

Custodial Imprisonment?

The number of people, girls and women in particular, taken into protective custody throughout the country has registered an abrupt increase over a period of just one month. While there were 216 such captives — 161 of them female — till February, by March the figure just shot up to 269 of whom 226 were female. The development is open to interpretations — both positive and negative. Positive, because the police may have been more receptive to the individual need for such security and people may also have felt encouraged to seek the law enforcers' help. Negative, because the cases of disputes and muscle-flexing could really be on the increase and/or the police have caught more people under the vagrancy act to place them under safe custody.

If a month's statistics of people brought under protective custody shows an abnormal rise there are obviously reasons to be worried about it. After incidents like the one involving Seema in Chittagong, both the concept and system of protective custody have been vigorously questioned. If people under threat from criminals or powerful quarters have to languish in jails for no fault of their own — in extreme cases for 15 and 12 years, as reported in the Bhorer Kagoj — and the intimidators move freely about, we need no more proof to say that the legal system has been a conspicuous failure. The police prove their incapacity in the face of impediment from the powerful and the state fails to ensure safety and security of common people. The police have moreover shown many times over that they are unqualified to be custodians of women in particular.

So, we suggest that the government immediately sit with the leading women's organisations and legal aid and human rights groups to devise an alternative safe arrangement for women requiring protection. The problem has to do with accommodation in the jails. We wonder what has happened to the question of jail reform. The government will have no excuse if there is recurrence of revolt in one or more of the country's prisons. Measures in this regard must be taken before the situation becomes explosive. Let's see the jail reform within a short time to avert another tragedy on a great scale.

Clear the Port Mess

Chittagong Port operations have been in a cliff-hanging balance tilted dangerously towards the placated caprice, one time too many, of the workers' CBA. These resumed since March 20 on a conditional prop of the dispute over the use of private equipment being put off for a fortnight in a last-ditch bid to reach a tripartite settlement of the question by the government, the CBA and the port users.

A formal government announcement ending the temporarily suspended impasse is expected today going by the agreed time-table. Whichever way the government decision goes, we would like to place on record our strongest reservations about the CBA tyranny against any attempt to introduce a new technology for a minimal modernisation of the port operations. All concerned caved in to the union's resistive pressure sheepishly. Even when the private parties have volunteered to have their cargoes unloaded with the help of much-less-than-super-sophisticated equipment in the face of given incapacity of the port employees, not to speak of their deliberate wild-cat derelictions of duty, the former's legitimate initiative floundered against a wall of opposition. Don't they have a right to self-applied safeguard at their own cost against unnecessary demurrage payment?

Let's firmly fix our back against the CBA's continual stonewalling of any move to improve the operational system at the premier port of the country in a competitive jolt vis-a-vis the services being offered by the ports nearer home, let alone those afar. The government must put its foot down on their anti-reform, anti-economy and shall we add, anti-people posture which the nation is in no position to countenance any more. What a slide-down in the situation this is that in addition to the disenchantment being occasionally expressed by foreign shipping lines to keep out of Chittagong Port, we now have our own port users worked up to the extent of saying even they are prepared to boycott it.

Taking all this into account, the government has to act decisively. To enable the government to do that it is necessary that the Opposition keep from fishing in the troubled waters.

Technicality Hog-wash

We have generally learnt to live with the interminably dangling question mark over our sense of prioritization the squeaks and squirms notwithstanding. But, here is an instance of abysmal mis-perception we really can't put a balm to or let go with, irksome as it is to the core of our sensibilities. Some things of such proven validity, efficacy and profitability like the three units of the Institute of Public Health (IPH) which have been locally producing life-saving vaccines and fluids in an import-unhappy country are gasping for breath to stay somehow afloat.

The fate of the projects funded under the ADPs from 1982 to 1995 and deserving a re-run from that point onwards under the revenue budget for their demonstrative merits has remained inexplicably undecided. While things on the periphery of national life have been brought under the revenue budgets over the years to give them recurring expenditure lines, these life-saving vaccine or serum units have begging bowls in their hands — thanks to the technicality or procedural jig-saw. These specialised production units operative since 1982 have yielded a highly skilled manpower pool of some 146 technicians whom we must endeavour not to lose. The stake is so much the higher.

When all the major hospitals of the country are critically dependent on the products of the IPH units the government must see to it that these are brought under the next revenue budget without fail.

Private Affluence and Public Squalor

Every economic activity has two sides, the positive (goods) and the negative (bads). The positive side brings forth goods which increases the income and wealth of the economy while the negative side gives rise to the bad products like industrial and other wastes which reduce the positive values of income and wealth since a portion of the values of the positive part has to be spent in disposing these wastes.

cities of the country, let alone thriving businesses) but the state of almost every public facility has gone to the pits. This is visible in every aspect of social and public facilities. Some examples would illustrate the point.

First, take the case of transport facilities in the country. As any observer can see now, there are too many cars, trucks, private business vehicles, private scooters and rickshaws on too few roads. The consequence has been disastrous. First of all, the roads are over-crowded and must intensively used by the owners of all kinds of vehicles and it takes much longer time to cover the same distances now than it used to take about five years ago causing a huge waste of working hours of the day. It slows down the office and business transactions. Secondly, the road condition is deteriorating rapidly without any improved maintenance services. Thirdly, the number of accidents is increasing every day. Fourthly, the air is polluted with black, poisonous fumes emitted out of the oil burning vehicles on the roads causing severe health hazards for all the city-dwellers.

The questions that immediately come to mind are the following: Does anybody care about these ever-increasing life-threatening hazards? Where and how these life-hazards are going to end? One can only see these growing in numbers and volumes and no remedies planned by the policy makers. If all these continue to oc-

cur at the present rate, one can be rest assured that the existing cities will not be liveable in the next decade or so.

This raises the most elementary but fundamental question as to what is meant by development. Every economic activity has two sides, the positive (goods) and the negative (bads). The positive side brings forth goods which increases the income and wealth of the economy while the negative side gives rise to the bad products like industrial and other wastes which reduce the positive values of income.

growth of the values of outputs neglecting the losses due to the economy's waste disposal will not mean economic development. Therefore, the values of life and properties involved in accidents, insurance costs and hospital and medical costs due to polluted environmental etc. will have to be deducted from the positive values of national products as the proper index of development. Otherwise, the development indicators will be fooling the people.

What about the quality of inter-city and inter-district

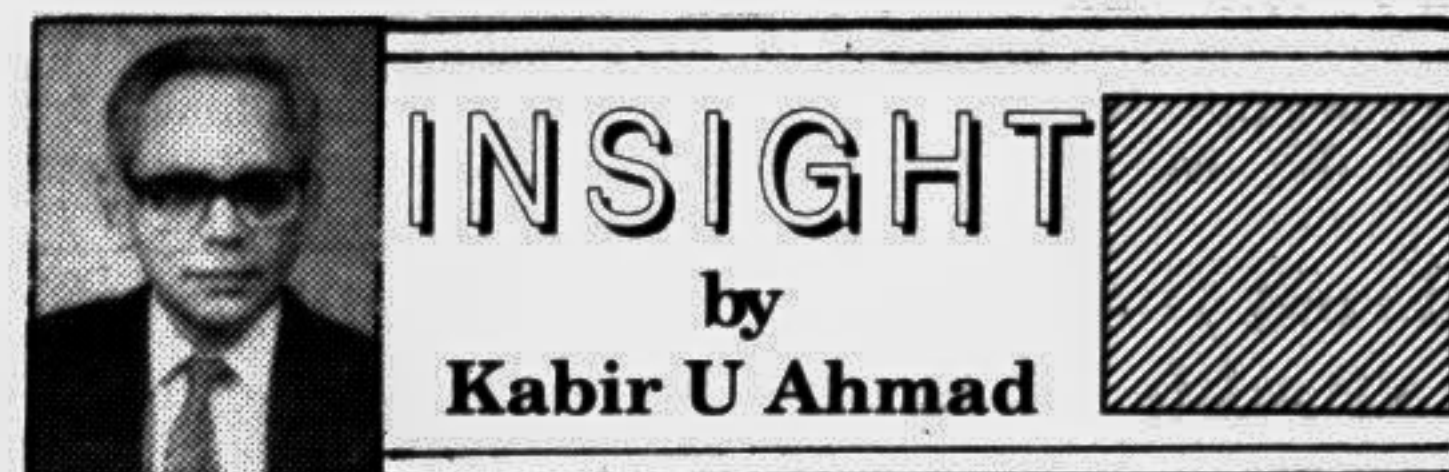
every often. Who cares?

What about the quality of garbage disposal, water supply, electricity and gas supplies, health care and educational services in the cities and the country? Everyone sees the piles of garbage on the streets, how these rot and pollute the air, and how crows, dogs and humans compete for whatever they can recover for their consumption. These are visible even in the most elegant residential areas of the city. Neither the city authorities nor its affluent residents bother much about the filthy environment. The roads in the interiors of the cities are over-used by the private builders and developers. No one wants to pay taxes for repair and maintenance of these public roads. The appalling situation with electricity, water and gas supplies is hurting almost everybody as well as the economy. It has become a political issue now and everybody blames everyone else.

The situation in the hospitals is far worse in terms of dirt and filth in and around these institutions. The stories of neglect of the patients by doctors and nurses, the non-availability of doctors in the hospital and the wrong treatment are well known. The affluent patients, of course, go off to India, Singapore, Bangkok and Europe or the United States. Who cares for those who cannot afford such luxuries of foreign treatment? Similarly, the state of public education is simply pathetic. Teachers in schools are busy in earning money by giving

private tuitions and less in spending time and efforts in the class-rooms. They have become used to selling examination questions to the examinees. What kind of education is taking place in these schools? What kind of products are these schools producing for future generations? At the level of higher education, the institutions have become battle grounds of political parties. Everyone talks about depoliticising the universities, but nothing really happens. Gun battles erupt every often. No one seems to know how to free the universities from the mess they have gone into.

What can be done? On the questions of transport and environment, something concrete can be done. First, increase the import duty on reconstructions and new cars and increase the tax on the gasoline to reduce the automobile use. Require every car, truck, bus and the scooter to introduce catalytic converter to eliminate the emission of black fume in the air. Introduce strict controls on the number of scooters and rickshaws permitted on the roads. Introduce and enforce speed limits for all vehicles in the city roads and on the inter-city highways. For environmental protection inside the cities, enforce a proper garbage collection system and charge fees for their clearance and disposal. Measures for improving utility supplies, healthcare and educational systems need thorough overhaul, and national commitment of all political parties which cannot be discussed in such a short article. Mechanism should be devised to collect more taxes from the affluent ones to eliminate the country's public squalor.



INSIGHT
by
Kabir U Ahmad

and wealth since a portion of the values of the positive part has to be spent in disposing these wastes. If, however, the waste disposal is not taken care of in the right way and at the right time, it can give rise to an amount of social cost in terms of environmental pollution, sickness, deaths, and injuries the values of which may far outweigh the initial values of the positive products of the economy.

So on the surface, the national income accounting, which takes into account only the positive goods and not the negative ones, may show the

transportation system? Roads and railways exist to connect various parts of the country. The state of the railway service is appalling. Its lines, being used and abused by political parties during hartal days, have made them unsafe and vulnerable to accidents. No one cares about replacement of these lines.

However, the two-lane highways connecting various parts of the country are being heavily used by private truckers, bus owners and private car owners. There is no sign of speed limit, let alone enforcing them, anywhere in the country and accidents have been taking place

Will Post-Deng China be Able to Cross New Hurdles?

by AMM Shahabuddin

New President Jiang Zemin, in his first public statement, after assuming power, vowed that he wouldn't "swerve" from Deng's policies, adding, that he would "outdo his achievements".

WITH the sudden, but not unexpected, passing away of the great leader of new China Deng Xiaoping, China has lost a great and dynamic personality. After Mao Zedong, the new glorious chapter of the Chinese episode, opened by Deng, will be there with its blazing trail to show the way to the new leadership to mould the destiny of 1.2 billion Chinese people in years to come. Deng opened a new vista for economic emancipation of his people with his dynamic economic reforms, by opening his country to the outside world, leaving for good, the traditional closed-door behind the bamboo curtain policy.

His exit from the national scenario, gave rise to many speculations in the West about the capability of his successor Jiang Zemin who was considered by many as a "powerless transitional figure". Some even described him as a "political vegetarian". Only future will show how far he succeeds to carry the torch handed over to him by his mentor, Deng.

New President Jiang Zemin, in his first public statement, after assuming power, vowed that he wouldn't "swerve" from Deng's policies, adding, that he would "outdo his achievements". This was rather too frank and too bold an announcement by Jiang and too early as he, the people of China, will take such a rather "disrespectful show of arrogance" to a leader, who is considered as the "supreme leader" and "architect" of China's new economic order, is difficult to predict. It was Deng who picked him up, practically from "obscurity", and groomed him to shoulder the future leadership, just as Stalin once brought out Khrushchev out of "obscurity" and put him to responsible position.

Deng's Good and Bad Days

Deng had the bitter, and sweat tastes of both 'the best of times' and 'the worst of times' during his long career as a dedicated communist activist, from the days of Mao Zedong. He fell from grace of Mao when he criticized Mao's much-publicised 'cultural revolution' (1966-1976) as a 'grave mistake' for which he was stripped of his post and sent to do 'menial work' in a countryside factory. He had the worst sufferings in those days. But he stuck to his gun and endured patiently with better hopes that came literally on a silver platter after the demise of Mao. But in one sense, Deng was lucky

not to leave his country and live an 'exiled' life like Trotsky who left his country in 1927 due to his feud with Stalin, to live in exile in Mexico where he was assassinated in 1940. Thus Deng could come back to power and rule the country for about two decades.

But the two sides of each coin are not always the same of shining glaze. There are at times light and shade. And Deng's regime shows these two sides glaringly. Just as he would be remembered for his historic economic reforms that produced the nation as a whole, he would also go down in China's history as playing a 'key-role' in crashing the pro-democracy movement that led to the massacre at the Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989. During this turmoil, President Jiang was 'politically' born in the hands of Deng as a 'mid-wife'. With both far-sight and foresight, Deng made him Communist Party chief after Zhao Ziyang, a reformist and a close associate of Deng, was stripped of his post, because he was dubbed as a supporter of democracy movements so what Mao did to Deng, the same was repeated by Deng in the case of one of his close associate Zhao.

Deng More Cautious than Gorbachev

Deng was indeed a champion of 'building socialism with Chinese characteristics'. He was in the forefront in his philosophy although similar voices were heard from some communist leaders, including Marshal Tito and Fidel Castro. Deng successfully brought out China from behind the tight-rope so-called 'bamboo curtain' rigid communist economy to the outside world with fresh air from the West with its open market economy. Although he became appreciably quite liberal in his economic policy, perhaps taking a cue from Western economic success, but he proved rigid so far as 'importing' western type of democracy was concerned. Perhaps he learnt a hard lesson from Gorbachev of former Soviet Union, who was raised to the sky by the western leaders and orchestrated media because of his 'openness', both politically and economically, with two popular slogans of glasnost and perestroika that led to his quick

fall. Deng was cautious and took measured steps avoiding 'pitfalls' and 'minefields'.

Deng started his economic reforms particularly from the rural areas where the vast majority of 1.2 billion people live and work. His policy brought about a tremendous change in the quality of life of the peasants and landless labourers during 1979-1984, when, according to one estimate, the farmer's incomes rose by 17 per cent a year, lifting them from near-subsistence level and giving them more impetus for further rise. But just as it happened with western economic system, every rise has its fall and an inevitable crash follows a certain period of boom. So happened with the flourishing Chinese farmers in the 1980s. And some media reported that their annual income fell from 17 per cent to only 2 per cent, creating a panic and havoc among the farmers. There was shortage of jobs, dearth of scopes for the national economy seemed to have reached a saturation point. Ironically, it led to huge exodus of unemployed farmers and a large-scale migration from the rural to the urban areas in search of jobs. Millions of farmers were on march. Perhaps a cruel reminiscence of the historic Long March which led the Chinese people to establish world's second Communist country. According to one report, about ten million migrants entered Guangdong province (Canton).

Economic Disparity: A Different Stroke

But there is another side of the boom. The boom has shown a tragic boomerang too. When millions were on the march in search of jobs and food for survival, important cities, like Beijing, were bursting with activities of the 'neo-rich' people. Thus Deng's policy created an outright economic disparity among the people, creating a so-called elite class, and a poor class. The elite class in Beijing and other flourishing cities had their posh new bungalows, new imported cars, domestic servants and 'even fed their pets with imported pet-food', as one report says, while their poorest 'cousins' were struggling for food and shelter on an annual income of \$65 only!

Although Deng was successful in later years to tide over the

difficult time through subsequent five-year plans, but still much was left to be done to stop the recurrence of the huge migration of rural farm people in search of jobs in the urban areas. According to one estimate, by 2020, China's urban population could more than double from its current about 400 million to some 840 million, and says an analyst, "unless a way can be found to control it, the next century will present China with breeding grounds for civil unrest..."

'Food Rush' by Growing Population

Today, China's coastal areas are said to be the fastest-growing economies in the world. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean that the whole of China is throbbing with new prosperity. When blood accumulates at one particular place, that's not a sign of health. People in the faraway rural areas in this vast country are still struggling on their subsistence-level income. The new Chinese government, headed by Jiang, will have to meet this 'food rush' of the growing population which is expected to reach at 'peak' at 1.6 billion by 2040, even working on its present one-child policy. China's current Five-Year plan, launched in 1996, promises several million new jobs to meet the situation. Chinese economic planners forecast economic growth of about nine per cent each year for next decade.

If that goes ahead undisturbed and unhampered, Jiang will, no doubt, emerge as a popular leader, next to Deng, even if he can't "out-do" him!

Social Evils Showing Ugly Face

But apart from economic problems, Jiang will have to deal with pernicious 'evils' that have already entered Chinese social life, like corruption, grafting, bribery, gambling, prostitution. A recent media report said that China had convicted some 41 bank officials for "fraudding" in a city near Shanghai, through "illegal" investment of 1.5 billion Yuan (\$184 million). It shows the extent of corruption and 'craze' for getting rich quicker. Unless checked, such vices would eat into the vitals of the Chinese nation. Jiang himself, commenting on this, has rightly

said: "Such official graft threatens the entire future of the nation and the Chinese Communist party". Jiang has touched the right chord at the right time. Even horse-racing and gambling (so-called capitalist or bourgeois vices), which were banned in China for the last four decades or so, have come back under the new name of 'horse intelligent taste', and gamblers are around under the new name of 'fun-seekers', just to dodge the prevailing law. (Chicago Tribune report). At least, the new leadership in China, is no longer expected to follow a policy, as they say, "Hear all, see all, say nowt (nothing)".

Political Unrest: A New Phenomenon

The recent bombasts in and around Beijing, killing several people, unheard of before, and political demonstrations in the north-western province of Xinjiang, dominated by a Muslim ethnic group, have undoubtedly rung the danger bell. They carry ominous signals. Besides, discontent and unrest is brewing in Tibet, now a province of China, for autonomy. It is another pain in the neck of Beijing. It's looming large on the horizon.

That's why the Chinese military forces have been put on "top alert" in both Xinjiang and Tibet in a bid to "curb separatist activities" in these areas. According to a media report, the

OPINION

Would-be Hindrance in Path of Development

Joy Alamgir

BNP lawmaker Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury proposed a bill to increase the powers of the members of the parliament. The bill known as "Parliament Member-Special Provision Law, 1996". If turned into a resolution of the parliament, will just be another barrier in the way of development.

Firstly, a member of the parliament is a lawmaker, not an administrator. The government governs the country through its various organizations and institutions. However if each and every one of the parliament members becomes the "supreme" person of his/her constituency the government and development programmes shall face hindrances and needless red-tape.

Secondly, why should a would-be company/firm or industry need the MP's permission to set up an industry? We live in a free market society, in a society of private enterprises. Development in our country has to come mainly from the private sector and from international investment. If someone decides to set up an industry in an area, the industry becomes an asset to the area. Why would there be need to ask the MP? If the concerned MP really does want development to come he would clear the path of formalities and red-tape to attract investment... It is really unfortunate that there are people in the parliament who think otherwise... to pasting another red-tape in an already sticky bureaucratic process. A member of the parliament who would want such powers would hinder the development of his/her constituency.

Permission of the MP to provide relief?... that to me does not make much sense, if

there is a disaster in an area that gives rise to the need of relief and if someone or some agency wants to forward relief why would that entity need the MP's permission? Why would an MP want the power to stop relief activities? His/her power to give permission to relief supplying entities would not be a positive power but would be a power to negate relief. Is that what he/she really wants? Would he/she really want his/her area struck by some disaster not to get relief? This bill if granted by the parliament would not be a power of growth and development. The bill also says any kind of rehabilitation programme has to have the MP's permission.... I had to laugh at this. These programmes are designed to give those members a second chance in life. Again, why would a member of parliament want rights that would let him stop any kind of rehabilitation programme?

Permission for Food for Works programme? Wouldn't an MP want his people to be employed? Why would he want such a power that would give him the right to deny permission to employment providing firms/entities to operate in his/her constituency? He would be an adviser to educational institutions in his constituency — I am afraid that as current politics go, a right such as this will become a tool for politicizing the growing minds before the minds develop political judgement. So this right may further politicize our already heavily politicized education system.

I hope that the current parliament will see through this bill and vote on it accordingly.

To the Editor...

The foundation training course

Sir, The foundation training is a government-prescribed training programme compulsory for the BCS Education cadre members. This training is conducted by the National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) situated at Dhanmondi, Dhaka. The training course has been developed by the National Training Council (NTC). The course is of about two months, to be precise 60 days duration.

The training course contains four theoretical subjects, viz. 1) Bangladesh studies, 2) Public administration, 3) Management process and 4) Developmental economics. The criticism of a book, writing of a term paper on a specific topic, attending daily physical exercise and participating in study tours also constitute the training course.

From the above description of the foundation training course, it is obvious that the course may well be worthy and

usable to any member of any of the BCS cadres, but there is nothing specialised for education, i.e. the course is devoid of any pedagogical elements.

It may be mentioned here that I had the privilege of conducting my MEd thesis on 'Determination of Bangladesh College Teachers' Teaching Competency in Biology'.

The research revealed that only 20 per cent of the college biology teachers have professional qualifications, i.e. B. Ed. and/or M. Ed. degrees. The situation may be similar in case of the teachers of other disciplines. The investigation also revealed that teachers having professional qualifications are superior in competency at 5 per cent level of significance to the untrained teachers, while the teachers having completed the foundation training (and no professional degree) are not significantly superior to the untrained ones.

Therefore, it is imperative that the college teachers should also acquire at least the B. Ed degree like the school teachers.

But it would be impossible for the government to provide the B. Ed training to all the untrained college teachers all at a time. Hence it is suggested that the NTC should reshuffle the foundation training course so that at least the government college teachers can have some pedagogical studies during their compulsory training.

There may be two ways of reshuffling. One is to lengthen the training course duration from two months to three months so that the course may contain at least two more subjects like Educational Psychology and Principles of Education. The other way may be to replace some repetitive subjects by some essential elements of pedagogy, especially the above two. Now, what are the repetitive subjects in the present foundation training course? It would not be unfair to state that the subjects like Bangladesh Studies and parts of Public Administration and Developmental Economics are mere repetitions of the BCS examination course that has been com-

pleted by the BCS Education cadre members before entering the cadre service.

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"Let there be..."

Sir, It's time for someone to invent and market a gadget, which can be fitted over the flame of the gas cooker in my kitchen for emergency lighting, when electric power fails. No tampering with or connection to the gas line. Something inconspicuous, smokeless. If such a lighting unit is available, it may be imported.

Secondly, LP Gas lamps may be marketed. Light and portable, it will have large sales.

We must not be at the mercy of the electricity wallahs!

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