

Education Policy 2010 and '62 education movement



Dhaka University cafeteria where almost all the colleges of the city were represented. The meeting withdrew the previously announced sit-down strike but announced a fresh action program of hartal or total strike on September 17.

Two chief characteristics of the '62 education movement deserve special mention. Firstly, the movement was initiated by the students alone without any outside influence. Secondly, the central student leaders could not foresee that such a huge movement was possible based on academic issues and problems faced by the students.

QUAZI FARUQUE AHMED

THIS year, September 17 is a day of immense importance with positive implication in view of adoption of the Education Policy 2010 in the backdrop of a series of debates and divergent views centering it. September 17, "Education Day," has a special connotation vis-a-vis this day 48 years ago in 1962.

In tracing the background of the '62 education movement, it is relevant to mention that anarchy in the education sector had become a common feature as the central government of Pakistan followed a policy of disparity and step-motherly attitude towards East Pakistan, where 56% of the people lived.

The number of educational institutions started to decrease and the dropout rate increased within a short time. Prior to partition of the subcontinent, what became East Pakistan was much ahead of the then western part of Pakistan education-wise. In 1947-48 the number of primary schools in East Bengal was 29,633, which came down to 26,000 within a span of 5 years.

On December 30, 1958, the government announced the formation of a committee

headed by secretary, education -- Ayub Khan's one time teacher at Aligarh University -- S.M.Sharif. In the 11-member commission, 4 educationists were from East Pakistan. They were Dr. Momtaj Uddin Ahmed, Vice-Chancellor, Rajshahi University; Dhaka Secondary Education Board President Abdul Haque and 2 teachers -- one from Dhaka University and another from Dhaka Engineering College. They were Professor Atowar Rahman and Dr. Abdur Rashid. The commission submitted its interim report on August 26, 1959.

Some features of the Sharif Commission report, which was published in 1962, provoked students' agitation in East Pakistan. To mention a few among them:

- The concept of free primary compulsory education is an utopia;
- To introduce a lingua franca for Pakistan, Roman script should be introduced and for that Arabic should be given priority;
- Urdu should be made the language of the people of Pakistan;
- Education should not be available at minimum cost;
- The 2 years' degree course should be upgraded to 3 years for improvement of quality at the higher education level.

Students reacted sharply against these features. They pointed out that the door of education had been closed to the poor and low-income people. Action committees and sub-committees were formed in protest in many institutions. A hand-capped student of degree class of Dhaka College, M.I. Chowdhury, initiated the agitation program. Sporadic strikes and abstention from classes by students continued throughout this period. Students of medical school and national medical institutions also resorted to movement, which included hunger strike.

The students' movement took a new turn on August 10 when college students assembled in a meeting at Dhaka College. This writer, then general secretary of Dhaka College Students' Union, convened and presided over the meeting -- which was the first of its kind. There was no link with the central leadership of students' organisations prior to this meeting. This meeting bridged the link. It announced general strike of students throughout the province on August 15. Students responded favourably to the programme.

As a follow-up, a sit-down action programme in front of the secretariat was also announced. A series of meetings were held between August 15 and September 10 at the historic Amtola in the Dhaka University Campus. A huge number of students from the schools and colleges of Dhaka city attended. The previously formed "Degrees Students' Forum" was renamed as "East Pakistan Students' Forum" with two joint conveners, Quazi Faruque Ahmed from East Pakistan Students' Union (Epsu) and Abdullah Wares Imam from East Pakistan Students' League (EPSL).

On September 10 a meeting was held at the

Students started picketing from early morning on the day. Provincial minister Hasan Askari's car was set on fire by the students. Some jeeps were also set ablaze. In the morning, a contingent of police chased prospective demonstrators from Sadarghat to Nawabpur railway crossing. By 9 a.m. Dhaka University campus was packed up with students from schools and colleges of Dhaka city.

News spread that the police had opened fire at Nawabpur road and some people including students were wounded. A procession was scheduled to be brought out at 10 a.m., but after the news of firing a huge procession was brought out with Sirajul Alam Khan, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Rashed Khan Menon, Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Ayub Reza Chowdhury and Reza Ali at the forefront.

The procession had entered Abdul Gani Road when police started firing. Babul, a student of Nabokumar High School was killed, and bus conductor Golam Mostofa, domestic worker Waziullah and many others seriously injured. Waziullah later died in the hospital. The firing at Abdul Gani Road infuriated the processionists, which included not only students but also workers and employees of different mills and factories, rickshaw pullers and boatmen from the Buriganga river.

It is said that the '52-language movement cultivated the spirit of nationalism and the '62-education movement inculcated and infused the ingredient of progressive content in it.

Two chief characteristics of the '62 education movement deserve special mention. Firstly, the movement was initiated by the students alone without any outside influence. Secondly, the central student leaders could not foresee that such a huge movement was possible based on academic issues and problems faced by the students.

The movement subsided eventually when opposition leader H. S. Suhrawardy came to Dhaka from Karachi during the last leg of the movement. He met East Pakistan Governor Golam Faruk and could persuade him to defer implementation of the Sharif Commission Report.

The people of Bangladesh, especially those involved in and concerned with education, admit and appreciate the patient and intelligent handling of the education policy issue by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. However, all concerned with education will prefer effective and fruitful implementation of the Education Policy 2010. The challenge is huge and the obstacles are many. So the vow of this year's Education Day should be: "We shall overcome."

Prof. Quazi Faruque Ahmed was an organiser of the '62 education movement and is a member of National Education Policy Implementation Committee and Chief Co-ordinator, National Front of Teachers & Employees (NFTE), Bangladesh. E-mail: principalqfahmed@yahoo.com.

Japanese PM survives the onslaught



Naoto Kan

Defeat for the incumbent prime minister could also have further eroded the popular support for the party as, in a number of recent opinion polls, people endorsed en mass their support for a continuation of leadership at a time when there are increasing worries over the economic performance of Japan.

MONZURUL HUQ

IN the end it turned out to be an easy victory. Naoto Kan, the incumbent prime minister and president of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), defeated his sole challenger Ichiro Ozawa, the heavyweight politician known as Shadow Shogun for his backdoor maneuvering, in the party presidential election.

Since the party president also assumes the post of prime minister, a defeat for Naoto Kan

would have meant Japan going through a sixth change in leadership within a short span of four years. Moreover, defeat for the incumbent prime minister could also have further eroded the popular support for the party as, in a number of recent opinion polls, people endorsed en mass their support for a continuation of leadership at a time when there are increasing worries over the economic performance of Japan.

However, the result of DPJ presidential election also raises a number of new questions, and

foremost among those is what role the losing candidate Ozawa would play in Japanese politics from now on. Much of the success of the Kan administration would depend on a positive stand by Ozawa, who still enjoys a large support base among Diet members, particularly those at the lower house.

DPJ has a complex voting system in electing the party leader. Members of both the houses of Japanese Diet have a greater say as each of the member's vote counts for two points. Besides, the local assembly members representing the party, as well as party chapters and rank and file members, are also allocated certain number of points and candidates contest to win over a majority from a total of 1,222 points. Naoto Kan received 721 points against Ozawa's 491. The huge difference of 230 points surprised many observers as the media in Japan had predicted a neck and neck race until the morning of the election.

The result of the party presidential election ensures that Kan will continue to serve as prime minister for the next two-year term and will have enough space to implement policies that he and his team see as crucial for helping Japan overcome economic difficulties. But the sailing will not be easy, as the party no longer enjoys a majority in the upper house after its disastrous performance in the July election.

Moreover, any move by Ozawa and his supporters to create further difficulties for the Kan administration might weaken even more the position of DPJ in the lower house as well. As a result, "walk a tightrope" is what some analysts say that Naoto Kan will have to do. He will need to be extremely skillful in avoiding any clash within the party, the benefit of which might go in favour of the largest opposition -- the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

One of the main reasons why Ozawa suddenly decided to challenge Kan in party leadership race was his feeling that he and his supporters were increasingly being isolated from the government since Kan became prime minister in June after Yukio Hatoyama submitted his resignation. Kan's cabinet did not include those who had been close to Ozawa, and top party positions too were filled up by party members who were seen as belonging to the anti-Ozawa camp.

As a veteran politician who had become so used to pulling the strings from behind the scene, it was difficult for Ozawa to accept such a big twist in his fate. Kan, on the other hand, made it clear that he wanted to distance himself from

the tainted political practices of the past as Ozawa too had to give up his post of party secretary general amid accusation of financial irregularities at the time when Hatoyama resigned.

Ozawa has a strong stake in the lower house by virtue of being at the helm of a strong support group. It was this support group of young lawmakers along with few veterans like former Prime Minister Hatoyama that, in a mid-August gathering, made a loud announcement that Ozawa would run as a candidate to challenge Kan in the party leadership election.

The first step the new Kan administration is going to take is to reshuffle the cabinet and top party positions. Though Kan did not say clearly if he was going to make a reconciliatory approach to Ozawa supporters, observers and the media expect that he might move away from his earlier position of total isolation and include a number of Ozawa supporters in the new lineup. This might defuse the tension that had been accumulating since the announcement of candidacy. However, the goodwill gesture on part of the prime minister might not be extended to Ozawa himself as the big winning margin might discourage him from taking any such move.

As for Ozawa, this might be the beginning of the end of a long career that saw him almost being elevated to the top position of the government a number of times in the past. He made it clear while announcing his candidacy that this was his last chance to offer his service to the nation. Unfortunately for Ozawa, the last chance has turned out to be a failed one. However, no one is expecting him to disappear from the political stage of Japan anytime soon.

There also remains the possibility of Ozawa bolting out of DPJ along with his supporters, which would place the party and the government in an extremely difficult situation to maintain the majority in the lower house. Should such a scenario arise, this would mean the eventual dissolution of the house and call for a fresh election, which would possibly give Ozawa another last chance to try his luck to remain a king maker.

Anyway, the victory for Kan is not a total one, as from now on he will need to learn the skill of managing not only the opposition in the Diet, but also his own party that stands very close to falling apart should there be a big mistake.

Monzurul Huq writes from Japan.

Prepare for yet another sort of battle!

Life is a battle from all possible perspectives, especially for Bangladeshis, more especially for the city dwellers, and even more especially for the people living in Dhaka. We all are fighters here. Anyone can attack you anywhere and in any possible or seemingly impossible way.

MOULI TASNUVA

I knew what to do when I faced a mugger. I even knew more or less how to avoid muggers. The only thing I didn't know was that it was going to happen to me!

We really don't believe anything until and unless we face it. Otherwise, who doesn't know that it's very risky to go through the alleys of Dhanmondi after dark, whether you are alone or with company. And what speed they have got! It seemed I just saw a superman! They took my bag with my first month's salary (and so many plans along with that!), my cell phone, appointment letter, ID card, medicine (which I have to take every two hours), and the most important thing, my notebook -- I have noted all the important points I learnt through my month long training, all the necessary information, important numbers... where would I get that back?

Well, I know you all are used to this sort of nagging. But I am not listing the lost items to grab your quick and natural sympathy. Rather to make you aware that it's not only money that you have to take care of, sometimes there are even more precious things at stake. And to make the matter worse, you have to make a G.D. for your lost ID card, and block your SIM card (and you have to pay for it!).

When we say life is a battle, we mean the contrast between what we want and what we get, what we deserve and what we achieve, our everyday duties, dilemmas and all sorts of other responsibilities and challenges that keep surfacing ceaselessly. We usually don't relate it to our physical, visible and more practical life. But it's actually equally true for both the sides of the coin.

Life is a battle from all possible perspectives, especially for Bangladeshis, more especially for the city dwellers, and even more especially for the people living in Dhaka. We all are fighters here. Anyone can attack you anywhere and in any possible or seemingly impossible way. And the most challenging battlefield is the road you take, the way between your home and office, school, shopping centre etc. You are not safe wherever you are outside your shelter. Now, can you afford to be inattentive in a battlefield? No, your minutest inattention can be fatal for you.

Just like different types of examinations, going out needs serious preparation as well! If you don't get prepared, you are likely to fail, and that is what I just did quite successfully! It's because I was not prepared. Whenever you step out, you have to take it for granted that you are going to be tested -- mugging, teasing, these are all your assessment criteria. And if you come back home without facing any of these, you should congratulate yourself. Yes, being attacked is this common and this easy nowadays.

Someone reminded me that I had avoided my duty as a citizen as I didn't try to get the muggers caught. I should have called the patrolling Rab then and there. But I didn't have their number then. And I think many of us don't have the number as well. So there should be more ads and awareness programmes on how we can get help from such authorities.

I would like to say a few words for the passengers of rickshaw from my first hand experience. It's not a good idea to hold your bag or purse tightly. Because once they get hold of it they won't bother whether you fall from the rickshaw or get hurt. There have been a number of incidents where people have broke their legs, or got bruised in their attempts to keep hold on their bags. So it's better not to allow them even to touch it. It's easy for them to snatch it away if it is kept on the lap, the usual place. Keeping your bag between your feet can be a good option if you are alone. And if you have company keep put the bag between the two of you.

But wouldn't we become rude and hard if we adopt this fighting attitude all the time? Definitely, yes. That is exactly what we are becoming. Think government, think. It's not always your action which is the most important. You have to have some thinking as your groundwork for acting. Otherwise, why are we called rational beings? A 15-crore insecure population, full of panic, hatred and distrust can't make any government happy.

Mouli Tasnuva is Faculty, Scholastica Private Limited.



PAUL BRADBURY/GETTY IMAGES