

On track to take silver medal

Bangladesh shows healthy growth

THE news will come as somewhat of a shock to sceptics who like to portray the economy to be in dire straits. American news organisation Bloomberg has forecasted that Bangladesh will post the second highest growth rates globally. In a survey that covered 193 countries, our economy is slated to grow 6.6 percent tying with that of Vietnam. That we are managing to grow in the midst of a global recession that has acted to contract much more advanced economies than ours, for instance, oil-rich Venezuela which will probably see its economy contract by as much as 3.3 percent, there is reason to rejoice.

The accolades are coming in from institutions such as the World Bank which has termed the economy as very stable. Yet there are reasons not to be over-joyous. Yes, we have made tremendous gains on social and economic fronts, but the major Achilles heels are yet to be addressed: infrastructure and reducing the cost of doing business; cutting down on bureaucratic red tape to foster business operations. These have been nagging problems for some years now and are perhaps one of the reasons why the economy has not been able to post much higher growth rates.

All in all, the outlook is good, but as stated before, prioritisation of projects related to energy and communication is a must. That coupled with easier credit and simplification of rules and procedures can only aid our economy to take off and join the ranks of economic powerhouses in the region.

Passing on of General Jacob

Adieu dear friend

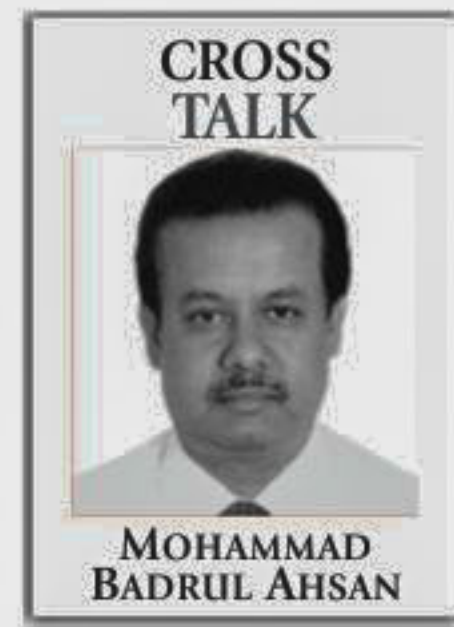
BANGLADESH condoles with people on both sides of the Bangladesh-India borders the death of Lieutenant General JFR Jacob (ret'd) at the age of 92, the man who as Major General and Chief of Staff of the Eastern Command of the Indian Army negotiated the surrender of Pakistani troops in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.

The success of General Jacob as a planner, some military experts think, lies in a draft outline plan he had prepared by the end of May 1971 based on important strategic parameters such as bypassing Pakistani fortified positions and selecting thrust lines accordingly, and selecting subsidiary objectives in order to secure communication centres as also to destroy command and control centres of the Pakistani forces. Enemy forces bypassed were to be dealt with later, he thought, a tactic that worked in reducing the number of casualties of the joint forces.

But his wisdom transcended the battlefield—he had the foresight of anticipating not only what the enemy might do tomorrow but also how, in future, the War was going to be reflected upon by the people of this country. And that's why he cajoled Lieutenant General Niazi, commander of the Eastern Command of the Pakistan Army, to surrender to the joint command of Bangladesh and India in front of the people of Dhaka in Suhrawardy Udyan on December 16, 1971.

The Bangladesh government, in 2012, in recognition of his contribution to the creation of Bangladesh, conferred the Friends of Liberation War on the great soldier. The country will forever remember Lt General Jacob with much gratitude.

Bridging the gap between preaching and practicing



CROSS TALK

MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

SCIENTISTS have claimed that in next five to ten years they are going to invent the cloak of invisibility. Eighty nanometers in thickness, an object can be

wrapped with it and poof it will be made to disappear just like that! A skin-like thing made of microscopic rectangular gold blocks, the cloak can be used for military applications to hide vehicles, aircrafts, and even individual soldiers. That stunning news also underscores the need for a reverse technology. If the visible can be made invisible, the invisible needs to become visible as well.

In other words, we need to see what can't be seen and for that we need a cloak of visibility. This cloak may render visible ghosts and spirits, which have vanished into thin air. It may recover people and events sucked into the layers of time. Genghis Khan's lost tomb or the Holy Grail can be found, solving many more unsolved mysteries by throwing a cloak over anything that comes to mind. It will give us the power to uncover mischief with the precision of drones hitting targets.

The contraption will be more useful on people than anything else, because individuals have this terrible capacity to hide behind their faces. What we see when we look at a person is the tip of the iceberg, ninety percent of identity lying below the surface. People hide behind their looks, while hypocrisy fills that existential gap. Intentions eclipsed by initiatives, the human mind can make the universe disappear in its depth.

Nothing so far has been able to change this phenomenon. Religion was meant to instill the fear of God in our hearts so that we thought twice before shortchanging truth. The lie detector is a modern device, which can extricate truth only if we have a suspect in hand. But most of the crimes are committed in the twilight zone where it

is even difficult to suspect the suspects. That brings us to the crux of the problem. There are many examples when we know the criminals, but can't accuse them due to fear of reprisals or manipulations. One most common example is ill-gotten wealth. It changes the net worth of people

fake credentials who can't be confronted. Extra-judicial killings are regularly justified with the same clichéd statement. Questionable elections are upheld as people's mandate. Political killings or abductions are shrouded in silence. One can talk all day about how dubious

of things where objects embody facts and facts embellish objects. If one is altered, the other ceases to exist. These two millstones of mendacity crush conscience and evaporate truth.

Between the chest and the back, the human body does its own vanishing acts. It hides much more than it shows, strutting and fretting with secrets of the universe buried in flesh and bones. Mankind has scoured the bottoms of oceans, and unravelled many secrets of the space, but it hasn't been able to conquer the body and explore the unfathomable depths of its microscopic cells.

So we need something to rescue man from this hidebound hideout. His ignorance of himself and others' ignorance of him make every man a riddle inside a riddle. In advanced societies, these two riddles are unglued as public persona is intensely scrutinized and private life is spared the torment. Lately, Edward Snowden has exposed that intelligence surveillance is flouting even that golden rule.

While surveillance of private life isn't acceptable, suppression of public life isn't desirable. If anybody does or says anything that affects the society as a whole, that individual should be investigated for all the right reasons. Democracy and the rule of law provide the tools to compel an individual in the public domain to disclose himself.

Short of these tools, a cloak of visibility is our only choice. When we can't question the questionable ones, or convict criminals whose crimes unleash a reign of terror, it adds insult to injury if they also thump their chests as being respectable people. Respect is the highest marker of human recognition that has been reduced to a ludicrous sleight of hand.

Faces hiding behind masks, life is full of peekaboo moments. And these moments arise amongst us every time known faces prove unknown. The conflict between preaching and practicing pops out of this compulsive crisis of credentials.

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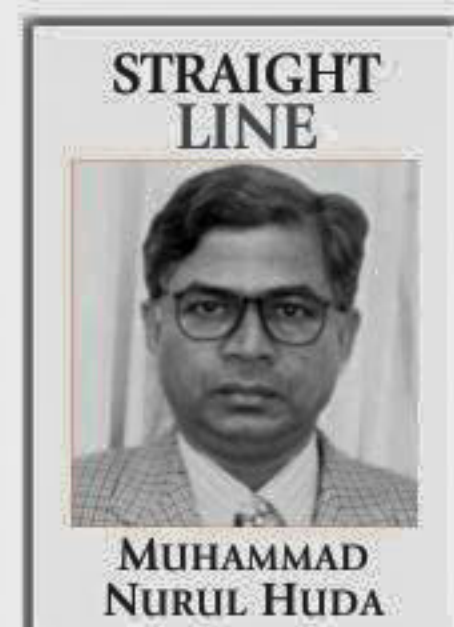
overnight and their ostentatious lifestyle pokes us in the eye. Yet allegations of corruption brought against these criminals can't be proven for the reason that they have mastered the art of keeping the fire separate from the smoke.

Then, there are many people with

things cannot be doubted despite being open secrets.

The common thread running through all of these contradictions is lack of visibility created by fogs of doubts, fears and twisted facts. That means an unofficial cloak of invisibility exists already in our sphere

The sinister collaborators of 1971



STRAIGHT LINE

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THE death sentence awarded to Motiur Rahman Nizami, the topmost Jamaat leader for

crimes committed against humanity in 1971 by the apex court, should come as no surprise. Though belated, the notorious schemer and planner of several murders of freedom loving Bangalis during the nine month long liberation struggle has finally been exposed.

The Bangali collaborators of 1971 accused of committing crimes against humanity do not deserve any mercy because they actively assisted the Pakistan occupation army in the destruction of the Bangali people. Quite clearly, the then Pakistan government deliberately undertook an annihilatory process in which collaborators like Motiur Rahman Nizami were complicit. There was no moral barrier that stood in the path of our destruction. The dilemma, if any, facing the Pakistani military junta related only to timing and logistical feasibility.

In 1971, during the course of our national liberation struggle, all moral obstructions to mass

murder had broken down and a rationale for 'wholesale' killing of the Bangalis was established. In fact, Bangalis were brutally mistreated in a barbarous way.

As far as evidentiary credibility is concerned, it is only proper to say that informed citizens everywhere in the world drew appropriate conclusions about what was happening in East Pakistan in 1971, reinforced by eye witness testimonies of those still alive.

To recollect and appreciate the tragic happenings of 1971 in the then East Pakistan, one must recognise that the full extent of the Bangali genocide became understood painfully, slowly. Quite late in the day, it became manifest that the Bangalis of East Pakistan had fallen victim to mass murder. The ordeal left many survivors homeless and dispossessed.

In 1971, while some Bangalis scaled summits of courage and nobility, there were shameless collaborators who plumbed depth of evils in a fashion that compels the awe of posterity. Amongst many present day citizens of Bangladesh, to whom serious hardship and collective peril are unknown, the tribulations that millions endured in the fateful nine months of 1971 are almost beyond comprehension. It was a contest between good and evil that imposed monumental misery upon so many.

It is also worth pondering that only a tiny fraction of those guilty of crimes against humanity in 1971 have been indicted. This is partly because the victors had no stomach for the scale of executions, numbering several thousands, which would have been necessary had strict justice been enforced against every criminal accused of crimes against humanity. Very few retributive executions took place in liberated Bangladesh. Students of history may like to compare this with events of post-World War II in Europe, where nearly a thousand retributive executions took place in the western zones of occupation. Some 920 Japanese were executed, more than three hundred of them by the Dutch, for crimes committed in the East Indies.

The post-liberation generation of Bangladesh needs to know that the Bangali villains and criminals of 1971 had not been held to account for their misdeeds for a long time, owing to factors better left unsaid. That, however, cannot be grounds for exonerating the sinister collaborators from charges framed later. There is also no reason to show mercy to these evil characters on account of their age, because they have proved their incorrigibility by words and wishes. These criminals do not show any remorse or regret even now.

The frail looking characters waiting in the docks with drooping posture must not make us forget the gory crimes they committed in full public view in complete disregard of morals and scruples. Their actions turned countless women into widows and scores of children into orphans. A particular faith became a nightmarish burden for a sizeable population due to their perverted fanaticism.

Believers know full well that patriotism is an inseparable part of faith. That being so, persons accused of crimes against humanity in 1971 have quite manifestly defied and defiled their own faith. They deserve no compassion and consideration, morally or legally.

Recollecting the gory incidents of 1971, it could justifiably be said that mass murders on a fearsome scale began immediately after the carnage of March 25 in Dhaka. Even as Pakistan army's military predicament worsened, the pace of slaughter of Bangalis did not slow down. The foremost aspiration of the occupation army was to produce mass death and thus their Bangali collaborators were willing to murder vast numbers of innocents in cold blood. Motiur Rahman Nizami may not himself have killed, but he was happy to acquiesce in, and even enthuse about, others doing so.

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

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COMMENTS

"Tree felling fest in Ctg"
(January 11, 2016)

Mdkayes Billah

These idiots don't understand that by cutting down trees they are destroying the country.

"If the tanneries in the capital's Hazaribagh are not relocated to Savar within the next 72 hours, they will be closed down."

Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu

Salahuddin Jamal

Tanneries are industrial plants so it is quite impossible.

Irhum Shafkat

72 hours? I'd be surprised if they managed to do it in 72 years!

Chandipur Malapara

Is this really possible?

"Bangladesh lacks skills to utilise sea resources: Muhith"

(January 9, 2016)

Sakib Ahmed Sezan

We need to train our workforce to excavate our natural resources in the sea.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Israel's invasion of Palestine

Palestinians are being killed everyday while trying to defend their land from invasion by armed Israeli forces. The stats suggest that over a thousand young Palestinians have been killed over the last few months. In 1971, we were in desperate need of justice; the situation is the same in Palestine now. We should all raise our voice in their support and show solidarity with their demand of a free Palestinian state.



Nasif Ferdous Sylhet

Children's commission

It is praiseworthy that recently various rights bodies and non-profit organisations raised the demand for an independent commission for children that would monitor the violation of their rights. Violation of rights encompasses a wide arena and it includes sexual abuse, child labour and also denial of the love, affection and access to the non-

custodial parent by the child(ren). Such denial in cases of estranged/divorced parents should not be overlooked by children's commission, but unfortunately this aspect is not taken care of by nations who have such commissions.

We hope and expect that the draft National Child Rights Commission Act 2015 is implemented soon and this oversight is addressed.
Deendayal M. Lulla
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