

Chastening those CBAs

The government has given an indication that it is bracing up to the chronically unattended task of de-mining tyrannical trade unionism in the nationalised sector.

So, it is a good, bold move contemplated by the AL government — with its one foot in the history of trade unionism in the country — to have a 5-member task force ruffle the feathers of CBAs and reform them by means of an action plan.

Its being constituted and headed by bankers does ensure a flow of information from within the banking sector to help enrich the output of the committee.

Anyway, we would like the September 15 deadline for submission of relevant information extended, given the confidentiality of leads being sought.

Trade unionism has drifted from voicing the rights of workers into virtually running the affairs of the banks themselves.

The legitimisation bid of the military or semi-military rulers had a nice customer in the trade unions. So did the short-sighted political party governments give indulgence to them.

Why Power Shortfall?

Power generation and supply have once again met with a severe setback. Worse, nobody knows when the situation will improve.

To come across an official explanation, one explicitly meant for public information, is, however, a rare opportunity in this country.

Accidents or mechanical failures may be unpredictable but a conscious decision to go for overhauling was really not. If the authority shuts a few power stations or sub-stations, power generation is likely to be hampered.

Unpredictable power supply and voltage fluctuations are indicative of lack of control over the system. This is the conclusion people are forced to draw in the absence of a clear picture about the power sector.

How long are people to suffer and what will be the daily share of loadshedding for a particular area? These are the normal questions to ask.

Kamalganj Feels Heat

Fish is dear now. The king of them, hilsha that is, should be dearer still is no wonder. But for Kamalganj it is particularly telling because people there feel the heat both ways.

Such a price discrepancy is, however, no Sylhet speciality, although nowhere else in the country these two items have similar price tags.

So both the immediate and long-term fall-outs of the gas field accident are being felt by people there. Nothing on this scale has ever happened to have an impact on the bio-diversity of a region in this country.

It is taking a heavy toll on the common people's daily life. This aspect should not get out of sight when the damages are assessed and compensatory provisions sought.

Education Reform in Turkey — Great Debate

THE Planning and Budget Commission of the Turkish Parliament has commenced debate about the proposed reforms in the education system of Turkey.

This is the first legislation of the new Turkish Government by Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's Motherland Party (ANAP).

In broad outline the new educational reform plan envisages that primary school-going children will receive an eight-year continuous education rather than the present 5-3.

Pakistan and India are understandably two key players in South Asia for a variety of reasons. Two nations were born simultaneously and they remained hostile to each other ever since.

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qualitative alteration in their fundamental relationship unless a sea-change marks the scenario at the bilateral level.

They have fought wars, and skirmishes between the border guards and the soldiers of the two countries along the sensitive boundaries are not uncommon even at a time when two sides speak about peace and promotion of good neighbourliness.

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Yes, uncertainty is the word to have something to speak on. As there is uncertainty in cricket, so there is a chance to show something surprising.

When in Bangladesh we read The Daily Star regularly and know that your newspaper aims to make the public aware of, and take action upon, many important social issues.

We have read with concern your comments on the fight against Arsenic contamination of water supplies, in your editorial column of July 18th.

The WHO organised consultation meeting which stated that a reliable valid recommendations for tackling the problem, and your proposal for the setting up of a national reference laboratory for testing the quality of water is just what is needed.

On Sunday, 3rd August, we heard an item on the BBC World Service which stated that a recent survey suggests that up to 50 million people are at risk of

The debate is between the secularist and anti-secularist. The Turkish establishment has been deeply disturbed by the rise of fundamentalism under the sponsorship of the RP. Should the programme of RP be put into effect it would lead to some radical change within the Turkish society nurtured under the reforms of Mustafa Kamal Atatürk

institutions called the Security Council composed of the Heads of the Armed Forces and the civilian side is represented by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, and it is presided by the President Süleyman Demirel. On 28 February last

the military establishment presented before the Security Council a package of reforms which was heavily tilted towards secularism. The package was approved by then Prime Minister Erbakan. The current attempt at educational reform is the most important element of that package.

though they mentioned their respective compulsions about the defence expenditures. When Indian prime minister Inder Kumar Gujral spoke from the ramparts of the Red Fort in Delhi or the Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif addressed his nation marking the fifty years of the freedom — certainly both could not escape reiterating their peace overtures but both also remain conscious of the complexities of such moves as far as their two countries are concerned.

The relationship governing India and Pakistan is certainly a matter of grave importance to other fellow countries in South Asia like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal... It is because the pious ambitions or turning the densely populated region into an economically viable one with raising the standard of the living of the vast multitude under the aegis of the SAARC are inextricably linked with the overall political climate in the South Asia.

The calls for improvement in the quality of life of the teeming millions, the people or the enthusiasm for "people-to-people" contacts will fall on the deaf ears unless the priorities in the area are properly fixed — and needless to say that India and Pakistan are the two main characters in this spectrum to turn South Asia

into a better place. No doubt, the SAARC has come a long way albeit slowly in foreign cooperation in different crucial areas and this can be called as a reasonably satisfactory progress given the nature of the political scenario that existed in the region before the concept was put to implementation or the political conditions that prevail even now.

There is no gainsaying the fact that both India and Pakistan have made good progress in the industrial and agricultural fields. But this progress could have been much bigger had the social and welfare oriented areas received still more attention. As the media of two countries are highlighting their

large Turkish flags attempted to converge on capital Ankara. There were scuffles between the security forces and photographers leading to highly publicised beating of photographers by the police. It ended with the public apology by the Prime Minister. The fear of RP led campaign after Friday prayers had failed to materialize. All in all the opposition attempt to mobilize public opinion against the bill has failed to materialize.

RP has mounted a filibustering campaign to oppose the bill in the parliamentary committee. It presented as many as 70 MPs within the Committee, who all wanted to speak. The ANAP chairman in order to meet the filibuster announced his decision to hold uninterrupted session through the night. He is determined to arrange the passage of the bill through this week. The bill is

achievements while celebrations of the golden jubilee are very much palpable, the world media is also focusing on the sides which reflect the miserable plight of a large number of their people even fifty years after the independence. The free press in both countries under democracies are making no bone of the fact that their father figures had dreamt of a society, in their respective countries free, from hunger, poverty and illiteracy. The essentials like the food, clothes and shelter should have been ensured for all by this time. The prosperity is no mean but that becomes worthwhile when common people can smile. As such, the political and social activists in both India and Pakistan rightly point out to the need for welfare and betterment of condition of the people. And those political parties like the leftists or the welfare-oriented ones seek to attach greater priority to this aspect while making less noises on divisive issues which have undeniably more potentials to whip up sentiments at national and international level but less meaning for the overwhelming majority who only care for minimum facilities for life that would provide them with basic necessities.

The human development report about the South Asian

region presents a horrifying picture showing how much of the people are deprived of basic necessities at a time when the rest of the world barring certain areas have reached dizzy heights of progress. South Asia has enough potentials and its people have calibrations and wisdom but are still lagging behind. Will India and Pakistan embark upon a venture fifty years after their independence that will bring them closer in the mission to work for the welfare of their peoples? Then this will have a sobering impact on other nations in the region and South Asia will definitely look different (for the better) from political point of view.

Not that the two countries have not strived to forge closer ties; in fact, their ties often marked progress in the cultural, sports and other areas of interest for the people while basic political issues that bedeviled them were kept in the background. Let us hope that two important players of South Asian scene will display greater urge in pursuit of providing more comfort to their common peoples as they observe the golden jubilee of nationhood.

University hierarchy starts with the position of a lecturer, followed by assistant professor then associate professor and finally ends up with professor. If we now look up the Dhaka University teacher ratio, we will be surprised to see that about 50 per cent of the academic staff, if not more, are professors. In some departments, as a matter of fact, the total number of professors are two times more compared to the number of lecturers, assistant and associate professors.

How is it possible? Here comes the question of "abuse of autonomy" Dhaka University has discovered a new phenomena called "restructuring". This is a process of upgrading a position to a higher level without having a concurrence of the Ministry of Finance — which ultimately pays the bill from the national exchequer. Interestingly in the process of restructuring a position, a teacher gets extra points for being a house tutor, student's counselor and other administrative jobs like assistant proctor, proctor etc. For all these positions, the teachers get additional allowances and free or subsidised house (proctor, asst proctor and house tutors). No one can claim that these activities have any academic component in it which should be weighed in giving a promotion.

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The government appears to have taken all precautions in order to ensure the passage of the bill. There is reasonable ground to believe that the bill will receive a majority vote in favour. The unknown factor is how many defections will take place from the ranks of ANAP. This party of centre right has within itself a hard core of Islamist deputies like Korukut Ozal, the brother of the late President Turgut Ozal. Korukut Ozal has openly stated his opposition to the bill brought by his party. Similarly some defections can be expected from the DYP although its modern former Prime Minister Tansu Ciller has signified opposition to the bill.

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Fifty Years of India and Pakistan, and the South Asia

by Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury

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On Sunday, 3rd August, we heard an item on the BBC World Service which stated that a recent survey suggests that up to 50 million people are at risk of

being poisoned by Arsenic in their drinking water. Other disturbing facts given in the report were as follows:

a. Few doctors know how to diagnose the symptoms of Arsenic poisoning, and they need to be given immediate training in this.

b. There are only two machines in Bangladesh for the testing for Arsenic, and these can only test up to 10 samples a day.

c. There has been no mass awareness campaign so far.

d. There has been little action so far by the Government, only the sealing up of a few tubewells. In this situation, what are the alternative sources of water?

e. If the water contain a high level of iron, and is left to stand for a day, the iron will sink to the bottom and carry the arsenic with it, thus reducing the risk. (Would it be possible to use a flocculating agent such as ALUM to achieve the same result?)

Today we were pleased to read the good news printed in your July 25th issue that a group of NGOs has decided to set up a task force to frame a plan of action to combat this whole problem. We know that other countries such as India, Argentina, Mexico, Taiwan and Thailand have had similar problems. We strongly feel that experts from these countries should be invited to a conference with the NGO team, as a matter of urgency. We are sure that, given time, their combined expertise and efforts will find a way to overcome this enormous problem, with the essential cooperation of the local people.

We look forward to reading the NGO team's policy document next month.

staircases depend on the number of persons it is meant to serve. Most often, a building made for residential use for say ten persons per floor is transformed overnight into garments factories for well over one hundred workers per floor. Needless to say, a stampede situation will occur if there is any emergency situation in any of these factories.

Alternative exit routes, as you suggest, are a must although not necessarily as mentioned in the editorial. The primary problem emanates from the fact that garments factories not being designed as such. The unfortunate deaths that are occur are due to industrialists taking risks by simply overloading a given situation.

Fire drill should be given top priority as workers are seen to be obviously panic because of fear of the unknown. Some of the men/women on every factory floor must be trained to take charge in an emergency.

It is time that management is compelled to take health and safety matters in earnest and discuss related issues with the workers' representatives. Every worker by law should be made aware of safety measure affecting him or her.

Only the vain may argue that there was "no fire" when 23 workers died recently and so safety measures were not to blame. In truth, even in a real fire, people suffocate or are trampled to death long before they are burnt by the flames.

The most unfortunate aspect of deaths in fire-associated accidents, as is becoming more common in our garments factories over the years, is that the owners of these factories, thanks to their business trips abroad, are well aware of ideal conditions of health and safety.

These industrialists who have endeavoured to create one of the most disciplined work forces in the world, owe it to their conscience to provide their extremely loyal workers a safe place to work. For these entrepreneurs who have succeeded in etching Bangladesh's name on the global business market, improving working conditions in their factories should not amount to a difficult task.

By ignoring their knowledge and wisdom, industrialists are helping repeatedly to enact tragedies; avoiding which are very much within their means. It is indeed their responsibility.

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OPINION Dhaka University Autonomy—Use or Abuse?

Moinul Hasan

About a decade back a dictator ruler of this country lamented that "Dhaka University has become a State within a State, this cannot be tolerated."

He was furious over the extent of the autonomy the university had been exercising. He might have different motives to be furious about the fact, but after a decade or more, I being a taxpayer citizen have become a bit worried about the use and abuse of "autonomy" of the Dhaka University.

University hierarchy starts with the position of a lecturer, followed by assistant professor then associate professor and finally ends up with professor. If we now look up the Dhaka University teacher ratio, we will be surprised to see that about 50 per cent of the academic staff, if not more, are professors. In some departments, as a matter of fact, the total number of professors are two times more compared to the number of lecturers, assistant and associate professors.

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