

Home Ministry Doesn't Go Far Enough

SUSPENSION of four constables involved in the public humiliation of a lady BNP activist during hartal on May 11 goes only part of the way to mitigate this particular offence, let alone the other excesses committed on the day. Even there the Inspector General of Police hinted at a possibility that 'more police officials might be suspended after the final report' is submitted.

But that is not where our focus is. While we certainly commend the home ministry for its swift action in the case of public humiliation of a lady we cannot help being discomfited over three other palpable offences going completely unaddressed.

Several photo-journalists were witness to such an outrageous remark being made by the police officer. Whether he said so on his own or there were such instructions as he claimed should have been a subject matter for a no-nonsense probe to establish the truth.

As for the onslaught on the working journalists that followed the threatening statement there is not a word that those who perpetrated it will be brought to book.

Congress in Crisis

SONIA Gandhi's reported resignation from Congress presidency in the face of rebellion from three senior members underlines, more than anything else, her inherent sense of dignity and deep-rooted commitment to the party's cause, which is a rarity in sub-continental politics.

Sonia Gandhi's origin has been a matter of controversy ever since she took over the Congress reins. With the mid-term polls just round the corner, the debate over the issue has only heated up.

In the event Sonia Gandhi pulls out from Congress leadership the party is likely to be pushed on to the precipice of a newer and graver crisis. Congress will not only suffer from a leadership crisis but could also invite the wrath of the electorate sympathetic to Sonia, which in turn may lead to a major setback in the forthcoming mid-term elections.

We may not have seen the last of it as yet. The Congress Working Committee has reportedly rejected Sonia's letter of resignation. The fact of the matter is the Congress cannot do without her at this point of time.

Quick Disposal of Files

INSTANCES abound where both governance and public service deliveries have suffered heavily due to the bureaucratic rigmarole bedeviling the work at the national secretariat.

The Cabinet meeting on Monday discussed some recommendations of the Public Administration Reforms Committee (PARC) and its observations on the sufferings of the public on account of red-tape and slow (at times no) movement of files.

The Prime Minister has instructed the ministries to adhere to the rules and advised the ministers to hold regular meetings with the secretaries and other officials to put an end to the sufferings of the people on this count.

The Cabinet has taken the right decisions under the leadership of the Prime Minister. Similar decisions had also been taken in the past but most of them hit a snag at the implementation stage.

A third front is wishful thinking. But the political climate has changed. The voters have moved away from the concept, which was born out of disillusionment with both major parties — the Congress and the BJP.

In a way, it was a repeat of what the Gandhian Jayaprakash Narayan had done in the seventies. He had reminded people of the clean standards which were followed before the advent of Indira Gandhi.

When the Janata Dal again came to power in 1996 and 1997 under Deve Gowda and Inder Kumar Gujral, respectively, it was not because of the numbers it had. By then, in fact, the Janata Dal had been reduced to some 26 members in the Lok Sabha as compared to the 90 during the VP Singh period.

The Congress, which supported the Janata Dal government, had much greater strength than the Janata Dal's. Yet standing by the secular forces was the overriding consideration.

CRIMES and anti-social activities affect the society as a whole, although some particular individuals become the direct victims and sufferers of such acts.

(1) The local community should organise "Law and Order Committees" in each village or locality in the rural areas and in each locality or ward in the municipalities or urban areas.

(2) The Committee will draw up its plan of operation and strategies for its programme of action. They will hold meetings and discussions with the local inhabitants on prevention, resistance and detection of crimes and terrorist activities and send information to the police about the criminals and suspects.

(3) The Committee should work in cooperation and collaboration with the Ansars, VDP and the Rural Police. The vigil of these organisations should be bolstered with the active support and participation of the Law and Order Committees.

(4) The local schools, colleges, madrasas and mosques, temples, churches and other religious institutions should be called upon to hold meetings and lectures for motivating the students and others to abstain from criminal and anti-social activities and to give information to the Law and Order Committee about crimes and criminals in the area.

(5) The Zila Parishad, Upazila Parishad, Union Parishad and Gram Parishad will have to provide back up support and incentives to the Law and Order Committees within their respective areas.

(6) The Nirbahi Officer, the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Assistant Adjutant of Ansar, the OC of the Thana will have to provide help and assistance to and fully support the activities of the Law and Order Committees within their areas and keep a close touch with them.

ANGLADESH'S cricket fans are betting, participating in a menuis quiz competitions and have rescheduled their regular plans to watch the World Cup cricket on television.

The mini-World Cup in Dhaka I found some veterans also getting tired because of long hours and was not alone in that. The mini-World Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium gave me a boost about the game and I had frequented the stadium, sometimes to my enthusiasm, biting my nails in an exciting match.

I tried to be a cricket player, but accidents followed me on the field pushing me away to the galleries at the most. In any case I am a witness to the making of a perfect international standard cricket ground and also its unmaking by dozens of workers.

With all those 'positives' and the Asia Cup possibly occurring in October this year (although its eventual fate is still undecided) one wonders why the cruelty with pitches — indeed if one has seen its making, the unmaking was really painful.

Guess, somewhere, days after seeking fresh aid from international donors, somebody had the idea to throw away to enable the return of football whose popularity waned with

Thoughts on Third Front

The communists, as their approach suggests, are keen on roping in all such elements as are outside the orbit of the BJP and the Congress. This is a faulty approach. This formation will neither evoke enthusiasm nor new thinking. The voters will remain distant.

government. True, both the Janata Dal governments were at the mercy of the Congress which pulled the rug from under the feet of first Deve Gowda and then Inder Gujral, making its own political calculations.

What is there now to fire the people's imagination for a third front? They have learnt from their experience that the rules of such a formation are no different from the leaders in the Congress and the BJP.

Former Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, who has looted the state as if it is his personal fiefdom, is now sought much in the third front. So is Mulayam Singh Yadav, who has propagated caste in UP as Laloo Yadav has done in Bihar.

The reason why the third front had failed time and again is that mere anti-Congress or anti-BJP sentiments are not the glue which can hold the disparate elements together.

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BETWEEN THE LINES

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How to Stop Lawlessness and Terrorism

Social Mobilisation against Crimes

by Mohammad Siddiqueer Rahman

A moratorium should be declared on hartals to stop economic loss and suffering of the people. Issues for which hartals are called should be debated in the parliament. Political protests should be confined to public meetings, processions, demonstrations etc so that the rights of individuals are not hampered.

of all departments and local government organisations within the upazila. The Deputy Commissioner of the district and the superintendent of police should encourage the Law and Order Committees in carrying out their activities, and extend to them all possible support and cooperation.

(7) The women members of the Law and Order Committee may make a separate plan of action and work in cooperation and collaboration with the woman members of the Union Parishad in the respective area under the guidance of the Law and Order Committee.

If the society and the community can be effectively mobilised, that would be one of the most effective ways to stop crimes and antisocial activities.

One of the most important things needed to stop political terrorism and armed violence is the political commitment of the part of the leaders of the political parties. The leaders of the major political parties, whether in the government or in the opposition, should overcome their narrow party interests, show large-heartedness and a spirit of statesmanship and patriotism to save the country from destruction caused by armed fights and terrorism between the major political parties.

Those who will not surrender their arms within the fixed date should be prosecuted and punished under the law and the respective parties will declare them as 'undesirable persons' and will not give them any help or support.

The MPs should be directed by the chairpersons of the respective parties to dissociate themselves from all acts of political terrorism and not to give any support or shelter to militants or armed hooligans. For the sake of justice and proper administration of law and order and to ensure neutrality of the police and the magistrates, the MPs and the political leaders should be directed by the chairpersons of the major parties not to interfere in administration and not to pressurise the officers. For these purposes officers of the district administration including the magistracy and the police should not be transferred before the expiry of their tenure of office to be fixed for each category of officer (2 to 3 years). The main pressure brought upon them by politicians is to threat them with transfer. It should be made a rule that transfer of an officer should be made only when there are specific allegations of duty and indiscipline, established on preliminary enquiry.

All the above measures can be taken only when the political parties enter into a dialogue and reach an understanding and agreement to cooperate with each other, work out the steps to stop lawlessness and political terrorism. But such dialogues and understanding cannot be reached unless some irritants between the major political parties are removed. Some of the causes that have distanced the party in power and the opposition may be overcome by an attitude of compromise and generosity on the part of both the parties by

rigid attitude. The chairpersons of the major political parties should come forward to make public statements, condemning political terrorism and armed violence that are only leading the country to destruction. They should express sincere resolve to clear their own parties and front organisations of all armed terrorists and criminals and not to allow any act of terrorism and fight under the shadow of their own party.

The chairpersons of major political parties should make a public declaration and direct all the party workers, armed cadres, front organisations and armed fighters to stop all kinds of terrorism, armed violence and fighting and surrender all their arms and explosives to the chairpersons of the respective parties within a certain date, to be agreed upon by the parties mutually. Amnesty should be declared up to a specific date for surrendering such arms, ammunition and explosives. Such declaration should preferably be made jointly by the major political parties. Those who will surrender arms and explosives should be given social and economic rehabilitation under a project to be undertaken by the government in consultation with other parties.

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The MPs should be directed by the chairpersons of the respective parties to dissociate themselves from all acts of political terrorism and not to give any support or shelter to militants or armed hooligans. For the sake of justice and proper administration of law and order and to ensure neutrality of the police and the magistrates, the MPs and the political leaders should be directed by the chairpersons of the major parties not to interfere in administration and not to pressurise the officers. For these purposes officers of the district administration including the magistracy and the police should not be transferred before the expiry of their tenure of office to be fixed for each category of officer (2 to 3 years). The main pressure brought upon them by politicians is to threat them with transfer. It should be made a rule that transfer of an officer should be made only when there are specific allegations of duty and indiscipline, established on preliminary enquiry.

All the above measures can be taken only when the political parties enter into a dialogue and reach an understanding and agreement to cooperate with each other, work out the steps to stop lawlessness and political terrorism. But such dialogues and understanding cannot be reached unless some irritants between the major political parties are removed. Some of the causes that have distanced the party in power and the opposition may be overcome by an attitude of compromise and generosity on the part