

Auditing Rajuk 10 years too late

A deeper and wider probe needed

WHAT'S going on in Rajuk? Internal auditing has resumed after a lapse of 10 years...

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...

Rajuk's activities have changed the city landscape during the last 10 years. They have turned residential plots into commercial ones...

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...

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

THE importance of recognising leaders of business for their innovative and creative ascent from virtual scratches can not be over-emphasised...

It is thus that we congratulate the winners of the Bangladesh Business Awards 2004 jointly sponsored by The Daily Star and DHL Worldwide Express...

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...

Religious extremism and freedom of choice

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

IF truth be told then western obsession with security and war on terror, horrific though the al-Qaedaist acts are, have caused sharp divides in the world...

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...

Turkish membership. Though European leaders would not publicly admit it but generally Europeans are against Turkish membership because Turkey is predominantly an Islamic country...

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

shares hundreds of miles of border with Syria and Iran into a Union that 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...

eighty advocate intervention to 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...

educational and cultural institutions, 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.

Though some Muslim scholars consider the essentialist construc-

and unite with the West and others to fight the common enemy -- terrorism. Islamic renaissance is unlikely to emerge from the destructive acts of Osama bin Laden.

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...

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

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 security.

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 low then why is the threshold so high 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...

pected Iranian nuclear ambition (despite 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 Sover-

unanimity 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 "neo-colonialism" 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,

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. Time is past for the Muslim world to hold on to tortured nationalism by blaming the West for failing to seize the moment when western technology was on its way to irreversibly change the contours of global civilisation. It is past time for the Islamic world to clean up the Augean Stable, get its act together

OPINION

Does the solution rest in the words of desperation?

MOZAMMEL H. KHAN

OVER 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-a-vis 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-

dor, on the other hand, offered to help in improving the electoral system and very much in tune with the widely accepted perception, opined that the Dhaka-10 by-election 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 caretaker government system. The

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 by-election 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".

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 has no absolute sovereignty to kill its

own people disregarding the appropriate and established judicial process. 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 minister of the rule of law.

The second issue lurks around few jobs 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-

holes with the intention to make it a full-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 assertion that "it is impossible to choose

single question from the opposition 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 than any one else.

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TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



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.

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

those in Nature (in the long run), mankind gets restive, and the fall-out phase starts.

The extremist and fundamentalist 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 services 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 is the next phase?

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

AZ 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

is around 3,000. The headmistress is a learned lady and very strict about discipline. The teachers are very careful about their students as well.

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 provided with some financial support from external sources then this school might become ideal for the students. There are many NGOs

which can extend their help for its development. Zahir U. Hyder Dhaka

Political Greenhouse effect

As an undeveloped citizen of an undeveloped country (although I am average 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 pety-mindedness 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 what).

Of course there is apparently no visible leadership outside the domain of politics, as the politicians dominate the social scene, and elbow out others. The others take it weekly and try to merge under big tents; giving birth to a new fashion cult. The net vanity is arrogant and volatile,

and puffed up like filled balloons. 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 (naunta) has become a profitable game.

There are two visible features in our politics: tribalism, and caste system. There are achhut kanyas and trigger-happy self-protection brigands earning their living through mystical or mysterious means. They listen to the gaibi awaz 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 Mammoo. They use steel, but it is not stainless steel.

There are two major political

parties in Dhaka, alternating in 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, forgetting 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 offering jobs overseas! How the

bakshish rate is too high for any 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 nafi age (amar ki hobey). Proxy politics is very popular in the third world. Exploit the masses-nakedly (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 Dhaka