

Act of sabotage on rail-tracks

Electronic detection device needed

These are bad times we are going through. After Brahmanbaria comes the lethal act of sabotage on a railway bridge near Feni bringing a whole train trundling down.

As for the costly train derailment disaster it was the work of a conspiracy hatched amidst a strike call, so that it was apparently politically motivated.

Mazharul Islam, the alleged saboteur, has stated in police custody, that the 'others' who had removed the fishplates between the rail-tracks were non-locals, meaning thereby that he was talked into it and that outsiders were involved in it.

While politicians need to get their act together and a public education campaign is essential for combating the scourge of reckless misadventures permeating a dangerous message to the fifth columnists it is the immediately doable and practicable aspects of the strategy that we would like to focus on.

The moral of the story is that the susceptibility to such things happening, not to speak of accidents taking place, is very high in our conditions where the signalling and advance warning systems remain primitive.

There is fibre optic line in place along certain railway tracks where we can immediately install the electronic signalling-cum-detection system to cover for any risks and blink alert to all concerned in time for a pull-back from any lurking disaster.

To bring the factor of deterrence to bear on the question of averting future acts of sabotage we have to punish the culprits of Wednesday's rail disaster in an appropriate manner.

The democratic principle

It is the usual practice of journalists not only in Bangladesh but world over to ask provocative questions of those in positions of power, political and otherwise.

order complete the legislative functions. But how does such a government run? To my mind, I cannot recall a weaker system of governance since liberation.

It is true that before our nascent democracy, we were subjected to dark years of military misrule. This makes it more unfortunate that we are now subjected to this mis-governance and rule of arrogance where the sanctity of the President's position is criticized.

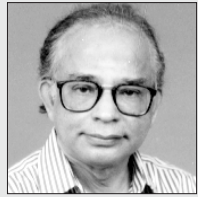
Our previous military rulers are known for their arrogance and their ignorance. Have we come back to those traits in our new leaders? The Awami League's primary task at this time should be to restore a democratic system in this country.

The President is the ultimate arbitrator in our system of governance. It is crucial that we do not compromise it through arrogance.

Shahed Latif Dhaka

Third force?

Chaos in Davos



HASNAT ABDUL HYE

CHAOS in Davos need not be repetitive like the song 'rain in Spain' in 'My Fair Lady'. But it has become so. Over the past few years rampaging demonstrators descending (ascending?) on this Swiss city tucked in to the picturesque Alpine height have become almost part of the seasonal crowd of holiday makers in nearby ski resorts.

injured. But the summit did not get total reprieve. Motley crowds of demonstrators sneaked through the cordon sanitaire and played cat and mouse with the riot police.

For over a decade the annual global summit organized by the World Economic Forum, a non-governmental organization based in Zurich, has attracted world leaders in politics, economics, business and technology.

more robust world economy on track. The bottom line of consensus in the summit was that in an era of globalization there could not and should not be any boat-rockers. Policy agenda emerging from the summit was not only meant for world leaders to be implemented in their own countries but also served to promote the interests of multi-nationals.

liberalization gathered pace, barriers to movement of capital were dismantled and the world became wired in a network of digital information a borderless economy was ushered where politics seemed to no longer matter.

tried to gloss over these grim realities and potential risks or become irrationally optimistic, pent up anger and frustration spilled over onto the street. The message behind the barricade was loud and clear: if globalization meant capitalism and capitalism meant giving free rein to profit seeking multi-nationals it was not acceptable to the ordinary people who care about family values and a sustainable environment.

as a forum only for discussion of economic development and that too through the perspective of undiluted globalism. In adopting this narrow focus it played into the hands of the multinationals and came to be seen as their mouthpiece.

The World Economic Forum has an important advantage over world bodies like World Bank, IMF etc., in that it can be as flexible and informal as it reacquies to be, both in format and the selection of agenda. Being a non-government forum the summit in Davos can embrace every shade of opinion and seek to achieve a consensus by moderating divergent views.

IN MY VIEW

It should be an occasion to discuss Development in its broader connotation. It should be an occasion to discuss development in general. If globalization is to mean a better life for everyone, in a meeting to discuss the state of the world the people of the global village should be represented adequately.

Zurich, has attracted world leaders in politics, economics, business and technology. The past participants in the summit in Davos read like a list of 'who is who' in these areas in the contemporary world. The world leaders gather to discuss the state of the world economy, to analyse the emerging trends in world trade and finance and to speculate about the future.

like World Bank, IMF, WTO, etc. sharing the same ideology on globalization joined the summit in full force adding their clout to its deliberations. From an annual gathering of world leaders the Summit in Davos has now become the joint forum of a disparate group of people and agencies but all bound together (voluntarily and not so voluntarily) by the politico-economic imperatives of economic globalization.

scenario nation state, politics and welfare state were made to appear as obsolete ideas. Globalization superceded all these and meant the beginning of a future where people, goods and money would move freely and everyone would share from increasing level of global economic prosperity.

protest. Long before Seattle become a water-shed in public acceptance of globalization sporadic protest from different quarters had forced some soul searching and reappraisal inside international bodies like the World Bank and various UN agencies.

Where Davos Summit went awry is in excluding the bigger agenda of development and broader participation by people representing all-important interests that are relevant in the daily life of people.

Never mind the last words



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

MOST people who knew Syed Ali Kabir, the former Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank who died last December, didn't know that once he was my boss. But all of those who knew him would agree with me that he was a man-child, an adult who handled the complexities of life with the simplicity of a child.

word uttered by William Randolph Hearst, the publishing giant of the USA, before his death was "Rosebud". Anybody who has seen the movie "Citizen Kane" would know that it had created a great deal of controversy amongst those who knew Hearst until they realized it was a word etched on the back of a chair facing him at the time of his death.

If death is dark, the last words of dying people can be gray. According to one version, Oscar Wilde ranted before his death, "Either that wallpaper goes or I do."

"Damn it! There's that cuckoo again!" US General Robert E. Lee is said to have made his exit with the military-metaphysical command: "Strike the tent!"

Often last words can have the uncanny resonance of clairvoyance. Thomas A. Edison said as he died in 1931, "It's very beautiful over there."

me that he wasn't afraid of death. If death was inevitable, so be it and what would his death matter, if not disappearance of just another speck of dust from the surface of eternity?

The last words of Mahatma Gandhi under the impact of assassin's bullets were "Hey Ram, Hey Ram!" The first Prime Minister of

Caesar expressed his wounded astonishment in his last words, "Thou too Brutus!"

There have been others who were funny in their last words. The Irish writer Brendan Behan croaked in 1964 after he turned to the nun who had just wiped his brow and said "Ah, bless you, Sister, may all your sons be bishops."

before he conks out. But most people would say things at the time of their death, which are mundane. They would divvy up their property amongst the children, or give advice to them on how to face the world after their death and so forth.

If deathbed is some kind of a stage, then last words are not always how the actors strut and fret to announce the grand finale. Although the last words could at times emanate from the depth of the role, they are mostly fillers, which speak the mind of an actor caught in transit between life and death.

Death erases life. The last words, more than anything else, are the last screeches of that erasing act. Never mind what these last words mean, because they may not mean anything but the mutters of vanishing life.

CROSS TALK

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kicked the bucket. In 1904 Anton Chekov died with a sad thought, "It's a long time since I drank champagne." The happenstance was that his coffin rode a freight car marked FRESH OYSTERS!

Do last words somehow indicate any correlation between life and death? Perhaps at times the tongue gives away in death what the heart could not hold in life. That explains why Britain's dying Lord Chief Justice Gordon Hewart had uttered,

What? The flames already?" Death is a kind of withdrawal, when life evacuates its earthly abode and embarks on an undefined journey. Gary Gilmore, the murderer executed in Utah, USA in 1977 was cocksure when he set out for that journey with an existentialist machismo. He told the warden before the time of his execution, "Let's do it!"

Recently, a septuagenarian banker who knew Syed Ali Kabir told

Pakistan Liaqat Ali Khan is said to have cried, "God save Pakistan" as he was about to breathe his last, cut down by assassin's bullet. It is believed that British Prime Minister William Pitt had exclaimed when departing this life, "My country! How I love my country!" On the other extreme, Roman emperor Nero resented at the time of his death, "How a great artist perishes with me!" Between his love of country and private sense of betrayal, Julius

regained his consciousness for long enough to observe, "John Rogers did!" and then slipped away. For those who don't know, John Rogers was an English Protestant divine who was burned at the stake for heresy in 1555.

Believe it or not, the last words can be as varied as the people who utter them. In Hindi or Bengali movies, the last words are always decisive. An actor would usually divulge a secret or solve a riddle

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

PHOTORIAL

Readers are invited to send in exclusive pictures, colour or black and white, of editorial value, with all relevant information including date, place and significance of subject matter. Pictures received will not be returned.

Let us breathe!



This brick factory in Mirpur is one among more than 700 factories that throw out noxious gases into the atmosphere. Dhaka is becoming notorious as the city with one of the most polluted atmospheres in the world. Is the new generation of children ever going to breathe clean air? Will the authorities take heed?

As an educated, elderly citizen and voter, I would like to tell other voters that propaganda by the regime against fundamentalist religious groups and other political parties, accusing them of being involved in anti-state activities, should be carefully questioned. Also to be questioned is the policy to give aged Freedom Fighters pro-party colours. The Freedom Fighter fought for the country, not for a political party.

The latest bomb blast at Paltan Maidan during the CPB meeting is a pointer that a third force might be emerging, due to the failures of the two major political parties.

Frustrated Voter Dhaka

Neglected Motijheel

Motijheel is the hub of economic

activities. Until recently, business houses took pride in having offices here. But this has become a most neglected area.

Footpaths are in terrible condition. Two open spaces have dumping grounds for rubbish. One has become the Terminal for the Narayanganj-bound Premier Bus. The round-about in front of Janata Bank is in a very sorry state - the drain around it is choked with rubbish causing water to stand whenever there is slightest rain. Flower beds exist, but they are unattended.

After dusk Motijheel is badly lit. Those of us who have seen this place for two decades, remember how well lit it used to be. It is because of this poor light that muggings take place here. Motijheel is dirty, littered with polyethylene bags. Surface drains, which were made deep after the 1988 floods, are now so choked up that it is hard to be sure they exist at all! Traffic is terrible, with rickshaws everywhere and no police in sight.

The amount of revenue that the government and municipal corporation earn is quite substantial, so why is this place forsaken and uncared for? Will the authorities look into this, and return to Motijheel the respectability that it deserves

C. M. Dahr Dhaka.