

The sun never sets on the imperial civil service

ESAM SOHAIL

YEARS ago I was helping clean up some old files from my father's work under the Ministry of Health of Bangladesh when a small oddity caught my youthful eyes. The letters written by his subordinates to him and by him to his superiors all ended with the sign-off, "Your most obedient servant". "Your most obedient servant?" Why, I wondered, were these folks writing to the King of England?

In a manner of speaking, they were. The South Asian sub-continent was, after all, the famed jewel in the British Crown. The British Crown, mind you. The vice-roys of British India built up a fantastic administrative edifice that proved exceptionally adept at perpetuating distant London's rule over a fifth of humanity. The culture, institutions, attitudes, and legalisms that held the British administrative machinery together survive well in today's successor states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The bureaucrat in South Asia is not a public servant in the commonly understood sense of the term. He is rather a representative of an almighty state that is omnipotent over the common masses. Hence, to his subordinates and his citizenry the bureaucrat can rightly expect the 'Your most obedient servant' sign-off. Ironically, it was the last Imperialist lion, Sir Winston Churchill, who remarked about British India's civil servants that 'the problem with the civil servants is that they are neither civil nor servants'.

Over half a century has passed since the sun set over the British Indian Empire and the reign of Queen Victoria's noble descendants ended in South Asia. But very much alive is an administrative culture which caters to the colonial mentality of strict separation of the two classes: the rulers (the bureaucracy) and the ruled (everyone else). In the laws, regulations, attitudes, and corporate culture, the administrative machinery of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh keeps the colonial legacy alive and well. This stubborn legacy has been

rightly blamed by the development partners of these South Asian countries for being a major impediment to progress and a significant source of corruption. Political and economic liberalisation tends to lead to slow but sure improvement in the social conditions of the average citizenry by providing more economic and educational opportunities for more people. A more confident and educated citizen is more likely than his humbler counterpart to question the petty and the big shenanigans of the bureaucratic mandarins in the ivy towers of government secretariats. Hence, it is little wonder that the strongest and most stubborn resistance to

It is high time that the ruling elite in the former British Indian Empire realise that in free countries, governments exist to serve the people, not the other way around. It is past time to reform the most obvious permanent legacy of imperialism.

political and economic reforms in South Asia has come from the entrenched bureaucracy which rightly perceives its privileged position in society under a potential threat if any reforms are implemented.

This elite's position in sub-continent society should have been threatened a long time ago. With the departure of His Majesty's vice-regents in 1947, it was rightly to be expected that the native servants of the British Crown would become public servants of the people who were their sovereigns. But, as President Ronald Reagan said it so well, 'a government bureaucracy is the closest thing to eternal life we humans know'.

Sadly enough, the post-1947 politicians of South Asia loved the trappings of Imperial power. They transformed themselves from anti-British freedom fighters to neoclerics within a proverbial New York minute. The powerful administrative machinery, henceforth used against them by the former rulers,

ists, malcontents, etc.). The 1861 Police Act that provided for a police force tightly controlled by the central and/or provincial executive and answerable to nobody continues to be the law of the land in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, albeit with cosmetic alterations. The Second World War era Defence of India Regulations that provided for unlimited preventive detention of political opponents is as in vogue in Pakistan and Bangladesh today as it was in Lord Wavell's time. Only the name of the law has changed; in Pakistan and India it is called the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance, in Bangladesh, the Special Powers Act. In fact, the brown colonialists have gone further than the white ones by coming up with more stringent anti-liberty laws which skirt even fundamental judicial review (India's TADA and Bangladesh's PSA).

Similar bureaucratic omnipotence prevails in every sphere of life in South Asia. Every conceivable economic or social transaction, be it

starting a joint stock company or getting a telephone, requires endless forms, permits, fees and waivers. Human nature being what it is, frustrated citizens often try to make their lives easier by greasing the palms of the concerned bureaucrats to expedite the process of starting a business or getting a fax line. Economics being a science, this leads to those who have more money to get better treatment than those who do not. Bureaucratic discretion becomes the tool for affirming social inequalities and, at the same time, a source for unlimited corruption. The concepts of self-less public service and equality before the law are turned on their heads in a perverse manner. Colonialism lives on!

Over half a century after its *de jure* end, it is high time to end *de facto* colonialism as well. The economic malaise, political repression, and social corruption that is engendered by a high and mighty bureaucratic elite cannot be a part of the good governance blueprint that all developing countries, especially the ones in the subcontinent, are desperately looking for. As plenty of reports by foreign experts and local judicial commissions have opined in the last several decades, South Asia's three major countries have a

Mobile telephony: Saga of 3G

SYED M ALAM KHAN

"HELLO Brad. How are you doing?" "Oh Hi Pamela. It's a pleasant surprise indeed to see you after such a long time." The above is the introduction of a conversation of two buddies over mobile phone. The readers may be startled about the "see" part of the conversation. Well you are hearing a conversation going over 3G technology based mobile phones.

Mobile Phone previously a commodity of sheer luxury has become an inseparable part of the cosmopolitan everyday life. Factors like sharp increases in computing power, plunging prices for silicon chips and electronics, and advances in wireless communications have brought about revolutionary changes in the mobile telecom industry and made powerful technologies accessible to mass people. The technology being used in this industry is undergoing changes everyday. Almost each and every newest technology is creating a craze in the consumer market and 3G is the latest one to top the list. 3G stands for third generation mobile phone and promises to unleash immense potential for the consumers. In this network the phones will look the same as ever but the uses to which they can be put will simply explode.

In the old days, when all phones were fixed rather than mobile, making a call involved establishing a direct electrical connection between your handset and the one you were calling. The same happens with GSM mobiles, but instead of setting up a dedicated circuit, a small portion of the airwaves are reserved for your call. This is a really bad way of dividing up the available airwaves because it means that the spaces and pauses in speech get the same priority as the words. 3G networks change all this. Instead of reserving airspace each conversation is chopped up into packets, each one of which is labelled with a code denoting which dialogue it is from.

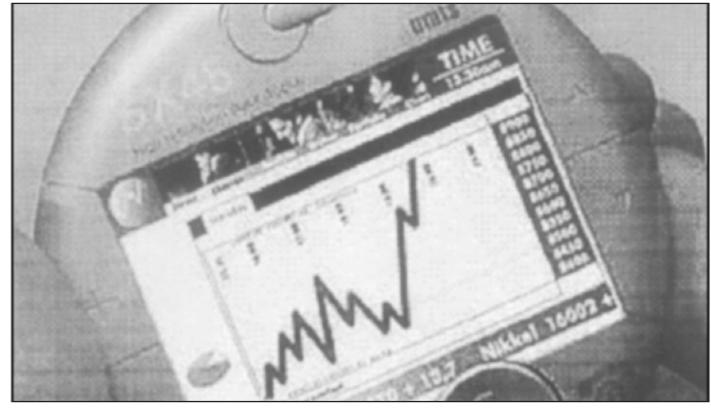
One of the most important features of 3G network is, it can support lots more subscribers and let them download data much faster. On current GSM networks data chugs around at 9.6 kilobits per second (kbps). By contrast the upper limit for 3G networks is 2 megabits per second if a user is standing still and 384 kbps for those on the move.

These are maximum rates and possible speed will fall as more people download data in any particular cell. It is possible that at peak times phone users will be lucky to do better than the 56 kbps possible over a fixed phone.

Since packets of information will be the conduits of voice and data, the users' phones will be effectively connected to network round the clock. Eventually, SMS (short message), video clip, e-mail, mp3 whatever is received can be retrieved without dialing up the phone. This flexibility also poses a difficulty about how the user will be billed. The user cannot be billed based on the talk time as s/he is connected to the network all the time. So, mobile

barrier for small fires' entry into this sector. So, only the giants can play in this field. The 3G market is dominated by a few marauder telecom giants namely Vodafone (UK based), BT (UK based), AT&T (US based), NTT DoCoMo (Japan based), Deutsche Telecom (Germany based), France Telecom (France based), Hutchinson (Hong Kong based). 3G is a fiercely competitive sector and the lure to operate in this highly profitable field, which is for future to decide, has fired the imagination of these telecom operators, some of which in effect have accumulated heavy debt from various sources.

Vodafone made the first 3rd generation mobile phone call this year in



April. This call was made from a real network located in UK. Vodafone indeed made a series of calls over a real 3G network, which is not put to mere test use, in Thames Valley. According to Mr Gavin Darby, Chief Operating Officer of Vodafone UK, "The advent of a new generation of mobile multimedia services will enable our customers to live more of their lives through their mobile device".

No technological advancement comes cheap. So, another side of this 3G tale is the cost involvement of mobile operators and individual users. European countries, with Germany being the first one, have begun awarding licences for their respective 3G market. And the results are simply gruesome. Six bidders have declared to pay USD 46 billion for getting licence to operate in the German 3G market. The record-breaking German auction has been followed by a similar contest in UK 3G market, in which the bid has been settled at USD 35

billion. All these exorbitant bidding prices boil down to a single question "Will it pay off so much money?" But getting licence to operate is not end of the story. In fact, it is just the beginning. It will require an influx of awesome investment for expansion, upgrading and maintenance of networks.

European telecom investors have already begun to show jittery feeling over the astronomical levels of debt companies have built up in acquiring third-generation (3G) mobile phone licences and investing in new mobile, data and internet services. Share prices of these companies have already experienced a rollercoaster ride. BT investors may have seen their shares slump 59 per cent in value over the past year but shareholders in France Telecom and Deutsche Telekom are nursing paper losses of 71 per cent and 74 per cent respectively. And shares in Dutch operator KPN have proved the worst investment of the lot over the past year, dropping 85 per cent. In all cases, the main reason for investors' concern has been the huge level of debt the companies have built up in acquiring third-generation (3G) mobile phone licences and investing in new mobile, data and internet services. Some investment analysts were skeptical to invest in these telecom stocks even under favourable market situation because these companies were saddled with heavy debt.

But this skyrocketing "billion game" of 3G market reminds of a similar story of recent time IT Bubble in United States of America. If this European 3G Bubble takes the same course of US IT Bubble then prickling the Balloon at a later stage will give the investors a nasty jolt. The 3G movers and shakers are apparently having a good pompous party at present. But one thing should be remembered for future "the longer the party the worse the hangover".

Syed Malam Khan is a professional in Bangladesh Telecom Industry.

Excerpts from the 'declassified' main report of Hamoodur Rahman Commission

MILITARY ASPECT-IX

The state of preparedness of the armed forces

An assessment of the state of preparedness in the armed forces is ordinarily a question of examining firstly, the adequacy of its manpower and secondly, the state of the training of the manpower. In the peculiar context of our circumstances in 1971 what has additionally to be considered is the impact of martial law upon the professional competence of the armed personnel.

It is to be regretted that we have not been able to find upon the evidence that there was any proper concept of manpower planning either within the armed services or at the national level. It is remarkable that, even in the critical months after March, 1971 when war was clearly a probability, if not an imminent certainty, the question seems to have bothered the general staff very little. It does not appear that even the chief of staff, much less then the commander-in-chief, ever showed any interest in this all important question.

It is true that we have implied above that the blame lies with the army headquarters and we seem to have failed to take into account the failure of the ministry of defence and the military finance. These too, of course, ought ordinarily to be charged with their due share of responsibility but it is to be remembered that, from the time that Field Marshal Ayub Khan became President, the role of the ministry of defence by degrees dwindled into that of a mere administrative machinery. This may well be regarded as an abdication by them of their proper functions but we think it was more a question of their deposition than of their abdication.

Apart, however, from the question of division of blame what we at the moment emphasise is that due attention was not given to this problem.

In March, 1971 when the emergency in East Pakistan commenced the reserve manpower stood at 53,000 as against the total planned requirement of 1,10,000. Nevertheless, there was no increase in the figure of 53,000 after March 1971. There was, of course, an entirely unexpected demand and

the provision of manpower towards new raising was planned at 10,000 but in actual fact rose to 1,02,000 during the year 1971. Naturally this demand exhausted the proper reservists with the result that when the war started on 3rd December, 1971 in West Pakistan no trained manpower was available as a reserve except old ex-servicemen who had long passed the period of their reserve liability.

In the case of the navy a phased

mobilization plan was brought into effect from April, 1971 and fleet

reservists and pensioners up to the age of 40 were recalled initially; however, with increasing requirements in East Pakistan the age limit was raised to 48 years and finally to 50 years. Later the ISPR directorate, without even consulting the naval headquarters issued a press release raising the age once again to 55 years.

In regard to the airforce the strength of the regular PAF airmen stood 18,509 as against the war establishment of 22,282. After some 4,720 East Pakistani airmen became incapable of being used, the manning level dropped to about 62 %. Instructions were, therefore, issued to recall airmen released in or after 1961 and later the date was extended to 1958, and as a result some 1,806 airmen were re-enrolled. In addition 189 airmen on deputation to foreign countries were also recalled but they arrived on and after 6th December 1971.

The manner in which the problem was handled is best illustrated by what happened in regard to the army; in any case that being the main service a deficiency in it mattered the most. The case for the promulgation of the ordinance, according to the adjutant general's branch, was initiated in April, 1971 but they complained that it was finally promulgated only on 4th December, 1971. After what is obviously also that as in the case of all arbitrary power, no subject to check, the temptation to use such power for personnel ends could not be resisted by most of the officers.

In addition, many of us find it difficult to disengage ourselves mentally from the martial law and the situation generally obtaining in the country even after units have been withdrawn from the internal security role. The present state of uncertainty of the political and the constitutional situation may well continue during the greater part of 1970 and the degree of physical involvement of troops may vary in different parts of the country according to the prevailing situation.

The year 1971. During 1970, despite the general policy of disen-

gagement of troops from martial law duties from March, 1969 onwards. It is true, of course, that this relates almost wholly to the army but in view of the fact that in the final analysis it is this service which mattered most, and that, as we have seen planning and coordination really meant the adaptation of plans in the other services to meet the army plans. It must follow that an impact on the army would be felt generally by all the services. We have ascertained that the total of 1,555 of army officers, were at one time or the other required to do various martial law duties, but more important than the actual number of the officers so involved is the fact that, almost with no exception, the general officers commanding divisions and the brigade commanders were so involved.

The GOC is the head of the formation, subject in general only to HQ. It was hardly to be expected that in this state of affairs the professional competence of these officers would not be affected or that their concentration upon their proper duties would not deteriorate.

Perhaps even worse was the psychological effect on the mental attitude of military officers in general. Comparatively junior officers were armed with power and importance out of all proportion to their normal rank and status, thus not only alienating civilian sympathies but also affecting their devotion to strict military thinking and training. It is obvious also that as in the case of all arbitrary power, no subject to check, the temptation to use such power for personnel ends could not be resisted by most of the officers.

In addition, many of us find it difficult to disengage ourselves mentally from the martial law and the situation generally obtaining in the country even after units have been withdrawn from the internal security role. The present state of

uncertainty of the political and the constitutional situation may well

continue during the greater part of 1970 and the degree of physical involvement of troops may vary in different parts of the country according to the prevailing situation.

The year 1971. During 1970, despite the general policy of disen-

Chechnya bleeds but not 'blanched'

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

THE drama of holding 60 persons including four Russians as hostage at a Swiss hotel in Istanbul by pro-Chechen gunmen a month ago (23 April) reflected the anguish and frustration of the pro-liberation forces of Chechnya. The gunmen reportedly said that they did it in protest of Russia's bloody war in the Republic of Chechnya. Although the rebel Chechen President Aslam Maskhadov did not approve of the action but he blamed the Russian Federation for such incident because of its policy of discrimination against Chechnya and Chechens.

The Chechens are fighting Russian 'occupation' for quite a long time and have not given up. They are sanguine Chechnya will remain independent despite Russian pressures.

Earlier a couple of months ago (15 March) the hijacking of a Russian airliner with 167 passengers on board by three Chechen rebels also at Istanbul was indicative of the struggle for independence of Chechnya. The hijackers made it clear that the plane was hijacked to demonstrate to the world the size of the army that he commanded was twice that under the command of Gen Ayub Khan or Gen Mohammad Moosa later, but in terms of equipment, the general said, he was by no means, as well off as his predecessors. It would seem that in terms of training also the increased army was not in as good a shape as the army just before the 1965 war.

The fiasco, which resulted in the bombing of one of our own ships by the Pakistan Airforce, was at least in part due to the inability of Airforce pilots to recognise ships of our own navy. Another reason for it was the increased army was not in as good a shape as the army just before the 1965 war.

Finally we do not feel that there had been sufficient training of sub-marines for such specialized operations as mine laying.

We have had no reason to feel dissatisfied with the training and fitness of the airforce personnel on the eve of the 1971 war.

TOMORROW: MILITARY ASPECT-X

interim council, Avtukhanov who tried in vain to call a halt to Chechnya's three years independence. It may be recalled that Chechen rebels are equipped with arsenal bequeathed to late general Dudaev, who was their rebel leader, by the departing Russian army in 1991. Therefore, there is no dearth of weapons on the side of the freedom fighters. Kremlin had made several attempts to conquer the tribes of the northern Caucasus. However, it took 30 years for the Kremlin to subjugate them at a cost of 300,000 troops and huge amount of national budget.

There is a tendency in the Kremlin these days to blame Chechens for any kind of incident in the Russian Federation and brand them as 'terrorist'. The three car bombs explosions in southern Russia, which killed 23 people and wounded more than 100 people, are some examples in this context. Without investigation into the incident the Kremlin authorities did not loose a minute even to blame Chechen freedom fighters, although no group had claimed the responsibility for the blasts.

The Foreign Minister designate of Chechnya Ilyas Akhmadov was received in Washington (27 March) by United States special adviser for newly independent states John Beyrle. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko criticising US officials for welcoming Ilyas Akhmadov said, 'Such a step by a great civilised power would have looked unnatural in the past. The latest bloody crimes by the Chechen terrorists in Stavropol region allow one to describe this Washington show as simply immoral.'

But to others this seems to be a tacit recognition of the breakaway region of the Russian Federation. The United States has, time and again, criticised Russia for violation of human rights in Chechnya and did not take cognizance of the Russian protest.

The Russian Federation authority also received criticism from Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for the violation of human rights in Chechnya. Therefore, it would be advisable for the authorities in the Kremlin not to fritter away their energy on unproductive issue and allow the Chechens to decide their own fate.

Health and nutrition

Calorie Count

Egg Dishes

Name	Service	Calories
Fried egg	One	175
Egg fried rice	1 plate	337
Egg on tomatoes	1 plate	194
Egg on potatoes	1 plate</	