

Governance and accountability

ABIR PHUKAN

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The lack of an authentic will to make things better seems to come in between our ministers and responsible governance... ABIR PHUKAN

As we are about to complete another year of independence from British rule, we realise how dependent we are on the instincts, on the determination and on the concern of the people we elect to represent us in the Government and in the Opposition.

When a coalition Government comes to power, people wonder whether such a Government will last its term. Till now, the electorate assumed safely that if the Government remains stable, the cabinet also will remain stable. But certain assumptions do not appear to be safe anymore. It is just a matter of time before they would be more worried about a stable cabinet than a stable Government in the Parliament. It is fast becoming a trend amongst Ministers to resign for the wrong reasons. They resign because they are sent to jail or because their conduct in a previous ministry is an embarrassment for the Government. At times they simply decide not to show up for taking oath.

If we look at our early years, we may feel that there was a time when Ministers owned responsibility when they failed to perform. Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Minister of Railways and Transport in the Central Cabinet from 1951 to 1956, offered to resign in 1956 when a train accident in Mahbubnagar, Andhra Pradesh caused 112 deaths. Pt. Nehru did not accept his resignation. Three months later when another train accident in Ariyalur, Tamil Nadu caused 144 deaths, Mr. Shastri again resigned, accepting moral and constitutional responsibility. Pt. Nehru stated in Parliament that he accepted the resignation

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