

Santals being denied their livelihood

Access to food must be ensured

SOME 1,200 Santal families were evicted on November 7 from land belonging to Rangpur Sugar Mill in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha district. The question of whether or not the indigenous community has rights to the land is not the immediate issue here. The fact is that these families are now confined to three villages of Sapmara union, for their own safety according to the police. These people have no access to the basic necessities like medicine and food, although some amount of rice and cash has been distributed among the evicted people. And they have been deprived of their employment for the last three days. The eviction drive carried out by the sugar mill authorities resulting in a clash with the Santals, who have for generations cultivated the land to eke out a living, without making provisions for their relocation and rehabilitation, resulted in casualties.

Was this really necessary? It appears that we are witnessing an erosion of tolerance against ethnic and marginalised people. The recent repeat attacks in Brahmanbaria where the level of violence has shocked many and now the uprooting of entire indigenous Santal communities from farmlands tilled since the time of their forefathers, seem to fit into a pattern where the local power elites are colluding to prey on the more vulnerable sections of our society. The land may belong to the sugar mill, but the government has a responsibility towards these families and we expect the authorities to make provisions for their livelihoods. These families, as citizens of the country, have the same basic rights as the rest of us and the State has to step in when their rights are violated so violently.

Update official websites

Maintenance, upgrade necessary

DESPITE the much hyped digital leap the country has embarked upon, official websites of many institutions remain inadequately developed, failing to provide users with valuable information and services. A case in point is the web page of Jahangirnagar University, one of the largest and best public universities of the country where important information about its physical facilities, research, publications and extracurricular activities are either missing or not upgraded. Also, many faculty members reportedly do not take the trouble to update their profiles online. Will any foreign, well-reputed university be interested in exchanging knowledge with an academic institution that has little or no information about its research work on its site?

But why single out JU when many other public universities and key organisations show the same level of incompetence in designing and maintaining their websites? For instance, many of the research centres of Dhaka University offer little insight into what kind of research is being carried out there. The list goes on. At the official website of a ministry the "tender" and "contracts" sections lie bare although the site contains two nice pictures of the minister and the secretary.

A well-designed website gives an organisation a consistent brand identity, distinction from competitors and reliable partnerships which improve the quality of services it provides. In order to make digitisation meaningful, authorities should have a well defined policy on what information official websites must contain. And heads of institutions should take measures to monitor and update their web sites.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Democracy did it!

It was strong democratic foundation and values in the United States of America that led Donald Trump to win the 2016 Presidential Election. Although the victory of Trump has bewildered the majority of global citizens, I still believe it was a great choice by the Americans. Let us wait and see what Trump, the 45th President of the United States, gives to the Americans and does to refresh US foreign policy.

Meanwhile, I appreciate presidential candidate Hillary Clinton accepting defeat and congratulating Donald Trump for his victory. This is a good lesson for the practitioners of democracy.

M. Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University

England's turnaround

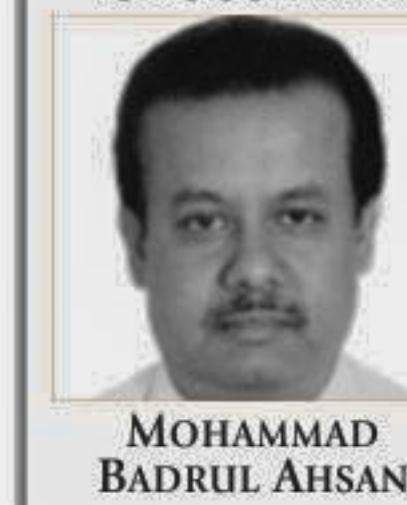
At the end of the first day's play, England scored 311/4, with Moeen Ali still batting at 99 and Root scoring a century. Normally a pitch generally plays well for the first 3 days or so, and then begins to deteriorate due to wear and tear, and batting becomes somewhat difficult.

The same is likely to happen in Rajkot, when bowlers will find more life in the pitch after 3 days of play. But at the start of play yesterday morning, the ball did swing a bit and 3 catches were dropped. Cook, however, failed to capitalise as he was given LBW even though he should have asked for a review. Hamid batted well in his debut innings.

Luthfe Ali, On Email

Donald Trump's victory is a dent in democracy

CROSS TALK



MOHAMMAD
BADRUL AHSAN

As much as the world has been shocked by the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States of America, an aftershock of

that earthquake is beginning to set in as we ask ourselves what happened to the hordes of pollsters, analysts and pundits who had predicted otherwise. In the end, the Chinese monkey proved more prescient than the collective wisdom of all those men and women who make a living out of professional projections. The simian seer in a Shanghai tourism park picked the life-sized cut-out of the Republican candidate with a kiss on the lips. That monkey ever since has thrown a monkey wrench into the vaunted world of logical deductions.

Trump's victory has trumped our common sense at so many levels. It has trumped our common sense of decency. It has trumped our common sense of propriety. His contempt for moral rectitude, disrespect for others, penchant for lies, and lack of tolerance, patience and the whole slew of other virtues are as pronounced as his contempt for women, Mexicans, Muslims, and the disabled reporter whom he mocked.

Donald Trump has won the election despite these deficiencies. He has won despite his refusal to disclose his tax returns. His taped "locker room talk" gave the world a peek into the grotty mind of a lewd man who never grew up. He groped women and called them all sorts of names. His wife gave a plagiarised speech at the party convention. He called Mexicans rapists, threatened to ban Muslims, vowed to dismantle NATO, and made foreign relations sound like gang fights. He is the first candidate in the 240 years of American history who refused to accept election results short of his victory.

The American voters took none of these things into consideration and gave him a landslide win. How was that possible in a country whose people have so long been known worldwide for their abiding faith in democracy? These voters didn't care for his character. They



A man sprays lighter fluid on a burning trash fire at an intersection during an anti-Trump protest in Oakland, California on November 9, 2016. AFP/Josh Edelson.

ignored his financial scandals. They overlooked his debauchery. They didn't give a flying fig about his eccentricities bordering on insanity.

This is a warning sign for democracy. The presidency of any country in the world isn't just about business, foreign policy or running the bureaucracy. It's also about moral leadership, and more so for an American president who claims to be the leader of the free world. The American parents won't be able to tell their children the truth about Donald Trump, and they won't be able to lie to them either. They are going to have to discuss the details of the personal life of their president under their breath like our parents discussed condoms while we were growing up.

As a matter of fact what's there to learn from the life of a casino owner, who is a self-confessed womaniser and possibly a serial tax avoider whose mouth is a running disaster? Where is the struggle in his life to inspire future

generations? What's there to emulate a man who shames and irritates the world every time he opens his mouth? In the closing days of his campaign, Donald Trump's staffers had to take away his twitter account to control his image. This is the same man who said on television he would have dated a young woman if she weren't his daughter.

Whatever has happened to the American tradition that their presidents must be icons of family values? And, what family values are conjured by a thrice-married man whose wandering hands work like heat-seeking missiles around other women? It's hard to think of a family man sitting in the Oval Office knowing his penchant for infidelity.

It's said that a fish rots from its head down. Donald Trump in the White House is a dent in democracy, and many people, who believed in the American system, are scratching their heads already. If a sophisticated machine has spluttered, it needs to be fixed. Four years

may be too late to wait, more so if he gets re-elected.

What desperation drove the American voters to elect Donald Trump can be explained only if we believe that the world has come to the end of common sense. Francis Fukuyama wrote "The End of History" in 1989, in which he argued that the universalisation of Western liberal democracy might be the end point of mankind's ideological evolution. That end point itself is threatened because the logical evolution of human mind may be coming to an end.

That's going to rankle in our minds more than anything. It's a blow to our hope in the exemplar of democracy, and our courage to fight for its advancement. Trump's triumph makes no sense because it has trounced our sanity.

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

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Global Stability in the Trump Era



CARL BILDT

ANGRY American voters who feel slighted by the Washington establishment have had their say. A stunned world must now come to terms with what the

election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States means for global stability in the years ahead.

The world has some time to consider the full implications of Trump's victory, because he will not take office until January 20, 2017, and he will then spend several months staffing his administration with the men and women who will actually formulate and implement its policies.

One thing we already know is that authoritarian rulers around the world can rest easier. They will not hear any more harsh words from the US about their regimes' contempt for democracy, freedom, or human rights. The American goal of making the world safe for democracy will now be replaced by a policy of "America first," a sea-change in US foreign policy that is already likely arousing jubilation in Russian and Chinese halls of power.

We also know that Trump's victory jeopardises world trade. Trump has promised to ditch the 12-country Trans-Pacific Partnership, impose punitive tariffs on Chinese imports, and unilaterally renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement. This is the last thing the world needs right now, given that trade – and the global economy itself – is already struggling.

Trump has promised to strengthen the US military and national-security regime, and to aggressively pursue the Islamic State and jihadist threats around the world. But eliminating the Islamic State and bringing genuine stability to the Levant will require far more than what he has proposed so far. And while he will probably revise his overly casual comments about nuclear weapons, we cannot ignore the possibility that the world will enter a new period of arms proliferation and instability.

Trump has said that he will renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal, and he has vowed to

renege on the US's carbon-reduction commitments under the Paris climate agreement. These are two of the international community's only significant diplomatic achievements in recent years. The consequences of a US retreat from them are anyone's guess. In any case, global stability will certainly suffer.

Trump's foreign-policy strategy is based on remaining unpredictable. But while some caginess in international relations has frequently been part of US policy (just ask Henry Kissinger),

The European Union will play a central role in the drama ahead, because it has long been America's primary partner on global issues, and vice versa. Trump, however, has praised the United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU, and his only European friends so far are figures such as UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage, who led the UK's Brexit campaign and even stumped for Trump in the US. Whether he intends to or not, Trump will give populists and nationalists such as Farage a boost in the

campaign to responsible governance, which is the only way that the US can maintain its global influence. He will have to make his choices for Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and National Security Adviser early, and the world will scrutinise his appointees carefully.

Trump may turn out to make good choices. But, given the tenor of his campaign, confidence in the US on the part of its foreign partners is at low ebb. With Trump's victory, the world has decisively entered a period of increasing



Chairman of the Republican National Committee Reince Priebus shakes hands with Republican presidential elect Donald Trump during election night at the New York Hilton Midtown in New York on November 9.

PHOTO: AFP

predictability is at the core of America's system of alliances, relationships, and friendships, which it has cultivated over many decades. Damaging America's standing as a good-faith actor on the world stage would set the scene for widespread instability.

When Trump takes office, he will have to move quickly to reassure America's friends and allies around the world. Otherwise, they could seek alternative relationships with the US's adversaries or other unsavoury players.

coming months and years.

Trump may find out too late that a fractured Europe is a less stable Europe, and that there are US adversaries poised to exploit the opportunity of European disunity. Russia, for its part, is explicitly trying to undermine the EU, and to change the rules of the game in Europe. Russian President Vladimir Putin may now view Trump as a new partner in his revisionist project; but he could very well overplay his hand, too.

The world will have to give Trump time to pivot from his anger-driven

unpredictability and instability. Global challenges are multiplying, and the international order as it has existed since the end of World War II is under grave threat. Even under the best of circumstances, Trump's election has undoubtedly reinforced these disturbing trends.

The writer is a former prime minister and foreign minister of Sweden.

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