It is thus that we congratulate the winners of the Bangladesh Business Awards 2004 jointly sponsored by The Daily Star and DHL Worldwide Express. The recipients - Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd as the Enterprise of the Year, Selina Quader as the Outstanding Woman in Business of the Year, Kazi Zahedul Hasan as the Business Person of the Year and finally Unilever Bangladesh Limited receiving a Special Achievement Award -- deserve a second round of applause, through this column. For, the more we think of them, the more we feel appreciative of their role in the economy.

We are delighted to be appreciating such people for what they are worth and also for being a part of the process they have successfully spearheaded in the business world. If the business environment is further improved and more enabling environment can be created for private enterprises, then the sky would be the limit for the country's economic growth. The government says its objective is to encourage private sector-led growth. To that end, it speaks in business friendly terms. But the words are not always matched by deeds. We must take measures to provide the honest, hardworking entrepreneurs with the best deals. For, they not only fetch earnings for the country from abroad, but also bring accolades thus enhancing the image of the country.

Religious extremism and freedom of choice

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

F truth be told then western obsession with security and war on terror, horrific though the al-Qaedist acts are, have caused sharp divides in the world. The transatlantic fracture and the tectonic shift never seen earlier in American history in security and foreign policy effected after in the change of administration from Bill Clinton to George W Bush felt by Madeline Albright are on the wane partly due to "kin country" syndrome which has brought together groups or states belonging to the same civilization and partly due to historical inevitability of rising coalition of countries to balance the dominant power. Therefore despite unquestionable American preeminence the most important conflicts of the future, predicts Samuel Huntington, will occur along the fault lines separating the Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and African civilizations from one another.

Huntington may prove to be prescient after all if one considers intra-European controversy generated by the invitation extended to Turkey by the European Council to start negotiations for admission into the EU. Valery Giscard d'Estaing denounced that Turkey's entry into the EU would spell the end of Europe. Austrian President called for pan-European referendum to settle the question. Two former Belgian Prime Ministers as well as the leaders of Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Malta and Greek Cyprus are not enthusiastic about

European leaders would not publicly admit it but generally Europeans are against Turkish membership because Turkey is predominantly an Islamic country. Paradoxically Europeans have little problem in accepting within its fold Catholic Italy, Ireland, Spain, Hungary, Czech Republic and Lithuania as well as other European countries where religion plays a predominant role in the social life of the people.

In Germany, for example, there is a religion tax though not mandatory yet religious and social services

all but guarantees freedom of movement to all individuals.

But Muslim scholars are reluctant to give much credence to perceived threat from religious extremists on the ground that the better part of the last century was occupied by wars among Europeans, Americans and Japanese not to speak of IRA and Spanish Basque separatists. Questions may be asked as to why withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon(part of which was under Israeli occupation till recently) and sus-, forces? Fortunately despite global

Turkish membership. Though shares hundreds of miles of border eignty advocate intervention to educational and cultural instituwith Syria and Iran into a Union that respond to humanitarian crisis -massive violation of human rights, famine, genocide? Is it because that western policy makers truly believe in Harvard Professor Marie Ann Slaughter's view that the "responsibility to protect" should apply only in cases where tyrants in closed societies are producing WMD which might directly harm the West while decimation of subalterns is acceptable with responsibility for their protection having been given to ill equipped and ill trained local

tions, such influence being more insidious and undetectable than when the colonies were being directly ruled. Besides the unwitting or even willing collaboration by the compradors(elites brought to power by the ex-colonial masters after giving independence to the colonies) and the pressure of globalisation prevented the Third World nations from developing an independent political and economic identity.

tion of the people and the religion

of Islam dominant in the western

academic orthodoxy as grossly

distorted, yet one must also

acknowledge that the deviants of

Islamic religion immersed in their

own grotesque interpretation of

pristine Islam do pose serious

threat not only to the West but also

to Muslims who they consider to

have deviated from the "true" path.

hold on to tortured nationalism by

blaming the West for failing to seize

the moment when western tech-

Augean Stable, get its act together

Commission on Global Gover-Though some Muslim scholars consider the essentialist construc-

nance echoing Immanuel Kant's theory of "universal moral community" that derives from the principle that all people are bound together morally regardless of their distinctive culture and identity. If it is recognised that human security is central to global peace then a government's right to rule must be weighed against its people's right to security. In cases if it is found that people's security is being threatened under the cloak of religious activism then the state should assume its responsibility to put ban on such religious activism which incipiently tries to crawl towards staging a so-called Islamic Free Election Trap to stage a coup to establish a theocratic state. Devoutly Muslim Bangladeshis are unlikely to countenance any Machiavellian machination by religious extremists because Bangladesh has a tradition of secular culture which is neither atheistic nor agnostic. The government in Time is past for the Muslim world to power regardless of political expediency is duty bound to arrest any movement towards religious extremism and ensure freedom of

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and

Efforts should be directed towards achieving "global civic ethics" as recommended by the Commission on Global Governance echoing Immanuel Kant's theory of "universal moral community" that derives from the principle that all people are bound together morally regardless of their distinctive culture and identity. If it is recognised that human security is central to global peace then a government's right to rule must be weighed against its people's right to

provided by the church to the religion tax payers. One is therefore tempted to wonder that if the threshold of European tolerance for Christianity is so high then why is the threshold so low for Islam? The French ban on wearing head scarf for Muslim women is a case in point though the ban is equally applicable to public display of all religious symbols. Perhaps German political leader Wolfgang Schauble has given the most credible explanation about European reservation about Turkish membership. Dismissing the charge that opposition to Turkey is on religious ground Schauble explains that European hesitation is because of potential problems that could

arise by admitting a country which

pected Iranian nuclear ambition(espite Iran's declaration that it has no intention to nuclearise the country while Israel possesses reportedly two hundred nuclear weapons) merit greater Western attention than the unspeakable brutalities particularly on women currently being perpetrated in Darfur and Democratic Republic of Congo despite western failure particularly the Europeans armed with centuries old knowledge of colonial Africa to prevent genocide in Rwanda?

Why is it that the West finds solace in devolving control of restless Africa to the military units of the African Union when Garrett Evans chaired International Commission on Intervention and State Soverunanimity on the need for humanitarian intervention in extreme cases for people like Mary Ann Slaughter and others UNSC still remains the preferred destination for resolution of international conflicts.

West's hesitancy in taking proactive and coercive measures is understandable on the ground of possibly being accused of "neocolonialism" and also because in pre-9/11 era the nation-states were jealous and zealous in guarding their territorial integrity against external encroachment. The newly independent countries defined neo-colonialism as the influence exercised by the ex-colonialists and superpower USA through financial,

nology was on its way to irreversibly change the contours of global choice to the people. civilisation. It is past time for the Islamic world to clean up the

OPINION

Does the solution rest in the words of desperation?

MOZAMMEL H. KHAN

VER the last few days the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister are delivering strong words of castigations for the opposition, the media, the foreign donors and the diplomats alike. Reprehensions of the opposition politicians are, of course, nothing new on the part of the Prime Minister. The point that has added an extra dimension to the utterance of the PM was the implication of some foreign countries, which in her own words, "we don't care for anyone's browbeating and dictation". She went further by declaring blatantly, albeit with some degree of imprudence, "I want to tell the foreigners categorically that Bangladesh will not be run by any dictates or orders of any foreign force". Nevertheless, any responsible citizen who believes in the dignity of his motherland may differ with the articulation of the message but certainly not with its spirit if the mingling of the diplomats transgresses within the sphere of the internal affairs of the state.

Ordinary citizens do not know more than what has been published in the local media regarding the so called 'dictation' of the foreign diplomats. In recent days two of the Dhaka-based European diplomats have expressed their opinions vis-àvis the affairs of the state. The Danish Ambassador, speaking on behalf of the European Commission, termed the death in so-called crossfire as 'extra-judicial killing' and asserted that these 'activities are contrary to good governance and rule of law'. German Ambassa-

help in improving the electoral system and very much in tune with the widely accepted perception, opined that the Dhaka-10 byelection was not the best precedence for a free and fair exercise of franchise. These two comments of the diplomats must have irked the PM for the simple fact that the government leaders, from top to bottom, are bent on justifying the killings in crossfire. In the same token, the government is vehemently opposed to any sort of reform of the

dor, on the other hand, offered to Article 11(1) declares, "everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence". In the preamble, to justify the formulation of the charter, it underscores, "whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind". It clearly stipulates that the government, however it is constituted, of any sovereign state

the 'will of the people' that must be reflected through 'genuine election'. Here again, as envisaged in the UN charter, 'genuine election' is not an internal matter of the state. The German envoy is well within his domain of right, not only as an individual, but the spokesperson of highly respected democratic country to express his solidarity with the aspiration of the people of Bangladesh to extend his country's help to make our 'best system' even better. Caretaker government system, though constituted with a caretaker government system. The has no absolute sovereignty to kill its , highly noble intent, has suffered a tion that "it is impossible to choose

holes with the intention to make it a single question from the opposifull-proof system as much as possible. Dismissing them, without exploring their merit, with the words such as, "the caretaker system exists and will be the same in the constitution", are words of desperation and do not further the cause of the continuous improvement of the electoral process. In fact, article 58 C(5) of the constitution already contains the option clause, which the opposition politicians are demanding to be the only option. Finance Minister's asser-

tion bench worthwhile to respond and the Speaker was not convinced that even the carnage of August 21 an important enough issue for the nation to warrant a discussions in the floor of that august body. Where the presence of the opposition MPs could do little but to alleviate the quorum crisis of the House. it is very unfortunate that our

politicians forget the history so quickly. In our 'democracy', it is not the number of MPs that decides the fate of an issue of public interest. Is there any one in the corridor of power who still remembers that the issue of CTG, put forward by the opposition parties, was passed in the parliament on March 26, 1996 without the existence of a single MP from the opposition?. Is there any in the helm of authority thinking of holding an election without the participation of the main opposition? They will be well-advised, once again, to review the history. Two of our chief executives have shown that arrogance in the past. Alas, history was not very kind to either of them! People at the helm of power very often fail to listen to the voice of the common people. Words of desperation reflect only the lack of merits of the arguments and merely aggravate the problem. Who will be there, at the end, to bear the brunt of that aggravation? Our honourable Prime Minister surely knows the answer far better

Dr. Mozammei H. Khan is a Professor and the

People at the helm of power very often fail to listen to the voice of the common people. Words of desperation reflect only the lack of merits of the arguments and merely aggravate the problem. Who will be there, at the end, to bear the brunt of that aggravation?

reference of Dhaka-10 by-election might have antagonised the PM even more for the fact that the PM went out of her way to congratulate the so called winner of that byelection notwithstanding the fact that it was dubbed by the local press as one of the biggest mockeries of the electoral process in recent time.

Are those aspects, the free franchise, the rule of law and the human rights internal affairs of a state? Let us look at what the UN charter on Human Rights affirms on these values. Article 21(3) of the UN human rights charter asserts, "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures"

own people disregarding the appropriate and established judicial

As a signatory to the document, the government of Bangladesh is bound to uphold the charter. Adverse repercussions from any sources in regards to the gross violation of any of its articles, are well within the periphery of 'the conscience of mankind', thereby liquidating the political and geographical boundaries of the states. Utterance of the finance minister that, "if the killings by the killers are not human right violation, how can any one term the death of killer a human right violation?", has equated an individual with the state, reflecting the sheer incomprehension on the part of the min-

ister of the rule of law. The second issue lurks around

few jolts for two obvious reasons. Firstly, the nation is evenly divided on the neutrality of the last CTG and the mere dismissal of the allegations of the detractors as the 'foul cry' of the losers will be an oversimplification of the problems. Secondly, the government's recently passed law to increase the age limit of the judges has added an extra jolt to the sanctity of the system. It was not too difficult to apprehend the well orchestrated intention of the government to install a particular person as the chief adviser of the next CTG. This manipulation of the government has put the letter and spirit of the system at a dire stake.

The reform proposals put forward by almost all the opposition parties are not to destroy the foundation of the system; rather, it was done apparently to close the loop-

is untenable and may not be credible enough to sell it to the people. In spite of multitudes of shortcomings, we are blessed with many worthy citizens who command the trust of the politicians and people of all spectra. Justice Shahbuddin Ahmed was a glaring example of the process of consensus, which created a blazing precedence that an apolitical person could carry the day in dealing with the politicians... The PM has asked the main

a chief adviser through consensus"

opposition to join parliament and to place their proposal on election reform. This was indeed a good proposal from the leader of the House of a Westminster democracy if only our parliament were anything other than the Louis Kahn's legendary creation. Where the PM during her tenure could not find a

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than any one else.

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing. is around 3,000. The headmistress which can extend their help for its and puffed uplike filled balloons. those in Nature (in the long run), Where are the new political voices, parties in Dhaka, alternating in bakshish rate is too high for any

Whither secular politics?

Today there are pockets of global confrontation at the political levels due to the infiltration of religion in politics (new political cosmetics vs. traditional) and time-tested religious beliefs and practices. All religions are tolerant to other religions; but its practice depends on the practitioners. The head (rationality) and the heart (belief) are clashing on uncommon grounds. The constitutions of a few independent nations mention that sovereignty on earth belonged to the Supreme Being high above (and everywhere).

Who encouraged the further entry of religion into modern politics? Those who are in charge of guarding their own fortresses, namely the caretakers with narrow horizons. The 9/11 attack on the superpower is a striking example of the shape of things to be untangled. When man-made philosophies, laws and regulations contradict is the next phase?

mankind gets restive, and the fallout phase starts. The extremist and fundamental-

ist groups are a nuisance, (like mosquito bites?). The bugs (as inside a computer) have to be debugged; hence anti-virus programmes are introduced into the system, complicating the processing (time and direction). Nothing can exist without its shadow, unless the light is removed. Virtual invisibility is not a sign of non-existence.

It looks like that new political hypotheses are called for, from which some workable theory and corollaries could emerge, to save the developed and the developing societies all over the globe. Unless the political systems are cleaned up internally and updated, the role of politics in providing public service is diminished to that extent.

Who are doing this type of R&D? None, as per mass media exposure; as self-protective measures consume time, energy and money. What

and what are the new messages? Is it time for entrepreneurship politics? Politics is out of date compared to technological developments.

Dhaka

A school in the garden

I would like to introduce a school that is situated in the heart of Dhaka city near the reputed Holy Cross School. It has a huge area of land; it's around more than an acre. It is mainly an orphanage established by some Christian missionary for the accommodation of helpless children and for their development. Afterwards a Girls' High School was established in the same compound that occupied around 20 percent of the total land.

It is a full-fledged high school including primary section under the Dhaka Board. It has a beautiful look and big fields with a garden of trees and well-maintained environment. The total number of students students. There are many NGOs net vanity is arrogant and volatile,

is a learned lady and very strict about discipline. The teachers are very careful about their students as

I think it is very rare to find any school with such big space and trees. So, children are very happy to take their breath within the compound and they can run in the field during their off period. Their performance is excellent up to the primary level. But at the junior and higher levels the performance is average compared to other schools. As a result, most of the brilliant students have to move to other schools just after completing their primary level.

According to the guardians, the school is running under a shortage of funds and hence the management cannot afford to recruit qualified teachers in the junior and higher sections. If they were proschool might become ideal for the

Zahir U. Hyder

Political Greenhouse effect

As an undeveloped citizen of an underdeveloped country (although I am overage now, but am still interested in writing letters to the editors, feigned to be in public interest), I am not at all surprised at the pettymindedness of our top leadership. Their footprints are so small, with hardly any living space for the citizens (umbrella effect). Small minds think small, and cling to ... (you know

Of course there is apparently no visible leadership outside the domain of politics, as the politicians dominate the social scene, and elbow vided with some financial support out others. The others take it weekly from external sources then this and try to merge under big tents; giving birth to a new fashion cult. The

Balloons, floating and flying, have no anchor or root in the ground, hence our politics is so unstable. A balloon bursts high up in the sky, due to atmospheric pressure difference, On the Dhaka metro playground, the same phenomenon is noticed. Notice how one old and aged party bagged only 60 seats out of 300 in the general elections, after running the preceding regime for five years, Name-calling (namta) has become a

profitable game. There are two visible features in our politics: tribalism, and caste system. There are achhut kanyyas and trigger-happy self-protection brigands earning their living through mystical or mysterious means. They listen to the gaibi awaaz from classified sources, known as godfathers. The latter are independent of time, place, nationality, religion, and educational degrees. There is a siren god on earth, known as the Mammon. They use steel, but it is not stainless steel.

governance. The fixations of these leaders are pitiable. They cannot get out of the groove, and confine their thesis most of the time on each other (mud-slinging, accusations and counter-accusations, as if there is nothing else to talk about.

Why the taxpayers are bearing their public expenses? While in power they talk about development projects, and while in the opposition they have one fixation, and see nothing but their opponents, forget-

ting the 60m voters. Who care if one political party fades out and another is on the rise? We citizens expect proper, adequate public services, regardless of the name of the party. The current Opposition would be bitterly remembered for its selfish hartal calls, while the present regime has created a sort of world record with five dozen ministers in the cabinet, to rule an impoverished nation. High-level Employment Agency, like the hundreds of mushroom firms There are two major political offering jobs overseas! How the Dhaka

official job solicited by an ordinary citizen. This unofficial toll collection by officials is not being spotlighted (read the launch design and contraction tales in the DS of March 4).

It is a nafsi age (amar ki hobey!). Proxy politics is very popular in the third world. Exploit the massesnakedly (does not matter which side is naked)! The two parties may be given some homework: compile a list of ten examples of personal sacrifices and suffering by their leaders during the last 15 years (not earlier!). During the Raj era, many Indian leaders went to jail several times, on principle. Nowadays political prison sentences do not contribute to name and fame. The new generation politicians are being molded in similar perverse environment, and the outside critics are keeping quiet. Sometimes denials become admission!

Coming: Political Greenhouse Effect. It is already a global epidemic. A. Mahasen