

## Bangladesh's CPI ranking dips

Govt. should wake up

**B**ANGLADESH has descended on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) from its earlier rank at 16th to 14th this year. Based on Berlin-based international anti-graft watchdog Transparency International (TI)'s global survey, scoring 25, which is 2 points less than last year's 27, Bangladesh is now the 145th most corrupt nation among 177 countries of the world.

Seeing that Bangladesh had been performing better since it reached its nadir on the CPI index between 2001 and 2005, there is reason to be concerned about this latest report of a reversal. Tracing it mainly to corruption committed at the political and administrative level in a collective manner, civil society members including from TI, Bangladesh chapter, blamed it mainly on the failure of the statutory and constitutional bodies like parliament, ACC, human rights bodies and so on to deliver. Regrettably, the government's denial mode in the face of reports on administrative corruption whether coming from the media or from local or international research bodies like TI has provided a kind of impunity to those liable for the evil practice. Small wonder unlike any other country, the common people are at the receiving end, thanks to the high level of tolerance towards corruption by those in authority.

The only answer to this stifling, unacceptable situation is the government's political will to change. To begin with it must free law-enforcing agencies from political influence and allow judiciary, ACC and all other statutory bodies to function without undue interference from the executive.

## Remembering our Founder Editor

His principles remain a beacon for us

**O**N his 86th birth anniversary today, we remember S. M. Ali, our Founder Editor and an icon of English journalism in our country, with deep deference and gratitude. He was a journalist by choice. At a time when less meritorious students than him chose more lucrative careers he chose to be a scribe out of a sheer penchant to serve the nation through his writings, an endowment that was a gift of Providence to a most worthy one.

S M Ali was perhaps the first journalist of erstwhile Pakistan and Bangladesh to have made his mark in international journalism. Having started as a young reporter in the then Pakistan Observer, a leading English daily of the time, in the early fifties, he served in various East Asian newspapers from the early 60s. He was the managing editor of Bangkok Post from 1966 to 1970 where he stood out as a journalist of high repute. He next served in The New Nation of Singapore as roving foreign editor and The Hong Kong Standard as its managing editor.

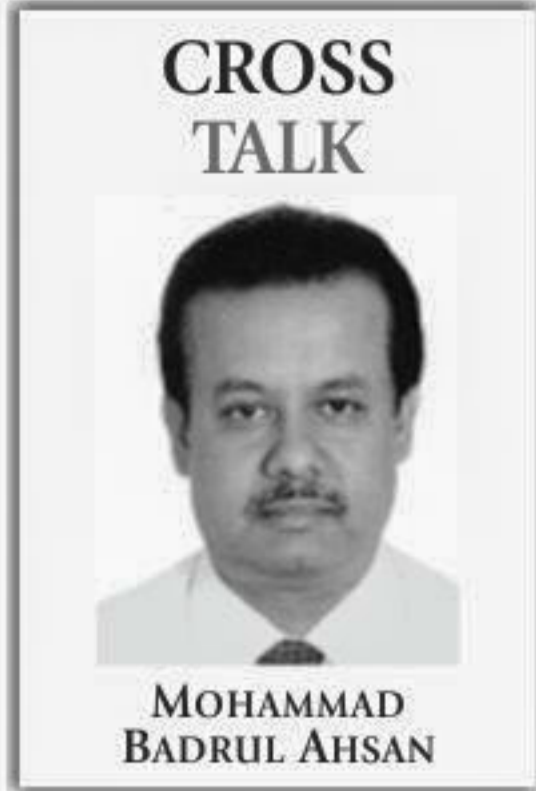
He played an active role in attracting international support for our Liberation War

It was in January 1991 that he embarked on what was perhaps his most important venture -- The Daily Star. The paper was the result of his passion for quality journalism and quality newspaper.

We recall fondly the selfless dedication that he exhibited in rearing a new born daily just as a doting mother would a new born child. It was his amiable disposition, his smiling face and his ability to cross the barrier of age that enabled him to transmit his sense of value to his junior colleagues, and which they carry to this day

On this day, while we remember our Founder Editor, we pledge ourselves to uphold the principles of fearless and

# Fathers are status quo, children are change



CROSS TALK  
MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

**T**HE 1993 movie "In the Name of the Father" was based on the true story of four people, who were wrongly convicted of the 1974 IRA's Guildford pub bombings that killed four off-duty British soldiers and a civilian. The son Gerry Conlon, played by Daniel Day-Lewis, makes it his fight to prove that his father Giuseppe wasn't guilty as charged. The movie ends when the triumphant son reveals his story to the media and proclaims his father's innocence. That may as well be the story of sons in this country but for a necessary twist. The fight of these sons needs to be focused not on proving the innocence of their fathers but their guilt.

Iconoclastic it may sound, but the true freedom of young people in this country lies in challenging the ways of their fathers, in some cases mothers. Parental guidance in many cases is misguiding, concentrated on pursuit of life more as a gamble than as a gift. The young minds need to break out of the vicious circle created by their parents that goes from hypocrisy to manipulation to desperation to more hypocrisy and more manipulation.

This country was once fortunate to repose its trust entirely in its young. It was they who fought the Liberation War, laid down their lives and shouldered the dream of creating an independent nation. It was then that parents were handheld by their children, when fathers even sought opinion of their high school-going sons before they decided to vote in the 1970 elections. It was then in many years that fathers saw more wisdom in seeing the world through the lens of their children. It was also in many years that mothers fortified their hearts to withstand the sacrifice of the apples of their eyes.

That glorious chapter of history has reversed. Those young people became parents in their turn, and they have misled their children in their mad pursuit for wealth and success. If the anomalies of last 43 years are to be summarised in one sentence, it's that parents have marginalised their children in every walk of life.

The children are first marginalised in their homes where greedy parents take up most of the space. In all their innocence these children grow up in the elusive mystery of expenditure exceeding income, their text-book sensibilities slipping through that enigmatic crack. For a second time they are marginalised when parents sublimate their

ambitions through the future of their children. Most of these children are forced to become the prototypes of their parents. The loan defaulters' children are raised to believe in the virtue of this vicious crime. The politicians expect their sons and daughters to fill in their shoes. Corrupt parents are splurging on their kids' amenities and opportunities so that these kids can get good education and upbringing.

Little does it matter that it only creates an oxymoron, because corrupt homes are an antithesis to character formation. Children raised by these households are like crops drawing sustenance from poisoned soil. It's a scientific fact that residues of that poison are bound to end up in the food at the dinner table.

David Finkelhor, a sociology professor at the University of New Hampshire, claims that although today's young people in the United States are risk averse, narcissistic, dependent, over-scheduled, entitled and "pornified," they are at the same time showing virtues their elders lacked. As proof, he throws statistics if anybody has doubts. Crime is down. Arrests for serious violent offenses by juveniles have dropped. Peer victimisation, harassment and bullying have declined. Suicide, too, is less common. Teenage pregnancy is down to record lows. Binge drinking by 12th-graders is low and compared with 1995, 56% fewer youths were running away in 2012.

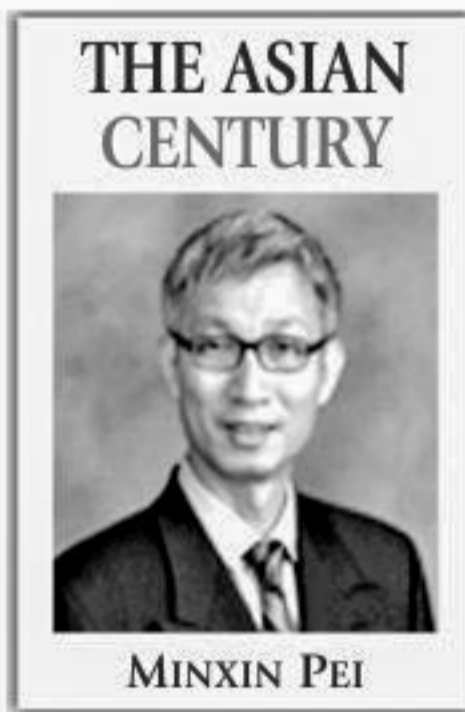
These improvements have happened, argues Finkelhor, for a number of reasons. Prevention and intervention programmes for parents, families and children, psychiatric medication given to them to reduce aggression, depression and hyperactivity, and the Internet, electronic games and cellphones have worked together to keep idle brains from turning into devil's workshop. But a more direct approach was taken in China 48 years ago. It was the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, when children were encouraged to denounce their parents, students to attack their teachers and spouses to accuse spouses of crimes and wrongdoings.

That madness perhaps is an extreme example, but the time has come to apply its underlying spirit in moderation. Fathers always signify the status quo, children the change. If anybody wonders why we are stuck like a stick in the mud, it's because change has become a captive of status quo. Herodotus says that in peace sons bury their fathers and in war fathers bury their son. Sons may still bury their fathers, who have buried their sons beneath the dead-weight of their dubious convictions.

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### PROJECT SYNDICATE

## China's Asia?



THE ASIAN CENTURY  
MINXIN PEI

**D**ISTINGUISHING diplomatic rhetoric from official policy is never easy. But it is especially difficult in China, where the government's actions so often fail to match its statements. Given this, it is worth asking whether the latest slogan adopted by Chinese officials -- "Asia for Asians" -- is merely nationalist posturing for domestic consumption or a signal of a genuine policy shift.

The most authoritative reference to an "Asia for Asians" occurred in May, during Chinese President Xi Jinping's keynote speech at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia. In a carefully crafted statement, Xi laid out China's vision for a new regional security order -- one in which, as the slogan suggests, Asians are in charge.

According to Xi, at the fundamental level, "it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia, and uphold the security of Asia." Fortunately, he declared, they have the "capability and wisdom" to build peace and security in the region through cooperation.

This vision, of course, entails an overhaul of the Asian security structure, with a drastically reduced role for the United States. Indeed, Xi implicitly criticised the existing US-dominated security architecture in Asia as stuck in the Cold War, and characterised "military alliance targeted at a third party" as "not conducive to maintaining common security." Since the speech, lower-level officials and the Chinese media have reiterated similar lines.

At first glance, this vision seems entirely reasonable; after all, most countries prefer to manage domestic and regional affairs without the meddling of outside powers. But Xi's statement marked a significant departure from China's long-standing position on America's presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Since the US-China rapprochement four decades ago, China has maintained a studied ambiguity regarding America's role as the guarantor of Asia's security. China's pragmatic leaders knew that the US presence helped to contain the Soviet Union (and subsequently Russia), prevented Japan from re-arming, and kept sea-lanes open. They also recognised that they lacked the power to challenge the US-led security order or offer a feasible alternative.

This may be changing. Though some analysts remain convinced that Xi's "Asia for Asians" line is an empty attempt to bolster his nationalist credentials, an equally strong case can be made that it signifies a genuine policy shift. While the argument is not overwhelming, it should not be dismissed out of hand.

The most conclusive evidence of Xi's readiness to challenge the established order lies in the economic sphere. Most notably, China has established new development institutions, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the new Silk Road Fund, to which it will channel tens of billions of dollars -- clear challenges to the established Western-dominated multilateral institutions.

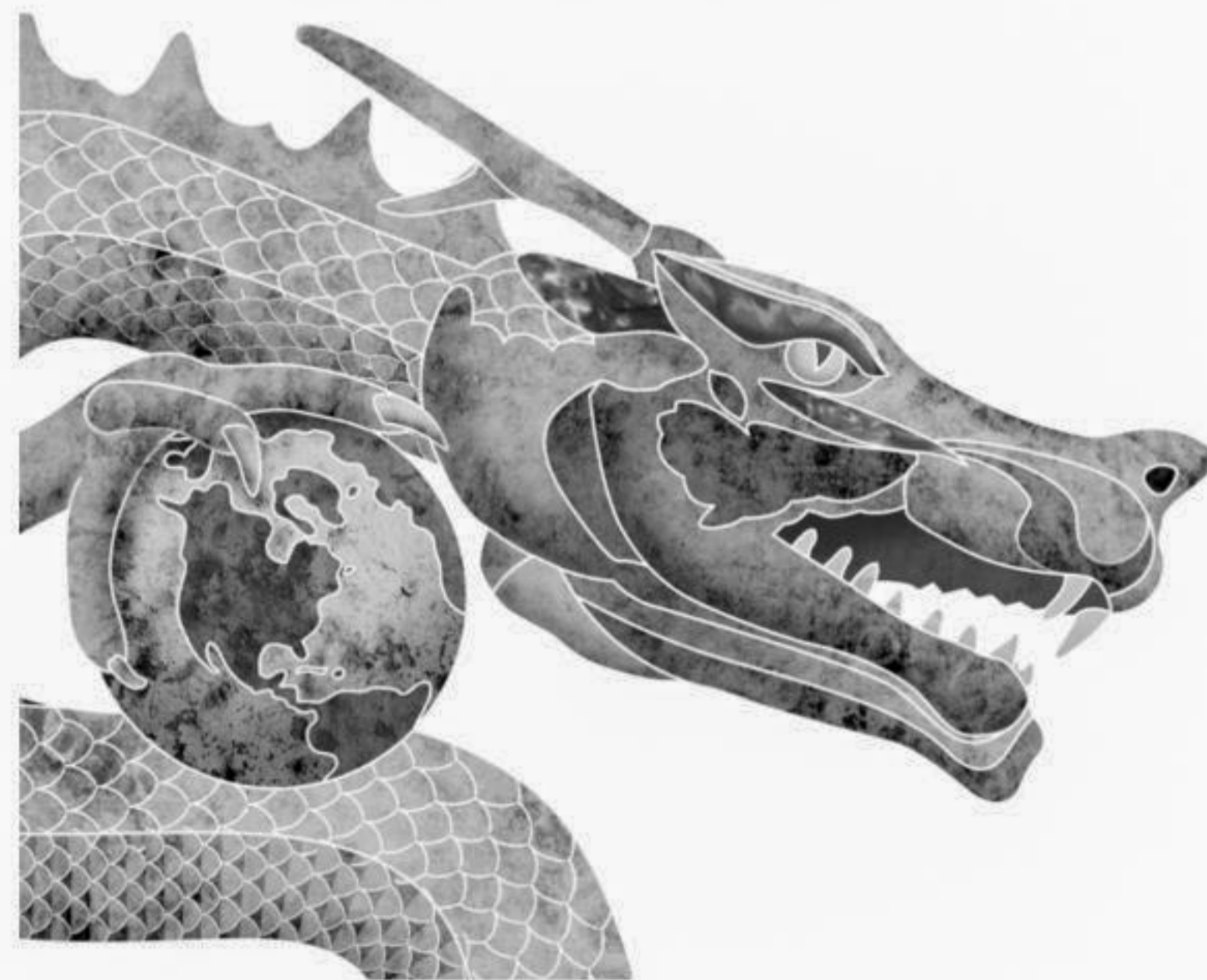
On the security front, however, China has made much less headway in turning its "Asia for Asians" vision into reality. To be sure, it has acquired some military capabilities to deter the US from intervening in the Taiwan Strait or the South China Sea, and it has improved its security cooperation with Russia and Central Asian countries through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. But such modest

gains are more than offset by the security setbacks that China has suffered as a result of its assertiveness in regional territorial disputes.

Indeed, after many months of increasingly forceful military moves -- most notably, the unilateral declaration of an air-defense identification zone covering a large swath of the South China Sea, including disputed territories -- China's ties with Japan reached an all-time low. And concerned Southeast Asian countries have been entreating the US to remain in the region as a counterweight to China.

Underlying the "Asia for Asians" trope may be China's belief that the US, not its own behaviour, is to blame for its neighbours' defiance. Some Chinese strategists believe that the US is using Asian states, particularly Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, as pawns to contain China. If this perspective has prevailed in the internal policy debate, Chinese leaders, including Xi, could have reached the fateful conclusion that, on balance, America's security presence in Asia directly threatens Chinese interests and must be eliminated.

That would be a grave strategic error, based on a fundamental misreading of Asian security dynamics. Most of China's neighbours, even North Korea, fear an unconstrained Chinese hegemon -- and, if the US security presence were eliminated, that is precisely what they would face. "Asia for Asians" would be "Asia for the Chinese."



It is difficult to imagine that Chinese policymakers, known for their sophistication and realism, could be pursuing a strategy that is not only unlikely to gain support from fellow Asians, but also is guaranteed to spark conflict with the US. Given this, it is likely -- indeed, desirable -- that "Asia for Asians" will remain a mere slogan. In fact, Xi has lately toned down his description of China's aims, recently telling Communist Party leaders that, "We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's message to the world."

But, even as rhetoric, the phrase "Asia for Asians" is problematic for historical reasons. In the 1930s, Japanese militarists used the idea of an "East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere" as a cover for their imperial ambitions and conquests. The slogan was widely ridiculed, particularly in China, for its transparent absurdity.

This may help to explain the lukewarm reception that the concept of "Asia for Asians" has received this time around. The smartest thing for Chinese leaders to do would be to drop it, once and for all.

The writer is Professor of Government at Claremont McKenna College and a non-resident senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

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## LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR  
letters@thedailystar.net

### Heading towards nuclear tragedy!

In some English dailies of 3rd December, there have been reports that the manufacturing work of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant has started in Russia. It is the worst news of the decade as we are going headlong for a major radiation disaster; maybe in the next fifteen years or so! Sadly, we are also paying for it through our nose by buying Russian plant, the worst and the most dangerous one, for potential nuclear radiation hazard. Past 80 now, this writer may not be there by the time it happens but major radiation leak related disaster is bound to happen sometimes or other.

If we want to have nuclear power plant, we can easily get U-238 absolutely radiation free nuclear power plants, sized around say 200MW each. These plants will be totally environmentally clean and can be located in a number of major cities and towns across Bangladesh. Further, the capital investment will also be far lower and no safety distances or special dome structures are needed for these U-238 nuclear power plants. We can also set one plant at a time, spreading the whole program over a few decades, one after another.

It is indeed sad that we are calling for a nuclear disaster for our next generation.  
Engr. S. A. Mansoor  
Dhaka

### Plight of children in hazardous work

Recently I met a 12-year-old boy, Sumon, who works in a steel factory. His family lives in a slum at Shahid Nagar near Islambagh, Dhaka. His father is a fruit seller who earns very little. So Sumon was forced to leave school and started doing this labourous job. He earns 1800 taka per month after working 10-12 hours a day. His factory owner sometimes punishes him physically for not being able to perform heavy jobs.

There are thousands of working children in Bangladesh and Sumon is just one of them. While they are supposed to be at school at this tender age, poverty has driven them out of school and they have to do jobs not suitable for them. Can't we protect these kids from this miserable condition?

Sujon Weasly Biswas  
Department of MBA  
Jahangirnagar University

### A sad December

December, the glorious month is here; the month of celebration and happiness. But ironically, people are not in that upbeat mood; they are passing their days in anxiety as the future seems bleak to them. But those who are in power are least bothered about people. They did not hesitate to trample upon the basic rights of people, as they snatched people's voting rights.

Nur Jahan  
Chittagong

### Comments on news report, "Arabs should leave Israel, with payment", published on Nov. 30, 2014

sirajulmo@yahoo.com  
This is an impractical idea. No country can get rid of 20% of its population.

### Touchstone

Now Arab citizens' birthright is for sale and Israel is the buyer.

### M. Emad

Compare 2014 Arab Israelis swap "package deal" with 1971's ten million East-Pakistani (Bengali) refugees in India and other countries.

### New Generation

It's a provocation against Arabs.

### SM

It is their land too; why should they leave? Atrocities against them and killing them are not working, I guess.

### Ahmed Aziz

As usurper of Palestine, Zionists have no legal mandate to offer anything. And it should certainly not be considered while they occupy Jerusalem.

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### "Registration mandatory for NGOs" (December 1, 2014)

### Zaker Naim

This is another example of what this authoritarian regime can do.

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### "Implement land deal with Bangladesh" (Dec. 2, 2014)

### Gias

This issue has been dragged for too long. The process needs to be expedited.