

# The evil that men do....

*His can never be forgotten or forgiven*

GOLAM Azam has passed into history. He was sentenced to a very long term jail sentence on several counts for genocide and crimes against humanity. He was spared by death the agony of long incarceration.

Golam Azam will remain a part of our history, and even after recollections of many events of our nation life become distant memories his role during the Liberation War will remain vivid in the nation's collective psyche. He will remain a part of our history in a negative way, much the same way as Quisling is of Norway's or Hitler of Germany's.

Golam Azam was instrumental in organising the dreaded Al-Badr and Al-Shams groups and colluded with the rapacious occupying forces in perpetrating one of the world's biggest genocides after Second World War with the purpose of stifling our victory. And even after the war he did everything to prevent the nascent state from gaining international recognition.

There are certain things that human beings may forgive and certain that they may forget and a few that they may both forget and forgive, but the misery and pain that Golam Azam helped to visit upon his fellow countrymen and women can neither be forgiven nor forgotten. To forgive and forget such a crime would be to desecrate the soil that has been hallowed by the sacred blood of our freedom fighters.

Now that Golam Azam has passed into the hands of God it is for Him to dispense His Justice. And his supporters would do well not to play politics with his death.

# Horrificing modern-day slave trade

*Has to be countered regionally*

THE horrific report that an unspecified number of job-seeking Bangladeshi youths are being enslaved under inhuman conditions in a remote island in Thailand for ransom following their capture by human traffickers has jolted us.

Unlike in the usual cases where job hungry people voluntarily cooperate with human traffickers' design, the victims here were first entrapped by traffickers and then forcibly taken to boats to be finally shipped to an unknown destination. More than 130 such victims, most of them Bangladeshis, have recently been found on the Phang Nga island of Thailand, according to Thai authorities.

Individual accounts of how these hapless people landed themselves in such a tragic situation reveal a thriving modern-day slave trade operated by a powerful human-trafficking underworld right under our coast guards' nose. According to Bangladesh Coast Guard, despite their knowledge of the ongoing illicit smuggling of people from the coastal areas by small fishing boats to traffickers' ships, they cannot challenge those ships as they remain outside our territorial waters. The Thai marine police, too, have more or less the same position.

Evidently, the human traffickers are making the most of this lack of policing on the high seas. Given the scale of the ongoing slave trade, as reported, and the enormity of the savagery it involves, the international community must act with urgency to stop it. In particular, Bangladesh should devise a strategy to counter it regionally in cooperation with neighbouring India, Myanmar as well as Thailand, Malaysia and other Southeast Asian nations.

# Fear spreads faster than Ebola

MOHAMMED ABUL KALAM

WHEN contagion break out -- whether it is AIDS in the 1980s, SARS a decade ago or Ebola today -- fear invariably spreads faster than the virus.

Vivid imagination, intense news media coverage, ignorance and natural human fear of the unknown all conspire to defeat reasoned analysis of the facts which, for now at least, are these: Only two cases of Ebola have been diagnosed in the USA, one linked to the other and confined to a tiny part of Dallas. Hardly anyone outside the proximity of those two people has any reason for concern, much less panic, unless there are more cases.

But amid the dreary news that the disease killing 70% of its victims and could produce 10,000 new cases a week by December, there were some striking success stories in the African epicenter of the outbreak:

- In 2000, Uganda had the worst Ebola outbreak ever until this year. It killed more than 400 people. But the nation has since learned how to contain the disease, and the last three flare-ups have been contained to 18 cases and eight deaths;
- Nigeria has managed to stop the spread of Ebola from neighbouring countries after a handful of cases turned up there;
- And in the middle of hard hit Liberia, a huge rubber firm reacted quickly when Ebola struck there that its 80,000 residents were now free of the disease, according to The Wall Street Journal. And that is without the sophisticated medical care available.

The experience so far in Dallas argues for transporting Ebola patients to the four hospitals (in Georgia, Maryland, Nebraska and Montana) specially equipped to handle them. This will work only as long as the number of the victims is small, but it could provide breathing room to train hospital staff and ramp up capacity to handle Ebola patients elsewhere.

The needs are more mundane than high-tech: more protective suits, more hands-on training, better protocols for hazardous waste disposal and, with flu season right around the corner, better ways to separate patients.

As for the inclination to panic, we would do well to look at those who have instinctively responded to the crisis with bravery: the medical professionals who have taken mortal risk to fight the contagion in West Africa, the infected nurse in Dallas who risked her life to help Duncan, and leaders such as Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins, who set a remarkable example for the US by publicly visiting Duncan's quarantined family and fiancée and helping to take them to a new home.

When people complained, medical experts said because the family had exhibited no signs of the disease, and what Jenkins did was safe. But it was a display of courage and decency, which is exactly the right antidote for an outbreak of fear.

The writer is Ex-Head, Department of Medical Sociology, Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control & Research (IEDCR).

## STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

Matters that may demand the attention of a democratic society is that the withdrawal of criminal cases by the State does not conclusively establish the innocence of victim Limon or preclude the initiation of penal action against those law enforcers who allegedly resorted to wrong and rash action. If the withdrawal of criminal case by the State is an implied admission of wrongdoing by public servants then it is only appropriate that necessary legal action follows. In fact, Limon and his family have wondered if those responsible for his grievous incapacitation shall ever be punished.

The withdrawal of the criminal cases is a definite indication of good sense and pragmatism as much bad blood had been created between the authority and the civil society over the alleged highhandedness and insensitivity over an incident that deserved compassion and consideration from the state. One could say with some certainty that the interests of a democratic society would not have been served by pursuing a physically crippled boy whose culpability was in doubt.

The two criminal cases against Limon—one for possessing firearms and another for obstructing law enforcers—did not stand on credible evidentiary strength as the prosecution has reportedly produced a worn out revolver and a used bullet cap only. Further, in incidents like the one in instance it would have been very difficult to produce disinterested credible witnesses who would testify to the veracity of the occurrence. The prosecution did not appear to have a strong case.

The home minister has very rightly pointed to Section 494 of the Criminal Procedure Code that contemplates

# Limon's ordeal and the State

THE optimists in Bangladesh would hope and pray that Limon's ordeal has perhaps come to an end, now that all the criminal cases filed against him have been withdrawn by the state. Limon, a young man, has been a subject of public discussion through sheer misfortune, by a suspect lethal action of a state organ that has left him crippled for the rest of his life. Fortunately, however, the incident has not crippled his spirit as he is reportedly studying law to eke out an honourable living.

action to be taken upon circumstances extraneous to the record of the case: for example, inexpediency of prosecution for reasons of state, necessity to drop the case on grounds of public policy, credible information having reached the government as to the falsity of the evidence, etc. It is refreshing to observe that the government has resorted to a very lawful course to correct the doubtful action by a state agency.

The primacy of political will lies in the fact that it is at the level of government that law is established. It is thus impossible not to evaluate this aspect when one is considering the subject of human rights and law enforcers. It has to be remembered that the police are required in accordance with law, and it is the law that establishes the condition in which they operate.

The government needs to remind itself that the major contentious issue is the non-respect of basic human rights insofar as it relates to treatment of suspected persons and prisoners. There is a pressing need to effectively establish internationally applicable principles in relation to human rights. Such establishment cannot be meaningful unless there is an adequately empowered control mechanism to ensure that.

The political authority has to make sure that the right conditions are created for human rights to be as fully respected as possible. This is important for establishing the conditions in which police are to operate, bearing in mind the actions within the respect of the law.

In the end, the law enforcers have to ask and ponder if there is a legal basis for their actions. Further, if that legal basis is in statutes or regulations, and its availability to members of public. They have to demonstrate that actions were proportionate to the threat or problem sought to be prevented. Equally important is the relevance and necessity factor with regard to action.

Human rights have now become an inevitable part of democratic way of life and there is a collective responsibility to ensure that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is truly universal. However, the issue is essentially a question of human behaviour, which cannot be resolved by legislation alone.

It needs to be borne in mind that law enforcement is a field of activity in which interaction between the world of the powerful and the world of the powerless is manifested. Hence we have to ensure that law enforcement emphasises principles of purpose and principles of values.

The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star.

# China's Hong Kong follies

## WORLD IN WORDS



SIN-MING SHAW

THE massive public demonstrations by students and young members of the middle-class that have roiled Hong Kong in recent weeks are ostensibly demands for democracy. But they actually reflect frustration among a population that has been poorly governed by a succession of leaders picked by China's central government more for their loyalty than their competence.

In fact, the current near-uprising is the culmination of a long series of demonstrations since Hong Kong's handover from the United Kingdom to China in 1997, after Chris Patten, the last British governor failed to persuade China to allow Hong Kong to establish a genuine democratic government.

In China's view, Patten's position was hypocritical, even offensive, given that the British had ruled Hong Kong autocratically. China believed that it could easily manage the same kind of "executive-led" government that had served Hong Kong well for 150 years under the British.

In order to placate Hong Kong's restive population -- which included many refugees from China -- a "one country, two systems" policy was embedded in the region's constitution, promising Hong Kong "a high degree of autonomy," except in foreign and defense affairs for 50 years. Indeed, Hong Kong enjoys many freedoms that the rest of China lacks, including a judiciary system that is guided by British common law and independent from the executive branch.

China has yet to follow through on its second promise: that Hong Kong would elect its chief executive by "universal suffrage" by 2017. Instead, a committee -- initially comprising 800 members, but since expanded to 1,200 -- selects the chief executive in accordance with the Chinese government's wishes.

Hong Kong's first chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, was widely viewed as a wise choice. The Western-educated heir to a shipping fortune, and unusually well connected with the global elite, Tung was thought to be a conservative, thoughtful, cosmopolitan man imbued with liberal values and free of ties to the powerful families that dominated the real-estate industry in the country.

This perception could not have been more wrong. Tung turned out to be shallow, radical in his views, more chauvinist than China's top leaders, and prone to rash decision-making on important policies with wide-ranging social and economic consequences. He forced out his competent chief secretary, Anson Chan, a veteran Hong Kong civil servant, for her colonial background, thereby signaling his mistrust of the entire civil service that the British had created.

It did not take long for Hong Kongers to realise that their new leader harboured a deep -- and deeply flawed -- "patriotic" worldview that regarded Western "values" as unsuitable for Hong Kong, the first globalised Chinese city in modern history. But it was not until Tung tried to ram through draconian internal-security legislation that many of Hong Kong's citizens began to feel that they were being overtaken by the repressive governance from which they were supposed to be exempt. Under Tung's leadership,

mass protests became a frequent sight in Hong Kong.

The Chinese government also belatedly recognised that Tung was a liability. In 2004, then-Chinese President Hu Jintao unceremoniously dressed down Tung on live television. Three months later, Tung resigned for "health reasons" and was elected vice chairman of the largely symbolic Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Tung's successor, Donald Tsang, was chosen reluctantly. But he was a senior civil servant, and seemed to be the only technocrat who could credibly hold together Hong Kong's disaffected civil service, which China knew was indispensable to governing the territory, regardless of its British heritage. But Tsang brought his own weaknesses to Hong Kong's government -- most notably, greed.

Tsang, who enjoyed spending time with the wealthy on their yachts and in their private suites, pursued a restrictive land policy that boosted real-estate values -- and thus the wealth of the land-owning tycoons. Prices rose so high, however, that real estate became accessible only to the very well-off, such as the families of high officials from the mainland. This kind of corrupt behaviour earned Tsang a disgraceful exit from government.



Kong's land-supply policy, despite a history of corruption in his personal property transactions. Worse, Leung pushed forward an unpopular plan to introduce "patriotic education" to Hong Kong, stoking fear among students of a China-dictated brainwashing.

After the failure of three consecutive Chinese-selected leaders to address Hong Kong's concerns, it is no wonder that Hong Kong's citizens are increasingly seeking to loosen China's grip on their government. But, for the Chinese authorities, this movement reflects an unacceptable challenge to China's sovereignty.

In this sense, Hong Kong is locked in a vicious circle -- and it is up to China's government to break it. The fact is that Hong Kong's citizens understand that they need China, and they have no interest in subverting the central government -- nor do they have the power to do so. Their demands for democracy are simply calls for good governance. They believe that free and fair elections represent their best chance of having a competent leader -- someone like Patten, China's former nemesis, who is remembered fondly in Hong Kong.

China's government is doing itself a disservice by demanding that Hong Kong's citizens bow before their sovereign, while blaming "outside hostile forces" for spurring some kind of unconstitutional rebellion. Instead, it should focus on the problems created by the chief executives that it chose for the wrong reasons, and it should resolve the underlying governance problems that the demonstrations reflect.

The writer, a former fellow at Oxford University, was, most recently, a visiting scholar at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2014. www.project-syndicate.org (Exclusive to The Daily Star)

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

## On English medium schools' fees

In response to Sirajul Islam's letter regarding fees of English medium schools, dated October 18, I would like to say that he should have admitted his child to a school that he can afford the fees of. There are many excellent Bangla medium schools in Dhaka as there are schools offering the national curriculum in English. I am a single parent with limited income but I sent my son to a reputed English medium school. The good English medium schools in Dhaka give quality education enabling their students to get admission at renowned universities around the world. They spend a lot of money on resources and salaries of qualified teachers. How would you expect them to maintain their standard if the fees are brought down to an unrealistic level?

Naima Islam  
Uttara, Dhaka

## Spiral of crime robs citizens of security

News of macabre incidents reaches us almost every day. Dead bodies are being recovered from rivers, ponds, septic tanks, ditches; members of some family found burnt to death, strangled or chopped in a gruesome way. Fiendish incidents have increased alarmingly. It seems that the law and order has collapsed completely. Political unrest is the main reason behind this. Criminals are taking advantage of the situation as law enforcing agents are busy stopping the normal activities of the political parties who are not happy with the autocratic stance of the government.

People want security. Those who took control of the country must return it to the people.  
Nur Jahan  
Chittagong

## Private car running illegally as taxi

The other day I was waiting at Gulshan-1 intersection for transport to reach my home. All the vehicles plying the road were crowded with passengers. Then I saw a private car just after pulling up at the bus stop started taking Mohakhali-bound passengers. The driver was asking two to three times more the fare.

Very often we see this practice on Dhaka roads. These drivers of private cars breach their employers' trust by doing so. And commuters must not get into any such cars as many unpleasant events, for example, robbery or kidnapping, can happen in these cars.

Md Zonaeed Emran  
The Farmers Bank Ltd.

## Comments on news report, "Corruption and the admirable jurisprudence," published on October 18, 2014

### Nds

To me it appears that our bureaucrats' arrogance far exceeds that of our politicians'. Politicians sometimes, particularly at election time show a little bit respect to the common people but bureaucrats never.

### Rahman Mostafiz

The bureaucrats having skill and power can manipulate everything that they have under their jurisdiction; whereas the political leaders have power but don't know how to use it because of lack of intelligence. So, politicians are always dependent on bureaucrats because they lack academic as well as official knowledge. Only a few politicians are different who possess some sort of knowledge far better than that of the giant bureaucrats.

\*\*\*\*\*

## "Law minister for changes to constitution" (Oct. 20, 2014)

### Prof. M. Hoque

There should not be any clemency for a war criminal. Remember, about 3 million people have given their lives to win our independence. It is a shame that we are still fiddling with the "files" of the war criminals! Is it not time that we sent them to the dungeon where they belong? I was 34 years old when I joined the liberation movement, and now I am 78; the war criminals are roaming on the street and some of them are even in the higher echelon of power. It is a double shame that it is happening when the country is being ruled by the party whose leader is the daughter of the Father of the Nation.

### M. Emad

War criminals and their masters are the most evil creatures in the thousand years' history of Bangladesh. There should be constitutional provision so that the convicted war criminals cannot get president's clemency in the future.

\*\*\*\*\*

## "Over 200 trips for 'pleasure'" (Oct. 20, 2014)

### S. M. Iftekhar Ahmed

Kudos to The Daily Star for exposing such wasteful practices. This is probably just the tip of the iceberg. Public funds are being wasted for the selfish interests of some corrupt officials not only from Rajuk, but other government organisations as well, thanks to their lack of accountability. This has to end now.