

Dhaka under Siege

Who governs in Dhaka? Government? Perhaps, but very very marginally indeed. Hanif? Perhaps ceremonially only and his writ runs at best within the municipal conservancy world. Then who? The answer is known to all who know Dhaka. Mastani rules Dhaka as no other person or agency does. The persons who constitute this supra-governmental force currently overtaking the city's social, economic and individual life have very nearly been named by a national vernacular daily. Are the mastans shaking because of the screaming disclosure? Far from it, they are wallowing in the glory of snug security offered by their political patrons.

Violent incidents ending so frequently in death are only the tip of iceberg that the hold terrorists exert over Dhaka is. The Bengalees as a race are myth-prone — and they believe they are a volatile lot of people. Politically perhaps. But in all other spheres they are more docile than the sheep. And this is specially so before the newfangled terrorists called mastans or rangbaz. The whole Dhaka populace is lying supine before the mastan clout. As long as this continues the citizens of the capital city wouldn't know democracy or even the independence ushered in by the Liberation War. And life in Dhaka would for many be reduced to no better than life in the Gulag.

If things were what they are supposed to be, the press disclosure of about 250 terrorists holding the 7 million Dhakaites in hostage would have sent a shiver down the spine of not police, but the reigning politicians. For it has been made out unambiguously that the police know their prey well but it is the politicians who stand in the way of nabbing the terrorists, prosecute them and free Dhaka of this present unwholesome siege.

All the political parties have grown a stake in mastani — and they all share in the guilt of undermining government, governance and society — with those in power taking the lion's share. If the next government, whoever that be, tries to improve upon this present one's performance here is a surefire area to strike at. The politicians' mastan connection must go before we can address the problem of making both the underworld and the police behave and reform.

UN Reform

A 17-point draft declaration framed for adoption by the Special General Assembly has underscored the need for, among others, reforming the United Nations and expansion of the Security Council. The calls for reform of the world's premier body have come both from the developing and developed countries. Apparently the two sides have their own special reasons to see that changes are made in the working of the UN. While the rich world is concerned about reducing the expenses of the UN operations, the developing countries are interested in the reform delivering better and effective international help and services to support their development programmes.

There is, however, no dispute over a more representative UN Security Council. The countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America feel that a few privileged countries enjoy a position from where they can easily impose their wills on others, control the world order and unfairly dictate terms in any dispute or agreement. Their representation, they believe, will rein in such a unilateral decision-making process.

Underlying the apparent contradiction is one agreed principle which is none other than a proper use of the UN funds. The body admittedly is in its worst financial crisis and some of the largest contributors are faulted for not paying their dues on schedule.

The reform and expansion of the SC will be worthwhile if the UN can curtail its operating cost but maintain and even expand its international obligations such as peace-keeping and supporting the development programmes in the poor nations. At a time when nations are opening to the outside world, financing — rather than withdrawal of support — will prove crucial for the progress of the international community as a whole.

Road Safety

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) organised a two-day international seminar on road safety. The very initiative is praiseworthy. Bringing in experts from UK and the World Bank, and going through a two-day discussion process to chalk out our own plan of action, is quite a dramatic way to start the process of public awareness building at the national level. One wonders if such an international seminar would have served our needs better if it were held after a whole series of district and national level conferences.

The most important likely gain of the seminar will be the road safety policy that is expected to emerge from it. The policy is to be based on the experiences of other countries who have made impressive progress on road safety measures.

We would like to underscore that our roads are used by both motorised and non-motorised vehicles. This makes for a discrepancy in speed which creates a whole range of problems not existing in other countries. This, however, is true for city traffic, and not so much valid for highway and intercity and inter-district roads.

We would like to caution BRTA that preparing a good plan is far from enough. What is crucial is implementing it. Bangladesh has an impressive record of preparing plans, and an abysmal one of implementing them. However, we commend BRTA for focusing on road safety issues which are getting increasingly out of hand. The fatal and serious-injury road accidents are on a dangerous rise, which makes the BRTA's initiative a most timely one. We hope government gives the requisite administrative and financial support to BRTA to realise its goals.

On Good Governance from Above

The government may involve donors with sincere motives in its task to formulate a good governance programme and a plan of implementation tailored to the country's needs

OF late both bilateral as well as multilateral donor organisations around the world are expressing widespread concern for good governance in developing countries. But there is clearly no unanimity among the donors on the definition of good governance. Multilateral organisations generally equate good governance with sound economic management based on accountability, participation, predictability and transparency. Here accountability refers to building government's capacity through better public sector management, improved public enterprise and financial management and reform of the civil service system; participation means greater involvement of beneficiaries and affected groups in the development planning and implementation process; empowerment of local government, greater role for NGOs and increased public sector/private sector interface; predictability implies building legal frameworks in order to minimise economic uncertainty and arbitrariness so that a market-based economic system can operate smoothly; and finally transparency underscores the need for information openness. The basic assumption here is that through these four instruments, government will better perform its expected role in what is essentially a market econ-

omy. The role includes these functions: (a) ensuring macro-economic stability; (b) developing infrastructure; (c) providing public goods; (d) preventing market failures; and (e) promoting equity.

However, there are bilateral donors who are not satisfied with this narrow economic definition of good governance. They would like at least five more elements to be included as an essential part of good governance, namely democratisation, human rights, the rule of law, cuts in military expenditure and probity. As concepts, these may appear quite desirable, but in real-life situation, these may be utilised for the wrong purpose. Indeed, there have been numerous attempts to impose this brand of good governance on developing countries in the recent years, with varying results and responses.

The developing countries are obviously unhappy with the growing concern for good governance by the donor community, whether of the economic or political variety. They have put forward a number of arguments and positions in this regard. Firstly, it is no more a mere concern. Directly or indirectly, this has turned into a new unacceptable conditionality. Secondly, the very use of the term governance is

objectionable. The dictionary meaning of governance is 'act manner, fact or function of governing, sway control'. Thus, even though some multilateral organisations would like to restrict good governance to economic development management, it is suspected that use of the word governance is only a step towards its wider use. Indeed, as admitted in both World Bank and Asian Development Bank documents, at the ground level there is a thin line between economics

governance, even in the economic sense, would be ensured by the donors. Fourthly, good governance may be taken as an excuse by the management and staff of donor agencies to hide their failures and shortcomings and shirk their responsibilities. Fifthly, most donor agencies have neither expertise nor experience to dabble in an area where many developing countries have a tradition going back thousands of years. Moreover, the erosion of public confidence in the

countries in general and Bangladesh in particular will be under increasing pressure from the donors to adopt good governance as prescribed from above. Therefore, the moot point is, how do we face up to it? In this regard, the first exercise that policy planners in Bangladesh will have to undertake is to find out the different motives which guide donors to push their peculiar brand of good governance. Theoretically at least, three donor motives may be identified, namely:

a) The donor will provide little or no aid in future, but will pressurise Bangladesh to provide good governance. In other words, the good governance issue is only to make things extremely difficult for Bangladesh, so that it may be denied aid on this pretext.

b) The donor will provide aid, but only if its brand of good governance is accepted in toto, although this may even mean compromising the sovereignty of Bangladesh and allowing gross interference in its internal affairs.

c) The donor will provide aid, but at the same time, will in a true spirit of partnership with the government, make an honest attempt to bring about good governance in Bangladesh but it will be restricted to economic management only.

These arguments notwithstanding, the fact is that in the days ahead, developing governmental system is not unique to developing countries. It is equally true of affluent societies which are also trying to reinvent the government. Finally, good governance emerges through a process of trial and error. Given the immense diversity of political systems, culture and history, each society must be allowed to find its own way to reconcile groups with conflicting interests and weave them into a cohesive organisation.

These arguments notwithstanding, the fact is that in the days ahead, developing

Making Government Work

by Analyst

and politics, and since many development policies and programmes have clear political implications, one cannot ultimately avoid involvement in politics, although this is beyond the Charters of these organisations. Indeed, governance now goes far beyond the explanation offered by Professor Paul Streeten. It was a term invented to complain about corruption, mismanagement and the abuses of certain regimes especially in Africa, without giving offence. Thirdly, it would be difficult to develop and operationalise practicable instruments through which good

Recalling Sher-e-Bangla — the Legendary Hero of Politics

by Prof Roushan Ara Hoque

TODAY, October 26, 1995 is the 122nd birthday of Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Hoque, the legendary hero of politics of this sub-continent, who with his indomitable spirit and foresighted statesmanship reshaped the political future of millions of Muslims of undivided India. An undaunted politician, a great champion of Hindu-Muslim unity, a great exponent of democracy, a philanthropic leader and above all, the most beloved 'Hoque Saheb' of the oppressed humanity, he had indeed created the image of such a great legendary hero which is an example, for all the present and future political leaders of our country, to be followed.

Born in village Satura in Rajapur thana of Barisal, A K Fazlul Hoque was brought up in Chakhar. His father Muhammad Wajed Ali, a zamindar, was a lawyer in Calcutta and at Barisal. Fazlul Hoque was an Honour's graduate in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry securing first class in M A in Mathematics, and an LB with distinction. He started his career as an Assistant with Sir Ashotosh Mukherjee at Calcutta High Court. He was also a lecturer at a college in Barisal for some time.

But Fazlul Hoque was destined to be the 'emancipator' of the oppressed Muslims. During the British rule their economic and social condition was very deplorable. So he decided to serve them by educating them and alleviating their poverty. For his patriotic feeling he was, at a very early age, elected a member of Barisal Municipality and then a member of Barisal District Board. In 1906 he joined government service as a First Class Magistrate but gave it up after six years and joined the High Court in 1912.

Fazlul Hoque started his political career as a friend of the peasants and ryots. In 1921, he formed a political party named Bongiya Kriak Proja Party. In 1924 Fazlul Hoque called a large Bongiya Proja Conference and presided over it. Thousands of representatives of the peasants from all over the then Bengal attended the

Conference and informed him of their oppression under their zamindars. In the Peasants' Conference at Gheor in 1926 he instructed the peasants not to cultivate the lands of the zamindars. At this he became very popular among the poor peasants. He formed a Proja Samity in 1927 and in 1929 called another All Bengal Proja Conference in which many Muslim leaders joined his party. Gradually the Peasants' Movement became very strong. In the Peasants' Conference of Dhaka in 1936 he delivered a memorable speech where he inspired the peasants by proposing to the British Government the abolition of zamindari system without any compensation, establishment of the rights of peasants on the lands under their plough and abolition of Mahajani system and the Land Tenancy Act.

He was a supporter of 1905 Partition of Bengal as he believed that this would help the progress of the Muslim community of East Bengal. In the All India Education Conference held at Dhaka on 30th December, 1906 at Ahsan Manjil, presided over by Sir Salmullah who proposed the formation of a political party entitled Muslim League. Fazlul Hoque readily agreed and helped an early formation of the party. At the earnest request of Sir Salmullah he joined the party in 1912 and in 1913 he became the Secretary of the Provincial Muslim League and All India Muslim League. In 1916 he was elected President of All India Muslim League. In 1912 he was elected Member of the Provincial Assembly of Bengal by defeating a rich zamindar. In 1915 he was again elected a Member of Bengal Legislative Assembly from Dhaka Division and represented it from 1913 to 1920.

As a champion of Hindu-Muslim unity Fazlul Hoque joined the All India National Congress. He was a leader of both the Muslim League and the Congress and he fought for the economic and political emancipation of all. Thus he became an all India nationalist leader and he was the organiser of the most important Lakhnow Pact



which resulted in strengthening Hindu-Muslim unity. In the Muslim League Conference of 1918 he declared that Hindus and Muslims are brethren of one another. Out of gratitude the people of Lakhnow honoured him with the title of 'Sher-e-Bangla' meaning 'The Tiger of Bengal'.

Sher-e-Bangla was a great scholar. He had a command not only over Bengali, but also over English, Urdu, Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. At an early age, he was the first to publish one weekly magazine named 'Balok' from Barisal. He was the first Muslim Editor in Bengal. He published another journal named 'Bharat Suhrid' which brought great fame for him. In 1921 he published Nabajug with the help of Mohammed Nasiruddin and Comrade Muzaffar Ahmed. The purpose of his being in journalism was to expose the British tyranny. He was an eloquent speaker with scholarly erudition. To eradicate the illiteracy of the Muslims, he raised the demand for their education in the Legislative Assembly for 128 times and delivered 148 speeches to effect redress of their grievances. He demanded to establish schools

and colleges, reservation of seats for Muslim students, creation of the post of one ADPI, establishment of one residential university at Dhaka in the model of Oxford, two Muslim Colleges, one at Dhaka and another at Calcutta.

Sher-e-Bangla was the pioneer of education for the Muslim for which the then British DPI called him 'Bentham of Bengal'. In 1921 the University of Dhaka was established. In 1924 Fazlul Hoque became the Education Minister of undivided Bengal. In that year, he established the Calcutta Islamia College. Many illustrious leaders of the past and present including Sheikh Mujib were students of that college. He changed the Aligarh Anglo-Oriental College, established by Sir Syed Ahmed, into a university. In 1931 he joined the Round Table Conference of London as a representative of the Muslims of Bengal.

Fazlul Hoque became the Chief Minister of Bengal on 1st April, 1937 and formed a cabinet of eleven ministers. As his mission was eradication of illiteracy, he took the charge of the Ministry of Education himself. During his tenure, he had established The Lady Brabourne College of

Calcutta, and brought the Sakhawat Memorial College under the provincial government control. He had allocated 44 per cent of his development budget for the education of the down-trodden people. On 7th May, 1937 he was given a warm reception in the Albert Hall of Calcutta under the presidency of Poet Nazrul Islam. As a Chief Minister he travelled the whole of Bengal to see personally the miserable condition of the peasants. He had established Calcutta Bethun College, Dhaka Eden College and introduced compulsory primary education. He had established Haraganga College of Munshigorj, and another College at Chakhar: Sarshina Madrasa, developed Adina F H College.

Sher-e-Bangla was a great statesman. In the Muslim League Conference of 1940 held at Lahore he had put forward convincing arguments for two hours in favour of separate Muslim states which nobody could oppose. The decision taken at his active initiative is known as the historical Lahore Resolution of 1940. Mohammed Ali Jinnah later on changed the wording from 'states' to 'state' and thus created one Muslim state only with two wings thousands of miles apart, having different languages and culture. Unfortunately Sher-e-Bangla could not see his dream materialised due to the shortsighted diplomacy of Mr Jinnah, whose politics compelled him to resign. In 1941 Fazlul Hoque had formed his second cabinet which lasted for two years. He did not support the Non-cooperation Movement of Mr Gandhi but actively participated in the 'Quit India' movement of the Congress. He released many top-political prisoners from Dhaka Central Jail. His formation of the second cabinet was the victory of his nationalist leadership perhaps against both Mr Gandhi and Mr Jinnah.

In 1948, Sher-e-Bangla settled in Dhaka and lived at his K M Das Lane house and began legal practice at Dhaka High Court. He was the first President of Dhaka High Court Bar Association. He joined the Language Movement and in the Rastra Bhasha Dibas of 11 March 1948 he was injured by a lathi charge on his leg. In 1953 he along with Mr Suhrawardy and Moulana Bhasani formed the United Front on 4th December and formulated the historical Ekush Dapha on the basis of the principles of Lahore Resolution. The victory of the United Front in the election of 10th March 1954 was the greatest success for Sher-e-Bangla. Of the 237 seats his UF won 223. This overwhelming victory was a landmark in the history of the Sub-continent.

On 3rd April, 1954 Fazlul Hoque became the Chief Minister of the then East Pakistan. Immediately after that he began to implement the Ekush Dapha. Bangla was declared as one of the state languages of Pakistan. Sher-e-Bangla was a great patron of female education as well. He began the construction of the new Eden Girls' College, established Dhaka Central Women's College and

Obviously, the Bangladesh government should identify itself with donor organisations with third motive. This is necessary also to expose and mobilise against donors with the first two motives. Secondly, and most importantly, the Bangladesh government should earnestly work out its own agenda of good governance and an implementation mechanism through consultations with various interest groups. In other words, it should do what it can on its own, rather than be pushed and pressurised by outsiders into doing what is unrealistic and culturally insensitive. This would also act as a shield against donors with dubious motives. Thirdly, it should get going with the implementation of its reform agenda with utmost seriousness during the first two years of its next five-year term, beginning from early 1996, since in a democratic framework unpleasant reforms cannot be pushed hard beyond that time-frame. Finally, the government may involve donors with sincere motives in its task to formulate a good governance programme and a plan of implementation tailored to the country's needs. Such donors could not only provide various technical services but also act as a conduit for the transfer of knowledge and experience on good governance from the various sub-regions of Asia.

many Girls' schools. He had established the Dhaka City Law College. He had introduced diversified courses and faculties in all the universities. He proposed for a Medical College in Barisal but could not materialise it in his life-time. When later on it was established, it was named as Sher-e-Bangla Medical College. He had established the Tejgaon Agricultural College, Bulbul Lalitkala Academy and organised many literary conferences. He was a devoted friend of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore whom he visited at his death-bed in Jorhashanko. On 7th August 1941 the great poet left this world keeping his hand on those of Sher-e-Bangla. He was also a friend of our national poet, Kaji Nazrul Islam.

The pioneer of Bengali nationalism, was declared a rebel against his own motherland, and was put under house arrest. On 31st May, 1954 Sec 93A was declared, his Cabinet was dismissed and the country was placed under Martial Law. When Mr Mohammed Ali of Bogra became the Prime Minister, he lifted the Martial Law and the ban on the United Front. Instead of becoming Chief Minister again he preferred to be the Home Minister in the Central Cabinet and as such formulated the Constitution of Pakistan on the basis of his Lahore Resolution of 1940. As a champion of democracy, he declared Pakistan, a People's Republic. In that Constitution, Autonomy, the Sovereignty of Parliament, Two Units, Joint Election, Two State Languages and the Principle of Party of Rights were included which paved the way for Majority Rule.

The new Constitution was implemented from 23rd March, the day of the Lahore Resolution. On 24th March, 1956 Sher-e-Bangla was appointed Governor of East Pakistan. As the Chancellor of the University of Dhaka he was honoured with the degree of Doctorate of Law for his sincere contribution towards its establishment. In 1958, President Ayub Khan awarded him the title of Hilal-i-Pakistan, the second highest honour. But he again became a victim of treachery and was removed from power by the then Prime Minister Feroz Khan Noon on 31st March, 1958. Since then he retired from his active political life of nearly 50 years. He had already been suffering from coronary thrombosis. On Friday, the 27th April, 1962 he breathed his last at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital at 10-20 am, at the age of 88 years 6 months and 1 day. Thus ended the life of the brightest star of the political horizon of East Bengal, the Sher-e-Bangla, the legendary hero of politics. But he will be remembered for ever as an example of what politics should be. Our present politicians should learn many things from his life and deeds for it was Sher-e-Bangla who had raised the image and public esteem for the politicians to its highest magnitude.

At this critical moment of our politics, we really need a great leader like Sher-e-Bangla.

To the Editor...

Soul-searching

Sir, As a foreigner, temporarily on an assignment in Bangladesh, I am not supposed, or may be even permitted to get involved or comment on the present political situation, and neither do I want to. This is not the aim of this letter. I am just stuck with a big question mark in my mind — where did the people in the polity got their childhood education? What make them so different from all other Bangladeshi men and women, I have been fortunate to meet and exchange ideas with some of them.

Because, you see, I had not been long in Bangladesh, before I realized what a treasure chest you have, and in your culture you still retain especially the teachings and writings of Rabindranath Tagore! I read every translated work of his, and about him that I could lay my hands

on, and fell in love.

And now I ask, where did this particular class, who hold the strings of prosperity and happiness of this country, study and learn about human relationships and human rights. Or have they already forgotten their past, ancestors and their soft Bengali soul.

You may ask, why do I care? Did not Tagore write, — I cannot here remember where — "You have given me shelter in the alien. You have built bridges connecting great distances and made a stranger my brother?" Therefore I care.

A Resident Chittagong

Mohalla security toll

Sir, Recently, a security guard in "military" uniform came to my flat in Mohamadpur with a register in his hand and demanded a monthly subscription of Taka

fifty for the maintenance of the security in our locality. When challenged, he could not produce any written document relating to the legitimacy of the subscription, and his authority to collect the cash subscription. He did not smell of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) nor mentioned the City Corporation, the police, or the Home Ministry. Who is the boss of these security guards? Why there is no publicity before the collection of such subscription.

The guard is employed by a local NGO (the logo appeared on the sleeve). Strangely enough, the NGO office did not deem it necessary to equip the cash collector with a letter of authority for the collection of the monthly (if not yearly) subscription. It is not known if the NGO has been contracted by the government or the DCC to do this job. As for the

subscription, I as a resident or a tenant has not been given prior intimation in writing or through public announcement like press, loud-speaker, or pamphlet for contributing Taka 50 per month. What happens if I decline to pay? The legal implications may be sorted out. The landlord may be given the option to collect the security toll along with the monthly rent.

The collection of subscription can be deposited in the local bank to avoid fraud or misuse. A pamphlet may be circulated to each head of the family in this connection. The uniform or the dress of the (private) security guards may be changed so as not to resemble the uniforms of the defence on police force personnel. Mistaken identity might have risky consequences in malafide cases.

A Resident Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207