

Rise in the number of female migrant workers

We have to ensure their safety

IT is promising that the number of female migrant workers from Bangladesh has increased from 37,304 in 2012 to 76,007 in 2014, even though overall migration of Bangladeshi workers has declined by 30 percent over the same period. The country received as much as \$15.31 billion in remittance – the highest in the country's history – thanks to the hard work of female workers in FY 2015.

Though certainly this is a welcome trend, we ought to be cautious about the precarious conditions under which many of our female migrant workers are working in some foreign countries, especially in countries with tainted records of human rights and workers' rights violations. As many as 65 percent of female migrant workers face different forms of violence – including physical and sexual abuse – in their host countries, according to a study published by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), but receive little to no systemic support either in their host or home countries. In a comprehensive study published last year, the Human Rights Watch documented the abuse and exploitation faced by female domestic workers in a particular Middle Eastern country due to a lack of labour protection laws. With 27 percent of the total female migrant workers of Bangladesh residing currently in that country and an overwhelming majority of them working as domestic workers, the government must take adequate steps to provide systemic protection to the vulnerable workers.

As we send more female workers abroad, we must prioritise the issue of migrant women's safety in negotiations with the receiving country, ensure that our embassies are equipped to address their concerns and take legal action when necessary, and set up shelter homes where female migrants can seek immediate assistance.

Fear in Raozan minorities

The state must ensure their security

IT is indeed disconcerting to see that the minorities living in Raozan area in Chittagong, once terrorised by Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, continue to still live in a state of fear of retribution. Given that there was violence in these areas following the original verdict in 2013, the fears may not be entirely unfounded, and this is what begs the question.

Not only during the tumultuous period of 1971 did Salahuddin and his cohorts perpetrate the worst kind of brutality on the local people in collaboration with the Pak army, even well after independence, and particularly after he was rehabilitated in politics, he had continued with his old ways. The problem that the prosecution faced in presenting the eye witnesses in the ICTs, fear of retribution being the main impeding factor, is well recorded.

We would like to see the state take an immediate and proactive measure to ensure that not only are the witnesses provided with adequate protection, the people of the area in general must also be provided with all the safety and security protection from the retributory reactions of the supporters of the convicted war criminals. This is also necessary for proper conduct of future trials of the war criminals. After all, the trials and punishments of the war criminals would become meaningless if the victims continue to suffer from a fear psychosis even after these criminals have met their fate in the hands of law. That would be a defeat of sorts for the people, particularly the direct victims of the brutality.

COMMENTS

“Welcome to the cruel world”
(July 28, 2015)

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Lal Shobuz Potaka
It's the most barbaric act a man can do.

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Jakaria Mondol
Honourable Prime Minister, please take action against all these hellish crimes committed by BCL.

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Kishore Chowdhury
Please take rapid action against the culprits.

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Kazi Zehad
Brutality is increasing in our society so rapidly.

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“Abdul Kalam no more”
(July 28, 2015)

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Mir Ahmed Siddiquee
The death of APJ Abdul Kalam is not only a loss for India but also for the world.

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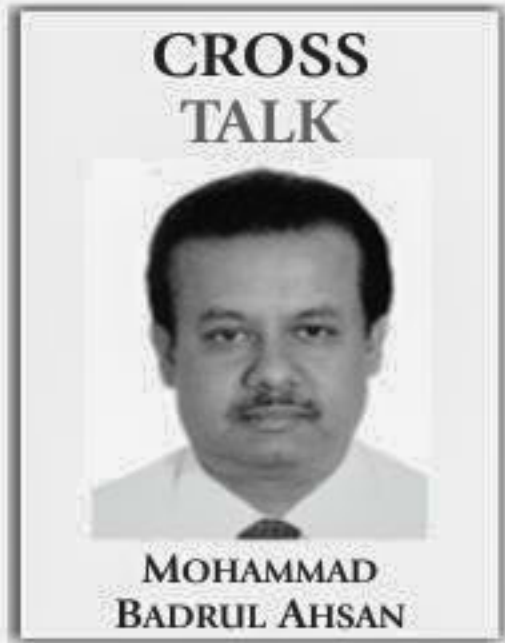
Uzzal Hossain
The world has lost a great leader and a dynamic man who used to believe in work. He was a man without greed.

▼

Moaz Uddin Ahmed
He was a great scientist and a great man.

▼

Laxman Sen
A great loss for the whole world. We lost a wonderful person.



CROSS TALK

MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

CRIME likens to math in the sense that some problems take longer time to solve, while many also remain hopelessly unresolved.

The speed at which the killers of Rajon in Sylhet have been apprehended gives us hope, but it also reminds us of the disappointing foot-dragging in investigations on the murders of journalist couple Sagar and Runi, and the abductions of BNP leaders Ilyas Ali and Salahuddin Ahmed. These high profile examples only accentuate a critical concern that deserves our attention. When people vanish like camphor or murders are swept under the rug, it speaks of how a country treats its citizens.

In a way, crimes, like tourist sites, also speak volumes about how a nation views itself. That's why the fear of crimes and perceptions of social disorder are widespread in developing countries, while rule of law and justice are the hallmarks of life in developed ones. That doesn't mean crime doesn't happen in more advanced countries. But

punishment is administered to criminals in the manner medicine is administered to patients. Illness may not be prevented or cured, but medical attention is guaranteed.

To use the FBI terminology, the national "clearance rate" for homicide in the United States today is 64.1 percent, which fifty-some years ago was more than 90 percent. Criminologists estimate that at least 200,000 murders have gone unsolved in the most powerful country of the world since the 1960s. That is enough to convince us that it's impossible to get to the bottom of every single murder mystery for the same reason one can never finish counting the stars in the sky.

But nations should be able to resolve some of their mysteries, especially those which attract collective attention. The Americans identified Lee Harvey Oswald as the killer of John F Kennedy, Sirhan Bishara Sirhan as the killer of Robert Kennedy and James Earl Ray as the killer of Martin Luther King, although conspiracy theories suggest they were merely the hands that pulled the triggers while real culprits eluded justice. Yet, all said and done, most Americans are pretty much satisfied that at least one person was found guilty for each of those crimes. It brought a closure in their minds.

In our country, two heads of governments were assassinated in the

last 44 years, and the killers of one have been identified, some punished already. The assassination of the other political figure during an aborted coup attempt still remains a mystery as much as the killing of the army general, who allegedly masterminded it. A number of officials were convicted and hanged, but the cry for justice persists in our minds in the manner of an unhappy spirit trapped inside a haunted house. More than punishing the guilty, it allegedly has made a travesty of justice as invisible hands victimised scapegoats.

Particularly so, when all fingers point at one individual like the needle of a compass always points north. And that exception also exists on the global scene when an American president is known to have lied to the world, creating ground for his intention to invade another country. George Bush is the living example of how the whole world was taken for a ride by a mischievous man to execute his nefarious scheme.

Curiously, punishment is often like curd because it has its coagulation time. Almost 44 years later, the war criminals in this country are getting their comeuppance. It's said that every crime leaves a trace and it's up to those who investigate to arrive at their conclusions. In case of the atrocious killings of Sagar and Runi, the disappearances of Ilyas Ali

and reappearance of Salahuddin Ahmed, it isn't even clear if the investigators have made an effort to draw their conclusions.

Sherlock Holmes says in *The Bascombe Valley Mystery* that there is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact. The most obvious of the obvious facts is that a crime can happen only if someone has committed it. In case of Rajon, the killers couldn't have made it more obvious than committing their crime in broad daylight. The murders of the journalist couple or abductions of the BNP leaders were diametrically different. These crimes took place in the middle of the night, when most people were sleeping.

What wasn't sleeping during those nights, however, is truth, which is being manipulated to create smokescreens. Crimes are hard to crack when truth is trivialised with an agenda, and we have seen many examples in our short history. The killers of the father of this nation have faced trial and the war criminals are currently paying for their sins.

Those who are hiding the truth mustn't forget its irony. Crime proved many times that it can be like a lost cat that eventually returns home. A nation that forgets its past is doomed to repeat it.

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Which India is claiming to have been colonised?

HISSAM KHANDKER

THIS week a video upload of a debate at the Oxford Union Debating Society has been trending on the internet. I am led to believe it may be the most watched Oxford Union debate to date, with close to 2 million views.

The star of this debate is the very eloquent MP Dr. Shashi Tharoor, even the Honourable Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi has showered praise on the orator (an opposition Congress politician) for carrying the house in the debate. The subject of this debate – ‘Why Britain owes reparations for colonising India’. Colonisers need to acknowledge the great harm done, enslavements, exploitations, racism and the hypocrisies used to support colonisation; reparations are, thus, owed. In this world of ever converging economic interests and pragmatic politics, it is also a matter of time till reparations will be given, most probably with due heartfelt respect and symbolical pageantry being extended by previous colonisers.

However, there is an issue with the continued use of the India as the reference for ‘The Colony’ in question that is owed reparations from Great Britain. The only ‘India’ or ‘British India’ that can claim to have been colonised by The Kingdom of Great Britain ended at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947.

The India of today merely shares a common English name with the ‘India’ that was colonised by Great Britain. The debate on colonisation, in reference to India, therefore, must respect that it was the subcontinent, not India alone, which was colonised. Any debate needs to recognise India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and the regional states, all having shared this colonial exploitation.

Dr. Tharoor most eloquently speaks of the horrors of colonisation on ‘India’, with facts that have been voiced in the same vain by many other equally patriotic and eloquent writers and historians as following:

- The terrible Bengal Famine that cost 10 million lives
- The state sponsored destruction of the textile industry
- The smashing of weavers' looms and thumbs to prevent production
- The de-industrialisation of the

subcontinent

- The forced agricultural production of tea, indigo, cotton, opium

All true, and all, for the greater part, inflicted not on the modern geographical India of today but on the current state known as Bangladesh and its capital city Dhaka.

Bangladesh can in fact claim the tragic distinction to have suffered the most during the colonisation of Moghul India by Great Britain. Referencing below some documented quotes from representatives of Great Britain in the late 1700s and 1800s.

In 1793, Francis Baring, awarded a Baronet by Parliament, famed for laying the foundations of the once powerful Barings Bank and a Director of the East



India Company wrote regarding the revenues of Bengal and Dhaka: “An astonishing mass of wealth has flowed ... into the lap of Great Britain” from this great state.

In 1800, the commercial resident from Great Britain John Taylor wrote on the economy of today's Bangladesh and the City of Dhaka, that due to Great Britain's restriction of trade, taxation, export tariffs on textiles as high as 75 percent, commerce has fallen by an incredible 50 percent in 40 years.

Spinners and weavers “died in famine”. The people of the once wealthy and industrious city Dhaka have been “reduced and impoverished” and Dhaka “ruined and abandoned” to become a “melancholy retrospect.”

In 1860, the commissioner Sir E.W.L

this was based on the State of Bengal (the wealthiest and most industrial state of Moghul India), with Dhaka as the economic centre. Therefore, the argument can be made that modern India only had a relatively small portion of world GDP, and Bangladesh approximately 12 percent of world GDP in the 1700s, which was systemically exploited and reduced to a bankrupt state, under colonisation.

The treasury of Bengal valued at approximately USD 40 billion in today's currency was looted, by Robert Clive and Great Britain after the Battle of Plassey. With the total tally of the spoils of conquest possibly well over USD 1 trillion in current values, if land grants, tax concessions, trade monopoly rights, revenue rights, mint rights are included in the accounting.

The entire established Muslim and Hindu Bengali political, military, feudal structure dismantled to eradicate any resistance, which resulted in both Bengal's political centre (Murshidabad) and financial centre (Dhaka) being stripped of power and wealth, to be re-concentrated in British India's capital Calcutta. A new Hindu dominated commercial class rose under British patronage as being politically and financially beholden to the colonisers, with no loyalties to the Moghul court in Delhi.

This led to possibly one of the harshest oppressions on any indigenous population recorded to date. As famine raged repeatedly through Bengal, it is estimated up to 50 percent of the region was depopulated, tens of millions died. However, British profits continued to increase, and taxes went from a pre-colonial Moghul tax rate of 10 percent to a taxation rate of 50 percent and higher imposed by Britain.

Bengal was forcibly de-industrialised. The production of food crops reduced, with labour forced to grow controlled crops such as cotton, indigo, tea, opium, at a fixed return of as low as 3 percent of the market value. This ensured continued famines, indebtedness, and the economic enslavement of the Bengali population.

The political leadership of Great Britain must not only agree to make reparations for the terrible famines, humiliations, oppressions, injustices, and looting that took place during the administration of British India to Delhi, but also should make these reparations in equal part to Islamabad, Kathmandu, Thimphu and Dhaka. Further, stressing that for true reparation to ever take place, a special acknowledgment needs to be made for the disproportionate suffering, impoverishment and looting inflicted on Dhaka and the people of Bangladesh from 1757 until 1947.

As Dr. Tharoor proposed in the debate, even if the reparation for colonisation is a single pound symbolically paid for the next 200 years by Great Britain to India, we would hope that Delhi and Great Britain in turn symbolically pay 45 pence of this single pound to Bangladesh, in acknowledgment of this state's suffering.

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The writer is an author.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Electricity not at the cost of Sundarbans

With deep sadness I am wondering where the patriotic and valiant people are -- people like those who led the Language Movement and the Liberation War and did not hesitate to lay down their lives to achieve their goal. We are in dire need of people like them now. Bangladesh government is going to set up a coal-fired power plant, a joint venture with India, near our priceless heritage the Sundarbans. It will not only destroy the world's largest mangrove forest, but will also create havoc all around it. The environment will be polluted and people will be displaced and lose their livelihood.

Therefore, people must protest in one voice the construction of the Rampal Power Plant and put pressure on the government to abandon it.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Hospital care in dire condition

Your editorial “Hospital care during Eid holidays” published on July 22 should be an eye-opener to the healthcare authority of Bangladesh.

- Government medical colleges as well as private healthcare places have little or no professional ethics or code of conduct. Mismanagement is rampant. Post-operative care is horrifying and beyond imagination. To make space for the next incoming post-operative patient, doctors often release the existing post-operative patient from the ICU and send him/her to the cabin, even when they know that the patient is still not out of danger. My uncle, who underwent a simple hernia operation at a private clinic in the city, later succumbed to untimely death due to severe negligence. Only the sufferer knows how it feels when you lose someone due to severe negligence. It's a

shame. Doctors are supposed to render selfless service to the humanity; rather they are found doing unscrupulous business in the name of healthcare. Government should act strictly to run an efficient medical institution. Hope the health ministry is listening!

Aeman T Rasul
Richmond, VA, USA



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN