

Agri University rampage a mark of mismanagement

Student reaction as unacceptable as name change is to students

MAYHEM at the Bangladesh Agricultural University has taken everyone by a deluge of unpleasant surprise. Students going on a rampage over changing the name from Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) to Mymensingh Agriculture University faced resistance, rebellion and ultimately serious violence. It was another sorry case of bad management by the government that borders on ineptitude.

The government hasn't managed to look very much in control by declaring that they had never wanted to change the nomenclature ever. It now looks like there are people who can issue orders without clearance from the highest policy making level and then let the political face of the government bear the consequences.

That such an order was issued is a fact because the notification and the BSS creed of the news are no secret. So saying that such an order was never issued only makes things look worse for the Khaleda government. Lack of information regarding the possible reaction to name changing is also a dismal fact. It was a decision taken in ignorance.

But that in no way makes the action of the students less condemnable. There is an increasing feeling amongst them that contempt towards public property is a sign of daring and machismo. One fails to see what benefit the students will have gained by resorting to mayhem which has left nearly 100 injured. Protest has many languages but none condones the kind of actions the students and their supporters took. In particular, one fails to see how the students could justify uprooting railway lines that are like the arteries of the nation and keep people and places connected. By damaging them, something much more than property has been damaged. It has become an attack on common people and their rights.

The renaming could have been managed much better and the government clearly needs to think through before deciding such issues.

And the students should learn that if their views are to be respected they have to learn to behave like students and not as members of demolition derby. If the name of the university is more precious than the institution, something has surely been missed in the education imparted to them.

Bloated bureaucracy causing underdevelopment

Saifur's suggestion to chop 50 per cent may have merits

FINANCE Minister Saifur Rahman has declared that the government could very well survive with 3 to 4 lakh employees instead of the present 10 lakhs that manage its functioning. He has also hinted that the government could pare down the work force by at least half and this was being actively considered. The Finance Minister was talking to the Economic Reporters Forum at the Dhaka Press Club on Tuesday.

The statement is an extremely significant one. Should downsizing become an issue for deciding, it will mean that the basic nature of governance as we understand it will be challenged. It has always been felt that the role of the government machinery populated by lakhs of people was to provide employment and no more. The idea that the government sector has a performance role to play is relatively new and by raising this matter the Finance Minister has pointed out the fundamental gap between welfare employment and functional employment. One wishes that this notion had arrived before there was a lot of donor pressure, as it will now look as if taken against one's will. But the bloated size of the government sector is no longer acceptable, affordable or sensible.

However, the fallout cost of this decision is also high. The huge army of the educated unemployed or would be unemployed will be a major problem with a potentially explosive socio-economic implications. That requires careful planning and will have to be executed not simply as a downsizing exercise but an economic management one. And the political expense will have to be shared between the two contending parties.

The idea is excellent but achieving the objective will require political will that may well be the missing link. The huge money-sucking public sector is a massive drain on national resources but no less is the animosity between the two parties. We hope that the issue will mean that public needs of an emerging economic reality will overcome partisan hostilities. It has to be realized that we can't have both.

India's 'war on terrorism' against Pakistan



M ABDUL HAFIZ

In its reaction to terrorists' attack on the Parliament building in Delhi last month India followed in a text-book manner the script devised and tried by the United States after its tragedy of September 11, 2001. The posture adopted and the rhetorics unleashed by India were also the same. She also took inspiration from how Ariel Sharon benefited from the script when early last month he launched a 'total war' against the Palestinians calling it a 'war on terrorism'. After the reprehensible attack in Delhi no agency claimed the responsibility. The government of India promptly blamed two Pakistan-based militant organisations, Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad for the crime even before an enquiry was held. The senior leaders of the government delivered a volley of shots of blistering words and chanted anchors of threats against Pakistan: "We will give a decisive fight till the end we shall liquidate terrorism and its sponsors India is keeping all options open and we will hit terrorists' training camp on Pakistan held Kashmir." These threats were, of course, followed by India's massive mobilisation of force 'as a

preventive measure'. In a knee-jerk reaction India unilaterally recalled its envoy from Islamabad and announced the termination of Lahore-Delhi bus service and Samjhota rail link from January, 2002.

President Musharraf strongly condemned the attack on Indian Parliament. But to Indian allegation of Pakistan's involvement in the carnage Pakistan President asked India for incriminating evidence against any Pakistani citizen so that he could be brought to justice.

raised her accusing finger against Pakistan almost instinctively. Although a Pakistani hand can not be totally ruled out in some earlier instances of terrorism in India or Kashmir, it appears absolutely insane on the part of Pakistan to commit an act of terror in India at this juncture when the world opinion is sharply against such act and India is on look out for finding an excuse to implicate Pakistan in some mischief.

In the meantime the political observers see several self-serving

once for all. Whatever could have been the intention of India, its attempt to achieve it the way the Americans had done in Afghanistan did not quite click. Because India is not America; neither Pakistan could be an easy target like Afghanistan. The arch rivals of South Asia are both nuclear powers and the international community will not let the brinkmanship of either go unchecked. The major countries including the US, Russia, Britain and China have already counseled and restrained. Tony Blair and Colin

question of 'evidence' or 'proofs' of Pakistan's complicity in the crime over India's parliament she gradually succumbed under duress to pressures India exerted either directly or through the US. Even without proof she willfully accepted what all India demanded from her. She did crackdown on the militant outfits named by India. Step by step Pakistan yielded to Indian demands of first freezing the accounts of Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-i-Muhammad, sealed their offices and finally banned both the militant

terror without clearheaded commitment to pursuing evidence-based lawful measures did not find favour with sensible Indians. The party of the Hindu Right ominously demanded retaliatory strikes against terrorists' training camps across the line of control. A large segment of Indians viewed with concern the threatening posture of "we will liquidate the terrorists and their sponsors wherever they are, whoever they are" adopted in farcical imitation of the US President George Bush's aggressive response to September 11 carnage unleashing a brutal war in Afghanistan. Even to justify a 'limited war' as a component of a 'new global war against terrorism' was considered by many as preposterous. Because what may start as a limited surgical strike is almost sure to be escalated into a full scale war. The danger of it will be tremendously magnified by the reality of both the countries possessing nuclear weapons.

It is rather early to say if the war clouds hovering over the subcontinent have really passed over. But the universality of the model produced by September 11, 2001 for fighting terrorism has proved wrong. There are other means through which the same desired results can be achieved. If the current Indo-Pakistan standoff can be stopped short of exploding into war it will once again prove that diplomacy still has a significant role in crisis management. It is heartening to see that thus far the international community particularly the big powers performed responsibly to avert the crisis.

Brig (ret'd) Hafiz is former DG of BISS.

PERSPECTIVES

The universality of the model produced by September 11, 2001 for fighting terrorism has proved wrong. There are other means through which the same desired results can be achieved. If the current Indo-Pakistan standoff can be stopped short of exploding into war it will once again prove that diplomacy still has a significant role in crisis management.

Pakistan also proposed a joint enquiry or an investigation by a neutral international body. The US also chipped in with an offer to involve the FBI in the investigations. But India spurned all such offers and suggestions and preferred to act at its own as the prosecutor, the judge and the jury. While blaming Pakistan it does not provide any proof but holds it guilty. India apparently wanted to equate itself with the US and its position before the latter struck against Afghanistan. She also tended to cash on the sympathy wave in the West on the issue of terrorism and attack on Indian Parliament. With India's political sight firmly laid on Pakistan India

reasons for India to implicate Pakistan in India's internal developments. The religious extremists and Jihadis in Pakistan have already responded with the hare-brained suggestion that the attack by the 'armed intruders' on Parliament building might have been 'stage managed' by India's intelligence or security agencies to divert public attention from the government's 'internal problems' like furor over the POTO (Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance), the election in Uttar Pradesh and so on and, of course, to defame, Kashmiris' 'freedom struggle'. At the heart of the whole exercise is Indian desire to finish with Kashmir's nagging problem

Powell visited the region to defuse the tension. Although both the countries are still teetering on the brink the ice has started to melt after the Pakistani President's recent speech to the nation. India is still firm on not allowing a third party to play a role in the dispute, but the US whose blessings are sought by both India and Pakistan has been significantly putting its pressure on both to prevent further escalation of the hostility.

Notwithstanding India's obvious limitation in waging a war on terrorism against Pakistan India's gain vis-a-vis her archival is not in significant in current stand-off. In spite of Pakistan's initial mumbling on the

organisations. It also apprehended the key leaders of the Jihad outfits including Moulana Masud Azher and initiated a U-turn in its policy with regards to the religious militants' role either in Kashmir or within Pakistan. Perhaps to balance his hard hitting speech deriding the religious extremists President Musharraf chose to withhold the extradition of 20 militants demanded by India. It is however an irony that the ultimate Pakistani response does vindicate what all India alleged.

Nevertheless, BJP-led Indian government's recourse to a dangerous brinkmanship in exploiting the post-September 11 war against

Police atrocities on AL demonstrators: Will BNP mimic AL's mistakes?

A R SHAMSUL ISLAM

THE democratic-minded people of Bangladesh were saddened at the atrocities of the police on the peaceful processionists and sit-in activists of the Awami League on the 9th instant during a six-hour hartal called by them protesting price hike of oil, gas, electricity and other essential commodities. What offended the people most was how brutally the former Home and Agriculture ministers Mohammad Nasim and Motia Chowdhury, respectively, lying prostrate on the road, were mercilessly batoned by the police, a picture that flashed live on ETV and other TV channels.

Evidently there was no clamping of section 144, no ban on procession, demonstration by the government. Even the criminalising police officer, an ADC of Detective Branch, Dhaka, had to acknowledge this lack of legal sanction from the government. Then to a question what led him to act like that he replied it was briefed so by the higher authority.

Incidentally, the former Home Minister Mohammad Nasim was heard shouting the condemned police ADC was the chief executioner of the infamous Jagannath Hall massacre tragedy a few years back. He continued the BNP having taken the rein of the government has rehabilitated those criminals. He roared in anger that he would restore his home ministry in coming days and sack that officer, an expression that was not anyway seemly.

The ruling Home Minister, however, put up a better gesture this time. He expressed he was sorry for what happened to his predecessor. It may be recalled that when asked a few days ago why the police beat up a sitting MP of the AL during an attempt for taking out a torch procession he replied, quite amusingly, the police took him (the MP) for a 'tokai' (street urchin). Undoubtedly, the Home Minister's reply to why Nasim was batoned by the police was somewhat polite and less impolitic than the previous one

though it could not rise above the level of being drab, perfunctory. When he feels sorry it will be commensurate if he comes forward to taking action against the accused police officer who by his act and deed caused him, the repository of the highest echelon of the law-enforcing body, to be sorry and the people, the sole reservoir of state power, shocked. It is not likely that an unlikely action against that police officer will occur. It will strengthen the popular belief that the police officer did not act on his own and verbal instruction to maul the opposition, irrespective of their individual status and background, came from the above.

The police criminality on that day registered other escalations too.

coming parliamentary session of 31 January next for its repeal. Very close to its dated death, the flash of last sign of venomous life of the condemned PSA in the hands of its killers victimising its creators may well serve as a classical example of a just nemesis of God. But the people of Bangladesh deeply weary of venom and vengeance do desperately long for burning the past and ushering in a new political order of tolerance, amity and constructive craftsmanship to implement which the people voted the BNP-led alliance to power in preference to the AL.

Conceivably, there is no dearth of protagonists of the BNP calling us to recall the memories of only yesterday when the then ruling party, the

suggested by one to be revised as 'The Half Truth', and finally brought out, as a rare display of writer's masterpiece humour, in writer's own choosy rename of 'Not the Whole Truth', we won't get down to the useless exercise of assessing if the allegations of the previous opposition BNP against the last ruling AL can be classified as to have contained 'the whole truth' or 'the half truth' or 'not the whole truth'. The BNP supporters will certainly claim us to believe that they (the allegations) are hundred percent true. Reciprocally will the democratic people of Bangladesh not claim the BNP not to fail to learn the hundred percent clear lessons that gleaned from the consequences of the repressive measures of the last

bound to fraternise with the terrorists who will find safe haven in the ruling parties gradually taming the latter as hostages in their (terrorists) hands.

To use the police for political purposes is fraught with dangerous consequences. Unfortunately all the past governments have committed this sort of crime. What a brutal truth it is that in our country the police can be genuinely dubbed as party's police far from being people's police. The police are no fool to take full advantage of the weakness of the ruling parties believing that the occupancy of the government depends largely on the support of the police wrecking the movements of the opposition. A consciousness of power is bred in their mind that

the chance of AL's attending the parliament. It has further questioned if the BNP sincerely wants AL to join it. Then what constitutes the ultimate design of the BNP? What is its ulterior motive?

Truly, while in power the chief of the AL and the then PM repeatedly pledged not to call hartal even if her party were relegated to the opposition. Unfortunately she has gone back on her word of honour. The arguments she has laboured to justify her non-adherence to committed pledge appear clumsy and crass enfeebling her party's already emaciated image. The BNP could have politically used this breach of AL's own pledge to further isolate the party (AL) from the people. Instead it is playing a self-defeating fascist tactic ranging people's sympathy on AL's side. One negative policy of the AL is more than compensated by a greater negative act of the BNP.

Amid growing suspicion about the goodwill of the BNP-led government two excellent public welfare jobs it is doing in banning the use of polythene, so much responsible for environmental and health pollution, and forcing the 20-year-old dilapidated smoke-spewing motorised vehicles to stay off the roads, have earned people's unstinted appreciation. It tends to raise once more the hope of the people that a government capable of boldly and smartly performing such humane, beneficial pieces of public work will withdraw in future laying its hand on fouling up with the inalienable democratic rights of the

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They indiscriminately fired tear gas shells on and baton charged the peaceful processionists and non-violent sit-down demonstrators. To cap it all two empty BRTC buses were brought in front of the squatting AL activists and that police ADC shouted ordering the bus drivers to run through the squatters. It was the non-compliance of the drivers that saved the situation from being a holocaust.

As if to consummate its action the police levelled a case under the infamous Public Safety Act (PSA) against Mohammad Nasim, Motia Chowdhury and two others accusing them of obstructing vehicular traffic and people's movement, attempting to damage the state property, hindering performance of official duty of the police. Most interestingly, the case was instituted only three days after the government's decision to scrap the law setting a bill to be tabled in the

AL, abusing the police and law of the land, denied the democratic rights of the BNP and persecuted its activists in numerous ways. The peaceful processions of the latter were routed by the so-called 'peace processions', sometimes spear-headed by gun tolers of the rulers, BNP offices and meetings were blocked and broken by the Awami hoodlums, many of Khaleda Zia's attempted road march were bailed in by littering abandoned trucks on the routes, herding hundreds of BNP men into jail and police custody with allegedly false charges under the Special Power Act (SPA), PSA. The menace of the then Awami MPs like Haji Selim, Al-haj Iqbal, Shameem Osman, Jainal Hazari, only to name a few, is too outrageous to be effaced from the public mind.

Like Justice Kayani's famous book first desired by the writer to be entitled 'The Whole Truth', then

government? The people have seen much of the woes of the politics of repression. It is bound to foster a politics of confrontation that kills the social peace and tranquillity nipping prospects of progress and prosperity. The last AL government was accused of this offence and consequently penalised by the people in the ballot. The BNP should keep off this error.

The main agenda of the government is to introduce better governance. To actuate it the government is required to pay full concentration on this subject. Indulging in fascist exercises will relegate the prime objective of the government to a secondary importance to the dismay of the people.

The election manifestos of the BNP-led four-party alliance, like those of other political parties, were primed by a crackdown on terrorism. Any oppressive government is

goads them on to perpetrate more and more arbitrary acts promoting personal designs being immune from the control of the government. The last AL government was prone to this mistake and people will be exasperated if the BNP foolishly mimics that fallacious course.

In a poor country like Bangladesh progress is to be achieved through a democratic political process. Democracy walks on two legs - the government and the opposition. To start with, a minimum understanding based on mutual respect and tolerance between the government and opposition shall have to be struck. The government has the greater obligation to be accommodative in this respect. Parliament without the participation of the main opposition AL is far from being meaningful. The AL has not yet joined the assembly. The revengeful attitude the BNP is increasingly showing towards the AL is receding

argued on whether *purdha* was mandatory for Muslim women or not. Being an enthusiastic reader of religion related books, I am surprised to see that most of the contributors did not quote from the most authentic verse that says '*purdha*' is compulsory and says how to perform it.

In Surra Al-Ahjab, verse 59, it is said, "O prophets, tell your wives, daughters and the faithful women to hang a veil (*chadar*) (when they go out) as it is the best way to recognise them so that nobody teases them."

Tafsir of this verse by Syed Abul a'la Moududi in the 'Tafhimul Quran'; quoting Ibn Jahir, Ibn Abbas 'Allah ordered women that, when they go out they have to cover their face by hang a veil and only their eyes can be shown.'

The problem with modern Muslim society is that they want to be liberal Muslims by practising 'Moderate Islam'. But there is no scope in Islam to be a liberal Muslim. There is no room in Islam to adopt some laws that are suitable for modern society while ignoring or denying other laws that are not very suitable in the modern world. Enayt Ullah Forhad Shukrabad, Dhaka

Purdah; no scope for liberal Islam?

It is very interesting to observe so many views regarding '*purdha*'. I have read all the letters that your readers have shared so far in the 'To the Editor' section. It was more interesting when I noticed that while they were quoting from the same verse of the Holy Quran, some were

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Political stability

Mahfuz Anam's commentary on January 11, has drawn my attention. Calling hartal and organising peaceful demonstration are not prohibited in our country. All the political parties use these tools which only brings sufferings to people. When BNP was in the opposition the called hartal the then ruling party Awami League protested it. As the tables have now turned the Awami League is now taking resort to hartal and demonstrations and the ruling BNP is protesting it. But both the ruling and opposition party should remember that for political stability tolerance not oppression is needed.

Parvez Ahmed
Savar Cantt. Nabinagar

Readers don't digest

While one has to swallow poor English, faulty construction, spelling mistakes and what have you in various news items etc. in your paper, it is difficult to digest a mistake right under the headlines in your esteemed daily of 10 January 2002. I quote below the lines which do not appear to fall on the right side of English grammar. "IMF's new, tough stance Every details of govt expenditure

demand to ensure transparency" Sir, I would imagine, every detail, would be appropriate. Perhaps, the sub-editing desk could allocate a little more time to the headlines at least.
N. Ahmed, on e-mail

Shahriar Kabir, a trouble maker

It is probably true that Mr. Shahriar Kabir is a troublemaker, who chooses his fights selectively and not on any moral principals and whose visit to India was to stir up more trouble and mistrust with our neighbour. But by arresting and charging him with sedition, the government has fallen into his trap and employed the favourite means of all tyrannical rulers. Ignore these middle-aged men with their '71 hangover and let's just move on.
MA
Dhaka

About textbooks

English medium schools are depended on foreign books, as Bangladeshi writers are not up to the standard. But there are a few books

that are comparatively good and various English Medium Schools have already included them in their syllabus.

Recently textbooks, of a particular writer, on social studies and science (I and II) came out in the market. However, the books cost a lot and the pictures would not attract the young learners. We have seen books of foreign writers of higher standard.

For example in Moinuddin Ahmed and Salma Rahman's Toddler's Workbook (page-44) the illustration titled 'My body' shows something else other than the main parts of a human body. In another book "Social Studies and Bangladesh (one)" by Dr Shahajan, page No 45, Lesson 13 "People who work for us", it is written "many people work for us in our society. They help us in many ways". For example: Farmers, Doctors, Nurses, Police men, Post men, Shop keepers, fire men, Hawkers, Carpenters, washer-men Fisher men, Cobblers, Trailers, Milk men etc." The author has mentioned almost all the professions excepting the teaching profession. Being himself a teacher how could the author exclude the teachers from the list?

We need to improve in many things if we want the English medium schools to include local textbooks.

Syed Rukhsna Zaman (Shanu)
Saidpur, Nilphamari

"Shahabuddin strikes back..."

Thank you very much for your editorial, "Shahabuddin strikes back and hard" (January 7).

It was a timely and appropriate editorial. I think the Ex-Prime Minister has lost her senses at the humiliating defeat of her party in the last election and therefore talking nonsense along with her party leaders. These troublemakers should give up their negative politics before people become desperate. We are bored of their destructive politics.

MAAI
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Yellow journalism

I fully share the views expressed in two letters (January 7) in relation to current controversy involving the former president Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and the Awami League. In one letter, the London-based

Bangabandhu's portrait on currency notes

The present government's decision to remove the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from our currency notes has no reasonable basis, except the small-mindedness of the ruling party. Almost every country has cur-

rency notes with portraits of its founder or illustrious leaders. In the USA, they have portraits of their past presidents, in Britain they have the picture of their ruling monarch. In India, Mahatma Gandhi's picture is on the currency notes. So is the case with Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines etc.

So, what is the reason for quietly doing away with the portrait of the founder of this nation from our currency notes?

Abul Mohsin
Dhaka

India-- Israel's good friend

In line with Toly Blair's statement a day before, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has said Tel Aviv fully supported New Delhi's claim for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. On the eve of his India visit Peres said India is an important country in Asia, a very good friend of Israel and that Tel Aviv is seeking New Delhi's support "to advance the (Middle East) peace process."

Describing India as a combination of fascinating factors, the former Prime Minister said that Israel supported "full-heartedly the accep-