

## Biman gets new Board

Restore its past credentials

At long last, we see changes at the top of the management in Bangladesh Biman. It has not come a day too early, but should have come much earlier. It is sad to see the steady decline of the national carrier due to inept and incompetent management. We have a new team now and it is our hope that the moribund Biman will see a recrudescence.

We feel that a mere reshuffling of the board will not be enough for Biman to regain some of its lost glory. Over the years, the airlines has lost a lot of business to other carriers. The nagging problems associated with systemic graft and bad management calls have turned this once proud national air carrier into a service that has become more synonymous with an airline that consistently misses flight schedules and is unable to satisfy even the most basic consumer satisfaction levels.

As things stand now, the Board is largely a traditional mixture of bureaucrats from the various ministries and some business leaders. However, we feel that it should consist more people with knowledge of the airline business. There is need for responding to one of the most dynamic industries of the present world and that can only be done if the Board consists of persons who have had long years of running airlines. It is a highly competitive business and regaining passenger confidence will require a lot of changes in the way Biman does business.

## Halda River at stake

Control tobacco farming near the river area

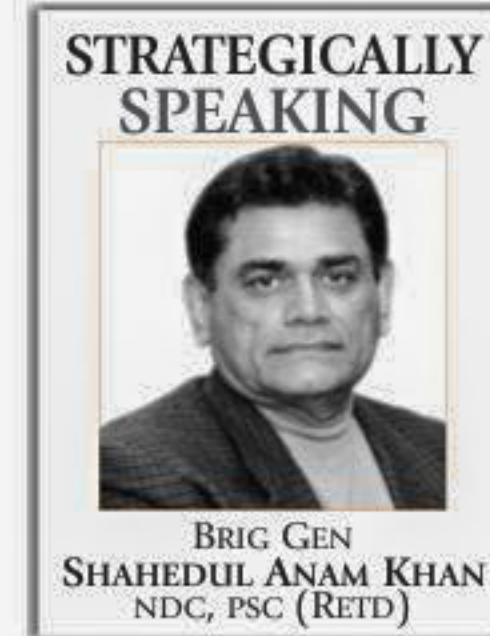
The country's largest natural breeding ground for carp, Halda River, has been under threat owing to various manmade hazards, including industrial waste and sewage contamination, sand extraction and illegal fishing. The situation has gotten worse due to unprecedented tobacco farming near the ecologically sensitive river catchment area. A research shows that the amount of fish eggs laid in the river dropped down drastically to only 47 kg in 2015 from 5,000 kg in 1945.

In the last three years, tobacco farming has increased 50 folds in the area. Tobacco requires up to four times more fertiliser and pesticide than traditional crops. Excess amounts of fertiliser and pesticides wash down to the nearby river and seriously contaminate the fish spawning zone.

It is alleged that tobacco companies induce local farmers with various incentives to discontinue cultivation of traditional crops in favour of tobacco. The local administration seems quite oblivious of this alarming trend. Bangladesh is a signatory to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which requires the government to take preventive steps to protect the environment from tobacco-related damage, by helping farmers grow alternative crops. Unfortunately there is little government campaign against tobacco production.

The government should immediately curb this menacing spread of tobacco farming near the Halda River. The farmers should be given incentives to grow alternative crops. Even then the nearby croplands should use organic fertiliser and pest control system. The river's hinterland should also be reforested.

# In the eye of the storm



BRIG GEN SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN NDC, PSC (RETD)

**STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING**  
NOBODY can remain unaffected by the grisly murder of a promising young woman whose life was nipped in the bud by a heartless killer. Tonu was one of several women who in recent times in this country met a gruesome end after suffering torture at the hands of the killers. And seldom, if at all, has the murder of a person generated such a reaction with such spontaneity all over the country as has the death of Tonu. The reactions are understandable, and the passion and intensity of the outbursts are due as much to the identity of the victim as to the likely identity of the perpetrator(s). And that is why the overwhelming reaction of people empathising with Tonu and calling for unearthing the truth of the matter and identifying the killer(s) and bringing him/them to justice, whosoever they might be, and as soon as it is practicable.

And by the same token, seldom has the Bangladesh Army found itself in such a situation, quite inadvertently, stemming from what is patently a pure law and order issue. This is because the unfortunate incident has occurred inside a military area which is supposed to be a 'sanitised' place, and where everyone and everything should be safe. That such is not the case is evident from the way Tonu met her end. And it proves that everyone that resides within the cantonment area is not an angel descended from the heavens. And because the murder took place inside a cantonment it has devolved on the Army primarily to see the end of the matter swiftly.

However, there is one particular reason that, I think, has led to the vociferous nature of the reaction, and that is – the perception that has been created in the mind of the people from the very outset – that there is an attempt to put the matter under wraps. The way the state of the deceased was recorded, the fact that a second autopsy has been ordered, reportedly, even before the substance of the first autopsy report has been made public, that there has not been any palpable progress in the case in the last ten days since the murder, has accreted to build that perception. The matter has been compounded by the fact that Tonu's parents were grilled, not by the investigating authority directly involved in the case, but by Rab, and, reportedly, coerced to own up to the murder. And one does not know as yet why Rab had to cull a portion of ground at the site where the body was found without the knowledge of the CID, who happens to be the investigating authority, much to their chagrin.



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All quarters must understand the messages the public demonstrations are conveying. One of which is that the authorities will do everything to get to the bottom of the matter. It is important that the culprit is identified quickly. There have been several cases, not all murders, where the alleged accused, because of their ostensible links with the high and the mighty, have evaded justice and managed to avoid punishment for a long time. The remonstrations stem from the fear that investigation of sensational murder cases running up against the wall if the perpetrators are close to the powers that be.

One has not forgotten the case of Sagar – Runi

which has apparently faded into oblivion and the momentum of the movement has very markedly, yet inexplicably, appeared to have been diffused.

It took more than a year to finalise the charge-sheet of the Narayanganj seven-murder case where the court was constrained to point out several shortcomings therein, and detractors suggest that those were not unintended. And because of his links the main accused, reportedly, is passing his days in a hospital 'prison' cell, apparently suffering from a back pain.

The Basic Bank is another case in point where the main person responsible for the scam has been left untouched;

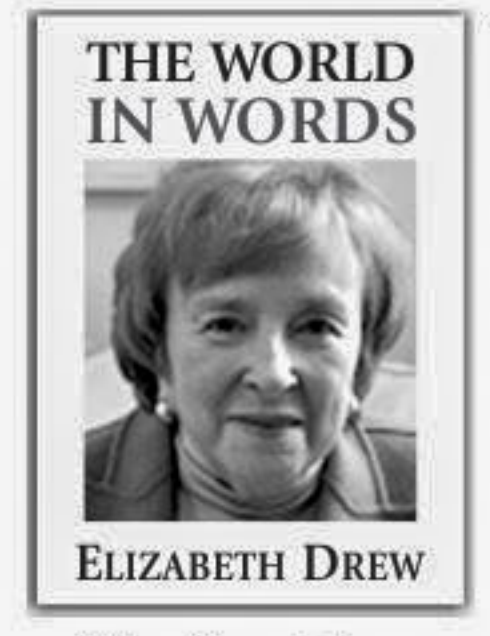
It is in the interest of the Army's credibility that everything should be done to resolve the mystery. Cantonments are not sacrosanct areas and from time to time criminal acts do occur in there. There are all shades of people residing in the cantonment, not all circumscribed by military rules and regulations. And it is not beyond the realm of possibility that there would be people with base instincts disposed towards venting their bestial desire.

There is nothing for the Army to prove except that it will not countenance crime whoever the perpetrator may be.

The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star

## PROJECT SYNDICATE

# Why Trump?



ELIZABETH DREW

**THE WORLD IN WORDS**  
WHATEVER becomes of his candidacy – whether he wins the Republican Party's nomination or is even elected President of the United States – Americans and the rest of the world will be wondering for a long time how the phenomenon of Donald Trump happened. They are already doing so.

The first thing to understand is that American political parties have nothing to do with who runs for the US presidency. In fact, US political parties amount to a collection of functionaries who arrange the process of selecting a presidential nominee and push for victories for the party in the November elections.

Presidential candidates are, in reality, freelancers. They decide on their own whether to run, and the decision is based on their sense (and perhaps polling) of how they would do and whether they can collect the necessary funds.

Some people run simply out of ego or greed. The publicity that attends a presidential bid can garner even a failed candidate a book contract, a television gig, or a well-paid speaking career (or perhaps all three). Trump ran on the basis of his celebrity. A famous developer with his name on all sorts of edifices and a personal fortune, he had been the star of a long-running prime-time "reality" show – a lodestone of US popular culture. He knew that America's party system is so nebulous that he could decide on his own to run for president, and that there was no party structure to stop him. (At least, that is what he is hoping, if he heads to the nominating convention in Cleveland this summer without enough delegates to sew up the nomination.)

Trump read the zeitgeist well: He played to the anger of the working class – those left behind in the shift from a manufacturing-led economy to one based on information. This was the group most hurt by trade deals such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which encouraged US companies to move their factories to Mexico and gave business owners who remained leverage to hold down wages.

Trump lambastes NAFTA and promises that, as president, he would make trade deals that are more favourable to workers. Early on, he based his campaign on anti-immigration sentiment, launching his run by calling Mexican immigrants "rapists" and "murderers."

Trump's campaign is premised on his reputation as a fabulously successful businessman, though it's not clear just how successful he's been; there have been four bankruptcies, and some of the businesses based on his brand have failed. He bristles at questions about whether he's worth \$10 billion, as he claims, and resists releasing his tax returns, which is expected of presidential aspirants.

Though Trump still mentions the preposterous wall he has vowed to build along the border with Mexico (with Mexico footing the bill), he has now made trade his main issue. It is no coincidence that both Trump and Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton's opponent for the Democratic Party's nomination, have made trade a major issue. Both Trump and Sanders are riding a middle-class revolt. Unemployment among those just out of college, a key constituency for Sanders, is 12 percent. Most of Trump's followers may not have gone to college, and if they lost their jobs because of trade deals – or think they did – they haven't received the retraining they were promised (or they have jobs with pay that has stagnated for years).

A whiff of fascism was apparent in Trump's campaign from the outset: The strong man will eliminate the barriers keeping his supporters from getting ahead. By sheer force of will, he will make life better for them.

When some of Trump's backers at a campaign rally last November in Birmingham, Alabama, were beating up a black protester, Trump encouraged them to hit the man harder, shouting, "Get him outta here." Liking the sound of this and his audience's ecstatic response, Trump repeated the phrase several times and at subsequent rallies. Rather than ignore them, as many politicians do, Trump calls attention to protesters to show how a strong man responds to them.

Spurring violence is one of Trump's instruments for gaining power. Were he to become President – which cannot be ruled out at this point – there is little reason to doubt that he would exploit violence to maintain power. The violence that broke out at the site of a

planned Chicago rally in mid-March was probably no accident: the chosen location invited it. Trump took credit for calling off the rally and, understanding how media works, he was available for interviews on the three major cable news channels as footage of the violence was played over and over.

The panicked Republican establishment that is now scrambling to block Trump from gaining enough delegates to win the nomination may be too divided and ineffectual to succeed. They are also torn over whether to try to block him at the convention, knowing that if they do, his followers may rebel. A few weeks ago, a small number of Republicans began to

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reconcile themselves to the idea that a President Trump wouldn't be so bad; but this stopped when Trump continued apparently to encourage violence. Other Republicans concluded that his nationalism and nativism, as well as his ignorance about public affairs, make him dangerous. And now they have reason to fear that something has been unleashed that no one can stop.

The writer is the author of Washington Journal: Reporting Watergate and Richard Nixon's Downfall. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2016. www.project-syndicate.org (Exclusive to The Daily Star)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### America's Israeli connection

AIPAC or the American Israel Public Affairs Committee describes itself as the most important organisation shaping the US relationship with Israel. With a budget of \$65 million and membership now standing at over 100,000, it is no wonder that congressional staffers consider it one of the most powerful and effective lobbies on Capitol Hill. AIPAC's support for US military aid to Israel amounts to over \$3 billion per year. The influence of the Israeli Lobby over US politicians is widely acknowledged.

In the occupied territories, what Israel is doing is much worse than apartheid. The Israeli settlements are expanding and flourishing. More and more people are moving into the West Bank. Israeli has refused to abide by UN Resolution No. 242 in which virtually the whole world, including America, agreed that Israel should withdraw from Palestinian territories. If the US government continues to support Israeli atrocities, America will be left standing alone with its powerful hand caught painfully in an Israeli trap!  
Ted Rudow III, MA  
CA, USA

### Act responsibly

From newspaper reports, we learned that a deal is going on with an Indian company to build a power plant in Bhola Island while the government continues to award power project contracts on the basis of unsolicited negotiations under the Special Act for Speedy Supply of Power and Energy.

Construction of power plants is necessary to meet the ever increasing demand for power. But the government must also take into consideration the impacts of these power plants on the environment.  
Nur Jahan, Chittagong

## COMMENTS

**"Exhumation of body ordered"**  
(March 29, 2016)

Ruth Filby

Whoever did this to her should receive the highest punishment under law. And there must be a proper investigation instead of forced statements. I wish justice for Tonu and her family.

Salahuddin Jamal

Along with the perpetrators, the highest punishment should also be given to those who forced Tonu's parents to lie about her relationship with a boy. It's disgraceful how they forced the grieving parents to say something like that.

**"Jamaat ready to take new name"**  
(March 28, 2016)

Ave Raafat

And then they will try to brainwash people in new ways.

Mamun Hussain

That's fine but what about their ideology?

**"3 confess to killing schoolboy Mishu"**  
(March 28, 2016)

Toufiq Rahman

So 14-year-olds are getting involved in murder nowadays! Almighty, save us!