

Jail Reform Imperative

So, the worst fear has come true. Loss of human lives for the cause of law and order. Reportedly, nine people have been killed in law-enforcing agency's Sunday operation to end the weeklong tale of rebellion at the Jessore jail. Ideally, it was a situation best averted but really, there seemed no way out of the no-go that had been prevailing there.

The hardliners among the prisoners made their militant mood of resistance manifest in no uncertain manner. They made weapons, they had firearms smuggled in and they created bunkers. On top, they lynched a fellow prisoner on suspicion that he was an informer to the police.

Though the rationale for use of force to quell the rebellion if it crossed the critical threshold, was touched upon editorially by The Daily Star, it does not stop us from seeing the pathetic side of the consequences of the blood and iron policy. While regretting the loss of human lives in the operation, we urge the authorities to conduct a thorough probe into it for a clear public view of the whole issue.

Every disaster leaves a lesson for the willing learner. Now that a long-brewing problem has been encountered, the government should immediately set out to root out its cause. There is no denying that jails in this country have become veritable hells. The spirit is so vitiated and the practice is so corrupt that the main purpose of sending a criminal behind the bars which is to reform him or her to the life of a law abiding, morally reborn human being is lost at the very outset.

The fact that our jails are inadequate both in number and space is only the one side of the picture. The source of real worry lies in jail administration. Corruption has gone so deep into the confined world that the inmates who are at the complete mercy of jail authorities, reportedly have to grease the palms of the menials there for small but basic necessities.

This is not administration weevilled to the core but gross violation of human rights as well. No wonder, as a leading Bengali daily researched out, seventy deaths have so far been recorded in twenty-five cases of jail rebellion in two decades. The positive part of this seamy history, however, is that it has the potential to flow into a different course; a course definitely human, civil and sensible, provided the government is keen on learning from the past.

What puts the present government at a vantage point vis-a-vis jail reform is that it faces the brunt of a negative legacy of previous callousness on this issue but cannot be blamed for it at all. So, it is clearly in a position to take new, bold steps towards comprehensive jail reform based on sound planning and prompt implementation of it in record time.

Peace Process Netanyahu Syndrome?

Benjamin Netanyahu, the youngest Prime Minister in Israel's history, has been a dynamo of a talker for peace, but not a single of his torrential pacific words has come to materialise during his six months in power.

At this point in time, he has irked, if not antagonised President Clinton who is now openly critical of the style and some contents of his leadership. Even his own security chiefs are apprehensive of a September-type outbreak of violence that has snuffed out 79 people. His vindictiveness far exceeds any act of militancy on the other side. For instance, the highway ambush, claimed to have been the work of a radical Palestinian faction, in which a Jewish settler and her 12-year-old son were slain, provoked Netanyahu into declaring a massive Jewish settlement plan. And just imagine, where the new 1000 housing units are going to be built! By a deliberate decision, close to the spot where the ambush had taken place.

That speaks volumes about this man's turning the clock back on progress achieved in the Middle East peace process during his predecessor Shimon Perez's time. Contrary to the media prognostication earlier on that, it would not be possible for him to put things on a reverse gear because these had advanced too far for it. Netanyahu seems hell-bent to be doing just that.

Under the accords, end of 1997 is the deadline for four military pullbacks including withdrawal of 80 per cent of troops from Hebron but his driving craze for new settlements demolish such prospects, to say nothing of the final status of talks on the future of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and borders between the two entities.

Netanyahu's size of electoral victory has not been supportive of and the latest opinion polls show his declining popularity lead to a point where he is trailing the opposition leader Ehud Barak.

There is some talk of the US withholding 2.7 billion dollars in loan guarantees for Israel. It is in the hands of the State Department to drum sense into the ears of Netanyahu.

Herded Cattleheads?

Highways of international quality are emerging as a treat to the eyes and a bodily comfort on journeys across the length and breadth of the country. We are grateful to those who have been helping us materially and technologically to lay this world-class network of roads as a part and parcel of the over-all infrastructure in the country. Commensurate with this development, we have seen a rapid increase in the number of luxury or ordinary coaches and buses on the highways.

However, barring a few exceptions on the eastern Bangladesh routes, the transports operate without any toilet fittings inside them, a rudimentary requirement in long-distance travel. Even worse, many terminals are scrawny little nothings with transiting passengers having to sneak into a private turf for relieving themselves. Properly-run waiting room facilities are hardly to be seen anywhere.

As if these passenger inconveniences were not enough, we are now being put through an excruciating ordeal on the ferries. Vehicles are placed in them so close to each other that they permit no passage whatsoever to people desperately needing to go to the toilets.

Let the JIWA issue immediate instructions to the ferry operators to redress this intolerable public hardship.

Money Making: Bangladesh Style

In fact for big business, dependence on the government as the buyer was overwhelming. As a consequence, influence peddling became a new money-making venture. In general, these were one-man show fixing and fixing for the real agents of foreign suppliers.

who could establish international contacts since import trade was practically run by indenting houses located in Pakistan and very few had even their branch offices at Dhaka. Therefore competition was hardly any and the near-monopoly conditions combined with scarce supplies, resulted in enormous gains for practically one indenting house.

This was the beginning of the big money-making game — Bangladesh style. The uniqueness of the style may please be noted. Out of the blue and without any investment, one can end up with millions of dollars and the only requirement is the right international contact which were indeed very rare in those days. After grains, came the need to import raw materials, cotton in particular. There was huge need to import spares and accessories for bringing the entire manufacturing sector into operation and who can find the right source of import, indenting became the great money spinning business of the early 1970s and it was so good involving so few and for so much.

The business was so new and very few could enter the business.

Cotton could not be imported from Pakistan as before. Who are the international suppliers of cotton who knows about them? The person who managed to secure the right information immediately made it into the millionaires rank practically as soon as the L/C

could be opened. There emerged a cotton king of Bangladesh. Similarly, in case of spares and equipment, imports were tied to original suppliers whose Pakistani agents have vanished. Therefore the few who could secure the new agency acquired the golden goose which started to lay the eggs without any waiting period at all.

Government's large-scale nationalisation policy strongly assisted the emergence of indenting as the major private sector business of the country. There were no substantial

opportunities in the manufacturing sector. In particular, former Bangladeshi factory owners all got into trading bandwagon in general, trying very hard to enter the import market. Government became the biggest buyer — from cars to power plants. In fact for big business, dependence on the government as the buyer was overwhelming. As a consequence, influence peddling became a new money-making venture. In general, these were one-man show fixing and fixing for the real agents of foreign suppliers.

Thus opportunities for productive capitalism were few and far between capital-less, contact-based money-making became the order of the day. This is the way to make quick money and big money as well. The business motivation and the value structure of business became so adversely biased that when incentives were provided and banks opened the doors for investment loans, the objectives were not to build up private manufacturing capacities, but the borrowed money itself was considered as income gained. Repayment was and sometime still is never in the mind of the borrowers. Money-making through bank borrowing is an end itself.

So three basic types of money-making, Bangladesh style could be identified: commission income, payments for lobbying and bank loans. Hundreds of crores of taka have been flushed away through these three money-making de-

vice. The fourth and the latest device is of very recent origin and God willing, it lasted for a short while. This is the bull run in the stock market when share prices shot up over ten to twenty times within days only. There must be a few, may be at least a dozen who made 100 crores over a short period of flush time for money-making. This is not unusual in a capitalist economy. However, the hangover from earlier flush seasons remained in the minds of the general public. As a result, even housewives and other small savers rushed in to the stock exchange increase their small money into big money overnight. Most of them lost heavily but the psychology behind it must be understood. People have seen others making tons of money without any cost or capital. From zero, bank balances shot up by leaps and bounds for the lucky few. Why not small savers try for the same and through no underhand dealing since share prices are shooting up.

After the collapse of the bull run, I think the Bangladesh style of money-making have come full circle. After 25 years we should realise that money-making is not easy. It needs money first and luck second.

Above all it calls for brain and sustained hard work. Successful money maker in the true productive capitalist style creates the genuine entrepreneurs who possess the unique capacity to think ahead and slog for years before they make it to the top.

We should try to create an economy where one can become rich overnight only through winning a big lottery and in no other way.



Window on Asia

Shahed Latif

manufacturing left to the private sector. On the other hand, imports in small lots by private industry owners were changed to very large-scale single import orders — making indenting a highly profitable business without any investment in any equipment or hardware. Also former private owners used to place orders directly to the vendors from abroad and also from the former west Pakistani suppliers. Instead of one jute or textile mill, the requirements of say 50 or more of them running into millions of dollars were pulled together and government appointed managers followed the well-established tendering

the scale of import, it was in those days possible for not many to arrange for the big performance bonds. Thus Socialism of those days did not support even small business which was so essential.

We had the worst of both the worlds of socialism and capitalism and in the midst of all, indenting and commission agents — not many of them though — flourished and prospered like nobody's business since it was all their business.

The beginning of the big time money-making opened the eyes and ears of many. The new aspirants were abundant — swelled by those denied of op-

Of Reality and Gratitude

I have gone around Dhaka and found that there is no memorial, no arch, not even a stone to commemorate the memory of the Indian officers and jawans who sacrificed their lives for Bangladesh.

should take the credit for defeating Pakistan and Dhaka for liberating Bangladesh.

The sensitivity of Bangladeshis is understandable. They have been cast in a different mould by the rulers succeeding Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, founder of Bangladesh, in the last 21 years. But now that the freedom fighters have come back to power, they should have been courageous enough to give the Indian forces their due. Fearing fundamentalists and extremists is surrendering to bigotry and jingoism. That the intellectuals are also afraid indicates the power that the biased have come to wield. But it is time for come to speak out.

Indeed, India needs no credit. It went to the help of Bangladeshis because they were being liquidated through brute force. But if they are going to live in the fear of fundamentalists, they will be jeopardising their liberty. They have to assert themselves. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has at least done one wrong. She laid on December 16 the foundation stone of Independence Movement to honour the glorious struggle for the National Liberation of Bangladesh. The monument will be at the same place where 91,498 Pakistani soldiers surrendered in 1971. In her speech, she acknowledged the contribution of the Indian army. But she praised America, the UK and Russia in the same breath. I do not recall any national of the three countries

giving his life for Bangladesh.

Indian armed forces did so. As many as 1,476 Indian officers and jawans lost their lives and 4,201 were wounded. At several spots on the Bangladesh soil, their blood mingled with that of Mukti Bahini's. It was a saga of bravery by both. How do the American, the British and the Russians come into the picture? And why should there be an effort to belittle India's

forces was explained by some Bangladeshi intellectuals thus. Since he was not part of the 10-month-long liberation movement because of his detention in Pakistan jail, he did not want to glorify the struggle let it should dwarf his importance. His estrangement with Tajuddin, his finance minister, who was a key to the liberation struggle, was reportedly for the same reason.

Even though New Delhi had banned private trade between India and Bangladesh, the propaganda was that the old Hindu manjuri was returning to East Bengal through the backdoor, opened by local Muslims. The pre-partition fear that the Muslims would be condemned to the drawers of water or hewers of wood is thought to be revived. Some Calcutta businessmen strengthened this fear by their "anxiety" to have trade with Bangladesh.

The return of Hindu refugees had also created anti-India feeling. After ousting Hindus following the military crackdown on March 25, 1971, Pakistanis had distributed the evacuee land and shops among Muslims. They now resented the government's order on the restoration of property to its original owners. Some Pakistani elements — and they appeared to be quite active — had propagated that even the refugees of 1947 were returning.

After the return of Hasina, the atmosphere has changed. It is the return of spirit of liberation days when India and Bangladesh marched hand in hand. Still there is hesitation. The ruling Awami League should realise that those whom it defeated at the polls are not in tune with new times. The more they are placated, the more they will expect and demand. The Ganga water treaty has helped to allay some suspicions. But India will have to tread the path carefully because it has a long way to go.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

help? I have gone around Dhaka and found that there is no memorial, no arch, not even a stone to commemorate the memory of the Indian officers and jawans who sacrificed their lives for Bangladesh.

I recalled the words Sheikh Mujib used when I interviewed him in Dhaka in early 1972. He said: "A Bengali does not forget even those who give him only a glass of water. Here your soldiers laid down their lives for my people. How can they ever forget your sacrifice? You fed ten million refugees for more than ten months. Even now you are giving us food and other assistance. I can assure you that my people are not ungrateful."

Why the Sheikh did not build any monument to honour the services of Indian armed

My reading is that the incipient anti-India feeling, a few weeks after the creation of Bangladesh, stopped the Sheikh from perpetuating the contribution of India or its armed forces. There were several exaggerated notions which evoked anti-India feeling. Civil servants in Dhaka, suddenly found themselves as small and yet not prosperous country; indulged in anti-India talk. "Your country is too big," they often said. "Whether your neighbours like it or not, they have to be subservient to you." Many of the officials would nostalgically recall the days they had spent as members of the Pakistan civil service and inquire if I had, during my visit to Pakistan, met such and such offi-

The average man was troubled by scarcities and high prices (an after effect of any war). He tended to believe in the propaganda that his difficulties were because "everything was going to India." I was told again and again that rice in Bangladesh was costly because it was being bartered for luxury goods smuggled from West Bengal.

A few Bangladesh leaders, like Maulana Bhashani, exploited the people's hardships for their political ends. They said things were bad because "our neighbours are making the best of our miseries. Their target was Mujib but since he was too tall for them, they picked on India and maligned it in the hope that some of the mud would stick on him as well.

To the Editor...

Haircuts and AIDS

Sir, When I got my hair-cut recently, I realised how vulnerable are we to AIDS. Much had been said about the prevention of this disease. However, we are yet to come up with a practical campaign that would create AIDS awareness. A simple cut by a contaminated blade during a hair-cut can give us AIDS and most of us are not aware of it. I do not think we have learned to think of death approaching us from such an unsuspecting direction.

But this must change. AIDS is a social disease and we have to reconsider many of our social practices that make us vulnerable to it. The World AIDS Day was an opportunity for the AIDS campaigners to promote such social awareness. Along with safe sex, we must promote safe hair-cuts!

Junaid Ahmed Mirpur, Dhaka

Hazards of skipping meals

Sir, Gone are the days, when one could watch a movie like 'Gone with the Wind' and admire the curves of Scarlett O'Hara, and appreciate a little weight on a woman's body. Even a decade back i.e. in the eighties, emphasis was given on an oval healthy look, rather than a 'super-thin', 'super-pale' model of the nineties, making her way on the ramp. Recently, after the advent of the Star TV and Zee TV, most of the viewers in Dhaka specially women belonging to the upper middle-class and well-to-do families, have taken the image of a model a little too seriously.

After a recent study it has been observed that almost 80 per cent of them skip meals and hardly have two well-balanced meals a day. In the course of losing inches from their waist, they also start suffering from malnutrition and Anorexia. Yet there are others who go one step further and resort to bulimia. Some of them in order to develop the 'lean-look' choose improper strenuous exercises

three hours per day, which can damage muscles and tissues severely.

Little do they realise, that from time immemorial food has been of vital importance for our very existence. Skipping meals can damage the internal organs extensively. The lack of proper vitamins B1, in our diet, can make one more edgy and moody. Leaking to temper tantrums. Skin becomes dry and scaly, due to the lack of vitamin A and C. Slathering of expensive creams in our faces cannot refrain one from that damage.

In order to look and feel good one has to maintain a nutritional well balanced diet. One should have the basic idea of what kind of fat should be eaten. Animal fat taken excessively can slow down blood clot dissolving activity.

On the other hand fat that is derived from fish, particularly fatty fish, overflowing with Omega-3 fatty acids is the best way to slash one's chances of heart disease. A lack of vitamin C can send blood pressure up. In fact, according to Doctor Christopher J. Bulpitt of the Hammer Smith Hospital of London, vitamin C in fruits and vegetables is a powerful preventive medicine against high blood pressure.

Some of the extremely figure-conscious women also tend to skip breakfast. This again is fatal to our health. In the book, 'Food Your Miracle Medicine' cardiologist Renata CF Koka, of the Memorial Hospital of Newfoundland in St. Johns suggest 'that skipping breakfast nearly triples our blood clot forming potential, leaving one more vulnerable to heart attacks and strokes.'

According to a recent article in the 'Life' magazine, it has been stated that each person has their own individual structure, and therefore, the amount of weight or the way one look depends on that particular structure. Aesthetically, some of us look or feel better if we have five pounds of extra weight in our body. Yet there are others whose body function

normally without that extra five pounds of weight.

Star-worshippers, who are not super-thin models like Kate Moss or Linda Evangelista, can become physically weak and pale, if they skip meals in order to loose weight and try to look like them.

Skipping meals dieting extensively and doing the wrong exercises strenuously can only make us weak and physically ill. Therefore, a well balanced diet and proper exercises done moderately, is the key to good health. Most of us who are not naturally skinny, can do with an extra few pounds of weight, as long as our body functions well and we look good, without being overweight.

A Citizen Dhaka

The right to property

Sir, The world, in all respects, is advancing day by day. The main bastion of power and born superiority are being challenged everywhere seriously. Women are waking up to their rights as human beings. And there shouldn't be males to speak against them.

But it is pitifully true that our Hindu women have always been neglected and suffering many social ills. The right to sharing property of either the family which they come of or of husbands is not still translated into reality due to absence of law.

So, if unfortunately one's husband dies one can hardly keep herself going. In our neighbouring country India, the women's rights to sharing property have been established.

In my opinion, we can match, as we swell up, the speeches with practices.

Afsana Chowdhury Emu SS Road, Straiganj

Lack of patriotic zeal

Sir, It is a pity that the educated people of our society seem to be quiet at indispensible, social injustice and corruption toward the youths who are our future leaders. These days,

everyone talks tall on various national issues without any patriotic feelings for the motherland. It is a shame.

Law-abiding and peace-loving citizens of our country don't seem to have enough courage to face any ordeal for the common good. It is indeed a peculiar psychology of those who are afraid of confronting any reactionary group of people. They are the enemies of the country. They say that laws have become corrupted limiting the powers of the intellectuals who are at the helms. The dishonest lot manage to get the benefits of good living and life at the cost of the hard-working people of our country. It is not a good sign for the future. It sounds like and echoes a possible convulsion like the French Revolution.

It is better to create public opinion in favour of an effective action to avoid such a dreadful event.

A Citizen Ameer Complex, Uttara Dhaka

Victory Day

Sir, We were under brutality of Pakistani occupation forces nine months. Hell was virtually let loose in '71, and demons united with uncivilised Pakistani invaders. We never will forget the brutality they exercised on Bangladesh. We became united and disciplined to achieve our target. Now I am sorry to say that we, after liberation, became reluctant to show our integrity to build our country.

As a result, time and again we were under military or quasi-military rules. Every good achievement of the Victory Day will be interfered if we deviate ourselves from democracy. My true respect to all sung and unsung martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the noble cause in 1971.

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OPINION About BCS Examination

Md Masum Billah

The existing system of BCS examination calls for opinions of the conscious citizens to be expressed and the candidates concerned, already seem to have reflected theirs in the different dailies. I cannot help sharing my opinion with them. BCS is a tough and subtle examination through which deserving candidates are selected to run state affairs smoothly. But the selective process is not transparent.

According to the syllabus of BCS examination, one candidate is to take three optional subjects from two groups irrelevant of Arts, Commerce and Science backgrounds. This mars the transparency of BCS examination. Students belonging to BUET, BITS, Agri varsity as well as the students of science faculty in our universities have ample scope to obtain high marks in these three optional subjects. Students of other faculties are deprived of this opportunity and the students of Arts group are the worst sufferers. A student of literature or political science or history can hardly obtain 60 per cent marks. But students of Science group can easily secure 80 per cent marks in their subjects. Here the interesting thing is to assess the results on the basis of total marks obtained by the candidates without considering their subject matter. As a result, only students with science background have been seen to occupy Foreign service and other prospective cadres for the last several years. This is happening due to the discrepancy of subject choice.

Only professional cadres need the knowledge of a particular subject to be applied (education and judicial cadre). But the general ones need candidates' awareness of the world, IQ, general knowledge and command English so that those are selected for these cadres can run administrative and similar arenas. So, I urge the PSC to exclude the optional subjects from the BCS examination. Marks distribution may be arranged in the following way:

General Bangali — 150  
General English — 200  
General Science — 100  
General Mathematics — 100  
G Knowledge (Bangladesh affairs) — 200  
G Knowledge (Foreign affairs) — 200  
Viva-voce — 50  
Total — 1000

It should be arranged that the candidates for the professional cadres will have to face examinations for 500 marks which can include G Bengali, G English, G Knowledge, G Science, G Mathematics and viva-voce excluding their academic attainment.

The viva-voce examination of 200 marks gives way to many anomalies in the BCS examination. The arrangement of different viva boards further aggravates the situation. Awarding marks to the candidates may differ from one board to another. It is widely known that in this competitive examination even one mark matters much. A candidate may fail to enter into service on his/her desired cadre for the difference of one mark only. So, the marks for viva-voce examination should not be more than 50.

Quota system in the BCS examination is another irrational side. Meritorious candidates are being deprived of jobs through this system and the country is failing to utilise their useful service. Quota system may continue for many, but not at the PSC.

Adopting unfair means in the examination is another peculiar experience. A large number of candidates, except a few ones, adopt unfair means in the BCS examination in different examination centres. PSC should be aware of this grim fact and take necessary steps to eradicate this evil practice from this prestigious examination.

The results of the 17th BCS written examination have been published on November 1 last. The PSC is entreated to consider the matter of the candidates of humanities seriously in the viva-voce so that they do not suffer any more.