

Bhaluka incident

Lawlessness is not the answer

NO fewer than 13 alleged robbers were beaten to death at Bhaluka on Wednesday last in a frenzied demonstration of mob anger being turned on a group of suspected criminals.

The villagers must have acted out of the conviction that they were playing an assertive role in the dispensation of justice. They must also have been convinced that there was no better way of dealing with the alleged criminals. Their desperation was all too manifest in the way they lynched the victims.

But when an incident like the one we have witnessed at Bhaluka happens, there is ample reason to be worried. It was a clear case of people taking the law in their own hands, and committing a ghastly crime in their bid to punish the suspected criminals.

But given the slide in law and order, one might also ask what the people can do to counter the wave of criminality which makes life extremely precarious for the unarmed, innocent citizens? Even if such questions may appear pertinent, we stand unequivocal in condemning this act of lawlessness in the name of punishing the outlaw. It is difficult to examine the issue in all its ramifications without a reference to the performance of the law enforcers. Obviously, the villagers would not have gone that far had they been sure that the criminals would be brought to justice. Regrettably enough, most people do not any longer believe that the police are doing their job. The result is that they do not hesitate to take the law in their hands whenever an opportunity presents itself.

But that cannot portend anything auspicious for society as a whole. The dangers associated with this kind of mob justice are not to be overlooked: lawlessness will persist and innocent people can be victimised any time. Above all, the demarcation line between peace-loving citizens and outlaws will become thinner and less visible.

The law enforcers must shoulder the responsibility of all that is happening around us. If they perform well and succeed in making people believe that criminals will not go unpunished, people will not react so violently as they did at Bhaluka.

Budgetary constraints in education sector

Free fall of quality worrying

EDUCATION Watch, an independent research and monitoring body, has, in our reckoning, produced a useful study of the objective conditions that cast a shadow over our human resource development efforts. That we have got the basics somewhat wrong is the impression one derives from the research and monitoring work. The analysis has established a cause-and-effect relationship between the money the government puts in the education sector and the quality of outcome.

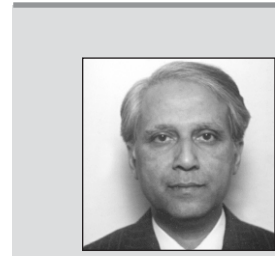
The statistics make a compelling case for a shift of emphasis both in terms of the size of allocation as well as the spending pattern. We spend two per cent of the GNP on education compared with the UN-recommended six per cent. With that kind of a gap in the ratio, how does it matter that education received the highest allocation in the budget for 2002-2003 -- Tk 6,871 crore? Moreover, with the lion's share of it going into payment of teachers' salaries and upkeep of an infrastructure that is hardly adequate, why talk about the highest allocation to the education sector? In fact, next to nothing is spent for developing learning methods, materials, textbooks with a clear-cut strategy for raising the standard of education.

While at the schools across the board, the spending on teachers' salaries and allowances ranged from 87 to 95 per cent, at the level of universities it averaged 80 to 90 per cent. For instance, a University Grants Commission report says that at the autonomous universities only 13 per cent of the budget is spent for education and research.

Little wonder, while grading the universities on performance in public examinations, teacher-student ratio, physical infrastructure and library and laboratory facilities, the study found 70 per cent of the educational institutions below standard or of the middling quality. The huge percentage of failure at the last series of Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) Examinations bore ample testimony to an educational waste a poor country like us can only afford to our peril.

While the government should reform the education system and invest more resource in it and judiciously, a greater private sector involvement with lessened profitability considerations will bring about the change we are looking for in the overall quality situation.

Labour standards, social governance and globalisation



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

THE complex interface between globalisation and the promotion of core labour standards is receiving growing attention. Citizens today consider that an equitable global economic system should promote social development and fundamental rights. It is also felt by a vast majority that the prevailing governance model in most developing countries do not adequately address these issues. This reflects not only a greater awareness of the impact of globalisation but also interest in economic relations being beneficial to all those involved. It is similarly a recognition that trade and investment flows should benefit the population at large and support those that participate in the production processes and contribute to economic growth. This growing public interest is based on the recognition of the universality of core labour standards.

It is this aspect that leads most developing countries to recognise that sustainable economic growth goes hand in hand with social cohesion. It is this belief that underpins their economic and social policy goals.

Unfortunately however, existing international economic and social rules and structures are viewed as being unbalanced at the global level. In this context one is reminded of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's observations at the Millennium Summit where he stated that "...in recent decades an imbalance has emerged between successful efforts to craft strong and well-enforced rules facilitating the expansion of global markets while support for equally valid social objectives, be they labour standards, the environment, human rights or poverty reduction, has lagged behind."

Analysis of the existing situation indicates that global market governance appears to have developed more quickly than global social governance. It is also clear that the ILO enforcement mechanism, being limited to ratified conventions, has limited effectiveness. It has consequently been suggested that the WTO, with its rules-based system and binding dispute settlement mechanism, will probably be a stronger and relatively more effective organisation. It is this relative strength of the WTO that has led to calls that it take upon itself to act in areas outside the

trade field, thus using its instruments to reinforce governance in other policy areas, such as labour standards and the environment. This is however not accepted by some. They point out that the ILO is, and must remain, the organisation competent to set and deal with labour standards, and that a rebalancing of the global system should seek to strengthen the social pillar by taking its starting point in the ILO mechanisms, not in the WTO.

These broader aspects of global

economic growth and development of the world economy but also is useful for sharing experiences and cross fertilisation of ideals, cultural values and aspirations. It was similarly recognised that poverty, unemployment and social disintegration had too often accompanied the changes and adjustment processes. The Copenhagen Declaration identified the challenge of properly managing the process of globalisation and also increasing the benefits while mitigating the potential negative effects upon

and occupation.

The 1998 Declaration also introduced a follow up mechanism to promote the universal application of core labour standards which applies to all ILO members, including those which have not ratified the corresponding ILO Conventions. This follow-up mechanism is additional to the supervisory mechanisms established by the ILO constitution for the application of ratified conventions as well as the special Freedom of Association procedure, which already

tion, improving living and working conditions and promoting quality of life are goals of the European Union.

Respect for labour standards is an integral element of the European social model, and a substantial body of Community legislation, ranging from standards on health and safety at work to equal opportunities and non-discrimination, has been built up since the early years of the Community.

The role of the social partners in the development of the social

approach, the situation in our region leaves a lot to be desired. Poverty, poor governance and extensive informal sectors are often the main cause of the weak implementation of core labour standards. In Bangladesh and also in the rest of South Asia, a large part of the local economy is informal and unregulated. Poorer people are heavily reliant on the informal sector, both as workers and consumers, and they consequently tend to be less well protected by core labour standard agreements.

In this context one must remember that development policy as poverty reduction would suggest that there be social development, including employment, access to social services, social integration and social regulation. These are essential components of efforts towards poverty reduction. The question is whether these elements are actually evolving in South Asia. The social aspects of development, one is afraid is lagging behind. It is also to be noted here that SAARC has not been able to play any defining role in this regard.

It would also be important to note here that while the universal application of fundamental rights has been certainly a necessary condition, it has not been sufficient in ensuring parallel economic and social progress.

The question therefore arises as to whether more can be done at international level to promote greater synergy between globalisation and progress in terms of social development and equity in a broader sense...One step that could be taken is to actively promote discussion and consideration of social development and core labour standards in other development organisations, including the Bretton Woods Institutions. This would ensure policy coherence in support of core labour standards as part of existing development cooperation programmes.

As compared to this enlightened dimension of European integration has been a central one, and the scope of the social dialogue at the European Union level has been progressively extended -- such that the social partners in the EU now play an important institutional role in elaborating EU-wide social and employment policy and legislation. Giving the social partners themselves the opportunity to propose rules on the issues which most concern them in the process of European economic and social integration has been a crucial element in the Community's efforts to manage the social dimensions of structural change.

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POST BREAKFAST

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governance tend to affect the promotion of core labour standards. It is important for one to understand this. Proper appreciation will then enable us to comprehend the dynamics of international developments in this field over the past decade. It will also help us to identify avenues to promote social development in the context of globalisation and underscore the close inter-linkage that exists between trade and investment, economic growth and social development and the need to address these issues in an integrated manner.

International discussions on the interface between globalisation and social development have involved in several fora in the recent past. These discussions have reflected overall support for the promotion of core labour standards and greater recognition of social development as a necessary tool of sustainable development. They have also clearly underlined the difficulty of addressing the interaction between trade and social issues in a manner that duly takes account of the concerns of all parties. Their anxiety has been raised out of their concern that a link between trade and social issues could be abused for protectionist purposes or might open the door for increased recourse to trade sanctions.

One recalls that the 1995 World Summit for Social Development addressed the social dimension of globalisation for the first time at the highest political level and thus gave full recognition to the social component of sustainable development. In the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, participating countries including Bangladesh recognised that globalisation not only creates opportunities for sustained eco-

people.

The Copenhagen Summit, with additional impetus provided by the 1996 OECD study and the WTO Singapore Ministerial Declaration, inspired the adoption of the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This Declaration constituted an important step forward in the universal recognition of core labour standards which included freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, effective abolition of child labour and elimination of discrimination in respect of employment

applied to non-ratifying states.

It would be useful here to see what is happening in Europe and how the Europeans are viewing labour standards as a key element of EU social policy.

Europeans believe that economic progress and social cohesion, together with a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, are complementary pillars of sustainable development. These according to the European Commission and the European Parliament are at the heart of the process of European integration. Raising living standards, promoting a high level of employment and social protec-

dimension of European integration has been a central one, and the scope of the social dialogue at the European Union level has been progressively extended -- such that the social partners in the EU now play an important institutional role in elaborating EU-wide social and employment policy and legislation. Giving the social partners themselves the opportunity to propose rules on the issues which most concern them in the process of European economic and social integration has been a crucial element in the Community's efforts to manage the social dimensions of structural change.

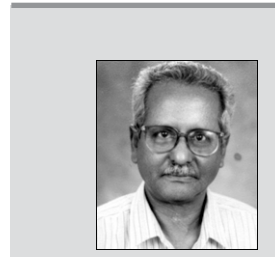


Closer inter-linkage between economic and social development has to be put in place to make the procedure useful. This inter-action will have to encompass the development and poverty reduction related aspects of sustainable development. Analysis will have to be carried out with regard to the connection between economic growth, employment, inequalities, poverty reduction and social protection.

This implies the need for examination of labour conditions, competitiveness, social flanking policies in support of trade reform (including vocational training), education, the impact of trade on gender and other forms of discrimination. This scrutiny would assist in providing a common understanding of steps required for social development.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador

Peace – necessary condition for growth



M. J. ZAHEDI

MR Atal Behari Vajpayee has given a response to Gen. Pervez Musharraf's offer of talks. During a speech at a cricket ground in Srinagar, Vajpayee said, "we are again extending the hand of friendship...all issues can be resolved through talks, nothing can be solved through war".

This statement constitutes a clear expression of readiness for talks for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute. The ambiguity however lies in whether the talks are to be unconditional. Our first proposition is that the imperative for unconditional talks emanates

from the logic of apparently irrefragable position of India on the Kashmir dispute on the one hand, and their expressed desire for seeking a peaceful resolution on the other.

Before the Srinagar statement of Vajpayee on April 18, the Indian

war, no peace situation will persist.

The very logic of suggesting talks for a lasting peace in such a situation, is premised on two assumptions:

- * the talks will be unconditional.
- * India's concern for cross-border

would now need to conduct a serious review of its Kashmir policy as preparatory homework for the concrete negotiations that could be expected to begin after the initial talks have ended. Such a review must be premised on the proposition that in negotiating the

deprived of the basic necessities. Overcoming these inhuman conditions of existence is necessary to make the independence of the nation meaningful, and to secure the future of Pakistan.

In spite of the good work being done by many development NGOs

about five per cent per annum. There can be no improvement in the appalling poverty situation. Serious poverty reduction and rapid improvement in the provision of basic services requires a GDP growth rate of over nine per cent. This target can only be reached with a substantial increase in domestic and foreign private investment. For achieving these target for investment GDP growth and poverty reduction require as a necessary condition peace with India.

The prospects of peace talks between Pakistan and India can be the prelude to a negotiated settlement of the Kashmir dispute and the establishment of a lasting peace in the subcontinent. Such a peace is vital for securing the well being of the people of Pakistan. Yet, to actualise this possibility, Pakistan will have to review its Kashmir policy on the basis of placing Pakistan first.

M J Zahedi is an eminent columnist in Pakistan and formerly the Editor of the Khaleez Times.

LETTER FROM KARACHI

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government held the view that Pakistan is sponsoring cross border militancy, which must stop before talks can begin. Pakistan's view on this is that Pakistan is doing its best to stop such incursions and is willing to facilitate an international monitoring regime in the line to demonstrate its intent. So long as both sides maintain this counterpoised positions the status quo of no talks, and worst still a no

militancy will be systematically addressed in the overall context of a negotiated settlement of the Kashmir dispute.

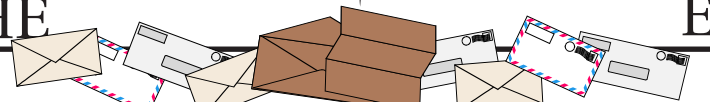
If talks begin, there is real possibility now of arriving at a negotiated settlement of the Kashmir dispute. For this to happen, the agenda of the talks must include a minimal outcome.

The government of Pakistan

Kashmir dispute Pakistan comes first. Kashmir may be the unfinished business of partition but it is time to realise that improving the economic conditions of the people of Pakistan, of providing them security of life and property and establishing a sustainable democracy together constitute the raison d'etre of Pakistan. Consider the condition of the people of Pakistan: the majority of them are

in Pakistan they are still covering only 0.01 per cent of the current poor population. The necessary condition for overcoming poverty, and providing health and education to the people of Pakistan is sufficiently accelerating the growth rate of GDP. If the conflict with India (and of course the law and order situation as at present) continues, the most optimistic GDP growth target we can aim is

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

"BCS jobs up for grabs at Modhu's canteen!"

It is really frustrating to read the news "BCS jobs up for grabs at Modhu's canteen!" (26 April).

I urge the Prime Minister, to please look in to the matter on an urgent basis before it is too late and take stern action against those who are planning to grab Modhu's canteen!

M.A. Bashir
Dhaka

Arabic signage at ZIA

Since the subject is being pursued by so many I would like to join as well. I do not think that hoisting Arabic sign at ZIA has in any way hurt our people. Islamic culture is international as it goes very much with the language and teaching of

Quran, Arabic, which all Muslims are to learn, to read and also supposed to understand.

We Bengalis are highly emotional having lived in an agrarian-based economy for and are most of the time not pragmatic. There was a proposal in mid-80s to introduce Arabic as a third language but a group objected to it and was foiled. In today's world we need to know the international language English for depth in education, science and technology not to speak of diplomacy in international arena. In India a person has to learn three languages, his mother tongue, Hindi as national language and English as working language. We had a strong base in English like-wise in India and Pakistan and our ancestors were better versed both in English and Bengali and were also better educated. They learnt

Bengali and English and a third language either Arabic, Persian or Sanskrit. Downgrading English after liberation was an emotionally stupid mistake. If people in India and Pakistan or even in Europe can learn three languages what was and is wrong for us to do so?

If Arabic was introduced in mid 80s as was proposed, a lot more of our people could have gotten employed in the Arabic speaking Middle Eastern countries who accepts us more willingly than by the non-Muslim countries of the west. Hoisting Arabic sign or learning Arabic is in no way a matter of public concern. Let us become pragmatic.

Altaf Choudhury
Gulshan, Dhaka

I am happy to see that the Zia International Airport displays its

name in Arabic along with English and Bangla. It highlights the intellectual character and capacity of the Bangladeshis. I wouldn't mind seeing Zia signboard in more languages, like French, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Hindi and so on. After all we are not like those dumb people who covet to colonise the whole world but can't even pronounce a foreign word correctly.

By the way, why some 'Muslims' are trying to distance themselves from the Arabs or Islam? After all we are the members of a global village.

Monorama
Toronto, Canada

This is in response to ZH (April 28). I almost completely agree with his views. You have requested to do

serious home works to tell something in favour or against Islam. Well, this is a very good suggestion. But what is the topic? I have read all the letters on this topic. No one said anything against Islam. It is not a case of debating philosophy of Islam. It is a matter of the attitude of the authority and the current government behind the addition of Arabic signage in ZIA. This is very much intentional and symbolic for what they want to project. What does an Arabic signage do for Islam? Nothing. Islam is not such a silly thing to be affected by a neon sign. But this Arabic neon sign represents our mentality towards the world. And what it represents is not good for us and for our future generation. I think the focus should be here.

Zahidul Islam Khan
Stockholm, Sweden

Sher-e-Bangla: The first nationalist

A few days ago, the nation celebrated the death anniversary of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, but not in a befitting manner. Sher-e-Bangla's contributions to our national life are yet to be thoroughly studied and adequately evaluated.

It is a pity that when the nation is made to reel under the confusion as to who is the Father of the Nation and who is the announcer of our independent nationhood, none takes care to assert that as early as in 1940, Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq moved the historic Lahore Resolution, wherein it was proposed that the Muslim majority provinces in the eastern and western regions of India shall constitute "independent states."

The most sad part of the history is that the then leaders of the Muslim League purposely manipulated the said resolution to make it "an independent state" of Pakistan instead of "independent states" of Pakistan and Bangladesh. It is this manipulation that took 24 years of hardships and about three million lives to give the people of Bangladesh the taste of freedom, albeit in a truncated form. These are all historical facts which everybody, particularly the younger generations, needs to be acquainted with.

Sher-e-Bangla was a real visionary and a true nationalist and a person of extra-ordinary calibre. It is almost impossible for us even to imagine as to how he elevated the multitudes of poor cultivators and their offspring into a promising middle class which comprises the backbone of Bangladesh today. As

a Prime Minister and Minister for Education of undivided Bengal, he made modern education within the easy reach of the poor Muslim students, until that time most of whom ended up in madrasah. He freed the poor peasants of Bengal from the clutches of the greedy landlords and moneylenders. Even in to-day's Bangladesh, one could hardly find a person of around 80 and above, who was not directly benefited by the far-reaching policies and programs of Sher-e-Bangla. As a matter of fact, he built the foundation upon which Bangladesh stands to-day. As a grateful nation, it is incumbent upon us to put this great statesman to his rightful place and honour him through national commemoration.

Hafeezul Alam
Dhaka