

DUCSU Dissolved

We congratulate Dhaka University authorities for dissolving DUCSU (Dhaka University Central Students' Union). It was a long overdue action and we are happy that finally they have shown the decisiveness and determination to come out of a preposterous situation.

From now on only the real students will be able to contest in the DUCSU elections. We have seen how in the past people with very unconvincing credentials, both in terms of academic involvement and age, clung to DUCSU leadership for years much to the embarrassment of the authorities and the shame of students' community.

A Way to Enough Food

A report by a Japanese research council says that Bangladesh tops all rice producing countries in the matter of paddy lost in the field. The Japanese fare the best with a 13.6 percentage loss. For the rest of Asia the figure is 55 per cent on an average.

Cutting on the pre-production loss can safely give us about at least 40 per cent more rice. Then, pray, let us do it. We must improve upon the huge loss at the standing stage and bring it down at least to 30 per cent.

Paddy must be dried for preservation and storing. There are driers which can take care of tens of thousands of quintals of paddy. There isn't one such in Bangladesh.

The points at which the loss of grain occurs and how it occurs — offer no insuperable problem. The peasants must know better than they know now. As, in fact, the peasant knows best of all about all aspects of the crop from sowing to harvesting to marketing, he is not prone to taking any cue from one who is not of his kind.

Safe Motherhood

Safe Motherhood Day was observed across the country yesterday with the dark revelation of three women dying at child birth every hour in Bangladesh. A recently released study jointly funded by WHO and Unicef made a statistical nightmare out of the appalling condition of mothers in this part of the world.

There is no denying poverty is the biggest contributing evil. Most mothers, specially those in the rural areas, do not have access to proper medicare in both ante-natal and post-natal stages due to economic hardship. But a great number of them also suffer from prejudice and ignorance.

We hope the consciousness stirred around this day every year will not exhaust itself in ritualistic activities but outgrow itself to be a source of ceaseless service to the community. The government in tandem with WHO has taken some laudable projects to promote the cause of safe motherhood.

Eyes on My Finger Tips

"Post-modernism is frightening because ... what it signifies is that the idea of futurity, of progress, the basis for all our notions of an avant-garde is defunct; that styles are not advances, but merely shapes on a revolving wheel, and that the wheel has begun to move so quickly all styles look like one."

Because, and I am speaking with tongue in cheek, it is the most catalytic, should I say, catalytic. We are living inside a big, almost a cosmic kind of Now, a Now that we are sharing with other people we have never set eyes upon.

No, it is not the messages I am worried about. I am concerned because there is no "otherworld". We are mediated "from the first hum of the radio alarm to the last strains of the late-night talk-shows."

What are the consequences? We are not sure, but we can speculate or, at least, fantasize. First, the media is plundering the "stock of available reality". In other words, they are demystifying the world.

This has always been the case wherever and whenever entertainment has been concerned. The great mass of audience will go for the latest, fastest, least taxing, most immediately stimulating thing.

Second, having made itself totally indispensable the airwaves and the printwaves haunt us every where, from our home to our workplace, from the shopping mall to our grave. But the media is also concerned. Because the serpent is devouring its own tail.

I quote Sven Birkerts once again: "So great is the fear of boredom, apart from illness and death (the ultimate condition of the boredom, its apotheosis) that every last quantum of ingenuity must be exerted in order to outdistance it."

Fourth, and that is the promising side of all. What will be exhausted first, the shrewd market sense of the producers or the psyche of the consumer? There lies the rub.

The third question is: how? It is simple. By stringing together unnecessary adjectives

and exclamation marks. The facts presented or the images painted need not be congruous with what they are. The trick is in the turn of a phrase or a peculiar angle of the camera, however unreal both might be.

So, we indulge walking into the chronological future backwards. New can only be generated out of combinations of the old. Dr. P. B. Steinberg was right: It is possible to bring to life something stuck together from various sources.

So what can we look for except the possibility of nuclear incineration? New diseases and new cures; ecological panic; crossing the frontiers of information technologies; longer lives and a diminishing quality of life.

devouring disease is boredom. So like a thermometer thrust in the mouth of a dying animal, the media must innovate and improvise even after rigor mortis has set in.

namely post-modernism. And Birkerts comes to my mind once again: "Post-modernism is frightening because ... what it signifies is that the idea of futurity, of progress the basis for all our notions of an avant-garde is defunct; that styles are not advances, but merely shapes on a revolving wheel, and that the wheel has begun to move so quickly all styles look like one."

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silent majority do I have the right to know why this lack of transparency? Undoubtedly, it is the privilege of the government insofar as BTV is concerned or is it that, even the benign government is unaware of this manipulation by some egg heads in the bureaucracy?



To the Editor...

Angels will sing to you

Sir, Indeed, it seems a befitting eulogy for a child called Shazneen who was about to be 16 and whose fragile flame of a life was snuffed out by a wind as abusive and violent as the nor'wester that grips Bangladesh with vicious intensity.

In the twinkling of an eye, without one being given the chance to bat one's eyelid, Shazneen was killed by an "animal" called man.

I write these lines, as a grieving teacher who feels that the world that these children will grow up to have taken a step backward. All those pitiful cries of the minor children raped, the grotesque death of young people somehow remain silent, not heard in the everyday clamour of life being understood in terms of money, avarice, power and greed.

I do not point a finger at anyone. I stand alone and in this, harsh world draw a "breath of pain". I have only a prayer for the children who are plucked by "proud Death". Our conscience must be not an open wound filled with the maggots of destruction and deceit. Let our conscience be clean so that deaths such as these can be avoided.

I have lit an eternal flame in my heart for Shazneen who is no more. The memory of Shazneen must live on mirrored in the eyes of her countless friends.

Fahima Khan Gulshan, Dhaka

"Melee in the Parliament"

Sir, This has reference to Dr Sabrina's letter under the above heading published in the DS on 17.5.98. She wrote on the rowdiness in the JS session occurred on 15.4.98.

On that very day the BNP and its allied parties called a holiday hartal in the country (the cause of calling the hartal might not be logical). At least three persons, all said to be BNP men were killed during the hartal hours. The government failed even to condole the loss of invaluable lives unnaturally.

Naturally, the BNP MPs were charged heavily and sought the permission of the Speaker to speak on the issue. Speaker Mr Humayun Rashid Chowdhury himself was presiding over the session. Instead of giving floor to the Opposition MPs, the Speaker allowed the Home Minister to speak at the very beginning. In retaliation, the Opposition MPs led by Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury threw 'paper missiles' and abuses towards the Speaker. They also beat up the TV cameraman.

I think, Mr H R Chowdhury, a career diplomat and ex-president of the UN General Assembly downgraded himself and dishonoured the institution of the Speaker by unnecessarily are upper hand his party — AL. A gentleman like Dr B Chowdhury, as Dr Sabrina described, failed to show even 'minimum patience' (instead of 'maximum') and did violate all civilised norms of the sacred JS (at whatever instigation it might be).

My questions are — where is the sense of self-respect in these

honourable persons? If that is in their sub-conscious mind, then when and how will this virtue awaken?

M A S Molla Member, BAAS Dhaka

Sir, I have read the letter written by Dr Sabrina under the above title published on May 17, with considerable interest. She in her letter has attempted to justify Dr B Chowdhury's (deputy leader of the opposition) reaction in Parliament in the mid-April (allegedly being wrongly treated by the Speaker). She has taken much trouble to explain B Chowdhury's rough behaviour by offering a number of arguments to prove that even if Dr Chowdhury lost his temper it is not he but the ones who made him do so should be held responsible.

But her arguments appeared to me rather strange. Throughout the letter she has simply taken side with the doctors and talked so highly of their patience that she almost went to the verge of declaring that doctors are the most patient persons in the society. She really doesn't make sense to me.

Shamim Ahsan 64/M, R K Mission Road Gopibagh, Dhaka-1203

Gulshan Lake up for Grab

Sir, With much interest I have read the reports in the DS on the above subject, especially since myself and my family are aggrieved persons in the above matter.

In the beginning of 1992 we rented the single-storied house at Gulshan, Road 76, House 8, when we came from Germany. Since then, I have been running a German-financed Infrastructure Development Project under LOE for the development of the country. To enjoy peace and tranquillity, we have rented this house by the lakeside which was assured to us to be the last one in the road according to the existing master plan.

However, with the beginning of this year, filling of land and surrounding it by a high brick wall started on the lake in front of our residence, claiming it to be a new plot, namely number 10. This very plot was depicted in the front page of The Daily Star on 30 April, 1998, when the series of report started. Since the beginning of the construction activities, this has been a great disturbance to us not only by noise, but also by destruction of the environment. Due to the construction activities, two huge trees in front of my residence have fallen down when a landslide occurred reaching far into my garden and, our boundary wall has collapsed and there is no security anymore.

In the DS of 19 May, it was reported that, all filling and construction works were ordered to cease. Another daily reported on 21 May 1998, that all the works had stopped. However, in our case, the construction works are still going on in full-swing seven days a week.

F. J. Jung Dhaka

The narrowing lake

Sir, Many thanks for the reports and showing of concern for the last natural waterbody of Dhaka city. In the Banani-Gulshan lake on the Banani side opposite Wapda staff quarter very swiftly and suddenly an earth filling has been made overnight right into the lake and piles have been driven and completed for construction.

Perhaps Rajuk would be kind enough to enlighten us on the emergence of this new land projecting like a connected island right into the lake and narrowing the lake to hardly 50-60 feet at this point which will be choking off its water flow in future.

Azizul Islam Banani, Dhaka.

"...plots to high-ups"

Sir, It refers to the report "Rajuk's Secretly" allotting plots to high-ups" published on April 30 in The Daily Star. In this coverage, it was mentioned only about Gulshan lake area. In this regard I would like to bring to your attention that similar dealings have been taking place in Uttara Model Town.

Being a resident of Uttara Model town, I would like to specifically mention the fact, that under the umbrella of 'Rupayan Real Estate', a construction work of an 8-storied apartment building ("Easel Dream") with Rajuk's approval using two of Rajuk's plot and adjacent few 'big-hats' of private land at the dead end of Road No. 2A, 3A, of Sector 5 is in progress. It should also be mentioned that this project is very close to the runway of Zia International Airport and it is known that construction of such high-rise building in this area are not permitted.

It may also be mentioned that the plots reserved for community use such as park, community center, mosque etc., of Sector 5 are gradually falling in the hands of so-called 'high-ups'.

Syed Mustaque Ahmed House No 18, Road No 4A Sector No 5, Uttara Model Town Dhaka.

A care-lorn island

Sir, After the May 6, 1998 report "Gulshan Lake: RAJUK suspends all work" — I would request Mr Morshed Ali Khan not to stop there. On the contrary it is not true that work has been suspended. Mr Khan should take a trip down the Road No 15 to see if for himself how ruthlessly and mercilessly the Lake has been filled, captured and retaining the claim by erecting rows of sheds.

On the other side of the lake, there is an island which belongs to the Government. But with the free economy in the country the island has become free for all also. There is no electricity, no fresh water no roads to get in or out except by boat to come on the South Avenue. The island could be developed and converted into an entertaining park for all.

M M Haq Gulshan, Dhaka-1212.

Tele-tyranny

Sir, It is my misfortune that my telephone number happens to be near the PBX Exchange numbers of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The consequence has turned out to be traumatic for my entire household. Naturally, that hospital telephone exchange receives a lot of telephone calls from outside. The trauma is felt when some of these calls, day in and day out, through faulty mechanism of the zonal telephone exchange find their way to my telephone. Such wrong telephone calls have lately become so frequent that my whole household has been flabbergasted. Even at dead of night when all the members of the family are deep asleep, these wrongs calls throw them into jitters.

Is there no way of mending the faulty operation of the main telephone exchange, so that we may be relieved of the tyranny of wrong telephone numbers? Besides, I sometimes wonder about the financial penalty that the callers to the hospital exchange suffer for these wrong calls.

One disgrusted Dhanmond, Dhaka.

A cup of salt

Sir, The politicians of our country utter the most outrageous rhetorics habitually. They do not spare any civility while lashing their opponents verbally. They sling vulgar slanders and indulge in making preposterous claims. Their tasteless verbal exchange would make proud many a shrew. Listening to their words it seems to me that a pinch of salt is not just enough to digest them, but a whole cupful is necessary.

There is a puzzling aspect in such behaviour. Almost every one of them are quite gentlemen in their private lives. They become the model of civility in any informal meetings or gatherings. It's only when they face the mass they discard all moderation.

Do they have a very low opinion of the people's intellect? May be they do — and may be they are not very wrong. We can get an indication of popular taste by perusing theatrics in popular culture.

In the advanced democracies, whenever a politician makes an ill-judged remark, there rises an enormous hue and cry. In ironic contrast with our country, the western politician are given maximum possible latitude in their private life but must follow a strict norm of behaviour in public.

I think for our people politics is a matter of passion, not reason.

Shafiqur Rahman 1/6, Lalnata, Dhaka

Scare the rapists

Sir, The surfeit of rape and gangrape news that we come across in the dailies and that has already assumed astounding proportion with enormity beyond human imagination exhorts me to make no worse, nay more inhuman proposal than chopping off the private parts of the rapists, at least of a little number, caught red handed, only in order to set precedences as deterrent measure.

When some people have turned beasts, and can play beastly game the weaker gender, what wrong is there to be inhuman and indecent once to teach

them worst lessons. "Lee" will take its own course" has already lost its lustre as nothing worth-mentioning to the extent of lessening the crime a little we behold.

A H Dewari 396/1, South Kafra, Dhaka Cantt, Dhaka-1206

Sanction against Iraq

Sir, It's about seven years or so that Iraq is gasping for survival under UN sanctions. The miseries of the Iraqis owing to such sanctions simply beggar description. In the meantime a stand-off arose out of Iraq's refusal to allow UN weapons inspectors unfettered access to so-called presidential sites.

However, much to our relief the stand-off for that matter an imminent war were over thanks to a witty Kofi Annan's tactful diplomacy, following which Iraq agreed to provide UN inspectors access to the con-jured sites and, indeed, it did so.

Now that Iraq has provided so-called 'unfettered access' and the inspectors have failed to trace any speculated arsenal of sophisticated weaponry, chief UN weapons inspector Richard Butler is perforce accusing Iraq of not cooperating with the UN! And the sanctions are becoming more unlikely to be lifted. This is naught but an instance of sheer US invasion and meddling in Iraq's state affairs. How come the UN isn't paying any active heed to Israel's constant expansion of Jewish settlement in Gaza and West Bank then?

Jamil Ahmed Dishari 11, Howapara, Sylhet

Biman's fare hike

Sir, Thank you for writing another editorial on Biman, the Bangladesh Air. Ever since the present government came to power, the remarkable achievements have been made in the issues like Ganges Water, Hill Tracts, fertiliser distribution system and trying hard to solve the loadshedding. For all these the government deserves congratulations.

But a pathetic situation is prevailing in Biman — apparently the government has no control and has put on Nelson's eyes.

Without any progress in Biman's service, there has been a fare-hike. Why?

Azhar Mahmood Malibagh, Dhaka

Safe?

Sir, What's happening in Dhaka city? Everyday, every morning people go out for different kinds of businesses, some go out for school/college/university, some go out for office (private/government), some go out for business but all the females remain in the house. Do we think they are safe in there. If yes then how? And if no then why?

Syed Shabbir Ahmed Pisciculture Housing Society House 13, Road 7, Block B, Mohammapur, Dhaka

BTV sans CNN/BBC, why?

Sir, Without assigning any reason from the Information Ministry or the BTV both CNN and BBC TV programme(s) have been banished recently from the BTV. The present government professes democracy from the roof tops, so, as one of the

right when he says: "Monks see things the rest of us do not... When someone is alone in a quiet room, he can easily hear the clock ticking. But if other people come in, and the usual talk and activity start up, he no longer hears it. But the ticking is still there to be heard."

So I go back to pre-Marconi silence and in a flash the night sky is charged with possibility, with the unknown, with futurity. No longer mediated by second-hand experience we quicken with expectancy and we see. And I recite the verses from Octavio Paz, Fable of John Miro:

Miro was a mirage with seven hands.

With the first, he beat the drum of the moon.

With the second, he scattered birds in the garden of wind.

With the third, he rattled the dice cup of the stars.

With the fourth, he wrote the Legend of Centuries of Snails.

With the fifth, he painted islands in the chest of green.

With the sixth, he created a woman by mixing night and water, music and electricity.

With the seventh, he erased everything he had made and started over again....

Sight is seed, to see is to sow, Miro works like a gardener.

And with his seven hand endlessly sketches — circle and tail. Oh! and

Ah!

that great exclamation with which the world begins each day.

So, as the dawn breaks, I look at my hands that are eyes. I have eyes on my finger tips. I write what I see and like Miro I say good morning to morning when it comes without ever asking where it comes from and where it goes.

When the night comes with its blue characters and festival birds and I can see no more, I shall "hail death" with a round of geraniums.

And I dream. Waterfall is like a girl coming down the stairs dying of laughter. The alphabets are all alive. They "send out roots, shoot up, bud, flower, fly off scatter and fall."

Salahuddin Y Jamal Firozshah, Chittagong

Neglected scientists

Sir, In a speech at the Institution of Engineers on 01.03.98, the Prime Minister expressed deep regret that our scientists were making contributions in innovating new technologies in the developed nations, but the same was not taking place at home. We need to probe into this. She further added that the present era is one of science and technology. As such, technology must be utilised effectively in Bangladesh as in the developed countries, and for this, the leading role must be played by our engineers.

I am a scientist and the innovator of the Radio Without Battery. Recently, the patent office of the government of Bangladesh has recognised both the innovation as well as the innovator and wished its success both at home and abroad, while giving me a call to contact the authority concerned. Raymond Lee Inc, an American organisation in USA, wanted to patent my invention as well as for marketing. I did not agree. My desire was to utilise our innovation in my own country. But no government nor any institution has yet come forward. As a result, a British company has started a "billion pound global business" on the basis of this innovation. Bangladesh is not only losing a business of worth millions of taka but also its due honour in the international panorama, for not being able to utilise this innovation.

I am not the only one, there are many scientists in the country who have successful innovations to their credit and are still engaged in the development of newer and better technologies. I believe, an industrial revolution will take place, if these efforts could be properly channelised and a programme could be taken in the light of ICTDC. It is also necessary to probe into why in spite of successful innovations, the country is still being deprived of the fruits of these innovations.

Nazmul Huda 38, Siddheswari Road Dhaka-1217

Crises of CU

Sir, Is there any authority at the Chittagong University to solve the ongoing crises? Already two brilliant students have died and hundreds have been injured. The university is captured by notorious terrorists and outsiders. The verity has become paralysed due to these elements. What is the government doing in taking necessary steps against the outsiders and terrorists?

Md Moshir Rahman Central Road Dharmad, Dhaka-1205