

# Child is the father of man

## Our undimmed conscience-keeper

### Good job by the police

#### Question leaking syndicate busted!

THE Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has managed to apprehend a sophisticated gang that specialised in leaking question papers for both public examinations and recruitment tests. Nine people have been arrested that include school teachers and government officials. Going by a report printed in this paper on August 10, the gang has so far earned Tk 10 crore from clients, where dozens have passed public service commission examinations and made it to government jobs and banks. The CID must be congratulated in breaking up this syndicate prior to the upcoming BCS preliminary examinations that are due to start next week.

One member was caught red handed with BCS question papers and Tk 60,000. We know from preliminary investigations that the gang members used electronic devices to capture images of exam papers and pass them on to outside parties just hours before examinations started and candidates paid anywhere between Tk 100,000 to Tk 2 million for this information. That this gang has operated with impunity for the last five or six years lends credence to reports we have covered over the last few years.

We need to change students' dependence on rote learning. Educationists believe that the only when we can break out of this vicious cycle is by making textbooks creative that encourage students to think independently. Then prospective exam takers will have little need for short cuts. Teachers should cover the whole syllabus in school and make learning an interesting experience which makes lessons participatory and student-friendly. There is no alternative to education reform and unless we start making these changes, these leaks will always be there.

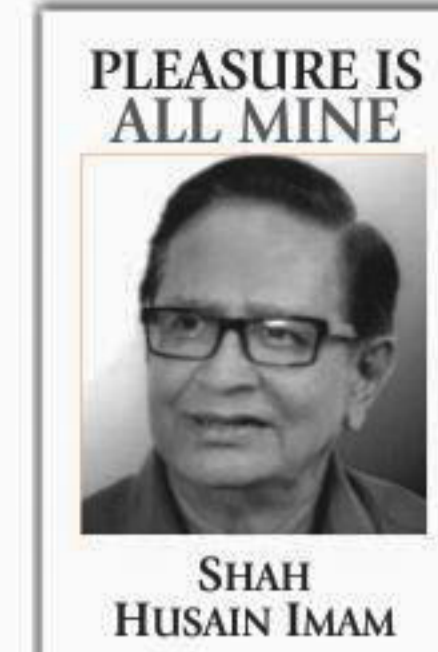
### One electronic gateway brings 38 agencies together

#### Should help boost trade and investment

THIRTY-EIGHT government and private sector agencies signed an agreement with the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to be connected with the National Single Window (NSW) system. NSW will allow traders to submit all import, export and transit information required by Customs and other key regulatory agencies via single electronic gateway. Once the system is fully operational, it is expected that the processing time for imports will be cut down to 122 hours and the average processing time for exports to 88 hours.

NSW is expected to benefit 319,000 Bangladeshi traders by cutting time and cost of doing business. The project being implemented at a cost of USD 74 million with funding from World Bank group's private sector arm the IFC and the DFID will go a long way in uplifting Bangladesh's score in indices such as the "Doing Business Index 2018" where the country trailed behind the South Asian average.

It is hoped that through necessary policy reform, the country will end up with modernised customs and border clearance procedures. We have been trailing behind in setting up a one-stop service for businesses for years, one which would not push up the cost of doing business and create image disincentives to potential foreign investors. The government ought to consider replicating the system in other areas where one-stop service will ease the life of common people.



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

THIS is entitled not to a freaky triumphalism but to a celebration of human compassion for the collective risk to lives on roads. This found a powerful utterance and demonstration through our tender-aged progeny's intelligent intervention for a few days. Apolitical, non-partisan and wholly dedicated to a long-neglected public interest, their message had an irresistible moral appeal. The youngsters offered us a stand-alone luminous time-warp, detached from more-of-the-same monotone and unprejudiced by any spoilt sequel.

Those boys and girls in their early to mid-teens made a statement from July 29 to August 5 with quiet dignity and anguished firmness demanding safe roads. The mangled death of two of their peers crushed between maddeningly racing buses were poignantly remindful of their daily transport travails laced with the toxins of impunity the transport operators fed on.

Their path-finding initiatives are having a vindication in the scrambles for fitness and licensing documentations. The ritualistic traffic week has been abuzz with doubling or tripling of cases filed against violators of traffic laws. Hiring of drivers and conductors on a daily contractual basis which bred a tendency to rush for maximising trips to inflate earnings may see a switch for fixed salaries.

One lesson that should have been learnt squarely by the gate-keepers is not to let stricter laws and demands for compliance increase corruption rather than containing it.

For scooping and symbiotic improvements in the transport organisation and policing sectors deeper reforms have been long overdue. If these are not carried out now, whatever little grip we have over the city will have been torn to shreds under the sheer weight of physical expansions.

That said, we may look at the macro-management of the fall-out of the movement. For instance on Wednesday night, the law enforcers carried out search operations for a few hours in the Basundhara area cued on some information purportedly received by them. Quite a few private universities are located in Basundhara and the adjoining areas. They went into hostels and messes asking the students questions about their laptops and mobile sets, residents said to the BBC. The whole area, needless to say, was panic-stricken.

The private universities have been comparatively less associated with agitation than the public universities but since the VAT and quota issues cropped, affecting them directly, they've been drawn to such concerns, quite naturally and as a matter of right.

At any rate, 22 students of East West and North



PHOTO: AFP/ KHANDAKER AZIZUR RAHMAN SUMON  
 Police try to clear student protesters as they blocked a vehicle to check documents.

South universities have been arrested and remanded in police custody. The VCs in their meeting on the overall situation with the education minister reportedly made a plea for "forgiveness" to the students. The minister asked, "Who was he to be doing it?" Anyhow, according to the latest report, they were refused bail.

As soon as the outsiders (the so-called *helmet bahini* and elements masquerading in school uniform) came on to the scene, the situation got ensnared with violence. Merciless hounding, chasing and beating of students were the order of the day in Jhigatola, Dhanmondi, Mirpur areas.

Several journalists, nearly two dozen of them from across the media were assaulted, their cameras and mobile sets having been either broken to pieces or snatched away. The number of the harassed and assaulted in the line of duty, including a strong team from *The Daily Star*, has surpassed the figures of the last year although five months are left of the current year (according to Article 19).

We would like to take heart from the words of assurances coming from the home and information ministers. The home minister has said, "Those who raised their hands against the journalists to embarrass the government will not be spared. The government is ready to weather any pressure from any quarter in order to deal firmly with them."

Those who fuelled anarchy and terror in the street

have been recorded on audio-video footages; an objective analysis by independent professionals will help weave a credible narrative.

As for the media persons, the information minister has assured that the attackers' photos are in the hands of his ministry, and that the detectives too have them. So a remedy cannot be far away. Our hope is, the ministers words will translate into deeds.

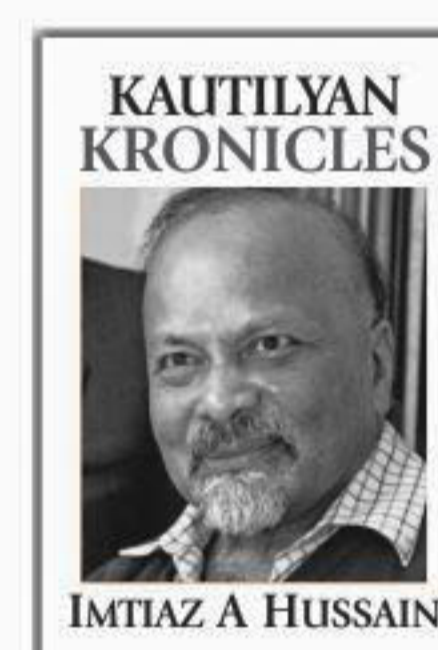
To fit a populist narrative, whenever the community rallied round a righteous cause to a point of spearheading it, some quarter would throw a spanner in the works. Either to hijack or derail it. It could spring from a handle unwittingly given to non-state actors or the refusal to countenance any parallel power centre by the government.

Speaking of Shahbagh Gonojagan Mancho, the quota movement, and the students' upsurge for safe road, there is an intellect versus feeling issue here. An attempt to conflate them or deem them analogous to one another should be resisted. That is obviously because each event has had its own inspirational propulsion, terms of reference, course of circumstances and targets of achievements.

The only precious point of commonality, however, lay in the spontaneous overwhelming bonding between the protesters and the public.

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## Thinking the unthinkable: A 'Chinese' Century?



IMTIAZ A HUSSAIN

KAUTILYAN KRONICLES  
 HENRY Luce deserves more than the credit he gets for predicting the "American Century" (in *Life* magazine, February 1941). That was after the League of Nations was unceremoniously buried, but before both the Pearl Harbor bombings, which awakened a slumberous and isolationist United States (that is but a slight exaggeration, since the United States was indirectly helping European countries against Adolf Hitler), and adopting the global leadership mantle after World War II. His choice of words encouraged history-oriented International Relations observers to find an even more perfect example of this "century" association: a "British Century", from the Corn Laws of 1846 to the end of World War II in 1945, stood out. Though the US Century did not quite fit the precise dictionary definition of "century", or Britain's amazing illustration of that precision, it still credits Luce. Even more can be attributed to him since we can now conceive of another "century" today, precisely in the country where he was born (of missionaries): China.

We could not make that same claim of Japan in the 1970s and 1980s, when the United States began what it

leadership); and ultimately a rationale, that is, an ideological framework to hang its leadership upon (Britain's was "free trade", the US' "free world").

Britain became the modern world's first free-trader, with the United States following (though blamed as a protectionist even before Trump's time, the United States has the lowest average tariff levels among all power-contenders). How does China fare?

From being filled to the brim with low-waged Chinese imports, the world should not have any qualms answering that. In the late 1980s, our complacent belief was that an ostracised communist country should be allowed to return to the free world. We did not bother evaluating the consequences (we never do: only when the consequences arise, we panic). They were not too gigantic, then, for us to notice, but slowly and steadily, China became overpowering financially: its surpluses in countries with money, and deliberate deficits with their poorer counterparts, enabled China to establish footholds too secure to dismantle now. As those surplus accumulations have ballooned beyond 5 trillion USD, we now see the consequences: China rebuilding the rest of the world such that no country can turn away, or even want to turn away. At the end of the day, a potential world leader emerges virtually unnoticed, as if by the back-door, and without winning any military conflict (as the United States did in World War II).

Armed with that cash, it consciously set out to lay the

Developing countries, by and large, began aping China's success, while developed countries were too much in awe of tapping a billion consumers to see the big-picture. At the end of the day, China was building more infrastructures globally than any single country has ever done in human history, except, of course, that original one: China itself, building the original *Great Silk Route* to Europe. With its trillions of stored cash, it could help the developing countries jump-start their upward-mobility race. The previous leader, the United States, through its principal organ, the World Bank, was already doing so, albeit too slowly, sporadically, and selectively after the stunning Marshall Plan success in West Europe. China has also been charging higher-than-World Bank interest rates. When recipient countries fail to pay back, as Ethiopia, representing Africa, and Sri Lanka with its Hambantota port, representing Asia, Chinese companies lease the franchise for the very long-term. This awaits Burma, Cambodia, and Pakistan, among other recipients of Chinese aid.

Diluting this anticipated pressure, China built the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). AIIB claims representation as global as the World Bank itself, and poses a serious potential challenge to the World Bank. With more Chinese *carrots* than *sticks* at play, when AIIB shifts the developmental traffic-flow from Washington to Beijing, we will have seen the *fait accompli* of Chinese leadership.

With trade and investment pillars firmly installed, China needs to next build its security foundations to claim world leadership. Anyone following relative global military expenditures will notice how China's proportion has not only been growing (at USD 175 billion in 2018, 8.1 percent more than in 2017; and its USD 146 billion in 2016 was 11 percent more than in 2014), but also in very strategic arenas: securing trade-flows (Hambantota and South Sea Island patrolling the risky Malacca Straits), particularly of energy (Djibouti and Gwador patrolling the vital Persian Gulf), is one; nuclear-weapon construction another (its 270 nuclear warheads equals both India's and Pakistan's, exceeds Great Britain's by 55, remains 30 short of France's, but falls far behind Russia's 7,000 and the 6,800 of the United States); outer-space (with space-based solar energy power generators a priority); and selling to other countries (now the world's third largest arms-exporter). China is everywhere.

Two observations close this discussion. First, historically Chinese leadership, like Britain's, has always preferred the economic route over security: wars disrupt, and China wants less of that. Playing a business-like game with China will fetch the maximum rewards for others. Second, the "Chinese Century" neither encourages nor discourages democracy, since that is an Anglo-Saxon contribution to the world. Yet, at heart, since authoritarianism speeds up policy-making, China's Century may be a century of dictatorships. Saying *sayonara* to democracy may be far closer to us at this juncture than ever before. Likewise, promoting democracy, as against the Soviet Union, may become the one threat to unravel China's leadership.

Why China cannot go a full century may become the lesser question than how we missed this progression from 30-years ago, or where the new democracy fulcrum may emerge since it is under enormous stress where it originated. Any BRI-hosting volunteer?

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PHOTO: JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS  
 US President Donald Trump during his visit to China.

is doing today: economically bashing a perceived rival. Nor could it be said of the European Union in its 1990s hey-days. No other country can rise to that lofty rival stature.

Motivating the "China Century" thought necessitates considering the very pillars of leadership: trade (the capacity to outcompete others, find more markets than ever before, and obtain raw materials far easier than previously); investment (the capacity to build tomorrow's infrastructures and lift other countries, that is, possible followers, incapable of doing so by themselves); security (not a necessary condition as China shows, but pivotal to both Britain and the United States, although it is poised to serve in a sufficient capacity to prolong China's economically-built

global leadership footprints; and it did so by reviving its own former global leadership formula. The *Great Silk Route* paved the way for a 21st Century *Belt-Road Initiative* (BRI) that began to establish trade routes all over the world, much like Britain did to manage its colonies through outposts in Gibraltar, Hong Kong, and Singapore; and the United States did less successfully with a multilateral trading instrument from 1947 (GATT) and a spate of security arrangements (NATO, among others), shortly thereafter. We would not know that this BRI network would slowly be fitted with China's security citadels (its own Gibraltar, Hong Kong, and Singapore), as the South China Sea island-building exercise, and naval bases in Djibouti and Gwador, indicate today.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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#### Sexual harassment in public transportation

In a city of approximately 20 million people, it's only normal that many women use public transports to go to many parts of the city every day for different purposes. It's a disturbing phenomenon that most of these women have to suffer some form of sexual, verbal or physical harassment. According to a Brac study, 94 percent women commuting in public transport have experienced some form of harassment.

It's time women speak up against what they have to endure every day. Like the teenagers' protests, they too should make their voices heard and shake up the nation.  
 Shakhawat Hossen, University of Dhaka

#### Release Shahidul Alam

It is really unfortunate that police have arrested Shahidul Alam, an internationally acclaimed photographer, on charges of making provocative comments. If people like him are detained for speaking up, what would happen to general people?

If anything, the government has simply managed to hurt its image even further by arresting him. Already, a number of globally prominent personalities including Noam Chomsky and Arundhati Roy urged the government to release him and withdraw charges against him. Global human rights and journalist organisations such as Amnesty International, Pen International and CPJ have made similar calls. We hope that the government release him immediately and refrain from harassing him any further.  
 Kabir Khan, Chittagong