

## Keep It Up, Please

Is the Opposition losing anything without the hartal-dependent protests against the government? Far from being a loser they are actually emerging as a solid gainer from the change in their agitational policy that now eschews frequent hartal. In terms of presence in the public mind, visibility, eye contact, getting messages across and audience or spectator response, the three-day road march that Begum Zia staged in the greater Mymensingh region albeit proved a much better method of political agitation than impulsive hartal.

We recall that following arrests of BNP leaders and activists in connection with the death of a police constable in a bomb attack the air was rife with the speculation of a hartal on 22nd July. But no, the BNP opted out of it; and not entirely because the arrested persons, at least the high-profile among them, were given bail by the court but primarily because of a healthy recapitulation of an earlier phase of hartal-free agitation which had raised their standing with the people.

Seemingly inspired by the outcome of her 500-mile road march in a motorised cavalcade that saw her address as many as 26 public meetings in six districts, Begum Zia has now announced plans to stage anti-government demonstrations throughout the country on August 3. Processions and public rallies are scheduled for the day. Quite clearly, hartal has been excluded from her otherwise intensive programme for agitation. Moreover, she has adopted the 'vote for us' approach in place of what has hitherto been a call for toppling the government. This is the stuff democratic politics ought to be made up of. Rather than imposing hartal on people and bringing the economy and civic life to ruin, win their hearts and minds by persuading them to see your points of view. The opposition, especially the BNP, deserves a round of applause for treating the people as an electorate, respecting their mood and concentrating on issues that are of interest to them, all with an eye to the next election. Democracy is all about supremacy of the ballot and sovereignty of the people's will.

It is heartening to note that in apparent reciprocation of the sense of responsibility being displayed by the opposition in the conduct of their programmes, the ruling party's approach, by and large, has been far from obstructive. This a political culture we enthusiastically greet and wish to see prosper.

## Protector Turns Predator

In recent times, the police have hogged headlines, mostly for wrong reasons. Their activities have often gyrated around the extreme ends of recklessness and callousness; in the process, indirectly abetting in and at times directly perpetrating violation of law. On Monday night it was the criminal recklessness and callousness in police sergeant Saroj Kumar Roy's behaviour that led to the death of an innocent young rickshaw-puller, Masud. Pre-meditated it may not have been, the killing nevertheless raises a string of disquieting questions: Why did the on-duty personnel draw the service revolver in the first place? What made him switch off the safety catch? Did it happen accidentally or was it off all along? Besides, according to reports carried by different news dailies, his very intervention in the apparently innocuous encounter between the deceased and a rickshaw van-puller was uncalled for. Then, why did he? On the whole, the incident puts a very big question mark over the technical and psychological orientation of the police official in particular and, given the upward trend in police excesses, the department in general. Maybe, it's time the high-ups in the department and the home ministry started viewing things in the perspective of a pervasive sense of arrogance of power and authority among the law enforcers. Also, they should not rule out the possibility of technical inadequacy in them.

Deaths in custody, allegations of widespread corruption and nexus with arms and drugs cartel, recovery of decomposed corpse from the overhead watertank at the Detective Branch office, public humiliation of opposition legislators, and a female activist, sexual harassment of women, etc. are indications of systemic failure in the police department. While condemning the reckless behaviour and demanding exemplary punishment for it, we would urge the authorities to reassess the training needs of personnel handling weapons. Feigned sense of power and authority, and technical inadequacy may lead to similar deaths in future unless steps are taken immediately to put a brake on these.

## Drug Abuse among Students

There has been an 'alarming' rise in drug abuse by resident students of higher educational institutions in Dhaka city. The most unfortunate part of it is that even female students are addicted to drugs.

All this has been revealed in a survey conducted by an NGO under the programme 'Prevalence and patterns of substance abuse among residential institutions in Dhaka city'. More than 20 thousand students of 32 male and 12 female dormitories were surveyed over a period of one year. The startling revelation is that more than 40 per cent of the total number of students using drugs are workers and activists of students' political organisations.

This is a very unhealthy trend that needs to be arrested somehow. There have been suggestions for a temporary moratorium on student politics, particularly of the variety which is patronised and guided by political parties of the country. The politicians and their parties are doing great harm to the future of this nation by giving the student cadres a kind of indulgence that is bound to make them into a spoilt generation. Parental control can hardly work where students are fed on an arrogance of power and pelf. It is now time for the politicians, publicists, narcotic experts, teachers and parents to persuade the students to shun the path of drug addiction by all means. Otherwise this nation may have to pay very dearly.

# Hope You are Doing Well

*I found the best approach to doing well prevails among Buddhist monks of Thailand. They possess no material desire. They simply crave for nothing ... The monks are bound to do well. In a land of abundant food and their totally selfless lifestyle, it is absolutely pointless to ask if they are doing well — they simply cannot do otherwise.*

There was no e-mail in those days. Those student days are long gone. Now as a working person, am I doing well?

This morning, as usual, I checked my mail box. I had received several e-mails and many of them began or concluded: hope you are doing well. I checked the e-mails I had sent the day before and found that I also wrote the same words as a matter of routine. Hope you are doing well. It is perhaps just a polite expression. I thought differently. Like Newton's discovery from the falling apple, suddenly, I had a sort of revelation. Hope you are doing well. How do I do well? If one knew the golden rule, only then one could answer the all important question and satisfy the hope, repeated in so many e-mails, almost everyday.

If I was a student, the golden rule is well known. I must do well in the examination. However, I could never do so since I was very bad at memorizing answers to ten important questions. Most of them used to be out of the syllabus of my limited memory. The other alternative would have been to carry notes inside my under garments and copy the answers. Unfortunately, I could never gather enough courage to do so.

As a consequence, I never did well as a student. Thank God!

They will try to suck you dry. A business man has to spend considerable time and effort and prove that he is doing badly. He is incurring heavy losses so that payments of taxes can be avoided and also get away from payment of over due loans to the banks.

In fact business people should strive to make out a case for subsidy from government;

for example, remission of payment of electricity bills.

The question of doing well in business is therefore a dangerous proposition. If you do well, you are doomed. In public, you must be doing badly. Otherwise, it is not only the tax people and bankers, your friends and foes alike will burn within with jealousy. They will pray for the death of success. Why anybody should do well in a disaster prone country?

How do I do well as a politician? Actually this is multimillion dollar question since you need that sort of money to be a successful politician. First,

like bad money driving out good money out of circulation, one should be notorious enough to drive out rival politicians out of the constituency. Remember, these are rivals within the same political party.

Next you deal with the rivals of other political parties. First try to finance the rivals to those

following the logic of the famous Arab proverb: the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Communism is finished for good. It failed to prove that the end will justify the means. Bad money and gangsters (bad means) cannot justify the success at the end. You cannot do well in politics since it does not involve good deeds. Doing well is ruled out by definition.

Who is doing well in Bangladesh? Perhaps Prof. Shamshur Rahman. After he has written a memorable piece which will be read and enjoyed by generations of Bengalis, he ought to be doing well. However, we live in a funny country. Even a man like him was assaulted inside his own home.

His life is under threat. He

has to hide, seek protection — all because he is doing well.

Professor Yunus of Grameen Bank is a huge success. He ought to be doing well. The answer is both yes and no. His success is well recognized at the international level. His interviews have been published by several foreign newspapers.

International television channels like BBC and CNN broadcast his activities. He has received countless international awards. Now, what is happening back home. Grameen bank is never mentioned in the official press or the media, BTV for example. He has not received any national award sponsored by the gov-

## Window on Asia

Shahid Latif

However, this is not enough. You create safe areas covering at least two-thirds of the constituency by funding gangsters at every nook and corner whose only responsibility will be to ensure that your rivals will not be allowed to set foot anywhere within the safe territory. Victory at the election is then assured.

You become a member of the parliament and authorized to hurl all sorts of abuse and insults in course of parliamentary debates.

This is the way you do well in politics. But Karl Marx is long dead.

## Sound Advice: It Works When Heeded

Ardeshir Cowasjee writes from Karachi

**N**othing has changed for the better. Nine years ago, in May 1990, during Benazir Bhutto's first round, I was visited one evening by a henchman of the prime minister and her husband, an officer of the grade of an ADM. He sent in his card which read "Ahmed Fahim Mughal, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, Bilawal House, Karachi."

He had come to see me, in his official capacity, about a huge highrise complex, "Classic Homes," of which he claimed to be a part owner, the others being Powerful Friends. I had filed a suit against this illegal construction and the Sindh High Court had granted a stay. He very directly asked me to withdraw the suit and have me stay vacated at the next hearing of the case in three days time. If I did not do so, showing me his fist, he told me I would have to face the consequences.

The suit had actually been filed by 27 affected citizens, many of the 26 not accustomed to dealing with people such as Mughal and his bosses. Worried about their safety, I went to court the next morning to find my lawyer, Khalid Anwer, to ask him what could be done to save the others from potential harassment. Khalid told me that fifty per cent of our judges exist in fear of their rulers and were not likely to spring to our aid. Safety could only lie in exposing bullies who issued threats. His suggestion was that

it must be heard as soon as a petitioner's advocate rises and announces that he has filed such a writ. Moin said that they had already decided to do this and that advocate Akram Shaikh was being instructed accordingly.

Senator Saifur Rahman, close confidante and friend of the prime minister from whose secretariat he operates, has taken upon himself the responsibility of ensuring that Nawaz Sharif and his government rule over us in perpetuity. Like the rest of the partymen, using his clout he had borrowed money from the government bank, UBL, in 1991, during Nawaz Sharif's first round and become a mill owner and industrialist. Some sums have been repaid but as of today he, his family, his textile mill and his business concern Redco owe UBL, from borrowings made in Pakistan and abroad, some Rs. 1.4 billion (140 crores).

Before Nawaz Sharif came in for the second time, the loan repayments were rescheduled twice but the repayment schedule was not adhered to. Come Sharif and his second round, banker Zubayr Soomro was brought in to head UBL and the recovery process in all cases was activated. For the third time, Saifur Rahman's repayments were rescheduled, and yet again no repayments were made in time. Finally, UBL filed a recovery suit in the Lahore High Court and the harassment of Zubayr commenced. His safety

will clean her office, her government and her party before it is too late.

Pradip Kumar Deb  
The University of Melbourne  
Australia

was guaranteed by the fact that he is the son of the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ilaish Baksh Soomro.

Saifur Rahman, in turn, filed a suit in the LHC against UBL claiming damages, pleading that interest was un-Islamic, etc. etc. The suits are being heard. Then, about six weeks ago, Saifur Rahman filed a writ in Justice Malik Qayyum's court at the LHC seeking, inter alia, that proceedings in the UBL suit be stayed so as to give him time to approach the high-powered bankers' rescheduling committee. Justice Qayyum passed no orders.

The heads of seven banks and financing institutions forming the committee are: Shaukat Tareen, Habib, Mohammad, Soomro, National, Zubayr Soomro, United, Mian Mohammad Mansha, President, Muslim Commercial, Rashid Chaudhry, Allied, Mohammad Ali Khoja, PICIC, Bilal Shaikh, NDPC. This committee cannot take notice of any rescheduling until the affected bank itself refers the matter to it. This UBL has not so far done. Saifur Rahman can prevail upon five of the seven committee members (let each think he is one of the two).

In the meantime Saifur Rahman managed to get one-time Ittefaq lawyer, Chaudhry Mohammad Farooq, who is also the Attorney-General of Pakistan, the first law officer of the people, to write to the Gov-

ernor of the State Bank asking him to direct the committee to consider questions relating to Saifur Rahman's unpaid loans.

The State Bank has brought this letter to the committee's attention but so far it has taken no action.

In the meantime, on the orders of Saifur Rahman, the income tax authorities commenced harassing Naeemuddin and his other brother, banker Bahauddin of Deutsche Bank. Saif rang Molnuddin in Riyadh on July 9 asking him to prevail upon Naeemuddin to be reasonable. Moin told him his brother abided by his own norms.

On July 18, as soon as Zubayr learnt that Naeemuddin had been abducted by the FIA, he moved to save his man. The first person he turned to was naturally his father, Ilaish Baksh, who leapt into action, and found the prime minister at Lahore airport as he and his ninety hangers-on were about to board their special Umra flight. The prime minister took a second wise decision and instructed his Principal Secretary, Saeed Mehdil, to order the immediate release of Naeemuddin, who had been flown from Karachi to Islamabad and lodged in Saifur Rahman's safe

office.

After my talk with Saif, I wrote another letter to the Secretary of the Privileges Committee drawing his attention to the General Clauses (Amendment) Act 1997 (adding section 24A to the General Clauses Act 1897) passed by parliament. This requires any authority, office or person making any order, or issuing any direction, to give reasons for making the order or issuing the direction. I reiterated my readiness "to appear before the Committee as and when lawfully summoned, but I must be made aware of the day certain power-wielders of Islamabad were considering sending the federal police to collect me from Karachi and to ensure my presence before the Privileges Committee of the National Assembly. When I asked who they were, he would not name them, but told me he had restrained them from taking any such action. I had to refresh his memory.

On April 13, 1998, MNA Khwaja Asif, holding the rank of a federal minister, reported to the National Assembly secretariat that I had not only "used abusive language but also threatened me with dire consequences."

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