

**Lynching Must Stop**

Bottled up social tensions uncorked at the slightest suggestion of retributive justice or letting off pent-up emotional frustrations are taking on a cannibalistic form in partial fulfilment of the Malthusian doomsday aphorism on overpopulation — 'man going to eat man'. Else how does one explain the totally anarchic mob behaviour at North Badda on Wednesday centring around three suspected, mind you, not proven, child-lifters. They did not rest content with beating them blue, but wrathfully, and frothily into the corners of their mouths, they pounced on the police van the three had been taken on to and set it afire. Two of the so-called child-lifters were instantaneously snuffed out while the third one, already half-dead, was dragged out and finally lynched. Violent clashes with the police interspersed with this central incident making the whole episode look like the worst-case syndrome to date of child abduction phobia-turned-mass hysteria.

Disrespect for law has hit the nadir. None in the area came forward to claim that his or her child has been attempted to be enticed away, far less actually lifted by anyone of the suspects. And no one in that crowd which swelled to 10 thousand at one point ever cared to take a pause and verify the truth, they all rallying round the call — 'catch them, catch them' and muscling into the situation just to tame three utterly helpless persons. It seems like a chilling prospect in Dhaka that a pointed finger at any individual with a mischievous yell blurted out by a thug could cost his or her life with no culpability to prove whatsoever. This is skating on wafer-thin ice with life and limbs in the city streets.

Public lynching has been on such a scale lately that while we condemn it in the strongest language we are capable of using, we do not feign either to be oblivious of the chinks in social policing and surveillance. How many of the kidnappers or rapists have been proceeded against and actually punished in the end? Very few, too few to breed public trust in the reach of the so-called long arm of law.

It is for quite sometime that public perception of a rise in the incidence of child-lifting has waxed incendiary with reports of abductions rending the air and parents refusing to send their children to schools in a few townships. The police intelligence network has a job there to get at the truth and execute pre-emptive actions where necessary. The media have a role to calm the social nerves by discouraging inflammatory public behaviour and reaction overkill in the form of mass hysteria.

**Opting for Solar Power**

Yesterday the country achieved a remarkable feat by commissioning a solar power pilot project in a river-girdled sleepy village, Karimpur in Narasingdi district. With a capacity to produce 62 kilo watt electricity, the French-assisted project has, in fact, made possible a quiet revolution in the generation of power from a source ideal for us by any consideration. The use of power from the renewable photovoltaic system indeed promises to be the ultimate source of energy for mankind. We have the advantage of having abundant sunlight throughout the year, except for a few days.

It is very good to know that two unions isolated by rivers all around have been given the first chance to enjoy the benefit of this highly rated technology. We would like to believe that the consumers there would not have to pay an unusually high rate for power. This is important because the commercial production of power under the system has to be competitive ultimately. Presently, though the technology is yet to bring down the production cost of power to the level of that being generated by other technological means.

Now the important thing is to come up with administrative decisions in favour of this unconventional technology both for its increasing application and research on it to cut the production cost with a view to making power generated under the photovoltaic system affordable for common people. Considered from a different point of view, the initial big investment, if any, is likely to be justified. Because it is a sustainable source and does not require wires and poles for transmission over a long distance, the long-term benefits are sure to compensate for the initial investment. The government should look at the case for solar energy from this angle and go for this challenging option.

**An Unsung Hero**

The most remarkable thing about the man is that he made Bangladesh his home coming from Pakistan and lived a bachelor's life, married only to football. That man of total commitment to football, Gafur Balooch, has at last taken leave from the life's game. At the age of 65, not a ripe age evidently, he breathed his last at a city hospital. The player-turned-coach who carries the tag of a Pakistan's province, Beluchistan, his original home, came to Dhaka in 1958 never to return to his home in Quetta. He was an outstanding defender, aptly called by his fans as the Chinese Wall, at the prime of his sporting career.

Although Balooch made his debut in the Dhaka football as a player for the Dhaka Wanderers Club, he is better known for his association with the Brothers Union, the Gopibagh outfit. An out and out football man, he possibly savoured his magic touch that turned a third division football team into the country's third force of the trade after Abahani and Mohammedan. Well, he also took the responsibility of coaching the national team and the youth team apart from doing the job for a few other Dhaka clubs. But Brothers Union should be considered his crowning glory. When he was transforming that team into one of the elite clubs, he also provided the necessary guidance to a number of star footballers of the country. So Balooch made immense contribution to Bangladesh football.

Regrettably though, the man who did so much for football here had to go through a difficult time during the last part of his life. Retiring in 1986 from active football coaching, he had not much savings to fall back upon. Nor was he rewarded by any sporting body or government for his life-long devotion to football. An unsung hero, he has done his part of the job to the best of his ability. We can emulate him.

**India-Pakistan: Hopeful Stirrings**

*India and Pakistan appear to have found the essential ingredient to a settlement of all outstanding issues most important of which is the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. And that ingredient is the political will which has been missing for half a century.*

ious talks at the Foreign Secretaries level. Hot lines have been installed between Delhi and Islamabad and in the context of the sub-continent politics this is big news.

These developments could not have been better timed. The subcontinent is expected to be awash with Silver Jubilee celebrations. It is a good time to take stock of the achievements and failures of these two major players of the subcontinent. What can be confidently stated is that the arms race due to hostility between India and Pakistan has worked as a powerful brake to nation-building activities. Whereas tiger economies are sprouting all around Asia, these two important countries have been left behind in the race for economic and social development. To take another yardstick, whereas members of the ASEAN have forged ahead the subcontinent and its main players have remained glued to under development due to sterile debate over issues which di-

vide them rather than paying attention to bettering the lives of their people. Quite naturally, the two sides are proceeding with caution and not allow expectations to reach giddy heights. For this is not the first attempt for the two countries to try and reach an accommodation. I recall the

my office upstairs, I saw a news item on my ticker through which one top Indian leader announced that Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru was gravely ill. I rushed downstairs and showed the news item to the President. He asked me to follow the news and inform him immediately of any major de-

told Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, his Foreign Minister, to prepare a warm message. He asked me to go to the house of Bhutto. I found the Foreign Secretary Aziz Ahmed and a suitable message was sent. This was followed by the visit of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah of Kashmir. These confidence-building measures vanished as Pakistan started training secretly guerillas in the hills of Murree. This ended up in the War of 1965 between India and Pakistan.

Since 1871, this is the first serious attempt by India and Pakistan to come to grips with the problems that divide them. Since the two sides have reasonably stable governments, they really do not need to play to the gallery, indeed in their confidence-building measures, they have laid emphasis on shunning propaganda aimed at each other. The agenda prepared by the two Foreign Secretaries included 'all outstanding issues of concern to both sides'. The

sensitive issue of Jammu and Kashmir is also part of the agenda. Since the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 and in spite of two wars of Kashmir, a virtual stalemate has prevailed between the two sides. Jammu and Kashmir stand divided with roughly one-third under Pakistani control and the remaining under Indian control. Of late, skirmishes have taken place in the Himalayan glaciers in Siachin. If no war has broken out between India and Pakistan over Kashmir since 1965, frictions, large and small, have been the order of the day. Both sides have traded routinely accusations of fomenting trouble in Kashmir.

India and Pakistan appear to have found the essential ingredient to a settlement of all outstanding issues most important of which is the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. And that ingredient is the political will which has been missing for half a century. As India and Pakistan take a careful step towards each other — one at a time — people of goodwill in the subcontinent will entertain the fond hope that they may not falter on this Golden Jubilee of their independence.

**The Horizon This Week**

Arshad-uz Zaman



early part of 1964. I was the first Bangalee to join on the personal staff as Public Relations Officer of President Field Marshal Ayub Khan. I was selected by him and the under-standing was that I could see the President whenever I required. One morning, the Cabinet meeting was in progress in the Cabinet room downstairs. Sitting in

development. In the afternoon, the news came of the death of Nehru. I rushed to the house of the President, which was within the compound which housed his office. He used to take a short nap on a wooden charpoy and I was ushered in his presence. He immediately ordered the lowering of the flag. He picked up the telephone and

is resisted vehemently. When the aim is not to acquire knowledge but to possess certificates, why bother about the means? A deep-seated psychology is at work behind the shameless violence resorted to against teachers by students. Will the education policy have remedy for this mental disorder? People with academic degrees but devoid of good senses are likely to have capacity for doing harms both to human kind and society at a monstrous proportion. Even if some of these possessors of degrees start employing their evil power, society can find itself on a roller-coaster journey to the hell.

**A Challenge Before Education Policy Formulators**

by Nilratan Halder

*The new education policy might suggest a recipe for the various academic weaknesses and needs but what about the steady degeneration of the teacher-student relationship and the educational environment? How to reverse the trend?*

A committee constituted by the government is expected to submit its draft education policy report by July 31 next. Different organisations, associations and forums such as the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and Institute of Diploma Engineers, have already submitted their demands and recommendations for incorporation in the policy now being framed. The committee responsible for framing the education policy has also held meetings for exchanging opinions with different groups. So we can rest assured that different shades of opinion and concerns will get reflected in the proposed education policy. And we are told that the committee will give shape to the policy on the basis of the Qudrat-e-Khuda Committee report. Clearly, there is an attempt to make the education policy as pragmatic and need-oriented as possible. The Jamaat-e-Islami has already sounded a dissenting voice in that it claims any education policy based on Khuda Committee report will be rejected by the nation. It is difficult to understand since when the Jamaat is representing the whole nation and has taken the mandate, to speak for it.

We would assume that the Jamaat is hardly a factor to influence the exercise now under way. What, instead, we are look-

ing forward to is a modern, forward-looking education policy — one that will help the nation to take up challenges of the new millennium. As the policy is still at the preparatory stage, it is time that some concerns were expressed so that they could be addressed through the proposed policy. The issue in question, to many, may look somewhat unrelated or even out of context. But the particular form of educational aberration has indeed taken a serious turn and it cannot be left alone for long. Can we draw the education-policy committee's attention to an incident that happened only recently in Rangpur Polytechnic Institute? Students — how many of them we do not know — of that institute went on a rampage, assaulted and confined teachers and two magistrates for hours together in a room, set residential quarters of some teachers, the workshop and office of the institute on fire. All because they were not allowed to adopt unfair means in their course-final examination. In another such incident in Rajshahi lawyers expressing their col-

leagues, attacked a magistrate who expelled that colleague's wife from an HSC examination centre for adopting unfair means. Another teacher was stabbed to death a year or so ago for similar reasons when he was returning home from his duty as an invigilator at an SSC examination centre.

Someone might argue that these are isolated and extreme cases and should not be a representative reflection on our education system. We disagree. The country's universities and most colleges have long become places where terrorism reigns supreme, where thuggery rather than knowledge is in contention. Teaching profession has indeed become unenviable both at the levels of highest seat of learning and school. Newspapers carried shocking pictures of lathi-wielding school students who came to the street to smash cars in a frenzy, protesting the withdrawal of question bank in the SSC examination. These are not in the least isolated incidents; far from that they are in fact the order of the day. We do not come across incidents like these be-

cause teachers have learnt at a price how to adapt themselves to the changed environment of student-teacher relationship. When the choice is between physical harms or public humiliation and compromise or self-humiliation, the latter is what most teachers have opted for. Teachers have indeed been held hostage by a corrupt and intellectually and politically bankrupt system.

The new education policy might suggest a recipe for the various academic weaknesses and needs but what about the steady degeneration of the teacher-student relationship and the educational environment? How to reverse the trend? Rulers with no legitimacy or people's mandate to run the country have always felt the need to appease the students. Not only the student leaders have been given to enjoy undue favours but in general academic concessions were made so that students could have a short-cut way to certificates. Now any attempt at standardising the syllabi or curricula or examination system

is resisted vehemently. When the aim is not to acquire knowledge but to possess certificates, why bother about the means? A deep-seated psychology is at work behind the shameless violence resorted to against teachers by students. Will the education policy have remedy for this mental disorder? People with academic degrees but devoid of good senses are likely to have capacity for doing harms both to human kind and society at a monstrous proportion. Even if some of these possessors of degrees start employing their evil power, society can find itself on a roller-coaster journey to the hell.

So we cannot afford to produce literate impostors who not only cheat society but also themselves. The quality they bring along with them in different national areas have a highly corrosive effect. Quality of head and heart is what we need at the moment. Teachers have long been subjected to economic penury and the subsequent humiliation of all kinds. Well, some of them are indeed responsible for inviting the disgrace to their profession. The

way teachers use students for narrow and dirty politics should provide a lesson for all who want to evolve ways to come out of the mess. There is no point being pessimistic about the future of our education. If we really want to introduce an education system of uncompromising quality, we surely can do so. It is the sector from which the leadership in all areas of life must come. So it must receive the attention it deserves. At least 20 per cent of our GDP should be allocated for the sector and it must go through a whole radical reform.

Students are held blamable for attacks on teachers. But a closer look will show how people everywhere are steeped in all sorts of patch-ups, shortcuts and even irregularities and corruption. Have we been able to give a congenial environment for education for the erring students? More particularly, can their teachers claim to have taught them the way they should? The answers to these questions will definitely indicate a solution to the problem. The new generation must be prepared both at home and in their schooling places to respect education and from whom they receive it. They must rise up to the challenge of a high standard so that they can hold their heads high anywhere in the world.

**To the Editor...**

*Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.*

**PM's TV programme and your commentary**

Sir, I read your 'Commentaries' which I find often entertaining. The 'Commentary' on 25th June, 1997 is one of the best in recent times. I congratulate you on such bold and straight-forward expression. I did not much like the programme itself. The PM's frequent reference to past while facing the problems of today was not always relevant. But now I agree with your evaluation of the totality. The very fact that PM has at all faced questioners in front of the TV, live, is really praiseworthy and nullifies the impact of her habit of going back to bygone days so frequently. It was, as you say, a win-win situation. I wish the leaders of BNP will take your commentaries seriously and advice the madam correctly.

M A Haq  
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**Chalk and Cheese**

Sir, I have read in yesterday's issue of The Daily Star BEXIMCO's threat and your reply. Your reply and defending press freedom and people's right to information are most appropriate. The matter, however, has far greater implications. BEXIMCO and its promoters maintain a high key operation and living. Their success and failures get ready press coverage.

The real issues are much different: 1) Legal Issue — Our country's laws are inadequate to deal with non-performing borrowers and some are able to get away with white-collar crimes. They are allowed to open newer and newer business even by maintaining a sort of bankruptcy in their other business. They get away with wrong accounting, breach of contract, flouting of promissory notes on maturity etc.

2) Social Issue — These borrowers are not socially disgraced nor legally haunted for deliberate non-performance of bank loans and they maintain luxurious life with expensive houses, cars and able to live and travel in luxury. 3) Financial Issue — a) Stagnation in bank's fund in-flow, b) banks' high loan loss provision thereby requiring higher profit or further capital injection.

tion, c) poor return to depositors, d) non-availability of funds for good borrowers etc. 4) Business Issue — No genuine assessment of business health of these defaulting borrowers can be made and they club together to form a pressure group called 'sick-industries business'. The cost, of course, is borne by depositors and small disadvantaged borrowers.

5) Moral Issue — Average banker is confused about what is right and what is wrong in loan-administration. He never likes to confront a delinquent borrower having political and social clout combined with financial muscle.

In banking terminology the grossly non-performing borrowers are called 'Delinquent Borrowers'. But in our country they are Social Elite. Alas, we live in a country where there is no distinction between 'Chalk' and 'Cheese'.

While fighting your case, my request is not to forget the overall cultural evils inflicted by the delinquents on our society. Highlight the evils in news and editorial, mobilise public opinion. Let all of us fight together a winning battle in public forum.

Dilwar H Choudhury  
Dhaka

**9115984 and 9115984 and ...**

Sir, Telephone No. 9115984 has been functioning at 30/9, 'C' Block (First Floor), Tajmahal Road, Mohammedpur, Dhaka-1205 since July 1974. Before its conversion to digital system, it was 315984 and after 30, 1991 the date of my retirement — it became a private telephone. From 1975 to 1991, I wrote volumes of official letters and personally met the authorities concerned complaining simultaneous functioning another phone with the same number i.e., 315984 from more than one address in the city. I furnished the detailed addresses of such persons. Over the last 15 years, I am sure, none read my letters and no action was ever taken.

We have always been asked by the Telephone Deptt to wait till the set is converted to digital system. By then, all our agonies and sorrows would be over! Recently it has been converted. To speak the truth, first six months after conversion, we really had the best of times as

far as the telephone is concerned. We had no complaints whatsoever against anybody. To our utter surprise, lately we have been receiving calls in our set which are not ours. On enquiry we were being told by the callers that 9115984 was their telephone and it was situated at Lalmatia and sometimes they said at Elephanta Road. From our last two monthly bills we understood that this telephone was being used by others, including us, as a parallel set has been functioning with the No. 9115984.

It is really difficult to believe how a digital line could be connected with other sets. Yet, it has been done and I am one of the poor sufferers. Is there nobody to whom I can appeal for immediate redress?

Md Khalequzzaman  
Dhaka

**A promising singer**

Sir, Recently, an audio cassette *Ami Aachi, Thakbo* containing 14 old days' modern Bengali songs (Bangladeshi and Indian), all sung by Sharmi, a promising new singer has been produced and released.

The album presents popular song like *Banshi keno gayee, Ami Achi Thakbo, Aaj Mon Cheyechae, Pagol mon* etc. The Bangla rendering of a Lata's Hindi number in Sharmi's enrapturing voice got quite touchy. Sharmi indeed possesses a melodious voice and she has sincerely tried to present all the songs in original style and tune.

M Zahidul Haque  
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**A request to PSC**

Sir, We can't but appreciate PSC's success in publishing the result of the 18th BCS preliminary test just after 28 days of holding the test. Alongside the appreciation, we also expect that the benign institution is committed to keep its promise to hold the written test by August next as announced through various national dailies. Here is some points on my part to say about the routine of the same. Generally in the written process, the tests of compulsory 5 subjects are taken at a stretch with no gaps. Consequently the candidates already in services of lower status desiring better positions through BCS Cadre fail to contest due to lack of inadequate leave and holiday.

Besides the students of masters degree who take part in the process by submitting honours degree certificate often have departmental examinations on the same date or few before or after. They are at a loss in sitting for the two tests at the same time. In this respect, I would

like to suggest a solution. As government has declared two-day weekly holiday, PSC may arrange the exams only on those days. It will take only 3 weeks to complete the compulsory 5 subjects. Another bonus in this suggestion is the availability of exam halls on those days.

So, we on behalf of possible victims of would-be situation appeal to the authority to consider the said request.

Md. Al Mamun  
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**The gasfield fire**

Sir, The people of our country always have to struggle hard against the natural calamities. But when the calamity is not natural and has occurred for carelessness (I), our grief knows no bound. The news of Magurchara gas field disaster has shocked us greatly. Due to gasfield fire, vast tract of green land is transformed into a wasteland. This fire destroyed tea plantations and took on people's health. Communications was also hampered as railway line has been destroyed. Sylhet district will remain isolated for a long time.

As we already have various financial problems, Magurchara fire has become a mother threat to our development. It has gravely affected our national economy. Because tea production has totally stopped in the tea gardens of the affected areas. Gas pipelines have been shut down and gas is out of supply in the tea gardens. So they are facing huge financial loss, as productions are being hampered.

Above all, our precious national wealth — gas — is burning. Nobody can tell when the fire would be put out.

Now the questions are: 'How can a project run without an accurate survey of the field? Why the company or the authority did not take any precautions to prevent such an accident before they started their work?' Because this type of accident had occurred in the past. All these carelessness came to us as a nerve-stirring shock! Anyway, we hope the flames would be brought under control as soon as possible.

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**Baridhara J-Block**

Sir, I was very pleased to see that the Housing & Works Minister directing the RAJUK authority to complete the allocation of plots for Nikunja for those who applied in 1992. I hope the RAJUK cares to take

notice of the Minister's directive. In the case of Baridhara J-Block allotments, RAJUK had been showing thumb to the ministerial directives, Parliamentary Petition Sub-committee recommendations, press reports and, of course, to the poor allottees who had been waiting on their mercy for more than last 12 years since 1984! I wonder in how many countries could this be possible, other than in this unfortunate country of ours.

Baridhara J-Block allottees were given allotment letters in 1986 on payment of the cost of the land. Physical possession of the said plots are yet to be handed over to them! Since then, those allottees who are still alive are holding on to the their allotment letters, hoping that if they do not get justice in this world, may be they will find it in the other world.

Abid Sultan,  
Mohakhali, Dhaka

**Friday as weekly holiday**

Sir, I am a student and I don't want two-day weekly holiday. Because, first of all, we will have difficulties in completing our syllabus. I am sure other people will also have lot of problems like me in their respective working life.

Bangladesh is a poor country and can't simply afford to waste time. One of my friends told me that the declaration of two-day holiday is a ploy by the government to eventually declare Sunday as weekly holiday. I would request our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina not to do that. On Fridays, 90 per cent of the Muslim population of our country would like to lead a formal pious life by saying Juma prayer and also paying Ziarat to the graves of their dear ones.

One argument being propagated is that declaring Sunday as holiday and Friday as working day will endow us with lot of economic benefit. But in reality declaring Friday as working day will not accrue much commercial benefit because of our time difference with Europe and America. All correspondences made on Friday will only be taken care of a following Monday. I am sure enlightened leaders of this letter know very well that when we have 12 o'clock noon Friday here in Bangladesh, they have 6 o'clock morning in London and work has not started there as yet. When we have closed down at 4 pm here, they have started working at 10 am in London. Again our day here on Monday will be a Sunday evening in the USA. So, why should we loose our link with East Asia and other Muslim

countries by declaring Sunday as weekly holiday instead of Friday? Democracy means that we value the opinion of the majority. Should we disregard the 90 per cent of the population? After all, all our efforts are for the people. Therefore, let us revert to one-day weekly holiday and that is Friday for our own good.

Nawrin Samrina  
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**MoU**

Sir, Long before the signing of Indo-Bangladesh Joint Memorandum of Understanding on the 12th March last, it was publicised by the Cabinet members as well as all pro-government bodies that proposed transit (corridor?) to India was actually finalised during late President Zia's period and the present regime as such, in no way liable for it. But it has been revealed afterwards that an Article of three-years term Indo-Bangladesh Trade and Commerce Agreement signed in the year of 1980 which was expired long 14 years back was incorporated afresh in the Article-32 of the MoU of March 12, 1997. (*Jai Jai Din*, April 1, 1997). Now question arises as to how the government could possibly agreed to incorporated a clause of an expired treaty in a new agreement and then could claim that the matter is merely a matter of continuation of previous arrangement. Whom the government is trying to deceive? If they are so eager to grant corridor to India, then why are not they doing it in a direct way?

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**'Fatigue' of the society**

Sir, How the fatigue of a society is identified and measured? Who points it out, and how the corrective measures are undertaken? How the timetable for the regeneration is planned? Bangladesh today is a country suffering from 'fatigue' for five decades. How much more energy can be extracted from the people majority of whom live below the poverty level?

(Political) regimes have their noble goals and ignoble ambitions. Those who serve get no rest from providing service. Indifference to the 'fatigue syndrome' Do we will upset the society. Do we not already see some of the signs? Let the leaders spell out the plan of action.

A Zabr  
Dhaka