

Annual confidential report irregularities

Need to nip tampering in the bud

THE news that a probe body of the establishment ministry has unearthed 31 cases of tampering with annual confidential reports (ACRs) of officials and that the ACRs of 48 more officials are missing is troubling in the extreme.

The probe body is still investigating, which means that this may be merely the tip of the iceberg. However, we are glad to see that there has at least been a joint secretary level investigation and that the preliminary findings have been forwarded to the parliamentary standing committee on the establishment ministry.

A probe committee has apparently been investigating such irregularities for a mind-boggling ten years, leading to a number of uncomfortable questions. The first of these is: are we to presume therefore that such irregularities have been going on for so long, and if so, then how is it that nothing has been done as yet?

The committee has asked the probe body to complete its investigation and submit a full report at the next meeting, which raises a second question, namely why is it that action seems to have been taken only when this was brought to the attention of the committee?

One final point is that while such internal investigations are all very well, we must ask why there is no internal mechanism in place to correct such a blatant problem automatically.

Our suggestion would be to computerise the entire process in the hopes that this would make tampering more difficult and easier to spot.

Now that the problem has been brought to the attention of the committee and the PM herself, who is head of the establishment ministry, we trust that corrective action will follow shortly.

A tribute to Shahadat

We mourn his passing

THE death of journalist Shahadat Choudhury is a great loss to the profession and men that he was associated with for over three decades. He opened a new horizon on periodical journalism and played a pioneering role in carrying it forward with an innovative flair.

Shahadat Choudhury's persona and works had two distinct features. First, he brought to bear on his activities a powerful element of social responsibility and commitment. Secondly, he set new trends in magazine journalism with a modernist vision.

He was the epitome of a Bengalee. But his refinement and sophistication never detached him from the people. A genial, effable and instantly helpful man, Shahadat Choudhury was known for his friendly warmth and engaging charm.

Shahadat Choudhury belonged to that breed of men and women who had dreamt, fought and worked for an independent Bangladesh. The standards set by him are worth emulating, if only because they are so firmly rooted in our culture and ethos.

His was one of the loudest and most persistent voices against fundamentalism and bigotry. In his own writings and in the coverage of Bichitra and later Weekly 2000, he exposed those who used religion for political ends.

We mourn the death of the man who has always been a source of inspiration to us and pray for the salvation of the departed soul. May his family have the strength to bear his loss.

Are we going the Afghan way?



Brig Gen SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN ncd, psc (Retd)

READING between the lines of the Daily Star editorial yesterday, one could not help imagine that it was alluding to the grim but the distinct possibility of Bangladesh being forced in that direction.

Some would like to take Bangladesh that way, i.e. the way Afghanistan went under the Talebans; some would like to make it appear that Bangladesh has already moved that way; but most of the people of the country, while perhaps dreading that that is where we are heading for, would like to see that such a possibility does not eventuate.

There has been spate of writings recently, both at home and abroad, expressing apprehensions that Bangladesh was well nigh that point where the Muslim radicals were about to overwhelm the country and its political system.

thing that was brought out through these columns in the past. And listening to some rather childlike arguments in reference to the letters threatening action against the judiciary, claiming them to be a hoax, it appears that some are yet to comprehend the seriousness of the matter.

too high a price for too insignificant an objective. These extremists have a definite political agenda. And they have not sprouted in a day or a year. The worrisome aspect is we have such people as these living amongst us that have been allowed to germinate when there were hardly any compelling circumstances for this to happen.

The similarity between the Bangladesh and Afghanistan situation is that there is a well-entrenched deeply motivated group in the country with similar ideological orientation. And that is where the similarity ends.

political space provided by the conditions created as a result of this clash. And this bickering is regrettably noticeable even after the recent suicide attacks in Chittagang and Ghazipur.

Time for theorising is over. Time for blame game is over. Time for petty partisan politics is over. The nation is at stake. It is time to formulate rational short and long-term strategies to combat this scourge. There are some hard decisions that the government needs to take soon that may require it to de-link from many of its established views.

no doubt that we are past the point of ifs and buts to a stage where a frightening prospect of combating an ideologically motivated group, prepared to kill themselves for the sake of establishing what they would like to think of as Islam in Bangladesh.

While one cannot take issue with the question of external support, because trans-boundary support, of money and ideas, is an essential ingredient on which these groups thrive, the argument that anyone would go to the extent of killing himself, only for the purpose of "destabilizing" a country, remains far from convincing.

One would like to think that the BNP remains at the core secular, in spite of teaming up with an Islamist party with the expressed goal of establishing "Islamic Hukumat" in the country, and would resist radical moves by the Islamists outside the fold, but as per common perception, in league with the Islamic parties in the coalition.

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Bihar's gift



M.J. AKBAR

NO matter which way the numbers are stacked, there is only one clear winner in the long-drawn Bihar Sudoku: a Sikh gentleman generally resident in Delhi who barely intervened in the turmoil of India's most turbulent state except to give Lalu Prasad Yadav the chance to convert what was a self-inflicted wound in March into suicide in November.

ambitious. If the new chief minister can ensure order, even if he cannot implement the full majesty of the law, he can claim distinction. There has to be a curb on the dacoits and gunmen who form a parallel, and more effective, administration.

year's pressures and strains, so it is best that he start doing something right away.

Finally, the government will be severely tested on Hindu-Muslim relations. So many of Lalu Yadav's crimes were forgiven because he was absolutely flawless in ensuring peace between communities so easily provoked into violence.

the winner of the Bihar election? In just about every which way. Defeat in Patna has made Lalu Yadav impotent in Delhi.

BYLINE

For the past year, voices have been gathering strength in the Congress that, with the BJP in disarray, a midterm election could win the party up to 200 seats. The additional seats would come from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra (where the Shiv Sena is fading into inconsequence). It is axiomatic that another election would mean the end of Dr Singh's tenure in office, irrespective of how the Congress fared.

ally incorrect level, a few trigger-happy policemen might be needed.

tomstones of projects aborted. For decades, its leaders have laid the foundation of grand schemes that never saw as much as a wall being built, let alone a chimney constructed.

castes other than Yadavs, but there had to be a spillover from the Lalu vote to ensure such a comprehensive victory.

winning. All wars have collateral damage, the serious-sounding term for being shot dead by your own side.

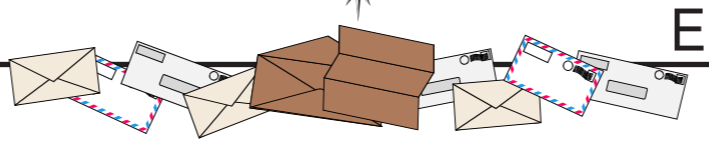
Priority number two will be Naxalites. Bihar shares a long border with Nepal that is porous for criminals, smugglers and those who dress up violence in ideological clothes.

Fourth: urban renewal. If someone were to control the mosquitoes of Patna, he would be renamed Chandragupta. Disease is another name for neglect and filth. So far, the city's services ensure little more than comfort for the residential area of the political class, up to a point.

Nitish Kumar's problem is accentuated by the fact that the BJP is his ally, and too many of its leaders find Muslim-baiting irresistible. But the challenge is greater than being the good cop of the alliance.

Lalu Yadav may have suffered a setback, but he is still in play. His fate will be determined by the quality of Nitish Kumar's performance as chief minister.

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.

Poor performance

Deficiency of gas, water and electricity has turned our lives miserable. This is, no doubt, a disappointing and pitiful matter. There are some reasons behind it mentioned below:

much due to load-shedding. The reasons behind 'load-shedding' are age old plants and machinery, poor maintenance and low grade fuel.

What we are? How do we do? Why we are champions (in corruption) five times in a row? I cannot discern any light of hope for our improvement. Now corruption is in our blood.

hard? Rather, he should be a politician, putting an end to his academic career. If one gets a job through a corrupt practice, how can he be a good officer?

I am happy to see that the 13th Saarc summit ended successfully and peacefully. By adopting strict security measures the law enforcing agencies displayed great sense of responsibility.

Our government deserves full credit for successful completion of the summit. People also cooperated with the government and sacrificed their self-interest for the greater welfare of the Saarc Summit, which had been postponed twice.

We are all grateful to all Saarc leaders for conferring the first award on late President Ziaur Rahman, who had contemplated formation of the regional grouping.

implicit corruption is not less rampant in our country! Are you surprised? Then I will make it clear by sharing my two bitter experiences with you.

However, I was quite astonished. I, an Hons Graduate (English), was not eligible even to face the interview. Some days later I came to know from one of my friends that one of his close friends who had just passed his BA (Pass) exam got the job only for being a nephew of a big uncle.

thing in Bangladesh). Then which criteria are required to be short-listed for interview to be an ordinary Lecturer of a private college? Does anyone need a degree from the Oxford University? Should he/she possess Ph.D? If they are needed, then why do they not mention it in the advertisement?