

Abominable admission business

Stop the hooligans

EDUCATION is the backbone of the nation and undermining or vitiating it in any form can only have disastrous effects on it. Many developed nations, including India, have used education as a powerful tool for economic progress and prosperity.

But what are we doing? A congenial academic atmosphere is now absent even in many reputable institutions due, largely, to the activities of the ruling party's student wing fanning out in different money-making directions. In addition to indulging in tender business, the BCL cadres are reportedly thriving on booming admission business in the colleges.

Dhaka College, which has a long and glorious history as one of the leading educational institutions of the country, is now the scene of the BCL activists trying to control the admission process. They went to the extent of preventing admission seekers from appearing in their viva voce on Sunday. Of course, they used muscle power to drive away the genuine students. They are demanding a 'political quota' of 500 seats for their organisation on the basis of a 400 seats quota they had last year. Quota means a huge amount of money as the seats will be sold out to the students wanting to get admission through the dark alleys of corruption -- now almost institutionalised in the academic arena, obviously to the detriment of the interest of deserving candidates.

Needless to say, the slide in the standard of education will continue if the admission business is not stopped as a matter of top priority. The future of the nation is bound to be bleak if student leaders are allowed to take charge of the admission process.

The question is, who will stop it? The BCL has been committing all sorts of excesses in the educational institutions that couldn't have nor did it escape the AL high command's notice. The prime minister herself rebuked and warned the errant BCL activists of dire consequences. But all the warnings and exhortations have gone unheeded with similar rapidity with which these were spewed out by leaders, with the result that they have only provided sinews to the culture of impunity they think they are heir to by virtue of being associated with ruling party.

It is high time that zero tolerance is shown to vandalism and corrupt practices on campuses not in mere words, but in actual deeds that make examples out of them with a deterrent effect. It is hard to believe that the AL cannot control the ominous forces out to ruin everything in the academic arena. They are expected to gauge the extent of the danger that the nation is exposed to because of wheeling and dealing with as sacrosanct an arena as education. It is too precious an affair to be left to hooligans and vandals. Bring the culprits to justice.

Big gain from small trade

Mobile recharge retail can be further boosted

A direct positive outcome of the fast growing mobile telecom sector in Bangladesh has been the growth of retail recharge outlets that number around two and a half million as of today. These retailers, some running part time and some fulltime outlets earn about 2.5 percent commission, finding in this business a good opportunity for self-employment. Given the rate of current growth in the telecom sector and newer telecom companies entering the market in Bangladesh one would hope that there will be more such outlets that would provide a scope of earning for many unemployed youths in future. This augurs well for a country like ours that has to cope with a very high rate of unemployment.

The system of prepaid mobile phones has reduced much of the hassles of the users; at least one doesn't have to bother about receiving monthly bills and having to pay it at a particular bank well in time lest the connection is cut off. One can now manage the use of mobiles perhaps more efficiently than otherwise would be in the case of post paid system as well.

The return on the investment by the retailers is safe and assured and the rate of return, as one can find out from some of the retailers is quite reasonable, which according to some of them, could be even better if the rate of commission were to be raised by the operators. There is need also to address the concern of the fulltime retailers regarding having different rates of commission for the two.

On the matter of enhancing the rate of commission of the retailers we would like to reflect the concern of the operators who suggest that one of the causes for reduction in the commission rates is enhanced tax on imported SIM cards which is now TK 900 per card as against Tk 800 prior to 2005-06 fiscal. Considering that the business is gainfully employing such large number of people there is every rationale for the government to reduce import duty on SIM cards. That, along with making the recharging business worthwhile, will make it cheaper for the users too. This needs to be considered.

Justice delayed but not denied

The nation has been waiting to see the killers hanged, not to rejoice their deaths, but to be reassured that the obstacles have been removed and from now on no killer will feel safe hiding behind any such thing as "Indemnity" act.

SHAHNOOR WAHID

THE execution of five of the self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has once again established our faith in the rule of law. It should be treated as a warning to those who had stood between the process of law and the killers. Whatever they had tried to gain by doing so must now hide their bloodied hands from public exposure. It was nasty politics to say the least.

We know that had the normal process of law not been interfered with through enacting the infamous "Indemnity Bill" by the powers of the day, all those who were involved in the assassination of Bangabandhu would have been long hanged and dead.

In the eye of law, those who would hinder the normal process of law in punishing offenders are to be treated as party to the offence.

Rounding up five of the 11 killers from various parts of the world and putting them in the dock to face trial and finally executing them after 35 years of the gruesome killing is unique in history.

Surely justice has been delayed, but not denied. The nation has been waiting to see the killers hanged, not to rejoice their deaths, but to be reassured that the obstacles have been removed and from now on no killer will feel safe hiding behind any such thing as "Indemnity" act.

Let us recall some of the achievements of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after liberation. He not only guided Bengal towards independence but also showed his capacity in re-building the war-devastated country within the span of only three and a half years.

The Pakistani army had largely destroyed the communication network of Bangladesh but within a few months, most of the major bridges including the Hardinge and Meghna Bridge were rebuilt. Chittagong and Mongla seaports were cleared of mines and opened for

business. Within a week of the independence the national flag, the national song and the war song were decided upon. For the farmers, he took the decision that there will be no tax for holdings land under 25 bighas.

Then, within a year, the Constitution was drafted and finalised to provide guidance to governance. Bangladesh gained membership of the United Nations in a couple of years. Bangladesh became a member of the Non-Aligned Movement. In the Algiers summit of NAM Countries, Bangabandhu was dubbed as the New Rising Sun of South Asia.

Within a very short period of independence, nearly two hundred countries recognised Bangladesh. Even Pakistan recognised Bangladesh and invited Bangabandhu to visit the country in 1974. All these were possible because of Bangabandhu's powerful personality, charisma and his role befitting a statesman. The World Peace Council awarded the prestigious Julio Curie Peace Medal because of his contributions. The organisation also dubbed him as "The Friend of the World."

Time to learn lessons?

Yes. Why not? So, what lessons have we learned? That the arms of law are much longer than what we tend to believe. That no criminal or crime gangs can ever be bigger or stronger than the state. That no one is above law. That the common masses cannot be fooled for all the time. That we should not ask for help from people and powers that are hostile to Bangladesh, who had opposed the creation of the country and who continue to do so. Those people and those powers are trying their utmost to destabilise the country through sending drugs, arms, counterfeit currency and trainers to train anti-state elements. These are the lessons we should learn from the hanging of the five killers of Bangabandhu.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman even in death evokes fear in the minds of the



No one is above the law.

anti-liberation forces and that's why they remain silent on the issue of the hanging of the killers. They cannot trust their own tongue and that's why they keep silent. They fear that if they open their mouth to talk they might say some-

thing to upset their masters. And that's why they cannot even say: Justice has been served.

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Challenge before the new leadership

Where do we, in Bangladesh, stand amid all these great shifts in the conventional paradigms of political and ideological thinking? Strangely, despite all assurances of having opened our economy to the world, nothing significant has been achieved so far.

SYED FATTAHUL ALIM

WITH the fall of the Berlin Wall, the force of ideology is gradually losing steam from the politics of the Western world. Also, in the aftermath of China's taking the capitalistic path of economic development, the promise of a Red East, too, has dimmed to a great extent. Furthermore, after Vietnam's climb onto the same bandwagon, the anti-imperialistic-nationalistic slogans, too, have lost much of their significance. Politics,

structured future? Quite to the contrary. As if, like the proverbial nature abhors a vacuum, the dream of a revolutionary transformation of society has now been replaced with the dream of rapid economic development through increased trade, especially by export to advanced economies in Europe and North America. The mantra of faster growth is how a nation can better woo foreign investors, who earlier were seriously suspect, because of their "capitalistic-imperialistic intentions."

In the political universe, ideology may

all these great shifts in the conventional paradigms of political and ideological thinking?

Strangely, despite all assurances of having opened our economy to the world, nothing significant has been achieved so far. We have been running in the same spot since we started our reforms and the drive to denationalise and adopt private sector-led economic development.

Though the sudden shift in ideology in the post-1990s dispensation jolted many economies in the East and West, we had our taste of a private sector-driven pro-market push in the economy at least a decade earlier.

Then, has the great change somehow failed to shake off our inertia and slumber? If not, how can we remain so unruffled when our close neighbours in the east and west are making enormous strides in the fields of their economic achievements?

If politics has lost much of its ideological fervour, and been replaced with economic pragmatism in the East and the West, that should have, at least, soberly impacted our highly polarised partisan politics. For here, the wedge that runs between the major partisan divide is rooted more in post-Liberation history than in any abstract ideological debates. Though ideological orthodoxy has traditionally been the main stumbling block in the way of political truce among warring camps elsewhere, bitterness and animosities have only grown in intensity here with time.

Since independence, we have generally blamed the bureaucracy for red-tapism, corruption and other administrative ills for our lack of economic progress and governance. Politicians have not been spared either. Neither the bureaucracy nor the politicians have protested against such blames. Recently, the awareness of and criticism against corruption have become sharper, but these have hardly helped matters.

The portrayal of our political landscape in such terms is familiar. Truth be told, we have been too critical of ourselves so far. More positive elements of motivation than exposure to biting self-criticism will be needed to drag us out of this morass of despair.

Our post-Independence political evolution has played a big part in rendering all our past efforts ineffective.

For every Asian nation that succeeded in quickly adapting itself to this new economic order, the change did not come automatically. The leadership played a great role in this shift. Lee Kwan Yew in Singapore, Mahathir Mohammad in Malaysia and Manmohan Singh in India, for example, played pioneering roles in bringing about a radical change in their economies. Yet our leadership somehow failed to meet the challenge of the time. Was it entirely due to the bickering that has smeared our politics since the late 1970s?

Here, the issue of leadership can unite and inspire the masses to open a new chapter in history. True, we failed to save our political giants, who could have inspired and swayed the masses and changed the nation's political history. Yet, that should not be enough reason to deny ourselves and our next generation a brighter future.

Now that we have started to come to terms with our bitter political past, it is time we also honestly soul-searched to identify where we failed and why. We are already late in catching up with our neighbours. The new leadership needs to take up this challenge in earnest.

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We need to wake up.

as a consequence, has been undergoing a deconstructive transformation. It is a complete reversal of the scenario that existed a few decades back in post-colonial Asia.

Has, then, the dream and hope of a radical social change, which the grand politico-ideological discourse of revolution had generated after World War II, giving way to its antithesis a return to the plain past lacking all the glamour of a con-

have lost its vigour though dream or hope has not. Now in Asia, in particular, the economic successes of China, South Korea and other Far Eastern and Southeast Asian countries have ignited another kind of dream in other nations' hearts. This dream is about how a nation can join faster the march of this market-oriented economic development.

Where do we, in Bangladesh, stand amid

Counting from the 1980s, we should have gathered enough experience to lead other nations who joined the new march after us.

Interestingly, our next-door neighbour, India, too, adopted the practice of private sector-led economic growth after we did. The same is true of the war-devastated, highly ideological Vietnam that recently embraced this new philosophy of economic growth.