

Prime Minister's warning to BCL and Jubo League

It must be followed up by purposeful action

PRIME Minister Sheikh Hasina has warned activists of the Chhatra League that any extortion and tender manipulation on their part will not be tolerated. Her sentiments are surely understandable, given that despite her earlier warnings to this effect in recent times elements of the Chhatra League as also the Jubo League have indulged in activities that leave citizens perturbed. Indeed, reports of BCL activists interfering in tender submissions and college and university admissions have now combined with allegations of harassment of people. Unfortunately, the authorities have been unwilling or unable to take any action against them. Only the other day, a Chhatra League worker humiliated a married female student of Jagannath University in full public view, with the police watching it all as mute spectators.

The bigger point here, however, is that admonition must now give way to action on the part of the government. We have said before and we say it again that if these unruly elements of the BCL are not dealt with severely, the public reaction will not necessarily be a favourable one for the ruling party. Indeed, as the prime minister herself has stated, their misdemeanours will leave the credibility and the good work done by the government dented. We therefore would like the prime minister to know that it is time she made sure the law was applied equally to all those who try to break it, irrespective of party affiliations.

Sheikh Hasina has voiced the concern that individuals who in earlier times played a part in harassing the Awami League and its front organizations have now infiltrated them. The question here is one of how they managed to do that. There are, in politics, always a large number of opportunists or turncoats ready to cause problems for those in power. Even so, if such people have indeed entered the AL and its associated bodies, one would like to know how they did so when every political party has a clearly defined system that vets individuals before they can become its members. In the case of these alleged infiltrators in the AL, it is clear the blame must lie with the party leadership.

The prime minister's assertion that the Chhatra League cannot be led by individuals who cannot be called students any more is a hint of how student politics may have become captive in the hands of what she calls 'uncles'. The statement is in itself a warning that unless such bodies as the Chhatra League are led back to the old idealism which marked their coming into existence, student politics will continue to be on a slide. And that will mean the sort of unruly behaviour citizens have seen coming from BCL activists in these past many months. One does not have to tolerate such behaviour, as the prime minister has explicitly stated, or expect that it will end through a mere sounding of warnings. Only an application of the law can have a salutary effect on such behaviour.

The malady of eve teasing

Time it's dealt with effectively

YET another death of a young girl driven to committing suicide being no longer able to withstand the agony perpetrated on her by some eve teasers. Reportedly, she and her family had been undergoing harassment for a long time, and, regrettably, all the remonstrations of the girl's mother and her calls for help had failed to bring her respite or give her the remedy. The result another young life fallen by the wayside.

Elora is but the latest victim -- who preferred an extreme step to ignominy or constant sense of insecurity -- of several such instances in recent times resulting from barbaric stalking. And although the rogues in some cases have been apprehended we are worried that such incidents continue to occur.

While it will be convenient to write this case off as just another instance of law and order issue, which in certain sense it is, but we would be remiss if we overlooked the underlying problems. There are moral and social values that are at stake here, and there is the issue of society, community or the neighbourhood intervening at some level to preempt such tragic consequences.

What surprises and pains us is to read about the mother's helpless plea to the local elders and her neighbours to do something about the matter falling on deaf ears. Not only that, the victim's family was kept from seeking police help by threats from the accused and his gang.

We are concerned because these incidents are indications of a deep-rooted malady that is eating into the very fabric of the society. We are concerned too at the apparent lack of sensitivity of the community to issues that dwell on the moral and ethical, which have to do with the standards of acceptable social behaviour. And the propensity to keep aloof from involving oneself to help resolve such a matter by standing up to the offenders is equally disturbing.

What we see happening today cannot be remedied by the application of law alone, although arrest of the offenders and quick disposal of the cases would help curb such uncivilised propensity considerably. But what is needed most is the proactive and forceful role of the society to retrieve social and moral values which have eroded over the years. There has been a colossal erosion of parental authority, and the role of the local elders in such issues has all but vanished. It is time for a collective reassertion.

Who's to blame?

Whatever might have been behind the tragedy at the Matuail Child and Mother Care Institute, the government needs to carry out a proper investigation into the case to find out the truth. If child and mother care centres, or, for that matter, hospitals, remain unsafe for children and other patients, then that should be an urgent concern for the government to address.

SYED FATTAHUL ALIM

ANY news of death hardly perturbs us, because the media is awash everyday with so many death reports on gratuitous killings by political hooligans, professional killers, muggers, homicides as a sequel to family disputes over property, deaths caused by violence against women, and so on. Add to these the victims of irresponsible drivers of cars, trucks and buses.

Desensitised though we are about news of deaths, there are still some cases where we cannot help being overcome with grief. The print and electronic media carried such reports last Friday and Saturday about the deaths (or may we use the word "murder") of a three-month-old infant and two newborns at a maternity hospital, not far from the capital but within its very heart at Matuail under Kadamtali thana.

Reports say the tragedy was enacted last Friday at the Institute of Child and Mother Health at Matuail as there was neither electricity nor oxygen to save those children. The victims' parents put the blame for their children's deaths squarely on the attending nurses and doctors. However, the hospital director has denied the reports of negligence or lack of hospital facilities and claimed that the deaths were natural.

What then is the man on the street to make of these claims by the victims' parents and relatives and the version by

the head of the maternity institute?

If the three, or, according to another report, four, children did die a natural death at a hospital on the same day, and that too in the morning, between 7 and 11 am, then that incident should merit special treatment by the media, if only for its rarity! However, if we also lend an ear to the complaints of all the victims' guardians, we cannot dismiss them out of hand because they were emotionally overcharged. It is also not possible that they all lied to the media that the hospital did not have electricity at that time and the generator, too, was not working. Worse still, the guardians' allegations about oxygen shortage or gross negligence of the attending doctors and nurses cannot be trashed as mere ranting and raving by the aggrieved parents.

It cannot be said that natural deaths in a hospital are quite unnatural. But if the chances of such deaths lose their quality of being chancy in a place where patients get admitted with the hope of surviving rather than embracing a natural death at home, then what is the use of a hospital? In the case of these victims, their parents might well have said that they would better keep their children at home and allow them to die peacefully there than take the trouble of taking them all the way to the hospital.

Here again we face the same old thought-pattern that we often come across in our politics and other spheres. It is the culture and the mindset of denial.



Is this really a hospital?

We are not ready to accept facts under any circumstances.

True, doctors are not gods so it would not be fair to hold them responsible for any death, even if that takes place under their care. The doctors have human limitations, too, and are also constrained by the conditions and realities under which they work. Granted, the doctors and nurses of Matuail hospital did not fail in the dedication to their calling. But what could they possibly have done to save those children if there was no power, or if there really was an oxygen shortage?

Acceptance of the facts would make it rather obvious to others the deplorable condition they have to discharge their

duties under. It would make the situation rather easier for all to understand, including the parents of the luckless children.

Whatever might have been behind the tragedy at the Matuail Child and Mother Care Institute, the government needs to carry out a proper investigation into the case to find out the truth. If child and mother care centres, or, for that matter, hospitals, remain unsafe for children and other patients, then that should be an urgent concern for the government to address. Otherwise, we will have to brace ourselves for more such tragedies in the future.

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Rehabilitation of the Muslim world

Despite historian Bernard Lewis's lamentation about the rage of the Muslims and Samuel Huntington's oracle of confrontation among different cultures and religions, the survival and the strengthening of politico-economic progress of mankind calls for Henry Kissinger's geopolitics, a euphemism for power politics, in the management of international relations.

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THE infamy of 9/11 that turned Islam, a religion of peace like the others, to one scorned as "Islamofascism," and forcing of the Muslim diaspora in the West to live a precarious life as second class citizens in the countries of their birth, has to be erased if the world is to become one again and not historian Niall Ferguson's fragmented spheres of gated affluence and "disposable" misery afflicted greater part of humanity.

In discussions on Islam, the very usage of the term "moderates" implies that "extremism" is the norm in Islam and has to be defeated by force. Undeniably, the illiberalism of the puritanical days of the pre-modern era that the Islamists would like to establish to envelop mankind under one culture-oriented system of governance, keeping no room for tolerance and dissent, cannot be the wish of humanity that has traversed from the Dark Ages to the Flat Earth post-modern era of today.

Despite historian Bernard Lewis's lamentation about the rage of the Muslims and Samuel Huntington's oracle of confrontation among different cultures and religions, the survival and the strengthening of politico-economic progress of mankind calls for Henry Kissinger's geopolitics, a euphemism for power politics, in the management of international relations.

Many in Bangladesh would like to try Henry Kissinger for thanking mass murderer General Yahaya Khan of Pakistan for his "delicacy and tact" during the war of liberation in 1971, as the Chileans would like to follow suit for Kissinger's planning the bloody overthrow of President Salvador Allende, for scuttling peace talks with Vietnam in 1968, persuading Richard Nixon for widening the Vietnam war with massive bombing of Cambodia and Laos, and assuring President Suharto in 1975 that the US would not recognise East Timor.

Yet, the brilliance of Kissinger lay in emulating his idol Prince Metternich in bringing an era of peace in Europe through the exercise of geopolitics. Effectively, Kissinger's realpolitik recognised the existence of various power centres that have to be treated with

respect, giving way to compromise when needed. The First World War came about not because of unstable power balance created by competing alliances but because Germany was no longer inter-

The global quest is for finding a "good society" where all can live in peace. Harvard Professor Michael Walzer disagrees that there has to be one good society given the immense variety of human cultures. Walzer would describe a good society as one that is constituted "by the peaceful coexistence of all the societies that aim at goodness...the good society can be imagined as a framework that encompasses all versions of goodness."

As the pre-eminent problem facing the international community is the unremitting violence let loose by Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, it is essential that the Islamic world be at one with the rest of

jihadism had been significantly bolstered by the Iraq war.

The recent reports in Bangladesh press about international terrorist groups using our country as a transit and training place is disturbing. More so, it is alleged that terrorists may try to disrupt the forthcoming trial of the people accused of genocide and crimes against humanity committed during our war of liberation.

While the international community, particularly the US, has fully supported the trial only one country and some miscreants are opposed to the trial. The government is fully alive to the threat and is prepared to meet it, should the need



The Muslim world must regain its place.

ested in maintaining a power balance. The Second World War came about due to the reluctance of the victorious powers in restoring the balance.

When Kissinger found that Soviet Union was not a friend but a competing power he wholeheartedly followed George Marshall, Dean Acheson and George Kennan's "containment" policy of communism as an update of traditional balance of power (Michael Howard-Foreign Affairs-May/June 1994). Kissinger, therefore, sees the US as a power in a complex world to interact with others that it can neither ignore nor dominate.

humanity in the destruction of this Frankenstein, initially created by the US and Pak intelligence agencies to oust the Soviets from Afghanistan. British columnist Nick Cohen (2007) found in Sayeed Qutb, the intellectual godfather of al-Qaeda, a love for European fascism that soon became a state ideology in Afghanistan's Taliban regime. Bush the younger's administration, peopled by neo-conservatives, goaded him into invading Iraq under a false premise, which created a chasm between two great religions and cultures. On the flip side is the US National Intelligence Estimate's suggestion that forces of

arise. The war crimes trial is a demand of the people of Bangladesh as it will remove from our national conscience a blot of deliberate machination by the beneficiaries of the brutal 1975 political changeover and for the souls of the victims to forever rest in peace.

The trial that will assuage our thirst for justice will also help bridge the North-South value chasm as it will be a follow-up of the Nuremberg, Tokyo, Rwanda, Hague, and Charles Taylor's trials, and put Bangladesh on the same page with all others for the pursuit of justice.

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