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Zidane's sad exit!

Zidane ended his long and glorious career by being expelled in extra time, costing France the World Cup. Zidane will be criticised badly for his ugly attack on an Italian player.

Scionara Shehry
Mastermind School, Dhaka



Beware of 'assassimators'

The article in your daily entitled 'Character assassination: who is next?' published on 22/06/06 is a timely endeavour to arouse the conscience of the members of the civil society against this sort of abominable activities by a section of the so-called intellectuals. I fully agree with Dr. Moazzem Hossain that these degenerated intellectuals have polluted the campus atmosphere everywhere in the country through vilification of the honest and dedicated members of the enlightened society. One has to remember that a mudslinger is not himself a clean man as he himself soils his hands with mud. The civil society should guard itself against these evildoers. Professor Dr. Mahfuzul Huq
Member, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh

Meeting with President

I find the issue of whether Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar was the acting president or the president because, as he said, "The president and in case of anybody who discharges duties to the post of the president will be provided with the protocol, flag and symbol" rather confusing. Does anyone think that

if the Prime Minister was unavailable to perform her duties (or the prime minister before her), that someone else would be considered the prime minister, with all the protocol, flag and symbol? Of course not.

The speaker filled in for the president, acted in the place of the president, and performed the duties in the absence of the president.

Until such time as there was no president, ill or otherwise, and until the speaker was appointed, elected, or defined as president, he was not the president, he merely assumed the duties and responsibilities of the president. After all, while he was president (if we follow his logic), was someone else given the protocol, flag and symbol of being the speaker since the speaker wasn't available to perform his duties?

But, all said, I find it an egregious breach of protocol for the leader of the Opposition in Parliament, and president of the Awami League, to request a meeting with the President, who recently returned to work after sickness, and then decide NOT to meet with the President because, in the words of the Awami League Joint Secretary, "Our party chief wanted to meet the president when he was sick. But as he is doing quite okay now, there is no need to meet him."

When he was sick, he would have every reason not to meet her or anyone else he desired not to meet

at the time.
M M Haque
One e-mail

Prove me wrong, politicians

I liked the article Govt says wait but Tata pushes on", as it brings out the true reason for not finalising the Tata investment by the present government. And as always, when there is a conflict of interest for politicians between personal gains versus what is good for the country, there are no prizes for guessing which takes the higher priority.

To quote from the article, "The upcoming election makes it difficult to accept a \$3 billion investment proposal by the Indian conglomerate Tata, even though the deal is good for the country." (Emphasis added) This was stated by a minister. So let's see, the deal is good for the country, but because we don't know whether we are going to be in power and, therefore, get a share of the booty, we don't want to approve it. I am pretty sure this is the underlying meaning of the above statement.

Another fantastic statement, to be attributed to another minister, "The government needs to consult opposition parties before entering into a deal with Tata for a \$3 billion investment," well, do it! Why wasn't this done before? If the opposition's

Engr. Hafizur Rahman Arma
East Bashabo, Dhaka

point of view is so important, then sit down and talk about it, instead of fighting on irrelevant issues. Do something positive for the country in cooperation with the opposition.

Once again it is proven that politicians in our country are always looking out for personal gains and never any positive development of Bangladesh.

Is it a fallacy to think that one day we will have selfless politicians hell-bent on making positive contributions for Bangladesh and not for their personal bank accounts? I am pretty sure it is...however, I would love to be proven wrong!

Areader, Dubai

BTTB lagging behind

Land phone service rendered by BTTB is still the most dominant one, despite the availability of and easy access to the various mobile phone services. The mobile phone companies are competing among themselves to serve the customers better. Unfortunately, BTTB runs far behind in this regard. Last year, for a few months I was billed 5-7 times my usual amount. Due to delay in paying one such mysterious bill, my phone was disconnected. After visiting the BTTB office for few days, one clerk estimated the most recent bill using 'average method' and it came to one-fourth the excessive amount. I still do not know how to adjust the earlier six months' excessive bill that I had already paid. At this point, I would like to make a suggestion that BTTB make such arrangement that any subscriber can know the amount billed, instantly by calling certain number. This way the subscriber can be aware of his/her expenses and thus economy will be achieved while mystery will be removed. The mobile phone companies are allowing such services for many days. Moreover, BTTB can think of prepaid card so that hassle of paying the bill is lessened.

Engr. Hafizur Rahman Arma
East Bashabo, Dhaka

Tata's investment plan

After graduating from Dhaka University in 1980 we came to the USA. All of us studied Geology and finished higher studies in Geology but the crude oil price went down to \$12 per barrel. US companies stopped exploration and started importing oil from the Middle East. I moved to Wall Street and am still working there. Now the oil price is \$75 per barrel but that does not help us. We all moved on and developed careers in different fields.

Time is important and timely move is very important. No commodity price is fixed. Many countries have done well without abundance of natural resources. Just looking east to ASEAN nations and comparing them with oil resource countries of the world, we can conclude that natural resources are not enough. Two hundred years ago Adam Smith predicted correctly on North America compared to mineral rich South America.

The Tata investment proposal is unique and extra ordinary. This proposal needed extra ordinary treatment. Natural resources if not utilized fully are like the money underneath the pillow. No commodity price remains static, as a result fixed gas price could have adverse impact on Tata's bottom line too. Tata knows about it. (How about floating gas price based on London or New York spot price and a proper discount to Tata - just a thought).

Now the deal is reported to have been shelved. We are an emerging nation with great potential. The world is moving ahead and we don't want to be left behind.

Ekram Belal, Look-East Club

World Cup frenzy



PHOTO: AFP

The greatest football festival almost changed the lifestyle of people who went crazy if they missed even a single minute of a game.

That's football at its best.

Md Arif Sadeq
University of Dhaka

A tiny girl hoped to enjoy the final match but slept before it got started. Being awake she asked her father, "What about the final match, Dad? I'll enjoy it". "After four years" replied her father. Well, in the same way, football fans have to sleep up to 2010.

Really, there was a sensation throughout the world that came to an end on 10 July, albeit its hilarity had ended after the farewell of top favourites

Brazil and Argentina. Though I am not a supporter of France I appreciated the impressive performance of Zidane. Accordingly, his fans like me had been in a fluster at the sight of his being sent off. However, the worldwide curiosity and love for football eclipsed everything else. May the feelings of World Cup football always prevail in our minds so that we forget hatred and malice!

M A Swift, On e-mail

Finally, the greatest show of earth came to an end and the Italians showed their ultimate vigour, courage and willpower to achieve the unforgettable victory. It was really great. From the beginning of the World Cup, Italy played very well and they always showed that they had a

huge chance to be the ultimate winners. Though there were lots of other favourite teams, there was something special in the Azzurries. The tactics of their coach and the hard work of players are really commendable. They always kept a compact defence and a very fierce offence, which definitely had the power to shatter the defence of any team. The midfield was also a combination of aesthetic beauty and power, which helped them to have more ball possession. They won the Cup that they deserved. The cacophony of applause in the city of Berlin, as well as the whole world, was not unexpected at all.

Shoaib M. Siddiqui
Elephant Road, Dhaka

North Korea's missile diplomacy

North Korea declared with great fanfare the testing of its long-range Taeopodong II missiles, which could reach the shores of Alaska. But the long-range missile proved to be dud, failing immediately after the launch. It is clear that North Korea doesn't have the technological know-how to launch long-range missiles of any kind. Yet, the furor raised by North Korea's failed missile tests continue to receive intense attention that it does not deserve.

In fact, the missile tests only exposed the great weakness of the North Korean military capability. North Korea is an impoverished country heavily depended on China, Japan and South Korea for its economic survival. However, any sudden collapse of the North Korean

regime is likely to trigger a mass exodus of starving people toward South Korea and China and this would be a serious strain on the economies of both countries. This is why both China and South Korea are more concerned about North Korea's collapse rather than any threats emanating from its missile capabilities.

The North Korean regime may be actually trying to stave off an impending revolt inside North Korea by trying to demonstrate its military might. The missile tests are aimed at intimidating the oppressed North Koreans who cannot take any more suffering inflicted by the regime. A hungry man is an angry man and most North Koreans are going hungry every day. By showing their

military might, the North Korean leaders might be trying to intimidate their own people. It may be also aimed at blackmailing the United States and Japan to giving more aid. Both Japan and the United States should be more concerned about the immediate collapse of the North Korean state. They should remember that East Germany collapsed when its economy could not sustain the population and exodus from East Germany to West Germany became unstoppable.

The United States, Japan and China should increase their economic assistance to North Korea to stem any sudden collapse.

Mahmood Elahi
Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada

Public toilets

We need more public toilets - and it's the responsibility of various shopping centres and related places to have such facilities.

There is almost no toilet for women in busy places in the city which really speaks volumes for our total insensitivity to such an important issue. The result is that many women and girls are suffering from urinary problems.

Yes, we have many constraints but such an important matter should not be overlooked.

Atiq, University of Dhaka

Brave boatmen

We were all shocked at the tragic incident of 24 June that happened in our territorial water at anchorage "Charlie" of Chittagong anchorage of the Bay of Bengal. An explosion hit the lighter tanker "MT Banglar Saurav" and three lives were lost in the accident, the first of its kind in Bangladesh. The casualty would have been more but for the timely actions of the poor boat people who stay at the sea beach entertaining tourists for a little boat-ride. They did not lose a second to rush to the spot and picked up the survivors from water. The survivors were rescued and brought back to shore well before the authorities' "Search and Rescue team" was set in motion.

The service the poor boat people rendered should be recognised by

the nation as a whole.
Captain Mohammad Ali
14th batch cadet, Marine Academy, Chittagong

Prices of essentials

These days prices of essentials have gone beyond the affordability of common people. Prices of essentials were never so high in the last two decades. It was quite unimaginable even five years ago that the price of four eggs would be Tk. 20, one kg potato would be Tk. 18 and one kg brinjal would be Tk. 26.

The government did not take any serious step to bring down the prices of essentials, other than changing the minister. However, the new minister was not able to bring relief to the common people's life. Every other day, price of this or that commodity is going up.

Can you imagine the plight of those poor people who live by earning less than Tk. 100 per day? Is it possible for them to buy rice and dal when prices of these two most essential food items are spiralling up every day?

Politicians seem to be not at all concerned with the issue. The government and the opposition are not doing much, other than using the issue for political purpose. This shows that the welfare of people is at the bottom of their priority list. They do politics to grab power.

Mohibul, Dhaka

Opposing hartal

Mr. Sanjoy of Chittagong has written a very apt letter of protest against the hartals and disruptions in society by both the government and the opposition. I salute him for his thoughts. I pray that a time will come when the curse of hartal will be banished from our country. I remember Sheikh Hasina categorically stating in a conference of newspaper editors (DS included) that the AL would not resort to hartal when in opposition. A downright lie. Is BNP any better? No.

One way to rid us of the evil parties would be to elect independent candidates and those who have proven to be honest and patriotic in the past. But do we have many of the latter?

Another idea would be to invite willing NRBs (non-resident Bangladeshis) to come back home to run the country. Here again, the jealousy factor may render them useless!

Another option could be a good person with a big baton



for a short time. But the good intentioned person does not remain good for long. He is corrupted both from within and outside. If nothing is done, there will be more chaos and bloodshed. Who will gain? Think people, think! ...And do something about it.

Javed Helali
Pflugerville, TX, USA



Machine readable passport

I write in response to the letter by R. Khondakar of July 10. It seems that all machine readable immigration documents such as passports, visas and permanent residency cards have the sex of the bearer denoted either by a "f" or "m" (for female and male respectively) between two 7 digit number for her/his date of birth and the expiry of the document itself (2 for year, 2 for month, 2 for date plus 1 digit for cross check). I cannot imagine why a machine-readable Bangladesh passport would circumvent this apparent interna-

tional convention. However, I was indeed surprised to discover that Bangladesh passports in their current format do not state the gender of the bearer whereas to the best of my knowledge non-machine readable passports from at least one European Union country (Ireland) does.

This is an interesting topic. In its high tech quest for fraud prevention, Britain for instance has been developing an e-Passport which will contain a micro-chip encoded with information about the bearer's facial biometrics.

Facial recognition will map various features on the face, for example, the distances between eyes, nose, mouth and ears. The measurements will be digitally coded and held on an electronic chip secured in the passport page. The technology is suitable for border control checking. It enables immigration officers to produce an image of the passport holder for checking the authenticity of the document against the person.

As a technology enthusiast, a consumer and a traveller, I wonder when we will begin to see

humans being tagged with RFIDs that are embedded in our bodies; this way we will do away with credit cards, passports and other identification documents. It sounds scary to think that authorities will be able to trace our whereabouts, our habits and all pertinent information about us just by scanning us in a fraction of a second just like a bar coded merchandise!!

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