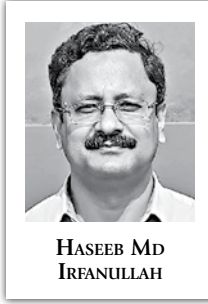


Can we overcome our academic inertia?

Getting Bangladesh's publishing system up to the global standard



HASEEB MD IRFANULLAH

THE first academic journal, *Le Journal des Sçavans*, was published on January 5, 1665 from Paris. Over the past three centuries—according to the latest STM Report 2018 by the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical (STM) Publishers—the number of peer-reviewed journal grew by about 3.5 percent a year. In recent years, however, this growth could be as high as 6 percent. Global databases like Web of Science and CrossRef indicate—with an annual addition of 3 million journal articles—by the end of 2020, the total number of published research papers would be more than 80 million. It means, by the time you finish reading this opinion piece, 40 new journal articles will be published!

In this huge volume of global research, Bangladesh's research is quite small. The world's largest journal publisher Elsevier manages Scopus, one of the biggest online platforms that catalogues academic journals. Out of more than 70 million research articles it holds, about 48,500; 0.07 percent are from Bangladesh. Scopus currently maintains 22,000 active journals, including 16 from Bangladesh. To put this into the South Asian context, 526 journals on this database are from India, 97 from Pakistan, 7 from Sri Lanka, and 6 journals are from Nepal.

Journal Impact Factor is a globally-recognised scoring system that indicates the impact, as well as the reputation, of an academic journal. The more a journal's papers are cited, the larger its score gets and the greater its impact on the academic discipline it belongs to. Every year, Philadelphia-based Clarivate Analytics publishes *Journal Citation Reports* where Impact Factors

of journals are declared. In the latest report published in June 2019, about 12,000 peer-reviewed journals received "Impact Factor 2018", and only four of them are from Bangladesh. I have been involved with the *Bangladesh Journal of Plant Taxonomy* since 2006. My journal received its first Impact Factor in 2010. Since then, no new Bangladeshi journal received an Impact Factor.

Given a very small number of Bangladeshi journals are in the above two databases, one may wonder how many academic journals are actually published from Bangladesh. In the absence of an exhaustive list, this is very difficult to answer. In 2007, INASP (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications), an Oxford-based charity, established an online platform called BanglaJOL or Bangladesh Journals Online. This platform currently has 143 Bangladeshi journals. Given the huge increase in universities in the last decade—from 82 in 2009 to 151 in 2019—we can estimate Bangladeshi academic institutions and academic societies are publishing another one hundred journals outside the BanglaJOL.

Being included in the Scopus or receiving an Impact Factor means that a journal has maintained the basic publishing standards. But, most of our journals do not do that. The BanglaJOL, for example, has classified 48 percent of its 143 journals as "inactive", as they are not published online regularly, and on time—one of the major practices to measure a journal's standard. As per the Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS), about 40 percent BanglaJOL journals are yet to attain minimum publishing standards; many of which are published by old, prestigious learned societies.

Although almost all Bangladeshi journals are struggling to get international recognition, there is in fact no motivation or incentive for improving their standards. A recent analysis has identified several reasons

for, let us call it, "academic inertia". First, the cost of publishing a journal in Bangladesh is very small, on average around USD 1,000 per issue. It is mostly paid by the concerned society, research institution, or often by the government ministries. So, funding is not an issue to publish a journal in Bangladesh. Second, the manuscripts journals receive from Bangladeshi authors are sufficient

academic community. Our public research spending—for example, during 2009-2018, the Ministry of Science and Technology funded around USD 45 million in research—that supports those researches also remain unappreciated.

In addition, most of our non-indexed journals are vehicles to advance our career by taking advantage of the limitations of the current recruitment and promotion rules,

Agricultural Research Council (which coordinates 10 national agricultural research institutes), UGC, and the concerned ministries. Such discussions will fill in the knowledge gaps on academic publishing standards, remove our misunderstandings, help us to understand where globally Bangladesh's research and research communication stand, and update us about the global scholarly publishing system.

These should also build trust among the stakeholders for taking collective actions to improve Bangladesh's academic publishing ecosystem. The final outcome of these discussions should be a clear framework outlining the road to improve.

The framework will highlight how to establish a national system to oversee and guide our journals' quality and standards. And how Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Education, UGC, Directorates of Archives and Library, and BARC can work together and formulate "National Journal Publishing Rules". These rules will gradually be echoed in the recruitment and promotion rules of the universities and research institutes of Bangladesh, updating which is direly needed. The proposed rules should also establish a "Bangladesh Journal Watch" to monitor the quality of Bangladeshi journals in light of the global academic publishing system.

Now the question is, can we soon start the conversation under the leadership of the UGC, prepare a framework to improve Bangladesh's academic publishing system in 2021—the Golden Jubilee of our independence, and aim at making drastic improvements to our academic journal system by 2024—the year Bangladesh graduates to middle-income country? Are we ready for it?

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Although almost all Bangladeshi journals are struggling to get international recognition, there is in fact no motivation or incentive for improving their standards.

SOURCE: WORLD.EDU

to publish normally two issues per year. So, these journals do not need international authors as a source of manuscripts. Third, despite being internationally-unrecognised, authors of Bangladeshi journals are largely okay with the quality of these journals, since publishing papers in these journals are helping them to get recognition, and also promotion, to be specific.

This inertia is harming Bangladesh's research ecosystem and reputation. A large amount of Bangladesh's research published in Bangladeshi journals remain unrecognised by the global

for example, of the universities. The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh has proposed a unified guideline for recruitment and promotion of public university teachers, which demands publishing in journals with Impact Factor or indexed in Scopus. But this may not help to improve the poor standards of many Bangladeshi journals.

To break this academic inertia and to make Bangladeshi journals better, as a first step, we need to organise dialogues and conversations among Bangladeshi researchers, journal editors, Bangladesh

Data protection is rising on the global agenda

MAZHARUL ISLAM

IN the age of information and communication technologies, the flow of information is fundamental to doing business in the global economy. Business operations and consumer expectations have undergone a major shift due to development of technology and the nature of information flows. Most of the services that we receive or provide are related to collection and analysis of personal data, for example, any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person. The economic and social integration resulting from the functioning of e-commerce has led to a substantial increase in cross-border flows of personal information. The scale of the collection and sharing of personal information has increased significantly. We share our personal information everyday by visiting a website, opening bank accounts, social media accounts, buying goods and services online, registering for emails, etc. without hesitation. It is a matter of grave concern that some organisations not only collect personal details but also store it in insecure places and share it with third parties or move this data across borders without taking customers' consent. Rapid technological developments and globalisation have brought new challenges for the protection of personal information. In the recent past, we have witnessed that British Airways owner IAG has been awarded a USD 230 million fine for the theft of data from 500,000 customers from its website last year under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force in 2018. Facebook has been fined GBP 500,000 in 2018 for serious breaches of

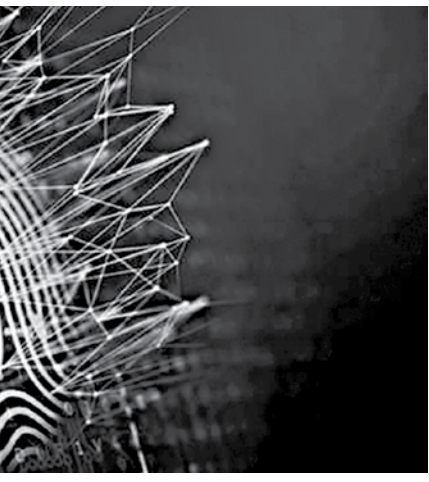
data protection law. Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to the protection of law against any interference with his privacy, family or correspondence. In December 2013, the United Nations General Assembly passed a Resolution demanding that the workings of state surveillance be subject to legality through clear and precise law, which must look to safeguard the right to privacy. As expected, data protection has become a major issue for



legislators, regulators and consumers worldwide that organisations can no longer afford to ignore. There are a number of data privacy regulations and acts have been introduced around the world.

Firstly, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is the latest European Union (EU) parliamentary measure designed to put the highest levels of protection around personal data, which came into force in

May 2018. The GDPR applies to all companies that process personal data of EU citizens, regardless of where the EU citizen resides. According to GDPR, companies must ensure that customers have control over their data and to be GDPR-compliant, a company must not only safeguard consumer data carefully but also provide consumers with ways to control, monitor, check and, if desired, delete any information pertaining to them. Any deviation of this could lead to imposition of fines of up to EUR 20 million or four percent of



the company's global annual turnover, whichever is higher.

Secondly, the California Federal Government has enacted the California Consumer Privacy Act, 2018 (CCPA), which comes into force in January 1, 2020. Many of its provisions are similar to GDPR and require companies to institute new internal data privacy regimes. CCPA gives more control to the consumer on how their data is collected, used and deleted. CCPA

applies to businesses that collect personal information about California residents, regardless of location, and meet certain thresholds.

Thirdly, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) has adopted a voluntary Privacy Framework in 2005 and updated it in 2015, which aims at promoting electronic commerce throughout the APEC region. In 2011, APEC implemented the Cross Border Privacy Rules (CBPR) system which requires participating businesses to develop and implement data privacy policies consistent with the Framework. The Framework requires appropriate safeguards, while the CBPR system requires the applicant country to describe how it enforces a requirement to have technical and administrative safeguards. The CBPR system is intended to provide a minimum level of protection if there are no applicable domestic privacy protection requirements in a country.

Fourthly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adopted the voluntary guidelines governing the Protection of Privacy and Trans-border Flows of Personal Data in 1980, and revised in 2013 in response to growing concerns about information privacy and data protection in an increasingly technological and connected world. The OECD Guidelines apply to personal data, whether in the public or private sectors which, because of the manner in which they are processed, or because of their nature or the context in which they are used, pose a danger to privacy and individual liberties. These guidelines should be regarded as minimum standards which are capable of being supplemented by additional measures for the protection of privacy

and individual liberties.

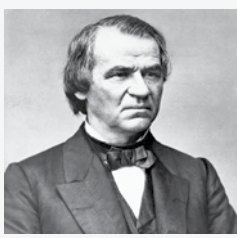
According to The Software Alliance (BSA) Global Cloud Computing Scorecard, 2018 privacy laws are still absent or insufficient in several countries, although a good number of countries have data protection frameworks in place. Brazil and Thailand have no comprehensive laws, while laws in China, India, Indonesia and Vietnam remain very limited. Canada and Mexico score highest in the privacy section.

The Supreme Court of India held that privacy is a fundamental right in the case of Justice KS Puttaswamy (Retd) v Union of India on August 24, 2017, which led to the formulation of a comprehensive Personal Data Protection Bill 2019. Presently, the Information Technology Act, 2000 contains specific provisions intended to protect electronic data.

It is unfortunate that there are no similar laws, regulations or guidelines for ensuring data privacy in Bangladesh that is applicable for all sectors, irrespective of their nature. As a result, individuals have become concerned about the harmful consequences that may arise from the use and misuse of their information. Technological developments require a strong and more coherent data protection framework, backed by strong enforcement, to ensure continued trade and economic development without imposing unnecessary barriers to information flows. Enterprises should also be required to introduce integrated privacy policy and effective data retention policy to this effect.

Mazharul Islam is a corporate legal practitioner. He can be reached at mazharul528@gmail.com.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

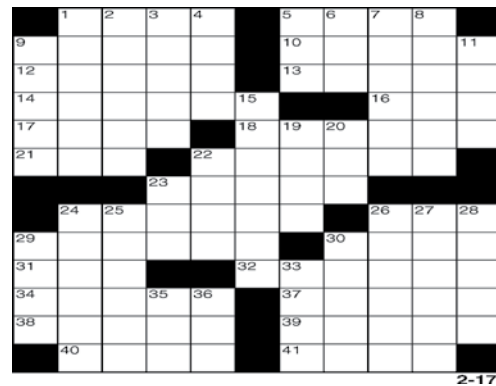


(February 24, 1868)
US President Andrew Johnson impeached

In 1868, the US House of Representatives voted 126-47 to impeach President Andrew Johnson, whose lenient Reconstruction policies regarding the South after the Civil War angered Radical Republicans in Congress.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Go by
 - 5 Hunting garb, for short
 - 9 Bit of change
 - 10 Chilled
 - 12 Heart, for one
 - 13 10th president
 - 14 14th president
 - 16 Quarter-back Manning
 - 17 Survey
 - 18 5th president
 - 21 Commercial
 - 22 Most dreadful
 - 23 Basic belief
 - 24 Cook's collection
 - 26 High tennis shot
 - 29 28th president
 - 30 Rabbit's cousin
 - 31 Start of a count
 - 32 33rd president
 - 34 44th president
 - 37 Change, as the Constitution
 - 38 Surgical beam
 - 39 Viper feature
 - 40 Sub shop
 - 41 Poker payment
- DOWN**
- 1 Sentence ender
 - 2 California team
 - 3 Mongrel's warning
 - 4 Dubbing concern
 - 5 Barracks bed
 - 6 One or more
 - 7 Some runners
 - 8 Spotted cat
 - 9 Dad
 - 11 Pennsylvania port
 - 15 Famous
 - 19 Metal sources
 - 20 Tennis court divider
 - 22 1920s art style
 - 23 "My country -- of thee"
 - 24 Fabled sailor
 - 25 Polite word
 - 26 Bemoan
 - 27 Grove fruit
 - 28 Flexes
 - 29 Sheep coat
 - 30 One of the primates
 - 33 Tennis star
 - Nadal, to fans
 - 35 Singer Torme
 - 36 "Exodus" hero



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

A D D S P R E P S
G R A I N L I M I T
R O D E O A M I N O
E N D T R Y N A P
E E Y O R E B E T S
D O C U D R A M A
S O A P O P E R A
B E R N N A D I R S
R A N Y E S V I P
I N A N E T H E S E
A C T O N S I R E N
N E E D S M A S T

BEEBLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.