

Stop Turag encroachers Admin must swing into action

THE grabbers have become desperate in their ravenous greed to take hold of as much of the land as possible from the different rivers surrounding the capital city. It has again become glaringly evident from the way they have given a damn about the High Court (HC) verdict of June 24 last as well as government warnings to that effect against encroachments on the rivers surrounding the capital city.

To all appearances, during the last three and half months since the HC order was issued, nothing of substance has been done by the executive branch of the government to act and stop the grabbers from continuing with their wicked activities. Otherwise where does these grabbers get the audacity to defy HC and the government? The land grabbers, whoever they may be, are certainly not from another planet so that they do not understand the message of court or government orders!

If truth be told, it is not for the first time that the land grabbers are at work to eat up a river, in the present case, the Turag. All quarters are fully aware of how some vested quarters are out to gobble up government lands everywhere. During the successive governments in the past as well as after the incumbent one took office, a number of operations were launched to free the Buriganga river from the grip of encroachers. Oddly enough, in every case it was observed that as soon as the magistrates and the members of the law-enforcing agency left the scene, the grabbers would return and start carrying on with their business as usual.

In fact, the government's apparent lack of action to discipline the vested quarters in question has only emboldened them further to go on with their grabbing spree. Unfortunately, such a situation has forced the well-meaning ones to bring the case to court for the second time to issue rule on the government so that it may swing into action to discipline the Turag grabbers.

This is an unacceptable situation. It is time for the government to put its foot down and bring those behind encroachment of Turag and other rivers to justice.

Commandeering land in Sitakunda

Those who have done it must be penalized

IT makes disconcerting reading because the incident militates against values and the social principles we have always held dear. News reports relating to what the son of a ruling party lawmaker has been doing in Sitakunda --- he and his associates have simply laid claim to land belonging to four ship-breaking yards along the coast --- are once more proof of the impunity with which the powerful disregard the law. As if recent reports of intimidation and grabbing of property in various parts of the country were not enough, this latest incident of a commandeering of land can only push us again into asking questions neither we nor anyone else can be comfortable with. Suffice it to say for now that what the lawmaker's child has done is a clear and unabashed violation of not only the law but of moral principles as well.

The young man and his goons have only compounded matters for themselves. They have even assaulted newsmen who, as part of their professional duties, tried to unearth the truth behind their act. One was beaten up, while the other had his camera snatched away. Now, such behaviour certainly reflects badly on the one indulging in it. But when it is an individual or a group of individuals who, taking advantage of their links with an influential politician, try give short shrift to the law, it is a whole society which is threatened with disorder, perhaps even anarchy. We have written earlier, and especially since the present government took over in January this year, of the need for the ruling Awami League leadership to rein in its followers and others engaged in deriving advantages through being close to it or working in its 'protective' shade. From time to time, we have heard of the prime minister and her cabinet colleagues sounding notes of warning to the more raucous ones among their camp followers. Despite all such warnings, sometimes exhortations, not much seems to have worked. And it is not just the younger elements in or around the ruling party who have been giving everyone a headache. It now appears that there are MPs and their families who have not stayed far behind those others in casting their disturbing shadows on life.

In the Sitakunda affair, claims and counter-claims have been made about who owns the land in question. That is beside the point. What clearly has happened is an attempt on the part of an individual to grab property not his. Which is why the law must come in. Those who have committed the misdeed must face the full force of the law. There can be no alternative here.

EDITORIAL

The Daily Star

Whither security of the people?

All that the teeming millions would ask of this elected government and any future elected government is that the government and the concerned government agencies stand by them and extend a helping hand in protecting their lives and properties and the honour of their women, and ensuring that the wrong doers are brought to justice.

SHAMSUDDIN AHMED

THIS government seems to be more focused on providing security to the political elites who are otherwise fortunate and powerful enough in this country to take care of their security, both physical and financial. The common people, who are not so fortunate enough and who voted this government and all previous political governments into power, have been left totally uncared for.

No, I do not mean that the state should provide people with housing and transportation facilities and protection by security forces, either free or on payment. Neither would the poor people of this country demand it. All that the teeming millions would ask of this elected government and any future elected government is that the government and the concerned government agencies stand by them and extend a helping hand in protecting their lives and properties and the honour of their women, and ensuring that the wrong doers are brought to justice.

Take the case of health care of the people. Dozens of babies have died recently just because they took spurious drugs produced and marketed by pharmaceutical companies with or without license from the government. Unfortunately, these are the babies of ordinary people, who are not fortunate enough to travel abroad for medical treatment or to buy imported drugs, which only the fortunate few elitist people can afford. We have a ministry of health and a watchdog outfit called health administration to ensure quality control of drugs in the market.

No punitive action has been taken

against anyone whose duty it was to check and control the quality of drugs being sold in the market. Supposing the babies who died before they could blossom into full-grown men and women had been the children of our ministers and lawmakers, would not the government have moved heaven and earth on this issue? Would not the minister of health have been sacked? Nothing of this sort has happened because it concerns the health of the common people of this country.

A much-prized possession of a girl or a young woman is her chastity. It leaves a girl virtually dead and traumatised, and her family devastated, when she is raped. In our society, a girl or a woman raped by criminals is looked down upon and condemned as an object of shame and pity, while rapists move about freely. In a country where Islam is the religion of the overwhelming majority of the people, it is a pity that women are being raped and degraded on a scale never seen before. Thanks to the revolutionary advancement in the media, we now get to know all that is happening around us and even in the remote countryside.

There is hardly a day when rape is not committed in this country. But not a single voice has been raised in the parliament condemning rape and rapists. Why this is so is not difficult to understand. It is because the victims of rape belong to families of poor people, the working class. It is also because the rapists happen to have a political tag attached to them, the tag being that of an activist of the ruling political party.

No wonder the police and the local administration behave as if they see no



Helpless against criminals.

evil, hear no evil and speak no evil. But they most certainly do evil as they, in fealty to the local political masters, do not go out to help the victims of rape and their families get justice. In most of the rape cases recently reported in the media the local police were said to be harassing the families of rape victims instead of trying to nab the criminals and bringing them to justice.

Emboldened by the partisan and loyalist attitude of the local police, these political thugs have not only raped the poor girls but have also made video films of their sinful acts with the help of mobile phone. Leave aside public lashing of the rapists, not a single rapist has been arrested by the police and put on trial. Ah! In one bizarre case of gang rape, the local AL leaders punished the rapists in vigilante style.

As the story goes, as many as 16 local activists of the ruling party in Kalapara (DS front page of October 6) abducted a class VII school girl, raped her one by one and then left her, which created a sensation because on that day the local MP and state minister for water resources was present in Kalapara. Two days later, the

local AL leaders sought to settle the matter through arbitration. They fined the rapists Tk 10,000 each and beat them up. Tk 1,60,000 realised as fine was handed over to the parents of the victim. The police looked on as spectators as the arbitration was going on.

The family of the victim, including the victim herself, is under constant vigilance by the rapists. Later on, the deputy commissioner and the superintendent of police of Patuakhali visited Kalapara and quoted the victim as saying that she was not raped. The DC and the SP did not feel the necessity of having the girl medically tested to ascertain whether the girl was telling the truth. The matter ended there.

The government and the local administration failed to provide security to the poor family of this victim of rape in the first instance. Now they have also denied the family justice for the wrongs suffered. Who will these poor people of this country turn to for security and justice?

Brig. Gen. Shamsuddin Ahmed is a former Military Secretary to the President.

Gypsy time is set to move

Although it is said that "we no more know our own destiny than a tea leaf knows the destiny of the East India Company," we at least know about the emergence of a few power centres in the Southern Hemisphere. They are well poised now to receive gypsy time, which is readying its caravan to move.

Z.A. KHAN

Time you old gypsy man will you not stay
Put up your caravan just for one day.

THIS was and is the ardent desire of all the men and women of the world. All of us want that time should be our captive for at least one more moment if not for one day. Time is a treasure chest or wonder lamp, whoever has it on his side rules the roost (previously seven seas). A visit down memory lane would reveal that time began its journey from Judea (Egypt) and kept moving to Babylon to Assyria to Sumar Akkad to Greece to Rome to France to Britain, and has now stopped in the US for a while in relation to ages that it had journeyed and the endless journey that lay ahead of it.

Every occasion that the gypsy, time, was ready to depart for the next destination, everybody offered everything available in the places that it left to implore or entice or cajole it to stay just for one day. Cruel time did not oblige. It demands loads of happenings to break its journey. It stopped at places that promised a beginning of a happening called civilisation. It witnessed the development and destruction of many civilisations, and is now helping Digitalised Civilisation to take root. Who will provide the cradle for Digitalised Civilisation to grow?

The ingredients for development of civilisation are harmony, hyper-activism, honesty and holding fast to commitments. In this process, one should not lose sight of ethical and social values that chastise corruption (moral, political or economical) prone homosapiens. The outlook for development should not be locked within its own realm, it should rather go beyond boundaries so that it benefits one and all and wears the look of universality.

Any vile effort to subvert the pledge made in various declarations to globalise civilisation will jeopardise philosophical globalisation. Currently, environmental insecurity poses a major threat to the development of an international charter that will be able to check unbridled emission of pollutants (CFC or CO2), deforestation, topsoil erosion and other kinds of biodegradation. Developed nations are the major violators of whatever restrictions that the concerned world bodies have been able to impose to guard against violation of their charter. A number of summits were held, assurances were obtained from major stakeholders, yet violations are continuing unabated.

Time releases its bounty till such time as

it is utilised for the cause of one and all that inhabit Mother Earth. The physical texture of the world has gone through many ramifications (both natural and artificial) over the millennia, but its nature of endowing has not transformed. Mundaka Upanishad contains the true character of the earth when it maintains;

Two birds.
Inseparable companions
Perch on the same tree.
One eats fruit

The first bird is comparable with mankind, which feeds on the pleasures and pains of our world; the other is time, which silently witnesses all, showing enormous endurance to enable us to make hay while the sun shines. We, the homo-sapiens have been committing excesses to feed our insatiable greed for food, wealth and power, often at the cost of millions of our neighbours. Who then should be blamed?

To my understanding, it is, as of now, the Western Alliance. They must know that time will finally let loose its resolve to move fast if they continue to "see the food supplies, fossil fuels and other common resources collapse even once, let alone a hundred times" because of their excessive use for commercial gains. Many conferences were held where emphatic declarations were made to cut back on the consumption of all resources.

It seems to me that their ego is prompting them to resist the changes that the world needs. This is an exploitative mode of consciousness, which must not be pursued as these natives are standing at the verge of receiving the wrath of time, which may move to a new destination. Although it is said that "we no more know our own destiny than a tea leaf knows the destiny of the East India Company," we at least know about the emergence of a few power centres in the Southern Hemisphere. They are well poised now to receive gypsy time, which is readying its caravan to move.

China, Japan and India are individually competing to hit the top spot, which does not seem to augur well for time to volunteer its surrender to any of them. The West formed a syndicate (in business parlance) to put up a formidable front by constructing an economic plan or military blue print that no country outside of the alliance could drive a wedge to share the boons of time.

Since the West is getting divided on economic and environmental issues and approach towards emerging power centres, it may find the task of keeping its unity



Time changes all.

monumental. On the other hand, the emerging power centres of the Southern Hemisphere might find it an uphill task to confront the West, the villain of earth's desecration and elusive time's chief detractor, unless it is ready to think "I and all things in the universe are one."

Emerging nations are competing to gain ascendancy, but this may not be an achievement in the consideration of time and space. The reason behind this formulation is that achievement will not be long lasting unless backed by the neighbouring countries who have supporting goods and services. So the countries of the Southern Hemisphere should feel that they are one at the core, and united to confront the West whose power seems to be fading.

So the emerging nations should promote building up on the anomalies until a point is reached where the West's exploitative character is no longer tenable and begins to lose its status and strength. The South's identity must be tuned to oneness to take advantage of each other's bounty and avoid what the West wants to impose. China, Japan, and India have been victims of the West's

unabated exploitation, because of which development in this part of the world has been blunted. Dialogue, NAM and other forums of unity could not garner enough strength because of mutual suspicion with regard to each other's intentions. The other reason is a nation's feeling of being "at ease with themselves combined with an increasing sense of inner security and invulnerability" by dint of support it receives from so called "sponsors" or development partners.

If we want to arrest time even for a while, we must close ranks to deny exploitative support and revive our capabilities, which the West exported to its lands by hatching conspiracies and enticing betrayal by the locals who, unlike Mother Earth looked at themselves. Let us not forget that even a sheet of paper becomes lighter if it is lifted by two people. While the life of the universe is endless in time, our's is limited to our ability to chase the challenges of gypsy time so that its caravan stops, and that we can enjoy this gift of Allah.

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