

Let Sirajganj Become the Model

Can Sirajganj show us light and set the pace as well? Or will it founder the same way things crashed in the Dhaka University after a JCD-BCL truce failed to last six hours? As Sirajganj is not quite Dhaka in any manner, an element of hope for a town free from college campus eruptions survives into the fourth day of AL and BNP leadership signing a nine-point code of conduct including a moratorium on campus violence.

The code of conduct came into force in the wake of a bloody BCL-JCD clash at the Sirajganj University College early last week in which scores were injured, seven of them seriously. The beauty of the Code lies in its being signed by 16 top local leaders of the two main political parties of the nation — the Awami League and the BNP. In this it differs from whatever has been done in Dhaka to stop for good the menace of campus violence.

The futility of holding in virtual siege schools, colleges or universities could not be better demonstrated than by the miserable failure in the polls of Jamaat-e-Islami which for decades have reduced to fiefdom two premier universities of the nation — Chittagong and Rajshahi. BNP's pre-eminence in DU has produced only liability at best to the party. Students no more decide the course of the nation and its politics as it used to be the case for close on to four decades. Times were when students used to persuade leaders to courses of the students' own choice. Student parties were independent entities then. Later, during the time of Ziaur Rahman, the parties were rather persuaded to take under their wings the student bodies. The students ever since have lost their grip on society and a great many of them have gone over to *mastani* as a compensation for their slipping power.

We pray the Sirajganj code to succeed and set a model for all other towns and cities including Dhaka.

Act Before it Spreads Here

The world congress against commercial sexual exploitation of children adopted an agenda urging the governments around the globe to have a rod in pickle so that prospective practitioners draw their horns in their frightened observation of the fate of those found guilty.

In the backdrop of the UNICEF estimation that some one million children a year are forced into child prostitution, trafficked for sexual purposes or used to produce pornography, the conference in Stockholm of people involved in the issue and the concerted call emanating from it sounds like a lenient settlement of a belated appraisal.

It need not wait the assemblage like the one in the Swedish capital to understand the enormous psychological devastation experienced by the children who betrayed either by their innocence or the pressing economic hardship of their guardians get trapped in the vicious cycle of commercial sexual exploitation. Rich in poverty as a general syndrome, Asia's problem with this phenomenon is much greater than the West where awareness and measures are likely to produce desirable result simply because of better economic condition.

Some of the Asian countries like Thailand and the Philippines have over the years become the happy hunting ground of the child sex traders. It is an alarming rise in countries like India and Sri Lanka.

Commercial exploitation of child sex may be a relatively new phenomenon but the general abuse of children from paedophilic perversion has a long history of shame, secrecy and suffering. While commercial aspect continues to hog the headlines, the non-commercial or domestic aspect of abuse tends to lurk in levity. Along with different non-governmental organisations government should launch a vigorous campaign to increase social awareness on this issue.

Bangladesh may still not be a hotbed of sexual exploitation of children for commercial purpose but it has alarmingly immense potential to be one. With pornographic films, videos, etc. and all other wonders of communication technology arriving almost a day after their invention, the evil of broadened and sophisticated exploitation of children for sexual purpose, be it commercial or non-commercial, looms larger than ever before. Therefore we must urgently take all necessary steps to prevent its occurrence here.

Quite Timely

The setting in motion of the mobile post-office, first of its kind in this country, has come as a very timely and welcome understanding of public grievance. We hope Dhaka will be a trail-blazer in this innovation as more of these vehicles will be seen across the country to offset the inconvenience of the tax-paying citizens caused by the inept and irritating performance of their static predecessors.

Postal service has long been a source of chronic public suffering. Not just the long queues, contumely of the unreasonably glum and sour people behind the counters and the incorrigible agents of system-spoiler among the service seekers themselves, there are other rotten features within the postal system. More often than not complaints are heard about letters from relatives, friends or well-wishers in a particular neighbouring country not reaching their desired destinations. Why no one knows as no one bothers to explain.

Of late, corruption of a monstrous proportion is reported to be going on inside the GPO itself. Allegedly a section of corrupt employees in connivance with their bosses are fouling up the whole process of DV visas — a lottery based immigration opportunity extended by the US government to different zones around the world. It is in the air that lucky winners are being deprived of fortune as the awarding papers sent by the authorities in the USA are getting hijacked by a organised gang once they land in the GPO. They are not disseminated according to the addresses instead they are being gathered and sold at a huge price to people intensely eager to immigrate. Let the advent of mobile post office be the beginning of the end of inconvenience and corruption of all sorts.

Of late, Bangladesh Television (BTV) decided to present live telecast of the voters' *Ajker Sangsads* (JS) deliberations. This brought the JS sessions at doorsteps of the voters. *Ajker Sangsads*, as the programme is called, has already drawn people's attention and it was reported that even in rural areas a growing number of TV viewers eagerly flock in to witness the show why should there be a demand for the live telecast of JS proceedings? It is perhaps, simply because that people in general like to see that their public representatives duly air the local grievances, criticize wrong government policies and help formulate appropriate policies and strategies for the socio-economic uplift of the society. So long they have heard or read in news papers, about what their MPs said in the JS. Now they tend to physically watch the session. It is why that in many countries a separate channel is used to throw the proceedings live throughout the whole session. Again, live telecast of such programme appear to enhance transparency especially through the questions and answers session. The Cabinet as a whole is bound to be accountable to the JS and through that to the people's representatives. We, therefore, would like

to thank the present government for taking this new but bold initiative of exposing the happenings of JS to the public.

The JS sessions are one of the most expensive ventures in Bangladesh. While in session, it is reported, the cost of operation per minute is Tk 15000. One might dispute the figure but let us not, for the sake of arguments, refute it for a while. Suppose that in one minute, an orator can throw 160 words. Therefore, the cost of a word in the JS straddles at Tk 94 (i.e. the price of a word is Tk 94). On the other hand, if a minute costs Tk 15000, then a five-hour session (for day) of JS would cost Tk 45 lakh a day. With one days of JS expenses, alternatively, 1500 households could be funded for income generating activities (Tk 3000 per household). There are innumerable options to use the money productively. Why then are we spending this princely amount for holding JS sessions? What are the benefits expected from the investments?

To tell the truth, it is a very difficult task to quantify the impacts of JS sessions. Again, direct estimates are not possible either. The activities of the

JS could, possibly, be dubbed as service sector activities wherein the contributions of the esteemed members are likely to improve the overall service deliveries in the society. For example, (a) a fruitful dis-

tribution, if JS sessions could be properly and productively utilized, the benefits arising out of a minute's deliberation should far outweigh its cost of Tk 15000. That is why so much expenses are being in-

to the time and for all the JS members.

More often than not, we become scared of some of their horrible performances. From random observations of some of the members speech we estimated that two thirds of the allotted time are being spent on glorifying the contributions of their respective leaders, dead or alive. That is, for each five minutes of speech, the said speaker appear to spend more than three minutes in "worrying." A part of the residual is spent in glorifying their party achievements. Then what is left for the constituency and for the country's problems? Almost nothing. Since worshipping has no social benefit it might bring some private benefits only we can possibly conclude that this group of members brutally waste Tk 15000 per minute. What a colossal loss to the society!

Even in developed countries, allegations loom large on the utility of parliamentary sessions. Voters in the developing world also tend to complain that their representatives in the parliament fail to truly reflect the wishes and challenges of their respective constituencies.

We are just the beginners en route parliamentary democracy. It is quite obvious that we would experience such problems more severely.

Wranglings over the souls of the deceased is not a good sign. There are many countries in the world which developed fast despite the fact that they faced national catastrophe either due to war or due to the follies of their national leaders. But who cared? People and leaders of those countries hardly cried over the spilled milk. They worked hard and harder. The past could be a point of reference for a while but the future should be the point of destination for all time to come. How long shall we chew the past to kill the future? Let us stop the militant minutes in the JS and sacrifice them for those who are born to day. A minute in time might save nine.

We do not know whether our learned leaders are aware of the fact that the public in general strongly feel that none of the parties in the parliament live upto the expectations of the people. This certificate from the public should, possibly, be enough to convey the message that the intrinsic cost of a minute in the JS session is much more than Tk 15,000. So let us maximize the gains and minimize the costs.

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes



curred for running parliaments all over the world.

There are many members of JS who seem to be aware of the costs and benefits. They spend their total allocation of time in ventilating the grievances of their people in their respective constituencies; (b) criticize the government for lapses as noticed; (c) suggest remedial measures. They tend to speak in such a manner as if they have to pay to the government Tk 94 for each of the words they throw. There are many other similar positive benefits that we can expect from the JS. In a parliamentary system, at the end of the day, the overall contributions should be reflected in the overall performance of the economy. Intu-

Some Thoughts on Industrial Policy, 1996

by Mohammad Sirajul Islam

THE new government's Industry and Commerce Minister had emphasised the necessity of a new industrial policy to stride fast the country's socio-economic progress. Bangladesh, a least developed country with a low human development index (HDI) below 0.500) ranking 143rd in 174 countries of the world, is still having its 56 per cent urban and 51 per cent rural population below poverty line (as of 1990). Moreover, 65 per cent of the country's employed labour force comes from agriculture while 16 per cent and 18 per cent comes from industry and services respectively (1990). The incremental growth of exports in money terms is jeopardised by high imports being 16.7 per cent of GDP (93) against only 9.5 per cent exports. Country's gross domestic investment being 14 per cent against gross domestic saving of only 8 per cent of GDP (US\$ 24.06 — 93) it shows enough scope and also dire necessity for improvement and enhancement in this respect.

The development strategy all over the world is continuously and rapidly changing to suit the demand of time and technology. The structural adjustments with definition, operation, monitoring have, therefore, undergone interesting changes in the domain of industry. The US small business, being recognised as the backbone of American economy, in fact, deals with smaller enterprises. So is the case with Japan and India. Some 10 million small businesses are very successfully operating in USA. Japan has some 6.48 million SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) out of a national total of some 6.54 million private business establishments (excluding primary industry). India has over 2.4 million small industries spread all over the country contributing about 50 per cent of the value addition to the manufacturing sector. Almost 42 per cent of India's export emerges from small industries. Interestingly, the nontraditional products account for more than 95

per cent of the small industries exports. India boasts for adopting a pro-active policy for systematic growth of small enterprises through establishment of support institutions for providing facilities to small enterprises development through entrepreneurship development, technology diffusion, project ideas formulation, feasibility studies, development financing, commercial banking, infrastructure provision (sheds and land in industrial estates), marketing and export supports, raw materials depots, design and common facilities centres.

Findings SME and small scale enterprise (micro enterprise) as a formidable force for accelerating growth as well as reducing inequality of income with disposal, here is an attempt to address some of the vital issues hindering its envisaged target.

Structural Adjustment: The structuring of industries in broad three categories namely, 1) large or big industry, 2) small and medium enterprises (SMEs), 3) small scale enterprises (micro enterprises), has already been in practice since long in developed and developing economies. In Japan and ASEAN countries nothing else except this terminology is in use in words and spirit. Keeping conformity with our economies' acceptability we may suggest the definition of SMEs and SSEs as follows:

1. Definition of "Small and Medium Enterprises"	
Sector	Employees capitalization
Manufacturing & Mining etc	Not more than 250 employees or Tk 40 million
Wholesale	100 " 20 "
Retail and Services	50 " 10 "
2. Definition of "Small-Scale Enterprises"	
Sector	Number of employees
Manufacturing, etc	Not more than 20 employees
Commercial and Service	5 "

This restructuring will have the inbuilt and ingrained marketing facility with the enterprises through inclusion of wholesale and retail operation in it. It may be mentioned here that the suggested definition has good resemblance with that of Japan which has proved to be wonderful in this respect.

Technology: In this dire

the sector (for example, textile, plastic, engineering, food processing etc) as per choice of trainees for 7/5-member groups each. This is already in practice at Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) with great success. In course of time, there shall be more such training centres in different

national need of employment generation and high productivity, the choice of technology is more pertinent than transfer of technology. And this approach relates to technology with a human face or, in other way, effecting the happenings of miracle in industrial arena with the best use of skilled human resources as principal factor as it happened in Japan.

The development of job culture, inbuilt quality control system, consideration of human behaviour in marketing aspect are some of the top priority points here. Government and private technology development centres need to be developed and promoted under a mother umbrella, like in India.

Training: There is no alter-

native to training for technical, entrepreneurial, managerial

skill development of vast un-

employed human resources of

the country. For a newcomer or

a potential entrepreneur there

shall be a basic three months

training initially, where theo-

retical and practical training

will be for equal time of one

and half-months each. For that

purpose Small and Cottage In-

dustry Training Institute (SCITI), BSCIC, Bangladesh Management Development Centre (BMDC) will have arrangements with some industries of

divisional headquarters. Such

efforts in private sector may be

supported by government, DFIs

Moreover, post training reha-

bilitation of successfully

trained potential entrepreneurs

will have to be ensured through

provision of credit and infra-

structure facilities by bank and

BSCIC.

Credit Management: At this

nascent stage of industrialisa-

tion credit being the most

sought after ingredient for

industrial development ample

opportunities shall be there in

DFIs, NCBs, CFBs to meet the

demand of entrepreneurs. What

is interesting is that in some

cases potential trained entre-

preneurs face inability to

draw fund from banks, BSCIC,

etc. in view of their not having

collateral asset for mortgage. In

such cases provision of venture

capital shall be there. More over,

government, BSCIC/banks may advance

credit to entrepreneurs in the

following procedures:

Loan amounts 65 to 90 per cent

of the necessary funds

Term of loans 15 to 20 years

Term of deferment 2 to 3 years

Interest rates Low interest

In addition, the existing pro-

cedure of marginal credit limit

(MCL) for ascertaining the

credit worthiness/limit of a

entrepreneur by bank is very

old which needs to be revised.

Financing non-performing

(sick) industrial units:

The whisking out of non-per-

forming industrial units from sick

list to active/performing one is

equally important along with