

Mysteries of the missing persons

Awaiting explanations

THE mysterious disappearance and reappearance of individuals from various walks of life, and the government's apathy when it comes to investigating their cases as well as its contradictory narratives and statements from time to time in regards to these disappearances, only increase a feeling of insecurity among citizens. Over the last few days, two such missing persons—Mubashar Hasan and Utpal Das—fortunately returned home but were unable to tell who their abductors were. Meanwhile, Kalyan Party leader who too had been missing for nearly four months was allegedly discovered and shown arrested by the police only hours after Mubashar had returned home on Friday.

It is not that we are pointing the finger at the government and blaming it for the disappearances, but we must question its lack of interest when it comes to investigating these incidents. If it's criminal gangs that are carrying out these heinous disappearances than why isn't the government trying harder to apprehend them? What is the government gaining by not getting to the bottom of these disappearances? Isn't it, in fact, self-defeating? These disappearances are, after all, putting a clear blemish on the government's reputation at home and abroad.

Although we are pleased to see these people return to their families, we understand that the entire experience for them must have been horrific. Given that some of them have been missing for months, it is understandable why they have not been able to give clear answers to all questions as yet. Meanwhile, there are still others who remain missing with no information regarding their situation. However, the little that they have said so far should be taken seriously by the government which needs to start investigating these cases properly if it wants people to have any confidence in its ability to protect them.

Christmas symbolises love and humility

Let us remember our humanity

CHRISTMAS is revered and celebrated by Christians all over the world as the day Jesus Christ was born. But Christmas is celebrated by everyone, not only for the festivities that it comes with, but for the realm of values that define humanity and symbolised by Jesus and his teachings. They are values that are universal – love for humanity, helping the needy, learning to forgive, sacrificing for others, shunning greed, deception, violence, respecting others, treating everyone equally regardless of who they are or what they look like – these are all virtues that are essential for coexistence of people and for the perpetuity of the human race.

Ironically these are values projected by all major religions yet the biggest conflicts in the world seem to be based on religion and the perception of difference. In the present context millions of people are being persecuted, displaced, killed and mutilated – because of this perceived difference – in religion or race. In our own land over 9 lakh Rohingyas have come fleeing the worst possible violence imaginable by the state machinery of the country they thought was their home. Acts of terror all over the world have killed people of many different faiths. Many of these mindless massacres were committed in the name of religion. Thus the politicisation, corruption and distortion of religions have aided in this terrible regression of basic human values, values advocated by many of our prophets including Jesus. It is proof of how far we, the human race, have forgotten all that we had learnt from our prophets and written in the scriptures.

Today, a day of celebration and joy, we wish our Christian brothers and sisters at home and abroad a very happy, peaceful Christmas. Let us remember the humility, sacrifice, tolerance and love for humanity that Jesus practiced and try to emulate these values in our own lives and communities. Let us shun avarice and violence, discrimination and hatred and embrace the path to peace.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Ethical failures in the financial sector

Professor Dr Rehman Sobhan on Thursday in a conference identified ethical failures in a number of areas of financial sectors, including the capital market, banking sector and commodity market. He also found ethical failures in other sectors like apparels, public service, access to healthcare and quality education, and even the country's democratic system. Criticising the political patronage behind gross financial anomalies, he said, "Had such money-based politics existed, leaders like Bangabandhu and Tajuddin wouldn't have emerged."

Highlighting the "ethical void" in the capital market, he said the market operates based on speculations, and that it is like a casino. Being an investor in stocks and mutual funds, I can say that Professor Sobhan's remarks are absolutely correct. The speech, in my opinion, fully reflects the current situation in Bangladesh.

Luthfe Ali, By e-mail

Discouraging smoking in public

A US court ruling recently forced cigarette companies to concede that their products were harmful and that they had misled the public about the health effects of smoking. It is a welcome step. Smoking is injurious to people's health; even passive smoking is dangerous. We often see celebrities glamorising the use of cigarettes. This influences many of their fans. They should rather set an example by refraining from smoking.

It may be difficult for many to stop smoking altogether, but they can certainly contain their urge to smoke in public. The harmful effect of smoking at home should also be emphasised because it can be harmful to children's health.

Deendayal M.Lulla, By e-mail

USA'S JERUSALEM DECISION

A collective stand by nations despite Trump's threats



Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Despite sharp warnings from the administration, 128 nations voted in favour of the resolution, while nine nations voted against it alongside 35 other nations that abstained from voting. Delegations from the rest of the 21 nations—out of the 193 UN members—were absent.

Donald Trump recently threatened that his administration might be cutting the "millions of dollars, even billions of dollars" in foreign aid to the countries that would vote in favour of the resolution, which called to reject the Trump administration's decision which also wants to move the US embassy of Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He further added that the US could benefit from saving money it gives out to other countries as foreign aid.

Trump's threat to the countries—which are either sponsoring, or voting in favour of, the UN resolution rejecting Trump's announcement—sounds a lot similar to what the former US President George W

The threats, though, had failed to take a sharp reality into account. The aid that the US has been providing to many countries worldwide are not a favour from the US to these countries. Rather, the aid are disbursed in order to safeguard—either directly or tacitly—US national interests.



projects and our industry as a whole. At Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation, we give the highest priority to nuclear safety. Our second priority is to change the public perception about nuclear energy. This is a crucial objective for us—our industry partners and



Ongoing construction work at Rooppur site.

international organisations, including International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

We respect every country's choice whether to develop nuclear energy or not. But, it is crucial that this choice be based on scientific knowledge, not fear. It is important for us to tell the public and government, and scientific and expert communities that nuclear energy is clean, safe and economically beneficial.

In Russia and other countries, where we are building



Nikki Haley, the American ambassador to the UN, posted this photo of her with US President Donald Trump on Twitter with the caption, "Referencing tomorrow's UN vote criticising the US embassy move. In the words of the President, 'Let them vote against us, we'll save a lot.'"

COURTESY: TWITTER

Bush had said following the 9/11 twin-towers attacks and prior to US-led NATO's war in Afghanistan.

"Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists," said George W Bush nine days after 9/11—a threatening gesture to its allies and to the international community, warning them not to stand against his administration's decision to start a war in Afghanistan.

A day before the UN resolution voting—precisely on December 20—Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the UN, tweeted: "At the UN we're always asked to do more & give more. So, when we make a decision, at the will of the American ppl [people], abt [about] where to locate OUR embassy, we don't expect those we've helped to target us...."

Nikki Haley had been continuously urging nations across the world not to vote in favour of the UN resolution. She said, following the resolution brought by a number of countries to the UN, that the Trump administration was closely observing the developments with regard to the

resolution and would be "taking names" of the countries that would vote in the resolution's favour.

Through such statements, the Trump administration wanted to buy votes with the guarantee of continued US aid to nations across the world.

The threats, though, had failed to take a sharp reality into account. The aid that the US has been providing to many countries worldwide are not a favour from the US to these countries. Rather, the aid is disbursed in order to safeguard—either directly or tacitly—US national interests.

For example, the aid to Egypt, which is one of the largest US foreign aid recipients, is given largely to safeguard interests in the greater Middle East, including the safety of its all-weather-ally Israel and the containment of militancy that threatens vital US interests in the region.

The US either lacks resources or is unwilling to provide these resources—including a large number of combat soldiers—for safeguarding its concerns in the Middle East. The US, therefore, provides financial and other aid in order to avail those

resources from the regional countries. Iraq, for example, receives US aid not as a favour, but for training and equipping Iraqi armed forces to tackle anti-US militancy and other threats to the US within the country. The US aid given to the Iraqi government has been visibly used in its fight against ISIS, which posed a direct threat to US's interest within Iraq and in the region.

Despite all the threats from Trump and Nikki, the UN eventually passed the resolution. The results of the resolution appear to be an outright victory for the Palestinians. However, the voting result is a minor victory for the US too, as it managed to sway 65 nations to either cast votes against the resolution, to refrain from voting or to remain absent. Some of these 65 nations had previously voiced favour for the resolution, yet subsequently gave-in due to the threats repeatedly issued from the US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, and from Trump himself.

Bahauddin Foizee is an international affairs columnist and a legal practitioner based in Dhaka. He regularly writes on environment, geopolitics, law and refugee scenario.

Changing perceptions on nuclear energy

Besides nuclear safety, Rosatom is working on public acceptance of atomic power

SINCE work began on the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project, a total of about 200 people, including journalists, experts, environmentalists, school children, students and industry experts from Bangladesh have visited Russia.

Public acceptance affects both the implementation of individual nuclear energy projects and our industry as a whole. At Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation, we give the highest priority to nuclear safety. Our second priority is to change the public perception about nuclear energy. This is a crucial objective for us—our industry partners and

local population as well. This is another key factor in the successful implementation of the Rooppur NPP construction project. The places where nuclear power plants are already in operation, the level of support for nuclear energy is traditionally high. However, where there are no plants, you need to talk to people—sometimes one has to begin by explaining the basics.

To that end, on December 24, we opened a public counselling office next to the Rooppur NPP to inform Pabna district residents about each stage of construction and the operation of the station. We will do our best to be as open as possible so that everyone who is interested has the opportunity to come and ask questions about the project. We received supported in this from our colleagues in Bangladesh at the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and so on. We are in constant contact. Work is done almost every day.

Another driver of public acceptance is education. We are proud of the fact that exchange of youth in the sector of science and technology has emerged as an important paradigm of Russian-Bangladeshi relations. More than 70 Bangladeshi students study nuclear engineering in Russia. This year young people from Bangladesh have been invited by Rosatom to attend major events such as the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi and the Forsage 2017 International Forum for Young Power Engineers and Industrialists.

Such trips are of an exploratory nature and are carried out at the request of our Bangladeshi colleagues. The recent visit by local public representatives was to the innovative Unit 6 of the Novovoronezh Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), which is a prototype for the new plants not only in Russia but also abroad, including Bangladesh. Two of the same power units with VVER-1200 reactors of the 3+ generation will be constructed by Russia at the Rooppur NPP. We are glad that we have the opportunity to acquaint our partners with the latest Russian technology—high-performance, durable, environment-friendly and safe.

The Unit 6 was put in commercial operation in February 2017. It has improved technical and economic performance and fully complies with the IAEA post-Fukushima requirements. Among them are systems that are unique and unrivalled in the world, such as the passive heat removal system (passive safety systems are capable of functioning even in the event of a total loss of power and without the operator's intervention), the hydrogen recombiners and the molten core catcher.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

improve the understanding of journalists working in both print and electronic media through press conferences and seminars. Annual press tours are conducted to various Russian nuclear energy objects to create better understanding. Since work began on the Rooppur NPP, more than 30 Bangladeshi journalists, including those from Pabna and Ishwardi, have visited Russia.

Besides these visits, interaction is going on with the

Andrey Shevlyakov is the acting CEO of Rosatom South Asia. Rosatom is a key partner in implementing the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project.