nies are taking part in the construc-

tion. Each building company has

been given a specific project within

the overall plans, according to a

construction contractor who is

The whole project is costing

millions of dollars, according to a

building contractor involved in the

project. "It's an open budget -- no

expense is being spared," he said. A

sergeant in charge of overseeing a

part of the construction can commis-

sion work worth a 100 million kyat

[ten thousand dollars] without

referring it to his superiors, he

Some buildings have been torn

down and rebuilt at least three times

because the commander in charge

was not happy with the finished work

when he saw it. "These people are so

ignorant they cannot read the archi-

tectural plans; they can only decide

when they see it constructed," the

But the move may create some

significant unexpected conse-

quences the top general had not

anticipated. It is likely fuel the sim-

mering resentment within the gov-

ernment bureaucracy. Many senior

civil servants have taken early retire-

ment in the past few months, includ-

ing the director general of the labour

ministry and senior members of the

retire or resign. But they may not be

allowed to, a western diplomat in

Rangoon said. The government has

enough space to hold any run away

civil servants, the Maung Oo warned.

The authorities plan to hunt them

down just as do for army and police

deserters, according to a source

been dismayed at the lack of consul-

tation and the suddenness of the

shift to Pyinmana. "Nobody agreed

to this move, I don't think even

General Maung Aye, but we all just

shut our mouths," a senior military

with no one able to get import or

export licences. Burmese citizens

waiting to pick up their passports

suddenly founded the office closed

and moved four kilometres away.

Prices of consumes goods, already

soaring because of the recent ten fold

increase in petrol prices, are set to

increase further, according to a

"The whole thing is absurd. The

generals have made another major

olunder," said a Burmese business-

man. Discontent with Burma's

military rulers is bound to swell, but

as yet there are no signs of the anger

which brought thousands of civil

servants, monks and students onto

the streets to topple the government

of General Ne Win nearly eighteen

Larry Jagan was the BBC World Service's News and

Current Affairs Editor for Asia and the Pacific for more

source in the Central Bank.

Already there is acute confusion

Government ministers have also

inside the interior ministry.

officer confided.

Many more are now expected to

builder said.

foreign ministry.

building a residential block.

# Promoting women in education

HE government undertook a project called Promote with funding support from the European Commission to promote the participation of women in teaching at the secondary school level, especially in rural areas. In spite of its recognised accomplishments, the project may end prematurely and financial commitments to support its activities may remain unmet because other projects supported by the EC have not fulfilled their obligations. The education project apparently is a victim of the ire of the EC, even though the really offending projects are not the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

The EC-supported project is an important element of the overall strategy for eliminating gender disparity in education. The UN Millennium Development Goals for 2015, to which Bangladesh is committed, require mary and secondary education opportunities for boys and girls by 2005 and to eliminate gender discrimination at all levels of education by 2015.

Bangladesh has earned international plaudits for its progress towards equal opportunities for boys and girls in primary and secondary education. It is the only South Asian and one of a handful of developing countries in the world which has removed a wide gender gap at the basic level of education in the course of a decade. An array of policy measures including stipends

for primary school children, stipends and tuition waivers for girls in high school in rural areas, quota for recruitment of female teachers at the primary level and incentives for raising the proportion of women teachers in high schools have contributed to increased girls' participation in education.

Equal participation of girls in education is a key element of a broader process of social change in Bangladesh. These include the increased economic opportunities for women

bringing the level of girls' enrolment at par with boys in primary and lower secondary levels, the quality of teaching and learning, preventing dropout and ensuring completion of the respective cycle of education, and above all, improving learning performance and achievement of students remain very serious problems for both girls and boys. This is why recruitment of qualified teachers, especially women teach-

only 16.7 percent. The Promote project was aimed at

addressing the problems of incentives and support for qualified women to become secondary school teachers. Its achievements so far include:

 One hundred thirty-three hostels in Upazila headquarters, where nonlocal women teachers can have residential accommodation, have been constructed and handed over to the

The EC delegation in Bangladesh, in agreement with the Ministry of Education, can

reconsider the decision to withhold committed funds and support to Promote and allow the project to complete its important mission. It would even make good sense to extend the life of Promote, given the project's achievements, the unfinished tasks that remain,

> reconsiders its decision. Promote has paid for the training of 6,797 female secondary teachers in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), offering the new recruits the chance to acquire professional B.Ed. qualification. Promote has helped 1,325 teachers find permanent teaching posts in secondary schools in rural Bangladesh between December 2003 and March

new teachers, which will cease with the removal of funds for Promote

- Promote also supported 3,400 temporary posts for female teachers in
- rural high schools. Promote assisted TTCs to reconnect
- with secondary schools. This included: · TTC trainers to have the opportunity to take part in classroom observations of rural secondary schools,

-Math, Science and English curricu-

lum materials were developed for the new B.Ed programme for the benefit of all teachers - women and men. Gender awareness programmes for

TCs, schools, teachers and education administrators were developed and implemented. Learning kits and materials (videos, multimedia) were developed for teachers and classrooms.

The EC delegation in Bangladesh, in agreement with the Ministry of Education, can reconsider the decision to withhold committed funds and support to Promote and allow the project to complete its important mission. It would even make good sense to extend the life of Promote, given the project's achievements, the unfinished tasks that remain, and its relevance to fulfilling the Mds in education to which both Bangladesh and EC are

Dr. Ahmed is Director of Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University. Ms. Chowdhury is Executive Director of Campaign for Popular Education

### Burma's generals move to the middle of nowhere

LARRY JAGAN

HOUSANDS of Burmese civil servants are reluctantly leaving Rangoon and heading for a secret compound in the hills on the orders of the country's top general. The move started recently with hardly any notice and is continuing throughout the rest of the year. Ministries are being ordered to pack up everything ready to move at the crack of dawn the following day.

"It's like something out of a crazy movie," said a Rangoon resident who procession of hundreds of trucks and buses out of the capital, winding its way nearly four hundred kilometres north of the capital to Pyinmana in central Burma.

The first bureaucrats to arrive at the new administrative centre were dismayed. "There's no water, no electricity and no windows or doors fitted in the living quarters," a senior government official told his family by phone. "I have to sleep in my office," he said in tears.

"There is nothing to eat, drink and nothing to buy. Just nothing," another civil servant told his wife. "My boss even told me that he now understands what hell is," he added.

For months Rangoon had been rife with rumours that the country's military rulers were planning to retreat to the hills in central Burma because of fears of a foreign invasion from the sea.

At exactly 6:37 am on November 6 the first convoy left Rangoon on its six hour journey north. Hundreds of single men under the age of fifty from eleven ministries, including the government's Central Bureau of Statistics, were the first to be relocated. Women will be moved in a  $subsequent\, phase\, of\, the\, relocation.$ 

Each morning since then another convey of civil servants has left for their destination in the hills. All Burma's government administration will be moved by the end of the year. The government workers' families will then be moved. Each ministry will have a school attached, a Burmese businessman involved in the construction of the complex told Inter Press Service (IPS).

Burma's government administration and military headquarters will have been shifted out of Rangoon. According to the blue-prints for the new complex, it is actually going to replace Rangoon as the country's

"This is typical of Than Shwe's pretensions to be the new Burmese monarch. Like all the Burmese kings before him he is building a new palace-capital for posterity," according to a senior Burmese analyst, Win Min based in Thailand

The reported name for the country's new centre of government is Nay Pyi Daw, according to diplomats in Rangoon. It is a monarchist term meaning the place of the King.

The massive complex being built at Pyinmana will house the military war office, all government ministries and a new parliament, according to a Burmese government official who has seen the blue-prints. The whole area is more than a hundred kilometres square.

Mansions for the senior generals, government offices and national headquarters for the country's ethnic groups and the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) are also being built.

Bunkers, tunnels, a large military hospital, apartments, a huge airstrip and a golf course are being built according to eye-witnesses. Two international standard hotels and two large supermarkets are also being constructed, according to an

"The whole thing is absurd. The generals have made another major blunder," said a Burmese businessman. **Discontent with Burma's** military rulers is bound to swell, but as yet there are no signs of the anger which brought thousands of civil servants, monks and students onto the streets to topple the government of **General Ne Win nearly** 

architect involved in the project.

eighteen years ago.

The creation of the new capital is primarily the idea of the top General Than Shwe. The plans have been in the pipeline for several years now and building started on it more than two years ago. "The planned retreat is essentially strategic," said an Asian diplomat who regularly deals with

The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 reinforced the top general's fear that the Washington might attack Burma, according to analysts. Burma's military strategists have long argued that the country's defences were vulnerable to an attack from the sea.

Burma's top generals have always suffered from a siege mentality. "Than Shwe has a bunker mentality," according to the Burmese analyst, Win Min. "But the motive behind this move is to make sure the military is in a better strategic position to control the regional commanders, the ethnic rebel groups in the border areas, the future parliament and combat social unrest throughout the country," he

Foreign embassies are lik have to follow the Burmese government when they are finally transplanted into the hills.

"Administrative and office buildings, as well as living quarters for more than five thousand people have peen completed," one of the builders working on the complex told IPS.

than 10 years. He is an East Asia specialist and has covered Burma for more than 20 years. More than thirty building compa

and its relevance to fulfilling the Mds in education to which both Bangladesh and EC are through the expansion of micro-credit in rural areas and employment of young women in large numbers in the ready-made garment industries, non-

formal basic education opportunities offered by NGOs, and awarenessraising about women's education and human rights promoted by the civil society organisations. In a scenario of gloom about many aspects of development in Bangladesh, girls' education and increased participation of women in the economy represent a ray of hope for the future. It is vitally important that the gains made in this area is consolidated and supported further.

skills, and providing appropriate incentives to meet performance standards as teachers becomes a critical concern.

The proactive policy for recruiting women teachers in primary schools and encouraging women to become secondary school teachers have helped to increase the number of women in teaching positions, but the proportions of women still remains low at all stages and types of education.

Data from the Bangladesh Bureau of **Educational Information and Statistics** (BANBEIS) shows that in 2002, 37.9 schools were women, and at the lower major disincentive for women in taking up teaching in small towns. Forty-six other hostels are under construction and may not be completed unless EC

accommodation was identified as a

2005. Salary subventions were given for

# Parliamentary democracy: A missed opportunity?

TE the members of the general public often hear from our leaders, especially from the ruling party ones, that parliament is the centre for all discussions and solving all problems the country faces. In the Westminster type of parliament, which we possess in an abridged form, the House is the focal point of administering the state affairs. But do we follow that? Does our parliament perform such a role?

The answer is obviously no. Rather our parliament, many may differ with me, appears to be a centre of spitting venom. Our parliament seems to be an apparatus of approving the desires and whims of the political parties in power. Our parliament has turned into a place where its members are reluctant to go.

Many may dub our democracy a nascent one. But we should not forget that "morning shows the day." Those who can't perform at 7 (years) can't perform at 70. After introduction of parliamentary democracy, 14 years have elapsed. We have seen three general elections (excepting the February 15, 1996 elections). But the status of our parliament as well as our democ-

We the general people can't rest our confidence on our national leaders. who actually determine out fates. Rather, the democratic institutions saw continuous erosion through politicisation, nepotism, and corruption. Bureaucracy has been dismantled, higher judiciary polluted, and institutions like Public Service Commission, Election Commission, and public universities have been made controversial. The general people now don't have minimum trust and faith on these institutions, which even in the

lower judiciary captured. Sacred

military regimes, had maintained their dignity and purity. Under these ciristances, the parliament, which is the central force to rectify all odds, has become unbelievably ineffective and dysfunctional in respect of delivering its duties and services, for the com-

Look at the current eighth parliament. The Daily Star and some other vernacular dailies in their series of reports depicted a lacklustre performance of our current parliament. Opposition Awami League remained out of the House for most of the time, giving this or that reasons. Treasury interest and enthusiasm to join the House. As a result, the House ran without quorum for most of the time. The leader of the House was also seen the members (both Treasury and

However, I personally do not find any substantial meaning of discussing things in the House. During my last 15 years of covering the parliament as a reporter, I did not find any bill was passed placed by the opposition, any amendment included in any bill brought by the opposition members, any private member resolution that was approved that had been placed by the opposition members. Then what is the meaning of this futile exercise when

Many may dub our democracy a nascent one. But we should not forget that "morning shows the day." Those who can't perform at 7 (years) can't perform at 70. After introduction of parliamentary democracy, 14 years have elapsed. We have seen three general elections excepting the February 15, 1996 elections). But the status of our parliament as well as our democracy does not bring in any hope in our minds.

moners. After establishment of democracy in 1991, the countrymen hoped a radical change in our administrative system where a total transparency and accountability would be ensured. The countrymen hoped that politicians would show more responsibility for their deeds and words. But their hopes and aspirations were shattered when the leaders made a volta-face to the commitments. Instead of becoming peoples' leaders, they put their efforts to become party leaders. Instead of protecting the interest of the country and its people, their prime interests were to derive personal and party interests. Getting passed in the elections by hook and crook becomes the

less interested in attending the House and her cabinet colleagues followed her

But the output of the House is even more insignificant. There was no discussion on major issues the country faced during the last four years. Grenade attacks on AL rally on August 21, incidents of killing of Ahsanullah Master and SAMS Kibria, August 17 bomb blasts, price hike of essentials, law and order situation, etc did not get approval of the Speaker and the Treasury Bench decision-makers to be discussed in the House. On the other hand, the ruling party rescind the privileges of the treasury bench members to place private members bills in opposition) did not have enough opportunity to speak about their electorates' demands and get those

The current constitutional provisions and rules of procedure of the parliament do not allow the Treasury Bench members to talk against any decision or bill of the government. There was no instance of taking any measures by the ruling government as suggested by the opposition. In fact nothing, except the 12th amendment reintroducing the parliamentary democracy system, had been approved in the House through consensus of the opposition and Treasury Bench members during the last 15 years. Our beyond the ambit of the government Under this dismal scenario of the

and heat but finally yields nothing

House, the parliament did an excellent job of framing standing committees headed by the non-minister members. But they are also missing their services due to the intransigent attitude of the government. In fact, the standing committees failed to be the real watchdog in ensuring transparency and accountability of the government, especially in the backdrop of Bangladesh's continuing corruption. The concerned ministers often skip the meetings of the standing committees and ministries do not provide necessary information and assistance, and the recommendations and decisions of the committees gather dust in the absence of mandatory execution of their decisions.

Public representatives should have the authority to debate on the issues of public interest whatever their party affiliation may be. They should have the freedom to vote to any side in the house they wish through amending the necessary clauses of the Article 70 of the constitution. I think, Article 70, which lates that a person elected as a member of parliament at an election at which he was nominated as a candidate by a political party shall vacate his seat if he resigns from that party or votes in parliament against the party, is a barrier in fulfilling the desires of the  $people\,as\,well\,as\,the\,members.$ 

Nazrul Islam is a freelance journalist.

# Ensuring availability of safe food

Md. Jafar Ullah Gazi

OWADAYS "Food Security" or "Food Safety" has become the most important issue throughout the world to save or protect the human lives. Whenever we talk about food security or quality of food, we remember or realise the "Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)" Act,

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an inter-governmental body of 158 member countries. Codex Alimentarius means "Food Code" or "Food Law". It was established by FAO in 1961. Codex standards guidelines and other recommendations ensure that food products must not be harmful to the consumers and can be traded safely between the member countries.

Food safety methods are defined on the application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures relating to food additives, veterinary drug and pesticide residues, contaminants, method of analysis and sampling and Codex guidelines of hygienic practice. Codex food safety standards are to be used as the reference for the World Trade Organisation (WTO). More than 300 Codex standard guidelines relating to food quality composition and safety are in FAO / WTO. The CAC worked over 760 food additives and contaminants, more than 2500 maximum limits for pesticide residues and more than 150 veterinary drug residues. The CAC also has guideline level for a number of environmental and industrial contaminants. Taking this philosophy a step further, CAC has adopted the guidelines for the application of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) System in Food Hygiene.

The HACCP is a tool to assess hazards and establish control systems -

preventive measures from preliminary production to end production of a food processing centre / factory. In 1994, the Uruguay Round agreements included Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS agreement) and the agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT agreement). The agreements will be applied by the member countries of The SPS agreement confirms the

right of WTO member countries to

apply measures necessary to protect nan, animal and plant life and health. This right was included in 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The TBT agreement is a revision of the agreement of the same name first undertaken under Tokyo Round of GATT negotiations in the 1970s. The objectives of the agreement is to prevent the use of national or regional technical requirements or standards in general as unjustified technical barriers to trade. The agreement covers standards relating to all types of products both industrial and agricultural, with the exception of aspects of food standards related to sanitary and phytosanitary measures. The TBT agreement basically provides that technical standards and regulations must have a legitimate purpose. The Codex standard guidelines and other recommendations assume the unprecedented importance with respect to consumer protection and international food trade. Codex general principles

#### of food hygiene The Codex General Principles of Food

Hygiene lay a firm foundation for ensuring food safety. The Codex principles follow the food chain from primary production to the final consumer taking hygienic control measures at each stage of production and recom-

mend an HACCP (Hazards Analysis Critical Control Point) based approach and guideline for its application. These principles of food hygiene are internationally recognised as essential to ensure the safety and suitability of food. The application of general principles of food hygiene and of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) allows the producer to operate within environmental conditions favourable for the production of safe food. The first step of implementing HACCP in any processing / production system is to review the existing programmes for compliance with General Principles of Food

from food oriented hazards.

 Indicating how to implement those principles.

□ Providing a guidance for specific codes which may be needed for sectors of food chain, processes or commodities to amplify the hygienic requirement specific to those areas.

### **HACCP** system approach

The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) is a worldwide recognised systemic and preventive approach that addresses biological, chemical and physical hazards through anticipation and prevention from

We have thousands of different food processing factories/units to feed millions of citizens. But how many factories or

HACCP system / plan publicly in 1971. In early 1980s the HACCP approach was adopted by other major food processing companies in USA. In 1985 the United States National Academy of Science (USNAS) recommended that the HACCP approach should be adopted in food processing factories or industries to ensure food safety secured food. Very recently International Commission on Microbiological Specification for Foods (ICMSF) and International Association of Milk Food and Environmental Sanitarians (IAMFES) have recommended the broad application of HACCP to food

HACCP include more effective use of

resources, saving to the food industry

and more timely response to food

safety problem. The application of

HACCP system can aid inspection by

food control regulatory authorities, and

promote international trade by

Hazards: Hazards may appear at

increasing buyers' confidence.

each steps of processing food. The potential hazards of a food processing unit or factory are Biological, Chemical and Physical.

Biological hazards. Food borne Biological hazards include Microbiological Organisms such as Bacteria, Viruses, Fungi and Parasites. The organisms are commonly associated with humans and with raw products entering the food establishment. Many of these micro organisms occur naturally in the environment where foods are grown. Most of them are killed or inactivated by cooking and their numbers can be minimised by

processing units are applying HACCP system? The probable answer will be 'a few'. So now it is time to think whether the quality or safe food or secured food is there in the market and whether customers are getting quality or safe food. Hence the government should come forward to implement HACCP system in each food processing unit to save millions of citizens

Hygiene (GPFH) and GMPs and to primary product to end product / consumer. The HACCP concept grew verify whether all the control measures from two major developments. The and record maintaining are followed in each step/tier of production. In sumfirst one is related with Dr. W. E. points in food handling to prevent mary, adherence to GPFH and GMPs Deming, whose theories of quality safety problems. The system which is management are widely regarded as a will simplify the implementation of science based and systematic, identi-HACCP plans and will ensure that the major factor in turning around the fies specific hazards and measures for integrity of HACCP plans is maintained quality of Japanese products in 1950s. their control to ensure safety of food. The second one is the concepts of and that the manufactured product is HACCP is based on prevention and Pillsbury Company in 1960s, the United reduces the reliance on end-product The objectives of the Codex General States Army and the United States inspection testing. Besides enhancing food safety, other benefits of applying Principles of Food Hygiene are: National Aeronautics and Space

of food hygiene applicable throughout the food chain (including primary production through to the final consumer) to achieve the goal of ensuring that the food is safe and suitable for human consumption.

Identifying the essential principles

□ Recommending an HACCP based approach as a means to enhance food

Administration (NASA) as a collaborative development for the production of safe foods.

HACCP emphasised control of the process as far upstream in the processing system as possible by utilising operator control and or continuous monitoring techniques at Critical Control Points. Pillsbury presented the

adequate control of handling and Advantages: The HACCP system storage practices uses the approach of controlling critical

Bacteria: The majority of well known food borne diseases are caused by pathogenic bacteria. A certain level of these micro organisms can be expected with some raw foods. Improper storage or handling of these foods can contribute to a significant increase in the level of these micro organisms. Cooked foods often provide fertile media for  $rapid\,growth\,of\,micro\,organisms\,if\,they$ are not properly handled or stored.

Viruses: Viruses can be food borne water borne /transmitted by human/animal or other contacts. Viruses are unable to reproduce outside a living cell. They cannot therefore replicate in food, and can only be carried by it.

Parasites: The Parasitic infections

are commonly associated with undercooked meat products or contaminated ready-to-eat food. Parasites in products that are intended to be eaten raw, marinated or partially cooked can be killed by effective freezing tech-

Fungi: Fungi can be beneficial as well as harmful. Some fungi can be used in the production of some specific foods like cheese. However some produce toxic substances (Mycotoxin) which are harmful for humans or

Chemical hazards: Chemical contaminants in food may be naturally occurring or may be added during the processing of food. Harmful chemicals at high levels have been associated with acute cases of food borne illnesses and can be responsible for chronic illness at lower levels. The example of Chemical Hazards are -- (Naturally occurring chemicals): Allergens, Mycotoxins, Scombrotoxin, Ciguatoxin, Mushroom toxins, Shellfish toxin; (Added chemicals): Polychlorinated biphenyls, Pesticides, Fertilizers, Antibiotics, Growth hormones; (Toxic elements): Lead, Zinc, Cadmium, Mercury, Arsenic, Cyanide; (Food additives): Vitamins, Minerals, Contaminants, water and stream treatment chemicals; (Packaging materials): Plasticizers, inyl chloride, Printing or coding ink, Adhesives, Lead, Tin etc.

Physical hazards: Illness and injury can result from hard foreign objects / materials in food. These physical hazards can result from contamination and / or poor practices at many points in the food chain from harvest to consumer, including those within the food establishments. The examples of physical hazards are: glass pieces can cause cuts, bleeding and may require surgery, wood pieces may cut, infect,

choke and may require surgery, stone can be choking, broken teeth, metal may cut, infect and may require surgery, bone and plastic can be choking, cause infection and may require sur-

In the middle of 1997 fish export was stopped for six months due to non application of HACCP system in the fish processing factories / units. At that time a team of Codex Alimentarius Commission came to Bangladesh and visited some fish processing units/factories. They suggested the fish exporters of Bangladesh to apply HACCP system in the fish processing units. To ensure the application of HACCP system in the fish processing units they came again to Bangladesh in December of the same year. After confirming the application of HACCP in fish processing factories they allowed 57 Bangladeshi fish exporters to export fish to other coun-

In our country we have thousands of

different food processing factories/units to feed millions of citizens. These are fish processing factories, cold and soft drink factories, dry fish plants, fruit processing factories, sova bean and mustard oil industries, spices processing industries, rice mills, flour mills etc. But how many factories or processing units are applying HACCP system? The probable answer will be 'a few'. So now it is time to think whether the quality or safe food or secured food is there in the market and whether customers are getting quality or safe food. Hence the government should come forward to implement HACCP system in each food processing unit to save millions of citizens from food oriented hazards.

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