

CROSS TALK

We hail Press Council verdict Media must maintain highest ethical standards

WE hail the verdict of the Press Council (PC) regarding some recent false, fabricated and motivated reports in the daily Kaler Kantha. We are happy to note the clarity and emphatic manner in which the Press Council reached its decision. Indeed, it is refreshing to observe that the body has reasserted its ability and capacity to adjudicate matters concerning the media. This surely augurs well for journalism especially given the fact that recourse to the PC holds out the promise of the proceedings being less time consuming and decisive. We would like to advise everyone involved with the media and also readers that in cases where media houses and individuals might feel aggrieved by other media reports, they can take the perfectly logical step of recording their grievances with the Press Council. Such a step, besides preventing journalists from being harassed unnecessarily, will be a spur to future activism on the part of the PC. The council's potential should now dawn on those needing it in future.

Now that the PC has acted, it is our hope that the management of daily Kaler Kantha will go for serious introspection of its role and what damage yellow journalism can do to healthy journalism. The daily should eschew the egotistical and revisit the issues raised by the PC judgement from an ethical and professional point of view. For in the media world today, it is hugely important that we discard unethical journalism and return to being the voices of truth, a fundamental objective of journalism. Unfortunately, too often some individuals indulge in personal vendetta and character assassination through misusing journalism and media houses. This must come to an end. All media organizations must uphold the highest standards of ethics in their presentation of news and comments. We must remember that as "watchdogs" of the public interest, newspapers are often subjected to the wrath of those who exercise power. And powerful quarters have never been loath to come down heavily on the press. In such moments of crises, it is the people, the readers, who stand by newspapers and vindicate their cause. It is thus not acceptable that this public support be squandered by a recourse to unethical practices by a section of the media. Public trust is a strength that will fritter away if we indulge in unethical and yellow journalism. We must not let that happen.

Let this seminal judgment of the Press Council be a beacon highlighting intellectual honesty and integrity in journalism. Let this ethics and morality-based, forward-looking verdict be a guideline for the future.

Relocation of chemical depots Act on task force recommendations

SOME 10 months after the devastating fire from a chemical warehouse and about eight months after the formation of a taskforce to find out means to stop recurrence of such incidents, the government seems to be swinging into action. It has decided to relocate chemical depots and factories from their present locations to the other side of the Buriganga.

There are some 1000 chemical factories and warehouses in the city, and of them, only 127 have any licences whatsoever.

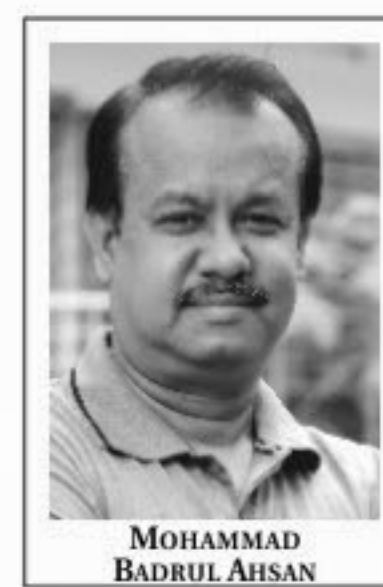
We must thank our stars that Nimtoli-like tragedies have not occurred so far. But the situation is much more serious than the concern we have shown in taking a prompt decision on shifting such hazardous establishments away from the city centres.

Earlier, especially after the Nimtoli fire tragedy we had advised the government on more than one occasion to take immediate measures to remove these factories from within the heart of the city. But as usual the bureaucratic machinery took this long to take such an important decision.

The long delay notwithstanding, we commend the government for having taken a firm decision after all to relocate the warehouses of flammable chemicals as well as the plastic factories that use such flammable chemicals to a designated spot outside the city.

The task force on whose recommendations two committees have been formed tasked with relocation and rehabilitation of the chemical warehouses and factories, has also stressed intensification of the drives against such illegal establishments in the city. As recommended, the government should not delay in launching such drive. And as in every other case of drive by the law-enforcers to carry out any government or statutory order, utmost care will be necessary to ensure that the enforcers of the law remain above board and incorruptible.

The committee constituted to see through the relocation process will be expected to complete the job within a



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHASAN

THE fate of a new Egypt appears to be in the hands of three famous Egyptians. Amr Musa is a former foreign minister and head of the Arab League. Nobel

Laureate Mohamed ElBaradei is the former director of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Naquib Sawiris is the chief executive of Orascom, one of the ten largest telecommunication companies in the world. Like all great men, they also think alike. Recently they agreed that Egypt should have a government that protects individual rights.

That wisdom in a faraway country only resonates the lack of it back home. After all, what is a country that doesn't protect the rights of its citizens? We have a people's republic, but how much of it belongs to the people? Bitter truth, it should be told. This country belongs to the rich and powerful. The ordinary people are mere numbers.

This country revs and runs for the privileged class. Oh yes, it does. Foreign policy, trading policy, law and order, development strategy, infrastructure building, entertainment, national budget, you name it, you got it, but everything is meant for that particular class. Law is binding on most people. A few people are exceptions to that rule.

The probe report on the stock market scam has made that fact even more poignant. The government wasn't as zealous to protect the interest of over 3.3 million investors, as it is to protect the names of a handful of market manipulators. Our politicians are pragmatic people. They know it may take the ordinary many to get elected to office, but only the extraordinary few keep them in power.

So, the teeming millions do not matter in this country. They are cannon fodder, the sentimental lot who are always in the first line of fire. They fill up the meeting venues, swell rallies, invigorate demonstrations and secure victory for political parties at the polls. They have shed blood in the Language Movement. They have fought against the invading Pakistani army during the Liberation War. Of

still the predominant victims of every bus capsizing, train accident, stalking, building collapse, factory fire, rape, fatwa, perversion, deprivation, depravity and despair. It's supposed to be their country. At least that's what it says in the country's official name: the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

The vast majority of people are neglected and oppressed in their own

in this country. They are dragged from court to court, police station to police station, and prison to prison. They often land in jail implicated for crimes they never committed. They are often sentenced to death, while the real culprits remain at large. They are the patsies for powerful people, scapegoats for their misdeeds. They are the body doubles, who substitute for the rich and powerful in tragedy and humiliation.

The contrast is obvious. The rich folks get to serve prison terms in the five-star hospitality of luxury hospitals. They get quick bails. Their trials get drawn out for as long as they wish. They are hardly accused, rarely convicted, scarcely sentenced but almost never sent to prison.

This republic is like a crowd scene from a movie where extras accentuate lead roles. The hawkers, beggars, frantic commuters, toiling farmers under the boiling sun, and the milling multitude, who fill its roads, streets, homes, fields and market squares are nothing but the wretched props on a stage dominated by a few actors.

The public in this republic are the victims of an endless scam. It happens in politics, it happens in share market, microfinance, business, banking, media, military, medical profession, legal profession, education and everything else. We are practicing silent cannibalism in this country where the blood and flesh of ordinary people bring sustenance to corporate and consummate greed.

The clever amongst us have made their choice. The hollow amongst us are making noise.

The people of this country have lost their voice. This republic contradicts itself. All men are equal, but some are more equal than others. Egypt has realised it. It's about time we also did.

The writer is Editor, First News and a columnist of The Daily Star.
Email: badrul151@yahoo.com



WAHID ADNAN/DRINKNEWS

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three million dead and two hundred thousand raped in 1971, the preponderant majority of these victims came from amongst them.

The mass people have always taken the brunt; the class people have reaped the benefit. And, that unfair business hasn't improved much even in this liberated country. The ordinary folks still starve. They still get swept away by cyclones and flood. They are

republic. They are squeezed by law-makers, fleeced by lawbreakers. They are hassled by musclemen, harassed by government. Land grabbers take their land; loan sharks take their homes. Nothing they have belongs to them. Doctors write false autopsy report for Hena's death. Rab shoots an innocent Limon in the leg. Neamul's fate hangs in the balance. Average people seldom find justice

The message of the cross of Christ

MARTIN ADHIKARY

AT the heart of Christianity lies the self-giving love of God. God supremely manifested this love for mankind on the cross of Christ. Paul, the apostle put this truth in this striking verse: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21)."

This message of the cross was antithetical to all ancient religious, ethical and political values. Crucifixion was a barbaric and gruesome practice of the Persian, Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans for punishing rebellious vassals and disobedient slaves.

The following dialogue between a Roman matron and her husband exemplifies the helpless condition of a slave under the whim of his master or mistress. "Crucify that slave," says the wife. "But what crime worthy of death has he committed?" asks the husband. "Where are the witnesses? Who informed against him? Give him a hearing at least. No delay can be too long when a man's life is at stake." "What a fool you are! Do you call a slave a man? Do you say he has done no wrong? This is my will and my command: take it as authority for the deed," retorted the wrathful wife (taken from Martin Hengel's "Crucifixion").

The Old Testament book of

Deuteronomy says: "He who is hanged on a tree (i.e. crucified) is cursed of God." Yet God chose this as the way for His Christ to deal with the issue of human sin and rebellion against Him. This is a profound spiritual truth not comprehended by mundane thinking or from worldly point of view.

Sacrifices of animals were inadequate to do away with human sins, which proved the need for a greater

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sacrifice. Brute animals do not have rational volition or choice. They cannot represent man. Philip Hughes observed: "A brute beast, by its very nature, is unqualified to serve as a substitute to man, the crown of God's creation."

Jesus became the true and perfect sacrifice as he lived a life of total obedience to God and His laws. His life was entirely sinless and perfect. He abolished the old order of rituals, and

wrought the new one with his own life. Christ's cross did what the Old Testament law could not do: it transformed the life of sinners by cleansing him. Any other kind of sacrifice is repeated again and again. But the giving of Christ's life is once for all. Christ died to bear our sins in his grace and mercy.

Of all the many images and symbols used in the book the most significant one is that of "the Lamb." This

enabling us to stand before a righteous and holy God. In other words, our relationship is righted with Him. In this lost and imperfect world the image of God in Man is tarnished and his crown rolls in the dust. Man is utterly depraved, and cannot save himself. So God's sinless Son came to take man's place and took upon himself that punishment due to man.

This is how and why Christ emptied himself. God, in his unique and unmerited grace, reconciled us to Himself. We don't earn our salvation, but it is God's free gift of grace to repentant man received in faith only. Simone Weil nicely says about God's transforming grace: "All the natural movements of the soul are controlled by laws analogous to those of physical gravity. Grace is the only exception." Eugene O'Neill observed: "Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is the glue."

God sent His son to mend and to recreate us that we may live righteously, in love, justice and harmony. This is God's way, for He says: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways (Isaiah 55:8)." God poured out His love that we may turn to Him in repentance for our sins, that we may receive forgiveness and live a new life in right relationship with others and with God.

The writer is a teacher of Theology.
Email: martin_a@timgangladesh.org

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

April 22

1911
Pravda, the "voice" of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, begins 1945

World War II: Fuehrerbunker: After learning that Soviet forces have taken Eberswalde without a fight, Adolf Hitler admits defeat in his underground bunker and states that suicide is his only recourse. 1972

Vietnam War: Increased American bombing in Vietnam prompts anti-war protests in Los Angeles, New York City, and San Francisco.