The Daily Star
Founder-Editor : Late S. M. Ali
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Arrest these Dangerous Symptoms

There are two incidents that occurred on Tuesday last to which we want to draw the attention of all social, community, political and government leaders. First, there were the grieving students of the Salimullah Medical College, the Dhaka Medical College and the Dental College who thought it fit to damage about 150 trucks in the city because one speeding truck, smashed under its wheels, a 21-year old first year MBBS student, named Rumana Parvin. About 500 students came out in full strength and started breaking the trucks. The whole area between Babubazar (in the old part of the city) and Gulistan saw the random damaging of trucks, which at one stage spilled over into areas close to the Dhaka Medical College, coming as far as the foreign office. As could be expected, when the first wave was over, the truck drivers retaliated and barricaded roads from Babubazar upto Nayabazar (both in the old city).

In another incident, about two thousand workers of a garment industry went on a rampage and attacked Zia International Airport at about 6 pm damaging the visitors gallery and parts of the arrival lounge. Reason? Because their employer was allegedly manhandled by custom officials when he arrived at Dhaka Airport in the afternoon, on the Thai flight from Bangkok.

These two incidents are totally unconnected. But in a deeply disturbing sense, there is a link. Both instances are examples of the law of the land being violated and attempt being made to take recourse to mob violence to gain 'justice', or to take revenge for a perceived notion of being wronged.

In the case of Rumana's death our heart goes out to the grieving parents, the members of her family and her fellow students. We condemn the habit of reckless truck driving in the city, that has earned for the city trucks the term of "killer truck" in the country's media. But should we not wait to get the full story before we either start demanding punishment or much less, going for direct lawless action ? Can we totally rule out the possibility of shared responsibility? The perpetrator of the act has been caught and can be given whatever punishment the law determines for him. Why then is the attack on other trucks? Similarly, why the attack on the airport? Why not lodge a criminal charge of physical assault, manhandling and bodily damage against the custom officials?

Why are we so eager to take law in our own hands? Why do we feel that what is a crime when committed by an individual, becomes quite sanctified if we do so in a group, and especially if that group can be worked up to a frenzy of a mob? These are questions that touch the very core of the political culture that we unfortunately appear to be promoting. We are compelled to conclude that the frequent instances of lawlessness occur because of the failure of the government to establish supremacy of the law. This is especially true in the case of student violence. Every time there is something about which a group of students feel agitated, they come out rampaging on to the city streets, breaking cars and trucks. And in most cases those involved are never punished.

First, the feeling that laws can be broken without fear of being punished; second, that laws broken in a group makes the perpetrators feel beyond the reach of the law, are very dangerous trends that must be stopped immediately if our civic society is to survive. This is a concern that should set both the government and the opposition thinking. They, once again we urge, must work together on this. The regular and casual flaunting of the law is much more than a partisan issue. Or, are we too caught up in our petty politics to realise that?

Absentee Teachers

One of Wednesday's bold news headlines said, "Absentee DU teachers to be fired". In a manner as if something very dire was being pronounced. But the news had in it more of a farce than anything of consequence. And a dash of perhaps unaccountability and irresponsibility — if on the part of the recalcitrant teachers, but ever more so on the part of the university itself.

The University of Dhaka is reportedly proceeding against some 55 teachers 19 of whom are living abroad since — incredible as it is, it is true — 1975. The report does not detail the achievements of the remaining 36 teachers which we can imagine would be on a similar scale.

Rather than be amazed by those teachers' performance one finds it hard to take the university's unmatched flair for patience — or shall we call it indulgence? The university has long been plagued by hundreds of its teachers not manning their posts years on end. This has affected the academic excellence as well as output of the university very adversely. The students have been let down in almost a criminal manner. Now that the university has started acting — it is indeed a hilarious act they are putting on. The pace they are moving in it will be eons before the university finds all its posts manned and the machine moving like a clockwork.

Job security for teachers is one thing we have guaranteed running past the western universities way behind. In most of the developed western nations security — or a renewed contract — is tied up with output. But in the case of the 'absentee' teachers we have gone to a ridiculous length on the other extreme. The university didn't have any moral right to do that.

One need not feel sorry for those that are projected to be thrown out. For in most cases, they have found much more coveted positions than they had with the university, which explains their lack of eagerness to return. An effectively stringent approach to deal with absenti-ism is very badly needed to help the image of the teachers in general to look up. Will the teachers realise that this is urgently needed?

Isolated Iran Woos New Muslim Republics

by Anthony Hyman

Iran has been mending fences with the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union. On a nine-day tour President Rafsanjani sought to allay fears that his country is trying to export its Islamic revolution. Iran is well placed to help the states diversify the trade routes to the Gulf ports instead of being so dependent on the old Soviet system via the Black Sea.

A tour by President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani to five Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union seems to have ended their general distrust of Iran. The visit focused mainly on cultural and regional cooperation.

Iran is showing much more caution towards Central Asia. In the past the various governments — especially Uzbekistan — have distrusted Iran's political ambitions. They feared Tehran might try to export its Islamic revolution.

Geography means Iran can aid the landlocked Central Asian republics. It is well placed to help diversify their trade routes, currently dependent on the old Soviet bulk-transport system via Black Sea ports, across regions of the Transcaucasus where the threat of civil war and actual fighting is disrupting communications.

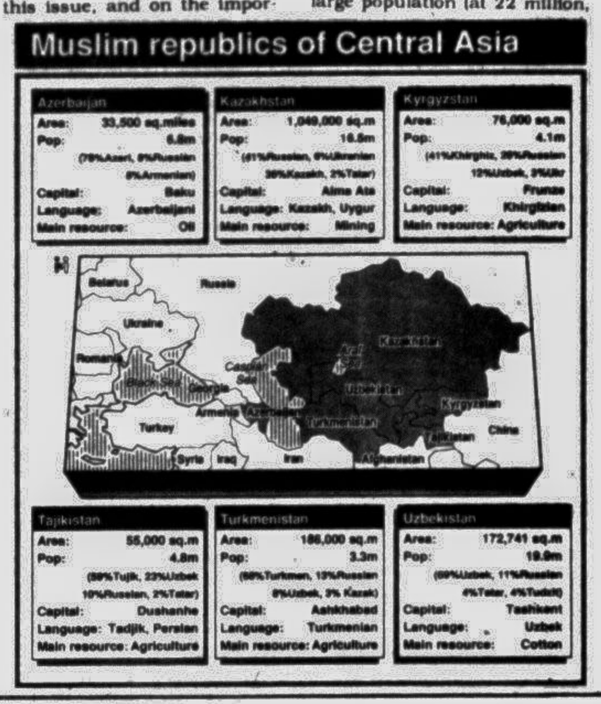
The Rafsanjani government has agreed to give access through Iran by road and rail, and on to the Gulf ports, for export of Central Asia's gas, oil and cotton. Increasing bilateral barter trade would be useful to all their hard-pressed economies.

Rafsanjani was warmly welcomed wherever he went. A sixth Muslim republic, Tajikistan, which is the closest to Iran of all the Central Asian countries in terms of shared Persian language and culture, was excluded from his visit.

That is because Iran is pressing for a negotiated peace there in the on-going civil war that will end the brutal suppression of the Tajik opposition by troops mainly from Russia and Uzbekistan. Iran recently invited Tajikistan's Foreign Minister to Tehran for talks with Tajik opposition leaders, some of whom now live in Iran.

The signs are that Rafsanjani and President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan agreed on this issue, and on the importance of improving bilateral relations. In the last two years Karimov, along with Russia's leaders, has repeatedly blamed Iran and Afghanistan for arming the Tajik opposition forces.

Uzbekistan is the key state in the region because of its large population (at 22 million, bigger than Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan combined), and its potential wealth from cotton, gas, gold and recently discovered oil.



Muslim republics of Central Asia

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In Alma Ata, capital of Kazakhstan, Rafsanjani signed protocols on trade and other areas of cooperation and invited President Nursultan Nazarbayev to visit Iran. Considerable goodwill also came out of Rafsanjani's visit to Turkmenistan, which strengthened links that were already closer than with the other republics.

In the last stage, Rafsanjani spent three days in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan. Iran is keen to end years of Azeri distrust, and to help end Azerbaijan's disastrous war with Armenia, which has brought 80,000 Azeri refugees across the border into Iran. Thousands flee daily.

Iran is also concerned about calls for the reunification of the two parts of Azerbaijan. Ever since Russia conquered the Baku region of northern Azerbaijan in 1828, Azerbaijanis (also known as Azeri Turks) have been effectively divided and ruled by two states.

In northwestern Iran an Azeri Turkish minority of nine million has Tabriz as its provincial capital, while on the ex-Soviet side of the border, across the river Arax, Baku is the capital for six million more Azeris.

Just two years ago the prospects of this oil-rich republic appeared to be brighter than almost any of the 15 successor states to the Soviet Union. Yet today Azerbaijan faces an uncertain future.

One reason Armenian forces have done so well is the prize at stake. They now seem to have ensured the viability of the ethnic Armenian enclave of Nagorny (mountainous) Karabagh. By driving the Azeri population out of Karabagh and now from the Lachin corridor which connects the enclave with Armenia itself — a spectacular reversal of fortune has taken place.

The Armenian nationalists clearly intend to ensure Karabagh and the Lachin corridor can be held against counter-attacks. That would mean the virtual annexation of the enclave by Armenia. Other conquered territory might be returned to Azerbaijan eventually in a humiliating peace settlement, or possibly kept by Armenia.

For decades the Armenians of Karabagh had faced oppressive tactics by the Baku government, and for five years before the Soviet Union broke up a virtual blockade of essential imported goods.

In September, Turkish troop reinforcements along the Armenian border were accompanied for the first time by a direct warning to Armenia to withdraw its forces from occupied areas of Azerbaijan "immediately and unconditionally." Ankara favours a United Nations peacekeeping force, probably including Turkish troops as a major component.

In a clear warning to the Armenians, Iran conducted military manoeuvres right up its border with Nakhichevan, an Azerbaijani enclave inside Armenia which borders on Iran and Turkey.

The Armenians now occupy almost one-fifth of the total territory of Azerbaijan. A recent change of regime in Azerbaijan brought to power former USSR Politburo member Geydar Aliev, with whom Iran feels more able to do business than with the previous regime.

Tehran sees itself as a key broker in a new peace initiative, because it believes it has won the confidence of the Armenian government. It is doing its best to show how it can help all the newly independent republics in various fields. They can also help Iran.

Closer links with Central Asia and Azerbaijan will improve the Rafsanjani government's domestic image by making it look far less isolated in the region.

Many independent observers believe Iran's stubborn but futile opposition to the PLO-Israeli peace process has marginalised the country in the Middle East. Diplomatic successes with the Muslim republics to the north can compensate for this. — Gemini News

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Seventeen-Point Charter of PROKRICHI-BCS

Accountable Democratic Administration

by Mohammed Abu Hena

THE more power concentrated in any particular section or group of the society, the greater is the need for safeguarding its abuse. The accumulated power concentrated over the years in a particular group of the civil servants remained without democratic controls, thus subverting popular government. The following points in the 17-Point Charter can fully ensure such an accountable democratic administration:

POINT-1: Institutional transfer of power to elected people's representatives at all levels of administration, abolition of all territorial local govt/administrative tiers which are not headed by elected people's representatives and ensuring participation of the people in development by making their representatives the development coordinators and controllers.

POINT-2: To give institutional shape to democracy and to make the administration accountable to the parliament the Ministers be declared Chief Executive of Ministries/Divisions and the Rules of Business be amended accordingly. (At present the civil servant is the Chief Executive of the Ministry/Division, and logically the Minister has no place on the organizational hierarchy. While appearing before the Parliament, the Minister, in factual analysis, represents the Chief Executive of the Ministry who is a civil servant).

POINT—6: Under the British system of cabinet type democratic administration there are politically responsible ministers who decide policy and technical administrators who carry out the policy. Between the two are the permanent secretaries who advise and assist the ministers and act as staff officials. Such Permanent Secretaries in the British system do not come from the lower court magistracy or from the land revenue collectors. To be a Permanent Secretary a civil servant is required to put in fairly long service of not less than twenty years in various departments of the Ministry/Division during which he gathers 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. In the case of Bangladesh the reverse is true. Here the Minister is relatively more permanent in a Ministry or Division than the civil servant who is to be the Permanent Secretary. The present Chairman of National Board of Revenue and Secretary Internal Resources Division is the best example of such a situation. The Permanent Secretary was permanently absent from the departments of Customs, Excise, VAT and Direct Taxes which form the core of National Board of Revenue, for long 26 years of his service in government until he became the Permanent Secretary a few month's ago. He has nothing to offer to the Minister from the storehouse of knowledge and experience of these vital statutory revenue departments and their complicated special laws.

POINT-12: To ensures "Accountable Management" each post in the Ministry's hierarchy be identified with clear-cut responsibilities and commensurate authority to be held accountable for performance against budgets, standards of achievements and other tests. The chain of command within the Ministry's hierarchy must not be violated by any overlapping interference or command from anyone outside the Ministry. Similarly all lateral entry/appointments in the corporations and autonomous bodies be stopped.

POINT-17: Ensure independence of the judiciary at all levels, including separation of judiciary from executive (As provided in Article 22 of the constitution).

Point 6 of the Charter, proposed that the technical heads of departments/corporations who implement the policy, report to the Minister who gives the policy. This will make the whole departmental storehouse of knowledge and expertise available to the Minister and assist him in policy making and policy evaluation. In the proposed system the technical heads will be the chiefs of productivity oriented Parallel Organization and shall participate in the policy making process and the formulation of development plans and programmes.

Point 10 proposes integration of the policy and implementation cells by making necessary amendments in the Rules of Business of 1975 and " Secretariat Instructions" of 1976.

Point 3 of the 17-Point Charter has the same end in view and that is to make available to each functional Ministry/Division the storehouse of all the functional and technical knowledge and expertise from the top to the bottom. In the reorganized unified Civil Service structure introduced in 1980, various functional cadres have been created and placed under the respective Ministry's disposal for carrying out their functions. Accordingly the Ministry of Agriculture has its BCS (Agriculture) cadre, Ministry of Health has its BCS (Health) cadre, Ministry of Works has its BCS (Works) cadre, so on. These functional cadres groups, by virtue of their permanence in the various departments within the ministry can rightly claim to be the permanent civil service within the context of the functions of the Ministry. The Secretariat is the policymaking tool of the Minister and only the accumulated wisdom, technical knowledge and expertise of the respective functional and professional groups can give this tool the cutting edge.

Point 11 is a reproduction of the recommendations of Public Administration Efficiency Study group conducted by the US AID. These include : (a) Establishing the field units (departments) and corporations as " basic operating units" by investing in them full administrative and financial authority. (b) Ensuring interministerial coordination at all levels of the administration and eliminating unnecessary formal coordination by officers outside the functional cadres. (c) Widening and expanding the decision-making levels and ensuring the effective participation of departmental and corporation heads at the level of the Ministry.(d) Amending schedule 2 of the Rules of Business and thereby authorizing all Class I officers to sign letters and agreements. (e) Vesting all administrative and financial powers relating to appointment of project personnel and purchase of vehicles etc in the project directors to speedily implement approved projects. (f) Adopting tested and appropriate methods of motivation to increase efficiency of officers and employees.

Point 16 of the Charter proposes " management by objectives" and "corporate planning" based on knowledge, experience and expertise of the specialists and experts in the respective fields.

Point 9 proposes the discontinuation of the colonial and autocratic system of coordination of development works now in operation in the districts. In the democratic system of administration each unit of administration must be headed by the elected people's representatives and the development activities must be coordinated by them. This will ensure people's participation and facilitate coordination between ministries. The concept of Deputy Commissioner is an autocratic creation which helped perpetuate the autocratic rule since Ayub Khan. Although there is no government order as such, the Deputy Commissioners styled themselves "Jilla Proshasak" and took over the role of a ruler in the district. To end this autocratic system and to install a democratic pattern, the task of coordination should be vested in the elected public representatives. The Deputy Commissioner is basically a District Magistrate and Collector of land revenue. He has a whole lot of functional duties. Now is the time to take the magistrate and collector to his own function and ensure that hundreds of thousands of court and revenue cases do not remain undecided for decades causing untold miseries to the poor toiling masses and defeating ends of justice.

Point 8 proposes that in line with the functional concept enunciated by the reforms of 1980 creating the reorganized service structure, the civil servants performing the jobs of magistrates in the lower courts and collectors of land revenue be identified with their function. Accordingly the utopia called the BCS (Admn) cadre be functionally identified as BCS (Magistracy) and BCS (Land). This will reflect the actual state of affairs and when such a district official will perform as a magistrate, he will be called District Magistrate and when he will perform as an officer in land matters, he will be designated District Land Officer. Similarly, the Divisional Commissioner will be designated Divisional Commissioner (Magistracy and Land) as these are his specified functions.

We do not understand why one should hesitate to call a spade a spade. We do not understand why a magistrate refuses to be called a magistrate and why a land revenue officer wishes to call himself a "Jilla Proshasak."

POINT-5: Besides the individual functional Ministries and Divisions carrying out separate specialized functions, there is the Prime Ministers Office, the Establishment Ministry and the Cabinet Division which commonly represent all functional Ministries and Divisions and the functional cadres and professional groups belonging to the Bangladesh Civil Service. The Establishment Ministry is the Ministry of all the Civil Servants of the country which means all the 1400,000 people working with the Govt. Of these 135,000 are class I officers. The BCS (Admn), which is one of the 29 functional cadres of the BCS having a role strength of 4400 officers occupies most of the important positions in these common offices, thereby denying these vital organs of the government the specialized knowledge, expertise and talent of the other 130,000 class I officers of the Civil Service. To make these common units representative of the whole lot of government functions and functionaries, it has been proposed that at least 95 % of the positions in these units be filled by officials belonging to the group of other 130,000 Civil Servants.

POINT-7: As declared in the basic principles guiding the Reorganized Service Structure of 1980, Pay level of the officer in the National Pay Scale is the determinant of his status and position. Accordingly, Point 7 contains the proposal for grading the officers on the basis of their scales of pay and revise the warrant of procedure in the sequence.

This is the third instalment of the series to be concluded tomorrow.)

Remembering Syed Badrudduja

by Khondkar Raisuddin

WHEN the sun set in Syed Badrudduja's life on November 18, 1974, it was the coming of twilight in the career of a man who had, in humility and yet with grit, struggled all his life for a people who he felt deserved a better place in the sun. Today, it is time — from the vantage point of history — to observe the essence of the man called Syed Badrudduja.

He was the lone crusader — fighting, suffering and bleeding for the emancipation of the millions of minorities from the clutches of oppression.

In the passing of this noble soul, the Muslims of India lost the most valiant fighter, parted with a life-long friend, a faithful companion, a dependable comrade and a dedicated leader who could smilingly brave all the storms and suffer from the seventh imprisonment even at the ripe old age of 75.

A fearless and indomitable champion of truth as he was, Syed Badrudduja never hesitated to call a spade a spade. In 1962, he declared unhesitatingly on the floor of Lok Sabha that the so-called secularism of India had already killed one million innocent Muslims through 5509 riots.

In 1958, he refused to sign a document which claimed that Kashmir was an integral part of India. Only the Muslim members of Lok Shaba, Rajya Sabha and Bidhan Shavas in India were asked to sign this document. He pointed out that true secularism could never single out only Muslim members and ask them to prove their allegiance by signing an illegal, unjust document. While refuting the charges of anti-state activities raised against him by the then law minister of West Bengal Siddharta Shankar Roy, he had the gutts to declare: "If love of my religion, my community and my culture is a crime, I am a criminal. And I am proud to be branded so".

In 1962, an Indian record was set when he was elected simultaneously to both Lok Sabha and Bidhan Sabha.

In 1969, a broad based committee was formed to pay a befitting tribute to Mirza Asadullah Ghalib, the legendary doyen of Urdu literature on his 100th birth anniversary. The star-studded "Ghalib Centenary Committee" comprised stalwarts from various walks of life like Satyajit Roy, Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Tarashankar Bandopaddaya, Profulla Ghosh, Humayun Kabir, Vivekananda Mukhopadday, Hiren Mukherjee, Indrejit Gupta, Annada Shankar Roy and Ashoke Sen. On the joint proposal of Profulla Ghosh and Satyajit Ray, the towering personality of Syed Badrudduja was unanimously chosen to head the prestigious and historic committee.

That the infamous Holwell Monument in Calcutta, testifying (?) to the so-called "Black Hole Tragedy", was removed through the brave and untiring efforts of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is known to one and all. But most of us are not aware of the fact that after the arrest of Subhas Chandra Bose on July 2, 1940 (on the eve of his proposed march to the Holwell Monument on July 3), the mantle fell on Syed Badrudduja. Day in and day out he organised meetings at the Islamic College campus and also led a mammoth procession to the Holwell Monument site in protest of the nefarious aspersions of Holwell on Nawab Siraj-ud-Doula. Almost all these meetings, and procession, were mercilessly mauled by the then British authorities. Although this infuriated Sher-e-Bangla to a great extent, it was the ceaseless efforts of Syed Badrudduja which were instrumental in persuading Sher-e-Bangla to declare that the Holwell Monument would be removed.

A devout and dedicated Muslim as he had always been, Syed Badrudduja neither criticized other religions nor tolerated any aspersion on their revere personalities. In 1940, an Anglo-Indian member of the Legislative Council cast serious and obscene aspersions on the holy character of Sri Khrishna. Syed Badrudduja rose to the occasion and faced the music with fire and fury. He not only opposed the nefarious activity tooth and nail but also pointed out through a fiery speech that no true follower of the holy Prophet Muhammad (SM.) could ever encourage or tolerate any attempt at maligning the great and noble celebrities of other religions.

Had he done nothing spectacular or sensational, even then he would be remembered for his scintillating, matchless gift of the gab in English, Bengali, Urdu and Persian. Sir Wedgewood Benn compared his oratory in English with those of Edmund Burke and Winston Churchill. The powerful weekly "The Blitz" blessed him with the epithet "Mark Anthony of India" in 1962. At the historic Joint Session of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha held in May, 1964 to pay homage to the memory of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, he spoke in English for four and a half minutes only. The majestic excellence of his eloquence found even Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Dean Rusk and Sir Anthony Eden spell-bound. In Urdu, he was second to none. Even a giant like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad gracefully acknowledged him as his equal. Incidentally, he was the only Bangla speaking person who had the rare honour of becoming the president of Anjuman-e-Taraqqui-e-Urdu. His speeches in Bangla moved and mesmerized all — young and old, wise and ignorant, rich and poor.

An intimate friend of Comrade Muzaffar Ahmed and Kazi Nazrul Islam as he was, Badruddoja played a key role in the treatment of the rebel poet. It was also his sincere gestures which brought Abdul Alim to Calcutta for the first time. Palli-Kavi Jasimuddin, also found a decent footing in life when Badrudduja blessed him with a respectable job. Justice Abdus Sattar, later on the President of Bangladesh, also had the rare privilege of being elevated to the post of Chief Executive Officer in Calcutta Corporation through his affectionate help. No wonder, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibar Rahman himself eulogised this dauntless crusader as "a great leader" and very graciously arranged foreign exchange for his last rites (*Challisha*) in December, 1974.

Syed Badrudduja took leave of the temporal world, as he had come to it, in all the manifestation of simplicity and sufferings. Here was a man! When comes such another!.

To the Editor...

Judiciary

Sir, I congratulate S Y Bakht on his report regarding ignoring of Supreme Court's recommendations by Ministry of Law which appeared in the 27th October issue of your esteemed daily.

I fail to understand how the Chief Justice can take things easy when the Law Minister, allegedly allows irregularities in promotions and transfers showing disrespect to the Supreme Court!

Had things gone so down, the Chief Justice should have resigned in protest than to suffer such humiliation.

God help our judiciary!

Bazlul Karim
Wyre Street, Dhaka.

State of society

Sir, A very unfortunate and heinous incident recently took place in our country — "a male magistrate murdered a female magistrate". I am not going to comment on the affairs which prompted the incident to occur but I would obviously question the state of our social order and discipline in the country's recruitment system. A Magistrate is a responsible and respectable legal body. One cannot even think of a person who is holding the post and status of a magistrate could commit such a crime!

The situation in our society is really grave which calls for immediate review and sanctions.

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