

# Suspension of students a farce

## Tougher action must be taken

THE decision by Bangladesh Agriculture University syndicate to expel three students and suspend three others in connection with the murder of a final year student has left us dumbfounded. The suspension of two students is a mere slap on the wrist given the gravity of the charges they face. That a public university's highest decision-making body continues to give the impression of cowering in the face of mounting pressure by Bangladesh Chatra League speaks volumes of the level of autonomy supposedly enjoyed by the syndicate.

The continued agitation of the general body of students against the decision of the syndicate is understandable, given the grievous circumstances. Temporary suspension of students connected to a murder rap is seen as an attempt to sweep the matter under the carpet. What appears to escape the university authorities is that letting the accused in a murder case off with such light sentence only encourages such brutal behaviour to be perpetuated in future.

The decision has left the university a house divided. A section of teachers have called for a reconstituted probe committee and the resignation of some teachers for negligence of duty. What is there to stop a fresh attack on ordinary students who demand justice for their fellow students who has met with such a gruesome end? Will the syndicate take responsibility for a future incident like the murder of April 1, or will we see more of such feeble attempts to give shelter to minions of the high and mighty?

# We remember Musa Bhai

## He left a legacy to emulate

WITH a heavy heart, we remember ABM Musa, or Musa Bhai, as he was popularly known among his fellow journalists, who died on Wednesday at a local hospital. He was 83.

At his death, Musa Bhai has left a big void almost impossible to fill in the world of Bangladesh journalism. It's not that no other living journalist can match his brilliance or talent. It's about a time, the golden era of journalism, that ended with his going to glory. Starting at an early age in the profession --he was only 19 when he joined the daily Insaaf in 1950 -- he became part of the history of journalism as it evolved in this part of the world. He also worked with many other media houses, print and wire service including Sangbad, BSS, the now defunct Bangladesh Observer, Morning News, among others. He never parted with his profession until his last days.

The kind of journalism Musa bhai and his contemporaries practised was in many ways different from what it is today. In those days, journalism was propelled by a steadfast sense of commitment to society and people. It was yet to become a career worth pursuing by bright university graduates since it hardly promised a life of financial security and comfort. So people like Musa Bhai who joined this profession during its formative years had knowingly chosen a career that was full of uncertainties, even risky and often thankless. The charm, if any, was in the challenge it held out before them.

Though he is physically no more with us, the legacy of professional and ethical journalism he represented will endure for generations to come.

We pray for eternal peace of his departed soul and com-

# What people think

Friday: April 4, 2014

Do you agree with BNP leader Rafiqul Islam Mia that the upazila election rigging proved that democracy is not safe at the hands of the Hasina administration?

Yes

85%

No

15%

Saturday: April 5, 2014

Do you agree with Election Working Group that the local administration and law enforcers showed patently unprofessional attitude in discharging their duties during upazila parishad polls?

Yes

89%

No

11%

Sunday: April 6, 2014

Do you think Bangladesh would be benefited by letting India use its soil for power corridor?

Yes

23%

No

77%

Monday: April 7, 2014

Do you think fair trial for the murder of labour leader Aminul Islam will be ensured following the three international labour rights groups' demand?

Yes

19%

No

81%

Tuesday: April 8, 2014

Do you agree with a report by Washington-based organisation Social Progress Imperative that Bangladesh has done better than most South Asian countries in social progress?

Yes

53%

No

47%

Wednesday: April 9, 2014

Do you think the authorities will be able to probe killings at Bangladesh Agricultural University and Rajshahi University without any influence?

Yes

7%

No

93%

Thursday: April 10, 2014

Do you agree with Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pankaj Saran that his country's policy towards Bangladesh would remain unchanged in case of changes in Indian government?

Yes

32%

No

68%

# Goldsmiths, gold diggers and Golden Bengal



only twenty-five percent of their intended weight in gold. Let's pray they don't misunderstand that gold diggers are how the Golden Bengal has got its name!

Some of them may never get the wind of this scandal unless our government decides to inform them by the way of replacing their crests and offering them an apology. Those who will find out will hopefully understand, and understand they will because here we aren't talking about ordinary men and women. These are large-hearted people, who have already proven that they could rise above parochial interests. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been concerned over the freedom-loving people in a faraway land.

But how can we absolve ourselves of the guilt of this miserable mischief? It's utterly shameful that the supplier of the crests and the government people, who were responsible for managing the procurement, are spouting hogwash at us. The supplier is telling us how Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution must have ruined much of the gold while testing, which is why the samples gave a poor reading of the quantity contained. The officials of the Liberation War Ministry sounded like a credulous bunch as if they got no clue they had been take for a ludicrous ride.

One wonders though what prompted the concerned ministry to have the testing done so late in the day. Ideally, it should have been done before the crests were given away. It should have been done by drawing random samples, even one piece at a time, since it's a serious matter of our national pride, prestige and interest.

Better late than never, now we know that our indebtedness to those who helped us in 1971 fell short in its measure in gold. We chose to give the crests as a gesture, corre-

OLDSMITHS in this part of the world have a reputation for stealing gold even from their mothers' nose-rings, but now they've got others who can give them a run for their money. What has happened is sure shot embarrassing. The gold crests given to foreign friends of Bangladesh, who contributed to our Liberation War, have been shortchanged. It means these tokens of our heartfelt gratitude carried

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sponding precious metal with the intrinsic value of our appreciation. Silver, copper or zinc crests would have given inappropriate assessment of those who stood by us at a critical juncture of history. Diamond, perhaps, would have been an overkill.

One had expected that the government was going to react very strongly. After all, it was the prime minister who handed over those crests. No matter how one looks at it, her reputation is on the line along with that of the country. By now we should have seen some heads rolling already.

Instead, what we have got so far is buck passing. The cabinet division has pointed finger at the Ministry of Liberation War. The supplier is blindly blaming BSTI. The statements of ministry officials reek with insincerity. It appears that nobody bothered to double check in their rush of whatever things.

The ultimate buck passing has been the formation of an investigation committee. Thanks to God, the temporary suspension of the officials allegedly involved in the scam is also a possibility! Over the years we have been conditioned like Pavlov's dog to expect nothing from an investigation committee. For some strange reason, it always did to our expectation what the suppliers have done to those crests. A committee has always taken the value out of an investigation.

What could have been done instead is an immediate meeting between the supplier and the BSTI experts to establish how much gold actually gets lost in the course of testing. Once that's established, the rest is easy. If the supplier is right then BSTI is wrong. Needless to say, the other way around can tell us who's the real culprit.

We don't know how far this matter will go. We don't know where the buck is going to stop. But if a crime has been committed here, its gravity can't be underestimated. It only shows how far the moral swamp has spread not to spare even our ability to respect ourselves.

One definition has it that an attempt to impair the well-being of a state to which one owes allegiance is treason. What has happened with the crests is more than a case of missing gold. It has been a slap in the face of our national self-assurance that at long last we showed the long overdue respect to our friends.

It's up to the government to decide if this gives enough reason to call this depravity an act of treason. But it has surely frog-marched this nation into another moral quagmire where nothing is sacred and nothing is safe.

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however, about the efforts we Ukrainians are now making to defend our country and our democracy. Our young men and women are volunteering for military service like never before. Our government has negotiated a standby loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund that will give us some of the tools that we need to get our financial and economic house in order. That agreement will also impose real economic pain, but Ukrainians are willing to pay the price in order to preserve our independence.

After a time of neglect, a time when we -- like the rest of Europe -- believed that the continent's borders would never again be changed by force, we are also increasing our defense spending, despite our economy's precarious state. There will be no more surrendering of sovereign Ukrainian territory. Not an inch.

Most important, despite the Russian army massed against us, we are embarking on an election campaign. Next month, Ukraine's citizens will freely choose a new president -- the best rebuke possible to Russian propaganda about our supposed failure to uphold democracy.

And yet, as Ukrainians work to rebuild our country after Viktor Yanukovich's predatory rule, we are facing a new threat, in the form of a "peace offensive" -- that old staple of Soviet diplomacy designed to undermine Western resolve. Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent phone call to US President Barack Obama to seek renewed diplomatic talks, followed by a Russian white paper on how to resolve a crisis of the Kremlin's making, is in fact a peace offensive that is offensive to peace.

Putin's gambit is akin to the infamous Yalta Conference in 1945, where Joseph Stalin made Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt complicit in a division of Europe that enslaved half of the continent for almost a half-century. Today, Putin is seeking to make the West complicit in the dismemberment of Ukraine by negotiating a Kremlin-designed federal constitution that would create a dozen Crimeas -- bite-size chunks that Russia could devour more easily later.

Of course, federalism sounds like a good thing. Devolving political power closer to where people actually live is always appealing, and usually effective. But the wellbeing of Ukrainian democracy is not what Putin has in mind; for him, a federal system is a means for the Kremlin to make political mischief and ultimately incorporate Ukraine's eastern and southern regions into the Russian Federation. To paraphrase Clausewitz, federalism for Putin is annexation by other means.

THE quiet period between the declaration of war in September 1939 and the Nazi blitz on Belgium and France in May 1940 is often called "The Phony War." Since Russia invaded and annexed Crimea, and began massing troops and armoured columns on our eastern border, we in Ukraine have been living through a "phony peace."

There is nothing phony,



One has only to look at the Russian proposal's fine print: Ukraine's new federal units would have a powerful say over "Ukraine's foreign-policy direction." That provision would enable Putin to try to coerce and manipulate Russian-speaking regions into vetoing the country's European future.

Ukraine's constitutional structure is for Ukraine's citizens alone to decide. Russia can have no say in it -- and nor should other countries, however helpful they wish to be. Ukraine is not Bosnia, where the constitution emerged out of peace talks that ended years of bloody warfare following the breakup of Yugoslavia. Nor is it Kosovo, which became independent at the same time that its governmental structures were being forged. Ukraine is a fully sovereign state, recognised as such by the world, including Russia.

To buy into Putin's sham federalism is to accept the lies that the Kremlin has been spewing about Ukraine's current interim government and the brave men and women who ousted Yanukovich. Putin's factotums claim that Ukraine's Russian speakers are under threat, but they cannot point to a single example of persecution that might bear this out. No Russian-speaking refugees from eastern Ukraine or Crimea have fled into Russia, and no Russian-speaker has sought political asylum anywhere else outside the country.

The reason is simple: there is no oppression of Russian speakers in Ukraine, and there never has been. Ukraine's government under Yanukovich was incompetent, corrupt, and mendacious. But it was an equal-opportunity oppressor.

If there is no oppression of Russian speakers in Ukraine, there is no reason to change the country's political structure. So should Ukraine really be forced to create a new constitutional order based on the Big Lie? What we need is a competent, efficient, and corruption-free government. And with Europe's help and technical assistance, we will establish one.

The desire of diplomats to find a peaceful solution to Ukraine's crisis is understandable. But the terms that Russia is demanding, if accepted by the West, would fatally undermine Ukraine's sovereignty; worse, accepting Russia's terms would ratify the idea that powerful countries may bully less powerful neighbours into doing their bidding, to the point of surrendering their independence.

Ukraine will stand up to the bully -- on our own, if necessary. We refuse to play the part of hapless victim in future history textbooks.

The writer, twice prime minister of Ukraine and a former political prisoner, is a candidate for president in the May election.  
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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## What's wrong with the Tigers?

During a post match interview, Mushfiq mentioned that he did not know or understand what's wrong with our players. If the team management watched all the matches starting from the Sri Lanka tour and listen to all the commentary, they may be able to find answers. Mushfiq's poor captaincy has been mentioned by all over and over again. If the pitch favours pacers, he continues to bring the spinners to bowl including part timers and vice versa. Proper rotation of bowlers was not practiced. Even when a bowler got tired, he continued with the same bowler. Fielders were not placed in catching positions. Countless easy catches were dropped. Many times, when the ball ran to the boundary, the fielder ran after the ball slowly and 'hoped' the ball would stop by itself.

As far as batting is concerned, past experience seemed to have "zero" value for the Tigers. There is simply no excuse for the way the top order batted. I hope the team management will look into each of the problem seriously and solve those. Our players should remember that they are international players representing our country, not school boys playing cricket on the streets.

Aminur Rahim  
New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka

## Self-defence training for rural girls



Plan International's initiative to train schoolgirls in karate and martial arts in Bangladesh's rural areas is really admirable (TDS; March 28). In Bangladesh violence against women is on the rise. Rape, killing, stalking, acid attacks are happening every now and then. In such horrible circumstances, no NGO, as far as I know, has come up with such a novel programme in a bid to encourage women in self-defense. Girls must believe in themselves, that they are not weak, that they can defend themselves without seeking anyone's help. Plan International should operate this programme in other districts also including Dhaka. I think, besides giving karate training to the girls, the programme should include some other important lessons for rural school and college girls. Groups can be formed with girls who live in the same area. They can go to school or college together, share their problems and experiences with each other and find solutions to their problems by themselves. That way they may scare away the stalkers as the latter may not dare harass a girl when she is among other 10 to 12 girls. All the NGOs working in the country should come up with such programmes if they are really willing to help women.

Sumaiya Rashid  
Dhaka

## Comments on news report, "The Lions Feast at Last," published on April 7, 2014

Titu Sultan

Bravo Sri Lanka!

Mozahedul Islam

Bangladesh organised the T20 World Cup well, now is time to organise the team.

## "Blacklisted co given the job" (April 6, 2014)

S. M. Iftekhar Ahmed

The Japanese are renowned for their high ethical standards, so this company should not even exist.

Hard Reality

How could they do that monumental mismanagement in broad daylight? Aren't they seriously thinking about their image, public outcry, accountability, good governance, fairness, justice, building public trust and most of all, putting the country above everything? It seems that they have created a culture of impunity, which gives them confidence that nothing can touch them and they can get away with almost anything.

Enayet Mowla

Is this another 10% affair? After a lot of unpleasant and humiliating publicity, the previous situation was saved by the intervention of the PM herself.

## "Priority changed for an ex-minister" (April 7, 2014)

SM

Is that Sheikh Hasina's patriot Abul?