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The World on Time

Down to Earth The Growing 'Tadbir' Culture

By A S M Nurunnabi

Tadbir is a versatile word in Bangla. In its innocuous form, it means effort for achieving success. But in the context of our socio-economic ramifications, it has acquired connotations, such as lobbying with built-in quid pro quo, palm-greasing or euphemisms for bribe or graft. It is open to question whether the phenomenon has become part of our national culture. In fact, there is hardly any sphere in life where the phenomenon does not operate in lofty strides.

According to social scientists, it has roots in economic factors arising from insufficiency of wherewithal of its operators.

In the Dhaka city, the government secretariat offers a convenient field for witnessing its operations for a variety of objectives. Since anti-pathy towards normal duties has also developed into a sort of culture with the office functionaries, *tadbir* mongering gets an added impetus.

The movement of a file, however, important or urgent it may be, suffers from inertia from the stages through which it has to pass. The concerned functionary holds up the file in the hope that a *tadbir* player will soon appear to pursue the file. When an understanding is reached with the player, the file resumes its movement to the next higher stage where a similar deal may be repeated. The play may continue till the file is

finally disposed of and the *tadbir* party gains its objective. This is the general pattern of operation of *tadbir*, with a few exceptions, in every field of work.

The *tadbir*-mongers form a distinct class by themselves. Since the secretariat, which is a protected area, is the heart of administration, and no ordinary person can get easy access to the offices there, he needs the help of a suitable person capable of doing him the favour, at a price, of enquiring about the progress of his file. Here a 'professional' *tadbir*-monger comes forward to help. In other words, such *tadbir*-mongers may be called touts if a blunt expression is used. As such touts perform the role of middlemen, they tend to create a distance between the concerned people and the officials, who are competent to deliver the goods, and thereby make improper gains.

It is alleged that people concerned with activities in government offices and courts are virtually regulated by these touts.

Moreover, it is difficult to detect the modus operandi of certain classes of touts. Various kinds of deals are conducted through them. It is said that most of the visitors that throng the visitors' room in the Secretariat are 'professional' touts or persons seeking to make *tadbirs* on their own in some office or another within the Secretariat.

It is also said that there is a steady demand for the services of such *tadbir*-mongers, because most of the ordinary people are not acquainted with the mechanism of work in the Secretariat. For such people, the help of a 'professional' is necessary and the latter sometimes takes resort to trickery and deceit to establish credibility.

The fields of activities of the city touts cover a wide range — banks, customs department, income tax offices, T&T office, and passport office. They are also active in other areas where there are prospects of illegal gains, such as matters like purchase of land lease of houses, and getting connections for electricity, gas, and water supply.

The horizon of the city touts has been steadily expanding. Some of them are said to be operating from well-furnished offices. They, as a class, are more dashing and enterprising with claims of political influence behind them. They manage to get easy access to the high-ups in the administration's hierarchy and conduct themselves in a flamboyant style.

The role of the *tadbir*-mongers has become so dominant that none can get anything done without their agency. Their omnipresence is an ominous fact of city life and they seem to have come to stay with their tentacles spreading to all spheres of activities.

Castrol executives arrive today

By Staff Correspondent

Two senior executives of Castrol, the world's leading lubricant company, are arriving in Dhaka to sign an agreement with a local company for lubricant marketing.

The executives are Henry Williamson, Regional Controller, Castrol Asia-Pacific, and J T Lee, Managing Director, Singapore Pte Ltd.

Sharif

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India's nuclear tests, the State Department said.

Talbott held talks with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and other senior leaders in Islamabad earlier to try to dissuade Pakistan from launching an arms race.

We did not receive assurances one way or the other with regard to their testing plans, state department spokesman James Rubin said.

But Rubin added that the US envoy had made 'very, very clear' to the Pakistani leadership 'the seriously negative consequences that would ensue from testing.'

These are difficult times, Talbott told reporters in Islamabad after 90 minutes of talks with Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan, who has been outspoken in his criticism of what he had called US complicity in India's surprise nuclear tests earlier this week.

A spokesman for Khan described the talks as a 'listening session'.

US President Bill Clinton sent Talbott, State Department Assistant Secretary for South Asia Karrin Inderfurth and other senior officials to try to persuade Pakistan not to carry out veiled threats to explode its first nuclear device.

Describing his personal feelings on hearing the news of the demise of Shaikat Osman this morning, he said, he brought down some books by Shaikat Osman from the racks to feel the touch of the litterateur.

'Then I uttered the memorable quote of Walt Whitman — if you touch this book, you touch man,' Sen said paying his rich tribute to the memory of Osman.

Orion Infusion

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the company's upcoming lucrative offers, which were rapidly pushing its prices up from about Tk 150 to as high as Tk 750.

The whole affair of Orion Infusion raises the question whether the company was involved in market manipulation. And yet, SEC had never investigated the affairs of this company.

Its balance sheet had been doctored and lucrative dividend offers were made which could jack up its share price if the market was in a normal mood.

When share price of a company is substantially higher than its rights offer, it is fully subscribed.

With the rights share money, Orion then would have its loans rescheduled and get working capital. It could then release its dividend money already used as working capital in the company and pay it to investors.

However, Obaidul Karim denied any manipulation by the company. As proof he said the company declared its dividend on January 4, 1997, when the market started falling. He also said during the stock market bubble, there were rumours about different companies and he had no hand in it if any information about his company prevailed in the market.

'If I had an ill-motive, I would not have declared dividend in the first place,' he said. 'This declaration of dividend has put me in the present situation.'

A condolence meeting at national level will be held at the TSC auditorium at 4 pm on May 19 at the Central Shaheed Minar.

For the holding of the May 19 condolence meeting, a 201-member national committee has been formed with poet Shamsur Rahman as its convenor. Seven coordinators of

Dipu murder

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Ahmed, Police latter arrested him and lodged a case.

JCD leader Dipu was killed on November 26, 1994 by a gang near the PATC gate adjacent to the campus as a sequel to a clash between two factions of JCD.

Saful was one of the accused in the killing and was ousted from the campus along with his accomplices following the murder.

Mizan's body was handed over to his family yesterday after its autopsy at the DMCH.

Selina Begum, mother of the victim, filed a murder case with Shabujbagh, Thana yesterday. None was arrested in this connection till last night.

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