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# Mother Language Day



Mother tongue is a gift of the Almighty. From the Holy Koran we come to know that the most Merciful has bestowed a mother tongue upon each and every caste, creed and colour. But it is an irony of fate that the then rulers of Pakistan tried to impose Urdu as mother tongue upon us, instead of Bangla. But the valiant sons of the soil laid down their lives for our mother tongue. Since then the day is observed as Shaheed Day commemorating the sacrifice of the language martyrs. Since 2000, this day has been recognised by the UNO as "The International Mother Language Day" in due recognition of the martyrs.

21st February is now observed all over the world. This day has great significance. We have achieved Bangla as our mother tongue. The Language Movement gave us the spirit of liberation and we liberated ourselves in 1971. Today we are free and we have our own culture and heritage. This day has given us honour and dignity. The world today recognises that Bangla is an important language.

We hope that in near future Bangla, like English, will be used as a medium of speech in different international forums and it can be concluded that our Language Movement is a unique event in the history of human civilisation.

Md. Abul Kalam Azad  
One-mail

# Rohingya refugees

The Rohingya refugee problem in Bangladesh has been a long pending one. It is now 17 years that they have been in Bangladesh without proper international attention.

Following the latest influx during 1991-92, Rohingyas took refuge in Bangladesh. Then about 258,000 Rohingyas were registered by the government of Bangladesh and granted refugee status through an executive order, however, without any proper legal sanction. In addition to that thousands of Rohingyas arrived here and mixed with local population over the years.

Some estimates suggest that there are about 300,000 nationals of Myanmar (mostly Rohingyas) outside the official camps who are 'illegally' staying in the Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and Chittagong districts.

The UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, which is mostly responsible for lingering the problem, came into operation here in 1992.

There are now some 26,000 plus refugees in two official camps in Cox's Bazar. The government of Bangladesh manages these camps with assistance from the UNHCR and other donors.

According to an official record of the government and the UNHCR, so far about 237,000 refugees have returned to Myanmar.

However, local people believe the opposite: almost all of the so-called repatriated Rohingyas came back to Bangladesh later on and continued to live here and there in greater Chittagong district and far away to greater Barisal district. Birth rates among those Rohingyas, whether in the camps or outside, are reportedly very high. The UNHCR and relevant UN agencies are ignorant on this issue.

The Rohingyas are an ethnic group from the Northern Rakhine State (formerly Arakan State) of Myanmar. They are persecuted in their home country, Myanmar. Out of about 2.5 million Rohingyas, two million are reportedly now out of the country of their origin. They are in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, India, Thailand, the USA and in different Middle Eastern and European countries.

It is very unfortunate that the international community including the UN agencies and countries like the USA, UK, China, Thailand and India have failed to perform their due role with regard to restoration of democracy and human rights in Myanmar. These countries have their respective busi-

ness and other interests with the present military regime of Myanmar.

Given the scenario of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, there has been no repatriation since 2006. In 2005, only 92 persons went back. On the other hand, there is a move to make the problem linger. This will encourage others to come to Bangladesh). They are reportedly negotiating with the government of Bangladesh for an arrangement to have permanent shelter for the remaining Rohingya refugees here. (If it were granted it would be an added burden to a poor country like ours indeed. This will encourage others to come to Bangladesh).

It is learnt that the UNHCR authority is expecting the present caretaker government to execute their plan: to have local integration (e.g. naturalization) for the remaining camp refugees. They are also planning to pressurize the government to open up the two-refugee camps, so that the refugee population could mix with local population. In the mean time, a group of nearly 10,000 'unregistered' Rohingyas have been provided shelter by the government on the reserved land of the forest department. Now, some so-called development partners (in fact, they do consider themselves as colonial masters) have reportedly been pressurizing the government for refugee status for those groups.

The people and the government of Bangladesh, which has been extending shelter generously to the Rohingyas for a long time, should be vocal now against any proposal for having permanent shelter for them in Bangladesh. The political parties should also take up the issue for the interest of the country.

The government should extensively talk with its Myanmar counterpart for taking back the remaining Rohingyas now staying here in Bangladesh recognised as refugees or staying here illegally.

The developed countries should come forward as well in this regard without any vested interest and share the burden through resettling a significant portion of the remaining refugees in their respective countries, if they really have any concern about the Rohingyas.

Udatta Bikash  
Researcher and writer  
Dhaka

## No way out?

I would beg your indulgence to cite a well-known joke: A man was asked what he would do if he finds a tiger is coming to him from behind, high walls on both the sides (which he is unable to jump over) and a lion is coming to him from the front! The man pondered for a while and replied, "I have nothing to do." "The lion and the tiger would do whatever they would like."

We, the people of Bangladesh, are really placed in a similar situation. We hear that the country is badly in need of an elected government in order to save it from the current crises on the one hand, and the fact that it is the elected governments which successively led the country to the brink of civil war like Rwanda, Burundi, Chad, Kenya and other African nations.

We, the general people, are not concerned about the blame game of who is responsible for what. We understand this much that the collective failure of the political leadership is fully responsible for 1/11 and we do not believe that they are capable of delivering the goods in future if their old forms and manners are not changed.

We do not want to go back to 1/11. It is the duty of this government to fulfil our expectations and it must create a condition in which future governments would be functional and the people of this country would be able to live in peace and harmony. If they fail to do so and if the civil war starts again, then the people will hold this government responsible for the loss of life and property.

We hope that this government would not take this risk and would do everything within its means to fulfil the dream of 150 million people to live peacefully.  
Md Shah Jahan  
Dhaka

## Supreme Judicial Commission

With reference to the proposed Supreme Judicial Commission (for selection of Supreme Court Judges), I beg to oppose the inclusion of the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association as the Member of the Commission on the following grounds:

1. The selected Judge may feel obligated to the President of the Bar or advocates who have elected him.
  2. A Judge cannot perform neutrally under any obligation.
  3. The Supreme Court Bar Association election is, in fact, always party based in our country.
- However, the need for inclusion of a Supreme Court Advocate in the commission cannot be denied. Therefore, it is suggested that a senior non-partisan Supreme Court Advocate be selected by the other members of the Supreme Judicial Commission in their first meeting.  
Anonymous  
One-mail

## BTTB public relations

As a telephone user in Dhaka for decades, I now find a sudden change in the attitude of the BTTB staff receiving complaints on the phone. They are polite and helpful; and it takes less time to repair and restore the line/fault.

Why the mobile/cell phones have achieved such tremendous popularity? Less human contacts in the system/flowchart (linemen, underground and overhead cables-wires, longer repairing time; more materials and spare

parts outdoors, etc).

So it is high time for BTTB to switch to modern equipment and system, such as fixed wireless [WLL?]. Laying out cables is expensive (project and maintenance), and material cost is high. In short, go wireless, but not cellular or mobile like Teletak.

There are two angles of vision: capital and O&M costs and human elements (bribery and corruption). Reduce human interface; but in the background, any public service should be humanized for PR (public relations), and not for technical operation.

Now BTTB is facing severe competition, and thousands of subscribers have gone to the private sector; and the demand for new BTTB land phones has reduced drastically. What would happen after a political regime comes back to power -- realising that we are basically a have-not society, looking for some bakshish.

The bureaucratic background of the civil service has to be reviewed by the CTG and the technocrats in the system have to be recognised and rewarded as per rules, and allowed to work without too much obstruction from non-technical seniors.  
Md Abad  
Dhaka

## Whither reforms?

Pre 1/11 was a hectic time in our political arena. Over the last few years, if I am not wrong, reform was one of the much-pronounced issue in our political arena. Political parties, especially the AL and its allies, had been of the opinion (before 1/11) that they would not participate in election if no constructive reform was in place. It pressed home the 31-point demand and the BNP-led alliance's stubbornness left the country virtually handicapped/paralysed. Finally, the BNP govt. was forced to sit for discussion. After a series of dialogues, no result could be achieved. The fiasco pushed the country into political chaos/uncertainty.

Against the backdrop of political uncertainty, the interim govt. took over. Since the interim govt. took charge, it has undertaken many steps. For example, separating the EC secretariat from the PMO, transparency in recruiting the judges and many more. But the core issue i.e. the reform of the political parties is still unresolved. The political parties should take the initiative in this respect. Though one year has elapsed since this govt. took over, the political parties have not taken any initiative to reform themselves, and the election is only a few months away. More interestingly, the AL, the prime advocate of reform, has been passing time mindlessly.

Quite funny! The AL and all the political parties are asking the CTG to hold an early election! On the other hand, the BNP has been split into two parts. The AL and the BNP will reject any reform unless their leaders are freed, but the sole condition is not justifiable. Moreover, the Jamaat believes it needs no reform. Last but not the least, we believe those reforms will be fruitless if the political parties are not reformed from within. Sadly, the political parties are bypassing the core issue.

Now, people want to see the political parties taking immediate steps in this respect.  
Mohammad Zanoed Emran  
Dept of Political Science  
University of Dhaka

## Congratulations!

Since the beginning of my reading newspaper and the commencement of The Daily Star in 1991, I have been an avid reader of your paper. But of course a vacuum had been creating pangs in me -- as a man coming from a business-conscious family and later doing graduation and post-graduation in the field of business administration -- which has just been shrugged off this morning with the enlarged publication of the DS Business Page. I can still recollect that on December 14, 2000 at a seminar on E-Commerce held at Pan Pacific Sonargaon in Dhaka, I requested you to increase the number of business pages in DS.

On the first day, Sarwar Chowdhury's write-up has been very attractive. This section will certainly give us more information about business.  
Bazlur Rahman  
Dhaka Stock Exchange Ltd.  
Founder of the Association of English Learners, DU

## Permanent representative to UN

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, sister of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the first woman Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations and also the late Princess Abida Sultana was first Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations.

Ms. Ismet Jahan is the first woman Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations in New York.  
We congratulate her.  
Mohammad Anwarul Quadir  
Advocate and Journalist  
Masterpara, Chakdev  
Naogaon

## Editorial on avian flu

I read an editorial on your website concerning the risk of avian flu. I thank you for bringing this issue to

the attention of your readers and encourage you to publish follow-up stories of a related vein. For example, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that while avian flu gets a lot of media attention, there are over 60 other potentially deadly diseases that humans can contract from birds. Does this very relevant issue not warrant the same media coverage?

I work for Bird-X, the worldwide leader in the bird deterrent products that do not harm animals and are safe for the environment since 1945. I would like to offer my informational expertise to you. Please keep us in mind the next time you run a story about birds. I am sure we could add something of value to your article.  
Kathleen Oprian  
Media Relations Correspondent  
Chicago, USA

## What after the election?

Many people are in a hurry to have the election as early as possible.

I would say that if after the election we find that we are in the same situation as before, having the two parties waiting for their turn to run the government and taking share of public wealth in their pockets, then what's the use of such election?

If we go back to the previous situation after the election, then I would blame the present caretaker government for failing in its mission. Because they have got a chance now to change the situation.

N.G. Chaudhury  
Luxembourg

## Comments

Since independence we have failed to live up to expectations of our people. Both military dictators and political parties failed. If we analyse the causes of their failures, I would have thought that going back on the same route is unlikely to solve our problems. Whenever we fail we must try something new and different, recognising what common people want. Have we

properly evaluated their needs and taken care of them? How about engaging academics, students, people from all walks of life who are non partisan to do rigorous campaigning in all the villages, cities, suburbs, mosques for the next eight months to identify virtuous, honest, decent people with a clear conscience to be their representatives at all levels of local authorities and in parliament. These people should not have any allegiance to any political parties for the next two terms.

From elected MPs various select committees could be formed to formulate and execute policies through the secretariat of each select committee i.e. about 10 to 12 MPs, all with equal status, will carry out the duties of each ministry.  
Mohammad Nurur Rahman  
DOHS Mohakhali  
Dhaka

## Gross mistakes

The NCTB has set the book entitled 'English For Today' at the HSC level with a new approach of communicative system for the learners, but the book, though its first edition was in 2001, has some glaring mistakes, which make us think about its acceptability and accessibility. Only two grave mistakes out of many are presented below:

1. The model on CV contained on page 262 without mentioning the address of the applicant is quite misleading (vide the dictionary on study page B15 edited by Sally Wehmeer).

2. The book also gives the phrase 'comprising of' in which the use of preposition is out and out inappropriate (see the O.A. Learner's dictionary by AS Hornby, page 238).

I hope the NCTB and the Education Boards concerned would look into the matter.

Md. Shahjahan Miah  
Asst. Professor of English  
Charfasson College, Bhola

# Save Biman

Biman is the global ambassador of Bangladesh and very dear to us. Just because of so many people's love, trust and loyalty, it has continued to fly in the skies even after losing millions of dollars every year due to administrative corruption, mismanagement and poor service quality.

It really hurts us to see it in such a bad condition right now. As a loyal customer, I would like to share some suggestions to improve the

countries where so many of our countrymen reside.

The customers are the kings. So, our cabin crew and airport-counter persons need to be more customer-focused, friendly, smiling, polite, caring and helpful. Proper and rigorous customer service training should be given to them.

All over the world, airlines are going for ticket less online reservation system with the



help of modern Information Technology. We should go for more transparent reservation and ticketing system by using IT to curb corruption and hassles.

Biman should immediately add at least ten (Currently only 7 out of 12 aircrafts are in service) new generation aircraft which are fuel-efficient and safer to fly. As there is money constraint, if it cannot accept offers by Boeing or Airbus Company, it can go for lease agreements with other airlines whereby one airline provides an aircraft, complete crew, maintenance, and insurance, (ACMI) to another airline, which pays by hours operated. The lessee provides fuel, covers airport fees, and any other duties, taxes, etc. Also it should dispose off the age old DC-10s and F-28s keeping the Airbuses.

Biman has Air Service Agreements with 42 countries, but it maintains flights to 18 only. Instead of having flights on low profitable routes, it can only go for the most profitable routes which require proper market research.

As we have given permission to so many airlines on so many routes, where our Biman is operating, we are in a big competition where with few fuel-inefficient aircrafts, poor unfriendly service and administrative corruption we cannot survive. So to make the scenario improve, we can stop giving permissions to other airlines on those routes even in the domestic flights i.e. Sylhet, Chittagong, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Kathmandu, London, Kolkata and all the M-E

present state of our national carrier. Skipping the criticisms, some simple recommendations are made below:

Introduce a corruption free system in reservation, maintenance and procurement.

There should be a monitoring team to check reservation errors, payment of agents' commission, mismanagement, wrong maintenance add to ensure procurement transparency.

Timeliness can make poor airlines look better. Proper scheduling and planning are to be carried out. Luggage should be handled with more care and attention.

Last but not the least, Biman should not lose heart as 150 million people are behind it.  
Engr. Ahmed Wakaar Raja  
Former Faculty, AIUB

