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"My country"

The other day a close friend of mine was lamenting on the state of the mind of our countrymen, and revealed to me some of his inner thoughts. I pass it along to the readers with the benevolent presumption that it might lead to a solo session on reflections--a dialogue with the self. This friend, whom I would call Kamal, has been working for many years overseas on contract, holding a high post in an international organisation. One day he announced that he would be returning to his motherland Bangladesh on the expiry of his contract sometime this year, and enjoy his double retirement. Almost all the Bengali residents in the city asked him the same question: why was he going back to his country, and why he would not try to get domiciled in that country and remain there. After some time, Kamal got bored with the question, and adopted a cryptic reply: "My country, good or bad". The second most popular query was that surely he was not going to lead a retired life; and they were curious to know what he wanted to do after retirement. "Nothing," Kamal snapped. "Do you know the art of doing nothing?" Some were shocked, some did not believe him, while some others did not give him the benefit of doubt. Kamal came to me for solace, and gave me a bit of his mind, because others would not and did not understand his philosophy. "What had happened to the nation?" He thundered in frustration. If well to do citizens cultivated this type of attitude, who would lead the society? He referred to the professionals holding posh jobs overseas, who were only concerned with their own lives. Enough is never enough. The curve in the graph must always be rising even with one foot in the grave. Even at the top, there is no such thing as a horizontal curve.

Developing countries need rising curves; and it becomes a motto of private and personal life. Spiritually, avariciousness, and wants and desires have reached the dimensions of a bottomless basket (remember Kissinger?). Gratitude to the Almighty is forgotten in the chase of Mammon. The tentacles of materialism have gripped a hundred million souls. There appeared to be no escape from the vicious circle. He quoted the great saint of Baghdad. Be satisfied with your present station, and seek not a change, because you do not know what is good for you. Be patient, and seek the blessings of the Lord: He is the most merciful and compassionate. Kamal moaned on the erosion and lack of faith in one's own self. He was very up-to-date with his reasoning. Look what happened to Eastern Europe suddenly and in a few months. Communism's godlessness could not hold for more than two generations. He stressed great spiritual significance to this historic change, and called for self analysis. I tried to bring him down to earth with the observation that the pattern of thinking in the developing countries is similar to the have-not mentality. The negative attitude towards life was due to frustration and lack of security. The sharpness of hunger blunts the conscience. Its effects are far reaching. The principles are eroded, the morality is compromised, moral courage disappears, and the willingness to suffer for principles evaporates. Temptation becomes irresistible. Therefore the have-nots cannot rule; because they are not accustomed to money and power. First self, then the party, then the country. "Tell me," I asked Kamal, "how to develop the feel for the country? You say sympathy is not enough. Criticism is a negative virtue. Analysis will not solve the problems. The leaders are not up to the

mark. There are double standards of effort, the list is endless and not at all secret. "Let me pose a counter question" Kamal retorted. Why nobody talks about moral values? Why the Planning Commission has not gone in for a moral rearmament programme? The majority of the experts in this august body are economists? Where are the 5-year and 2-year perspective plans for the development of the Bengali language? Why the focus on the issue is limited to one day in the year-- 21st February? I interrupted him. "We were talking about 'my country, good or bad'. We cannot discuss every subject in one evening," Kamal was unstoppable. "I am not worried. I am not alone. Coming back to the issue, let me remind you that the light from a small candle can remove all the darkness in a room; but no amount of darkness can remove the light of a single candle I mean you; if you go back to your country,"

AMawaz
Dhaka

Private medical colleges

In the last few weeks, news was published in different newspapers accusing the private medical colleges of the country. This news created confusion, depression and frustration not only among the students, teachers and staff of the colleges but also among the guardians.

Considering the huge population of this country and their medical needs, the Bangladesh government was supposed to promote at least 64 government Medical Colleges and Hospitals in all the 64 districts, but this was not given priority by the government. To reduce the severe scarcity of doctors, some organisations and foundations have taken initiatives to set up some private medical colleges. We must congratulate

these organisations, foundations and trusts for their philanthropic initiative.

Khawja Yunus Ali Medical College of Enayetpur, Sirajganj, popularly known as KYAMC, is the only private medical college in the entire Rajshahi Division which possesses its own complete campus comparable with the medical colleges of advanced countries. I had the opportunity to work in some of the renowned medical colleges of North America, Europe and Asia. Considering the facilities available in those western medical colleges, I must say that KYAMC possesses rich laboratories, equipments, buildings, etc. Not only the people of Rajshahi Division but also the whole country should be proud that we have such a rich medical hospital and college. I have seen that this medical college possesses most modern equipments for cancer treatment and cardiac problem management.

I had the opportunity also to see the chronological growth and development of Dhaka Medical College and Rajshahi Medical College since 1960. I can remember what the facilities and infrastructure of these medical colleges were at the initial stage. Considering those facilities, I must say that KYAMC has already had a better start.

This year a number of young people have passed the HSC examinations. I am sure our public universities and medical colleges will not be able to accommodate them. Then where will these young people go if there is no private medical college or university?

My request to the authorities: remain careful so that your decisions do not create panic among the entrepreneurs, rather help them overcome the barriers. Anwarul Hasan Sufi, Ph.D
Rajshahi University

Two big festivals



This year Eid and Puja came along together creating a mood of festivity and joy among the people of Bangladesh. It was really beautiful to see the communal harmony between the Hindus and Muslims.

They have celebrated these two occasions together. And, most importantly, the main purpose of Eid and Puja is to be happy and make others happy too.

But the poor in our society cannot

always share the joy of Eid and Puja.

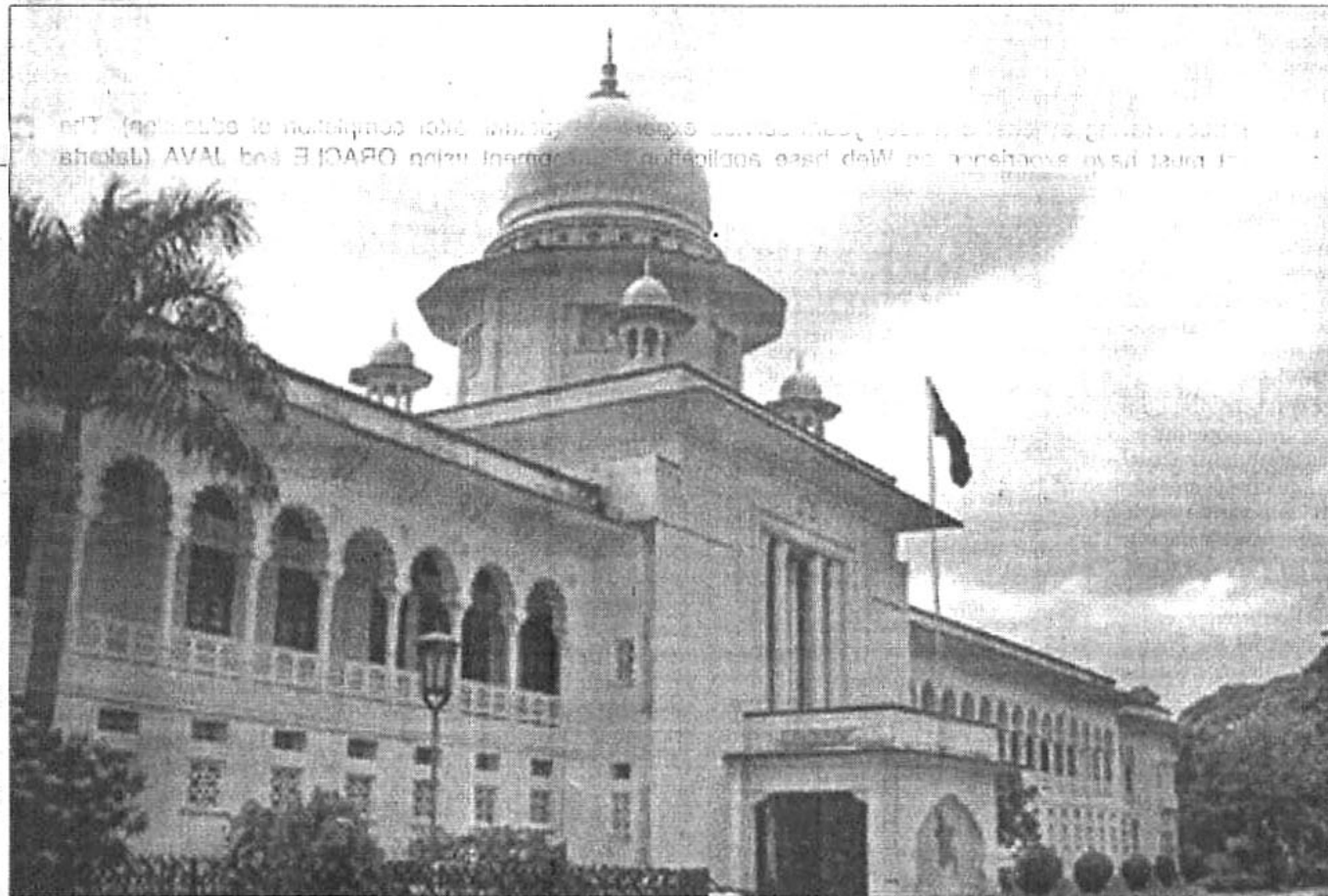
It is time we addressed the issue.

Shatabdi Biswas
Officers' Quarter
RPATC, Park Avenue
Rajshahi



PHOTO: AFP

Separation of judiciary



Separation of the judiciary from the executive is a long-standing demand of the people of this country. It will definitely help in establishing the rule of law and containing corruption. Its implementation is already long overdue. British merchants mingled the judiciary with the administration with a view to exploiting people of this land and painfully the system is still on. So immediate separation of judiciary is a must for the greater interest of the nation.

True, the task is an uphill one but its implementation cannot be left to the vagaries of unpatriotic and mischievous political leaders. Although there is immense public support for implementation of this landmark decision, there is no dearth of opposition from the coteries of vested interest, who in the past left no stone unturned to foil this good attempt. Already, to the utter surprise of the general masses, a pretext has been put forward again in the name of extension of time for review of imple-

mentation of separation of judiciary.

I, as a commoner, would like to urge upon the present popular CTG not to allow any delay in its implementation. If it is left for future political governments, it will never see daylight. We saw how the political governments played hocus-pocus with the people for the last thirty-six years over the issue of separation of judiciary.

Tozmit Haque
Bogra

Road in bad shape

The largest portion of northern Dhaka is situated on the eastern side of Dhaka-North Bengal Road; the area is known as Uttar Khan & Dakshin Khan (now declared as two separate thanas) covering an area of about 40/50 square kilometers. The road along which the people of this area mainly move is called Shah Kabir Mazar Road, in short Mazar Road. It starts from the Azampur Rail Gate of Uttara Model Town, Sector No. 4 and extends eastward about 10/12 km to the Balu River. The area has already turned into one of the biggest residential habitats of Dhaka city. On the other side of the river, Kaligonj and Rugonj thanas are situated. Most of the people of these two thanas cross the river and come to the city along this road by rickshaw, bus, baby-taxi, tempo etc. and on foot.

But the condition of this road is beyond description. Only the sufferers know how much difficulty they are facing every day. The road is very narrow--about 20/25 feet in

width. Besides, at some places it has been further narrowed by buildings, houses, shops etc. on or beside the road.

Accidents occur every now and then. There is always jam on the road which is time-consuming and most troublesome. Sometimes, it takes one hour or more to pass one kilometre. Moreover, the situation worsens during the rainy season. The road is totally unfit for use. Will the authorities concerned look into the matter?

Md. Nurul Amin
Uttara, Dhaka

Unnecessary expenditures

We are regularly paying a large amount of money to the government exchequer in the form of taxes and fees levied on our income, savings, investments and expenses. We do not want our contribution from the hard-earned money to be mis-spent by the government agencies, as before.

Recently, we observed that the

government has decided to procure 150 Pajaro Jeeps, costing Tk. 24 lakh each for the UNOs. We wonder, why it is necessary to buy such expensive transports for their use? The command area of these officials within an upazila is very small. It hardly exceeds eight miles radius. Use of telephone and public transport services are available to them. They can very well use by-cycles instead, to undertake official functions properly and that will be more economical and effective.

We can cite many such expenditures, still continuing within the government as legacy of past regimes. Such as, iftar parties, occasional visits abroad, unproductive project expenditures and outlays, unnecessary official meetings and functions, random use of public security guards, use of government transports and other services for private purposes etc. The list can be long and these expenses are beyond any financial norms and prudence. It only increases budget deficiency and money circulation without corre-

sponding increase in financial potentiality of the country.

Time has already come to call a halt on such useless expenditures. We should have done this much earlier. The administration needs to be careful about such unnecessary expenditures from the government coffers. It needs to ensure an effective expenditure control policy outline from the highest level to make better use of our limited financial resource. If this is not done our GDP growth will remain slow and inadequate, in spite of the present thrust on mobilisation of internal resources. People will be giving higher taxes without any resultant benefit.

Azmal Hossain
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

A good doctor

Prof. SH Advani, consultant oncologist, is a renowned cancer specialist not only of India, but of this sub-continent. Like many others he was known to me by his name. In last July, I went to Mumbai with a patient who was to

meet Dr Advani for treatment. Dr Advani lost strength of both of his legs after he was attacked by polio in his childhood. He moves in a wheelchair. He comes to Jaslok Hospital, one of the best in Mumbai, in the afternoon.

After he reached the hospital premises, his wheelchair was pushed by his assistant who follow him wherever he goes. While going to his chamber he had to pass before the patients who were waiting for him. While he moved past them, all the patients stood up to show respect to him. In return he waived his hand with a smiling face.

In the morning, a new patient has to report to a doctor who writes down the history of his/her disease and gives it to the patient in a file which has to be shown to Dr. Advani.

Dr Advani first reads the report then he talks with the patient. He has great sense. What he says at the first instance is proved to be true when he finally receives all the reports. When all the reports are handed over to him, he quickly, but not hurriedly, reads all the reports. With a smiling face he says to the patient, "You are alright"! He did not press the calling bell until the patient left his chamber.

In Dhaka, after an operation on the patient, test reports of the two laboratories were different. So, the doctor reluctantly advised the patient to go to Mumbai and see Dr Advani.

Different test arrangements were highly modern and dependable. If these were not so dependable, the doctors of Mumbai would not be so famous.

We contacted Dr. Advani at his residence. We requested him to call us as the first patient, so that we could leave Bombay on Monday evening. He patiently listened and asked us as to why we did not phone him directly. He however came to his chamber in time and called us as the first patient.

Here in Dhaka, normally a specialist doctor does not give his mobile number to the patients. At the time of leaving Dr Advani's chamber, I paid my respect to him by saying, "You are not only a great doctor, but a great man." He folded his hands and bowed down towards me.

K.M. Hasan
Retd. professor
Govt. college

Congratulations!

My heartiest congratulation goes to Bangladeshi Scientist Abul Hussam on his achievement of being recognised as a "hero" of the environment in the Oct-29 issue of TIME magazine. His SONO filter which costs \$35, is said to remove 98 percent of arsenic content in water and hence it is a filter which is capable of saving the lives of 137 million people around the world who use arsenic-contaminated water.

The harm which arsenic can cause is known to us all. Abul Hussam deserves praise for his hard work, determination and years of research--all for the sake of creating a filter capable of destroying arsenic. In our country, arsenic contamination of ground-water has led to a massive epidemic of arsenic poisoning and only our concerted efforts can help us to fight this battle against arsenic. He has indeed made us proud and it is men like him that our country needs if we are to prevent the poor people living in the villages from drinking arsenic contaminated water.

Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Appeal for help

Rafiqul Islam has been struggling to earn a livelihood with both of his legs injured in a road accident. Rafiqul studied up to class-nine at the Sara Marwari High School at Ishurdi, Pabna. But poverty forced him to drop out of school and come to Dhaka to work for a livelihood. At Dhaka, he started working as a helper of a truck. But cruel fate intervened, when in Comilla another truck collided head-on with Rafiqul's truck. In the accident both of his legs were crushed. To save his legs, he sold his arable lands to go to the Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital, Madras, India, where he was treated by Dr Shyamal Chitta Ranjan and Dr Isaac Xavier. They operated five times on Rafiqul's legs.

As a result Rafiqul could somehow walk around. But the doctors say that to be able to walk normally three more operations are needed. For these operations another three lakh taka is required. At present Rafiqul's legs have become infected. If the operations are not performed immediately, the legs will have to be amputated, the doctors have warned. Rafiqul is unable to raise this amount. He has appealed to the generous, kindhearted and affluent of our society to assist him for the remaining operations, after which he can again work normally.

Financial assistance can be sent to Agrani Bank, New Eskaton Branch, Savings Account No 34120544.
A friend, Dhaka

US and democracy

When we look into the US State Department policy on Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Myanmar (Burma) we feel astonished, stultified, worried and shocked.

Why is the US blindly supporting, giving military and

economic aid to Israel and denying democracy, human rights and freedom to the people of Palestine for the last 60 years?

Why has the US invaded and occupied Afghanistan and Iraq?

Why is it shedding crocodile's tears for Myanmar?

Would the UNO, US State Department and the strategic analysts kindly answer the above questions?

OH Kabir
Wari, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP