

Subway system for Dhaka Experts should have the final say

PRIME Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has told the Russian Ambassador in a formal meeting that she is interested to build an underground transportation system in Dhaka with Russian support.

In fact, similar proposals were under consideration by the Awami League government as well but no final decision was taken.

That means an independent group of experts with full powers should be brought together reflecting competence in all the relevant areas to figure out whether it makes more sense to go underground or move up.

Khaleda Zia should not commit herself to this project before the technical part is completed without any predisposition.

The Russian envoy has also said that he will process a formal proposal for the project, which also means that there is a great deal of urgency, involved but again we would like to raise a flag of warning.

Such projects are so huge and long lasting in nature. We urge that a technical experts committee be formed immediately and a political process to support the same body be also put into motion to ensure consensus of all before a final decision is considered.

Jail killing Remains a test-case for rule of law

THAT a new political regime is in power doesn't necessarily mean we can be tentative about the jail killing incident which added a tainted chapter to our national history on November 3, 1975.

All the four leaders, especially Tajuddin Ahmed as wartime prime minister and Syed Nazrul Islam as the acting president, contributed signally to the political and diplomatic recognition of Bangladesh's cause during those fateful days of 1971.

After three consecutive national elections, the time has come for some political maturity to be shown by a fully non-partisan view taken of history.

The Neutral Caretaker Government: An assessment

SHAH AMS KIBRIA

EXPERTS will no doubt subject the results of the general election held on October 1 to searching analysis and they will explain the underlying reasons for the success and failure of the different political parties.

However, the performance of the caretaker government is in a somewhat different category. Its work can be better evaluated while our memories about its activities are still fresh.

In my view, the answer to all these questions are in the negative. Neutrality was cast aside in such a cavalier fashion that a chorus of public criticism rose soon after the Chief Adviser took his oath of office.

Neutrality was cast aside in such a cavalier fashion that a chorus of public criticism rose soon after the Chief Adviser took his oath of office. Unlike his predecessor, an upright man of impeccable integrity, Mr. Latifur Rahman tarnished his image almost from the very beginning of his term.

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explanation nor a word of regret that the telephone lines to the outgoing prime minister's residence were rudely disconnected as soon as power was transferred.

He and his colleagues have set a record of insensitivity to protests and complaints from the Awami League.

Power vested in him by the constitution was taken by him to be license to act according to his sweet will. He behaved as if this was a constitutionally authorised autocracy for three months!

There is no dearth of individuals with high national standing who did not belong to any political party. Yet relatively undistinguished or even unknown persons were chosen.

was a unique and innovative system that had the potential to become a model for others to follow.

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is not neutral and impartial or if he does not happen to be a man of integrity, one can only curse one's luck because no one can bring them to book.

The caretakers can just ignore public opinion, claiming that they do not have to pay heed to what anyone said.

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1. The Chief Adviser issued orders for the transfer and re-assignment of 13 secretaries to ministries within minutes of taking the oath

government and shall carry on the routine functions of such government with the aid and assistance of persons in the services of the Republic.

2. More than a thousand officers were transferred within a matter of a few weeks. These were not random transfers because the aim of this exercise was to remove pro-Awami League officers from positions of power and influence and assign pro-BNP officers in their place.

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harassment, the BNP leaders were accorded a kid glove treatment. For example, curfew was imposed on Feni to search the house of an Awami League MP Mr Joinal Hazari but no such step was taken to search the house of VP Joinal.

5. An attempt was made to change the electoral laws. Some of the laws were actually changed though some others had to be abandoned in the face of strong opposition.

How is it that the neutral government of Mr. Rahman could spot so many officers who had pro-BNP sympathies? No, it was not a matter of mere chance.

only possible basis of the mass transfers. We noted with surprise that Mr. Rahman and his chosen advisers did not find anything wrong in transferring officials on the basis of a list prepared by the BNP.

3. Key officials in the CA's office, Information Ministry including Radio, TV, BSS and Election Commission were carefully replaced. Is it possible to believe that these postings were not done with a view to influencing the elections?

But was it necessary to bring in his place someone who was well known as a collaborator with the Pakistani forces? The thrust of the caretaker government's action was not lost to the other officials.

4. Partisan approach to the arms recovery campaign was too obvious to escape notice. There was much support in the country for a vigorous campaign to recover arms from known terrorists.

explanation from the CEC for not taking these proposed reforms to the parliament for consideration. Electoral laws of a country are matters of national concern.

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OPINION

Top ten reasons for AL election debacle

OMAR KHASRU

DAVID Letterman, celebrated and hilarious US comic genius, has a late night talk show on CBS television network.

We have all heard and read the various reasons and explanations for the recent election debacle of Awami League.

their incessant pontification, prognostication and proselytization deluged and overwhelmed us.

To bridge this cavernous gap and to lighten things up, and purely for innocuous fun, antic and puckish frolic, here is a modest attempt at identifying dozen top reasons.

1. With a dozen not so top foreign Ph.D., Sheikh Hasina was too scholarly, high-brow and incomprehensible to commoners.

tone of this piece to a tee. So here goes:

1. With a dozen not so top foreign Ph.D., Sheikh Hasina was too scholarly, high-brow and incomprehensible to commoners.

2. People wanted to give Mahfuz Anam the opportunity to write the customary rambling, modern day Aesop's fable, redundant front-page piece, imploring Khaleda Zia to accede to father of the nation designation.

3. Give the members, MPs, Ministers of the other party a chance to travel far and near, to

exotic locations, and get an opportunity at government largesse and officially sponsored and subsidized shopping spree;

4. Hasina was getting too predictable and boring as the queen of the starburst TV evening news, and her gang of Awami supporting cast and flunkies were getting old and tedious with the same old repetitious act; people wanted new lead player, new cast and new unfolding drama with Humayun Ahmed twists.

5. She ran out of glittering new apparel. All 1827 sarees, like the shoes of Imelda Marcos, had each been adorned once during the five-year reign; people could not bear to see her wear the same attire twice.

6. Sheikh Hasina and Awami League had run out of places, establishments and structures to

name after her family members and relatives. People were getting tired of the same names for multiple structures.

7. People, out for stroll and relaxation in the parliament area, were missing the floating bridge over Crescent Lake; they were tired of getting across the lake in a round about way and wanted a new bridge.

8. People got tired of the same set of villainous ruling politicians, ministers, MPs and their depraved sons, student cadres and terrorist accomplices; they were yearning for a new set of villains.

9. Awami Ministers, MPs and leaders sent their children abroad and bought houses and apartments in New York, Florida and San Francisco; people want to spread the favor and give the rival

party the chance to do the same;

10. 'Awami' sounds too much like an alien and Razakar term. People were enamored by terms like Nationalist and 4-party alliance, which sounded a lot like unified, pro-nationalist and pro-liberation entity, thereby overlooking and ignoring stealthy presence of Jamaat, Shaikul Hadis and Mufti Amini.

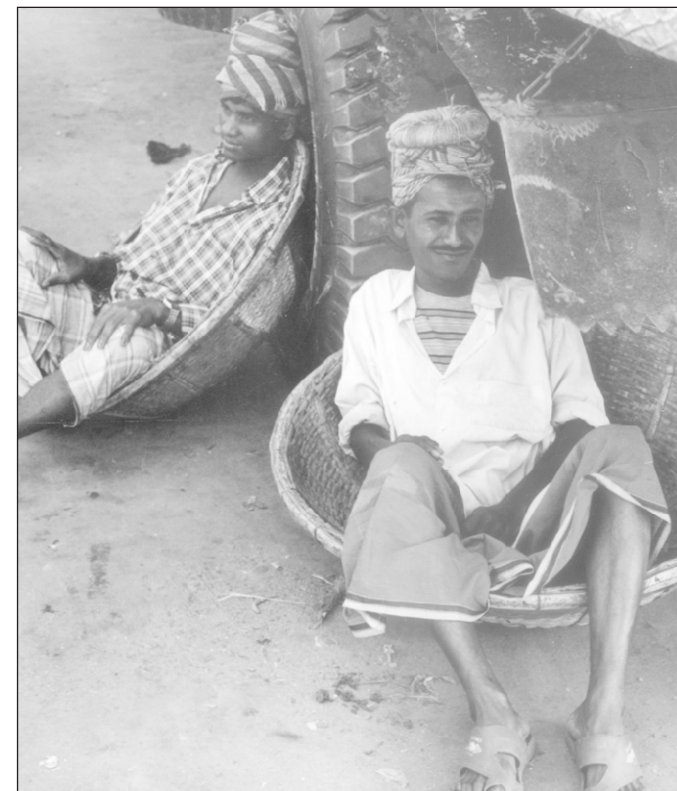
11. George W. Bush to Sheikh Hasina, 'Bin Laden did it!'

12. Finally, the most hideous covert action and concerted, and cognizant conspiracy by majority of the common voters.

Now you know. You can add your own reason to make it a baker's dozen. This munchkin effort may only be good for vestigial facetious munching.

PHOTORIAL

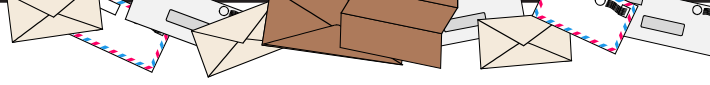
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Working men at rest

Day labourers rest on their baskets with their heads against the treaded tires of trucks. The contrast is strange because the mechanized vehicles are very costly while the workers who toil with their muscles are paid wages that are barely enough to survive.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



"An American opinion"

I was astonished to learn that America feed the whole world. It indicates the lack of knowledge of the American about the rest of the world.

America earns money by selling arms and ammunition. To increase their sale they always instigate war between other countries.

If America behaves like a rational country, if they don't interfere in other country's affair we won't need any help from the American.

Yes, we all are queuing to go to America, because you are after our asset (such as gas of Bangladesh or the consumers' oil of the Middle East) or market.

sucked from Saudi Arabia in the name of the Kuwait war?

Finally, Who created Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban? Isn't it the United States of America?

Shawkat Hossain Lalmatia, Dhaka, on e-mail

Source of Anthrax organism

We would like to know the source of Anthrax organism. Which country is behind this attack and spreading panic throughout the world?

Bangladesh is likely to have relationship with all countries of the world expect Israel, perhaps over with 100 countries! Our central post offices can detect identity of all countries and so we can identify the country of origin of powder carrying envelope.

You said people of Saudi Arabia and Middle East attacked you. Then why did you attack Afghanistan instead of those countries?

Dr. Lailun Nahar Dhaka People's verdict However, shell-shocking it was for the Awami League, it would have been dignified for Sheikh Hasina to

accept the result of the October 1 elections.

I am particularly happy about the fact that people did not vote for the likes of Hazi Mokbul, Hazi Selim, Joynal Hazari, Akhtuzzaman Babu and Shamim Osman.

It is true that Sheikh Hasina herself is responsible for the debacle of her party. We often felt ashamed by her choice of words, her arrogant attitude, her support for Joynal Hazari and other terrorists in her party.

In civilised countries, when a party fails to win, the leader resigns to let a competent person lead and take the party forward.

It is high time for the Awami League to realise that people are quite capable to decide for themselves. We can call this election a silent revolution of people against a government who thought that the state has become their personal property.

UZ Utrara, Dhaka, on e-mail

It is a good sign to read that AL leadership embarked on a BMR programme (not BMRE) (October 24). Who will carry out the cleansing at the top?

AL may spring back without the present leadership-- of course there will be a split in the first phase due to the inertia effect.

AMA Dhaka Anthrax leakage Are some US intelligence groups seeking alibi for foreign operation? The huge publicity looks dubious.

ASkeptic Dhaka Export package The central bank on October 24 announced its first stimulus package to bolster the country's dwindled export figure.

AMA Dhaka

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ASkeptic Dhaka

Export package

The central bank on October 24 announced its first stimulus package to bolster the country's dwindled export figure. As part of the package, the Bangladesh Bank

reduced bank rate to six per cent from the earlier seven per cent to encourage commercial banks to reduce their industrial lending rates.

In another move, the government decided to cut interest rate on export advance by about three percentage and fix it at seven per cent especially for the RMG (Ready Made Garment) sector in the wake of falling exports in a waning global economy.

Official statistic also reveals that the sector is already in a crisis and is set to face a major setback in FY02.

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Frozen food business is highly capital intensive. For example, the average value of shrimp of a fully loaded container is about US \$20 million. Due to variation of size and market demand, packers have to go for stock building of such containers in their cold storage. Bank interest for this sector has been

fixed at 10 per cent per annum. In countries such as India, Thailand, Singapore and Pakistan, interest rate has been kept at six per cent.

The government should take immediate steps for assessing the loss of exporters. Apart from providing cash incentives and sanctioning fresh loans, the interest rates should be further cut by five per cent as to minimise the loss".

M.H. Bari Deputy General Manager Bionic Fish Processing Ltd, Khulna

Global Competitiveness Report

The October 20th issue of the Economist magazine carries a small tidbit about the Global Competitiveness Report from the World Economic Forum. Bangladesh has been ranked 71 out of 75 countries that were included.

None of the local papers or politicians seem to have picked up on this. Given the furor with which Transparency Int.'s Corruption Perception Index was received the muted reaction in Dhaka seems to be strange.

MAI, on e-mail