The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali Dhaka, Monday, July 10, 2000

WHO Index: Some Thoughts

↑ CCORDING to WHO's World Health Report 2000. Bangladesh ranks 88th amongst 191 member states in overall healthcare performance. Based on 1997 estimates, the health index puts us next to Sri Lanka, placed 76th, in South Asian context and way ahead of India and Pakistan, 112th and 122nd respectively. For a least developed country like ours, the progress is reasonably satisfactory in-

The ground reality, however, is not as rosy as our climb up the world health index might suggest. Still, a vast majority of the country's population has no access to basic healthcare. While health service system in the public sector is in total disarray, private sector is not either encouraged or motivated to engage in the service. The Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP), which seeks to take emergency medical care to the grassroots through district hospitals and thana health complexes, has never quite gathered the desired momentum. At one time, the programme appeared lost in bureaucratic web. Incumbent health minister, in a recent interview to this paper, did express displeasure at its slow pace of implementation. Medical supply for the Essential Services Package (ESP), which is an integral part of the HPSP, also nearly stopped when the health ministry failed to renew the agreement with relevant UN agencies.

All the leading state-run hospitals, too, are beset with multifarious problems. Inadequate infrastructure, shortage of medicine and equipment supply, scarcity of logistic and personnel support etc have taken heavy toll on their services. That the number of service-seekers has progressively increased over the years has not found any reflection in annual budgetary allocation. At a high-level meeting with the health minister recently, heads of all the public hospitals and health institutes have pleaded for allocational increase. City-centricity of the doctors has also been a major stumbling block for the government's overall healthcare plans. Many a medical practitioner on the government's payroll has taken resort to one pretext or the other to evade posting at outstations. Some five hundred vacant positions at the district hospitals and thana health complexes bear testimony to that.

It is inevitably the poor who have suffered for the sorry state of public healthcare system. They are the majority and, therefore, focus of all government efforts should be on them. The reality on the ground, vis-a-vis the world health index, underlines one strong truth: we have a long way to go.

Land Grabbers at It Again

A ND now it is the turn of WASA. The group of people, who illegally occupied a huge area of Rajuk land and constructed a market styled as Hazrat Shah Jalal Supermarket at Section 6 of Uttara model town, have now grabbed a piece of land at Section 3 of Uttara near the DIT market. Already a few semi-pucca shops have been constructed on the land designated for WASA's use. The gang is led allegedly by Dipu Choudhury, son of State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Choudhury Maya, according to a report in the Bangla daily Prothom Alo, published on Sunday.

The authorities bulldozed the illegal market on the Rajuk land in the face of public criticism last month. But, in case of the WASA land they have so far played silent watchers! Against allegation of non-cooperation by the Uttara thana, the OC said they would definitely take action if any case was lodged against the unauthorised constructions.

It is reported that around two bighas of land was given to WASA by Rajuk in 1983 for construction of pumphouse for Uttara model town. WASA accordingly constructed one pumphouse and kept rest of the land vacant for future use. But about two months back Dipu Choudhury took initiative to construct eight pucca shops and a kitchen market inside the shopping complex. This has also led to a reign of mastaans and terrorists in the area. Rajuk has not taken any action against this shopping complex though commercial activities are not authorised in residential areas. Locals are mortally afraid of Dipu Choudhury, who is also the general secretary of Uttara Friends Club, and his lackeys.

How could the son of a state minister commit the same crime in the same area much to the detriment of the ruling party itself and disturbance of peace and tranquillity of a locality where peace loving, law abiding citizens live? People who had paid for the shops at the Shah Jalal Supermarket have not been returned their hard-earned money since their shops were demolished by Rajuk. We implore the authorities to act for the sake of law and discipline, without fear or favour, and that without delay and also force the land grabbers to compensate.

Lost Manhours

THE errant power supply is getting on the denizens' nerves. It has been a story of one tumble after another in terms of load-shedding which is but a sugar-coated phrase for abysmal mismanagement of the power sector. The downslide is amply illustrated by the changes in the so-called load-shedding pattern. Previously this used to be resorted to following an announcement of the hours of black-out and areas earmarked to plunge into darkness. Then came shutdowns completely out of the blue without any prior notification of either the hours or the places to suffer power cuts. Invariably though, areas known as VIP habitats have been spared the woes of power-snapping to be in their good book. But now it seems that the discrimination is slowly breaking down not by virtue of any altruistic change of heart of the PDB or DESA to serve commoners but because the megawatt shortage is far too overwhelming not to touch at least the peripheral VIPs. So that's that — even some of the hitherto privileged are feeling the pinch of ordinary mortals.

It is time the government started making an appraisal of the total number of man-hours lost through frequent power failures by daytime and night too, say, over the last one year. At the offices and factories, the losses are certainly calculable but not so perhaps at the private homes, especially at night when many a soul is hard put to concentrate on any pursuit whatsoever. No productive or creative work is possible at night.

Our output at the national and private levels must have plummeted to the lowest ebb - thanks to the deteriorating power supply scenario. What else do we need to wake up to the danger of being morons?

Breaking Indo-Pak Impasse

Praful Bidwai writes from New Delhi

Past mistakes and misunderstandings do not negate the need for a dialogue. A dialogue could produce results—at least greater mutual trust and a revival of the SAARC process which India torpedoed last year. This is a win-win opportunity which only the foolhardy will squander.

"Pakistan syndrome" which frameworks, they do face simihas always plagued its foreign policy. To say this is not to deny India-Pakistan tensions or Pakistan's support to Kashmiri militants.

NE doesn't have to be a

Pervez Musharraf

admirer or a believer in

some inevitable improvement

in India-Pakistan relations to

note the overtures from

Pakistan's chief executive (CE)

to New Delhi. Both his

Hindustan Times interview and

his conversations with Indian

participants during a recent

South Asian media conference

were meant to convey the mes-

New Delhi must open a dia-

logue with the Musharraf gov-

ernment without precondi-

tions. The Indian governmen-

t's-and people's-best bet lies

in peace and reconciliation

with Pakistan. Indeed, Indian

diplomacy faces its greatest test

not in Washington or Moscow,

or at the UN, but right next

TUGOSLAVIA is a classic

why we should be very

careful when dealing with di-

verse races within one bound-

ary. While Marshal Tito was

alive he kept Yugoslavia going

on the strength of his personal-

ity and the use of police-state

methods. Do we have a Marshal

Tito in Pervez Musharraf, in

fact does Pervez Musharraf

want to be a Marshal Tito? In

democracies neither cult nor

authoritarian measures work.

The disintegration of Yu-

goslavia only confirms that de-

volution of power could proba-

bly end up in a fatal miscalcula-

tion. Equate Punjab to Serbia

in the present feeling of the

Provinces towards the Punjab

and Yugoslavia becomes a mir-

ror image of our problems ex-

cept that in Yugoslavia there

was also a religious divide and

in Pakistan we have a very hos-

tile neighbour. Given that the

resemblance of Yugoslavia is

uncanny, how can we bring the

much needed devolution of

Pakistan?

example in modern times

to spread jehad.

sage that he wants a dialogue, Many people who advocate and ultimately peace, with Inreconciliation with Pakistan advance two persuasive argu-It is possible that this is only ments. The first is culturalist. a shrewd public relations exer-Partition created an "artificial" cise. It is also not ruled out that divide within a unified culture. the architect of Pakistan's impoverishing it. This has Kargil misadventure is now made it impossible for people to atoning for his blunder. Howact "naturally": e.g. cross the ever questionable his motives, border at Lahore or Amritsar. they are no reason for not have a hearty meal, listen to talking to him, even less for music which they share, intercornering, confronting and beact with their "own kind" of rating Pakistan as an unbalpeople.. anced, irresponsible power out

Urvashi Butalia's Other Side of Silence is a powerful plea for transcending Partition's trauma. Rushdie calls "magnificent and necessary... rigorous and compassionate. thought-provoking and mov-

There is much to be said for this, although the argument only applies to Punjab, Sindh and some parts of Uttar India cannot enhance its Pradesh. Although India and global image unless it proves Pakistan have evolved within

lar problems. They have a lot to gain through interaction and cooperation-and lose through mutual rivalry.

No less powerful is the economic argument that India and Pakistan should gainfully cooperate in trade, industry and energy. They can only lose by not forming the core of a regional trading bloc.

The complementarities of the Indian and Pakistani economies offer rich possibilities. Just bringing their \$2 billion-plus underground trade to the surface would immensely benefit both. The dividend from liberalised trade will exceed all foreign investment into the re-

A shining example of cooperation is the proposed Iran-India natural gas pipeline via Pakistan. India's gas requirements are expected to rise fourfold by 2010 (and Pakistan's to double). Pakistan would earn \$600 million annually through transit fees alone.

While one need not support energy-intensive growth, the pipeline scores over the present mature enough to overcome the divergent socio-political sea-based import strategy. The have begun reconciliation.

fear that Pakistan will use it to blackmail India is exaggerated. Strong international guarantees can prevent this. Besides, Pakistan has its self-interest in the \$1.1 billion pipeline-based refinery it is building with

Iran's help. However, there is an even more powerful political argument for India-Pakistan reconciliation. This holds that strategic hostility is unaffordable and we must decommunalise both countries' domestic

Strategic hostility is one of the greatest obstacles to democracy and development in both countries, driving and reinforcing social prejudice, religious bigotry and militaristic nationalism.

The Indian sub-continent is the world's only region which has witnessed a continuous hotcold war for half a century. which shows no signs of abating. East-West rivalry ended a decade ago, with mixed results. The Israel-Arab hot-cold war too has ended-for better and for worse (witness Palestine's plight). Even the two Koreas

India and Pakistan are the sole exception to the trend. Their potential for mutual destruction has risen after nuclearisation. A war between them is unwinnable. Millions of their civilians have become vulnerable to a nuclear catastrophe. This constitutes a pressing reason for a Lahore-II, with serious arms reduction and strategic restraint. No less pressing is domestic politics into which their strategic ri

Mutual hostility validates communal politics in both societies. If the image of an "overbearing", hostile India did not exist, the Jamaat-i-Islami would have to invent one. A Pakistan at peace with India would blunt Hindutva's appeal Two of the three prongs of its Trishul (mandir, Uniform Civil Code and Article 370) would lose their potency.

valry ineluctably feeds.

That's why reconciliation must begin. New Delhi must stop pretending that its opposition to Gen Musharraf is based upon "democratic" high principle rather than courting Washington at Islamabad's expense New Delhi has done brisk

with US-style democracy

rhetoric.

business with a range of military dictators, from Sukarno to the Shah, Ne Win to Pinochet, and Marcos to Zia-ul-Haq. It maintains close ties with the Burmese junta and the King of Bhutan. Mr Vajpayee was among the world's few foreign ministers who failed to condemn Bhutto's judicial hanging under Zia.

To talk to Gen Musharraf is not to dignify him: it is merely to accept the reality of his being Pakistan's CE, and the undesirability of India's meddling in Pakistan's domestic politics. A dialogue does not presume a radical change in Islamabad's Kashmir policy. But did Pak-Istan execute a dramatic change before Mr Vajpayee went to Lahore?

It won't do to say the Kargil "betrayal" makes a dialogue impossible. Kargil did vitiate the India-Pakistan security equation. But an even greater blow came from nuclearisation. Here, India was the initiator.

Past mistakes and misunderstandings do not negate the need for a dialogue. A dialogue could produce results - at least greater mutual trust and a revival of the SAARC process which India torpedoed last year. This is a win-win opportunity which only the foolhardy will squander.

Refining the Devolution Plan

There is no substitute in any democracy giving power back to the people at the grassroots level, but the planning must be in a pragmatic manner, according to the realities on the ground. Risk-taking in experimentation must be well calculated one that can neutralize adverse consequences not compound them.

tioned time and distance for the proposed assembly members to travel and/or their facilities for lodging. That argument does not stand on merit. Except in Balochistan and in the mountainous areas of NWFP there is more than one hour's journey in any Division from whatever is its epicenter or probable capital town. Moreover, there are 27 Divisions (including FATA counting as one) in the country, it will be far more economical to construct 27 Divisional Assemblies with the Divisional Government offices adjacent to it as well as small residentialcum-office units for every assembly person. Compare the cost of nearly a hundred such

complexes, not including recur-

ring expenditures.

Have the various Local Bodpower into the body politics of ies tiers proposed by the NRB but let us have Assembly at the In the absence of making Divisional level giving us not more Provinces, the only course only control and economy of for usuis to have Divisional scale but direct linkages be-Governments which will be tween representation and exerboth economically and politically feasible entities, almost all the Divisions are capable of administration by the people's generating enough revenues for self-sustenance. Whether we are in an urban or rural area, we are very much a tribal society, divided on ethnic and sectarian lines, a concentrated and united ting the maximum votes must minority could well exercise sit on the Union Council, with absolute rule over a fragmented majority. Any plan for devoluareas, it would be the first ten tion must provide autonomy men and the first ten woman, within reasonable parameters (2) in the developed rural areas and not make it a stepping the first 14 men and first six stone for an unilateral declarawomen and (3) in the undeveltion of independence (UDI), oped areas the first 18 men and Federal and Provincial Govthe first two women. Another ernments retaining some conproviso would be that if women trols that will act as a bar who are capable of standing for against separatist tendencies. election are non-existent in any How does one exercise the fiat of Union then, the 18 men would the Federation by essentially by consensus nominate two making nearly a 100 or so Diswomen for the seats on the tricts if the District Govern-Council. Only those who have ment Plan is implemented in been elected to the Union Counits present form? Would cil would be eligible to stand for Balochistan be able to control the Tehsil Council elections 26 such Districts directly? Or and only those elected to the for that matter Punjab 34? Union Council would be eligible When Gen Naqvi was asked for District Council elections

ASISEEIT Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi anymore but will have to stand

for elections. Having elected all three tiers we now have to have a direct vote for the Union Council Chairman and his Deputy, the Tehsil Council Chairman and his Deputy, the District Mayor and his Deputy. Only those will be eligible who will have already been directly voted in to the Union Councils, Tehsil Council or the District Council respectively. These again will be on a slate pattern but on runoff basis i.e. the candidates must get more than 50 per cent of the votes and if not there will be a second round between the first two candidates. We would have then simultaneously, accise of authority. We do not need complished the elections to the a debating society but effective next three tiers, i.e. the Divisional Assembly the Provincial representatives. All three tiers Assembly and the National Asi.e. the Union Council, the sembly without any further

Tehsil Council and the District vote. The Union Council Council must be elected on the Chairman and his Deputy slate pattern i.e. the first 20 get- would become members of the Divisional Assembly, the Tehsil Council Chairman and one proviso i.e. (1) in the urban his Deputy will become members of the Provincial Assembly and the District Mayor and his Deputy become members of the National Assembly. In this manner not only are the directly elected representatives exercising administrative authority in their own respective constituencies but they are actually sitting in an Assembly two tiers above their level representing their constituents.

> Four elected representatives will represent each Divisional Assembly in the Senate, two on general seats and one reserved for women, again on a slate pattern on a direct vote from among those elected to District Council seats. Technocrats will be nominated by each Divisional Assembly out of those applying, one will be voted in by

so that it consists of 324 MNAs, each District having two MNAs. Let us not make the grave mistake of having elections to any tier on non-party basis, that is the surest way to divide the country on ethnic and sectarian basis. Only elected members of the Senate and National Asa direct vote. As such the Senate sembly of each Province should will have directly elected Senathen be eligible to stand in ditors, at least 20 per cent women. rect elections for President. The two Senators getting the Prime Minister, Governors and maximum votes in each Divi-Chief Ministers of the sion will become the Divisional

Provinces. Chief Mayor and Deputy Chief There will be a District Gov-Mayor. There are presently 27 ernment but without an Assem-Divisions (including FATA as a bly. All the civil servants in-Division) and 112 Districts cluding the District Coordina-(including the 7 of FATA) in the tor must be directly under the country. With two Districts of District Mayor. All financial Karachi, South and West (and powers must also be exercised including Karachi Port and directly by the District Mayor Port Qasim) to be Federally and in his/her absence by the Administered Areas joining Is-Deputy, with the civil servant only in an pre-audit capacity. The police will be under the National Public Safety Commis-The MNAs will not change sion Provincial Public Safety Commission and a Divisional same but we will have to add Public Safety Commission reeight Senators. We will thus spectively at various levels. Wherever the Division comes to bers of National Assembly. On a a large metropolitan city, it can proportional representation be known as Metropolitan Public Safety Commission with po-

apportioned in an equitable and workable manner. Working on the KISS (Keep it Simple, Stupid) formula, we

will have achieved continuity throughout the electoral spectrum, both on directly elected representatives and exercise of their authority in a meaningful manner, all this alongwith tremendous economy and simplicity of implementation. Let Gen Naqvi and his advisors examine our proposal without rejecting it just because it does not agree with theirs. By Dec 2001, the Local Bodies upto the Divisional Assemblies will have been elected. Give the process at least a year of working to see how the elected representatives are keeping to their election promises, with that performance as an indicator let's call the Assemblies and have the second round in Dec 2002 for the Senate, President, PM, Governors and Chief Ministers.

In theory the proposals of the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) are brilliant, in practice they could become an open invitation to disaster. There is no substitute in any democracy giving power back to the people at the grassroots level, but the planning must be in a pragmatic manner, accordground. Risk-taking in experimentation must be well calculated, one that can neutralize adverse consequences not compound them. Please do not take lice and administrative power us down the road to apocalypse.

OPINION

lamabad Capital Territory

thus making two more Divi-

sions, the number will rise to

as the Districts remain the

have 116 Senators, 224 Mem-

basis we should add another

100 to the National Assembly

Civil Society and Political Violence

6 TF, however, both parties remain committed to the **L**politics of confrontation. then mere exhortations of eminent citizens or even concerned aid donors can do little to resolve our political crisis. Here, civil society, if it is to be heard, will have to esdalate its proactive role from being observer-referees to seek to design more potent sanctions to be applied a larger constituency of citizens against the political parties. Civil disobedience movements need not limit themselves to actions by the opposition against the government. Citizens can also enforce hartals, gheraos and lead citizens' demonstrations against both the government and opposition to demand that they resolve their conflicts within a democratic discourse rather than through confrontation.' (The Daily Star,

February 18, 2000) These words written by Professor Rehman Sobhan sent a shiver. He was advocating a Third Force in politics whose tactics would differ little from those of the parties they will be intended to curb. After all, no gentleman — in the true sense of the word - would go in for hartals and gheraos. One can imagine the kind of people who

Furthermore, the words belie the expectations of freedom from tyranny that was supposed to be heralded by the removal of autocracy in 1990. In removing one dictator, it seems that we have acquired two - both of whom have to be restrained by 'civil society'.

Professor Rehman Sobhan then adduces examples from Northern Ireland as evidence of what citizens - two of whom ta's National University went on to win the Nobel Prize - can achieve. The example was unfortunate; as any Irishman will tell you, the Protestant majority would never have sat down at the negotiating table if it hadn't been for the violent persuasion of Sinn Fein. Besides, it wasn't civic groups that were the architects of the Good Friday agreement; it was the governments of Britain and

One part of the world that Mr. Sobhan should have mentioned is Colombia, where a determined citizens' movement has been under way for quite some time. This movement is known as 'No Mas' - meaning. No More, no more violence and kidnapping. The violence in and violence through No Mas - civil society.

by Iftekhar Sayeed Columbia is a tripartite affair between the leftist guerillas FARC and ELN and paramilitary forces aided by the army. As a showpiece 'civil society' action group, how has it

In March, the news editor of El Tiempo, Francisco Santos. wrote his last column from inside Columbia. "I am one more. Like the intellectual, the reporter, the human-rights activist, the displaced person. It's my turn to have to abandon my country.

A week earlier, Fernando Gonzalez Pacheco, a TV entertainer, also had to flee the country after receiving similar into exile. Ordinary citizens find no succor, either: in 1999, 23,172 murders gave Columbia a murder rate ten time that of the United States.

The terror that has gripped Colombians forced around 350,000 (nearly 1% of the population) into exile. And these people are the brightest and the most vocal. The country can ill afford their departure - both economically and politically. But depart they must. The consequence of staying, and speaking out, is death. Since 1989 more than 80 journalists and co-workers have been murdered in Colombia. In December, another El Tiempo journalist had to run; Jaimie Garzon, a popular TV comic, was shot dead last August; in September, a wellknown economist, Jesus Bejarano, was murdered at Bogowhere also, in December, a political scientist, Eduardo Pizarro, was shot twice (he survived and now lives in the United States).

The facts regarding Mr. Santos are pertinent to our present situation - and Professor Sobhan's prescription for a civil movement. Columbia's urban middle class had more or less rallied behind Mr. Santos. shaking off their helplessness and passivity. The family's newspaper championed their has its roots in a unique westanger and frustration. He was propelled to fame after an 8month abduction by the tioned. To put it summarily and Medellin drug gangster, Pablo bluntly: after the wild goose Escobar. His subsequent cam- chase for democracy, we have paigning against kidnapping the latest wild goose to run after

led, last October, to several million Colombians taking to the streets. In January, more people turned off their lights at home briefly throughout the nation because guerillas were attack-

ing the national grid. Interestingly enough, the champion of democracy and citizen's rights, the United States of America, sets little score by such civic movements. On January 11th. Bill Clinton announced that the United States would give \$1.3 billion of aid to the Colombia's government and army. (In 1999, the native soil, my life, my soul, my United States gave Columbia \$300 million of military aid, making the country the biggest recipient of aid after Israel and Egypt.) Of course, the Untied States has its own agenda: the death threats. Recently, five control of drugs flowing into journalists have been killed, 14 the country from Colombia. kidnapped and four hounded The violence is fuelled by the groups' control over the drugtrade. Nevertheless, the lesson is clear: the American government would rather let the army handle the violence than wait for a few centuries to let the civic groups calm the nerves of

the belligerents. Yes, Madeleine Albright did say, "This is not a counter-insurgency programme. This is a counter-narco-trafficking programme." Uh...what's the difference? The methods and the outcome are the same — more

power to the army. 'Are there many citizens who are willing to invest time, survive the initial hostility of both parties and will persevere to see such tasks through to their conclusion?' questions Professor Sobhan. The question should rather be: 'Are there any citizens who are willing to risk getting killed, kidnapped, exiled, beaten up....to prevent the two democratically elected parties of Bangladesh from tearing the country apart?' That would be a more honest job-description and I doubt, if, put this way, there would be

many takers. We have had many eccentric ideas exported by the west: nationalism, Marxism, democracy And each idea has landed us in trouble. For lack of space, it cannot be shown here that the idea of 'civil society' ern experience that has thrown up the other ideas just men-

Transparency must be visible

the reasons why he preferred

District Governments to Divi-

sional Government, he men-

Sir, The government must ensure that transparency is visible in each and every level. One way to ensure it is to re-introduce (why the system was allowed to die out?) the international practice of wearing uniform by civilian officials on outdoor duty. In this way, people around can see them, watch them and talk to them if necessary (to point out some grievance, for which they have otherwise to go and visit some office-- a waste of time).

Uniform is a sign of discipline, uniformity, identification and recognition. There is nothing to feel shy about it; and it is not embarrassing. Why the inspectors (all departments) are not in uniform? Discipline comes from uniformity and discipline today has been severely eroded due to constant political movements of defiance and non-cooperation, which has invariably infected other public sectors.

Defiance of the authority is a serious menace in the society today, and it must be nipped in the bud. Now the differences of opinion are erupting in violent forms, even at the higher levels of employees.

The intolerance factor has become intolerable! Unauthorised bossing is becoming a standard practice. Why the government is not taking corrective measures, through deterrent steps? The politicians threaten a lot, but the bureaucracy cannot come out with the necessary regulations to enforce discipline at all levels. One major cause is politici-

sation right and left, severe nepotism and utter indifference to the sense of duty and the responsibilities attached to it. The politicians in power talk loftily on achievements, but they neglect the routine level of working, which impresses in daily life

The only difference for Tehsil

and District would be that the

women will not be nominated

There are standard mechanisms of feedback in the public service. But these are not being implemented due to private, personal and subjective preoccupations of the senior offi-

There is no professionalism in today's governance.

Budget--FBCCI's concern! Sir, FBCCI's concern over

hartal call has attracted my attention, which was resultant of an emergency meeting (earlier) reportedly chaired by its Vice President Mr M. A. Munim. Though the press report did not elaborate as to how many of the executive members (Directors) supported his contention. I got concerned and rather alarmed that the apex body of business community has again become the party office of the pro Awami Leaguers who are only trying to pamper the government. It is an established fact that the current budget is neither pro-people nor pro-business and it is just the repetition of the past one with some makeups here and there. I have been surprised that Mr Munim did not put forward any of FBCCI's opinion or suggestions in respect of the good or bad effect of the budget rather he ventured to

politicise the role of our apex body as did few past leaderships. It would have been wise if he would have initiated a parley with the opposition and discuss the ills and odds of the budget to formulate a constructive suggestion instead of advising the opposition to discuss the budget with the party in power and thus exposing the apex body to become a partisan institution It is true that hartal in general doesn't do any good to common people but it is the established norm of democracy to put forward one's form of opinion. But I assume Mr Munim has no business to pursue his political opinion over the common feeling of the members and use FBCCI's platform to advocate partisan politics.

A F Rahman Dhaka

Haji Selim episode

Sir, Few weeks back all the leading newspapers were found active publishing the news regarding Haji Selim MP who put barricade on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway. A case was also filed against him under PSA. Some newspapers started publishing follow-up news on it. But it is really astounding that all of a sudden all the newspapers started keeping mum over the news! And this muteness has indeed raised a few questions in the minds of general people. People are curious whether the news has consigned to oblivion like many other

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