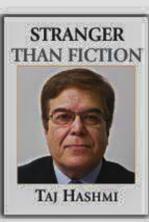


# What's so "interesting" in Bangladesh today?



STRANGER THAN FICTION  
TAJ HASHMI

**I** NTERESTINGLY, "interesting" is an English expression, which may hide one's actual opinion about something one considers "interesting".

What I read in Bangladesh media recently is very "interesting" to me. Stories range from the absurd, bizarre, entertaining, frightful, to the very sickening.

Let's start with some "interesting" media reports on money laundering from Bangladesh. *The Jugantor* (May 3, 2017) reports, during the last one year alone, Bangladeshis laundered around USD 6 billion out of their country. Another report (*The Daily Star*, May 3, 2017) suggests, in ten years (2005-2014) there was a flight of capital from Bangladesh to the tune of USD 75 billion. According to a UN report in 2010, annually, more than 30 percent of Bangladesh's GDP go out of the country. Someone has sarcastically commented in social

media that now plundered money is the second most important export item - after readymade garments - from Bangladesh! I also read, Bangladesh is now the third largest source of foreign remittance for India. Thousands of Indian executives work in Bangladesh - most of them illegally - and remit billions of dollars to India. It's "interesting", neither the government nor the intelligentsia in Bangladesh seem worried about it, at all!

Another report is equally "interesting", Obaidul Quader, a powerful minister who's also the Secretary General of the Awami League, came up with a bombshell. His curious and not-so-funny advice to his corrupt party men hardly raised eyebrows in the administration or media. While some media reports were a bit bold and critical, most of them avoided giving wide publicity to what the minister had actually said in the most extraordinary manner. I find his statement "interesting". It's sort of soft, not that harsh for the corrupt elements in the Awami League. He

advised them to spend some of their ill-gotten money for the benefit of the people, otherwise, he warned: "If the party is not in power, you will have to run away from the country". "Power and money does not stay for long, so don't misuse it," he added. Did the minister realise the implications of what he said about the corrupt elements in the ruling party? On the one hand, he admitted his party men were corrupt, and on the other, he advised them to spend some of their ill-gotten money for public welfare, so that they could stay in the country even if the Awami League isn't in power.

*The Daily Star* (April 3, 2017) reports, Obaidul Quader recently defended the Prime Minister saying that the PM was not aware of the recent court action against the elected mayors (from BNP) in Sylhet and Rajshahi, barring them from going to work as mayors as they were wanted for arson and violent crimes. Doesn't such defence give the impression that the PM did not know such important things as court action against elected mayors?

I found *The Daily Star's* (April 11,

2017) recent headline in Roman Hindi, "*Kuchh toh mila*" after the Prime Minister's return from India not entertaining, but very "interesting"! I can't resist the temptation to cite the first few lines of the report: "*Didi pani nehi diya, lekin bijli to diya... Kuchh to mila.*" (Sister did not give us water, but gave electricity... at least we've got something). Pointing to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made the comment in Hindi yesterday on the last day of her four-day India visit, which has failed to resolve the Teesta water-sharing issue, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

What's not entertaining here is that first of all, the PM is not expected to address a provincial chief minister in India, even if she is a Bengali and from the Bengali-majority Indian state of Paschim Banga, as her "Didi". Second, the comment sounded as if Mamata Banerjee was doing us a favour. India doesn't provide electricity to Bangladesh free of cost, as charity!

It's not all Mamata Banerjee's fault that Bangladesh doesn't get its

due share of Teesta waters. A Teesta accord was in the offing in 2011 when Manmohan Singh was the Prime Minister. So much so that the then foreign minister was on record to have said that the Teesta deal would be signed during the Indian Prime Minister's trip. New Delhi officially doesn't tell Dhaka about a barrage India has built across the Teesta in the upstream in Sikkim. So, Mamata Banerjee's opposition to give Bangladesh its due share of Teesta waters is only part of a bigger story. Now, Narendra Modi is telling the same old story to his Bangladeshi counterpart that we heard when Manmohan was in power. Meanwhile, no "Hilsa-diplomacy" (after "Hilsa-treats" to Pranab Mukherjee and Mamata Banerjee by Bangladesh Government) has worked to the advantage of Bangladesh! The water level in the Teesta during the dry months hasn't gone up, for Bangladesh.

The media reveals Hefazat-e-Islam, which Awami League once despised as an obscurantist enemy of human rights and secularism, has emerged as an influential

powerbroker of the government. It demands: a) the removal of a harmless sculpture of a Greek goddess - a universal symbol of justice - from the premises of the Supreme Court; and b) the official recognition of Qwami madrasa's terminal degree as equivalent to master's degree from universities. Not only some ruling party leaders but some Bangladeshi intellectuals have also started glorifying the Qwami madrasa system. The rising Hefazat factor is behind Chief Justice (CJ) Surendra Kumar Sinha's nemesis. Recently, he asserted in public: "Rule of law in Bangladesh is not fully established" (bdnews24.com, May 1, 2017), which was of no avail. Thanks to the growing influence of Hefazat, even the PM has started disliking the sculpture.

Isn't Bangladesh going through an "interesting" phase of history?

The writer teaches security studies at Austin Peay State University. He is the author of several books, including his latest, *Global Jihad and America: The Hundred-Year War Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan* (Sage, 2014). Email: tajhashmi@gmail.com

# The trauma that never ends



MEHTAB GHAZI RAHMAN

**A** shocking headline in *The Daily Star*, claiming "145 children [were] raped in three months!" caught the attention of many recently. The article reported that 145 children in Bangladesh were raped in the first three months of 2017, 50 of whom were killed. Social media was abuzz with discussions around the article, and the general feedback was unanimous - what is happening in our society is despicable, shocking, nauseating. These 145 cases are only the tip of the iceberg - a multitude of sexual abuse cases have likely gone unreported due to societal taboo, shame and stigma.

Childhood is a time when complex changes occur in a person's physical, social and psychological being - these changes are retarded and perverted when a child is abused, leading to abnormalities in their development. Abuse disrupts a child's self-esteem and sense of mastery of the world, leaving them vulnerable to social and personal deficits in later life. The child loses the sense of the world as a safe and trusting environment, the understanding that relationships can be trusting and intimate; in adult life, this leads to an increased risk of low self-esteem, social insecurity, difficulties with one's sexuality and ability to be intimate, and socio-economic failure. Abused children have lower educational attainment - they are more likely to have lower grades, increased absence from school and lower than average attainment in language and mathematics, all of which persists

happen to them (pessimism) and they may develop a sense that they lack control of their own lives and life events.

Sexual abuse in childhood has been shown to cause significant changes in the brain structure (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States). Researchers have found specific changes in a key part of the brain, the hippocampus, in those who have been maltreated in childhood. Those children who have experienced abuse have been found to have reduction in brain volume in two parts of the hippocampus: the pre-subiculum and subiculum. These brain changes leave a person more vulnerable to anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder in adulthood. Childhood abuse also leads to high levels of circulating stress hormones that damage regions of the brain that affect the person's ability to cope with stress in

problems in adulthood ("The long-term effects of childhood sexual abuse: Counseling implications", [counselingoutfitters.com](http://counselingoutfitters.com)).

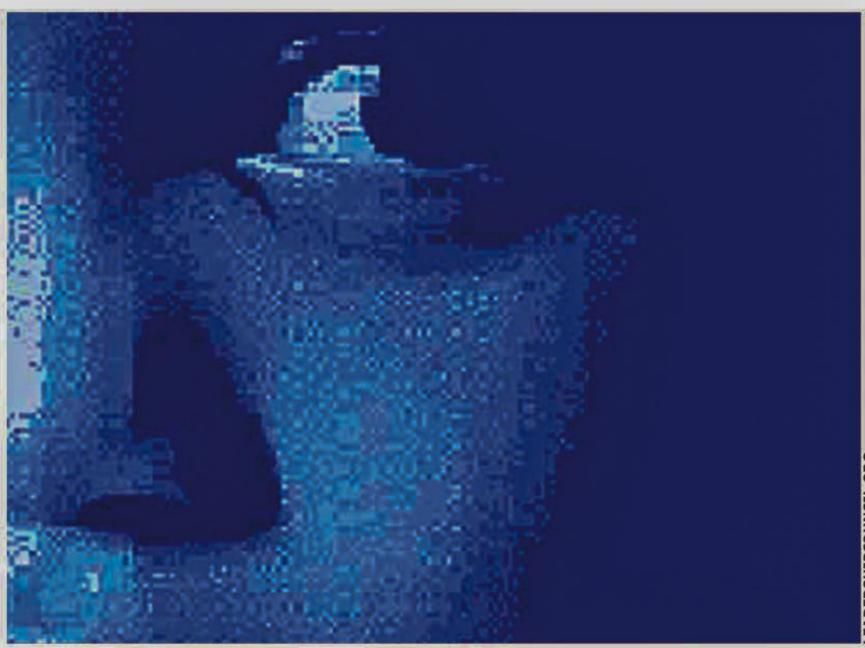
The trauma of childhood sex abuse affects the body's stress system, which lingers on for years after the initial event. The increased level of stress leaves the victim vulnerable to chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, heart attacks and strokes. Victims are also more likely to report chronic pain syndromes such as back pain, unexplained headaches, pelvic pain, poor sleep, gastrointestinal problems and breathing difficulties in adult life ("The long-term effects of child sexual abuse", Australian Institute of Family Studies). A clear link exists between sexual abuse and fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome and irritable bowel disease. Studies have shown that a victim of sexual assault has double the risk of being confined to bed or restricted in daily activities due to their physical health problems. Eating disorders and body image issues are also common.

**The effect of sexual abuse on mental health is profound. The trauma of abuse during childhood leads the victim to direct their shame, despair and anger inwards, which gives rise to psychological distress in adolescence. The denial and repression of the memories of being abused can lead to amnesia of parts of one's childhood, which can be confusing and distressing for the sufferer.**

Have you given a thought about what happens to child abuse victims in the longer term? What influence does child sexual abuse have on a person's physical, psychological, social and interpersonal functioning in later life?

Child sexual abuse can be defined as 'any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given'. The perpetrators of sexual abuse are not always adults; sexual contact between an older child and a younger one can also be deemed as abusive if the victim is unable to give informed consent. Acts considered as sexual abuse include penetration and touching, as well as non-contact acts such as voyeurism and exposure; in plain words, any activity that exploits a victim sexually is sexual abuse. Perpetrators may also exploit children online, by prematurely exposing children to pornography, trapping them into having conversations of a sexual nature in chat rooms and manipulating them into sending pornographic photos of their bodies. Sexual abuse is often carried out by someone who the victims trust - the abuse breaks the trust and leaves the abused children believing that the people they trust will end up hurting them.

Childhood sexual abuse occurs in families of all socioeconomic levels, but is most common in families that are socially deprived and disorganised. Dysfunctional marriages, resulting in domestic violence or parental separation, are associated with higher risks of child sexual abuse ("A Study of Potential Risk Factors for Sexual Abuse in Childhood", *Child Abuse and Neglect*, Vol. 21). There is also increased risk with a step-parent in the family or when a child is put into foster care ("Childhood sexual abuse and psychiatric disorders in young adulthood", *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, Vol. 35). Social deprivation and dysfunctional family environments are likely to leave children vulnerable due to the lack of adequate care, protection and supervision, leaving them exposed to molesters who display fake interest and affection to take advantage of a child's vulnerability. Studies have suggested that physical maturity, attractiveness, early sexual maturation and socially isolated children with few friends have the highest risk of being sexually abused ("High risk children", *A Sourcebook on Child Sexual Abuse*).



The effect of sexual abuse on mental health is profound. The trauma of abuse during childhood leads the victim to direct their shame, despair and anger inwards, which gives rise to psychological distress in adolescence. The denial and repression of the memories of being abused can lead to amnesia of parts of one's childhood, which can be confusing and distressing for the sufferer. There is now a large body of research that links child sexual abuse to high rates of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, trauma and substance abuse.

Interestingly, research has shown that long-term problems following child sexual abuse are lower in those victims who have confiding and supportive relationships with their mothers ("Childhood sexual abuse and later psychological problems", *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, Volume 7). Success in sports and academic achievement at school have been shown to be protective against long-term consequences of sexual abuse as they lead to improvement of one's self-esteem and encourage effective social interaction with peers.

The long-term effects of childhood sexual abuse can be complex and devastating. Sexual abuse not only leaves the victim vulnerable to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and anger, but also chronic physical health problems such as chronic pain and gastrointestinal disorders. Survivors need to be supported with empathy, understanding and empowering messages with the aim to improving their self-esteem and re-integrating them in society. Instead of identifying and targeting abuse victims, the effort should be to provide all adolescents the opportunity to participate in social opportunities that increase their self-esteem and mastery in dealing with life. Enabling victims to achieve success in academics, sports and in the workforce greatly reduces the vulnerabilities to developing mental, physical and interpersonal problems in adulthood.

The writer is a London-based Adult Psychiatrist working for the National Health Service (NHS), United Kingdom.

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**FREDERIC BASTIAT**  
FRENCH ECONOMIST AND AUTHOR

*It is not true that the legislator has absolute power over our persons and property. The existence of persons and property preceded the existence of the legislator, and his function is only to guarantee their safety.*

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

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| 24 | 25 |    |    | 26 | 27 |    |    |   |
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| 31 |    |    | 32 |    | 33 | 34 | 35 |   |
| 36 |    | 37 | 38 |    |    | 39 |    |   |
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4-20

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**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- One or more
- Bar supply
- Clarifying words
- Before, in Brest
- River feature
- Sold for
- Freud topic
- Zig and zag
- Anger, informally
- Verb for you
- Nevada neighbor
- Sluggo Williams
- Rumsoaked cake
- Copied
- Wire measure
- Intent look

**DOWN**

- "Dragnet" alert
- Gosling's dad
- Libel's counterpart
- Fuss
- Asian capital
- Wild dog
- Strike group
- Fills completely
- Range features
- Bird abode
- Court order
- Typed
- Put in the closet
- Convention ID
- Stretch of history
- Christen
- Sand traps, in golf
- Sopwith Camel, for one
- Neighbor of Greece
- Farm enclosure
- Musical mixture
- Stretch of history
- Inferno chronicle
- Perimeters
- Perch
- Cranny's kin
- Clamors
- Notorious czar

**Former Secretary M N Huda Passes Away**

Former Secretary to the Government Mr. Muhammad Nurul Huda breathed his last due to old age complications in a city hospital yesterday. He was 87 (Inna Lillaha Wa Innalilaha Rajjun).

Huda joined the erstwhile Police Service of Pakistan (PSP) in 1953. A career police officer Mr. Huda held many important positions in different districts, Police Headquarter and Special Police Establishment. After the liberation war, he was posted as DIG of Collaboration Cases in 1972. He was one of the founders of National Security Intelligence (NSI). During his long tenure (1973 - 1985), he had much contribution for the development of NSI serving both as Director and DG. He was Secretary in the Ministry of Planning (1986 - 1987) before retirement from the Government Service.

He left behind his wife, two sons, one daughter, five grandchildren and host of relations to mourn his death.

His Namaza Janaza will be held at the Gulshan Central Mosque after Zohr prayers today and will be buried at the Banani Graveyard.