

## Privatisation Snags

Kazi Zafarullah, Chairman of the Privatisation Board has minced no words in criticising 'white collar' labour leaders, bureaucracy and politicians for the gingerly pace of the privatisation process. Our Tuesday's front-page report on the subject provides samples of their stone-walling spanners on the wheel. CBAs seem more interested in retaining their privileges than serving the workers' cause. Some bureaucrats in the sector corporations are 'in league' with trade union leaders to perpetuate corruption: 'pocketing the salary of phantom workers'. There is also a degree of expedient inaction to avoid a likely grilling for selling the 'SOEs below their real value'. Workers might take recourse to opposition support when failing to stem progress of privatisation in certain units. For instance, in the Karim Jute Mills (KJM), they have rallied round the union backed by the BNP to lead them as their CBA. This is where the wisdom to forge bipartisan understanding going beyond political vicissitudes has to dawn on the political parties to carry forward the process.

The AL government is politically sincere in its offer to the workers of the SOEs that they have the first priority to buy the units. Obviously, if they fail to form cooperatives to take charge of these by putting the money upfront, the units will be open to sale for the others. While it is time the trade union leaders gave some active thought to the prospect, the bureaucrats may think of ways to help implement it through international assistance because it does not militate against free market operations. To announce the option and rest on the oars thinking that the ball has been set rolling in the direction of the critics to play with will be far from helpful.

The consultations going on with the workers' representatives to secure their cooperation in the privatisation programme bear potential for confidence-building but these need to acquire substance. Our suggestions are that with adequate media support let the following messages be put across to organised labour: (a) privatisation will cut down on subsidies to the public sector releasing money for credit distribution to the private sector; (b) international help will be forthcoming; (c) it is better to be members of profitable organisations than spend a lifetime in losing concerns; (d) redundant workers will get jobs elsewhere after being re-trained under well-aided and appropriately supervised programmes.

## Some Emergency!

Dhaka Medical College Hospital has truly turned into the proverbial Pandora's box. From corruption to mismanagement you name any evil, and the place will not disappoint you. One of the more recently spotlighted part of its moribund face was the emergency unit. Only the other day this paper ran a poignant tale of patients' sufferings in this section.

A substantial part of the story dealt with the agony of the patients and their attendants due to the unfeeling behaviour of the staff from the doctor down to the ward-boy. Doctors are mechanically insistent on the production of the so-called ticket that seems to have become more important here than Apollo's bough for a netherworld bound Aeneas. Apparently, the ticket is more important than the suffering person. Some of the cases reported by the correspondent who had been an eye witness to this jeremiad of the sick and injured were pretty serious. But that did not have any impact on the doctors who either smoked nonchalantly or grumbled at the excessive load of work.

We understand the emergency unit of the DMCH is understaffed. But is that any excuse for being callous about those who are dying for medical attention? One of the staff in fact gave out to our correspondent that a number of people have actually died over the years due to delay or nonavailability of treatment. This is simply criminal. Any body coming to Hippocrates' profession cannot be so unscrupulously evasive no matter how heavy the odds.

This problem of attitude that seems to be endemic in majority of the Bangladeshi doctors is something which no logistical reinforcement will ever cure. Those who are in the medical profession must have compassion for the suffering humanity above everything else. They cannot allow situational inconvenience to get the better of their commitment to service.

The hospital director however, as the report said, is not pessimistic about the crisis in this particular unit. He feels better days are round the corner. The question is: How long have we to wait for an improvement?

## National Amnesia and Paltan

Nineteen years is a long time for one who is not yet even twenty-six. Now that Paltan Maidan is back again as the site of massive political course, one may curse oneself for having never even felt that this fountainhead of all our political resistance to the machinations of Pakistan and its communal lackeys was absent — non-existent — for that long a time. This trait in us all may be symptomatic of most of our collective ills — this national amnesia.

Paltan Maidan! The nursery of the Bengalee People's matchless and unbreakable democratic struggle! At the outset Paltan rallies rent the sky with cries for politico-economic crisis. Things moved and years passed and Paltan oratory electrified the nation with the first seeding of the nationalist idea of the Bengali-speakers rising as one entity against deprivation and discrimination and for human dignity and recognition as a people.

Nursery it was for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to be groomed by the political realities of the time into that sculptor of human minds and movements and unity that yielded Bangladesh. But Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani is more inextricably linked with the legend of the Paltan Maidan. It was at Paltan Maidan that he whipped and cajoled the mind of the masses to act and rise against injustice and the mean tricks like communalism that perpetrated it.

Let Paltan Maidan rise like Phoenix and bring evermore good to this nation.

# After the Death of the Princess

**What kind of impact will the events surrounding Diana have on the British monarchy? It is agreed by all that the monarchy will have to change to adapt to the changed circumstances. Diana was keen to bring out the Princess from their closed environment into the open air much like the other British children. The chances are that the pace will be speeded up.**

It is a supreme irony that Diana, the Princess of Wales, was hounded to her death and is now alive, large than life — thanks to the media. And the signs are that she will continue to grow in stature.

And what makes it such a fantastic story in print and visually? We live in an age of instant communication and pictures are transmitted to our TV screens instantaneously. The paparazzi had been after Princess Diana for long. Since her divorce from Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, rather than disappearing into oblivion Diana started projecting an independent image across the world screens. More and more she devoted herself to charitable causes. Humanitarian causes were high on her list of priorities. Indeed shortly before her death Diana, dressed as closely as possible with a military looking outfit was spotted trotting the fields of Bosnia-Herzegovina campaigning against land mines.

And then there was romance. This set the paparazzi in hot pursuit. Here was romance between the mother of future King of England and heir to the mighty Harrods of London Dodi El-Fayed, an Egyptian. There was talk of matrimony in the air.

The entire story will never be

told. The story with all its twists and turns is still unfolding. What has been established as a fact that on the fateful night of the 31st August after changing their plans for venue for dinner — largely to avoid the paparazzi — they dined at the Ritz hotel of Paris, reportedly owned by Mohammed El-Fayed, father of the friend of Princess Diana. The couple is reported to have changed plans and taken a chauffeur, who is reported to be a member of the security of the couple. And now it is reported insistently that the driver was drunk, with three times the permissible alcohol level. The blood test has reportedly shown effects of drug.

Nearly a dozen paparazzi have been arrested following the fatal crash near Place Alma. They were caught taking pictures of the dying Princess. There has been such a world-wide revulsion against the paparazzi that the pictures, which would fetch millions, have not so far seen the light of day. Earl Spencer, the brother of Princess Diana, who has

emerged as a forceful figure through the drama, has launched a one man assault on the media and has accused the press of driving his sister to death. Feeling the wrath of the people the owners of the media have taken a defensive position. The emotional funeral will not be easily forgotten. The mountains of flowers piled high

sembled crowd to near tears. Protocol was thrown to the winds. Her Majesty the Queen, Prince Philip, the heir to the throne Prince Charles and the two Princes William and Harry stood motionlessly as the gun carriage carried the body of Diana to its final resting place in the heart of England. An unprecedented speech by Earl

the attention it deserved.

As fresh revelations continue to be made regarding this amazing story a new turn has taken by the donations that have started pouring into the Trust Fund hastily set up in the name of Diana, the Princess of Wales. And the donations run into millions of dollars. In fact, donations are pouring from young and old rich and not-so-rich mammed sums like 35 million dollars from Mohammad El-Fayed and a few cents from a school girl, from her saving of tiffin money. It appears that the donations will break all previous records.

The only comparable story I can recall is the assassination of President John F Kennedy in 1963. His widow Jacqueline Kennedy, three small children and the gigantic funeral in Washington, DC. World famous leaders including President Charles de Gaulle of France attended the funeral. We saw live murder on TV as Oswald, reportedly, the assassin of President Kennedy, was gunned down in police custody by a

notorious character called Jack Ruby. The funeral scenes placed Jacqueline in the hearts of the Americans as the 'Queen'. This beautiful Camelot story was shattered when Jacqueline started dating the Greek tycoon Aristotle Onassis and ultimately marrying him. She was hounded like Diana by the paparazzi.

What kind of impact will the events surrounding Diana have on the British monarchy? It is agreed by all that the monarchy will have to change to adapt to the changed circumstances. Diana was keen to bring out the Princess from their closed environment into the open air much like the other British children. The chances are that the pace will be speeded up. The British are a great people to adapt to a new situation. The massive outpouring of sympathy and applause to the speech of Earl Spencer must have surprised the inmates of the Buckingham Palace.

The mood of the people was beautifully caught by Prime Minister Tony Blair in his emotional tribute to Princess Diana, whom he called the 'People's Princess'.

I asked a Scotsman about his reaction. He pointed his thumb downward and said the monarchy has no more than ten years.

## The Horizon This Week

Arshad-uz Zaman



In front of the Buckingham Palace and St. James Palace with nearly a million thronging in front of the Westminster Abbey and the moving scenes among the crowd will remain permanently etched in our memories. The song of Elton John — *Candle in the Wind* — sung with barely suppressed emotion by the favourite singer of the Princess, moved the as-

Spencer inside the Westminster Abbey received long applause from those inside the Church and the huge crowd outside. The speech had high emotional content and was unsparring in its criticism of the Buckingham Palace for having taken away of Her Royal Highness title from his sister. Such as the emotional outpouring that the speech of the Queen did not get

## LETTER FROM AMERICA

# The US Congress is an Impediment to Middle East Peace

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

**The Israeli lobby in America knows that what the average American thinks does not matter. What matters is the action of those who formulate policy, shape public opinion and dole out the money.**

THE good news is that after stalling for six months, the Middle East peace process is about to jump start. The bad news is that the Palestinians will be short-changed yet again.

Recently, *The Wall Street Journal*, America's largest circulation daily, wrote an editorial urging the Clinton administration to forget about evenhandedness in the Middle East, and throw its weight solidly behind Israel. Such sweeping suggestions would have been provocative, had it not been so laughable. Ever since President Harry Truman's America became the first country to recognise Israel after the Jewish state declared its independence in 1948, America's support for Israel has been unquestioned and unwavering. So much so that there is a saying that America's Middle East policy is formulated not in Washington, DC but in Jerusalem.

It's not that Americans are in love with Israel. Average American is as critical of Israel's intransigence as an average Muslim. However, the Israeli lobby in America knows that what the average American thinks does not matter. What matters is the action of those who formulate policy, shape public opinion and dole out the money. The media and the politicians are under the lobby's absolute control. Therefore, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can agree to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's "time-out" from settlement activity, and then authorise the building of 300 housing units in

areas claimed by the Palestinians, without batting an eyelid. Poor Albright! She is being eaten alive by a monster the US helped create. Not even Presidents fared well taking on the Israeli lobby.

President Dwight Eisenhower was the last US President to stare down Israel. He demanded that Israel withdraw fully from its Suez campaign in 1956. Israel complied. Things have been totally different since then. During the 1960 Presidential campaign, wealthy Jewish contributors let it be known that vast sums of money awaited Senator John Kennedy, if only he would commit himself to total support for Israel. Kennedys are among the staunchest supporters of Israel in America. Sirhan, a Lebanese assassin Robert Kennedy in 1968, because he thought that as President, Robert Kennedy would favour Israel disproportionately.

Although not a fan of the Jewish state, both Presidents Johnson and Nixon went along. President Carter committed political suicide by having Israel withdraw from the Sinai via the Camp David accord.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan wanted to sell the early warning AWAC planes to Saudi Arabia. The American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) put up a tremendous fight. Eventually, the Senate

approved the sale by just one vote. Instead of getting mad at the Israeli lobby for interfering with his foreign policy, Mr. Reagan did exactly the opposite. Thenceforth, he sought AIPAC's head. Thomas Dine's approval for all sensitive appointments!

George Bush was the last President to take on the Israeli lobby. He too paid dearly for the folly. The Bush administration chastised Israel for demanding 400 million dollars for not retaliating against Iraq's scud attack during the 1991 Gulf War. The administration expressed its displeasure as Israel sought loan guarantees for building housing units for Russian Jews. And when President Bush called Jerusalem a disputed city early in 1992, the Shamir government fell.

The Israeli lobby was furious. They put their weight solidly behind Bill Clinton. Life long Republicans, such as *The New York Times* columnist William Safire and A. M. Rosenthal, wrote scathing columns attacking Bush. Even to this day, in the Op-Ed pages of *The New York Times*, A. M. Rosenthal's bastards President Bush and his Secretary of State James Baker's names as "bushbaker". (Writing someone's name with a lower case is a mark of disrespect.) President Clinton is considered a true friend of Israel. Vice President Gore is more extreme. Israeli lobby has figured out

that to immune Israel from political and financial insecurity, all they need to do is control the majority of the Congressmen, the Senators and the man in the White House. Even they did not realise it would be this easy!

For external consumption, the President has to show some degree of evenhandedness. The Congress is under no such constraint. The Congressmen and Senators crawl over broken glass to please the Israeli lobby. Never a fan of foreign aid, the Congress in the past had, nevertheless, allocated more money to Israel than Israel asked for! Every Israeli man, woman and child receives about 1,000 US dollars every year.

Otherwise a sensible man, for political expediency, former Senate majority leader and Presidential candidate Bob Dole legislated that the American Embassy in Israel, currently in Tel Aviv, be relocated to "disputed Jerusalem". Recently, Newt Gingrich, the Speaker of the House, echoed *The Wall Street Journal's* sentiments and asked the Clinton administration to forget about being impartial and resort to previous policy of one-sided support for Israel. Clearly, there would be no peace in the Middle East if the US Congress was the sole arbiter.

The US Congress too Netanyahu's line and cut off all assistance to the Palestinian

authority. They want to predicate all concessions to the Palestinians on how well they fight terrorism. In essence, they are asking Yasser Arafat to hand over his ace before sitting down to a game of chess!

Fortunately, there are wise men in Israel. They realise that all of Israel's might cannot stop the suicide bombers. That all the pandering notwithstanding, the US Congress cannot give Israel peace and security. Only Palestinians can. That is why Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon

Peres wanted to make peace with the Palestinians. They almost pulled it off.

Rabin and Peres realised that with Al Aqsa mosque and Dome of the Rock in Israeli hands, Israel will never have peace with the Muslim world. Their willingness to part with those Islamic holy sites, brought out goodwill in Muslims. For the first time, Muslims, including this writer, began traveling to Israel to visit the holy sites. Israel was about to receive the legitimacy and normalcy it so desperately craves.

Unfortunately, the current Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, seems to belong to a different persuasion.

## OPINION

# Cyclone, BTV and the Viewers

Masud Hassan Siddique

A severe cyclone had again hit the coastal districts of Bangladesh, causing widespread damage to property and loss of life. As well as the lives of the cyclone, it was learnt that one of the international media, who has its office in Dhaka, had sent its TV crew hours before the cyclone has hit the coastal belt and arranged a live telecast for its viewers worldwide. What was BTV doing at that time? This time we hoped that BTV has now another station in Chittagong and will not hesitate to send its TV crew to the coastal belt before the hit and cover the cyclone 'live' from there. But alas they were still sleeping!

I hope the TV News section is not running Shortage of experts who know what is news and 'immediacy' of acting accordingly, which is time demanding. If not, they should be geared up to wake up in this age of media boom and should stop thinking that the viewers are still stupid. Autonomy doesn't restrict in providing news of public interest. It is not politics, rather helps politics to go a step forward and I'm sure it's time to remind them (news section) of their duties and obligations. There should be no more excuses of failures. BTV authority who should be made responsible to earn back the faith of the viewers it has lost over the years.

This is not the first time: BTV failed to telecast the last cyclone of 19th May (as well as all cyclones of the history) which damaged the coastal areas severely. We, the viewers, had to depend on international

## Come September

AR Choudhury

I'm not reviewing one of the hit movies of the sixties, but morosely raking up the torments of our Energy Ministry, their assurances and its effects on us.

Last winter, there were excuses from the government that forerunners made water dirty. I apologise, made power generation unworthy. In summer, we were roasted, while our children melted and were sucked by (x) moshas (mosquitoes) during their (children's) crucial exams, due to "uninterrupted load shedding" (ULS).

Then, HE's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (PDB, REB and DESA), regularly (for good number of days) gave a huge aid in all the leading dailies at the cost of exchequer, explaining "Why This Load Shedding Assurances" at different stages, also came from them that many steps had been taken by this worthy government to improve power generation by September, '97.

We endured, the unusual hot summer, without electricity for hours hoping and wishing "Come September", then there would be some relief. September has come and gone, but we are at loss who is to be blamed. Many days in September, as we were half-way of 10 pm BTV news, load shedding started in Uttara.

Now if everything is OK in DESA, then why there is a load-shedding in a residential area at 10:10 pm. As by this time, all shops pull down their shutters and dwellers also don't burn money on extra light and appliances. As a matter of fact, up to 1993, none experienced any

## To the Editor...

### No Parking, but park anyway

Sir, It is extremely painful to see that in a city like Dhaka, there are practically no place earmarked for parking. It is therefore assumed that all places not specifically earmarked as 'No parking zone' are free for parking. It is as such surprising that police sergeants at their whim fine cars parked at Chandni Chawk or at the entry of Aarong at Mohammadpur where hundreds of cars are parked all the times. Furthermore the government vehicles appear to be immune to their Draconian decisions.

It is because of this we feel that the yellow coated sergeants who are bestowed with immense power, use their authority when they feel that they must do something about meeting their target of fining suspects or trying to prove that they are diligent towards their duties. Little do they realise that it is at a cost of poor car owners who do not know that they are not supposed to park there if at all the rule is there. In any civilised country, it would have been possible to sue the tail off the administration for this gross injustice.

Let's hope that we learn to respect the fundamental rights of our citizens — at least where possible.

Mahbubur Rashid,  
110 Moghbazar, Ramna, Dhaka

### Stop using the word "Leper"

Sir, In the recent deaths of Princess Diana and Mother Theresa, the cause of leprosy has lost two of its strong supporters. The world-wide media coverage that their death and funeral received had the benefit that the world community was reminded that leprosy continues to be a problem and should receive help, but it also had a set-back through the resurgence of the unkind and uncivil word "leper" which found lavish mention in all the commentaries and articles, including in the eulogy by Earl Spencer from the pulpit of Westminster Abbey.

It was Mahatma Gandhi who had first started the campaign against the use of the term "leper" because it brands and stigmatises a person suffering from leprosy. The tag of "leper"

remains even after a person is completely cured of the disease and is therefore demeaning and humiliating to the people who are unfortunate enough to contract this perfectly curable and one of the least infectious disease.

How will it be if a person diagnosed as having a malignant tumor is called as a "cancer" for the rest of his/her life and his/her family referred to as a "cancer family" or if a person suffering from tuberculosis branded as a TB-ite or a "Cough-Bee"? Why should the poor leprosy patients be the ones to carry the burden of a humiliating tag called "leper"?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has targeted leprosy for "elimination" as a public health problem i.e., to reduce prevalence of the disease to less than 1/10,000 population by the year 2000. All of us should be aware that the emphasis is to detect, treat and cure the patients and thereby prevent deformities and prevent displacement of the patient from society. The priority is to establish an effective National Leprosy Control Programme rather than provide mere charity to the person suffering from the disease.

Will *The Daily Star* which is campaigning for many social causes take the initiative to educate the people of Bangladesh about the modern facts of leprosy and inform the people about the derogatory nature of the word "leper" so that it is not used in this country, at least by the turn of this century?

Mrs Patsy Lobo  
House-28, Road-10  
Baridhara, Dhaka-1212

### Benefits of knowledge

Sir, Being a retired person, I always try to ease my anxieties through medical facts about health and hygiene. For that, I have purchased a copy of "Home Medical Encyclopedia" in order to gain the benefits of knowledge for me and my family. Now I find that the professional doctors, because of their trade secrets in private practice, do not want the patients to know the benefits of knowledge about the medical facts one needs to know for his own welfare and the family.

Life-style and gene control the brain power which, in fact, regulates the inner-clock (heart beat) of man. If any individual

above 45 is careful of three things (as mentioned below), he or she can be physically fit in his or her life on earth:

- Overeating
- Inactivity
- Stress

Except surgery and medicine one should not visit the doctor or pharmacist for the obvious reasons. Though I am not a doctor I must say that the good schedule of health and hygiene can make any human happy and physically fit to enjoy the benefits of knowledge in respect of health questions. Modern medicine is next to poison. Try to avoid if possible. Go the last mile and enjoy it.

Abul Ashraf Noor  
Uttara, Dhaka

### Questions to answer

Sir, Mayor of the capital city has got a question to answer. Now that he is the boss of the city and his own party is the 'boss' of the country, under which he is working — why are the streets of Dhaka still piled up with garbage, most of the time?

The story begins three years or so ago when the present Mayor was elected and the streets started getting piled up with garbage — therefore his time of coming to this office is quite forgettable! Hats off to whoever were in this office before him, because they at least kept our city clean. So when some areas remained under the stench of garbage for weeks on end, after the new mayor's taking office, I repeatedly rang up different people responsible for keeping the roads clean. It was such a hassle reaching the actual person responsible because one half of the road was under one person and the other half under another person, then the right side under one person and the left under another one!

So many people looking after one road and look at the result of their work! So next I tried to reach the boss, since others did not budge, in spite of my repeated requests. 'Well', said he, (his answer was original, unlike the others) 'since I belong to AL and the government is of BNP, they don't let me work and so the streets are so dirty'.

Well, I had nothing to complain after that! But then the Mayor's dream came true — AL got the power. We felt relieved

that, at least now hundreds of thousands of people who use these roads will get clean roads. But alas our hopes were shattered because the situation got worse still and the garbage is not only piled up but sometimes forms a mountain of it, absolutely covering the entire road and thus making it unusable.

In Farmgate area, they have also made an 'open air' urinal near the garbage heap for 3/4 men are always seen urinating there. So one can imagine the extent of stench in that area and how widely it spreads. And how many people are suffering for the carelessness of the persons responsible — hundreds of them in innumerable buses, tempos, baby-taxis, cars and rickshaws which pass through this area everyday. It is a good place for the breeding of flies and fleas too. Now, God alone can help us to get rid of this stinking menace, by putting some sense of duty into the people responsible. Amen!

Dr Sarah  
Dhaka

### Promotion to senior posts

Sir, A recent press report says that promotions are going to be made to the posts of Additional Secretary, Joint Secretary and Deputy Secretary soon. Officers of different cadres will be assessed by a selection committee. Establishment Manual published by the Establishment Ministry lays down the rule that inter-se seniority will be determined on the basis of senior scale.

Present BCS Administrative cadre consists of six cadres i.e. erstwhile CSP, EPCS, PML&CS, CSS, EPSS and post-liberation recruits. So for promotion to these higher posts, government should strictly go by rules i.e. seniority on the basis of promotion to senior scale irrespective of the date of joining of officers in someone's erstwhile cadre and of course other relevant factors like ACR and good service records. Since there are heterogeneous elements in administrative cadre rules on inter-se seniority on the basis of senior scale should be rigidly followed to prevent any misdeeds from vested interest groups.

Mrs. Montaj Jahan  
Fulbari, Sylhet.