

Crunch Time for NGOs?

IT may sound like a bombshell that foreign funding of NGO activities in Bangladesh may diminish in the near future. But, in truth, there is hardly any surprise element to it, if one were to recall the backdrop to it. In broad terms, this comes as a natural corollary to the drying up of the aid climate on a global scale which has already affected the flow of foreign assistance to the government sector in Bangladesh. Now it seems to be the turn for the non-government sector to face the crunch.

Not long ago there had been an express donor preference for funneling increased resources through the NGOs to a country in appreciation for their signal contribution to its socio-economic development. But lately, without altering that basic policy thrust they seem to have grown actively averse to the misuse of donor funds by not a few NGOs in Bangladesh. In the assessment of the World Bank, according to a reliable source, donors have reduced their funding of several NGOs because of the latter's failure to use the money for the purpose it was taken.

The implications of this crunch are two-fold: first, some of the NGO might have to wrap up their business while those who are planning to open new NGOs hoping to run it with foreign funds may have second thoughts. In a way, this could act as a blessing in disguise. The mushrooming of NGOs will hopefully be discouraged with the survival of the fittest taking place through self-propulsion in monetary terms. There is already a certain genre of NGOs like the BRAC for instance to say nothing of Grameen Bank, which generates a very large proportion of its management, operational and revolving fund costs in addition to ensuring gains to their programme participants. They are role models among the NGO community.

The flow of foreign assistance to NGOs has been on the basis of time-bound projects so that there was an element of uncertainty as to renewal of funding which made some of them fend for themselves anyway. Self-reliance is the best proposition in the book.

In any case, their commercial considerations should not outweigh their commitments to the society.

Power Supply Irritant

FEW cities in the world can match Dhaka city's frequency of power blackouts in peacetime. Load shedding of electricity reflecting an unbridgeable gap between generation and supply of power has suddenly hit a new high in recent months of 500 megawatts plunging innumerable households into total darkness and industrial units in despair for unusual lengths of time, that too on a daily basis. We have had stories and explanations galore about the steep deterioration in the supply and generation of power and plans taken for improvement and then bungled.

Given the restive political atmosphere and difficult law and order situation in the country, how are we going to woo foreign direct investments in the country with this deplorable management of power? The commercial considerations for any investment, not to speak of foreign one.

The readymade prescription for this vexing problem has been to buy a generator. But why should the citizens spend money on generators when they pay taxes for state amenities? And then how many can afford to buy them and disturb the neighbours with the sound and air pollution in densely populated areas of the city? Since the situation started deteriorating from 1997 all we have heard are accusations against the previous government and delayed target-dates for completion of projects couched in unrepentant idiom.

The present situation it has been claimed, is likely to improve by the 10th of this month when some units of Ghorasal power station start functioning but the people are fed up with the long history of shifting dates for improvement in the power supply position. The power and energy sector with its powerful ministers and bureaucrats appears to be nobody's responsibility. People's suffering is mounting and during the last four years no tangible efforts were made to establish big power stations in the country to tide over the crisis. This goes to suggest that people's sufferings are not foremost on the priority list of the government. Are we to believe that nothing will move in this sector unless the persons responsible are affected every day by power cuts?

A piece of Thuggery

FIRST, they surreptitiously dug up a road that was in reasonably good condition in the darkness of night. Then, they spread around the news that the municipal corporation had begun renovation works. Later, they told the business community and local residents that the municipal corporation had run out of funds and if they wanted to have the road fixed they would have to finance the repair job themselves. The total cost involved, they said, was five lakh taka. Innovative way of toll collection, isn't it? The irony is that although people in the Ukilpara neighbourhood of Narayanganj know the men behind the heinous ploy, they cannot complain against them. The reason: these individuals are members of a notorious terrorist group.

Interestingly, the municipal corporation claims to have had no knowledge of the incident. Nevertheless, it has been considerate enough to form a probe body with the superintendent of police Narayanganj heading it. The committee, upon first-hand inspection, has ordered the Narayanganj police station to intervene. Effective police intervention may not take place very soon and the possibility that local traders and residents could actually be forced into paying their 'due' still remains.

Whichever way the affair ends, the reality now is that nearly 40,000 users of the road have been inconvenienced by this act of roguery. In case of medical emergency, people wouldn't be able to call in ambulance even. Besides, hosiery business in the locality risks substantial losses if the road were not repaired before the peak season, which is a few weeks away. Then there is Durga puja coming.

The criminal elements not only outnumber the law enforcers but also outwit them more often than not. What could be a more poignant testimony in this regard than the 'road repair' drama in Narayanganj's Ukilpara neighbourhood?

Voters Should Know More about Indo-Bangladesh Relations

by M Rashiduzzaman

Where does India stand on the sovereignty and long term national interests of Bangladesh? Did any of the dire anti-Indian forecasts prove real? Is anti-Indianism a self-serving cynicism of certain leaders and groups or it stems from the deep-rooted contradictions in the Indo-Bangladesh relations that cannot be dismissed out of hand?

BEYOND polemics, the issues of Indo-Bangladesh relations are largely left unspoken as a serious subject of public policy debates. For more than one reason, and especially because of the approaching elections, the Indo-Bangladesh relations deserve an objective and dispassionate treatment in the political forums and in the intellectual circuitry. The Bengali nationalists, secularists and liberals, as a rule, talk and write about India with a deference, and New Delhi is believed to be pretty close to the ruling Awami League. On the other hand, the Bangladesh nationalists, the rightwing newspapers, the Islamic parties, their leaders and those who are implicitly designated as pro-Pakistan elements are routinely critical of India and vehemently oppose what is widely viewed as India's big brotherly insensitive bent. I can identify the following reasons for the Awami League, Bengali nationalists and the secularists overtly displaying a soft attitude towards India and avoiding a critical assessment of who gets what in the India-Bangladesh relations:

(a) Generally speaking, no matter what is the political stripe of those in power in Bangladesh, Dhaka would think twice before seriously going against New Delhi's wishes on bilateral matters.

(b) Except the right wing groups and leaders who demonstrate their anti-Indian proclivities, there are factions and individuals in the liberal and cultural establishments who believe that Bangladesh should work in close cooperation with India, and their views often prevail among the upper educated elite.

(c) Those who fought for independence in 1971 and fled to India to escape from the Pakistani soldiers' rampaging the country have a sense of gratitude to India, and they are unwilling to veer away from New Delhi no matter what the right wing critics might say.

(d) The pro-Indian liberals generally look upon the criticism of India, in any substantial form, as a breach of secularism, and an infringement of progressive disposition in politics.

(e) Many possibly reconciled to the reality of the Indian preponderance, and cared little about the right wing charges that Bangladesh only switched from the domination of Islamabad to that of New Delhi.

While the politicians shy away from an informative debate on India-Bangladesh relations, the non-political forums are no less discouraging. The right wing or the so-called pro-Islamic newspapers and periodicals frequently pick on India. But the anti-Indian cosmology is not the exclusive domain of the religious bigots although segments of the right wing groups may sometimes invoke anti-Indianism obsessively. However, the second strain of anti-Indian feelings has a populist character that resents the Indian indifference to Bangladesh grievances, blame India for manipulation of Bangladesh politics, and vent anger for the unresolved bilateral disputes that New Delhi has been foot dragging for decades. Of late, the Bangladesh businessmen are critical of a de facto one-sided trade with India that has become a great threat to the industries in Bangladesh, which flourished under state protection since the 1960's. India is one of the ten fastest growing economies in the world, but its poor Bangladeshi neighbours are doubtful if they are benefitting from the Indian economic bonanza.

So far, the mainstream media and the liberal establishments have failed in promoting an unbiased discussion on India and Indo-Bangladesh relations except periodically reporting the old border disputes raising their ugly heads, firing across the border and, of course, focusing on the terribly unfavourable balance of trade between the two countries. However, such reporting does not

penetrate into the strategic questions that entangle the two neighbours with a bumpy history of political distrust. New Delhi has a reputation of skillfully obscuring of what it really wants from its neighbours. But let us not forget that the Indian newspapers' coverage on Bangladesh is also few and far between. I scan the Internet editions of a couple of Indian newspapers—I don't remember when did I last read something serious on the New Delhi-Dhaka ties. Not even the intractable questions of transshipment, Ganges water, the CHT accord and the sale of Bangladesh gas are among the hotly discussed topics of the Indian media. In fact, the only neighbouring country that makes headlines in the Indian newspapers is Pakistan for its refusal to accept what New Delhi dictates.

Recently I attended part of the Bangladesh Institute for Strategic Studies symposium on the CHT peace agreement. What struck me there was that (during the first two hours but I don't know what happened later) none of the participants pointed out that the accord was indeed a triangular partnership between the Bangladesh government, the Chakma-led Shantibahini and finally India, the absentee actor that had apparently been the patron of the CHT separatists. Needless to point out that the CHT compact symbolized a tilt towards India, which gave New Delhi more leverage with the tribal leadership that would cooperate with the Indian security forces by not sheltering the separatists from the Indian northeast plagued by insurgencies for decades. The plethora of writings triggered by the CHT treaty will arguably help the ordinary Bangladeshis to get a sense of those supporting the agreement as well as those opposing it. But history, humanitarianism, and

autonomy for the ethnic groups and moral reasoning generate bulk of those writings. Most observers ignored that the treaty itself contains the potential of further separatism in the CHT whose future is linked with what might happen to the secessionist movements in the Indian northeast. Realistically, the CHT agreement has made Bangladesh even more dependent on India. To contain further insurgency in the CHT, Bangladesh would need even more Indian help both diplomatically and militarily.

Beyond the CHT, the Indo-Bangladesh relations deserve attention in the larger context of nuclear and mass-destructive weapons proliferation in South Asia. India is acquiring massive and offensive military capacity overtly to match China and Pakistan, two rivals who fought wars with India. Nuclear arms, missiles and other weapons in the Indian arsenal have a bullying effect on the smaller neighbours including Bangladesh: so Dhaka cannot afford to be an acquiescent validator of the spectacular arms race between India, Pakistan and China. Although New Delhi has not acknowledged it publicly, Bangladesh has become more important to India than ever before. What is possibly better known to the public is the fact that Bangladesh, already a 3-4 billion (US) dollar market for the Indian products from automobiles to fish, will continue to be even a bigger economic pot.

The security aspect of the proposed transit through Bangladesh is more driven by speculation among the ordinary people—the government of Bangladesh is yet to divulge the full implications of the proposed logistical facility that is snowballing as an anti-Awami League and anti-Indian campaign in Bangladesh. The au-

thorities in Dhaka should consider selling gas to India only if Bangladesh has a huge surplus over its visible need, but what is evidently an economic prospect has been heavily politicized because of the prevailing fear and suspicion about India's ultimate objectives in Bangladesh.

I believe much of the adverse spillover of what are evidently foreign affairs will muddle the domestic sphere of Bangladesh politics. We know that the Awami League as a party and its numerous leaders including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina are viewed as pro-Indian—undoubtedly an intangible attribute, but a powerful catalyst in Bangladesh politics. No doubt she fears an anti-Indian backlash on her well-publicized pro-New Delhi bias. It is such considerations that are holding back her final decisions on transit through Bangladesh territory and gas sale to India—she does not want to give the opposition more ammunition to fight her. Sheikh Hasina has to come up with more convincing arguments justifying the transit and possible sale of gas to India—she has not tried hard enough to dispel public fear by allowing more open deliberation on the subject. On behalf of the largest opposition party BNP, the pro-Islamic parties and the Islamically inclined leaders, Sheikh Hasina and her cohorts are daily attacked for their presumed loyalty toward India in cultural as well as political spheres. "Blame it on India" is very much in the political winds of Bangladesh—it will gain momentum, as the election will draw nearer. The strategic national interests are too important to be settled by rhetorical overkill that may leave the nation without a consensus on how to deal with the giant of a neighbour. The ubiquity of anti-Indianism is too prominent to be dismissed as

just another expression of the "Muslim otherness" of the Muslim-majority Bangladesh. It happened in 1997 when the Awami League, faced with a whispering campaign as a pro-Indian (and anti-Islam) party, suffered a defeat at the hands of the nationalist BNP.

Bangladesh is very much a divided nation over India, and it may even be further divided over its powerful neighbour. Let's not forget that in the early years of Bangladesh, anti-Indianism was the main vehicle of opposition politics, and that legacy dies hard. But there is something redeeming—dislike for New Delhi is a more fearful perception in Dhaka than the live tension that prevails in the Indo-Pakistan relation except the periodic border disturbances. Bangladesh has no battle cry against India. But sometimes anti-Indian feeling expresses itself more as a frustrated rage. Generally speaking, the pro-Indian supporters are not numerically overwhelming but they are politically influential and they look down upon the right wing animosity towards India. Although India is too big and too powerful to be baffled by the domestic turmoil inside Bangladesh, a change of government in the hands of the BNP and its right wing partners may sour the Dhaka-New Delhi relations. The strategic worry is that any future shifts in Indo-Bangladesh relations may adversely affect Bangladesh more adversely than India. Because Bangladesh has fewer options against India than India, let the voters be informed on the following:

Where does India stand on the sovereignty and long term national interests of Bangladesh? Did any of the dire anti-Indian forecasts prove real? Is anti-Indianism a self-serving cynicism of certain leaders and groups or it stems from the deep-rooted contradictions in the Indo-Bangladesh relations that cannot be dismissed out of hand? If so, what are those? Finally, what exactly is the tangled web that makes the strategic path between Dhaka and New Delhi so uneven?

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Supplementary Report of Hamoodur Rahman Commission: Some Relevant Extracts

Twelfth instalment

The Commission thought that Pakistan's strategic concept failed to take into account the ground reality of a politico-military situation developing in the wake of the military action in East Pakistan. The implications of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of August '71 were available on both fronts (the then East and West Pakistan) compared to those of India has been underlined, too.

(Continued from yesterday)

The Military Aspect

While discussing the military aspect of the war in the Main Report we came to the conclusion that the major role in the 1971 disaster had been that of the ground forces, that the strategic concept embodied in war Directive No.4 of 1967, political and military situation developing as a result of the military action in East Pakistan in March 1971, but the Army High Command did not carry out any study in depth of the effect of these new factors, nor did it pay any attention to the growing disparity between the war preparedness and the capability of the armed forces of Pakistan and India as a result of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Aug 1971. We dealt at length with the concepts of defence as well as the plans formulated by the General Headquarters both for East and West Pakistan, and pointed out the defects and deficiencies in those plans, apart from the inadequacy of resources available on both fronts as compared to those of the enemy. However, we observed that our study of the military aspect of the war in East Pakistan, though limited and total, was inconclusive on account of the non-availability of the evidence of the Commander, Eastern Command, and other senior officers then serving in East Pakistan.

Having now had the advantage of examining these commanders at considerable length we feel we are in a position to formulate our final conclusions as to the causes of surrender in East Pakistan.

There has been some controversy as to the exact status of Lt Gen. A.A.K. Niazi, namely, whether he was a Theatre Commander or merely a Corps Commander although he has been officially described as Commander, Eastern Command. While a Corps Commander is merely a Commander of a number of divisions placed under his command, a Theatre Commander is not merely in command of all the forces in the area, including the Naval and the Air Forces. In case of East Pakistan the Theatre Commander was the Navy and the Air Force Commanding of the Pakistan Air Force were directly under their own respective Commanders-in-Chief, although they were instructed to

liaise and coordinate with the Commander, Eastern Command. Technically speaking, therefore, Gen Niazi was not a Theatre Commander and was never designated as such. Nevertheless, situated as he was, we consider that at least from the 3rd of Dec 1971 onwards, on which date war broke out on the Western Front as well, Lt Gen Niazi became, in all intents and purposes, an independent Corps Commander, possessing of necessity and by force of circumstances all the powers of a Theatre Commander, and even the General Headquarters expected him to act as such, for there was no possibility thereafter of replacing him by another Commander of equivalent rank. General Niazi's conduct of war, as also his final decision to surrender, have, therefore, to be judged in this light.

The Traditional Concept of Defence Adopted by Pakistan Army

It was that the defence of East Pakistan lies in West Pakistan. However Lt Gen Niazi contended before the Commission that the Indians would not have started an all-out war in East Pakistan if the Western Front had not been opened by Pakistan. It seems to us that this contention is based on a lack of proper appreciation of the enemy threat which was fast developing in the Eastern Theatre. It had become quite evident that the Mukti Bahini, on their own, even after their training in India would never be able to face a pitched battle with the Pakistan Army, and the Indians could not afford to prolong the war by proxy for an indefinite period. The plan of capturing a sizeable chunk of territory for

setting up Bangladesh has also been frustrated by the forward deployment of our troops. An all-out war had, therefore, become inevitable for India, and in such an event the only course open for Pakistan was to implement the traditional concept of defending East Pakistan from West Pakistan in an determined and effective manner. The concept, therefore, that the defence of East Pakistan lies in West Pakistan remained valid and if ever there was need to invoke this concept it was on the 21st of Nov 1971 when the Indian troops had crossed the border and the half-hearted and hesitant manner in which it was ultimately opened only helped in precipitating the catastrophe in East Pakistan.

The Operational Instructions issued by the Eastern Command as No.3 of 1971 on the 15th of July 1971, contemplated a forward defensive posture with strong points and fortresses which were to be made logistically self-sufficient to fight a battle lasting for at least 30 days, even if bypassed. They were also expected to act as firm bases or jumping-off points for actions against the enemy from the flanks or from behind. Dacca was to be defended at all costs by being made into a fortress, as it was the linchpin, both politically and militarily.

The plan envisaged as many as 25 fortresses and 9 strong points, consisting mainly of built up areas such as district or sub-divisional headquarters towns, large villages and cantonments. The paucity of troops did not permit them to be manned but it was expected that the troops deployed along the border and in counter insur-

gency operations would gradually fall back and take up defensive positions within the fortresses and strong points. His concept further contemplated that the fortresses would be defended to the last man and last round.

The fortress concept postulates 3 essential conditions for its success namely: a) that there must be adequate reserves to stress, and to give mutual support to another fortress.

(b) that the fortress must be so located as to be able to mutually support each other and (c) that the population in the areas in which such fortresses are located is not hostile. Gen Niazi was fully aware that none of these conditions were fulfilled in East Pakistan as he did not have enough troops to man 34 fortresses and strong points with his then 29 battalions: his fortress and strong points were so located that they were not in a position to mutually support each other, and he also knew that the local population was hostile and movement of his troops would be made impossible by the Mukti Bahini. We are at a loss to understand how he expected the concept to succeed in these circumstances.

The evidence clearly discloses that none of the fortresses were manned nor did they have protective defences capable of withstanding enemy attacks supported by armour. Troops were expected to man these fortresses after falling back from their forward: even such artillery or heavy weapons as the troops possessed were to be transported to the fortresses. The withdrawal of the troops to the fortresses was as was to be expected in these circumstances, by no means an orderly withdrawal, but in most cases it was a disorderly retreat, leaving even the heavy equipment behind. There were no reserves with any local Commanders, except for 16 Division, and the command reserve of only a brigade strength and also been committed in the Eastern sector, through which the main enemy thrust came. This soundness of the fortress concept thus stood thoroughly exposed by the end which it produced.

In our view, the concept was utterly inappropriate for achieving the mission assigned to the Commander, Eastern Command, of defending East Pakistan and maintaining his presence in East Pakistan in the changed situation created by the war launched by the enemy. The wisest course of action for Gen Niazi would have been to concentrate his troops in a smaller area, protected by the major natural obstacles around the military and political lymph node-Dacca.

At any rate, there should

have been a contingency plan for a planned withdrawal into Dacca triangle to cater for fighting a all-out war with an enemy vastly superior in resources and capabilities both on the ground and in the air. The failure on part of the Eastern Command to so plan amounts to gross negligence for, in fact, in fact, what was done was merely to give battle in weakness and be forced to retreat in disorder. The fortress strategy might have been suitable for carrying out the counter insurgency operations, but after the 21st of Nov 1971, it became redundant. The net result of this strategy was to give the opposite advantage to the enemy, who at his leisure routed and dispersed our troops while himself concentrating advanced in order towards Dacca.

The tragedy with Gen Niazi has been his obsession that he would be called upon to fight any major battle with the Indians in East Pakistan, in spite of enormous Indian build-up around East Pakistan, the detailed briefing given by GHQ to his Chief of Staff about the Indian plans and the advice given to him by the chief of the General Staff and the Vice-chief of the General Staff, during their last visit to the Eastern Theatre, for the deployment of his troops. Gen Niazi's only reaction to these warnings about the new threat was to hastily raise two ad hoc Divisions namely 36 Div in Sept 1971 and 39 Div on the 19th of Nov 1971 by committing his command reserves.

Lt Gen Niazi tried to justify the deployment of his reserves by saying that he had been promised 8 more battalions, and if these had been sent, he would have had enough troops to create a command reserve as also to meet the deficiencies of the new ad hoc formations. The evidence unfortunately does not disclose that any firm commitment was made by GHQ. We also find that even if the extra battalions had been sent the position would not have materially improved as there was no clear plan for their deployment. Gen Niazi was therefore, not justified in denuding himself of his reserves before the actual arrival of the additional troops.

We are also not impressed by the excuse put forward by the Commander, Eastern Command for not modifying his plans, namely that the mission originally assigned to him held every inch of territory in East Pakistan and to prevent the establishment of Bangladesh by the capture of any sizeable chunk of territory, was never changed by the High Command. As an independent Corps Commander, thousands of miles away from the GHQ, it should have been apparent to him that

at least from the 21 Nov 1971 onwards the more important part of his mission was to defend East Pakistan and to keep the Corps in being, by giving up territory if necessary.

We also find that it is not correct to say that the mission given to the Eastern Command was never changed, because the GHQ had given him through more than one message a clear indication that territory had become less important, and that the Command should fight for time keeping in view only territories of strategic importance.

The detailed narrative of events as given by us in the Supplementary Report, clearly shows that the planning was hopelessly defective and there was no plan at all for the defence of Dacca, nor for any concerted effort to stem the enemy onslaught with a Div or a Brigade battle at any stage. It was only when the general found himself gradually being encircled by the enemy which had successfully managed to bypass his fortresses and reached Faridpur, Khulna, Daudkandi and Chandpur (the shortest route to Dacca) that he began to make frantic efforts to get the troops back for the defence of Dacca. It was unfortunately too late, the ferries necessary for crossing the troops over the big Jamuna river from the area of 16 division had disappeared and the Mukti Bahini had invested the area behind, making vehicular movement impossible. Orderly withdrawal of troops in time for concentrated defence was also made impossible by the untimely orders issued by Lt Gen Niazi for the withdrawal was to take place unless cleared two up and without suffering 75% casualties.

In the absence of contingency plans for the withdrawal of troops into the Dacca triangle area behind the big rivers, to prevent the enemy breakthrough and to deal if need be with the known capability of the enemy to hell-drove troops behind our lines after it had acquired mastery of the air, either eliminating or neutralising our Air Force of only one squadron, it was not at all a matter of surprise that the defences should have collapsed immediately in thin lines in the forward positions were pierced by the enemy. On the fourth day of the all-out war major fortresses were abandoned without a fight, namely, Jessore and Jhikanda on the West and the Brahmanbaria in the east. On the next day the Comilla fortress was isolated by encirclement from all sides, and on the 9th of Dec 1971 even a divisional commander abandoned his area of responsibility with his headquarters, leaving his formation behind. On the same day 2 more fortresses, Kustia and Laksham were abandoned. At the latter fortress even the sick and the wounded were left behind. By 10 Dec 1971, even Hilli, where a determined battle had been fought for 16 days had to be abandoned. The Brigade returning from Mymensingh got entangled with hell dropped Indian troops, and the Brigade Commander and some of his troops were taken prisoner.

The thirteenth instalment appears tomorrow.

To the Editor

Fish export

Sir, Lately, I have come to know from DS report that Bangladesh has earned a record US\$ 362 million in the last fiscal year 1999-2000. The export growth rate was 38.06 per cent in volume and 31.33 per cent in value. I am sure our Fisheries and livestock Ministry will be very pleased with this excellent performance of the Fishing Export Sector.

But as a common citizen what we see in the daily fish market is really frustrating. The price of fish has skyrocketed in the last few years. Fish prices are so high that even middle class people cannot afford to buy fish for the family members. Most ordinary fish is selling for TK 100/ per KG onwards. Better quality fish is

selling for TK 250/- per KG to TK 350/- per KG. Now is the season for our favourite fish 'Hilsha'. But the price is between TK 300/- per piece to TK 450/- per piece. How many people can afford to buy it at such high price?

I would earnestly request the concerned authority to take steps for supply of adequate quantity of fish all over the country at affordable prices otherwise we shall soon forget that we are 'Mache bhate Bangla'.

A Fish Lover
Dhaka

Crime using cellular-phones

Sir, With the popularity of mobile cellphones, even in the developing countries, the crime

rate has gone up (DS report, Aug 19). Sometimes back the police in Karachi had to monitor cell-phone calls to keep a watch on criminal gangs and syndicates involved in rioting and acts of violence. Dhaka can go for the necessary legislation for deterrent measures in public interest.

Our police have to be equipped in a modern manner, to be able to compete with the criminals. The old-fashioned image about our police constables should go; for example, carrying huge bulky rifles with wooden butt and using walkie-talkie sets.

Our police force badly need a BMRE. The budget is usually silent on such modernisation projects.
A Frustrated Citizen
Dhaka