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## Neglected place

Last weekend I paid a visit to a place that represent our glorious history of 1971. The place is Rayerbazar Boddhobhumi, the place where intellectuals were brutally killed in 1971 by coward Pakistani soldiers. To honour the heroes the government has built a memorial on the bank of a river. The shape of the memorial resembles a mountain having a window on chest. With ceramic brick construction, it seems wearing a blood gown. It carries great significance along with its endless beauty. When the sun sets, it seems to see the martyrs through the window.

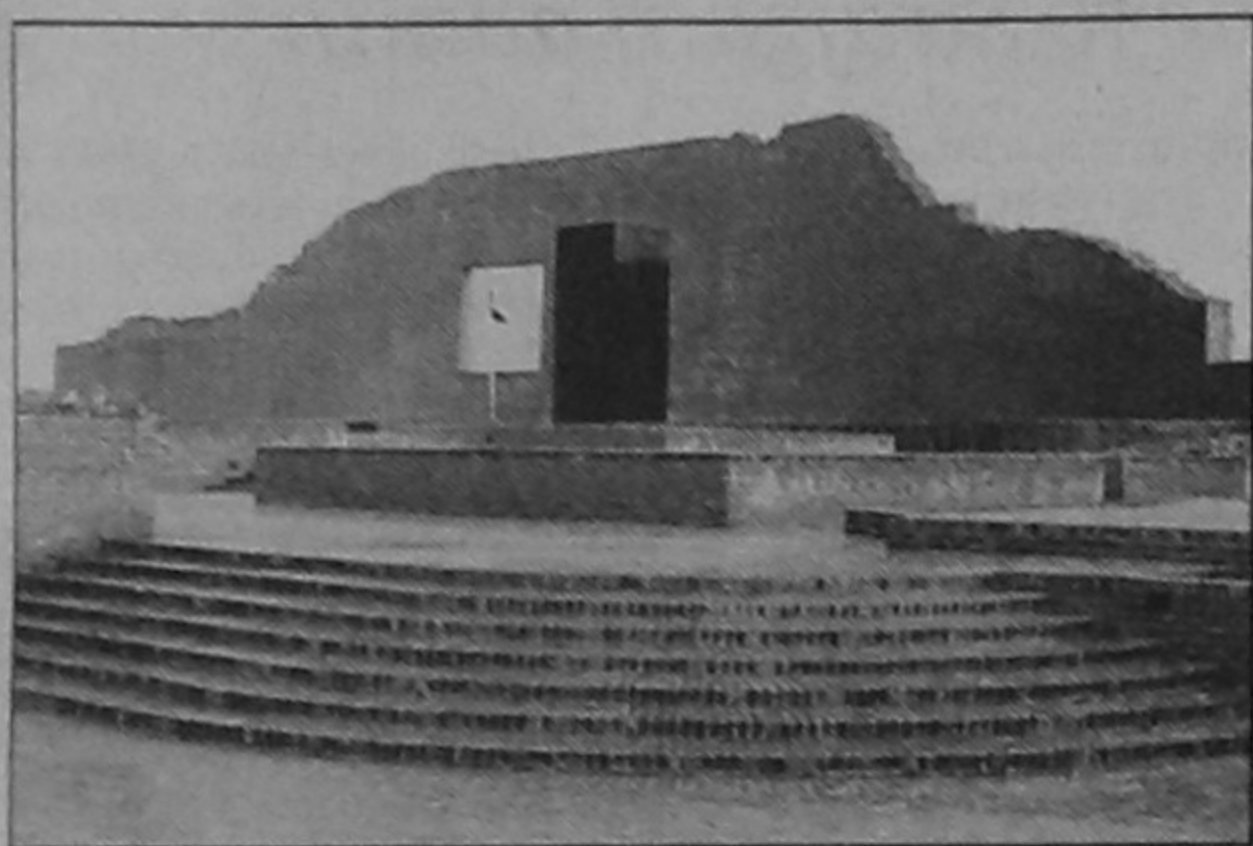
But it is so sad to say that some illiterate and

unconscious people are ruining its beauty. They are converting the place to a market and dating place. There I saw a board where I found..... The air of this place is heavy with the sound of the cry of the unsatisfied souls of the martyrs. But no sign I found. Even some guys are using the place as toilet.

'Don't walk on the grass...' but who cares? It became the safest ground for couples and mobile hawkers.

The authorities are silent. Will you please do something to save the inspiring monument for the young generation?

Istiaq Ahmed Raihan  
Dhaka City College



## USA and others

The USA and the West always talk about democracy. They more or less practice this theory in their own territory. They even try to teach us democracy when they find any occasion. But do they believe in democracy from their core of mind? They often behave in most undemocratic ways with the underdeveloped countries.

In the UN some of them have the veto power simply because they are superpowers. They think the arms, bombs etc are safe with them but unsafe with others. They also do business in the guise of helping the poor countries but take back more in the name of consultancy.

If any statesman tries to oppose them, they do not hesitate to kill or remove him from power. Are they still civilized in true sense?

Haron-or-Rashid  
Sobhanbag  
Dhaka

## Educational institutions

We have become a rough and rude people. There is impoliteness, harshness, violence and brutality everywhere. A look at our daily life or at any newspaper on any day will confirm this. If we are satisfied with the way we are, there is nothing more to say about it. However, if we feel that we need and want to change our ways, we have to think of the means of bringing about the change. I think our education can and must play a crucial role in this matter.

There was a time when family and community exerted the most powerful influence on shaping the character of every growing generation and inculcated with confidence the values and norms by which it was supposed to live. That time is no more. Strong forces of disintegration have played

havoc on family and community and robbed them of their confidence and their power and influence over their members. In this confusing situation the only other place we have that can be reasonably expected to perform this crucial function is our educational institutions. Fostering good manners and smoothing the rough edges in the character of students have to be one of their major goals. The work should begin at the earliest level and continue up to the highest level. There can be no let up in this.

A KM Mohiuddin  
Rajshahi University Campus  
Rajshahi

## BCFCC, the new victim!

Who can tell me how & why the name of the popular centre of meetings & fairs got a new name? Was it necessary at all? Do we not cut a sorry figure to the contributor? It was built by our good friends 'the Chinese' and as I knew so long it was a total package of a gift from one of our best friendly countries and their people. If the ruling govt. wanted to name another landmark after its founder, no one would have objected. In fact we need several such venues of international standard.

But I am wondering why the present govt. is keeping themselves busy to change names and rename the existing buildings, bridges, institutions and trying to deface former rulers even by demolishing murals of our respected past leaders, in the darkness of night.

After all how many more places they want to put their names on, when we have seen them vanished just with the change of the governments.

Among all, I just can not reconcile the change of name of the PG Hospital -- thank god it has remained the same with the rickshaw pullers; similarly the 'Jamuna Bridge' as it is popularly known should not be disturbed, especially when the present govt. could not change the name of the river. I urge upon those in the present govt. who are pretty quick to change the popular names to restore those landmarks viz. China Friendship Centre, Bhashani Novo

Theatre, Jamuna Bridge etc. and shun the partisan attitude.

A F Rahman  
On e-mail

## Our priorities

What is the national priority at this moment? If we go by the political language the 1st point will be poverty elimination, 2nd place will be taken by 'Food for all' 3rd will be 'education for all', 4th will be housing for all, 5th will be electricity for all etc. But to our surprise, none of the above issues are addressed properly, this is probably due to the fact that after the government took over the responsibility of serving the people (though they say assuming power) the above points are often issued and addressed during seminars and symposiums and most disappointingly at the public meetings. In reality what percentage of the government's success has actually taken place is what we like to know through the media. All the past governments hardly bothered to publish any documents and since a lot is expected from this government due to their huge majority and pre-election commitments, we certainly would like to see a report rather than been informed in public meetings what or how much they have achieved in the last 07 months from their oath taking.

The construction work of the Padma bridge will start soon and all sorts of paper works have probably been done by now for implementing this huge project and also we understand from the media reports that a second bridge is also in the plan for which paper work will start soon. I have nothing against either of the Padma bridges as it will only help boost the development of the country, especially with the underdeveloped southern part, but I am very concerned as these bridges will definitely connect the capital with the southern part of the country. I am sure the miserable traffic situation of the capital city will become even worse than it is at this very moment. Does the city have enough network of roads? Does the city have by pass roads or a proper ring road? I really do not see any of them and also fail to understand, why the government has not taken up any master plans yet though 210 days from their legitimate 1,825 days have passed.

Sohel Ahmed  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Asian Highway

It is not a matter of preference at all. It is a matter of reality that AH enters from India crossing the western border of our country. I think it is also not a matter of preference, rather it is pragmatic that AH enters Myanmar, the only other common boarder country of Bangladesh. Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand are the member countries of BIMST-EC which has further development plan for AH network. ESCAP, the patronizing organization of AH network, prioritised capital-to-capital links for international transport.

So, Dhaka must have road link with Yangon, the nearest cross border capital of Dhaka.

Saif Tinku  
Uttara, Dhaka

## British troops in Afghanistan

The British General David Richards has recently revealed the true motive behind their presence in Afghanistan. He told The Times that British soldiers would remain in Afghanistan for the next 40 years (The Daily Star: 09.08.09).

It has unmasked the true intention of the foreign troops there. The intention is not to protect the Afghan people from the atrocities of the Taliban, rather they want to occupy the land permanently.

Monzur Rahman  
Dhaka

## TIB's role

As a senior citizen, I found it embarrassing to find the leader of the House (JS) criticising the role and activities of the TIB, on the closing day of the recent session.

It is rare to find an NGO performing in Bangladesh without political pressure (an evil culture of dynasty rules). The motivation behind the finding (waste of funds in JS) has to be kept in view. The intention was not to criticise the major party in the JS, but the lack of quorum and late arrivals (loss- one lakh Taka every three minutes). Now (separately), the financial lapses of the past speakers have come to light.

It points to one glaring weakness in our society: lack of political credibility. The latter is not changing for decades. It is a rating factor in accessing the performance of our leaders of the society. Who control the elected politicians? Of course, it is the millions of voters; but there are many barriers and shortcomings (it is not a secret). These are not being seriously analysed in parliament; thanks to the powerful political cartels, patronised by the top leaders.

The opposition culture is struggling to survive. The magnificent Louis Kahn parliament mansion does not reflect the standard of working inside. We voters are hostages to political syndicates. The recent caretaker, non-political government has been excessively criticised by the MPs.

First: internal self-cleansing; then mud-slinging. There was nothing new in the closing speech of the Leader of the House in the closing day. People are hankering to get out of the vicious circle; but here is no light at the end of the tunnel. Bangladesh has to adjust to live in today's global village. The ad hoc issues dominate the proceedings; and the political level is localised.

This is a luxury we cannot afford.

CAI  
Dhaka

## Bangabandhu

Like millions of Bangladeshis the world over, I have missed him immensely since that day - August 15, 1975.

But since the December 2008 election when Bangabandhu's very dear Awami League came to power under the leadership of his elder daughter, I have started missing him more than ever for what his disciples are saying & doing. Babbling is what they are doing the best so far. The High Commissioner of our friendly neighbour is freely humiliating our people at any opportune moment. He publicly termed our water experts of international repute as 'so-called water experts' & claimed '80% of Indian visa seekers being touts & brokers' right in presence of our senior Cabinet Ministers! We watched these live on TV in horror while the ministers accepted the High Commissioner's comments without a whimper. Later, when the Foreign Minister did try to term the comments of the Indian HC about our water experts as being not within diplomatic norms, another senior cabinet minister quickly came to the rescue of the Indian HC publicly by rejecting our Foreign Minister's comment & thus putting her to shame. The least is said about our ever ready commentator, the Commerce Minister - the better.

Just the year before Bangabandhu was assassinated, in May, 1974, the Indo-Bangladesh Land Agreement, generally known as the Mujib-Indira Treaty was signed. While our parliament ratified the treaty promptly in November, 1974, the Indian side has shied away from it for the last 35 years! And, in the meantime, not a day goes by when Bangladeshis are not gunned down by the trigger-happy BSF -- 69 Bangladeshis lives were lost since January 2009. We watch on TV in utter surprise some of our very senior parliamentarians 'singing the song' for Tipaimukh dam.

All these things & many more are happening that are detrimental to our country's interest. And, yet we are to see a definite & a strong message from the daughter of Bangabandhu.

Bangabandhu, I and millions and millions of others who love Bangladesh, miss you now more than ever and always will.

Ashfaq Chowdhry  
Banani, Dhaka

# Deprived farmers



Last month when I was coming back to Dhaka from Sylhet by a Shohag Poribahan bus, it stopped at a place in Brahmanbaria to facilitate passengers offer Jumma prayer as it was Friday.

There I witnessed a very unfortunate thing: a number of young and older people hawking vegetables like sweet bitter gourd, lady's finger, brinjal packed in net and poly bags each one weighing more than 5 kg. The price of each bag was ranging from only Tk.20-25 (for sweet bitter gourd and lady's finger) and Tk.25-35 (for brinjal). One can imagine prices of these vegetables in the markets of Dhaka and other big cities of the country.

We also found farmers selling their agricultural produces at wholesale rate which seemed also far below the cost of production. This situation testifies that farmers are not getting their genuine return (cost plus profit) from the sale of their hard-grown produces. And this is a common picture throughout Bangladesh.

There is no doubt that the production of agricultural crops has increased significantly following successful intervention by different agricultural extension, research, and service oriented organizations of the government. At the same time it is to be admitted that farmers are not getting fair prices of their agricultural produces; one main reason being absence of appropriate and efficient marketing facilities which include transportation and storing.

On the other side, a smaller group of

traders are taking out the bulk of financial benefits through selling various agricultural commodities at an exorbitant price in the big city markets. They are also creating artificial scarcity of agricultural commodities in the markets.

Now the question is, how to keep prices of agricultural commodities, not only of crops and vegetables but livestock and poultry products under control? In my view, the government may establish a separate agency like 'Agricultural Marketing Authority' which will create direct marketing opportunities for all the agricultural commodities including dairy and poultry products. This agency will also control market price of various agricultural commodities and monitor marketing opportunities by using ICT technology. This agency may also be given magistracy to administer legal bindings instantly. The present Department of Agricultural Marketing may be re-structured to form the above-suggested 'Agricultural Marketing Authority'.

Until and unless the government takes full control of agricultural marketing, interests of both producers and consumers cannot be protected.

Professor M Zahidul Haque

Chairman  
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System  
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University  
Dhaka

## Dhaka-NY flight

Having read the recent article in the Financial Express dated 14th August about Biman's resumption of its Dhaka-New York flights, I have a few comments to make and some questions to ask publicly to the CEO of Bangladesh's national flag carrier. Firstly, as a north-America resident of Bangladeshi roots I am delighted to hear the news because it can cut my journey by as much as 40%. Secondly as a well-wisher of the ailing carrier, I look forward to this becoming a profitable route. Thirdly, I question why the flight has to make a stop on-route to Dhaka from New York based on both technical and business reasons.

However, there are some assumptions I need to make to justify my thoughts and I leave it up to the experts in your readership to judge the fairness thereof. The article claims that there are some 200,000 Bangladeshis residing in the United States; let's add another 50,000 to cover those who live in Canada. If we assume about 90% of these folks travel to Bangladesh at least once every two years, and 75% of them live east of the Texas-Ontario diagonal and are therefore likely to fly on the JFK-DAC route. This brings the total number of such customers to 168,750. In other words, there are 231 people who travel to Dhaka from New York every calendar day and an equal number who travel back.

The current cost of an average economy class return ticket from this region (Toronto, New York, Washington DC etc.), on Etihad, Emirates and Kuwait Airways to Dhaka is about \$1,150.00 (Tk 80,500). This is equivalent to \$575 one way (Tk 40,250). Therefore, the gross-earning for the airline operator per o/w flight is \$132,825 (Tk 93 Lakh). Interestingly, Biman

claims they made a loss of Tk 75 Lakh (\$107,142) per New York Dhaka flight using a full load of 274 customers in their ancient DC 10-30s. This implies the cost per o/w seat to Biman on this flight was \$875 or 150% higher than other carriers.

A Boeing 777-300 ER has a range anywhere between 5,200 and 9,300 miles with a capacity to carry 300 to 360 passengers. Such an aircraft is more than adequate to cover the 7,000 nautical miles over the arctic between New York and Dhaka. Assuming an average speed of 550 miles/hr this aircraft would take about 12.7 hours for this flight. Recently, Biman wet-leased (cost includes aircraft, crew, maintenance, insurance, fuel and ground handling) a Boeing 747 at \$5,300 per block (flying) hour. The current wet-lease cost of a Boeing 777 ranges between \$10,000 and \$14,000 per hour. Taking a mid-range value of \$12,000 per hour, it would cost Biman \$152,727 to operate one such flight. Assuming a configuration and fill factor are such that there are 330 economy class passengers per flight, their cost per seat would be about \$465. If Biman charges the same as what the foreign carriers are charging, they would make a profit of \$110 per seat or \$36,300 (Tk 25.4 Lakh) per one way flight instead of a loss Tk 75 Lakh!

As long distance traveller, I'll pay \$575 o/w for a non-stop flight that lasts less than 13 to nearly 24 hours it takes going via Abu Dhabi, Dubai or Kuwait. In fact, I would be more than happy to pay extra for the added convenience and avoiding the high risk of mistreatment by natives of the Gulf countries. So there is a pure business case for Biman to start such a non-stop service. All the complaints from Biman about political pressure from Bangladeshi expatriates in

north America seem ridiculous. However, it is obvious that having such a direct flight between Dhaka and New York will benefit Bangladesh's trade with the region many times.

While I am happy to see positive ideas emanating from Biman's management reflected by good business decisions, I think it would be a huge mistake to break up the New York - Dhaka journey by stopping in a third country like the UK. Not only will it take away the biggest attraction of a shorter travel time, but it will also add to the anxiety of having to deal with travel restrictions on Bangladeshi passport holders in those countries, not to mention delays and elemental uncertainties related to any additional stop-over.

I look forward to seeing Bangladesh's national flag carrier on US soil again soon! Shabbir A. Bashir, PhD  
Vancouver, USA

## Security issue

On last 6 July, the cabinet approved a draft law to ensure security of the family members of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with immediate effect. This step has been rejected by most of the people as two online polls run by newspapers show. The prime minister of Bangladesh gets water tight security ex officio, so there is no need to change or enact any law in this regard. Furthermore, it seems inappropriate when overall public security is creaking. Acid throwing, extortion and murder are common incidents nowadays, even innocent people are being killed in broad daylight.

Our constitution, also says "All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law" (part 3, article 27). So, is it not a breach of the constitution?

Sheikh Sabuj  
Department of English  
University of Dhaka

# Dr. Yunus

Prof Yunus is our pride. He has got America's highest civilian award. It is good news for any Bangladeshi. The success of Prof Yunus is sufficient to change the image of our nation. This incident would definitely encourage many other Bangladeshis to work for the betterment of the country. Yunus won the hearts of millions of Bangladeshis through his hard work and right thought. President Barack Obama rightly called Yunus, "An agent of change."

I do not hesitate to say that at this old age too, Prof Yunus looks very young and cheerful. This signifies that age is no bar for him and he has "miles to go." Like Lord Tennyson's Ulysses, he possesses iron determination "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

Pradip Das  
A novelist  
Dhaka

