

# While Aleppo bleeds...



I wonder how many of us remember the bloody image of the five-year-old boy which flashed on our TV screens last month. That was Omran Daqneesh in Aleppo who sat alone in an ambulance, coated with dust and encrusted in blood. His expression was of shock and bewilderment, reflecting the mood of his fellow citizens. Omran was pulled out of the rubbles of a damaged building after a Syrian government/Russian airstrike. According to reports, he is one of the many children who are treated every day at hospitals in the city's rebel-held section. Omran touched the world's conscience, but the tears of empathy soon evaporated. For most people in the United States, his memory has been drowned in the well-crafted campaign promises about making the world a safer place and enhancing the security of American citizens! Debates on whether or not to build a wall between Mexico and the United States or stop Muslim immigrants and refugees from entering the country are an integral part of the current election campaign. As the political leaders squabble over these issues and throw barbs at each other, thousands are trapped in a city called "Aleppo" because of a war triggered by the flawed policies of the powerful nations. For these unfortunate people, the future is bleak or there is no future - it makes no difference whether Gary Johnson does not know where Aleppo is and Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton know where it is. Or even who gets elected president.

We may build walls and introduce new laws to protect the United States from unwanted external forces, but the fact remains that we live in a global village where all of us are interconnected and each one of us is a part of the big story of humanity. Hence, if Aleppo doesn't matter, how can the rest of us matter?

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given that most Americans seem not to be interested in the rest of the world! But Aleppo is not just another Syrian 'city'. Since 2012, it has been a hotbed of conflict between the ISIS, the government forces and other factions fighting the civil war in Syria. It is at the crux of the refugee problem that the world is struggling to deal with. The intense aerial bombings by the current regime (aided by Russia) and the atrocities committed by the occupying ISIS forces have caused thousands to flee. Johnson's ignorance

becomes further inexcusable in the face of the US-Russia peace deal negotiated earlier this month for the 'cessation of hostilities' in Syria, especially in Aleppo'. How can we expect any reasonable solution to the problem when a candidate running for the US presidency is unaware of the existence of the city that is at the epicentre of the crisis? After all, this is a person who is seeking an office that can make crucial decisions regarding the Syrian stand off!

But we should not be surprised that a US politician is oblivious of the existence of a fractured city in the Middle East, where thousands are suffering due to the ravages of terror, direct combat and bomb attacks. Johnson may have made a public gaffe, but perhaps his reaction was honest, while others are more politically astute. And some are even callously insensitive - recently a tweet from Donald Trump Jr. compared Syrian refugees to "poisoned" skittle candies, making a case that Americans should not be eating from the "poisoned" bowl!



MILIA ALI

**SHIFTING IMAGES**  
YOU would think that the Information Age (spurred by the internet) has made us more aware and well informed about the challenges facing our world. This does not seem to be true for Libertarian presidential candidate

Gary Johnson. Some readers may ask "Who?" -- and I can't blame them. Why tax your grey cells about a US presidential hopeful whose current rating stands at less than 10 percent? I would have overlooked him too, had it not been for the ignorance and insensitivity that he displayed in an NBC interview. Asked what he would do about Aleppo if elected president, Johnson appeared stupefied and blurted out: "What is Aleppo?" "You're kidding me," responded journalist Mike Barnicle, who asked the question. When Johnson answered "No," Barnicle went on to explain "what" Aleppo is. "OK, got it, got it," said Johnson and continued to deliver his rehearsed campaign response on Syria: "With regard to Syria I do think it's a mess..."

The gaffe went viral for a few hours, but petered out, the media moving on to the next sensational topic. The callousness that Johnson demonstrated, shocking as it may be to some of us, is not a unique phenomenon. It is what we observe in the political elite the world over. They seem to be particularly immune to the hardship and suffering faced by the disadvantaged and marginalised. But why blame leaders and politicians? Even the more privileged segments of society view these voiceless people as mere statistics and not as individuals with feelings and aspirations... One could excuse Johnson's ignorance

# Alas, my Bangla lingo!



CHINTITO SINCE 1995

**THROUGHOUT** the 1960s, come every Ekushey February, we would see frantic efforts by main corporations, business houses and shop owners covering (albeit temporarily) their Urdu and English signboards with paper, lest the

zealous movers of Bangla as a state language of Pakistan consider it their right to desecrate them with alkatra. Almost nothing on the street was in Bangla, and therefore the struggle to earn an equitable and honourable place for our mother tongue.

The Dhaka-born lawyer-lyricist-singer Atul Prasad Sen (1871-1934) had thus penned with utmost passion in Bangla, which translated reads:

*Our pride, our hope ...  
Alas, my Bangla bhasha.*

Over the last almost sixty years, the three languages have had mixed fate on billboards, hoardings and name plates; Urdu began to disappear before or after the 1969 mass movement, and was completely removed from public appearance in 1971. English retained its place and with gusto. And Bangla, (tch! tch!tch!) is still struggling in its homeland. I wonder if our heavy dating with English may one day lead us to a "Bengali Land".

Our schools, colleges and universities have English names. All the cardinal and sub-cardinal directions have been taken in English. However, no educational institution has been named *Uttor-Dakshin* or *Purbo-Paschim* as yet. The name of several reputed universities of English-speaking countries have been plagiarised. Some English, American and Australian cities and dales, oceans and rivers find themselves glorified on signboards in our quest for knowledge. Academic prospectus are generally in English with a few exceptions. The driven-out colonialists, led by Mounbatten and co., would particularly have been very amused.

Manufacturing industries and commercial

business houses are widely named in English. Their reasoning: 'We have to communicate with the outside world'. Psst! That world also consists of houses and brands named Daihatsu, Fuji and Yamaha, Birla, Pakeezah and Druk.

You will come across rose (that's very much an English entitlement) instead of *golap*, Thames and Yangtze instead of *Buriganga* or *Turag*, building instead of *ottalika*, restaurant instead of *bhojonaloy*, well

but there too the company/trade/organisation's English name is written in Bangla font.

We almost never utter our mobile telephone number in Bangla. Perhaps that is how it has been from the beginning, and we all got used to saying, calling and saving in English, so much so that now a number communicated in Bangla may well raise confusion.

Apartment buildings, restaurants and

instance (not a real entity) a building's name will be signposted 'Sagorika' but not in the Bangla font.

Services for construction, building materials, medical, cellular network and matchmaking (no relation) are named and advertised in English even in the Bangla media. That is not the real reason why buildings are tumbling, treatment is often denied, talks are failing and marriages are on the rocks.

TV ads appear to be in Bangla but there will be many foreign innuendoes, such as hello, hi ouch and yahoos, not to speak of the alien attire and body language. Amazingly, Bengali language song contests have a Grand Finale, never a "sarambor porishamapti".

Most alarmingly, government establishments and universities (public as well as private) publicise notices and adverts in English, unbelievably in Bangla dailies and online versions. Now that definitely was not the spirit behind

the slogans since 1948. While one may accept e-tendering in Bangla newspapers in English with a pinch of salt, general announcements being printed nowadays are unacceptable.

The silver lining - yes, there is one - is that despite the allure of the alien domain, we have made almost insurmountable progress since the last couple of decades in our songs, theatre and painting, rooting them intrinsically to our language, culture and heritage. That is the bare evidence that we nurture Bangla in our hearts. Yet, we still suffer a complex, dare I say inferiority, to use our *matribhasha* in all spheres. We can only improve from here on if we understand the need to arrest the degeneration and corruption of our mother tongue.

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beyond our big cities.

Consumer products are by and large in English; biscuits, chocolates, toiletries, stationery, you name it. An entire tube of toothpaste made in Bangladesh may not have a single letter in Bangla. And we still feel fresh! Ahhhh...

Visiting cards, including mine, are in English. Some of them have a Bangla insertion on the side opposite to English,

guest houses have the most outrageous names in English, occasionally in outlandish French (*Pourquoi, Dieusait?*), which very few people are able to pronounce. The idea, I believe, is to appear just that, bizarre and mysterious to draw customers and keep away intruders; an inexplicable thought indeed. Interestingly, establishments named in Bangla will have the signpost rendered in English; for

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**VIRGIL THOMSON**

*Let your mind alone, and see what happens.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- Surgery souvenir
- Sacred bird of Egypt
- Shoplifted
- Strollers' aids
- Subject
- Silly
- Draw attention away from
- Candle material
- Drill part
- Tell the tale
- Eric of "Mask"
- Peepers
- Manual readers
- Be boastful
- Turning tools
- Shows
- Historic time
- Copy
- "A Perfect Spy" author
- Intuit
- Birch's kin
- Comics Viking
- Brutes
- Printed matter

**DOWN**

- Eats in the evening
- "Cut that out!"
- Admits
- Stepped down
- Forswears
- Less friendly
- Outlaw
- Somehow
- Capitol group
- Ticket remnants
- Sides in an ongoing battle
- Springbok, for one
- Take it easy
- Bobsled's kin
- Scamps
- Impetuous
- Iterate
- Pay back
- Strapped
- Long-plumed birds
- Tarot readers
- Vigilant
- Noted baseball family
- Jazz horn

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

T	A	C	T	S	E	M	I		
I	D	E	A	S	A	C	I	N	G
D	O	N	N	A	L	O	D	G	E
A	R	T	L	E	A	N	D	E	R
L	E	A	W	A	R	L	A	M	
D	R	A	M	A	V	E	R		
F	R	I	S	E	M				
A	V	I	D	D	E	G	A	S	
T	I	E	S	E	C	A	N	T	S
H	O	L	S	T	E	R	A	Y	E
O	L	D	I	E	E	A	G	L	E
S	E	E	M	E	T	R	E	E	D
T	R	I	P						

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 “মানসম্মত, নিরাপদ ও বৈধ বয়লার ব্যবহারের মাধ্যমে শিল্প প্রতিষ্ঠানের জান-মালের নিরাপত্তা ও জ্বালানি সাশ্রয় নিশ্চিত করুন”  
**বয়লার বিষয়ক সতর্কীকরণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি**  
 সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, প্রধান বয়লার পরিদর্শকের কার্যালয় কর্তৃক সারাদেশে শিল্প কারখানায় ব্যবহৃত বয়লারসমূহ দৈবচয়ন ভিত্তিতে (random) পরিদর্শন করা হচ্ছে। বয়লার একটি ঝুঁকিপূর্ণ যন্ত্র, যা নির্মাণের সময়ই নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিতকরণের লক্ষ্যে আন্তর্জাতিকভাবে স্বীকৃত বয়লার কোড অনুযায়ী প্রস্তুত করা হয়ে থাকে। “বয়লার আইন, ১৯২৩” মোতাবেক শিল্প কারখানাসহ যে কোন প্রতিষ্ঠানে ২২.৭৬ লিটারের অধিক পানি ধারণ ক্ষমতাসম্পন্ন বয়লারে প্রেসারসহ বাষ্প উৎপাদন করলে উক্ত বয়লার ব্যবহারের জন্য প্রধান বয়লার পরিদর্শকের কার্যালয় হতে রেজিস্ট্রেশন গ্রহণ ও বাৎসরিক বয়লার চালনার সার্টিফিকেট গ্রহণ করা বাধ্যতামূলক। সেক্ষেত্রে অবৈধভাবে বয়লার তৈরী, ব্যবহার ও মেরামত কাজ করা হতে সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে সম্পূর্ণরূপে বিরত থাকার জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে। অন্যথায় অবৈধভাবে বয়লার প্রস্তুতকারী, ব্যবহারকারী ও মেরামতকারীর বিরুদ্ধে আইন অনুযায়ী কঠোর ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।  
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