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Development and the role of state

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN

F we want to modernise agriculture and mitigate drudgery of the farmers, we have to adopt mechanisation, which calls for development of industries to support it. Physical and social Infrastructures will need the inputs of enormous resources, labour, technology, industrial support, management, vision and confident leadership. We cannot expect someone else to build our infrastructure free. Could we prepare ourselves to take up what we had to do over last decades?

The present national issues like terrorism, extortion, rising crimes, student unrest, labour unrest, unemployment, official extortion and the like are not unmanageable as they are the outcomes of manageable problems. These can be solved at their very roots, if the leadership shows sincere commitment

This cannot, however, be done by sermon. It will need innovative institutions, overhaul of existing ones, and orientation, re-education and motivation of the administrative machinery i.e. a functional and responsible government. The police system must be revamped. The local government bodies may be people-oriented, but without political affiliation, so that no party is afraid of use of muscle and arms by other parties, whether in power or out of it, and does not feel constrained to become or shelter socalled godfathers. Like some Southeast Asian countries, Japanese police system based on Koban system may be adapted to our need, which may curtail crimes immediately with people's cooperation

Sometimes corruption is cited as a major obstacle to development. There is virtually no corruption in Bangladesh. What is going on is open and bold without any deterrence; it is defiance of the legal authority of the government. The people involved run their own parallel government, which Barrister Moudud once termed as "governments within the government" in a conversation in Tokyo. Begum Khaleda Zia admitted the existence of corruption in a brief discussion with me during her earlier premiership, but she told that it cannot be removed at a time. I again want to say, if she has got the determination to do that, it is very very much possible to reduce it and even to eradicate it, and we must do it. There are ways to do this without raising big alarm, and in a quite short time

Bangladesh seems to invite foreign

It is highly desired that the leadership will respond to and address the real need and desire of the people and state, wisely utilise every small amount of foreign exchange the nation earns, have faith in people and do not damn the people's opinion, do not play trickery to clinch to power, never give up efforts and ambition to achieve the goal in a rational way

the country, all these sets are imported. investments without judging their desirability. Contrary to general belief, There is an undue monthly levy of Tk.500 which amounts to Tk.1,050 Japan and South Korea developed themselves by wisely resisting undesircrore annually. If the average monthly bill is Tk3000, the annual bill comes to able foreign investment with relevant laws. We need induction of high tech-Tk.6.300 crore (i.e. US\$1.088 million at nology and may invite investment in US\$1 = Tk.57.9). Is it affordable by manufacturing in the field of electron-Bangladesh with an annual per capita ics, communication and transport export of just about US\$50. Similarly, equipments, computer, shipbuilding, foreign investment in power sector, industrial chemicals, petrochemicals, energy sector, or any service sector automobile parts and other valuemay not be in our interest. Must we not added high-tech or capital intensive manage our own resources to invest in industries, possibly in joint ventures. these sectors, if necessary with short term foreign borrowings? There can be Are we going to attract any such investdevised mechanisms to make the ments? We are probably leasing, if not utility service partly owned and

selling out, our scarce land to foreigners for setting up Private EPZ., such as Korean EPZ in Chittagong. Is it at all difficult to set up an EPZ by ourselves? The Railway authority is seemingly giving Chittagong Railway Station land to Grameen Phone to construct a building. Is it not ridiculous for the Railway to lease out its prestige land to an investment company? Can't the Railway develop even a station building? On the other hand, is it that top priority when it still takes more than six hours to go from Dhaka to Chittagong? Have we developed any capability to modernise Railway by ourselves even after more than hundred years of its operation? Land purchase by foreign interest cannot be encouraged as an investment. Should Railway be engaged in real estate business for immediate gain, or for personal gain of some invisible hands? If Railway communication is fully developed, it may have to buy or acquire new private land someday. I think, their farsightedness should extend, and they must think of future rail communication and commuter train development with own resources and technology, and not day-dream that someone else will build a linear motor or magnetic levitation train for us at no cost to the

Is it advisable to allow foreign investments in land, and utility services which had traditionally been controlled by most of the countries of the World? We cannot afford to pay in foreign exchange our utility bill. There are, say, 1.75 million mobile phones. In the absence of manufacturing plant in

of a balance between inward and outward foreign investments.

Some people are apparently plotting to export our meagre gas resource for probably some kickback. It will be irresponsible from national context. If we make India invest in pipeline for export, and we cannot supply sufficiently, will India take it lightly? Why should they? Let's not unnecessarily create a cause of conflict with India. Let us not be in confusion. Time may not be too far when we may have to import energy and may need Indian cooperation. We may take lesson from the USA that banned export of oil from its huge oil reserve in Alaska even during oil crises and despite her colossal recurfinanced by the service users and minimise or remove the chance of ring trade deficits. corruption. Moreover, we must think It is natural for any opposition to

exploit and highlight the weakness of the government and engage it in reacting to the former's accusations. The opposition's purpose is served if it can drag the government into the rhetoric of defending itself and blaming the opposition at any turn. Any leadership in power can simply listen to opposition, find out if there is anything constructive to incorporate in its own programme, provided it is framed for broader national development. It is highly desired that the leader-

ship will respond to and address the real need and desire of the people and state, wisely utilise every small amount of foreign exchange the nation earns. have faith in people and do not damn the people's opinion, do not play trickery to clinch to power,

People never abandon such a leadership. Despite repeated frustration in the past, can the people trust the leadership of Khaleda Zia for some time more? It is now up to Begum Zia to assure the people through determined, comprehensive, rational and educated steps. Time is running out, but still something great and comprehensive may be done with a more than two-third parliamentary majority in her coalition government. History may not give her another such opportunity to show her leadership if she happens to miss this, and chooses to throw the fate of the people into uncertainty and despair again for some time. People are fed up with political mud slinging. Let us have a hope for conscientious move ahead to help ourselves.

never give up efforts and ambition to achieve the goal in a rational way.

The views expressed here are of the author's own and not necessarily of the organisation he represents. Mustafizur Rahman, Ph.D., is Chairman, The Institute of Development Strategy, Dhaka

BNP plans to counter JS boycott



JAMILUR RAHMAN

ARLIAMENT boycott by the opposition is a problem that continues to baffle the ruling alliance But it hasn't yet found an effective countermove, nor has it given up the hope of finding one

After all its exhortations and appeals fell flat; the ruling alliance is now planning to make some changes n the rules to take the fun out of the boycott game. According to the existing rules, a lawmaker may los the parliament seat if she/he remains absent from its proceedings for 90 days, a pretty long time. A bil seeking to reduce the time to 30 days may be tabled in the next parliament session. The alliance wants to shorten the period for obvious reasons: it will give the opposition lawmakers less time to decide what they will do.

The change, if effected, will take away some manoeuvring space from the opposition MPs, who have not joined any session of parliament since June 25. The alliance strategists deem the change in rules necessary to bring back life to the democratic dispensation, hobbling along with visible discomfi ture at the moment

The BNP-led alliance is now convinced that the 90-day rule is giving the opposition too much leewav

It is an interesting situation. Without question, parliamentary democracy loses much of it force and flair, when the opposition does not emerge as a key player. That is a universally acknowledged truth nullified by a host of political complexities, some of which quite intriguing, in our context

The alliance is, therefore, perfectly justified in doing as much as it can to bring back the opposition to parliament, though anything other than a conciliatory approach may turn out to be counterproduc

But the AL is apparently convinced that it is time to intensify the pressure on the government. So chances are not bright that it will reconsider its position on parliament boycott

Meanwhile, the price spiral continues to worry people. The commerce minister has finally given a plausible explanation of why the prices are soaring up. He has admitted that traders have to pay tolls at no fewer than 16 points, for example, on the Jessore-Dhaka route. It seems an organised crime, not the market forces alone, is pushing the prices up

The minister has been frank enough to tell the truth. It may take some pressure off his ministry since enforcing the law is none of its business. But the government cannot feel relaxed with the revelation, which merely shifts the burden of explaining why prices are shooting up from one ministry to anothe

Now it is the home ministry's turn to answer the unpleasant question. The police administration took note of law and order in the city before the holy month of Ramadan began, and deployed specia teams at different points. The criminals regularly stalking the city roads are the target

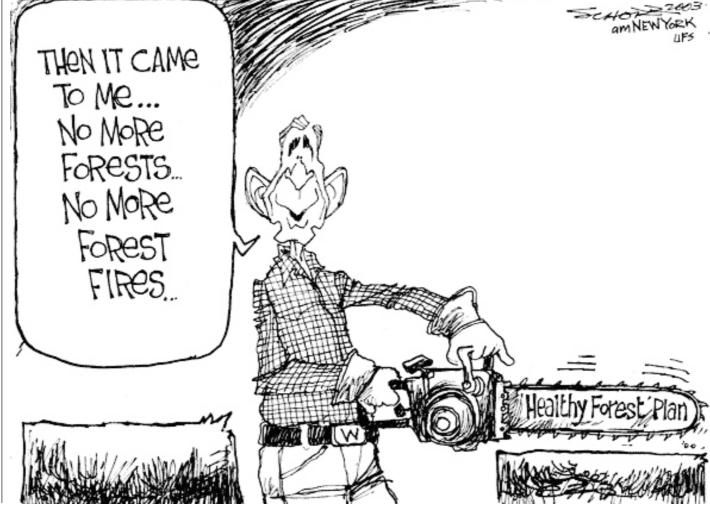
The law enforcers are doing what is expected of them. But the extra surveillance won't pay divi dends if people are fleeced by tradersinstead of being waylaid by muggers-- asking for prohibitive prices. And traders say they have to do their own arithmetic, after paying the extortionists at 16 point on just one route

There is another development on the political front. The AL is planning to add steam to its anti government movement by enlisting the support of some other political parties. It may be recalled here that the party has long been trying to forge an alliance with the left-leaning parties. Talks were held to reach an understanding on the core issues; but it was not very clear whether they made real progress.

However, the latest news suggests that things are changing fast. The AL, JSD (Inu), Communist Party of Bangladesh and Workers Party are planning to jointly hold a national conference in January to bring into focus what they termed 'marginalisation ' of Union Parishad by the introduction of Gram Sarka

This may give the four parties an opportunity to launch a combined assault on the Gram Sarkar which has not had an easy sailing since the government decided to revive the brainchild of the lat president Ziaur Rahmai

Jamilur Rahman is an Assistant Editor of The Daily Star



Surging crime: The administration must

L'AVE & NICE DAY

Dr. Rubaiul Murshed

All health information to keep you up to date

Stroke: Can this be prevented?

Stroke is a very common cause that leads to a dramatic change in the life of an affected individual, in older individuals. A stroke is significant brain dysfunction due to ischemia. And ischemia means local and temporary deficiency of blood supply. This ischemia in the brain results in neurologic deficits. If the clinical deficit is persistent for 24 hours, even if it resolves over a few days, the ischemia is termed CVA (Cerebrovascular accident) or stroke. Then again, if the clinical deficit resolves by 24 hours, the ischemia is called TIA (Transient ischemic attack). Brain cells thus deprived of oxygen are damaged or die within minutes during a stroke. Parts of the body that were controlled by the brain tissue damaged will not function properly. The risk of recurrent stroke is higher in the first few days and weeks after an initial stroke. Therefore, it is crucial that patients have an appropriate evaluation to prevent, if possible, a second ischemic event. TIA actually serves as a warning sign of stroke. This warning should prompt one to see a doctor immediately so that appropriate measures can be taken to prevent a stroke. In fact, a TIA is a mini stroke caused by a temporary loss of blood supply to a part of the brain.

Warning signs of a stroke (TIA/CVA)

In most instances the history and physical examination explain the pathophysiology of the event. The symptoms of a stroke usually develop abruptly over minutes or hours, but occasionally over several days. Symptoms of stroke are often confusing, but any of the following symptoms should be brought to a doctor's attention without delay * Headache, mental confusion or epileptic fit

- * Sudden blindness or disturbance of vision in one or both eyes
- * Slurred speech or difficulty in speaking
- Dizziness or fainting
- * Loss of sensation
- * Loss of balance
- ^{*} Weakness or numbness in an arm, leg or facial muscle
- * Paralysis or weakness on one side of the body is the commonest effect of a serious stroke.

How to lower your risk

1. Treat hypertension (high blood pressure). Have regular check-ups; 2. Avoid high cholesterol and fatty foods;

- 3. Take less salt in your diet:
- 4. Maintain your ideal weight for your age and height;
- 5. Exercise a suitable programme regularly; but have a full medical check-up
- and doctor's advice before starting;
- 6. Stop smoking and drinking alcohol, and
- 7. Try to avoid stressful situations through life style modification and relaxation methods.

Did you know?

Many clinicians think that Aspirin, Clopidogrel are helpful in preventing stroke. They recommended this to people susceptible to blood clots. Consult a qualified doctor or specialist if you think you might need it.

Next: Sugar is not always sweet

arrest the dangerous trend

MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

manner that commerce has come to a

grinding halt and social amity is fast

mature political leaders are parading

themselves before the media saying

little that is relevant but much that is

incendiary. Consumed by hate, anger

and vengeance, mindless marauders

are bearing down on peaceful citizens,

destroying their lives, vocations and

This has been one of the blackest

weeks in the country in recent times.

Coming up with increasing frequency,

grisly incidents of crime have put a blot

blot on the government which prom-

ransom of Tk 35,000 is an act of barba-

recovered after 5 days from under-

existing peaceful relations.

takeover in 2001.

social values.

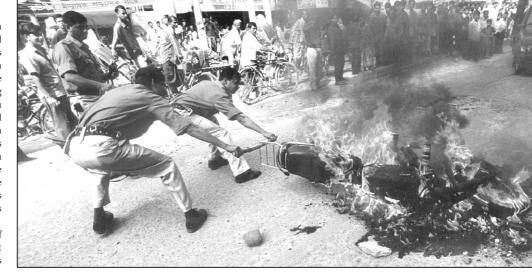
TIOLENCE of all types is searing People are apt to think that the administration's ability to tackle the sensitive and core issues of state-craft, viz the land. Most worrisome. faced with such escalating police administration, economic issues, is hardly anything tangible. But what is ominous is that trouble-makers, gangsterism, the investment climate is looters and goons seem to have a large measure of administrative sanction in the mayhem that goes on. And that at an all-time low and the economy is in inevitably destabilises governance of the country and takes a heavy toll on the popularity of the government the doldrums. Pessimism and hopelessness are having a field day. Political

infighting and rampant killings are slaughter sweeping the country in such an ugly

The alleged death of two young men in police custody in Khilgaon and Gulshan thanas has raised eyebrows disappearing. Once again so-called about the police. In the case of Sumon who allegedly died of torture in police custody, people are questioning whether he really was caught in a robbery incident in the locality and suffered grievous injuries on his person due to mob beating, as police sources report. People ask if Sumon was a victim of mob beating then why was he not taken to DMCH to ascertain the extent of his injuries and why were his relations not informed immediately as per the requirement of law.

on the image of the country. It is also a In any case, whatever the findings of the police investigation, the cops can't ised a crime-free society after their evade the responsibility of the charges made against them. While people in the Undoubtedly, the grisly killing of a country fret and fume over the series of minor boy Mintu aged 7 at Rajoir brutal incidents occurring without Upazila in Madaripur on October 30 for respite, it was learnt that on November 4 unidentified assasins slaughtered three rism. Mintu's decomposed body was youths near the railway line at Shyampur WASA gate. Police sources attribute these neath the hyacinths in a nearby pond. killings to revenge and extortion related Reports have it that payment of the Tk conflicts arising out of the sharing of 35,000 ransom money was arranged extortion booty. Police further claim that but the abductors neither took the the assassins belong to a criminal group money nor spared the life of Mintu. led by the criminal Shahin. They got Reports of such macabre crimes are not Shahin arrested with weapons as a sequel only ominous but a chilling symbol of to a feud between them and Shahin's the breakdown of our moral fabric and group ultimately eliminated them. But local people and neighbours say that In the meantime, based on the these assasins did not have a tainted past suspicion of Mintu's family members, and they were working in some mills.

the local police nabbed the killers Before the loud protests about the Zahirul Sardar and his brother-in-law Sumon killing case had abated, Russel Mollah who confessed their Khilgaon thana police added another guilt. Given the country's history of feather to their cap. Reports have it that peaceful living, amity and fraternal on October 31, some cops of Khilgaon relations, this vengeful spree is a break thana headed by 2 SIs (Sub Inspectors) from tradition. Surely civilised societsnatched over Tk 2 lakh from two ies do not allow anger to descend into businessmen in the city. These busibarbarism. Unfortunately, the country nessmen based in Karaniganj came to is now witnessing the transformation buy "ihoot" from police informant of revenge and greed into bloody Delwar who masterminded the police



Angry mob set ablaze a motor bike reportedly used by muggers in Dhaka recently.

extortion bid. Later, on being challenged by the local people, who beseiged the thana till 11 pm, the cops returned Tk 1.5 lakh. The alleged culprits in uniform have since been arrested but the master operator SI Shahjahan Sabuj and the informant Delwar have been absconding.

The wealthy businessmen and ruling party loyalist Jamal Uddin of Chittagong could not be recovered from the clutches of his kidnappers, alive or dead, even after 100 days, although his family paid Tk 25 lakh to the abductors' agents in the presence of the police as part of the ransom money of one crore demanded for his release. This only says that like Veerappan in Indian's Madhya Pradesh forest, urban Chittagong has seen a proliferation of goons who can operate their clandestine activities defying all canons of law.

Terrorism, extortion and political vendetta in the country are no longer abstractions or something associated

with Chittagong alone. They are the most defining and destabilizing force in the lives of the people today. They have become an immediate fear for everyone who has a stake in the civilisational order and the norms of a tranquil society. Such attacks, abductions and ransom bids are pathetic reminders that someone out there is determined to strike at the heart of the country and take advantage of the poor

governance. And the stark fact is that at this hour of grave crisis, the government can neither sit tight nor relax. More shocking, law enforcement agency who could have halted this dangerous slide have joined hands with the criminals and this has emboldened their moves. True, in the face of mounting criticism against the brutal treatment of Sumon and his subsequent death, all the police personnel have been transferred from Khilgaon thana. People wonder if this can be construed as any punishment or can act as a deterrent to the acceleratsectors and tinkering with politically irrelevant issues

The question one may ask is what kind of criminal justice system keeps these dangerous criminals under trial for so long? The answer is that we need a justice system that punishes criminals before we forget what their crimes were. Since justice is such an elusive thing, the average person faces sentencing without trial if he happens to be on the wrong side of some politicians or officials. He can be wrongly arrested, wrongly denied bail, even have his bank accounts frozen, his property seized and his life totally destroyed. As the justice system is virtually non-functional, the average offender, whether he is a policeman or other official knows that he can get away with theft, bribery and corruption. Not just because justice is unobtainable, but also because our laws do not provide punishment of officials who harass innocent citizens, amass vast wealth and property beyond their ostensible means of income.

Could the public ever know how the Khilgaon thana OC could have such a mansion in Mohammadpur area? These are questions to be answered in curbing crime from all directions. Unfortunately as new political leaders and extremist ideologues emerge every day, millions of perfectly middle-class citizens -- the sort who want good governance, a better economy and limit their religiosity to private practice -- find themselves marginalised.

PHOTO: STAR

ing rate of crime deeply ingrained in

In fact we have a justice system so

flawed that we have yet to bring to

justice those who committed grievous

crimes years before. Nearly 10 years on,

most of the cases progress at a pace so

imperceptible that an occasional story

in the newspapers is the only reminder

of justice not done. The bullock-cart

pace or rather release of the hardened

criminals after a protracted trial

because of the loopholes in FIR or GD

entry so emboldens the criminals that

they dare to threaten the relatives of the

victims with dire consequences should

they proceed with the trial. In fact, the

past five years have seen a decline into

lawlessness, chaos and corruption so

rapid that experts had taken to describ-

ing it as worse than ever before. Surely,

stories of what was going on must have

reached the stalwarts in the adminis-

tration but they chose to ignore them

and continue inflicting administra-

tively incompetent officers on vital

the cops in recent times

People are apt to think that the administration's ability to tackle the sensitive and core issues of state-craft, viz police administration, economic issues, is hardly anything tangible. But what is ominous is that troublemakers, looters and goons seem to have a large measure of administrative sanction in the mayhem that goes on. And that inevitably destabilises governance of the country and takes a heavy toll on the popularity of the government. The administration must without delay see what changes can be made to make ordinary people in the country feel that there is someone up there doing something.

Md. Asadullah Khan, formerly a teacher of physics, is Controller of Examinations, BUET.