

## CROSS TALK

## Mindless carnage in old town

*Reprehensible, coming from students*

ONE never gets tired of mayhem created by unruly students on this campus or that. Mostly such incidents are the result of some frivolous altercation that sparks off the mindless violence creating anarchy and resulting in untold suffering for people in the locality. The latest example of this uncivilised barbarism took place on November 21 when students of Kobi Nazrul College and Jagannath University clashed over what appears to be who would get precedence over whom in depositing certain fees in a bank.

The running battles between the two campuses embroiled hundreds of students from both institutions who spared no one or nothing in their way -- torching vehicles, beating up bystanders and stationed police officers. More than 50 people have sustained injuries and the whole area turned into a battle field with contenders vying for supremacy. As stated before, such behaviour is hardly uncommon in our country. While no one supports such violence and vandalism, there have been little by way of constructive measures taken to stem this sort of unruly conduct that has practically become a regular feature in academic institutions. The question is how it is possible for groups of students to get access to lethal weaponry in such a short span of time, unless of course these were hoarded at a convenient place -- to be utilised when needed. This obviously is a systemic problem, one that authorities should seriously look into if they are interested in keeping peace on the campus and protecting public interest.

Looking beyond mere pre-emptive measures, the attitude of violence that apparently has become ingrained in the general psyche is something that cannot be rectified through security measures. The general erosion of values in society is reflected in these actions. Unless we start imparting values and codes of conduct to newer generations, such abhorrent violence will continue.

## Well done Hasan

*You do us proud*

FOR a person who the selectors thought 'can bat a bit', Hasan has proved he can do much more than that. What a test debutante, who was included in the team as a fast bowler only, and came in only after the fall of the eighth wicket, is more than merely a hundred runs in the scorer's book. He broke a 110-year old record and became not only the second number ten batsman to score a century in his first test match, his is also the highest score for a batsman in that position. Bravo Abul Hasan.

Hasan's record is something that has made us immensely proud. For a bowler to knock off a century, that too in nearly as many balls, says much about the temperament of the man and the immense potential he has to emerge as a true all rounder in future.

Hasan's innings was not all snicks and edges, and although he survived a few chances, he showed he had the technique to stand up to world class bowlers; he played all the shots in the text book, something that a recognised batsman would have been proud of. He not only saved the blushes of the Bangladesh team, his innings, well supported by Mahmudullah, gave respectability to the team score. Their partnership was the fourth highest tenth-wicket partnership in test cricket.

There are a few performances in the field of sports that Bangladesh can take pride in. Ashraful still holds the record of being the youngest test century maker. And Hasan's achievement comes as a great joy particularly when we witness world records being created against Bangladesh.

Hasan should not let the achievement go into his head. He must recognise his potential and work for greater achievements. The country has a lot of expectations from



MOHAMMAD  
BADRUL HASAN

Earth's gravity. Children grownup, wife deceased, he has got all the time to graze upon his memories.

Unrequited love is like an eclipse; in the rotation of life it often passes into the shadows of reality. Fifty years later my friend is digging into the past. He wants to recover a face from obscurity.

He first saw that face when he was a young man admitted to a hospital. Many years later he met her again when she was nursing his pregnant wife. Standing on two sides of the hospital bed, they were most eloquent in their constricted silence. These days he wonders what has happened to that magic, when two loving hearts could stand in a crowd and beat within each other's earshot.

That magic, he vouches, is lost in the dense fog of lust, the cacophony of colliding flesh has drowned its music. There has been a climate change in the sensual universe. The greenhouse effect of libidinal radiation is causing global warming that is melting the ice of moral glaciers. The plains of compulsive affection are inundated by the rising sea level of impulsive lust.

A seventy-some-years-old friend has gained escape velocity, which is the speed necessary for a spacecraft to break free of

Human libido is now in maximum overdrive. It can be compared to the Superstorm Sandy that has made its landfall on the human psyche and laid waste to its carnal coast. The permutation and combination of appetites have given an expanded menu with greater selection of erotic flavours. There are gays, lesbians and straights amongst us. The gender map is being redrawn everywhere as love is shifting from the physical to their hearts, where it belongs.

That means the law of magnet doesn't work. Like poles attract and

Now that we are offering a larger selection, does it also whet the appetite? Late BBC presenter Jimmy Saville has allegedly abused 300 children. Former Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi reportedly still has prostitutes on his payroll. Former IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn allegedly assaulted other women in spite of having a loving wife at home. Newspaper pages are filled with horror stories of lesser men treating female bodies with the fury of American troops invading Iraq. Even in a disciplined force like the

novel Bring Up the Bodies, King Henry VIII pretends not to comprehend why his wife Anne Boleyn "a sober, a godly matron, whose only duty is to get a child" might take pleasure in sex. It's evocative of mal hypocrisy that has dominated history. The king himself had fathered at least one child outside of marriage.

That hypocrisy is now fading fast as the failing fiefdom of the male gender is becoming increasingly ineffective in treating the female gender like serfs. Neither gender has to depend on either for biological needs or conjugal vows. Each gender is now organised around its identity like guilds around crafts.

That brings us to the ultimate question. If people now have more ways to love, does it mean they also love more? The walls of prisons are being knocked down as men and women are being liberated from their bodies. Then why are rapes, molestations and abuses going up?

Perhaps we are watching the beginning of a bizarre contest. The freedom of choice is satisfying love, but it's also satisfying lust. Lust for love is competing with love of lust. Fifty years from today, the seventy-some-years-olds of the future will still be nostalgic, not over faces but over bodies. Men and women alike, the lecherous, like gravediggers, will exhume bodies in their memories. They will count the number of hits, and sadly miss the misses.

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opposite poles repel. Legendary singer Elton John is married to a man. Hollywood actress Jodie Foster has preference for women. This flip-flop of fatal attraction transcending gender barrier is a historical fact.

Mughal Emperor Babur had fallen in love with a boy in Kandahar, whose memory he took to his grave. Alexander the Great was taught by Aristotle that relationships based purely on carnal relations ought to be shameful. But the conqueror's relationship with his friend Hephaestion was questionable, because after his death Alexander did not eat for days.

US army, rape is common not only amongst women but also amongst men. That tells us that variety in love is also bringing variety in lust. One outcome of these multifarious options is that it has diluted man's proprietary claim on the female body. More men are now ready to marry women, who have been married before. The frosty stigma attached to women touched by other men has started to thaw. The unreasonable male ego is shaping up. He is learning not to expect that his woman has to be faithful while he could be a philanderer. In Hilary Mantel's Booker-winning

# China changes leaders, but not policies

## MAHMOOD HASAN

THE process of choosing leaders in the two largest economies of the world -- US and China -- has been markedly different. They came in quick succession.

The American presidential election was probably unique because of its openness, the way the campaign was carried and the amount of money spent. The Chinese leadership change came through a process shrouded in secrecy. The monolithic political system dominated by the Communist Party of China (CPC) does not allow for such Western luxury. There were no opposing candidates for the posts and thus no campaigning. It was a routine process with fanfare and pageantry.

The week-long 18th National Congress of the CPC ended on November 14 in Beijing. It unveiled the names of new leaders who shall lead China for the next ten years, and broad policy guidelines that China shall follow.

Eighty two million members of CPC selected 2,270 delegates from 40 constituencies around the country, who converged at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on November 8. They selected 376 members of the Central Committee, which is responsible for overall policies of CPC. The Central Committee then selected the 25-member Politburo and the 7-member Politburo Standing Committee (PSC). The PSC is the apex of power in China. It is collective leadership of these seven members that will steer China through the next decade.

The first member of the PSC, Xi Jinping, son of Xi Xhongxun, a minister under Mao Zedong, has been named the General Secretary of CPC. He will become president of China. The second member, Li Keqiang, will become the premier, while the other five members will be assigned important posts of the state. Several of these "fifth generation" leaders are also known as "princelings" because they have political pedigrees.

Although there was no campaigning as in democracies -- the selection process was not without its internal struggles, bargaining, elbowing and

jostling among the two major factions within the CPC. According to China watchers former President Jiang Zemin (86) still has significant influence over party affairs and was instrumental in promoting Xi Jinping to the top Party post. Outgoing President Hu Jintao (70) is the other leader who had sway over different aspects of the Congress.

Remarkably, none of these internal differences came into the open -- primarily because of strict control over the media. The 7-day Congress went off smoothly without any hitch and demonstrated complete unity among the delegates. The choreographed event appeared extremely disciplined.

**Clearly, China will continue to move along the same path as in the past. One would recall that in 1978 Deng Xiaoping launched what is known as "second revolution" that involved reforming China's stagnated economy and "opening up to outside world." At the 18th Congress none of the leaders indicated any departure from this path.**

Now that the Party Congress is over the next important event will be the National People's Congress (parliament), which will be held in March 2013. It is at that Congress that the decisions taken by the Party Congress will be formalised.

Xi Jinping (59), the Party general secretary, has also become the chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC) that actually commands the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the largest (2.28 million) in the world. When Hu Jintao became the general secretary of CPC, he did not get the chairmanship of the CMC from the outgoing Jiang Zemin for two years. Whoever chairs the CMC has tremendous influence over the CPC and the government. But Hu Jintao has voluntarily (!) relinquished the post. In other words, Xi Jinping has consolidated his powers.

The questions that China watchers have been asking and seeking answers are to are -- will Xi Jinping be able to lead China successfully? Will he change direction? Will the

CPC be able to retain power as Chinese society changes rapidly? Will the Chinese economy continue to grow strongly? Will China become stronger militarily?

The answers to these questions can be found in the speeches of outgoing Hu Jintao and the incoming Xi Jinping.

Hu Jintao spoke of building a moderately prosperous society; stamping out corruption; building a powerful new China; improving the socialist market economy; changing the growth model with scientific outlook; reforming the political structure; promoting ecological progress; modernising armed forces; and promoting peace.

Congress none of the leaders indicated any departure from this path.

The new leaders will, however, have to be extremely flexible to changes in the society, which is the product of economic progress. Over 75% of the people are talking over mobile phones. Over half a billion people have internet access. On the domestic front -- widening gap between the rich and the rural poor, environmental degradation, and most importantly governance issues will need careful attention of Xi Jinping and his team.

On foreign relations Xi Jinping will have to deal with multiple issues. In its immediate neighbourhood relations with Japan over the disputed Senkaku Islands in East China Sea; boundary related dispute with India; the festering problem in Tibet; the problems of Korean peninsula will keep Beijing busy in the coming days.

China is economically strong and growing militarily powerful, and intends to assert its power in regional and international affairs. Relations with US will have to be clearly defined by Xi Jinping. US - China relations are extremely complex, that requires dexterous handling. Re-elected Barack Obama and Xi Jinping will have to establish a personal chemistry that maintains peace in the Asia-Pacific region. President Obama has already toured three South East Asian nations, demonstrating a significant shift in US policy towards the Asia-Pacific region, which many analysts call "containment of China."

Unlike in Western democracies, where political leaders come to the fore after a long political career, CPC selects leaders who are not very well known for their views. Though Xi Jinping has visited many countries and CPC has groomed him to be the next president, he is little known outside China. One can safely conclude that there will be no radical change in China's domestic or foreign policy. As in the past, CPC will continue to be flexible and responsive to the needs of its people. CPC has still not become irrelevant in China as did Bolshevik Party in erstwhile Soviet Union.

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## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

November 23

1510

First campaign of Ottoman Empire against Kingdom of Imereti (modern western Georgia). Ottoman armies sack its capital Kutaisi and burn Gelati Monastery.

1940

World War II: Romania becomes a signatory of the Tripartite Pact, officially joining the Axis Powers.

1959

General Charles de Gaulle, President of France, declares in a speech in Strasbourg his vision for a "Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals."

1971

Representatives of the People's Republic of China attend the United Nations, including the United Nations Security Council, for the first time.

1979

In Dublin, Ireland, Provisional Irish Republican Army member Thomas McMahon is sentenced to life in prison for the assassination of Lord Mountbatten.

2001

The Convention on Cybercrime is signed in Budapest, Hungary.

2003

Rose Revolution: the Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze resigns following weeks of mass protests over flawed elections.

2011

Arab Spring: After 11 months of protests in Yemen, The Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh signs a deal to transfer power to the vice president, in exchange for legal immunity.