

Public servants' falsifying FF certificate! They should be handed exemplary punishment

THE government by having revoked the false freedom fighters' certificates that 35 public servants had been using over the years to illegally occupy different official positions and draw benefits illegally from the public exchequer has taken the first step towards holding these fraudsters to account. But considering the gravity of their offence, the government should not rest content with merely removing them from office. They should be made to refund the money they have so far illegally taken from the government under the FF's quota. They also deserve exemplary punishment.

By resorting to such heinous means to pass themselves off as freedom fighters, these people have tried to cheat the entire nation out of its glorious legacy of the Liberation War. Regrettably, this evil practice has been going on for too long giving it a kind of impunity. Small wonder the number of freedom fighters now stands at 2.12 lakh, which was 1.98 lakh in 2002. How are we to account for these additional 14,000 FFs within the last 12 years? The magnitude of the forgery and deception involving false certification as freedom fighters is mind-boggling.

We would like to be reassured about Liberation War ministry's stated investigation against 500 government employees and 5,000 other people in different other professions who are allegedly using fake FF certificates. We believe the government will bring under closer scrutiny all such cases of false FF certificates being used by dishonest people and thus flush the FF ranks clean of impostors.

So it's media's fault! People in charge need to take responsibility

THE communications minister asserts that 80 per cent of the highways are in good shape adding that media has published three-year old pictures in an apparent bid to underplay the progress in the road repair work. We find Mr. Quader's statement unfortunately lacking in depth. If he is so sure that the media is reusing old photographs, let him furnish these as proof of such misrepresentation. Then media will admit its mistake. This is the least we could expect from the communications minister.

Why blame others for the dilapidated condition of the highways? For as we have witnessed in the past the dynamic minister has often taken officials to task for their negligence. Why doesn't he put the R&H officials under the scanner? It has become a yearly ritual for the thousands who brave broken roads that turn dangerously unsafe at the slightest fall of rain. We are sure that the people would be most interested to know precisely how the ministry of communications intends to make Dhaka - Chittagong and Dhaka - Mymensingh highways roadworthy for heavy vehicles like inter-district buses when the rains have washed away most of the repair work undertaken thus far.

And why must repair work only become a priority just prior to festivals? What is required is for authorities to properly plan, make required financial allocations and conduct round the year maintenance of highways instead of resort-

Pathway to a hunger-free Bangladesh

FAHMIDA HASHEM

HISTORY has shown us that when conditions are right, famers have consistently responded with dramatic improvements in productivity growth. How will we feed 9 billion people by 2050 when there are already 870 million hungry people in the world today? It is estimated that even if large farmers increase their production by 20% by 2050, smallholder farms will need to more than double their current production in order to feed a growing population.

Small farmers are always linked to the local private sector. Smallholder farmers are the backbone of the rural economy - but they are bearing the brunt of climate change. Worldwide, there are 500 million smallholder farms supporting some 2 billion people.

The best evidence of the power of smallholder farmers is the Green Revolution, the period of agricultural productivity in Asia that triggered overall economic growth and contributed significantly to poverty reduction in the region. The transformation of Asian agriculture happened on the backs of smallholder farmers—women and men. If smallholder farmers are to embark on the transition to agricultural modernizations, the vicious circle of poverty, lack of resources and low productivity which characterizes smallholder food crop farming must be broken. Despite the enormous success of the Green Revolution, countries like India and Bangladesh still have unacceptably high levels of hunger and poverty.

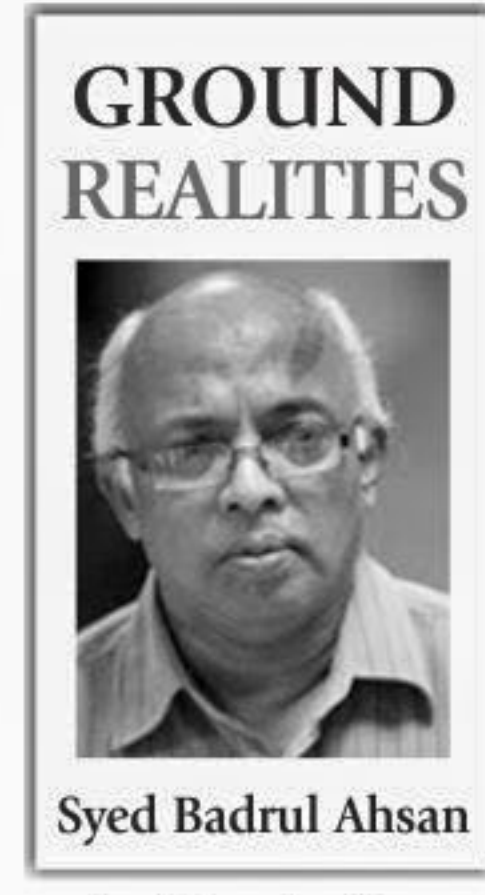
We have made progress, but we are moving too slowly. Small farmers are always linked to the local private sector, at the time when they buy input and tools from suppliers and when they sell their produce to traders and sellers. But often these linkages are not strong enough to secure high quality input and the necessary technical knowledge, hindering small farmers to increase their productivity and diversify into higher value agriculture production meeting the market demand.

Although governments in many Asian countries have shown strong political commitment to small-farm-led agricultural development in the past, further support to small farmers will be needed in the areas of policy interventions. Government should also strengthen the rural feeder road network and strive to enhance the security of land rights for farmers ensure that the ministries of agriculture are performance driven.

In summary, smallholders have the ability to reduce hunger in the world and help feed the growing population. However, they need support and access to technologies, markets, information and finance. This not only supports rural economic growth, but also contributes significantly to overall food security.

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Tajuddin Ahmed: Our history maker



Syed Badrul Ahsan

TAJUDDIN Ahmed was a man of history. He understood the nuances of history. He was able to analyse history in all the forensic details that such analyses called for. Of greater importance than all this preoccupation with history on his part was his own role in the making of history. Between 17 April 1971 and 12 January 1972, Tajuddin Ahmed fashioned history. He was, and remains, our history maker. The history he forged in the darkest period of our collective life was ours.

And then the forces of anti-history struck him down. There was a seer in Tajuddin Ahmed. His was the voice and the resolve which eventually carried us through the War of Liberation in 1971. Had it not been for him --- and do not forget that Bangabandhu had been taken prisoner by the Pakistan army --- the question of liberty for the seventy five million people of Bangladesh would easily have run into a wall. Or gone downhill, to hit rock bottom. In the minutes before the Pakistanis cracked down on unsuspecting, unarmed Bengalis on 25 March 1971, Tajuddin Ahmed tried persuading Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to leave the city. That, thought Tajuddin, would make it easier for Bengalis to go into a war of national liberation. Bangabandhu had his own and very credible reasons, of course, not to leave the scene despite the attendant risks. The elected leader of a majority party in parliament does not run from danger. Bangabandhu chose to stay and confront the world on his terms. For his part, Tajuddin chose his own path. He would give shape to a government, the very first in Bengali history, and win a war against a formidable military machine.

A remembrance of Tajuddin Ahmed is surely the role he played in weaving the Mujibnagar government into a credible pattern in April 1971. He it was who undertook the task of locating all the senior leaders of the Awami League then making their way across the frontier into India in the face of all-round genocide and bringing them together as a wartime administration. There were those who clearly felt uneasy about Tajuddin's playing the foremost role in organizing the war; and they went overboard in trying to push him aside. Lawmakers elected on the Awami League ticket at the December 1970 elections were made to gather, the sole objective being a removal of Tajuddin from the leadership of the movement. Tajuddin did not waver in his overriding goal of seeing the nation through to victory. He survived, to wage war in Bangabandhu's name. On 16 December 1971, Tajuddin Ahmed's place in history was firmly etched in the human consciousness.

There was, in Tajuddin, a proper man of principles. His diaries, dating from the late 1940s, are but a window to the thought processes working in him even at that young age. In the early 1970s, as Bangladesh's first finance minister, Tajuddin's understanding of the priorities before the nation was without ambiguity. Alone in the cabinet, he believed that Bangladesh's future lay in its use of its human resources. A nation which had gone to war and come back home in triumph could achieve greater wonders. Hence there was little need for the World Bank, for the IMF, indeed for aid from the capitalistic West. He felt it was pointless to speak to Robert McNamara in Delhi in February 1972. And yet, in 1974, when he did see McNamara in Washington, he must have felt the irony of it all. The government he was part of had changed gear, toward the West. He had not. Disillusion had taken over. Only weeks later, he would be out of government. His leader, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, would ask

him to resign. The decent man that he was, Tajuddin quietly stepped aside.

The extent to which Tajuddin Ahmed mattered in Bengali politics was made obvious to a group of young economists cheerfully explaining the details of a proposed Six Point plan on regional autonomy to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1965. The venue, as a participant at the moonlight-dappled meeting once told this writer, was a boat on the Sitalakhya, away from the prying eyes of Ayub Khan's intelligence. Bangabandhu was satisfied with the economists' analysis of the Six Points. And then Tajuddin took over, with question after question. The young economists, until then focused on Mujib, knew at that point that the Awami League had a formidable presence in Tajuddin's intellectual persona. Tajuddin's political and intellectual brilliance was a matter of worry for Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. When, soon after the elections in 1970, President Yahya Khan prepared to visit Dhaka, Bhutto told him to watch out for Tajuddin, for Tajuddin asked the questions and demanded the answers. After all, Bhutto had reason to know. In early 1966, when as Ayub Khan's foreign minister he had challenged Mujib to a debate over the Six Points at the Paltan Maidan, it was Tajuddin who chose to accept the challenge on behalf of his leader. In the event, Bhutto did not turn up.

Tajuddin Ahmed brooked no nonsense. He tolerated no sycophancy. And he was not squeamish about making his thoughts on politics public, loud enough for everyone to



hear. In spring 1974, he warned of looming danger: those who argued that Bangabandhu ought to have more powers were only planning to isolate him from the masses. An isolated man, he told his party men, was a lonely man. And a lonely man could easily be pushed aside. That was Tajuddin, nine months before January 1975.

Tajuddin's belief in socialism never wavered. But socialism, he made it clear to people impatient for results, was a matter of dedication. It was a plant which needed ceaseless nurturing. Socialism was much more than an idea. It was, he repeated over and over again, underpinned by faith. Hypocrisy had no place in the socialist's concept of the world.

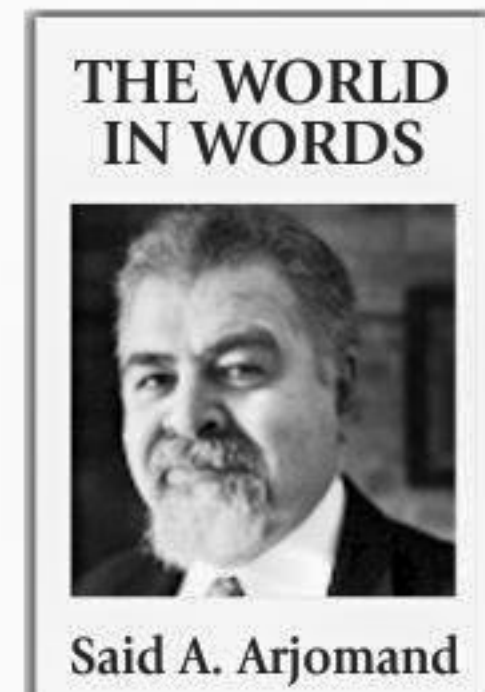
In August 1975, as he made his way out of his home and to prison, he knew he would never return alive. On 3 November, when the assassins brought him and his three colleagues together at Dhaka central jail, he had little illusion that those men were there to kill. And kill they did.

Bangladesh crumbled to its knees on the day Bangabandhu died. It was paralysed when Tajuddin Ahmed was gunned down with his Mujibnagar colleagues three months later.

(Tajuddin Ahmed, prime minister in Bangladesh's government-in-exile in 1971, was born on 23 July 1925. He was murdered in prison on 3 November 1975).

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Remaking Iran



Said A. Arjomand

IRANIAN President Hassan Rouhani recently marked the end of his first year in office not only with smiles, but also with further evidence of his efforts at domestic reform and geostrategic reorientation. In Iran's case, these two imperatives have long gone hand in hand.

Rouhani now says that Iran would be willing to work with the United States in Iraq. The dire threat to both Iranian and US interests posed by the Islamic State (formerly the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) has, evidently, brought the two countries closer together. In the days since the anniversary of Rouhani's election, Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, overcame his earlier reservations and expressed optimism about reaching an international deal on his country's nuclear program by the original deadline of July 20.

If rapprochement with the West can be achieved, the removal of the international sanctions stemming from the nuclear program would give a tremendous boost to Rouhani's economic policy. And it is here that Rouhani has invested much of his energy and political capital.

Coming into office, Rouhani had a clear priority: fix an economy devastated by eight years of former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's demagogic mismanagement. He replaced Ahmadinejad's incompetent thugs with a reasonably qualified cabinet and capable administrators, and has embarked on an ambitious program of economic development, expanded health care, and environmental protection.

Though Rouhani has made little headway combating rampant inflation, small business and the entrepreneurial middle class seem to be thriving. In early June, I found a recently opened complex of expensive restaurants opposite the new luxury Grand Hotel in Shiraz packed with affluent customers.

Rouhani is vigorously cultivating economic ties with Gulf states, including Kuwait, whose ruler he entertained in Tehran in early June before leaving on an official visit to Turkey, where he signed ten deals aimed at doubling bilateral trade, to \$30 billion, in 2015. On the environmental front, Rouhani is also busy undoing his predecessor's damage. Tehran's air pollution, widely blamed by those with respiratory illness on low-octane "Ahmadinejad gasoline," has visibly declined with the introduction of high-octane fuel and other restrictions.

Last but not least, Rouhani has launched his national health-insurance program, and ordered state hospitals, which dominate the health sector, to limit patients' copayments for all medical expenses to 10%. Rouhani has made it clear that he wants to pay for the new health care by phasing out the monthly state stipends paid to more than seventy-four million registered citizens, which Ahmadinejad offered when he eliminated a wide range of subsidies.

The strongest factor working in Rouhani's favor is the support of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's Supreme

Leader, for the president's domestic policies - just as he has fully backed the nuclear negotiations. Unlike Ahmadinejad's reformist predecessor, Mohammad Khatami, who acted more like the leader of the loyal opposition than head of the executive, Rouhani has worked closely with Khamenei.

In his speech to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's death on June 4, Khamenei fully appropriated the discourse of the dissident clerics aligned with Khatami. Thus, he described the regime instituted by Khomeini as a religious democracy in which all high state offices, including his own, derive their legitimacy from the will of the people as expressed in elections.

But Rouhani needs more than Khamenei's backing. Khamenei is 74 and has health problems. With Mohammad Reza Mahdavi Kani, the 83-year-old chairman of the Council of Experts (the body of clerics that elects the supreme leader) gravely ill, Chorbani Dorri-Najafabadi, an influential member and former intelligence and security minister, has suggested that the Council should proceed to elect Khamenei's successor now. Clearly, the clerical elite is concerned about the future of its leadership after Khamenei. Should a succession process begin soon, it would significantly constrain Rouhani's room for maneuver.

Rouhani's relations with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and other security forces are of more immediate concern. Last month's unceremonious killing of a billionaire businessman detained by security forces on corruption charges seemed to reflect the tacit division of power between the president and Iran's security apparatus.

Nonetheless, tension is simmering beneath the surface. Rouhani seems to have halted the expansion of the IRGC's economic empire. The IRGC's commander, General Mohammad Ali Jafari, has publicly expressed his hostility to Rouhani's administration, while General Hassan Firouzabadi, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, has countered by expressing his support for the president.

It is in Iraq, however, that Iran faces its most complicated mix of challenge and opportunity. Determined to prevent the disintegration of the country, Iran has provided military and political support to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government. This appears to align Iranian and American policies, with both determined to counter the gains of radical Islamist forces in Iraq and Syria. Rouhani's circle is fully prepared to address this crisis by talking to the US.

After a year in power, Rouhani's program of economic development, environmental cleanup, and improved health care is proceeding smoothly and quietly. But, given the uncertainty of the domestic and international political context, there are no guarantees of success. Much depends on whether a nuclear deal with the international community is achieved, and the likelihood of that outcome has unexpectedly increased, owing to the common interest of Iran and the US in coping with the collapse of Iraq.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Muslim leaders' inexplicable silence

The way Israel is attacking Palestine is simply awful. Nearly 600 people were brutally killed including children and women. But most of the global leaders are silent about this genocide. Even the leaders of the Muslim countries have failed to take any significant steps to stop this massacre. It is understood that the allies of Israel will act in favour of Israel. But why are the Muslim leaders silent?

Dr. Md. Sayedul Hoque
Baitul Aman
Adabar, Dhaka

Inhuman eviction of sex workers

On July 20, I was crossing the road in front of the Press Club. There I saw hundreds of people preparing for a human chain. It was a protest of the sex workers against their recent eviction from a Tangail brothel. The placards in women's hands read: "We are sex workers not terrorists or criminals", "We are human beings, we want our rights," etc.

The brothel was invaded by local politicians and fanatics who forced the sex workers to leave. They didn't even allow the sex workers to take their belongings. Last year another brothel situated in Madaripur district was evicted and occupied by politicians and fanatics.

We heard that the local mayor (an Awami Leaguer), who wants to grab the brothel's land, is behind this eviction. Eviction of sex workers without rehabilitation will force them to live a more miserable life.
Talukdar Zahid
Surja Sen Hall
University of Dhaka

Will Summit address condition of Gaza girls?

The Girl Summit has started on July 22 in London. The summit is aimed at mobilising domestic and international efforts to improve the lives of girls and women in the world's poorest countries. Hopefully, Gaza tragedy and the condition of girls in Gaza will receive due attention.

Anami
California, USA

Comments on news report, "Jan 5 polls flawed," published on July 19, 2014

Mofi
I don't see anything wrong in her description. We all want a fair election with participation of all major and minor political parties, and so does she. We welcome you to Bangladesh and hope you will play a constructive role within the diplomatic framework.

Zman7
January 5 election is 'undeniably flawed', but thank God its outcome is undeniably a boon for Bangladesh in many ways: it brought back peace and calmness in the country. People were tired and their lives and business were shattered by hartal and violence enforced by the opposition.

Abul Kashem
You are right, sir. When AL destroyed this 'peace and calmness' by undressing office going people in broad daylight in support of their unruly hartals, it was okay. When they introduced logi-boitha culture to kill people, it was also okay. All unwanted activities are acceptable if those are done by AL people.

Mortuza Huq
The bold and straight forward statement of the new US Ambassador to Bangladesh echoed the hearts of millions of democracy-loving people of Bangladesh. However, the question is what USA can do to make a credible and inclusive poll happen in Bangladesh soon in order to elect the true people's representatives. Let's hope for a diplomatic success over chaos, anarchy and loss of lives. AL must start meaningful dialogues with BNP and civil society for a dependable election-time government for a credible early poll for the eleventh parliament.

PlainSpeaker
Who cares what US says; Indian recognition and support is enough for PM. They better follow what India says.

Hafeejul Alam
Wow! Even before joining her new assignment, the US Ambassador-designate has started doing politics!

"Israel threatens to widen Gaza assault" (July 19, 2014)

Mohammad Rahman
Obama told reporters in Washington that US supports Israel's right to defend itself. Then what about Palestinian's right to defend themselves in Gaza?

Asif
Israel, stop bombing on Gaza.