

Fester Wounds

We never thought the incident that day at the Dhaka University, of a group of students attacking the VC, could itself have an equal and opposite version. If we can believe responsible and eminent dailies of Dhaka, exactly that kind of a reverse thing occurred in the Islamic University at Kushtia

on Sunday. It was allegedly the Vice-Chancellor who did the attacking with a thirtyish group of mercenaries and stormed into his long-locked up office-room. This he had not been able to do for consecutive 52 days because of ceaseless teacher and student protest. That was not a wise thing for the VC to do as, when receiving news of the VC's escapade, hundreds of students rushed to the scene, chased the VC's hirelings out and even manhandled the VC. He was put into his car, already battered by angry students, forced to sign a blank paper saying he was resigning and asked to drive straight to Dhaka.

It is in truth not at all that the situation has to be clearly understood before fixing responsibilities in the 52-day standstill at the IU and its ugly outcome on Sunday. The fourth villain we can identify without much ado. The wound is a long-standing one — much more than 52 days old and the government has allowed it to happily fester to the present state. If Dr Inamul Huq, the VC had not preempted dire student action, the students by now would have been well on their way to a fast unto death *satyagraha*. The government has now expressed its desire to soon set up a probe into the allegations against the VC. Why now and not at least a month back? If the government felt shy to respond to a Students League-led anti-VC action, why didn't it take the opportunity when the university teachers association joined the action? IU's is the only case so far, perhaps where Chhatra Shibir has joined hands with a BCL movement. The government could respond to that and take the situation in hand. With a government duly functioning in the country and with the campus situation being what it has been for long, no university must go unmonitored even for a week.

We believe the education ministry knows all about what has been plaguing the universities. All of them. What's the bane of RU or CU? How is the Agri-varisty of Mymensingh ailing and where? Or the unsatisfactory goings-on in some of the private universities. The question is what the supreme control of this nation's education is doing in the matter. They are allowing things to degenerate. Why? Reason number one possibly is, they don't know well about the role they must play in this and they don't have either a total picture of what they want our higher education to be like.

This wouldn't simply do.

Stop this Haemorrhage

Petrobangla has got a chink in its technical, monitoring and negotiating armour from a loss of some of its skilled top-brass to the lure of jobs offered by foreign oil and gas companies which are still in an exploratory mould here though.

Given that the foreign companies are yet to pitch their tents all over the potential blocks of hydrocarbons, the loss of technical hands threatens to snowball as an exodus and, apparently perversely, within our own frontiers.

But is it really so very exceptional an occurrence? Not quite, if one surveys the neighbouring scenario: some prestigious government-run scientific and research organisations in India are running dry of their skilled manpower being mopped up frequently by foreign private companies with hugely enticing salaries or benefits the former had only dreamt of as life-time savings rather than a month's take-home pay. On the one hand, the vital segments of public sector are raising their levels of job incentives to compare favourably with the private corporate sector's offerings. On the other, the private sector employers in India seem close to making an upward revision in the existing salaries and perks structure for the sake of retaining experts in the face of the pooling onslaught of giant transnational conglomerates. Our dilemma is still not as testing and complicated as India's given our not-quite-so blooming privatisation with foreign capital; yet we hear the rumblings of a stormy exodus already.

This comes at the most inopportune time. Our gas and oil prospects have been attracting several potential investors to the country. Whereas we ought to have a thorough-bred institutional capacity commensurate with such a bright outlook, we are making a mess of whatever organisational base we have got. Petrobangla as the nodal agency for safeguarding the country's hydrocarbon interests has to bring to bear all the monitoring and negotiating skills it can manage to develop on the offers made by foreign oil and gas companies in response to our invitations to them.

Let there be rethinking and restructuring in Petrobangla to make the organisation work with some of the highly proficient people it still has by retaining them with adequate remuneration.

Whither Flayed Tempers?

The truckers were in an ugly mood at Satrasta intersection in Tejgaon day before yesterday engaging policemen in violent duels wherever they could along the stretch, on the Tongi Diversion Road in particular. It was warlike situation. The Daily Star front-page photograph depicted on Monday with smokes bellowing from tyres burnt and tear-gas shells lobbed by the riot police.

Why, what went wrong between the two sides? They must be credited with having learnt to live with each other by a tenuous, if often, greased arrangement of coexistence under stressful traffic-related circumstances. The incidents reportedly originated in some policemen's exacting demands for gratification. A counter-vaing version for the police was that they faced stiff resistance of truckers when asking them to show they were operating with valid documents.

Why should the truck drivers and workers feel like holy cows, above any earthly criticism, and beyond the normal reach of any regulatory swipe. If the policemen have been incurably oppressive with their insatiable appetite for tolls there must be ways to drum sense into their ears.

All in all, the rowdy street scenes must be addressed, here and now.

The Fateful Mid-August

Vigilance is the best safeguard against conspiracy. The exceedingly high August humidity perhaps provides the ideal condition for promotion of fungus as well as evil designs against the nation — induced by fungus-ridden brains of the disoriented few.

15 AUGUST 1947, 50 years back was a historic occasion for the sub-continent. It was the end of the British Raj. Two independent countries were born. They became sovereign states. The end of colonialism from the world had begun. It was a momentous event. We were very much part of that milestone development. In mid-August 1947, we also thought to have become part of the independent sovereign state of Pakistan. With all hopes and aspirations, we were very much involved in the struggle and sufferings of an extraordinary kind where the majority had no access to the real seat of power, authority and resources.

The incredibly poor East Pakistan generated export surplus in merchandise trade all throughout 1950s which was diverted to the western segment of the country. Through wrong and harmful policies, the raw jute trade was ruined. The jute mills were located in India while 90 per cent of raw jute was produced in East Bengal. Pakistani rulers never cared for the poor jute growers and they were denied access to the main market in India. As a result, India promoted jute cultivation and within a decade emerged as a major raw jute producer which was totally unsuccessful if Pakistan had pursued correct trade policies. It was most unfortunate that jute farmers were sacrificed at the alter of Indo-Pak conflicts. It was a policy worst than the indigo policy of the British since number of growers involved were too few compared to millions of jute farmers of the 1950s.

However, never in the history of human struggle for freedom and independence were the dreams and aspirations shattered so quickly. Within a year only, the struggle began for the most basic of all rights — the right to the use of our own mother tongue. There is no need to repeat what began in 1948 which 24 years later, on 16 December 1971, led to the emergence of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

The fateful event of mid-August

50 years ago therefore proved to be a fatal attraction — leading to death, destruction and agony with losses to count and no gains to cherish. We failed to realize at the time of the birth of Pakistan that what we were gaining in terms of the demise of British colonialism would be totally negated by a new form of domination and denial — a neo-colonialism of an extraordinary kind where the majority had no access to the real seat of power, authority and resources.

August keeps on lurking behind. The enemies within can be far more dangerous. For us, mid-August seems to be fateful for more than one reason. It is the end of the month of Sravan — the end of the major period of rainfall in the country and we know our fate if we should go hungry or not for the rest of the

year (Thank God! We had good rains during Sravan this year). In mid-August, prices received by farmers for jute determine the fate of the annual cash income of millions of rural families of the country. The August moon remains so deceptive, shrouded by a veil of cloud. The weather is hot, humid and sultry.

Clearly, August could be a cruel month and fateful mid-August, the cruellest segment of that cruel month. Two fateful events which sealed our fate occurred in mid-August. Birth of Pakistan which never gave us our independence and freedom; and, the killing of Banga-

tragedy.

The painful event of mid-August 1975 established the possibility of change of guards through assassination. The tragedy did occur again. It is extremely painful but true that the two leading political parties of the country have so gravely suffered from death through assassination. Both parties should therefore be united to remain ever watchful. There must never be third such national tragedy.

To get back to the fateful mid-August, we should take careful note of the timing of the two mid-August events. A coincidence? But truth is stranger

than fiction! The liberation of Bangladesh was soaked in blood, sweat and tears. The divorce had a smell of death. The event of mid-August 1947 was a veritable disaster for us. In the same mid-August, 28 years later, there was a national calamity.

Revolution of 1971 was tarnished beyond redemption. Mid-August 1975 constituted the day of the great national tragedy and worst still is the fact that we were able to observe it in a befitting manner only after 21 years of the event. Now we must remain fully aware of the after effects of that great na-

tion.

Vigilance is the best safeguard against conspiracy. The exceedingly high August humidity perhaps provides the ideal condition for promotion of fungus as well as evil designs against the nation — induced by fungus-ridden brains of the disoriented few. No doubt there are strong forces against Bangladesh. We are aware of the elements in our society who are not yet reconciled to the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. On the other hand, a hegemony over Bangladesh is becoming increasingly relevant. We are living on top of a huge energy

cauldron. It is feasible to transport natural gas to rest of the world through pipelines planned for the future without involving expensive liquid gas plants. The location of Bangladesh as the gateway to Bay of Bengal has also assumed new importance. Our ports can provide critical access to not only the north-eastern parts of the sub-continent but beyond to Tibet, Yunnan province and

other south-central parts of China. The territories north of Bangladesh are vast and underpopulated. Their resource potentials are yet to be fully assessed.

The huge population of Bangladesh can eventually, and if politically feasible, move northward for employment and income. There can be a sea change on the "Roof of the World". For developed and capital-rich countries this would mean opportunities for investment on a vastly expanded scale. For us this opens up an immense opportunity to move out of poverty and backwardness. There is no doubt about it. However, the mid-August syndrome must be carefully noted.

Like the mid-August, 50 years back, we must not ever be misled. We have learned many useful lessons during the last 50 years of turmoil. We have been baptized in blood and tears and should know what is best for us.

East India Company, back in 18th century could have enabled India to emerge as a mercantilist-trading nation of the world. Manufacturing of goods and services could have flourished for markets in Europe. Instead of destroying the weaving industry of Bengal, mechanized weaving might have emerged provided a powerful nation state was well established in India, instead of the weak Moghul Empire, and East India Company remained a trading firm although expanding their volume of business. History took a different turn which was reversed only 200 years later although without any advantage to us.

The fateful mid-August has taught us many cruel lessons. Hope we remember them for the future.



Window on Asia

Shahid Latif

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scopio variety of the Russian history with its intrigues and drama have lent a unique flavour, colour and grandeur to the panorama of tumultuous world history. As our civilisation marches ahead triumphantly and steps into the next millennium with its new challenges, Russia will no doubt be in the vanguard adding ever new chapters to the epic story of mankind. Set to emerge as a major player in international events, Russia is destined to be a moving force in the era that awaits us.

The article is an abridged version of an address delivered by the author at the installation ceremony of Volga Club at the Russian Cultural Centre recently.

OPINION

Development of Human Resources in Bangladesh

K B Ahmed

The only skilled manpower in Bangladesh are the farmers who are trained by TRADITION and EXPERIENCE. They have been the backbone of the economy and any difficulty they face affects the GDP/GNP; and as yet no attempt has been made to facilitate these very important work forces with access to the citizens as far as practicality.

Those who take a narrow and rigid view of the Russian history, hold that the Russia's experiment in the recent past with collectivism and socialism has been in vain, a totally wasteful effort and a meaningless piece of episode signifying nothing. However, before we sit in judgment, we should set the Russian scene against the background of a long-term historical perspective. A closer look at the forces that unleashed the Russian revolution would reveal that the revolution had a definite purpose and a pre-designed design in human history and that the world civilisation owes a great deal to what had happened in Russia.

With a bold, unique and full-blown experiment set in motion and the empirical evidence gathered from it, Russia became a great human laboratory shaping the present with powerful portents for the future of mankind. Socialism in action revolutionised human thinking and profoundly influenced the course of recorded history. It set the seal for a crucial stage in human development and represented a giant step along the long and bumpy road to the evolutionary process.

Before the October 1917 Revolution in Russia the working class in general was subjugated and suppressed by owners of capital.

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