

Learning Arabic: An opinion

Like many of your readers abroad, I take great interest in reading your newspaper on a daily basis to keep abreast of happenings in Bangladesh.

I take this opportunity to write on the debate that has ensued from the "Make Arabic compulsory in schools" letter, by Mr. Mustafizur Rahman.

I think Arabic, as a language should be re-introduced into our school curriculum - whether it should be made compulsory is much more questionable. Let me explain why I say this.

Like many others, I read the verses of the Quran without understanding much, as I do not know the language. I would have understood the Holy Quran much better if I had known the Arabic language.

For heaven's sake, please do not politicise every sphere of our national life. Please do not bring up the war of words between language, religion and science.

Mahmudul Huq Khan
New Jersey, USA

The following facts seem to be pertinent to the discussion going on in this column about Arabic language:

- \* Arabic is a language spoken by about 300 million people of the world in the Middle East and Africa.
\* Arabic is the official language of 22 member countries of the Arab League.
\* Arabic is one of the few languages, which are used in all the UN organisations.
\* Arabic is the language needed to be learnt by that work/wish to work in the Arab countries.

Arabic is the language of the last revealed scripture (the Holy Quran). (Remember: Sanskrit - a dead language - is recognised in the constitution of India as one of the official languages and being made compulsory in the educational institutions because it is the language of ancient Hindu scriptures and was spoken by the forefathers of the caste Hindus - Aryans - who invaded India thousands of years ago).

Here, I'd like to make it clear that I am not advocating making Arabic compulsory in schools. My point is that the importance of Arabic should not be underestimated. The language will continue



Is this what we want?

to retain its importance, not only in Muslim societies like ours but also elsewhere. It is because of high demand for it among the people (regardless of their religious affinity) that as a language, it is being increasingly introduced in various institutions in the West.

Abu Talal Fazlie
Jeddah, K.S.A

In his letter Mr. Golam Sarwar, ("Compulsory Arabic in schools: another Bhasha Andolon now?") expresses nothing but intolerance at the author of the letter who proposed the adoption of Arabic as a mandatory language.

The freedom of expression is an inalienable right, and the author

of the letter proposing the adoption of Arabic language was exercising that right. Intertwining the intention of that proposal as part of a covert operation by the Jamaat-e-Islami to take over the country as purported by Mr. Sarwar and calling for a "Bhasha Andolon" is ludicrous.

In his exuberant praise of the prosperity that the English language supposedly brings, he has failed to take into account that many of the "prosperous" European countries do not use English as the official language.

As history has shown, the people of Bangladesh are quite capable of dealing adequately with attempts by vested quarter to subvert their right to their own language and culture, with the exception of probably, Mr. Sarwar. I do not find this surprising.

Mojammel Hossain
Tokyo, Japan

Bad guys

Your paper missed an interesting story of last month. The head of Austria's racist, anti-Muslim Freedom Party, Mr Jorge Haider, was received with warm aplomb by Saddam Hussein in Baghdad.

Interestingly enough, early last year, America's resident racist and hate-monger Pat Buchanan had similar sentiments when he spoke at a foreign policy function in Washington.

Just goes to show that when it comes to intolerance, bigotry, and plain incency, the bad guys all over the world root for each other.

ES
Missouri, USA

Some questions

- 1.Which countries are known as LDC?
2 How much the government earns on VAT from ISPs?
There are many information we require daily. If your esteemed daily could open a new column as "general information" and invite questions a large number of readers would be benefited.

PMG, on e-mail

Digital fires!

During this dry season when the humidity is low, we are witnessing a couple of fire incident in the telephone exchanges both in the private and public sector (Citycell and Chowk Bazar incident). It is hoped no coincidental inferences can be drawn.

That brings up a long pending policy issue. The government should announce the future policy of development of the fixed telephone network, which is lagging behind (3-year waiting list): whether to go for all-wireless (WAP) fixed phone system: or continue with the old-

fashioned laying of cables under the ground and over the drains in the cities.

Conversion from analogue to digital is one of the many phases of the BMRE exercise which the government has been publicising for years, while utterly failing to reduce the huge gap between the demand and the supply (the latter kept inter-

bypassing this BTRC, an autonomous Commission, which is strangely, chaired by a Secretary to the GoB!

Flood the market with telephones, cable or wireless, private or public, to suit the middle class. Telephone is not a luxury item, hence the approach should be democratic.

no significant impact in my life. However as a Technology Sector enthusiast, I find it hampering the BNP government's effort to develop the IT sector in Bangladesh.

Countless countries have gone through privatisation of its Telcom sector and lowering rates for the local and international tariffs found only helping their goal to develop the

the tariff and laws related to the telecommunications sector.

For example, I was surprised to see the CDPD utilisation in Ecuador when in North America we only spoke about it in 1995. The US Telecommunications Act of 1996 brought a world of innovation in the Telecommunications and Technology field.

als or AABEA) in Silicon Valley, California and words of technology transfer to Bangladesh. I invite people like Farooq Sobhan, President of Bangladesh Enterprise, Mr. Salman Rahman, Chairman of Bangladesh Enterprise and Mr. Sabbir Ahamed (key organiser of Bangladesh Caucus in Washington DC.) to take a leading role in communicating and preventing these counterproductive acts by BTTB.

Sakhawat Chowdhury Tamanna (John)
President AABEA-North Texas
President Bangladesh Association

Afsan Chowdhury's writing and Ken Saro-Wiva



Ken and Shell

I would like to thank Mr Afsan Chowdhury for his wonderful writings, which I read eagerly whenever they are printed. I specifically liked his "Will Bangladesh become another Nigeria?" (February 12) and his subsequent response to the Nigerian High Commissioner (February 18). In the past, I would always read his writings and wished I could do something to express my appreciation, like perhaps shaking his hands! Therefore, will it be possible for me to meet him? And after going through his response to the High Commissioner, I am all the more eager to meet him and shake his hands, especially for the sentence he wrote, "Like everywhere, the elite class was closer to the oppressors."

Now I will try to answer Haroon Jabbar's question (February 20). Ken Saro-Wiva was a writer and also an activist against Shell Oil in Nigeria, especially against the exploitation by Shell of the oil and gas wealth and subsequent environmental degradation of his region. For this he came into conflict with the ruthless military dictator of Nigeria, General Sani Abacha (who even annulled an election result as he had lost it to Mr Mashud Abiola). General Abacha had Ken Saro-Wiva tried and convicted on trumped-up charges in a kangaroo court and hanged him despite appeals from all over the world including one from President Nelson Mandela of South Africa.

Jerry
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

tionally low for personal gains, it is suspected).

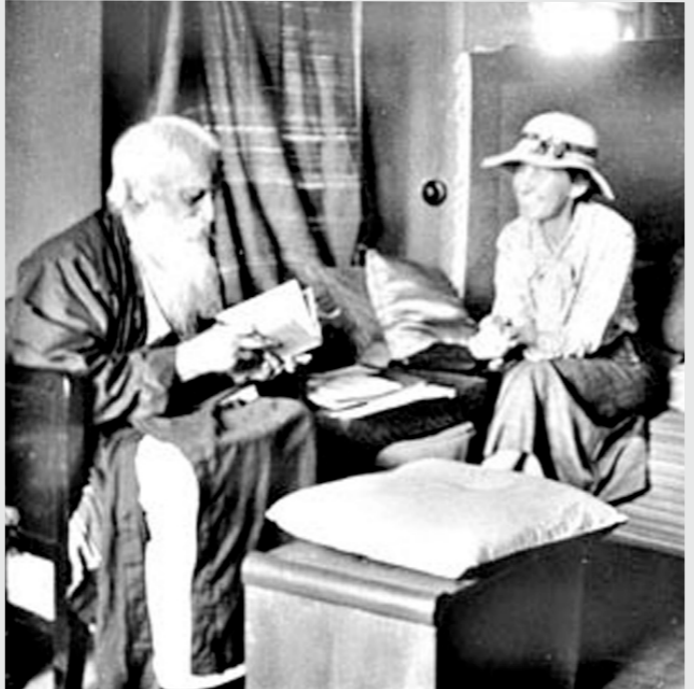
Meanwhile the private cellular phone operators are experiencing a boom in their business, and the government controlled T&T is not reacting to counter the competition. Meanwhile an autonomous regulatory body on telecoms has just started working, but the beginning is muddled with controversy as the BTTB announced some major changes in pricing of telephone calls

technology sector in the country. Most of us living in North America have seen the benefit. We have also witnessed the impact of not lowering the local tariff in our neighbouring country Mexico.

During the early 1990s, I have worked with a number of South and Central American countries such as Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia and have seen the positive impact the local government can make in developing the technology sector by lowering

I'm encouraged by the recent government initiatives to focus on the technology sector, however discouraged to see the new increase in the tariff. They are needless to say countering productive. Only two years ago, I was impressed to see Bangladeshi government and its business interest in the Silicon Bangla IT conference (organised by the American Association of Bangladeshi Engineers, Architects and IT Profession-

My request to the authorities



The man, the book and his words

21). May I remind Mr. Hussain that the lovers of Tagore songs never criticised Debabrata Biswas rather he was a political casualty of the 'gurus' who had been occupying Biswa-Bharati music board since decades.

To set the record straight, I like to assert that Debebrata Biswas never modified or changed the lyric or tune of Rabindra Sangeet except that he had a style of his own, which the 'gurus' of Biswa-Bharati could not accept. But how does it correlate when the readers are seriously disturbed by a 'wrong' wording in a Rabindra Sangeet sung by another singer Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya.

As far as I know each and every Rabindra Sangeet needed prior permission from the Biswa-Bharati Music Board before it goes for commercial recording and if I am right, my question is how could the song of Bannya with a wrong wording (as pointed out by Mr. Nazmul Karim) be recorded? Didn't Bannya need Biswa-Bharati's permission?

Imtiaz Ahmed
Dhanmondi R/A., Dhaka

What are these uncalled for analysis enduring over for more than two weeks? Now is the time that the singer herself spell out her

observation on the assessment made by Mr. Nazmul Karim (February 6) and bring an end to these unnecessary arguments for once and for all.

Zereena Islam
Washington, D.C., U.S.A

Oh no, not again and this time a wrong wording in a Tagore's poem -'Porichoye! Yes, I am referring to the letter of Mr. Akbar Hussain (February 21). The writer has very accurately said that 'The genius of Tagore is so unique that there is no place for modification there' but unfortunately, in his letter, the writer has wrongly quoted Tagore's poem: 'Porichoye' - 'Mor naam aie boley khanto hok, Ami tomaderi lok', which itself is a modification.

The actual word is not 'khanto' (spelling - 'khio akar no shonjukto') which means finish/end/stop/conclude/cease or terminate but 'khetto' (spelling- 'kho jofola akar to') which means renowned/recognised/eminent/prominent/celebrated or famous.

As a multifaceted genius and renaissance man par excellence, Rabindranath Tagore, the supreme symbol of our literature, culture and spirit, not only carried the literature and arts of Bengal, virtually single-handedly, to dizzying heights of creativity of global status but by his inspiring words, his lyrically unequalled songs and as a philosopher and reformer, his unstinting support for the cause of our cultural freedom during a long and turbulent phase of her history, he lifted our culture and psyche to an unprecedented level of revitalisation.

I suppose, because of this tradition and consciousness of the Bangladeshes, which was elevated by Rabindranath Tagore, my letter of February 06 on a 'wrong' wording in a Rabindra Sangeet, received instinctive reaction from the readers across the world.

I wish to thank all the readers of The Daily Star who spontaneously responded to my observation, which ultimately flickered into a global debate/discussion.

I reiterate that I have my high regards for Ms. Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya, who, as a member of a new generation of artists of Rabindra Sangeet in Bangladesh has helped to broaden the horizon of its popularity by her continuous public performances. She developed a personal style and undoubtedly is one of the most popular artists of Rabindra Sangeet.

A recapitulation of all the opinions and views from worldover, clearly manifests and is a lesson for all the Rabindra Sangeet artists, that no one, irrelevant of his/her immense popularity, can escape with a 'wrong'.

Nazmul Karim
Dhaka

The global debate on a 'word'

I refer to the letter of Mr. Nazmul Karim (February 06) and my letter on the same on February 17. I am constrained to say that I have been grossly misunderstood by the readers. In response to a letter from Mr. Nazmul Karim published on February 06 what I wanted to say is that though the writer has, in a very easy way, pointed out a 'wrong' word Ms. Rezawana Chowdhury Bannya sang in a Rabindra Sangeet but it was not very easy for a great professional singer of her stature to swallow the blunder - the first of its kind. Naturally she must have felt dejected and was stressed out.

That a listener has pointed out an error in Ms. Bannya's song is adequate blow for her pride as one of the most popular singers. So I felt enough is enough. She does not need any more of it. Naturally I thought and expected that a singer of her stature will come out with her own view and sincerely wanted that no more letters are published till she gets over the blow that hit her self-importance.

I thought a simple 'sorry' from her would further upgrade her stature but she does not seem to believe in that concept. When people do not know how to say 'sorry' even after he/she committed a mistake, others consider them to be arrogant. I now sincerely feel that the singer must immediately publicly apologise, of course not in Manik Mia Avenue but through the 'Letters to the Editor' page of The Daily Star.

Thank you again for publishing my earlier letter (February 17), where I did criticise you but sincerely speaking that was not my intention.

Sharmilee Banerjee
Lausanne, Switzerland

I am not referring to the letter of Mr. Nazmul Karim (Feb. 06) but to the letters that followed. I do not understand what is your intention and why are you prolonging this so-called debate or deliberation.

Mr. Karim has specifically claimed that in her song 'jokhon porbe na mor paer chinnho ei bate' Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya has used a wrong word. According to Mr. Karim the word should be 'dar' instead of 'dhar'. It is more than three weeks that the discussion are going on and to my knowledge Bannya and no one on her behalf has claimed that she was not wrong. So what is this debate all about?

Bannya should be condemned not for singing a wrong word but for her silence since last three weeks. The listeners at least deserve an explanation from her. Or is it that the singer does not read The Daily Star or that no one has informed her of this episode?

Dr. Fahmida Chowdhury
Banani, Dhaka

This has reference to the letter of Mr. Akbar Hussain (February

concerned please take action against this nuisance and let us walk or run in the evening peacefully by providing three or four police personnel.

If done so I strongly believe the situation will improve dramatically. Please let us breathe peacefully and safely.

A concerned citizen
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Spare them please!

The Mirpur Zoo authorities seem to be bent on squandering all their resources on the luxurious liger hybrid project for the past few years without any success.

We should ponder on whether the

CAA vs BAF

We have been noticing with dismay that a good number of BAF officers are deputed to the department of Civil Aviation including the Managing Director of Biman and they rotate regularly in turn after an interval of three years.

Does it mean that our Air Force has officers' surplus to their requirement? If it is so, then the right number of officers should be retained in service and the rest be allowed to leave and join Civil services permanently.

In a country where unemployment is so acute how come a person is doing two jobs at the same time. More over it tells upon the efficiency of the organisation besides blocking

Sports channels in TV schedule

For some time you boxed the sports channels in your TV schedule; now you do not show them.

I preferred them boxed; can you show them at least?

Moray Clayton
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

Our sports

Do you know what are the big inroads jamming the advancement of our country's cricket, other sports, as well as all other sectors?

Firstly, there are ignorant inappropriate people around at the forefront dominating and taking lone decisions for all technical activities. Secondly, they are not allowing the authenticated people to dwell on. Thirdly, they are only paving the way for illiterates like them whom they can dominate with their sheer thickness of brain. Fourthly, in this way they are accumulating generations who will successfully and skilfully restrain the flourishing of skills. Fifthly, they happen to possess the skins of Rhinoceros (some might say Dinosaurs) through which no good word or pleas for good work could penetrate ever. Sixthly, now you can realise with efficient people like those from the top to bottom as the key administrators, coach, player and also as the

newcomer are so that even endary would not fight them.

I am even if The Daily tor, Mr. A n a m something than his issue to all the ing all over t h e sliding of would not h a v e

seen and experienced all these actual facts as a Premier League Footballer, National Handballer and also I have close connections with some current sports persons although luckily nowadays I do not have to keep connection with any sort of Sports for my living.

There are immense sporting talents available in Bangladesh but they are not talented enough to overcome the talents of untalented players who are basking in the favour of bureaucrats, administrator, coach and leading senior players. These types of malpractice are not only ruining the natural flow of other players but are also putting a negative impact on their own performances. Thus everybody is becoming the loser. Anybody would sense this dismal environment at the very moment he or she gets in touch with those Rhinoceros skinned people.

M. S. Hamid (Bobby)
Old DOHS, Dhaka

zoo authorities are equipped enough or are capable of any assiduous work needed for such project. We apprehend, the chances of a liger at all being born, and that too being able to survive and withstand the adversity later, are quite slim.

We have already witnessed the miserable and mysterious deaths of several tigers in the Zoo, the exact causes of which are yet to be unearthed. It would be wiser to spend the time, energy, and money for the improvement of the lot of countless hapless creatures in the zoo, gasping for normal healthy life.

After all, what's the point in experimenting with the birth of another species, leaving it only to die, while the very survival of the existing ones is at stake?

Lulu Ahmad
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

all these ingrained the leg- Bruce Lee dare to against afraid that

Star edi- Mahfuz furnishes bigger 24 pages peep out bars exist- the place agonising cricket still stop. I practically

M.A.Zakaria, on e-mail

