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Last word on police

I'm sorry to recommend for the abolition of our entire police force. We don't need them. We will be better off without them. It seems they are here to rob us in all respects. These days, they themselves indulge in day light robbery. Why then should people pay for them? Should we pay them for being mugged?

You may say that the government does not pay them enough, so they get involved in other activities that are harmful for the society. Well, if one cannot live on the salary on offer, one must not join the force. If one does join out of patriotism, one must not mug us constantly.

Kavi Zaman
Kingsford, Australia

TI report not accurate

As was revealed in the news published in local dailies, for the 3rd consecutive years Bangladesh was marked as the No. 1 corrupt country of the world by the Berlin based Transparency International (TI). But, without having assessed the merit of the of the TI report, some of the local press, intellectuals and politicians, who claim they are the only patriots, became very

single deal is more than that of the annual budget of Bangladesh. We are also aware that many of those deals were published in international media, but bypassed TI's attention.

Hence, in my opinion, one should not give importance to such superfluous reports. Rather, let us work like real patriots to better our conditions.

Fakhrul Alam
Siddeshwari, Dhaka

We're more secular than the West

Thanks to Mahfuzur Rahman for his reply to one of my earlier letters (November 6).

I agree that our failure as a nation is laced with innumerable complexities. Hartals and tea-stall gossips are just a few of them and the inappropriate madrasah education is another in the list.

However, regarding education, it is unjust to pin point madrasahs only. If madrasahs are giving rise to religious fundamentalism, then we also need to acknowledge that some of the biggest mastans, corrupt political VIPs and well-funded student-wing members come from our universities and colleges. These secular institutions have

(b) If we tell some of those developed countries that their constitution/government is heavily influenced by religion, they will laugh at us while boasting that their countries are more secular. If so, how many British PMs were Muslims? How many US Presidents were non-Christian? How many Indian PMs were non-Hindu? How many non-Jewish PMs were there in Israel? You see, reality is quite different than what meets the eye.

(c) When someone writes something unconventional, our mullahs come out in force and demand action. Our government quickly kicks out that writer toward some European countries where they have their admirers. To outsiders, this appears as though religious fanatics in Bangladesh control everything and the government has no power over them. But look at it carefully and you will see a different picture. When our leaders face problems like this, they think that if we take side with this "one" writer to protect his/her "freedom of speech", we will upset thousands of people. But if we take side with those thousands on the street, at least some of them will vote for us. If our government wants - and it should - it can protect freedom

student to write about Deewali, ask both students to write about both Eid and Deewali.

Whatever some "creative minds" preach to their foreign admirers about Bangladesh, our country is under no greater influence of religion than those countries bombing people because they think they are more secular/democratic. If anything, we are probably better when it comes to tolerating different religions.

Azad Miah, Oldham

Living in a strange country

The management of newspapers are trying their best to reduce number of holidays for the press because newspaper is an essential service provider like the TV, Radio, etc. But, some quarters are out to thwart this commendable effort. If newspapers do not have holidays all over the world, then why is it being fought about against in Bangladesh?

Today (08-Nov), we the people of Chittagong, are going without any news because some associations in Chittagong successfully organised something that halted the closure (on account of 7th November) of news-

Dept of English, Dhaka University

"We and the 18 century novelty"

I am glad that Rifat Mahubb pointed out the similarities between the Dhaka of today and the 18th century England (November 7). I have mused on the subject, but from a different angle.

I often think of the appalling corruption in our politics. This was a trademark of the 18th century England. England then was dominated by a patriarchy that controlled political and social matters, including government jobs.

One major exception is that the British patriarchy was not linked with criminals and godfathers, as our patriarchy is. Think of Prime Minister William Pitt laughing at the conviction of William Wilberforce on slave trade issue, saying, "It is a nice idea, William, but it would never work. It would split the Tory Party!"

During the hey days of colonialism, wealth was coming in from the empire but most of it went into a few select pockets and not much of it reached the poor whose lives were wretched, almost beyond belief.

Like us, England then had a feeble police force and little health care or

Lalmatia, Dhaka

Is democracy facing a danger?

With much apprehension I read the news that the Opposition is preparing to beef up its anti-government "movement" to oust the government. I can't believe how and why our politicians behave this way. Here are few facts that should make the call to oust the government by force look both criminal and anti-democratic. This is notwithstanding that this Government did not do a good job so far.

First; this government is a democratically elected one. It came to power with a 2/3rd majority. Nobody except the people has the right to change this government and that too not without holding an election.

Second; the call to "oust" a democratic government by force is a fascist strategy and not a democratic one. A case can be made for such an ouster only when the government assumes power through a military coup, as Ershad did in the early 1980s.

Third; the BNP, despite its poor showing, is doing no worse than the AL. Why can't the AL wait for the elections, and, if they are so convinced



PHOTO: AFP

Hasina's 'theory of negativity'

We know the 'Theory of Relativity,' as was formulated by Einstein. It is applicable to most of the world affairs. Our leader of the Opposition, Sheikh Hasina, has propounded another theory that may be termed as the 'Theory of Negativity.' She treats everything done by anybody other than her own party as something wrong and anti-state.

Recently we read a long article on 'Tears,' which appeared in most of the national dailies both in the vernacular and in English. The write up was a full description of the 'misdeeds' of the present government. Some are, no doubt, true descriptions; but could not she identify a single good work of Khaleda Zia's government?

I also realise that the PM these days is failing to recognise anything good in the works of the last AL government. This failure of our national leaders to identify anything good in the works of their counter part is tragic indeed.

However, these are political statements and the PM is not writing any article for the dailies. If anybody wishes to write he/she should be objective enough to avoid the notion of negativity. Besides, the editors must screen out which are articles and which are mere political propaganda.

MAS Molla, BAAS, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

Why Concorde failed?

Although I have never flown in a Concorde, I feel for the great aircraft that has now become history. As an aircraft fan since my school days in the 1940s, I have studied a lot about aircraft and my background in engineering and metallurgy has helped me tremendously in understanding aircraft's engines and airframes.

Both Concorde and the Comet stretched the envelope of material design beyond the edge of safety based on prevalent knowledge. Multiple accidents in both the aircraft were caused due to the limitation of knowledge in material science. The comet failed because of fatigue and micro crack failure of sophisticated airframe metals, which possibly were not fully understood at that time. Similarly, most of Concorde's accidents -- both fatal and non fatal -- could be attributed to failure of the airframe.

Thus the era of supersonic flight has had its setbacks. I firmly believe that in the days to come, supersonic passenger flight will be a routine matter. In this respect, the Douglas DC-10 may be considered lucky.

Despite rear cargo door and engine mounting failures, which were the causes of the two fatal accidents, the DC-10 survived. However, its adverse publicity might have been the reason for the unpopularity and the lower preference for this model.

Be that as it may. As an aircraft fan, I salute the Concorde and its designers, pilots and engineers, who all were the pioneers in opening the era of supersonic passenger flight.

SM Mansoor, Gulshan, Dhaka

vocal with the issue. This proved that partisan politics had more to do with their activities than patriotism.

The TI's assessment was based on reports published within Bangladesh by various local and foreign organisations and the local media. Hence, it is clear that the report is nothing but a gimmick.

Of course there are corruption in Bangladesh. But in true sense, corruption in Bangladesh is far less compared to many countries of the world. Due to the nature of my profession, I used to travel a lot. I can confidently say that Bangladesh cannot be the No. 1 corrupt country in the world, and, I am sure that people who travel around the world would agree with me.

The TI does not report anything about Western developed countries, who are involved in billions of dollars of underhand deals related to arms trade, implementation of big projects, etc. Some times, amount involved in a

little to do with Islam, other than teaching students bearing Islamic names.

It is a fashion these days to accuse Muslim countries of harbouring the religious extremism. As such, to portray themselves as modern and democratic, some Muslims react by distancing themselves from anything religious. We hear a lot that our country is governed by fundamentalists, but consider the following:

(a) In the UK and many European countries, mosques are not allowed to perform azaan with loudspeakers whining outside (although, situation is improving now). Yet, in Bangladesh, our Hindu brothers have been performing Puja, Deewali and other religious ceremonies (and they have every rights to do so) that involve loud noise/music. For centuries, Hindus and Muslims have been living side by side in this country without any sectarian problem.

of speech without making mullahs the bad guys.

I believe very strongly that "all" our madrasahs need to reform and give some very serious thoughts on the subjects they teach. If all the madrasah-graduates have to run to university-graduate doctors whenever they get ill, then it doesn't appear very productive. Madrasahs too should teach medical science and engineering. At the same time, if one is a Muslim but has very little knowledge of Islam, he/she is likely to have some very conflicting ideas.

Closing down madrasahs and churches in the name of democracy and development will only bring cosmetic prosperity. Our country would be more productive, our societies would be much safer and our people would be more tolerant if we engage and work with all religions.

Instead of asking a Muslim student to write an essay on Eid, and a Hindu

paper distribution. Hawkers even did not collect papers coming from Dhaka to the "Commercial Capital" of the nation.

Ironically, the hapless people of this city were led to believe that there is no newspaper in the country today. I went into the Internet and could, surely, read my favourite Daily Star. We live in a strange country- don't we?
CNR
Chittagong

Sleazy writer sued

Taslima Nasreen has come to lime-light again. She is a victim of moral turpitude. I listened to her interview in the BBC on Nov 09. I was absolutely shocked as well as perplexed by her shamelessness. In her recent novel "Ka," she divulged some facts about some noted persons of the Bengalee literature. One of the fall guys lodged a defamation suit against her.
Molla Mohammad Shaheen

education. The squalor and viciousness, especially in the slums of the new industrial towns, were beyond any description. There were typhoid epidemics up to the 1830s, but the authorities could not link its outbreak with infected drinking water.

The Anti-Slavery Movement took 50 years to abolish both the slave trade and slavery. A corrupt Parliament was reformed in 1832 and a reformed series of Parliaments under various political parties vied to reform our public and social life from top to bottom.

I wonder what will inspire such a movement here? I am most impressed by the wonderful Muslim religious piety and devotion in so many hearts here. But can it be harnessed to the kind of moral passion and readiness that would produce the political and social reforms that liberated millions of the wretched in England?
Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs)

that the BNP is messing things up, wait for the people to give that verdict for them. Why is it so anxious to usurp the power that belongs to people only?

I have other fears too. The BNP has once fallen victim to this threat of the AL in 1996. It will not do this again for now since there is no earthly reason for the BNP to do so. Can anybody be stupid enough to imagine that the BNP will stand down under such a threat? They will hold on, legitimately, to power and like the AL, hand over power on the very last day, unless somewhere down the road they feel convinced that by calling early elections, they can do themselves some good.

Under threat, they won't budge. The hartals and breakdown of law and order will only further deteriorate an already grim economic situation. And who is going to suffer from all this? No doubt it will be Bangladesh and its people. Now someone please tell me

how on earth can such a movement be democratic and pro- people?

The politicians, it seems, have lost their minds and increasingly, the country's politics seems to be sliding further into an abyss.

It seems that in Bangladesh, everyone except our politicians believe in Democracy.
Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmandi RA, Dhaka

Congratulation, Media World

I am very happy to know that the Journalists of The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo got cars and motor cycles from their management. I feel happy that some of my good friends will get car or bikes.

Our society must congratulate the management of the Media World. It is commonly known that the entrepreneurs of our country are depriving

their employees in many ways. The garment sector is an example. The recent movement of the garment workers of Narayangonj reminds us how our entrepreneurs are treating their employees.

Amid the frustrating news of killing, looting, bribery, brutality, the news of giving vehicles to staff brings relief from the negative news.

I hope other good entrepreneurs will come forward to set examples like the Media World. This will definitely encourage Bangladeshi workers to be more professional and punctual to their daily work. Every extra incentive to employees must not be seen as a loss, rather it enhances productivity by uplifting sagging morale.

Congratulations also to my friends for having cars. And, million thanks to the Media World for setting such a glaring example in the world of the nation's print media.
Syed Tariqul Islam, Dhaka

On American dream and beyond



PHOTO: INTERNET

Typical American dream envisages having your own home, a car, a job, raising a family, and pursuit of happiness through possession of material wealth. Following snapshot encapsulates the dream:

Under a blue sky, scattered clouds pass by high above a nice cosy house surrounded by well-manicured trees and lush green lawns. In front of the garage while son can be seen taking lessons from dad on basketball, elsewhere in the lawn mom is busy barbecuing a sumptuous dinner. Nearby cute little daughter struggles to free a retrieved stick from the mouth of the household's tail wagging pet spaniel.

At the forefront is a clean and shiny Chrysler made Jeep Cherokee parked alongside the pavement.

"Ain't nothin but sheer bliss". Does the depiction ring any bell? How many times have we come across the likes of this snapshot and thought wishfully: if only.....or.....maybe someday.....

The aspirant desiring to follow through such a dream would, based on ability, be required to do his or her due diligence as a good citizen and in return Uncle Sam would allow the aspirant to chase the dream. Achievement would be subject to the level of the person's due diligence.

Now that we have somewhat

understood what this dream is all about, let us try to get a perspective on what actually lies beneath this most coveted dream and what keeps its pulse ticking?

Based on capitalism with the help of mass media, a vast consumer-oriented society has been created, which is the main driving force behind the US (United States) economy. Consumers are kept perpetually occupied in the relentless pursuit of material wealth.

A constant watch is on to identify markets beyond American shores for unloading surplus produce and seek out areas from where resources and energies can be pulled to feed the insatiable appetite of America's giant economic powerhouse.

Basically, this is what represents American interests among other things and wherever these have been seen as hampered or jeopardised, all means at disposal have been both deployed and employed to protect and secure these vital elements of US economy.

The protection of such elements takes precedence over ethics and morals. The motive behind all this is to preserve and nurture the American dream. This is just the tip of the iceberg; much however lay beneath.

On a host of various pretexts, unfriendly foreign governments are

uprooted when they come in the way; opponents of America are systematically eliminated. Covert operations are unleashed to orchestrate coup d'etats in underdog countries; assassinations and mass upsurge are promoted in distant lands and invasions into other sovereign nations are encouraged.

Resulting from these events, loss of countless number of innocent lives is considered as unavoidable collateral damage. These are few more examples of what lies beneath. A formidable military might has been built to thwart and deter those who come in the way.

Thanks to technology and the media. For better or for worse, these mass communication tools have evolved to become an omnipresent phenomenon of the typical American's life. This inseparable and useful union is exploited in every conceivable way to mould public opinion among other objectives. Media constantly helps in the furtherance of the cause of the American dream.

Let us wrap up with the following conclusion:

It is indeed ironic that, while a country that devotes so much resource towards research and development on just about everything, not much is focused on the 'clear and present dangers' that confront the US today. Either the need for probing to

get to the heart of the matter is being deliberately ignored, or grossly misunderstood.

A superiority complex coupled with complacency and a sense of invincibility quite understandably consumes the American mind. This egocentric mind needs to open up and usher in a

genuine sense of understanding about the critical issues that plague today's world.

As the only remaining superpower and guardian, time has come for Americans to re-word JFK's famous quotation and pose upon themselves: "Ask not what the world can do for

Uncle Sam, ask what Uncle Sam can do for the world". Thus will be the beginning of a much-awaited healing process and understanding.

Then, and then only, will the American nodding-heads will emerge as sympathisers of the world that languishes around.

Najmul Halim, Dhaka



PHOTO: INTERNET