

## Crucial RMG safety need addressed

*A stumbling block removed for the sector*

ONE of the sticking points for readymade garments (RMG) industry has been the huge cost of installing safety equipment. The issue of worker safety came to the forefront in the immediate aftermath of a number of devastating incidents like the fire at the Tazreen factory that killed scores of people. Workplace safety has also been a major issue of contention between Bangladesh and the various associations of US and EU buyers.

Now that we know the government intends to slash duties drastically by nearly 90 per cent, it should pave the way for factories to install much needed equipment that can and will make the difference between life and death for many workers.

The industry for its part has been clamouring for a lowering of the duty structure that affects the pricing on items like sprinklers and fire doors. Sprinklers for one are an absolute essential item that can put fires out quickly and effectively. Its incorporation has been recommended by factory inspection teams and with retail pricing to come down substantially as soon as changes to the duty structure are effected, we should see large scale retrofitting to commence across the thousands of factories in the country.

Although BGMEA had asked for a zero-duty facility for import of such equipment, we believe the current move should go a long way in addressing countermeasures that must be installed to deter a rerun of the incident on the scale of Tazreen Fashion.

## Derailed train on Bangabandhu bridge

*Providential intervention saved lives*

DERAILMENT of nine bogies of an inter-city train on Bangabandhu Bridge by norwester storm on Sunday night gives a shocking jolt as to how close to disaster the accident went.

Please note that 14 people died and crops in four districts were damaged through the storm. That itself was a heavy toll, but had the wind blown the other way the precariously derailed train would not have tilted towards the bridge's side; instead , it would have fallen into the river. Thus providence saved a colossal loss in human and material terms.

Following the incident, train communication remained suspended between Dhaka and northern districts for about 16 hours. Consequently, some twelve trains commuting to and from the northern districts, carrying several hundred passengers, got delayed.

Responding to the mishap the Railway ministry has formed a four-member committee headed by an additional director general of infrastructure. We wonder whether it's merely a ritualistic step! Since the structural flaw of the railway tracks is manifest in its fragile railings on the river side, standard fortifications were sorely lacking.

This brings to bold relief the weaknesses in the design of the railway tracks which in fact is a reflection of the poor contingency risk assessment in regard to a vital part of an important infrastructure.

Our hope is that the probe committee will come out with recommendation for urgent fortification of railway tracks and the government will implement its suggestion sooner

## Avoid 'man-made' nuclear disasters!

ABDUL MATIN

FOLLOWING the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011, many countries with operating nuclear power reactors reviewed the safety of their reactors. Some took precautionary measures and continued with the expansion of their nuclear power programme while others decided to phase out nuclear power. Under such circumstances, Bangladesh decided to build its first nuclear power plant at Rooppur with Russian assistance.

After the Fukushima accident, the National Diet of Japan constituted an independent parliamentary commission to investigate into the causes of the accident and to recommend measures for prevention of such accidents in the future. The first and the most important conclusion of the commission is that the "accident was the result of collusion between the government, the regulators and TEPCO,..... They effectively betrayed the nation's right to be safe from nuclear accidents. Therefore, we conclude that the accident was clearly 'manmade.'" TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company) is the owner/operator of the Fukushima nuclear Plant.

To avoid another future 'manmade' accident, the commission recommended that "A permanent committee to deal with issues regarding nuclear power must be established in the National Diet in order to supervise the regulators to secure the safety of the public. Its responsibilities should be: (i) To conduct regular investigations and explanatory hearings of regulatory agencies, academics and stakeholders; (ii) To establish an advisory body, including independent experts with a global perspective, to keep the committee's knowledge updated in its dealings with regulators; (iii) To continue investigations on other relevant issues; (iv) To make regular reports on their activities and the implementation of their recommendations."

The Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority (BAERA) was formed in 2013 but it works directly under the ministry of science and technology (MoST) like the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission which will own and operate the Rooppur nuclear plant. Under such circumstances, collusion, like that of Japan, involving the government, the BAEC and BAERA cannot be ruled out. This can seriously affect the safety of the nuclear plant.

Under the circumstances, it is strongly recommended that the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Act 2012 is amended to make BAERA responsible to a parliamentary committee and to form an advisory expert body to assist the parliamentary committee to further strengthen nuclear safety and avoid 'man-made' nuclear disasters in Bangladesh.

The writer is a former chief engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and author of "Rooppur and the Power Crisis."

# May Day . . . and all those good men

## GROUND REALITIES



SYED BADRUL AHSAN

yet there have been in me all those stirrings that have regularly spoken to me of the rights that men are by nature heir to. I have kept faith in the principle of people all over the world, but especially in my country, coming by politics that would base itself on the socialistic model, that would propel Bangladesh decisively into the future.

On May Day, therefore, it is much more than a remembrance of Chicago 1886 that I go into. I go beyond that Haymarket tragedy, the same that today symbolises the struggle of what we know as the toiling masses for a happier, better future for themselves. And I remember the Soviet Union as it used to be before perestroika and glasnost led it down the road to ruin. When you speak of human rights today, when you feel the urge for a world based on the rights of everyone to its resources, you remember with a certain touch of pride the sweeping psychological and political changes that the republic proclaimed by Lenin in 1917 and so solidified by Stalin subsequently caused around the globe. You and I may have been put off by Nikita Khrushchev's shoe-banging at the United Nations in 1960. The tired men, Brezhnev and company, who led the Soviet Union into a disastrous war in Afghanistan in the late 1970s have never been our heroes. But the Soviet Union was, when it was around, a model for the future. In our collective memory, it remains an idea we can recreate out of its ashes. It is thus that we understand the yearnings in Vladimir Putin for a powerful Russia.

That is how my thoughts run on May Day. It is a time when I miss Che Guevara, the dedicated socialist who could have changed the face of our world had he not been done to death by the wolves in the Bolivian jungles nearly five decades ago. Guevara was one socialist who combined in him all the best that leftwing politics had to offer. He was charismatic, he was educated and he had faith. Like Fidel Castro, he knew that the most compelling argument in defence of rights was the power of the masses to change their fate. I have been impressed by the rise of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua; and I have been deeply distressed at the way America's Reaganites forced them out of

MAY Day, for me, for millions of others around the world, remains a matter of conviction. No, I do not pretend to be a socialist, though I try to be one. That is what my heart tells me. I remain acutely conscious of the fact that I can never be a good communist. The reasons are simple. It takes great courage, an immensity of the sacrificial spirit and a totality of faith in the power of the common masses to change the world to transform an individual into a socialist or a communist. And

*My pain comes coated in the belief that there will be time someday for the poor and the dispossessed to reclaim the world for themselves. There will be time for the hungry and the angry and the subjugated to take charge of their lives and their universe.*

office. It feels good to see them back in power, but there do not arise in us the feelings that the Sandinistas once epitomised. When pragmatism supplants idealism, you often lose something important. And you call that conviction. But conviction sometimes is revived through the arrival on the scene of men like Hugo Chavez. Venezuela's leader held out hope for his nation's poor. He could have done the job better had he been a little less incendiary in his approach to the neo-conservatives in the United States.

Some years ago, here in Dhaka, a young Chinese woman told me with a straight face that her generation had a poor opinion of Mao Zedong because in his time people were poor. Today, she said with a smile that spread from ear to ear, everyone in China was happy because there was a lot of money to go around. I listened to her, stunned into near silence, for here was a woman who clearly did not remember her history. And her history was the tale of a people who had struggled resolutely and mightily to cause a change in their fortunes. The Long March, the political will of Mao, Zhou En-lai, Chu Teh and Liu Shaoqi are historical episodes that will remind us of the glory that socialism was meant to be. Of course, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution turned out to be disasters. Of course, the repeated purges of men like Deng Xiaoping did not exactly endear Chinese socialism to many. But can you really agree with Deng's proposition

that it did not matter if a cat was white or black as long as it caught mice? Socialism has always been about the means justifying the ends. It has not just been about ends.

On May Day this year, I shall remember with pain the passing of good men like Afghanistan's Nur Mohammad Taraki. There was D.N. Aidit who disappeared on a night of brutality in Indonesia long ago. Had Brezhnev not come in the way, Alexander Dubcek would have caused wonders in Czechoslovakia through his Prague Spring in 1968. Would Bangladesh have taken the rainbow-brightened road to socialism had there not been a falling out between Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Tajuddin Ahmad?

But my pain comes coated in the belief that there will be time someday for the poor and the dispossessed to reclaim the world for themselves. There will be time for the hungry and the angry and the subjugated to take charge of their lives and their universe and build, brick by patient brick, the structure of socialism that will take us a little closer to the creation of a better, prosperous and educated society for ourselves.

There will be time to inform ourselves that globalization is not what we need. Internationalism is what will give nations dignity, around the world.

There are the Bastilles that need to be stormed, in the interest of our children and their children.

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## Egypt awaits seventh president

KAMAL GABALLA

THE doors for Egyptians to register as presidential candidates and present their documents to the presidential elections commission closed last week, leaving only former army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and leftist politician Hamdeen Sabahi to compete in the May elections.

Many observers and political analysts, foreign and local, predict the winning of Sisi in the elections that will be held on May 26 and 27.

At the same time, Sabahi, who came third in the 2012 elections with about 20% of the votes, believes he will win.

Sabahi told a newspaper recently that he will win by 52 percent in the upcoming elections, insisting that a successful state needs a successful management to fight poverty. He added that this state would also need to establish democracy, transitional justice and end the war on terrorism.

The Guardian's Patrick Kingsley has said in a report that Sisi is receiving support that's a lot stronger than Sabahi's. He explained that not only the army is supporting the former army chief but also biased mainstream media, private and public.

Kingsley said that there are concerns however surrounding the transparency of the coming elections especially among rights activists and political opponents.

At least 16,000 Islamists have been detained, according to even the most conservative sources since the ousting of President Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood last year.

Also, as the elections draws nearer, many question freedom of expression in Egypt as a court has forbade the Brotherhood from running the race.

After Egypt witnessed two revolutions in less than three years, the main priority for Egyptians became to restore political and economic stability, with the majority of Egyptians hoping Sisi would be the one to achieve this.

Meanwhile, some observers and political analysts believe that Sisi does not fit the model of a democratic president. Many businessmen however will probably vote for him as they believe he will restore the stability that will help them attract foreign investors.

A few weeks ago, a UAE company signed a contract worth 40 billion dollars to build a million housing units in Egypt.

Meanwhile, it's likely that Korea's Samsung will invest tens of millions of dollars to build a factory in Egypt to collect parts. Similarly, Coca-Cola has also expressed intentions to invest half a billion dollars in the Middle East's most populous country.

Last February, a report issued by the Bank of America described Sisi's presidential bid as useful to the market in the short-term, especially because Gulf aids and other agreements will flow in along with the International Monetary Fund's support.

The report warned Sisi however of depending on Hosni Mubarak's supporters and their policies, describing them as corrupt and incompetent.

The Foreign Policy magazine reported Mohamed al-Dahshan as saying that until today the economic vision of Sisi is still unclear, unlike his political vision regarding domestic and international affairs.

Dahshan, a political scholar, said that Sisi's aim is to abolish the Muslim Brotherhood and satisfy main international players as he feeds the aggression against Turkey,

Qatar and Gaza.

The writer said that Sisi has surrounded himself by a group of experts who are now preparing his political program which will surface in the coming weeks.

Dahshan also discussed some of Sisi's statements, which were mostly leaked and aired through mainstream media, which include him saying, "Has anyone thought about donating one month's income to help the poor? Has anyone considered going to university by foot to save the country some money? I know Egypt and its problems... Egypt will not move forward with words but with work and selflessness... perhaps we need one generation or two for Egypt to live."

The writer sees that these statements indicate that Sisi prefers austerity policy, which includes an increase in taxation and less spending on public transportation unlike the Beblawi government which was put in place in 2013 and resigned a few months ago.

The Beblawi administration accepted Gulf aides to increase spending – and debts – in hopes to elevate the economy which has suffered greatly since the January 25 uprising kicked off.

What's remaining is that we shed light on the two officially competing candidates; Sisi and Sabahi.

Sisi's roots go back to Monofeya which his father left about 80 years ago to live in al-Gamaleya neighborhood, which is a popular and poor area in Cairo's al-Fatemya side.

His father married two women and had a total of eleven children while he was known as "al-Sheikh Abdel Fattah al-Sisi" at a young age for memorizing and reciting the Quran – Muslims' holy book.

Sisi was born on November 19, 1954 and graduated from the army academy in 1977. He's a professional army man and leader and eventually he became the head of military intelligence.

Sisi is married and has three sons and one daughter. His wife is veiled and some of his family members were quoted saying that they prefer that he does not run for presidency because they are scared for him, especially because Egypt's unstable and is facing a critical point in its history on all levels, but especially politically.

Sisi has neither shown enough support for the uprising or those who support it nor promised to chase off those who served in the Muslim Brotherhood, Mubarak or Sadat administrations.

I was lucky enough to have been a classmate of Hamdeen Sabahi and his friend for the past 42 years where we went to Media College at Cairo University in 1972. I watched him with my own eyes as he nobly fought the Student Union elections. I also watched him fight for social justice, human dignity and national independence.

He stood bravely in the face of Sadat before he continued his revolt against the Mubarak regime, which let him to being jailed 13 times as he fought for the poor and farmers and against relations between Egypt and Israel.

Sabahi refuses to be the revolution's contender against the former Egyptian army chief because that in his opinion would only benefit the Muslim Brotherhood and Zionists. He constantly insists that he supports the Egyptian army.

Finally, both candidates could be described as national figures, with only their experiences being different and their size of support.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### For the welfare of cricket

Bangladesh started its 2014 international cricket calendar with nightmarish performances. Loss in Test, ODI and T20 series against Sri Lanka diminished the morale of the Tigers, and they finished the Asia Cup at the bottom of the table. What they did in the T20 world cup was even more shameful as they got drubbed by Hong Kong. Though they reached the super10 round, yet an overall poor performance earned the Tigers nothing but harsh criticism.

Alleged fixing scandals in BPL made things worse. All those concerned with local cricket should remember that among Test ranking sides, Bangladesh undoubtedly has one of the best environments in regards to players' remunerations, club facilities and highest standards of overall comfort.

The board must urgently wake up and arrange countrywide open selection, long term coaching camps, coaches' advanced courses and such other programmes.

**Sultana**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

### Blood donation in saving lives

Having worked with Quantum Lab, one of the pioneers in blood transfusion, as a volunteer and being a regular blood donor, I have had some practical experience about how important blood donation is in saving lives. I have also seen how terrible and bitter situations people have to face when managing blood for their near and dear ones. That's why voluntary blood donation is so important. Every religion tells us to do good work for humanity. What could be better than donating blood? This is also beneficial to one's health.

Donating blood with intervals of four months rejuvenates our blood cells. Regular donors, in most of the cases avoid, to some extent, the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease and cancer. It is really heartening to see that many private organisations such as Red Crescent, Sondhani, Quantum Lab, Badhon, etc., have come forward with blood donation programmes. We need to donate blood spontaneously as well as make people aware about the benefits of blood donation.

**Md Zonae Emran**  
Treasury Department  
Janata Bank Ltd

### Comments on news report, "Alarm over antibiotics," published on April 27, 2014

#### Saint

Rightly said, "That sort of corruption you will find in all sectors." But all this corruption is ruining our present and future too.

#### OpeeMonir

Flagyl is one such antibiotic that is used in serious stomach ailment or in the case of diarrhoea. This particular medicine is widely available in Bangladesh over the counter, no question asked. Repeated or frequent use of this particular medicine has potential to do permanent damage to our digestive system. This is just a single example to start with...

#### Salma L.

The dishonesty of our physicians is not a new issue. For years our doctors have been prescribing unnecessary medicines to patients just to make money. Surgeons also conduct avoidable and unnecessary surgical procedures. These professionals are going on with their illegal activities and our health administration is turning a blind eye.

Hope The Daily Star will continue to write about this issue and our govt. will take some practical measures to save the nation.

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### "They don't need Teesta water?" (April 26, 2014)

#### Mofi

Are these AL leaders insane? I guess not! It is perhaps a trick to save their skin.

#### SM

A true AL leader showing his allegiance to his country! I forgot the alphabets to express the adjectives for people like these.

#### Snr Citizen

Simple math; we need Teesta water for the survival of millions and for their livelihood!

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### "The killing mission" (April 26, 2014)

#### James Rozario

Gen. Manzur's family deserves justice. We, as conscious citizens of Bangladesh, want to see that justice is served to this valiant freedom fighter.

#### Hakli

Truth can never be hidden for good -- no matter how crafty you are -- even if you're ERSHAD! May Allah grant Jannat to Gen. Manzur. His family might find a little solace knowing that the truth has started to come out to put some cowards into the garbage of history.