

Some Exchanges between Jinnah and Gandhi

"Let it be a partition as between two brothers," argued Gandhi. "I proceed on the assumption that India is to be regarded as two or more nations but as one family consisting of many members..."

Remarkable Judgement

A Division Bench of the High Court in a far-reaching judgement on a writ petition has pronounced that separation of the judiciary from the administration need no constitutional amendment to be effected and that the process for it should be set in motion immediately in consultation with the Supreme Court.

The judgement has come as a declaratory pronouncement on the separate status of judicial officers vis-a-vis that of those in the administrative service in matters of service conditions, including salary, allowance and other facilities.

We think this is a landmark judgement that must enable the government now to abandon the path of parliamentary committee referrals or the long-drawn-out process of legislation which in a matter of constitutional amendment would require an endorsement by a two-thirds majority in the Jatiya Sangsad.

Constitutional reforms need to be carried out in terms of the corpus of laws, both civil and criminal, and in the parameters of judicial procedures recruitment, service conditions, training and accountability hand-in-hand with the process of separation between the judiciary and the executive.

A Licence to Continue

The government has been issuing warnings against unauthorised medical colleges and other higher educational institutions for sometime through handouts. The latest of such notifications has only this much to threaten with that the government will neither endorse any degree awarded by unapproved medical colleges nor allow students studying there to avail of the opportunity to sit for any authorised examinations.

We are indeed confused why the government, instead of taking appropriate actions against the illegal educational facilities, has been repeatedly warning them against indulging in the illegal practice. There are definite laws and frameworks for establishing such facilities in private capacity.

Wonder of wonders, the government cautions prospective students not to get themselves admitted into those medical and dental colleges. Why didn't you close the shop before the customers crowded there? What about the students who are already studying there? These are questions the government must directly answer.

Mobutu's Departure

President Mobutu Sese Seko seems to have left his country for good. His departure from Zaire in the face of a relentless rebel advance brings one of the world's longest serving ruler's reign to a predictable end. Mobutu, not particularly credited for good and just rule, had little option other than doing this. Mercifully the ailing ruler has been able to read the writings on the wall quite correctly.

Now he has to instruct his henchmen and die-hard followers to accept the defeat instead of fighting on. Africa's richest country under Mobutu has not been able to harness its resources to give benefits to its citizens in any appreciable manner.

If that is ensured, we must call upon the new administration in Zaire to take up the issue of repatriation of the Rwandan refugees in right earnest and with compassion. The Zairean authorities will not be required so much to do in terms of material support, what they will be expected to do is to create the right opportunities for the international bodies and communities to work smoothly on its territory.

In a meeting with Lord Mountbatten, Mahatma Gandhi says: Years ago, Viceroy, Jinnah was the greatest advocate of Hindu and Muslim unity.

This is from Jinnah, a film which is being shot in Pakistan. There is truth in the Mahatma's observation because before partition, the economic backwardness of Muslims was part of the gist to the Pakistan demand.

The British response to Gandhi's slogan, 'Quit India or Die', was brutal. Thousands of people were detained without trial. Processions and demonstrations were forcibly suppressed.

Sardar Patel had envisaged an underground movement. He approached the communists to carry it out. But with the entry of the Soviet Union, their attitude towards the war had changed.

Patel was amazed when they said 'no' to his offer. Not only they, M N Roy, a radical humanist, accepted funds from the government and helped war efforts.

Congress leaders of socialist leanings went underground. Jayaprakash Narain escaped from jail; Aruna Asaf Ali evaded arrest by hiding at a top government official's residence.

Many years later when I met Patwardhan to commend his role during the 1942 agitation, he regretted it. He said that the 1942 stir was not necessary because the British would have any way left.

But after the failure of Cripps mission, when the Japanese were slicing through British defences in the East like a knife through butter, India's independence looked a matter of faith. There was an atmosphere of despondency.

Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad did not want to embarrass the war efforts which, they knew, were directed towards fighting fascism. The Rajaji group was

inactive because it sympathised with the demand for Pakistan without the vivisection of the country. An average countryman, dejected after the failure of Cripps mission, saw in the Quit India call a revival of old days of struggle.

Azad had anticipated that the movement would not remain non-violent. But he had felt that a general upheaval might lead to a deadlock and force the British to come to terms.

This was clear also from the treatment meted to top Congress leaders. From jail, Azad wrote a letter of complaint to the viceroy that even criminals were allowed to correspond with their near relations or read newspapers but they had been denied these facilities since their detention.

In the meanwhile, the Rajaji formula, named after its author, Rajagopalachari, was finalised. He said that he had done it after obtaining Gandhi's approval in jail. The formula proposed the appointment of a commission to demarcate 'contiguous districts in the

north-west and east of India, wherein the Muslim population is in absolute majority' and to hold there a plebiscite on the basis of adult franchise so as to 'decide the issue of separation from Hindustan.'

The Rajaji formula emphasised that in the event of separation, 'mutual agreements shall be entered into for safeguarding defence, commerce, communication and for other essential purposes.'

Gandhi, who by this time, had been released on ground of ill-health — he had undertaken a fast in jail — replied: the commission would be appointed by the provisional government. 'Safeguarding defence etc. meant a central or joint board of control; and as regards against whom, this would be against all who may put the common interests in jeopardy.'

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

The viceroy convinced his superiors that 'time has come to stem the flood of seditious and defeatist utterance with which Congress leaders are endeavouring to cover up the failure over Cripps mission.'

According to official figures of that time, at least 340 Indian had been killed by police fire since August 11 and 630 wounded. The Home Department at that time said that the 'true total' was considerably higher.

troops were called out in no less than 60 places; some 57 battalions of British army soldiers were used. There is no record of the total number of dead and wounded in Bihar be-

cause British aircraft went on strafing civilians with machine-gun fire for days. Azad had anticipated that the movement would not remain non-violent.

Removing Shackles that Constrain Development Efforts

by Dr M Zakir Husain

People in South Asia have been fed with too many promises for too long. It is time to be low on words and high on action. Otherwise, the future is predictably bleak

INDEED, it was something to be read not with mind alone but with heart also. I refer to Mahfuz Anam's piece as well as 'Towards SAARC 2010' in the Focus on Human Development in South Asia.

It is disconcerting to realise how colossal is the backlog of human deprivation in South Asia and that it will not go away by mere expressions of support and sympathy for human development alone.

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To the Editor...

Poor English, poor education

Sir, Standards are slipping away everywhere in Bangladesh and one of the most noticeable of these areas is the educational arena. Bangladesh is noted for its jute, tea and Sundarban tigers among many other things, but we are unfortunately not noted for our achievements in education.

One can read for and secure a great variety of degrees at various Bangladeshi universities these days but the problem is that these degrees do not seem to hold any value in other countries.

We can take for example the large number of Bangladeshis now entering the United Kingdom. Many of them hold degrees upto masters level but find it hard to do anything with them as they are not of the same standard of degrees awarded in other countries.

Even in neighbouring India we find quite a different story in that the degrees awarded are valuable and can be put to use in attaining jobs as well as entering for further education in countries other than India.

Whatever the reason, something happened, and the facts and figures have to be recorded for history, research, and the future generations; otherwise there will be a gap in the literature; (the AL government has undertaken a similar project to normalise the alleged distort-

rights will demand much more than rhetorical references to the past glory and future promise.

At the very least, these challenges and opportunities will demand resolute and disciplined adherence to very clear, unequivocal and unwavering policies and actions that preferentially promote and sustain human development with universal access to work and health, other basic services with enabling environment of security, rights and freedom.

From where South Asia is today — and the situation differs with some countries a little ahead of others in human development — it is indeed going to be a long way to go. The backlog is just too heavy. At the minimum, there can be no compromise or prevarication in the five elementary priorities: education, health, water and sanitation, nutrition, and family welfare.

People in South Asia have been fed with too many promises for too long. It is time to be low on words and high on action. Otherwise, the future is predictably bleak.

Commission on national loss

Sir, As a citizen it is proposed that the government may be pleased to appoint a high level and independent national commission to access and record the loss to the national economy (and other positive and negative outcomes) during the street political movement during the period 1994-95 leading to the last general elections.

There is a difference of opinion on the motivation of the campaign. The agitating groups claim it was a fight (regardless of the national losses) for the establishment of democratic culture in the country; while the group under attack cite the movement as wholly unnecessary against a duly elected regime, and term it as a sabotage to the national economy.

The present regime is also using the word 'sabotage' frequently. The public need enlightenment on the conflicting versions — the local definition of 'sabotage' has become rather loose politically. It may be noted that the western world contemptuously labelled some Muslim states as 'terrorist' for political motives.

There is a basic question which has to be faced by all of us: should the society allow the politicians to have the last word on any national issue? International history does not confirm this presumption.

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tion of history of the Liberation War and of the governance in the 1970s).

The motivation of this proposal is not to look for scapegoats or to find fault with the differing groups, but for the facts, figures, and the data to be recorded officially for future use.

Communication system

Sir, The country's Railway communication system is on the verge of collapse, particularly in western zone, due to poor passenger service, irregular movement of trains, safety inadequacy, pilferage etc. Bangladesh is probably the only country in the world where no new railway line was set up, rather many branch lines were closed and rails were uprooted.

Due to heavy siltation, most of the river routes have been permanently closed. The resultant effect of this has now pressurised the country's road communication system. Several hundreds of thousands of different kinds of vehicles have been now plying the limited roads and highways of the country. With the increased number of vehicles, there is a dearth of experienced drivers and as such gruesome accidents occur all over the country almost every day.

In face of such a situation, traffic rules and regulations have completely collapsed. Nobody bothers about load capacity of the vehicles. In passenger coaches tons of goods are loaded with as many as passengers on the top. Most of the trucks carry the load of about 3-4 times more than actual capacity. If such overloaded vehicles move all the time, country's newly-constructed roads will be damaged. In this context a news item, published in an English daily on March 3, may be cited as an example — 16 people killed and 52 injured. The reason of acci-

dent was overloading and driver's addiction as alleged by the passengers. Nowadays, to be in the vehicles on road is most unsafe and dangerous.

To meet the communication challenge of the people in this small country, Railway service should be renovated and strengthened, otherwise road transports will be most hazardous and dangerous.

They are also selling and drinking phensedyl openly. General people do not like it but they are not able to prevent these anti-social activities. My village suffers a lot because the miscreants and the black-marketers have taken it as their main route and distribution station.

It is also widely believed that there is a close relation between stealing teaks and phensedyl. The local administration and the police are not carrying out their duties properly. The miscreants are divided into groups and now they are in a tug of war to establish domination. The peace-loving poor people are doubting and fearing of an immediate bloodshed. The innocent people will suffer in the long run. People want its remedy soon.

So would I be able to draw the attention of the PM and the state minister? Hopefully, I will be able to draw their attention on behalf of general mass.

Save the teak trees

Sir, I have been at my village home for three days during Eid-ul-Fitr vacation. The name of the village is Abu Nagar. It is under Mirsarai thana. Mithachara Bazaar is very close to the village. Most of the villagers are simple, easy and poor. Some young people of this area are now cutting down and selling teak trees freely from the nearest hills.

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A great deal of action research and development innovation at the operational grassroots level will be needed. Related training in human development planning and evaluation will be extremely useful. Scarce resources for research and development should flow first and foremost to problem-based research and innovations at the delivery level in preference to academic research into dialectics of development alternatives or more research into definition and discovery of problems without any reference to solution.

A shift from the present adversarial relationship to a partnership relationship between government and non-government organisations, and between the public and the pri-

But soon the discussion between them meandered into issues like what the differences between Hindus and Muslims were and whether they constituted one or two nations.

"Let it be a partition as between two brothers," argued Gandhi. "I proceed on the assumption that India is to be regarded as two or more nations but as one family consisting of many members of whom Muslims living in the north-west zone, that is, Baluchistan, Sind, the North-West Frontier and the part of Punjab where they are in absolute majority over all other elements and in parts of Bengal and Assam where they are in absolute majority, desire to live in separation from the rest of India."

Jinnah said: "If this term were accepted and given effect to, the present boundaries of these provinces would be maimed and mutilated beyond redemption and leave us only with the busk and it is opposed to the Lahore (Pakistan) Resolution."

Both Gandhi and Jinnah stood poles apart as much in dress as in thoughts. Jinnah was elegantly dressed with a still white collar even in hot weather. Gandhi wore only a dhoti. For the one the two-nation theory was a method to solve the subcontinent's independence question, for the other the two-nation theory was the perpetuation of the sub-continent's ills.

relationship may be governed more by comparative advantage and strength of each and their demonstrated competence and performance.

South Asia is soon entering into the twenty-first century — a century where even to remain at the same place on the scale of human development, countries and people have to be running. Of the five or six stated minimum priorities, education particularly of the females and primary healthcare to all particularly to the poor and the disadvantaged will most likely give higher returns, and indeed support the fulfilment of some of the other elements. But there is hardly any room or excuse for compromise or prevarication on the minimum human development priorities in the coming decades if South Asia is to be counted.

The writer is former Director of Programme Management at the WHO South East Asia Regional Office in New Delhi.

OPINION Cigarettes Today, Burgers Tomorrow

Bruce Herschensohn

It's just a question of time. Since heart disease is the greatest killer and high cholesterol is the leading cause of heart disease, some day soon there will be a class-action suit against McDonald's and the entire fast-food industry. Someone will claim that McDonald's is to blame for that terminal condition. There have been no health warnings on their hamburgers. Worse than that, the suit will say McDonald's has been targeting children in their ads and with attractions like playgrounds on the premises and special meals complete with toys. The chief villain is, of course, Ronald McDonald, who makes Joe Camel a piker.

That's going to be the quick consequence of state government and the federal government establishing the precedent of supporting hate campaigns against a legal substance. Tobacco is chicken-feed.

"Now, wait a minute," someone will say. "Big Macs don't create an addiction like cigarettes. Oh, yeah? I'm addicted. I have at least one cheeseburger a day and have done that throughout most of my life. How did this terror start? I hate to admit it, but it was when I was a kid. I'm not to blame. They did it to me. How was I to know? There's something else I feel compelled to bring up on behalf of all those who have been ensnared into this pit of disease: The costs to society for all these hamburger-related ailments are tremendous.

That, of course, is the consequence of programs that are socialistic. Once the taxpayer is compelled to pay for the choices made by another, the government can take jurisdiction over the entire industry that the government feels is responsible for those costs.

In sympathy with those, like me, who were hooked into all this by a legal substance, I hope the president mandates heavy restrictions and regulations regarding the advertising of those fast-food horrors, restrictions on T-shirts, comic characters, logos, posters at sporting events and color advertisements. The devil with the 1st Amendment! Health should always supersede the Constitution. And this should not be the end of it; it should be the beginning of it. The evidence of many other legal substances causing disease is overwhelming. Leading journals continually confirm this. The London Times printed that 'research has linked high consumption of hot dogs with an

increase in childhood leukemia.' The same newspaper also reported that "it has been recognized since 1970 that licorice taken in quantities can cause high blood pressure, sudden cardiac arrest, congested cardiac failure and more." To be consistent in the terminology in smoking-related diseases, we should say that leukemia is a hot dog-related disease, and cardiac arrest is licorice-related. What started all this, of course, was government's involvement with anti-smoking campaigns and regulations. I have a confession. I'm not only a cheeseburger addict, I smoke. I started smoking when I was 18 and it wasn't because of advertisements or logos or posters or cartoon characters. It was because, like millions of others in the military in those days, a representative of the US government encouraged me to smoke. "Smoke 'em if you got 'em" was the phrase yelled out one will say. "Big Macs don't create an addiction like cigarettes. Oh, yeah? I'm addicted. I have at least one cheeseburger a day and have done that throughout most of my life. How did this terror start? I hate to admit it, but it was when I was a kid. I'm not to blame. They did it to me. How was I to know? There's something else I feel compelled to bring up on behalf of all those who have been ensnared into this pit of disease: The costs to society for all these hamburger-related ailments are tremendous.

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