

Selected extracts from the September issue of Forum

# Where the streets have no name



BINA D' COSTA

**T**HE most important distinguishing factor between a refugee and an internally displaced person (IDP) is cross border movement. Unlike refugees, who cross

the international border for fear of persecution, IDPs do not cross a border. There is very limited legal protection offered to IDPs due to this unique context, as the state itself is the perpetrator of violence instead of providing protection to the IDPs. The United Nation's working defini-

tion of the internally displaced is, "...persons who have been forced to flee their home suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers, as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, and who are within the territory of their own country."

Another report by Janie Hampton, the editor of IDP: A Global Survey states, "Unlike refugees who cross international borders, those who stay within their own country must rely upon their own governments to uphold their civil and human rights. If the state chooses not to invite external assistance, then the international community has limited options to protect these people. In many countries, it is the government or its military forces that have caused the displacement or prevent access to their citizens." Numbers of IDPs from the region are unfortunately growing. The reason for them to be displaced range from being forced to flee their home because of an armed conflict (Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Burma, Iraq), environmental disasters (Indonesia, Burma, China), construction of dams (China, India, Bangladesh), industrialisation, famine and economic upheavals (the Philippines, Cambodia).

Internal displacement of the Pahari people in Bangladesh is the result of post-colonial

nationbuilding and identity conflict. Known as Paharis or Hill People they are easily distinguishable from the people of the plains in terms of their features, socio-cultural practices and economic activities. Because of their traditional practice of shifting cultivation they are also collectively referred as "Jumma" people. This self-identification is also used by various CHT political communities to frame their own Pahari/Jumma nationbuilding strategies.

The CHT has geo-political and strategic significance for Bangladesh and South Asian security due to its location and proximity to India and Burma, and the porosity of the border; its richness in commercial natural resources; and historical, political and social contexts that constitute the communities of the CHT as the "other" within a Bangladeshi state. A low-intensity conflict that is deeply embedded in the struggle over land and existence in the CHT has contributed to massive internal displacement over the years.

For the full version of this article please read this month's Forum, available free with The Daily Star on September 6.

Bina D'Costa is a member of the Drishtipat Writers Collective, which published the book "Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism" where an abbreviated version of this essay appears.

# The transfer chronicles

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

**F**OR every hard-core football fan, of which there are many in Bangladesh, the summer months can be long and arduous. League season in Europe winds down with the Champions League final in May and unless you are an aficionado of the Icelandic or Russian leagues, June-August will most likely be spent in a state of hope/despair, depending on the performance of your chosen team in the corresponding season.

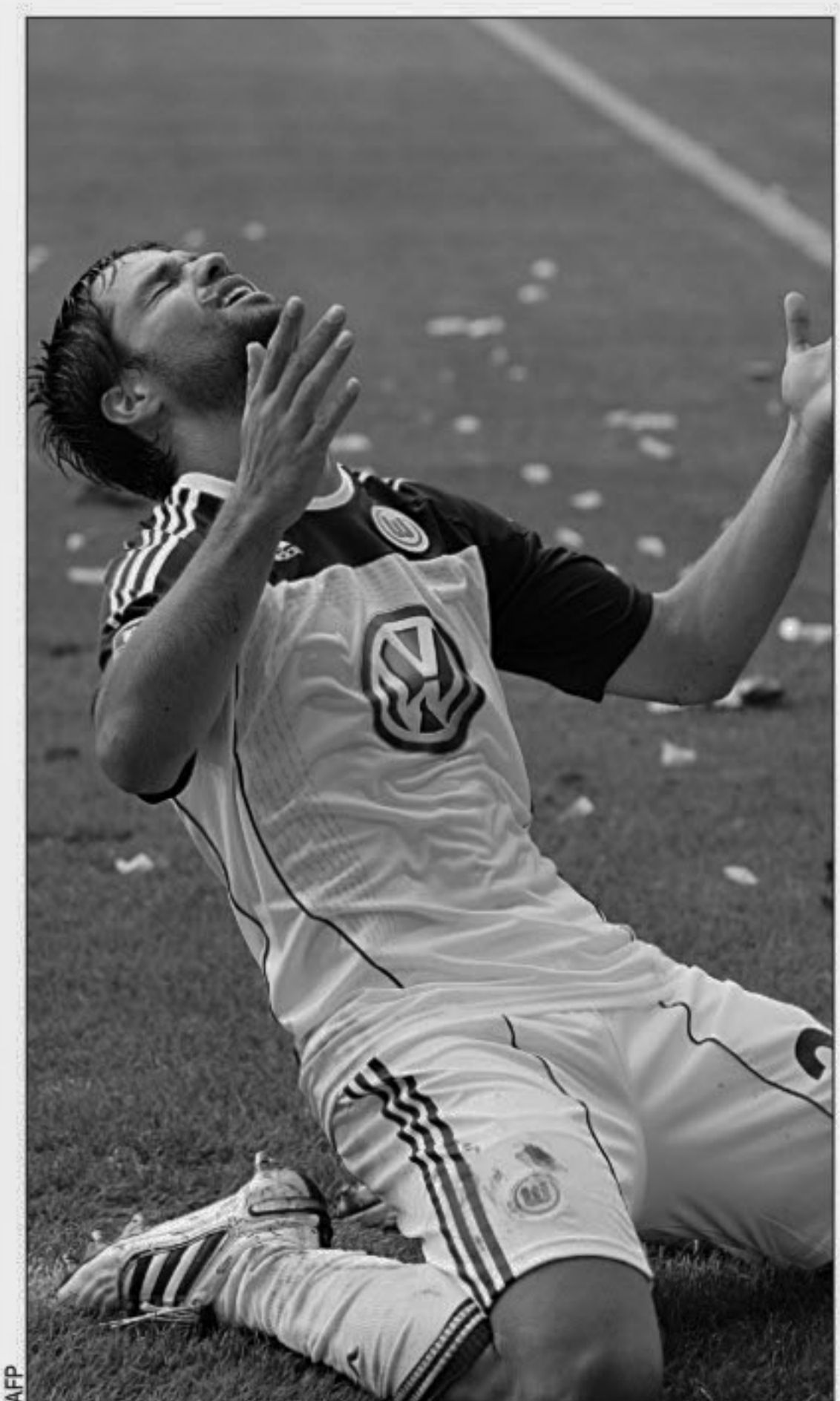
Of course, every two years, you have either the European Championship or the World Cup to keep you busy, but often even these heady tournaments take a back-seat to the single most important activity for the summer transfers.

Transfers are a unique activity and it would not be wrong to say that they are almost football's lifeblood. People talk about them, the press jump on them and the clubs see it as a way of improving their playing staff while at the same time appeasing their demanding fans.

The blood-thirsty nature of transfers mean, that every off-season (and for a short while in January) fans are baying for new blood. Newspapers are abound with rumours of fresh recruitments by big clubs and all this means that the clubs are always under undue pressure to sign up the next big star name to their books. The short time span, lack of proper planning, and high competition mean that more often than not a lot of transfers turn into busts.

Take the case of AC Milan for example. In the early 1980's, a Milan scout spotted a feisty young black forward playing for English upstarts Watford. Rumour has it, that the player was John Barnes. But the poor scout, suffered from a case of mistaken identity and instead roped in the hapless Luther Blissett for the princely sum of 1 million pounds. Suffice to say, Blissett's time at the San Siro was acrimonious, and his name is now synonymous with anarchy, in the fashion capital of Milan.

But those were the halcyon days of the 80's. As football gained more professionalism and as scouts were increasingly fed with information gleaned from



every corner of the globe, you would expect transfer activity to have been perfected to an almost exact science. Right?

Wrong. The truth is, clubs continue to rope in players with hardly any thought to proper planning. Small wonder then, that a high percentage of transfers end up being expensive failures. For a more recent example, one only has to look at the supposedly infallible Sir Alex Ferguson. After the World Cup in 2002, much was made of the decision of the Scot to rope in Brazilian midfielder Kleberston. The previously unheard of midfielder had, according to Ferguson, won Brazil the World Cup. Many were shocked, since Kleberston had played in only a few games in the finals. But Ferguson was convinced, and Kleberston it was, who strutted his stuff in the Theatre of Dreams for two seasons; with understandably tragic results.

For an even more recent example, one only has to look at the case of the Portuguese starlet Bebe, signed this season by United. A former homeless World Cup player, Bebe was secured by Ferguson for the princely sum of 7.5 million pounds. So far, he has even failed to crack the reserve team, with his control and touch apparently not good enough. Ferguson admitted, he had never seen Bebe play and this is astonishing for someone who splashed that kind of cash on a player. Yet, Ferguson is not the only example. Clubs often splash out on unknown talent and are left with egg on their faces.

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Quazi Zulquarnain Islam is a Football Journalist.

# A triangular manipulation

MD. SHAIRUL MASHREQUE

**T**HE contemporary scenario of triangular manipulation is a manipulation by the dominant interest group -- the coalition of interests among "governing elites," "fortune seeking political entrepreneurs" and privileged business communities. Governing elites include both political leadership and bureaucracy. It is seen that governing elites expand various opportunities for economic concentration including rent-seeking ones. It ultimately aggravates the poverty situation threatening the legitimacy of the regime and increasing the probability of regime turn over.

Political leadership actually does not represent the majority of the rural population. The change of political allegiance of local leadership with the change of the ruling regime is evident (Ahmed 1991). Local leadership has turned into a lucrative trade without investment drawing most patronage resources from the ruling regimes. Patronage resources have been usually placed at the disposal of the influential elites including local MPs. There is a great struggle among faction leaders to capture those resources which provide accessibility to development inputs flowing into the locality from different strategic points of the "centre power axis."

The crisis of non-participation of the ordinary ruralities is crystal clear in a "soft" and "predatory" state like Bangladesh. Here the structure of governance is subservient to "extensive rent seeking" an omnipresent policy to obtain private benefits from public actions and resources. So fuzzy governance bedevils the otherwise seemingly stable community life. Repeated policy failure is thus a forgone conclusion. This is evident from the frantic attempt of the governing elites to grab more resources.

Bureaucracy is found to be bolstering fuzzy local governance using manipulative skills and techniques. The governing class including the tycoons may not benefit from the "enforcement of rules of law," transparency and anti-corruption state action. Instead they "gain from extensive unproductive and profit seeking

activities in a political system they control than from long term efforts to build a well functioning state in which economic progress and democratic institutions flourish" (Nafgee and Anvize:2002). The protracted fuzzy governance is an inevitable outcome of triangular manipulation with bureaucracy going strong to practice corruption. A plethora of organisations influenced by a triangular alliance are not effective mechanisms to articulate the interest of the deprived class as policy inputs. Local government bodies, co-operatives, several committees and civil societies (not all) have become more or less the "ploys of intensive political hobnobbing."

The foundation of peasant existence in the politico-administrative landscape has been constantly eroded by three interlinked processes: one operates on the global dimension, one the national plane and one at the local level. The net effects of the cold and dark happenings in the globalisation process have been disastrous in the southern hemisphere; battering the lives of peasants. The cumulative effects of policy failures and inadequacies in organisation and management at the national level are equally disastrous, worsening material conditions of living. In addition, the shattering impact of project intervention altogether with flimsy and insensitive institutional structures on the peasant economy is obvious.

Policy failure is not a matter of inefficient public policy but clear-cut fuzzy governance. The governing class running the show through various intervening interest groups blissfully overlooks progressive impoverishment in the countryside marked by a "veritable" cauldron of economic crises. The downside of the poor and fixed income group has become one of the significant marks of the fall on the destiny of the peasant society.

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Dr. Md. Shairul Mashreque is a Professor, Department of Public Administration, Chittagong University.

# Our constitution

HANA SHAMS AHMED

**T**HE Constitution of Bangladesh has been brought under the microscope for the 15th time since 1972. With the annulment of the fifth amendment of the Constitution through a judgment by the Supreme Court this year, the Constitution is to revert to some of the core values behind the formation of the original 1972 version, whose four main pillars were democracy, socialism, nationalism and secularism.

The latest judgment by the Supreme Court gives us a chance to look closely at the Constitution, which was adopted soon after the liberation war ended in 1971, in the aftermath of the emotions and ideology that led the nation in the struggle for identity and existence. While the 1972 document had an equal vie towards citizens of all religions, ethnic, cultural and linguistic pluralism were patently absent from the document. Thus, while the 1972 constitution was even-handed to all religions, it did not recognise the fifty or more indigenous peoples and their distinct identities, who still remain as second class citizens of Bangladesh.

When the draft of the Constitution of Bangladesh was presented to the Constituent Assembly in 1972, Manabendra Narayan Larma (founder general secretary of PCJSS) refused to endorse a Constitution that did not recognise the existence of people of other ethnic origins than Bangali. He had protested: "Under no definition or logic can a Chakma be a Bangali or a Bangali be a Chakma... As citizens of Bangladesh we are all Bangladeshis, but we also have a separate ethnic identity..."

Thirty-eight years after MN Larma's protest, the time has finally come to correct a basic flaw in our national constitutional framework. The formation of the current special parliamentary committee to review and recommend constitutional amendments is a welcome move by the government. Its

recommendations must include remedies to a Constitution that is still ethnically communal in nature, putting people from non-Bangali groups outside our definition of nation.

## The 1997 CHT Accord and the 2008 AL election manifesto

One of the objectives of the Constitution review and amendment committee is "implementation of ruling Awami League-led grand alliance's electoral pledges". One commitment that the Awami League government has so far not fulfilled is implementation of the CHT Accord. The 2008 election manifesto promised: "The 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord will be fully implemented. More efforts will be directed towards the development of underdeveloped areas, and special programs on priority basis will be taken to secure rights of the ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and other communities, and to preserve their language, literature, culture, and unique lifestyles."

However, by the second year of the Awami League government, the Pahari people are still waiting for positive steps towards implementation of the Accord. In fact, instead of implementation, in April of this year the CHT Accord received a setback when a bench of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court declared the CHT Regional Council (RC), set up under the Accord, as unconstitutional. The RC was formed, among others, to coordinate and supervise the activities of the three Hill District Councils, and to oversee general administration, local council and NGO activities. The court decision is currently being appealed against by the government and the RC, pending which the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court has stayed the High Court Divisions' judgment.

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Hana Shams Ahmed is a member of Drishtipat Writers' Collective and can be contacted at dpwriters@drishtipat.org.

# Two hands are better than one



ISHFAQ IALHI CHOUDHURY

**C**IVIL-MILITARY relations generate much debate and discussion in Bangladesh because of the ups and downs, turbulence and trepidations through

which the relationship has passed over the last four decades. This debate goes on not only in Bangladesh, but also in the most developed countries of the world such as in the US, UK, and in our region in India and Pakistan. This relationship has often influenced domestic

policies or its external relations, besides shaping the country's security structures. Now that we are once again consolidating our democratic polity, it is important to re-examine civil-military issues, identify shortfalls and recommend measures to build a strong, and vibrant relationship between the two important segments of the society. Before we venture further, it would be pertinent to examine the historical background.

## Historical background

Civil-military relationship in Bangladesh can be traced back to the Liberation War in March 1971 when young Bengali military officers of the Pakistan Army, of the rank of Major and below, along with troops under their command, revolted and joined the freedom fight at the call of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Nine months of mostly guerilla warfare followed by a brief stint of conventional war in December 1971, saw victory and the birth of a new nation -- Bangladesh. These officers had been steeped in the Pakistani military ethos of blaming politicians for all national ills and looking down at them as corrupt and decadent. Some believed that military can administer better and must have a role in national affairs, while others, with leftist orientation, believed that the new nation should be a truly Marxist-socialist state.

The military commanders, who operated almost autonomously during the Liberation War, had gained further confidence in themselves. To their troops, and also to large numbers of irregular Freedom Fighters (FF), or Muktis, as they were called, the Commanders appeared as demigods. The loyalty of the troops was often to the Commander as a person, and not to the organisation or the state. Added to this symbiotic relationship between men and officers who participated in the Liberation War was the induction of large numbers of officers and men repatriated from Pakistan in 1973-74. These military personnel made up the so-called "repatriated" group and generally had an acrimonious relationship with the FFs. If one is to understand what happened from August 1975 to well in the 1990s, these sub-groupings and their relationships must be taken into account. Most officers who were involved in uprisings and mutinies from 1975 to 1981 were from FF groups. However, the coup by Gen. Ershad in 1982 marked the eclipse of the FFs and the emergence of the repatriated officers in the power structure of the armed forces.

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Air Cdre (Retd) Ishfaq Ialhi Choudhury is a Security Analyst and Registrar, BRAC University.