

Let BNP Speak

We think it was wrong of presiding speaker Rahmat Ali (a member of the panel of Chairmen designated to preside over the House in case of absence of the speaker and his deputy) to deny floor to the opposition members from BNP during the parliamentary session last Thursday.

The speaker felt offended for the way some BNP MPs behaved with him the day before. We shared the speaker's outrage and have expressed so in writing. But to carry that outrage to a vengeful retaliation is neither democratic nor a part of parliamentary practice.

We strongly suggest that by the time the House resumes on Sunday this 'punish them' mentality should end. Speaker's ruling on what he wants to do with the people he has identified as being responsible for Wednesday's incident should be dealt with separately.

May we remind the ruling party, whose influence on the speaker is becoming more and more apparent every day, that it serves nobody's purpose, least of all theirs, to force the opposition into a corner.

We must also add here that BNP should stop their obstructionist tactics and get to the serious business of the House. There are plenty of ground and opportunities to take the treasury bench on.

The Fatal Booze

At least fifty are already dead and some more may also die. This is a toll being paid by some people in Gaibandha preferring a special booze in the happy occasion of the Pahela Baishakh.

At the root of the massive death and suffering incident is drinking no country brew but rectified spirit bought from three homeopathic medicine shops. In a similar case in a Dhaka slum quite a number had died of poisoning caused by the same liquid chemical which the pharmacists keep and sell ostensibly for medical use.

Tragedies such as this shocks us into realising the inadequacy of the picture we have of our society. By and large the society keeps to the strong and almost puritanical peasant values.

It can be worthy social work to try to wean away the addicts from drinks and as drinking is prohibited by law, this wouldn't be tampering with human rights either. But that cannot be put forward as a measure preventing such unnecessary deaths.

Drugs and drinks are consumed on a much larger scale than we ever knew. It is a problem that will grow and there will be little chance of containing it effectively.

Apparent Lessons from Awesome Woes

With a fragile financial sector — unregulated and unsupervised — a cut throat liberalisation of the economy might tantamount to building a multi-storied mansion on a wooden structure. Today or tomorrow, the spectre that visited East Asia could be waiting on the wings to visit us.

It was not that South Asian country succumbed in a serious way; we were also surprised because all the countries of South Asia are weaker than those of East Asia in terms of what we have been accustomed to thinking of as the fundamentals.

hazard which such guarantees create. As a result borrowers tend to borrow as they like in the absence of any check and balance while the creditors foresee their losses being socialized.



Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes

politically powerful — is considered to be the third contributor to the crisis. Access to credit market was determined by the access to political, rather than economic or financial muscle that an enterprise usually has to live with.

Williamson strongly feels that the miracle was no mirage. In terms of per capita income growth or poverty alleviation, the achievements of Korea and Thailand — between 1970 and 1995 — are indeed miracles that happened.

With the awesome woes of the East Asian countries emerging from the crisis, let us bag some lessons for our own economies. With a fragile financial sector — unregulated and unsupervised — a cut throat liberalisation of the economy might tantamount to building a multi-storied mansion on a wooden structure.

Over confidence and carelessness are the two unpardonable offences that seem to have added fuel to the fire. The prolonged absence of any macro crisis since these economies journeyed through the thick and thin of their macro economic management and high economic growth mostly kept them oblivious of any macro economic crisis and thus made them resort to injudicious use of exchange rates, credit policy and other macro economic parameters.

Rickshaws and Dogs are Not Allowed

As we make our way to our meeting, enjoying the warm air, the empty, silent streets, the smell of grass, the absence of cars honking and buses hooting, I wonder why rickshaws get such a raw deal.



Coming Home...

Almas Zakiuddin

Listen young man. According to one estimate, there are approximately two hundred and fifty thousand rickshaws in Dhaka. I don't care if they are licenced or fake or if their papers come from Santa Claus.

Dark Suit says nothing. I am running late for our meeting. I let it go. And so, eventually, my colleague and I head out towards the outer entrance of the hotel. We walk to the nearest rickshaw and begin a ride that is really quite enjoyable.

What is the worst that could happen, I ask them. If my rickshaw were to pull up at the entrance of your posh hotel, what would be so horrible about that sight? "Nothing ma'am," stammers one of the many dark-suited, bland-faced, moderately energetic men who always hang around the lobby of Dhaka's leading five-star hotel.

Indeed, I am probably the only woman visitor in the hotel lobby at the time. I am also considerably dishevelled, but if you have around Dhaka in a rickshaw as I have been doing this warm and humid morning, what else can you expect?

I am angry and as always, I am louder than the stereotypical Bangladeshi lady (if there is such a creature), and so in short, I attract some attention.

To the Editor...

Sutia river bridge Sir, Construction work of the above bridge started more than five years ago back on the Sutia river at Mahmudpur-Mukhi ferry ghat. The distance by road between Bhaluka and Kishoreganj district HQs via Gaffarganj, Hossainpur, Pakundia is only 18/19 miles which is one-fourth of the same via Mymensingh. The importance of the bridge cannot be neglected. It is unfortunate that the construction work of the bridge has been suspended since the last two years.

Ahmed Ali Vill: Mahmudpur PO: Nana Mahmudpur PS-Bhaluka, Dist: Mymensingh

surprised because they have never been asked to explain their policy vis-a-vis rickshaws before. Which makes me wonder, does this hotel have a policy vis-a-vis rickshaws, at all?

Before I can ask them to explain the cluster disbands, each bland-faced individual in a dark suit swiftly melting away into the outer reaches of the lobby. There is one young and helpless-looking Dark Suit left behind.

Thousands? You must be joking. Don't you people have any idea what is happening outside the air-conditioned walls of your domain. I mean, talk about living in an ivory tower, you fellows really don't have a clue, do you?

Natural gas or fertiliser?

Sir, For the last few weeks we have been reading views of experts and policy makers on the future of our natural gas reserve vis-a-vis export of gas to neighbouring countries. It has further been emphasised by some that the future of our natural gas as fuel is not stable if we take the example of coal. Due to its high demand resulting in closing down of mines around the world. As such we say we should maximise our use of natural gas as fuel. If required, by exporting. So long its demand remains high we can harvest immense benefit rather than sitting on useless reserve of gas in future and cursing our past policy makers for their blunders.

Javed Mortuza Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

Traffic Circle at Azampur

Sir, Town planners always provide Traffic Circles at every section. Besides discouraging street corner vendors, adding beauty to nearby buildings, it works as a landmark too. But mainly, it regulates vehicular traffic at crossing in an uninterrupted way, keeping all vehicles in one direction on entry till exit to desired direction. So, at a Traffic Circle, jam is not that unmanageable compared to a traffic light controlled crossing. Traffic flow becomes intermittent for red and green signal and all accumulated vehicles often can't get through at green signal. These halt and accumulation vehicles are prone to logjam and accident. Differences can be seen at Circles of Gulshan-1 and 2, Saat Rasta and traffic signals at Mohakhali, Kakoli etc.

being at Bhuapur, major traffic of BBB is likely to pass through Uttara to Dhaka and other southern and north-eastern cities. So, Azampur crossing (already a traffic jam area) will face huge traffic pressure from rapidly growing Uttara, Uttar Khan, and inter-district traffic. Amazingly, over bridge/passenger shelter, built here, have now even obstructed the on going road expansion project for BBB traffic.

Encouraging, but ....

Sir, There has been an enormous improvement in the electricity sector — at least as far as the people living in Uttara, Banani, DOHS, Gulshan and Mohakhali areas are concerned. Though there were news items in the DS saying that a drastic change is far from being possible — then what we see here must be a remarkable twist of fate or hard work from the energy ministry.

Motivation Campaigns

workers at all levels, especially in the public and semi-autonomous sectors. How motivation and the sense of duty are measured? It is not an amusing statement; the time has come to come down to brass tacks. There are too many extra-curricular activities going on during work or duty hours. Start from the top or from the bottom? Let the leaders decide.

A Zabr

OPINION

Can BJP-led Government Tame Activities of RSS?

Barrister Harun ur Rashid

Although BJP Parliamentary Party has jettisoned its official right wing and ultra-nationalist policies to agree on a "National Agenda" to keep the allied parties within its fold, the BJP party stalwarts have taken a unique position in recent days that policies of BJP government is different from those of the BJP Party.

It appears to be a very clever strategic move by the BJP party to keep the party faithfuls happy and disciplined as the BJP parliamentary party had toned its much heralded ultra-nationalist policies to form the government with the other parties. It remains to be seen how BJP government handles this issue within the structure of Westminster parliamentary system where the party supports invariably the policies of its government.

It is reported that in its annual report only released recently, RSS claimed that the guerilla activities in the eastern states of India, in particular in Mizoram, had its origin from the active support of Christian missionaries. The missionaries advocated, according to the report, the benefits to be obtained from conversion to Christianity. It also said that 23 Hindu temples were burnt down in 1997 in the state.

reported that the Christians were subject to harassment and even attack in Gujarat and Maharashtra states. There is also a campaign by RSS for reconversion to Hinduism from Christianity and it is reported that "camps for reconversion" are being set up by RSS in many parts of India.

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