

Investigating Biman

We demand that an Independent Inquiry Commission be set up to conduct an in depth investigation into Biman's operation. The Commission's terms of reference should cover all aspects of the organisation, including, and especially, the financial, technical and staff related questions.

Serious questions have been raised about how this airlines is being managed and run, and we want answers to all of them. The latest evidence of the deteriorating condition of Biman's management has been revealed during a visit of a five-member team from the US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA).

There is no way that serious accounting of Biman's operation can be postponed any further. Have we grown in terms of staff competence, technical expertise and passenger confidence in the last 26 years? We have four different types of aircraft in our small fleet — Air Bus, DC-10, ATP, F-28.

The record of maintenance of these aircraft are frightening. One report says that after purchasing the two F-28s in '81 they have not been sent for D-check, which is a mandatory requirement after flying certain hours.

We have recently reported on how the Biman's trade unions have prevented fresh recruitment and have forced the institution to fill senior positions only through promotions of the existing staff.

Airlines is an international operation, and any tinkering with it in Bangladeshi style will ruin it, as it has been. Only a thorough investigation by a competent team, perhaps with foreign expertise, can save Biman.

Do it in Ctg Port, Please!

Even by our standards of stoic calm, something has been gabbing such deep cuts into the national economy that it better now make us sit up and take note. The pathologically non-working Chittagong port has drawn the curtain on our exports and imports with huge losses staring us in the face like a scowling vulture does at a wasteland.

The cross-river anarchy is understandably a seasonal phenomenon. The river beds have shoaled badly but there has been no matching dredging work. The exacerbation has indeed been the handiwork of several man-made factors.

All this is very good. And now we implore him to replicate this where his personal staff and direct intervention are most needed — the Chittagong Port.

Filmfest Expectations

Inaugurating the nine-day filmfest gala PM Sheikh Hasina in her speech a few days ago asked the filmmakers to go for the films that portray social reality or, generally speaking, cinema verite.

In the inspiring presence of film personalities like Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Buddhadev Dasgupta it was perhaps very apt of the Prime Minister to point at this collective failure of our filmmakers.

Also the authorities' studied effort not to tamper with the basic condition of art-liberty has helped matters in other countries. The performance of the censor board here has been appalling particularly in its treatment towards films dealing with our War of Liberation.

Instead of sermonising what people in art and culture should do authorities should invest energy in facilitating their work financially or logistically. It is the circumstantial obstacles that actually clip the wings of imagination.

Environmentalists are Wrong?

There is no doubt that the sensationalist message of many environmentalists commands great public attention and may serve as wake up call but "continued incorrect prophecies of doom from environmentalists have contributed to the fatigue with agricultural issues of donors and policy makers.."

SOME critics have said that the Green Revolution has created more problems than it has solved. This I cannot accept, for I believe it is far better for mankind to struggle with new problems caused by abundance rather than with the old problem of famine.

In a recent conference paper: "Why Environmentalists are Wrong about the Global Food Situation: Methods and Myths," Mark W Rosegrant and Claudia Ringler (1997) of the International Food Policy Research Institute attempted to highlight some of the misconceptions and misplaced judgements of environmentalists on world food situation.

The authors go to argue that by embracing mechanistic Malthusian notion of the inevitability of exponential population growth outpacing the arithmetic growth in food production, environmentalists tend to reject or ignore human creativity.

Rosegrant and Ringler finds

land we have now than before but increased productivity through diffusion of new technology became the beacon to solution. Environmentalists are allergic to large scale agricultural production and akinly they are also averse to commercialization or increased specialisation of agricultural production.

The authors go to argue that by embracing mechanistic Malthusian notion of the inevitability of exponential population growth outpacing the arithmetic growth in food production, environmentalists tend to reject or ignore human creativity.

land we have now than before but increased productivity through diffusion of new technology became the beacon to solution.

Environmentalists are allergic to large scale agricultural production and akinly they are also averse to commercialization or increased specialisation of agricultural production.

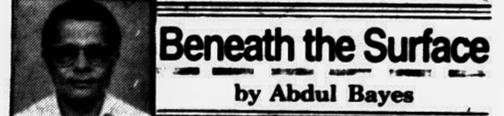
duction seems to spring partly from a "romanticized" view of the past when more primitive structures of existence apparently lived in perfect harmony with nature.

They forget that, apart from being impossible of feeding the present population through small-scale farms, the living standard of preindustrial societies was impoverished, health conditions were abject, malnourishment was common-

and eventually lead to specialisation at the farm or unit of production level. Furthermore, Von Braun — a leading economist of Germany — observed that commercialization of agriculture — supported by favourable government policies — benefits the poor by directly generating employment and increased agricultural labour productivity.

There are other arguments put forth by environmentalists which were countered by Rosegrant and Ringler on environmental vis-a-vis agricultural growth. Space constraint does not allow us to deal with them in detail.

commercial ones on the principle of profit maximization. Environmentalists view this trend as unsustainable since their impact on environment is not taken into due consideration.



Beneath the Surface by Abdul Bayes

CHT Treaty, National Integrity and Sovereignty

by Dr. Khandakar Quadrat-I Elahi

The Treaty shall consolidate our National Integrity, strengthen our Sovereignty and enhance our National Interests. We just have to understand and believe.

FINALLY achieved what appeared to be unachievable: A Peace Treaty between representatives of the tribal people and the Bangladesh government has been signed, paving the way to solve one of the gargantuan problems facing the country.

Reactions from BNP and its allies are neither unanticipated nor unexpected. Their major objections are the following: The CHT Treaty (i) threatens National Integrity, (ii) undermines Sovereignty and (iii) sacrifices National Interests.

BNP's objections are clearly motivated by their narrow power politics, meaning that there is little point in arguing on them. However, I intend to examine these objections, not for refuting them, but for clearly understanding them.

BNP's objections are clearly motivated by their narrow power politics, meaning that there is little point in arguing on them. However, I intend to examine these objections, not for refuting them, but for clearly understanding them.

BNP's objections are clearly motivated by their narrow power politics, meaning that there is little point in arguing on them. However, I intend to examine these objections, not for refuting them, but for clearly understanding them.

BNP's objections are clearly motivated by their narrow power politics, meaning that there is little point in arguing on them. However, I intend to examine these objections, not for refuting them, but for clearly understanding them.

BNP's objections are clearly motivated by their narrow power politics, meaning that there is little point in arguing on them. However, I intend to examine these objections, not for refuting them, but for clearly understanding them.

BNP's objections are clearly motivated by their narrow power politics, meaning that there is little point in arguing on them. However, I intend to examine these objections, not for refuting them, but for clearly understanding them.

sure that it should be government by themselves, or a portion of them exclusively."

Many societal factors contribute to the development of a Nation, but following are the most important: culture, history, language, religion and ethnic character.

Two points should be noted. First, Nation represents a natural community, formed by common sympathies among its members which develop over centuries perhaps, through sharing such societal factors as mentioned above.

Today's world political order is organized around a network of independent States, whose founding ideas are Nation and Nationalism. The State has four integral, physical attributes: (i) identified people, (ii) defined territory (iii) a government and (iv) sovereignty.

There are however fundamental differences between the Nation and the State. First, the Nation is a desired sovereign political society while the State is an actual sovereign body politic representing a single, often unique, political system. Second, a Nation is a naturally developed community; it cannot be created by force. But the State is a political society created by humans, by consent or by force.

I shall now look into

Bangladeshi Jatiotabad. My source is: BANGLADESHI JATIOTABAD SMARAK GRANTHA, edited by Ahmed Musa. Mr. Musa describes the perspective and development of Bangladeshi Jatiotabad in the following way:

Muslims in British India created Pakistan — based on Two Nation Theory — to prevent Hindu domination while Bengalis in Pakistan created Bangladesh — based on Two Economy Theory — to prevent Punjab domination.

Who are the People Included in the Natural Community which BNP Calls Race? They are first and foremost Muslims (religion), speaking Bengali (language), living in the area called Bangladesh (territory). All these combine to define their culture — Bengali Muslim.

Do the Tribal People of CHT Belong to BNP's Race? Their language, religion and culture are fundamentally different from BNP's Race. They did not participate in Pakistan movement. On the contrary, they protested when their territory was annexed to Pakistan.

By the criterion set by BNP, the people of CHT then do not belong to its conception of Nation and do not subscribe its idea of Nationalism. The people of CHT have the right of self-rule as we have ours.

words, if people refuse to obey the government, it has no moral authority over them, meaning it loses its internal sovereignty.

The CHT Treaty has consolidated our national integrity by convincing the people of CHT to give up their armed struggle. Both our internal sovereignty and external sovereignty are thus strengthened.

Has CHT Treaty Sacrificed Our National Interests? This Treaty will impact upon three of our very important national interests — two political and one socio-economic. The two political interests are: integrity and sovereignty of the country, expected to be strengthened instead of being undermined.

What is the Source of Sovereignty? We must know to understand BNP's allegations. The people forming the State are the original and ultimate source of sovereignty. They appoint the government to exercise it on their behalf and the government can do so, so long the people trust it. In other

words, if people refuse to obey the government, it has no moral authority over them, meaning it loses its internal sovereignty. The external sovereignty authority of the government is substantially weakened if it lacks internal sovereignty.

The CHT Treaty has consolidated our national integrity by convincing the people of CHT to give up their armed struggle. Both our internal sovereignty and external sovereignty are thus strengthened.

To the Editor...

"Long Way to Go"

Sir, I read the article written by Justice Amin ur Rahman Khan "Long Way to Go" on the judiciary of Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 30.11.97) there are some suggestions at the bottom of the article. The article carries no data regarding pending cases. We very often hear that cases of late 60's are still pending in the honourable High Court.

(1) How many cases are pending in the Supreme Court i.e. High Court Division and Appellate Division with the year of filing? (2) Does the Supreme Judiciary follow serial in disposing of the pending cases? (3) Does any authority inspect the different branches and courts of the High Court and Appellate Divisions.

(4) Does the Supreme Court publish any annual judicial report regarding budget, disposal of cases, pending cases court wise, vacant posts etc? We the people do not dare to write about judiciary. Now time has come for transparency of the judiciary. It should start from the Supreme Court, the highest judiciary of the country.

Abdullah Farooq 132 Laxmi Bazar, Dhaka.

Well done, England!

Sir, It was indeed a tremendous joy to watch masters and promoters of cricket — England — to clinch the recently concluded Akai Singer Cup in Sharja. It has been quite a long time since England won a major cricket competition! England was considered as underdogs before this tournament in

Sharja, but they proved everyone wrong by clearly trouncing all their fancied opponents — India, Pakistan and West Indies, twice.

England rightly emerged as true unbeaten champions, despite of some newcomers in the team. It was again wonderful after a long gap to see the Englishmen demonstrate superior skill over all their rivals in the very game that they have once dominated.

Khawja Viqar Motnuddin 48/1, Purana Paltan, Dhaka

Inactive in housing

Sir, For the past 10 years, no government has constructed multi-storied buildings for residential purposes. Instead, the so-called housing societies have been carrying on with building homes for those who can manage a home but prefer it ready-made! No one builds any low-cost house for the poor and the middle class. Oh, yes, lots of plans are made. But the buildings do not rise. And if they do, those for whom the buildings are meant do not get the allotment.

So who will guarantee that the buildings scheduled to go up will be the home of those who need them? No one. Only the government can help. Then why is the Awami League government silent? Is the Housing Ministry getting no cooperation from the Finance Ministry?

It has been repeatedly suggested that as alternative to private, public housing should be made available for all citizens concerned. In addition, those dwelling in government housing can be given the privilege of buying up their flats on monthly payment basis. And this can done right away. Nei-

ther the government, nor the family has to wait for tomorrow. Perhaps those who are in a position to move the files are dilly-dallying because many government housing are in a sad state of disrepair. Why are they not the official concerned expediting the repair work? Maintenance conducted properly increases the life of a building.

Otherwise, it gets 'condemned' more quickly than would have been natural. Besides, if officials are reluctant to implement the scheme of immediate allocation of flats as numerous flats are in dire need of renovation, then a clause can be included in the ordinance providing for total and thorough repair of all flats that are applied for on a permanent or 99-year lease basis.

Mostafa Zaman Khair Paikpara, Dhaka

Peace treaty and unrest

Sir, December is the month for rejoicing for in this month, we have won our victory and Bangladesh was born. But this year people have become very unhappy and apprehensive about the future as the peace accord in the CHT is shattering the peace of the country.

The government is blaming the opposition parties that they are opposing only for opposition's sake, there is not a single reason why it should not be accepted. But it is where the government is wrong, not only the opposition political parties, except the ruling party and its supporters, every single person of Bangladesh must be against the peace treaty because it is not in conformity with its interest.

BTv schedule

Sir, Recently, the BTv has changed its time schedules of some programmes. The full length Bengali cinema is one of them. It starts at 8-30pm on ev-

ery Thursday and ends at about 11-4pm with a disgusting 30 minutes intermission by English news at 10 to 10-30pm.

In the rural areas, villagers can watch the cinema up to 10pm, and miss the rest because they do not understand English news and this 30-minute duration, they do not find anything to do but go to sleep.

Moreover, in winter they feel discomfort to watch TV up to midnight in the open yards of their neighbours. They do corporal works all day long and do not like to enjoy TV upto the midnight amidst disruption by several boring advertisements.

So these BTv-dependent audience are deprived to enjoy cinema for mistimed schedule of it. I think the proper time to telecast cinemas is about within 3-7pm on Friday.

Md Abdur Rahim Shohel 539, Surya Sen Hall Dhaka University.

Adopt a Road

Sir, In consideration of the fact that the local municipal authorities, district boards and other local administration, who are entrusted with the construction of local roads/lanes, are always short of enough fund to build and maintain the local roads. In order to solve the problem and also ensure public participation in local development activities the following proposal may be considered.

Local roads to be constructed or already existing ones may be opened for 'adoption' by the local affluent people, on competitive basis. The contract could be for 2-10 years period. The winning party/person would be responsible for sharing the cost of building/maintenance of the road by shouldering yearly a certain percentage of the cost.

In return the local authority would place name-

stones/plagues on the road with the sponsors name on it in 'bold' letters. I believe there are a lot of individuals in our urban and rural areas who have enough wealth and will be willing to spend some money, which will bring them prominence and prestige in local area.

On the other hand, scarce public money will be saved and overall budgetary relief will be provided to the local bodies. Considering Bangladesh's local scenario and perspective the local bodies could promote such participatory programs in various other fields.

Kaiser Ahmed (By e-mail) Maryland, USA

"A Verdict to Ponder"

Sir, The editorial titled "A Verdict to Ponder" on 16 November, 1997 was very educative, meaningful and full of genuine thought for all of us to accept and follow in real life today. We are really tired of violence, disruption of civic life and indiscipline of the unruly mob responsible for poor level of economic activities in the country.

The culture of democracy at the moment does not indicate fully the ethos of tolerance and vision for the good of the country. Please tell us frankly how long we shall bear huge losses on hartal days in the interest of law and order. May the members of parliament rescue us from being destroyed as a brave nation in modern times.

If they would pass a law against 'hartal' or 'strike' as illegal and unconstitutional, they would have been considered as 'the protectors of democracy' in this part of the world.

Abul Ashraf Noor Uttara, Dhaka.