

Sexual assault on women and minor on Pahela

Baishakh
Their humiliation is our collective shame

HERE are no words to express the shock and disgust at the sexual assault of young women and a minor at the Suhrawardy Udyan gate near the TSC area by 30 or 40 hooligans on the first day of Baishakh. It is unthinkable that some of the attackers were university students and one of the victims a ten-year-old girl whose dress was torn and who had bite marks on her body. One of the women had her clothes ripped off. It was a few courageous members of Bangladesh Chhatra Union who rescued the women and child, braving injury to themselves.

How was this possible with law enforcers being stationed only 20 yards from the spot? The assault, according to reports, continued for a good one hour – but no police came forward to stop the despicable crime.

According to one of the rescuers, when asked for help the police said that the area was beyond their jurisdiction! Women were being sexually assaulted in an area they had been assigned to protect and this was not in their jurisdiction? The rescuers have said that they had handed five of the culprits to the police but two hours later all of them were released. This raises the suspicion that the culprits had enough influence to go scot free.

The apathy of law enforcers is deplorable and reveals one of the reasons why these horrible incidents have been repeated in recent months. Attackers of women on the DU campus, near TSC, inside the Ekushey Boi Mela, have got away on several occasions because the police did nothing to stop them.

We demand this reprehensible crime be investigated thoroughly, the perverts caught and given the harshest punishment.

Going 'green' is good business

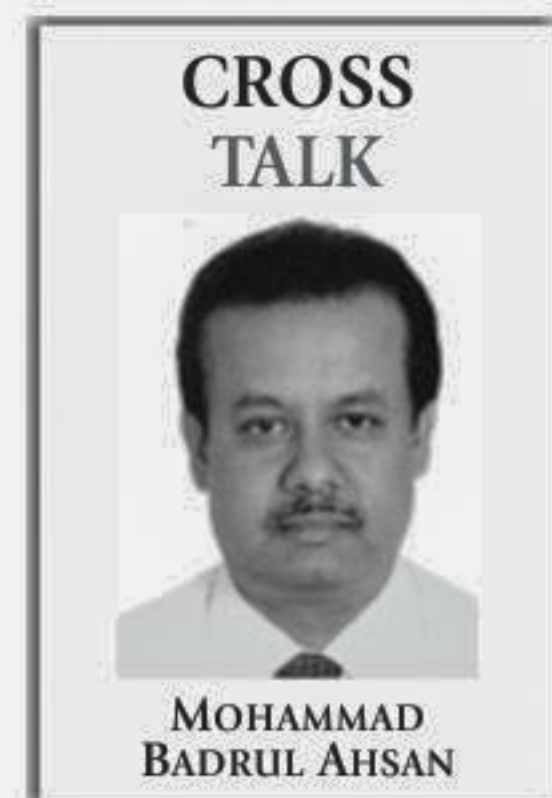
Growing trend among apparels factories

IT is interesting to note that a growing number of leading readymade garments (RMG) producers are taking steps to qualify for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification offered in the United States. Apparently, the move is being embraced by greater numbers of RMG companies as another way to catch the attention of that segment of international buyers for whom taking care of the environment is a priority issue. Getting the LEEDS certification requires companies to have green buildings that consume less energy and more emphasis is placed on health and safety of workers.

As reported in this paper, some 14 companies have been awarded certification and another fifty factories are in line to be awarded by LEEDS. The trend is certainly a healthy one, reflecting recognition by the RMG sector that business simply cannot go on as usual. It is a sector that is still going through the process of rebuilding its image in the aftermath of the RANA Plaza building collapse and the fire that killed scores in the TAZREEN incident.

That our RMG sector is evolving to cater to some of the more high-end business means more investments are being made that will introduce a series of measures to counter fire-related incidents and lead to a healthier workforce – a driving force behind the RMG success in the country. With retailers asking more questions about how a company treats its workers and the conditions they work in, it makes sense to be more responsible and the benefits that come from being responsible are obvious.

Hundred years of death, destruction and destiny


CROSS TALK
MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

THE centre of gravity shifts every few years. The shattered buildings look like real estate displays as if walls and roofs were purposefully stripped off to offer an inside view of property to prospective buyers. But the debris and desolation give away the cover. All of these buildings have been bombed, shelled and bullet-holed either by the terrorists or rebels or government

forces or foreign alliance attacks, depending on who targeted whom in that order. The destination changes, while the devastation remains constant.

During the First World War, Ypres in Belgium and Arras in France were amongst the cities reduced to rubble. For many years it was Europe that was the eye of the apocalyptic storm. German cities Berlin and Dresden bore the brunt of destruction during the Second World War when other cities in that continent were also razed to the ground.

The shape-shifting beast moved to Asia next. For nearly two decades, American bombs rained down on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were vapourised with atom bombs earlier, becoming precursors to imminent horror. Saigon, Phnom Penh and Vientiane were pounded from air, land and water. But then those Asian cities were still largely underdeveloped, having more paddy fields and forests than concrete structures.

The theatre of that depravity moved to the Middle East next, when the Arabs vowed to eliminate Israel. The 1970s and 1980s were dominated by the guerrilla

war waged by PLO and other Palestinian forces against the Israeli occupation. Bombs, missiles and bullets were hitting West Bank, Gaza and Beirut, the images of hollowed out buildings emerging in its wake.

In the early 1990s, the Battle of Mogadishu convinced many that Africa was going to become the new face of cataclysm. The fierce battle between forces of the United States, supported by UNOSOM II, and Somali militiamen loyal to the self-proclaimed president-to-be Mohamed Farrah Aidid threatened to disrupt the Dark Continent. But it turned out to be a false alarm when the Taliban was hissing in its pit in Afghanistan. Earlier, the Gulf War raised the spectre of confrontation between good and evil.

In 2001, the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon brought yet another diversion. It seemed terror had found a new centre of gravity in the new continent. Al Qaeda emerged on the world scene, Osama bin Laden being its poster boy. The US invasion of Iraq eventually found the monster of its next breeding ground. After Baghdad and Kabul, it went to Syrian cities Damascus and Aleppo until IS took terrorism from retail to wholesale.

Meanwhile, the Muslim militia made incursions in Mali and Central African Union before Boko Haram rattled Nigeria and Al Shabab men targeted Kenya. While these countries are being marinated in the terror juice, Yemeni cities are familiar scenes of death and destruction. As militia men, backed by the airpower of the Saudi-led coalition, fight the Houthi rebels, the bombed and burned buildings and debris-strewn desolate streets of Sana'a and Aden invoke the same old nightmare.

From aggressive Serbian nationalism that sparked the First World War, the elusive hatred of men travelled from place to place. The Second World War rode on the waves of Nazism, an extreme form of German

nationalism. Indochina flared up because the United States wanted to resist the spread of communism. The Middle East got slowly sucked into the flames after the Palestinians vowed to recover their homeland from Israeli occupation.

This is where the turning point comes and the centre of gravity shifts from politics to religion. The Taliban was born to resist the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. But it was not until the rise of Al-Qaeda that Islamic militancy went global, its offshoots now operating in different names in different countries of the world.

The Islamic State, formerly known as Al Qaeda in Iraq, has taken that militancy to the next level. If the world was nervous before in terms of where the militants were going to strike next, IS has now turned militancy into a form of "pop culture." Parents and governments around the world are worried because young men and women are rushing to its cause.

From cause to cause and from continent to continent, the wasteland has moved in an unvarying motion. Wars, rebellions, assassinations and clashes have left behind a lengthening trail that proved nothing more than the futility of human fate. Human beings are the grievous victims of their own piteous condition.

In the end, all contradictions are existential and all conflicts pertain to survival. Political power, economic emancipation and religious rigours merely define the struggle, but nothing defends mankind against its congenital misfortune. Solutions create problems, peace creates war and compromise creates disagreement. Man and monster live inside each other. The rest of it is mundane.

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REMEMBERING MUJIBNAGAR DAY

The Odyssey of self determination and equality

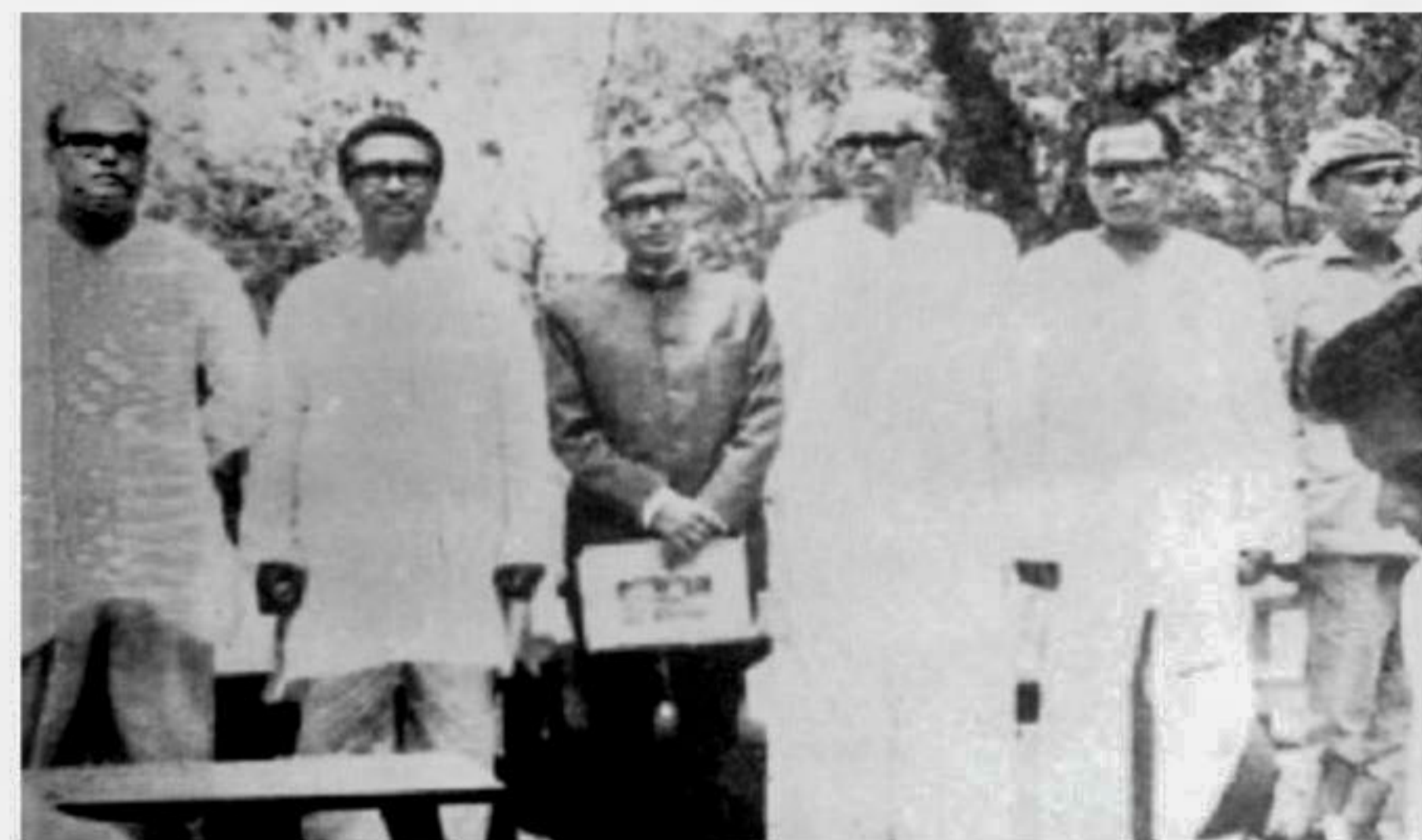
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

WHEN in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

So begins the American Declaration

Mujibnagar after the indisputable leader of the Liberation War, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib. It was the capital of the exiled government till December 16, 1971. The formation of the Mujibnagar government gave life and legitimacy to our liberation struggle both internally and internationally.

On the dreadful night of March 25, Bangabandhu, before being arrested, declared the independence of Bangladesh. Top political leaders of the non-cooperation movement, preceding Pakistani crackdown, had to cross into India. Though spontaneous resistance took place in various parts of the coun-



try, it was too weak to counter the well equipped Pakistani force. It lacked any clear war strategy as well as proper political guidance. The exiled political leaders felt the urge to form a government to continue the resistance and turn it into a national liberation struggle. On April 4, military leaders who revolted against the Pakistani Junta met at Teliapara, Sylhet. They also emphasised on the formation of a government to procure arms and aid to conduct the national Liberation War. With the able leadership of Tajuddin Ahmed, a government came into being on April 10 with the Proclamation of Independence.

The logic behind the formation of a government was clearly delineated in the Proclamation Document: "Whereas the Government by levying an unjust war

of Independence of July 4, 1776. After almost 195 years, Bangladesh was born. The strongest moral foundation to this new nation was provided in the Proclamation of Independence Order issued on April 10, 1971. The Proclamation was greatly inspired by the American Declaration [BarristerAmirul Islam' account in *Muktijuddher Dalilpotro*]. Following the Proclamation of Independence Order, the exiled government took oath at the Baidyanathala mango grove of Meherpur on April 17, 1971. The Proclamation was formally read out by Professor Mohammad Yusuf Ali on this very occasion. The oath taking was witnessed by hundreds of foreign journalists who had assembled there to hail the birth of a new nation. Tajuddin Ahmed named the place

try, it was too weak to counter the well equipped Pakistani force. It lacked any clear war strategy as well as proper political guidance. The exiled political leaders felt the urge to form a government to continue the resistance and turn it into a national liberation struggle. On April 4, military leaders who revolted against the Pakistani Junta met at Teliapara, Sylhet. They also emphasised on the formation of a government to procure arms and aid to conduct the national Liberation War. With the able leadership of Tajuddin Ahmed, a government came into being on April 10 with the Proclamation of Independence.

and committing genocide and by other repressive measures made it impossible for the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh to meet and frame a Constitution, and give to themselves a Government, And whereas the people of Bangladesh by their heroism, bravery and revolutionary fervour have established effective control over the territories of Bangladesh, We the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh as honour bound by the mandate given to us by the people of Bangladesh whose will is supreme duly constituted ourselves into a Constituent Assembly, And having held mutual consultations, And in order to ensure for the people of Bangladesh equality, human dignity and social justice, declare and constitute Bangladesh to be sovereign People's Republic." [Proclamation of Independence Order, Bangladesh Documents]

These lines of the Proclamation Order set the foundation of the birth of Bangladesh which can be an ever remitting source of inspiration in the conduct of political and social life of its citizens.

The Proclamation substantiates Bangladesh's just cause in the war. It invalidates all the attempts to portray our liberation struggle as a secessionist movement. It delineates the high ideal of self determination that when a majority is denied its democratic right of forming its own government, the revolutionary right of the majority to dismember the country as a means of implementing self-determination, could never be in dispute. This is the inherent right of the people themselves. Since the Liberation War started there have been attempts to demean the liberation struggle as a civil war as the American Civil War of 1861 and Abraham Lincoln has often been quoted as a reference against secession. But they forget what Lincoln had expressed in his first inaugural address: "This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."

The evocation of the principle of self-determination also lays a strong ground

for Bangalee nationalism which needs to be venerated to come out of the false debate of Bangalee vs Bangladeshi nationalism. Nationalism based on self-determination does not express superiority of a nation over other nations rather it recognizes equal right of every nation. So when we see racial discrimination in CHT that is not the consequence of Bangalee nationalism but the violation of the very idea of Bangalee nationalism.

The Proclamation also eschews the secular ideal of Bangladesh. It's the idea of 'equality' that clearly abolishes the principal of religious difference and give equal rights to every citizen irrespective of their religious identity. That's why religion based politics is a contradiction to the spirit of the Proclamation of Independence.

The Proclamation suggests that the whole purpose of the government is to secure people's rights and that government gets its power from "the consent of the governed." It discourages the idea of distributive equality where the state distributes equality to its citizens. It is the liberal top-down theory of equality where it starts from the state and asks how people should be treated by it. But the Proclamation approaches the issue of equality as a bottom-up model. It starts from the people who engage in political action and see changes in the state (or the economy, or the family, etc) as resulting from that. Though the current reality of Bangladesh bears the fact that we are yet to fully realise the potential of our liberation struggle we can take inspiration from the ideals of the Proclamation of Independence and the auspicious history of the Mujibnagar government to fulfill the unfinished revolution.

Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury BB, who as the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of Meherpur played a critical role in organising the Mujibnagar Ceremony, on his return from the swearing ritual wrote in his diary: "On our way we reflected and realised that a nation had been born out but it will be a long Odyssey before we established this infant Nation in the world forum."

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COMMENTS

"PM wishes peaceful life for people in New Year"

(April 14, 2015)


Kashem Aziz Bhuiyan

I salute PM for her New Year wishes but she first must understand what peace is.

"Shabby upkeep of Dhaka public hospitals"

(April 10, 2015)


Tanha

People want these places clean and secure. This shabby condition of public hospitals is unacceptable.

"BSF kills 2 cattle traders"

(April 12, 2015)


Gina

Can anyone please stop these border killings?


Atiq Ur Rehman Sial

This government is doing nothing against these killings.


Saleh Chowdury

India says they are our friends. Where was our friend when BSF killed innocent Bangladeshis?


Lal Shobuz Potaka

This should be stopped. Enough is enough.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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May the best win

The city corporation polls are knocking at the door. Thousands of city dwellers are likely to throng at the vote centres on April 28 to cast their votes. Hope they will choose the best one from so many candidates who will work hard to transform Dhaka into a developed city.

 Nafis Nihal Ferdaus
 Anandaniketan school, Sylhet

"US aid to Israel should stop"

I read the above letter with immense interest written by Ted Rudow on March 25. He condemned US aid to Israel considering the latter's role in the destruction of Palestine. There is no

doubt that the financial as well as military aid of US helps Israel in restricting Palestine from forming an independent country.

Jews have an immense influence in the American economic, cultural, intellectual and political spheres. They played a central role in the American financial system during the 1980s, and they were among the chief beneficiaries of that decade's corporate mergers and reorganizations. Today, though barely 2% of the nation's population is Jewish, close to half its billionaires are Jews. The world media is also controlled by Israel. In the education and political sectors of US, the dominance of Jews is also evident. I wonder, will the US ever stop funding Israel?

 Ripu Sen
 International Islamic University
 Chittagong


Industrial fire safety

Every year, a large number of fire incidents take place in the industrial areas of Bangladesh. The main reason behind this is lack of awareness. Factories lack sufficient equipment to combat fire accident, and their employees lack training and knowledge.

Industrialists should take necessary measures to prevent fire accidents and provide employees with a safe environment to work.

 Md. Imran Hossain Molla
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 Mongla EPZ, Bagerhat