

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI
DHAKA SATURDAY OCTOBER 15, 2016, ASHWIN 30, 1423 BS

Humanity's abandoned house

Thai monarch dies at 88

More than a monarch to his people

OUR deepest condolences go out to the people of Thailand on the death of Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej who passed away peacefully on October 13. He was not only the longest serving monarch but a man who was revered by his people cutting across all strata of Thai society and a constant for peace, stability and a unifying factor for Thais during turbulent political life that Thailand has had to endure over his rule. He will be succeeded by the Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn. King Bhumibol's rule was punctuated by conflict in the region during the height of the cold war including the war in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and several upheavals in Thailand that saw the military intervene more than once. There are palpable tensions in Thai society between the urban and rural populace and the political landscape is divided between the bureaucracy and military on side and the recent rise of populist, albeit rural support that was led by the former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The single constant that rose above the divisive elements was the former king, a towering figure, held in great reverence both by ordinary Thais and the various contending factions in Thai politics. We join millions of Thai countrymen in bidding goodbye to their beloved king and hope that the peace and stability that the late King strove so hard to preserve during his historic rule will prevail in the years to come.

Unblocking Dhaka's arteries

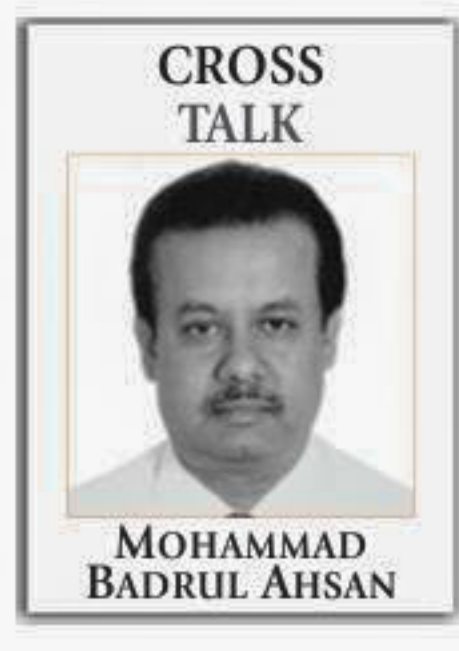
Authorities must act before it's too late

THE indifference of the authorities to the continuing encroachment and dumping of waste materials on what used to be canals with fresh water flow and aquatic biodiversity, we believe, is shocking. One can easily guess, just by looking at the 3 glaring photographs of the problem published by this newspaper on Wednesday, the severity of the menace.

The first photograph shows stores mushrooming up next to a road on what used to be a canal only a few years ago. The second show huge amounts of garbage dumped in Gobindapur Mridhabari Wasa canal in the West Moataile area of the capital; while the third shows how that is clogging up the storm water drainage rendering the canal almost useless. As revolting as the scenes in the photographs are, city dwellers are, unfortunately, no stranger to them. And what is most unfortunate is that it is, in most cases, influential people who continue to encroach on canals by ignoring all consequences of their actions.

Whereas the open canals are supposed to serve as major storm water carriers, because of relentless encroachments and mindless dumping of waste products, the city gets waterlogged every time there is any significant rain. But what does that speak about the handling of the problem by the authorities? Both mayors of the city had, in their election manifestos, pledged to reclaim the canals. On being elected, however, both said that they lacked the legal authority and the financial resources to do so.

This is unacceptable. The authorities need to immediately end the blocking of Dhaka's arteries before the city has a heart-attack resulting in severe consequences for all its dwellers.



CROSS TALK
LATE S. M. ALI
MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

PRIME Minister Sheikh Hasina asked a seminal question in the parliament on October 6, a question that sublimated the anxiety bubbling inside every sensible heart in this country. She asked why nobody had come to the rescue of Khadija Akhter Nargis, who was waylaid on her way home and publicly hacked by a deranged man. She also resented that some people instead of helping the victim, recorded her misery on their cell phones. Then the prime minister asked the mother of all questions: Why are people losing those values that make them humans? It's obvious that two-legged animals are giving four-legged ones a run for their money.

Humanity, in the simplest sense, is the quality or state of being human. Hence, it's shocking when human condition is denied its elements and

The answer to the prime minister's question is writ large on the wall: Humanity in this country is an abandoned house and nobody lives there.

some of us in human forms indulge in animal instincts. When militants butcher innocent people they never met before, it surely looms the spectre of erosion in humanity. It's the same thing when parents kill children, children kill parents, siblings slaughter siblings, or neighbours slay neighbours. Rejected lovers stab or hack their objects of love like angry children smash toys.



Scientists agree that evolution and genetics have baked a certain amount of murder into humans as a species. Mammals average a lethal violence rate of about three killings of their own species in 1,000 deaths. The "root" violence rate of early humans and many of our closer primate cousins is about 20 in 1,000. In the medieval period, between 700 and 1500 A.D., that deadly rate shot up to about 120 per 1000.

This arithmetic resonates with what the Prime Minister has said. She was dismayed at the rising lethal violence rate. And she sounded worried because human suffering has been turned into spectator sport. The Romans cheered gladiators spilling blood in the arenas. That blood sport is now played in our homes, neighbourhoods and restaurants.

But why feel sad for that one girl in Sylhet only? Sagar and Runi were stabbed to death in their apartment in 2012. The killers apparently ate food, sipped tea, and chatted with their hostess before doffing their masks and raining down on her with a hail of knife blades. They also waited for her husband to return home late in the night. They bound and gagged him as if to make his body airtight, so that life couldn't escape it until they had exhausted their rage upon him.

Many more lives have been taken since

then under many different circumstances. A meritorious student named Toki was killed in Narayanganj, his body put in a sack and dumped in a river. A young girl named Tonu has been raped and killed, her body discarded like a rag doll in a bush. Suraya Akhter Risha, a student of Willes Little Flower School, was stabbed by a stalker and left to bleed on a footbridge in Dhaka.

These are but the tallest peaks of a mountain range of crimes that got the most media attention. There have been many targeted killings, forced disappearances, extra-judicial murders, rapes, family feuds, and street brawls in the intervening period that made it clearly evident that this country is reeling on the verge of a moral bankruptcy. Honestly, right now we aren't even paying a penny on the dollar of humanity.

What was particularly disturbing about the hacking of Khadija is that she suffered her agonising fate in broad daylight. There were many onlookers, but nobody stepped forward to stop the assailant. Humanity was hiding in the thick of huddled bodies jostling to get a better view of the crime. It was scared to assert itself because it was lonelier than the victim herself.

And that loneliness is the creation of a

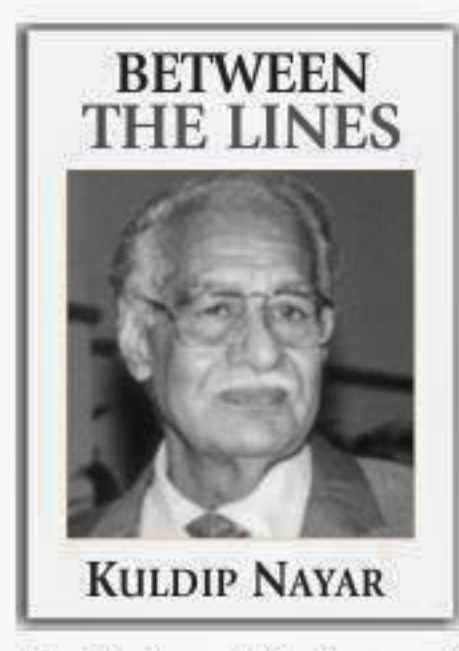
society where everybody is alone in the crowd. It includes not only those who are hacked, stabbed or shot to death in public, but also those who are molested within four walls or dragged from their homes in the middle of the night by plainclothes men. Those who are killed in fake encounters probably ingest the same sense of forlornness before being cut down by dubious bullets.

It's no exaggeration that we are an absurd nation where every individual feels deeply desolate in the midst of a dense population. The reason why nobody comes to the rescue of others is that, instead of protecting an individual, the support system provided by family, society, and government makes him or her more vulnerable.

The answer to the prime minister's question is writ large on the wall: Humanity in this country is an abandoned house and nobody lives there. John Donne writes in his poem No Man Is An Island, "Any man's death diminishes me/Because I am involved in mankind." Humanity doesn't get involved in mankind unless humans will get involved first.

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

Misplaced blame game



BETWEEN THE LINES
KULDIP NAYYAR

PAKISTAN'S National Security Advisor Sartaj Aziz has said that there is no room for improvement in relations between India and Pakistan so long as Narendra Modi is the Prime Minister of India. This is the most undemocratic and anti-people remark any person could have made. That it comes from a top Pakistan official is all the more disappointing and deplorable.

Modi is a duly elected Prime Minister and he and his Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) were returned to power in an open, fair election. Dissent is a part of democracy but it does not mean that a dissenter should be given the No. 1 position. I do not like the ideology of Modi and his party but he is the Prime Minister of India and I, as a citizen of the country, accept him in that position.

Sartaj is only shutting his eyes to the facts. His opinion does not count in the face of reality: the return of BJP and Narendra Modi at the polls. The cat was out of the bag when the National Assembly, which he was addressing, passed a unanimous resolution on the "atrocities" in Kashmir. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also drew a blank at the UN where he tried to raise the issue.

Seventy years have gone by and there is no normalisation of relations between the two countries because of Pakistan's insistence on raising the Kashmir issue at different world forums. It was agreed between Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto and Indira Gandhi at Shimla in 1970 that Kashmir was a bilateral issue and it has to be sorted out by the two, without any interference of a third party.

Since the Kashmir problem had remained unresolved I met Lord Radcliffe during a visit to London to know his view point. He readily agreed to meet me but on the condition that I would not discuss the line which he had drawn between India and Pakistan at the time of partition. I assured him that I was not renewing the issue because I had no ulterior motive. But I just wanted to understand the rationale behind the line delineated.

Lord Radcliffe lived at a flat on the Oxford Street, London. When he opened the door I thought that he couldn't be Radcliffe because I had imagined that there would be fuss in meeting the Lord. On the contrary, when I went to his flat

he asked me if I would have a cup of tea. When I said yes, he himself went to the kitchen and prepared the tea.

I knew that Lord Radcliffe had refused to collect his fee of Rs. 40,000 which Lord Mountbatten had offered him when he was approached to demarcate the border between India and Pakistan. As a sensitive man that he was, Lord Radcliffe thought that the blood of one million people who took upon themselves to migrate from one country to other was on his conscience. That is the reason why he refused to collect the fee.

He said he was surprised that the two

nourishing the grievance against Pakistan for not making him the joint Governor General.

I was amazed by the disclosures that Lord Radcliffe made when he said that while drawing the line he had given Lahore to India. But when he realised that Pakistan would not have an important place to locate its capital, he had allotted it to Pakistan.

Pakistan has itself to blame for the conditions prevailing in Kashmir. When the British quit, Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu and Kashmir announced his independence. Pakistan sent its regular troops because it did not accept the

entire story would have been different.

Sartaj Aiziz, I think, it is wrong to pick on Modi because when he stopped at Islamabad, Kashmir's accession was history. Modi has had no hand in it. He started with all the goodwill and visited Islamabad to participate in the birthday celebrations of Nawaz Sharif's granddaughter.

Pakistan's obsession is Islam, the religion. Islam, that they made the state religion. Since Modi is considered an exponent of Hindutva—he was an RSS pracharak—he is blamed for all the wrong that had happened to the Muslims in



Lord Mountbatten meets Nehru, Jinnah and other Leaders to plan Partition of India.

IMAGE: WIKIMEDIA

countries had gone to war on Kashmir which he considered an insignificant territory. He blamed Lord Mountbatten for having given a *tehsil* in Gurdaspur to connect India with Kashmir. Without it, there would have been no link of India with Kashmir.

There was yet another evidence of Lord Mountbatten's antics when a letter from him was retrieved from the debris of a plane crash in the northern part of Pakistan. The letter was being carried by his personal aide who was travelling in the plane. Pakistan has quoted this incident as an evidence of nefarious design by Lord Mountbatten who was

Maharaja's decision. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru did not accept the Maharaja's accession until he made Sheikh Abdullah, the popular Kashmiri leader, in prison at the time, as Prime Minister of the state.

There was so much delay in Nehru giving his nod to the accession that the Pakistani troops reached the outskirts of Srinagar airport. The Indian forces were flown and they reached at the nick of time to secure the airport. Captain Rai was the first casualty. Had the Pakistani forces not wasted time in looting and raping at Baramulla, they would have had the control of the airport. If they done so,

India after partition. Posterity will confirm that the border accepted on the basis of religion is a permanent wrong done to people on both the countries. They remain segregated because one is Hindu and the other is Muslim.

I hope that the dream of Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah comes true. He said that the two countries would live like America and Canada. They would, Jinnah said, cease to be Hindus and Muslims, not in the religious sense but otherwise, and stop mixing religion with the state.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Attitude towards education must change

In the recent admission test results of University of Dhaka, a major portion of the students have failed in English even though most of them got A in HSC.

English classes in many schools are conducted by teachers of other subjects like chemistry, mathematics and even Bangla. Many coaching centers employ undergraduate students and IELTS takers as English teachers. Is it so easy to be an English teacher?

On another note, how can we expect the best performance from a teacher who only thinks of increasing the number of students in his batch? A teacher should not be allowed to privately tutor students of the institution where s/he works. However, we cannot stop them from doing so when we cannot provide them adequate salary compared to other professions, like with doctors or engineers. To get the best outcome from our students, we must change our attitude towards the subject of English and our expectations from teachers.

Pradip Das
On email

Recruitment process in Bangladesh Bank

BB published a circular to recruit "Officer (General Side)" against its vacancy in June 2014. After almost 6 months of the publication date, a preliminary exam was taken on January 2, 2015. Written test results were published after 8 months, and almost 6 months have passed since the viva test.

We know that not every candidate will get the job. But we request the BB authorities to announce their decision soon and relieve us from our anxiety.

Rifat Intiaz
Dhaka