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World Water Day

It is indeed gratifying to see that the World Water Day 2006 celebration theme is "Water and culture", for culture is life! Water in its various form is our culture from time immemorial. Water, the pure and precious resource, is central to our culture.

However, the modern Bangla cultural kaleidoscope reflects the commercial price and not the intrinsic value of water. This is so obvious from the conspicuous consumption of water by the 20% or less of the people in Bangladesh.

This small section of the population consumes almost the entire volume of water available in the country. Free flow of pipe water is needed to wash the many, many long and big cars that crowd the entrance of any apartment buildings in the city.

Unobstructed and often illegal connection of pipe water is used, eighteen hours a day or day and night to build the infrastructure, called "apartment culture".

Making new roads by clearing and cutting down beautiful trees and greenery also use an abundant amount of water (which is for areas that pay water taxes) for "make-up and cosmetic touches" to the barren dusty surface.

Why not celebrate the next World Water Day with the theme water is life. To waste water is to destroy life.

Farida S., On e-mail



PHOTO: AFP

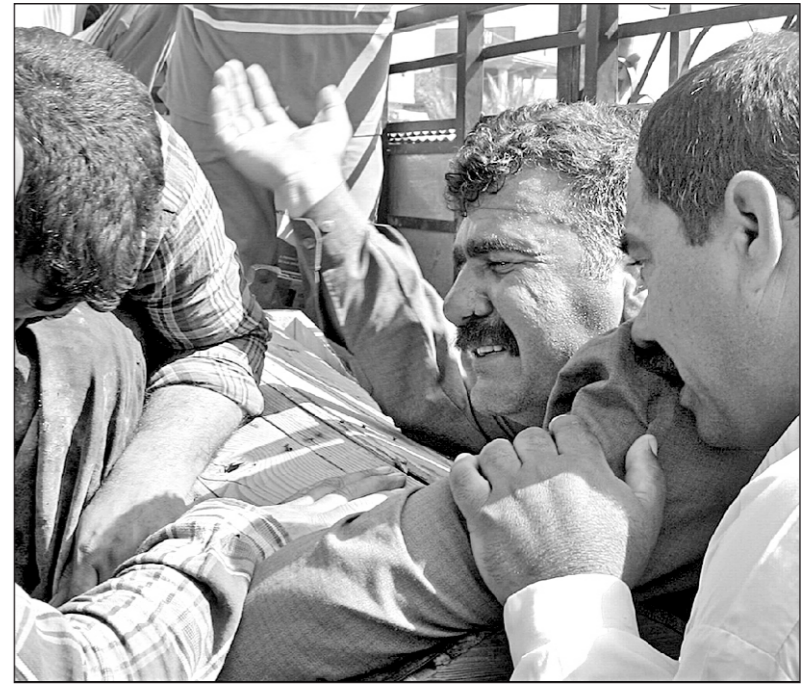


PHOTO: AFP

To the people of Iraq...

With deep anguish and outrage we are watching the situation in Iraq, which is getting worse day by day.

Iraq, the cradle of civilisation and the country of Khalifa Harun-ur-Rashid, the land of the stories of Sindbad, is being torn into pieces. President Bush did not hesitate to attack a sovereign country and arrest its president, now Saddam Hussein's trial is going on, what a farce! What right G.W. Bush has got to attack Iraq and kill thousands of innocent people and destroy the country? Not only that, thanks to the cunning manoeuvre of the Bush administration

the country is facing the possibility of a civil war. Sunnis and Shites will never destroy one another's mosques, it never happened before, it is clear as daylight that America is behind all these heinous acts. The Bush administration wants to annihilate the Iraqis. They have killed many people and cleverly arranged it in such a way that Iraqis would finish themselves off. In the name of introducing democracy, America had acted demoniacally.

We urge the Shites and Sunnis, to remain calm, think rationally, not to fall into the trap set up by the US, not to

fight with one another and jointly resist the invaders. We are praying to the Almighty Allah to help them.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Imperialism championed by the US and the UK leaders-- warmongers George W. Bush & Tony Blair, has brought the universal humanity on the razor edge. With Iraq burning, the warmongers are spreading their dark wings towards Iran and Syria, it is just a matter of time that they will cause more deaths and destruction.

Thousands of innocent Iraqis, women and children, have been killed and thousands of others maimed.

The horrific scenario reminds one of the sad song by Pink Floyd where he cries out in utter despair "What have we done Maggie? Maggie what have we done?" We wait, we pray- we look forward to an end to all this. Wake up humanity wake up
Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

The Prophet

This is beyond any doubt and question that the Prophet (pbuh) of Islam was one of the greatest human beings that ever lived. He was above any religion because of his inherent stature and we, irrespective of cast and creed, should not only pay homage to him but also to other prophets and great men. From history we come to know that there were religious differences among the people of the pre-Islamic era. But this is undisputed that there was a consensus regarding his personality that he was a man of honesty, integrity, character and, above all, free from any flaw. Even, he was given the title 'Al-Amin' by his adversaries because of his extraordinary integrity which is quite unprecedented. The great men of other faiths paid their tributes to him in a befitting manner.

However, the cartoon controversy is shocking as it undermines a great prophet.
M M Taimur Gofran
Shewrapara, Dhaka

Cartoon controversy

The publication of cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) deserves protest by the offended Muslims around the world. There was also protest by the Christians against materials on Jesus Christ (for example, "The last temptation of Christ").

I would like to draw a line between the two protests where some Muslims lost their valuable lives and Christians did not. If we could change the fashion of protests with thoughtfulness, I believe the world would be more peaceful. Religion teaches us tolerance, which we should follow.

I prayed for those Muslims who sacrificed their lives while protesting.

Thomas Gomes Bhura
Manipuripara, Tejgaon

Negotiating with Tata

We understand that the final round of negotiations with Tata is imminent. The question that one should naturally ask is whether the government has done its homework and is now adequately prepared to face a strong negotiating side. We should note that even though there are plenty of competent Indians working for Tata, it has included European experts in its team, perhaps in part for ornamental reasons, but also no doubt because of the technical expertise that they bring with them. Our team, on the other hand, appears handicapped lacking in experience, expertise as well as background preparation.

Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud's report has brought much needed relief to our beleaguered team. However, it has come very late in the day (due to no fault of Professor Mahmud's, I am sure), and while extremely valuable, it is not enough. Indeed, a full and comprehensive assessment of all aspects of the Tata proposal is not something that can be done overnight by one individual, no matter how talented he may be. Such an exercise is a major undertaking in which Professor Mahmud's report could be regarded as the opening salvo, delineating various possible directions that a comprehensive assessment could take. For example, it is important to be able to estimate direct and indirect effects, calculate the economic rates of return, assess the viability of each component, and identify social and environmental costs in addition to economic ones. I guess such an exercise is not cheap. But then, you are talking about a multi-billion dollar deal wouldn't you say that the money would be well spent?

Our history of negotiations with foreign investors has been less than glorious. Please show us that we can do things better even if it means some additional delay. It is really important that we get it right this time, Mr. Rahman.

Dr. K.A.S. Murshid
Gulshan, Dhaka

A day to remember

On the morning of 18 March the cacophonous ringing bell of the alarm seemed like the sweet song of the cuckoo. It was the time for which I have waited for many days. It was a day, which I nurtured in my dreams for a very long time--the day of DS award giving ceremony.

We headed towards the China Friendship Hall to attend the ceremony. How proud my parents and I were when we saw all those banners hanging in front of the hall giving compliments to the students achieving brilliant results in O and A level.

My friends were already there and seemed to be more enthusiastic than me. At about 8.30 we entered the auditorium. It was a big one.

With the help of the volunteers we took our seats and with the arrival of the chief guest the gala event began. At the beginning, the national anthem was played. It was sung with so much emotion that I couldn't control my tears.

The song made me feel deeply about the martyrs who had sacrificed their lives for the country. The speech of the editor of DS was inspiring. Not only me it touched the hearts of all my fellow mates.

After the speeches of other dignitaries the most eagerly expected moment came -- distribution of prizes. According to the alphabetical order the awards were distributed. It was a great moment for all of us.

Maruf Amin Bhuiyan
Willes Little Flower School, Dhaka

Points to ponder

We have observed our independence day this year like previous years. The day is very significant to the people of Bangladesh. On this day the late president Ziaur Rahman announced independence on behalf of Bangabandhu. So people of all strata of life came out to join the Liberation War. About 30 lakh people including women, children, teachers and intellectuals were massacred during the nine month long war. But if we analyse the matter deeply, we see that we have achieved nothing from our Liberation War. Most of the people of our country are living below poverty line. As a result, many guardians can't send their children to school. People cannot enjoy their basic rights. On the other hand, the law and order situation has gone out of control. The country is grappling with terrorism.

Again unemployment, which is a great problem, stands in the way of development. So have we gained real freedom? If we want to enjoy our freedom, we have to root out this problem from society by making concerted efforts.

Kabir Hossain
Dhaka

Restoring values

First of all, thank you very much for all you have done and have been doing for restoring the norms and values in political and as well as social life of this almost lost country. Despite enormous potentialities the evil, if not devil, politicians are fast putting the nation to utter frustration. Please do something for the country and please proceed with what you have started. I have gone through the article of Mr. Habibur

Rahman, former head of the caretaker government and chief Justice of Bangladesh, and I have also been studying the articles of Dr. Mohammad Yunus on his thinking on political reform. Time is fast passing and the corrupt people have been trying to hide in any guise. We are with you; we will work if necessary to promote your efforts and struggle.

I have read the book 'Amar dekha rajnitir panchash bachar' and many other books that have not only enriched my knowledge but helped me to grow with a patriotic spirit.

Can we not find a Nelson Mandela or a Dr. Mahthir to build our country? Once the forefathers of Tony Blair and Bush came to our country for trading and earning but unfortunately we are now doing everything to find a place outside our own land. I am convinced we can again see an affluent Bangla provided the miscreant politicians and their henchmen are defeated. We are hopeful and once again thank you and those who have undertaken the task of building a corruption-free, prosperous Bangladesh.

I would like to express my profound gratitude to those engaged in building the nation in the face of all odds. Their efforts will not go in vain.

Khalilur Rahman
One e-mail

Nepali students of SUST

The Nepali students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) are facing many problems. The problems include poor accommodation and lack of other facilities. The students are left on their own during long Ramadan or Eid holidays.

The university authorities should look into the matter.

Amit Yadav, Nitesh Karn
SUST, Sylhet

Trees and plants

Trees are the mute children of nature. Giving oxygen, fruits, wood, raw materials for paper, cloth, medicine, trees play the role of our friend. But how much are we doing for tree plantation and protection?

You may say we arrange a tree plantation week during the rainy season every year. Yes, we do it. But is there any plant that doesn't need care? We just plant them. Sometimes ministers and MPs do it for getting media coverage.

That is not how we can pay back the debt we owe to trees and plants.
Sadat Shahriar
RUET

Next election

We are expecting that the next parliamentary election in 2007 will be free and fair. But some people in our village have not yet been enlisted as voters.

I would request the authorities concerned to look into the matter.
AK M Fuad Adnan Rahman
Atani Bazar, Muktagacha

Intellectuals and democracy

Our intellectuals have to attain the moral courage to call a spade a spade. The dialogues and meetings have not produced any results, as they are not addressing the real problems.

Intellectuals need to be objective as far as possible.

Dr. Ujjwal
Holy Family Hospital, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

After five days of Abdur Rahman's arrest, another top terrorist Bangla Bhai was arrested from Mymensingh. It's good news for the government as well as the people of Bangladesh, especially the people living in the northern region heaved a sigh of relief. During his self proclaimed regime in Rajshahi, nobody could save himself from his oppression. Though at first the government termed him a creation of the media, in the course of time it perceived its mistake and arrested him. He was a dreadful man to the people of the northern region.

After his arrest, people from all strata of life congratulated the law enforcing agencies on their great achievement.

But it was too late for the government to arrest him. If he had been arrested earlier, there would have been no bloodshed across the country. Now to bring the culprits to justice is a major task for the government. They should be given exemplary punishment so that no militant group can emerge in the country in future.
Kabir, DU

Finally Shaikh Abdur Rahman, the son of a Rajakar who turned himself into the nation's spectre of horror by masterminding countrywide synchronized bomb blasts on Aug 17 last year and later killing judges at Jhalakhati and people at the court premises of Gazipur, Chittagong and elsewhere by his suicide squads has been caged, thanks to the foolproof busting operation of Rab and other law enforcers. It reminds us of a once oft uttered lampoon, "a Rajakar is a Rajakar for all time". So the Rajakar's son carried the lamp of his father to turn this land into another Afghanistan, if not a mini Pakistan. God saved us from the evil doers. Now the nation wants to crown over the capture of Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, a devil incarnate who along with his long list of adherents stalked various places under Rajshahi Division, took law into his hands and in the name of eliminating members of the outlawed Sharbahara Party began killing men not subscribing to his opinions of Islami Hukumat, and plundered money and property as if there was none to touch or teach him. He is the demon who killed a man in Natore and hanged him down in a tree to cower people and display his wickedness and immunity.

It has been again amply proved that our law enforcers can do or undo anything to capture the criminal, however powerful they may be or wherever they may go into hiding. What they need is the green signal of the powers that be and freedom to act on their own. The virulent anti-state activities of the outfits, JMB and JMJB headed by the above two that they began since 2002 were brought to the notice of the coalition government by the print media many times (the DS in particular was relentless) with caution of bad omen for the country, but the government headed by the BNP turned a deaf ear to them and that helped the outfits to grow further. Had not the government glossed over this issue, the country would not have lost so many lives and earned the bad name of a terrorist country. Even after the countrywide bomb blasts the government did not appear to be serious enough about hunting down of the above Bin Ladens of Bangladesh. If that could be the case we would not have lost two judges and many other innocents. And only after the said carnages, and outside pressure, did the government find itself on its toes to swing into action and hundreds of Bangladeshi al-Qaeda followers were arrested.

Had there been any further delay to order their arrest at any cost, the country would have faced much deeper trouble. To retrieve our lost image, the religious outfits with hidden agenda must be wiped out lock, stock and barrel.
Ahmed Niaz, Dhaka

IS IT A UNIVERSITY?



A university is the key to a nation's development. A university student should be a first class citizen of a country. A jewel that is not only precious but also helps to wash away all the dirt from the nation, society. And a university should be the safest place for a student or teacher to study and research. But things are not always as they are supposed to be. Sometimes it happens that a university student forgets his duties to the society and practises something despicable.

In our university the picture is dismal. A group of political cadres who call themselves the anaconda group are engaged in anti-social and obscene activities, but the university authorities are not doing anything against them.

I hope the authorities will do something to put an end to all obscene activities.

A student, SUST

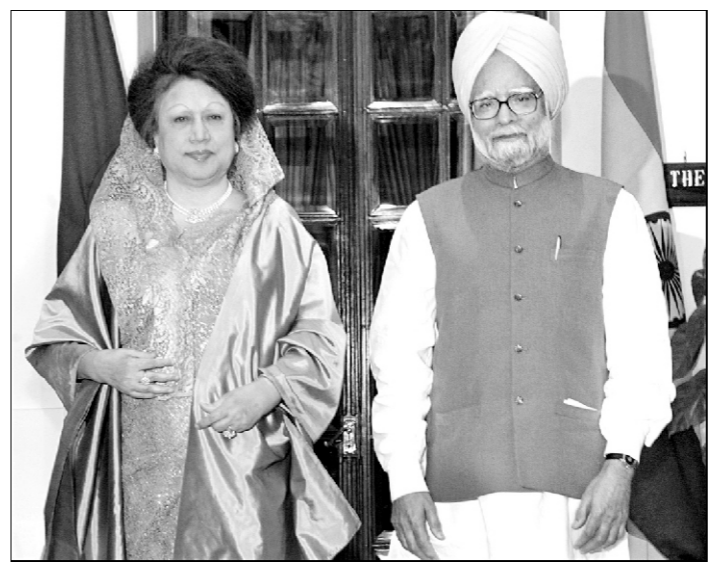


PHOTO: AFP

Relations with India

The government must be congratulated for its efforts to develop a new relationship with the regional giant India. India is surrounding us from three sides. So a good relationship with it is essential. But we should remember that it's India who made the distance between us. They didn't fulfil the promise of a corridor to our own land that is surrounded by India.

We gave them the corridors first, but they did not respond to our needs.

So developing better relations with the big neighbour is all right, but India should not be oblivious of our problems and limitations.

A.S.M. Ahsanur Rahman
Shahjalal University