

An umbrella university for South Asia



A South Asian University should be one that germinates and grows along with the multi-layered understanding of regionalism amongst our societies. It should not be an institution mandated from on high. Nor, of course, should the new university be a cyber-institution that floats in midair without ownership of its constituent units. This would be the greatest challenge, because a dispersed university of this kind has rarely been tried. Indeed, the departments and faculties under the Grant Commission must be proud of being part of the South Asian University network.

KANAK MANI DIXIT

EVERYBODY welcomes the idea of a "South Asian University;" it's like mother's milk. But even mother's milk has to have the proper nutrients, or the baby will grow up malformed. The idea of a South Asian University is so overwhelmingly important that it must not be wasted at the altar of good intentions or individual ambition.

The very evolution of South Asia can be given direction by a South Asian University with practical, achievable goals and staying power. India's support for such a venture is critical, as it would be able to provide significant funds and faculty, and hopefully would have the circumspection not to smother the institution in India-centrism.

Manmohan Singh, in his speech at the Dhaka SAARC Summit on November 12, 2005, said that he would push for a South Asian University as a "centre of excellence." Said the prime minister: "We can certainly host this institution, but are equally prepared to cooperate in creating a suitable venue in any other member country."

It is said that Prime Minister Singh has committed \$100 million to the project, which is good of him. It now appears likely that the idea will see fruition at the upcoming SAARC Summit in New Delhi, in early April.

Unfortunately, what is currently known of the project does not inspire confidence. Pushed by the Dhaka-

born scholar and international administrator Gowher Rizvi, the plan is to develop a centralized institution with "a single campus ... working under the direction of a single president/chancellor and academic council."

The proposed campus would be set up on a hundred acres in the locality of Dwarka -- now practically a New Delhi suburb -- which would attract scholars-in-residence and a South Asia-wide student body.

The placement is already problematic. The first university of South Asia must be one that promotes a regional vision quite distinct from the capital-centric model of the SAARC organisation. As such, the university needs to be physically removed from any capital, in particular the region's most powerful one.

Fortunately, decentralized models have been developed, including by a team headed by Rizvi's compatriot, the political scientist Imtiaz Ahmed. This writer would suggest that the money India seeks to invest in the South Asian University, together with contributions from other SAARC members according to GDP, be made available to a trans-national South Asian University Grant Commission, constituted of top-notch academics and administrators.

Such a commission could well be headquartered in New Delhi, but its core activity would be to detect, fund and monitor universities across the region. The commission would remain independent of national interests, not compromise on tokenism, and insti-

tute stringent reporting requirements of the grantee institutions.

At least to start with, the South Asian University would not be a campus but an umbrella institution. It would provide support to select post-graduate departments in, say, JNU, Delhi University and Jamia Milia in the Indian capital, Jadavpur University in Calcutta, LUMS in Lahore, Benaras Hindu University, Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, the universities of Dhaka, Karachi, Colombo and Madras, and so on.

Many of these institutions delivered South Asia its intellectual stalwarts in the twentieth century, the nation-builders of the modern era; now, most have deteriorated due to political interference of every sort and lack of comfortable endowment.

It is important to revive these hallowed universities, rather than to build a spanking new one that would only further suck away energy and dynamism from the existing institutions.

A lack of social-science learning has robbed our societies collectively of an upright intelligentsia amidst dislocating modernization and economic globalization. As such, it is important for the proposed university to make attractive once again post-graduate courses in history, political science, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, as well as education, public health, and science and technology.

Those studies supported by the private-sector -- information technology, medicine, engineering,

business management -- should be left out by the planners of the new institution, at least at the outset.

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Nor, of course, should the new university be a cyber-institution that floats in midair without ownership of its constituent units. This would be the greatest challenge, because a dispersed university of this kind has rarely been tried. Indeed, the departments and faculties under the Grant Commission must be proud of being part of the South Asian University network.

We must get the South Asian University right the first time around, because the costs of failure would be high. Manmohan Singh is a thinking South Asian; may he back the right idea.

Kanak Mani Dixit is Editor of the Kathmandu-based Himal Southasian magazine.

Responding to TB in Asia

BOBBY RAMAKANT

CHINA, India and Indonesia are home to two-in-three of the world's tuberculosis (TB) cases and the countries are expanding coverage of its TB programme at record-breaking speed. In its shadow, drug resistance is also upping the pace. Is there something fundamentally awry with the response to TB in Asia? Some Asian experts think more of the same is sufficient -- but has the time come to re-think the way TB is tackled?

Amid recent concerns about the possible emergence of drug resistant TB in India, a member of the government's committee on TB control outlined the national strategy for addressing the problem: "Unfortunately research scientists are yet to come up with medicine for XDR-TB. Therefore it is time to focus on DOTS and restrict the new form of TB," said Dr Rajendra Prasad.

DOTS (or directly-observed treatment short-course) is the internationally recommended TB control strategy that includes standardized case detection, treatment and patient support. It requires consistent drug supply and effective monitoring systems.

India has adopted and implemented DOTS in various parts of the country since 1993. Full national DOTS coverage was reportedly achieved at the end of March 2006, with an estimated treatment success rate of 86%. But is it really "time to focus on DOTS" more intensively? According to the World Health Organization (WHO), drug resistant TB is a symptom of poor programme performance.

If we hope to change the outcome, and decrease the proportion of drug resistant TB, don't the DOTS model need to be adapted or its implementation improved? More of the same might only compound the TB drug resistance threat.

Despite recent DOTS coverage gains, many communities in the country remain underserved by TB services. Rural settings, poor communities and mobile populations, for example, are subject to social and economic factors that often lead to incomplete or inappropriate treatment. In addition, TB diagnosis is difficult among people living with HIV

-- a growing proportion of people with TB in India.

The country does indeed need more and better TB drugs and diagnostics in the public sector. But better strategies to make TB control programmes work more effectively for the most vulnerable and hard to reach communities are also essential to improving treatment adherence and, as a consequence, reducing drug resistance.

The 2006 annual Indian TB Report said: "Drug-resistant TB has frequently been encountered in India and its presence has been known virtually from the time anti-TB drugs were introduced for the treatment of TB."

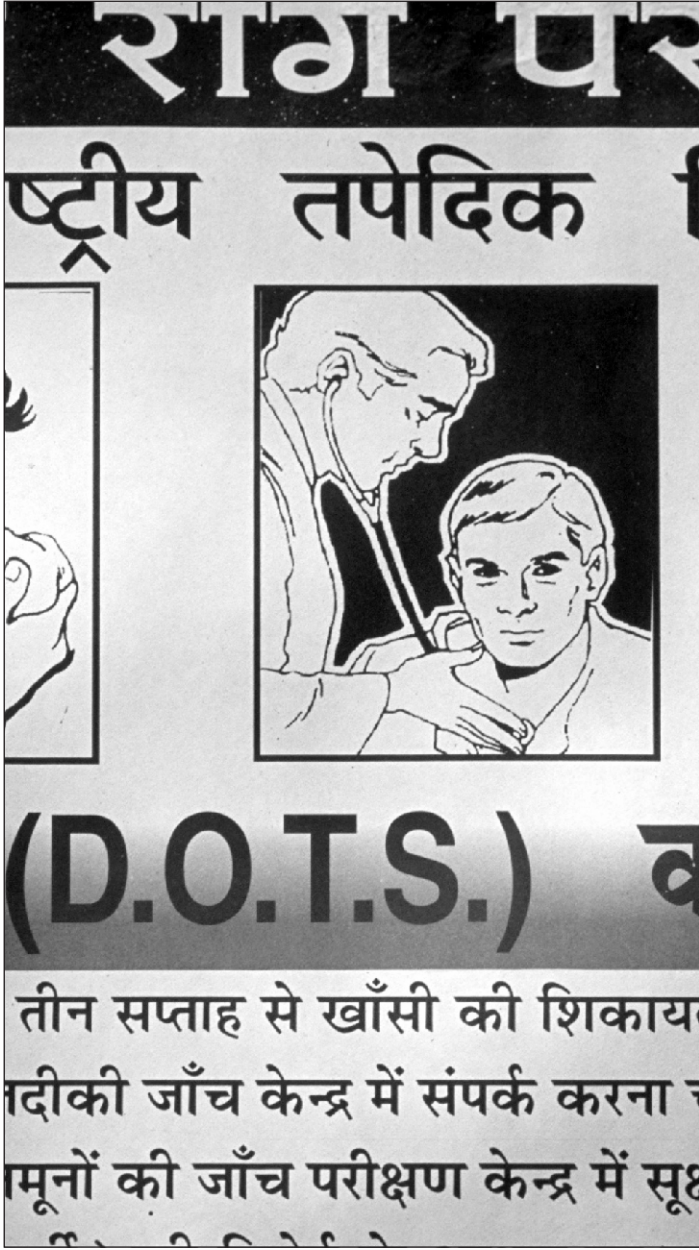
Over the next five years (2006-2010), Drug Resistant Surveillance is being carried out in 10 states of India to gauge the extent of problem. From March 2007, India will also launch a DOTS-Plus programme. DOTS-Plus, conceived by the WHO and its partners, is a strategy for the management of multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB). It uses second-line anti-TB drugs to cure MDR-TB. DOTS-Plus pilot projects are only recommended in settings where the DOTS strategy is fully in place to protect against the creation of further drug resistance.

Potential ways to improve DOTS programme performance are well known and documented. One is to move beyond approaches that place health centres at the centre of TB services, to community-based versions of DOTS.

The need to attend to problems faced by frontline workers is also important for example, provision of transport and other logistical support to increase work performance, geographic coverage and patient compliance.

Another key area is improving patient-health worker communication, which in turn works to reduce TB-related stigma, and raise local awareness and improve treatment literacy. The India DOTS-Plus programme will make second-line drugs available in the country for people with MDR-TB.

Just as the widespread use, or misuse, of first-line anti-TB drugs can lead to loss of drug sensitivity, the arrival of less effective, more toxic and costlier second-line TB



drugs may give rise to various new forms of drug resistant TB.

The emergence of extensively drug resistant TB (XDR-TB) in India therefore cannot be ruled out -- especially if we do not attend to the factors that are known impediments to effective TB responses and treatment in the country already.

More DOTS without better imple-

mentation might be just what is not needed.

Bobby Ramakant is a public health and development Journalist, a part of The Key Correspondent Team coordinated by Health and Development Networks.

Fighting corruption: Why this ambivalence?



DR ANM WAHEEDUZAMAN

RIGHT now the nation is fighting an uphill battle against corruption. In our 36-year history, this is the first time we are seeing such a large number of rich, powerful and untouchable people behind bars. All these are taking place under a caretaker government whose legitimacy is accepted but credibility is still untested. Some believe they are acting beyond their mandate. But people are happy.

Some even do not want the political parties to return. Apparently, the people are willing to give more time to the caretaker government for housecleaning. But then there are reservations. Despite popular support there is also

ambivalence, skepticism and cautionary notes in the writings, discussions and debates among the intelligentsia that include academics, journalists, writers, and civil society. Why this ambivalence?

A few good men have taken a bold and risky move to eradicate corruption, should we not support them to change the course of our nation? Here are a few possible reasons for the ambivalence and suggestions to address them.

No historical evidence

The pessimism is rooted in our history. We have no previous record of success against high-level corruption. International studies on corruption in developing countries also provide a depress-

ing record. Field Marshal Ayub Khan of Pakistan had popular support at the beginning against politicians and corruption, but that did not last long. In 1982, General Ershad took power with a promise to provide a corruption-free society. He left power only to be convicted with corruption. So far the evidences do not speak favorably.

Transitory nature of the caretaker government

Skepticism also originates from the transitory nature of the caretaker government, which lives on a "culture of present." It has no past glory and it cannot make future promises. It has no followers to undertake its unfinished task. The

chessboard may be redrawn when political parties return. This creates a natural credibility gap, especially under Emergency. Our military, which is providing a silent backing to the caretaker government, needs to assure that the reforms will continue even when the caretaker government is not there. A patriotic military is the last source of solace and support to a nation. Hope we always have that support.

Money does speak

The kingpins are behind the bars but not their money or the machinery. They still own private banks, trading houses, industries, newspapers and TV stations. They employ a large number of people and carry a huge amount of unaccounted cash. Their combined economic wealth is substantial for a small country like Bangladesh. From a distance, they still can affect the dances of the street. Their power to sabotage the good moves should not be underestimated. Their compatriots may have gone hiding for now but will resurface at the first opportunity.

Institutionalized nature of corruption

Corruption has been institutionalized in our culture. It is there in every nook and corner of the society. Eradicating it would be like, as the Bangla proverb says, "thok bachte ga ujar." Unless we institute proper moral and educational training in our families, schools and colleges this is going to be a cat and mouse

chase. We will never be able to put our house in order. The fight needs to be ideological as well as economic and political.

Economics of corruption

It is really against us. A poor country like Bangladesh with a large young population, high unemployment rate, income inequality, and inefficient market is not likely to do well in her fight against corruption. There are a large number of people who just live on corruption. It is their livelihood. There are too many variables that are uncontrollable. Caretaker government can affect only a few of them. Our resources are limited to combat organized corruption. Unless dramatic changes occur in the area of economics the success may be limited.

Need for political support

Political support is a critical input to fighting corruption. We need strong support from the political parties. But unfortunately, they are the greatest sufferer of this housecleaning process.

On January 19, Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil said that the party would not take any responsibility for those leaders and workers who have been proven guilty of criminal offences. This is a welcome gesture. Mahfuz Anam rightfully noted, "the nation's political parties ought to begin a process of distancing themselves from individuals who have sullied their own as well as their organizations' reputation." So far distancing has not been

very significant. Political parties need to start their own house cleaning before lending a hand to a national fight against corruption.

The reasons for ambivalence should not deter us from fighting corruption. Rather we should take it as a collective battle. The government needs to take serious measures to "muster the support" of the civil society, bureaucracy, business, and intelligentsia.

The gap between the military and civil society also needs to be addressed. Last time we saw all these power constituencies working under one umbrella was the liberation war. We need that kind of concerted effort to fight corruption. Moral suasion and public relations must continue. If this initiative fails the consequences can be extremely fatal; the vengeance can be dangerous.

The reform of administrative and legal system is a necessary condition for success against corruption. Reform of the Judiciary, Public Service Commission, Civil Administration, and Police and empowering of the Anticorruption Commission are right moves.

The process must continue. Since the caretaker government may not have the time to complete the task, the military must remain vigilant behind the scene. Military may need to strengthen their intelligence apparatus for the purpose. However, caution must be taken to see that no one misuses or abuses the intelligence apparatus. The innocent must be protected.

Appointing right people at different administrative and judicial leadership positions is critical in the fight against corruption. Appointment of Lieutenant General (Retired) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury as the chief of Anticorruption Commission is a very laudable step in this regard.

I like our Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Moen's three criteria for selecting the right people: honesty, competency and sincerity. I believe there are a large number of people in the bureaucracy, judiciary, media, education, police and military who meet these three criteria. Let us find them, empower them and support them. United they can be a strong force against corruption. Special efforts should be taken to forge unity among them.

The caretaker government needs strong media support to fight corruption. The media must be left open and alive. A free press is better than a restricted press. There is nothing more beneficial to a nation than open discussions or debates. Suppressing the media will cut-off the debate. In the long run, the dialectic (Hegelian) process should provide a better synthesis. Our patience should outlast our irritation forthat.

We need to punish corrupt businessmen but protect our entrepreneurial culture. The contribution of private entrepreneurs in our economic growth is very laudable. Their cooperation is essential for fighting corruption. We need to keep the economics in our favor. We are fighting corruption in business but not business.

Entrepreneurial spirit of the free market should be left alone. The "visible hand" of the government should not tamper with it.

Apparently, we are obsessed with corruption. There are other national priorities that we need to attend to -- poverty, education, health, economic growth, international trade, global image etc. I am not sure caretaker government can address these issues in their short tenure. But what they can do well is, offer us a free, fair and credible election. It is their primary task, their reason for being -- raison d'etre.

Drifting away from it would cast doubts in their motives and initiatives. That would hurt our fight against corruption. It is time for them to make specific commitment in this regard. An early announcement should help us come out of the "fine mess," as the Economist (February 22) calls it, we are in. We hope for the best.

Dr ANM Waheeduzzaman is a Professor of Marketing and International Business at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Police and ethics

MOHAMMED HOSSAIN

IT is widely recognized that the first organized police force were the Roman vigiles, the first group of nonmilitary and nonmercenary police. They were created by Gaius Octavius, the grand nephew of Julius Caesar, around 27 BC. Indeed, the concept of the police force as a protective and law enforcement organization developed from the use of military bodies as guardians of the peace, such as the Praetorian Guard of ancient Rome. The Romans achieved a high level of law enforcement, which remained in effect until the decline of the empire and the onset of the Middle Ages.

Beginning in the 5th century, policing became a function of the heads of fiefdoms and principalities. Since then the police have been performing all duties impartially, without favour or ill will, and without regard to status, sex, race, religion, or political belief.

The word "Police" means, generally, the arrangements made in all civilized countries to ensure that the inhabitants keep the peace and obey the law. The word also denotes

the group of peace officers (or police) employed for this purpose.

In 1829, Sir Richard Mayne wrote: "The primary object of an efficient police is the prevention of crime; the next that of detection and punishment of offenders if crime is committed. To these ends all the efforts of police must be directed. The protection of life and property, the preservation of public tranquillity, and the absence of crime, will alone prove whether those efforts have been successful and whether the objects for which the police were appointed have been attained."

Therefore, in attaining these objects, much depends on the approval and co-operation of the public, and these have always been determined by the degree of esteem and respect in which the police are held.

As a background, I have started my discussion with the evaluation of police and their main responsibility, and the degree of respect for police in the society.

I would like to give some suggestions to the present caretaker government to improve policing practices, as we understand that the police could not perform their duties

with honesty and dignity, as well as neutrality, because of political intervention.

In my view, five major issues/areas need to be emphasised. These are as follows:

- Unique entry level appointment;
- Training and promotion;
- Specialization and talent pool;
- Police code of ethics;
- Transparency cell.

Unique entry level of appointment

A policeman will act as an official representative of government who is required and trusted to work within the law, thus, obviously the selection process should be transparent. Unfortunately, previous ways of selection of police personnel failed to build confidence in the public, and the present caretaker government is bound to cancel the appointments. In order to strengthen faith in the selection procedure, and to ensure the credibility of the system, I propose the creation of an "Independent Selection Committee" comprising of seven members from seven different sectors such as police, army,

civil servant, academic, justice, professionals (doctors and engineers) and lawyer. I think this kind of committee can ensure that the selection process will be neutral.

Training and education

Training should be provided in various areas, such as organised crime, public corruption, financial crime, fraud against the government, bribery, copyright infringement, civil rights violations, bank robbery, extortion, kidnapping, terrorism, espionage, and drug trafficking etc. In order to achieve high quality training and education in the above areas, police personnel need to study abroad, and the government should create all possible steps for this. For example, the government can establish links with foreign training institutes specialized in the above areas, and can seek help from the diplomatic missions working in our country.

Specialization and talent pool

There should be a national pool for talented police personnel in the above-mentioned areas. In order to assign a specific job, the govern-

ment can easily call the right person. However, the government should provide higher education/training in all the above aspects.

Police code of ethics

Every criminal justice profession and association has "codes" of ethics, "canons" of professional responsibility, "statements" of values, "principles" of conduct, "standards" of practice, and "oaths" of office, along with "pledges," "vows," "maxims," "credos," "prayers," "tenets," and "declarations." The people of Bangladesh expect the police to serve with courage, fairness, impartiality and integrity, and to apply democratic principles that honour human dignity, in the pursuit of justice.

Recently, a workshop held in Dhaka emphasised the need for reforms in the legal framework, including the antiquated 150-year old Police Act, to modernise and streamline Bangladesh Police. In order to do that the Bangladesh government needs now to introduce "Code of Police Ethics" including guidelines for police action, general obligations, guidelines during arrest and detention by police, guidelines

during preliminary investigation, human rights and care for citizens. However, before introducing this code, the government should consider the elements of other developed and developing countries' codes of police ethics.

Transparency cell

Transparency is more than an information sharing issue; it is a cultural issue affecting all parts of the police service. A transparent organisation does more than disclose its policies, it addresses and accounts for its thinking, actions and conduct on a day-to-day basis.

Within the service, there must be a dynamic culture of accountability, which supports and underpins the principles of openness and transparency. Therefore, the police must be willing to engage in dialogue with the community/public domain via the media, every month in every district, in relation to policing issues, and provide full and frank information about their performance. I do think that if we open such kind of transparency cell at the district level, confidence in the police and police activities will be built up in the community.

