

## Boraigram murder

*Subverting course of justice can prove costly for government*

THE prime minister and the rest of her government owe it to the nation to take the Awami League lawmaker from the Boraigram-Gurudaspur constituency in Natore to task for the outrageous remarks about the Sanaullah Noor Babu murder he has just made. And with him, there are other Natore AL leaders who must be asked to explain why they resorted to such audacity day before yesterday, obviously as a way of telling the country that even if the supporters or members of the ruling party commit crimes, they can get away with it. The MP has asked his party men not to worry because nothing will come of the murder case and nothing will happen to the Awami League. We wonder if the lawmaker and the other AL figures in Natore were aware of the repercussions of their remarks, made in public and with little of embarrassment.

The lawmaker has been vociferous in informing people that he has been trying to convince the prime minister that no one from the Awami League was involved in Babu's murder. That flies in the face of reality, for it was a whole gang of ruling party elements who pounced upon the hapless BNP politician and beat him to death. Video footage and eye witness accounts are there to verify the facts. Now the lawmaker has instructed the local police and civil administration to act in line with the prime minister's comments on the situation. Here too we notice the arrogance of power clearly coming in the way of a judicious, uninterrupted exercise of the law. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has only made things worse for herself and for the government. Where earlier she reassured the country that the perpetrators of the crime in Boraigram would be punished, subsequently she appears to shift from that position and quickly pointed the finger of blame for the crime at the opposition BNP. Is she now trying to tell us that it was the BNP itself which is guilty of committing the crime? We raise these questions because apparently the local MP is convinced that because the prime minister has shifted her position none of the men involved in the crime will now be punished.

This is appalling. And it only gets worse. The lawmaker has the temerity to warn the district administration not to harass any Awami League or anyone from its front organisations. He and other local AL leaders have already decided, in the infinity of their wisdom, that the case filed following Babu's murder is false and fabricated. As if that were not enough, they have asked their followers to tie up the policemen who go to arrest them. That is again a crime, for two reasons. First, they are advising their followers to resist arrest. Second, they are instructing them to seize employees of the republic, hostage-like, and so let the nation know that the law might not take its own course.

We ask that the government, in order to save itself from embarrassment and to prevent the country from lurching towards the precipice, take appropriate action against those who are responsible for the murder. For her part, the prime minister must do nothing, through statements and the like, that could subvert the course of justice in Boraigram.

We would like to point out to the PM that the ultimate challenge is governance and that is how governments are judged and her government will be judged by the same yardstick as well. The indications that the lawmaker gives of how the local administration should work are anything to go by then that will be the surest way of weakening the machinery and structure through which she would have to ensure good governance. So there is much more to it at stake than merely exonerating a lawmaker or party loyalists. She has a writ to exercise as the head of government.

## We rejoice in their miraculous rescue

*A stupendous example of human endurance*

WE congratulate 33 Chilean miners on their safe return to the surface of the earth after 69 days' ordeal of daily encounter with death. Thanks are also due to the rescue operators, the Chilean people and their government for the love and compassion they showed for their trapped brethren in the collapsed mine.

The operation to salvage the miners trapped underground in a caved-in copper and gold mine about half a mile below the surface of the earth has been an extraordinary drama in real life. We hear of mine collapse tragedy from different parts of the world from time to time. But in few of the cases the victims survive. The case of the San Jose mine collapse in northern Chile is quite a different example of human experience altogether.

The rescue operation was undoubtedly a wonderful piece of technological feat. What is equally important is the power of the trapped miners' survival instinct, their mettle and endurance, their trust and faith in themselves and their Chilean compatriots. For they had already survived for 17 days with a ration of only 48 hours after the August 5 mine accident without any hope of ever being detected. And once the rescuers came to know of their position and condition, there was still no certainty that they could at all be rescued, for there was no such instance of salvage of miners from such depths before.

What stunned even experts is that the miners proved all their prognostications about their adaptability to the conditions above the ground wrong. They showed no sign of exhaustion after being hauled up on the ground above.

According to a psychologist, it is the society they built underground that kept them strong and optimistic.

The story of the trapped miners' survival and the rescue operation is a unique event in human history. United in a concern, the entire world has been glued to television sets, computers, mobile telephones and all other forms of communication devices to keep track of the day-to-day development of the rescue operation and what was being communicated between the miners and their families and the rescue team working above. And it is not the Chileans alone; the whole world had a leap of the mind in a shared sense of relief. Been at one with the miners.

In spite of all the diseases, wars, hunger and the acts of terrorism people are going through everyday, the Chilean instance of indefatigable human spirit, the power of trust, faith and the love of one human being for another at once provide a moment's respite and a lesson to learn from. And it is not only that Chile is enriched, the world at large also is.



My city!

## To live and die in Dhaka

Dhaka is a crucible city, where diverse emotions grind together the best and the worst in the country. Decisions are made here. Commotions are created. Political movements are organised. Corruptions are cultivated. The sublime is ridiculed and the ridiculous is sublimed.

MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

PLATO once said about a certain city that it was what it was because its citizens were what they were. The great philosopher couldn't be wrong. If people inhabit a city, the city also inhabits them. The denizens of Dhaka reflect on it no less than it reflects on them.

If Dhaka is a crowded city, its people have crowded minds. If it's a city of gridlocks, people have learned to be patient and sit through them. This is a city of load-shedding, and people have got rechargeable lights and fans, IPS, UPS and generators built into their budgets. This is a city of insufficient transports. Lo and behold people of this city don't mind standing in long queues, and wait for buses. Enough to convince, the Zen of this city and its citizens have mutual influence.

Dhaka is a hectic city of frantic people. It's a city of hawkers and gawkers, mosques and masks, geeks and goons, phonies and cronies, touts and louts, the needy and the greedy, the wise and the wisecrack, the depraved and the devout. Dhaka is also an

epileptic city. Its spasmodic traffic, periodic power cuts, gas crisis, water shortage, spate of violence, natural calamities and man-made disasters work like epileptic seizures. But then it's also an asthmatic city. The heat, dust, fumes, odours, roaring generators during load shedding, filth and squalor embody the image of a city gasping for breath.

If people make the city, the city also makes them. Historically, Paris has attracted writers and painters more than anybody else. London is the most visited city in the world, the world's largest financial centre alongside New York. A study funded by the US National Science Foundation examined geographic variation in personality. It found the residents of the Mid-Atlantic and New England states relatively stressed, irritable and depressed, whereas West Coast residents were more emotionally stable, relaxed and calm.

Traits associated with intellect, such as creativity, imagination, and openness, are higher in the Northeast and West Coast than in the Central and Southern states, where people are more pragmatic, straight-

forward and traditional. The residents of the Central and Southern states are also more neighbourly, friendly and generous. The single most significant finding of the study is that people choose to live in places that meet their needs.

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A regression of the city is also a regression of its people. Nothing about Dhaka is dependable. Nothing about its people is also reliable. If you can't trust the city, you also can't trust its people. Don't eat anything offered by a stranger. Watch your pocket wherever you go. In this city, keep your shoes in prayer when in a mosque.

Dhaka is a pathological city. Its bus drivers are depraved. Its rickshaw pullers are desperate. Its hawkers are demented. Its police are debauched. Its doctors are demonic, engineers are disastrous and lawyers are deplorable. On the whole, its inhabitants are disillusioned in this city where looks are deceiving, shadows are threatening, and promises are misleading.

This is also a pathetic city. Crammed houses, blind alleyways, clogged streets, clogged drains, overflowing garbage, dimly lit neighbourhoods at night, water shortage, power cuts and gas crisis formulate the ecology of a city bordering on hell. This is where people in their pursuit of dreams get trapped in nightmares.

It's also a nervous city. It lives in anxieties over load-shedding, water supply, and gas shortage. It lives in the fear of sabotage, earthquake and political show-downs. It's jittery about where the next traffic jam is going to grow like a meandering snake. It's panicky at night when junkies and criminals prowl its streets. It's paranoid by day because another day could bring another disaster.

The city is forever in conflict with its citizens. The restlessness, frenzy, cruelty, chaos, violence and hypocrisy are mutual. It appears to be a city that it's not, and its people aren't what they appear. Expensive cars, expansive lifestyle, impressive houses and compulsive greed camouflage the poverty and despair seething under its glitzy veneer. Fighting families, scrambling spouses, muddled marriages, profligate parents, complicated children, offending officers, scurrilous shopkeepers, and daredevil drivers diminish the inhabitants as much as the inhabitants diminish Dhaka.

It's also a pathetic city of contradictions. Piety and perversion go hand in hand. Devotion and deviation go in lock steps. People are shrinking while the city is expanding. People are more shadowy than the shadows. The city is creepier than the creepshows. More people come to this crammed city, featuring the ultimate contradiction. Here living is costly, but life is cheap.

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## China and the new world order

Since becoming the world-dominant power during World War II, the U.S. has sought to maintain a system of global control. But that project is not easy to sustain. The system is visibly eroding, with significant implications for the future. China is an increasingly influential player -- and challenger.

NOAM CHOMSKY

AMID all the alleged threats to the world's reigning superpower, one rival is quietly, forcefully emerging: China. And the U.S. is closely scrutinising China's intentions.

On August 13, a Pentagon study expressed concern that China is expanding its military forces in ways that "could deny the ability of American warships to operate in international waters off the coast," Thom Shanker reports in The New York Times. Washington is alarmed that "China's lack of openness about the growth, capabilities and intentions of its military injects instability to a vital region of the globe."

The U.S., on the other hand, is quite open about its intention to operate freely throughout the "vital region of the globe" surrounding China (as elsewhere). The U.S. advertises its vast capacity to do so: with a growing military budget that roughly matches the rest of the world combined, hundreds of military bases across the globe, and a huge lead in the technology of destruction and domination.

China's lack of understanding of the rules of international civility was illustrated by its objections to the plan for the advanced nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George Washington to take part in the U.S.-South Korea military exercises near China's coast in July, with the alleged capacity to strike Beijing.

By contrast, the West understands that such U.S. operations are all undertaken to defend stability and its own security. The term "stability" has a technical meaning in discourse on international affairs: domination by the U.S.

Thus, no eyebrows are raised when James Chace, former editor of Foreign Affairs, explains that in order to achieve "stability" in Chile in 1973, it was necessary to "destabilise" the country -- by overthrowing the elected government of President Salvador Allende and installing the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, which proceeded to slaughter and torture with abandon and to set up a terror network that helped install similar regimes elsewhere, with U.S. backing, in the interest of stability and security.

It is routine to recognise that U.S. security requires absolute control. The premise was given a scholarly imprimatur by historian John Lewis Gaddis of Yale University in "Surprise, Security, and the American Experience," in which he investigates the roots of President George W. Bush's preventive war doctrine. The operative principle is that expansion is "the path to security," a doctrine that Gaddis admirably traces back almost two centuries -- to President John Quincy Adams, the intellectual author of Manifest Destiny.

When Bush warned, "Americans must be ready for pre-emptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to

defend our lives," Gaddis observes, "he was echoing an old tradition rather than establishing a new one," reiterating principles that presidents from Adams to Woodrow Wilson "would all have understood ...very well."

Likewise Wilson's successors, to the present. President Bill Clinton's doctrine was that the U.S. is entitled to use military force to ensure "uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies and strategic resources," with no need even to concoct pretexts of the Bush II variety.

According to Clinton's defence secretary, William Cohen, the U.S., therefore, must keep huge military forces "forward deployed" in Europe and Asia "in order to shape people's opinions about us" and "to shape events that will affect our livelihood and our security."

This prescription for permanent war is a new strategic doctrine, military historian Andrew Bacevich observes, later amplified by Bush II and President Barack Obama. As every Mafia don knows, even the slightest loss of control might lead to unravelling of the system of domination as others are encouraged to follow a similar path.

This central principle of power is formulated as the "domino theory," in the language of policy-makers, which translates in practice to the recognition that the "virus" of successful independent development might "spread contagion" elsewhere, and therefore must be destroyed while potential plague victims are inoculated, usually by brutal dictatorships.

According to the Pentagon study, China's military budget expanded to an estimated \$150 billion in 2009, approaching "one-fifth of what the Pentagon spent to operate and carry out the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan" in that year, which is only a fraction of the total U.S. military budget, of course.

The United States' concerns are understandable, if one takes into account the virtually unchallenged assumption that the U.S. must maintain "unquestioned power" over much of the world, with "military and economic supremacy," while ensuring the "limitation of any exercise of sovereignty" by states that might interfere with its global designs. These were the principles established by high-level planners and foreign policy experts during World War II, as they developed the framework for the post-war world, which was largely implemented.

The U.S. was to maintain this dominance in a "Grand Area," which was to include at a minimum the Western hemisphere, the Far East and the former British empire, including the crucial energy resources of the Middle East.

As Russia began to grind down Nazi armies after Stalingrad, Grand Area goals extended to as much of Eurasia as possible. It was always understood that Europe might choose to follow an independent course -- perhaps the Gaullist vision of a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was partially intended to counter this threat, and the issue remains very much alive today as Nato is expanded to a U.S.-run intervention force responsible for controlling the "crucial infrastructure" of the global energy system on which the West relies.

Since becoming the world-dominant power during World War II, the U.S. has sought to maintain a system of global control. But that project is not easy to sustain. The system is visibly eroding, with significant implications for the future. China is an increasingly influential player -- and challenger.

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