

## Protect Historic Sites

Vandalism is a crime. Not always only the criminally minded indulge in it. Most of our rich national heirloom in the shape of objects of art and of archeological interest, including ancient monuments have been grossly vandalised through sheer ignorance. It is a sad commentary on our people's awareness of their own achievements in the past years. It is a shame we do not know the value of our own creations of high intrinsic value.

Add to this the work of the criminal vandals who have stumbled somehow on the knowledge that these are things of value and actually some of such are invaluable. And realising the price these can fetch they keep on draining the country of all relict riches, specially images of Buddhist and Hindu gods. It cannot be said that the illicit trading in such things has been arrested in any meaningful manner.

In a break-out to new dimension, state vandalism is now all poised to destroy ancient Dhamrai. The Daily Star front-page exposure of the design on Thursday referred to political engineering that in 1992 initiated the move to widen a road in a manner destroying old buildings and temples of true historic, religious and artistic value. Why could not this be stopped even after change of government? Perhaps because those that took over in 1996 are as ignorant of Dhamrai's glory as their predecessors were. Although nothing of that remains, Dhamrai is diminutive of Dharmarajika of Emperor Asoka's time. The savant emperor, lord of a realm far larger than Akbar's or Aurangzeb's India, not to speak of British India, marked 84 sites of special merit throughout his empire. And Dhamrai was one of them.

There can be no question about government's giving up this project. May be government has been harming many other such sites and things of value, quite unknowingly. Let there be no repetition of such insensitivity to historic sites.

## Secretariat Creaking

Droves of favour-seeking visitors are making the national secretariat into a sort of madhouse. The hub of government decision-making is only a short distance away from being ravingly dysfunctional.

Like butterflies beholden to flower, they gravitate to the secretariat — thanks to over-centralisation of administration. They seek entry into the government complex by means more foul than fair and on gaining it spill all over transforming into locust. They are descending abominably on the place all right, yet they are not to be principally blamed; for if their intent to get in were not indulged, they wouldn't have made it to the secretariat to be sure.

The Bangla daily which shed some new light on the invasive crowding of the secretariat referred to a Home Ministry Circular and a report on the latest situation filed by the Special Branch to the Police Headquarters. Three things come out of these write-ups from those who know at firsthand what has been happening within the four walls of secretariat. We knew that a paltry bribe of Tk 20 at the gate was enough to see one through the main hurdle but what we didn't know much about is the high incidence of *tadbir* (favour-seeking) by people giving the identity of journalists, but mostly belonging to non-descript newspapers.

Many of the passes meant for the visitors were not dated, did not contain their names, and where they did, more than one name appeared. Those who are authorised to sign the passes mustn't as a rule issue more than ten and that too strictly for an hour at the most. The fact of having a pass does not mean a right to free and indefinite loitering. It is only when the counterfoil of the pass is deposited at the gate when leaving that the authority will be able to regulate traffic into the secretariat.

## Address this Absurdity

The report published in a leading vernacular daily last week on two young girls' sufferings over their SSC examination results served as a pointer to a long endured absurdity in our evaluative system. Both the students despite their obvious ability were reckoned as failures in the first major exam of their life apparently for no fault of their own.

The most absurd part of it all was that though the teachers unanimously agreed on reexamination that neither deserved the treatment they actually got, the stigma of failure could not be cleared. An ordinance since 1961, it was referred, has kept the possibility of revaluation in all board examinations barred. Now the question that has been aired by the parents of one of these girls and should also bother the authorities is what is the point of keeping the provision of reexamination if there be not any method to address an injustice? What is the necessity of this grand tamasha of ineffectuality and frustration?

We do not share the smug indifference of a Board official quoted in the report that for the greater cause some individuals always suffer. Neither do we buy his defence of the law that changing it would mean an open invitation to all sorts of power pressure and manipulation. Is the situation any better now? The recent investigative press reports have already proved that country's education boards are dens of all sorts of corruption. So how the picture can be any worse than what it is now?

Above all the present law tends to make a mockery of the question of accountability. What about the punitive measure for the teachers whose lack of professionalism, incompetence and carelessness play havoc with students' lives? Under the present system the questionable section of teachers' community can and is actually getting away with murder.

The present government seems pretty keen on reforms in country's moth-eaten education sector. We urge its Education Ministry to review this antiquated, meaningless and dangerously painful piece of absurdity immediately.

THE Daily Star in its editorial remarks threw a voice of grave concern 'over not merely a rapid-fire deterioration of political violence in the country but also a tendentious eruption of it without any direct provocation or incitement given to the same' (DS November 13, 1997). Other newspaper reports and analysis on the recent Chittagong episode also tend to hit home the impression that all that occurred there were more stimulated than spontaneous.

It is not beyond the realm of reality that the opposition parties of a country would oppose government policies and actions in the event they find these against people's interest. Democracy walks on two legs: opposition and government. So when people voted Awami League to power by a razor-thin margin during the last general election, opposition was vested with the responsibility of keeping the government on track through the use of its instruments judiciously.

From the day the present government was sworn in, the issues that opposition harped on to discredit and destabilize the government do not appear to be in consort with the wisdom of an opposition in a parliamentary democracy. Hartal

While we are looking around for more investments and employment, to uplift socio-economic status of our people, it is sensible politics that we are expecting from both government and opposition parties.

— the most slated instrument of ventilating political grievances — has been used off and on by the party which once upon a time considered hartal as an anti-state activity. Abstinence from the parliament goes on by the major opposition party despite the recorded view that, while in power, they themselves wanted every political hitch to be resolved in the parliament.

BNP seems to live with the impression that abstinenace from parliament and continuous hartals might cause a fall of the government. Because it is through this process, allegedly, that Awami League — now in power — once made its way through. Unfortunately, what BNP misses at this point of argument is the fact that their power scrambled not so much due to the then opposition's politics but more so due to their own follies to cling to power. The Magura bi-election and the 12 February election triggered the downfall. So basically it is the right issue at the right moment that could help BNP to regain some its lost grounds.

Are the current issues with which BNP and its allies are grappling with right? Take the examples of two of the most widely used citations: making Bangladesh a bazaar of Indian commodities and sell-out of a part of Bangladesh through signing a peace accord with the rebels in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). It was in 1990 — with BNP in power — when a massive cut in import duties was allowed in the name of import

## Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes



liberalization and open economy. M Saifur Rahman — the then Finance Minister — rightly boasted of a transition from an inward-looking to outward-looking trade strategy. From then on relatively cheaper Indian goods started flowing into Bangladesh markets through legal channels. To know as to what extent Bangladesh has been turned into a "captive market" of India

during those comparable periods of time. *A priori*, we could perhaps, hypothesize that the degree of the alleged captivity has not increased. If not, then, during the present regime, let's not lose sight of another grotesque implication of the "theory of captive market" argument: while in power, you supported trade liberalization and now in opposition you grizzle over the outcome. The most

## Verbatim

Told you because you were one of the concerned officers of DGFI.

A: Yes.

Q: Was any measure taken to foil the conspiracy?

A: It was the matter of the DG. There were many cells, which cell he would activate was his matter.

Q: Constant surveillance of DGFI was there inside and in the adjoining areas of the cantonment?

A: There was no provision of constant surveillance.

Q: Did surveillance take place in rotation?

A: There was no such provision.

Q: The field of operation of DGFI is confined to the armed forces?

A: Primarily to the defence services, but it can expand to civilian matters and even outside the country, depending on assignments.

Q: CIA may also come into it.

Q: What about Raw?

A: I don't have any knowledge.

Q: Was there any condolence message from India after the August 15 incident?

A: I don't have any knowledge.

Q: Did India recognise Mushtaque government?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Did you know anything about a letter written by Indira Gandhi to famous Indian writer Annapurna Sankar Ray about the August 15 incident?

A: No.

Q: Were you a concerned officer for which Brig Rouf told you about a conspiracy against the government 8 to 10 days before the August 15 incident?

A: I was in DGFI.

Q: He told you about toppling of the government by the army?

A: No. He named some particular officers, he (Rouf) didn't tell about the involvement of army.

Q: You were bound to go there as there was an order from your superior.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you need to pursue JRB (Jatiya Rakhi Bahini) Di-

rector Hasan for not going for any offensive role or found him as persuaded by the Army HQ?

A: I found him prepared for going to the radio station with me.

Q: You had taken Hasan to the radio station by your white jeep.

A: By DGFI's white jeep.

Q: Before leaving the JRB HQ did Hasan tell anything to the jawans of the Rakhi Bahini?

A: I didn't remember.

Q: Tofael Ahmed was the political controller of Rakhi Bahini.

A: It is not known to me.

Q: As per JRB organogram was Hasan in charge of Rakhi Bahini or there was some one superior to him on August 15.

A: I don't know.

Q: Who was acting as DG Rakhi Bahini on August 15?

A: I don't know.

Q: Before going to Bangabandhu's residence to take pictures you came across 12 mentioned places, which places you visited under order and which for self-imposed responsibility?

A: I went to the radio station and to the DGFI office as part of my self-imposed responsibility.

Q: Was your movement before going to Bangabandhu's house at 11 am was as per the order of your higher authority?

A: Some movements were under order and some for responsibility.

Q: Going to the Rakhi Bahini HQ, you saw the jawans

of DGFI.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you feel insecure?

A: Although there were some risks I had to go there to perform my duty. As a DGFI man I went there in civil dress and by a white car of DGFI.

Q: You were bound to go there as there was an order from your superior.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you need to pursue JRB (Jatiya Rakhi Bahini) Di-

rector Hasan for not going for any offensive role or found him as persuaded by the Army HQ?

A: I found him prepared for going to the radio station with me.

Q: You had taken Hasan to the radio station by your white jeep.

A: By DGFI's white jeep.

Q: Before leaving the JRB HQ did Hasan tell anything to the jawans of the Rakhi Bahini?

A: I didn't remember.

Q: Tofael Ahmed was the political controller of Rakhi Bahini.

A: It is not known to me.

Q: As per JRB organogram was Hasan in charge of Rakhi Bahini or there was some one superior to him on August 15.

A: I don't know.

Q: Who was acting as DG Rakhi Bahini on August 15?

A: I don't know.

Q: Before going to Bangabandhu's residence to take pictures you came across 12 mentioned places, which places you visited under order and which for self-imposed responsibility?

A: I went to the radio station and to the DGFI office as part of my self-imposed responsibility.

Q: Was your movement before going to Bangabandhu's house at 11 am was as per the order of your higher authority?

A: Some movements were under order and some for responsibility.

Q: Going to the Rakhi Bahini HQ, you saw the jawans

of DGFI.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you feel insecure?

A: Although there were some risks I had to go there to perform my duty. As a DGFI man I went there in civil dress and by a white car of DGFI.

Q: You were bound to go there as there was an order from your superior.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you need to pursue JRB (Jatiya Rakhi Bahini) Di-

rector Hasan for not going for any offensive role or found him as persuaded by the Army HQ?

A: I found him prepared for going to the radio station with me.

Q: You had taken Hasan to the radio station by your white jeep.

A: By DGFI's white jeep.

Q: Before leaving the JRB HQ did Hasan tell anything to the jawans of the Rakhi Bahini?

A: I didn't remember.

Q: Tofael Ahmed was the political controller of Rakhi Bahini.

A: It is not known to me.

Q: As per JRB organogram was Hasan in charge of Rakhi Bahini or there was some one superior to him on August 15.

A: I don't know.

Q: Who was acting as DG Rakhi Bahini on August 15?

A: I don't know.

Q: Before going to Bangabandhu's residence to take pictures you came across 12 mentioned places, which places you visited under order and which for self-imposed responsibility?

A: I went to the radio station and to the DGFI office as part of my self-imposed responsibility.

Q: Was your movement before going to Bangabandhu's house at 11 am was as per the order of your higher authority?

A: Some movements were under order and some for responsibility.

Q: Going to the Rakhi Bahini HQ, you saw the jawans

of DGFI.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you feel insecure?

A: Although there were some risks I had to go there to perform my duty. As a DGFI man I went there in civil dress and by a white car of DGFI.

Q: You were bound to go there as there was an order from your superior.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you need to pursue JRB (Jatiya Rakhi Bahini) Di-