

We condole the tragic deaths in stampede

Indifference to human lives condemnable

WE are shell-shocked at the death of 23 women and four children in a stampede during zakat distribution at a businessman's house in Mymensingh. Reports suggest that 1000 people had gathered overnight in front of the house-cum-factory of Mohammad Shamim. When the main gate was opened, people, in their desperate attempt to reach the donations before the others, scurried and shoved each other; with no crowd control mechanism in place, many fell to the ground and got trampled. Witnesses allege that the workers of Shamim's factory clubbed them to "manage" the crowd, further aggravating the situation. This barbarity, if true, is utterly reprehensible.

We are at a loss to understand why no precautionary measures for crowd control were taken by the zakat donor or by the police to ensure the safety of those receiving the donations. Given that 1000 people had already been waiting before the gates were unlocked, there was ample opportunity for the owner to devise appropriate measures. Essentially, the police, too, cannot shirk its responsibilities by claiming they hadn't been informed, as they were aware of the huge numbers of people that had gathered that day; had they taken pro-active steps to manage the crowd, this catastrophe may well have been averted.

We condemn the disdainful attitude to human lives. With a week still to go before Eid, we urge the authorities, as well as those providing donations, to ensure that charitable events are not turned into unimaginable tragedies, and people's lives lost for a mere piece of clothing, in the absence of precautionary measures.

Modi-Sharif meet

Resumption of stalled talks welcome

WE welcome the move by the prime ministers of India and Pakistan to cooperate on eliminating 'all forms' of terrorism in South Asia. It demonstrates a readiness by two leaders to engage on such a vital regional security issue despite their protracted antagonistic relations. We believe that such an interaction will eventually help defuse tension not only between them but also in South Asia.

The first meeting between the two PMs in over seven months was held on the sidelines of the BRICS/SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) Summit in Russia. That they grasped the opportunity of engaging each other itself is an auspicious news. They talked on five points to tackle terror and improve ties between the two nations. The two governments have also scheduled meetings between national advisers and heads of border security forces which augurs well as a problem solving initiative. Indian PM Modi also agreed to pay a visit to Pakistan next year to attend the SAARC Summit signalling further normalisation of ties.

The whole South Asia has been suffering from the high cost of non-cooperation between these two key players. We are yet to formulate any regional approach to counter growing terrorism which has been threatening the security of the whole region. We hope the agreement of the two prime ministers to rein in militancy will be a great boost for establishing order and peace in South Asia.

COMMENTS

"No college for over 2 lakh yet"
(July 9, 2015)

Faysal Ahamed

Many students claim that they applied for a certain institution but got into another and when they went there, the college authorities demanded huge amounts of money. What the hell is going on!

"DU admission seekers can't sit for test 2nd time: HC"
(July 9, 2015)

Ziad Chowdhury

That's a pathetic decision. As I succeeded on the second test, I understand the pressure of the first time test; DU authorities should give them one last chance.

"Taking refuge in ruling party"
(July 8, 2015)

Kazi Moinul Islam Nishat

Because they know that they can't survive without doing that.

"Rain paralyses Ctg"
(July 10, 2015)

Abu Sufian Chowdhury

This is a common scenery of Chittagong during the rainy season.

Mohammad Serazul Islam

We are destined for this situation in Chittagong as almost all the drains have been used either for dumping of garbage or filled up by sand/earth. Negligence of the City Corporation is always there. As long as people do not act with sense and responsibility, all will suffer.

Embrace thy enemy?

NO STRINGS ATTACHED



AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

THE whole-sale induction of BNP-Jamaat leaders into the ruling party is the latest startling development in our bizarre political scene. It is reminiscent of the old days

when former president HM Ershad kept changing alliances depending on which party he was in the mood for, an eccentricity he still seems to nurture. Only this time it is less of a comic relief than a sign of decay in our democratic process.

The sudden exodus to the other side is hardly the result of being enamoured by the enemy's disarming charm or political ideology. Nor is it like those fairy tales where naughty goblins turn over a new leaf. A large part of it is out of sheer fear of being arrested, of being put in jail because of numerous cases against opposition activists and leaders or of becoming completely irrelevant in the country's politics.

Of course we cannot rule out the bankruptcy of the BNP-Jamaat that could be attributed for the defection, especially after a failed movement that relied solely on terrorising ordinary people, burning them with petrol bombs in a bid to show that the country would become paralysed unless the demands of the opposition were met. There was no public support for this violent, counterproductive strategy that seemed to be dictated by the Chief of the Opposition's son in London. The complete denial of responsibility for all those deaths, and the lack of sympathy for the victims from the BNP Chief have done little to endear the people towards this age old rival of the AL.

But there can be no denying that the



threat of being locked up for years on end after charges of sedition and anarchy, has done wonders in metamorphosing diehard BNP and Jamaat loyalists into strange bedfellows of the AL.

For the BNP-Jamaat alliance it is not just a slap in the face – more like a head-on collision that has left an ungainly pile of debris.

The AL, meanwhile, may think it has won the game of thrones by consolidating its power through a classic luring of the enemy's foot soldiers to its side. But in reality have they really triumphed?

What they have actually achieved is to swell their ranks with individuals who, until the moment they claimed their

allegiance, were sworn enemies of the AL. Ideologically, too, they had traditionally been diametrically opposed, at least in the public eye. How can the AL really trust these individuals and be sure that they will not one day turn around to bite them in the face? The AL's mandate has largely been based on its historical role in the Liberation movement and its pro-Liberation image. And all this time, the ruling party has been vehemently saying that the BNP-Jamaat alliance was full of terrorists that harboured anti-liberation, anti secular, fanatical ideologies. Now they are ready to embrace them as one of their own! Such a compromise may not bode well for the ruling party in the future.

And what of the hapless public, the disenfranchised people of this country who may now be witness to another phase of undemocratic politics? For both BNP and AL supporters, this wholesale converting is a big, unfathomable letdown. It will make voting for the party they once believed in a complete farce. The parliament, which has an unconvincing opposition, will be an assembly of yes men and yes women with no real debate over issues that affect the lives of 160 million people. And the silence outside the parliament will be all the more deafening.

The writer is Deputy Editor, Op-Ed and Editorial, The Daily Star.

TALK THE TALK

Walk the walk

BOTTOM LINE



BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

AFTER the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, the then Soviet Union brokered a peace agreement at Tashkent. Russia has again taken the initiative to hold bilateral discussions between the two nuclear power rivals of South Asia, India and Pakistan, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Russia on July 10.

The leaders of India and Pakistan reportedly exchanged views on issues of bilateral and regional interest over a phone call initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and agreed that India and Pakistan have a collective responsibility to fight terrorism in South Asia.

After the meeting, a six-point joint statement was issued and both countries agreed on a meeting in New Delhi between the two security agencies to discuss all issues connected to terrorism and early meetings of DG BSF and DG Pakistan Rangers followed by that of DG Military Operations. The statement also expressed the decision to release fishermen, along with their boats, of each country from the neighbouring country's custody within 15 days. It mentioned the need for a mechanism for facilitating religious tourism, and both sides agreed to discuss ways and means to expedite the Mumbai case trial, including additional information like providing voice samples.

To strengthen their growing relationship, PM Modi also accepted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's invitation to visit Pakistan for the SAARC Summit in 2016.

The above agreement is considered a big leap forward in their relations given some of

the past developments since the Modi government came into power.

When Nawaz Sharif had been in New Delhi at Narendra Modi's invitation of his swearing-in ceremony last year, it was hoped that relations between the two countries would improve. Instead relations deteriorated in August after India cancelled talks with Pakistan after accusing it of interfering in its internal affairs. Modi and Sharif last met at the SAARC summit in Kathmandu in November 2014, but did not hold formal talks.

In 2014, according to available figures provided by the Indian army, there was a 158 percent increase in cease-fire violations by Pakistan and last year has seen the highest cease-fire violations targeting civilian areas and forward border posts along the LoC and international border. There have also been counter-claims of Indian violations of the LOC by Pakistan. Furthermore, Pakistan alleges India aids separatist rebels in its province of Balochistan and fears India could cut off its rivers at source, turning the country into a veritable wasteland.

Good relations with India will trigger growth of Pakistan's economy while energy could be provided by India to Lahore at a very cost-effective rate, say experts. Apart from attracting foreign investment, this growth could lead to more markets and locations for productions, thereby increasing employment opportunities for Pakistan.

A Pew survey found that 53 percent of the respondents in Pakistan chose India as the greater threat to their country, and only 26 percent chose the Taliban and al-Qaeda. At the same time 72 percent said it was important to improve relations with India, and about 75 percent wanted more trade relations and discussions with India.

Observers say that progress in relations may likely to depend on the Pakistan army and how the Pakistani military leadership assesses the impact of the agreements made

by Sharif with Modi. It is noted that the China-Pakistan relationship casts a shadow on the Indo-Pakistan relationship. Pakistan needs China for its security, and China needs Pakistan to counterbalance the growing influence of India.

Given the above factors, the relations between India and Pakistan in the past resembled a see-saw. While highs in their relationship were observed at times, more often than not, situations forced bilateral relations to take a step back. Many analysts say that even the recent talks were not substantive, but rather 'talks about talks'. So this was not really a dialogue but a discussion on a dialogue.

Poverty in South Asia is a massive

A Pew survey found that 53 percent of the respondents in Pakistan chose India as the greater threat to their country, and only 26 percent chose the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

problem. More than two-thirds of the world's poor live in Asia, and nearly half of them are in South Asia. South Asian countries will have to ensure food, water, and energy to a growing population. Besides, they have to deal with poverty removal, and the crisis of demography, debt, climate change, good governance and corruption. South Asian regional cooperation is imperative to address these issues.

There is a saying that a leader is he who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way. Will these two prime ministers exhibit these attributes as leaders in the near future?

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Education minister's good gesture

Recently Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid came up with an official statement along with an apology after the college admission for the academic session 2015-2016 went into disarray. It may be mentioned that this year the government has initiated online admission system to all colleges. It has also decided that the education boards would publish a list of the students, specifying the colleges where they are to be enrolled. But unfortunately, the authorities concerned did not take proper preparations to make this massive mission a success. As a result, the entire system turned out to be a nightmare for more than 11 lakh applicants and their parents.

However, the education minister said, "This year's admission process was new and it involved a huge task. The students faced some problems and I am sorry for that. Please see the matter with a forgiving heart." We thank the education minister for his good gesture. We also suggest that the same system should be introduced for school admissions as well.

Mobarak Ali
Gopibagh, Dhaka

Self-assessment skills of students

Self-assessment is an important skill to learn so that students can themselves assess their academic work and performance. A lot of research has been done on students' self-assessment skills and it has been found that high-achieving students tend to underestimate their ability while low-achieving students overestimate their ability. The teachers must guide students on how to develop self-assessment skills, individually and in groups. Self-assessment can help a student discover her/his limitations in dealing with course requirements and drives her/him to go for appropriate measures to improve work and performance.

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