

When Law Enforcers Err

In yet another tragic incident involving a confrontation between members of the law enforcing agency — ansars to be precise — and the public, two men were left dead and three seriously wounded on Sunday. The death was reportedly caused by indiscriminate shooting by the ansars on duty on a Dhaka-bound train from Sylhet following an altercation over toll collection by those law enforcers. The vendors who refused to pay the illegal toll were reportedly travelling without tickets.

If the vendors were found guilty of ticketless travelling, the ansars had no business to do anything about the matter. Unless of course the ticket checker sought their help. In this case, nothing of the sort happened. The railway then has a system of double-checking. When someone alights from a train, it is the rail station's duty to see whether he has travelled with or without tickets. If the passenger fails to produce a ticket he must be punished according to well-laid down rules. The ansars or police on duty on the train come nowhere in the picture.

The fact that the ansars became a party to the feud has a plausible explanation — one that, among other reasons, has been responsible for crippling the country's railway to the extent that its viability is now being questioned. If the vendors travelled without ticket on the fateful day, it was not their fault alone. The chain of service employed by the railway has, for reasons known and unknown, not been working. Most probably those vendors like many other of their kind and passengers somehow can manage to take almost a free ride with active co-operation — better say in collusion with — from a section of the railway employees. As long as the unwritten contract is respected, there is no problem. On either party's becoming more demanding, temper gets frayed and the chaos is let loose.

Apparently, a dangerous trend has been set in that the law enforcers are increasingly finding themselves on the wrong side of a feud. Such a loss of their image as a neutral agency invulnerable to material temptation and provocation even in trying times, has already caused incalculable harms to our society. The mistrust is mutual and this certainly points to a bleak prospect for the country. Only a couple of days before the Airport Railway Station incident, a village under Phulata Thana in Khulna was the venue of such an ugly encounter between the villagers and the members of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). The issue concerns smuggling of Indian cows. But the BDR men only overdid their job, allegedly to the extent of even rounding a few local cows from cow-sheds of that village. They even took the chairman of the village in custody.

What happened then were public versus BDR clashes leading to the blockade on the Jessore-Khulna road. Evidently, reason is becoming the first casualty in all such incidents. Not all the villagers are smugglers, nor all the traders or passengers do travel without tickets. Similarly, all members of the law enforcing agencies are not bent on doing excesses even in the face of extreme provocation. But things are getting messed up and it is the undiscriminating nature of blaming anybody and everybody for some one else's faults that is most worrying. Developing a system for dealing with whatever crime is no doubt important, but it is even more significant to ensure that the system really works.

Perhaps training for law enforcers prove decisive enough, but even this can be brought to nought if the whole society is resigned to a corrupt way of life. Anyone going out of his discipline and limit is bound to jeopardise others' rights and responsibilities. The erring ansars are a product of the prevailing system. The fact that members of the law enforcing agency punished for various offences account for a great total will be of no help unless the cases have been made public. If their colleagues come to know what punishment awaits them in similar cases of violation of laws, it may have a deterring effect.

Tourism Month

The so-called 'Tourism Month '93' (15 October-15 November) went, as it came, mostly unnoticed. Except for some official functions, a few placards here and there and some banner hung from odd places, the tourism month remained far from both the tourists and the people. Yes, here was mass rally of sorts on the inaugural day, participated by the Prime Minister. That was probably the extent of the mass contact. As for the rest of the period there was really no effort by the authorities to popularise the concept of tourism or propagate among the citizens to the facilities available.

It is our view that the whole concept of tourism development in Bangladesh is based on only one premise — attracting foreign tourists. What about the local tourists? We agree that external tourism is a very important ingredient to build national tourism industry. And given our need to earn hard currency, we have to get foreign tourists. But a singular emphasis on foreign tourists leads to a neglect of the local tourists. From the manner the 'Tourism Month' was organised, it appears that the authorities consider the domestic tourist market to be too small to warrant any special attention. This is where we take the wrong turn. The domestic market may be small, but it is a growing market.

Bangladeshi families are going abroad for vacation in increasing numbers. With rising business community, and its gradual expansion, there is an increasing number of entrepreneurs who can, and do, take vacations. And most go abroad. Has our tourism department made any attempt to tap this market? There is also a reasonably large expatriate community in Bangladesh. The diplomatic corps, the UN and its associate organisations, the various non-governmental bodies and the increasing number of expatriate business firms are sending their staff to be located here. All together this group forms a potential money earner for the industry. Again, the question arises — have we made any attempt to persuade this group not to take their holidays outside Bangladesh, but to spend their time and money here?

We must realise that without a domestic tourist industrial base, the foreign tourism will never take off. Therefore alongside trying to attract the foreigners to visit our country, we have to encourage our own people to travel around and see this land of ours. Emphasis on local tourists has always been missing in our tourism development drive, as it was missing in the just concluded tourism month.

William Carey, the Missionary and the Humanist

WILLIAM Carey came an Englishman and died an Indian; came a missionary and died a humanist. Carey did not cease to be an Englishman. What is more, he remained true to his vocation as a missionary to the last day of his life. Is there anything wrong in a missionary becoming a humanist? Or, for that matter, for an Englishman becoming an Indian? If not, then why do I pose this question? I do so because that sort of thing happens rarely. And not that only. As for a missionary also becoming a humanist, we have a difficulty in reconciling the two concepts. A missionary normally functions within the strict limits of an agenda, and the limits are set by his church, by his superiors. One remembers the case of the English poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins. Also the case of John Donne. Both more or less relinquished poetry as soon as they became priests. And when they wrote poetry at all, the poetry had to conform, which means that the poetic self of their youth had to be buried deep or to be diverted to an entirely different channel.

The work of the early Christian missionaries in India must have been a heart-breaking job. They had come with the sole purpose of converting the heathen to Christian truth. But to their utter dismay, they found the heathen tough in his resistance. He would accept a favour but not the faith. Carey discovered this bitter truth in the first seven years of his missionary life in that remote village.

We remember Carey today primarily as one of the makers of Bengali prose, an honour he shares with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Vidyasagar. And it is a rare distinction for somebody who spoke a different tongue and who had to learn an alien language the hard way, through sheer personal effort.

Madnabati, in Dinajpur. Is it Carey himself or some other missionary working with him I can't recall, who said, rather wrote in a letter about one formidable difficulty in converting a heathen: the heathen here has no sense of guilt, he feels no urge for repentance.

This remarkable observation should set one thinking. In fact it raises a hundred questions and I am sure the hundred questions would lead to a thousand answers. One is tempted to pursue the question but one must resist the temptation. It will take us off the track.

The early missionaries — the term should be understood to mean Christian missionaries — working in India in the closing years of the eighteenth and the beginning years of the nineteenth century, did not find the government of the day helpful. They might have counted upon some help, because the rulers were of the same country and of the same faith as they were. But apparently — and this is not mere supposition — the East India Company put commerce before Christianity, in their scale of values. They had come as traders, and though they had stumbled into a territory which promised to be an empire, they during those days, took their steps with great caution. At least that is what the historians say. They would not do anything or allow missionaries to do anything that might

hurt the religious susceptibilities of the people they were doing trade with. In the field of education, the European missionaries thought they would be given a free hand in establishing schools and colleges wherever they thought fit. Here also the missionaries soon found the Company slowly changing its earlier policy which suited the missionaries, the policy of leaving education outside its activities. There is evidence to lend support to the idea that as the government's involvement in education increased, so did the

Christian tests but extended to such daring ventures as Krittibas Ramayana and Kashiram Das' Mahabharata, all this must have been done with the consent of the Church. The Church's liberality might have had something to do with the fact that she was not Carey's sole provider. In the early years, Carey was an employee of an Indigo planter. Later, he was on the pay roll of the Government as a professor of Fort William College. It would appear that all his active life in Bengal, Carey had to depend on finance from

the leading orientalist of his times, and one of the leaders of social reform.

Bengali prose writings of Carey are not all of the same quality, nor was it expected to be. As a translator of the gospels, his main concern was to remain faithful to Greek and Hebrew texts. He could not take any liberty with words of divine origin. The prose, naturally, is stilted, and careless of Bengali syntax. But, in his *Ithasmala*, he gives enough evidence of his competent handling of a language whose prose is a new instrument not only for him but for everybody. In this book, he is not much behind Vidyasagar, and much ahead of Ram Mohan Roy, and equally ahead of Munshi Ram Ram Boshu of *Pratapditya Chagit*. In his *Kathopakathan*, he shows his mastery of the spoken Bengali of the region around Calcutta, and his freedom from priestly prudishness in respect of the vulgar and the slang. Here the humanist has the better of the cleric.

I owe these thoughts, I must now admit, to the courtesy of the William Carey Bicentenary Committee who are now celebrating Carey's arrival in India two hundred years ago. The date is November 11, 1793. Carey's journey to India, his arrival in Calcutta was a stealthy one. He had practically smuggled himself into the country

But the event was to prove one of utmost importance for the country and the people. The Dhaka celebrations brought out the significance of the arrival. A great-great grandson of Carey is here in the city to grace the occasion. There are others, representing the Baptist Church. I was there on the second of the three evenings over which the celebration is extended. Three of the guest speakers were churchmen and though they spoke on different themes, there was a sermon-like touch in their speeches, starting with a few lines from the Bible. The secular tone was provided by Professor Kabir Chaudhury and myself and finally by Mr Sudhir Adhikari, the president of the session. That established the balance between the spiritual and the temporal.

The conduct of the assembly — no loud voices in any corner of the arena, the decor of the exhibition area, the peace and sweetness which marked the proceedings and the environs, were things not commonly found in most such occasions. It speaks something in favour of the culture of the community. On imagines the spirit of the church permeating the conduct of the community.

But, finally, if this tribute to Carey's memory was pleasing, to say the least, the indifference of the larger community, particularly that of the universities and The Asiatic Society was a shame. I am ready to withdraw this remark if Carey has been remembered at any of these places and this has escaped my notice.

Unlike in England the head of a technical department in Bangladesh do not serve under the full control of the Minister who is a people's representative. There is a long clerical hierarchy of six men between the Minister and the technical head starting with a newly recruited assistant secretary (Generally coming from the functional cadre of magistrates and land revenue collectors) to the Secretary. Result-oriented accountable management system is absent. There is no performance criteria for individuals and measures of output and impacts for units throughout the Government. Jobs in the government service are not identified with clearcut responsibilities and commensurate authority without which accountability is not possible. According to UN Team's report, for most, if not all government positions, position descriptions do not exist. In the absence of position descriptions evaluation and accountability for performance against budgets, targets, standards of achievements and other tests is not possible.

The bureaucratic view that there is a built-in democratic and accountable system of administration in Bangladesh is simply a cover-up aimed at self-deception and to dupe the public opinion.

(This is the second instalment of the series.)

PASSING CLOUDS
Zillur Rahman Siddiqui

despair of the missionaries. The two aims, that of winning a temporal empire, and that of gaining a spiritual empire, could not be reconciled.

Returning to Carey I do not know how his Church evaluates his work merely as a missionary. But it must be said to the credit of his Church that it had enough understanding and appreciation of the work that he had undertaken in addition to and as complementary to his routine job of a priest. The setting up of the first printing press in India at Serampore, the production of the gospels in Bengali as translated by Carey, the expansion of the range of translations and publications which was not restricted to

outside the Church. This gave him the freedom which is denied the average ordained priest.

We remember Carey to day primarily as one of the makers of Bengali prose, an honour he shares with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Vidyasagar. And it is a rare distinction for somebody who spoke a different tongue and who had to learn an alien language the hard way, through sheer personal effort. Carey's astounding achievements as a linguist, his probing into the structure of a dozen Asian languages, his scientific and agricultural interests, and finally his deep concerns over the inhuman practice of *suttee*, all this combined made him one of

Seventeen-Point Charter of PROKRICHI-BCS

Democracy and a Plural Society

by Mohammed Abu Hena

Daily Star, 19-9-93.

While speaking as a chief guest in an UN colloquium on 'Good Governance' Mirza Ghulam Hafiz, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister stated that although Parliamentary-style democracy has been introduced in the country, the country's administration is still a continuation of the autocratic system.

The UN Report on Public Administration Sector Study in Bangladesh, 1993 concluded that the administrative machinery that has served Bangladesh upto the present will not be able to meet the challenges of the year ahead.

The UN Team asserted that the civil service has been unwilling to give up powers to the democratically elected representatives, and that there are uncertainties and tensions about the respective roles of Ministers and the civil servants. The shortcoming of the government are seen to be related to the absence of a system of accountability. The government organizations are not being held properly accountable either financially or for programme performance.

In the recent reports by International Management Consultants Limited, namely: Bangladesh: Reforms in Budgeting and Expenditure Control, Final Report, and Bangladesh: Reforms in Budgeting and Expenditure Control, Final Report, Project Implementation 'Documentation, serious inadequacies in the present systems were revealed. The UN Team found that the system of Government, which is a relic of the former authoritarian presidential regime is characterized by a rigid bureaucratic approach responsible for all the weaknesses of the administrations.

The UN Report categorically stated that as a result of the unwillingness of the bureaucracy to hand over power to the democratically elected people's representatives, the government's policy and implementation programmes are faced with severe criticism. The Team strongly suggested immediate major reforms in the organisational and management and changes among public servants in respect of the accountability to the elected representatives and Ministers.

Accountability and Ministerial Responsibility

The form of Bangladesh Govt is a representative democracy in which the citizens exercise their right to make political decisions within the constitutional framework through representatives elected by and responsible to them. It is a Cabinet government which implies that power and responsibility will be shared equally between all members of the cabinet.

The constitutional responsibility of Ministers to parliament and the public covers every action of the department, whether done with their specific authority or by delegation, expressed or implied. The Minister in charge of the department is answerable to parliament for the workings of the department.

Every department is a storehouse of professional and technical knowledge and experience in the subjects handled. It is the duty of the civil servant to give the Minister the fullest benefit of the storehouse of technical knowledge, wisdom and experience. The higher civil service, therefore, needs to be primarily organized with that

end in view based on functional knowledge and expertise so that there is a direct flow of functional knowledge available to him.

The characteristics of the civil servant lies in his permanence in a certain kind of function or profession where he gains considerable knowledge about the activities of the department within which he is situated. He becomes versed in the intricacies and technical details within which particular functions are performed and administered. When he is changed frequently like the Minister, he loses his identity as a member of the permanent civil service. Such a civil servant, who is himself dependent on other's technical and professional knowledge and experience cannot give his Minister the fullest benefit of the storehouse of experience and knowledge of the department.

Under the British system of government there are politically responsible ministers who decide policy and technical administrators who carry out the policy. Between the two are the permanent secretaries who act as staff officials and advise and assist the ministers. A permanent secretary is not appointed to that position unless he has served in that particular department for not less than twenty years — and has enough knowledge and expertise about the technical operations to be able to explain them to the minister. He must also be able to communicate all technical details contained in the policy to the specialists.

This Principle of Ministerial Responsibility is not reflected in

the organizational structure of the government in Bangladesh. According to the Rules of Business the Permanent Secretaries who frequently do leapfrogging from one department to another have very little or no experience in the technical operations of the departments under the Ministry/Division of which he is the head and principal accounting officer. Though not a Minister, he is head of the Ministry. He neither sits in the cabinet nor in the Parliament yet he heads the Ministry and the Division.

In the Parliamentary system of cabinet government, the Minister still remains to be a minister of the Presidential System of Government. Accountability, in the sense of electoral process, is absent in Bangladesh. In England the permanent civil servant is called Permanent Secretary because he remains almost permanently in a particular department. The politician is designated the Secretary heading the Ministry. In Bangladesh the civil servant holds similar position as the Minister in England without having to account for before the Parliament and to the public.

OPINION

What's in a Division?

A Rashid

Of late, there appears to be a determined and planned competition for the creation of divisions out of districts. This trend was rather subdued before the creation of Barisal division out of former Barisal district. The administration appears to have worked out some sort of formula for that step, apart, of course, from some political pressures. Now that Barisal division is very much on the map of Bangladesh and daily fed on the television weather report, there is a growing demand for pitchforking many others into that hallowed category. Mymensingh, the largest district in preparation India, has started systematic campaign with big banners, festoons and ads in prime newspapers. Sylhet has not lagged far behind and with its comparatively vast dollar pound backed manpower, is stepping up its effort to attain the coveted status. Next door Comilla is quite alert in not allowing the neighbour a walk-over in this regard. In the midst of this hullabaloo, Tiry Feni has also recently reared its head to claim the dubious honour. I have a hunch that Bogra and Kustia will in no time join the bandwagon. I wonder, what substance is there in a division administratively, an el-dorado!

It will be no surprise if in course of time when and if the caprices of Mymensingh, Sylhet, Comilla at all are satisfied, all other districts not being divisions agitate vehemently for the status of a division. I doubt if the stalwarts of the districts now agitating for a division have at all gone deeply into the cost-benefit ratio of having a division. First of all, administratively, a division brings in its wake a few divisional bureaucrats, chiefly a divisional commissioner a couple of additional commissioners, may be one superintending engineer, Roads and Highways/Works/Power Development/Irrigation. The central figure is, no doubt, a civil commissioner with some time-

consuming power of hearing revenue appeals and appearing as the overall supervisor of revenue, administrative and development activities. These functions except the one of revenue appeals are at present adequately performed by the district level officers. The commissioner and his office becomes a fifth wheel clogging and delaying development work and even law and order matters everywhere. The only aspect of the elevation to a division which attracts many uninitiated in the intricacies of administration is seemingly the 'durbars' in which he may be figuring as a centre piece with local high ups — politicians, wise men of legal profession, religious leaders, educationist and student bodies.

Looking at the other side of the picture, one must be appalled at the staggering cost of establishing a divisional headquarters.

Apart from the additional expenditure on the salary and allowances of the divisional officers and staff, the capital and recurring expenditure on the office buildings, officers and staff housing, the ancillary physical infrastructure will run into crores. Such capital and recurring expenditure must be met out of the revenue receipts, in otherwords, from the various taxes paid by the people.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that a serious and nonpolitical study is undertaken to work out the actual, not sentimental and prestige oriented, cost benefit ratio of elevating (shall we say forcing) a district into a division. The politicians, businessmen, professional bodies, the youth force must dispassionately weigh in the balance the real benefit accruing from the creation of a division against the enormous drain on the people's meagre resources. I am inclined to be optimistic and hope that they will resist the temptation of acquiring simply a 'status symbol'.

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.

Age of fortune

Sir, As we look around us the world over, what we see is that the leadership in the socio-political and economic fields is in the hands of women or men in their forties. Unfortunately here in Bangladesh, no one takes you seriously till you have reached the ripe age of fifty. Although our average life expectancy is 56.1 years, we are made to believe that at 40 we are still in our youth (look at the average age of the leaders of various politically aligned youth fronts), at 50 we are sensible (political leaders and corporate chiefs) and at 60 (if one survives) we are guaranteed a place in the helm of our leadership and hall of fame.

Now, do not misunderstand me; I am not being disrespectful to or ignorant of the wisdom, experience and intelligence one may gather with age. But in this world of competitiveness and fast moving technological age, what you need in the decision makers are daring, instant decisions, quick and action oriented plans of action. At 40, one can take chances to make a mistake and correct it but at 60 you do not get a second chance. Now think about that.

We are getting closer to a boom that is knocking at our door. Now, to be able to open the door and greet that and make good use of this opportunity, we need the far-sightedness, toward thinking attitude and the willingness to sacrifice old ideas for the 'new'. All this is a must, if we want to move ahead in this world and become a member of the exclusive club of the fortunate. But if we wish to remain the member of the basket case, I have nothing much to say, I rest my case.

Akku Chowdhury
Nakhapara, Dhaka

Taka convertibility

Sir, The Bangladesh Bank has announced that the Taka has been made convertible with foreign currency. This is one step of deregulation in the mechanism of foreign exchange deal. With the introduction of Taka convertibility, our currency will have an access to the foreign exchange market.

The convertibility will be very fruitful if we can develop our capital market. The present capital market does not encour-

age to invest in Bangladesh. Even in Bangladesh there are willful investors who wish to invest in gilt edged securities and shares but do not feel encouraged to go ahead for want of confidence in the capital market.

The Bangladesh Bank should also educate our businessmen about the mechanism of Taka convertibility.

Mahbubul Haque Chowdhury
Kalabaghan, Dhaka.

Neo-Nazis

Sir, The skinheads widely known as the neo-Nazis are getting stronger in Germany. Only a few years ago these neo-Nazi groups were rather harmless. Shaving their heads, wearing the Swastika on their arms and chanting 'hail Hitler' — that was what they did. But within the last two years, they have rapidly changed and now they cannot be considered as harmless. The immigrants are their targets. Even a tourist visiting Germany is not safe. Asian tourists' have been attacked several times. Only a few months ago a Turkish family was burnt to death by them. Their hatred towards the foreigners is increasing.

These neo-Nazis follow the evil ideals of Adolf Hitler that they are superior to other races and no immigrant has the right to stay in Germany. Specialists believe that the increasing number of Asians and their comparatively cheap labour

may be the main reason for their being hated. Unification may be sighted as another reason. These neo-Nazi groups have taken steps to form a national network which may not be very pleasant for Germany itself.

The authority should take prompt steps to ban such organizations before it is too late. Already many quarters have given their support to their atrocious activities and with support these groups are likely to get even stronger. Such support may consolidate their position thus endangering the lives of thousands of innocent people.

Touheed Feroze
New DOHS, Dhaka.

Phone out of order

Sir, Our phone number '257392' remained out of order for four months. On seeing the Honourable Minister of T&T, Mr Tariqul Islam's generosity we approached his PS then Mr Wadud, Director T&T and then PA to the Chairman and sent several letters to the department concerned. Lodged 18 complaints then again with SDO Phones and lastly with Bikrampur House T&T camp office. All of them listened to our complaints carefully and politely but could not restore the above phone till late last month.

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