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History distorted?

Often some of us turn vociferous bringing allegations against some persons or quarters of distorting the history of our glorious war of liberation. But did we ever verify how the scholars from our neighbouring countries, particularly India, recorded and evaluated our nine-month long war of liberation?

Recently, while preparing a lecture synopsis for the MS students of our university on the subject, Journalism, I went through an Indian book titled "Mass Communication", the author of which is no less important a person than R Chatterjee, a former member of the Central Information Service, Govt. of India, former Director of News Service, All India Radio, former Colombo Plan Information Officer, etc. In this book, the author viewed our movement for freedom differently as he writes in page 174 (Chapter XV National Integration):-

"However, the year 1971 saw the reestablishment of unity when in the general elections the Congress Party was returned with an overwhelming majority. While India's efforts to avoid a war with Pakistan over the issue of refugees failed, the 14-day war resulted in the freedom of Bangla Desh."

Prof. M. Zahidul Haque
Chairman, Dept. of Language
Shere-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka-1207

Dhaka--vulnerable to flood

The megacity Dhaka is now an overcrowded terrain which has become much vulnerable to floods. After the month-long flood and its thumping impact over the whole country, when flood-water started receding and the post-flood rehabilitation programmes were in full spate, Dhaka again went under knee-deep water due to the two days of torrential rain. Being the nerve-centre of the country, Dhaka must be kept well protected from being isolated from other parts of the country. It has been seen that Bangladesh does not get water at the time of need, while it goes under waist-deep water when it is absolutely unnecessary. It is because of the Farakka Barrage by which we have already had our fingers burnt. The problem of Dhaka originates from the poor management of catchment areas. Not only this, the marshes and lakes inside and around Dhaka city, which have been illegally occupied for real estate development, have contributed a lot to increasing the miseries of the water-logged people. The very constant and regular phenomenon of Dhaka city is the digging and re-digging of the roads by WASA, DESA, BWDB etc. which has greatly decimated the drainage system. As a result, free movement of water is impeded. If they dig the roads on the basis of coordination, the drainage system will not get a great jerk and will be able to accelerate the smooth receding of water.

Otherwise, the situation will never improve.

A.B.M. Shafiqul Islam
Dept. of English
Jahangirnaga University

Charity begins abroad!

The temperature was -7°C when British Airways flight landed in Geneva. After the immigration matters had been dealt with, I stepped outside the airport. It was snowing seemingly white cotton buds were falling gently down onto a soft white blanket so extensive.

It was early April in 1990. I was a émigré youth destined to an uncertain terminus in search of safety and freedom in every sense. Having been released after spending a couple of years in a cell "in charge of" taking part in movement against military dictator Ershad and threatened to be falsely imprisoned again; what better could I do but to manage myself to leave my dearest Bangladesh (the then Empire of Ershad)!

By this time I had worn my pull-over as it was freezing and I got some of my dollars changed into local currency. I went to the Geneva Train Station close to the Geneva Airport. The only address that I had with me was of a long-term expatriate came from my locality in Bangladesh, Jayanta Roy, who used to live in Solothurn City. I bought myself a ticket to that obvious destination. Arriving there in time, thanks to the

Rains of September

The heavy rains in the middle of September this year brought city life to a stand still. It also brought to the fore the inadequacy of the drainage system of the city. Water logging in the streets was so severe that the transport system came to a virtual halt.

The reasons underlying this state of affairs has been written and spoken about by experts and others in many forums. One point may have been missed the regular re-carpeting of the roads.

Under our monsoon conditions, the asphalt concrete (the black top) is subject to disintegration, creating potholes. Every few years all major roads are re-carpeted. And, every time this is done the level of the roads is raised by 50 to 75cm. This, in turn, leads to disruption of the drainage regime and gradual narrowing of the drainage portals alongside the roads. Unless this practice is discontinued the rains of last September would soon be seen to have been a matter of minor inconvenience.

It is high time we considered alternative technologies. Re-carpeting should be done after removing the old asphalt concrete. Technologies exist which allow for reuse of the old asphalt material and is in use all over the world.

Things have changed and we have to change too. Never before has the Caribbean been battered by two major cyclones in a month. Never before has Dhaka been deluged by 350mm of rain in a day. Never before has the necessity of tackling the drainage problem of the city been more acute. Inaction will only bring more misery.

KM Huque, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

was a bit difficult for me to find a job. All I did was wonder about and spend time with my newly made friends. I came into contact with an Indian guy called Satnam Singh who used to work for Reufenacht and Co. which was a gigantic business firm owned by twin brothers Mr. Heinz and Mr. Freddy Reufenacht. Singh introduced me with them. There I was asked where I was from, when I replied 'Bangladesh', I found them very much sympathetic to me. They hardly spent a second to offer me a job after enquiring about the then flood situation of Bangladesh. To my utmost amazement, they offered me a three bedroom flat above where Mr. Heinz used to live.

They never boasted the fact that they were so rich and worked like simple men. I have seen so many workaholics east and west in my life but none like the twins.

By the end of 1993, I got the summons from Bundesamt to leave Confoederatio Helvetica (Switzerland) immediately. Reufenacht brothers personally made an appeal on my behalf and that was rejected as well. Finally, I had to leave the country. At present I am settled in England with the family of my own, I have everything that I have wished for. But the biggest achievement of my life is that, I have learnt from Reufenachts to love and respect all people even the poor and needy ones of my own country.

Sharif Chowdhury, from Bradford, UK

Save us

"Dhaka University" the premier institution is called "the Oxford of the East". Students have to face a rigorous competition here. The university is capable of producing skilled and capable future citizens to lead the nation.

But the entire educational process of DU has come to a standstill due to the political circumstances prevailing in the country. Thirty

thousand students are suffering acutely and their future has become uncertain.

We are exhorting the political parties to free the DU and other educational institutions from politics.

Motasim Billah
Ziaur Rahman Hall
Dept. of International Relations
University of Dhaka

It does not take much, but pays a lot

I presume that it is one of the well known sayings in the modern sophisticated world. People who are employed at foreign and reputed institutes know it better than anybody else. But sometimes the guys and girls working in such places think that they are some bigwigs and behave in an arrogant manner, instead of politely rendering the service expected of them.

Hassan Mahmud
Kazipara, Mirpur Dhaka

AL's self-complacency

It is time the glorious Awami League, with out-dated goals and objectives, reviewed its approach to political policies, to suit the contemporary culture of new and modern politics. What the party's forefathers did and achieved is no consolation for the changing moods of the times, in Dhaka, or any other capital.

The age of secularism is gone, with current global politics heavily tinged with religious inputs (even US is a follower). Secondly, the local parties have to take policy decision on use of terrorism in local politics; to avoid self-victimization. The failure or decline of a party these days depends entirely on the guidelines set by the current party leaders. Chanting mantras, or counting beads won't sell. Get away from charisma, and offer attractive packages which the lay voters (and their families) can understand, and look forward to (without lottery culture!).

Where does student politics stand ?

What is going on in the name of student politics, particularly in public universities at present, is appalling. At times, my mind shudders at the thought of the future of our public universities. I apprehend an imminent darkness looming large over the future sky of these universities unless the student politics is restored to its right track. Indeed, we have glorious records of student politics to recall, on different occasions in 1952, 1971 and 1990. But unfortunately student politics has deviated from its ethical stance and is in the process of continuous deterioration. No doubt, student politics should be dedicated to ensure rights and welfare of all students as well as of the entire nation. But it is pathetic to see that student politics has become hostage to a certain few students, most of whom hardly show any student-like traits.

They seldom care for the general students

and are out to persuade their own interest. They are motivated by some unscrupulous political leaders who exploit them to safeguard their pelf and power. Nowadays, the very nature of student politics is that the student wing of the party in power is to oppress and suppress the opposition, while the opposition keeps on calling strikes. At present almost all the public universities suffer from such politics of vengeance. For this trend of student politics, congenial atmosphere of learning is being disrupted frequently. But who are the real sufferers? Unfortunately, the general students. As a university student, I myself am a victim of this so-called student politics and long for the days when we will get rid of this suffocating situation. Is there no way out?

Moniruzzaman Khan
Dept of English, DU



PHOTO: AFP

The politicians have to pay attention to political marketing techniques, the political laws of supply and demand, and how to sell services to non-political voters, who are not interested in politics, and like to be busy with their own business. The packaging has to be attractive; but the sales personnel have to be well trained and behaved not to divert attention to the weaknesses of the other competitive services available in Dhaka metropolis. Beat your own drum, but don't try to silence others. The freedom to differ is there, but the presentation need not be negative the majority of the time. What have you to offer?

That does not mean our politics has to end up at one extreme. There is tolerance in Islam, but the Muslim political leaders ignore it, and go for subjective cosmetic effects, which is misunderstood by some, and criticised by others.

Our political parties work under small footprints. The coverage area has to be broadened, to accommodate others. Poverty-line politics targeted at the illiterate (majority) has a different tune and rhythm. This cannot be applied in Bangladesh today. The awareness level has increased rapidly these decades. Besides, the views of the lakhs of NRBs abroad are ignored, but they play a prominent role in enhancing the economy of Bangladesh. What is not taken into account is the cosmopolitan outlook prevailing even in the rural areas of Bangladesh (relations working abroad).

A Husnain
Dhaka

Political reform and intellectuals

I had the opportunity to join the round-table discussions on "Political reforms organised by The Daily Star and Shujan, on 25 September. The intellectuals discussed democracy, election, problems, solutions and possible measures with emotion, argument, logic and anger. But, as usual the blame went to the politicians.

I think the intellectuals who participated in the discussion are also responsible for this situation. These citizens are prominent personalities, giving advice everywhere. But my question is what really they have done for us. When they observed problems in the political arena, why did not they try to form a neutral political platform?

Syed Habib Anwar Pasha
Dept. of Marketing
DU

The future of values

The priceless small pleasure of reading newspapers is gone. These days, once in a while, some good reading material appears, amidst the chaos generated by the political rulers in every corner of the globe. Inside the dying UN system, the Unesco chief came up with a good address on the "Future of Values" at a philosophical (?) conference (reproduced in The Daily Star of September 22).

It is a sensitive and topical issue, haunting the minds of the billions of people in the first and third worlds, most of whom are not articulate or analytical enough to get their bearing from the ersatz international leadership gone haywire.

Truth sticks and takes root, while hybridization, fashions and plurality create cultural insecurity in the islands of civilizations. One is reminded of the old maxim -"The East is East, and the West is West, and never the twain shall meet". Note how the ICT (information, communication, and technology) Age has widened the communication gap amongst the modern and the traditional minds. The political leaders, who lead the media lime-light, are unable to handle the future of Values. The base of virtual reality is strengthened, needing lethal arms for control of the human minds.

I watch (amateurishly) my society from our capital, Dhaka. It is not possible to decode the sense of

direction. The sense of values is changing, making the situation all the more confounded. Values are crashing on collision courses; too many at too short intervals.

Political news and views dominate the pages of the print media; while, as a voter, it takes (me) only a couple of hours to cast the vote. The implications of the voting (machine) are staggering. Too much debris on the path(s), and the garbage content exceeds the weight and mass of selected items. We have been conditioned to live with high systems losses. No lighthouse to indicate the nearness of the port (goal). No guide in the Sunderbans (the beautiful forest). Too many traffic signals and controls at the metropolitan political points; but how to get out on the highway, and use the fifth gear (overdrive)? What we observe are the accelerate-and-brake drivers of the nation who break all the rules of political driving, and create some new ones.

Insecurity prevails on the cultural

fronts. Even the secretary general of the UN had to point out the demerits of imposing democracy on foreign soils using arm-twisting methods (Iraq). Plurality means loss of meaning? The clash of values is propelling all towards the clash of civilizations.

This type of musing has no ending. Better pause here, for the other readers to catch a breath.

Md. Abad, Dhaka

Discipline labour unions

The IT report on corrupt practices at the Ctg port is an open secret; now the data have been formally announced. The government has to announce stringent reforms, to regain its bad image of governance.

Too much indulgence accorded to the supporting party workers. The civil service has been ruined. Imagine class four staff telling the government how to run a department! Then why have the BCS recruitment and the universities and the consul-

stants. Why do we need professionals?

The political parties have spoiled the labour unions through political use, time and again, by the succeeding regimes. (The students have been lured into politics and easy money). Now these unions cannot be controlled or disciplined, and it dictates the law, style and culture. There is no discipline in the civil service, due to absence of reward and punishment. The transfer system can also be bribed. The incumbents in each and every post must be changed at regular intervals, for flow of fresh air inside the offices.

The political leaders with ordinary minds and subjective goals have done great damage to the society. It is difficult to get out of this vice of corruption and armed hooliganism. Cutting the branches and plucking the leaves won't work; the roots have to be pulled out and thrown away; nay, buried deep. This is the typical LDC syndrome unable to resist temptation. First phase: deny power to the politicians, as they misuse it.

Politics needs to rest for a while, after the clean-up (once again). The hidden political godfathers have amassed enough wealth to eat their haram bread for some years. Political indigestion have been invited by the political incumbents themselves, so others should not be blamed. The politicians have forgotten the price of everything. This state of affairs cannot last for ever.

A Mawaz, Dhaka

BTV News

There are press reports that the government is trying to improve the news presentation of BTV for the viewers at home and abroad. Before going into details, the approach to the issue has to be firmly established by the policy makers, (go round the forest before entering it). Here are some suggestions for consideration.

It is not necessary to point out or remind the viewers at short intervals who are running the government. It is the 'neutral' government which is presenting the news. The government is looked upon too politically (the regime gets preference to the government). The government is not the party.

The professional editor judges the news items impartially on merit of the news value. There should be no non-professional interference with professional processing (inside the news section). The News Section should not be under political pressure, directly or indirectly.

But the problem is that it is very difficult for a broadcaster (BTV) in the public sector to work independently, and not face the music. There are differences between propaganda and publicity, and sycophancy and nepotism. The influence of unwritten laws have to be reviewed. Give the editor professional freedom.

Political bias should not influence news rating. News is news, regardless of source, site, and the personnel involved. Why political news and information are accorded higher rating, and that too subjectively? It is a sensitive question, but very relevant. Why genuine criticism is suppressed? Have a clear policy on this point.

Too much coverage is given to the politicians in power. A foreign viewer should not be able to guess the political leaning.

Non-government and private sector news is scanty, and the treatment is step-motherly, because many of these are not covered (the cameras are too busy elsewhere). What is the policy?

The transparency rating of news has to be maintained, whether BTV operates from the public or private sector. Why the difference is so noticeable?

There are other points, but let the above points be tackled first.

Aiif
Dhaka



PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

We love nature and the seasons. We celebrate the seasons naturally. In March, the strong winds blow the seeds into the ground and the rain helps the plants to blossom. Only the tiny buds can be seen and these have a unique beauty. These tiny buds will blossom into hundreds of flowers in the summer in May. The spring winds, the summer flowers and the warmth of the sun continues in the life of the seasons. "No candied hearts in February, no first of spring, no Easter eggs, no Eid, no Christmas, in fact it's just another ordinary day," which is every day. Stephen Roney wrote an interesting article in the Toronto Star, "Christmas is an orgiastic celebration of materialism". There are too many holiday celebrations and it is difficult to keep up with them and all of them are about shopping and commercialism. These holiday months cause stress, and depression. There is a Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). There are people who get depressed because of dark winter days. I think the holiday expenses and stress cause more depression. We love the seasons and the changes and we don't get depressed. In fact, in December, the last month of the year, there is also a way to have a very natural Christmas. We all leave the overcrowded shopping centres, the rush and the madness and get away from the holiday December blues. We just go on a vacation to a remote area. When we were children, we were supposed to join religious celebrations, be a glutton, buy clothes and go shopping. Christmas, Eid, or whatever you call it, is nothing but a time to gain baksheesh, charity and go shopping. A few years ago we read about this Scrooge Club in which the writer wrote that he doesn't spend any money for Christmas and thank goodness for Scrooge. We would like to say something about fasting. There is fasting in different religions. Islam is a tolerant religion. But some people come up and ask "Are you fasting?" and they are not supposed to ask this question. It is no one's business as to what belief system a person follows. Fasting is a way of abstinence. In Islam, sick and elderly people are not supposed to fast. Islam makes provisions.

Estelle Mahnuma, Fraulein M. Chaudhury, Suchitra, M. Shahi
Gulshan 2, Dhaka