

## Mobilising Society for Education

It is gratifying to hear the Prime Minister hold forth so eloquently on the importance of education in the life of the nation, as she did last week. No one will join issue with her high ideas of what education can do to the individual citizen as well as the society. One could not agree more with her approach that to achieve our goals in education we must now ensure that all our national resources, energy and capability are appropriately pooled and properly utilised.

She was opening a seminar titled "Education for All - Social Mobilisation." And precisely this information would tend to rob the elevating speech of much of its true significance. First, because seminars have a way of being opened by top people on a note that the topic of the ensuing proceedings are the be-all and end-all of all things under the sun.

The next problem with such inaugural addresses by PM or even a minister is that these are more a statement of how the involved bureaucrats look at the position of the things being talked about—a position which is almost wholly a creation of their own as such these always boil down to a defence of the prevailing position which suits the politicians just fine. Of things which never occur in such addresses is the identification of the problems long plaguing the subject of the seminar and how the government proposes to go about overcoming them.

Thursday's seminar and its inaugural address were no exception to these old and unmeaning ways. However, the Prime Minister was correct in welcoming non-government initiative in the education sector. What has eluded the bureaucrats who briefed her, is that education had all along been very largely a non-government enterprise and it was always in order to welcome government initiative in this sector and not the other way round. While government policies over the last few decades have helped dry up private and social interest in the area, the government itself has failed to bring about any of the badly needed radical changes on the multifaceted and many-layered educational front.

Barring the handful of universities, whose number is a national shame of the worst order, — one for about 15 million people— and the few government colleges and schools opened generally on a greater district basis, all educational institutions were established and funded out of private endowments and social action. Over the years government performance has been limited to taking over colleges and giving supportive 'benefits' to teachers in schools. Precious little has so far been done to expand the base and extend the reach of quality education and effect changes in the content and the dissemination of education— changes warranted by a modern world poised to enter the third millennium.

Education, in the bargain, has been over-bureaucratised. You want to open a primary or secondary school and you will know what that means. The heavily manned offices are there standing as mountains to block you until you hole your way into them with drills made of cash.

But the Prime Minister's welcome was aimed at the more opulent section of the society. To motivate them into coming to the aid of the billion-Taka education business, two things will have to be done in the first place: one, to make up the mind over what incentives government will offer to them to draw them out; two, to insure that these very potential sources of endowment are not harassed by political parties and assorted mastans for 'donations'.

Charity should indeed begin at home and the noble sentiments aired by the Prime Minister can be expected to yield result if the major political parties take it upon themselves to generate the main body of non-government initiative in education.

## No to Art Theft

Art theft has become a serious concern for connoisseurs and collectors of the finest of creative works by masters the world over. This has not been so in this country for obvious reasons. But the theft of as many as 17 paintings of Zaimul Abedin, our Shilpacharya, Saturday night has suddenly changed the situation. The loss of one single masterpiece can rob the entire human race of its most enduring achievement. The Bangalees have indeed become a little poorer by losing the 17 paintings of Shilpacharya. It is surely important to know if those 17 works have among them any of his masterpieces but no less significant is the theft itself, the import of which can be ominously devastating.

We are fed, almost at a regular basis, with news that statues of different sizes and varieties have been recovered before they could be smuggled out of the country or some of them have been stolen from some places or others. Objects of art have not been made a target so long because of the failure to judge their value — mostly in terms of money. What then compelled the thieves to try their hands at the Abedin paintings? Has the art appreciation suddenly risen at its commercial best?

The answer evidently is a big no. But then men with dubious connection with the international net of smugglers know better than others what dividends they will reap from what art escapade. You never know how the thieves are going to use the paintings: they can seek ransom, sell those out or falling both of which destroy those. None of these prospects can be welcome. Whether the lost paintings can be recovered ought to be the most important issue at this moment.

Yet there are other important questions that need to be settled before another such incident takes place. The questions relate to the preservation of art and sculpture. Until now the system of protecting the best of such heritage of ours has suffered from laxity. Even in the national museum, the sculptures and paintings are not as much safe as they should have been. Once the thievery of paintings has started, there is no knowing where it will end up. So the need for vigilance now proves to be greater than before. The best works of our illustrious sons deserve a far better protection than they are receiving now— no matter where they are, outside of the museums or inside.

I was in Islamabad when Ahmed Shah Masood reached the outskirts of Kabul. Not many Pakistanis liked the development because Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, Islamabad's protégé, was still hurling challenges from Peshawar. One remark heard was that Pakistan should have kept contact with Mujahideen in the field rather than with those who were 'eating murga' in Peshawar.

It was clear that the events had taken Pakistan by surprise. Although Najibullah had informed Islamabad about stepping down from the presidency three days before he quit, it had no alternative structure for the transfer of power ready. There was confusion and even Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the Pakistan President, whom I met with a group of Indians, was not certain about the future; he did not even know what was happening in Kabul at that time. "We are trying to bring together 35 representatives of Mujahideen and others," he said. The list was apparently expanded later to accommodate another 15.

What would happen? I asked Wali Khan, the NWFP leader, and Ajmal Khan Khatak, the Pakistan National Assembly member. Both predicted a blood bath and a civil strife extending over a long period. They saw the events meandering to a situation where Pakhtoons would have to fight the rest 'for their enemy.' Their reasoning was that Hikmatyar, although a fundamentalist, is a Pakhtoon while Masood, whose emphasis is more on nationalism than on religion, is a Tajik, Persian speaking. Ethnicity would come to prevail and Hikmatyar's bigotry would be ignored, they felt.

Pakistan faces a tough situation. It cannot allow the ethnic

# The Debacle at Kabul

What was once *jihad* and united all Mujahideen is rapidly reducing to ethnic and linguistic strifes for supremacy. There is no unifying factor and like many other freedom movements, the one in Afghanistan may go sour because of infighting among the liberators.

unity of Pakhtoons to take shape because that may resurrect the demand for Pakhtoonistan. Nor can it afford Masood's victory because he is backed by Iran, which wants to have a finger in the Afghanistan pie. Also the Central Asian Republics are supporting Masood, adding yet another factor to the situation.

Islamabad's policy has failed in the sense that it has opted for a UN peace process after having articulated an exclusive rule by Hikmatyar at Kabul. On the other hand, it has practically no influence over Masood, who now dominates the scene and who was deliberately overlooked by the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), which has guided Pakistan's policy on Afghanistan.

True, Nawaz Sharif, the Pakistan Prime Minister, has been able to effect a ceasefire of sorts between the two. But it is Hikmatyar who has been the odd man out; once he was tackled Masood posed no problem. In fact, the latter had appealed to Islamabad to curb Hikmatyar from storming into Kabul. Even now the Hizb-Islami of Hikmatyar has said in a statement that it has agreed to a leadership council and the formation of government but not to the transfer of power to the 50-member council.

Pakistan has to stay impartial if it wants to play a decisive role in Afghanistan. Reports are that the ISI has begun supplying arms to Hikmatyar.

Perhaps this was the price which Islamabad had to pay to bring Hikmatyar in line. To reject him, Pakistan had to reject even Najibullah's request for an asylum; he approached India only subsequently.

Hikmatyar has never concealed his intentions. He wants a fundamentalistic regime at Kabul and he is stoutly opposed to including in any interim arrangement such ele-

The interim council, cobbled together under pressure, cannot last long because it is merely a motley crowd, wanting reward for the sufferings it has undergone in the struggle for liberation. What was once *jihad* and united all Mujahideen is rapidly reducing to ethnic and linguistic strifes for supremacy. There is no unifying factor and like many other freedom movements, the one in Afghanistan may go

in April 1978. New Delhi based its policy on the reports by S K Singh, then India's ambassador in Kabul, who had no clue of the impending coup. His deputy, Daulat Singh, was correct in his assessment but his reports were merely filed in the South Block.

When Daoud fell, India hitched its wagon to the communist leaders, first Taraki and then Amin. At the time of Soviet invasion in December 1979, India sided with Moscow. It did not condemn the Soviet aggression against a country which was a member of the non-aligned movement. It did not support the UN resolution for the withdrawal of Soviet forces and did not associate itself with any effort to free Kabul from Moscow's subjugation.

I recall how alienated were the people in Kabul when I visited the city in January 1980, two weeks after the Soviet take-over. They felt let down by India, which they had preferred to Pakistan all along. They could not believe that New Delhi would acquiesce to Moscow's rule. There was a grievance against a friend, against a country, the land of Mahatma Gandhi who, they said, gave his life to protect the weak.

Even after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces, India continued to support the regime at Kabul. Najibullah was considered the best bet and New Delhi kept all its eggs in his

basket. It did not change its policy even when it was clear that he would not last long. In fact, Natwar Singh, former minister of state for foreign affairs, went to Kabul in March on behalf of the Narasimha Rao government to register India's support to the Najibullah government.

Hikmatyar's allegation is that New Delhi continued to supply arms to Najib till the last day. This may well be true but Hikmatyar should know that the Indian people have been opposed to New Delhi's policy on Afghanistan; they never supported Moscow's aggression or occupation. Hikmatyar had more or less the same perception. He said that they were against the government, not the Indian people.

Still my fear is that the sins of New Delhi's wrong policy are going to visit on the Indian people. The Mujahideen might support the insurgency in Kashmir. One Afghan leader rationalised that the 'Kashmiri Mujahideen' had fought along with them for the liberation of Afghanistan and that they too were obliged to do likewise.

Who is responsible for the debacle at Kabul has to be pondered over seriously because it is probably the biggest failure of Indian foreign policy since independence. But even a limited examination is not possible because the people associated with the old policy are still the advisers to the Narasimha Rao government.

Some day New Delhi will have to face the fact, the fact of Afghans' annoyance. The sooner it does and takes steps to retrieve them, the better it would be for India and the region. But India is too smug, too lost in the shibboleths which have been the hallmark of its foreign policy.

## Between the Lines

Kuldip Nayyar

ments as had anything to do with Najibullah's government.

I will have no truck 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.

Even if Hikmatyar does not violate the ceasefire, already shaky and tentative, it is difficult to reconcile his demand with the compulsions of Masood, who had the supporters of Najibullah on his side. Also, both leaders have contempt for each other, Masood calling Hikmatyar 'a warmonger' and Hikmatyar in turn describing Masood as 'a Godless communist.'

sour because of infighting among the liberators.

Alas, India does not figure anywhere, even in a gloomy scenario. One Pakistani leader remarked that it was strange that Washington and Moscow were talking between themselves on what to do about Afghanistan but not New Delhi and Islamabad, which were the concerned parties in the region. It looked plausible in Islamabad that if New Delhi had taken the initiative and sent its foreign secretary to Pakistan, when the fall of Kabul was imminent, it would have responded.

But India's policy on Afghanistan has been faulty from the very beginning. Before Mohammad Daoud Khan, then Afghanistan's president and prime minister, was ousted by the communists

# Indian Self-reliance Policy Buckles under US Pressure

by Mohammed Hassan

*India's near bankruptcy has opened the way for the New World Order Champions to move in for the kill. In the process the country's whole post-independence global stance and vision has been subverted.*

the country was effectively bankrupt. Indeed, during Chandrashekar's time as Prime Minister, the scene had already been set for the shape of things to come. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait had crystallised the flaw in India's shaky relationship with the Soviet Union. An increasingly hard-up Soviet Union was unable to support the rupee/oil exchange scheme. Lately, the Soviet Union was shipping Iraqi oil to India as payment for massive Soviet arms supplies to Iraq, indeed, with the halt in Iraqi oil shipments, this cosy arrangement could not work any more.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Bank boys had already started to make frequent trips to New Delhi. Chandrashekar, in a departure from precedent, allowed US B-52 bombers to refuel in India en route to the Persian Gulf. While Rajiv Gandhi as leader of Congress (I), seized upon this as a publicity issue, subsequent events were to show that the deal with the US was already struck. Chandrashekar was merely opening the bidding. Earlier, Rajiv Gandhi had already upgraded relations with Israel, and the Israeli Consulate in Bombay was functioning more or less like an Embassy.

After the elections, the Congress (I) government of P V Narasimha Rao moved with lightning speed to fall into the lap of the IMF/World Bank duo, agreeing to a humiliating set of conditions to keep the economy afloat and service the US\$60 billion foreign debt. Further, liberalisation of the economy on the pattern of Rajiv Gandhi was set to increase the need for foreign currency borrowing even further. Manmohan Singh, India's Finance Minister, became the ideal partner for the IMF and the World Bank to deal with.

The economic price to pay for this salvage operation will become evident in years to come, but the political price is already becoming glaringly obvious. India's stance as a

champion of the Third World in the on-going Uruguay Round of trade negotiations has become much more feeble. India's formidable expertise in complex General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations has been horned in and fundamental objections to multinational hegemony of global resources, watered down. As a result the USTR (United States Trade Representative) has shelved proposals to institute retaliatory measures against Indian imports into the US under the latter's notorious Super 301 clause.

The next target was India's foreign policy. Hints were dropped by the US that the country should normalise relations with Israel. As a start, President Bush 'persuaded' Prime Minister Rao to vote for the UN resolution setting aside the earlier UN resolution equating Zionism with racism. Then, India was 'prevailed' upon to establish diplomatic links with Israel. This was mere window dressing. Several months prior to that Israeli agents posing as tourists had been captured by Kashmiri freedom fighters.

The 'rewards' were tangible. The US stopped calling for India to respect UN resolutions on Kashmir. The US and UK began to make excuses for the brutal behaviour of Indian forces in Kashmir.

As the Guardian reported on 6 January 1992 after a visit by the British Home Secretary, 'Most of the Delhi newspapers have approvingly quoted Mr Baker's condemnation of terrorism, and his apparent endorsement of Indian police and army tactics in the blood-

soaked states of Punjab and Kashmir, where at least 6,000 people were killed last year alone by separatist extremists and the security forces.

In fact, according to the best available official sources, not a single member of any branch of the security forces has been punished for any offence committed in the ugly anti-terrorist campaigns in Punjab or Kashmir. A handful of soldiers and police have been suspended or transferred, but innumerable official inquiries have never resulted in any court action.

While pressure began to mount on Pakistan over its nuclear plans resulting in a cut-off of US aid, the Indian programme was more or less exonerated. After a January 1992 visit by Senator Larry Pressler, who is the author of the amendment barring US aid to Pakistan because of evidence of nuclear weapons programme, to India he said that he did not think that the country had a nuclear weapons programme!

This at the time when the Norwegians have obtained conclusive evidence that India was the recipient of a diverted 12.5-tonne shipment of heavy water to Romania in 1985. Heavy water, or deuterium oxide, is used to produce plutonium which in turn is used in nuclear weapons and atom bombs.

For official US purposes, however, India now has no nuclear weapons programme!

India, on its part, has now lost interest in the non-aligned movement, and started to vote with the US on issues like the demand to extradite the two Libyans alleged to have carried out the Lockerbie bombing.

Driving heavy 5-ton trucks through residential areas in thousand at night hours is both illegal and inhuman. But on approach the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic-North) as well as the Officer-in-Charge of the Mirpur Police Station outright refuse to listen to the earnest prayers of the thousands of the residents of the area.

The above menace is reportedly going to continue at least for 6 more months causing serious health hazards for the thousands of the local residents. Even the local Member of the Parliament also refused to look into the matter in spite of appeals from public.

Several accidents took place in the area. The local people made several speed-breakers at their own costs. But the truck-owners destroyed them and warned the local people.

Mahmud Ali Chowdhury Mirpur, Dhaka

## Truck menace in Mirpur

Sir, Believe it or not about 50,000 people are living by the sides of seriously damaged and broken Road No 1 of Mirpur Section 12 in Block-A and they are not sleeping at night for the last three months. Every night on this one-mile long road about a thousand 5-ton

The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and India's exposed position has enabled these U-turns to be presented as vital to the country's long-term interests. This has also helped deflect any serious criticism inside the country. The only protest has come from the large Muslim minority and this primarily on re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel.

The US, having cowed down a desperate Congress (I) government, has an even more sinister agenda. While the BJP President M Manohar Joshi was leading his Akta Yatra (Unity March) across the country to divert attention from his party's inability to deal with the Ayodhya Mosque/Mandir issue, the senior BJP parliamentarian, L K Advani, was touring the US.

As India Today reported (L K Advani's) 10 day American yatra could have been the envy of any blue chip Washington lobbyist. For there he was, this high flying doyen of the Indian right wing, hobnobbing with State Department officials like Assistant Secretary of State T Schaffer, palavering with board members of the powerful, conservative Heritage Foundation, rubbing shoulders with top leaders of the American Jewish community, attending banquets in Chicago, Boston, Rouge, and Los Angeles, and holding forth on the party's ideology at a packed meeting at the Washington Press Club.

During his American peregrinations, Advani played down the Ayodhya issue while eulogising secularism in which all religions would flourish. But here was the bite that left the BJP's indelible teardrop on the American: it was Advani's

message — mostly directly delivered — that his party, which has now emerged as a formidable force in India, is one with which the United States can do business. It has a history of anti-communism, being soft on Israel, worshipping private enterprise, opposing Nehruvian socialism and staunchly resisting fundamentalist Islamic groupings. This was a welcome diversion to American ears inured to being lectured by visiting Indian statesmen on the moral superiority of socialist Third Worldism, and especially during a time when images of a new Islamic bloc, armed with a nuke, are exercising the minds of policy planners in Washington.

Developments in India itself lead to an even more worrying scenario for Muslims. There is talk of a Congress (I) BJP alliance to preserve the upper caste Hindu hegemony of the country's power structure. Indeed, the RSS — a key mass movement instrumental in mobilising the Hindu vote for the BJP — has already begun to gravitate away from the BJP and towards Congress (I). It this happens, India's minorities would be effectively disenfranchised.

A heavily indebted Hindu fundamentalist India in tow of the US could wreak havoc on the region in the service of the New World Order. The fact that the Indian polity would also suffer a mortal blow in the process needs to be grasped rapidly by Indians if catastrophe is to be avoided — Third World Network Features

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## OPINION

### Grandmas' Gifts

A grandma had been nurturing a sapling. The sapling would take some 10 to 15 years to become a mature tree to bear fruits. By that time, every possibility was that grandma would be gone to the other world. Her grandson with an innocuous gesture asked, "Grandma for whom are you planting this sapling?" "With a naive and contented sweet smile, the grandma replied, "Why! for you, your sisters and brothers and your cousins, my dear!" Such were the grandmas in this land of love and affection. Traditionally, they did things just for their sweet-heart grand-children i.e. the younger generation. It was their sheer love which prompted them to do such nice things for their off-springs knowing it well that they would become mere memories when those trees would bear fruits.

The leaders and statesmen are usually revered as the formidable figures who find happiness in giving like the grandmas, expecting only love and honour in return. It is indeed out-of-the-way to think of a grandma selling family property for buying personal jewellery in the aluvial culture of ours. The people always expect their leaders, too, to render self-less service

to the teeming millions of the country. They are not expected to scramble for self-interest and realization of personal ambitions. No wonder, people do reward the leaders. They are justifiably conferred prominence and position by the people.

We are sorry to say that in the present Bangladesh we discover that those grandmas are gone and with them the benevolent leaders who resembled our "Grandmas". Aren't we paying heavily for this?

We are already exposed to ecological imbalance on one hand and on the other, economic quagmire. Love and affection is superseded by moral degeneration.

The country presently needs those grandmas who would plant trees so that their grand children could get fruits and the leaders and statesmen to be able to give up self-interest to work for the people.

This land has no dearth of talents but absence of honesty, integrity. No empty words, but sincere actions and happiness in giving and not in having, because it is proven all over the world that giving is having and thus having is living.

Hubert Francis Sarkar Singtola, Dhaka.

## To the Editor...

### Sagacity

Sir, I fully endorse the views expressed by Advocate Sultana Fatun Nahar in the Opinion column of your esteemed daily (BTW: Ghost of Ershad....) on April 2.

It is really deplorable that when our democratically constituted Parliamentary system of Government was going through its embryonic stage the party in power particularly our universally applauded Lady Prime Minister should follow the discarded Ershad type — demonstrative decorum as displayed on TV. Why should she allow ostentatious guard of honour requiring the presence of three Chiefs of the Armed Force, Ministers and high officials while going out and coming back from abroad which is both expensive and wasteful, when the country is going through an economic crisis.

Personally I and perhaps a large majority of conscientious public of the country have great regard for her integrity personality and unquestionable devotion and above all her unalloyed patriotism which are

pre-requisite qualities for progress and development of our problem-ridden and one of the poorest countries of the world.

I sincerely hope that she will take time by the forelock and proceed with caution and sagacity by consensus with her powerful opponents as far as practicable.

Example is always better than precept and sagacity better than precept and sagacity better than precept.

A K Chaudhuri Dhaka

### How DU fares now

Sir, Dhaka University, the highest seat of learning in Bangladesh is in the grip of numerous problems: terrorism, unscheduled closure, session jam, inadequate transportation, managerial limitations to name a few of them. During Ershad's rule, Dhaka University was the centre of all anti-Ershad movements. Whatever ill visited the Dhaka University as well as Bangladesh during that period was interpreted as the direct consequence of the autocratic rule of Ershad. I still remem-