

CROSS TALK

Students take oath to fight corruption

Replicate the initiative all over

WE are heartened by the news of hundreds of students taking a vow to launch an unrelenting fight against corruption in a recently held ceremony. These students, many of them SSC examinees, have pledged not only to shun corruption but also to root it out altogether. At a function also attended by teachers and guardians at the Shaheed Mohor Ali High School in Chapainawabganj, they took the oath. When corruption has insidiously seeped into all segments of society securing the country one of the top positions in the list of most corrupt countries, we view this ceremony as a pioneering move to see the youth take up the lead in the moral battle against corruption.

Youth Engagement and Support Group of Chapainawabganj unit of Transparency International, Bangladesh and Sachetan Nagorik Committee deserve thanks for organising the function. We believe that this type of awareness building programme can be instrumental in sensitising our young generation about the fact that corruption stalls social progress, affecting in the process, all individuals in our society. While commending the move, we emphasise the need for replicating this measure covering all the major schools and other academic institutions. We envision a time when students from all corners of the country having taken an oath will work shoulder to shoulder to curb corruption.

We should however cast our net wider and get the larger communities involved into the act. Professionals, political leaders, social activists and people from all walks of life should encourage identical programmes to build a nationwide movement against corruption. The NGOs and local government bodies could come forward in a meaningful way to strengthen the endeavour.

It is admitted on all hands that no effort should be spared to combat high incidence of corruption that has engulfed the country. Let us not forget that giving bribe is as culpable as taking it.

Bangladeshi doctor rewarded

Rural mothers' and children's access to service increased

WE are heartened at the news that Bangladesh national Dr ASM Amjad Hossain has won the first Gates Vaccine Innovation Award.

The award recognizes the work of Dr. Hossain, a former district immunization and surveillance medical officer in Brahmanbraia and Habiganj districts, whose implementation of an innovative approach to routine immunization provided thousands of children with access to life-saving vaccines. An increased accessibility of the service has also helped expand the coverage rate of the immunisation programme.

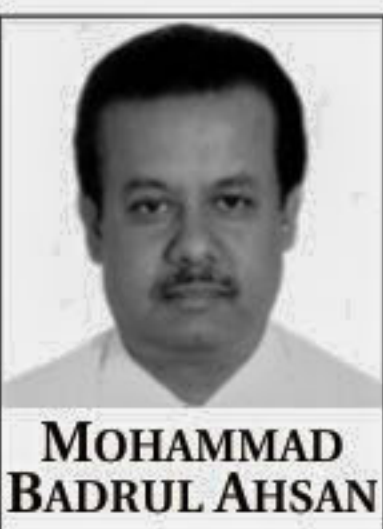
Though his approach may not look radical, yet it has shown how a small change in the service delivery mechanism can make a big difference in extending a programme's reach and availability to those who need it most.

What Dr. Hossain actually did was to implement annual vaccination schedules for communities and introduce some simple steps like adding vaccinators' phone numbers in the children's immunisation cards. These have gone a long way in increasing the accountability of the vaccination programme as well as provided the parents with easy access to the health workers.

The remote rural communities and the vulnerable children and would-be mothers can now be tracked, located and registered by vaccinators more easily than before through this improved system.

By recognising and awarding Dr. Hossain for his contribution to immunisation programme, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has in fact recognised the need for faster and better immunisation service for the most vulnerable sections of the rural communities of Bangladesh. It also shows the Foundation's concern for the suffering mothers and children of Bangladesh.

We extend our thanks to the Gates Foundation for this. We further hope that Dr. Hossain's achievement will inspire others to come up with such innovation in the ser-



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

NEWTON'S third law of motion certainly doesn't work on the India-Bangladesh border, because what

Indian Border Security Force does unto Bangladeshi citizens aren't reportedly done unto Indian citizens by Border Guards of Bangladesh and weren't reportedly done by its predecessor Bangladesh Rifles. The comparison is not intended to provoke retaliation from the Bangladesh side, but to draw an obvious contrast between the border guarding forces of the two countries for a valid reason. If BGB or BDR could exercise restraint on this side of the border, why is BSF on that side so brazen in its behaviour?

The Indian border guards have been in the news again after eight of their men stripped, kicked, and mercilessly beat up a young Bangladeshi named Habibur Rahman apparently because he refused to bribe them or didn't bribe them enough. Should every action have an equal and opposite reaction, Indians should have occasionally received similar treatment in the hands of Bangladeshi border guards. But that didn't happen in last one decade when BSF killed at least 1,000

Bangladeshi nationals and maimed many times more.

This is not only amazing, but also interesting. How is it possible that two forces on two sides of the bor-

der could be so dissimilar in temperament? One side is decent and composed. The other side is psychotic and ruthless.

In his reaction to the latest depravity of BSF men, our LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam said something that ought to shock sensible people out of their wits. In his view the state doesn't need to worry about everything that happens on the border. He listed smuggling,

security forces. If that is true then it makes the title question of this essay ring out even louder. Why do deals always go wrong with BSF men, since BGB men are not involved in harsh treatment of Indian citizens?

How it happens is a mystery. If it takes two hands to clap, so does smuggling. Smugglers carry goods across the border from one side to another, and every transaction

so brutally torture an ordinary foreign national as shown on the video clip, it should be a matter of grave concern for rest of the world. As neighbour, we should be particularly worried about what lurks in the heart of that monolithic state that raises so much aggression in its men. That is where, our LGRD minister should know, the state is responsible for its border more than merely defending it.

Because a nation is both centrifugal and centripetal in the nature of its business that simultaneously pull it towards the centre and push it towards the circumference. Indian daily The Hindu has asked its government to apologise for the misdeemeanour of its security men. It was the Indians who nursed Habibur after he was left for dead in a mustard field. It was Indian television channel NDTV which first broke the news of the barbaric act.

These are telltale signs that Indians are lucky to have achieved a certain amount of balance when the state can't avoid responsibility for what happens on its border. But that is all the more reason to ask why Indian border guards should be inordinately ruthless. Last week the Indian smugglers abducted a BGB member subsequently returned by BSE, which was a disturbing sign of sordid connections between the law and the outlaw.

India should know that BSF is destroying more bridges in the hearts of Bangladeshi people than Delhi hopes to build and repair.

The writer is Editor, *First News* and an opinion writer for *The Daily Star*. Email: badrul151@yahoo.com

May be BSF should also compare and contrast their men with our men to understand why two groups handling similar burdens of anxiety and temptation should demonstrate such disparate mindsets?

drug dealing and cattle trade as causes of border incidents, which lead to disputes followed by abominable atrocities.

If we are to believe in that grandiose theory of state minimalism, then India shouldn't have so promptly suspended those BSF jawans involved in the December 9 incident and ordered a full investigation into the matter. It's obvious that our honourable minister has missed the point. The state is like a circle whose center is nothing unless one has also drawn its circumference.

An Indian diplomat once told me that the border incidents merely revealed the sultry side of paltry business interests when deals go sour between the smugglers and the

encompasses both sides. That means every transaction must have the blessings of both sides, which should have similar interests in the game. But what disturbs BSF so much that they must get more upset than BGB?

Perhaps the Indian authorities should investigate more into that aspect of their border security men. It's more important to find why they get so angry instead of what they do after they get angry. May be they should also compare and contrast their men with our men to understand why two groups handling similar burdens of anxiety and temptation should demonstrate such disparate mindsets?

If the members of a trained force of the world's largest democracy can

Happy birthday, broken cane!

FRANK PETERS

FRIDAY, January 13, 2011 is one of those momentous days in the annals of Bangladesh history that will be remembered by present and future generations with glowing appreciation. It was on this date all children of Bangladesh were blessed by the High Court in response to a petition lodged on July 18, 2010 by Barrister Sara Hossain on behalf of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK).

The Divisional bench comprising of Justice Md. Imman Ali and Justice Md. Sheikh Hasan Arif outlawed corporal punishment in Bangladesh schools and madrassas and declared it "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and a clear violation of a child's fundamental right to life, liberty and freedom."

While students and parents may now rejoice and celebrate this auspicious occasion, one cannot help but ask why it has taken 39-years for this fundamental right of a child to be recognised by law. One might also ask why a law was needed at all. Why didn't common decency kick-in and say it's wrong to maltreat human beings, especially innocent, defenseless children?

When has violence ever been the solution to anything? Has the conscience of teachers and headmasters been dormant all this time? Where were they when moral fibre, decency, and respect were being distributed? Why didn't the child protection agencies speak out against it? No doubt they spent millions on compiling reports to justify their existence.

Did parents love their children less in bygone days? I doubt it. Were parents (especially in villages) less educated in years gone by and

unable to tell the difference between assault and discipline? Most definitely! Did the alleged "learned ones" (teachers) take advantage of their ignorance? Most definitely! And still do.

Education is the currency of the day, without it you are poor and a slave to those who have it. If we are to claim we live in a civilised society, corporal punishment must be eradicated entirely. A civilised society is one that holds the attitude of equal respect for all men, women and children alike.

It was in 1973 that I received one of the greatest eye-opening lessons in my life, not from a Stephen

which it has no relation. On the contrary, it is a widely practiced form of mental and physical torture that causes pain and humiliation, and violates the rights of the child. It teaches hate, violence, resentment, vengeance and disrespect. And if that's the society you want, this is how you can foster it. If teachers teach violence, children will learn violence. Children are conditioned to trust them.

Violence is an all-too common colour in the tapestry of Bangladesh. Every day, the newspapers are filled with reports of violence. We see shocking pictures of students carrying cleavers, clubs,

of the sad-but-true fact that it still goes on, law or not, and the interests if these children need to be addressed -- for their good and the good of the nation.

It is imperative that teachers of high moral standing speak out against it in their schools, to protect the dignity of their profession and themselves, and to teach what is right, decent, and proper by example. Some teachers are prepared to fight for the country, to die for the country, but asking them to live and do what's right for the country seems to be asking too much.

In 2012, I would like to see the change that began in 2011 continue for the benefit of all. Perhaps in the next 40-years there won't be any students carrying cleavers, clubs, machetes, and baseball bats on hallowed grounds.

Most people will never have monuments erected in their honour, however deserving, but that is not to say they are less appreciated. While we do not build physical monuments to those whom we love, admire and appreciate most (such as our parents, our loved ones and those we've come to know and admire), there is nothing to prevent us from carrying these "monuments" in our thoughts -- and it's always right to express appreciation and give credit where it is due.

In my mental "Avenue of Honour" there are monuments thanking Justice Md. Imman Ali and Justice Md. Sheikh Hasan Arif, Barrister Sara Hossain, BLAST and ASK for their distinguished and worthwhile contribution to a much better Bangladesh. To them, I offer a massive "thank you" and thunderous cheers, on behalf of all the children of Bangladesh.

The writer is a former newspaper and magazine publisher and editor, a humanitarian, and a Senior Adviser to European and Saudi Royalty.

Hawkins or a university professor, but from two little boys aged no more than nine. I was walking past the playground of a junior school at the time.

One boy had the other held by the throat and was punching him in the stomach with his free clenched fist. I was just about to scream "stop, leave him alone" when I heard the boy shout: "You will be my friend ... you will be my friend" to the boy he was beating. I was dumbstruck. I did not scream "stop" as I had planned. I needed time to think! The valuable lesson I learned was it's impossible to beat love and respect into anyone. The moment violence -- of any degree -- is used respect takes flight and never returns.

Corporal punishment is mistakenly equated with discipline, to

machetes and other weaponry in universities -- the highest seats of learning. Naturally, we question what exactly they are learning.

I give thought to parents, who perhaps have saved hard all their lives to give their child this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Do they feel cheated at having spent so much hard-earned money and in return for what? A degree in violence and social misbehaviour? I also ask myself what role corporal punishment played in moulding the minds of the students to this level, whether it's solely political influence or a combination of both.

While many thousands of children throughout Bangladesh have reason to celebrate January 13 as the day corporal punishment was abolished in their schools, we must be mindful

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

January 27

661 The Rashidun Caliphate ends with death of Ali.

1695 Mustafa II becomes the Ottoman sultan in Istanbul on the death of Ahmed II. Mustafa rules until his abdication in 1703.

1927 Ibn Saud takes the title of King of Nejd.

1944 World War II: The 900-day Siege of Leningrad is lifted.

1967 The United States, United Kingdom, and Soviet Union sign the Outer Space Treaty in Washington, D.C., banning deployment of nuclear weapons in space, and limiting use of the Moon and other celestial bodies to peaceful purposes.

1973 The Paris Peace Accords officially end the Vietnam War. Colonel William Nolde is killed in action becoming the conflict's last recorded American combat casualty.