

Prime Minister Mir Zafar Ullah Khan Jamali has expressed publicly his dissatisfaction over the one year performance of the parliament. He has put the blame on the negative attitude of the parliamentary opposition. On the other hand, the combined opposition, which obtained no less votes from the people, in all four Provinces, than the ruling coalition of PML (Q) and its allied parties, hold the Musharraf - Jamali government for this year-long crisis of democracy.

The common man in the street, in all four Provinces, is not concerned with the technical fine points of the ongoing constitutional debate. He is more concerned with his day-to-day problems pertaining to the security of his life and property, the availability of his daily needs at a fair price, the fair dispensation of justice, riddance from the cruel Thana and Tehsil culture. In short the common man demands good governance. He is not concerned with issues like recognition of Israel, sending Pak troops to Iraq, nuclear proliferation and balance of power.

Thus, there is a marked difference between the fiery political environment of the major urban centres and the vast majority of the rural population, which is not directly influenced

## Profiles in politics

# Crisis of democracy

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by the vested mafia-political, economic, religious as well as socio-cultural, labour, lawyers and even sectarian. At the heart of the protests, strikes and desk thumping in the assemblies, in the name of revival of genuine democracy, is one point agenda. Every opposition has developed a culture of denouncing the government in power to replace it through violence in the streets.

Almost every time, the army has been requested, not privately but publicly, to help the opposition with those in power labelled as security risks if not traitors. Nawaz Sharif made no secret of his desire to throw the entire Peoples Party in the Arabian Sea. Similarly many champions of democracy today, on both sides of the political divide, were fully supportive of Ziaul Haq in Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's hanging.

Therefore, even if the LFO issue is resolved, the show will carry on till

the opposition succeeds through fair or foul means to overthrow the present government.

The question is whether the common man's condition has improved or not? This is a very serious issue. Unless our parliamentary leaders sit and resolve this issue with an open mind and arrive at a national consensus, the present crisis of democracy is likely to continue. Whether any one likes it or not, the political evolution of power has somehow lured the army in the affairs of the state right from the early 1950's.

The question of Civil-Military su-

premacy, though clear and accepted in principle by both sides, is not so simple in the light of the ground realities. The solution lies in providing a safe passage of exit to the military, in phases which are mutually acceptable to both sides. Applying Article 6 of the Constitution to the generals as well as the judiciary including Sharif-ud-Din Pirzada and many others, is not practicable.

This would only delay the introduction of democracy. It is an irony of history that President George W. Bush has chosen the present moment, when US troops are locked in Afghanistan and Iraq trying to export American version of democracy, to spell out his own disappointment in respect of 60 years of US support of undemocratic governments particularly in the Middle East.

It is only after 9/11 and particularly after facing the insurgency in Iraq and isolation of its position that Washing-

ton has been forced to acknowledge its strategic shortfalls, in the pursuit of the US Middle East policy. The Muslim world has been divided into three categories - the opponents, the loyal followers, and those who toed the US line till yesterday, but are now reluctant in view of the changed scenario.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia are typical examples. Even Pakistan, regarded as the front line state in the war against terror, is not listed in the three countries stamped as democratic in the eyes of Washington. Therefore, in the midst of the deepening crisis of democracy all over the world, President Bush has now belatedly chosen to "show the way towards democracy in the Middle East".

For this new American exhortation for democracy President Bush's stance has shifted from the undemocratic rulers towards the hapless populace. This should give quick food for thought to those who are easily lured into the trap of false promises from foreign lands. Pakistan must realize that foreign assistance is no more than a mirage and the real linch-pin for the survival of any government/democratic ruler is the support of the people through national consensus.

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