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Mahfuz Anam

Editor (Star Weekend)

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EDITOR'S NOTE

March is a month of celebration for every one who believes in the ideals of equality and freedom. But it is also a revolutionary month- a month to challenge existing oppressive structures and reductive ideologies, a month to renew our promises to change the status quo.

These days, International Women's Day (IWD) has become a caricature of its former revolutionary self, characterised by special discounts from beauty parlours, empowerment ads from fairness products and corporate-sponsored roundtables. We, however, want to remember and honour its radical roots. As such, in our "Women's Day Special" issue, we centre the experiences of migrant and RMG workers and the Hijra community in the conversation on women's empowerment and ask how we can make the women's movement more inclusive, more self-aware and more emancipatory. We also celebrate the personal triumphs of women like Jasmine Begum, the female rickshaw-puller from Chittagong, remembering that the personal is always already political.

Celebrate with us – and revolt with us – this Women's Day.

— SUSHMITA S PREETHA

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Corrupting a Generation

In the last few years, our education sector has been facing an inexorable crisis- disclosure of question papers, which is really unfortunate and disgraceful. We are a developing nation and have a lot of achievements to be proud of. However, our failure to arrange a fair and transparent examination has been tainting our achievements for years. When there is a lot of undeniable evidence of question paper leaking, the Education Ministry and the relevant officials are completely denying the fact. Our Education Ministry cannot play with the fate of millions of students like this. Such blatant denial of the proven facts indicates that the government's strategy to tackle the issue is not in favour of the national interest. The author in the article titled Menacing Our Society (published in Star Weekend on February 24, 2017) rightly pointed out the fact that the disclosure of question papers before the exam date has been destroying the society's moral base. A particular group of people has been working with well organised plans to destroy our society by corrupting our youth and our education system. If our government fails to fight against these criminals, we, the conscious citizens must come forward to thwart their vile objectives.

Qazi Nafis Zami
Ispahani Public School & College, Chittagong



Poetry in Frames

It was a wonderful experience to read the article titled 'Poetry in Frames' in the Star Weekend issue of February 17, 2017. I really liked this article because I didn't have any idea about the portrait photography by Nasir Ali Mamun. However, after reading the article I simply got awestruck to know about his vast collection of photographs of many renowned personalities. I realised that these portrait photographs captured by Nasir are not only valued for their aesthetics, but each of his photograph reflects the story of the person's internal story. I am really glad to learn about this great artist's life and his resourceful experience about portrait photography.

Nasrin Akhter, Ahmednagar, Dhaka



PHOTO: NASIR ALI MAMUN

xCorrigendum

In the article titled "Menacing Our Society" published on February 24, 2017, it was mistakenly stated that question paper of the written test of Bangladesh Civil Service Exam was leaked in 2017 and the question paper of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) was leaked in 2012. In reality, the question paper of the written test of Bangladesh Civil Service Exam was actually leaked in 2012 and question papers of SSC exam have been leaked in 2017. We sincerely regret the inadvertent error.

The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the Star Weekend.

THIS JUST IN

WEEK IN RE(AR)VIEW

SHAER REAZ

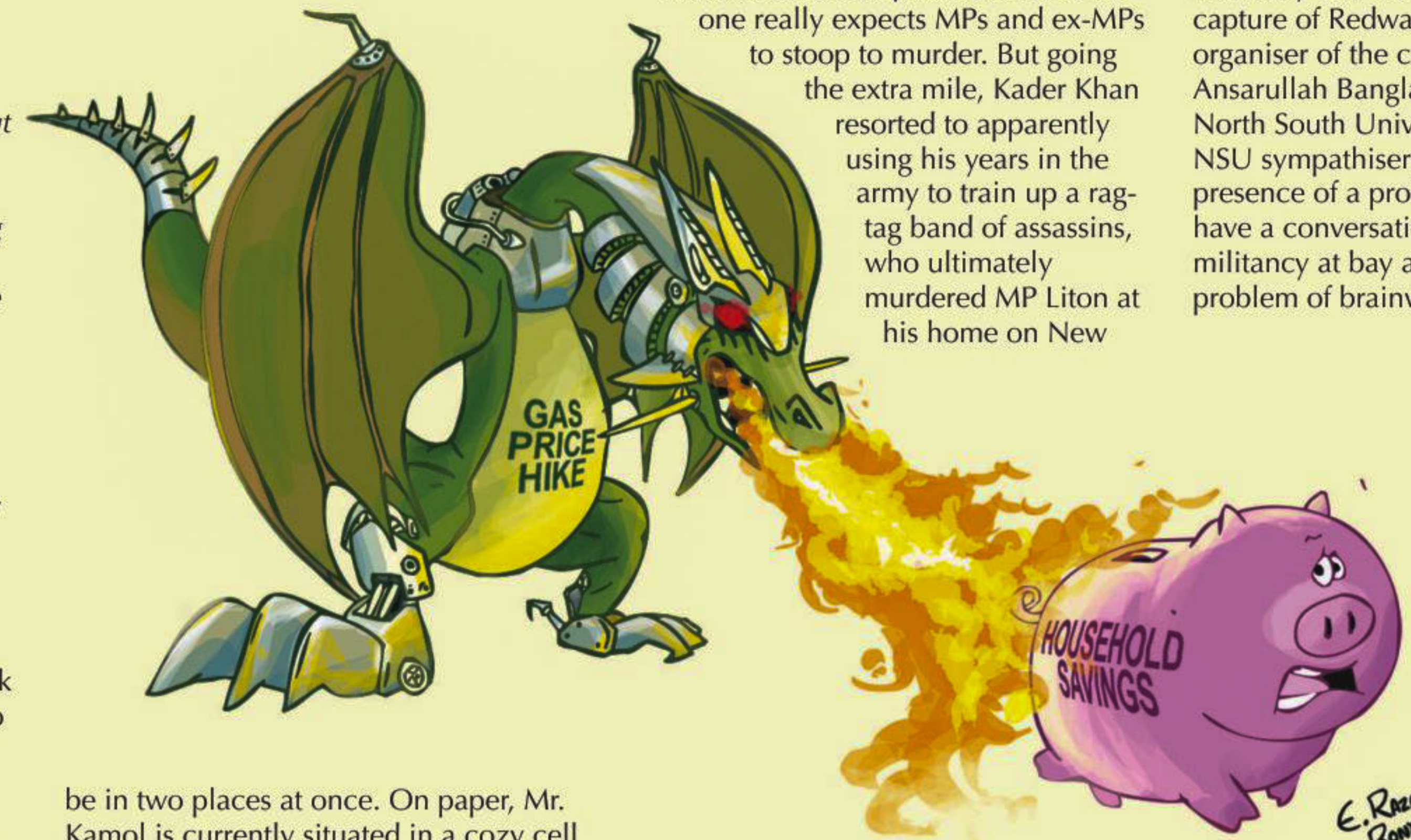
The attention span of the regular reader of news these days is about 15 seconds. Beyond the catchy headlines, most people can barely sit through page after page of demoralising stories of death, devastation and, gasp, "stories of public interest". This is where this column steps in – facts and official reports with a dash of sarcasm.

Yet another way to burn through your savings

On February 23, the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) raised gas prices for all consumers by 22.7 percent and decided to implement the increase in two phases. Households using double burners will have to pay Tk 800 each from next month compared to Tk 650 now, while those using single burners will have to pay Tk 750 each against Tk 600. The prices would be increased again on June 1 by another Tk 150 for each gas stove. Since then, the High Court has stayed the order for the second phase of the price hike and also questioned the legality of the government's move to increase prices in two phases.

Given that the spendable income of people who need this gas is not increasing at the same rate, how are they supposed to cope with it? One way could be to protest, like some left-leaning parties have already done. But a simpler solution, one which the authorities probably have in mind already, is that households should literally take a sizeable portion of their monthly income and burn it in a carefully constructed pile over which they can cook their next meal. CNG driven cars can follow suit, throwing wads of cash into their CNG tanks. This might even increase employment, as the typical car owner might have to resort to hiring a small man-child to sit in the trunk and feed the CNG tank with banknotes. The political left in the country are expected to scramble for unionising these man-children for better wages soon after. Win-win-win.

Kamol Khan, accused of double murder, and part-time sorcery
Mr. Kamol has done what every boss in this country expects of their employees –



be in two places at once. On paper, Mr. Kamol is currently situated in a cozy cell in Dhaka Central Jail, sharing a space designed for two people with twenty others, and embarrassing himself by responding to nature's call in front of complete strangers, who know nothing about him other than the fact that he snores pretty loudly. On a different set of equally official papers, he is a fugitive, on the run for almost 6 years.

So where is prisoner number 22,477/04? Officially, he is still in two places at once, and therefore the prosecution handling his case are still trying him in absentia as he has failed to show up for at least two court dates. We hear he is trying to perfect the trick to be in three places next.

Killing off political rivals and other fun things to try on New Year's Eve

What do you do when you want to enter politics but haven't participated in the various "extra-curricular activities" sponsored by the hyper-partisan student wings of the top political parties? In the case of Col (ret'd) Abdul Kader Khan, who spent his formative years in the army before retiring in 2004, you go to an ex-commanding officer and ask for some "help". Kader joined Jatiya Party in 2008 and won his nomination in Gaibandha by "managing" HM Ershad. In 2014, he lost his nomination to Manjurul Islam Liton, who was Kader's rival back in 2008.

Our parliamentary politics is no stranger to ridiculousness, considering traffic jams are apparent indicators of national wealth going by comments thrown around in parliament. But no one really expects MPs and ex-MPs to stoop to murder. But going the extra mile, Kader Khan resorted to apparently using his years in the army to train up a rag-tag band of assassins, who ultimately murdered MP Liton at his home on New

managed to track down, arrest and deport the killer of blogger Rajib from Malaysia, a mere four years after the murder. Unprecedented pace and swift action by law enforcement has led to the capture of Redwanul Azad Rana, a key organiser of the creatively named Ansarullah Bangla Team and a student of North South University. Cue the horde of NSU sympathisers who'd rather deny the presence of a problem than actually have a conversation about how to keep militancy at bay and address the problem of brainwashed students.

Shopping and not-tying now off the table

If you're big on shopping in congested malls where the price tags alone can go up in flames thanks to inflation, be warned. If you're fond of having your burns treated at a hospital, be...warned? Seriously, how do hospitals of all

Year's Eve in 2016. In the magical realism of Bangladeshi politics, what better way to usher in the new year than killing off your political rival?

BNP: terrorist party, in Canada

A Canadian court has found enough "evidence" to declare the Bangladesh Nationalist Party to be a "terrorist party", according to the PM. It's possible the BNP has weapons of mass destruction, given their affinity towards burning buses to uphold values of democracy. In other news, a British court has ruled that every person believing verdicts without reading the reports shall be subjected to eating stale jackfruits.

May we please protest?

Rampal protesters in Chittagong were charged with batons during a peaceful sit-in because they did not take "prior permission" from the authorities for a protest, and were forcibly removed because they were hampering traffic movement. In the immortal words of Gil-Scott Heron, the revolution will not be televised - but apparently it will have to ask for proper permission from the concerned authorities.

Malaysian import is a bad apple, and a murderer

In a rare move, the government has

places lack fire safety equipment? You know, given the over-abundance of flammable bandages, flammable anaesthetics, flammable white coats, flammable cigarettes stored in hideaways for overworked doctors, flammable doctors charged with malpractice by angry relatives and so on?

When only Breitbart gets invited to the party

The White House temporarily banned prominent media outlets such as BBC, CNN and The Guardian from attending briefings from an off-camera press briefing, with Trump calling the media "an enemy of the American people". Pro-Trump conservative media outlets did attend the briefing, and considering their penchant for reporting fake news, those barred from attending have a simple task of reversing the alternative facts they present to come to a truth of what actually happened at that briefing. More importantly, this represents an important and likely devastating shift in press freedom, which can't bode well for the American people. Wonder which other country has, in the past, decided it's a good idea to bar prominent media outlets from attending press briefings held by the head of state...