

## Shooting at a moving target Black money puzzle

THE question of how to deal with the problem of black money is not one that lends itself to an easy resolution. The government has put in place a number of measures to encourage those with illegal incomes to "whiten" their money or bring it into the formal sector where it can be used productively and eventually taxed. To this end, it is stipulated that no tax will be sought on and no question asked about the source of certain investments.

But this approach has had only limited success. In the past three years only Tk 1,800 crore was brought into the formal economy using these channels, a drop in the bucket compared to the total amount of money in the black economy today, estimates of which range from Tk 50,000 to as much as Tk 175,000 crore (or between roughly one fifth and one half of GDP). Most black money thus still remains outside the scope of the formal economy either in foreign bank accounts or in fixed deposit accounts here.

The other problem with "turning a blind eye" or the amnesty approach to whitening black money is that it sends all the wrong signals to honest businesspeople who play by the rules and pay their taxes. The message is that if you are able to accumulate money unlawfully, then the government will try to accommodate you and that you have nothing to fear from the authorities.

A better approach, we feel, would be to initiate an aggressive policy of sealing up the routes through which money enters the black economy. The first step is administrative. A financial intelligence unit and strike force to check crimes in the financial sector has been on the table since 2002. The sooner this idea is implemented the better.

Some steps that the government can take to halt the accumulation of black money are to take a firmer stand against tender manipulation and over and under-invoicing. Most importantly, the government must take measures to eliminate the corruption and collusion in the administration which are key to the accumulation of black money. The government might also think about tightening the rules on fixed deposit accounts suspected to be a receptacle for black money that can currently be opened without any photographic identification.

Tightening up the enforcement regime, not granting amnesty which, in any case, few take advantage of, is the best approach to addressing the problem of black money.

## Reclaiming canals

The move can only fail to the city's peril

THE drive getting underway with a good deal of publicity to reclaim the canals in the city, most parts of which remain illegally occupied, seems to be hurtling along. There is little sign that anything substantial will have been achieved before the next rainy season.

It is a vital necessity that the natural drainage system of the city is revived through clearing the canals of illegal occupation. It is the only way to deal with the ever increasing problem of water-logging in the city. The problem has reached a stage where many of the city roads and lanes remain submerged for days together during the rains.

Needless to say, occupation of canals is a clear violation of the law. The encroachers have not only taken possession of these but have also erected concrete structures in many places. The city is deprived of natural water flows which are needed to prevent environmental pollution. But the government's plan to recover the canals has apparently run aground; because the occupants being influential, are trying to thwart the move to dislodge them through various machinations. So, the decision-makers have to make some determined efforts to neutralise the clout of the encroachers. And the issue has to be handled on a priority basis since the rainy season is not far away.

The government's move to reclaim the derelict or illegally occupied canals strikes a responsive chord in us. This is because, from time to time, we have advocated stern action against the illegal occupiers. Now that the move has been made, a high premium is put on its success. Failure will prove extremely costly and thoroughly counter-productive which the government can clearly ill-afford.

MAHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THE new of the recent acquisition of nine armoured cars with more in the pipeline by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), as reported in the newspapers, will most likely excite the young, amuse the gullible and may become an issue of serious concern to the discerning observer of our polity. Arming and equipping a special outfit should not ordinarily raise questions. However, the RAB, an admittedly civil enforcement unit through the legal extension of the existing Armed Police Battalions, has been statutorily entrusted with two principal functions of collection of "intelligence in respect of crime and criminal activities" and "investigation of any offence on the direction of the government." In the background of such job description, the organisational goal of police and the ground reality relating to the actual threat perception, the public may justifiably be enlightened about the benefit or otherwise of the acquisition of the aforementioned armoured cars hitherto used only by the defence forces in our scenario.

### Ground reality and identity

Maintenance of internal order and ensuring security, which among other things includes prevention and detection of crime through intelligence, should always be a police function. In the discharging of such functions there have been some occasions in some particular places of the country where the police have used weapons that are predominantly military. It has been more of an exception than a rule and that too in some declared or earmarked places. Therefore, it is quite relevant to ask why has it been necessary for an elite unit of the police department to use a manifestly military transport throughout the country and with what outweighing benefits? This query assumes added significance

at a time when it has been authoritatively claimed that due to RAB's operations serious crimes have registered a sharp decrease and veteran criminals are on the run.

A pertinent question in view of the above, relates to the real threat perception. What type of miscreants are the targets of the armoured cars? Understandably,

funds for obtaining secret information and modernising the forensic laboratory might serve some useful purpose in accomplishing the statutorily stipulated objective. For understandable reasons, the necessity of nabbing the terrorists and armed miscreants is a priority. For that we need credible and actionable intelligence which in turn depends

plaints. While the law and regulation categorically forbids such practices, reality on ground tells an unpalatably different story.

### Fixing the priority

Now may be the time when we must know why investigative efficiency of the police has deteriorated so sharply over the years and whether such efficiency can

last decade has brought us to a situation where we are uncomfortably witnessing external agencies dealing with matters on our soil in which we may at best seek expert opinion only. Purchasing lethal weapons may serve inadequately explained goals but investigation has to be scientific and level-headed to prove equal to the stress following an incident and

approach to the future through a strategic plan should be a priority. The policing programmes should endeavour to provide that kind of service which can consistently meet the needs and expectations of different segments of the community within current and anticipated resource. The thrust of police planning should be to endear the organisation to the community by establishing an enduring partnership in the objective of reducing crime and maintaining order.

### Elitism and excellence

In matters of law enforcement we have to decide whether we are unwittingly creating pockets of doubtful excellence in an ever-expanding environment of inefficiency and inactivity. We have to ascertain whether attainment of such excellence is hampering the securing of organisational goals. Additionally, we may have to examine if disproportionately larger resources are spent for attaining the excellence at the expense of equally important functional area at a time when funds for law enforcement are hard to come by. Simultaneously, we have to determine if elitism can achieve the desired goal in an expansionary form. Elite forces, by definition and experience, remain limited to very specific area and functions. It usually has a trim existence. We may have to find out if the additional perks and privileges of the elite outfit are a damper to other units who are entrusted with the performance of analogous functions. Last but not the least whether the increased militarisation of a civil enforcement unit will give rise to organisational imbalance is an aspect that needs serious examination by the policymakers. A rough and tough exterior only is not a panacea for law enforcement.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is former Inspector General of Police and Secretary to the Government.

mass protests or demonstrations are not to be scared into submission or inaction by fearsome display. So where is the threat of dangerously armed assembly of organised criminals that may destabilise our society? Speaking of the sub-continent it is only in Karachi that the police are using armoured vehicles because there the number of unauthorised 'Kalashnikovs' in criminal possession stands at a staggering one hundred thousand, not to speak of other deadly weapons and there are several no-go areas for the police in that city. Do we have a situation even faintly resembling that? If not then why purchase these heavy duty capital machinery at a high price? Into whose hearts the authorities would like to strike fear when the deadly adversary is not seen on ground? Can the police befriend the community or endear itself to the people by the display of the hardware? These are questions that need to be answered.

### Cost-benefit factor and image

Experts tell us that the collection of "intelligence in respect of crime and criminals" and "investigation of any offence" will not be boosted by the acquisition of armoured cars. However, earmarking large

largely on commitment of financial resources. We need pragmatic and judicial allocation of resources. We have to scientifically empower the police organisation in specifics of investigation. The absence of a desirable scientific mind encourages police officers to abuse their discretionary powers and to resort to irregular and illegal methods and practices. Unnecessary use of physical force and third degree methods for extracting confession of the accused are common com-

be regained in isolation without setting the expected organisational goal of the police. It may also be appropriate now to know the pattern of resource allocation for increasing the professional competence of investigative outfits. We may have to know if there is a lack of proper emphasis in fixing priorities and deciding the core functions of police in a pluralist society like ours. We have to appreciate that the cumulative neglect towards increasing the investigative efficiency over the

credible enough to withstand the subsequent test of rigorous scrutiny in the court of law.

### Focal point and service delivery

It serving the people is our avowed goal then we can no longer neglect the improvement of at least the physical condition of the police stations. A number of buildings housing the police stations of Dhaka Metropolitan area are in a pitiable state. There is no doubt that the police stations are the focal points of service delivery. The need for more resources at the police stations is obvious as we ask for courteous, prompt and professional service at this point. No responsible citizen will dispute the proper equipping of enforcement unit but we should be prudent to devote increased attention and allocate enhanced resources to what one may call 'mainstream policing'. Ad-hocism has reigned supreme for a painfully long time.

We have to be cognisant of the fact that the demand for police services of our rapidly growing society has increased at a faster rate than the growth and expansion of its service delivery capacity. There is a need to rationalise the importance of operational policing. To do that a structured



Militarisation of civil enforcement?

## OPINION

## The recognition story An insider's view

M. SHAFIULLAH

IN the first week of January 1972 the captor told the prisoner in the solitary confinement that his country was free and whether he would like to go to New Delhi to reach Dhaka. The prisoner released from death row preferred to travel to London on way to his independent country. It was on 8 January 1972 the founder of the new nation reached London along with his fellow prisoner Dr. Kamal Hossain. On reaching London he said, "It was a journey from darkness to light." Soon after, his roaring voice was heard on the radio world over. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was asking the freedom loving nations to recognise his country - Bangladesh.

Before Bangladesh's return to Dhaka on 10 January only two countries - Bhutan and India - recognised the new state in December 1971. His return had home was a kind of favourable wind blowing to the mast of Bangladesh - country after country accorded recognition to Dhaka. Only those that suffered material, moral and strategic defeat along with Pakistan in the Liberation War of Bangladesh kept out of the race. Defeated axis emerged in the new

role to block entry of the new nation into the UN and other fora so that the newborn die in the bathtub. Machination of the powerful countries like China, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United States were a matter of deep concern for the nascent state. At the touch of magic wand of the 'old gypsy man' erstwhile foes are now friends of Bangladesh Bangladesh! It only proves the time-tested edict that there is no permanent friend or foe in the interstate relations; only the interest of the nation is permanent.

Caught in the cobweb of the Cold War era East Pakistan was a strategic staging point for mainland Pakistan and China in their bid to contain India with whom both had a number of issues to settle. Sino-Pak strategic alliance was a natural growth proving the other axiom that "my enemy's enemy is my friend". China squarely challenged the man, material, political and diplomatic support of India behind Bangladesh's Liberation by similar support to Pakistan to ensure her national interest in the sub-continent. In the Cold War divide United States wanted to befriend China against Washington's rival Moscow and therefore exploiting her alliance with Pakistan to open window to Beijing.

Merrily Pakistan became a conduit between Washington and Beijing. Henry Kissinger made his secret journey from Islamabad to Beijing in mid 1971.

It was convergence of the interests of China and the United States to keep Pakistan united that mattered most over the self-determination of the East Pakistanis in 1971. Liberation of Bangladesh upset their strategic calculation and was a severe blow to their plan and what they subsequently did was only a natural response from a wounded lion. Ambassador M. M. Rezaul Karim's observation that the Chinese delayed recognition to Bangladesh for nearly four years "from complete misunderstanding about the very raison d'etre of Bangladesh" [Independence Day Special, The Daily Star, 26 March] and "Out of ignorance of China of Bangladesh Liberation War" [Prothom Alo 24 March, 2005] is not perhaps saying the whole truth.

He also wrote that Saudi Arabia delayed recognition because "Saudi monarch gave in to Pakistani propaganda that Bangladesh was born due to the machinations of a Hindu India determined to divide and weaken the largest Muslim state in the world." The fact

is that when Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury and Dr. Kamal Hossain met the Saudi King Faisal, they were told that Saudis view secularism in the Bangladesh constitution as an obstacle as it meant anti-religion At their Algiers meeting in the sideline of Non-Aligned Summit in 1973 King Faisal wanted that Bangladesh should declare itself as an Islamic Republic as it was a Muslim majority state to which Bangabandhu responded that Pakistan was an Islamic Republic yet her soldiers carried genocide and raped hundreds and thousands of women in Bangladesh in 1971. Bangladesh was not to follow Pakistan. The meeting ended rather abruptly.

Meanwhile King Faisal was assassinated. King Khalid accorded recognition to Bangladesh after the assassination of Bangabandhu in 1975. For the sake of record a few words needed to be said on the OIC membership since some inaccuracy appears to have crept up in the "Recognition story" under reference. Words came in through diplomatic channel that a group of Arab Foreign Ministers would be coming headed by Kuwait Foreign Minister carrying invitation for the Prime Minister of

Bangladesh to participate in the OIC Summit in Lahore. A Kuwaiti jet was to reach Dhaka in the evening of 21 February 1974. Gonobhavan officials and Foreign Office protocol waited till 2 am when the jet landed at the Tejgaon Airport.

Delegation consisting of the Foreign Ministers of Kuwait, Somalia, Senegal, Representative of Algeria and the Secretary-General of OIC was taken to Gonobhavan at Ramna where Bangabandhu with Dr. Kamal Hossain and Foreign Secretary Fakhruddin Ahmed arrived for discussion. The crucial meeting lasted till early hours of 22 February when the Prime Minister ultimately accepted the invitation letter to join OIC summit in Lahore on condition of prior recognition of Pakistan to Bangladesh. Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, [he is still the Foreign Minister] assured the Bangladesh leader that within 24 hours of reaching Islamabad recognition would follow. Kuwaiti jet flew westward as the sun rose in the east on 22 February.

It was in the late afternoon that the much-awaited announcement came on the teleprinter at Gonobhavan. Prime Minister's immediate reaction

was that "Bangladesh also recognises Pakistan. It is a mutual recognition". The next day Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and President of Algeria Houari Boumediene sent his plane to Dhaka to fetch Bangabandhu to Lahore. General Tikka Khan, Chief of Staff of Pakistan Army, who had imprisoned the leader of Bangladesh and started genocide on 25 March night, accorded distinguished salute to Sheikh Mujib while the national Anthem of Bangladesh was played for the first time on the Pakistani soil. Sheikh Mujib occupied the centre stage and Bangladesh was accorded membership of OIC with thunderous acclamation. At the end of the summit, President Anwar Saadat of Egypt, the most powerful Arab nation brought Bangabandhu from Lahore to Dhaka in his plane.

That was the image of the man in the comity of nations and of the country he carved out for the Bengalees. Where are we today?

Former Ambassador M. Shafiqullah was Press Officer at the Gonobhavan from 1972 to 1975

## TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

### Indigenous people

I appreciate very much Thuihla Mong's letter on Marmas. Marmas and other indigenous people need to come forward and demand preservation of their unique cultures. We need them more than they need us! It would be very sad if the majority imposes their hegemony on those indigenous people and force them to become more like Bengalees. The government should protect these tribes, before they take the law in their own hands.

Dev Saha  
Boston University, US

### Modification of caretaker system

Recently, The Daily Star published an interesting letter that questioned the justification of AL demand for modification of the caretaker system (Why this demand? Nur Jahan Chittagong). The writer correctly

pointed out that the AL was the prime force behind the introduction of the caretaker system. However, we must understand that every system has advantages and disadvantages. When we start a system we may not foresee all of these benefits or faults. However, over time we may find out the faults of a system. That is why every system sees changes. Bangladesh started with the parliamentary system of democracy and then moved to the presidential system and now again to the parliamentary system. Change is part of life. We learn from our mistakes and then modify ourselves. The

AL does not want to abandon the caretaker system but wants some modifications only.

The AL thinks that the BNP is trying to abuse this system by appointing a BNP sympathiser as chief of the caretaker government. The BNP has increased the age limit of retirement for the judges, thus

effectively allowing the former chief justice to become next chief of caretaker government. The AL is thus justified to think that the caretaker government will not be neutral.

Rashed Choudhury  
Winnipeg, Canada

### The challenge

I totally agree with, and as a student of a renowned English medium school, support Zeenat Z. Syed and her overall views. I am a class 8 student and I have two more years before my O-level examinations. I can already feel the heat and I am really tensed about it like any other boy who is desperate to make his way up. It is true that we have many negative sides. No doubt about that, but on the other hand I would also like to mention that we, the students of English medium schools also play and will play a vital role in our country's development. Competition is increasing day by day. The future

will only belong to those who are the best of the best. No second chance. In this situation I would like to say that we have a big advantage and we are better prepared to face the real world.

As Ms. Zeenat has said, anyone who has the will to become the best can succeed. I know this writing would not make much of a difference, but one thing that we should all know is that there is no harm in sending children to English medium schools.

Adeeb Tawseef  
Ramna Estate Complex, Dhaka

### Whither teaching ethics?

The preliminary findings by the UGC on the state of the numerous private universities in Bangladesh (53, out of which 41 are located in capital Dhaka) makes distressing reading (Mar 22). One university has no students, and another

university has six departments with only two teachers! Like the medical clinics, the professors are flitting from one place to another in part-time engagements! Part time pursuit of knowledge, and the other part devoted to business-politics?

It is an open secret that the private universities are doing roaring business in offering mass-produced degrees, like the so-called manpower agencies that send our labour abroad under false promises. Also there are numerous advertisements in the press of lucrative courses of higher studies abroad. Boom in sunshine or shadow?

The trend is shady economic boom that is also seen in other sectors such as politics (which has now become a business). Air-conditioned shopping malls for the quick-rich class and handling costly projects in the public sector and re-tendering many times to please certain groups (plus the

resultant delays which are not at all in public interest, such as the undersea cable and the performance of the public telephone sector).

What is happening to the morality of the teachers? Who will teach the teachers? It is a fundamental question, and this type of question should not arise in any good and healthy changing society. Our education is turning to cosmetic teachingsapings without roots, or the right type of soil. The future of Bangladesh is not bright, as the adverse after-effects are delayed and will last for a long time (at least a generation).

We are too obsessed with bad politics. The services rendered by the politicians to the 'developing' society is marginal, to say the least. Where are the national debates and the mass-awareness campaigns?  
AHusnain  
Dhaka

### Congratulations!

Congratulations to Arif Reza for his winning the second prize at SOFTEC-2005. What's next? The next stage of the achievement is to transfer the success into winning commercial products.

How: The devices, which can identify individuals or things, have many commercial applications in industries starting from retail to security.

Reality: Once the concept is transformed into product, it will find there are other similar products in the market as well.

Not a problem: No matter how hard the competition is cost competitiveness and product differentiation would find its way out.

Charity begins at home: Even before it has gone into the international market, locally the product versions can be used in as many places as possible. The fund generated can be recycled into adaptation, diversification, development,

value addition and so on.

Creating internal demand. Keep spinning the creative cycle.

I hope such collective successes would lead to commercial successes and a new niche for Bangladesh.

Mahmud  
On e-mail

### Good cover story

At first I would like to thank Mr. Mustafa Zaman for his well thought out report. We seem to have forgotten that we have a rich heritage. We should come forward to protect the historical heritages and sites. Otherwise, they will be lost forever. And that will indeed be a great loss to the nation.

Md Iteharul Alam  
Chittagong College  
Chittagong