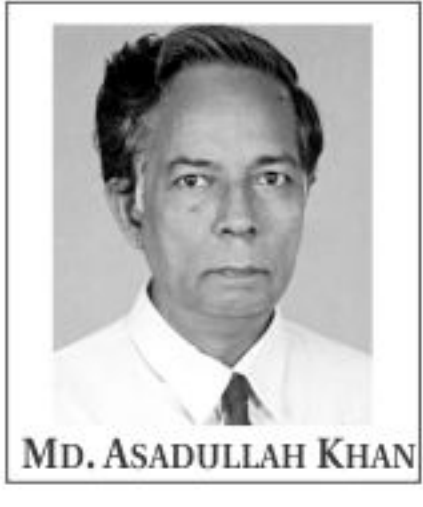


BITTER TRUTH

Arrest surging crime



Md. ASADULLAH KHAN

THE horrifying reports of killing, abduction and extortion that fill the pages of the dailies with alarming frequency only lead one to believe that if anything the country has fallen in the grip of barbaric forces. Newspaper reports show that in just 6 days -- between August 24 and August 29 -- at least 30 people were killed in different places of the country. Not only the capital city but even the small towns seem to be caught in a frightening coil of fear and trauma. In the six months ending June 2012, statistics revealed by the National Human Rights Commission showed that there were 2,272 murders in the country (13 murders daily), 84 cases of secret killings, 49 cases of acid throwing and 286 cases of sexual abuse on women and children. There is absolute anarchy bordering on total breakdown of law and order. A survey of the crimes committed in the last one year revealed that in Dhaka city alone at least one hundred persons belonging to distinguished professions were killed either for money or for political vendetta. And in most cases, the main culprits could not be booked.

Most alarmingly, the surge in crime has peaked mostly with the backing of some political masters and godfathers who have a share in the toll, and employ these thugs to eliminate their rivals. While newspaper reporters, columnists and editors write ponderous articles about the crime situation, the dastardly acts of the hoodlums that continue to play havoc with the citizens' lives go on unabated. With a temporary lull in such activities, when this menacing trend stops being headlined, we tend to feel once more that nothing had happened. But, most lamentably, the spectre of killing, abduction, extortion, terrorism and lawlessness continues to haunt the citizens, but no steps worth mentioning have been taken to improve police functioning.

Ironically true, the whole country is being held hostage in the hands of a limited number of criminals. Fed up with increasing incidence of killing, abduction, extortion, dacoity, looting and raping of young girls that brought no response from the law enforcement agencies, people in different parts of the country, and in many cases the victims themselves, out of pent up anger, took law into their own hands.

Even during the holy month of Ramadan murders have been committed in most of the dis-

tricts and even remote villages. Such homicides are painful proof that the worst types of big city crimes are spreading as never before to smaller cities and towns -- places that have long been viewed as safe, "livable alternatives" to gradually congesting large urban areas.

A large section of the populace seems to be disillusioned with the integrity of the police and administration. If the evidence is anything to go by, the criminal, the politician and the police in the country have always been good friends. Each has a use for the other, a nexus that has time and again been shown to be lucrative.

Terrorism, murders, abduction and political vendetta are the most defining and destabilising force in the lives of the people of the country today. They have become an immediate fear for everyone who has a stake in the civilisational order and the norms of a tranquil society. Such

Some of them have joined hands with the criminals, and this has emboldened the wrongdoers. In the face of mounting criticism about kick-backs and other malfeasance of some of the police personnel, people wonder if some transfers from one thana to another or temporary suspension can be construed as any punishment or can act as deterrent.

In fact we have a justice system so flawed that we have yet to bring to justice those who committed grievous crimes years before. Most of the cases progress at a pace so imperceptible that an occasional story in the newspapers is the reminder of justice not done. In fact, the past years have seen such a rapid decline into lawlessness, chaos and corruption that experts had taken to describing it as worse than ever before. Surely, what was going on must have reached the stalwarts in the administration, but they chose to ignore them and continued inflicting administratively incompetent officers on vital sectors and tinkering with politically irrelevant issues.

The question one may ask is what kind of criminal justice system or investigation allows these criminals to come out on bail or keeps them under trial for so long? The answer is that we need an investigation process that must be fair and never polluted by political intervention and a justice system that punishes criminals before we forget what their crimes were. Since justice is such an elusive thing, the average person faces sentencing without trial if he happens to be on the wrong side of some politicians or officials. He can be wrongly arrested, wrongly denied bail, even have his bank account frozen, his property seized and his life totally destroyed.

People are apt to think that the administration's ability to tackle the sensitive crime and core issues of statecraft, viz. police administration, economic issues, graft allegations against officials and politicians, is hardly up to the mark. Most worryingly, what is ominous is that trouble-makers, looters and goons have a large measure of administrative sanction in the mayhem that goes on. And that inevitably destabilises governance of the country and takes a heavy toll on the popularity of the government. The administration must, without delay, see what changes can be made to make ordinary people in the country feel that there is someone up there doing something.

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attacks, abductions, and ransom bids are pathetic reminders that someone out there is determined to strike at the heart of the country and take advantage of the poor governance.

No headway has been made in the investigations regarding the killing of journalist couple Sagar-Runi, abduction of Sylhet BNP leader Ilyas and driver Azam of APS Faruq's car involved in the railwaygate scam, and a host of other cases across the country.

The stark fact is that, at this hour of crisis, the government can neither sit tight nor relax. Undeniably true, law enforcement agencies in the country, if they had worked with commitment, could have halted this dangerous slide.

LEST WE FORGET

The battle of Goalhati

TUSHER AMIN

THIS is a story about a battle that we have forgotten. It was on September 5, 1971, that Bir Sreshtho Nur Mohammad Sheikh sacrificed his life during our War of Liberation.

I am going to introduce you to a hero who dedicated his life for the sake of our beloved motherland, and sacrificed himself for the honour of the green and red flag that symbolises Bangladesh. He was Nur Mohammad Sheikh, a hero of the motherland, who was a Lance Nayek in East Pakistan Rifles during the Liberation War.

Nur Mohammad Sheikh was born in Moheshkhali village near the bank of Chitra River in Narail on February 26, 1936. His father was Mohammad Amanat Sheikh and mother was Mosammat Jinnatunnesa Khanam. From his early life he was interested in games and music rather than studies. He was seriously shocked at his mother's death when he was only ten years old. Just three years after his mother's death, his father also died. He was more involved in music after his father's death. He continued his education up to seventh grade at local schools. After fighting against hard times in his village he went to Dhaka for earning his livelihood.

On March 14, 1959, Nur Mohammad joined the East Pakistan Rifles. He was sent to Rajshahi for training. After finishing the elementary training, he was posted at the Dinajpur sector. He fought for his motherland in 1965 during the Indo-Pakistan and successfully carried out his missions. After that war, he was awarded "Tamgha-e-jung" and "Sitara-e-harob" for his extraordinary performance in the battle field.

In July 1970, he was transferred to Jessore 4 no. wing under the Jessore Headquarter sector. He felt trapped in an uncomfortable environment where there were non-Bangalee officers rather than Bangalee officers. He was happy when a Bangalee officer named Major Abu Osman Chowdhury was appointed to that wing.

In March 1971, Nur Mohammad was on vacation in his village. When the war started, he joined Sector 8 and took part in different battles in Jessore. Lance Nayek Nur Mohammad was selected as the captain of the Standing Patrol team at Goalhati, which was established to monitor the Pakistan army. On September 5, Nur Mohammad was patrolling with 4 fellow soldiers. The Pakistan army managed to find out the position of his team and attacked them from three sides. Nur Mohammad did not want to retreat to his base and continued firing against the Pakistani soldiers. Meanwhile, one of his fellow soldiers was shot and Nur Mohammad tried to carry him to safety. But he was hit by a mortar. Even though he was seriously injured, he continued to provide covering fire for his team. At that time, his Sepoy, Mostafa, urged Nur Mohammad to go with him, but Nur Mohammad refused to do so. He kept on fighting until he died.

He was posthumously awarded the highest gallantry award "Bir Sreshtho" for his bravery during the War of Liberation.

There are some people who work for no returns. Nur Mohammad Sheikh was one of them. He fought for his motherland and sacrificed himself for it. He dreamt of Sonar Bangla. How many of us think of our beloved motherland Bangladesh, for which 3 million people lost their lives?

I am Bangladeshi. I am here under the green and red flag that was established by the braveheart sons of Bangladesh. They are the heroes. Heroes live forever. Bir Sreshtho Nur Mohammad Sheikh also lives forever in the middle of the green and red flag of Bangladesh.

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Bir Sreshtho Nur Mohammad Sheikh

Myanmar: Super cabinet to deflect criticism

LARRY JAGAN

AFTER months of speculation and rumours, Myanmar's President Thein Sein has created a "super" cabinet in order to deflect attention from his besieged administration, which is riven with divisions and inertia. Recently, the president began to roll out his planned massive shake-up in government -- involving extensive cabinet changes and an overhaul of the civil service. This is aimed at reforming and modernising the country's antiquated government machinery and more importantly, boosting economic development.

President Thein Sein has tried to silence growing critics inside the country and shore up international support in one fell swoop -- the cabinet reshuffle announced earlier this week -- and get the reform process back on track. At least nine cabinet ministers have been replaced and more than sixteen new deputy ministers appointed in the largest shake-up in the Myanmar government since President Thein Sein took power last year and embarked on his ambitious reform process.

After months of hints and leaks from government advisors, Thein Sein has seized the moment and announced the cabinet changes, though only piecemeal. One thing is certain, the cabinet reshuffle is aimed at increasing the president's power, especially at time when there is a constitutional crisis between the president and the Parliament led by the Speaker of the lower house Shwe Mann.

The announcement was largely intended to deflect parliamentary criticism and interference, according to many analysts in Yangon. "The timing of the reshuffle was planned so as to divert attention from the crises the president is facing," Khin ZawWin told *The Daily Star*.

Last week, the violence between Buddhists and Muslims in the country's western Arakan state was the talk of the town, this week it's the cabinet changes. "Now the right men are in the right positions," said Aung Tun, a street stall vendor in downtown Yangon. In the sweeping shake-up, Thein Sein replaced the

ministers responsible for information, economic planning, finance, industry and railways. These ministries are being transferred to the president's office. Finance Minister Hla Tun, Economic Planning Minister Tin Naing Thein, Industry Minister Soe Thein and Railways Minister Aung Min have all effectively been promoted and transferred to the president's office to oversee the running of the economy. "It's more a re-organisation than a reshuffle," said a government insider.

Earlier this month, President Thein announced that the government's immediate priority was to boost economic growth by 8% a year and provide real income growth for everyone. Many Myanmarese economists, though, believe that the president's plans are over-ambitious and unrealistic, especially the proposed increase of per capita income to \$3,000 by 2015.

The economic ministers, on whose shoulders this Herculean task now rests, will oversee the process from the president's office. This means they will work directly under the president. This will free him to concentrate on other matters, according to the president's political advisors. It will increase their direct access to the president and give them greater authority.

"It's all part of streamlining the decision-making process and making the president and his ministers more effective," said a government insider. But it is also a process of centralising power in the president's office with creation of an elite team of ministers -- a super cabinet -- that will take responsibility for most of the government administration.

The current cabinet reshuffle shows the president's commitment to the reform process, according to

many analysts. "The signs are very good that this new cabinet will help unblock the recent log-jam to reform and generally push for greater economic liberalisation," said Australian economic expert, Sean Turnell. Many of the new ministers and deputy minister are very committed economic reformers.

But Thein Sein's other aim is to improve the efficiency of the government bureaucracy and inject new blood into the administration. Many of the new ministers are academics, businessmen and technocrats. The appointment of Winston Set Aung -- a businessmen and economic consultant who has been acting as an economic advisor to the president during the last 12 months -- as the deputy minister for economic planning is only the start of things, said a government insider.

Competency, efficiency and effectiveness are now to be the watchwords for the government and the civil service many diplomats in Yangon believe. Promotion will be on results, borrowing from American organisational management text, said a

European businessman who has travelled regularly and extensively in Myanmar. The president is a key fan of these texts that have been translated into Myanmar, a close confidante of the president's confided to me.

"The battle between the hardliners and reformers has been exaggerated," a presidential advisor told *The Daily Star*, on condition of anonymity. "The fault line is between competence and incompetence; between effectiveness and ineffectiveness," he added.

A good illustration of this new approach to government is that Information Minister Kyaw Hsan has been effectively demoted to look after cooperatives, which many analysts believe will be phased out over

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time. The fact that he hung on for so long has been a mystery, but many believe his relationship with the old dictator Than Shwe made him almost indispensable, that is until the press council fiasco earlier this month made his departure almost inevitable.

The new information minister is the dynamic former Labour and Social Welfare Minister Aung Kyi. He has a reputation for being a reformer -- but more than anything, he is one of the most effective ministers in Thein Sein's cabinet. The ILO is full of praise for his farsighted approach to forced labour, the formation of trade unions and industrial conciliation, and child soldiers. Apart from that he has a good working relationship with the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who he met several times when he was the liaison minister. Since then, they have continued to work together on the issue of Myanmarese migrant workers in Thailand.

Finally, former Railways Minister Aung Min is to become a minister in the president's office, commissioned with overseeing national reconciliation efforts. Apart from continuing his ceasefire mediation efforts with ethnic rebel groups, he will be responsible for encouraging Myanmarese exiles and expatriates to return to the country. He will also reportedly become a member of the national defense security council and be given a measure of authority over the military.

"The government must deliver on its promises," another insider said, "and time is running out."

In particular, the constitutional crisis that is presently pitting the president against the parliament, and Thein Sein against the speaker Shwe Mann, has yet to be resolved, and may well add to the paralysis in government. No one can afford this to be spun out any longer than is possible -- a compromise must be found or the country is going to plunge into increasing uncertainty and disorder, with government effectively castrated.

The writer is a former Current Affairs Editor, Asia, BBC World Service.