

Bangladesh police: A tale of admonitions and inactions

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

The largely ritualistic 'Police Week' is being celebrated from today. As in other years, this year too, there would be no shortage of grave and solemn assurances of rising to the call of duty and glowing account of great services rendered to the people. The government, in the person of the Prime Minister, will catalogue in her inaugural speech the achievements of police the measures taken for its efficiency and will once again admonish the police to be the real servant of the public. This is not unusual in our task-oriented society where admonition is the most favourite pastime.

The reality on ground, however, is disappointing, particularly in the background of the rising expectations of a democratic polity. Little do we, as a nation, realise that our police system as introduced by the British was not conceived as a service. The main objective of the colonial masters was to ensure the continuance of their rule and the police acted as their chief agent. Substitute 'continuance of rule' by 'ruling party interests' and one will not naturally find much qualitative change because the police are increasingly appearing as the energised agents for promoting government interests.

The people of Bangladesh having resolved to establish a democratic political system gave to the country a constitution which sought to convert the country into a welfare state. The ideals of social justice, freedom and equality intended to develop Bangladesh into a welfare state were incorporated in the constitution. The concept of welfare state implies extension of state activity in many directions for the welfare and security of the people. The needs and compulsions of the idea of welfare state demand police activities quite beyond the traditional crime control.

The ideal

The police in a democracy must act as a service and not as a force; although they must be prepared to use legitimate and requisite force on occasion. They have to recognise that they also fulfil several ancillary roles and remember the distinction between state and society and state and government. The police service is there to uphold the law and is not responsible for making it. Too close an identification between police and the government of the day can bring trouble to the police.

Constitutionally speaking, we believe in the values of democracy based on the rule of law. If the rule of law is to be maintained, then the laws must be enforced comprehensively, impartially and effectively. The official and legitimate law enforcement agency is the Police Force. The primary role of the Police is, therefore, to enforce the law, at the implicit wish of society, so as to make legitimate government effective.

The question is, are our police,

as enforcers of law, ensuring the supremacy of law? Or is it largely enforcing the wish of the government or the party? Since our state has legitimacy, the role of police cannot be one of repression of dissent.

The reality and use of force

In Bangladesh, unfortunately, the government rather than the law is supreme and the major adversary of the police is the so-called political subversive rather than the criminal. Under our system it is a legitimate and indeed desirable activity of the police to gather information of all kinds and thus the ordinary, law-abiding citizen is no more entitled to privacy than the inveterate plotter or the reckless goon. Our policemen would appear more accountable to their superiors, rather than public opinion or the law. Their duties are tabulated for them and there is little or no room for discretion. The officers are given military-style

procession on account of the presence of unusually large number of overbearing and combative police personnel. This is the reality for the last one decade and politicians and policemen relish such postures and reactions.

It has not occurred to us that the police, as one of the administrative agencies, have a special responsibility to ensure the widest possible degree of individual liberty and security in terms of our constitutional guarantees. We seem to be oblivious to the reality that challenges to authority are inherent in a plural society. These are accentuated in a democratic polity and lead to agitations and disturbances. Additionally, there is the problem of right use of authority by parties which are in power. There have been many instances where governments have been accused of using the police machinery for political ends. There are instances of individual politicians interfering with the administration and work

into conflict with the forces generated by the political system which they are intended not only to serve but also to preserve. This delicacy and complexity is not adequately understood and impressed upon.

The net result of such a scenario is that the police is cast into a rigid adversarial relationship. Under such circumstances, the hallowed talks of endearing the police to the community and the lofty ideas of community policing sound hollow. In any venture of promotional efforts the real stakeholders are conspicuously absent. The outcome remains less than desirable.

Misplaced priorities

In the name of modernisation of police force we are procuring more sophisticated firearms and combat hardware like armoured cars. While this may be necessary, does not the physical uplift of police station premises deserve a greater priority, given our resource constraints? This writer is of the con-

perform their duties more effectively, carries a potential threat to the relationship between police and society. The police stand the risk of losing their remaining links with the ordinary public, which depend on random patrolling, gossip and chance.

Virus in the recruitment

The unhealthy political meddling in the recruitment process of police, particularly in the subordinate ranks is a sad reality despite denials by successive regimes. We do not realise that however good the organisational structure, the procedures and the methods, it is the personnel who translate policy into action. We have continually failed to appreciate that the nature of the police role in a democracy requires that the members should be selected impartially; they should be administratively competent, politically neutral and imbued with the spirit of service. A police officer enjoys vast powers under the law and exercises wide discretion. The recruitment procedures should, therefore, be so devised that they are free from political, personal or corruptive influences.

Unfortunately, our recruitment process has become tainted. So if policy makers do not realise the depth and consequence of irregular and illegal practices in the said exercises, the law and order situation will not improve for the relief of the citizens.

The desirable way

As of now, many agitations which pose a threat to law and have a claim to social legitimacy. The police, therefore, has a risk of being cast in an anti-people role. In the changed circumstances of our society, a wholly law and order oriented force has to be transformed into one, which, while retaining a keen appreciation of its legal responsibilities to safeguard life and property, has also an understanding of the larger social issues involved in its day to day work. The implications of this are that police officers must be helped to acquire a high degree of professional competence and develop an understanding of the social purpose of their activity and attitudes in consonance with the concept of social justice with particular reference to the weaker sections of the community.

We need to develop a self-respecting trim police force which is apolitical and professional in its outlook. Let us slow down the recruitment of unskilled labour in order to reach a stage in future where we will have the benefit of fuller and socially desirable policing. Policing has been less than a respectable profession in our environment for well-known but less appreciated reasons. Let us make a modest beginning to reverse the process. Are politicians listening?

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a former Secretary and IGP.

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badges of rank; and there is disproportionate emphasis upon strict discipline, drill and saluting which give the impression that this is a para-military organisation. If we look back we will find that the use of overt force was problematic and continues to remain so. Given the vast distances that many colonial police officers had to travel and the handful of men under their command, a display of force was not always advisable. The use of force, even if carefully controlled, could backfire. To some extent, the whole exercise in imperial policing rested on bluff and junior officers were expected and indeed obliged to use their initiative and discretion.

In Bangladesh, however, the police are expected to use maximum force in quelling street agitations, political meetings and demonstrations. Indeed things have come to such a pretty pass that the major opposition political party cannot venture out of the immediate physical surroundings of their party office even for a peaceful

of the police. Unfortunately, we are yet to develop the norms that should govern the relationship between the party in power, the individual politician and the police.

Lack of sensitisation

Our politicians have failed to sensitise our policemen in correctly understanding the rising expectations and aspirations of the people which result from the enunciation of national goals in the political sphere. Our policemen are not made to understand that any gap between the promise of constitutional ideal and the reality leads to strains and tensions which are mobilised for the 'politics of agitation'. There is still not adequate appreciation that the resultant politicalisation of the masses and the development among them of a greater awareness of their rights and methods of achievement intensify the ferment and lead to confrontations with authority. Thus our policemen often come

considered view that the cost of one armoured car would perhaps be sufficient for constructing a people-friendly police station building. And we all know that the police station is the focal point of service delivery.

We need to know that human nature does not change. There will always be a need for a police force to control the vicious members of the society and support the weak. How well the police do this depends on the skill of individual policeman for they are in contact with the people. Technology, under such circumstances, can be of limited use although it is affecting police management and pattern of police organisation. Technological benefits will not alter the fundamental nature of policing which involves putting someone in uniform and asking them to patrol the streets with their eyes and ears open. The reckless advance of technology and the advent of fearsome vehicle while providing the police an apparent chance to

BOOK REVIEW

A guide to guard investment in stocks

B H MIAH

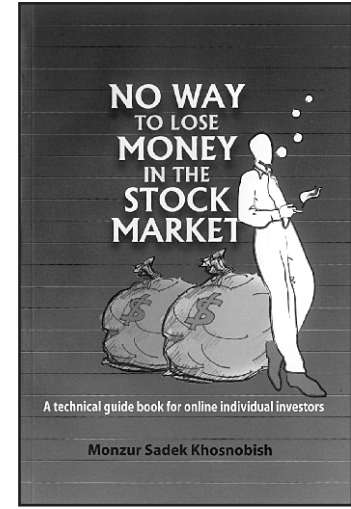
Some say it's the quickest way to make money, while others who have burnt their fingers say it's the fastest way to doom. A section of skeptics also liken investment into stocks to gambling, while others believe it's the surest way to financial freedom. Such varying perceptions actually stem from the seesaw fortune that people often encounter after they put their money into portfolio investment. True that luck has a significant role in seeing success in stocks trade, but equally true is that informed, prudent and some tactical decisions can ensure financial safety, even profitability, for the stock market operators.

A book on Stock Market for online investors *No Way To Lose Money In The Stock Market* by Manzur Sadek Khosnobish shows a ray of hope to those who suffered great losses out of ignorance about the stock market. When many families are still trying to forget the trauma they underwent by investing in the stock market during the 1996 market crash, Khosnobish has come up with an idea on how to penetrate successfully into an area of such speculative trade.

Trading in the stock market went online in Bangladesh nearly a decade before. Khosnobish, who also has bitter experience of dealing with stock market and its pros and cons, has tried to highlight online trading. Sour experiences prompted him to write the book, which is, in fact, a technical guidebook for online individual investors. It will help them to develop an insight into the fundamentals of the stock market.

The author does not have any specialisation with higher degree. But he took brave initiative in writing this book taking it as a challenge. Every Bangladeshi reader -- either at home or abroad -- may feel greeting Manzur Sadek for his contribution because his work would introduce not only him but also the country (Bangladesh) to the global online investors. It is a happy information to us that this book is going to American individual investors and also worldwide.

Under the accord of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) there has been a stiff competition arising out of market-oriented economy. Such an economic order has brought the world together to



compete on an evenly spread out turf. Successful investment is now, therefore, a common global concern.

Beximco Pharmaceuticals of Bangladesh has made recently its debut in the London Stock Exchange. It has been reported in the press that the new listing has already cut a good figure there. Manzur Sadek has the global vision and he has rightly focused on the points to ponder before making any investment in the stock market either at home or abroad.

What happened in Bangladesh Stock Market in 1996 was really painful. When the market was artificially manipulated and share prices skyrocketed, people having no knowledge in the area just flocked to the stock exchanges. They became desperate and nobody could bar them from making wholesale investment. Share prices of those companies, which even did not go into production, also leaped to incredible proportions. People having no idea whatsoever in stocks put their hard-earned money into such scrips believing the widespread rumours that their prices would increase even further. The result of such half-baked investment decisions was catastrophic. People in their thousands saw their money go down the drains never to be recovered again. Those who were a bit farsighted, could left the bandwagon of the rumour-mongers with windfall profits. But thousands of small investors still lament the loss in the turbulent market.

Such downturn in stock markets, however, is not exclusive to

Bangladesh. What Nick Leeson of the Barings Bank did and what happened to BCCI Bank are still vivid in the minds of people. Even at the Dow Jones, the situation turned from bad to worse and the US government had to intervene into the market to make it stable in the last decade. Manzur has tried to shed light on the global aspects of share market and give the prospective investors some tips so that they do not lose their hard-earned money. Whether laymen or experts, it is now a common idea to all that capital market is a high-risk area where speculation reigns supreme.

Someone may call it a gambling. Still there are some fundamentals and points to ponder. Return from investment in stock market is not an isolated issue. There are many non-economic factors that also determine the prospects and problems. There was a crash in Japanese share market after a devastating earthquake razed Kobe city to the earth. Other than these hazards, there are some basics and mathematics that need to be taken into account ahead of making investments.

Manzur Sadek has tried to address these factors through computer graphics and describing 10 steps for the prospective investors. They step one starts with how to find company symbol sector-wise. And the step-10 ends with discussion on finally arriving at a dream come true situation.

In the introduction of the book, the writer says market always goes in two ways -- north and south. When it heads northwards, money-making becomes kid's stuff. But one needs to know how to make money when market goes southwards. How can one find that?

In his writing, Manzur Sadek has been concerned with the southward movement. He says one has to watch market for at least a few weeks and only then one can get some basic idea. Stock markets have lots of characters. For example, markets open up for hundred days but suddenly goes down in half an hour. So, people interested in financial affairs and those willing to invest in stocks will find the book an interesting reading.

It is sure that the book will help the investors to a certain extent to go into the market well informed and well guided.

BH Miah is a journalist.

The view from Phnom Penh

VERGESE MATHEWS

This has not been a good year at all for the opposition Sam Rainsy Party though it has turned out to be much better than expected for the dominant Cambodian People's Party of Prime Minister Hun Sen and its coalition partner in government, the royalist Funcinpec, headed by Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Meanwhile, newly crowned King Norodom Sihamoni manifested a regal decorum and a quiet charm that quickly endeared him especially to the common folk 'the little people' as his father, ex-King Sihanouk, was wont fondly to refer to them.

Hun Sen, Ranariddh and Rainsy have, over the years, all played centre stage with varying degrees of success and failure. In the process they have raised debilitating politicking and disruptive one-upmanship into a fine art.

Notwithstanding this, there has been a gradual maturing of the political styles in the past year. Old-fashioned politicians who were rewarded for past services are being slowly replaced by more educated and competent young politicians and technocrats who are able to address complex challenges and relate equally well to the increasing numbers of potentially troublesome unemployed youths moving to the cities and towns.

This evolving change in the political party scene has gone largely unnoticed as all focus has been on the main players. Not surprisingly, despite the infusion of the new blood, the infighting, the factionalism and the one-upmanship of Cambodian politics continue.

Looking back at 2005, King Sihamoni has undoubtedly

It is now for Hun Sen to focus on and to promote the younger generation of technocrats and politicians to address challenges. This will take some time. But what is at stake is not just Hun Sen's credibility and his place in history: Cambodia's viability is also at stake. No one wants it to be a failed state.

emerged as the best-loved figure, with Hun Sen clearly the strongest of the leaders while Ranariddh has surprised his detractors as a deft survivor and a practical politician.

Rainsy is indisputably the main loser. This was sealed on December 22 when a Cambodian court found him guilty on two counts of criminal defamation and sentenced him in absentia to 18 months in prison for remarks he made against Hun Sen and Ranariddh. Rainsy, who has been in self-exile in Paris following the removal of his parliamentary immunity from prosecution in February, refused to attend the trial.

Rainsy was alleged to have accused Hun Sen of being involved in a 1997 grenade attack on an opposition rally that resulted in 19 deaths. He was also alleged to have accused Ranariddh of having accepted substantial bribes from the CPP as an inducement for Funcinpec to join the government.

Rainsy has termed the judicial decision farcical and repeated his allegation that the Cambodian courts are not independent. The US State Department expressed concern at what it termed was the continuing deterioration of democratic principles such as free speech.

Likewise, Rainsy's friends overseas, including human rights organizations, have come out in his support, but back home where

the votes count, his glamour is gone and his party is steadily losing credibility.

Some suggest that while Rainsy's extended stay outside the country had given unprecedented elbow room for other aspirants in his tightly-run party, no clear alternative leader has emerged. With the latest court ruling, Rainsy will continue to remain outside with limited options. Some supporters have suggested a party-in-exile leading to a government-in-exile!

Meanwhile, Rainsy has quickly called for a pardon from the King, an act which will return him to public life in Phnom Penh. Already his friends and supporters, especially the anti-Hun Sen Cambodian diaspora in the US and France, are picking up this call and flooding internet newsgroups with similar demands to the King.

A couple of months ago, there was a similar flood of appeals by almost the same groups for the King not to sign a supplementary border treaty between Cambodia and Vietnam. The young King was under tremendous pressure for weeks, even when it was clear to many that his hands were tied as a constitutional monarch. Sihamoni could have, as some suggested, chosen the easy way out and gone on a holiday, leaving it to the acting Head of State to sign the bill into law. In the event Sihamoni boldly chose to stay and signed the bill knowing that it

would upset some people.

Once again, the pressure is building up this time for Sihamoni to pardon Rainsy and others and, once again, observers believe that Sihamoni will do the right thing.

The pressure is much less these days on Hun Sen. At the recent annual CPP congress, he was named the undisputed prime-ministerial candidate in the 2008 election, a far cry from the situation before the last election when the confirmation was not so readily forthcoming until much nearer the polls. In addition, many observers are convinced that the enlarged CPP Central Committee, from 153 to 268 members, has many of Hun Sen's men.

Hun Sen is clearly in charge, and this is not at all surprising given that he has done well both as a clear-minded and resolute Prime Minister and as a party strategist. However, the toughness he sometimes exhibits has not endeared him to liberal groups and human rights activists at home and abroad.

Ranariddh is the luckiest. In the last decade his party's fortunes have gone from bad to worse and many had written it off after the last election. His joining the government has given him a lifeline and he knows it. The subsequent warming-up of personal relations between him and Hun Sen, though it has not percolated all the way down to the provincial structures, has been a great boost

for Funcinpec and generally good for the country.

What started off as an uncertain year for Cambodia is ending better than expected. The IMF has just announced that it will provide 100 percent of debt relief, amounting to approximately \$82 million, incurred by Cambodia to the IMF before January 1, 2005. The IMF noted that Cambodia had qualified for the debt relief because "of its overall satisfactory recent macroeconomic performance, progress in poverty reduction, and improvements in public expenditure management."

The IMF further noted that since 1999, Cambodia had enjoyed robust economic expansion, with annual growth rates averaging over 7 percent with inflation under control and with improving public administration, in particular public expenditure management.

While that is a good way to end the year, the new year will bring varied and complex challenges, the major ones being the need to further strengthen its institutions and to ensure that good governance is firmly rooted in the country. This calls especially for a determined and comprehensive attempt at curbing corruption and dismantling the equally deeply entrenched patronage system.

It is now for Hun Sen to focus on and to promote the younger generation of technocrats and politicians to address these challenges. This will take some time. But what is at stake is not just Hun Sen's credibility and his place in history: Cambodia's viability is also at stake. No one wants it to be a failed state.

Vergese Mathews, a former Singapore Ambassador to Cambodia, is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

RUCHIR SHARMA

EMERGING-market stocks have been the asset class of choice this decade, rising by nearly 200 percent over the past three years. However, the rally in many of these markets has been fueled largely by ebullient foreign investors, who have poured in more than \$150 billion during this period. Even today, domestic investors think this "levitation act" just can't last.

Both sides make equally strong arguments on whether the rally is peaking. Valuations in most emerging markets are at the higher end of their recent trading range but, in general, well below levels that prevailed in 1994 and 2000 -- the major turning points in the last two emerging-market bull runs. Global investors point to the dramatic improvement in emerging markets' macroeconomic profile -- including trade surpluses and low inflation -- while local investors in several large countries cite the fading reform momentum as part of their long list of negatives.

When one analyzes major trends, it's often helpful to rely on historical precedents and ignore the daily trench warfare. Bank Credit Analyst, an independent research firm, argues that investors tend to get caught up in one theme each decade, and that theme typically turns into a mania or bubble. But contrary to popular belief, financial-market bubbles aren't made of thin air.

They are based on genuine changes that present new profit opportunities and lead to a boom. Investors are at first slow to recognize the new phenomenon but subsequently rush to participate in it, and eventually go too far. History is littered with the episodes of bubbles, from the financial-engineering-driven

South Sea bubble in the 18th century to the railroad mania in the 19th century, which was based on the greatest technological invention of that period. Then there was the bubble of the 1920s, formed out of an extended period of prosperity in the United States during the early part of the 20th century.

More recently, in the late 1960s, it was the emergence of multinationals that caught the imagination of equity investors. This group of US companies -- called the "nifty 50" -- had earnings so strong that investors believed their incomes were shockproof. Commodities, such as gold and oil, were the main theme of the 1970s bubble story. In the second half of the 1980s, it was the domination of Japan, and in the 1990s came the technology revolution. BCA thinks the theme most likely to dominate this decade is the ascension of a China-led Asia to the top of the world economic order.

Well, that theme could quite easily stretch to include all emerging markets. In fact, emerging markets outside Asia have generated more spectacular returns than those in Asia. Interestingly, almost the entire price appreciation of the past three years in emerging markets can be explained by earnings growth, with little expansion seen in the widely tracked price/earnings, or P/E, ratio.

Typically, major bull markets witness an increase in both these indicators. Furthermore, emerging markets still represent only 15 percent of global market capitalization, even though the share of developing economies in global GDP has risen to 25 percent in current dollar terms. Foreign investors are fascinated by the idea that developing countries are now on the fast track to con-

vergence with the developed world, due to globalization.

In the past, such "new era" thinking has been associated with the formation of bubbles. Predicting bubbles and investing in them is terribly difficult for fundamental and value-oriented investors. But market history is filled with periods of mania, and such instances will continue as long as human psychology drives market action. It's human nature to be manic-depressive.

However, the most important precondition for the formation of an emerging-market bubble is the continuing expansion of the main driver of global demand, the US economy. It's important to remember that while macroeconomic fundamentals in the developing world have been improving consistently since the Asian and Russian financial crises in 1997-98, emerging markets started to zip ahead only in March 2003, when the US-led global economic recovery began in earnest. Over the past two years, every time the Goldilocks scenario for the US economy was threatened, emerging markets have faced selling pressure.

To be sure, as those fears receded, emerging markets came roaring back to hit new highs. Still, those stormy spells have been a reminder that the US economy's path remains a terribly important factor for the performance of emerging markets. If the US economy doesn't wilt under the burden of its much-talked-about financial imbalances, then emerging markets may yet become the next big bubble.

Ruchir Sharma is co-head of global emerging markets at Morgan Stanley Investment Management.

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