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Lord Buddha's hair



The Bangla daily Prothom Alo of 13 July carried a news item stating that a 19-member Sri Lankan delegation including five cabinet ministers headed by their foreign minister was coming to Bangladesh on 16 July on a three-day visit to take away Lord Buddha's hair which was preserved in a Chittagong Buddhist temple. Ultimately, the hair was handed over to them. The news is incomprehensible, and to say the least

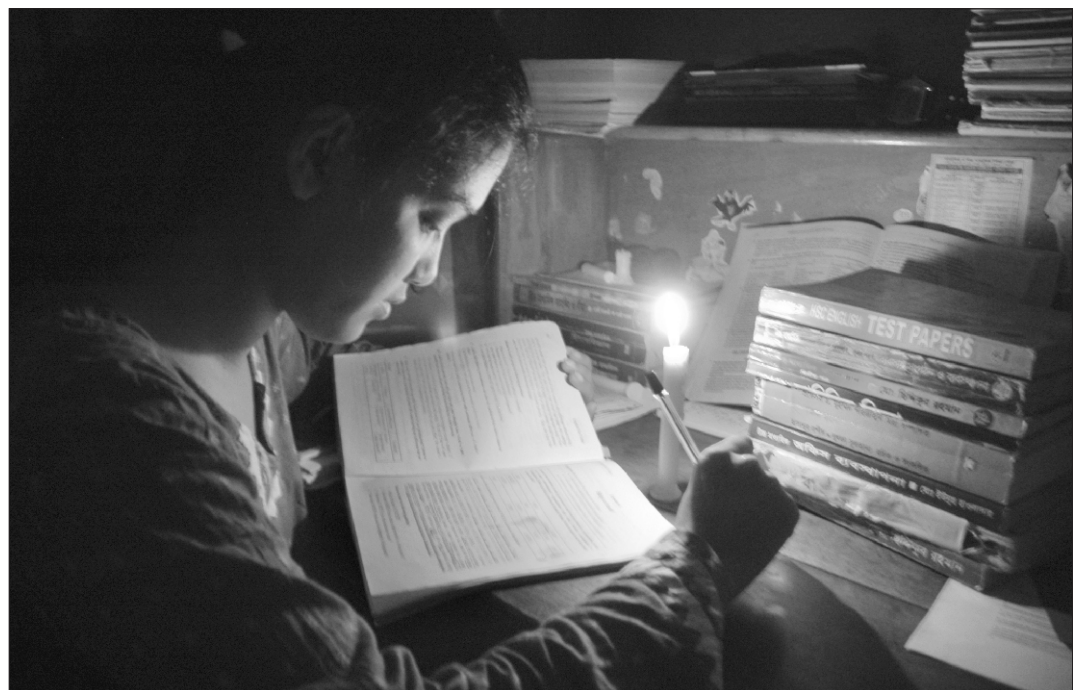
shocking. The hair is our precious heritage. Though majority of this country are Muslims today but there are Buddhists too amongst us. We were Buddhists before Lankans became Buddhists. By all criteria of history, culture and tradition the holy hair belongs to Bangladesh and should remain so.

Alternatively, does it mean that we are incapable of preserving our own heritage? Shall we give away our many black stone Hindu deity figures of ancient times to Nepal, a Hindu kingdom, or India, a secular but predominantly Hindu country for the sake of friendship as is being claimed in this case? Everybody here knows that we do maintain a friendly and warm relationship with them as it is, and we do not have to hand over our precious heritage to convince them further of that relationship without setting a burdensome and painful precedence to develop friendly relations with other countries. Shouldn't

Myanmar, a contiguous Buddhist country would be a more serious candidate for the purpose of keeping such an important and precious Buddhist relic? What about Thailand or Japan? Aren't we interested to promote friendship with them through transfer of whatever worthwhile we have inherited from the past?

Consequently, it is deeply felt that we continue to keep our own heritage, in this case Lord Buddha's hair for our posterity. The Sri Lankans are most welcome to see this and other relics of interest without taking possession of them. They should themselves be friendly enough to suggest that it is much friendlier that such a heritage should better be preserved with the people of Bangladesh. **A citizen**
On e-mail

Power generation



The Finance Adviser, Mirza Azizul Islam, said in his speech that the government had set a target to generate sufficient electricity by the year 2010. The demand for electricity increased but generation didn't increase correspondingly. So, the government has taken up short and

long-term plans. The Adviser said that they have planned to increase power generation over the next three years by 345MW in the first year, 900MW in the second year and 1,050MW in the third year. In the past, the maintenance of those power plants was neglected. The govern-

ment has taken initiatives for the maintenance of those plants. So, I think the caretaker government is really doing a great job for ending load-shedding. **Sabrina Bint Rashid**
Dept. of English
IIU, Chittagong

A good doctor

My daughter had to go through an eye surgery when she was two years old in 2005. After discussing with the child ophthalmologist, Dr. Sorot Wutthiphon, we scheduled the surgery date. She was, probably in her early 40s, not very senior in age. We, the young parents, were very nervous as the operation required full anesthesia. Due to going through extreme anxiety, many questions appeared in our mind. Is the doctor (ophthalmologist) competent enough? Can a baby tolerate full anesthesia? etc.

Thanks to the Internet, we got all the information there to keep our mind away from unwarranted fear. We were amazed when we read about the doctor on the Internet. We found some excerpts of her publications, some interviews with the print media, her profile in the hospital's website and her active participation in discussion forums of child ophthalmologists etc.

One of her messages in a discussion forum gave me a great sense of respect to a doctor which I have never felt so strongly. She wrote about one of her patient's post surgery treatment. She sought suggestions from other ophthalmologists on the message board to find a cost-effective solution for her patient. Part of her message was, "...as you know Thailand is in economic recession, it's hard for the parents to spend the necessary amount. I am looking for any alternate..."

It was great to know that a doctor used the Internet to communicate with other doctors around the world for a better solution back in 1997, the year when a handful of people used the Internet even in the developed countries.

She understood the importance of sharing knowledge via the web in 1997, which was very unusual in our country. I was amazed when I learned a doctor's concern was to reduce expenses of the parents.

Later, I visited many other doctors in Thailand with my family, relatives, and friends from Bangladesh. They truly care for their patients. They examine a

patient as long as necessary. For instance, I visited a famous neurologist here with my relative from Bangladesh and the first visit took more than an hour! The patient has fully recovered after a couple of examinations, some instructions to follow and without a single drop of medicine!

The same patient had visited a few famous doctors in Dhaka before she came here. She complained the doctors had started writing their prescriptions immediately after asking a few questions. Undoubtedly, physicians are skilled in our country. We have adequate medical instruments in some private and public hospitals based in Dhaka.

What we lack is "care".
Faruk Ahmed
Thailand

Paradigm shift

In a comment titled "Paradigm shift" published on July 15, 2007, the author Professor Zaman makes some useful and pertinent points. He raises the issue of preferential treatment accorded to high profile detainees such as Mr. Tarique Rahman or Mr. S.Q. Chowdhury. Yet the point worth remembering is that these detainees are yet to be convicted by a court of law. In the eyes of law they are accused of crimes of high stake and should be treated as such. Their crimes are being investigated and in due course justice will prevail.

The author was, however, a little carried away when he wrote: "Why are the two leaders (AL and BNP) still enjoying the homely comfort and the latitude (as extended by the government) despite a catalogue of grave allegations staring in their face. This is becoming counter-productive to the government." The author ought to be sensitive to the point that you cannot simply throw people behind bars on the basis of the argument that "no one is above law".

The other problem is to paint the two leaders with the same brush. On the basis of allegations both leaders ought to be investigated

and justice should spare none. However, if one fails to separate corruption from crime we are in trouble. From 1991 to 2001 Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina respectively presided over regimes which had many corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and party men who took undue advantages. However, between 2001 and 2006, Begum Khaleda Zia was at the helms of affairs of a "crime syndicate".
H.H. Khondker
On e-mail

Hasina and Khaleda

Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia should leave their posts for the sake of their party. If they leave voluntarily their party might avoid a split.

We see many leaders in other countries resigning from their posts immediately after a scandal. However, with so many corruption charges and failures during their times, our leaders still want to hold on to their positions.

Jony
California, USA

Some questions

Today (16/7/07) on the last page, a picture caught our sight: The Hon'ble adviser or the Health and Family Welfare Ministry examining a child in a Dhaka Medical College Hospital bed with deep sympathy (one can find his affectionate hand over the child's hand). As a physician and guardian of the health system and health of the people of Bangladesh, he has every right to be there. One must also honour and appreciate his endeavour and dedication. He has passed a considerable amount of time beside these unfortunate children despite his busy schedule as the adviser of three ministries (from 12 noon to 200pm). Definitely the families, victims and the physicians treating them are boosted by his gracious presence.

As a physician the question arises in my mind- what he was trying to find in the lungs of a patient with mass hysteria? To the best of our knowledge there is nothing as

such. Moreover, while scanning through the picture, we also find him standing on the left side of the patient. In the examination methodology, as is written the most of the standard medical texts, one must stand on the right side of a patient while examining. In medical colleges, many students fail to score pass marks while adopting this wrong technique during his or her final year exams and had to appear in the exams again in the next session. Now a medical student might ask their teachers: "Sir, why I was punished for this mistake?" As a teacher, he/she would have 'no' answer to the question and the act! Last question: was this an important national event of the health sector that warranted our adviser to pass more than two hours of his peak office period beside these patients?

Dr. Ahmed Badawani
Sylhet, Bangladesh

Disappointing editorial

I have been extremely disappointed with the editorial published in DS on Sheikh Hasina's arrest. It seems your newspaper is very sympathetic to the AL chief and has forgotten all about her past activities. You have quite literally trivialized and dismissed the charges against her. You should have known or acknowledged that corruption during the AL regime would not have occurred without the party chief's consent and if you are under the impression that only a few of the AL politicians are corrupt and Hasina is innocent, then I have nothing to say.

By the way, the CTG has my full support.

Asif Rahman
Canada

Your commentary

I have mixed feelings about your 17 July commentary ("This is no way to strengthen democracy"). I readily agree with your assertion that our military, the 'knights in

shining armour' as they would prefer to be seen, is not a magic potion for the country's mess. But your argument that Sheikh Hasina's arrest, or the probable arrest of Khaleda Zia in the near future, is a threat to democracy is rather infuriating. Equating freedom to plunder and go unchallenged with democratic tenets is not acceptable. Period. There is no dispute that legal proceedings against Hasina for her alleged misdeeds could have proceeded without her being arrested or interned, but I do wonder whether the caretaker government had any option left. By extension of your logic, all those who have so far been arrested, for the inglorious, ingenious and blatant way they have looted the country, should be set free pronto for the sake of democracy!

Let our leaders, if they are leaders at all, come out clean of the accusations and we will then see if they deserved to be voted back to power. Indeed, it is most likely that we will do so; as a nation we seem to have developed a knack for electing people with dubious distinctions!

Meanwhile, I would request you to be a little circumspect. Your observations could be misconstrued by the forces out to create chaos.

Nayem Jafar
New Jersey

Speaker's medical bill

Thanks for the commentary on the Speaker's medical bill. There is no need for me to elaborate on this issue any more when we have heard the Hon. Speaker, the former CAG and also seen your commentary. However, one can note that your commentary has finished short of the inevitable final conclusion that the Hon. Speaker should uphold the dignity of the office of the Speaker of parliament.

Since the political chaos in our country started, I have been pondering on the issue and tried to identify the areas of failure responsible for the present situation in Bangladesh. In my judgment, these are:

a. The political leaders- especially the leadership of the coalition government parties and the main opposition party.

b. Failure of the parliament to make the government accountable- especially when one expects the Speaker to rise above partisan politics and help establish a sound practice of parliamentary democracy.

c. The Ministry of Law and the Parliamentary Affairs had failed in the immediate past to enforce rule of law, but apparently had supported controversial political steps.

d. Independence of the constitutional institution is not only dependent on the law, it must have quality of leadership with strong mind, professional quality and independent decision making capacity, irrespective of any political pressure. One can refer to the resignation of 4 advisers of the former caretaker government. They have set an example of "resignation culture" which is missing in our public service arena.

e. Definition of corruption is basically limited to financial transaction and misuse of powers. "Moral corruption" is not well defined or understood and not also accountable.

One would expect a quick and positive response from the politicians to end the current political crisis.

Areader, On e-mail

Disabled children

According to an estimate, there are about 42 lakh children with either mental or physical or both disabilities. Unfortunately, they are unable to meet the needs for themselves as well as the demands of the society. Thus, it is our duty and responsibility to help them overcome their inability. The government and the citizens are both responsible for their care, treatment, education, employment, and social rehabilitation. According to an estimate of the Centre for Services and Information on Disability in Bangladesh (CSID), only four percent of the children with disability are getting opportunity to go to school. Although they deserve equal human rights and privileges like all other members of the society, they have become the victims of ignorance and intentional child neglect. Even the parents of the retarded children become tired of taking care of and providing services to their children. These children suffer for no fault of their own and depend entirely on people's support.

Despite the availability of healthcare facilities the numbers of physically and mentally disabled children have been increasing worldwide. Therefore, we must make our effort to provide the support and services to our disabled children so that they can overcome the disadvantages and develop and grow normally. How best we can provide these services would of course depend on several factors including the number of such children in a society, the availability of resources, and our humane obligation and interest towards these children.

There are many ways to help these children. In addition to government and NGO efforts, any wealthy and benevolent person can support them by sponsoring one or two children with a little amount of money. We must acknowledge that we need to provide social support and justice to our handicapped children it is our moral duty and national responsibility.

In view of this I am soliciting necessary attention of our social welfare ministry and other relevant organisations.

Nazma Ahmed Kona
Babar Road
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Tigers in trouble

Not a good time for the BD cricket fans! What we have seen from the Tigers recently is an instance of perfect nightmare. Do we actually have anything to praise our juvenile and promising cricketers? It is hard to believe that our young cricketers defeated the mighty Proteus and the strong Indians in their World Cup encounters. Those wins during had given us the impression that Bangladesh are no longer minnows. We remember that a lot of criticism had gone against us and some cricket analysts commented our performance as 'stroke of luck'.

It is obvious that Bangladesh has put a lot of effort and improved their level of performance fairly well. My heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Mr. Dave Whatmore. He made us feel proud and Bangladesh could have been worse than now if he had not been here with us.

I along with all the cricket fans wish Bangladesh a good come-back. We want our cricketers to play well and make us smile.

Md Badiuzzaman Tamal
Student, Jahangirnagar University

Sheikh Hasina's arrest

I am not a fan of Sheikh Hasina or her brand of politics. But I cannot help maintain that the CTG's move is ill advised and erroneous. By no means should Sheikh Hasina be above the law. But while she should be forced to face the full brunt of the law, if she is truly guilty, the apparent perception ought not to be that she is being perse-

wrong about arresting Hasina? A person is innocent until proven guilty and as such, it is the court that should decide if Hasina is guilty or not. If she is guilty then she must pay for her crimes and if she is not then she will certainly walk free. It's as simple as that. Why are some AL supporters making a big issue out of this? Can we



cuted, rather than prosecuted. The hoopla that was created before and after her arrest made her look like the victim of persecution, rather than prosecution.

Now the call to democratize her party while she is in custody will fall on deaf ears. It would also be difficult for the government to justify her arrest in Paltan murder case while the accused in the counter-case involving the same incident is yet scot-free and has even the liberty to make foreign trips at his sweet will.

In fact despite provocation, the CTG should have kept Sheikh Hasina at large and let the due process of law take its course. After all, as alleged, if the government has a strong case against her then it should be enough to bring her career to an end. The CTG's ill advised present move will resurrect her politically by silencing her critics within her own party and will fail to meet the intended purpose of her arrest.

If the Jamaat and similar other parties are not forced to declare the sources of their funding, then the government's move to democratize the two major parties will appear to be ill-intentioned and ostensibly aimed at favouring a particular party of their choosing.

Lutful Haider
Montréal, Canada

What is so wrong about the arrest of Sheikh Hasina? We all believe in justice and the law of the land, don't we? If the police suspect someone, they have the right to arrest and question that person. This is how things should be. And it is a good thing that the police now have the power and the freedom to arrest even untouchable people like Khaleda and Hasina. We should be happy about it. Don't forget that even Tony Blair was questioned by the police recently over the cash-for-honours issue. So what is

remind these people that vandalism, slogans and anarchy will not be tolerated. We are sick of it. Let the court of law decide.

Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

The editorial on the arrest of AL chief Hasina was a nice one and your view is expressed in a balanced and extremely logical way.

Chowdhury Shagana
On e-mail

The treatment meted out to a former prime minister by the government is unfortunate.

I strongly condemn this. Its long term implications would not be good for the country.

Raziul H. Mollah
Overland Park, KS

People are extremely happy to see that the present caretaker government is fighting against corruption and the corrupt.

The CTG has really made the right decision of not showing any mercy to anyone who is involved in corruption.

Reaz, Uttara

The government has made a very bold move and we certainly can expect a backlash.

I request my fellow citizens not to take the law into their own hands.

Let justice take its course.

Eزاز uddin
On e-mail

I was disappointed to read your commentary on the arrest of Sheikh Hasina. I support the action of the caretaker government because this shows that no one is above the law. If a person has been involved in corruption, supported it or have been ambivalent about it while holding an important position in the government of the country, why cannot that person be held accountable for that?

Anisur Rahman
California, USA

Lal Masjid tragedy

There is no doubt that the present political situation in Pakistan is critical. The country has always been a breeding ground of the religious extremists but recently the activities of these fanatics have escalated at an alarming rate. Before things get even worse, the Pakistan government must act against these intruders.

The recent incident at Lal Masjid was one such incident where the Pakistani security forces had to deal firmly with the religious extremists. It is definitely a red-alert situation.

We are simply appalled and perplexed to watch these brutal and heinous crimes by these fanatics. The Pakistan government must do something to rein in those responsible for the Lal Masjid tragedy.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

