

HC verdict on Biswajit murder

Deal severely with culture of negligence

THE High Court (HC) verdict on the Biswajit murder reaffirms the view that the process of investigation is distorted and facts tampered with, and police officers and forensic experts give false reports to influence the outcome of a case to favour the accused. There must have been enough grounds for the HC to suspect malpractice in this case, a feature long suspected of being modus operandi of some members of law enforcement agencies, and we commend the court for taking cognisance of such criminal behaviour. The directive of the court as well as the finding of the DMP enquiry into police action that led to injury and permanent blindness of Siddiqur Rahman, highlight the lack of professionalism, integrity and honesty of some members of the police force.

The falsification of facts by members of the medical fraternity and the Sutrapur sub-inspector at the time of the filing of the murder case against the accused exposes the serious problem that the police high command must contend with. Such motivated investigations cast a dark shadow on the credibility of the legal procedure and sap people's confidence in the system. Misconduct and negligence of duty are serious charges under any circumstances, but they have very grave implications in case of a murder.

We hope that the HC directive and DMP probe findings would serve as a wakeup call for the police administration to put its house in order that would put a stop to this sort of unprofessional and immoral behaviour that not only maligns the name of the force but, more dangerously, does great harm to the cause of justice.

Int'l Day of the Indigenous Peoples

Address their concerns

TODAY, as we celebrate International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (*Adivasi Dibosh*), the indigenous communities of Bangladesh living in Chittagong Hill Tracts and plain lands are still being deprived of basic necessities.

No nation can develop with a section of its people left behind in many aspects of national life. According to our national education policy adopted in 2010, indigenous children have the right to learn in their mother tongue. But sadly, this has not been implemented yet. And their right to health? The recent deaths of ten children from measles in Chittagong's Sitakunda upazila are just an example of the kind of healthcare these people are provided with.

Also, indigenous people being evicted from their ancestral land by influential people has become a common occurrence across the country. We have failed to ensure the safety of indigenous women, who fall victim to torture which the powerful quarters often use as a means for grabbing their land. Furthermore, the CHT peace accord has still not been fully implemented.

These are some of the issues that need to be addressed if we are serious about protecting their rights. To do so, involvement of indigenous people at the policy level is necessary.

Only dedicating a day for indigenous peoples will have no impact on their lives. And as a country we can't develop if the rights of these people are not ensured. We dream of a Bangladesh where the indigenous communities will be able to enjoy their rights without discrimination.



THE OVERTON WINDOW
ERESH OMAR JAMAL

THE atomic age began with the US dropping the first atomic bomb dubbed "Little Boy," on August 6, 1945, on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, after its July 16 pre-dawn birth in success ful testing at Alamogordo, New Mexico. Three days later, on August 9, 1945, the second bomb—"Fat Man"—was dropped on Nagasaki, incinerating the city and its unexpected inhabitants. Their combined devastation was so unimaginable, that it caused Robert Oppenheimer, largely considered to be the "father of the atomic bomb," to say, quoting the Bhagavad Gita, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."

Having dropped the A-bomb on Hiroshima, Brigadier-General Paul Warfield Tibbets Junior—pilot of the first plane (Enola Gay) to drop the atomic bomb—said to have blinked from the flash behind his goggles. When he opened his eyes to look down, what he saw, he described as "a peep into hell." At least 200,000 died from the combined hellish force of the two atomic bombs, many more were scarred for life, including future generations harmed by radiologically caused birth defects, etc. The co-pilot of the Enola Gay, Robert Lewis, wrote in his flight log, "My God! What have we done?"

Unfortunately, what they had done was, and continues to be, deceitfully described as a "necessary evil"—a fait accompli—till date; beginning with a radio speech delivered on the same day as the bombing of Nagasaki by President Harry Truman, who said, "The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima a military base [known to be untrue by the US top brass]. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians [emphasis mine]," which has been contested by many, and not without evidence.

Prior to the bombs being dropped, US Secretary of War Henry Stimson, for example, briefed General Dwight Eisenhower on their imminent use, saying Japan was "already defeated" and that "dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary." After its use, Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral William Leahy called the atom bomb "a barbarous weapon" and said that the "Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender."

In addition, four days before President Truman, Prime Minister Churchill and Premier Stalin met in Potsdam in mid-July to discuss post-war issues two months after Nazi Germany's defeat, a telegram from Japanese Foreign Minister Shigenori Tōgō to Moscow read, "It is his Majesty's heart's desire to see the swift termination of the war." This message was intercepted and known by the US intelligence, which had broken Japanese codes even before the war began, and had been reading Japan's diplomatic messages at least from the

summer of 1940. Even the top US commander in the Pacific, General Douglas McArthur admitted that the Japanese were "already beaten" by the time the bomb was dropped, a view endorsed by the head of US air operations in the Pacific, General Curtis LeMay, who said, "Even without the atomic bomb and the Russian entry into the war, Japan would have surrendered in two weeks." This has led many to speculate that they were dropped as a warning to all those planning to oppose the US's post-war supremacy, particularly the Soviet Union; and that the lives of the many thousands of Japanese victims were considered merely a small price to pay to achieve that. Overlooking the fact that terror bombing is an international high crime, as Article 25 of the Laws of War: Laws

considered, according to scientific opinion, on contract to the Pentagon as 'harmless to the surrounding civilian population because the explosion is underground.' This, he says, is "a lie". And as common sense dictates, is madness.

Professor Christopher Busby, Scientific Secretary of the European Committee on Radiation Risk based in Brussels, says that "modern thermonuclear warheads...pack about 800kT (kilotonnes)," whereas the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were 13kT and 20kT, respectively. Given this, he suggests that all who have the capacity should refrain from sanctioning the final nuclear exchange "on the mistaken prediction that such an event

will be winnable." Yet we are today the closest we have ever been to nuclear annihilation—"two and a half minutes to midnight" on the doomsday clock, for the first time in history—according to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. And the fact that we are completely oblivious to that, as made evident by a 2016 CBS News poll, which revealed that 43 percent of US residents still approve of the US's use of nuclear bombs against Japan, is perhaps the greatest danger of all.

Tommy Yang, an 85-year-old survivor in the atomic bombing of Nagasaki said in an interview that "Nuclear weapons are not just weapons. It's a devil's tool. It cannot co-exist with the [sic] mankind." It is perhaps time for us to realise that ourselves. And also understand, as Professor Chossudovsky opines, that



A cloud of smoke from the atomic bomb dropped by the US on the city of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, three days after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. More than 70,000 people in Nagasaki were instantly killed by the bomb.

and Customs of War on Land (1907 Hague IV Convention) states that, "The attack or bombardment, by whatever means, of towns, villages, dwellings, or building which are undefended is prohibited" and the post-WWII Geneva IV, which protects civilians in time of war, prohibiting violence of any type against them and the 1945 Nuremberg Principles which forbid "crimes committed against any civilian population, before or during the war," notably indiscriminate killing and "wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity."

More than 70 years later, we see similar dangers re-emerging today, as the world shockingly seems to have

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"The bombs of August [Hiroshima and Nagasaki] are an ominous reminder that what happened to Japan can repeat whenever lunatics in Washington believe it to their advantage [emphasis mine]. Humanity may not survive their madness." And with the realisation and understanding to work towards eradicating nuclear weapons completely before allowing them to eradicate humanity from the face of the earth as was done during the split seconds it took to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki; which in no uncertain terms were crimes of the most inhumane kind to have ever been perpetrated by humanity—against itself.

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Eresh Omar Jamal is a member of the editorial team at *The Daily Star*.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Bring perpetrators of rape to justice

According to Bangladesh Mahila Parishad's figures, as reported by this newspaper, as many as 429 incidents of rape took place between January and June this year, with many victims being teenage girls. Some of the victims were even murdered after being raped. These barbaric incidents of rape triggered outcry across the whole country, but few culprits have so far been brought to proper justice. Many of them escape justice and live with impunity by threatening the victim's family, mobilising political clout or bribing corrupt officials. If this trend continues, the whole country will encounter more such horrific abuses.

I want to draw the kind attention of the authorities to end this culture of impunity. If they fail to bring these perpetrators to justice, we cannot provide our women with a safe environment to live in.

Mohammad Kabir, Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University

Meritorious students should join politics

That the students are the future leaders of a nation is known to all. Students are expected to take part in politics indirectly in order to develop the qualities of leadership. But those now involved in student politics tend to prioritise politics over their education.

We have a glorious history of student politics, but its present condition is diminishing the prestige of our glorious past. It is high time we encouraged meritorious and competent students to get engaged in student politics. Only by doing so can we create capable leaders in the future.

Bayjid Rayhan, University of Dhaka



DANIEL T BLUMSTEIN

DESPITE the falsehoods that some politicians peddle, facts still matter, and getting those facts right is essential for survival. I know, because I regularly see the deadly consequences of getting facts wrong.

I am a behavioural ecologist, and I study how animals assess and manage predation risk. But, rather than study the flashy

predators—with their sharp teeth, stealthy approaches, and impressive sprinting abilities—I focus on their food.

Some wallabies make bad use of facts. Too often, these four-legged snacks ignore information right in front of them—like rustling in the underbrush or the scent of a passing carnivore. And they pay for this ignorance dearly, with the sudden slash of talons, or the constricting squeeze of a powerful jaw.

But my research has shown that many would-be meals—marmots, birds, lizards, fish, and sessile marine invertebrates among them—are better at assessing risk. In 1979, the ecologists Richard Dawkins and John Krebs proposed the "life-dinner principle," which holds that prey, with more to lose than predators, are more creative survivalists. The risk of being eaten—and thus removed from the gene pool—provides a strong incentive to up one's game. For the predator, the only consequence of failure is going hungry until the next meal.

We see the life-dinner principle at work all around us. When shorebirds or ducks flock together as a dog runs down the beach or along a pond, it is because the birds understand that there is safety in numbers. People do the same thing. We feel more anxious, for example, when we surf alone, because we know that, in the extremely unlikely event that a shark decides it wants a fibreglass-and-neoprene meal, our odds of survival increase when the shark has more than one target from which to choose.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Surviving in a post-truth world

People, just like animals, need reliable, truthful data to make good decisions. Once, while studying marmots in the Karakoram mountain range between China and Pakistan, a lack of facts almost got me killed. A cataclysmic rainstorm and resulting landslides had cut off all access into and out of my study site, disorienting me as I sought to leave. As conditions worsened, it was impossible to craft an exit strategy.

Because I was battling typhoid and had a lot of research gear with me, I simply didn't have the

conclusions that support or disprove an original prediction. We learn—and science advances—by constantly challenging assumptions with fresh, factual information. In this way, we test and hone our ideas until we are left with a conclusion that cannot easily be refuted. We call this our "revealed truth."

But revealed scientific truth is always subject to new analysis, new scrutiny, and new interpretation. It is always regarded as provisional—that is, subject to later falsification—rather than becoming a fully accepted dogma.

When scientists, and the public at large, dismiss well-supported hypotheses by citing so-called alternative facts, supported by nothing more than emotion or personal belief (post-truth in political-speak), we miss an important opportunity to strengthen our analysis. When we glibly dismiss fact-checked articles in reputable news sources as "fake news," we fail to use evidence to support our conclusions. In politics as in science, when we dismiss revealed truth, we increase the likelihood of catastrophically bad outcomes.

People have survived because their ancestors got their facts right, like the shorebird that flocks at the hint of danger. In all aspects of life, we should insist on a scientific process that bases decisions on accumulated observations. If, and when, there is enough evidence to support a particular conclusion, we should accept it. Ongoing, self-critical analysis is essential, but only if new ideas, new evidence, or new experimental methods are introduced.

For humanity, emulating the predator-naïve wallaby, and simply ignoring the rustle in the bushes, is no way to avoid being killed. Rather, it is a certain recipe for extinction.

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energy to walk across miles of slumping rock and mud. Only days later, when the threat passed and I was finally able to leave the area, did I realise how unhelpful the available information about the roads and alternative routes out that I had been using really was.

While any self-respecting scientist must question everything, and be critical of accepted wisdom, it is possible to make predictions, design experiments to collect data, and, after analysing those data, draw