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**"Bangladesh-third time lucky"**

It is a national shame that Bangladesh has been topping the list of the most corrupt countries for the last three consecutive years. But our political leaders do not believe this as it is their achievement. Mr. Saifur Rahman has even gone to the extent of questioning the validity of the corruption rating, saying it was based on newspaper reports and comments.

But we, the common people of Bangladesh, know and believe that it is true. Transparency International (TI) has only published this fact in the form of a report. But we are going through this experience in our daily life. Mr. Saifur Rahman is undoubtedly the most capable and respectable minister of the present government and he has shown the courage to be not always blindly supporting the government and the party.

We hope that he and his government will come forward to accept the underlying truth of the TI's findings and do something to free this poor and the most corrupt nation from this shame and from the clutches of the evil-doers. Meanwhile, the DS deserves a big applause for its editorial "Bangladesh hitting corruption abyss", dated 10-10-2003. The editorial has come up with some important, valuable and specific suggestions. Let us also remember that to fight corruption, the most effective tool available is our Islamic sharia laws.

**Md. Aminul Haque**  
East Rampura, Dhaka

**Living with the "most corrupt"**

I am a citizen of the most corrupt nation in the world for the third year running! It hurts me deeply, and I have lost my face to foreigners. But our leaders apparently do not care, otherwise the

**Shirin Ebadi: A role model for women**

The Nobel committee awarded 2003 peace prize to an Iranian writer, lawyer and human rights activist, Shirin Ebadi. Ebadi is the 11th woman and the 1st Muslim woman and the first Iranian to have won the peace prize since it was first awarded in 1901. Ebadi was selected from among 165 candidates, including Pope John Paul II and former Czech president Vaclav Havel, the latter a human rights activist during the communist regime. The Norwegian Nobel committee said in its citation "her principal arena is the struggle for basic human rights, and no society deserves to be labelled civilised unless the rights of women and children are respected. In an era of violence, she has consistently supported non-violence."

The committee said, Ebadi represents reformed Islam and lauded her for arguing for a new interpretation of Islamic laws which is in harmony with basic human rights such as democracy and equality before law.

Ebadi stands for tolerant Islam and believes that conservative interpretation of the fundamentals of Islam does not bring any benefit to Muslims. Islam is a religion for all times as it professes peace, harmony and compassion for the entire mankind. Once she said, "My problem is not with Islam, it is with the culture of patriarchy." She told Britain's Guardian newspaper in June, "Practices such as stoning has no foundation in Quran."

She also warned the USA not to intervene in her country's affairs. In a direct swipe at the USA which had singled out Iran along with Iraq and North Korea as the "axis of Evil", she said after winning the award, "the fight for human rights in Iran is conducted by the Iranians and we are against any foreign intervention in Iran."

As a lawyer, judge, lecturer, writer and activist, she has spoken out clearly and strongly in her country, Iran, and far beyond its borders. She stood up as a sound professional and a courageous person and has never given into the threats to her own safety. Shirin Ebadi is definitely a role model for both Muslim and non-Muslim women.

Hats off to Shirin Ebadi.  
**Md Foyaz Ahmed**  
Dept. of Economics,  
Zia Hall, DU



**Persuade Mahathir to take OIC leadership**

I heartily and fully agree with RD Qurashi that OIC members should persuade Dr. Mahathir to take the position of Secretary General. This will certainly rejuvenate the Muslim world and the out side world will start reckoning our strength.

So far, the OIC has totally failed to stand up to the expectation of Muslims. It's activities are limited to formal, almost useless, meetings and there is no proof of the organisation having played any constructive role. The reason may be the lack of proper leadership & well defined objectives.

In an International organisation like the OIC, the Secretary General plays the pivotal role. But the OIC never had a person like Mahathir as its Secretary General and knows not how good a job this charismatic leader can do to the Ummah. He has international standing to lead us at this critical hour.

OIC members should persuade Mahathir to accept the assignment for the greater interest of the Ummah.  
**MABashar, Dhaka**



active, true democracy is applied and tax money of the nation is utilised economically.

**Molla Mohammad Shaheen**  
Dept of English,  
Dhaka University

**Wanted or most wanted?**

The vacancy advertisements in The Daily Star look very weird when they contain the "Wanted" headings. These particular type of headings are usually used when law enforcers look for criminals. It would look nice if a reputed newspaper like The Daily Star uses

'Vacancy announcement' or 'Required' instead of 'Wanted'.

**M. Fuad Hussain**  
Dhanmondi RA,  
Dhaka

**Searching for a leader**

We have seen the styles of our politicians how they make promises and how they break them. All I can say is that, they are all the same. They only come to power to do good to themselves only. They also have a tendency to use people before every election. I am not blaming any particular political party, but, in fact, the blame goes to all the parties because they all have same bad traits. It is time we look for a strong-minded patriotic leader to show the world that we too can lead and be led in a tolerable manner.

**Minhaj Ahmed**  
Uttara, Dhaka

**Acts speak louder**

A news item along with pictures of dismantled road divider at the airport road was published in some newspapers last month.

But, most amazingly, the communication minister, Barristor Nazmul Huda, nonchalantly expressed his ignorance about this whole thing. This angered the PM. So she visited the spot along with the minister to see for herself the real situation. Our ministers should concentrate more on how to improve their performance rather than giving speeches. They should know that acts speak louder than words.

**Iqbal Ahmed**  
New Eskaton, Dhaka

**National University agonises students**

Being a student of the National University (NU), I know the suffering of NU students. NU was established in 1992. Until now, we don't see any development in its administration and management. Rather, we see ignorance of the authority and of the government. Although almost six lakhs students are doing their undergraduate and post graduate courses under this university, the government hasn't shown any interest to develop the NU.

As far as I know, almost every college has insufficient teachers. Many vacant posts of teachers are also found in almost every govt. colleges. As per as the existing teachers are concerned, what are they doing? They do not like to take more than one class in a week. We the students of first year hon's aren't getting more than one class from a teacher. Same is the situation in almost every govt. college under the NU.

It should be mentioned here that the duration of a class is only 45 minutes. Every teacher comes in his/her class at least five minutes later than the scheduled time. And, in every class, he or she spends 12-15 minutes to take attendance of more than 250 students. Ultimately, we get 25 minutes from a teacher once in a week. Is it sufficient for the hon's level students?

Moreover, we get more than six months holidays in a year for various reasons -- such as HSC exam, BA (pass) exam, BA (Hon's) exam, Ma (Hon's) exam, public holidays, hartals or strikes, etc. Although it is mentioned in the National university's syllabus that

tutorial classes should be taken by the teachers, we have not witnessed any tutorial classes so far.

And then, surplus students are enrolled in government colleges but separate sections are not made. We have to attend classes with over 250 students in one classroom.

Another thing is that the results take long time to get published. As a result, students get frustrated. I am a student of Dhaka College under the NU. Though it is a very renowned college in Bangladesh, all these irregularities are seen here too.

More than half a million students from the middle and lower middle classes are subjected to great losses due to the administrative corruption, mismanagement and government ignorance surrounding the NU. We, the students of the NU, are requesting the government to take following steps to ameliorate our sufferings:

- 1) Result within three months and full adherence to the academic calendar.
  - 2) Separate examination hall and regular classes.
  - 3) Filling of the vacant post of teachers.
- At the same time, necessary steps should be taken to ensure quality education.

**Kushal**  
Dhaka College  
Dhaka

**Dismal HSC result: Devil is in details**

The HSC candidates sat for the public examination this year for the first time after the education authorities introduced communicative English. The communicative English in the HSC invited a lot of criticisms from different corners but the education authorities (Ministry Education, NCTB, Education Boards) did not pay heed to these criticisms. This resulted in the extremely poor performance of the students in an examination the result of which decides whether one can go for higher education or not.

The percentage of pass would have been well below twenty percent had the education boards not given ten grace marks in the English. We predicted this result at the time the syllabus was introduced. The devil lies in details of how the system got kicked off.

When something new is introduced in the education sector, it must be widely circulated through the media. Our education authorities miserably failed to do so or deliberately kept away from circulating it to the public. Neither students nor teachers could form a clear idea about the nature, system and the way the questions would be styled.

NCTB simply played hide and seek with students and guardians. They remained busy with earning money by distributing the syllabus and the directions to different publishing companies, keeping the teachers in the dark about the whole process. Nor they arranged any effective seminars or workshops to ensure participation by teachers of higher secondary educational institutions. NCTB did not send any written direction or syllabus to educational institutions. I used to serve in different cadet colleges and at Rajuk College in Dhaka but no such direction or guide was received by those institutions.

I asked my former

cadet college colleagues who expressed their ignorance about this matter. No teacher was invited by NCTB from Rajuk college. My question to the NCTB is: who were called to attend the seminars or meetings organised by the authorities to explain the syllabus?

If this is the condition of the teachers of Dhaka city and cadet Colleges, what about the teachers of rural colleges? They have absolutely been in the dark and failed to guide students toward adopting a proper perspective on communicative English. Meanwhile, different publishing companies flooded the market with different kinds of guide books, which failed to give a uniform and conspicuous idea about the syllabus of communicative English.

Avoidance of traditional grammar can be attributed partially to this dismal result as the students and teachers were accustomed to and habituated with the ways and spirits of the traditional method. The sudden change left them unprepared. The new syllabus contains 60 marks for filling in gaps with and without clues, but it demands strong grammatical and structural base of the students. As the communicative English absolutely discourages teaching traditional grammar, no college ventured into doing it.

Students of towns and cities are privileged in many ways as they learn English from the environment, surrounding situation, family, friends, quality of colleges and from more qualified teachers. These advantages give them basic ideas to fill in the gaps even without having grammatical knowledge. Rural students are deprived of these advantages, hence they failed to obtain good marks and doomed their career. Creative writing threw them into such a difficulty that they answered things wrongly.

Education authorities must ponder over these points deeply and find out a pragmatic solution in consultation with not only the teachers of higher level, also with those who are at the field level.

**Professor Masum Billah**  
WAPDA Road,  
West Rampura, Dhaka

**Values have little to do with poverty**

Politically, we are very sensitive; but not morally. Look at the huge "business" of corrupt practices. Compare the belief, goals, objectives and the traditional hospitality of this generation with the preceding ones. Materialistic opportunities provide temptations to break the moral codes of life. Our generation is sunk into this materialistic Crusade.

**What an elephantine cruelty!**



I do not understand how a responsible personnel of a Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) can use a magazine full of bullets to kill an elephant in a government forest and sanctuary (BDR officer kills wild elephant in sanctuary, 13th October 2003).

Myself and three of my former students-cum-researchers (Anisuzzaman Khan, SMA Rashid and Mohsinuzzaman Chowdhury), who are at present working at the IUCN-Dhaka chapter, studied elephants in the Pablakhal and other areas of the greater CHT and Sylhet districts during the 1970s, early 1980s and late 1990s. We often came face to face with elephants. But neither had we harmed them nor did the elephants harm us.

Once Rashid and I took shelter on a tree as a herd of elephants started following the bridal path we were using. The elephants stopped just under our tree. They soon started rubbing their bodies against the same lanky tree we were on. We were forced to shout at full throat and throw our caps toward the elephants. It scared them and they ran for their lives screaming. We could not believe the elephants could be so scared. It was a scene to be seen and cherished for lifetime experience.

I strongly feel that we must start environmental and wildlife conservation awareness campaign to enlighten our men and women in uniform immediately; so that they realise the value of declining natural wealth and how to save them from extinction instead of becoming a party to its destruction.

I request the ministry of environment and forest, home and defence to sit together and chalk out programmes with the assistance of national,

regional and international NGOs and agencies.  
**Dr. Mohammad Ali Reza Khan**  
Environment and Wildlife Researcher  
Former Member of Asian Elephant Specialist Group of IUCN and current member of World Commission of Protected Areas -- the WORLD Conservation Union, Switzerland

Did our trigger-happy BDR personnel know anything about the law of the land? Or he thought government has given him the license to kill? How cruel one has to be to fire 50 bullets to a wild animal? My heart broke to see the dead animal's picture on the newspaper. Few days back, we saw Dhaka zoo staff members being handed over tough punishment for killing animals in the zoo. They were mostly from the lower segment of the society.

But in case of this poor elephant, the reason was different. The defaulter himself is the custodian of law. He should be handed over tougher punishment; so that others take a lesson out of this incident. Through this letter I would like to let the readers know that there are good people too. A river dolphin was rescued by the tourists in a sanctuary in Kotka on 9th October 2003. Government should brief BDR and Armed Forces personnel about the Wildlife Act of 1974.

This may be the first time we came to know about this gruesome act, but it is very common for the armed forces personnel to keep endangered animals as pet. Government should take immediate steps to release those animals or make sure the animals get the treatment they deserve in captivity.

**Crocodile Farmer, On e-mail**

**"Over population and our misery"**



This is in response to Mr. M. Mizanur Rahman's letter 'Over population and our misery' (DS October 17, 2003). Many thanks to Mr. Rahman for including some facts and figures in his thoughtful letter.

One of the prime tasks of the government, especially of the powerful state officials, (whether it is a monarchy, colonial, military dictatorship, democratic, socialist, communist or even Islamic type) is to bring the adult population of the country under money circulation. This can be done by promoting official and private business facilities and generate employment opportunities for economic growth and social stability.

During the British colonial rule, the imperial government restricted wider money circulation among the growing native population and evaded the responsibility of job creation.

During last three decades, we followed the World Bank and IMF prescriptions, which resulted into a large segment of our adult population being out of money circulation.

When every married couple will have financial freedom, they would pursue improved quality of living and in return they would bear less number of children. The impoverished married couple would quarrel bitterly at the daytime for economic hardship; while at night, reconcile over sexual pleasure. The trend toward overpopulation has persisted not only for decades, rather for a few centuries.

**Golam Ashraf, DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka**