

## Wresting control of Grameen Bank

Let its unique character not be compromised

WE have come to learn from the finance minister that the proposed changes to Grameen Bank Ordinance, 1983 are centred on the appointment of the Managing Director (MD). It does become clear as daylight that the singular purpose of the amendment is to transform the character of the bank's uniqueness and originality. We believe this move is to empower the Chairman over the Board with regard to appointment of the MD.

The government having already disassociated Professor Yunus from the Grameen Bank (GB), we fail to understand why it is in effect discarding Professor Yunus's suggestion that he be included in the search committee to select a new MD. One cannot deny the fact Professor Yunus is entitled to such a space given his insight, direct experience with the bank's growth and vision for its future. We cannot suddenly divest him of his links to the institution which is largely of his own creation by imposing changes from without. After all, the institution he helped build on purely democratic and participatory lines have enabled 8.3 million women to be empowered and have their say in decision making and running of the bank.

By allowing the government a say in the appointment of the MD position, it is laid bare to possibilities of politicisation at the top decision-making level of the bank. In the event of a change in power, the next government, in all likelihood, would appoint its own man in the position of MD, thereby ensuring an enforced politicisation of GB perpetually. The unique character of GB that is at the heart of its achievement and one that has been emulated worldwide will be lost forever. Hence the demand from the top 58 women leaders and professionals of the country asking the government not to change the ordinance should be heeded.

## BNP's move to propose a formula on CTG

Govt. should build on the idea when offered

REPORT in this paper based on insider information suggests, albeit at the informal level, that the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is going to propose a new formula on the interim government for polls after the Eid.

It is worthwhile to note that the BNP's initiative follows the prime minister's proposal of a small interim cabinet including ministers from the opposition, although the opposition has rejected it in principle.

According to our report, the BNP is essentially sticking to the 13th Amendment Act 1996 of the constitution with some changes to the provision of selecting the Chief Adviser (CA). Given the political chaos that arose in 2006 over selecting the CA from among the immediate past chief justices of the High Court, it (BNP) may suggest selecting the CA from among the former chief justices through discussion among the political parties.

However, until such time that the BNP formally announces its proposal, we have to reserve our comments on the issue. And depending on the contents of the BNP's formula, we will make our comments in due course.

Even so, we welcome this sign of flexibility in the approach of BNP, which had so far been insisting on the government's express willingness to restore the annulled CTG system first. The BNP's seeming shift from earlier position and expressing a desire to volunteer a formula is certainly a good augury.

If the BNP comes up with its formula after the Eid as it hints at, the ruling party should not reject it out of hand; rather give it due consideration, build on it and try to reach

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

August 10

- 1270**  
Yekuno Amlak takes the imperial throne of Ethiopia, restoring the Solomonic dynasty to power after a 100-year Zagwe interregnum.
- 1675**  
The foundation stone of the Royal Greenwich Observatory in London is laid.
- 1776**  
American Revolutionary War: word of the United States Declaration of Independence reaches London.
- 1920**  
World War I: Ottoman sultan Mehmed VI's representatives sign the Treaty of Sèvres that divides up the Ottoman Empire between the Allies.
- 1990**  
More than 127 Muslims are killed in North East Sri Lanka by paramilitary troops.
- 1998**  
HRH Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah is proclaimed the crown prince of Brunei with a Royal Proclamation.

### CROSS TALK



IF history is compared to an onion, one more layer peeled off last month when Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Brunei sent their female athletes to London. The kingdom did it for the first time, but the Sheikdom and the Sultanate supposedly had already crossed that threshold when they sent their women to the Islamic Women's Games in Tehran. Overall it's the first time for the women of all three countries to participate in the Olympics Games.

It's a small step for the women of these three countries when their gender around the world has accomplished giant leaps. They have become astronauts, stateswomen, Playboy centerfolds, bandit queens, scientists, authors, and day labours, infiltrating every rank that was once dominated by men. While the Saudi women are still forbidden to drive, their cohorts elsewhere are flying planes and manning rockets.

Why are these dissimilar strides for women? One answer is that history is like a garden where different patches are tended at different times. History itself is discriminated within itself. History books give brief treatment to the period before the emergence of writing around 3,000 B.C., although it constitutes 99.9% of the five-million-year history of the human species. In short, even evolution evolves at varying rates. What is seeded in one part of the world is a grownup plant in another, yet fruit-bearing tree in many.

The seven athletes from the three countries are participating in five categories: judo, athletics, table tennis, swimming and sprint. Not to forget the first female participation in Olympics was in 1900 in Paris when

women were allowed to compete only in lawn tennis and golf. The burst of female freedom in even the western world took its time. At petty pace they made their incursions into the men's world as their struggle gradually loosened the grip that was choking them for hundreds of years.

American film historian Jeanine Basinger explains what it is like. She said that no matter whether a woman



Little has changed after Age of Reasoning, Age of Enlightenment, Reformation, Renaissance, scientific discoveries, revolutions and scores of movements.

lived in a mansion, an apartment, or a yurt, it's all the same thing because what she really lived in is the body of a woman. Then she gave her punch line: That body was allowed to occupy space only according to the dictates of her society.

Last month, women from three Muslim countries were able to convince their societies to give them more space. It's a pity that so many of their predecessors went to their graves, banging their heads against

the walls of prejudice, their unfulfilled yearnings collapsing like a bird that succumbed to the grills of its cage. Not that women weren't influential in earlier times. They were empresses, saints, dowager princesses, nurses, writers and statisticians. But they were exceptions that proved the rule. An overwhelming number of gifted and ordinary women lived under

the spines of the newborn, they bury them alive, strangle and poison them, or just starve them to death.

Shocking as it may be, even in this age of freedom and equality there are pockets of darkness where boys are valued immensely more than girls, where the birth of a girl is deemed as economically unprofitable. In 2005, Harvard University President Larry Summers, who later became Bill Clinton's Treasury Secretary, proposed that women are genetically inferior to men at the high end of the ability spectrum in math, science and engineering.

Summers' hypothesis was taken seriously. The National Academy of Sciences, the premier scientific organisation that advises the US government, was constrained to study and prepare a report, "Beyond Bias and Barriers." Its conclusion was that there is no evidence to date of cognitive differences between men and women that can explain the underrepresentation of women on math, science and engineering faculties.

Who wants to push back the historical chain of causation? This civilisation is only a few hundred years old compared to the millenniums that passed since the dawn of mankind. There have been conflicts, tensions, hatred and discrimination between races, religions, complexions, occupations, traditions, ideologies, and genders. Who can tell how it started? Who can tell who started it first?

But nothing is more grotesque than those depraved men who look down upon women of whom they are born. Little has changed after Age of Reasoning, Age of Enlightenment, Reformation, Renaissance, scientific discoveries, revolutions and scores of movements. Men are still trapped in their minds. And, women in their bodies.

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The writer is Editor, *First News* and an opinion writer for *The Daily Star*.  
Email: badrul151@yahoo.com

### | The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

# Another threat in Pakistan, in sheep's clothing

MICHAEL KUGELMAN

COUNTLESS threats stalk the Pakistani government, from militants in the tribal regions near Afghanistan to a backward economy teetering on collapse. In recent weeks, the focus has been on the Haqqani network, fundamentalist fighters along the border who have longstanding ties to Pakistani intelligence and have conducted deadly attacks on American troops and officials in Afghanistan.

Yet Pakistan also faces another, less publicised, challenge -- from a banned Islamist organisation that does not mount spectacular attacks but is nonetheless insidious. The group, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, is part of an international Islamist movement that promises to establish a caliphate through a bloodless revolution led by elite recruits.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir is not known to have committed a violent act in Pakistan. Instead, according to analysts, it looks for turncoats, proselytising among officials in inner circles who have the power to bring the government down from within. If they succeed, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal might fall into hands that are even less reliable than those of the military, which controls the country's security.

The organisation operates in more than 40 countries, including Britain and the United States, and has been active in Central Asia for more than a decade. But special concern arose in Pakistan after an army brigadier named Ali Khan was arrested in May 2011; his six-month trial, on charges of having ties to Hizb-ut-Tahrir, and of conspiring to overthrow the government, ended in June but a verdict has

not yet been announced.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ultimate goal is a global caliphate -- an Islamic political and religious domain -- across the entire Muslim world, and Pakistani researchers suggest that it has targeted Pakistan as a potential starting point. Several weeks before Khan's arrest last year, Pakistani intelligence warned the government that the movement was planning an Arab Spring-style uprising.

And last March, Pakistani news organisations published a report that Khan had said the movement was ready to take over anytime, having equipped itself with a new constitution and shadow government. The report was attributed to a prosecution witness.

The extent of the threat is difficult to judge. While the movement characterises its tactics as non-violent, it has used bellicose anti-Western imagery, praised attacks on American forces in the region, and spoken of global conquest. In those ways, at least, Hizb-ut-Tahrir resembles more violent South Asian militant organisations like Lashkar e-Taiba, some of which have friends and sympathisers within the Pakistani military and intelligence elite.

The number of Hizb-ut-Tahrir members in Pakistan is unknown, and officials assume it is modest. But the group's significance lies not so much

in its size as in its composition. Its recruiting targets are high-ranking military officers, affluent, educated urbanites and students at prestigious private universities. A statement posted on its Pakistani website on Oct. 21 appealed: "To the Generals, Air Marshals and Navy Admirals and officers of the Pakistan armed forces," rather than to common soldiers.

"Being the real rulers of this country," it told the officers, "only through you can the ummah be liberated from the current crises, hardship and calamities that she faces at the hands of the Western capitalist states." (The *ummah* refers to the global Islamic community.)

This recruitment seems to be working. Members have claimed that the group operates in major Pakistani cities, and that thousands of Pakistanis have joined. In late March, Pakistani journalists received a text message with a link to a new video accusing the army chief, Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, of treachery. Hours later, intelligence agents detained more than 20 people on suspicion of helping produce the video -- at a home in one of Lahore's fanciest neighbourhoods.

A former air base commander in the southern province of Baluchistan and a high-ranking security officer for Pervaz Musharraf, then the president, were arrested in 2009 and accused of having connections to Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

The group has also recruited army cadets trained at Sandhurst, Britain's military academy.

Even though conservatism and piety are on the rise among Pakistan's privileged classes, and recent polls find nearly two-thirds of Pakistani youths favouring an Islamic state, some analysts optimistically assume that Pakistanis as a whole would reject militant paths to that goal. Militant factions like the Pakistani Taliban are reviled for their brutality, and radical Islamist political parties have not done well in elections.

But those observations don't take into account the deviousness of Hizb-ut-Tahrir. In simultaneously rejecting the existing political system and professing non-violence, the group deftly captures a middle ground in the Pakistani zeitgeist, since a great many Pakistanis abhor both their dysfunctional government and the prospect of more killing. But Hizb-ut-Tahrir's references to non-violence obscure the group's apparent willingness to use coups to take power, its entreaties to fight American soldiers, and its calls for Israel's destruction.

Given the strength of Pakistan's military, attempts to pull off a putsch like the one Khan was accused of planning could well fail. But even a botched coup could unleash devastating results: army crackdowns, a state of emergency, terrorist attacks and a suspension of civilian government.

All this makes for yet another nightmarish prospect that Americans need to worry about in one of the world's most dangerous countries.

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The writer is the South Asia Associate at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

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