

HC ruling voids Jamaat's registration

Rewriting party constitution only remedy

IN a landmark decision on August 1, the High Court cancelled registration of Jamaat-e-Islami's (JI) party registration. The ruling came in light of a petition challenging the party's registration with the Election Commission (EC) in 2009. Though the party rewrote its constitution earlier, it fails to recognise democracy and parliament as the highest body responsible for enactment of laws. The HC ruling leaves open the door for JI to appeal to the appellate division. However, till the outcome of the appeal, the party cannot take part in national polls.

The HC ruling does not however come as a total surprise. For the past three years, JI has been playing a cat-and-mouse game with the EC to amend its charter. JI's refusal to conform to the Representation of the People Order (RPO) which was changed by the EC in 2008 set the stage for this outcome. JI's charter continues to belittle the country's constitution in that it fails to recognise the plenary power of parliament in making laws. Furthermore, the charter has discriminatory provisions that disallow women and non-Muslims to ever become the party chief. Such clauses are in direct contravention to the constitution that holds specific views against discrimination based on religion and gender.

Given that no political party can operate in Bangladesh without taking into cognizance the constitution and EC's revised RPO, it is expected that JI will recast its party charter and reintegrate itself in the political fabric of the land.

Shrinkage of rivers

Demarcation pillars need to be rightly placed

RIVER pillars in Turag, which were built two years ago, have caused the river to shrink by 30ft. The task-force on river recently met and realized that the demarcation pillars were wrongly placed, causing the shrinkage. The task force does not even remember if the demarcation was made when the river was full of water or not, a factor which would obviously affect the river's wellbeing. And this is not the case only in Turag, Buriganga, Shitalakkhya, Balu and Dhaleswari are also facing the same problem.

It is astonishing to learn that such an important task of doing proper demarcation was not done before spending the money in building the pillars. Poor quality materials used to build the pillars might have also affected the situation. It is almost as if no thought was given to the consequences. The shrinking rivers of Dhaka, the same ones which once made the city that much more sufficient and a growth capital are now disappearing because of sheer negligence.

We blame our industries for river pollution and people for not being responsible tourists while visiting rivers, yet our government is also part of the destruction of the rivers in our country.

We sincerely hope that the new demarcation pillars which will be built to save the rivers from further destruction are well planned and properly set up.

Experience and knowledge

S.A. MANSUR

AN interesting and rather unusual write-up published by a local English daily on July 25 made me ponder a while; in trying to determine the co-relation between the two. I have, therefore, deliberately changed the order of the heading which was "Knowledge and Experience." Simply because experience leads to knowledge, and not the other way round! Experience comes from doing, seeing and participating in various events, things or activities, and the information that one comes through this experience subsequently becomes knowledge that is gained.

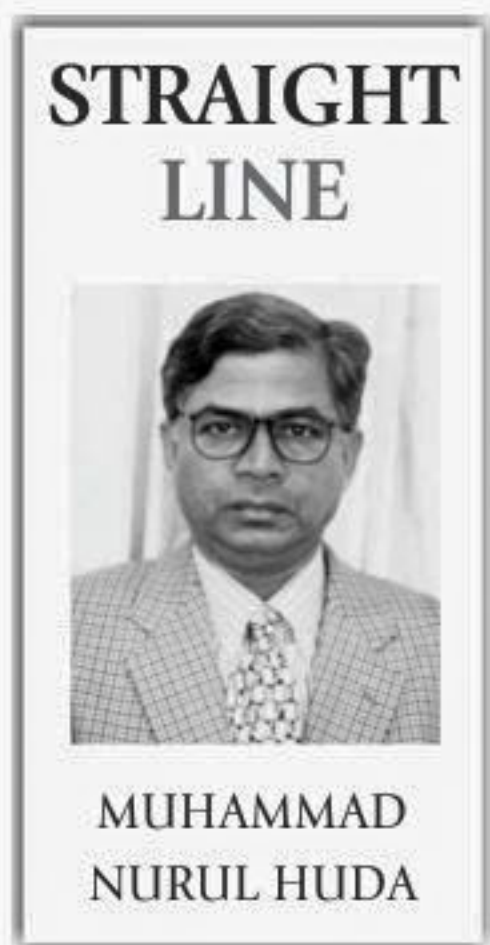
Knowledge, or awareness, on the other hand can help you to determine what the experience could be, when the event happens. Knowledge about fire breaking out in the house makes you aware of the dangers associated with it, and guides you in taking proper precautions based on earlier experiences from such events. A history student may have all the knowledge and results of a war that happened long time back, but has no experience (or firsthand knowledge) of the hardship, dangers and wounds suffered by the persons who were involved in that war! In that respect, knowledge is secondhand; while experience is usually firsthand information of facts and events gained by the person or persons concerned.

To an extent, 'information from participation' leads to experience; hence experience can build up knowledge for future; but knowledge alone can never lead to experience! We can say that knowledge can be the cause of an event; and the result of the experience is the effect of it! Knowledge here is the cause, and experience the effect of it! Hence comes the saying "cause and effect!" It is for this reason, that actual working experience is important for engineers and technical personnel, who can apply the knowledge gained from such experiences!

To sum up; experience leads to knowledge that can lead to experience. It is the experiences of the past that are the cornerstone of knowledge today! One is about doing things, and the other is about knowing what was done! That is the fundamental difference between the two.

The writer is a retired engineer.

Freedom with partition



HISTORIANS are polarised on the question whether freedom in August 1947 was seized by the Indians or power was transferred voluntarily by the British "as an act of positive statesmanship." The British decision to quit was significantly based on the un-governability of India in 1940's. The constitutional arrangements of 1919 and 1935 were actually meant to secure British hegemony over the Indian empire through consolidation of control over the central government. Therefore, it is unlikely that the British left India voluntarily in 1947 in pursuance of a policy of decolonisation. Freedom was not a gift to the Indians.

The Cripps Mission of March-April 1942, though a failure, signified an important shift in British policy. It announced Indian independence after the war, within or outside the empire, to be the ultimate goal of British policy; and that unity would no longer be a precondition for independence.

The major obstacle to an unruffled transfer of power in India was the Hindu-Muslim divide, which by 1940s had become quite apparent at the negotiating table. The 1940 Lahore resolution had elevated the Indian Muslims from the status of 'minority' to that of a 'nation,' and subsequent developments projected Jinnah as their "sole spokesman." Jinnah rejected the Cripps proposal precisely because it did not recognise the Muslims' right to self-determination and equality as a nation.

The demand for Pakistan was not well defined in 1942-43. At this stage what Jinnah wanted was autonomy for the Muslim majority provinces in a loose federal structure, with Hindu-Muslim party at the central government, the minority Hindus in the Muslim majority provinces serving as security for the Muslim minorities elsewhere.

The vagueness of the Pakistan demand made it an excellent instrument for a Muslim mass mobilisation campaign in the 1940's, the primary objective of which was to construct a Muslim national identity transcending class and regional barriers. Muslim politics during the period began to attract support from a cross-section of Muslim population, particularly from the professional and business classes for whom a separate state of Pakistan would mean elimination of Hindu competition. To this was added the political support of the leading *ulama*, *pirs* and *maulavis* who lent this campaign a religious legitimacy.

Muslim politics at a national level was being institutionalised and Jinnah gradually emerged as its control over the provincial branches of the Muslim League. The provincial groups or leaders where systematically pulled down and politically marginalised. During the closing years of the Second World War, in Bengal and Panjab, the Pakistan demand became an ideological rallying symbol that helped overcome the various fissures within a heterogeneous Muslim community.

'Pakistan' was presented as 'a peasant utopia' which would bring in liberation for Muslim peasantry from the hands of the Hindu *zamindars* and moneylenders. As a result, by the mid-1940's, Pakistan as an ideological symbol of Muslim solidarity gained almost universal acceptance among the Muslim peasants. Abul Hashim, the Bengal League leader, travelled extensively throughout East Bengal countryside campaigning for Pakistan and his draft manifesto that outlined the moral, economic and political objectives of the movement, and also appealed to the Muslim middle classes, particularly the students. By 1945 the Muslim League had emerged as the only mass-based political party of the Muslims.

Muslim League's popularity was translated into a massive election victory in 1946, with the League winning 93% of Muslim votes in the province and 119 of the 250 seats in the

For many Indians freedom came with a sense of loss caused by the partition, while to many Muslims in Pakistan partition itself meant freedom.

Assembly.

Jinnah, in 1944, launched a well orchestrated mass campaign to popularise the idea of Pakistan in rural Punjab by enlisting the help of Punjab Muslim Students federation and the *sajjaidhishins* (custodian of Sufi shrines) who were pressed into the political service of Islam. When the *pirs*, with their huge rural influence, issued *fatwas*, support for Pakistan became an individual religious responsibility of every Muslim.

As the election of 1946 approached, the entire power structure of the Punjabi Muslim community—from the rural magnates and the landowning class, which previously supported the unionist party, to the ordinary Muslim peasants in Western Punjab -- drifted towards the Muslim League.

Jinnah began preparing the Muslim nation for agitational politics from August 16, 1946, which was chosen as the "Direct Action Day," and it was on this very day that all hell was let loose on Calcutta. If the Muslim league mobilised the masses around the ideological symbol of Pakistan, the Hindu Mahasabha had also raised the slogan of Hindu *rastra* (state) and launched a mass mobilisation campaign. In fact, since the late 1930s the Hindu organisations were trying to convert the "putative 'Hindu Family' into a single harmonious whole," and by the mid-1940s they were preparing for an ultimate showdown by giving their volunteer groups "pseudo-military training."

The elite and popular communalism combined to create a general environment of distrust and tension between Hindus and Muslims that finally exploded in August 1946. As a reaction, riots broke out in Chittagong, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Barisal and Pabna. The worst riots broke out the Noakhali and Tipperah. The entire north Indian Hinds belt experienced the same communal build-up in the 1940s. All communities "had blood on their hands."

The Hindu Mahasabha and local congress in Bengal led a well-orchestrated campaign that advocated partition of Bengal and construction of a Hindu Homeland by retaining the Hindu majority areas in a separate province of West Bengal within the Indian Union. The movement was led by the Hindu Bhadrolok who were trying to seize political initiative once again to determine their own destiny.

The Indian Independence Act was ratified by the crown on July 18 and implemented on August 14/15, 1947. For many Indians freedom came with a sense of loss caused by the partition, while to many Muslims in Pakistan partition itself meant freedom. It is no wonder, therefore, that 'partition' happens to be the most contested discursive territory of South Asian historiography.

For some Pakistani historians the partition was a liberating experience, a logical culmination of a long historical process that was started in the 19th century by Syed Ahmed Khan and others when the South Asian Muslims began to discover their national identity that was articulated later in the complex sub-continental politics of the 1940s. For some it was 'a divide that is 50 years young and 5,000 years old.'

The concept of Pakistan was irresistible and widespread among Muslims. In 1947 they forced a separation and thus claimed for themselves a separate history of their own. There were others who questioned the inevitability and legitimacy of partition. There is a view that the Lahore resolution of 1940 was Jinnah's tactical move to have the claim of nationhood accepted by the congress and the British. The ideal constitutional arrangement Jinnah preferred for India in mid-1940s was a weak federal structure with strong autonomy for the provinces, and Hindu-Muslim parity at the centre.

Some historians are of the belief that "it was not the League but the Congress who chose at the end of the day to run a knife across Mother India's body." Though Jinnah may have first floated the idea of Pakistan as a "bargaining counter" it is doubtful if he had the same bargaining autonomy once the mass mobilisation campaign began in 1944 around this emotive symbol of Muslim nationhood. The Pakistan movement was hardly an elite affair in the run-up to the partition in August 1947.

The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star.

Indo-Pak dialogue futile

RAJINDER PURI

PAKISTAN Ambassador Salman Bashir has conveyed his government's invitation to hold talks on the Wullar Barrage on August 27 to 28 and on Sir Creek on September 16 to 17.

This will be before Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Nawaz Sharif are expected to meet during September end on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session.

Talks with Pakistan should of course be pursued but only if focused on tangibles. Settling irritants and furthering people to people contacts as a prelude to attempting agreement is meaningless. Such efforts can continue for decades and get periodically derailed whenever vested interests supporting terrorism choose to sabotage progress. Unless New Delhi recognises the core problem in Pakistan it will be a waste of time to pursue the peace dialogue.

Neither finding solutions for irritants nor addressing non-existent hostility between the peoples of India and Pakistan is the problem. The problem is that Pakistan is a totally subverted nation.

Over the decades ever since its inception foreign powers subverted Pakistan to ensure its instrumentality for the purpose it was created.

Even after six decades Pakistan's civil population best represented by its media remains largely reasonable, liberal and well disposed towards India. But this segment that should in normal circumstances dictate Pakistan's policies is in fact helpless. It is squeezed between the ruling military establishment above and the lumpen elements schooled and funded to support terrorism below. Together these two segments in Pakistan have kept alive terrorism under encouragement of foreign vested interests hostile to India.

The vested interests of military and intelligence persuade their members to rationalise continued exploitation and justify terrorism. Until effective and credible steps are taken to eliminate terrorism it is futile to persist with a peace dialogue perpetually held hostage to vested interests supporting terror.

Now, however, Pakistan is approaching its moment of truth. The discrimination practiced against all minorities and support only for the fundamentalist Sunni segment of its society has over the years rendered Islamabad's ruling establishment as much the oppressor as the victim of the Frankenstein's monster it has created.

A perceptive article by Aakar Patel in *The Hindustan Times* has traced how the ruling establishment in Pakistan has systematically and inexorably targeted all communities except its Sunni hardcore through discrimination.

After Hindus, Christians and Sikhs became targeted citizens immediately after Pakistan's founder Mohammed Ali

Jinnah's demise, even though he had made a stirring inaugural speech promoting secularism, it was the turn of non-Sunni Islamic sects to bear the brunt of discrimination. Ahmediahs and Quadianis were also treated as non-Muslims.

Inevitably, the axe finally fell on the largest non-Sunni sect, the Shiites. Pakistan has legislated Shiites as being non-Islamic and therefore debarred from holding high office. By a supreme irony the founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah was a Shiite.

Terrorist attacks against the Shiites fueled by the searing hostility between Shiite and Sunni nations that has set the Middle East on fire have reached unbearable proportions inside Pakistan. Foreign-funded madrassas have converted backward and economically impoverished southern Punjab into the recruiting ground and virtual factory of terrorist organisations. Pakistan's home grown dreaded Tehrik-e-Taliban is a much more dedicated adherent of al-Qaeda ideology than the Afghan Taliban. And now it is wantonly killing Shiites on a daily basis. And if the Pakistan security establishment attempts to curb terrorism its own members are killed by the Punjabi Taliban.

What purpose therefore will any confidence building measures with Pakistan serve unless terrorism is not first eliminated? The credible intent by Pakistan to eliminate terrorism will not be demonstrated merely by suitable legal action on 26/11 or on border incursions and beheadings of Indian soldiers. It will be demonstrated only if the Pakistan army and security establishment commit themselves to end terrorism by cooperating with their Indian counterparts.

Unless the Pakistan army accepts in principle that it will enter into joint defence with the Indian army to be achieved in a given timeframe the pursuit of a peace settlement with Pakistan is delusional.

Therefore, when Prime Minister Singh confers with Prime Minister Sharif in New York in late September he should focus on the core issue and give an ultimatum. If Sharif cannot deliver his army's consent to open and declared cooperation with India all peace efforts should be abandoned. Valuable time has been wasted. There are other diplomatic measures open to India to hasten the implosion of Pakistan, towards which its ruling establishment is relentlessly proceeding.

The basic question remains whether Islamabad will deliver. Sharif does have vision. But does he have the will?

The writer is a veteran journalist and cartoonist.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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“A land of many Muslims but little of Islam”

Having read the above titled piece by Shahedul Anam Khan, I got confused. He criticised our un-Islamic practices of food adulteration, price hike in Ramadan, strikes, vandalism and tampering with baby milk.

While I appreciate the self-critique, it must be pointed out that the vices in us do not arise because we are Muslims or non-Muslims. The article could just as well have been titled 'little of patriotism' or 'little of socialism' or 'little of basic human integrity'. The self-proclaimed flag bearers of Islam are also a national problem and have little to do with Islam. There is Islam in the rickshaw puller who pedals while fasting and the beggar who shares his iftar with street urchins.

Adnan R Amin
Gulshan, Dhaka

T20 World Cup venues

As a cricket fan, the recent turns of events have been more of bafflement rather than disappointment to me. The BCB is dealing with issues like election and Dhaka Premier League in a naive way. There are unresolved issues regarding T20 venues. We already have world class venues in Bogra, Khulna and Fatullah besides Dhaka and Chittagong. We could easily have held matches in any of the three venues alongside the two main venues. There was no need to prepare a new stadium in Sylhet. Moreover, if they were keen to carry on with their plans, why couldn't they begin the work properly? Now they put the country at risk of losing the rights of hosting the T20 World Cup.

Tauhidul Islam
Uttara, Dhaka

Bring Rony to justice

I was speechless after seeing the video footage of two journalists of the Independent Television being beaten up by Awami League MP Golam Maula Rony. I was relieved after knowing that he was arrested. How can an MP act that way?

Assaulting journalists is not new in our country. For bringing out the truth, they put their lives at risk. No one has forgotten the journalist couple murder incident. I like journalism and would love to become a journalist.

Rony should be boycotted by all and his membership in parliament should also be cancelled. He should be awarded highest punishment so that such things never happen in the future.

Jannatul Ferdous Usha
Holy Cross College
Dhaka

A scary prospect!

Through the columns of your esteemed daily, I would like to draw the attention of the conscientious people to the despicable leader of Gujarat carnage. India is a country of multi-culture and multi-religion. People of different faiths live peacefully there. But BJP is trying to exterminate the Muslim community. Narendra Modi of the party will compete for the post of prime minister in the next election. But the fact is, he is infamous for his role in Gujarat carnage. We want to say that the head of a government must be free from religious bias. Ethnic cleansing cannot be the motto of a real leader. Religious minorities won't feel secure under his premiership. An illustrious personality like Amartya Sen has questioned his nomination for the top position of India. We hope the voters of India will reject him by ballot in the coming election.

Swapon Biswas
Asst. teacher
Jhenidah Govt. High School

Comments on news report, “Caught on camera,” published on July 31, 2013

Mayen Uddin Tazim

This tragic incident indicates how the country has been run. The nation wants to get rid of such criminal activities and also wants to see how the ministry of home affairs is going to act on this.

Vikram Khan

Instead of being united in this time of political crisis, the government party is divided. We're going nowhere...

Abul Kashem

Where monetary matters and question of power exist, rivalry is very much natural there.

Shahin Huq

When misrule and a culture of murders develop in a country, all are almost equally affected. Because of lawlessness, both opposition and ruling party people are being killed in brutal manners. The government is responsible for all these crimes, because it has given a green signal to criminals and murderers.

“EC chooses to be toothless”
(July 29, 2013)

Nds

It is good while everybody in this country wants more power; EC wants to make an exception. It deserves to be welcomed.

Abul Kashem

There's no way left except praying to the Almighty. All government institutions are toothless tigers now. They have nothing to do unless instructed by the highest authorities.