

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
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DHAKA TUESDAY MAY 22, 2018, JAISHTHA 8, 1425 BS

Six years lost in jail

Inexplicable communication breakdown

A report published by this newspaper on Monday told the story of how one Azaher Ali Raza, acquitted six years ago, was still stuck in Dinajpur jail, due to a procedural lapse in the communication of his release order. The incident was recently brought to light after the jail authorities informed the Supreme Court Legal Aid Committee (SCLAC) about the issue. Meanwhile, those six years are lost to Raza, who according to the law should have walked out as a free man six years ago. Not being aware of the legal complexities and procedures, his mother did not even know that her son had been legally a free man for six years.

Raza was initially convicted and sentenced to death in 2005 in a murder case but a High Court order acquitted him in 2010. The order was then stayed by the Supreme Court. After the final hearing in 2012, the SC issued an order asking the government to file a leave-to-appeal petition against the acquittal within two weeks. Since the state did not appeal within the stipulated time, Raza was effectively acquitted. However, this order somehow never reached the jail authorities.

There can be no justification for what has happened. The steps for his release are now being undertaken. It was the duty of the SC officials to properly communicate this order and ensure his release.

We agree wholeheartedly with the Attorney General who has said that whoever is responsible for the negligence should be punished through conducting a probe. We would like to add that even though the time lost cannot be gained, the state owes this man some form of monetary compensation for his over-imprisonment. An acquitted man should not have to pay the price of negligence by the authorities.

Implement HC order

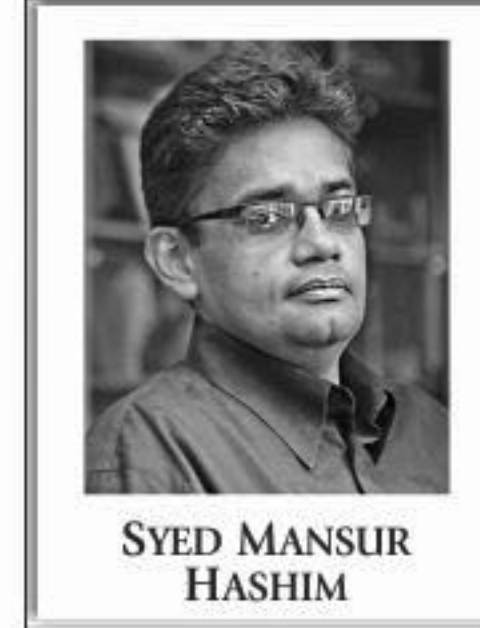
Pavements for everyone except pedestrians!

It seems that Dhaka lacks a basic traffic management system. In the past, we have seen motorcyclists using footpaths during gridlocks ignoring traffic rules. As nothing has been done to stop this malpractice, other vehicles are now doing the same. Two photos published in *The Daily Star* yesterday depicted how violation of traffic rules has become the norm in this city. One photo showed all types of vehicles -- bicycle, motorcycle, rickshaw, and even CNG-run-auto-rickshaw -- are using the pavement meant for pedestrians' use, while in the other photo a VIP car was spotted taking the wrong side of a busy road under police escort.

Such malpractices are rampant despite the fact that we have all the necessary traffic rules in place. The only problem is, these rules are hardly being implemented by the traffic police. And it's not only that the traffic police do not enforce the rules, they themselves violate the rules by driving on the wrong side and also helping the VIPs drive on the wrong side. Reportedly, traffic police even take bribes from the offenders of traffic rules. If such practices cannot be stopped, the traffic situation in the city, especially during the month of Ramadan, will surely become even worse.

Thus we urge the authorities concerned to strictly enforce the traffic rules in order to bring back discipline on our roads. In March 2012, the High Court gave an order to stop bikers using footpaths to make them safe for pedestrians' use. This order must be enforced by the traffic police. And footpaths should be there only for those they are meant for.

Funding crunch for non-profits



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

NON-profit organisations (NGOs) in Bangladesh are facing a general downturn in funding according to government data. As per a

report in a leading English daily, data from NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) state that donor aid commitment fell by 20 percent over a three-year period from fiscal years 2014 to 2017. This has a lot to do with the way we have drummed the graduation to middle-income country status. It has coincided with a shift in priorities for donor countries as the focus moves from Asia to conflict-ridden regions. When we look at the year-to-year commitments to Bangladesh, things have been going downhill for some time now.

This has affected rights and advocacy-based NGOs more than those that are microcredit oriented and we are seeing a scaling back of operations giving rise to trimming of work forces. Back in 2014, Bangladesh attained a gross national per capita of USD 1,070 which put it in the lower middle-income category. Even the largest of

NGOs, BRAC has been forced to lay off more than 3,000 staff. The affected areas have been in water, sanitation and hygiene, basic health care and mitigation programmes. If this is the situation with the most efficient NGO in Bangladesh, it is easy to imagine what the situation is across the sector. There appears to be a rethinking of how NGOs in Bangladesh should operate from a donor perspective. That

As stated before, there has been a progressive withdrawal from Asia by western donors. If we look at the data, there has been a sharp increase for humanitarian support to the Middle East and focus on Sub-Saharan Africa—at the cost of commitments to Asia. According to Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016, the top 10 recipients of most international humanitarian assistance in 2015 were

reduction of overseas development assistance, we have to understand that it is not just a shift in focus of donor countries towards new regions but has to do with the global financial crisis. Back in 2016, ODA (Overseas Development Assistance) was 0.4 percent of GDP which was halved to 0.2 percent in 2017. The focus on sustainability of NGOs has come to the forefront whereby fewer organisations are now focused on socioeconomic issues and more are concentrating on social business and business enterprises.

As Bangladesh strives to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, it has been suggested that a dedicated allocation be made in the annual development programme (ADP) which will create a domestic fund for NGOs to tap into. Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) has suggested that this fund should not be a government initiative only; rather, both foreign and domestic donors (corporate bodies, non-traditional foreign donors) can pool their resources here. Of course, being dependent on a Trust fund coming out of the national exchequer will undoubtedly put curbs on the independence of non-profits, but what is the alternative?

Unless NGOs are able to find their own paths to self-sustenance, many of them will not survive the drying up of foreign funds. Any large-scale demise of this sector will do the government more harm than good. For decades, the NGO sector has been a development partner of the State in areas of health and education and built up grassroots organisations that work in the villages where government services have had difficulty reaching. The country is now in a financial position to make an allocation out of the ADP for NGOs and it should be done so in the national interest.

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SOURCE: MYBIGPLUNGE.COM

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more emphasis is being given on "self-sustainability" could very well be a precursor to a general disengagement from Bangladesh's non-profit sector. Needless to say, such a situation is not going to happen in the short term but its ramifications will be felt over the next few years. The trend however has had an impact on NGO registration. According to NGOAB data, the average annual registration during Awami League-led government during its tenure 1996-2001 was 121. That figure has now come down to 78 in the last three years.

Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan, Palestine, Somalia and Turkey. Indeed, a handful of conflict-ridden counties including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and South Sudan received nearly 40 percent of all funding.

With this change in strategy, it is now a question of whether the non-profit sector has to change their modus operandi to self-sustenance. With the reduction in funds, the fight for funds will surely intensify among organisations. When we look at the

Is China creating dependency among developing countries?

HUAZHONG TU, HONGMEI HE AND WEI ZONG

EVER since Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch and German economist Han Singer proposed the "dependency theory" in the 1950s and 60s, there has been a heated debate between developing and developed countries on the merits of it. Dependency theory holds that after gaining independence, it is still very hard for developing countries to eradicate poverty in the long run, largely owing to an imbalanced international economic system. As developing countries lie at the bottom of the resource flow of international chain of enterprises, they have to depend on developed countries, which have abundant resources, advanced technology and human capital.

Thanks to these advantages, developed countries have tailored a series of international laws for their own needs, thereby constantly exploiting and oppressing developing countries, essentially entrapping them in poverty and underdevelopment. Since the publication of the theory, it has become an important weapon for developing countries to contend against their developed counterparts in the process of making international economic rules and norms.

Subsequently, dependency theory has become an important weapon to restrain advanced countries with regard to trade and other global policy formation. Sensing pressure from the developing world, some scholars from developed countries joined in to explain the theory and cited its aims to distract the attention of developing countries. Disguised in the coat of dependency theory, their real purpose is to attack China, and to accuse it of exploiting resources from developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and selling low-quality cheap commodities in developing countries.

More recently, they have accused China of using the "One Belt, One Road" (now known as Belt and Road Initiative) to develop a kind of new colonial relationship so that many developing countries have to depend on China. Deducing from those western scholars, in general, their logic is to locate the definite answer before looking for the evidence based on sample studies. Therefore, this kind of sample study not only distorts the original concept and principles of dependency theory, but also maliciously attacks the trade and commerce between China and developing countries. To some extent, it misleads media and public opinion resulting in adverse influence on the relationship between China and other developing countries.

Looking back in history, China has been the biggest developing country in the world. Since 1949, the country has risen from semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. When it was established as a people's democratic state, China was in a dependent relationship with developed countries because at that time China had to rely on import for things even as small as a match box.

Today, with the devotion and arduous struggle against poverty, the country has emerged as the second biggest economy in the world. According to the Xinhua News Agency, China has set up a complete industrial system that covers all the industrial categories classified by the United Nations. The country has contributed greatly to world economic development. China has made remarkable progress in improving the living standard of millions of people. The Chinese development experience shows that the country has set an example of cutting off the umbilical cord with western hosts, giving hope of doing the same to other developing countries.

Nevertheless, the dependency theory gradually turned out to be a tool that some western scholars

employ to blackmail China with the goal of creating divisions among developing countries. Even though China is now the world's second largest economy, it remains a developing country in many aspects, such as per capita income and human development index. China lags behind western countries and faces many developmental challenges. But its course of development provides solid evidence that the dependency theory will not last forever without evolving. And through its steadfast efforts, China has walked a unique path demonstrating that breaking away from an age-old dependency relationship is possible.

In this age of globalisation, not a single country can develop with a locked-door policy. Instead, we need to be interdependent on one another. The development of China cannot be achieved without the support of developing countries. Likewise, the development of developing countries cannot do away with China's support. The relationship between China and developing countries is not an absurd zero-sum game.

and building commercial barriers, which the west once employed *vis-à-vis* developing world. These measures belong to the "palaeo-state" relationship. In this modern world, Beijing rather proposes a new "neostate" relationship that promotes industrial complementary along with technological progress, and smashes down trade barriers.

It is an indispensable part of China's proposal to build a fair and reasonable international order of politics and economics. It is necessary to point out that China still is the biggest developing country in the world that shares the same historical sufferings and faces analogous development challenges, as do other developing countries. China has no divergence with other developing countries on issues such as improving living standard, ensuring the safety of resources, dealing with climate change and pushing forward reforms in the United Nations. China and other developing countries share unanimous interests of foundation and goal for development. In this regard, other developing



An aerial view of part of Guangzhou city, south China's Guangdong province. The Chinese development experience has set an example for other developing countries.

PHOTO: AFP

On the one hand, China, having set an example of successfully severing dependent relationships, provides an instance to study and imitate if necessary; on the other hand, China is willing to share experience and achievements with other developing countries. Although China has achieved much progress in recent decades, it is not distracted from its original motivation. During his visit to Mongolia in 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed and opened up opportunities for neighbouring countries under the aegis of "Thumb a Lift" policy. The declaration demonstrates China's willingness to share its experience with its neighbours and other developing countries.

Beijing's "Thumb a Lift" policy doesn't mean that it is asking other developing countries to depend on China. Instead it advances an interdependent relationship, resulting in a win-win situation for all stakeholders. It is different from despoiling high profits via monopoly, restricting technical communication,

countries are important to China to develop a fair and reasonable new international political and economic order.

In March 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping first advocated a new concept called "Human Destiny Community". Later on, during his visits to Asia, Africa and Latin America, on many occasions, he reinforced that idea. In the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, held in October, 2017, President Xi once again appealed to people in different countries to build a community whose ultimate goal is to establish a fair and reasonable international political and economic order. This appeal demonstrates China's willingness to establish a new international order, one which conforms to the common interest of China and all other developing countries.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Of Marx in Bangladesh

The two-part series on Karl Marx that *The Daily Star* published was a good read. I am a writer and translator of material relating to Marxism based in Tamil Nadu, India. Thanks to a socialist website, I was able to read the inspiring essay of Mirza Hassan about the reception of Marxist ideas in Bangladesh.

I am also an admirer of Kazi Nazrul Islam and was delighted to learn how he and Muzaffar Ahmad took turns talking to people's hearts—an ability quite rare among left-leaning parties in India.

I want to use this opportunity to mention that there are many people in my part of India who remember the Red Maulana. Finally, I thank Mirza Hassan for his inspiring and passionate article.
SV Rajadurai, Tamil Nadu, India

Stop food adulteration during Ramadan

During Ramadan, road-side shops sell different types of food. They may look very tempting but they are often kept in unhygienic conditions. Many of the sellers use harmful chemicals on fruits to store them.

The authorities should remain vigilant to ensure vendors are not selling customers adulterated food. Carrying out proper testing is a must. Mobile courts should carry out regular operations to ensure adulterated food are kept off the streets during this month.
Shafkat Rahman, By e-mail