

Homeopath's guide to police brutality in Bangladesh

Bringing Wasa, Rajuk under City Corporations

Mayor's call worth considering

POLICYMAKERS would do well to pay heed to the call of the DNCC mayor to bring Rajuk and Wasa under the jurisdiction of the city corporations in order to tackle the city's worsening waterlogging problem. The mayor's demand has strong rationale as the city corporations have no control over departments such as Wasa, Rajuk, Police and other service providers in the capital.

The current state defies both logic and common sense. Reportedly, a total of 18 ministries and 56 departments are responsible for providing services and carrying out development activities in the city. How can the city corporations get the job done unless they have the resources and the administrative authority to do so?

Since taking office, both the mayors have been making serious efforts to deliver on their election promises, a rarity in our culture, from cleaning up the city in a record time after Eid al-Adha to freeing up roads from illegal parking, reaffirming the fact that if there is a will, there is a way.

To fulfill the mandate and to be effective the government must revisit the current task-to-resource state of the city corporations. Under the current arrangement there is much wastage of resources due to lack of coordination among so many departments and agencies. Thus the matter brings up the core issue of city government, an issue that has been pushed under the carpet.

If Dhaka has to be made livable again, there is no alternative to a city government. If there is reservation among some policymakers about this, then appropriate legislations can be made to address these matters. Till that happens, the mayor's suggestion regarding Wasa is worth considering.

Police or politician?

Such blatant partisanship is regrettable

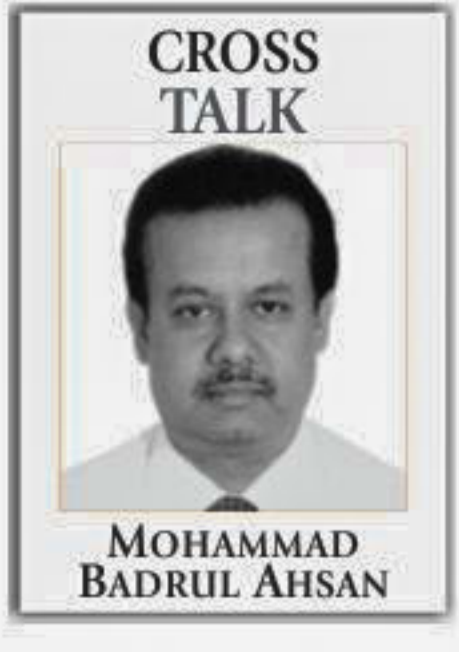
WE are flabbergasted by the comments made by officer-in-charge of Hatibandha Police Station, of a decidedly political nature, at two consecutive programmes at which 1100 former BNP and JP activists formally joined the AL at Gaddimiri union. The OC welcomed the former activists to the party and commented that they took the right step in joining the AL.

We wonder, is the OC, as a civil servant and law enforcer, the right person to "welcome" anyone to the AL? Is it within his term of reference to attend and address a political gathering, quipping in a manner that befits only a politician? The OC, when asked if he, as a law enforcer, could make such political speeches, defended himself by saying that his speech was aimed at maintaining law and order, and not at politics. Needless to say, the logic of the OC is lost on us.

This sort of blatant partisanship on the part of law enforcers highlights the extent of politicisation of public institutions and reinforces the public perception that law enforcers serve the narrow interests of the party in power, rather than that of the people.

The AL should not feel elated in any way by the OC's remarks. It must remember that this same OC might become as blatantly anti-AL as he is anti-BNP now, if and when the wind changes.

It is unfortunate that successive governments have turned the police, in particular, into a partisan tool. Rather than discourage partisan behaviour, we are disturbed to see the ruling party allowing law enforcers to act as party spokespersons, thereby putting the professional neutrality of the force into question. The politicisation of the police reflects poorly on democratic governance, and should be stopped.



CROSS TALK
 MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

FROM the look of things, it appears that the policemen in Bangladesh are drawing inspiration from the homeopath's guide to potency and dosage. As a general rule, chronic illness that a patient has for a long time should be treated with low potencies, and acute conditions that are relatively new should be treated with high potencies. That explains why two men with no criminal records have been brutally roughed up in the capital where hardened criminals roam free.

We can safely assume that these two victims of police brutality aren't criminals because they haven't been charged with anything. One of them is a central bank official and another is a city corporation supervisor, not exactly drifters who should be suspects in a paranoid city. But the policemen saw something that made them itchy. Like astute homeopaths, they readily assessed administering the correct dosage to those men was important.

And that correct dosage started with a few blows in two separate incidents. It didn't matter what those men must have begged to say in their defense. It didn't matter that they must have repeatedly pleaded that they too worked for the government. The policemen knew that criminals like patients live in a state of denial. They knew a good thrashing could open mouths like laxative cleanses bowels.

Now we know both incidents were unfortunate. And that realisation has also hit home with the police authorities, who promptly suspended the guilty officers. Even the High Court has observed that the sub-inspector, who detained and tortured the bank official, committed a criminal offence.

What will happen next is a never ending story. We are going to forget it soon. The police officers might get sacked or reinstated. The victims, however, will wake up terrified from disturbing nightmares, as the pain will hurt them long after the wounds are healed.

But is it going to change anything? Newspapers and TV channels bring us spine-chilling stories of how misguided policemen are carrying out kidnapping, extortion and contract killing. But what

squeezing them for money.

As it is, police brutality isn't just a problem in this country. It's a global problem when law enforcers behave like outlaws. Numerous incidents happen in the United States every year, when white policemen target suspects not for the nature of their crimes but the colour of their skins. The cops of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil notoriously shoot homeless children for target practice.

In 2013, the Indian Supreme Court took suo motu cognizance after a senior

disrespect they showed to citizens, particularly women.

The same concerns also rang out in this country when people read the news and saw the anguished images of the two wronged victims. Everybody understands that law-enforcement isn't exactly a walk in the park. There are tense moments when it's only human to flip under stress. Verbal abuse or use of inordinate force or error in judgment can happen when those patrolling our streets are overly stretched.

Sigmund Freud believes that everyone has the desire to cause pain to another human being, but some of us have it under better control than others. Heinz Kohut was a Freudian psychoanalyst who argues that rage or hatred directed at another person can be a way of holding ourselves together.

Psychoanalyst and author Christopher Bollas says that a profound emptiness always lies under hatred and hateful behaviour.

All of these three theories are plausible reasons for police brutality, because deep down inside policemen are human beings. When they go home and take off their uniforms, they sit face to face with the miserable monster howling between lust for money and blast of political pressure. Our policemen live in anxiety because they can't even protect themselves.

The victims of police brutality make it obvious. Their screams are nothing but the cry of their tormented tormentors. Scientists found that high doses of cocaine triggers brain cells to eat themselves. If our police are heady with power and greed, it's a case of suppressed autophagy: cells are digesting their insides.

Police are digesting law, which is digesting them. Homeopath's guide suggests that when symptoms persist one must seek help.

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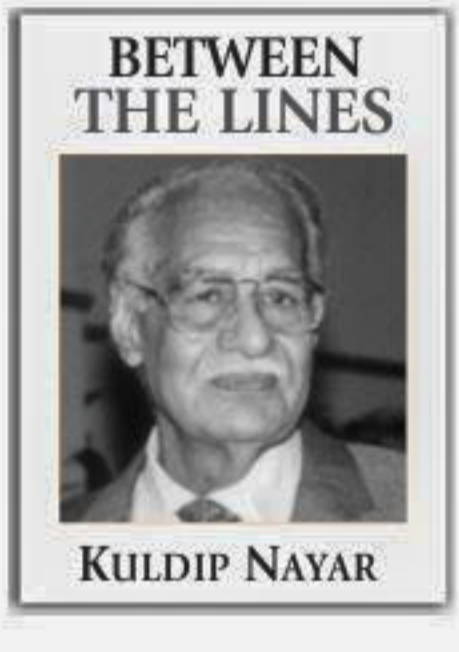


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we read, hear and see don't add up to all the police excesses taking place across this country. The vendors, hawkers, truckers, bus drivers, commuters, pedestrians, landowners, homeowners, beggars, the guilty and the innocent alike anywhere and everywhere in this land have tales to tell. They can vouch how conniving cops are forever

police officer in Delhi slapped a young woman so hard that she bled from the ear. In another incident in Aligarh, an officer had brutally pushed an unarmed 65-year-old woman. The courts in both cases observed that unless a surgery from top to bottom was done, nothing was going to change. They were critical of the excessive force used by police and

Unimportance of awards



BETWEEN THE LINES
 KULDIP NAYYAR

I MEAN no disrespect to Republic Day awardees. Except for a few who have distinguished themselves in their respective fields, the rest have made the grade because they have

connection, however remote, with the ruling party, this time the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The earlier regime of the Congress Party was also guilty of promoting its own people for the honour. This is, however, contrary to the thinking of the framers of the Constitution. They banned awards. That is the reason that when the Janata Party came in the wake of the popular movement, led by Gandhian Jayaprakash Narayan, they stopped this practice. The person who initiated the awards was India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He wanted the recognition of people who had excelled in the fields of literature, economy and science. No money is given because the award was too valuable to be weighed on the scales of monetary benefit.

Nehru also did not want the award to be linked with politics. He did not envisage that one day the entire exercise of selection would get politicised. The government would pick up its chamchas (sycophants) to reward his or her services to the ruling party.

I recall that initially the Republic Day awards, started some 50 years ago, were under the Ministry of External Affairs which Nehru headed. Subsequently, the job was entrusted to the Home Ministry, which gave the responsibility to a deputy secretary. But he had too many things on his plate and passed on the task to the

information officer attached to the ministry. That is how I came to handle the job, because I was then the Home Ministry's information officer.

The mode of selection was arbitrary. The prime minister and other ministers would suggest one or more names which I, as information officer, would stack in a file. Almost a month before the Republic Day, I had to shortlist the names. I must admit I followed no rules while preparing the list, which went to the deputy secretary in charge, then the home secretary and finally to the home minister. I found very few changes made to the list I would send.

But the toughest job was preparing the citations. I would have the dictionary

names was issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. I recollect that once the name of Ms. Lazarus was suggested by the president. We, in the home ministry, knew that the honour had been conferred on the then famous educationist Ms Lazarus. Accordingly, the gazette notification was made public.

But when President Rajendra Prasad saw the notification, he said the name he had suggested was that of a nurse. She had attended to him when he had a bout of asthma when he was travelling to Hyderabad from Karnool in Andhra Pradesh. We were all embarrassed that the honour had been bestowed on the wrong person. But we could do nothing because the name was already in the

experience is that the ruling party tends to give "recognition" to the people who are either members of the party or somehow connected with it. The real purpose is lost, because the recognition is extended to those who are close to the party.

Take, for instance, the case of Sachin Tendulkar. Undoubtedly, he was the best batsman, probably next only to Don Bradman, in the world. But should he have been conferred with the Bharat Ratna when hockey wizard Dyan Chand was not even considered for the honour? The legendary Milkha Singh made an issue when he was chosen for the Arjuna award, as he allegedly refused it saying that he would accept nothing less than the Bharat Ratna, because his son had been bestowed with the award before him.

Among academicians, Romila Thapar, while refusing the Padma Bhushan award, made another point: she wanted to be judged by her peers, and not the bureaucrats sitting at the Home Ministry. The famous sitar maestro Vilayat Khan called it an insult and refused to accept both the Padma Shri and Padma Vibhushan. His argument was that he would not accept an award which was conferred on his juniors who, in his opinion, were less deserving. This only underlines that the story of a wrong time, wrong person and wrong award is eternal.

This only emphasises the argument that the awards are not given according to merit. This charge will remain because the selection is done by people who are nominated by the government. You can include the opposition leader in the selection panel, but he or she would be in the minority. There should be a debate in the country on the importance of awards. Maybe, they have outlived their utility, which was predominant when we achieved our freedom.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

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and Roget's Thesaurus before me. In some cases, I had the bio-data to guide myself. Mostly they contained a mere cryptic description of the person - whether he was a scientist, an academician or economist. That helped me somewhat, but preparing the citation on that basis was challenging.

The entire process was so haphazard that the Supreme Court had to intervene to ask the government to constitute a selection committee, including the opposition leader as its member. However, some order came to prevail once the committee was in position. Yet, preparing the citation was my task.

The draft gazette notification of

public domain. That year two Lazarus' were given the awards.

Two years ago, when the Congress was in power, it conferred the Padma Bhushan award to the US hotelier Sant Singh Chatwal, despite criminal cases pending against him. There was a furor in the country but the home minister justified his selection on the plea that he was a known Indian who had served the cause of the country abroad. But there are several cases of eminent people refusing to accept the award on the grounds that the panel of selectors was not capable enough to judge their work.

The lesson to be learnt is whether there should be any such award at all. The

COMMENTS

"Is making profit BPC's only job?"
 (January 19, 2016)

Monjurul Kader
 The government should seek wealth statements of the staff and executives of BPC.

Rashed Anam
 In trying to make profit at the expense of the economy, the government has artificially inflated the energy price as well as the price of all other goods.

Arifa Sharmin
 Timor-Leste is a small island, but they adjust the cost of fuel in line with the international market every time. But for Bangladesh, the price seems to remain the same for a lifetime.

Sayedur Rahman
 I know some employees of BPC who make arrangements to steal oil from the oil-carrying ships before the docks. They make a lot of money out of this and the money is distributed to employees at various levels of BPC.

Md Ashfaq Ullah
 Why should I have to pay that much when the oil price is this low?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Meeting energy challenge

This relates to Prof. Ijaz Ahmed's write-up on the above subject published in TDS on January 7, 2016. To face this challenge, naturally, large scale investment is needed. Old, inefficient, outdated oil-fired and coal-fired power plants will be expensive to import and handle, and there are extra costs related to the disposal of the ash.

Regarding alternative energy options, we should speed up the setting up of solar power plants. We should also go for city refuse based power plant -- at least one in Dhaka and one in

Chittagong. If it is done, not only will we not need the usual oil fuel of conventional oil-fired power plant of identical capacity but it will also create employment for unskilled persons in the sorting of refuse. In the long run, this may possibly be the best option for power generation in Bangladesh. The generation of methane gas from solid human refuse was successfully done in Thailand more than a decade ago and we can follow their method.
 Engr. S. A. Mansoor
 Dhaka

Use stadiums for meetings and celebrations

Whenever political processions and celebrations are held, activists occupy streets causing traffic congestion resulting in the waste of thousands of litres of petrol and hundreds of man-hours. I have seen that in many countries political meetings and celebrations are held inside football and cricket stadiums and are televised for publicity. I think our government should try that.
 Aminur Rahim
 New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka