

BCL attack on CPB-BSD rally

Indicative of an arrogant mindset

WHAT an irony! On the very day when the parliament with two-third AL majority was celebrating Democracy Day, when the PM was reasserting her commitment to the constitution and democracy to visiting UK MPs, when the PM's son was seeking votes for the Boat for the sake of democracy, we had the spectacle of the BCL activists attacking a political rally of CPB-BSD in Sylhet and injuring the CPB leader, on September 15. Why? Because of remarks made at the said rally they found objectionable.

The attack is a blatant display of arrogance, intolerance and indifference of the ruling party to public sentiments that has rubbed off on its appendages too. And while we commend the dissolution of the local BCL committee we have not heard a single word of condemnation from the central committee of either the BCL or the AL. It is even more ironic given the fact that it was an attack on a party with which AL's ideological convergence can be said to be substantive.

We condemn the violence which is indicative of a psyche that has been allowed to grow in the minds of the party workers at every level over a period of time, which the AL did not bother to curb. And this has motivated the type of behaviour from the AL appendages we witnessed in Sylhet. Unless there is demonstrative action against such acts, behaviour such as this may become deadweight for the party in the next general election.

Implementation of CHT peace accord

Remove the bottlenecks

THE plights of the indigenous people are being continually expressed. And one of the main reasons for that is the non-implementation of the CHT Accord signed in 1997. The indigenous people remain deprived of many of their basic rights. So much so, that the treaty actually seems to many like a 'deception' on the part of the government.

The question is what is or are the impediments to the implementation of the Accord? If it relates to the Constitution then the issue should be addressed urgently. The High Court verdict of April 12-13, 2010, which found that the CHT Regional Council Act violated some articles of the constitution, was stayed by Appellate Division in March 2011. The CHT Peace Accord is at present under the Appellate Division's stay order.

The accord was formed in the hope of bringing peace to the hill tracts, which had suffered from violence and insurgency since independence. The root cause of hostility remains land, its ownership and occupation. The land commission formed over a decade ago to settle land disputes has all but failed. The amendment to the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act is still waiting to be passed by the parliament.

'Deception' is a strong charge to make against the government, but, until and unless the CHT Accord is implemented in full, and its people ensured their basic and cultural rights, doubts will remain regarding the sincerity of the government both at the time of

Risky container handling

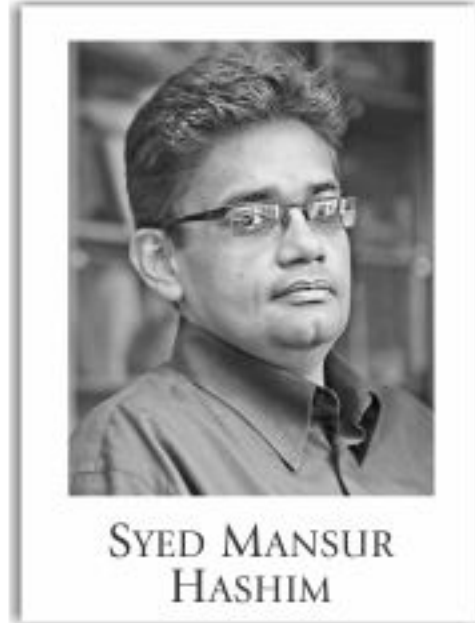
SYED ZAHID HOSSAIN

IN Chittagong port, at the conventional jetty berths, discharging/loading of a container requires attendance by stevedore personnel for locking/unlocking of a spreader for the purpose of lifting of the container. The procedure followed by some of the stevedore personnel is completely unsafe and very dangerous. Generally, the positioning of a spreader is done whilst the stevedore stands on top of the container. There had been numbers of accident where the stevedores were hit by the spreader when it was moved or swung suddenly, mostly due to the careless operation of crane by the operator. Sometimes, it has been noticed that the securing, locking/unlocking of spreader to the container is done by stevedores whilst they stand on the narrow beam of the spreader, which is very unsafe and dangerous. There had been a number of accidents recently, leading to even death of stevedores, due to sudden shake-up of the spreader because of momentary release of spreader from the container. The aforementioned procedure is not at all safe and not an acceptable way of container handling. It has also been noticed that the stevedores do not wear/use personal protective equipment (PPE) during handling of containers.

In view of the numbers of recent accident at Chittagong port where stevedores sustained serious injury including death, it is necessary that the berth-operators should adopt a "Safe Working Procedure" for the handling of the spreader, i.e. securing and positioning of spreader on a container, and they should ensure regular use of PPE. It is important to build up safety awareness among the stevedores by proper guidance and training.

The writer is Master Mariner (U.K.) and marine surveyor and consultant.

Water for slum dwellers



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

URBANISATION is a problem all over Asia. Like Bangladesh, India is facing the same phenomenon. It is estimated 220 million people will be moving from the countryside to the cities in the next two decades. With such a massive surge of people to urban areas comes the problem of providing clean water. The situation is particularly bad for slum dwellers with meagre earning and subsistence living -- essentially communities who have no fixed addresses and are unable to take advantage of piped water provided by municipalities.

It is interesting to learn of innovative ideas coming from private sector to tackle this problem. 'Sarvajal' ("water for all" in Sanskrit) is a five-year old company that is offering a unique solution to a slum in Delhi. Sarvajal has started a business that provides ATM-style systems "that can distribute low cost, clean water to customers using an ATM card. Sarvajal already has 35 of its water ATMs installed in urban areas in India, and the plan is to launch another 50 in the coming months across slum redevelopment communities in Delhi. The ATMs are owned and managed by local franchise entrepreneurs and the devices have some 25 sensors, which manage and monitor water pressure and filtration, and make maintenance and repair of the systems low cost and easy."

The system works as per trial runs. While the above project is only in the pilot phase, the true test will be to break the common psychology of people who have been born and bred to expect free water from the government. While municipality water may be free, but the time wasted lining up in long queues to get access to that water is indeed time away from earning a livelihood. Sarvajal claims it can sell its ATM-style water at \$0.01 or 1 cent (roughly Tk.8) per litre, which is about seven times cheaper than bottled water. With such low costs at retail level, it will be interesting to see whether the model can be scaled up at a national level.

It is not only in India where new companies are coming up with new ideas. The Manila Water Company, a business that is in the business of making profits while supplying safe water and sewage facility for those who can afford and those who cannot. As in India, poor people in Manila were paying up to 7 times the regular price of water. In 1997, in

The systems that are in place are simply insufficient to provide a consistent and dependable supply of water to slum dwellers.



an effort to tackle the crisis, the government granted Manila Water Company "the rights to distribute water and operate the sewage system in greater Manila's East Zone -- that includes the cities of Makati, Pasig, Manaduyong, Marikina, San Juan and Taguig, most parts of Quezon City, some parts of Manila, and the municipality of Pateros, as well as cities of municipalities of Rizal Province further east."

As explained by Minhaz Anwar in his article published titled 'Rethinking Business Models: Doing Good, Doing Well' in *The Financial Express*, the company went about laying an estimated 3,200 km of new pipelines, tackling unregistered connections and constructing 33 sewage treatment plants amongst other things. The end result is the daily supply of 100 million litres of clean water that is recycled from waste water. The constant availability of water in the areas where the company operates went up from 26% to 99%. Moreover, the company made profits while maintaining all standard water quality standards.

Such examples do open up the question; can't this be done for Dhaka which is suffering the same trends of

urbanisation as other cities in Asia? One thing is abundantly clear: the infrastructure our cities provide are inadequate to support the burgeoning slum dwelling population. The systems that are in place are simply insufficient to provide a consistent and dependable supply of water to slum dwellers. With the way things are, these residents must at times wake up at ungodly hours to go chasing for water. While the government provides piped water, what are impoverished communities to do? Their "homes," the makeshift shanties they live in, are not exactly designed with basic amenities such as sanitation and water built into their design.

While the Manila Water Company model may take some years to achieve, a project like Sarvajal can be implemented with the aid of non-government organisations and engagement of the private sector. What is required is willingness, at policy level, to move away from set perceptions and let private operators get services to those who need it most at a price that they can afford.

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51 YEARS OF EDUCATION DAY Challenges ahead

QUAZI FARUQUE AHMED

SEPTEMBER 17 is 'Education Day.' It reminds us of the movement against discrimination and deprivation in education and for scrapping of the unpopular Shareef Commission Report on Education by students in the then East Pakistan in the early sixties, which culminated this day in 1962. On that day, school student Babul, bus conductor Golam Mostafa and domestic worker Waziullah sacrificed their lives in support of the movement of the students. I participated in the movement as an activist in the capacity of General Secretary of Dhaka College Students' Union.

The movement was initiated by the students alone without any outside influence. The central student leaders could not foresee that such a huge movement was possible based on academic issues and problems faced by the students. The momentum of the movement subsided when the then opposition leader H.S. Suhrawardy came to Dhaka from Karachi. He met East Pakistan Governor Golam Faruk and could persuade him to defer implementation of the Shareef Commission Report.

Since the establishment of Pakistan, a policy of disparity and stepmotherly attitude was followed towards East Pakistan, where 56% of the population lived. The number of educational institutions started to decrease and the dropout rate increased within a short time. In 1947-48, the number of primary schools in East Pakistan was 29,633, which came down to 26,000 within a span of 5 years. In October, 1958, Pakistan army chief General Ayub Khan toppled the coalition civilian government headed by Prime Minister Feroz Khan Noon.

Two months after usurping power, Ayub announced formation of a committee headed by the Secretary, Education of West Pakistan and his one time teacher at Aligarh University S. M. Shareef, on December 30. The committee submitted its interim report on August 26, 1959. Some features of the committee's report, which was published in 1962, provoked students' agitation in East Pakistan. They were: (1) the concept of free primary compulsory education is Utopian, (2) to introduce a lingua franca for Pakistan, Roman script should be introduced and for that Arabic should be given priority, (3) Urdu should be made the language of the people of Pakistan, (4) education should not be available at minimum cost and at a 'cheap price,' and (5) the 2 years' degree course should be upgraded to 3 years.

These features and recommendations naturally were not acceptable to the enlightened sections of people in

East Pakistan, who were already against the military rule. The education movement of 1962, in line with the language movement of 1952, contributed to the liberation struggle in 1971 along with the civil disobedience movement in 1969 followed by the election in 1971, which ultimately resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh.

This year September 17 appears in the midst of government action, particularly publication of the draft education law for implementation of the Education Policy 2010, and reflection on Bangladesh Skill Development policy 2011. Teachers' organisations, NGOs, the print and electronic media continue to submit their recommendations on different points highlighting their own preferences. National Front of Teachers & Employees (NFTE), a combine of 11 organisations of teachers and employees, has placed its recommendations, which include among others: implementation of the provisions of Unesco-ILO recommendations of 1966 and 1997 concerning the status

teachers, which ensure both rights and obligations; introduction of separate pay scale; formation of permanent Education Commission; establishment of an institution of Ombudsman; reform of existing educational institution management system and the service conditions of the teachers and employees; ending of disparity in education in regard to gender, allocation in the budget for the rural areas, technical and vocational education. Due rights and privileges for the disabled and autistic students and teachers also were included in the NFTE recommendations.

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), Bangladesh meanwhile submitted 22 recommendations to Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid on September 8.

CAMPE/Education Watch recommendations included introduction of night classes for the working children; decentralisation of education; nonpoliticisation of the management of educational institutions, keeping educational institutions out of partisan programmes; end to sexual harassment and corporal punishment; recognition of education as a right, with primary education as a priority; and placement of the disabled in the Ministry of Education.

These are some of the challenges ahead in education in Bangladesh. Various programmes on Education Day are supposed to highlight the problems, as well as propose remedies. Needless to say, the challenges are many. The vow of this year's Education Day, therefore, should be to face the challenges with sustained courage and vision.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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WB loan to rescue banks!

The government is seeking financial assistance from the World Bank to help the state-run banks recover the financial crisis. This is not good news. The loans will come with tough conditions. The wide range of corruption in the state-run banks is known to all, especially after the Sonali Bank scandal. Now the question arises who will repay this loan to the WB? Of course the people. But people are not asking the government to take loans as the current deficit of the four state-run banks was not created by people, rather it was created by the government and its chosen officials on the board of directors of the banks. So taking this loan and thus putting the people in debt can not be a good decision.

Golam Kader Mukut

On e-mail

Bangladesh enters 3G mobile tech era

Bangladesh is going to soon embark on a new era of third generation (3G) mobile technology brought by four private mobile operators in the country. Last year, state-run mobile operator Teletalk introduced the technology on trial basis. Now four private mobile operators have been given license to operate 3G. This technology enables the use of various services like GPS (Global Positioning System), mobile television and video call, high speed internet, etc. This is one step to achieve the vision of digital Bangladesh.

Samiul Raijul

Bangladesh University of Textiles, Dhaka

BNP's models on poll-time govt.

BNP's ploy to go to power by hook or by crook is very clear in their so-called models. One wonders what is the basis of this illogical proposal of 'fifty-fifty' distribution of all posts.

Rationally, it should include all parties that have secured minimum ten percent of seats in the current parliament. Head of the team of advisers and their portfolios should be decided by the votes of the advisers. This simple and rational position should be accepted by all. If it is not acceptable to BNP, then how can they claim to be a democratic party? Furthermore, BNP must spell out how they will recover all the money siphoned off in their heyday when Hawa Bhaban, Tarique and Coco ruled the roost.

Conscious voter

On e-mail

Comments on news report, "Little hope of solution in JS," published on September 12, 2013

Shahin Huq

Since the ruling party ministers have perpetrated so many crimes, they are scared of public verdict. They don't want to face public wrath by losing the general elections.

Nasirullah Mridha, USA

The solutions lie in ruling party's positive attitude.

Abul Kashem

Based on previous experiences, a common man can easily predict that the political stalemate will not be broken due to the rigid position of our so-called politicians.

Khondkar Saleque Sufi

Why can't the media objectively analyse the situation? The present situation could be avoided if the BNP-led opposition alliance would participate in the parliamentary committee formed for amending the constitution, following the court verdict about caretaker government.

Snr Citizen

Dear patriots, please give the nation a break from this stalemate and get down to intelligent business, if to serve the nation is your main motto. To agree to a call is not to give in but to be magnanimous. Save the nation, please.

Molla A. Latif

Could not understand where to agree...to the amendment of the constitution or following it strictly.

"Hasina sees national, int'l conspiracies" (September 15, 2013)

Iftekhar Hassan

What PM needs to understand is, she cannot rapidly develop Bangladesh based on a bureaucracy of corrupt civil servants and by turning mastans into politicians.

S. M. Iftekhar Ahmed

The same old outdated mentality of "Everyone else is to blame, except us."

Shahin Huq

It makes sense. Sheikh Hasina knows more than anyone else that there is an international conspiracy to keep her in power for some more years. The western world may need her government for its strategic interests.