

The wrong should be righted

Limon should get justice

PRESSED, by the very organisation that is supposed to protect his right to justice, to strike a compromise with the law-enforcers, Limon, the young victim of Rab shooting, is now faced with a big moral dilemma. Should he compromise and withdraw the case against law-enforcers in exchange for the assurance of a let-off and financial security?

But why should the boy from a poor household of Jhalakathi, who was wronged and has been fighting for justice in the face of overwhelming odds, be asked to rest his case?

We believe such a suggestion made to a victim of injustice is antithetical to the cause of upholding human rights. The Chairman, National Human Rights Commission, (NHRC), who is reportedly conducting the negotiation, needs to explain his position in a greater detail.

It may be recalled that after Limon was shot on March 23, 2011, a Rab director admitted that the boy was a victim of "shootout."

Limon's mother filed a case against those who inflicted physical harm on her son. But then the cases in which Jhalakathi police implicated the victim smacked of vindictiveness. And those cases are now being used as the bargaining chip to persuade the victim to withdraw his case. This is immoral and unacceptable.

It is a question of establishing justice. When moral forces are stacked against the law-enforcers, coming up with such a proposal for compromise is inexplicable. The victim must not be denied, but ensured, justice.

Women migrant workers' woes

Who ensures their safety?

NEARLY seven out of ten female migrant workers in Bangladesh suffer one form of torture during their occupation abroad. This shocking news has come to the surface, thanks to a study carried out by the UN's International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The nature of abuse is extensive. The violation of the rights of Bangladeshi working women abroad is not limited merely to sexual harassment. Women workers, like their male counterparts are facing similar problems at the hands of middlemen. Seizure of passports, denial of medical benefits and untimely payment of salaries are but a few anomalies that exist in this largely unregulated sector.

What has come to light is the fact that female workers going abroad are at a natural disadvantage due to lack of awareness and education. Such shortcomings naturally create opportunities for harassment. Obviously, a lot needs to be done to redress the situation, especially in light of the fact that the number of women migrant workers has shot up significantly in recent years. Skills development programmes must be made mandatory for all agencies involved in international recruitment. The other area of contention, one that has not been adequately redressed over the last few years – the greater involvement of our diplomatic missions abroad to aid expatriate Bangladeshi workers, particularly women. There is no denying the massive contribution migrant workers play to the national economy. And it is a matter of national priority that the workers who work to contribute \$15 billion per annum to the economy be treated with the respect they deserve.

The nosedive of the education system

THE education system in Bangladesh has changed drastically over the past decade. The change has not only altered the quality of education but also increased the costs involved. Schooling and getting admitted to a private institution are financially challenging for most families. Students do not benefit from the increased fees. To add to this, schools have been hiring teachers without proper authorisation, and senior teachers have been changing their jobs due to the low levels of remuneration offered. Corruption and lack of proper monitoring by the government have led to the nosedive of the education system.

Coaching centres are one of the biggest contributing factors behind the downfall in the quality of education. It is surprising that students from playgroup and nursery are also seen to be going to these coaching centres after their school hours. It is now "unusual" not to go to coaching centres. In many cases, students join coaching centres due to peer pressure while some are forced to join by their teachers and parents. Many teachers do not teach much in the classrooms, leaving students with no options but to go for private classes.

Coaching centres, according to me, seems to distort the thinking abilities of the students as the teachers spoon-feed them, automatically programming them to develop a tunnel vision. Furthermore, some teachers openly discourage students from asking questions. Whether they do this because they do not want their students to think critically or they do not want to disrupt the flow of the class is what puzzles me. But what is the point in learning if we cannot think of all the different possibilities and look at something from various dimensions?

On a different note, students seem to be more than concerned about their marks and report cards rather than actually learning. This has led to the illegal and unacceptable habit of cheating, more commonly known to students as "answer cross-checking."

The education they are receiving is not only supposed to be related to studying but also to teach them about morals and principles of life. We should do what we can on our own. After all, an achievement is recognised by one's sincere efforts and determination. I believe that all of our dreams can come true one day, if we have the courage to pursue them.

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SYED BADRUL AHSAN

ages made life difficult for people across the world. Harry Truman pushed tens of thousands to death in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Yahya Khan ended his career through presiding over the annihilation of three million Bengalis. Pol Pot pushed Cambodia back into the dark ages. The Mujahideen and the Taliban destroyed, in serial manner, a proud country called Afghanistan. George W. Bush and Tony Blair lied through their teeth about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and then proceeded to invade and destroy the country.

Back in August 1975, Khondokar Moshtaq Ahmed, minister for commerce in the government of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, turned up as the president of Bangladesh through a bloody military coup' etat that left most members of the family of the Father of the Nation dead. In that sordid job of liquidating Bangabandhu, he had been helped enormously by a band of majors and colonels of the Bangladesh army. Following the coup, Moshtaq publicly called these assassins heroes, indeed as children of the sun. Images of the new 'president,' in the company of the killers, soon appeared in the media. Those images were a powerful hint of the darkness Bangladesh had passed into.

Moshtaq died of natural causes in March 1996, a few months before the Awami League, after twenty one years in the wilderness, returned to power under the leadership of the daughter of the man he had caused to be murdered on August 15, 1975. Towards the end of his life, he was given to much ranting. He had had nothing to do with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's death, he said. Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana were like his daughters, he said. And then he died.

When it was suspected that his remains had been taken to Baitul

Not forgetting Khondokar Moshtaq

IT is most healthy remembering men who have created history. It is necessary that men who have tried subverting history be remembered as well, for it is these men who have through the mystery for the nation, Moshtaq was not charged with complicity in the murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or the assassination of the four Mujibnagar leaders. The military officers who led the killing mission were, but Moshtaq, Taheruddin Thakur, Mabbubul Alam Chashi and ABS Safdar -- all of whom were ensconced for the three days prior to the coup at Comilla BARD and turned up in Dhaka once they were sure that Mujib was dead -- were never cited for the significant role they had played in the making of the August 15 tragedy.

Individuals linked to Sheikh Hasina's first government gave out the lame excuse that Moshtaq's name had not been included on the list of those charged with the 1975 killings because he was already dead. These individuals or the government they served perhaps did not know that there was something called posthumous trials.

A particular tragedy for this nation is that no one checked Moshtaq as he went about giving shape to his ambitions once liberation came to Bangladesh. Only one man -- and that was Tajuddin Ahmed -- knew of the mischief Moshtaq was capable of making. Had Tajuddin not stopped Moshtaq from proceeding to the United Nations in September 1971, the course of Bangladesh's history would be well be different, and unsettling for all of us. Had Moshtaq gone to New York, Bengalis would be pushed into a confederal arrangement with Pakistan, the Liberation War would be subverted and a painful conflict would leave our nationalist aspirations into pieces.

And yet Moshtaq was the man to whose help Bangabandhu's administration came when he faced certain defeat at the general elections of March 1973. It was Moshtaq who planted a kiss on Bangabandhu's cheeks the moment the Father of the Nation stepped off the plane in Dhaka on

January 10, 1972. It was Moshtaq who shadowed Bangabandhu every step of the way. In contrast, Tajuddin Ahmed hardly ever could get in a word edge-ways as he tried giving Bangabandhu the background to the formation of the Mujibnagar government in April 1971.

Moshtaq was inconsolable at the funeral of Bangabandhu's father in 1974, to a point where the latter was left wondering why his commerce minister was weeping so profusely. Only months later, the weeping man would push his leader to a gory death. And at his first cabinet meeting, Moshtaq had only a single piece of business to discuss. A national dress code -- and that meant the achkan and topi he always wore -- would be adopted by the nation. Moshtaq smiled a lot that day.

And the smiling went on for nearly three months, until Khaled Musharraf forced him out. But not before Moshtaq had committed one more crime. On the night between November 2-3, 1975, he ordered officials at Dhaka central jail to allow a band of soldiers in and have them do whatever they had come to do. The soldiers went in, killed four of the nation's heroes and marched off in blood-soaked triumph.

On the morning of November 7, a cheerful Moshtaq arrived at the Radio Bangladesh office in Shahbagh. Convinced that in the new situation would be restored to power, he had a speech ready to read out before the nation. He waited there for hours, until Colonel Taher made it clear he was not welcome, he was not going to be president.

That was effectively Moshtaq's demise as a politician and as a man. He hung on for a few more years with his Democratic League, where a band of unsavoury characters joined him in their hatred of Bangabandhu. In early 1979, a public rally his followers organised in Dhaka ended in bedlam when someone released a snake into the crowd. Convicted on charges of corruption by the Zia regime, he spent months in jail.

Postscript: In October 1974, at a lunch for the visiting Henry Kissinger in Dhaka, the American stepped out of the banquet hall. A minute or so later, Moshtaq did the same. Curious, Syed Najmuddin Hashim stepped out as well. He spotted the two men talking outside the washroom. They quickly separated when they saw him.

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China, US establishing new ties

SU XIAOHUI

THE presidents of China and the United States wrapped up their two-day summit in Sunnylands, California, without signing a series of agreements or releasing a joint statement, as is usually the case at the end of a state visit. However, since the meetings were informal, the role of this summit was to act as a more effective way for the two countries to communicate with each other.

During the meetings, the two leaders touched upon a wide range of issues relating to the bilateral relationship, which was necessary to improve the dispute management between the two sides, and so help them escape the Thucydides trap, which refers to the ancient Greek historian's observation that a rising power can alarm an established power to such an extent that war is inevitable.

China and the United States have maintained and strengthened their military dialogue channels and military exchanges. In 2012, high-level military officials, including the defence ministers from both sides, exchanged visits. The second China-US Strategic Security Dialogue was held in May last year and the 13th China-US Defence Consultation was held in December. Moreover, both sides promoted cooperation in areas of low sensitivity, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

However, neither China nor the US believes that the current exchanges are sufficient to build up mutual trust. On the one hand, China's growing military budget and capabilities have inevitably drawn some concern from the US. From the US' perspective, China still lacks transparency in its military development.

On the other hand, the US' increasing military presence in the Asia-Pacific region has resulted in China's growing suspicions about its intentions. The truth is that the US is carrying out an extensive rebalancing, in which the military is a key part. The country has set out a plan to deploy 60% of its navy and 60% of its over-seas-based air force in the region. The

increase in deployment is moderate, but what matters is that some US officials have made it clear that this is partly to counterbalance China's military build-up.

Both sides have come to realise that the military relationship has had a negative impact on the overall bilateral relationship. Fortunately, the leaders agreed to strengthen the military-to-military relationship during their summit. The positive developments are that China will attend RIMPAC, the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, in 2014 at

the China and the US will be able to manage the disputes.

China does not aim for conflict. Actually, China is seeking a balance between defending its national interests and maintaining an agreeable regional environment. China is firm in defending its territorial sovereignty and legitimate rights, but, at the same time, it seeks peaceful development and is willing to solve the disputes with related parties through bilateral dialogue and negotiation. China made this point clear to the US. During the summit, President Xi Jinping made clear China's stance on the Diaoyu Islands and the South China Sea.

As for the US, the country acknowledges China's position and has realised China's determination to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Misunderstandings and miscalculations can be avoided. As for the Diaoyu Islands, China's response to Japan's "nationalisation" of three of the islands was beyond the expectations of both Japan and the US. The US will try to avoid any awkward situations in the future.

It is difficult for the US to change its basic principles when involving itself in the territorial issues in the Asia-Pacific. However, the US will be more cautious in staking out its position, and will strengthen management and control over related issues. The most likely situation is that the US will maintain the pressure on both China and other parties involved in the disputes, in order to prevent the disputes from escalating out of control.

Strategically, China and the US have achieved an agreement that a zero-sum game will harm both sides' interests and they will cooperate to avoid the Thucydides trap. Specifically, in the process of improving military exchanges and managing territorial issues, the two countries may find a way to finally establish a new type of relationship.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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ICT loan for poor entrepreneurs

Bangladesh is branded as the third largest country in the world in outsourcing. For the last four years, I have been trying to buy a PC but couldn't manage the money. Despite having the will and spirit, I am unable to utilise my skill and potentiality. There are thousands of young people like me. They can't utilise their skills because of poverty. I urge the authorities concerned, especially the Governor of Bangladesh Bank, to take an initiative so that all banks come forward to give ICT loans to the poor entrepreneurs.

Badsha Solaiman
Dept. of English
University of Dhaka

Torn and fake bank notes

People who deal cash transactions in the banks or financial institutions face a lot of problems while making transactions. Fake and torn notes create a horrible situation. Generally, customers want to



deposit notes which are in bad condition but they refuse to receive slightly torn notes. Tellers on the counter have to face penalty for receiving fake notes unintentionally. The Bangladesh Bank should take initiatives to make people aware through mass media about the security features of bank notes and procedures of exchanging torn notes.

Md. Mojammel Hoque
Prime Bank Limited
Fatikchhari Branch
Chittagong

Yunus on RMG workers' pay

Recently, Nobel Laureate Dr. Yunus, in an interview with a US based TV channel, said that if the present minimum wages of the garment workers in Bangladesh was doubled, garments made in Bangladesh would still remain the cheapest in the world market. On another occasion in Tokyo, he urged the CEOs of the leading international retailers to join hands to make Bangladesh a highly attractive country for sourcing garment products and help bring back the companies which left the country.

However, former president of BGMEA and FBCCI Anisul Huq said in a recent article in TDS entitled "Made in Bangladesh: crunching numbers" that all the success stories of this sector seem to have been lost in the rubble of Tazreen Fashions and Rana Plaza. Anisul Huq expected constructive criticism and support from the government, civil society and the professionals.

We thank Dr. Yunus for his suggestions on correcting this sector without hurting it.

Mobarak Ali
Gopibagh
Dhaka

Comments on news report, "Theatre of the absurd", published on June 23, 2013

Shahin Huq

We hope next time when Awami League and BNP choose their female MPs, they would be more cautious and select decent women who will be more prudent in the use of words.

shafquat301

The words and convictions should have been much stronger to describe this abuse in the house.

Saleh Tanveer

And yet, our people keep sending these clowns to parliament! Can we hope that in the future we will get MPs with more education and norm?

"Leakages cause huge loss of gas" (June 23, 2013)

Khondkar Saleque Sufi

Where is the petroleum engineer or the reservoir engineer who can assess and evaluate the damage? A democratic government has passed almost the entire term. Yet the leakages in the largest gas field could not be remedied.

Anonymous

10 to 15 million cubic feet of gas is being wasted every day while the majority of the people of the country are deprived of it. What an irony!

Tropa

It is high time the government stopped this wastage. Otherwise there won't be enough gas left for our future generation.