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Biman issue

I am a Bangladeshi student studying in Australia and I am very patriotic and passionate about my beloved country Bangladesh. I go through your newspaper every day and have read an article entitled "Foreign airlines take away Biman's 90pc business" by Mr Sharier Khan.

Now I travel around the world four to five times a year and go to Bangladesh at least three times a year. Biman doesn't have any flight to Australia yet, but still if I go to Singapore, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur or Hong Kong and from there go to Dhaka through Biman. It works out a lot cheaper.

I think it's fair enough that Biman is losing its business because their service is not better than our local bus service with corrupt and ill-mannered staff. In July this year I flew from Melbourne to Singapore by Qantas Airways and was supposed to go to Dhaka by Biman and it did not work out. Biman officials told me that the flight was full and in fact it wasn't. At that time I didn't understand why

they lied to me. Then finally I came to Dhaka through Singapore Airlines where I got an excellent treatment. Two weeks later I was going with my family to Kolkata and the flight got cancelled due to weather conditions and we were told about that at 2:00am. I fought for my rights and finally they gave us a below standard hotel. They also refused to give me a single room and asked me to share a room with a stranger. The next morning Biman was supposed to contact us and give us our new flight schedule but they didn't even bother to contact us. We went to the airport and they said all Biman flights are fully booked and it would not be possible to fly in the next 24 hrs. We waited and finally they told us that we can go in the evening flight but when the counter opened they told us that they had an over booking of 12 passengers on a F28 flight. We boarded and then had to wait in the aircraft for another hour because there were at least 7 empty seats and what they did



was call people from the airport and ask them to fly in this flight. It proved that Biman is undoubtedly one of the most corrupt airlines.

With this sort of service how will they get passengers ? Biman has a lot of potential destinations through which they can make a lot of money but

they are so corrupt that it would never happen.
Sajjad Khan
Melbourne, Australia

The concept of morality

The pervasive lawlessness and corruption in the public and private realms of Bangladeshi society generate a lot of lively discussions in newspaper pages, and the concept of morality inevitably comes to the fore. We lament about the lack of it in some segments of the populace, and as firsthand eyewitnesses of living and breathing immorality, we have some idea about what we expect from a moral person. Let us try to expand on that concept -- because not everything we think about a moral person may be part of his/her morality.

For example, a person may be forced to behave in a moral way under fear, or perhaps under mundane environmental pressures such as public humiliation -- but that does not mean that he or she is a moral person.

In that vein we can say that morality is an attribute of a person who does the right thing even when there is no one watching over them.

In the concept of morality there are two components: understanding the idea of right and wrong, and having some sort of spirituality, which tells us to follow the injunction of right and wrong. Without these two components, there can be no morality. And in one way, both components are intertwined. That spirituality, which teaches us to do the right things, also tells us exactly what is the right thing to be done and/or what is the right action to be taken.

Can we be moral if there is no spirituality? Some people might say that their conscience would lead them through the right course of action. But in reality this does not happen. Without firm beliefs or convictions, conscientiousness might work to some extent. But when the stakes are high and temptation is irresistible, the inhibition of conscientiousness disappears like a haystack in a cyclone. In Bangladesh today, all of us would claim to be people of good conscience, but we know the true story of what is happening in practice.

A person cannot be said to be moral until his/her morality is tested. We the expatriates living in the West, like this author, try to congratulate ourselves as moral persons.

But I am not so sure. Our morality is sometimes a very passive morality. The concept of morality involves doing the right thing -- with some positive effort.

Some people think that enforcing the law can restore morality.

That is also a wrong concept. There is a famous saying of the late American civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr. that morality cannot be legislated. Naturally, if it cannot be legislated then law can't enforce it. Only our behaviour can be controlled by law, not our morality.

Religion, and the laws of the land try to codify this concept of right and wrong to benefit humanity as a whole, or maybe just benefit the citizens of a particular country. But until we subscribe to a genuine spirituality, morality will never be part of our lives -- both in the private and public arenas.

Anwarul Islam
Michigan, USA

What is happening?

It is incomprehensible to any civilised society some of the actions of our countrymen.

-- We burn our most important industries, our one and only means of livelihood in the name of demand for higher pay or by instigation of hate-mongers.

-- We burn our university and assault our teachers for causes that have nothing to do with the university or the teachers.

-- We give 14 lives in the name of protesting erratic electric supply. (Interestingly, the leader does not lose anything but profit from reparation)

-- We break indiscriminately hundreds of private cars and shops in the name of protesting undue police force, which happen to fall on us when we try to make chaos and panic.

-- We burn scores of public transports gleefully to create panic and enforce shut down of our normal life.

-- We label people as "enemy of the state/liberation" for not recognising our questionable leaders as avatar.

-- We push the somewhat peaceful country to the brink of civil war to topple an elected government and get to power and do exactly the same or even worse.

How these actions can improve our lives? How destroying senselessly the meagre resources that we have can make us resourceful? Let's not kid anymore. Let's admit we are in the pit because that's where we belong. We have to act as good citizens in order to come out of the pit. The interesting thing to note is that our media seems to accept all of our self-destructive activities as normal reactions.

H. Khan
New York

Rural banking

We, of course, concentrate on making the resources useful to human beings by changing forms that ultimately help to alleviate poverty from our society.

We must not overlook that the number of commercial bank branches in the rural areas is negligible. And this is obstructing the growth of the rural economy.

The matter deserves a closer look.

Mizanur Rahman
Islamic Bank Bangladesh Ltd.
Zonal Office, Chittagong

Keep your home clean

We, the people of Bangladesh, often blame politicians for their lack of sincerity, commitment, abuse of power, and what not. But why do we always take it for granted that it is only a handful of people's duty to improve our nation's standing?

Doesn't this responsibility fall on our shoulders too?

There are a lot of things that you can do to make Bangladesh a better place to live in. For instance, by keeping your city clean you can render valuable service to the nation. Every time I hit the streets, I see people spitting ignorantly on the road or throwing rubbish, empty bottles and cans, etc. I really feel disgusted. Our city is one big home where we live in, why don't we keep it clean? Yes I know, many people point out that if he/she alone does not litter, it will make no difference at all. But why do we don't notice that each and every one of us says the same thing and we all keep littering? No one comes forward.

I think it's high time for us to put the blame on ourselves for certain

things. Let's keep our home clean; every single individual can make a difference. You can make a difference!

M.H. Haider
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

The political stale-mate

We are really getting concerned at the impending catastrophe if no political solution is reached before the political government steps down. The 14 party alliance and newly formed Jukto Front may boycott the polls and go all out to resist the process. Participation of some other parties like JP (Ershad) will not make the victory of the BNP-led alliance acceptable to the people. February 15, 1996 will be repeated with loss of life, resources and working hours. Agitation with renewed vigour will ensue.

Can we afford such political extravaganzas? Definitely no. We can avoid the ugly situation only if our politicians show a little bit of maturity. Parties in power have bigger responsibilities. The opposition should also be amenable to reason. Both the parties should agree to common acceptable reforms and vow to abide by the verdict of the people. We the commoners want peace and order to pursue our daily struggle of survival. In these hard days this is more important to us.

M. Sanaul Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

A losing game!

The big game that's being played for the last 15 (or more in fact) years is where the two players are fighting even after they have been defeated!

I often wonder why people still watch this monotonous game on TV or read about it in newspapers. The only logical answer is, the viewers of this lame game shows and the readers of this lame game articles are blind, deaf and dumb.

Wait! Do you know which game I'm talking about? Come on folks! Can't you figure it out? It's the GREAT lawn tennis game between Sheikh Hasina and Begum Zia.

A big hand for them. They have played courageously without ever being tired. Their virtues are shining so brightly that nobody can miss them. Now is the time, we hand them consolation prizes (since none

has won and both has lost) and send them away for a vacation, relaxation, redemption.

Why? is the BIG question. Don't you see that the ball with which they're playing isn't 'just' a simple hollow tennis ball - but all our lives moulded into a compact sphere.

Aren't you fed up with these two smashing us over the net, below the net and sometimes smashing us absolutely out of the tennis court?

When they come to press conferences, all they can do is to scream peppery comments about each other. They are prepared to criticise bitterly but unprepared to accept criticism (How unfair!). The fact that they are the best players of the blame-game is undeniable. Never a sweet word will you hear from them.

How long will they blow the trumpets of their Father and Husband? Don't they need to prove themselves fit to be seated on the throne? How long will they claim for the hereditary ownership of the throne? They have clearly misunderstood the meaning of democracy and they are trying to replace it with the laws of Kings and Queens of ancient times. We need to remind them that we will judge how they play themselves not how their Father or Husband played.

I pity my poor country, its poorer people and the poorest leaders.

Efad Syed
On-e-mail

Brain drain

Every year a significant number of bright students of high calibre of our country go abroad for higher education but regrettably many of them do not come back even after completion of their higher education. If they returned home, they could serve the nation with their knowledge and expertise.

There is reason why they do not come back home e.g. high-income opportunity, secure social and personal life, job security and some other amenities. It's undoubtedly true that our country cannot afford to provide them sufficient amenities and luxuries compared to their expectation. But at the same time we also need to take into account that those economically developed European or North American

Tourism potential

Have you ever heard someone in the western world saying, "Let's visit this country called Bangladesh, I heard that you can have a really great time there, at least that is what my travel agent told me, I guess it would be a totally different experience." Indeed it is a very rare occasion that you would hear something of this sort. Promotion of tourism is a very important thing for a country to earn foreign exchange and also to attract foreign investments. Malaysia, Singapore and most of the European countries and even our neighbour India have promoted tourism. What have we done?

Staying in the US for my education for the last five years, I have realised that Bangladesh has no international presence in the tourism industry of the world. If I walk into a travel agent in the USA, I find brochures and package deals for all parts of the world, and agents promoting those places and recommending them highly. Once I was visiting STA Travel Agency in my University to plan a trip for my spring break. The sales agent was actually asking me to take a trip to Malaysia instead of anywhere in the USA as, "It would be a good experience and a very pleasant change." Then she was telling me about India and how beautiful it would be to visit the castles and experience the Indian culture while visiting historical places. All of these travel deals included a full package deal with airfare, lodging, and other miscellaneous expenses. They had nicely printed brochures specifying sights of interests and also boasting the culture and the country, which actually encourage one to think twice

before rejecting the offer. It gives a push of curiosity when you start reading about those places. I've been to India, Singapore, Thailand etc. several times, but after reading those brochures and hearing about the deals, there was a pinch of excitement in me and a part of me wanted to experience the feelings portrayed in them. I have a lot of friends in the USA who have visited India, China, Turkey etc. All of them were very much interested and impressed when they came to know about Bangladesh from me being moved by our culture and the experience we can offer. They all want to visit Bangladesh, but sadly due to lack of tourism information and lack of international presence it is hard for anyone to think about visiting a country like Bangladesh.

More private and public sector enterprises and individuals should be encouraged to invest in the tourism sector. We hear about the huge foreign exchange deficit in our country. This can be easily overcome or at least tackled if tourism is promoted, this means more and more foreigners will spend in our country causing a direct influx of foreign exchange. Thus this will also contribute positively towards the balance of payment deficit that exists.

Overall, tourism is a sector that has not really been explored to its full potential.

Samir Ahmed
Purdue University, Krannert School of Management, USA



nations were not so developed at their birth. It is the people of those countries who built up their nations little by little with their diligence, blood and sweat. So who will work to develop our country? Certainly, we ourselves have to come forward to develop our own nation. If the bright people came back home, our country surely would grow faster.

Can't we expect a patriot like Bismillah Khan who refused to go America leaving India or like Dr. Mohammad Zafar Iqbal who came back to Bangladesh from America leaving a lucrative job so as to serve the nation?

These great people them-

selves work for the nation but the more important thing is that their work and words, company and dedication and voice inspire others to work for the nation through pain and pleasure, shine and shower.

We are waiting for the day when the sons of the soil will seek not only their personal interest but also that of the nation.

Md. Munir Rahman
Lecturer in English
Jessore Govt. Mohila College, Jessore

Our identity

This is not a very complicated

issue; our citizenship is Bangladeshi --simple and clear. But our ethnic identity is Bengalee. You can become a Chinese citizen if you are granted the citizenship but you will never be considered a member of the Chinese ethnic group I guess it will be pointless to claim yourself a Chinese (ethnically).

Please try to learn and stop having a tunnel vision and making misleading remarks.

Dr. Ashik
Calgary, Canada



Legendary tennis player Andre Agassi bade goodbye to international tennis after his third round at the US Open-2006. It was a historic moment for the tennis world, for the maestro Agassi left tennis in a fashion that marks his extraordinary potential and love for the game. Spontaneous standing ovations from the crowd in the field and Agassi's emotional outbursts moved the sports lovers at large. It was to an extent unbearable on the part of the audience at court and the ones glued to the TV screen!

Andre Agassi was born on April 29, 1970, in Las Vegas, Nevada, to Mike and Elizabeth Agassi. His father was a native of Iran and his mother American.

Mike Agassi was a Golden Gloves champ who boxed for Iran in the 1948 and 1952 Olympics. Settling in Las Vegas, he became a tennis pro at the Tropicana.

It was his father that instilled the passion for the sports in to his kids and paved the way for such a versatile genius like Agassi.

Agassi's phenomenal emergence was through winning the US and the Wimbledon, when he was as aggressive, fast and accurate as an Arabian horse!

We've seen many great players at play, we've heard of many other greats; but where Agassi stands most apart is his dedication and a true love for the game. Agassi will be living through his fans across the globe. His wife, another legend Steffi Graf deserves much credit for her praise-worthy support.

Rafiqul Islam Rime, Agrabad, Chittagong

Poor healthcare

Since independence the healthcare sector has received enormous amounts of donations from abroad and funds allocated by the government. Unfortunately, all the financial resources have gone down the drain. According to several surveys it is the most mismanaged, inefficient and corruption-ridden sector in the country. You need not dig deep to unravel its ills. Just take a look at the two biggest hospitals in the capital Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (formerly IPGM&R). These have become the last resort for people of low socio-economic status to seek medical advice.

BSMMU was transformed into an autonomous body during the tenure of the Awami League government. This ill-advised decision has turned this institute into a most corrupt and politicised organisation. Professors and doctors of all categories are using it as a tool to further their careers and private practices at the expense of the superior service they were supposed to provide to the

patients as well as students of higher learning. The quality of education is so poor that we have not yet been able to get recognition of our post-graduate degrees from any internationally acclaimed academia. It is even very sad to know that the failure rate in any post-graduate course is appallingly high. The professors are not held accountable for their dismal performance.

BSMMU's staff members have become untouchables! In the past one could replace a professor for his incompetence with a qualified one from another government run hospital, but it is not possible now. I actually got a taste of healthcare in Bangladesh when my brother's cervical lymph nodes were sent to BSMMU's Department of Pathology for histopathology reporting. They had diagnosed it as metastatic carcinoma though in reality it was a case of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma as diagnosed at a reputed hospital in the US. When I got into the department I could sense that it was one of the worst managed departments in the hospital. I had

never seen a more filthy healthcare facility anywhere in the world. The head of the department was on leave for the twenty or so days I tried to see her. It was even a bigger hassle to get the slides. The quality was so poor that I felt ashamed of myself as a Bangladeshi when the Chief of Pathology in the US hospital said that they were not worth putting under the microscope. The only positive aspect of my ordeal was the sincerity with which the student who helped me get the slides in spite of the lengthy bureaucratic obstacle-erected process to get them at my earliest convenience.

Thirty five long years have gone by. So has billions of dollars. But unfortunately there is not a single modern hospital that Bangladesh can boast of. Neither can it boast of health care expertise at par with medical professionals of international repute. Its imperative that joint collaboration in the field of medical education be immediately initiated at the private level to train our future generation of doctors.

Wasim Rajin, On e-mail

