

Workforce at grave risk

Implement a protective strategy

THAT a large workforce in the country faces life-threatening occupational hazards is seldom realised by us, caught up in the medley of so-called priority concerns as we are. It requires an in-depth, stock-taking survey to make us sit up and take note. But when it comes to acting on the knowledge to create a safer working environment we are found wanting.

Having said that, we turn to the results of a survey recently conducted by Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE). These should be an eye-opener for the government and the private sector acting in concert to upgrade the dire safety conditions at work-places. The daily direct exposure to toxic chemicals in ship-breaking, tannery and chemical industries kill off 21 workers every month, cripple and slow-poison countless numbers of them. Thus risks are posed to life, health and productivity of workers.

Answers to the hazards lie in providing standard safety gears to workers and making their use compulsory under regular supervision. In particular, underaged employment in ship-breaking yards needs to be banned as pre-certification is enforced in importing derelict ships for scrap iron requiring clearance in terms of toxic content.

In agriculture, the mainstay of the economy, around 85 percent farmers are said to be exposed to hazardous pesticides and other chemicals. Because of this 30 percent farmers fall ill. They will have to be continually guided about safe use of pesticides by agriculture extension workers. The health of people who till the land, use inputs to grow food and cash crops is pivotal to national productivity --we must bear that in mind.

Yet another death at stalker's hands

This is the outcome of impunity

ANOTHER young man was killed by a stalker for protesting harassment of his sister. And the killer is the same as the one who is accused of assaulting 11 members of a family including a pregnant woman in Bhashantek area of the city in February of this year.

Clearly the law enforcing agencies are doing precious little by way of prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators of this kind of violence against women. How does one explain the fact that the killer of the young man, accused in the earlier case, had not only evaded arrest for the last ten months but he has been back in his locality since the last one month and continuing with his wicked activities, with impunity?

For the police to say that the accused could not be traced by them when in fact he has been roaming about freely in the open only proves that the police are being paid to turn a blind eye to these criminals.

One of the reasons why this ill is still persisting is that law enforcing agency has failed to nail the perpetrators in most cases and of those prosecuted most have evaded punishment by exploiting loopholes in the legal process.

We would want that cases relating to stalking and harassment, many of which have forced the victims to commit suicide, be tried in the speedy trial court. The perpetrators need to be made examples of if we are to see an end to this

The unmanageable minister

SHAHNOOR WAHID

HOW else can we describe him? Describe him in any other way he will keep radiating crudity, vulgarity and boorishness wherever he would appear. Refinement and humility are words not to be found in his dictionary.

This particular minister has set a record by talking most foul in public and behaving most repulsively with junior government officials during his tenure in the ministry. Such people, when in power, believe that they have the right to abuse power. The Bangla term "khomota," meaning power to rule, goes into their head and they translate the term as licentiousness. They harbour the skewed notion that they own the country, the people and all the resources of the state. There is serious lacking of moral discipline in such people and they continue to ignore social and legal bounds of a public representative, until they are stopped.

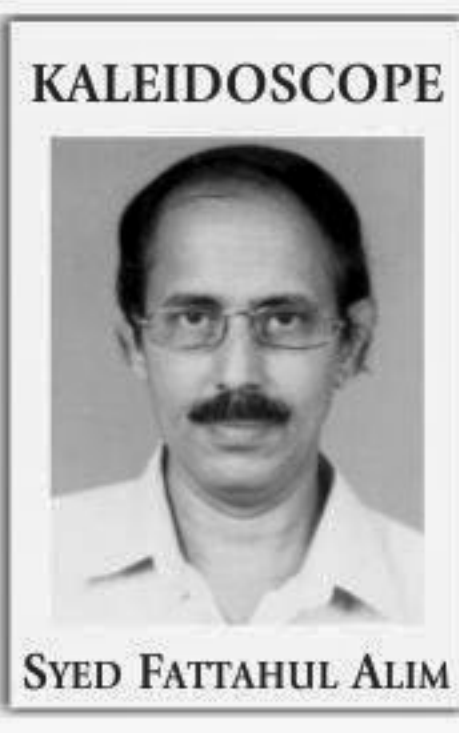
He was the most "unstoppable" cabinet member for all these years, and now he has become the most "expedient" one, a folly of his own creation indeed. I wonder how the nation could tolerate his idiocy for so long a time.

He also suffers from the delusion that he is a highly read person, almost an intellectual (?), very intelligent and a man of ancient wisdom. He thinks everyone else knows very little about almost everything, therefore they should listen to his words and get enlightened. He gets on the dais with great confidence and starts a speech with the air of an orator, a scholar almost, but ends up talking gibberish. His talks or speeches are mostly incoherent, directionless, unfocused, haughty and pompous, "signifying nothing." This writer had the misfortune of enduring an hour long "no head, no tail" speech by him in a private university some months back. By God, it was all "rubbish." His lackeys go about telling people that he possesses ten thousand books. I wonder if a man has read ten thousand good books, including novels, short stories, travelogues, essays and poetry how come it does not reflect in his speech?

The democratic system, no matter how good it is in absence of anything better, creates "leaders" like our 'minister for misdemeanor,' who impose their foolhardiness on the nation until they are shown the door most ignominiously at the end. But in politics it appears no one reads history; no one wants to take lessons from history. And that is why they keep making the same mistakes over and over again. They take their position for granted and that is when they start to falter. Men like our unmanageable minister need a thorough orientation before taking up weighty responsibilities as a minister. They need to be told that being a part of a government is not like being a part of a kabadi team.

The writer is Special Supplements Editor, The Daily Star

Did Malala earn the prize?



SYED FATTAHUL ALAM

Swat district of Pakistan, despite their (Taliban's) edict to close down schools in her district where they ruled supreme at that time. From that point of view, Malala definitely deserves sympathy, praise, support and encouragement, if only for her courage to stand up to the Taliban. And she has been generously showered with no end of affection, sympathy, praise and, of course, acknowledgements from home and abroad. Being in such global limelight since her pre-teen years is itself a rare achievement. The international bodies and the media have indeed been rather lavish in this respect. Consider all the awards, prizes and rare accolades she has already won from different

quarters! Nobel laureate Desmond Tutu of South Africa, an anti-apartheid, social and human right activist, nominated her for the International Children's Peace Prize. She is also the winner of Pakistan's first National Youth Peace Prize. She featured in Time magazine's front cover on its April 29, 2013 issue as one of The 100 Most Influential People in the World. In July 2013, she spoke to the UN Headquarters on worldwide access to education and in the same year received Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. In October of 2013, the Canadian government offered to confer honorary citizenship of Canada upon her, while in February of 2014 Sweden nominated her for the World Children's Prize. Again in May 2014, she was granted honorary doctorate by the University of King's College in Halifax. So many awards within such a short span of time for a girl still in her early teens! And now the ultimate recognition, the Nobel Peace Prize!

It is one thing to recognise a kid for the courage of her conviction and quite another to confer upon her the world's highest honour, which is usually given to extraordinary individuals or entities for their lifetime achievement. From that point of view, one can genuinely ask: Was Malala really ready for the Nobel Peace Prize?

Co-recipient of the Nobel Peace award, the Indian anti-child labour activist Kailash Satyarthi seems more logically poised to have earned it at a mature age of sixty years, half of which he dedicated to the cause of freeing children from the age-old bondage of child labour. But this argument in Kailash's favour would also fly in the face of what the founder of the peace prize envisioned around one and a

quarter century back. Even Kailash Satyarthi, despite the importance of his contribution, looks rather remotely placed from the category of anti-war and pro-peace activism for which the peace prize was originally conceived. Talking of anti-war, anti-armament and pro-peace activism, Malala has still a long way to go before she might one day be able to place these issues in their proper perspective. Is it not surprising that the Nobel peace committee, for reasons best known to it, seems to have been in a hurry to give the prize to Malala?

Interestingly, it was also not for the first time that she was nominated for the prize, before her final selection for it this year. She was honoured with her first nomination for the prize in 2013, when she was in her eighth month into convalescence from the Taliban-inflicted gunshot wounds. Would it not have been proper for the prize awarding authority to wait until the courageous little girl from Pakistan came of age, became more stable, focused and mature to make greater contribution towards the great causes she has been fighting for, including those against war and for peace, before she could rightfully lay claim to the prize?

From the past few years' experience it appears the Norwegian Nobel Committee has been shifting from its basic philosophy in the choice of the recipients of the peace prize. By introducing the peace prize, Alfred Nobel

wanted to extricate himself from the bad press he received for his inventions of weapons of war and destruction like dynamite, gelignite, etc. He became aware of such public perception about himself after the death of his brother. Mistaking his brother for him, a French newspaper wrote in an obituary that the "the merchant of death is dead." Small wonder, in his

last will he directed that more than 90% of his assets be used to endow "prizes to those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind." The first three of the prizes were for physical science or physics, chemistry and medical science; the fourth prize was for literature, while the fifth one was for peace to be given to the person or society that renders the greatest service to the cause of international fraternity, in the suppression or reduction of standing armies, or in the establishment or furtherance of peace congresses.

Excepting the prizes for exact sciences and literature, the peace prizes, in recent years, have increasingly been drawing the ire of well-meaning quarters for their controversial nature, more specifically for political bias. These include, for example, the 2009's Nobel Peace prize for US President Barack Obama, 2010's Prize for the Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobao or 2012's for European Union and this year's for Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi.

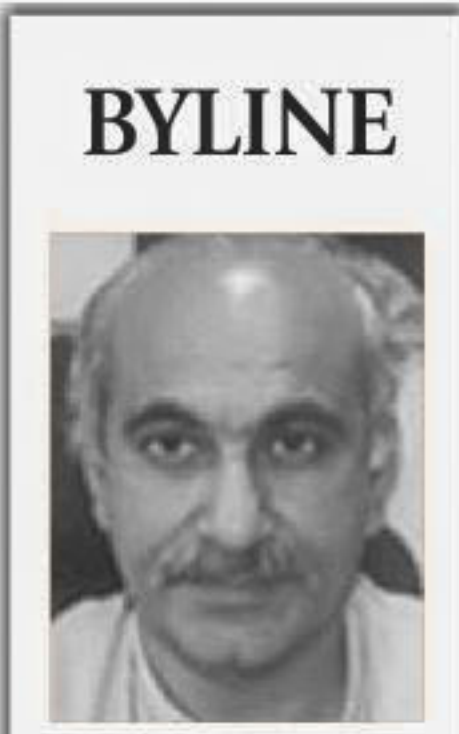
It is in the interest of the Nobel Prize's reputation and image that the Nobel Committee should avoid being embroiled in such controversies while awarding the prizes, particularly for peace.

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World wants welfare, not warfare



M.J. AKBAR

THE Norwegian Nobel Committee has sent a powerful message by awarding the peace prize for this year to the Gandhian in Delhi, Kailash Satyarthi, and the extraordinarily courageous Pakistani Malala Yousafzai, wandering in exile: the world applauds welfare, not warfare. Someone in Pakistan's military-religious complex of Pakistan should clean his ears and start listening—not for the sake of that amorphous feel-good entity known as humanity, or for a subcontinent riddled with conflict, but for Pakistan's sake.

Two Pakistanis have won the Nobel, physicist Abdus Salam in 1979, and now Malala. Salam, a pious man, could not step into Pakistan without fear of assassination because he was Qadiani, a sect defined as apostate and therefore non-Muslim under Pak law. Malala is targeted by barbaric extremists who do not believe in education for girls, and mix a regressive social agenda with terrorism. Such terrorist groups receive protection from the "deep state" because they serve, with suicidal zeal, on the frontlines of Pakistan's proxy wars against India and Afghanistan.

If Pak artillery has fallen silent after nine hostile days on the Indian border it is no thanks to the optimistic intentions of the Nobel committee. This happened because India gave as good as it got, and then some more. There has been much speculation about Islamabad's high-risk escalation, to no evident purpose, unless a permanent state of hostility is the new strategic intention of Pakistan's generals.

Are they testing Narendra Modi, just as they tested Atal Behari Vajpayee in Kargil? This would be extremely foolish. Modi is not a weak leader who will buckle. Rahul Gandhi, who rarely fires a gun that will not backfire, lowered a diminishing Congress vote even further when he suggested on the Assembly campaign trail that Modi, and Defence Minister Arun Jaitley, were buckling before Pakistan. Within 48 hours of Rahul Gandhi's Quixotic tilt at windmills, Pakistan backed off.

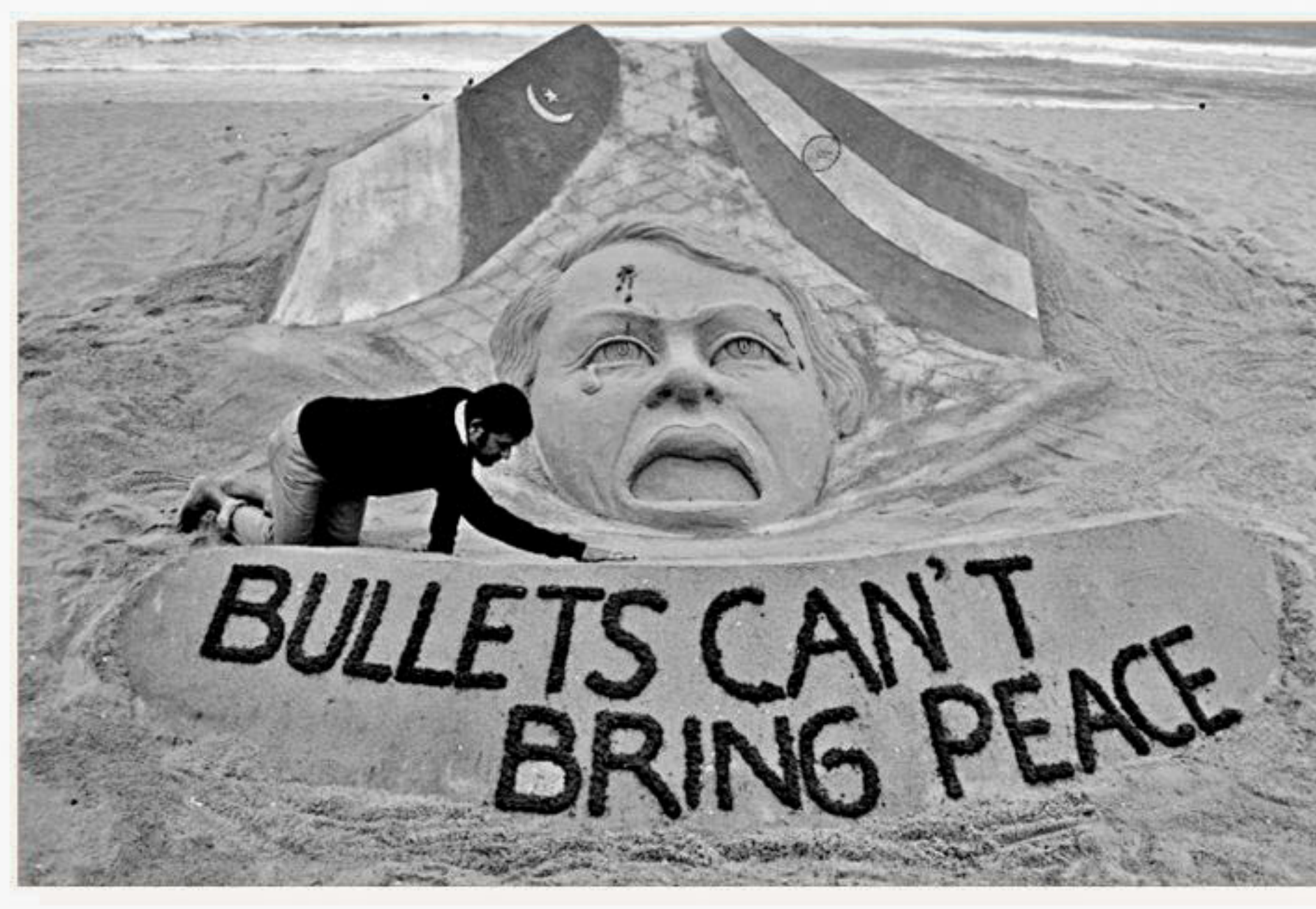
Then there is a familiar alibi, heard with obstinate consistency when Pakistan's diplomatic and military community appears on television or at conferences: India started it. This is fleshed out with an explanation: the Pak military is so heavily engaged on other fronts, including its internal civil wars, that it has no motive for seeking a military engagement with India. This is disingenuous. It seeks to camouflage the irrational with the rational.

Pakistan has never felt the need for any rational reason to go to war against India. Its very first important decision after independence was to seize by war what could have been negotiated in peace. It launched an offensive for

Kashmir, which had acceded to neither India nor Pakistan, through irregulars and terrorists as early as in October 1947. If Pak policy had been guided by common sense, there would have been a peaceful solution over Kashmir, probably under British supervision [we had only Dominion status] by the spring or summer of 1948. Islamabad again resorted to a medley of terrorism, proxy war and regular conflict in 1965. When it learnt, after 1965 and 1971, that Kashmir would never be won through formal war, it converted terrorism, low-intensity provocation and hot-border tactics into a staple as the only means of keeping the Kashmir problem "alive."

Conversely, India has never sought to expand its territory in Kashmir across the line of control ever since the cease fire came into effect in the first week of January 1949. India did not attempt this even when the Pak army was on its knees, and 90,000 of its troops had surrendered in Dhaka after the 1971 war. India has respected its pacts with Pakistan. This does not mean that Indian forces will keel over when attacked, and they responded forcefully, under Modi's leadership, last week when Pakistan raised the violence to levels not seen in a decade.

We are still left with the question: why? I wonder if



some part of the answer lies in the breakthrough joint statement signed between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Barack Obama in Washington, where America, for the very first time, set aside Pak objections and agreed that India had a legitimate role in the war against terrorist sanctuaries based on Pak soil. Organisations were specifically named to avoid any misinterpretation: Lashkar e Taiba, Jaish e Muhammad, al Qaeda, the Haqqani network [operating in Afghanistan], Dawood Ibrahim's D Company and Iraq's Islamic State. This stretches the India-America strategic relationship into the most dangerous war zone of the contemporary world, and in effect makes India a major ally of the United States in this war. Pakistan's double role, in which it was an American buttress when talking to Pentagon, and a terrorist sanctuary when addressing the jihadists, is under unprecedented strain if not thoroughly exposed.

Are upset Pak generals signalling to India and America that they are turning the concentration of firepower back to their eastern front?

The writer is Editor of The Sunday Guardian, published from Delhi, India on Sunday, published from London and Editorial Director, India Today and Headlines Today.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Congrats to Malala and Kailash

It is very exciting to hear that Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi have been jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this year. Malala and Kailash, the two courageous and passionate champions of child rights and education have so far helped inspire hundreds of thousands of young campaigners around the world towards establishing human rights and children's right to education.

While extending hearty congratulations to the two champs, I sincerely wish total success in their noble mission. Let's make this earth a beautiful and peaceful abode for children and adults alike.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
 Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System, SAU, Dhaka

Our vulnerable women!

On 25th September 2014, The Daily Star reported that an 18-year old girl was chained out in the open overnight for 11 hours and beaten allegedly by her boyfriend and his parents in Barisal city while no passers-by or neighbour came to her assistance. The girl had refused to withdraw cases accusing the boyfriend of raping her and trying to engage her into prostitution. The girl was rescued next morning.

Recently, a Unicef finding shows us that one of every five girls between the ages of 15 and 19 is sexually abused by her partner or husband. Add to this the fact that as many as 47 percent of adolescent girls in the country are subjected to physical or sexual violence. We, the common people of Bangladesh want these culprits to be brought to justice.

Hasna Begum
 Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Celebrating 'atrocities' by Columbus

Columbus Day is a federal holiday celebrated on the second Monday in October each year in USA, commemorating the discovery of the New World of Americas by a white European. According to the white European perspective, Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas and he was the first messenger from Western civilization to the Americas.

When Columbus and his companions came ashore in the Bahamas Islands, they were warmly welcomed by the natives. According to Columbus, the natives were very naive and he could easily manipulate them through coercion and force them to accomplish his mission to find treasure, which he promised to his expedition financiers in Spain.

Columbus brought bloodshed, massacre and extinction for the Native Americans through his greed. For example, Columbus almost exterminated the native Arawak tribe from the Bahamas Islands. What is the point of celebrating atrocities in the name of Columbus Day? Observing Columbus Day is showing disrespect towards the Native Americans' dead souls, who were made to suffer brutality and were murdered by Columbus and his associates.

Nawfal Talukdar
 New York, USA

Comments on news report, "Language movement hero Matin no more," published on October 9, 2014

Nantughotok
 Another hero of the language movement has passed away. All such heroes shall pass and we will be left with dwarfs only.

Nazmul Arefin
 I personally knew this man. He was the epitome of an honest person and a devoted politician who never made any compromise in his life with his principle. He passed the Pakistan Civil Service (CSP) exam but never joined the service instead devoted his life to the welfare of the poor and the oppressed.

"First as tragedy, then as farce" (October 9, 2014)

Nawfal Talukdar
 The garment workers of Tuba group were protesting and demonstrating for their due wages. The government has no time to heed the legitimate and rightful issues of the garment workers.

"Gas crisis may ease next year" (October 10, 2014)

Omar Farooque
 The government or Petrobangla should work on the wastage of gas first. I am a resident of sector 12 in Uttara for the last 5 years and I know three gas leaks in sector 12 alone. This really made me wonder when the authority last checked or repaired the lines.