

Arafat and the US

Recently the US has opposed a UN resolution that sought to resist Israel's threatening behaviours towards the popular leader Arafat. Through this stand, the US has exhibited once again her support for Israel's heinous conspiracy to get rid of Arafat. The US delegate is the only one in the UNSC to have abused his veto power against this resolution relating Arafat's security. To some extent, the Resolution is tied to a peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict too. Unfortunately, this US support will encourage Israel further to do

whatever it wishes. Israel will view it as a green signal, a license to fulfill its desire to assassinate or exile Arafat. Israel knows if Arafat is removed from the scene, Palestinian groups will fight among themselves and Israel can not be blamed for suing peace. It is also true that if Arafat dies through some mysterious reason, the US will be blamed indirectly and more Americans will be targeted by the Arabs along with the Jews.

Juthika, Dhaka University

Who are those 11 per cent?

The whole nation is now united and protesting against India's plan to divert Eastern Himalayan river waters. This plan is a threat to the lives of over 400 Million people living in Bangladesh and West Bengal, Bihar, Assam and adjoining states of India. Serious ecological imbalance will devastate these areas as well as Nepal, Bhutan, Sikim and Myanmar if the plan is implemented. The daily *Prothom Alo* in its internet opinion poll on 7.9.2003

National Stadium?

One might have noticed that, in the commentaries on the on going Test match between Bangladesh and England, the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) is simply being called the National Stadium. Have the commentators been asked to say so? Because, in the beginning, they were calling it BNS. It seems the change in the name followed the circulation of an emotional article, full of truths, on Bangabandhu in the *Cricinfo* page. I guess the commentators were

and 'on the ground work' of a noble state minister. In fact it is possible to do miraculous things in this country if one works with sincerity to help the nation. **CS Mahtab**
On mail

Money making with environment protection pretext

I am writing this letter to draw the attention of the ministry in charge of environmental affairs.

this number, the men further said, I would be informed where I could get my car fitted out with such a device. I was given a month's time to do so. When I called the phone number at the ministry, somebody gave me the phone number of the "Speedway" company, who then informed me that one catalytic converter for my 800 cc. Suzuki Maruti would cost me Taka 25,000.

So what does this mean? Has it been set up by the ministry for environment? Buses and trucks spew out long plumes of poisonous smoke but no mobile court is there to deal with this problem. But we have to pay an exorbitant amount of money to get some catalytic converter because the ministry wants us to have it. I am sure that there are people, both in the ministry and outside, who have good terms with a company and they will be benefited by the project.

While the spirit of the law is all right, the worst part of it is that in practice the sporadic implementation of environmental laws is oppressive. A few months ago there was that hullabaloo with bumper guards, all of which came to nothing except that some people paid to have the extra guard removed and then put back to their place. I have no doubt that the same thing will happen in the case of these catalytic converters. Some money will be squeezed out from citizens and then the whole matter will be forgotten, except by the people who paid out Taka 25,000 for nothing.

Therefore I am asking the ministry concerned to let it go. The holy month of Ramadan has begun, the prices of foods in the bazaar have shot up. We are groaning under the pressure. This is not the time to ask people to pay money for fitting their cars with catalytic converters. Surely, there are better things for bureaucrats and policymakers to do.

Nahar Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

PDB: spurious meter reading goes on

There are a lot of complaints against the government controlled electric utility agencies (PDB, DESA, DESCO) for several years now. Not only there are illegal connections, but meter readings are tampered with and faked. I had to go to Mohammadpur DESA office last year to sort out the inflated bills. Now spurious readings are creeping in once again.

The minister may review the image of these agencies and enforce a better public relations approach. For example, in my 12 years at a flat, no inspector ever came to ask the tenants if they had any comment on the service.

Visits to the offices are wasteful, as one has to run from table to table. There is no one-stop complaint/enquiry desk run by a senior officer, who can call any official from any section to face the client right in front of the officer.

Good governance means fast service with little wastage of time. There is always a slow follow-up after a complaint is lodged (passing on the buck). I left my telephone number, but received no call. Why the consumers have to go to the office and show their face from time to time? Political rhetoric has no meaning until the basic services are delivered with speed and accuracy. **Md Abad**
Dhaka

PM takes on the media

According to The Daily Star report

(Monday, October 20) Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has condemned the so called media's negative reporting over her coalition government's successes. It's fashionable indeed for an incumbent PM, and, in this regard, I would say that it's the media which'd put her four party alliance in power.

During the last Awami League period, media had played a vital role in publishing wrong-doings of the government and their stooges. People were mostly influenced by the fair media reports, not by the rhetorical speeches of the alliance leaders.

Print media like The Daily Star plays a pioneering role in exposing both the good and bad side of the society. It's the duty and obligation of the media to express the real situation prevailing in the society.

But, accusing the media of negative reporting does little to ease the situation. In practice, it will make the problem more complex and provoke the party men to do whatever they like. Besides, democracy is unworkable without criticism.

Salam
Third year, Department of law, Chittagong University

In JU, students are victims

This writing encompasses the grievances of ten thousand students of the Jahangirnagar University who have been crippled for more than 3 months by one year session-jam following a duel between the two groups of teachers known as VC group and the anti-VC group. A deadlock prevails in the campus as the anti-VC group attends all sorts of academic activities.

All the departments excepting a few are not running. The administrative section is inactive. The water-crisis incident in the three female halls has added a new dimension to the indefinite strike of the teachers, increasing frustration and antipathy among general students.

Meanwhile, general students are losing their valuable time while the teachers stick to their respective demands. A teacher is no good if he/she does not have any concern for students. Taking classes punctually is their first duty. Why should we be the sufferers for their strike?

If this strike continues, an upheaval may follow. We want classes and examinations in due time and also a good and happy ending of this dispute. Our humble urge to the chancellor and the President of our country is that, please take pragmatic initiatives for running the university smoothly and save us from being the victims of our teachers' squabbling.

ABM Shafiqul Islam
Jahangirnagar University, Savar

NGO-developer nexus: PM must intervene

In the 70s, the government in its effort to promote involvement of non-government organisations in the social welfare service allotted lands (mostly in Mirpur area) to a number of NGOs-both local and foreign. In most cases, the government (through the Ministry of Social Welfare) also paid the value of the land.

In the course of time some NGOs (like SOS, Grameen, UCEP, National Heart Foundation, BIRDEM, etc) made proper use of the land by developing the plots as service outlets for targeted beneficiaries. However, many others, mostly local, just failed to do so.

Unfortunately, many of the 'second category' NGOs eventually became conduits to serving the personal agenda of the NGO bosses like the president/ chairman and/or general secretary/managing trustee/executive director, etc.

Resorting to malpractice/corruption is very common in all such NGOs. The leaders of these non-functional (or with inefficient services) NGOs have now gotten involved in another fraudulent practice to make money (in millions).

In the name of furthering/enhancing source(s) of income, these NGO bosses are now entering into commercial contracts with chosen 'Developers' to construct "multi-storied market complex" on the land that originally belonged to the state. Moreover, the government paid the value of the land allotted to them (NGOs) only to provide specific welfare services to uplift our social conditions.

In this 'NGO-Developer Deal' the agenda id to serve self-interest and make money, for both the parties the so-called NGO bosses and their chosen developers. All these are happening in government land.

At the same time, in the name of offering public service, the NGO bosses and the developers are evading huge amounts of VAT, Rates, Taxes etc., causing more losses to Public Exchequer.

What is more interesting is that the RAJUK and the housing and settlement departments are approving these "market complex" construction plans by taking kickback.

Similarly, the departments assigned to oversee the activities of the NGOs are conspicuously non-chalant and/or prefer to condone the whole affair. They (these departments) never ask the NGOs about

the sources of such huge funding. Conventional wisdom suggests that, with such a backdrop, the prime minister's Office should be pro-active to immediately put an injunction and stop the construction of such "market complex" under the 'NGO-developer deal.' It is serious issue.

Abu Osman
Lalbagh, Dhaka

Hazari's credential

A few days back, as I was reading the newspaper, my eyes caught the sight of a news about Jainal Hazari. In the news, the word 'alleged' was used while mentioning about the crimes he had committed. I think that no sincere and sane person have any doubt in mind about the true nature of this person. He was directly responsible for almost killing a journalist and his men were also responsible for many misdeeds in Feni. His crimes had also been proven in the court and verdict rendered. Why is there so much confusion in the mind of the correspondent who penned the report.

Zahedul Amin
On mail

Getting rich by selling diaries

In a few weeks time, the sidewalks of Baitul Mukurram will be full of diaries. Many of the diaries have been stolen from different companies. It is also part of a scam that affects the whole society. The cancer has reached the stage of "metastasis."

The diaries give all sorts of information. Some of them are ten years old, providing wrong information to the public.

Seeing these diaries I feel we have become a nation of lazybones. Why must one work hard if the street smart 'diary wallahs' can make as much profits as do big corporations. 'By the sweat of thy brow, shall you earn your bread' seems a wrong maxim in our context. Being a plain copycat is good enough for us.

Shahabuddin Mahtab
Dhaka

Islamic economy and development

Islam embodies the complete code of life. There is a perfect guideline in Islam to guide all affairs of human life, including politics, sociology, economy etc.

In the holy Quran and Hadiths, principles are laid out to solve all kinds of problems a human being faces. These principles are equally applicable for individuals, society, state and the world. Islamic economy is one such aspect that prohibits its usury but permits profit sharing from investment and trade. The difference here being, you pay nothing if you have not profited whereas interests on borrowed money are never forgiven.

Though many non-Muslim nations believe this fact, we in Bangladesh know little about it. If we did know it, the authority of national university would not have abolished this course from its Honours syllabus.

The subject was included in the syllabus of 3rd year Honours course of 1993-94, but removed from the syllabus of four years duration Honours course. Many are doubtful whether this is a conspiracy by any evil force. I hope that the authority concerned will properly rethink about the matter due to following reasons:

During the last forty years, many research works were done on Islamic economy, finance, banking and insurance. At the same time, many institutions have been established in many places of the world to teach the practical applications of

Will Khaleda uphold Zia's promise?



Medicare is one of the basic needs of humanity. Bangladesh government has been spending millions of takas in the health sector for the common people and for medical education. The government hospitals, health complexes and other small medicare units throughout the country have been serving mostly to poor patients.

A huge amount of taka is being spent to purchase medicine. But it is an open secret that the poor patients in the government hospitals/ health centres seldom get free medicine, something they are suppose to get regularly. *Shahid* president Ziaur Rahman declared to set up one essential drug factory in each administrative division to produce medicine and other items required for patients treated in government hospitals, health complexes, etc. So far, it is known that two essential drug factories have been set up in Dhaka and Rajshahi division. Four more factories need to be set up in other divisions. Illegal drainage of medicine and other medicare items from government health care units has to be stopped.

The drugs produced in government's essential drug factories must be supplied in generic names and should be packed in bulk quantities, not in a strip of 8 to 12 tablets or capsule or as liquid medicine in 250 ml bottles. Rather, those should be packed in 100 tablets or capsules in a plastic container. And, liquid medicines should be packed in 500 ml or 1 ltr. bottles

The nurses in hospitals will feed the medicine according to the dose suggested by doctors. Medical practitioners usually prescribe medicine in trade names. The patients other than from government health care units will receive prescriptions from doctors for medicine bearing trade names. They will purchase those from the chemist shop produced by private medicine producers. The private patients will not agree to purchase government made medicine in loose packets as well as in generic names.

We urge the government to produce medicine in generic names, pack in bulk quantities and set up additional four essential drug factories at Sylhet, Barisal, Chittagong and Khulna divisions to cater for the demand of government hospitals and clinics.

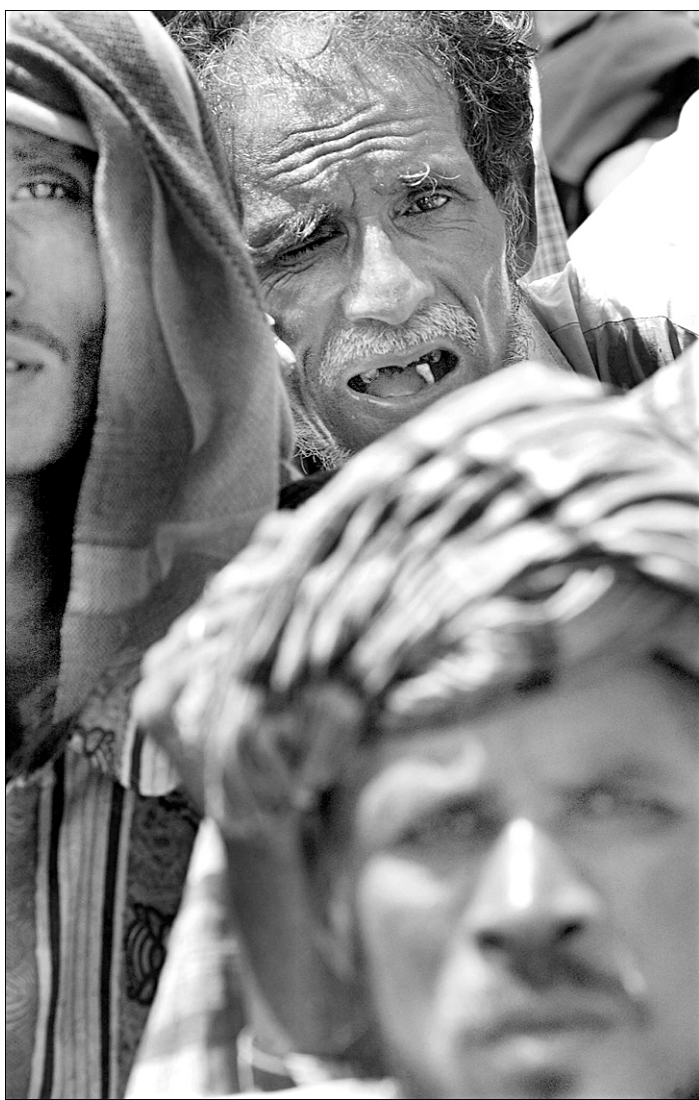
Md Ashraf Hossain
Panthapath, Dhaka

these things throughout the world. For instance, (1) In the Rise University of USA, there is a "Chair on Islamic Economy." (2) In the Southern California University, "King Faisal professor of Economics" is a full time fellowship.

Besides, Masters and PhD Programmes have started in Islamic economy in Lough borrow university and M. Phil and PhD degrees are on offer in many western universities on the subject. While many world famous non-Muslim economists are engaged in researching on Islamic economy and finance, what is our problem being the second largest Muslim country on earth?

A Writer,
Dhaka

Labour deaths in husking mills



these husking mills and boilers ignore the safety of the labourers.

About fifty accidents of boiler explosion occurred during the year 2000. Most of these accidents occurred in northern region of he country. In some cases, ten labourers lost their lives in one single explosion. For instance, a boiler explosion occurred in a husking mill at Bochagong of Dinajpur district where ten labourers were killed and one seriously injured. The injured one became crippled for life. On August 9, 2003, a day labourer name Sarwar (45) was killed by an explosion in a boiler at Dupchachia Upo-zila of Bogra district.

On inquiry it was revealed that the safety valve of the boiler was defective but the owner of the boiler did not care for it. The owner of the boilers escaped responsibilities by paying taka twenty one thousand only. It is also known that husking mills and boilers owners are enlisted in food department and they are allotted paddy from the government warehouses for making rice. In order to be enlisted in food department the boilers and husking mill owners are required to obtain trade license, bank solvency etc. But they are reluctant to obtain the required license.

A source in the factory inspection team said, spot inspection on the technical experience of the workers, arrangements of health care, application of labour laws etc. is made, but, punishment for violating laws is very light or negligible. That is why the proprietors of the husking mills or Chatal (paddy drying yard) do not care for obtaining license..

TIM Rashid
Seujgari, Talukder Para, Bogra

Very often the labourers of boilers and rice husking mills are losing their lives by explosion and other accidents although there are laws in this regard which are hardly ever applied. Due to such accidents, some labourers become handicapped for the rest of their lives.

North Bengal is called the crop treasury of Bangladesh. Apparently, hundreds of husking mills and paddy drying yard called "Chatal" have been

established. The numbers of these husking mills and paddy drying yards are not known officially, nor they carry legal permits.

It is estimated that about few thousands of boilers farms and husking mills dot the region where about one lakh labourers are working with least wages merely to ensure survival. Due to the existing laws in this respect not being applied to earn more profits, the owners of

asked by the authorities to refrain from calling the stadium as BNS. What a pity! By the by, I hope I am wrong. **Wahid Shafi**
One-mail

A minister's feat

In the past, we have not been able to give our primary school children their books in the first week of January. This year has been an exception, due to the alertness, sincerity

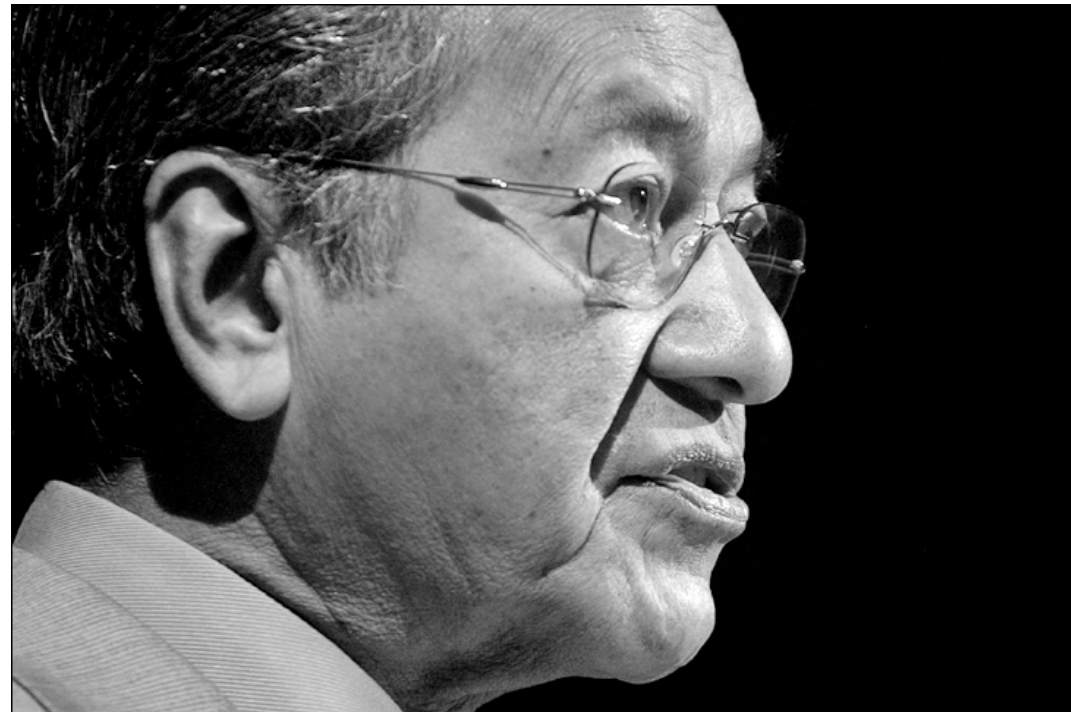
My car was stopped the other day on Manik Miah Avenue by two policemen, under the direction of two other men sitting in chairs in front of a table. With them was some instrument. They 'tested' my car and pronounced it fit except that the car's hydrocarbon ppm. was a little 'high'. They told me that my car needed to be fitted with a catalytic converter. They handed me a piece of paper, on which there was also a phone number of the environment ministry's oversight office. If I called

reported that 89 per cent people of Bangladesh feel that the implementation of the alleged plan would be disastrous to us while 11 per cent did not agree.

I find the poll's result very interesting. Who are those 11 per cent? Do they realise the consequences of their views? **Asaduzzaman**
Dr. Kudrat-E-Khuda Road, Dhaka

Bangabandhu or only

On Mahathir and Hitler



Malaysian Prime Minister Mahatir Mohamad diatribes about Jews' trying to control the world are not different from Hitler's. Hitler managed to arouse a considerable number of his compatriots to a frenzy of homicidal fury against the Jews when the latter amounted to only one per cent of the German population.

The post-war Polish government did even better: the Communist regime produced anti-Semitism without having much Jews living in its

territory. Poland's once thriving Jewish community were either killed during the war or emigrated after the war.

Mahatir is trying to do the same. He is trying to find a scapegoat for his own failures. He may be reminded that he has jailed his able finance minister Anwar Ibrahim on concocted charges, simply because he was becoming popular.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada