



# Chittagong Mayor



I have no issue with the Chittagong mayor opposing the agreement of a private company operating gantry cranes at the port, although I think that if there's a valid and legal agreement, that agreement should be observed until the agreement runs out. That is simple contractual law. Nor do I have issue with the Mayor giving it a political tinge when he alleged that the agreement was signed as part of a conspiracy by the immediate past four-party alliance government with the connivance of previous CPA chairman to loot the port's resources. The mayor may well be

correct that the agreement was completed under questionable circumstances. But I do have issue with the mayor threatening to besiege the port and urging "devotees" to march towards the office of the Chittagong Port and the mayor's subsequent saying the company should remove their equipment, employees and establishment from the port yard, "Otherwise nobody would be responsible if your establishment comes under attack by the agitating people." The mayor is wrong. Someone will be responsi-

ble for the safety of the company's facilities. As the elected mayor responsible for the life, safety and security of the residents and the property of the city, it is not up to the mayor to decide whom he will protect or who's safety and security will be subject to his wish or whim. If the mayor wants to employ partisan safety then he should step down and negotiate political issues as a private citizen. **M.M. Haque**  
New York

# Hasina's stand on corruption

After consecutive five years of constant anguish with the most disgracing title of the most corrupt country in the world, we finally could perform a little better. This year we are in the 3rd bottom position in the Transparency scale. We are in the 3rd position with 3 other countries, Chad, Congo and Sudan. These 4 countries scored 2.0 points out of 10 on the Transparency scale. Guinea, Iraq and Myanmar are in the 2nd position scoring 1.9. Haiti occupies the bottom position scoring 1.8. So, by country ranking we did better than four countries. Therefore, though we are not in a honourable position, we have definitely improved.

If we look at last year's score, Bangladesh along with Chad scored 1.7 out of 10 meaning 17% in percentage scale. This year Haiti stands in the bottom position scoring 1.8 out of 10, that's 18%. So, Bangladesh, including other countries below us, has improved and got higher scores. But AL chief Sheikh Hasina could not like it at all. So, she remarked that we didn't do any better and corruption didn't decrease at all. **Mohammed Giashuddin**  
New York, USA



PHOTO: AFP

# Present crisis who are our opponents?

Democracy, free and fair election, independent CG and EC, continuous blockade are the common terms today. The dreams of the nation have been replaced by nightmares, which take the face of uncertainty with the rising sun. Food, cloth, treatment, education, security are five fundamental rights of human beings. Today political allies are fighting for the voting right of 14 crore Bangladeshi citizens in a free, fair election, thereby the people have lost the assurance of moving freely in the street, their business goods are not allowed to be transported, children cannot sit for examinations, public universities are being shut down by student bodies, leaving students' life entirely stagnant... Lets have a thorough and brief look at the current situation: The reason for crisis- the two major political parties couldn't reach a common view

regarding the EC and CG. The goal of this movement- to achieve a free and fair election. But what are we watching in practice? At times I feel that I should have been born 40 years back, at least I would have known who my enemies are, against whom should I arrange my weapons. In those days when the oppressors were from a different country, we could identify them very well. But who are my opponents in Bangladesh today? These power hungry leaders and their allied people are from my next door. How can we fight our brothers? I am too insignificant a person to opine about our national life, but at least I can ask for a peaceful society, where our lives won't be obstructed by violent politics. **Sadia Mahboob**  
Faculty of Pharmacy  
Dhaka University

## Grameen Model

In the last couple of weeks I have been receiving emails and SMS from friends and families about the accolade Prof. Yunus has received -- 2006 Nobel Peace Prize. To be honest, I wasn't surprised at all; in fact I had been expecting this to come our way for a while, especially when the Grameen Model had been endorsed by the ex President of the US. Prof. Yunus's theory on poverty alleviation has been hailed as one of the most innovative solutions to the 21st century poverty problems. In this modern era, receiving the Nobel Prize is a great honour for the individual and the nation. I assume winning this prize will put our country on the map. But the overall situation in the country cannot make us optimistic. While studying for my undergraduate degree at university a friend who used to work in a bookshop presented me Prof. Yunus's autobiography which I read from cover to cover, and I loved it - actually I read the book twice! I said to myself, this is it - Prof. Yunus has found the solution and someday we will be living in a poverty free world. The autobiography gave me such an adrenalin rush; I decided to write my final year thesis on micro credit - The Grameen Model. I ploughed myself through hundred's of journals and articles and finally finished with a one month long filed trip to Bangladesh. I visited Sunamgonj and met with some of the 'destitute' who were in receipt of credit. But the picture I got there was rather bleak. My field trip to Bangladesh lasted exactly one month and I can confidently say that the Grameen Model is open to abuse. **Ahmed Choudhury**  
London, United Kingdom

## Joining LDP

I have been observing that many supporters of the BNP, Awami League, Jamaat, JP are in the

queue to join the newly formed political party-- LDP headed by Dr. Badruddoza Chowdhury and its chief architect Col (Retd) Oli Ahmed, a former parliamentarian from the BNP. The mandates of the party are to eliminate corruption to create a corruption free country ensuring even development across the country by having a honest leadership. It is indeed a good attempt to win confidence and support of the people. But my question is who are joining the new party? Initially, those who joined the LDP were from the BNP, the immediate past ruling party and these people had taken all the benefits provided to them as ruling party lawmakers. They have joined the party after completion of five years tenure of the government taking all the privileges and facilities provided by the government and at the last moment to gain cheap popularity they joined the LDP to prove that they were immaculate. They were apparently frustrated and flabbergasted with the range of corruption in the government and the ruling party. I am not a politician, but can the LDP confirm that all those who joined the party never indulged in corruption during their early days or in the past. If they had courage and boldness, then why these lawmakers did not leave the party earlier showing their relentless efforts to wipe out corruption. They did not do that, because, they wanted to avail all the privileges and immunity as the parliament member of the ruling party. Nevertheless, I respect and welcome Mr. Oli Ahmed for the courage shown by him and the decisive action that he took to fight corruption from the new political platform. Can he do that as the people surrounding him and his party are not from a distant land. They had been with other parties, received benefits from the ruling party that they belonged to and changed their

fate and fortune by undertaking many activities while in power. However, they probably thought that they would not have a better prospect in the party anymore, and decided to leave it by blaming the party leadership and their wrong doings. I would like to make a request to this party leaders, your perception and ideas are good for achieving the well-being of the country and society, but do not accept the people as members of the party those who have bad records in the political arena and joined the new party just to show their anger to the parties that they belonged to. And one day they will also leave you for the same cause. We need good governance based on strong principles to run the country where the general public want to lead a plain but decent life. **Rahim**  
Timor Leste

## Forced marriage

Recently, the British High Commission launched a project on prevention of forced marriage. The project will be implemented in partnership with British Council And Bangladesh Women Lawyer's Association (BNWLA). They will implement this project in greater Sylhet-- a part of Bangladesh from where a vast group of people immigrated to the UK. This is a very timely initiative for Sylhet. Over the last few decades one of the major demographical changes in Sylhet- a district in the northeastern part of Bangladesh, has been the development of a new community. This community is locally known "Londoni". It refers to the people who migrated to the UK. This immigrant population, now in their third generation in UK, comes to Bangladesh to marry their children off. Due to ties with culture and root, these UK-living parents want to marry their children off in Bangladesh, especially, in their

home district Sylhet. They also do it so that nobody could say that they hadn't fulfilled their parental obligation to try to make a good match for their son or daughter. But often such marriage effectively serves as an immigration opportunity for those Bangladeshis who eagerly aspire to go to the UK as immigrant. The real problem lies here. As immigrant prospect is an important concern, competition among prospective candidates becomes intense. As a result, they offer attractive dowry package. But this is not the end. Sometimes the whole marriage involves a series of crime where the victim may be abducted, abused, imprisoned, harassed and beaten. Born and brought up in Sylhet, I came across many cases where the Bangladeshi British citizens, especially, the young women were subject to forced marriage with severe consequences. I know an incident where a Bangladeshi British girl was taken to Bangladesh by her parents telling her that they were together going on holiday. Later she was being forced to get married with somebody she did not want or know. When she was adamant on her decision, her parents took away her passport and air ticket. Deprived of her travel document, she found it difficult in an alien environment to obtain help to escape. There are plenty of cases where the lives of young girls -who have just come through their O-Levels, have been ruined by their parents when they were forced into marriage with men whose fundamental qualification is nothing but selection by their parents. In our society, women who marry men of their choice are often believed to damage their family prestige. Even parents don't ask for their daughter's opinion about a marriage prospect assuming that they will accept. Sometimes they try to emotionally blackmail their children to marry the person the parents have chosen or not to

marry the person the child has decided on. If someone, especially the woman, marries of her own accord, she is socially cut off from his or her family. This boycott often ends after a while, especially when the married couple gets a kid of their own. But is it justifiable? Islam also has a strong stand against this. It recommends that parents should ascertain the will of their daughter before arranging their marriage. Sometimes, an arranged marriage might be a forced marriage in a society like us where the social environment precludes women being able to choose. So one question arises in my mind, when the consent is not freely given due to physical, mental or social pressure, why shouldn't we treat it as a forced marriage? Marriage is a sacred union between two people before the Almighty. It is not an institution that should be trifled with by anybody, but unfortunately it is. Let us hope that this project will be able to curb this malpractice by creating appropriate awareness. **Shahed Akbar**  
Student  
School of Business  
North South University

**How long will it continue?**  
The political situation of the country is worsening day by day. Our leaders are using the common people as their tool. When it's time to vote they treat the people well. After assuming power, they forget the common people. But this must not continue endlessly. Why should our normal life be affected by political activities? **Shirin Sharmin Bubly**  
Dept. of Civil Engineering  
BUET

# Inconsistency of our cricketers

The selectors were right to keep Ashrafal away from the team for a short while. No doubt he is a promising cricketer and pathfinder for the future generation. His dropping from the national team is not new, he was dropped in the past also and got back to the team in style by virtue of his talent. Since the beginning of cricket in our country, our cricketers never had consistency. Ashrafal has

been given many chances by BCB but his consistency is really poor though he is known as crowd's hero. Razin Saleh, Alok Kapali and Tushar Imran started their carrier as promising cricketers but now they are out of sight. So it is not easy for the selectors to pick up players for the national team. **Rajul Hasan**, University of Ballarat, Sydney



# High profile conspiracy?

It is quite an appalling fact that some government high-ups had a private meeting at former energy minister Mahmudur Rahman's private office at Uttara. The attempts that they made for evading the journalists were simply disgusting and ridiculous. They were found to be hiding their faces with hands and wearing clothes. Their hide and seek game has raised several questions in people's minds; a dark deed at a time when the nation is passing through very

turbulent times. Reactions from the people of all walks of life are still pouring forth. The advisors of the present caretaker government namely Dr Akbar Ali's comment is precise and straight; he is of the view that the people that gathered at a private place stepped over the government rules and regulations and thus humiliated themselves as well as the nation and stern measures should be taken against them. Now that such an incident has

taken place the authorities concerned should seriously deal with it. **Rafiqul Islam Rime**  
Agrabad, Chittagong

Once again, the nation has witnessed the true power of journalism. Our journalists have successfully revealed the clandestine meeting of in-service bureaucrats at an Uttara residence. May be this time also, the beneficiaries of this meeting will try to blame them for report-

ing this true incident as it has been done by the ex-prime minister in the case of price hike of essential commodities during the tenure of the past government. That is why I salute those journalists who have revealed the information to all. I am hopeful that still in these days of bribery and rampant corruption in Bangladesh, our journalists are trying to bring the truth to the nation. Well done journalists, you are the conscience of the nation. **Kamal Tauseef**, Canada