

Balanced management of private universities

The Act is a policy instrument for enforcing transparency and accountability, and encouraging participatory faculty governance. The Act and the statutes should be mutually reinforcing to prevent friction between the vice-chancellor and founders, and between the founders and the government/UGC.

HAFIZ G. A. SIDDIQI

PRIVATE universities are under pressure, and rightly so, to improve their performance. This is because, of the 54 universities, only a small number are performing reasonably well, the rest are non-performers.

Given the infrastructural facilities, teachers' qualities, low teacher-student ratio, use of computer technology in teaching, research, and library automation, and other essential support services, there is much to be desired from these non-performing universities. In addition, there are allegations of malpractices and corruptions. Appropriate measures must be taken to reverse the situation.

The major stakeholders -- the government, UGC, the founders and university management -- need to jointly try to institutionalise a system that will enable them to do what they are supposed to do to meet societal expectation. The society expects that the private universities impart socially relevant quality education and produce highly skilled manpower at reasonable cost. For this, good governance, among other things, must be institutionalised.

Good governance and best management practices are prerequisite for quality assurance. I consider the best man-

agement practice a sub-set of good governance. Management practices are applicable at micro level to run a university with a view to achieving its goals given its vision and mission; whereas good governance applies at macro level -- formulation and implementation of government policies to create enabling environment so that private individuals come forward to establish self-financed universities.

The government provides a legal framework and a set of policy guidelines, rules and regulations (Private University Act) in the light of which individual universities prepare and follow their own statutes in managing themselves. The quality of education greatly depends on the macro level check and balance made effective through application of policies, rules and regulations provided by Private University Act.

The Act in turn influences, through application of the statutes, the management style followed at the university. Quality of education is also largely determined by the management system practiced by the university following its statutes.

The government and UGC are expected to play a vital role in quality assurance by institutionalising good governance. To perform its duty, the government recently repealed the old

Private University Act 1992 and passed the new Private University Act 2010. This provides policy guidelines, control mechanism and regulatory framework. The private universities are required to comply with the provisions of this Act.

The Act is not intended primarily to "control" the universities; rather it aims at facilitating their smooth functioning without discouraging private investment in higher education. One must note that without private universities the national demand for higher education cannot be met.

The government does not have enough resources to meet the increasing demand for higher education. Therefore, the number of good quality private universities must be increased. Public and private universities must coexist, and supplement and complement each other.

The degree of good governance in the private university system in general and management style at the individual university level are defined by how prudently the provisions of the Private University Act and individual university statutes are written.

Good governance cannot be ensured unless the founders of the universities see and believe that the Private University Act has been formulated to guide and help both the founders and the management team led by the vice-chancellor, and not to discourage the well-meaning founders in the name of controlling/preventing wrongdoings.

The Act is a policy instrument for enforcing transparency and accountability, and encouraging participatory faculty governance. The Act and the statutes should be mutually reinforcing to prevent friction between the vice-chancellor and founders, and between the founders and the government/UGC. They may not even comply with some



Formulating and implementing wrong policies (such as provisions of the Act) are examples of bad governance. For example, imposing taxes on the surpluses of the non-profit private universities is a wrong policy. Such a policy may lead to either confrontational or evasive behaviour on the part of the university. In extreme cases, the founders may tend to manage the university affairs in such a way as they find expedient.

They may not even comply with some

provisions of the Act or ignore the directions of UGC. The friction between the UGC/government and the founders will eventually create managerial problems, leading to a chaotic situation. Under such circumstances, the Board of Trustees may willfully delegate decision-making authority to wrong places with some hidden agenda, or exert undue interference in the activities of the vice-chancellor so that s/he cannot function as the CEO.

Such a chaotic situation may be a sign of poor management through the selection of poor teachers, admission of too many poor students primarily on revenue consideration and unaudited wasteful expenditures due to corrupt practices. All these mean that good governance and best management practices are the cornerstones of quality assurance.

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Blessing or binding?

Now that Bangladesh has shown the potential of being a medium-sized developing country, we can justifiably pick and choose as to whom to take loan from and seek maximum privilege while negotiating loan deals.

Z.A. KHAN

THE loan agreement signed recently between Bangladesh and India, which entitles the former to receive \$1 billion to be funneled through the Exim Bank of India, has raised a debate which threatens to snowball into an impasse. The situation warrants immediate attention and deft handling. The present economic status of Bangladesh, in the assessment of the World Bank, has improved in the recent decades and they are not inclined anymore to consider us a least developed country (LDC).

Have we been able to come to this stage without external assistance and support? In the historical consideration no country has achieved a healthy economy on its own. We have received vari-

ous types of loans (tied, untied, suppliers' credit etc) from a number of countries, including India, since our independence. As ill luck would have it, we failed to utilise these loans for their promised targets for a variety of reasons, corruption being the prominent one.

Our over-dependence on international donor agencies and development partners in the past to finance our ADP left us with no choice but to often accede to the so-called "benefactor's term." We must confess that these terms were stringent enough to even force us to ramify our development goal. Even now our MDG will be difficult to achieve if we do not receive external assistance.

True that loan agreements are negotiable with regard to terms. International donor agencies give loan at low interest but their loans are directed to their aims,

which are mostly capacity building, poverty alleviation and reduction of vulnerability.

Their initiatives often made us accept loans in non-priority sectors, which made us think that beggars could not be choosers (pardon me for feeling so degraded). The reason behind their harsh conditionalities may be their belief that we are incapable of prioritising our development programs and that we are corrupt.

Lately, we have started asking for loans according to our priority. In the past we failed to substantiate our demand because of the lack of accurate data, inadequate managerial expertise and changing political priority.

The changing global geo-political situation has luckily placed us in a position that prompts the loan strategists to focus on fresh initiatives to combat rising militancy, illegal trade of addictive drugs and the need to use our territory for trade and commerce by neighbours, before deciding on the conditionalities of loan to be given to Bangladesh -- a moderate democracy with a much less volatile political situation.

Meanwhile, we have been able to

generate internal resources to provide as much as 40% to our ADP fund requirement. Our management skills, infrastructure and democracy have taken root, the inadequacy of which was shown as the sole reason for denying us our rightful share of world funding.

We happily note that FDI has increased considerably, remittances have increased many-fold, the gap in the balance of trade is narrowing and foreign exchange reserve is increasing. This has created a congenial situation for the donors to offer us loan.

Now that Bangladesh has shown the potential of being a medium-sized developing country, we can justifiably pick and choose as to whom to take loan from and seek maximum privilege while negotiating loan deals.

India expressly needs to develop communication with the mineral-rich North-East. Therefore, we should look for more privileges than they are offering.

In view of foregoing, I feel that we should have been more prudent in signing the deal. We should have been apolitical. Yes, there are great advantages that the deal offers. Our people, we should

not overlook, are wary of deals with India as our experience of Indian honouring of deals is not quite satisfactory.

Deals with regard to returning of the enclaves, sharing of the river water as a lower-riparian country of the international river system, narrowing of trade imbalance and unabated misdemeanour of BSF are a few examples that created misgivings about India in the minds of the people.

It is claimed that in the scenario of today's global economy, no country should disengage itself from the global responsibility of development of interconnectivity. Some people ask that if China can adopt confidence building measures for the purpose of trade and commerce, if Pakistan can trade with India and if some Arab countries can pursue commerce with Israel, why can't the two geographically contiguous countries do so?

We do want all our neighbours to be equal partners of development with no strings attached. We have to build strategic partnerships with neighbours to emerge as an economic alliance like EEC, Asean etc., so that one country's surplus resources can be utilised by the

other neighbouring countries as most favoured nations.

Subjugation fuels insubordination, which is unpalatable for the recipient. Suspicion breeds disbelief even in a right cause. Our friendship with India hangs on Indian earnestness to seek rapprochement by adopting an honest remedial approach, as has been focused in this article.

I urge upon all not to treat this agreement from the political point of view, which does not fit in the global scheme of things. Let us, together, bear upon all future donors not to tie us so badly that we are constrained to feel that they are hatching schemes to subjugate us for their gains.

Bangladesh, thankfully, has crossed the phase when we could be constrained to accept the dictated terms without considering their suitability, and it is time to set the nation free from the shackles of under-development. Therefore, our governments should not contemplate signing unequal deals, especially when there is a psychological barrier.

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Transforming India's heaven into hell



Some people, by misguiding the Kashmiri youth in the name of religion and independence, want to convert this heaven (Kashmir) on earth into a hell state like Afghanistan.

TANVEER JAFRI

KASHMIR, popularly called "heaven on Indian soil," is burning nowadays. Though the prob-

lem of Kashmir is six decades old, it gets so violent at times that the Indian government finds it very difficult to handle it. Two years ago a similar kind of turmoil was witnessed on the issue of land allot-

ment to the holy Amarnath Shrine. At that time it seemed that this problem would take a decisive turn.

The Kashmir valley has once again come face to face with violence. For the last two months Kashmiri youth have been pelting stones at the security forces in a planned way. About three dozen youth have been killed in the retaliatory action by the paramilitary forces. The dead also include some children who were either part of the protesters or were just onlookers. About 1,300 paramilitary troops have also been injured till now.

Let's take a look at the current circumstances in Kashmir. India considers Kashmir as its integral part whereas Kashmir-based secessionists, mainly Hurriyat Conference extremist leaders, have different views. Some secessionists call for Kashmir's freedom whereas some opine that it should be integrated with Pakistan. Some are of the view that both parts of Kashmir should be merged and be recognised as an independent nation.

Periodic violence in the usually calm Kashmir renews the political grievances and unemployed Kashmiri youth easily become tools in the hands of the secessionist powers, as is clear from the present situation. Pakistan looks for such a situation in the hope of destabilising Kashmir.

There are also reports that Pakistan's ISI has a major role in the current disturbance in Kashmir and secessionists lead-

ers in Kashmir, especially Syed Ali Shah Geelani, are its pawns. It is paradoxical that while Geelani is appealing to Kashmiri youth to refrain from stone pelting, the same Geelani is making an "emotional" appeal to the same youth to participate in violent protests in large numbers so as to achieve "freedom."

Many interesting facts are emerging regarding the current stone pelting in the valley. Report is that many kids, especially school going children, are paid small amounts of money to throw stones. Many reports also suggest that large cache of stones are gathered in trucks at night and are stored in people's houses. Next day, these stones make targets of the security forces.

When the security forces react to disperse people, a police bullet kills a kid or youth. After that he is treated as a "martyr" for the cause of Kashmir's freedom and his last journey is given a violent touch. Protests are not limited to stone pelting, in fact, according Home Minister P Chidambaram, many armed youths also take part in these protest rallies.

The state politics is no less responsible for the current turmoil in Kashmir. Even though Omar Abdullah was made the chief minister of J&K through an apparently fully democratic process, many veteran leaders of the state are not ready to accept him as the head of the state. The main opposition, particularly the

People's Democratic Party (PDP), seems more interested in destabilising the state instead of cooperating with the government.

Recently, at the suggestion of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, Omar Abdullah called an all-party meeting in order to restore peace in the state. PDP was also invited but did not join. Instead, its leaders continued to give poisonous statements regarding those killed in police firing. The Hurriyat Conference, that avoids participating in the state's democratic process, is playing the same game.

One thing is clear. Whether it is an attempt by the PDP to weaken the Omar Abdullah government or an effort to misguide the youth by Hurriyat leaders like Geelani, those youths who get injured or killed are victims of such political propaganda. Security forces are also paying for this in the course of doing their duty.

Kashmiri youth should follow the following lines of the poet Ameer-e-Shahar: "Gharibon ko loot leta hai, kabhi ba-heel-a-e-mazhab kabhi banaam-e-watan." It means that the secessionists are only trying to capture power by misguiding the youth either in the name of "freedom" or of "religion."

Services Examination-2009, has done well to the name of Kashmir as well as the Indian Muslims.

What type of independent country do the secessionists imagine? Are they not learning anything from the internal situation of Pakistan? Are they not aware of the economic and psychological state of the people of Pakistan and Pak occupied Kashmir (PoK)? In fact, some people, by misguiding the Kashmiri youth in the name of religion and independence, want to convert this heaven (Kashmir) on earth into a hell state like Afghanistan.

Their claim of preserving "Kashmiriyat" is also fake. Otherwise, thousands of non-Muslim Kashmiris would not have been forced to leave Kashmir by these forces. Without these non-Muslim Kashmiris, the true "Kashmiriyat" is incomplete. The Kashmiri youth should remain alert about such actions of these secessionists. They should also think about the tourism potential Kashmir (including PoK) holds.

It would have been much better had these separatists launched a movement with the Kashmiri youth for inclusion of PoK in the Indian boundary, thus unifying this heaven on earth, so that the people of PoK could also become economically strong and make their place also a tourist hotspot like J&K.

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