The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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Two-way Traffic

Experts, both local and foreign, were eloquent on globalisation challenges at two discussionmeets in the city, one held by the BIDS and USIS jointly on May 3 and another by the AmCham on May 5. A common thread ran through the scholarly observations on the problems and prospects of Bangladesh in this special area. But one discerned a greater share of optimism in the confabulation at the AmCham luncheon meeting than at the preceding DIDS-USIS workshop where apparently some debating skills were traded.

Never mind the style, a consensus was eventually reached through that series of lively discussions for which we must thank BIDS, USIS and AmCham.

It is interesting to note that Bangladesh's GDP growth has been outstripped by her growth in trade and that she is well-placed among the South Asian countries to reap the benefits of globalisation. Our improved trade performance, largely bolstered by the quota-based access to the world market may be worthy of appreciation but it does not per se connote integration with the global market-place.

For this to happen we need to upgrade our infrastructure including power, gas and telecommunications sectors, improve the financial laws, privatise rapidly and create an enabling environment for investment, both foreign and local.

Those are the do's for us and there are do's for the developed countries as well. We are looking for an equitable distribution of globalisation dividends, to be precise. This can be achieved through a greater market access, better terms of trade, transfer of technology, assured free movement of labour, relocation of industries and production of complementary goods to allow manufacturing and trading leeways.

To the best of our understanding, globalisation means integration with the world market based on the concept of organised interdependence of economies, both developed and developing. Since the factor of mutual dependence is the basic motivation behind the globalisation process we don't see why there should not be a consensus reached between the developed and developing worlds on the pace of structural reforms.

Drainage Tangle

It looks like this year too the rainy season will not see any change in Dhaka's denizens' fate. Within a month or two, when the ashen hue of the sky and the ceaseless rain drops become a regular feature, the too familiar pattern of suffering - water clogged city roads - promises to revisit the urban population like an irredeemable curse. Because the main culprit — city's underground drainage network --- as a mational daily indicates, is yet to be through with the much-touted ameliorative initiatives. Although, authorities are waxing in assurances claiming that if the three blockages, put in the Segunbagicha canal as a part of the tinkering work, are withdrawn, there will be no waterlogging in the city, Dhaka seems to have made little progress in getting rid of the abomination. The riverine look of some of the traditionally notorious roads after a spell of heavy downpour couple of days back reminded that.

We know it is not an easy task for the authorities to fix the drainage system of a city that has gone awry from the twin devilry of managerial indifference and collective insensitivity of citizens; but why the authorities would be always found wanting in getting their act together? Is it tenable that just because the contractors were on a three month strike that they would not be able to get the job done within the stipulated time? Can a vital aspect of city management be kept exposed to such operational hazards? Couldn't there be a contingency plan?

We believe they have been able to run this maddening show of inefficiency for years because there hasn't been accountability. With their job secure why would they bother to get a move on? It may not bother their conscience, but this is criminal because people pay for a minimum standard of living and the authorities are morally and legally bound to provide that. The misdirected nature of our politics has made matters only worse. Authorities claim that the main problem with the underground drainage network is the heavy concentration of polybags. But no effort is there to stop its use or production nor is there any consensus among the political parties on this issue. With the decisionmakers proving so biased and insensitive to civic convenience no wonder professionals working under their instructions are so adept in offering

excuses for their ineptitude. A Day of Universal Grieving

Today is Ashura, the 10th of Muharram — the day Imam Hussain courted martyrdom. The day has continued for a millennium and a half as a day of endless grieving. And of revulsion at the heartdessness of Yazid and his horde.

The Muslims of Bangladesh are overwhelmingly Sunnis. And as such, the Ashura does not constitute as much of a significant event on their reliegious calendar as it is for the Shi'ites. Even then the tragedy on the Euphrates of all of Hussain's family dying a death out of thirst as Yazid's men made sure no one got water from the river, has by its human appeal been dear to every Bengalee heart for centuries. And that precisely led Mir Mosharraf Hossain to write his tome Bishad-Sindhu, a prose epic that influenced the Bengalee Sunni Muslims in a way only surpassed by the Quran. Bishad-Sindhu became veritably the national epic of the

Bengali Muslims. The result was a wonderful synthesis with Sunni women fasting on the day and their men folk joinging the Tazia procession. The heroism in the sacrifice of Imam Hussain and his family appeals to all cutting across all barriers.

Let us learn from his example to be steadfast in our beliefs and principles.

Crisis in BUET

Is the Autonomy of Educational Institutions at Peril?

It would not be a measure of weakness on the part of the government to ask the highly revered Vice Chancellor,

of the BUET's Vice Chancellor Prof. Iqbal Mahmud and 71 other teachers of this prestigious institution of Bangladesh on the 4 instant came as a great surprise, rather a rude shock, to the people. It raised anew some important questions about the method and practice of what has been installed as democratic process in our country as well as the propriety of what has been happening inside BUET, and for that matter in our other educational institutions. The press conferences of both the Vice Chancellor and the Education Minister are most revealing and made crystal clear what had really transpired in this unfortunate

episode. The Vice Chancellor's statement and explanation were direct and unequivocal. He minced no words and laid bare the facts, or at least what he perceived as facts. The entire affair centred round the resignation of 13 teachers of the Department of Architecture in a bid to express solidarity with some striking students protesting against a change in the system of admission test for students in that Department. They resigned and their resignation was accepted by the University Syndicate. The Hon'ble Prime Minister called him on telephone and the Education Minister to his office, both asking the Vice -Chancellor to reverse the decision of the Syndicate and to re-instate the 13 teachers in question. Political Adviser to the Prime Minister,

N unofficial statement by

BJP's foreign policy adv-

isor Ambassador Nage-

ndra Nath Jha, which he

subsequently denied, that India

should be more involved in

trying to resolve the ethnic

conflict in its neighbouring

country, has unleashed bitter

resentments among the ma-

jority Sinhalese community.

To them any such efforts would

tantamount to a deviation from

Guilal Doctrine, and reversal

back to its earlier 'interven-

tionist policy.' Sri Lanka is up-

set because it is fully aware of

the futility of 'interventionist

policy in conflict resolution in

the backdrop of existing inter-

national order. Today conflicts

are more likely to be resolved

either through direct negotia-

tions between the antagonists

and mediation by a major

power, that is, if offer of such

mediation is accepted by the

country/countries concerned.

Does India has that kind of re-

gional status that it can play a

mediating role in the resolution

of its neighbour's internal prob-

lems? What actually is needed

for a nation to play a meaning-

ful mediating role is the trust

from the parties concerned be-

sides diplomatic, economic and

military clouts. Trust, however,

is the linchpin. The fact of the

matter is that the fundamental

ingredient namely mutual trust

between India and Sri Lanka is

simply not there. Hence such

furors over New Delhi's over-

that Sri Lanka's reactions have

been overrated and can be con-

sidered as a storm over a cup of

tea. But such 'irrational' behav-

iors by the Sinhalese can be un-

derstood only in the context of

the complexities of South Asian

ethnicity problem. It is argued,

and rightly so, that since ethnic

problems in each country in the

region, including India have, to

some extent, been created by the

majority communities, they

should be the ones who should

solve them. But unfortunately

that solutions to these prob-

lems are not solely in the hands

of the majority any more.

South Asian states have them-

selves made the situation com-

plicated. For a long time they

took advantage of their neigh-

bour's internal problems, exac-

erbating the conflicts rather

than dissipating and thereby

losing the locus standi to medi-

ate on one hand, and making it

difficult for the majority to deal

with the situation on the other

hand. India's involvement in

Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka

is an evidence of such

The heart of BJP's present

stance is its overt concerns

about India's national security

which are reminiscences of

much debated 'Indira Doctrine'

of early 1980s. During the cold

war New Delhi had been ob-

sessed with its hard core secu-

rity. As a dominant regional

power New Delhi expected that

its neighbours should take its

security concerns into consid-

paradigm.

One could easily conclude

tures of friendly gestures.

who had very good reasons to be disenchanted, to withdraw resignation and keep this old and venerable institution running. Chancellor. The Minister, as he is a clever and conscientious

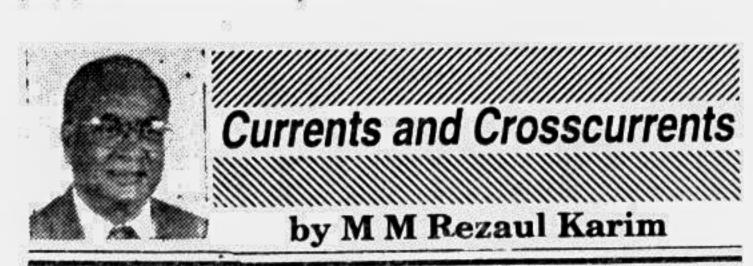
Dr. Malek, also talked to him in the same vein.

Prof. Mahmud sought to explain the situation by saying that the Syndicate had earlier informed the teachers concerned that the correct procedure to revise the decision of the Syndicate would be to apply individually, and not in a body, for this purpose. The teachers did not comply and in their collective application only reiterated their earlier demand but did not request the Syndicate for a revision of its decision and to re-instate them. This, according to the Vice-Chancellor, left the Syndicate no scope for re-consideration. He also observed that had the 13 teachers not used their access to the high-ups in the administration and been bold by the acquisition of their newly found strength, the problem could have been solved within the parameter of the rules and regulations of the University. Despite his stated reasons for tendering resignation was official, he made it absolutely clear that due to the pressure and interference from the government he found himself unable to work in an institution which is supposed to enjoy autonomy of ac-

The Hon'ble Education Minister in his press conference stated that no pressure was brought to bear upon the Vice

person, this time, unlike his usual, sought to clarify a point cleverly but in vain. He said that no one had put any pressure on the Vice-Chancellor to resign. But, no one made that allegation. The point was that government interference and pressure were exercised to reverse the decision of the Syndi-

glaring pressure tactics to dictate a specific action to re-instate some teachers, without regard to the rules and regulations in vogue. When a Head of Government expresses a wish, that generally becomes a com mand to others. But the principled and respected Vice Chancellor is an exception and does not belong to the group of



cate in respect of the 13 teachers. He made no counter to that. Then again, the Minister said that if the Prime Minister could successfully amicably settle the question about the striking students earlier, then why her role in the matter of the 13 teachers who resigned be held as interference? This argument, however, does not appear to be tenable. The former was an is-

sue in which a compromise be-

tween the two parties was

sought, whereas the latter was a

case of naked interference and

As stated earlier, the two major points that emanate out of this event are two-fold. Firstly, it brings home to the public a case of gross interference of the government in the administration of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and, as the opposition clamours, other educational institutions in the country. This destroys the degree of autonomy they are supposed to enjoy, encourages undue politicking by students and teachers, vitiates the atmo-

sphere of the campus and, finally, negates the very purpose of their study - to become good and well-qualified citizens. The other point relates to the involvement of students and teachers in politics. This crisis would not have been created at all, if the earlier striking students and teachers did not have access to the leaders of the ruling political party and were not emboldened by their assurance. On the other side, the opposition sought to make good use of the weakness of the government, notwithstanding merit of the issue, by expressing their solidarity with the aggrieved party. This appears to be normal in the game of politics and may not be attributed to the alleged partisanship of some of those who resigned later. Prof. Igbal Mahmud is a

very distinguished and widely respected citizen and academician of the country. He was a member of the last Caretaker government and no one could cite any instance of his actions in which he could be guilty of deviating from the path of fairness and neutrality in his role to conduct the 1996 June election. He is not a BNP sympathiser, as alleged. But, he will be one in future, if the government

persists in its obduracity. I had the very pleasant memory of working with him as with Professor Muhammad

Yunus, on the Board of the PKSF (Palli Karma Shahayak Shangstha), the apex organisation in the country devoted to generate income and employment by way of granting funds through micro-credit operation of a thousand big and small organisations throughout Bangladesh. I happened to be Chairman of the PKSF for a short spell and we all were happy and indebted to Prof. Mahmud for his sterling qualities as well as valued contributions. I have, therefore, no doubt his dealings in the BUET would be anything other than just and fair. The University is virtually

closed, except for the paraphernalia of admission. The BUET Teachers' Association asked the government to prevail upon the Vice Chancellor not to resign and sentimentally declared that no other person would be acceptable to them in his place. The Education Minister, however, stated that the issue should be settled through discussion and compromise among the parties concerned. All sensible persons would share this view. But the government was in the wrong, hence must mend the fence first. It would not be a measure of weakness on the part of the government to ask the highly revered Vice Chancellor, who had very good reasons to be disenchanted, to withdraw resignation and keep this old and venerable institution running. Anyway, under no circumstances the legitimate interests of students should be hindered.

Sri Lanka and BJP's "Friendly Concerns"

A Different Perspective

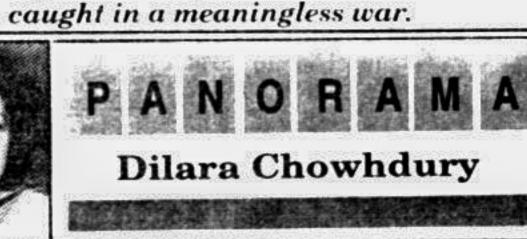
This is not to say that India does not have any stake in the resolution of the Tamil conflict. Because as a big neighbour with ethnic ties it would always have a say in such quagmire and a role to play. But that has to be in accordance with the national interests of the country concerned as well as the aspiration of people who are

erations. But given the then existing mistrust and suspicion in the neighbouring countries New Delhi's expectations were premature. Its neighbours could not appreciate India's security interests, especially in the absence of a regional security framework. Even in the postcold war international order there has not been any dramatic change in South Asian security environment. Since asymmetries dominate South Asia, explaining much of the region's tension, the burden falls on the core country, and it should be New Delhi's task to allay the fears, mistrusts and suspicions of its neighbours.

Unfortunately, India has miserably failed to live upto those expectations. Many Indians are often irritated, when reminded of their country's responsibility, and respond bluntly, and somewhat childishly argue that they cannot help for being big. Is it their fault that India dwarfs other South Asian states in all respects-geographic size, population, military capability and economic markets? Certainly not. What is expected of India is that it should use its asymmetries in a positive way. Otherwise why would any sovereign country appreciate and accommodate another country's interests if its national interests are also not served at the same time? One has to remember that without responsibilities there

cannot be any privileges. Perhaps the reality began to sink into Indian elite psyche. and Guilal Doctrine was its pragmatic manifestation. South Asia felt that the Doctrine was the right step in the right direction. That neighbours should be left alone to sort out their own domestic problems without the overarching guidance of their giant neighbour. Any attempts by BJP to deviate from that policy would only complicate the tenuous domestic situation of each polity of the regional states including India as well as the al ready complex inter-state rela-

Ambassador Nagendra Nath Jha's remark, while he was attending a conference in Colombo, seems like a prenomination that has underlined a subtle change and a shift in New Delhi's foreign policy orientation irking Sri Lanka in a bad way. He suggested that the Northern and Eastern Provinces, where majority Tanuls live, should be permanently united. Sri Lanka leels, and rightly so, that this kind of suggestion tantamounts to



ternal affairs of the country It is upset because ethnicity problem in Sri Lanka has long been a bone of contention in Indo-Sri Lankan relations, and it is fully aware of New Delhi's involvement in this Island country's insurgency. Sri Lanka's Tamil minorities, who are waging a guerilla war for an independent state of their own (Eelam), have had moral and material support from Indian state of Tamil Nadu which compelled Indian central government to have a sympathetic view. Besides the domestic factor, New Delhi's involvement in Sri Lankan affairs was also emanated, and more so, from US posture in the Indian Ocean and its friendly ties with Colombo. New Delhi thus viewed the Indo-Sri Lanka accord of 1987 as one, which took due consideration to its 'legiti mate' security interest. Because it not only underlined the need for accommodation between the state and the ethnic group by temporarily merging Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka pending a referendum. but also reiterated India's status quo stance in South Asia much to the disliking of the Sinhalese. The fact should not be lost in sight that underlying the accord was New Delhi's ambition to play its perceived regional and international role.

History has proved that the accord was not successful in resolving the conflict in Sri Lanka. We all know how in time the Tamil tigers went out of control of their former mentors and how the conflicts continued unabated. Sri Lanka justifiably considers that accord quite out of date since conflict resolution through intervention by an outside power has proved to be not feasible. India's 'interventionist policy', Sri Lanka feels, not only complicated the bilateral relations but also poisoned the internal situation. It also felt somewhat subservent to New Delhi. A fact which is unpleasant to any self-respecting country. As such, Guilal Doctrine was a welcome development, which would allow Sr Lanka to resolve its insurgency in a manner best suited for its interest.

Guilal Doctrine basically attempted to follow a course, which would leave the neigh

bours alone in order to settle their own domestic problems, and generate neighbourly good will. And everybody knows New Delhi needs a lot of them if it wants to play its role as regional power. Obviously, an attempt to deviate from a policy of non-interference through a remark by Ambassador Jha suggesting a permanent merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka have taken the Island country by storm. Although Ambassador Jha denied making such a remark, but it is a well known diplomatic dictum that government's position is often made known to the party concerned through this kind of modus operandi. In the context of BJP's manifesto with regard to Sri Lankan Tamil problem, Ambassador Jha's remark. thus, cannot be altogether dis-

If such is the case, then it is indeed unfortunate. One thing BJP has to keep in mind that since the end of the cold war

ethnicity has become a serious problem, and now considered being the greatest source of conflicts and instability in the Third World countries. India is no exception. Its religious and ethnic problems can hardly be exaggerated. Beside the intractable Kashmir conflict, the insurgencies in the North Eastern provinces, which are a bewildering patchwork of tribal and ethnic inhabitants, are all too well known. New Delhi accuses outside powers, on a regular basis, for fermenting these internal insurgencies and hope that these would be brought under control if external powers are not meddling into their internal affairs. Should not then India practice what it preaches.

We feel that it is best for all South Asian countries to leave each other alone so that these internal sources of conflict can be resolved peacefully and through negotiations. It should be kept in mind that any attempts to redraw the state boundaries on ethnic lines could be dangerous. Organization of African Unity realized this hard fact many years ago that attempts should be made by Afro-Asian nations to create multi-ethnic, multi-religious nations instead of trying to emulate the European nation

states of by-gone era. Building a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state is a garguantic task. In our region, such endeavours are likely to be successful if there is no outside interference. As such Sri Lanka should be

left alone to deal with its vicious ethnic problem. This is not say that India does not have any stake in the resolution of the Tamil conflict. Because as a big neighbour with ethnic ties it would always have a say in such quagmire and a role to play. But that has to be in accordance with the national interests of the country concerned as well as the aspiration of people who are caught in a meaningless war. Sure it is the responsibility of the majority of people of Sri Lanka, as it was the majority who created the problem, but it is also the responsibility of the neighbour to demonstrate its 'friendly concerns' in such a way that its friend does not take it otherwise. Sri Lanka's ethnic demography, like ethnicity anywhere, is very complex. A peaceful resolution to its problem would need protracted and intricate negotiations between the majority i.e. Sinhalese and the minority on one hand, and among the parties concerned the Jaffna Tamils, Tamilspeaking Moors with a distinct identity and the Indian Tamils on the other. In such a complex situation New Delhi's only option, if any, should be to provide its good offices to all concerned parties for mediation, but with strict neutrality to all. The roles played by the governments of Great Britain and Ireland in hammering out the recent Northern Island Accord is a case in point.

OPINION

Men Versus Women?

Relationship between man and woman has not been exactly defined by anybody since

the creation of mankind. When Adam and Eve the first couple came into existence, no one was there to guide them, to tell them what to do or not to do. Only instinct or physical need made them eat, sleep and

to have physical relationship. They were man and woman equal in their status protected each other from the hostile nature, looked after each. Then came the day when the woman became mother and the

duties of a mother like carrying

and giving birth to a child,

breast-feeding the offsprings

and rearing them up confined

her at home. On the other hand, the man was busy doing other duties like bringing food for the family, arranging for shelter, clothes etc. But we cannot exclude woman's assistance and help in those activities. So from the beginning of the creation of mankind the women were involved in all the activities of livelihood in addition to their exclusive responsibilities of bearing and rear-

ing up children for which they ossess some extra organs in their bodies. Other than that they are the same human being having a heart and other necessary biological organs to live in the world.

With the advancement of time men subjugated women by exploiting the weaknesses of their physical strength and other biological barriers, sentiments of motherhood, kept them in doors and took all the advantages whatever they could out of them. In early days of the world men's lust for women made women an object to be enjoyed although sometimes history tells us about the power of some women over men. But that was also power of beauty and physical attractiveness.

We have heard about women like Helen. Cleopatra and others who were famous for their beauty to enjoy authority. Women needed beauty more than ability and intelligence. Hundreds of years have passed since the creation of world.

Munira Khan People all over the world have advanced in their mind and thought. But still a woman is mostly being looked upon as a

woman — not as a human being, not exactly equal like men, whereas the capacity of being a mother, by carrying a child in their wombs, giving birth to other humans, ['Creator's best creation') should place them in higher stature, but it seems that it has placed them in lower status than men, fixed them in a fix, put them in many difficul-

They cannot move freely cannot behave in the same way men do, cannot be placed in the same position in spite of their abilities in many areas. Differences in physical appearance restricted their advancement only because of men's attitude towards women. Even a girl child is different in the eyes of men. Specially after growing up and getting married to a man, a woman almost loses her entity and becomes a wife of a husband. Her own wishes get blurred against her husband's

wishes. Recently I read a story about a princess whose father gave her hands to a hermit (Rishi) for going to heaven. The Rishi sold her thrice, to three kings, in exchange for three hundred rare horses to give to another Rishi for divine causes! The princess gave birth to three wealthy sons to the kings before returning to her original husband. But the husband, of course, could not take her back because she became a bad woman as she lived with other men. The princess went back to her father who wanted to arrange a 'Soyamber' (where she could choose her husband out of some men) but the princess instead chose to live in a jungle. as she thought men after all did not behave with her better than

beasts. Although this story depicted the attitude of men towards women in ancient time, yet in my opinion the real position of women in the society did not change much. Women still are not their own masters. When-

ever I read a news about rape, I think about thousands of wives daily being raped by their husbands (if the word 'rape' means physical relationship with a

woman without her consent). The marital relationship between husband and wife depends only on the mood and desire of men. Husbands mostly do not care or bother to know and do not take permission from wives. I think this attitude is the root cause of sex-related violence against women. Men do not try to understand that in mind and thought everybody is independent. Everybody has a right to live his or her own life. If a woman cannot take a man forcibly, then a man also cannot do that.

They should restrain themselves from taking a woman forcibly. This should be implanted in a boy's mind from his childhood days. From the time of primary school or kindergarten days, a boy or a girl should be taught to respect each other's opinion, they should learn not to impose their wishes on anybody, avoid

using force for any possession. Parents, rich or poor, should take care to teach their children values of life - otherwise the well-knit ties of family and society will be come loose and the gap will be wider day by day. From the primary stage of their lives boys should learn to respect the individualities of girls which would ultimately change the attitude of men towards women. Retention of social and family values has become absolutely necessary for the security of women and girls. For peaceful co-habitation of men and women, to provide a secured life to our children. I would request all of us to think about the present situation and delve-deep. Rallies, processions and demands are not enough to cure the malaise.

This mental disease of desiring women forcibly would ruin many families unless we act quickly. Let us all, both men and women, vow to solve the problems, and protect our children from further death and destruction.

To the Editor...

Why not a Carmichael University?

Sir, We the people of Rangpur are really grateful to you for writing a timely editional on the above subject.

Carmichael College is one of the oldest educational institutions of northern Bangladesh and is situated on 900 acres of land. The people of the area had been demanding for establishment of Carmichael College into a full-fledged university long before the independence of Bangladesh.

The then governor of the then East Pakistan Mr Azam Khan also argued in favour of turning this college into a fullfledged university. Many other heads of state or governments felt the necessity of Carmichael University, but nothing has been done except introducing masters in some subjects.

gross interference into the in-

Mahbubul Haque Chowdhury General Manager, Agrani Bank, Rajshahi

A Get-well card won't do

Sir, Shazneen's death has made us all the more nervous to open the newspapers in the morning. With a pang in your heart and shame on your selfesteem how can you begin your day with any enthusiasm or for any purpose?

Neeman A Sobhan's beautifully written 'To Any Daughter Desecrated" (DS, April 27 '98) will touch anyone having a young daughter and many of the readers must be having one or

Our national leaders, most

of whose wards are abroad and having nothing to fear, have the audacity to say that "nothing unusual is happening, only the media is giving more coverage to the item than they used to do before" or simply "it is a conspiracy by the enemies of democracy'

Then they visit the victims with a Get Well card and the media covers them with photographs. How funny and how pathetic! Unless a vaccine is found soon this human society of ours may turn into a Den of Beasts. I appeal to the sociologists, the economists, the environmentalists and all other 'ists' to come forward with their and recommendations to eliminate this evil so that our political leaders shut their mouth and do something concrete for

Mahmood Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

the nation. Ameen!