

Reform imperative for political parties

ABMS ZAHUR

A government can never work well without efficient leadership. A bureaucracy can neither effectively discharge its duties nor can it provide quality plans or policies when lacking clear direction from leaders. During the last 15 years of democracy run by two lady leaders it has been proved beyond doubt that (i) without clear and neutral direction a government cannot reach its goals, (ii) catchy political slogans or sentimental statements are more useful for befooling the common people, and (iii) statecraft in any LDC with politically sensitive population is not only a serious matter it also needs high level skill. For effective implementation of ideas it is essential that the leader is popular. But this perhaps is not enough.

Both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia were dragged into politics due to exigencies of the situation created by assassinations of Sheikh Mujib and Ziaur Rahman, respectively. Their only contribution appears to be saving their respective parties from

disintegration. Normally, even a high calibre politician has to work hard to attain prominent position in the party. A party leader must understand clearly what is good for the party. If leaders are carried away by sycophancy no talent can save them from making blunders. These leaders have shown their serious weakness for sycophancy.

We do not say that nothing has been achieved during the last 15 years. Despite rampant corruption, nepotism, terrorism the rate of growth on average was better during the period as compared to Ershad regime (5.9% against 3.9%). There was also distinct improvement in the common man's participation in facing natural disaster. This was partic-

ularly seen during Bangladesh's longest flood in 1998. Furthermore, there has been a remarkable decrease in dropouts in primary schools. In the health sector the improvement was satisfactory. In fact performance in this sector is better than India. Even in sports, road communication or telecommunication clear improvement is evident. However, we find not enough evidence to exclusively congratulate these ladies for the said successes.

Notwithstanding appreciable cooperation of the people performance of these governments could not reach the desired level mainly due to poor leadership. Sheikh Hasina spent most of her time in recalling the glory of AL in the liberation movement, pointing misdeeds of razakars during war of independence and highlighting sacrifices of her family in attaining independence. She could hardly utilize her time for reforming her party through democratization. By ignoring the upcoming new generation of politicians her party was deprived of the necessity for dynamism, freshness and virility. Even the grassroots level leaders were not given adequate time. Frequent visits abroad to gather honours did not serve interest of the party. She never regretted for poor governance of AL in 1972-75, wrong decisions like introduction of presidential government, severe restriction on freedom of press and Baksal.



insatiable thirst for power; underestimation of opposition members, particularly AL; and allowing close incompetent and greedy relations to thrive through various malpractices. Her latest decision to appoint her brother Sayeed Islakar vice president of BNP indicates a blind faith in dynastic rule.

Reform has become unavoidable for political parties to make them more democratic, dynamic and vibrant. Feeble attempts of some parties were not successful in the past. As we are going for a democratic election in which all the parties will compete in a free, fair and credible manner to elect honest, able and committed persons, we strongly feel the need for reform which may be done by political parties themselves. However, no provision for dynastic rule or family centric politics can be considered.

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La Niña and Bangladesh floods

Right now, it looks like a weak La Niña is developing, which may cause a slight enhanced rainfall during the monsoon season. So, based on the maturity stage of this year's La Niña, the possibility to experience a normal (or slightly higher than normal) flood is high. But if the La Niña condition continues to gain strength then a different climate scenario may appear.

DR. MD RASHED CHOWDHURY

ACCORDING to the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) USA, a transition from ENSO-neutral to La Niña conditions is possible within the next 1-3 months.

Nearly all of the model forecasts predict below-average SSTs in the Niño 3.4 region (5°N-5°S, 120°-170°W) during the remainder of the year. While most statistical models show ENSO-neutral conditions persisting through August 2007, most dynamical models indicate La Niña will develop within the next three months.

La Niña refers to the appearance of colder-than-average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the central or eastern equatorial Pacific region (the opposite to conditions during El Niño) (Fig. 2). It is a cold event where the SSTs become anomalously colder compared to the long-term average, for the central and eastern equatorial Pacific.

Over the past several months most of the statistical and coupled model forecasts have trended towards cooler conditions in the tropical Pacific through late-2006. The spread of the some of the statistical and coupled model forecasts (ENSO-neutral to weak La Niña) indicated some uncertainty in the outlooks. However, current conditions (stronger-than-average easterly winds over the central equatorial Pacific and recent cooling trends in observed oceanic conditions support weak La Niña conditions (may gain strength to become moderate) in the tropical Pacific during the next 3 months.

Some forecast models continue to predict a rapid transition to La Niña by July 2007. What type of climatic impact does La Niña have in 2007 in Bangladesh?

Finally, it is important to note that the seasonal forecast prepared here is probabilistic type, which is based on monitoring of the ocean and knowledge of how the atmosphere has responded in the past to similar SSTs (and La Niña) in Bangladesh, with a variety of lag times.

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departures are negative in the Niño 1+2 (-1.9°C) and Niño 3 (-0.6°C) regions, and remain near zero in the Niño 3.4 (0.0°C) and Niño 4 (+0.4°C) regions (Fig. 2).

The scientific reason is that air flows from high-pressure regions to low-pressure ones. As a result, a huge volume of moisture propagates from the Pacific Ocean to Bangladesh and India; due to the prevailing low atmospheric pressure in this area at that time, the moisture-laden air rises, causing heavy rainfall in Bangladesh and India.

Several scientific researches have identified that during La Niña years (either strong or moderate strength) Bangladesh is often a victim of flooding (e.g., 1984, 1988, and 1998).

Right now, it looks like a weak La Niña is developing, which may cause a slight enhanced rainfall during the monsoon season. So, based on the maturity stage of this year's La Niña, the possibility to experience a normal (or slightly higher than normal) flood is high.

But if the La Niña condition continues to gain strength then a different climate scenario may appear for which we need to wait and monitor very closely the on-going La Niña event.

These conditions reflect an enhanced strength of the equatorial Walker circulation. When this Walker circulation is strong, the upper tropospheric winds in the Australasian region are easterly and consequently the tropical disturbances are transported westward into the Bay of Bengal. Therefore, rainfall activity becomes very active in the region of western Pacific.

As of June 8, based on the patterns of anomalous ocean temperatures (SSTs), atmospheric circulation and precipitation are consistent in indicating La Niña conditions in the tropical Pacific.

ENSO-neutral conditions continued in the tropical Pacific during May 2007, with average to below-average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) extending from the date line to the west coast of South America (Fig. 1). The latest weekly SST

According to his observations,

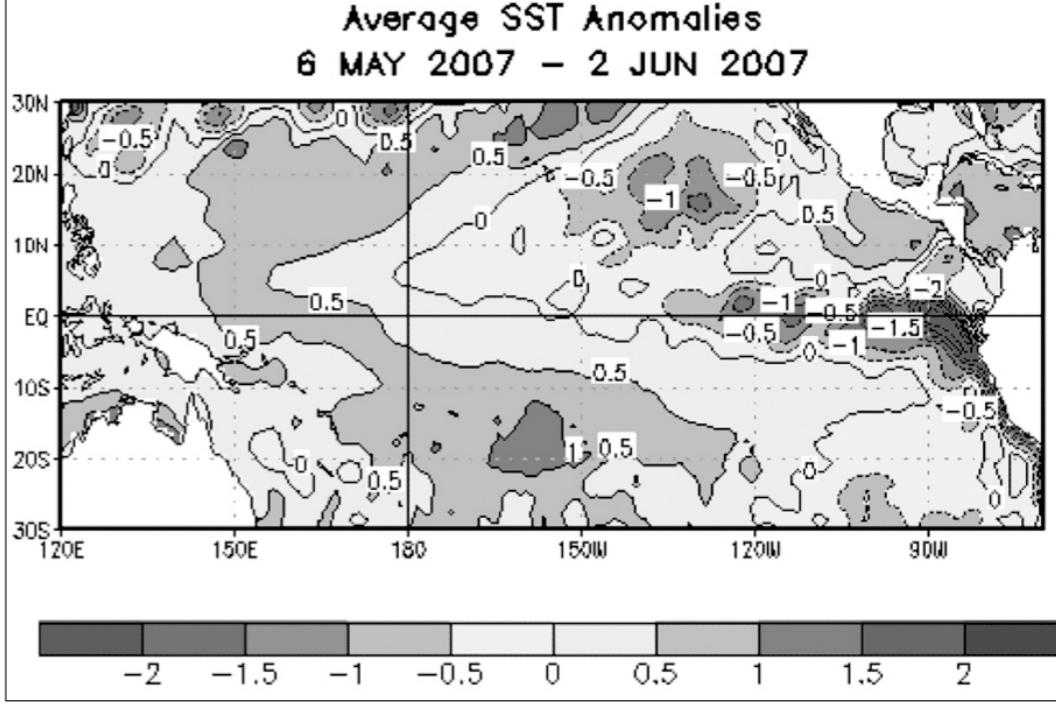


Figure 1: Sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies (°C) during the four-week period 6 May-2 June 2007 (Source: http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/index.shtml)

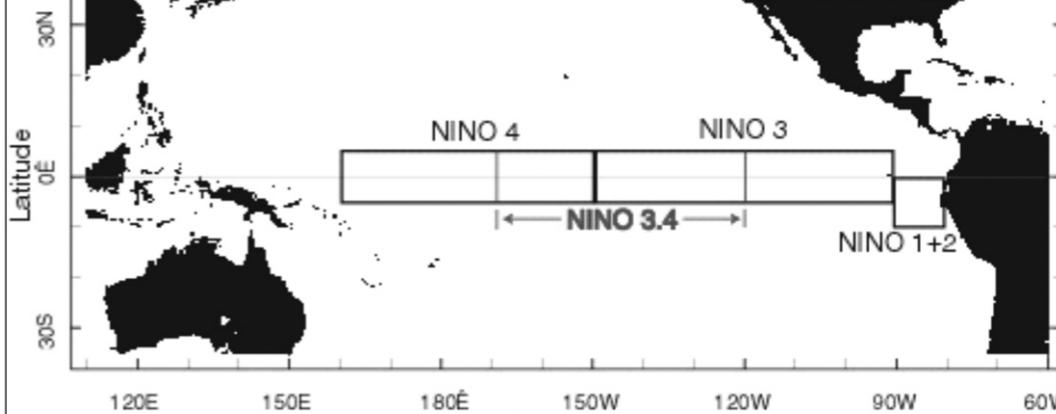


Figure 2: The Niño regions [Niño-1+2 (0°-10°S, 90°-80°W), Niño 3 (5°N-5°S, 150°W-90°W), Niño-3.4 (5°N-5°S, 170°W-120°W), Niño-4 (150°W-160°E and 5°N-5°S)].

For a credible PSC and dynamic bureaucracy

SHEIKH HAFIZUR RAHMAN KARZON

THE council of advisers to the present caretaker government on May 30 requested the Public Service Commission to cancel the viva voce of the controversial 27th BCS examinations. They asked the Commission to complete all arrangements to reschedule the viva for all the successful candidates of the written examinations.

For the last couple of months all the major national dailies published series of reports about the alleged corruption of the Chairman, members, and officials of the Public Service Commission. The newspaper reports unearthed how the questions of preliminary and written examinations were leaked, how candidates were asked irrelevant questions in the viva voce, and how marks were tampered.

We were taken aback when we discovered that there were syndicates in the Public Service Commission composing of members, officials and brokers who confirmed the selection of many candidates in lieu of money. This is sufficient to totter the edifice of civil bureaucracy in Bangladesh.

I humbly request the policy makers to ponder over two things. One, the teachers of the public universities are conducting the admission tests of the universities and the same teachers, when working in the PSC, are conducting the examinations of BCS. The fairness and credibility of public university admission tests are well-accepted, whereas procedural transparency, propriety, and public confidence of BCS examinations have dropped to the sediment. Second, a comparative study of the recruitment procedure of military officers and civil bureaucrats will

reveal how the civil bureaucracy has been tainted at the very outset.

The Advisers of the caretaker government have considered the constitutional and administrative issues involved in the BCS examinations and human aspects of the selected candidates. The grounds, put forward by the government side for canceling the viva voce, were stated in a government handout. The handout said that "The meeting of Advisers took the decision after reviewing newspaper reports and various allegations about 27th BCS examination in order to restore confidence in public mind and establish transparency in the recruiting process for public jobs." (The Daily Star, May 30, 2007.)

The government decision has accepted the fact that there were gross irregularities in the BCS examination procedure, which has cast serious doubt in public mind about the individual credibility of the Chairman and members of the PSC and institutional sanctity of the Public Service Commission. If the government admitted irregularities which obliged them to restore confidence in public mind and establish transparency in the recruiting process, why did they cancel the 27th BCS examinations results partially? Is it judicious to redress any injustice in part? If the government would cancel the full

results of the 27th BCS examinations, would it not deter the future incumbents from committing this type of vices?

The government decision also contains a fallacy as it remains silent about the punishment of those who were responsible for the alleged irregularities. Civil society members several times have raised their voice to form the Supreme Judicial Council to inquire into the reported irregularities and corruption of the ex-chairman, members, and officials of the PSC and accordingly penalise them, if they are found guilty. The government admits the commission of irregularities and cancels the viva voce on that ground, but keeps the responsible persons beyond the ambit of justice. In no way this type of contradiction stands in tune with the crusade of the caretaker government against corruption.

I do not deny the fact that there are candidates who have been selected on merit and who do not have their age to attend another BCS examination. Their cases need to be considered discreetly. The irregularities, anomalies, and sheer corruption in the BCS examinations procedure and recent government decision to cancel the viva voce have underlined the necessity to recast the

Public Service Commission. The appointment procedure of the Chairman and Members of the PSC, the way BCS examinations are conducted, the quota system, the eligibility and competence of the PSC officials must be brought within the ambit of scrutiny immediately. The members and officials, who were involved in the irregularities, if not replaced by neutral and competent persons, the coming viva-voce will be a mockery.

The editorial of the Daily Star on June 1, 2007 very correctly remarked that "It is for the new Chairman now to set the right tenor at the PSC through the clearly hands-on leadership he has been demonstrating since taking charge. That obviously calls for the creation of a right, purposeful team which can take the organisation back to its moorings."

I want to draw, in the present context, the attention of the policy-makers, civil society members and commoners to consider the reconstruction of PSC as one of the most important agenda of the state. The civil bureaucracy constitutes the skeleton of a democratic state, spread over the whole country, from city to the remote villages.

The civil bureaucracy in Bangladesh is beset with many problems. The civil servants are not sufficiently sensitised and committed to ensure the interest of the tax payers. But if we want to establish a pro-people civil bureaucracy, the first task of the caretaker government is to form a high-powered Commission consisting of Supreme-Court judges, academicians, bureaucrats, doctors and engineers to look into the constitutional, administrative, and procedural flaws of the PSC and civil bureaucracy in Bangladesh. It will submit extensive recommendations which will include, inter alia, the amendment of the Constitution and enactment of new laws to ensure recruitment of competent, committed and honest candidates in the service of the Republic and to make the civil bureaucracy very dynamic.

In a globalised world the civil bureaucracy has to execute the state policies, which include -- ensuring basic rights of citizens, reaching state facilities to the toiling masses, constructing infrastructure for agricultural and industrial development, keeping the country connected with the international community and even playing the regulatory role in communicating with the super highway of information and technology.

Without an efficient and committed civil bureaucracy how Bangladesh can expect to cope with the current of 21st century?

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