

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

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Attack on BNP Chairperson's motorcade Scrupulously avoid intimidation

WE are taken aback by the news that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's motorcade came under attack, reportedly by pro-ruling party activists, during her electoral campaign two days in a row. According to our reports, on Monday, some 150 pro-AL activists bashed the vehicles with wooden sticks and brick chips, injuring 15 people and damaging six cars. Earlier, on Sunday, ruling party men had blocked roads during her campaign at Uttara and chased her motorcade carrying sticks and black flags.

We find it unacceptable that the leader of a political party should face such brazen violence while carrying out her campaign. It is a violation of democratic norms and constitutional rights. In light of the government's oft-repeated promises to hold fair and inclusive city elections and ensure a level playing field, there cannot be any justifiable reason for restraining the BNP leader from conducting her campaign in a peaceful manner.

We have been avowedly critical of the violent programmes of oborodh and blockade that had been launched by the BNP chairperson, but at the same time, the government should acknowledge a certain sign of a positive change in the political atmosphere. Such unwarranted violence against a political opponent should not be allowed to create unnecessary misgivings about the city corporation polls and upset the political situation that had only just begun to improve after three months of mayhem.

We urge the ruling party high ups to rein in their overzealous activists from crossing the line of propriety at a time when we pin hope on city corporation elections as a window of opportunity to defuse political tension.

Police used to gage AL candidates' popularity

Isn't the state agency assuming a political role?

IT is nothing short of bizarre – that officers-in charge of police stations have been busy sending reports on the popularity of candidates of the ruling party contesting the mayoral elections. It seems the OCs of this city have enough time at hand to carry out the task of pollsters – something that is both unfair, as it is done only for AL-backed candidates, and also an abuse of a state agency.

The investigative report by this paper, further mentions that the police officers were assigned by deputy commissioners to send the reports on the candidate's popularity via a special email address and fax number. A sample of the assessment report obtained by The Daily Star shows a box where a candidate's popularity can be marked on a scale of hundred. According to the report, the purpose of this task is to indicate whether a candidate is unpopular so that the party can withdraw its original endorsement and go for the more popular candidate, even an independent one.

The state minister for home's denial that his ministry did not issue these instructions is rather bewildering. It would mean that the deputy commissioners are on their own carrying out these popularity assessments, which, if true, should be considered an abuse of their power. That the police is working beyond its remit in a matter that clashes with the principle of neutrality during campaigning demands the Election Commission's intervention.

If the deputy commissioners are acting on their own accord the government should put an immediate stop to it to save its own image.

The Candidate



KNOT SO TRUE
RUBANA HUQ

HEctic public space. My public engagement has always been limited because of my personal choice. I have always believed that it is not possible to take a position when one is a beneficiary. Hence I have actively maintained a distance from public spotlight and public attention. But thrust into the political space overnight, I have today become an active campaigner of a candidate, my husband. But this column is not about him, his experience, or his credibility. This column will only cover what I am experiencing on the ground.

A crucial element in any campaign is a microphone. This tool along with a slogan vouching for the symbol is essential for the candidate. A candidate feels safe and confident when there are people around him or her. This is a reality. But while this is the truth, there is another side of the story that remains unaddressed and unattended. While I fall back on the pace in the drill, I actively pitch my objective and make eye contact with as many as possible. By asking for a vote for the candidate, I am also taking a serious responsibility on my shoulder of accountability. While I am the wife, my face automatically is getting registered with the voters and at the end of the day, he or she will be returning home talking about me, the wife who asked for a single vote. I have made it a point to beg for votes with extreme courtesy, just because every single voter needs a glance of an extra assurance. The West does not have

this practice, but we do. Touching every hand is not a requirement in other places, but this necessity may have sprung from a general feeling of dissatisfaction on the voters' side along with an extra dose of anti-incumbency factor, which may or may not be justified.

During campaign, a specific group catches my maximum attention. This usual group is usually a bunch of young people who are either enjoying tea at local tea stall or just gathering around a corner trying to catch a glance of cricket.

game in this country? We must pose this question to ourselves and look into the mirror.

As a campaigner, I find it worthwhile to engage with the young every time I sense that they want to remain as sideline critics. Watching talk shows, taking part in them and engaging in social media help, but being in politics is another ball game altogether. While the young may have an apathy towards politics, it is essential for us to tell our children that they are Bangladesh and that if

them to vote and to become a part of the political sphere.

My appeal lies in asking all to vote. I sense absolute pleasure and spirit in slum dwellers wanting to vote in spite of their abject poverty. During campaign, I take a moment to photograph slums, so that I can sharpen my sense of gratitude to my Almighty along with remembering the moment I am part of. But there are also other photographs that are being taken all around, which none of us have any control over. A random walk may have random strangers that none of the mayoral aspirants recognise and the next morning, there may be red circles around faces that threaten the democratic practices in the country, and these faces may be running beside or behind the mayoral candidates or their campaigners, but this does not stand as an endorsement from the aspirants or the campaigners themselves.

Consider two cases: one is of the ultra poor wanting to take the responsibility of being a part of the political process in reality, and the other is of a few who want to remain on the fence and sway as per the virtual reality online. As responsible citizens, we must correct this contrast now. If there are areas in politics that need to be addressed, the best way to do this would be to swim in the deep sea and fight the sharks that plant and promote conspiracy, terror and violence, irrespective of the party or political affiliation. If people want responsible and a cleaner face to come to politics, then the need to differentiate between what the candidate currently offers and what may be a leftover of a rotten system.

As a city, we want Dhaka to be the safest haven ever and we also want it to be in the safest hand. Wishing all the mayoral aspirants the best of luck in the race ahead, I sign off today... as just a Dhakabashi.

The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.



This group is also often playing carom, or engrossed in Facebook. With 45 percent of young voters eligible to vote for electing the mayor of Dhaka, the scenario is challenging. While engaging with them, I found many of them reluctant to vote for anyone. Many view politics as a game, which they are unwilling to be a part of. However, at what point and in which year did politics become a deadly

they don't actively get involved in politics, and refrain from voting, then not only are they losing out in the process but our land is also the one that will suffer the most. While we engage with them, we also need to tell them that the change that they want to see must come from within and that while it may take a few years for them to come and enter the active political scene, now is the time for

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Visionary Voices

A GLOBAL MARSHALL PLAN

ERIK REINERT and JOMO KWAME SUNDARAM

DESPITE ongoing efforts to catalyse global development cooperation, there have been significant obstacles to progress in recent years. Fortunately, with major international meetings set for the second half of 2015, world leaders have an important opportunity to overcome them.

Such a turnaround has happened before. At the turn of the century, international negotiations on economic development had also come to a grinding halt. The Seattle ministerial of the World Trade Organization ended without decision, and after two decades of the Washington Consensus, developing countries were frustrated at the US-led international financial institutions. Negotiations for the inaugural United Nations Financing for Development (FfD) conference in Monterrey, Mexico, seemed to be headed nowhere.

Then, on September 11, 2001, the United States was hit with major terrorist attacks – a tragic development that somehow catalysed progress. World leaders agreed to begin the Doha Development Round to ensure that trade negotiations would serve developing countries' development aspirations. And the 2002 Monterrey FfD conference produced major breakthroughs on foreign and domestic investment, foreign debt, international cooperation, trade, and systemic governance issues.

Of course, tragedy is not needed to kick-start progress. This year's major global meetings – the Conference on Financing for Development in July, the meeting at the United Nations to adopt Sustainable Development Goals in September, and the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December –

should be sufficient. And the efforts that have gone into preparing for these meetings suggest that there is a will to move forward.

But the right programme is key. The world needs a well-designed and far-reaching strategy to stimulate industrialisation, modelled after the European Recovery Program – the American initiative that enabled Europe to rebuild after World War II. The Marshall Plan, as it is better known, entailed a massive infusion of US aid to support national development efforts in Europe, and is still viewed by many Europeans as America's finest hour.

The Marshall Plan's impact was felt far beyond Europe's borders, developing over the following decade into what is probably the most successful economic-development assistance project in human history. Similar policies were introduced in Northeast Asia following the establishment of the People's Republic of China and the Korean War.

Of course, there was a political motivation behind the Marshall Plan's expansion. By creating a cordon sanitaire of wealthy countries from Western Europe to Northeast Asia, the US hoped to contain the spread of communism at the start of the Cold War. Developing countries that did not serve the same political ends were left out.

At its core, however, the Marshall Plan was an economic strategy – and a sound one at that. Crucially, it represented a complete reversal of its predecessor, the Morgenthau Plan, which focused on de-industrialisation – with poor results. The plan's aim – articulated by Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr., in his 1945 book *Germany is Our Problem* – was to convert Germany into a "principally agricultural and pastoral" country,

in order to prevent its involvement in any new wars.

By late 1946, however, economic hardship and unemployment in Germany spurred former US President Herbert Hoover to visit the country on a fact-finding mission. Hoover's third report of March 18, 1947, called the notion that Germany could be reduced to a pastoral state an "illusion," which could not be achieved without exterminating or moving 25,000,000 people out of the country.

The only alternative was re-industrialisation. Less than three months later, Secretary of State George Marshall made his landmark speech at Harvard University announcing the policy reversal. Germany and the rest of Europe were to be re-industrialised, he stated, including through heavy-handed state interventions, such as high duties, quotas, and import prohibitions. Free trade would be possible only after reconstruction, when European countries could compete in international markets.

Marshall made three other important points in his short speech. First, in noting the role that the breakdown of trade between urban and rural areas played in Germany's economic slowdown, he recalled a centuries-old European economic insight: all wealthy countries have cities with a manufacturing sector. "The remedy," Marshall explained, "lies in...restoring the confidence of the European people," so that "the manufacturer and the farmer" would be "able and willing to exchange their products for currencies, the continuing value of which is not open to question."

Second, Marshall argued that participatory institutions emerge from economic progress, not the other way around – the opposite of today's conven-

tional wisdom. As he put it, the policy's "purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world, so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist."

Third, Marshall emphasised that aid should be comprehensive and strategic, in order to foster real progress and development. "Such assistance," he declared, "must not be on a piecemeal basis as various crises develop. Any assistance that this government may render in the future should provide a cure, rather than a mere palliative."

Marshall's vision offers important lessons for world leaders seeking to accelerate development today, beginning with the need to reverse the effects of the Washington Consensus on developing and transition economies – effects that resemble those of the Morgenthau Plan. Some countries – including large economies like China and India, which have long protected domestic industry – have been in a better position to benefit from economic globalization. Others have experienced a decline in economic growth and real per capita income, as their industry and agricultural capacity have fallen, especially over the last two decades of the last century.

It is time to increase poor economies' productive capacity and purchasing power, as occurred in Europe in the decade after Marshall's speech. Marshall's insight that such shared economic development is the only way to create a lasting peace remains as true as ever.

Erik S. Reinert is the author of *How Rich Countries Got Rich...and Why Poor Countries Stay Poor*. Jomo Kwame Sundaram is Coordinator for Economic and Social Development at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

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COMMENTS

"If this is not sexual assault, what is?" (April 18, 2015)

Saiekh Sohrauddin

We are requesting the media to publish these beasts' photographs so that we can boycott them socially.

AA

I think victims should come forward and file cases. Whoever has photos must publish them in social networks. Please do it without fear hiding your name and face.

Nasima Akter

Hats off Liton Nandi! Having people like you (we females) can think to go out even in crowds.

"Sexual assault on women and minor on Pahela Baishakh" (April 17, 2015)

Bellal Hossain

Some people are really sick. What would they do if it happens to their own daughter or sister? Say #notosexualviolence

MD Sunny

Shame on our government! Shame on our cops! They are totally failed.

Alexander Van Winkle

This is not acceptable. It is a time of shame for us and our nation.

Awlad Hossain

This incident is undisputable evidence that our education system is morally bankrupt.

Syed Neaz Ahmad

Where is the collective morality of the people? It's time we paused and gave it a thought. No blame game would heal this.

End violence against women

I express my grave concern about the unexpected incident of sexual assault on Pahela Baishakh. Police were there on duty but they did not take any action against the hooligans. If places like DU and JU are not safe for women, then where will they go?

We are demanding to the authority concerned to ensure the safety and security of women everywhere and bring the culprits to book immediately.

MD. Abdul Halim

On e-mail



PHOTO: STAR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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City corporation election must be free and fair

When we learned from reports published in newspapers on November, 2011 that the government was planning to dissolve the existing Dhaka City Corporation and split it into two, we were shocked. Eminent citizens, experts and people from all walks of life protested the move and urged the government to refrain from taking such a step as it would not help in any way and make the situation very complicated.

Ignoring people's plea the city was dissected; the government further stalled the DCC election by an unusual move. The long overdue election is now going to be held. We do not know what will be the outcome as we learned that ruling party candidates are campaigning freely but others are facing trouble.

Our Election Commission is also a strange institution. It has found no wrong when several ministers attended an election meeting to discuss the electoral strategy for a mayoral candidate in Chittagong. We hope the EC will act wisely and take all the steps necessary to hold a free and fair election and will not hesitate to deploy armed forces during the election procedure.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong