

Attack on victory procession

BNP's democratic credentials badly damaged

We are shocked and horrified at the death of a Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) supporter at the hands of BNP supporters and party men who attacked the BDB's victory procession in Munshiganj last Monday. This is a disgraceful act that reflects a culture of intolerance and unwillingness to accept defeat with good grace.

Needless to say, this has done more harm to the democratic credentials of the BNP than any perceived long-term setback that the defeat in the Munshiganj by-polls might have. This senseless violence by its supporters has smeared the image of the BNP.

We strongly condemn this act and feel that it is up to the BNP to prove that such an act is an aberration rather than the normal behaviour of its supporters by bringing the culprits to book and denouncing such acts of violence.

We cannot but also express our concerns at the reaction of the BNP high command to the recent by-election result. An election result is the reflection of the electorate's feelings and the manifestation of their preference, and a way of sending a message to the ruling party. One might even consider it a wake-up call. While the BNP should rightly take cue from the message of the voters, the opposition need not over-exaggerate the significance of the defeat of the ruling candidate either.

Our concerns stem from the remarks of some BNP leaders following the Munshiganj defeat. It appears that they have taken this as a do-or-die matter and feel that the Dhaka-10 seat must be won at all cost. This frame of mind, we suspect, might prompt the BNP to replicate a 'Magura' in Dhaka-10, which will be even more damaging to its credentials.

BNP and its coalition partners enjoy an overwhelming majority in the Jatiyo Sangshad and one or two losses cannot make a big dent in their parliamentary ranks.

Winning elections is important, but it is not the be-all and end-all of politics. This electoral loss should prompt introspection by the BNP policy makers, rather than vengeance directed at their political opponents. It is time the BNP woke up to the reality before its otherwise besmirched credibility is further damaged.

PM plea to cops

But government must lead the way

It would be hard to disagree with the PM's recent statement to police academy cadets. The PM correctly highlighted that duty of the police to take care to ensure that they do not harass innocent men and women, and we have no argument with her request to the police force to maintain law and order and ensure the security of the people. This is the job of the police force, and the chief executive of the nation has every right to expect compliance with their responsibilities.

However, fine words are not enough. Concrete steps are needed in order to ensure law and order, and many of the measures that need to be put in place to maintain domestic peace and security can only be initiated by the government. It is the government that has the ability and the responsibility to enact the reforms necessary to ensure the smooth functioning of law enforcement in the country. The PM must back up her words by making police reform a top priority, otherwise the needed improvement will never occur.

The first problem with the nation's police force stems from the fact that they receive inadequate salaries, which facilitates corruption. Training and equipment are also far behind what is needed. The first step, therefore, is to allocate the funds without which a turnaround will not be possible.

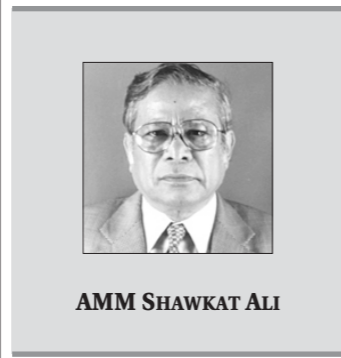
The next step is to seriously tackle the issue of the politicisation of the police force which has had such a negative impact on law enforcement in recent years. The police force must be a meritocracy to function effectively, with transfers, advancement, and promotion dependent on merit and not politics.

The final reform that the PM must initiate if she is serious about reform is to end the partisan use of the police for political purposes. How can the police do their job if they are unable to take action against criminals with ties to the government?

The PM has urged the police to not mistreat the public. All well and good. But in this regard one must note the government's recent crackdown on the general public on suspicion of being opposition party activists at the end of April. If directives such as these are given by the government, then abuse by the police is certain to follow.

Police reform is a good idea, but if the PM is serious, then she must recognise that the means to enact such reform remain in her hands, and act accordingly.

Unending debate about ADP implementation



AMM SHAWKAT ALI

IN the wake of the Prime Minister's directive to the Secretaries to improve performance in implementing projects under the Annual Development Programme (ADP), a lot has been written or discussed in the news media. Such discussions appear to have generated more heat than light on the issue of underperformance. Running through such heat lies the incontrovertible fact that it is in the months of April through June that there is a rise in terms of expenditure of ADP. This trend has been and continues to be a fact and not a fiction. This is what a recent editorial termed "yearend outburst of work." The editorial further commented that the PM's directives have an extra bit of relevance in the present context because of the marked under-implementation of the ADP in the current fiscal year. Is that right?

Delays in implementation

Post-mortems in terms of implementation difficulties encountered and project impact assessment studies are done by the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the Ministry of Planning.

Every year in the annual meeting of the National Economic Council (NEC), IMED brings the problems associated with project implemen-

tation across the sectors. The problems include delays in (1) land acquisition, (2) procurement, (3) project processing and approval, and (4) fund release/inadequate fund provision.

Other factors include (a) lack of full-time project director, appointment of project personnel and their frequent transfer, (b) inadequate delegated financial authority for project implementation, (c) conditionalities imposed by the development partners, and (d) inadequate monitoring and evaluation.

removal of bottlenecks in project implementation process.

Land acquisition

Although Land Acquisition Act has been amended and a decentralised mechanism for decision making in land acquisition exists, the problems of delay in acquisition remain. Part of the delay can be overcome if adequate attention is given by the acquiring authorities. However, when litigation is involved challenging the acquisition, delay is unavoidable.

replaced. Many view this highly centralized approach as adding to the list of existing roadblocks that will further extend the dilatory process of project implementation. In case of aided projects, the guidelines of the aid-giving agencies require that their approval is mandatory in such cases. What we have then is the fact that the project implementing authority in this case has to knock at two doors. One of the aid-giving agencies and the other of the Cabinet committee. According to government decision and delegated authority for project

installment, complete expenditure statement is needed for the MOF to authorize release. Here also timely and proper statement of expenditure and its submission can cut short delays.

It is also relevant in this context to point out that 'yearend outburst' of activities are caused by the requirement of the Accountant General (AG) office to submit the claims for expenditure within a definite time-frame. This timeframe for the last quarter of the financial year is June 12. Necessary papers, supporting vouchers

delays which can be avoided.

RPA

Delays relating to reimbursement claims in aided projects can be overcome if such claims are based on prescribed paper work required for the purpose. This can be achieved by appropriate training of relevant personnel. Sometimes the delays also occur on the part of authorities responsible for reimbursement over which the project management has little control. Finally, a more proactive role on the part of the development partners remains a necessary condition for avoiding delays in project implementation.

It should be distinctly understood that the list of constraints and weaknesses described above are common to all sectors and more or less present a global view. Some sectors such as those relating to civil works and infrastructure do not have the whole year to complete the allotted work. These sectors are handicapped by the element of seasonality in that they have to do such work between November through April or roughly the dry season.

The rate of overall utilisation

The rates of utilisation of ADP from 1996-97 to 2002-2003 maintained by IMED indicate that these have varied between 94 percent in 1996-97 and 1999-2000 to 88 in 2001-2002 and 90 in 2002-2003. Up to March 2004, the rate is 48 percent, which IMED expects to reach at least 90 percent. If these estimates are correct, an average of about 91 percent should not raise a tempest over a tea cup. On the other hand, these estimates could be much lower if ADPs were not slashed every year. There is a need for a more professional approach to draw conclusions in this regard.

AMM Shawkat Ali, PhD, is a former Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture.

WORTH A LOOK

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The above factors are identified by IMED and reported to NEC every year with recommendations to overcome the problems. The recommendations are generally accepted by NEC and appropriate instructions communicated to the ministries for necessary action. Even then the problems persist and are repeatedly reflected every year in the annual reports of NEC.

It is necessary to point out some operational issues that impede efficient project management and execution. Specific issues relate but not necessarily limited to the following:

- * Delays associated with claiming and reimbursement of reimbursable project aid (RPA);
- * Length of time taken in processing and approval of subsidiary loan agreement (SLA) for projects having a credit component; and
- * Inadequate pro-active role in making speedy decisions for

Procurement

For procurement, again the delay occurs due to long procedures from long-listing to short-listing, from short-listing to bidding, evaluation and award for contract. For local bidding minimum of 30 days notice is required. For international bidding the time to be allowed is 45 days. Apart from procedures which have to be transparent, delays also occur due to lack of knowledge of procedures. This can be overcome by appropriate training and creation of an environment that conduces to speedy decisions. Delays also occur due to unfounded allegations in procurement cases which need to be attended to.

To make things worse, it is learnt that the Cabinet committee on government purchase has recently issued a directive that requires prior approval of the aforesaid committee in case a consultant already selected needs to be

procurement approval, depending on the value of the contract, apart from Cabinet committee, the minister-in-charge and the implementing entity can approve procurement of goods and services. Under the recent directive of the Cabinet committee, all cases of replacement of consultants will have to move upwards to get the final approval.

Project processing and fund release

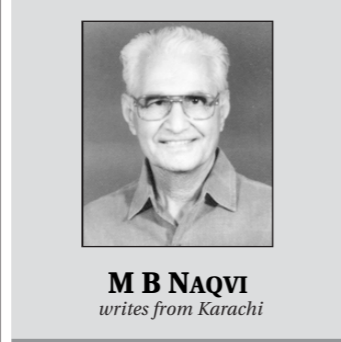
Project processing and approval delays arise out of procedural complexities and sometimes inadequate attention to proper paper work required for the purpose. The delays in fund release is not an important factor as first three installments can be released provided the papers are presented properly for which adequate attention is to be given to improve the skill of relevant officials in doing the paper work. For the fourth

are to be submitted in order to be eligible for payment of the claim made.

Recruitment and deployment

Proper and timely deployment of project personnel and keeping them in their positions is a necessary condition for effective implementation. Here also procedural delays occur involving advertisement, interview and selection. In aided projects, the appointment of project directors need to be vetted by the aid-giving agency and sometimes delays occurred. Frequent transfer and subsequent filling up of positions also lead to weaknesses in project management. Frequent transfer needs to be avoided which can easily be done if due attention is paid. Many of the above delays can be avoided if monitoring and evaluation is done by the Ministry and if the Head of the agency keeps an eye on the

Trend of the thought counts



M B NAQVI
writes from Karachi

INDIAN FM Natwar Singh has proposed that India, Pakistan and China should evolve a common nuclear doctrine. It is an interestingly fresh idea, though traceable to 1988. It has still to be fleshed out; it may not be quickly achieved. But the approach is fresh and breaks new ground.

The earlier official Indian thinking comprised making India powerful and influential. The motivation, apart from advancing India, included creating awe in others -- the true connotation of the word commonly used: Gaurav. Natwar Singh takes cognisance of the new setting in which India has to operate, with two other major nuclear powers nearby, the relations with which were -- and largely are, prickly. His proposal is for harmonising their relationships for common advantage.

What is a common nuclear doctrine for the three powers? Narrowly, it may mean each will cooperatively define the essential principles governing its Nuclear Deterrent: when will it be used, against whom, and whether it will be used preemptively or subscribe to 'no first use' notion, and so forth. All this defining is meant primarily to create trust in the other two nuclear powers. Implied in it is another notion that creating trust in others, especially neighbours, is necessary; the emphasis is on the pacific intent of the three nuclear powers vis-à-vis one another. This essential confidence has to be willed and worked for so as to be demonstrable; it would logically follow from the closeness in concepts and actions. For, an axis of three can also be aggressive in motivation. That this is not the case has to be made obvious.

Harmonising nuclear policies of

three powers is a huge task. See the widely different circumstances -- political, economic, and outside pressures -- in which each has developed its nuclear weapons. China's nuclear capabilities, obviously, were and are aimed at coping with the enveloping US and Russian pressures without forgetting Japan. It did not have India or South Asia in its mind. Pakistan had had no one in mind except India. India's bomb was unrelated to any specific threat. India had the

not. Each state has its interests -- political and economic. Each has a vision of what it wants. Which is where the Devil resides. Acquiring power and influence by a nation -- superficially non-controversial -- can involve putting others' interests at risk. Up to a point, it is a zero sum game: a nation's influence can mean, and often does, others' interests being subordinated. We in Asia have experienced the phenomenon, for a foreign policy grows out of the politics of domi-

half, if India also does so. Other members of establishment are also proposing solid-seeming CBMs; Sardar Ahmad Asef Ali, a former foreign minister, has proposed as many as six treaties, presumably comprising Pakistan's idea of Nuclear Restraint Regime.

But that is one side of the coin. Security establishments of both India and Pakistan are acting on the time-honoured dictum: talk softly but carry a big stick. Pakistan fired two Hatat V (Ghauri) missiles

the political (non-violent) support of not only Kashmiris but also fair-minded Indians.

Even if Islamabad wins the verbal agreement of the South Bloc about the centrality of the Kashmir dispute, what does it hope to gain? The Indian state is still determined to keep the real estate of the J and K State as its own. It has proved that it will do what it takes to maintain the status quo and it has a credible deterrent. What Pakistan could not win on the battlefield, it cannot

say: there often are hidden meanings in what they say. But this nonstop exercise of finding an implied meaning can be useless if one continues to wear old blinkers and which make people incapable of appreciating the significance of changes that have taken place in India. A center-left government has taken over by defeating the Hindutva-favouring right-wing government. Natwar's idea of looking to the future and setting a new course to evolving a new consensus among China, India, and Pakistan is a sharp departure from what BJP looked kindly on.

The differences in viewpoints in India need to be appreciated. The BJP school of thought had parted company with what was Nehru's legacy to India: not to attach itself to any superpower. BJP, for the first time, plumped for an alliance with the US; to it the US -- and Israel -- were a benign force in Asia. It instantly approved the US in its War on Terror -- and offered all logistical support in its War on Afghanistan. The BJP government looked kindly on all US actions in, and designs on, the Middle East, Gulf, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and probably what it may be planning vis-à-vis Russia, China, Korean peninsula, Japan, and Taiwan.

Natwar Singh does not seem to share that outlook. He seems to be perturbed by American supremacy over all of Asia, especially its modus operandi of unilateralism, preemption and control over sensitive raw material sources. An evolution of strategic consensus among China, India, and Pakistan would tend to undo much of what America is trying to do in Asia. That leaves out Japan, Russia, and the Koreans. Some day they too will have to be brought into an all Asian understanding. However, Natwar's outlook is a part of Nehru's legacy. His objectives appear to include a multi-polar and truly free world. One wonders how much support he will have from his own security establishment. Anyway one would like the Chinese and Pakistanis to seriously engage the Indians. The issue needs to be debated openly among the peoples.

MB Naqvi is a leading Pakistani columnist.

PLAIN WORDS

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capability of fabricating atomic weapons in the 1950s but did not weaponise until 1974. The world still thinks that India's 1974 PNE was, somehow, in pursuit of knowledge, but the stated motivation was no more than national greatness. This writer suspects that the PNE bomb was related to the vicissitudes of relations with Pakistan. But once India had the bomb, the latter acquired an autonomy of its own and created an influential body of beneficiaries of the huge expenditures -- a development that is universal.

The nuclear arsenals of China, India, and Pakistan were meant for different purposes. Nuclear weapons being an inseparable part of each country's foreign policy, the effort to evolve a common nuclear doctrine approximates to harmonising the three foreign policies. While it is a huge task, it has still to be attempted. Nothing is more important for all the three peoples than to be assured that they will not be victims of an atomic attack. But that requires not attacking one another -- with any weapons. There is no way to prevent a conventional war becoming a nuclear one. That will require growing harmonisation of their politics as well as foreign policies.

Saying this is simple. Doing it is

nant elites. It is not mere logic chopping that starting from the desired common nuclear doctrine and working back to how it can be achieved, one finally lands at the task of actually harmonising -- in broad essentials -- the main thrusts of the three sets of political and economic policies. Which is no bad thing and which is why one says that harmonising nuclear policies can only be the start of a noble process. It is this trend of thought that appeals.

One is aware that Natwar Singh has been criticized mainly by the MMA, a part of ruling establishment really. The gravamen of their argument is that the Manmohan government is raising irrelevant, and impractical issues in order to sidetrack the core problem of Kashmir. Islamabad establishment shares Prof. Khurshid Ahmad's views.

For its part, the Pakistan government is playing its realpolitik hand competently. It says it is happy that the new government in Delhi is committed to the Jan 6 Peace Process; it is ready to engage with it at an early date. But it also sends other signals: while President Musharraf shows an amazing degree of impatience about talks, he goes on making radical proposals like cutting nuclear forces to

to remind that Pakistan is not an inconsequential state. It has also been talking of buying more modern aircrafts and to modernize the navy. Local versions of industrial military complexes, largely bureaucratic in India and Pakistan, have no reason to worry: arms race is still going on and realpolitik reigns. India is also keeping its powder dry: it is inducting two more types of missiles (including Agni) in addition to ongoing build up. The arms race in South Asia continues to enrich those who always benefit from an arms build up. Peace makers, please remember.

The officials in this country fail to notice that this realpolitik -- despite several wars and half wars and several near bankruptcies of the state -- has led to what or where? Well, it has achieved nothing unless we define 1964, 1965, 1971, 1999, and 2002 as worthwhile victories. Each war was a setback: adopting a purely military approach vis-à-vis a big, more populous, more technologically developed and richer state with bigger armed forces and more atomic bombs is bad politics. Pakistan needs to adopt a more political approach. However hard it may be, it has to seize the high moral ground and fortify itself with

take through negotiations. The point worth repeating is that classical realpolitik is now a hindrance to whatever solution may have to politically emerge. A political approach that eschews violence is necessary.

If realpolitik of carrying -- i.e. threatening with -- a big stick does not help, a paradigm shift is inevitable. All that was disfavoured earlier -- a lot of people-to-people contacts, wide-scale cultural exchanges, free and preferential trade and economic and political cooperation with India -- may now be a must. The fact is blindingly clear: there is no hope of wresting Kashmir from Indian control by using our conventional and all nuclear deterrent. If Kashmir's status is to change, it will be with the concurrence of authority in India. Islamabad has to engage the common Indian for that because India is a democracy. Maximum intercourse of peoples is sure to effect a change in political attitudes all round. The interplay of political forces will produce an eventual solution of Kashmir that will last.

Reflex action of looking for hidden meanings in each New Delhi stand needs to be eschewed. Doubtless we all should keep our ears and eyes open to hidden meanings of what political leaders

OPINION

A need for grievance cell in health sector

YUNUS ALI SHEIKH

CERTAIN levels of grievance prevail in all jobs. It may relate to posting-transfer, training, harassment in working place, etc. If things don't happen as per the rule in one's career, then grievances may arise which harm the work environment, demotivate the staff, and obstruct an organisation from reaching its goal. The issue of grievance management has now been given the utmost priority in the present management context around the world. Implementation of grievance management procedures in any institutions would help in promoting and maintaining good employee/management relations.

What is it?

Grievance in industrial relations is a technical term. Any one may feel 'aggrieved' about the way management has behaved without having cause to raise a grievance. Technically, a grievance is a complaint that the employer has failed to comply with an existing agreement or well-established custom and practice. Grievances are taken by one individual or group of individuals against management about one issue. The grievance will be heard by a panel in a formal hearing according to the agreed upon procedure unless resolved through more informal negotiation first. A member who is dissatisfied with any aspect of his position shall be entitled to utilise the grievance process. A member who feels aggrieved should first discuss his grievance informally with his

supervisor. If the member remains dissatisfied, the grievance procedure should be followed.

In the days of Mughal law, there was a system of public appearance in a regular interval at Dewan-e-Aam to listen to the people for narrowing down the gap with the ruling class. Nowadays, the regular appearance of the top boss to the subordinates helps in maintaining a congenial working environment. In Bangladesh, the new concept may be introduced as a test case by establishing a grievance cell in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for dealing with archaic problems in the sector.

Why?

The tree Ps -- politics, paisa (money) and porichoy (acquain-

tance) -- prevails in all strata of our society, and has pushed out many honest and hard working officials from the deserved level in their respective careers. Almost everyone believes that the normal official system does not work without *tadbir* (persuasion and manipulation). "I have passed 25 years as an UHFPO without getting any promotion. Few years left for my retirement and still I didn't get any chance to ventilate my grievances regarding anomalies in my professional career," a disgruntled UHFPO of a remote upazila of a southern district told me. A highly centralised system regulates all posting, transfer, promotions, training etc. which hardly follows the system and encourages *tadbir* for individual gains.

"After completing my studies in the US, I came back home to join my government job at IEDCR. But the authorities asked me to join at the ministry instead of at my job place. How can I enter into the fortified Secretariat for my joining where normal entrance is simply impossible? I could somehow manage to take my file directly to the Secretary which may not be possible for many others," an official told me, preferring anonymity.

Speaking on managing grievances, Dr. Enamul Karim, Team Leader of UK based health sector development organization HILSP, said a grievance procedure can be followed which will explain the policy on handling grievances and the approach to dealing with them.

Timely management of grievances would help improve the performance of staff, said Dr. Karim and informed that India has introduced grievance management system for last 10 years where Director level officials usually attend the aggrieved staff once a week in lots of institutions.

How it may start?

Two cells -- one in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) with Joint Secretary and Joint Secretary (Admin) and another one in the DGHS with DG and Director (Admin) may be set up to listen to the grievances of health officials. The top brass can earmark one or two hour's time in every week to listen to the sufferers on appointment. The system will be very easy and does not have any

procedural bottlenecks to get access to the top bosses. A set of grievance procedure report forms may be used to quicken the action.

Benefits

- * Deprived/aggrieved officials will have access to the top management.
- * Increase management efficiency. Reduce adhocism.
- * Act as motivation among all staff.

Not only personal but institutional grievance to be managed through this system. For example, the fuel scarcity for ambulance despite persuasion through official procedure may be solved instantly.

Reduce inordinate delay in some urgent issues which may not occur in the normal file-system.

End words

The system of grievance management is now one of the priority issues which needs to be introduced throughout the public health sector. It will make easier the human resource management function and bring positive changes to the individual staff and the organisation as a whole. However, as has been said many times, whatever the management formula you apply, the person behind the gun is as important as the system. We need open and transparent process also to deal with the grievances. What the system will bring is access to someone would not have access otherwise.