

Reckless politicians

KALEIDOSCOPE



SYED FATAHUL ALIM

POWER is blind. Politicians have power and, unless tempered with responsibility, they have the proclivity for getting blinded by it. Patuakhali's lawmaker Golam Moulana did go blind on Saturday afternoon when he failed to control himself and fell upon journalists.

We know from newspapers and TV reports what he had to say about the incident. He said reporters from a particular TV channel had been shadowing him constantly for some days. So finding them sitting in the building at Topkhana Road in the city that houses his office, he only challenged them, but denied having attacked them. And that it was those two journalists who had behaved badly with him, he alleged, whereas he was so good with them, etc. However, from his narrative it was not clear how those journalists got hurt and their camera was broken.

But why did this lawmaker, who has been able to draw some public attention, if only for his outspokenness in parliament or for his seemingly unbiased views at the TV talk shows, go off his rocker on that day and behave in a

manner unbecoming of a lawmaker? Why, as a public figure, did he fail to engage those TV reporters in a discussion, reply to their query, if they had any, or even warn them of legal consequences if they were found in his pursuit again in the future? But the lawmaker did not give consideration to these options, but preferred to act like a bully. Clearly, more than civility and rationality, the arrogance of power got the better of him.

But MP Roni was not the first lawmaker to have a go at journalists. Politicians, be they in power or in opposition, and their cadres, have developed a habit of using journalists, regardless of their gender, as a convenient punching bag. Even women are not spared. We may recall how a female journalist was attacked at a rally of Hefajate-Islam recently. She, however, drew Hefajate's wrath more because she was female than because she was a journalist.

But then how does one explain the case of yet another female journalist whose hands were mangled by a male ruling party lawmaker a year and a half ago when she tried to interview him. The journalist's fault was that she wanted to know from the MP, if, as the president of a school managing committee, it was his decision to charge higher fees from

students seeking admission in that school. In MP Roni's case, the journalists did not even get the opportunity to approach the lawmaker for an interview.

Journalists have also been murdered and they are not getting justice. In the case of the double murder of the journalist couple Sagar-Runi, justice seems to be a far cry. The state's crime investigation department has so far miserably failed to track down the murderers, far less bring them to justice, though about a year and a half have elapsed since the tragedy happened.

And all this is happening to journalists despite the government's claim that the press is enjoying freedom, and that people's right to information has been established. But such claims fly in the face of the high-handed attitude of powerful politicians, bureaucrats and the police towards news gatherers.

Interestingly, the Roni episode took place only a day after the communications minister Obaidul Quader, another ruling party leader well-known for his plain speaking, compared politicians with 'reckless drivers.' While on a visit to Gazipur last Friday, he told journalists: "Who will run the country, if people lose faith in politicians? How can the country be run if we [politicians] behave like reckless drivers?"

It is heartening to know that among the horde of 'reckless drivers' at the helm of affairs, there is still a voice in the wilderness. But as an active politician, he should have known that the answer to the question he raised with a rather philosophical note lies with people. The reckless ones have forgotten that it is the people who have made them powerful. And they (the people) know how to put them in their place.

Politicians who have still the pangs of conscience in Bangladesh, as part of soul-searching, may make a serious effort to know the people's mind about them. They may well follow the footsteps of the British politician and lawmaker Gloria de Piero.

Troubled by conscience, Ms. Piero, a Labour Party MP for Ashfield in Nottinghamshire of England, set herself an audacious mission to know for herself what her constituents think about politicians. To get their honest opinion she organised a tour among them with the question: "Who do you hate me?" The answers she got were hardly pleasant to her ears. In a few words they spoke their mind: "Liars," "Selfish," "Privileged and arrogant," "Devious," "Insincere," etc.

Such public perception about politicians must have left a sobering impact on the English lawmaker. Would any of our politicians, who are yet to become 'reckless' and arrogant, dare to take such mission to know their electorates' mind?

The writer is Editor, Science & Life, The Daily Star. E-mail: sfalim@gmail.com

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When religion meets electoral politics

ANAM A. CHOUDHURY

IT is a truth universally acknowledged that a politician in possession of absolute power hardly recognises legitimacy in alternative points of view. As long as AL sticks to the "no caretaker government" mantra a deal is impossible. Their disagreement is not with their political opponents only, but also with the overwhelming opinion of people in our country.

Politically, it looks like we are heading towards very difficult times, a prospect no one can relish. Nobody wants to see fierce battles between police and angry citizens raging on our streets. Our violence is splashed on the front pages of the world and it hurts us all. Clock is ticking, we hope both the parties will drop their hard-line policies and try to hammer out an agreement that gives both of them something to brag about.

A year or so ago BNP appeared to be struggling and failing to communicate a coherent political message, and their image looked fragile. Nowadays, they look rather chirpy and they are thriving in a "political period that is highly charged with religious furore." Their new found zest may simply reflect the rallying of support of Allama Shafi's Hefajate-Islam and its growing numbers and spreading movement. BNP is now trying to collect the dividends and unite the people under the banner of Islam, instead of showing moral leadership in the face of such chauvinism.

Hypocrisy is too mild a word to cover such behaviour. Allama Shafi and his team should realise that our tradition of respecting individual rights and opposing reactionary attempts to corral and control has served the country well in many ways. On the other hand, Pakistan and Afghanistan have become dangerous and unstable states, torn apart by jihadist violence. The main target of Muslim extremism is Muslims, yet many fanatics admire Taliban rule and want to live under it.

Allama Shafi is obfuscating the truth and using misleading religious arguments and blatant scare tactics to lock women in their places and force them to stay in purdah. It's a shame that in our country Muslim women are victims of Muslim men. Unfortunately, the ruling party is yet to find correct responses and powerful answers against such onslaught. Critics claim that AL has forgotten the necessity of fighting for each and every vote. It is always a mistake to underestimate your opponent.

Given the way the political wind is blowing, critics reckon that AL has run its course and a change of govern-

ment is inevitable. But a change of government in itself will not solve our ingrained problems and political mess, as we all know that another set of power hungry manipulative politicians are impatiently waiting for their turn to be back in the saddle after a five-year interval. BNP firmly believe that they are on the right road and AL has effectively defeated itself, and that voters who have no alternative but to vote for a change must ultimately choose between BNP and AL.

Politics is firmly in the grip of two families and the nation is hostage to their whims and fancies. It is a common tradition in many countries that there are meetings behind closed doors to decide who should be the leader of the party. Debate goes on until a winner emerges. But in this subcontinent, political life is different and party leaders' retirement before death is normally unprecedented -- they don't want to retire from public life. Voters are really tired of familiar faces and voices. China with its relatively youthful political leadership has joined the ranks of the great powers, whereas, India with its billion-plus population and eco-

nomic promise is still widely seen as a country that cannot quite get its act together.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh seems to be swimming against the tide, but is still clinging to power. In Bangladesh, an artful politician, Mr. H.M. Ershad who ruled Bangladesh for long 9 years, is now hoping against hope to switch horses at the "opportune moment" to secure an easy ride to the presidency. Pervez Musharraf, a former general, dictator and president of Pakistan seized power in 1999, survived two serious assassination attempts and ruled Pakistan until 2008. After self-imposed exile in London for more than four years, he suddenly returned to Pakistan to save Pakistan and contest election. Now he is behind bars facing charges of treason for staging his coup in 1999, and he is also accused in Bhutto murder case.

When Benazir Bhutto, in her bid to become prime minister of Pakistan for the third time, returned from exile on October 2007, extremists bombed her motorcade after it left Karachi airport, killing 140 supporters, but she was unhurt in that attack. Two months later, a suicide bomber brutally killed her at a political rally. I conclude by quoting Albert Einstein: "Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former." God bless politics and God bless politicians.

The writer is a former investment banker.

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ACROSS

- 1 Recede
- 4 Petrol
- 7 Potato
- 11 Settled down
- 13 Mischief-maker
- 14 Cautious
- 15 "Bye"
- 16 Neither partner
- 17 Rice or Tyler
- 18 Ledge
- 20 Dispatch
- 22 Mary — cosmetics
- 24 Half a wet-weather pair
- 28 Game like pinochle
- 32 Hoose-gow
- 33 Valhalla VIP
- 34 Dog's foot
- 36 Burrito cousin
- 37 Fifth-day Christmas gift
- 39 Paraphrase

DOWN

- 1 Impressionist?
- 43 Feathery neckpiece
- 44 List-ending abbr.
- 46 It brings out the kid in you
- 50 Coffee
- 53 Run-down horse
- 55 Stead
- 56 Need for 41-
- 57 Wildebeest
- 58 Bridge
- 59 Jewels
- 60 Longing
- 61 Illustrations
- 1 Comestibles
- 2 Mediocre
- 3 Small snack
- 4 Martini ingredient
- 5 Out of control
- 6 Parsley serving
- 7 Brightly marked butterflies
- 8 Skillet
- 9 Samovar
- 10 Coloring agent
- 12 TV news pundits,
- 19 Online info
- 21 Once around the track
- 23 "Uh-huh"
- 25 Gumbo need
- 26 Membership
- 27 Advertise strongly
- 28 Drill
- 29 Fix a manuscript
- 30 Galvanizing stuff
- 31 Listener
- 35 "Charlotte's —"
- 38 Collection
- 40 Weep
- 42 Tall and slender
- 45 Kegler's pathway
- 47 Morning co-host Kelly
- 48 Rip
- 49 Quest
- 50 TV drama that spawned "NCIS"
- 51 Expert
- 52 Energy
- 54 Pistol

Solution time: 24 mins.

Saturday's answer 6-17

A	M	I	S	S	D	E	A	L	T		
B	L	O	T	T	O	S	I	E	R	S	
W	I	L	S	O	N	W	A	L	T	O	N
A	N	D	A	D	I	E	D	H	U	E	
N	E	E	D	E	L	L	N	A	P	A	
A	D	D	I	N	L	E	V	E	L	E	D
A	B	S	D	E	W						
S	C	A	R	C	E	R	E	S	T	O	P
L	A	C	Y	C	O	G	Y	O	R	E	
O	N	E	N	A	N	A	S	T	I	E	
W	A	T	S	O	N	W	Y	N	T	O	N
S	L	Y	E	S	T	K	N	E	E	L	S
S	L	A	Y	S	C	O	R	E	S		

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28	29	30		31		32				
33			34		35		36			
37			38		39		40			
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		44		45		46		47	48	49
50	51	52		53		54		55		
56				57				58		
59				60						61

CRYPTOQUIP

B K H P J T O R U V V - X P K R P I K T

Z C E P J C E P E P M C P C Z C N E P M V O

V C T M U A J C A Y K I A H D Z C B Y E P U

M H P A : H N E - D U X E A J C P .

Saturday's Cryptoquip:

THE TWO POETS WHO ALWAYS COMPOSED VERSE TOGETHER CONSIDERED THEMSELVES PARTNERS IN RHYME.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals F

QUOTABLE Quotes

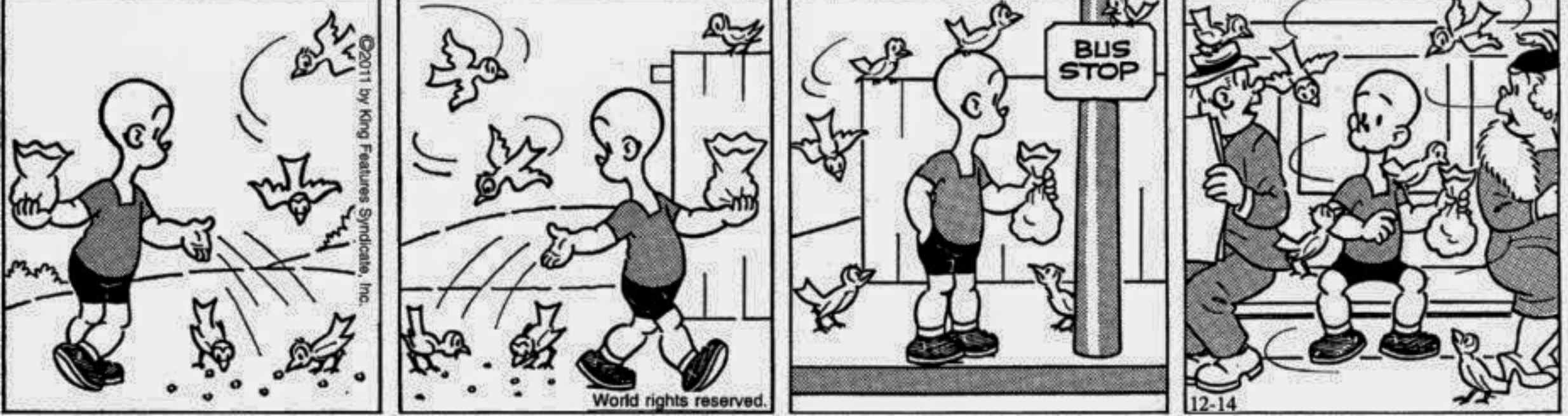
"Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it's called the present."

Unknown

BEETLE BAILY by Mort Walker



HENRY by Don Tranchte



NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION: FALL 2013

Test Date: 10 a.m. Saturday 03 August 2013

Application Deadline: 4 p.m. 31 July 2013

Admission Requirements

- Minimum GPA of 3.5 in S.S.C. and H.S.C. each.
- Minimum Average Grade Point of 2.5 in five subjects in O-Level and 2.0 in two subjects in A-Level (A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2, E=1).
- HSC appeared candidates can apply.
- Candidates will be selected on the basis of past academic results and admission test performance.

Tuition Waiver

Students securing 1st and 2nd position in the Admission Test based merit list will be eligible for 100% tuition waiver.

Candidates fulfilling the following minimum requirements will be eligible for 25% to 100% tuition waiver subject to performance in the admission test:

- 7 A's at a time in O-level and 3 A's in A-Level examinations
- GPA 5.0 (excluding 4th subject) in either SSC or HSC and at least GPA 4.8 in the other (excluding 4th subject)

Form Submission Procedures:

Application Forms are available for Tk. 1000 from Southeast Bank, Bashundhara Branch. One can also download application forms from the NSU Website: www.northsouth.edu, payment of Tk. 1000 must be made with pay order during submission of application form.

Applicants are requested to show original and attach the following documents at the copy of submission of the Application Form:

- Original HSC Registration Card with one photocopy or Original Passport with a copy
- Four copies of passport size photographs, three are glued and stapled in the form
- Photocopies of the following:
 - SSC/O'Level marksheet (mandatory)
 - SSC/O'Level certificate (mandatory)
 - HSC/A'Level marksheet (mandatory)
 - HSC/A'Level certificate (if available)
- Two letter of recommendations/Testimonials from Teachers/Head Master/Principal (if available)

Test Date Instructions:

- All candidates must report at least 30 minutes before the admission test
- NO Cell phones
- NO digital watch
- NO calculators

For further information, please contact:

NSU Admission & Information Office
Level 1, Bashundhara, Dhaka-1229
Tel: 880-2-8852000, Ext. 5000/5002/5004
Email: registrar@northsouth.edu
Web: www.northsouth.edu