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PHOTO: AFP

Sergio Vieira de Mello

Sergio Vieira de Mello, a well-respected and world-renowned UN diplomat, died yesterday in Iraq. For the past four months or so, he had been helping the Iraqi people as the UN Secretary General's special envoy there. Immediately prior to his assignment as UN Human Rights Commissioner, he was the Transitional Administrator of East Timor. In East Timor, he successfully led the UN protected territory to a fully sovereign country. Sergio held a number of important positions within UN prior to his death, there was a strong rumour that Sergio would succeed the present UN Secretary General on the completion of latter's current term.

I have had the opportunity to know Sergio and worked with him in East Timor. I have fond memories of his sterling leadership, charming personality and helpful attitude. I can still remember vividly, how helpful he was to me when I was the Administrator of Baucau, the second largest district of East Timor after the capital district, Dili. In Baucau, we had to re-start the district administration virtually from a scratch. His personal interest in the development of the district was a motive force behind the effort of my district team and mine to stabilise the law and order situation of the district and re-start development activities there.

The success of the Engineers Battalions of Bangladesh Army (BA) in the initial re-building of East Timor's physical infrastructure was facilitated by his confidence in, and support for, the Battalions' work. He praised their work on a number of occasions. He had great appreciation for the performance of then UNMO Head Brig-Gen. R. Haider now, a Major-General of BA. He was happy with the contributions of Bangladesh civilian police personnel, UNMO officers from BA, Civil Affairs Officers and others from Bangladesh. My subsequent appointments as the Head of East Timor Civil Service and occasionally as the Acting Cabinet Member of Internal Administration afforded me an opportunity to get a further insight about his professional qualities including political acumen.

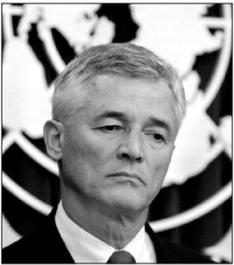
Sergio was a good friend and well wisher of Bangladesh. His love for Bangladesh began when he worked as a UN official there immediately after the liberation. Those who know him or worked with him would vouch for it. His death is a loss to Bangladesh. At personal level, I lost a great supporter and a trusted senior colleague of mine. May Allah bless the departed soul and give comfort to the family of the deceased.

The picture of the UN flag atop the destroyed UN headquarters in Baghdad (shown by world media after the bomb blast) symbolises, among other things, UN's continuing commitment to the re-building of Iraq. The UN Secretary General has, in a recent statement, affirmed the

intention of the UN to maintain its presence in Iraq and continue its work there. There can be no better tribute to the fallen world statesman Sergio Vieira de Mello than to making UN in Iraq yet another story of success.

Ms. Sarwar Sultana, New York

The death of Sergio Vieira De Mello in Baghdad is so dastardly that no appropriate words can be found to condemn it. Yet there is an underlying message for us. If USA is truly pursuing a war against terrorism, then why after their declaration of the war on terrorism, world-wide terror has increased? After the invasion of Iraq, USA expected to be welcomed with open arms and flowers. But what is happening is the US and British forces are fighting till today. There are words that al Qaida may have been behind the bombing that killed Sergio. If al Qaida is anything like the USA wants the rest of the world to believe, then Iraq today must be a haven for them, not only to regroup but also to fight its declared enemy, the United States of America.



It's now clear that the US force failed to make themselves acceptable to the Iraqis, even to those who have suffered directly at the hands of Saddam and his evil regime. And that suggests the longer the US stays in Iraq, the more they will find themselves in such situations. Unfortunately, the support for such bombings among the people will increase; not decrease. Like it or not, the Middle East is not Europe after the Second World war, and the Bush Administration are conjuring to suggest that what is happening in Iraq post Saddam is temporary. But it is not so. The situation is going out of the US hands faster than they realise.

The National Security Adviser of the Bush administration Dr. Rice in a recent statement said that US objective in the Middle East is to change societies there, the US will change them in democracies. Little did she realise that she was not dealing with school children. She was talking about an Islamic civilisation that has contributed so much to the world. Following her statement, the Washington Post in its editorial recently has welcomed what she said about the necessity of sending "democracy trainers" to the Middle East. It is unfortunate that when the United States has the might do so much good to the world, its arrogance and its neo-conservative leaders supported by an equally conservative press is taking USA in the opposite direction. And it has already made the world a dangerous place to live in.

Sergio's death is deeply regrettable but many more lives like his would be lost unless the USA stops acting as the international bully.

Shahjahan Ahmed, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Private hospital/clinic irregularities

Does the government have any control over the performances of the private hospitals and clinics?

Most hospitals/clinics charge a lot of money from the patients but the treatment offered is far below the standard. Moreover in some cases, the duty doctors and nurses are miserably deficient in both professional disciplines and in human conduct. They never think that if the patient stop coming to their private hospitals/clinics, they would automatically be thrown out of the job. Again, some doctors attend patients in their chambers almost till midnight, then they go and see the patients in their private hospitals/clinics and the rest of the time they do their official duties in government hospitals, educational institutions in the mornings. I am worried, if they are sincere about their job or not!

The administration and management systems in most of the private hospitals/clinics are also not up to the mark. Honest and dedicated administrators and staffs often find it difficult to discharge their responsibilities due to the lack of proper support from the owners. It is heard that in some cases, hospital ayas are being deputed by the owners, directors to do domestic works at the cost of jeopardising the hospital services. Often these ayas due to their high-up connections misbe-

have with patients as well as hospital officials.

The government is trying to improve country's health-care sector. Now I would request the prime minister and health minister to take some effective measures for removing the irregularities from private as well as public hospitals/clinics.

M. Zahidul Haque
Associate Professor and Member, Syndicate,
Shere-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka

Fortunate candidtes

The result of the 24th BCS (Preliminary) has come out. I have come to learn it through the notice published in the notice board of the PSC. The PSC has unprecedentedly allowed at least 46 thousands candidates. We are astonished to see such a surge of successful candidates. Why the PSC had to allow so many candidates? It is clear that the question paper leaked out. But the PSC denied the fact and to appease the agitated candidates, PSC took such a move by allowing the large number of candidates.

That means the really deserving candidates got chance along with those who got the question paper prior to the exam. When the question paper was first leaked out in the February exam, the PSC Chairman told that if the question paper

had really been leaked out, then only five per cent candidates had got it. The PSC to save its face this time allowed so many candidates so that the unfortunate candidates who could not get the questions can get berth along with the 'five per cent'.

The PSC has totally lost its credibility by not being able to find out the culprits involved in the leakage. The PSC now made itself a clown by allowing such a good number of students.

Kudos to PSC for its latest move (?)
Nandita Chowdhury
Dhaka

A great job!

Thanks to Ms. Zakia Rahman and Mr. S Zakir Hossain.

The write-up in DS, Star City this morning (August 18) on Armanitola and the pictures were superb.

It was a pleasure to read some good English and somebody who had knowledge of the right words to use. The pictures were sharp, crisp and very poignant.

J D'Silva
Professor, Dhaka University

Fake notes

One of the most alarming and shocking news of the recent days is the finding of fake notes in the vault of the Bangladesh Bank. This is a very sensitive issue for the government as well as for the authority concerned, because this is a ques-

tion of public confidence and financial security of the country. So the matter deserves keen attention and sterner action from the authority. But whatsoever, we have seen some sort of routine investigation taking long 16 days to reach to the resolution that some of the officials' irresponsibility and lack of modern security equipment are the main factors responsible for the incident. As usual, like some other recent incidents, for example: the disastrous launch mishap, allegation of the BCS question paper leakage, the main culprits are not identified specifically to give exemplary punishment to prevent the recurrence of such heinous acts in future. Consequently we have been watching the same incidents happening again and again, costing our valuable lives, wealth and confidence on the administration. So, it is high time to beat the hot iron and give it the right shape. Viable, pragmatic and uncompromising steps on the part of the administration can only save us from chaotic and anarchic situa-

whole country is in crisis management stage. Power shortage and frequent disruption continue to ruin the Industry besides letting loose hell upon the consuming public.

We shall have to consume giga watts of power for irrigation and water management and prepare for the same before it goes to severe acute shortage syndrome as the writing on the wall is saying. The Farakka barrage and now the great Brahmaputra barrage shall turn the country into Sahara of the subcontinent unless of course we can manage huge water storage facility like Tarbella and underground water resources by large scale pumping for irrigation to offset the desert like fate awaiting us.

The arsenic poisoning is the direct result of Farakka and the combined effect of the Brahmaputra barrage shall seal the fate of Bangladesh. Paradoxically these barrages are the tools of two-way evils -- to deprive of water in dry season when the need of it is the most and in monsoon season to

enduring voice. Only solution of our Pandora's box of owes is energy generation viable and long term. Only Ruppur Nuclear Reactor has that capacity. India and Pakistan have multiple nuclear reactors whereas Bangladesh has none in this part of the world. This is not only a question of dire necessity, but also of national pride.

We demand our promised Ruppur Nuclear Reactor without delay.

Concerned
On e-mail

The MagLev controversy

There has been a rising number of discussions in your newspaper about a magnetically levitated (MagLev) high speed train service for the 265km distance between Dhaka and Chittagong. Even if it were completed in 16 years (the more plausible estimate from PERC than the 18 months claimed by the Communications Minister), it would probably be one of the lon-

carriers, at our doorstep. As a regular traveller who swears by existing high speed "bullet" trains such as EuroStar, TGV and Shinkansen over planes given that at distances less than a 1000km these can match gate to gate flight times and are more energy efficient, more comfortable and environmentally friendly I'll be more than happy to pay the 40 per cent higher fare. However as a socially conscious engineer who hails from one of the poorest countries, I shudder to think when Bangladesh's economy and market will actually support such a high cost and outlandish project.

My humble advise to the minority who really need to get from Dhaka to Chittagong in 40 minutes would be to try to make do with less expensive alternatives such as video conferencing and other internet and telecommunication based technologies rather than put the burden on the taxpayer of a country with a per capita income of app. \$370.
Shabbir A Bashar

country in the world uses it commercially.

Mr. Tony Morris writes that "...the creation of new transportation is an essential part of the government's fight against poverty...", and that the project will be cost effective. True, in the long term effect that is. Magnetic Levitation will be cheaper, if the country does not succumb to the pressure of the debts created in building the service, or finds a new way to generate revenue to maintain the system.

By the way, to which sector of the population is Magnetic Levitation aimed at? The middle class will ride buses, and Bangladesh Railway provides a much cheaper service for the lower class. The people who can really afford to use Magnetic Levitation would be the upper class, that is, people who already has their own cars or who can afford to fly.

TMK, Lalmania

Abduction crisis

The hidden business of war

I still remember that rally held in front of the University of Texas at Dallas Student Union Centre. I was walking out of the horrid calculus class; those cruel and unusual numbers were then dancing in my brains and threatening to fall out. It was hot and dry -- the Texas sun was beating down on the neat granite pathways that always reminded me of forgotten episodes from Star Trek. I was heading for the Student Union building to seek comfort in some Brazilian coffee and rid my poor mind of the pains of higher education, only to confront a huge crowd in front of the giant stairs of my destination.

The banners read "Stop war on Iraq", and I thought this is even better than coffee! Students of all colours, ethnicity, age and gender were there and suddenly I was part of a crowd. A crowd that yelled the slogan "Stop war on Iraq" with such passion and such fervour, that for those few hours we all somehow believed that there was justice in this world. That truth and freedom actually exists and are not some

silly words dreamed up by revolutionaries.

The professors gave speeches of logic and reason; the rappers in their African costumes beat on drums and cried for peace. It all made sense, but what made the most sense was this revolt against violence. It was complicated, yes...but it was very simple all at the same time. When did wars ever make sense? To attack when not attacked, when did that ever make sense? To oppress those weaker than you, it was a crime as hideous as the attack Bangladesh faced not very long ago. I don't claim to have much knowledge of politics nor the ways of the world, but that day signing my name as one of the meagre representatives of those who did not want yet another episode of mindless bombing, I felt a little more worthy of life. Now the war on Iraq is over and the questions are left as unanswered as they had been in that rally, or the thousands of rallies that rocked the States back then. We are continuously undergoing

revolution and evolution, all tangled up in the mess of technology and science. It has always been like this, its only getting worse since killing is a matter of dropping high-tech weapons from longer distances. Yet we still dance at the signals of those who lead us. We watch mindlessly as Israel crawls down on Palestine one barb wired fence at a time. We watch the hunger and devastation and gang wars of Liberia just as mindlessly. Why shouldn't we be able to? I tell myself, if I can face the poverty, wretchedness and corruption in my own Bangladesh with such impersonal distance, why should the rest of the world count at all? To me now, memory of that rally is neither about Iraq, nor about righteousness. It's about the countless feeble attempts we make to improve, or rather try and improve the ever degrading human condition.

Karishma Sinha
On e-mail



PHOTO: AFP

tion; the situation greatly demands it.

Md. Arif Sadeq
Department of English, DU

Gas for India

Of late there has been flood of excuses and all sorts of pretexts in favour and with same degree of vehemence against the export of gas to India. It is a bitter fact the trade with India has turned Bangladesh into a protected market with huge unfavourable imbalance. No Bangladeshi likes to be known as debtor. This trade imbalance needs to be addressed urgently even by export of gas or electricity provided of course we have enough stock or find an alternative source of energy generator.

We should read the writing on the wall and be warned as to the importance of energy becoming the world currency replacing the present system. Let nobody dare betray the energy wealth of the nation. Even President Ayub Khan realised this fact as he had been coming in every election year to East Pakistan dangling a stick with the carrot of Ruppur Nuclear Reactor to convince the voting public they acquired a huge area of land near Ishwardi and laid down buildings and infrastructure for the supposed Nuclear Reactor which has been existing in the dream for the last three decades.

That promised Reactor could have been realised thirty years ago but for the duplicity of Pakistanis and the obstinacy of the neighbour. The Ruppur Reactor has been overdue for the long three decades. Ruppur genie has been bottled up diabolically rather too long by the so-called friends of the nation. Today the scenario has changed to uncork the genie. Let India or whosoever else take the gas only with cooperation for the erection of the Reactor for Bangladesh. An alternative source of energy is the crying need of the hour.

Today the Kaptai Hydel Plant is faced with grave danger after the recent Barakal earthquake. There appeared large cracks in the Lake embankment threatening the very existence of the fifty years old Hydel Power Generator of the country. Razaun thermal generator is over due for production and is beset with troubles. The power production situation could not be worse enough as of today.

The whole of Rajshahi and Khulna region is devoid any energy source. Power availability wise the

drown us in deluge when the need is the least.

As they say one cannot change the neighbours, but may change strategy to live together. Firmly believing in co-existence we Bangladesh has only one solution viz. looking for a viable energy source for the distribution of the stored floodwater during dry season. We may not look beyond the border for the water supply.

India herself is water-starved during dry season. What we may request her is not to drown us by opening the floodgates towards Bangladesh in the name of humanity. As the good prophet said, "God helps them who help themselves." Time has come to hark to that

gest MagLev routes in the world! According to an article by a P Holmer in the August 2003 issue of The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Spectrum magazine, the longest such route -- currently only in its study phase -- will run 171km between the cities of Los Angeles and Palmdale in southern California, USA. Designed for 30 million passengers per year at an estimated cost of US\$70 million per km, this is expected to be operational in about 7 years from now.

As a scientist, I would be tickled silly at the prospect of having this state of the art technology, that may soon be used for launching spacecrafts and fighter jets from aircraft

Stanford University,
California, USA

It is really amazing that a Less Developed Country like ours could even plan to construct a magnetic train service. How can a country like ours, which cannot even maintain a proper bus service, considering constructing and maintaining a magnetic train service?

I believe it would be a much better investment for the government to use that much of money to buy more buses or improve the road infrastructure between Dhaka and Chittagong. I don't know why the government considered utilizing Magnetic Levitation technology in the first place, when no other

Now a days abduction is very alarming in the country specially in Chittagong and Dhaka. The abductors are doing this as dame care ignoring of the law enforcing agencies. In many cases, the law enforcing agencies are helpless due to the inefficient handling by the government. The general people of the country lost their confidence in the government. I don't understand the reason why the government has not taken effective measures to stop abduction.

However, I request the government to introduce death penalty for abduction cases to stop this heinous crime before it is too late.

MA Bashar
Dhaka

Pre-paid vs post-paid

This in reference to Mr. Ishtiaque Uddin (Rifat)'s letter DS dated 6th July, 2003 about the pre-paid and post-paid subscription. In his letter Mr. Rifat has mentioned about the price reduction on the call charges of post-paid service.

I would like to say that until the price cut of call charges, post-paid users had to pay the same rate like pre-paid users. A post-paid user had to give a monthly subscription charge for using the facility. Beside that, the subscribers had to pay another 15 per cent VAT on the total bill. So obviously the 'post-paid' was not a good choice comparing to 'pre-paid'. On the other hand, the pre-paid users enjoy a flat rate of VAT inclusive call charges. Now you do the simple calculation!

Nabil Huda
Purana Paltan, Dhaka

Great relief

By now, the newspaper readers must have become accustomed receiving their daily dose of disappointment at the state of the country. So it was with great relief that I read of the court's refusal to bow to pressure from the home ministry and dismiss a murder case involving an MP's brother. It seems that against all odds, there is still a judge somewhere determined to do his job honourably and seek justice.

Zeeshan Hasan
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

Worn out notes!



PHOTO: STAR

We use different types of notes daily, but the irritating thing is that a good portion of these notes is either tattered or filthy. In some cases the notes that we use are so worn out, that we face troubles with rickshawpullers, shopkeepers and bus-conductors. And this type of incidents happens so frequently that paying for something has become really vexing. These altercations could easily be avoided by replacing those grubby notes with plastic notes and coins. A pivotal point is that

these notes carry lots of germs. So it is important to remove these filthy and ragged notes promptly.

An elated news for us is that Bangladesh Bank has already taken initiatives to remove old notes and is going to print new notes which I think is a timely decision. I welcome the step but want a rapid implementation

Md. Nazrul Islam Sumon
Department of English, DU