

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

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## Islami Bank fined for third time

*Stern action needed for gross offence*

**I**SLAMI Bank has been fined once again for hiding suspicious transactions by militants. In an enquiry conducted in three branches, the Bangladesh Bank found evidence of money laundering by banned JMB members in collaboration with some officials of the Islami Bank. It may be mentioned that the bank had been penalised twice before on similar charges of violation of the provisions of Money Laundering Act. The Bangladesh Bank asked the Islami Bank to pay the fine, this time Tk. 1 lakh, and report what action it had taken against its 20 officials found guilty of assisting the militants.

We strongly feel that imposing a fine of a meagre sum of Tk. 1 lakh is too negligible a penalty for gross irregularities on the part of a financial institution. What actually needed is much sterner measure against the offenders including the members of the board of directors and the managing director. In the meantime the enquiry against 20 officials found guilty should be carried out by an independent body that may include, amongst others, officials from the ministry of home and preferably one or two members from the intelligence agencies. We feel that individuals involved in such offences should be tried in the criminal court of justice. After all such transactions and financing have directly contributed to the proliferation of terrorism in the country.

Several weeks ago a leading Bangla Daily had also published the names of individuals along with corresponding bank account numbers, yet the disciplinary actions taken so far against the perpetrators are mere exchange of a few letters between the Bangladesh Bank and the bank allegedly involved in the transactions.

We are certain that such light measures will not make the slightest dent in the existing network of terrorists. It may rather end up encouraging future terrorists with renewed vigour. We urge the administration to move more decisively with a strong hand and without any further loss of time.

## Children campaign for proper sanitation

*Others should emulate the good endeavour*

**S**OME children of a village called Chandpur under Jamalpur sadar upazila have been campaigning in an innovative way to create awareness among the villagers for the use of sanitary latrine, as reported in The Daily Star on Thursday. We find the news item worth mentioning as it provides an effective approach to solving the health and hygiene problem prevailing in the entire country. These children, with the support of an NGO and local people, have been staging drama skits, singing songs, chanting slogans and even blowing whistles to motivate the villagers to install and use sanitary latrines in the households and public places in order to ensure good health and hygiene for everyone. And the encouraging part of the news item is that already the concerted effort of the people and the children have produced results. The villagers have installed about 18 public sanitary latrines at different bazaars, mosques and village roads besides installing the same in their own households.

It goes without saying that installation of proper sanitation system in each and every household and public places is the key to good health. Experts are of the opinion that existing unhygienic sanitation system and lack of awareness among the people are the root cause of many major diseases. Though most of these diseases are life threatening, they are preventable and one simple way to ensure this is through installation of a sanitary latrine in each household, especially in the rural areas and city slums.

One WHO estimate says that sanitation coverage in the country is around 40 per cent and that there is wide difference between rural and urban areas. We understand the LGD ministry and health ministry have sufficient resources at their disposal to ensure the basic health requirements of the people. Therefore, why sanitation coverage in the country has not gone far beyond the WHO estimate by now remains a big question.

We feel what the local people and children in Jamalpur are doing is a unique example of collective effort towards attaining a common goal. This success story needs to be disseminated widely in the country so that others may emulate it to their benefit.

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# The Iraq war: Doubts and hopes



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

**T**HE third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq has come and gone but the news coming out of Baghdad has not been very pleasant. Doubts and hopes continue to fill the radar screen. The situation remains unstable. In fact, disagreement and strands of sectarian violence have necessitated another sudden visit to Baghdad by US Secretary of State C. Rice and the British Foreign Secretary J. Straw. This has only underlined the existing fluidity to the scenario.

We have witnessed chaos, confusion and carnage on the television screen. The brand-new Iraqi parliament has met in Baghdad under curfew conditions. Most of those elected appear to have lacked any sense of direction. March 20, 2006 issue of 'Time' magazine described their efforts as being directed "to pull together some kind of future amid warnings of civil war". The United States and the Coalition have tried to cast their own shadow by launching the over hyped 'Operation Swarmer', the biggest air strikes since the invasion, ostensibly to root out 'insurgents' north of Baghdad.

There has however been one slim sliver line of good news. Recent comments by President Bush and his team have indicated that they are beginning to embrace reality. Washington realises that chaos will

'continue for months to come'. They are also admitting that many tactical mistakes have taken place. The comment made by US defence hawk Richard Perle in this regard is significant - 'America got the war right and the postwar wrong'. William F Buckley Jr's observation about the invasion of Iraq has also been important - 'the objectives were sound, but our reach proved insufficient to realise them'.

We also have an analysis of the socio-anthropological-cultural reaction to this invasion. Francis Fukuyama,

the war in several universities both at home and abroad. My concerns have been shared in the past by many other political scientists and historians.

Unfortunately, what worried me in the first quarter of 2003 - the lack of a defined post-war plan - appears to be true even now. The coalition is still tackling situations on an ad-hoc basis. Their objectives appear to be limited always to an immediate future where an environment can be created that would permit the withdrawal of US troops and reduce casualties - aimed

administrative system continues to be very weak. The Shi'ite factions have come together in an arrangement of sorts and have set forth their ideas about governance, but these do not appear to be fully acceptable to the other factions. In any case, liberal democracy also does not appear to be on the cards in the immediate future.

The United States obviously understands that they are under the microscope in Iraq. The war in that country started for different reasons - supposed presence of WMD and links

and head injuries and are looking forward to a lifetime disability.

He has also drawn attention to another controversial issue. He has referred to the fact that earlier claims by the Bush administration 'that the Iraq war would be good for the (US) economy' do not appear to be holding water. He has noted that things have turned out differently - 'the oil companies are the big winners while the American and the global economies are losers'. Stiglitz and many others have now come forward and stated that the money

that the Iraqi government and the Coalition authorities now control 14 out of 18 Iraqi provinces. These are reportedly comparatively stable. The Coalition should seriously examine whether they can expand and also deepen Iraqi association in governance in these provinces. Instead of always supporting a Shi'ite-Kurdish combine; it might be useful to associate Sunni representation in these areas. The most important aspect for any peaceful reconstruction is to convey to the Sunni population in Iraq that they will not be marginalised in the scope of future governance in Iraq.

The other important step would be to sit down in a comprehensive dialogue with Iran - the sooner the better. Inflaming further an already combustible situation with rhetoric and hints of divide and rule on the basis of ethnicity will not help. What is required is restraint.

The United States would also do well to establish a closer relationship with both the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Jeddah and the Arab League in Cairo. It should try to frankly discuss the problems being faced in Iraq, note what the members have to say, and not over-ride their views as being immaterial. This can help to ease tension in the region and eventually facilitate the creation of an Islamic peacekeeping force.

It will be tough out there, but military and terrorism have to be contained for the sake of a sensitive region. Civil war or sectarian war, whatever we might call it, has to be controlled. Otherwise, we might end up with a situation, which will spread across the desert as an oil stain into the neighbouring countries.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador who can be reached at mzamir@dhaka.net

## POST BREAKFAST

The United States would do well to establish a closer relationship with both the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Jeddah and the Arab League in Cairo. It should try to frankly discuss the problems being faced in Iraq, note what the members have to say, and not over-ride their views as being immaterial. This can help to ease tension in the region and eventually facilitate the creation of an Islamic peacekeeping force.

who described initial efforts in Iraq as 'real gains', has now gone on record 'that the balance sheet for the war at this moment is quite negative'. In this context he has noted that 'balanced against these gains are costs that go well beyond the direct human and financial ones. The occupation of Iraq has served as a tremendous stimulus for Arab and Muslim anti-Americanism and thus has made radical Islamism terrorism significantly worse than it would otherwise be. America's reputation around the world has taken a huge hit among ordinary people who are now more likely to associate our (US) democracy with scenes of prisoner abuse than with the Statue of Liberty'.

Many serious questions have troubled the world since the beginning of 2003. I have written more than twenty articles on Iraq during this period in different publications. I have also spoken about the implications of

to satisfy domestic opinion back in the USA. Such an approach has obviously not helped. It has only reflected lack of determination to those who are ostensibly fighting occupation in Iraq.

Yes, US and Coalition casualties have been reduced but violence has not been reined in. In fact, fighting terrorism and militancy in Iraq appears to have been outsourced to ill trained and poorly motivated Iraqi personnel who on more than one occasion have demonstrated their inability to control a situation. This dangerous lapse has been further exacerbated through existing inter-sectarian feuds.

The net result is that despite an election, the divide between parties has not been bridged. No common ground has surfaced other than shared greed for power.

Despite recent urging by both Blair and Bush, the upside potential in Iraq looks rather limited. The central

with international terrorism. It turned out that such assumptions were misplaced, to put it mildly. We then had a spin that the war was associated with the restoration of democracy and the ensuring of human rights. This was, as Kenneth Roth of the Human Rights Watch has put it 'an after-the-fact justification'.

Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, a fierce critic of the war has accused the US policy-makers of having failed to have undertaken an objective, cool, hard economic analysis of the war and its possible effects. He has claimed that a study undertaken by his friend Linda Bilmes (a budget expert at Harvard) and himself has suggested that the war might eventually cost the US taxpayers more than US dollar one trillion. He has apparently also included in his estimate, the cost of treating the 16,000 plus severely wounded returned veterans, many of whom, are suffering from brain

spent on the war should have been allocated to domestic investment in roads, schools and research within the USA, which would have stimulated the US economy.

The USA has a problem in its hands. Nevertheless, time has not yet come for it to cut and run. There has to be a gradual and phased withdrawal. The destroyed infrastructure has to be revived and basic state facilities in the agriculture, health and education sectors rebuilt. Let the Iraqi population see the advantages of government without Saddam. Unfortunately, what they have witnessed till now is terror on the streets and absence of law and order. All those associated with sectarian violence need to be pursued and punished. A secular court and a special speedy judicial process would probably have to be set up for this purpose.

Conservative estimates suggest

# Reforms needed to make caretaker system more effective

A K MD ABDUR RAHAMAN

**T**HE working parliamentary democracy since its inception demonstrated that the ruling party abused its authority to rig elections in order to stay in power. They, with the object of retaining power, used the various governmental machinery at their disposal in order to influence the outcome of the election. The concept of a caretaker government, although a departure from the principles of parliamentary democracy, was incorporated into the constitution of Bangladesh in order to provide a bulwark against the abuse of power by the ruling party in order to rig elections.

In order to ensure that such government can act independently, provisions were made in the constitution that the retired Chief Justice would become the head of such government supported by other members, who would be appointed by him subject to the approval of the President. Although the Prime Minister and the Cabinet would resign, handing over power to the caretaker government, the President would retain his post as the head of the caretaker government. The retention of the post of the president as the head of the caretaker government was necessary because the administration of the country could not be solely left in the hands of an appointed body even for a short period of time.

The provision of Caretaker Government is a unique feature in the constitution of the Bangladesh. As no other country have adopted a caretaker government, the founders of the Bangladesh constitution could not follow any guidelines towards its formation and application. They innovated the constitution of such government, defining its

tenure, jurisdiction and power to suit the genius of the people of Bangladesh. The task was not easy because they had to combine the elements of both elected and appointed bodies in the formation of such government, providing scope for a clash of power between them. Their jurisdiction of power unless clearly defined in the constitution could give rise to problems, requiring interpretation by the court to ensure whether or not they exceeded the constitutional limit in exercising such power. The analysis

The opposition parties have made some specific proposals to reform the system. There is no denying the fact that some reforms are necessary, but I cannot agree that they should be accepted in their entirety. The opposition have proposed that the President, after consulting the major political parties, would select somebody who is likely to command their confidence without providing any solution to break the deadlock in the event of a disagreement. An impasse is likely

to expose the country to a constitutional crisis fraught with dangerous consequences. It may prove difficult to find somebody who is likely to be accepted by all the interested parties. Both the opposition and ruling parties should hold fruitful discussion so that they can mutually agree to devise a formula to select somebody to lead the caretaker government.

The vacuum of power likely to be created by the resignation of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet might have influenced the founders of the constitution to give wider power including the defence to the President. Such concentration of power, as alleged by opposition parties, may result in its abuse unless he remained neutral. They also contend that the wide range of power granted to the President is not in keeping with the principles of parliamentary democracy where the President remains a titular head, acting in most cases on the advice of

power, defining them in the constitution. Such demarcation of power would keep the president confined within his jurisdiction in so far as it relates to the formulation of the policies and overseeing of the running of the administration. The portfolio of the defence which relates to the security of the country cannot be handed over to an appointed body. The responsibility of defending the country cannot be left in the hands of an appointed body. Some people may argue that the task of defending the country on its own is a hypothetical question. The possibility of such situation arising, although remote, cannot be ruled out altogether. Adequate provisions should be made to defend the country, ignoring the assumption that it is highly unlikely that the country would face any external aggression during the short tenure of the office of the caretaker government.

The office of the President forms

an integral part of the caretaker government. It is imperative that he should maintain neutrality so that he does not get involved in party politics. It may prove difficult to maintain such neutrality if he belongs to any political party. A stipulation should be made in the constitution that the candidate for the presidency should not belong to any political party. Such stipulation would serve the same purpose as the opposition parties wanted to achieve through their reforms, requiring the caretaker government to control

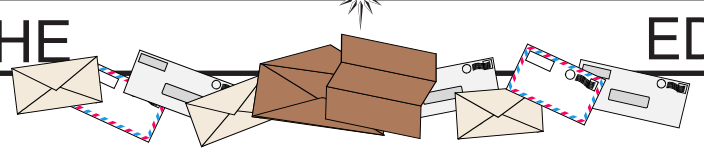
limit. They will certainly exceed their jurisdiction if they tend to formulate policies in the name of administrative actions. So an exhaustive list of powers and responsibilities should be enumerated in the constitution, giving a guideline of the definition of policy formulation and administrative action and the limit of their jurisdiction.

The effectiveness of any political innovation can be judged after it is put into practice, when its merits and defects and other factors associated with its application can be identified. As the concept of caretaker government is a new phenomenon in the political field of Bangladesh, its effectiveness can be improved by taking the necessary steps to rectify the defects as identified above. Despite criticism that it is an unelected body, with no power and no mandate that derives from the people, it has proved successful in holding elections unhindered by the interference of the ruling party.

It is a positive sign that the Prime Minister, in response to the demands of the opposition parties for reforms, has instructed the formation of a committee representing both AL and BNP to discuss the issue. An impasse can only be avoided if they are determined to come to an agreement by adopting a policy of give and take.

The writer, a retired British civil servant, resides in London.

## 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.

### We need to work

Whenever I open the TV to listen to news most of the times I find it contains talks in the form of address at a gathering, briefing, interview, on or from procession, protest marches, agitation etc.

In the present circumstances I prefer rationing on bhashon (lecture), be it on food, fertilizer, electricity or water, fuel etc. as mere lecturing will not change the fate of the nation. We should talk less and work more.

Thomas Gomes Dhura  
Montipurpara, Tejgaon, Dhaka

### Our future propellers

It was nice to know that you have honoured the brilliant students from English medium schools who have done excellent in their examinations. This kind of encouraging acts will surely instil an urge to do better in the students who are indeed the future of the land.

A highly commendable job you have done indeed and we expect you to keep up the great job.

I would like to echo the words expressed by the British high commis-

sioner Anwar Chowdhury - they, the students, have certainly glorified names of their parents and the schools and they'll indeed glorify their land, Bangladesh, through educating them properly and through fostering the higher sense of patriotism.

I wish the students a bright future and wish that they extended themselves to the welfare of the land....  
Cheers!  
Rafiqul Islam Rime  
Agrabad, Chittagong

### Misuse of electricity at RU

During my last visit to RU, I was amazed that most of the students in the residential halls cook their food in their rooms using electric heater. Normally, four students are living in a room but in some cases, these four are not cooking together. They are using four separate heaters. While the nation is facing severe power crisis, farmers do not get electricity for irrigation, what a stupid thing the students are doing in the highest educational institution. They are using about 4000 heaters of say, two kilowatt each for 4-

5 hours per day on average, which consume a huge amount of electric power.

A power official (unwilling to tell his name) told me that the electric charge of RU comes to about Tk 22 core; after the charge abatement RU pays about Tk 15 core. If the authority can stop the use of heaters in the halls, the nation can save some electric power as well as RU can save a lot of money, which can be used for the improvement of food quality in the dining-hall and research and development purpose also.

As a first step to stop using heater, the authority should give a special attention towards serving better quality food in dining-hall and provide more student facilities like sports, library, cultural activities etc. so that the students are inspired to take food in the dining-hall instead of cooking in their rooms. After providing all the facilities the authority should take such technical measures as to check any heater connections.

If the authority be cordial and active on preventing the harmful practice (using heater) and take fruitful steps, the students not get any issue for

demonstration. cent percent students of BUET halls are taking food from their dining-hall @ Tk 10 per meal; not a single heater can be found in their rooms. It is possible due to the continuous monitoring on food quality and students facilities in the BUET halls.

The students should be conscious about the misuse of our national resources. My special request to the all concerned at RU is to take necessary steps to stop the use of heater in residential halls as early as possible. Stop the misuse and serve the nation.  
Md. Shahadat Hussain  
Chandora, Shafigur, Gazipur

### Dhaka City transport

We, the city dwellers travel from one place to another in the Capital by using different public and private transports. But we face severe problems while using the same. Here are a few stated below.

If we look at the transport system of greater Mirpur-Palcoi area, we see there several transports plying such as buses on route nos. 1, 2, 8, 9, 14, 17, 36, Metro link, BRTC local and Volvo DC etc. Many of them run claiming Dired (non stop), Sitting, Gate lock services and charging much

more than the normal fare. Moreover, the bus people do not give proper services as they commit. It is a matter of sorrow that during pick time a few local buses also take this advantage by turning themselves into direct service and asking for more ticket money from the passengers.

Very recently 'Super local sitting service' has been launched on route no. 9 using few of the existing buses and charging more ticket money in return. We are surprised to see such an eye wash. During rush hours hardly any local transport is seen for passengers who would go a short distance. If any one rides a bus he has to pay full route or slab wise bus fare. Thus the bus people exploit the passengers. We don't know whether they got any permission for the way they are doing, besides this some time local buses push the passengers out before reaching the last stoppage on this pretext. For instance on route no. 1 then often drive the passengers out from the bus at Mirpur-10 (Circle) on their trip from Gulistan to Mirpur-12, some time at Mirpur-11, Pallobi and Chourangi. This is not acceptable and outrageous. Moreover they allow vegetable, fish and so on to be loaded

from Karwan bazar site, which is quite disgusting for the passengers. Transport owners should give at least 3/4 stoppages/slabs facility in bus fare considering distance so that people can move for their destinations faster by paying actual fare. I would request the authority to take proper steps for eradicating all unfair practices from the transport sector in order to give proper services to the general people.

Md Saifur Rahman  
Mirpur 1, Dhaka

### Better than alms

Now-a-days, we can see a few disabled persons in many places selling matches, pens, chocolates etc by hawking. They have found out a better way of livelihood instead of begging. If all disabled persons and beggars follow this way, we may soon find a beggar free Bangladesh. We should buy a pen or a chocolate just to encourage them in this endeavour though we may not need that immediately. I think it is better than giving alms which encourages begging.

Senjuti Shuvo Ahmed  
Dhaka College, Dhaka

### Cartridge paper crisis

Cartridge papers are used in the Lower Court from the Court of Assst. Judge to District Judge for filing new cases by the plaintiffs especially in civil matter and for giving written statement or written objection by the defendants. And except this cartridge paper no other paper can be used for the purposes. The price per sheet of cartridge paper is taka 2/00 which is fixed by the government. But it is very unfortunate that at the present time cartridge paper is not readily available for which some middlemen and those who supply it from the treasury with the help of vendors have created further crisis perhaps with a money making motive. Now one is to purchase a cartridge paper at the cost of Taka 5/00 i.e. 15 times higher than the normal price. Now a cartridge paper at a normal level is sold at Taka 5/0-. If one files a petition in the court he is to purchase a petition at Taka 36/- the normal price of which is Taka 7/00. It seems there is none to look into it. When the matter was brought to the notice of a learned District Judge he contacted with the Deputy Commissioner but the Deputy Commissioner perhaps could not do

anything. I think it is an artificial crisis.

Previously once there was shortage of paper and at that time the learned District Judge allowed to use green paper by paying court fee of Taka 2/00. Today no forms are supplied by the government and it is locally arranged. It is the bounden duty of the government to supply forms and other necessary papers including the cartridge papers. The litigant public have no forum to put up their grievances, they cannot give pressure to the government to solve the problem. I draw the attention of the Hon'ble Law Minister to kindly look into the matter and make immediate arrangement to supply cartridge paper at the normal price.  
Mir Mosharrar Hosain  
Comilla