

Intolerance gripping our politics

People's suffering reaching its limit

THE government's total failure to contain criminals and all sorts of anti-social elements had already made our life intolerable. And now the opposition's hartal spree is making it almost impossible. It seems both the government and the opposition are bent on punishing the ordinary people -- one by its lack of governance and doing practically nothing to give the people even a minimum sense of security and the other by its determination to create as much obstacle to normal life as possible.

The government, in the name of ruling has actually ruined the country in as many ways as possible. Today our shopkeepers, businessmen and women, teachers, journalists, etc are all out in the streets asking the government for protection of their lives and property which is every government's prime duty. For the last two and half years that this government has been in power, there have been several terrorist bomb attacks, dozens of gruesome murders, several cases of arson, loot, high level robbery and hundreds of cases of rape and violence against women. Practically nothing has been done in any of the major cases. Most shocking has been the government's silence on the huge arms caches that were discovered -- in some cases quite accidentally -- by the police. Till today we have been told nothing about where such huge arms came from, where were they headed, who were behind them and how much progress the government has made in solving these cases. What we got instead is continuous and fabricated accusations against the opposition. We call them fabricated for the simple reason that the government till date has been unable to provide even an iota of proof substantiating its claim.

All this has naturally created a serious credibility gap about what the government says. Its silence on the crucial law and order issues has only added credence to the public suspicion about government's inability to control the situation. A total sense of unease has now gripped public life.

To all this we now have the added hurdle of passing our already hard life and making our ends meet with hartsals. We have said for the umpteenth times and will continue to do so that hartial does not punish the government, it punishes the people in whose name the opposition is agitating. Instead of sympathising with the plight of the ordinary people whose lives have already become insecure and full of tension and worry, the opposition is making it even harder by calling for frequent work stoppages.

What is the AL's explanation for today's hartial? Because its two leaders were hurt the whole nation must be made to pay? We condemn the police for their action. But to bring our lives to a standstill for that reason speaks of an opposition that does not seem to care what happens to people who have to earn a living every day unlike the salaried people, or government servants or, not to mention, our politicians.

A new and dangerous intolerance is gripping our politics. A madness of arrogance of power. We say most categorically that the BNP alliance government has not shown even the slightest respect for the opposition. From day one, it has used the full power of the State to browbeat and cow down the opposition. For every evil under the sun the ruling party had only one answer -- blame the opposition and provide no proof to back its assertion. We said earlier and say it again -- the opposition received 41 percent of the popular vote and ignoring it amounts to ignoring 41 percent of the voters. This cannot be accepted by our people who have fought so hard and for so long to establish the system of democratic governance. We must remind the BNP and its leaders that as compared with the opposition's tally they got 46 percent of the votes along with other three allies. So if their 46 percent gives them legitimacy to rule then AL's 41 percent entitles them to receive all the respect and dignity of a party that enjoys that many voters' confidence.

Comprehending this simple fact is the first step for getting us out of the dangerous intolerance that is gripping our politics.

Regional partnership in water resources management



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

fostering effective and efficient water management in general within South Asia and cooperation and partnership between Nepal and Bangladesh in particular. What we require is regional cooperation and good partnership within the region.

About twenty per cent of the world's population live in South Asia. Of this, nearly 40 per cent live in the region of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) river system. The territory covered is second only to the Amazon in drainage area and

and natural potential have to be creatively and co-operatively harnessed to overcome the region's common problems of overpopulation and poverty, floods, droughts and ecological imbalance.

The water resource potential of the GBM region is available to us in general terms. The three rivers constitute an interconnected system with an annual discharge of 1350 billion cubic meters of water and replenishable ground water resource of 230 billion cubic meters.

In addition to the above causes, in Bangladesh, the magnitude of water quality deterioration has been further compounded by salinity intrusion in the south-western region. We have been suffering since the late seventies with this problem which has arisen as a result of drastic reduction of fresh water flows in the Ganges -- the major distributary of the Ganges. The quotient of health hazard has been further enhanced with the additional problem of relatively high concentrations of arsenic in certain water supply points in the system.

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navigation, industrial and domestic water supply, salinity control and reservoir storage and operation. The anticipated sea level rise in the Bay of Bengal would also significantly compound the problem in Bangladesh through coastal submergence and enhanced drainage congestion in the flood plain.

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It will be rational to start the development of water resources from Nepal, which is located in the upper reaches of the Ganges in the GBM river system. Such projects will not only cater to the needs of Nepal but may also focus on the vast and growing energy market in North India as well as in Bangladesh. The GMB countries could share the costs and benefits of such multipurpose reservoir projects on agreed terms.

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