

## A Crucial Reform Agenda

POLICE reform is not quite on the back burner. It is understood that the Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) has begun from the assumption that police reform is imperative for an improvement of the law and order situation, establishment of rule of law and fostering of justice and fairplay in the society.

After thorough deliberations on MP Rahmat Ali's report and former civil servant Khaled Shams' concept paper as PARC members, the commission has reached a conclusion that political will is *sine qua non* for an improvement in the law and order situation based on adequate and effective police reform. We are entirely in agreement with this prescription. So long as a government uses the police force as an instrument of political aggrandisement police reform is bound to be a non-starter at best and a perverted process at worst. When the BNP was in power it made political use of the police force. Now, the Awami League is said to be only 'clearing up the mess' and depoliticising what had been left to them in a politicised state. The police officers' antecedents are gone into with a great attention to detail including queries about their home districts and political leanings, etc. Those who pass the screening test, so to speak, are regarded as good enough for favours. All this is about those who are in the force already while the recruitment of new personnel is often susceptible to partisan considerations. The term 'political will' has become a cliché but what is even worse, it is most narrowly comprehended these days. Political will does not mean determination only nor even gritting the teeth against an imaginary foe. What it really means is an honest desire to allow the public institutions to function. We underline the word 'public' in relation to the police force because of the fact that it is a public property maintained by the tax payers' money not any ruling party's personal fiefdom.

Next to an apolitical recruitment policy based on merit, character, motivation and educated reflexes, we need proper and rotative training of police personnel and rewards for good work and punishment for lapses. Equally important would be separation of the preventive wing from the investigation wing at the thana level; manning of the investigation wing with persons knowledgeable in law; introduction of history-sheet, crime-map and computerised maintenance of records; and adoption of modern forensic technology. Police reform will be incomplete if the law enforcers' relationship with the magistracy is not radically improved.

## Peace in Kosovo

THE last piece of the Kosovo peace puzzle seems to have fallen in place with Russia agreeing to a peace-keeping role under the 'tactical control' of NATO generals in the war-ravaged southern Serbian province. Although Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's formal assent to a Western-backed peace package on June 3 and formal beginning of Serb force withdrawal a week later had signalled an end to the conflict in the Balkans, constitution of the peace-keeping force, KFOR, remained a thorn in the flesh. Russia's demand for a separate zone for its troops in Kosovo was greeted with vehement opposition from the United States. To make matters worse, a small contingent of Russian army pre-empted the Pristina airport. On the whole, the scenario looked increasingly murky. Thankfully, three days of intense negotiations led to the Helsinki Accord. It means that after months of war, peace in Kosovo is finally in the offing. For nearly one million Kosovars of Albanian descent, who took refuge in neighbouring Albania and Macedonia to escape Serb atrocities, it means they can safely go back home.

Contrary to widespread speculations, the 78-day NATO operations have apparently managed to achieve their goals — 'the Serb forces out, the international force with NATO at its core, and the refugees coming home,' as summed up by US President Bill Clinton. However, a tougher task is up ahead: removing the rubbles of war, rebuilding the war-torn province and rehabilitating the repatriates. It will be no less than a war. Retreating Serb forces, clearing out of the Kosovo heartland to meet a Friday night deadline, will certainly leave behind a trail of destruction for home-bound refugees. Ethnic Albanians will have to start from the scratch, with their homes destroyed and assets looted. On top of it will be the trauma of losing their close ones. In the coming days, the Kosovars will need all the help they can get. Indeed, the peace-keepers will be there to ensure that there be no more Serb atrocities; however, they will need a lot more than that: a political settlement of the deep-seated ethnic conflict.

## Hostage to Hooligans

LONG with the railway network, the northern region of Bangladesh has had a developed road transport network since the pre-liberation days. While in recent times the railway suffered from lack of modernisation compounded by myopic policies the road transport sector has improved very rapidly into a thriving business. This prosperity has given birth to all kinds of illegal and unsocial activities among a large section of people who call themselves transport workers. More than forty-five million people of sixteen districts in northern Bangladesh are virtually taken hostage by the indisciplined and arrogant transport workers. Illegal toll collection, almost regular road blockades and frequent strikes and hartals have made life miserable for the people of these districts. Business community is the worst sufferer. They are made to pay toll even on industrial raw materials which in turn increases the prices of finished products. Loaded trucks with perishable commodities are prime targets as each one of them has to pay a toll of two thousand five hundred leading to an increase in the prices of seasonal fruits. A bus owner informs the Prothom Alo that he had to pay more than taka four hundred thousand at three spots of Gabtali bus terminal for introducing a new bus service.

Besides, robbery and dacoity on passenger buses have increased. The law and order committee met under the leadership of the divisional commissioner in which DCs and SPs discussed the chaotic conditions in the road transport sector and opined that unless the people's representatives cooperate the administration cannot proceed further in this matter. This is a dangerous observation. District administration must take action against the law breakers and proceed against them according to the law of the land. It is the sacred duty and responsibility of public representatives to provide safety and security to life and property of the people they represent. The ministry concerned must back up the local administration to control the hooliganism in the greater interest of the people of North Bengal.

# India's Missed Opportunities in Kashmir

*India's Kashmir policy represents a chronicle of opportunities deliberately or inadvertently missed by her. Today if there is a grand settlement on Kashmir by shedding prejudice and paranoia and even by trading off territory India will be its biggest beneficiary — given her present predicaments in the state.*

WITH India's monthlong airstrikes along and an artillery duel across the line of control (LOC) at the dizzy heights of the Western Himalaya, Kashmir has once again become an international flash point. There could have been an element of surrealism in the prognosis of CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) director who in 1993 identified Kashmir as the most dangerous place on earth with its prospect for the future use of WMD (weapon of mass destruction) including the nuclear weapon, but the danger is now real. Soon after New Delhi and Islamabad conducted their nuclear tests in May last year, Pakistan foreign minister Gohar Ayub Khan made a chilling statement confirming the assessment of American spy master. He said that Kashmir remained an 'open wound' and could lead to a nuclear war in the subcontinent. Indeed there are few places on earth more combustible than Kashmir today as evident from the tensions it has generated even along the international borders between its two contenders, India and Pakistan.

As a fullscale war has been raging in the wilderness of Kashmir's Kargil region the rivals are in the meantime busy to prove their innocence. In doing so while India accuses Pakistan of backing the intruders who had earlier crossed the LOC and occupied some of the vantage points on high mountains overlooking India's strategic communication network below, Pakistan denies any involvement and insists on her ignorance even of the intruders' identity. The current clash of the titans have already all but started their third war over Kashmir blurring however even the genesis of the crisis.

According to an estimate the Kargil war is costing India \$4 million a day. She has been already incurring another \$14 million a day to keep the defiant state under occupation with atleast half a million security forces. These are apart from the political and moral cost which are still more exorbitant. The

party, the National Conference were assets for India. Yet India continued to defy the UN's call for allowing the people of Kashmir to exercise their right of self determination. She presumably did not want the plebiscite to cast its shadow over the state's accession to India in 1947 which she considered final and irreversible. But as Abdullah later flicked with the idea of more autonomy the central government responded with curtailment of a special status it initially granted to Kashmir and put Abdullah, India's best friend in prison.

Except for two brief spells of freedom Abdullah remained in India's prison for 22 years until February 1975 when the Sheikh again became chief minister after signing an agreement with Prime minister Indira Gandhi. Mrs Gandhi was able to defend the Lion of Kashmir who now allied with the ruling Indian

National Congress. The only freedom he and his heir apparent Farooq Abdullah exercised during his second term was the freedom to be outrageously self indulgent and engage in reckless corruption. The Kashmiris nurtured a seething anger and deep sense of humiliation over how their vaunted Lion had been tamed in Indian hands, obviously India could no more entertain the idea of any plebiscite with its tarnished image before the Kashmiris although the latter maintained a tilt towards India till as late as 1965. Pakistan's venture in

even before that India started taking the Kashmiris for granted. Kashmir was gradually stripped of the special status granted to her earlier. Not only that in 1984 Farooq Abdullah who also clamored for greater autonomy was dismissed as chief minister by central government. There followed a period of obtuse and thuggish rule by New Delhi in Kashmir, an apparently rigged election in 1987 that gave a chastised and more obedient Farooq Abdullah another spell in power and the outbreak of violence two years later. New Delhi and Srinagar drifted further away from each other and their linkage became tenuous.

Beside political disenchantment the Kashmiris alienation from India is mired in history, economy and psychology of the state. The problems had never been much about communal issues. The latest phase of Kashmiri discontent followed significant social changes in Kashmir. Meaningful economic growth didn't accompany the land reforms and expanded education facilities achieved during the rule of Sheikh Abdullah and Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad. The roots of the popular uprising in 1989 lay in the bad governance, neglect of the state and Delhi's ruthless manipulation of Kashmir politics. But India confronted the insurgency with allegation of external subversion, brute force and unlawful machinations.

India's oft-repeated claim that Kashmir is an integral part of Indian Union increasingly rings hollow because of her classic failure in integrating the state — particularly after the uprising of 1989 which was essentially propelled by socio-economic reasons. From the start of the anti-militancy drive India's attitude had been to coerce the Kashmiris into

## PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

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Kashmir in 1965 failed mainly because of the Kashmiris' non-cooperation with the Pakistani commandos who infiltrated into or were dropped in the valley before Indo-Pakistani war during that year.

Sheikh Abdullah was a great nationalist and in politics worked in close liaison with Nehru, Moulana Azad and Indian National Congress. He seldom met Mr Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and was least influenced by his ideas. Abdullah instilled a strong sense of nationalism among the Kashmiris and made them aware of their separate identity. The Kashmiris' identity was however based on place, kinship and culture as much as on religion. Considering all these factors they were constitutionally given a special status under article 370 of Indian Constitution. As an ambitious Abdullah's wings were clipped and

## Cellular Lobby Prevails: Our Own Crony Capitalism

Praful Bidwai writes from New Delhi

*Our telecom operators espouse that very ideology — until it comes to coughing up dues. After that, these free-market tigers turn into poor mice, who need protection. They have relentlessly lobbied the PMO for extensions of the payment deadlines — with which Mr Vajpayee obliged them. They succeeded in getting a draft New Telecom Policy-1999, also heavily tilted in their favour.*

concession.

The leniency surprised many familiar with Mr Jagmohan's terrible role as Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, and in Turkman Gate in Sanjay Gandhi's Emergency action. The leniency was real.

Mr Jagmohan was also right to cash the defaulters' bank guarantees for Rs. 1,000 crore. He had legal backing from Attorney General Soli Sorabjee, who is by no means ill-disposed towards corporations.

The private operators had bid for the licences with their eyes open, on profit-centred calculations. Any business involves a certain risk. Neo-classical economics tries to legitimise profit as reward for risk-taking.

Our telecom operators espouse that very ideology — until it comes to coughing up dues. After that, these free-market tigers turn into poor mice, who need protection. They have relentlessly lobbied the PMO for extensions of the payment deadlines — with which Mr Vajpayee obliged them. They succeeded in getting a draft New Telecom Policy-1999, also

heavily tilted in their favour. This is the third time such a policy is being drafted in six years. This speaks of the mess created by the National Telecom Policy of 1994. NTP99 is worse. It is geared to guarantee business to private companies through 'revenue sharing' — a crude device to snuff customers away from the government-run DoT. This is another travesty of 'free-market' economics.

If the 1994 NTP with its promise of Rs. 23,000 crore private investment and a 'telephone on demand', was a fraud, NTP99 is a huge scam organised and executed by India's craftiest corporations.

NTP99 will mean sky-high tariffs, greater urban-rural disparities, slower telecom growth, and strangling of DoT. Private operators will concentrate on high-revenue customers, indulging in 'cherry-picking'. DoT will lose revenue until it cannot add new lines (last year, it added 3,000 times more lines than the private sector). Mr Jagmohan questioned this and was removed.

Big Business has been trying through the 1990s to write policies not just in telecom, but in every infrastructure area. The BJP-led government gave it a direct and unique role by appointing Working Groups on petroleum, power, highways, aviation, etc. Their conveners were to the last man, industrialists with a stake in the concerned sector.

This involved a blatant conflict of interest. Even Mr Ronald Reagan would not have been as brazen as Mr Vajpayee in this regard.

The Working Groups excluded consumers, trade unions, economists, sometimes technical experts. Their casual deliberations were not based on background papers, serious projections, considerations of equity or regional balance.

They were designed to bring the infrastructure under the rule of 'India Inc' and shower massive subsidies upon Big Business — unrelated to efficiency, experience or competence.

The model that guided the Groups was Enron — probably the world's craziest and costliest

est power project. This will sell gold-plated electricity at Rs. 4.75 per unit to the Maharashtra state electricity board — four times costlier than the power MSEB generates. Whether MSEB buys the power or not, it must pay Enron Rs. 80 crore a month!

The Enron contract is skewed, unequal and legally dubious. It was darkly opaque, involving no competitive bidding. Yet, the Centre gave it sovereign guarantees. Enron will inflict crippling losses on MSEB, once our most profitable board.

It is this kind of public money siphoning that business houses are trying to effect in different infrastructure areas — an unprecedented bonanza of Rs. 500,000 crore. This festival of sky-high deals will make basic services unaffordable for the vast majority. This is retrograde from every point of view.

By facilitating this loot of public money, the Vajpayee government has inflicted grievous damage upon the economy in just 15 months. It is privatising not just the infrastructure, but policy-making itself.

Its functionaries are candid; they want official policy to be 'corporate-driven'. On June 3, special commerce secretary N.N. Khanna told industry that India's stand at the forthcoming crucial Seattle Round of WTO negotiations will be corporate-driven and genuinely reflect the felt needs of Indian industry.

Industry associations like CII, Assocham and FICCI have never been more vocal — not just in demanding concessions, but in dictating policy. Babu raj is undesirable, of course. Company raj might be worse.

In a democracy, babus can theoretically be brought to book. In practice, they sometimes are. Corporations are never answerable to the public. They are accountable only to the nawabs who run them as fiefdoms, although they own a fraction of their equity.

Business is a highly parochial interest-group. Our organised sector only employs 27 million of our 500 million-strong workforce. Company raj means exclusion of the vast majority, and the rule of the super-privileged.

It is this that Messrs Vajpayee, Pramod Mahajan, Ranjan Bhattacharya and Jaswant Singh are busy promoting. Such corporate nawabs is incompatible with democracy. It must be abolished.

The concept of Green productivity is drawn from the integration of two important developmental strategies viz i) Productivity improvement and ii) Environmental protection. The GP provides the foundation for sustainable development.

It may be mentioned here that the Asian Productivity Organisation (APO) launched its GP programme in 1994 and now it has been implemented in some of the APO member countries. The APO is working for the extension of the GP programme to all its member countries including Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, there is a great scope for implementing the GP strategy in industrial, agricultural and other service sectors. The National Productivity Organisation (NPO) under the Ministry of Industries can contribute effectively in the promotion of practitioner-driven GP programme in the country.

M Zahidul Haque Associate Professor BAI, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

## To the Editor...

*Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.*

### Save Osmani Uddyan

Sir, Nowadays one of the most discussed issues is environmental issue. Every person related to this issue are continuously extending their support to improve the environment and protect the world from possible disaster. And in this quest for saving the earth, the most important role is played by trees. Trees play a vital role in maintaining the ecological equilibrium of this planet. But it is a matter of great regret that our PM has taken a self-destructive decision to build an international conference centre by felling the trees of Osmani Uddyan.

I fervently request her to refrain from this self-destructive act for the sake of the people of this country, their successor and as well as the whole world.

### Anwar Faruq Shameem Eastern Bank Limited Moulvibazar

Sir, According to a front page news report, until April 13, 1999, there had been no electricity for nearly seven hundred and ninety-eight hours for which the city's one hundred and thirty-eight water pumps remained inoperative. Therefore, the sufferings of the general people in the month of Chaitra, the hottest days in Bangladesh hardly needs any explanation. Probably this has been the worst type of crisis faced by us in decades that too in the era of the wonders of modern science.

### Crisis of the decade!

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It is more astonishing and painful to see that our intellectuals neither protested against the incident nor brought out any procession denouncing/condemning the acts.

### Iqbal Ahmed Dhaka-1000.

Why not Sunday Sir, We think it is high time the people changed the weekly holiday from Friday to Sunday. And please don't compare things with Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Nigeria and Turkey 16 countries. Friday being the day of weekly holiday many among us

who otherwise would have attended the Jummah prayers, now get the excuse to miss it due to preoccupation like picnic, late wake-up call, family reunion or for purpose of travelling within the country, without going into details, we should consider the loss our country is facing in all respects, only because the weekly holiday is on Friday.

During the days when Friday was a working day, I used to say my Jummah prayers in the secretariat masjid and I always found the place filled to capacity.

I think two-hour break is more than enough for the masjidis to say their prayer and have lunch. They may also work extra hours for the love of the country. All the countries mentioned above follow the same practice on Friday. Let us take this matter to our parliament and discuss. I hope we won't need to repeat the arguments why we want Friday as a working day and not as a holiday.

Jamshed Taher, Lalmoni, Dhaka

### The fallen

Sir, It was sheer pleasure to read the newspapers of June 1, '99, where the headlines screamed the news of Bangladesh cricket team's victory over Pakistan. The victory was very well earned and the game was brilliantly played by our young cricketers.

However this brilliant episode was marred by a sad news that Gordon Greenidge has been sacked. A bad performance obviously deserves to be punished and mitigating factors may only lessen the punishment. But what we want to know is what was the reason of humiliating a person who once was regarded as the one who immensely contributed to Bangladesh's meteoric rise in the field of cricket? Why none of the players who are the direct beneficiaries of Gordon's talent was only in organising international tournaments to mint money. But, who spent what money and who got what contracts and how, were never

made public. There have been serious allegations about the lack of transparency in spending money or giving contracts in those tournaments. It is also alleged that during the WC '92 cricket board officials travelled and stayed in UK at BCB's cost