

Persistent unrest in RMG sector

Setup a body for on-the-spot redress

THIS is for the umpteenth time in recent months that the garment workers enraged by default on payment by the factory owners took to the street, blocked the traffic and vandalised vehicles. All these were topped off by the police roughing them up, including women workers. Just the venue changed -- it was Shawrapara on Sunday.

What defies comprehension is the perennial nature of the problem. When the tripartite agreement had been reached at the fag-end of the BNP-led coalition government providing for the minimum salary and other benefits for the workers, one had thought that the issue stood resolved. But that was not to be; several factory owners reneged on the agreement and grievances over non-payment of dues and maltreatment of workers would surface again and again subsequently.

This way productivity suffers, contractual obligations as to the timing of delivery of consignments are not complied with. In the post-MFA period, when sheltered markets are no longer in vogue and the RMG market has become a field for fierce open competition, the buyers are quick to switch market choices. No wonder, before this winter, Bangladesh was faced with a series of order cancellations. We cannot afford this anymore bearing in mind the fact that the garment sector fetches 70 percent of our export earnings.

Now things are looking up in terms of import orders as winter has taken hold in the west and that is more the reason why we should find appropriate solutions to the interminable eruptions of labour agitation.

We suggest that some kind of a roving body in the nature of a mobile court be formed with representatives from the textile ministry, labour ministry and BGMEA headed by a judge with the power to redress legitimate demands of the workers on the spot, or very quickly. Such a body doing justice to both the poor workers and owners (who are genuinely in financial trouble) will gain the trust of workers and prevent the latter from going for wildcat agitation or industrial action.

Of course, the longer term agenda cannot be abandoned. The root cause of the trouble having to do with large profits made by owners vis-à-vis poor salary structure and terms and conditions of service is seldom looked into, far less addressed on a durable basis. The perception among the workers that they are being exploited, needs to be removed by a set of concrete confidence building measures leading to enhancement of service security and salary adjustments compatible with inflation rates.

Child in jail

Ablot on the legal system

THE sad spectacle of a nine-year old victim of rape being in prison for six months, as reported by the daily Prothom Alo, is a harsh reminder of the helplessness of the most vulnerable group in society -- the ultra poor women and children. The girl's unbearable agony has been compounded by the legal process which finally landed her in jail in the name of safe custody.

This is another case of a little girl falling victim to a barbaric crime and wrongful confinement which should be taken up suo moto by the judiciary and the girl set free immediately.

It really sounds ironical that the girl had to be kept in custody when she needed great care and psychological support from her family, after the highly traumatic experience, or a girl of that age should have been in a shelter home. Besides, one would expect only the rapist to end up in jail, not the victim.

The girl was spotted in jail by the Deputy Commissioner of Kishoreganj, which we believe was purely fortuitous. So, the disturbing question as to how many such girls or similar victims of ghastly crimes may be languishing in jail, or failing to get justice, arises for very cogent reasons. It is also not clear, as reported, why the Deputy Commissioner couldn't do anything on his own and had to request a human rights activist to come to the rescue of the girl.

The government officials concerned could only say that they were following the rules, though the rules do not permit keeping a child in jail. Even if it is argued that their intention was not bad, it is obvious that the ill-fated girl couldn't receive sympathy from the people who were supposed to mete out justice to her.

Incidents like this can only bring disgrace to society. It is a terrible moral burden on us to prove that there still exists any system to ensure social security of children, especially those grappling with grinding poverty. The NGOs which work in this field can provide shelter to this hapless girl. The social welfare ministry could take the girl under their wings. Safeguarding the rights of children should be a mission, and not merely a slogan.

Musing on the ensuing election



SHAHNOOR WAHID

IN the rural Bengal, when high tide comes in rivers, boatmen get up from their sleep, start to holler on top of their voice at one another, pull up the anchor, untie their boats and begin to row with all their might to reach the destination. No more snoozing in a low tide. It's time for work. Row, row, row. Come election time and you see similar activities ensuing in various political camps across the country. Come election time you see professional politicians and seasonal supporters dusting their campaign attire and polishing their campaign boots.

Yes, there is the conspicuous smell of election in the air of

SENSE & INSENSIBILITY

But will it be the same this year? Shall we see jet black complexioned black- money holders going to the rural areas in large jeeps spreading dust on their ancestors faces to "beg" for their votes? That's begging up front but "threat" once the camera is gone. Will known smugglers go again to the rural areas wearing snow-white pajama and kurta to hide the blackness of their souls to beg for votes? Will drunks, bank defaulters, liars, grave diggers and women repressors in the cities and towns knock on your door begging for your votes?

Golden Bengal at the moment and politicians have begun to smell it, sniff it rather, with their sharp and sensitive noses. The smile is coming back on their faces. Khandaker Selwar is fully awake now. He does not look sleepy anymore. And last time he was on camera he had a clean kurta on. Good for him and his supporters. From various corners and cracks of Golden Bengal, others are also beginning to emerge, looking frequently over their shoulders. No. Thank God, no olive colour vehicle around...

With the hint of election, politicians are pulling up the anchor and looking forward to hitting the

campaign trail the moment ban on political activities and emergency will be lifted. Politics brings forth such flurry of activities in the quiet countryside. It turns out to be the biggest carnival every five years, and a time to delve in brawls and gunfights with your opponents.

Election is the time when big money, in terms of crores, flies in the air in towns and sleepy villages of this poor country, where more than fifty percent of the people live below the poverty line, with the rest being in no better shape. Full stomach or half stomach; young men or women, old or adolescent, they all remain

fully involved in the seasonal game forgetting their individual profession. Fishermen leave their fishing nets behind; farmers forget to water the seedbeds; milkmen forget to milk their cows and teachers do not attend primary schools. Why? Because unlimited amount of money, in cash, comes in the darkness of night.

Come election time people get infected by the electioneering malady, like the seasonal flu. It gets bad to worse as the polling date begins to draw nearer. Friends take up arms against childhood friends. Students throw stones at their own teach-

ers. Wives connive against their husbands. Everything goes during election. You can crack open the skull of the workers of another political party and the thanawallas will not entertain any complaint. It's election time baba, forget it. Murders and breaking of limbs are only part of election. What do you expect...a peaceful congregation like you see in Eid jamaat?

Come election time and printing presswalls and graphic designers begin to polish their machines and computers. They sit in the front room to welcome any stranger, lest he or she turns out to be a mighty minister within three months. Known political leaders will come to them with horrendous looking photographs and ask the graphics expert to make them look handsome. Good Lord! Then the printing presswalla will have to print hundreds of posters from that photograph. The presswalla will get a 20 percent down payment to do the job and the rest to be given after delivery. He will never get the money.

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year? Shall we see jet black complexioned black- money holders going to the rural areas in large jeeps spreading dust on their ancestors faces to "beg" for their votes? That's begging up front but "threat" once the camera is gone. Will known smugglers go again to the rural areas wearing snow-white pajama and kurta to hide the blackness of their souls to beg for votes? Will drunks, bank defaulters, liars, grave diggers and women repressors in the cities and towns knock on your door begging for your votes?

There is a likelihood that thing will not be the same this year. Things must not be the same, if we believe in upholding the spirit of democracy and the sanctity of the democratic institutions. Only lip service will not do, we have to ensure, each one of us, and not only the EC or ACC, that such lowly creatures never show the audacity of defiling the sacred precinct of politics and parliament. If we haven't learned our lesson yet, we never will.

Shahnoor Wahid is Senior Assistant Editor of The Daily Star.

Boom in the local hospitality industry

The hospitality industry is rising rapidly, but it is also changing. In Bangladesh, the industry is doing well. Varieties of restaurants are mushrooming, yet every new entrant to this business is doing well. Who would have thought 10 years ago that we would be ordering take-away pizzas from petrol station forecourts, for example? Many new offers are coming on-stream, and there are undoubtedly more interesting ones to follow.

MOHAMMAD SHAHIDUL ISLAM

THE hospitality industry is experiencing a boom across the world, including Bangladesh. A plethora of new hotels have opened in Dhaka, Chitagon, Sylhet and Cox's Bazaar. As a result, there is a constant need for top-level industry consultants to advise on the profession. Besides, varieties of jobs in the catering business are now ready to be filled in.

One of the many wonderful aspects of this industry is the flexibility and choice it offers. One can start working in hotels, and if that does not suit him, he can change to contract catering or use his experience to go into consultancy, or manage or run a restaurant or fast-food outlet. So, the opportunities are many.

For many people, the thought of a career in the hospitality, leisure and tourism industries may bring up the images of chefs, waiters, guides and cabin crews. But the industry offers more than these. Every day, 1 in every 5 new jobs in the world falls in this sector. This is a huge industry, offering variety, diversity and tons of different jobs and career opportunities to suit everyone across the globe.

So, what sort of person do you need to be to work in the hospitality, leisure and tourism business? Well, to begin with, you need to like people, and enjoy the challenges of working in a

customer-focused environment. You need to be flexible, adaptable, enjoy solving problems and thinking on your feet, and be able to work as part of a team.

I met Jewel Mahmud, 18 years old, energetic and bubbly, working in the front office of a renowned hotel in Dhaka. "The diversity of the industry brings challenges and new opportunities, and that's what appeals to me," he said. "I originally came to this from National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute, where I was on an 18-week course on Front Office and Secretarial Operations. Now, I work part-time as a receptionist, which allows me to continue my studies towards A-Level."

His advice to anyone considering a career in hotel is: "Don't be put off by the thought of long hours and less pay. Initially, I followed my heart when I chose this as a career, and I don't regret it for a moment." Mahmud hopes to go on to become a Front Office Manager or Conference and Events Manager at a five star hotel in Bangladesh or outside the country.

Hospitality industry is a huge term. It includes not only hotels, but also restaurants and other entertainment facilities. It is entwined in our daily life; grabbing a sandwich for lunch, stopping off for a coffee or drinks with friends, staying at a hotel, going to the cinema or theatre, school meals, eating in a canteen

at work, catching a bus, using motor-way service stations ... the list goes on and on.

Mahbuba Begum is a chef in Australia. She did a one-year professional Chef Course from National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (NHTTI). Her first job was as a Commis-II (junior, or apprentice-grade-II) in a small hotel, but was soon promoted to chef because of her hard labour and perseverance.

After moving to Australia, she took a job specialising in fish and, within two years, became chef of a new restaurant group. She says: "My career is very satisfying and I was delighted to be given promotion soon. My advice to young chefs wanting to progress in their career would be to focus on what they want to achieve -- put your head down and keep working. That is what I did -- believe me, you will get noticed!"

What about travel and tourism? It is a huge growth sector, valued at a massive £270 billion worldwide. Travel and tourism are closely linked with hospitality and leisure, all providing services for their customers. It is a very inter-dependent industry... it is constantly expanding... which means more jobs and careers!

Bangladesh is becoming the best-chosen destination for the airlines operators. Many foreign airlines are doing fantastic business in Bangladesh. The scope and opportunities for airlines

jobs are, therefore, climbing.

What is the best way into this industry, and what qualifications do you need? Hospitality and catering, like many other sectors, suffer from skills shortages in certain areas. Undoubtedly there is a wide range of jobs on offer -- in reception, bar, conference and banquetting, and event management, as chef or waiter, in sales and marketing, house-keeping, food and beverage ... these are just a few!

The three main entry routes are:

- By managing a job in a small or big hotel and benefiting from company training and development, maybe alongside part-time study.
- By becoming a management trainee, or by having industrial attachment with the different outlets of a hotel.
- By enrolling in a full-time course in an institute. There are courses to suit all, whatever your academic achievements, but at least SSC/O-level certificate is required.

If it is a career in travel and tourism that interests you, again there are too many jobs to mention here; travel agent, overseas representative, cabin crew, marketing for a tour operator, customer relations, operations, cruise ships (outside the country), tourist information centers, are just a few to consider. This sector is attractive to new entrants, and competition can be tough.

Some of the qualifications that could help you on your way include: (a) Industrial attachment or management trainee -- you get an opportunity to develop skills, expertise and gain hospitality attributes whilst at work. (b) Diploma in hotel and tourism management and BA in hospitality management -- often

these courses include business studies, field trips, foreign languages and marketing elements.

Qualifications alone are no guarantee of a job in the hospitality, leisure, travel or tourism industry -- a lot depends on your personality, attitude, communication skills and commonsense approach to work and life in general! Hospitality, leisure, and tourism might not be everyone's choice, but if you are enthusiastic, like people, and want a career that is exciting, challenging and constantly developing, contact the recruiters at home and abroad to check it out -- you might just be surprised!

The hospitality industry is rising rapidly, but it is also changing. In Bangladesh, the industry is doing well. Varieties of restaurants are mushrooming, yet every new entrant to this business is doing well. Who would have thought 10 years ago that we would be ordering take-away pizzas from petrol station forecourts, for example? Many new offers are coming on-stream, and there are undoubtedly more interesting ones to follow.

That is the good news. The bad news is that the hospitality industry still has problems, above all with its image. But the over-riding message from recruiters is that the low pay and long hours for which hotels and restaurants are famous are becoming a thing of the past. The sheer growth of the industry has meant that employers are putting together far more attractive recruitment packages to attract the right staff. For potential managers the prospects can be tremendous.

Management salaries in this industry are increasing faster than those in other sectors. There are some very good pack-

ages on offer. A good reason to go into the industry is that there is a continual shortage of top-caliber people, so qualified people will progress very quickly and can probably expect an amount of money similar to what they would earn in any other industry at an early age.

Hospitality has always been an industry in which bright entrepreneurs can succeed, regardless of qualifications, and employers are now realising this. Many say they want personality and charisma rather than a clutch of qualifications.

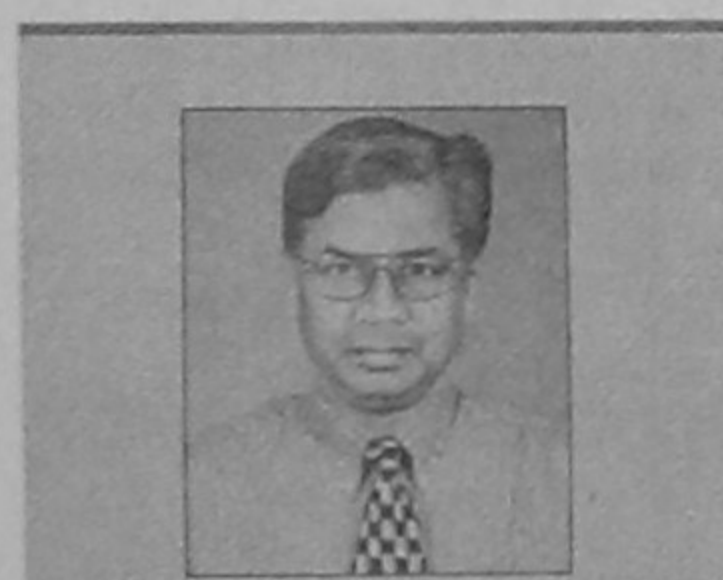
Rubina Afroz, Training and Development Manager at National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute-NHTTI, says: "Personality is first. The industry is looking for outgoing, highly motivated people who are very much focused on business results -- the sort of people who would one day want to run their own businesses."

She adds: "Good qualifications won't do anybody any harm at all, but I do not think they are by any means a prerequisite. My personal point of view is that very often good qualifications tend to mean "high intellect" and "good at doing exams." These are not necessarily the best competencies for the hospitality industry. It is more important that they are the right type of individual. They have got to like other people."

SM Mizanur Rahman, head of language and culture department at NHTTI, believes qualifications still count. But he adds: "Having said that, this industry is performance-orientated. You can get as far on your performance as your ability will take you."

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Thoughts on managing sports bodies



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

RECENTLY, there have been laudable efforts to streamline the administration of the national level sports bodies. Sports enthusiasts are witnessing commendable ventures to financially strengthen the different sports federations. There is considerable interest in creating a lively atmosphere. This writer, in view of his past experience as the president of the Bangladesh Volleyball Federation and also as secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports, considers it pertinent to put forward some suggestions for improving the performance of our sports bodies.

From the earliest years of the revival of competitive sport as a means of improving individual

STRAIGHT LINE

It is high time for our apex sports organisation to prepare a strategic plan as proposed, and embark upon a pragmatic program of action. Hope lies in the fact that the Chief of Staff, Bangladesh Army has taken a meaningful interest in the development of sports. His commitment should encourage others to come forward and contribute their mite.

social conditions, most sports clubs, leagues, unions, associations, and national federations (NFs) operated exclusively under the impulse of two major tendencies: the socialist approach under populist concepts on the one hand, and the approach focusing on individual rights and support to private organisations on the other.

The former pursued traditional concepts such as sport for all, sport as a social service, and sport as an educational vehicle. The latter emphasised freedom of choice and enabled youngsters deprived of social opportunities to attain physical and moral health and avoid antisocial behaviour and criminal tendencies.

In the past, volunteers promoted sports through improvised sports activities. These offered

enjoyment, free-time, and community contact to the youth of the day. Later on, clubs, leagues, associations, NFs, and others provided competitors with an opportunity to become local heroes through sport competitions. Simple sports enjoyment, combined with the honour of defending the colours of a group, college, university, or club, would sometimes lead to the pleasure of becoming a recognised community idol.

This is no longer the case, because every sporting event today is shrouded in a new atmosphere, surrounded by a whole set of new relationships, attitudes and behaviours, creating a commercial sport world peculiar to our times.

Times have changed, as have individual attitudes and behav-

iour. As a result, the social context of sport has undergone a profound change. Today, in addition to honour and public recognition, new rewards await winners: fame, glory, money and social status. By now, every layer of society has been affected by this shift.

Sports organisations at the national and international levels are deserting the battlefields of competitive sport and leaving professional sports activities in the hands of businessmen and promoters.

At the same time, they are being pressured by political, commercial, and domineering attitudes. All this turmoil threatens to destroy current sport structures, sooner or later, and compels NFs either to abandon the sport scene or, in exchange for their subservience, remain as passive bystand-

ers with no significant role.

Maintaining cooperation and understanding in sports will be possible only if sport leaders at the national level are elected from among individuals whose ethical principles make them trustworthy guardians of the moral and legal integrity of sport and of its democratic institutions. This leader must not be driven by personal ambition and plutocratic interests.

Inertia, combined with a lack of organisational structure, the absence of administrative procedures, and the ineptitude of managers, will not only destroy a sport organisation itself but also the sport movement, as we know it today. In the end, it will seriously damage the very roots of the Olympic movement.

Organisation, administration, and management are, today, the most reliable driving forces of sport organisations in any country. Indeed, these three elements must function well together for a sports association, club, league, event organiser, or regional sport organization, to attain the highest level of efficiency and effectively solve problems that arise.

A good organisation arranges a coherent structure of interdependent and interactive units, sections, or divisions into a whole system. In any country, sport activities need a good organisational structure so that athletes, clubs, teams, and others can participate easily in events. Well-prepared units of a sports organisation must all work together toward the achievement of clearly determined goals and objectives.

Administration is the timely allocation of human, material, and financial resources needed to maintain the smooth running of an organization, and implementing its strategic actions. Once a sport organisation's structure is clearly defined, an efficient administration to support and follow up the various actions of the units, as well as to connect with those practicing the sport, must be foreseen.

Management creates and maintains a coherent system of decision-making procedures and motivates people to identify themselves with, and strive toward, the accomplishment of an organisation's strategic plan.

This involves an adequate flow of information; the determination

of goals and objectives; the selection of activities required to pursue those objectives; and the motivation of members, employees, and volunteers alike to work together toward those goals. An organisation needs to be run by professional and competent managers from its earliest to its ultimate stage of development.

National federations are central to the NOCs (National Olympic Committee), and represent the IF and its sport in their country. When adequately organised, efficiently administered, professionally managed, NFs are the driving forces of sports in their respective countries. As such, they are able to carry out day-to-day operations, such as the following:

Recruiting athletes and organising groups of teams in clubs or other sport organisations capable of providing training and regular sport activities. Organising and promoting local, regional, national, and international competitions.

Being in charge of the preparation, selection, and entry of athletes for international competitions held under the authority of the respective IFs.

Proposing to their NOC, in the case of regional, continental, and Olympic multi-sport competitions recognised by the IOC, those athletes that it considers to be prepared and eligible to represent their country, on the understanding that the NOC is the only competent body to enter the athletes in such games.

Providing technical assistance for implementing organisational programs to develop grassroots, educational, or free-time sports.

Facilitating the formation of leagues or events circuits (professional, semi-pro, national, regional, or local), that are run by affiliated organisations, under their umbrella.

It is high time for our apex sports organisation to prepare a strategic plan as proposed, and embark upon a pragmatic program of action. Hope lies in the fact that the Chief of Staff, Bangladesh Army has taken a meaningful interest in the development of sports. His commitment should encourage others to come forward and contribute their mite.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a columnist for The Daily Star.