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The greatest of the greatest

The greatest Bengalee

I did not vote for the poll. So the result does not bear my opinion. It might be same for many of 140 million Bengalees, who did not or could not vote in that poll. But even then the results bear some significance. Bangabandhu was voted as the Greatest Bengalee. It shows how important it was for the Bengalees to have a country of their own. The creation of 'Bangladesh' is the most significant incident in our history. So it is no surprise that the leader of that most significant incident would be adjudged the greatest Bengalee.

But I am mainly concerned about the next two figures. Rabinranath and Nazrul. It is no surprise too. But still it demonstrates the role of these two literary figures in the life of Bengalees. Politicians, scientists

and religious preachers are always important figures in the history. But literary figures are not always so. But in our lives these two men were much too important. I would not have been surprised if I saw them in the first two positions. Another point to note is, no other literary figures could make their way through in this list.

Asifur Rahman Mahi
Uttara, Dhaka

" Greatest Bengalee" : mysterious silence

Founding father of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has been adjudged the "Greatest Bengalee" of all time" in a listeners' poll conducted by the Bengali Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on April 14. Most of the newspapers published this news with great

enthusiasm. People from all walks of life have enjoyed the programme on the "Greatest Bengalee" broadcast by BBC. Enthusiasm was overwhelming among the people to hear who would be the greatest.

The silence of some newspapers over it implies that they are not truly serving the truth. Does publishing no news on Bangabandhu reflect their neutrality?

Mallik Akram Hossain, Hong Kong

BBC poll

We passed our time in outmost anxiety for a quite a few days about our heroes -- who is the greatest! BBC Bangla Service (BBS) has given us an opportunity to think about our past. It's really a great moment for the Bengalis to relieve themselves of the unnecessary debate about the greatest hero for the last one thousand years and may

be for the next thousand years. Now we know that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the greatest. Undoubtedly, he always was.

Just a few days back we all thought that Kabiguru Rabinranath Tagore would be adjudged the greatest. But all the speculations proved wrong when BBC announced Kabiguru as the second greatest. Not only this! Sabir Mustafa, the head of the BBS, has announced in an interview with the Channel I that Bangabandhu received almost double the votes received by the Kabiguru!

Thanks to BBS and all the listeners of BBS who voted for Bangabandhu and for whom the truth has been established.

Md. Golam Mortaza,
Intern, CPD (Centre for Policy Dialogue)
Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

AL's siege plan

This refers to an article titled 'AL siege of Hawa Bhaban' written by Mr. Omar Khasru and printed in the 'Point Counter-point' page. We are living in a world where there is no dearth of intelligent people thinking about all the good & evils we are facing daily particularly in this poor country of ours. My observations and opinions sometimes seem to be very extreme, because my line of thinking cannot be deflected by some naïve reasoning.

From my experience I have seen that more I surrender my causes or liberties to those of others who are bent to take some unreasonable fruits out of mine, I am to forgo more. We have some internal strife in our families even when we tend to give something to ones who are not so generous towards us. This is the rule of the game of politics too.

Becoming too gentle before a rude man encourages him to cross limits. The AL's decision of laying siege to Hawa Bhaban can be compared to 'Crossing the Rubicon' -- a fateful and ultimate decision which will by all means damage their image and which is self destructive too. This very decision has been taken to drive the country towards a more chaotic situation out of which the AL intends to reap fruits without considering that these fruits may become too bitter for them.

I have spoken to many friends of mine with diversity of political sympathy about the subject but none has endorsed the AL's policy of laying a siege to Hawa Bhaban.

It is politics and a struggle for existence to the two major players- one enjoying the fruits of running the government, the other hungry for it. The hungry one should understand that meals in a poor hospital is served only after a definite time- not before that. For the AL that may be five long years or more. Who knows that? Time will testify.

Dewan G Ahmed, Dhaka

Our leaders

This is in response to Azad Miah's letter 'On the leaders' published in The Daily Star on April 16, 2004. I found it rather biased and disrespectful of the people's judgement.

There are many supporters (mostly tacit) of the present coalition government and when they are frustrated with the bad performance of the party in power in terms of failures in controlling prices of essentials, the unprecedented level of corruption, nepotism, politicisation and ineptness in running the government, they started crying foul and wanted to prove that the past Awami League government had also failed on the same scores and, therefore, none is better. Some of them tend to say, like Azad Miah, 'what good will come if Hasina takes office?' They should respect the truth while comparing the two governments. Even though it failed to control the law and order situation to the satisfaction of people, the AL government was able to attain food autarky for the first time in the country's history and succeeded in maintaining a very low inflationary level with expansionary fiscal policy and in providing huge funds for rural works programme. It also attained remarkable infrastructural development. The AL government maintained a stable level of prices throughout its tenure in office. The foreign policy was truly independent. It managed the 1998 floods very successfully. It gave the nation victory in the ICC Trophy and helped attain the Test status in international cricket. During the AL regime, February 21 was recognised as the International Mother Language Day. Average growth rates of GDP were all-time high in Bangladesh (vide, ADB country report) during Hasina's time. Azad has suggested putting an end to politics dominated by certain families. One may propagate the idea based on comparative performance, but as an informed citizen, I still see the relevance of the leadership of Sheikh Hasina for rapid economic growth and the welfare of the poor people of this country. What's going on is certainly based on people's mandate/acceptance, whether we like it or not. Banning family dominated politics, as suggested by Azad, sounds undemocratic. Who bans whom on what basis?

Prof. SAM
Monipuripara, Dhaka

Bid for OIC Secretary General

The foreign minister has visited Turkey to gain support for Bangladesh's bid for Secretary General of OIC. I believe this whole enterprise is a wastage of public money. The OIC is suffering from a severe leadership crisis. It is very unrealistic to expect Bangladesh to provide such a leadership, when it itself lacks strong leadership. This is a time when we need strong leadership for OIC to represent the Islamic world. Ironically, this organisation has become nothing more than a "debating society and a get-together club" contrary to the objective of its founders. The Muslim world today is facing threats from all directions. Due to a lack of strong leadership, OIC has failed to make any political impact on the happenings of even the Islamic world, let alone the whole world. OIC has failed miserably to even make any headway to address any of the following issues:

1. Israel's occupation of Palestine.
2. Russian occupation/ genocide of the Muslim population in Caucasus (Dagestan and Chechnya) and the Volga basin (Tartarstan and Bashkorkostan).
3. NATO's occupation of Kosovo.
4. US occupation of Iraq.
5. The situation in Kashmir
6. China's brutal occupation and suppression of human rights against the Muslim Uygur population of Eastern Turkestan.

This clearly shows that this organisation is nothing more than a lame duck. Hence at this critical juncture of time, countries with a strong economy and wide diplomatic relations with both the West and the East (like Malaysia, Turkey etc) should be leading the OIC. Bangladesh is a developing country but most of the public in western countries have not even heard of it. Those who fortunately have heard, do not, however, have a rosy

image of it.

Therefore, I would sincerely hope that for the sake of OIC, the Bangladesh government would reconsider its decision and would spend public money in improving domestic infrastructure, rather than chasing the mirage i.e. the post of Secretary General of OIC.

K Wasimuddin
Chicago, IL, USA

Arms haul

The entire nation is shocked by the largest arms haul till date. As expected, the blame game was played by the government as well as the opposition. Another group tried to conclude that the cache was meant for a third country.

The state of affairs of Bangladesh has come to such an extent that everyone has a tendency to jump to conclusion without even going into the depths of investigation. And we all now know how investigations are conducted in this country. The culprits always remain scot-free. If we analyse the development since the haul took place, it will be evident that the vested quarters do not want a fair and neutral investigation. When an ansar commander and his colleagues dropped the bombshell (DS 4 April) that the off loading was being conducted in presence of some police officials it sounded like a pre-planned operation. The operation started before midnight but due to the objection and initiative taken by the ansars, the matter was reported to the CMP. It is very confusing to note that even after reporting the matter to the CMP around 1:00am, the cargo unloading continued in presence of the policemen. The CMP contingent turned up at the site at 4:00am (after 3 hours!).

We all know, the investigators will now desperately look for scapegoats. But the situation is very alarming and the government must come out clean with a neutral investigation. Whether the arms were meant for a third country or meant for within the country, a neutral investigation is required, preferably by international agencies, to dig out the truth. But will we ever know what really happened?

Sislam
Dhaka

National University exams

We, the students of NU, have appealed many times to the Vice Chancellor to publish the results of exams within three months. More than eight months have passed but the results of honours first year exams haven't been published, and we don't even know when they will be published. On the other hand, our second year exams may be held in the last week of June because last year's honours exams were held at around that time. According to the rules and syllabus of NU, one student will get one chance to appear in improvement exams if he/she gets less than 45% marks in any subject. In this situation, a student will not get sufficient time to prepare for improvement tests as he/she doesn't know the results yet.

Moreover, the syllabus is totally new and very hard to follow because we haven't got any clear idea about the question pattern.

In this situation, what should we do? Last Tuesday we, students of Dhaka College, staged a demonstration in front of the college. We also formed a human chain in Mukhtangan on 17th April. What else can we do to deal with a problem that stands in the way of developing our academic career?

A sufferer
Dhaka College, Dhaka

CAB having a siesta?

I have tried in the recent past, more than once, to push the grievances of the common consumers to the fore and desired that the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) would come to the rescue of the consumers in a real sense, and prove that they do not fulfil their obligations only by issuing statements.

I urge the CAB as well the government agencies responsible to take appropriate action, as per law, against all those producers and marketers who continue to deal in inferior, impure and counterfeit products and ensure that all harmful products are withdrawn from the

Law enforcers or violators?

I am a working woman and was on my way to the office on Friday morning at 10:00am on account of some urgent business. My microbus, where I was the lone passenger, was stopped by a sergeant at Jhikatala bus stand. My driver got out and the sergeant ceased all the documents related to the vehicle. I did not quite understand

what was happening until the driver came back and reported that the transport is being requisitioned by the police and was instructed to report to the Rajarbagh police station. I got down from the microbus and told the sergeant that I had to report to the office and the transport belonged to Emergency Health Service. The ser-



PHOTO: AFP

Police be good

market before more harm is done to public health.

A F Rahman, On e-mail

Zealots return

I have just gone through your news report on "Police allow zealots to storm Ahmadiyya Mosque," published on 17 April.

I fail to understand why the government is not taking harsh and urgent steps against these zealots. This is a bad omen for democracy and society. The venom of these zealots spread fast. Today it is the Ahmadiyyas, tomorrow the Shiites, then the Christians and thereafter the Buddhists so on and so forth. We must learn our lesson from the Pakistan situation. It is this kind of zealots, both Sunnis and the

Shiites, who are killing each other inside mosques. Bangladesh today is passing through a critical phase of its existence. Letting such religious fanaticism to flourish will serve as the "last straw on the camel's back".

I fail to understand why the entire civil society, the intellectuals including the opposition leaders have a lukewarm response to this critical and urgent issue. At a time when they are most proactive in creating all forms of protest marches, manabbandhans, forums, seminars and discussions to topple the government, why can't they address the issue of religious fanaticism? Trust me, if this Frankenstein is allowed to roam freely the very existence of this country will be in jeopardy. Just consider what the

Shiite/Sunni divide has landed Iraq into.

I remain extremely concerned and worried about this development and most sincerely believe that all sensible people of this country, irrespective of their religion, caste and colour, should be. Religion is important in the life of an individual or nation but a religious belief that creates miseries for fellow human beings cannot be part of any religion, least of all Islam.

Shamsheer Chowdhury
Dhaka

Strange things!

Thank you for your editorial on the 3-year old accused. I echo the same feeling and demand to know as a citizen from the judge why he treated the 3-year old like a grown-

up accused, even after seeing the kid for himself. Couldn't he quash the charge against the kid only, at least? Shame on the investigating police officers who once again proved that they are there to harass even children. The authorities must take exemplary actions against those who contributed to further damaging the tarnished images of both the judiciary and the police.

DS on April 17 carried the news of three lynching deaths. That may be considered as an ominous sign of lawlessness, however justified the mob might have been. The mob action usually results from continuous failure of the authorities to bring the culprits to justice, particularly when the people have reason to believe that the offenders will go

unpunished, or police in connivance will not take any action. It may be seen as the result of lack of public confidence in the governance system that is in place. Nothing can be more serious for the country than running without public confidence in governance. The consequence may be disastrous for public life, peace, economic growth, etc, all of which in turn will make other fragile components worse and may destroy the social fabric.

My attention has also been drawn to another news item (AA Mintoo saying that forced donations to political parties and extortionists are hindering corporate governance). He just had the courage to state the already known truth in public.

All the above tells us of a situation where governance is lacking, not to say anything about good governance, which is essential for development and poverty alleviation. Mere growth in GDP will not reduce poverty until a just social system with equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity is ensured, for which, again, good governance is a sine-qua-non. Should we wait for some Angel to deliver that?

Muhammad Ali

On e-mail



PHOTO: AFP