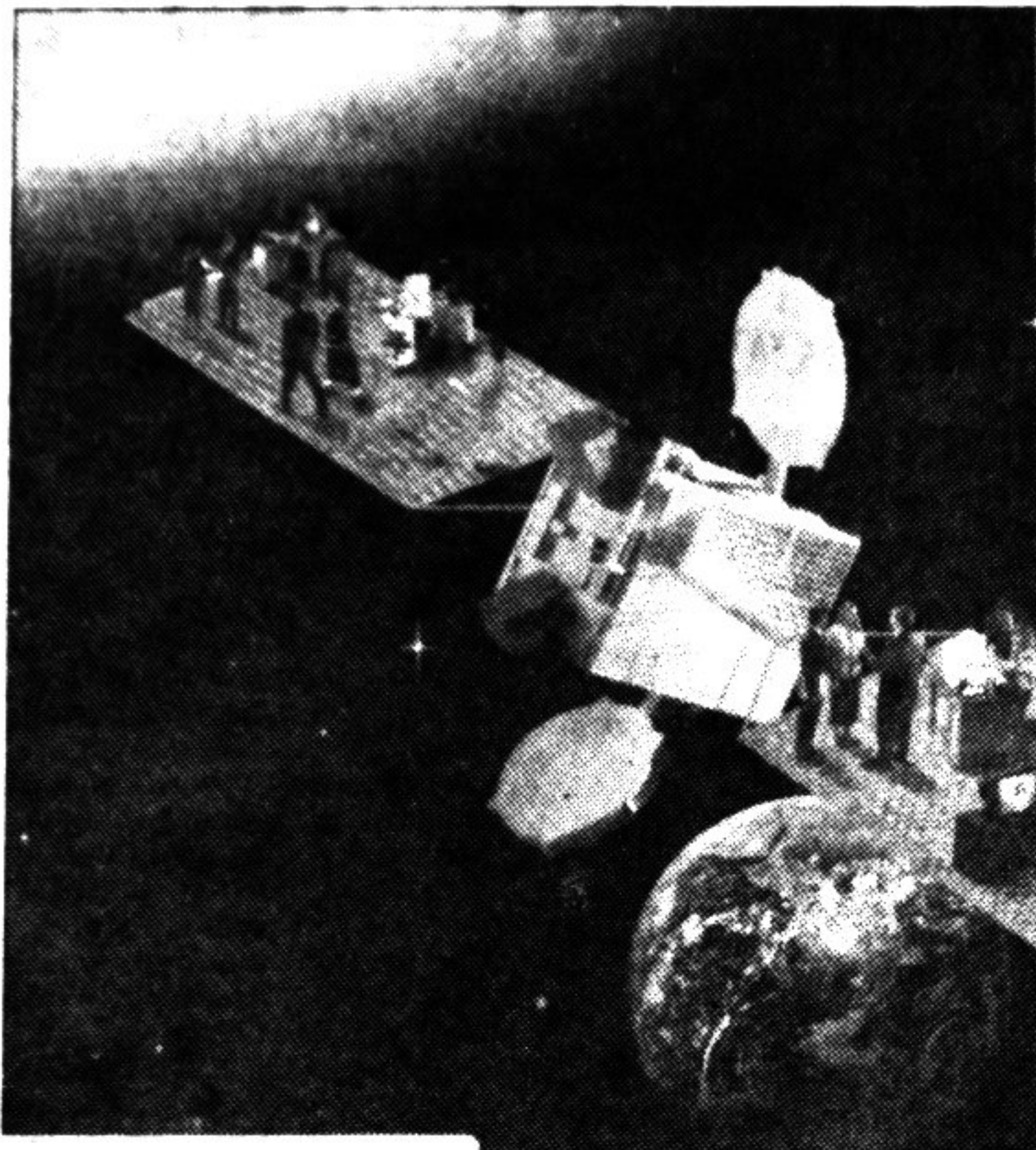


LIVE FROM THE INTERNET

The following articles, or "posts" (to use Internet parlance), come from the Bangladesh Internet newsgroup called "soc.culture.bangladesh," or SCB. In this newsgroup, Internet users from around the world, mostly Bangladeshis, discuss issues relevant to Bangladesh. In "Live from the Internet" the Daily Star reprints these posts verbatim (complete with English language errors) - just as they would appear on your computer screen. They have only been edited for size and relevance to the subject matter.



Editor's Note . .

What is "Live from the Internet"?

Curious about what Bangladeshi expatriates think about our current political crisis? Just ask. Want to know what it's like being a Bangladeshi student at an American university? Just ask. Want to know about the Bangladeshi community in UK, Middle East, Canada, Japan, Australia, Russia - anywhere? Just ask. In this way, we hope to link you, our readers, directly to the rest of the world (anonymous comments are also accepted).

The following articles and comments come from the largest network of computers in the world - the Internet. Over four crore people from around the globe are directly connected to the Internet, including hundreds of expatriate Bangladeshis living in such places as East Asia, North America, Australia, the Middle East, Scandinavia and Central Europe. By connecting their computers to local Internet host sites through modems and telephone lines, Internet users can exchange massive amounts of information - everything from simple New Year's greetings, to the latest satellite images, to important breakthroughs in medicine. All in a blink of the eye.

The result: A vast new world - a vast new world of information.

The following articles, or "posts" (to use Internet parlance), come from the Bangladesh Internet newsgroup called "soc.culture.bangladesh," or SCB. In this newsgroup, Internet users from around the world, mostly Bangladeshis, discuss issues relevant to Bangladesh. In "Live from the Internet" the Daily Star reprints these posts verbatim (complete with English language errors) - just as they would appear on your computer screen. They have only been edited for size and relevance to the subject matter.

And now you, the readers of the Daily Star, are also connected to the Internet.

Every Tuesday, the Daily Star will publish "Live from the Internet" and invite your responses (see address). The Daily Star will then type your responses into its computer network and send them back to the Internet newsgroup where they will be read and commented on by participants from around the world. Interesting and relevant discussions, including your own comments, will appear in "Live from the Internet" during the following weeks.

So start writing. And welcome to the world of international computer networking.

Daily Star to Publish SCB

Daily Star
dstar@dhaka.agni.com
Dhaka, Bangladesh:

The Daily Star is pleased to announce the introduction of soc.culture.bangladesh into its pages.

Somnath Sen
ssen@scf.usc.edu
University of Southern California, USA:

What does this mean to non-Bangladeshi bengalis? Can only citizens of Bangladesh respond? What if I want to say HOWDY to my friends in Bangladesh who might just look through the

What if I want to say HOWDY to my friends in Bangladesh who might just look through the Star once in a while? Besides my roots are in Bangladesh.

Naeem Mohalemen
naeem@ix.netcom.com
New York, USA:

I think the extracts from scb that DAILY STAR is printing would be an excellent opportunity for folks from West Bengal to get their opinions exposed to Bangladesh audience.

So my advice, whenever discussing a topic that you think might be of interest to sc.bangladesh [e.g. satyajit ray, tagore, dul banga theory, sylhetis, mujtaba ali, baje golpo XXI, 1971, etc.] please cross-post to sc.bangladesh, bearing in mind that if your article is interesting, it may show up in DAILY STAR paper of Bangladesh.

On behalf of the Bangladeshi community of Logan I Bindu Wish you all for the coming New year!!!!!!

—Dewan Gazzali, Utah, USA

Happy New Year Bangladesh!

Dewan Gazzali
sl6g@cc.usu.edu
Utah State University, USA

The 25th Victory day was observed at Utah State University, Logan, Utah. We observe the victory day on 16th december and had a cultural program followed by a dinner party arranged by Bangladeshi Student Association in the next day. About 75 Bangladeshis from different states joined us at the party. On behalf of the Bangladeshi community of Logan I Bindu Wish you all for the coming New year!!!!!!

Who Decides Hartal?

Swapon Ghosh
ghosh@minerva.ias.hiroshima-u.ac.jp
Hiroshima University, Japan:

The people are the supreme authority to decide whether opposition demand is reasonable or not. Of course people can reject Hartal if they think it is not reasonable.

Zahid Hussain

zahid@rajshahi.demon.co.uk
London, UK:

Indeed people are supreme judge of whether a demand is just or otherwise. However, it is extremely difficult to gauge whether the hartals are indeed supported by the public. Political parties in Bangladesh are not unknown to pay hoodlams to incite riot and enforce hartals by threatening and conducting violence to the extent of looting and burning businesses, beating up taxi drivers and damaging their vehicles.

Do tell us if these acts are democratic and reasonable? People should be able to withdraw their labour in trade disputes, where their pay and condition is involved (ie as the dispute in France).

The current wave of hartals in Bangladesh are political in nature, people are not withdrawing their labour because they have a dispute with the government but because the opposition parties are engaged in activities to oust the incumbent government.



Disclaimer

The Internet is a global medium of communication and expression. It is free from all sorts of censorship and restrictions. It is truly a PEOPLE'S FORUM.

The opinions expressed in these columns are the author's own as they appear to all receivers of the Internet. We reproduce them authentically to permit our readers to know what Bangladeshis abroad are feeling and saying.

The Daily Star is not responsible for the opinions expressed in these columns.

Vivid Memories of 1971 and the "Children of Three Families"

Montaz Ali
mali@kasper.abo.fi
Finland:

Dear friends: This is the months of our glorious victory. Let us remember those who sacrificed their lives for the cause of our true feelings that we are an independent nation with our own identity and dignity.

I was a little boy and as obvious in this month my vivid memories of war takes me back to the site where 103 (one hundred and three) the brightest sons of our land were brutally murdered in my village.

My home was in the front-line and as a result we had to leave home and take shelter in an abandoned hindu house two kilometer away. Every week I used to come to my home with my father, uncle or cousins when opportunity came. I saw my mother and

and 10-15 muktijodha were killed in that battle.

One day while I was playing with the others in a field near to the main road I saw Tara Miah (a village doctor, well respected person of Bhitardond bazar) was being taken away by several youths. Later he was gun down with three others (unknown) in the foot ball ground in the Nagesawari bazar. After Liberation his sons discovered his mutilated body in a shallow grave and brought it back home. Some of "these children" were involved in his killing.

Children of C were responsible of burning houses. In Katal-bari one kilometer from kurigram town one whole village were burnt into ashes in the leadership of Tasul Islam Chaudhuri (Son of C). That was the village of former VP of Kurigram College and now a Local ALer.

Here is an example of how Internet works. Two Bangladeshis - one in the USA, another in Hong Kong - argue with one another about Rakkhi Bahini's role and present political issues as if they are sitting across a table.

Read and join their debate. If you wish.

Sajedur Rahman
mrdsaj@minna.ccc.ttu.edu
USA:

Now let me tell little bit how widely the propaganda was and is being made against AL and Sk. Mujib. Khaleda Zia always tells about the Rakkhi Bahini. 'Rokhi Bahini was nothing but an extra force like police. But it was stronger than police force.'

Parvez, Hong Kong: Then why not to reinforce the police force? Why to establish a new force under the control of a party leader? Why was it para-military in nature? Why not civil force? If they would have reinforced the Police force, it would serve a long term purpose of Police capability to fight crime.

Rahman, USA: This is the background of 'Rokhi Bahini'.

Parvez, Hong Kong: No. This is not. This is wrong and misleading.

Rahman, USA: I don't say that Rokhi Bahini did their job as perfectly as they were supposed to.

Parvez, Hong Kong: I think they did for what they were created.

Rahman, USA: I guess nobody will answer affirmatively here. Now if asked if we need police force, no negative answer will come, although most people are sick of what they're doing.

Parvez, Hong Kong: Wrong comparison. Whatever police is doing, they don't have tyrannical power. They are corrupt. And many police are often punished as well. Your Rakkies, had unlimited power. Rakkies, unusual in their cruelty, barbarity and power could only be compared with Hitlers Gestapo. Almost all of the police detainees came back home but few of Rakkies detainees had the fortune to return alive. Army had legitimate reason to be scared when they see Rakkies being armed with Heavy Mortar and light artillery.

Rahman, USA: After Zia took over the power, he himself said that Rokhi Bahini did not have anything - no good armaments, even not a good training as that of army.

Parvez, Hong Kong: That was in comparison with military. But Rakkies were a growing threat.

Rahman, USA: But during Sk. Mujib's ruling, Zia and other

Debate on role of Rakkhi Bahini and Other issues

Parvez, Hong Kong: They started terrorising after they were not allowed to speak openly. Things that happened actually was that when they were actually used as weapon of language, they started speaking in the language of weapon.

Rahman, USA: Police force was not enough to fight against them. The need of stronger force arised then.

Parvez, Hong Kong: Then why not to reinforce the police force? Why to establish a new force under the control of a party leader? Why was it para-military in nature? Why not civil force? If they would have reinforced the Police force, it would serve a long term purpose of Police capability to fight crime.

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Rahman, USA: But during Sk. Mujib's ruling, Zia and other

army officers were responsible for the propa-ganda that Rokhi Bahini is a parallel force to army and they are having better arms and better training than army do. This was one of the reason which provoked the coup against Sk. Mujib.

Parvez, Hong Kong: Wrong. Military never said Rakkies are getting better training. They said Rakkies were getting better opportunities and eating up a big amount of the budget.

Rahman, USA: AL deserves this chance. Why are we so reluctant to see AL in power?

Parvez, Hong Kong: I can speak for myself. I am scared that Rakkie era will return once Awami league assumed power.

Rahman, USA: AL was in power only for three and half years when our country was almost demolished condition after our liberation war, and there was no recognition of Bangladesh from the biggest donors like US, Middle Eastern countries, and many European countries. In this situation, it was very hard to provide a square meal for the common people, let alone other fundamental needs.

Parvez, Hong Kong: This is correct. I admit.

Rahman, USA: Besides many people took advantage of the Mujib's liberalism.

Parvez, Hong Kong: Those are also Awami Leaguers. Infact Awami people misled Mujib and brought his fall.

Rahman, USA: But at least we should believe that Sk. Mujib tried his best to build the country. In many respect, his success was tremendous even in such an adversity. Khaleda Zia also kept telling of her first three years in power that the autocracy took away everything, so we should allow her more time to show her work. Well we did. But we did not do that to Sk. Mujib.

Parvez, Hong Kong: Mujib's attempt was thwarted completely by selfish and opportunistic leaders. Even if Mujib were in power for decades, nothing better could be achieved unless he could shrug off the honey sucking bees around him.

Rahman, USA: Many of us like to think that Khaleda Zia would

keep her mouth shut and congratulate AL if AL won that election instead of BNP. Actually it would never happen. If you were reading the news-papers before the '91 election, you might have seen many statements made by Khaleda against the Shahabuddin's ad-ministration. I remember couple of them. Once in a public meeting, she told she got information that some people in the administration are working for other party (she explicitly did not tell AL). In another public meeting, she said if you people saw any rigging, prevent them with bamboo sticks (just "prevent them" would be OK, but the addition "bamboo sticks" is obviously instigative). At the beginning of election result announcement in TV. She always had doubt that administration and the election commission were not in favor of her party. When Shahabuddin Ahmed said that he could not hand over the power to Khaleda because of constitutional barrier then - Constitution had to be changed to make this process legal. Khaleda made some statements to embarrass him. If you impartially think, then you will realize she would not stop at just making the statement like 'Sukho Kerchup!', it would go far beyond that.

Parvez, Hong Kong: This is true. Khaleda would probably not be perfect in democratic culture if she would have lost the election. But this doesn't stand as a justification for Hasina's activities.

Rahman, USA: We are blaming the opposition parties, especially AL for calling so many hartals. I also agree this. But at a same time, why don't we also blame the government party for this crisis.

Parvez, Hong Kong: Government party is sufficiently lenient over this issue. It is the opposition which is stubborn. All foreign mediators too unilaterally accused the opposition for lingering the crisis.

Rahman, USA: Obviously they are also part of this and have the biggest responsibility to end this crisis. Just blaming a particular party and ignore every fault of another won't solve our current political crisis. We should understand what is good for us, for our country, not for those politicians and their parties and should compel them to do what we want.

Parvez, Hong Kong: I agree.

This is the background of 'Rokhi Bahini'.
— Rahman, USA

No. This is not. This is wrong and misleading.
— Parvez, Hong Kong

... my vivid memory of the war takes me back to the site where 103 of the brightest sons of our land were brutally murdered in my village.

my sisters were always in tears. On several occasions we had to hide in a small bush or in the "jute ground" amid fears of raid by pakis and the rajakers.

Kurigram was a place of three veteran Muslim Leaguers (ML) and Many of the crime were committed by the "children of three families". Here is the descriptions of "three families".

A. Family of Kasim Miah in Olipur.

B. Family of Alhaj Saifur Rahman in Nagesawari.

C. Family of Ponir Miah in Kurigram.

The eldest son of family A (Maidul Islam Mukul) was the supreme commander of the command council of rajakers with sector and subsector commander from family B (in a lesser degree) and family C. All of these three "Great Houses(?)" were turned into mini cantonments. Family A had several mini cantonments in and around of their house where many suspected Awami Leaguers (AL) and young people (suspected Freedom fighters (FF)) were tortured and even murdered.

One of the cantonment of A once was attacked by FF

More tragedy started when the frontlines were shanging rapidly and one day FF were fighting back. Reinforcements were arriving shortly with two vehicles of FF and they were just passing "Bapanier hat" where (in my village) they were ambushed by enemies. I had in the ambulance "children" of A and C families were present. Later however these "children" revisited the site and shouted at the deadbodies saying "indian agent" and "where is your joy bangla now" etc.

Their slogan 'joy bangla' is now abandoned probably because it is too powerful! How can we respect them without their so beloved slogan 'joy bangla'?

After the tragic death of Bhabgobandhu these three ML families' soon became BNP and their children went on to become the cabinet minister and MPs.

Can anybody please tell me what is the difference between:

(a) Killers of 1971 who are now JJ and

(b) Killers of 1971 who are now BNP

Live Debate Between Khalida Zia and Sheikh Hasina?

Rinku Anisuzzaman
anisuzzaman.1@postbox.acs.ohio-state.edu
Ohio State University, USA:

I just read that Hasina is willing to debate zia, but only if the debate is broadcast on national TV and radio. Hasina has put the country to so much pain, and all of a sudden, she is willing to talk with the BNP. My question is, why now? why did she not do this when this whole "crisis" started?

Her selfish motives are known by all Bangladeshis. She will easily sacrifice the country for her own needs. Bangladesh does not need her, she needs Bangladesh. Its because of people like Hasina that our country is going nowhere. While I don't know much about Bangladeshi politics, I know that Khalida was elected through a reasonably fair election (by Bangladeshi standards). Where is Hasinas proof at massive vote riggin by the BNP? Does she have any proof in the first place?

Swapon Ghosh
ghosh@minerva.ias.hiroshima-u.ac.jp
Hiroshima University, Japan:

I think You don't know the beginning of this crisis. Long Long month ago Hasina offered this debate to the PM Begum Zia. The PM replied, she agreed in any such debate, but it must be in the parliament.

[The previous] election was conducted by a non-party caretaker Govt. But during telephone conversation with Hasina The PM lost her memory. It is not possible for You to learn how Bangladeshi politicians manipulate vote results. Gen. Ziaur Rahman got 98% vote on his favour in a referendum.

Ershad was more clever; he got much less than 98%. Go to Bangladesh and ask Magura People about the proof of vote rigging. Wishing you a happy and prosperous New Year.

Montaz Ali
mali@kasper.abo.fi
Finland:

What's wrong if such a debate is to be held in TV and radio? I think that is a good news. At least people can learn to both of them (Hasina and the PM). For the crisis all parties deserves criticism for their fair share, why Sk Hasina alone? As to the vote rasing, I think people of Magura know better than us. Yes, I agree, it's time to "put up or shut up" now.

Sajf Ahmed
sahmed@cs.obertin.edu
Oberlin, USA:

Well, lets ask similar questions of Khaleda. She has been saying for the past 2 months that she's willing to offer a caretaker government, it's the 90 days idea she doesn't like. Why now? Why not two years ago when the AL asked BNP to introduce bill for a constitutional amend-ment to allow for a caretaker government for all parliamentary elections. There was nothing wrong with the demand then, and there's nothing wrong with it now. Though I personally don't think that would have averted the crisis, I think Hasina would have found some other excuse for a 'movement', but a provision for caretaker government might have averted future crises.

As for the debate, I'm all for it. There should be more live debates. Dirty tricks or not, it will expose the politicians.

Massacre of 21st February

Anonymous
oshrtony@ix.netcom.com
USA:

Someone recently told me that the 21st of February occupies a special place in Bangladesh national life and that on this date in 1952, more than a 100,000 citizens were massacred in Dhaka during protests over the status of the Bengali language. Could someone shed more light on this event and its significance viz. the development of Bangladesh nationalism. I personally find the number of casualties quite incredible, especially on a single date. This is not to suggest that a smaller number would diminish the importance of the event and its memory, just trying to get an accurate picture.

Sajf Ahmed
sahmed@cs.obertin.edu
Oberlin, USA:

Your facts are not entirely correct. In all 3 people were killed and hundreds injured. But it is true that the day is very significant in the history of Bangladesh. Bengalis of East Bengal sacrificed a lot towards the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Thousands of lives were lost in the communal riots of the time. But almost immediately after the creation of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, in his first ever visit to Dhaka (then Dacca) declared that Urdu would be the official language of all of Pakistan. Bengalis felt a tremendous sense of betrayal. Urdu was the language of less than 20% of Pakistan whereas Bengali was spoken by more than half the population. Bengalis began to feel like a colonized nation once again. Protests began over the declaration and gradually grew in intensity when in 1952 hundreds of thousands of protesters marched in the streets of Dhaka. Police attacked the crowds with sticks, and guns which resulted in three deaths and thousands of injuries. After that incident, Bengali was declared the official language of East Pakistan. The language movement is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it enforced the notion that Bangladesh was once again a colonized nation. Secondly, it shifted Bengali nationalism from a religion based one, which resulted in the breakup of British India into India and Pakistan, to a language based one. This, along with economic exploitation of East Pakistan, led to the creation of various autonomy movements and at least one (NAP) movement for independence.

A Question

Abul Anisuzzaman
anisuzzaman.1@postbox.acs.ohio-state.edu
Ohio, USA:

Why does Bangladesh have so many ministries? It seems that for a country our size, our bureaucracy is overwhelming. We have ministries for everything - railway, works, fisheries. Some of these ministries are essential I know, but com on, cant we cut down on some of the red tape?

AND NOW MY TOP 7 PROPOSED MINISTRIES

1. ministry of pan affairs
2. ministry of sweets
3. ministry of caretaker governments
4. ministry to ensure that vote rigging does not occur
5. ministry of pandit affairs
6. ministry of student violence and homemade bomb affairs
7. ministry of hartals

while this list is absurd, so are some of the ministries that ACTUALLY DO exist in Bangladesh.

CA
kgazi@ix.netcom.com

Funny you should say that, for fact is stranger than fiction! Notice my comment "BD must evolve its own characteristic democracy". To truly implement DEMOCRACY in BD I can vouch for at least 6 of your 7 items listed above "(: (: (: BTW, dont forget The Ministry of Rickshaws!

Best Bengali Cookbook

Sangeeta Mukherjee
sangeeta.mukherjee@eng.sun.com, California, USA:

Could you recommend a Bengali cuisine cookbook? The ones that I have are all written by Non-Bengali, so I am assuming that they are second hand recipes. Do you use a cookbook that you think offers authentic recipes? Also, what bookstore would carry this?

S. Bari
shahedaziz@mail.utexas.edu
University of Texas, USA:

One excellent book that all Bangladeshis girls get when they get married (often several copies) is called Ranna Khaddo Pushti. It's written by Siddiqua Kabir, who is a professor in Dhaka and has some wonderful recipes. It covers basic dishes to very fancy stuff (and we all agree Muslims are better at the biryani type food). Just use your own judgement with the quantities - she tends to use a bit too much oil. Good eating!

The newsgroup, soc.culture.bangladesh, has been provided courtesy of Agni BBS.

Please send or fax your Internet posts to: "Live from the Internet"

Daily Star, House 11, Road 3, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205. Fax: 863035.

If you have an email account, you can email your post directly to: soc.culture.bangladesh@pus.bull.com

Letters should be no more than 500 words in length and titled. Anonymous letters will also be accepted.