

Irresponsible Students

The Jahangirnagar University would have been closed any way from yesterday, because the winter vacation was due to start on the day. But the way the syndicate had to take the decision for the students to vacate the halls on a short notice should be considered a poor commentary on our entire higher education system. Not only was the university's decision-making body forced to go for the measure but also the teacher-student relations were left in shreds. Indiscipline and unruly behaviour at their height were at play on the JU campus.

Surprisingly, though, the chaos on the campus has been created by the Jatayatadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The JCD has been protesting the expulsion of two of its leaders. But the way of the JCD activists' protest has, more often than not, been violent and the target of their violence has been none other than the teachers. In the expulsion case, the two students were involved in an assault on the provost of their hall. And the punishment meted out is just one year's expulsion. Despite the lenient consideration, the JCD activists of the JU went to the extent of laying siege to a meeting of the teachers for as long as 16 hours. Failing to persuade the teachers to reconsider the expulsion order, they went one better by ransacking rooms of several teachers, including some syndicate members. The intimidatory muscle-flexing has gone too far to be covered by any democratic and lawful procedure.

Evidently, what was an isolated incident of indiscipline and crime has been taken up as a common issue by a particular student organisation. It is a clear case of an attempt to justify violence and lawlessness. Not only fellow members of the offending students have supported their crime but have also been committing the same crime. But for the same offence as of those two, a student of the Dhaka University has not only been expelled for life but also deprived of his degree (honours) certificate. It is indeed a disgrace that the action of the ruling party's student wing should have an echo in what the Islami Chhatra Shibir did at the Chittagong University campus. Specially worrying is the fact that the incidents of assault on teachers are increasing in number. A similar incident at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology has led to a stalemate there. In question is not just an individual's behaviour and action but a whole group or groups of students' irrational campaign. When the student organisation happens to be the ruling party's student wing, it is futile to expect responsible behaviour from others.

Then the JCD did not behave responsible at the Rajshahi University campus too. The student organisation there put the administrative building, class rooms and examination halls under lock and key, forcing the authority not to hold the scheduled examination. If the teachers are brought so low, the nation surely runs the risk of heading for a catastrophe. It is reported that two ministers went to rescue the gheraoed teachers at JU. That they had to pacify their future cadres points to the political links often ill used. Now the question is whether such illegal activities are punishable or not under the Anti-terrorism Act. If the answer is in the affirmative, the government would do well to apply it without being restrained by any partisan consideration. This alone can ensure the government's neutrality and in the process help restore part of its lost image.

Honouring Dr FR Khan

One of the world's most renowned engineer, Dr FR Khan of Bangladesh, will finally get some recognition in the country of his birth. BUET will now introduce a chair and set up an institute in the name of the world famous structural engineer who died on the job while supervising the construction of the Jeddah airport, designed by him. There is, however, a catch to the sudden effort by BUET to show respect to the man who brought so much honour and prestige to the country. The family had to put together Tk.8 lakh, which will be the seed money of the whole scheme.

Welcome to honouring our dead heroes Bangladeshi style. Honour comes your way if the family or friends can cough up the funds. Till then we will have to do with vociferous lip service and occasional seminars, with radio TV coverage, if you can get some minister to attend them. We would like to raise the question as the why the family of Dr FR Khan had to raise the money to set up the chair and start the institute. In contrast to the usual image, Bangladesh suddenly became known as the country of birth of the man who designed the tallest building in the world. Initial disbelief led to the subsequent recognition that Bangladesh had some of the best professionals there were in the field. But none brought home this point as dramatically as Dr FR Khan did.

There are many other renowned people that this country has produced, in diverse fields of science, engineering, art, literature etc. who are still to receive any sort of recognition. These intellectuals will all have to be given their due honour and respect by the society. It is inconceivable that we will have to wait for their families to raise the necessary funds before our government or institutions bother to do something. To start the process, maybe an effort could be made to draw up a list of those who achieved worldwide fame, or regional and national excellence in their respective fields. With such a list, concerned Universities, could then launch a fund-raising drive, both nationally and outside. It is possible that philanthropic bodies can be found at the international level who can help us to set up scientific institutions. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) could also be approached for this purpose. UNESCO may not be able to extend funds, but they could help us organise the fund-raising drive.

THE BBC asked me the other day whether India would be able to save its secular polity. I was told that the West was aghast at the recent events because it considered India compassionate and tolerant.

The fear is legitimate because the Hindu fundamentalists were able to demolish the disputed Babri Masjid in broad daylight without any challenge. They violated the undertaking given to the highest law court that they would protect the structure. And the security forces took sides in the disturbances that followed at many places, killing scores of workers up protesters.

Many independent observers returning from Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Bombay and Jaipur have testified that the confrontation was between the police and the Muslims. This is in fact reminiscent of the riots in Jamshedpur, Bhopalpur and Meerut where the police did not control the violence, but were a party to it.

At that time I saw Hindu temples coming up in the police lines with a vengeance; most were dedicated to Hanuman (the monkey god). This violated both the letter and the spirit of instructions issued years before that stressed religion was a private affair and no temple, mosque, church or gurdwara could be built within police precincts.

True, when the security forces lose their impartiality, the secular credentials of the state become suspect. Yet this is not the complete picture. The average Hindu has felt distressed over the demolition of the mosque and does not con-

Will India Stay Secular?

What the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its political arms like the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) are trying to do is to hijack Hinduism and make it monolithic even at the expense of deforming it.

done those who were responsible. He is particularly worried about the country's unity which, he believes, cannot be maintained if the 110 million Muslims in the country are alienated.

The Hindus, who constitute 82 per cent of the population, could have had a Hindu Rashtriya when India won freedom. The Hindu Mahasabha preached that. But they preferred secularism because that was the ethos of the national movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. In fact, this is also the ethos of their religion, which has no Pope, no church and no religious discipline. It is the sense of accommodation that has distinguished it from other religions that effected conversions by fire and sword. Jewish leaders have told me that India is the only country in the world where the Jews never faced religious persecution.

What the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its political arms like the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) are trying to do is to hijack Hinduism and make it monolithic even at the expense of deforming it.

Muslim fundamentalism has helped them. Even the movement for more democratic rights in Kashmir is cited as a Muslim challenge to New

Delhi. Hence the false claims by LK Advani, the BJP leader, who insists on repeating ad nauseam that 46 Hindu temples have been destroyed in the valley. (Independent organisations have verified that this is not true).

The violent retaliation in Bangladesh and Pakistan is further grist to the BJP mill. The reported move by some West Asian countries to restrict the

with politics. Unlike the UK, Italy or Pakistan, India has no state religion. But the BJP, without spelling it out, wants Hinduism to have an official status, *de facto* if not *de jure*.

It would have been far more honest if the BJP had placed the proposition before the nation directly. Instead, it has been articulating the Hindu sentiment in the name of Ram and duping the community as

should be to resuscitate our weakened institutions. The judiciary has become effects; it is too slow and too cumbersome in its operation.

The law suit challenging the requisition of the disputed land, where the foundation stone of the *mandir* was laid, remained pending for months. Had the judgement been delivered five days earlier, the demolition could probably have been avoided; the tardiness of judges has cost the country dearly.

Even worse is the delayed judgement on which of the two communities owns the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi site. The case has been pending for the last 40 years. On the other hand, what can we say about a political party that says faith comes before the law and which violates the orders of the Supreme Court?

Another institution sadly contaminated is that of police. It is an integral part of the steel frame that administers India and it cannot but be impartial. No doubt, some policemen were killed in Bombay and elsewhere but this is no justification for the force stinging out a community for retaliation. Politicisation was bad enough, communalisation is worse. There is no escape from having a mixed police force on a substantial scale;

their training too needs to be reoriented. The press, probably the most influential institution, has acquitted itself well this time. There is practically no newspaper which has tried to defend the BJP, unlike in 1990 when the police was criticised for using force to protect the disputed structure. A couple of English dailies have changed the tune and so have a few Hindi publications, probably under pressure. But initially, they too were critical. Even otherwise, the condemnation of the BJP is so wide and so strident that a few voices in its support have failed to convince anyone.

Even if the institutions are revived they will be of little use in the face of intolerance that is sweeping the country. I can never forget the advice of Mahatma Gandhi to a Punjabi Hindu who had lost his 10-year-old son during the 1947 riots and wanted to take revenge on the Muslim community. Gandhi looked at him with sympathy but told him the way to shame the Muslims was to adopt a 10-year-old Muslim orphan and bring him up in the Islamic tradition.

Both Hindus and Muslims should think likewise: adopting orphans from each other's community. By doing so, they would honour universal Indian values that have stood the test of time. "The quality of mercy is not strained; it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven." This may set in motion a process that may retrieve our ethos and image. It is a pity that the West exaggerates our difficulties and minimises our efforts.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

supply of oil to India will reinforce their pet line that Hindus in India are besieged by hostile Muslim countries.

It is the anti-Muslim card that the BJP has been playing; it would like to arm itself with any additional argument to poison the minds of Hindus, the majority of whom are still secular. A weak and battered government, headed by a vacillating prime minister, and the split among the non-BJP political parties will only send the wrong signals and weaken the institutions still further.

The constitution has consecrated the rule of law and has assured equality to all communities. Religion is not mixed

if the Muslims were against building the temple in the name of their god. This has, of course, paid dividends to the party because it has increased its strength in the Lok Sabha from eight members to 118.

Therefore, it is no use kidding ourselves. The country has now a determined party, which wants to convert India into the Hindu Rashtriya. It secured only 20 per cent of votes in the last election. But it will continue to employ all methods, fair or foul, to polarise the country.

How to repair the damage caused to our composite culture is the biggest task facing the nation. The first priority

US Military Plans Expanded Role for 'Shock Troops'

by David Isenberg

US military policymakers are planning an expanded role for 'special forces' to further perceived US interests in a New World Order.

THE various components of a modern military establishment are like gamblers at a casino. Every now and then someone gets hot and goes on a roll.

In recent years the military equivalent of a winner on a roll has been US Special Operations Forces (SOF). During the 1980s, 'special operations', along with 'low-intensity conflict' (LIC), became Washington's favourite buzzwords. US policymakers view special forces as the solution to a world where perceived threats to US interests are increasingly varied and diffuse.

The Department of Defence (DOD) asserts that in the post-Cold War era the major threats to the United States are 'uncertainty, instability, and regional contingencies'. Administration officials see special forces, like the traditional covert forces of the intelligence agencies, as an option between doing nothing and engaging in a full scale war. But the Persian Gulf War demonstrated that special forces can also operate in an all-out war.

US military officials are not optimistic about the prospects for a more peaceful 'new world order'. Within developing nations, dramatic increases in population and growing dissatisfaction with the perpetual gap between the rich and poor will continue to be major causes of unrest and insurgency, writes Gen Carl Stiner, head of the US Special Operations Command. 'In a world marked by conflicting political, social and economic systems, there will always be those who consider their interests at odds with the United States.'

LIC is one way to deal with those whose interests are at odds with the US. The US military defines LIC as 'political-military confrontation between contending states or groups below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition among states... waged by a combination of

means employing political, economic, informational and military instruments. Low intensity conflicts are often localised, generally in the Third World, but contain regional and global security implications.'

A Congressional Research Service study concludes that 'successful LIC operations allow highly developed states to achieve selected objectives while reducing risks in a world where the proliferation of mass destruction weapons, missile delivery systems, and other sophisticated devices make mid- and high-intensity warfare increasingly unattractive to rational decision makers.'

Special Operations Forces are key to LIC. Generically speaking, special forces are elite units. Special operations are conducted by specially trained, equipped, and organised DOD forces against strategic or tactical targets in pursuit of national military, political, economic, or psychological objectives. These operations may be conducted during periods of peace or hostilities. They may support conventional operations, or they may be prosecuted independently...

From the Barbary Coast to Basra

Long before the term special operations existed, US military forces were intervening in 'low-intensity conflicts' and were carrying them out as well. US Marines did so during 1801-07 in the 'war' against the Barbary pirates. As US economic interests expanded worldwide in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, so did the interventionary use of the Marines.

Since 1985, the Marine Corps have had what they call the Marine Expeditionary Unit/Special Operations Capable, or MEU (SOC). Six of the units, two of which are special operations capable, rotate on routine deployments to the Mediterranean and the Pacific Rim. In 1988 they saw

combat in the Persian Gulf, attacking Iranian oil rigs and landing on suspected mine-laying ships. A typical MEU contains about 2,500 Marines and sailors trained to carry out some 18 specific missions, from non-combatant evacuations operations (such as Liberia in 1990) to training foreign military forces.

Army special forces units are the descendants of World War II units such as the Office of Strategic Services, Darby's Rangers and the Jedburgh Teams. In 1952, the Army formed the 10th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to wage guerrilla or 'unconventional' warfare, in the event of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. The first non-Europe deployment of US special forces, aside from the Korean War, occurred in 1956, when Washington sent troops to Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam. By 1958, the basic operational unit of Special Forces had emerged as a 12-man team known as the A-detachment or A-team.

US special forces became more explicitly involved in counterinsurgency with President John F. Kennedy's second National Security Action Memorandum, 'Development of Counter-Guerrilla Forces', ratified on 3 February 1961. One month later the Army doubled the number of special forces units, organising them by geographic speciality.

Special forces played an extensive role during the Vietnam War, along with other counterinsurgency operatives such as the CIA's Operation Phoenix and the Marines' 'combined action platoons'. After Vietnam the Pentagon reduced special force units.

It was not until the Reagan

administration that their advocates again found a sympathetic ear, following the failed Iranian hostage rescue attempt in 1980 and problems in the 1983 invasion of Grenada. The 1983 Beirut bombing of the US embassy — which killed a Delta Force commando — and of the Marine compound at Beirut airport strengthened the arguments of those seeking to revitalise US special forces, and led to the creation of a Joint Special Operations Agency in 1984. Between 1981 and the end of 1984, special operations funding nearly doubled, from \$441 million to almost \$800 million, and their active-duty number increased almost 30%, from 11,600 to 14,900.

The most notable Reagan-era development was the 1986 creation of the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) as the newest of eight unified commands in the US military's combatant command structure. USSOCOM has control over about 42,000 Army, Air Force and Navy active, reserve and national guard forces.

The war against Iraq was hardly the first time for US special forces in the Middle East or the Persian Gulf. When TWA flight 847 was hijacked in 1985, the Army's Delta Force was flown to Europe to await an opportunity to launch a rescue attempt. Three months later, when the Achille Lauro was taken over by renegade Palestinian fighters, Delta Force and a SEAL team prepared for a rescue attempt, and SEALs participated in the subsequent capture of some of the hijackers when their plane was intercepted.

In 1987 the Army's special operations helicopter unit, Task Force 160, deployed secretly from Ft Campbell,

Kentucky, to the Persian Gulf as part of the reflagging operations of the Kuwaiti oil tankers. They played a key role in attacking the Iranian oil platforms being used as launch sites for attacks on the tanker.

SOF personnel conducted many missions in the 1989 US invasion of Panama. That turned out to be only a warm-up for what was to come.

The US military buildup in the Middle East after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait included nearly 10,000 special operations forces — the largest deployment of special forces in history. Among the first units to deploy to Saudi Arabia in August 1991, they carried out missions before, during and after the war, and included special forces from the Army, Air Force and Navy, and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) and Civil Affairs units.

The missions included reconnaissance, psychological operations, 'civil affairs', direct action, and search-and-rescue operations. They also aided Kurdish refugees and supported other allied military forces, notably the British Special Air Service and Special Boat Squadron.

Language specialists served as liaisons with Arab forces. Members of the 5th Special Forces Group, for example, helped reconstitute the Kuwaiti army from a handful of volunteers to five light infantry brigades.

Broadcasting Death

Specific special operations missions included dropping high-tech parachutes to drift through the night sky and report on enemy positions, disabling communications towers and water wells, and using lasers to target Scud missile launchers and tank emplacements for air attack. Special forces also placed explosive charges on bridges to cut off Iraqi avenues of retreat.

A Navy SEAL team secretly boarded a freighter intercepted by the US Navy in mid-August and infiltrated Kuwait to protect the US embassy. One unconfirmed report asserts that coalition special forces tried but failed to capture a Soviet adviser to the Iraqi Army during the war.

Members of the Air Force's 1st Special Operations Wing dropped the massive Vietnam-era 15,000 pound BLU-82 bombs, killing large numbers of Iraqi soldiers and inducing others to desert or surrender. The use of BLU-82 bombs was considered a psychological as well as an offensive operation, and was followed by drops of 29 million safe-passage leaflets and broadcasts from an 18-hour-a-day 'Voice of the Gulf' radio station. In one case, an entire Iraqi battalion surrendered to a US helicopter patrol after the PSYOPS team broadcast that 'death from above' was imminent.

Air Force special forces conducted many armed reconnaissance and fire support missions in southern Iraq and Kuwait. Beginning in early January 1991, Navy SEALs and Special Boat Units conducted nightly coastal patrols in the northern Persian Gulf. Army special operations personnel also conducted long-range helicopter reconnaissance missions in central and west-central Iraq. Among other tasks, they analysed soil conditions to determine whether heavy armoured vehicles could pass, information critical for developing the flanking manoeuvre into western Iraq where the

ground war started.

Navy SEALs dropped from helicopters on 25 occasions into Gulf waters to detonate mines. In preparation for the ground war, SEALs flew 11 reconnaissance missions off Kuwaiti beaches, dropping swimmers who swam almost to shore on two-hour surveillance stints. Three hours before the start of ground operations, SEALs blew up mines off Kuwait's coastline, prompting the Iraqis to move troops eastward, making it easier for the main coalition forces to attack in the west.

On the final day of the war the Iraqis had moved 26 Scud missiles near their western border for a saturation attack on Israel. Members of the US Delta Force, along with British SAS commandos and regular US Air Force personnel, destroyed them.

Less Oversight

The use of special forces personnel did not stop with the ceasefire. Kuwaiti reconstruction planning began working with the Kuwaiti government. After the war there were reports that special forces personnel helped round up Palestinians from suspected 'safe houses' in Kuwait City. About 1,500 special forces aided Iraqi Kurds who fled after the failed uprisings against Saddam Hussein.

Since their Gulf War performance, US special forces have become the golden boys of the national security establishment. Special Operations budgets will not be taking cuts along with the rest of the military services. In Fiscal Year 1991 the Special Operations Command received nearly \$2.5 billion. In FY 1992 it rose to over \$3.1 billion, and the FY 1993 request is nearly \$3 billion.

Military planners expect special forces to play a role in literally all possible future conflicts. They no doubt will play a greater role in the Middle East, especially in intelligence gathering as Congress moves to reshape the intelligence establishment. Covert operations traditionally conducted by the CIA may be assigned to special forces. British air station RAF Alconbury will be a command and operations centre for US airborne special forces.

Policy-makers who hesitate to deploy regular military forces see special forces as the ideal response to insurgencies, terrorist actions and hostage taking. They believe special operations will face less congressional oversight than traditional intelligence agencies. In 1990, General James Lindsay, then head of USSOCOM, pushed for blanket approval to conduct certain clandestine missions without oversight from the CIA or the State Department. The move was disapproved but will likely come up again.

'In a volatile and turbulent world,' Defence Secretary Dick Cheney wrote in his most recent annual report, 'special operations forces have a critical role in executing the new strategy... Where the enemies are 'uncertainty' and 'instability', special forces will be the shock troops of the new world order.'

— Third World Network Features/Middle East Report

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To the Editor...

Sanctity in jeopardy

Sir, God will punish the sinners, according to the holy books. So, his followers will earn heaven and the rest will belong to hell. If any deed out of the bounds of his laws can constitute a sin, then fanaticism over religious concern must be as bad as barbarism that jeopardizes the religious sanctity resulting in sin committed by the individual(s).

Obviously, the recent explosive episode over the disputed famous mosque in India, which has produced uproar across the world, distinguishes religious fanaticism as the Space Age barbarism.

The nefarious act of demolishing a sacred architecture has hurt all pious sentiments as has struck the theological foundation like a bolt from the blue negating the position connotations of modern civilization. What else can be more disgracing to the divine rights after such a wild action abusing human rights will not be known to the humanity in the foreseeable future.

The fallout of this outburst by the outrageous mob of a homogeneous community may be widespread and enduring enough to affect the spiritual enlightenment of the next generation and even the heritage of the subcontinent.

Responsibility

Even after leaving the whole matter up to His jurisdiction, the merits of the turmoil deserve assessment in view of global prosperity till Domsday. Dawn on earth, the administrative drawback must have a share in the responsibility for the humiliation this premeditated crime has wrought upon the world's faiths.

Now a new structure can be erected to compensate largely for the lost historic symbol of allegiance to the Almighty, but the decomposed spirit of communal integrity has to be revived in a short period at any cost.

M Rahman
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Responsibility

Sir, Though belated, I would extend my heartfelt thanks to S M Ali for his bold and courageous commentary 'Hasina should take a responsible line in her statement' published in The Daily Star on December 20.

I do not understand what these two leaders think about the millions of people of this country; whether they think that the IQ of the people of this country is so low that they

cannot judge what is what.

When BNP and its sycophants say that the war of liberation was won in the battle field only and the political parties did not play any role, and Awami League says that the war was won by it and none had any contribution, both the parties underestimate the IQ of the people and think that people will believe everything what they want them to believe. Those are the days gone.

With my little knowledge, I understand, this sort of politics developed because of dictatorial rule, whether civil or military, in this country. During Pakistan period, in the absence of democracy, third grade politicians turned into first grade and started politics of falsehood, promising -/8/- annas seer of rice and -/2/- annas dista of paper etc. Had there been a democratic process alive in the then Pakistan (same of course goes to the present remaining Pakistan) the history of the Sub-Continent would have been written otherwise.

We are proud that we are an independent country. We must protect, preserve and defend our hard-earned independence by keeping the democratic process alive. A day may come when to other party may get a

chance to form the Government. But, God forbid, if we lose our whatever independence we have, we will be slaves.

So let us act as responsible citizens of this country.

M Saleem Ullah
Motijheel C/A, Dhaka

Music cassettes

Sir, Certain recording companies are now releasing cassettes of some good but less popular singers. A few days back, the old days' song cassette by Roksanana Anwar had acclaimed listeners appreciation and also made a handsome business.

Lately I listened to a cassette containing Nazrul Sangit and old days' songs sung by Bina Mahboob. The songs are well presented but I feel an impression of hastiness in the presentation. Perhaps the Nazrul songs could be made more melodious had those been sung only with harmonium and few other country instruments. Recording of the cassette released by one Sharp Products need further improvement.

M Zahidul Haque
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