

## Eliminating Bakshi

THE Government of India never fails to be surprised by any development of importance in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. When the State Government released Abdullah in April, Lai Bahadur Shastri, then Minister without Portfolio, stated in Parliament that the announcement of the State Government's decision, its timing and manner, had taken New Delhi by surprise. Now this week the two Houses of Parliament were again told that the Kashmir Government had arrested Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, the State's former Prime Minister, and some of his colleagues not only without consulting the Centre but also without informing it. Technically, the power to use the DIR in Jammu and Kashmir is the State Government's; and there is, besides, the need that if anything unpleasant has to be done in Kashmir the initiative should appear to be that of the State Government, not of the Government of India. Yet, the fact remains that the apparent failure of communication on important matters between the Centre and Jammu and Kashmir, which, ail said and done, is not just another State of the Union, is disconcerting, to say the least.

Use of the Defence of India Rules for political purposes is, of course, deplorable. Members of the Bakshi clique as well as other opponents of the Sadiq Government, like Sheikh Abdullah, have not been slow to exploit this argument. They have pointed out that a no-confidence motion against Sadiq was about to be moved in the State legislature with the support of Bakshi and, they claim, a majority of the members of the ruling National Conference. The Sadiq Government's action is sought to be presented as a desperate move to forestall the no-confidence motion which would have led to its downfall. On the other hand, the press communique issued by the Kashmir Government immediately after Bakshi's arrest stated that it had been forced to act because Bakshi had been using his political influence in the State to obstruct the investigation of "cases of corruption and other criminal cases" involving him.

*Prima facie* there is no reason to lend greater credence to the allegations of Bakshi and Sheikh Abdullah than to the Kashmir Government's statement. It is a known fact that the State Government has been investigating complaints of corruption against Bakshi—

which are perhaps no less numerous than those against Kairon in Punjab—and it might have become obvious to Bakshi by now that the only way to stop these investigations was to topple the Sadiq Ministry. Towards this end he had made common cause with Sheikh Abdullah recently. In any case, the claim that the imminent no-confidence motion against Sadiq had the support of the majority of the National Conference members of the State legislature is baseless. The National Conference legislature party is reported to have passed a resolution expressing its confidence in the Sadiq Government on the day following Bakshi's arrest. According to the general secretary of the National Conference, Syed Mir Qasim, 45 of the 67 members of the legislature party attended the meeting.

The record of the Sadiq Government also points against a purely political use of the DIR by it against Bakshi. During its relatively short term in office and considering the extremely difficult circumstances, the increase in democratic freedoms in the State under the present Government has been most commendable. The contrast with conditions that prevailed during the Bakshi regime is so marked that the charge of undemocratic action by the Government, when it comes from Bakshi, sounds rather ludicrous.

Sadiq has promised that Bakshi's detention under the DIR would be short and that the State legislature, prorogued by the Sadar-i-Riyasat on Tuesday, would also be reconvened as soon as possible. It is important that these promises are kept. With Bakshi temporarily quarantined, the Government must expedite its investigations and take action against him under the ordinary laws of the land as soon as possible.

Sadiq has to simultaneously deal with Bakshi at the political level. The resolution passed by the National Conference opposing the arrest of Bakshi and his colleagues and the prorogation of the legislature is proof that Bakshi is far from a spent force yet in Kashmir politics. But Sadiq has already demonstrated, in the case of Sheikh Abdullah and the leaders of the Plebiscite Front, how opposition to the Government can be effectively dealt with on the political plane. The tremendous enthusiasm among the people for Sheikh Abdullah has appreciably waned and differences

have cropped up between him and other leaders like Maulvi Farroq which have weakened him further.

Bakshi must be tackled similarly. The steps taken in the last few months to reorganise the National Conference and to create for it a base among the people of the State are in the right direction, as is the appointment of Mir Quasim as the party's secretary. Sadiq's principal handicap on assuming office as Prime Minister was the lack of an effective party organisation through which he could function. Success in the attempts to rehabilitate the National Conference as a popular party by ridding it of the corrupt elements which have ruled it for the last so many years should gradually remove this handicap.

### Dandakaranya Stink

THE only way in which the Chairman of a Board can express his dissatisfaction with the conduct of the affairs of the enterprise concerned is to offer his resignation. This is a valid and accepted method of persuading the Board, when it is an elected body, to re-consider and mend its ways; and when the Chairman is appointed by an outside agency—as in the case of the Dandakaranya Development Authority—surely there is no other way.

It is normally not the practice of this paper to discuss the conduct of civil servants who, like women and cows in the code of Mahabharatha warfare, cannot be touched. This inhibition, however, does not apply to Chairmen of statutory bodies whose position is not that of civil servants, whatever their background may have been. In the particular case of the controversy between Shri Saibal K Gupta, the Chairman of the DDA who has resigned, and Shri Mahavir Tyagi, the Minister of Rehabilitation, there is an additional consideration. The Chairman of the DDA brought with him an unsullied reputation and an unblemished record, both as a distinguished member of the judiciary and as Chairman of the Calcutta Improvement Trust. So he is obviously a man with a reputation to lose. This is a handicap which Shri Mahavir Tyagi does not suffer from.

Leaving aside the various asides of the Minister delivered at his Press Conference on August 21 and his impertinent observation that Shri Gupta was "an able officer", that "none can doubt his honesty" but that he "became too conscious of his rights and privileges", let us take Shri Tyagi's

statement in the Rajya Sabha last week that, in his letter of resignation, Shri Gupta had made "pointed reference to several aspects of the DDA's working, alleging shortcomings" and that "he appears to have laid all these shortcomings at the door of the Chief Administrator" What is one to say of his final winding up: "I shall certainly look into the allegations"? Does it mean that he accepted the resignation without even bothering to look into the allegations which this very responsible Chairman had made and let him go without even making the pretence of an investigation?

True, Ministers are privileged. But how low can a Minister sink? Is it not hitting below the belt to make an allegation, when Gupta was not there to

rebut it, that while Shri Saibal Gupta criticised extravagant expenditure, he had himself incurred much greater travelling expenditure on an average per month than his distinguished predecessor? Did it occur to the Minister that travelling expenditure varies directly with the extent of travelling done and that in the case of a conscientious and energetic head of a Development Authority whose range of operations extends over hundreds of square miles of largely virgin territory unopened to communication, the travelling could also be an index of energy, effort and application?

Dandakaranya, held up once as an El Dorado of refugees from East Pakistan, has so far proved only a mirage—Its administration stinks and investiga-

tion into the affairs of D D A has been long overdue. Surely Shri Tyagi owes it to the public at least to release to the press Shri Gupta's letter of resignation so that people may judge for themselves. Shri Tyagi was not setting an example of good parliamentary behaviour when he told the Rajya Sabha that "whatever be the importance of the officer, I am not going to make the Government surrender to him. I am not going to negotiate with him". If the Government expects self-respecting and competent people to take charge of statutory bodies or public corporations, it must insist that Ministers observe a proper code of conduct in relation to them. The Chairman of a statutory body is not an "officer" whom a Minister can order about.

## Weekly Notes

### Unwanted Re-Finance?

**T**O judge an institution by its performance in the very first year of its existence is certainly not fair. This is especially so when the institution was itself evolved after long consideration and slow debate and deals with a sector where progress is notoriously tardy. The Agricultural Refinance Corporation came into being quite some time after it was realised that the Reserve Bank's Agricultural Long-Term Operations Fund alone could not fully meet the long-term credit requirements of agriculture. Since it is primarily a refinancing agency, its role in revitalising Indian agriculture may be seriously limited. But that, strictly speaking, can only be judged in time although there are some interesting sidelights on this point in the Corporation's first Annual Report and in the Chairman's statement at the Annual General meeting.

In his speech the Chairman of the Corporation thought it "a pity" that only four schemes could be approved for refinancing during the first year. He blamed this on the response from the State Governments in sending worthwhile schemes, which he considered was "not as encouraging as one would like it to be, considering the vast potentialities for the development of agriculture in India and in the context of the emphasis that has to be placed on increased agricultural production." He pointed out that while the officers of the Corporation could only give the State Governments "a general idea of the functions and working of the Cor-

poration and help them in the preparation of sound schemes, the initiative in this regard has largely to come from the State Governments themselves".

This is in somewhat strange conflict with the language of the Report of the Corporation's Directors which asserts that the Corporation will not be "merely a passive financing agency" but will play "an active role in stimulating interest in special agricultural development schemes". The Report further claims that during the year the Corporation did actually play "an active role in stimulating interest among the various State Governments, the financing institutions and various other statutory bodies connected with agricultural development, in the preparation of worthwhile and economic schemes intended to develop agriculture and thereby increase agricultural production". And, anticipating a familiar line of criticism, the Report also states that "there is bound to be some time lag between the receipt of a scheme and approval thereof because of the elaborate nature of the appraisal necessary.

It is also interesting to note that of the four schemes so far approved by the Corporation (there has been no disbursement of funds yet), three are in Andhra and one—with the lowest financial outlay—in Orissa. Shri Bhide has already set about playing the active role in the stimulation of interest claimed for the Corporation. He has added his voice to the chorus reminding the States of their obligations in national development. He has addressed

the Chief Secretaries of State Governments, emphasising the need for preparation of schemes for agricultural development. Shri Bhide has also suggested means by which such preparation could best be done. The suggestion from one so well-versed in the ways of governments is entirely predictable. It is the constitution of a Special Committee in each State "charged with the responsibility of the preparation and scrutiny of all such schemes".

### Water-logging and Silting

**T**HE Prime Minister's reply to the Lok Sabha debate on the no-confidence motion against the Government included a detailed discussion of water-logging in Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab. He indicated that if water-logging was prevented in the Punjab, it would ensure an additional food production of 200,000 tons.

Water-logging is a concomitant of large-scale irrigation through canals. Even before Independence, the problem afflicted the Punjab and Sind, the two provinces where one of the largest irrigation systems in the world was constructed during the British era. The problem seems to have received little attention at that time. And while investing large amounts in canal irrigation during the First and Second Plans our planners also have largely ignored the problem.

Neglect of the problem of water-logging can have grave consequences. In West Pakistan today, the water-table has risen to such an extent that