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Down the memory lane with Jim Corbett

Reading Khademul Islam's article on legendary Jim Corbett in the Star Literature brought misty nostalgia to my 70 years old eyes.

It was 1948 when I first 'met' Jim Corbett through his 'Man-Eaters of Kumaon' which was added to the curricula at St Xavier's College, Calcutta. It was love at first read and quickly devoured. I settled in Chittagong after my graduation in 1952. From then onwards till Feb 1971 it was one long affair with the verdant hills of the Hill Tracts where I spent months in each year, hunting and traversing some of the most dense forests imaginable and seeing the spectacular landscape which abound in each Hill District.

In latter years I concentrated on Bandarban searching for medicinal plants. By the mid-50's I had penetrated deep into every Mouza of this sub-division and it was here in 1962 in a place called Chema Jiri that I saw at close quarters what was my first and possibly the Chittagong Hill Tracts' last tiger in the wild. Perhaps he already considered himself a refugee in his own domain as was evident by the long sorrowful look I got. But, although those 10-20 seconds were like 10-20 years, I did not feel a moment's unease as I stood there alone, unarmed.

By that time, I had already avidly read and re-read 'The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag' the 'Temple Tiger and more Man-Eaters of Kumaon', 'My India', 'Jungle Lore (The Shikari's Bible)' and 'Tree-tops' his slim last work which contains the poignant portrayal of the newly wedded Princess Elizabeth who was on her honeymoon trip to Kenya. Staying at the famous Tree-tops Hotel on the night, her father King George VI died. "She went up a Princess and came down a Queen".

Nearly 50 years after his death in Kenya, Jim Corbett is still a household word in Kumaon, and, India has done well to name its grandest tiger conservation project after this great naturalist. He had warned and foretold in his first book that "the tiger is a large-hearted gentleman with boundless courage and when he is exterminated, as exterminated he will be unless public opinion rallies to his support, India (and that included Bangladesh then) will have lost the finest of her fauna."

If I go to visit my son in Kenya next year, I will make it a point to visit the tomb of my "Guru" and pay homage to a largely unsung (except in India) but a most ardent devotee of practical conservation to atone and seek forgiveness. This I must do because I share the same unfortunate nationality as those who had no compunction about not only keeping these magnificent creatures confined in cages (after systematically despoiling their natural habitat), but to poison no less than five of them for a few pieces of nickel.

S Sikander Ahmed  
Baitul Aman Society, Shyamoli, Dhaka



bastion of justice.

In my opinion, lawyers clamouring for the implementation of their six point demand do possess some values. The government should change its unbending attitude and go through the contents of those demands. Finally, I will urge the government to implement those demands as soon as possible for the greater interests of the lawyers and the mass that cry aloud for justice.

Bivuti Tarafder  
3rd year, Department of Law, DU

Honesty and our politicians

The finance minister's reaction to the recent Transparency International (TIB) report makes an incredibly comic reading, except for the sublime tragedy it hides. At a July 3, 2001 press conference, the then finance minister SAMS Kibria made exactly the same charges.

As The Daily Star reported the next day, Mr. Kibria pointed out that the TIB was an anti-Awami League organisation whose founders included, among others, Mr. Saifur Rahman! Now, in 2003, only the names of individuals and parties (doing the attack and the defence respectively) have been changed. The fact is, both the ministers have been vocal supporters of the TIB when in opposition and participated in regional Transparency International conferences as delegates during their tenure on the Opposition benches.

It is a shame that both the ministers have chosen, when in office, to defend the very ills of corruption that they decied when in Opposition.

I think children in kindergarten have more intellectual honesty than our politicians.

Esam Sohail, Kansas, USA

The cable curse

Satellite networks have given us a wide range of channels and choices of programmes. A simple villager in Bangladesh and a rich man in the US can watch the same programmes on TV and learn about various cultures. This is only possible due to the advent of cable. Anyway, most of the channels are under the control of different private companies and individuals. Considering the markets and the choices of viewers, the owners of the channels produce and broadcast music videos, films, serials and many other programmes that are not always healthy to the taste of our family members.

In fact, it is a matter of great concern that most of the people, particularly the youth of today, are concentrating more to the relatively light, provocative and low graded programmes. Those who are immature, not having clear ideas about the reality and incapable of judging between right and wrong, are greatly influenced by these programmes.

Children spend hours watching TV and that affect their studies,

teous at the outset.

It can, hence, be deduced that shameful clashes might be averted if the government behaved differently that what it is alleged to have done. In short, government is responsible for the untoward incidents due to its irresponsible attitude.

Another objection is to the election process of the Bar Council. By amending the Bar Council Ordinance 1972, an advocate is barred from holding office more than two times. What it means is that they are discriminated against, in comparison with members of the Bangladesh Medical Association, because such a restriction isn't applicable to the latter. It is good to hear that the incumbent government vows to separate the judiciary from the executive organ. As well,

A helicopter for 'DG Health', please

In a bold move, the DG of the Health Directorate made a surprise visit to check on the attendance of doctors at a city hospital and apparently confirmed the World Bank's claim that a sizeable number of doctors in the public sector are not available to those who need their services. Additional surprise visits out of Dhaka already seem to be paying dividends.

To address the absenteeism and the negligence of doctors, as was recently claimed in the media, experts of the World Bank and the UNFPA, in a recent forum (Sept. 28-29), suggested the adoption of a "demand side financing" (among other things) to provide resources to health service "users" (especially

rather infrequently in the arena of public services.

If this activity alone is ratcheted up and conducted more routinely at all levels, healthcare delivery should improve noticeably as the second day's visits suggest. Combining other elements of the management system, such surprised visits will help straighten the system even more. My suggestion is: Let's fix the supply side problems first before venturing into another expensive and untested experimentdemand side financing.

Perhaps the resources would be better spent if the DG were to be given a helicopter to conduct more random supervisory visits across the country. He could also bring along World Bank experts to check whether the high-absenteeism statistic suggested by the Bank is

Let's roll on: We have done much better



The recent revelation that the rate of poverty is decreasing at a rate of one per cent every year is indeed a great news. The fact that poverty rate decreased by only two per cent during the mid 80s to early 90s, and that it came down by 10 per cent during the 90s, is a powerful indication of the benefits we are reaping from democracy.

We have achieved a lot. Our population growth rate is one of the lowest in South Asia. In human development, our position is second in Asia, next to China (seems counter-intuitive but the figures speak for themselves). I believe the efforts of the numerous NGOs were instrumental in achieving such progresses.

The fact that we have been able to achieve all these despite having such a large population and too few natural resources is indeed a tremendous achievement. The people of Bangladesh possess extra-ordinary resilience in the face of disastrous natural calamities that strike us too often. I am sure many countries, if they were in our position, could not have achieved what we did.

It is true that we have a lot more to do. The fact that 40 per cent of the population is still living below the poverty line is an indication of our task ahead. Poor governance, corruption, law and order situation, etc. pose major challenges to our further progress. What matters most though is that we have hopes for the future. As people become more educated and empowered, they will become more conscientious of their rights and would elect people to power who would not make hollow promises, but work hard to turn election pledges into reality.

We will see then that even faster development is occurring in all spheres of our society. We can hope that someday our future generations, if not our own generation, will feel proud of being Bangladeshis. Let's roll on.

K M Zubair Sadeque  
Duquesne University Pittsburgh, USA

the Supreme Court directs to do so.

Question is, how much longer must one wait for that to happen? We know that all the magistrates are biased. If not, why did a magistrate stand up in order to salute the honourable Minister for Housing and Public works, Miza Abbas, while she was hearing the accusation of a defamation case? The concerned magistrate had denied having done so, but none believes that version.

Unfortunately, we also observed that several judges were appointed ignoring recommendations of the Chief Justice and in contravention of the constitutional dictates relating such matters. Such controversial appointments pose a major threat to judges who are motivated to work impartially. If the trend continues, judges will devote themselves to satisfy the government to facilitate early promotions or to being permanent. People will eventually withdraw their confidence from the last

sleep and outdoor activities. According to nerve specialists, the present generation of children are suffering from epilepsy, the number increasing further due to excessive TV watching and computer game playing. Besides, programmes with the scenes of sex and violence are leading the tender mind of our youth as well as the children towards destructive tendencies.

They are being deceived by the weird images and the colourful presentations of the celluloid as they fondly emulate the dress-ups, get ups and the overall attitude of the characters and become detached from the realities governing our lives.

In many cases, our youths involve themselves in acts of murder and rape, imbued by evil spirits emitting from the TV screens. Is there any body to take note of the cultural impact of the cable on our posterity? One e-mail

Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Put hartal issue into a referendum

The main aim of the struggle for Independence from the colonial British rule and subsequently from the Pak Military Junta was to establish a democratic society to be governed by democratic ideals. In democracy, the wishes and aspirations of the common people are reflected. The majority of our people are poor and less knowledgeable about how a true democracy must operate.

Yet, in the elections held in a free and fair atmosphere, the decisions given by those illiterate majority remain praiseworthy, although we see the outcome of such elections as acceptable only insofar as the "exercise of the right to franchise" is concerned.

But we are sorry to notice that the "call of hartal" and its outcome is thoroughly unacceptable as this "right to call hartal", to compel people not to venture out, come through intimidation, damage to personal life and property. Under the above circumstances, it is suggested that the prerogative of 'calling hartal' should be brought to a "referendum."

Only a referendum can reflect public opinion "for or against" it, which in turn can give birth to a law proscribing such agitational and disruptive means to achieve one's political goals.

Engr. SH Kaiser  
Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka

UN, reform it or remove it

After invading two sovereign countries and passing some very racist UN resolutions, some leaders are now talking about making the UN more effective. Really? Those unlucky, expendable Muslims are now going to have a UN that actually cares for them? I feel flattered. In fact, half-drunk with joy!

I am half-drunk because there is the other half of me that is already shouting that these "reform talks" are nothing more than some inexpensive, time-wasting, diplomatic horse manure. How many of you actually believe that all those countries who enjoy God-like powers with their veto would allow other countries to take away some of their powers? To reform the UN, that is exactly what you need. And until that happens, this UN will always remain a club of the racist, by the racist and for the racist. Ask yourself; how can an organisation be fair, when some members of that very organisation enjoy more power than the others?

To make the UN more effective, we need to make it equal for all. The first thing would be to cancel all veto-power. But that would be impossible. All those veto- holding members will never allow this. Hence, the next option is to increase the number of veto-holding members and distribute it equally around the globe for people of all background. This can be done either based on the region e.g. one for Asia, one for Africa etc. Or, based on religion, e.g. one for the Christians, one for the Muslims, one for the Hindus and so on.

However, what is NOT acceptable is the fact that some rich countries possess lots of nukes and nasty weapons as well as veto powers. Look at the US, the UK, France, Russia and China. What do they all have in common? Nukes!

So, either all those big countries get down to real business and address the root weakness of the UN, or they can spend another 50 years hitting around the bush, having high-class diplomatic orgasms. Bottom line is: these cosmetic and dubious reforms will produce no solution whatsoever!

Therefore, we would request these big guys not to deceive us any more by wasting time with some monkey issues. They should not think, even for a second, that we don't know what they are up to. We were sure before the Iraq war that the reason was not WMD, it was to destroy the cradle of our civilization. But, they said it was the WMD. Now they say Saddam posed as having WMD. How could they forget in months that Saddam had always insisted upon not having any WMD in his armoury.

Now that the game is up and the Western conspiracy against us is exposed, I would urge our leaders to wake up to the reality. It's time they begin to behave maturely, not like some stone-age, second-hand brainless robots. They must do something to protect other Muslim nations. No ifs, no buts. We run out of time.

Azad Miah, Oldham, UK

An Appeal to VC, NU

My son, Md. Ashif Sadeq (bearing Roll-481/1994 and 1188/1995), has appeared as an improvement examinee of Traditional Honours Examination-1995 in English from Jagannath government college and as per pick-up system his total marks came to 396 and with 9 grace marks added to this figure his total marks stand at 405 (396+9) which is the minimum marks required for a second class. This fact has been duly authenticated by the memo No. JABI/PANI/Hons Traditiona/Part-III/3rd Year/97/2002/1093 dated 19-11-02 written to my son by the controller of examinations, NU. An application addressed to the vice-

Flower and fashion change with time



It is a usual practice that when we tend to portray the beauty of a woman (her softness and tenderness), we often compare her with flowers. "You are more beautiful than a flower" is a common expression of love. The appeal of flower is universal, something we never deny.

Let's get back to our childhood. We were asked by our mothers to pluck fresh flowers from the gardens to decorate rooms. This was a common practice in our childhood. We enjoyed flower plucking and our mothers enjoyed decorating them in different manners. Visiting guests and other family members enjoyed the beautiful smell and fragrance of those fresh flowers. In sum, flower was a source of ecstasy and entertainment.

Now, let's come back to the present. These days, an empty flower vase, may be made of crystal or Chinese ceramic, is the chief attraction of a corner or centre table in

a room. On occasions like birthdays and marriage anniversaries, we forget to take flowers for our dear ones. But we hardly forget to buy costly presents (and it would be unwise if I don't add here that these presents are mainly evaluated with their money value only). This is very upsetting.

Sometimes teenaged girls and women sell flowers on streets. This is their main income source and you will be astonished to know that these beautiful flowers are sold at a very cheap price and most of the buyers are foreigners. I think we should be ashamed of ourselves. Question is, who should be blamed for it -- change of our taste or what?

However, thanks God that we still do not hesitate to decorate our wedding-rooms, cars of a bridegroom, etc. with fresh flowers as we seldom forget to take fresh flowers to the Shahid Minar and the graveyards.

Nahid Afreen, Dhaka

chancellor and dully recommended by the Principal, Jagannath College was submitted to the NU on 13-04-02 by my son Md. Ashif Sadeq for issuance of his second class honours marks certificate and provisional certificate. The controller of examinations, though authenticated the justification of the claim of my son for issuance of the second class marks sheet and provisional certificate vide his letter no. referred to above expressed his inability to do so without prior approval of the academic council. In this connection, I should like to mention here that the publication of results of all public examinations under NU is made under signature of the controller of examinations by order of the vice-chancellor subject to subsequent approval by the academic council or syndicate. No prior approval of the

academic council is mandatory for routine publication of any result of any public examination. Unless any delicacy arises about a particular case or cases the question of prior approval does not arise at all.

The application of pick-up system is a routine affair for finalisation of results of improvement examinees. This can be done easily by the concerned officials under guidance and supervision of the controller. There is no delicacy in the uniform application of pick-up to the results of improvement examinees. If the NU is kind enough to do welfare to the innocent and deprived improvement examinees of 1994 and 1995, who number not less than one thousand, prior approval of the academic council should not stand a bar to it. An administrative order of the vice-chancellor is enough for

quick disposal of the issue.

I, therefore, hope and pray that the hon'ble vice-chancellor would kindly do the needful for early disposal of the issue of improvement examinees of 1994 and 1995 regarding application of Pick-up system and finalisation of their results. This will establish a record that National University is really worthy of its name and is not a national tragedy.

M. Sadeq  
Chairman of Management  
Tejgaon college, Dhaka

Curbing credit card 'scam'

The way the credit card business is operating in Bangladesh could be called a 'scam' -- a novel way to swindle or deceive innocent credit-hungry public. As this scam goes on, the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) -- the only watchdog for safeguarding our interest -- does nothing. I do not know if there is any department to watch on them?

Lately, many banks ventured into issuing credit cards to eligible and interested ones, alluring them with assurances of various facilities. Such offers include the tie-up of various business concerns and issuance of supplementary cards for near & dear ones. But they do not forget to charge hefty amounts as interest and principal o the principal card. This comes atop of almost all card-accepting establishments debiting a minimum of

3% on each shopping and dining.

I do not know if the Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of the country, has any role to play here to relieve the credit card users from such dual taxation. I must urge for some governmental intervention despite knowing that our finance minister wants to over-burden us with extra taxes on credit card users.

It's high time that the controlling authority, if any, should look into this credit card business altogether and try to relieve the users' owes by following the methods outlined below: (1) Credit Card should be offered, free of charge, to all eligible clients as the users already pay heavy interest every month. (Many overseas companies/banks offer credit cards free of charge while some charge a nominal fee).

(2) Business establishments, which are entrusted by the card cos./banks to honour their cards, must not be charged, or charged only a commission, or deduct any percentage for the transactions.

(3) The interest rate on local credit cards is the highest in the world. Bangladesh Bank should look into it and enforce a limit to charging interest to relieve the burden of the middle class consumers.

(4) Banks should formulate plans, like their counterparts abroad, to offer cards free of charge or at a very nominal cost with variable interest rates for a particular period to attract more customers. Interest may go high only to a reasonable level at the end of any special offering period.

A F Rahman  
Dhaka

the poor). The expectation is that the clients would use their new-found purchasing power to reward or punish doctors and other service providers to bring them to the service facilities.

An interesting ideabut such a mechanism would work where clients have a choice of facilities; where they are relatively enlightened; where transportation and the overall infrastructure provides wider access; and, where a secondary market for the resource instruments (vouchers in this case) is unlikely to evolve because of better regulation and standards of living.

The real problem of healthcare delivery in Bangladesh is one of poorly designed and implemented "management system" that fails to adequately address the human resource, financial control, information, service, logistics, delivery and supervision systems. The DG's surprise visit is an example of a random supervisory visit, used

true or is a mere sampling error!  
Syed Saad Andaleeb  
Fulbright Scholar, East West University

Dear minister of law,

Several controversial amendments, which were introduced in last two successive parliamentary sessions, triggered off the lawyers community's splitting into two poles. One group in particular has been demonstrating different activities in order to repeal amending Civil Procedure Code (CPC) for last couple of months.

Meanwhile, pro-government lawyers have been resisting the agitating lawyers at any cost, which has given birth to several brawls in court premises. Finally, by way of postponing the effectiveness of the CPC amendment with a view to seeking expert opinions, the government clearly proved that the agitating lawyers have been right-

