

## Attack on RU students

### Role of Police and BCL contemptible

WE strongly condemn the police attack on the students of Rajshai University in collusion with the Chattra League cadres.

Is there no other option open to the police to disperse agitating students than use of lethal weapons? We wonder why this option particularly when it is students that they are dealing with. Yet the police indulged in shooting at agitating students of the university injuring more than 100 persons including many journalists.

Equally despicable was the part of the Chattra League in the attack, whose role seemed to be in aid of the police. And the police were happy to turn a blind eye literally because, when asked, the police commissioner said that he had not seen weapon wielding BCL activists on the spot.

This is the first time after AL's coming to power in a controversial and largely voterless election that its student front has indulged in the most blatant show of force stemming from arrogance of power and in which, we are sorry to say, the university authorities played no small part. And what has eventuated at the University following the students' demand a fortnight ago of, among others, waiving the increase in fees and doing away with night classes, is because of the ham-handed handling of the matter by the University authorities.

We are afraid we are seeing the revival of the brutal character of the BCL that we had seen during the greater part of the last tenure of the AL. And this can only be stopped if the violent BCL cadres are meted out the most exemplary punishment.

We intend to comment separately later on the question of increase of fees in public universities, which we think is at an unrealistic level at the moment.

## The ACC should have a neutral image

### It has to be choosy in attending ceremonies

THE Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) is supposed to symbolize an institution working towards ensuring transparency and accountability of governance and development works by combating corruption. That said, it is somehow eye brow raising that the chairman of the ACC saw it fit to inaugurate a couple of bridges last Friday. We endorse the TIB's concern over the bridge inauguration ceremonies that the ACC chairman took part in.

The ACC chief should have been seized of a conflict of interest issue there. In addition, none in the list of ACC's eleven responsibilities envisages its leadership's involvement in launching ceremonies of any nature. The people expect the ACC leadership to perform in line with the ACC act by way of exercising its remit.

Not to forget that professionalism and image of the anti-graft body have a bearing on the effectiveness of its functioning, we expect the ACC leadership to be apolitical, neutral and above reproach. In choosing to be present in official functions, it should be selective so as to avoid drawing any controversy.

As an epitome of neutrality the ACC leadership should distance itself from political quarters and act in accord with its statutory position.

## "Phunny follytics"

PHONE companies are doing a very smart business in Bangladesh. Telephone conversations between leaders sometimes determine the political course here. Politics has turned phony this time around. This has been not since Hasina and Khaleda shook Bangladesh for 37 minutes through their telephone conversation, though it was a decisive moment, but long before that. Since long before Sayedee's phony face was seen on the moon.

At present, the essence of the latest parliamentary election has been summed up as catching or missing the train phenomenon, fairness or democracy irrelevant. Whether Khaleda missed the train set out for power or she compelled Hasina to compel her to miss it remains as mysterious as whether Khaleda's red phone was dead or alive when Hasina desperately tried to invite her to dinner. Politics in this country has been reduced to a verbal brawl between our two most powerful leaders coining appellation for each other like Golapi and Gopali. Since people watched Golapi Ekhon Train-e, nothing more popular has appeared in the country, barring Beder Meye Josna. But cinema and politics are a thousand miles apart.

Jatiya Party candidates were compelled to voluntarily stand in the election. Their leader Ershad was compelled to voluntarily move to hospital for treatment. His people did not find him on the mobile phone because all this was phony? Now a phony opposition has been set up in parliament with his party. Ershad played golf during his treatment and the day he came out in the open after recovery from his phony illness he looked very sad, but then he was all smiles on becoming the PM's special envoy. Phony?

The phone conversation between Tarique and Shamsher M Chowdhury got leaked through YouTube. Before that Tarique gave a call to the people to rise up and risk their lives to protect democracy while he stayed in a safe haven in London. This call was through a videotape, not phone, yet people could see through the phony call.

All this phony business by the major parties has screened all the follies the AL committed during the past five years, as well as the BNP before it and the JP even before it. All the important issues concerning people's lives got washed away by this funny tide. It appeared funny that many of people's representatives made mountains of wealth by catching phony fishes in their fishy businesses. Then the phony self-importance of some VIPs swelled with having gala receptions from school children kept standing for hours without food on the roadside. People suffer; funny, isn't it?

The writer writes on theatre, education and socio-political issues.

## Ill prepared to face cyber crimes



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

WITH the increase in internet usage has come a host of crimes committed in the cyber world. In the year 2000, internet subscribers in Bangladesh stood at about 30,000; by 2007 it had reached half a million and in 2009, it had crossed 615,000 users. According to newspaper reports, internet usage has hit nearly 33million people in the country. We use the

internet for leisure whereby friends and family are in constant touch with one another through social networks such as facebook and twitter. Communication through email for business and personal use has become a mainstay in our lives. While we have grown used to using the internet for personal and business purposes, criminals too have evolved ways to take advantage of the greater connectivity in our lives.

With greater connectivity comes a host of privacy and security issues. As we share our private lives online, "e-criminals" are busy in various ways like piracy, hacking virus attack, property crime, forgery, cyber defamation and denial of service. Indeed it would be impossible to list all the ways a tech-savvy hacker or groups of e-criminals are active today in the local context. However, recent events do give us food for thought. The attack on religious harmony in the Ramu incident was perpetrated by cyber criminals who put up a fake facebook account that helped incite radical religious sentiments. The doctored image of Saidi's face on the moon is yet another example of cyber crime that was widely circulated through social media. Target for cyber criminals go beyond the political. It has as much to do with stealing of financial and personal data with the intent of fraud, theft and blackmail.

The above illustrate the negative side of the virtual world. The stealing and misuse of confidential data is big business. The nature of such crime fall into three broad categories: against individuals, against business and non-profit entities and as we have already witnessed, against the government. The authorities set up a special cell called the 'Computer Security Incident Response Team' (CSIRT) with the aim of detecting cyber crimes. The ICT Act (amended) 2013 has already drawn flak as a tool for probable repression rather than a means to an end to detect and prevent cyber-related crimes. According to network security experts, the problems associated with CSIRT are manifold. There is a serious lack of trained investigators on cyber-crime. Our law enforcement agencies (LEAs) are not equipped with adequate knowledge for digital forensic detection. Secondly, financial allocation for procurement of necessary equipment to get a fully-functional CSIRT is yet to get underway. LEAs need to buy efficient forensic detection software and also hardware to help with the detection process. For a successful detection, the network system also needs to be structured. But the current network system in the country has Gateways where they do not have Data Filters, which makes us really vulnerable to

international hackers for exploitation.

Our ICT Act appears to be based on the US federal cyber law. However, there exist major differences between the two countries in that the judiciary is fundamentally different. However, a crime is a crime wherever it may be committed. In the Federal Cyber security act they have taken specific measures to introduce penalties, imprisonment of various terms. In some cases, life imprisonment and death penalty have been prescribed. However our cyber law is lacking in clarity and punishment is not as severe as the federal law. Going beyond what is stated in the Act, the CSIRT has to undergo some fundamental changes if it is to become a vanguard against cyber crime. Given that it is based on the US model, it ought to be developed as a full-fledged organization that "receives reports of security breaches, conducts analyses of the reports and responds to the senders." A national CSIRT would have to have a team led by managers, supervisors and group leaders. There has to be a hotline replete with help desk manned by trained staff. The range of services that CSIRT will provide will depend largely on the evolving threat. Typically in any country, "threats" that need to be dealt with include viruses that attack a network, denial of service (as had happened with BRAC's internet service some time ago),

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hacking of government websites. For police to help foil cyber crime, they require assistance from Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Corporation, CSIRT and network security experts, lawyers and policymakers. A national task force bringing together the various elements would go a long way to achieve that purpose.

But at the end of the day after putting all the preventive and protective measures, social awareness is the key. People will have to know about online crimes that are taking place and the probable crimes which can take place. That is why tools and materials should be used to make citizens aware. Every single person should have knowledge about the ICT Act, which online activities have been defined as crimes and what have not. Otherwise some innocent people will get punished for crimes because they were unaware of the provisions in the law. Cyber crime awareness building amongst the masses is by far the biggest responsibility and challenge of the government. People will become supportive in terms of the enforcement of the law if they understand what the Act entails.

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## A Poll Without Real Alternatives?

### AAP's costly missteps



PRAFUL BIDWAI COLUMN



PRAFUL BIDWAI

WITHIN a month of storming to power in Delhi, the Aam Aadmi Party's image stands tarnished by three missteps. First, its ministers Somnath Bharti and Rakhi Birla indulged in obnoxious vigilantism. Second, AAP's leadership, including Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, defended and commended them.

Third, AAP's Hindi organ website recorded "shortlisting of Bangladeshi infiltrators" as one of the 15 achievements of its government. This was reminiscent of the Hindutva forces' past attempts to illegally expel Bengali-speakers by branding them Bangladeshis.

This embarrassed AAP leaders and the e-magazine was withdrawn. But the offending sentence showed that communal prejudice and xenophobia thrive in AAP's ranks; their votaries casually use words like "infiltrator", which suggest intent to "subvert the nation".

Attention was diverted from the first misstep by the Rail Bhavan dharna—which provoked charges of "anarchism". But AAP shouldn't be faulted much for occupying a visible space in Delhi, as distinct from Jantar Mantar, where protests are made invisible, unlike in any other democracy.

AAP was right to demand police accountability to Delhi's elected government. But the crucial issue is police reform.

AAP's real culpability lies elsewhere: in Mr Bharti's attempt to bully the police to arrest four African women in Khirkee, alleged without evidence, to be drug-peddlers and prostitutes.

When the police refused, citing lack of a warrant, and the rule that no woman be arrested after sunset, a mob surrounded the women. They were racially abused, manhandled and subjected to humiliating medical tests.

Nine women's organisations condemned Mr Bharti for racism, xenophobia, male-supremacism and human rights violations. He cynically exploited widespread prejudice against Africans based on their skin colour. In Khirkee, they are routinely accused of drug-peddling.

Such treatment reveals a lack of civility and respect for justice. AAP should have sacked Mr Bharti from the cabinet pending the results of two inquiries against him. But they backed him and staged a dharna against police "insubordination". This ended with the wrongful transfer of two officers.

AAP beat a retreat, like any other party, for political reasons, declaring "victory". AAP leaders now practise the denial and prevarication tactics typical of venal political parties.

Mr Kejriwal displayed crass gender illiteracy in saying that "rape tendencies" arise from sex and "drug rackets". But rape has little to do with sex, and even less with drugs. It's about patriarchy and subjugating women. This is worse than attributing rapes to women's "provocative" attire or their outdoor presence at night!

AAP leaders equate good policing with control of the police by "the local people" through mohalla committees. They want police stations to be "directly accountable to" mohalla sabhas—never mind the rule of law, proper procedures, and the right of legal defence.

They obviously haven't heard of Dr Ambedkar's warning that the village and the mohalla are the worst repositories

of casteism, patriarchy and parochial prejudice; excessive powers for them in the absence of structural social change and anti-caste reform would produce greater Dalit enslavement.

Only a thin line separates mohalla-based democracy from majoritarianism. If majorities are allowed to summarily punish anyone who is termed "deviant" for defying "customs", they will act like khap panchayats. Brute majorities can do terrible things—including mass killings.

The crucial flawed concept here is "the people" as an undifferentiated, homogenous entity, without divisions along class, caste, power, religion or gender lines. This is a dangerous myth. As is AAP's woolly notion of the aam aadmi, which includes everyone from the "honest" billionaire, through the schoolteacher, to the pauper.

"The people" defined thus can be manipulated by dominant classes to oppress minorities. Blinded by prejudice and narrow self-interest, they can exercise power untrammelled by law, ethics or compassion—with horrendous consequences.

What we need is not "people", but citizens committed to universal values of democracy, who give primacy to marginalised and excluded groups in a common project to build a more humane, equal and compassionate society.

AAP lacks this vision. Its dogmatic rejection of ideology and any broad programmatic perspective deprives its "solutions-based" approach of the moral compass necessary to judge what's in the public interest.

Unless AAP acknowledges blunders and corrects course, it will betray its promise of providing an alternative to the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party.

AAP is young and still evolving. So it would be wrong to judge it harshly. But its missteps and leadership divisions shouldn't be ignored.

Some AAP leaders want the party to focus primarily on the upper-middle and middle classes and adopt Right-of-centre policies in line with pressure from the corporate-controlled media.

On the other hand, a number of well-regarded Left-wingers have joined it because they believe that AAP, not the Congress, can effectively impede Narendra Modi's bid for power by taking votes away from the BJP.

But AAP has a long way to go. A CSDS-Lokniti-CNN-IBN poll estimates its national vote-share at just 4 percent and its Lok Sabha seat-tally at 6-12. The vote-share will probably grow as AAP recruits lakhs of members. But to make a real impact, AAP's growth must be backed by Left-of-centre, staunchly pro-poor, policies.

It would make practical sense too for AAP to fill the Left-of-centre space which is opening up as the BJP and the Congress move Rightwards. This space is likely to be partially vacated by the traditional Left parties. The CSDS poll gives them 15-23 Lok Sabha seats in place of the present 24.

How AAP makes its policy choices is an open question. Its economic policy team, dominated by pro-business individuals, doesn't inspire much confidence. AAP shouldn't accept its report without broad-based consultations and thorough debate.

If AAP wants to put up a spirited fight against Mr Modi, it must take a clear stand against Hindutva and oppose his neoliberal economic policies too. Mr Modi personifies three extremely negative traits: raw corporate power, virulent Hindutva, and authoritarian politics.

Defeating Mr Modi is a high priority for those committed to defending India's democracy. It's not clear if AAP can rise to that challenge.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Fall in GDP growth

Bangladesh has lost thousands of crores of taka owing to political turmoil in the last few months. The government was trying to increase GDP growth but all went in vain. Now the central bank will have to face daunting challenges for maintaining a healthy GDP growth rate.

The central bank hoped the private sector credit growth would be 15.5 percent by the end of the year. But the growth was 11.13 percent till November. Inflation has been rising by leaps and bounds in recent months. The central bank may lower some policy rates which will create pressure on the banks to cut lending rates.

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### BNP's realization about upazila

I had the opportunity to start my career as a public servant at upazila level back in 1962. Upazila is an ideal unit for local level planning and development with elected local leaders as decision-makers. The politicians at the national level now feel that they did wrong by not giving due attention to strengthening of upazila administration as part of the decentralisation process.

It is good that BNP has realised the truth and is working hard to regain their image at upazila level. They have already suffered a political defeat in the national election held on 5th of January 2014.

Anami  
On e-mail

### Cricket is a game, not business

It seems the role of ICC is nothing but to act in line with the decisions made by BCCI, CA and ECB. They should realise that cricket is a game and not business. If we get money from playing cricket, it's not bad. But turning it into totally a business will be a mistake. By using power, the 'Big Three' want to dominate the cricket world. This way cricket will lose its popularity among many nations, rather than becoming popular globally. ICC should have a serious rethink about the matter.

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### Comments on post editorial, "An ornamental Sangsad?" published on January 31, 2014

Shahin Huq

A wonderful parliament where the 'opposition leader' professes to work for the implementation of government plans! How unique and how utopian!

Akhter Shah

When has it been really an arena of constructive debates? It's mostly been a talking shop and a 'dry run' of various procedural parliamentary activities. An 'ornament' is, generally speaking, an object that is pleasing to the eye!

One has to put the 'horse before the cart', i.e. democracy practiced by the parties.

Syedziad39

Both the ladies should be barred from politics in the greater interest of the nation. Thanks for your impartial comments.

### "Punishment instead of reward" (February 01, 2014)

Molla A. Latif

Boomerang works like that. What they planned was not right and hit them back. Silence of their Netri proved that she did know it earlier.

S.M. Iftekhar Ahmed

Of course, their party can do no wrong. Had the AL been in this position, perhaps they would have said the same thing. These politicians are so predictable in their shamelessness.

Shahin Huq

If government ministers of that time were involved in the arms smuggle, the trucks would not have been intercepted during their rule. It is preposterous that these people have been given maximum punishment for a crime they did not commit. This verdict has set a sad example and may cause more troubles in the future.

India has shown Awami League a dirty way to remain in power for a long time by exterminating opposition leaders.

### "Terror sponsored by the state" (January 30, 2014)

SY

Congrats to BNP-Jamaat for turning our country into a breeding ground of terrorists.

Sharukh Khan

How else could one uncover the BNP-Jamaat's ugly face! Bravo TDS! I reiterate my call to the educated urban middle class brothers and sisters to dump BNP and Jamaat and form an India-neutral 3rd political force. Victory will be ours, Inshallah. No other option left. You cannot do anything to India because India is just too strong. In the end, you will undo Bangladesh. So brothers and sisters of BNP, get your agenda straight to save Bangladesh and save yourselves.