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Justice, at long last

I was reading A.L. Khatib's narration of the sinister night of August 14, 1975 in Dhaka in The Daily Star. The vivid details of the gruesome murders are once again imprinted on my mind. I am so pleased to know that the senseless massacre of Bangabandhu's family is finally avenged through the legal institutions of our democratic nation. This is a day for Bangladeshis to be proud as a nation.

Dr. Nusrat Rabbee
Daughter of Martyred Intellectual Shaheed Dr. Fazle Rabbee

Greed - the green-eyed monster

Just over a year after taking oath to serve the people of Bangladesh, the Fat Cats have duly emerged from Kahn's White Elephant Stables (KWES). There will now be the descent of "Manna from Heaven" for the lucky 345 denizens of KWES in the shape of duty-free Gas Guzzling Monstrosities (GGMs).

My questions are 1) Why should only the Legislature get this opportunity? Why deprive the Judiciary? The Advisers? And the Executive (including the bureaucrats, TNOs, Chairmen etc down to the DCC cleaners)? 2) At an average of Tk 30 lakh, the GGMs for the MPs alone will entail an expenditure of Tk.103.5 crore plus another Tk 16.50 crore for their upkeep and maintenance. I shudder to even mention the loss of duty revenue which the DS informs us will be to the tune over Tk 700 crore. Will the voting public stand for this needless waste? 3) Are all the lucky recipients in need of GGMs? 4) Has any authority surveyed how many GGMs they already have in their garages? 5) Greed breeds corruption, so if at all the MPs need to be given some largesse (bribe?), would it not be more practical to hand over a lump sum (GGM sale price less cost) and spare the Dhaka roads from more congestion whenever they show off their new duty-free acquisition duly followed by their posse of police plus their chamchas?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Sohel Taj returns

Sohel Taj resigned and left the country for months. A new state-minister was appointed to take over his job. And still the government does not know the exact status of Sohel Taj. On his arrival back to Bangladesh, if the news reports were correct, he was accorded the protocol befitting a state minister. It is heartening that Sohel Taj refused the protocol and took a private transport to his home.

This fiasco definitely does not bode well for the kind of leadership (digital or not) envisioned by the prime minister.

Mohammad Zaman
Ellisville, Missouri

This nuisance must stop

Of late, mobile telephone companies are taking advantage of their knowledge (of our cell numbers) and taking this 'keep connected' mission beyond civic sense even by jungle standards. Mobile telephone companies are rather inquisitive and personal. It is possible that at 2:00am in the morning your sms alert will sound, you would obviously want to know what it is that is so urgent, and the words at the push of your 'read now' button would unveil the company's profoundest desire to learn whether you would like to get the latest ring tone from some Indian movie of a foreign language. And this is a Bangladeshi operator, licensed to operate in Bangladesh in taka and not rupee.

You are in a serious meeting and the mobile set is set to 'vibrator' mode. your body shakes because the receiver is in your pocket. You take out the set, and press the 'show now' button to see what the message is all about. It's again that operator, intruding on your privacy, disturbing you, making you inattentive to some serious business and asking you whether you want to know about the latest lahanga that is available in this and that outlet. Your body shakes again, this time because your scruples are attached to your body.

The sensible and polite thing would be to stop this nuisance at once. However, if money is still biting them to bring in more money, mobile companies could advertise in newspapers and in their monthly bulletins telephone numbers for various purposes where we can send sms, if we require.

Shoshi Osman
Baridhara, Dhaka

The tragic incident

It is surprising that there is no official reaction to what has happened at the Imperial Hotel, I am not sure whether the PM had been informed of the incident. If she has been, we expect her to visit the wounded players and asked for explanation from the concerned in-charge of the SAF Games and the person in charge of accommodation and safety. Apparently, the hotel management failed to prevent over loading in the lift. This is pure negligence of duty by the hotel management, and do not blame the poor liftman alone.

The organizers have put all their efforts for the gala opening ceremony and the glittering part of the same. A big question has arisen, are we fully prepared to host such big events and what will happen to the future big events!!

Be transparent and tell the people what actually happened, how and why.

Areader
One-mail



Food from sunflower!

The AP news item from USA on the matter was published by a local English daily on 23 January. It is exciting news, for the growing world population, ailing food and fuel resource shortages, if not today, then in the years hence!

It is reported that scientists are exploring the frontier of genetic DNA research to try to crossbreed and modify the sunflower DNA to make it a potential source of food from the flower seeds and fuel (ethanol) from the flower stalk! The plant stem will be modified genetically to produce usable timber also for house building!

Scientists hope to have a breeding programme for such hybrid sunflower plants in the next few years! This has been possible through understanding of the plant's genes, and its modification.

All this bodes well for the world, already facing shortage of food and

fuel in various countries. Researchers plan to map the genes of the sunflower family of plants to develop wood producing modified sunflower plants, with increase in complex sugars in the stalk to have a viable feedstock for ethanol production.

Most of the ethanol now comes from corn, an important food source. Conversion of food to fuel is now being criticised for taking away food from the needy and to convert it to fuel for the rich person's car!

These scientists are doing a commendable work for humanity, and are among the famous "unknown and unsung heroes"; of whom we know not!

They all deserve our acknowledgement and heartfelt thanks, for this great

Humanitarian work for the needy.
Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Support the needy

My attention has been drawn to the advertisement published in your daily on January 23 last "Inviting applications for 2010 higher studies scholarship". This is undoubtedly a good gesture on the part of a bank of ours when, as far as my knowledge is concerned, I have not seen any such endeavour shown by any other institution or agency as yet. This is a praiseworthy step taken by one of our banks for helping and encouraging higher studies by the meritorious students.

I have all my appreciations and praises for the donors. I believe other institutions like this would also come forward to render such noble services to the society. There are lot many avenues in our society to spend money for the betterment of the poor.

It's a pleasure for me to realize that scores of richest people are there in our country who can open their hearts to extend necessary help not only to the scholars but also to hundreds of our poor people who are suffering from deadly diseases like cancer, cardiac problems and others, treatment of which is very costly.

I had occasions to see the pale faces of such helpless patients, their parents and near relatives in NICVD, BSMMU hospital, Shishu and Pangu hospitals and in some other clinics in the city and tried to help them with the mite I have. I would urge upon the richest people of our country to kindly come forward and render necessary financial help to these poor and helpless people to get back their healthy and happy lives.

I believe Allah the Creator of mankind and everything seen and unseen by us and the Lord of the Day of resurrection, shall give them much more than they can think of.

Let everybody extend their helping hands towards all the needy ones in the country to redress their miseries.

Let there be no more failure to save humanity from hunger and natural calamities.

Acitizen
Dhaka

Chhatra League activities

We have become very upset by the activities of cadres of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Day by day they are becoming more daring and desperate.

On the night of January 29, 2010 cadres of BCL and students of Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University damaged more than 100 vehicles and looted valuables when police arrested a few of them for teasing girls and snatching goods from stalls. We learned that many BCL leaders were negotiating at the police station for the release of the arrested leaders. We deplore this move, those guilty persons must be punished, otherwise they will think being ruling party men they are invincible and can do whatever they wish.

The nation will celebrate the Mother Language Day, February 21. My heart fills with pride and gratitude when I think of the martyrs of the Language Movement, they were students who laid down their lives for the sake of their mother tongue and in the liberation war there were many students who did not hesitate to embrace death to liberate the country.

With deep anguish I can only think—where have those valiant sons gone? Why this degradation?

If timely actions are not taken, we will be in deeper trouble. We request the government to deal sternly with their student wing.
Nurjahan
Chittagong

A different ministry

The Ministry of Science and Technology is an applied ministry which deals with so many applied subjects like biotechnology, R and D research project, fellowship and funding to the researchers who are engaged in short and long term research, fellowship to the masters and doctoral students, especially with science background in different universities, different type of prestigious scholarship offered by different countries etc. Two national institutes like Bangabandhu Novo theatre, National Institute of Biotechnology are under this ministry.

In future its activities will reflect our adaptation of modern science and technology. Therefore this ministry needs specialized people who will handle the vast area. The bureaucrats who are apt in file work cannot make this ministry dynamic.

Therefore, I would request our government to appoint famous scientists for this special ministry, instead of officials with administrative background alone. After all, this ministry is a special one.

Hafiz Chandan (Ph.D)
Wuhan University
China

Request for website

Zia International Airport is one of the important international airports in our region. However, it is a matter of regret that there is no official website of the airport. Many countries in Asia have already launched official websites for their international airports. An airport website helps to promote the airport, its services, and makes it easy for the users to navigate through the airport. Moreover, a website of an airport can help the passengers in many ways. Domestic and international passengers can easily receive relevant information from the website about their travel.

I would urge the authorities to take the initiative to launch an interactive website for Zia International Airport. This website will be a representative of Bangladesh to the international and domestic community. The authorities can take example of websites of Hong Kong International Airport, Singapore and Thailand International Airport. I am sure that it can be done by our domestic IT professionals.
Mohammad H. Rahman
East Bashabo, Dhaka

Price on heads

Even in the USA, when police fail to net some most wanted criminals like serial killers they declare 'price on heads' for bounty hunters. The bounty hunters in the USA is a group manned by ex-police and military personnel who are well equipped with past experience and hunting for money is their business. Their network is so wide that they can penetrate anywhere in the world and catch the absconding criminals in exchange of declared money.

Out of 12 convicted killers of Bangabandhu, only 5 were in custody and the present govt has executed them. Out of remaining seven, one has reportedly died long before. The rest six are absconding and reportedly living in different countries. Full implementation and not partial implementation of court orders is the duty of the government. The absconding killers are living in many countries with some of whom Bangladesh has no extradition treaty, some are friendly to those killers who gave them shelter. I suspect, official process to bring them home and implement the court orders may take a long time and if it goes beyond the tenure of the present government they may not face punishment at all. It took 34 years to complete the trials and if, by any chance there is a change in power, it may take another 34 years when all will meet natural death and the court orders will remain unimplemented forever.

I don't know the possibilities, feasibilities or justifiability but I suggest the present government may look into the matter and if necessary should declare "Price on Heads" on the convicted killers.
Shafiqul Islam, NY

U-19 World Cup

After an impressive build-up to the Under-19 World Cup Cricket Championship, Bangladesh again comes away with a "plate". To me, this is like being the best of the worst. Being the worst of the best at least, would have been a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, we are not good enough for even that. From dreaming to be in the last four we slipped to 9th. We do not seem to be able to do the right thing when it matters most, as we witnessed in this tournament. The score in the last match with Ireland is proof of the fact that the boys from Bangladesh actually belonged in the big league. "This is cricket" Maybe. "You can have good days and bad days" Sure. But when you have one bad day after another, this is NOT cricket. This is wandering about in the wilderness. I don't claim to know the answer to this impasse. I know only that there is no quick-fix solution to this problem. But fixed it can be by those who walk the halls of status and prestige of the world of Bangladesh cricket.

We already have three "plates". If this trend continues, very soon the BCB will be able to host a dinner party with their "prestigious" collection. Maybe this is what they are aiming for. Who knows?
Dr. C. Zaman
Ottawa, Canada

BNP's reaction

Our leader of the opposition Madam Khaleda Zia refrained from making any comments and also instructed her party men to do the same after the execution of five killers of Bangabandhu and his family. By the way, what is so surprising about that? This attitude, this exercise of caution, certainly reflects her personal feelings towards the whole matter.

It is not unexpected at all, if we consider what her late husband did to save these killers (for reasons unknown?) and what she particularly has been doing for some years in the name of celebrating her fake birthday on this mournful day! It is Bangabandhu's killing she is celebrating not her birthday! Outrageous!

Durdana Matin
Associate Professor
Department of English
University of Chittagong

Clinton and Obama

Most people are talking about U.S. President Barack Obama's losing the Senate seat vacated by the demise of Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy without ever mentioning that former President Bill Clinton also lost Congress in 1994 and yet he was re-elected in 1996 with a wider margin.

In the 1994 mid-term elections, President Clinton saw his Democrats lose Congress. Critics blamed that Clinton's loss was the result of his abandoning tax-cutting centrist platform as a "New Democrat." Once in office, Clinton announced a huge tax increase and embarked on a national health care plan. As a result, most people thought he would be another Jimmy Carter and would go down as a single-term president.

And yet, Mr. Clinton was re-elected in a landslide in 1996 and his Republican opponent Senator Bob Dole, running on a tax-cutting agenda, went down in total defeat. Clinton did raise taxes on wealthy Americans (people earning more than \$250,000 a year) to stem a runaway budget deficit left behind by earlier Republican administrations. Clinton's tax-hike on the rich, denounced by right-wing Republicans as "a passport to recession," balanced the budget, produced a surplus, lowered the long-term interest

rate and triggered the longest economic boom in recent history. His successor President George W. Bush squandered the surplus by his staggering \$1.67 trillion tax cut, producing a massive \$400 billion deficit.

Like President Clinton, President Barack Obama faces an enormous budget deficit left behind by President Bush. And he must follow in the footsteps of Mr. Clinton and raise taxes on the wealthy to balance the budget. This will reduce the deficit and need to borrow from China. In fact Mr. Obama is moving in the direction.

But like Clinton in 1994, Obama is now facing his critics who are blinded by a temporary setback. They fail to realise that Mr. Obama is showing his steel to tame the bankers who bankrupted America's financial institutions through their greed and incompetence. The Obama administration launched a modest regulatory reform initiative in the summer of 2009, proposing new consumer protections and some measures to strengthen financial stability. But the banks are fighting the measures at every step.

It's no surprise that the banks have tried to resist reform.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa
Canada

Tribute to a great poet



January 25 is the birthday of Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Though born into a rich family, he suffered a lot throughout his whole life because of his indomitable will to lead a free life.

His sorrow could not snatch his creative impulse. He would ever remain a bright star in the world of Bengali literature. His creations are our national assets too. At the same time, he would inspire millions of free thinking people. In fact, he was above all kind of narrowness. However, people of his times misunderstood him.

He was born in Jessore district of Bangladesh. Being citizens of this country, we are proud of him.

The present generation must know about this great poet.

Pradip Das
A novelist
Dhaka

Pope and Jews

The substantive thing that I agree with Mr. Kokoski's letter of January 31st is that Nazi Germany was a "complex period of history." During that period the role of the German Catholic Church in particular and the Vatican in general is at best murky and perplexing. Before the Roman Catholic Church can justify Pope Pius XII's elevation to sainthood there should be responses to numerous answered questions. To begin with, Firstly, why the Vatican was one of the very first independent political entities to recognize Hitler's government, and why it was in such a rush to make its unwise "Reich Concordat" with Hitler, six months after he was in office, thereby giving it unwarranted moral legitimacy in the eyes of the rest of the world?

Secondly, why did the Church never repudiate that Concordat, once it became clear that it had "made a pact with the devil"?

Thirdly, why there is so little evidence of the authorities of the Catholic Church in either Germany or the Vatican speaking clearly and loudly against the Nazis, yet there is ample

evidence of the Church insisting on being "neutral", when it was urged to speak out against the Nazi's. And yet, when it regularly instructed German Catholics to obey their Nazi rulers, was that being "neutral"?

Fourthly, Can anybody say why didn't Pope Pius XI or XII ever put "Mein Kampf" on the Index of Forbidden Books? Or did the church allow this book to compete throughout the Hitler years with the Judeo-Christian Bible, as the best selling book in Germany?

Fifthly, why the Pope and/or bishops of the Nazi countries never excommunicated or even refused the sacraments to Adolf Hitler or any of the many other high-ranking Catholics in the Nazi leadership?

Sixthly, how could the Roman Catholic Church order a solemn requiem mass for Hitler upon learning of his death?

In conclusion, I dare say that the Roman Catholic Church in Germany chose never to oppose Hitler publicly and unequivocally during his time.
Syed Moimul Hasan
New York, USA

A peaceful congregation



Bishwa Ijtema is undoubtedly one of the most significant religious congregations of Muslims and has become a global event. It is not sure when the first Bishwa Ijtema was held. Some believe that this event started back in 1946. One facet of this religious congregation that has remained alike over time is that the Tabligh Jamaat of Bangladesh organises it every year. Starting out as a tiny event that was attended by a few devotees, it has grown into a massive congregation that is attended by millions from all over

the world.

Bishwa Ijtema is an exclusive event, as it is a gathering that focuses solely on prayer and meditation, and is not open for political deliberations. Muslims come to the assembly, located on the Turag River near Dhaka, to obtain divine blessings. As a matter of fact, it is the ideal medium of religious learning.

Shohag Mostafij
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University of Dhaka