

The Killing in Jessore

We deplore the killing of several people, with the number varying between six and ten, caused by police firing on some 50,000 protesters near the Benapole border in Jessore on Monday, thus halting what has come to be known as the Long March to Ayodhya. A high-level judicial enquiry, rightly demanded by politicians of all different beliefs and opinions, should reveal whether firing could have been avoided and if the police could not have dealt with the situation through lathi charge or an extensive use of tear gas. Again, some reports suggest that two ministers were present on the scene. Experienced as most government leaders are in addressing public rallies, the two should have indeed tried to pacify the protesters. If they tried, they obviously failed in their efforts to halt the march by peaceful means. This is a pity — indeed a shame. On the other hand, if no minister was present on the scene, one would certainly wonder why, when the situation had become explosive enough to deserve the attention at the highest level of the administration.

In a way, the situation had become volatile even before the protesters had left Dhaka on Saturday for the border. This was the time when Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia could have appeared before the crowd, shared its sentiments over the demolition of the Babri Masjid but advised the protesters to weigh the possible consequences of their proposed action. She could have told them, firmly and clearly, that any outbreak of violence on the Indo-Bangladesh border could disrupt communal harmony and raise the level of tension in the Dhaka-Delhi bilateral relations. It is possible, but deplorable, that the government had underestimated the situation, perhaps misguided by poor intelligence reports, and had thus allowed the threat to law and order to turn real in which killing of some innocent and well-meaning civilians became inevitable.

We feel confident that protesters, regardless of their number, would have listened to the Prime Minister if she had chosen to address them either in Dhaka or anywhere on the road to Jessore. We are sure, she could convince them that while they felt justifiably angry over the failure of the Indian authorities to prevent Hindu extremists from praying at the site of the razed mosque, they must share with the government the responsibility of maintaining peace and harmony inside the country and ensuring that the SAARC Summit was held on next Tuesday and Wednesday as planned. If we allow disruption to mar the meeting, it will be Bangladesh which will be the worst loser.

It is late, but not too late, to convey this message to the protesters, many of whom may still want to cross the border into West Bengal and challenge the Indian police to a confrontation. This must be avoided. What must also be avoided is the implementation of the plan announced by the Long March Committee to stage a siege at the ZIA on Tuesday when the Indian Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao is due to arrive here for the SAARC Summit. At the moment, our plea is simply this: Call off the Long March, and do nothing that disrupts the SAARC Summit.

Jatra a National Wealth

The Prime Minister on Monday opened at the Shilpakala Academy a 17-day national jatra festival. She called jatra a valued national wealth and recalled that it was President Zia who had accorded jatra a national recognition.

So the ugly duckling has turned into the Prince Charming. A fantastic case of national about-face. Till only a year back jatra was gasping for life not because of any lack of popular patronage but chaffing under executive bans imposed on it locally all over Bangladesh — something that were very certainly going to result in a national ban. The Daily Star stood alone denouncing the foolish and inordinately harmful act of subjecting art to as shallow a thing as politico-bureaucratic diktat. We stand vindicated by the government's change of heart in the matter. Indeed, we are encouraged to expect that this would herald the eschewing of many governmental position born directly of prejudice.

What was wrong with jatra when it was targeted to be killed? What now is its virtue that it is being recognised as a valued national wealth by the Prime Minister? Perhaps nothing besides a success story of those who pulled covert strings on behalf of, luckily for us, the jatra people. The only other factor that could be cited as constituting the difference between the virtue and vice of this typically Bengalee folk theatre involves the question of dance interludes between the acts and scenes of the play being staged. This as such needs to be examined in depth with perception and knowledge of both art and culture. Without proposing to do that we, however, can point out that the propensity that these dancing interludes, having no relationship with the play proper which almost always deals in a very serious manner with a subject equally serious, shows towards lewdness, live porno or eroticism — whichever suits one's taste — tends to increase in reaction to two main factors: a growing threat to jatra as offering a gainful occupation for all involved in it and, two, the growing influence of 'blue' video-cassettes and soft-porno magazines weaning a traditional clientele away from jatra.

A jatra performance exorcised of its naughty 'nauch' scenes may be quite acceptable to the audiences at the Shilpakala Academy festival who are indeed a completely different set from the true ones out in the villages. But cutting this part out and acceptance of such excision would greatly harm the time-honoured form and at the same time block creativity without provision of areas to where the dancing and singing genius of our people may be channelised. The proper way to deal with lewd exhibitionistic things on the jatra stage is to help jatra to flourish and find its true and deserved niche in the national art scene. We must allow jatra to come to terms with its own dictates of needs and quite stringent standards of artistic requirements. Let us beware of putting a straitjacket of urban prudery, having nothing to do with art, specially the performing ones, on the jatra. Already we have lost and just squandered away much of our cultural riches that came to us from centuries past. It is time we woke up to our foolishness and saved jatra and a host other endangered art forms by not subjecting them to the whims and prejudices of the philistines decorating theologians and political positions.

If we try to understand the real connotation and the exact meaning of the word 'ideal' we shall be obliged, inevitably, to make an appreciation of the social scenario in which individuals run their affairs. In the present day situation of turmoil and uncertainty in the country human life has been rendered totally insecure. Values of life have no meaning to new generation. To-day, 'ideal' and 'idealism' are literal hostages in the hands of 'hydra-headed demons'. In yonder years these human traits used to serve as herbingers of social and ethical values.

An ideal man is a rarity now. He has been reduced to a microscopic minority. He is a silent, helpless spectator in a society replete with unbridled corruption, nepotism, favouritism, chaos, confusion, cheating, deception, hi-jacking, gun-battle, political victimisation and all sorts of terrorist activities including senseless murders.

Scenario in the Employment Field

The scenario in the employment field cannot be treated in isolation. The people there are the part and parcel of the society obstructed by all kinds of vices. Barring a few multi-national subsidiaries where employee discipline is still in place, in the offices in the public sector, either in the Ministries, Directorates and Departments of the government, even in private industrial and commercial houses, public and private sector banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions, large-scale indiscipline is holding sway.

On one hand most of the public sector offices have been victims of indiscriminate over-employment and on the other, the output of individual employee has fallen far below average. Even those few who had the reputation of being conscientious workers have been compelled to sink themselves in the mainstream of inactivity because of the majority 'work-shirkers'. Vacant seats, gossiping in groups in the office corridors or at the desks of other colleagues, reading newspapers or cinema magazines keeping files piled up on their desks, entertaining friends and relations, writing personal letters, moving back and forth from one department to the other aimlessly, going out on shopping or personal errands — all these are the most common scenes in the public sector offices. Yet every one seems to be

SERVICE SECTOR MANAGEMENT

In Quest of an Ideal Employee

by Kazi Alauddin Ahmed

very busy. For what, God alone knows. Communications received from outside are kept pending or unattended for months together. The bosses are equally affected by such perpetual malaise. The weak boss is getting weaker and the strong ones are losing their strength because they have lost control over their 'militant' subordinates. One can very well term it 'official anarchy'.

THE COMPOUNDING PROBLEMS: It is not intended to bracket the subordinates alone. The bosses or the managers have also their own contribution to compounding the problems in the officialdom. It seems that they are enjoying their blissful ignorance of how to manage. Almost all of them are concerned primarily to keep their seats intact. In this gamble, they are found frequently engaging themselves in polarising vocal and physical support of the employees divided in groups. The employees, on the other hand, do not hesitate to take undue advantage from their respective group bosses exploiting their queer patronage. At this point I am tempted to say that such group-wise wranglings are even observed at the ministerial levels. Turning back to the departmental bosses and their subordinates one may be easily intrigued by the mounting aversion to work for which everyone is ostensibly employed.

Modern management principles however, do not recognize such feudalistic attitude. On the contrary, the role to be played by every single individual in the discharge of his functional responsibilities is identified as indivisible and indispensable component on the assembly line. That alone can give the achievement its total effect.

Assuming that in spite of the unfavourable situation to-day, there are yet some employees who want to display their innate flair but not getting the expected blessings from the boss to go ahead, rearing up a potential employee is essentially a moral obligation for the boss. In this, he must also have the capability to contribute to the career building of such promising boys.

As a means for such an end 'empowering' employees can serve as an effective catalyst. Richard Hamlin, a noted Management Consultant in the United States of America wants us to remember that empowerment is not an external event but rather an internal one. It is not something that is 'done to someone' but rather something that they decide to 'do for themselves'. Expanding his points Hamilton identifies to us some every interesting aspects from an employee's point of view. These are reproduced below in the first person.

Richard Hamlin observes (from the point of view of the employee again) that the Manager can achieve this by: 1) Believing in the ability of the employee to be successful; 2) Being patient and giving the employee time to learn; 3) Providing him with direction and structure; 4) Teaching him new skills in small, incremental steps; 5) Asking him questions that challenge him to think in new ways; 6) Sharing information with the employee; 7) Giving him timely, understandable feedback encouraging him throughout the learning process.

instilled, can prepare the ground. Everyone has to understand that his employment not only provides him economic security but also gives him ample opportunity to develop himself for shouldering even higher responsibility. He must realize that, in turn, he has a prospect of augmenting his economic security through upward mobility.

THE DESTINED INTERACTION: Traditionally the relation between the boss and the subordinates in our country, rather, in the sub-continent, has been in the proximity of the relationship between a master and a servant. In the organisational hierarchy, therefore, a one-sided game is always played. When the boss is a hard-core task-master he prides in his capability alone. The contribution of the individual employer severally or collectively is seldom identified for recognition.

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As an employee, I am willing to learn new thinking and doing skills if the following conditions exist: 1) I see that I will be better off for learning, and 2) I perceive that a non-punitive pathway is available to me.

If these conditions do not exist, I will resist taking the necessary actions to learn and apply new skills on the job. To change my behaviour, I use the following steps as a guide: 1) Make a commitment to myself and others to find ways of changing behaviour. 2) Learn any new thinking and doing skills. 3) Test the new behaviour, and talk about the initial results with my supervisor. 4) Request information, feedback, coaching from other people. 5) Apply the feedback and coaching by trying again. 6) Make adjustment until I can produce the results I want.

Such a conjecture on the part of the employee is hardly conceivable in our situation. The employee's proposed attempt to change his behaviour taking to a self-learning process demands a reasonably high level of education. In fact, this is the point where the 'ideal' employee is located. Generally speaking, our average employees do not have such a projected mental up-keeping. Nevertheless, it is honestly believed that our apathetic employees will realize, sooner or later, that the present obduracy is not paying. They would not lose anything if they can force within themselves an identical understanding of the realisation of the 'ideal' employee above who can see how the Manager is able to help him in empowerment skills.

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8) Offering him alternative ways of doing things; 9) Showing a sense of humour and demonstrating care for him as a person; and 10) Focusing on the results and acknowledging his personal improvement.

The whole exercise is aimed at establishing a 'participative culture' amongst the employees. It shall eventually demand effective management of the transition form a 'Command culture' which, hand in hand, goes with developing loyalty. Invariably, this would involve obtaining total commitment from every employee by shifting opportunity, responsibility and creativity from a few individuals to the whole group.

Strategies for managers

Barring a few exceptions, most of our managers are ill-equipped and consequently find themselves often in baffling situations to the detriment of the organisation. Seldom do we find inspiring leadership in them. A state of queer complacency eclipses their thinking. They start behaving like 'Jacks' in addressing organisational problems.

Lary Malone, a senior associate in the Human Resources Management Division of a Management Consultancy Firm in California, USA feels that, "all managers should be responsible for making sure that things can be done without them. When the managers view their responsibilities collectively, that's when a company grows. And the subordinate is seeing growth instead of working for someone with a personal security problem."

Such a broader perspective takes us to certain result-oriented practices which good managers adopt as part of their strategies in employee handling. These are: a) Listen: It suggests talking less, more of listening. b) Be objective: It helps managers to identify with performance, not with personality. c) Seek several opinions: Atmospheric crudity in organisations often clouds the truth. This stance will enable him communicate and evaluate more effectively. d) Be the model: This calls for setting the example in professionalism, work-ethic, integrity and morals. e) Delegate: Delegation provides individuals opportunities to put them on test. f) Audit performance:

When an employee is given an assignment he should be adequately and clearly instructed but allowed the freedom to do the assignment in his own way. It is however, necessary that the progress achieved by him is carefully monitored. g) People's development: Managers must carefully draw plans for the development of their people. h) Like people: This is the basic premise on which the organisational progress largely depends. Management is about people, with the people, by the people and for the people. So, if the Manager doesn't like people, he doesn't manage. i) Recognize limits: No manager should behave himself as a 'Jack'. It is also not necessary that he has to have all the answers to the problems in his sleeves. If he is capable of seeking several opinions, may be from his own people or from other departmental managers or their people, he is sure to make good his own deficiencies in no time.

Leadership

Leadership in organisation is a positive faculty. Max De Pree, Chief Executive Officer of Hermon Miller Inc. of USA, one of America's 'Ten most admired companies', tells us precisely what it means to be a leader: "The leader must lead but not be followed by the people blind-folded. In order to build his people he owes them space, space in the sense of freedom. Freedom in the sense of enabling people exercise their gifts. We need to give each other space to grow to be ourselves, to exercise our diversity."

Conclusion

In our overall situation to-day, the ideal employee of yesterday is almost consigned to obscurity. He is a silent spectator bereft totally of all his enthusiasm, dedication and innovative ideas. He is abhorred at the kind of leadership emerging now that does neither motivate nor encourage.

It is yet believed that the current state of desolation shall soon be over. Despair will be replaced by hope. We have got to mobilize our break-way, strength and consolidate it for, containing the waning situation. Even if we do not have a 'Messiah' at sight we can at least draw our inspiration from the eternal gospel-like high-tone optimism so eloquent in Poet Shelley's immortal line: "Oh wind, if winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

The writer is a Management consultant and trainer.

ONCE the centre of a superpower, Russia is still a force to be reckoned with in the Commonwealth of Independent States, but its leadership role is being severely tested by virulent separatist struggles within and outside its borders.

Russia still has 'enough strength and potency' to recapture much of its former clout, said Georgia Arbatov, director of the influential United States and Canadian Studies Institute.

But he said it can do so only if it has 'friendly surroundings', referring to an estimated 25 million ethnic Russians living in former Soviet republics who can be used as hostages in some circumstances.

Arbatov's warning came while consultations were underway on the formulation of a new foreign policy doctrine demanded by Russian President Boris Yeltsin and scheduled to be presented in December to the Congress of People's Deputies.

It highlights Moscow's predicament in trying to behave like an equal partner in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) while knowing that it alone has to shoulder the burden.

From controlling nuclear weapons, keeping the peace across a range of ethnic, linguistic and religious conflicts in the CIS, to preserving a single currency zone and repaying Soviet debts, Russia is at the centre of the storms raging in the region.

Russia's future as a global giant appears to be bound by a

Russia: Lost in the former USSR

series of problems with its newly-independent neighbours.

Moscow realises it must give top priority to the resolution of regional problems caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Otherwise, it will never be able to resume its role as one of the world's leading nations, the specialists told a session of the Council on Foreign Policy in November.

But as the states try to tackle nagging disputes among them, Russia remains nuclear on how much clout it should use to keep errant republics like Ukraine in line with its broader regional objectives.

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev has advocated a phased integration of the CIS, recognising the reality that emerged at the October summit in the Kirgiz capital of Bishkek.

The first flush of independence from centuries of rule in Central Asia and the Caucasus by Moscow is beginning to give way to more sober assessments of an enduring centre-periphery relationship.

But there is no unanimity within the bloc. Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan and Uzbekistan prefer to join hands immediately but Ukraine and Turkmenistan are pulling away. Others like Azerbaijan and Georgia are watching from the sidelines while Tajikistan gets hopelessly mired in an escalating civil war.

There are fears about the

Russia tries to come to terms with its new role in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Rajiv Tiwari of IPS reports from Moscow.



Yugoslavisation' of the CIS and experts are cautioning that if unrest in the ex-Soviet republics is not curbed, it will finally lead to the disintegration of Russia itself.

The four-year-old conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the ethnic enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh has refused to yield to peace initiatives. Tajikistan's civil war threatens to destabilise the en-

tire Central Asian region while Georgia's unstable condition has already rocked the entire Caucasian belt.

In November, Russian troops were dispatched to control the first outbreak of ethnic clashes on Russian soil between Ossetians and Ingushes. But the swift measure nearly boomeranged as the neighbouring republic of Chechenya announced a state

of emergency and mobilised its forces against Russian troops who took up position on its borders.

The intervention underscored the dangers Moscow faces from the volatile multi-ethnic mix living in its outlying provinces and the need to shelter the Russian republics from the outbreak of insurgencies in other Caucasian and Central Asian states.

In response to the warning, Yeltsin appointed his close aide Sergei Shakhrai in charge of a specially upgraded nationalities commission while he earlier formed a council of Russian republics to include them in government policy-making.

Though similar resolute actions may prevent the spread of armed conflicts throughout the CIS, Russia will encounter resistance if it tries to act unilaterally.

Unresolved territorial claims among newly-independent countries, the presence of large, well-armed and uncontrolled ethnic militias and the uncertain status of Russian armed contingents in other republics already pose formidable dangers, says CIS Joint Armed Forces chief Yevgeny Shaposhnikov.

But mounting economic and political crises in the entire region are complicating the situation all the more. Shaposhnikov recently told the newspaper Izvestia that "the main military danger to the Commonwealth today, comes

from internal political factor".

A belt of 'serious instability' is expected to fester on Russia's southern and south-eastern borders for the next 50 years and experts say Moscow must create a cordon sanitaire around it.

But the problem is how far Russia is prepared to commit itself by reinforcing centuries of control over the region. It is damned if it does and damned if it does not.

When Yeltsin addressed the Foreign Ministry collegium in October, however, he criticised the ministry for its lack of preparedness and asked for a clear programme of action to protect Russian interests.

"Russia is not a country that can be kept in the anteroom," Yeltsin said. "We are wary of mentioning our interests in the fear of being accused of imperial traits, even when these interests are infringed upon."

Yeltsin's choice of approach — which some analysts ascribe to pressure from mounting nationalist opposition within Russia — has led to a review of earlier plans for honourable disengagement from the region and a shift into the West European camp.

Russia has to take an active interest in the affairs of other CIS members, says Sergei Karaganov of the European Institute, suggesting the provision of a nuclear umbrella to protect its neighbours.

But, he added, Russia must also expand its economic intervention in the region and also exert 'ideological influence' by supporting 'instruments of pro-Russian influence'.

To the Editor...

Gift of humiliation

Sir, The news published in a section of the local press under the caption 'Pak gift of cycle rickshaws to Bangladesh' has not only concerned me but it also came as a blow to me to feel that the Pakistanis are still treating us as underdogs.

It is appreciable that the Pakistanis in their course of advancement and modernization have thought of removing all the three-wheeler rickshaws from the roads of Pakistan and accordingly the government of Pakistan has bought all the rickshaws from the pullers. These used rickshaws, as anyone will agree with me, are no more 'junk' to be disposed off.

If I put up a question to the Pakistani Government as to what would they have done with these rickshaws, had they not chosen Bangladesh as a dumping area for these rickshaws, it would have been dif-

icult for them to answer, but had the question been put up by a Pakistani national to the Pakistani Government, the government may have easily answered by saying that we would have thrown away the junks in the Arabian Sea or would have auctioned the same to some steel and re-rolling mills. I wonder how the Government of Pakistan has thought of such an insulting step in the name of promoting cordial and brotherly relations. Perhaps the Pakistanis have forgotten that today's Bangladesh is the result of their treating the Bengali speaking people as underdogs and the Prime Minister of Pakistan has again diplomatically expressed that they still treat us as underdogs and therefore have dared to send the throwaways of their country as gifts to Bangladesh.

If we accept these junks as gifts, it won't be a surprise when these Pakistanis will dare to send us their used shoes and pajamas in any other opportunity in the name of gift.

We Bangladeshis definitely want to maintain brotherly relationship with all the nations, but we do not want alms and we do not expect insults. Had the Pakistanis really thought of maintaining a brotherly relationship with us and giving due honour to our nation and our independence, they would have given us our equitable share of assets of the pre-independence time.

Twenty-one years have passed by of our independence but they are yet to repatriate hundreds of thousands of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh to Pakistan. Instead of sending junks to us they could have relieved us of the big human burden that is on us. If the Pakistanis are really eager to show cordiality and brotherhood they could part away with some of their sea-

going vessels and large bodied aircraft along with some other planes which we deserve to have as a part of equitable distribution of assets between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

However, I personally do not expect to have such gesture from a nation which was never good to us. But I would definitely expect that no one should send us throwaways in the name of gift and I would personally request our government to give a second thought before accepting this gift of humiliation from Pakistan.

Mohammad Rafiqul Islam  
Rayer Bazar, Dhaka

Babri Masjid tragedy

Sir, Like many, a number of letter writers have expressed their outrage in the local daily newspapers at the demolition of the Babri Mosque by Hindu zealots and appealed to the

Indian government to rebuild the mosque at its place. Further, some of them have drawn a rosy picture of the Muslim rule in India and the peace and tranquillity that prevailed at that time and both Hindus and Muslims lived together in harmony.

Still, I think there was always some sort of tussle between the two. However, this is not the time to dig into the past. In my view the worst of fence was created when our Muslim brethren attacked the Bakshibazar Mosque in Dhaka and burnt copies of the Holy Quran. Strangely enough, none of us, including the fundamentalists, raised voice against this heinous act and even did not demand for trial of the offenders in the court of law, nor even we heard of those hoodlums being held by the law enforcing agencies for trial.

Quite naturally we raised a hue and cry when Babri Mosque was demolished. But we should also feel ashamed for destroying quite a number of temples in Bangladesh, a country which was supposed to be a paradise for the minorities all the time except once during the time of Ershad when some Hindu temples came under attack. My request to both the government and the people of our country is to steal a march over India by rebuilding those affected Mandirs without any loss of time, so that the aching wounds of the Hindus are healed. Let India do its part, as promised. We shall wait and see.

My appeal to all citizens in the sub-continent is that we should all follow the principle of 'live and let live' and that is the real panacea of all ills for the three countries — India, Pakistan, Bangladesh.

Dr Neematullah  
Bara Moghbazar, Dhaka