

Police Reform

The new Home Minister Major (retd) Rafiqul Islam keeps an open mind on his traditionally rather discreet-type portfolio in handling which his predecessors regarded silence as the better part of valour.

Going by the sense of purpose and the clarity of vision writ large on his pronouncements even his worst detractors should not mistake these for populist public relationing slogans.

We can see that the home minister has pressed the right buttons to set his house in order. The IGP, at his instructions, has signalled to his men that henceforth they should regard the criminals as politically faceless "social enemies".

Menacing irritants like the requisitioning of public vehicles by the police, extortionist activities in the terminals and campus violence are to receive 'special attention'.

From this point of view, we hail the decision of the home ministry to obtain views of the intelligentsia by holding a day-long 'national conference' on July 20.

In particular, the ruling party's collaboration with other political parties will be of utmost importance not just in formulating police reforms but also for implementing them in letter and spirit.

When the BNP was in power we maintained that the onus lay on it as the ruling party to set examples of complete neutrality in handling criminals even if they swore by or claimed loyalty to the party.

Let the Home Minister set the ball on police reform rolling in the first session of the parliament.

Avoidable Remarks

The new government has been saying sensible things and taking steps in the right direction. The main opposition BNP — after the initial salvos of discontent following its election reversal — gave an impression that it was ready to provide a strong opposition role in Parliament.

Why make such statements, and so early in the day too? The new government is only into its third week. Not even a Jatiya Sangsad session has been held.

The prime minister could have perhaps ignored the veiled threat of agitation against the alleged government action on party cadres of the opposition camp.

AIDS Spectre

As the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) spectre widens, people have a hope — just hope — for the cure of this most dreaded disease.

There is one unbridgeable dilemma though. Of the 8,500 new people infected daily, 90 per cent are from the developing world.

Since a sure treatment is not there and the available one will take a long time to reach patients in countries like ours, we face a special problem here.

(Corrigendum: Yesterday in our first editorial 'Impetus to Bilateral Ties', Indian Foreign Minister I K Gujral was mistakenly identified as Foreign Secretary. We regret the inadvertent error.)

Politicians and Public Perception: The Need for Openness

by Manzoor Hasan

The Nolan Committee examined three areas of concern: Members of Parliament, Ministers and Civil Servants; and the quangos. The Committee took evidence and within a period of six months produced its recommendations.

THE recent Cabinet decision to disclose information regarding the ministers' and state ministers' property is laudable because the public perception of politicians has reached its nadir.

In the United Kingdom an opinion poll revealed that the general public did not hold the Members of Parliament in very high estimation.

Selflessness: Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Accountability: Holders of public office should be held accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles of leadership and example.

Members of Parliament: The service of Members of Parliament to lobby on behalf of companies should be banned together with any agreement or contract entered into which could in any way restrict their freedom to act.

Civil Servants: The core values identified were integrity, political impartiality, objectivity, selection and promotion on merit and accountability through Ministers to Parliament.

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Administrative Reforms: An Analysis

by Engr Md Shahidur Rahman Khan

ODAY'S administration covers dispensation of justice, looking after estates, managing business affairs, managing state etc.

sovereignty of the empire. He had police guard as a show of his might. At the time of partition in 1947, because of incapacity of Pakistani politicians the administrative machinery was not remodelled to suit the changed circumstances.

Public servants are endowed with responsibility, power and authority. This is a sacred trust on them.

1) The judiciary is yet to be fully separated from the executive organs of the state. Article 22 of our Constitution says: The State shall ensure the separation of the judiciary from the executive organs of the State.

2) Who is the executive head of a ministry? If the Secretary is, then why decisions are not finalised at the same level? If the Minister is the executive head, then how can he be the head of the parliamentary committee? The

parliamentary committees are formed to scrutinise/review the activities of ministries. How the same person can be the examiner and the examinee at the same time?

3) The autonomous/semi-autonomous bodies were created to bring about dynamism, mobility in decision-making and implementation process.

4) The functional officers of autonomous/semi-autonomous bodies do personnel administration, financial management along with their main functional job. These organisations also have career officers dealing with personnel administration and financial management.

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ments advocated themselves to be democratic. Development of democratic institutions values were not encouraged rather public representatives were considered to be a subject of contempt.

5) The primary duties of the magistrates are maintenance of law and order, and dispensation of justice. Major contributor of our GDP is the agricultural sector. It is extremely urgent to modernise the land administration system.

6) Officials belonging to some of the cadres are being posted in different departments at different times, whereas their cadres are exclusive of their own. Movement should be encouraged to achieve transfer of experience and expertise; foster better understanding and mutual cooperation between different cadre services; but for a meaningful achievement, the movement should take place both ways.

7) Some people duly repay bank loan in time, while some others cannot or do not. The government showing due concern for the poor or showing

generosity, wrote off all loans of a particular group of defaulters. But this relief was not accompanied with provision for returning the money to the persons of that group, who have already repaid the loan.

8) Local government institutions are the pillars of democracy. Our Constitution in Article 9 says: The State shall encourage Local Government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given as far as possible, to peasants, workers and women.

9) There are many instances of public servants being posted in the positions of the top-most elected representatives or in the positions of the elected representatives in different local government institutions. These posting places the public servants over other elected public representatives. Are these placements against the norms and values of democratic system?

10) In our country sovereignty of people was rarely recognised through all the govern-

finished goods. Complaints of overbilling in case of BT&T, DESA, WASA, PDB and such other organisations are commonplace. In a report of the Daily Ittefaq dated 31st December, 1995 there is the story of a lost briefcase from an air conditioned coach of Bangladesh Railway. The search attendants under pressure from railway police, were about to return the briefcase. But at that point the suspects had to be released because of interference of other railway employees, who gheraoed the police.

11) In the past the government wanted to change the office hours to 10:00 am to 5:00 pm for central offices of Dhaka. Generally considerable part of the early office hours of high officials are spent in meetings and conferences. According to new office timing, the second half was free for attending citizens and doing file work. This would have resulted in better service to the public and better coordination with field offices. In a discussion programme on new office timing on the Bangladesh Television, lots of arguments were given about difficulties and problems of the employees in the newly-introduced office hours. No body uttered a single word about the convenience

12) Twisting of constitutional expressions and priorisation of cadre interests have given rise to inter-cadre conflict. This cannot be classified as conflict between two disciplines of learning. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Fourth Edition, Fifth Impression (1991) in pages 151 and 1319 respectively gives the following definitions: Bureaucrat — Official relating in a government department, especially one who follows administrative routine and the rules of the department very strictly; insensitive, bungling etc. (A sarcastic sense of expression is evident in the meaning by use of words like insensitive, bungling etc). Technocrat — Expert in science, engineering, etc., especially one who favours technocracy.

13) The word technocrat in the ongoing conflict is being used to mean holder of government jobs by officials of all the

14) Bureaucracy is indispensable for any state, but it has to be made pro-people and service-oriented. Loyalty to nation should be the main criterion of public servants' actions. They have to recognise the people as their masters. Bureaucrats are also part of the local society. Making the bureaucracy transparent and answerable to people will benefit everybody without exception. The Constitution of Bangladesh in Article 21 (2) says: Every person in the service of the Republic has a duty to strive at all times to serve the people.

15) Mutual respect always leads to goodwill and good relation. If every body feels to be in the service of the people, do not have the ego to be the master; then there can be no attrition between different cadre holders. Time is in favour of the policy makers, as some of the cadre holders are willing to cooperate in implementation of reforms.

16) The new government must express its stand on the copying in the examinations.

17) The other crimes committed by the terrorists would be downplayed to almost zero if and only if the government and other political parties cease their patronisation and if the Home Ministry is sincere in arresting terrorists. We candidly inform the new government that we, in no way, want to get a Matin Choudhury-like Home Minister anymore.

18) Occupying seats in halls illegally and copying (or help copying) are directly concerned with the students. This is obviously related to our unfortunate 'students' politics' (political scientists find a new

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cadres other than so-called administrative ones. In the real sense the so-called technocrats working in government are also bureaucrats. In our country the scope of overlapping and inter-dependency has been misused, and there has been amassing of authority to enjoy the associated perks, facilities and power. The National Pay Commission of December 1977 (Rashid Commission) devaluated the professionals. The professionals went for movement in May, 1978 corrigendum to the recommendations were issued. This was in fact the first step towards rationalisation of the service structure of the country. The salient features of rationalisation were: a) giving equal status to all cadres, b) formation of Senior Service Pool for all posts from Deputy Secretary, level in the secretariat, and c) declaration of government policy for filling up the posts of Senior Service Pool for all cadres on the basis of merit and qualification.

On the basis of these decisions the formation of Senior Service Pool was declared in 1979. In September 1980 government declared the unification of government administrative services into 28 cadres (sub-cadres). These were named on the basis of their function; except some. The rationalisation of service cadres by putting all cadre services on unified footing was not accepted by all in good grace. The implementation of government's 1980 declaration was being delayed on different pretexts by some. They were pressing the government to revert to the old style of class system in the administration.

Bureaucracy is indispensable for any state, but it has to be made pro-people and service-oriented. Loyalty to nation should be the main criterion of public servants' actions. They have to recognise the people as their masters. Bureaucrats are also part of the local society. Making the bureaucracy transparent and answerable to people will benefit everybody without exception. The Constitution of Bangladesh in Article 21 (2) says: Every person in the service of the Republic has a duty to strive at all times to serve the people.

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To the Editor

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Dangerous Ice-cream

Sir, Ice-cream is a popular food in Bangladesh and in other countries. Most children and adults like ice-cream. There are hundreds of ice-cream factories in Bangladesh and most of them are dangerously contaminated with water for preparing ice-cream. They are not making it sure that the water which is being used is safe. As most of the people are illiterate or have no concept of micro-organisms, they don't bother about the risks of having these foods. For this reason, many people may have been contracting various infectious diseases from ice-creams. Hundreds of pathogenic viruses, bacteria and parasites may be present in

the ice-creams. Many types of pathogenic micro-organisms can survive longer in ice and cause diarrhoea, dysentery, jaundice, typhoid, paratyphoid etc.

Recently, we have tested some ice-creams collected from street vendors of Dhaka city and found most of them are dangerously contaminated with faecal coliforms (Escherichia coli, Klebsiella, citrobacter, enterobacter species) and other types of bacteria. The total bacterial counts are also beyond the acceptable limit. Public health authority and the general people may be ignorant in this regard. Such low quality products must be banned immediately or strict quality control must be enforced.

We believe, various social

clubs, schools and NGOs can play an important role in motivating the common people in this regard. Factories should use safe and clean water sources for quality product. Hygiene should be maintained properly. Otherwise, the prevalence of diarrhoea and other infectious diseases will not be reduced in our country.

M Jahangir Alam and Momena Shirin, M. Phil. Research Fellows, DU. Mr. Murtaza Begum, Rajuk UMS College, Dhaka-1230.

Fate of the nation

Sir, On 24th March, 1982 the then Chief of Army staff Lt. Gen. H M Ershad usurped power from Justice Abubakar Siddique and took the country from ruination. He alleged that the then BNP government was a corrupted one and he (Ershad) would lead a Jihad against corruption. He also vowed to make the country corruption-free. He had called for austerity at all levels of society. Some peculiar steps were taken by him in this regard. We even saw him

riding bicycle while attending offices. He also posed himself as a pious man to mislead people. But what happened in reality was very much clear to the people. Behind sweet talks and mucked face he did everything to ruin the economy and make fortune for himself.

Arresting terrorists

Sir, Terrorism has been rampant in Bangladesh since the country's very birth. The first group of terrorists were some unruly freedom fighters (we are lucky that most of the freedom fighters were committed to the welfare of the people). Later a new generation of terrorists has been