The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka Sunday, June 7, 1998

Proof in the Pudding

What the Director General of the Department of Environment (DoE) has laid down as a strategy to contain black smoke belching in the city smells right. And the government, setting up a black smoke check post at Manik Mia Avenue and following it up with many more soon enough, and putting four mobile courts on the run apprehending culprit vehicles, seems to be at last on the right track. Encouraged, we very seriously suggest that for the well-devised exercise to yield result, a cell should be set up forthwith to research into ways the culprits would use to beat the strategy as also the weaknesses built into the governmental juggernaut itself that may defeat the whole thing.

For example, what do you do with police vehicles? Most of them give off black smoke more unabashedly than private ones. Will these be stickered and by the unreformed third time grounded? The police administration would then simply collapse. And if you are lax with these police vehicles, the anti-pollution exercise could lose its thrust.

What about other government-owned vehicles? Rather than toiling over catching them on the road by hair-raising chases, cannot the government ask all its departments and agencies and personnel that from now on no government vehicle will belch black smoke? The first — and last — test of the bona fide of the government's intention in the matter rests on two simple things: a. no government vehicle with engine defects causing black smoke effusion will be on the road from a set time onwards, say July 6 or August 6 or whatever; b. government must come up with some drastic action against two-stroke three-wheelers, very visible to the public, such as refusal to renew anymore registration of such vehicles if these have been more than five (or six or seven) years on the road and an airtight ban on entry of new three-wheeler chassis from across the border or anywhere.

What we can do best besides wishing good luck to the DoE and BRTA, and Sajeda Choudhury and Sheikh Hasina, is to keep our fingers crossed. Our sixth sense says Dhaka's sky will not get bluer even in six month's time and autos and government vehicles would romp around as smokily as ever. But our better senses say keep faith and wait for good results and meanwhile set your own engine right.

Chittagong Port

We are worried. Chittagong port has again entered a spell of crippling congestion. The problem has now become chronic, a recurring nightmare haunting the premier port of the country at an immeasurable cost of the national exchequer and prestige. With the authorities unable to show the resolve and imagination to take the problem by the scruff, the debilitating phenomenon looks destined to weigh down heavily on the country's economic future.

We have always counselled the government to take a holistic view of our port reality instead of adopting stop gap or tinkering measures. Fragmented vision has so far neither been able to cure the Chittagong port of its ailment nor has it left any impact in upgrading the Mongla port. We feel a fully equipped and operational Mongla port would have taken care of many of the problems that are currently plaguing the Chittagong port. The fact of Chittagong in effect being the lone sea port of the country has been a tremendous boost to the vested interest groups there. For the trouble mongers the port has been a great handle to blackmail the authorities for their petty interests.

For reasons best known to it, the government has failed to address the issue with due seriousness. Shipping Ministry's inordinate delay in giving a decision on a certain proposal by the port authority serves as a case in point. It has been a year since the proposal for the imposition of penal rent on stockpiled containers was first submitted. This type of callousness on the part of decision-making authorities is suicidal. We feel if the government finds the job of ensuring competitive efficiency of the ports beyond itself, it should think of alternative solutions. Privatization of the ports should be contemplated seriously. Some international financing agencies have promised funds once the ports are handed over to the private sector. The moot point is the fate of the ports will have to be decided quickly. Government has to act. And act fast. Years of malfunctioning of the ports and the authorities' indecision about it have resulted in the drainage of huge sums of money. With regard to this issue we feel the government has neither time nor options in plenty.

Closure of Missions

Last Sunday the Belgian Embassy wound up in Dhaka. The Brazilian and Hungarian resident missions are headed for closure by the end of the current month. The three-some shuttering down episode, rather the near-simultaneity of its occurrence, gives grounds for reading implications into it.

A large presence of diplomatic corps in a country is an indicator of importance attached to the host country. Bangladesh's eventful birth, her baptism through fire and her being a resilient nation with a robust survival instinct won her a large diplomatic presence during the first few years of her inception. And then her image as a model in family planning, EPI and Grameen successes etc gave a sort of sustenance to the resident missions.

The exit of three missions gives us a prick, especially when in Belgium and Brazil we keep fullfledged diplomatic missions headed by ambassadors. Hungary is a different case-study. The Hungarian mission was one of the earliest to open here but we have had no reciprocal diplomatic presence

in that country all these years. Both Belgium and Brazil had cited 'budgetary

constraints' as being the reason for the winding up of their missions in Dhaka. But drastic cost-cutting measures are usually applied to missions which are regarded as 'redundant'. This gives an unwholesome feeling which gets somewhat palpable by the fact that the Belgian authorities had initially served a notice for downgrading their mission in Dhaka. If at that time we had taken up the matter with Brussels in earnest the closure of its Dhaka mission could perhaps have been headed off.

We shall be without the physical presence of three important diplomatic missions in Dhaka. But their fond memories will remain with us as much as the necessity for bilateral relations with all those countries.

Bangladesh also needs to take a pause and determine which of her missions abroad are redundant and which are not, her own power of the purse being what it is.

Indo-Pak Nuclear Race and Bangladesh

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has taken a good initiative by offering to go to Islamabad and Delhi to try and

keep the temperature down. In view of Bangladesh's past initiatives in promoting South Asian cooperation

this was indeed expected of her.

HE unexpected nuclear explosions by India, and Pakistan's predictable reaction, do set in motion a trend of thought that is essentially selfish and short sighted. It is that this time Bangladesh, thank heavens, is out of it all. We were a part of India till 1947 and of Pakistan till 1971. We have been partisans in the trauma of India's partition and in 1948 and 1965, had to take part, as it were, in someone else's wars that took their toll on us in terms of human sacrifice and economic hardship. One of the attributes of Bangladesh's independence has been that there is now no compulsion for us to get drawn into this insane nuclear arms

faction, claim friendship with

recent developments in South

Asia, one does recall the words

of Sheikh Mujib uttered in Cal-

cutta on February 6, 1972, at a

dinner in his honour by Indira

Gandhi. It was within months

of Bangladesh's birth and the

heat of the war of independence

could still then be felt. He said,

".... Let there be an end, once

and for all, to the sterile policy

of confrontation between

neighbours. Let us not fritter

away our national resources but

use them to lift the standard of

living of our people. As for us we

will not be found wanting to co-

operate with all concerned for

creating an area of peace in

south Asia where we could live

side by side as good neighbours

and pursue constructive poli-

cies for the benefit of our people.

History will not forgive us if we

Wise words that were to fall, un-

emanated from Bangladesh

when President Ziaur Rahman

took a concrete initiative by

writing to his fellow Heads of

South Asian Governments. He

wrote to them on May 2, 1980

emphasizing on the need for co-

operation for development in

South Asia. He pointed out in

his letter that South Asia

seemed to be an exception as a

region which had not ap-

proached "the concept of re-

gional cooperation with much

optimism...". He attributed this

to "mutual distrust and lack of

understanding" that had come

down to us as a "legacy of his-

tory." He expressed

Bangladesh's deep conviction

about the urgent need to set up

an infrastructure of coopera-

tion. A simple thought, ex-

pressed in simple words, as

great and good ideas usually

are. It also reflected the con-

structive attitude of a compara-

nations. Bangladesh persisted

on developing this idea of re-

gional cooperation, inspite of

many a road bloc on the way,

formally inaugurate SAARC in

Dhaka on December 8, 1985.

Since the inception of

Bangladesh all the govern-

ments of the country have vig-

orously pursued the policy of

promoting South Asian cooper-

for well over a decade now

while the organization, one has

to admit with regret, has barely

We have lived with SAARC

President Ershad was able to

tive new-comer in the comity of

The same thought process

fail in this challenging task

fortunately on deaf ears!

In one's desperation at the

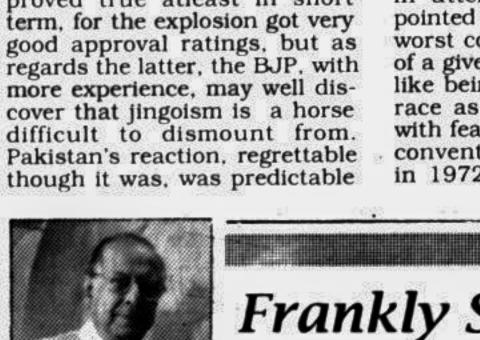
all our South Asian partners.

The bitterness and animosity created in the wake of India's independence in 1947, have increased with time, as is borne out by the fact that more than 95 per cent of Indians and Pakistanis have enthusiastically welcomed and applauded the nuclear explosions by their respective countries. We are too near events yet, but one can predict without fear of being proved wrong that in times ahead, the future generations of both these countries will look back on these nuclear explosions as the results of a sudden seizure of summer madness.

Bangladesh was born out of the barrel of the gun. Yet our birth did not leave any permanent scars. It is not only because our cause was just, but also, I dare say, because ever since the inception of Bangladesh we have endeavoured to play a positive role in the subcontinent. India was our ally in our War of Independence, yet as soon as circumstances permitted we set about normalising relations with Pakistan. Bangabandhu went to Lahore in 1974 to attend the Islamic Summit and Pakistan accorded us recognition. Though all our problems and misunderstandings did not vanish with a magic wand, a solid basis of constructive relationship with Pakistan was thus laid. An independent Bangladesh did encounter problems with India as may happen between immediate neighbours. But through bilateral talks, at times calling for a high degree of patience, we have succeeded in sorting out problems of Tin Bigha and the sharing of the Ganges waters. We have brought back 60,000 tribal refugees, whose undue and prolonged sojourn on the Indian soil was becoming an irritant in our relationship. Geographical proximity does create problems of its own but there should be nothing to cause conflict. We can, with some satis-

survived. The main reason for SAARC's somewhat sorry state is the lack of mutual trust between India and Pakistan, the two chief protagonists of the region. Their relations have reached a new nadir with India exploding its five bombs. One has not quite understood as to why India had to do it. As events unfold, it seems more and more as an act prompted by the new found power of a political party, with hardly any previous experience of statecraft, that thought that the nuclear adventure would atonce satisfy its internal political needs and its professed ideology of making India strong and powerful. The former may seem to have proved true atleast in short term, for the explosion got very good approval ratings, but as regards the latter, the BJP, with more experience, may well discover that jingoism is a horse difficult to dismount from.

powers, with world's fourth and seventh largest armies respectively, have fought three wars in the last half a century of their existence as independent countries. In early 1987 following India's decision to stage "Operation Brasstacks", a large military exercise, India and Pakistan came to the brink of war. Since 1989, with the deteriorating situation in Kashmir. tension has persisted in varying degrees between both the countries. Shyam Bhatia, a journalist of 'The Telegraph' London, who has visited Kashmir after the India-Pakistan nuclear explosions, reported over the BBC that he found that the Kashmiris were now living in utter fear. He quite aptly pointed out that not even in the worst cold war days did people of a given geographical area feel like being the cause a nuclear race as the Kashmiris, white with fear, now do. After the last conventional war they fought in 1972, both the Indian and



Frankly Speaking...

by Faruq Choudhury

and the two weeks that elapsed between the Pokhran and Baluchistan blasts would have seemed to most Pakistanis as the longest two weeks in their lives. These events do reveal that both India and Pakistan had really been in a state of preparedness but that the previous governments, in both the countries, had wisely decided not to cross the nuclear threshold. Now that this has happened, the comparatively carefree non-nuclear days will never be here again. One indeed had fears that the rise in India of Hindu nationalism, as a social and political force, had the potential to exacerbate regional tensions. Yet one had hoped that once in power, the BJP would demonstrate responsibility and restraint. This has not so far happened. There is a fear now of both the countries falling into ideological extrem-

The danger of a nuclear holocaust in this region is indeed very real. After all India and Pakistan, now nuclear

Pakistani governments had accepted the cease fire positions in Kashmir as a "line of control" and had resolved to "settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them". It is the refusal of the protagonists to honour this understanding in letter and spirit that has brought matters to such a frightening state.

A low intensity conflict has been going on continuously in Kashmir. As the Kashmiris have pressed for self determination. Pakistan has armed, trained and harboured the activists. India has failed to manage the state politically from the very beginning, flooding Kashmir with thousands o military and paramilitary personnel. Thousands of Kashmiris have been killed by the security forces. And there have been human rights abuses in unprecedented scales. That is the truth, unpleasant though it might sound. But then one would only be a fool to indulge

in lies in the face of a genuine nuclear threat. Unless this thorn between India and Pakistan is removed, one may achieve only lulls before storms. The danger now is that a nuclear holocaust precludes the possibility of more than one

What can Bangladesh, with its very limited political and economic leverage do in this situation? First, we have of course to ensure that the new situation does not in any way impinge upon our security, independence and sovereignty. We must reserve the right to exercise our freedom of action to safeguard our national security, in the unlikely event of its coming under any threat. Second, we have to ensure that the nuclear excitement around us does not deter our economic progress. Economic sanctions against India and Pakistan can, on the one hand create some problems and on the other open up horizons of new and challenging possibilities. We should be alert enough to deal with either or both the situations. An acceleration of our economic growth can indeed demonstrate to the public opinions in India and Pakistan that economic progress is more powerful than nuclear bombs.

We have a plus point in being in good terms, not only with India and Pakistan, but also with China, the other nuclear power in this region, which seems to have been somewhat surprised, if not amused by its name being dragged in, in the wake of the Pokhran blasts. China, whose interest in the subcontinent. had in this last decade somewhat waned, will now keep an eye on it with heightened vigil.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has taken a good initiative by offering to go to Islamabad and Delhi to try and keep the temperature down. In view of Bangladesh's past initiatives in promoting South Asian cooperation this was indeed expected of her. Bangladesh could also get in touch with other non-nuclear powers in the region such as Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives. Zero plus zero may indeed add upto something when it comes to exerting moral pressures on India and Pakistan!

But the key to the solution may indeed be with the United States and other developed countries, to whom we may, with our good track record in forging regional cooperation,

lend some local expertise. Nuclear danger can hardly be regarded as a bilateral matter only. The forthcoming SAARC Summit will be very important, for this will be the first time that Nawaz Sharif and Atal Bihari Vajpayee will meet as Heads of Governments of two nuclear powers. We must do everything possible to set the stage for them to engage in urgent talks to limit and control their nuclear activities. We may do so with the advice and guidance of the major nuclear powers, particularly regarding the possibility of these two countries signing the CTBT.

It remains to be seen as to

how active a role the US Administration would now like to play in this area. South Asia has not so far enjoyed the highest priority in US foreign policy though its importance had been increasing. Now with India and Pakistan gone nuclear, this region containing one fifth of the world's population and occupying a critical geostrategic position deserves such a priority. The first task in this region has to be the prevention of an Indo-Pakistan war which with the nervous pressing of a button can now turn nuclear. A war can be prevented with any reasonable degree of certitude only by resolving the major differences between the two countries. The United States and the World powers would do well to attach the top most priority in encouraging the two parties to talk and any constructive role that Bangladesh can play in this regard could be useful. In this backdrop President Clinton's forthcoming visit to South Asia, significant as it is, assumes critical importance. Simultaneously all efforts

be made to discourage further proliferation. A freeze creating a stable plateau for Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons and missile competition should be achieved. It must be said of India that it decided not to follow its 1974 test with more tests. A policy of nuclear caution exercised by both the countries can transform into a set of understandings that will deepen over time provided there is progress on the ground regarding the resolution of bilateral disputes The United States and other key powers have not in the past launched any major initiative regarding the solution of the disputes. The time has now come to do so and the United States, other key countries and friends of India and Pakistan could act in unison to persuade both the countries to engage in regular and sustained negotiations to settle their bilateral disputes, including the question

The South Asian Tension and the SAARC

Were the latest developments in this part of the world so necessary that India and Pakistan have equipped

themselves with nuclear weapons and drew the world attention by turning South Asia as the most volatile

mercurial change has taken place in the South Asian scenario, rather abruptly, in the last few weeks. The region has never been an area of tranquillity and political stability but occasional strains in the relationship among countries of the region and even bellicose ties to an extent are taken as something normal millieu of the South

Asian scene. It is in this parameter of broader regional environment that countries which share more than one billion people one-fifth of the humanity among themselves have developed certain common objectives despite the differences. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is the most notable of such ventures to develop against the given odds and adversities that characterise the general pattern of the political climate in the area. But this venture has received a severe jolt in recent times due to the developments that have attracted global at-

Undoubtedly, India and Pakistan are the two principal actors of the regional scene but their rivalries have reached a height of unimaginable proportion in the form of acquiring nuclear capabilities that appear to threaten in engulfing the South Asia should the belligerence takes serious turn. Were the latest developments in this part of the world so necessary that India and Pakistan have equipped themselves with nuclear weapons and drew the world attention by turning South Asia as the most volatile area in the globe now?

No doubt, the people of both the countries to a large degree feel "great" that their countries have now joined the "elite" (or

area in the globe now? dangerous!) nuclear club, but many including the main opposition leaders in two countries question the viability of having the power which they must have gained at huge expenditures and of late, the tests have also been carried out at the cost of international assistance. Will these at atomic power ever be used? If at all, who will use against whom? Given the close geographical proximity between the two countries, who would ensure that the weapons of this nature would affect only the "enemies" and not beyond that? Would it not be self-destructive? And in the process, in the event

Arguably, the Indo-Pak wars in the past did not exceed limits in the sense that even conventional wars could have been more serious. Two sides were bitterly fighting in the fronts but seldom chose to attack civilian population, hospitals or sensitives institutions. This shows a great restraint on their part in the past as both knew that a war is war but still it could be controlled within certain limits. But the conventional war may seem somewhat meaningless between the two if any war breaks out in future since both are now boastful of

to use this nuclear power which

appears a remote a possibility

unless the spirit of jingoism

goes beyond all proportions, the

innocuous smaller nations in

the neighbourhood might have

to bear the brunt of the holo-

caust. What is their fault?

arsenals. New Delhi and Islamabad say in a ritualistic manner that none would be the first to use

being in possession of nuclear

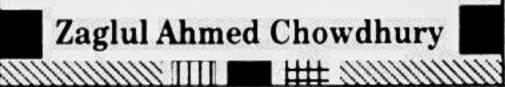
this dangerous weapon but both maintain that this could be used if need be. When conflicts between the two arch rivals cannot be ruled out, what scene one can really foresee if such unwanted and undesirable development flares up! The SAARC that has been so assiduously built up through long and painstaking efforts by seven member-nations of the region is unquestionably the first victim of the latest situation marked by escalations of ten-

but it has to weather many a The collective endeavour taken. ever since has passed through

many turbulent phases that required postponements of the meetings of the foreign ministers calling off the summits almost at the last moment. Nonetheless, it survived and the venture was back on the track. One may find faults with the SAARC over its progress that it has made since its inception but one can also point out that the achievements are not insignificant despite the slow progress The coming summit that is

MATTERS ##

AROUND US



to take place in Colombo next month appears to be hanging in the balance although all the member-states want that the event takes place as scheduled. The venture had taken off the ground formally in 1985 through a summit but the preparatory works took several years. The officials had burnt mid-night oil to find common ground for seven nations while political leaders succeeded albeit slowly — in removing the inherent misgivings that persisted at the bilateral plane among the members. One can recall the warning sounded by late Sri Lankan President Junious Jeyewardene that the

since resource constraints and other factors cannot really

guarantee a faster progress for an organisation of such nature. There may be domestic and other compulsions for India and Pakistan for detonating nuclear devices but this has suddenly changed the political environment in South Asia. In fact, the developments suggest that even China could be brought in the vortex of the dangerous nuclear arms race in this area. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif would certainly seek to score points on the domestic fronts on the issue of nuclear devices but they would have little answers to fellow South Asian partners on the actions that they have

Judging by the sequence of the developments, the BJP-led coalition government of India first did it hastily mainly to give an impression to its people that it could take serious decision and the measure would also ward off bickering within the fragile government that is walking a tight rope with razorthin majority in parliament. This would also embolden the image of the government as well as the BJP could also go on record that it could do it since the nuclear device in 1974 was done by its political rival Congress government.

One Congress leader said after the tests that the BJP government even thought of the explosions when it was in power for a barely 13 days in 1996! Initially, the government could rally people and other parties with the development but later euphoria faded to an extent and the opposition Congress, United Front and others questioning the timing and motives of the device. Such leaders like former minister of external affairs Pranab Mukherjee and state ministers K Natwar Singh and Salman Kurshid of Congress. Inderjit Gupta of the CPI who served as the home minister in the UF government or former defence minister Mulyam Singh Yadav said they wonder whether the security in the neighbourhood and sudden assertions by the defence minister Gerge Fernandes calling China as "Number-one threat to India" are at all rationale to warrant a nuclear device.

In Pakistan, the government of Nawaz Sharif was caught unawares by the Indian measures and came under severe pressures to match what the rival has done. The expected development came off and in South Asia is now in the focus of the international concerns and at-

The SAARC has to move on but its current chairman president Mamoun Abdul Gayoom finds it in a difficult situation to maintain the spirit of the regional institution in the changed circumstances. The summit must not be allowed to be deferred or postponed, and at best its timing can be readjusted only by days and not by weeks or months. The summit may also provide a sobering effect to the contending member-states since leaders of India and Pakistan are likely to meet at bilateral plane on the sideline of the event. The SAARC is facing one of the most critical phase of its efficacy since two largest member-states are now in a kind of loggerheads that was absent betore.

Bangladesh and other members of the SAARC must not be a spectator of this and should make efforts to uphold the SAARC spirit when two important nations of the forum are bringing out their swords and shining them as far as hey can do. The stake is more for Bangladesh which wants the SAARC to move and get strengthened and so is with present chairman of the Maldives and future chairperson Sri Lanka. The SAARC must not be allowed to get bogged down by India-Pakistan nuclear competition and their elevation(!) to the "elite club" - the refusal by the five members of the "nuclear club" to membership of two nations notwithstanding!

Confidence tricks

Sir, The government, it is hoped, is aware of con games in the name of religion. One game is to use an unauthorised vacant plot for erecting a temporary structure of a mosque; knowing the dismantling of a mosque is

a sensitive issue. Another con game is to display the name of political party to discourage protests or formal

The human society is a mixture of the good, the bad, and the dubious.

AZDhaka.

Beauty, in the eyes of beholder

Sir, "Sonar Bangla" is our dream and on all opportune moments we take fresh vows to fulfill this commitment. Sonar Bangla promises us to have a happy and prosperous country, a place where everything including our mind and mentality would sparkle like a piece of

gold. But then reality is far ploit the tenants to the maxifrom dreaming. "Worst decision, bad taste" (DS 18 May) is only one reflection of what we see around us each and every day repeatedly. We have neither the eyes nor the mentality to enjoy and appreciate anything beautiful. Short-sightedness often take precedence and destroy many of our wonderful things not realising the inner values.

Sense of pride, belonging and appreciation for beautiful things come from inner soul. The quality of thinking will justify the quality of work.

Thank you, the DS, for the pointer. Tasmia Amaat Dhanmandi, Dhaka.

House-owners!

Sir, It is a pity that some of the house-owners at Uttara Model Town are very rude and discourteous to the tenants who are retired people having no house of their own in Dhaka and elsewhere in Bangladesh. The house owners want to exmum for profits in real estate business.

SAARC is a boat that had sailed

Now it is high time for the government to make its House Rent Control Department very effective and operative to rescue the retired people from being harassed at the hands of the house-owners.

I think there was an Act passed in 1963 to this effect. Rent of a house or an apartment should be determined on the basis of the total square feet of the house or the apartment with fittings (local or foreign).

Abul Ashraf Noor House#9, Road#4 Sector#5, Uttara, Dhaka-1230

Is laughter the best medicine?

Sir, I came across a news report in a Dhaka-based weekly titled "Assassins of Johnny Yet to be Arrested".

It said that the killers of Johnny (16) who was murdered at Suritola School in

14th, 1998 are still not arrested. Police officials said that the murderers have not been caught as they have not returned to

their homes. Says the Officer in Charge of Kotwali PS, in the report: "How can we catch the killers if they are in hiding?" My wife, brother and I were in splits of laughter after reading that re-

port. We tried to picture the scenario in the police station where the officers are sitting in a meeting, quite frustrated and angry. The irritated IO is saying to his OC, "Sir, what kind of vicious, cold-blooded, heinous criminals are we dealing with here, they don't even have the decency to go home after a crime!" The OC agrees and drifts back to the good old days, "Ahhh...Where are those disciplined criminals of yesteryear... the good criminals who would commit a crime and quickly go home to their fami-

Nawabpur, Old Dhaka on April the good guys catch the guys if the bad guys pull dirty tricks like this... NOT FAIR!!!!I tell you there is no decency left

these days!" Please forgive me for being sarcastic here - God knows it. must be real tough for the police force at the moment trying to restore law and order in the country. But the police should refrain from issuing such ludicrous statements in the papers. and scaring the general public like myself, who still have confidence in the system and want to believe that the police force is still working hard for our

safety and security by main-

Farhan Quddus Banani, Dhaka

taining law and order.

Who is stopping us? Sir. Our children are right here in the country, because we could not sent them abroad like our leaders have done. And bad things are always happening to lies and wait patiently for the police to arrest them... How will

Any front page of a newspaper will show this ghastly truth in photographic detail. and sometimes even in colour. If we could have fulfilled our role as mothers, these would not have happened.

Who is stopping us?

clarify the matter? Is this a democratic country in name only? Or is it a place where people get killed almost everyday on the streets, at home, in factories and elsewhere in fires or stampedes or get simply

Will the PM Sheikh Hasina

murdered. And if they are of the feminine gender like me, acid may be thrown on them as they walk out of the SSC exam hall. They can also suffer rape, actually assault, and it will make little

difference if they are mere children or quite mature. Is this why we cast out votes?

Eden Girls College and Uni-

Tarana Jamil versity. Dhaka.