

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE

The loosening grip on public order



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

PERHAPS, the standard textbooks on forensic science have to be rewritten for Bangladesh. No murders ever get investigated with any single-minded purpose except for looking over the shoulder who maybe politically hurt or benefited and getting laidback in the process.

Naturally, arrests miss who should have been the targets, but these would be made in an unfocused manner anyway and progress reported from time to time to the media. But this too may have run into some difficulty lately. When the iron is hot it is not struck because that would have meant hard work and due diligence. In the end, or shall we say from the beginning, the real culprits would have been secure in the thought that they would not be convicted.

The resulting sense of impunity is at the root of proliferation of crimes with their newer shocks rocking the public mind every other day.

There is no point in blaming wholesale the police or the Rab because they are like the 'tainted' moon borrowing light from the sun. Those who are at the driving seat have to take the responsibility for their actions at the end of the day.

The crime world, those who police it and the political masters are not necessarily mutually exclusive entities. Largely by default, you would like to believe, since the latter two have not moved to correct such a public perception. Instead, they have worked to keep the impression alive. Yes, there have been success stories but these are far outstripped by the failed scorecard.

Whenever any mind-boggling murder occurs shattering public confidence in law and order, some ruling party leaders are up and about disproving that this is the work of their supporters or followers. Why should anyone in authority take it as an embarrassment or something of a personal affront when a crime takes place? For, this could have happened in spite of them.

Our leaders often say, a terrorist is a terrorist and a criminal is a criminal and should be dealt with as such, without considering what political badge he/she wears



STAR

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on the lapel or claims to be so wearing. In reality, what we see is just the other way round, or at least a deceiving other way round. And, a get-away is managed in the confusion with great finesse. Any number of routes were taken -- delayed and two or three-pronged investigations and weak prosecution feeding on lost or compromised evidences and what have you!

Like the terminal of depression we have experienced with Tazreen factory fire, so we have another wave of shock spiraling on the trajectory that Biswajeet Das' brutal murder has placed us on.

Two fundamentals in the handling of the Biswajeet case cannot be missed. First, rather than going after the

killers who are clearly marked out in the media, law enforcement machinery is apparently going all out to clarify on the identity of the murderers. What difference does it make whether they still wear BCL badge or have been expelled out of the student wing? The latest spin to the story is, Jamaat-e-Islami elements may have been behind the murder. One could be gullible as the victim belonged to a minority community.

But an innocent young man has been butchered, and the killers cannot be sheltered, they must be punished to make an example out of them, full stop. We know there are a plenty of sensational high profile murders that have not been met with the force of law, even left

out to be thinning away on the memory lane. In the crime world, let bygones be bygones doesn't simply work. This gory murder of a young citizen has crossed the red line and the government's will is clearly on test here.

We must introspect and find a plausible explanation to this trend of trampling of any human person's right to life like a centipede.

Three factors need to be taken into account by way of dealing with the situation: For one thing, the announcement-centric politics without the announcing party taking any responsibility for, or indeed any safeguard against, the consequences must give way to a greater reflection of leadership qualities on both sides. For the other, the upper echelons of party leadership have either no control, or exercise any, over the lower tiers of the party going down to the grassroots or street level.

The third factor that must be discarded is any attempt, overt or covert, at inciting party supporters to resist political opponents. This is not in the category of politically meeting a political challenge -- this must sink in their mind. Rather it is an aberration, not a norm. Law and order problems will have to be dealt with through the impersonal instruments of law enforcement. If I remember aright, a government leader had counseled Juba League and BCL cadres to catch pickets and hand them over to the police. With such indulgence given on the platter there is no knowing when the thin line that separates law from anarchy is obliterated.

Macabre violence on the ground in a strange but understandable way connects to the bitterness and rancour that is harboured, nurtured and propagated in endless cycles of vitriol the political leaders on both sides have been indulging in.

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Human rights and human wrongs

MARTIN ADHIKARY

THEY gave their lives working to clothe us. We covered their mortal remains, which had turned into carbon, with pieces of white cloth and buried them with our tears. Yes, I am talking about the tragic incident that took place in Nishchintopur that will continue to disturb our peace for long. Let not the memory of this tragedy get obliterated, because we seem to have got used to such incidents that are horrible acts of negligence by people.

Violations of human rights are more often than not direct consequences of human wrongs. The recent death of 111 people in a fire in a garment factory is but one incident in thousands of violations of human rights. They defy calculation, and we do not, and perhaps cannot, figure out where to begin and where to end talking about them. They occur every day, everywhere, in multiple ways. A nation that does not honour its labourers or workers cannot progress. Labour is a blessing for mankind. That particular event is the harshest commentary about how badly we treat our work force.

It is deplorable that many garment factories have proved to be death traps for those who work for a living and, as such, cocoons of violations of human rights of those people.

Government authorities needs to take urgent and immediate measures to put a halt to all these. The primary and sacred duty and responsibility of the government is to protect and promote the human rights of people.

Government authorities should initiate massive awareness campaigns against extrajudicial punishments in the name of fatwa. Educational institutions should have in their academic curriculum provision for imparting education on human rights and related concerns. Punishment should be given for violation of human rights. The media should regularly publicise messages concerning these. There should be popular and easy access to legal aid and helpline to seek protection from violations against the poor and weak people, like women, widows, orphans, children and the homeless. No mean job or task. But seriousness of purpose and political will can do a great deal.

We need to identify the values that we need to inculcate and also to underline the attitudinal change that is necessary to correct these ills. We dream that one day we will live in a society where the four great ideals of faith in the Almighty Allah, nationalism, democracy and socialism are not only written down on paper but also in our minds and hearts and culture of life. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has a clause of great significance: "The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights, freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed..." (Article 11, Part II). There can be no better vision than this for a

nation. What is needed is singular commitment. Newer and nobler visions will automatically emerge only when this basic one is achieved.

Bangladesh came into being as the culmination of years-long struggle against gross violations of human rights. Three million people gave their lives, millions of women were raped, and ten million people had to take asylum in India. However, we are still far removed from promoting and protecting the basic and natural human values and human rights of the people who are often denied those.

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. This vigilance includes, above all else, the protection of human rights and dignity. More than six decades have passed since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1948). Each of the 30 Articles is like a gem and needs to be implemented by the governments of nations. However, the history of the human race has been tarnished by the violations of those articles in all places and all countries.

The key words are "inherent dignity." This inherent or inalienable dignity of man lies at the root of all that we talk about human rights. It is the moral, ethical and spiritual values of human life that counts above all. Because man is created in the image and likeness of God, human rights stand for the respect and promotion of the inherent dignity of the human person. Human rights of people are created and given to man by

his Creator and sustainer, the Almighty, in whom the people of Bangladesh believe and trust.

Recently, the world observed the UN declared Human Rights Day. This year the focus was on the human rights of all people -- the poor, the marginalised, women, children, people with disabilities, minorities, youth, and the indigenous peoples. The UN Human Rights Charter forms the basis for a world still to be built on authentic freedom, justice and peace. Human rights issue is as old as humanity itself, just as human wrongs or sins are. They are the two sides of the same coin.

All people have inalienable dignity and glory which are so dear to the Almighty Creator that He feels the pain when people suffer, especially at the hands of others. Indeed, all sins against man committed by man are first of all sins against God. Discrimination, violence, torture are all gross sins against humanity and are enemies of human rights. Let us all internalise the spirit behind all our sacred pledges and documents, and let those who make decisions that affect many sincerely do that which will protect the glory and dignity of humankind.

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December 14 evokes pain and sorrow

MOHAMMAD SHAHIDUL ISLAM

DECEMBER 14 is a day that evokes pain and sorrow in Bengali souls as we remember that on this day, 41 years ago, in misty winter, some of the bravest and most enlightened sons of Bangladesh had made their ultimate sacrifice for the cause of pride and liberty. Teachers, writers, journalists, professionals and social thinkers were picked up from their residences, blindfolded and taken to the deserted trench of Rayer Bazar, to be tormented and massacred just two days before the victory in the nation's war of independence on December 16, 1971.

The nation today is in intense pain because the murderers of the intellectuals still move about on the same soil that was reddened by the blood of the great sons and daughters of the land. The pain of their loss only doubles when the thought that the actors behind the scene had not been put in the dock as per the laws of the land haunts our minds.

The brutality of the occupation army and its supporters was meant to maim the nation, which would certainly need the sagacity and wisdom of its worthy sons to move ahead in the early days of its independence. But what they overlooked is that the assassins' bullets could not destroy the teachings and ideals of the intellectuals, who dreamt of an independent Bangladesh. The martyred intellectuals have a permanent place in the hearts of the people of Bangladesh. The lesson to be learned from the day is that men of character, wisdom and commitment to society cannot be defeated.

The best way to pay tribute to the martyrs is to remove the social discrepancies and discriminations which amount to violation of people's rights. The need for having men like the ones we lost on that dreadful night cannot be over-emphasised, because we are passing through a crisis emanating, by and large, from degeneration in almost every sphere of our national life. However, we can still overcome the difficulties by remaining faithful to the teachings of the martyred intellectuals.

Most of all, the responsibility lies with the present-generation intellectuals to prove that they deserve the mantle they have inherited from their fallen forebears. Sitting over their academic records and professional laurels will enhance their self-image but will not bring the country nearer to realisation of the pledges of the Liberation War. Freethinking and free expression of views in a freed country has been cramped by party loyalty. Divergence of thoughts among intellectuals is healthy but straight bifurcation of intellectual life along party lines does not go to foster healthy intellectual pursuit.

The professors, academics and intellectuals of today have a much wider exposure, facilities and opportunities for global interaction than could ever be enjoyed by those pioneers. But what is their contribution as a whole, not counting some constructive exceptions? Where

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were they when secularism was thrown away? Where are they now when the nation's natural resources are being bartered away to foreign corporate monsters? Martyred intellectuals day is also a day to remind us that all the failings of ours at present are perhaps nearly as massive as the achievements of the past.

December 14 relights the memories of the

martyrs and also rings the bell of continuing the unfinished job of building a prosperous and proud nation that they cherished so zealously as teachers, writers, journalists, professionals, social thinkers and so forth. This nation can never do too much to honour those martyrs, the hundreds of thousands of men and women, sung or unsung, who have left behind a deathless saga of valour and sacrifice. And it is not enough to merely honour them if the cause for which they laid down their lives is not upheld in our everyday life, in offices and homes, in political assemblies and street corners, in intellectual discourse, playfields, classrooms and textbooks. Our commitment in this respect must go beyond observing a day devoted to the souls of the martyrs.

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