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FM's remarks

My reflex action to reading about the FM's speech to the Young Journalists was, there he goes again! Diplomacy is the most complex of professions and one never played out before the press. If you take our FM, he perhaps thinks the only place where this profession is practised is on the pages of newspapers and on TV screens.

I could not agree more with those among the BNP who have expressed criticisms in no uncertain terms over the speech, for there is no other way to look at this speech. ("Sharp reactions to Morshed's remark": DS September 9th). By itself, this speech, even if all the facts are in our favour and India is wrong on all counts, will get us nowhere and close all doors for negotiations. Did the foreign minister forget that the water ministry is trying very hard for ministerial level talks for sharing of water and to influence the Indian government to drop the river linking project and that official level talks between the two countries' water ministries are scheduled for next week? Now is there any point for those talks?

For those hard-liners in the BNP, they do not know that the surest way to being sidelined regarding our interests with India is to embarrass India as the FM has done. They may get a lot of satisfaction by reading what the FM said against India but they will get NOTHING more than reading satisfaction. To the Indians, chances for getting anything done through this FM and the foreign ministry regarding our interests with them have now come down to a BIG ZERO.

Those urging the FM in this hawkish stance should perhaps ask the FM what he

saw when he came back from India just a few months ago to tell everyone that the Congress led government was prepared to settle all outstanding problems with Bangladesh.

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

Morshed Khan's outburst regarding India was out of the norm, but it is clear that India is becoming a huge obstacle in the prosperity of our country. They lobby in Washington to portray our country as a base for terrorist groups; Indian newspapers condemn our government for not taking necessary measures to root out the problem yet they don't have any evidence to back up their allegation. India considers us as a Failed Nation. They do not care about the bilateral trade deficit, they just want us to cooperate with whatever they want and we as a nation don't even have the courage to point it out. I believe we can do better!

Anonymous
On e-mail

The recent remarks of our foreign minister on India-Bangladesh relations came as a surprise to many. It has crossed the fine line of diplomacy. It is difficult to assume what prompted him to go to such a length. Did he spell out government policy or his own feelings? It sounded like a threat while dealing with trade balance.

Without being fully informed about the purpose and the environment prevailing during the discussion, it is difficult to guess what prompted the FM to be so blunt. We expect some clarification either from the FM



FM meets L.K. Advani

or from the policy makers of the BNP.

A Bangladeshi abroad
On e-mail

The bluntness of the recent remarks by Foreign Minister Morshed Khan is remarkable. Diplomacy is often the science of the obtuse and Mr. Khan is known to be a rather amiable person. Hence, I can understand the disappointment of Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri who handled the situation with utmost tact and grace.

That said, Ms. Sikri must surely know that

India has not exactly been fair to Bangladesh always. Putting aside all other issues, I will point out that to this day India's Parliament has not ratified the treaty that demarcated our borders thirty years ago. Our legislature endorsed the same almost immediately but the unwillingness of successive Indian governments to bring the treaty to their Parliament has contributed to the untold misery of hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis trapped in enclaves. Such mysterious reluctance is also a factor in frequent border clashes. The failure of India

to honour her solemn pledge must make many of us wonder whether the pledge was indeed taken in good faith or not. I have heard, of course, the Indian defence that the issue has become tangled up in courts and state-federal relations. None of those arguments make much sense because as any novice of basic international relations knows, treaty obligations take precedence over local, provincial, national, and even constitutional law.

My suggestion to High Commissioner Sikri is that she ask her government to fulfil the pledge India made to us three decades ago: promises kept are the surest foundation of good neighbourly relations.

Esam Sohail
Kansas City Missouri, USA

Foreign Minister Mr. Morshed Khan's comments in the young journalists' meeting naturally came as a shock to many well meaning persons throughout Bangladesh, even within the ruling party.

After all, Mr. Khan has been FM for over two years now. Why should he suddenly make such caustic remarks about a neighbour? Perhaps what he said was in conformity with an approved government version. One should not be surprised if indeed this is the case.

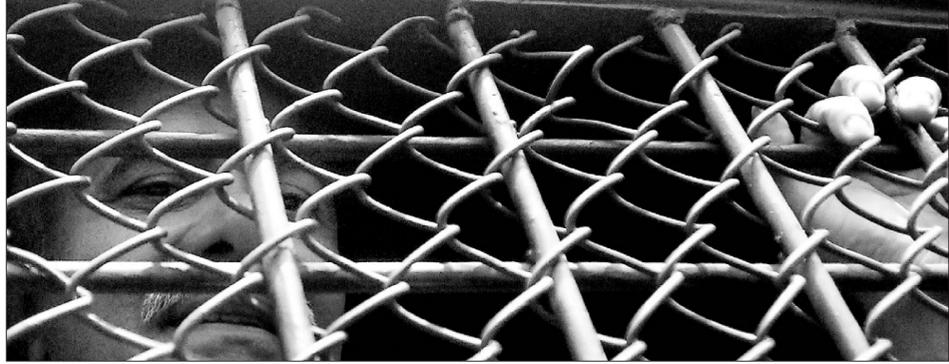
A senior citizen
On e-mail

I was perplexed by your editorial ("The foreign minister's fury") and the op-ed article by your Assistant Editor Mr. Zafar Sobhan ("Cooperation not confrontation") on September 10, critical of Bangladesh Foreign

Minister's "broadside" against India's unfair trade policies towards Bangladesh. You admit that it was a breach of diplomatic protocol for the Indian Prime Minister to phone only our leader of the opposition after August 21, "bypassing" the prime minister who was not phoned, unlike every other heads of the government who had phoned both the prime minister and the leader of the opposition to offer condolences. You sugarcoat another serious breach of protocol by India by stating matter-of-factly, "The protocol given to Sheikh Hasina, and the level of meetings arranged for her during her visit to India, before any meeting with PM Khaleda Zia, was also not lost on the BNP coalition government." While you dismiss the two diplomatic insults hurled openly at the prime minister of Bangladesh by India and do not criticise India for it, you take to task the foreign minister of Bangladesh for his "un-diplomatic" and "amateurish outburst," knowing full well that what the foreign minister said about India's unfair trade practices, lack of water-sharing and the false allegation of Bangladesh harbouring terrorist camps, was true!

I agree with Mr. Sobhan that there exists within India two constituencies, one friendly and one hostile to Bangladesh. Regardless of what we do, the hostile constituency will always remain so. We need to cultivate the Bangladesh-friendly constituency in India. What better way is there to do so than telling them the truth?

Rashed Firoz
New York



Former Bangladeshi Lt. Col Syed Faruk Rahman

Jail killing

My attention has been drawn to a news report under the caption "verdict shifted" covering the latest twist and turn in the shifting of date for delivering of judgement in the sensational murder of four of our front line national Leaders. Like the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, this too is a disgraceful chapter of our history. As a matter of fact, this in a way is no less a tragedy than the assassination of the father of the nation for the sheer "circumstances" in which the heinous act was carried out. The present government may have to bear the major share of the blame for not expediting the trial and justice in both

the cases, but the fact remains that the previous governments particularly the past government of Awami League too could not be totally exonerated for its share of inability, inaction and failure.

It has become a part of our political culture to cry for justice only when it hurts concerned individuals, their families or their partisan interests. No one really does anything in this country to uphold an institutional legacy from the standpoint of national concern. I continue to live with the memory of kidnapping and killing of one of my brothers during the War of Liberation, one of the most recognised intellectuals and cham-

panion of democracy of his time alongside two hundred others of no less calibre and consequence. To this day, I continue to be baffled by the failures of the then AL government to bring the criminals to justice.

Let us face facts: we all are equally guilty for this state of affairs in varying degrees. Yet the fact remains that we must continue to fight for "justice" at every opportunity while rising above political consideration of any dimension.

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka

Mission incomplete

A new wave of "Crossfire Panic" spreads among the enlisted and wanted criminals fearing that they will be murdered by "RAB", a newly established law securing agency, which wants to hunt the "marked" criminals down. Consequently, the citizens are divided on the issue.

In this respect, I want to say that such 'crossfire' is only helping the 'political godfathers' who played their roles in raising those criminals as criminals.

Rizwan Haque
On e-mail

Whose advocates are they?

Your newspaper recently published a report saying that the statement by the foreign minister against India baffled some of the politicians, and also outraged them. Let me remind those corrupt politicians that they are elected by us, not by Indians.

Shad
Los Angeles, CA

Feelings of the Iron Man

Somewhere, along the way, in life, a person may become sad and lose feelings. The tin man is supposed to be an intelligent person. He was searching for a heart and feelings. "Oz never gave anything to the tin man that he already didn't have." When iron is in the fire, it changes from white to orange, orange to red, red to blue to black and so on. I have a figure of the iron man on the table and I can leave him on the edge. Suppose the iron man was on the edge of a cliff. The iron man fell. His

iron legs are off. His arms are off, his eye and his head are off. All the separate pieces tumbled, crashing. A seagull picks up the eye and puts it in the hand. With magnetic power, parts of the iron man may come back together. The iron man fell into a pit, but shook the earth. A scarecrow is supposed to be a person

with a heart and he is searching for a brain. Our mind can be filled with straw, or maybe with too much paper and certificates. Not all the certificates in the world can fill the need for communication, peace and love. A person can be a tin man or a scarecrow but when one tries to heal painful memories, one has to

bring the head and the heart together. I wish that life was like the iron man so that we can put back broken pieces together. Every person can then be put together again, especially people who are old and ill. The Yellow Submarine is a wonderful movie about feelings. The Beatles and people.

Beslan massacre in perspective

Beslan (South Russia) experienced a great tragedy; the entire world witnessed that incident. Shock and outrage are inadequate to describe the gruesome death of hundreds of innocent school children through a combination of vile hostage taking and foolhardy storming of the school by notoriously inept Russian security forces.

The Daily Star ran reports and printed vivid pictures of sobbing, stunned and shocked Russian mothers in the aftermath; these touched a sympathetic chord in numerous readers. So did the major western media in a chorus of consternation and condemnation.

Yet, a question comes to mind. Why did the media fail to run truthful account of thousands of Chechen families brutally driven from their homes, of men hunted down and killed and of thousands of children made orphans in repeated Russian campaigns in Chechnya? Why not a single picture to show the Chechen "black widows" whose husbands were executed and which drove them to become suicide bombers willing to make supreme sacrifice to avenge?

Indeed, many of the past atrocities perpetrated upon fiercely freedom loving Chechens are less documented and even less publicised; few reminded of the Czarist wars of extermination of Eastern Caucasians (Chechens, Ingushis, and Dagestanis) in the nineteenth century; few reminded of Stalinist era mass deportation (600 thousand) of entire Chechen population in 1944 in cattle trucks when many died of fatigue, starvation and indignity. Little is known about the broken promises of President Boris Yeltsin or the repression of Chechens by Russian warlords thereafter. Chechnya today is deeply scarred and in utter ruins largely due to the long festering wound inflicted by successive Russian regimes.

Zakir Husain, Dhaka ***

Will anybody say that once upon a time Russia was one of the two greatest powers of the World? It was then Soviet Union. Now it has a brittle economic system. It cannot also provide security for its citizens.

Royal
ANP-SUST

Estelle Mahnuma
On e-mail

Threat to WB director

As reported in the September 11 DS internet edition, in response to the World Bank Country Director being threatened and leaving Bangladesh, the Prime Minister's Political Secretary, Harris Chowdhury, told the BBC Radio, "We have no idea if she (Wallich) has received a bomb threat. The threat could be for fun or real." The story indicated he alleged a vested quarter is trying to destabilise the country through such threats and grab headlines, targeting foreign delegates, and "We don't consider such threats serious. Still, we are taking all-out measures." While it's hard to comprehend that his office didn't check with appropriate authorities to see if there was a threat, it's incomprehensible that he can say that the threat can be for fun. The threat may not be real, but a death threat CANNOT be fun. And it's further incomprehensible, even if there weren't recent attacks and bombings, for someone at the Political Secretary's level to say that they don't consider such threats serious enough. Even if there were no recent attacks the police and other law enforcement agencies should consider every threat serious until they investigate and determine otherwise.

MM Haque
Gulshan

Statesman editorial

I should like to ask the gentleman from the US, Mr. Niraj Agarwalla, (Letter to the DS, September 10) how the "Statesman" editorial titled "Khaleda's game plan: Kill Hasina and banish democracy," and my legitimate complaint that thirty years after Sheikh Mujib handed over Bangladesh enclaves Dahagram and Angarapota to India, India is yet to cede to Bangladesh equal amount of Indian land as promised by Indira Gandhi, both qualify as "slander mongering!"

Anyone with any knowledge of journalistic ethics would agree that to accuse the head of the government of a sovereign nation with attempted murder of the leader of

opposition without offering any proof, as the "Statesman" has done, is "slander mongering," at its worst! On the other hand, any fair-minded person with a sense of decency would categorise India's unwillingness to cede to Bangladesh territories that belongs to Bangladesh, as nothing short of big-brotherly cheating! Excuse me, Mr. Agarwalla, where is your sense of logic?

Arshad Jamil
New Jersey

Free for all?

Bomb is found everywhere in Bangladesh. It is on the open streets, at public meeting places, in launches, in kitchens and so on. We are insecure, though we have the government, security forces, opposition, third force etc. The government is busy with development activities securing party image.

The opposition is trying to unseat the government in its own way. The third force has no force to implement its theories. So our sufferings will not come to an end.

Tumpa Khan
On e-mail

MCC top slot

Well Bangladesh has done it again! It has topped the list of Transparency International's MCC (Most Corrupt Countries). Even the people attempting to clean up corruption in Bangladesh are corrupt. This should send a message to Bangladeshis in and out of Bangladesh. We have to allow an independent agency to aid in the anti-corruption efforts, because as it can be seen, our own people cannot be trusted.

This is the not the nation for which hundreds of people died. This is not the nation that freedom fighters dreamed of when they fought Pakistan.

Sumi
On e-mail

Search for 'sotru'

We are looking for 'sotru'. Our search for the so called 'sotru' is going in full swing. Taka one crore has been set as the reward for information about the culprits of August 21 bomb blasts. Our intelli-



Hijab/France

I could not resist writing about the hijab ban in France. France is a sovereign country with a vibrant democracy and much better human rights records than the subcontinental countries. If some one wants to compare the minority people's rights of Bangladesh with France's and want to feel good about minorities having greater rights in Bangladesh, it would be a travesty of truth. France has banned all religious symbols from the public funded schools but not from private ones. People have to follow the laws of the country they live in! Many of these new French immigrants could not stay in their country of origin for political reasons! I would say that these immigrants are intelligent enough to take care of themselves. Leave them alone!

Dev Saha, Boston, US

gence agencies are making newer branches. Different foreign security agencies are extending their helping hand. Both the government and the opposition have voiced their concern over the enemy. This time the 'sotru' will not be spared.

The opposition enforced hartals after the tragic incident and after some face-saving measures the government roared back saying it has its limits, too. Like all other incidents, it is becoming an issue to get some political mileage. Sincerity to get the criminal seems to be missing. With all the new logistics minus sincerity, the 'sotru' will be elusive as ever.

Joy
Dhaka

Christine Wallich's departure

The threat of a bomb attack forced Christine I Wallich to leave our country. When the BBC newsman asked the World Bank officials about her departure they replied, "of course the government was informed". But Mr. Harris Chowdhury told the BBC that Wallich had not informed the government of her departure. Is it not contradictory?

People in general, ambassadors, and top officials of different foreign organisations are insecure, but one of our ministers commented in a press briefing recently that they now feel more secure.

Abdullah al Mamun
Zia Hall, University of Dhaka

"Creative destruction"

The readers may have heard the term "Creative destruction" used in modern management. I am

not going to elaborate what it means as readers could well guess something that should be near to its meaning.

But I personally think this is the term most suitable for the present city road management system. A nearly 2 km road, stretched from Goran Bazar to Basoboo, was carpeted just a few days before the recent floods. Though this road survived the floods, it could not escape the unscrupulous staff of City Corporation, utility services and contractors. These people are not giving the road even a year to live in peace, as they are now laying pipes for WASA. Where is the coordination among the government agencies?

Md. Mynul Mamun
On e-mail

Disgraceful!
A hidden camera was discovered in a bathroom of Rokeya Hall of Dhaka University. How could it be possible? It's a conspiracy against our women seeking higher education.

As the mother of a child, I demand a proper inquiry into the matter.

Saleha Rahman
Mirpur 10, Dhaka

Archer K. Blood

Thanks for the news on Archer K. Blood, a friend of Bangladesh even at his death.

We live in Denver, within an hour from Mr. Blood's home at Fort Collins. Bangladeshis here feel that we should pay homage by being at the memorial on the 17th of September.

Irfan
Student, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado



PHOTO: AFP