Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Thursday, May 12, 1994

# A National Loss

There is nothing new in question papers getting circulated for a price before the SSC exams of the Comilla Board. Still there is in it this time an interesting new element. In the past the papers used to be leaked in off-city remote centres of Noakhali or Chittagong, the Board getting a reprieve on the good plea that the papers there were the charge of the police and local administration and not theirs. This time the first was to be out on general sale was the English language exam paper. Then came the Religion and the Science papers and Maths. Latest till Tuesday was the Geography paper. Tens of thousands of these papers were sold in Comilla openly. And these hotcakes proved to be no fakes. There has been so far remarkable honesty in the crime.

The Education Minister left very little to conjecture about his intention to teach the striking teachers a good lesson by keeping them out of this year's SSC exam process. We had in these columns said it wouldn't help things if the government went ahead with its SSC programme with the strike situation unresolved, even if the government had the power to somehow complete it. No good could come out of trying to prove that two hundred thousand teachers were being paid for nothing - examinations, not to speak of ordinary daily class teaching, could be held completely without them. That was a foolish thing for

the government to embark on.

It is not Comilla alone that is spoiling the minister's put-up of a valiant show. The Liaison Committee of the striking teachers have been crying hoarse in denouncing the goings on in the name of exams. They accuse that even peons and bearers have been placed to work as invigilators and that there is a collapse in the management of the examination centres. While it would be unreasonable to dismiss the allegations as some exercise in motivated untruth, the nonpartisan national press has recorded that primary teachers, replacing the striking high school teachers as invigilators, were proving quite inadequate for the job all over the country. That coupled with the absence of centre inspection has led to copying on a very vast scale. The lax atmosphere in the centres has given rise to interesting cases of violation of the exams such as taking away blank answer scripts to home to write them out there (Gaurnadi and Mehendiganj) to a violent mob attack on a Netrokona centre in which 12 including a magistrate were injured. Thousands of examinees have already been ex-

pelled from centres spread throughout the nation. Absence from the examination halls of renowned, recognised and respected teachers has no doubt spurred the copying mentality to making a field day of the whole thing.

The government and indeed the nation was very painfully finding, through a trial and error process, a way out of the menace of copying. The education managers' obsession with copying gave birth to the demon that eats up education namely the objective type questions and their bank. In the wake came coaching centres and school teachers 'practising' education at home rather than teaching in the classroom. A billion Taka business was born to bleed the poor parents dry — all to beat copying.

Now back to copying we go with a bang. How much time will it take to rein in the prancing copy-horse? The strike would end, very soon for very compelling reasons, and teachers would go back to their classes what wouldn't so readily go back to normal is the temper of education.

### The Looming Threat

The closure of as many as 21,512 looms last year in just one district should be a good enough indication of the plight of the country's weavers. In fact, this number of closed looms in Siraigan District may look somewhat inflated compared to that in other districts. But the cumulative effects of the government's wrong policy, lack of capital and the clandestine infiltration into the local market of smuggled clothes have been too strong for the weavers to stay competitive. In their death throes for a long time, the looms have finally gone out of operation en masse.

Not surprisingly, the early sign was quite clear. Over the last ten years, the weavers throughout the country have been facing a diminishing prospect. During this period in the northern districts alone about 47,000 looms have been forced to shut down. Other parts of the country are not expected to present any different picture. If the process continues, there is no knowing where the weavers will end up ultimately. Currently, however, the signal looks quite ominous for this traditional artisan class.

The sheer size of the population turning unemployed with the closure of the vast number of looms is indeed frightening. If on an average four people are working for a loom, about two lakh people have found themselves out of employment in the northern districts during the period under scrutiny. In the whole country this number is going to be quite a substantial portion of the total population. If the number of their dependents is taken into account, we know what a severe economic repercussion it will have on the

closed society of rural Bangladesh. When the emphasis ought to be on the creation of jobs in villages and also on the revamping of the existing ones, the government seems to have failed to grasp the import of such a development. Weavers or farmers going out of work surely bodes ill for the entire country. They are still the most productive class of people. They need no special favour. Just a fair deal for them would be enough to stay in the business. A distorted and

myopic perception has been at the root of all their problems.

The distress call of the weavers can be turned into a rallying cry for buoyancy and economic health if only they are allowed to enjoy an unmanipulated market and some initial capital support. Grameen Udyog initiated by the Grameen Bank is poised to be a sterling success in this area. With indigenous skill and expertise, the weavers have worked wonders. Grameen Check developed by our local weavers can match the best quality of such material produced anywhere in the world. Yes, the comparison is in terms of texture, colour and durability. This should be an eye opener for the government. If the potential of our artisans could be fully realised, the country could have recorded tremendous economic success.

#### Need to Build Political Institutions OLITICAL turmoil even persistent turmoil in new or vintage de-

convincing victory.

ssarily imply that Athe-nian Fortunately, none of these born democracy is at peril instabilities are interpreted as The fact that Bangladesh threats to democracy but Awami League (AL) is willfully proves how strong and stable making it difficult for Begum democracies are. Khaleda Zia to simplistically Pakistan, Nepal and Bangpass her five year term, cannot

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In recent years, India, Pa

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the White House in Wa-

shington are all experiencing

massive political turmoils and

yet, able to sustain democra-

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Japan's tenure of succes-

sive prime ministers are re-

cently far from what the

Japanese constitution has writ-

ten down. Japan's annual

budget and major reform bills

such as: income tax reform

bill, lie untouched in the Ja-

panese parliament. And, since

the past five decades, Italian

governments have been the

most unstable and turbulent.

Itali's newly elected Berlus-

coni is yet to be sworn in as

the prime minister despite his

American citizens.

since 1991.

ladesh - the emerging capital markets and political democracies do not have established institutions and therefore, any anti-government agitations are believed to be threats to democracy and, conclusively preached to be so by the ruling governments. But, if we have a constitution to guide the affairs of the country, the AL's ambition to pull down the ruling government is perfectly constitutional. We do lack viable institutions but it is the ruling coterie obstructing the functioning of such institutions such as, an independent judiciary, free press and TV, a deregulated economy etc. As per the Bangladesh Constitution, an election will be held once a government is brought down and a new one is sworn in, and in all probabilities, it is a repetitive cycle. AL's repeated boycott of parliamentary sessions is no alarm and also perfectly constitutional. Frequent boycotts could well be an alternative to frequent hartals. Street agitations or parliament boycotts may immobilise and demolish Begum Zia's government only to bring in the same

by Nizam Ahmad

government or a new one is a constitutional - institutional democracy. If we dislike this democratic system then are yet to know what democ-

After two or three quick successive national elections. both AL and BNP will learn to adopt wiser means to tackle their inter-party rivairies. They may learn to sort out their differences across the table. However, these seemingly disturbing political battles are fair and normal so long, they are not fought with guns and grenades and, so long some

breakaway military factions do not militarily intervene to bring in order and stability. Bangladesh would not be politically, morally, and ideologically bankrupt and the voiceless majority reduced to abject poverty, had the system of BKSAL pulled down by street agitations and discontent short or prolonged. Political interventionists like economic interventions by authoritative governments do not provide answers, well-being and solutions. If BKSAL was wrong, the street agitations would have given ample proof to the then leadership to change ways. Mass movements were not militarily crushed by Banga-

bandhu and neither did he

even consider surrounding himself with tanks and arti-

lieries like the successful dic-

tatorships in various countries. Revolutions are in a way a burst of reforms but the power remains concentrated in the hands of a few and therefore such revolutions, bloody or bloodless are self destructive and quick to disintegrate. The survival of a democratic order however ugly or extravagant. is more important than trying to preserve a full term of an elected government freed of criticism, shifting coalitions

and violent demonstrations. If hartals are unpopular or if they disrupt plaque laying grandeur, the AL will once again, sorrowfully read the people's verdict this coming national election. Laying foundation stone is no indication of economic activity. There are thousands of other political and deregulative economic reforms the BNP government must push through or, acquire the skills and the right cabinet capable of restructuring the worn out system.

BNP's tendency to do things alone and to monopolise political power are the major roadblocks to political and economic progress and stability. Ministerial control of TV radio and a section of the press thwarts democracy and

misuses people's wealth for one party. A free press is a well laid system of check and balance in a democracy. The government is foolishly stalling the passage of the independent judiciary bill in the parliament. Investments or a renewed international confidence in Bangladesh can only occur if basic institutions such as, a independent judiciary are know to function.

Simply speaking, India's

liberal economic reforms and foreign investments would yield desired results because India has built in institutional infrastructure. China does not. Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong may see a outflow of foreign or local investments if political institutions do not complement economic liberalisations. Chinese heads are threatened to be chopped off if prices are not controlled and Singaporeans are jailed for predicting GDP figures. If SAARC nations can become truly democratic and liberal economies at the same time, we could be what the Pacific rim had been in the 1980s.

Bangladesh parliament is still not institutionally perfect . It does not sit like all parliaments in reputed democracies. Like all other democratic institutions such as, the judiciary the executive, the press, the free market, parliaments too must work every day barring

welfare of the people. Our intelligentsia should

normal holidays to oversee day

to day administration and the

attack our imperfect system and not only the imperfect heads of political parties. It will do more good if the intelligentsia highlight major flaws and short comings of our institutions and not the persons. Once the institutions are sound, the politicians can be attacked to let the system do its work of pulling them down. The AL should first build a strong institutional agenda such as, a free press, an independent judiciary, a decontrolled BTV, a deregulated market to achieve and ensure prosperity and individual liberty etc. SAARC's SAPTA can be redefined as a free trading association instead of preferential trading. This is a difficult task as SAARC bureaucrats will hardly relinquish their age-old grip on their respective economies. The bureaucrats have deep roots and wide connections to defy and defeat,

politicians. Let these powerful institutions correct, punish or promote political ideas and leaders or let them be merely removed and forgotten. Nevertheless, hats off to The Daily Star for bringing forward stimulating discussions essential to emerging and developed democracies.

The writer is a veteran political activist and a free market advocate.

# Towards a New Professionalism in the Civil Service

by Syed Naquib Muslim

HE Picture of Bangladesh in terms of Human Development parameters calls for a readjustment of the present role of Civil Service. The civil servants are to play a new role to meet the challenges of high population growth rate, low literacy rate, high infant mortality rate, low nutrition status of children and women, low rate of employment. In fact, the civil servants of today have to develop a new professionalism to grow capability to meet these new challenges.

Normal professionalism asks how can the control of governmental machinery be straightened to ensure proper implementation of centrally (top-down approach) determined development plans. Whereas the new professionalism asks how the conditions of people particularly the poor and disadvantaged can be improved and how their status can be raise. Normal professionalism deals with social development primarily as a matter of increasing social services (health, education etc.) budgets and strengthening the existing social services delivery mechanisms; new professionalism is equally concerned with the social needs — but it considers empowerment as the central issue of social development. The new professionalism seeks to motivate the civil servants to help the poor and the powerless as directly as possible - to help them organize, to drag them out of the ugly clutches of poverty and powerlessness. As David Korten puts it, "Normal professionalism assumes the government is the lead actor in every significant development action. New professionalism looks to the government more as an enabler", the role of which is to encourage the poor people to take the lead

#### through capacity-building. Pro-poor Civil Service

For a modern government, a pro-poor civil service is a practical necessity. This entails development of new package of skills and a new perception or outlook. With the change in environment and of situation and rise in the level of people's consciousness, traditional roles of bureaucracy and of politics call for comprehensive revision Both administration and politics need to have a uniform development orientation of a new variety as discussed above.

istration which so long negated the emergence of the poor in the decision-making process on the matters that concern them is hardly suitable to meet the needs of the day; there is a general feeling that if a modern government is to accomplish is multiple developmental goals, it has to build a creative civil service and develop in it a new professionalism. In the present context, the members of bureaucracy are not only to play a regulatory role but also a responsive role. But the question is — how to make bureaucracy more responsive to the people, especially the disadvantaged and distressed citizenry of Bangladesh?

Basic Change There is, therefore, a need for a basic change in the perspective on the part of the administrators and policymakers. But how can this new professionalism be attained? This can be developed by building in them an analytical framework so that they are able to appreciate the human development dynamics Training is recognised today as one of the powerful instruments of moulding the attitude of bureaucrats or civil servants in response to the changing needs of the society. Thus effectiveness of the government is related to the efficiency and creativity of bureaucracy Training has a substantial role

to play in this regard. Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC), the premier seat of public administration training in the country, is sensitive to the developments that are occurring inside and beyond Bangladesh. the Centre has been playing since 1984 an instrumental and pro-active role in shaping the traditional administrative system into a development-oriented one. It has been acting as an agent of change by providing new knowledge, new information and current technology to the members of the civil service. It is committed to making a kind of bureaucracy which is flexible, adaptive and innovative. It is helping the government in evolving techniques and methods that facilitate effective implementation of its micro

The curricula of the Centre's various training courses are designed according to the training needs of the civil servants. Course contents are continually revised and up-

and macroplans.

dated in view of the recommendations, needs and demands placed by the participants of the courses. Among various learning elements, analytical skills, public policy formulation/analysis, techniques of budgeting decisionmaking, skills of coordination, project management techniques, administrative communication, and resource mobilisation strategies deserve special mention. Methods such as lecture, panel discussion, syndicate discussion, casestudy, field trip are employed

## istration in development.

for impartation of training.

Thrust of almost all courses

are the technology of adminis-

tration and the role of admin-

Removing Confusion Today the Centre is designing training programmes not only for the government officials but also for the NGO officials who are working with the former as equal partners of development. The Centre works as a catalytic agent to bridge the gulf between GOs and NGOs that are working in the area of poverty alleviation, disaster management and childwoman development. Through administration of various training programmes, workshops and seminars, BPATC is striving to remove the confusion and misunderstanding that ex-

ist between GOs and NGOs. The Centre is particularly alive to the problems that impede poverty alleviation process in this country. In August 1990, the Centre organized a three-day workshop on Poverty Alleviation Programmes & Alternative Delivery Systems" in collaboration with APDC under the purview of a regional research project. Eight regional countries namely Nepal, India. Thailand, Indonesia, Shri Lanka, China, and the Philippines participated in this project. The focus of the research was on the design and delivery of the poverty alleviation programmes for the capacity building of the poor. Another seminar entitled "Poverty Alleviation & Land Management" is scheduled to

#### be organized this month. Accountability and Transparency

An accountable and a transparent administrative system is the common expectation of all and sundry. Training contents, workshops, syndicate exercises are routinely addressing the issues of administrative accountability and transparency. The trainee-civil servants however feel that unless elected public representatives at various levels are equally injected with these new values, the former will not be able to practise what they learn at BPATC.

The traditional civil service is characterised by lack o team spirit and open communication between superordinate and the subordinate, policy-makers and bureaucrats specialists and generalists. BPATC has taken up the critical task of providing a course called Team-building and Coordination course for field

level officers at regular intervals. The field-level civil servants and elected representatives take part in this training on the same platform, discuss multifarious problems fieldlevel in an open mind and climate. Confusion, conflict and misunderstanding that remain unresolved among the diverse groups of development actors are smoked out through free exchange of views, ideas and experiences. BPATC has the credit of creating such a healthy forum. However, the number of the politicians or elected representatives participating in the course is very insignificant. This reflects lack of interest of the local level politicians in orienta tion/training programmes offered by the Centre. This course which has by now taken the shape of a workshop administered through an unobtrusive learning by doing approach. What is therefore needed is to increase the proportion of representation of the politicians so that the goals

#### of the course are realised.

**Informal Coordination** Mal-coordination at various levels is a barrier to the accomplishment of governmental goals. Experience suggests that informal coordination is often more speedy, effective and sustainable than the formal one. BPATC has been able to create a network of informal coordination among the senior, mid-level, entry-level officials of the government. Officials coming from diverse jobs, disciplines and workplaces stay together in the same campus, share views, information, experiences, and ideas in both formal and in-

formal, academic and non-academic situations. After the conclusion of each course, the officials leave the Centre with a healthy and friendly interpersonal relationship appreciating each other's problems which ultimately helps in building a lasting coordinative spirit

among themselves. Participation in the form of voluntary contribution of labour in development activities is one of the features of any modern government. BPATC has incorporated participatory development as one of the basic components of foundation training curriculum. They receive both theoretical and practical orientation on the participatory rural development. On return from field work, participants are encouraged to take part freely in discussions on the issues of participatory development in the light of their practical experiences. During their stay in the campus they put in their energies, ideas in the development work of BPATC itself and also of nearby village areas. Through these learning strategies, the fresh recruits of civil service are brought closer to the people, ivory-tower administrators are brought down-to-earth, and they are given to understand that they are no more the masters of people; they are rather their friends or partners in the de-

Rational Policies

Development cannot take

place by chance or in a vacuum. It occurs through formulation of rational policies that guide both the political and administrative behaviors in the country. BPATC has been organising various seminars and workshops where current policies and programmes formulated by the government are discussed, analysed, and evaluated. Recommendations are put forward to the relevant agencies of the government for their revision or adjustment, if considered necessary Moreover, BPATC has been conducting syndicates, casestudies, research projects in senior and mid-level courses on various policy areas of the government or national or regional issues such as reorganisation, structural adjustment, poverty alleviation, human development, population and family welfare, decentralization, deregulation, market economy, privatisation etc. The objectives are not simply to encourage intellectual exercises but also to measure strengths and weaknesses of those policies or strategies and provide helpful recommendations to the government for improving the efficacy of its public management system.

The writer is a member of the BCS Administration.

### OPINION

# "Politicians must Change Pattern of Protest"

Md Moksudur Rahman

I heartily congratulate Mr Mahbubur Rahman, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries for his deeply appreciable observation "Politicians must change pattern of protest", published in your esteemed newspaper on 7th April. This observation had reference to programme of 'Secretariat Siege' called by the opposition parties on that

Mr Mahbubur Rahman has correctly advised the politicians to change their 'behavioural pattern' "if they really want a congenial investment atmosphere in the country." He has also rightly referred to the photograph published in a Japanese newspaper showing the demonstration at Dhaka demanding for declaration of Ahmadiya community members as non-Muslims, as having a negative impact on the Japanese investor's about the investment climate in

Bangladesh. Will the politicians pay heed to the advice tendered in public interest? The answer, perhaps, is 'no', because lust for power and often jealousy move them more towards such measures as to topple the government than to the uncertain prospect of coming to power by following democratic means. But the politicians must remember that end does not justify the means. The end and the means adopted to achieve it both must equally be justified vis-a-vis the rules of law and morality. The programme of gherao

of the Secretariat was designed to obstruct the government in the discharge of its functions for the period of the siege. This is undoubtedly against public interest, apart from the consequences following therefrom. The elected government has a tenure of office and it should be allowed to function for that period also in public interest.

Some days back there was an attempt by some leaders of

the opposition parties to justify the siege of the Secretariat with reference to Articles 36 and 37 of the Constitution of Bangladesh. Article 36 gives fundamental right to every citizen to move freely, and to reside and settle in any place in Bangladesh. Article 37 grants right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms. Both these rights are subject to reasonable restriction imposed by law. The government has not only the right but also the duty to carry on its functions in the office. By these two articles the citizens have not been given

rights to obstruct the functions

of the government.

The objects of the programme of siege of the Secretariat were said to be two: (1) To force the government to agree to hold next parliamentary election under a neutral government. The election is two years away, and it cannot be done in that way without giving a go-by to the constitutional provision about the Election Commission; (2) To cancel Magura-2 bye-election result. The leaders of the application parties are supposed to know the forum established by law for redressing the grievances, if any, concerning the election of a member of the Parliament. The Election Commission has become functous officio after the gazette notification of the election re-

The whole process of agitation is against the rule of law and is sure to mislead the people. After the programme of gherao there was the call for hartals in protest against the consequences of the siege. The leaders responsible for these programmes are deliberately leading the country towards chaos and not progress. Everything cannot be allowed to pass on the pretext of demo-

cratic right. (The writer is a former Judge of the High Court Division.)

#### Indo-Bangla accord on army training?

A colonial pattern of admin-

Sir, I was surprised to see the following news item in the Khaleez Times on 1st May, 1994:

"INDO-BANGLA ACCORD ON ARMY TRAINING : New Delhi — India and Bangladesh have agreed to enhance armyto-army level cooperation, particularly in the training field, according to chief of the Indian Army staff, Gen B C Joshi. The army chief, just back from a six-day visit to Bangladesh, said the armies of the two countries were partners in progress and poised to meet challenges in the coming century jointly". -

It is to be noted that the Chief of the Indian Army Staff expressed "to meet challenges in the coming century jointly". What did he mean by that? Has Bangladesh indicated any desire to participate in the subcontinental defence issues 'jointly' with India?

We ought to take into account that such issues have serious foreign policy consequences with friendly relations amongst the countries of the

It is expected that Bangladesh should clarify her position for her people with regard to such future expectation of India.

Rear Admiral M H Khan Former Chief of the Naval Staff

#### "Effective External Audit ..."

Sir, Your post-editorial article by Mr S B Chaudhuri — "Effective External Audits Help Banks Do Better" - in May 5 issue caught my attention. While it is greed that effective audits, external or internal, will help any organisation, including banks, do bet, ter, it is understood that external audit only verifies the past records and performance of an organisation by an outsider professional. In banks and other government/semigovernment organisations, professionals are recruited for its legal, engineering, medical and other specialised departments. These professionals report to the management and advise the management to

take timely corrective measures. Unfortunately, in most of the banks, governments and financial institutions, professionals are not recruited for the posts of Chief Accountants or Internal Auditors. These posts are manned by bankers generalists under the guise of designations as DGM-Accounts audit etc. The services of Chartered

Accountant as internal auditors should be utilised to coutinely investigate the shortcomings and accounting flaws and also the delinquent accounts. The internal auditors investigation report may be submitted directly to the Chief Executive and for ensuring the internal auditors' independence, he may be placed, as in other companies, directly under the CE. This will not only act as a check on the employees of the financial institutions, it will also help to a great extent the effective utilisation of the depositors' money and will in the long run reduce the government's regular instalments of capital infusion to the na-

tionalised financial institutions.

Chartered Accountants should

therefore be recruited and

placed by the financial institutions in the accounts, finance, internal audit and MIS departments without further de-

A N A H Siddigui, FCA 52, Motijheel CA, Dhaka.

#### Confronting hijackers

Sir, A news item was published in different newspapers on 25th April, 94, stating that a lady school teacher overpowered four hijackers single handedly. Undoubtedly it was an act of extraordinary courage and she was very lucky to escape unhurt. But was it very wise to con-

front so many miscreants barehanded? She may have lost her life in the debut. Life is very precious, we should not jeopardize it by acting rashly. We all want to bring culprits

to justice but we should assess the situation and act accordingly. And the society must stand by the side of the victim in all such situations everywhere on time to save her/him from the miscreants.

Nur Jahan East Nasirabad, Chittagong