

State of Agricultural Education in Bangladesh

Systemic Reorganisation is Imperative

by Kazi M Badruddoza

"The BAU has been compared to the agricultural universities of India and also the US land grant universities. This is not an accurate comparison since the agricultural universities that have been established in India since 1955 were set up to separate the agricultural college and university level training from the traditional university institution system... The US land grant colleges (subsequently, universities in 1887) were established as autonomous bodies under the boards of regents or boards of governors responsible to the legislators of the States. Neither the Indian Agricultural Universities nor the US land grant colleges/universities are under the control of the Department/Ministry of Education."

BAU has benefited from early and strong educational resources, beginning with the founding in 1938 of the Bengal Agricultural Institute at Dhaka Monipur farm (now, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar) by the then Chief Minister of Bengal, A K Fazlul Haq. At that time, it was the only college for higher education in agriculture in the province of Bengal, established on the recommendation of Royal Agriculture Commission. It had a concurrent status as the Faculty of Agriculture of the Dhaka University. This is now the Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (BAI), affiliated with the Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) and gives degrees in Agriculture covering only crops.

Agricultural education, particularly higher agricultural education, has gone through the process of evolution from time to time. The BAU used to give degrees in two parts — B Sc (Agriculture) degree of two years covering only basic sciences and B. Ag degree of two years covering applied sciences. Later, a three-year B. Ag degree was introduced in 1945 and finally a 4-year B. Sc Ag course was introduced after the BAU's affiliation to the BAU. The Commission on Food and Agriculture formed on 13 December, 1958 by the government of the then Pakistan was the first body to come out with a clear recommendation that "there is an immediate need for the establishment of an Agricultural University in each wing of Pakistan".

Eventually, the higher education in the agricultural services made some advance in 1961 with the establishment at Mymensingh the Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) as an autonomous institution. According to its ordinance (1961), the objective for establishing an agricultural university was, "to provide practices for higher education and research work in agriculture and its branches." At page 2 of this ordinance under Article 5 (a), it was further stated that the university would have powers to make provisions for research and dissemination of knowledge in various branches of learning.

It was unfortunate that the integration of research, teaching and extension advocated by the Pakistan Education Commission, was not supported by the then Pakistan Food and Agriculture Commission. They argued that the extension issue must be tackled in all their aspects by the specialized government organizations. Thus, the Agricultural University followed the paths of the traditional universities, and the extension role was practically reduced to nothing. All the impor-

tant issues concerning an agricultural university were decided in a period of only two years. On the contrary, the most important issues of the goals and objectives of an agricultural university was developed in India over a period of 20 years through regular periodic reviews. India adopted the well-known US land grant college model, integrating teaching, research and extension at all levels of university activity. By the beginning of 1961 interest in establishing an Agricultural University grew to become a movement. The India Education Commission (1964) supported the establishment of, at least, one Agricultural University in every State. The Agricultural University in India, for obvious reasons, is under administrative control of the State Agriculture Department (Ministry of Agriculture) and recognizes the responsibility and is responsive to the needs of the farmers, in contrast to being only a seat of learning and scholarship as in Bangladesh.

The BAU, because of the limitation in extension activities, could not achieve any noteworthy success in the transfer of knowledge to the farmers and other end users, which the scientists of the university had acquired through research.

In addition to the old institutions like the BAI and the BAU, several new institutions/colleges as needed were established during the last 20 years. Bangladesh College of Agriculture Science (BCAS) was established in 1978 at Salna (Gazipur) to offer B. Sc (Ag) degree. It went through several reorganizations. In 1983, it was renamed as "Institute of Post-graduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA)" to offer M Sc (Ag) and Ph D degrees in various disciplines in agriculture. In 1997, it was raised as a university and renamed as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University to offer B Sc (Ag), M Sc (Ag), M Sc (Ag) and Ph D degrees in various disciplines in agriculture. It has now been brought under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education. Dumki (Patuakhali) Agriculture College was established in 1978 and Hazi Danesh Agriculture College, Dinajpur was established in 1988 under the Ministry of Agriculture to offer B Sc Ag Degree covering only crops. It is under control of the colleges at Patuakhali and Dinajpur are being reorganized as the University of Science and Technology with a faculty of agriculture in each and placed under the Ministry of Education. The fate of the oldest technical college in Dhaka (BAI) is still not clear.

I have not even the slightest hesitation to accept the need for the university of science and technology at different regions/parts of the country.

However, I don't consider that conversion of agricultural colleges of Patuakhali and Dinajpur into universities of science and technology is at all justified. Agriculture is an applied science largely related to the survival and economic progress of the rural Bangladesh. Therefore, upgrading colleges into agricultural universities could be more justified than merging them with university of science and technology.

There are also two private Agriculture Colleges—one at Rajshahi and another at Bogra. One college of Forestry at Chittagong under the Ministry of Forest and Environment offers BS degree in forestry and the Institute of Forestry at the University of Chittagong — offers graduate and post-graduate degrees. Besides, there are two veterinary colleges — one at Sylhet and one at Chittagong offering degrees in Veterinary Science.

The colleges do not enjoy the same facilities as the universities do in respect of management structure, professional opportunities, autonomy and funding. In academic aspects, they are controlled by the affiliating universities, while in administrative aspects, they are controlled by the government departments or boards of management in case of private colleges. This dual control deprived the colleges of the privileges enjoyed by the universities, particularly in respect to career opportunities, academic contributions and funding scope.

The diploma level education is given by Agriculture Extension Training Institute (AETI) and other training institutions of the sub-sectors of agriculture, such as, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, animal husbandry.

Intake of Students: About 1200 hundred students are admitted every year at the undergraduate level covering all sub-sectors of agriculture and 200-250 students at the post-graduate level. The Bangladesh Agricultural University, the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University, Khulna University and the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences under the University of Chittagong also

offer courses leading to PhD degrees. Several hundred students are admitted into the various diploma courses every year.

Examination System: The BAU and the colleges continue to carry on the annual examination system, though in most of the agricultural universities in the world, course credit system and rigorous internal evaluation methods have been initiated. Over a number of years, it has been established that the semester system is good and useful for both the student and the teacher. A teacher has to work hard to prepare the courses/text books; the students also need to work round the year to keep themselves in a state of preparedness. Without doubt, the existing examination system encourages cramming and memorizing and destroys independence of thinking. It will not be unfair to conclude that the present examination system is also contributing to the progressive deterioration of education. It is encouraging that several of the present institutions including BAU, have been working to introduce the semester system. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University has already introduced the semester system with success.

Course Content of Education: The present course contents of most of the institutions are almost static. The course contents need to be revised and made up-to-date to deal with the emerging issues. Agriculture is a practical science. It is an occupation to be practised. The students do not receive sufficient practical training in farm operations for want of operational funds, farmland in the colleges and other requisite facilities. Further, the university farms cannot provide adequate scope for fieldwork to students, due to unprecedented increase in their number. Knowledge received through traditional methods of instruction can never equip the students to meet the job situation after his/her appointment in the government services and other organizations.

Facilities: The BAU is the only multi-faculty agricultural university with six faculties,

such as, Agriculture, Veterinary, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Agricultural Engineering and Technology, and Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. The Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University has, at present, only the Agriculture Faculty, but it has plans to open new faculties in the near future. The Agriculture/Veterinary Colleges have only one faculty with several departments. In addition to teaching faculties, the BAU has a research unit, the Bangladesh Agricultural University Research System (BAURES) to fund, coordinate and monitor research programmes/projects of the university, and the Graduate Training Institute (GTI) for training of the new graduates and others involved in agricultural development activities.

Management Structure: It generally includes the Syndicate, Academic Council, Board of Studies, Committee for Advanced Studies and Research and other special Committees, and is more or less the same with the other universities in the country. The management aspect of the colleges/training institutions is the responsibility of the Department/Ministry to which a college/training institution is attached.

Working Relationship with the Major Research Organizations for Post-graduation Teaching: Anticipating the difficulties that might arise, if research responsibilities are not given and increased at the Agricultural University level, the then Pakistan Food and Agriculture Commission had advised that "arrangements should be made between the university and the research organizations to enable post-graduate students, in pursuance of higher degree, to work in the laboratories and in the farms of the research organizations". So far such arrangement has been meaningfully organized only by the Institute of Post-graduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA), now Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University.

Teaching in Isolation: At present, as already indicated, there is practically no integra-

tion of research, teaching and extension. Without the stimulation of relevant and purposeful research, instruction in the classroom loses vitality and vigour. The continuous acquisition of new knowledge, through realistic and applied research, makes teaching effective and practical. But without the back-stopping of feed-back from the extension organization, research cannot address itself to the solution of problems of farmers and other people. Research, in its turn, then becomes pointless and ineffective. On the other hand, the extension loses the benefit of an Agricultural Institution to build-up rural economy. The three functions mutually reinforce the classroom teaching to become realistic to stir the imagination of the students. Without doubt, in absence of such interaction between research, extension and teaching, agricultural education becomes dull and fails to convey thoughtful ideas and knowledge to the students. This is exactly what has been happening to agricultural education in Bangladesh. But it is encouraging to find that the adverse effect of this kind of gap is now being more and more realized, and efforts are being made in the teaching institutions to develop mechanisms to establish strong linkages with the national grid of agricultural research as well as the extension organizations.

Evaluation: There is yet no periodic evaluation system of the teaching institutions. As a result, it remains in darkness, as to what happened, in regard to such important matters as the maintenance of standards of teaching, extension and research and the progress towards the attainment of the objective of agricultural education to solve the problems of rural areas. The lack of realization of the concept of agricultural teaching institutions (generally, the universities and colleges) has led agricultural education to a state of complete isolation and alienation from the mainstream of agricultural life. In contrast to this bleak scenario in Bangladesh, the Agricultural University System

in India is initiating steps almost at the same time to reorganize the higher agricultural education system, and this could achieve a spectacular advancement and progress in agricultural production and rural development because they had adopted to Indian conditions the model of the Land Grant University in the USA, which is acclaimed to be one of the most successful rural education experiments in the world.

The Positive features of a Successful Higher Agricultural Education System: These could be outlined as follows:

- Integration of teaching, extension and research through the development of appropriate mechanism
- Ability to respond to farmers' problems in all phases of agricultural production
- Collaboration and cooperative linkages with the agricultural development agencies and institutions
- Facilities for resident instructors with provision for experiment stations
- Effective feed-back ensuring the free flow of information from farm to the laboratory and ability to disseminate knowledge.

The joint review team (1978) for strengthening Bangladesh Agricultural Research made the following observations:

"The BAU has been compared to the agricultural universities of India and also the US land grant universities. This is not an accurate comparison since the agricultural universities that have been established in India since 1955 were set up to separate the agricultural college and university level training from the traditional university institution system. The Indian agricultural universities are under the Department (Ministry) of Agriculture of the respective State. Similarly, the US land grant colleges were established in 1826 in recognition of the inadequacy of the US universities of that period — that were patterned after Western European Universities — to meet the needs of a developing agriculture. The US land grant colleges (subsequently, universities in 1887) were established as autonomous bodies under the boards of regents or boards of governors responsible to the legislators of the States. Neither the Indian Agricultural Universities nor the US land grant colleges/universities are under the control of the Department/Ministry of Education."

In India, during the last many decades the agricultural faculties within the structure of the general universities and also the agricultural colleges were upgraded and reorganized

into agricultural universities with radical and revolutionary changes. This is how, India achieved tremendous success today in manpower development in agriculture which, in turn, helped in the development of agricultural technologies comparable with those of any developed country. It may be noted here that, Dhaka Agriculture College (BAU) was one of the six agricultural colleges of the then British India. But very unfortunately, except this agriculture college (BAU), falling in East Pakistan (Bangladesh), all the other five colleges after partition of India, were reorganized as agricultural universities incorporating changes that, in a sense, made the rural universities to serve the rural communities to solve perilous food problems. Later, many more agricultural universities were established, at least one in each state of India, by upgrading the old agriculture colleges.

The Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), because of a faltering and half-hearted integration concept by the then Pakistan Education Commission, brushed aside by the then Pakistan Food and Agriculture Commission, remained as a mere seat of so called learning and scholarship under the Ministry of Education. How can we then expect capable scientists to come out and develop technologies to strengthen economy?

Based on the above facts, it emerges that an effective higher agricultural education system for a country like Bangladesh whose economy is predominantly agrarian, must be reorganized with the following basic characteristics:

- A campus in rural settings with requisite farmland and also having experiment stations at appropriate places; there should be necessary infrastructure and adequate operation resources to ensure thorough on-farm training.
- Effective mechanisms for integration of teaching, extension and research
- Formal linkage and feed-back with agricultural development agencies and participation of the higher agricultural institutions in agricultural planning and production programmes.
- Sufficient capital and operational funds.

These basic features can be met out by upgrading the three Agricultural Colleges into full-fledged Agricultural Universities, reorganizing and integrating their major activities attached to the Ministry of Agriculture.

The author is emeritus scientist, National Agriculture Research System (NARS) and former chairman, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC)

The 13th Lok Sabha Elections in India: An Overview

Aabed Rahman writes from New Delhi

For the greater interest of the South Asian countries, India must have a stable Government at the Centre, no matter which party forms it. What is important is that Delhi must ease undue and unnecessary pressure from the regional parties. Only a stable government at Delhi that is less dependent on regional parties, can prevent bilateralisation of Indian domestic problems and brighten the prospect of regional cooperation and improve bilateral ties with its neighbours.

OVER a span of three years, India, the world's biggest democracy is having its third consecutive Lok Sabha elections that is the 13th in the 51-year long history of the country. The four-phase elections would be over by the end of September and the counting would begin on the 5th of October 1999.

The 13th Lok Sabha elections are being held at a crucial time when India has proved itself as a nuclear power, as a result of which facing economic sanctions and in the aftermath of the Kargil conflict in Kashmir. The other important aspect of this elections is that the Congress President Sonia Gandhi is contesting elections despite widespread campaign against her as a foreigner not only by anti-congress BJP and its allies, but also by a faction of her own party now named Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). This election is also likely to test the credibility and potentials of the regional parties that have been playing key roles over the last three years in forming governments in Delhi.

BJP's Kargil Politics

Initially, BJP overemphasised the so-called victory in Kargil and strived to convince the voters that it is only the BJP that can ensure India's security and military supremacy over Pakistan. There are stunning revelations about Kargil that are now becoming counterproductive for the BJP. This is the end result of over exploitation of an issue. In some state of course the issue has cut at least some ice. Now voters tend to believe that BJP caretaker government was fully aware of the so-called infiltration in Kargil. Government did not take any preventive action and let infiltrators consolidate their positions. Bearing the elections in mind, BJP Government kept silent on this serious national security issue hoping that with their military superiority, they would be able to flush out the infiltrators and claim a victory over Pakistan. Vajpayee knew that people in India are obsessed with any victory over Pakistan. It may be even in cricket. He wanted to use this in BJP's favour in the elections. Now with all this revelation,

the opposition leaders are questioning whether country's security and territorial integrity are safe in BJP's hands, notwithstanding the huge losses of lives and resources.

Electorates are going to be taxed after the elections for Kargil expenditure that amounts to Rs. 12,000 crore. During the initial period, if any opposition leader talked about government's failure in Kargil, he or she was dubbed as unpatriotic. Now with the electioneering gaining ground, every body is talking about this issue and the government is on the defensive now. Ironically, India's Kargil victory is stated to be attributed to the effectivity of the Bofors guns that hit the backbone of the infiltrators. Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress party have been accused by the BJP and its allies over the past one decade for the purchase deal on these guns and their have been questioning their effectivity. In this election, BJP is not at all questioning the effectivity of these guns.

Kargil and Sugar Scam

Sugar import during Kargil conflict from Pakistan is now more and more being highlighted by the Congress and its splinter group Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Sharad Pawar. It is alleged that some BJP linked businessmen were involved in this import when Kargil conflict was going on despite the fact that India had its enough stock. This is going to affect poll prospects of the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance in Maharashtra. Thanks to the NCP leader Maharashtra's powerman Sharad Pawar who left the Congress on the plea of Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin and formed NCP along with the former Lok Sabha Speaker P A Sangma and Congress Minority Cell Chairman Tariq Anwar. The vision of the Congress will have serious post impact in this state and may bar the Shiv Sena-BJP Government in the state in the Assembly elections, though they even may be unable to recover in the Lok Sabha elections. The future of NCP and in particular of its leader Sharad Pawar is also hanging in balance. NCP's best wish at this moment may be not

to play another Jayalalitha for the next coalition with its dozen odd seats it can bag in the elections; but to pray for the BJP and its allies to cross the 273 margin and to give Congress some thing around 120. Only then, Sharad Pawar can hope some unlikely grumbling in the Congress on the question of Sonia Gandhi's leadership and to convince Congressmen for a Sonia-free Congress.

Congress' Stability Plank

Congress, as usual is trying to emphasise the stability issue. People are not happy with the way the country is being run. The huge costs of frequent elections is borne by them. The records also show that whenever Congress formed the Government, it completed full term. On the other hand, no non-Congress coalition Government in India has ever been able to run the country for more than two years.

Congress, however, is not playing all cards. Many suggested that if Priyanka Gandhi, daughter of the former Prime Minister slain leader Rajiv Gandhi and a reminiscence of late Indira Gandhi, is fielded against Mr. Vajpayee in Lucknow, she could perhaps upset the apple-cart. She is the symbol of youth. Congress is also focusing now more on youth and women. They could be a force to reckon with in the future for the Congress. Congress is understandably keeping 1er as reserve force for the future.

Many believe that Ms. Priyanka Gandhi is likely to win at least one general election for the Congress, no matter how well she would perform as the Prime Minister. She has proved this in Bellary, Karnataka from where her mother Congress President Sonia Gandhi contested. The Bellary voters and

the anti-Congress camp who fielded Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, BJP senior leader, former cabinet minister and chief minister of Delhi against Mrs. Gandhi, have witnessed the Gandhi magic. The Amethi voters are yet to see this. Priyanka is now her mother's campaign manager in Amethi, the second seat from where Mrs. Gandhi is contesting. Priyanka is attracting huge crowds. She is mesmerising and frenzying the young and women electorates. She is the 'reincarnation' of Indira Gandhi and a symbol of new age and dynamism. She is effervescent in her own rights and merits.

Unlike her sister, though Rahul Gandhi addressed any election rally, he is accompanying mother Sonia Gandhi in many places during the campaign. When Sanjay Gandhi, Indira Gandhi's younger son, died in a plane crash, most people expected her wife Maneka Gandhi to be brought in as the heir to Gandhi family. Finally astute Indira Gandhi brought in her elder son Rajiv as her heir. It was Rajiv Gandhi who visioned India's economic reform that paying off now. He brought in modernism in Indian polity. Rahul Gandhi seems to be like his father. One day, not only her sister, he himself can display the yet another Gandhi magic to the Indians. Time has the final say.

Minority Factor

Muslims and other minority and backward classes like Christians, dalits and others are looking back to Congress time that they are in power. The view that no coalition government has done anything for them. Muslims and dalits in Uttar Pradesh feel that their situation has worsened even under the rule of Samajwadi Party (SP) led by Mulayam Singh Yadav, two time former chief min-

ister and Central Defence Minister and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) led by Kanshi Ram and the former chief minister Ms. Mayawati. On the other hand, Christian community is the recent victim of the Hindu extremism. The community leaders have appealed to their followers to vote against the BJP. A large chunk of Muslim voters supported SP under Mulayam Singh Yadav in the past in Uttar Pradesh. Mr. Singh has earned opprobrium from the Muslim community for blocking Mrs. Sonia Gandhi's emergence as an alternative Prime Minister after the fall of the Vajpayee Government in last April.

Same has also happened with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu. His formal poll alliance with the BJP has alienated the Muslim and backward classes voters from his Telegu Desam Party (TDP). Like in Uttar Pradesh, Muslims in Andhra Pradesh too are returning to the Congress fold.

Post-poll Scenario

Post poll scenario may be more complicated. BJP has formed a national alliance with about two dozens of regional parties. It is called NDA - National Democratic Alliance. BJP and its allies may bag between 250 and 260 seats though the pre-poll projections said they would manage to cross the 300 margin. Anti-NDA parties are likely to get more seats than NDA. The question is in that case whether SP and NCP would be supporting a Congress government. Sonia-led coalition government is unlikely to get support of the NCP. In that case, former Finance Minister Manmohan Singh-led coalition Congress government may emerge.

In India, except CPI and CPI (M), almost all regional parties are their leader oriented. What-

ever their leader says that is the decision of the party. SP led by Mulayam Singh Yadav is no exception. SP's support base is eroding with the Muslims and party leaders deserting it not only for Mulayam Singh Yadav's refusal to support a Sonia-led government after the fall of Vajpayee government last April, but also for his dictatorial style of running the party. Many senior leaders have either left the party or are now inactive. Mulayam Singh Yadav now mainly depends on Amar Singh, his party General Secretary and a Calcutta based industrialist who has reportedly made political acumen and links. He now calls the shots in the party in the name of Mr. Yadav. Though SP's popularity is waning, still it can manage around a dozen odd seats in Uttar Pradesh.

Mulayam Singh Yadav is the man who could turn the table either way. For the very same reason, the so-called widely known secular Chandra Babu Naidu, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh supported the BJP Govt in 1998. Mr. Yadav, now better known as politician than politician, may extend his support to the BJP. In 1998, Chandra Babu's TDP lost ground to the Congress. For his very own survival in the state, he decided to go along with the BJP with the hope that he could this way prevent Congress onslaught in his state. Mr. Yadav's SP is also losing ground in Uttar Pradesh, his power base, to be lost by SP and BSP are likely to go to the Congress. In this scenario, Mulayam too for his own political survival, can go along with the BJP.

Future of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi

The foregone conclusion is that she has already established her credibility as the

leader of the Congress party. BJP and its allies, NCP's Sharad Pawar and its protagonists may not agree to this fact. The reason is that Congress is likely to gain more seats under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi. Gaining more seats than previous two elections (120 in 1996 and 142 in 1998) is important to test her leadership and for her political survival. Congress is likely to gain in states like Uttar Pradesh (gained no seat in 1998), Tamil Nadu (no seat in 1998), Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and in a few others. It may lose seats in Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Congress may not emerge as the single largest party; but is likely to cross the 160 margin in this election. Even if Congress cannot form the government, yet it would be established that Sonia Gandhi has the capability to lead the age-old party to improve its position. That can very well bury all the debate on her so-called foreign origin and will enable her to consolidate her leadership in the party.

In all probability, her hands are going to be strengthened by her daughter and son in the near future. The signs are already omnipresent. Recently Sonia Gandhi said that "both my children are interested in politics, but they will do so at the time of their own choosing". They are the likely future leaders who would lead the world's biggest democracy in the next millennium.

Chance of Jyoti Basu

The West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu has at least missed two occasions to lead India as the Prime Minister. The CPI (M) Politbureau was against Jyoti Basu's premiership, though Mr. Basu himself and CPI (M) General Secretary Harkishen Singh Surjeet were in favour of Mr. Basu's candidacy. As a disciplined communist leader Mr. Basu was guided by his party's decision. CPI (M) always maintained and strived to keep BJP out of power and was a strong advocate for a coalition government of the secular parties. Even it tried unsuccessfully in persuading Mulayam Singh Yadav to support a Congress-led government

after the fall of Vajpayee Government last April.

This time, if the BJP-led NDA cannot manage more than 260 seats, and if SP and NCP do not agree to a Sonia for any Congress-led Government, Jyoti Basu is likely to be again the front runner for the top post. The indication is that this time CPI (M) Politbureau may approve Mr. Basu's candidacy as the Prime Minister. The advantage with Mr. Basu is that he may even get support from some potential parties of NDA including TDP. Dravidia Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) led by Tamil Nadu chief minister Karunanidhi, and Janata Dal (JD) led by leaders like Ram Kishna Hegde, Sharda Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan, George Fernandes and of course of NCP and SP. Mr. Basu may be the third time lucky.

Implications for the India's Neighbours

India is a big country. Its political attitude, gesture and behaviour matter much to its neighbours and to their bilateral relations with her. More the government in Delhi is unstable, worse is the prospect of regional cooperation and bilateral relations with its neighbours. For the greater interest of the South Asian countries, India must have a stable Government at the Centre, no matter which party forms it. What is important is that Delhi must ease undue and unnecessary pressure from the regional parties. These parties put this pressure for their own petty party interests in return of their support to the Government to continue to be in power. This weakens government's overall performance, functioning and capacity to deliver. Only a stable government at Delhi that is less dependent on regional parties, can prevent bilateralisation of Indian domestic problems and brighten the prospect of regional cooperation and improve bilateral ties with its neighbours. This is what this poor South Asia and its millions of poor people including India and the Indians, should expect from this 13th Lok Sabha elections. The flush point, however, is that the Indian electorates appreciate this.

TOM & JERRY

