

Sullen Mayor

Mayor Hanif's proposal for a metropolitan government with him as its head has not received the government's approval. It has been decided instead by the PM to constitute a new coordination committee for the city affairs under the chairmanship of the LGRD Minister with the Mayor designated as its co-chairman.

Although the reasons cited by him for disassociating himself from the committee are inadequacies in the existing laws and of funds which, in his reckoning, are bound to render it virtually useless, his underlying feeling seems to be that his elective position and status has been compromised.

He is undisguisedly on a warpath with a party government to which, by political affiliations, he is loyalty-bound. That the government's decision has come about without having taken him sufficiently into confidence to head off an open dissent on the question makes us as unhappy as Hanif's public expression of it.

This is an unfortunate turn of events in the handling of the affairs of a metropolis which is riddled with mounting civic problems. Mayor Hanif has stepped into the final year of his 4-year term and the martyr complex he had developed over the last nearly three years in relation to a BNP government seems inexplicably poised for a fresh lease under an Awami League government.

How long would the city be held ransom to Mayoral conflicts with governments? The civic life is so bedeviled that it cannot brook the uncertainty of even another year of disorder at the top. Let the disharmony be sorted out by the party leadership with a healthy sense of objectivity, so that it does not linger for another day.

Security at the Garden

Even the Director of the National Botanical Garden has admitted that there is "some security problem" in the only facility of its kind in the country at the northern tip of Mirpur. The director obviously has reasons to make an understatement and to our knowledge the security problem he refers to could not be worse.

If the authorities had not turned a blind eye to the surge of criminal gangs inside the facility or given in to underhand dealings over a long period of time, the situation could not have been as deplorable as it is now.

There are 38 security guards in the garden. For such a security strength to ensure spot vigilance for the entire 208 acres of garden area is neither possible nor desirable. The problem actually lies in the fact that the guards do anything but the duty they are assigned to.

It is a disgrace that we have failed to maintain security of a place meant for people's escape into nature's quietude from the city's hectic and tension-filled life. We feel that the vested interest groups can be effectively dealt with if the authority shows a seriousness of purpose there.

The garden's location gives an additional advantage for ensuring its security. The security staff must be held responsible for any incident of extortion or mugging within the garden's boundary. The boundary wall must be raised all around, allowing no easy trespassing by criminal intruders.

Good Thinking

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has initiated a move to hear complaints against its own members. Earlier, these had to be lodged with a police station. Now it is the police commissioner himself who will entertain complaints from aggrieved people.

Apparently this move is aimed at ensuring accountability of the police for their actions and boosting public confidence in them. We appreciate the attention being paid by the DMP to a much-neglected area in police-public relations. At the same time we would like to see that the new move not as a cosmetic PR exercise but something that actually addresses the grievances of people.

More important is, however, the development of a system from within. This calls for qualitative improvement of each individual member of the force. Tougher educational criterion for their recruitment and the availability of modern training and equipment thereafter are essential for this purpose.

The approach is for a better rapport between the police and the public. Let this expand beyond the metropolis to cover the entire country.

The Mechanics of Accountability

If we are to implement an accountability process in the country the mechanics must be clear, simple and concise. The mechanics of accountability have to focus on and attack the conduit, the person who has the most to lose with the least to show for it

tion is that all government departments, irrespective of their efficiency and neutrality, are subject to influence and coercion by the factors of power, money and relationship. At the end of the day, delivery of justice is subjective, not objective. This makes any accountability process suspect. Money obtained from corruption can not just disappear into thin air, it has to go to either 1) some bank account or locker and/or 2) into real estate or other such investment.

Nobody keeps money in foreign accounts/lockers in his/her own name, these are mostly in numbered accounts but since all banks are required to keep identification documents for withdrawal, usually copies of the national passport, a UN Resolution on corruption becomes invaluable in locating previously hidden accounts. Over the past three years, various cronies have been put in charge of nationalized commercial banks (NCBs) and public development finance institutions (DFIs). They not only made loans/credits to other cronies, they help in facilitating illegal transactions of the mentor-in-chief.

ality is focused to the exclusion of everything else. Unfortunately nepotism has not been confined to the public sector institutions only but also to many financial institutions, private and/or foreign, which stand to derive any benefit from the government, particularly in "consultancies" for the privatization exercise. Lead bankers in a consortium etc. It is sickening to see executives of foreign banks falling over themselves to please those who matter.

ampaign targeting some local symbols of nepotism and corruption in the banking sector, squeezing them hard may find specific leads to some of the accused leaders of corruption. These people are the weak spots we should be looking for in the war against corruption. Such people they will generally answer constantly negatively to some test questions, viz 1) was he senior enough to be promoted to his present post? 2) is his professional experience and competence exceeding that of his colleague? 3) is he maintaining a life style commensurate to his pay and status? 4) is he living within the perquisites legally allowed to him by his institution? 5) does he rely on merit and competence in the

petence. Through a close uniformed relation of a particular banker happens to be a very good friend of mine, one of the most glaring examples of nepotism gone astray with a vengeance is that of Khalid Iqbal, presently Chairman National Development Finance Corporation (NDFC). Without accusing him specifically of corruption himself or being responsible for it, one is a little amazed at the good fortune that has come his way these last five years to the exclusion of much more deserving persons.

Before leaving MCB he sought and got promotion, being deputy Chairman Regional Development Finance Corporation (RDFC). Thereafter he pushed out greener pastures in Banker's Equity Limited (BEL). From there he has graduated to being Chairman NDFC, all this in less than three years. The reported misuse of "officially sanctioned" prerequisites aside, such as drawing rent from NDFC while still using the RDFC Guest House, Khalid Iqbal seems to have a fairly Godfather

Thereafter Khalid Iqbal's CV reads like a dream come true. Before leaving MCB he sought and got promotion, being deputy Chairman Regional Development Finance Corporation (RDFC). Thereafter he pushed out greener pastures in Banker's Equity Limited (BEL). From there he has graduated to being Chairman NDFC, all this in less than three years. The reported misuse of "officially sanctioned" prerequisites aside, such as drawing rent from NDFC while still using the RDFC Guest House, Khalid Iqbal seems to have a fairly Godfather

AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

specialists, etc. This is not only a shameless exhibition of opportunism but gives a seal of approval on corruption. Not all foreign banks have done this but they have paid for it in getting less from this government than others. Third World banks are regularly accused by the first world of money laundering, etc. In fact, many banks in the western world are not only money laundering illegal wealth with impunity through their local employees in branches in the developing countries but are keeping them as fixed term deposits, no questions asked. These people and their parent institutions, who preach what they do not practice, are beneath contempt, though one dare say all this is covered ethically in the name of "business promotion" according to their holier-than-thou corporate HQs in New York, London, Paris, Zurich, etc.

choice of his staff? 6) is he looking at his own merit and competence for advancement? etc. A short list of about dozen such people should be put to the closest scrutiny and investigation, preferably by private sector investigators, since we all know what happens to official investigations. Most senior bankers having executive decision making powers in NCBs and DFIs have been promoted out of turn, superseding much more deserving people. In almost all the cases they neither had the experience or professional competence for the posts they now fill. As regards their life style, a simple calculation of what their institution is spending on them on a day to day basis, would show it to be many times their legal perquisites. Very rarely the crooked banker will choose subordinate staff who have professional competence and merit, similarly he would look to do anything to please his mentor/mentors to seek his own advancement rather than rely on his own merit and com-

for a mentor, paving his progress with gold. So why not focus enquiry on such a person? If he can justify all loan/credits dished out by him in these three institutions, RDFC, BEL, and NDFC, we will be very happy and seek atonement for our misdeed in targeting him as a model of bad financial governance. In the meantime, let separate private investigation teams look at his wealth tax and try and co-relate his real estate, liquid worth, etc with his real worth. The idea is that this cynosure by independent enquiries may convince this gentleman that while crime does not pay, it becomes much more easy on those who turn state's evidence.

Even the World Bank has got into the act in the war against corruption, labeling Pakistan as the second most corrupt country in the world. But how serious they are can be gauged from the fact that they have chosen SGS to do an audit. Why not ask the World Bank about the Hub Power Project and why it has become the most expensive project in the world on a comparative power (MW)-to-money ratio? This inordinate escalation could not have happened without orchestration and/or active connivance of World Bank (WB) executives. People take the name of Ibrahim Elean, an WB employee, who has the beneficially in any scam? WB would do well in doing an in house investigation. Since SGS has a lucrative contract with the Pakistan government to check on quality and price of imports, what honesty of purpose should we expect in this "conflict of interest" situation. If we are to implement an accountability process in the country the mechanics must be clear, simple and concise. The mechanics of accountability have to focus on and attack the conduit, the person who has the most to lose with the least to show for it.

Once you have the conduit singing like a bird, the evidence that is required to bring his mentor to justice will fall into place. Then, and only then, when we have an approver in place, will the accountability process become meaningful. To put it bluntly, the mechanics of accountability must be right for the process to be effective.

The Colour of Nationalism

by Kazi Alauddin Ahmed

It is agreed that an independent and sovereign state was the ultimate goal of our Liberation War but it was the die-hard 'Bangalee nationalism' that paved the way to...

big powers, Germany was bifurcated while Poland — the first victim of Adolf Hitler, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria etc went en masse to Soviet bloc being ruthlessly coerced and gagged into submission to communism.

China, still under constant threat of Japanese aggression while the situation in the rest of the world continued to be volatile, in consequence of the 2nd World War, was already deeply engaged with the guerrilla activities spearheaded by Mao Tse Tung since 1927, the so-called War of Liberation by Mao and his followers gradually out numbering Chiang's Junta, the power base of the latter had simultaneously started shrinking. Eventually, Chiang Kaishek, who and his followers were branded as "reactionaries" by Mao, was over-run by the teeming millions of the already organised Peoples' Liberation Army joining his "Long March". It was indeed a revolution against the so-called "nationalist" government of Generalissimo Chiang Kaishek.

Driven out of the mainland China by the guerrilla marchers in the Peoples' Liberation Army, the nationalist leader had to seek refuge in a distant island called Taiwan where he had the breather to rebuild and reorganize his power base in the later part of forties, Mao had decided not to Chase Chiang further because that would have entailed escalation of death tolls of innocent people lured away by "nationalistic syndrome" and "reactionary" living. The fabric of the revolution as an island-state occupying today an enviable position in the industrially developed superpowers, is of course an eloquent testimony of a promise so squarely fulfilled. That is however, a different story — a tale of dedication, perseverance, diligence and honest endeavours of the people living in this tiny island.

But, in spite of the booming economy, the historically tarnished image of Generalissimo Chiang Kaishek as an 'autocrat' and 'reactionary' is yet to be reasonably salvaged. In fact, Taiwan's stupendous march forward may not owe its ceremonial start to Chiang Kaishek's reign or so to say, to his military rule. It took off after he was out of the scene for good. Nevertheless, his spirit of "nationalism" could be a fore-runner

even though he could not have foreseen such a gigantic stride ahead.

However, from the point of view of the communists until the disintegration of USSR and induction of democracy and democratic institutions, in east European countries, nationalism or nationalistic spirit continued to carry the stigma of "reactionaries". The mounting waves of "democracy" all over the world since early nineties, did not spare even the hardliners in mainland China. By and large, they too are caught in the melee of democratic process.

And by virtue of the innate attraction of the terminology and its wider perspective, 'democracy' has been continuously gaining popularity all over the world while its twin 'nationalism' has been gradually receding into obscurity being scarcely practised. Still then, some of the third world countries are observed to have been clinging to this orthodox philosophy of nationhood. Such a stance being fastidiously pursued by them are seen by the adversaries as a mere tool to hoodwink the imagination of the people purporting to derive uncertain political gains.

Indeed it has turned out to be a bogey to mislead the people that only the nationalists are real

patriots while others who do not subscribe to such an eerie interpretation dismiss it as a fanatically motivated conjecture to antagonize the people against them.

In Bangladesh, 'nationalism' has been described in two different nomenclature. One is 'Bangalee nationalism' and the other is 'Bangladeshi nationalism'. The former is apparently based on the 'lingua franca' of the people here while the latter on the 'geographical sovereignty' of the country or the nation. Practically, 'Bangalee nationalism' is considered as a legitimate forerunner of our historic War of Liberation which saw its emergence in the Language movement of 1952 followed by 6-point demand of 1966, and mass upsurge of 1969. There is no denying the fact that this particular spirit and facet of nationalism has been a strong, binding factor besides being an indispensable catalyst forging insurmountable solidarity amongst the hapless people of the country against the Pakistani hegemony.

On the other hand, 'Bangladeshi nationalism' took its birth from the hatchery of a group after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975. Invariably, it owed its origin to

a militaristic pattern of administration far away from the popular, democratic one. Its strength was gun and never vox populi. Clearly, its manoeuvre could be attributed to a sordid agenda to wipe out the Himalayan popularity of the founder of the state from human memories. With its advent and at the first instance, calculated measures were taken to pervert the history of the War of Independence apportioning greater credit to the man who had fought it only as sector commander. It was a cunning and got promotion, being deputy Chairman Regional Development Finance Corporation (RDFC). Thereafter he pushed out greener pastures in Banker's Equity Limited (BEL). From there he has graduated to being Chairman NDFC, all this in less than three years. The reported misuse of "officially sanctioned" prerequisites aside, such as drawing rent from NDFC while still using the RDFC Guest House, Khalid Iqbal seems to have a fairly Godfather

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person refused, in a high-handed manner, to recognize that the great sacrifice which the people of Bangladesh made for their mother tongue had no match in the global history — not to speak of those Bangalees beyond our borders. So, most justifiably, the dawning of Bangalee nationalism by the people of Bangladesh was appropriate. There could not be a second opinion about such an absolute truth. It is agreed that an independent and sovereign state was the ultimate goal of our Liberation War but it was the die-hard 'Bangalee nationalism' that paved the way to it spilling blood of 3 million innocent lives. Unfortunately, the protagonists of the so-called 'Bangladeshi nationalism' have been losing sight of such a massive sacrifice on the part of our people. They are happy with the end results being contemptibly oblivious of the 'truth' to that end. This is the height of their ingratitude to the whole nation. This is how they are most shamelessly wearing the garb of 'Bangladeshi nationalism' which orates Bangladesh both as a state and a nation while it very rudely ignores the prime component — the great people of Bangladesh who are very proud to be Bangalee first and Bangalee last. Our emergence and existence alike owe one hundred per cent to 'Bangalee nationalism', that is, the magical, unifying force of our language which eventually culminated into a sovereign country. So, here 'Bangladeshi nationalism' is essentially a misnomer, an irritating concoction of our War of Liberation.

This Day, a Quarter Century Ago

by Kaiser Haq

October 9, 1971: Murti, a remote hill village on the Bhutan border. To the world at large neither the date nor the place meant anything. But for 61 Bangladeshis, then in the prime of youth, it was one of the most important days in their lives. Perhaps the most important. After 14 weeks of spartan training they were ready to become Second Lieutenants in the Bangladesh Army — the only

batch commissioned by the Bangladesh government in exile. They came to be known as the First Bangladesh War Course or First SS (Short Service Course).

Within days, the 61 subalterns were at the Front putting their training to use. The next

two months were a gruelling test of courage and endurance, but the 1st SS came through with flying colours. Sixteen received gallantry awards. Casualties: 3 shaheeds.

A special bond of comradeship unites those who train together to risk their lives in the service for a noble cause. But of

such fellow feeling was created the First Bangladesh War Course trust, which each year on 9th October arranges a reunion of all surviving members of the course and their families. It is a time to remember the dead and to Reminisce about what they shared in Murti; the hardship gladly borne, the jokes, the idealism, which sadly has given way nationwide to cynicism and despair.



Standing (from left): Abu Sadeque, Anisur Rahman, Dilar Atar Hossain, Mohammad Ali, Mizanur Rahman, Ajizar Rahman, Abul Hossain, Ali Wakiuzzaman, Asaduzzaman, Md. Ahsanullah, Peraz Kamal, Aminul Islam, Zahirul Haq Khan, Niranjan Bhattacharya, Sayeed Ahmed, Sheikh Kamal, Mahbubul Alam, Jalalabadi, Shamsul Alam, Abdul Aziz Chowdhury, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Ashfaqur Samad, Abdullah Kaiser, Abdul Kayum Khan, Munir Rahman. Middle row (from left): Jamil Din Hasan, Rafiqul Islam, Masudur Rahman, Mansurul Alam, Sachin Karmakar, Mizanur Rahman, Hashmi Mostafa Kamal, Shahrir Huda, Fazlur Rahman, SM Khaleel, Abdul Jalil, Huda Huda Bachchu, Abu Baker. Sitting (from left): Taheruddin Akbarji, Abdur Rouf, Raquibul Islam, Anisul Hasan, Kabir Uddin, Khondkar Md. Nurunnabi, Alik Kumar Gupta, Momtaj Hasan, Mahbubur Rahman, Manjur Ahmad, Mansurul Islam Majumdar, Taher Ahmed, Mohammad Mostafa, Fazl Hossain, Wakar Hasan, Selim Hasan, Nazrul Islam Bhuiya, Walli Ul Islam. Not in the picture: Shawkat Ali, Fazlur Rahman, Ghoshuddin.

To the Editor...

Incident at ZIA

Sir, This is to endorse the letter of Professor Alau Hq Frantur who was my colleague at the University of Chicago and to request that the matter be given a serious consideration. If I recall correctly, The Daily Star deplored the sad incidence at Zia International Airport where a British passport-holder of Bangladesh ori-

gin was killed reportedly by officials. Rough handling of Bangladesh passengers by British and making them suffer at their own airports have been observed by both Bangladesh and foreign observers. It's time something is done to stop such behaviour at the time of arrival and departure.

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