

Dialogue between govt and AL

Pragmatic approach needed to yield consensus

THE AL-government dialogue, a more formalised one than the one that immediately followed the release of Sheikh Hasina for medical treatment abroad, has ended rather inconclusively. But the vibes sounded positive as indicated by the resolve expressed by both sides to sit again and continue with the quest for reaching a common ground and cobbling together a formula whereby broadbased participation in a qualitatively reformed election can be ensured.

Quite evidently some of the demands of the AL go to mirror the inner political compulsions the party feels to articulate concerns, such as release of Sheikh Hasina, lifting of the emergency, holding of parliamentary elections as the first priority, withdrawal of 'false' and 'repressive' cases against political leaders etc. But there is a plethora of other demands that either relate to governance or to issues of a longer term perspective. In the first category are included soaring prices of essentials, economic recession, withdrawal of ban on trade union and implementation of the women development policy, 1998. In the second category fall issues of trial of war criminals, crushing poverty, dipping investment, energy crisis and lack of employment.

Obviously, there is the need for AL to untangle the issues from its list of agenda that are not of immediate relevance to the work at hand i.e. holding free, fair and credible national elections.

The AL will have to adopt a pragmatic approach and that means being focussed on political and party reforms that will make the coming elections qualitatively better than before. The party can not gloss over the gains made so far, courtesy the government and the EC, through preparation of an authentic electoral roll with photograph that has shed one crore false voters, reconstitution and reform of the election commission and appointment of a neutral EC. They have to their credit, formulation of new electoral laws. These basically constitute the fulfillment of the demands AL had been clamouring for. A good deal of ground work has already been done and this needs to be rounded off by a consensual understanding on the remaining agenda to be owned and worked for across the political spectrum including the government as the facilitating player. This will greatly ensure strengthening of our democracy.

The government, for its part, should acknowledge the importance of dialogue with AL in the present scheme of things requiring a breakthrough with a major political party as a vital spring board and be prepared to go the extra mile in meeting the legitimate demands of the AL. The AL can take the clincher initiative by reciprocating with a conciliatory and mature approach to the next round of the dialogue.

Sessions judge courts in hill districts

A dream fulfilled for CHT people

THE gazette notification introducing sessions judge courts in the three hill districts of Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachhari marks a momentous event in the chequered history of Chittagong hill tracts.

The President assenting to the proposal made by the government in a sequel to the Chief Advisor's pledge during his visit in March to Rangamati and Bandarban caused the orders to be passed on June 4.

The courts were to commence working from July 1.

It is a shame for successive governments to recall that three court buildings with very large premises were constructed in 1990 presumably to house the planned higher courts. For long 18 years since their erection those massive buildings stood neglected and uncared for. So much for our commitment to the welfare of the hill people!

It was a patent inadequacy of the justice system that it didn't extend to a particular region of the country. It also featured another facet of discrimination to the region. People of three hill districts were denied access to higher judicial service. There was magistracy alright, but the long-drawn absence of sessions courts led to all sorts of legal complications in administration of justice. The people had to rush to far away Chittagong Divisional Commissioner's Court to avail themselves of some higher form of service. In such a context, the seekers of justice were hard put to get it, what with the costs involved.

Now that the sessions court paraphernalia will be at the door steps of the people the demand for fair-play is being met as their long cherished dreams are going to be fulfilled.

Now the courts should operate in full swing and in a much transformed and congenial atmosphere in which the judiciary stands separated from the executive.

Lawman and lure of lucre



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THE suspension of an assistant superintendent of police on charges of stealing a Thai woman's mobile telephone at the airport astounds many and puts many enforcement practitioners to shame. Such incident, perhaps, also points to the necessity of some introspection and soul searching to find out why manifest criminal action by higher level functionaries are disturbingly on the increase.

One should be concerned to know as to what has gone wrong in motivating otherwise decent educated folks about the supreme necessity of maintaining integrity in public service. Is the recruitment process and training regime in need of large-scale sanitisation?

The act of robbery by a similarly placed official in the not-too-distant past followed by this despicable theft should be sufficient to cause justifiable worries in the corridors of public responsibility.

One may wonder how come that the criminal acts of some black sheep continue to smear the good deeds of scores of painstaking policemen? Is there any truth in the premonition that the bad hats in uniform have not been dealt with an iron hand? Have undesirable elements found their way into police department due to the so-called pressing factors?

Coming to the so-called pressing factors, it would be relevant to point out that the aforementioned

criminal officer reportedly belongs to the much maligned 24th BCS batch, whose hurried entry, truncated training and premature posting to field situation under unusual circumstances attracted widespread adverse publicity in the not-too-distant past.

It would be pertinent to recollect that 'The Daily Star' in its lead news of October 23, 2005 reported that half-trained cops were scheduled to report to duty posts for alleged

During the period between 1991 and 2006, that is, in the tenure of two political governments, bulk recruitments of managerial level officers were effected despite the reservation of senior professionals in the department.

The demands of the so-called emerging political requirements had to be met. In the process half-baked and ill-trained officials were produced.

Disconcerting news about the

of material favours without appreciating that appointees from a shady deal would turn into bitter and insensitive cops in no time.

Under circumstances as above, it is only natural that bitter individuals occupying positions of coercive power would behave abnormally. The minds and motivations of such individuals remained preoccupied with the compulsions of recouping their initial investment at the earliest. Quite natu-

ral process to become a facilitating and catalytic factor. Regular training was not considered an investment in human resources.

There are credible fears that the police image will suffer incalculable damage if politicisation is not effectively halted and expeditious screening of undesirable appointees not done. At the same time large-scale behavioural and attitudinal changes of politicians and

being transferred, to mitigate disciplinary sentences or to earn advancement in rank.

Thus a necessary basis has been provided for a mutually advantageous barter. This give-and-take between the police and the politicians has thrived because superintendence and control over the police rests in the political executive.

The acts of a few black sheep must not be allowed to smear the virtues of toiling policemen. The bad hats must be dealt with an iron hand at the very first instance of criminality.

The unholy alliance between criminal policemen and corrupt politicians must be broken and the performance of both should be under continuous vigilance and constant scrutiny. The recruitment process of police functionaries have to be sanitised to prevent the entry of undesirable elements and drastic disciplinary actions relating to delinquent police officers must not be interfered with. These are not tall orders. We need them to bring sanity in our governance scenario.

The deviation of policemen in the form of criminal acts and other illegal activities are always deplorable as they shake the foundation of the society by eroding faith and trust in the rule of law.

The most visible symbol of authority can never escape criticism for malfunctioning of any description. They cannot ignore public opinion. This needs to be constantly impressed upon the rank and file.

At the same time it needs to be seriously examined at the earliest whether the bulk of our police force should continue to be ludicrously equated with the unskilled workers and whether police modernisation schemes will remain an area of low priority.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a columnist of The Daily Star.

STRAIGHT LINE

The bad hats must be dealt with an iron hand at the very first instance of criminality. The unholy alliance between criminal policemen and corrupt politicians must be broken and the performance of both should be under continuous vigilance and constant scrutiny. The recruitment process of police functionaries have to be sanitised to prevent the entry of undesirable elements. These are not tall orders. We need them to bring sanity in our governance scenario.

election related assignments and that the same would be realised by shortening the training period of police officers of different ranks.

It was reported that 200 Assistant Superintendents of Police who were recruited through 24th BCS examination would complete their training after nine months only to meet administrative exigencies.

The question that should bother us is whether there was an unhealthy motive in the recruitment of more than usual number of officials in the penultimate year of a political government.

Such premonition arises because the integrity of recruitment process of public services in the recent past was not above board. And now it has been seen that premature field exposure to a duty post without basic orientation has been dangerously unwholesome.

The accusations of intake of partisan law enforcement officials have complicated an already fearfully polarised public life.

unsavoury political influence on several layers of police hierarchy-attracting headlines of national newspapers was no surprise in the recent past. In fact, many senior police officers made specific mention of the pernicious political pressures being exerted on them with regard to appointments, transfer and postings of different ranks.

Such officials had also complained about the entry of undesirable and unsuitable individuals and inappropriate posting violating the usual procedure and disregarding the chain of command.

Reportedly, a district level commander lamented during the past political government that the unbridled political meddling had made the subordinate officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station more powerful than him.

It appears that the political executives across the divide did not realise that the police as an official organ was expected to be the relief provider. They ensured the intake of undesirable persons in exchange

rally, the lure of the lucre took its toll.

The tragedy in the enforcement parlance has been that the real interests of the State were allowed to get diluted and mixed up with the interests of the government of the day. Our politicians including those at the apex did not display an understanding and appreciation of the requirements of the State and the government in a democratic and pluralist society.

Their myopia decimated professionalism and consequently the sense of direction was lost. In such circumstances, the police hierarchy dipped further into a frustratingly lackadaisical scenario and interests of the State took a back seat providing increasingly greater space to narrow partisan considerations.

The policy-makers have forgotten that in the context of constitutionally incorporated state objectives the need of training for desirable attitudinal development necessitate sustained training.

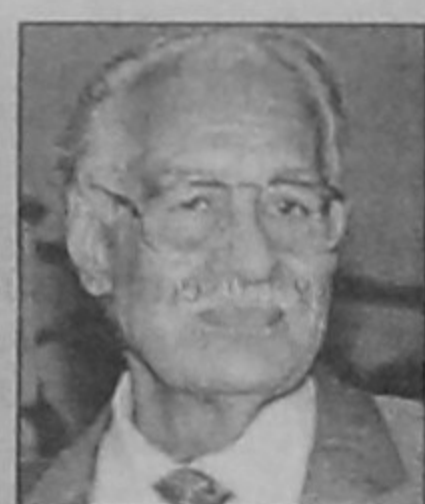
Time is important for the train-

public servants would be necessary in public interest.

There are definite reasons to be apprehensive as in the recent past police officers were tasked to survey ruling party candidate popularity. The unfortunate experience has been that most often appeals and entreaties for stopping blatant politicisation of the police have fallen on deaf ears and the political establishment has displayed a 'carrion regardless' attitude. The paramount necessity of insulating the enforcement organ from political influence has not been taken note of.

In Bangladesh, unfortunately, there is no agreement among the different segments of the society as to what is expected or wanted from our police. In such a situation, our policemen indulge in doing things, which they ought not to do, or in refraining from doing things they ought to do, to favour politicians in power and ask the politicians-in-power to use their influence to obtain choice postings, to avoid

Manmohan Singh insists on nuclear deal



KULDIP NAYAR
writes from New Delhi

WHEN a Prime Minister's Press Secretary on his own initiative calls newspapers and TV channels to tell them that he is neither confirming nor denying the PM's resignation, the inference is that there is something wrong somewhere. This is exactly the exercise which Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Press Secretary Sanjay Baru went over some time ago. The entire country was ablaze with rumours and the share market was adversely affected.

There is no doubt that Manmohan Singh has put all his weight behind the nuclear deal with America, even to the reported exasperation of Congress president Sonia Gandhi. The Left is quite right when they say that he alone is bent upon going ahead with the deal.

What surprises me is the abrupt change in the Prime Minister from his earlier observations: his government is not a one issue government; the failure to sign the deal is not the end of the world. Till

recently whenever the co-ordination committee, comprising the Congress, its allies and the Left, met the spirit of accommodation was so perceptible that all felt a way would be found to reach a consensus. The Left, which threatened to withdraw its support from the government if it made any move towards the deal, allowed the government to have talks with the IAEA on the safeguards agreement. They feel let down. Now they have

Probably, the Prime Minister believes that it is a historic moment for him to quit, if need be. He will leave in blazing glory, giving the impression that when it came to the country's 'interests,' he sacrificed his office. The never-stopping taunt by the BJP that Manmohan Singh is a weak Prime Minister may also have spurred him to go ahead to prove that he is not.

I don't know if his stand is correct. One, his party is not with him

The evidence of America's pressure is visible in the statements that come from Washington. A US lawmaker, Gary Ackerman, has said this week: 'I have very difficult time understanding why India continues to pursue a gas pipeline with Iran and Pakistan...' Not long ago, US ambassador to India David Mulford warned New Delhi not to vote for Iran on a crucial IAEA board meeting and we voted at his bidding.

blow to progressive forces. The Left has to realise while stopping the nuclear deal is important, but not allowing the country to go into the hands of the Hindutva crowd is equally paramount. It's a pity that a CPM representative played the communal card by warning Samajwadi Party, which may support the Congress, that the Muslims from the Samajwadi will go away if it signs the deal which will be seen as a pro-American

terms of this current deal would have the right to put their experts into our plants like a force of international policemen.

True, the nuclear deal will open up many facilities in technology that developing India badly needs. But we cannot barter away our independence. It took us 150 years to get rid of the British. We should not land ourselves in a situation where we remain sovereign on paper like the present-day Iraq, but actually be subservient to Washington's dictates. The manner in which the US is putting pressure on New Delhi—literally installing officials in the government's different ministries—it gives me the feeling as if they are too anxious for our comfort.

I must confess that a Manmohan Singh of South-South report, warning the Third World against the machinations of the Developed countries, has changed over the years. I am not talking of his policy of globalisation, but of the pressure the World Bank and the multinational companies have come to wield during his regime. The nuclear deal may open the floodgates for such cartels which stand to make billions from the concessions that New Delhi would inevitably make. I wish the Prime Minister, a brilliant economist as he is, had burnt the midnight oil to devise policies which would have uplifted the lower 70 per cent of people who, according to an official report, live on one dollar per day.

Kuldip Nayar is an eminent Indian columnist.

BETWEEN THE LINES

One thing which New Delhi has to guard against is America casting a shadow over our sovereignty. True, the nuclear deal will open up many facilities in technology that developing India badly needs. But we cannot barter away our independence. It took us 150 years to get rid of the British. We should not land ourselves in a situation where we remain sovereign on paper like the present-day Iraq, but actually be subservient to Washington's dictates.

said that the Prime Minister's departure for Tokyo to attend the G8 meeting will be considered the government's decision to go ahead with the deal. So why has the Prime Minister taken such a tough stance?

The suspicion is that President Bush's pressure, or for that matter America's, has worked. I do not buy it because Manmohan Singh is not the person who would give in without believing that what he is doing is right. He may be honestly of the viewpoint that the deal is the best thing that will happen to the country. Indian civil society by and large thinks in a similar way.

if the deal means a parting of ways with the Left and facing early elections. The Congress and its allies fall short of a majority if the 59 members of the Left withdraw their support. Two, the nuclear experts, including former Bhabha Atomic Research Centre Director P.K. Iyengar, have said in a statement that the deal was not in the interests of India. They have no axe to grind and they know what they are talking about. Three, the general impression is that America is pushing us hard so that we become dependent on it and hitch our wagon with Washington's, jettisoning our policy of non-alignment.

I do not really understand the government's obsession with the deal. It has literally stopped the rest of the work. This is the time when all efforts should have been directed to stop inflation and prices rise which have made an average man's life hell. Instead, the Congress has the BJP a propaganda point, which it will use during the elections, whenever they are held.

The Left is also oblivious to the danger the country would face once the secular forces are divided. It has made all the efforts it could to stall the nuclear deal, but throwing out a secular government with the help of the BJP will give a deadly

stand. The latest statement by the Prime Minister should have mollified the Left. He has said that when New Delhi completes the process of negotiations with the IAEA and Nuclear Suppliers' group, he will 'bring it before Parliament and abide by the House.' The only point to know is whether the deal has some confidential clauses or not. One thing which New Delhi has to guard against is America casting a shadow over our sovereignty. If, at some future date, we are obliged to carry out further nuclear tests to upgrade our capability, it shouldn't mean the Americans under the

Reforming our examination system

PROF. QUAZI FARUQUE AHMED

THE necessity for reforms in our existing public examination system has come under discussion in the recent years. The realisation of such need for change in the evaluation system has come mostly due to failures of a large number of students in two major public examinations -- Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) in the recent past. The practice of copying or cheating in the examination halls however has decreased in the last 7 to 8 years due to continued motivational campaign and vigilance on the part of both teachers and the administration with enhanced co-operation from guardians. Percentage of pass with a huge number of GPAs in this year's SSC results also shows apparent in enhancement of number of successful examinees. Side by side, prompted instruction to the examiners from the education board authorities at the instance of the government for

leniency in the assessment of examination scripts has also been reported in a section of the press.

It is useless to go into the details and verify its authenticity since some new phenomena have cropped up in the meantime indicating the ineffectiveness and unworkability of the existing examination system. For the last 4-5 years and until now, teachers are also reported to be expelled from the examination halls on charge of illegal and immoral role. Now-a-days a new feature of cheating has also come in the surface like proxy-candidate in examination halls.

Before we discuss about reforms in our existing examination system, it is very much necessary to have a comprehensive idea of the prevailing system of evaluation. By examination we are supposed to assess the length and depth of the acquired knowledge of a particular student under the framework of a particular syllabus. The mechanism of assessing the standard of students or holding examination has already given

Some immediate steps need to be taken to reform our systems of examination. For that it is necessary to view the problem in its totality and not in piecemeal or in an isolated manner as was done in the past. I think study of examination systems of foreign countries including our neighbouring ones, review of findings of all the education commissions and task forces relevant to examination, taking note of the opinions of the teachers and all concerned involved with public examinations, including the administrators, will be useful.

birth to manifold complications and problems. The system has also become unmanageable and unworkable due to sole stress on public examinations. In 1960 the then East Pakistan Secondary Education Board alone could manage it. But now there are nine Education Boards to conduct the examination of almost more than a million examinees through series of public examinations consecutively.

Practically holding of public examinations as is done now, has become unmanageable not only due to the influx of huge number of examinees, increase in number of subjects in multiple disciplines have also come up to multiply the managerial problem in many dimensions. Absence of quality

teachers in subjects like English, Physics, Mathematics, Biology even in Bangla, inappropriate and useless syllabus/curricula are also a few ingredients to add to the problem. The system of assessing students' acquired knowledge in educational institutions under particular syllabus has become obsolete. Redress of the system has become overdue. It is not a fact that our governments have not at all addressed the problem. But their actions are neither timely nor consistent with the constant changes and overhauling of the system elsewhere in the world. Enough instances and examples may be cited to show the incoherence in our existing examination system. To mention a few:

- Dropout of huge number of examinees.
- Fear of sitting over in the examination hall by examinees due to lack of preparation.
- Lack of professional expertise by the teachers in tiers of examination from question setting to publication of the results.
- Continuous yearly increase of financial burden on guardians through increase of examination fees and levy of exorbitant 'allowances' for the government officials not connected with the conducting of the examination.

Under the circumstances some immediate steps need to be taken to reform our systems of examination. For that it is necessary to view the problem in its totality and not in piecemeal or in an isolated manner as was done in the past. I think study of examination systems of foreign countries including our neighbouring ones, review of findings of all the education commissions and task forces relevant to examination, taking note of the opinions of the teachers and all concerned involved with public examinations, including the administrators, will be useful. Any reform in our examination system should be bifurcated in two parts. Firstly we should ascertain whether the existing public examination system should continue any more or not. Secondly, before we go for a radical change discontinuing the present examination system, some corrective measures should be taken so that no anomaly can crop up in the stop-gap period.

Following are some of the suggestions:

- Education should not be examination oriented and should prioritise acquisition of knowledge, development of skill to attain better livelihood, inspiration and incentive to develop entrepreneurship.
- Change of question pattern to discourage rote or memorizing.
- Holding of examination in different subjects by various sets of question papers with more than 100 questions in each paper.
- Reduction of duration of examination from 3 to 2 hours.
- To follow gradually open book examination system.
- Introduction of 50 percent marks/grade in both public and internal examinations and inclusion of results of both the examinations, in the final mark sheet/transcript of the Education Board.
- Precondition of eligibility to appear in public examination should be compulsory 75 per-

cent attendance in classroom, and satisfactory success in both periodical and test examinations.

To ensure practical classes for science students. Government should establish at least one science laboratory in each thana headquarter, so that students of the area can attend practical classes in science subjects by rotation.

Permission to introduce science courses in schools and colleges only after they fulfil provisions of practical classes and recruitment of qualified science teachers.

It is high time that government should seriously take note of the points and suggestions made above in the greater interest of education and form a task force to look into the matter and take appropriate action without any further delay.

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