

Of GPA 5 and journalistic ethics

AKHTAR SULTANA

We can all agree that in recent years, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of Bangladeshi students who achieved GPA 5 in both the secondary and higher secondary school level. It is no doubt heartening to see that our young people are doing so well in their studies, but it also raises a pertinent question as to the standard of education that is being imparted in our schools and colleges. The question that has been frequently asked is "Do so many deserve GPA 5 or is it being handed out to them?" This issue undoubtedly requires serious reflection.

A few days ago, a well-known television channel carried a report on GPA-5 achievers and their level of knowledge on various topics. The reporter picked a handful of GPA 5 achievers and asked them general knowledge questions, both on national and international topics, which most of the students were unable to answer. My question today, however, is not about these students and their level of knowledge or lack thereof – rather it is about how this was portrayed in the media. The reporter asked students questions in quick succession, "rapid fire" style. While the reporter hammered on, these young people avoided making eye contact with the camera, clearly embarrassed about their inability to answer the questions. The topics were without doubt very relevant and appropriate, but these children were humiliated on national television for all of Bangladesh to see on the 7 o'clock news.

Here arises the important question



regarding the ethics of journalism. Does the TV channel, or any media for that matter, have the right to humiliate anyone, especially children, in a public domain? Was the reporter aware of the damage he was causing to these children, both emotionally and psychologically and the embarrassment, taunting and humiliation they would have to face among their peers? These youngsters perhaps agreed to be

interviewed, hoping to tell their friends and family that they were featured on television, absolutely unaware of what was to follow.

My question is to the television channel that aired this report. How could a responsible television channel air this report? Shouldn't it have been edited? As I watched the six and a half minute long video, I kept wondering what the reporter was trying to

establish. Was it the GPA 5 achievers' lack of knowledge, their inability to answer general knowledge questions or the standard of education that is being imparted in our schools? The reporter perhaps had good intentions, but the way it was carried out was far from right.

Students alone cannot be held responsible for their lack of knowledge. We have to dig deeper into the issue. It

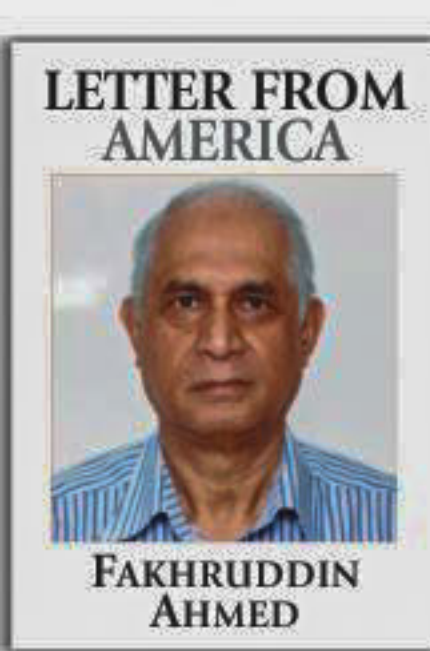
is the education system that is responsible, and as long as we do not pay heed to changing our system, this will not end. Our education system emphasises memorisation, rather than active learning and creativity. Attending coaching classes and running around from tutor to tutor has become the norm. Our society cares more for the scores you have obtained in an exam rather than the knowledge you have gained in the long run. As a result, parents, teachers, private tutors and schools all focus on students achieving higher GPAs. The schools are rated with the students' GPA – the higher the GPA, the better the school or the coaching centre is thought to be. When a school's students score GPA 5, they proudly display this information – and why shouldn't they? This is the parameter by which the success of the school is decided. As a result, parents too, are forced to give in to this pressure to get their youngsters into a college where GPA matters most. This is a toxic cycle from which we all need to break free. For the sake of better education, a better system, and most of all, for the sake of the youth of Bangladesh.

Whatever the cause, it needs to be addressed but not in a manner which humiliates young people in front of the nation. The youth have the right to their privacy which must be respected. It is time for our reporters to pay more heed to the ethics of journalism, and high time for our media to be more conscious of the content and the people they are portraying.

The writer is Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.

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Muhammad Ali, forever the Greatest



LETTER FROM AMERICA

FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

In eulogising a hero, as Muhammad Ali was to me, the danger is that one may get carried away and heap undeserved superlatives on the deceased. But, superlatives always adorned

in no wars unless declared by Allah or 'The Messenger.' He also said: 'I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong ... They never called me nigger.'

Ali refused induction into the US Army in Houston on April 28, 1967. This time white America went ballistic! Ali was convicted of draft evasion, sentenced to five years in prison and fined USD 10,000. He was arrested, and released on bail. Ali was immediately stripped of his heavyweight title, and

popular in America, especially on college campuses, where draft-averse white kids found a champion in him. In 1971, the US Supreme Court unanimously overturned Ali's conviction, 8-0, with Justice Thurgood Marshall recusing himself.

Cassius Marcellus Clay was born in Louisville, Kentucky on January 17, 1942. At age 12, a thief stole his bicycle. Clay wanted to "whup" the thief! A policeman, Joe Martin, who was also

Disgusted, Clay threw his Gold Medal in the Ohio River. (The IOC replaced Ali's Gold Medal at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.)

The world began noticing Clay in the early 1960s for the speed of his hands and feet in the ring, and his mouth outside it. With his typical doggerel, he began predicting the round in which his opponent would fall. ("I am not talking jive/Cooper falls in five!") He was dubbed "The Louisville Lip." TIME

all its splendour.

Fear of getting hit made Ali, "float like a butterfly and sting like a bee." After the forced hiatus, Ali was slower and less averse to getting hit. Ali had three epic fights against Joe Frazier, he lost the first to Champion Frazier in March 1971, and won the next two, including "The Thrilla in Manila" in 1975, absorbing enormous punishment in the process. Although he would defeat Champion George Foreman in "The Rumble in the Jungle" in Zaire in 1974 employing the famous "rope-a-dope" tactic—leaning against the ropes in a defensive posture, while letting Foreman punch himself out, before knocking Foreman out - once again he took too many blows. Ali would win the Heavyweight title for the third time by defeating Leon Spinks in a rematch in 1978.

All those blows took their toll. Ali was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1984. The world first saw Ali with the disease as he lighted the Olympic flame in Atlanta in 1996. The last time the world saw Ali was at the London Olympics in 2012. Recently, Ali's condition had deteriorated so much that he was shaking violently. It was painful to see the Greatest suffer. Thank God, it is now over.

When historians write Muhammad Ali's epitaph, they will struggle to choose between the glittering array of his accomplishments. Ali would hand out USD100 bills to sick children at hospitals on visits abroad. Ali was named the "Sportsman of the Century" by Sports Illustrated and BBC. Ali won the Amnesty International's lifetime achievement award, and UN Messenger of Peace award. President George W. Bush awarded Ali the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005.

Ali's greatest achievement is that those Americans who had demonised him fifty years ago, are now extolling him! Ali did not change; America changed, and followed his lead. Muhammad Ali made America and the world a better place. Rest in peace, Champion!

The writer is a Rhodes Scholar.



Muhammad Ali poses with two members of An Garda Síochána prior to his fight against Al Blue Lewis, July 1972.

PHOTO: OLD IRISH PHOTOS

banned from fighting in all fifty states. Ali's passport was confiscated. From March 1967 to October 1970—his prime boxing years between 25 and 29—Ali was banished from boxing. We will never know how much greater he could have been.

The brave stand that made Ali a pariah among white Americans, made the persecuted champion a hero in the rest of the world. As Vietnam War became unpopular, Ali became more

an amateur boxing coach, told Clay to learn boxing first. Clay trained with Martin for the next six years, until he won the Light Heavyweight boxing Gold Medal at the Rome Olympics in 1960.

Returning home, like the white Gold Medalists, Clay expected to be treated as a hero. Instead, he was refused service at a Louisville restaurant. That life-altering experience fuelled Clay's activism for the rest of his life.

magazine put him on its cover in 1963—the first of six! Ali talked his way into a title fight with Liston in Miami in 1964 and against all odds won, mostly because of the lightening speed of his hands and feet. In the rematch in Lewiston, Maine in May, 1965, Ali knocked Liston out in the first round. That fight will forever be remembered for one iconic photograph—Ali towering over a sprawling Liston. That photograph showcases Ali's physique in

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QUOTABLE Quote

PYTHAGORAS
Greek philosopher and mathematician.

Do not say a little in many words but a great deal in a few.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- Canyon sound
- Layers
- Lummox
- Repeated verbatim
- Dissolute fellow
- Zombies
- High times
- Copenhagen native
- Piano piece
- Femur's upper end
- Took to impound
- Untethered
- Server system
- Song for two
- Massachusetts university
- Exodus figure
- Exploit
- Task
- Galleon, e.g.
- Stir-fry pan
- TV serial
- Rock's Hendrix
- Revenue
- Foot or furlong
- Pulled in
- Obtains

DOWN

- Grayish color
- Hoof sound
- Stay-at-home sort
- Pindar poem
- Football team
- Mountain passage
- Took the bus
- Finished off
- Caffeine source
- Say further
- Failure
- Printed matter
- Restaurant offer
- "Got it"
- Darlings
- Ballet attire
- Burden
- Stench
- Plot
- Custodian's tool
- Took on
- Location
- Leave out
- Young foxes
- Confession topic
- Early hour
- Do something
- Moonshine holder

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

S	T	A	N	C	H	A	R	S	M
W	A	P	I	N	H	A	R	I	O
E	X	P	L	O	R	A	T	I	O
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P	E	S	O	I	N	L	E	T	
A	L	A	N	S	K	Y	L	A	B
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T	R	E	E	S	M	E	T	S	

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