

## Turning DU Around

THE Dhaka University Disciplinary Board has taken action against five students with decision to continue 'temporary expulsion' on seven others for their involvement in various criminal activities on the campus. The five were expelled for various terms, recording the first such direct action against offending students, after they have been found guilty by enquiry committees constituted by the DU authorities from time to time. Had such strong attitude been shown earlier by the DU administration the situation on the campus would have been under control and many of the ills averted. This is a good step but not sufficient enough to eradicate the accumulated malaise. The punishment should have been accompanied with criminal charges against the offenders as an effective deterrent.

Many of the unhappy situations on the campus arises out of sheer politicisation that sharply divides both the teachers and the students. This ominous trend has virtually turned some of the residential hostels into sanctuary for criminals. They stay there and continue their anti-social activities, in some cases with the blessings of the hall administration. But as very much conscious beings they have the responsibility of saving this august institution first from partisan politics. The Vice Chancellor has, on occasions, been bold and effective.

The temporary peace on the campus though welcome, came at the price of the present ruling party boys driving the others out. A particular political force outmanoeuvred their opponents with official muscles. This was a peace forced and not achieved through mutual efforts for peaceful co-existence. Example of the higher echelon being partisan in the highest education institution has once again been set beyond any doubt by the Vice Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University who has resigned his post to contest a bypoll as a ruling party candidate. By doing so the JU VC has put into question the neutrality of his whole tenure. All the unfortunate incidents at the campus during his tenure now smacks of highly politicised administrative actions. After all his ambition and selection by the ruling party did not come off in a day.

We therefore, appeal to all teachers, students and other staff of these institutions to shun partisan attitude when the question of the well-being of these institutions and all those involved in and belonging to them are concerned. Love for the 'alma mater' should be above all priorities of teachers and students; only then these sacred institutions will once again regain their former images and be revered by all and sundry.

## Traffic Tyranny

EVIDENTLY, major streets of the capital last week were disorder epitomised. While the first half was ruled by skirmishing pro- and anti-hartal activists and police, the latter saw motorised vehicles, forced into exile of sort by three successive days of dawn-to-dusk shut-outs, hitting the road in renewed vigour. The result had been impeded movement for city-dwellers, first by political violence and then by untenable traffic congestion. On Wednesday, with the opposition-enforced agitation programmes having ended the evening before, it was a cruel exposition of Dhaka's overburdened traffic system. Every way which one turned, it was the same story — motley of motorised and manual vehicles in a tangle for hours together. Sadly though, it was an intense display of a familiar phenomenon of the city's daily life.

Despite variegated management manoeuvres to smoothen the flow, the traffic situation has steadily deteriorated over the years. In recent times, it has assumed untenable proportions. While the road network has little or no room to expand, the number of vehicles plying the roads has been steadily on the rise. It is indeed a wonder that the traffic system has not had a total collapse yet. It surely will some time in near future, unless and until the authorities come up with curative measures very soon.

Primarily, violation of traffic rules and regulations in the form of unauthorised parking, unscheduled stoppages by commuters, reckless lane changes and so on should be severely dealt with. At the same time, steps need to be taken to strictly implement the traffic laws and update and make efficient the existing logistics. However, in the long run, the authorities should aim at enhancing the infrastructure, both on qualitative and quantitative terms. Traffic management ought to be a top priority concern with the authorities.

## A Mafia Menace

THE transport sector in Bangladesh was believed to be free from the clutch of corruption and political malice. However, that holds true no more. Now, toll collection there results in the accumulation of Taka 4.2 crore everyday, according to a report published in the Prothom Alo on Thursday. The amount is realised from drivers of different types of automobiles, especially the trucks plying on the highways. The people involved are a coterie of vehicle-owners, labour union leaders, some politicians and even members of the police force. The existence of such lawlessness is not new, but the nature and extent of this Mafia-like toll menace is too outrageous to stand for most of the transport users. They allege such extortion has taken firm roots especially due to political patronage to goons. It is interesting to note that Awami League MP Alhaj Makhbul Hossain is the President of Bangladesh Road Transport Council, the amount of alleged toll collection of which is reportedly twice or thrice of that collected by other trade unions!

An investigation by the Bengali daily revealed that the coalition between some ruling party members and a section of administration has allowed such effrontery to prevail. It said that the money realised from four Dhaka terminals is shared by these parties concerned. We condemn such depravity on the part of the 'law-enforcers'. Their inauspicious inaction or 'action' in this case, only serves to disparage them in the eyes of the ordinary people. This only delineates a picture of hypocrisy and atrocity. Whether and why political pot-notches are involved in this 'day-light vandalism' is a mystery and we can only speculate about that. But we wonder whether the ministry concerned has any responsibility to stem the turpitude.

# Not the 'Other Half' but Part and Parcel of the 'Whole'

THE role of women in economic growth and development is widely recognised but seems hardly recorded by official statistics. Especially in agricultural productivity gains that swept countries over the past 30 years, rarely the role of women was properly appreciated. This negligence, allegedly, sprang from the ignorance of agricultural research scientists and programme implementers who apparently seemed to turn a deaf ear to the potential contributions of women in raising farm productivity. However, time is ripe enough, perhaps, to give due cognizance to the contribution of women to agricultural development, their capabilities and constraints, so that necessary policies and programmes could be orchestrated to assist them and thus augment agricultural production.

The degree of the contributions of women would, nevertheless, vary across countries, regions and agro ecological zones. Variations could also be caused in response to economic, demographic, political and other changes that seemingly influence the pattern of female participation in agricultural productivities. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, a gender division of labour is reported to take place between cash and

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food crops. Women are said to be primarily engaged in and responsible for food or subsistence crops while men are found involved in cash crops with a share of labour drawing from women. In many parts of Africa, according to available evidence, there are 'female crops' (eg cassava, swamp rice, roots and tubers) and 'male crops' (eg maize, cotton). In the region of Africa, women are reported to operate independently in their own plots farmed and managed by themselves and if not, occasionally with the help of their children. They make their own decisions and have control over own earnings. In addition, they also contribute labour on their husbands' plots.

According to estimates provided by some economists (eg Seager and Olson, Henn, Cloud etc), about half of the labour force in sub-Saharan Africa is constituted by women. 'Women's actual participation in farm work is, however, considerably more than is reflected in region-wise statistics. Surveys conducted in two villages representative of farming systems in Southern Cameroon,

## Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes



for example, showed that women, on average contributed two-thirds of the weekly labour hours in agriculture. Another observation states, 'Women in Africa contribute, on average, 90 per cent of the labour force for food production, 100 per cent in animal husbandry and 60 per cent in marketing'. It may be noted that official rates of female participation in the agricultural labour force in Asia posits a lower figure and for Latin America much lower. Empirical evidence showed that within Asia and Pacific region, estimates of women's participations in agricultural activities (paid and unpaid) ranges from under 5 per cent in Jordan to nearly 50 per cent in Nepal. In Vantau, women constitute half of the agricultural labour

force. Looking at the nature of works performed by women, one could note that 'in the rice field of India and Sri Lanka women carry out 75 to 85 per cent of manual weeding and almost all the works in transplanting rice'. In Madhya Pradesh of India where researchers in the past saw no contribution of women in agriculture, half of the labour used in rice production is reported to come from women. However, unlike in Africa, women in Asia hardly go for independent works, rather their contributions mostly originate in terms of unpaid family labour and hence tend to impart varying degrees of influence in overall decision making.

Interestingly enough, in Nepal, for example, one

economist found that in HIV growing areas 'women are making 81 per cent of the decisions pertaining to seed selection, 80 per cent of these concerning the use of improved seeds and 40 per cent of decisions about fertiliser use'. In rural Thailand and the Philippines, women manage household budgets and are often responsible for financial decision-making. Simeen Mahmood and Wahiduddin Mahmood of Bangladesh observed that '21 to 56 per cent of all wage labourers in Bangladesh, for example, are women. They represent one-half to two-thirds of women from landless households.

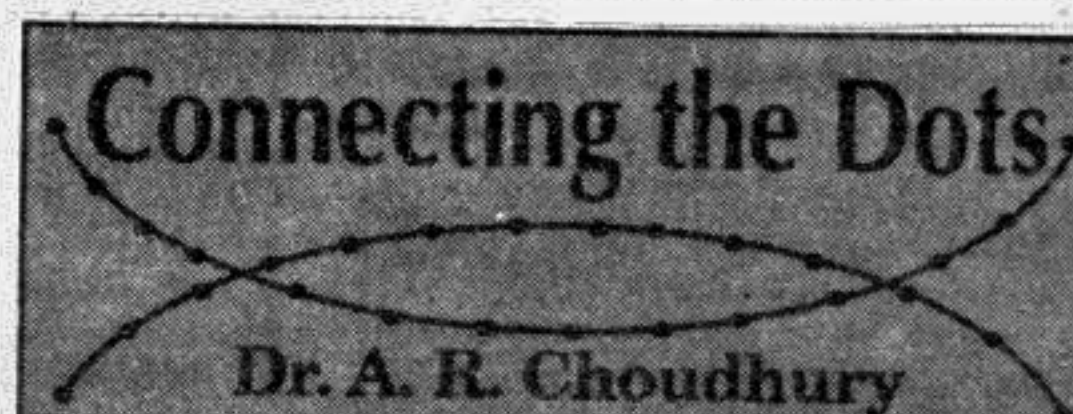
In the absence of largescale national and agricultural gender disaggregated income, production and consumption data, an accurate monetary valuation of the above mentioned contributions by women is hard to come by. On the other hand, the pervasive presence of unpaid family contributions makes it more difficult. Few of the available hard-earned estimates should, nevertheless, be cited. For example, in some countries, women's earnings are shown to constitute a third

of the expenditure on purchased food and their output represented three-quarters of subsistence food consumption. In Egypt, 40 per cent of yearly cash income for an average size farm came from women. Agarwal (India) and Mahmood and Mahmood (Bangladesh) found that 'women's earnings account for about half of household cash income in Bangladesh while in India, women farm wage labourers are often the main even the sole income earners in landless households'.

Therefore, the 'other half', of our total population need to be increasingly favoured by incentives, as done for men, to draw them into the mainstream of economy. Women are not only home producers but also farmers engaged in agricultural production activities in the field. The recognition calls for policy packages 'that would minimise undermining their role and maximise their services and technology delivery.' Women's access to credit delivery should not further be strengthened and only for non-agricultural purposes but also for agricultural purposes. Take the other half as full and fully appreciate their role. They are not the other half as is told but, in fact, the part and parcel of the total.

# Microsoft Ripples Worldwide

*In recent years, Microsoft has been investing heavily in the European and Asian markets. Now it has to think very carefully how it behaves in the future. In the longer term, even if Microsoft agrees to certain punishments to settle its legal battle with the US Justice Department, the software maker may eventually emerge as a marked company encouraging its unhappy competitors to launch their own civil suits against Microsoft.*



drop. The US Justice Department and about two dozen US states have charged Microsoft with abusing its monopoly power in order to sell more copies of its own internet browser, Internet Explorer, and damage the business prospects of rival Netscape Navigator browser. Microsoft argued that, although its Windows operating system runs on ninety per cent of the world's personal computers, it didn't act as a monopoly and instead benefitted its customers by giving them additional features at no extra cost. However, the judge seems to have sided with the arguments presented by the Government.

The key finding of the Judge is that Microsoft's actual pricing behaviour is evidence that the firm enjoys monopoly power in the market for Intel-compatible personal computer operating systems.

The judge's decision also accuses Microsoft of engaging in a concerted series of actions to protect the applications barrier to entry, and hence its monopoly power, from a variety of threats including Netscape's Web browser and Sun's implementation of Java. According to the judge, many of these actions have harmed the consumers by distorting compe-

tition and raising prices. A recurring theme in the judge's findings is that Microsoft took extreme measures to stop the development of any potentially competitive product. Presumably, these findings of fact by the judge are only a prelude to the actual ruling of law expected early next year.

The fundamental question is now whether Microsoft has illegally exploited its Windows monopoly. If this is found to be the case, the judge will listen to proposals about possible remedies.

Currently, several different options for remedies are being discussed by legal and computer analysts. The first option would be to split Microsoft into separate companies selling operating systems, applications and internet content. Alternatively, the judge may allow Microsoft's competitors to add or modify Windows to use their

own software. A third option being discussed would prevent Microsoft from giving discounts to companies which exclusively use its software.

The biggest issue now is perhaps what will happen during the inevitable appeals process and other legal manoeuvres that will continue for some time. Later this year, the judge will probably order some remedies to restore fair competition. Microsoft will inevitably appeal the judge's decision. As this process could take several years, it would allow Microsoft to continue its worldwide run-up of profits and record market valuations. There will be much disruption

in the computer industry worldwide.

It is premature to speculate about the possible breakup of Microsoft into smaller companies, especially as there may be more practical remedies such as stopping Microsoft from making any further acquisitions for a period of time, and declaring Windows to be an essential facility, with the source code being in the public domain. The judge's ruling also makes it more likely that European and Japanese anti-trust investigators will scrutinise Microsoft's activities more closely.

Already, regulators in France, Italy, and Japan are considering consumer complaints against Microsoft, while the European Commission said it would study the ruling, and had two complaints lodged against the computer giant.

In recent years, Microsoft has been investing heavily in the European and Asian mar-

kets. Now it has to think very carefully how it behaves in the future. In the longer term, even if Microsoft agrees to certain punishments to settle its legal battle with the US Justice Department, the software maker may eventually emerge as a marked company encouraging its unhappy competitors to launch their own civil suits against Microsoft. Like the leading tobacco makers, it may be dogged by civil lawsuits worldwide.

The judge is extremely clear-cut in his findings, declaring that Microsoft abused its dominance of the personal computer industry to stifle innovation and competition, hurting consumers. But the decision is only a first step towards determining punishment that likely will affect the entire technology industry worldwide.

What does it mean for individuals? For those who use Microsoft programmes or visit Microsoft's popular websites, not much is likely to change in the near term — at least until the legal appeals are exhausted.

For those who are holding Microsoft stocks, there may be some uncertainty in the short run. What happens in the long run — to both the stocks and the products — is anybody's guess.

## What's in a Name?

# "Shahid Janani Jahanara Imam Hall"

by Dr. Yasmeen Haque

IF one person symbolizes the spirit of the Liberation War, it is Mrs. Jahanara Imam. She stands out as one of the persons who publicly challenged the Amir of Jamaat-e-Islam, Ghulam Azam. He was convicted and condemned as a war criminal by a people's tribunal headed by Mrs. Jahanara Imam. Just as she is a beacon of light and a symbol for us, the mere mention of her name strikes a very unpleasant chord in the hearts of the traitors and war criminals of our Liberation War, who are now trying desperately to wipe out their despicable past history.

The Shahjalal University of Science and Technology is relatively a new university as compared to some of the older institutions of our country. I consider it my good fortune to be a teacher of the university in the Physics department. Two years ago, I was appointed as the provost of the only existing ladies hall named nearly six years ago. From its beginning the hall was not given a name. On my appointment as the provost, the naming of the hall was one of my first priorities.

The University is an autonomous body and has rules and regulation through which each decision is taken. Our ordinance says that the names of the Halls of the University shall be determined by the Syndicate. The existing men's hall of our university has had the name 'Shaaharan Hall' for many years now.

We, the provost and assistant provosts of the ladies hall, decided to request the Syndicate for a name. Part of our letter written to the Syndicate is quoted below:

"We feel that when the deliberations for a name arise, we should consider the name of a nationally acclaimed person who has contributed immensely in the field of education, literature and culture of our country. The name itself should reflect and inspire leadership qualities and the spirit of the Liberation War. Such a person who is admired and respected by all is Mrs. Jahanara Imam.

Not only was Mrs. Jahanara Imam a brilliant educationist but the mother of a martyr, a Fulbright Scholar, a social worker, a teacher and a prolific writer who still lives amongst

us through her writings. Her name invokes the spirit of the Liberation War and the extreme courage with which she faced her entire life.

Whatever little we do in her memory now, it seems insignificant compared to her contribution in all arenas, for the future generations of Bangladesh. We would like to propose the name 'Shahid Janani Jahanara Imam Hall' as the name of the ladies hall."

At the time the above letter was written, I was unaware of the fact that Mrs. Jahanara Imam was also the proud recipient of the Bangla Academy Award. In fact her achievements are so numerous that no list will be a complete one.

It is now nearly a year since the above quoted letter was given to the university administration. A high powered committee was set up to name the various halls and buildings of the university. After a few meetings our various buildings and halls were named after Banga Bandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sayet-Bose, Dr. Md. Shahidullah, Dr. G. C. Deb, Kazi Motahar Husein, Bongo Bibi Osman, Dr. Qudrat-e-Khuda, Zubaida Khatun Choudhury and Hasan Raja. The ladies hall was named 'Shahid Janani Jahanara Imam Hall'.

Now, it seems that after so many years the razakars of 1971 dare to raise their heads again. After the announcement of the names they called a strike in all the educational institutions of Sylhet. They came to the Shahjalal University campus and locked all the academic and administration buildings.

The teachers were insulted and debarred from entering their offices. The campus students were terrorized. Their main objection was the name of the ladies hall. It is amazing that all this can go on in the campus of a national university and the government and police of our country turn a blind eye. Now they have again threatened our campus with another long march and strike on November 14th. The female students of the Shahid Janani Jahanara Imam hall are another story. I was out of the country at the time but I am told that they were overjoyed and brought out a rally in support of the name. They are already very comfortable with

the name and have submitted a signed memorandum to the Vice-Chancellor requesting a portrait of Mrs. Jahanara Imam and the name of the hall to be prominently displayed in the hall premises as soon as possible. These girls were threatened with their lives and that their bodies would float in the Surma river! These threats are no different than the ones given to the Jahangirnagar University girls during the recent unfortunate incident in their university. In spite of the dire threats, as we all know, the courage and determination of those girls stands out as an example.

Nearly six years ago I was seeing off Mrs. Jahanara Imam at the airport in New Jersey, USA. This would be our last meeting. In front of us at the airport terminal counter was a young woman checking in for a flight connection. This woman had three small children ranging from one to five and also a lot of luggage with her. Seeing how well the woman was handling all this by herself alone, Mrs. Jahanara Imam turned to me and said "Our girls still have a lot to learn." I wish I could meet her now and then I would say "Our country still has a lot to learn from our girls".

The vice-chancellor of our university has been threatened with physical assault. The syndicate members are also getting regular threatening phone calls and firearms have been exploded in their residence. These anti-liberation forces have warned that they will hold the syndicate members hostage until the name is changed. But I would like to remind them that they are better off not following in the footsteps of their Jamaati brothers of 1971. One Jahanara Imam was enough and still haunts them from her grave to strike terror in the hearts of all Jamaatis including their Amir Ghulam Azam. Let's forget this, hall will inshallah produce the future Jahanara Imams to show them and guide them in the right path.

The writer is Provost, Shahid Janani Jahanara Imam Hall and Associate Professor, Department of Physics and Member of the Syndicate, Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet.

## 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.

### A clarification

Sir, The Daily Star published a front page report on some ad hoc appointments in the Jahangirnagar University and it included my name as well (DS 8 Nov). Some adverse comments were made on my academic achievements and even on my social standing. I felt impelled to clarify some issues raised in the report.

First, it is not true that I did not study International Relations. In fact I obtained a degree for a thesis entitled Bangladesh-Soviet Union Relations 1980-1990. My thesis, I must modestly note, elicited very favourable comments from external examiners. Secondly, I entered government service through an examination conducted by the Bangladesh Public Service Commission. Thirdly, my ad hoc appointment went through a process in which all the three important functionaries of the university, namely, the Chairman of the Department, the Dean of the Faculty and the Vice-Chancellor had to concur. So it could not be a unilateral appointment by any one. It was done strictly in accordance with the J U Act, and the Statutes. Finally, a very serious accusation of 'anti-social activities' has been made against me. I will be delighted to know what it means and what it amounts to. To my knowledge, I have not done anything which could be construed to be an anti-social activity.

Md Abdullah-hel-Kaft, Lecturer, Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka

### Y2K confusion

Sir, Today is 9th November 1999, correct me if I am wrong, there are 418 days left of the 2nd millennium. In reference to Reader's Digest (page-76, January 1996) the first day of the first millennium was January 1, 1 AD and accordingly the last day of 1st millennium was on December 31, 100 AD. So, is it not correct to say that the 3rd millennium begins on January 1, 2000 but on January 1, 2001? It would be correct to say that the 3rd millennium begins on January 1, 2000 if the first

day of the first millennium was January 1, 0 AD.

Nashat Farhana Moin, Dhaka

### Used syringes

Sir, We are grateful to The Daily Star for making the vulnerable people aware of the health hazards in the country. How is it possible to allow certain countries to export used syringes?

I request the authorities concerned to take urgent steps to stop the import of used syringes in order to avoid a catastrophe.

It is our children who are mostly at risk and it is the duty of all the departments concerned to stop the import of diseases at once.

R Ahmed, Dhaka

### Western press on the East

Sir, The anti-Mahathir campaign by the Western mass media has overspilled into the third world press, because the latter has no Asian press agency to compete internationally with the West. This anger to chastise Mahathir of Malaysia is understandable, as so far he has resisted Western penetration into Malaysia and the Asean region.

Only now some intrusion has been gained in E Timor, but there also the Australian leadership of the UN peace-keeping forces in under sharp criticism and divergence of opinion. The slow re-emergence of Malaysia from the financial stranglehold of the West has not abated the Western fury. News from Malaysia is negatively oriented and slanted by the Western tycoons. In the same vein, the OIC has utterly failed to set up a news agency network to keep the Islamic world enlightened. Of course there is sympathy for the underdog, and the confirmation is subject to court verdict. It is a difficult decision to make, the groomed-up successor to Mahathir, who was ditched by the latter after more than a decade of tutoring. The underlying causes might be unearthed someday; as what is appearing in the press might be part of the story, and some in-

Abul M Ahmad, Dhaka

### Museum of notoriety

Sir, The BTV story on Ershad Sikdar and his palace in Khulna was revealing. He must be one of the great success stories of the century (handling a total of Tk 500 crore), considering the primary level of his educational qualification.

The government may consider seizing his palace and converting it into a Museum of Notoriety for posterity to learn lessons. This is the height of negative entrepreneurship, starting life as a coolie in a steamer ghaf.

A Husnain, Dhaka