

letters@thedailystar.net

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.



Chernobyl tragedy

While I was going to congratulate Mr. Khalid Shams for his excellent article on the present international thinking and preparations for nuclear power which was published in your daily on April 29, 2006(although the heading did not quite reflect the contents and the views therein), I was very surprised to read the Letter to the Editor on 'Chernobyl Tragedy 20 Years After' published in your paper on May 5, 2006 in which, I think, the effects of the Chernobyl accident have been overplayed. How could the disaster, where only 60 persons, including the fire-fighting workers, died in the first few days, be ten times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped in Hiroshima and (Nagasaki), where hundreds of thousand people died instantly? The effects of radioactive fallout cannot be quantified but certainly they were much more in the case of the bombs than the Chernobyl accident. It may be mentioned that Chernobyl power plant did not have the proper containment dome required according to international standards. It may be worthwhile to mention that no one died (or even seriously injured) in the much-publicised Three Mile Island nuclear power plant (the financial loss might, however, have been great) and there was no radioactive release due to its proper dome. More than 430 power reactors and similar number of research reactors are now safely running for the last twenty years after Chernobyl and no reactor was shut down for technical reasons involving the reactors.

It may be mentioned that the Bangladesh research reactor (in Savar) was commissioned in the same year of the Chernobyl accident(1986) and except for a temporary shutdown due to non-nuclear reasons, the

reactor has been functioning well.

No research or power reactor is now allowed to be constructed without a full-proof containment dome and the safety standards for nuclear reactors are so high that there is hardly any chance of a Chernobyl-type of accident with consequent radioactive fall-out, if a power station is built according to international standards. It may be mentioned that a nuclear power station does not release CO2 which causes pollution in the case of conventional power stations. Solid and liquid wastes can be taken care of without much difficulty.

I would finally like to add that nuclear power (electricity), producing 78% electricity in France now, is staging a comeback, due to worldwide concern about global warming. According to Dr. Burton Richter (a Nobel Laureate in Physics), the carbon-di-oxide intensity(CO2 per unit GDP) of France is the lowest in the world, while Mr. James Lovelock(environmentalist) has come down on the side of nuclear energy. Economic and environmental self-interest both point to the need for large scale carbon free energy. Nuclear power could be one such solution. For Bangladesh, it could provide energy security by not putting all eggs in one basket(in the case of power production). Our natural gas can be conserved and even used for purposes other than power. The same is true for coal, with its additional environmental problems.

Dr. Anwar Hossain
Dhaka

Unpredictable life

I want to say something to the readers of these columns. If you are thinking of visiting a sick relative or friend, don't waste time, do it now, because it may be too late when you are ready to pay the visit. And if you see someone you know, who may not have noticed you, go up and speak to that person; life is unpredictable, you may not get another chance.

An incident still haunts me, I remember it with a pang of remorse. A farmer from our village, whom I knew from childhood as a very affectionate person, visited one of my brother's house in Chittagong town. That day I also went to that house and when I was leaving, I saw him talking with the inmates downstairs, he did not notice me, as I was in a hurry I did not stop and talk with him. That very night he died in his sleep at my brother's house. I felt very sad and regretted my action as I will never get the opportunity to meet him again.

Nur Jahan
Ctg

Price hike and minister's comments

We are really very lucky to have some ministers in our four-party alliance government who make amusing remarks that nobody could ever think of. A minister has said, "Has anybody died because of the price hike?" So what do they want? Do they want some deaths before they can take any proper steps to tackle the price hike? It is said that nothing good happens in this country without death. This is what has happened in Kansat where 20 people had to die in order to get their legal and rightful demands fulfilled.

My humble questions to our ministers are why should you remain in power if you have nothing to do about the price hike, why did you promise us the moon before the last election? And why didn't you tell us then that if there is a price hike you would do nothing?

Actions speak louder than words. So, do something right

now about the price hike.

Foyisal Ahmed
University of Dhaka

Jewish lobby in the US

Two prominent US political scientists have done a research on "The Israeli lobby & the American foreign policy". The conspiracy hatched by the Jews has been brought to light by this research. They have pointed the losses suffered by the US due to the activities of the Jewish lobby.

The people of Palestine are not worried about the US. But its blind support for Israel has created a situation in which Palestinians cannot trust the Americans any more. It was clear that the Jews killed John F Kennedy because he was the first Catholic American president who was not ready to allow Israel to have nuclear weapons. That's why he was killed. War against terrorism was planned by Israel and they provoked the United States to get involved in it. On the basis of this plan the US started the war across the world and the US military forces are killing the enemies of the Jews. But what is the US gaining from it? It is losing time, money and energy.

The US policy makers should be able to see reason and do justice to the people of Palestine.

Shunil Shaha
Eastern University

Ray of hope

At the outset, I would like to thank the four-party alliance (especially BNP) as they underscore the need for reform that the opposition parties led by the Awami league have been demanding. Recently, the exchange of letters showed that the BNP government is very frank about addressing issues that relate to people's interest. On the other hand, the AL is proceeding cautiously.

Exchange of letters is apparently paving the way to the dialogue between the AL and the BNP. But the parties are not showing the flexibility needed for a breakthrough.

If they do not come forward with an open mind and fail to reach a consensus, then the political

situation in the country will not improve.

Md Zonayed Emran
University of Dhaka

Police & country's image

The Test match between Bangladesh and Australia in Chittagong was marred by the police.

The police beat up the on-duty journalists. They have blurred the image of the country beyond recognition. Those responsible for the incident must not go unpunished.

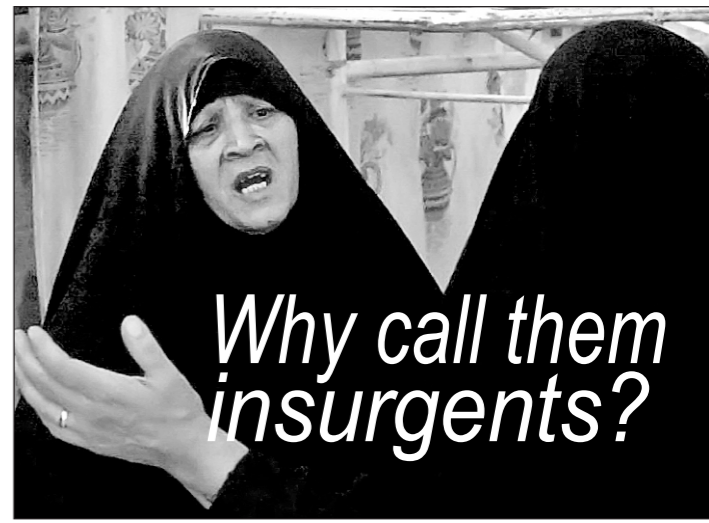
MAH Nazim
University of Dhaka

What's going on?

Now the garment industry is under attack. The government should intervene and ensure that the just demands of the workers are met before things go further out of control.

The damage caused to the industry has been colossal. We must stop this kind of activities with a sense of urgency. The future of the country is at stake.

Obaidullah Khan, Dhaka



This is in reference to the news "US, Iraqi forces kill 20 insurgents" dated May, 2006. The people of Iraq are fighting against an occupation army who invaded their country and have already killed more than 30,000 people. So isn't it a matter of regret that the Iraqi freedom fighters are termed as insurgents by the press? If they are insurgents, what about our freedom fighters in 1971 who were fighting against an enemy forcefully occupying our land and committing genocide for perpetuating their rule.

Though some foreigners are fighting on their side for ideological reasons, we cannot term all Iraqis fighting for freedom as insurgents.

I think you should consider my point in right earnest.
Maruf Hossain, Gifu, Japan

Good performance, but..

The performance of the Tigers in the first Test against Australia showed that they are now a strong competitor against any Test playing nation. The Australian skipper realised and admitted that they had done wrong in declaring Bangladesh as an unworthy side in the domain of Test cricket.

The Tigers, however, have a great deal to learn from the matches. They must concentrate on improving their second innings performance.

Kabir, DU

