

Tampered mark sheet tainted image

New CJ should start a cleansing process

THE decision of Chitttagong University Syndicate to cancel the certificate of 2,350 graduates, of which 70 are LLB candidates including Faisal Mahmud Faizee, a judge of the high court, appointed by the erstwhile BNP led alliance government, has vindicated newspaper reports about Faizee's questionable credentials to even practice law, let alone merit appointment as a judge of the high court.

It is a shame to even contemplate a person whose LLB mark sheet was tampered with, to have held a judge's post in the highest judiciary of the country. We feel ashamed; we wonder whether those who appointed him as a judge of the high court and insisted on his confirmation will ever feel remorse for the indelible blot they have caused to be cast upon the highest judiciary.

Like politicisation of all the other organs of the government the judiciary was also not spared the despicable act indulged in by the immediate past government.

The fact that the convention of seeking the advice of the highest judiciary in the appointment of judges to the high court seems to have been all but done away with and the role of the chief justice (CJ) made nothing more than mere perfunctory as far as appointment of judges are concerned. Time and again the recommendations of CJ were ignored by the government of the day and judges were appointed on the whims of the ruling party, especially of Khaleda Zia.

We understand the deference that is shown by the judiciary to the elected executive and that is not a bad thing. But then a line must be drawn by it to ensure that such deference does not become the cause of its embarrassment and denigrates its standing and degrades its prestige.

Faizee's episode has been a blot in the face of the judiciary that can only be removed by the gentleman in question relinquishing his responsibility on his own. This should be followed by the new CJ taking an initiative to cleanse the higher judiciary and restore its glory and dignity to the full.

We mourn the deaths

Dying in the line of duty they have nation's gratitude

GRUESOME murder of two Rab men, Deputy Assistant Director Humayun Kabir and constable Phool Mia, both intelligence operatives in plainclothes, has shocked and exasperated us beyond measure. These men died not only in extreme helplessness, they were blind-folded and led away to the death trap, finishing them off in a vicious way. As the first such casualties of Rab man, the authorities need to sit up and take note.

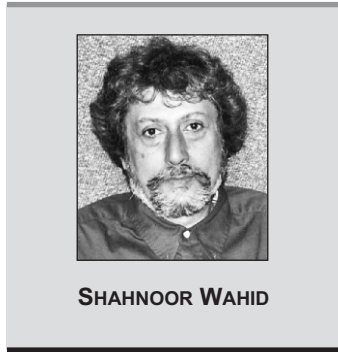
A new dimension in crime taking on the powerful seems to be noticeable. Just as the top brass in the law enforcing authority must strengthen their strategic equipment and intelligence ramparts against the venality and new-found modernity of the criminal networking, they must raise the level of human intelligence gathering through cooperation in the community.

Except for crossfire deaths which we never tired of vociferously complaining against Rab, in most other aspects Rab has been a positive influence in reducing crimes, infusing new dynamism in crime control and forcing the criminals largely out of operation.

Let's not forget, the introduction of Rab has had a seminal effect in chastening the ever rising the ranks of criminals. They have removed the gnawing sense of insecurity from society. Of course there is so much more to be done by preserving the human rights values.

They died in the line of duty and this is the noblest way a law man can think of dying. We condole their untimely death and share the grief of their relatives. No compensation can be equal to the sense of loss but we believe their families will be amply recompensed.

Tale of tenders and scrap politicians



SHAHNOOR WAHID

TENDERING is a fascinating thing in Golden Bengal. Tenders do magic in this country. Politics here evolves around tenders. People get killed for tenders. Lawmakers remain more busy running around to manage tenders than making laws.

One tender can propel a person from obscurity to sudden social recognition. That is why tenders worth millions of dollars begin to float in the air of this poor country as soon as a new government becomes *godinashin* (comes to power). Whether the country needs many of the items and projects that are tendered for is a question that never gets answered. But, come what may, tenders have to be floated.

Actually they are floated deliberately for various purposes. Getting the right kind of material to

SENSE & INSENSIBILITY

We may encourage our export houses to find markets abroad for most of the old and over-used politicians who have become nothing but nation's liability. So far they have only taken from this country and given nothing in return. Let us export them as scrap material so that we may earn good amount of foreign currency. Any takers?

meet an emergency is only one of the many purposes. It is the rest of the "purposes" that go to make such interesting stories.

Becoming a millionaire in the shortest possible time is one such purpose of a tender. Even in the US, one cannot become a millionaire so fast. It is possible in Bangladesh, if you have connections with Windy Castle or Honey Cottage or other important buildings.

We can look at one such story of how a 100 million dollar tender can make the relevant minister and his *okalkushmando* (worthless) son, state minister and his *opodartho* (again worthless) brother-in-law, their PS(s), relevant secretary of the ministry, joint secretary, deputy secretary, project engineers, project managers, peons and drivers all millionaires in three months.

It happens as simply as this. Somewhere someone needs something urgently, and you as

the junior most officer in the ministry sit down to prepare a tender document so that the material can be imported from abroad. First, you put in the technical specification as per what has been handed down to you from the higher authorities.

Then comes the financial part. What you have before you is the lowest possible price idea of the material, freight cost and other charges to bring it to your doorstep. But wait, you cannot take that price to calculate the total cost. Because if you do so then your head would roll on the carpet! So, what do you do?

Simple. You contact Altu and Faltu to go talk to the son, son-in-law, brother, and brother-in-law of the minister, state minister and the secretaries concerned to advise as to what amount you have to add over and above the actual price, which is, let's say, 30 million dollars. "Add 50 million dollars for us," Altu and Faltu are advised.

You do it diligently."

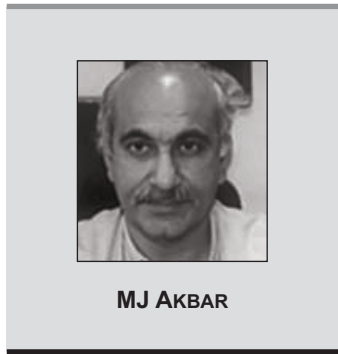
Then comes the question of taking the advice of the project engineers and project managers. "Add 20 million dollars for us," the advice reaches you. So you have the tender worth 100 million dollars ready to be floated.

What about the ECNEC and Finance Ministry hurdles? Did you also say PMO hurdles? In Golden Bengal the blessing of these offices worked more effectively than divine blessing to turn paupers into millionaires in three to six months.

Tender for honest politicians

Well, that was the shortest story ever written on tendering in Golden Bengal. But right at this moment the people in this great country are facing a major crisis and the problem can only be solved through floating a tender. This would be a genuine tender inviting suppliers to supply a

The 2.5% rate of growth



MJ AKBAR

THE BJP is in serious danger of declaring victory in the quarterfinals. There is already a strut in their steps that has not been seen since the now-forgotten Venkaiah Naidu was predicting that the party might even get 300 seats, so strong did he see the wave in its favour. We all saw how that wavelet stopped far short of Delhi: the BJP could not even win in the capital, its traditional bastion.

There is good news for the party, but 'good' is a comparative word. The NDA began to ebb when the BJP started to lose the urban vote. Its revival has started exactly where its decline began, in the cities.

Mumbai went back to Shiv Sena and BJP in the municipal elections; and the urban seats in Punjab, where there was a massive pro-BJP swing, brought Parkash Singh Badal to power. But this is only the starting point of the end game in the current phase of the power struggle.

Yes, the pace of the game will become faster, and in the month between the assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and the elections for the president of India (whose electoral college includes MLAs) it could become frenetic. But the final result

BYLINE

There are around 150 million Muslims in India, and about 50 million Sikhs and Christians. The total allocation for them is less than Rs 320 crore. The annual expenditure of the Union government is Rs 680,521 crore. Do the math. Send your answers to the prime minister.

could go in either direction.

There is good news also for those congressmen -- a substantial section which exhausts its frustration by muttering under the breath -- who are convinced that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sent the "Hindu" vote back to the BJP by appeasing Muslims. Not to worry, my friends: all this talk about helping Muslims was only lip service.

When the time came to deliver in the budget, the prime minister had nothing to offer. We've seen the pattern before; Dr Singh's government has repeated it. Other deprived sections like the Dalits and backwards get concrete benefits; Indian minorities get enquiry commissions.

Dr Singh's historic contribution to Indian Muslims is the Sachar Commission report. I hope he will do them a favour now and stop talking about this report, particularly because his sincerity once fuelled high expectations.

Lip service can be a very cruel form of betrayal. Dr Singh even suggested that 15% of the expenditure should be allotted to welfare and economic empowerment schemes for Muslims, since they constitute a little less than 15% of the population.

So what happened when the

honourable finance minister presented the budget to the Lok Sabha? Let us check out paragraph 36 of the budget speech. "Last year, I made a modest contribution of Rs 16.47 crore to the equity of the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation."

The finance minister admits that it was modest; we should be thankful for small mercies. This year, the war drums were sounded, so how did he respond? "Following the Sachar Committee report, NMDFC would be required to expand its reach and intensify its efforts." So, a meagre Rs 63 crore is added to the share capital.

The next paragraph notes that there are a number of districts with a concentration of minorities, but does not specify how many, for that might be both revealing and embarrassing.

What is the provision? Rs 108 crore. It is so small that the money may not be visible by the time it reaches the district headquarters. Add to this scholarship worth Rs 210.60 crore for all "minority communities."

There are around 150 million Muslims in India, and about 50 million Sikhs and Christians. The total allocation for them is less than Rs 320 crore.

The annual expenditure of the Union government is Rs 680,521 crore. Do the math.

Send your answers to the prime minister. He lives in Delhi, and the post office should find him quite easily.

For a comparison, read paragraph 33: the allocation for schemes benefiting only scheduled castes and tribes is Rs 3,271 crore, and for schemes in which they will get at least 20% benefit, the sum is Rs 17,691 crore. In addition, there are scholarships worth Rs 790 crore for the children of these communities.

These SC/ST communities need all the help they can, so funds for minorities do not have to come out of their budgets. There is enough money elsewhere. But there is no will to help the minorities.

This thin gruel did not come without prodding. In an extraordinary gesture, the prime minister actually wrote to his finance minister late last year suggesting that the findings of the Sachar report should be taken into consideration.

It took a reminder from the prime minister's principal secretary, and a formal letter from the Marxist MP Brinda Karat, to persuade the finance minister to read what his leader had written. He might as well have ignored it completely.

As the budget reveals, the letter produced a molehill instead of a mountain. If a prime

bunch of honest politicians.

There is an acute crisis of this material in the country and consequently a huge demand for this dwindling variety of professionals has been created since the present caretaker government took over power.

It has been reported that each and every political party is frantically looking for at least a few of them within the party to sell to the people during the next general elections. But they have been immensely disappointed by the situation over there. Next, they have searched outside the party but there again none was found to meet the specifications of an honest and competent candidate.

But crisis (actually necessity) is the mother of all inventions. So, they came up with this brilliant idea of tendering for honest politicians with the hope that genuine supply houses would be able to supply such men and women.

Accordingly, party bigwigs have become busy preparing the specifications of honest and competent politicians keeping in view what the common people would want this time during the elections.

It seems the political parties have finally come to realise that the common people are now more conscious than before as far as selecting the right candidate is concerned. This time around they

minister cannot get his finance minister to read his letters, he can't be much of a prime minister, can he?

The budget is as dismissive of the poor as it is of minorities. There is a kind of implicit contempt for have-nots: if they don't like what they see, they can lump it.

The penultimate paragraph of the speech lists the balance sheet after three years in power. "The UPA government has delivered on the promise of savings and investment... It has delivered on the promise of growth..." But, "it will deliver on the promise of making growth more inclusive."

When it comes to including the poor in the benefits of growth, the verb moves into the future tense. When shall this "will" come? There are no timelines indicated. But there is a formula: "given the right mix of policies, the poor will benefit from growth that is driven by savings and investment, and that is more inclusive". Have we got the right mix of policies yet?

Dr Manmohan Singh first chanted the growth mantra in 1991, fifteen budgets ago. Its proponents believe that the poor will benefit from the "trickle down" effect. For a decade and half it has been just that: the gush has gone in the direction of bank-balance Indians, savers, investors and share marketers.

The poor have been condemned to a trickle from a municipal tap. Government propagandists keep churning out the statistic that the growth rate has crossed 9%; no one talks about the fact that the growth rate in agriculture is only 2.5%.

would not vote for anyone coming up wearing the jersey of a so-called big party along with lots of false promises. The people are now able to call a thief a thief point blank.

Export dishonest politicians as scrap material

We import scrap ships to dismantle them into pieces and then sell the parts. It is known to be a profitable business. We may encourage our export houses to find markets abroad for most of the old and over-used politicians who have become nothing but nation's liability. They are failing to remain on course and have lost steam and they have become threats to our environment.

Therefore, they must be dismantled before a major disaster is caused. So far they have only taken from this country and given nothing in return. Let us export them as scrap material so that we may earn good amount of foreign currency. Any takers?

Shahnoor Wahid is a Senior Assistant Editor of The Daily Star.

This is the central reality. A part of India may be growing at 20%, but most of India is growing at the rate of 3%.

This might work in a dictatorship like China, but democracy demands a different dialectic. One critical problem of the UPA government is that the prime minister and his finance minister speak from a dictionary that is music to the confederations of industry and unintelligible to the poor.

A budget is not just a description of the national economy; it is also a critical test of its politics. Theoretically, Dr Singh has two budgets left under his stewardship, unless one of the laws of Indian democracy catches up with him: if you are not in control of events, events will be in control of you.

The defeat of the Congress in Punjab is remarkable for one reason. The first Sikh prime minister of India could not persuade the Sikh voter to stay with the Congress. This is a tribute to the voter's maturity, for she (women polled in higher numbers in Punjab than men) is no longer swayed by the false sentiment of accidental identity. She measures her vote on the scales of her vegetable shop. She is the judge and the jury, and she is hearing the evidence.

Only one thing is certain: the time between the quarterfinals and finals will pass in a rush.

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State of our politics: Views of the young generation

The politicians should realise that their purpose is to serve the people, and not the other way around. As demonstrated by the current state of emergency, the country is caught in a vicious cycle. Politicians take negative actions, including promotion of violence, to further their agenda and undermine their rivals at the expense of the citizens.

NESAR AHMED

I am a 26-year-old Bangladeshi living and working in the UK. As with other members of our young generation, the current state of our politics has had a major impact on me. In 2003 I got my undergraduate degree in the UK and wanted to return to Bangladesh.

My father warned against it, saying that it was not safe due to the political situation and also because there were no good opportunities for me unless I had "influential friends." So I decided to stay in the UK rather than risk the worsening political crisis in my native land.

I am not alone in this respect.

The current state of our politics has played a significant role in creating insecurity and lack of opportunities for Bangladesh's young generation in their own country.

As far as the economy is concerned, strikes, hartals and oborods have crippled it. My brother-in-law owned a small hardware store in old Dhaka, which he had to shut due to huge losses suffered because of the strikes that began after the previous government left office in late October 2006.

Since closing his store he tried to start a new business with his friends, importing melamine plates from China. The business was supposed to have taken off in

late December 2006, in time for the busy Eid-ul-Adha -- he is yet to receive the first shipment.

He tells me that if he could get a visa he would go abroad as he has had enough of Bangladesh. This exemplifies why our young generation seeks better opportunities abroad, resulting in "Brain Drain." The state of our politics is the cause of this, and most of the things that are wrong with Bangladesh today.

The politicians should realise that their purpose is to serve the people, and not the other way around. As demonstrated by the current state of emergency, the country is caught in a vicious cycle.

Politicians take negative

actions, including promotion of violence, to further their agenda and undermine their rivals at the expense of the citizens. There are many ways to overcome this crisis. All party-backed student political groups should be banned from our universities.

The country needs a new direction and, therefore, there should be a law barring an individual politician from holding office more than twice. Otherwise, you will get the same corrupt leaders and the same problems. What we desperately need are new, transparent leaders who put the people's interest first.

Laws must be enacted requiring all election candidates to disclose their profession, financial details and assets before being nominated. In addition, a criminal record check must be done on anyone running for elections, and those who have one must be barred.

Once these checks are imposed, we must also ensure that those MPs and leaders who

do get elected give time to the people of the areas they represent. For example, MPs must have weekly "surgery hours" when they will be available for consultation in their elected areas, rather than in their lavish, expensive, marbled flats in Dhaka. Once the politicians start serving the people, rather than filling their own coffers, the rule of law will prevail.

Politicians should focus on preventing the numerous heinous acts from happening in their areas. For example, in February, the body of a tortured 10-year-old girl was found in a travel bag dumped at a school playground in Mirpur. Apparently, the girl had been a domestic servant.

Politicians and lawmakers need to focus on improving the laws so that children like her do not have to leave their families at such an early age, and fall victim to abuse. They also need to take drastic actions against mistreatment and illegal executions by law enforcers such as Rab, in the

guise of "crossfire."

It is the politicians' responsibility to ensure human rights, security and rule of law for the people of Bangladesh. To do this, the politicians need to improve the protectors of the law.

The police and other law enforcement agencies must be held accountable. There is a drastic need for an Internal Affairs agency to investigate and punish any officers who have broken the law, so that others are discouraged from doing the same.

Furthermore, there needs to be a review of the salary of the police and other security forces, and an adequate increase so that they stop giving the excuse that they are underpaid and, hence, justified in taking bribes. Such steps would help stop arbitrary arrests and other human rights violations.

Similar watchdogs should be set up in all the courts to ensure that judges and other legal practitioners uphold the law. Once the

law is sound, the work ethic and personal behaviour of the general public will naturally be affected for the better.

When supported by the rule of law, the vast majority of Bangladeshis would prefer to live lives of honesty, principles and morals. For too long our leaders, with their blatant corruption, have allowed wrong values like materialism to grip society.

For example, during Eid-ul-Adha, many of the rich people were more concerned with showing off how many cows they sacrificed, than with being good Muslims.

Instead of principles the younger generation of Bangladeshis is being tempted by lust for power and wealth, and taking shortcuts. Our politicians need to lead by example, and create the right atmosphere for cultivating our latent professional excellence. Only then will our younger generation's outlook improve, allowing them to take pride in their work and live just lives. Only then will

Bangladesh move forward.

In summation, as a member of the young Bangladeshi generation,

I have given my views on

some of the problems facing our

country due to the state of our

politics. Such problems can be

solved once our politicians over-

come their personal interests

and focus on the welfare of the

Bangladeshi people. I may be

over-optimistic but as John

Lennon said: "You may say I'm a

dreamer... but I'm not the only

one."

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