

Punish the killers

It is state's responsibility to protect its citizens

REACTIONS from the fathers of the three among the killers of Biswajit Das have exposed how the politics of the day has been brutalising the young generation. Little wonder, seeing what monsters have been made out of their sons, they disowned their children outright. And as any responsible fathers would do, they wanted punishment to be meted out to their errant sons.

Unfortunately, little progress has been made so far in bringing murderers to justice. Far from doing that, the government, or the ruling party for that matter, is giving the impression of being in a denial mode.

First it said, the killers were not any more members of the ruling party's student front as they had been expelled from it.

But that was the last thing that the parents and relatives of the victim as well as the people at large have been expecting from the government. Whatever the identity of the killers, the people only want immediate steps to arrest them and bring them to justice.

Second, the media has been informed by no less a person than the home minister that until Tuesday morning, eight persons had been arrested in connection with Biswajit's killing. However, at the same time, we are also told that those involved in the murder were identified and that efforts were on to nab them. Who have then have been arrested, if the identified culprits are yet to be caught? The puzzle has been somewhat complicated by the officer-in-charge of Sutrapur police, who differed on the question of arrests.

When the parents could recognise their sons committing the crime from the media, accept the truth and want to have them punished, it is not understandable why the authorities are waffling.

The man in the street is left confused about what is happening in the aftermath of the dastardly murder.

It is the state's responsibility to protect its citizens. Therefore, we are looking forward to the government's all-out efforts to bring a speedy and satisfactory end to the murder episode by punishing the criminals.

Photojournalists assaulted

We strongly condemn it

IF we have learnt one thing from the chaos of this past week, it is that no one is safe. During any protest, blockade or hartal, anyone can be attacked, injured and even killed. Innocent pedestrians, naïve foreigners and, yes, even the media people, who were manhandled while discharging their duties. This became apparent in the torching of a private television channel vehicle during Sunday's blockade and the assault of photojournalists from two national English dailies in Tuesday's hartal. And, while the vehicle was set ablaze by pro-blockade, opposition activists, the photojournalists were attacked by no one but a policeman. This goes to show that not only is no one not safe, but that no one is safe from anyone -- not the opposition's pro-hartal supporters, not the government's anti-hartal activists, and not even the law enforcing agencies who are delegated the duty of maintaining law and order and safety of all citizens.

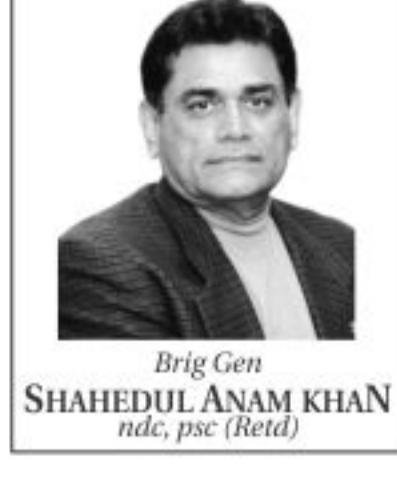
At best, they have stood by while pro-government activists have had their way; at worst, they themselves were the attackers. The photojournalists, who were taking photographs of tyres being set on fire, were assaulted by police on the scene, detained, and manhandled again at the police station, despite having produced their identity cards.

Journalists risk their safety and even their lives in the line of duty, simply to report the facts to the audience and illustrate them with photographs. In a non-combat zone, there is no situation more dangerous than where mobs run amok attacking and setting ablaze anything in their path. Under these circumstances, if they are also at risk from the law enforcing agencies whose duty it is to protect, there can be nothing more unfortunate.

The sub-inspector responsible in the above case has been closed, a prompt action we are glad about. We hope

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

Counting the cost of bad politics



Brig Gen
SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN
ndc, psc (Retd)

ON the very day when the world was celebrating Human Rights Day, a helpless innocent bystander was denied his right to life. We have lost any claim to be called a civilised people

If in Bangladesh politics was bad, and I make no apologies for calling it so, it has been made even worse by the way politics has been played out of late, and the outcomes of it handled by the administration, particularly the death of Biswajeet. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, it has been politics without principles ever since our independence.

Mahatma Gandhi had said that politics bereft of morality is one of the seven deadly sins. In fact, if one were to look at his list of the "Seven Deadly Sins" it would be quite clear that we have been committing all these sins ever since we took charge of our own destiny. And at risking the wrath of many, I shall make so bold as to suggest that no one who has been on the leadership role in this country can escape his or her responsibility in bringing the country and politics to the level that these have been brought at this point in time. We have been writing endlessly about the harmful consequences of bad politics, and we have been again reminded of it by some very recent distressful happenings.

That bad politics makes animals of

human beings there is no doubt, and one cannot avoid a feeling of strong revulsion that such brutes should be categorised as humans. What we saw being done to Biswajeet by his fellow beings is not to be found even in the animal world. It was not Biswajeet that perished in the face of brutal and merciless attack, and I don't care which party they belong or belonged to, they were cruelly personified passing off as human beings, it was humanity that became victim of man's animal instincts, an instinct nurtured by hatred towards political opponents and fed on the mutual animosity of the leaders of the two parties.

And humanity has been shamed by the deafening silence of the so-called conscience of the society, who, on any other occasion, had the same thing been perpetrated by people that did not belong to their party, would have raised their voices in unison against such brutality. Sorry Biswajeet, my brother, you had the bad luck to be killed by the wrong party-men.

And look at the very insensate attitude of the politicians. They were busy trying to establish that the killers did not belong to their party; as if

that would absolve them of all responsibilities. And it seems the home minister needs reminding that he is a minister of the country and not of any political party. It is clearly evident also that the home minister and his police are working on different wave lengths, given the contradictory statements regarding the arrest of the alleged murderers of Biswajeet. And to any perspicuous person that should be a cause for concern.

If politics is for the people, and both parties claim that their programmes are to establish the rights of the people, then where are the people in the equation? Politics is emitting a putrid smell that, I am afraid, will affect the sensitivities of everyone.

video footage since they want to ascertain the veracity of the pictures first and, according to them, if found true, take action. If it is not to lay red herrings to save party goons then what is?

So far no one has been arrested for the killing of the poor tailor. The police have instituted a case against 25 "unknown" accused. It is now quite clear why the police had been found to be inactive even when a posse of policemen was present

And look at the way the issue has been handled till now. The day after the killing the home minister had said that the agencies have been told to investigate and, "if necessary," take action. And the local police have no confidence on the

only a few yards away from the spot where Biswajeet was being hacked to death. When the media has caught the perpetrators in action and revealed their identity they seem to have vanished.

Thus the question is why are we here? Repeating past mistakes can become a habit if we are not prepared to take lessons from those. If politics is for the people, and both parties claim that their programmes are to establish the rights of the people, then where are the people in the equation? Unfortunately, except when they become news after being reduced to dead bodies, or when trying to save themselves from the violence of mobs enforcing a hartal, or from those trying to counter the hartal, people never come into the reckoning of the political parties.

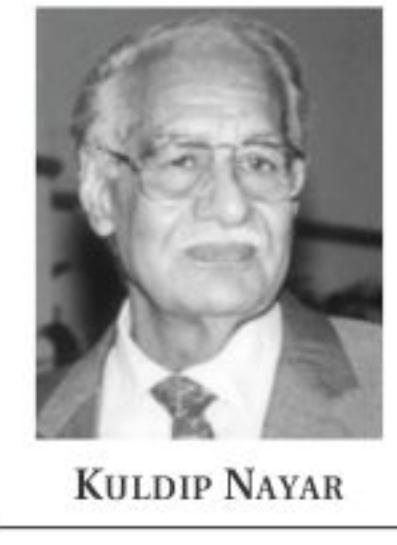
We are on a collision course, much on the same track as we were in at the fag end of 2006. Both the political parties have blood on their hands. If the BNP acting secretary general can be arrested for allegedly inciting violence during the last several days, are not those AL leaders who had been calling on their party cadres to resist hartal and to combat their political opponents on the streets equally culpable for inciting violence?

Politics is emitting a putrid smell that, I am afraid, will affect the sensitivities of everyone.

The writer is Editor, Defence & Strategic Affairs, *The Daily Star*.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Lok Sabha needs to be dissolved



KULDIP NAYAR

Iwonder whether the Lok Sabha, the lower House, can last its full tenure till May 2014. The government has been in a

minority since the Trinamool Congress of West Bengal withdrew its support a few months ago. The debate on the government decision to allow 51% to direct Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in multi-brand retail showed how close Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's victory was -- 253 against 217 -- in the House attended by 471 members.

In fact, it is a pyrrhic victory because both the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samajwadi Party walked out with their members before the voting. Both the parties have between them 41 votes. Had even Mulayam Singh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party voted in favour of the motion, the government would not have been defeated as opposition leader Sushma Swaraj claimed in her emotional and well-argued speech in the house.

She was right when she said that some of those who spoke in favour of her motion were on the other side when it came to voting.

What made the two parties walk out to enable the government win is already in the public domain. The government-controlled Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered cases of corruption against the two leaders. They could not afford to annoy the rulers. Mulayam Singh and Mayawati realise that the sword of Damocles is hanging over their heads as long as this Lok Sabha lasts.

Maybe, it has dawned upon them after the opposition's defeat on FDI that it was in their interests to have the House dissolved as soon as possi-

ble and have fresh elections, particularly after their resounding victories in UP elections (Mayawati in the Lok Sabha polls and Mulayam Singh in the assembly election) are fresh in the voters' mind.

True, most of the sitting members are opposed to the dissolution because they are not sure whether they would get their party's tickets and even if they did, whether they would win. This may be in their interests but not that of Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mayawati who are bound to gain from early elections.

People in the country are sick of the present parliament, which does not function. A new Lok Sabha may be a different ballgame. Both the Congress and the BJP, the two main political parties, are so hostile to

As far as the Manmohan Singh government is concerned there is a policy paralysis which would get worse when the opposition jointly challenges every decision in Parliament and on the streets. Largely, the situation has reached dangerous proportions because of corruption by the ruling party and the ineptness of ministers and bureaucrats who cannot handle ticklish problems.

each other that the transaction of business after the FDI debate has become all the more difficult. The country needs growth so that there are more jobs and more money in the people's hands.

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A simple question is handling the distribution of food grains. How do

you explain that one-fourth of the population goes to bed without food while some 60,000 tons of food grains are rotting in Punjab in the open, some of it as old as 15 years?

There is no accountability. The Centre has even ignored the Supreme Court's order that food grains should be distributed among the poor instead of allowing them to rot. FDI in retail is not going to improve the situation. Farmers will be hit and small shopkeepers may join the larger force of the unemployed.

Mulayam Singh Yadav may rue the day when he helped the government because his image as a socialist is in the mud. Even though he said he walked out keeping in mind the interests of farmers and small shopkeepers, he could have defended

the advanced countries want only our markets and not the large work force we have?

In fact, the West has imposed strict visa restrictions and even students' entry is difficult. It has become fashionable for the West to downgrade India because it is a free society, not like China where the forced labour can produce things cheaper. Even the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supposedly independent, has lectured us not to try to effect "inclusive" growth because we would become a cropper.

The growth which is not intensive is neither just nor fair. The FDI has been imposed on us, we didn't want it.

Nonetheless, I want the debate on FDI in multi-brand retail to end. The entire country has done nothing in the last one year except weigh its pros and cons. True, the government has won. But it has to be vigilant about the way in which the advanced countries utilise our markets.

Flag follows the trade has been India's experience, starting with the East India Company and ending with the 150 years of British rule. This time the rule may not be direct, but they may be tempted to pull the wires from behind. I can understand the exigencies of politics which the ruling Congress had to cope with to win in the Lok Sabha.

The deals with Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mayawati are bad enough. But what is worse is the "concessions" promised to foreign investors. There may be offers which the governments do not easily concede. The behind-the-scenes things are always at the expense of the country's trade or business. I hope I am wrong. If I am not, it would be a sellout by the Congress to stay in power. The voters will not take this lightly when they go to polling booths in 2014 or earlier.

The writer is an eminent Indian journalist. Visit My Website: www.kuldipnayar.com

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

December 13

1949

The Knesset votes to move the capital of Israel to Jerusalem.

1971

Bangladesh Liberation War: Soviet Navy deploys a group of warships to counter USS Enterprise in the Bay of Bengal.

1979

The Canadian Government of Prime Minister Joe Clark is defeated in the House of Commons, prompting the 1980 Canadian election.

1981

General Wojciech Jaruzelski declares martial law in Poland to prevent dismantling of the communist system by Solidarity.

1988

Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat gives a speech at the United Nations General Assembly in the Swiss city of Geneva after the United States authorities refused to give him a visa to enter New York.

2001

The Indian Parliament Sansad is attacked by terrorists. 15 people are killed, including all the terrorists.

2003

Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is captured near his home town of Tikrit (see Operation Red Dawn).