

Anti terror initiatives in private universities

Avoid knee-jerk reaction

THE phenomenon of extremism that is on the rise in the country requires a coordinated effort of all sections of society to see an end of this peril. And in the aftermath of the attack on Holey Artisan Bakery and the subsequent attack in Kishoreganj, all concerned must come together to fight this scourge in a manner coordinated by one central authority. Surprisingly, the student wing of the ruling party has taken it upon itself to form anti-terrorism awareness committees in all the more than 90 private universities of the country. We wonder why private universities should be singled out just because a few misguided youths from some of these have gone astray. And the discipline of the student wing of the ruling party leaves much to be desired.

This is much too sensitive a matter to be left also to the student organisation of any political party because unless the anti-terror efforts are coordinated centrally the government initiative may go awry. We are afraid the scheme may become one of witch-hunting where personal scores may be settled in the name of anti-terror awareness programme. And there is also a very good possibility that the move will lead to the politicisation of private universities, a phenomenon that has till date not been able to affect this sector.

The battle against terrorism is a national issue. It falls upon the government agencies to tackle the extremist elements by taking all the stakeholders on board. Private university authorities can and will cooperate with the law to the fullest extent. But the Chhatra League initiative, if implemented, may ultimately undermine the fight against terror and not assist it.

Sunderbans robbers surrender

Take measures to rehabilitate them

TWO Sunderbans-based robber gangs, which had been robbing fishermen and honey collectors and kidnapping them for ransom for the last couple of years, have laid down their arms and surrendered to the home minister. This is a welcome move, and follows the surrender of another gang in May this year. Good sense has prevailed on these outlaws and it should now be the responsibility of the government to make it easy for them to be rehabilitated in the society.

The change of heart of the bandits and the accommodation of the authorities is an improvement on the existing 'strategy' to deal with the outlaws in the area which saw about 167 robbers killed in gunfights with Rab personnel in the last five years. Rehabilitation is extremely important because criminal recidivism is not uncommon in the region. In the mid nineties, the laudable initiative by the then-government to absorb some members of the Shorbohara party into a paramilitary force, met with some success but some from amongst them had gone back to their old profession.

Once a criminal, always a criminal is an outdated attitude. They deserve a second chance to become contributing members of the society. Among other things they require counseling on how to lead honest lives. Then they should be provided with training and capital enabling them to start their own business or find meaningful employment. Such steps will work as a counterforce to the tendency

CoMMENTS

"Fizz breaks the ice"
(July 13, 2016)

▼
Mohammad Fahad

He is probably one of the humblest players on Earth. Hope he does not change much.

COMBATING TERRORISM

Let law not be the casualty

C R ABRAR

THERE is little doubt that the mayhem at Holey Artisan Restaurant in Gulshan will be an important landmark in the annals of Bangladesh's law enforcement. People were shocked at the mindless brutality and murders of a score of expatriates and locals. They were disappointed that the intelligence agencies could not preempt the act, though many concerned citizens and observers saw such an attack coming. It would reassure the public to know what actions the authorities had taken when families reported their children missing. Newspaper reports so far have not been encouraging.

The discrepancy in the number of terrorists involved, in the figures provided by the police on hostages 'rescued' and the absence of any transparent and credible account of the sequence of the gruesome events that unfolded at Holey Artisan have led to a lot of unanswered questions. The people were particularly appalled at the attempt to present one of the employees of the restaurant, still donning a chef's apron, as he lay dead, as a member of the terror group. Needless to say this subaltern being did not qualify to secure the state honours that the other deceased so rightly were accorded.

If we could have captured any one of the terrorists alive, it would have no doubt helped the investigation. Was such a possibility at all considered? We will never know. In all likelihood the attackers had their ultimate satisfaction for being able to take all their secrets to their graves. No less pleased were the

puppeteers located either within the country (as the Home Minister would like us to believe), or in a distant land.

The government has announced a series of measures to prevent such sinister attacks in the future. Understandably, the law enforcement and intelligence agencies are also taking stock of the situation. The private educational institutions are devising methods to face the challenge. Advises are aplenty about what constitutes 'good parenting'. While there has been an overnight mushrooming of 'security experts', erudite partisan luminaries are busy berating their political opposition without providing a shred of evidence in support of their claims. While all this is happening one of the kitchen staff, Zakir Hossain Shaon, 19, of Holey Artisan taken in custody on suspicion of being in league with the perpetrators, died of injuries in a city hospital on July 8.

News reports inform that the police took Shaon to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) two days after the attack. As his condition deteriorated he was admitted to the intensive care unit of the hospital at past mid-day on July 8 and died in the evening. Media reports and footage show that on the day of the siege the law enforcers recovered him from near the café, well before the commandos raided the place. It is interesting to note that although the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) authorities claimed that Shaon was in the suspects' list, his name does not appear in the case file in connection with the attack.

Shaon's father reported his son was

missing for four days since July 1. His mother informed hours before the attack that her son had said over phone that he would be back home for Eid as soon as he got his salary and bonus on July 3. After seeing Shaon in the hospital family members reported that "marks of beating" were all over his body. They also alleged "he was tortured to death". The family members further stated Shaon seemed to have lost his mind and kept repeating "Please don't hit me anymore" (Daily Star, July 11).

The death of Shaon raises some pertinent questions. Where was Shaon between the time he was picked up by law enforcement agencies in the early hours of July 2 and admitted to DMCH on July 3? Who interrogated him? If the attackers inflicted injuries and caused bodily harm on him was he provided any medical treatment and where? As the injuries were serious as was revealed afterwards why was he not taken to a medical facility such as DMCH as was subsequently done? Also what were the reasons for the DMP to link Shaon with the terrorists and if those stood on solid grounds why did not his name appear in the case file?

It is worthwhile to note that Article 35 (5) of the Constitution explicitly states, "No person shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment".

News reports inform us that two other witnesses of the restaurant carnage, Tahmid Hasib Khan and Hasnat R Karim, were taken to custody on suspicion of having links with the terrorists. Both were rescued in operation Thunderbolt.

Although the police had claimed they were later released, none of the two returned home.

The police have also provided little information about the status of Lazarus Saren and Jakirul Islam who were picked up as suspects for the Gulshan attack. Both sustained injuries during the attack; Lazarus in his left leg, while Jakirul, an employee of O'Kitchen adjacent to Holey Bakery, in his chest. Like Shaon, names of these two did not appear in the case file. Both have been kept incommunicado since they were taken into police custody.

It is also worthwhile to note a couple of more Articles of the Constitution. "No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty save in accordance with law" (Article 32) and that "Every person who is arrested and detained in custody shall be produced before the nearest magistrate within a period of twenty-four hours of such arrest, ... and no such person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period without the authority of a magistrate" (Article 33 (2)). Their families repeated plea to inform them about their whereabouts and give them access to the suspects has been thus far denied.

Bangladesh is passing through a cathartic period. While as a nation we debate and try to chart various courses of action to combat terrorism, the government must ensure that all actions of its law enforcement agencies are strictly bound by the law.

The writer teaches International Relations at the University of Dhaka. He writes and researches on rights and migration issues.

BASTILLE DAY TRUCK ATTACK

As horror strikes again, all eyes are on how France reacts

NATALIE NOUGAYRÈDE

A night of national celebrations ends in horror and tears. France is yet again in shock. Yet again in mourning. Bodies strewn in the road, families frantically searching for loved ones, crowds running wildly in the dark, a city in lockdown. In the immediate aftermath, political extremes actively trying to capitalise on the blind violence.

After Charlie Hebdo and the Bataclan, now it is Nice's waterfront. The attack happened on Bastille Day, as the anniversary of the French Revolution was being celebrated. That symbolism only added to the gut-wrenching pain of seeing photographs of some of the 84 dead and more than 200 wounded, including children.

The attack happened hours after France's annual military parade on the Champs Élysées, attended by President François Hollande, an event meant to demonstrate patriotic strength and unity. And it struck days after the Euro 2016 football tournament had finished without the dreaded news of another assault. There had barely been time to heave a sigh of relief. Now we have been plunged into yet more trauma.

France feels devastated. The country is reeling from its third major terrorist attack in less than 18 months. Since 2015, the death toll has reached 231 – and could still rise – to which should be added the seven people killed by Mohammed Merah in 2012 in Montauban and Toulouse.

How and why this could have been prevented will be much debated. Just days ago, a French parliamentary investigation into the Paris attacks of November 2015 had concluded there had been a "global failure" of the country's security and intelligence services. Yet, in a reflection of France's patchy record of public accountability, no one in government seems to be considering resigning.

Details about the assailant, a 31-year-old Franco-Tunisian who worked and lived in Nice, and his motives are still sketchy. But already, Hollande has announced more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria against Islamic State, as well as the calling up of reservists and a three-month extension of France's state of emergency – none of which is likely to address the roots of the problem.

Terrorism has upended politics in France since 2015, and now that is about to get worse. It has put the nation on a war footing, heightened religious and ethnic tensions and fed growing partisan polarisation, which the National Front is set to benefit from during next year's presidential election campaign.

The fallout will be felt across Europe too, bringing a sinister boost to xenophobic narratives conflating



People gather in front of a memorial on the Promenade des Anglais, where the truck crashed into the crowd during the Bastille Day celebrations.

PHOTO: IAN LANGSDON

immigrants and refugees with the threat of bombs and automatic rifles. Now, even without any link to ISIS yet evident, jihadi terrorism has taken on a new face: the wild rampage of a truck on a touristy, festive Mediterranean shoreline.

Nice is a cosmopolitan city, a huge social and ethnic mixture, a place where you find former "pieds noirs" – French colonials from Algeria, middle-class pensioners from across France, communities of Muslim immigrants, rich Russians and tourists from all over the world. With past visitors from Chekhov to F. Scott Fitzgerald, the city's palaces and palm tree-lined squares have long been celebrated as part of France's proud cultural heritage. A terror strike here is an attack not just at the diverse fabric of a society but at a vivid tourist industry and at an entire country's sense of itself.

There are two ways this can play out politically in France, and they may well be combined. If it turns out the attacker had connections with homegrown terrorist groups, the country will be again confronted with burning questions about its difficulties in integrating second and third-generation immigrants who feel alienated – not least because of France's brand of secularism and its economy, where youth unemployment and discrimination are rife. But if the

focus is on his Tunisian heritage, then there will be further examination of foreign fighter networks.

France's plight points to how Europe has been unable to exert any influence on the Syrian civil war, where it has been sidelined from diplomacy while Russia and the US pursue an ambiguous rapprochement. This could strengthen Syria's dictator, whose scorched-earth policies of repression have provided a prime breeding ground for ISIS.

After Nice, expect France's far-right leader, Marine Le Pen, to be on a roll. Her statements after the attack made that clear. With nine months to the presidential vote, French identity and security will be at the centre of all public discourse, and she will stand to gain.

Beyond the terrible loss of families forever torn apart and traumatised just because they wanted to watch fireworks on a warm summer evening, the wider result of this tragedy is that extremes, political and religious, will continue to feed off each other. Voices of reason and moderation will be drowned out – "the bloody wedding of repression and terrorism", as Albert Camus once called it.

The writer is a columnist, leader writer and foreign affairs commentator for the Guardian. She was previously executive editor and managing editor of Le Monde.
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Monitor the universities

I arrived in Bangladesh late last year and have been enchanted by the wonderful people of this land - full of talented, hardworking individuals. Bangladeshis are one of the friendliest nations on earth. One cannot fail to fall in love with Bangladesh for her hospitality, warmth and stoicism.

I am, however, full of sorrow and fear for Bangladesh. It is clear that unless the current

wave of horrific atrocities ends, foreign investment will decline, and rather than continuing to take the enormous steps forward towards sustainable development goals - progress will halt and possibly reverse. Bangladesh is not the only country to face the threats of terrorism but it possibly stands to lose more than many other countries more rapidly. The people killed in Holey

artisan Bakery were here to contribute to the development of Bangladesh. The terrorists—most of whom were well-educated and came from affluent families—had no conception of the selfishness of their actions. The 'hot-beds' of radicalisation in the universities must be better monitored and controlled.

Loveday Jones
On e-mail

Technology to be used Credibility of autopsy reports for coal transportation

As reported in The Daily Star on July 13, 2016, the Rampal Coal Power Plant will burn 4.72 million tonnes of coal a year. This means that they have to bring about 13,000 tonnes of coal per day to the site. We wonder what technology they are going to use for this massive transportation of coal. Will this increase the ship traffic in the area?

Prof. M. A. Quaiyum
On e-mail

Autopsy reports on the victims of the Holey Bakery massacre showed the extent of brutality suffered by these people. However, I need to stress that I would respect our autopsy doctors more if they didn't appear so 'confused' in other cases of torture or murder. Tonu's death, for example, is still shrouded in mystery. The first autopsy report claimed that they didn't find any evidence of

'foul play' but the subsequent report claimed that the body had injury marks. The autopsy report of Shamarukh Mahjabin, the daughter-in-law of an AL lawmaker, could be another case in point. These two autopsies were done with 'no major findings'. The parents of the victims, however, rejected those reports.

Absan Habib
Via email