

## Air cargo flights to UK suspended

### Address the security concerns

THE ban on all air cargo flights out of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to the UK has just come into effect on security grounds. This spells disaster for exporters, not only readymade garments but also the lucrative export of fresh and processed foodstuffs that include vegetables, fish and fruits. The UK is home to the largest Bangladeshi expatriate community and a ban on flights out to that country has a lot of businesses worried sick. Why did we let things come to this stage? The UK is the second country after Australia to slap a ban like this. And although this is being touted as temporary by Bangladeshi authorities, the cost in terms of reputation and business will have far reaching implications.

We are informed by media reports that the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh has been working towards ensuring foolproof security but this has come too little too late. We should have moved faster to procure the requisite security equipment immediately after October 2015 when the UK put Shahjalal Airport on a list of 38 airports as being too vulnerable in security terms, but we did not pay enough heed. The recommendations for engaging security personnel to operate cargo complex using modern scanning machines were not taken seriously enough.

It is high time we got our act together. There is a review coming up by a UK team on March 13 and we need to show our good intent to get the message across that authorities are working seriously on addressing security loopholes. A ban such as this is the last thing our exporters need.

## An indomitable spirit

### Help him achieve his dream

FOR Md Nasiruddin of Jhalakathi, perseverance is a long word for a simple idea: never giving up. The extraordinary student has fought the oppressive elements of the society and held them to a standoff by enrolling in a Master's programme which he is paying for by pulling a rickshaw.

Born into a poor family of seven children, Nasiruddin covered his living and educational costs working as a tutor but when his father fell ill, the responsibility of supporting his family fell on his shoulders. Unshakable by the stigma that is often attached to physical labour, he took up rickshaw pulling.

What's remarkable about him is the fact that he studied in a Madrasa—scoring GPA 4 in both Dakhil and Alim exams—before graduating with a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in English from Suhrawardy College in Pirojpur. It proves that his quest for knowledge is continuous and not confined to one particular area. Although he misses a lot of classes for obvious reasons, he makes sure to visit his department on a regular basis to borrow books.

His is a journey based on courage, determination and persistence. While the society offered him no lifelines, acted on no principles, Nasiruddin acted wholly on distinctions, principles, and one supposes, of faith. It does not take a lot of resources to help promising young people like him. The affluent in the area should provide him with a decent job or a scholarship. And his college can give him special dispensation to allow him to attend classes and learn.

## COMMENTS

**"Tigers title hopes iced with hot Mahmudullah held back"**

(March 8, 2016)

Safa

Our bowling performance was poor in the final match. Anyway, better luck next time.

**"Son all too lonely as mother also departs" (March 7, 2016)**

Sharika Tanzeem Ansari

We feel very sorry for Zarif. The poor boy lost everyone at such a tender age. Our deepest condolences for him. Wish we could do something for him.

# Is the dream of democracy going downhill?



CROSS TALK

MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

FORMER US presidential contender Mitt Romney lambasted his own party frontrunner Donald Trump and called him a conman, fraud and phony.

Earlier, former Malaysian premier Mahathir Mohamad had announced that he was quitting the ruling party UMNO to protest the alleged "corruption" of sitting premier Najib Razak. These are but two examples of how even more advanced democracies are seething with leadership crisis. Democracy is going the way of sophisticated equipment in absence of qualified handlers.

It's the beauty of democracy that sensible stalwarts have taken positions against their party colleagues instead of falling in line with their mischiefs and misdeeds. But it's also the irony of democracy that it churns out leaders who provoke such contentions. Donald

**Loss of standard in many democracies has created its own double standard.**

Trump and Najib Razak are popular choices, but their images embody spite for peoples' interests.

Trump, who is an icon of insanity, and Razak, who has ratcheted up disdain for his alleged involvement in a huge

financial scam, make the high watermark of a deluge that threatens to submerge democracy and its institutions. Not to speak of many other countries of the world where democracy is more an excuse than a cause. In these arrested democracies, election is pretension, Parliament is presumption and the Constitution is confusion. Thus loss of standard in many

their people but to mislead them. And it so happens because popularity, instead of being the measure of people looking for strengths in their leaders, has been reduced to leaders looking for weaknesses in their people.

So larger-than-life leaders are fast becoming a thing of the past and smaller-than-life leaders are stepping into their shoes. Mitt Romney asked if the

earth. The rise of the business class everywhere has taken away leadership from selfless leaders and invested it in selfish hands. Politicians lusting for money and businessmen lusting for power have created an absurd class of powerful people who don't know where to draw the line between greed and need, ideals and ideas, people and profit, and country and commerce.

Thus they are turning the clock back on democracy, which is being hustled down the forsaken path. If people were subjugated and oppressed by kings, autocrats and feudal lords hundreds of years ago it was the military might that allowed a few to intimidate many. Now economic might is doing the same thing, bribery, corruption and other inducements reducing people into chattels who can be bought and sold for cash and kind.

The upshot is that democracy is looking like a spent force. And, instead of being the talisman for their freedom and liberty, democracy has created a state of paralysis when people can't even stir a finger against those who lie to them or steal their votes. Democracy is thus stewing in its own juice as people, instead of being empowered, have been cowered into the corner.

Donald Trump and Nazib Razak are the poster boys of that petrification when people have no choice but to endorse them. The idea that a government should be of the people, by the people and for the people has been shortchanged just like bullets in a gun are replaced by blanks. Democracy is perhaps done for the day.

We shall see more of the same in future. A dog-and-pony show, democracy uses a highly promoted, often over-staged performance, to subjugate people by their own choice.

The writer is editor of the weekly *First News* and an opinion writer for *The Daily Star*. Email: badtul151@yahoo.com.



Mahathir Mohamad and Najib Razak

PHOTO: THE MALAYSIAN INSIDER

democracies has created its own double standard. But who between people and their politicians are to blame for it? Are people bringing down the standards of their leaders? Or, are leaders bringing down the standards of their people? When insults fly in GOP debates in the United States, or Narendra Modi whips up public frenzy to spread religious hatred and vengeance in India, two of the largest democratic machineries in the world show the sign of spitting. It also raises doubts about the efficacy of the system itself.

One reason for this dismal disturbance is the blurring line between popularity and integrity of politicians. And democracy, like an angry sea, throws back to the shore the same garbage dumped in its water. Leaders no longer rise to lead

Americans would welcome their children and grandchildren acting the way Donald Trump does, and Mahathir Mohamad vented his frustration saying, "I won't call it UMNO anymore, this is Najib's party." They actually meant to lament the loss of moral heights amongst the leaders.

Can democracy tide over these tumultuous times? Probably not, because the cause of this concern is deeply rooted in its delicate balance. Finding respectable leaders leading disillusioned people is almost as impossible as finding disillusioned people following respectable leaders. The failure of democracy is seeded in this terrible equation as politicians and people keep dragging each other down.

And, somewhere in that failure, cream of the crop is ceding place to scum of

# 7th March: The pinnacle of a relationship

ENAYETULLAH KHAN

*More than anyone else in Bangladesh's history, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman enjoyed a relationship with his people. That special relationship reached its zenith at the Racecourse Maidan on March 7.*

THAT year 1971, as we all know by now, threw up a number of dates that will remain forever etched in the history of Bangladesh, and command its people's reverence. Particularly, March 26 and December 16, commemorated respectively as the dates of Independence and Victory, stand out in the popular consciousness, constitutionally enshrined as indelible landmarks in the emergence of Bangladesh. They are marked on every calendar and appear on the 'important dates' column of every diary, not to mention the annual holiday sheet. Yet there are many - or at least maybe the 10 lakh or so who made their way to the Racecourse on March 7 that year - who in thinking back, will find it hard to name any other day, or date, or moment, that can take that afternoon's place as the pinnacle of Bangladeshi nationalism.

I mentioned the million-or-so who came. They came, on that soggy March afternoon, from all corners of the country. And having arrived, spread out again, away from the rudimentary stage that had been erected in vast concentric circles, till as far as the eye could see. I weigh those words today - some 44 years later, and almost shudder at how literally I mean it. It so poignantly contrasts the countless number of times one may utter the same words, with such casual disregard for their meaning. No, here were gathered one million

human beings, and their pulse beat as one. Being the great, natural leader of men that he was, Sheikh Mujib - Bangabandhu after all, with all the instinct for his people's feelings implied by that name - captures it in an instant, and in maybe 15-20 minutes, delivers it back with such authority and conviction, the truth of his words stinging the air. It is inconceivable to have been there and not come away from it completely convinced of his

personal fortitude to the position for a while, but that 'relationship' I'm talking about is built over many more years. The people in Bengal started making a friend, at least his acquaintance, as he made his way around the rural heartland in the east on his bicycle, many a year before he became Bangabandhu. They called him Mujibur, a staid spelling that rendered it almost a different name to the endearing call of 'Mojibor', which is how they

as he did on March 7, 1971.

I had made my way there with my friend, the dearly departed Mishuk Munier, and his brilliant father, Professor Munier Chowdhury, the martyred intellectual, who were our neighbours on the DU campus. I clearly recall how we milled about on the great expanse of the Maidan like ants, the day's din a cacophony of speculation as to what was to come. Would we hear a categorical declaration? Were

people (After "I come to you with a heavy heart", "You know everything, and you understand everything"). He spoke of them, their miseries, the injustice and cruelty to which they were subjected ("The weapons I paid for to defend the nation, are today turned against my own people" and "How my mothers have been made senseless."). He trusted them ("Bangalira, act using your judgement!"). He confided ("I speak to Yahya Khan on the telephone"). And assuredly, with the cacophony building up, he spoke by them, and they spoke by him.

The honesty in the relationship can be told by how twice, or maybe more, but twice that I recall, he very pointedly broke his chain of thought to remind us all, his fate was uncertain, and so to continue their struggle still ("Even if I'm not there to command you!"). This was after all, this time around, "the struggle for independence".

Today, we hear the term "crisis of leadership" being used to try and make sense of the political impasse that is gripping Bangladesh. Squeezing it dry of the vitality, its young demographic demands to make their mark in the world. With 24 years now since the advent of democracy, the time is ripe for a leader who is in touch with the population, who knows their buttons and soft corners, how to win them over, without resorting to deception. Who recognises their troubles. The country needs a period of self-introspection, overseen by a leader they trust. Looking around, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangabandhu's daughter, represents our best bet to make that happen.

The writer is Editor-in-Chief, UNB and Dhaka Courier.



leadership. That day, he could have said we'd go for parting the sea, and we would have taken turns carrying the staff with which he'd do it.

In light of the unsavoury nature of all the politicking in recent times, I've been recalling his leadership, that particular relationship with his people that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman enjoyed, that has never quite been reproduced since, on these shores. Ziaur Rahman brought his sense of integrity and great

started coming to know this fellow, wiry and bespectacled, with a sincere face that encouraged people to talk to him. Just around the time, Suhrawardy spotted his strengths as a trusted organiser of the people. That's when Mujib started a lifelong conversation with the people he left as Bangladeshis at his death. A leader so in tune with the ebb and flow of his people's feelings, can never betray that privilege. Only a leader like him could speak his nation's mind,

the six-points to stand? What about the violence that had gripped the country in the preceding week, with the military effectively deployed?

To have been there was to have lived a bit of Liberation. Bangabandhu took the stage, and instantly everyone in every corner sat (or stood) transfixed, hanging on every word that poured out of his soul in all directions, washing over this great sea of humanity that had seemingly obliterated the green of the Maidan. He spoke to his

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Non-stick cookware not safe

Non-stick cookware is now widely used in the kitchen for cooking purposes. But they release toxic fumes which are harmful for humans, animals and environment when heated at high temperatures. Non-stick cookware surfaces are coated with a synthetic polymer known as Teflon. When a non-stick cookware is heated during cooking, it releases toxic fumes and inhaling of this fume may cause flu like symptoms known as "Teflon Flu" in humans. It is better to restrict the use of non-stick cookware; instead, stainless steel cookware should be used for cooking.

In my opinion, we should go back to earthen pans and pots, our traditional cookware. These are safe. And using them can protect our cottage industries.

Professor M Zahidul Haque

Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System, SAU, Dhaka

### Mangoes in all seasons!

For the mango lovers, it is obviously exciting news that they are going to be able to relish the taste of mangoes all the year round. According to a news report (TDS, March 5, 2016), the scientists at the Regional Horticulture Research Station in Chapainawganj have invented a special variety of mango that would be produced in plenty on trees which would yield ripen delicious mangoes in February, May, August and November every



PHOTO: STAR

year. They say they have already been successful in producing two

trees full of these mangoes. However, the scientists say that they might have to spend two more years for being able to cultivate the fruit commercially.

We appreciate the research efforts of our scientists and congratulate them on their success in inventing the all-season mangoes.

Mohammad Rukanuddin  
Assistant Professor of English  
Ahsanullah University of Science  
and Technology

### Improve domestic cricket

Bangladesh cricket team has proved its class and quality to the world in 2015 and 2016. But to sustain such performances in the long run, we need to improve the quality of our domestic cricket. We need to increase the number of domestic tournaments. BPL matches should take place more frequently. Also, gym and practice facilities must be improved to meet international standards.

Nasif Ferdous  
Sylhet