

Changed Pak Stance Disappoints Hikmatyar

Sound Agricultural Policy Needed

Another agricultural policy aimed, according to Prime Minister Khaleeda Zia, to bring momentum in the sector is just in the pipeline. That a democratically elected government must make a review of the situation on the food front is, no doubt, natural—more so when the previous regime was not known to adopt pro-people policies and programmes. Equally—if not more, the compulsion for producing enough food to feed the nation quite independently stands prominent. Any policy that envisages to serve the purpose is most welcome.

The key point, therefore, is the soundness of the proposed policy. The fact that we have by now grown to a galore of policies on each area of our national life, however, makes us quite apprehensive of the thing to come. Indeed, the government penchant for formulation of newer policies—more in words and less in terms of practical works—is much too well-known. What is, however, less known are the new policies' plus points that were to make all the differences in the end results; and more importantly here, if the desired results ever came about from such much touted policies. The fact that the policies themselves are, more often than not, less defined and with much less substance is responsible for so frequently giving them new shapes.

This, indeed, is a peculiar situation. Governments, immediately after taking over, demonstrate an unusual inclination for dismissing everything their predecessors worked out as sham. In policy matters, there are certainly scope for trial and error as a method to carry forward a certain national cause. But there should not be two opinions about the objective or the goal to be pursued. So the policy drift is not expected to be startling enough and often upsetting so that one has to begin all over again. But that is what each new government during its tenure continues to claim—mostly with the aim to discredit its predecessor by way of earning a few votes.

What we understand is that there should be some broad-based policy guidelines on which the front-line political parties must agree. The differences are expected to be on the implementation methods and procedures and working out of details. All stable democracies have such a tacit understanding between and among their major political parties. The bone of contention remains to be a subtle thing and academicians work on them with an envious tenacity. The political parties, however, know what they really want for their nation. It is precisely for this reason that some policies survive government after government with just a few cosmetic touches here and there.

It is quite understandable why people here are wary of policies. Our reputation for letting down a sound policy is almost proverbial. What we need is the working out of a mechanism well-matched with the obtaining situation at the grass-roots level. Detection of loopholes and the causes of failures can be a guide to future implementation. Until now, that aspect of monitoring and necessary evaluation has been neglected at our own cost. Rhetorics we have had enough. Now is the time, we genuinely gave a policy a real go. The success, let us hope, will be measured only in terms of implementation.

This decidedly points to the need for a pragmatic policy—one that may not fulfil all our expectations but is surely within our capacity to be implemented in full. Once the decision on the policy matters has been arrived at, there will be no way of backing out. This again leads to the question of accountability, one of the nicest virtues of a democratic government.

On the Terror of being Gay

Gay girls on increase, so says a Daily Star headline on its Tuesday issue. The citizens of no less a traditionally conservative city like Sylhet are naturally concerned over the unpleasant development. However, incidentally, who are these girls? And how gay they are? And why?

As with all men and women, big editors have big idiosyncratic fits. Some would be horrified to see pictures of bodies of dead men or women in print although in life they perhaps never had such taboos. Some other editor at some other time in some hoary past decreed against writing words like prostitutes, brothels and pimps. Lesser mortals in the news desk had to make do by circumventing those items of inverted personal fetishes. And Bengalee journalism is not unique on this score. In Britain too the newspapers talk of street-walkers and of soliciting.

While home back, we haven't yet been able to get out of the cruellest joke of all of man's history—calling the preys to human lust, gay, we fail to take in the semantic change of the adjective-turned-noun into some totally different connotation. First male homosexuals started being called gays and then it spread to lesbians—and the term has by now no essential connection with prostitution. So, to hell with 'gay girls' as a peculiarly newspaperish term—out with this cruel joke.

Now what about this sudden increase in young girls submitting to indignity for a pittance? And in the comparatively affluent Sylhet? In our millennia-old, ever-evolving system of values there is nothing as degrading as that. This was far worse than being killed outright. Now, in our peerless fashioning of poverty and deprivation and over-population, we have changed all that in the span of a few decades. Living is the main thing—how, ask that question only afterwards. Pray, even then don't ask how. Will that be living the way she will do that?

Each of our children, our sister or our daughter, that takes to the streets each time and around the corner of all the towns and bazars—we as a people die irrecoverably. It is we who have contrived Tanbazar and that is shame enough. But the story of tens of thousands of our small dear little girls giving up to life degradation and abject violation of the human self is a far horrifying scenario.

We should stop booming platitudes over small success stories here and there in the face of galloping drug addiction and prostitution and leaping land-grabbing that pushes landlessness on a wild run.

Going back to the self-incriminating business of media-bushing—it is the media that sell the fable of paradise while the terrors of an eight-year-old yielding herself to the lust of a loathsome stranger is glossed over by all of us, specially the media.

GULBADDIN Hikmatyar is a peculiar combination of fundamentalism and scientific temper. After graduating in engineering, he strayed into politics. He now heads Hizb-e-Islami, the most powerful fundamentalist organisation, fighting for Afghanistan's independence.

His has been a relentless battle against the Russian occupation from the beginning, then he was only 40. But today, after seeing Moscow quit Afghanistan, he has allowed anger to cloud his judgment. He does not seem to want any part of his country, if the power is to be shared by two erstwhile communist parties, the Khalq and the Parcham, or their successor combination Watan, or their supporters.

"I will have nothing to do with those who were once communists," Hikmatyar told me in Peshawar the other day. He favours elections within a year under a Bangladesh-type of arrangement, where the country's chief justice headed the government to supervise fresh elections in the wake of General Ershad's downfall. Hikmatyar does not mind "non-controversial people" forming an interim government and supervising the polls. But in no case is he prepared to accept a set-up, which will include the communists or their followers. In fact, he wants them to be disfranchised.

Hikmatyar realises that the UN proposals—an interim government representing all the Afghan parties to supervise democratic elections—have not only the support of Washington and Moscow but also Islamabad. He also realises that if he were to withdraw his objection, he could help end

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the uncertainty in Afghanistan. But he does not mind waiting even at the expense of postponing the exit of President Najibullah.

Where Hikmatyar has gone wrong is in his inability to assess others' strength, the opposition Najibullah is facing in pushing through an arrangement, which will give a share in power to the Mujahideen. Many stalwarts in the Afghan army are reluctant to compromise with those against whom they have fought a long battle. Hikmatyar and other fundamentalists, in southern provinces of Afghanistan, General Momen has revolted and so has Colonel Juma Ashak on this count.

But Hikmatyar is more bothered about America, which is his bete noire. He feels that the verdict of loyatrga (a parliament of tribals), which Washington is advocating, is not a real election. This according to him, was being favoured because America does not want to risk the outcome in Afghanistan lest it should be like the one in Algeria (where the fundamentalists have won at the polls). He is confident that the purpose for which they fought—the Islamic rule in Kabul—will be achieved before long.

Hikmatyar is disappointed that Pakistan has "changed its stance" supporting fundamentalists. And he sees Washington's hand behind it. But he is not worried. "If the Russians could not subjugate us, who else would?", he asks. Indeed, he has an entrenched following in Pakistan.

Sami-ul-Haq, the Jamaat-i-Islami chief, has already come to his side, demanding the government to support the Afghan Mujahideen who are not only fighting their battle but a battle of Muslim umma." The same sentiment has been echoed by other important quarters.

After having been retired summarily, Lt. Gen. Hamid Gul, who was the chief of the ISI, the military intelligence agency that has armed and directed the Mujahideen, has said that Pakistan and the 'cause' of Afghans cannot be separated as both have the same objectives.

publicly. Tehran wants to take over from where Islamabad has left.

Jettisoning Hikmatyar must have been a difficult decision for Islamabad because it means joining issue with the various Muslim parties (for example, Jamaat-i-Islami), which constitute the Islamic Jummuriyat Ittehad, the ruling combination that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif heads. But Pakistan could not afford to stay embroiled in Afghanistan where a fratricidal warfare might become inevitable.

Pakistan has only faced the realities on the ground. It has

want Islamabad to recognise.

But the 12-year-old war has also made the border with Afghanistan virtually non-existent. The absence of border has led to free trades in narcotics and arms which have created serious domestic problems in Pakistan. It cannot afford to leave things as they stand today.

The people in Pakistan want the three million Afghan refugees (like the Bangladeshis India had in 1972) to go back since they are not only claiming a big chunk of business but also playing politics in the country. Another argument which is gaining ground is that the Behari Muslims, who fought for Pakistan, are being allowed to languish in the camps of Bangladesh, while the Afghans are being 'pampered'.

Significantly, Islamabad's dilution of support to Hikmatyar has synchronised with the return of its team from Central Asian Republics. They want in Afghanistan Islam, not mullah. Because of their fear that fundamentalists may take over at Kabul, they have continued the supply of arms to the Najibullah government. Hikmatyar admits the arms supply. But he rationalises it as an exchange of weapons for gas from Afghanistan.

It appears that the Asian republics want a land route to the Pakistan and Indian markets. They want Afghanistan to attain sufficient stability as early as possible. Pakistan, which also wants access for its goods to the Asian republics, sees in the UN proposals a

promise of normalcy.

Some 30 per cent people in Afghanistan appear to be committed to Najibullah or the communist regime. Even if these people were wanting to change sides, Hikmatyar is not willing to forgive them for their past association. So they want to go down fighting with Najibullah than risking the emergence of Hikmatyar or another fundamentalist, Rasool Sayyaf, who has characterised the UN proposals as "an international conspiracy against Afghanistan."

"This does not, however, daunt Hikmatyar, who believes that the communists and their supporters number only three per cent. He does admit that they have no dearth of arms. Here he blames India also. According to him, New Delhi is sending arms to the Kabul regime. He says: "Not long ago, you sent consignments by air, using even Indian Airlines. Now you are doing it via sea." I do not know what proof he possesses but the way he spoke gave me the impression that he would be willing to give evidence to back up his allegation. (While talking about India, he makes distinction between the people and the government.)

But his main criticism of India is not because of the arms it allegedly supplies to Afghanistan, but because of its "surrender" to America. He is worried about New Delhi's "going into the lap of Washington." Embittered by the fact that America dropped him after Russia's withdrawal from Afghanistan, Hikmatyar warned me: "Learn from our experience. They are nobody's friends. They will betray you the moment they find your utility is over."

Between the Lines

Kuldip Nayar

He has voiced support to the 'cause' of Afghans as it means the welfare of Pakistan. In other words, he sees the new policy of Islamabad as a departure from the 'cause' of Afghans, meaning the rule of fundamentalists.

It is significant that the Islamic Republic of Iran has become more active than ever before. The Iranian consulate in Peshawar last month arranged a cultural programme, where a number of Afghan students participated. They wore the national dress of Iran, pinned on their vests the photo of late Imam Ayatollah Khomeini and sang the national anthem of Iran. Professor Sitghatullah, president of the Afghan interim government, protested against it

found that, with all its support, the Mujahideen have neither been able to dislodge Najibullah, nor occupy Kabul despite several attacks. Their fervour is lessening since the Mujahideen have no interest left after the Russian withdrawal.

Also, after their withdrawal, the raison d'être of Pakistan's assistance has gone. The stoppage of US aid, funnelled through Islamabad, exhausted whatever dividends it was reaping. From the Pakistan point of view, there was nothing to be gained by sustaining the hostilities. True, it has also practically obliterated the Durand Line, which the Pakhtuns in Pakistan never accepted and which Abdul Wali Khan, the Awami National Party (ANP) chief, does not

Thoughts on Identity

Too Many Faces or Facelessness?

by Gholam Mohammad

conflict between the Two Nations Theory and Bengali culture, the language issue being on top of the agenda from 14 August 1947 till 21 February 1952.

From 21 February 1952 onwards, in the then East Pakistan, a powerful movement centering around Bengali culture, within the frame-work of Pakistan, kept on growing. This gained momentum as time passed on exploding finally on the streets, in the form of mass upsurge against Ayub Khan. Some imbalances shown in the table below, were exposed at that point of time:

Indicator	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
1. Students as an organised community	Politically conscious and dynamic; Capable of providing leadership. Very sharp and responsive to the political events.	Generally non-responsive to the political events
2. People	Sharp and dynamic; responsive to contemporary political events despite their inadequacies due to poverty, illiteracy etc.	In general, averse to politics
3. Intellectuals	Revolted—moved with time and events	Following the Government lines generally except for occasional progressive rhetorics
4. Politicians	Plebain	Patrician
5. Civil Bureaucracy	Negligible	Dominating the scenario
6. Armed Forces	Almost non-existent	Dominating the scenario
7. Industrial & Business Community	Too frail to take note of their existence	Dominating the scenario
8. Big Landlords	Absent	Very powerful
9. General Economic Situation	Worsening	Improving
10. Language	Bangla	Urdu (This was usurped)

The mass upsurge against Ayub Khan in East Pakistan was therefore a people's movement having roots in the regional nationalism which had, over a period of time, shifted its focus from religion to the cul-

ture of the region and, as such, the people's participation was spontaneous and total. In a deeper analysis, this challenged the interests of the vested groups for whom it was the question of their survival. They, therefore, teamed up with a common objective to protect their respective interests. In this backdrop, Ayub Khan resigned. Power was handed over to Yahya i.e. the Armed Forces.

Yahya's re-appraisal is necessary now. He lacked totally

was ideal.

Upon assumption of power, Yahya promised country-wide general elections in keeping with his so-called LFO provision. Some of the events recorded below shall illustrate that given Yahya's best of intentions though, the actual power lay elsewhere and some one else from behind the scene was monitoring the situation:

1. Yahya driving an open jeep himself, — no army outriders, no security cordons, — on the streets of Dhaka to oversee the flood relief works just in the wake of the mass upsurge against Ayub Khan on the same streets;

2. Yahya's firm stand on neutral elections, — one-man, one-vote, — which gave Awami League a clear majority to form the Government. This also recognised our majority position;

3. Yahya's visit to Sheikh Mujib's residence to greet him as Pakistan's future Prime Minister;

4. Yahya's decree convening the newly elected National Assembly's session at Dhaka. Right from this stage, the vested interests with their location in the then West Pakistan, came out openly under the leadership of Bhutto demanding a share in the power in accordance with their so-called concept of Two Majority Parties within one State which was used as an effective instrument to obstruct the transfer of power to Awami League.

On the other hand, Awami League with all its revolutionary slogans on the streets, still carried out its political programmes peacefully within the frame-work of Pakistan giving a further premium of PPP and others by actively participating in the dialogue on the modalities of the transfer of power being unaware (?) of the military re-inforcement in the then East Pakistan.

Sheikh Mujib still fumbled on taking an open public stand on Bangladesh position on 23

March, 1971 when the so-called dialogue had collapsed already, which is illustrated by the circumstances at the time of unfolding the Bangladesh flag.

The military crack-down on the unaware people of East Pakistan abruptly in the night of 25 March, 1971, came into direct conflict with the concept of Pakistan when instead of protecting the interest of the Muslims, unprecedented atrocities were committed by the soldiers of Pakistan on the people of the then East Pakistan who happened to be their brothers-in-faith. This led to the war of liberation in which the people of East Pakistan were assisted by India at their extreme friendliness, desperate and miserable hour of need. This should be interpreted from our stand-point of survival as a nation in that grim situation.

Emergence of Bangladesh finally landed us in an absolute new situation. For historical reasons, secularism was our logical option which was subsequently incorporated into our constitution. (Pointed attention of the concerned readers is drawn at this stage to the provisions of speculative philosophy and secularism in Islam, discussion on which is being reserved at the moment.)

Unfortunately for ourselves, during the last 15 years, conscious efforts are being made to re-introduce religion in the State management (possibly?) to revert to the earlier position. This will provide a meaning to the existence of Pakistan at the expense of our social fabrics threatened with destruction in that event. Even the creation of Bangladesh as a sovereign State for that matter, shall be questionable.

To conclude: (1) Bengali nationalism was prevented by brute force from playing its role in the Pakistan framework by the vested interest. Mujib was the last unsuccessful attempt to retain the basis of Pakistan. (2) The advocate of Two Majority Parties within

one State (Bhutto) was raised to the highest office of the President. (3) The prospective Prime Minister of Pakistan (Mujib) was charged with high treason though earlier treated with proper dignity. (4) Punishment for high treason was heavily inflicted on the people who had voted for the then East Pakistan instead of the accused.

Questions: (1) Reasons for the silence of the political leadership from 25 March 1971 till the formation of the Mujib Nagar Government, at a safe region, on 10 April, 1971. (2) Does the silence relate to the capabilities and competence of the political leadership to handle the crisis situation? (3) Whether or not, this silence, in actual effect, paved the ground for an Army Officer (Radical announcement of Major Zia) to assume political leadership in the worst crisis situation in the history of the nation to be repeated and followed by Ershad in due course of time? (4) Do or do not the present two major political parties viz. BNP and Awami League, owe an explanation to the nation for their failure to preserve and promote the democratic norms and institutions during their respective times not too long ago? (5) At the present moment, how far Democracy is safe and secure with BNP in power and Awami League sitting in the opposition?

These issues are crucial. It is time, we had addressed ourselves to basic national issues fundamental to our survival as a democratic society as well as to identify ourselves in terms of whether we are a piece of land inhabited by name-less and face-less people or people having too many faces at the same time?

Should we look back to see if we have a past and for that matter, a name from which to derive our national pride?

Needless to remark that the national pride generating a strong sense of belongingness to the society is an essential pre-requisite for meaningful economic development in the absence of which, given the resources, corruption and other vices like that are inevitable. These are the symptoms. The Malady has been pointed out already.

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.

'People's representative'

Sir, I fully endorse the views of Mr S A Moazzam expressed in his above captioned letter published in your esteemed daily on 27th February. It is a matter of shame that our MPs who are supposed to be 'patriot' public representatives could not resist their temptation and greed for enhanced pay, import of duty free cars etc. It seems that they have bracketed themselves with public servants for increased

pay, allowances, pension etc. It is also a pity that no MP raised his voice protesting pay increase, pension etc. They all are unanimous for their own interest overlooking the genuine demands of others.

Again, pension benefit to MPs is unheard of in a Democratic form of Government. It is not at all justified to grant pension benefit to MPs after expiry of their parliamentary term. The Ministers and MPs who will not be chosen by the people and defeated in future elec-

tions will reap this benefit at the expense of the tax-payer. This will be a perpetual drain on our exchequer. Further, the Cumulative amount towards the pension of the MPs will be always on the increase and after passage of time a huge sum of money shall have to be earmarked in the budget for giving pensions to the MPs. A poor country like Bangladesh can hardly afford such an unprecedented luxury. Will our Hon'ble President look into this before he gives assent to this amendment?

Wahed Ullata, Dhaka.

Miss Eliada

Sir, The other day Miss Eliada Macrod was arrested with 3 kg heroin at Zia International Airport. Soon

after her arrest she disclosed the names and addresses of persons who gave her the heroin. As a result, the authority concerned was able to arrest Mr Robert Blankson Tony, the real smuggler, as he was preparing to cross to India through Benapole border.

In the light of the above she doesn't appear to be a real guilty and perhaps had no bad intention. If she was a member of the smugglers, she could have made opportunities for Tony to flee giving false information to the police. She rather appears to be innocent, unwittingly 'fallen in the trap.'

It has been widely published in the newspapers that the teenaged Miss Eliada is a student. So, it seems necessary to release her on humanitarian ground. She begged the authority concerned to release her on the said ground, which is internationally accepted by

law. I take the opportunity of this column to pray to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister kindly to release Miss Eliada Macrod on humanitarian ground at the earliest.

All Hossain Dockyard & Engineering Works Ltd, Narayanganj.

Potato and rice

Sir, Every year during potato harvesting season it is advised to eat potato in place of rice. It is a good proposal, so long it is cheaper to eat potato. I have the following observations in this respect. We eat dry rice and raw potato after boiling. One kilogram of dry rice produces more than three kilograms of boiled rice after cooking. One kilogram of raw potato produces one kilogram

of boiled potato after cooking. It means that in terms of edible cooked food one kilogram of rice is equivalent to at least three kilograms of potato.

When the price of three kilogram of potato is less than one kilogram of rice it may be economical for a family to eat potato as a staple food. In Bangladesh, seldom the price of potato comes to that level. Moreover, it takes more fuel to cook three kilograms of potato than to cook one kilogram of rice. Poor households without having natural gas connection would have to bear extra fuel cost to cook potato. Because of economic reason too, people do not opt in favour of eating potato in place of rice.

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