

## New industrial policy

*Evolve mechanisms for implementation*

THE just-released cabinet approved draft industrial policy sounds unconventional and ambitious going by past standards. It seems to have been formulated with a populist overtone but it postulates a well-defined set of goals, some of the key elements emphasizing expanded public sector role to be complemented, it is envisaged, by public private partnership. The PPP is still in an embryonic state, though.

The draft industrial policy which will be tabled before the parliament in the form of a bill, sets itself the onerous task of raising the industrial sector's contribution to GDP from the current 28 percent to 42 percent. It appears that the idea is to turn the industrial sector into a major instrument of economic growth. Therefore, a plethora of wide-ranging thrust sectors has been selected, as many as 21 in number, for priority attention. One wonders, if the list is not unwieldy. The focal points need to be determined.

However, the emphasis on agro-based food processing industry, human resource export, shipbuilding, solar power, ICT products and services, tourism, light engineering industry, home textiles and handicraft, readymade garments, herbal medicine, energy efficient appliances is well-taken. Prioritisation of export and import-substitution industries and some non-traditional segments is laudable, only that it requires an extraordinary level of inter-ministerial coordination.

Notably, the principle of divesting loss-making state-owned enterprises (SOEs) outright has been discarded in favour of making these competitive and profitable, a tall order for the conventional management resources. The astronomical loan default on the part of the SOEs cannot be lost sight of as this has been a huge drain on the national exchequer. It is understood that a legal framework will be provided for the operation of the sick industry which, among other things, will stipulate alternative employment for those to be retrenched. This should be linked to retraining of the workers so that they fitted into the requirements of a new order.

Basically, the emphasis laid on SMEs with a redefinition of micro industries enabling them to avail of the facilities catering for their special needs and problems is welcome. So is the idea of setting up separate economic zones for highly potential industry like pharmaceuticals. But in the ultimate analysis its success will depend on evolving mechanisms for the policy's implementation.

## Eid holidays and medicare

*Contingency arrangements should be in place*

EVERYONE is entitled to holidays, even those who are involved in providing medicare to patients in hospitals. On religious holidays, it is understandable that doctors, nurses and everyone else involved with ensuring the welfare of patients in hospitals and clinics will look forward to celebrating the occasions like everyone else. And yet the emergencies need to be attended to, something which the doctors themselves remain aware of. Also, slack in routine care should be avoided.

Hospitals in the capital, however, are suddenly experiencing a lower number of patients than they normally do because a number of doctors and nurses have decided to celebrate Eid away from their workplaces. A number of patients have been released from the hospitals, where they have been undergoing treatment, and told to come back after the holidays. In one instance, a man whose leg was amputated a few days ago, has been let go. This is a serious example of unprofessional conduct on the part of the hospital authorities, especially because the man's wounds are yet raw and because he cannot come by any remedial measures should he have problems in his village, where he has gone.

We are informed by hospital authorities with a fair degree of regularity that emergency facilities are always there to deal with sudden and serious cases. The truth has been something else. There is hardly anyone to be found in the emergency departments once the holidays begin. As for the general wards, patients have already pointed out that it is rare for them to have a sight of doctors making the rounds in the overall holiday atmosphere.

Such a situation will not do. Taking care of public health is a responsible undertaking, which is why proper, foolproof measures must be in place for doctors and nurses to look into the cases of patients in the hospitals during holidays. Like many other professions, medical care is a twenty-four hour job. The authorities at the various hospitals must, on such occasions as holidays, devise schedules that will ensure the continued treatment of patients. It is surprising, indeed amazing, to hear of patients being sent home because medical personnel will be away during the Eid vacations. Let there be a proper roster of attendance during holidays by recourse to rotation and let it be strictly monitored.

## The season for remembering

In a third world country, especially one where democracy is a tenuous and tentative affair, a meeting of minds on the part of the military and the civil administration successfully keeps society beholden to the combine. Into the combine sometimes come elements from other areas of society.

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

THE decade-long rule of Mohammad Ayub Khan in Pakistan went a long way in giving bureaucrats a place in the power structure they did not deserve. The objective was a sidelining of the political classes. And what better way than a bonding between Pakistan's military and its bureaucracy, both deriving pleasure from being remnants of the system the British colonial power left behind in 1947?

In a third world country, especially one where democracy is a tenuous and tentative affair, a meeting of minds on the part of the military and the civil administration successfully keeps society beholden to the combine. Into the combine sometimes come elements from other areas of society. The result is an insistent drilling of falsehood into the minds of the people. In the end, it all turns toxic when an entire nation, tired and angry and exasperated, takes to the streets to run the combine out of town. Think here of Pakistan and then of Bangladesh, of their military-bureaucratic complexes . . . and much else besides.

Ayub Khan had Altaf Gauhar to assist him in manipulating the affairs of state.

And then there were all the others. Manzur Qadir was a good lawyer who saw nothing wrong in cosyng up to the military regime. Yes, of course, Z.A. Bhutto remains a classic example of how illegal governments are propped up by their civilian cohorts. But Bhutto was not the only one at fault. Mohammad Shoaib remained happy being Ayub's finance minister.

In S.M. Zafar, the dictator found a law minister happy to defend everything that was lawless about the regime's workings. And do not forget Altaf Hussain, the Bengali editor of Dawn who cheerfully turned his back on journalism to be the self-styled field marshal's minister for industries. Khwaja Shahabuddin, obsessed with Pakistani "ideology" decreed a ban on the "Hindu" Rabindranath Tagore.

Observe now the re-branding of the Ayub story in Bangladesh. In a country where no one honestly expected bandit regimes to take over, dictators have arisen to give us some bad times. It was not just politicians who helped General Ziaur Rahman in prolonging his hold on power. There were others, men who clearly were successors of the generation that in the 1960s was in thrall to Ayub Khan in Pakistan. Some even belonged to that generation.

Shafiqul Azam, once close to Monem Khan, was brought back into the scene by Zia. Ayub's former minister Kazi Anwarul Haq too came back, this time as a minister in a purely Bengali military dispensation. Add to the list of Zia enthusiasts the respected academic Abul Fazl. It is heart-breaking when such men do not see the evil in unconstitutional regimes.

Abul Fazl was not the only scholar to link up with Zia. There was Professor Shamsul Haq, a former vice chancellor of Dhaka University who took upon himself the job of foreign minister in the military regime.

Ziaur Rahman poached Professor Yusuf Ali, he who read out the Proclamation of Independence at Mujibnagar in April 1971, from the Awami League. Ali never explained why he had turned his back on Bangladesh's secular legacy, in much the same way that Justice Munir could never explain to Pakistanis what good he saw in being with Ayub Khan.

In the non-freedom fighter Awami Leaguer Zahiruddin, Zia spotted Bangladesh's first ambassador to Pakistan. Off went the man to Islamabad.

Yahya Khan was not far behind Ayub Khan in coming by civilian support for his regime. A.R. Cornelius, a former chief justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court, was a strong underpinning of his regime. In the times of Hussein Muhammad Ershad in Bangladesh, there was Justice Ahsanuddin Chowdhury.

If Pakistan's second military ruler had G.W. Chowdhury, Shah Azizur

Rahman, Mahmud Ali, Nurul Amin, Raja Tridiv Roy, N.M. Uquaili and Roedad Khan for company, Ershad celebrated himself in a court that included the likes of A.S.M. Abdur Rab, A.R. Yusuf and Sardar Amjad Hossain and others.

There is always the past to remember. There is forever a necessity to learn from the mistakes of men. Shah Azizur Rahman, Mahmud Ali and Syed Ziaur Hussain made the mistake of defending the Yahya Khan junta abroad even as Pakistan's soldiers murdered Bengalis in occupied Bangladesh. And then Mohiuddin Ahmed and Abdul Malek Ukil, men once close to Bangabandhu, did not see the contradiction in themselves as they offered a defence of Khondokar Moshtaque Ahmed in Moscow and London in post-August 1975.

The properly Pakistani diplomat Iqbal Athar repudiated his country to embrace the Bangladesh cause in 1971. Tragically, quite a number of Bengali diplomats in the service of Pakistan would have nothing to do with a "secessionist" Bangladesh, until the Bhutto government would turn them out.

And yet there have been the brave men, the uncompromising souls. Justice S.M. Murshed and Justice M.R. Kayani gave Ayub Khan short shrift. Justice Abdur Rahman Chowdhury, Justice Syed Mohammad Hussain and Justice K.M. Sobhan refused to be intimidated by H.M. Ershad.

It is the season for remembering.

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## Iraqis count costs of war



Demographic maps of today's Iraq reveal that the Shiite regions are the least educated, most impoverished and most underfed. Resource maps reveal they have the bulk of the country's formidable oil and gas reserves and, despite their great political strength, they have been unable to harness the latter to ameliorate the former in the seven years since liberation in April 2003.

HARUN UR RASHID

ON August 31, President Barack Obama hailed the official end of a combat role for US troops in Iraq as a "milestone" after seven years of war.

In a national address from the Oval office -- only his second since becoming president -- President Obama said that the US had met its responsibility and it was now "time to turn the page." He said that the Iraqi people must take control of their own security.

The US draw-down of troops from 140,000 in January last year to 50,000 comes at a time when there is still no confirmed government in place in Baghdad six months after elections that were held in March.

Iyad Allawi, former prime minister, insists that the election win gave him the first right to form a new government, but the union of Prime Minister Maliki's bloc with the Shi'ite Iraqi

National Alliance, the third-place finisher, is resisting formation of the government by Allawi and has angered Sunnis, raising fears of renewed sectarian conflict as US troops prepare to leave.

US Vice-President Joe Biden, who was in Iraq on August 31 to mark the formal end of US combat operations in Iraq, reportedly claimed that that peace and stability in Iraq "could be one of the great achievements" of the Obama administration.

Defence Secretary Robert Gates, who was also in Iraq with the vice-president, reportedly said that history had still to judge whether the war was worth the cost. He added that the war "will always be clouded by how it began."

Many Iraqis believe that they have paid enough price for removing dictator Saddam Hussein. They think that the US invasion has created too much chaos in Iraq.

An estimated 100,000 Iraqi civilians

were killed (426 Iraqis were killed in August alone, according to a government source). More than 3 million Iraqis have left, and reside in neighbouring countries and in distant shores. They have been left with nothing -- not even a government. They are pessimistic about the chances of Iraq becoming a better country.

Demographic maps of today's Iraq reveal that the Shiite regions are the least educated, most impoverished and most underfed. Resource maps reveal they have the bulk of the country's formidable oil and gas reserves and, despite their great political strength, they have been unable to harness the latter to ameliorate the former in the seven years since liberation in April 2003.

Another issue that is of concern is that the US combat troops leave behind thousands of Iraqis who worked on behalf of the US administration, who fear for their lives because their families are threatened by insurgents as a result. The bottom line -- is all the suffering and hardship a price worth paying to be rid of Saddam?

US taxpayers have spent more than \$700 billion, but potable water is scarce, health and education services function badly and, worst of all, with constant temperatures of nearly 50 degrees through the long summer, Iraqis have electricity for only a few hours a day and petrol is often in short supply. Government is missing in action. Corruption is chronic.

Where is Iraq going? Iraqis ask themselves every day. The number of Iraqis leaving the country reflects that Iraq has no future for them. Furthermore, Iraqi Kurds in the north no more fly Iraq's flag but their own Kurdish banner on public buildings, the first steps in the disintegration of Iraq. As a sign of independence from Baghdad, leaders of the Kurdish north want to enter into separate oil agreement, with foreign companies, and the move has annoyed the Iraqi government.

The major mistake was the American actions after the war, including empowerment of the Shiites at the expense of the Sunni elites. A growing number of Iraq experts believe that disintegration of Iraq is inevitable in the long run, while others say that a confederated Iraq might emerge. The question is whether the Sunnis will accept a confederated country without the share of oil resources.

Many suggest a plan to carve the country into three regions -- Kurdish in the north, Sunnis in the middle and Shiites in the south. Both the north and south regions are oil-rich while the middle is bereft of such resources.

One worst-case scenario is that an autonomous Shiite region in the south of Iraq could encourage the Shiite minority in Saudi Arabia's north, a significant oil region, to press for autonomy or, at the extreme, may demand to join with its Iraqi brethren to the north. Any unrest in the region poses a blow to global economy.

Some strategists say that the dissolution of Iraq will be a great boon for security of Israel. Creation of many small unthreatening Arab States will suit Israel.

If small states are carved out on the basis of sects, the whole Arab world would be at risk and a new map of small and weak states would emerge, and the unity in the Arab world would become fragile.

Sectionalism in Iraq appears to be a totally new game in the Arab World, and is different from the conflict between the radical Arab nationalists and the conservative pan-Islamists of the late '50s and '60s.

Michael Hudson, a professor of Arab Studies at Georgetown University in Washington, has reportedly said: "What we are seeing now may be signs of things to come, but that was not so much inevitable as it is a result of our action."

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