

Farewell to Corruption!

The Anti-Corruption Act, 1974 is going to be stricter from now on with the provision for a seven-year jail term or fine and confiscation of ill-gotten wealth. That the members of the parliament have unanimously passed the bill seeking to make the law more suitable to the obtaining situation indicates the importance of the move. So far as the merit of the amendment is concerned, there is no doubt about its effectiveness in fighting corruption. We unreservedly welcome the law on its becoming more punitive.

But at the same time we are also apprehensive that the law may still stand the chance of ending in a whimper. We know that there are good laws to deal with many of the social evils but the real problem is the failure to evolve an effective system to enable the laws to take their own course. To include excellent laws in the statute book is one thing and to make them effective enough in practice is another. Then, of course, there is the rule of law as distinct from witch-hunt and settling of old score.

The question that has troubled the Opposition members' minds is that the law may not be uniformly applied. They have been explicit that the politicians are, more often than not, victimised although bureaucrats and public servants in corruption cases go scot-free. The reference is good enough to highlight how the same law can be differently interpreted or is actually made so. What becomes a casualty in the process is the rule of law and the human rights. The danger of carrying the laws to excesses has been witnessed in this and a few other neighbouring countries in recent times.

If all these are a guide, the provisions for law reform have to be carefully examined. To say individual rights are inviolable is not enough. The important thing is to ensure that nobody is held guilty unless and until declared so by the court. Secrecy of cases specially from media overlay and in trial is a must if the privacy of an individual, a vital point, is to be honoured. This aspect of our human rights is currently flagrantly flouted. This should, in line with our democratic aspirations, be brought to an end. However much the need for expeditious disposal of cases may prove overriding, there is no sense going for repressive measures all the time. The important point is that we can be uncompromising on the question of corruption without ever being responsible for the undermining of human rights. After all, the laws are made for man not the vice versa.

It is good to know that the government is all set to swoop on the big fish, not just the small fries. Here again, let it be reminded, the experience with the big defaulter cases was not particularly happy. Can we expect something similar will not also happen in this case? That laws are flagrantly violated owes to the fact that the very process designed to fight corruption itself is corrupt — most of the time. Then the chances of exploiting the stricter provisions by the corrupt officials cannot be overruled. A faulty or corrupt system cannot be expected to match the new challenges that arise out of reframing the laws.

In Hong Kong and Singapore, in particular, it has been amply manifest how things can go awry if laws are only tightened without back-up legal, social and other measures. State-sponsored corruption and musclemanry are two of the vilest social evils this nation has become a heir to thanks to the long autocratic rule. Sure enough, the provision for confiscation of ill-gotten property is going to be a strong deterrent to corruption. But one would like to know how all the legal complications involved in the process of deciding such properties will be handled? One major problem in bringing the big corrupt elements to book is that it is very difficult to prove cases against them. Then what about those who have long made their wealth of misappropriation look like a genuinely earned one?

We, therefore, strongly suggest the relevant laws to deal with corruption in our neighbouring countries are examined and also our special situation taken into consideration to come to grip with the widespread corruption cases.

Safety Net

If the Government of Begum Khaleda Zia runs out of appropriate names for a new ministry that is designed to look after our people who fall victims to one form of harassment after another, it should look towards Moscow for some inspiration. A new ministry just set up there by the Russian government is called, the Ministry for Social Protection.

With the traditional bitter winter just in, perhaps the entire people of Russia would ask for "protection" from the ministry. However, to simplify the work of the ministry, the authorities have assigned it certain specific areas. It is reported that it will be primarily concerned with 65 million retired people, single parents, Chernobyl victims and domestic refugees who deserve the government assistance most, not to mention the inevitable and much-needed foreign aid.

The setting up of the new ministry has much to do with the new "climate of aid", as someone might put it, a phenomenon not quite unknown in Bangladesh. The republic, the largest in the former Soviet Union, has received 352,000 tons of food aid delivered since December 1990. The report says that much of it has fallen on wrong hands in a country not used to receiving foreign aid, while a lot has vanished in the ever-hungry black market. Again, one can find some similarities with what happens in a developing country like Bangladesh.

However, one must give due credit to the Russian authorities for thinking of a safety net — for people who need all the help but do not get it.

It will be worthwhile for the Bangladesh Embassy in Moscow to find out how the ministry works. The problem is, if such a ministry is also set up in this country, it might be so big as to take over the entire central secretariat, judging by the number of people who are crying out for "protection" from all kinds of problems. If, as in Moscow, the Ministry works closely with the Commission for Humanitarian Aid, the Prime Minister may just discover, to her dismay, that far too many people are interested in running it. Our safety net may then turn out to be full of big holes.

THE incarceration of the veteran Sindh nationalist leader G M Syed which came into a sharp during his 89th birthday celebration earlier this month — on Jan 17 to be exact — has added a new dimension to politics in this country, with immediate significance for the trouble-torn province of Sindh.

The observance of the politician's birthday at a party held in Karachi, attended by over 10,000 enthusiastic workers, has pushed to the background even the sensational case of the alleged gang rape of Veena Hayat, daughter of the veteran Muslim League leader Sardar Shaikat Hayat.

For the birthday party, workers belonging to Jeeye Sindh Tehrik (JST) of which Mr Syed is the founder and chief had come from all over the country, mainly to listen to the speech of the Sindh leader. The speech was said to have been written by Mr Syed himself, but it was read out by the Vice President of JST.

The speech by Mr Syed called for a free Sindh, a free Balochistan, a free Sindh (Punjab) and a free Pukhtunkhwa as part of a new world order. Only thus, the speech asserted, could peace, prosperity, freedom and defence of these "nations" could be ensured and preserved.

He advocated the formation of blocs of different nations with veto powers for individual members on internal matters. Such blocs could be either formed on a regional basis, as the SAARC, or on ideological basis, such as an association of Islamic nations. The function began with the singing of a 'Sindhudesh national anthem', with the entire crowd standing up to show respect to it.

Next day, the nonagenarian leader was served with a detention order under which he is confined in his own house in Karachi which has been declared a sub-jail.

That it should be so was not surprising because no government worth its name can let anyone openly preach secession, more so once-bitten-twice-shy Pakistan. But what was surprising was that only a day before, the Chief Minister of Sindh, the controversial

FOCUS ON PAKISTAN

G M Syed Provides a New Push to Demand for Free Sindh

M J Zahedi writes from Karachi

Jam Sadiq Ali, at a luncheon he gave for senior journalists had described G M Syed as a true Pakistani and said he (Jam) had never heard him mention Sindhudesh. A few days before that G M Syed had arranged a luncheon for Jam. The Chief Minister did not attend the birthday function but had sent his Special Assistant for Political Affairs Ghazi Salahuddin to represent him. He was promptly removed from his office for 'showing honour to the Sindhudesh national anthem' but it is not yet known if he will be prosecuted. Orders of arrest have been issued against several people who were present at the function, but none has yet been held.

The episode has come as a great embarrassment for Jam Sadiq Ali. His opponents, particularly Ms Benazir Bhutto, has promptly seized the opportunity to blast the provincial administration as she did during the co-operatives scam in Punjab, and has repeated her demand for his dismissal. She alleged that policies similar to those that were pursued in former East Pakistan were being followed in Sindh where schools, hospitals and even cities are being divided on ethnic lines by those who stand not for national integration but for disintegration. She was obviously referring to the activities of the Muttahida Qaumi Mahaz, headed by the engineer-turned-political 'pir' Altaf Hussain, whose party members are coalition partners of Jam in Sindh and Nawaz Sharif at the Centre. The MQM also rules the civic bodies in Karachi and Hyderabad.

The action, it is said, was taken at the direction of the Federal Government. It is said Jam Sahib hesitated because he was more concerned about

this fragile and multi-functional majority in the provincial assembly. He tried to ignore Islamabad's instructions in the hope that the storm would blow over. But the anti-Jam faction at the Centre, it is said, got in touch with the Prime Minister who was in Paris. He is said to have ordered the federal machinery to put Mr Syed under house arrest and haul up others who were involved.

The Federal Government action naturally is resented by Jam Sadiq who is pleading innocence to pacify the hostile Sindh elements, such as G M Syed's son who is an MNA.

Questions are being raised in the political circles regarding the conduct of then Sindh Government in connection

with the birthday celebrations as well as the association of G M Syed with the Provincial Government or at least its head Jam Sadiq Ali. Ms Bhutto has said that Jam Sahib, who was an important member of the Pakistan People's Party during her father's time was not given any important post because the Inter Services Intelligence agency had questions about his connections with a foreign country. But President Ghulam Ishaq Khan provided him a golden chance by appointing him the caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh after the dismissal of the PPP Government at the Centre and in Sindh. The President, Benazir said, allowed him a free hand in collaboration and cooperation with anti-state el-

ements like G M Syed to subvert the Constitution, rig the October 1990 polls, and unleash a reign of terror on the workers and supporters of the PPP in the name of suppressing terrorists, particularly the Al Zulfikar Organisation which Benazir's brother had founded abroad after the hanging of Mr Bhutto by the late President Zia-ul-Haq and which Jam says the Bhutto ladies are now indirectly helping. When Jam Sadiq Ali was installed as the chief of the coalition government in Sindh it was announced that the coalition partners were the MQM, the Jam group, the Pir Pagaro group, the Jatoli group and the Sindh National Alliance headed by G M Syed.

Only a few days before the birthday celebrations, G M Syed had expressed the same sentiments at a luncheon he held for Jam Sadiq Ali, as he did publicly from the Nishtar Park rostrum on January 17. Only a day before the big event, the newly-elected office-bearers of JST pledged on oath before G M Syed to struggle to make Sindh an independent country. Despite all these and possibly knowing that these sentiments would be expressed even more vigorously at a public function like the birthday celebrations, it is asked how and why the Government allowed the function to be held.

With this background, the political circles are looking towards Islamabad awaiting its verdict about the Provincial Government as a whole. Matters are further complicated by the fact that Jam Sadiq is said to be a nominee of the President and the most influential person in the Government after the Chief Minister is his Adviser on



G. M. Syed

Home Affairs, Irfanullah Khan Marwat, who happens to be the son-in-law of the President. Again, the DIO of the all-powerful and the most-criticised Criminal Investigation Agency (CIA) Samiullah Khan Marwat, Irfanullah's cousin, has recently been transferred and the chief of the Prime Minister's Inspection Team is holding an enquiry against him. The action following persistent complaints of wrongdoing and adoption of questionable and irregular methods by the CIA in questioning held suspects, particularly PPP activists, on the Prime Minister's sudden visit here to preside over a high-level meeting on law and order in the province.

Interestingly, Dr Saifur Mahmood, an historian and author of numerous books on current topics, has in a newspaper article described the episode as "an early warning of our history". He described three 'separatist' movements in Pakistan's history — the Pakhtoonistan movement followed by the Bengali autonomous movement and last of all the Jeeye Sindh movement. "Two of the three", he says, "have resolved themselves in one way or the other. Pakhtoonistan movement is a model of a regional tendency which was absorbed in the main national stream whereas East Pakistan autonomous movement is a case study of our failure in national integration." So, he urges the nation to heed the signals that the G M Syed birthday episode has sent. "If we do not heed these signals, then history cannot be stopped from taking revenge from us for our indifference, lack of vision and complacency."

M J Zahedi who started his noted career in journalism in the erstwhile Pakistan Observer in the early fifties rose to the position of the paper's News Editor and, later, among other positions, served as the News Editor of Dawn (Karachi) and the founder-editor of the Khaleej Times (UAE). Presently, he is a consultant (News) for Dawn, Karachi. Mr Zahedi will be writing for The Daily Star on a fortnightly basis and later every week, commenting on the developments in Pakistan where he now lives.

Radical Nepali Reds Out to Topple Monarchy

Jan Sharma writes from Kathmandu

A radical wing of the communists in Nepal says it will launch an armed struggle to abolish monarchy and create a People's Republic of Nepal.

Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre), reiterating its support to insurgents fighting in neighbouring Sri Lanka, Punjab and Kashmir, says it will launch armed insurrection if necessary to capture power and turn the Hindu kingdom into a republic.

The three basic instruments of a revolution — the party, a united front, and the people's army — will be created. The power is to be captured at the grassroots and then gradually at the village and town levels.

An intensified campaign is to be launched to vehemently oppose the multi-party democ-

cracy under a monarchy and to espouse the cause of a new people's democracy with a view to mobilising the people against the "reactionary alliance between the King and the Nepali Congress."

"We are committed to armed insurrection," said Nirmal Lama, the group's controversial leader at the end of an underground meeting of the faction held in an undisclosed destination in Chitwan foothills recently.

Mr Lama said although the political framework following the changes in April 1990 has "broadened," it is not possible "to trust the royal palace completely. It is possible that the palace may act the same way it did in 1960. It is also for this reason that we have kept our party's main machinery underground."

The centre of attack by the group, which believes in the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, has also been the constitutional monarchy.

'We are committed to armed insurrection,' says the group's controversial leader. Its aim: to oust the Nepali monarchy and establish a people's republic

"Communists are by nature anti-monarchy," says Dr Babu Ram Bhattarai, a Unity Centre leader and party ideologue educated and trained in the New Delhi-based Jawaharal Nehru University.

"We are opposed to monarchy. Democracy as you see today is only for those who support monarchy, imperialism and feudalism. We want a peo-

ple's republic."

The only other known group championing the abolition of the Hindu monarchy is the India-based Janabadi Morcha, (People's Front) with

Ram Raja Prasad Singh as its leader.

Mr Singh, given a death sentence in absentia for his involvement in the terrorist bomb attacks in Kathmandu and elsewhere in June 1985, has already been granted amnesty by King Birendra. He remains in India on self-imposed exile.

Because of the underground

nature of the Unity Centre, it would be difficult even to guess their membership strength. However, their support and fraternity with insurgents in the region has far reaching political and security implications, analysts say.

The Unity Centre, formed in 1990, consists of CPN (Mashal), CPN (Fourth Convention), Proletariat Labour Organisation Nepal and the CPN (Mashal) factions.

"We support Tamils in Sri Lanka, Sikhs in Punjab and Kashmiris in Kashmir," says Mr Lama in an interview. "We support their terrorism. We support all violence that is aimed against violence."

"The meeting was very successful," says a press statement issued by the group at the end of the meeting. It said 222 representatives, 49 observers,

and delegates from the All India Coordination Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) and the Punjab's Paigam group attended the meeting.

The statement describes both the King and the Nepali Congress as "common enemies" from both class and political perspectives.

As regards the United Marxist-Leninist (UML) faction, the press statement said, although there are great numbers of "dedicated revolutionaries," the leadership is more oriented towards the reactionary path and is dominated by "rightist revisionist forces." The UML along with other communist factions captured an impressive 69 seats in the 205-member House of Representatives.

—Depthnews Asia

Panel on Juvenile Delinquency Considers Rising Crime Rates

BANGKOK: Social development and criminal justices experts from Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam gathered here to examine and discuss the practical implementation of rehabilitation programmes for juvenile delinquents in the ESCAP region (Jan 6-22).

Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFEI), the "Seminar-cum-Field Study on Programmes to Rehabilitate Juvenile Delinquents in the ESCAP region" was convened to explore optimal ways of rehabilitating juvenile delinquents, in consonance with recent United Nations rules and mandates on juvenile justice administration.

In his opening statement,

SAMS Kibria, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), said that timely action is called for if recidivism among juvenile delinquents is not to become a major problem, escalating in turn to serious crime in late adolescence and early adulthood.

On the issue of rehabilitation, Mr Kibria noted that the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, Popularly known as the

"Beijing Rules", clearly state that placement of juveniles in an institution should be a course of last resort and for the minimum necessary period.

He observed, however, that in practice, many juvenile delinquents, even including first time offenders, are imprisoned with adult criminals, for lack of appropriate rehabilitation measures specifically designed for their age-group.

He emphasized that the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents must be premised on

overriding concern with the long-term well-being of the juvenile and his or her family.

Mr Kibria reiterated that ESCAP firmly believes in the efficacy of an interdisciplinary approach to the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents. Such an approach, he added, requires close cooperation between the personnel and agencies of the criminal justice system as well as schools, community organizations, families and individuals.

The Meeting provided not only a forum for discussions

but a major feature of this Meeting was a series of field visits to observe rehabilitation programmes in diverse development contexts, namely, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo. For example in Bangkok, the participants visited the Duang Pratheep Foundation, Klong Toey slum and the Ban Karuna Boys Training School.

The field visits will emphasize the practical aspects of programme implementation and programme impact on juvenile delinquents. The Meeting which commenced in Bangkok on 6 January will conclude in Tokyo on 22 January 1992.

At the conclusion of the Meeting, the participants formulated recommendations on rehabilitation measures that would serve to strengthen the implementation, in the ESCAP regions, of the "Beijing Rules" and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juvenile Deprived of their Liberty.

—UNIS

To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Legacy of autocracy

Sir, The present democratic Government may claim that they have removed autocracy from our country but in reality many things of the past autocratic regime is going on. I elaborate below some which are still continuing.

- 1) Special Powers Act still continues in spite of clear cut commitment by BNP leadership before election.
- 2) Autonomy of Radio and TV has not been established.
- 3) Reduction of expenditure for

non-productive sectors has not been effected. 4) Terrorism from campus could not be eradicated. 5) Arbitrary requisition of private vehicles by Government for use by security personnel of Government's emergency use still continues in the capital city and more so in the Mofussil. 6) Total closing of city roads for movement by Government leaders causing immense traffic problem for road users still continues. 7) Buying of costly luxury vehicles for Government and semi-Government bodies still con-

tinues. Costly vehicles are more expensive too, and the government of a poor country spends so much for the driving comfort! 8) The system of allowing MPs to import duty free cars and then their subsequent sale to private users still continues.

There are a lot of other autocratic decisions which are still continuing.

We understand that these will continue in spite of being resented in the press because the legacy of autocracy is powerful enough to withstand one mass movement and one election.

Ahmed Hossain
Circular Road, Dhaka

ISD call charges

Sir, Ever since the ISD telephone system was introduced in Bangladesh the T & T Board

is charging for international calls at exorbitant rate.

All over the world an ISD caller pays for exactly the period utilised. The rates are also very low. In Bangladesh the rates are high and if a caller uses for example 1.1 minute, he has to pay for 2 minutes. Why cannot the T & T charge for exactly 1.1 minute.

These days international telecommunication is directly connected with trade and industry. There is talk of reducing production costs of products while launching drive for anti-smuggling. Why cannot the T & T Board contribute towards the reduction of production cost by charging for international calls for exact period utilised? They can further assist in this regard by introducing cheap rate calls during off-peak period which is followed all over the world ex-

cept Bangladesh.

I hope the T & T Board will give serious consideration to the suggestions.

Amyad Hossain
Elephant Road, Dhaka.

Murphy's Law

"Sir, 'Everybody makes mistakes', 'To err is human', 'Nobody is perfect'... so, nothing is perfect!

Right or wrong is indicated by the acceptability that determines the popularity of anything. Since everything is relative in the universal system, acceptability of something depends largely on the decision of the individual concerned.

As a social being, every individual is vulnerable to influences of the socio-ecosystem

that affect the individual's psychological development, which, in turn, controls his/her decision-making process. Consequently, action of an individual indicates his/her decision, i. e., what has been mastered and how well — correct or flawed.

Justifiably, the human error, apart from deficiency and inefficiency, is to blame most for the hardships and the declining quality of life, which may otherwise be interpreted as the results of lacking "right know-how". Even an insignificant typing error, for instance, may cause an irreparable damage... Who cares about Murphy's Law?

M. Rahman
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