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Purchasing planes



It has been reported in the media that Bangladesh is purchasing some fighter planes from China at a cost of about \$ 93 million dollars. Now the question is whether we need fighter planes more urgently than passenger planes for Biman. People have not forgotten the disarray that took place with Hajj flights due to shortage of aircrafts a few weeks ago. Still Biman is unable to maintain its normal

flight schedule due to acute shortage of planes. As a result, most of the planes are over-used and the flights have become risky, to put it mildly!

We have come to learn that the government has forex reserve of over \$3 billion dollars with the Bangladesh Bank, why not release about \$300 million dollars out of that reserve to buy 3 or 4 aircrafts from Airbus or Boeing to meet the urgent needs of the people. We should use our scarce foreign exchange judiciously. We must not forget that nearly half of our F.E. reserve comes from foreign remittances sent by our nationals working abroad.

Very often we find Bangladeshis cannot return to their workplace on due dates due to non-availability of planes which is likely to land them in trouble with their employers. The government policy makers should look into this aspect of the problem.

Abul Mohsin
Siddheshwari Circular Road, Dhaka

Capture of JMB leader

The top leader of Islamic militant outfit JMB Shaekh Abdur Rahman was captured in Sylhet on March 1.

I would congratulate the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) as well as other law enforcing agencies for the service they have rendered to the nation.

MAH Nazim
University of Dhaka

Why this closure?

The Chittagong Chemical Complex located at Barab Kunda Chittagong was closed by an administrative order on 15th December, 2002. This used to produce basic industrial chemicals like caustic soda, chlorine, hydrochloric acid, bleaching powder, calcium hypo, etc. The caustic soda is widely used as a

common alkaline in paper, fertiliser, textile, and jute mills, and for water purification in all industries in both Dhaka & Chittagong by WASA. Till today I could not find any valid justification for closing this factory. No civilised country closes such industries, which cater to the needs of basic industrial and chemical plants. The factory had no liability in bank & used to pay at least 4 to 5 crore yearly to the government in duties. The products were not enough to meet the country's demand but could maintain a balance with imported chemicals. Last year the market price of caustic soda went as high as Tk. 65,000 per M.T. The usual price was Tk. 22 to 23 thousand per M.T. Similarly, the chlorine price also went as high as Tk. 35,000 per M.T. Chlorine is a hazardous chemical. It is now being

imported by road. Usually ships don't carry this cargo. The hydrochloric acid is widely used in pickling of all corrugated Galvanized iron sheet (CGI) and in manufacturing other cleaning agents. These are now being imported with precious foreign exchange.

For the sake of the country and its people & especially for other industries the factory should be started immediately either by BCIC itself with a new organisational structure or should be sold to any entrepreneur. Otherwise, all the infrastructures will turn into scraps.

I urge the government and all political parties to come forward to restart this industrial unit without further delay.

Md. Sadeque
Halishahar Housing State, Chittagong

Power crisis

The candle industry seems to be booming. Generators are flying off the shop shelves. Charger lights are getting scarce. The reason is in the fact that the nation is passing through a power crisis. The state owned and privately owned power plants cannot meet the ever-increasing demand of electricity. Some power plants have become derelict. The power plants are now over 40 years old.

It seems the government is not interested in any major development of the power sector.

In the rural areas where electricity reached recently there are power outages after dark and they last for several hours. Forget about the villages, even in Dhaka there are power outages many times a day. This is occurring even in the privately controlled DESCO regions.

In the past 10 years, no major power plant has been built. Power plants like the one at Kaptai Lake can generate over five times its current output with proper overhaul. The country diesel and gas turbine power plants must be given proper upgrades to increase their outputs. The northern regions where gas supply is scarce can employ coal-fired power plants. In countries like the UK and US these are still used to generate between 3500 to 4000 megawatt of power.

Our country has all the resources but they are not being utilised properly. While these overhauls might take a few years, the government can take the initiative to import electricity and provide it to the people at a subsidised rate. The government should spend more money in this area, rather than purchasing new fighter jets.

Azfar Khan
One-mail

No private TV channel!

The other day Colonel Faruk Khan, an Awami League lawmaker in the parliament, was demanding that the private TV channels be allowed to enter into the House to cover the news of the parliament proceedings. From his statement I came to know that only BTV camera is allowed to enter into the Jatiya Sangsad. Can you imagine that in a democracy the voice of neutral press is being thwarted! Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar replied to Mr. Khan's appeal saying, "I want the private channels to come here. But I am a conservative person. So I cannot do it overnight" (The Daily Prothom Alo, 28 February).

The speaker is the guardian of the House. He has also to play a big role in making the parliament accountable to the people. Why should he take too much time to allow private television channels to the floor?

S M Masum Billah
Eskaton, Dhaka

A constructive revolution

Our country is nothing but marginal, defensive about its corrupt political system. Corruption has always been and continues to be our number one social malady. Does our country need a revolution (!) to break the existing political system? I think so. The dynamics to start a revolution already exists in our country. What we need is a real revolutionary process aiming to overturn the existing political and economic order. The future for poor Bengalis at present is very dark but it can be changed.

According to Marx, the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. This society consists of readers like us. We can contribute further by spreading the word about what our country needs. Over the last few years the big corporations have been, and are, swarming to our country. Consequentially, as the popular saying goes, the rich will only get richer and the poor poorer.

The two major political parties should not underestimate the power of the people. Bangladesh is the 8th most populous country in the world and the most corrupt as well. The revolutionary theories indicate that we are in the perfect situation for a change.

Tarik Sayeed
One-mail

"Clean" candidates for next election

Please accept my best wishes on the occasion of your 15th anniversary celebrations. In the last 15 years you have left a great impression in the minds of readers and the nation as a whole, particularly in building social and political awareness.

I think the most effective one is the keynote speech given by Dr. Mohamamed Yunus on 4 Feb at The Daily Star's 15th anniversary celebrations.

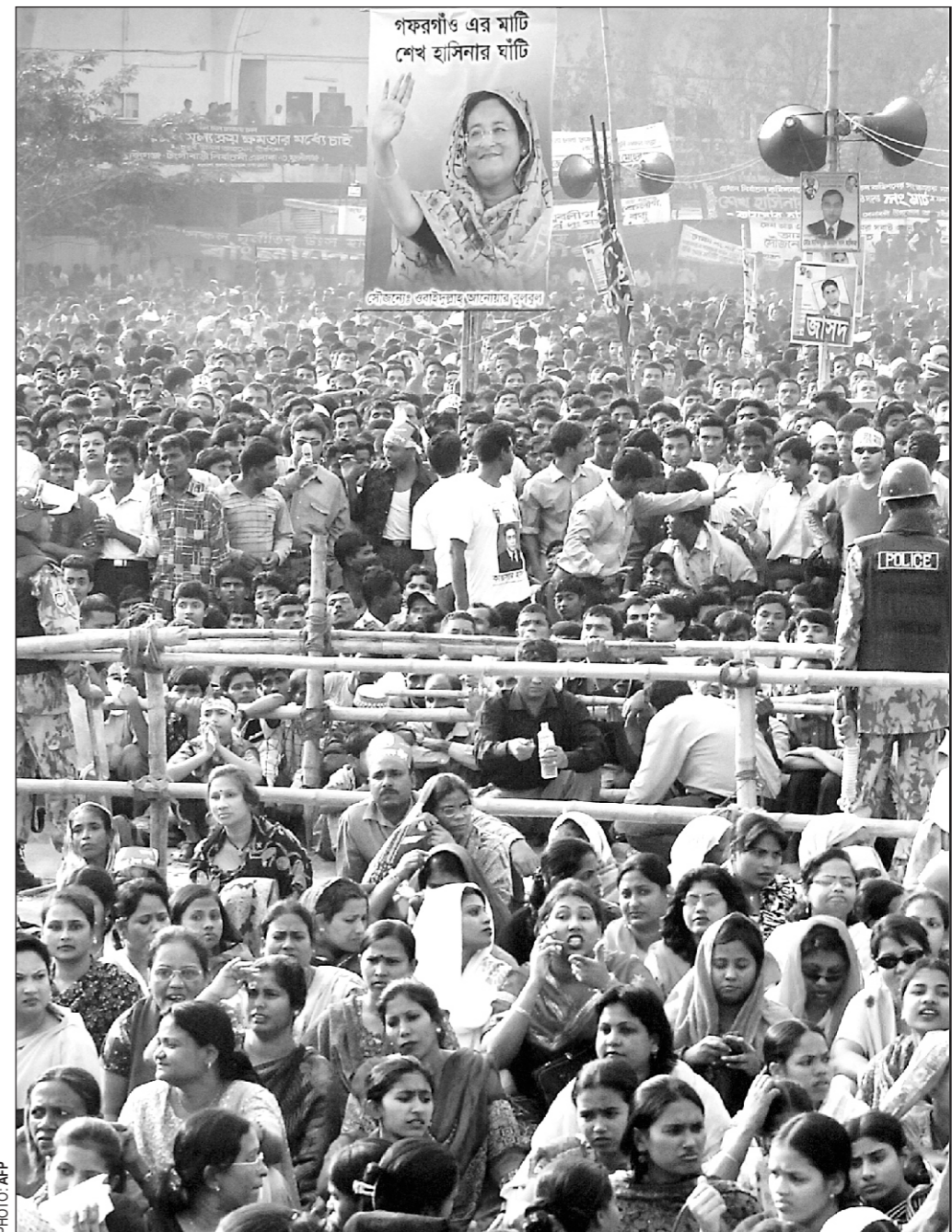
Both Prof Yunus and your Daily will be remembered for placing these valuable suggestions at this hour of national political crisis. The speech is a very timely one. This is the year of national election and the whole nation wants to see that through this election "Clean Candidates" are elected to the next parliament. We have achieved independence through a great struggle and a lot of sacrifice. Now our parliament is the highest platform to take important decisions to run the affairs of the country. As such, the parliament members must be best quality humans—honest, sincere and clean. We cannot expect all the people of our country or any country in this world to be clean, good but we can expect at least 300 parliament members in our country of 12 crore people to be "clean". I believe that through a sincere and effective process of selection this can surely be achieved.

The present system of election of candidates by the political parties at the last moment is not an effective method by which suitable candidates can be selected. The suggestions put forward by Dr. Yunus in his speech for the selection of "clean candidates" for the next election is a better one. This goal can be achieved if it started now.

As per his suggestion, our organization, 61-Club comprising B.Sc Engineering graduates of 1961 from the then Ahsanullah Engineering College (now BUET), is willing to take up this challenge of selecting a panel of clean candidates for the next election, provided we get media support like yours and other TV channels etc.

Engr. M. H. Bhuiyan
Dhaka

Opposition's role



The sun emerges from the unknown cloud in the political sky of Bangladesh. For a long time, people of Bangladesh were suffering from uncertainty. We are happy although it is late. We pray to the Almighty to keep the opposition in the parliament for the rest of its tenure.

Doubt is there that the opposition would walk out from the parliament after raising any issue or problem, which would not be solved. The opposition MPs came to the parliament just before the expiry of 90 working days after which they would have lost their membership. It seems to us that they came to the parliament for their own interest i.e. to keep their membership, otherwise they would be deprived from the benefits they are getting as MPs. They have a great opportunity in near future if they change their so-called politics of demonstration, strike and destruction of properties. People's expectation from the present government was much higher than it is actually delivering. In the hope of getting more, the people will lean towards the opposition in the next general election.

It is worth mentioning here that when the present opposition was ruling the country, the BNP had walked out and rejoined just

before the end of 90 working days to protect their membership. They had not continued. We don't expect repetition of the same unacceptable thing from the present opposition. If major political parties (especially AL and BNP) do the same exercise again and again, the country will suffer.

Masud Rana
IDB, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

National unity was the base power during the liberation war of this nation, though the major political parties currently do not acknowledge it as one lesson from the history. "Walkout" from the parliament and demonstrating violently using the word "freedom" have not been very productive, since the practice of democracy began in the 90s.

Most politicians are willing to develop their personal infrastructure of greater profits, ignoring the citizens' interests. They are not working for the country's economic or social development.

Tahsin Hyder
Maple Leaf International School
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Media magic Sania Mirza

Sania Mirza has been awarded the Indian National Award "Padmashree" for her "superb performance" in Tennis, ranked 32nd in the world now. Funny!

I think the Indians should not make the national award so cheap, national award for the 32nd ranked tennis player!

Today in the ad world too Sania Mirza's position is only next to the legendary Sachin Tendulkar. Amazing!

What miracle media, especially Indian media can do, Sania Mirza is the burning example of that. It is possible only in India—thanks to the mighty media.

Md. Abul Kalam
Samsuddin
Kalyanpur, Mirpur-1, Dhaka



Anti cartoon protests



A cartoon of Muhammad (pbuh) published by a Danish newspaper and reprinted in some other European papers has angered Muslims all over the world and they protested it vehemently since such an act is blasphemous. In Palestine as per reports five people and in Nigeria at least 11 people were killed while protesting and encountering police. It is a custom that protests are intercepted by the government agencies. But in the above case the act was seen as blasphemy, so much so that even a Muslim Indian minister, Mr M Yaqub Qureshi, offered a cash of US \$11.5 million for beheading the cartoonists. He said that drawing cartoon of the Prophet is blasphemous and Muslims will not tolerate this insult (DS 19.02.06).

A protest for a genuine reason is going on and probably the Muslim world will not rest until the Danish government officially apologise and assure that such an act of blasphemy would not be repeated. The governments and international communities should press the Danish government to formally apologise without further loss

of time in the interest of local, regional and international peace.

Abdullah, Nuruzzaman
Gulshan, Dhaka

Recently a debate is going on about the cartoon of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). We see people giving their opinions and calling seminars to talk about this ongoing matter. Some people are burning the flags to express their resentment.

And obviously it's a matter of being angry, outraged and irritated.

We know it's blasphemous to abuse religious personalities, religious books, and certain religious ideologies. We Muslims usually don't say anything offensive against the prophets, as we know every messenger who has been sent by Allah should be treated equally by us and should have the same respect. If anyone says anything or does anything reprehensible it is the result of his ignorance about religion (the number of these kind of Muslims are very few).

The concerned Muslims know very well the conse-

quences of making fun of religious beliefs; they know they'll have to suffer on the judgement day for it, so they refrain from doing anything like that. And some non-Muslims are taking advantage of it. They are adding fuel to the fire, cause they know well that Muslims all over the world are outraged after the Iraq war, and this the chance. So here the Muslims should play intelligently.

If any non-Muslim gives identity of his racist perception and says its "freedom of speech", then it's the matter of his own idiocy and sentiment. In such cases I don't think Muslims should burst into resentment immediately. Moreover, if that person is a minor then first of all before breaking the world on him, we should think deeply with cool brain what the Prophet (pbuh) himself would have done under such circumstances.

Our Prophet (pbuh) was an intelligent and extremely patient kind of man with an attractive persona. He had such a cool and mesmerizing personality that people who were hostile towards him were

amazed by his friendly attitude and benevolent behaviour and became Muslims. And forgiveness and patience were some of the best virtues of him that we should learn from him. Another thing that we can learn from him is controlling temper.

People who don't believe that the Prophet (pbuh) was chosen as a messenger by God, and who don't have a clear perception of Islam, may say lot of things. It does not matter.

It has been happening from the very beginning. And it's also true that we can't disagree that religion is a nice topic for debating (unless there is no risk of sudden outburst) and Islam always allows all kinds of discussion and debates on religious topics. Hence in the name of "free speech and democracy" offending religions and prophets is reprehensible and it must be stopped.

Cantara Wali Ruhi, DU