

Sony's killing further exposes the dark side of student politics

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WITH the tragic death of Sabequn Nahar Sony, a 2nd level 2nd term student of Chemical Engineering department BUET in a shoot-out between two rival factions of the JCD over campus occupation for tender winning bid and consequently capturing a high booty from the contractors in some big construction works at BUET, the nation came to further realise the dark side of student politics. The sordid drama ensued when a rival party leader Tagar of Dhaka University came to BUET with his armed cadres to prove his group's supremacy as the bidding of Taka 1 (one) crore project for construction of teachers' housing complex was on progress.

While we condole the tragic death of a brilliant student, especially a female student totally uninvolved in the dirty politics of student factions, and sympathise with the bereaved family, we can only ponder over the consequences of unbridled rise of criminal groups in different campuses in the country as a result of total indifference of the administration to such gangsterism proliferating with the patronage of political godfathers. Reports published in different newspapers indicate that at least 12 big wigs belonging to the ruling party including one prominent parliamentarian in Dhaka have been directly patronising such criminal activities with total impunity. People are not unfamiliar with such gangsterism in the campuses of the universities and colleges in the country yet the present one in the context of its macabre design and devilishness far exceeds the previous ones. The irony of the whole situation is that we have clowns masquerading as leaders. The fact that all these culprits have political connections is all the more sickening. The spurt in violence on June 8 last that resulted in the killing of Sony in the BUET campus, hitherto known to be relatively peaceful one in the country, has sent shivers down the spines of even those inured to such dastardly incidents.

Let us not forget how quickly yesterday's mastans and some fake student leaders become today's political leaders. To declare a ban on student politics has been a battle cry of the whole nation since long. Some populist leaders have kept themselves in the national eye with

their mixture of bluff and bluster. BNP leaders' assurances after election victory raised hopes that there was a different kind of leadership ready to take on the terrorists and crackdown on the trouble mongers wherever they might be. But that only exposed their U-turn, saying one thing and doing another.

People who voted the present ruling party to power are coming down hard on the P.M. demanding that those at the helm of affairs put their action to words. After Sony's killing, the tormented family as well as the nation has waited for days to see that these killers are arrested. The administration's responsibility is not merely to dispense justice but to dispense it swiftly, delaying justice is an injustice itself. The

party image and only if the Prime Minister decides to make his government start working could she restore the party's sullied image. As death stalks every innocent citizen, whose only craving is the development of the country, such nefarious and dastardly killing allows the present ruling party a moment of reckoning. People ask the government to choose between the criminals and them.

In the worst of times, precisely in the backdrop of a stark national context, draconian laws are framed. But when it comes to implementation, precious little is done. On June 8 last people in the country, saw in stunned disbelief the most audacious act of terrorism ever committed. Although the police station was

deals that was trapped by the DB men for a big construction work in Dhaka College? This is just to drive home the message that in our country Tagars and his ilk and law enforcers are the real gods. Is it that the highest administration in the country is incapable of taking action against officials who are so openly insubordinate? The PM must have surely noticed that there is a general disenchantment with the government's inability to do anything that goes beyond the motions of governance.

Coming back to student politics, it was patriotism, ideology and dedication that were the guiding spirit and driving force of student politics during Swadeshi movement in the early 30s till our liberation war.

and mastans have sown the seeds of a new brand of politics that uses terror and corruption to consolidate power. Without exception, colleges and universities in the country also have turned into dens of criminals. Precisely speaking, student politics these days means getting involved in *tenderbazi*, toll collection, drug peddling, gun toting and killing one another. Tagar and Muki are the by-products of such tainted politics backed by influential godfathers mostly and always belonging to the ruling party.

Lamentably, these gangsters have infiltrated into the campuses and often let loose a reign of terror, corrupt the impressionable students and destroy the peaceful academic

for the other, a nexus that has been traditionally lucrative. Every time a criminal hits the front pages, the politician-godfather runs for cover. It would be interesting to see what happens to Tagar-Muki-godfather case, the latest example of a politician consorting with his criminal gangs.

Only a handful of students, these days, are involved in student politics. The sensible citizenry in the country, Education Reform Commission and most teachers favour banning or at least suspending student politics for some years to put a lid on such ominous turn. As it turns out now, unless efforts are taken to de-link student politics from national politics, there is hardly any hope on the horizon. When these evil guys will see that there is hardly any one that much powerful to back them and rescue them, they won't indulge in such dare-devil activities. At the same time, the state must create avenues of employment as well as career opportunities for those coming out of the university with degrees. Cold blooded murder, raping and extortion spree have become the most defining and destabilising force in the lives of people at large in the country. Sony's killing on June 8 last in the BUET campus regardless of the fact whether she was a target or not is a pathetic reminder that some evil forces out there are determined to strike at the heart of educational institutions that were running almost smoothly in the face of serious odds. The government at this time can't afford to relax.

atmosphere of the institutions. But they remain away from the clutches of law as they enjoy blessings and protection from their mentors in the political circle. The situation has come to such a pass that every Bangladeshi feels outraged, shamed and sickened by the manner in which successive governments in the country have handled this monstrous problem. In fact godfather politics is a reflection of what is wrong in Bangladesh crime situation and police administration.

What does it tell us about the system of governance? The fact is: when it comes to killers, hijackers and terrorists, the police administration falls instantly to its knees. It also reminds us that there is something seriously wrong with the police investigation which in most cases appear to be shoddy. There has been, we are told, a special "Rapid Action Force" to nab these hardened criminals. What are they doing? As newspaper reports reveal, criminals elude arrest, make a safe journey over the borders and then come back and live in posh houses, with all the comforts and pleasures but our law enforcers can't catch them. The fact reportedly is, in Bangladesh criminal-police-godfather have always been good friends. Each has a use

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result of such criminal neglect is horrific. The ruling party's much vaunted election pledges have boomeranged badly, robbing the party of its credibility with the people. The situation has come to such a pass that if the P.M. does not quickly get back to governing the country we could find ourselves ruled by thugs instead of the democratically elected government. There are disturbing signs that this is already beginning to happen. Shockingly, backed by some tainted party leaders a group of criminals and armed cadres in the student wing of JCD now ravaged the peaceful atmosphere of BUET campus. Ironically, they operate in such a funny circle that yesterday many of them had their affiliations with the BCL but to-day they belong to JCD. They just change their colours to suit convenience.

Most shockingly, with violence surging up, extortion spree going unabated and the economy in bad shape, stalwarts in the administration remain silent. Is it that the massive election victory has caused their leadership quality to atrophy instead of radiating the guiding spirit that the people demanded and craved for so much.

Having student wing of the party far from being an asset is destroying

only yards away from the scene, terrorists had no difficulty to make good their escape. Top criminals like Kala Jahanqir, Freedom Sohail, Joy Hares, Prakash, Jabbar Munna, Killer Abbas, Mollah Masud, Subrata Bain, Helal and Picchi Helal, Liakat and Aga Shamim all known accused in dozens of cases like killing, looting and extortion have been escaping arrest even when, it is reported that, many of them are staying inside the country. Many of these criminals, it is allegedly reported, are hand in glove with the law enforcers. Although we have lived with such terrorism and mayhem for the past one decade, these are frightening now that we know the scale of terror these criminals are capable of unleashing with the most sophisticated arms in their possession.

As it turns out, crime today is a low risk, high returns business. With more than 90 percent chance that one will not be convicted, it's no wonder that youngsters don't think twice before committing a crime. Despite the PM's stern warning, criminals are operating with greater ferocity and vengeance. Otherwise, how come the identified killer Tagar in BUET shoot out incident returns to Dhaka after staying in Calcutta for some days and enters into fresh

When calamity befell the nation at least thrice since 1947, our student community fought the tyrannical rule of the Pakistani government as well as Ershad regime with heroism, sacrifice and devotion. But during most part of post liberation days, patronised by a section of disgruntled political leaders who initiated a process of cadre recruitment to serve their own petty interests often in disregard of national interest, these armed youth in their lust for money and pleasures have been playing havoc with the lives of peace loving citizens. Shockingly true, Bangladesh has now become a cauldron than a country. The brew bubbling there has burst into a catastrophe that would make all other nation building programmes tame. The warning bells aren't just ringing but they are booming the message throughout the country. Every one can hear these bells except our leaders. How loud must these warnings be?

Student organisations these days in the country that are mere extensions of the political parties are busy collecting money from any source possible instead of concentrating on issues related to student welfare. Using the signboard of different political parties, these armed cadres or rather hooligans

Indo-Pak tensions: SAARC marginalised further

DR MUNIM KUMAR BARAI

THE war cloud that was looming large in the South Asian sky for quite some time has partially evaporated. India has announced a number of measures to de-escalate tensions on the border. It has called its navy back to ports, lifted the ban on Pakistani commercial flights to fly over its sky, demobilised some of its troops from the border other than those stationed in Jammu and Kashmir, and has agreed to send back its diplomats to Islamabad. These it has done in return of an assurance carried from Islamabad that Pakistan would stop cross border terrorism, by none other than the US Under Secretary of State, Richard Armitage.

The easing of tension has brought a big sigh of relief to the people of near and far. A full scale war between the two long time (now nuclear) rivals could spell a doom in the whole region. But the latest development also highlights a striking fact. While the external powers exerted an enormous

pressure on both sides to defuse tensions, the regional political forces or regional diplomacy could do nothing to persuade them to cool down. Though Bangladesh tried to be a go between, the effort was rebuffed by India. Nepal, the present Chair of SAARC, is beset with a blood letting internal political and

subcontinent. The dangerous escalation of tension began after the daring terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in December. The tension reached the peak after the deadly attack on an Indian army barrack in Jammu and Kashmir in May. On both occasions, India blamed Pakistan for orchestrating

the world. This has dangerous long run implications for the western powers including Russia.

Third, this is a time when the terrains in Kashmir become sloth and sloppy because of the rain and melting of upper peaks' snow. The Indian forces have learnt the difficulties of fighting a war during the

SAARC would ultimately be able to foster a closer economic and political bond among the member countries. On that premise, the body was thought to be acting as a deterrent to inter-state tensions in the region.

Unfortunately, SAARC could never make any significant head-

time has changed. The success or failure of any present regional and international set-up cannot and should not be compared with any one that came up in the mid or late twentieth century. The unipolarity of the world has lessened the weight and utility of smaller states both as economic and geographic entities in the international power play. Strong regional bodies can play an important role in checking further marginalisation of the smaller states. There remains the relevance of SAARC as well.

The wakening of SAARC is bound to lead to a strong bilateralism in the region. Most of the smaller states are to stand losers in that scenario. Their bargaining leverage could then become subject to pressure from big neighbours. Moreover, the effects of Indo-Pak conflict would no longer remain confined to them. Other countries in the region have to convey the message strongly that the Indo-Pak bilateral bad breath is affecting the entire region economically and politically. They should urge the Indo-Pak leadership that they like to progress and prosper individually and regionally. A strong SAARC can foster the process. Thus SAARC's future should not be made hostage to the Indo-Pak relations.

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social strife. So no initiative through the SAARC apparatus took off. In the net analysis, the stand off has actually marginalised SAARC further as a body of regional cooperation.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States and the subsequent war on terror in Afghanistan, the Indo-Pak stand off was breathing hot on the necks of people in the

attacks and as usual Pakistan denied the allegations.

But this time the two attacks apparently hardened India's resolve to go for a military solution of the insurgency problem. It marched more than half of its military might to its border with Pakistan. Pakistan was, on the other hand, constrained by its commitment of forces in the western border to search the Al-Qaida and Taliban fighters who fled to its territory after their rout in Afghanistan. However, at the height of the tension, on the two sides of the border a million men stood ready eyeball to eyeball. The most dangerous part of a possible war between India and Pakistan is that it could go nuclear. The fall out of such a nuclear war is unthinkable.

Though the possibility of a full scale war between India and Pakistan was there this time, there were some constraints as well:

First, a huge US operation is going on inside Pakistan against the Al Qaida (and the Taliban) with hundreds of American troops involved. Though they are concentrating their operations in the Pakistan territory bordering Afghanistan, they have spread the net throughout Pakistan. Now most of the Pakistani airports are under the direct or indirect control of the American forces. In a war between India and Pakistan, the US forces involved in the ground operations could also become the victims. Can the US accept such casualties? The simple answer is no.

Second, US cannot stop its less hyped war on terror it is now pursuing in Pakistan due to the conflict of its "two friends." It likes to continue the operations against the remnants of Al Qaida. A full-blown war between the rivals would surely give the Al Qaida a breather to escape the US dragnet and spread all over

Kargil crisis in June -July 1999. The border in Gujarat and Rajasthan has the problem of heat and rain that could also hamper the operational capabilities of the forces at war. The analysis of past wars shows that they took place between autumn and the onset of winter.

Finally, the nuclearisation of both the countries has a deterrent effect even on the conventional war. Because that any time could go nuclear once the red bottom level is crossed by a winning side. This is unacceptable to the world community at large.

So this time though both sides played rhetoric directed to the domestic and global audiences quite well, the factors mentioned were not in favour a full scale war at least for the moment. Of course a limited surgical strike on the insurgents' base in Pakistan held Kashmir was on the Indian card. But that too was constrained by the perceived Pakistani response.

Because of the ground realities, the western powers, particularly the US, put the heaviest pressure to avoid a war. It sent its Deputy Secretary of State and then its Defense Secretary to New Delhi and Islamabad. The British Foreign Secretary was the first to visit both the capitals to dissuade them not to go for a war. The Russians also played their part behind the screen. It was impossible for India and Pakistan not to bow down to the combined western pressure. At the end it seemed that both were looking for a face saving formula for the deescalation.

Crisis in this region is not new, particularly between India and Pakistan. But aversion of regional conflict was also an objective that the regional initiative SAARC was intended to attain. Through its creation, it was expected that

way with the economic and political issues. It is true the SAARC Charter does not give bilateral political issues to be dealt on the forum's floor. In the past we saw the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh visiting India and Pakistan to bring the leadership to start a dialogue soon after they both detonated the nuclear devices in 1998. It proved to be a futile effort. The last Kathmandu Summit of SAARC is yet to be forgotten. It was held after a long delay from the schedule. Though gestures of friendship were shown on the floor of the Summit, it translated into nothing.

The war cry between the two members of SAARC has once again shown the limitations of SAARC as a regional body. Though the statement may sound harsh, the crisis this time may have actually marginalised the organization further. Due to the tensions, the estrangement between the two countries has further widened. India seems to be maintaining a certain level of war preparedness in the border for a longer time. This could ignite further tension in the future. The lingering of tension is likely to affect the functioning of ongoing various programmes of SAARC. It is expected to have a cooling effect on SAPTA's fourth round of talks as well. As a consequence of the crisis, bilateralism is likely to be entrenched further in this region. This could act as a detriment to the spirit of SAARC.

Many argue that other regional bodies now seen to be operating effectively have come to the stage after a long time of their existence. They say SAARC is only seventeen years old. So nothing spectacular could be expected from it considering the acrimonious past and present relationship of the member states. True, but it is also true that



All health information to keep you up to date

Signs of some cancers

The most commonly occurring cancers are breast cancer (women) and prostate cancer (men), even though lung cancer is the cancer that causes the most death. The types of cancer vary from country to country. For example, in Australia the most commonly occurring cancer is the non-malignant skin cancer or in case of Japan 'stomach cancer' is not uncommon. Conventional means for treating cancer are surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. But research is continually being undertaken to search for more successful ways of dealing with this disease.

Cancer prevention and early warning signs: Early warning should not be ignored. These are --

- ☞ Change in bowel or bladder habits
- ☞ Unusual bleeding or discharge
- ☞ A sore throat, which does not heal
- ☞ Lump in the breast or elsewhere
- ☞ Indigestion or finding difficulty in swallowing
- ☞ Noticeable change in a wart or mole
- ☞ Irritating persistent cough or hoarseness

There are several things people can do to reduce the risk of cancer. These are:

- ☞ Do not smoke
- ☞ Drink arsenic-free safe water
- ☞ Eat a healthy diet
- ☞ Be aware of safety rules where exposure to chemicals, radiation and other hazards increase risk

Did you know! In 1893 when US president Grover Cleveland struck with cancer, doctors feared cancer is an alien invader.

Next: Men's health after 50