

## Faking freedom fighter identity

### A highly culpable offence

WE are appalled that a top leader of the war heroes' platform, Muktijoddha Sangsad, has been found to be a fraud with a fake freedom fighters' certificate, according to a probe by the ACC.

The malpractice of using forged certificates by people in positions of power has become pervasive and is a cause of grave concern for the nation. The ACC last month identified five high-ranking government officials, including three incumbent secretaries, who obtained fake freedom fighter certificates. Another 70,000 people, many of whom are civil servants, are under scrutiny for forged certificates.

There is no denying that obtaining these false certificates signifies moral corruption at its worst. The perpetrators have grossly defiled the meaning of the Liberation War and the sacrifice of freedom fighters for the enjoyment of benefits and privileges due to war heroes. They have used these fake identities to seal powerful positions in the government and other important pro-liberation platforms.

We maintain that revoking the titles of these frauds who have not only cheated the offices they serve but the nation at large is simply not enough. The government is yet to declare when, if at all, any legal action against the perpetrators will be taken. This may encourage others to partake in similar immoral and illegal acts.

We hope that the government will not only bring to book those who obtained the certificates, but also those who abused their power and issued these false certificates. The involvement and/or lapses on the part of the ministry concerned must be ascertained without delay.

## Urbanisation ignores the poor

### Policies friendly to them imperative

OVER 10 per cent of the population live in the capital city and some 532 urban growth centres concentrated in a little over 11,000 square kilometres of the total landmass, contributing to over 60 per cent of the GDP. It is sad to witness that 4 out of 10 poor people in Dhaka city live in slums having little access to the basic amenities of modern life. These include lack of sanitation, access to educational and health facilities, security, etcetera, which underscore the basic failure to address the issues of economic and social emancipation of the toiling masses.

With urbanisation being a global phenomenon, it is only natural that Bangladesh's urban centres will continue to post impressive migration growth from rural areas. Yet, without the city administration taking into account the dire needs of the sizeable disadvantaged group to proper housing, education and other more basic facilities that allow for a decent quality of life, the disparity between the rich and the poor will continue to grow.

As expressed by experts in a recent meeting, more than 8 out of 10 urban poor lack ownership of habitat. Needless to say where powerful real estate groups vie for land in an already congested city, catering almost entirely to the middle and upper classes, the poor are left adrift to fend for themselves. Policy initiatives are needed to redress this inequality so that those less fortunate may have a chance to a decent life in the cities.

# Maritime crimes: Bangladeshis in Thai jungle

KAMAL UDDIN BHUIYAN and MD. JAHANGIR ALAM

NOT much time has passed since the BBC online reported the heart-rending news of discovery of 171 people, mainly Bangladeshis, from Thai jungle camps. The Bangladeshis are victims of organised slave trade. Tempted by the prospect of jobs, they were taken to be sold as slaves. Bangladeshis seeking work in South East Asian countries like Malaysia, Thailand or Singapore are victims of slave trade and human trafficking. The Bay of Bengal and adjacent rivers are the routes of such crimes.

According to Suritec Piracy Report, August 2014, three hotspots related to incidents of piracy and looting of ships have emerged in 2014. These are the South China Sea, Gulf of Guinea and Bangladesh. ReCAAP reports that a total of 73 incidents of piracy were reported in Asia during January-June 2014. Among these incidents, 18 were piracy incidents and 55 were armed robbery of ships. Of the 18 piracy incidents reported during January-June 2014, 15 occurred in the South China Sea (SCS), 2 in the Bay of Bengal and 1 attempted incident in the Indian Ocean. According to Cox's Bazar District Fishing Trawler Owners Association (DFTOA), pirates have killed at least 411 fishermen and wounded at least 1,000 more in the last five years. Every month, thousands of Yaba tablets, an illicit drug, are seized in Bangladesh. The smugglers are using the Bay of Bengal and its adjacent rivers as a route for smuggling Yaba and other narcotic drugs from Myanmar to Bangladesh.

Though UNCLOS 1982 is unambiguous enough as to the rights and obligations of the littoral States, it has some grey provisions on many points on the question of enforcement.

By virtue of Articles 87 and 88, freedom of high seas and reservation of the high seas for peaceful purposes have been ensured for all States, either littoral or landlocked. Article 86 of UNCLOS 1982 defines high seas as "the maritime zone not included in the EEZ." Article 86 of UNCLOS bars the application of provisions of high seas to exclusive economic zone, in the territorial sea or in the internal waters of States. This provision confers littoral States exclusive rights on territorial sea, exclusive economic zone and continental Shelf, but it poses problems when we deal with the question of transnational maritime crimes, particularly piracy, armed robbery, slave trade, illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances.

Two main legal enforcement mechanisms under UNCLOS for the repression of such transnational maritime crimes are the right to visit (Article 110) and of hot pursuit (Article 111). The right to visit under Article 110 enables any State to visit, i.e. check and if need be take necessary action against, any ship suspected of engaging in piracy, slave trade and unauthorised broadcasting. On the other hand, the right of hot pursuit allows a warship or military aircraft of a State to pursue a foreign ship which has violated that State's laws within its internal waters or territorial sea and to arrest it on the high seas. Pursuit must be hot and continuous, and the right of hot pursuit ends when the ship being pursued enters the territorial sea of its own or a third State; because to continue it therein would be to violate the sovereignty of the other State.

This legal constraint doesn't permit other navies or coastguards to indulge in hot pursuit of pirates into each

other's water in booking the criminal. Thus, the right of hot pursuit implicitly does not apply the principle of universality. To get rid of such baffling legal constraints of UNCLOS 1982, it is necessary to have bilateral or regional mechanisms.

Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Marine Navigation 1988 was adopted to develop international co-operation between States in devising and adopting effective and practical measures for the prevention of all unlawful acts against the safety of maritime navigation and the prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators. Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar have not signed this convention. As a result, these countries have failed to ensure regional cooperation in the matter of preventing unlawful acts against safety of maritime navigation pursuant to UNCLOS 1982. The Security Council has called upon "all States to criminalise piracy under domestic law." But the littoral States of Bay of Bengal failed to do so. Updating national legislations of the littoral States of Bay of Bengal is important to facilitate successful prosecution, to provide basis for international cooperation, and to meet international obligations for fighting against transnational maritime crimes. Regional co-operation requires information sharing, mutual legal



assistance, extradition, co-operation in enforcement and ad hoc cooperation arrangement.

The third US-Bangladesh security dialogue began at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) on April 22, 2014. In this dialogue, the US said it was willing to cooperate with Bangladesh in ensuring maritime security in the Bay of Bengal. This cooperation can enhance technological capabilities of the Bangladesh Navy or Coast Guard. As transnational maritime crimes extend to South Asia and South East Asia, regional cooperation for combating these crimes should be built up among the littoral States of these regions. In this regard, a wider Bay of Bengal Community needs to be formed inviting Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and China to join with all littoral States of the Bay region in order to enhance cooperation to develop and enforce mechanisms more effectively to fight against transnational maritime crimes, particularly slave trade, human trafficking, piracy and illicit drug trafficking.

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# Action more important than disclosure of names

### BETWEEN THE LINES



KULDIP NAYYAR

IN the midst of debate on the illegal foreign account holders, the names of those who were given amnesty a few days before the debate have been forgotten. Apparently, they are from both the main political parties, the Congress and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). Otherwise, the shouting would not have stopped in such a short time. One other noticeable point is that there has not been even a cursory mention of how the account holders came to accumulate so much money and what steps have been taken to

stop the practice.

Stashing money abroad is a crime. Therefore, all those who have hidden money in foreign countries are guilty. The government's hesitation in making their names public is not understandable. Obviously, both the Congress and the BJP are guilty and they do not want their image to be damaged if and when the names are out. Both parties have a lot to hide.

The fact remains that the political parties, which spend crores of rupees during elections, have foreign countries as a safe haven for accumulating the illicit money. In this way, they not only escape public attention but also save the sums which they would have otherwise paid in the shape of taxes.

The people in India should however thank Germany, which put the names in the public domain. One German bank got hold of the list of names unwittingly and handed it over to the government of India. No intelligence agency in the country can take credit for the list. Why Germany gave the names is not understandable. If it was a pressure of sorts on New Delhi it has worked.

The public was understandably up in arms when it came to know that 800 odd people have money abroad. There must be many other names which have not come out. The amount of money stashed abroad is said to be Rs. 6 lakh crore.

I recall that when I was India's High Commissioner at London, the stringency of money had made New Delhi write to its envoys to raise money from the Indians settled abroad. I also made a fervent appeal to the people of Indian origin. I was surprised when the German ambassador told me that the Indians had so much money deposited in the Swiss banks that they could easily finance many five-year plans.

In any case, the government now has names of foreign account holders. They were reportedly received many months ago when the Congress government headed by Dr. Manmohan Singh was at the helm of affairs. Because of political considerations, it took no action against anyone. Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who promised to book the guilty within one hundred days of his regime, has begun action only after seven months of coming to power. The Manmohan Singh government sat over the names which were

received during its regime. Why no action was taken has not been explained by the Congress spokespersons. Uncomfortable questions are never answered. Disclosure of names is in the same category.

The Modi government too has sacred cows. It has preferred to name some companies in the corporate sector to others. The three names announced from the corporate sector are probably of those companies which the Modi government has not been able to mulct. Also, the concentration on the corporate sector is meant to divert the people's attention from the political world. The effort is to convince the society that the illicit money is the doing of the corporate sector. This may be true because the money spent on elections, running into thousands of crores, comes from the corporate sector. But this is the black money, earned through the illicit means. The politicians, whether in or out of power, have to bear the guilt. They look to the other side than when corrupt means are used to accumulate money.

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***That Modi would fight against the vested interests who have polluted politics was expected, particularly when he talked about cleanliness from every public platform. But unfortunately, he has not kept his promise.***

But unfortunately, he has not kept his promise. He has made businessmen and bureaucrats careful in going about their corrupt practices. But the corruption has in no way lessened.

Even now it is not too late to retrieve his reputation if Modi puts all the names on the net. Who among them can be prosecuted depends on the evidence gathered. The disclosure of names will at least absolve him from the responsibility of hiding corruption from the people.

This may not be an instance of corruption but it is quiet appalling. Some Rs. 3,000 crores are estimated to have been spent on fire crackers during Diwali. The money, again in crores, during the Dussehra is separate from this amount.

The country, where one third of the population goes to bed without food, is a sad spectacle of insensitivity to the conditions the common man faces. I have not found the activists coming even once on the streets in protest. The society is indifferent because those who have the voice and mould the public opinion are part of the problem. They can hardly offer a solution.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Exploitation-free society remains a dream

More than four decades ago Bangladesh came into being at a great cost of life and property. The immense sacrifices were made to free the people from exploitation.

Now Bangladesh is an independent country and there are no foreign rulers, but has exploitation stopped? No, ordinary people are still being oppressed by the rulers and their goons. We never expected this in a free country. The promise of an exploitation free society made by the political leaders remains a far reaching dream.

**Saleh Mohamad Ayub**  
Houston, Texas, USA

### A boy with a difference

Last week while I was passing by the Bhabadur Shah Park near Jagannath University, I saw a blind boy playing pipe sweetly. There was a small crowd around him. When he finished playing, everyone gave him some money. When I found him alone, I asked him his whereabouts. "I don't beg as I think it is an inferior job. I give people pleasure by playing the pipe. And they happily give me something. I somehow manage," replied the eight-year old boy named Suren Tonga. I came to know that he lost his parents at his early years. Though he is visually impaired, he fights for his survival each and every day. There are so many blind poor people around us who beg for a living, but Suren is quite different. We should extend our helping hands towards this kind of honest boys.

**Bipul K Debnath**  
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### Bt brinjal brings sorrow for farmers

The government gave permission for cultivating Bt brinjal in Bangladesh in October 2013. This GM crop is resistant to pests but after cultivating the Bt brinjal, the farmers faced huge loss as most of the plants wilted and died.

Chemical composition of the soil changes as this invasive plant requires different type of nutrients. Moreover, it is quite unfair to cultivate and market this veggie without diagnosing its impact on human health. Bt brinjal is resistant to pests; so would it be too foolish to imagine that there exists toxin in this brinjal which can cause harm to human health?

It is high time the government improved biosafety regulations and took public opinion before introducing any kind of new GM crops in the country.

**Samshad Nowreen**  
Lecturer  
Dept. of Tourism and Hospitality Management  
University of Dhaka

### Comments on news report, "Mirpur Biharis' cry for justice," published on October 27, 2014

**M Ali**  
They should either be repatriated to Pakistan or given full citizenship by Bangladesh according to their wish.

**Dev Saha**  
Biharis have become persona non grata with no place to go.

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### "Three deals signed" (Oct. 28, 2014)

**SM**  
What are there for Bangladesh in these deals? These are bi-lateral agreements with no substantial value.

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### "Gas hope for winter" (Oct. 28, 2014)

**S.M. Iftekhar Ahmed**  
Very good news indeed. Perhaps the country has more gas reserves which still remain untapped. Furthermore, studies need to be conducted to assess if there is potential for shale gas which has changed the condition of many nations that once faced shortages.

**Nasirullah Mridha, USA**  
We should utilise our natural assets prudently.

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### "Charges against BNP leaders lack credibility" (Oct. 28, 2014)

**Nds**  
Agreed. The ruling party is scrupulously following the classical practice of turning a democratic party into sort of a fascist one. The government should put an end to their over enthusiasm to wipe out all voices of dissent.

**Rahman Mostafiz**  
This is undemocratic. Democracy always invites myriads of opinions and political activities. Otherwise, the democratic institutions will lose their functions.

## The curry at a crossroads

R. D. QURESHI

HUMOURIST Naveed Mahbub titled one of his columns Korma Karma (The Daily Star September 26, 2014), narrating story of the glamorous curry kingdom of the 'Chefs from Sylhet' in the United Kingdom.

The story of the 'curry' travelling all the way across the riverine routes and the oceanic depths is the subject of this article. Mr. Mahbub has mentioned that one Sake Dean Mahomed is reputed to have started the first curry house in Britain, named Hindustani Coffee House, in Central London in 1809.

I have a story also, from a book written by one Robert Lindsay, the British East India Company's resident administrator of Sylhet from 1778 to 1788. He mentioned in his Anecdotes of an Indian Life, published in 1840, that a man named Syed Ullah travelled all the way from Sylhet to the United Kingdom with the intention of killing Robert Lindsay in retaliation for the killing of his father in Sylhet during an incident of shooting by police under Lindsay's order. Lindsay (by then Lord Lindsay) convinced Syed Ullah that he was only doing his duty, and the man accepted that explanation. Lindsay learned that Syed Ullah was a good cook, widely reputed for his 'best in the world curry,' and engaged him as a cook in 1809.

Now, the year 1809 appears in the case of opening of Hindustani Coffee House in Central London by Sake Dean Mahomed. (Mr. Naveed Mahbub has surely got this from some authentic source.) But the year 1809 also appears in Robert Lindsay's book as the year of appointment of Syed Ullah as cook by Robert Lindsay. (In the appendix of the book it appears as a finding of one Nurul Islam in his 'Probashir Kotha')

Who, then, was the first curry cook in the United Kingdom?

I am not inclined to believe that Hindustani Coffee House of Sake Dean Mahomed was really opened in Central London in 1809. Was it not too early for Britishers to get used to and attracted by Indian curry only half a century after British intrusion into India? In my opinion, it took a longer time for the Britishers -- civil servants, tea planters and others -- to get used to a new recipe and take a liking to it. If there was at all a Hindustani Coffee House in London, it may have been opened in 1909 instead of 1809, when there must have been a few whites used to curry for a restaurant serving Indian food to survive in London.

The writer is a retired officer of BCIC.