

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
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Faulty CNG cylinders

Enforce testing, provide more centres

TWO horrible accidents within the same week involving faulty gas cylinders in vehicles should be a wakeup call to CNG vehicle users and the authorities that immediate steps have to be taken to prevent such devastating disasters. In the latest incident, two people were killed and four others injured when the CNG cylinder of a car exploded when the car was being refueled at a station. Investigating authorities believe it was because the cylinder was defective.

In fact, a *Daily Star* report has found that a huge number of CNG-run vehicles run the risk of explosion due to faulty or counterfeit cylinders. This is because cylinders of some 1.5 lakh vehicles in the country have not been tested since their conversion into CNG quite a few years ago. International guidelines, followed by a government circular, have stipulated that gas cylinders must go through fitness tests every five years. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in this country due to lack of awareness amongst vehicle owners, lax enforcement of the required tests by the authorities and a dearth of testing centres.

More disasters, meanwhile, are waiting to happen. Apart from the two accidents that occurred within one week, there have been quite a few others involving gas cylinders of buses and other vehicles. It is crucial that the government take immediate measures to set up more testing areas, and require that all vehicles owners submit CNG cylinder test reports to the BRTA. An awareness campaign is also necessary to alert vehicle owners and passengers regarding the risk of explosion in vehicles with faulty gas cylinders and the need for these cylinders to get tested.

Preventing heart attacks

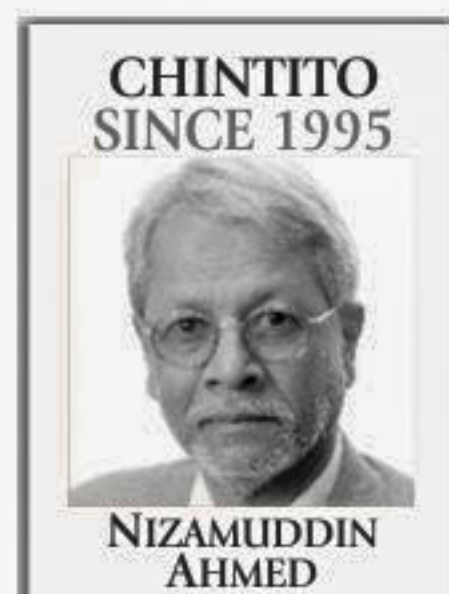
Small steps can save lives

ABOUT a quarter patients die within one hour of a heart attack, which can be prevented by the immediate administering of some simple medication and injections such as streptokinase or urokinase, according to some prominent physicians of the country. At a recently held seminar, they suggested that patients be rushed to the nearest hospital with amenities including angiogram, angioplasty, stenting and bypass surgery.

Several studies show that people in South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, have a higher risk of heart disease at an early age than any other ethnic group in the world. What are we doing wrong? It could be our food habits, according to a study jointly conducted by ICDDR, Bangladesh National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases and Cambridge University. The study finds the presence of toxic heavy metals such as arsenic, copper and mercury in human blood that doubles the risk of heart attack. How did these chemicals find their way in our blood? Adulterated food and arsenic in water could, reportedly, be the cause.

It is common knowledge that diabetes, increased blood pressure and smoking are factors that heighten the risk of heart attacks. People should be made aware of the fact that some form of physical exercise is crucial to reduce the risk factors for cardiovascular diseases. While adulteration in food is a complex problem with no seemingly easy solution, quitting smoking and doing exercise are simple lifestyle changes that can do a lot of good. And hospitals and clinics must be equipped with emergency cardiac drugs and other facilities to immediately treat patients experiencing a heart attack which could very well save their lives.

Famed by PP, framed at BB



A city can become famous for one or more reasons; for instance, Dhaka is famous for its myriad of masjids, although some may prefer tagging traffic jams or 'relieving' denizens standing against a wall, looking smilingly towards the sky every now and then.

London is a top tourist destination for its red buses, red roses and David Cameron's integrity for having paid taxes for the red money his father stowed in Blairmore Holdings, a hitherto unknown overseas account.

Paris made its name for the soaring tower that Gustave Eiffel built, and for the quite unnecessary but abysmal l'affaire du voile (or the veil affair) under which Muslim schoolgirls cannot cover their head.

Perhaps the French lost their freedom when they gifted to New York their most famous landmark, La Liberté Éclairant Le Monde (okay, the Statue of Liberty) that a Frenchman, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, designed, and another (the same Eiffel) constructed in 1886. More recently, it is also famous for a trump card that no one knew existed until a racist bigot from Queens opened his mouth.

Beijing draws visitors to the Great Wall that stretches thousands of miles beyond the Chinese capital, and to the Bird's Nest - which can house thousands, but is infamous for the many who would like to coo outside their given nests.

Taiwan carved a name for the 101-storied skyscraper it dared to construct in 2004, and... before you get any more impatient, I was coming to Panama.

One wonders why corporate service providers in some of the other economically-starving (?) cities like Panama City, despite their skyscrapers, casinos and nightclubs did not think of stashing others' secret monies to earn that extra buck for survival. One good reason could be because it is illegal, and those other cities, Dhaka included, have some self-respect, although we are not really living hand to mouth with 7 percent GDP in sight.

Also, it is not really illegal to have illegal money here, because come every budget, the reigning minister hands all large-scale tax evaders (the rubbish people) a bucket of white paint to legalise

black taka, with his simultaneous pledge that the same mercy will not be shown the following year. It's a vicious loop. It may stop this financial year, we hope, and if so, I pledge to shave my head and cover it under a Panama hat only to weather the forty degrees that cometh every April.

Simply because it is that much convenient to turn 'guilt-less' overnight in Bangladesh, the motivation for the lords of the powerful ring to contact Mossack Fonseca, a law firm (hah!), is that much scant, although some have reportedly shown that investing across national boundaries is a better consideration than becoming seasonal b/w painters.

very few people from the south side of the Niagara Falls, yet another awesome destination, have been named in the Pee-Pee (not to be confused as the source of the water drops). That is because they too follow the Bangla model - 'I am bad' means 'I am good'. Oh! How I miss Michael Jackson!

That notion and the fact that we sleep like *behush* on Fridays even in some KPIs was enough reason for an international money-laundering racket to select Bangladesh as having the ideal central bank to hack. Sometime in February 4-5 this year, digital hackers conducted a failed heist of \$850 million and a successful one

state spiked by fiscal profit or loss.

Therefore, who better to epitomise kindness than the Manila-based Chinese casino junket operator, who seemingly without his arm being twisted, decided to hand back to Bangladesh the money (in heaps of cash) that somehow made its way to his bank account? Somehow? But he is doing it in stages, lest the world thinks that returning cash in any amount is not heart-breaking. Or perhaps hoping that the Bangladesh Bank Governor will at one point say, "Keep the change", for him to reciprocate with a "Xie xie" (pr. sh-ay, sh-ay).

Talking about thank you, we owe big

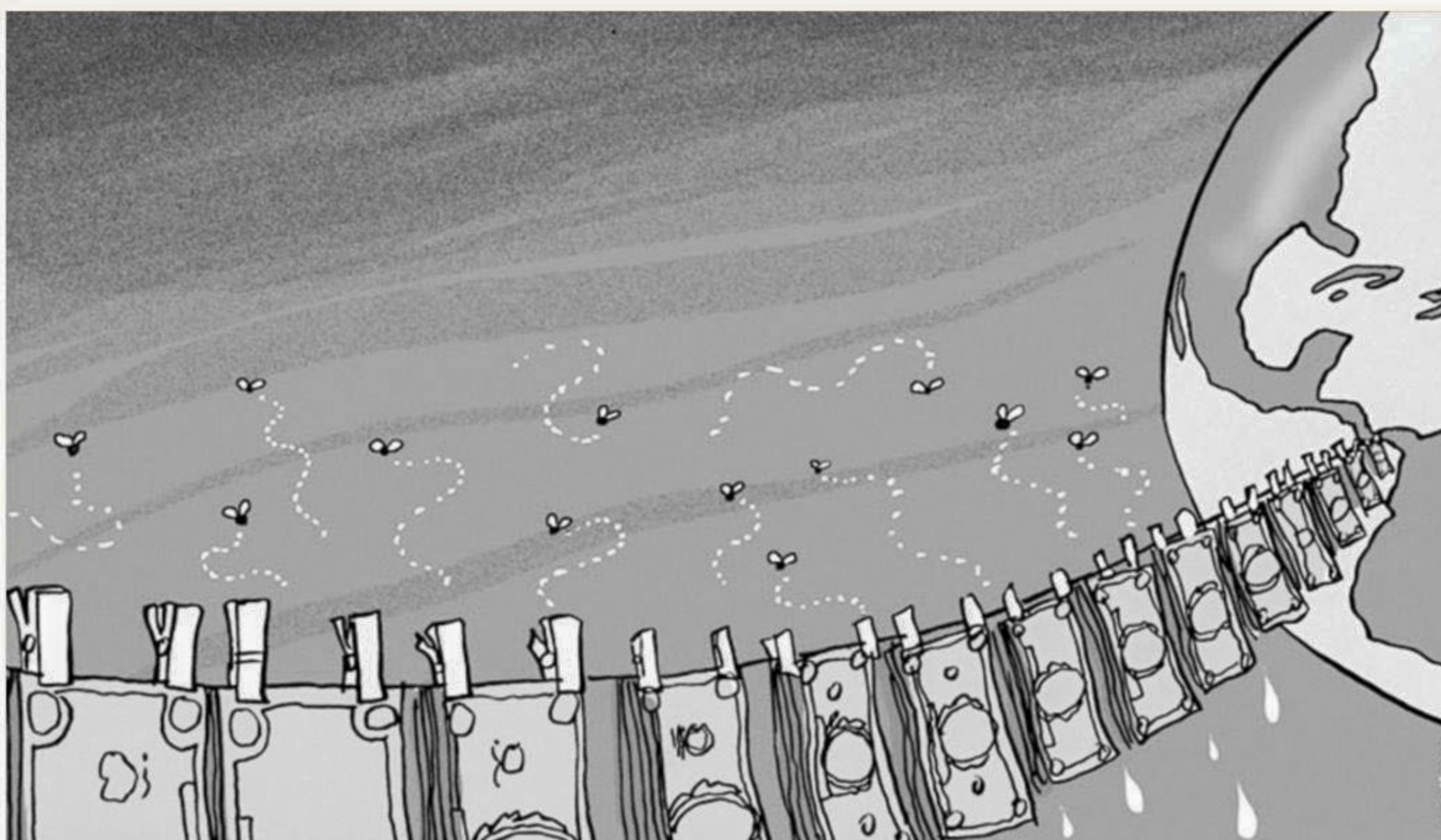


PHOTO: ALFREDO MARTIRENA/CARTOONMOVEMENT.COM

Some economic reporters have also tried to divert the pressure from the money-brities (perhaps because of Aishwarya of Bachchan fame) by explaining that there is nothing illegal in maintaining offshore accounts of funds, which were otherwise secretly transferred to perhaps evade home taxation. *Arey Bhai*, (always address the rich as your brother) *Arey Bhai*, if it were legitimate transactions, why did the bewildered world have to learn of such surreptitious holdings only after the names were leaked?

Despite the leaks being as large as the famous falls at Madhabkundo, a major tourist attraction in Sylhet, surprisingly

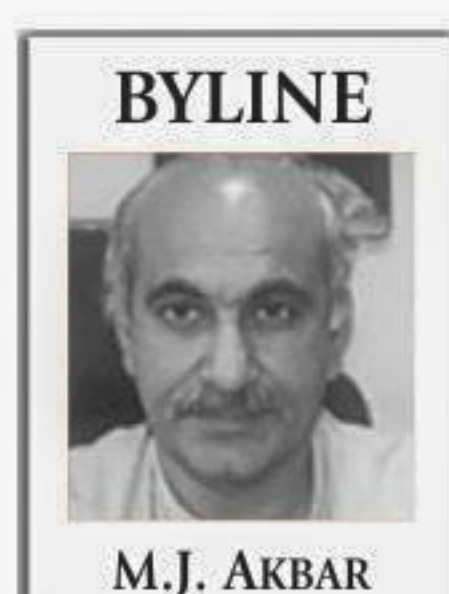
of \$101 million, proudly the highest known theft amount in the history of humankind. The nation under KII and awkwardly, its Finance Minister was informed of the pond-theft amazingly one month after Bangladesh Bank became aware of it.

The unearthing of the mammoth international *dakati* was also an opportunity for the inquisitive to embark on a quest as to why the human species is suffixed with 'kind'. We can now reveal the cause by acknowledging the many novels as well as movies where gamblers are portrayed on the inside being more 'kind' than most people, which could be because of their drunken

ones to Bangladesh Bank's recently-awakened security system and to the unsung Deutsche Bank, the intermediary agency, which together jammed the transfer of another \$850 million from Bangladesh's Central Bank's account at New York's Federal Reserve Bank. For those of us who do not handle that kind of cash, that in Bangla taka means almost 6,650 crore. Phew! I had no idea we had that much money tucked away in an overseas account.

The writer is a practising Architect at BashaBari Ltd., a Commonwealth Scholar and a Fellow, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout Leader, and a Major Donor Rotarian.

Gandhi, Chakrayya and Ambedkar



IN May 1947, Mahatma Gandhi suffered a grievous personal loss. Chakrayya, a young Dalit disciple who had served at Sevagram Ashram since its inception in 1935, died of brain

tumour. He was like family; the Mahatma's grief was palpable and public.

On June 2, Gandhi startled his prayer meeting with a radical suggestion. He first explained his decision to name Jawaharlal Nehru as the "uncrowned king of India": having studied at Harrow and Cambridge before becoming barrister, Nehru was needed to negotiate with Englishmen. It was not the most persuasive of arguments, but Gandhi wanted to convey that Nehru's role as free India's first Prime Minister was not in question. But there was a second post, technically higher than a Prime Minister's in the new Indian polity, that was vacant.

I quote: "But the time is fast approaching when India will have to elect the first President of the Republic. I would have proposed the name of Chakrayya, had he been alive. I would wish with all my heart to have a brave, selfless and pure-hearted Dalit [the term Gandhi used, now obsolete, has been changed here and elsewhere] girl to be our first President. It is no vain dream...Our future President will have no need to know English. Of

course he will be assisted by men who are proficient in political matters and who also know foreign languages. These dreams, however, can be realised only if we devote all our attention to our villages instead of killing each other" [*Collected Works*, Volume 95].

On June 6, Gandhi pursued this idea in a conversation with Rajendra Prasad, who would of course become India's first president. Gandhi framed his proposal

Neither Gandhi nor those Congress leaders preparing to enter office thought that Babasaheb Ambedkar might be worth consideration as the first rashtrapati. Ambedkar certainly had the qualifications and repute.

thus: "If all the leaders join the Cabinet, it will be very difficult to maintain contact with the people at large...That is why I suggested even in my prayer speech that a Dalit like Chakrayya or a Dalit girl should be made the nation's first President and Jawaharlal should become

the Prime Minister..." Since Chakrayya had died, a young Dalit woman could be given the honour.

Congress leaders were unimpressed. It is interesting that Chakrayya is never mentioned by any of them in their memoirs or records of their conversations, at least to my knowledge. Perhaps they dismissed the thought as the radicalism of a saint, increasingly removed from practical requirements of office. But Gandhi continued to campaign for such empowerment, saying things like, "We want the rule of the Dalits. The Dalits are the highest of all because their service is the greatest."

Interestingly, neither Gandhi nor those Congress leaders preparing to enter office thought that Babasaheb Ambedkar might be worth consideration as the first *Rashtrapati*. Ambedkar certainly had the qualifications and repute. It is likely that Babasaheb's decision to play an independent role during the independence movement rankled deeply with contemporary Congress leaders. Babasaheb was not one of them. They refused to trust him beyond a point.

The challenge of Dalit empowerment was of highest concern to both Gandhi and Ambedkar, with this difference that Gandhi gave first priority to freedom and Ambedkar to Dalit emancipation. By the mid-1940s, the difference became irrelevant, as freedom became visible. The thrust of Ambedkar's intellectual contribution shifted to careful proposals that could fashion a polity acceptable to both Hindus and Muslims. He also

pondered deeply on the meaning of partition. As early as December 1940, he published what is surely the first book with a title that includes 'Pakistan'. His *Thoughts on Pakistan* was startling and prescient. No one else had foreseen what is today's biggest threat, an Islamic Jihad with a geo-political agenda rising from the North-West frontier and Afghanistan. Ambedkar's thesis, that 'a safe army is better than a safe border', is remarkable.

Once Pakistan became a fact, the focus shifted to internal challenges. The curbing of an abominable caste system could be abolished in law, but its elimination in real life was a different story. Ambedkar laid down his famous dictum: there are no rights without remedies, which became the operating principle of the Constitution. Gandhi did not live long enough to see the Constitution, but he understood the power of political symbolism. Nothing would erode the psychological foundations of caste hierarchies faster than a Dalit in the palace of Viceroy.

It took us decades to fulfil Gandhi's dream. To be fair, we have come a very long way since 1947, but there are, as famously noted by a poet, miles to go. Leaders are human; they all must go to the big sleep one day. But a nation lives on. India will rise only when Dalit emancipation and economic empowerment has been fully achieved.

The writer is an eminent Indian journalist and author. Currently, he is the National Spokesperson of the BJP and Rajya Sabha MP from Jharkhand.

COMMENTS

"No-hilsa campaign worked well"
(April 16, 2016)

Amina Begum

It was a good campaign indeed. Every year, people get crazy to have hilsa on Pehela Baishakh, which eventually encourages the practice of catching jatkas and thus endangers this species in their breeding season.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Including the coach in selection committee

This refers to a news report titled "Papon ponders selector's role for Chandika" (TDS, April 9, 2016). We fully agree with the president of BCB that the coach should have a say in the selection process of the national team. The coach knows the state of a player better than anyone else. He observes a player's behaviour, movement and style from all angles. So he deserves to be in the national selection panel.

Shafkat Rahman
BIAM Model School and College
New Eshaton, Dhaka

People demand their democratic right back

We have lost our voting rights and are passing our days in fear because horrible incidents are happening around us almost every day. The government is constantly saying that the country is prospering. But why don't we feel that? Democracy must be allowed to take deep roots in order to ensure peace and security.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

A dangerous malpractice

On April 9, almost all the dailies of the country published the news of a government-funded building that had been constructed using bamboo sticks in the place of iron rods. The Department of Agricultural Extension of Chuadanga received the fund of Tk 2.41 crore last year to build the two-storey Biological Research Centre and Lab in Darshana under Damurhuda upazila. Joy Construction Ltd. of Dhaka was constructing the building.

This was an example of criminal minded "creativity" in civil engineering construction work. Imagine a contractor using bamboo sticks in place of steel reinforcing rods in a Reinforce Cement Concrete (RCC) component of a load bearing structure. It was indeed a dangerous crime, which if not reported by the local people, could have later led to a serious disaster that could have even claimed many lives. We want exemplary punishment of those involved in this dangerous practice of using bamboo sticks instead of rods, hence risking people's lives.

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Dhaka

