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Remembering Gregory Peck

The great actor Gregory Peck is gone. Hollywood has lost one more of its legends. He was one of those few actors who made their mark in the history of film by sheer talent, devotion to the art of acting and remaining humane all through.

Born in 1916, Gregory Peck made his debut in Emyln William's stage play "The Morning Star" (1942). By 1943, he was in Hollywood where he debuted in the RKO film days of Glory (1944).

Stardom came with the next film, "The Keys of the Kingdom", (1944).

With a string of hits behind, Peck soon took the decision to work only in films that interested him. He continued to appear as the heroic figures (larger than life) in films such as "Captain Horatio Hornblower" (1951) and "Moby Dick" (1956). He worked with Audrey Hepburn in her debut film "Roman Holiday" (1953). After four nominations, Peck finally won Oscar for his performance as Lawyer Atticus Finch in "To Kill a Mockingbird" (1962). He also gave a powerful performance as Captain Keith Mallory in "The Guns of Navarone", (1961), one of the biggest cinematic hits of that year.

In the early 70s, he produced two movies "The Trial of the Catonsville Nine", (1972) and "The Dove", (1974), while his film career waned. He made a comeback playing the wooden Robert Thorn in the horror film "Omen"(1976). After that, he returned to the larger than life roles as MacArthur (1977).

Many of the above mentioned movies had been shown in the 50s and 60s in some of the cinema houses of Dhaka.

Gregory Peck had attained in his screen persona an almost spiritual nobility, rooted in his earnest, sober portrayals of earnest, sober man. The quiet strength and dignity with which the tall, exceedingly handsome Peck invests many of his characters had made his occasional forays into villainy-and comedy all the more surprising, and effective.

To acquaint Bangladeshi cinema fans with some of Gregory Peck's great movies, I suggest that the film clubs of Dhaka as well as the American Centre arrange holding his retrospectives in the near future.

Adib Reza, Paribagh, Dhaka

"Budget thought"

A letter "Budget thought" on my name has been published in *The Daily Star* of 20th June. However, there is no relation with the letter and myself. Someone might have illegally used my name and designation with the letter. I do not even agree with most of the content of the letter.

Subsequently, a part of the letter came as a quotation in the *City Express* in Star City (June 22). This statement, at least in part, is quite nonsense to anyone bearing some responsibility to the nation. Some reactions to the letter and the statement also came in *The Daily Star* of 23rd June. The letter and the subsequent statement tarnished my image as an economist. I strongly protest such mean activities, whoever have done this.

A.K.M. Atiqur Rahman
Chairperson
Department of Economics
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abroad or in an international arena. In the Western countries, such attitude is unthinkable. In Canada, there is a popular TV serial, which not only criticises different policies of the government but rather disparages and even mocks at its Prime Minister and other members of the government including the US leaders. No court cases or even protests are ever lodged there. Even in neighbouring India, political tolerance is considerably conspicuous and that's the main reason for which it's regarded as the largest democracy in the world. It's a pity that we could neither learn from the far nor from the near!

Hafeejul Alam
Dhaka

"People's right to know"

I congratulate Mahfuz Anam for his recent commentary, which appears to me as the correct direction for a democratic society. If democracy means "a government of the people, government by the people, and government for the people", then the people have the right to know as to who man the government, what is their background and what they are doing for the people. The press has a great role to play in these respects, particularly when the government is found to be lacking in divulging many necessary information which the people are supposed to know in the interest of good governance and of course, in the interest of the government itself.

Free flow of information is said to be the keystone of democracy and if any higher echelon of the government can't tolerate a free press, the conclusion categorically centres round their inability to be a part of a democratic set up, let alone to represent the country

It is unfortunate to note that Mr. Rezaul Karim has viewed the writings on the above as 'people have no interest' since 'not a single politician who does politics for the people' (re.: DS 23 June).

Yes, this is the very reason we should know of about them - their activities and background. Since they are supposed to be the people's representative in a democratic set up, they are accountable to the people. It is also a fallacy that 'people have no interest about the incident ... which is 30 years old' and that 'people want to move forward, not held back.'

Mr Karim is definitely referring to the War of Liberation 30 years ago. This is a dangerous attitude some people nowadays love to profess since they have allergy to everything associated with our movement for freedom, War of Liberation and the Razakar issue. If Mr. Karim is right, then we should get rid of studying history of Bangladesh, political history and their related subjects, such as, geopolitics, geostrategy etc. from our educational curricula. This might suit his so-called 'Roadmap'.

Don't you know, Mr. Karim, your future is built upon your past? Your past will act as a guideline for drawing your 'Roadmap' for future, otherwise it will lead you to

Tea garden sand used in construction work

Excavation of sand from the riverbeds for using as construction material is common in Bangladesh but extraction of soil from tea gardens for house building is a dangerous contraption.

During my recent visit to Sylhet I actually witnessed such an incident.

I saw dozens of people loading a truck from a piled up soil by the roadside. Our driver managed to manoeuvre through the labyrinth somehow. I stopped to find out the reason for such untoward decision by the truck driver. It was that the adjacent National Tea Estate signed a contract with a house-building contractor to excavate the soil (sand) from the garden area. The reasons being that the soil is of great demand and fetches high price in Dhaka since its dry and salt free composition helps in building damp free houses. Moreover, the tea estate owners find easy access to quick money without much effort. As we drove down, this rampant digging of soil within some tea estates continued up to Srimangal.

This rapidly growing phenomenon is new and such excavation is deadly for the environment of the area.

Soon the tea estates will turn derelict if the uncontrolled excavation goes on unabated.

Although the tea holdings are outside the jurisdiction of the forest department, the government can still hold the lease owners responsible for the degradation of the environment in the area. The land is a government property leased out to the tea estates. Surely there is a law for tea estate landholders to abide by. The country earns a fairly large amount of foreign exchange from tea export. So, we must take the matter seriously.

Razia Quadir

Managing Director, Dharitri

"Wake up to reality"

In his letter, "Wake up to reality," (19 June) it appears that while remarking on K. Wasimuddin's letter on "South Asian Alliance," (16 June) Mr. Anirban Dutta Choudhury himself has proved as being the one, who lives in a fool's paradise.

First, his rebuff that Chinese are friends to none is contrary to reality. For, over the years, in many respects, China has proved its friendly gesture towards Bangladesh, as it is evident in her quick response to grant free access for Bangladeshi products.

On the other, India not only denies entry of Bangladeshi products, but also has imposed non-tariff barriers.

Second, I am not sure why Mr. Choudhury considers Chinese goods as worst in quality. Contrary to his claim, Chinese goods have flooded the world market, and we are yet to see how Indian prolixity is materialised.

Third, his claim of impracticability of the "Eastern Corridor," in reality, is about to take place, as within a couple of years, the proposed linkage of the National Highways of Bangladesh to that of Burma, Thailand, and China would create an integrated highway system.

Fourth, I am not sure why Mr. Choudhury considers a domestic issue of Bangladesh such as strengthening of Bangladesh Rifles, Police, and Army an absurd idea. I wonder, why Mr. Choudhury does not save his advice for his own countrymen?

What Mr. Choudhury and people like his mentality fail to realise, is the fact that it is respect to neighbouring nations' sensitivity and discarding the zero sum game policy that earns natural leadership for a big nation. To become great, it requires a sense of vision that ensures integrated interests' of all parties.

Shibly Azad
Columbia University, USA

Nagarbhavan, the hotbed of corruption

Nagarbhavan is the centre of all the activities conducted by DCC. But unfortunately Nagarbhavan has been turned into a hotbed of corruption. And with it the aspiration of the *Dhakaites* to see a liveable Dhaka has been dashed. The different development projects in Dhaka, caught in the red tape, have been gathering dust without signs of getting implemented.

It is the omnipotent people of the Mayor Cell who make all the decisions -- be it transferring officials or replacing files from one table to another. Projects are often halted even after the Mayor's approval. Unfortunately, all their corrupt practices are harming the good name of the Mayor. We hope the Mayor will look into these matters and rid the Nagarbhavan of these corrupt selfish officials.

Ripon
R K Mission Road, Gopibagh, Dhaka

HSC Exam 2003

I am appearing in the HSC Exam 2003 from Science Group. So far I've been amazed by the mistakes in the question paper and the quality of the question.

Let me begin with the first exam which was English 1st paper. The problem with English began long before the exam had started. Because of NCTB continuously changing the question pattern there was much confusion about how flow charts, writing a list of given things from a comprehension, fill in the gaps should be written. Teachers had different opinions and when the teachers are in confusion how can the students be confident?

Coming to the question paper, the biggest flaw has already been mentioned by many letter writers-- mandatory paragraph on Eid-ul-Fitr. How could there be a paragraph which carried 14 marks and was told to be written in about 100 words based on the given questions; but also in detail? And the big question is how could the Education Board ask us to write about the religious festival of a particular community? Is this an exam where only Muslim boys take part?

For English 2nd paper exam most of the teachers said there would be two questions based on population explosion. Where did that pop out from? And couldn't the education board be more specific on whether to write a paragraph or a letter in the question where we were told to invite a friend to village home and describe the scenery.

We have always been taught that writing an incorrect spelling of any writer's name is a grave mistake? Why was the name of poet 'Jashimuddin' misspelled in the question paper? In order to create confusion among students?

In Physics 1st paper one question asked us to determine the rate of thermal radiation of round thing. But they didn't mention if it was a black body and if not then why wasn't the term 'e' mentioned in the question?

Chemistry 1st paper question had many mistakes. Notably in question no 2 the information given was the 'rate of reaction' of a first order reaction and you had to find out the half-life-time of that reaction. It should have been 'rate constant of reaction'. Some students began to answer question 2 which had 4 questions in it. And when they were confused by

the question mentioned above they simply had to leave that broad question and answer the alternative. It cost them a lot of time.

And why were the numbers for math calculation in Bengali? Our calculator doesn't show Bengali figures!

Students aren't allowed to bring mobiles in exam halls. That is a very good step. But shouldn't that apply for teachers too. Their mobile ringing constantly disturbs our concentration. In one particular centre students aren't allowed to take steel scales. Why? They weren't informed earlier either.

KK
Dhaka

Magnetic Train from Dhaka to Chittagong

Once again there is news about magnetic trains being planned to travel from Dhaka to Chittagong in one hour (June 20). A similar news came out about a year ago and then it died out. This time there is a Press Conference where some data has been given. After reading about the news conference, I was intrigued as I personally rode a magnetic train in Tsukuba some years ago, and have always been interested in this subject. This time I did some more research, and came up with the following information which differs from the data given at the press conference.

- There is NO magnetic train between Shanghai and Beijing, a distance of 800 miles.
- There is one between Shanghai Financial District and Pudong International Airport-- a distance of only 30-km. This has only made its maiden run on 31st Dec 2002.
- This was built at a cost of \$1.57 Billion which comes to \$52 M per km.
- This contrasts with \$2 M per km mentioned at the press conference.
- The Shanghai maglev was built by Transrapid International based in Berlin, and not by InterGlob.
- Several other magnetic train are being planned in the world, but they are mostly between airport and city, (except one planned in the Ruhr of 69 km) and none of them as long as 250 km, the distance from Dhaka to Chittagong.
- The fare of the 30-km journey in Shanghai has been set at \$6.25, i.e. Tk 12 per km. This contrasts with Tk 1 per km mentioned at the press conference.
- It took 18 months to construct the 30-km line in Shanghai. In the press conference it was said that the 250-km line to Chittagong will take 18 months.
- The most intriguing part is that the train will be able to transport bulk gas without the need for pipelines. The writer has worked with gas for 20 years, and has never come across this. Pray tell me how.
- Finally, with such a cheap offer, Bangladesh should grab it fast, before they change their mind.

Hasanat Khan
Uttara, Dhaka

that the Bengali community in New Zealand would be deprived from watching this channel because in New Zealand it doesn't not cover Apstar R. Therefore, we would like to request the NTV authority to air the Channel through ASIASAT 3s as well.

Pabitra Das, Md. MM Huda, Afikur Islam, Talebul Islam, M Waliullah and many other interested viewers
New Zealand

"No control over drug price"

I was shocked to learn from the news-item "No control over drug price" the contrasting price-level of drugs in Bangladesh with our neighbouring countries. In some cases prices of some drugs are four/five times higher than that of India. We know some drugs are indispensable therefore it is all the more shocking and frustrating to learn that a group of people monopolise the drug market and deprive the mass from these lifesaving medicine.

The government must take immediate measure to fix the price of essential drugs and monitor the market carefully.

Nazrul Islam
On e-mail

"Converting Muslims to Christianity"

I thank those who have responded to the debate on 'conversions' which I have found most interesting although I have to protest to Shabbir Bashar that nowhere did I say that Bangladesh was unique in its treatment of evangelicals! Incidentally, please let us not use the label 'Evangelical' too loosely. It is worn by many. I myself am a member of the Evangelical Alliance in the UK because English Evangelicals are much more progressive than some elsewhere.

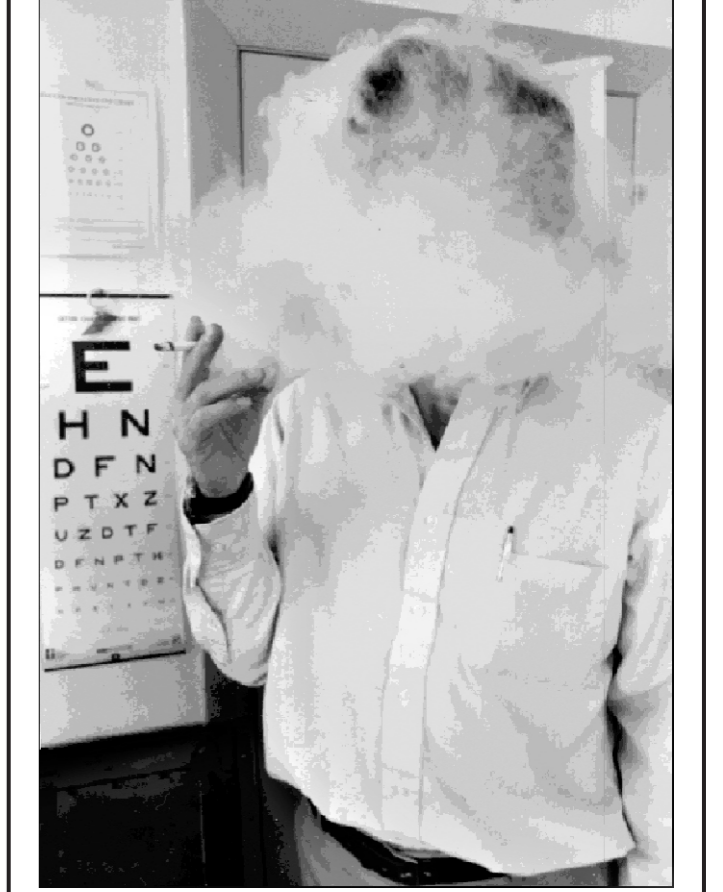
It was also nice to hear from Abu Hashem that his experience of 'converts' and their descendants, here in Bangladesh, is that they are good citizens and not zombies manipulated by wicked missionaries who have brain-washed them into submission!

Also I think the story of Bengal weavers having fingers chopped off because they competed with those in England, needs to be checked out. My enquiries indicate that it is a story from Moghul times and, in any case, it was certainly not done by missionaries! Indeed, the reason why Christian missionaries were, in some places, heartily loathed by traders, was that they exposed ill-treatment and exploitation of the 'natives' so well that they are responsible for some of these stories getting out! No, none of us are perfect, but repeating ancient stories about other religions will keep us going round in circles.

More relevant for debate is the recent story of the death of the young Christian man, Ridoy Roy, of Pingolkathi in Gouranadi upazila of Barisal, who was stabbed to death on April 24th by a group of extremists when returning home from showing Christian films to a morning meeting. Already, my Church of England Newspaper is calling him 'the first Christian martyr in Bangladesh'. If this incident had happened in the West, to a Muslim missionary, it would have been headlines and all hell would have broken loose - and rightly so. No, it is not a level playing-field.

Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs)
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Anti-tobacco treaty and Bangladesh



Vanishing behind the smoke-screen!

The World Health Organisation (WHO), in its annual general meeting in Geneva, expressed concern over the increasing level of tobacco consumption in the developing countries. The situation is grave in Bangladesh as well and it demands rethinking the issue in the context of imposition of tax, advertisement and motivation.

WHO, recently in its annual meeting of 192 member countries unanimously adopted the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTN). The convention requires its members to ban or impose tough restrictions on tobacco advertisement, sponsorship and promotion within five years and lays down guidelines on the statutory warning inscribed on cigarette packets.

According to WHO, each year about 5 million peoples die from diseases linked to smoking and a major portion of them comes from the developing countries. The developed countries have succeeded in cutting tobacco consumption through tough measures in indoor smoking, advertisement and by imposing higher tax. As for example, price of cigarette is much cheaper in our country than in UK. In addition to that in our country cigarette is available maybe more than anything else. One will find small cigarette shops in every corner and one can even buy a single stick of cigarette which is not possible in many developed countries.

Our government is not doing much to curb the level of tobacco consumption. Government should ban smoking inside office buildings and places where there are mass gathering. There is a growing trend of billboard advertisement in city roads. These glamorous ads may attract the young generation and there is every possibility that they will resort to smoking. Many actors-actresses often act as models in these ads which also lure the younger generation. The only profit visible from these is that the City Corporation and other authorities get some fees at the cost of public health. The Government should review the existing policy of City Corporation and media regarding smoking.

Our Government should give effort to curb smoking. In addition to that, NGOs, newspapers, educational institutions can play an important role in creating awareness among the citizens against smoking.

Monzur Qader Chowdhury, LGED, Netrakona

MPs' bloated perks and our dented purse!

We read with a heavy heart the way the government has planned to squander public money in the name of marking up the allowance figures for the MPs and Ministers in a country with a perennial begging bowl. I shudder to think that a full Minister tried to back this proposal by saying that, "people abroad laugh at the meagre figure that we receive as MPs and Ministers". Some other Minister even quoted the Australian MPs' allowance figure during their assembly sessions!

It's a shame, being in one of the poorest countries in the world plagued with perennial and inherent history of impoverishment, rampant corruption and mindless politicians who earned a real poor image for the country, citing examples of such perks in a richie rich country like Australia! People in the developed world make mockery of us not because we are poor in material possession but because we are poor in managing our own resources honestly for the welfare of the poor. Our politicians usurp all that is there for the public in the name of serving the nation.

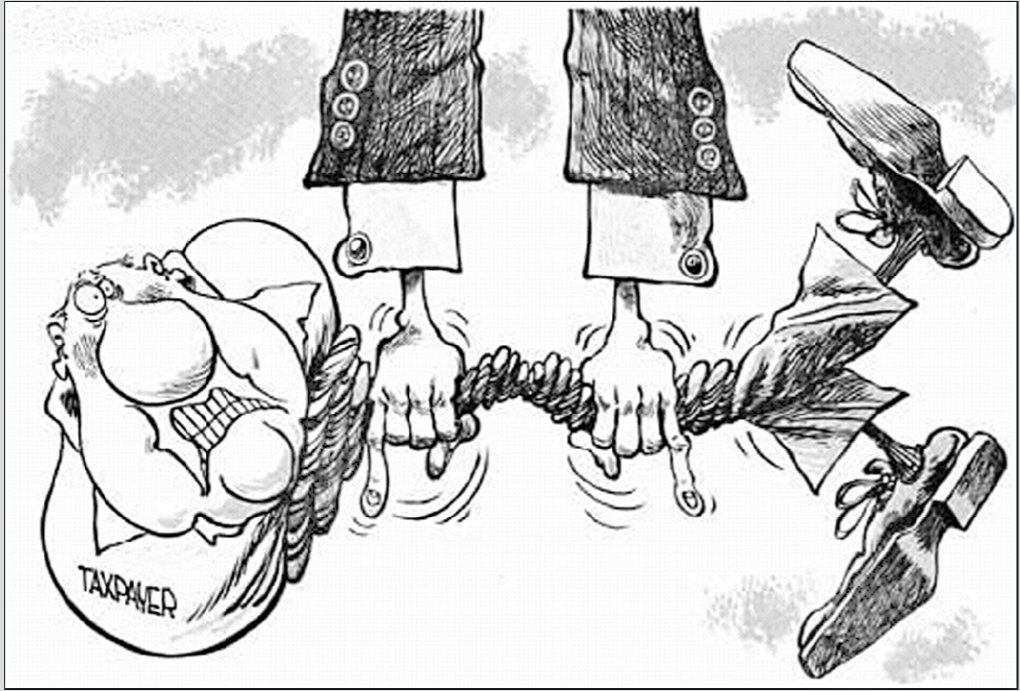
Raising perks if at all justified to a level where our hard earned public exchequer won't

be dented much - is probably acceptable. But by God, jacking it up by 400% in a jiffy is way too much to digest. At least when we nurse such a big platoon of MPs and Ministers who are mostly awful performers and cause sheer waste of public money! For heaven's sake, stop zipping

around in Volvo and Mercedes at our (and donors') expense. Look around our own neighbouring countries where the educated and veteran politicians ride small basic transports to serve the people. They command much, much higher respect to the people of this currently changed world.

Please be rational and act in way as to retain whatever remnant of image we have before the world community! Please act now and act fast for the sake of this nation and for the sake of salvaging your images.

Shah Mushtaque Ahmed
Lake Circus, Dhaka



GIVE ME MORE!