

## Better treatment for crash victims

Action plan needs implementation

ACCORDING to the World Health Organisation, 21,000 people die due to road accidents in Bangladesh. We do not know for certain precisely how many more suffer serious injury. An action plan has been finalised that brought together various stakeholders including the government to identify the causes of such deaths. What has been brought to light is that many fatalities could be avoided if in the immediate aftermath of an accident, emergency medication and trained paramedics were available countrywide. Indeed, we find that crash victims have to be transported all the way to Dhaka to receive emergency treatment and the long distances involved often leads to victims succumbing to injury.

We hope the action plan that has been drafted will be put into action by June of the current fiscal year. Post-crash care involves developing a new cadre of paramedics and the establishment of trauma centres across the country. It would require budgetary allocations and a prioritisation at policy level to treat the matter with the seriousness it deserves. Such measures are necessary to limit the severity of injuries, which at present cause either disabilities or result in death for crash victims. And although efforts are underway to contain accidents, they will happen nonetheless and initiatives need to be taken to mitigate the sufferings of the injured. Health authorities in the country are not geared to provide emergency medical service (EMS) for post-crash victims, and it is high time that provisions are made to develop an EMS programme to be deployed nationwide.

## Freeing Footpaths

Who will police the police?

THAT a few members of the police force are standing in the way of the eviction drives by Dhaka South City Corporation, according to Mayor Sayeed Khokon, to free footpaths of illegal occupation in Gulshan area, seems a measure of how things have gone out of hand. The mayor had launched the laudable initiative in December last year with the objective of clearing out street vendors in that area in 30 days.

That quite didn't work out the way it was envisioned, with footpaths being re-occupied by vendors the same day they were evicted because of a few policemen, according to the mayor.

The well-made pavement free for pedestrians to walk on is a distant memory in this city. According to several reports, more than 70 percent of the footpaths are occupied by different kinds of vendors who eke out a living by selling all sorts merchandise.

How can the eviction drives of the city corporations be successful if the police do not cooperate? Under what circumstances a mayor has to express his grievances at a programme held at the National Press Club? How can the mayors be effective if they are not given enough power and support to do their job?

At the same time it is well to remember that eviction drives, no matter how well-intentioned, will not be productive without making arrangements for the rehabilitation of the hawkers.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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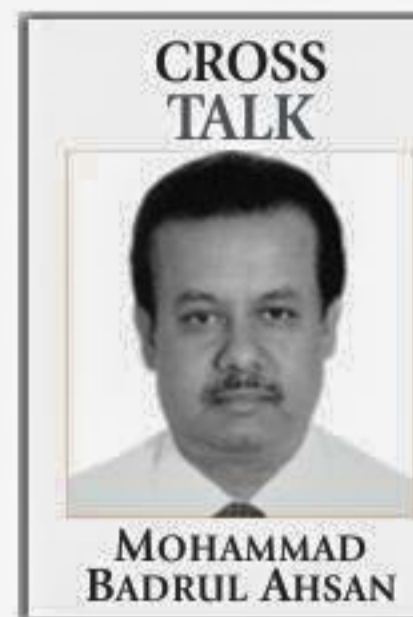
### Discrimination related to the date of increment in pay scale

The new national pay scale by the present government is undoubtedly a good initiative which has satisfied a majority of the country's government employees. But it appears that a provision related to the date of increment is discriminatory. Section 11 (2) of the gazette on the new pay scale states: "Annual increment from 1st July up to the last day prior to publication of the services (Pay and Allowances) Order, 2015 via gazette, i.e. 14 December, shall be payable". It implies that the increment due within the first five and a half months of the financial year shall be payable, but no increment shall be payable if it fell within the last six and a half months of the fiscal year. This is clearly discriminatory.

It appears that this discriminatory provision may have been incorporated for upholding the interest of a section of officials who played important roles in the framing of this government order. The government should therefore rectify this provision to give equal benefits and opportunities to all. That is, either there should be no increment throughout the financial year (July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016) or everybody should be given salary increments (irrespective of date) throughout the financial year 2015-16.

An aggrieved government employee  
 Ramna, Dhaka-1000

# The giants and the pygmies amongst us



CROSS TALK

MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

THIS is a dog-eat-dog world, but when adults kill children even that saying proves inadequate to express the horror. It's sheer horror when four schoolboys were strangled to death

in Habiganj because the adults couldn't settle their differences in a sensible manner. When a mother threw her newborn from a six-storey building in Bailey Road or some kind of a grandfather killed a fifth-grader in Keraniganj, that horror worked like gunshot. The impact depended on the range between the gun and its target.

So when children are killed by their loved ones, it has the impact of a shotgun fired from a close range. It devastates us most because the cruelty is more disturbing than the crime itself. But it's still disturbing even when there is distance in the relationship between the killers and their victims. The whole country recoiled in contempt when strangers in Sylhet beat up a minor to death while he was tied to a post, or when an employer in Khulna forced a compressor tube into the rectum of a boy and busted his organs like overblown

balloons.

Thus one thing constant in the varying nature of killing children is how ruthlessly a life is nipped in the bud. Be it infanticide, prolicide or paedocide, that nipping is shocking no matter who does it and how it's done. It's abortion done in mothers' laps instead of their wombs when promising lives are extinguished like sentences erased before written.

Not that it doesn't happen in other societies. And it's also not something that isn't supposed to happen. If revolution devours its own children, so does evolution. In fact, it must be a design of nature that animals from time to time shall kill their young. Mother bears, felines, canids, primates, and many species of rodents from rats to prairie dogs have been eating their young. Insects, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and birds also have been implicated in killing, and sometimes devouring, the young of their own kind.

Nature throws even more bizarre patterns of this mindless crime. A male damselfish selects and guards a small territory in a coral reef before a female damselfish visits him and lays eggs. It's the responsibility of the male to fertilise, guard and protect those eggs. But the father fish chooses to eat any eggs that are too small or not growing fast enough. Studies of one species, the

Cortez damselfish, have found that about 20 percent of eggs get eaten. In another species of damselfish, the Scissortail Sergeant, the female fish lays "fake eggs" to see if the father will eat them, before trusting him with real eggs.

Humans aren't fish except for their choice to swim with or against the current. It's not clear exactly at what point of that swimming human minds snap, meaning the loss of sanity under some kind of provocation. But children are always victims for no fault of their own. The boys in Habiganj died as vehicles of vengeance sought by a rickshaw puller to settle his score with enemies who had thrown him out of a village *panchayat*. The mother who threw her baby was ashamed of an unwanted pregnancy after she was raped. And, a distant grandfather was stoked by greed to kidnap a boy in the family and then took his life after the plan tanked.

The number of children killed in Bangladesh is perhaps minuscule when weighed against the entire population. Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum found in its study that a total of 968 children were tortured to death in the last three and a half years. The alarming news is that the number of child murders was 61 percent higher in 2014 than the previous year.

One doesn't have to be a psychologist to understand the sickness. When grownups don't pick on somebody their own size and instead choose children to channel their rage, the loss of adulthood is obvious. And that rage is often an outburst of wretchedness that screams inside conflicted souls constrained to undermine their own worth. Winston Churchill warned us decades ago that when the war of the giants is over, the wars of the pygmies will begin.

The children aren't safe in their homes, playgrounds, schools and neighbourhoods because the adults aren't safe in their own minds. These adults in their impaired political, social and economic conditions feel harassed and intimidated. They are paranoid and nervous, forever struggling to rise after falling in their own eyes.

That explains why there is a sudden spate of atrocious crimes against children, who are bearing the brunt of fury and lust that drive the impulses of their adults. Fruits are never safe when the trees are endangered. Human civilisation is a delicate balance between the giants and the pygmies. When one side goes down, the other is bound to rise.

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## It just doesn't add up

MOZAMMEL H. KHAN

IN the midst of almost a hundred law suits and tens of thousands of crores of damage suits initiated against *The Daily Star* editor Mahfuz Anam, I personally believed that good sense would prevail and the Prime Minister would intervene against the 'madness of the sycophants' through back door intervention. Many in the land counted on her silence and attributed it as a positive aspect of the fiasco.

However, that expectation was bulldozed by the PM's hard-hitting speech on February 22 in a discussion on the occasion of Amar Ekushey and the International Mother Language Day. Blasting *The Daily Star* for running "the DGFI-supplied false news" against her during the tenure of the last caretaker government, the PM said the *Star* editor himself could not demonstrate his "courage" by stepping down from his post after admitting his faults. "He must have tendered his resignation had he any self-dignity.... For such a mistake, everybody including the common people, Awami League leaders and workers, businessmen and the student community had paid an unbearable price. My family and I also had to pay for the mistake dearly."

As per news reports, Mahfuz Anam in a TV interview has admitted to his "biggest mistake" in journalism, saying it was an error of editorial judgement to run corruption stories against Sheikh Hasina during the 2007-8 military-controlled caretaker regime. Make no mistake, Mahfuz Anam did not admit that he fabricated those stories, DS published them (as other newspapers did), as they came from the Task Force Intelligence Cell (TFIC).

So let us set the record straight. It was TFIC that gave the news to DS, not the other way around. It was not that DS fabricated news and it was on the basis of those news that the DGFI went into action. This was testified by the PM when she said, "Those, who published the DGFI-supplied fake news, had so far written 'fake, false and adulterated reports by pretending to be honest'. Since the introduction of killing in the name of 'crossfire', all the newspapers have been publishing the

news given by RAB. Are there any avenues for the newspapers to verify such news? Are there opportunities for the news media to ask RAB that they want to investigate before they publish the news?"

The country witnessed the emergency rule due to the misrule and corruption of the BNP-Jamaat government, she told her audience. "A different face emerged when the caretaker regime assumed power. They tried to consolidate their power and the two newspapers backed them."

Nothing could be further from the truth. We are fighting ceaselessly against the distortion of our history; let us not do the same ourselves. As

she had argued that the chief of the caretaker government would run the country, not the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI). So she is suggesting that it was the DGFI that was running the country. However, is there any evidence to suggest to the public that Mahfuz Anam was colluding with the DGFI to help them implement their evil design?

The PM has been at the helm of the state since 2009. The CAS was still heading the army when she became the PM until he retired in due time. Did it mean that the DGFI acted without the approval of the CAS or CTG? Had it been the case, why didn't she try those,

War, which was absolutely distorted during the dark era of the BNP-Jamaat government, was reverted, to a great extent, to its true form, thereby, allowing our children to learn the true history of their nation's birth.

Secondly, the father of the nation was given due respect with the visit of the president, the CA, and the chiefs of three services to his mausoleum on his death anniversary.

Thirdly, August 15 was reinstated as the day of national morning, and the government observed the day with due solemnity and dignity.

Fourthly, November 7 was officially abolished as the day of "national revolution and solidarity day".

Finally, the general election was held with an unprecedented 85 percent turnout of the eligible voters in a free and fair environment. The landmark election gave AL the huge mandate to form a popular and representative government.

Now all on a sudden, due to Mahfuz Anam's honest admission, the PM warned: "Those who were involved in this conspiratorial plot would be tried like the war criminals for destroying the Constitution." And by the way, Mahfuz Anam is in no way a neutral person. He wrote his historic commentary on July 17, 2007, headlined, "This is no way to strengthen democracy", "Just as 'command economy' failed, so will 'command politics', following Sheikh Hasina's arrest the day before, when her own party men did not have the courage to take to the street". But he kept himself absolutely mum following the arrest of Khaleda Zia, a former PM and her two sons.

The PM was irked by a certain quarter's expressions of "frustration and grief" over the filing of cases against *The Daily Star* editor. If the PM goes through the list of that "quarter", she will discover among them the natural allies of AL who, for instance, protested - spending hundreds from their own pockets - her arrest and demanded her release despite living in faraway lands like Canada. They have earned the moral right to protest vociferously against any wrongdoing, as they did following her own internment.

The writer is the Convener of the Canadian Committee for Human Rights and Democracy in Bangladesh.

*We are fighting ceaselessly against the distortion of our history; let us not do the same ourselves. As far as the DS is concerned, when none of the AL leaders, none of the newspapers of the country dared to open their mouths against the Chief of Army Staff's (CAS) tacit intention to create 'our own' brand of democracy, it was only Mahfuz Anam who had the bravado to write a commentary under the heading, "Gen Moeen goes public on politics."*

far as the DS is concerned, when none of the AL leaders, none of the newspapers of the country dared to open their mouths against the Chief of Army Staff's (CAS) tacit intention to create 'our own' brand of democracy, it was only Mahfuz Anam who had the bravado to write a commentary under the heading, "Gen Moeen goes public on politics", which he concluded with the following:

"Simply put, we strongly feel our armed forces should not involve themselves in politics. They have a mission behind which there is popular support, which they should accomplish and return to their barracks."

even in absentia, responsible in DGFI for her internment and ill-treatment or for that matter those who obstructed her return home?. Even the victims of such torture did not go public to tell the nation the kind of duress they experienced that forced them to make such 'false' confessions of corruption which Mahfuz Anam is 'guilty' of publishing.

All along, it was lurking in my mind why the Sheikh Hasina government did not put those culprits on the dock. The answer that came to my mind was that the AL probably felt obliged by the following bold acts of the CTG: Firstly, the history of our Liberation