

Facts that give you goose bumps



CHINTITO SINCE 1995
NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

YOU have heard of G-11, and may have wondered how outlandish that can be. How many layers of 'economicsphere' separate us and them? Now brace yourselves for N-11, and I am not referring to any highway where stalks

the banned CNG-run three-wheelers, and where you can have a roadside shave as the intercity buses wheeze by. While we are stuck in apparently endless traffic jams, grumbling, but forgetting to be grateful for the vastly improved power supply over the last few years, it appears that Bangladesh - hey that's us - has made real good progress. Ahem! Bangladesh has overcome several low-middle income countries, including India, in several socio-economic indexes over the last four and a half decades. The life expectancy of people in Bangladesh has increased from 47 years in 1971 to 70 years in 2015, compared to Bharat's and similar other economies' 66 years. In 1971, child mortality in Bangladesh was 149, in India 141, and in other low-middle income countries 124 for every thousand births. But, today Bangladesh has been able to bring down that dreadful indicator to 33 deaths per thousand births, compared to 41 of India and 44 for other low-middle income countries. Almost one-third of new-born babies suffered from malnutrition in 1971, which today has come down to 16 percent and remains at par with India and other similar countries. While the number of births per Bangladeshi women in 1971 was 6.9 and Indians was 5.4 and that of similar countries 5.6, Bangladesh has made laudable progress in bringing that down to 2.2, the figure of which in India today is 4.4 and that in other comparable countries is 2.9.



Clap, clap!
 The above figures have not been released by the central office of the Bangladesh Awami League to woo voters before the forthcoming local elections, although from their point of view such an aggressive campaign would be necessary because the score in the last municipal elections 2010-11 was AL (backed candidates) - 88 and BNP(backed candidates)- 92. The heart-warming statistics were divulged in the city on October 19 by the World Bank at a workshop branded the Bangladesh Country Partnership Framework under a report titled the "World Bank Group Consultations, October-November 2015".

(Bangladesh Pratidin, (Bengali daily) October 20, 2015)
 Sadly, some major media outlets missed the point. Because it is the very Bank that denied and delayed the 6.15-long multipurpose Padma Bridge, the revelations accrue that much importance. The World Bank Report went on to say that Bangladesh has amazed even the developed countries. And they are not talking about cricket. At independence in 1971, the number of children being inoculated was two per every one hundred; the number today has been reversed and ninety-seven children among every one hundred are vaccinated.

India remains at 72 percent and other low-income countries at 76 percent. As a Rotarian and Scout Leader, I too feel humbly gratified in this milestone achievement, as Rotarians and Scouts in Bangladesh have been zealously involved in particularly the polio eradication scheme for nearly two decades. In 1971, only 35 percent of Bangladeshis were facilitated by a developed sewerage system, which has increased to 57 percent today. No wonder, you have to hold your breath, as you walk the pavements on our city streets. But, be prepared to cover your muzzle a lot more in India (if you get the Visa that is) because the sewerage coverage there is 36

percent. Surprisingly, in similar other countries 47 percent of the people have proper sewage disposal. I have rarely felt so fresh. According to the World Bank, Bangladesh has made major gains, and is on its way to becoming a low-middle income country in 2021, from the launching pad of which, it can commence its challenging efforts to becoming a middle-income nation. Happily, for all of us, in 2014, Bangladesh's per capita income reached US\$1046, which trend if sustained shall enable the country to reach US\$1220 in 2015. The figures do not narrate the existing monetary disparity among our people, but then they do indicate our country's potentiality to address the needs of those severely disadvantaged.

Those strides that Bangladesh made have not gone unnoticed. At the inaugural ceremony of the World Bank at Peru, Lima recently, its President Dr. Jim Yong Kim mentioned only one country, saying that its economic and social progress is an example for many low-income countries. The WB Report comes as a surprise (pleasant or otherwise, depending on one's myopic political view), but Bangladesh was long named among the Next Eleven (countries), marked by the reputed investment bankers Goldman Sachs and by economist-researcher Jim O'Neil, as having great prospects of catching up with the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and becoming among the world's largest economies in the 21st century. Psst! Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea and Vietnam are listed in N-11. We are not a great nation when it comes to appreciating our own kind. Let the good work continue, the patting will follow, hopefully.

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AMAN'S ORDEAL

HASNA JASIMUDDIN MOUDUD

ON my saddest day, I see smiles. We buried Aman next to his grandmother and grandfather and his eldest brother, who died at the age of six. I feel very tired to think this all through. Now I remember; I wanted Aman to be well quickly so that he and I could leave for London at the end of his summer holidays. He had been feeling unwell since our visit to Noakhali. After dinner, his fever flared up, causing immense discomfort. I took him to the United Hospital, where Dr. Afsana immediately pronounced that he had dengue and told us to admit him in the hospital after a basic blood test. His platelet count was 120.

We did. But instead of improving, it got worse. The main concern was that he was sweating a lot and he was having the urge to urinate very frequently which the doctor did not treat. He was given IV fluid and oral saline. His temperature was within 101-102 degrees. On the fifth night, he was given a strong broad spectrum antibiotic by Dr Pradip Saha. He became very sick, sleepless, although he was given a sedative. When I checked in around midnight, Aman was still not asleep; I had left him around 9:30 or 10pm. When I checked in at 2:00 am and found Aman still unable to sleep, I asked the attendant to pass him the phone. I asked him to go to sleep and he assured me that he would. He sounded normal; I should have asked if anything was bothering him but I did not. That was my last conversation with my son.

I wanted to treat him at home, since there is no medicine other than water and rest for dengue. But the doctor did not allow this. Instead, he gave Aman antibiotics, in addition to Paracetamol and a potassium drink. I could hear Aman wailing from the lift of his floor. I

ran to him and there was my son with his eyes rolled up and an anguished cry coming out of him. I held his hand and tried to calm him. His lips were very dry. I gave him half a teaspoon of water and told him to say Allahu repeatedly; he responded by whispering Allahu but did not look at me. The doctor on duty Dr. Afsana who said he should be shifted to ICU for better monitoring. They put him on oxygen only then and took him away. He was not even given oxygen or examined fully and properly.

Moudud came when he was already in the ICU and we were not allowed in. I was asked to sign a paper to allow an incision near Aman's neck line so that more fluid could be given. as he was still dehydrated. Then they came again, asking me to sign another paper to put a ventilator down his throat. My mother had died after she had been put on a ventilator. I could not understand why Aman needed it. Much later we were allowed to see him. His body was lifeless, like in deep sleep. I called him but got no response. When Asma touched him, she said there was a slight sensation. When Khokon and I called loudly, his closed eyes tried to blink a little. During this time, a CT scan and more blood tests were done; I don't know why.

Dr. Pradip was again trying to convince us to agree to give him another series of drugs, this time quinine, which could have a reaction, to treat a type of malaria that Aman might have contracted, though there was no clinical proof of that. Time was running out. I agreed but the medicine was not available.

By now, all we wanted to do was to take him out of this place and get him treated at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore by air ambulance, which was supposed to be fully equipped to meet emergencies on air. When the doctor said he could fly, we arranged for

the flight, which would be a four and half hour one in a very small jet. It took nearly seven hours to get the hospital release papers and bill clearance. During the long four hours, it seemed like Aman was still asleep. They controlled his face muscles with a hand held machine. At one stage, they were desperately looking for something but could not find it. That is when I was convinced that something was wrong. They explained that the patient was losing

He was a very innocent young man and he should not have been subjected to such humiliation in life and in death by the so called booming Singapore health business.

pressure and he had already exhausted three pumps or something like that. By this time, the aircraft was trying to land in Changi Airport. They should have known that Singapore had announced a national emergency due to heavy haze. After wasting more time trying to land, they flew to the other airport, some 20 minutes away by car. Finally, the air ambulance landed in a deserted part

of the airport at around 4:00 am. After or during landing, they started pumping his heart by hand and after a while they asked us to get out of the aircraft. There was no ambulance waiting on the ground. We rushed around, trying to convince the airport staff that this was an emergency and we needed an ambulance.

I then saw one of the medical staff come out of the aircraft looking totally exhausted; I knew it was all

examined and all enquiries may continue. But they did not listen. He was covered with a dirty blanket in the heat. They were apparently following procedure. After over an hour, he was sent to the General Hospital morgue, where he stayed until the coroner's case hearing the next day. We had nothing to do.

Once at the hotel, I sent an email to Robert Gibson, British High Commissioner in Bangladesh, requesting him to help us collect

of medical malpractice at United Hospital and most probably in most private hospitals and clinics in Bangladesh, I wrote down funeral details and arrangements for our son, defying all religious norms.

Next morning I got a call from the medical agent to inform me that the police officer dealing with our case had asked us to go early to the morgue. He could wait, I thought, after making us wait four hours at the airport after a long flight and a tragedy that will stay with us for life. I was also informed that the British Consulate had been calling to cancel Aman's British passport before office closed. I called the British consulate and they informed me that there was no hurry - I could do that when I reached Bangladesh. Perhaps the medical agent was anxious that there could be an inquiry on possible medical neglect after the death of a British subject.

When we were shown our son's body we cried and begged the doctor to spare him from autopsy. Finally his body was released after two hours and we managed to bring our son home on September 16 and buried him on September 17.

He was a very innocent young man and he should not have been subjected to such humiliation in life and in death by the so called booming Singapore health business. There are many agencies in the name of health packages which are not accountable to anyone. Nor do they pay taxes anywhere. They use the name of high profile hospitals and doctors, perhaps they too are involved. But why did it happen to our son who was the sunshine of our life?

Today we buried him under the Dalim gacher toley made famous by my father poet Jasimuddin's prophetic poem *Ei khane, Dalim gacher toley, tirish bochor bhijaye rekhechi dui noiner jaley.*

The writer is former MP and President, CARDMA.



Aman Moutaj Moudud with his mother, Hasna Jasimuddin Moudud.

over. After four hours the ambulance came. But death on Singapore soil brought scores of police who investigated the death for hours. They said they would have to wait for the supervisor, who came after two hours. All this time we were pleading with everyone to release the body of my son from the oven hot aircraft. We begged to let him be taken in an ambulance to a cool hospital chamber where he could be

Aman's body, perform the religious rites and take him home for a quick burial. I made a call to the Bangladesh High Commissioner to expedite Aman's release from the morgue and not to perform an autopsy of his body. He immediately responded and assigned Mr. Ashraf, who not only helped but spent hours following Singapore procedures.

While my son slept in the morgue with the ventilator still on, a symbol

QUOTABLE Quote

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE
 None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
 1 Sunset setting
 5 Intercede
 11 Bridge feature
 12 Eyetooth
 13 Smoke source
 14 Go to
 15 Truck driver
 17 Tiny
 18 Work breaks
 22 Island south of Sicily
 24 Old photo tint
 25 Yale student
 26 Workout unit
 27 Beach bits
 30 Gather together
 32 Brat's opposite
 33 Crow cry
 34 Diner side
 38 Zambia neighbor
 41 Seat of Hawaii County
 42 Tolerated
 43 Crazy about
 44 Hampers
 45 They may clash

DOWN
 1 Float on the breeze
 2 War of 1812 port
 3 Writing badly
 4 Big Apple opera house
 5 "Get lost!"
 6 Spuds
 7 Menu choice
 8 Slapstick projectile
 9 Road-house
 10 Homer's neighbor
 16 Neptune's realm
 19 Extensive
 20 Makes bows
 21 Easy targets
 22 South-western sight
 23 Shepard in space
 28 Century division
 29 Ritardando
 30 Perfect serve
 31 Old five-iron
 35 Toppers
 36 Choir voice
 37 Courts
 38 Furious
 39 Homer's dad
 40 Tippy

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

DEPP QUASAR
 EXAM UPDATE
 APPS ERODED
 FOE LEOS
 RHINO PALA
 DEBUT TRALA
 OVAL APES
 PICKS CZECH
 ELK LAUER
 LUXE BAG
 RECOIL BAJA
 ATONCE ORAL
 GANGES OKRA

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