

| IN RETROSPECT |

# FLASHBACK 2015

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

PHOTO: KAZI TAHAIN AGAZ APURBO

The year 2015 was marked with many significant incidents that changed Bangladesh's course of history forever. It is very unfortunate that many of these incidents are quite negative and depressing, however, there are positive and inspiring stories too. Let's recall some of the incidents that happened this year and shook the entire nation, sometimes with fear and sometimes with celebration.

## The Tainted Pahela Boishakh

Several sexual assaults on women during the celebration of Pahela Boishakh and law enforcers' blatant indifference to arrest the miscreants shocked the whole nation. Organised miscreants assaulted women visitors indiscriminately at several places in Shahbag, Dhaka University campus and Suhrawardi Uddyan which are the prime locations of this merry celebration to welcome the Bengali New Year. The youths who came forward to save the women were also assaulted and got injured by those rowdy criminals. Despite many witness accounts, law enforcers completely denied the fact and even brutally thrashed the protesters who demanded arrest of the assaulters.



## Can We Remember the Weeping Children?

This year, 2015 was heavy with the cry of our innocent children. Rajon, a 13 year old boy was flogged to death, Raquib a 12 year old boy was tortured brutally and killed in a gruesome manner, a 10 year old boy who used to work in a hotel was shot in cold blood as he demanded an increment, a 10 year old boy was bludgeoned in the head repeatedly and killed after a neighbour accused him of stealing fish...and the list goes on. Repetitive incidents of child abuse and such brutal murders have saddened and outraged the whole nation.

## No Vat on Education

One of the remarkable incidents of 2015 was the non-violent and completely peaceful movements of private university students against the government's decision to impose value added tax on their university tuition fee. Government imposed 7.5 percent value added tax on the tuition fee of private university students which made this already expensive stream of education even costlier and unbearable for many of the students. However, after sustained protests, the government finally withdrew its decision and for the first time in its history, the nation witnessed how an entirely peaceful protest can achieve its



objective of altering government's thoughtless decision.

## A Step Towards Progress

Bangladesh's continuous economic growth despite of thousands of obstacles got its recognition this year. After the annual revision of world's economies, The World Bank declared Bangladesh a lower middle income country as the Gross National Income Per Capita of the country rose from 1190 US\$ to 1314 US\$. This improvement shows that Bangladesh, previously listed as a low income country, has made considerable progress to reach its goal to

be a middle income country by 2021.

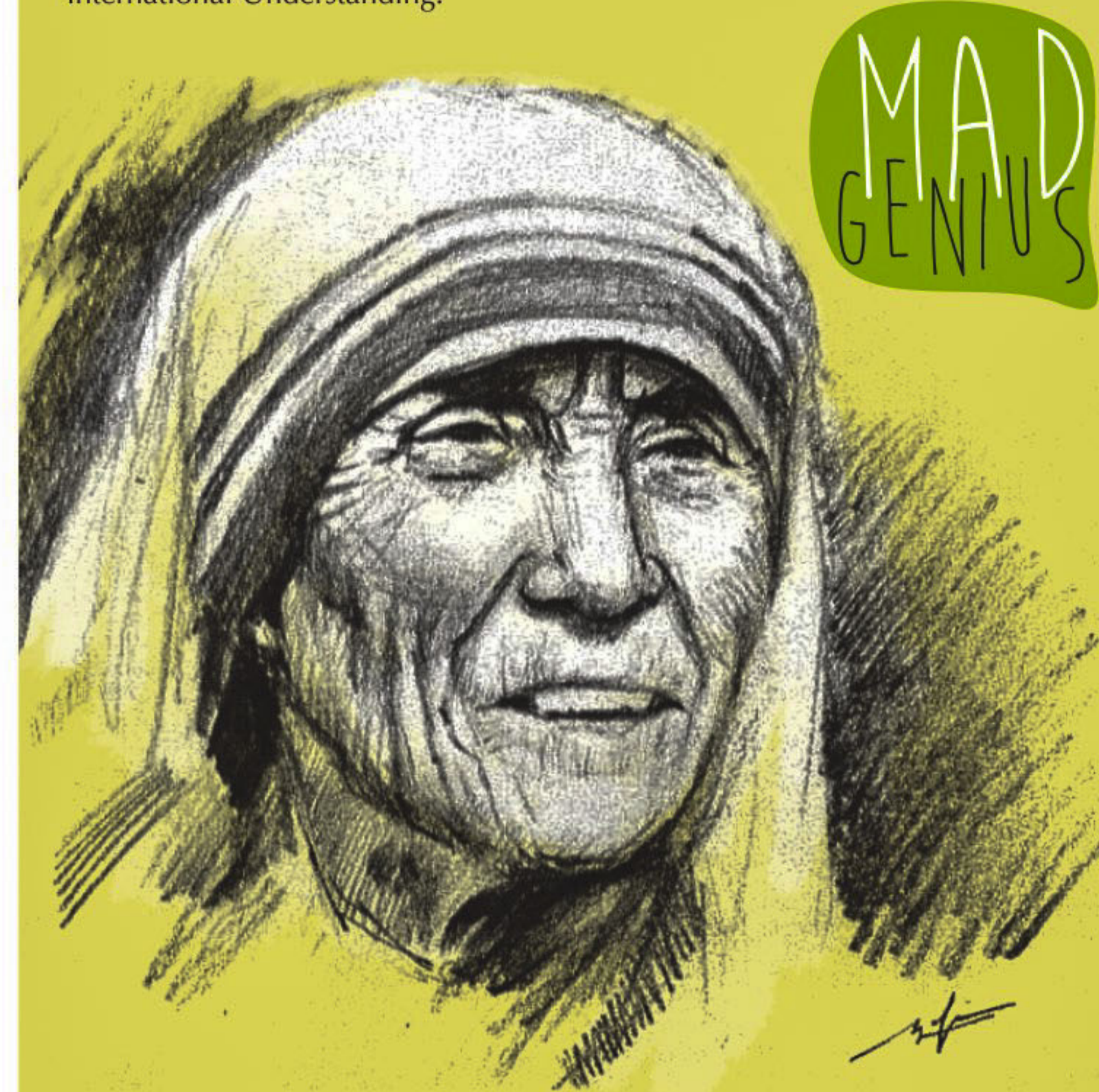
## Muzzling the Social Media

Bangladesh government banned all types of social media due to security reasons and this time it was for the lengthiest period. For twenty one days, Bangladeshis could not use any type of social media platforms such as Facebook, Viber, Whatsapp etc. which created outcry among many Bangladeshis especially the young generation. After repeated requests from different quarters, the government finally decided to open all these social media platforms.

## MOTHER TERESA

26 August 1910 – 5 September 1997

Mother Teresa symbolises compassion to the world. She represents faith, humanity, charity and hope for her remarkable life spent in serving the poor and people around the world suffering. While she was highly admired for her charitable works, she was criticised for the substandard conditions in the hospice. She bagged a number of honours including the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, Padma Shri in 1962 and the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding.



SKETCH: YAFIZ SIDDIQUI

“ Let us always meet each other with smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.

Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.

Love begins by taking care of the closest ones - the ones at home.

The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.

Let us not be satisfied with just giving money. Money is not enough, money can be got, but they need your hearts to love them. So, spread your love everywhere you go. ”

## STARSTORY

# SURPRISE!

Last Thursday, while I was buying groceries for my hospital in Kawran Bazaar, I met a wonderful elderly lady around 65-70 years old. She was buying fish for her family. She was holding a heavy bag in her right hand full of grocery items and a bag full of vegetable and a small vanity bag in the left. As there was huge crowd, she was being pushed around by people her. But she was not bothered at all. Assuming her to be a well behaved and soft spoken person, I asked her, why she had come to the market all by herself. “Today is my one and only son's birthday. I have planned that I will cook all the items that he loves to eat. That's why I am here to buy fish”, she replied. “I wanted to do everything on my own, because it's a surprise that I planned for him!” she replied with a smile. I was really astonished with her plan. No other surprise plan in the world is as unique as our mother's plan.

Sayem Ahmed  
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PHOTO: INTERNET

## THE PASSPORT CHRONICLES

The other day I went to the Passport Office to fix an error in my MRP. Upon asking the procedure to fix errors in MRP from the information desk, the person told me to get a new form and to follow the procedures for applying to MRP all over again. So I did as recommended and then halfway into the procedures, I was told by another official that I needed to use another form and get it signed by the respective authorities and getting the signatures, and then another two hour course which comprised of walking up and down the stairs from third to sixth and finally eighth floor and then again to third floor, I stood behind a queue of apparently twenty women in front of me and twenty men on the other side. Then after spending another hour standing in line, amidst quarrels and heated up accusations with people for trying to break the line, I finally could submit my form and get a delivery slip and where I discovered that all these people were all being served by only two

officials. On top of that, there were Ansars regularly intervening and giving extra forms to get them enrolled. While I was waiting in a line downstairs, a man (probably a middleman) was going around asking people whether they want to get their passport done in hassle free manner by paying him money. And they were probably in collaboration with the ansars who were interfering the lines and getting people inside. It is evident that everyone working in the passport offices has a hard job having to handle so many people, and there are many officers who behave really well and are quite helpful. Irrespective of all the troubles that we the citizens face, they do work hard. But these offices need to recruit more employees and need to find a way to get rid of the middlemen, to make the process easier.  
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