

Read the extremists threat correctly

Substandard drugs in the market

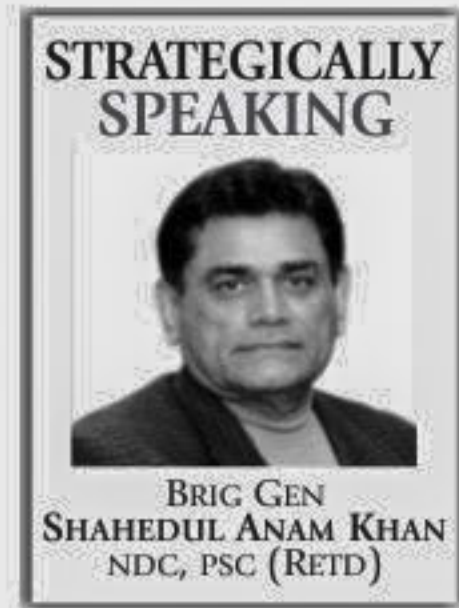
Who will take the responsibility of the health hazards?

WHILE we appreciate the directive of the High Court to stop production of twenty drug companies we are dismayed at the role of the drug administration which failed to take immediate action against the companies at fault. Earlier the parliamentary standing committee on the health ministry appointed an expert committee which recommended revoking the licenses of the drug companies that repeatedly failed to comply with the good manufacturing practices (GMP). Since then more than one month has passed but the health ministry, particularly the drug administration, is yet to implement the recommendation of the expert committee. The drug authority's attempt to gloss over their inaction by citing legal loopholes is unacceptable. We wonder what restrained them to immediately seal the factories of the unscrupulous drug companies and order them to withdraw their medicines from the market. We wonder also whether the drug administration is aware of the fact that between April 2016 when the closure was recommended by the Committee and now, a huge quantity of substandard drugs have entered the market. Who will take the responsibility for the health hazards inflicted by these drugs? We hope the directive of the High Court would help accelerate the process of revoking the licenses of the faulty drug companies. The authority should also take immediate action to withdraw the substandard drugs from the market and make people aware about these harmful products.

UNDP survey

Fulfil people's aspirations

THE United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has carried out a survey of 1,500 households in Dhaka city, 17 municipalities and 33 village covering 45 districts and its findings shared recently. The results of the survey reflect people's aspirations. Less than 40 percent of households are optimistic about their personal future and a mere 28.7 percent are hopeful about the country's future. While more than half are happy about children's education, we find to our utter dismay that nearly 9 out of 10 respondents have little faith in getting fair justice in the country and a mere 13 percent are optimistic about law and order. The government should listen to people's voice and not simply brush it aside as most party in power are wont to, for it reflects both the achievements and shortfall of government interventions in various areas. We note that with the exception of education, most other important indicators did not come up to the expectation of the people, and what is clear is that people would like to see a marked improvement in the way things are being run in the country. Ultimately it falls upon the party in power to provide its people with a sense of security, which unfortunately appears not to be the case according to respondents' replies. It is a competent administration, strict law enforcement and efficient legal system that will add to good governance in the country. The government should conduct an internal audit to seek out the problem areas and remedy the situation, for it is to the government people look to seek solutions.



STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING
It was like the extremists thumbing their nose at the law enforcing agencies. To target a police officer's wife in broad daylight requires a good deal of planning and a great deal of audacity, and they, it must be regretfully admitted, displayed both. We understand several persons have been arrested in this connection and the motorcycle used in the killing mission impounded. The telltale signs are very evident and predictably the SITE Intelligence quoted the IS as having carried out the killing of the police officer's wife. Thankfully, unlike in the past cases, the home minister did not refer to the killing as an 'isolated incident', but drew a link with the extremists. One must add though that the deputy of Rab still insists on calling it so and with an inexplicable persistence. On that very day another member of the minority community was hacked to death, and there have been several more added to the list of unfortunate victims since. Though there is a particular message that the extremist killers would want to convey through this particular killing -- that anyone going after them will be targeted directly or indirectly, as in this case -- there is a wider purpose of the recent killings. We should understand the very underlying motivation of these radicals. The real target is not the victims. They are symbolic. It is the state that they are aiming at. And by choosing individuals of a particular creed they are propagating their agenda. What they have been able to achieve

through these killings is quite in proportion, in our context, to what other international extremist and terrorist groups like the ISIS, and to a lesser extent, al Qaeda achieved by large scale attacks and killings in Europe and the Middle East.

Apart from inculcating fear in the minds of the minorities they have been able to bring to bear on the government tremendous international pressure. The US and the West feel that the scale of terror acts have increased in Bangladesh in recent times. It was exactly what the extremist had wanted; it is not the number of killed that the extremists are interested in but in the number of attacks carried out, and the nature of targets, to elicit the kind of reaction internationally that has been forthcoming. The choice of target is significant. Starting with bloggers, the victims include Muslim clerics, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, foreigners. The purpose is not restricted to drawing reactions only, it is also to provoke a situation that would prompt the minorities to seek 'safer grounds' and cause our big neighbour to react. We have already heard two very significant statements from the Indian side. Firstly a BJP National Executive Committee Member has told the BBC that, "Hindus in Bangladesh do not feel safe and that they would be forced to flee to Bharat if the attacks on them continued." The reaction stemmed from his visit to this country recently to attend a religious conference. But what is reflective of the fear in the minds of the minorities in this country is his comment that, "the Hindus at the meeting raised the issue of their protection and said if protection was not ensured, they would migrate to West Bengal."

While one could question the locus standi of any political party in India to talk for

minorities in other countries given the state of minorities in that country, and least of all BJP, these sentiments, coupled with the intention of the Indian government to bring amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955, is significant. The amendment will exempt minority citizens of Pakistan and Bangladesh, who have come to India due to fear of religious prosecution, from being categorised as "illegal migrants". And once the amendments are made, "the refugees will be legally allowed to stay in India and also apply for citizenship."

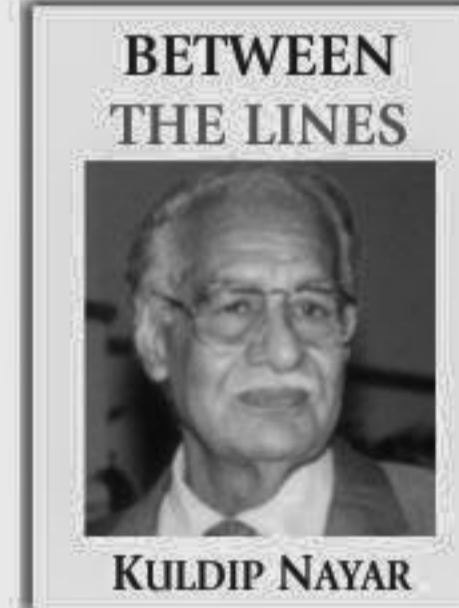
The developments are very significant for Bangladesh which the government cannot overlook. Although the BJP has given a clean chit to the Awami League vis-à-vis their treatment of the minorities, one can anticipate a degree of pressure from our big neighbour in this regard whenever Hindus are perceived to be under threat. And this is also what the extremists want, to generate pressure on the government by creating a situation to engender minority unrest. How that will help the extremist to achieve their political objective at the end should be a subject for further research for government policy makers.

The government must realise that it is against heavy odds, that it faces an organised group that is well led both at the strategic and tactical level as evident from the recent conduct of the killings. What is needed is a coherent assessment and rational policy to meet the challenge. Rhetoric doesn't help. Regrettably, when what is needed is to arrive at a consensus on the means of addressing this menace cutting across party lines, accusatory fingers are being pointed at political opponents. It helps the extremists only.

The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.

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Two years of Modi government



BETWEEN THE LINES
I F I were to award marks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his two-year governance, I would give him four out of 10. I wouldn't fail him because he did not officially pursue the Hindutva programme, and yet allowed the RSS and Bajrang Dal, both extremist organisations, to have the run of the field.

I know that RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat was allowed to use Akashvani [All India Radio] to purvey his parochial and extremist views. In the same manner, other government-owned institutions, such as the Nehru Library, were asked to follow the words coming from the RSS headquarters in Nagpur or Jhandewalan in New Delhi. Heads of different educational institutes with Nehruvian leanings were dismissed.

The process is not yet complete. Even the central institutions in the Congress-run states are being systematically saffronised. Modi doesn't have to give day-to-day instructions. The message has been conveyed that the entire set-up will have to willy-nilly follow the Hindutva line of thinking, no matter how antediluvian it might be.

Take the case of a murder at Dadri, only 50 kilometres from Delhi. A Muslim was killed by fanatics, simply because his family was suspected to have eaten beef. The extremists were not content with the killing of one person but wanted action against the whole family. The hapless members of the family did not even raise their voice in protest. What kind of message must this have sent to the world about a nation which is capable of sending a man to the moon, when it is steeped in the antediluvian ideas that consider eating beef a sin?

What saddens one is the silence of those who claim to be secularists. Will these same chest-beating secularists also remain silent if Modi tomorrow permits his foreign minister to break ties with Japan, because the Japanese are famous for producing their famous Kobe beef, which is considered to be one of the greatest delicacies in the world?

Unfortunately, the Hindutva crowd does not realise that India is ruled by the Constitution and it is not a Hindu rashtra. The Constitution gives equal rights to Hindus, who are 80 percent of the population, and the minorities who make up the remaining 20 percent. Together they constitute the republic.

Modi was right when he raised the slogan, *sabka saath, sabka vikas*, meaning thereby that we shall all be together and advance further hand in hand. But subsequently, he and his party BJP appear to have lost their way and today, whether they like it or not, their government has come to represent a particular way of thinking - an intolerant India - which has the overtones of

India by the BJP and its allies. We forget that in the democratic structure we have, everyone is free to eat whatever he or she likes. Nothing can be enforced. In a vast country like India, where food and dress change every 50 kilometres, diversity is inevitable. Indeed, this is India's strength. Respecting diversity keeps our different units together in a federal structure which we follow.

BJP hardliners who believe that they have come to power because of a fundamental shift in national values should think again. There is more than a grain of truth in the argument that voters gave them a chance because they had lost faith in the Congress and were

thinking may not last long, since the Indian nation is basically pluralistic. BJP itself seems to be conscious of this because there is some evidence that it is moving from the right of the centre to the centre.

The predicament that plagues the party is that its cadres come from the RSS. Maybe, that is the reason that there is no scam in the government. However much may one dislike the RSS ideology, its emphasis on integrity cannot be doubted. Yet, there should be no misgivings on its interference in the governance. Even the top bureaucrats are judged on their proximity to the Hindutva philosophy. Modi himself was an RSS pracharak



Narendra Modi was an RSS worker and pracharak who was sent to the BJP in 1985. Here he is seen with Keshubhai Patel (who was Gujarat's CM before him) and others. PHOTO: AFP

Hindutva. Probably, the party's think-tank has come to believe that they can win more votes by dividing the society. With Assembly Elections due in UP early next year, the Bajrang Dal has begun vitiating the atmosphere. They are holding more and more exercises in different cities where *lathis* and other weapons are used. There is a kind of parallel police force, and even in UP, where the non-BJP government is currently in power, there are morning and evening parades of extremists to instruct their young recruits on the use of *lathis*. The same fear of Islamic domination that is being exploited by right wing parties in the West is being cunningly manipulated in

looking for an alternative. The Congress will be failing itself, if it persists with dynastic politics. The party must realise -- if it has not done so this far -- that Rahul Gandhi does not sell. Sonia Gandhi herself will be a far better bet than the other leaders so far available in the party. The disadvantage of being an Italian has disappeared over the years and she is considered as much an Indian as anyone by birth. But the problem is that she has very little chance to head the country because the Congress has lost its shine. Undoubtedly, BJP has *Hindusised* politics but that is the dominant thinking which has caught the imagination at present, thanks to Modi's leadership. This

(preacher). Even now he is a regular visitor to Nagpur where he interacts with the RSS leadership. Some of the ideas he gathers from there are reflected in the policy which his government frames. This has torn asunder the fabric of the nation's secular temperament, and given rise to extremist groups in different regions. I only hope that this is a passing phase. But as long as it lasts, the preference for sons of the soil will be casting a shadow on the idea of India. This is unfortunate. I hope that the Prime Minister will rethink his policies so that the basic structure of the Constitution is in no way affected.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

COMMENTS

"Militants killed wife to demoralise SP Babul: Minister"
(June 6, 2016)

Romel Ahmed

Every time these kinds of murders take place, some people are quick to jump to the conclusion of a 'jongli' connection without waiting for the investigation to be complete. And in the meantime, perpetrators take the chance and escape.

Limon Hossain

This is very unfortunate that an honest police officer's wife had to become the victim. And this incident should not be blamed to the 'unidentified' militants; law enforcers must catch the killers without delay.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Water scarcity in old Dhaka

The old part of Dhaka especially Faridabad, Gandaria, Sutrapur, Arsimgate R/A, IG Gate, Milbarrack, Postagola and Shyampur is facing severe water crisis. Many people living in these areas have to spend most of the time of the day in search of drinking water. The WASA authority should look into this matter immediately to solve the problem.
Mahbubuddin Chowdhury
Gandaria, Dhaka

Work together for peace

This refers to the report, "Global economy is 'urgent priority': G7" (May 27). Peace is essential to revive the global economy which has taken a downward slide. Global powers need to bury their political hegemony and work for a strong economy. Issues like South China Sea should be solved. Britain should not exit from the European Union. New emerging BRIC nations also have a role to play. World leaders should understand that protectionist policies of nations are a major obstacle to the growth of the global economy.
Deendayal M. Lulla
On e-mail

Satisfactory education budget

It is really laudable that the government has increased the allocation for education sector to 2.4 percent of the GDP and 14.38 of the total outlay for the fiscal year 2016-17. Earlier, the allocation for education was around two percent only. We welcome this move and urge the authorities concerned to ensure proper utilisation of the money.
Juel Rana
University of Dhaka