

Sayedee reaps as he sowed

Violence must be stopped

WITH the death sentence pronounced on Maulana Delawar Hossain Sayedee by the International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday, it is comeuppance for him. This has resonated with most people of the country as the Shahbagh Chatter expresses its jubilation over the verdict.

Elaborate procedures have been observed with the defense and the plaintiff making out their cases based on the witness accounts as well as other evidences produced before the court. It has been a long-drawn out process after which the verdict has been delivered in pursuit of the due process of law. The defendant has already expressed its intention to appeal the tribunal's verdict. It is only after the disposal of the appeal that the legal process will have been exhausted.

In the essence, the International Crimes Tribunals and their procedures have been successfully tried out with the result that the processes have been strengthened for justice to be done to the victims of the crimes against humanity in the 1971 Liberation War.

It is a vindication of the long arm of law reaching the heinous perpetrators after 42 years since their diabolical acts in collusion with the Pak occupation forces.

Having said that, we are shocked at the scale of violence and mayhem perpetrated by the Jamaat-Shibir elements and their supporters. The death figures reached four in Chittagong, two in Rangpur and one each in Dinajpur and Sirajganj within hours of delivering the verdict. What appalls us is the torching of a temple in Noakhali.

All this can't go on, life must return to full normality. The law enforcement agencies and the BGB are doing their best to quell the disturbances and we hope the situation will be brought under control expeditiously. We urge restraint from all sides in the greater interest of our beloved country.

TIB report sheds light on graft

Objectivity has been maintained

WE thank the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) for bringing to our attention the cases of selective graft that took place during the tenure of the military-backed caretaker government. After conducting painstaking research that spanned over two years, the outcome has added value to our understanding of the downsides of the Fakhruddin-led caretaker government was all about. That way, it is a positive contribution to the repository of knowledge about that extraordinary contrivance brought on by the fierce confrontation between the Awami League and the BNP.

As stated before, the report is credible enough as it was written based upon the findings of interviews with some 200 respondents, 8 discussion meetings with parties, 20 case studies and secondary data over a two-year period. That there was abuse of power by a section of the military has been established. What should be remembered here is that in the absence of democratic practices, the rule of law and the checks and balances that come with it are largely absent from the equation. And it is precisely the existence of such extraordinary circumstances that gives rise to the whole concept of abuse of power with impunity.

The report has also highlighted several favourable aspects of the past caretaker government, i.e. it was during its short tenure of two years that separation of the judiciary from the Executive was facilitated. Equally important was the preparation of voter ID database that paved the way for the holding of a free and fair election which led the way to strengthening democracy. Five years down the democratic path, the nation is once again experiencing the prospect of polarisation between democratic parties. We fully concur with the report that political forces must abstain from creating the grounds

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

March 1

- 1947
- The International Monetary Fund begins financial operations.
- 1966
- The Ba'ath Party takes power in Syria.
- 1971
- President of Pakistan Yahya Khan indefinitely postpones the pending national assembly session, precipitating massive civil disobedience in East Pakistan.
- 1974
- Watergate scandal: Seven are indicted for their role in the Watergate break-in and charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice.
- 1992
- Bosnia and Herzegovina declares its independence from Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
- 2002
- U.S. invasion of Afghanistan: Operation Anaconda begins in eastern Afghanistan.
- 2003
- The International Criminal Court holds its inaugural session in The Hague.
- 2004
- Mohammed Bahr al-Uloum becomes President of Iraq.

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PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

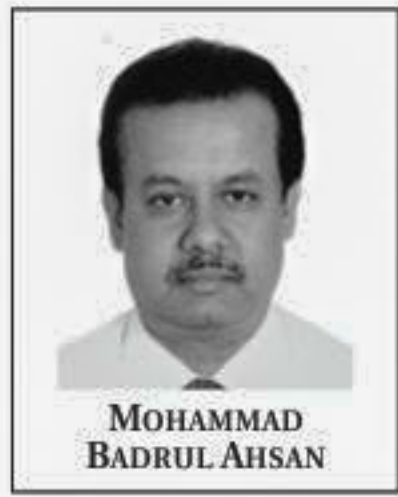
straw on the camel's back. The International Crimes Tribunal-1 has pronounced death penalty for his diabolical crimes against humanity.

This is the third consecutive judgment delivered by the International Crimes Tribunals reflective of an advancing process of trial against the local predators and collaborators of the Pak armed forces in 1971.

Following the verdict on Sayedee, there has been widespread violence and destruction of property by the zealots across the country. In particular, the mayhem along Dhaka-Chittagong highway spreading to the heart of Chittagong took a toll of at least five lives let alone injuries inflicted on a large number of people. They are on a warpath. The law enforcement agencies are out in force to quell the disturbances.

Jamaat-Shibir's *hartal* call yesterday was a contrived coincidence with the war crimes tribunal's verdict on Maulana Delawar Hossain Sayedee. It was a deliberate act of provocation to the Jagoron Moncha. Clearly, the Jamaatees thought that like in the case Abdul Quader Mollah the verdict on Sayedee would be pared down out of a perceived pressure. But Jamaatees have been patently disproved as he was sentenced to maximum punishment. It is after a due process of law that a judgment has been delivered in his case. The

CROSS TALK



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

try on February 25, 2009. The trial of almost six thousand soldiers has failed to get us sufficient facts to stitch together the full account of what happened on that fateful day. There must be a black hole somewhere in this country. What goes into it never comes out.

What have the BDR members said during their trial? Have they given confessions? Have they given denials of their involvement in atrocities committed to officers and their families? Have they pleaded guilty or innocent? Somewhere in the court proceedings against so many men, has anybody been able to glean nothing but the whole truth?

There are two possibilities. One is that each of these guilty men was operating from his silo. He did what he was told, sort of like the apartment culture where everybody knows what's happening inside his own apartment but nothing about rest of the building. Another possibility is that everybody knows everything and they are bound by a strict code of silence. When I say everybody I mean not only those who are being tried but also those who are trying.

Soviet strongman Joseph Stalin

Shahbagh and Shapla Chatter generations are jubilant over the verdict that also resonates with the popular sentiments.

This was the fourth *hartal* in a month by these elements, something that severely upset the SSC examination schedules throwing the candidates and their guardians off gear. Those who do not hesitate to cut tendons of opponents without a blink of the eye couldn't care less about the wrenching inconvenience of the exam candidates or people's normal pursuit of day-to-day activities.

The attempted disruption of public peace by Jamaat-Shibir combine and their ratcheting up of violence after the verdict on Sayedee

The new generation Jamaat-Shibir need not carry the stigma of the older generation of leaders who did not accept Bangladesh in the first place. As contemporary Bangladeshis they shouldn't carry any baggage of the past, instead try and emerge in a new shape and form professing peace, true to the spirit of Islam which means peace.

can only lead to loss of lives and infliction of injuries and damages all around. They should shun such an isolationist path in view of the fact that even among their peers other Islamic parties have disassociated themselves from the Jamaat's line of thought and approach. The best course open for them would be to help justice take its course, be part of the process and accept the verdict of the tribunals.

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and emerge in a new shape and form professing peace, true to the spirit of Islam which means peace.

All said and done, the political crisis has sunk into new depths. Some distinguished senior citizens have characterised the latest situation as the most difficult in the history of independent Bangladesh.

We have experienced usurpation of power, Martial Law and military rule disguised in civilian clothes of a caretaker government. But the supreme irony is that in an elective democracy major political forces have grown more divisive and polarised than ever before.

TIB, in an objective assessment of the military-backed caretaker government's role in 2007-08,

highlighted the mischievous and coercive corruption and abuse of power by a section of the army. In the end, the TIB has made a fervent plea to the political parties not to enact a replay of 1/11 which has been the cause of so much misfortune for the people.

Granted, the Fakhruddin-led caretaker government had done some significantly good things but these are obscured by the massive graft, interference in civil administration, gagging of the press and coercive extortions resorted to by a section of the army.

The TIB has called upon political parties to sit across the table to hit a

common ground in the resolution of the caretaker dispute. We had expected that the awesome majesty of the people circulating around Projonmo Chatter would have a sobering effect on the key political stakeholders. This remains a far cry. In the very least, non-violence of new generation of protestors should have had its influence on the prevailing political culture of banter, bickering and confrontational posturings.

As long as the Projonmo Chatter remain politically uncoloured, the nucleus of a new genre of power that has been formed will remain intact and could be reincarnated at a short notice, if need be.

The first sign of the government reaching out to the youngsters was reflected through the amendment in the War Crime Tribunal Act to provide for appeal on both sides and limiting the time of disposal of appeals. This will help quicken the conclusion of the trial process.

A cabinet decision put out a call for the first time to Shahbagh Chatter to assemble between 3:00 pm and 10:00 pm every Friday keeping the rest of the week free to ease the sufferings of the patients of the major hospitals Birdem and BSMMU. Already the youths have veered away to the National Museum and the TSC square.

Now the challenge before the government is containing the reactionary violence. In this task, it needs to take on board all the major political parties to wield the right kind of influence on the course of events from here on.

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Getting to the bottom of BDR tragedy

philosophised that a single death is a tragedy but a million deaths is a statistic. But for the families who lost their loved ones in the BDR mutiny, the statistic subdivides into many single deaths, fifty-seven to be precise not counting seven who went missing. The grief that comes to us in an annual rotation is a staple of their daily living.

How do these families handle this grief? How do they bear the burden of so many unaccounted deaths? We know the soldiers killed their officers and then descended on their living quarters like the

We we aren't looking for the killers because we have supposedly captured them. We aren't looking for the dead bodies either, because we found all of them but seven. Nor is this a case where the murder weapons are missing. What's missing instead is motive.

Visigoths who ransacked Rome. But did those soldiers act on their own? Who instigated such a massive madness? Who coordinated its abundant cruelty?

This nation has suffered from moral eclipse many times in its history. Political figures have been assassinated. People have been abducted. Men and women have been brutally murdered in their own homes. So many deaths have simply occurred but nobody tried to get to the bottom of things.

The BDR story should have been different. It happened over two days in broad daylight, right in the heart

of the nation's capital under the glare of television cameras, watchful eyes of an entire nation, the scrutinising scope of intelligence apparatus, and deliberations of government machineries. Here we aren't looking for the killers because we have supposedly captured them. We aren't looking for the dead bodies either, because we found all of them but seven. Nor is this a case where the murder weapons are missing.

What's missing instead is motive. Why were the soldiers so disgruntled or, for that matter, were they disgruntled at all? How could a disciplined force raise so many deranged

minds that they went on a killing spree with the psychosis of Genghis Khan? The Mongolian warrior boasted that the greatest happiness for him was to vanquish and chase his enemies, rob them of their wealth, see those dear to them bathed in tears and clasp to his bosom their wives and daughters. The similarities are so striking!

Four years later, people of this country are still struggling to grasp what motivated those killers to kill. Were there motivators who motivated them? If deprivation and discrimination were to make monsters out of people, BDR-like mayhem

should happen daily in our garments factories. It should also happen in our homes and streets as political and economic pressures are regularly pushing people to boiling point.

It's often said that the nightmare in Pilkhana was an intelligence failure. But nothing has happened to those who failed. If hordes of soldiers have been brought to the dock, why nobody from the intelligence side has been rapped on the knuckles?

We are not talking about scouring an ocean to find a toothpick. Thousands of soldiers conspired, organised and mobilised within the few square miles of a compound, and nobody could notice anything unusual. That was only possible if the intelligence guys were sleeping like babies.

After forty-two years, we are breaking out of the cycle of guilt and recompense in this country. We have tried the killers of the father of this nation and we are trying the war criminals of 1971. But the BDR killing might be a stumbling block to this healing process. If anybody finds it convenient to forget this terrible tragedy, it will return to seek its own revenge. The blood of the innocent will retrace its own trail, even if it takes another forty-two years to happen.

History repeats itself hoping that nations will learn from their mistakes.

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