

DHAKA WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 1996

Hartal: can be stopped forever

KABIR MD ZAHANGIR
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 USA:

How can we get ride off "Hartal" from Bangladesh to improve our economic growth. Can we make an constitutional amendment with new Sangsad about "Hartal band".

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 Canada:

Now here we have something to ponder about. Amendment / clause banning "hartal" is not a bad idea. But hartal/strike is a democratic right. But again there has to a limit to this "democratic right".

So, how about this? Allow hartal, but place a limit to it. For example, here in the Western countries, if some of the services are considered essential, the strikers providing these services can be ordered/forced back to work or the strike may be considered illegal. So we have to etch something of this sort in our constitution, such as, a political party can not go on a country/city wide hartal shutting down everything. Hartal will only be allowed by individual organizations. For example, transport workers may go on a strike (but a political party will not be allowed to shut down transportation in the name of hartal), etc. Politicians can always fight in the parliament, in meetings, on radio, TV (here I absolutely agree with Shabbir (UK) and Dr. Harun uz Zaman that media should be neutral, and politicians should be allowed to debate issues there when necessary). Ideas? (Let's provide some input to our fellow countrymen on this issue keeping in mind that Daily Star will bring this to wider Bangladeshi readers.)

Zia Hassan
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 USA:
 The caretaker government doesn't have the necessary authority to make that change to the constitution or enact it as a law otherwise. The next elected government, can do something in this regard. However, we must remember that calling strikes are part of our democratic rights. (But exploding crackers to make sure that it holds is not. Again, hopefully law and order situation under the next elected government would be better and there would be no cracker

explosions to hold people hostage.)

Another thing that I am sure that we all realize, is that making newer laws wouldn't help much in attaining change in the political practices, as some other things like democracy within the parties and within the nation everywhere would.

In another of my postings/followup, I have suggested that to get rid of hartals, we must find an effective alternative to hartal. An alternative that would not be used for the cause of a person, or of a party, but solely for the cause of the nation.

In that same followup posting I also suggested that perhaps we can have an amendment to the constitution, that would allow us to oblige the government to discuss an issue, or hold a gono vote (this is more expensive) on that issue, provided 10 million people sign (or tip shoi) in favor of that issue.

However, as I have indicated in the original posting that this is merely an elementary idea. Something, perhaps can be done along this line. I don't know. If you guys have anything constructive please feel free to contribute. Thank you.

Akbar Hossain
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 USA:

I am 100% in favor of HARTAL Band for atleast 20 years in Bangladesh. No ONE can call for hartal period. The constitution amendment must also include if any one calls for hartal, the leader(s) will be responsible for any death and destruction.

Before we rush to yet another election, few things need to be ironed out: When can you call an election "the fairest election held so far" as "karchupche", when Hasina WINS or when someone else WINS.

Hasina must answer this question before she decides to participate in the next election. What happens IF she LOSES? Is she ready to accept the result? Other wise we are wasting our time and money calling for another election. You might as well give her the power. That way atleast the lawlessness will end and no more people will be hacked to death alive or burnt alive in a bus into which a fuel bomb was dropped.

Zia Hassan
 zisan@usit.edu

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The articles, or "posts" (to use Internet parlance) published in this page come from the Bangladesh Internet news group called "soc.culture.bangladesh," or SCB. In this newsgroup, Internet users from around the world, mostly Bangalees, 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.

BIOSPHERE III: An Unprecedented Ecocide in the Gangetic Bangladesh

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The humanitarian distress is so much that words cannot tell. It has been difficult to convince even the environmentalists of the extent of the damage. This is just a manifestation of the fact that our civilized world can grasp upto a certain extent.

3,172 cubic meters per second during May to November, and 1,726 cubic meters per second during rest of the year. The combined flow in the Ganges-Brahmaputra was 2.4 times the monsoon water rainfall. The Ganges water would flow through the tributaries and canals to thousands of flood plains, ponds, and ditches which were the breeding ground of 109 species of fishes. The distributed surface water resources were the "life blood" of the Ganges

The habitat of an unknown number of aquatics and amphibians was destroyed. Among the main species of fishes, two are extinct and about thirty are endangered. In the early nineties, compared to early seventies, the annual fish production dropped by at least 100,000 lbs costing more than 100 million dollars. The cheapest and major sources of animal protein (6.25%) and calcium (25%) for the world's 40 million poorest people living in the Ganges basin people were lost.

The Ganges-Kabobad Irrigation Project serving 14,164 sq km are in jeopardy. About 48,039 sq km of the land has lost the cash crop jute forever. The production of 1,034 million lbs of mangoes annually has been affected, costing over \$ 300,000,000. The saline water front has engulfed about 52,000 sq km affecting 45 million trees (60% marketable timber) of the Sundarbans, the world's largest (5,697 sq km)

compensate for the surface water resources, about 7,075 cu meters of groundwater are withdrawn annually to irrigate 1 sq km of land. Additionally, the Varendra Research Project extracts 386 cubic meters of groundwater every second.

More than 50% of the families are entirely dependent on groundwater apart from the general use of groundwater in drinking by all people. Due to over extraction and in absence of adequately recharging, groundwater is being depleted at a maximum rate of about one-half meter per year.

Ordinary hand-tubewells cannot extract water from 8 meters depth anymore. About 60,000 Tara pumps have been set up to extract water from 12 meters. The feedback effects of overextraction of groundwater is further worsening the situation.

To increase the flow in the Ganges in the postdiversion dry sea-son, India proposed to Bang-ladesh to divert 2,833 cubic meters per sec out of the Brahmaputra's dry season flow of 3,121 cubic meters per second to the Ganges up-stream of Farakka barrage. Bangladesh rejected it because

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Since the Bangladeshis did not raised their voice in time, a delayed response to this utter destruction rings an exaggeration of the actual atate to others.

Bangladesh, the world's largest delta is located at the lower end of the Ganges-Brahmaputra basin, the world's largest agricultural plain. Before 1975, the Ganges river which enters the delta from the northwest had flows of

basin ecosystems. India's unilateral withdrawal of the Ganges water by the Farakka barrage since 1975 has reduced the flood season flow by, at least, 25% in quantity and duration, and the dry season flow by, at least, 66%. As a result, by 1983, compared to prediversion period, the distributary areas dropped to 41%, number of shoals in rivers increased by 7 times, the shoal area increased by 12 times, the total river area dropped to 81%, and the navigable routes shrank to 24%. A few million people lost their professions.

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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.

— Editor.

The monsoon rainfall has decreased by about 50%. To

she does not to create another Biosphere III in the Brahmaputra basin.

Further, the 335 km-long link canal for water diversion will cost 1,200 sq km of land for the land-scarce Bangladesh and will make 1 million homeless. India has further constructed sixteen more barrages/dams, the most important one is the Tipaimukh Dam on the Barak river in Manipur/Mezorom states. The dam will store 15,900 million cubic meters of water reducing the flow in the Meghna basin, and turning it into another Biosphere III.

Thoughts on BD Constitution

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duce the first bill in the new parliament would be the Care-taker Govt bill) before the election, my hunch is that, a future PM, when he/she gets power my side track the issue, as KZ has done with the Special Powers act and the autonomy of TV and Radio.

Another issue is Indemnity bill, and this needs to be erased from BD constitution. A democratic constitution can not have an undemocratic provision. Gen Zia govt did it, and his govt was not democratic anyway. Cantonment democracy contradict with real Peoples democracy. I also wish to see a commitment from the opposition parties regarding the removal of Special acts provisions and extend autonomy to TV and Radio, and to allow private ownership of TV and Radio stations.

Lastly, I like to see a neutral and non biased judiciary. BD const does not have to copy US or UK model, however, the const needs to ensure independent judiciary system, so that it can challenge the parliament if necessary.

Good news for Bangladesh

Dr. Abdul Hamid Molla
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Source: The Globe and Mail (Canada), April 16, 1996

The world's 48 least-developed countries are now growing faster economically than the rest of the world according to an annual survey by UN Conference on Trade and Development (The survey to be published today [19/04/96]). The survey said Bangladesh once perceived as basketcase appears to be well on the road to

economic recovery. The report also notes the fastest-growing LDCs focused on exports, and did not rely heavily on a small range of commodities. Bangladesh is named among the best performers!

The report notes a significant drop in the LDCs share of global trade, from 1.7 percent of both exports and imports in 1970 to 0.4 percent of exports and 0.7 percent of imports in 1994.

The newsgroup, "soc.culture.bangladesh", has been provided courtesy of Agni Systems Limited (Tel. 882379).

You can also take participate in this page by sending us your views/questions/comments/inquiries (anything that you want). The Daily Star will then send your responses into the Internet newsgroup free of charge where they will be read and commented on by participants from around the world. Letters should be no than 100 words in length and titled.

Please send or fax your Internet posts to: M. Shamimuzzaman, Page incharge, "Live from the Internet", The Daily Star, House 11, Road 3, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205. (GPO Box no: 3257) Fax 863035.

Wednesday 8th May
 (All programmes are in local time. We recommend programmes printed in bold)

BTV

3:00 Opening Announcement Al-Quran Programme Summary 2:10 Recitation From the Geeta 2:15 Re-telecast of Selected Programme 4:00 News in Bangla 4:15 Sports Programme 4:45 Tagore Songs 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Moner Katha : Children's Programme 6:00 News in Bangla 6:05 Higal Tamal : Folk Songs 7:00 The News 7:05 Open University 7:25 Sangbad Patrikam : Current Affairs 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Band Show : Pop Songs 9:00 Min Series 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shasthottama : Health Programme 10:35 Protoshay Alo : Magazine on Population 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Thursday's programme 11:40 Close down

BBC

6:00am BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report (Asia Today/24 Hours 9:00 World Headlines 9:05 The Big Trip 10:00 BBC Newday 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 Horizon 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out : Holiday 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out : Film 9:45 BBC Newsdesk 6:00pm BBC World News 6:15 Panorama 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC News-hour Asia & Pacific 8:30 The Andrew Neil Show 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 The Big Trip 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out : Tag Gear 11:00 The World Today 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 Great Railway Journeys 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out : Madhur Jaffrey's Far Eastern Cookery 3:00 BBC World Report inc. World Business Report/24 Hours 5:00 BBC World News 5:10 Newsnight

CHANNEL V

7:00am Rewind VJ Sophia 8:00 Jump Start VJ Trey 10:00 Frame

by Frame 12:00 noon The Vibe VJ Luke 1:00 By Demand VJ Trey 2:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:30 By Demand VJ Trey 5:30 Rewind VJ Sophia 6:30 The Vibe VJ Luke 7:30 First Day First Show 8:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 9:00 Pentaloon Fashon Police 9:30 Sansu Manta Ha 10:00 Speak Easy 10:30 First Day First Show 11:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 12:00pm BPL Oye 1:00 Hayash 2:00 By Demand VJ Trey 3:00 Nature Vision 5:00 Frame by Frame

STAR PLUS

6:30am Transformers 7:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 7:30 GI Joe 8:00 The Dunky-O's 8:30 Wind in the Willows 9:00 Aerobics Oz Style 9:30 Nanny and the Professor 10:00 Mr Belvedere 10:30 Simply Delicious 11:00 Extreme Close Up Sylvester Stallone 11:30 Gabrielle 12:30pm Santa Barbara 1:30 The Bold and The Beautiful 2:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 2:00 Remington Stead 4:00 Simply Delicious 4:30 Extreme Close Up Sylvester Stallone 5:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 5:30 New Lassie 10:30 Thai Kick Boxing 11:30 German Football League 12:00 1996 Thailand Open Snooker 2:00 1996 World Speed Skating

Football League M/ 9:00 Squash Super Series Leeks British Open, Cardiff Hits 10:00 Fotbol Mundial 10:30 Thai Kick Boxing 11:30 German Football League H/L 5:30 1996 ABC Junior Championship 4:00 Women 3/4th Play-off 1996 World Speed Skating

Champs 2:30 UK 18th Skiffs Grand Prix 3:30 ATP Tour XL Bermuda Open From Bermuda 1st semi-final 5:00 German Football League H/L 5:30 1996 ABC Junior Championship 4:00 Women 3/4th Play-off 1996 World Speed Skating

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