

The Incurable Campus

Assailants took away the life of Zakir Hossain, final year MA student and leader of BCL, on Thursday at Jagannath Hall. This is the third murder in the campus of resident students in the past two months.

With the situation being what it is, it wouldn't become the government or the ruling party or the university authorities to brag about their yeomen service in the cause of education for quite a while.

But then we must not be swayed by the horror of any situation of wanton killing and rather proceed coolly to heal the diseased areas of the campus life of our universities.

Underneath towering portraits of warrior forefathers, Vasil Hristov recounts a litany of historical slights Macedonia has suffered at the hands of neighbours over the last 1,000 years.

Tales of conspiracies, aggression and treaties broken by Serbs, Greeks, Albanians, Turks, Romanians — complete with dates, names and places — roll off his tongue in much the same way a US youth might recite the batting averages of favourite baseball players.

The 100-year-old group has its roots in the fight for the rights of Slavic inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire. Today, Hristov and his comrades are potential foot soldiers if the Balkan conflict spreads to the country that now bears the name Macedonia.

Even, on the complicated quilt of nationalities making up the Balkan peninsula, the Macedonia Question remains especially convoluted. The name 'Macedonia', actually a geographical designation, is claimed by citizens of three countries: Greece, Bulgaria and the newly independent Republic of Macedonia.

The Greeks maintain the name is an ancient Hellenic designation and home of its proudest historical figure: Alexander the Great. Athens refuses to recognise the Republic of Macedonia, which it refers to simply as Skopje, the name of that country's capital.

To press its case, Greece has imposed an economic blockade on Macedonia, cutting off the country's access to the Aegean Sea. The Bulgarians refer to south-western Bulgaria as Pirin Macedonia, after the mountain range that dominates the region.

However, we are not fully convinced that best use is being made of this valuable natural resource. There is widespread allegation of its abuse and misuse. As for abuse the main contention is that of wastage — in production, in transmission and in its utilization.

While we commend Titas Gas for the determination and efficiency with which it is bringing ever wider areas into the gas supply network, we would like to urge the energy ministry to invest necessary resources and expertise in looking for alternative sources of energy.

Bangladesh Railway: Grappling with Groans?

by Abdul Bayes

ALTHOUGH the relative importance has been on the wane, railways or trams still constitute one of the most important modes of transport all over the world.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), in its recent fifth dialogue, chose to deliberate on the current status of this vital transport mode of Bangladesh and for that to happen, there assembled all those who usually matter for BR.

Several critical elements in the evolution of the rail transport system of the country are alleged to contribute to the present state of its uncompetitiveness, subsidy dependency and poor quality service.

It is being argued by some that the gradual erosion of railway as the dominant transport system of the country and the faster growth of road transport network, contributed to a natural market failure for the BR and that the absence of east-west traffic across the Jamuna only exacerbated the plight.

Challenges and Changes Considering the fact that railway is environment friendly, less risky and also pro-poor transport mode, its importance could hardly be undermined in the context of a country like Bangladesh.

BR's comparative advantage in handling freight has been edged out, to a great extent, by other means. To regain a part of that lost empire, BR could arrange for better container handling, even provide door to door service and attempt to revise some of the tariffs.

of the services could be feasible given the current state of affairs. An innovative privatisation is reported to be already in practice.

On institutional side, an introduction of a system of reward and punishment could be another boon solicited. The division of labour and responsibility between GOB/Ministry of Communication, the Railway Board and the Railway Management should be clearly spelled out.

By and large, commercialisation of BR should assume increasing attention. It is argued that BR can only survive by attaining commercial viability which is, in fact, a function of well planned and well implemented reform agenda.

In its attempt to commercialise, first, BR could embark on private sector co-operation. Selected privatization of some

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Blagoevgrad members of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, meanwhile, say that they too want to avoid conflict with the Republic of Macedonia — although they made clear their opposition to the country's government.

Knives on Macedonian Pie

Macedonia is shaping up to be the eye of a potentially violent Balkan hurricane. David Rocks reports for Inter Press Service from Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Brewing Balkan Storm



Karakachanov denied reports that his group is stockpiling weapons to prepare for such an eventuality. He said his group seeks to avoid conflict rather than promote it.

But Karakachanov nonetheless said he could mobilise thousands of men "in a short time" if a crisis were to erupt, and any Bulgarian leader who does not lead his nation into the fight would go down in history as a traitor.

"We have great potential," he said. "You have to remember that in Bulgaria there are a million and a half people of Macedonian origin, and these people have a great deal of importance in Bulgarian politics."

The matter is further complicated by the fact that Macedonians themselves are not 100 percent convinced of the motives of their Bulgarian friends. While nearly every Bulgarian considers the two

about whether documents should be signed in one language or two.

Bulgarians say Macedonia is trying to usurp their history. By claiming Bulgarian traditions and national heroes as their own, Macedonians create tensions between two countries that should be good neighbours, Bulgarians argue.

"We understand that they want to prove themselves as a country, but we don't them to do so at the expense of our language, our history," said Konstantin Andreev, head of Balkan issues at Bulgaria's

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "You can't create a nation by stealing parts of history from other national groups."

Blagoevgrad members of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, meanwhile, say that they too want to avoid conflict with the Republic of Macedonia — although they made clear their opposition to the country's government.

If Macedonians were allowed to speak freely, they claim, they would unanimously say they are Bulgarians. Only the leaders of the country are trying to create a separate Macedonian nationality.

"We are two states but one nation," group leader Kostadin Serafimov said. "We consider Vardar to be Bulgarian land."

OPINION Science, Miracles and Annihilation of Populations

The Daily Star published on October 9, 1994, an article by Linda B. Boldo of Depthnews Asia, under the title "Science Has no Miracle Cure for World's Ills" covering some lectures presented at the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in September 1994.

Slavic natives of the two countries, for example, speak virtually the same language. But while Bulgarians maintain that the two tongues are indeed the same, Macedonians say theirs is a separate language.

To press the point, Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov, arrived in Sofia last spring with an interpreter — akin to US President Bill Clinton showing up in London and asking someone to translate British Prime Minister John Major's words to him.

The language issue has soured relations between the two countries, and several agreements between them have been held up due to questions

phorous material are still visible in the Dead Sea. It was widely believed that the city was destroyed for committing sodomy which, unfortunately, the UN seem to be interested in promoting these days.

About a million Jews were killed by the Roman conquerors in Palestine in 70 AD, millions were killed by Changiz Khan and his Mongol hordes in the thirteenth century in Middle East and Europe, plague killed ten million in the middle ages in Europe, earthquakes killed millions in Japan, China, Georgia, Iran and Mexico several times, six million Jews were killed in Europe during the Second World War, man-made famine killed ten million in Bengal province of India in 1943, tidal bores wiped out millions in Bangladesh in 1970 and 1992, millions have been killed by a process called ethnic cleansing in Europe and Africa during the last two years, the two World Wars of the century wiped out many millions in Europe, Asia and Africa. During 1943 there was no shortage of food in Bengal.

The colonial government in power, then fighting a war, banned the movement of foodstuff which resulted in the famine. During the last several years, many people died in East Africa due to starvation as enough food could not be produced because of severe drought rendering normal agricultural activity difficult.

Among the catastrophes mentioned above annihilating large segments of world populations, none except one was linked with shortage of food or resources. The lone exception is the recent drought in East Africa. This event however cannot be linked with any of the phenomena mentioned by Prof Kendall, such as depletion of resources, too much industrialisation, pollution or green revolution, etc. The drought of East Africa was as unpredictable as earthquakes taking place all over the world these days rather frequently. In fact if Prof Kendall cares to think, he will find that populations are wiped out when they least expect it. If someone predicts it, usually he is decried as doomsday prophet!

The most surprising thing is that the UN was found to be trying to promote those factors in underdeveloped countries which often served as reasons for wiping out of populations in the past.

Yes, in the recorded history of human race there were many instances of brutal annihilation of population, but as we know there was no instance of annihilation due to food shortage or resource shortage. Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century AD reported about the complete destruction of a city named Qamran on the bank of the Dead Sea in about 2000 BC. During a fateful night sulphurous material erupted from the earth and there were thunder storms from the sky which ignited the erupted material. As a result the whole city was reduced to ashes in a few hours. Traces of the sul-

phorous material are still visible in the Dead Sea. It was widely believed that the city was destroyed for committing sodomy which, unfortunately, the UN seem to be interested in promoting these days.

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To the Editor...

Traffic problems

Sir, Dhaka is indeed a beautiful city, with its big and broad roads, nice looking commercial and private buildings, lovely shops and shopping arcades, trees and parks. Everything is fine with the city except for the rather disorganised traffic. It seems no serious plans and development has ever been entrusted upon to modernise and control the Dhaka traffic, except for the very few exceptions like, check on inter city speed limit and stopping of trucks during the day time, but this too disappeared on its own. There is only the routine traffic week. It certainly has its role, but it is not doing much for protecting lives, except for keeping an eagle watch on blue books and other related documents. Proper steps must be taken to improve the city traffic situation, that will bring a sigh of relief to the millions of its inhabitants. How about if the following steps are taken?

of main roads, causing unexpected obstacles to others. 4. Stop plying of trucks during the day and not till 9 pm. 5. Stop plying push carts, vans and other sluggish carriers. 6. Prohibit illegal occupation of road side by vendors. 7. Caution motor car owners of the black smokes and reckless driving. 8. Create public awareness about the right use of the zebra crossing, which is absolutely ignored these days. 9. Impose heavy fine and punishment on defaulters, so that no one will dare to violate the law. And measures then should be properly monitored to ensure effectiveness. Such measures will not only check road accidents, but will also help grow the city dwellers' trust on the administration concerned.

harder, bigger and painful and at the same time I was losing weight and feeling very weak. It soon became a grave concern to me. I had to rush to a doctor. While being checked up, I also noticed a mark of concern on the doctor's face. Just after the growth was shown, I was asked to have a biopsy and various kinds of blood tests. After about a week when I went to collect the reports, I was informed that I was suffering from a malignant tumour. I was not surprised at all, as my physical condition told so. After a few days, I was also flown to Woodlands, Calcutta, where the diagnosis was exactly the same. My wife, with whom I had some differences, has been away in Boston, USA. She has been informed about my illness but not the whole truth. My house is now full of relatives coming to see me.

another day." The creation is not justified, I thought to myself again, while still looking down, but I soon realised that "all such comforts, pleasures and also sufferings are only temporal. The ultimate beneficiary is he whom Allah the Almighty is satisfied with. And the pleasure in the Heaven is even greater, everlasting and beyond human imagination.

Now-a-days I lie mostly in my bed, recollecting memories of my best time of life, specially the childhood days. How time passes by! I could not do much in life. I live in a rented house in a locality where cars find it difficult to get in. By the way, I would like to make a request to the younger ones, whom life has so much to offer, that they "be good boys and girls," lead a decent life. Be good to your parents and neighbours. Concentrate more of your time to studies. The land needs you. Your parents love you." I don't know what is in store for me in the other world, but my wishes are: Gonna build myself a castle high in the sky. There'll be clouds outside my window. Gonna turn myself to shadow, so that I can see your face. Good bye.

A departing soul Dhaka

The last wishes

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