

An Absurd Move

The *de facto* position of Professor Golam Azam of Pakistan as the Ameer or president of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) was declared to be *de jure* through a press statement last Sunday. This official confirmation by Jamaat of Golam Azam's status within the JI is the latest move by the fourth largest party in parliament in its continuing quest to earn legitimacy for itself and its Pakistani leader who has been suspected of controlling party affairs from behind the scenes since he was allowed to return to Bangladesh a decade-and-a-half ago. But the move has now exposed the government to a whole jungle of legal and political implications which it must sort out sooner rather than later.

As we understand the current legal situation, citizens of foreign countries are law-bound to refrain from interfering in the political affairs of this country, and the question of active involvement in local party politics by a foreigner simply does not arise. Therefore, when the leadership of a national political party is publicly assumed by a non-Bangladeshi, it then becomes an issue of grave national concern. Questions of legality and national sovereignty are inextricably linked to this issue, and any government official who treats this lightly or from the point of view of mere political expediency would run the risk of jeopardising the national interest.

At the crux of this issue, in addition to the illegality of foreigner participation in national politics, is the role of the political party in question and government reaction to it. In any sovereign country, whether democratic or not, every political party which wishes to earn a right to operate legitimately, is supposed to serve the interest of the country. Differences in ideologies or strategies are not the points here. But an ability and willingness to serve the country, that is to uphold its sovereignty and laws, is the first and foremost criterion on which a party can operate in any nation-state. The question that has to be asked is, how can a political party which is headed by a foreigner serve the national interest of independent Bangladesh? That is a question Jamaat has to ask itself too, because its failure to pick a leader from its Bangladeshi ranks appears as the height of political bankruptcy.

Whatever Jamaat's calculations and motives might have been, the government of the country cannot afford to view the decision to make Golam Azam party leader from any point other than the legal one. Upholding the laws of the land is one of the government's — any government's — primary responsibilities, and it is no secret that a taxpayer-financed official body or two exist with the specific brief of keeping an eye on matters which are contrary to our national interest (as distinct from the political interest of the government of the day). The government therefore has the responsibility and the logistics necessary to deal effectively with situations of this kind, and it has to be unequivocal about its decisions and actions.

With the issue of foreigners in politics being thrown under the public spotlight by Jamaat's rather absurd move, the government also needs to clarify state policy regarding foreigner resident in this country. If the policy is that all foreigners can take part in local politics, then the debate will naturally take a new turn; but if the law says otherwise, then the government will have no choice but to throw the book at Jamaat and Professor Azam in the best interest of the country.

Bush Goes to Japan

President George Bush who has been praised for his performance in foreign relations but severely criticised for his alleged failure on the domestic front is now on a mission abroad whose results could well improve the US leader's rating inside the country. His 12-day tour of the Pacific, with a visit to Japan serving as a high point, has been already been described by analysts as a selling mission. Mr Bush himself has said with his usual directness that he would tell his country's allies, Australia, Japan and South Korea, that "free trade is a two-way street."

This statement is in reference to the severe imbalance the United States suffers in trade with such countries as Japan and South Korea. This imbalance is the main source of the massive trade deficit of the United States to the tune of \$43 billion. Unless this deficit is drastically reduced, Washington will be forced to impose cuts on social programmes to remove imbalance in its budgetary situation.

The efforts by Mr Bush to reduce the trade deficit with Tokyo, which, in effect, means selling more US goods to Japan, have a popular appeal. Just now, the US is struggling to come out of a long recession, during which one of the worst sufferers has been the country's automobile industry. This has caused retrenchment of workers and even closure of a number of plants. To a lesser degree, the same is happening in a number of other sectors of the US industry, such as the electronic industry.

There are strong indications that Japan will announce new measures on the eve of the visit by the US President to please Washington. It is said that the government is considering giving buyers of imported cars a break by charging only the normal consumption tax of three per cent, rather than the special 4.5 per cent automotive tax. This may ease the situation. Whether it will bring about a dramatic change in the overall trade situation remains to be seen. The two-way street in free trade may continue to be a rocky one between Tokyo and Washington, as indeed it is between many Third World nations and the West.

A superpower went out of existence — amazing — incredible! Even a world war could not have done it. Along with went and went virtually in disgrace the leader who aroused the peoples' spirit of freedom and indeed liberated them. Only history will tell why it happened and who is or are responsible, but as the events unfolded one could see that Gorbachev's unlimited. Unchecked and apparently unplanned perestroika led to the dismantling of the institutions which were condemned as communist but without any suitable replacement. The restructuring was so unlimited that Gorbachev restructured himself out and along with it his country too. Today the old Soviet Union got rid of the totalitarianism but it went under a form of dictatorship run by some demagogues.

People not consulted: The West praised the establishment of democracy in the Soviet Union but the world was amazed to see that series of decrees signed by one man led to the death of a Union — a superpower. The people were never consulted. Did the people of the Soviet Union ever give any mandate to three leaders — leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia — who met in Minsk to destroy the Union and establish on December 8 a doubtful entity — a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)? Only in March 1991 the people of the

Death of a Superpower

by Muslehuddin Ahmad

old Soviet Union voted overwhelmingly in favour of maintaining the Union — the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's call for a fresh referendum after Minsk decision was totally rejected. Does anyone see any trace of democracy in these actions? Of course, some other Republics joined the CIS but again the decisions were of only leaders and not of the people. Even if all these Republics Legislatures ratify what was done by their leaders would not change the situation. The basic question remains unanswered were the people of the Soviet Union ever consulted?

Yeltsin's Revenge

The entire episode seems to be based on personal revenge. Boris Yeltsin was thrown out by Gorbachev and he wanted to take the revenge. He is a "courageous" man but many a time reckless people also look courageous. He, denounced and no doubt courageously resisted, the rightist coup on August 19. He demanded an "immediate return of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev to his post" only to throw him out in some four months time and take his position. This is exactly what has happened. CIS of Yeltsin and USSR (Union of Sovereign

States) of Gorbachev were not world apart. If there were differences, with honest intention of working together, These could have been ironed out and the Union could have been saved that could have coordinated the foreign policies and defense with the central control of the nuclear arsenals. But Yeltsin wanted the "pound of flesh"; he wanted the place of Gorbachev even if it meant the death of the Union. This is why the Union was replaced by Commonwealth with no role for Gorbachev. There is no head of Commonwealth yet but without a head, even though a nominal one, there could be no official coordination. Yeltsin has the nuclear key and he is supposed to handle this in consultation with three other nuclear leaders. Is he then not the de facto head? No amount of assurance can help. One can clearly see rise of Russian empire.

Gorbachev lost control: One wonders why Gorbachev lost control of the situation. Possible reasons seem to be the following: his limitless perestroika without knowing where to stop — his perestroika had broken down everything

Kremlin chair. However, only the procedural matters were divulged to the press.

Post coup Gorbachev

Post coup Gorbachev was totally different from Gorbachev of 1985. During my July-August '85 visit to Soviet Union I could feel Gorbachev everywhere — young Gorbachev, of course by Soviet standard, was peoples' hope and aspiration. From Crimea he returned not only to a "different country" — he was a different person too. His confidence was shattered — he looked exhausted. He continued to usurp power and Gorbachev could not stop it. All these also had fall out effects — the Republican leaders also started to rise with the demand for independence of the Republics. Gorbachev appealed for unity. He said, "everything was collapsing; we must not part, we must just redistribute power". Nobody listened and the process of disintegration continued unabated.

No Help from West

Gorbachev was unlucky with regard to West's help and assistance though he did everything to satisfy the US and the West. East Europe was liber-

ated. Berlin crumbled down and two Germans were allowed to be united. Communism collapsed and his people were liberated from totalitarianism. Drastic arms cuts including that of nuclear arms took place. He supported the US to the hilt in liberating Kuwait and also along with it all the consequences for the Arabs.

He indeed withdrew Soviet Union practically from rest of the world making things easy for the US. Despite all these, he returned empty handed from London meeting of the leaders of the industrialised countries where he hoped to receive substantial economic and foreign aid. The West's lip service continued but that did not help Gorbachev at all.

Would Yeltsin last this winter? Why Gorbachev did not resist remains a mystery. Maybe he wanted to avoid the turmoil. But this is likely to happen any way. It could also be that he wanted Yeltsin to carry the burden of his perestroika (restructuring) and get discredited. Yeltsin's decrees can act market economy on paper but cannot produce food. Decontrolling of prices by decrees without ensuring supplies can only bring riots; cold houses, empty stomachs and empty shelves — an ideal situation for the people to take to the street. Boris Yeltsin would be extremely lucky if he could survive this winter.

Pepper-bearded Top Cop who is Scholarly and Tough

Atiya Singh writes from Chandigarh

KANWAR Pal Singh Gill loves to be in the midst of a storm. At 55, he holds one of the world's toughest jobs. Sikh militants in Punjab, the north-western state of India riddled with violence since 1980, would want him dead.

Gill is state Director-General of Police. He was brought back to the job after a break of a year leading the Central Reserve Police Force in New Delhi because in 1988 the Sikh militants had suffered their biggest setback at his hands.

During Operation Black Thunder, police under Gill's command forced 150 top militants holed up in the Golden Temple — holiest shrine of the Sikhs in Amritsar — to surrender without the security forces even entering the sacred place.

For that feat Gill now heads the hit-list of militants, but so far no militant has dared snipe at him. Tall, handsome, daredevil Gill is a fighter who leads the security forces from the front.

Today he finds himself entrusted with the challenging job of creating 'suitable conditions' for elections in Punjab scheduled for February. Since October 1987 Punjab has been denied a popular government and is ruled directly from New Delhi.

Five Governors have been tried out during the last two years without any of them making a dent in controlling militancy. Gill's recall to Punjab signals the continuation of the strong-arm policy by the new Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, to end the militancy.

Many Akali party leaders — major opponents in Punjab of Rao's Congress (I) party — who had been hoping for a change of policy on the troubled state from the Central government, are angry about Gill's return.

Says Gurtej Singh, a senior Akali leader: "Thrusting Gill on the Punjab demonstrates the contempt with which the Centre treats the state."

For a decade India's most prosperous state, Punjab has been in turmoil. Sikh militants demanding a separate state have resorted to violence. New Delhi has responded with a bullet-for-bullet policy. Now the new Narasimha Rao government wants to hold elections in the state. Gemini News Service profiles KPS Gill, the man in charge of ensuring that democracy returns to strife-torn Punjab.



K.P.S. GILL
Supercop of India

Leaders of the Bharat Kisan Union, a peasant organisation, have also condemned Gill's recall as an affront to the sentiments of the beleaguered people of the state.

Some observers think political considerations rather than a desire to improve the law and order situation persuaded Rao to send Gill back to Punjab. They say Gill could prove more helpful to Congress (I) leaders during the elections.

Others disagree. Said an observer: "Politicians may be in for a surprise as Gill is not as pliable as they think him to be. He might toe their line only up to a limit.... a limit set by him."

Gill remains calm under pressure and is not worried about his critics. He has already declared his first priority: to limit the militants' geographical area of operation.

In the last year they have been active in most of the state.

Killings by militants have increased over the years. On an average six people are killed daily in Punjab in political violence. In October alone 128 civilians, 24 policemen and 51 alleged militants were shot dead.

The violence has disrupted the social and economic life of what used to be India's most prosperous state. Total demoralisation is evident in the industrial towns of Ludhiana, Batala, Amritsar, Sangrur and Bhatinda. Industrialists have begun setting up alternative centres in the neighbouring state of Haryana.

The government's writ runs only in the cities. "From dusk to dawn militants rule the countryside," says Jarnail Singh, a bank officer in Amritsar. "At night the police retreat indoors in their fortress-like stations."

Gill wants to change this and ensure the supremacy of the police at night in the rural areas too. He says: "I expect to move forces into rural areas to intercept militant operations at night."

Police have all along been special targets of militants and now even their families are not spared. Says Gill: "I think I'll be able to check this menace quickly within the framework of law."

That Gill has the full support of the Central government in curbing militancy is supported by two recent developments: the move of 140 army battalions into Punjab, and a declaration by New Delhi that the entire Punjab is a disturbed state.

The army plans to seal the Indo-Pakistan border to curb

infiltration from across the border. Officials say the militants are trained and armed in Pakistan. The army is expected to help police and paramilitary forces in operations aimed at destroying militant hideouts.

Gill expects the operation will instil confidence among people and create a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair poll.

As a staunch nationalist and a non-sensuous cop, Gill may be tough, but he has another side to his personality. When not fighting militants, he loves discussing Shakespeare, western philosophy, and theology.

At heart he is a poet and philosopher.

Gill, a post-graduate in English literature, is a fascinating conversationalist. When a New York Times reporter met him two years ago in Amritsar, Gill talked about everything except the militants, the real reason for their meeting.

Later, the American journalist wrote: "Gill is an imposing man with august bearing, a salt-and-pepper beard and a penchant for whisky and recondite scholarship. He can spend his evenings quoting the

abstruse Swiss theologian Karl Barth and his days driving across the worst areas of Punjab to direct an assault on a terrorist hideout."

He is immensely popular with the police rank-and-file. "He can get things done with a few words usually uttered gently," says a police officer who knows him well. "He rarely feels the need to repeat himself or shout."

Gill's strength lies in the fact that he is not condescending towards his juniors, seldom bears a grudge and is without duplicity.

He acquired his image of ruthlessness some year ago when, as police chief of the eastern Assam state, he crushed an anti-New Delhi agitation. It enabled elections to be held in Assam. He is trying to repeat the scenario in Punjab.

— GEMINI NEWS

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OPINION

What the Burmese Military Junta's Intentions are?

It is now evident that the incident of 21st December, 1991 at Burma-Bangladesh border in which two BDR personnel lost their lives and twenty-two others were injured, was pre-planned and also a gross violation of Bangladesh territorial integrity and sovereignty. Bangladesh side's repeated efforts to defuse the tension in the border received no immediate response from Burma and Bangladesh's firm policy of peace with this neighbour is being misinterpreted as weakness. It is surprising that Burma's well-trained troops could mistake a border outpost of BDR which was there far so away from that of a rebel camp.

Bangladesh should not ignore huge military build-up of Burmese Army in the bordering area with 25,000 troops, helicopter gunships, anti-aircraft guns, light tanks and F-7 fighter aircraft at Akyab in a peace time, as reported in a leading English daily on 28th December last. The Burmese version that they are in hot pursuit of white communists and Rohingya Muslim rebels seems unbelievable because this border has never before witnessed communist activities except a very small number of Rohingya Muslim rebels. This border area is known for decades for small time smuggling activities from both sides. Therefore such a huge military build-up has created a dangerous situation for Bangladesh. Burma which is approximately five times bigger than Bangladesh in size with a population of approximately 45 million is maintaining a huge army of nearly 500,000 including border security forces, village defence forces and police. Burmese army has been waging wars with many different rebel groups in all bordering areas for the last 45 years, mostly in the difficult jungles and mountainous terrains. Burmese troops are weathered and battle hardened and one of the best in Asia.

In the recent election Burmese military rulers found that junior ranks in the army and a good many soldiers voted and supported Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of their beloved founder of the Burmese army, late general Aung San. For example the election result showed that more than 80% soldiers voted for NLD, the party of Aung San

Suu Kyi at Hmabi, a military garrison city near Rangoon. After the 1988 massacre of thousands unarmed students by the military junta, it was reported that many army men deserted the army, including senior ranking officers such as a Lt Col who joined the KNU-backed exile government near Thai border very recently. The junta which is in fact living with constant fears of coup d'etat had to keep the army busy and engaged in the jungle, fighting the rebels. The junta also fears that they will face Nuremberg style trials and punishments if they hand over power to the elected government, as was told by the Philippines foreign secretary Mr Raul Monglapus in Bangkok who paid a visit to Rangoon recently. Therefore, the sudden military build-up along the Bangladesh-Burma border by the junta should have a major objective. In our opinion, same military rulers behind the socialist government in 1978 silently accepted the return of more refugees, numbering over two lakh who crossed into Bangladesh at that time. Because, at that time Burma maintained few army battalions in Akyab Division.

In our opinion this time they are ready by amassing nearly 25,000 troops — either they will push more refugees into Bangladesh or they will resist any attempt by Bangladesh to send back the refugees, which they could not do in 1978. Otherwise why are they digging trenches inside Burmese border and why the anti-aircraft guns are there or why are they rebuilding the old air field at Bothidong sub-division? Bangladesh should tackle the situation with extreme care and the international community including the United Nations should be invited to witness the situation, because the junta will not hesitate to commit its troops even at the risk of high casualties to achieve the objectives of creating a major incident and divert the attention of Burmese people, so that they could be fooled again and be saying that the beloved army is really defending the country and giving lives for the national interest and so on. We think the junta has no plan for development works in Burma. One should also take note that the real power behind this

junta is the military intelligence chief General Khin Nyunt who has been making all the threats (the man most feared in Burma: The Daily Star, December 27, 1991) to foreign countries that urged the junta to hand over power to the elected representatives.

The international community and the entire world should not forget that Burma alone produces over 40% of the opium that poisoned the youths of the entire world, for which this junta is also responsible because they could have mobilised this huge military machine to crush opium growers and traders inside Burma, instead of threatening a peaceful country like Bangladesh.

Bangladesh should seek immediate help if necessary from friendly countries to counter these unwarranted threats. This is, however, not so surprising from military point of view. Any sudden attack could achieve a result as the Burmese troops did; BDR or any other security units could never dream of such attack from a friendly country like Burma.

Having Muslim population in the border area of Burma while there is a Muslim majority country on the other side of the border is also not surprising, because in almost all the countries, the bordering people have usually similar culture or religion. While there are Muslims in the Burmese border area, there are Buddhist Mogs inside Bangladesh border. In Cox's Bazar areas and in the hill tracts with similar culture like the Akyab Buddhists. These Rohingya Muslims have been staying in the Burma border areas since before the British rule and they are not Bangladeshis. The United Nations or any third country may investigate and find out the truth that these refugees are Burmese citizens whose identity cards or other documents may have been seized by Burmese authorities now or during many of their previous such operations. Burma is reportedly trying to purchase nearly US\$ 1000 million worth of weapons from China. The whole international community should condemn Burma's unwarranted military adventures of such nature.

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To the Editor...

Affiliating University — a wasteful project

Sir, Post-graduate teaching and research are hallmark of a university. A so-called affiliating university solely meant to frame syllabuses and conduct final examinations for affiliated degree colleges does not exist anywhere in the world. The idea is a historical anachronism because it was in 1857 that three affiliating universities were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras by the then colonial government, modelled on the London University which itself became a teaching-cum-research university within a few years. In the face of bitter criticism the aforementioned three universities too assumed the responsibilities of affiliating, teaching and research. It is highly unfortunate that the erstwhile autocratic government approved the project for establishing an open university at an initial cost of about Taka seventy crore in the face of strong opposition from enlightened quarters, even defying the unanimous recommendations of an expert committee set up by the Bangladesh University Grants Commission. There is no denying the fact that the system of affiliating colleges is the most cost effective mode of making higher education available to our people under the academic umbrella of the existing universities. It is true that the system needs some

modification for the better. The following suggestions are offered in this respect:

- (1) Sharing responsibility of affiliating degree colleges equally by all the general universities — Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong, Jahangirnagar, Sylhet and Khulna (hitherto only the first three universities have been affiliating colleges);
- (2) Converting some of the affiliated colleges into autonomous colleges;
- (3) Granting status of constituent colleges to some affiliated colleges; and
- (4) Allowing, gradually, some affiliated colleges having considerably large enrolments, status of mini universities to confer their own degrees.

It is hoped that the present democratically elected Government will be able to read between the lines and avoid repeating the anti-people performance of a discredited government notorious for wasting national resources.

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Private tuition

Sir, Sometimes wonder what is happening to our educational institutions. Why do children depend so much on private tuition? I really get preoccupied with the sight of a five-year kid going for tuition after his school time. It makes me wonder whether their parents are unconcerned or just naive.

Is it that the child is not getting enough attention at school or is too much burden being put on him? Why are most of the tuition centres manned by teachers of the same school? Maybe because their salaries are not adequate enough to meet their requirements and so they are compelled to supplement their salaries by earning some money through tuitions.

Children who go to tuitions centres run by their teachers, pass with flying colours. Either they are well prepared for the exam or papers are leaked out. If children do not go to tuition centres, many of them are likely to fail in most subjects. The tuition fees charged by these centres range between Tk 600/- and Tk 1000/- per subject. The tuition fees are demanded sometimes more in case of good teachers. What about those children who can't afford it. Is this a fair practice? If a child is weak or does not take interest in his studies, it is the class teacher who can help, rather getting the child humiliated and embarrassed.

The net result is that later, becomes aggressive and anti-social.

Can any one put an end to this fashion of depending on tuition centres? I request all concerned to take care of the children and treat all of them alike because they are our future.

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