

When Police Fail

To think of the entire population of a village fleeing the wrath of none other than the custodians of law needs unusual mental capacity. But in this land of the imponderable, realities are sometimes stranger than what the faculties of imagination can grasp.

Only the previous night a constable was killed and a few other policemen were injured in an attack by a group of people of the village on the contingent that was taking to thana four accused villagers in connection with an abduction case.

No denying the fact that the people who attacked the police, with the arrested men, on their way to thana committed the criminal dare-devilry in the first place. But there are precedences in which the men in uniform have made the first offences.

The Bijoypur incident makes alarming reading for a number of reasons. One report says that the arrested men each paid a huge sum to some men in manpower business but they were neither sent abroad nor returned the money.

Some of the people sometimes can do wrongs in violation of the law and the police as an executive branch has solely been created to deal with those offenders with court orders.

This is an alarming situation, to say the least. While criminals roam freely, innocent people are not spared of harassment. Thus people's confidence in the ability of the police gradually gets eroded.

Too Late?

The 16-nation NATO alliance has decided to make immediate preparations for undertaking stronger measures, including air strikes, to ease the stranglehold on Sarajevo by the Bosnian Serbs. The decision is unprecedented and if put into action, it would be the communism-containing alliance's first offensive operation.

Although Lord Owen, the peace merchant on the spot, seems not to have been overly pleased with the NATO decision, without which the three parties already heading for some agreement leading to ceasefire and partial lifting of the siege, the US position clearly upheld the cause of justice and humanity.

President Alija Izetbegovich has kept himself away from the talks for a day and the NATO decision may induce him to go for talking from a position of not everything is lost yet. But this would, albeit brave, at best be a gamble.

It is gratifying that the call of justice and humanity is being responded to by the most powerful quarters of the world. They should now, to keep up the good work, see to it that their belated awakening is not reduced to a futile exercise.

Manpower Export — an Ignored Potential

by Kazi Alauddin Ahmed

NOTWITHSTANDING the numerous scandals in the sector, export of manpower from Bangladesh to different middle eastern and south east Asian countries has been substantial. In terms of remittance of foreign exchange too the figure has been simply staggering.

Even though the period appears too long, the earnings have not been in any manner insignificant for a poor developing country like ours. Our boys, be they doctors, engineers, technocrats, skilled or unskilled workers, are known to put every hard labour to earn their living.

Despite no tangible effort at mobilisation of this huge remittance of foreign exchange has ever made, it could offer sustenance to about 10 million people here. It could provide educational, marital, domestic, housebuilding expenses for the beneficiaries/dependents and even Haj expenses for parents, medicare etc. Besides, such succours could help many at home to neutralized their debts.

Organising the remittances of the Bangladeshis abroad and diverting them into potential investment channels obviously need careful and thoughtful maneuvering. In this, our financial and industrial experts can play a very vital role. Our perpetual misfortune has been that even after so many years nobody could come up with any thoughtful deliberation over such highly potential aspect of our economy.

Practically, the bureaucracy has so far been least concerned about how best these remittances from Bangladeshis working abroad could be put to productive use. This potential aspect has been totally ignored.

On one hand, there has been much lamentations that adequate educational facilities could not be provided to our children for shortage of foreign exchange and, on the other, we have allowed this most potential foreign exchange resource channeled into and spent for none too productive ventures. No body seems to have ever considered this aspect seriously.

Once the proposed plan is ready the responsibility of its meticulous implementation may be initiated. At this stage the commercial banks may be suitably involved. Adequate care and vigilance too shall be required so that the process of implementation does not fall in the quagmire of bureaucratic inertia.

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It is needless to say that our brethren abroad, making huge remittances of their earnings, would ever grudge their money being spent in productive fields at home towards development and improvement of our national economy.

It is heartening to note that a commercial bank in the public sector is preparing itself to take up responsibilities of a manpower export bank. Indeed it is a redeeming feature in the manpower export sector

smiles in the faces of their own poverty-ridden brethren here. The much desired initiative must, however, come from the government. But the commercial banks and other financing agencies should be assigned the responsibility of investing the resources thus mobilized.

Bureaucracy should be kept out of such exercise for obvious reason. Or precisely, despite some amount of success of some of the stalwarts in the sixties, bureaucratic intervention has always bred losses and failures to the detriment of our national interest. It is not to say there is no feeling of patriotism within the bureaucratic ranks rather, it seeks to point out their inclination, in majority of cases, to red-tape mannerism.

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presently, dominated, to an extent, by unscrupulous 'dalals' and even 'cheats'. We have plenty of manpower who are capable but are not having enough means to go abroad of their own. A comprehensive plan to establish a full-range manpower bank is the crying need of the hour. The financial assistance programme such plan should embrace, will provide employment opportunities abroad to many of our unemployed people.

Manpower export sector is undeniably a very important sector in our national economy. It is seen as a most potential outlet through which much of the employment crisis in the country can be contained. Similarly, a deft handling of this particular area, can release much of the frustration of the younger generation seized by continued unemployment.

Jagan Talks to the Guyana Brain Drain

Mohamed Hamaludin writes from Miami

Nine months into office President Cheddi Jagan has been telling Guyanese living in the United States his plans to rebuild their country after 28 years of power by his political rivals. One of his many problems is the lack of skilled workers. Thousands left the country during the decades of rule by Forbes Burnham — and many are living in the Miami region. Gemini News Service reports on Jagan's meeting with overseas Guyanese.



DR CHEDDI JAGAN. We welcome investors — with open arms.

GUYANA'S foreign debt burden is so heavy that, after paying its interest and buying oil, the country has no hard currency for other purchases and ends up further in the hole.

That is the word from President Cheddi Jagan, whose People's Progressive Party-Civic Alliance government wrested power in elections last October from the People's National Congress (PNC), which had ruled for 28 years.

On a visit to Miami, Jagan told a meeting of Guyanese living in the region that Guyana has to pay 68 cents per dollar for debt servicing. Oil costs take another 40 per cent, leaving a deficit of eight per cent.

Such statistics led the PNC administration to devalue the Guyana dollar several times, to a low of G\$125 per US dollar.

The government has asked for some debt forgiveness as well as soft loan and debt rescheduling and the international climate may be favourable for that, Jagan said.

Shortage of funds for even other basic goods such as foodstuffs and medicine, he added, is compounded by the brain drain. Foreign donors have voted \$177 million for important projects, but the money cannot be used because of a lack of skilled personnel to monitor the ventures.

"All of you are over here," he quipped. He said a acute shortage of housing is making it difficult to bring Guyanese home. One professional recruited by the government found most of his salary went on rent.

Jagan said the government had ordered the sugar corporation to make thousands of uncultivated acres available to build homes.

The President unfolded a national rebuilding strategy that puts him walking a thin line between encouraging investment and safeguarding the national interest, especially workers' rights.

The dilemma has been dramatised by a dispute between the government and industrialist Kayman Sankar, who recently won approval from the Inter-American Development Bank for a \$7 million loan to put 8,000 acres under rice cultivation.

The government put a brake on the venture because it does not grant more than 500 acres to any one person. Jagan embraced this policy while he was still a young politician — he is now 74 — after it was introduced in Puerto Rico. The intention, he said, is to ensure that ordinary people are able to own land.

He disclosed that already 40 per cent of the land is controlled by five per cent of Guyanese and 50 per cent of the population have five acres or less.

Jagan said his government welcomes foreign investment but not at any price. He explained:

"We don't only want growth. We want growth with human development. We are determined to have growth, but growth with social justice in that the poor must not become poorer and the rich richer."

The government is prepared to make 2,500 acres available for the Sankar project. The rest will have to go to small farmers who will be obligated to sell their produce to the Sankar rice mill.

"We are not against investors," Jagan stated. "We welcome investors and preference will be given to Guyanese and West Indians and then others. We welcome you with open arms."

Jagan has been a socialist for at least a generation and is the only democratically elected head of government who is also a Marxist. His strong views on social policy are well known.

How his approach will work at a time when there is an empty treasury and a crushing debt load remains to be seen and could determine whether his government will be successful.

In education, he adheres to the policy of the former government, led by Desmond Hoyte, that schooling should be free from kindergarten to college. However, he explained that foreign aid sources are pressing the government to introduce a user fee for education.

He said he would not bow to that pressure. He drew attention to the work-study programme of Cuba, where schools are attached to industrial or farming ventures and students

work their way through. He said other ideas under consideration were for free education for the very poor, loans to those who need such help, and fees for those who can afford to pay. The education system has deteriorated to the point where the dropout rate is 20 per cent and children attend classes in building that leak. At one time Guyana had a literacy rate of more than 95 per cent.

Jagan is determined to emphasise "human resources to the point where we become like the Japanese."

In investment, he explained that the last government built no industrial parks to attract factories. His government planned to build two, but could not meet the \$800 million needed to put in water, roads and electricity.

Another dilemma is seen in the government's attitude towards the privatisation policy put in place by Hoyte. Jagan refused to accept the argument, put especially by Western nations and led by the United States, that state industries are inherently inferior. He said the issue is more one of mismanagement and corruption.

Jagan headed the government of then British Guiana between 1953 and 1964, and was shut out of power by what observers believed were widespread election irregularities by the PNC.

He said the government had an asset worth more than money — the confidence and goodwill of the population.

It is forging a link with the people through citizens committees in every community. They comprise members of all parties, businesspeople, professionals and priests.

The committees will identify the problems of each community and propose solutions that can be provided with little help from the administration. Jagan said committees had already been proving themselves in fighting crime.

Jagan vowed to forge a new era of racial harmony in the country that prides itself as being the "land of six peoples." Anglican Bishop Randolph George was named to head a committee that is looking at ways to bring it about.

Jagan pledged that his administration would end all forms of discrimination and

sign the protocols to the United Nations Human Rights Declaration, enabling Guyanese citizens to appear as individuals before the UN Human Rights Commission to lodge complaints.

He said the PNC government signed the Declaration but balked at the protocols. Jagan added: "We have no problem signing them because we do not intend to violate anybody's rights."

His government, he said, embraced not only the traditional political and civil rights but also economic and cultural rights.

Jagan also said that: "His government has turned the official residence of late president Forbes Burnham into a centre for the arts."

Village elections will be held before year end for the first time in over 20 years.

One questioner wondered what would become of stability in his coalition government if something should happen to him.

Jagan's answer: "If I were to die tomorrow, no problem. A leadership will emerge through the democratic process. I won't be too worried about who will replace me. And, in any case, I am still strong yet."

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OPINION

Afghan Border Skirmishes — Russian Clarification

During the last few days there has been a drastic aggravation of the situation at the Tajik-Afghan border with unceasing cross-border attacks of the armed Tajik opposition militants actively supported by Afghan Mujahideen increasingly unearthing a clear-cut and obviously well planned pattern. All incursions and penetrations into the Tajik territory are purposefully staged in such a manner that the greatest possible number of casualties be caused among both peaceful local population and the Russian border-guards.

It may be recalled that the latter are deployed at the border at Tajik government's request and in accordance with a special agreement between the two states in order to ensure protection of the boundary which otherwise would have been completely unguarded in the absence of a Tajik border security force — hardly inexplicable given the turbulent history of that country's one and a half year of independent existence. This small specialised force has a strictly limited mandate well defined both by the agreement mentioned and its own capacity and most scrupulously keeps away from having anything whatsoever to do with internal developments in Tajikistan. The same is true with regard to the 201st Russian infantry division deployed in that country at its government's request. It has to be engaged in widely-dispersed policing activities against the background of extensive crime-wave in the aftermath of the bloody civil war just recently concluded in that far-away mountainous Central Asian

country of 4.5 million people. Being convinced that only a peaceful solution has a prospect there, Russia stands up for a constructive peace-oriented dialogue of all the parties, involved into the conflict. The framework of such efforts may and should be provided by the meetings of special representatives of the leadership of Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Russia is also ready to resume intergovernmental talks with the leadership of Afghanistan in order to bring to an end the destructive activities of the militants from its territory.

Being deeply concerned with the development of the situation in and around Tajikistan, Russia is taking active efforts within the CIS through dialogue and negotiations at all levels, including top-level contacts, with the Central Asian CIS countries. At present the special envoy of the President, First Deputy Foreign Minister Mr A Adamishin is making visits to Dushanbe, Bishkek, Tashkent, Ashgabad and Alma-Ata to convey personal messages of the President of Russia to the leaders of the countries of the region.

Far from interfering into purely internal affairs of Tajikistan, Russia, on the contrary, believes in national reconciliation in that country through efforts of its all political forces and welcomes moves towards peaceful dialogue between the government and the opposition, involving broader strata of Tajik society in the cause of national reconciliation.

The seriousness of the situation may require in addition to the above mentioned political and diplomatic steps effective

involvement of international community, and first of all the United Nations, into the solution of the problem. The situation at the Tajik-Afghan border has reached such a point, when those who would really like to prevent new outbreak of tension in the volatile area joining Central and South Asia should consider whether activities which flagrantly violate norms of international law and encroach upon the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Tajikistan do not endanger directly their own national interests.

It is a clear and historically proved fact that a military solution to the problem is the road to nowhere, which may result in unpredictable consequences for the development of the situation in the region and have a very negative impact on the settlement of other conflicts in different parts of the world as well as on the international situation in general. The earliest normalization of the situation in and around Tajikistan would be thus in line not only with the interests of the peoples of Tajikistan but with the interests of the entire international community.

On balance, unbiased and responsible approaches, efficient and persistent political and diplomatic efforts, plus the international community's involvement, can bring about national reconciliation in Tajikistan and peace in and around it. For its part Russia is doing everything it can for the attainment of this goal.

Embassy of the Russian Federation in Bangladesh

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.

Unbearable load-shedding

Sir, It is a matter of great regret that in these hot and humid days and nights the people of Ibrahimpur and adjoining areas are suffering because of load-shedding. Specially HSC Examinees are the worst sufferers.

The most interesting thing is that when Ibrahimpur remains without electricity for hours together the East Kazipara and part of Shewrapara are hardly affected by load-shedding. I find that in these areas workshops including welding machine shops continue to remain open till 10/11 pm in violation of the Electricity Rules. The line men and others who are responsible to enforce the rules under the Electricity Act, apparently avoid their duty, for obvious reasons.

I appeal to the authority concerned to take immediate action in this regard and main-

tain these areas as residential ones. Save us from air and noise pollution as well as from the unbearable load-shedding. M Saleem Ullah, Motilheel C/A, Dhaka.

Mandatory cultivation programme

Sir, It has been observed that a considerable portion of our cultivable land is not utilized round the year although irrigation facilities can be extended to most of those places if some efforts are made. This is possibly because of two reasons: First, the owners of those lands do not know how best their lands can be utilized round the year and, secondly, they do not feel much the need. So they are least interested to get their lands better utilized. We may, therefore, possibly think of introducing a mandatory cultivation programme in our country, in greater national interest.

BADC can take up the programme with the help of UP Chairmen to determine the

utilization of all cultivable lands in their respective areas. Suggestions should, thereafter, be given at grassroots level by the concerned authority how to make best possible use of the land by the owners or by the landless people of the area. If such a programme is carried out and regularly monitored, our food scarcity will, hopefully, be minimized to a great extent.

Motius Samad Choudhury Phultola Tea Estate, Sylhet

Who's terrorist?

Sir, If Iraq could be accused of plotting the assassination of the former US President, what about the USA herself when, a few years back, she tried to exterminate the Libyan President Gaddafi? In fact, everyone is well aware of the role of CIA in many countries where changes of power had been brought in a ruthless manner. But nobody dares to challenge them for they are invincible and immune to all accusations as well.

If the USA wishes to put an end to the state sponsored terrorism, what they claimed to have tried successfully against Iraq, she should pay attention to her own house first where she breeds perhaps the world's most sophisticated terrorist — the CIA.

Md Jalaluddin Iqbal Mohammedpur, Dhaka