

## STRAIGHT LINE

## Police probe into Aminbazar carnage

*The truth must come out*

**T**HE initiative by the higher police authorities to form a probe body to unfold the 'mystery' behind the killing of six students on July 18 by a mob in Aminbazar of Savar is welcome.

The impunity with which the mob lynched the students on the mere suspicion of their being robbers has left us wondering about the role of the local police during and after the gruesome incident. What is most baffling here is on what ground did the police brand the victims as robbers before carrying out any investigation into the incident? How in their presence the mob could pounce on the victims in the first place? And why are they so low to take any action against the culprits who perpetrated the gratuitous carnage?

So, we feel assured by the very fact that the top echelon of the police is sensing something 'fishy' in the monstrosity enacted in the Aminbazar area in the wee hours of July 18. And it also gives us the reason to believe that they have taken the case filed by the local police against the victims terming them robbers with a grain of salt.

While we appreciate the latest move by the higher police authority, we would like to offer a word of caution. From previous experience we have come by cases where such departmental enquiries within police had ended in shielding the culprits rather than getting to the bottom of the incidents. Small wonder, the relatives of the victims and the public in general often remain doubtful of such departmental probes held against police.

That naturally should set a high standard for the probe to be convincing. So, there is huge stake for the police authorities in making the probe transparent, professional, foolproof and above board.

Side by side with the police probe, we think the government should also carry out an independent investigation into the appalling incident to provide clues to what really went behind the tragic incident on July 18. These probes, hopefully, would go a long way in finding ways to prevent similar tragedies from happening in the future.

We hope the truth will finally come out and the culprits committing the outrage will be brought to justice.

## Regulating coaching business

*Think up a formula to address the issue*

**T**HE meeting of the heads of different schools and colleges of Dhaka on Thursday with the education minister Nurul Islam Nhid with the demand to stop coaching centres has drawn our attention.

The move by the teachers is appreciable, though the minister has pointed to the infeasibility of such a proposition. However, her can still think of taking some steps to regulate the phenomenon.

We think the mushrooming of coaching centres is symptomatic of the failure of our education system as a whole. The educational institutions are failing to provide the students with necessary instructions at the classrooms. Which is why, the guardians and their wards are making a beeline for private coaching. Many teachers taking advantage of this situation have been running private coaching centres shirking their duties at the institution they are employed with.

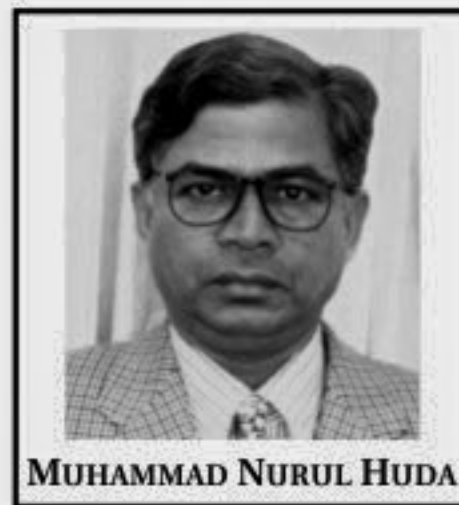
We would still like to distinguish private tutoring and coaching business per se. Our recommendations on this score are:

The government should bring the coaching centres under regulation. Though private coaching may be given allowance for, it has to be ensured that private tutors may not teach their own students from the schools they are employed with. The school authorities must duly monitor if the teachers are providing adequate attention to their students at the classrooms.

The private coaching centres situated on a formal premise have to be registered with the appropriate authority. That authority will monitor whether the coaching centres are maintaining the standards set by it.

We think the government will form a committee on this score comprising eminent persons from the intelligentsia to deal with the complex issue at hand and devise a for-

# Thrashing political opponents



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

**P**HOTOGRAPHIC presentation of the alleged thrashing of high profile politicians of the major political

parties at different times between 2002 and the present that appeared on the front page of 'The Daily Star' recently depicted abnormalities of a disturbing proportion.

Comments that were posted on the said photograph read "Pictures of now and then show political culture has not changed a bit. Politicians in opposition always come under ruthless police attacks and leaders in power waste no time to claim that no wrong has been done. Have not politicians learned a lesson yet? Should not the people expect them to wake up and put an end to the criminal practice of thrashing opposition by law enforcers?"

Under circumstances as above it should be relevant to note that our politicians crave for Westminster model of democracy but they have combined the colonial agitational politics with the role of the opposition. This is the mindset of both position and opposition. One cries for maintenance of law and order, protection of national interest while the other fights for the democratic rights of the people in relentless agitation, work stoppages and violence. Therefore, policies, postures, statements and actions of the political parties and ruling regimes have significant role in conflict aggravation and its transition from one phase to another.

There have been instances where governments have been accused of using the police machinery for political ends. There are also instances of individual politicians interfering with the administration and the work of

the police. As may be expected in a society in transition, the norms which should govern the relationship between the party in power, the individual politician and the police have still to be developed.

It is worth recalling that in Bangladesh political activities, partly on account of historical factors, have assumed a dominant agitational character. Over the years, since after liberation and more particularly during the anti-autocracy movement in the eighties, leading to the fall of the military dictatorial regime in December 1990, political protests demanded crude physical courage from the field

The rule of law, though a civilising factor has often led to violence for purposes of governance without ensuring to check indiscriminate use of power in our polity. We have also not seen any serious policy discussion of the phenomena of violence.

Political violence should call for a political response from the state authorities rather than a police response. The latter may be necessary but not sufficient. In a situation of large scale institutional malfunctioning as is feared in our case, politics acquires an appetite for all spaces, both public and private.

Under circumstances as above, all

Terms such as "law and order," "public order," or "security of state" are often used in Bangladesh to deploy state violence with impunity. The police in our situation tend to make indiscriminate use of the provisions of Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code to disperse unlawful assemblies even when demands made by such assemblies are legitimate and lawful. No effective guidelines in law are provided for the use of force to deal with such assemblies except the general specification that minimum force be used. Such use of force often leads to loss of life and liberty.

Unfortunately, the independence in 1971 and democratic struggles thereafter have not resulted in any basic administrative changes in the structure of governance. Under such circumstances, shall one assume that the basic features of our Republican constitution, parliamentary democracy and development administration are in conflict with the inherited political-organisational characteristics of our administrative structure?

We have to address the issue of inaction vis-à-vis political violence that is at the heart of our political system. While security of the state is important, it must not exceed the limits of legitimacy and indulge in unacceptable levels of violence.

We need to examine the real and potential political violence in view of the currently charged situation and determine the policy and response to it in the context of the overall challenge of "humane governance." The institutional mechanisms for policy analysis and action at government level need to be freed from the colonial attributes and restructured to address the challenge. There is, admittedly, a need for far-reaching administrative and police reforms, neglected for too long.

The writer is a former IGP and a columnist for The Daily Star.

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level activists of the political movement. As the dictatorial regime primarily depended on brute power and looked towards non-political quarters for its sustenance, it did not bother about the excessive use of force by the state apparatus. It had no qualms in utilising dangerous goons to intimidate and if necessary liquidate political party workers and leaders. A section of the law enforcement personnel sadly turned out to be a willing partner in such patently illegal acts.

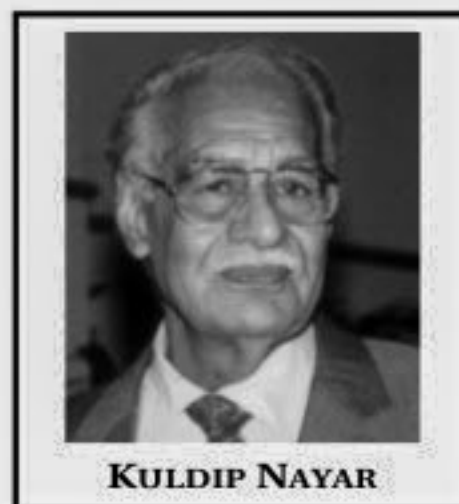
There is no denying that Bangladesh in recent years has experienced the politics of violence, which in practical terms meant resorting to physical violence to promote a political objective. At the same time we have also seen violence of politics built into the institutional structure of politics despite the ideal that liberal democracy abjures violence of politics.

violence becomes political and our state authority relies largely on the police machinery not only for information gathering pertaining to social conflict and violence but also for the analysis and interpretation of the phenomena of violence in terms of their nature, causes and solutions. As such the colonially derived significance of the police machinery on such a crucial matter and its influence in determining the state response to violence has not been seriously looked into.

It is an unfortunate facet of our political existence that the political class has quite often shifted to the police its burden of providing a response to many socio-political movements which are essentially an expression of people's aspiration for a life of dignity and self-respect. The Kansat tragedy of the not-too-distant past is a glaring case in point.

## BETWEEN THE LINES

# Mumbai is yesterday



KULDIP NAYYAR

**I** have never lived in Mumbai. My visits too have been few and far between and never beyond two to three

days. Therefore, it is difficult for me to visualise how people live, fearing one blast or the other in the morning. What impresses me, however, is the manner in which the 20 million people from different parts of the country have fused into one community despite the terrorists and the threats of Shiv Sena to the non-Marathi speaking population.

The city has had 16 attacks in the last 18 years. People have come to live with insecurity they face. They criticise the governments at the centre and in the state for not protecting them against recurring incidents of bomb blasts. Still they live undeterred, and this is what the outsiders describe as "the spirit of Mumbai."

I was in Karachi a few weeks ago and found how people have come to terms with the conditions obtaining there, one blast practically every day, apart from ethnic riots. I asked them how and their reply was: Tell us the alternative. There was a feeling of helplessness, something like Mumbai's.

I also had the traumatic experience of facing riots and death at the time of partition. When I travelled from my hometown Sialkot City to the Attari-Wagah border in India, I feared I might be killed when people before my eyes were slaughtering one another. It looked impossible how we would restart our life without any help from the government. But we did it. The Punjabis in East Punjab started from the scratch and were up on their feet before long. Was it our sense of resistance or the spirit of determination? I find the people living in Mumbai cast in the same mould. They get up,

fall but are on their feet again. They have done it many a time before and would do it again, if challenged. In fact, there is no option except to fight against those forces which want them to fall and stay there. I have not forgotten a poignant remark made by a woman living in Colaba: "Whenever my husband goes to office in the morning, I pray he should come back safe in the evening." Things have not reached the same stage in Delhi where I live. But it can happen any time. As a senior citizen, I have come to be a fatalist.

The most unpalatable thing happening in India is the politicising of riots. Both the Congress and the BJP, the two main political parties, begin blaming each other. Within 24 hours

who was removed because of failure then is back. In this way, the government is sending a wrong signal.

I regret why the government makes the same mistakes and gives the same assurances on zero tolerance against terrorists. I thought the attack on Mumbai in 2008 was a big warning. I have heard even Prime Minister Manmohan Singh saying that they would not allow it to happen again. Yet the basic thing like the intelligence failed again. For Chidambaram to admit that there was no input either from internal or external intelligence agencies is a slur on the government. Both the Centre and Mumbai have an elaborate intelligence network. It is their job to be nosing and probing all the time.

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of the blasts at Mumbai, BJP leader L.K. Advani reached Mumbai and advised New Delhi not to have talks with Pakistan. None in the media or elsewhere had even remotely hinted at the involvement of Pakistan. But should he politicise the issue for electoral purpose? Congress general secretary Digvijay Singh soon jumped into fray and raised the possible involvement of the RSS. In contrast, Home Minister P. Chidambaram said that his government was not yet sure who was responsible for the blasts. He told the public that no group was out of their radar.

The result of politicising the riots is that the government does not have to explain why it kept the police ill-equipped and ill-trained even after the Mumbai attacks three years ago. Maharashtra Home Minister Patel

We must find out from America how it has not allowed a single incident to take place after 9/11. That country also has a large ethnic population and is bigger in size than India. President Bush introduced some laws like the Patriotic Act which treated every American as a criminal before he or she could prove it otherwise.

We should not make such a mistake. There is no dearth of law in our government's armoury. Another law will not help. What is needed is to shake up the law and order machinery so that it operates properly and quickly. Why is the country ruled by the police act as old as 1861, formulated by the British which wanted to keep the public and police apart. America and European countries have devised ways for the public participation in the measures taken by the

police to maintain law and order.

The National Investigation Agency was set up with a fanfare in 2009 to assuage public anger over a similar series of failure leading up to 26/11. They were entrusted with cases but the result so far is dismal. The latest annual report of the Union Home Ministry says that large investments were made "in new measures to meet the grave challenges posed by global terrorism." The report says the MHA's major achievements include the establishment of new rapid-response hubs for the national Security Guard Special Forces, and the establishment of an online National Intelligence Grid.

Poor dividends from these measures do not come as a surprise. "Even though both state and central government have been scrambling to set up all kinds of special counter-terrorism forces," says Dr. Ajai Sahni, Director of the Institute for Conflict Management in New Delhi, "there has been no real effort to improve intelligence-gathering and investigations capabilities from the bottom-up." No computer, he points out, is going to help you solve a case if you have got no worthwhile data to feed into it.

Investigators believe that all the five attacks are linked to members of the Indian Mujahideen (IM) a group inspired by the terrorist group in Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Toiba. The IM is responsible for a string of attacks in several Indian cities between 2006 and 2008. There was however, little evidence to support the charge, though the available intelligence suggests that the Lashkar has been attempting to regroup. The terrorists' blast is said to the hands work of a new module born from within the IM.

Mumbai is not a problem. It is the fallout of administrative inadequacies. The financial capital requires a better attention. And it should not go out of the centre's radar.

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## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

July 23

**1914**  
Austria-Hungary issues an ultimatum to Serbia demanding Serbia to allow the Austrians to determine who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Serbia will reject those demands and Austria will declare war on July 28.

**1942**  
The Holocaust: the Treblinka extermination camp is opened.

**1942**  
World War II: Operation Edelweiss begins.

**1952**  
General Muhammad Naguib leads the Free Officers Movement (formed by Gamal Abdel Nasser, the real power behind the coup) in overthrowing King Farouk of Egypt.

**1968**  
The only successful hijacking of an El Al aircraft takes place when a Boeing 707 carrying 10 crew and 38 passengers is taken over by three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The aircraft was en route from Rome, Italy, to Lod, Israel.