

**We love Sonar Bangla**

Of all the bureaucrats turned columnists for your esteemed daily, Hasnat Abdul Hye is probably the most readable and I usually follow his column when time permits. Mr Hye is respected not only as a former administrator of integrity but more so as a prolific chronicler and essayist. Reading his travelogue is both informative and entertaining.

One must also respect him for resisting the temptation (so far) of jockeying for position in one of the political parties to continue to stay in the limelight of power. Some of my retired bureaucrat friends confided their feeling of impotence without the cover of official power!

However, his article "Who loves Sonar Bangla", which appeared on *The Daily Star* of 18<sup>th</sup> May left me a little disappointed. I think it was platitudinous at best and somewhat uncharitable at worst.

Let us examine why people in Bangladesh clamour to go to a first world country, whether for education, medical attention or for permanent residence. Are all these people unpatriotic because they have the ambition of living a decent, secure life, want to educate their children or simply want to survive disease? I think these people love 'Sonar Bangla' dearly and their dream always is to return to their beloved Bangladesh and invest in a house or apartment as soon as they can afford to do so.

And why do they need to go to another country for education, even be duped by apparently dubious institutions called 'Alpha Beta College' (to learn ABC)? The answer is that our government has all but destroyed institutions of education, healthcare and law and order.

I remember in the 1960's, Dhaka University was considered a premiere seat of learning in this region, and Dhaka Medical College received foreign students from Malaysia and Singapore! Graduates of DMC used to proceed to the United Kingdom to pursue post-graduate studies in medicine and surgery.

Today, a graduate degree from a Bangladeshi medical college is not recognised in any country worth mentioning. If our medical students obtain their qualification with muscle power and by holding out physical threats to the faculty, what quality of medical attention can patients hope for?

Is it really fair to blame the middle-class patients for selling their assets to save their near and dear ones by seeking treatment in hospitals in Thailand, Singapore or India?

As for our boys and girls going abroad for higher education, most of them would like to come home to a self-respecting career rather than hang around as aliens in North America or Australia. But where do they fit in? After four or six years of study or internship in a civil society with personal rights and consideration for fellow citizens, is it possible for these young men and women to make a re-entry into a lawless, unjust and *mastaan*-ridden environment created by us in 'Sonar Bangla'?

Have our leaders (political, academic or official) done anything to create an enabling environment for young men and women to return to?

One wonders what Mr Hye thinks of his erstwhile colleagues who have made suburban Washington or New Jersey their home and commute to and from Bangladesh to cut multi-million dollar deals involving government or donor funded contracts? Do these people love their 'Sonar Bangla'? Or is it a pot of gold for the privileged few to help themselves from?

**Bibah Rattas**  
Dhaka

**Neutral BBC?**

We used to rely on the BBC's neutral news and views, famous for projecting independent news casting. But to the shock of viewers, BBC has nowadays monopolised the news and views of certain countries.

Whenever we switch on to the BBC, we wonder if it is the British Broadcasting Corporation or the Bharat Broadcasting Corporation. Most of the programmes are India based, such as India Business programme, India quiz, interview programme of various Indian personalities and so on.

There are many countries in South Asia whose news, views, people and places are interesting to many. But these appear to be less or unimportant to BBC. Even when they do cover these countries, they only highlight the negative side. We have really become fed up with BBC's bias for India.

**AR Ripon**  
Banani, Dhaka

**Exempt taxation**

In order to build a small house and rent it out to arrange for an income for survival after retirement, service holders with limited income used to take loans from the Bangladesh House Building Finance Corporation, (BHBC) and supplement with their life savings.

These borrowers, who have no other income except the rent money or maybe a small pension, find it extremely difficult to keep their body and soul together after paying the monthly loan repayment instalment. Taxation on this small rent income is really burdensome.

Under these circumstances, I appeal to the government to consider the borrowers' hardship and

exempt them from taxation till the end of their loan recovery period.

**MA Hashem**  
Mirpur Road, Dhaka

**Affordable train fare**

The low income people of Sylhet are very unfortunate as they cannot afford to ride in the inter-city trains that run between Dhaka-Sylhet as there is no 'sulov' (economy) class in them.

In the beginning when inter-city trains were introduced on this line both 'Joyontika' and 'Parabol' inter-city trains used to have economy class and the low income passengers could utilise this facility. But for the last few years, the Railway Authority have withdrawn this economy class for reasons best known to them.

Do the authorities consider all the passengers to be rich people? If they do so, they are wrong because almost 80 per cent people using this route are from the low income group.

The authorities are urged to look into the matter and introduce 'sulov' class in all the inter-city trains running between Dhaka and Sylhet.

**Mohammed Gyasuddin**  
Sylhet

**Political standards**

Creating planned incidents at the border, leading to military operations is an old political trick to divert attention. What is happening in Bangladesh today, could be suspected to be a pre-election stunt. I would not be surprised if the next incidents occur at the Chittagong and the Chittagong Hill Tracts borders.

The politicians cannot fool all the people, all the time. As long as the standard of politics does not improve, does it matter which party runs the country? The voters are fed up of the political in-fighting, and seek some change of political environment.

**AMawaz**  
Dhaka

**Garments sector**

We are proud of the performance of our readymade garments industry, earning more than 70 per cent of the country's foreign exchange. From time to time, BGMEA has put forward different types of proposals and recommendations to the government for redressing grievances and problems of the industry. The administration has always been sympathetic, and extended its support and co-operation as far as its limited resources would allow.

But the human side of the huge garment industry has been suppressed. How are the human factors being monitored and improved; specially the lot of the lakhs of workers, mostly females? No public relations stories are being released to the press, nor AV documentaries released by the BGMEA for TV screening.

What are the recreation and holiday facilities? Do the workers have departmental stores for discount purchases and subsidised community centres for social and family activities? What are the extracurricular and leisure activities of more than a million workers and

Will the authorities concerned

gers and pedestrians.

Due to erratic electric supply and constant loadshedding, it is imperative that DCC and DMP compel and enforce rickshawpullers to use light/lamp on rickshaws for the safety and security of passengers as well as pedestrians.

**OH Kabir**  
Wari, Dhaka

**Toilet trouble**

Due to lack of attention, mainte-

intimidated by a photograph showing Bangladeshi villagers carrying the dead body of a BSF soldier on a pole. But did they ever think the reason behind it was not to humiliate the body but something else?

One needs a stretcher to carry a partly decomposed body collected from the muddy and wet paddy field and carry it a long distance. Where in the world would the villagers get a stretcher? It is hardly available even in the cities, forget about a far off village, miles away from a hospital

Jamaat. They should not even be considered eligible to participate in the elections. Same is the case with Jatiya Party. Then whom does one recommend?

This has been the biggest crisis in our country for many years. We are in dire need of capable and charismatic leadership. We need a leader who will be concerned about the country, not power and self-interest.

At present, as we don't have any

run errands by her mother, because she knows she'll be attacked by miscreants. There is insecurity for a child to go out in the nearby field and play a game of football because the mother knows that there are lots of child traffickers around. There is insecurity for young men who know that if they are bold, they can be stabbed and this may cost them their life.

Despite being an independent nation, people suffer from insecurity,

minorities around the globe, we should organise a world body/world community to protect the life and wealth of minorities. Global awareness should be developed by the UNO's member countries.

I would request the Secretary General of the United Nations and all heads of state to initiate an International Minorities Day to uphold the human rights of minorities around the globe.

I have been trying to publish minority news from Bangladesh. But the authority concerned in the Bangladesh government has denied me permission to publish a weekly minority news from Bangladesh. I do not have the resources to start writ proceedings against the decision of the Bangladesh government.

I would remain grateful to any individual or organisation if they come forward to help me publish minority news from Bangladesh.

**Md. Hassanul Alam**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

**"Minister's son"**

The letter "Minister's son" (May 20) disheartened me. Every conscious citizen knows that the minister's son indicated in the letter is minister Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury May's son.

Mofazzel Hossain's contribution during our Liberation War is known to all. As a freedom fighter, he carried out some important operations, which was tremendously beneficial to the war. Like many people, I also salute him as a dedicated son of the soil.

But the recent notorious activities of his son have started me. If the activities of the son of such a person is like this, then what can we expect from others?

**Pervez**  
Mirpur-02, Dhaka

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The letter "Minister's son" by "An Uttara resident" has a ring of sickening monotony about it. In the letter the anonymous writer illustrates the degree of terror struck by the said great son of the minister. Land grabbing, toll collection, extortion, rape and even murders are the sole preserve of these sons.

I may painfully assure the writer that nobody is going to give his letter two hoots. Great sons will continue to carry on their nefarious activities with greater zeal and amass more and more money.

The reign of terror echoes alarmingly familiar of bygone days but nobody learns the lesson of history. The writer, in his desperation, has appealed to MPs, the Home Minister, the President and the PM. Alas! the writer's memory is failing him. The PM has categorically declared to the countrymen more than once that no terrorist, whatsoever his party affiliation might be, shall escape the arm of law. To eliminate the black terror the PM has even piloted the Public Safety Act.

The writer would do well to pinpoint real terrorists and not beat about the bush by mentioning respectable persons like MPs of Dhaka Mirpur, Barisal, Chittagong, Feni, etc as all are doing their best to turn this country into a 25

A broken hearted man  
Dhaka

**Privatise BTTB!**

This is with regard to BTTB's proposed two lakh GSM cellular phones project for Dhaka city on supplier's credit. Only in greater Dhaka, about 22,000 paid demand notes are lying for a year or so.

I wonder what would be the country-wide total. This is indeed the best 'achievement' of our BTTB with blessings from the bureaucrats.

I am an electrical engineer living in the USA. I used to work in Bangladesh for some years in the communication sector. In the USA, I can get

an application though it was within its knowledge that I was passing through financial crisis since my retirement. It may be mentioned here that if I am so permitted, TCB shall not be loser in any way, or its acts shall not be treated as unlawful".

The aforesaid representation remained ignored and unattended. So I was compelled to serve legal notice dated 02-6-2000 up on the TCB through my lawyer Mr Muhammad Muhiduddin, Advocate of Supreme Court, Muhiduddin and Colleagues, Ibrahim Mansion (2<sup>nd</sup> floor), 11, Purana Paltan, Dhaka-1000, demanding redress of my aforementioned grievance.

But till now I have not received a response from the TCB authority in spite of my repeated efforts. I fervently request a personal initiative from the Ministry to resolve the case since the TCB authority has utterly failed.

**Masihuddin Ahmad**  
New Circular Road, Dhaka

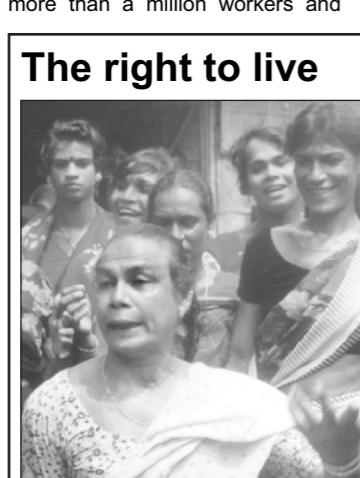
**Right to cheat?**

Your columnist Almas Zakiuddin ended her column (May 15) posing a question, "Are we prepared for a day when cheating becomes a fundamental right?" I am tempted to put a counter question, isn't it already the case in Bangladesh, albeit unofficially?

Everyday, don't we glamorise cheating in our actions and deeds? The smartest person around is the one who can cheat others to attain his/her objectives, no qualms about it! The columnist has given a couple of examples before that concluding question. I could add some more. But what is the point? The rot has already set in.

Cheating was endemic in our society, gradually became pandemic and now it is epidemic in dimension and nature. It has, indeed, become an unwritten fundamental right.

**M. B. Zaman**  
Uttara, Dhaka, on e-mail

**The right to live**

It was a surprise to learn ("Plight of the hijra" May 18) that the 'Bangladeshis' who are eunuchs ('hijra') are not recognised by the state. Aren't they citizens of this country? Well, they must be if their births were registered.

The government has many programmes for looking after the handicapped citizens. It appears that the official attitude is not the same towards all.

The mass media do not carry any news about the 'hijra's' welfare activities. These unfortunate people are not responsible for the way they were born. Surely, the UN system is aware of their existence in different countries. One would like to know from either the UN or others what kind of attitude other communities have towards the 'hijra'.

It is a taboo topic, but with government encouragement, there are enough NGOs in the country to initiate different programmes for the eunuchs. First, a database has to be prepared. But perhaps they are not in any official list. That means a field survey should be conducted first. A proper awareness campaign may tilt the response in the right direction.

**AH**  
Dhaka

Will the authorities concerned

such candidate in any political party.

We should go for independent candidates. I have the firm belief that these candidates will be able to lead the country far better than the Awami League and BNP.

**Md. Habibullah Khan**  
North Carolina, USA, on e-mail

**Reject hartal**

Bangladesh is a hartal-prone country. Opposition parties of our country frequently call hartal to exhibit their democratic right. They never think about the fate of our poor people and those who live on their daily earnings. These unfortunate people are the real victims of hartal. But neither the government nor the opposition political parties care about these people and their rights.

The political parties routinely claim that they are struggling for the welfare of the poor. But in reality, they are only using them to cling to power.

The hartal culture is destroying our economy and increasing the distress of general people. It would be my request to all the political parties to consider the hardship of the poor and reject the destructive tool, hartal.

**Arjumand Wohra**  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka, on e-mail

**Minority rights**

Minority communities around the

tension, unhealthy environment and a blind future. No lawful act is taken against the trouble-mongers. The facilities that the people of an independent nation should relish are missing within us.

We can talk and feel sorry about those unfortunate souls that were destroyed during the war, but we should not ignore the present status in the country. We look so much into our past that we overlook what is going on in the present.

Day after day sad incidents take place in individual homes. Members of families pass away due to political instability, law and order situation, unlawful activities, but sadly no lawful act ever takes place.

Time and time again we come across grieved families, read about them in newspapers, see their pain on television and keep quiet about it. We lost so many people of our country during the Independence War.

After the war, people were relieved that there'll be peace, but peace never came. Looking at so many incidents, many of us have a vital question in our sub-conscious mind: Are we really independent?

**Md Abdul Latif**  
Khulna University

**The lying culture**

It is a matter of great concern that we, as a nation, are sliding into the lying culture. To our detriment, this has been vigorously pioneered by our political leaders. If politics is nothing but lying, we denounce it. If it is something for the betterment of the people, let the political leaders realise it first.

Telling lies is one of the six major sins. It appears that most of the people in our society are oblivious of the supreme doctrine of Islam. Lying has gradually pervaded our society so much that one can hardly rely on anybody's commitment.

The religious teachers also seem to have given up preaching the true values of life. It is the unpunished lying or for that matter the concealment of fact that underlies the perpetration of all misdeeds.

At this critical juncture, only practising truthfulness can save our nation and it has to start from our political leaders.

**Mohsin**  
Baily Road, Dhaka