

Another Nudge for Police Reform

It is not without some valid reasons that the police role has been placed under some microscopic scrutiny by a rather worried civil society in our country.

Against this backdrop, it is essential that we hear the police side of the story in order that a rational approach is taken towards formulating a police reform package commensurate with the democratic status of the country.

We get some valuable input from senior police officials by virtue of a front-page report in this newspaper on Saturday entitled "Police, DB & CID riddled with problems".

It is our definite belief that the attention which the police received so far from the government and political parties has been much less than what they truly deserved.

Rein Them In

The ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) appears to have developed a habit of hogging the headlines for wrong reasons.

Apparently, the central leadership of the ruling party does not have any hierarchic control over its student organisation.

What could be more poignant a reflection of a fascistic mindset? We want to believe that it's not representative of the collective psyche of the ruling party.

Military Debate in US Presidential Election

The most controversial issue facing the new president involves the fate of a missile defence system for shooting down nuclear, biological and chemical warheads launched by rogue states.

As the country's commander-in-chief, the next American president, like his predecessors, will oversee the most powerful military force in the world.

In Kosovo when US Army was ridiculed for taking weeks in sending apache helicopter, tanks and rocket launchers to neighbouring Albania.

He alleges that the Army is still more organised for cold war and not for the challenges of the new century.



PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

He strongly supports the troops for peace keeping missions. He promises to raise the defence spending with an emphasis on gradual replacement of obsolete Reagan-era weapons.

Bush blames Clinton-Gore administration of caving in to the services chiefs bent on buying expensive or outdated weapon

systems such as the Lumbering crusaders, a mobile artillery system. The defence analysts said it was too big and heavy for modern warfare.

Gore says in response that Bush's proposal would leave the services with outdated equipment at a time when hardware bought during the Reagan administration build-up of the mid-1980s is fast wearing out.

According to defence experts the debate over how to prepare the military for the challenges of the new century comes down to two key questions: What weapons

and equipment are needed? And how much the US should spend on them? Although there are indications in the arguments of both the candidates that the defence spending would perforce shoot up there is no answer to either of the questions in specific terms.

spending. Gore however responded with his plan for asking the congress to spend \$100 bn more on defence over 10 years.

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Those factors, alongwith objections from Russia and two failed missile system tests this year persuaded Clinton several weeks ago to leave a decision to his successor.

Urban Space Goes Saffron: Hindutva's New Offensives

Praful Bidwai writes from New Delhi

CALENDAR-art recreations of Hindu mythology all along the Yamuna in Delhi? That's Mr Jagmohan's latest brainwave.

Each Pandava's pavilion will have a unique design. For instance, Bhima's will be an akhara. The project will span hundreds of hectares.

These pavilions are meant to inculcate sanskaras. The minister is allotting Rs. 5 crore for a feasibility study alone.

This spells Delhi's further architectural transformation. Already, the Yamuna's left bank is dotted with temples.

Like the British Empire which created Delhi's Eighth City, Mr Jagmohan wants to establish the Ninth Hindu Delhi, an amalgam of myth and modern technology.

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ambition, money and mumbo-jumbo.

This is an assault on anything approaching a civilised, urbane, not to speak of secular, sensibility. We'll soon be hoist with monuments to the BJP's sectarian prejudices which could prove hard to dismantle like the makeshift Ayodhya "temple".

Mr Jagmohan's ill-conceived plan is as unbalanced as his "demolition" activity, which ends up bulldozing homes of the poor, while "regularising" the illegal, gross, mansions of the affluent.

The Yamuna plan puts Mr Jagmohan in the same league as Mr K.S. Sudarshan with his "swadeshi Church" demand.

Worse, he casts aspersions upon the integrity of millions of citizens because they are, to him, lesser Indians, being non-Hindu. Such hate speech is morally and politically obnoxious.

ema-hall without cause. Even less does it mean you question people's citizenship.

Hindus aren't more "Indian" because of their religion's origins. Christianity and Islam are as indigenous to India.

This is precisely the kind of anti-Jewish hate speech that Germany's "indigenists" and Aryan nationalists perfected before Hitler's rise to power.

Senior BJP leaders like Messrs L.K. Advani, Jana Krishna Murthy, J.P. Mathur and Narendra Modi have endorsed Mr Sudarshan's "swadeshi Church" statement.

So the BJP is taking us back to the rhetoric of all non-Hindus being suspect. What unites the BJP-VHP-RSS and their front organisations is precisely this

malign majoritarianism. They all lay claim to a superior "Hindu" identity by falsely rooting Aryans in Harappan civilisation, or grossly exaggerating the cultural achievements of Vedic Indians.

This "superiority" claim is used to demand privileges for a particular group. Its numerical strength is cited to invoke "democracy". But majoritarianism is the opposite of democracy.

Hindutva ideologues invent spurious archeological-historical theories to support their prejudices. The latest is "vedic" archaeology. Two eminent U.S.-based Indologists have thoroughly exposed this in Frontline and demolished the communal work of N.S. Rajaram. This claims to "prove" that the Harappans were pastoral Aryans on the basis of some Harappan seals.

In fact, Rajaram's computer "enhancement" of a unicorn seal into a horse is pure forgery. It is of such stuffwoodoo archaeology, distortion and manipulation that Hindutva's claims to national greatness are made.

The saffron agenda is gathering particular momentum in education. Under the guise of morality, the National Council of Educational Research and Training is making "value education" mandatory for schoolchildren.

This will promote false pride in a glorified past and teach the child that if there is anything commendable in any civilisation or culture, it must be Indian, or rather, Hindu.

Universities too will have compulsory "value education". IIT Delhi will act as the "value" centre for all engineering colleges.

At this rate, education will collapse into religious instruction. Creationism will replace Darwin.

The vague term "values" includes "spirituality, meditation, yoga and ways to manage the self". Now, one can under-

stand the "value" of being truthful or diligent. But yoga and meditation aren't "values".

Such half-digested notions will produce incoherent syllabi bound only by a fiercely arrogant nationalism, and by emphasis on Hinduness and "family values".

"Family values" may sound innocuous, like mother's milk. But this is a disciplinarian notion which emphasises hierarchy and authority, and restricts freedom and individuality, while perpetuating patriarchy.

It is on such illiberal foundations that European fascism's ideological edifice was erected. The sangh parivar is building those very foundations.

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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.

Frustrating facts

Sir, Shipu, Jewel, Rubel, Bushra, Mohsin, Sayem... the list goes on and on. To the ignorant, these may just seem a few names of people in the crowd, but what these names symbolise is the reign of terror that has become the hallmark of the society that we are currently living in-- the legacy of the present Awami League government.

I wonder where the home minister's lofty promises have gone to regarding the capture and punishment of criminals irrespective of the party they belong to!

these criminals could be captured if only the ruling party and the police truly desired? Why does AL have to raise a hue and cry about the 25-year old murder case of Bangabandhu all the time, when most people of this country are more concerned about the prevailing deteriorating law and order situation?

What pains me most as a concerned citizen is that the people, as well as the media seem to wake up to a particular problem only after some form of irreparable damage has already been done.

AFrustrated Citizen Dhaka

LPG price hike

Sir, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) is widely used as a domestic cooking fuel in some part of our country. During the eighty's Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) started marketing LPG through their three petroleum companies Padma, Meghna and Jamuna.

Recently, while I was going through different local newspapers, I noticed that the price of LPG in the local market is rocketing like anything. To me it does not seem surprising because of awareness of LPG international price.

At the end of '99, one of the private enterprises entered into local LPG market to mitigate the crisis of LPG where our natural gas pipeline is not available to the doorstep of the ultimate end users or who cannot enjoy the benefit of natural gas.

AFrustrated Citizen Dhaka

Considering the recent scenario of international oil market, no body can foresee that this LPG price can shoot abnormally high. It may be mentioned that LPG is very much related to crude oil.

The present government has given permission to import LPG from abroad to alleviate the fuel crisis where natural gas pipeline is not available.

Considering this present international LPG market scenario how one can supply 12.5 Kg of filled LPG cylinder at Taka 250 to 300 in spite of having strong desire to offer it at a competitive price in order to mitigate fuel crisis in northern and southern region of our country?

The present government is kind enough to waive VAT in import stage but imposing VAT in bottling stage ultimately cost to end users and as such it becomes unaffordable.

ernment allowed private entrepreneurs to import LPG and alleviate the crisis.

Considering from the end users' side as well as protecting our deforestation, I earnestly request the government to waive all sorts of duty and other taxes from LPG in order to supply it at a competitive and as well as at a affordable price.

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Exporting bad politics

Sir, We are so obsessed about exporting everything that our leaders while travelling abroad do not hesitate to sell the bad political image of the country to the foreigners and the NRBs (non-resident Bangladeshis).

Political back-biting has now firmly entered into our culture. This political virus is now being carried by non-politician citizens also. God is one, but in this damned country the two begums demand and expect separate individual allegiance; thereby introducing dualism.

AZ Dhaka