A Petition on Our Unchanging Nature

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I have a petition to circulate among the citizens of our country which, after reading, I hope they will tear out, sign and deluge the respected home minister's office. This petition comes, of course, as a result of what has happened in Savar on April 24. Our Prime Minister is correct that one should not restrict our wisdom about rescue efforts and medical help to the television studios and couches in front of televisions. One should be there at the scene of the catastrophe helping the survivors and those who wish to help in recovery. I would like to think that this petition would be a part of my small contribution towards the efforts.

My petition concerns both before what has happened and after. The difference between this catastrophe and those that usually afflicts this country via nature is that this one was preventable. In addition, it was not a sudden event. The very previous day as we well know, cracks had developed as a portent of ominous things to come. All of this has been discussed before. The question is regarding how this very building came into being. We all know that this building was supposed to be three floors high but ended up being a nine-storied monstrosity and so it was very shaky both in literal and figurative terms. And yet, no one from the police to the local administrative officials had the sense of responsibility to confront the owners and builders.

With the increasing instances of police brutality, one wonders if this is not compounded by the fact that the biggest bullies are also the biggest cowards. I know that this does not represent every policeman. I have met members of the Police force with such honour that they would put knights of old to shame. Needless to say, such men are never in the news and like it that way. The first of this petition is to simply let such men do their jobs. Do not interfere with them in any way. Do not threaten them, do not allow anyone threatening them to get away and do not put restrictions on what they can pursue in the name of justice and the law. Above all else, pay them more than the many useless civil servants who are more of masters than servants when it comes to those whose welfare they are supposed to look after.

The second part of this petition is regarding the extraordinary bravery shown by the volunteers who arrived at Savar from places all around the country and worked to save so many lives. I salute these individuals. I also salute those medical stations where the staff has taken in patients with no concern of being reimbursed for material or labour. Above all, I salute those who cried for those whom they never knew but who were their sisters and brothers in tragedy. We all know that the military and the different services were there, but why was there no real coordination at the site of the event. We all know that there were ministers, secretaries, generals and even politicians who masqueraded as the former, but why there was no one who took hold of the tragedy by the throat and worked towards a coordinated recovery effort and speedier deployment of resources. The most bizarre was perhaps the sight of rescuers using hand fans and everything they could to circulate air



A catastrophe that could have been averted. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS