

Police negligence in arresting Rajon killers

Take punitive action against abettors

If the barbaric torture and murder of 13-year-old child in Sylhet by a gang of four wasn't appalling enough, we now have evidence of police negligence in arresting the killers and of allowing a perpetrator to flee the country because of "political influence". Not only did the police fail to stop the criminals from carrying out their inhumane torture in broad daylight, but they allegedly also had a financial deal with the killers and let one of them flee the country. In addition, when Rajon's father went to file a case with the police, they misbehaved with him.

A three-member probe committee formed to investigate these allegations has found that the police, indeed, was guilty of negligence and misbehaviour. That law enforcers, who should protect us from criminals, should be found abetting them is unacceptable and highlights just how vulnerable citizens of this country are. What's even more outrageous is that the police's failure to arrest was a result of "political interference". However, the committee has not yet revealed the name of the person or persons who were exerting their power to save these perverted murderers; we urge the committee to make the name(s) public without delay. We strongly believe that anyone who allows, and indeed, assists, these criminals to go free is also complicit in the murder, and as such, should be brought to book.

While we welcome the move to close OC (Investigation) and the two sub-inspectors, we do not believe that these are strong enough measures for abatement of murder. Nothing less than criminal action can be appropriate against these errant law enforcers.

DMCH trolleys only for good tipplers!

Discriminatory practices must be stopped

A report by this paper has found staff of the DMCH engaged in extorting exorbitant tips for trolley service from people coming to the emergency department. What is worse is that they offer trolleys only to those who 'appear' to be able to pay up for a service that is supposed to be free of cost. This means poor patients who go to the public hospital because they cannot afford private health care, are left without this basic service.

Such blatant discrimination and corruption is unacceptable in a state-run hospital where thousands of sick people, many of them critically ill or injured, come to be treated. It is not credible that such wrongdoing has been going on without the knowledge of the higher authorities. If it is so, then those in charge of the administrative functions of the hospital are negligent of their responsibilities and hence should be held accountable.

The sheer dearth of trolleys and staff who operate them is also a major reason for this illegal practice. According to the hospital's official records around 800 people are treated everyday with around 250 admitted in different wards. But the number of trolleys is only 30. The long waits for a trolley or not getting one at all, is not surprising in such dire scarcity.

Corruption and inadequate staffing has been perennial problems in almost all of our public hospitals, DMCH being no exception. It is therefore inexcusable that such crises in as crucial a sector as healthcare should continue without intervention from the state. The government is obligated to probe into these anomalies and make sure the people they have appointed to run these public hospitals do their job.

COMMENTS

"INHUMAN"
(July 23, 2015)

Nur Sultana Ahmed

The perpetrators should be punished in the same way.

Habibur Rahman Khan

What brutality! Truly inhumane.

Konika Barmon

We need to stop this type of violence as early as possible.

Shaista Mohsin

Is this becoming a trend now? A trend like, "Let's see how brutal we can get with kids?"

Lovloo Alam Golam Mustofa

They should be tied the same way to the tree for 12 hours to feel the pain of these two little boys.

"Raise voice against India's river linking project: BNP urges govt"
(July 23, 2015)

Kazi Md Ashiqur Rahman

Our government adopts servile foreign policies against India, so no chance.

Kalo Jam

I support BNP on this issue.

Saiful Alam Shelly

Anyway, I request Awami League to seize the opportunity by calling an all party meeting on this issue and take a unanimous decision which would serve Bangladesh's interest.

PLAYING SOLITAIRE in a parliamentary democracy

ZIAUDDIN CHOUDHURY

DEMOCRACY in a one-party state may sound like an oxymoron, but such a thing does exist in our known world. In a single-party state only one political party has the right to form the government, usually based on the existing constitution, or by diktat. Sometimes the term de facto single-party state is used to describe a dominant-party system that, unlike the single-party state, allows (at least nominally) democratic multiparty elections, but the existing practices or balance of political power effectively prevent the opposition from winning the elections.

In modern times, apart from the communist regimes that dominated half of Europe, and a large part of Asia for the past six decades, there were non-communist countries that had democracy in their constitutions, but in practice a single party ruled either because the constitution prescribed so, or the rulers coerced their way to establish a single party rule. Best examples of one party state, some de jure and some de facto, in the recent past were Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Egypt in the Middle East, and a majority of countries in Africa that witnessed the largest cohorts of rulers with highest longevity because they effectively established one-party system through coercion and election manipulation. And there are other examples of a one-party system that seems to be effective, at least so far. That is the rule by religious diktat, the way the clerics run Iran now. Although they are subject to election, these are all within the framework of Islamic provisions as interpreted by the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council.

Democracy in western countries is often viewed as black or white, either you have it or you don't. You have democracy only when people are free to vote, free to speak or write, and have recourse to law when any of these is

infringed. You do not have democracy in a country when any or all of these conditions are absent. There is nothing known as quasi-democracy. Yet, we have countries that declare that they have constitutions that provide for democracy and democratically elected governments that have been voted to power by people. However, the means by which such elections are held or how the constitution is often bent to suit a purpose are as murky as the ways such governments operate.



Establishing a one-party rule in either a communist regime or semi-theocratic regime is a no-brainer. The system of government allows only accommodation of people who subscribe and owe their allegiance to the ideology of that country. It is also fairly easy to have a single party in dictatorial regimes where one person decides the fate of that country. It becomes rather tricky to develop a one-party rule where the constitution provides for democracy and a democrat-

ically elected government.

There are two ways to circumvent this; one is to tweak the constitution to make way for a single party rule. This was done by Saddam Hussain in Iraq and Hafez Assad in Syria to make only one party eligible to take part in elections. The other, and perhaps more prevalent way to one-party domination is marginalisation of opposition either through coercion and intimidation, or by gradual assimilation. The moral aspect of this second method may be

questioned, but it is most effective and desirable for the ruling party. One, on the surface it lets the government function under the illusion of popular mandate (because the opposition is either absent or totally weakened), and second, the opportunity to demonstrate internally and externally that it has not officially declared itself to be the only political party that is allowed to operate in the country.

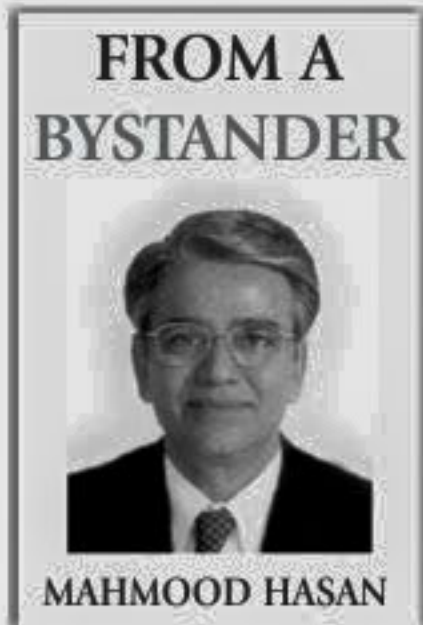
Elections in a democracy are a nor-

mal affair; all governments irrespective of whether they pay lip service to democracy or genuinely practice it do have elections. The elections are a stamp of approval from the populace that a government seeks. The difference is how they win this stamp of approval from people. In a single party state the approval is a mere formality, in a multi-party state it is a contest. In his quest for legitimacy, President Ziaur Rahman first held a referendum on his government. When the referendum led to embarrassingly high number of votes in his favour (because there was no opposition), he later held a Presidential election inviting opponents, some with cash incentives. Our later history would tell how we had de facto one party rule as many of our politicians thronged to forge political alliance with the military rulers for much of the seventies and all of eighties.

True democracy thrives when people can make choices from different parties. Unfettered rule of one party can bring relief and prosperity to the ruling party, but it may not bring prosperity and peace for the people in the long run. We do not have to cite the hackneyed expression that absolute power corrupts absolutely, but we have seen enough of it in the past to say that absence of opposition in a democracy is not a good omen for the future of a country or its people. There are many ways to weaken the opposition, but the best one is not by annihilating it completely. The correct way to nurture democracy, if we believe in it, is to have everyone a say in the way people are governed, and encourage everyone to take part in the governance process. For that everyone need not be a part of the government or the ruling party. The voice of opposition need not be always destructive; it can be a voice of reason, and a voice for keeping the country on the right path.

The writer is a political analyst and commentator.

BRICS launches new development bank



RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin hosted the 7th BRICS summit from July 8-9, 2015 in the Siberian city of Ufa. The theme of the colloquy was BRICS Partnership – a Powerful Factor of Global Development.

Formation of BRICS was spurred by the dominance of the American Dollar and the US controlled voting pattern at IMF. The first formal meeting of leaders of four countries – Brazil, China, India and Russia – was held in June 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia. By then, the world economy had already gone into deep depression, which began in 2008. In December 2010, South Africa joined as the fifth member of the group.

Looking for an alternative to the US Dollar, the group focused on reforming the global economy by creating new international financial institutions. The first summit announced the need for a new "global reserve currency", which would be "diversified, stable and predictable." That discussion eventually culminated in the agreement to set up the New Development Bank (NDB) at the sixth BRICS summit in Brazil in July 2014.

The most significant achievement at Ufa was the launching of the NDB. The first Board of Governors Meeting was held at Ufa, under the Chairship of Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov. Based in Shanghai, the Bank with a capital of \$100 billion will start operations in early 2016.

The summit also welcomed the completion of the ratification process of the treaty establishing a \$100 billion Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) and its entry into force. Its objective: any NDB members can get CRA liquidity support, without harmful preconditions, to ease balance of payment pressures. NDB members may now be encouraged to use CRA instead of IMF. Actually, CRA is a window of the NDB. Unless IMF changes its voting patterns, it may face serious challenges from CRA.

The 15th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit was also held at the same time. Since it

was Russia's turn to chair BRICS and SCO and because there is a convergence of the main focus of these two organisations, the conferences were timed simultaneously.

Established in 2001, SCO has six members – China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. It now has eight members with the elevation of Pakistan and India from "observer" status to full members. SCO has gradually turned its focus for greater economic cooperation, though originally it was meant for security cooperation.

Eurasia Economic Union (EEU) leaders were also at Ufa to discuss closer economic cooperation with BRICS and SCO leaders. The union formed in January 2015, brings together five central Asian countries – Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. China has already made inroads in the Eurasian autocracies with its liberal financial loans.

In another development the Articles of Association of the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) was signed by 57 countries, including Bangladesh, on June 29, 2015 in Beijing. President Xi Jinping announced at Ufa that the China sponsored AIIB would collaborate closely with NDB and other international financial institutions. AIIB is expected to be operational by the end of 2015. The US and Japan are absent from the AIIB, which is seen as a rival to the US dominated World Bank.

For China, it was an excellent opportunity to push its diplomacy and dominate the summits. With its massive foreign exchange reserve of \$3.9 trillion (World Bank, 2014), China is set to play a larger financial role in global economy.

For Russia, the chairmanship of BRICS and SCO summits could not have come at a better moment. With harsh sanctions imposed by the US and EU following Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Russian economy has suffered a jolt. The desperation has increased because of the fall of oil prices, a major source of revenue for Moscow. Moscow is happy that the CRA may provide Russia much needed financial support.

China continues to do well in terms of economic growth (7.4 percent, WB 2014). India, too, is doing

well (7.4 percent). Russia is going through an imposed depression (0.6 percent). Brazil has lost its luster (0.1 percent). South Africa's smaller economy is not doing badly (1.5 percent). In spite of differences in growth rates, the total GDP of BRICS is almost equal to that of US. As a block, it has the economic weight to make substantial contributions in restructuring world financial architecture.

BRICS represents 41 percent of global population, 21 percent of the world GDP, 17 percent of global merchandise and 45 percent of world agricultural output. However, economic growth is the key to BRICS unity. Economic stagnation will lead to political upheavals and weaken the group.

Sino-Russian "anti-West" entente makes them strange bed partners with largely "pro-West" Brazil and South Africa. India is somewhere in the middle – trying to balance the two, holding a faded non-aligned flag. What is impressive is that despite being dispersed in four continents and having diverse political systems, BRICS holds together.

BRICS can rightly take credit for launching NDB. This novel institution should help in consolidating BRICS as a forum. NDB's emergence in the global financial scene will no doubt challenge the Bretton Woods system that we have been so familiar with since the WWII. It will not be surprising if a new international reserve currency is devised by NDB in the coming years.

The 77-paragraph Ufa Declaration emphasised the importance of strengthening BRICS' solidarity and mutually beneficial cooperation. It stressed efforts to respond to emerging challenges, ensure peace and security, and promote development in a sustainable way.

Despite Kremlin's standoff with the West, the gathering of so many leaders at Ufa proved that President Putin is not alone. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said, "BRICS illustrates a new polycentric system of international relations" demonstrating the increasing influence of "new centres of power."

BRICS seems set to challenge West's domination of the global financial system.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Iran's entry into mainstream world affairs

I thoroughly enjoyed reading former ambassador Mahmood Hasan's article titled 'Iran's re-entry to the comity of nations' (TDS, July 21, 2015). As for Iran's re-entry into the international community, it is a case of 'if you can't beat them, join them'.

Let's hope Iran stays on board and does not suddenly decide to take a dangerous dive to swim back to the isolation bay.
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Dhaka

Relocation is not the answer

Thanks to TDS for the article "Why relocating Rohingyas is not the answer," published on July 13, 2015. I completely agree that the association of the Rohingya refugees with crime is not likely to be based on data and statistics; rather it's a tendency to blame migrants for a nation's problems. I also agree that unless Rohingya refugees are willing, they should not be forced to relocate. Something not mentioned in this piece which may be beneficial for future pieces is that seven Nobel laureates -- Desmond Tutu, Mairead Maguire, Jody Williams, Tawakkol Karman, Shirin Ebadi, Leymah Gbowee, and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel -- and the international community have agreed that the situation in Myanmar is nothing short of genocide. The persecution of the Rohingyas by the Myanmar govern-

ment is deplorable. Hope good sense will prevail.
Amanda Krolick
On e-mail



PHOTO: AFP