

People Flummoxed

WITH the High Court handing a five-year prison sentence to former president HM Ershad in the Janata Tower Case in an appeal preferred by the latter against a lower court verdict for seven years' imprisonment, one could say that the law has caught up with him. The only legal motion seems left in this case now is for Ershad to file an appeal before the Supreme Court and await the latter's ruling on the subject. What has added suspense to the episode is that whereas he ought to surrender before the authorities immediately and file his appeal from the jail in terms of the HC orders he has decided to pray for time when the court reopens after recess. Setting aside the legal matters which have their own dynamics it is the politics churning around the former president and currently leader of Jatiya Party that calls for closer scrutiny and evaluation — in public interest. In terms of Ershad's personal political future the HC verdict, if confirmed by the Supreme Court, will mean that as well as losing his current status as MP he would be barred from participating in the next general election.

But that those objective conditions facing Ershad would weigh with the opposition alliance partners of Jatiya Party in such a pronounced manner is something that smacks of unprincipled politics. As a matter of fact, most people are baffled not so much by the announcement of the opposition political parties that they would take part in the next polls together as an alliance as the time chosen for making that declaration. Who can miss the fact that the announcement which the alliance partners of BNP had been craving for a long time stands suddenly delivered quickly on the heels of the HC judgement in a corruption case. It is the BNP government which had instituted cases against Ershad as an elected successor government to the latter's discredited regime, let alone BNP's vanguard role in the popular movement against him.

In hindsight, it was also reprehensible on the part of Awami League to have cultivated Ershad the way they did for his support in the formation of the so-called consensus government following AL victory in the 1996 general election. He was set on bail and court proceedings stayed against him. But subsequently when he turned volte face and went close to the opposition getting into the alliance fold he obviously courted falling from the AL grace.

Such alternating political expediency on the part of major political parties in the country centring around a single person with a reputation for changing loyalties does hurt people's political sensibilities and diminish their faith in democracy based on good precedents and principles.

Outcome of Teachers' Strike

WE are glad that the government and the Bangladesh Teachers' Action Co-ordination Committee (BTACC) have reached an accord to end the long-running strike at 22,000 non-government schools, colleges and madrassahs across the country. Of course, there is the room for regret — the government could surely have initiated the talks and broken the deadlock a lot earlier than it did saving some precious academic hours.

While the government has agreed to pay 90 per cent of the teachers' basic salary from the public exchequer, the teachers, in their turn, have acquiesced in some conditions that promise to bring about a substantive change in the overall standard of education at their institutions. A fixed teacher-student ratio would surely work towards improving the classroom environment and subsequently standard of learning. Also, the criteria set for recruitment would translate into appointment of uniformly qualified teaching staff. To top it off, there is a defined target for each institution — less than 37.4 per cent success at the SSC and HSC examinations and the government would stop disbursement of teachers' salary. Emphasis on teachers' role in warding off cheating in the exams is also a strong point of the agreement.

Until and unless enforced to the letter and spirit these are mere words on a scrap of paper. Now, how does the government ensure that the non-government educational institutions will actually go by the rules? A strong management committee is the answer. It should be empowered to inspect and submit reports to the education ministry at regular intervals, thereby taking care of the monitoring function for the government. But what worries us most is that there may be some loose ends still not tied up which could invoke yet another crisis situation. As we wholeheartedly greet the agreement between the government and the teachers of the non-government schools, colleges and madrassahs, we urge them to plug the loopholes in time to avert relapse into a similar stand-off.

Claims Deflated

A report in this paper on Saturday makes a sorry reading of the crime situation in the country. The figure for murders till last Monday of this month outstrips that for the corresponding period of last year which the concerned agencies find themselves hard-put to explain. The case of the listed criminals remaining at large in spite of repeated vows by the authorities to haul them up also remains unexplained. There has been very spirited declarations by the concerned officials expressing their determination to uproot crimes in the society along with the criminals banished from the land but it appears that much of that air has been deflated.

To enhance the capability and power of the law enforcers the Public Safety Act was added to the already powerful armoury of the police. Special drives with well-equipped plainclothesmen armed with PSA was also conducted but in vain. Instead had they followed the dossiers of the criminals without fear or favour the police could have legitimately claimed success. It was maintained by government leaders that under the PSA device crime could be successfully curbed but the results of the expeditions spearheaded under the law proved otherwise. People have enough reasons to believe that the increase in crime may have been triggered by the useless application of special drives and the PSA. To make things worse there was the untimely bragging about operational thrusts by authorities that made the criminals smarter to avoid being caught. We believe that statements by top police officials or the home ministry should follow the actions by the departments concerned and not precede them. That way police may be more effective against the criminals.

Dialogue on Development: From Darkness to Light

Whether 21st Century would see rosy rural areas would depend on whether policy makers foresee the future fruitfully. To bring the villages from darkness to light, to cause a reverse migration, villages should be turned into towns not the towns into villages as has been observed in the past in some of the developing areas.

THE Global Dialogue was held recently in Hanover, Germany. The theme of the Dialogue "The Village in 21st Century: Crops, Jobs and Livelihood" aimed at portraying and projecting problems and potentials that villages are likely to embrace in the 21st century. Joachim von Braun of the Centre for Development Research (Bonn) and others lit the torch to lay the foundation for discussion. It is true, perhaps, that urbanisation would lurk large to dominate the era of globalisation. But equally true is the fact that rural areas would continue to invincibly influence the shaping of the dynamics of upcoming developments. Relevant projections show that in the next 25 years, 90 per cent of population increase in developing countries will be in urban areas, and in the year 2025, less than half of the population in Asia and Africa and less than one-fifth in America and Europe will remain in rural areas. However, policymakers should not be oblivious of the fact that the sources of food production and natural resources and also the pockets of poverty would remain mostly in rural areas.

Hold inside Expo 2000 venue, the Dialogue got off to a scintillating start. A vibrant variety of village and city representations — scientists, workers specialized in rural development, politicians and businessmen got together to discuss problems and deliver solutions from a scientific perspective. The tone of the Dialogue was seemingly set by taking the whole world as a "virtual village" where installed inside is the insidious internal inequality. To cite a few (*la Joachim von Braun and Detlef Virchow*), in our average global village of 1000 inhabitants there are: 520 women, 480 men, 306 aged be-

tween 0-14, 98 aged over 60, 22 birth per year, 206 illiterate (above 15 years), 130 malnourished persons, 165 earn less than a dollar a day, 426 are engaged in agricultural activities. And to indicate inequality, the richest person of the village owns wealth that is more than the combined income of the 577 poorest persons of the village.

The perennial paradox that participants had to ponder over is that the world's rural space today is that of bareness as well as beauty, of problems as well as potentials. While rural areas have been reeling for decades under a top-down development paradigm, the future would invariably have to rest on bottom-up planning exercise. Decentralisation is the key to put rural areas on an even keel but, appealing though, that process entails costs and risks. It warrants a lot of capacity building, *ipso facto*. Three important elements should be focused: national policies facilitating the supply of basic public goods in rural areas (food, health care, education, infrastructure); decentralised rural governing that can improve the effectiveness of national government and posit transparent, accountable, efficient local authorities.

The hypothesis that rural areas are backward, traditional, inflexible and apathetic to technological innovation is rejected outright. Rural areas are endowed with indigenous technological breakthroughs that have long been overlooked and undervalued. Rural areas again entrench "innovators" who apparently seem to be illiterate and inhibited by informa-

tion gap but are geared to discover what maybe the best under available socio-economic, institutional and political parameters. Unfortunately, people were never brought to the forefront nor policy makers realised even that power lies with people. To make things better, modern education and knowledge system should complement, not contradict, the traditional knowledge system prevailing in villages.

Information and communication technologies could be the cornerstone. These would help bridge the gap between rural and urban areas — as well as be-

were connected by telephone, 38 years until they had a radio, 11 years until they had a TV and 4 years until they had access to Internet. From the statistics provided, it appears that radio took half of the time taken by telephone. TV took a little over one third of that of radio and Internet a little more than one-third of TV's. But during the march forward, rural areas have already been "left out" to be served last thus placing urban areas in "jet planes" and rural areas in "vintage buses" to reach destinations. Substantial time lags between ICT investment and positive ef-

fects followed by roads. So, a country destined for alleviation (or reduction) of poverty must go for spread of education and road communication in rural areas. Innovations, both modern and traditional, should combine to let rural areas walk on two legs. Village pay phones in Bangladesh tend to demonstrate that access to information can help the poor to re-empower themselves relatively more compared to the rich.

And finally, while technology cannot lag behind, it is in fact rural people who are inflexible and apathetic to technological adoption but before them militate against emerging technological efforts. Capacity building should be there to create suitable environment for indigenous efforts to crop up. Infrastructure, incentives and institutions should go hand in hand to uplift rural areas from the pit of poverty. A judicious mix of these four elements should lead to leapfrogging. They should substantially reduce the time taken to go up the ladder.

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By and large, the prospects of village in the 21st century is going to hinge on four I's: Infrastructure, Innovations, Institution and Incentives. In preparation of policies or their implementation, people should come first. Rural development policies should be for the people, by the people and for the people.

tween the 'global economy' and the village. By providing symmetric information (prices, markets) new information technologies can make substantial welfare effects. These can mitigate the degree of migration to urban areas and make rural areas attractive to live in.

In our global village of 1000 inhabitants: 96 read newspapers, 418 listen to radio, 247 watch TV, 500 walk two hours to nearest telephone and 10 have access to Internet connection. The speed of the spread of information and communication technology over the years is worth mentioning. It took 74 years until 50 million people

fects tend to put rural areas as laggards under a fast moving world. Time has come when rural areas, especially the poor there, need to substitute middlemen with mobile phones. Access to technology should be universal to deter an uneven "digital divide".

Strikingly, perhaps, water is likely to emerge as the most scarce input. In the past, we all know, oil caused wars. Now water might lead to the same. While the adage goes as "water water everywhere, not a single drop to drink", the 21st century is likely to head towards a point where "water water nowhere to water the plants" (not to speak

Supplementary Report of Hamoodur Rahman Commission: Some Relevant Extracts

Second instalment

(Continued from yesterday)
The Moral Aspect
Glaring Cases of Moral Lapses Amongst Officers Posted in East Pakistan

(1) Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi

In the Main Report we have mentioned the allegations, and the evidence relating thereto as regards the personal conduct of Gen Yahya Khan, Gen. Abdul Hamid Khan the late Maj Gen (Retd) Khuda Dad Khan, Lt. Gen A.A.K. Niazi, Maj Gen Jehanzeb and Brig Hayatullah. We wish to supplement those observations as regards Lt. Gen Niazi.

From a perusal of Paragraphs 80 to 34 of Chapter II of Part V of the Main Report, it will be seen that the graveness of the allegations made against Lt. Gen. Niazi is that he was making money in the handling of Martial Law cases while posted as G.O.C. Sialkot and later as G.O.C. and Martial Law Administrator at Lahore; that he was on intimate terms with one Mrs. Saeeda Bukhari of Gulberg, Lahore, who was running a brothel under the name of Senorita Home, and was also acting as the General's tout for receiving bribes and getting things done; that he was also friendly with another woman called Shamini Firdaus of Sialkot who was said to be playing the same role as Mrs. Saeeda Bukhari of Lahore; that during his stay in East Pakistan he came to acquire a stinking reputation owing to his association with women of bad repute, and his nocturnal visits to places also frequented by several junior officers under his command; and that he indulged in the smuggling of Pan from East Pakistan to West Pakistan. According to Major S.S. Haider (Witness No. 259) and Brig Atta Mohammed (Witness No. 257) even Brig Baqir Siddiqui, Chief of Staff, Eastern Command, was a partner of Gen Niazi in the export of Pan.

The allegations mentioned in the preceding paragraphs were put.

To Lt. Gen. Niazi during his appearance before us, and he naturally denied them. When asked about his weakness for the fair sex, he replied, "I say no, I have been doing Martial Law duties. I never stopped anybody coming to see me. I became very religious during the East Pakistan trouble. I was not so before. I thought more of death than these things."

As regards the allegation that he was indulging in the export of Pan, he stated that he had ordered an enquiry into the matter on the complaint of a man called Bhuiyan who was aggrieved by the monopoly position occupied by the Pan exporters. He alleged that in fact Brig Hanifuddin and PIA staff were themselves involved in the smuggling of Pan.

From the mass of evidence coming before the Commission from witnesses, both civil and military, there is little doubt that Gen. Niazi unfortunately came to acquire a bad reputation in sex matters, and this reputation has been consistent during his postings in Sialkot, Lahore and East Pakistan. The allegations regarding his indulgence in the export of Pan by using or abusing his position in the Eastern Command and as Zonal Martial Law Administrator also prima facie appear to be well-founded, although it was not our function to hold a detailed inquiry into the matter. It is for the Government to decide whether these matters should also form the subject of any inquiry or trial which may have to be ultimately held against this officer.

(2) Maj Gen Mohammad Jamshed, former GOC 36 (A) Division, East Pakistan

Col. Bashir Ahmad Khan (Witness No. 263) who was posted as DDML, Eastern Com-

To give a thumbnail description of what this instalment contains, damaging evidence coming on record regarding the ill-repute of General Niazi in sex matters ... the commission questioned Niazi on it to get the following answer from him: "I never stopped anybody coming to see me. I became very religious during the East Pakistan trouble. I was not so before. I thought more of death than these things."

One of the witnesses remembered what the troops used to say, "When the commander (Lt. Gen. Niazi) was himself a raper how could they be stopped."

Then appears the names of other senior officers who on being confronted with specific allegations of involvement in currency scandal, large scale looting, theft etc left the commission dissatisfied with the explanation of their conduct. The commission concluded, "such infamous conduct had a direct bearing on the quality of determination and leadership displayed by these officers in the 1971 War."

transportation of Pan to West Pakistan by placing limitation on poundage, I told ADC to Gen Niazi who visited me in my office, that this was a commercial matter and should be left to the arrangements arrived at between PIA and Pan exporters. We understand that the insinuation is that a son of Gen Niazi was engaged in the export of Pan from East Pakistan to West Pakistan. According to Major S.S. Haider (Witness No. 259) and Brig Atta Mohammed (Witness No. 257) even Brig Baqir Siddiqui, Chief of Staff, Eastern Command, was a partner of Gen Niazi in the export of Pan.

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From the above clarification it will be appreciated that there was no requirement to furnish details of the above expenditure to any accounts department.

We regret we cannot regard the reply given by Maj. Gen. Jamshed as satisfactory. Even though the funds disbursed by him may not be auditable in ordinary circumstances, it would have been appropriate and advisable for him to supply such information as was possible for him to do in the circumstances once the question of the disposal of these funds had arisen on the basis of information supplied to the Commission by officers who heard of these transactions in East Pakistan and later in the prisoners of

mand, stated before the Commission that the wife of Maj Gen Jamshed Khan had brought some currency with her while being evacuated from Dacca on the morning of 16th December 1971. He further alleged that Lt. Col Rashid, Col. Staff or the East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces, commanded by Maj Gen Jamshed Khan, was also reported to have been involved in the misappropriation of currency. It further came to our notice that the General had distributed some money among persons who left East Pakistan by helicopter on the morning of 15th or 16th of December 1971.

An inquiry was made from Maj Gen Jamshed Khan in this behalf, and his reply is as under:

The total sum involved was Rs. 50,000 which I had ordered to be drawn from the currency that was being destroyed under Government instructions and the total amount was distributed by me and strictly according to the instruction/rules and regulations to the Binaris and Benalis, informers, and to the needy on night of 15/16 December 1971.

A secret fund was placed at my disposal by the Government of East Pakistan for the purpose of payment of rewards and purchase of information and in this case the expenditure was from the secret fund at my disposal. This fund was non-auditable. The money given to the needy families who were displaced by helicopters on night 15/16 December, 1971 was from the EPCAF Director General's Fund. I was the sole authority to sanction from this fund and considering the circumstances under which this expenditure was made I had no intention to recommend recovery from persons concerned.

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war camps. We suggest, therefore, without necessarily implying any dereliction on the part of the general, that the matter should be enquired into further so that the suspicion surrounding the same is cleared in the General's own interest.

(3) Brig. Jehanzeb Arbab, former Commander 57 Brigade.

(4) Lt. Col. (Now Brig) Muzafer Ali Khan Zahid, former CO 31 Field Regiment.

(5) Lt. Col. Basharat Ahmad, former CO 18 Punjab.

(6) Lt. Col. Mohammad Taj, CO 32 Punjab.

(7) Lt. Col. Mohammad Tufail, CO 55 Field Regiment.

(8) Major Madad Hussain Shah, 18 Punjab

We were informed that a Court

of Inquiry was convened under the Chairmanship of Maj Gen M.H. Ansari who had recorded some evidence, but could not complete the inquiry owing to the outbreak of war.

The GHQ representative was not able to inform us as to what action had ultimately been taken by GHQ in respect of these officers, except that Brig. Jehanzeb Arbab had been appointed to officiate as GOC of a Division. The Commission feels that this appointment, before the completion of the inquiry and exonerating of the officer from any blame, was highly inadvisable on the part of the GHQ. We recommend that action should now be taken without delay to finalise the proceedings of the inquiry commenced by Maj Gen Ansari in East Pakistan. There should be no difficulty in reconstructing the record, if necessary as the material witness appear to be now available in Pakistan.

Before we conclude this Chapter, we would like to state that we had no desire to embark on any inquiry into personal allegations of immorality dishonestly against senior Army Commanders, but were persuaded to examine these matters owing to the universal belief that such infamous conduct had a direct bearing on the qualities of determination and leadership displayed by these officers in the 1971 war. We have regrettably found that this was indeed so. It is, therefore, imperative that deterrent action should be taken by the Government, wherever it is justified by the facts, in order to maintain the high moral standards and traditions for which the Muslim Army of Pakistan was justly proud before degeneration set in.

Third instalment appears tomorrow

However, the shop owners who were not affected at all were the mobile shops selling jewelry, clips etc., and the ones in open-air. The atmosphere here is always like this, whether or not the power supply is there. People don't have problems shopping here. What I'm trying to say is that the environmental factor does not affect my business, of course unless it's raining," said one such open-air shopkeeper. Hard hit was the upstairs compartment of New Market which sells clothes on one side and crockery etc. on the other side. Most people did not even contemplate going up the stairs knowing that the place was oven-hot under normal circumstances.

"I shudder to think what it may be like up there," commented a young man who frequented upstairs for jeans and T-shirts.