

education
News 11-2-03

Performance

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As I wrote in a previous column while the military government may have done some good things - credible macro-economic performance and enhanced political representation for women — there is much to be unhappy about the way it launched the oft-trumpeted "true" and "genuine" democracy. Manipulation, rigging and use of defection characterized the elections and the formation of governments at the centre and in some of the provinces. Pakistan witnessed the rare sight of a prime minister literally running around, persuading and picking up supporters (in official transport - one wonders if he later charged TA and DA for these trips) to strengthen his position in the National Assembly, after the elections. Our civilian head of the state (self-appointed), continues wearing a military uniform giving clear signals who the real "chief-executive" is. All the weighty matters remain the preserve of the military-president — holding talks with the visiting Iranian leader, going to Moscow to break new diplomatic ground or to attend the coming NAM conference in Kuala Lumpur, while the dubious chores such as the sojourn in the Gulf states are entrusted to the prime minister.

After luring defectors and adding to the pro-government numbers in the legislative assembly, Mr Jamali's major preoccupation has been to improvise dramatic measures to win popular support. Rs. 5 billion for millions of the poor; a small raise in the interest percentage for pensioners' savings upto a deposit of 150,000 beyond which they will be paying withholding tax, etc. There are similar dramatic announcements at the provincial levels. No fees (Rs 12) for students upto matric level in government schools while parents will continue to pay for books, uniforms and a lot of extra charges. Pri-

vate schools will continue to charge exorbitant fees.

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it and other educational reforms. But hardly any one, she or the famous head of the national human development commission, leave aside the provincial education czars, has any clear idea of what exactly is going on by way of implementation, at the district and sub district levels. All the burden of this complex and difficult task has been thrown on the unmotivated district literacy officers. One doubts if Mr Jamali is even aware of the national literacy plan and about hundreds of crores of rupees to be spent on its implementation!

Another achievement of the new government is to take away the recruitment of officials of grade 1 to 15 from the Public Service Commissions. What havoc it will cause to the civil services with the discretionary induction of thousand of new recruits, by-passing merit, in the name

of employment, can only be imagined considering the irreparable damage already done by the previous government.

Much is being written in the national Press about the new-fangled NRB-cooked district administration system. This was hailed as a major achievement of the military regime. Elections spread over months held, in stages, with military stewards scrupulously identifying Nazims and DCOs and monitoring their induction and orientation to boost democracy at the grass roots level, yielded the

provincial governments (on advice) are amending the local government legislation to debar the moving of any no-confidence resolution in the local assemblies. (how very democratic). Poor Nazims replacing the deputy commissioner/district magistrates have little authority in matters relating to "law and order". "Law and order" is deteriorating despite enhancement of powers of the police under a new law (another signal contribution of the military regime). Imagine the head of a department exercising powers of the provincial government (home secretary and the chief minister in this case) with the government abdicating its authority and responsibility. The other day a provincial minister was forced to hand over his car in Lahore to miscreants. A somewhat similar incident involving a Sindh minister was reported in Karachi. The Punjab law minister is reported to have informed the Punjab assembly that 97 people died in 69 bomb blasts during the last 4 years, that culprits in 49 of these have remained untraceable while 20 accused in 13 blasts were being prosecuted. The national Press keeps writing about the poor performance of the police.

It is time the Jamali government realises that gimmickry and violation of the time-honoured principles and practices of good administration will only weaken the position of politicians as the military may only be waiting in the wings to take over again because of civilian failure to manage affairs satisfactorily. Even if it does not take over it will increasingly throw its weight around to run affairs with remote control because of political government's inadequacies and poor performance.

Will the Prime Minister begin to review his government's approach to administrative matters and seriously address such all-important issues as security of the citizen and education instead of resorting to cheap shots to win a little momentary popularity.

new Nazimate set-up. Provincial advice and protestations were disregarded and military-administration governors charged with the task of ensuring success. Army monitors kept keeping Nazims on track. The politicians now have to contend with this dispensation hatched by the military command. Mr Jamali wants MNAs and CMs, MPAs to be kept happy by with large doles to exercise patronage at the local levels in the constituencies they come from. But the Nazimate system is an obstacle in the way. So the matter had to be discussed in the central cabinet and a way found to work out an approach which includes special monitors appointed by the central government.

The Nazimate system, on other counts too, is, showing signs of strain and stress. To bolster it,