

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
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The chief justice in the dock

An unwarranted development

THE issue of the chief justice proceeding on leave abroad on health grounds and the statements and comments from various quarters have muddled the matter immensely. This situation is most unwarranted and should not have been allowed to happen. In this regard we feel the attorney general's remark that the chances of the CJ resuming his duties are a far cry, is uncalled for. As the chief law officer of the state it seems that he has already prejudged the case and declared the guilty verdict on the CJ.

As many as 11 charges have been brought against the CJ, all very serious in nature including money laundering, corruption and moral turpitude. The Supreme Court statement does not, however, inform us of any of the other 11 'charges' the CJ is alleged to have committed, nor does it inform us about the agency that has conducted the investigation into the charges; but be that as it may, we believe in the assumption of a person's innocence unless proven otherwise. It would not be remiss to ask whether a person with such a large number of extremely serious allegations against him should have been allowed to leave the country. Obviously there was no urgency, and the CJ has himself dismissed the news about his illness.

Justice Sinha was appointed as the chief justice by this government. And we recall his verdicts in many landmark cases including the judgment on the war criminals. While it is true that nobody is above the law, it is equally true that nobody should be considered below the law either. Surely, to accuse the CJ suddenly of such downright illegal activities as money laundering certainly raises many questions.

It is an extremely sad day that a matter relating to the highest judiciary has come to such a pass. We fear that the rule of law, respect for justice and independence of judiciary may suffer as a consequence.

Suicide of a twelve-year-old

Symptomatic of culture of impunity

WE are deeply saddened to know that a 12-year-old girl in Khulna took her own life on Friday "fearing abduction and further humiliation" after being harassed by a youth for almost a year. Chadni, the seventh grader, was driven over the edge when the youth in question, his father, and a local influential woman went to Chadni's house where she and her father were assaulted when they protested the matter.

It is beyond disturbing that a child was essentially provoked to commit suicide not only by the youth who constantly stalked and harassed her, but also by his own father who, far from paying heed to Chadni's father's plea to ask his son to stop harassing Chadni, went to the girl's house to ask whether she "liked" his son.

Sadly, this is a reality of far too many girls in Bangladesh today. For countless girls and women, stepping outside of the home simply in pursuit of education or work has become something to be dreaded. In a society where sexual harassment is almost culturally accepted and rarely punished, it is no wonder that girls like Chadni—seeing no way out of their misery—ultimately resort to suicide.

The local woman is in police custody but the others are on the run. The police should leave no stone unturned in locating and arresting the youth, his father, and all those involved. All these individuals should be given the highest form of punishment because of their role in inciting a child to take her own life.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Can BB help stop rice hoarders?

The price of different varieties of rice has recently increased by about 20-30 percent in the retail market. After the recent floods that badly affected crop production across the haor region, the government imported nearly 8.5 lakh metric tonnes of rice from India and Vietnam. But that was barely adequate, and had little impact on the price of rice. The problem was exacerbated because local dealers had hoarded a huge amount of rice causing an artificial crisis in the market.

The same thing also happened nine years ago, during the tenure of the last caretaker government. At that time, Bangladesh Bank (BB) had instructed all the banks to ask the hoarders to repay their loans within one month. As a result, the price of rice dropped within weeks. BB should follow the same technique to protect the interests of the consumers.

Md Ashraf Hossain, By email

Stop question paper leak

Like previous years, the question papers of admission tests at Dhaka University and Jagannath University have also been leaked this year. The authorities have so far arrested at least 17 candidates on charges of admission fraud.

Earlier, the JnU vice-chancellor at a press conference had claimed that no such thing could happen at his university. However, five candidates were expelled from JnU admission tests because they somehow got hold of the question papers before the tests.

It's likely that some insiders were involved but unless the authorities find out and punish those perpetrators, the practice of question paper leak cannot be prevented.

Rashidul Hasan, By email

It's all about the oil

NO FRILLS



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

WHILE the world's focus is now squarely on the United States' (US) spat with Iran and North Korea, there may be trouble brewing elsewhere and that is

northern Iraq. The Kurdish referendum, although not binding, has sent ripples through not just Iraq but the entire region. The arming of the Kurds by the US in the fight against Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was a controversial one. It was opposed by Turkey and to some extent Iran, primarily due to the fact that any Kurdish independence (in the long run) would automatically affect Kurds living in these countries. The Iraqi leadership must have had its own misgivings but at the time had nothing to say given its own dismal performance against the bigger enemy, i.e. ISIS.

As ISIS has lost ground to both a US-led coalition and a Russia-backed alliance (that includes the Assad regime), the Kurds have taken the first step towards independence. This issue is being contested not only out of fear of what it will do to spur nationalism in the Kurdish minority groups living in neighbouring countries, but what will happen to the oil reserves that are situated around Kirkuk. As we see ISIS forces being ousted from their strongholds in northern Iraq, the Iraqi military and its Iranian allies are now in very close proximity to Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) forces and all eyes are on those oil fields.

So, how large is the production base in those fields controlled by KRG? As per a Bloomberg article published on October 15 by Julian Lee, "The Kurdish Regional Government exports around 565,000 barrels of crude a day, about the same amount as OPEC member Qatar. Turkey, fearing the impact of the referendum on its own Kurdish population, has threatened to shut the pipeline from Kurdistan to its Mediterranean oil terminal at Ceyhan. The KRG has exported 160 million barrels through Turkey so far this year, according to Bloomberg tanker tracking. Although the flow has remained undiminished in the three weeks since voting took place, Turkey could stop it overnight. Around a third of this oil is



At the centre of the Kirkuk dispute are its massive oil and gas fields, which could strengthen the Kurdish bid for independence.

PHOTO: AFP

produced by foreign investors like DNO ASA, Genel Energy Plc and Gulf Keystone Petroleum Ltd. Bigger companies with strong political backing have also invested in the region. Russia's Gazprom Neft and Rosneft both have interests in Kurdish projects, as does Chevron. Not only could any disruption hurt these companies, European refiners would also get squeezed." If we are to take Lee's analysis at face value, there is reason to be concerned.

Control of oil in the Iraqi civil war has always loomed large. When the region was largely under ISIS control, proceeds from illegal transfers of oil provided the group with valuable income to finance its terror operations. Back in March, 2015 I wrote in a piece that while ISIS controlled up to 40 percent of Iraq's landmass, it ruled over 11 percent of gas and oil reserves. Indeed, a substantial portion of its cash flow at that time came from selling oil from existing oil fields to middlemen in an international "grey market".

The Kurds have fared better than ISIS since the area they control in Iraq has known relative peace and not subject to concerted air bombing from any side for any sustained periods of time. It has given KRG time to consolidate not only its political base and hold onto territory, but to also set the building blocks of nation-building. Indeed, the government in

Baghdad has been forced to sell its own crude (produced by North Oil Company) using Kurdish infrastructure, as it has no pipeline of its own in the north of the country. So, when we talk about "Iraqi" oil, we are actually talking about crude from both the Iraqi-sanctioned exports and that which is pumped up from oil fields under KRG control.

Push has come to shove in retaking control of Kurdish-controlled oil fields with Iraqi forces launching operations into Kirkuk with the aim of regaining control of the city on October 16. An Iraqi military statement issued says (as reported by Reuters) that it had regained control of an airbase called K1, the North Gas Company station, a processing plant, a power plant and the industrial district. This has not been confirmed by Kurdish forces.

The fallout from any disruption of oil supply will be felt more by Europeans than anyone else. Indeed, Italy is said to be the biggest importer of Kurdish oil followed by a slew of other countries including Croatia, Greece and Spain. Interestingly, Israel also imports oil from the region. Given that oil from KRG is not exactly "legal" and the trade in the oil that goes via Turkey is controlled by grey market operators, the pricing of the oil is also negotiable and not a price regime agreed upon by OPEC.

It will be interesting to see precisely what the US will do to contain the clashes taking place since both the Kurds and the Iraqi government are its allies in the fight against ISIS. Earlier, the peshmerga (Kurdish forces) general command had voiced a warning of a "grave catastrophe" in the midst of all this sabre-rattling by Turkey, Iraq and Iran and has called for dialogue. Now that Iraq has made the first move, we will have to wait and see if there is any chance of peace being brokered by outside powers.

The sooner a ceasefire can be brokered the better. Because at the end of the day, it's all about oil revenues and negotiations must focus on how to manage control of and revenue generated from these oil fields (once there is a ceasefire in place). A negotiated settlement that is binding in nature and where there are clear-cut clauses on how revenue will be shared between KRG and the Iraqi government. The longer hostilities are allowed to continue, the greater are the chances of this conflict turning into the second Iraqi civil war—one that Iraq can ill afford to wage. Such an event could potentially revive the fortunes of ISIS and that is something the world can do without.

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PROJECT SYNDICATE

The two backlashes against globalisation

AWAKENING INDIA



SHASHI THAROOR

WHEN I left India for graduate school in the United States in 1975, the word "globalisation" was not in use anywhere in the world. Back then, crossing borders

was still a big deal, and getting a US visa was no easy feat. When I did arrive in America, to be an Indian still carried a whiff of the exotic and the unfamiliar.

Nowadays, globalisation is inescapable. Over the course of less than three decades, trade barriers came down, and the combination of accessible airplane travel, satellite television, and the Internet has

organisation, the forces of democracy and liberal capitalism had won a definitive victory.

Then crisis struck, and the hubris of that era was quickly discredited. People began to note a distinct and deepening disparity between globalisation's winners and losers, with weak wage growth accompanied by robust returns for the wealthy. In the United Kingdom, for example, wages have grown by only 13 percent since 2008, but the stock market is up by 115 percent. According to an annual Credit Suisse report, wealth inequality is now growing sharply in 35 of 46 major economies, compared to just 12 before 2007.

In the developed world, the poor and the unemployed began to feel that they had no stake in the globalised system. They condemned the political establishment for

This identity-focused backlash is exemplified by US President Donald Trump, whose slogan, "Make America Great Again," was code for "Make America White Again"—a message that appealed to the unemployed, bitter, and increasingly xenophobic white blue-collar voters that formed the core of Trump's base. But the America that Trump promised isn't coming back: by 2030, a majority of the American labour force will be non-white.

While Trump is often viewed as a uniquely American phenomenon, he is actually just one part of a broader revolt by nationalists and traditionalists against a liberal globalist and cosmopolitan elite, in the name of a more religiously and culturally rooted identity. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and, in his own way, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi are

Senator Bernie Sanders, opposed Hillary Clinton for much the same reason: their right-wing counterparts did: with her well-paid speeches at Goldman Sachs, she was viewed as a representative of the Wall Street-linked globalised elite.

Similar anti-elite sentiment, fuelled partly by working-class resentment of cosmopolitanism and economic inequality, underpinned the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union. There are now 1,800 billionaires globally, 70 of whom live in wealthy and cosmopolitan London, where residents overwhelmingly opposed Brexit. But opposition to the EU was compounded by more fundamental issues of nationalism and identity, including citizens' distaste for the large numbers of non-English-speaking immigrants from other member countries.

The economic and cultural backlashes against globalisation do not always overlap. While Erdoğan and Modi, like Xi Jinping in China, promise national reassertion, they are still economic globalisers—the "Davos Man" who has come to represent the global elite. But the current spectre of economic uncertainty is now reinforcing their nativism and chauvinism, just when similar tendencies are on the rise in the West.

Taken together, the two types of backlash against globalisation explain why protectionist barriers to the free flow of goods, capital, and labour have been erected even in developed Western countries that long advocated greater openness. The numbers speak for themselves. In 2007, global capital flows reached a record high of USD 12.4 trillion, or 21 percent of the global economy. By 2016 the annual total had plummeted to USD 4.3 trillion, or 6 percent of the global economy—a lower share than in 1980. With total economic growth outpacing world trade growth of less than 2.5 percent, globalisation has been rolled back decades.

Yet, while globalisation isn't perfect, it has pulled millions out of poverty in developing countries like China and India, created new markets for goods made by poor countries, and reduced prices for rich-country consumers. The economic and cultural backlash must be resisted, and the promise of global integration realised for all.

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created a kind of interconnected "global village." But two types of backlash are now casting doubt on globalisation's future.

The 2008 economic crisis seems to have been the turning point in public perception. In the years leading up to the crisis, millions of people rose out of poverty, and democracy became more widespread than ever, creating the general sense that a golden age had begun. Francis Fukuyama famously argued that in the grand global struggle over the future of human political and economic

pursuing policies that sent their jobs to faraway lands like China and India. And they demanded a return to the old economic order, and thus to the promise that each new generation would earn more and live better than the last.

But the backlash against economic globalisation is only half of the story. There has also been a backlash against cultural globalisation—encompassing cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and secularism—driven by those who seek the comforts of traditional ethnic, religious, or national identity.

all capitalising on this trend. Even in places where far-right, xenophobic, and nationalist parties and politicians have not won power, they have made strides, as the *Alternative für Deutschland* did in Germany's recent federal election.

Yet the resentment toward the so-called elites into which such leaders have tapped can be seen on the left as well. Consider the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US, which comprised young people claiming to represent the 99 percent who were left behind as the 1 percent continued to thrive. The Democratic Party insurgency, led by