

DU students on rampage

Is it becoming of them?

DHAKA University campus was the scene of utter disorder last Thursday with rampaging students setting two cars on fire and damaging 25 other vehicles. The vandalism followed an accident in which a colleague of theirs was knocked over and injured by a car driven by a learner who happened to be a student too. One of the two cars set ablaze was involved in the accident. Needless to say, the ensuing situation resulted in serious dislocation of movement of people and severe traffic snarl up in the area for a long time. This is not the first time that accidents have occurred inside the Dhaka University area.

It is a matter of satisfaction that the injury is not serious, and the student is reportedly out of danger. But what followed the accident can hardly be explained as anything sensible. While we fully understand the emotion of the students caused by the news of the accident, we can hardly rationalise their reaction.

It is not becoming of students belonging to the highest seat of learning in the country to behave in that fashion. Even those vehicles that were not involved in the accident did not escape their wrath. The implication of such a rash act cannot be lost on those that we consider to be the future leaders of the country.

What is also unacceptable is car accident inside the campus. In June 2009, wife of a university teacher was killed after being knocked down by an errant driver in almost the same area, and in that instance too the person driving the car happened to be a trainee driver. And a TSC employee was killed after being run over by a car in that area very recently. We fail to understand why the campus roads should continue to be used by trainee drivers and that too during the peak hours of the university, in spite of the fact that learner cars have been prohibited by the university authorities since 2009.

It is, however, good to note that the university administration, police and student leaders made a concerted effort to calm down the agitated students. This is where we think lies the potential to prevent untoward incidents from happening i.e. through joint efforts by university administration and student leaders.

We see that there are speed breakers at various points of the roads inside the university area, and the roads are off limits to heavy vehicles but there should be stricter oversight, more so to discourage those trying their hands at the wheels newly, to use the university area to perfect their skills. As it is, vehicles using the campus roads should drive even more cautiously than otherwise. It is unacceptable that students should fall victims to rash driving inside the campus.

Sabre-rattling to wanton bellicosity

Pyongyang's attack on South Korean island is condemnable

WE have noted with serious concern Tuesday's North Korean artillery strike on South Korea's Yeonpyeong island. It has taken a toll of both military and civilian casualties with tension mounting in the volatile region. It has gone down as one of the most serious border incidents since the Korean war in 1950-53. It has triggered concern in world capitals, especially against the backdrop of Pyongyang's disclosure of an operational uranium enrichment programme, being regarded as a second potentiality of building an atom bomb.

Reclusive North Korea's nuclear ambitions, defiant of the six-nation negotiation process which it abandoned in April 2009 keep not only its neighbour worrying but the regional and NATO powers as well. North's show of belligerence have had to do in part with what observers see as consolidation of the succession process in Pyongyang.

The US and Britain predictably came out strongly condemning the 'unprovoked' attack. President Obama has reaffirmed Washington's firm commitment to the defense of its ally, ROK and 'maintenance of peace and stability in the region'. Japan's PM Naoto Nan whose country has a history of troubled relations with Pyongyang has alerted his government 'to prepare for any eventuality'. NATO's wholesale condemnation, Russia's warning of a 'colossal danger', China's expression of 'concern over the situation' bespeak a global nature of involvement, at least at the psychological level. Basically, this is indicative of how seriously the world looks at the untoward development in the Korean peninsula and seeks to stem a conflagration in the region.

We condemn North Korea's blatant attack on the South Korean island and the human cost, in violation of UN charter and Armistice Agreement that ended the Korean war, apart from the bilateral protocol between Pyongyang and Seoul. While we counsel restraint on both sides, regional countries and world powers should move in concert to wield their influence in defusing tension between the two Koreas.

The desirable feat of law enforcers

The crisis of our law and order has not sprouted overnight and as such the solution will not be instant. The creation of an elite force and desperate action indulged may succeed in temporarily keeping some terrorists on the run and the authorities may get some credit from unsuspecting public on this count but the real problem will remain in situ with root and branches.

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THE lead report in 'The Daily Star' of 25 June tells us that an elite law enforcement unit of the country-- a combination of civil and military personnel -- was formed way back in 2004 because the then State Minister for Home Affairs thought that rising crime in the capital city and the southeastern region could not be contained by the police.

The said elite force was reportedly created "to develop an independent elite force on its own capacity to assist the police under special circumstances. The force was supposed to develop its own capacity through fresh recruitment as soon as possible". Subsequent developments, according to a report, however, indicate that extra-judicial killings have overshadowed the crime-busting feat of this elite unit.

The question is what went wrong with the mode of crime control and law enforcement? It would be worthwhile to remember that while the government of yesteryears found justification of the above extra-judicial killings by referring to the so-called public jubilation following the death of alleged hardened criminals, the discerning citizens of any civilized polity reached the inevitable conclusion that such an eventuality was indicative of the uncontrollable state of crime and the helplessness of the regulatory authority.

Under those circumstances, it was not improper to say that the failure to lawfully conduct the affairs of public order had necessitated these extra-judicial killings. Any farsighted consideration will convince us that such extra-judicial killing cannot be an effective and realistic method of crime control. The reasons are simple, because if we fail to protect the legal rights of the accused, we will not be able to ensure the rights of the innocent members of the public.

One has to admit that a lawfully constituted government cannot resort to killing in this way and cannot issue licence to any outfit to indulge in such reprehensible killing. If this continues to happen then the criminal trial process and indeed the whole

judicial system is bound to be dangerously undermined. The deaths under the garb of so-called crossfire were only highlighting the failure of police and the judiciary.

It is not for the ordinary or gullible members of the public to take a deep look at such extra legal killings because their concern was one of immediate relief from the depredations of the local bully or the entrenched tormentor. However, a civilized government cannot be a prisoner of such damaging retrograde thoughts. A very significant aspect which demands serious attention is that the so-called terrorists killed in the crossfire were in fact politically patronized and blessed. As a result, there was no guarantee that such killings will prove positive as was implied in some utterances of responsible establishment personalities.

It may be relevant to recollect that the "operation clean heart" also resulted in the extra-legal killings of identified terrorists and criminals and that too happened after only one year of assumption of power of a civil government. The law and order or crime situation did not register much of a change for the better. In fact, extra-judicial killings have not succeeded in controlling crime anywhere in any country.

Experts observe that the phenomenon of crime and terrorism do not cross the bearable limit on its own. There are always cogent and credible factors behind such abnormalities. One needs to probe into those with the concern of a protector. Extra-judicial killings cannot be a sensible alternative proposition.

A considered view is that we need adequate provision of witness protection and victim support in the criminal justice administration. To make those effective we need large injection of governmental funds. Any further delay will only swell the ranks of summary-justice seekers and the admirers of vigilante action. The decapitating adversity of the victims of crime demand mainstream support of the system.

Sadly enough, we now have misguided citizens and law enforcers in our midst who think that if a criminal is known, whatever



Temporarily keeping some terrorists on the run...

be the process of such identification, there is not much harm in doing away such element for the good of the society. Little do they realize that their logic is queer because in such eventuality the worst criminal on earth can also justify the blackest crime on the pretext of good motive.

If the government, in the persons of law-enforcers becomes law-breakers, it breeds contempt for law. To declare that the government may commit crimes to ensure punishment of criminals would invite terrible retribution. The objective of the civilized government is not to score points or play to the gallery but to ensure that justice shall be done. Law is the means and justice is the goal.

It should appear sensible to any discerning observer of our socio-political scene that preparing and properly equipping our police force -- the principal crime preventing and investigating agency under the law -- should receive the highest priority in tackling crimes of desperate nature as against the extra-legal vigilante action. This is not a tall order. Requirements are simple. Those are as follow:

a) The local police should be allowed to work unhindered. Postings and transfer of all ranks should be on professional consideration. The local MP should not dictate as to the suitability of the officer-in-charge of his constituency. His advice may be taken into consideration.

b) Primary importance has to be accorded to the collection of intelligence as the information network is vital to the fight against criminals and extremists. Financial allocation on this head should be noticeably substantial along with posting of appropriate personnel to the intelligence

outfit. Proper information will reduce the necessity of the so-called big operations.

c) There should be sufficient financial and administrative arrangements to inculcate a scientific mind in the investigation of crime as distinct from the present emphasis on interrogation and confession. The CID forensic laboratory should be modernised for encouraging scientific investigation.

d) There should be sufficient funds for witness protection and victim support in this regard to offset intimidation of state witnesses. This would be needed in connection with successful prosecution of veteran criminal and extremist related cases.

e) There should be separate legislation for long-term detention in specially appropriate cases.

f) The earmarked tribunals should be given all support in conducting expeditious trials. Adjournments should be minimum.

The crisis of our law and order has not sprouted overnight and as such the solution will not be instant. The creation of an elite force and desperate action indulged may succeed in temporarily keeping some terrorists on the run and the authorities may get some credit from unsuspecting public on this count but the real problem will remain in situ with root and branches. The residue of large scale violations of human rights by the guardians would be a shameful and painful memory to live with. It is time to ensure an effective halt to this continuing dark episode of our nation.

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Bihar shows the way

The lesson taught by the electorate to Lalu Prasad Yadav and his Rashtriya Janata Dal is an example for other leaders and other parties. You can fool people for some time but not for all the time. He got a chance for one and a half decades but he preferred corruption to cleanliness and was involved in the fodder scam reaching the figure of more than 900 crore of rupees.

KULDIP NAYAR

BIHAR has half of Pakistan's population, 8 crore, and it is one of the most important state which affects Indian politics. The Jaya Prakash Narayan movement that swept out Mrs. Indira Gandhi out of office in 1977 started from the State. The play boy Lalu Prasad Yadav who ruled and looted Bihar at will for 15 years is also from the state.

Today Bihar has emerged on the Indian scene and even beyond because the State elections have sent the message that Bihar has turned its back on crime and corruption. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has swept the polls. When he assumed power, his agenda was development and a decisive action against criminals and history sheeters. After finishing his 5-year term, he has proved through the polls that a voter wants economic betterment and reliable security, not religious or caste slogans. Almost 70 per cent of the population comprises of backward classes and Muslims.

Not even once did Nitish Kumar and his Janata Dal (United) appeal in the name of caste -- he is a Kurmi, enumerated among Other Backward Classes (OBC). Nor did he allow the BJP, its ally both in the government and the joint front that fought election, to bring in parochialism, much less anti-Muslim bias, in the campaign. Nitish rose above the 100 castes in the State. He did concentrate on Extremely Backward Classes and Mahadalit and gave 50 per cent seats to women in the Panchayats. The women have never voted in such large numbers as they did in this election.

Nitish stood firm when the BJP put all its pressure on him. But he did not ask Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi to participate in the electioneering. Modi's hands are tainted with the blood of Muslims whom he had executed in a planned man-

ner in 2006. Nitish even refused to attend a party in Modi's honour at Patna. The Muslim electorate (15 per cent) appreciated this and voted en-block for Nitish and crushed the Congress which at one time looked attracting them. The 2-1 judgment on the Babri Masjid has been considered by them the Congress doing.

Ideally, Nitish would like to go it alone and part company with the BJP which rubs its fanaticism on him to damage his image. But more than two-third of seats which Nitish has won, 201 in 243-member house, has a large number of BJP members. It looks as if he cannot constitute the government with the support of his own members and, therefore, has to depend on the BJP. But the day is not far when he will have to jettison the BJP which is riding his shoulders if he wants to throw his hats in the ring for India's primeministership.

Natish has no alternative to this and it seems that he is working towards a situation where he will be his own master and does not have to suffer the BJP. By the time the next Parliament elections take place in 2014, Nitish would have more or less finished his task in Bihar. He would be available to lead the Third Force in the country. The Congress is too steeped in corruption and groupism and the BJP in communalism and the RSS dictated politics. India needs a party or, for that matter, a person who can help the country rise above caste, religion and regionalism. The way in which Nitish has vanquished caste through his progressive administration is what the nation is looking for.

Unfortunately, Nitish is part of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) which the BJP heads. The party's candidate for the primeministership is Narendra Modi. Both of them are so different that either of them can take the country to separate destinations, one towards liberalism and the other



Could fool people for some time...

to chauvinism. Both are strong in administration and enjoy the reputation of cleanliness. Yet the primeministership of Nitish will mean a pluralistic society, the ideal for which that the independence struggle was waged. The primeministership of Modi may take the nation to the pit of darkness from where it would be difficult to get back to light.

Nitish's credentials are known. He is democrat and secular. The Bihar election has shown that he can bring back to the country the same wave of idealism and parivartan (change) which the JP brought and put the Third Force at the helm of affairs in New Delhi in 1977. It is true that Nitish has no cadre of his own. He depends on bureaucrats for governance. Yet when there is a wave in the country the people become the cadre on their own as happened during the JP movement.

For that he will have to quit the NDA and come out on his own to harness people's aspirations for a better and secure life. Since he has convinced the people in Bihar that he can turn a new leaf in their life, there is no reason to disbelieve that he would not be able to duplicate the experiment in the entire country.

The BJP-led NDA would insist on Narendra Modi when the time comes. He is the party's poster boy. And he has the ability to change a state like Gujarat -- Mahatma Gandhi came from Gujarat -- into the model that the RSS has in view. The difference between democracy and dicta-

torship is that in the first people change the top man, in the second, the top man changes the people. Modi has changed the people of Gujarat. A democratic country like India should not be exposed to such dangers.

The lesson taught by the electorate to Lalu Prasad Yadav and his Rashtriya Janata Dal is an example for other leaders and other parties. You can fool people for some time but not for all the time. He got a chance for one and a half decades but he preferred corruption to cleanliness and was involved in the fodder scam reaching the figure of more than 900 crore of rupees. He also concentrated on playing the Muslim-Yadav of OBC card. Little did he realize that the people want to improve their lot, send their children to schools and want relief from criminals. In fact, this is a message for all political parties. People will vote for them if their election manifesto promises development.

The biggest drubbing is that of the Congress which has been reduced further in strength, from 16 to 6. What the party should realize is that the magic of Rahul Gandhi does not work. He should realize that a few remarks here or a fleeting visit there does not help in the long run. He has to prove his sincerity while talking about ameliorating the conditions of the poor. The mantra is development, not slogans, Bihar has shown the way.

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