

The Love's Labour's Lost in Struggle for Power

Ever since the mysterious death of General Ziaul Huq the Pakistani political leadership tried to sideline the Army. The process gained momentum when Sharif won the last election. The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution which put in place the 'troika' — a power sharing arrangement between parliament, presidency and the military — was done away with.

Trifling with ID Card

THE Voter Identity Card project which has remained an unfinished agenda with the Election Commission for a good part of five years seems to have been stalked by financial irregularities from the very beginning.

The project, approved by ECNEC in April 1995, was originally intended to be completed by June, 1997. But in view of the pending work at the end of that cut-off point, the implementation period had to be extended till June, 1999. But when even that relaxed time-table expired, we woke up to the reality that no more than 60 per cent of the electorate might have received any ID card. As if to make that unsatisfactory coverage look even worse, many factual inaccuracies came to be detected on the cards distributed.

For the remainder 40 per cent of the electorate who did not receive the ID card, EC *post-haste* launched a crash programme to complete the task by September. We are yet to know the latest distribution status but have reasons to suspect that large gaps still exist in the coverage.

As if to put the finger on the root cause of the project's derailment, we now have the very revealing audit report on it having been presented to the parliament by Finance Minister SAMS Kibria the other day. It appears that the project worth Tk 180 crore has been eyed wistfully by people keen on a quick buck whenever the opportunity for it presented itself. Audit objections pertain to issuance of work order without tender notice published for taking photographs and making laminated ID cards, let alone other lapses in terms of maintaining records on stock and distribution of stationery and other goods, VAT deduction from contractors' bills, etc. These allegations need to be seriously gone into, not merely as an anti-corruption measure but also by way of fixing responsibility for the trivialisations of a project of supreme importance. This has to do with a scientific safeguard for free and fair elections in the country. Moreover, we have trifled with, if not spoiled, a golden opportunity for the creation of an extensive database with inherent multiple efficacy. We are surprised by the revised lay-out that excluded computerisation at the district and thana levels.

It is time the EC gave a full picture of where we stand in terms of the voter ID card possession together with an action plan for a time-bound completion of the still unfinished task. No one will savour a mixed announcement prior to the next general election that "those with or without ID card are both eligible to vote". Every one must have the ID card in good time and one that is linked to a centralised data bank for other uses as well.

Consultancy Work

IN July last, the Vice Chancellor, Dhaka University, had expressed the hope that there would be a change for the better so far as the attitude of a section of teachers towards unauthorised moonlighting was concerned. But a report in The Daily Star on Sunday depicted a rather different picture. The authorities at the university are still thinking about taking actions against the truant teachers. This is for the third time in recent years that we have come across such a piece of news. The authorities are thinking of serving show cause notices to the 'undisciplined ones'. This is not only the case with DU only; there are other educational institutions and professional bodies where teachers and others do take up consultancy work.

This is an issue that should be approached with utmost care and concern. Actually, we need to adopt a forward-looking approach rather than shutting our minds off to it. We must, first of all, decide the terms and conditions under which it would be desirable for a teacher to do consultancy for others. They can work only with authorisation of the competent authority. Secondly, they would share a reasonable amount with their employer (the University); and thirdly, their extra work should never be allowed to interfere with their primary responsibility as teachers. Only on fulfillment of these conditions should one be entitled to a consultancy assignment. But before that, the DU must find out ways for the department chairmen to comply with its instructions for drawing up a list of teachers of their respective departments who have been working without proper permission in other organisations.

We hope a uniform and forward-looking rule will be adopted and followed in future to set at rest all controversies on the subject.

Aussies Nod for Queen

THE Queen of Britain remains as the head of state in Australia. So voted 54.3 per cent of the Australians on Saturday against the Republican idea of a home-grown head of state in the form of a president. This has a weighty significance. The issue was whether Australia should have a foreigner or a local as its head of state. Monarchy was equally at issue.

The contention was brought to the fore in the mid-nineties by the former Labour prime minister who realised the importance of Australia's increasing role in Asia and wanted this change by deleting the country's "royal" image, hoping to enhance Australia's position in the Asian perspective. On the other hand, a view also prevails among old-timers that their security could also be jeopardised if the link with Britain were severed. Consequently, people, though divided over the issue, voted to retain the queen as the head of the state.

Without much support from the major political parties, the referendum brought fissure in the government itself: John Howard, the prime minister, upholds monarchy but his deputy does not. The "yes" campaigners have accused the prime minister of rigging. However, by keeping a link to monarchy, Australia may have experienced an apparent backslide, for this was truly the occasion for it to symbolically extricate itself from its 200-year-old monarchist legacy. The latest attempt may have suffered a defeat, but the republicans we predict, will definitely win some day.

THE Pakistani rulers from Malik Ghulam Muhammad to Mian Nawaz Sharif have remembered the day they chose a favourite from the country's military establishment or elsewhere. But the tradition went unabated with the history repeating itself and the time giving its verdict in the same coin. When they reached the precipice of power they did not know how to return from there and fondly hoped that they would be rescued by their favourites. Often those hopes were shattered. The ground rules of Pakistan's internal power struggle hardly changed over last half a century.

Ghulam Muhammad, formerly of Indian Audit and Account Service had proved himself to be the master manipulator of Pakistan's power politics during its formative days. He made optimum use of Iskandar Mirza, a fellow bureaucrat, in his intense power play to become the country's most powerful head of the state. So much so that he inducted Mirza, earlier a Defence Secretary in the Central Cabinet, as Home Minister after the latter's short stint as erstwhile East Pakistan's Governor in 1954. It did not take Mirza long to persuade the ruling cabal of the day to get rid of an ailing Ghulam Muhammad and invite him to replace the imperious governor general in 1955. Henceforth Iskandar Mirza's rise had been meteoric in seizing all state powers and becoming the virtual arbiter of the country's political fate.

He consolidated his power with General Ayub Khan who was already a defence minister in the cabinet and a powerful army in the background. Both found each other reliable friend in fulfilling their ambitions. After all, Mirza played a role in 1951 in making Ayub Khan the first Pakistani C in C of the Army and the latter provided much needed support base to Mirza's game plan. Yet when

Iskandar Mirza staged the country's first ever coup in 1958, within weeks Ayub's generals stormed into Mirza's bedroom during a midnight drama to force his resignation, pack him off to Quetta and later banish him to London.

At the fag end of Ayub's 'decade of reforms', an embattled president, caught in the tangled web of Tashkent Case and countryside agitation realised that he was fast losing the ground. To make things worse he fired in agony his key ministers, wanted to respond to incipient dissents with the 'language of weapons', himself suffered a stroke at the end of 1968 and remained away from the country at crucial juncture of unsavoury political developments in the country. In 1966 Ayub Khan already appointed General Yahya Khan the new C in C of Pakistan Army in preference to many senior generals. Because Yahya who was there to hit the bottle hard would have no time for politics and was thus considered innocuous and loyal man. But during the political crisis of early 1969, when Ayub became increasingly isolated, Yahya Khan now with the Army under his thumb started behaving more like a partner in power.

By the end of February 1966 Yahya, along with two other services chiefs prevailed upon a forlorn Ayub Khan to reimpose martial law to restore order in the country. But before that Yahya and his Generals gave the indication that they were not more prepared to pull Ayub Khan from the political mess of his making. On 25 March 1969 Yahya, with great care, oversaw the transmission of Ayub's abdication speech and

later settled down in GHQ to record his own speech that transgressed all the bounds given to him by his mentor. The scene was reminiscent of what it was during the night of 27 October 1958 in Karachi's presidential palace.

Yahya's exit was even more ignominious. Obviously he was in no way equal to an extraordinary situation that prevailed in post Ayub Pakistan. There were polarisation of politics, first ever general election on adult franchise, intrigues and war. But for a man whose only passion in life had been an unbridled hedonism these were little more than sports. Small wonder that in a blatantly par-

tisan move, he sided with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto with whom he drew up Larkana game plan for a showdown in East Pakistan. Bhutto who took full advantage of Yahya's myopic view of the national crisis simply dumped 'this national liability' on him after 1971 debacle. Then he fell on Yahya crocally in the military with a heavy hand and cut them to size.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had been a phenomenon by himself in Pakistan's politics. With his razor-sharp intellect he understood it the best. None could better understand than him the dynamics of Pakistan's power struggle as an insider of Ayub's inner circuit till 1965. He had full grasp of the Generals' ambitions and the politicians' lim-

itations. He wanted to impose once for all the civilian supremacy over the politics. He carefully proceeded to clip the wings of the potential Bonapartes and demanded an unflinching loyalty from the military. He picked up an obscure General Ziaul Huq for the top slot in the Army to rest assured about his vulnerable flank on the military front.

When his political front was crumbling after the allegedly rigged 1977 election, his only consolation was that of a loyal military. He boasted of it to visiting Princess Ashraf of Iran only days before he was taken into custody by Ziaul Huq. General Zia did not want to take

whom he hobnobbed throughout Zia's rule. When General Zia put on civilian facade for his administration during mid-eighties Sharif was made the Chief Minister of the key province of Punjab. Although as a backlash to prolonged Zia rule Ms Benazir Bhutto came to power on a sympathy wave in 1988, Sharif remained the military's 'democratic choice' after Zia's death.

In 1996 when Sharif returned to power for the second term with a resounding victory and later after a bitter struggle with the presidency and judiciary consolidated his power the military was obviously on alert. It was on red alert when the prime minister fired General Jehangir Karamat to further consolidate his power and did not relish Sharif who was in any case the military's creation wielding such authority.

The whole nation watched with trepidation the removal of Karamat. As the prime minister's choice fell on General Pervez Musharraf to be the next chief of Army staff it was on its facevalue believed to be a master-stroke of Sharif to get a Muhajir to quell the Muhajir uprising in Sind. Therefore, there was not much reaction in the Army.

Few had then thought that Musharraf, a person promoted by Sharif, would be anything more than a pliant subordinate to the prime minister. General Musharraf however soon showed that he was his own man and not willing to tauntfully follow his benefactor. Within months he demonstrated temperamental which gave an indication of the shape of things to emerge later. When Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee went

to Lahore in February last General Musharraf together with other two services chiefs defied the protocol and refused to attend the ceremonial welcome at Wagha much to the embarrassment of Sharif. The rift appeared between the two when Musharraf, believed to be the architect of Kargil operation wanted the prime minister to own it but the latter made all efforts to wriggle out of it.

The love once given to one can be dangerous if it is shifted to another. Sharif made his faux pas by doing exactly that. There was immediate back lash when Sharif chose another loyalist to replace Musharraf. There are plethora of justification for Musharraf to topple Sharif's elected government from misrule to economic bungling by destroying the country's institutions but perhaps no less involved in it are the questions of the self-preservation of the military itself and perhaps its burning desire to avenge Pakistan's humiliating climbdown from Kargil. What was at stake had been the military's honour in the face of its marginalisation in national affair.

Ever since the mysterious death of General Ziaul Huq the Pakistani political leadership tried to sideline the Army. The process gained momentum when Sharif won the last election. The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution which put in place the 'troika' — a power sharing arrangement between parliament, presidency and the military — was done away with. The political leadership seemed to be gradually establishing itself as the main repository of power in Pakistan. For a while the Army too seemed resigned to its unsoldierly role of maintaining routine law and order and collecting dues for the water and electricity board. The military's latent displeasures were however inadvertently sparked by Sharif's shifting favour.

PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

change and proceeded with great circumspection. He accurately identified the potential opposition, if any, to his takeover in 1977 and did not hesitate to hang his benefactor in a controversial case of political murder.

Zia died before he could show predilection for any. Many believe that he would not have done it at all. He never compromised on the question of power or its sharing even with his closest colleague or relative. Till the end he clinched the baton of Army chief of staff which he knew was his only source of power. But he did patronise his advisers. Nawaz Sharif was a Zia protégé and was in a wider sense the favourite of the Army with

OPINION

Hartal Bangladesh Style: Democratic Right or Coercive Might?

by Abdul Latif Molla

Even if we agree that 'hartal' is the 'democratic right' of the people we just cannot agree that it is the 'right' of the political leaders to force the people to observe hartal spontaneously (?) on such and such date for such and such hours for realising such and such demands of a political party. This is nothing, but arrogant imposition of the whim of the politicians on the mass, in utter disrespect to their right.

HARTAL, the most talked about subject of the current political arena has both its protagonists denoting it as the most efficacious 'democratic right' of the people and its antagonists denouncing it as the most grotesquely interlocking 'political weapon' wantonly used against the interests of the people. Many of our intellectuals are also shedding their forehead sweat to their feet trying to come up with alternatives to this detestable political consuetude, but in vain. Instead, hartal is coming down on the people with its augmenting frequency, duration and ferocity. It is also being feared that it will grip the moving wheels of the country and the people with its anti-torquing tongs very soon to bring them to a standstill till the aim of its implementors is achieved. This writer being neither a political analyst nor an economist will not be able to present an expert's view meticulously analysing the subject politically and economically. Being a simple generalist, he desires to furnish a general view on hartal for his valued readers — especially the common people of the country for their common conception about this egregious political prerogative.

'Hartal' is a Gujarati word. 'Har' means 'every' and 'Tal' means 'lock' in Gujarati language. So the word 'Hartal' for the apt political purpose as had been used and as is being used, may be construed more or less to mean, "lock everywhere," "stoppage of work in protest," "boycott," etc. but not anywhere near "killing" "destruction" and "coercion". In a wider sense it had been in practice to peacefully register protests, refusals, agitations, etc. against the illegitimate, anti-people and unacceptable decisions imposed on the people by the government or authorities or refusal of the government or the authorities to accept legitimate rights and demands of the people. Similar stoppage of work called strike used to be observed also in the industries, corporations and business organisations by the employees for similar reasons. So there existed a conspicuous seabed between 'hartal' and 'strike'. 'Hartal' was observed by the general public for their rights and 'strike' was observed by the employees of the organisations for their rights. 'Hartal' eventually could affect the organisations closing their activities due to its wider peripheral jurisdiction but 'strike' could not intrude into the public life beyond the limits of the organisations concerned. Even 'strike' in one organisation could not affect others.

The period of genesis of this type of protests by human beings is not certainly known but mythology provides us with information that their workers who built pyramids resorted to such protests for their rights and were killed by pharaohs at least 5000 years BC. In our known history we have the great 'May Day' to observe in memory of the workers who sacrificed their lives in Chicago city of America in 1886 for demanding their legitimate rights.

In the past 'hartal' or 'strike' was neither the first nor the last resort for realising rights and demands. It maintained its chronology after all other peaceful means before it had been properly exploited, such as: placing demands, holding discussions and negotiations, going to court and arbitration, issuing notice of hartal and

strike, holding further discussion and negotiation and if needed extending time, etc. because it involved humanitarian as well as pecuniary aspects of the public and organisations. If the extreme methods like hartal or strike at all became inevitable, the organisers very carefully pre-empted the possible sequel of them and adopted adequate preventive measures to avert any violent, destructive and subversive activities which could cause deaths to humans, destruction of public properties or even impair good relations between the two contrasting parties. Both the involved sides strictly controlled any provocative activities which could stoke up such deleterious acts. Mahatma Gandhi called off the 'hartal' against the British government when he had received reports of violence taking place during hartal and did not call hartal again.

In the past, prior to the genesis of vindictive politics, we may not find that hartals were called or rather imposed on the people protesting arrest of or demanding release of accused persons in criminal cases, terrorists and killers. We may also not find evidence of such vast magnitude of deaths, injuries and destructions during hartals at that time as it happens today. That could be very rightly called 'democratic right' of the people.

But whatever the origin or history or implication, hartal now has a Bangladeshi version of expression, style and application which are quite 'adversely' different even from that of

erstwhile East Pakistan. During the East Pakistan period the political leaders maintained the original meaning and genuine purpose of hartal with its strict rules of application. But now in Bangladesh the political leaders very fondly call hartal the 'democratic right' of the people and mercifully impose it on them in the most undemocratic manner for no legitimate or even minimum reasonable cause let alone for any public interest. Mostly, hartal is coercively imposed on the people against their democratic right for the interest of the political parties rendering the entire country helplessly beleaguered in the hands of the 'armed cadres' of the party calling it, and that opposing it, simply as a brute gimmick to demonstrate muscle strength.

At the end, the head of the party calling hartal congratulates the party for observing it 'spontaneously' and the head of the party against the hartal congratulates the people for rejecting it also 'spontaneously'. The valuable gain of the people is only the intoned congratulations darts to them like sharp arrows.

The people suffer immense loss of lives, properties, time, money and innumerable other things in the imposed hartal. They are also compelled to bear the liabilities of hartal incurred on the state economy. We may not be able to define this 'hartal, Bangladesh style' but can express our painful feelings about it by splitting each letter of 'HARTAL' and seeing what each letter represents: H = Hor-

ror, A = Atrocity, R = Repression, T = Toll, A = Anger and L = Loathe.

Achievements of hartal might have been great in the past but losses were greater and now the loss due to hartal has no limits. Evaluated statistics of economic loss of taka four hundred crore or so per day of hartal appears to be far below the minimum estimation of losses along with the standing losses. However, the most ominous of the losses of hartal is the diabolic humanitarian loss. Toll of a few deaths is almost guaranteed and bashing, lashing and injuries are normal sequel in a hartal without which a hartal is not regarded successful. The most sordid fact is that the high commands of both pro and anti-hartal parties perhaps ardently desire that a few corpses of their 'own party workers' must be at their disposal during hartal so that they get an opportunity to shed crocodile tears for them, adorn them with floral wreaths, parade through the city centre with the corpses, chant dry slogans against the opponents, bury them after a few 'janajays' and forget them forever. But these corpses provide them with opportunities to clamp a few more hartals and extend them as they wish. Also that facilitate them to lodge murder cases against their opponents and put them behind bars. This is the despicable open secret and there exists little doubt that it is a planned episode of playing with human lives by both sides

for their interest of the odious politics of power. But the most excruciating tragedy lies with those parents who lose their sons. They are the common people and not the political leaders. This is the most tragic loss of hartal but it appears to be desired by the morbid leaders of the political parties either to wrest power from the government or to cling to power. What an enormous excruciating loss for the parents but what an ecstatic gain for the politicians! It does not end there; the poor rickshaw pullers, baby-taxi drivers, members of the law enforcing agencies who come out on the streets for earning their meagre subsistence for the day also fall victims to the bestial atrocities of the myrmidons of these political leaders. They are also killed by being burnt alive, hit by bombs or bullets or hacked by sharp weapons. Many of them and their passengers sustain serious injuries often leading to the loss of their vital organs making them invalid for life. Can the political leaders say what mundane things can compensate these diabolic premature deaths and invalidities? They cannot, because consciously they desire such happenings for their self interest... Even if we agree that 'hartal' is the 'democratic right' of the people we just cannot agree that it is the 'right' of the political leaders to force the people to observe hartal spontaneously (?) on such and such date for such and such hours for realising such and such demands of a political party. This is nothing, but arrogant imposition of the whim of the politicians on the mass, in utter disrespect to their right, coercively often with open demonstration of arms and brute muscle power. Such imposed hartals cannot be called a "democratic right" of the people but can well be seen as 'coercive might' of the political leaders and parties.

To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Hartal-holiday

Sir, Ok, this has gone beyond being ridiculous! The opposition has observed a hartal on November 7 to 'protest' cancellation of public holiday on National Revolution and Solidarity Day! The mind boggles.

I'm not even going to bother addressing the economic and financial need to decrease the number of holidays. I'll leave that to others better qualified than me to speak about. But, just a hint to the opposition: MAYBE we could do with LESS HOLIDAYS and more working days. For the benefit of the national economy... Just something to ponder upon...

Let's face it: We all KNOW why hartals are conveniently called on Thursdays or Sundays. It gives the public a chance to have a long weekend. A lot of people opt to leave town, the streets empty out, the opposition claims the hartal a 'great success'. Does the opposition really believe that the public doesn't see through this 'strategy'? All these so called 'elections', 'transhipment' are mere excuses.

Still, until this point, it was simply an untold, understood,

open secret. Something to laugh (and cry) at but nevertheless, painfully tolerated.

Now, the opposition themselves have unwittingly brought the truth to light regarding 'Hartals'. The public can finally acknowledge it as the ludicrous affair it truly is: hartals are not valid democratic forms of expressions. They're simply excuses for lazy people to not work and for keeping sincere people from working.

The Daily Star quoted BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as saying, "Nov 7... was a public holiday, but the AL government cancelled it. This is why we are giving a private holiday by calling hartal on the day."

I say, "Bravo" to the Secretary General for calling a spade a spade. At last the opposition has FINALLY given the CORRECT reason for calling hartals. Thank you for no longer treating the public as fools. Having run out of 'eye wash' issues for declaring hartals, the opposition has finally landed with the one it truly believes in: Holidays. Very mature move.

I suppose there will be many diehard politicians who will object to my cynical observation. I'm ready for them too.

Let us work under the supposition that declaring Nov 7 as a hartal is doing us public a favour (not that we asked for it, mind you) and we're thrilled to get the 'private holiday'.

Fine, so as per any normal 'holiday', I wish to go visit my relatives and friends. Can I take my car out? Only if I wish to have it battered or burnt beyond recognition.

Never mind, I'll take public transport. How funny, I can't seem to find any other transport but outrageously priced rickshaws!

Oh well, shall we walk? But, look ahead on the main road. Police firing randomly, tokai kids throwing hand bombs. I think I'll turn back now.

Back home, the maid says there's no milk in the house. I send her to buy some from the nearby store. She returns empty handed because all shops are closed. So much for a nice cup of hot tea on a lazy 'holiday' morning! THIS is a 'private holiday'? Where I'm housebound, without viable transport and no public place open to visit?

One more small point on this issue of giving the public a 'private holiday'. One would think the Puja Parishad, Hindu Religious Welfare Trust and other Hindu Organizations would be thanking the opposition for the 'private holiday'. Instead, they were urging the opposition to withdraw hartal on Nov 7 so the country's Hindu community can celebrate Shyama Puja in a peaceful and appropriate manner. Does this give the opposition a SLIGHT

hint as to what most of us public think of their 'private holiday'?

Last I checked, holidays were about 'options'. The freedom to do what one wants when one wants. But 'hartal-holidays' like the one declared on Nov 7 and 8 give us NO freedom. Just a whole lot of frustration.

Muniz M Khasru
Gulshan, Dhaka

Constitution Day

Sir, We are indeed very happy that the DS has given a generous coverage of the proceedings of the seminar on the Constitution Day held on 4th November 1999. This is the first time that the anniversary of the Constitution Day was held in Bangladesh. It was participated by many of the surviving members of the Constitution Drafting Committee. I had the privilege of presiding over the meeting. In projecting the preceding it was given to understand that some of the Speakers accused judges of the Supreme Court, but the fact of the matter is that the trend of their discussion was not based on accusation.

It centered mainly around the integrity of the Constitution. Some of the Speakers traced the history of the violation of the Pakistan Constitution starting from Tamjuddin Khan through Dossos case, and referred to judgment of the Appellate Division in Halima Khatun's case.

The opinion was also expressed that if such cases were reviewed and 4th, 5th and 7th Amendments are challenged be-

fore the Supreme Court and if the amendments are declared ultra vires then the Constitution would be restored to its original form. This positive aspect, it seems, has not been reflected in the report.

Syed Ishraq Ahmed
Senior Advocate
Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Use merit instead of force

Sir, On 25th October, 1999 at 9 am, I parked my car along with other 15-20 cars at the parking lot in front of IDB Building, Rokeya Sarani in Agargaon area and attended the Fisheries Workshop held in the 2nd floor of the building. The workshop was arranged by DOF and ICLARM. Finance Minister, Fisheries and Livestock Minister, Cabinet Secretary, Water Secretary, Environment Secretary and many other distinguished national and international personalities attended the workshop.

After the workshop at about 6 pm, I came out of the building and found my car missing, although other cars with drivers were there. On hectic enquiry, one of the drivers informed that my car had been removed by the police. Later on, after a lot of harassment, I found my car at Teigan thana compound and had it released after payment of a fine for Tk 400. The police justified the removal of my car on the pretext of the Prime Minister passing through

Rokeya Sarani during that time.

Dhaka University label was prominently displayed on the windscreen of my car. The presence of so many important ministers and secretaries was supposed to be within the knowledge of the police. Therefore the police could easily have announced in the workshop to remove all cars with the help of enquiry office at the ground floor of IDB building. They did not bother to do that. They could have also returned my car at the parking lot after the Prime Minister had left. They did not do that either.

I request the authority concerned to use their merit instead of force. I would also suggest that the IDB building authority should close the parking area and display prominently the existence of underground parking facility there.

Dr M Shaif
Chairman, Department of Aquaculture and Fisheries
University of Dhaka

Why vacant?

Sir, The post of eye consultant in Sirajganj Sadar Hospital has been lying vacant for a long period of time and due to this the poor ophthalmic patients of the district suffer a lot. It is a pity that such an important post is vacant in a district hospital.

Nargis Parvin
Masumpur Uttar Para
Sirajganj