

## Chittagong ammonia factory blast

*A case of criminal negligence and dereliction of duty*

WE are happy that the probe report on the DAP fertiliser factory explosion has been made public. This is certainly a departure from the norm where findings are not often shared in this manner. The report has brought out the degree of blatant negligence and gross dereliction of duty on the part of two senior officials of the factory, the Deputy Chief Engineer (electricity) (DCE) and General Manager (Technical and Maintenance Service) (GM, TMS) that caused the blast. We had editorialised on the occurrence a few days ago and commented on the BCIC Chairman's hasty remarks terming the blast as "just an accident." Our position has been validated; should he not withdraw his remarks in light of the report? We believe that the manner in which the individuals in question went about their business is a classic example of how not to run a plant!

However, we cannot but take issue with the fact that the question of holding the two errant officials responsible for their utter disregard of duty has been glossed over by suggesting that the losses be defrayed from their gratuity. The so called penalty suggested merely dilutes the criminality of the DCE and GM, T&M given that the committee has found the cost of destruction of the old ammonia tank is around Tk. 5 crore and the replacement will cost the national exchequer around Tk. 20-22 crore, not to talk of the loss of fish stock in the adjacent area amounting to nearly Tk. 2 crore; and it was only providence that prevented serious damage to life and property.

The blast is a case of sheer criminal negligence and those responsible should face the full brunt of the law.

## Colonel Nazma's feat

*Makes the country proud*

IT is a matter of pride to see the first ever female contingent commander from Bangladesh Army to a UN peace keeping mission being awarded a special UN award for outstanding leadership in a high-tempo operational environment like Côte d'Ivoire where Bangladesh Army has been carrying out peacekeeping missions since 2004, with the highest level of professionalism and efficiency. Colonel Dr Nazma Begum has also been selected for Military Gender Advocate of the Year-2016 Award. Her achievement commands a salute.

The induction of women in the Bangladesh Armed Force has been a significant development and Colonel Nazma's accomplishments prove that women are no less qualified than men in any field of work, including in the armed forces, if offered equal opportunities and working conditions. Our female paratroopers and pilots are reaffirmation of that fact. Thus, for the government it is important to acknowledge that creating favourable conditions for women to excel in their respective areas is to advance the country.

We believe that the best of women can be as good, if not better, than the best of men, given the opportunity. Colonel Nazma proves that attributes most valuable for success in the field of military operation as well as in life—leadership, courage and commitment—are not the exclusive preserve of men. Her strength as a manager in an international environment and a trying atmosphere will inspire women of this country. In hailing her achievement, we hail a symbol of what, as a nation, we collectively aspire to be.

## LETTERS

### TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

#### Justice for Risha

The recent killing of Risha by a stalker has shocked us deeply. Her death has proved again that girls are not safe anywhere in the country. We are happy that the police have caught her killer. We demand highest punishment under law so that no one will ever think about committing such crimes again.

Sayek Ahmed Sajib  
University of Rajshahi

#### Suicide of a girl for examination fee

This is in reference to the news item, "Punished for failure to pay, schoolgirl kills herself" published in The Daily Star on August 30, 2016. It is difficult to describe how shocked we are.

Unfortunately, it is common practice in schools that children have to suffer humiliation in case of late payment or non-payment of dues especially if the school is a non-government or private one. The payment of school fees and dues are the matter of transaction between the school administration and the guardians. So, subjecting children to humiliation and embarrassing them for the non-payment of fees and other dues is unjust. There should be rules that will make sure that the payment of school fees will remain a matter between the school and the guardians only. The students have nothing to do with it and they should not be harassed or reprimanded for this reason. I draw the attention of Ministry of Education in this regard.

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

# The future generations are losing their entitlement



CROSS TALK

MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

THE world is demographically lopsided more than ever before: old people are concentrated in the rich countries, and the rest of the world is crowded with the young. Whoever said that the young shall inherit the earth must think again. As nations get more affluent, their populations also get more aged. In an increasingly prosperous world,

the future generations are losing entitlement.

The young are between the ages of 10 and 24, making a fourth of the global population. In 2010, an estimated 524 million people were aged 65 or older. By 2050, this number is expected to triple to 1.5 billion, nearly one-fourth of today's total population. Late marriage, singlehood, and fewer children might further skew the global demography with greying population.

In today's world, the young have diminished clout and visibility. In the immediate past century, they fought wars, led revolutions, organised protests and spearheaded cultural movements. It was they who defied authorities, toppled tyrants, and broke barriers in the name of equality, freedom and justice. But this century already seems barren for them. Except for gang fights, drugs, pornography and militancy, the commitment of youth is vague and weak.

True, more of them are going to school, and more of them are working. Yet the figures released by the International Labor Organization show that two out of five young people are either not working or working in such ill-paid jobs that they can't escape poverty. Surprisingly, youth unemployment is high in richer countries. It's 25 percent in Europe. In the USA, 17 percent of those between the ages of 16 and 29 are neither in school nor working.

The picture is opposite in developing countries. China, facing a shortage of young workers, had to end its decades-old one-child policy in 2015, allowing married couples to have two children. Many developed countries are tweaking their immigration policies to welcome young workers from less developed countries.

But the power of youth seems limited to the job market only. In the larger context, the young generations don't have an agenda to push. Excluding religious zeal, ideological footing is next to nothing. In so much as the youth of today are concerned, they are more prepared to follow than lead.

In 2010, the Tunisian revolution sent a wave of demonstrations, protests, riots and civil wars across the Arab world that came to be known as the Arab Spring. Multitudes of young people gathered in public squares for days and weeks, determined to overthrow governments and change the system in their respective countries. It fizzled out by mid-2012 as tired and



ILLUSTRATION: DVRLISTS.COM

disillusioned youths returned home empty-handed, many of them dead.

Idealistic youths in America gathered in Zuccotti Park in New York City in 2011 and launched the Occupy Wall Street Movement against social and economic inequality worldwide. Protesters turned their focus to occupying banks, corporate headquarters, board meetings, foreclosed homes, and college and university campuses. It resonated with young people in many western cities before fading within the same year.

These two consecutive failures remind one of an English teacher named David McCullough Jr. at Wellesley High School in Massachusetts, USA. About four years ago, he asked the graduating class to climb the world so they could see the world, not so the world could see them. The youths of our time are evermore obsessed with climbing the world, while the world is all the more persistent to ignore them.

In this exchange, young minds are getting marginalised. Not a single sphere of life exists where they can dictate the terms. Whether in politics, education, invention or any other thing, young people are stuck in the mud. The status quo is beating down on the propensity to change.

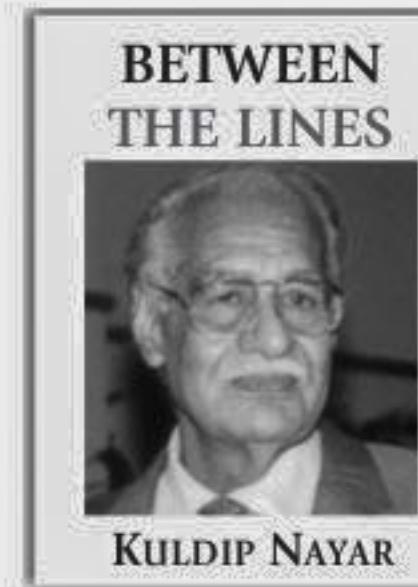
Instead of changing the world, the world is changing them. Most youths don't like to enter the social discourses because other things are more interesting to them. In fact, a significant percentage of young people are suffering from internet addiction. According to Time magazine's cover story of May 9, 2013, a Pew survey found that kids in America send an average of 88 texts per day. It's yet to be determined how many selfies they take on average between waking up in the morning and going back to bed.

Always a bundle of energy, youth once found expression in doing daring things. Young people could go without food, shelter and medication for days to write poetry or explore a region or fight for a revolution. They could die for love, kill for it too. But all of these changed since they started indulging in pleasurable things. Sex, drugs, video games, mobile phones, internet and temptations of easy life took the bite out of youth.

The youth of today shaped the world of tomorrow, which has changed. It's a pity that the world of today is shaping the youth of tomorrow.

The writer is Editor of the weekly First News and an opinion writer for The Daily Star.  
Email: badrul151@yahoo.com.

## Listening to Kashmiri youth



BETWEEN THE LINES

KULDIP NAYAR

HOME Minister Rajnath Singh has met around 300 people in Srinagar. Pakistan, too, has offered to have talks on Kashmir. Both steps, however

laudable, are late by two to three years. The Kashmiris then wanted a settlement through a dialogue. Leaders like Yasin Malik and Shabbir Shah took part in the conclaves held at Srinagar and New Delhi.

The issue at that time was to make New Delhi realise that the state had acceded to the Union of India only on three subjects: Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications. But overzealous Jagmohan (then governor of Jammu and Kashmir) and governors like N.N. Vohra and his predecessors spread themselves all over. They did not keep in mind that accession was limited to only three subjects. The Kashmiri leaders were unhappy but felt helpless.

Today, the young generation has gone beyond what their elders had promised. The youth now want independence, with freedom to chalk out their foreign policy. In fact, their concept of sovereignty is like the freedom which any country in the world enjoys. Their representatives invited me to Srinagar last month. I found them agitated but quite clear about what they want.

To call them fundamentalists or anti-India will not be fair. True, they want Srinagar to be like Washington or London and they do not want links with Islamabad. They argue that their foreign policy will be decided by the elected members of the State assembly and not dictated by New Delhi or, for that matter, Islamabad.

I told them that I believed that their demand was understandable, but how could India create another Muslim country on its border when it already has had a bad experience of having one Islamic state, Pakistan? They shrugged their shoulders when I argued with them that the Lok Sabha, with a majority behind Prime Minister Narendra Modi, would not concede their demand. This is your problem, they said.

The quantum of autonomy can be a matter of debate but certainly not the accession. By going back to the very raison d'être of Pakistan, we would start another kind of a debate and might

disturb the equanimity which Hindus and Muslims have achieved despite an unequal situation.

Those who pelted stones in Srinagar may appear, in a way, to be misguided youth. But on the other hand, they represent the aspirations for independence. They have gone far ahead of Yasin Malik and Shabbir Shah, who are now in jail. The youth resent the very accession to India. But they are equally indignant against Pakistan, although some extremists are trying to cloud that indignation.

I think that until a couple of years ago, the matter could have been settled between the governments in New Delhi and Srinagar, but today the Kashmiris

Abdullah, who now leads the National Conference, is quite right when he says that he finds no utility in delegations visiting Srinagar when the reports prepared by the earlier ones are accumulating dust in the corridors of the Home Ministry. New Delhi will have to prove its genuine intentions first before the thread can be picked up from where it was left off earlier.

After all, what was the demand of Sheikh Abdullah who had to spend some 12 years at Kodaikanal in the south? He wanted New Delhi to recognise that the state had joined the Union by giving into only three subjects. It was not for the Union to usurp more powers without consulting the unit that

students that the land-locked valley would have to depend either on India or Pakistan for business.

In reply, they said that they would be like Switzerland, a tourist resort and would earn money from visitors of different lands. They would not have a standing army, the upkeep of which costs a huge amount. They would still have the problem of finding a market for their men and material but they are oblivious to this fact at present.

New Delhi is quite right in demanding a discussion on terrorism with Pakistan before discussing Kashmir. The dialogue which Pakistan has offered can start with terrorism and also embrace Kashmir because they are the



PHOTO: AFP

would have to be part of any dialogue on the future of the state. The UN resolution for a plebiscite in Kashmir or the Shimla Agreement between Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Pakistan's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has lost relevance. The situation today is different.

It is regrettable that neither India nor Pakistan realises this or, at least, gives that impression. It is now a triangle and all the three points will have to be touched for an amicable settlement. Another delegation to Srinagar may be a futile exercise because the Kashmiris feel that promises made earlier have not been made good.

Former chief minister Omar Farooq

had acceded to it.

Much water has flowed down the Jehlum since. But the situation can be retrieved by rolling back all laws which go beyond the scope of the three subjects. The youth in Kashmir may not feel happy but this is one possibility, although a remote one, to bring back the state on its tracks.

During my talks with the students at Srinagar, I told them that it was not possible to meet the demand of full independence. India is already suffering from the pinpricks of Pakistan. By granting full independence to Kashmir, New Delhi will only be increasingly its problems. I also argued with the

two sides of the same coin. The army which calls the shots in Pakistan may have its own agenda but cannot be opposed to a dialogue for normalising the border, bristling with armies of the two countries.

India should sort out the problem in Kashmir first before sitting with Pakistan. This can be done by accepting what Sheikh Abdullah, friend of Jawaharlal Nehru, demanded. The Sheikh said that India should withdraw all laws that went beyond the scope of the three subjects originally acceded to the Union of India.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.