What We Stood for

ON ADMINISTRATION

Palliatives won't Do

1-1-94

The Prochrichi-BCS (admn) conflict, deepseated as it is, cannot be addressed tactically, it has to be sorted out professionally. The facts have to be faced. Prochrichi's principal demand related to rationalising the working equations between the specialists and the generalists. The BCS (admn) cadre officials, trained in magistracy and revenue matters, wield authority over the members of specialised cadres. The DCs and SDOs have worked as chiefs among equals at the local levels and, in the national secretariat, barring a few specialists who became secretaries, the officials of BCS (admn) cadre including the erswhile CSP officials enjoyed primacy at the various coordination meetings. Their 'supremacy' can be put out of the way if we succeed in associating elected public representatives directly with administration.

A Case for Local Govt

15-12-94

Since the commission had a majority representation from the government side, the authority in fact is contradicting its own principle stand. The sidetracking of the two most important recommendation has been done perhaps to serve some narrow ends. But any radical change demands a bold vision and rising above any parochial considerations. Creation of almost independent, self-supporting local governments could take the country several steps ahead. Today the wind of self-governance is sweeping most part of the globe. In the United States the Republican Party made their electoral gains on this issue. We have dabbled at it but failed to take advantage of the situation. But there is no doubt we shall have to go for such an effective bottom upwards administrative system.

ON JUDICIARY

Supreme Court Impasse

8-2-1994

We commend the SC Bar Association for taking the action that they did. They upheld the position of the courts and enhanced the prestige of the Chief Justice. The government also deserves credit by not taking the issue as a challenge against itself, but as a mistake that needed to be corrected. It was this maturity of action that led the government to be flexible, and take accommodative steps, that it is reportedly taking.

The main issue, however, remains to be that of independence of the judiciary. The current administration's control over the judges leads to the type of situations that we just faced. Why should a popular government be afraid of setting up a truly independent judiciary? In fact, such a judiciary, protected from the machinations of the power of the day, can become the best guarantor for the protection of our Constitution and the guardian of all civil liberties, democratic norms and individual human rights.

ON ECONOMY

Stability at the Cost of Growth

15-1-94

The situation almost seems beyond redemption. As usual, investments under the Annual Development Programme (ADP) last year, failed to meet the benchmark. The marginal improvement in the level of investment last year actually came through the contribution of the private sector. It appears that we are on the way to see a repeat performance this year too. The utilization of the current ADP in the first five months up to November was only sixteen per cent of the total allocation — actually two per cent lower than the corresponding period last year.

Stockmarket Base

31-3-1994

This is also the time for the DSE to manage its own affairs in a way that would strengthen investor confidence in its dealings. The DSE should streamline its procedures, update its listing and trading rules — make its operations fully transparent. Apropos the Security and Exchange Commission, the DEC chairman is reported to have remarked that the SEC should better concentrate its role on promotional activities.

Shift in ADB's Lending Policy

14-5-1994

It is presumed that the new lending policy will not apply specifically to its window for soft loans as well, namely, the Asian Development Fund (ADF) which benefits the poorer countries like Bangladesh most. However, replenishment of the ADF would come up in about a couple of years time. Poorer nations should brace themselves from now for facing stricter conditionalities in their future borrowings from the ADF.

ON INDUSTRY & ENTERPRISE

Paper Mills Go for Green Jute

20-6-94

Time and again nature has been proving most gracious in her bounty for Bangladesh. Bangladesh's liberation war, as if, celebrated by nature by gifting the new nation one of her finest and purest gas deposits. Soon after even oil was struck. From aeons ago Bangladesh had soil that yielded the richest crops, waters that reared the biggest harvest of sweetwater fishes and a sea that gave gems of marine wealth. But by some strange vanishing magic — these bounties have always come to nought.

The misgivings get a great boost when we take up the price offered for green jute, Tk 20 a maund at the purchasing centres. How was this figure worked out?

ON EDUCATION

Ekushey, and Education for All

21-2-1994

Within the broad area of RHD, the goal of Education for All suits the aim and the spirit of Ekushey. As we have said earlier, and in articles in this page and elsewhere, that our claim for respect for our mother tongue rings hollow with nearly 70 per cent of our people not being able to read or write. It is not only the fact that the vast majority of our people cannot read and write, attendant with it, is the problem of the impact of such a large segment of the population not being able to partake of the creative regeneration of our language and culture. For the safeguarding and development of the language, for which the martyrs of '52 laid down their lives, we need to devote our full energy and strength to the spread of education.

An Inordinately Unfortunate Note

28-4-1994

If the government indeed feels it is going to give what the teachers want, why not make the best use of the gift, by presenting it in a manner that can allow the Liaison Committee leadership to end the strike? Governance should be no place for ego contests.

These squabbles over pay and allowances, job security etc. will come and go. What will remain for long if not for ever, is the question of the quality of education. Can the teachers raise themselves by their own bootstraps to add quality to what they are doing at present? The teachers, as if as a class, are not great readers and they tend to be learners as soon as they land a job. These completely disqualify them from entering a classroom and standing on the pulpit.

ON CAMPUS

But We Must Hope

24-9-94

But thank you all Mr VC and the leaders who helped, this has been a big step forward. This may not stop one single shot of the automatics but tremendous moral ground has been gained which is sure to inhibit adventurist gun-toting done without the command of the hierarchy reaching to the apex of political leadership. And the whole gamut of any hierarchical control should now be much more amenable to the moral proddings of the September 17 decision.

ON GOVERNANCE

Participatory Planning

18-4-1994

Participation in the planning process will raise expectations among the people consulted that the specific needs of the community would be met through future development work in the region. Then again, a project may benefit the community at large but hurt some of its members. People so affected would expect adequate compensation. Therefore, it is all the more important to associate the community as a whole, actively and effectively, in the execution of development projects.

How Justice Suffers

30-12-94

This is exactly why people lose confidence in the dispensation of justice. Plagued by such a mortifying sense of insecurity, we as a society get diminished. Undesirable political clouts and administrative corruptions are at the root. To make society run such political and administrative aberrations must be done away with.

ON LAW AND ORDER

No to Acid Throwing

13-1-94

Acid throwing appears to have staged a comeback after quite a welcome respite. The fact that its spree once took this society of ours by storm should be a rude reminder for everyone, particularly the government. No palliatives but the provision for capital punishment for the crime — made earlier on — was actually responsible for reducing the incidents of acid throwing. Armed with this legal provision, judges were able to mete out the harshest punishment possible under the relevant act. And that seems to have made all the differences in the amorous advances of the depraved Romeos.

Doing away with Toll Collection

3-2-1994

An administrative reform on the one hand and a campaign against all kinds of corruption and bullying with provision for stringent measures on the other, will be necessary for coping with the challenge. In fact, the style of governance has to be a happy mixture of firmness and persuasion towards sanity. It is time that the political leaders did not ask from their followers what they themselves cannot practise and did not practise what they cannot ask the people to do. So long the preaching and practice have shown no sign of coming to a meeting-point. The leaders must not give any reason for the common man to be disillusioned. Its debilitating impact is what produces the anti-social gangs.

A Despicable Excess

20-2-1994

A mere 500 metres away there stood the fully manned Daukdandi police station. Police stood dispassionately aloof. Not that the thana did not have an inkling of the attack. Perhaps they kept away because they had foreknowledge of who were going to be involved. The police will find it difficult to free themselves from such a serious accusation.

ON POLITICS

Magura Poll Lessons

22-3-1994

We should say all sides behaved irresponsibly insofar as maintaining a congenial atmosphere went. To be frank and, strictly speaking, it is the much talked-about code of conduct that was ironically least operational on the election day. The allegations and, on some points, counter-allegations of mob attacks on polling booths, kidnapping of MPs and stuffing of votes and raising of barricades prove that despite the presence of many ministers and political leaders in Magura the incidents of violence could not be averted.

A Sad Day in Our Politics

10-4-1994

In the tragedy ridden history of our beloved country, we had seen many things, but this takes the cake in sordidness. The preference for political expediency, in place of truth and ethics, as shown by these two political parties, especially the BNP, which used the state power (like helicopter, TV, PID etc) to make its designs effective, has created a revulsion among the public. To what depths of opportunistic and mercenary abyss are we to lower ourselves just to stick to power, or on the other hand, in an attempt to seize it?

Diminishing the JS

16-8-94

That elan and the esprit that led it foundered on shoals and rocks of narrowness of vision bordering on petty egotism sliding frequently into regular meanness while the rosebud of democracy was let to wilt all the time. There is no use here apportioning the responsibility of being the greater sinner among the two — for the record is clear and open for all in the nation to know the truth. What is indubitably certain is that the talk of victory for democracy is ringing hollow with every promulgation of an ordinance and every passing day of the boycott. As much as it will take two to end this boycott, it will need a full House to stop the ordinances.

The Will to Solve

26-12-94

We have held the view, and reiterate it on this occasion, that sufficient ground exists for a compromise, without the loss either of their core position, or of their 'face'. All we need is for the two parties to calmly take stock of the proposals at hand, and we think a way out exist within them. Now that the opposition has made it clear that the caretaker government will be in place after, and only after, the term of office of the present government expires, we think that the Prime Minister should not have any more reason to reject it. In fact we think that such an arrangement, if adopted by consensus in the parliament, and for the next four elections, will help solve the question of free and fair election for the foreseeable future.

ON WOMEN'S RIGHT

Fillip for Fight against Women's Repression

11-1-94

Gone are the days when the moneyed ones spent sizeably on works on public good. Our whole educational infrastructure is a result of such charities and endowments. For long four decades, endowments and institution of awards and prizes aimed at promoting the cause of a better society have been tapering into almost nothing. The Nurjahan prize should help in changing that. One expects the other business houses to take theirs from Delta Life.

Woman-bashing must Stop

9-7-94

This is the picture of a house of horror — if ever there was one. Is this the Bengal we have known for centuries? Where has the proverbial humanism of the Bengalee gone?

The society is breaking fast with no sign of any healthy replacement. All encompassing and dehumanising poverty is pushing women out of the household and into not only the streets but to invade man's traditional preserves. Lakhs of them are now being gainfully employed and every day better openings for them are being offered specially in education. The male bastion of power and born-superiority are being challenged seriously.

Women are waking up to their rights as human beings. *Fatwabazi*, far more than sporadic cases of murder and violence inflicted on woman, is becoming, with every passing day, the philosophical arm and justification for thwarting the women from coming to claim their share in the family and in the society at large. Some mullahs as derided by Kazi Nazrul, are trying to turn back the hands of the clock of history — and they are doing that against justice. Our government has so far allowed them a long leash, for reasons best known to them. Giving them any further rope will surely contribute capitally to the undoing of the society as well as the government itself.

An Historic Judgement

24-2-1994

Courts of law can influence the social and political unfolding of a nation even after keeping well within its cloistered existence. The best example of that is the history of US. But courts cannot do that all on their own, someone must go to them seeking justice. That the Nurjahan case was taken to court and the court could come up with an historically important judgement was all primarily due to women's rights activists who would not let this pass as do scores and scores of similar cases in a year. It is they who brought the sinister thing to the attention of the whole nation and went to court. The nation's thanks are due to the activists of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and its president Begum Sufia Kamal.

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and
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