

A trigger happy MP

Lawmakers are not above the law

A minor boy in Sundarganj of Gaibandha was shot and wounded in both legs, reportedly by a local member of parliament, on Friday. Apparently he was not the target, his uncle was, with whom he had gone out for a walk in the morning. Predictably, the MP at first, refuted the claim but later his brother-in-law surrendered his shot gun and pistol to the police station, although the lawmaker did not come himself. The DC of Gaibandha has acknowledged the veracity of the allegation and the OC ordered that the firearms of the MP be seized. The fact that the MP and his family are in hiding gives all the indication of his guilt.

The MP had resorted to indiscriminate firing as eye witness accounts reveal. Even more reprehensible is that attempts were made by the MP to prevent the injured boy from going to Rangpur for better treatment. We learn from media reports that the said MP is known for his arrogance and misdemeanour which even his party colleagues have admitted to and which they think have harmed the party's image.

Public representatives are supposed to be guardians of the electorate. What a way to protect the very people who have voted the MP to the parliament! In the eyes of the law, shooting an unarmed person who poses no threat is considered a punishable crime. Where the victim is a minor, the crime is all the more condemnable. The lawmaker in question should be brought to book like any other individual would be for such an unlawful, brutal act.

Too many unauthorised hospitals

Take actions to clamp down on them

THE 'discovery' of yet another private hospital operating without proper authorisation accentuates the worsening conditions of the health services in the country.

The four-storey, 20-bed general hospital in question reportedly did not renew its registration after 2014. What's more, it had no permission to run a neonatal ICU. One does not have to be a rocket scientist to see a link between this fact and the death of three newborn babies last Friday which prompted the authorities to shut it down and arrest two doctors and an official of this illegal facility.

According to a report last year, more than 60 percent of private clinics and diagnostic centres in the country are operating without the approval of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) resulting in wrong and improper treatments while many others simply did not bother to get their permission renewed. It is bewildering why there is no mechanism for proper monitoring of these pseudo clinics for bringing them to book. On the other hand, is there any channel through which victims of gross medical malpractice can ventilate their grievances and hold the culprits accountable?

We believe that the presence of these so-called clinics and hospitals running under the nose of the authorities negates the rhetoric of the much hyped qualitative leap the country is poised to take in all sectors including healthcare and education, the two most important vehicles of development.

We demand that the DGHS immediately conduct an all-out drive against all such private establishments working without the proper authorisation and ensure that those involved in medical malpractice are given the highest punishment under law.

Will the killings affect the economy?



FAHMIDA KHATUN

FOLLOWING the killing of an innocent Italian citizen on September 28 in Dhaka, tensions have been engulfing us on all sides. Diplomatic missions, quite naturally, alerted their citizens to stay safe and take precautions while moving around the city. We Bangladeshis were upset and surprised by high security alerts issued by some countries to their citizens and also by the news in the Western media. Many thought that the reaction to the killing was probably out of proportion, even though they were also shocked and baffled by this sudden murder, something that has rarely happened in Bangladesh before.

This is also alarming, since Gulshan and Baridhara are supposedly the safest areas of Dhaka city where diplomats and foreign communities reside. We see many foreigners jogging on the roads and parks, walking with groceries to their homes, cycling to their offices and even sending their children to international schools in rickshaws which many of us, being Bangladeshis, don't feel comfortable doing. But our foreign friends faced no problem until this killing. Bangladeshis have always shown their hospitality and warmth to foreigners. Except for one or two petty incidents of mugging, miscreants generally never target them. So the murder of a foreigner on a street of Gulshan was beyond the wildest imagination of anyone.

But within five days into the killing of the Italian citizen, the second murder of another foreigner, a Japanese working in a village in Rangpur, brought new waves of apprehension regarding the question of safety of foreigners in the country.

Political implications of such killings cannot be ignored. There could be economic repercussions too. Even with impressive economic growth of about 6 percent during the last decade, Bangladesh has been struggling to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) to enhance its growth momentum and reduce poverty through higher employment generation. However, private investment - both foreign and domestic - is not picking up not only due to the lack of infrastructural bottlenecks, but also owing to poor governance and lack of political stability. Export growth, including exports of readymade garments (RMG), did not meet the target in FY2015. Political volatility during earlier months of 2015 has been one of the reasons, in addition to compliance issues in case of lower RMG exports.

As the global economic outlook for 2015 and 2016 is not promising, the coming days for Bangladesh will not be easy either. The International Monetary Fund in July this year projected global economic growth to be 3.3 percent, which is lower than 2014. In its upcoming global economic outlook, IMF is going to downgrade its growth projections, as large economies such as China face weaker growth than

expected. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has also lowered its forecasts for global economic growth in mid-September. The World Trade Organisation indicates only a slight increase of global trade, from 2.8 percent in 2014 to 3.3 percent in 2015 and to 4 percent in 2016.

ADB's economic outlook for Asia in September reveals that Asian economies will have lower growth from 6.2 percent in 2014 to 5.8 percent in 2015 and only a slight increase to 6 percent in 2016. As for Bangladesh, growth projections are revised slightly upward in the hope that exports will grow, remittances will boost consumption demand, investment will pick up and spending on annual development programme will increase. However,

people in developed countries, particularly the USA, where gun massacres are random and have become a day-to-day affair. Life there is unpredictable for innocent citizens, even for very young children. The difference between killings in advanced countries and Bangladesh is that it does not stop people from going to those countries to live there, spend their money there and invest there. Those are developed economies, whereas Bangladesh has just graduated from a low income to a lower-middle income country with a per capita income of only \$1,314 where investment is merely 30 percent of the GDP. Therefore, it cannot afford any slight mistake in its journey towards further progression.

But branding Bangladesh as an unsafe country for foreigners would be fatal, as much as it would



the recent Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) of the World Economic Forum indicates that hurdles remain in a number of areas, including institutions, despite a slight improvement in the GCR ranking, from 109th position in 2014 to 107th in 2015.

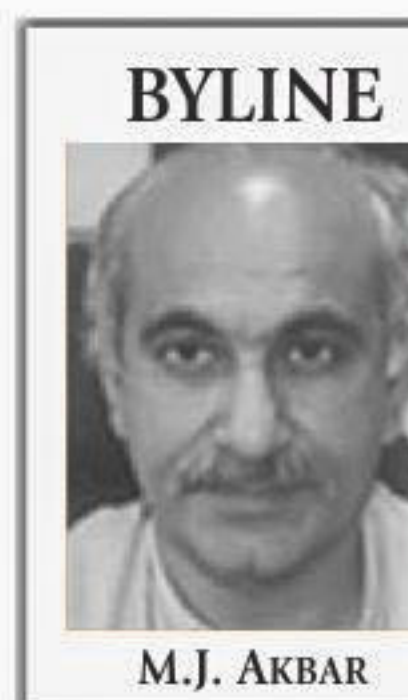
As almost 60 percent of the Bangladesh economy is integrated with the global economy through trade, FDI, foreign aid and remittances, clouds in the global economy will also loom over Bangladesh. Concerns, such as the murders of foreigners in the country, can only make matters worse, since image also plays an important role in the case of economic decisions.

Some of us tried to compare the killings of foreigners in Bangladesh with the shooting of

be wrong to portray today's Bangladesh as a place for religious extremism. Bangladeshis have always been progressive in their thoughts with religious values instilled in their hearts. Despite being a predominantly Muslim country, Bangladesh has always upheld communal harmony and demonstrated tolerance towards people from other religious beliefs. The present government of Bangladesh has shown a strong commitment towards combating terrorism and extremism. In the same spirit, the government should exhibit its strength to take measures for justice and protect foreigners living in the country.

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If Left doesn't do God, it should try Godfather



M.J. AKBAR

on October 3, was the now-venerable Asim Dasgupta, who served as finance minister of Left Front governments in Bengal for more than a quarter century; but this is not a joke about how the mighty have fallen. In fact, it goes to the CPI(M)'s credit that it does not permit anyone's ego to interfere with a party diktat. If a lofty finance minister is ordered to try for a suburban mayor's job, so be it. The joke lies elsewhere.

Comrade Dasgupta is canvassing in the old-fashioned manner, door-to-door. According to *The Indian Express*, he tells citizens, "Don't forget to vote. And make sure you're there early in the morning...because that's when we expect the trouble and disruption by TMC [Trinamool Congress] hooligans to be the least." He also distributes a pamphlet captioned 'Nijer Vote Nije Deen', or, 'Cast your vote yourself'.

This is uproarious for anyone who lived in Bengal between 1977 and 2011, when the Left Front held what seemed to be interminable power. In every election, the Marxists supplemented their vote, and ensured victory, in precisely this manner. Their cadre would,

with the confidence of hooligans protected by state police, capture polling booths where they believed the vote would go against them. Officials manning the voting centres were intimidated if they did not collaborate. It is always fun to hear a shriveled pot calling a whistling kettle black. Bengal's Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is doing unto CPI(M) precisely what CPI(M) did unto others. It is almost impossible to imagine Bengal's Marxists as advocates of fair elections. But defeat works wonders. It can even make you virtuous.

The odd thing is that four years after losing Bengal, the Marxists have still not understood why. One phrase sums it up: Old Doctrine, Old Men. The Leftists have neither reinvented their philosophy to restore their equation with the young, nor retired the old men who have long passed their sell-by date. Asim Dasgupta is 69 now. In other words, he was 40 when appointed finance minister. Why has CPI(M) not made a 40-year-old its candidate for mayor in Bidhannagar? Is it because the party does not have too many members who are young and capable? Or is it because they still suffer from what might be called the "Soviet Politburo mentality", in which once you were taken into the charmed circle, you remained there till God sent summons? Since the Marxist icon Stalin did not believe in God, he solved the problem with a periodic purge, but that option is not available to Bengal's Stalinists.

Irrespective of localised results in a municipal poll, it is unlikely that the red flag, currently at limp half mast, will flutter under the leadership of tired

old men. The interesting question is this: can leftists ever regain the space vacated by them in India's electoral equations? Has pseudo-Marxism in India become as passé as Marxism internationally? The last outposts have fallen. China's Communists have egalitarian intentions but no longer believe that they can create prosperity through old, formulaic prescriptions. Cuba's Raul Castro is beginning to see the light of radiant religion. He welcomed Pope Francis to his country by signalling that he could return to the faith. The pillars of Marxism have

Bengal, Mamata Banerjee wins because she has the support of the poor.

For three and a half decades, Marxists treated Bengal as their citadel, and it was a pretty effective fortress. Strangely, leftists never once believed that the doors of a fortress can also open outward; that it can be a secure base from which a realm, or an ideology, can expand. Instead, they closed the doors upon themselves and retreated into an arrogant smugness.

Parties, like individuals, can become bed-ridden for many reasons; many

Parties, like individuals, can become bed-ridden for many reasons; many have died an early death because of irrelevance. When an obituary of the Indian Left is written, it will be said that it died of complacency. It was not homicide, really. It was suicide.

crumbled, leaving only good intentions behind.

The secret of Bengal Marxist longevity lay not in doctrine but in a party machine. Their nemesis, Mamata Banerjee, understood this, which is why she simply usurped enough parts of that machine and adjusted it into her own networks. Simultaneously, the challenge of poverty is being addressed by political forces that owe nothing to the Left, and view this as a national mission rather than as part of an international revolutionary project. In

have died an early death because of irrelevance. When an obituary of the Indian Left is written, it will be said that it died of complacency. It was not homicide, really. It was suicide.

Is it too late for recovery? No. But the Left too does not need a doctor. It needs a miracle. Miracles require God. If the Left will not accept God, it should at least try a different Godfather.

The writer is Editor of *The Sunday Guardian*, published from Delhi, India on Sunday, published from London and Editorial Director, *India Today* and *Headlines Today*.

COMMENTS

"A murder and an 'Alert'"
(October 3, 2015)

Margaret Roomy

We should focus on our own interests; we don't want to be Afghanistan.

"Boy shot 'by MP'"
(October 3, 2015)

Amena Begum

Nowadays, kids in Bangladesh are safe nowhere, not even in the hands of MPs.

"Dengue cases hit 9-yr high"
(October 3, 2015)

Mohiuddin Faysal

Government initiatives are desperately needed, such as spraying insecticide in mosquito breeding places to avoid this menace.

"Foreign missions concerned"
(September 30, 2015)

Mohammad Sunny

Our government has failed to ensure security of foreigners.

Bikrom Karmakar

So they are considering Bangladesh unsafe. It's not a good sign for Bangladesh.

Ritzzy Bird

So finally Bangladesh has also been included in the list of the countries not safe for foreigners. So sad.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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PM's reactions over the murdered Italian

The recent murder of an Italian in the diplomatic area of Dhaka is so far, unexplained. The police have said that they are following leads and do not yet know enough to draw conclusions.

The PM termed the event as "very unfortunate." Maybe this would have been an OK reaction if it wasn't for the rest of her comments. She is apparently "surprised" by the reaction of the foreign missions in Dhaka. She says, "Awami League leader Nazmul was murdered in

New York City. Was an alert issued then?"

But she has her facts wrong. Before the murder on Monday evening, the Australian, UK and US embassies had already issued warnings to their nationals about the possibility of militants targeting westerners in Bangladesh. The warning wasn't issued in response to the murder. The PM should be concerned more with how to deal with this issue than whether or not the embassies were right to react in the way they did.

Arnold T. Hearst
On e-mail

Media should downplay the 'Australian tour' issue

The prime minister deserves thanks for expressing her opinion on Australia's cricket tour to Bangladesh while attending a press conference in New York. She said that the Australian team knew why they did not come and that it was their matter.

I think enough is enough and our media should downplay this 'cricket tour' issue. We have so many other things to worry about.

Anami
Dhaka