

## It's time for Jamaat's mea culpa

### A long overdue act of atonement

A top-ranking leader of Jamaat has tendered his resignation after a very long association with the party. The ostensible reason for that is he has failed to convince the party leadership to own up to the party's anti-liberation role during the War of Liberation in 1971, and apologise to the nation for it.

As a "reformist" faction wants the party to come to its senses and make a public apology about its role during the war, the resignation of the said leader will create further pressure on Jamaat to seek forgiveness for its misdeeds in 1971 and reform its charter. There is also a segment of the current crop of the party that would want to have nothing to do with 1971, and start anew.

The demand for the party to come clean and start a new chapter in its political history is the demand of the time and for its political survival. It's normal for a political party to have its own guiding philosophy and its own position on a political issue. But its active support of the Pakistan military and being a part of its killing machine makes it complicit in the genocide in Bangladesh.

Regrettably, Jamaat was rehabilitated by the military rulers for political dividends. Equally unfortunate was that the major political parties subsequently did not hesitate either to seek its support for political expediency, according to Jamaat the legitimacy it needed to resurrect itself as a political entity. BNP must be held responsible for making Jamaat a part of the government and still carrying on a partnership with them.

The Jamaat leadership must understand what it stands for and that its past is anathema to the core values on which this nation is built. And we feel that a political party that has the blood of our martyrs on its hand forfeits the right to participate in politics. Jamaat should not only apologise and recast itself, it must also help the state to bring to book the remaining war criminals of the party.

## The beacons of light in our nation-building

### Recognise them and support their efforts

It is *The Daily Star's* privilege to honour two teachers, Satwajit Biswas and Taherul Islam, who have stood out as beacons of light in their dedicated service to education. The former, a teacher of mathematics and science from Jashore, has never in his three-decade-long career been late to class. For him his students come before all else and that perhaps explains why Biswas has never taken a day's leave during his educational tenure, not even on the day of his wedding or the day of his father's funeral. The latter who hails from Pabna decided to set up a school for under-privileged children after retiring from the teaching profession which spanned forty-nine years. His roadside school aptly named Bina Poishar Pathshala, which literally means "free school", enlightens the children of poor parents, who cannot afford to give their children schooling. Not only that, he set aside a part of his meagre income as a primary school teacher to establish a library.

Today, we stand in awe of these two gentlemen who have spent their lives bringing hope to those who have none and imparting proper education to children living in remote areas. We look forward to the day that the concerned ministry takes cognizance of other teachers like Biswas and Islam, for they are an asset to the nation. Only a good teacher can produce a good student and it is time that the selfless service such teachers give our children through their individual efforts towards nation building, far away from the glittering lights of metropolis, is recognised, rewarded and supported.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Paying respect to language martyrs

Decades ago, our predecessors paid a heavy price in order to uphold the dignity of our mother tongue—an act perhaps unparalleled in world history. February 21 has since been recognised as International Mother Language Day by Unesco. On this day, we remember their great sacrifice with deep gratitude and reverence.

We should pay our respects to them throughout the year, not only on Shaheed Dibosh or the National Martyrs' Day, as the day is commemorated in Bangladesh. In every aspect of our life, Bangla should not be neglected. That would be the perfect homage to the martyrs.

Nur Jahan, Chattogram

### Disgraced men in uniform

Two police officials in Saturia, Manikganj are reported to have drugged a young woman and raped her for two nights and, in punishment, they have been "closed" from their duties. Only a few days back, two other police personnel reportedly picked up two men and demanded Tk 15 lakh as ransom. In the recent past, some have been caught red-handed in the Yaba trade.

It is disquieting and appalling that those who are to apprehend criminals are themselves committing criminal acts and bringing disgrace to the whole entity. Offenders must be meted out exemplary punishment.

AH Dewan, By e-mail

# What kind of development do we need for an inclusive society?

SM WALIUZZAMAN

DEVELOPMENT is a buzzword in Bangladesh. Everyone talks about development but what do we really mean by development? There seems to be an obsession everywhere regarding the term without critically challenging the version of development that we have adopted.

The conceptualisation of development is not straightforward. Scholars such as G Hart ("Development Critiques in the 1990s: Culs de Sac and Promising Paths", 2001) have distinguished between Development (with a "Big d") and development ("small d") as an act of "post-world war project of intervention" and an act of "uneven geographical reconfiguration" respectively.

In the context of Bangladesh, development with a "small d" has always been in action at the local level through the effort made by millions of people every day. A hypothetical "small d" example can be adopted here by borrowing the community garden analogy provided by Gibson-Graham (Take Back the Economy, 2013). In a community garden, resources provided by nature (sunlight, water, air, soil, seeds) are carefully nurtured by gardeners with their labour to produce

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wealth (e.g. vegetables, fruits). As wealth is produced, they are managed in an effective way by consumption, distribution and recycling in order to ensure the ongoing survival of the gardeners and the garden. If nature is kind and there is surplus, the wealth is shared with extended families/neighbours or even donated to the local food bank in order to build goodwill and contribute to the community. It is also up to the gardeners to decide whether to sell some of the surplus at the local market to invest in the further productivity of the garden. "Small d" development is thus organised around the evolving human-nature support system. By widening our vision we can recognise a similar process that we carry out every day through household work, care work, feeding the poultry, co-operative farming/fishing, indigenous land management, forest management and so on.



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On the other hand, "Big d" is an imported or often infiltrated idea that pursues the capitalist mode of development through implementing mega projects and policies. Under this, efforts that are being made at the local level are often overlooked, ignored or conceptualised as flawed or subordinate. We have adopted the "Big d" development approach advocated by big global actors such as the World Bank and IMF which assume that the free market economy and privatisation can solve our societal crisis. In that process, big private business enterprises and corporates have become the economic powerhouses of the country by accumulating capital and suppressing opportunities at the local level. Despite living in a finite planet, we have exploited the non-renewable energy resources and manipulated the renewable ones. Despite living with others, we have focused on individual gains and preferences while privileging some at the cost of many others. Large-scale corporate farming has replaced co-operative agricultural practices, organic products have been replaced by the genetically modified organism (GMO) products, people have been made landless through various processes of grabbing/land acquisition, rivers/canals and many other natural elements have been killed by massive infrastructural development and so on. The very popular metrics of measuring "Big d" such as GDP bear no account of many local interventions such as women's household contribution or the care work. As if development with a "Big d" means true development and "small d" development is not a sign of development, rather the latter is one of primitive society!

But it's time to rethink the version of development that we have adopted, mostly from the legacy of British and Pakistani colonial rule. The idea is not to abandon either of the two but to ask if it is really possible to have our own approach where they can co-exist or where at least the "small d" is not totally overshadowed by the hegemony of "Big d". It is hard to answer this question

at the moment, but the process of thinking of alternatives can be started by at least recognising the efforts made at local levels and valuing indigenous traditions, norms, values and knowledge. There is evidence around us of individuals and communities which are engaged in various innovative ways of addressing our daily challenges. Inspiration can be taken from localised and pluralistic grassroots movements. Take the Water Museum in Coastal Bangladesh, a first-of-its-kind in South Asia, where, after being severely impacted by the water crisis in the region, community people had formed it in 2014 as part of their campaign for saving the rivers and to uphold the cultural value of water over its commercial value. Or the formation of farmers' cooperatives in northern Bangladesh to create a seed bank, a community-led initiative which emerged as a strategy of not only ensuring food security during drought but also as a mechanism of economic, political and social empowerment of communities, to support the whole community. Or from those slum dwellers of Dhaka, who despite facing extreme economic hardship are supporting the economy of the city by creating space for a diverse range of economic practices where these practices are often driven by the motive of collective survival rather than profit gain.

My belief is that actual development and prosperity cannot be achieved unless we consciously defeat the seductive power of the glamorous notion of "Big d" development and work together to make an inclusive society not through competition but through our traditional spirit of shared existence. By noticing all the things that are being done to ensure our material and socio-environmental well-being at the household, community and national level, we can seriously give ourselves a chance at creating an inclusive society.

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## Brexit: Is a debacle in the offing for the UK?



SAIFUL ISLAM

With May 29, 2019—official deadline for Brexit negotiations with the European Union—looming large on the horizon, the UK looks set to face a political crisis not seen in recent history. The once much-touted economic prosperity and bonanza promised by leading Leave campaigners, including current prime minister Theresa May, seem to have lost appeal to British citizens, with uncertainties over reaching a deal with the EU after Britain officially leaves the alliance set to unsettle people living in Britain. On June 23, 2016 Britons chose to come

Delving deeper into the underlying grievances lurking in the Britons' minds for a long time provides a clearer picture of what drove them to the decision.

Among the many issues that have pushed the people of Britain to go as far as to move away from the EU are immigration, budgetary constraints and regulations imposed by the EU, capital movement and trade with the union that Britons think hardly benefited them. The hottest issue among these is immigration. The majority of voters who voted to leave were older, working-class people living in the English countryside, who fear adverse impacts immigrants could bring in their daily life. Why this "fear"?

Data regarding EU nationals living in the UK shows the extent of EU immigration: 3.8 million (61 percent) of the 6.2 million non-British nationals living in

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Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May.

PHOTO: REUTERS/TOBY MELVILLE

out of the EU after a hard-fought campaign with razor-sharp margins dictating a difference of just over three percent between "Leave" and "Remain"—the Leave campaign came out victorious with 51.89 percent of votes against the 48.11 percent secured by the Remain campaign.

Now, one wonders as to what pushed UK—a long, powerful and, above all, trusted partner of the EU—to take a decision of such monumental significance.

The UK in 2017 were from EU countries. Immigrants from EU countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, etc. who came into the domain of EU roughly a decade ago swamped the UK labour market, resulting in massive pressure on healthcare and social welfare, and lower wages. Anger and resentment stemming from these key factors have been instrumental in driving the political discourse in favour of right-wing politicians waiting for the right moment to unleash their

deadly cards employed by right-wingers across the world—stoking fear and fomenting anger.

As has been seen with many right-wing political parties across Europe and elsewhere, it is always easy to scare citizens about "others" and provoke anger about the "sought-after" positions immigrants have managed to carve out for themselves through their hard work and dedication than to provide real answers to problems, complexities and frustrations faced by citizens. Theresa May and her cohorts did the same when they campaigned vigorously for Brexit and employed every tool they had at their disposal to channel citizens' anger and frustration in that direction. While the benefits and boons that Britain would apparently be entitled to once it comes out of the EU were the mantras that Theresa May, Boris Johnson and co spouted out to their infuriated fellow Britons before the referendum, the Brexit process now appears to have become very unnerving and complicated, given the indecisions and disagreements among MPs of major political parties. Although Theresa May may have survived a no-confidence vote recently, her inability to get her negotiated deal, under which Britain's trading relationship would be determined with the EU, passed through parliament spells shock as a "no-deal Brexit" looms large which

her opponents view as a betrayal on her part. The deal that Theresa May and her associates reached with the EU last year was blocked by MPs of all parties by a margin of 432 votes to 202. Then again, getting a particular Brexit deal passed through the parliament is not enough. The deal needs to be ratified by the European Parliament as well. Confronted with these unsettling issues, Britain is highly likely to move out of the EU without a deal on March 29, 2019 unless a spell of wizardry sways opinions in favour of a second referendum. A "no-deal" augers ill for British businesses (big and small alike), the nature of trading relations with the EU, and for British citizens working in EU countries.

With a possible deal negotiated by Theresa May with the EU in limbo, it is not just the citizens of other European countries living in the UK who are cheesed off with what has been unfolding before them in the form of Brexit; British citizens are worried as well given the fact that three million jobs in Britain depend on export to EU countries. The Institute of Fiscal Studies published a report on August 10, 2018 warning that the UK faced a very difficult choice. The list of uncertainties and fears that the UK would face after it moves out of the EU does not end there. The London School of Economics paints a grim picture of what could happen once Britain leaves the bloc it has been a part of for nearly five decades. Among the major crises, Britain might face after Brexit are skyrocketing food prices and shortage of food supplies. Meanwhile, employers warn of potential difficulty of finding adequate number of workers for a growing economy, which looks still likely to attract significant Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the level of which can be gauged by the portion of global FDI of which Britain holds seven percent.

The sole option Britons are now left with is to rely on politicians and see what and how they decide to get their country out of this impasse unforeseen in the recent political history of their country.

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