Refreshing News Items

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Often we encounter news items in the media that come as great relief to our eyes and brain that are being constantly bombarded by horrendous facts, figures and graphics. There should be more of such stories in the media to brighten up our life, instead of casting a pall of gloom for the rest of the day. Some such interesting news items published in the local media caught my attention recently. One was about some donkeys in Rangamati brought from India during the rule of the last government (From goats to donkeys...great!). These creatures are doing no work but voraciously eating away everything, from vegetables to foliage, to spell disaster for the local farmers. The donkeys were brought under a Tk. one crore project to carry loads in the hilly roads but there is no one around to find out what has happened to that project. Like every other "innovative" project of our *rajnoitik netribrindos* this one has also gone to the dogs (sorry for the phrase, donkeys).

The other news item is on Shah Rukh Khan, who is said to be as popular as the Pope himself. Amen! There is a great deal of similarity in what the two do. While the Pope sells tickets to heaven, Shah Rukh Khan helps in selling tickets to the cinema halls. Both talk about worlds they believe in. Pope talks about the celestial world, Shah Rukh talks about the celluloid world. Pope's world can be visited only after one permanently leaves this world. But Shah Rukh's world can be visited any day in this world. Therefore, it is no wonder he is as popular as the Pope.

There is yet another very interesting news item that concerns our *poolish* brothers. It is interesting to note how often they come to limelight for all the wrong reasons. This item is about an assistant commissioner of police and three constables who wanted to be rich overnight (actually in a single night) but instead found themselves in the jail locker. The foursome had entered a businessman's apartment in the dead of night and threatened him of dire consequences if he couldn't come up with five lakh taka... pronto. The man gave nearly two lakh in cash, a cheque for one lakh and some gold ornaments to save his hide from being flogged. But *bidhi* was *baam* for our police brothers - the foolish foursome - and in a day or two they landed themselves in the same jail where they threatened to send the businessman. They realised, a wee bit late, that they had just killed the golden goose.

But the punch line of this story has not been written yet. Here it comes. The incident took place only five days after the IG of Police had said before the senior police officers in Chittagong, 'why should the entire police force suffer bad name for a handful of corrupt officials and constables.' We have reasons to believe that the assistant commissioner was present there. What was he thinking when the IGP was saying all those things about corruption and punishment? Was he smiling under his *goph*? Hard to know now.

A poignant story to end this piece. The homes of our poor people get levelled to the ground regularly by floods, storms, cyclone and fire. We just look at the graphical images of such destroyed homes and cluck with sympathy and sigh, " ahharey...ki koshto!" Next day we forget about those images and while we get busy with our life and redecorate our living rooms with useless fancy stuff, those poor people collect wood, bamboo and rope to prop up a structure they fondly call home. But here in the big city when it comes to the demolition of a big building of the big people, it becomes news worth a three-column heading. There is this huge structure that hit the headlines a number of times and continues to be news worthy. It was allegedly built on illegal land with an illegal construction plan. But the legality of it rests with the court to decide. What amazes me is how much attention we give to news items when these concern the rich and the powerful. Hugeness and intricacy appeal more to our senses than small and simplicity. Let thousands of shanties get demolished but bring the news concerning the demolishing of one single structure that has taken lives of many poor men.