

Law and order is part of state management

Sooner the government realises it the better

NEWSPAPERS have reported that in the last nearly one decade, ten journalists were killed in the southwestern parts of Bangladesh. Out of this ten who were murdered, only in two cases was there any satisfactory trial while eight are still left without any delivery of justice of any sort. It's clearly an indication of the state of the law and order as well as the justice delivery system as it exists in the country. While one may read this as significant to one part of the country, one should remember that such a situation is not unique to only the southwestern part of Bangladesh.

One can't deny that journalists do have some access to power. At least the media does focus on their death when it occurs so there is some degree of pressure on the law enforcement agencies. But despite such pressures the murderers of the media men have gotten away all this time. If this is the state of the relatively in-focus people at the local level one may say with some degree of confidence that ordinary people feel terribly unsafe indeed.

This news should be read with the other news that says that the top terrorists whom the police had publicly sought support for arrest have not been taken in. This is despite the fact that rewards were announced for information leading to their arrest. And now the police are saying that these people could not be hauled up because either they have fled away to foreign lands, gone into deep hiding or are being actively protected by powerful men. Hence the police can do little about it.

This brings up the entire issue of law and order as well as the nature of politics that defines it into question. In other words, we are talking of a system where the issue is not that of crimes being committed but of knowing how not to get caught. There are various factors which contribute to this but we clearly note that criminals are rarely unsafe but victims are almost constantly are.

The management of the state is now closely linked to the politico-criminal culture and our political leaders and the police have admitted as such. We face a situation where improving the law and order is becoming pivotal not only to good governance but also to state management.

It's no longer a matter of arresting criminals but one of protecting the state. As the situation develops further we are talking of securing the state. The present government's mandate for better law and order does need to be lived up to.

Let the post-election spirit be revived

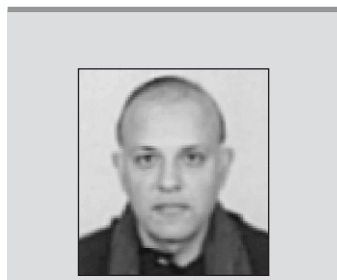
Stave off portrait vandalising spree

IN her first address to the nation upon assumption of office following a massive electoral victory, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia exhorted upon enthusiasts to the effect that they refrain from vandalising or disgracing portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman anywhere in the country. Her stance on the issue was greeted with admiration and her words had a tremendous impact on the ruling party activists down to the grassroots level. As a result, barring a few sporadic incidents, there was hardly any act of defacement of the portrait.

Unfortunately, within hours of the passage of the Preservation and Display of Portrait of the Father of the Nation (Repeal) Bill, 2002 through the Jatiya Sangsad, Bangabandhu's mural at the main entrance of the BSMM University Hospital was defaced. Some stray incidents also took place outside the capital. It is an ignominy that should have been avoided. The administration would have done better to anticipate that some quarters might embark on a vandalism spree as soon as the bill was passed by the parliament and taken measures accordingly to pre-empt such possibilities. Be that as it may, the government should now immediately step in to stave off such disgraceful acts.

The damage done to Bangabandhu's portrait couldn't have reflected positively on the government's image. We are confident that the spirit of the immediate post-election days will be revived by the government to deal with any further portrait vandalising attempts.

On Stern reforms



K.A.S. MURSHID

WE have recently had the privilege of having with us none other than the Chief Economist of the World Bank Professor Nicholas Stern, a well-regarded neo-classical economist better known in academic circles than amongst policy makers. In a speech to the Bangladesh Economic Association he reiterated the official Bank prescriptions for developing countries. The main planks of the argument are well-known but still bears repetition. There are three broad planks or points of departure put forward: improving the investment climate for both domestic and foreign investors, large and small (urban and rural); improving governance and the rule of law (and presumably property rights), and third, making growth more inclusive (a fresh euphemism meaning broad-based growth in which the poor and women are not left out). The above goals are apparently to be addressed through aggressive structural reforms on the one hand and improving macro-economic stability, the regulatory framework for good governance and physical and financial infrastructure.

Predictably, trade policy reforms has come in for special treatment. While conceding that Bangladesh was one of the rapid globalizers along with China, India and Mexico

in the 1980s and 1990s, it is suggested that the country's trade policy is in need of renewed attention, in order to 'respond to new international challenges and to help accelerate growth'. The most serious challenge relates to the withdrawal of MFA status from January 2005 when Bangladeshi RMG will come into direct competition with producers in India and Vietnam (and China after 2008). Therefore trade reforms

should be clear enough: they challenge a monolithic policy orthodoxy that can and does go wrong. The East Asian debacle of yesteryears should serve to remind us of the perils of orthodoxy.

Dani Rodrik

Rodrik while talking about the latest World Bank report entitled "Globalization, Growth and Poverty: Building an Inclusive World Economy" (December 2001) states that the

growth but even for integration in world markets. It seems to be acknowledging that its repeated assertions about the benefits of globalization do not carry direct implications for how trade policy should be conducted in developing countries. Closer to the truth is Dani's view that rapid integration into global markets is a consequence, not of trade liberalization or adherence to WTO strictures per se, but of successful growth strategies 'with often highly

on.

Ravi Kanbur and Bill Easterly

In a recent book Easterly exposes the sorry history of economics and economists in prescribing for growth, as they have moved from one fad to another. First it was the 'financing gap', then education, population, governance and so on. Aid agencies too followed suit, following

BETWEEN YOURSELF AND ME

The role of the developed countries in opening up their own protected markets (e.g. agriculture) is perhaps the single most important constraint affecting developing country trade potentials from being realized. Nor is it encouraging to note the use of the market-access carrot to for non-trade reasons, i.e. to secure compliance in non-trade arenas like security or anti-terrorism.

in a number of areas are considered essential if Bangladesh is to effectively meet this challenge. It is this argument that I will try and discuss a bit more. Let it first be noted however, that the sustained concern of developing countries like Bangladesh for market access has received a nod in the right direction from Professor Stern. At least a beginning has been made although it is very doubtful if the reform agenda of developed countries will change as a result of exhortations by bodies like the World Bank which do not lend to rich countries. The WB-Stern position has come in for pretty sharp criticism in recent months. I will briefly introduce the comments made by a few forceful critics - Dani Rodrik, Bill Easterly and Ravi Kanbur - the latter, it may be recalled, actually worked for the Bank before resigning amidst strong policy disagreements. The reason why we should not ignore critical voices such as those of Kanbur

report presents few surprises, and essentially, repeats the mantra that the countries that have gone further down the path of globalization are the ones that have had greater success in economic growth and poverty reduction. Dani however discovers that buried in the pages of the report is a startling admission: countries that integrated into the world economy most rapidly were not necessarily those that adopted the most pro-trade policies. From a Bangladesh perspective, this is easy enough to see. While it could be argued that Bangladesh's trade policies were much more pro-trade and more open compared to that of India, especially in the 80s and 90s, Bangladesh in fact integrated much less slowly with the rest of the world compared to India.

The implications of this admission are far-reaching. The Bank appears to be admitting that trade liberalization may not be an effective instrument, not just for stimulating

idiosyncratic characteristics'.

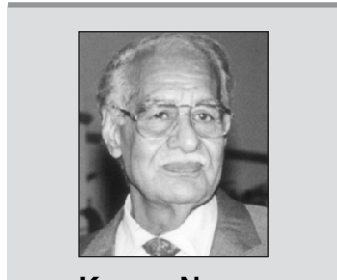
The example of China and India (often held up by the Bank as star globalizers) needs to be revisited. In both countries, the main trade reforms took place about a decade after the onset of higher growth. Further, the trade restrictions that remain in these countries are amongst the highest in the world. In China high growth started in the late '70s in response to private incentives in agriculture and a two-tier price policy. Import liberalization took place much later, in the '80s and '90s. In India's case, the growth rate took off in the '80s although serious trade reform did not start until 1991-93. In both these countries scarce administrative and political resources were focused on areas other than trade liberalization. The experience of South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam also suggests that deep trade liberalization is hardly ever a factor in fostering higher growth and expanded trade early

these fads closely. So what does lead to growth?

According to Easterly, high inequality and polarization in societies hold back growth, as does poor governance and corruption. For poor economies, a great deal of instability stems from events, both natural and economic, outside their control. Despite a tinge of orthodoxy in Easterly's position it is clear that he is a believer: 'free trade arguments are now supported by the experience of the past few decades, which has found that more open economies are richer and grow faster'. There is substantial convergence with the World Bank's views that speak for good governance, better delivery of education and health services, social protection mechanisms and integration into the world economy that leads to growth and poverty reduction.

Kanbur separates the proposition on trade, (a) that integration into the world economy results in growth, and (b) that the growth is equitable.

The RSS fatwa



KULDIP NAYYAR

writes from New Delhi

THERE is little that is new in the latest resolution of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) at its Bangalore conclave. The anti-Muslim bias of the organisation, which calls itself a cultural body, is well known. And its threat to build a temple at the Babri masjid site has become a cliché now.

What is new is the warning to the Muslims that "their real safety lies in the goodwill of the majority." In other words, it matters little whether they are good citizens, wedded to the soil, or whether they abide by the constitution and the laws of the land. But if they want to be secure, they have to be in the good books of Hindus.

For the RSS, there is nothing called safety per se for the Muslims. They must be at the mercy of the majority. This smacks of not only communalism but of gross racialism. And who will decide if Muslims have come up to the standard required? Obviously, it is the RSS.

The organisation's arrogance gets more pathetic when it touches upon the Supreme Court's recent judgment not to allow the puja at the undisputed land around the destroyed masjid. Of course, the Solomon is the RSS. The RSS

pronounces its own judgment and says that the Supreme Court has "hurt the sentiments of Hindus." Why? Because the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) was not allowed to take the law into its own hands.

Once again, there is a veiled warning -- this time administered to the highest judicial body in the land, not to deliver such judgments because they may "hurt the sentiments of Hindus." Who will decide that? Obviously, the RSS.

government. For a long time, it has been wanting to put LK Advani in the saddle but has failed to do so because Advani does not represent the consensus as Vajpayee does. For the RSS to stoke the fires of difference between the two at this time can be dangerous. It is strange that Vajpayee should say in the Rajya Sabha, while winding up the debate on the President's address, that he was so tired and angry that it would not matter even if he sat in the

Khaleda Zia government has failed to provide the kind of protection required. But many Muslims in Bangladesh have felt this and so has the media. They are fighting against those who are harassing the minorities.

But how are the VHP and the Bajrang Dal, which thrive under the protection of the RSS, different from the fundamentalists in Bangladesh? Should Bangladesh or, for that matter, other Muslim countries stop

and making it secular.

The unfortunate fact is that the PM belongs to the BJP, which is a political wing of the RSS. Only the other day he said that he was a swamyasevak. If this is his stand, then he has no business to be the country's Prime Minister. He must sever his relations with the RSS and should explain his government's position in the light of the Bangalore resolution.

Home Minister Vallabhbai Patel

BETWEEN THE LINES

The national struggle, which the country fought to oust the British, drew members from all communities. The RSS was nowhere in the picture. Nor were the VHP and the Bajrang Dal. All thinking persons should combat their efforts to disrupt the secular basis of our nation. Aggressiveness of minorities is bad. But it can be fought efficiently. Aggressiveness of the majority is worse. For it ends in fascism.

The point of warning is clear for the title suit of the disputed land is pending before the court. Then why to have law courts at all they have to watch that their verdict does not hurt the majority community? And what kind of polity is the RSS selling to the country?

The most disturbing aspect of the resolution is its timing. It has been passed when the riots in Gujarat have taken a toll of 800 Muslims and uprooted thousands of them. There are also persistent demands for the dismissal of Gujarati chief minister Narendra Modi and for banning the VHP. The RSS tried to put an end to these demands.

What is significant is that the RSS has expressed its unhappiness with the Atal Behari Vajpayee-led

opposition. He was also visibly hurt by the VHP's vandalism at the Orissa assembly. The RSS did not even mention it in the resolution.

The resolution justifies the genocide in Gujarat and characterises it as "spontaneous and natural reaction" to the Godhara happening. None has minced words in condemning what the Muslims did there. But if the argument of the RSS is taken to its logical end, it means that the killing of innocent Muslims is justified because some bad elements from among them who have killed Hindus. This is a new jurisprudence of the RSS.

The same kind of crooked logic has led the RSS to ask the government to apply economic sanctions against Bangladesh for "the atrocities on Hindus." True, the

import of Indian goods because of Gujarat? The RSS, soaked in communalism, can think of measures only on communal lines.

In India, the problem is that the Prime Minister has given the RSS respectability by holding talks with its leaders and consulting them on certain matters like the Ayodhya. What is the status of the RSS leaders?

They do not represent the Hindu community nor have they fought any election to prove their credentials.

The PM can consult anyone. But the question is not whether he can do so or not but whether he should consult people who undermine the basic philosophy of pluralism. I would have understood the consultations if the PM was trying to change the Hindu face of the RSS

wrote in September 1948 in a letter to RSS chief Golwalkar: "... It was not necessary to spread poison in order to enthrone the Hindus and organise for their protection. As a final result of the poison, the country had to suffer the sacrifice of the invaluable life of Gandhiji. Even an iota of the sympathy of the government or of the people no more remained for the RSS. In fact, opposition rev. Opposition turned more severe, when the RSS men expressed joy and distributed sweets after Gandhiji's death. Under these conditions it became inevitable for the government to take action against the RSS..."

Jayaprakash Narayan, who allowed the Jana Sangh, the predecessor of the BJP, to join the Janata Party in

1977, was a disillusioned person. He wrote to Prime Minister Morarji Desai in March 1979: "Some friends have repeatedly complained that RSS is trying to capture leadership in the government. The RSS, like other political parties, is free to influence politics and is doing that too. My only objection is that the RSS people are trying to influence politics with the camouflage of being a cultural organisation. I have advised the leaders of the RSS to merge with other like-minded organisations or the Sangh should get affiliated to Janata Party. They, however, refuse to accept my views in the belief that they have a separate cultural identity and they have nothing to do with politics. I totally disagree with this argument of the RSS leaders. Even now I feel that the RSS should merge into organisations supporting Janata Party. But if they are determined to retaining their separate identity I would again say that they should open their doors to non-Hindu like Muslims and Christians."

The RSS has a long-term plan. It wants to convert India into a Hindu Rashtra. Its ideology of Hindu rashtravad runs counter to our ideal of a composite nation. The national struggle, which the country fought to oust the British, drew members from all communities. The RSS was nowhere in the picture. Nor were the VHP and the Bajrang Dal. All thinking persons should combat their efforts to disrupt the secular basis of our nation. Aggressiveness of minorities is bad. But it can be fought efficiently. Aggressiveness of the majority is worse. For it ends in fascism.

Kuldip Nayyar is an eminent Indian columnist.

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

Bangabandhu should not be used as a political tool!

My ardent appeal to Sheikh Hasina to stop abusing her father's name to gain cheap political momentum and create trouble for ordinary citizens.

We respect Bangabandhu for his achievements, as well as, criticise him for his grave administrative



failures. No human being is above criticism, which the Awami Leaguers failed to grasp till today. Bangabandhu was not a god or a super human being; he had the natural ability to lead and led this nation to independence. But, his failures as an administrator must be accepted after the liberation of

Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina must understand that enforced (Constitutionally or not) showing of portraits of Bangabandhu does not garner respect. Real respect does not warrant such measures, it comes naturally from our hearts.

Now, she is using this as a pretext to destabilise the country and to cover up her massive defeat in the last election. I wonder what is more important than leading the country to economic and social stability, or crying fouls at every opportunity just to grab power! Please, remember that Bangladesh was never and will never be someone's personal property whether one's father or husband had contributed to the independence of the nation. The time has changed where such undemocratic attitude will not be tolerated.

Nafees K
Texas, USA

How is Bangladesh doing?

A recent UNICEF survey of 110 countries showed that the worst affected by malnutrition is North Korea, where 60 per cent of children under five are malnourished which is followed by Bangladesh and Afghanistan, with 48 per cent. Nepal, India, Ethiopia, Cambodia,

Yemen, Burundi, Eritrea, Mali and Niger also have percentages in the 40s.

Statistics such as these ought to force us to build consensus among major political parties, government and civil society to attack the problem of malnutrition and poverty rather than attacking each other.

Habib Khondker
Singapore

On Baanya's reply

I refer to the letter of Mr. Faridul Huda (March 19) who wondered "where will be her so-called pride if the disc is sent to a technical committee expertise on sound recording and it is found the otherwise?" And also to the letter of Mr. Ruhul Karim Manna (March 19) where Mr. Manna claimed that "anybody involved with the recording business would know that what Bannya replied regarding 'poor recording system' is possible".

Isn't it about time a technical team took up the subject and decided on the claim of Mr. Nazmul Karim (February, 6)?
Ashique Rahman Khan
Chittagong

I am not only shocked at the stuffing Ms. Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya (March 13) has used in her story evidently to cover-up her fault but I am also surprised at the silence of

Mr. Nazmul Karim, whose letter of February 6 has apparently instigated the 'global debate' on wrong wording in a Rabindra Sangeet. Is it that Mr. Karim has accepted the singer's reply or is it that he is in some sort of a dilemma? Would Mr. Karim please comment on Bannya's reply?
Rehana Pervin
Connecticut, U.S.A.

Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya's claim is absurd and totally bogus. It is technically not possible that because of 'bad recording' or 'over-use of the cassette' or because of 'a mechanical error' one word can be heard as a different word. No way it is possible, neither theoretically nor practically.

Whom the singer is trying to deceive?
Ahmed Shareef
Halsingborg, Sweden

No one can conceive that because of 'overuse of the master cassette' or because of the 'bad sound quality' or because of 'a mechanical fault' the word 'dar' is heard as 'dhar'?

Bannya should have been allowed to get away with a wrong word but not with a wrong explanation.
Aseef Mahmud
East West University, Dhaka

Ms. Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya was alleged for singing a wrong word in three different recordings of the same song. One sung by herself, and two other duets with two different male singers. Bannya has clarified her views but only about one recording of a duet but mysteriously she has kept quiet about the other two recordings. May be she is writing two more dissertations for those two recordings.

Another mystery is the silence of Mr. Nazmul Karim, who instigated this debate. The listeners would like to hear his comment on the singer's reaction.

Why is he quiet now?
Sayama Zaved
Lisbon, Portugal

Submarine cable

BNP's indecisiveness caused us to miss out on the earlier SEA-ME-WE 4 link up. What of it? Bangladesh deserves only the best and until we know which one is the best we will sit on our hands.

Remember the fuss when AL wanted to buy Leyland trucks for the Artillery corps? BNP's fortitude saved us from that and now we have Renault and Mercedes (made in Germany not India, thank you very much) to tow our vintage (but polished) field guns.

This time around with inflation

and the escalating prices for hiring mastaans (campaign volunteers) and spiralling electioneering costs, we really shouldn't begrudge BNP if they go for the Alcatel bid. After all, AL got kickbacks from fertiliser plants, frigates, MIGs, APCs and innumerable public works projects named after Bangabandhu, BNP deserves their share of the booty.

Rightly so; after all, we knew who we were voting for.

MA
Dhaka

In defence of English

To a section of our Intelligentsia popularising and talking of English is considered either snobbish or anti-national. This attitude is anti-progressive and lacking in foresight.

Yet, one has to understand that lack of proper learning of any language depends largely on the overall educational policy of the country and on the quality of its educators. It would have been perfectly in order for us to go all-out with Bengali had there been adequate published materials in Bengali whereby we could have easy and ready access to the study and understanding of all modern-day branches of learning. On the other hand mere celebrations of the Language Martyr's day year after year will not make way for Bengali to

attain its rightful place.

Here too English is inevitable. We need adequate number of authentic and quality publications translated into Bengali and Bengali into English. In the 21st century any language by itself carries no meaning. A language is what a language does and what it conveys to the world at large. Bengali is undoubtedly a very rich language and is spoken by a very large number of people in the subcontinent. Its literary value has long been recognised all over the world.

Yet the fact remains that English language is also directly linked with the economic well being of the country. With the world becoming a global village and English being the medium of communication in international trade and commerce its importance cannot be overemphasised. On the other hand within the country the need for learning English has become evident more than ever before. To day there are many a International corporate enterprises in the Banking sector, joint venture projects involving foreign funding including the offshore oil drilling companies where business is conducted exclusively in English. These corporate bodies not have the best of job opportunities. I have experienced that many a otherwise qualified prospective candidates are unable to avail of these job

opportunities, due to their lack of required level of command over the English language.

On the other hand the most developed technology in the world today is the Information Technology. One of the pioneers in this sector globally is our closest Neighbour India. No nation worth its name can ever make a stride in its development efforts without a steady and continued development of its IT. The entire business of IT is transacted in English. Bangladesh thus simply must take extraordinary measures in accelerating its programmes on the teaching of English nation-wide. Much valuable time has been lost and indeed there is no room for complacency.

Finally despite the fact that Bengali is one of the richest languages backed by a heritage of rich culture it must be understood that in its essence Bengali is a Regional Language as against English which has been from ages a Global language. Therefore English could also be a vehicle for making Bengali known and respected in the rest of the world beyond the jurisdictions of greater Bengal.

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka