

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
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Accused of Narayanganj murders charged

The High Court's role has been laudable

ALMOST a year after the gruesome murders of seven men in Narayanganj, police have charged 35 individuals. This includes the prime accused Nur Hossain and three sacked Rab officials. According to our reports 25 of those against whom charge sheets have been submitted, are members of Rab.

It is rare in our system to see serving, high level law enforcers being held responsible for their crimes. However, the family of Nazrul Islam, the main target of the crime, as well as the prosecuting lawyer, have expressed frustration that five of the six accused named in the case filed by Nazrul's widow, are not included in the charge sheet. One of them is a ruling party leader. While we take heart in the fact that this time due process of law has been followed to bring corrupt law enforcers to book we express our concern at this omission. This issue must be explained to the public for the process to be fully satisfactory.

Here we must commend the strong, decisive role of the High Court in ordering the arrests of the three main Rab officials who executed the diabolical plan. If it hadn't been for the High Court's determination to expedite the investigation process there was a possibility of murder cases being swept under the carpet.

This case begs the question as to what internal control mechanism exists at present to monitor actions by those who carry out law enforcement activities. How is delinquency within the system discovered and addressed?

It appears that only when the media or, as in this instance, the higher judiciary, gets involved, are the law enforcers held accountable.

Every country, where law enforcement has achieved a high degree of credibility, has strict and transparent internal monitoring and a follow up system. It is high time we have such a system in place.

New economic zones for FDI

What about existing ones?

WE are heartened to learn that the government plans to set up three new economic zones that will cater specifically for Japanese, Chinese and Indian firms intending to invest in Bangladesh. These plans are not new. In fact, the government declared back in 2010 that it had taken a decision to offer 22 economic zones to both local and foreign investors. Going by what has been printed in this paper on April 9, we are informed that Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority has acquired more than 500 acres of land in Gazipur for Japanese investors and a further 774 acres in Chittagong for Chinese companies. The zones for foreign investors will be operated on the basis of public-private partnership.

All this is very good news for Bangladesh. Yet, we cannot but wonder why the first foreign investors to come to Bangladesh to set up their export processing zone (KEPZ), the Koreans, have been treated so shoddily. That part of the 2,492 acres of land allotted to KEPZ is going to be reacquired by the government for apparent violations by Korean firms hardly garners confidence among prospective foreign investors. There are both arguments for and against KEPZ with regards to land usage, violation of rules, land lease agreement, and so on. But the point that should be kept in mind is we cannot have different playing fields for different sets of investors from different countries. That is not the way to build foreign investors' confidence. We urge that the KEPZ issue be solved expeditiously and fairly to send the right signals to the prospective investor countries and companies.

COMMENTS

"134 police officers promoted"
(April 8, 2015)

M. Ashraf

Most amusing is that the police force has not been able to protect public safety.

"Revised trade deal with India okayed"
(April 7, 2015)

Anonymous

We want fair trade deal. It should be made sure that India wouldn't try to dominate us.

"Risky, illegal"
(April 7, 2015)

Farina

People are exposed to serious risks of fatal accidents due to these billboards. The authority should look into this matter seriously and urgently.

Afrin

The city authorities have failed to check the mushroom growth of billboards; they are responsible for all those accidents.

Lira

How many more accidents need to take place to awake the authorities from their slumber?

"Commuters face trouble"
(April 7, 2015)

Sonia Rahman

It is extremely unfortunate for us. May Allah protect us all from these death traps.

Why does the Indian home minister have A BEEF WITH BEEF?

CROSS TALK



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

GOD knows what madness came upon the Indian Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on April 1, the day he instructed his BSF men to put a complete halt to the smuggling of cattle to Bangladesh. He said he was aware prices

of beef in Bangladesh had gone up by 30 percent due to heightened vigil by BSF against cattle smuggling. To this extent, Singh sounded like an informed politician, who had in his heart the best interest of his country.

The madness part was when he asked BSF to stop cattle smuggling completely and speculated that the prices of beef should go up by 70-80% forcing Bangladeshis to give up eating beef. This is where it seemed like he personally has a beef with the people of this country. Needless to say, what we eat is none of his business.

The Indian minister's comment was prompted by his support of a nationwide ban on cow slaughter in his country. What India does to Indians is its own internal matter. But what it does to us is unsolicited interference that leaves a bad taste in the mouth.

Of course, the day he chose to make this senseless statement had its own significance. It was April Fool's Day, and maybe the Indian minister was playing a practical joke on the people of the neighbouring country. Maybe, he just wanted us to have a good laugh and then forget that he ever said it.

Every year, nearly 2.5 million cattle are smuggled into Bangladesh from India. It's God's work that a beef-loving nation of more than 160 million people should be juxtaposed with a country of 1.27 billion people, roughly 90% of whom are beef averse. What is holy to some is haute cuisine to others. In economics, gains from such differences are called comparative advantage.

It's estimated that if India stops cattle smuggling to Bangladesh, it will have 12.5

million dry cattle to feed annually. The life expectancy of cows in India varies from 15 to 20 years. If Bangladeshis are starved of beef, India will have to incur an annual expenditure of Rs. 310 billion to feed these cows until they die naturally. The amount doesn't include the cost of acquiring land for cowsheds and initial investment in building the infrastructure.

Economics aside, the politics of it has shocked Bangladeshis. While Indians have every right to control their cattle, Bangladeshis have the right to decide how to accommodate their appetite. If necessary, they could raise their own cattle and import beef from other countries to meet local demand. Failing that, it should be their call whether to cut down on beef consumption or do otherwise.

But an Indian minister cannot dictate at what price we should stop eating beef in this country or how we should plan our diet. Whatever intention he had in mind while making this statement, it smacked of bitter vengeance as if he would like to see Bangladeshis suffer for their love of beef. It doesn't make sense that he should be so upset with us.

It may not have occurred to Rajnath Singh that it takes two hands to clap in regards to smuggling. The Indian traders have to bring their cattle to the border before the Bangladeshi traders get there to retrieve them. It's a lucrative business on both sides of the border. The minister would have been fair were his spite directed at both sides in equal shares.

If this is any indication, we should think twice before depending on anything that is under the control of the Indian government. The enclaves, water sharing, massive trade imbalance and, now, the cattle supply are enough warnings that India likes to deprive us of our rightful shares. Electricity from India is another concern. If a cranky Indian politician decides Bangladeshis are having too much fun with electric fans and light, he might curtail power supply.

In 2001, the Indian daily *The Hindu* reported that 72 Hindu communities in

Kerala preferred beef to the expensive mutton. It also said that Hindu gods Indra and Agni both had weakness for cow meat. Even the seminal Hindu text Manusmriti didn't prohibit the consumption of beef. The daily also refuted that Hinduism prohibited eating beef.

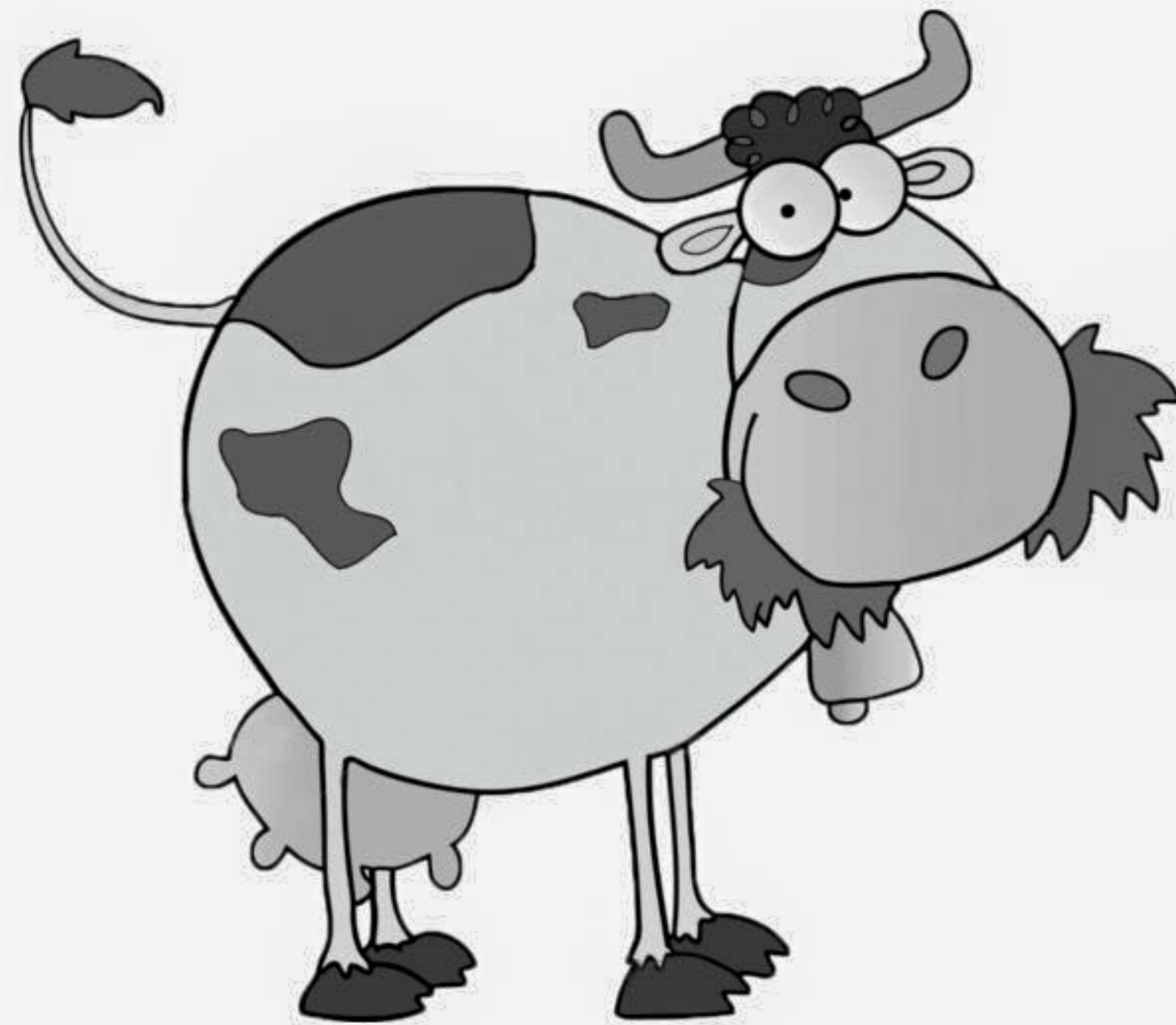
India is the world's second largest beef exporter after Brazil. When the Congress Party was in power it aggressively promoted beef sales abroad. The BJP government and the Hindutva forces are trying to change that in the land where cows are sacred.

Beef eaters in Bangladesh are caught in that Indian dilemma, and Singh only made it obvious with his scurrilous comment. Every time we pick our teeth after eating high-priced beef, we can hope that it pricks his conscience.

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PROJECT SYNDICATE

Winning Sri Lanka's Peace

WORLD AFFAIRS



RANIL WICKREMESINGHE

soon gave way to insurgency, civil war, and the rise of the murderous Islamic State. In Libya, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere, the hopes unleashed by the Arab Spring have similarly turned into an often-violent despair.

Today, a half-decade after the end of its 36-year civil war, Sri Lanka is at a crucial moment in its own efforts to consolidate peace and secure its long-term benefits. Newly elected President Maithripala Sirisena and I, as prime minister, are determined to win that peace, and to help our country become what it always should have been: a prosperous Asian island of democracy, civility, and open society.

The risks of a failed peace are appearing only now, because, since 2009, when the war with the Tamil Tigers ended in an enormous spasm of violence, the government led by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa made only the most half-hearted of efforts to bring about reconciliation

with our Tamil citizens. Reconstruction of war-ravaged Tamil districts, as well as other parts of our society damaged by years of fighting and terrorism, has barely begun.

That neglect was part of a deliberate strategy by Rajapaksa, who saw keeping Sri Lanka on a semi-war footing, and our Tamil citizens aggrieved and alienated, as the most effective way to maintain his iron-fisted rule. But, though his divide and rule strategy worked for a while, allowing him to concentrate an unprecedented amount of power in his own hands, it could not hide the truth of our social divisions and continuing impoverishment. So, in the presidential election of this past January, Sirisena stunned the world by creating a winning coalition of Sri Lankans of all faiths and ethnicities who want to rebuild their democracy, not continue down the path of authoritarian rule.

In the months since Sirisena's triumph, Sri Lankan democracy has been revived, and the hard work of building a durable domestic peace has begun. We plan to quickly call a Parliamentary election, which will take place one year ahead of schedule, in order to replace Rajapaksa's echo chamber with a fully functioning assembly, one that holds the government to account.

Moreover, presidential power is now exercised within the limits established by law, not according to the whims of one man. Our judges no longer feel intimi-

dated. Our business leaders no longer fear shakedowns and takeovers by the president's greedy family members and cronies.

As we liberate all of our citizens from fear, we will rebuild Sri Lanka as a free society. The authoritarian model of capitalism that Rajapaksa introduced to our country, and that much of the world seems to be embracing nowadays, is not for us.

Of course, some of our neighbors are advising us to take a different path, to reform our economy and not worry too much about re-establishing political freedom. Our experience with authoritarian rule, however, is that it undermines the goal of post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction by its need to maintain our society's divisions artificially. The best way to avoid a relapse into conflict and arbitrary rule is to ensure that Sri Lanka's leaders are held accountable through representative institutions.

But we cannot fully turn the page on authoritarian rule, restore the full range of democratic freedoms, and rebuild our economy in an inclusive way on our own. Too much of our country's wealth has been damaged by war, taken flight abroad, or been siphoned off through corruption. We simply lack the resources to undertake the great task of reconstruction without assistance.

So we need the world's democracies to stand with us and support us,

lest our people become discouraged and be tempted by the autocratic forces waiting in the wings to return to power in the coming parliamentary election. We need to demonstrate to our people that reconciliation, democracy, tolerance, and the rule of law constitute the only route to long-term peace and shared prosperity. Sadly, the help that we have received so far is too little to enable my government to be as effective as it can and should be in rebuilding our country and resetting our strategic position in the world.

Still, there is reason for hope. Though our political institutions need a thorough overhaul, I am proud to say that, despite Rajapaksa's best efforts to corrupt and hollow them out, our victory was made possible because the election commission and court workers adhered to the law. Equally important, when the votes were counted, Sri Lanka's military leaders honored their oaths and bravely rebuffed Rajapaksa's unconstitutional order to annul the election and maintain him in power.

These acts of civic heroism form a strong basis on which to refound Sri Lanka's state and society. With the world's help, we will do just that.

The writer is Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2015. www.project-syndicate.org

(Exclusive to *The Daily Star*)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Safety measures for construction workers

Construction sector workers have greater exposure to biological, chemical and ergonomic risk. In Bangladesh, every year a large number of construction workers die or get crippled because of accidents. Majority of these accidents take place due to lack of proper safety measures. We

often see that there is no safety net in an under construction building. We also see that labourers work in the construction sites without wearing any safety gear. It's high time the government made it mandatory for the building owners to provide their workers with safety gear.

Md. Arifur Rahman
Environment Counsellor
Mongla EPZ



PHOTO: STAR

Naimur vs Chandika

Was wondering how long the honeymoon would last. Well, the inevitable happened and it looks like an all too familiar history is about to repeat itself. Despite the recent World Cup success, a rift seems to be developing between BCB selector Naimur and Tiger coach Chandika. I found out about it on cricinfo and most of all those commenting, including myself, sided with the coach. Is the selector likely to evaluate his own controlling and egotistical attitude? Most likely not, and I predict another good coach will be run off. If it happens, this will prove that the problem is not a cultural gap as with previous Australian coaches. This is the same controlling mentality which led to Shakib being slapped at first with a six-month sanction. Fortunately, the BCB re-evaluated the Shakib sanction and reduced it. In almost every other country and in almost every other sport, the coach has a say in defining his team. Chandika mentioned wanting Zubair. When death-bowler Al Amin Hossain was abruptly sent back, Shofiqul, who did not bowl a single over, not Zubair, was sent to replace him. When Anamul was injured, Imrul, who did not have sufficient time to practice in the WC conditions not Zubair, was sent to replace him. Will Naimur humble himself for the benefit of the Tigers? We'll see.

Scott Elliott
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