

# "Rivers of blood"

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 21, 2016, ASHWIN 6, 1423BS

## More suffering for hajj pilgrims

### Mismanagement of operators to blame

IT is very inopportune that pilgrims, who perform hajj with so much hope, not to say spending so much money, have to suffer at every step during the journey due to mismanagement and irresponsibility. After the fiasco of changed flight schedules, and inadequacy of flights to take outbound passengers for hajj, now on the return journey, we hear of pilgrims who had to suffer due to flight delays.

Biman officials and hajis have said that due to mismanagement of both the government and private hajj operators, the pilgrims were victims of long delays. One official even conceded that officials and guides are uncaring towards the pilgrims. On the first day of the return, the four return flights were delayed by 11 hours to 24 hours. From operators who manage these flights every year it is unacceptable that flights scheduled for 8:40pm should land at 3:00am.

The problems, from what the officials and hajis tell us, are structural. Failing to get the pilgrims to the airport on time, getting them proper accommodation and food, inadequacy of flights all point towards negligence. Surely, the number of hajis is known by the operators from beforehand, and if handled carefully, there should be no reason for these untoward sufferings.

Many choose Biman and the government operators in hope for a better service. But, with the private operators, the government operators have been accused of irresponsibility and non-cooperation too. We hope that proper planning is ensured beforehand, so that we do not have to hear the same old problems when it comes to hajj next year. It is the duty of the operators to ensure that the process is smooth, not to add more suffering to the travails of pilgrims.

## CMCH understaffed for decades!

### High time this is rectified

IT is unthinkable that the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) is operating today with the same staff levels it had back in 1969. Nearly half a century on, the number of departments has increased from 3 to 41; bed capacity has increased from 500 in 1969 to 1,313 in 2013 and patients receiving treatment from the premier government-run hospital in the second largest city in the country has gone up exponentially. As things stand now, some 437 nurses working three shifts cater to 2,500 patients, which boils down to 145 nurses available at any given time to tend to this very large number of patients. The current state of staff is far below what is recommended by the World Health Organisation which states that there should be 1 nurse for every four patients.

Bangladesh of course is not a rich country, but that there is only 1 nurse for every 15 patients at CMCH is because there have been no new inductions in hospital staff for so many decades. It defies imagination how successive governments went on expanding department after department regardless of the fact that most of them are not manned by consultants or administrative staff. As per a report in this newspaper we find that most of these positions are manned by postgraduate students, which again, is an unacceptable situation.

We are informed that a committee is being formed that will decide on a new organisational chart detailing doctor, nurse and technician needs. This draft plan will have to be vetted by the health ministry and then perhaps, recruitment process can be finalised. It can only be hoped that the ministry will prioritise manpower allocation to a workable staff to patient ratio.



RUBANA HUQ

THE holidays lasted forever. The trip, the food, the extra calorie-packed week smelt delicious, spoilt us and made most of us weigh the work-life options once again. Yes, it definitely feels great not to be working and for doing the bare minimum just to keep the routine going. An occasional checking of the inbox of the mail folder, a few responses coupled with a few "out-of-office" vacation notices definitely feel rewarding. After all, apparently the more rested we are, the better we perform when we get back to our desks.

In reality, South Asia is probably one of the regions where we look for holidays every month. Even October has a few. Wow. However, our holidays are not as restful as before. When we were young, a bliss that accompanied holidays was the luxury of not keeping up with news. The only one television channel used to air programmes appropriate for the holiday season and often our evenings were packed with "Amjad Hossain" dramas. The television announcer would only talk about what the President and the Prime Minister were doing and slide on to cultural news and further, since there were no talk shows, there was no one to dissect the neighbourhood fly, no one to disgrace the opponent, no one to vilify the villain. But then again, those were the times when real revolution happened. Quite thankfully, Ekushey, Ekattor, Ekanobboi happened without the Facebook or Twitter storm.

I personally deactivated my Facebook account three years ago after being traumatised by the social updates. I discovered that my peers were having a great time when I wasn't. So, driven by sheer jealousy and resentment, I closed mine down. This holiday season, I decided that I was missing a bit too much and therefore, perhaps, I could possibly reactivate my account and start afresh. And I also decided that I would have no more than 50 FB friends this time around. So I attempted the unimaginable. I registered and reopened my old Facebook account. And guess what? I lasted less than a minute. The noise, the nag and the news got to me in less than thirty seconds. I almost instantly knew that my grand pursuit of connectivity would take a toll on my health while I looked at one of the first pictures trending on "rivers of blood." The post-qurbani scene of cows being sacrificed is stressful, but then when it is accompanied by scenes of their blood mixed with water flowing through the streets, then that certainly is enough to kill our Eid for good. In the span of the sixty seconds that I lasted in FB, I also exposed myself to a number of photos of cow-selfies, which gave birth to a crucial question: are we losing it? As a nation, are we ticking our boxes of reality checks?

When we were young, the paper-boy used to take a holiday after Eid as there were no papers. These days, there's no getting away from news. The online wings of the prints tirelessly work 24/7 and cater news to our fancies. After all, consumerism has hit us hard and there's no question of taking breaks at any point. So, today we have virtual shelves of libraries, books, news and gossip that we can subscribe to and be directed to what and when we want to read. Thanks to the hashtag generation, the specificity of news is also defined so that we can only read what we want to. For example, when I typed "contagious" this morning on my twitter, I ended up with over a thousand links to articles that talked about Hillary's "contagious" pneumonia, instead of any reference to other medical ailments

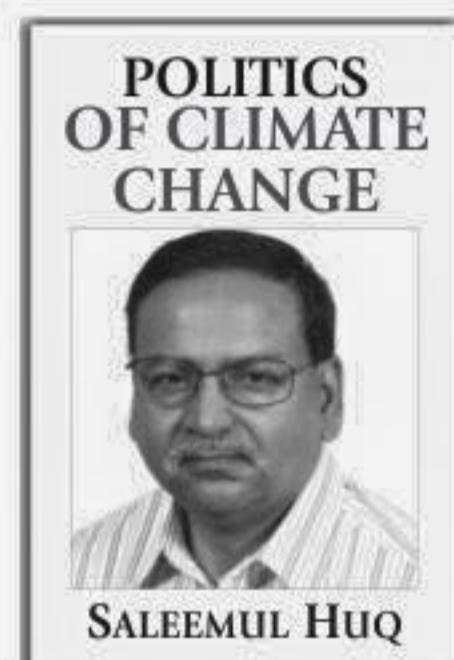
*In our lives, we try and look for social proofs and replicate other events, other practices, other lives, et al. We also try and promote ourselves, our lives, our products with valuable virility. Most of us use social media to be viral. But being viral with responsibility is a difficult task and being responsible while reporting to the public is even more challenging.*

that are contagious. This is how news, too, becomes contagious.

On the next day of Eid, what happened was worse. Crafted carefully by the media outlet, an online version had carried multiple photos of "rivers of blood" in Dhaka. Two of the four pictures were quoted to be taken from "Facebook" sources. But, ah, yes, why do we forget that we are trying to breed citizen journalism at our ends? Of course, we need reporters in every house reporting every single dinner-time conversation down to sick selfies with the poor, harmless animals. As a result of this, every malaise needs to be reported and if it isn't gory enough, then it's made so by using our genius computer skills and

## PARIS AGREEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

# Approaching the 55/55 threshold



SALEEMUL HUQ

THE historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change that was agreed at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) of the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Paris, France last December, was a major breakthrough in the global arena where all countries agreed to take action to tackle the climate change problem. However, for this historic Paris Agreement to come into force as a legally binding global legal agreement there are several more steps that have to be completed.

The first step is that each and every one of the countries that adopted the agreement in Paris has to ratify the global agreement in their own respective national Parliaments or legislatures. Then the country has to deposit their ratification certificate with the United Nations in New York.

Once a minimum of 55 countries who account for a minimum of 55 percent of global emissions have deposited their ratification certificate then the global agreement "comes into force" as a legally binding global treaty.

This 55/55 formula for a global agreement to come into force was first adopted when the Kyoto Protocol was agreed at COP3 in Kyoto, Japan in 1997.

However, that treaty took several years before it finally came into force in 2001. The main reason it took so long was that the US, although it agreed to the Protocol in Kyoto (after all night negotiations on the last day) under President Clinton, they changed their mind after President Bush came into the White House and refused to ratify it in the US Congress.

As the US at that time alone accounted for more than 25 percent of global emissions, that meant reaching 55 percent of global emissions by other countries was very difficult. At that time, the threshold of reaching a minimum of 55 countries was in fact achieved quite quickly, but the threshold of 55 percent of global emissions was much more difficult

without the US' cooperation.

In the end, the balance was held by Russia under President Putin who was the deciding factor. If he decided to ratify, the 55 percent threshold would be reached and the Kyoto Protocol would come into force as a globally binding legal treaty, and if he refused then the threshold would not be reached and the Kyoto Protocol would not come into force.

In the end, Russia ratified (although President Bush tried hard to persuade Putin not to do so) and the Kyoto Protocol came into force as a globally binding treaty, even though the US was never part of it.

the US as the world's biggest emitter of Greenhouse Gases, has also ratified the Paris Agreement.

Thus we now have two major emitters of the world, China and US, on board as well as many other countries, and are rapidly approaching the 55/55 threshold.

The next major milestone will be a climate summit called by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in New York today (September 21), where it is expected that many more countries will deposit their respective certificates of ratification.

If all goes well, the 55/55 threshold will be reached this year so that the

discussed there.

Bangladesh is an important member of two groups. The first one is the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group which is a group of nearly fifty poor developing countries in Africa and Asia who negotiate in the UNFCCC as a single negotiating bloc. This LDC group has emerged as a strong negotiating bloc and was very instrumental in achieving inclusion of the 1.5 Degree long term goal in the Paris Agreement and also the Article on Loss and Damage.

We also belong to the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) which is a group of over forty vulnerable

*Bangladesh has previously chaired both the LDC Group as well as the CVF and remains a senior member of both groups. It will thus have an important role to play at COP22 in Marrakech in November.*



ILLUSTRATION: STÉPHANIE GIRARD

With regard to ratification of the Paris Agreement the situation is much improved. Firstly, the US under President Obama was a key supporter of the Paris Agreement, and he has already issued the formal ratification of the US. Interestingly, the reason the Paris Agreement is called an "agreement" and not a "protocol" is for the convenience of the US as the President would have to get the US Congress to formally ratify a protocol, whereas the President can simply sign an agreement without approval from Congress.

The second positive development is that China, which has now overtaken

Paris Agreement can come into force in record time.

This will give added momentum to the upcoming COP22 to be held in Marrakech, Morocco in November this year where the main discussion can focus on how to implement the Paris Agreement rather than on how to get it into force.

The two main elements of the Paris Agreement for Bangladesh will be to implement the long term temperature goal of 1.5 Degrees as well as the Article on Loss and Damage. It is possible that COP22 may become known as the Loss and Damage COP as this will be one of the key issues

developing countries from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Small Islands who are not a negotiating bloc in the UNFCCC, but rather a global advocacy group. Ethiopia has just taken over from the Philippines as head of the CVF.

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The writer is Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development at the Independent University, Bangladesh. Email: Saleemul.huq@iied.org

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Justice delayed, justice denied

The Daily Star published a news, reporting on the detainment of a youth connected with Nitu Mondol's death last Sunday. It reminded me of Risha, who was also stabbed to death by stalker Obydul.

The recent murder incidents of Nitu, Risha and Tonu urgently require justice. We demand immediate and severe punishment of the perpetrators.

Sayek Ahmed Sajib  
University of Rajshahi

### Undesirable Income Tax system

I welcome the government's new income tax system, but the 16,000 taka over which income tax may be charged is inadvisable.

A simple double-bedroom house in Dhaka charges a rent of at least 15,000 taka. The remaining amount is spent on food, education, medical bills etc. As a result savings become almost non-existent unless both husband and wife have incomes.

Following the UK tax system deducting income tax at source would be better. This would allow greater tax revenue for the government and also relieve taxpayers from having to submit income tax return. At the end of the financial year, the NBR would send a statement to taxpayers stating the total income and tax paid.

With the sovereign power of the Republic belonging to the people, it is only fair for us to demand a transparent disclosure of financial and non-financial benefits enjoyed and the tax paid by all concerned parties. This will enhance the public's trust in the government and also encourage us to pay our fair share.

A. Amin  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka