

At Last a Plan at least

We are, hopefully enough, going to have a 'tourism policy' by the end of this month. So assures a news story put out by an agency and published by The Daily Star. To have a policy, even a bad one, is better than having none at all, specially in matters involving long development and big investment and slow and not-so-tangible results. Tourism is an ideal candidate for that exercise and it is very strange that billions of Taka has gone down the tourism drain in the last forty and odd years, all without a plan.

One very convincing proof of all this unplanned investment yielding no result at all is the complete failure on our part to develop domestic tourism. The tourism industry cannot sustain itself and nor can it justify giant-sized outlays aimed exclusively at foreign tourists from the developed nations, if there is no strong domestic tourist traffic. How many of our citizens — let us talk about only the educated and the well-to-do among them — have been to Cox's Bazar, our chief tourist spot by all standards? The yearly figure for Bangladeshis visiting the glorious beach there can be as tragic and discouraging as the static figure of literacy in the country, — and perhaps far worse. There isn't really a rush of Bangladeshers for seeing the aging Kantof's Temple at Dinajpur any more than there is one for the eighth century Buddhist Vihara at Paharpur. If Mainamati and Mahasthan fail to impress us locals into wanting to visit these very young entries into the world of antiquities, being only about a thousand years old — we shall only be a pack of fools to expect steady streams of foreigners heading there all the year round.

Developing a sizeable and steady domestic tourist traffic interested in seeing the historical, religious and artistically important spots of our land would involve a better level of general awareness of our cultural heritage which cannot be brought about without effecting radical changes in education and making education extend beyond the present constricting confines. And this is going to take decades even after the job is taken up in earnest.

So, let us rather talk about tourism as entertainment. For leisure and fun, for enjoying the scenic beauties of the land and for enjoying one's own self. That should have been an easier bet to bait the home-bound middle class out. The record of Cox's Bazar says eloquently enough that the care is a wee bit more complicated than that. With always an eye kept on the foreign hedonists, the authorities haven't ever taken measures to make it locally fashionable to go to Cox's Bazar. It was never the 'in' thing, the trendy thing. Why? And, moreover, little has ever been done to entice schools and colleges and clubs and associations to go on team tours of Cox's Bazar, not to say of Kuakata which is, on some counts, a more spectacular site.

As with all difficult things, sometimes a trick or two helps. On the other side of our border, members of our same Bengalee race overflow all the main tourist sites of India and even the forbidding snowy desfiles of the Himalayas, thanks largely to a little device called the Leave Transfer Certificate which enables all government employees to travel every year to any important tourist spot in India and back to their place of work — free, with all their dependants in the family. Now there is no stopping the lower middle class families, specially in West Bengal, from spending their Puja holidays either in Kanya-Kumarka or in Kulu-Manali. There is currently an incredible tourist boom in that country.

The reason why we would not do the same to our own tourist situation, lies solely in our not wanting to do it seriously enough. How can we forget that the offshore islands off Patuakhali, with romantic names like Rangabali and Kajal, literally floats on the sea with their unending fronds of palms — rivaling any that has been seen in the heavenly South Seas. These should be developed into wonderful tourist spots with a lot of imagination and very little of tangible investment. Just invite a horde of tourism-wizened connoisseurs and give them a day trip from Dhaka to Khulna — along the mightiest rivers of the world — and they are some to fall head over heels in love with the experience. We marvel why this is not done.

Philippines Election

The stage is being set for the national election in the Philippines, scheduled for May. However, judging by the names of candidates cropping up in the media, the promise of the archipelago entering a new era through the polls seems extremely remote indeed.

With President Corazon Aquino firmly set against running for the second term, there is a mad race among several old tried-and-true politicians to enter the contest. They include even Imelda Marcos with her notorious collection of shoes, the President of the Senate Ramon Mitra and Jovita Salonga who led the campaign for ending his country's agreement with the United States on the Subic Naval base. Filipinos cannot be blamed if they do not feel particularly excited by this lot, and angered by the audacity of Mrs Marcos to run for the highest office in the country.

There are varied opinions as to what would be the best course open to the country. Although the performance of Mrs Aquino during her one and only term is not being rated too highly, many, perhaps even the majority, of Filipinos would probably like her to seek a second term. Again, many would perhaps like the country to switch to the parliamentary system, a demand which was one quite strong, to give the remote provinces, especially the Muslim dominated southern region, increased autonomy and power. Unfortunately, it may be too late to try out the two solutions.

The last remaining option is that each presidential candidate will now spell out his or her programme, especially in the socio-economic field, and give the electorate a chance to judge it objectively and fairly. There is hope for the troubled country if the campaign is based on programmes, rather than on personalities. However, even the programme would mean nothing if the polling is not free and fair, free from rigging, intimidation, vote-buying and, above all, a presentation of shoes by Mrs Marcos.

THE Vice-Chancellor of Chittagong University, Dr Alamgir Mohammad Sirajuddin, has been removed. He has been immediately replaced by Dr R.I. Choudhury, Professor of Political Science of the same university. As a part of the same sweeping move, a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor has also been appointed.

However surprising, and to many of us however shocking, the step may be, it must have been taken after long deliberations. The situation over there has remained critical for full one year, if we count it from December 22, 1990. Some would put it back by months if not by years. The campus has witnessed the worst form of violence, including murder. Though similar, and equally tragic deaths have happened on other campuses, and though Chittagong is not the only university which has been closed for months, causing a total dislocation of all normal work, still the university has earned one distinction denied to others: it has a completely destabilised administration and it has remained, almost without break for over a year, in the grip, the iron grip, of Shibir, a student organisation. Shibir has the reputation of being a highly organised party, and is said to be the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami. This party, the Shibir, has achieved something quite unique in Chittagong — a paralysed administration and a Vice-Chancellor under siege in his own house on the campus. One would have supposed that there is no government in the country. But no, though the

nation wanted the government to act, it remained unruffled, impervious to all appeals to save the Vice-Chancellor and to save the university, to put a stop to this deliberate flouting of law and order by a determined group of student activists, to do something which any lawful government is expected to do in a similar situation. It hedged and delayed as if to test the nerve of a man under the severest strain. According to newspaper reports, there have been attacks on his house and he and his family has lived for weeks under threat of death. Most other persons would have succumbed under the pressure but Dr Sirajuddin refused to give in.

It would seem that the authorities wanted the Vice-Chancellor to quit, and to do so on his own. When he didn't, he was advised to step aside. When he didn't oblige, and when the prolonged war of nerves failed to produce the desired result, he was fired.

To the best of our knowledge, there is no provision in the Act — the Chittagong University Act of 1973 — enabling anybody to dismiss or remove the Vice-Chancellor. They must have found a way to circumvent the Act.

Several points are involved, including the moral and the legal. We will deal with the moral aspect of the government action first.

By removing the Vice-Chancellor, the government

has passed a judgement, implicitly, making the Vice-Chancellor responsible for the non-functioning of the university, and deciding that a replacement would restore normalcy on the campus. Whether this happens is yet to be seen. Meanwhile, protests have been voiced by students, teachers and political circles. In Chittagong and other places, blaming the government for flouting the Act and thereby violating the university's autonomy, and also for encouraging, may be indirectly, student

the government made a scapegoat of the Vice-Chancellor. It is well known that though, as the highest executive of the university, the Vice-Chancellor "shall be responsible for the discipline of the university in accordance with this Act, the statutes and the University Ordinances" (Chittagong University Act, 13(9)), the discipline referred to has a limited and precise meaning in the context. The kind of indiscipline most Vice-Chancellors have to deal with these days is a different thing altogether, not within the

government has done something which is morally indefensible.

We now come to the legal aspect of the government action. As we see, the Act does not say anything on the question of a Vice-Chancellor's removal from office. In the situation, the government is supposed to have invoked some other law — which law we do not know — which will give legality to the action. The action has not yet been challenged in a court of law. Only wide disapproval from many quarters, academic and non academic, is being reported in the newspapers daily.

The absence of a provision for the removal of a Vice-Chancellor in the Act, being a general feature of all such Acts in this country and elsewhere, cannot be a mere omission. There may arise situations when a government may find a removal — by whatever name you call it — necessary. Our past history shows one of the following methods were adopted either by the government or by the incumbent, when the former found such an action necessary or when the latter decided for himself.

Action by the government: In recognition of the yeoman's service rendered by him; offer him some other post. Make him an ambassador (Dr M.O. Ghani) or find a berth for him in the U.G.C./Public Service Commission etc. Make a deal

with the incumbent, but don't let him dictate the terms.

If, however, the incumbent is a choice of a former government that you have successfully supplanted, punish the incumbent by catching him in the legal trap and send him to prison. (Remember the 1975 cases, names need not be mentioned.)

Dealing with persons found guilty of moral turpitude — all Vice-Chancellors are not angels — removal will be easy and will not arouse much resentment. The government will be morally justified. There has been at least two such cases that I can recall.

When the incumbent is too independent and politically non-co-operative, withdraw your support from him, make things difficult for him and force him to capitulate. Failing, remove him, without caring for the consequences.

The latest Chittagong action seems to be an illustrative case of this nature.

Action by the incumbent: Gracefully accept the offer when you are convinced that you cannot continue, because the government doesn't want you to, and make the best of a bad bargain.

Or, quit, and eat your humble pie and do not look for any favour or compensation. This will be a most honourable course left open to you. You will earn the gratitude of the government though this will never be formally acknowledged.

There are a few more tips, for both the parties, but enough for today.

Exit of a Vice-Chancellor

PASSING CLOUDS
Zillur Rahman Siddiqui

Indiscipline. For it is the students who have unleashed violence and have insisted on the removal of the Vice-Chancellor, who have won the day. In choosing between a group of students virtually demanding the right to run the university, and a Vice-Chancellor given the highest vote of confidence by the Senate, the highest authority of the university, the government, for reasons best known to itself, chose the students.

The choice merits to be seen and judged from the moral angle. To most observers, this has been an immoral choice and decision. Unable or unwilling to admit its own failure to deal with indiscipline and lawlessness,

meaning of that clause. In a situation of extreme disorder, the Vice-Chancellor will ask for police help. The police will come, dutifully, may be reluctantly, because of the famed sanctity of the place, and will do nothing when violence erupts. There is a mystique about our police behaviour, and by this time the campus communities across the country have come to know it well.

It is now universally accepted that the ultimate responsibility for maintenance of law and order in our educational precincts, lies with the government. By making the Vice-Chancellor the scapegoat for a disorderly campus and a non-functioning university, the

Can Political Killer Keating Pull it Off?

by David O'reilly writes from Canberra

Paul Keating, who ousted populist Bob Hawke as Prime Minister of Australia just before Christmas, is regarded as the political killer of Canberra politics. He was Treasurer for most of Hawke's nine years in office. Now he has to tackle a tough economic situation partly of his own making. On top of that, reports Gemini News Service, he faces a new opposition leader with a comprehensive programme that swing power to the right in 1993.



PAUL KEATING
New Australian Prime Minister
unsuccessful, party room challenge in June and gone, brooding, to the backbenches.
So successfully did his supporters destabilise the government, a certain inevitability shrouded the perennial speculation about Hawke's demise. The day after his exit one newspaper said it all: "To the spoiler goes the victory."
Hawke bowed out, credited with great achievements. After nearly nine years as prime minister, he had made the

Labour Party, for the first time, a viable alternative to the conservative Liberal and National Party Coalition that had dominated national politics since World War Two.

The Hawke-Keating alliance transformed Labor from an unelectable alliance of faceless men with extremist policies into a middle ground, moderate, economically-literate and populist party.

Ironically, in 1991 Labor fell into electoral despair because of the onset of recession, brought about, in part, by the failed tight monetary policy Keating maintained in his last two years as Treasurer.

Labor fell 20 per cent behind the coalition under the leadership of a newly arrived, fresh-faced John Hewson and the country looked on somewhat incredulously as Keating supporters argued for six months that he should be brought back as leader to breathe new life — and "vision" — into a tired government.

Hawke supporters argued unsuccessfully that if anyone should be blamed for Labor's decline it should be the economic mastermind.

In June Keating pulled on the first challenge, coinciding

with the leaked revelation that before the 1990 election Hawke had secretly agreed to a deal by which, after it, he would hand the leadership over to his Treasurer. Hawke had reneged on the undertaking.

Hawke's private view was that Keating was too volatile a politician to be leader. Keating's private view was that Hawke had become so personally intoxicated with high office that his political judgement was clouded.

Keating long argued that the next great challenge for Labor would be to show it could evolve, in office, from one successful leader to another — to become, in effect, the new natural party of government in Australia.

In the end the 110-member government caucus concluded that, whatever his achievements and special relationship with the electorate, the 62-year-old Hawke could not go on forever.

In June Hawke had won the party room count by 66 votes to 44. This time, with Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, a Hawke supporter, away in Cambodia, the vote went 56-51 to 47-year-old Keating, who

thus became the country's youngest ever Prime Minister. The narrow margin hinted at the bitter divisions that had wracked the party during the six months of agitation form Hawke's enemies, which included members of his cabinet.

Hawke had not helped his case by months of indecision in responding to the Keating plotting. Against a spiralling \$130 billion national debt, a million jobless (nearly 10 per cent), record bankruptcy levels and business and consumer confidence at an all-time low, Hawke could point only to a relatively low inflation figure.

His choice as Treasurer to replace Keating, former Primary Industry Minister John Kerin, flopped and had to be sacked. Hawke just kept hoping the recession would bottom out. It never did.

The critical question is when and how fast the economic turnaround comes. Economic commentators are divided.

One scenario suggests that, Hawke having suffered the odium of the recession for six months while Keating sat on the backbench, Keating may see it begin to lift in early 1992, so that he can freshen

up the government by mid-1993 when the next election is due.

The other scenario suggests that this recession is deeper than anyone thought possible and that it is all too late for Labor, irrespective of who is leader.

The other factor is John Hewson. Recently he released the most comprehensive policy document ever produced by a political opposition in Australia. It proposes a VAT-style consumption tax, increased economic incentive for the business community and a crackdown on welfare fraud.

Hawke and Kerin floundered trying to discredit it. For the first time in a decade the coalition seems to have a leader and more importantly, a credible policy manifesto.

Keating with a virulent hatred of the conservatives, a keen sense of the political jugular and a venomous tongue, is the "killer" of Australian politics.

Yet for many electors his tough policies as Treasurer and what comes over as an arrogant personal demeanour make him a hated figure.

If he is as aggressive and abusive a Prime Minister as he was Treasurer, Keating may simply lead further credibility to the Hewson push. Keating needs to combine his undoubted skills as a salesman with a more soothing pitch.

Even this may not be enough. Labor has taken an immense gamble in desperately trying to extend its tenure beyond the limits of the Hawke populism.

in Yunnan. And the number of crimes related to narcotics are beginning to alarm the authorities.

"Narcotics-related crimes are now being uncovered in nearly all provinces, cities and prefectures in China", said Lin Zhun, vice president of the people's supreme court, earlier last year. He described the drugs trade as "running wild" with international drug activities "infiltrating China daily."

The problem is apparently so serious that the National People's Congress standing committee has set up a special anti-drug department — a recognition that anti-drug measures at the local level have been ineffective and probably riddled with corruption.

It is an attempt to regain control where law officers at the local level have apparently failed against the superior might of highly organised drug syndicates.

China: Death to Drug Traffickers

Beijing finally admits it has a serious drug problem and is using the most draconian measures to solve it. Yojana Sharma of IPS reports from Kunming, China.

attention to this problem ... now we are very serious. If we can sentence someone to death we certainly will." Yang told IPS.

The executions are part of a major crackdown on drug-related crimes in Yunnan which borders on the Golden Triangle region of Burma, Laos and Vietnam — grown in recent years into a key transit route for opium and heroin to Hong Kong and beyond.

When the communists came to power in China in 1949 they nearly eradicated the drug problem, but it is resurging with a vengeance.

Previously, Beijing did not want to admit the problem existed as it would merely point to a failure by the authorities to keep the scourge under control. Now, China openly admits it has a drug crisis and is using the most draconian measures to stop it.

Ironically, China's problems began with efforts in other South-east Asian countries to combat trafficking, in particular a 1982 agreement between Thailand and Malaysia to fight the flow of heroin from the Golden Triangle.

In search of a new route, traffickers channeled the drugs out through China's southern provinces to Hong Kong and from there to the rest of the world.

Former public security minister Wang Fang told a anti-narcotics conference in Beijing last year China was determined to eliminate the drug problem

"within three years." At the end of 1990 China enacted severe drug laws which stipulated the death sentence for those who traffic more than 50 grams of heroin or over 1 kg of opium.

In addition an extra 5,000 troops and para-military police have been stationed in Yunnan, and in May an anti-narcotics agreement was signed with Burma to curb smuggling.

Yunnan is surrounded by drugs," said Peng Jianfei, director of the Yunnan provincial drug office. He said Yunnan police dealt with over 2,000 cases in the first eight months

of this year, seizing more than 320 kgs of opium and 1.2 kgs of heroin — more than double the figures for the same period in 1990.

In the past, drug use had been confined to peasants living along the Burma border and was hotly denied by the authorities who labelled drug abuse a Western disease.

But now Peng admitted there were some 85 drug treatment clinics in the province which had over the past three years treated some 10,000 addicts.

The addiction has spread from Kunming to cities as far afield as Xian, Lanzhou and Canton along the drug route from Yunnan to Hong Kong. Elsewhere in China, including the capital Beijing, it is virtually unknown.

Central government statistics list some 70,000 registered addicts, 20,000 of them

hard manual labour as shepherd, kitchen-worker, road and wastes cleaner, car-cleaner etc. As they are working under private owners, they are not getting genuine pay. They're supposed to get 800 Rls but getting only 300-500 Rls. They cannot claim their genuine pay because Bangladeshis are going there on less salaries.

May I through your column, request the Saudi authorities to please look into the working situation of the Bangladeshi workers and ensure their genuine pay and other service benefits.

M. Zahidul Haque
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To the Editor...

Back to square one?

Sir, Russian Commonwealth states have been recognized by Bangladesh. The Commonwealth of 11 (out of 15) former Socialist Soviet Republics including Russian Federation has resulted from Glasnost and Perestroika.

Internationally, the status of USSR has been retained by Russia despite being trim geographically, but not much militarily, which still matters to world peace due to fear of possible repetition of arms race reviving Cold War.

At present Russian Commonwealth appears to be in the process of transforming its econo-political structure following western model that

will finally be the culmination of internal pressures for liberalization of communistic system coupled with the impact of external propaganda.

The expected outcome so far from replacing the disgraced communism with the adopted capitalism in the Commonwealth of Independent States is its burgeoning trades with the West as much as mushrooming private enterprises on the home front.

No matter what revolutionary changes have been implanted in the Russian affairs, Russia remains a Superpower with her superiority in many fields. By and large, the recent democratic trend in the communist world has redesigned

the global geo-political setting that has evidently re-introduced market economy overpowering Leninism.

M Rahman
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Campus violence

Sir, This a very widely written and discussed subject in Bangladesh now. Wherever a few guardians of college — or university — going students gather this subject figures in the discussion. Recently, a seminar was held at the BUET campus on the subject and various respectable persons gave their opinions. I have a suggestion to address this problem

which of course I gathered from such of discussions. Briefly, my suggestion will be to enact a law in the parliament that the president, the prime minister, the ministers, the members of the parliament (treasury and opposition), secretaries and others who have any say in making and enforcing the law of the country cannot send their children abroad for education. If anyone does, he can do so after relinquishing the position. When the policy-makers have a personal stake, we are sure they will put their heart into the job. Moreover, if they send their wards to a different system it appears that they have no confidence in the one they evolve and administer.

Absurd? But isn't the situation absurd too?

Md Anwarul Haq
47/9 West Rajabazar, Dhaka.

Bangladeshis in KSA

Sir, Often it makes me terribly upset to feel the depth of poverty and sorrows of my compatriots. The other day I was listening to a cassette sent by our old house-maid's son who is presently working in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. His account of the situation is really heart-breaking. He said that relatives in the home could never imagine what sort of job our Bangalee brothers are doing there. Eighty per cent of them are doing very