

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

LIVING with senseless politics often makes us gloomy, even obsessively cynical. Sometimes we have to pinch our skin to make a sense of any happy tiding pouring into our ears. Whether the good words showered on Bangladesh, because of our extraordinary collective or individual deeds, are well-deserved, we may sometimes wonder!

While two of our leading women are suspended in mid-air on a political parachute, a pair of our sisters or daughters has put us on the summit of the Himalayas. The contradictions are overwhelming but these can hardly take away the gloss of the list of our accomplishments.

On the one hand, we have grown consistently at 6-7% in terms of GDP with food on our tables; on the other, we lose 2% growth through endemic corruption. Just think of it, despite power outages, jammed traffic, and what have you, 63 Bangladeshi youngsters picked up laurels on a global scale as the highest marks holders in different subjects at 'O' & 'A' Levels, including English, last year. In the SSC and HSC scorecards, numbers of high achievers have been on the rise. In Maths Olympiad, innovating software, region-wide debating competitions, we clinch top honours.

There is talent everywhere, potential and proven, with devilry out of sheer idleness tugging at our elbows. Had we been able to provide an enabling environment to our youth they would have worked greater wonders as they do in their extended study, research and professional stints overseas.

Take a pause and reflect on the good words, praises and recognitions Bangladesh has been receiving from

various knowledgeable quarters: "A model among developing countries given its improving social indicators including women's education, empowerment and status, low child mortality rate, (if dogged by malnutrition) and reduction in the absolute number of poor."

On the failed state index (FSI) prepared by US-based non-profit research body Fund for Peace -- Foreign Policy, Somalia tops the list for the fifth time in a row followed by Congo, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Haiti, Yemen, Iraq, Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Guinea, among others. Pakistan ranks 13th on the list.

That Bangladesh comes 29th, four steps higher than last year, can only be a small solace.

Twelve parameters including population pressure, economic crisis, human rights situation, governability formed the basis for the comparative worldwide evaluative assessment.

Bangladesh is not a failed state but a failed democracy, like it or not, a point that hardly needs to be laboured. Just as we remain poor "by choice" despite tremendous potential for growth so are we a failed democracy by choice. Very sad thing to say that our leadership is a metaphor for "two fighting ladies."

There is hardly any room for self-glorification. The government, let's face it, has an image clearing job on its hands. It has to come clean on the stigma of extra-judicial killings including disappearances and alleged

corruption in Padma Bridge project. In the latter case, World Bank has supplied the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) with facts and figures, based on findings of Canadian investigations. The ACC, which had given a clean chit earlier on, has its job cut out in the face of what is claimed to be mounting evidence.

The second priority is grappling with a few projections made on the world economy by Manu Bhaskaran in his reprinted article in *South China Morning Post* (May 30,

2012 issue), courtesy YaleGlobal Online. Manu projects a sharper than expected deceleration in global demand. The eurozone will suffer a deeper recession than forecast; Chinese economy, the largest source of growth in global demand, is slowing sharply; and the US economic recovery will remain modest at best and, therefore, highly

vulnerable to external shocks. Protectionism is likely to claw in.

Given the scenario, our \$18 billion worth of garment exports last fiscal almost entirely to eurozone and USA may be in for trouble. In this context, if we have to protect our position as the second largest exporter of RMG products after China in the Western niche markets, we have to do some real underpinnings of the sector. We can ill-afford any labour unrest simmering around living wages, minimum housing, and better working conditions for the three million-strong garment work

force. When crunch comes, the buyers can be fussier.

Come to investment. A Beijing datelined story by Celine Sun in *South China Morning Post's* Business sums up the scenario like this: European firms put off by rising labour costs, competition and policy barriers in China are looking to invest in other emerging economies. But there are two caveats to such a plan: First, Vietnam to which the European companies rivet their attention will take years to build up the required infrastructure; and secondly, profits in China would hover higher than the global average for at least next two years.

Another favourite destination for investment is Indonesia. Indonesia has younger population compared with China, a big workforce and affordable labour costs. Even with such advantages, the Indonesian archipelago desperately needs "to invest in infrastructure to replace worn-out roads, ports and airports, to build railways and make its cities more livable" -- (*The Sunday Times*; April 29, 2012 issue).

So, what is the bottom line for Bangladesh? We have a lead time but only a limited one for a marked improvement in our infrastructures including roads, highways, energy supply and port efficiency brought closer to the Southeast Asian standards. We have an abundant workforce, also easily trainable, and highly affordable labour costs. Our energy reserves are diverse, impressive and exploitable too provided critical investments are made in the right areas. We have connectivity advantages.

In the ultimate analysis, all this is iffy in a context of self-attribitional political acrimony and confrontation between the two major political forces. To the liberators of the country and our posterity we owe a debt to leave a Bangladesh performing to its full potential.

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## The two judgements

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ALL praises to the Almighty that the people of Pakistan have been blessed with two history-making judgements of the apex court, and this within a matter of days. The more momentous of the two verdicts has ended the months-old agony of Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani by pushing him off the prime ministerial chair. Since the issue was contempt of the highest court in the land the verdict was not unexpected, though the scale of punishment is.

While all Supreme Court verdicts must always be honoured even if they do not appear to be sound, it may not be possible to avoid a prolonged discussion on the present judgement. There are quite a few issues that will need to be clarified.

Only time will tell whether this judgement will be viewed as a vindication of the judiciary's authority or as an avoidable encroachment on the political domain of parliament, and whether the majesty of law only means the majesty of judges. History has not always upheld crucial judicial decisions, however popular they might have been in the first instance.

To say this does not mean siding with Gilani and his party; it only means that regardless of any party's guilt, justice must not only be done, it should also be seen to be done.

Besides, whatever the circumstances, the near total eclipse of parliamentary institutions is a prospect even a stable and disciplined state cannot afford. The consequences to Pakistan cannot be viewed with equanimity. The ouster of a prime minister on a non-political charge calls for solemn reflection and not dancing in the streets.

The Pakistan People's Party as the major partner in the ruling coalition has done well to accept the verdict and start looking for Gilani's successor. It might have been better for them to vacate the stage altogether in favour of the people more acceptable to both the permanent and ideological wings of the establishment.

The other judgement, which disposed of the suo motu Case No 5 of 2012, regarding media coverage of some allegedly shady deals, has been pushed into the background but it will also be debated for long. This because the Supreme Court has withstood another three-yearly test, and is saying that "today, as ever, the court has endeavoured to uphold the constitution and has stood up to unconstitutional forces bent upon undermining it."

The debate will be long because the court has chosen not to identify the "unconstitutional forces" behind the Malik Riaz-Arsalan Iftikhar affair. The only people taken to task in the judgement belong to the electronic media, and they cannot be suspected of possessing the capacity to undermine the constitution or the judiciary.

By stopping short of exposing the invisible hands that conspired against the judiciary the matter has been left in the area of speculation. As a result the lawyers, who claim to be friends of the judiciary, and who need not be guided by it, may be looking for scapegoats in the wrong places. They should know about the forces capable of using carefully stored information to rattle any institution, the judiciary not excepted.

A highly gratifying feature of the judgement is the assurance that the tradition of replacing a few dry and dreary paragraphs on an exposition of law with classical verse is getting stronger. There is progress too inasmuch as, instead of relying on translations, Hafiz is quoted in his own language.

The promotion of Persian poetry, criminally neglected by the education bosses, is yet another feather in the court's already bulging plumage. And one does not have words to thank the august court for reminding us of the incomparable words of wisdom (Everybody's flight of mind is limited by his capacity).

Indeed, My Lords.

There is a danger, however, that the intoxicating poetry may make us miss Justice Khilji's observation that "although family members of public functionaries are, properly speaking, not performing state functions, the alleged facts of this case highlight the necessity of extreme caution and discretion in their private and public dealings and conduct." It is possible the good judge wrote the four-sentence note only to issue this essential warning.

The verdict will also be debated for offering media celebrities a lesson in the ethics of reporting. The advice to media persons to check and recheck the authenticity of information they rely on is wholly valid. But it may not be fair to blame journalists for failing to find out "what has been ascertained by us with very little effort."

Journalists in Pakistan cannot even dream of the power the courts enjoy, especially these days.

It is for the privileged journalists to ponder the causes of their fall from grace. Not long ago they were hailed as leaders of the morality brigade when they were hounding the government's counsel and tearing into their submissions to the court before the judges had looked at them. What made them change? Or can it be said that they did not change, only the beholder's angle of vision changed?

As a sequel to Case No 5, quite a few media figures have also been accused of picking crumbs from discredited operators' tables.

This game has been played before. During the past few decades incomplete lists of journalists who received undue

favours from the state or its services have been leaked more than once but never pursued. Let us now have all the lists published. Sadly enough, quite like the politicians who quarrel among themselves to the amusement of their common enemy, the media groups are piling calumny upon calumny on their professional rivals alone.

Only a few should, however, be surprised at the allegations against the media persons who have learnt the way to profit from an order that is corrupt to the core. There can be no islands of honesty in an ocean of corruption. Who does not know about handout journalists that grew up under Ayub Khan or the breed of lifafa (envelope) journalists

raised by Ziaul Haq! It is no secret that pliable scribes are planted in various media establishments and retained by intelligence operators, and the most powerful employers cannot think of touching them.

The sooner an across-the-board accountability is held the better. The journalists' unions should hold full-scale inquiries and remind the people, including the born-yesterday angels, of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists' code of ethics drawn up half a century ago.

True, there are black sheep in the media. Yet no holier-than-thou institution has the right to paint the whole media community as a bunch of galley slaves up for auction. The fools who sweat day in and day out for a pittance, who are not even paid their wages, greatly outnumber the successful and popular celebrities.

The way to deal with the rot all around is not to make an example of a few politicians, a few journalists, or a few unmentionable names in this category or that; the entire mosaic of Pakistan society needs to be replaced by better quality pieces.

This task can be accomplished neither by the whip of the law nor the preachers suffering from illusions of grandeur and infallibility. Let normal political activity continue uninterrupted, the people will themselves throw up their saviours.

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## Pharmaceutical industry: Progress and challenges

WAHIDUR RAHMAN

THE pharmaceutical sector is highly developed in Bangladesh and contributes significantly to the country's economy. After the promulgation of Drug Control Ordinance-1982, the development of the sector was accelerated. The professional knowledge and innovative conceptual skills played a vital role in the development of the sector as a whole.

The substantial development in this sector enabled us to export our branded generics in the international marketing domain. The local pharmaceutical manufacturers cater to

97 % of the country's demand and are expanding their business in the global market. The annual per capita drug consumption in Bangladesh is the lowest in the world.

The pharmaceutical market has grown substantially in the last few years. Pharmaceutical sale in 2007 was worth Tk.4,000 crore, In 2010 it was almost double and in 2011 it was over Tk.9,000 crore. The contributing factors in this sector were the development of health care infrastructure, increase of health awareness, increased rural market penetration of the manufacturers, and the buying capacity of the people.

Healthy growth is encouraging the pharmaceutical manufacturers towards research and development for newer generics of quality drugs at affordable prices. The latest addition in this segment is the introduction of human vaccines, which were previously imported products. Now we are capable of meeting 100 % of the local demand and also exporting even to stringently regulated countries of the world.

Moreover, a high-tech insulin manufacturing plant has started operation to meet the country's growing demand. The pharmaceutical industry is trying to export to 120 countries from the existing 83 in the next few years. The pharmaceutical sector is the highest contributor to the national exchequer, along with being the largest white-collar employment sector of the country. Bangladesh pharmaceuticals earned around Tk.400 crore through export in 2010, and this could rise to around Tk.500 crore in 2012.

The pharmaceutical companies are now on the verge of entering highly regulated markets like USA, EU, Australia and GCC countries, and have already obtained accreditation from USFDA, UKMHRA, TGA and GCC. In addition to export there is a great opportunity for contract manufacturing and compulsory licensing within the LDC's of the Asia-Pacific and Africa regions.

The most important factors are drugs quality control and quality assurance from the manufacturer. The DGDR Bangladesh is playing the key role in inspecting the WHO GMP and SOP of the pharmaceutical manufactures and enrolling the certifications for subsequent two years validity from the date of inspection.

The creation of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient park (API) is one of the most significant parts of the pharmaceutical industry as a whole. The government has taken substantial initiatives to establish this industrial park at Gazaria, Munshiganj by 2013. It would be a giant step in strengthening the pharma industry as at the moment 80% of raw materials are being imported from India/China.

In order to export within the mildly regulated and regulated markets it's mandatory to provide bioequivalence data of the drug. But at the moment we have no bioequivalence test laboratory to conduct this test and we have to do it abroad at a higher price. So now it is the basic need of the time to establish a full-fledged bioequivalence test laboratory in Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh pharmaceutical market is growing at a fast pace and has a bright future indeed. According to Business Monitor International's latest report Bangladesh has moved one step upward to occupy the 14th position within 17 regional markets surveyed by BMIs Pharmaceutical & Healthcare Business Environment ratings for the Asia region. Bangladesh has a long way to go though there is huge potential in pharmaceutical manufacturing and international marketing.

The Bangladesh pharmaceutical sector has an opportunity to establish itself as a high volume export-oriented industry close to RMG sector.

Last but not least, it is clear that the Bangladesh pharmaceutical industry is emerging at a fast pace. In order to keep up this pace we have to devise mechanisms to overcome the obstacles and enhance our image in local and international markets.

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