

## Welcome release of teachers and students

Wish the issue had been handled with greater sensitivity

THE curtain has been all but drawn on the four cases filed against DU teachers and students with their release following acquittal, grant of clemency and quashing of charges. In one of the cases, in which charges were pressed against 25 students and outsiders, 18 have been absolved with the remainder seven yet to be let off.

As for Rajshahi University, the teachers had been released earlier on through a presidential pardon with their relatives denying they had asked for it. The remaining detainee students and an employee of RU were let off through a pardon night before last.

Just when the acquittal of four teachers and 11 students was ruled by a Dhaka Court day before yesterday raising the hope of their exoneration in the second case, given an optimistic environment overall, three of them were convicted in it. They have since been released but they will take a long time living down the memory of conviction. Needless to say, people would have been happy if all of them had been released without conviction.

It is a self-evident fact that the detained teachers and students have suffered in jail for nearly five months. The outcome of the 'legal process' is a proof of their innocence. In that view of the matter, why should the government have not released the teachers and students in good time before the emotions ran high? More so because in public perception the government had been pursuing the course of a negotiated settlement which couldn't admit of any trace of angularity in the outcome.

In our last editorial we had urged the government to release the teachers and students immediately and unconditionally having regard to not only the high esteem in which the community is held in society but also the likely negative fallout of any inflexible position. We also highlighted the glorious tradition of DU in championing the liberal and democratic aspirations of the country. Although the government could have handled the issue with greater sensitivity, the fact that they have taken a positive initiative in the overall to close the matter raises the hope that the small remnants of the issue would be cleared from the deck.

The entire nation must now be able to concentrate on the forthcoming elections and all concerned should be devoted to the sole goal of maintaining a congenial atmosphere for the polls to be held by December, if not earlier.

## Gujarat riots verdict

The system of justice has worked, surely

JUSTICE appears to have been done over the case of a woman brutalised during the Gujarat riots of 2002. Of course, as human rights groups in India have been saying all along, as many as 2,500 people were hacked, beaten or burnt to death in the riots. That means that there is yet a huge backlog of the Indian judicial system needs to address if the questions raised over the riots are to be fully answered. But the fact that a court in Mumbai has now sentenced 11 Hindu men to life in prison for the gang rape of a pregnant young woman, Bilkis Bano, and has also punished a policeman for trying to divert the court of justice through falsifying evidence, is surely an encouraging sign.

The judgement should allay, to a large extent, the fears of those who so long might have remained apprehensive about the situation given the clearly dark role played by the Narendra Modi government in Gujarat over the issue. Indeed, the verdict in Mumbai testifies to the decisive role of the Indian judicial system continues to play in holding wrongdoers to account. That the Supreme Court decided earlier on, in 2004, to move the case from Gujarat to Maharashtra in order for full and proper justice to be done speaks volumes of the sagacity and awareness of public welfare upon which the judicial system works in India. It is anybody's guess as to how the case might have turned out if it were gone through in Gujarat itself. But what has happened here is that the very legitimate fears of the public as well as human rights organisations about a likely miscarriage of justice in Gujarat were noted.

The verdict, in a number of ways, is a grim reminder of the pogrom which followed in the wake of the deaths of 59 Hindus in a train fire in Gujarat in 2002. The consequences were horrifying, with Hindu mobs turning upon the state's Muslim population in the belief that the dead Hindus on the train had been done in by Muslims. As murder and mayhem overwhelmed decency and good sense, it was the sheer callousness of the Modi government to the crisis that exacerbated the situation. It has long been the feeling that the government egged the rioters on. Now that justice has been done in the Bilkis Bano case, the expectation will be that a similar redress of grievances will be done regarding all other ugly incidents committed in 2002.

## The general and the lessons of history

### GROUND REALITIES

Our political legacy, where the imposition and operation of martial law is concerned, remains a story we would rather not remember. And if you were to cast around for similar tales around the world, you would bump into plenty to build your theories on why martial law or military rule has only pushed societies to extremes of despair, politically as well as economically.



SYED BADRUL AHSAN

GENERAL Moeen U. Ahmed has basically echoed the feelings of an entire country through speaking of the disavow with which the modern world looks upon military rule. Or change that to martial law. The point here is that Bangladesh's army chief, busy playing a key role in reshaping political realities in the country, has expressed sentiments that soldier-officers in our part of the world have not, for years together.

Imagine General Hussein Muhammad Ershad telling us, back in the days after Justice Abdus Sattar assumed charge as the nation's elected president in 1981, that the army would resolutely support the growth of democracy. He did not. Indeed, if memory serves us all right, he went on needing the government, through newspaper interviews and the lot, on the need for the military to be accommodated in a power-sharing deal he euphemistically called the national security council. And then came an improbable dawn when the general simply forced the president out of Bangabhaban at gunpoint.

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It was clearly such ramifications of military rule that the people of India had in mind when they rounded on Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw, by then a retired, celebrated war hero, over the garrulity of his comments regarding what he could have done as a soldier. Had he wanted (said he), any time after the 1971 war, to stage a coup d'etat and seize power in India, he could easily have done so.

Not so fast, said the Indian masses, politicians and plebeians alike. He had, said they, absolutely no right to think that battlefield bravery could graduate into political adventurism. Manekshaw learned his lesson. He sealed his lips. And that is the beauty of democracy.

As the late lamented Zulfikar Ali Bhutto said in his twilight moments, in that eerie space when his days hovered between the reality of increasingly feeble life and the lengthening shadows of oncoming death, the din and chaos of their

democracy had kept the Indians going.

It is such democratic din and chaos that has all too often not been permitted to dig roots in vast regions of the globe. Bangladesh ought to have turned out a political proposition different from what Pakistan has always been.

A major thought, once the Bengalis stood liberated in 1971, was that the new country had turned its back on any possibility of an extra-constitutional seizure of power by the armed forces or, for that matter, by any other organised force. The chilling coup of August 15, 1975 put paid to such idealism.

Indeed, the majors and colonels who, with Khondokar Moshataq, seized power on that dawn of shame not only forced an elected government out of office but also hugely improved on the old Pakistani idea of how to go about imposing military rule on a society. They engaged in widespread murder and mayhem, an act that none of the two generals who had put Pakistan through military rule till that point of time, Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan, had indulged in.

Over the next three months, more precious lives would be lost in the growing struggle for power that would be waged between colonels

and major generals and then between different groups of major generals in Bangladesh.

The leaders of the Mujibnagar government, which government was truly a seminal point in our modern history, were the casualties in that sordid struggle, as were some of the finest of Bengalis ever to rise in defence of the nation in 1971. Khaled Mosharraf and his friends, all brave men of the Mukti Bahini, were lost to us for all time.

Now that General Moeen reiterates what the rest of us have repeatedly asserted over the decades in this unfortunate country, we cannot but wish that General Ziaur Rahman had been possessed of similar wisdom in his times. The general elections promised for February 1977 should have been allowed to go on.

Zia would have done the edifying had he not compelled President Sayem to hand over power to him and had he resisted the temptation of ruling, in the old Pakistani fashion, through a command structure where he as chief martial law administrator, with all those deputy chief martial law administrators around him, would be primus inter pares. We will not repeat the old stories. But we surely remember that every instance of military rule anywhere has left unimaginable

and yet predictable stagnation behind.

Democratic institutions have been left maimed, through the rise and predominance of an overly grasping civilian bureaucracy that has parasitically based its survival on attaching itself to the soldiers running the roost. Ayub Khan had his Altaf Gauhar Yahya Khan had his Roedad Khan. Ziaur Rahman had his Shafiqul Azam. And, of course, the legions of Ershad loyalists in the civil administration will forever remain a blot on our collective memory.

Military rule in Indonesia quickly led to the rise of a kleptocracy. The multinationals looted the country and General Suharto robbed his fellow citizens. General Mobutu and his thieving family licked away the cream and then the whole cake in Congo, leaving only the crumbs for a citizenry that had never known peace since the days of the murdered Patrice Lumumba.

In Nigeria, the coup that killed Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in 1966 would lead to a long night of fear. Chile's Augusto Pinochet Ugarte dispensed with Salvador Allende before abducting thousands of civilians and having them disappear. It is a stultified society in Myanmar today, has been since the day General Ne Win seized power in 1962. It only grows worse, with even priests getting mown down by the power of the state. The stories are endless. And endless too are the other realities thrown up by military rule.

A period of martial law quickly produces political sycophancy. And the sycophants are those politicians whose credibility with their people has regularly been at rock bottom. Such hollow men and women, with little prospect of gaining elective office on their own, had packed the

Convention Muslim League of Ayub Khan, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party of Ziaur Rahman, the Jatiyo Party of Hussein Muhammad Ershad and the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) of Pervez Musharraf.

A bunch of rightwing, unelectable Bengali politicians gleefully went to the United Nations in September 1971, to argue that the Pakistan army was doing nothing wrong in what they still saw as East Pakistan.

Military regimes have often left the reputations of perfectly good men in bad shape, one reason of course being the misplaced belief in those men that they could guide the generals and with them the country back into a valley of democratic luminosity.

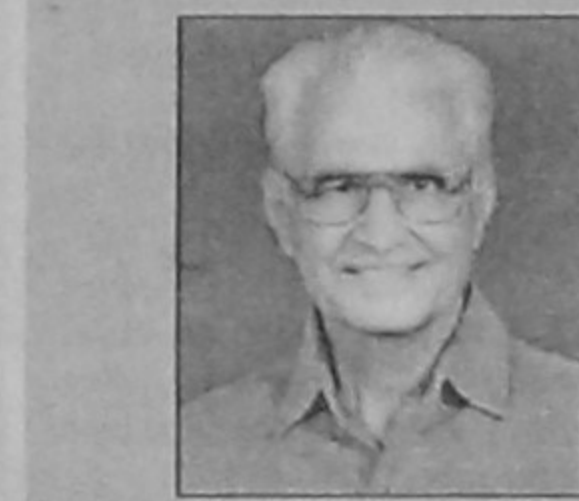
Manzur Quader, a suave lawyer, lost his bearings once he linked up with Ayub Khan. Mohammad Ali Bogra ought not to have joined the Ayub government. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada has been known to be a friend of every military regime that has seized the state of Pakistan and so has alienated himself from Pakistan's masses.

In Bangladesh, Aftab Rahman Khan, Korban Ali and Abdul Halim Chowdhury lost their shine when they joined the rickety Ershad bandwagon.

It is all part of history, every bit of it a slice of collective experience in our times. It is what we have lived through, what General Moeen U. Ahmed has lived through. Which is why our faith in the ability of democracy to power us into the future endures, and assumes refreshing new light.

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## Election prospects



M.B. NAQVI  
writes from Karachi

ELECTIONS remain scheduled for February 18. There is scepticism whether polling will take place on that date. Sure, politics is involved in the doubt. But, generally, it seems that the elections will be held in time. Their prospects should be assessed, though doubts whether these elections will be free and fair are far more widespread.

If there is no rigging, the opposition stands a good chance of defeating the ruling coalition of PML (Q), MQM, PPP (Sheerpa) and PPP (Patriots). Top of the list is PPP which is sure to win most seats in rural Sindh and is sure to win some in Punjab.

The other winner is likely to be PML (N) riding a Nawaz wave in Punjab. PML (N) can win a majority of Punjab Assembly seats and proportionate National Assembly seats.

That leaves MMA, which is in a bad shape, with JUI feuding with JI. But JUI in its own right can win many seats in NWFP and Balochistan, though this time it is commonly adjudged that it tally cannot match 2002's JI, too, can win a few seats in NWFP, if it participates.

### PLAIN WORDS

There is some controversy over relations with America. The Americans are not behaving like mere friends; their actions are more like a master's. They are demanding something that is utter foolishness: to fight the Taliban ruthlessly with mainly military means. In Pakistan, that means a civil war. Islamic extremism can only be fought by political means, if at all.

What would an opposition win signify? First thing to note is that relations among all parties seem bad; there appears to be much animosity between PML (Q) and PPP and also between PML (Q) and PML (N). And so on. This does not auger well. Why? Because of close association between PML (Q) and President Musharraf, and Mr. Musharraf represents the Pakistan army and is also a nominee of the Americans, whose influence is known.

But the opposition is not really disunited. There is unity among them over relations with America, and the foreign policy's contours to be followed. All of them simply love to eat out of American hands, including religious parties also, if it is suitably packaged.

On economic policies, there is near unanimity between all opposition parties and the ruling party, or Americans or Pakistan army; they know only one policy, that which is recommended by the American Treasury, WTO, IMF etc.

Socially and politically, most are solid conservatives; there is not one radical party that is of any consequence electorally. With such an opposition, the army and the Americans should be well satisfied.

Are they? The PPP is everything that Americans want; it is the Pakistan army that, for historical reasons, distrusts PPP leadership. The only presumption is that the Pakistan army does not want any leadership that is independent of its influence. PPP or PML (N) may be conservative and pro-American, but neither depends on the Pakistan army for getting into the citadel of power through elections -- to be sure not to take over completely but as a junior partner of the army. Even that is disliked by the army; it wants all in government to be its protégés.

However, there are some basic issues that do divide the parties, though they do not acknowledge the country's permanent problems: There is the perennial question of centre-state relations. All the three minority provinces demand more autonomy. None of the major parties is prepared to make any clear-cut commitment for more autonomy by defining the quantum of provincial autonomy. Then, there is the issue of Pakistan being run according to Islamic injunctions. There is much mealy-mouthed obfuscation all around on the subject. PPP is claimed to be quasi-secular. Nawaz

Sharif in office was close to religious parties' thinking, though not quite identical.

Nawaz perhaps regarded himself as Islamic as any Mullah and, at one stage, thought of becoming Amirul Mومineen himself. Hopefully, he has come away from that position because he apparently regards that as his earlier mistake. But even the JI and JUI apparently differ over the leadership question, as also on the precise Islam either would impose.

This is an open question, and no one knows where Islamisation should begin or end. Indeed, should it begin at all? After all, Ziaul Haq had Islamised Pakistan to the extent that the Pakistan army thought possible. That has been controversial ever since: all liberals and most Muslim women have been opposed to his Hudood Ordinances. Curiously, no one is talking about their future anymore. Why?

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fought by political means, if at all. No victory is assured for liberals, but the only way forward is through simple, unadulterated democracy (without adjectives). This formula is the solution that, over time, would hopefully resolve the issue of intolerant extremism.

If the people finally insist upon imposing Islam of an obscure kind, they should be free to suffer it, and it is no business of America or Pakistan army to prevent. Being a liberal, the writer would fight for secular democracy without reservations.

But that fight is itself Islamic because Islam prohibits all coercion, much less military force, over questions of belief. One is against Islamic extremism because of the element of coercion in its view of what should be done.

There are other loose ends: what democratic liberties should the people have, and do the restrictions General Musharraf imposed on electronic media, the judges' dismissal and the mutilation of the Constitution and the harsh suppression of lawyers (and journalists) need to stay? No obfuscation on the issue, please.

Pakistan should have strict rule of law, and not the military's or any other dictator's law; either the Constitution to be restored in its original form, as it was written, or a new basic law must be written in an agreed democratic procedure.

The law and order question requires people's association with their government to enforce laws over the land, without citizens being ordered around. Law and order problems should be resolved through democratic means --

through more democracy.

The deposed 60 judges have to be restored pronto, without reservation. Supreme and High Courts must be restored to as they were on November 2 last year, and all recent Constitutional amendments must be undone. These are the pre-requirements for normalcy. Inflation and man-made shortages of foodstuffs, heavy unemployment, and widespread poverty call for determined action. Musharraf and co. have sung songs of self-praise over economic management, and widespread poverty call for determined action. Musharraf and co. have sung songs of self-praise over economic management, and widespread poverty call for determined action. Musharraf and co. have sung songs of self-praise over economic management, and widespread poverty call for determined action. Musharraf and co. have sung songs of self-praise over economic management, and widespread poverty call for determined action.

Is PPP committed to restoring the Constitution and the judges, and allowing media unfettered freedom of expression? Would PML (N) do that? Is PML (Q) interested in these issues? What about MMA? Will it undo the mischief that Musharraf did? These are the vital questions; all parties must answer these before general elections.

That raises another question: do we have any real opposition party? Most mainstream parties are variations on the same theme. An opposition party would be one that can show, through its philosophy and a carefully researched program, that it will change the life of common Pakistanis in such and such concrete manner and quantum.

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## Marketing factor of agro-industrial projects

A marketing plan aims at positioning a firm's product most advantageously in relation to its consumers and competition. Most products have several design options. The product should be designed by the project's marketing and production personnel because marketing identifies the needs for production's designs.

A.B.M.S. ZAHUR

THE primary elements in marketing analysis of an agro-industrial project are (a) consumer analysis, (b) analysis competitive environment, and (c) marketing plan. Consumer analysis identifies needs of a product created by a complex interaction of physiological, sociological and psychological motives. It is necessary to divide consumers into groups or market segments. Geographic location often reveals ethnic or regional taste differences. Age and sex of consumers are two other common segmenting variables. Another variable is income level. Yet another market differentiation is between domestic and import consumers. Market segmentation identifies potential

consumers and limits the agro-industrial project's options. Thus, it is necessary to select a segment based on competitive environment and the strengths and weaknesses of the company. Understanding the buying process is needed in designing the marketing plan. Consumers make purchasing decisions in various ways. Low-price items are often purchased on impulse. Purchase of expensive items is frequently planned. Purchasing frequency affects several marketing issues. Market research identifies common needs, market segments and buying processes to facilitate sound marketing decisions. It involves four steps: data specification, source identification, data collection and data analysis. The private or public

marketer must define his or her market information need. After identifying the necessary information, a marketer should locate the information's primary and secondary sources. Data can be collected formally or informally. Formal data collection techniques consist of an explicit research design, statistical sampling and standardised information collection procedures, such as telephone, mail or direct interviews surveys. Data analysis requires interpretation of the information to fit specific informational needs. Market analysis examines the structure of the market, the basis of the competition, and the institutional constraints affecting the competitive environment. Market structure has been a traditional focal point for the

economists studying industrial organisations and competitive environments. Structural examination of a market can begin only by identification of the competitors. Products should be identified with their broad industrial classification.

Competition occurs simultaneously along several parameters. In a perfectly competitive society, price is the prime method of competing. Product quality is the second parameter of the competition. Service is the third parameter of competition. When a new product enters the market place, there are few competitors. As the product matures and differences among brands decrease, the basis of competition shifts more to price.

A capital-intensive processing enterprise with significant economies of scale has a lower cost structure for an on-going producer with a large share of the market than for a new, low-volume company. A new company in the market would have difficulty competing with the price of developed company's product.

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A firm should choose its pricing strategy according to its competitive environment and market segment. The most common pricing strategies are, cost-plus pricing (adding a margin to its costs for profit), penetration pricing (setting of prices at levels lower than the competition's to enter an existing market), predatory pricing (under-pricing existing competitors to erode their market position severely), skimming (setting high prices to attract the price-insensitive segment of the market), price leadership (prevailing price determined by one firm and followed by others), and administered prices (in the regulated

industries and industries with cartels).

The primary tasks in formulating the promotional strategy are deciding whom to reach, what to say, and how to say it. It is directed toward the end user or toward wholesale and retail distributors. Some promotion is intended simply to stimulate primary demand for the category of products. Promotion messages can be communicated to the audiences by direct or indirect methods. Direct methods are face to face encounters. Indirect methods include television, radio, film etc.

Distribution is important in marketing mix because it links the processor to the market place. A processor has to decide between using the distribution services of the existing institutions and undertaking distribution itself.

Marketing mix of a product should be designed to be internally consistent and mutually reinforcing. It must also relate to the company's entire line so that sales will not be diverted from

another of the company's product. Integration of the marketing components into an internally consistent whole that is compatible with the company's product line and the other managerial works constitutes the marketing plan.

Demand forecasts are needed to estimate the economic implications of the marketing plan and are used to protect profitability, financial and raw material needs, and plant capacity. Forecasting involves collecting and analysing past data to understand future market behaviour and to reduce the uncertainty of decision making. Forecasts should be made in physical and monetary values, and unit measure should be standardised to facilitate comparisons. Data are most useful when they can be disaggregated to correspond to product categories and market segment characteristics. To ensure reliable projections accuracy of data should be verified. In reviewing demand forecasting it should be carefully seen that the data are sound and forecasting methods appropriate.

Bangladesh has a very good prospect for becoming a leading agro-industrial power if her agricultural base and statistical data can be strengthened, and she can develop an adequate number of marketing experts. Around 22 years back the GOB conducted a project Trade and Industrial Policy (Reform) financed by the World Bank. Only an insignificant part of the said study was actually implemented. The study included strengthening of the statistical base in Bangladesh. Under another World Bank financed project, Matching Grant Facility (MGF), an export financing project assistance was given to promote export/exporters. It may be worthwhile to draw up a plan to attract investors in agro-industries, particularly in the northern part of Bangladesh because such industries are labour intensive, and help indirectly both small and big farmers. Land is available at much lower prices in north Bengal.

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