

## Protesting mother beaten to death

### A case of double victimhood

**I**N Tarash upazila of Sirajganj, a 45-year-old woman, Khushi Begum, was beaten to death when she protested the harassment of her daughter. Reports suggest that when she went over to her neighbour's house and confronted him for harassing her 18-year-old daughter, a fight broke out between Khushi and the neighbour's wife. Subsequently, the neighbour, his wife and his sister beat her till she died on the spot.

That a mother should be beaten so mercilessly for protesting aggression towards her daughter is beyond comprehension. And that two women, instead of hearing out the charges of harassment against the male family member, should attack the mother just goes to show the extent to which people, irrespective of their gender, internalise patriarchal ideas, turning a blind eye towards allegations of harassment if people close to them are accused. We are also flabbergasted by the severity of the violence inflicted so unconcernedly by otherwise ordinary people over a matter that could well be resolved through civilised means. What, we ask, has become of people's humanity?

In this column, we have repeatedly highlighted the need for concerted efforts to eradicate violence against women. Interventions must take place at the individual, family and community levels across the country to instil egalitarian and humanitarian values in both men and women. As we have seen, women, too, can inflict violence against other women in the interest of men in their families and communities, and they must be engaged through constructive dialogues.

Meanwhile, the perpetrators, two of whom have already been arrested, must be brought to justice through a speedy trial.

## Vegetable, fruit export to EU dips

### Rectify compliance issues and fake certification

**E**XPORT of fruits and vegetables to the European Union (EU) fell significantly over the first seven months of the year. No less than 143 consignments have been rejected by EU authorities on the grounds that there is lack of proper and, in some cases, fake documentation. Phytosanitary certificates (PC) were either missing or altered by some exporters in a bid to enter the common market. Beyond this, there have been cases of improper hygiene standards. The prevalence of pests and non-compliance of health and safety standards has all colluded to put us in this mess.

According to what has been reported in this paper, EU authorities have warned the government that it risks the banning of all vegetable exports unless it does something to address current health concerns. Although our authorities have submitted a plan of action last May, there are a number of areas that have to be addressed to detect and deal with anomalies. One such area is the lack of automation, i.e. no database that tracks produce of registered growers. The lack of coordination between various agencies like customs and cargo handling officials at the airport all help to let the situation aggravate which only works in favour of errant exporters.

Given that our export to the EU in this category has fallen by 38 per cent to around \$150 million annually, urgent action is required to put in place a mechanism whereby all relevant agencies involved work energetically to halt falsification of documentation and maintain required health and safety standards.

## COMMENTS

### "I'm ready to make sacrifice for people: PM" (August 17, 2015)

**Moazzam Hossen Manik**  
We have already seen what sacrifices you can make! You took the voting right of people and tainted all the elections under your so-called government and now you say you are 'ready to sacrifice'!

**Anika Tabassum Medha**  
You want to make a sacrifice? Give us democracy. True democracy!

**Sohel Rana**  
I think she is going to create a new definition of the word 'sacrifice'!

**Faravi M Choudhury**  
All the political leaders crave for power and they even try to coax the nation with sweet words.

**Francis Chowdhury**  
Stop joking. We are tired of it.

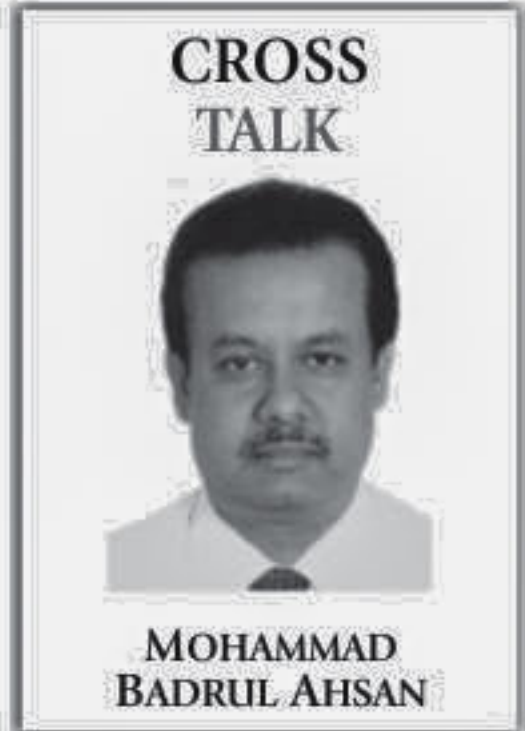
**Reaid Rashed**  
Please, just give us democracy and a fair and free election. Give us back our voting rights.

**Aminur Rahim**  
Stop blocking the traffic and causing traffic jams.

### "Of the lucky ones" (August 16, 2015)

**Masud Khan**  
And they get the lucrative jobs at home and abroad. And we, the commoners, get nothing.

# STOP the madness



CROSS  
TALK

MOHAMMAD  
BADRUL AHSAN

**A**NOTHER blogger was hacked to death in Dhaka two weeks ago, and the common thread running through these gruesome murders is that all of

them have been allegedly killed for their "liberal" views. It may be too early to say, but putting experience above hope gives us the second common thread: Most of these murder mysteries aren't likely to be solved and many of the murderers might not be identified or apprehended. We're watching an escalating showdown between free-thinking minds and free-killing hands.

It can be said without sitting on the fence that both sides of this ugly hostility are fundamentally wrong. One side strongly believes it can think whatever it likes and write about it as well. The other side is terribly misguided in its thirst for blood; they're resorting to killing as the ultimate way to exact revenge. This year four times as many bloggers have been killed compared to 2013, which could mean that unbridled thoughts and unrestrained actions are provoking each other like pouring kerosene on a fire.

The real concern is the age of the

people involved on both sides of this simmering war. Three of the five bloggers were between late 20s and early 30s, two being in their early 40s. Most of the assailants also appear to be in the same age brackets, if not younger, which is all the more reason why we should be worried.

Because, this country is still coming through long-drawn historical conflict metamorphosed into a grueling political rift. We're yet to reconcile between the

are still in their formative years and they are being irreverential to the religious sentiments of the preponderant majority of their countrymen. At the same time, young and fanatical minds are being driven by their primal passions to decisively deal with anybody whose views they differ with.

Joseph Conrad writes in Heart of Darkness, "The mind of men is capable of anything." Mind is where everything is happening in this festering fight. It's

boss warned that bloggers may have to go to jail for writing provocative blogs. He also mentioned that an offender of religious belief may get the highest punishment of 14 years in jail, uttering in the same breath that killing someone for that offence wasn't acceptable.

The killers are definitely much more reprehensible because nobody has the right to take another life no matter what. At the same time, the bloggers must understand that freedom of expression doesn't give them the license to hurt anybody's feelings or insult anybody's religion.

A sensible mind always stands up for the freedom of expression so long as it's responsibly exercised. Prophets and messiahs suffered persecution because they dared going against established beliefs. Initially branded as heretics, they eventually proved they had preached in the name of God.

The killers are pathetically mixed up in their minds. They're alarmingly oblivious that destroying human life is criminal offense, not God's work. They deserve utmost condemnation and the highest possible punishment.

The writer's pen is mightier than the fighter's sword and the scholar's ink is holier than the martyr's blood. As ink is wasted and blood is spilled, W. B. Yeats comes knocking: "The best lack all conviction and the worst are full of passionate intensity."

The writer is the Editor of weekly *First News* and an opinion writer for *The Daily Star*.  
Email: badrul151@yahoo.com

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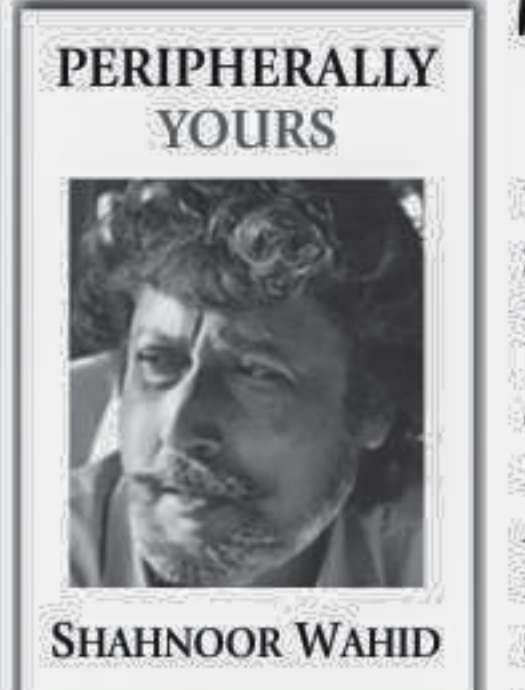
pro-liberation and anti-liberation forces forty-four years after independence. And it looks like the seed for a new discontent is being planted to keep us divided yet on another ground.

While much of the first two divisions have been dominated by older people, the last one is entirely in the hands of the youth although it's possible their elders are pulling the strings from behind. It's an irony that many of them

in their minds that the bloggers are mapping their thoughts and the killers are planning their strikes. It's in their minds that neither side is realizing that either side is acting with extreme spite.

The Inspector General of Police has urged the bloggers not to "cross the line" meaning they shouldn't write blogs that may hurt religious feelings of others. Secular activists in the country have expressed their outrage after the police

## AKIHITO EXPRESSES REMORSE Why doesn't Pakistan?



PERIPHERALLY  
YOURS

SHAHNOOR WAHID

**T**HAT humility does not transform a giant into a minnow has been exemplified by Emperor Akihito of Japan in a recent statement.

Associated Press

reports that that while talking about the outcome of World War II he expressed "deep remorse" over his country's wartime actions. In a modest tone he said, "Reflecting on our past and bearing in mind the feelings of deep remorse over the last war, I earnestly hope that the ravages of war will never be repeated."

The Emperor has expressed deep remorse for what had happened so many decades ago and their part in it. Has he become small by doing so? Has he tarnished the image of Japan by saying so? Perhaps history will judge it one day. But for now, we can only express our appreciation for the humility with which he spoke those words. Only a person of very high stature could do so.

Emperor Akihito's words of remorse remind us that even after 44 years of committing the worst kind of genocide on the unarmed people of Bangladesh, Pakistan has never expressed remorse or officially apologised to the people of Bangladesh. Pakistani troops had swooped down on the unarmed citizens of its own country in March 1971 and killed millions of them over a period of 9 months.

It was not a war between two enemy countries and yet the army of Pakistan occupied the land like an invading army and treated the entire populace of then East Pakistan, especially the Bangalis, as prisoners of war. They let loose a reign of terror by shooting down young and old, torching their homesteads, raping their girls and women, and looting their valuables. Even when the international media and the international community in general started to protest the killings, the



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military junta never bothered to listen to their pleas and stop the atrocities.

Bangalis were forced to take up arms and launch guerrilla warfare to thwart the movement of the foreign forces across the country. Bangalis suffered immensely but did not lose heart in their final battle for freedom. They deservedly won victory on December

16, 1971.

Soon after the birth of Bangladesh, the government of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had contacted the then government of Pakistan to pay our share of the wealth and settle other similar issues as soon as possible.

The Bangladeshi government communicated with successive governments in Pakistan demanding a formal apology for the genocide, but the Pakistani governments never responded in the positive. The surprising part of the story is that Pakistanis never took into cognizance the political and military blunders committed by their political and military leadership respectively in the then East Pakistan in the name of crushing the rightful movements of the people in realising their demands for fairness and parity. The thought that the Pakistani politicians and the military had inadvertently contributed to the hastening of the creation of Bangladesh has never crossed their minds in the last four plus decades. Throughout the 23 years of unlawful

domination of East Pakistan by West Pakistan, the colonial attitude of the civil and military powers had greatly clouded their rational thinking process. The end had to be painful for such condescension.

Pakistan had to pay the price for its misdemeanour and misadventure in Bangladesh. It learnt the hard way that guns cannot always solve all problems in this world. And yet, despite many calls by some wise members of Pakistan media and civil society, the government remains as unperturbed as ever in saying sorry to Bangladesh.

Since the two countries have diplomatic and trade relations like other countries of the world, there should not be any hesitation on the part of the Pakistani government to offer an official apology for their role in East Pakistan in 1971, and in settling the wealth sharing issue at the same time. The Emperor of Japan has set a unique example. Pakistan can take a cue from there.

The writer is Special Supplements Editor, *The Daily Star*.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### VAT on education

The government has imposed 7.5 percent VAT on private university students' tuition fees, which means that students now have to pay more money for their education. Needless to say, it will create additional pressure on the students and their parents, particularly those from middle-class families.

Education should not be treated as a commodity or as an exclusive right of a few who can afford it. It should be accessible to everyone. We hope the government will reconsider its decision.  
Zabed Wali  
Chittagong



PHOTO: RIFON KAWAL

### Take the advantage of demographic dividend

Demographic dividend is the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older). Every nation gets a chance of demographic dividend in its lifetime. Japan, South Korea and most Western nations

have successfully utilised their demographic dividend.

According to international donor agencies and economists, Bangladesh can start utilising its demographic dividend which will last till around 2040. It means there is a lot of potential for us. Bangladesh is already a lower middle-income country and according to the declaration of our government, we are supposed to achieve the status of middle-income country by 2021. We need a proper plan to transmute millions of youths into human resources.  
Golam Ali Rubel  
Chittagong