

No Summary Trial

Our sense of indebtedness to Dr. Milon whose martyrdom hastened the end of a desperately clinging autocracy is made doubly poignant because we have failed to punish his killers. The murder case instituted in this behalf drew a blank with justice wailing in the wilderness as the perpetrator could hide his face behind the smokescreen of the applied law and its variegated loopholes.

In the application of the criminal law, the Evidence Act and the considerations ancillary thereto are so demanding to prove an offence beyond any reasonable doubt that there could be and often are technical escapes from the law's net.

From this point of view, we are in full agreement with the Prime Minister when she says that there ought to be a reopening of and retrial on Dr Milon's murder following a scooping reinvestigation into the whole episode. All of this should not only be feasible but also desirable specially because a precedent need to be firmly set in the knowledge that many a perpetrator of murders on the campus and elsewhere has slipped through the figures of law as applied.

But the Prime Minister's talk of a new stringent law for summary trial of killers reflects a point of view that is bound to be judged against a somewhat critical criterion. Promulgation of special laws and having a provision for summary trial connote measures that are taken under extraordinary circumstances. Only the other day, the State Minister for Law and Justice Abdul Matin Khasru made it public and plain that even the trial of Bangabandhu's murderers will be held in the ordinary court under the existing law of the land.

We ask, of what practical value the anti-terrorism law had been during the BNP rule? For justified reasons, the Awami League had criticised it and as most people know that many arrests made under that act could not be defended in court of law. The existing corpus of laws, we believe, is enough to bring the killers to justice. Those who keep out of the reach of law can do so because of some operational weaknesses in the system. Let us, by all means, strengthen the police, the CID and the magistracy but to think of promulgating any special law solely for the purpose of censuring a summary trial sounds like an exercise in superfluity and creation of an avoidable controversy. Rather than inviting the criticism the AL had levelled against the BNP, the ruling party must see to it that the system works better.

Look Before You Leap

It evoked no ready response of commendation to know from yesterday's issue of The Daily Star that the Dhaka City Corporation is mulling over a truck terminal at the cost of a natural canal at Rayerbazaar.

The canal has been serving as a vital secondary connection between two rivers — the Turag and the Buriganga via Mohammadpur and Rayerbazaar. The ten mile long waterway, apart from its navigational utility for bringing merchandise to the capital, is also considered as a source for irrigation water and pisciculture.

Perhaps, the biggest utilitarian favour it has come to do Dhaka is its positive contribution in the drainage system. Waterlogging has been a chronic problem with Dhaka for quite some time and no quarter has been reported to have contended the fact that disappearance of city's waterways has contributed significantly to the present stifling situation. No doubt, the filling up of the Kaittar Boro Khaal (canal) will add to the huge problem the DCC already has on its hands.

The rationale behind the choice of the site for a truck terminal deserves to be debated for another very valid reason. The terminal has been planned to be near the proposed mausoleum for the martyred intellectuals. One does not have to be a visionary to imagine the host of evils a truck terminal will bring along. Needless to say that they will considerably vitiate the atmosphere normally deemed as ideal for a hallowed place.

The fact that the DCC is left with quite a few options for fixing a truck resting place makes the thought all the more despicable.

Although there is still a cloud of uncertainty looming over the whole idea, the DCC would be ill advised to pursue in the feared direction any further.

Savoury Revelation

Food Ministry's disclosure of self-sufficiency in food for the year comes as a welcome relief in the serenade of our poverty and the subsequent dependence on other countries.

The news that Bangladesh would not be required to import rice this year to feed its hungry millions means a very encouraging emergence of an option regarding the use of foreign currency. The huge amount of money saved can be diverted to other developmental activities.

For a party almost eloquent about giving agriculture top priority, the projection about silos being sufficiently filled is indeed a savoury intimation for the Awami League government.

Particularly, it should form a very rewarding and heart-warming commentary on the sincerity and untiring efforts of Motia Chowdhury, the Food Minister herself.

The Food Ministry would do well to strike a balance between procurement and off-take of cereals to keep their prices within the purchasing power of common consumers. Furthermore, we ought to ensure that the farmers get remunerative price for their produce.

Politics is Manageable, not Ethics

The BJP's new hobby-horse is corruption. But how can anyone take it seriously when BJP chief L K Advani has been charged in a scam? Integrity of many other BJP leaders is also doubtful. By throwing stones at the Congress and the Janata Dal leaders, it cannot hide the fact that it itself lives in a glass house.

government. Three Congress is conscious of the possibility of a mid-term poll if it pushes the Deve Gowda government to the wall. It has felt exasperated as times.

Kesari, who has picked up former finance minister Manmohan Singh as the party's mascot, expects to divert attention from the Congress party's corruption to the Deve Gowda government's failure to improve the economy. But Kesari's difficulty is that Congress no longer has a sense of purpose strong enough to bind it together despite its divisions. The organisation and the parliamentary party are at odds, whatever the denials. That is not a good prognosis to face fresh polls. In fact, some stalwarts in Congress would like to have a coalition with the United Front government if it is possible despite the communists' opposition.

A Janata Dal-Congress coalition is a red rag to the Bharatiya Janata Party because it forecloses options for new

elections. If ever the party thinks of coming to power at the Centre, it is because it believes that new combinations can emerge only after fresh elections. Without a mid-term poll, it sees no chance till 2001.

Even otherwise, the party is downcast. It feels it has hit a plateau. It may still scale a few

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The communists can stem the tide. But most of their energy is wasted over how to keep the different UFs in tandem. The communists can expand their base in some areas.

But they are stumped over by the regional and other parties they have cobbled together in the shape of United Front. Still more formidable is their task in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar where left wing extremists have sullied ideology by violence.

The People's War Group (PWG) is on a warpath. What advice do they give Hyderabad or the centre to deal with such incidents? However, the communists cannot run away from the fact that socio-economic situation prevalent in most parts of the country cannot but provoke insurgency.

You can manage politics, not ethics.

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