

Detained students should get bail

Their "offences" do not warrant such harshness

WE are concerned by the arrest of at least 22 students of various universities who have been accused of different offences under some laws including the controversial Section 57 of the ICT Act. The accused university students (including female students) have been repeatedly denied bail.

While we are not commenting on the veracity of the offences they are accused of and that are yet to be proven, we plead that they may be granted bail. Someone arrested for bailable offences has a right to get bail. In the case of non-bailable offences- the court can, at its discretion, grant bail to the accused as it has in the past. The arrested are not hardened criminals but young university students who are prone to act out of emotion as is customary at their age. Their education has been severely hampered due to such detentions. The movement they had taken part in was for a cause—road safety- was one that was accepted by everyone including the government. In fact we have a long tradition of student movements in our history and this too was one that reflected this tradition.

It is worrying that some of these students have been sent to remand which, we all know, involves some sort of physical or mental torture. This is unacceptable and goes against the principles of human rights.

In view of the fact that they are young, students and first time offenders, we hope the court will give them special consideration and grant them bail while the legal process continues. The principle of innocent until proven guilty should apply to all.

In total at least 97 people (including the students) have been detained on similar charges related to the road safety movement yet none of the attackers who ruthlessly assaulted students, journalists and other ordinary citizens on the streets, have been apprehended. These only raise questions surrounding the arbitrary detentions of students and other citizens.

The cases can easily be investigated with the students out in bail. Given the impending Eid which is an occasion of sacrifice and celebration we think that these students should be allowed out on bail to spend the Eid with their families.

Deaths under the wheels

Reckless driving continues

WE are shocked at the latest incident of road crash that occurred last Wednesday in Rajshahi. A bus ran over three people including a schoolgirl killing them all on the spot and also injuring several others.

The bus ploughed into the roadside shops and pinned the girl who was standing there to the wall of a shop. It was a holiday and the girl had gone to school to attend a programme of National Mourning Day at her school.

According to eyewitnesses, the bus was being driven by the helper instead of the driver, which was also evident by the erratic way the bus moved towards the public. What we do not understand is why the local OC and the general secretary of the Rajshahi Bus owners Association would deny the fact. Were they present at the spot during the incident? Such denials would only serve the interest of the guilty driver and the helper. The transport authorities and the local police concerned should move away from this denial mode and make sure that the guilty are brought to justice.

Needless to say, our transport sector needs to be strictly regulated. Earlier this month, we witnessed a massive student protest for safe roads after a bus ploughed into school students at a bus stop, killing two of them and injuring several others. The students had correctly identified the problems plaguing our transport sector and showed us how to maintain order in the sector. Will we ever learn?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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DU authorities' double standards

On August 9, the Dhaka University authorities temporarily suspended a 4th-year student from the finance department, asking him to show the cause as to why he shouldn't be permanently suspended. His alleged offence was that he challenged a proctorial team when its members were taking photos of students demanding safer roads. He, along with his friends, also allegedly obstructed the team.

The university authorities took hours to hand him such a strict punishment, while turning a blind eye to those who mercilessly beat protesters and journalists. The authorities' double standards should be called out and condemned.

Omar Sam, By e-mail

Highways remain unsafe

Despite the demands, there has been little positive changes seen in terms of improving road safety. The highways, in particular, pose grave dangers because of three-wheelers and unsafe locally made vehicles.

Intercity bus operators in southern districts held strikes to demand that these small vehicles be banned on highways, but it fell on deaf ears. Every day, the number of these unauthorised small vehicles is increasing, along with the number of accidents on highways. The current situation demands serious attention from the authorities concerned.

SM Mahmud Arafat, Jessore



MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

WATER will in future become more valuable than oil as rising demand from people, industries and agriculture will apply pressure on the scarce water supplies worldwide. We can live without oil as alternative green production sources become available. But we cannot live without water. Recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that global warming will lead to "changes in all components of the freshwater system." The conclusion being that "water and its availability and quality will be the main pressures on, and issues for, societies and the environment under climate change." Wars and conflicts may even arise due to the scarcity of water.

For a nation like Bangladesh, water scarcity could become a grave issue as it hinders economic growth and may lead to forced migration and uneven consequences across the nation. Global warming has already begun to show how it can impact the world's water resources. So, it's high time we should rethink how we use water in the country's readymade garment (RMG) sector.

The growth of the world population increases by 83 million per year. The current world population of 7.6 billion is expected to reach 8.6 billion in 2030, 9.8 billion in 2050 and 11.2 billion in 2100, according to a new United Nations report launched in May this year. This alone will put pressure on the fresh water scarcity, next to climate changes and the industries, agriculture and consumers' need for washing, cooking and drinking water. Thus, we have a responsibility in the RMG sector.

Why do we need to rethink and take responsibility? What is the situation in Bangladesh? We have just celebrated that we are now going to become a middle-income nation. Could the scarcity of water hamper our growth as a nation? The WHO estimates that 97 percent of the people of Bangladesh have access to water but only 40 percent have proper sanitation. With a shocking 60 percent of our population living with unsafe drinking water, Bangladesh is facing staggering problems in terms of health issues. Bangladesh needs healthy workers to keep growing its GDP. The agricultural industry providing food for our nation is directly competing with the RMG that provides 83 percent of the export. Declines in water availability and quality can increase competition for clean water. Community opposition to industrial

water withdrawals and perceived or real inequities in water usage may even emerge and affect businesses profoundly.

At the same time that we as a nation need to prepare to address climate change and the major issues that will come with it, water scarcity and salinity intrusion being the primary sector that will be affected, our RMG industry needs to be at the centre of this stride as this sector provides the growth for the nation. We need to build ties and bridges to the government and local communities addressing and agreeing on how to use water for the best use for people and industry and ultimately Bangladesh.

brands working to improve and safeguard their water usage. Levi's, in partnership with one of its Chinese suppliers, recently made 100,000 pairs of jeans using 100 percent recycled water. As a result, Levi's claimed to have saved 12 ml of water, the equivalent of almost five Olympic-size swimming pools. Levi's now provides all its supplier factories with technical guidance on reusing and recycling water with its new water-saving standard, a body of requirements the brand will share with other textile industry stakeholders in true sustainability codex.

In 2012, WWF and H&M conducted an evaluation of H&M's water related

the solution developed by the Dutch company DyeCoo. Adopted by Nike and Adidas, for example, the DyeCoo process dyes polyester without water, chemical additives or drying. It pressurises carbon dioxide (CO2) to the right temperature to turn it into liquid and gas. This "fixes" the colours of the fabric. As proof of the promise of this solution, the global sportswear giant Nike is now a shareholder in DyeCoo, whose R&D teams are now developing similar technology for nylon and cotton.

Locally in Bangladesh we also need to take responsibility for our own eco-system and our own industry. We need to inspire our



No doubt we need our international partners who visit Bangladesh and buy our services and goods to take responsibility for our shared problems. The Water PaCT Bangladesh is one of those partnerships founded to drive the wet processing in textile sector in the country towards a more sustainable performance and better water and resource efficiency. The PaCT helped individual factories identify and implement Cleaner Production (CP) measures in water, energy and chemical use in the dye house, within the factories' utilities and effluent treatment plants (ETPs).

There are also a few examples of big

challenges, to evaluate the company's new water strategy. While Nudie jeans have implemented a water reuse policy in its manufacturing process and urges customers not to wash their jeans for six months as about 2/3rd of all water waste is happening at the homes of consumers because of over-washing of their garments.

The textile industry uses 4 billion tons of water a year to produce 30 billion kilos of fabric. According to the World Bank, it alone will account for 17-20 percent of the world's water pollution. Imagine that. Consequently, manufacturers have to turn to new, more sustainable manufacturing processes, like

partners. We need to show the way—locally and globally. Innovation, technology and thinking out of the box could be the way forward where Bangladesh could move from an underdog to an inspiration for many. We may think of establishing an innovation hub nationally sponsored by the government and funded by the RMG manufacturers and international partners to solve our future problems.

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SAVINGS CERTIFICATES

Deserving candidates should get access

BRIG GEN MANZOOR AHMED MOLLAH (RETD)

FROM an article titled "A Note on Re-fixing Interest Rate on Shanchoypatra" written by Mr Biru Paksha Paul, published in *The Daily Star* on August 5, 2018, I scooped up a few precious pearls of ominous prophecies, the gist of which are: i) it would be inappropriate and unwise for the government not to lower the interest rate of all kinds of saving instruments bringing it at par with the banks' deposit rate; ii) under no circumstances should the rate of interest of saving instruments be above 9 percent.

Now let me take a brief look at the genesis of savings schemes. National

example, savings certificates were issued during World War I and World War II to help finance the war effort.

Department of national savings, Bangladesh, traces its origin to the National Savings Institute of India, which was founded in 1944, at the fag-end of the British rule in India. After the partition of India, the National Savings Institute was managed by the Ministry of Finance (Pakistan). And after the Independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Government of Bangladesh created the Directorate of National Savings, which absorbed the functions of the National Savings Institute. In 2014, the Directorate of National Savings was upgraded to a full-fledged department

the objectives of the department are: i) to encourage people to inculcate the habit of saving; ii) to garner small savings scattered across the country and bring those to the mainstream saving scheme of the government; iii) to meet the national budget deficits by the money garnered through the national saving scheme; iv) to bring under the economic and social safety net through national saving scheme such special groups of people as women, retired government employees, senior citizens, expatriate Bangladeshis and physically handicapped people; and v) to help control inflation and reduce dependence on foreign aid.

But the reality is that massive

"Aims and objectives" of the Department of National Savings, Government of Bangladesh, as enunciated in its website.

To equate the rate of interest of saving instruments with Banks' deposit/lending rate is both inappropriate as well as extraneous for the former is a welfare oriented non-profit initiative, which act as a social safety net to bring succour to the disadvantaged sections of the society, while the latter is a profit-making organisation, designed to play significant role in the socio-economic development of the country.

The government's worry is that the sale of savings certificates far supersedes the target it (government) set forth because the interest rate of savings certificates is higher than that of banks' deposit, saving or FDR. This anomalous situation crops up because voluminous amounts of savings instruments are purchased by people not entitled to purchase them as per the Directorate of National Savings' clear mandate. The DNS unambiguously specifies the categories of people who are eligible to purchase savings certificates.

If the government strictly adheres to its own edicts and confines the sale of savings certificates to only those who are eligible, two distinct benefits will accrue: Firstly, retired government employees, marginalised people, women et al shall not have to return from the banks and post offices frustrated, dejected and demoralised being told that savings instruments are not available; Secondly, the government's set target won't be crossed and it (government) won't have to pay extra money as interest from its coffers.

The solution to this deviant problem, in my humble opinion, lies not in cutting the head to cure the headache, but in thoughtful and in-depth deliberation focusing on set principles and objectives of the national saving scheme—its history, aims and objectives since 1944.

Manzoor Ahmed Mollah is a retired Brigadier General.



Saving and Investment scheme was founded by the Government of UK in 1861 as Post Office Savings Bank, the world's first Postal Saving System. The aim of the bank was to allow ordinary workers a facility "to provide for themselves against adversity and ill-health", and to provide the government with access to debt funding. As an

with defined aims and objectives. Primarily, the Department of National Savings is aimed at ensuring welfare of the disadvantaged, marginalised, handicapped, retired government employees, senior citizens (above 70 years old), women, freedom fighters and the middle and lower income group of people in the country. While

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amounts of savings certificates are being bought by institutional investors, corporate houses, big industrial entrepreneurs and business groups, individuals with a lot of black money and, even public and private banks. The above-mentioned individuals and institutions certainly don't fall under the categories of people mentioned in the