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Barbaric murder of a child – again!

Children who work are not safe

THERE are no words to express our abhorrence and shock at the barbaric torture and killing of 10-year-old Sagar Barman, by co-workers of the factory he worked at in Narayanganj. The monsters who killed him did so by inserting an air pump into his rectum and pumping air into his abdomen which led to his horrible death. It is almost like the case of 12-year-old Rakib, who was murdered in an identical manner. In Rakib's murder case, two of the murderers have been sentenced to death by the court.

But despite the harshest possible punishment given by the court to Rakib's killers, the same kind of heinous assault on a child has taken place. It seems even the possibility of a death sentence has not acted as a deterrent to these perverted criminals.

Sagar's killing and that of Rakib and many other children should be wakeup calls to the country on the extreme risks under which thousands of children are exposed to because they are forced to work for a living. Child labour, especially the kind of labour that gives children no protection at all in terms of physical security and mental wellbeing, has to be abolished once and for all. Children like Sagar and Rakib were victims of not only demented fellow workers but of a system that is heartless and apathetic to the needs of the most precious members of society.

There has to be a massive social awakening in this country regarding the right of a child to live in a safe, caring environment and not be vulnerable to abuse. It is the government's responsibility to initiate such an endeavour.

Unfit vehicles plying the streets

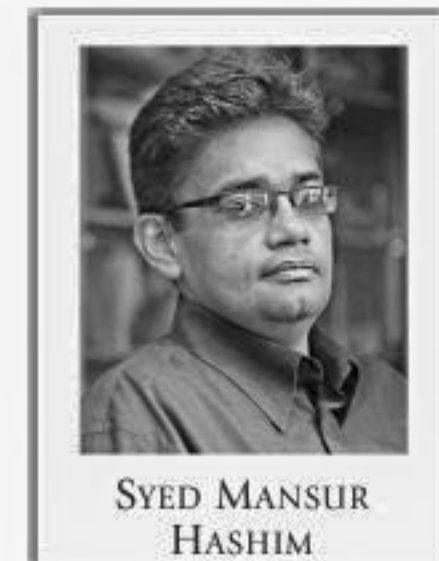
Thumbing the nose at the law!

THE photo of a dilapidated vehicle published in this paper on 24th July beggars belief. The jalopy that is carrying passengers on the road of the capital as well as the inaction of the police and the agencies that are supposed to enforce road safety have shocked us. These transports are a risk to their passengers, not to mention the pedestrians and the ordinary people who happen to be at the immediate vicinity of these vehicles. These are potential weapons of mass murder.

Vehicles are not supposed to be allowed to hit the road without a fitness certificate. There are instances where we have seen cars impounded and fined for not doing their fitness on time. Would we be remiss to ask how such unfit transports as the one in the picture, are allowed to run with impunity? The problem is all the more pronounced on the highways, where ramshackle and unfit bus and lorries are one of the biggest contributors to accidents. It is a small wonder that Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of deaths during travel, which some researches put as high as 24,000 a year.

The blame, we believe, primarily lies with the transport owners who rampantly flout laws and indulge in such malpractices with the connivance of some of the officials of the concerned departments. We urge the government to arm the traffic police with effective surveillance and monitoring devices. On top of it all, it is crucial to purge the reckless attitude of people working in this sector by instilling a sense of accountability across the board.

What happened at Manbij?



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

WHILE major Western media outlets didn't make much of the news, it is obvious that the French and US airstrikes that targeted the village of Toukhan Al-

Kubra near the Turkish-Syrian border and the city of Manbij had gone horribly wrong! The Assad government has claimed that more than 140 civilians were killed by allied bombing. Indeed the Syrian government is terming it as "bloody massacre" and the foreign ministry statement published states: "The government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns, with the strongest terms, the two bloody massacres perpetrated by the French and US warplanes and those affiliated to the so-called international coalition which send their missiles and bombs to the civilians instead of directing them to the terrorist gangs... Syria also affirms that those who want to combat terrorism seriously should coordinate with the Syrian government and army."

Syria is now demanding that the UN take action against the United States and France for the civilian casualties. This incident has also been condemned by Amnesty International which stated that it has found credible evidence of Syrian government's claims. A spokesperson for human rights body stated "even if the coalition forces believed that fighters from the armed group calling itself Islamic State were present around al-Tukhar, they should have taken the necessary precaution to identify who else was present to avoid or at least minimise civilian casualties." So, now we have more than a hundred dead civilians including children, women and elderly on our hands and the world press has not really given this piece of news much

importance. Now why is that? Casualties are casualties. Are we then to accept that when the Syrian forces' operations that result in civilian death, it is news and when unnecessary deaths are caused by the coalition forces, these are "collateral damage"? Although The Guardian and The Telegraph newspapers have carried the news, one cannot but be somewhat puzzled about why this news item has not been given the importance it deserves by the wider media outlets. The

making statements that US-led forces have struck IS tactical units and fighting positions near Manbij?

This is precisely the sort of incident forces allied against the IS do not need. While there may be a tacit agreement among media outlets to downplay such incidents, the news will get out invariably, and most notably, through social media. What is of import is the fact that when established media start deciding which news to highlight and which not to, we are headed for a dark

US-led airstrikes resulted in 50 civilian deaths. With all that high tech equipment including drones in the air and satellites in orbit, reconnaissance planes sending back live footage, how is it that the US military are not aware of IS presence in the field and cannot distinguish between civilians and combatants?

Needless to say that there will probably not be an outside inquiry to ascertain what really happened in Manbij. It is, after all, a combat zone and the battle lines are shifting constantly. What we do know is that the senseless slaughter of innocents and the failure of major media houses to report on both sides of the conflict is quietly fuelling more hatred amongst millions of non-combatant Muslims around the world. If winning the hearts-and-minds of the larger populace is a priority area for US-led forces in Syria, then the Manbij incident will stick out like a sore thumb for a long, long time. Selective news coverage is unhelpful in the information age where a large portion of the world populace is connected and news in one form or another reach them. This is a dangerous game of hide-and-seek that is being played by free press. Selective journalism is playing into the hands of radical forces that can and do argue that the West is there to occupy the lands of Arabs for the purposes of controlling resources. Senseless bombing and a failure to take responsibility, or even report on the issue fuels more hatred and aids in recruitment by extremist outfits like the IS. Surely, the time has arrived when we start practicing our trade with the honesty it deserves. Media, both print and broadcast exists to serve public interest with news, as it happens, when it happens; and not be used as an extension of foreign policy.

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Boys on a pick-up truck evacuated from the Southern district of Manbij city in Syria following a US-led airstrike.

PHOTO: REUTERS

outpouring of condemnation and outrage is not really present here. As pointed out by Magdalena Mughrabi, Amnesty International's interim Middle East Director, "anyone responsible for violations of international humanitarian law must be brought to justice and victims and their families should receive full reparations." How can reparations be made when the whole incident is being downplayed and the US Central Command (CENTCOM) is found

hole. News is news and we should not be playing God when it comes to reporting the facts. By downplaying the incident, the US has inadvertently strengthened Assad's hand and his claims that the US is not really interested in destroying the IS but is actively engaged in supporting factions with dubious records, such as the Al-Nusra Front and Jaish Al-Alam, which purportedly have links with IS. This is not the first time such "collateral" damage has happened. Back in January,

How long will Atatürk's Turkey last?

SHAKHAWAT LITON

THE only apparent similarity between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is their long-running rule of Turkey. Their rise to power and political mission, however, are completely opposite. One was a revolutionary, who had transformed Turkey into a modern and secular republic, while the other has been known as a leader accused of uprooting the secular foundations of the country.

When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was born in 1881, the Ottoman Empire was in decline. When he was 12 years old, Mustafa was sent to the military academy in Istanbul. There, his mathematics teacher gave him the name Kemal - meaning "perfection" - because he excelled in academics. As a young man, he was involved with the Young Turks, a revolutionary group that deposed Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1909.

Young Kemal had joined the army to become a professional soldier. He held a number of posts in the Ottoman army from 1909 to 1918. He fought against Italy in the Italo-Turkish War in 1911 and he fought in the Balkan Wars from 1912-1913. During the second Balkan War, he became Chief of Staff. He made a name for himself as the commander of the 19th Division, where his bravery and strategic prowess helped thwart the British and French forces' invasion of the Dardanelles in 1915 during World War I. But the Allied forces, led by British, France, Russia and Italy, later occupied the capital of the Ottoman Empire and many of its territories in next several years.

It was Kemal who led the Turkish War of Independence and signed the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which made Turkey a republic and him its president. As part of his revolution, Kemal opted for the discontinuation of the Sultanate, which was formally abolished in 1923. He established a single party regime that lasted until 1945, almost without interruption.

He translated his revolutionary thoughts into action by launching massive social and political reforms to modernise Turkey. The reforms he pursued included the emancipation of women, the abolition of all Islamic institutions and the introduction of Western legal codes, dress, calendar and alphabet, replacing the Arabic script with a Latin one. In 1935, he was given the name Atatürk, meaning 'Father of the Turks'. He died in 1938.

One of his successors, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's political philosophy is opposite to that of Kemal's. Erdogan was born in 1954 in modern and secular Turkey, around 16 years after Kemal's death. He is not from an affluent family. Young Erdogan used to sell lemonade and sesame buns on the streets of Istanbul's rougher districts to earn extra cash. He attended an Islamic school, before obtaining his degree in management from Istanbul's Marmara University. In the 1970s and 80s, he was active in Islamist circles and

was a member of the Welfare Party founded by Necmettin Erbakan, a longtime leader of Turkey's Islamist political movement.

With support of the Welfare Party, he was elected mayor of Istanbul from 1994 to 1998. Erdogan had to languish in jail for four months in 1998 for religious incitement, after he publicly read a nationalist poem including the lines: "The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers." The Welfare Party was also banned by the constitutional court, on charge of violating the principle of secularism. The court also barred Necmettin Erbakan, mentor of Erdogan, from politics for five years.

Earlier, Erbakan formed the National Order Party, which was also banned by the constitutional court in 1971, a year after its formation. Erbakan, two years later, formed the National Salvation Party and served twice in the 70s as a deputy prime minister. He was jailed after Gen Kenan Evran seized power in a bloodless coup. Erbakan was also prohibited from engaging in politics from 1980 to 1987. Returning to

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politics, Erbakan formed the Welfare Party once more, which was again banned by the court in 1998.

Following the court verdict in 1998, most members of Erbakan's Welfare Party formed a new party called the Virtue Party, which was banned by the constitutional court in 2001. After the ban, Erbakan formed a new party - the Felicity Party.

Records assert that Erdogan's mentor Erbakan had set up five political parties, four of which were closed down after military coups or by courts on the grounds of undermining secular principles. Erbakan was also ousted from his post after serving a year as the Prime Minister of Turkey in 1997, following pressure by the secular military.

Learning their lessons from these failures, Abdullah Ghul, the immediate former Turkish president, Erdogan and others emerged as "reformists" to survive politically. They broke away from their mentor Erbakan and formed their own party - the Justice and Development Party, also known as the AK Party. This harkened a new dawn for Erdogan in politics. He came to power in 2002, a year after the formation of the AK

Party. He spent 11 years as Turkey's prime minister, before becoming the country's first directly-elected president in August 2014 to replace Abdullah Ghul. However, he does not seem happy with the presidency, as it only has a ceremonial role. Thus, he is unofficially running the show behind the scenes, thereby emerging as the most powerful president of Turkey after Kemal Atatürk. Yet, he wants to create an executive presidency to regain some of the powers.

To his supporters, Erdogan is a charismatic leader who has taken Turkey forward economically. To his critics, he is a ruthless autocrat who brutally bulldozes his political opponents and dissenting voices. Erdogan has also been accused of pursuing Islamist agendas in a different guise. Political analysts say that he could not move ahead with his Islamist agenda due to the army, a strong supporter of Atatürk's secularism. In the past, on several occasions, he has systematically taken stringent measures against several army generals and officers who were strong followers of Atatürk's secularism.

Given the background, the failed coup of July 15 seems to have appeared as a blessing for Erdogan, as he himself termed it as a "gift of God". Since the coup attempt that left at least 265 people dead and more than 1,000 wounded, tens of thousands of military personnel, judges, prosecutors and civil servants have already been detained or suspended from their jobs, as part of the investigation into the possible plotters of the coup.

Last Wednesday Erdogan announced a three-month state of emergency, enabling him and his government to bypass the Parliament, rule via decree, and suspend rights and freedoms as they deem necessary. The first decree, announced on Saturday, extended pre-charged detention from four to 30 days and ordered the closure of more than 2,000 private schools, associations, foundations, unions, health institutions and universities.

The crackdown on the military appears most brutal. Till Saturday, almost 7,500 military personnel had been detained on accusations of being involved in the coup attempt. It was announced on Sunday that the presidential guard would be disbanded, after 300 of the 2,500 officers from the elite unit were rounded up over suspected links to the coup. Erdogan on Saturday announced the overhaul of the army in response to the failed coup, and he may use the state of emergency to achieve his goal. It is obvious that Erdogan will restructure the army with officials loyal to him and his politics. Army officials who follow Atatürk's secularism will not find themselves in important positions. If Erdogan can succeed in his mission, the army will no longer be a threat to his Islamist political agenda or his rise as an apparent 'Sultan' in Kemal Atatürk's Turkey. All these developments pose a crucial question: how long will Kemal Atatürk's Turkey survive?

The writer is Senior Reporter, The Daily Star.

COMMENTS

"Extent of militancy decreased: Says police chief" (July 23, 2016)

Afreen Azhari
Don't be so complacent.

"He went to Turkey on 'honeymoon'" (July 21, 2016)

Ismat A Choudhury
His late father was my teacher when I was a student of MC College in 1963. I am horrified.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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The superpowers' mess

Violent incidents are taking place frequently in many countries including ours. This situation would not have emerged if former US president G. W. Bush and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair had not invaded Iraq on a false pretext, turning the historic and a prosperous land into ruins.

Tony Blair has said sorry for the 170 British soldiers killed in the Iraq war but remains silent about half a million or so Iraqis killed in the unjust war. The consequences of Iraq war

has given rise to terrorism and unrest. In another development on March 19, 2011, United States supported by some NATO countries including UK began bombing Libya to remove Muammar al-Gaddafi. But Libyans were happy with Gaddafi as he was kind to them. This invasion also cost many innocent lives.

What a mess the superpowers have made! The whole world is paying for that.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Spend more time with your child

Nowadays most of us are always busy making money for giving our children a 'better life'. But expensive school, fancy clothes, modern gadgets, classy society etc are not enough. We have to spend time with them. They are often lonely and confused.

Now is the time for us to get cautious. Talk to your children. Pass quality time with them. Why not watch a movie with them at home? Try to monitor their social activity. And please do not let them use social media before fifteen. And most importantly, watch what they are doing with their smart phones.

Tasjid Ahmed
Dhaka

A strange experience at BRTA

A few days ago, I went to BRTA to record the change in the engine number of my car. A lot of photocopies of papers were asked for; a heavy charge in the form of government duty was imposed and a sum of Tk.600 was demanded as bribe. I was told that the change would appear in the next fitness certificate to be issued after one year. But no receipt was given to me.

If I am alive after one year and the BRTA man remains in the same job and recognises me, all will be fine. Fingers crossed!

Mahbubur Rashid
Bashundhara R/A, Dhaka