

Biman's long flights elusive!

Highlights management and planning drawbacks

THE national flag carrier Biman has been limping along with its under-utilized fleet of aircraft due to fewer pilots to fly the planes, on the one hand, and unwillingness of the higher management to push through existing plan to operate on long routes, on the other. Worse yet, lacking in commercial sense management high-ups have become captive in the hands of a corrupt vested group that exploits Biman's present situation to their unfair advantage. It's hardly surprising that, Biman has been counting losses in terms of crores of taka annually.

One cannot, however, complain that Biman's lack of progress has been due to any resource shortage. For instance, of the four new long-range aircraft that Biman bought from Boeing, on average, one plane sits idle for four days a week. This is a huge wastage of the national asset, to say the least. Why is it so? Because the management, for reasons best known it, has not gone by the recommendations made by experts to fly Biman along the long-haul routes to Frankfurt, New York, Brussels, Manchester, Tokyo an so on for optimal use of its new planes. In a similar show of indifference, the management has not recruited any new pilot over the last four years, though experts advised it to recruit them to meet Biman's expanded fleet's requirements. Small wonder the US aviation authorities have put Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) under Category-2 depriving Biman of flight operation rights to US airports.

The government should overhaul Biman's present management to rescue it from its present state of being a losing concern what with its incompetence.

Bangladesh higher on HDI

Cheery progress on gender index

BANGLADESH has moved up on Human Development Index by a notch placing at 142nd among 187 countries in the UNDP's Human Development Report, 2014. Bettering last year's record by one step though modest is significant in many ways. For, in spite of turbulent politics our people could pull off a sustained, even improving trend in human development indicators. In other words, they could do even better given reasonably stable politics.

That said, particularly noteworthy is that Bangladesh is in the bracket of 18 countries having showed extraordinary progress in human development. The country's track record of 'inclusive development' puts it ahead of India, Pakistan and Nepal. In the newly introduced Gender Development Index Bangladesh is placed at 107th, well ahead of India at 132nd and Pakistan at 145th positions respectively. But Sri Lanka tops in th gender development category in South Asia.

Two factors contributed to Bangladesh's better showing. The first one is of course the micro-credit revolution which created opportunities for self-employment, particularly among women. With people's income increasing investment in health and education rose. And women are wiser spenders than men insofar as health and education go.

The other contributory factors are said to be government's role in extending social safety net and food security measures. Simultaneously, its efforts in health and education sectors have had some uplifting effect, the ERD secre-

Condemning is not enough!

SHAHRIAR FEROZE

BY inflicting terror and misery on Gaza for nearly 25 days, Israel has proved the age-old proverb "All is fair in love and war" - only to be more true. The death list emerging out of the greater carnage has one cheeky message: its holocaust Zionist style stop it if you can.

You can say, write, organize campaigns and take on plenty of initiatives for condemning the deaths of children in Gaza but will the killings stop? Well the answer as yet is no. So when the UN condemned by stating that "Nothing is more shameful than attacking sleeping children" - it sounded like the intergovernmental organization could only feel sorry other than trying to put an end to the crisis. If it cannot stop it could at least make an effort to restrict the US from supplying Israel with future stockpiles of lethal weapons. What needs to be understood at this stage is that a big part of victims of those cursed US military hardware is the innocent children of a war-tattered nation.

The child death rate in Gaza crossed 200 last week and expectantly more is to die. The high number of deaths resulting from the Israeli ground invasion, now in its third week, has led to calls from the international community to end the violence. Even then the killings have not stopped and it's exactly here where I want to place my question - 'in terms of ending the bloodbath at Gaza who is more powerful - the ever defying Zionist military zeal or the collective strength of the international community? The rationale behind asking it is quite strong as even the UN-designated shelters in Gaza are also being hit.

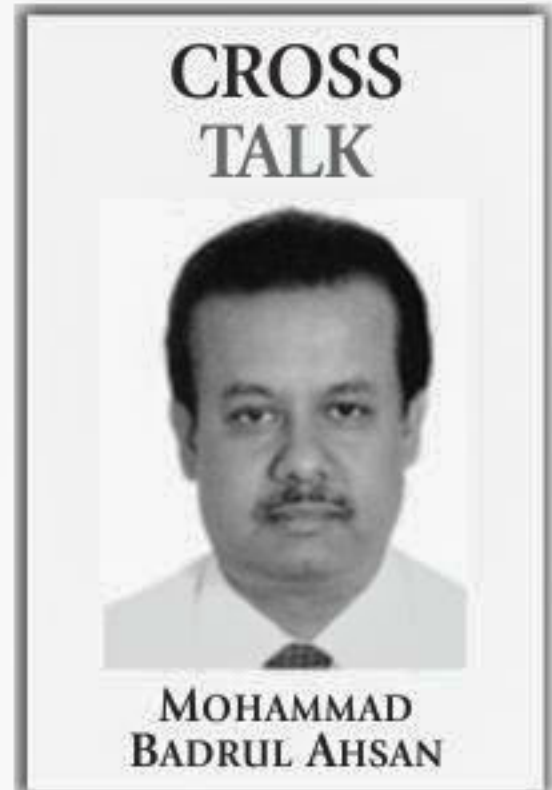
For instance, how would you give good reason to the attack of what once was a classroom, that had housed 123 women and children, and which in a blink of an eye was turned into a pile of rubble after being hit by at least 7-8 shells - Leaving all its occupants dead. This serious violation of international law by the Israel military cannot escape appropriate retribution.

Need of the minute besides condemning is to, catalog these cold-blooded attacks as cases of war crimes and show justice to the families of those innocent little ones meant to live longer.

With regard to Israel's unleashing of terror nothing perhaps beats what Noam Chomsky had to say some five years ago about the conflict in Gaza then. And that is - "The new crimes that the US and Israel were committing in Gaza as 2009 opened do not fit easily into any standard category—except for the category of familiarity".

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Israel is betraying the Holocaust lessons



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

ON July 20, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared on a US television show and accused Hamas of a "double war crime." He said the Palestinian organization was targeting Israeli civilians while its militants were hiding behind Palestinian civilians. What Netanyahu didn't mention is that the state of Israel is guilty of double standard. It has been defending one mockery of truth while hiding

behind another. Perhaps Netanyahu would like the world to forget that the creation of Israel is a Western charity at Arab expense. The persecution of Jews in Europe had eventually caught up with the Western conscience, and it was shoved down the Arab throat. Many lighthearted Palestinians joke today that they're paying the price for the sins Germany committed in the Second World War.

In the shifting sands of time, much of the world has forgotten that original injustice and the Palestinians are misunderstood as intruders in their own homes. Many people don't remember these people have a genuine grievance; their homeland for over a thousand years was forcibly taken from them. The Palestinians have been driven out of their homes so that the Jews could have a homeland. The Zionists justified that imposition claiming that Palestine was their Promised Land. They argued that this was the land God had promised to the Israelites. The promise was first made to Abraham and then renewed to his son Isaac, and to Isaac's son Jacob.

God's promise proved bunkum until the British got involved. The Balfour Declaration initiated the creation of the Jewish state when British foreign secretary Arthur James Balfour wrote to British Jewish community leader Baron Walter Rothschild in 1917. The Zionists also wanted the Palestinian land because their ancestors lived there some 2,000 years ago!

King Abdullah of Jordan had made an impassioned appeal against this "historic claim" in an article he wrote in The American Magazine in November 1947. He eloquently argued that "if such fantasy were allowed" then Italians might claim England because the Romans held country for a long time. For the same reason, England might claim France, "homeland" of the conquering Normans. And the French Normans might claim Norway, where their ancestors originated. The Arabs also should claim Spain, which they ruled for 700 years.

The king went on in the same vein that Mexicans might claim Spain, "homeland" of their forefathers. They might even claim Texas, which was Mexican until 100 years ago. He then asked the American readers what would happen if

the American Indians wanted to get back the "homeland" of which they were the sole, native, and ancient occupants until only some 450 Thus Israel, a contradiction in conception, has thrived on double standard. And it has called the rightful claimants of the land terrorists and terrorized them every time they vowed to fight against it. If Hamas is targeting the Israelis hiding behind the Palestinians, Israel is also waging an unjust war hiding behind its superior firepower. Nearly 2,000 Palestinians have been killed already during the ongoing incursions by Israel and Netanyahu has declared that his army wouldn't stop unless the "mission" was accomplished.

The Jordanian king in his essay had also tried to convince the western countries to relocate the Jews to their own soils. He wrote that some of the Jews still living in the concentration camps had opted for their original countries in Europe instead of going to Israel. But the Jewish Agency for Palestine had hoodwinked them to change their minds. It had even severely beaten and tortured the dissenters.

It's already a moral failure for Israel that the former victim has turned into a ferocious victimizer. The sound of its missiles, armored vehicles and purported propaganda



can't drown out the voice of conscience that the Zionists are taking out the frustration of Holocaust on the people, who historically had nothing to do with it. Impervious to the sufferings and sacrifice of its victims, Israel is now recreating in them the anguish of Jews, who were picked up from their homes, transported to concentration camps and, in all innocence, incinerated in Nazi gas chambers.

Late Israeli premier Ariel Sharon, known as the Butcher of Beirut, said that the Jewish lesson of the Holocaust was that nobody cared Jews were being murdered. That lesson should have made Israel a more considerate and compassionate nation. Instead, Israel is following the Holocaust masterminds in their footsteps. It doesn't care that innocent Palestinian men, women and children are getting killed to satisfy its lust for land.

Israel has lost the high moral ground on which it stands, as Benjamin Netanyahu's "mission" is resonating the horror of Hitler's "final solution." By undermining the Holocaust lessons, Israel has reduced itself into a pathetic question: How long exactly does it think it can exist under false pretense?

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Political economy of ISIS's advance

DR. PETER CUSTERS

WHICH story line sounds the more credible, - that linking the rebel movement ISIS to policies pursued by Iran, - or rather that linking the Sunni extremist force to Iran's adversary Saudi Arabia? In June last, fighters belonging to ISIS - a rebel movement that had previously established its foothold in the oil-rich areas of North-Eastern Syria - succeeded in capturing Mosul, a city surrounded by oil fields in Northern Iraq. Ever since, commentators in the world's press media have been speculating on the origins of the dreaded organisation's military success. It is admitted that the occupation of Mosul and vast tracts of the Sunni-dominated portion of Iraq would not have been possible except for the fact that ISIS forged a broad grassroots' alliance expressing deep discontent by Iraq's minority Sunnis against policies of the Al-Maliki government. Nor would Mosul have fallen but for the dramatic desertion by top-officers of Iraq's state army. Yet various observers have meanwhile focused on the political economy behind ISIS's advance. Some experts belonging to US think tanks have discussed the likely sources of ISIS's finance, pinpointing private donors in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Other writers instead have connected ISIS's reliance on black market sales of oil in Kurdish territory with Iranian exports of crude, described as 'illegal'.

Below I propose to put the spotlights on the methods of war financing used by ISIS. But before doing so, I suggest to highlight the movement's utter sectarianism. Soon after the occupation of Mosul, rebels blew up and bulldozed shrines and mosques in the city belonging to Shia Muslims. Pictures on the demolition of these buildings were circulated widely via the world's mainstream media. Unfortunately, few Western journalists have cared to draw attention to the role which destruction of shrines has played in the history of Islam. Contrary to what's the case in Christian Catholicism, - the veneration of saints at Sufi and Shia tombs and shrines basically reflects heterodox tendencies within the Islamic faith. Whereas Sunni orthodoxy of Saudi variety, i.e. Wahhabism, either condemns intercession, or at the least considers the worshipping of saints at tombs to be unacceptable, - Islam's minority of Shias, and its mystical current of Sufism, freely engage in such worship, - and this throughout the Muslim world. ISIS's work of demolition in Iraq can in no way be equated with practices of Iran's Shia rulers. Instead, they express the extremist movement's affinity with policies for long championed by Saudi Arabia.

What does the political economy behind ISIS's military advance in Syria and Iraq tell us about the organisation's affinities? First, in one sense ISIS's strategy might be interpreted as rather novel. Whereas the extraction of raw materials is a war strategy pursued by numerous rebel movements in the global South - see e.g. UNITA's extraction of diamonds in the context of Angola's civil war, and the trade in coltan by rebels in Congo (DRC) - rarely has a Southern rebel movement succeeded in turning crude oil into its chief source of revenue. Indeed, whereas ISIS originally relied on private funders in Saudi Arabia so as to build up a force of trained fighters, - the organisation has

consciously targeted regions in Syria and Iraq harbouring major oil fields and (in the case of Iraq) oil refineries. By laying siege to the oil refinery at Baiji, responsible for processing a third of oil consumed in Iraq, ISIS hoped to undermine the state's control of oil resources. Again, some 450 million dollars was stolen by ISIS fighters from a subsidiary of Iraq's central bank after the occupation of Mosul. This reportedly was all income from oil extraction. Some observers put the cash income which ISIS derives from smuggled oil at a million dollars per day!

ISIS then is a 'religiously inspired', Sunni extremist organisation with an utterly secular objective: to lay hold on the bulk of oil resources in two Middle Eastern states, so as to re-establish a caliphate, a all-Islamic state-entity guided by a central religious authority. Yet though ISIS' methodology of reliance on oil for financing of its war campaigns is novel for a rebel movement, - it is not as such unique in the context of the Middle East. Ever since the 1970s, most oil-rich countries of the region have squandered a major part of their income from the exports of crude, by (indirectly) exchanging their main natural resource against means of destruction, - weapon systems bought on the international market. And while the Shah's Iran in the seventies was equally enticed into opting for this form of trade, - it is the Wahhabi kingdom of Saudi Arabia which all through - from the oil crisis of 1973 onwards and until today - has functioned as the central axe of the given trade mechanism. Witness for instance the 1980s oil-for-arms (!) barter deal between the Saudi kingdom and Great Britain, the so-called Al Yamamah deal. And witness the 60 Billion US Dollar, largest-ever international arms' agreement between Saudi Arabia and the United States clinched in 2010.

In 2014 Iraq is madly struggling to survive. A section of the world's media has already announced its impending demise, - predicting a split of the country into three portions, i.e. the Sunni, Kurdish and Shia portions. On the other hand, some commentators have advised that the US should now change gear and line up with Iran, so as to help the Iraqi government overcome its domestic political crisis. Yet the US and its European allies for long, too long, have bended over to service the Wahhabi state. Even as Western politicians loudly proclaimed their allegiance to democracy and secularism, - they failed to oppose or counter the oppression of, and utter discrimination against Shia citizens. For over forty years they opted to close their eyes and supply Saudi Arabia with massive quantities of fighter planes, missiles and other weaponry, in exchange of the country's crude. The US has recently advised Iraq's prime minister al-Maliki known for his sectarian approach, that he should be more 'inclusive', i.e. sensitive towards Iraq's minority Sunni population. But has the US's prime Middle Eastern ally Saudi Arabia ever been chastised over its systematic discrimination of Shias? Has it ever been put to task for its cruel oppression of heterodox Muslims? And has the US ever pondered over the implications of the trading mechanism of disparate exchange it sponsored - for the future of democracy, food sovereignty and people's welfare in the Middle East?

The writer is the Author of 'Questioning Globalized Militarism' (Tulika, New Delhi/Merlin Press, London, 2007)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Helpless victims of Israeli genocide

The number of deaths resulting from military offensive against the defenseless people of Gaza has crossed 1100 and the killing continues unabated by the Israelis. With the blessings of internet and other methods of modern communication, the world at large is well aware of what is happening to the helpless Palestinian Muslims in Gaza. May the Almighty help the Palestinians.

Saleh Mohammad Ayub
Houston, Texas, USA

Use deterrent punishment against rapists

The recent increase in rape incidents proves that the life of women has become more insecure in both rural and urban areas of Bangladesh. Statistics shows that some 812 incidents of rape occurred in 2013. The above mentioned statistics of rape cases is the tip of the iceberg since many such cases remain unreported. Though the civil society members and the media are protesting this heinous crime and demanding punishment, identity of the perpetrators are remaining unpunished in almost all the cases. This encourages them to commit this crime again and again.

This terrifying violence against women is affecting our economy adversely. We want harsh, deterrent punishment against the perpetrators of this abominable crime.

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Accommodation crisis at JU dorms

Jahangirnagar University is the only residential university of Bangladesh which is now facing acute accommodation problem. The dormitories are not capable of accommodating its large number of students. First year students are still waiting to get seats in the halls. Many of them are compelled to live in the common rooms or dining spaces of the dormitories. I request the authorities to solve this problem as soon as possible.

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Jahangirnagar University

Comments on news report, "Cops needed Tk 10 lakh," published on July 24, 2014

Hyder

This is yet another case of police torture. A few days back a jhut trader was tortured to death by police and now it is Jisan, a college student who was tortured by sub-inspector Sahidul Biswas of Dhanmondi police station. He demanded tk.10 lakh from Jisan. It is also reported that Jisan's father paid more than tk. 4 lakh but the torture did not stop. Where will people go to seek justice?

M Fatig

No one is safe from the medieval brutality of our police forces.

Spiderman

A government that takes away the fundamental right of voting from people will never understand nor grant rights to its people.

"Mohsin's new antics" (July 24, 2014)

Deep Purple Blue

What to do? Sycophancy is the surest way to find a berth in the cabinet. We saw some ministers of the previous government secured their places in the cabinet by paying respect to Hasina by touching her feet! Can't blame the ministers... it is the prevailing political culture!

Ibrahim Zaman

Why doesn't the PM remove these types of irresponsible persons from her cabinet?

"Winner one, win for all" (July 23, 2014)

Samia Zaman

Laws do not mean much if those are not enforced. It is essential that perpetrators are brought to justice. We need more heroes like Dr. Hanif in our country.