

# BCL activist shot dead

*The cycle of violence must end*

IT is deplorable that the unrelenting infighting of Bangladesh Chhatra League for establishing dominance over Chittagong University has resulted in the death of Taposh Sarkar, a first-year BCL activist, on Sunday.

The factional divide has spiraled out of control over the last few months, as reported by the media, all but paralysing the university. Even the Prime Minister herself last month warned the members to stop the frequent infighting on campus. The murder of Taposh signals that even the premier's warning is not enough to discipline the unruly activists who are bent on wreaking havoc on campus, jeopardising students' lives and hampering educational activities, in their turf war.

The out-of-control behaviour of BCL activists and their disrespect towards their leader raise grave concerns about the debased priorities of the reigning student wing. This year alone, we witnessed countless incidents of BCL men inflicting violence, not only on each other, but against others as well. In most cases, no serious action was taken to rein them in by the university administration, the government or the party.

Why has no one been arrested for the murder of Taposh? Why is the police as well as university administration silent on the issue? We can only assume that everyone is powerless in the face of BCL's power play.

AL can no longer ignore the threat of BCL activists to the party itself, let alone the harm it is causing to universities, students and the nation at large. It must take strong action to stop the cycle of violence.

# Barendra museum heist

*Punish culprits, recover artefacts*

ACCORDING to a prominent Bengali daily, as many as 185 artefacts including ancient statues, Terracotta, currencies besides countless publications, have been smuggled out of the Barendra museum which is administered by Rajshahi university. The appalling news was revealed at a special meeting held by the museum's advisory committee recently. Based on an investigation carried out by the advisory committee, fingers have been pointed at two former directors for their alleged involvement in removing the antiques. There have been several accusations against them; they have been asked to give explanations regarding the missing artefacts.

All this not only exposes the fact that our museums are run by dubious and unprofessional officials but also the reality of how we are repeatedly failing to protect our heritage. It's the sheer number of missing antiques that is mind-boggling. Why did the number have to reach a staggering 185 plus before the disclosure came about? It appears that smuggling has been going on for long without causing any concern to the administration.

We have reasons to suspect that an unidentified smuggling syndicate has been operating with the help of some museum officials in Bangladesh. In view of the expose, we expect security to be beefed up at museums complemented by staffs that are tech-savvy in terms of identifying and preventing the smugglers from having a free ride.

Last but not least, besides ferreting out the culprits we have to be extra-ordinarily prompt in recovering the stolen items from Barendra museum.



SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN

IT is not new for us in Bangladesh to suffer politicians who keep on constantly talking through their hats. And in this regard the stalwarts of the two parties are in a race to out do one another in talking gibberish. And an example of such garbage is the recent comment by the Senior VP of BNP which has caught our attention.

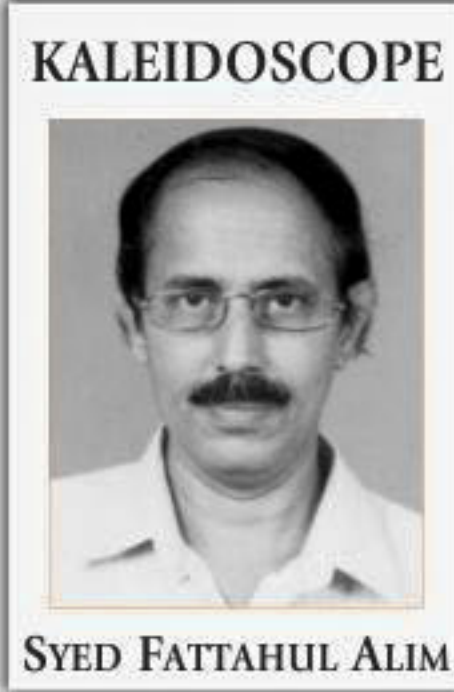
Tareq Zia is not known for his finesse when talking about Bangabandhu and he does not hide his feelings in spewing invectives about him. From terming Sheikh Mujib a 'Paki-friend' to denying him the rightful place in history (as if what he said matters) to all kind of denigrating adjectives (and he has been taken to court for it), Tareq Zia has used all kinds of adjectives against Bangabandhu. But what he said yesterday in London about the Father of the Nation beats all his previous description of Bangabandhu. According to the BNP senior VP, Bangabandhu is a Razakar. It would not surprise us if we were to hear Tareq Zia one of these days say that that Bangabandhu was an agent of Pakistan government and the killings on 26 March were started at his behest?

These rants, which is how one can best describe these statements, are indicative of a puerile mind working perhaps at the prompting of others. If it is to return the 'compliments' (like Zia was a fake freedom fighter, and that he was an ISI agent infiltrated into the ranks of the Mukti Bahini), that some of the equally infantile AL leaders had paid to his late father, than the form chosen by the son is at best insensitive and uncalled for. While Mujib and Zia can never be put on the same pedestal, smearing national leaders who have influenced the course of the country's history does no credit to the character of the persons involved in that heinous campaign. In fact it only betrays one's poor upbringing.

Knowing fully well that one's call to our politicians for civility in their utterances will go unheeded we would nonetheless want the politicians to understand that to be tongue-tied is much better than to lose control over it.

The writer is Editor, Oped and Defence & Strategic Affairs, *The Daily Star*.

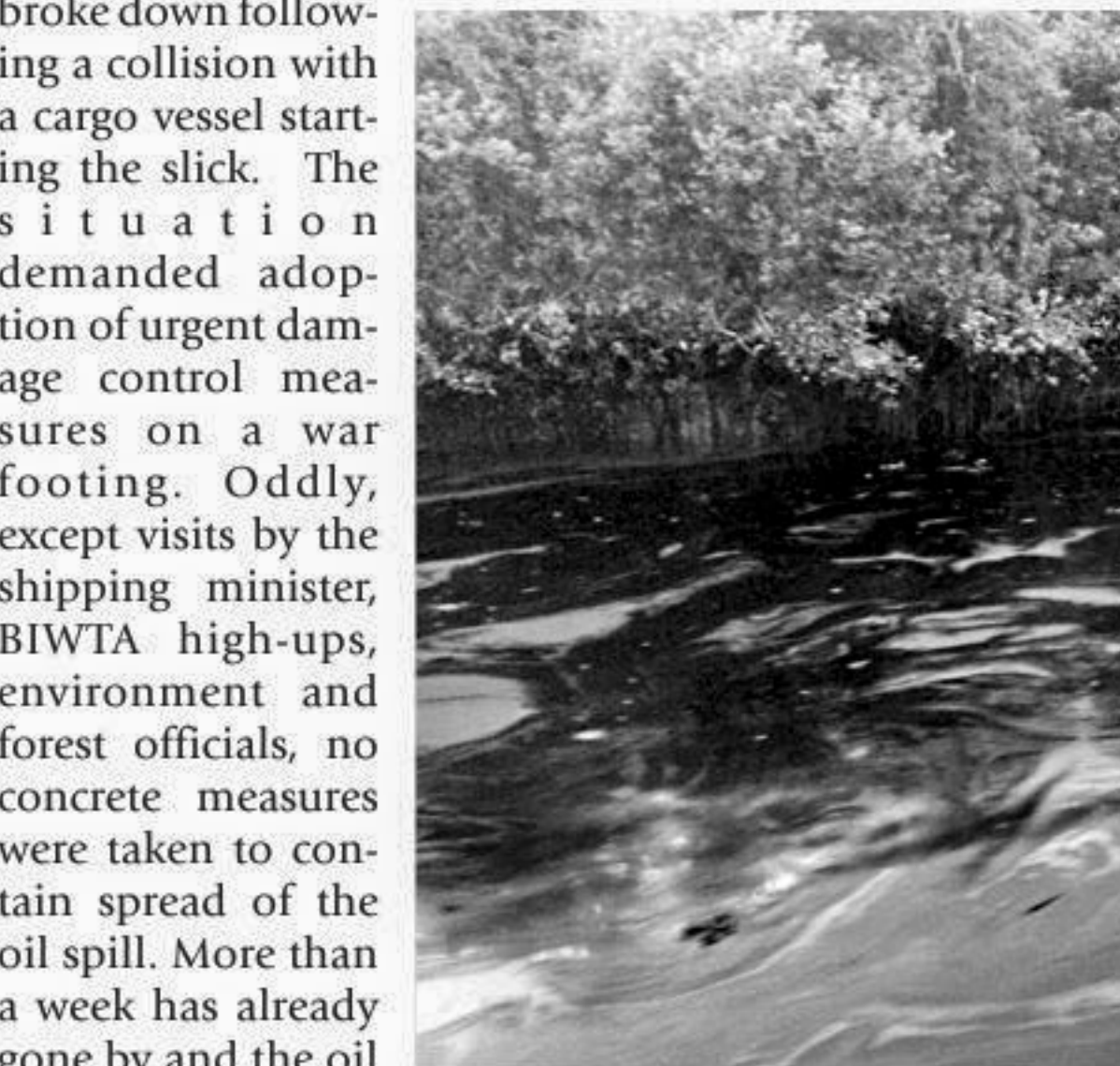
# Outrageous myopia



SYED FATAHUL ALAM

WE cannot say that December 9's oil tanker crash on the Shela river in the Sundarbans was an unexpected accident. To be frank it was waiting to happen and the foggy morning of December 9 just proved to be the fateful moment. In fact, the condition for such disaster was created since April 2011 when the Bangladesh Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) under the Shipping ministry opened this river passing through Sundarbans to the movement of commercial vessels as the Mongla-Ghasiakhali channel lost its navigability due to heavy silting. But this decision was taken despite opposition from the Environment and Forest Ministry and in defiance of the laws of wildlife conservation, environment protection, Unesco's World Heritage Commission and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

Environmentalists have been expressing their concern from the very moment that the oil tanker with 3.58 lakh litres of furnace oil broke down following a collision with a cargo vessel starting the slick. The situation demanded adoption of urgent damage control measures on a war footing. Oddly, except visits by the shipping minister, BIWTA high-ups, environment and forest officials, no concrete measures were taken to contain spread of the oil spill. More than a week has already gone by and the oil has spread across



entire length of the river and into the sea. Suggestions to address the issue came and went and the government sat on the problem as though the oil will wait idly until the correct solution to remove it is hatched up. At long last, we are back to square one: the old mop and bucket. The villagers will sponge the oil off the river surface.

So, a few scores of villagers have been deployed to do the colossal task of ridding the Shela river of more than a quarter million litres of the dirtiest kind of oil--furnace oil! This is pure joke.

What should one make of the government's behaviour in the face of this grave environmental crisis? Why no action came even within a week that the disaster struck? No accident ever comes with a forewarning allowing the authorities in question any excuse for lack of preparedness. And that is more so, when we have the mouthful of a ministry called the ministry of disaster management and relief. May we ask what has this particular ministry been doing during all these days since the tanker broke up? So it's no surprise that what was to happen has happened--the entire Shela river, the Sundarbans that cradles it and the flora and fauna of which they were denizens have been dealt a mortal blow. A video clip published in this paper shows how the entire surface of the river is covered with a

thick layer of the brown liquid through which some objects looking like carcasses of some animals were floating by. People are wondering where all those crocodiles, Irrawady and Ganges dolphins, other small and big aquatic creatures, birds, wild bores, even deer gone as their movement has not been visible in the river and around its banks after the catastrophe befell them. Faster moving animals such fish, crocodiles, porpoises, otters, etc who could survive the initial impact of the calamity, may have migrated to the still unaffected parts of the river. But with the oil slick swallowing still greater patches of the river in the absence of any prompt and effective measure to contain it, the future of those animals appears to be fated. And along with destruction of those creatures, Sundarbans' delicate ecosystem linked with the river will undergo irreversible damage leading also to the permanent loss of livelihood of the local people who depend on them.

Environmental experts have already raised the alarm about the dire consequences of the uncontrolled oil spill. Now that the major damage could not be averted, what should be the government's next step to save what is still left of the disaster-stricken Shela river and parts of the Sundarbans washed by it? To take a defeatist stand and allow commercial vessels' movement through the river--

the real cause of the havoc--to continue unabated? The Shipping minister's statement that the Shela river route should remain open to commercial traffic and the Mongla-based business community's view supporting it only lends credence to that kind of defeatist outlook.

Actually, declaring the Shela river off limits to commercial vessels will in no way put the users of this route out of business due to the detour the cargo carriers will have to make to reach their destinations and that too until the silted Mongla-Ghasiakhali channel is reopened once its dredging is completed.

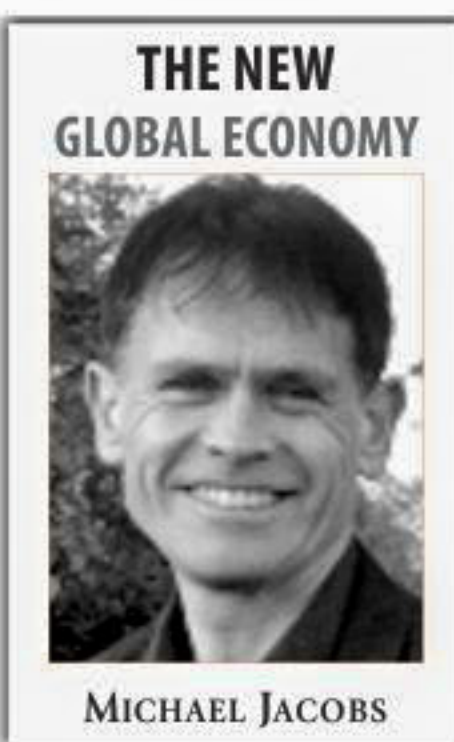
The shipping ministry and the business community are but conveniently using the argument of economy and trade to justify their continued abuse of the waterway flowing through the Sundarbans. But in doing so they are missing the bigger perspective, the longer-term national interest of preserving Sundarbans' delicate ecological balance.

We are indeed stunned by the insensitivity of the quarters who are not at all perturbed by the devastation that the sunken oil tanker has already caused to the lives of animals, plants including humans and the complex ecosystem that evolved surrounding the Shela river in the Sundarbans. They are now brazening it out by insisting that their vessels containing dangerous cargoes must be allowed to ply through the heart of Sundarbans. And their argument is business. This is the worst kind of myopia and an outrageous one at that.

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## PROJECT SYNDICATE

# The real Lima deal



MICHAEL JACOBS

IT was the agreement that everyone wanted, yet that no one much likes. This year's annual United Nations climate-change conference in Lima, Peru, finally concluded in the early hours of Sunday morning, more than 24 hours after the scheduled close, after fierce argument in the final days. Negotiators from 196 countries patched together a compromise that keeps the world on course to a new global climate agreement in Paris next year, but almost everyone was left unhappy with some provision or another.

Many critics of the deal, however, have missed the point. The Lima deal is weak in many respects. But it also represents a fundamental breakthrough for shaping a comprehensive global climate regime.

The Lima conference had two goals. The first was to adopt an outline of the text of the 2015 Paris agreement. This goal was achieved -- but only by creating a huge 37-page document containing every possible option that countries may want to see in next year's deal. Delegates did not attempt to negotiate between the various options, taking to heart the old maxim "Why do today what you can put off until tomorrow?"

That negotiation has been left to the five sessions of talks scheduled for 2015, starting in February. Given the divergence among the positions included in the Lima text, arriving at a draft fit for signing in Paris next December will be a huge task.

The second goal was to agree on the terms under which countries will devise their national commitments -- officially, their "intended nationally determined contributions" (INDCs) -- in 2015. Here, the compromises were sharply felt.

Developing countries wanted the INDCs to include plans for adaptation to climate change as well as emissions cuts, and they wanted developed countries to include financial support for poorer countries. Instead, no commitments to new money were made, and the inclusion of adaptation plans will be optional, not compulsory.

Meanwhile, developed countries wanted all countries to provide standardized information on their emissions targets and plans, to ensure transparency and comparability. The key elements were agreed on, but only in the form of guidance, not as requirements. Likewise, the proposal by the European Union and the United States that countries' plans be subject to some kind of assessment was dropped from the final text.

But the aggregate effect of all countries' plans will be calculated, allowing evaluation next year of whether the world has done enough to limit average global warming to the agreed ceiling of 2° Celsius. It almost certainly will have not.

For many of the agreement's critics, particularly those in the environmental movement, these compromises made

the Lima deal an excessively "bottom-up" agreement. Countries have too much latitude to make whatever commitments they want, relatively unconstrained by a common set of "top-down" rules imposed by the agreement. Such critics worry that this will make it harder to persuade countries to cut emissions further when it becomes clear that their collective efforts are not enough, and that it may even allow some countries to use irregular accounting methods.

But this overlooks the Lima agreement's greatest accomplishment: It ends the longstanding division of the world into only two kinds of countries, developed and developing. Ever since the original UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed in 1992, countries' obligations have been defined according to their level of development in that year. The rich so-called "Annex 1" countries have had compulsory obligations, while poorer "non-Annex 1" countries merely have been required to make voluntary efforts.

Over the last 22 years, that binary distinction has looked increasingly obsolete, as the larger developing countries, such as China and Brazil, have emerged as economic superpowers and major greenhouse-gas emitters. For this reason, the developed world has long wanted to replace the "firewall" between the two historic groupings with a form of differentiation that better reflects the contemporary world. But the developing countries -- including major powers like China -- have insisted that it remain.

No longer. The Lima agreement creates obligations for countries without regard for the distinction between Annex 1 and non-Annex 1. Rather, it uses a new phrase drawn from the recent agreement between the US and China: countries' responsibilities will be based on "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in light of different national circumstances." The firewall has been breached.

In theory, the Lima agreement on INDCs does not determine the shape of the long-term Paris agreement. So another fierce battle on this issue can be expected next year. But the vast majority of developing countries -- including China and Brazil -- are happy with the new regime. So it is impossible to imagine the binary model being restored -- and those countries that opposed the change know it, which is why the final two days in Lima were so fiercely fought.

The Lima conference has shown just how hard the negotiations in Paris next year will be, despite recent optimism about global progress. But one highly significant decision has now effectively been made. Abandoning the rigid distinction between developed and developing countries paves the way toward an agreement that all countries, including the US and China, can sign.

The writer is visiting Professor in the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics.

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 (Exclusive to *The Daily Star*)

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Human rights violations in the US

It seems no black man is safe in the United States. Police shot many of them in the past few years. They don't even hesitate to shoot black men. Since the grand jury did not indict the police officers involved in Eric Garner and Michael Brown's death, which incited protests all over America, it is obvious that this practice will go on.



In the modern world such killings are not acceptable. The US shouts about human rights violations of other nations, but they themselves violate the human rights of their own people. They should stop preaching the world about human rights and improve the human rights condition of their own country.

Md. Nazmul Islam  
 Jalshuka Habibur Rahman College  
 Dhunat, Bogra

## Kids in hazardous job as tempo helpers

The tempos that ply the roads of Chittagong city employ children as assistants who collect fares from the passengers and assist the drivers. Many of the tempo assistants are barely ten years old. They are compelled to do this risky job for long hours. There is every possibility of losing the grip of the handle and falling from the running vehicle. Shouldn't they be at school instead of working as tempo assistants? But no one seems to care about their well-being. Something should be done to free those boys, rehabilitate them and give them back their childhood. The government can formulate a law prohibiting the tempo owners to employ any kids in such a risky job.

Zabed Wali  
 Chittagong

## Indian visa agents' tyranny

The current Indian government has put emphasis on curbing corruption in their country, but it's a shame that their representative offices in the neighbouring countries are failing to work that way. The system of online visa application for getting Indian visa has become completely useless in Bangladesh, as everything must be done with the help of the agents who charge excessive amount of fees (as much as BDT 5000) in exchange for their service.

I just hope that the Indian Ministry of External Affairs or any equivalent body will do something about this issue.

Abraham Junaid

## Comments on news report, "Seepage spreads over 50km water," published on Dec. 11, 2014

### Muramir Mohaimen

Nothing will happen by filing cases. Proper measures need to be adopted to control the spill.

### Deep

Procrastination in taking proactive measures will only worsen the situation. The government should not handle the matter lightly.

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## "The pot calling the kettle black" (Dec. 11, 2014)

### Akm Fazlul Bari

Khaleda Zia is no longer the opposition leader since she did not get elected. She may be the leader of one of the largest political parties, but until she is elected again, she is not an opposition leader.

### PlainSpeaker

This is an excellent commentary on a very serious matter. The writer has been polite and watchful in his remarks. Both AL and BNP are fully responsible for politicising the civil administration and society at large.

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## The tale of 'Just-A-Man' and our \$50 billion (December 10, 2014)

### Keerthi

Living wage is making waves across the developed countries. It is an idea well understood by most consumers in North America and Europe. Can Bangladesh join the band wagon successfully, is it a big challenge?

### Prime

Couldn't hold my tears.

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## "Police team attacked" (Dec. 11, 2014)

### Nazim

It is very regretful that the police force came under attack during discharging their duties. If members of the law enforcing agencies themselves are attacked by unscrupulous ones, then one can easily imagine the condition of security of ordinary people.