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# Reform the police

The misuse of the police, and ideas towards a new approach to police reforms (BMRE) were well analysed by a retired IGP (DS, June 3); on the basis of his life-long experience and inside knowledge. It is not that the senior police officers in service are unaware of the adverse implications of the ways the police are used by their political masters.

What needs to be built up is the citizens' forum for awareness campaigns (as we have in the other sectors—food, hunger, poverty, anti-smoking, gender discrimination, health, etc). This is a sensitive area (politically), hence perhaps the NGOs avoid the issue (fear of lathi charge?)!

The police are misused by the political parties and/or autocratic regimes in power in the third world countries; and Bangladesh is no exception (the toddler-crawling effect). The rulers are aware of it, and side-track the reforms, on various masterly and passionate

pleas to public conscience. Oratory and eloquence occupy high places in our cultural evaluation index!

It is the attitude of the players, the regulators, and the referees involved in the game of policing a society. Decades of dubious practices have turned the evil game into a bad culture, with deep roots; and now it is very difficult (needs a mini-revolution) to uproot the system, when politics itself is unstable. The motivation is simple, but distorted: first the survival of the party—the nation comes second! That explains the hate campaigns of our netas.

The critics have to list the various tools and methods the political parties use to achieve their immediate goals, and come up with draft reforms, pointing out the misuse of the police force. The commissioning of Commissions is not the end game, as mere paper reports stacked in files serve no end. There are two

weak areas: lack of political will; and absence of continuity.

Politics based on hate campaigns are anti-people crimes, with no avenues open for redress. Answer: choose the right MPs. How? There are many slips between the cup and the lips. The vicious cycles, and closed circles, (more than one in different locations) have to be smashed. The current limping political leaders cannot do it, as they depend on past names; and cannot stand on their own feet, independently. Our bony structures need too much cushioning effect!

On the other hand, fat has spongy effect, and absorbs garbage also. Three decades is a long period (more than one generation) for finding solutions. But, in under-developed countries there is time delay: the have nots in the society interfere inside the core circles; and the bad effects spill out marginally, and discourage mass movements from millions living around the poverty-line. The minorities rule, and the super minority in the inside circles dominate (the other name is the ruling class).

There is another factor: our high density of population (around 1,000 citizens per sq km— the highest in the world, based on the small size of Bangladesh). It creates political Brownian movement. Watch the parameters of a kitchen market in metro Dhaka: how every square foot of space is grabbed by hawkers, peddlers and vehicles (not to speak of beggars).

Then there is the waiting period (for the start of a new movement). Activists need a minimum reserve stock for contingencies. The staying power or stamina is poor, both in the politicians and in the critics.

There we are, with under-developed resources, to develop the right resources!

Alif Zabr, Dhaka

## To GW Bush..

Mr President, are you feeling remorse of any sort for attacking Iraq on a false pretext and turning it into a slaughter ground? I think it is a foolish question

because if you had the conscience to know the difference between right and wrong you would never have done this. Iraq is still bleeding and



PHOTO: AFP



with it our hearts also. The people of Iraq are passing their days in great misery, everyday scores of people are being killed, it has become much worse than Saddam Hussein's regime.

Mr President, you preached that your action was to free the people and introduce 'Democracy' in Iraq. Oh yes, you have succeeded in introducing many things, which start with the letter "D". As for example death, destruction, disaster, despair, devastation, doom, etc.

M Jahan Chittagong

### Slow policy decisions

The government's propaganda machine appears to be rusted and unprofessional. The technical presentation should be left to professional advisors, rather than to interfering political pundits, who are not trained to look at publicity with unbiased and objective outlook. The public psychological aspects are ignored.

There are two sides to the game. What the client political regime want, and the reaction of the target masses the voters/citizens. At present, the positive side of development projects (laying foundation stone and opening ceremonies) are loudly acclaimed innumerable times with personal names added, but the areas of unfinished, dormant projects, and absence of new urgent projects are blacked out. The publics are not gullible. Promises are fragile buds, and wither easily, if plucked out from the plant (mainstream).

The elected representatives do not bother to talk at peer level, and confine their harangue to (90 percent of the time) to castigating the opponents. There is no value added in the post-sermon period, as the situation does not move forward. This is amateur politics. The faith in technocrats has to be revived in the political field. The politicians pose as shab-janta (expert on everything), and are too autocratic in their egotism.

The regime should talk more on the dormant projects, some of which are indicated below.

The delay in initiating new electric generation projects. Why no progress in three years? Why re-tendering is needed so many times? Why no continuity? The public have the right to call for explanations from the so-called leaders. We are spoiling them with undue adulation, which is not at all in public interest. They get away with many lapses.

Who approved this indolence? We voters have to be tough. Mercy in political affairs is the beginning of downfall.

The laying of new gas pipelines in the northern districts has to be speeded up. Why this sector cannot attract local and foreign investment for decades? Imagine the tremendous economic benefits had there been some progress since 1991. This is a hush-hush area. Why? We need firm long-term continuity policies on utilisation of vast gas and coal reserves.

A policy on the extent of political activities allowed within the educational campus; that i.e., a code for Do's and Don'ts for students indulging as political activists should be in place. The political parties have been misusing the student fronts traditionally, and do not talk about it. The reasons are not explained. The situation is different in the developed countries. No politicians dare to broach this sensitive issue. Why this hide-and-peek policy?

Police reforms, too corrupt. How to lay a new base or foundation? The modular planning concepts have to be debated publicly.

The mummification of the parliament, and virtually complete absence of national consensus on almost ALL issues. How to make JS work vibrantly? Criticising the opposition is not the solution. The regime may initiate reforms, as is in the driving seat (the term "opposition" includes the major party in power today, when it was in the opposition). Politicians have short-term memories—it is not a sign of greatness.

There are many more gray and blacked-out areas of governance. Why face the microphone when you do not know what to say; and, if you know, hide it? It needs moral courage to be blunt. Public relations are more than mere diplomacy.



## Desecration of Holy Koran

Desecration of the Holy Koran at the US run Guantanamo detention centre in Cuba has hurt the feelings of the Muslims all over the world. I was stunned for some time when I read the news of the desecration of the holy book. We, Muslims, believe that the Holy Koran is a divine revelation and value it more than anything else in the world. So any desecration of the holy book will be considered by us as an attack on our faith. Naturally it hurt the Muslims' sentiments. Angry protests and demonstrations were held in different countries. So many valuable lives were lost during demonstration against disrespect of the holy book.

The Muslims believe in every man's right to follow his own faith and never disregard any religious book of others faiths. But the followers of other faiths have not always followed suit.

History tells us of horrible incidents of brutality and cruelty on the Muslims of Spain. Hundreds of Muslims including children had taken shelter in different mosques on the advice of the then King of Spain and the king promised to save their lives and send them to other countries safely. But it was a tricky and treacherous drama. The Spanish set fire on the mosques, which were tightly closed, and the innocent Muslims were burnt alive to death. But these horrible killings had never saddened the hearts of the international community. Now we see that history is repeating itself in the new millennium. Muslims all over the whole world are being persecuted, tortured and killed on lame excuses.

Muslims should face the challenge collectively. Md. Shahidul Islam Khilgaon, Dhaka

A Aabdi, Dhaka

### Ramna park-sheer negligence

The Ramna Park is a gem in the heart of the city. Being the treasure house of flora, the park is also the 'lung' of the otherwise polluted and congested city. However, the park suffers from sheer negligence of the authorities concerned. Litters are to be found everywhere as far as the eye can see. Too many brick works are eroding the greener aspect of the garden. Vendors frequent day and night selling cold drinks, tea/coffee, coconuts, peanuts and crisps. Beggars pose a nuisance. Youths play football and cricket, much to the annoyance of the visitors. Unauthorised magic/cultural shows take place regularly. The lake and the surface canal emit foul smell. After dark some of the garden lights are not found operating. Anti-socials thrive taking advantage of the situation. Security guards and gardeners are hardly to be found in the vicinity. There is a growing need to make the people aware about the maintenance of the park. Megaphone may be used by the guards/gardeners to disseminate messages regarding maintenance of the park.

Introduction of entry fee will keep at bay unauthorised visitors. Entry of vendors and beggars should be severely dealt with. Simply cleaning (Jharu) litters regularly will make the park look 'clean and green'. Regular cleaning is the answer. The park should not be made accessible to any recreational activities (cultural./magic/puppet shows) other than on special days like Pahela Baishakh. Even then the organisers should be made

accountable for any litters thrown in the park.

S Ahmed Bangla Motor, Dhaka

### Divine decree

We all are trying in our respective fields to become happy, prosperous and successful! Now, reaching the top of the few among the present six billion people of the world depends solely on the desire of the most gracious and most merciful —the Almighty Allah.

We must not deviate from our faith.

Golam Ashraf, Dhaka-1206

### Our cricket

When you talk about our image abroad, don't forget cricket.

We often hear the word "image" of the country abroad from our ministers.

The possible highest priority of the present government is to enhance a positive image of our country abroad and to fight against any elements that come as a barrier. I think instead of blaming the opposition parties for creating an adverse impact on the "good image" of the country, our eleven Bengal Tigers and their management should take part of the blame. To some extent, they should be held responsible for creating an adverse impact on our country's image for the poorest performance that I have ever seen in cricket.

In The Daily Stars' sports section I read that our Tigers are not comfortable staying at Durham. They are not happy with food and accommodation. But we know that our Bengal Tigers (the ones which stay in forests and Mirpur Zool!) never complain, though they are constantly under threat and in search of food!

M. Fuad Hussain

Dhanmondi, Dhaka

### Student politics

The history of student politics in our country is glorious. Students proved to be the vanguards in different critical phases of the country. But what happened after '91 when complete democracy was established? I think our student politics started to rot just from that time. And at present the welfare of the country is a far cry, students are not able to unite and act responsibly even on the issues which are very much their own.

What did they do after the tragic death of Shammee Akhter Happy? They were supposed to act together, regardless of their party affiliations, to prevent such accidents in future. But what they did was unfortunate. They ran riot on the campus and traded blames against each other. The worst part was that the death of Happy was completely overshadowed by their hooliganism. It's a fact that today's student politics cannot bring any good.

Let's call a spade a spade. It's our political culture, which spoiled the morals of student politics. So the onus of eradicating all the evils is on the political leaders. But none of them would take the initiative because they use the students as the instruments to fulfil their dirty political designs. The only silver lining we can see is the media. The media can play a significant role to make our young generation, the future of the country, realise that student politics is a major stumbling block to the normal flow of their valuable academic careers. Should the media succeed in their campaign, a time must come when not a single student would step forward to the deleterious way of student politics, which is nothing but playing ducks & drakes with the most important time of human life.

Kazi Farzan Ahmed East Shewrapara, Dhaka

### Violence in DU and its future

A few days ago, one of my relatives asked me, "What do you think about the violent situation in the university area? Are the neutral students safe from the violence?" I wondered that I didn't know what to answer. Are we really safe on the campus? I got my answer from an incident and my fear came true, the answer is "No".

It was May 31, 11:30am, and I was gossiping with my friends at TSC. At first we saw some students running towards us and after them there was a group of "students" armed with sticks. We all ran to the indoor games room and locked it from inside. Then they came and forced us to open it. They were looking for a man belonging to a certain party. They found the man and told us to leave the place. When I was running to get out of the area I looked behind for a while to see the "suspect". I was thundered. The boy, they were beating, was a student of first year. When we came to the TSC he was there and knew nothing about what happened outside.

This year I saw many good students showing no interest in DU admission. Why are they preferring private universities? They said, "At least there is no threat to our lives there". DU is losing good students every year and the number is increasing.

Our honourable VC ensured the media that he would take steps to bring back a congenial atmosphere to the campus. Such steps are needed badly. We really don't want to be among the last graduates from our beloved university.

Anakin, DU

# Bidisha's fate

As a patriot, I feel sad reading the Internet edition of our newspapers today-- the private cum political episode of former President Hossain Mohammad Ershad. This news should have been downplayed. Let the truth come out automatically.

I feel sad because of the play by vested political quarters which, my good guess, is going against the democratic process in the country.

A Bangladeshhi On e-mail

H.M. Ershad's whirlwind marriage with Bidisha had sent waves at the time. The birth of his son (!) was another news maker.

Once again the couple is in the headlines; only this time it is supposed to be political in nature. Since when did Bidisha become interested in politics? Or for that matter, why is Ershad keen to end his marriage? And going public about his domestic affairs? Everyone is aware of the kind of reputation he has!

One would feel inclined to sympathise with Bidisha for all the harassment she had to

suffer. But there is no doubt that both are very good in acting. They would make a great screen couple!!

Rahat Nilofer On e-mail

Arrest of Bidisha Ershad shows how the law is manipulated to suit the interest of the government of the day. First, she was arrested because Ershad filed a complaint with police. Now the passport forgery i.e. discrepancies in date of birth. Can these be reason enough for arresting a person?

Mohammed Syed Khan On e-mail

It is really shocking to read stories of Ershad's wife (former!) Bidisha. Bidisha was seriously ill and was being treated in the hospital when she was arrested. All the stories regarding Bidisha pointed towards the ruling alliance's involvement in the episode. Especially, there is widespread rumour of the direct involvement of the second most important person in the government.

It seems that Ershad was forced to do what he did in the last few days. However, I do not have any sympathy for Ershad since he did not hesitate to sacrifice his wife and future of his child for the sake of his own survival. Once again Ershad showed his true character.

It seems that the ruling alliance is planning to do everything, moral or immoral, to ensure their victory in the next general elections. They have two thirds majority in the parliament but still are afraid of losing the elections. It seems that the ruling alliance did not hesitate to destroy the former president's family life. There are reports that they forced Awami League MPs to join the ruling party.

I feel sorry for the little son of Ershad. Certainly, he will be deprived of motherly affection. He is a victim of cruel power politics of the ruling alliance.

Wasim Haider Vancouver, BC, Canada

For many of us it is very disturbing to see a photo of crying Bidisha after she got the

news of divorce from Ershad. I am not a supporter of the Jatiyo Party, but I am a human being. And that is why I think that persons behind Bidisha drama had done a very inhuman and cruel thing. I think politics in

Bangladesh is becoming more and more ruthless. Many will agree with me that cruelty in politics took a sharp upward turn after the 2001 elections. One important aspect of current politics is the rise of so-called



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