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MPs trade charges

In a recent heated debate in the JS, an AL legislator branded a ruling party MP as an extortionist. The MP hit back picturing the AL man as a listed smuggler and extortionist in the transportation sector. There are also self-proclaimed anti-liberation elements in our JS. These are the people we have elected to speak for us and to make and amend laws to make the country a better place to live in.

Sumon
One-mail

Massacre in Bihar

The Rabidas community in Bangladesh condemns the mayhem in the Indian state of Bihar, where at least 10 low caste Hindus were massacred by the upper caste militia. It is unfortunate that such heinous caste oppression still takes place in Indian society, after more than half a century of democratic rule. This does not bode well for the land of Gandhi and Nehru. And it is all the more shocking that the incident took place after the defeat of the BJP and reemergence of the Congress in the political arena.

The Rabidas community in Bangladesh expresses compassionate condolences to the bereaved families and the near and dear ones of the victims.

Kanaillal Rabidas
Director General
Bangladesh Guru Rabidas (Dham) Mission

New cars

The government has a plan to stop import of used/second hand Japanese cars in phases to lessen air pollution in cities like Dhaka, Chittagong etc. Accordingly, an additional tax has been imposed on import of used cars. In this regard, I would like to note that standard of some new vehicles running in the city roads are not up to the mark. Some of them are junks and are being imported using our valuable hard-earned foreign currency.

In this respect, I would like to draw the attention of the authorities either to stop import of sub-standard vehicles from India or any other country, or set some minimum standard for new vehicles to be eligible for import. If necessary the government may think of continuing import of used Japanese cars for a few more years in limited numbers to meet the gap between demand and supply.

Mohammad Shahjahan
One-mail

Golden education?

In my search for a destiny after my A' Level, I have been searching the internet for all the relevant information I could find and also visited student-counselling centres for both the US and Australia. With the knowledge about the quality of education in the UK, I wanted some information regarding their education. So I checked out the web-site of the British Council in Bangladesh.

On that web-site I came across a new facility that the Council has started to provide, which they have named "Professional Advisory Service for Students (PASS)". According to that web-site, "For the equivalent of £120 we will assign one of our staff to help you select and apply for your chosen university or college. They will also help you to

put your visa documents together". I was utterly shocked by this. Why on earth would anyone have to pay such an amount of money which is more than Tk 10,000? Is it not a rather whimsical amount to ask for, just for giving students advice on choosing a university and then organising the visa papers?

Tawfik Mohammed
Cephalon International School

The real Brando

It is interesting to note that the obituaries for Brando (with the exception of Dave Zirin) have neatly side-stepped his political activism. From his youth, Brando broke ranks with comfortable Hollywood liberalism and embraced human rights that were anathema to many Americans. Marlon Brando's political journey began in 1959, when he co-

founded the Hollywood chapter of SANE-- an anti-nuclear arms group. In the 1960s, he reduced his acting to focus on the Civil Rights Movement's demands for Black emancipation. In 1963, he marched arm in arm with James Baldwin at the march on Washington. Joining hands with Baldwin, who was at the time one of the very few Black gay men to be out of the closet, was a major drawback to Brando's career. He was one of the "freedom riders" (joined by Paul Newman) who journeyed to the South to desegregate the bus lines. After Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968, a traumatised Brando announced he was resigning from a major film role to focus on the civil rights movement. He gave money to defend the militant Black Panthers, which resulted in Southern theatre chains boycotting his films and the creation of the "Brando Black List", which shut him out of many movie opportunities.

Brando had also worked for the Native American ("Indian") community. In 1964, he was arrested during a protest for their fishing rights. In 1973, the militant Native American group AIM (American Indian Movement) laid siege to the

historical site of Wounded Knee, reclaiming it for the Lakota Nation. The 73 day siege ended with deaths in a shootout with Federal authorities, and initiated years of harassment of the community by Federal agents. Infuriated by the incident, Brando refused to accept his Oscar for "Godfather" and sent Native American actress Sacheen Littlefeather in his place to refuse the award. The only other Oscar moment that sent similar political shockwaves was Bert Schneider's (1975 winner for Vietnam documentary "Hearts and Minds") reading of a telegram from the Viet Cong delegation to Peace Talks.

Brando's politicisation also showed up in his film choices, including "Burn" (colonial freedom struggle), "Viva Zapata" (Mexican revolution), "Dry White Season" (South Africa) and "Apocalypse

means to send their children abroad, far away from this chaos so that they can build a career of their own, while these same politicians allow the country to spiral down a dangerous path. When will this stop? If this continues, all brilliant students will leave the country, one way or the other, and the country will be left with leaders who have no merit, who cheat and lie and are inept in running the country. BD is the only country where students spend more time in politics than on their studies. It seems that student politics is a big business now and no one wants it to stop. BD is perhaps the only country that on a state level encourages students to take up arms. It is perhaps the only country that blatantly erodes the education system knowing perfectly well how detrimental it is to its own future. And it is perhaps the only country

mean to speak against democracy. By this they mean freedom to speak against Islam which doesn't hamper their interest. Bangladesh is no different. The government is allowing some people to speak against religion freely and also the fanatics to issue death threats. It's only natural for uneducated mullahs to get excited. So "Freedom of speech" should be specified by DOs and DON'Ts.

Finally, I don't understand why some people are trying to relate Hizb-ut-Tahrir with Islamic zealots. The members of HT are well educated students and professionals. Also they use modern technology effectively. They conduct all their programmes openly. The old habit of "doubting everybody for one" seems to reign supreme.

Worried citizen
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Hartal

Hartal cripples the economy and takes away valuable lives. But, sadly, the government and opposition are not taking any steps to stop hartal. None of them want to ban it as the AL needs it now to protest against the government, and the BNP will need it later. But is hartal more important to the BNP and the AL than human lives?

Nayeem Islam
The Aga Khan School
Utara, Dhaka

Education for out-of-school children

The second lead of your daily of July 9 under "Education for-out-of-school children" was a thought provoking piece. Your observations and concerns on the subject, in short, cover all that one needs to be aware of. The policy makers, the planners, the implementing agencies and the serious readers got an idea about the issue at hand.

While reading the piece, I thought that the project needs to be kept out of the suited-booted members of the public administration, as much as possible, for it has to be a task oriented programme rather than a paper oriented one. In other words, it means that continuation of an employee in this project should be made exclusively dependent on his/her performance, unlike the rest of the public service programmes. Hence, it has to be run as an NGO project.

Syed Wailullah
Dhaka

Central bonded warehouse

I have come to know that a Central Bonded Warehouse is going to be established by the BGMEA. I fully appreciate the idea.

However, being the owner of a garment industry, since the very beginning of the year 1993, I lay the basic concept of the warehouse and the preliminary discussion was held with Mr. Nurul Hoque Sikder at his Motijheel office.

Indeed, gone are those days but the memories are still alive in my mind. Mr. Sikder listened to what I said and urged me to place the idea before the then president of the BGMEA. Accordingly, I submitted a key note paper on the possibility of setting up a central bonded warehouse to the president of the BGMEA. The president appreciated it and told me to proceed with the idea.

The purpose of writing this letter is that I am very happy to learn that such a warehouse is going to be set up, if only because it was my brain-child.

KT Ahmed
Crescent Road
Dhaka

Biman: Sky is just the beginning

For Biman, the national flag carrier of Bangladesh, sky is just the beginning when it comes to squandering public money and mistreating the passengers. The F-28 affair has become an old story and we are

sweeping everything under the carpet. The hospitable Biman has set a new record by entertaining its valued passengers with very bad food. Do the concerned officials not understand what kind of 'good will' it

may bring for the carrier of national flag? Worse still, instead of apologising they were more eager to show it as an isolated incident just like the regular engine failure of the old F-28. Meanwhile, our min-

ister has urged the not-knowledgeable circle not to make rash comments on F-28, and the director of engineering of Biman stopped short of terming them blessed with everlasting youth.

I think it is high time we overhauled the whole management and administrative system and got rid of the inefficient and corrupt people.

Saif
Dhaka

"Your home is the sky" is the theme of Biman, the national flag carrier. However, the actual situation is completely different. Recently, they added two faulty F-28 aircraft to their fleet. The procurement department was aware of the faults of these aircraft. Nonetheless, they bought these amid controversy. So, why did they buy these in the first place? People have every right to know the answer.

Rafi
Dhaka

Tampering with history

As with most of your excellent editorials, I could not help agreeing with this one written on July 12th (Tampering with History). I think your call for an immediate cessation of this suicidal trend that the BNP seems so adept in introducing to our politics at regular intervals is a right one, but I guess the damage has already been done. I really do not know how the BNP can back-track on this one. The AL has already started setting into motion what it is capable of; using this un-political action by the BNP to put a gridlock on the country and the economy. With the AL having come back to Parliament and with the two major parties talking on the ways to end the culture of hartals, this act of the BNP was highly injudicious from the point of timing.

However, now that the damage is done, there is a lot to be said about this matter of proclamation of independence that has not thus far been written correctly. While the AL was in power, the interpretation that it gave to this important and critical phase of our history was grossly one sided where all credit was given for everything about our liberation to Bangabandhu and by that token to the Awami League. Bangabandhu has been shown as the great dreamer of our independence movement, as the great architect who not only visualised but led us through every stage of this step-by-step movement for independence, starting with the Language Movement in 1952 to the students' upheaval in 1969 and finally, to our war of liberation even though for the last named stage he chose for himself the prison rather than being with the people to fight with them. It seems like he was convinced that if he gave a Declaration of Independence, that would be enough for the people to fight and win independence and he could spend his time incarcerated.

The AL's presentation of history is fictitious to say the least; too wishy washy to stand any real scrutiny. Just for thought, Bangabandhu was through out his political life a nationalist while an outspoken and charismatic leader of the rights of the people of East Pakistan. The truth of 1971 is that it was a people's war where leadership was given by the heroes like Major Zia, Khaleed Mosharraf and the rest who fought with Bangabandhu as the unquestioned leader, for he gave us the courage to demand our rights.

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

I was a 30 year old young man when the Pakistan army pounced on the people of East Pakistan on the night of 25 March, 1971.

Massacre in Dhaka city went on for two nights and one day under the cover of curfew. Curfew was relaxed for a few hours on the morning of 27th March, '71. I went out of my residence to do some essential shopping. A shopkeeper whispered to me to go home and listen to Chittagong Radio Station. I came back and switched on my radio to Chittagong. There a young Major Ziaur Rahman was fervently announcing on behalf of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the independence of Bangladesh and pleading to people of East Pakistan to join the war of liberation. He also sought recognition of Bangladesh and help from friendly countries. I have heard these announcements several times and at no stage Major Ziaur Rahman had omitted the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The sound still ring in my ears. In 1971, the history had unfolded in front of my eyes and many others of my age group. Historians cannot bluff us.

We would like to know what kind of guarantee or warranty was provided by the seller or were these sold on 'as is' basis without any warranty like scrap material?

While Biman is famous for its mismanagement of flights and schedules, this episode also attests to its technical and financial incompetence and irresponsibility.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation should open a probe to find out what led to this poor decision.

M Faruque
USA



The subject is raging since the restoration of democracy. I firmly believe people who distort history can also distort their own background. They are not historians. A nation that cannot write its history correctly cannot move forward. We are belittling ourselves in the comity of nations. It's a shame.

Ziauddin Ahmed
One-mail

It should not be a surprise that the BNP is trying to distort the true history of our Liberation War. This cynical ploy is going on for quite a long time. Actually, this fight between the Awami League and the BNP regarding the Liberation War has reached such a proportion that one can write an epic novel on this subject.

Let's be very clear on one issue. Distortion of history was possible in pre historic periods. In this world of computers, internet, and free information it is practically impossible to distort history for long. BNP might succeed for some time but the truth will remain somewhere hidden and it will come out. True distortion of history happens when one fact of life could be erased forever from the face of the earth. Is it really possible these days? Think 500 years from now. Do you really think whatever the BNP is doing to make Ziaur Rahman, a Major in the army at that time, the true hero of our Liberation War will succeed? Somewhere, in some place the fact that Sheikh Mujib is the true hero will be kept and that fact will be restored.

I believe that Internet has made life for those plotters difficult. Once something is added on the Internet, none has the power to completely destroy that. As I believe Internet will, in some form or another, be part of human civilisation from now on, no true history can be destroyed. The lesson of saying all these is for the BNP to stop doing what it is doing.

Bangladesh is a story of failure and will always remain like this. It is no argument that give Bangladesh 200 years and it will become another US. If a nation cannot figure out its true history of birth even after 30 years of existence, no amount of years will suffice. What's the implication of challenging someone's father?

I must say at the end that I don't believe in calling someone Father of the Nation, but I have no problem in calling Sheikh Mujibur Rahman a real hero of our Liberation War. Zia's story begins much later.

Nayeem Mano
Lubbock, US

The AL is levelling allegations against the ruling party that it is trying to rewrite the history by naming the late president Zia as declarer of independence, sidelining the role of Sk. Mujib. The Liberation war is a watershed in the history of Bangladesh and there are people who truly feel the significance and importance of this event. It is also true that the overuse of this issue on political ground and uncountable allegations and counter allegations has made the new generation repulsive to it. In fact, they are more interested about a VJ in MTV than the role of a leader during the liberation war, as there is BNP version and an AL version of it. Japan was ravaged by the World War-II. Today it has become an economic superpower and look eye to eye to its former adversary.

Will we go on harping on those old issues or learn something from Japan?

Sumon
Dhaka

The ruling alliance doesn't recognise him as the father of the nation but still Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is undoubtedly the architect of independent Bangladesh. He has been selected as the greatest Bengalee of all times by the majority of the BBC audience. His contribution for this country can never be undermined. History of Bangladesh without the name of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is simply unthinkable.

But some of his deeds and decisions after the liberation war must have invited widespread criticism. Most devastating was his decision to award amnesty to all war criminals. The families of those who were abducted and killed by those rajakars could not accept it. The kids and relatives of those martyrs now question as to who authorised Sheikh Shaheb to forgive them? Since none of his family members or relatives were in the victims list, our leader could not probably read the depth of the wounds that was being carried by millions of people. To add to our misery, those rajakars were rehabilitated.

Thirty-three years after the liberation war, sitting in the heaven looking down toward his dearest motherland what Sheikh Mujibur Rahman finds? What is the state of his country now? Can he recognise that white bearded gentleman through the glass of a posh car with a national flag fluttering on the car's flag stand? How does he feel when fundamentalists give out death warrants to teachers of Dhaka university? How he feels about the Robin Hood *biscope* of so-called Bangla Bhai? How did he feel when his daughter went to get a few drops of blessings from the then Amir of the Jamaat for the election, after the fall of the autocratic government?

Romeo Ahmed
Central Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

