

Cheers to our national cricket team!

You fought well, played quality inspiring cricket

WHEN Bangladesh graduated to the quarter-finals, it raised the expectation that the contest would be highly competitive and that Bangladesh was to give a fight. Of course the team was under pressure to chase a big Indian total and until the 35th over; the fight was on. Unfortunately, a few umpiring decisions which have been criticised even by reputed international cricketers and experts cast a shadow over the course of the game.

The first shock came when a no-ball was called against a catch taken by Imrul Kayes off the batting of Rohit Sharma when he was at 90. He went on to add a crucial 47 runs to his score and to the team's. On closer scrutiny it was found to be a proper delivery. This could have been a turning point in the match for Bangladesh team had the decision been different. The second incident was an appeal for LBW off the bowling of Mashrafe against Suresh Raina which was turned down by the umpire. On a replay, it was found that the ball in all probability would have hit the stumps. The final controversy revolved around Shikhar Dhawan's catch of Riyad's shot, where the umpire ruled that his foot had disturbed the rope and replays were apparently inconclusive. At such international level technology is always available for use in reaching correct decisions particularly when they were very close calls.

Bad umpiring notwithstanding, our team gave a very good account of itself. Now the challenge is to build on the momentum. The professionalism we have shown must now be built upon and exhibited in the coming matches. There should be no going back.

Attack on theatre workers at Shilpakala

A shameful precedent!

THE mindless assault on theatre workers at the Shilpakala Academy on Wednesday is an appalling example of a lapse in security at such an important cultural centre. The ugly incident occurred during a play staged by students of Dhaka University's Theatre and Performance Studies Department. It was part of the ongoing International Theatre Festival organised by the International Theatre Institute and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. Some hooligans decided to pick up a fight over a stage prop kept in the corridor. They insisted on wanting to open it to see what was inside. When the theatre workers objected the hooligans picked up a fight. They called their friends and soon others came with sticks to beat up the theatre workers or whoever was in the way. There were theatre goers and also members of a Chinese troupe who have been performing at the festival at the venue when this unsavoury incident took place.

Although the police eventually came and caught some of the miscreants, the entire incident is shameful. Theatre enthusiasts wait eagerly for such festivals -- a reprieve from the present pall of continuous political violence. Now even this little oasis of peace has been attacked by ruffians.

Participants of this festival include troupes from other countries. This in itself warrants a beefing up of security around the Academy to keep out unruly elements. Under the present circumstances when violent attacks on people are taking place at random points in the city, the sanctity and security of the Shilpakala Academy should be a priority for the law enforcement authorities.

COMMENTS

"Democracy was buried when I relinquished power."

--Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad

Faysal Razzak

Joke of the year! He is good for nothing.

Saiful Ahmed Rony

He has no shame actually.

Ibrahim Khalil

After he took power forcefully, democracy in Bangladesh has been buried under the ground.

"HC questions legality of DU admission test rule"

(March 17, 2015)

Shoyeb Rahman Shatil

When the students of the previous years got the opportunity to sit for the admission test a second time, then why does the new rule bar the students of HSC batch 2014 from a second try?

"He [the police chief] should have resigned, that very day [when Avijit was murdered]. We don't have this culture in our country."

-- Justice ABM Khairul Haque

The grammar of investigation

STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THE Law Commission Chairman Justice A.B.M. Khairul Haque found himself in the limelight when at a discussion he said: "He (the police chief) should have resigned that very day (when Avijit was murdered).....We don't have this culture in our country." The very Honourable Justice condemns and laments in the same breath and thus perhaps brings into sharp focus the poignancy of public servants' sense of duty and propriety.

Many readers, I am sure, are inspired by the refreshing candidness of Justice Haque. One only wishes that he had delved a little more into the causative factors of our deteriorating moral fibre; and how at critical junctures of our history leaders of corrective institutions have behaved like 'boneless wonders' thus contributing to the gradual building of a culture that he so ruefully regrets.

This writer is, however, particularly impressed by Justice Haque's caustic observation on the necessity of external assistance in matters of criminal investigation. To be specific, he says: "Why has FBI been called? You are supposed to follow the same grammar that FBI does in investigation. Then, what is the necessity to call FBI?" One could not agree more with the erudite Justice. In fact, one could ask if authorities in Bangladesh need to beseech FBI or Scotland Yard ad infinitum.

Upon scrutiny one may find that the sad reality is that every time a heinous crime involving loss of lives occurs, we look for external assistance without

realising how galling such a scenario is to the national honour. Delving into the legality of the role of external agencies in our criminal investigation does not serve much purpose, but what must concern us are the factors that have brought us to such a pretty pass.

Our citizens need to know why our investigating outfits have to live with the double stigma of being partisan and inefficient. One may ask why our national level political leaders openly impute motives on the part of our investigators and cast doubt on their integrity. Who has failed whom? Have political leaders encouraged and abetted the malfeasance of the investigators?

Viewed from another angle, are we victims of misplaced priorities because of the follies of myopic policymakers and malevolent professionals? In misplaced exuberance, have we extolled the benefits of the so-called crossfire to the detriment of cultivating a scientific culture in law enforcement? These are queries that need to be pondered in serious earnest.

Now may be the time when we must know why investigative efficiency of the police has deteriorated over the years, and whether such efficiency can be regained in isolation without setting the expected organisational goal of the police. It may also be appropriate to know the pattern of resource allocation for increasing the professional competence of investigative outfits. We may have to know if there is a lack of proper emphasis in fixing priorities and deciding the core functions of the police in a pluralist society like ours.

We have to appreciate that the cumulative neglect towards increasing investigative efficiency over the last decade has brought us to a situation where we are uncomfortably witnessing external agencies dealing with matters about which we may at best seek expert opin-

ion only. Purchasing lethal weapons may serve inadequately explained goals but investigation has to be scientific and level-headed to prove equal to the stress following an incident, and credible enough to withstand the subsequent rigorous scrutiny in a court of law.

Experienced observers are of the view that the investigating agencies shall continue to remain inactive and incapacitated until the political authorities decide to treat criminal violence as a purely criminal phenomenon and desist from interfering in the investigative process. Immediate actions to secure the place of occurrence for preservation of physical evidence will not follow if the investigators remain in a state of bewilderment following the enormity of one such incident.

Institution capacity building, insofar as it relates to modern scientific investigation, is not on anybody's priority list. There is, therefore, no wonder that after each incident there is a demand for impartial investigation by a foreign or international agency on account of alleged lack of investigative acumen, in addition to other political and psychological factors. The question is: where do we go from this impasse?

If we are not willing to forsake one of the primary State functions we cannot lose any further time in modernising our investigative outfits. Must we not realise that calling foreign investigation agencies to conduct activities on our soil amounts to a disgraceful admission of our operational and administrative inefficiency? What we need to plug the gaps in this regard is some modest investment on capital machineries and training.

However, equipping the investigators will not serve the purpose if investigation does not become the unaffected and unfettered jurisdiction of the inves-

tigators. The inaction and the resultant incapacity characterising each incident of serious violence hangs heavy on the national scene, and is causing concern. The need, therefore, is to empower the investigators through lawful directives and ensure the growth of a healthy political climate for peaceful resolution.

What should engage serious attention are the factors attributed to the malfunctioning or under-functioning of a vital organ of the state, thus impinging seriously on good governance. In the absence of a meaningful look into the deficits and attendant corrective actions, all our condemnations and pontifications serve no purpose. It is, therefore, time once again to venture to do the needful with a view to moving from the deviations to the desirable.

One has to admit that the Bangladesh state was the product of a freedom struggle and, while it adopted a written, liberal democratic constitution, it retained the colonial administrative, police and judicial structures without recasting them to meet the changed situation.

Did not the 'colonial-repressive' character of our state emerge when the governing elite of a de-colonised society decided to retain the inherited police organisation, ignoring justified demands for change?

In fact, public functionaries, including the investigators, must be helped and facilitated to so conduct themselves that the difference between government and the state interests are not diluted, thereby upholding the hallowed ethos of public service. If this can be done at the earliest we may be able to halt the pernicious slide towards an environment of pervasive lack of trust and confidence in the ability and impartiality of our investigative apparatus.

DCC POLLS

Lofty promises

BITTER TRUTH



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

WITH the Dhaka City Corporation polls schedule just announced, the mayoral and councillor aspirants have come out with a flurry of pledges, which, if implemented, will give Dhaka a dazzling look. Sure enough, they have unveiled a dream manifesto, but to implement it we need men of sterling qualities both in politics and in the bureaucracy. But do we have such men in our political arena?

Ill-conceived policies of the past that still continue have created nightmarish conditions in our cities. Worst affected is Dhaka city that grapples with oversized population, scanty land space, water shortage and contaminated water, noxious emissions, toxic effluents from the industries, and recurrent monsoonal floods. The human factors responsible for deterioration of environmental quality are population growth incompatible with development of resources, lack of adequate environmental consideration in the development processes, and poor management of waste generated through the production-consumption process. Compounding the crisis is the unceasing wave of terrorism, violence and crime committed because of lax governance and weak policing.

The maladies that affect the capital city or even the countryside are not merely localised wounds that can be cleaned, disinfected and healed; they have deep roots. Basically the problem stems from lack of vision, coordinated planning, and honest resolve. Rajuk and DCC, the two city development and

utility organisations, have come up with shortsighted planning and ad-hoc solutions from the beginning. They have forgotten that cities shape civilisation and cultural roots and urban discipline can only take roots when there is organised civic life. It is only 44 years after liberation that the present minister in charge of housing and public works has expressed his deep resentment over the way Rajuk allowed commercial establishments in the residential areas, and that zoning laws and building codes have been violated with impunity.

The picture of this fast growing city is grim. There is no sanitation worth the name for 70% of the urban population. Daily, about 65-70 thousand cubic metres of sewage flows into the city's water bodies and canals or into the river Buriganga. Pagla sewerage treatment plant, with a capacity of treating 1,20,000 cubic metres, can now treat only 50 to 55 thousand cubic metres per day.

Dhaka city roads have turned into a veritable mess. They have been pulverised, cratered and pot-holed because of non-repair for years. Development work has not gained any momentum even in Dhaka city. Rajuk has not taken up the construction of 'Uttara Lake Development Project' in the 10 months after its approval by Ecnc in May, 2014. Although city dwellers pay holding taxes regularly, even when the tax ceiling has been increased several times recently, there has hardly been any improvement in civic amenities. Because of the political feud and bickering, city dwellers have forgotten about their sufferings on the roads and the horrific mosquito menace. They have become resilient and inured to the sufferings they are being subjected to, because they know there is none to listen to or redress their problems.

Experts have expressed concern that

encroachment on the river Buriganga, the lifeline of this 400-yr old city, traffic congestion, pollution and diseases are turning this once growing paradise city into a choking hell. Once, sources of sweet and pure water for Dhaka and Narayanganj, the Buriganga and Shitalakhya rivers are now lifeless receptacles of human wastes and toxic industrial effluents. Besides, land grabbers, who are mostly politically influential, are dumping wastes on the riverbed and then raising unauthorised structures on the reclaimed land. Lack of awareness about the environment and total apathy of the government and different agencies owning river and river bank properties have made the situation worse.

Dhaka city is now under assault on many fronts like land, water and air. Garbage in Dhaka city has posed a major threat to health and sanitation of people. In the teeming city suburbs filthy water and human excreta along with other wastes in choked drains stagnate throughout the year till the rainy season washes a part of it into the rivers Buriganga and Shitalakhya.

Dhaka is symbolic of the ills that plague the country's unplanned urbanisation. But it is hardly possible that city corporation services like maintaining roads, sanitation, water bodies and healthcare will improve because transactions and official business in the country are beset by corruption. Even though DCC was split into two parts to bring about improvement in public utility services, no real benefit emerged. It is most unfortunate that the past city corporation administrations failed to bring about any real improvement because of lack of commitment and political will. If things are left as they are now, Dhaka will continue to win the "worst polluted city" medal year after year.

Election time in the country, whether it is city corporation or national, is the time when a parade of shady characters comes knocking on the voter's door. Many of these aspirants, booked in the past for amassing wealth beyond known sources of income and charge sheeted for criminal offences, will be asking for votes again. People have become somewhat cynical and are prone to wonder if there is any point in voting when the choice is between bad and worse. Could it be because they know when it comes to corruption all candidates, belonging to any party, are the same?

Unfortunately, the weakening moral authority of our leaders in public offices only increases the arbitrary power of the bureaucrats. The commitment, sincerity of purpose and firm resolve that our public leaders are expected to display in vital national reconstruction activities have not come about.

After the liberation of the country, or even after the restoration of democracy in the '90s, our policy makers and city planners should have evolved a clear urban vision. Unfortunately, those at the helm did not show any ingenuity, competence and commitment. They were more imitative than creative. The Dickensian blight and haze that hang over the city are nothing but a fallout of a foggy vision.

In absence of a vision, Dhaka has lapsed into a beehive of filth, congestion, squalour and urban blight. With things going so awry, it boils down to the fact that most of the big cities, especially Dhaka, have suffered at the hands of the policy makers. And unless the public takes a unanimous stand in choosing the right people, Dhaka's decline will continue.

The writer is a columnist of *The Daily Star*.
E-mail: aukhandk@gmail.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

"West's partial view about Muslims"

Ted Rudow's above titled letter published in your daily on March 16 has hit the nail on the head. I appreciate him for his views that are quite rational and factual. Unfortunately, many people have forgotten the past when Muslims played a significant role in arts, science and literature. Muslims in their heyday were authorities on astronomy, mathematics, chemistry. They pioneered the birth and development of these sciences among many other insights regarding the universe and about coming up with a theoretical radius of infinity. The West seems to deliberately want to forget all these contributions. But truth always remains the same; no matter how much some people try to ignore it.

S. A. Mansoor
On e-mail

A stalemate that never ends

Hartals and blockades are being used as instruments by the parties out of power to hold common people hostage, pushing our country back. The resulting financial loss is unimaginable. We are a developing nation with a huge population which is also a resource with enormous potential. Our people, both at home and abroad, contribute significantly to the economy. But most economic activities have come to a standstill because of the unscrupulous game played by

the politicians. In the US, where I live, I have not seen any educational institution being closed down unless there is an emergency like a snowstorm. The academicians here are shocked when we talk about "session jam." Teachers (in the US) give their course curriculum prior to each semester where they outline their class schedule and activities and exam date. Everyone here is engaged in economic activity, and very punctual because of the system. The US president holds the most powerful position in the world. For holding this position, the political parties there compete once in every four

years. No programmes like hartal and blockade are chalked out by them. The constitution preserves the rights of the citizens in the true sense of the term. But what about the protection of rights stipulated in our constitution? Who will take the responsibility of those who have been victims of these anti-people programmes of our political parties? How will they make up the loss they have caused our students? Who will restore the huge financial loss that these programmes have caused?

Dilruba Akter
New York, USA