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Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right in a free and democratic society. But where do we draw the line? Suppose I am traveling in a plane and the person sitting next to me has been behaving in a strange way and honestly I hate this kind of awkward behaviour. Do I bluntly tell him I hate him for his way of behaving? Or very politely request him to consider my presence next to him? We are all humans and sometimes we do not like a certain person or a group of persons, do we approach them and tell them that we hate them? A racist or an ethnic remark or joke is considered a criminal act in all civilised societies.

Society can accept honest remarks from an innocent child if he says that he does not like a certain individual. This is acceptable from a child because they did not develop a sense of sensitivity and do not mean to hurt people, but this is not acceptable in case of an adult.

M Rafique Uddin
One-mail

English as 2nd state language

In our country, even educated people face difficulty with English. Whereas, neighbouring countries like India and Sri Lanka are doing

better in this area.

We all know, for reasons like job, business and other economic activities, our people now have to compete in the world market and even, to some extent, in local market with the people from other countries. Our deficiency in English obstructs our competitiveness in those fields.

Bengali is our only state language. If English is declared as second state language for the sake of upgrading our competitiveness in the future world, there will be no harm to our mother tongue.

May the academicians, intellectuals and the authorities concerned please consider this proposal?

Imtiaz
Uttara, Dhaka

Unsolicited 'advice'

As usual the visiting dignitary from a western country finding no other issues "advised" the government to open outdoor politics without realising the significance and effect of any such move. While making the 'advice' he appears to have totally ignored the historical steps taken by the administration towards holding of a meaningful election for peaceful transfer of power to an elected government. He seems to be totally oblivious of the fact that the present administration is at the helm of affairs for a

mission with popular support to get rid of a situation created by the corrupt and power hungry politicians who made a mess of the country in every aspect. I do not understand what amusement these western countries (particularly two) including a few of their paper organisations called 'European Union' get by showering unnecessary and unsolicited advice on us as to how to run the government, how to do politics, how to behave with the corrupt and the criminals etc. We are no longer in a position to listen to the so-called 'advice from the West and it is, therefore, high time for them to stop this evil practice.

May I have the privilege of quoting the under noted extract from the famous book 'Wisdom of Mankind' written by Dr. Habib Siddiqui, a Bangladeshi internationally known expert in Six Sigma methodology, now based in Los Angeles.

"The West does not have a conscience, it never had. Hypocrisy had been her trademark. Truly, if hypocrisy is an art, the West has mastered it. As Malcolm X would have said: There is no system more corrupt and more hypocritical than a system that represents itself as the example of freedom, the example of democracy, the example of fraternity and can go all over this earth telling other people how to strengthen their houses, how to

manage their affairs, while their own minorities non-Christians, are denied the basic human rights including democratic rights and are unprotected and routinely discriminated upon."

Anyone having a minimum sense of humanity would wonder what these western countries have been doing by invading the middle eastern countries recently on the false pretext of war on 'terror' by inflicting untold sufferings to the inhabitants unprecedented in the history of mankind; only to serve their political, military and economic lusts. Therefore, the early they shun their hypocrisy, the better for the world.

Mohammad Ataul Hoque
One-mail

Why this anomaly?

We the students of the medicine faculty of Dhaka University are in trouble. DU is closed till 28th Oct.07. But the faculty of medicine is holding examinations in different medical colleges such as, Dhaka Medical College, Mymensingh Medical College on behalf of the University of Dhaka. Due to this lack of coordination we are suffering a lot.

Ho could this happen?

Laila Shamsul
Rowshan Alam
Postgraduate student
Dhaka Medical College, Dhaka

clash with the police. The situation came under control following the intervention by the 'joint forces'.

Many suspect that the issue had been engineered by vested quarters trying to take over part of the Bangladesh apparel market, particularly in the USA. One can easily guess who could be immediate beneficiaries if the move was successful.

Many tend to suspect that some outside forces had engineered it to project the Bangladesh RMG as an unstable sector in the major importing countries and grab the Bangladesh's portion of the market.

August 29, 2007, BBC once again ran a report by British run charity Action Aid on MADE IN BANGLADESH garments. This year, every few days, reports have been aired and published in Britain highlighting the exploitation and misery of Bangladeshi workers. It appears Bangladesh is unique in the field. As a result, consumers have begun to boycott Bangladeshi goods. Some consumers have even demanded that Tesco, Asda and other big supermarkets stop all imports of Bangladeshi goods.

In the United States, the British campaign is having its effects. Students have gone on demonstrations demanding ban on Bangladeshi goods. Some 12 students were arrested at one demo. Italy and other European nations are slowly removing production out of Bangladesh into Sri Lanka, India, Cambodia and Vietnam. Of course, those nations are not free of abuse of workers! Propaganda seems to be cleverly directed at Bangladesh.

Action Aid and War Against Want-two charities most active against Bangladesh trade-even use people with Bengali heritage in their campaign. Fact remains people of Bangladesh origin are amongst the most naive, and easily manipulated.

The problem for Bangladeshi industries is that too often the industrialists themselves have been too busy playing politics or being led by political agendas to concentrate on developing the made in Bangladesh brand. The industry associations and Bangladesh embassies have weak intelligence on the work of anti-Bangladesh propagandists.

It is important for the industry and the government to spend at least a \$100 million per year on PR and lobbying as a matter of priority. If such sacrifices are not made the country will face a calamity. By the way PR means publishing positive books on the country and its culture; promoting music, dance, drama, arts and festivals in Bangladesh; developing excellent websites.

These are the indirect methods of promoting MADE IN BANGLADESH goods and services. Also, rather than denying that rouges exist, as they do in all parts of the world, invite people on tourism trail to come to textiles factories and experience the environment. All the above may be ways of generating further revenue (money is a dirty word in Bangladesh for some reason) and employment in the country, as well as giving the country a positive and forward looking image.

Sayed Rahman
Founder, BANGLAIT

Rejoinder by Reaz Rahman

This has reference to the letter of Mr. Reaz Rahman published in your daily of 24 Sept'07. Mr. Rahman's rejoinder to the observations made by Mr. K.M. Shehabuddin in his book "There and back again" and contained in

Political situation in Myanmar

Listening to the media news one gets the impression that the political situation is getting worse in Myanmar. Popular agitation is getting intensified and the military junta is taking the hard line to crash the pro-democracy movement. We hope and pray that good sense will prevail and the military rulers will accept the verdict of the people and the international community and open the path to democracy by peaceful means.

We understand that China and India can exert their influence on the military junta to choose the path of peace and democracy. It would be unfair to bypass this issue on the pretext of not interfering with the "internal affairs" of the country. Action is needed to help achieve pro-people results.

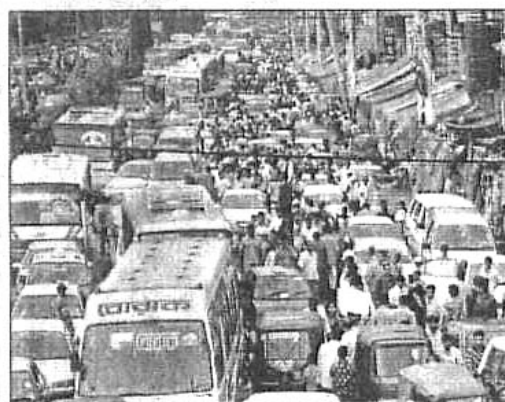
Of late, the Bangladesh government has extended



its hands of friendship with Myanmar. There is nothing wrong in that. But one has to consider the need of

Myanmar. We shall appreciate if our government can demonstrate its support for democracy in Burma, and

maintain low profile on other issues already on their agenda. A reader, One-mail



Month of Ramadan

Ramadan is the month of self restraint and perseverance and these words have become clichés due to the improper use of this month by us.

During this month, the traffic goes wild and people start acting insane. People do not show any respect to the traffic lights and start driving carelessly, causing suffocating traffic problems.

Businessmen have used this month as a source of high income by raising the prices of essentials.

Look at other countries, during Christmas sales are seen everywhere so that people can buy many things and celebrate the occasion. In India, you see sales going up during the month of Puja and other festivals.

But in our country this has become a month of suffering, due to the immoral intention of some people which affects everybody.

In the mosques you will see the devotees, but are they really following the teachings of Islam? Fasting is associated with all your conducts!

Munna Hasib
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Patience needed

Nowadays we are almost forgetting the meaning of the holy month of Ramadan and paying least attention to its significance. A few days ago, I was out in the Paribag road, a terrific traffic jam was there. Suddenly, I heard some disgusting slang in Bengali and looked around. Two rickshaw pullers and their passengers, who seemed to be educated, were exchanging words. People around them were just enjoying the matter, and no one bothered to stop them.

Ramadan is the month of patience and self control, so can't we just practise these things in our daily life, rather than just saying them?

Tanjila Rahman
Shantibag Masjid Road
Dhaka

Circuit house

During the British rule circuit houses were established as temporary abode of visiting government officials. Private visitors were also allowed to stay paying rent when

the rooms were available. Executive engineers or his nominated officer maintained the house and administered the same as per rules. This practice is still there in India perhaps also in Pakistan. As a foreigner I had the opportunity to use circuit house facility in India.

But in the recent past district administrations took up the management of the circuit houses. D.C. or on his behalf N.D.C. administers the management. During political regime these circuit houses are used as the political hub of ministers and MPs. Deputy commissioners under pressure or with pleasure provide all sorts of facilities for the ruling elite. Most of the expenditures are borne from the L.R. funds, a public fund DCs arrange locally to meet local exigencies, of course in public interest. This extra burden hampers the efficiency of the District administration and many a time creates embarrassing situations for them. Most of the ministers and MPs hardly care to pay the minimum expenses incurred during their stay.

So, we urge upon the caretaker

government to delink circuit houses from district administration. P.W.D. as in the past should maintain the house and permanent staffs should take care of guests as per rules set by the government. Political leaders (including ministers and MPs) those who have own residences in the district should not be allowed to use the house or at least they should be barred from holding political meetings/parties in circuit house. These should be strictly used for administrative purpose only. Private persons of status should also be allowed to use the facilities on availability.

M. Sanaul Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

Garments industry

Yet another violent incident rocked the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DPEZ) at Savar, leading to suspension of operations in all units there for a couple of hours.

Garment workers enraged by a rumour about the 'killing' of one of their fellow worker ransacked their factory and engaged in a fierce

the review by Syed Badrul Ahsan is not at all convincing. Many Bengali diplomats imbued with the spirit of liberation declared their allegiance to the Bangladesh government in exile even in much more hostile circumstances. Being stationed in a country sympathetic to the liberation war, he could have easily flown to any place in the world, rather than joining the bandwagon for Pakistan on the closure of the office of the High Commissioner for Pakistan in Delhi.

He wrote in his letter that on his return to Pakistan in October '71 he immediately exercised his option for Bangladesh. I don't know what he intends to mean by the word "immediately" as options were sought from the stranded Bengalees by the government of Pakistan sometime in the middle of 1972.

The decision to cross the border trusting the hospitality of the Indian embassy in Kabul sometime in the last week of January or first week of February '73 is just another example of opportunism resorted to by the individuals who placed career above everything else. As far as I know, he was a dedicated junior diplomat for Pakistan.

Rezaul Karim
Malibagh Dhaka

An appeal

We are living at Darus Salam area which is located on the southern side of Mirpur Road in between Kallyanpur and Gabtali. We have only one 15 feet wide road in a place where at least twenty thousand people live. In 2002 i.e. after takeover by this present city corporation management, some house owners started to occupy this road by illegal construction, setting up vegetable shops, fish shops, fruit shops etc. Lots of correspondences were made toward the PM Office, DCC office, RAJUK office, but things did not change.

The authorities concerned are requested to look into the matter immediately.

Rezwana Rahman
Darus Salam, Mirpur, Dhaka

Airport issue

We are all concerned about the high-rise buildings built with lot of money. I wonder why we do not think of the present location of the airport itself and how long it will serve the national interest. Small countries around are building more international airports to serve the national interests and we are doing all sorts of research with one airport. I understand there is plenty of low land on the northern side of the present airport.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh could verify how much land is available. If available, the land could be developed for extending the runway towards the northern side. This may help us to avoid the problem of removing the top floors of high-rise buildings for the time being. At the same time, we must think of building a new airport at a suitable place as Dhaka city will engulf Joydevpur and Savar areas very soon. We need a new airport.

Gp Capt M M Khairuzzaman
(retd.)
One-mail

Pakistan scene

Lawyers are confronting the powers to be? While hailing the decision of the legal fraternity to field Justice (Retd.) Wajihuddin Ahmad as presidential candidate, a judge of an impeccable character, the Empower Pakistan Forum has termed it as a good omen for the country. Today's decision to field Justice (Retd.) Wajihuddin Ahmad as presidential candidate is a very laudable one keeping in view that

Fire hazard in CNG vehicles

The CNG bus fire at Mohakhali and the vivid picture (Sept.26) says it all. Naturally, the quality of CNG conversion kit and the retrofit workmanship is 'suspect' as the prime reason for the dangerous fire. Such incidents will greatly lower confidence in CNG public vehicles (buses & taxis) to a great extent.

The statement of the state-run BRP's engineer about poor quality of cylinders and the CNG kit may be true. However, the standard of workmanship in the retrofit-fitting of the CNG conversion kit needs to be addressed. Shoddy work could lead to leakage of natural gas, forming a combustible mixture with air resulting in ignition from stray spark of the ignition system. The ignition set up of the vehicle should be in top order; another aspect that needs to be examined and rectified during the retrofit.

I would recommend that the insurance companies join together to set up a team of experts to fulltime supervise inspected and approved conversion workshops. This will insure testing and approval of conversion kit materials including the cylinder, the standard of workmanships and proper testing after the retrofit. They may allow a small rebate

on insurance premiums if the conversion is done and certified by their experts at the recognised and approved workshops. For vehicles converted elsewhere the insurers can add a stiff surcharge to the premium. This will gradually bring the system to reasonable order, and decrease the frequency of such incidents; many of which go unreported and unknown to the travelling public!

This method is adopted during building of ocean-going ships by Lloyds and other maritime insurers. Their inspectors test and oversee all aspects of materials, component manufacture, hull and structural plates and various other equipment fitted to the vessel. All workmanship and static and sea trials of the vessel is done under their supervision prior to approving the vessel for regular sailing.

The undersigned was involved in this testing procedure of Lloyds when manufacturing shipbuilding grade plates in Chittagong Steel Mills in the seventies. A similar approach in the CNG retrofitting work will ensure the quality and safety of the vehicles. This logical approach needs to be adopted for ensuring the safety of passenger carrying vehicles, the earlier the better.

S.A. Mansoor
Retired engineer, Dhaka

Rivers drying up

About thirty or forty years ago most of the rivers of Bangladesh or Bengal basin were in full stream and they never dried up even in the dry season. But what is happening now? Except the rainy season, most of the rivers become dry or almost dry; some are spotted with many 'chars'. Once upon a time the rivers which now are almost dry were flowing with big vessels, cargoes and even ships. Will those days come

again? We should reveal the causes behind this. When discussion takes place about this issue, most of our politicians blame the Farakka Barrage and lack of dredging activities. But the causes need further elaboration. Yes, Farakka is one of the main causes but it is not the whole truth. And another thing is lack of dredging. But dredging technology came to us not long ago. Then how hundreds and thousand of rivers of our

country flowed smoothly without dredging in the past? So it is totally foolish to identify lack of dredging as the main reason behind the rivers getting dried up.

There are many other reasons and most of them have been created by us, not by others. For example, construction of sluice-gates is obstructing the normal flow of rivers.

Abdur Rahim
One-mail

Twenty20 World Cup

The study reveals that the whites, apart from the ones who have been in the action ever since cricket has been introduced, are obviously less interested in cricket as they think it consumes much time in comparison to other most fabulous and popular games, football for example. However, having said that, cricket has been phenomenal, sensational and most importantly a stylish form of sport to those who love and play cricket. The emergence of cricket within Asia has been overwhelming over the few decades. There was a time when only Test cricket was in practice. The ICC introduced ODI and this format of cricket became very popular.

Md Badiuzzaman Tamal
Mass Consultants, Dhaka

