

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Off to school, old Dhaka.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

School Memories

My school life was divided into two parts. The first part, from Kindergarten to Class Five, was in Blue Bird School in my hometown Sylhet. After we moved to Dhaka in 1970, I attended St. Joseph's High School in Dhaka from Class Six to Ten.

Although I had excelled in my studies in Sylhet, I found myself struggling in the new environment in Dhaka. For one thing, speaking in Bangla with teachers at Blue Bird had been acceptable, but at St. Joseph's one had to speak in English with teachers. This requirement led to my eventual fluency in spoken English, but to this day, when I meet another Bengali who fumbles trying to speak in English, I instantly feel their pain. Another reason for my fish-out-of-water situation stemmed from my skipping a grade in Sylhet. I was double-promoted for reasons that escape me. As a result I was at a competitive disadvantage at St. Joseph's.

Blue Bird had been a small school with affectionate teachers where everyone knew each other. At St. Joseph's I landed as a stranger in a large school, dealing not just with classmates teasing me about my small-town ways but also with teachers who appeared ruthless. One of my earliest Josephite memories is my collar being grabbed by Brother Ralph, a massive, ruddy-faced, towering red-headed figure (Donald Trump is vaguely reminiscent of him) because I had asked my neighbour a question during class.

But I soon found my niche at St. Joseph's – in the basketball court. This was the result of a string of happy coincidences. One was my height. Another was the house we had rented: it was across the street from the school. Even back then, I loved being outdoors, and the open-air, cemented basketball court beckoned me. I came home after school ended at 1:30, and

after lunch and some quick homework, I was usually the first one on the court for the afternoon's basketball games. For today's pupils locked into game-playing smartphones, the pull of the open fields of St. Joseph's where dozens of kids gathered every afternoon for outdoor sports would be, regrettably, incomprehensible.

It was on one of those afternoons that Brother Ralph – who had watched my dedication and poor technique – showed me correct dribbling and shooting. I recall my thrill at correctly executing my first jumpshot, how I levitated for a fraction of a second to fire off that ball. Later, Brother Thomas More, probably the gentlest missionary to grace the school, helped me refine my layup and rebound. I made it to the Varsity team and eventually captained it.

I never did find my academic stride at St. Joseph's and, after yet another double promotion, graduated with ho-hum grades in "Matri" Secondary Examination. But immediately after this exam, along with two other brilliant boys from my class who became lifelong friends – Qader and Tausif – I was able to schedule tutoring time with Mr. Shawkat Hussain, mathematics teacher extraordinaire. Within a short time Math and Science clicked for me, opening the doors of academic excellence.

My parents made big sacrifices for their children's education, including giving up life in their beloved Sylhet. Times have changed but one thing remains constant, I think. The sacrifices that parents make for the education of their children are probably their best investment; I am certainly grateful to my parents for all they endured for me and my siblings.

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Hefajat a reality: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The alliance the Awami League is forming is strategic, but it never compromised on ideology, party general secretary Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

The Awami League had won the general elections in 1996 as it made realistic but seemingly compromising decisions based on reality, Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said, adding that his party recognised the right-wing Hefajat-e-Islam as reality demanded it.

"In the politics of power some compromises need to be made... That's the reality... We couldn't come to power unless we made [some] compromises..." he said referring to AL's giving election tickets to lesser known candidates in the 1996 national polls.

He made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at a programme of Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, marking its 26th founding anniversary in the capital's Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh.



In 1996, the AL gave nomination for Dhaka-6 constituency to Saber Hossain Chowdhury instead of its long-time dedicated leader and freedom fighter Muzaffar Hossain Paltu. And for Dhaka-8 constituency, the party chose Haji Selim over Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, he said.

"And you know the result of that election." The AL could not start the process of trying the war criminals unless it came to power, the AL general

secretary added.

Quader once again rejected BNP's call for holding a dialogue over the polls-time government ahead of the upcoming parliamentary election, saying that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had gone to console BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia after her son Arafat Rahman Koko passed away, but the premier was sent back empty-handed.

"She [Khaleda] had not only closed the door of her house, but she closed the door to [any further] dialogue."

The senior AL leader also expressed his concern saying that if the BNP again came to power, it would taint the spirit of the Liberation War.

Regarding the recent violence of between supporters of two feuding AL leaders in Narayanganj, Quader said the offenders will not be spared for breaching discipline of the party. "The PM has asked me to talk to the home minister over the matter. Whoever the offender is, [she or he] will be punished."

1969 mass upsurge hero Asad to be recalled today

UNB, Dhaka

Shaheed Asad Day will be observed today, commemorating the supreme sacrifice of student leader Asad during the mass upsurge of 1969.

The nation will recall Asad's sacrifice with deep gratitude through various programmes, marking his 49th martyrdom anniversary.

On this day in 1969, Asaduzzaman was killed when Pakistani forces opened fire near Dhaka Medical College Hospital during a protest against repression on the then East Pakistan [now Bangladesh].

Then a graduate student of history at Dhaka University,

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BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia along with party leaders and activists offers prayers for the salvation of the departed soul of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman at his grave in the capital yesterday, on the occasion of the late president's 82nd birthday.

PHOTO: STAR

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Maintain pressure on Myanmar

Foreign minister urges India, international community at 3rd Raisina Dialogue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali urged India and the international community to continue their pressure on Myanmar for a sustainable repatriation of the Rohingya refugees.

The problem of the Rohingya refugee influx from Myanmar to Bangladesh would be solved permanently through their sustainable return to Myanmar, he also hoped while delivering a keynote speech in New Delhi on Thursday, the concluding day of the 3rd Raisina Dialogue.

The three-day premier foreign policy event of the Indian government was jointly organised by Indian Ministry of External Affairs and a Delhi-based a think tank.

During his speech Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has remained "steadfast" in her policy of "zero tolerance for all forms of terrorism" by not allowing any terrorist outfit use Bangladesh's soil to "jeopardize the security interests of our neighbours including India" and Bangladesh has demonstrated this commitment with decisive actions over the past nine years.

The security cooperation together with our collective fight against terrorism and violent extremism continue to play an important role in achieving peace, stability and security in the region and beyond," he said in his keynote speech on "managing disruptive transitions through strong

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I'm a vandal. Arrest me.

Say DU demonstrators as authorities sue dozens of unnamed students



With a poster reading "I'm a demonstrator. Arrest me.", students of Dhaka University stage a protest at Raju memorial against the authorities suing dozens of unnamed students. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

DU CORRESPONDENT

"I'm a demonstrator. Arrest me." "I'm a vandal. Arrest me."

These were the writings on placards hung on the fences surrounding the Raju Memorial Sculpture on the Dhaka University campus.

The night was cold and dark but that could not diminish the determination of some of the students who sat at the base of the sculpture on Thursday protesting filing of a case with Shahbagh Police Station against 50 of their fellows by the university authorities.

The students took position there around 2:00am. As of yesterday, they were still there demanding withdrawal of the case and resignation of the DU proctor who, according to them, took steps against the protesting students instead of taking action against the BCL activists.

On Monday, around 400 BCL activists foiled the demonstration of a section of DU students who were staging a sit-in in front of the vice chancellor's office, demanding withdrawal of DU affiliation with seven colleges in the capital.

The BCL activists allegedly harassed

some of the female students and took one of the coordinators of the protest inside the VC office and assaulted him.

On Wednesday, demanding punishment for the BCL men, around 100 students broke the collapsible gate of the Arts Building and demonstrated in front of the proctor's office.

They also confined the proctor for several hours as he failed to give them any assurance. The students later went to the VC and gave him an ultimatum to meet their demands including forming a probe body to investigate the incident.

But in a surprise move, on Thursday night, the university authorities filed a case against 50 unknown students for vandalising the gate of the Arts Building and formed a three-member probe body to investigate the incident.

They also formed another three-member committee to investigate the allegation of harassment by the BCL men. However, they did not include any student representative as per the demand of protesting students, said the students.

But, on Wednesday, the VC assured them of forming a probe body with student

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

The mail boxes in front of Jatiya Press Club have been covered with posters although such act is prohibited by law, inset. The photos were taken yesterday.

Teachers and employees of MPO enlisted educational institutions, who are on a hunger strike, yesterday announced to refrain from holding classes for a day in all their secondary and higher secondary institutions on Sunday.

They will not participate in any official activities of the institutions and conduct any classes, they said on the fifth day of their strike yesterday, demanding nationalisation of all the institutions enjoying the government's monthly pay order (MPO) facilities.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the Besarkari Shikshak Jatiyakaran Liaison Forum, the platform of six organisations of teachers and employees leading the movement.

"We will boycott classes for one day. We urge all the teachers of the institutions to participate in the hunger strike on January 21," said GM Shawon, joint convener of the forum.

He said they took the decision as they did not get any response from the prime minister with regard to their demand.

Several hundred teachers began the indefinite hunger

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and strike yesterday.