

Negligence costs Biswas 13 years

Demand for compensation justified

WHILE we may express dismay and sympathy for Zobed Ali Biswas who spent an additional 13 years in jail after being acquitted in a case, can we even begin to comprehend what the man had to endure during incarceration despite being declared innocent? No, we cannot imagine what it must have been like for the man who came to know in 2005 from jail authorities that he had been acquitted in a case that gave him a life term for allegedly poisoning his daughter; who had sent letter after letter over a five year period to the Additional Sessions Judge's Court of Satkhira to seek information about his appeal – and not received any reply. Biswas's case is not the first and will probably not be the last we will see where a High Court (HC) judgement was not passed on to jail authorities by a local court.

The HC has asked authorities to explain why this should not be treated as negligence of duty and why the victim should not be compensated by Tk 2 million as per petition by Biswas's lawyers. This case cannot be treated lightly as it brings forth the question of accountability and proper discharge of responsibility of duties by both the administration and the court system. Any lapse at any stage results in ordinary people falling victim to the situation that cost Biswas precious years of his life. We hope the government will take into account these facts and address loopholes in the system so citizens in the future are spared such treatment.

The neglected national poet

Preserve and promote his works

WE as a nation honour ourselves by revering Kazi Nazrul Islam as our national poet. And why shouldn't we, considering his immense contribution to poetry, music and the spirit of nationalism? But have we done enough to uphold and propagate the works and memory of "one of the world's most morally provoking artists of the twentieth century"?

There is very little research on his creative life and works. The Nazrul Research Centre at Dhaka University is suffering from inadequate funds and research facilities. Nazrul studies is also neglected in the national curriculums. Though there have been attempts to translate Nazrul's work into various languages Nazrul has yet to receive proper global exposure. The Kabi Bhaban, along with other memorials of the poet, is in a dire condition due to absence of routine renovation, maintenance and preservation efforts.

Recently, a group of artists has made some specific demands in this regard. It includes repairing and enhancing the beauty of Nazrul memorials at Shahbagh's Birdem and Saarc Fountain and setting up nameplates citing Nazrul's verses at different important places in the capital. We fully endorse these suggestions, and hope the government will take necessary initiatives. There should also be conscious efforts by researchers, artistes and the media to introduce the audience to the variety and richness of Nazrul's creations. Nazrul's works and philosophy must be allowed to thrive, for they are part of our rich heritage to be handed down to future generations.

COMMENTS

"Nurjahan Begum no more"

(May 24, 2016)

Hashmat Begum

That's the end of a life dedicated to illuminating the lives of women living in darkness. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

Atm Nazrul Islam

She was a great human being. We are deeply saddened.

Shahid Zaman

Her demise is a great loss for the nation.

Mohammad Mahamudul Azam

Her contribution to the nation is unforgettable. We will always remember her.

"BINS MISSING!"

(May 22, 2016)

Asgar H. Miku

Is it possible for the city corporation to monitor all these bins all the time?

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

THE country and the rest of the world are eagerly waiting for the recommendations from the investigating committee led by Dr. Farashuddin. In a recent press conference, Dr. Farashuddin laid the blame for Bangladesh Bank's (BB) vulnerability squarely on the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), and on their technicians who purportedly introduced loopholes while connecting the real-time gross settlement (RTGS) system to SWIFT. I am not going to question the validity or the motive behind this accusation. However, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has raised the possibility of internal foul play, and Dr. Farashuddin has acknowledged the same when he said that "BB staff had contributed to the situation through their carelessness, callousness, irresponsibility and ignorance". His commission's final report must bring some closure to this issue.

Now that the various investigations have revealed weaknesses that can be exploited, and we know there are systems, protocols, and software to protect future "intrusions", it is crucial that the nation gear up for some action to minimise the risk of attacks in the coming days. Fortunately for Bangladesh, and the consultants lending us a helping hand in strengthening our cyber security "Iron Dome", we can use tools that have already been tried and tested in other parts of the world. Bangladesh must constantly stay in touch with international experts and banking regulators to learn from their proactive initiatives. We must undertake the following steps:

- Conduct regular IT security assessment, review access control and validation, and record maintenance procedures;
- Instruct employees on proper protocol to follow while using equipment;
- Review employee clearance level, audit control, and ensure accountability;
- Use software to ensure encryption of all data and transmissions;
- Deploy a well-tested "contingency plan" that includes plans for data backup, disaster recovery and emergency mode operation.

MANZOOR AHMED

ON May 19, *The Daily Star* headline announced, "From now on, primary education in the country will be up to class-VIII". The decision had been taken and made public by the Minister of Education, Nurul Islam Nahid.

Talking to *The Daily Star*, Education Minister Nahid said that extending the level of primary education was the biggest decision in the history of education of the country. This is the spin given to the decision which was actually to shift the responsibility for grades 6 to 8 to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) from the Ministry of Education (MOE).

That primary education should be extended to grade 8 was in the Education Policy approved by the Parliament in 2010. Accordingly, in 2013, MoPME opened class 6 in some 600 primary schools and the plan was to add more classes in more schools every year.

Several problems quickly surfaced with the MoPME initiative. Although the new grade six was opened selectively, the initiative stumbled due to difficulties in respect of additional classrooms and teachers. Parents were more interested to send children to a secondary school where there would be designated teachers for the various subjects and students would be able to continue in the same school beyond grade 8.

There is a basic difference in the curriculum and pedagogy for the lower primary grades and for grade six and above. Building the foundation of literacy and numeracy is the main task in the lower grades, whereas teaching is more subject-based which requires specifically trained and qualified teachers for the subjects in the higher grades.

Moreover, in our current system, education up to grade 5 is supposed to be free of tuition charges and teachers and schools are largely under the government. For grade 6 and beyond, the teachers and schools are mostly non-governmental with students paying admission and tuition fees. Would the recent decision change all this and will all the teachers and schools teaching grade 6 to 8 come fully under government management?

Arguably, the reluctance of the education establishment and the policy-makers to face these challenges held them back from seriously pursuing the goal of grade 8 universal education. The Primary

Going forward

Balance between convenience and security

The above is just a sprinkling of the many "best practices" followed by IT security professionals who are International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 27000 compliant. The ISO and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) develops the specialised system for worldwide standardisation of cyber security practices. Let me quote from ISO/IEC 27039 modified in 2016: "Organisations should not only know when, if, and how an intrusion of their network, system, or application occurs. They also should know what vulnerability was exploited and what safeguards or appropriate risk treatment options (i.e. risk modification, risk

retention, risk avoidance, risk sharing) should be implemented to prevent similar intrusions in the future."

ISO/IEC 27000 series provides guidelines for effective IDPS selection, deployment, and operation, as well as fundamental knowledge about IDPS. Bangladesh Bank, as it attempts to catch up with best practices around the world, could adopt guidelines, tried in the EU financial sector, such as developing and maintaining a set of security standards for product development; performing security evaluations and tests on devices, applications and systems; providing guidance to help end-users configure ICT systems to comply with ISO standards; performing in-house and independent third party security testing of vendor solutions; and evaluating and developing responses to possible

convenience and security. In this new environment, Steve Hill, Director of External Engagement at The Open University, advises that "Businesses need to recognise that investing in IT infrastructure and retraining staff must go hand in hand. As the techniques used by hackers to breach networks and servers become more sophisticated, companies need to do more than simply update their IT systems. Instead, they must ensure that their employees have the knowledge and skills to maintain best practice and future-proof the company's defenses. ... Cyber security measures cannot simply rely on the expertise of a skilled IT team. Knowledge about best practice must be

convenience and security.

Knowledge about best practice must be

If we stay attuned to the experts and practitioners working in the financial and banking sectors worldwide, new threats and methods used by the crooks can be neutralised before any damage is done to our own emerging system.



PHOTO: WWW.AOL.COM

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A familiar term used in the profession is intrusion detection and prevention systems (IDPS) to address threats posed by malware, hackers, and other breaches. IDPS came into use in the 1990s and Bangladesh Bank appears to have been at least two decades behind in its readiness to effectively utilise IDPS. ISO recommends that in order for an organisation to derive the maximum benefits from IDPS, the process of IDPS selection, deployment, and operations should be carefully planned and implemented by properly trained and experienced personnel. The

vulnerabilities potentially affecting installed systems as they're discovered.

If we stay attuned to the experts and practitioners working in the financial and banking sectors worldwide, new threats and methods used by the crooks can be neutralised before any damage is done to our own emerging system. New products are marketed by "fintech" entities such as eBay, bKash, and Bitcoin which compete against traditional banks. To quote an expert, Boston Fed's Eric Rosengren, "Customers are looking for convenience; so not surprisingly, new applications and devices continue to evolve in unexpected ways." Our regulators and supervisory bodies need to craft an infrastructure that carefully balances the need between

widespread across an organisation."

At the 2016 Cybersecurity Conference organised by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston in April, Boston Fed President Eric Rosengren offered the following warning: "Rapid evolution generates risks... The risks in the cyber realm are, unfortunately, not abating".

Given our recent interactions with the US Federal Reserve System following the February Heist, BB can seek ways to collaborate with the Fed, and they can proceed in taking proactive measures to meet the challenges brought about by electronic business.

The writer is an economist and has been working in ICT for three decades.

Grade 8 Universal Education Five steps to make it happen

Education Development Programme 2011-16 (known as PEDP3), supported by some 10 major donor agencies, failed to include this component within the programme. Only a half-hearted initiative was begun in 2013, as noted. This lack became an embarrassing lapse in the basic education provisions of the country that could not be ignored any longer.

Eventually, at least 12 years of public education should be free and compulsory as stipulated in the new SDG 2030 and Education 2030 agenda (replacing MDG and EFA 2015). As an aspiring middle-income country, we cannot but work towards that goal seriously and urgently. However, it is not just a matter of

family circumstances of the children. The need obviously is to improve the services and add more facilities and teaching personnel to existing secondary schools, rather than open new schools or new classes in primary schools.

Looking at it mostly as a problem of shifting the administrative task to MoPME by labelling it as primary education is not particularly important and makes the job unnecessarily difficult. It is more important to ensure that grades 6-8 education of acceptable quality is available to children wherever they are than to pass the buck to MoPME.

An added complication is that the ill-advised introduction of high-stake grade 5 public examination in 2010 has caused



PHOTO: STAR

The new initiative must bring better quality education to the classroom.

finding the funds. And not just a matter of passing the administrative task to another Ministry.

The division of the territory between two Ministries, unlike anywhere else in the world for school education, seems to have prevented us from looking at what provisions we already have and from taking coordinated action. Some 19,000 high schools at present teach grades 6-8 as part of the secondary programme. About 2,400 of these, known as junior secondary schools, offer only grades 6-8.

These schools at present serve over 60 percent of the eligible secondary level students, i.e., those who complete primary education. In fact, more than 80 percent of the primary school completers move on to grade 6, but many drop out soon, because of poor services in school and poverty-related

great damage to quality of teaching and learning in primary school. It intensified dependence on guidebooks, rote memorisation, and private coaching; and encouraged students and teachers to engage in unethical practices.

Prof. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal has written to the Minister of Education, saying that the primary terminal exam brought a disaster to the education system, with private coaching taking a worse turn. These negative effects have already spread to grade 8 like a virus. There is no strong educational justification for a high-stake public examination even at the end of grade 8.

Quality education for all children up to grade 8 can be achieved rapidly if it is treated as an education problem and not an administrative jurisdiction issue. Five pragmatic steps with high level policy

backing will help achieve this goal.

1 Begin with the premise that a substantial amount of facilities and personnel exists now to serve the large majority of eligible students for grades 6-8; look into these, and concentrate on improving their services, instead of setting up new facilities.

2 Undertake an upazila-wise rapid assessment of the state of provision of physical facilities and teachers for grades 6-8, make a projection of potential students for the next five years, and identify gaps and deficits. Primary and secondary education officers at upazila and district levels should work on this jointly. Keep local thugs and the MPs out of it.

3 Class 5 public examinations should be abolished, and emphasis placed on school-based assessment (with an annual and a half-yearly exam) plus formative assessment as part of good pedagogic practice. A public exam after grade 8, if retained, should be to test basic competencies, rather than to test knowledge on all subjects and textbooks. Assessment of learning in basic competencies at different stages - such as at grades 3, 5, and 8 - should be conducted, as in many countries, along the line of national student assessment now carried out every other year by DPE to assess the performance of the system, not to label individual students.

4 Additional resources must be found for improving quality of the existing grades 6-8, wherever they are, including more and better qualified and trained teachers, libraries and laboratories, playground, toilets and classrooms. This improvement, based on planning under step 2, should be guided by joint taskforces at the national and upazila levels of MoPME and MOE, until the policy-makers see the logic of placing all school education under one Ministry.

5 Work on an integrated curriculum development from pre-primary to grade 8 and eventually grade 12 should be undertaken by examining curriculum load, articulation, balance and sequence and effective implementation of curriculum in schools.

The last two steps reiterate the need and justification for coordinated development of pre-tertiary education guided by a single Ministry at the national level. Sooner this is done the better.

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