

ENVIRONMENT

THE HISTORIC MOVEMENT TO SAVE SUNDARBANS WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED



PHOTO COURTESY: LAST BENCH



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Failing to counter these scientific facts, the government is now repeatedly urging us to trust them, saying that they will protect the Sundarbans.

of Khulna City on the last April 20, 2017. Thousands of people of all ages, from the coastal districts adjacent to Sundarbans, gathered there ignoring the rain – singing, dancing and shouting slogans. When a group of us protestors went out prior to the programme to distribute leaflets on the streets of Khulna city, the general people voiced similar concerns to ours. The shopkeepers, hawkers, tea stall owners, pedestrians – all shared

their discontent against the Rampal power plant and their frustration at the government's actions. Some pointed out that the local powerful groups were threatening them to remain silent.

During the protest, a 70-year-old protester, Mihir Sarkar, died of a stroke while marching in the procession leading to the event. What made this 70-year-old man come to the procession, ignoring his health, to save the Sundarbans? The answer lies in the importance of the Sundarbans to Bangladesh – 5 million people depend on it for their lives and livelihoods, and it acts as a natural protector of 50 million people of the coastal belt from cyclones like Sidr and Aila. Though multiple surveys have revealed that more than 90 percent people of Bangladesh are against the Rampal plant, we do not find them on our side when we are out on the streets; they remain silent despite their reservations. But will remaining silent save them when future generations question them about the role they played in destroying the Sundarbans?

Mahtab Uddin Ahmed is an activist and researcher.

THE WEEK IN RE(AR)VIEW

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thing that sounds fishier is a school of fish discussing the Finding Dory movie which we support wholeheartedly.

Rana plaza aftermath

This April 24 marked the fourth year of the nine-storied Rana Plaza collapse. Housing several readymade garment factories, the collapse killed over 1,130 people while injuring thousands. Two cases were filed in connection with the incident. Both cases are like Axe body spray: Nothing really happens.

The aftermath of the disaster now leaves 42 percent of survivors still unemployed, according to Actionaid. Of the unemployed, 48.1 percent cited being physically weak and 33.4 percent not having the mental strength as the main reason for being out of work.

To test if the remaining are finally fit, police charged them with a water cannon as they showed up to the site to place floral wreaths. Local lawmaker Md Enamur Rahaman had given them permission on Sunday. But the police were not having any of that since, apparently, they had not seen a stage anywhere in sight. A rally without a stage is just madness. When asked as to the reason for a water cannon, Savar's Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police Mahbubur Rahman considered it regular deployment. Good to know in this summer, we can call upon the police to provide us with water. Maybe turn down the pressure a bit?

Replace humans for benefit of humans

While we drown in our sorrows and in torrential and water cannon rain, the rest of the world seems hellbent on replacing humans for the benefit of humans. Apple was granted a permit to test self-driving cars on April 14 by the California Department of Motor Vehicles. Which is all great but the entire project is shrouded in secrecy. Is Apple planning to provide automated foot massages for the passengers of their driverless cars?

4G promises

On our technology front, we have a promising future full of, that's right...promises. 4G has come out in 2010 and our neighbours in India have been ogling Rakhi Sawant in real time on their 4G phones since 2012. We settle for hope. 4G auction is to take place after announcement of national budget for next fiscal year, so says our venerable Finance Minister AMA Muhith, famous memelord for implementing taxation on education.

Goodbye Lucky

On a tragic note, Lucky Akhand, one of the most gifted singer-composers Bangladesh has ever produced, passed away on 21 April 2017. He was battling with cancer. ■

#RealTalk



OSAMA RAHMAN

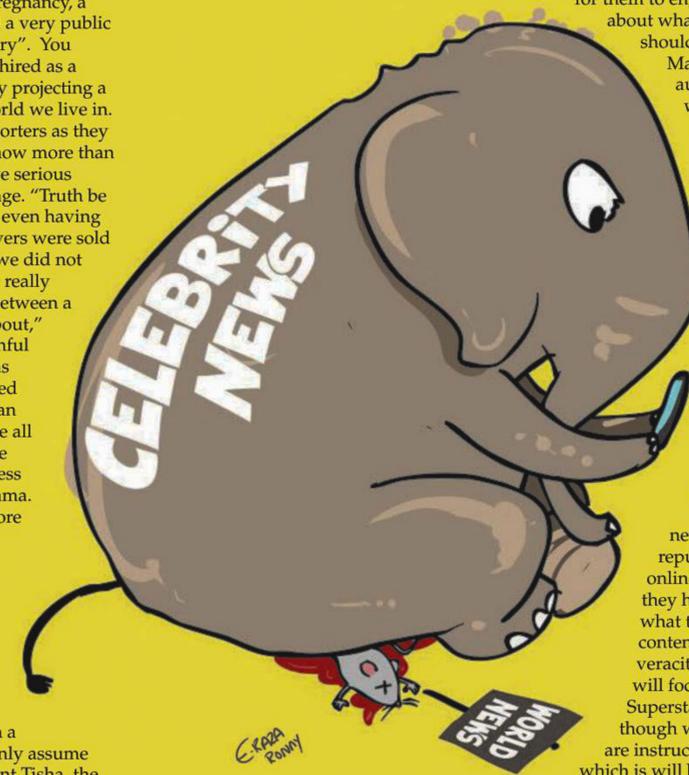
JOURNALISTS DECLARE WEEK-LONG BREAK

Holiday to mark end of Apu-Shakib tragicomedy

While the global media is traumatised by an impending nuclear war and a lunatic running the most powerful country in the planet, the journalists of Bangladesh have declared a week-long holiday in what can only be called a shocking turn of events. The holidays come on the heels of the fight and reconciliation of the nation's two biggest superstars, following an untold pregnancy, a secret childbirth, a live TV confession and a very public patch-up, all dubbed "The Love2Hate Story". You cannot make this stuff up, unless you are hired as a propaganda artist who hides the reality by projecting a more compelling false narrative of the world we live in.

However, the journalists, or yellow reporters as they are affectionately called, need this break now more than ever, despite possible actions that can have serious global ramifications and may need coverage. "Truth be told, when we found out about these two even having kids, it's all we could talk about. While rivers were sold and we were forced to purchase security we did not want, it was all irrelevant in view of what really mattered: the birth of a secret love-child between a married couple that no one really cares about," President of Journalist's Association, Truthful Tutul explained. "Now that this drama has gone on for so long, our journalists are tired from running after this news. It has been an emotionally draining period for us and we all need rest. The world always has their little wars but our literary and analytical prowess are spent analysing this Shakesperean drama. Nothing can beat it. Nothing can draw more users. This was our Magnum Opus," he declared.

Detractors though point out a more nefarious agenda behind the break. "These journalists are no longer journalists. They have morphed into gossip columnists. When the front page of a national daily gives more space to a tiff between two married people than it gives to what the leader of country did on a strategically crucial foreign trip, we can only assume that something is very wrong," Transparent Tisha, the



head of Opacity International Bangladesh, stated. When asked why they didn't do real things instead of constantly holding press conferences and preparing reports no one ever reads, Transparent Tisha quickly evaded the question and went back to saying whatever it is that she wanted to say. "That is a good question. But it is not an important one. Right now, we must be asking why is it that this holiday comes on the heels of a neighbour possibly poisoning our water systems and a series of events that may break out into a totally unfair war. The journalists need to pick up their keyboards and get to stroking and fast," she added.

"It is better for the journalists, or lobbyists as one might correctly call them, to take a break. They can revisit this big superstar story, treat it as soul food and come back better. But in the meantime, it is even better for them to engage their audience. News should be about what people want to read and not what they should read," Dr. Professor General Abdul Matin, Editor of *Faltu Alaap* said. "Also, by audiences we mean advertisers. This week we are planning a thorough activation plan with a condom company. The campaign is called #TrustTheLust where we make a ton doing nonsense awareness campaigns by distributing condoms where they aren't needed but where the readers will possibly see our brand and read more of our papers. In the meantime, they will not have to bother with unacceptable imperialistic ambitions and the questionable state of our democracy. News needs to be soft. People should enjoy reading the newspaper," he said, adding that news should generate chuckles and not tears and it should provoke us to purchase things and not provoke thoughts or discussions.

The week-long holiday is set to begin next week. During the time, not a single reputable newspaper will be published. The online versions, though, will be active. But they have been instructed to stick to doing what they do best and that is looking for content that can go viral, regardless of their veracity. In fact, next week online newspapers will focus on the theme, "Fruits shaped like Superstar babies". The rest of the journalists though will take a long awaited break, unless they are instructed to work under special arrangements, which is will be highly likely. ■

ABOUT TOWN



MAY DAY 2017

Organiser: Srote Abritti Sangsad
May 1, 4.30 – 8 pm, TSC, University of Dhaka



WE DON'T WANT COAL-BASED POWER PLANT

Organiser: Bangladesh Nagarik Shakti- Dhaka District
May 01, 10 am, National Shaheed Minar



PREMIER SHOW OF THE DRAMA 'SARARATTIR'

Organiser: Teerondaz Repertory
April 28, 4 - 8.30 pm, Beauty Boarding, Banglabazar



ENTHUSIAST PHOTOGRAPHERS EXHIBITION 2017

Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpokola Academy
April 27-29, 10am - 8pm, Bangladesh Shilpokola Academy