

An exercise in democracy

By GWNNE DYER

What's extraordinary is how calm everybody is. India is in the midst of an election that could wreck the country's economic miracle and threaten its unity. Yet everybody acts as though it was just a normal election.

Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao warns that if his Congress Party is replaced in power by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), "India could go the way of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia." And it could happen, if the nationalists and Hindu chauvinists of the BJP attack the 120 million-strong Moslem minority at home.

Did the Indians panic when Rao made his warning? No, they roundly denounced him for alarmism - and the Bombay Stock Exchange, already up 37 per cent this year, went right on rising.

Terrorist bombs have been wreaking havoc in both India and Pakistan lately - the ones in India probably the work of Kashmiri separatists, those in Pakistan most likely connected with the virtual civil war raging in Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city. But Indian right-wingers blame Pakistan for the bombs, and after the most recent blast in Pakistan killed 50 villagers in a rural bus, Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto blamed India.

But Indians didn't panic, of course. They just patiently waited their turn as the election caravan moved around the country. Police and paramilitary forces are being shuffled around to ensure adequate security at the 800,000 polling stations, but it means that only about one-third of the population gets to vote at a time.

It is a very impressive exercise in democracy, but it is also a puzzle. Don't these people understand that if the BJP comes to power, their old India is gone, and their new one will be an intolerant nationalist state locked into permanent confrontation with Moslem neighbours abroad and Moslem citizens at home?

Many Indians want exactly that, of course, and that's why they are voting for the BJP or its neo-fascist ally Shiv Sena. They are people who like the idea of an India that openly wields nuclear weapons.

Every country has such people: in the United States they are collectively known as 'angry white men'. But in India their party of choice is leading in the opinion polls, and if it were to gain power the consequences would be much more than just shutting down a few family planning clinics. So why are ordinary Indian voters so plainly not panicked? What do they know (or think they know) that we don't?

They know, for a start, that this election is not about the BJP winning. It is about Congress, which has dominated the Indian political scene since independence, losing its central position in Indian politics.

Like the Christian Democratic Party in Italy or the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan, Congress has had almost four decades in office with only a brief two-year interruption in its reign. Well, corruption probes, and the Liberal Democrats are faltering badly. Why should Congress be any better?

Whatever the balance in the new parliament, there will have to be a coalition government. And the BJP is unlikely to dominate the coalition government. And the BJP is unlikely to dominate the coalition even if it wins more votes than any other party: few of its rivals share its fundamentalist outlook on the world. India is mature enough to democratise fully without disaster.



LAUNCHED ... At the event are, from left, General Committee for Bahrain Workers chairman Faisal Fulad, Mr Al Haroon, Shaikh Abdulrahman, Kuwaiti federation delegates Mohammed Al Anazi and Hassan Baloochi.

Training Bahraini

Chamber looks to market needs

By AMIRA AL HUSSAINI

join hands in supporting training programmes.

He pledged the chamber's support to training programmes, which would fulfil the market's actual needs.

"We are ready to exert all efforts in this sector and our support for the training of a national workforce will be in line with what the job market actually needs," said Mr Zainalabedin.

He said the chamber had al-

ready decided to grant a number of young Bahraini scholarships to study at the Bahrain Training Institute (BTI).

"We have also carried a number of field trips to the centre in order to have a closer look at how it functions and ways in which it could be supported and assisted," said Mr Zainalabedin.

He said the response of commercial and industrial organisations in employing Bahrainis reflected their sense of responsibility towards the nation.

"We have taken wide steps in the development of our social and economical sectors through the efforts of the country's different organisations.

"It is, therefore, important to preserve this standard through the training of workers in developing their productivity, increasing their performance and developing their attitude towards work."

Mr Zainalabedin was speaking at the International Labour Day celebrations yesterday at the Gulf Hotel.



TRAINING ... Mr Zainalabedin

TRAINING of a dependable Bahraini workforce is a task everyone should work towards fulfilling, says Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry first vice-president Hassan Zainalabedin.

He said training was an inter-related responsibility, which should be shared by the individual, home, school, educational institute, university and workplace.

"Training of Bahraini workers should fulfil the actual needs of society and its establishments," said Mr Zainalabedin.

"Therefore, we should all



VISIT ... Participants of the second course before their departure with GCBW chairman Faisal Fulad, second row, sixth from left

Workers backbone of Bahrain says minister

Labour group heads for Cairo course

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workers in both countries. Mr Al Sho'ala added such co-operation between the two organisations could be the first step towards overall co-operation between the GCC countries.

He also pointed to the co-operation between Bahrain and Egypt in this field.

Mr Al Sho'ala said the ceremony also reaffirmed the country's keenness to preserve the rights of workers, its efforts at increasing the national workforce and opening new employment opportunities for Bahrainis.

He emphasised that training of workers was a must in order for them to carry out their work fully. "As a result, training of Bahrainis is one of the Government's top priorities when laying out future programmes and plans," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

He also highlighted the role of the private sector and businessmen in fully supporting the Government's drive

in the employment and training of Bahrainis.

"This could be easily traced to the fact that the private sector has provided employment opportunities for 7,900 workers last year, decreasing the rate of unemployment to 1.4 per cent," he said.

This achievement was made possible by the nature of Bahraini workers, who were able to adapt to different circumstances and market needs, he said.

Importance

"This also emphasises the fact that Bahraini workers enjoy the trust of private companies and are a vital national asset," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

He said this year's ceremony pointed out the role of women workers as partners of their male counterparts in all sectors of production.

Mr Al Sho'ala said more women were honoured than in previous years.

"This also reflects what is

stressed in the Bahrain labour law on the importance of maintaining equality between men and women in terms of employment, training, wages and social benefits," he said.

Mr Al Sho'ala added that Bahrain labour law also gave women special treatment in order for them to balance between two crucial roles.

"On the one hand women play an important factor in the development and progress of their work sector, but also have another role as mothers, in charge of bringing up the future generations," he said.

Mr Al Sho'ala urged women to rear their children according to Islamic teachings and society values, especially those related to the love of the country and moral work ethics.

He said all workers should be thanked for their contribution to the progress of society.

"Our appreciation and support goes out to all workers in Bahrain and not only those honoured heretoday," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

A SECOND group of 25 workers' representatives from Bahrain leaves tomorrow for a worker education programme being held in Cairo.

The course, which runs until May 17, has been organised by the General Committee for Bahrain Workers (GCBW) in co-operation with the Workers' University in Cairo.

The programme will focus on topics such as report writing, history of worker organisations, rules and regulations for meetings, methods of convincing, role and responsibilities of worker organisations.

It is being run three times to accommodate a total of 75 workers' representatives from 26 Bahraini companies, which have joint labour committees. The first group of 25 workers' representatives attended the course in March.

The programmes are the first to be organised by the GCBW outside Bahrain for all workers' representatives.

WEATHER

TODAY: Fine with some patches of cloud at times.

Wind: Northwesterly 10 to 15kt and reaching 17 to 22kt at times over the sea areas.
Sea state: 1 to 3ft inshore 3 to 5ft offshore.
Sunrise: 0459 Sunset: 1810
Moonrise: 1713 Moonset: 2424
Temperature: Max 33C, Min 24C
Humidity: Max 70% Min 30%

Min Sulman tides: High at 1648 Low at 1049
Actual values recorded yesterday:
Temperature: Max 34C, Min 23C.
Humidity: Max 66%, Min 20%.
Gulf temperatures: Kuwait 43, Cairo 28, Doha 34, Abu Dhabi 35, Muscat 32.

	Min	Max																
Amsterdam	00	17	CI	Frankfurt	06	17	CI	Moscow	13	18	R							
Athens	12	24	CI	Geneva	15	18	R	Nairobi	15	19	CI							
Auckland	14	17	R	Hanoi	23	29	R	New Delhi	26	42	C							
Bangkok	25	33	R	Helsinki	00	09	C	New York	14	16	C							
Barcelona	11	19	R	Hong Kong	22	25	R	Oslo	04	15	CI							
Beijing	12	27	C	Islamabad	16	24	C	Paris	06	16	CI							
Belur	18	20	R	Istanbul	16	24	C	Rio de Janeiro	21	26	C							
Brisbane	03	13	R	Kuala Lumpur	25	34	C	Rome	09	21	CI							
Buenos Aires	18	24	CI	London	08	14	CI	Seoul	12	20	CI							
Cairo	21	40	C	Los Angeles	19	27	C	Singapore	23	30	R							
Colombo	26	33	C	Manila	25	35	C	Taipei	21	29	CI							
Dhaka	19	31	C	Melbourne	08	23	CI	Vienna	06	20	R							
Dublin	04	08	R	Miami	23	29	CI	Warsaw	07	14	CI							

*CODE: C=Clear, CI=Cloudy, R=Rain

PRAYER TIMES

Noon (Dohr) 11.36am, Afternoon (Asr) 3.04pm, Sunset (Maghrib) 6.11pm, Nightfall (Ishaa) 7.41pm and Dawn (Fajr) 3.36am tomorrow.

Today is the 14th day of Dhul Hijah 1416, in the Islamic calendar.

*Provided by the Justice and Islamic Affairs Ministry

New centre holds first course

BAHRAIN'S first worker education centre was launched into operation yesterday. About 30 people attended the centre's first course on the impact of global economic changes on workers. The opening was attended by Assistant Under-Secretary for Labour Shaikh Abdulrahman bin Abdulla bin Hamad Al Khalifa and president of the Kuwait Trade Union Federation Thabet Al Haroon. The one-day course, held yesterday, was the first activity undertaken by the centre, which has been set up by the General Committee for

Bahrain Workers (GCBW). The centre, located at the GCBW premises in Adliya, is aimed at preparing a new generation of Bahraini workers, who can take their proper place in the country's development process. A new nine-member board has been formed to govern the activities of the centre. Educational programmes to be offered will focus on building workers' capabilities by enhancing their knowledge on such issues as tripartite negotiation, regional and international labour standards and rights and responsibilities of workers.

GPIC offers a BD1,000 boost

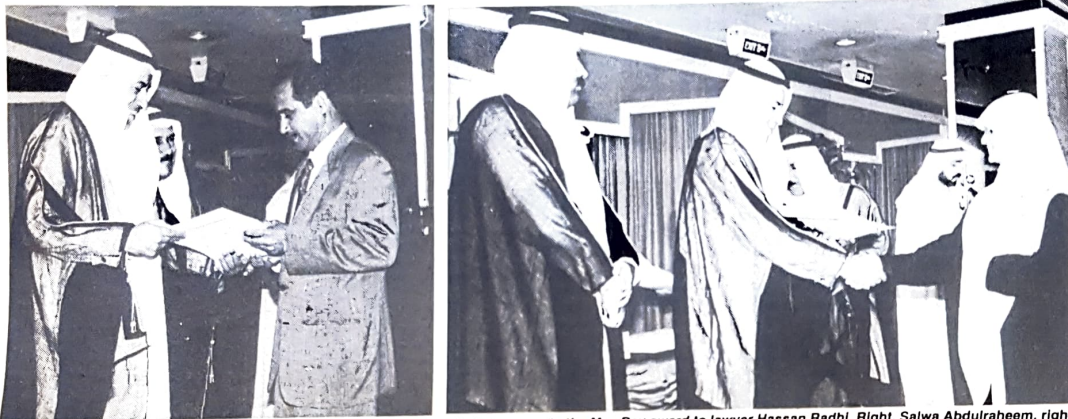
A NEW worker education centre, set up by the General Committee for Bahrain Workers (GCBW), received a shot-in-the-arm from the Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company.

Company general manager Mustafa Al Sayed presented a cheque for BD1,000 towards the centre, which is the first of its kind in Bahrain.



In the picture on the right, Mr Al Sayed is seen presenting the cheque to GCBW chairman Mr Faisal Fulad, left.

workforce 'key task'



AWARD ... Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala, left, presents the May Day award to lawyer Hassan Radhi. Right, Salwa Abduraheem, right, from the Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company receives her award from Mr Al Sho'ala.



TIES ... Mr Fulad

Tripartite relations 'crucial for growth'

WORKERS, employers and the Government all work to achieve economic growth and prosperity for the people, says General Committee for Bahrain Workers chairman Faisal Fulad.

He said the committee, since it began in 1982, had been carrying out projects and objectives, which helped create a closer link between the three "partners in progress".

Mr Fulad said the committee had carried out a number of awareness campaigns and workshops for workers in Bahrain and abroad.

He said co-operation pacts were signed between the committee and similar committees in Egypt and Kuwait.

Opportunities

"The programmes emphasised exchange of training opportunities as well as introducing workers to their rights and obligations," said Mr Fulad, who praised the efforts of workers in the production sector and said it reflected the increasing profits of companies.

He also said workers were the real asset of Bahrain and that diversifying the economy would help create further employment opportunities.

Mr Fulad called for implementation of this year's theme of developing standards for labour organisations and forging closer co-operation between the three partners in progress: the Government, workers and employers.

Government committed to backing skills programmes says minister

By SOMAN BABY

BAHRAIN is committed to helping employers to find the "right Bahraini for the right job", says Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala.

He was speaking at a reception at the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, marking the launch of CareerCraft, a British organisation specialised in career design and training.

The ministry is to sponsor 60 young unemployed Bahrainis to the CareerCraft courses.

"The Bahrain Government is committed to supporting international training institutions which will help prepare young Bahrainis to become productive and skilled workers," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

"As part of this commitment, the Labour and Social Affairs Ministry will sponsor 60 young Bahrainis to the training programme launched by CareerCraft at the Bahrain Training Institute."

CareerCraft, which has successfully implemented a programme in Saudi Arabia to prepare young nationals for workplaces over the past two years, has opened the Bahrain office at the invitation of the ministry.

Mr Al Sho'ala said CareerCraft's new programme, 'Passport to Work', would prove a boon for both employers and employees.

He said CareerCraft was established in Bahrain in record time.

"It was just two months ago that its director Keith Hodgkinson and his colleagues visited Bahrain to explore the possibilities of setting up an office to serve the growing needs of the Gulf region," said



TRAINING ... Mr Al Sho'ala cuts a ribbon marking the launch watched by officials and other guests.

Mr Al Sho'ala. "Once they decided to base their Middle East operations in Bahrain, the companies employing them to foster higher levels of productivity and profitability on the other."

"CareerCraft, I strongly believe, aims to equip nationals with professional skills and instill in them a keenly developed sense of purpose and commitment so that they become their employer's highly valued assets," he said. "The establishment of the new office yet again demonstrates the confidence that international companies have in Bahrain and the immense market potential of the region that can be tapped from here."

Mr Al Sho'ala said private sector companies might prefer those seeking jobs to be "ready-made" and well trained, partly

because they may not have in-house training facilities and partly because they may not have the time to train their own staff.

The presence of companies like CareerCraft will serve to fill the gap and its record of success in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere is reassuring," he said.

Mr Al Sho'ala thanked the officials of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry for their participation at the launch ceremony and support to various training activities.

CareerCraft's chief executive officer Alan Miles said the company's first training programme in Bahrain would start at the Bahrain Training Institute on May 18.

"We hope to have 40 young Bahrainis in total to join the first three courses for secretaries, administrators and sales people," he said.

Mr Miles said it was most appropriate that the launching



Mr Miles



Mr Hodgkinson

ceremony was held on May Day, the International Labour Day.

"CareerCraft will present awards during the Labour Day celebrations next year to the best company in terms of successfully employing Bahrainis, the best new recruit, the employee who made the biggest contribution to the company and the best supervisor," he said.

Mr Miles said Bahrain, through the initiative taken by the Labour and Social Affairs Minister, was providing leadership in training to the entire Middle East region.

Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry board member Hamad Abul, who also spoke on the occasion, offered the Chamber's total support to CareerCraft's training programmes. The Bahrain office of CareerCraft will be managed by a team headed by Mr Hodgkinson.

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