

No place for "anti-Indians" in Bangladesh!

Water-logged Dhaka horrifying Put heads together for a sustainable solution

If there is one thing all Dhaka dwellers can unreservedly agree on, it is that traffic jams in the capital has reached unbearable and unacceptable levels, with trips that should take 15 minutes regularly taking as much as an hour if one is lucky and much more if not. Poor traffic management, unwanted obstructions and unfinished constructions on roads, restricted traffic to allow passage for PM and ministers, and the sheer number of cars on Dhaka's roads, among other reasons, pose a debilitating problem for Dhaka's residents. But if traffic is agonizing on an average day, on Thursday, with the first sign of monsoon, the city came to a near complete standstill, with rainwater inundating the roads.

It is unacceptable that a capital city of a fast-growing nation should all but collapse with a few hours of rain due to water-logging. Experts believe that unplanned urbanisation is a major cause of this persisting problem. The natural drainage system is Dhaka, which comprises of several retention and detention areas including canals and floodplains, has been destroyed, grabbed or filled up with illegal dumping of wastes. Real estate developers have been allowed to indiscriminately earth-fill these retention areas. Meanwhile, improper maintenance of existing drainage system has aggravated the situation.

The respective authorities can no longer turn a blind eye towards the increasingly worsening situation of traffic jams. High-rise buildings must not be established without Traffic Impact Assessments, in violation of laws, and illegal obstructions and car parks must be removed to allow for smoother traffic flows.

The new mayors, in coordination with other actors, must address the issue of water-logging on an urgent basis. In the long run, if we want an effective solution to this problem, we must restore the natural drainage system and make sustainable development a cornerstone of urban planning.

STRANGER THAN FICTION



TAJ HASHMI

As believers in the freedom of expression, we must not have any qualms with his portrayal of BNP as "anti-Indian", but we can never condone his undemocratic assertion, which is tantamount to justifying proscription of a political party, and expelling "anti-Indians" from Bangladesh. We do not know what Mr Sengupta meant by "no place for any 'anti-Indian' in Bangladesh", but we know the ominous implications of such irresponsible remarks. He sounded undemocratic, and promoter of one-party rule.

Blaming the victim could be an easy option, but not always. Victims and aggrieved people – for genuine reasons or because of perceived victimization by others – often resort to undemocratic methods of protest, including violence and terrorism. We have many examples of violent protests by perceived or real victims of oppression in the history of ethno-national uprisings, revolutions, and failed rebellions. The ongoing violence and terrorism in the world in the name of Islam may be cited in this regard.

I am not sure if Mr Sengupta, his party people and followers have even thought of the implications of kicking out all so-called "anti-Indian" people from Bangladesh. The nation is already fractured and over-polarized; people having very little tolerance, mutual trust and respect for each other. Bangladesh can no longer afford further polarization of people between "patriots" and "enemies". Drawing the synonymy

between "anti-Bangladeshi" and "anti-Indian" is not different from dogmatic Islamists' drawing a parallel between secular Muslims and "enemies of Islam". We have so many examples of divisive lines between "good" and "evil", drawn arbitrarily by ruling elites, colonial powers, religious extremists, throughout history: between Patricians and Plebeians; Aryans and non-Aryans; Christians and pagans; Europeans and "Natives"; White and Black; Germans and Jews; Pakistanis and anti-Pakistanis; Muslims and non-Muslims, etc. And Bangladesh is already polarized between "pro-" and "anti-Liberation" people. Unfortunately, Mr

under the leadership of Maulana Bhashani. One wonders as to why the young, popular, and charismatic Sengupta, who was an MP in the 1970s, never ever portrayed Bhashani and other avowedly anti-Indian people as "enemies of Bangladesh"! One may recall Bhashani's leading the historic Farakka March in 1976, demanding Bangladesh's due share in the Ganges water. Since India has problematic relations with all its immediate neighbours (except tiny Maldives), people in the neighbouring countries love to hate India. Bangladesh is not an exception in this regard. For all the right and wrong

of Shanti Bahini guerrillas to bleed Bangladesh, almost for two decades up to the late 1990s. One may mention Indian Border Security Force's (BSF) incursions in 2001, and the killing of scores of unarmed Bangladeshis (presumably smugglers) by BSF troops at the border, till the recent past.

Thus there is nothing surprising about the rise and growth of anti-Indian sentiment in Bangladesh. Similarly, one cannot blame Indian nationals for harbouring anti-Bangladeshi sentiment for various reasons. The BNP Government's controversial role in harbouring, arming and promoting ULFA militants to bleed India, may be mentioned in this regard.

In view of this, nobody has the right to force Bangladeshis to shun sentiments that question India's role and actions, let alone consider them "anti-Bangladeshi" or even worse, personae non grata, as Mr Sengupta has done, hopefully unwittingly. We know there are people almost everywhere who harbor serious suspicions against their neighbours across the border. There are even people who hate their own countries. Some Americans are publicly anti-American; many Scottish and Quebecers want independence; and they do so with impunity. This is what democracy and freedom of expression are all about.

Last but not least, despite Prime Minister Modi's promises to Bangladesh – especially during his recent state visit to the country – about the latter's right to its due share of water in the common rivers, the way India has been dillydallying to implement the over-promised and overdue Teesta Agreement for the last four years, and took 41 years to ratify the LBA, many Bangladeshis neither trust India nor expect any fair deal from it in the foreseeable future. In this backdrop and if nothing changes dramatically, it will be difficult to stop Bangladeshis from turning "anti-Indian", and it is absurd to portray them as "enemies of Bangladesh", hence personae non grata.

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Sengupta's rhetoric is not different from what Hindu extremists in India say publicly about Indian Muslims, who they believe should either go to Pakistan or be sent to the Qabarstan (graveyard). Before considering all "anti-Indians" in Bangladesh as "anti-Bangladeshi", Mr Sengupta should have done some homework to find out as to why and how many Bangladeshis started harbouring anti-Indian sentiment soon after the creation of their country with direct help and support from India. Not only pro-Pakistanis but many pro-Liberation Bangladeshis started swelling the ranks of anti-Indian people and organizations

reasons, many pro-independence, liberal, secular and left-oriented Bangladeshis turned anti-Indian, not long after the Liberation. They imputed the post-Liberation socio-economic and political crises to India's "colonial designs and ambitions". There are so many other issues besides the Farakka, Teesta and Tipaimukh that embittered the Indo-Bangladesh relations. One cannot just sweep them under the carpet. One knows how India harboured, armed and sent dissidents to destabilize Bangladesh following the August 1975 coup. The whole world knows who armed, trained and sheltered thousands

Boro prices plummeting Foul play by syndicate

ACCORDING to a report in a leading Bangla daily Boro farmers are being deprived of rational prices for their paddy. Although a 10 per cent tax on rice import in May, it has not had the desired effect. The special branch of the police has sent a report describing the situation in 15 districts to the ministry of home affairs. It states that price in local markets is about half the government-declared rate and with frustration levels running high, untoward incidents could happen.

The minister of agriculture has gone on record to state that the daily demand for rice is about 100,000 tons and the imported quantity is 1.3 million tons, which would meet demand for 13 days and hence not adversely affect the market. Prices have plummeted to Tk650 per mound, whereas the government price is Tk880 for the same quantity. The problem is that a coterie of middlemen comprising of rice mill owners and unscrupulous officials in the food department are procuring low priced rice from the market and supplying to the government warehouses reaping windfall profits.

The only logical way out of this quandary is if authorities made it possible for farmers to sell directly to the government. Unless such steps are taken, farmers will incur inordinate losses, from which it will be difficult to recuperate. And if farmers lose out in a big way on growing paddy, not only they will be dissuaded from growing paddy in the next season – an unthinkable situation for food security in the country.

The imperative of police accountability

STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

maintaining order, while treating individuals fairly and within the bounds of law. Police are expected to uphold laws, regarding due process, search and seizure, arrests, discrimination, as well as other laws relating to equal employment, sexual harassment, etc. In a democratic society, the political process and elected officials serve to keep the police accountable and that they reflect the "will of the people". In turn, holding the police force accountable is important for maintaining the public's "faith in the system".

In colonial times before 1947 and, also thereafter, the State has functioned as an enforcement agency and in the process became alienated from the public. The police, as the main instrument of enforcement, earned a bad image. The police enforced 'order' in seclusion from community support, lending credence to the belief that it was the police versus the people. This is reflected in the Police Act 1861 and people's expectations from the police.

The guiding principles of police accountability, according to wide agreement, are the following:

The first assumption is that order has to be maintained within law. There is a tendency in the police to restore peace and order even at the expense of violating the law. This is an important issue to ponder: how not to indulge in violating activities like torture, extra-judicial executions, and fake encounters? It is in this context that there is the need to acquire knowledge and skills used globally for conflict settlement and management without violating the rights of the citizens.

The second assumption is to exercise power to protect the democratic rights of people. The understanding is that the police have been empowered to protect the democratic rights of the citizens.

Experience indicates that both state and civil society controls are exercised in relation to the following functions which the police are to perform for maintaining the rule of law and dispensation of justice:

- Crime detection and prevention
- Investigation of crime
- Protection of rights of citizens
- Maintenance of public order
- National and human security

To perform these functions, the police, as per the law, are accountable to the command structure within the force, to the Ministry of Home Affairs, to the judicial system and through the Parliament to the people at large. The police department is under the Ministry of Home Affairs, and thus the Home Minister and the Government are answerable to the Parliament for the conduct of the police. Over the years, this institutional control has become routine and allegedly political control has often become the bane of policing. It is in view of these developments that various

committees and commissions in the sub-continent have suggested that the selection of the police chief should be de-politicized and the investigation wing of the police should be insulated from external political pressures.

It needs to be borne in mind that the key to the criminal justice system is the application of the principles of accountability to the investigative, prosecution and trial systems. The command structure of the police has built-in performance and control mechanisms - inspection by an officer, crime review meetings at the government, district and police station levels based on indicators like charge-sheeting, conviction, clearance rates, crime data including incidence of crime, number of unsolved cases, causes of spurt in crime, etc.

The power of police in any society is derived from the communities they serve. The public invests responsibility in its police to enforce the laws and, in some rare cases, to use force against citizens. This is an extremely important segment of responsibilities that the police must use with caution and care. In cases where police overstep their responsibilities and engage in misconduct, they can be removed from their positions and, in the most extreme cases, prosecuted for violating the law. The major way in which citizens ensure that the police are exercising their responsibilities within the parameters set by the community is through police accountability measures.

The key to the effectiveness of any of the police accountability models is the role of the supervisor. The first-level supervisor must be trained and inclined to use the information that influences

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the behaviour of his officers. Initial training is essential because in many law enforcement agencies training in employee supervision is extremely limited when officers are promoted to supervisory positions. In many cases officers simply try to replicate the behaviour of their prior supervisors whom they obeyed and followed.

In the area of police accountability, the role of the supervisor is critical. When supervisors ignore difficult employees or fail to effectively intervene in cases of employee misconduct, the resulting situation not only affects the future behaviour of that employee but negatively affects the attitudes and orientation of all employees, who quickly identify a double standard between what an organisation says are its values and policies and what happens to employees who fail to carry out these policies or reflect the organisational values.

The writer is a columnist of *The Daily Star*.

COMMENTS

"Visit 'productive'" (June 9, 2015)

Mehran Pashmina Nepal

Of course the visit was 'productive' and 'successful' because he got a lot of facilities from Bangladesh.

Jabed Hossain

He got everything he wanted from us.

Mehedi Hasan Faysal

Productive? Explain to me HOW! \$200 million will be used for developing the roads (mainly Chittagong Road) and those roads will be used by India... We still have to pay the debts!

"Modi comment stirs outrage" (June 9, 2015)

Nazrul Islam

"I am happy that Bangladesh Prime Minister, despite being a woman, has declared zero tolerance for terrorism," Modi said in a speech on Sunday at the Dhaka University.

I feel shame for such a lie. Zero tolerance for terrorism? Then what is BCL doing all around the country? And who is patronising terrorists like Shamim Osman?

Zaman Khan

Freedom of speech applies to the Indian PM too!

Ronen Marx

I am an Indian and I, too, didn't like his statement; he must be careful in the future.

Saurav Kumar Chanda

Better understand the meaning before commenting. In his speech, he was appreciating women's empowerment in Bangladesh.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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RUTF to tackle SAM

The Daily Star's front page report of June 9 ("Miracle food made in Bangladesh") should be the most outstanding news of the year. I am sure the dedicated team of icdr,b which developed this low cost food for our growing infants, deserves the gratitude of the nation. I look forward to the day when it will be available in the market.

Government should be closely involved with this fundamentally new nutrition project that hopefully, in the days to come, changes the picture of malnourishment of our infants.

S. A. Mansoor
 Dhaka

Employment discrimination based on religious practices

The US Supreme Court has ruled in favour of a Muslim woman who filed a lawsuit after she was denied a job at the Abercrombie & Fitch clothing chain because she wore a headscarf for religious reasons.

On an eight to one vote, the court handed a win on Monday to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), a federal agency that sued the company on behalf of Samantha Elauf, who was denied a sales job in 2008 at a store in the state of Oklahoma when she was 17. The company denied Elauf the job on the grounds that wearing the scarf violated its "look policy" for members of the sales

staff, a policy intended to promote the brand's East Coast collegiate image. The ruling was welcomed by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), which campaigns for the civil liberties of Muslim communities in the US.

The legal question before the court was whether Elauf was required to ask for a religious accommodation in order for the company to be sued under the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which, among other things, bans employment discrimination based on religious beliefs and practices. Elauf was wearing a headscarf, or hijab, at the job interview but did not specifically say that, as a Muslim, she wanted the company to give her a religious accommodation. The EEOC has reported that Muslims file more employment claims about discrimination and the failure to provide religious accommodations than any other religious group.

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