

## Beans spilled at R&H Hqs

*Only that it's brazen-faced*

WHAT happened at the Roads and Highways (R & H) headquarters building on Tuesday was a brazen display of armed rivalry between two groups of ruling party elements. They were vying for the control of tender business. They had long been engaged in rent-seeking by way of manipulating tenders invited by the R & H division. The genuine contractors, who participate in these tenders, could get the contracts through these ruling party elements in exchange for a huge sum of toll money.

However, with the new communications minister taking charge followed by cancellation of some tenders called earlier and opting for open bidding in some cases the rent-seeking coteries were hit hard.

Later, shifting of the Dhaka Zone of R&H division to Tejgaon reportedly caused dislocation in the business of vested quarters. So, the shootout of Tuesday was clearly a demonstration of their attempt at resisting the change that threatened their booty-sharing.

There is no reason to doubt that the top echelons of the R & H division were giving indulgence to the monopoly cadres and their associates within and without the organization.

It may be recalled that the prime minister had on different occasions warned such party cadres or persons flaunting connections to the party against abusing their power under any pretext. Clearly, the PM's directives have been defied.

We hope the incumbent communications minister would give a serious look into the incident and rid the R&H department of those vested coteries for they in cahoots with some corrupt officials have turned this department into their happy hunting ground.

## HC directive on Dhanmondi

*It should be effectively implemented*

THE High Court decision to declare illegal all commercial operations in Dhanmondi brings an old issue to the fore once again. For years, indeed decades together, the decline of Dhanmondi from a peaceful residential area to a chaotic commercial zone has gone on unabated, with sporadic warnings from the authorities that all commercial or business enterprises need to be moved out to other places. Nothing came of those efforts. And what has instead happened is a rapid turning over of Dhanmondi into a cacophony of shops, private schools, colleges and universities and even clinics and hospitals. What was once a region admired for its placidity and environmental beauty is today a story of the past.

Now that the HC has intervened in the matter following the filing of a writ petition asking the authorities to set a timeline for owners of the institutions involved to shift their operations elsewhere, the question is whether the job can be done. Almost every road and street in Dhanmondi is now cramped with such commercial establishments, with the result that the area goes through regular noise pollution and is also home to horrendous traffic congestions. Add to that the discomfiture of residents of the area, for it is they who have borne the brunt of all the changes that have been taking place. That said, there is the reality of these business enterprises, especially academic institutions, which have become an entrenched part of the area. To expect them to shift elsewhere soon would seem pretty unrealistic. However, as the HC directive in the case of a particular school shows, a time frame of perhaps three years or so should prove effective in resolving the issue. But that again depends on the sincerity of the owners of the institutions as well as of the city corporation authorities in ensuring that the HC orders are fully and systematically implemented. In a country where ignoring rules or blatantly violating them has become something of a norm, vigilance is what one needs to restore Dhanmondi, somewhat, to its former state.

We welcome the HC move. At the same time, we hope that in the not too distant future, action will be forthcoming on a restoration of the residential qualities of such

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

June 14

- 1285

Forces led by Prince Tran Quang Khai of Vietnam's Tran Dynasty destroys most of the invading Mongol naval fleet in a battle at Chuong Duong.
- 1287

Kublai Khan defeated the force of Nayan and other traditionalist Borjigin princes in East Mongolia and Manchuria.
- 1777

The Stars and Stripes is adopted by Congress as the Flag of the United States.
- 1821

Badi VII, king of Sennar, surrenders his throne and realm to Isma'il Pasha, general of the Ottoman Empire, ending the existence of that Sudanese kingdom.
- 1940

World War II: Paris falls under German occupation, and Allied forces retreat.
- 1965

Nguyen Cao Ky became Prime Minister of South Vietnam at the head of a military junta; General Nguyen Van Thieu became the figurehead chief of state.
- 1982

The Falklands War ends: Argentine forces in the capital Stanley unconditionally surrender to British forces.

### STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



Brig Gen  
SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN  
ndc, psc (Retd)

WE have a woe-ful shortage of sobriety, particularly in those whose words should count but cannot because of their abject shoddiness. It is a great thing to recognise the season for speech and the season for silence.

Unfortunately, what a Roman dramatist had said more than two thousand years ago, that surpasses the span of time and universality, has, unfortunately, no bearing on our politicians, advisors, and parliamentarians. And it seems that the foible has rubbed off on at least one of our judges.

Alarminglly, people in high places in our country have lost the sense of time, season and of propriety. It seems that in Bangladesh it is season of denial, of acrimony and castigation and of calling everyone else seditious.

Some of our politicians, particularly those at the leadership position, are so apt to talk out of turn that their utterances endorse Lincoln's well-known comment that it is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt.

The random use of the term "seditious" against others has taken disconcerting proportions. It seems, going by the way people are being termed seditious, there would be very few people left with any loyalty at all, at least insofar as the term loyalty seems to be understood by

those that are accusing others of sedition.

In one very unprecedented incident the Speaker of the House, of all people, was termed as seditious by one of the High Court Judges of the country, nearly bringing the two organs of the government on a collision course. While it is for people with knowledge of law to comment on the specifics of behaviour and

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demeanour of a judge, from a very ordinary man's point of view I understand that there is a code of conduct for sitting judges in all other countries and I suppose there is one too for ours. And I presume the judges are also accountable to an appropriate authority for their judicial conduct.

Of the many things that the Bangalore Draft Code of Judicial Conduct 2001(adopted by the Judicial Group on Strengthening Judicial Integrity, as revised at the Round Table Meeting of Chief Justices held at the Peace Palace, The Hague, November 25-26, 2002) it affirms that public confidence in the judicial system and in the moral authority and integrity of the judiciary is of the utmost importance in a modern democratic society. And that

it is essential that judges, individually and collectively, respect and honour judicial office as a public trust and strive to enhance and maintain confidence in the judicial system. It further says that the primary responsibility for the promotion and maintenance of high standards of judicial conduct lies with the judiciary in each country.

Given that, one could ask whether

one who is sitting on judgment can demean by words or action the dignity of any other person, whether present in the court or not. The judge in question has been known for his supercilious attitude and while not questioning any of his judgments, one wonders whether it is out of the purview of the Chief Justice to address any breach of ethics and conduct by his subordinate judges in the highest court of law. It is for the Chief Justice to ensure that neither is the integrity of the judiciary nor the public confidence in it is ever lost.

By the same token no one, whatever position he or she may be holding, can slight the judiciary or its officers, that being the last resort of the people seeking the protection of law. One would not be wrong in suggesting that the remarks of the

Honourable Speaker, referring to a particular judgement dealing with a piece of land that belonged to the Supreme Court, were uncalled for, and nobody would take issue with the judge for taking exceptions to those remarks. Whether the judge's remarks were in good order is not for me to comment.

What followed, by way of the statement by some of the MPs in the parliament, some of them well known for throwing invectives at others, nearly excoriating the judge and virtually calling for his head, and in the process not forgetting to remind him of their party's benevolence towards him, was simply awful. In the process both the judiciary and the House were brought down

It was deeply painful for us to see the two very important organs of the state locking horns and one would hope that the good offices of the Speaker as well as the Chief Justice would see an end of this unsavoury episode.

No one single organ of the state is "independent" in that sense and one exercises checks and balance over the other. And as for sovereignty, nobody but the people can claim absolute sovereignty because the people as a collective entity are answerable to none, and by extension of the argument it is the elected parliament that can claim sovereignty, being people's representatives. But it is for the respective organs of the state not only to know the limit of their remit but also recognise the implications of words uttered.

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### WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY

# Share blood, share life

ZULFIQUER AHMED AMIN

BEHIND the shimmering glow of our everyday mirth and bliss, unseen and unnoticed, a handful of organisations and their dedicated workers are keeping the candle of life lighted. Every second, a life is waiting for a bag of blood from them. They are the blood donors and their patrons ushering in a ray of hope to those lying in the thin line between life and death. The donors voluntarily show up at a blood drive and offer their precious blood to lend a hand to someone they may never ever meet. This is the greatest gift one can give.

About 234 million major operations are performed worldwide every year, most of which need concurrent transfusion. Hemorrhage accounts for over 25% of the 530,000 maternal deaths each year; 99% of these occur in the developing world. Road traffic accidents kill 1.2 million people and injure or disable about 30 million more a year, a large proportion of whom require blood during the first 24 hours of treatment; 90% of deaths occur if blood is not available then. About 4.5 million Americans would die each year without life saving blood. Every year approximately 85.6 million people need single or multiple blood transfusions for life saving treatment.

Worldwide over 88 million units of blood are collected annually. The quantity is sufficient to fill 32 modern Olympic swimming pools but not enough for the 7 billion world population, which requires 150 million units annually. In the African region, blood requirement was estimated at about 8 million units in 2006, but only 3.2 million units were collected. South-East Asia accounts for about 25% of the world's population, but collects only 9% of the world's blood supply -- 7 million units a year against an estimated requirement of 15 million units.

Globally, it is estimated that only 20% of the 150 million units of blood amassed annually are collected in

the developing world, where 80% of the world's population lives. Some countries having high levels of voluntary blood donors per 1,000 population figures are Switzerland (113/1,000), Japan (70/1,000), while India has 4/1,000 and Bangladesh has 5/1000. Around 362,000 units of blood were collected in Bangladesh in 2009, of which only 29% were from voluntary donors.

Safe blood saves lives but, for too many patients around the world whose survival depends on blood transfusion, the required quantity is neither available nor adequately safe. World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation for safe blood transfusion is provision of compatible blood which are cross matched and screened for at least five WHO recommended, transfusion transmitted infections --

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis C virus (HCV), Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), syphilis and malarial parasite. When blood is collected from a professional donor, it may be hazardous. Instead of saving life, it may introduce deadly infections which cause suffering and premature death. Donors who earn by selling blood usually come from very low socio-economic stratum, in whom alcohol and drug abuse, nutritional and infective medical conditions are prevalent.

In a study at Dhaka Shishu Hospital, HCV became a serious problem where 19.4% multi-transfused thalassemia patients incurred HCV infection from transfusion. Red Crescent data of Bangladesh showed Hepatitis B was positive in 29% of professional donors, Hepatitis C in

6% and syphilis in 22%. Globally, up to 4 million people have been infected with HIV through transfusion of unsafe blood. In Latin America and the Caribbean, around 240,000 units of blood were discarded in 2005 because laboratory screening tests showed evidence of infection. At an estimated cost of \$ 56 per unit, this represented wastage of \$ 13.4 million.

The Hippocratic principle of "*primum non nocere*" (first do no harm) is breached by the proviso of paid transfusion. The commercialisation of blood donation is in violation of the fundamental principle of altruism, which voluntary blood donation enshrines. Voluntary donors are

recognised to be the safest donors because they are motivated by humanity and longing for helping others and by a sense of moral duty and social responsibility. They have no reasons to withhold information about their lifestyles or medical conditions that may make them unfit to donate blood. They are not placed under any compulsion by hospital

staff, family members or the community to donate, and they entrust their blood donations to be used as needed, rather than for chosen patients. The only reward they receive is self-satisfaction, self-esteem and pride.

To effectively address the global demand of safe human blood, a realistic target will range from 1030 donations per 1,000 people per year. Appallingly, donation rates are still less than 1% of the population in 77 countries, including Bangladesh. Until and unless a motivated social culture of voluntary blood donation

can be inculcated, an unsafe source will always fill in the gap between demand and supply to threaten the health of the patients already at stake by diseases. Although the need for blood is ever-increasing and there are still periods of blood shortages, so long as every individual continues to give, promote or motivate, there will be enough blood for all. After all, it is the little drops of water that make the mighty ocean.

To encourage voluntary blood donation we need to recognise donors with due accolade and respect. The media, specially, need to lay emphasis on their humble generosity. Anyone donating blood for someone unknown and unseen, without any material benefits, deserves our open-hearted gratitude and due acknowledgment. Our recognition is their badge of honour. In doing so, we thank them and encourage other eligible aspirants to be part of this humanitarian endeavour. Heroes are not born in a nation whose people cannot praise their idols.

World Blood Donor Day (WBDD), which is observed annually on June 14, provides a special opportunity to promote a culture of voluntary blood donation. The theme of the 2012 World Blood Donor Day campaign, "Every Blood Donor is a Hero," recognises the silent and unsung heroes who save lives every day through their blood donations and in tandem strongly focuses on young donors with the hope that a new generation of idealistic and motivated voluntary blood donors will rise to form a pool that will provide the safest blood possible for use wherever and whenever it is needed. "You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give" -- Kahlil Gibran. So, smile when you give, to ensure that others can smile and live.

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