

Punish These Law Breakers

Yesterday, most of the national dailies carried front page pictures of hawkers breaking up cars. Why? Because they were protesting. What were they protesting about? The recent City Corporation's action of evicting them from illegally set up shops at various busy city intersections.

This is a most disturbing trend that we see emerging in our political life. Damaging public and private property by this or that group to register protest cannot be permitted under any circumstances.

But we are also convinced that mere pious words, and moral pontification will have no impact on the minds of people who find such vicarious pleasure in destroying other people's property. Severe action must be taken against these people who take up the law in their hands at the slightest pretext.

The impact of such outburst of violence on civic life has been devastating. Owners of buses, trucks and private cars operate under constant fear and intense strains, not knowing what lies next for them.

We urge the police to take some immediate and effective steps against the recurrence of such incidents. We would like to suggest the formation of a special task force to respond immediately to such situations and take preventive actions against them.

Firm hand of the law must be made to appear supreme. All sorts of lawlessness must be severely dealt with. Not only our civic life, but the prospect of our economic development, including attracting foreign investment, depends on how effectively we handle the law-breakers.

Congratulations for a Fantastic Loser

Our sincere consolations to 'Bronze Queen' Merlene Ottey of Jamaica. She is the best woman sprinter of the world if consistency of performance at top and the length of it is considered — and also her talent and tenacity.

Unlucky Ottey has, however, done something rare and more memorable than winning a gold, on her Stuttgart run on Tuesday which gave her the silver. Gail Devers of US and Ottey, together with the officials of their respective national teams, were unsure of the outcome at the end of the race.

The Jamaicans protested. And the jury relented and timed both at 10.82. But the gold was confirmed for Devers. The displeased Jamaicans maintained that "Devers' face had crossed the line first but Ottey had won because her torso was ahead."

The debate is now on what wins a race — the head or the torso or any other part of the body that crosses the line first. The jury seem to have acted on the third point which is what should appeal to most sport enthusiasts as well as to common sense.

Meanwhile, shall we only console Ottey? She has this time beaten her Olympic victor Gwen Torrence to third place. And equaled the time of the winner. What a fantastic loser, we congratulate you Marlene.

The ongoing polarisation of various parties and hectic organisational activities coupled with a series of street movements, at times accompanied by violence, has warmed up the political arena during these humid days of August.

A mini convention of former Foreign Minister Hossain and his allies, held from August 12 to 14, reached consensus to form a new political party on liberal democratic lines, which is likely to be floated from the National Grand Convention (NGC), scheduled in Dhaka from August 27.

The process of forming a new party, branded by its organisers as the 'third force' in politics, was initiated in June last year when Kamal, the then president member of the AL, launched Bangladesh Democratic Forum (BDF).

From the very beginning, the AL hierarchy did not approve of this independent move of Kamal that finally resulted in his dropping from the party presidency during the AL council in September last year.

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breakup of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is expected to hasten the decline of one of Southeast Asia's last insurgencies.

In mid-July, a major group in the party, the Manila-Rizal province regional committee, announced it was breaking away from the central committee headed by founding chairman Jose Maria Sison.

The committee controls the communist movement in the Philippines capital, adjacent Rizal province and surrounding provinces. The committee was in the vanguard of the urban terrorism campaign in 1987-91, when more than 200 policemen, soldiers and government officials, including an American military adviser, were assassinated by left-wing guerrillas.

The move of the Manila-Rizal committee, considered the most sophisticated and talented in the CPP, did not come as a surprise. Party unity began fraying back in 1986.

Since December, Manila's media have seen an exchange of slander between two groups: those carrying on the fight through the armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), and exiles based in Utrecht in the Netherlands, led by Sison and Luis Jalandoni.

The insurgency has lasted 23 years, reaching its height in the mid-1980s when its strength was put at around 30,000.

What had precipitated the rebellion was Sison's attempt to block ideological progress of the left in the face of changing world and domestic circumstances. From his exile, he ordered a "rectification" last year, which was really a purge of dissidents, and ordered the movement to return to the countryside to re-wage the guerrilla war.

Sison considered the NPA urban insurrection waged by 500 armed killers a mistake because they turned the populace against them. He shut off all avenues of discussions within the movement.

The secessionist group represents the more influential urban-based leaders. They are informed and organised, with significant influence over fronts in central and southern Philippines. Sison is left with peasant followers. The split was accelerated partly because the Ramos government began to talk peace with all rebel groups — the left, rightwing putschists and Muslim secessionists.

In the current policies of the government, special stress, at least in paper, is given on private enterprise. In practice, however, the growth in the private sector continues to be impeded by bureaucratic intransigence.

Kamal's Move Adds New Dimension to a Turbulent Political Scene

by Chapal Bashar

In the process of merging with the new party, Prof Mozaffar categorically said that he was not going to quit NAP, which means he would continue with the political line he had been following for over three decades.

The Ganatantri Party (GP) is still undecided about joining the proposed party, though efforts from Kamal's camp is on to bring them in the process. The GP's council is scheduled to meet during third week of the current month where a decision in this regard might be taken.

From the AL, with which Kamal worked for long and served the party's government as minister with important portfolios, a sizeable number including some senior members have already joined hands with him. However, a number of intellectuals including Shamsur Rahman, Zillur Rahman Siddiqui and others, who were with Kamal in the Forum, are now keeping themselves away from the proposed party.

While the efforts of Kamal and his allies are on and the party is now certain to be floated in late August, the AL is visibly perturbed about it. The AL central leaders Zillur Rahman, Abdus Samad Azad and others have clearly expressed their annoyance about the move.

Two smaller parties, JSD led by Shajahan Siraj and Cano Azadi League, founded by late

that Kamal's party will cause damage to AL's organisation and might spoil its support to some extent which will ultimately benefit the ruling party BNP during the next elections.

Interestingly, there is no visible reaction in BNP about Kamal's move. There is little doubt that the ruling party is enjoying the rift in its major rival party. However, Kamal maintains that his organisation will act as mainstream in the politics since both the BNP and the AL failed to do their task for the nation.

This is not the first time that the AL is facing desertion of some party members led by a senior leader. The AL experienced similar situation in 1957

at least ideologically. The AL, the biggest opposition party bearing the heritage of over four decades, is concerned at the recent developments and has geared up its organisational activities to face the new challenge.

The AL has also planned a massive rally on August 20 at Manik Miah Avenue in the city where the leaders are likely to announce fresh programme of movement on political and economic demands. It is natural that AL will strive for a big show on that day keeping in view the forthcoming Grand Conference of Kamal and National Council of BNP.

Meanwhile, another development has been cropping up as a natural sequel of polarisation. The CPB (hardliners) and the Five-party, a left alliance, are already in touch to go for unified movements.

However, this time AL is facing a bigger challenge, since a leader like Dr Kamal Hossain, who contested presidential election with AL ticket, is backed by radical forces having country-wide organisational network and cadres.

It will be a challenge for Kamal too — his political future and existence will depend only on meaningful existence of the organisation he is fostering. The challenge also remains for those who are climbing on a political platform, totally new for them,

the country was under presidential form of government when BNP was in power for the first time. The BNP has returned to power after nine years, but the country has now a parliamentary system. The switch-over to this system was possible through consensus between the BNP, the AL and others in the parliament.

The changed system of government has also necessitated the amendments of BNP's manifesto which stands for presidential form of government. Clause 8 of the BNP's manifesto says that a president elected by the people can safeguard the democracy as well as the democratic stability.

A total of 2017 councillors are expected to attend the national council which will undoubtedly boost the organisational activities of the ruling party. The BNP's constitution provides the system of appointing the office bearers by the party's chairperson. So, the speculation about the appointment of a new Secretary General is rife while the names of the aspirants for the post are being widely discussed.

The preparation for BNP's September 1-2 National Council continues in full swing. This will be the fourth council of the party founded by late President Ziaur

Rahman in 1978 while the first and the second council were held in 1980 and 1981 respectively when the party was in power. The third one took place in 1989 when the BNP was on the street fighting for democracy. Now the fourth one is being held in a different scenario, the party is back to power with its Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia as the Prime Minister.

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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Maulana Tarkabagish, have decided to merge with the party to be floated.

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Rebels Split, War Fades — and Ramos Rejoices

Abby Tan writes from Manila

One of Southeast Asia's last insurgencies looks like ending. The Communist Party of the Philippines has split as a result of a breakaway by a younger and influential group, believed to make up one-third of the 15,000 members. The CPP's 23-year-old insurgency reached its height in the mid-1980s. President Ramos intends to go on talking to all factions of the party and keep them divided.

Philippines peace progress



- 1985 Marcos comes to power
1986 New People's Army (NPA) founded, guerrilla war launched
1972 Martial Law declared
1973 Left umbrella group National Democratic Front set up
1986 Marcos flees after popular uprising
1986 Aquino releases NPA leaders, holds talks
1986 Talks fail, NPA leader Romulo Kintanar arrested
1982 Ramos lifts ban on communists, NPA ideological split
1980 Split in Communist Party of Philippines

Jalandoni played down the rift, calling the breakaway regional committee "small and isolated" and its leader Pilemon Lagman "an impostor."

The insurgency has lasted 23 years, reaching its height in the mid-1980s when its strength was put at around 30,000.

avenues of discussions within the movement. In breaking away, Lagman urged the convening of a party congress to elect the leaders, which it never held since its founding.

Political scientist Alex Magno says: "Sison is out of touch. All the polemical pieces he has produced are, on close examination, a collection of ad hominem statements and name-calling. He reveals no new insight into the political realities of this time."

The secessionist group represents the more influential urban-based leaders. They are informed and organised, with significant influence over fronts in central and southern Philippines. Sison is left with peasant followers. The split was accelerated partly because the Ramos government began to talk peace with all rebel groups — the left, rightwing putschists and Muslim secessionists.

Sison considered the talks a trap to divide the communist ranks. In a way he was right, Ramos persuaded parliament to legalise the communists and pass laws granting the rebels an amnesty. Many of the fighters want peace. Lagman's statement reflects war weariness. His group said they were willing to take "the smallest opportunity to seek a peaceful negotiated settlement" and even take

part in the 1995 legislative elections. At a clandestine press conference Lagman said: "Our children are grown now. We want peace, but a peace that is the result of the resolutions of the causes of the armed struggle."

The government could well exploit war fatigue, but because of the simmering dispute within the CPP, only one round of talks has been held in The Hague in the Netherlands.

The government seems in no hurry. Haydee Yorac, chair of the government peace body, the National Unification Commission, said: "There's re-

ally no urgency (for talks), but the government must extend the hand to all concerned."

She says it will take many years for the communists to get their "act" together. All past strategies had resulted from years of internal debate. Yorac points out that the NPA threat is no longer on the same scale as in the 1980s, when battalion-sized guerrilla armies overran remote towns and villages.

Sporadic attacks continue but the war is down to a whimper. Many regions have had no guerrilla activity for a long time. Cadres have taken advantage of the amnesty offer and quietly returned to their farms. The government will go on talking to all factions of the communist party and keep them divided.

ABBY TAN is a Singaporean journalist specialising in economic and political affairs. She has been based in Manila since 1977.

OPINION

Evaluation of Bureaucracy

Mr A Z M Shamsul Alam's evaluation of the role of our bureaucrats in your August 9 issue has though been brief it is very significant. If I have correctly identified him Mr Alam, himself a seasoned bureaucrat and a very senior civil servant, has surprised us all by his exposition. It is good to be self-evaluative at times and to be reflective of one's shortcomings.

In the current policies of the government, special stress, at least in paper, is given on private enterprise. In practice, however, the growth in the private sector continues to be impeded by bureaucratic intransigence. On this, Mr Alam has been surprisingly blunt when he observes — "many bureaucrats instead of being helpful, generally handicap the growth of the private enterprise in the country".

I would congratulate Mr Shamsul Alam for such admissions which though would be unpalatable to many of his colleagues in the government, remain to be considered as a whole truth. But I am taken aback a little when he tells us elsewhere that "the bureaucrats are not alone responsible in our country for their 'bureaucratic' attitude". He finds the "attitude of the people as an equally 'contributory factor'". Arguing on this point Mr Alam

holds our people asking "everything from the government, and free". And that is how he sees "the bureaucrats assume greater responsibility and guardianship of the administration, economy and the country".

If they (the bureaucrats) "assume greater responsibility" how then they should be incapable of fulfilling that "greater responsibility". Mr Alam could not escape the element of contradiction when he portrays our bureaucracy as "terribly inefficient in negative role". Actually this "negative role" being perpetually played by the majority of the bureaucrats has been the main stumbling block in the progress and upward mobility of our economic development.

Thanks to Mr Alam and notwithstanding the contradictions for having realised that "whatever economic development the people are attaining in our country is not that much because of the bureaucrats, but it is so much inspite of them". So, it is pointless to blame the people or to make a wholesale castigation against the bureaucratic system of administration. Rather there should be an honest realisation of how best we can reorganise ourselves in the light of the UNDP report on administrative reforms handed down to the government recently. Concurrently, let us work relentlessly for the desired transparency.

Kazi Alauddin Ahmed Shantinagar, Dhaka

To the Editor...

Code of conduct for Ministers

Sir, It is often alleged and is a matter of common knowledge that ministers frequently interfere in the affairs of other ministries in cases of posting, promotion, appointment etc. As a result, it becomes difficult for the officials to act fairly and impartially. Again, officials indulging in this type of irregularities cannot be brought to book because they would quote ministers for their actions. Allegedly postings/transfers of the Ministry of Establishment are often made not on the basis of set policy or guideline but upon overt or covert influence of ministers. Sanctioning contracts, permits, licences etc of different Ministries, Departments, Directorates and Corporations are also said to be influenced not only by concerned ministers but by ministers not officially related to the job.

When late president Ziaur Rahman came to know about this type of situation, he issued a circular laying down a code of conduct to be followed by minis-

ters. That circular debarred ministers from interfering into the affairs of other ministries and departments. It worked quite well during his time. The need for such a code of conduct seems to have become essential these days too. I therefore request the Honourable Prime Minister to kindly follow the footsteps of her lamented husband in this regard and allow the administration overcome hindrances, if any, to act fairly and impartially. Our Parliament has also a responsibility in this regard.

Zahidi Ahmed Jafr Fulbari, Sylhet

In praise of Kamblis

Sir, Through your esteemed daily, I would like to congratulate the Indian batting maestro, Vinod Kamblis on his 4th century in five Tests.

all, Sir Don Bradman and Wally Hammond were the only two batsmen in the entire history of Test cricket who had managed to score two consecutive double centuries. Earlier this year, Kamblis enrolled his name into this hall of fame by scoring 224 against England and 227 against Zimbabwe. In the just ended series between Sri Lanka and India, Kamblis scored a century in the final two Tests.

The first Test was washed out by rain; otherwise, Kamblis would have had the opportunity to make it five consecutive centuries. The retirements of the great batting maestros, Sunil Gavaskar and Viv Richards have been replaced by their successors, Sachin Tendulkar and Brian Lara respectively. But Kamblis is the successor to neither.

His batting potency has made him a mixture of Don Bradman, George Headley and Garfield Sobers — three of the best batsmen ever produced. There was once a saying, "The sun never sets in the British

empire." This may be true for India. Sunny Gavaskar has set, but Vinny (Vinod) Kamblis has risen.

Kamblis now has only one more record in front of him to level or break. Clyde Leopold Walcott, one of the three Ws of the West Indies holds the world record for scoring the maximum number of consecutive centuries in Tests. He scored five centuries in four consecutive Tests in 1954 (a. 124, 51 vs. Eng; b. 50, 116 vs. Eng; c. 108, 39 vs. Aus and d. 126, 110 vs. Aus).

If we omit the first Test at Kandi, as it was totally destroyed by rain, Kamblis now only has to score a century in his next Test to be the first person to level with Walcott and enroll his name in another hall of fame. The way Kamblis has started, I think that he will be able to join the ranks of the great Walcott. Late us wait and see.

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