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US loses credibility



Re "Silence is better," by Husain Haqqani (May 23). After the botched-up US invasion of Iraq to dismantle its non-existent weapons of mass destruction, US President George W. Bush made bringing democracy in Iraq his new goal. But he failed to realise that democracy cannot be imposed by high-altitude bombers and laser-guided weapons and that the marines are ill-equipped for any democratising mission. Democracy is a participatory system of government which must grow from within through a long period of trial and error. In fact, by invading Iraq on a flimsy pretext, the United States might have done great harm to any transformation of Iraq.

As for Bush's contention that post-war Germany and Japan are examples of successful American military

intervention as a prelude to democracy, it must be pointed out that Germany was a democracy before the war and Hitler was himself elected by the German people. In fact, Hitler is an example that a democratically elected leader is no guarantee to his turning against democracy when it suits him. Japan was also undergoing democratic transformation since the Meiji Revolution in the 19th century before ultra-nationalists general took control in the name of the emperor. In any case, the United States went to war against Japan in response to its attack on Pearl Harbour, and not to bring democracy.

By justifying a failed military intervention as a democratising mission, the United States might have done great harm to democracy. The American invasion has only exacerbated Iraq's Shi'a-

Sunni cleavage and now a sectarian civil war is raging there. Once-dominant Sunni minority see the election as the only a means to impose

the Shiite majority rule and the Shiite majority are now determined to dominate in the name of democracy. The Shiites seem to have forgotten that democracy is not a tyranny of the majority, but a participatory form of government in which minority rights must be protected. Surge in American troops has only led to a surge in sectarian violence which the American forces have failed to stem.

It should be clear to all, that the United States has lost its credibility as a force for democracy. America is increasingly going back to the Cold War days when the so-called real politic -- supporting friendly dictators -- was the corner stone of the American foreign policy.

Prof. Husain Haqqani writes: "Ambassador Boucher's characterization of Pakistan under General

Pervez Musharraf is even worse. To say that the "Pakistani government is moving forward" so soon after the government-orchestrated massacre of opposition supporters in Karachi is nothing short of an insult to Pakistanis marching in the streets of the country's cities for rule of law and restoration of democracy." But he may be reminded that America also supported Gen. Augusto Pinochet, a brutal dictator, because he overthrew the elected Marxist President Allende of Chile. A capitalist dictator was far more preferable to an elected communist!

As long as Gen. Musharraf can convince the Americans that he is fighting al-Qaeda, he will enjoy the American support in the same way Gen. Pinochet enjoyed massive American aid because he convinced the Americans that he was fighting the communists. With al-Qaeda replacing the Marxists as America's main enemy, support to autocrats will be justified in the name of fighting the new enemy. America is now engaged in a hot war against al-Qaeda and it will justify its present support for the autocratic regimes in the Middle East and the world as long as they remain loyal.

Bringing democracy is only a propaganda tool in this new war against terror. Pakistan will have to find its own way to achieve even nominal democracy.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Long queues

We see long queues, wastage of time and energy of the members of public/consumers for payment and receipt of electricity, Wasa, gas and telephone bills.

For many years this is a common scene and practice in almost all banks wherein we are required to pay and obtain receipts for payment of our electricity, Wasa, gas and telephone bills.

On one side the bank manager and his/her entire staff members sit idle, read newspapers, take tea or gossip. And on the other, a lone staff member of bank sits in the bill payment counter.

The said bank counter staff performs his/her onerous and multifarious works and duties single-handedly. He/she collects cash from the members of public/consumers, counts and scrutinises the required money, sticks revenue stamps, puts seal and initial on the bills, makes necessary entries in different registers and hand over the payment receipts to the people/consumers.

This is a very long system and process of work and is time-

consuming. The bill counter bank staff member is overburdened and exhausted. The members of public/consumers waiting and standing in the long queue are all tired and exhausted and they suffer due to unnecessary wastage of their valuable time and energy.

We once again request the bank, Desa, Wasa, Titas Gas and telephone authorities to sit together, cooperate and coordinate among themselves and if necessary depute 1-2 special staff members from their organisations to handle bill collection from general consumers.

OH Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

Names of establishments

There should never be any resentment if a private establishment is installed and named whatever its owner thinks suitable. But the situation is different when an establishment is created by the state. In such a case we would always anticipate that it will be named after those who are widely respected by people. For example, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, Nawab Salimullah, Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Sher-e-Bangla etc.

I, therefore, propose to the caretaker government to immediately change the names of institutions and establishments which smack of party politics.

Mizanur Rahman
Dhaka

ETP issue

The recent CTG directive to close down an industry if ETP (effluent treatment plant) is not installed before Oct 31 2007 will not bring any tangible results. Everything simply cannot be achieved by a shut-down threat & setting up deadlines.

The CTG should realize the magnitude of this problem, before setting up the deadline. As per a DS article (dated May 14) out of 1800 industries in & around Dhaka requiring ETP, only 89 of them have it (i.e. less than 5%). So the fact of the matter is 95% of them are without ETP. To expect that all these will have their own ETP within Oct 31 is definitely wishful thinking. The CTG should formulate a detailed action plan to deal with an issue of such magnitude.

First of all, let us try to identify why we are in this mess with ETP (or rather lack of it). It would be wrong to solely blame the owners of industries. These industries were not set up without government permits & approval. So where was the environment ministry then? What role did they play, after passing the "Environment Conservation Act 1997"? How did these industries get their

approval in the first place? Unfortunately, like Rajuk & all other government monitoring bodies, most of these departments have forgotten what their actual job is.

So what do we do about it now? First of all, we have to realize that establishing ETP is a very expensive process (even a small scale one costs approx US\$50,000). So definitely not all the industries can afford setting it up. Besides it's not just the money factor, but one needs sufficient land space also for proper ETP functioning, which many industries cannot manage now, even if they want to (as the adjacent plots have been occupied by others).

The CTG should target the big players first, those companies which are discharging a huge quantity of effluents.

For these small units, the CTG should themselves take the initiative of setting up huge, functioning ETP (area based) & ask all these small units, to arrange discharging their wastes to these centralised ETP unit. Similar to water & sewerage bill, the govt. will take a monthly bill for treating such wastes (based on respective vol. discharge). This will prevent "eye wash" type ETPs (which many industries unfortunately have), and the possibility of not operating ETP (due to high operating costs) also gets eliminated. I am sure there are several NGOs which can be entrusted with setting up (& maintaining) art of facility ETP units & charge individual users on cost basis. The government would also need to allocate free land space for setting up such centralised ETP for each industrial zone (ideal starting point could be the tanneries in Rayer Bazar/Zigatola area). I feel only then we can expect to have a cleaner & better environment in the future.

It's not too late yet. But we urge the CTG to take the first step of bringing in a team of experts to formulate a constructive work plan in this area.

Mehroz Jallil
Dhaka Cantonment

Woolmer's death

Rumours spread regarding the sudden death of Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer during the WC '07. Signs of being choked in his throat, presence of anti-weed poison in the stomach- were quite enough to prove that it was a case of murder. The case was turning out to be such a mysterious one that finally Jamaican police administration had to hand over the issue to the famous detective agency 'Scotland Yard'. Though a formal post-mortem operation was done upon Woolmer's dead body in Jamaica, two other specialists examined

his body under the patronage of ex-Scotland Yard member Mark Shield. There might have been causes of Woolmer being assassinated. On 15 May, two days before his dead body was found in the hotel room, Bob was witnessed by many of the Pakistani cricketers and team members quarreling with two illegal bettors. The technical team of Scotland Yard also popped out a video clip of the very night Woolmer died where he was screaming angrily to three strangers. It was claimed that the match between Pakistan and newcomer Ireland was a fixed bout and Bob was about to unmask the scandal. That's why he was killed. Parallel to this, Jamaican media also put up solid evidences against Mafia and Pakistani bowling coach of being involved in it.

At last, a recent article from Jamaican magazine 'Sunday Gleaner' has wiped out everything from this investigation. The report depicts that it wasn't a homicide. Woolmer had a heart attack that night and hence he passed away. Woolmer became mentally upset when Pakistan was knocked out of the WC after Ireland defeated them and as a result this mental distress slipped into heart disease. The pathology communiqué of the technical team clarified the fact.

Zihad Azad
Govt. Laboratory High School

Safety first

Without indulging in the blame game of who gave permission, who went for building a vertical type instead of horizontal type of factory or who was involved in the money whitening process for a high-rise building; the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Armed Forces Division (AFD) of the Chief Adviser's Office (CAO), Department of Fire Brigade, Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Finance and the Industries, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) should evolve a safety method in the event of a 'Building Collapse'.

During inclement weather, like an inflatable sea-raft of a sinking vessel (with a classification certificate) an inflatable compartment would inflate during the event of a building collapse which would turn like a life-saving compartment, withstanding heavyweights of the crumbling building whereby the inmates would rush for safety. These life saving compartments would be fitted in every floor with emergency lights, food supplies and oxygen kits for helping the survivors until the rescuers reach and rescue them.

Golam Ashraf

Gulshan, Dhaka
RMCH

I have read the news of the deaths of four patients at RMCH over the strike of the intern doctors there in the online edition of your paper. I wonder how these doctors dare to go on strike when the country is running under an emergency. We hope that there will be a thorough inquiry into the matter and the responsible will be brought to justice. It is time for the government to declare medical services as an emergency service. To my judgment, the medical service is one of our most undisciplined public sector agencies, preceded by education.

We would be very happy to see the government framing a national health policy to ensure proper medical services to citizens.

M. Habibur Rahman
Associate Professor
Department of Chemistry
University of Rajshahi

Indian envoy's remarks

I am surprised by the Indian envoy's recent remarks on the practice of secularism in Bangladesh.

While I would love to see Bangladesh as a truly secular country, I strongly believe the High Commissioner is not in a position to suggest publicly what Bangladesh should do.

Monzur Mursheed
Montreal, Canada

US lawmakers

I am a Bangladeshi residing in Montreal. I am, of course, observing the political situation in Bangladesh and I am quite concerned. One thing I feel, and I think there is consensus on this, is that the present caretaker government needs time to sort out the problems, which are manifold, of the political scene before returning Bangladesh to the path of democracy. Democracy is essential for Bangladesh. But we cannot go back to the kind of leadership we had before. I am certain US lawmakers will fully understand this concern. Therefore, for the US to put pressure on the Bangladeshi government to come up with roadmaps within the next 2 months, lift the state of emergency and thereby return the country into the grip of the politicians who the people do not want, is unjust. Yes, the US must make sure Bangladesh does eventually return to democracy. But the country needs time. And all western powers should do a realistic evaluation of what that timeframe should be. You simply cannot ask us to have our old politicians back in power. It is not what the vast majority of the people want. Only people with vested interests would want that. And given how the main political leaders are being treated now, if they are ever back in power, they will inevitably wreak havoc on the entire nation.

It is with great sadness therefore that I read in The Daily Star about the increase in medical charges at the CRP and the marginalisation of the poorest patients. Valerie started the CRP to help the ultra-poor who cannot get medical treatment anywhere else and has raised money tirelessly and successfully over many years to ensure that the poor have access to treatment. Indeed, the land for the CRP-Mirpuur centre was donated specifically because it would be providing treatment for the poor.

It is essential that the CRP continues to run to serve the purpose for which it was founded - a hospital and rehabilitation centre which is accessible to all in this country and not only the rich.

Samantha Morshed
One-mail

I am utterly dismayed to see the news item of 15 American Senators calling for early election in Bangladesh. Are we the people who have to be always guided? Do these Senators feel more for this country than us? Are they the people who suffer in the hands of political hoodlums? Then why should they meddle in what is absolutely our own affair? It is right that some of our men might have acted as catalyst to bring about this epoch-making change, but does that qualify us to abandon us in the midway? Perhaps not.

Moreover, the people wanted this change. Only we did not know how it would occur. We used to look up to the sky for divine interference and that was it, emergency came into being. Now, please don't try to interfere with an all important issue relating to our existence. We were totally down in the last fifteen years under the clutch of so called democracy.

In the name of democracy they grabbed govt. property, evicted minorities, amassed incredibly large amounts of money, siphoned off ill-gotten fortune to unknown destinations, dictated the administration according to their whims and what not.

Golam Ashraf

country, come and see how the most luxurious vehicles ply on our roads, ridiculing the majority. You will be surprised to see that people who with their good money can barely build a tin-shed house, have dozens of pompous apartments in posh areas. Now with the caretaker govt. in power we hope to see an end to such malpractices. Please do not ruin our dream and compel the present govt. to fall prey to petty party interest. Remember a clean Bangladesh could add to your benefits, more than a corrupt Bangladesh could. **G.M. Chowdhury**
Kafrial, Dhaka

CRP

I read the article in May 16 edition of your newspaper regarding Valerie Taylor being sidelined at the CRP and the increasing costs of treatment at the CRP with great dismay.

I am British but having lived in Bangladesh for a number of years consider myself to be very much Bangladeshi and I am very fond in particular of the rural population of Bangladesh. It is impossible to live in this country and not to be touched by the need to help the poor and to provide facilities and access to facilities for the very poorest in this country.

Valerie Taylor has worked tirelessly for almost 40 years in Bangladesh creating an institution that is known throughout the country. The work of the CRP in reaching out to the poorest in this country and in providing services and medical treatment that are not available anywhere else in the country and providing these to the poorest is legendary. I think there is not a village in Bangladesh which has not heard of Valerie Taylor and the CRP.

It is with great sadness therefore that I read in The Daily Star about the increase in medical charges at the CRP and the marginalisation of the poorest patients. Valerie started the CRP to help the ultra-poor who cannot get medical treatment anywhere else and has raised money tirelessly and successfully over many years to ensure that the poor have access to treatment. Indeed, the land for the CRP-Mirpuur centre was donated specifically because it would be providing treatment for the poor.

Undoubtedly, a Deputy Commissioner carries out his/her duties transparently but still a legitimate question arises regarding their rigorous monitoring of all activities, otherwise an employee of the DC's office could not have asked for money from a teacher. The culprits must be brought to justice.

Md. Rezaul Karim
Lecturer, English Department
Leading University, Sylhet

Next election

I would request the American politicians to focus more on stopping the bloodbath in Iraq and elsewhere, rather than devoting time to a quick election in Bangladesh. The common people in Bangladesh are willing to wait for a free, fair and credible election and, more importantly, to be able to elect responsible and honest leaders. Some political leaders in Bangladesh are in a great hurry to sell nomination tickets, to go to power to make money and to take revenge, and others are in a hurry to escape trial for corruption or extortion. Some have argued, why it should take 18 months to hold the election, while it took only 9 months to gain liberation!

They must have forgotten the Indian army's role in our liberation war, and also why and how we fought and achieved the liberation! The country was not created for some families, or dynasties to introduce an autocratic system.

Why are the politicians so keen to hold a quick election? Is it because the two Begums are too keen to sell nomination tickets?

Bangladesh politicians have taken the moral and ethical values of politics to the bottom. Even 18 months won't be enough to restore the lost values. I also fully agree with Dr. Kamal Hossain that any election earlier than Mr. Fakhrulddin mentioned won't be able to prepare the right foundation for a sustainable democracy.

Dr. Mannan Mridha
Stockholm, Sweden

unique role as an ideal model of a teacher. She has not bowed her head to the established ills and evils of the society. In the past a very common practice was usually noticed that a government official was to give away one-third of the pension, gratuity and the like at the end of his/her life to some bribe takers and yahoos of the government office.

Undoubtedly, a Deputy Commissioner carries out his/her duties transparently but still a legitimate question arises regarding their rigorous monitoring of all activities, otherwise an employee of the DC's office could not have asked for money from a teacher. The culprits must be brought to justice.

Md. Rezaul Karim
Lecturer, English Department
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Lack of analysis

I have been reading the sports columns of your newspaper over the past month and have closely followed Bangladesh cricket team's performance during the World Cup tournament. What has bothered me most, despite the fantastic tour, is the captaincy of Habibul Bashar. I keep reading that Habibul defends himself by saying that even though he has batted badly his captaincy has been good, but I personally can't see how he can claim so! I am surprised to hear such statements and also to see that your reporters support this view and never point out the flaws in his captaincy in their articles!

Throughout the tournament Shahriar Nafees, one of our key batsmen, has struggled in the opening slot and yet there was no move to send him down the order and push Mashfiqur Rahim up to the opening slot.

To me these are issues that need to be analysed and brought up in your articles.

Ahmed Iftekhar Khan
Thailand

