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The Death of Shah A.M.S. Kibria: Willful Negligence, and Perhaps Much More
by Dr. Reza Kibria

Some members of the BNP-Jamaat Government have chosen to respond to some things I have said recently. I would like to take this opportunity to reply to them.

I understand that Messrs. Saifur Rahman and Nizami are deeply offended at some of my remarks. It should be noted that my comments were based on recent press reports where they are quoted as having made statements that would suggest they have specific information pertaining to the attack. For example, in the *Daily Janakantha* of 4 February there is a story entitled “Kibria Killing is a Personal Event (literal translation): Saifur Rahman”. How does he know whether or not this attack was political in nature? Or is he implying that my father’s death was so insignificant as to have no impact on the national political situation? Under the circumstances is it wrong for me to suggest that when a proper investigation begins these two persons need to be interrogated?

The Speaker’s statements are even more curious. This man – who insists he is the third most significant person in the country (please note that I am cognizant of the Order of Precedence) – has exposed himself for what he is through his own statements. I was under the impression that by now he knows how the people of the country regard his claims of veracity following the incident of the simultaneous television recording of what he said to my mother and her responses. He was unlucky enough to be caught out then.

However, what Mr. Sircar is reported to have said yesterday is truly remarkable as a reflection of the man’s sheer ineptitude, incompetence and perhaps something much more sinister. He is reported to have said that the first he knew of the attack on my father was in the newspapers the next morning. He insists that no one tried to contact him in any way and that no one gave him news of the attack on the 27th. All his statements need to be carefully analyzed.

The Speaker’s statements have a number of important implications:

1. Various people, including leaders of the Opposition party tried to contact him but were unable to do so – he could not be reached on the telephone. Perhaps he had given instructions “not to be disturbed under any circumstances”. Was he aware of the circumstances that were to ensue? It is a question of his word against theirs – or is it? The inability of people to contact him in the critical hours following the attack (a period of about 4 hours) is something that needs to be thoroughly investigated when the FBI commences its enquiries. Note that he made no effort to go to the BIRDEM hospital when much of Dhaka had become aware of what had happened and a large number of people had gone there to await the arrival of the ambulance carrying my father.
2. Mr. Sircar is apparently telling the country that he does not have any information system (links to the Press or to members of the Government or to members of the

- party or other M.P.s) or any officers attached to him that could provide him with vital news and information. Moreover, neither he nor any member of his family (his immediate family or members of his extended family living in other suburbs) seems to have had access to television or radio. Many of us would fully share his apparent contempt and disregard for the BTV news but I would note that even this government station carried news (at around 7.30 pm) of the attack on my father (reportedly just after 7 p.m.). People around the country reported that friends and relatives from overseas who saw TV reports began calling to get details about the attack from 8 p.m. onwards. Surely some member of Mr. Sircar's extended family or one of his friends could have telephoned him with the news. Or perhaps they regarded this news as being of rather minor significance and not worth reporting to "the third most important personality of the country". Whatever the case, the explanation will make interesting reading in the investigation report.
3. There are some other explanations that I would like to anticipate – that he had a "diplomatic illness" that lasted just until my father was dead – or that he fell asleep at 7 p.m. and could not be awakened - or even perhaps that he does not have a television or radio set. In case of the latter explanation - even though we are admittedly the citizens of a poor country – I would humbly request the Government to make these facilities available to a man who is under the impression that he is the "third most important personality of the country".

I was under the impression that the Speaker of Parliament is there to protect the rights and interests of M.P.s of every party. This is clearly not the case in this country. I feel very sorry for the parliamentarians of the country that they are under the "guardianship" of Mr. Sircar, who clearly has no idea of the responsibilities that his position entails. Putting the word "Honourable" in front of one's name does not make one so. Your actions, Mr. Sircar, do matter.

Mr. Sircar appears troubled at some of my remarks and has seen fit to instruct me in the behaviour expected of those living in a "civilized society". Mr. Sircar, a society that is governed by a group of people that is quite comfortable with the idea of taking no effective action to provide assistance or medical treatment to a man of 73 whose mangled body was sent off on a 4 hour journey to a distant hospital in an ill-equipped ambulance (with no doctor in attendance) is not a "civilized" one - by my reckoning, at least. As for his other comment, I understand he is a barrister – I had expected that he would know how to behave like one.

What recent events have shown is that there is something very sinister in the actions – or inaction – of Mr. Sircar. At the very least the question of whether there was "willful negligence" must arise. My father might have lived had he been transported to Dhaka by helicopter. Mr. Sircar failed in his duty to help arrange this and my family and I – and all our friends across the country want to know why. He, like others holding office in the BNP-Jamaat Government have acted with impunity in the past and hidden behind a web of lies and deceit. This time we will expose the truth – with the help, however unwitting - of the "third most important personality of the country".

For further information please see: www.kibria.org