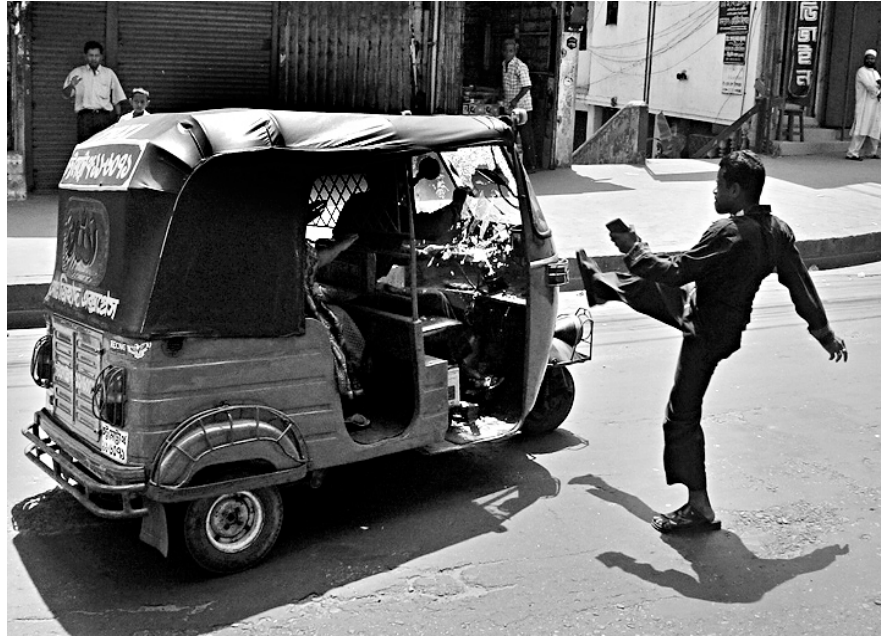
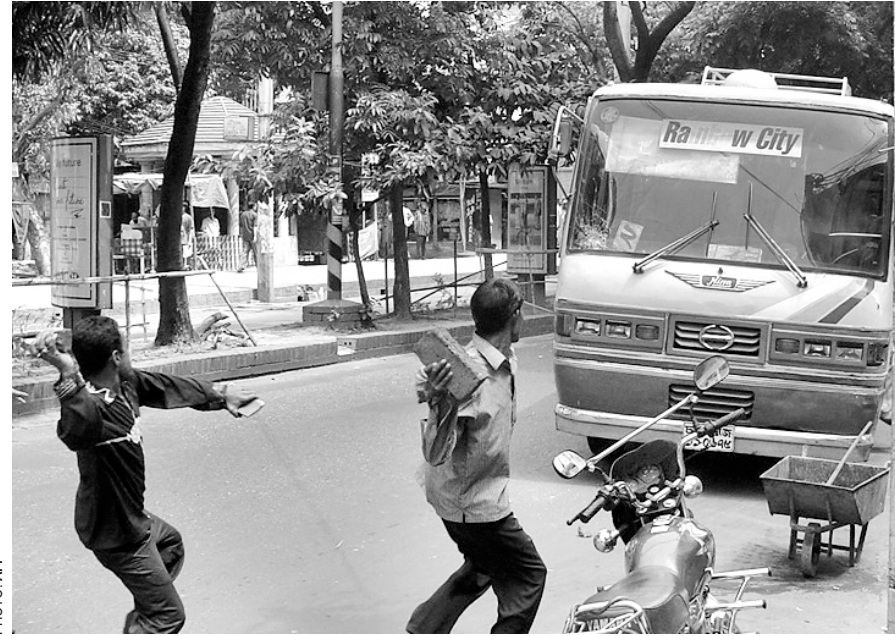


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

# HARTALS



This refers to The Daily Star's reporting of the hartals and protests that went on in Dhaka this week. The overwhelming rhetoric of the articles seem to be biased towards the protesters, as if they were peace activists. Charging the police for having instigated battle and claiming that 'Tens of thousands of people in the capital suffered due to the police barricades' are further legitimising unruly and disruptive criminal behaviour by protesters. There is nothing wrong with being anti-government or establish-

ment, but to challenge the basic principles of dignified social behaviour in order to take a stance on the government is not acceptable. Who will pay for the rickshaws, cars, trucks set on fire, the public property destroyed by the mobs?

I don't hear DS ever reporting any leader on the ground (whether AL, BNP, Jamaat, JP or otherwise) calling for calm during protests, never is it mentioned that an MP stood before the mob behind her/him and prevented violence. It takes great leadership to

truly believe in a cause and take it through, our 'leaders' lack both the faith in their cause or the courage to see it through; there are those who have marched on our streets before us who were able to maintain the dignity of the protest, of the hartal, they have struggled and have won. Today, we have bus loads of people brought into the city, paid to wreak havoc and chaos over petty, pathetic, criminal political squabbles which have little to do with our lives.

**Ashfaque Siddiqui**

On e-mail

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Calling hartal is a democratic right, but compelling others to observe it by picketing cannot be, as it is against the basic principles of democracy. So is there anyone who can file a writ petition to the court for a ban on picketing on hartal days?

**Badal, On e-mail**

## Our country

I fully endorse what Mr. Abed Choudhury wrote on the 16th of this month. Our poor as well as low-income people are the cannon fodders for any agitation whipped up by the politicians and their lackeys. The blood of these people spill and ornament the streets whilst those politicians' remains unscathed if not accidentally hit by something. Leaving aside the cases where assassins are employed for a mission to kill, the general picture reminds me of a poem written by Sukanta, which I read in my childhood. A chicken chic always used to peep in a dining hall and shooed away by the people. He had great desire to go inside all along. One day he did go but as a roasted bird on a platter!

Enough of intellectual discourse has taken place at the dismay of ordinary people who are bamboozled by the economic and political jargons to save the country. But the point is that the government is run by an agenda of its own. It has corporate power, it is a lawmaker. As a regulator it makes rules, which can invalidate an existing law by taking advantage of the ambiguous words in the constitution. Its object is to project the power of a truth to be accepted in the market of free speech in which the government is also a player. It does not need advice as to how to run a country. If you do not like a particular government, select a new one.

**Rabeeya Rahman**  
On e-mail

## Woes of NRBs

It is very encouraging news that our private commercial banks are considering smoothening the process and removing bottlenecks for NRBs sending foreign currency to BD. However, they can quickly learn from what other countries have already done in this area to encourage such inflow of foreign currency

by providing some level of good service and no transfer fees. For example, Indian private banking sector has established very good relationship with US major financial institutions in order to help NRIs send foreign exchange to India without any fees, and the money is often timely dispersed to their relatives or banks the same day.

I currently pay fees in the US banks to send money to a very reputable private bank in Dhaka. The bank in Dhaka then again charges transaction fees on top of what is being shared between the banks in the form of intra-bank exchange fees. This double dipping is definitely not helping. No one knows why, but it also takes 3-5 days to clear the funds in Dhaka. Maybe our PCBs can do the same for NRBs as Indian banks have done for their NRIs and create a win-win situation for all.

**Rezaul Abid**  
On e-mail

## Tariff increase by BTTB

The increase of call charge for BTTB users shows that it's a tag team game. The BTRC and the Finance Minister are continuously pressing the private mobile operators to lower their tariff but giving the state-owned BTTB permission to increase their tariff! When I first heard this news I thought BTTB was going to sign a revenue sharing agreement with mobile operators which would allow mobile users to enjoy free incoming calls. All mobile operators share the revenue they collect from their customers for making a call with the operator where the call is being received. That's why operators can provide free incoming facility. If mobile operators have to provide free incoming for BTTB calls, there should be similar revenue sharing with BTTB and mobile operators. Just one year ago, BTTB refused

to share the revenue they earned with mobile operators. They said that their call rate is lower than mobile subscribers'. It was true at that moment but now BTTB has increased the call rates without sharing it with anybody (except with Teletalk).

One more thing is the Tele Tapping and other directives of BTRC. They didn't do anything when they should have done something, and now they are trying to do all kinds of things they should not. Do people understand that the cost of implementing all those fancy ideas like recording and preserving conversations for an indefinite period will directly affect the normal customers? Does BTRC have any idea how much this is going to cost the operators? We have the right to know where in the world operators record and preserve conversations for an indefinite period of time? BTRC's "do as I like" attitude shows what the Tughluki regime was.

Also, I was horrified to read the news that an organisation called "Citizens' Rights Movement" urged mobile users to give miss calls and create jam in networks. Do they understand that someone may be trying to make an urgent call during that time? Right is directly related to duties. Urging people to do a wrong thing must be condemned whatever the cause is.

**Abdullah Mamun**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Higher education plan

I would like to draw your attention to the editorial published on the 16th April on higher education plan. This government always tries to play a hide and seek game while taking any decision on education. For instance, the government was about to implement the unified curriculum at secondary and higher secondary levels without any con-

sultation with different stakeholders related to education sector. However, as the relevant stakeholders, educators and conscious citizens identified flaws in the proposed unified curriculum and protested vehemently; the government had no other choice but to nullify its decision. In the same way, keeping all the concerned stakeholders in the dark, the government has chalked out a 20-year higher education plan.

We, all the concerned people, emphasise that our higher education policy must be modified for its better performance. There are numerous problems in our education policy that should be addressed with a view to achieving ultimate development of the country. But this should be done through discussions with different stakeholders in the higher education. Education is a very sensitive issue for a nation and so any policy in this context should be formulated through the participatory concept by involving academics, students, and other concerned people. Imposition of any decision from the top is a colonial attitude and this must be avoided in any democratic country. In fact, people directly involved in higher education (e.g. teachers, students) know better the relevant factors that hinder imparting of quality and need-based higher education. As primary stakeholders, they can contribute much in formulating an efficient and effective education plan. So, if the government really wants to bring any positive change in our higher education then involving the concerned stakeholders is the only option. Otherwise, the fate of the proposed 20-year higher education plan will be the same as the unified education policy that the government had planned to implement.

**Md. Anwarul Kabir**  
Assistant Professor  
American International University-  
Bangladesh

## Whose baby is it?

On April 5, 2006, you published the interview of the two top leaders of the BNP and AL taken by Time journalist Alex Perry. When he asked the PM regarding the opposition leader's complaint that militancy was her "baby", she dismissed the charge, saying that it was the opposition's baby. The opposition leader spoke in the same language, putting the blame on the BNP. Now the questions is, whose baby is it?

**Abdul Kaium Khan**  
Southeast University

## What are they learning?

If we look at our academic campuses, we will find what is happening there. Students come here to study. But the ground situation is not at all suitable for this purpose.

**Engr. Md. Omar Ali**  
Shamoli, Dhaka

## Indo-Bangla relations

A letter by Biswajeet Mahapatra, an Indian, on Indo-Bangla relations published in your daily on 3-4-06 has drawn my attention. The writer claims that India's neighbours are inclined to disrupt the country by their instigating activities. I wonder how he actually thinks of provocative actions by the small neighbours of India against it. The entire area of all the neighbours of India, except China, is as large as one third the total area of India and it is far ahead of all these countries combined in size, military might, and economy. If I am mightier than you, then I can think of a suppressing role, I can craft the plan to appropriate some of your territories, I could proceed so as to disrupt your internal stability. But while I am weaker, even incomparable in any terms with you, I can just take the defensive stand. Yes,

# Why are we poor?

That very interesting letter caught my eyes. "Why are we poor". Strangely, I have never really asked myself why we are poor. It's something I know, believe and have experienced. Like the common issues that have been cited by Mr. Ahmed in his letter, I took them to be the real issues for Bangladesh being poor. But, has any serious thought really gone into it? Is it overpopulation? Then what about China? They are doing quite okay. Corruption? Which country is totally corruption free? Political unrest? Well, that too is not as bad as we would like to believe. Lack of resources? What about countries like Singapore? So really what is the reason? From my perspective, I feel we are laid back

and lazy. We do not have the drive or the desire to work to our fullest capacity. We are content to leave everything in the hands of fate, we do not aspire to mould our future. Recently, a survey showed that Bangladeshis were the happiest people on earth, the reason?

Not very heartening, it's because they are content with the way life is treating them. So, if in a country where majority of the people are living below poverty and they are content with their present state, what can you expect? We are poor because we choose to be poor!

**Nazneen, On e-mail**



at least we can say that we are not the poorest country of the world. We can at least claim that we are a developing country. But the international bodies seem more concerned about that. They give some conditions in the name of development plans which we have to accept.

The government should learn to think freely.

**A student**  
Sylhet

## We need such people

I would like to request the citizens of Bangladesh to consider and elect candidates like Mr. Rabbani of Kansat for the upcoming national assembly election.

I think the only way out of this current misery is to elect people like Mr. Rabbani of Kansat in all 300 national assembly seats.

I would like to ask the civil society to strongly support candidates like Mr. Rabbani in the upcoming parliamentary election.

Bangladesh is in desperate need of 300 Rabbanis.

**Shoaib A. Chowdhury**  
Cadillac, MI

## Toilets of Eden College

It seems Eden College with its uncared for stinking toilets is on the edge of ruining the last trail of reputation it once had.

Being one of the 3619 examinees of the recently held 27th BCS written test, I had the fortune (!) to enter the premises of the college.

Like others, I was surprised to see the toilets in such bad condition. I hope Eden College authorities will look into the matter.

**Pablu Chakma**  
West Shewrapara, Mirpur, Dhaka

## Ashraful, overstaying

Why on earth is this boy still in the team? Because you never know when his performance is going to flare up. Come on, give me a break, BD Team has not yet become so much professional as other Test playing countries that it can carry the burden of such a player thinking someday he will save the day. Shut him off, let him prove his own stake and do the come back, open the space for other players to prove their worth. I thought the days of taking players under influence was over but it seems not, just because MEDIA loves him no one will take him out and yet in every dam match he just blundered his position, all other batsman proved there role somewhat while this kid just fails to prove his calibre.

Let's open the window and bring in some fresh air and may be this will knock some senses in his mind to prove what he or we think him to be.

Sorry to be so upset, but cannot keep it anymore. Thanks to Rafique and Nafees who have better consistency, so goes for Aftab.

**Shane Abde Elahi**  
Toronto, Canada

## Democracy

If we like to develop this country we have to do something different. We know ours is a democratic country but most of the people don't know what is democracy.

So political consciousness is a major issue for any fledgling democracy.

**Sumon**  
Uttara, Dhaka

# To the PM...



A right to dissent is the essence of democracy. This essence is being trampled ostensibly in Bangladesh. The day an MP exercised his inalienable democratic right to dissent, he got tangled with myriad of troubles. Thugs ransacked his business. Taxmen showed their mean face in his neighbourhood.

Your police interfered with the rights of a honourable citizen (in fact, an ex-President) to travel and speak his mind. Your supporters even stole and/or dismantled the loud speakers

and microphones. Do you think that the loud speaker belongs only to the ruling party? Or do you believe that loud speakers are the only means of effective communication?

Do you remember the days when you were the leader of the opposition? Do you remember the video advertisement compiled by your party that exposed the reign of misrule unleashed by your predecessor? Now, if someone compiles a similar video-advertisement depicting violence, given the matter-of-fact, would you advise me how should I rate your reign?

Your ascendancy to power was on the wings of democracy. I want to believe you, when you talk high of democratic ideals and principles. I do not condone the calls (from different quarters) for your resignation. I despise the calls to topple your government. Your failure shall be a failure not of yours only. Your failure shall be a failure for the nation as a whole. I want you to succeed. I want you to serve your people until your term ends. But I want you to serve well.

Government is nothing but an institutional tool to serve. As the head of the government, you have to listen to the voices of the people.

I democracy, people's will eventually prevail for they are the REAL MASTERS!  
**Mohammad Zaman**  
North Carolina, USA

# IRAQ: another Vietnam

We have not forgotten the bloodshed in Vietnam. US falcons' ghastly clutch made a havoc, but they had to come back with their wounded wings. This abominable history is well known to all. But the tragedy is that they are repeating the same mistake in Iraq. And the country is slowly turning into another Vietnam.

History repeats itself.  
**Kazi Abubakar Siddique**  
Lalmatia, Dhaka

