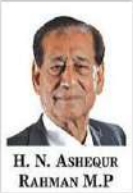




Police and Society: Expectations and Realities (Part -1)



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Police, in any society, is an inevitability and it is existing in all societies from the time immemorial in one form or other and so all of us cannot but have some idea about police and the society, its expectations and the reality.

Problems of police force in Bangladesh are more or less known to everybody such as shortage of policemen, absence of sophisticated weapons and equipments, lack of transport and mobility, long hours of unrewarding duty, little compensation and remuneration, little opportunity to progress, low morale, pervasive corruption, political interference and control from the powerful, imposition of extraneous work on them and above all a society which itself does not take responsibility and is not congenial and conducive to withholding of immediate consumption of material benefit and does not appear to reward those good and hard working men who subject themselves to hardship and sacrifices.

Never-the-less, not that gallant and honest policemen are not there and they are not putting very good work but dominance to the contrary eclipses the hard work and good example. Besides, the media is not necessarily kind and the society is also sharply critical. All factors together within police and beyond police indeed make the whole pattern counter-productive and it is well-nigh impossible for a policeman to be correct and service-oriented. So the realities are as they are today.

All these situations cannot be over-turned overnight or can be remedied. Question then arises, should then the society cease to expect good service from the police unless the total society changes and that the present state of affairs will continue is a foregone conclusion and that cannot change unless we can change the totality of factors. That would be a situation of total abandon and abject non-action.

We are no prophet and society is a much larger issue. However, immediate overhauling of the total society is desirable, but it is a long shot and may require mighty genius, that is indeed a difficult task, a lofty and high agenda.

To start with, we should act then within our limited sphere and push for the right outcome, regardless what may be the detrimental factors acting thereon. We may not be able to pull all the resources and eradicate the total conditions eroding into the morale of a policeman, yet we cannot sit idle and we must do our best as if with one eye, with single-minded purpose and determination. We must turn a handle and gradually in the process, we turn the situation around us and we start getting the salutary results on the whole ethos even though we started from a rudimentary beginning.

The officer-in-charge of a thana in the nineties once confided to me that he was getting a total salary of Tk. 2900/= per month. Under insistence and some kind of motivation and persuasion, he agreed to manage his family within that amount. But he posed some questions which I could not answer readily. He had to run a motor vehicle on the national highway. But he was never paid for the fuel. Never were any stationery given to him, he had to manage everything for the thana including the papers for recording FIR. There was also a broad and nervous hint at the chain of corruption, which he must oblige to keep his job and future going. Now-a-days, in place of individual corruption,

chain and organised net-working of graft are taking over in the various government departments. In fact, as yet I have no answers ready. Despite all problems; insistence, motivation and persuasion worked. The officer and his staff honestly tried hard and brought down significantly the crime in the thana. Cattle-lifting, spurious liquor and gambling were rampant. Cattle-lifting almost totally stopped. Gambling and spurious liquor came down substantially. The good work had effect on the other departments as well.

Today when we look at the police-force and when we talk of improving the situation and discuss about improving the capability, effectiveness and quality of police-force as the deterrent, I am afraid, the rush of events have overtaken our initiative. It is true that criminality, incidents and novelty of crime have increased manifold and diversified

In the old days, big areas in the thana was administrated and controlled with a few policemen. People knew that crime would be dealt with heavily. The recalcitrant elements knew that they could not escape justice and they would be hunted out.

Once, the Dictum of Predictability in Administration disappears and message is not clear, the wrong-doer tends to guess and gamble. Somebody can even drag somebody in public and march him to a distance, soak him with gasoline and burn him for hours in public view and walk away and float like a fish in the pond. He takes a calculated risk and if this happens in series in every thana, what will happen then to the government and the governance. For any government, at the outset it is a must to put across its message firm and follow it up and establish its Credibility of Commitment before the initiative is blurred or lost. Once it

influence, education, religious and political motivation. The small percentage will remain criminal in intent and activity and they must be suppressed with iron-hand. Volume of work will be manageable as the task will shrink greatly in size.

Normally whenever a ghastly crime takes place, the high ups run to the place of occurrence. Directives are issued for arrest and quick detection and prosecution although in normal course of dispensation, these are regular actions. But how much one can run, there is a limit to such running. We may pursue events after events but when enormous increase in incidence takes place, surely we cannot over-race them unless the system works and crime situation is within normal limit and volume; and the system itself is pregnant with in-built deterrent. However, no doubt, visit by High ups at the place of occurrence and their insistence and direct cognizance surely shake up the machinery and produces sure persuasiveness and expresses the determined Will of the Administration. More police, more supplies of arms and ancillaries are necessary but they are not the ultimate answer and we cannot go on adding them indefinitely and limitlessly.

As one living in the society we must insist that police fulfills its duty and the expectations. Whatever may be the defense of non-fulfillment of expectations, we just cannot let it go like this. In the interest of the society, to keep the fabric of the society in tact from a collapse, we must in all seriousness, attend to this vital organ of the society. We must, regardless of what may be obtaining around us and whatever circumstances, insist that they-the police must strive hard, improve and perform. Reward, pains of punishment, close monitoring must be in place to enforce the required outcome.

We must have a hard look on the police of today and try measures which may add to their confidence and capability and promote the credibility of police administration. Now situation is such even if a policeman wants to perform his job well-he will not know which way he will proceed and whereto. Police administration, if it has to be effective, purposive and capable of suitable action has to pinpoint on the 4 (four) basic elements.

1. Detection
2. Intelligence collection
3. Framing of charge sheet.
4. Prosecution in the court

All of these today are in complete disarray and in shambles. Hardly a case is detected, properly charge-sheeted and prosecuted in the court. It is also a fact, a large number of cases are not at all reported at police stations for reasons, known to everybody. Whatever investigation or detection is conducted takes place in the crudest of methods and that explains some custodial deaths at times. Quality of detection must be given highest priority. Officer of all ranks, high and low, must be given extensive training in detection of crime and in the modern methodology imparted both at home and abroad. Competent teachers/instructors may be recruited and hired and even brought from other country. Every thana should be monitored as regards its success rate in detection.

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over the years. Police officers lament at the shortage of police-force and other requirements. We want to control crime incident wise. But that is fraught with danger and seems impossible. Innumerable number of police may be recruited but crime will not be controlled; unless we can establish the OPredictability of Administration". Otherwise, the increasing number of events taking place will overtake and overcome us rather than we overtake and overcome them. We must put across the message loud and clear what the Government wants, how and in what quantum the Government will react and that efforts shall continue till such time it is inevitably established that the administration will remain determined, up and doing to bring at any cost the offenders to justice. OPredictability of Administration" response and action must be transparent and a fore-gone conclusion.

is delayed, in desperation the administration with a great gusto may pursue events at a later stage and still the machinery and its initiative may fall increasingly behind. Indeed, a firm but benevolent administration with a clear vision and message and a capacity of adequate, appropriate and flexible response and delivery of some goods and beneficial work for the well-being of common men is always well-taken with admiration and obedience by the citizens. Then the government can get the people stand united behind itself, make them work harder and even get them to make sacrifices and before them hold a dream which they will feel realisable and within reachable imagination.

When the OIntent of AdministrationO and the OAct of WillO are clearly understood and expressed, the majority of people, potentially law-abiding as they are, will abide by law. The rest will be taken care of by parental and family