

We have the law, but where is the order?

Chhatra League on the rampage, again!

When will their political masters act?

A suspended faction of Chittagong University Bangladesh Chhatra League (CUBCL) went on the rampage and vandalised the Chittagong University Vice Chancellor's office on November 7. They have been demanding the sacking of a teacher. Apparently these "students" were unhappy about this teacher for expressing his dissatisfaction about city corporation tax assessment.

As a citizen of the country, the teacher is perfectly at liberty to be associated with a social movement and we are in full agreement with the VC that there is no bar on such activity as far as the university is concerned. Does it mean that nobody has the right to hold his or her opinion? Does it mean that there is no freedom of speech or action? By the conduct of these CUBCL activists, it certainly looks that way.

We condemn the actions of these CUBCL activists, for their actions revolve around a matter that has no relation either to the university or their education. Where do these so-called students get the nerve to vandalise the office of the university's VC unless they are assured immunity by those they report to? This sort of bullying has become a hallmark of Chhatra League over the last few years and is totally unacceptable.

And what is the role of the ruling party in all this? It would be a mistake to think that these elements were acting of their own volition. They bring disgrace to the body they belong to. What we witnessed at Chittagong University is the ill manifestation of the politicisation of educational institutions. It is our hope that the university authorities would take necessary steps to curb such unruly behaviour with a firm hand.

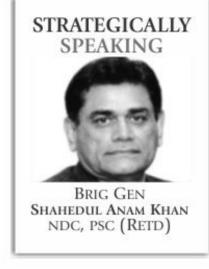
Deaths at stone quarry

Illegal stone extraction continues to take lives

ON Tuesday, a quarry labourer died along with five children when he went to the Lovachhara river in Sylhet's Kanaighat upazila to bring back his son who had gone there to collect stones. Although his son was saved, the labourer and the five children were crushed to death when a massive chunk of earth dislodged and fell into the river. What makes this incident so tragic is that these deaths were completely preventable, had it not been for the fact that the Lovachhara river was a site of illegal stone extraction, which is why the children went there in the first place. For us, these deaths should be a wake-up call about the dangers that unlawful stone extraction continues to pose across the country.

The story is way too familiar. Illegal stone extraction in the Lovachhara river and its nearby areas is the work of a syndicate of stone lifters whose greed has cost the lives of the quarry labourer and the children. Not to mention the fact that the environmental costs of illegal stone extraction are now beyond measure. Much like previous such incidents, the police in Sylhet too had tried to halt the illegal activity but without success—which is not surprising given the fact that these syndicates wield considerable power deriving from their political affiliations.

We hope that the three-member probe body that has been formed to look into the deaths of the six people is allowed to conduct a fair investigation—free of influence and intimidation. The findings of the committee's report should be taken into serious consideration and implemented at the earliest. Most importantly, the syndicate responsible for all this must be immediately dismantled so that no more such preventable deaths occur.



BRIG GEN SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN NDC, PSC (RETD)

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING
FOR everything that goes wrong, or for everything that seems to be out of order, we unhesitatingly blame the state of law and order in the country. It

is tad unfair to blame law and order in the same breath. I am told that we are a country that is regulated by the largest corpus of laws, rules and regulations. And although nobody has taken a stock of the violations of regulations that occur every day, one can venture a guess without fear of contradiction that we may be a strong contender, as a people, for being the highest violator of laws. And the infringement, is directly proportional to the socio-economic status and political clout of the offender, or the size of the vehicle one is driving.

Look at the propensity to violate traffic rules. I have seldom seen rickshaw pullers taking the wrong side of the road or jumping the red light. Most of the violators are particularly those that drive 3000cc jeeps or don various ensigns on their vehicle. I am not making this up. There is empirical evidence to support my statement. Happily that practice in the capital has but only recently stopped with a few days of police action, and many thanks to the police. One would hope the offenders have been sufficiently embarrassed not to indulge in the blatant disregard for law, and their examples would be a disincentive for people of the same ilk and disposition. Such practice must be stopped in the highways too.

It looks as if highways are widened, not to facilitate quicker movement of vehicles but to make parking space for privately owned covered vans, buses and trucks. The Joydebpur-Mymensingh highway, for example, has been widened

threefold, yet it takes more time to cover the same distance as it used to on the old road. All because the crossings are littered with vehicles belonging to, of course, the high and the mighty. One wonders where these vehicles used to be parked before the roads were widened! All this time I knew that the law is blind. Now I find that the law enforcers are blind too. And I see that manifested in our everyday life that involves justice, law and law-keeping. What has newly provoked me to restate this is a very

whether Frederick Douglass, the great American intellectual, had us in mind when he said that "human law may know no distinction among men in respect of rights, but human practice may". How true he is. The same police, lo and behold, in the same incident, did manage to find evidence against BNP men in a counter-case filed by a local AL leader. And they have been charge-sheeted too. Of course the IO is not bound to tell the public, as he told the reporter of this paper, why his eyes went

country has a law been so brutally violated than in the abuse of the laws protecting our wetlands. Now it is being preached that Dhaka does not need wetlands, not by experts, environmentalists or engineers, the pontiffs of this "sublime" revelation are those that are in violation of the law including the police. No wonder the law has been so blatantly debased. How can anyone, entrusted to protect the law, do its job when it itself has chosen to disregard the law by filling up a canal?



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recent report in the print media that the police probe into the 2015 attack on Khaleda Zia's motorcade in the city's Karwan Bazar could not identify any of the attackers, although not only were photographs of the many alleged attackers published in the media, but they were clearly identified too. So the case was thrown out as being without merit. And we must believe what the keepers of the law say, that the complaint was false and that there was no attack on Begum Zia's motorcade. One wonders

on overdrive in one case and on "under-drive" in another case related to the same place and day of occurrence. It seems that not only God, but our police too, works in mysterious ways. But is dismissing the complaint enough after performing a pliant obligation? A number of vehicles were damaged in that incident, and it is the police's bounden duty to find out the culprits.

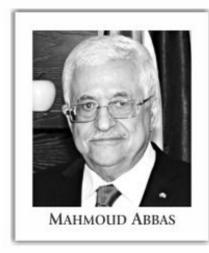
The water bodies and catchment areas around the capital are protected by law, or supposed to be. But nowhere in this

But a more bizarre twist has been added to the "tail" of the sordid tale, (pun intended). The violators have put up the most capricious demand that all the violations be consecrated by accepting the changes on ground and that a new detail area plan be drawn up.

The list is long and one could go on. But what is clear is that it is not so much the law but the order that needs fixing.

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Lord Balfour's Burden



MAHMOUD ABBAS

THIS year, the Palestinian nation marks one hundred years of the Balfour Declaration. Lord Arthur Balfour was a British foreign

secretary who decided to change the identity and fate of Palestine, a land that he did not own, by promising it to the Zionist movement, and dramatically altering the history of the Palestinian people. But to this day, the United Kingdom evades its historic responsibility by refusing to apologise to a nation still living in exile and under occupation as the result of that unethical undertaking by their politicians. In 1917, Palestine had a robust population of over 700,000 inhabitants living on almost 28,000 square kilometres. Palestine had a well-established society, proud of its history and cultural heritage, and the centuries-long tradition of coexistence and tolerance among its inhabitants. The city of Jerusalem—built by the Jebusites, a Canaanite tribe—the ancient ports of Jaffa and Haifa, the biblical cities of Gaza, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Hebron and Nablus, as well as one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world, Jericho, alongside the Dead Sea and the fertile Jordan Valley, all stood witness to this rich civilisation. Palestine was a country inhabited mainly by Arabs, mostly Muslims and Christians, but also a small Jewish minority.

Disgracefully, the text of the Balfour Declaration referred to the vast majority of the population as the "non-Jewish communities," in a deliberate attempt at setting the foundation and basis of denying them any future political rights. Balfour was fully entrenched in colonial ideology with no respect for the deeply-rooted presence of Palestinians, Christians, and Muslims. In 1922, he wrote: "Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs and future hopes of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land." It was a glaring dismissal of the presence, history, and rights of the population that had inhabited the land for centuries. Examined against the backdrop of the current debates in international politics, Balfour could have easily been referred to as a "white supremacist."

a nation, was never a matter of consensus among British politicians. The declaration continued with a British Mandate of Palestine that soon proved to be entrapped between Lord Balfour's folly and the reality on the ground. In the following years, British colonial rule grappled with the contradictions of its promises to the Jewish and Arab peoples. In 1922, the British Parliament rejected the British Mandate of Palestine precisely because it included the fulfilment of the Balfour Declaration as part of its goals. In fact, it was the only Jewish member of the British Cabinet, Sir Edwin Montagu, who expressed his rejection in these strong terms: "I would not deny the Jews in Palestine equal rights to colonisation with those who profess other religions, but a religious test of citizenship seems to me to be the only admitted by those

leading to the *Nakba* (catastrophe) of 1948, which led to over two-thirds of the Palestinian people becoming refugees, including myself. But the international community failed to fulfil the implementation of the UN Partition Resolution 181, a resolution that unquestionably did not allow or call for the forcible displacement of the Palestinian population. It also failed to implement Resolution 194 (III) to restore Palestine refugees to their homes. In fact, the United Nations' recognition of Israel was conditioned on Israel's implementation of this resolution. Similarly, disappointingly, the international community has failed to implement the countless UN resolutions that call on Israel to end its military occupation that began in 1967, including its colonial-settlement project.



A man waves the Palestinian national flag as he shouts, "Free Palestine!"

who take a bigoted and narrow view of one particular epoch of the history of Palestine, and claim for the Jews a position to which they are not entitled." Balfour's perfidy anticipated the international community's disrespect for the rights of Palestinians after Israel's founding. Thirty years later, on November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution 181 (II) calling for the partition of Palestine into two states. Again, this decision disregarded the wishes, aspirations, and the very rights of the indigenous population of Palestine. The world voted for the partition of Palestine, but the country's people did not. The international community was willing to support the Zionist desire to build a state in Palestine, but did not have the determination to supervise the implementation of their resolutions,

Today, the presence of illegal settlements all over the occupied territory of Palestine has threatened to make the two-state solution impossible to realise. This is clearly the goal of the current right-wing Israeli government that does not shy away from hiding such intentions. Israel's prolonged occupation and its colonial-settlement project has virtually destroyed the prospects of the internationally endorsed two-state solution on the 1967 borders, thereby solidifying the reality of one state, Israel, controlling all the land of historic Palestine, while imposing two different systems: one for Israeli-Jews and another for Palestinians. The two-state solution is not accepted by any of the political parties that constitute today's Israeli government coalitions. Their leaders continue to incite and spew hatred against the

Palestinian people and inflammatory rhetoric against Palestinian national rights and aspirations. This has included the dangerous use of religion to justify war crimes and human rights violations, which is something that we believe is of paramount gravity and consequence to regional and international peace and security.

The one-state reality could not be possible without the impunity it has received from the international community. The Israeli colonial-settlement enterprise in Occupied Palestine could not succeed without international markets being opened to illegal Israeli settlement products, without free trade agreements welcoming these products, without international companies and the Israeli economy mutually profiting from this systematic denial of Palestinian rights, and without the commitments of several governments that no matter the crimes and human rights violations, Israel will continue to enjoy full impunity.

But make no mistake: Palestinians have learned the lessons from Balfour's colonialism. The steadfastness and resilience of our people should serve as a message to the entire world, and particularly to Israel, that there will be no peace in our region without the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Our vision of peace is one of great compromise and is based simply on what we are entitled to under international law and UN resolutions: a sovereign and independent state that fully ends the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, while ensuring at the same time that Jerusalem could be an open city between its eastern and western parts. We envision our sovereign control over our natural resources, airspace and maritime borders.

A just and lasting peace is possible. It requires the full implementation of the long overdue inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We call upon those who allegedly support the two-state solution to recognise two states, not only one. At the same time, we shall keep the doors open for the possibility of a resumption of negotiations seeking to end the Israeli occupation and fulfil our rights. We don't see any contradiction between negotiations and continuing to seek justice through the legitimate tools and instruments available under international law. It is our right to undertake all peaceful means to end the torment of our people and to fulfil their inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations.

Mahmoud Abbas is the current president of the State of Palestine, and chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Take food adulteration seriously

A few days ago, this newspaper published a report which revealed that around 30 percent of the vegetables that we eat contained pesticide residues, citing a test done by the Institute of Public Health. Research also revealed that noodles lacked what is considered to be the standard level of protein and that mustard oil and soybean oil available on the market were both of sub-standard quality.

Even the street food that our children love so much is highly adulterated. These findings do not bode well for us. It shows that despite the adoption of the Food Safety Act, 2013, food adulteration is actually still on the rise. Lack of monitoring and awareness by the concerned authorities are some of the reasons for this menace to have become so widespread, research said.

Experts opined that enforcement of laws pertaining to food safety and regular market monitoring could minimise food adulteration and the damage that it causes.

The authorities concerned should, therefore, take urgent action to enforce the Food Safety Act, 2013, and create proper monitoring mechanismsto keep an eye on food adulteration of all sorts and rid the market of food items that are harmful for all of us.

Md Sadequr Rahman, Maniknagar



PHOTO: STAR