

Fracas in BB

Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of the country, looks diminutive today after what happened within its precincts on Monday. The rumpus was on a high dare-devil rating with 40-50 employees storming into GM (admn)'s chamber and ransacking it to a point where he had to duck under the table only to be a sitting target for kicks and punches from the intruders. The GM desperately ran for shelter at the governor's chamber. There he and the Bangladesh Bank governor paid audience to spiteful remarks with a blistering demand shouted at them for their immediate removal from office.

All this was said to be the handiwork of Bangladesh Bank Employees' Association, the vanquished party in the last CBA election which was won by Bangladesh Bank Karmachari Samity with a narrow margin. Although no organisation supporting any political party is legally allowed to function in Bangladesh Bank, some reports suggested that the incumbent Karmachari Samity has had a pro-BNP image while its rival Employees Association has been known for its leanings toward the AL. Some leaders of the party which had lost the election demanded transfer of a few key officials allegedly responsible for victimising their supporters. The GM apparently refused to concede this angering them a good deal. Some observers even tend to look at it as part of a scheme plotted outside the bank to exert pressure on the governor lest he took some decisions which were on the anvil.

If it is a case of rivalry between the election winner and the loser then it needs to be addressed by utmost neutrality in the administration and by reminding all concerned that they are debarred from showing off any clout of national political parties, overtly or covertly, according to BB rules. We would like to see deterrent action taken on the culprits and an uncovering done of the machinations behind the outburst, if any. This looked like a tall order for the 3-member inquiry committee headed by Harinarayan Majumder, an executive director of Bangladesh Bank, especially when he was given 24 hours to file the report. Nothing like solving the problem internally, but if need be, expert trouble-shooting advice should be sought from the finance ministry without hesitation. At all events, we want discipline restored to Bangladesh Bank. It cannot afford its institutional efficiency and prestige, as the central bank of the country, to be playthings for the union leaders, past or present.

Now It's Canada

Canada has put our fish product exports on its 'import alert list'. Apparently, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has reacted after the European Union which earlier deemed the standard unsatisfactory and sent an inspection team to see things for itself.

We find the recent development quite baffling because a flurry of measures followed the EU inspection team's visit in order to standardise the farms coming under fire from the importing countries. The government has extended credit to modernise the farms. In addition to that, laws were revamped to make sure the EU regulations were met by the exporter. Yet why this set-back?

The ministry concerned of the government is yet to clear its position. One cannot help feeling that the issue has suffered from lack of follow-up. The kind of persuasion it takes to restore faith in international business following any instance of misgivings has reportedly been missing. This is most unfortunate. Because the government did not lack in either discretion or speed in understanding the gravity of the problem yet its intention has not been translated into reality.

The news of Canadian setback makes us feel that the problem might have suffered a communication gap. We urge the government to take up the matter seriously and do whatever is needed to clear the air. The fact that some other countries like India and Madagascar have also suffered this dubious distinction of being on the alert list of the European and North American importers should not make it subject to any kind of complacency because we can hardly afford it; the stakes are rather too high in our case.

Shrimp comprises 42 percent of our exports. Not only that thousands live on this 350 million US dollar frozen food industry.

Export of fish products seems to have been caught in a web of setbacks. Unless the reality changes there, the economy is in for a big jolt.

Shahjalal Varsity Tense

We are worried at the way the situation is deteriorating at the Sylhet Shahjalal University of Science and Technology due to the bellicose stance of the student fronts of the ruling party and the opposition BNP. Although both BCL and JCD are now in a position to be blamed squarely for any possible eruption that might flare up it is the former which set the ball rolling in this case. The activists of the student front of ruling Awami League made a mockery of the administration by refusing to vacate the hall after the authorities closed the university in view of escalating tension following the expulsion of 17 students by the syndicate on various grounds. Eleven of the expelled students belong to BCL. Protesting expulsion decision, the BCL activists clamped a self-proclaimed strike forcing the authorities to close the university *sine die*. Since then the BCL activists and their JCD counterparts have been on collision course.

We are shocked to notice that a month is about to pass since the trouble began and yet the ruling party has not made any discernible move to chasten the members of its student front who have put the university in a limbo.

In unison with President Shahabuddin Ahmed we have observed it many times before that unless political parties completely dissociate themselves with their student fronts, this sickening saga of BCL-JCD anarchy will never end. We demand of the party in power to take steps immediately against the BCL trouble mongers and help the university authorities restore normalcy without any further delay.

Situating the CHT Accord within a Moral Paradigm

by Dr Shahdeen Malik

Politics without moral responsibility for the wrongs committed is nothing but 'shontrash' and politics lacks significance unless it becomes a medium for entrenching moral values for a better society.

In recent weeks, the CHT Accord has certainly been one of the most commented, analysed, explained, hailed and appreciated or derided and criticised event in the media. The debate and contrasting comments have focused mostly on, on the one hand, the need for peace, harmony, development, conducive conditions for exploitation of natural resources of the region, end of blood shed and discrimination and plight of the hill people and the consequent justification for concluding the accord. On the other hand, doubts about the correctness or desirability of concluding an accord with a particular body of the hill people, legality and constitutional validity of powers conferred on the regional bodies (parbatya zilla parishad) including limited eligibility for membership of these bodies, restrictive conditions on land ownership and use of minerals, implications for the unitary character of the state, its security and sovereignty have been the central concerns of its critics, with the spillover effect into the national politics including the proper functioning of the Jatiya Sangsad.

None of the views expressed so far, particularly in the print media, has focused on the moral aspects of rights of people, particularly the people of the minority communities in a pluralistic society and, hence, this essay attempts to interject

certain relevant moral dimensions into, as it were, the foray. Long gone are the days of city states which could function by totally excluding all groups but one from the ambit of power, privilege and authority. Every state and society today includes large sections of men and women who are disadvantaged because they are denied equal access to the resources of the society. These sections, depending on the deployment of the vocabulary of the commanding discourse of the majority people, have variously been termed as blacks, niggers, ethnic minorities, religious minorities, aborigines, indigenous, underclass, tribals, immigrants, untouchables, scheduled castes, guest workers, 'women' and so on. Compelled to live in societies shaped exclusively by the majority, these groups or sections live in a world in which their lives are not theirs to live as they would have liked to live. For the minorities, or whatever other designation or description deployed to delineate them, the world belongs to the majority and the only way they can live a half decent life is by becoming like the majority. But then the paths and avenues for imitating the majority is usually blocked or made inaccessible due to the structures of dis-

crimination which are occasionally formal but often pervasively entrenched by the realm created by the majority. Our language of inequality, injustice, marginalisation, deprivation, exploitation and so forth is too feeble, too tame and hopelessly inadequate to capture their conditions and feelings and hardly any amount of provisions stemming from our paradigm of formal legality and equality can significantly change that world of the 'other'.

It is only when these formal concepts of equality are internalised by the majority through the realisation that all human beings have claim on each other arising from the fact that they belong to a common species, are similarly constituted, have similar basic needs and are equal at the deepest level that we can take the first steps towards a moral society in which whenever there is a suffering or a cry for help, every other human being feels addressed thereby. One may not always be able to help, but if one is not moved by that suffering or lacks compassion, then one loses sight of what is meant to be human.

When a person is denied access to sympathy because he is presumed to be differently con-

stituted, or frustrated for lack of opportunities which he feels are more readily available to members of the majority group, or denied self-expression (circa language movement), or systematically humiliated, insulted, degraded, if not physically violated (circa our liberation struggle) — and thereby made a person without dignity,

it becomes the moral duty of a human being to be sympathetic to these conditions of any group or section of people in his society. And when compassion, sympathy, goodwill or personal efforts are not sufficient to address these problems then it becomes imperative upon the state, the sole available instrument of collective action, to do the needful so that all persons within the state may become human again, both the majority and the minority.

And now moving on to positivism as a moral paradigm, it may not be pointless to reiterate that no group or section can degrade others for long without degrading and brutalising itself in the process. It has never been possible for any group, most usually the majorities in any society, to develop their own potentials and capacities at the expense of another. A *mastan* cannot become a *mastan* unless

he brutalises others and in the process he brutalises himself and becomes a person devoid of tender feelings and, ultimately, a person without humanity. Similarly, when a collective, a majority in any society, prospers by denying the rights of others, such a course exacts a heavy toll on the privileged and the powerful whose lives remain superficial, pleasures crude, minds full of fear and hearts narrow and hateful and, ultimately, such a course almost inevitably leads to a society in which physical and organised violence becomes the primary mode of 'social cohesion', as is the case in too many countries around us.

Lastly, the moral duty to help others, the less privileged and exploited, stems from the need to correct past misdeeds. The dominant groups systematically maltreated the dominated groups and caused them much moral, material and psychological harm. They therefore bear a special responsibility for the plight of their victims and have a duty not only to end the harm but also to heal their wounds and help them become whole human beings. As moral beings, the dominant groups cannot but regret the past and have a duty to redress its painful consequences.

It was morally wrong to have obliterated the material signifiers of their heritage by dam buildings in the 60s, to have denied the hill people their distinctiveness in the early 70s, to have forcibly occupied their habitats since the late 70s, to have brutalised them by the use of modern methods of organised violence since the early 80s, to have compelled them to leave their homelands in tens of thousands and flee into unknown territory and environment. Hence, it is now time to recognise that a tormented past for groups or sections of the society will not lead to a shared future for the whole society unless we find ways of pacifying its aggrieved and tormented victims. It is only from the standpoint of the moral duty of a human being that we have to address the necessity of redressing past treatment of the minorities and find the inner strength to recognise that even if they got a 'better deal' it is our moral duty to ensure them such a deal. By denying them, we deny our own morality.

Politics without moral responsibility for the wrongs committed is nothing but *shontrash*, and politics lacks significance unless it becomes a medium for entrenching moral values for a better society.

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OPINION

Politicisation: Inroads into Administration

by AR Shamsul Islam

Politicisation kills the instinct of a person to work independently. It destroys his courage to stand for justice. It turns him into a tool to serve the party. It leads him to subordinate the interests of the state and people to those of the party and partymen.

NELSON Mandela set a rare example of true, selfless and democratic leadership by relinquishing the post of the President of his party African National Congress he was holding in favour of its Deputy President. He further advised the new appointee to keep around him the firm and neutral persons to ensure effectiveness of the administration.

Unfortunately ours is a world absolutely reverse to it. The heads of our political parties tend to cling to the party chiefship lifelong. Further they naively enjoy being lost in the thickets of sycophants. Principled elements are driven miles off.

After the Awami League had come to power in 1996 the news of the politicisation of the governmental administration by the erstwhile ruler BNP began to appear in fleshy details. The nation was astounded and wounded to know how and to what extent the entire administration — the executive, police, autonomous bodies and even the benign judiciary — was smeared by induction of BNP men into different tiers. The judiciary, the last resort of suffering men, if left under the clutches of a political party, what remains for the victims to depend upon in the dark, distressing hours?

The Awami League government of 1996 started with a bang when the Prime Minister urged the government functionaries to work honestly and impartially without any fear of enmeshment from ruling party. She emphatically declared that no 'tadbir' would

be allowed. People heard that registers were opened in police stations and other susceptible places to note the names of 'tadbirkaris'. People were inspired to believe that they had exercised their franchise correctly. But soon confusions began to crop up.

Fat lists of Awami men drawn to don the key positions of bank, autonomous bodies, reform commissions etc. by reshuffling the previous and creating new set-ups ran through the press. A lot of new assignees were retired bureaucrats, civil or army, some of whose service records were far from being least encouraging to the public.

There followed a lot of changes at the higher echelons of the secretariat. Those believed to be closer to the 'Janatair Mancha' of 1996 were found getting more lucra of the changes. OSD making fashion thickened to the misery of the alleged victims. In the foreign service there was a flurry of calling back overseas diplomats and prizing and pushing new appointees into the vacant positions. The yardstick of this change is alleged to be political. Some of those called back did not return home. They remained in the same foreign soil courting the opposition party and counting the days for parcelling of the existing government when they hope to restore their old diplomatic positions.

When the ethics of politics is on the wane multi-dimensional politicisation is but corollary. Politics, supposed to be a means for the well-being of country, degenerates into an oppressive

armour for the aggrandisement of the opportunist politicians. They are bent upon putting men of their choice on the network built for promoting their personal interests. This necessitates a reshuffle often ruthlessly in the posts and positions of the government and other important bodies. With politicisation it is as well what may be called 'personalisation'. In a rotten political climate the two walk hand in hand.

The officialdom is hardly short of coarsening. They have also their moral corruptions probably to the full. If obeying the unscrupulous politicians ensures their share of fortunes, why shall they stand against the darling offers? An unholly *entente* is forged to divide the wealth of the country.

Of course, there are some officials till now with a strong moral fibre to stand above politicisation. Note that they may face a two-way blitz. Either rudely frightened into submission or herded into OSD concentration camps.

Politicisation works up according to the importance of the departments. In the executive and police it is direct and drastic. Many DCs, TNOs, SPs, DIGs etc. are found chanting ruling party's slogans. As the governments change so their choruses.

Alas, the education department and educational institutions are also attacked with the virus of politicisation. Not to speak of the leaders of the student communities who are infamed as mercenaries of political parties. Even the teachers of the highest seats of learning, the universities, have taken

badges — white, blue, pink etc. — that smack of more than indirect affiliation to political parties.

It is apprehended that politicisation might have smitten the inviolable judiciary as well. There are accusations that even the justices of the High Court and Supreme Court are sometimes appointed on basis of party affiliations. It may be recalled that a party district president, an advocate was assigned to be a justice of the High Court. The incident of another Justice flanked by political party leaders in his residence parlour talking to the pressmen over a controversial judgement that triggered a series of violence a couple of years back may not go off the memory.

Politicisation kills the instinct of a person to work independently. It destroys his courage to stand for justice. It turns him into a tool to serve the party. It leads him to subordinate the interests of the state and people to those of the party and partymen.

The well-being of the country should stand above all. All political parties should have borne a wave-length to that effect. Unfortunately the opportunist politicians, whose numbers menacingly get overwhelming, have gone demolishing it. Ennobling politics by serving people selflessly is being rapidly supplanted by base politicisation yoked to personal and private benefits. This is a worst misery that tries to perpetuate.

The writer is retired principal Gout Mohila College, Pabna.

Ramadan and Martyrdom of Imam Ali (RA)

by Sayed Eqbal Rezvi

THE month of Ramadan is known to the Muslim polity as the holiest month in the Islamic calendar. First, the holy Quran was revealed in this month. Second, the most beloved Caliph of Islam Hazrat Ali (RA) embraced martyrdom on the 21st of Ramadan after a dastardly attack by an infidel who conspired to annihilate Islam.

Hazrat Ali was not only the Caliph of Islam, he was also a great warrior and military strategist who not only waged wars against the enemies of Islam, but went to the extent of displaying his prowess in the battlefields. Hazrat Ali was also a great scholar who had superiority over philosophical subjects, a man of letters and his different instructions to governors were considered masterpieces of Arabic literature.

In this mundane age when Ramadan is being used by a section of our affluent people in extravagance and lavish spendings, we forget what Ramadan teaches us all who are so vociferous in giving lip service to Islamic causes — to abstain from all ill and prytice tolerance and patience. One may even say — whither Islamic fraternity even in this holy month of Ramadan when Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar and stranded Pakistanis are languishing in sordid and squalid camps, unattended and uncared for?

Hazrat Ali (RA) was an epitome of justice, fairplay and equality. What he taught he equally preached. He never surrendered to the forces of evil and fought the foes of Islam with matching intelligence and in humane ways.

Our beloved Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) loved the invincible Imam Ali and gladly gave his daughter Hazrat Bibi Fa-

tima (RA) in marriage to this indefatigable personality of Islam. Hazrat Ali never imposed his will on others. He persuaded the deviators with logic and understanding and never rebuked them. With all these human qualities, he never compromised on principles and his unflinching faith in the destiny of Islam also played a dominant role in the spread of Islam.

The Holy Qur'an has also praised Maula Ali (RA) and even our last Prophet (PBUH) spoke eloquently about him on many important occasions. The Nahjat-ul-Balagha — his directives and sermons to a governor — earned appreciation from western commentators and other religious figures of different religions. Hazrat Ali (RA) was dearly called Sher-e-Khuda and his famous Sword known as 'Zulficar-e-Haidari' is part of the valiant history of Islam. The Nahjat-ul-Balagha ought to be properly studied and practised by the Muslim governments. His techniques of administration have been highly appreciated and lauded by learned people in the realm of public administration.

In this holy month of Ramadan and particularly on 21st Ramadan-ul-Mubarak, the noble and practical concepts of administration should be emulated by our public administration officials if we try to emulate what Hazrat Ali (RA) prescribed in Nahjat-ul-Balagha, there is every reason to believe that our public administration officials will derive maximum benefits out of them. In this pious month let us read and study Quran in a meaningful way and try to learn what Hazrat Ali (RA), the great preacher and saint of Islam, taught us to follow for our salvation here and after.

To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

"English serials in Bangla"

Sir, Dr Sabrina Rashid's letter on the captioned subject (Star, 14.1.98) is in reference. I agree with her that BTV does not care about public opinion in re-casting/modifying/improving their programme. I have personal experience about it. I have made several requests through the columns of a popular daily in re-casting the so-called Ujibon programme to make it a really Islamic, but it seemed that the authorities concerned are either too busy with state directed programmes or don't consider ordinary men's suggestion worth attending to, for they are not responsible to people but to the government in power.

I however do not agree with the learned and prolific writer's reservation about dubbing English serials in Bangla on the pretext that the dubbing deprive people from having access to the original English accent which is not comprehensible even by highly educated person (in her words as highly as a Master's in English).

That being so, what good purpose it would serve if shown without dubbing since majority of the educated people are not master's in English. Moreover, some of the dubbed serials are of interest to children and youths, who if one would go by high standard of English of Dr Sabrina, would miss the contents of the serials most, if not dubbed, because of their low

proficiency in English language. Further, all the English serials/films are not dubbed. Those with high proficiency in English can take advantage of the undubbed films/serials and enjoy them to their heart's content and at the same time allow the ordinary people to be happy with real good dubbed ones and not, of course, the vulgar ones.

Dr Sabrina may have her own good reasons for her reservations while the others equally have their own for the dubbed serials. BTV therefore should go for a balanced programme to serve the need of different classes of people. With due regard to the sentiment of Dr Sabrina, I have my own strong points in favour of dubbing. If BTV is at all going to consider Dr. Sabrina's proposal, I'd like that mine should also not be ignored to ensure BTV's non partisan role.

Abu Imran
Azampur, Dhaka

"Ruling," "opposing" and iftaar

Sir, Ramadan, no doubt, happens to be one of the most important religious events right after Eid. This is the time when everyone, regardless of age, sex, and class — fast throughout the one month period. This holy month is usually there to promote the feelings and thoughts of

holiness amongst ourselves. This year, unfortunately, the holy month of Ramadan started off with a severe cold spell. This cold weather has also managed to take multiple lives through out the country. Though the met offices are saying that this spell won't last long, but the suffering at the present is devastating.

Ramadan isn't complete without 'iftaar' and 'sheri'. Both events are quite religiously followed with a lot of enthusiasm. Normally iftaar parties are a big deal for all, especially in the top levels. But this year we see a change. The government has declared that all iftaar parties should be cancelled and the money saved would be spent on warm clothing for the poor. A very noble gesture indeed.

But what sickens me is the fact that the opposition is making a big deal out of their own iftaar parties. It is admirable that they are doing what the opposition normally does, oppose the ruling party. But why oppose something which is *cruel and inhuman*? Sometimes I feel that no one at the top level really knows what 'ruling' and 'opposing' is. Just the definition of those two terms doesn't always apply in real life. So please, I plead with you, do not always use politics as a shield and hide behind it, show us that you truly care for the people and act as such. There is no harm in showing that you remotely care. Isn't that the reason why we have voted for you in the first place?

Masroor Ahmed Deepak.
Dhaka

Air services

Sir, Following Biman's failure to operate in all domestic sectors and very restricted and irregular flights to Calcutta

from Dhaka and Dhaka to Calcutta and cancellation of flights between Chittagong-Calcutta and Calcutta-Chittagong, we business travellers and tourists in the country have been seriously suffering with immense inconvenience and loss to our business and to our lifestyle. People who would like to go to Dhaka or Sylhet or any other points in Bangladesh cannot do so for want of flights. Trying to go to Calcutta poses immense problems in obtaining tickets and one has to go to Dhaka either by coach or by train to avail the facility of air passage to Calcutta.

I must say, we as citizens and tax-payers of Bangladesh are really suffering for mismanagement and no planning on the part of Biman authorities. It is a shame that the whole system has seemingly collapsed with no backup services. It is also a pity that when the country is celebrating 26 years of independence, the citizens of the country are faced with such 'man-made' problems.

I would have expected the private airlines like Aero Bengal, Air Parabat and GMG Airlines would come to our rescue but sadly this is not the case. Aero Bengal instead of flying two flights a day between Dhaka and Chittagong are now running only one flight in the morning. We do not know when Air Parabat and GMG will commence their flights. These companies had advertised earlier that they would introduce their flights from early January. What is the reason of the delay? I ask the Civil Aviation Authorities whether it is because of them that these companies are delayed in flying their planes.

Basul Nizam
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Chittagong, Bangladesh

Lost integrity

Sir, In one cold foggy night when we were returning from a wedding party, a little girl of about eight — bare feet and half clad in that biting cold — came running to us to sell her small flower garlands. Most of the car owners coldshouldered her. Feeling sorry for her I bought one garland but paid her for two. Can you imagine what integrity these malnourished, poor little girl had, for she insisted that I must take two garlands as I had paid for two!

Another day, a poor little boy at New Market came up to me to sell his safety-pins. Since I had already bought one set from another little boy I gave him the profit that he would have made by selling it.

But he won't take it! I was really touched, for without any education, money or proper guidance, these poor little children had what our highly educated, very rich and sometimes even religious-minded people do not have. Here is how one such person behaved. He left the house that he had rented without paying electricity, gas and water bills amounting to a few thousand taka. The house owner thought that a person such as him must be dependable beyond doubt, but he was made a fool of, for his trust.

So this is what our society has become now. You just can't trust anybody, for even the educated and rich people have resorted to such behavior. There is no such thing as conscience now.

Which is what keeps a person from going astray. Alas! Is something really wrong with our educational system?

Who is corrupt in the government machinery? Are not they all highly educated people of our country, the cream of our society? Since education failed to, couldn't religion have

kept them from going astray, as all religions preach honesty and integrity? That is why somebody had once said 'If people are so bad with religion, how bad they would've been without it'. But there is a group which believes that being a good, honest person is more important than being a religious one. I don't think it is so easy to do so though. Otherwise why are there so many religions to keep people in the right path! Good luck to them anyway, for trying to be a good man at least. That way the society will be a better place to live in perhaps. Religion or no religion!

Dr Sabrina Rashid.
Dhaka Cantonment

"Banglapaedia ..."

Sir, Issue lottery to collect funds. The sense of participation and donation is psychologically satisfying from the point of view of motivation.

A Z
Dhaka

Healthcare on holidays

Sir, The government-run hospitals remain closed on Fridays and Saturdays like other government institutions. Meanwhile, the government declared a few banks, post offices and educational institutions to remain open on these days.

We the commoners are too poor to go to the private clinics or to the specialists. The only hope for us is these hospitals. If these institutions remain closed on Fridays and Saturdays, then where will we go when we are sick?

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