

DB Overhaul

Discovery of the decomposed corpse of Jalal Ahmed from the overhead water-tank at the Detective Branch office in the capital and subsequent investigation into the murder case have led up to some extremely disconcerting revelations. Put together these pointed to one compelling truth: the Detective Branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police has really gone out of control and needs immediate overhaul. While there was an instant clamour among conscious citizens for an immediate intervention from the government to get things in order at the Detective Branch, the home ministry has been slow to act initially. However, a report carried in the front page of some leading Bengali news dailies on Monday suggests that the government has taken the matter into serious consideration and a thorough reorganisation of the branch is on the cards. Belated though, the ministry's activism in that direction certainly comes as a heartening bit of news as it underlines Home Minister Mohammad Nasim's commitment towards streamlining the law enforcement system.

The areas identified for complete overhaul show that the ministry has touched the heart of the matter. Plans to reduce the staff strength to 200, including 110 officials, in not only Dhaka but also in the three other metropolitan areas are highly pertinent. And, the induction of an accountability mechanism would certainly go a long way towards enhancing DB's efficiency and restoring its badly battered credibility. However, our suggestion is that the activities of other intelligence wings of the government, such as the NSI, Special Branch (SB) and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) should also be reviewed, and brought under the supervision of a parliamentary body. That would not only ensure accountability of these organisations but also make them transparent to the citizenry thereby augmenting their faith in the law enforcement system. Moreover, the government must make sure that the intelligence agencies are modernised and equipped with sophisticated gadgets, and also the agents are trained for their tasks.

The intelligence agencies have so far been beset with multifarious problems. Complaints of high handedness, corruption, nexus with the crime cartel and, above all, partisanship have severely damaged their image. Custodians of law are now viewed as hands of horror by the regular citizen. But respect for the law enforcers is a precondition to the effective working of an enforcement system. We are happy that the simple truth has dawned on the policy-makers. We earnestly hope that this realisation would be translated into establishing a clean, effective and, of course, accountable law enforcement system.

Whither Task Force Report?

Strange it may sound though, it is true nevertheless that important recommendations of a Task Force constituted after the Gaibandha liquor tragedy in April 1998 still remain in the cold storage. The seven-member committee formed after sixty-nine persons had died following ingestion of methanol on 15 April last year made three specific recommendations: to control the use of methanol, to monitor the uses of methanol and to ascertain the total requirement of this poisonous spirit for various use all over the country along with its imports. But these recommendations were soon forgotten and not until the Narsingdi tragedy in which one hundred and fourteen people died was the new Director General of the Narcotics informed about the existence of such a report, according to a report in *Prothom Alo* on Monday.

Now who is responsible for non-implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force? The net result has been the tragedy at Narsingdi and who knows how many more lives will be lost in future because of the callousness of the authorities concerned. The Health Ministry should wake up now and take full responsibility for averting future tragedies. The failure of the ministry points to the failure in governance. Any more lapse on the part of the government can cause disasters in future. Instead of wasting time in fruitless political rhetorics and sensing conspiracies in whatever agenda the opposition is pursuing, the government must take up the challenging task of good governance for the benefit of the people who had voted them to power. We are appalled by the thought of many more reports being kept in the cold due to utter negligence of the concerned authorities while the people suffer in silence. The pattern seems to be: form a task force or probe committee when caught up in a storm and just forget about the report submitted by it at once the dusts have settled.

Who are They Fooling?

The old cliché of breaking butterflies upon wheels is holding true at the ongoing Higher Secondary Certificate examination centres. Things clearly have gotten out of hands, and therefore, the education secretary has strengthened the deputy commissioners (DCs) with the power to seek Bangladesh Rifle's (BDR's) help in need. Evidently, the police were not deemed enough to check unprecedented unfair means at exam halls. Why? Are the police also backing the exam-hall blockheads? Resorting to cheating by a large number of examinees has created a state of anarchy all over the country, turning all exams into horseplay and also threatening to reduce the importance of certificates even more.

On the one hand, students those who go for unfair means have been proven themselves as extortionists; and that too, reportedly, with the help of some "bribable" invigilators, and on the other, many of them have exhibited innovative — apart from might-is-right approach — jocular ways of cheating at the exam hall. A Bangla daily carried a photo-report unveiling a female candidate's chemise swarmed with a textbook look-alike. Similar examples are aplenty.

Now, who are these young unfair means-seekers fooling? Without any iota of doubt: "themselves". After crossing the SSC and HSC hurdles when they would realise what they have done, there'll be no remedy left for them. Admission into universities is bound to be the most arduous task for them. Moreover, if job-hunting and living a decent life are the prime objectives of our way of education then there are disappointments waiting for every one of those who 'fared with unfairness.' Workplaces would be the shock of their life. We don't want people who acquire educational attestation of this category, because these are an unskilled, literally uneducated lot. We hope these rogues don't get a free run.

Education: In Search of a Policy

One basic thrust of the policy is to ensure that all citizens of the country have equal opportunity of access to education, certainly to primary and secondary education but also to other levels. Primary education is proposed to be extended up to class VIII, with secondary education consisting of classes IX to XII. This system is proposed to be put in place in phases to be completed by 2010.

programmes and projects and let educational activities be pursued, as has been the case in the past, without adopting a national education policy.

But in order that efforts can be mounted to promote education in a coherent manner, generating a momentum towards the best possible development of human capability for the best possible rate of national progress, an overall policy framework is absolutely necessary. In the absence of such a framework policy, ad-hocism and piecemeal actions are more the norm than systemic imperatives. This state of affairs ill behoves the nation if it were to prepare for a major forward thrust in the 21st century.

Since Liberation several commissions and committees have been appointed by the government to formulate a national educational policy. Reports have been submitted but, as noted earlier, a policy is yet to be adopted. The present government formed a National Educational Policy Formulation Committee in January 1997, which submitted its report in September of that year. In early 1998, a small committee was constituted to review that report, finalise policy proposals and suggest implementation and financing strategies. This committee, using the report of the earlier committee as the basis and after holding discussions with various stakeholders and reviewing the comments and suggestions offered by individuals and organisations generated on the basis of discussions on the proposals contained in that report drafted a National Education Policy covering various levels and types of education and suggesting implementation strategies along with possible ways of funding the major initiatives to be undertaken under the policy.

In this piece I wish to highlight the development of expertise of various types and levels. The sciences, engineering and technical subjects and also the social sciences which are more directly concerned with economic activities are encouraged in this context.

Given that an overriding need of this country is to help the ordinary people to get out of their accommodation with poverty and backwardness, primary and secondary education, encompassing both the overriding goals stated above, have been given top priority. Keeping in sharp view that the two levels represent both terminal and continuing education, the curriculum and importance of various subjects have been proposed. Side by side with the development of human qualities, emphasis has been laid on vocational training and more directly economy-related

subjects such as economics, commerce, science, computer, agriculture and so on. Liberal arts are not however neglected.

As I see it, the proposed policy has been formulated with two basic goals in view, which are very appropriate in the context of Bangladesh. One is the promotion of ethical and human values, such as social justice, good behaviour, fellow-feeling, respect for others' views, devotion to duty, respect for human rights, non-communism, and patriotism. Promotion of leadership qualities is also an important aspect. The second overarching purpose is the applied side of education

and the development of expertise of various types and levels. The sciences, engineering and technical subjects and also the social sciences which are more directly concerned with economic activities are encouraged in this context.

Given that an overriding need of this country is to help the ordinary people to get out of their accommodation with poverty and backwardness, primary and secondary education, encompassing both the overriding goals stated above, have been given top priority. Keeping in sharp view that the two levels represent both terminal and continuing education, the curriculum and importance of various subjects have been proposed. Side by side with the development of human qualities, emphasis has been laid on vocational training and more directly economy-related

subjects such as economics, commerce, science, computer, agriculture and so on. Liberal arts are not however neglected.

At the same time, for those who cannot go to school because of poverty and other social reasons, the major emphasis has been given on non-formal education. Its purpose is to bring those left-out children within the fold of the educational process and to encourage and help them to pursue education at least to a level that enables them to participate in economic and social processes in a meaningful way. Another important aspect of the proposed educational policy is people's participation in the process of ensuring that schools and colleges are properly managed, education is properly imparted, and quality of education is adequately ensured. In this process, continuous interactions among teachers, parents, members of management committees, local leaders, and local government officials will be encouraged, promoted, and facilitated.

One basic thrust of the policy is to ensure that all citizens of the country have equal opportunity of access to education, certainly to primary and secondary education but also to other levels. Primary education is proposed to be extended up to class VIII, with secondary education consisting of classes IX to XII. This system is proposed to be put in place in phases to be completed by 2010. One very important purpose of the proposed longer duration of primary

education is that on completion of primary education one acquires basic qualifications to participate purposefully in economic, social, cultural and political processes of the country.

While primary education is compulsory and universal, higher levels of education will depend on the ability of the students to pursue higher diplomas/degrees. Higher education and research in the sciences and technical subjects is duly emphasised. A major emphasis has been laid on the quality of education at all levels — primary to the highest degree. With that end in view, training of teachers of all levels has been duly emphasised. Strategies have been proposed for pursuing both these ends in an effective manner.

With a view to promoting an equitable educational system in accordance with the dictates of the Constitution of Bangladesh, all types of primary schools will be required to impart education of which the contents and quality will be the same and the medium of instruction Bengali. However, due emphasis has been given on English as a second language, which will be taught from class III as a compulsory subject; it may also be taught in classes I and II as an optional subject.

There will be three basic streams at the secondary level — general, technical and madrasa. In each stream, vocational education will form an integral part so that after completing secondary education one is able to take up a vocation if one does not pursue higher education for some reason or other. In each stream, there will also be certain common compulsory subjects. Overall, education to be provided in each stream has been so designed that, when the proposed new system of primary education up

to class VIII and secondary education consisting of classes IX to XII will be in place, students will be able to change from one stream to another, if they so desire, on completion of primary and secondary levels, as the case may be.

In so far as madrasa education is concerned, the emphasis is on in-depth and analytical imparting of religious education. At the same time, the sciences, technical subjects and the social sciences are given due emphasis in madrasa education appropriately at different levels in order to enable the madrasa educated people to have both a proper religious education and a strong background in other subjects for them to be able to participate not only in religious activities but also in economic and scientific processes in an effective manner.

As far as I know the draft policy document has been going through various stages for final formulation and, hopefully, eventual adoption. Obviously, it is important that a policy which is appropriate in the context of the needs and aspirations of the people and national and international dynamics is adopted. The draft policy provides an adequate response to this national need, as I see it. But one must also recognise that the implementation is another matter. In this country, there are good, even excellent policies in many areas of national management, but implementation is often poor and riddled with corruption and mismanagement.

The management of education at national and subordinate levels is also seriously affected by inefficiency, bureaucratic procrastination, and corruption. It is important therefore that to ensure effective progress in the field of education and training, and indeed in other sectors, the issue of corruption and mismanagement has to be addressed squarely and firmly. Otherwise, our future is unlikely to be any better than a mirror image of our past (failures and poor achievements).



Lest We Forget ...

by Qazi Kholiuzzaman Ahmad

and the development of expertise of various types and levels. The sciences, engineering and technical subjects and also the social sciences which are more directly concerned with economic activities are encouraged in this context.

Given that an overriding need of this country is to help the ordinary people to get out of their accommodation with poverty and backwardness, primary and secondary education, encompassing both the overriding goals stated above, have been given top priority. Keeping in sharp view that the two levels represent both terminal and continuing education, the curriculum and importance of various subjects have been proposed. Side by side with the development of human qualities, emphasis has been laid on vocational training and more directly economy-related

subjects such as economics, commerce, science, computer, agriculture and so on. Liberal arts are not however neglected.

At the same time, for those

who cannot go to school because of poverty and other social reasons, the major emphasis has been given on non-formal education.

Its purpose is to bring those left-out children within the fold of the educational process and to encourage and help them to pursue education at least to a level that enables them to participate in economic and social processes in a meaningful way. Another important aspect of the proposed educational policy is people's participation in the process of ensuring that schools and colleges are properly managed, education is properly imparted, and quality of education is adequately ensured. In this process, continuous interactions among teachers, parents, members of management committees, local leaders, and local government officials will be encouraged, promoted, and facilitated.

One basic thrust of the policy is to ensure that all citizens of the country have equal opportunity of access to education, certainly to primary and secondary education but also to other levels. Primary education is proposed to be extended up to class VIII, with secondary education consisting of classes IX to XII. This system is proposed to be put in place in phases to be completed by 2010. One very important purpose of the proposed longer duration of primary

education is that on completion of primary education one acquires basic qualifications to participate purposefully in economic, social, cultural and political processes of the country.

There are allegations that late Rajiv Gandhi and his "cronies" made fortunes from the "commission and kick-backs" on the huge arms deal with Swedish company Bofors where also an Italian business concern was involved. Critics say people should decide whether they want "Ram" or "Rome," an euphemism for "Hindu" or "Italian". The "Telugu Desam Party" in southern Andhra Pradesh where it is the principal political rival of the Congress also echoes similar feelings about Sonia Gandhi.

Barring the hardcore segment, such arguments are unlikely to cut much ice among the conscious and saner section of the people. The critics say Sonia took many years to take Indian citizenship after her marriage to Rajiv Gandhi in 1968. By saying this they seek to drive home the point that she was not much keen to become an Indian national. The Congress turns the table on the opponents maintaining that when Italian Sonia married Indian Rajiv and chose to live in India, she embraced this country whole heartedly. Supporters of Sonia say she also took painstaking efforts to learn Hindi and mingle with the Indians.

On the other hand, bitterness within the opposition parties is obvious because some of them accuse each other of "betrayal" or of adopting a tendency guided by political meanness that prevented them from forming the new government in the aftermath of the fall of the Vajpayee government. Rivalries within the opposition group is another dimension that may make the campaign for the coming polls acrimonious and intense.

Certainly there is a variety of the issues that the contending sides will seek to use against each other. But under the two

main political parties — the BJP and the Congress — the "foreign origin" of Congress president Sonia Gandhi is definitely the most sensitive. Although Vajpayee has said that he would not make this an issue, the BJP and some of its allies are unlikely to exclude this in the campaign that is slowly picking up. The Congress and Sonia Gandhi herself cannot be totally oblivious of the fact that the critics would exploit this issue to the best of their ability

to hold such offices as president, vice-president and prime minister.

They argue that different nations have similar constitutional bar like the United States where none can be the head of the country unless he/she is of American origin by birth and Pakistan where a non-Muslim cannot hold the office of head of country and/or government.

They also spare no efforts to vilify Sonia being an Italian and say people should decide whether they want "Ram" or "Rome," an euphemism for "Hindu" or "Italian".

The "Telugu Desam Party" in southern Andhra Pradesh where it is the principal political rival of the Congress also echoes similar feelings about Sonia Gandhi.

Barring the hardcore segment, such arguments are unlikely to cut much ice among the conscious and saner section of the people. The critics say Sonia took many years to take Indian citizenship after her marriage to Rajiv Gandhi in 1968. By saying this they seek to drive home the point that she was not much keen to become an Indian national. The Congress turns the table on the opponents maintaining that when Italian Sonia married Indian Rajiv and chose to live in India, she embraced this country whole heartedly. Supporters of Sonia say she also took painstaking efforts to learn Hindi and mingle with the Indians.

On the other hand, bitterness within the opposition parties is obvious because some of them accuse each other of "betrayal" or of adopting a tendency guided by political meanness that prevented them from forming the new government in the aftermath of the fall of the Vajpayee government. Rivalries within the opposition group is another dimension that may make the campaign for the coming polls acrimonious and intense.

Certainly there is a variety of the issues that the contending sides will seek to use against each other. But under the two

main political parties — the BJP and the Congress — the "foreign origin" of Congress president Sonia Gandhi is definitely the most sensitive. Although Vajpayee has said that he would not make this an issue, the BJP and some of its allies are unlikely to exclude this in the campaign that is slowly picking up. The Congress and Sonia Gandhi herself cannot be totally oblivious of the fact that the critics would exploit this issue to the best of their ability

to hold such offices as president, vice-president and prime minister.

They argue that different nations have similar constitutional bar like the United States where none can be the head of the country unless he/she is of American origin by birth and Pakistan where a non-Muslim cannot hold the office of head of country and/or government.

They also spare no efforts to vilify Sonia being an Italian and say people should decide whether they want "Ram" or "Rome," an euphemism for "Hindu" or "Italian".

The "Telugu Desam Party" in southern Andhra Pradesh where it is the principal political rival of the Congress also echoes similar feelings about Sonia Gandhi.

Barring the hardcore segment, such arguments are unlikely to cut much ice among the conscious and saner section of the people. The critics say Sonia took many years to take Indian citizenship after her marriage to Rajiv Gandhi in 1968. By saying this they seek to drive home the point that she was not much keen to become an Indian national. The Congress turns the table on the opponents maintaining that when Italian Sonia married Indian Rajiv and chose to live in India, she embraced this country whole heartedly. Supporters of Sonia say she also took painstaking efforts to learn Hindi and mingle with the Indians.

On the other hand, bitterness within the opposition parties is obvious because some of them accuse each other of "betrayal" or of adopting a tendency guided by political meanness that prevented them from forming the new government in the aftermath of the fall of the Vajpayee government. Rivalries within the opposition group is another dimension that may make the campaign for the coming polls acrimonious and intense.

Certainly there is a variety of the issues that the contending sides will seek to use against each other. But under the two

main political parties — the BJP and the Congress — the "foreign origin" of Congress president Sonia Gandhi is definitely the most sensitive. Although Vajpayee has said that he would not make this an issue, the BJP and some of its allies are unlikely to exclude this in the campaign that is slowly picking up. The Congress and Sonia Gandhi herself cannot be totally oblivious of the fact that the critics would exploit this issue to the best of their ability

to hold such offices as president, vice-president and prime minister.

They argue that different nations have similar constitutional bar like the United States where none can be the head of the country unless he/she is of American origin by birth and Pakistan where a non-Muslim cannot hold the office of head of country and/or government.

They also spare no efforts to vilify Sonia being an Italian and say people should decide whether they want "Ram" or "Rome," an euphemism for "Hindu" or "Italian".

The "Telugu Desam Party" in southern Andhra Pradesh where it is the principal political rival of the Congress also echoes similar feelings about Sonia Gandhi.

Barring the hardcore segment, such arguments are unlikely to cut much ice among the conscious and saner section of the people. The critics say Sonia took many years to take Indian citizenship after her marriage to Rajiv Gandhi in 1968. By saying this they seek to drive home the point that she was not much keen to become an Indian national. The Congress turns the table on the opponents maintaining that when Italian Sonia married Indian Rajiv and chose to live in India, she embraced this country whole heartedly. Supporters of Sonia say she also took painstaking efforts to learn Hindi and mingle with the Indians.

On the other hand, bitterness within the opposition parties is obvious because some of them accuse each other of "betrayal" or of adopting a tendency guided by political meanness that prevented them from forming the new government in the aftermath of the fall of the Vajpayee government. Rivalries within the opposition group is another dimension that may make the campaign for the coming polls acrimonious and intense.

Certainly there is a variety of the issues that the contending sides will seek to use against each other. But under the two

main political parties — the BJP and the Congress — the "foreign origin" of Congress president Sonia Gandhi is definitely the most sensitive. Although Vajpayee has said that he would not make this an issue, the BJP and some of its allies are unlikely to exclude this in the campaign that is slowly picking up. The Congress and Sonia Gandhi herself cannot be totally oblivious of the fact that the critics would exploit this issue to the best of their