

At long last

Headway on LBA

THE unanimous passage of the Land Boundary Agreement Bill in both the Houses of the Indian Parliament is a historic development. It is matter of great satisfaction that at long last the Mujib-Indira Agreement of 1974 is on the way to full operationalization. The deal will end the misery of several thousand people who can now claim to belong to either of the countries – a status that they had been deprived of for the last 68 years.

It would be misplaced to see the issue in terms of 'gains' or 'loss' of land. The very underlying humanitarian problem that has been associated with the issue needed to be addressed, and that has been done.

This was one of the issues that had defied full implementation although Bangladesh lost no time in ratifying the deal and implementing its part of the 1974 Agreement. The Indian government and Prime Minister Modi deserve our thanks for having resolved the matter despite some recent misgivings. At the end local politics in India had to yield to reason and principles.

We reiterate what we had said very recently in these columns - the important thing is to implement quickly the provisions of the agreement and the associated protocols to give effect to the LBA. And we are sure that the two countries would move swiftly in this regard.

A new momentum in Bangladesh-India relations has been set in motion with the passage of the Bill in the Indian Lok Sabha, and we hope that the other issue that has resisted resolution so far – Teesta water sharing – would be addressed in the same manner by the Indian government and resolved very soon.

Yaba menace pervading

Coordinated efforts needed to combat the menace

WE are deeply concerned by a recent report of this newspaper revealing that about 50 lakh Yaba pills are trafficked into the country and consumed every day, most of which come from Myanmar.

According to the US National Drug Intelligence Centre, Yaba causes rapid heart rate, increased blood pressure, and damage to the small blood vessels in the brain that can lead to stroke. Chronic use can result in inflammation of the heart lining. Overdoses can cause elevated body temperature, convulsions, and death.

Individuals who use Yaba also may have episodes of violent behavior, paranoia, anxiety, confusion, and insomnia. Those who inject the drug expose themselves to additional risks, including contracting HIV hepatitis B and C.

Literally 'crazy medicine' in Thai, Yaba is taking its toll on its users, mostly the urban youth. It has also ravaged a number of small towns and villages across the country, according to news reports.

We welcome the recent meeting between the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), Bangladesh and a delegation representing the Central Committee for Drug Abuse and Control (CCDAC) of Myanmar who agreed to identify gangs producing and trafficking Yaba pills into Bangladesh and take actions against them. Apart from that the Myanmar authorities must also identify and dismantle the yaba producing factories near the border of the two countries.

However, it is not merely a law enforcement issue. We believe combating the menace of Yaba demands well-coordinated efforts with participation of people from all walks of life including parents, teachers, media and social organisations.

The assertive look

STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THE game of cricket in its present form, many will perhaps agree, owes its origin to England. One may not take issue with the observation that in a manifestly class-conscious and stratified English society, cricket used to be the exclusive preserve of the upper class gentry.

Interestingly enough, many Englishmen would like to believe that playing cricket was synonymous with behaving and acting in a fair and just manner. The premonition, as of now, is that developments in the world of cricket in the last few decades may have significantly disturbed those believing in the pristine virtues of the game.

There is no doubt that the present day spectators and enthusiasts of the game intensely enjoy the drastically truncated version with the attendant drama and excitement. However, the so-called old timers, the admirers of the unspoilt form would surely curse Kerry Packer, considered the progenitor of the shorter version, for divesting cricket of its original charm. They would hold him responsible for subjecting cricket to disconcertingly crass commercialism, an accusation that may not be wholly unfounded.

The debate and discourse between the protagonists and the antagonists on the style and format of the game may continue unabated and I am sure the voluble experts will continue to enlighten and entertain us on the emerging dynamics of this sport. This writer, is, however, particularly attracted to the behavioural facet of the game, specifically the altercation on field between players of the opposing sides, and if something interestingly indicative could be read into that.

Coming to specifics, could I draw attention to the now famous photograph of May 3 (The Daily Star) that very appropriately says: "A Change in Attitude Too: Tigers superstar Shakib Al Hasan matches Pakistan paceman Wahab Riaz word for word during the



absorbing final session of the first Test at Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna on Saturday". Quite interestingly it was Wahab Riaz of the underperforming Pakistan against Australia in the recently held World Cup who stole the limelight by his stunningly macho performance accompanied by the most graphical body language that made light of the 'sledding happy Australians', at least temporarily. A fascinating dimension of the whole episode is that the Australian crowd, including its top players, enjoyed and appreciated the nerve testing transaction.

This writer does not know at what point of time the expression 'sledding' (presumably slang meaning psychological bashing of the opponents by words and gestures) gained currency in cricketing parlance. It is also not known as to what measure the so-called sledding has accounted for the Australian cricketing prowess. Curiously it is not clear if sledding should constitute violation of the ICC (International Cricket Council) code of conduct.

Coming to the alleged verbal duel of Shakib Al Hasan and Wahab Riaz it is not known what actually transpired in the alleged altercation. This writer, no advocate of sledding as a performance-boosting tactic, was, however, greatly impressed by Shakib's

matching aggression and fortitude. His forbearing conduct on the pitch also deserves recognition. Above all, his assertive look was an inspiring sight. Such assertion, undoubtedly, is the outcome of years of hard work and dedication. No wonder a determined Shakib could not be bullied or covered by an overbearing Wahab Riaz. To the delight of many, Shakib stood his ground.

Our cricketers have no doubt given a sterling account of their cricketing abilities. However, I am not sure if it is time to brand us as a 'New Bangladesh' as far as cricketing performance goes. A circumspect view perhaps may be to watch a few more engagements in different time and clime. The signal achievement, to my mind, relates to the encouragingly assertive look tinged with a calm defiance writ large on the bearings of our performers. Distinguished Bangladeshis dedicated to branding Bangladesh may perhaps take note.

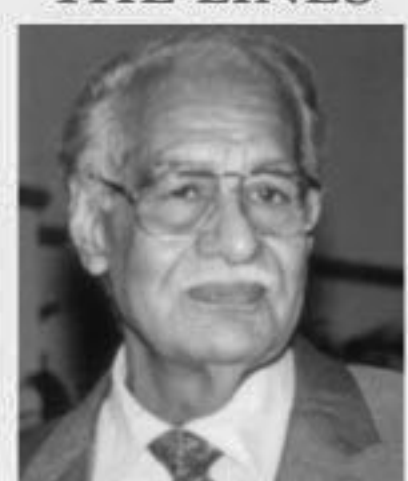
It is time to mentally decolonise and prove ourselves capable to perform against odds in heavier circumstances. Heartiest congratulations to a truly gritty Shakib Al Hasan and Company.

The writer is a columnist of the *The Daily Star*.

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Disturbing trend at AMU

BETWEEN THE LINES



KULDEEP NAVAR

I have returned from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) disappointed and disturbed. I am disappointed because the students did not seem to have merged into the mainstream yet

and disturbed because they were still talking in terms of religious identity.

Perhaps, it would give a vicarious satisfaction to the Muslims of having an identity of their own if the AMU is officially declared as a Muslim university. After having lost the battle in all fields, including Urdu, the Muslims do feel dejected. There is no inconsistency if a Muslim is made to feel that he has an identity of his own, but the overwhelming identity of all people living in India is Indian.

Aligarh is the place where Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the eminent freedom fighter, was abused before the country's partition. The students had found him in a train compartment. He was travelling from Delhi to Calcutta from his hometown. They took off their clothes and booed him to show all the disrespect they could.

His fault was that he differed with the Muslim League and opposed the formation of Pakistan. He would argue that the demand had been raised on the false assumption that partition was the best way out to escape the overwhelming majority of Hindus. But after the formation of Pakistan, the number of Muslims in India would go down still further. On top of it, the Hindu would say that you had taken your share and, therefore, go to Pakistan. This is precisely what happened.

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first

Prime Minister, himself went to Connaught Circus and beat up some looters with a stick he carried. The AMU students probably did not realise that the identity on the basis of religion led to the partition of India. After the division, the same type of politics could not be repeated and the Muslims, who plugged the line of separation, would suffer. The 80 percent of population, that of Hindus, would not brook the same old talk.

I feel that the Muslims on the whole have turned a new leaf in their life and want to be a part of the mainstream. They realise the dangers of ploughing a communal furrow. The riots between the Hindus and the Muslims ultimately become the riots between the Muslims and the police, which largely has been the case.

It is, however, the mainstream which was not allowing them too much. The soft Hindutva appears to have come to prevail in the country. This is making the Muslims more and more uneasy. Talking to some of them at the Jamia Millia institution in Delhi, I found that they were scared of the rise of Hindutva followers who cared little about their rights.

In this context I found the report by the US Congress-established panel pertinent. A bit of generalisation has reduced its utility. Otherwise, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom is justified in observing that religious minorities in India have been subjected to "violent attacks, forced conversions" and ghar wapsi campaigns by groups like the RSS after the assumption of power by the Narendra Modi government.

It is unfortunate that the report has been officially rejected. The country should have debated on it. There is some truth in the perception that the equilibrium which we had developed over the years in the relationship between Hindus and Muslims has got upset since the

advent of the Modi government. There is a sense of superiority among the Hindus and insecurity among the Muslims.

True, the strength that the equation has developed in such a way that the bond, however weakened, has not snapped altogether. Maybe, both communities have come to terms with the realities on the ground and had developed an understanding which stands them in good stead during the crises which arise occasionally.

The RSS, which has added violence or, at best, the threat of it has given a new edge to the narrative. The organisation which had taken a back seat since the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi is rearing its ugly head again and trying to

Even the hostility towards Pakistan, a feature of daily life, is less than before. But it is still there. The common man never abjured goodwill towards people in Pakistan. But now even governments have realised the futility of plugging a line which does not sell. There are good chances of the two sides sitting across the table for a dialogue.

The Punjabis in both the states, one in India and other across the border, are so communal in approach that they do not appreciate the Sufi culture which is the synthesis of religious values on both sides. The Pakistan government's allegation that India is trying to change the demographic pattern in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is palpably wrong.

There is no inconsistency if a Muslim is made to feel that he has an identity of his own, but the overwhelming identity of all people living in India is Indian.

put up a statute in the memory of Godse who shot Gandhi dead. Not that the Congress party had made the society secular. But its ideology is secular and it raised the voice when even the communal forces gained ascendancy. Another perception about the Modi government is that the communal elements have got fillip in administration.

The understanding may have developed on the part of Muslims that they have to live with the majority, however impossible. Perhaps both live in separate worlds of their own. Social contacts between the two have reduced to the minimum. Yet, the ever present tension which one could smell has more or less gone.

The return of Kashmiri pandits to the valley is something to be welcomed. Their integration with the Muslims is one proof of the Kashmiriyat, representing both the communities. Even the separatists, except probably the fundamentalist Syed Ali Shah Geelani, strongly defend the presence of pandits in their midst on the ground that they were an integral part of their society.

In fact, the strength of Kashmiriyat is that it is based on secular ethos. The students at Aligarh should take a leaf out of Kashmir's book and learn to resist the temptation of underlining identity on the basis of religion.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

COMMENTS

"BCL man expelled from JnU for assaulting female teacher"

(May 7, 2015)

Iqbal Hossain Bhuiyan

Expelling a criminal is never a punishment of any crime. Those who are criminals should be sentenced to proper punishment according to the prevailing law.

Md Rajibul Hasan

What has the authority done?! Do they have any knowledge about the legacy of BCL? They are the golden sons of Bengal!

Shaukat Islam

Just 'expel' and the matter ends?

Mohsanul Haque

Hate their activities. Expulsion is a very mild punishment.

Abu Saeed

Expulsion isn't enough for such type of crimes; he should be punished by the court according to our existing law.

Shaown Mahmud

The authority has done a great mistake! BCL works for the government. So they have the right to do anything they wish!

"Bank officials and employees, even the female staff, are unnecessarily being made to stay in office on the pretext of work even after the close of office hours at 6:00pm, which is not humane."

--Bangladesh Bank Governor **ATIUR RAHMAN**

Salim Ullah

I salute you for your honest and courageous remark.

Snr Citizen

Absolutely right, Dr. Atiur. This horrible attitude prevails almost at all private establishments. One can not leave even if the day's job is done and it's 6pm only because the boss is still in the office! I feel this is absolutely unnecessary and counter-productive. Employees must be treated with more respect.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Low female labour force in Bangladesh

The latest (April, 2015) Bangladesh Development Update published by the World Bank mentions that female labour force participation (the proportion of women between the ages 15-64 who are employed or are looking for employment) stands at a low 33.7 percent. For Bangladeshi men, it is 81.7 percent. The report prescribes that increasing the female labour force participation (FLFP) to the level of that seen among males in ten years would increase GDP growth by 1.8 percent. Thus, it is imperative for policymakers to look into ways to increase FLFP in Bangladesh. It remains a mystery that despite all the development that Bangladesh has achieved in every socio-economic sector, FLFP remains so low in Bangladesh. Social and cultural norms may be preventing

women from actively participating in the workforce. Women should be actively encouraged to participate in the labour force by the government. This will not only help to increase the GDP growth, but also elevate the status of women in the country. Already the government has taken some initiatives that should encourage women to increase their participation, like providing free education till Bachelors degree but additional measures might be needed. Women face various forms of physical and mental harassment at work or when going to work, so the government should take steps to encourage a safe working environment and transportation services for women. Along with that, each major corporation should have an ombudsman where complaints can be filed.

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Going in the opposite direction

On 13th April, news about a driverless train that ran 27 km backwards caught my attention. The Faridpur Express crossed three stations in Rajbari without its driver. I wonder how nobody at the department of railway noticed it. I think the whole thing reflects the real picture of the entire country, how it runs and how it is being governed.
Md. Shobanur Rabaman Sbetu
BAU, Mymensingh