

Purbachal plots

Allotment irregularities can't be made light of

Allotment of Rajuk plots at Purbachal has given rise to a host of unpleasant questions. Newspaper reports say the allotment process was politically manipulated...

What is particularly worrying is that the beneficiaries of violation of rules include lawmakers and ministers. That certainly adds to the widespread apprehension...

Regrettably, allotment of Rajuk plots had created controversy in the past, with politicisation of the allotment process being the principle charge...

What does all this boil down to? Will there never be a fair allotment process free from manipulation and unholy influence?

Allotment of plots in Uttara was cancelled not long ago because it smacked of favouritism, political or otherwise. But it seems the ingredients, including political influence...

Since several irregularities are being alleged about the allotment process, the government needs to investigate the matter with a view to establishing accountability...

Car set ablaze at DU

Let's put a stop to street justice

The increasing incidence of mobs meting out street justice is a disturbing symptom of the corrosion of respect for the rule of law in the country. In the latest such incident, Dhaka University students set fire to a car...

There was no suggestion that the driver had been driving recklessly or that he had attempted to flee the scene or in any way acted inappropriately. Nor was the accident victim seriously hurt...

Matters such as these can be dealt with perfectly well in a court of law and the fact that the mob took the law into its own hands merely goes to show how far the law and order situation has deteriorated.

The message sent by such vigilante action is that justice is not dispensed by a court of law but by whoever has the strength to mete it out, and that those who arrogate to themselves the duty of enforcing street justice are above the law.

The first step to improving the law and order situation is to make clear that none is above the law or can take the law into his own hands. Those responsible must be brought to book.

Governance: Don't judge the book by its cover

M. SHAHIDUL ISLAM

The BNP-Jamaat coalition has governed the nation for two years. The achievement and success of the government are being measured in political, social and economic terms. The government enjoys a comfortable two-thirds majority in the parliament...

The government's response to such concerns is a bit weird and wobbly. Decisions are taken only to rescind under pressure. Increased demands for consumer products are being met by import, not through investment to increase productions in firms and factories...

Uncertainty is an anathema to investment. There are tertiary and substantive pitfalls that spurred such uncertainties. Chronic political instability, lawlessness, lack of infrastructure and poor research and dynamism are barring us from reaching out the global market. Between 1999-2002, private sector investment dropped from 7.4 per cent to 7.1 per cent of GDP...

more employment opportunities abroad, and soon. Beginning with the early 1980s, import rose to 18 per cent of GDP while export increased to 15 per cent. This may look okay, but in money terms, the deficit constitutes 10 per cent of GDP.

showed a virtual free fall (of nearly 60 per cent) in the current fiscal from the 2001-02 benchmark of \$304 million. Politics is all about delivering what is needed individually and collectively. Leaders must be wise to know that they control and manage our national assets and resources...

through the clog, three millions are added to the job market each year, half of them ending up without any employment. This huge army of jobless inflates ranks and files of miscreants to nix rules of law. Then, there are over 100 million still languishing below the poverty line. Their fundamental rights include timely access to employment, health and social welfare.

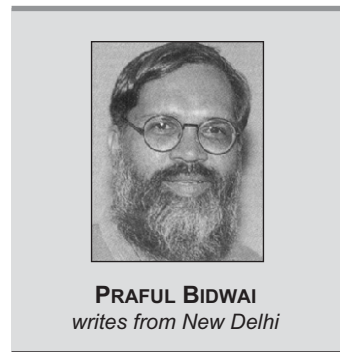
If good governance means fast moving of files; prompt gas, electricity and telephone connections in commercial/ industrial outlets; absence of kickback; befriending of domestic and foreign industrial captains; and ensurance of rules of law, none of it is happening much, despite pre-election promises.

accessing finance. Project finance has been, and remains to be, accessible only to an oligopoly of entrepreneurs with partisan political leaning. Over 50 per cent of them are now branded as defaulters. As well, the fruit of whatever was invested does not seem to have chipped into the real economy as yet.

A major factor retarding employment and growth is the difficulties a budding entrepreneur faces while accessing finance. Project finance has been, and remains to be, accessible only to an oligopoly of entrepreneurs with partisan political leaning. Over 50 per cent of them are now branded as defaulters. As well, the fruit of whatever was invested does not seem to have chipped into the real economy as yet.

After the 'Sankalp Sammelan'

Hindutva's strategic crisis



PRAFUL BIDWAI writes from New Delhi

MILLIONS feel relieved that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's deplorable sankalp sammelan, meant to precipitate a crisis in Ayodhya, turned out a flop. VHP leaders could not enter the temple/mosque complex on October 17.

Finally, VHP supporters contented themselves with a darshan of Ramllala in small groups under government escort. Mr Ashok Singh stood completely isolated in his sadhu's robes when he was arrested.

The sammelan flopping demonstrates four things. First, a determined state government can enforce law and order in Ayodhya without shedding blood. Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav had a specific mandate from the Allahabad High Court against a VHP meeting. The Centre too is legally obliged to protect the status of the land vested in it in 1993.

The BJP's national leadership was reluctant to destabilise Mr Yadav after he indicated a "moderate" approach. (This was reflected in allowing some 20-30,000 VHP supporters to enter Ayodhya after October 17 -- although even this could have been avoided).

The BJP sharply criticises the Parishad. In return, the VHP spews filthy abuse every week at the BJP, and even more important, at Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, accusing them of "capitulating" to secularism!

After the sammelan fiasco, the BJP and VHP are likely to drift further apart. The BJP's government that is fiercely nationalist (but strongly anti-internationalist), and opposed to the BJP's globalisation agenda.

Hindutva advocates have no respect for any religious sensibilities. As an agnostic, I can admire Mother Teresa's epochal social work, without sharing her faith, or believing that she really performed "miracles". The RSS cannot. It churlishly declared her beatification a "Christian conspiracy"... Such sick minds are unfit to lead. It's India's tragedy that the RSS is the chief leader of its present leaders.

mental wing will try to rein in the VHP. The VHP will try to resist this with hardline positions. The RSS will try to play the mediator. Here lies the BJP's dilemma. It needs the Ayodhya movement politically. But it doesn't like its leadership, dominated by the fanatical Mr Singhal and Mr Togadia.

The VHP, like every sangh parivar "front", has a well-defined function. Such "fronts" are said to number between 150 and 300, and are active among traders, trade unions, women and Adivasis.

use physical violence to intimidate opponents. Their goons burn churches, mosques and people -- as happened to the Graham Staines and two little sons. The VHP's function is threefold: politicise disaffected sadhus; mobilise people on emotive, seemingly "religious" issues like the temple; and raise funds for the sangh combine, especially from North America and Britain.

Indian secularist group has identified IDRF donors from US official records. They include software giants like Sun Microsystems and CISCO.

This investigation thoroughly exposes the nefarious and genocidal ends to which the VHP helps the sangh combine. The BJP has never been fully distinguishable from the VHP's nasties. The Gujarat pogrom was the joint work of the two.

The supreme irony is that the sangh parivar has nothing to do with religion in the real, deep sense. It denies Hinduism's richly syncretic, plural nature and puts it into a rigid upper-caste-oriented, intolerant frame, amenable to political exploitation.

Others, like Vidya Bharati, which runs 20,000 schools, are crucial to recruiting children. Some, like the Bajrang Dal, are composed of modern-day storm-troopers who

RSS activist, and India's "second ambassador" to the US. Mr Agnihotri's anomalous status -- the US doesn't recognise him -- his communal views, and his demands on the Indian exchequer, have generated controversy.

Keep up the good work. Rafiq Ahmed Chicago, IL

It was so nice of Star Heritage that I went many places after reading your heritage features. This is really very helpful for the people who like to

pay its talents nearly the similar amount if they fall back to work for the nation. Almost 90 per cent heeded to the call. Indian public sector too now competes with private sector to stir competitiveness within. Our government recoils to such prospects.

are some such parties already active, who are they and how can we get in touch with them? There are many caring and energetic Bangladeshis at home and abroad who would help financially if someone in Bangladesh took the necessary first steps towards protecting these sites.

Travel historical places. My request to Star Heritage is to provide us a list of ancient places which are very near to Dhaka. Palash Dhaka

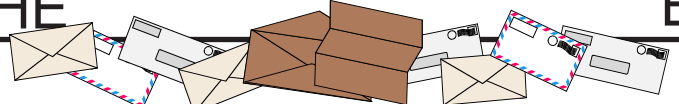
I pity Iraqi people! To claim that we are civilised and we are living in a civilised world has little relation with truth. Foreign aggression can never establish peace and happiness in a country, especially for the indigenous people. I pity Iraqi people that they have been destined to suffer in such a great measure. All casualties and miseries in the present day Iraq will just solidify Bush-Blair's burdens of guilt. The launching of their war in Iraq has made it a second Palestine where sufferings will continue, God knows for how long. Mahmud Portsmouth, UK

Travel historical places. My request to Star Heritage is to provide us a list of ancient places which are very near to Dhaka. Palash Dhaka

I pity Iraqi people! To claim that we are civilised and we are living in a civilised world has little relation with truth. Foreign aggression can never establish peace and happiness in a country, especially for the indigenous people. I pity Iraqi people that they have been destined to suffer in such a great measure. All casualties and miseries in the present day Iraq will just solidify Bush-Blair's burdens of guilt. The launching of their war in Iraq has made it a second Palestine where sufferings will continue, God knows for how long. Mahmud Portsmouth, UK

Keep up the good work. Rafiq Ahmed Chicago, IL

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

The blessed bureaucrat

I read with extreme disgust the news report published in your esteemed daily of 27 October. The blessed bureaucrat you have referred to in your report is typically representative of the mindset of most of our bureaucrats and lawmakers. I am sad but not surprised. I have experienced such debilitating acts by many of our senior bureaucrats while dealing with scores of them during the 80s and 90s.

government from here onwards will back up all her actions ever more. Shamsheer Chowdhury Dhaka

About weekly holidays

I totally disagree with Mr. Shahed Jamil's letter regarding weekly holidays published in The Daily Star on 30th September 30, 2003. Mr. Jamil told us that a nation like ours can't afford the luxury of having scores of them during the 80s and 90s. However it must be said that some of the donor agencies providing funds for the visits are also to be blamed.

Talking about his first point, a developing nation may not afford 2-day weekly holidays but for a corrupt developing country like ours, it is all the same. With the astonishing and amazing level of corruption we have installed in every step of governmental offices, it actually doesn't matter whether we have 2-day weekly holidays or no holidays at all!

public offices, we must not restructure the holiday model. If it is a 2-day weekly holiday, then the shifting of important files from one desk to another will take years. And if the government comes out with a seven day working structure, then the shifting process will take more than a year.

In a 2-day weekly holidays, our govt. staffs will get 5 days to run their corrupt practices. And in a 1-day structure, they will get 6 days. Which one is better totally depends on personal opinions. So, at first you must have corruption uprooted from the deep of our heart because here we differ from the western developed nations, not in holidays.

And regarding Mr. Jamil's most absurd notion of having a Saturday-Sunday holiday structure, our real "Holy-day" of the week is Friday. The holidays in western countries mean a "holy-day" when everyone have the chance of going to the churches or temples and sitting back and relax after a torrid week. So our current Friday holiday structure makes some senses at least! And one important thing

should be remembered, not Pakistan or even Saudi Arabia is the role model of an Islamic country. The one and only model of Islam is in what Allah says and what the prophet (sm.) did. That means Quran and Hadith instead of Pakistan, Afghanistan or Saudi Arab. Syed Muhammad Muhtad Department of Chemical Engg. and Polymer Science Shahjhal University of Science And Technology, Sylhet

Reading Nehru

In last Friday's letter to editor section there was a piece from Mr. AAB, "On reading Jawaharlal Nehru". Excuse me sir, but what was the point of this piece in this column. It seems as incomprehensible as your intent to print it. Commendable though his thoughts were, but what was the point the writer tried to hammer home? MAHMED On e-mail

Thanks to Star Heritage

Thanks to Star Heritage, The Daily Star for highlighting some of Bangladesh's significant architectural heritage. It is a refresher for those of us who live abroad, and for our children who can learn something about the rich heritage of Bangladesh. At the end of each report, however, you bemoan the fact that no one seems to be taking care of these historical sites. We are not surprised to hear that, but cannot help but be disgusted that no one seems to care. A nation that cannot be proud and protective of its heritage -- what a sad and depressing condition. Add to that the commercial value of local and foreign tourism centred around sites of historical interest, one wonders why enough effort is not being made!

We urge The Daily Star to keep this issue on the radar and influence positive change in the apathetic treatment of our national treasures. If government agencies cannot do their job, perhaps private foundations and non-profits can step forward. If there



Past treasures

are some such parties already active, who are they and how can we get in touch with them? There are many caring and energetic Bangladeshis at home and abroad who would help financially if someone in Bangladesh took the necessary first steps towards protecting these sites.

Keep up the good work. Rafiq Ahmed Chicago, IL

It was so nice of Star Heritage that I went many places after reading your heritage features. This is really very helpful for the people who like to

Palash Dhaka

I pity Iraqi people!

To claim that we are civilised and we are living in a civilised world has little relation with truth. Foreign aggression can never establish peace and happiness in a country, especially for the indigenous people. I pity Iraqi people that they have been destined to suffer in such a great measure. All casualties and miseries in the present day Iraq will just solidify Bush-Blair's burdens of guilt. The launching of their war in Iraq has made it a second Palestine where sufferings will continue, God knows for how long. Mahmud Portsmouth, UK

Keep up the good work. Rafiq Ahmed Chicago, IL