# The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Sunday, April 19, 1998

#### Gas Bidding and BAPEX

Finally we have a clear statement as to how the government is planning to settle the second round of block bidding on our gas fields. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on Wednesday: "We want to accommodate all major oil companies so that none is left out of the bidding." Well, this can be a good policy in diplomatic terms but we are not sure how feasible and wise it is in economic and technical terms. "Accommodation" cannot be a goal here. Serving the long-term interest of the nation is, and must, be the only goal. However we understand the realities within which a small and developing country like ours has to operate and the tremendous pull and push factors of our major development partners that we have to live with. We feel reassured to learn that our PM is aware of the pitfalls into which a deal like KAFCO has put us in. But we are not sure whether a repeat of it is not on the cards. Lack of transparency in the government's selection process has unnecessarily, but not baselessly, given rise to speculations of political wheeling and dealing. We welcome the interest shown by the PM on BAPEX. We think its track record has been deliberately downplayed and its performance capability ignored at a great cost to national interest. The example of Petronas of Malaysia should serve as a good example of how a state-run company can become a major global player as a result of far-sighted government policy. At the initial stage Malaysia gave steady and unrelenting support to Petronas and insisted on it being made a partner in every deal that foreign companies signed. We think Bangladesh should give a similar support to BAPEX now. We urge the PM to delve further into this. Proper utilisation of our natural resource provides with our only chance to break out of the stranglehold of poverty. We must have the courage, honesty and vision to use it for the interest of the nation.

We believe that foreign investment in the energy sector would benefit Bangladesh tremendously if the contracts are signed with utmost care, and they are properly monitored. But we also believe that there cannot be any substitute to having our own exploration wing do our work. By prescribing an ineffective 10 per cent "carried over" partnership of BAPEX with foreign companies the government itself is hindering its own growth prospects. We know that exploration costs in blocks 9 and 11 would be much cheaper and relatively risk-free. Investment in BAPEX and giving it proper assignments would be more cost-effective than foreign companies. And best of all, the growth of BAPEX would be most beneficial for Bangladesh.

#### **A Very Grave Crime**

In a war situation people know they have to be watchful. But in Mirpur and Shantinagar areas people never knew they were indeed drinking water polluted by human excreta and other sewage and had no reason to be suspicious.

The criminal part in this inordinately irresponsible business lay in DCC and WASA's knowing that this was happening and even then issuing no warning to the people. This leads to the fear that may be some other areas are also having this problem. Who can tell, who will tell? People conscious of their rights, especially those who have suffered as a result of this DCC-WASA duet performance of contamination, can sue them for crores in compensation. That no one is ready to be involved in legal complications, allows such big organisations to play with the lives of people with indifference and impunity.

We are gratified to know that action is already being taken to stop the present problems as well as to effect changes in the laying of sewers and drinking water pipes. But this is not enough. First the authorities must warn or inform the people of any problems still remaining in any area of the city. The two bodies must then come up with a full report of how this happened and also how this was allowed to continue causing diarrhoea to thousands.

A failure of a very grave nature has taken place. Some persons, some quarters must be responsible for this. Water mains can develop leaks. But allowing these to take in sewage, something that shouldn't have been in any close proximity, and continuing with the piping of this stuff for months to unsuspecting and unprepared consumers — is a serious crime. The responsibility of these all must rightly be traced and the persons rightly be punished

Tampered piped water is the surest way to kill a city's entire population, more effectively than even an atomic bomb. We simply cannot afford any loose performance or mistakes in the water supply system. An authority supplying bad water and another helping with the pollutant — can between them commit a crime worse than any Halaku's or Hitler's. Let us see that the government has wizened up to the gravity of the thing.

#### **BOI's Problem**

Something is wrong with Board of Investment's (BOI's) initiatives to project Bangladesh as an attractive investment destination. The much touted one stop service is a case in point. Almost three months have gone since its installment January last, yet the reality seems a long way off from the aired great expectations. BOI officials are being heard pretty audibly now that there must have been some coordination shortcomings at the outset which led to the lacuna between achievement and aspiration. We think the authorities there indulged in robust optimism too early without fully doing their bit to ensure the thrust and elaborate preparation it takes to turn expectation into reality.

There is no denying one stop service is essential to woo investors. Unless we can guarantee the basic infrastructural facilities like gas, power and telephone in the shortest possible time, there is no point crying over investors' apathy.

And it is no small work to have an efficient one stop service in place. It calls for massive interministerial and inter-agency coordination. More so in a country like ours notorious for its bureaucratic tardiness and corruption. Instead of exaggerated claims about what miracle effective one stop service would perform, the BOI authorities should have concentrated more in the detail of the preparation. Loud proclamations followed by little or no result can invite unnecessary disappointment and cynicism about a system. We hope under the new leadership BOI would go about the ground work more seriously in its future effort to draw investors.

### Professor Yunus on Economics

The purpose of this article is to dispassionately analyse some of the most important points that have been raised by Professor Yunus and make some observations along the way on what Dr. Mahfuzur Rahman has said.

INSIGHT

Professor Muhammad Yunus delivered a paper under a captivating title, "Towards a Poverty-Free World", in the recently-held conference in Dhaka organized jointly by Bangladesh Economic Association and International Economic Association, which was published in *The Daily Star*, on April 2, 1998. Had this article been written by any other person than Professor Yunus, who has deservedly earned a world-wide fame for creating a unique institution like the Grameen Bank, for which I have deep sympathy and admiration, I wouldn't

After reading the published version of his paper, I felt extremely uneasy because it was a total denunciation of the present-day economics and realised that it was going to create deep confusions in the minds of the readers, no less among the young professionals in economics and social science. In the meantime, I have also read an article by Dr. Mahfuzur Rahman, a former UN economist from Bangladesh now living in New York, in *The Daily Star*, April 17, 1998, on some of the views presented by Professor Yunus. It looks like there is a growing disapproval among some professional economists

of what Professor
Yunus has said.
The purpose of
this article is to
dispassionately
analyse some of
the most important points that
have been raised
by Professor
Yunus and make

have been raised by Professor Yunus and make some observations along the way on what Dr. (fiscal and more

Rahman has said.

Issues Raised by Professor Yunus

Professor Yunus has raised quite a number of issues but I shall confine only to five important ones: i) Economics is responsible for most of the ills of the present-day world especially its widespread poverty. By way of elaborating it, he said that economics got the world " into a lot of troubles and many human tragedies .... Seeds of poverty are planted firmly in the pages of economics text-books". If one asks how has economics been able to do that? His answer is that Economics text-books create the mindsets and mindsets create the world". ii) Economics "has created a category called" labour "which look more like draught animals than human beings" who have no creativity. On the other hand, it has "assigned creativity only to a select, rather rare, category of people called "entrepreneur" who are " treated as royalty" and "has persuaded the world that all other human beings are born to serve under them". iii) Economics, especially the economics of text-books, "never had any use for the term self-employment" and hence cannot "address the issues of poverty, development,

iv) Economics completely disqualifies itself as a social science when it comes to the treatment of credit". By "deciding that it can do business with the rich, literally it has created a financial apartheid" and (v) since economics has persuaded the world that "capitalist economy must be fueled only by greed" it has ignored the "social consciousness-driven enterprises". "Social consciousness and the urge to do good things to people and the planet can be as burning, even more burning, a desire than personal gain in an individual" to act as the driving force

population and gender". "There has been a major

failure of economics in understanding the poor.

Poverty is not created by the poor. It is created by

the theoretical framework that we work with institutions that we built and policies that we

for economic development. It would be useful to take up these issues briefly.

Economics and the World's Ills

Does "economics creates the world we live in and its ills" by creating mindsets"? The right answer is that, no doubt, there are some influences of economics in the world that we live in, but economics certainly doesn't create the entire world as it is. Let us see why.

There are four points that should be noted: a) What do economics text-books (good quality ones) teach? b) how are the economic theories developed? c) how much of the teachings of economics is applied in the real world? and (d) who rules the world that we live in and with

what rules?

Good modern (i.e., Neo-classical economics) text-books teach how to allocate the society's available resources most efficiently so that maximum amount of output can be produced (the production side of the economy), how to determine the optimal price for goods and services in the market so that producers and consumers get maximum profits and satisfaction, respectively (the exchange side of the economy), how to optimally distribute as well as redistribute the income among the poorer classes of the people to maximize the society's total welfare (welfare side of the economy), how to promote competition (and thereby social welfare) among producers and workers to avoid concentration of economic powers in the form of monopolistic, duopolistic and oligopolistic market structures (industrial and labour organization side of the economy). how to promote maximum trade with the outside world to boost domestic growth with proper balance in the external payments system (international trade side), how to promote optimal rate of growth of the economy with its corresponding investment and saving rates (economic growth side ) and how to design optimal

monetary (including bank loans and credits which are Prof. Yunus's main concerns which I completely accept) and fiscal policies to maximize economic growth and social welfare

(fiscal and monetary sides of the economy).

A student who goes to learn economics from a good university also learns that there are (political, institutional, (both inherited and newly-created, technological as well as vested interests type) rigidities in each of these areas which create resistance to dynamic optimization processes which give rise to inefficiencies and thereby adverse income distributions and economic growth of the society.

Good university teachers teach how to introduce flexibilities in the analytical models to remove such rigidities but are practically impossible to implement them since politicians, bureaucrats, business leaders and trade union leaders who have one foot in the semi-feudal land system and another foot in the trade-finance- industrial and government power houses would resist such solutions at all costs.

One should ask oneself the questions: Who prevents a drastic land reform which can radically change the rural poverty scene? Who prevents the privatisation, or even closing down, of the perpetually loss- making state-owned industries? Who pays for these colossal amount of losses year after year? Who prevents the realisation of willfully defaulted loans? Who gains out of these rigidities? In view of these, it would be fair to say that the perpetrators of poverty are here not in the economics text-books. More on the category of "labour" and "credit worthiness" are discussed below.

However, economic analysts also understand that there are some vital hidden factors behind the success of the operation of the simple market process, not only optimization models. All economists starting from Aristotle onwards to Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Stuart Mill and modern Neo-classicists have emphasized on these factors. These are the rules of law and ethics of a society which govern the human behaviour in the market as well as in the society at large and right kind of institutions prevailing in the economy. If legal and ethical systems do not work or are violated with impunity or even break down, as we clearly see in many countries including Bangladesh, then a terror-ridden, violent, vulgar and corrupt sys-

In such a state of a society, trying to reduce poverty by applying the efficiency rules of optimization models in all sectors of the economy would be like singing classical songs in the gathering of some murder-film lovers. Just as in such a gathering blaming the classical singers would be a mistake, blaming economics would be a double mistake for the poverty and other ills in a terror-ridden, vested interest dominated and corrupt society.

(To be continued)

(10 De con

# Dhaka: A Care-lorn City

by Chandra Shekhar Das

The city mayor had promised to arrest the deterioration of law and order before election. Now at the fag end of his term he says he cannot do that without cooperation from the law enforcers. We always knew that. But who will deliver the goods and when?

visual on the front page of Saturday's Daily Star particularised a general aspect of the metropolitan Dhaka with telling vividness: a rickshaw in the foreground with all three of its riders — the puller and the passengers putting their palms across their noses. The reason the trio was caught in a unity of action was the gigantic mound of reeking rubbish on their left. The three were just trying to fight the immediate assault of stench on their olfactory faculty. What is significant the photo though taken from Bishwa road, could have been, with the variety to the height and width of the refuse-hill, a true pictorial representation of Dhaka's most streets, if not all. With such a hateful quotidian reality taking daily toll on our health it really sounds as a risqué, bad joke every time the authorities pronounce clichés like Tilottama Dhaka. What kind of Tilottama they are up to? A Tilottama that neither looks nor smells good?

In a recent interview with a leading Bangla daily, Mayor Hanif when asked about the proposed involvement of the private sector in waste management did optimism no favour saying there was no response from any quarter. Candid and eloquent surrender has been the forte of the tall city father. But that is no relief for the struggling dwellers of a city that has gone perilously close to the frontiers of unlivability.

Not only reeking waste. Dhaka's denizens are afflicted with crunch and disorder in all sectors of civic amenities. You name it; Dhaka will not disappoint you. Like power short supply of water has been a crisis in the context of the whole country. Plummeting ground water level, unabated power shortage have only helped the problem reach a crisis point.

Worse, the plague of paucity has been accompanied by contamination. Wasa's supply lines are reported to have got connected with sewage channels in areas like Shantinagar

and Mirpur. No wonder over 2000 have suffered diarrhoeal attack in a month. Even without this latest instance of 'unholy nexus' of Wasa and sewer lines, contamination is a major problem with the Wasa supplied water. Because the drawing source is the Buriganga, a river that has been subject to frightening levels of pollution in the recent times. There is hardly any form of waste, organic or inorganic. that does not find way to this great absorber by the city. Perhaps nothing has done more harm than the chemical wastes from the tanneries. A lot has been written about the relocation of the tanneries but Hazaribagh continues to be the main source of pollution of the Buriganga.

What is most frustrating for the tax paying citizen is the apparent smugness of the authorities. They seem to be oblivious of the fact that Dhaka is probably the most unplanned city in the world, requiring an overtime of idea and effort to accommodate a spiralling population. Unfortunately that vision with an urgency to make the optimal use of the present is badly missing. Sayedabad water treatment plant which by now could have a been great aid to the challenge of supplying water to about nine million population of the city is a classic case. It has suffered from an assortment evil ranging from resistance of vested interest group to bureaucratic tardiness.

But there is no proof more ocular of Dhaka having gone environmentally awry than its air. It is one of the most polluted in the world. As in the case of water, efforts in this field have also been awfully faulty and paltry. We have heard much about steps to punish the vehicles responsible for spraying black exhaust fume into the air. But until today the relevant agencies like BRTA. law enforcers and the City Corporation have not been able to forge out an effective working

relation to fight the scourge.

Traffic congestion, a

chronic feature of urban Dhaka and one of the chief contributing factors in air pollution apart from being a great nuisance for those who have places to go and people to meet in time has not got a healing touch yet There is no denying that traffic laws need to be teethed with the aim of making violation of road rules costly but as elsewhere, here too the main problem is enforcement of law. Problems multiply because of inter ministerial or inter agency coordination as much as they do due to authorities tendency to sacrifice the future to accommodate the present. We have seen how the reexcavation of the Dhanmondi Lake, known once as the necklace of Dhaka suffered due to inter agency coordination.

No less confounding was City Corporation's recent zeal for filling the rare remnants of green spots in the city with market and shopping complexes. The body of city managers seem to have totally forgotten that parks are the lungs of a city; more so in a dangerously polluted city like Dhaka. Thankfully, they have paid heed to the combined outcry of the press and shelved most of the inchoate projects. For once the resistance of the fourth estate did not turn into Cassandra's cry.

If amenities are on the wane, insecurity in citizen's life has risen menacingly. Life in Dhaka is like minute struggle to pick one's way through a minefield. Newspapers now seem to be in need of regular columns on rape, murder and hijacking, so prevalent are such crimes. While the authorities are caught in an endless jugglery of responsibility, common people continue to suffer. The city mayor had promised to arrest the deterioration of law and order before election. Now at the fag end of his term he says he cannot do that without cooperation from the law enforcers. We always knew that. But who will deliver the goods

and when?

# South Asia and Bill Richardson's Visit

The talks that the politician-turned-diplomat of the US had in all the capitals of South Asia are viewed by area analysts and diplomatic circles as not only important but in some ways also crucial for stability and peace in the region.

THE US Ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson has just completed a swing of the South Asian countries. His 10-day trip has taken him to Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka along with some other countries. The visit covered four main countries in South Asia and Afghanistan is also in a way located in the same region albeit the fact that it is not strictly a South Asian nation going by the SAARC terminology. The chief American diplomat in the world body held extensive and intense discussions during his fleet-

ing visit to all these countries. His talks with the leaders of all these nations are significant for a variety of reasons. Whether it was in Dhaka or capital of war-ravaged island state Sri Lanka - which is the last hop of his swing, the talks that he had were of great importance for the region as well as in the context of Washington's foreign policy parameters. According to Mr. Richardson himself, this region has not received enough attention earlier by the policy makers of the United States and hence President Bill Clinton is attaching greater significance to the area which has more than one billion people in addition to its strategic importance. Truly, it is not too long ago that the US government has set up a separate South Asian bureau in the State Department and the region is receiving more attention of Washington ever since this new territorial desk came into being.

Ms. Robin Raphel looked after South Asia till last year when she was succeeded by Karl F. Inderfurth, who makes routine visits to the region.

Certainly, he is that Mr. Richardson thrown the

very much in the high-power delegation that Mr. Richardson heads and Mr. Inderfurth is scheduled to stay back in Colombo after the US Ambassador to the UN flies to another destination completing his discussions in the South Asia. Sri Lanka is at the last leg of his itinerary in this region and needless to say, the country embroiled in a long drawn ethnic conflict understandably requires lengthier talks with the US which the short visit of Mr. Richardson is unlikely to provide as he is covering so many countries in only 10 days. He came to Dhaka on the first leg of South Asian trip that ends with Colombo.

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury

The talks that the politician-turned-diplomat of the US had in all the capitals of South Asia are viewed by area analysts and diplomatic circles as not only important but in some ways also crucial for stability and peace in the region. And of course, the visit has also been inextricably linked with Washington's bilateral ties with these countries covering political and economic priorities. The ramifications of the visit is being talked about in varying interpretations but all are almost unanimous that only seldom such a visit from ranking figure of US administration is made to South Asia and that too as many as five nations in one go. He successfully secured a cease-fire in Afghanistan at least for the time being, although scepticism persists about the progress.

Mr. Richardson is no stranger here while he is widely acknowledged as the trouble-shooter of the Clinton administration. He has been earlier in global trouble spots as the main negotiator from the US and whatever be the outcome of his missions to all those places — one thing is certain that all were important and also difficult exercises. As a person who has served the congress for long 14 years, Mr. Richardson has combined in himself the experiences and virtues, as well as advantages and disadvantages of both a politician and a diplomat. He is the successor in his present position of no less a person than Ms. Madeline Albright, who has been elevated to Secretary of State. He was here earlier more than once as a Congressman.

For Bangladesh, the visit was of immense importance for the simple reason that for many years an official of the America of Minister's status has not visited this country. Ms. Albright was to come here a few months ago but she could not make it at the last moment since sudden flare-up of the Middle East crisis centering Washington' direct confrontation with Iraq resulted in the postponement of the trip to Dhaka. She had to make unscheduled talks in capitals of some Arab countries when the Secretary of State was already on the trip that was to bring her also to South Asia. She did manage to visit New Delhi and Islamabad for a shortwhile, and there too she flew in much later than her scheduled

However. Ms. Albright said she would look for an early opportunity to come in Bangladesh which she missed due to Middle East imbroglio at that time. Earlier, Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead was in Dhaka in 1985 and he was the second important person in the State Department. Ms. Robin Raphel was in Bangladesh four times when she made routine visit to South Asia and Mr. Inderfurth has also made a visit here late last year.

Bangladesh has reason to feel happy on his visit because it is only during his stay here Mr. Richardson announced that President Clinton will pay a visit to this country in coming fall. The US President's South Asia trip was planned

much earlier and he was originally schedule to visit in early 1998 but the political uncertainty in India — one of the countries he was to visit — compelled him to call it off and wait for later in the year. Bangladesh was not firmly on the list of his South Asian swing and uncertainties hung on his trip to Dhaka. Speculations have now been set at rest about the first visit of an American President to this country.

First lady Hillary Clinton did come here in 1995 and went back impressed. It appears that she too has contributed to the plan for Presidential visit here along with Mr. Clinton's special assistant on near East and South Asia in the White House Bruce Riedel and South Asian affairs official Mr. Inderfurth. I remember, when Mr. Inderfurth was here several months ago on his first visit in the present capacity, he told me that the President's visit to this country had not been finalised but they are trying for this. In any case, the upcoming visit for Mr. Clinton to Dhaka is the single main achievement of Mr. Richardson's trip here as far as this country is concerned while he discussed many other issues pertaining to strengthening of the democratic institutions, stability in the South Asian region, and economic and commercial issues were also not excluded. He met top figures in the country including the President, Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

But undoubtedly, he had talks on more difficult matters in all other capitals in this region. India and Pakistan are a constant source of concern for

and Pakistan are a constant source of concern for Washington for the obvious reason that the two traditionally archfoes have now ring of a nuclear

thrown their hats in the ring of a nuclear weapon race in a more pronounced manner \_ a line which the US opposes as it is against spread of nuclear capability. The latest test of the "Ghauri" missles by Pakistan and India already possessing the "Privthi" missile have thrown this region on the danger of the vortex of a possible use of nuclear armaments in their future conflicts.

Although both say that they are against war and pursue only peaceful use of the nuclear capability, yet such a possibility cannot be totally ruled out given their belligerent relationship that has seen three wars — of which two over "Kashmir" issue that remains the main of contention. Mr. Richardson spoke to leaders of both countries to resume their stalled peace talks and need for restraint in arms race but it is unlikely that he would succeed much on this complex issue

His talks in New Delhi and Islamabad understandably touched on the China issue as well since Beijing is once again being talked about in the context of the Indo-Pak relations. New Indian defence minister George Fernandes has made no secret of the views that India believes China is behind the technology of Islamabad's latest missile experiment. Both Pakistan and China denied it but this has once again opened up Beijing being involved in New Delhi-Islamabad controversies. The US said it believed Pakistan has successfully tested the missile recently but said it would like an investigation whether China has assisted Pakistan in this field. Beijing, expectedly, reacted criticising such an American stance. Besides, India still feels that communist China can be a threat to its stability.

Mr. Richardson had a tough time in discussing issues in Afghanistana where he was the most senior western official since the former Soviet Union's invasion of the country in 1979. He held close-door talks with Taleban leaders like Mullah Muhammad Rabbani in Kabul and then flew to opposition-held town Shibergan to meet ethnic-Uzbeck and former communist warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam, former President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his strongman Shah Ahmad Masood. Two-thirds of the country is being held by the Talebans while one-third by their rivals. His thrust of the talks there was the need for a cease-fire among the warring sides. It is too early to analyse the outcome of the discussions. Arguably, the ice is too hard to melt. But some than towards peace is visible.

In Colombo, the visit is seen as a reflection of the American support for President Chandrika Kumaratunga's fight against the separist Tamils who remain the major headache for the government despite a series of recent successes in the battlefronts and hideouts. The US has banned the Tamil separatists and its armed wing in America. It is possible that Colombo may seek Washington's material assistance in combating the Tamil tigers. He was scheduled to preside over a meeting in Colombo of US envoys in the region.

Mr. Richardson's agenda during the South Asian trip was heavy with contentions and vexed issues along with innocuous subjects like greater bilateral cooperation and also cooperation among the countries of the region. His visit has done the groundwork for the Presidential visit. Only time can tell if his talks have cast any sobering effect on escalations of tensions in the region as a whole. Hopefully, his talks will have some positive impact towards peace and tranquility among the hostile countries as well as warring factions within the countries them-

#### To the Editor...

#### Outrageous behaviour

Sir, I was deeply shocked to see the way the BNP behaved with the Speaker. The Speaker was giving time to the MP who was supposed to Speak at that moment; but the BNP could not tolerate this. They caused chaos in the Parliament and started throwing files and other accessories at the Speaker.

Such behaviour is the sign of an uncivilised nation. The Parliament is certainly not the place to behave like this. How can we progress socially, politically and culturally if the elite group of people in our country behave so illogically?

Arbab Quadri Road 7/A, Dhanmondi Dhaka.

## What are they trying to prove?

Sir, I am sure by now all of us are fully aware what took place in the JS on Wednesday the 15th of April. And I am in no mood to go over that childish yet ugly scenario created by the opposition. My question is, what are they trying to prove? Was this an after effect of BTV not covering Khaleda Zia's speech on the CHT peace accord or was it to create problems both outside and inside the Parliament (as there was a strike that day too)?

When prominent personalities like Dr. Chowdhury act like this, then are we to assume the Parliament should pass a resolution on spanking the out-ofline members? Are they to be humiliated in front of the entire nation before some sort of understanding creeps in?

When I think that it was us who voted people like them to power — it sends shivers down my spine.

Masroor Ahmed Deepak. Dhaka

# "Where Are We going?" Sir, I have attentively read our editorial "Where are we go-

your editorial "Where are we going?" published in *The Daily Star* of 16th March, and tried to form in my mind the reasons of our present deplorable law and order situation. I appreciate the suggestions you have listed in the last para of the editorial. I totally agree with those; but would like to add the most important one which is, the government of the day has to be neutral and impartial in implementing law.

If the meaning of law is different for different individuals
or different segment of the society, such mind bogling, cruel
and criminal acts will go on
unabated. When the police see
that those at the helm of affair
of the state are the main perpetrators, they become disinterested in the rule of law. Who
does not know that the person
behind most of the misfortunes
in Chittagong and who does not
know the person responsible

for the woes of Feni.

Unless the old adage "Everybody is equal in the eye of law" is adhered to strictly the situation will get worse day by day. I am sure the readers must be remembering that in the Ershad era students took out procession

for the right to copy in the exam; because they knew that the head of the state himself was corrupt.

The way efforts are being made to divide the country and the polity into two camps — supporters and opponents of Freedom Struggle after 26 years of independence and the way deserting people are being coerced by left hand of the law of the present government. I do not see a prosperous future of this country.

Nawrin Samrina Dept of International Relations University of Dhaka

#### Power generation

Sir. The media were vocal about a year-and-half ago with the allegation that the last BNP government failed miserably to increase our power generation capacity by even an iota! They spared no words to castigate the previous regime. But now it is being said that it takes a minimum of 2-3 years to implement a power generation unit (DS 1.4.98). Considering the numerous obstacles the last opposition placed before the administration, don't you think the media were hasty in finding a

Installation of bargemounted power generators is only an emergency and interim measure. This is an uneconomical way to generate power i.e. per unit cost is very high. So let us exercise prudence and caution before taking the plunge as the consequences may be dear.

Shafiqur Rahman 1/6 Lalmatia, Block-A, Dhaka