

Promotion of officers

It has raised some pertinent questions

NO fewer than 84 officers have been promoted to be additional secretary, after serving as joint secretary for only 13 months. This en masse elevation of senior officers to a higher level has raised some pertinent questions, thanks to a number of factors that smack of clear deviations from the standard practice.

The government could not create the required number of posts for the promoted officers, though reports say the initial plan was to give them specific duties after they were given promotion. This might aggravate the OSD syndrome in the administration which drew the attention of the press not long ago. Reports also say that officers having the advantage of proximity to the powers that be were the main beneficiaries of the wholesale promotion plan.

There might be a lot many things to say for and against the process that the government relied on for promoting the officers. However, the fallout of the action is what the decision-makers should have taken into consideration. The civil servants who expect a strict adherence to rules and regulations in such matters are likely to be upset if promotion is based on a loose and subjective assessment of seniority and efficiency. For example, officers hand-picked from the 1973 to 1979 batches have been promoted as additional secretary. So there was no cut-off point as far as service length was concerned. Officers of too many batches have been stuffed together to prepare a promotion list which clearly violated the principle of seniority. Supersession does take place in government service, but it should be an exception, not rule.

The upshot of it all is that the morale of the civil service will be affected adversely as officers might begin to feel that promotion will not come their way as a matter of right in future. The promoted officers themselves are reported to have been embarrassed by the fact that many deserving candidates were left out. Worse still, politically influential people are said to have resorted to intense lobbying in favour of their candidates.

So discretion and confidentiality gave way to controversy, publicity and a debate over a matter which in the past was never brought to public glare the way it has been this time around. The decision-makers, however, should have shown due sensitivity to the rules and norms that form the very basis of the civil service.

Rampant power failure

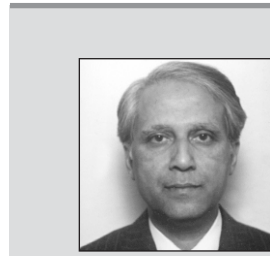
This sector has to be rescued from the doldrums

THERE is no doubt that a large number of inhabitants of Dhaka share the same frustration and anger as the shop owners and shopkeepers at New Market. They came out on the street in desperation on Wednesday after being without electricity for no less than ten days. It's only natural to sympathise with their plight when their business has been hampered due to the power cut and, allegedly, the authorities' failure to restore power. Whether it's a case of outstanding bills or technical faults, the fact remains that the shop owners have not had electric supply for a long time and it has cost them too much.

Why only them, frequent load shedding in large parts of the city for more than three weeks has become unbearable for all of us. The government itself admitted that it would be so for a while till power supply was fully restored. But it never said how long that 'while' would last for. We know there are problems -- both logistical and financial, but what we don't know are the reasons behind these problems. Thanks to lack of investment in the power sector, Dhaka Electric Supply Authority or DESA in short, has been supplying electricity with years old machines and transformers which probably have not been serviced or properly maintained for many years. On top of that, demand has increased over the years though supply has not, accordingly.

We would like to assume that the government has realised the severity of the power crisis. Failure to curb system loss, inefficiency and widespread corruption has hindered the growth of this sector putting us way behind the other South Asian countries. What we should must do now is to identify the stumbling blocks and take measures to remove them urgently. The latest World Bank report on investment climate in Bangladesh could be an eye opener for the authorities. Most surprisingly, it's not corruption and other hurdles, it's the erratic power supply that tops the list of obstacles in investment. It's high time the government got its acts together. If a basic necessity like uninterrupted power supply is not ensured, then no matter how much facilities are provided to the foreign investors, they will continue to stay away like they have been.

The global economy, the US' role and G-8 responsibilities



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

ECONOMICS is not a zero-sum game. In recent history, there has not been any other instance where one nation has been as dominant in the world economy as the United States is today. It is a colossus whose output of goods and services -- that is, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) -- exceeded \$ 10 trillion in 2002. That is greater than the total GDP of the next five countries combined. All told, the United States, with 1/20th of the world's population, accounts for one-third of the world's output and, last year, more than three-fifths of its growth.

The US economy is so large that some of its metropolitan areas produce more than some countries. For example, last year, Chicago had about the same GDP as Australia; Boston had the same as Taiwan; Dallas, the same as Saudi Arabia; Milwaukee as much as Pakistan; New Ark in New Jersey as much as Iran and New York's GDP was more than India's.

Such statistics are both a blessing as well as a curse. It draws attention to the dominant position of the United States and thrusts upon it responsibilities. In a world tied together by its own trade equation, the US has now become the focal point, which actions enable other nations to thrive. In turn, if other nations win, then the US also prospers.

We must not forget that international trade is a two-way street. Customers benefit from imports, which sometimes provides goods and services of higher quality or lower prices (or both) than those made at home. Producers on the other hand also tend to benefit from exports, which provide more customers for goods and services.

The role of the US economy for the rest of the world assumes special importance from the point of view of what and how much it exports from the rest of the world. It generates world-wide movement forward or recession through its own dynamics.

In 2002, imports to the United

States from developing nations amounted to about \$317 billion, it being the single largest market for developing nations' goods. Conversely, exports from the US to these nations totaled \$130 billion, that is, the trade deficit was in the negative for the US by \$187 billion. This was 44 per cent of the entire trade deficit run up last year by USA with all nations. In a manner of speaking, such US action continued to stimulate the developing world's economy including that of

countries. It is this reportage mechanism that encourages or retards possibilities for a developing nation to receive foreign funds. Unfortunately, the recent categorisation of various countries as being prone to terrorism has affected their chances and consequently reduced their potential for creating jobs and reducing poverty.

There appears to be a great deal of truth in this. In the five years after liberalisation, GDP growth in India has averaged 5.7 per cent annually,

incomes for the developing nations.

Trade liberalisation was introduced in the Uruguay Round and provided a good catalyst. In the six years after the Round, exports from developing nations grew by \$1 trillion, to a total of \$2.4 trillion in 2002. This leap forward has been possible because of duty free and sometimes quota free possibilities offered by the European Union and the United States. We have to build on that. In the case of Bangladesh, in particular, further easing of

relations, then its strategic interests cannot end up in assisting the path of protectionism espoused by protectionists, special interests, anti-globalisation nihilists and partisanship.

Ahead of the Cancun ministerial, the general feeling is that trade is rigged against the poor.

The developing countries to their sorrow are realising that their farmers' lack of good transportation and high technology is not being balanced out by their cheap labour.

tional Herald Tribune' on 21 July is worth quoting -- "The United States and its wealthy allies (G-8) will not eradicate poverty -- or defeat terrorism -- by conspiring to deprive the world's poor farmers of even the most modest opportunities."

WTO negotiators within the scope of the 'development round' as initiated in Doha in late 2001, will be having a crucial meeting soon in Cancun, Mexico. Any success there will depend on the commitment by the G-8 countries and many others from the European Union to reduce barriers. Painful reforms will have to be made to make trade a meaningful two-way street.

At the same time the South must continue to dialogue with itself as well as with the North while it lends credibility to that process by concrete action. This is important because the South faces major economic problems of which, inter alia, the debt burden, protectionism by the North, exchange rates misalignment and commodity price collapse are but manifestations of a deeper international malaise. We must remember that the South as a group can acquire, through systematic cooperation, countervailing power or leverage in its relations and negotiations with the North.

It is true that results of cooperation among countries of the South at the regional level have mostly been less than encouraging. There have been conceptual failures in formulating programmes of regional cooperation and integration. There have also been failures at the level of policy formulation. More than anything else, the failure has been at the political level where leaders have not been able to evolve even broad areas of cooperation among themselves.

However, despite all these limitations and complexities, efforts have to be made at Cancun and immediately after by developing countries to break out of their present state of dependency on the North. The key to cooperation is for the stronger economies to offer protection to the weaker developing countries and for the latter to rely on medium- and long-term gains despite some hardship in the short term.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

POST BREAKFAST

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Bangladesh.

There is another important area where the USA casts a large shadow. The United States does not only buys hundreds of billions of dollars worth of goods produced by developing nations, but it also invests heavily in some of these countries. It is in this aspect which continues to be the desired equation for most developing nations in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Because of several known reasons, the US today is the prime source of funds for the rest of the world. The US being relatively stable provides an enormous haven for capital investments (in stocks, bonds and real estate) from abroad. These capital inflows in turn provide the necessary support for imports into the United States so that it can, in turn, sustain its large trade deficits. Income generated through investments in the United States is also often used by foreign entrepreneurs and investors to start and expand businesses at home.

The integration and liberalisation of financial markets over the past 20 years has provided impetus in this regard. These factors have allowed capital to flow to its best uses, with broad benefits globally. Economists recognised this aspect and stress therefore on the theoretical principle of liberalisation for the developing world. This, they believe, will ensure foreign investors investing in the securities of other countries -- their stocks and bonds. Here however comes the catch. The US financial institutions play a very crucial role in determining and grading the investment climate in various

restrictions by the US will have a salutary effect. US Trade Representative, ambassador RB Zoellick has recently indicated in an article in 'The Economist', published from London that America's trade policies are connected to its broader economic, political and security aims. He has also acknowledged that this intellectual integration may confound some trade scholars, but has argued that it follows in the footsteps of the architects of reconstruction after 1945. He believes that if US trade strategy is to be sustainable at home, it needs to be aligned with America's values and aspirations and its economic interests. That is something we cannot argue with. After all, each nation, big or small has its own vital interests. However, when one nation becomes an overwhelming factor in international economic

comparisons with 3.2 per cent in the five preceding years before liberalisation. Similarly, Thailand's average five-year growth has been 8.7 per cent after liberalisation of its securities markets and 3.5 per cent before. Bangladesh has also gained somewhat in this context but not really enough. That is probably because we have not been able to resolve some of our outstanding confusions and continue to have a poor image abroad.

It is important at this point to underline the significance of liberalised trade for the developing world. Whatever be the form -- multilateral, regional or bilateral -- it is the key ingredient in the recipe for prosperity. The coming months are vital for the developing world, also known as the South. New global trade negotiations, if they succeed, is expected to generate between \$150 to \$190 billion a year in higher

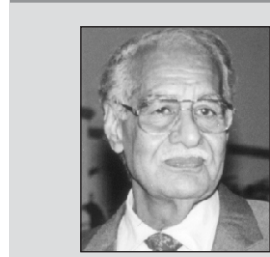
Instead their competitors in agricultural products in places like the United States or Europe have better seeds, fertilisers and equipment and their products are also often protected by high tariffs, or underwritten by massive farm subsidies that make them artificially cheap. The answer that is staring some countries in the face, specifically in Africa (dependent largely on export of agricultural products), is disaster. Struggling African and Asian cotton farmers are forced to compete with products from affluent US agribusinesses whose rock-bottom prices are made possible by as much as \$3 billion in annual subsidies. Sugar products in Africa are similarly stymied by the European Union's insistence on subsidising beet sugar production as part of a wasteful farming -- welfare programme that gobbles up half its budget.

It is interesting to note here that the United States, Europe and Japan funnel nearly a billion dollars a day to their farmers in taxpayer subsidies. The argument given by the farming lobby is that the farmers cannot stay in business if they are left at the mercy of wildly fluctuating prices and are forced to compete against people who are happy to work in their fields for a dollar a day.

Sadly, the rigged game, as it is perceived, is sowing ever-greater resentment toward the United States, the principal architect of the global economic order. This is also affecting the world vision of that country and its stand for democracy and freedom. An editorial which recently appeared in the 'Internationa-



Standing up to terrorism



KULDIP NAYYAR writes from New Delhi

HOW does the democratic government in India fight the terrorists who are financed, armed and encouraged from outside to outdo the barbarity they have committed earlier? The answer is: In the way which upholds the values that democracies stand for.

It is an easy thing to say but a difficult thing to do. It is walking a tightrope. For years Kashmir, the northeast and several other parts of the country have faced the killing of the innocent and the demolition of all that is decent. The bomb blasts in Mumbai only underscores the point. Still there is no other way except the one which upholds the law and stays within the precincts of democracy. Terrorists would like our country to snuff out the norms of a free society. Take, for example, the idea of different communities, with different value systems and religions, living together in amity. The methods of terrorists are a constant challenge to our values and our commitment to pluralism.

They attacked the Gujarati-majority areas, apparently to avenge the killings in Gujarat. But

they failed in their intent. Despite fundamentalists, the communities are beginning to appreciate the gains of living in harmony. In fact, for the first time in many years, the Hindu and Muslim divide disappeared after the bomb blasts. Muslims from their localities rushed to rescue Hindus from one of the places of blasts, near the temple. Here the terroristist three men and one woman had put powerful bombs in the boot of a taxi which blew and smashed everything around to

administration of Maharashtra. This was his prescription to overcome the hatred that the terrorists spread. Instead of appealing to his party-led government at the centre for stepping up the fight against terrorism, he made a political speech to exploit the situation. His associates in the Shiv Sena were not far behind.

I cannot understand why Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani's visit to Mumbai was announced when the blasts were not even one hour old and when the TV networks were

than take up the case as has happened in the blast case. The same security apparatus comes into the picture. The same intelligence men try to find out why they did not come to know about the plot beforehand, and where they went wrong. Yes, one change does take place. The New Delhi-appointed governor assumes the charge of the administration. The people's representatives are ousted under the pretext that the constitutional machinery had failed. The BJP and the Shiv

where it rears its head. The BJP has a penchant for President's rule. After having appointed the RSS-BJP men as governors, practically in all states, the first thing that the party thinks of is the imposition of President's rule after any incident because that allows the governor to run the administration. The same formula is being suggested for the UP imbroglio. That the BJP will sit in the opposition is understandable because it does not have the number. In any case, it came to power through questionable methods. But to suggest President's rule when Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav can prove his majority on the floor of the house is to throw all norms to the wind.

In fact, when the history of the past few years of Uttar Pradesh politics is written, the BJP would be held responsible for flouting every rule, with the help of the Speaker, to stay in power. The BJP has broken every democratic norm. It has ruined the state politically, economically and socially.

Here is a party which speaks of values. Some were taken in by its pious slogans. But power is all that it requires. By shutting eyes to corruption and criminalisation which Mayawati, who became chief minister with the BJP's help, was indulging in the party has set a precedent which will be difficult to efface.

Power is no answer to the problems that the country faces. But the BJP seems to believe in the theory of gaining power by hook or by crook and sustaining it through dubious ways.

Kuldip Nayyar is an eminent Indian columnist.

BETWEEN THE LINES

The problem the country faces is bigger than the charges traded by the BJP with the Congress. It is how to deal with terrorism which is spreading in India and taking a parochial shape... Terrorism is now a fact of life. We have to live with it. And we have to think of ways to eliminate it.

smithereens, killing and injuring scores of people. Muslims rushed the injured to the nearby hospitals.

Ordinary people became heroes. Kadir Ghare, a car park attendant, had noticed some school children alighting from a bus earlier. He ran and took them to safety. His colleague, Ismail Attarwala, had seen the 1993 blasts. This time when he saw how scared people were, he tried to give them courage and confidence. And he was successful. For many people were able to take the blasts in their stride.

In contrast, the voluble Pramod Mahajan, the BJP's secretary-general, ranted on a TV network that the President should take over the

showing hospitals and the injured. He is mistaken if he thinks that his presence evokes confidence. People still remember his rath yatra which left in its wake a trail of blood and communal hatred in the north Indian states.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi also flew to Mumbai lest it should be said that she was not there at the hour of need. The state government had to put in extra efforts for her security. She probably thought it was worth her while to stand by her party's government.

Advani, more than Mahajan, should realise that President's rule does not change things in any way. The same policemen of the same

Sena, demanding the imposition of President's rule, must have had that point in view.

Maharashtra governor Fazal was a BJP member. He was first appointed the governor of Goa where the BJP tried to form its government despite being in a minority. If such a thinking was at the back of the demand for President's rule in Maharashtra, it would be a crude, undemocratic method to have BJP's rule in the state.

The problem the country faces is bigger than the charges traded by the BJP with the Congress. It is how to deal with terrorism which is spreading in India and taking a parochial shape. America has

Lashkar-e-Toiba, the suspect, which has its headquarters in Pakistan. The Jamaat-e-Islami condemned violence when some of us met its representatives at Karachi in June. They should speak out against the killing of the innocent at Mumbai if they had not done so already. Fazlur Rehman, head of six religious parties (MMA), who had left a lot of goodwill in India, should have been the first to criticise the Lashkar. His representative has in fact criticised New Delhi.

Terrorism is now a fact of life. We have to live with it. And we have to think of ways to eliminate it. This cannot be done by accommodating differences, nor by the centre taking over the state

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.

Schools in residential areas

Everyday when you step out of your house you will be terrified by the traffic problem just before your house, especially if you are residing at the Dhanmondi area. The number of schools is rapidly increasing. And these schools do not care about the traffic problem they are creating. You will be shocked to see all types of vehicles jostling down from all direction which results in a complete chaos. Sometimes my wife and daughter come out of the car and start walking because if they don't do so they will reach school almost an hour late.

It seems that schools are everywhere. Many of the private houses have become schools or universities at Dhanmondi. I think the gov-

ernment should make a rule where a school should be given permission to rent a house by observing the position of the house and the roads nearby it. That might reduce the traffic problem in the residential areas. And no school will be given permission if it is close to important roads.

Badal Hasib
Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Agriculture Commission's Report
The Agriculture Commission's Report containing 20 recommendations to boost agricultural productions in the country and review of the same by the Cabinet Committee is timely and deserves high commendation with the assurance of cooper-

ation by all and sundry.
I take the privilege to put forward a few issues that the cabinet committee might consider in depth to formulate final strategy:
a) There must be more incentives for organic farming and production of agro-products while pesticides and insecticides should be discouraged as far as practicable. It is sure inorganic assistance based productions will not get market in the developed countries in future including Malaysia and Singapore.
b) We must take measures to grow non-traditional products like mushroom, broccoli, French bean, baby corn etc. Such profitable projects can be carried out with small investments and on small lands.
c) A special mechanism should

be developed for approval of the equity and entrepreneurship fund for the agricultural sector to enable the medium and marginal farmers to obtain the opportunity of interest free credit and developed entrepreneurship in real terms.
d) Export marketing of agro-products is at present greatly hindered due to the non-availability of transportation facilities. There must be appropriate recommendation to provide adequate facilities for export marketing by air. Since agro-products are exported without L/C, the risk coverage with insurance could be a possible alternative to help the exporters.
e) The product based strategy to provide sufficient subsidy should be considered specially for cotton and maize considering their marketing

opportunity and demand at home and abroad.

I am very hopeful that these recommendations will get the approval of the appropriate authority and the government subsidy of Tk 300 crore will be utilised in full. The priorities and objectives are envisaged in the poverty reduction strategy paper will be achieved within the time-frame as speculated provided agriculture can get adequate attention of the entrepreneurs and policy makers at large.

Dhiraj Kumar Nath
Former Secretary, Rural Development and Cooperatives Division

Khilkhet roads
About one lakh people live in Nikunjo-2, Khilkhet. The roads are in indescribable condition so it is

getting hard for the general people to carry on their daily activities. In such a big residential area there are so many students going to schools, colleges and universities; and there are also many working women and men. Our area is linked to the airport highway. As there is no intersection in front of the whole residential area, for going to any place other than Uttara, we are bound to go all around the airport, which is about five kms, and only then we can start for our destination. This is really a hassle for the middle class people who try to cut down their cost while traveling in a Taxi or a CNG scooter. The drivers first of all ask for more in both cases and then if you have to give extra money everyday for five km besides the fare you can guess how burdensome it becomes. It is a loss of time,

energy and money.
We see everyday that there are some works going on in the name of repairing dividers on almost all the roads. Sometimes they make it wider and sometimes narrower and in a few places triangular. Instead of solving the problem, these dividers are giving more trouble.
I would like to draw the attention of the communication minister to do something about repairing the roads of Nikunjo-2 and make an intersection on the road for the benefit of the inhabitants. The intersection was there eight months back.

Somona
A suffering resident of Nikunjo-2, Khilkhet, Dhaka

Three cheers for Javed!

I would like to heartily congratulate Javed Omer Belim for his brilliant performance against Pakistani cricket team. His century was an example of patience and perseverance. He simply showed his class against world class bowling. I also like to hail Bangladesh's coach Dav Whatamora who seems to have instilled some much-needed confidence in Bangladesh's team. I am sure along with this new coach Bangladesh team will gradually but surely walk to the road of betterment and success! A new found spirit was clearly visible in Bangladesh side which was simply heartening for a die hard cricket fan like me! Three cheers for Javed and Bangladesh cricket team!

Mohammed Sohail Hara
Olympia Palace Restaurant, Tophkana Road