

Price hike in Ramadan

At the advent of the holy Ramadan a certain group of traders/stock holders take some undue privileges by increasing the prices of daily necessities and it becomes the common practice in our country. We the general public always protest this unscrupulous activities of the traders. But the recent price hike of daily necessities reminded that our clamor calls goes unheeded.

Rice, dal, oil, onions and garlic are selling at a higher price than usual. Now to compete with these commodity prices of flattened rice (Chira), fried rice, peas, sugar, milk and ghee are also soaring up. It is learnt that the prices of most of the essential commodities have already exceeded the limit.

But it is a fact that prices of the commodities are not increased due to poor supply or non-availability of goods. There is no scarcity of the daily necessities in the market. It is an artificial crisis made by the unscrupulous profiteers. The worst sufferers of this most unwanted price hike are the limited income group. Necessary administrative steps should be taken from the government's relevant agencies for combating price hike.

MH Bari
Dhaka

Corruption and Bangladesh

We are some students from Bangladesh studying at various IT institutions in Bangalore for some years. We find the people here friendly and helpful. Classes are held regularly and there is no strike by students any time. No "politics" of any kind is allowed in any educational institutions. Therefore exams are held on times and results published within scheduled dates.

A few months ago during the regime of the Awami League government Bangladesh became the most corrupt country in the world as per assessment of an International Organisation. Many of our local friends and even teachers asked us about this matter. We felt very bad but could not give any suitable answer.

Now that a new government of BNP has taken over we would request our Honourable Prime Minister to take drastic measures to root out "corruption" from our country. It is a fact that people are suffering but no one is concerned about it.

As a leading newspaper we request you to protest against all forms of corruption and help our nation.

Mohd. Mansur, Sabil, Babul
Bangalore, India

Political leadership

Political vandalism by both the ruling party and the opposition has marred the hopes of democratic transition.

I am an expatriate Bangladeshi. I still can't believe why a mature political party like the Awami League is reluctant to accept the election verdict of people.

Does Sheikh Hasina think that she will ensure the fall of the four-party alliance government by muscle power? I must say that she must be in a fool's paradise.

Probably she has failed to grasp the difference between the February 1996 election and 1 October 2001 election.

Please ask your conscience Sheikh Hasina: do you really believe in the west ministerial democracy? Then being a Prime Minister why did you patronise all the noted criminals, including your relatives? The incumbent Prime Minister wants to ban student politics.

But again you're talking rubbish regarding this matter. The atrocities that the JCD is committing were also committed by your BCL "cadres". You don't want to take part in banning the most destructive student politics because you don't really care about the welfare of innocent students and their guardians.

Abul Hasnat
Manchester University, UK

Boycotting US goods

Indian police have killed 14 for distributing "handbills" (which) asked people to boycott American goods to protest strikes on Afghanistan" (Economic Times, October 28

'01, Internet). What should be the response of the Muslims?

Satish Chandra
Cambridge, USA

Air pollution.

Recent media coverage on air pollution prior to and followed by the rally held on November 9 were all great welcome developments. Also your editorial on air pollution (November 11) must act as an alarm bell for those people who are responsible for our environment and so far failed so miserably to appreciate the magnitude of the disaster which according to experts already transformed Dhaka city almost unfit a place to live.

For the millions of helpless sufferers both housed and homeless living in this mega-city who have no alternative place to go except keep on breathing this poisonous air, this is like prolonging the life of a dying patient by administering kuramine.

We have seen enough hue and cry on this serious issue made by the media as well as by a few environmentalists in the past. But the actions of the authorities as rightly pointed in your editorial so far has always been the examples of, "the refusal or inability to act that follows such condemnations and appeals". We had some results that can be easily called 'eye wash' for the

Dhaka from the present slow poisoning process.

We have a great advantage of using CNG for all types of vehicles in our transport system thereby reducing the level of air pollution as long as our gas reserve permit. But slow conversion of vehicles to use CNG as fuel and the absence of adequate number of filling stations have not proved helpful to any significant success so far.

It is most interesting to note from some recent press reports that the proposed gas pipeline from Bangladesh to Delhi is one way to improve environment by use of prospective imported natural gas from our country instead of using the conventional fuels for their transport system and industries. Our people in the helm of affairs must be aware of our own long-term national interests before considering any export of gas. It will also be sad if we find our neighbouring countries solving their air pollution problem with the help of our natural gas while we keep breathing the black smokes in our capital.

Z. Rahman
Gulshan, Dhaka

Politics of vengeance

Sheikh Hasina is claiming that Awami League didn't publish white paper on BNP regime bearing in mind that it might be taken as ven-

Osama bin Laden?" Of course not. Supporting someone does not mean expressing the wish to be ruled by that person. You (a Danish) are supporting the USA, does not mean you want to be ruled by them.

"Do you wish to be dominated by the Arabs?" Mr. Goschal asks. Exactly how many Arabs are fighting for Laden's cause? The figure is definitely insignificant. The Taliban are fighting for Laden, they are giving shelter to him, not the Arabs. And we all know that the Taliban are not powerful like the Arabs. What if it was the Arabs "harbouring" Laden (a very unlikely event, because all the Arab rulers are whole heartedly in support of America)? The USA would have been on a very slippery slope then, or would you rather I called it an *oily* slope? USA would have tried to get the upper hand in that situation by resorting to crafty moves - they would never have dared to start this "crusade".

You are saying that the Anti-Liberation forces in our country were supported by Pakistan, so how can we now support people, supported by Pakistan? But not supporting Laden, means supporting the USA, who did not support us during our Liberation War. How can we do that? We *might* have even done that if it hadn't been for the US policy towards Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, Vietnam and the lot. How can anyone expect us to see the brutal deaths of SO many and have no reaction? Instead of instigating the mass killings in the above-mentioned countries, can't the USA, as the most powerful country in this world, stop it?

It's the age of freedom of speech. If it is thought that we will stop speaking our minds just because people will shun us, one is basically questioning our integrity. But unfortunate for you and me, Mr. Goschal, our views carry little weight in this devastating game between the powerful and the powerless. After all, we are easily frightened by President Bush's "either you are with us, or..." I guess this threat is also an example of freedom of speech.

Nabila Idris
Class VII; Sunnydale School

I could not find any logic in Mr. Goschal's argument by branding Bangladeshis as the follower of Bin Laden. Suppose, he saw one hundred thousand people chanting slogans for Bin Laden on BBC, but that is less than 1 per cent of our population! So, in reality, numbers do not support his view. Majority of the people are just trying to earn bread for the day, let alone supporting someone who they don't even know. But, they do understand the pain and sufferings of their comrades in hunger in Afghanistan.

This latest western media hype is derived from intentional misconception and to create sensation, in order to contribute to the carefully crafted propaganda.

Nafees K
USA

Bangladeshi Hindu

The Muslims of Bangladesh should be grateful that a vast number of Bangladeshi Hindus have supported Awami League, a Muslim dominated party. Instead of blaming the Hindus for this they should heed the message the Hindus are trying to send to the country.

Hindus in Bangladesh do not have a single right wing party like Jamat-e-Islami. India has many such Islamic parties. My question to all Muslims of Bangladesh; what would you rather have—a right wing Hindu political party supported by majority Bangladeshi Hindus or a liberal Awami League which seldom stood by Hindu Rights yet maintained to get majority Hindu votes?

This will certainly not confuse AL related issues with issues of Hindu human rights. I am not a fan of Awami League, and BNP is a disgrace to Bangladeshi Hindus to say the least.

Anup Deb
San Jose, USA

Health service needed

The people of village Nardas and its environs of Baghmara upazila in the district of Rajshahi are in dire need of health service facilities for a long time. There has never been any political or government commit-

ment for such an important public service.

People travel a long distance either by bullock carts during the dry season or by boats during the rainy season for primary as well as emergency medical and maternity care. The nearest primary medical service facilities available is the Mohanpur Health Complex and is more than 20 miles away. Unfortunately the transportation network in the region is still in rudimentary stage.

Mofazzal Hossain, on e-mail

Plain clothed police

Due to the deteriorating law and order situation the government decided to deploy plain clothed policemen in 25 spots in Dhaka city during the month of Ramadan. It seemed to be a good decision to bring relief to the terror tormented citizens.

On Friday night's Ekushey TV news we saw the plain clothed policemen guarding a shopping mall with arms hanging in their shoulders. It is common sense that plain clothed policemen should have their arms hidden so they would look like civilians and that is a tactic police employs to nab criminals. What we saw in the news may well give us the impression that the plain clothed policemen were deployed not to nab the criminals but to alarm them.

Now, if the criminals come out with arms in their shoulders how people will differentiate between the criminals and the so-called plain clothed policemen? Will the police department reply?

Rubaiyat
Hong Kong

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Mofazzal Hossain, on e-mail

Towards minority issue

There have been undesirable incidents recently on the minority community of the country. While these acts are despicable and need to be protested, stopped, and perpetrators prosecuted, I cannot simply think what Shahriar Kabir may have done would be considered good for our sovereign country.

The minority problem is our internal problem, and we 'must' solve it by our own. For this, do we need to go to any neighbouring country and seek their patronage from and give our own bias views to foreign media?

Do we want to make our country another Afghanistan, the making of which was facilitated by overbearing outside interventions?

In this sense, can we really summarily dismiss the action of the government? Of course, government must act within the rule of law and due process of law must be upheld. Any failure of the government in this regard can only weaken its case, if any.

Ruchira Rahman
Dhaka

"What about the Indian Muslims?"

The fact that violence in Bangladesh is political is the most significant reason why it is the duty of the Bangladeshi people, regardless of faith, to condemn any such form of oppression. If we pride our country for being a democracy, we also pride ourselves of choosing governments and political leaderships that represent our interests. If our leaders fail to stand up against those who abuse the rights of our fellow countrymen, it remains our moral responsibility to stand up on the behalf of those minorities that are ill treated.

Bad leadership is and has been a chronic disease in our country, and sadly will remain to be so until we as a people refuse to support those who fail in proper leadership. We can condemn India for ill treatment of Muslims if we want, that's our choice (though perhaps an unwise one); but it is most certainly our duty to stand up against any form of ethnic abuse in our own country.

Omar Siddiquee
New York, USA

"Nuclear power"

Mr. Satish Chandra is wrong in his letter "Nuclear power" (December 7) about Pakistan's nuclear programme. There are certain lobbies, especially Israeli and Indian, whose sole aim is to make Islamic and western civilisations collide so they can sit on the sidelines and watch the show.

There is absolutely no debate in Pakistan about transferring the nuclear technology to other Islamic countries. These kind of news are mere fabrication of pro-Israeli-

Indian lobbies to create an atmosphere of mistrust between the two great civilisations.

Pakistan's nuclear programme is just a response to India's grand ambition to dominate this part of the world.

Israelis have long been planning to destroy Pakistan's nuclear facilities. Any attempt to hit Pakistani nuclear facilities will be disastrous for the whole region.

Jami Ahmed
Houston, Texas, USA

Gas export

Finally! After having suffered from the chest-beatings of people armed with little knowledge but a lot of zeal, it was lucid arguments regarding the gas export issue from M. M. Haque (DS, Nov 30). We are indulging in bashing America and American energy companies on the one hand and asking for "concessions" on the other.

Stop and think of today's global economic realities-- worldwide recession, economies in the doldrums, our dwindling foreign remittance and aid situation, not to mention the economic fallout of the September 11 attacks. While they divert their resources to the ongoing war against terror, how can we assume to be the continued recipients of American largesse for free, when clearly their priorities are elsewhere?

Economic reality dictates that we should be giving gas export serious consideration if we are to progress in the future. To echo the opinion of the Hon'ble Finance Minister, gas is a useless resource while it's under the ground. We should be planning for the future, focusing on how to develop alternative industries, infrastructure and human resources with the income generated from gas sales.

What is most ironic is how worked up we become about "self-

4) of Mr. Paul Reed.

Human beings are not dominant in nature but a part of it. Being a part of nature it is proper for us to leave in harmony with it. If we look at the sexual behaviours of other creatures, we find that sexual intercourse between a pair of the same sex of any species is completely absent. A cock never makes love to another cock, or a bull to another bull. This is the fact with every other animal but the human race. Sexual passion for the same sex is man-made, so is the Aids Virus.

Faruque Hasan
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

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already very frustrated and pessimistic about the future of our country and our lives. These small gestures are our hopes; we at least can achieve that.

They are my satisfaction in my life because I know in my lifetime I won't be able to see a prosperous Bangladesh where we all can have at least peace of mind.

So thank you very, very much for giving me an opportunity to see people acknowledging the right fact. And thanks a lot to for creating a wonderful place to express our opinions, ideas, views, emotions, complaints and whatnot!

Shahrin Hussain Tania
Old DOHS, Dhaka Cantonment

To Amnesty International

I have some questions to Amnesty International (AI).

Why does AI mention only Hindus? What about the Muslims from AL or BNP?

We don't hear anything from them about the innocent killing in Afghanistan (even in the name of revolt killed hundreds of surrendered soldiers violating Geneva Convention), in Palestine and Kashmir.

About Shahriar Kabir the government should investigate and find out the facts.

Who knows may be he is working for some controversial organisation. Would AI clear all doubts?

Sabu
Kadamtala, Dhaka

"Is Islam an Arab religion?"

I am writing in response to the letter "Is Islam an Arab religion?" (December 7). The writer presented two so-called facts, supporting this statement.

The first one is, the schools of thought in the Sunni sect said that the Caliph has to be from Quraish. That is not true. There is a prophesy of the Prophet (SAW) which states that there will be a succession of Caliphs who will be from Quraish. That does not mean that anyone said that the Caliphs have to be from Quraish.

There were many well-respected Caliphs from other ethnic groups. One of the most famous is Salahuddin, who was Caliph during the second Crusade. He was a Kurd. Also the long succession of Caliphs from the Mamluk dynasty in Egypt and the Turks cannot simply be overlooked.

The second false fact, stating that Arabs cannot be made slaves is a misrepresentation.

It is Muslims, and not only Arabs who cannot be made slaves.

Mokaddes Hassan Khan
Birmingham, USA

Mobile telephone service

The mobile telephone services of Aktel Company has very much deteriorated especially the incoming and out-going calls abroad do not function most of the time. Their ISD service is dependent on T&T and such failures of overseas services continues for 2/3 days at a time.

The company is realising cut-throat rate from their clients, but it does not have worth-the-name attendants to receive complaints of the subscribers!

Except genuine businessmen, a substantial number of these phones are owned by smugglers, hijackers and many other criminals.

Normal charge of mobile for a local call is Tk 4 for per minute, whereas, T&T charges Tk.2 for 3 minutes with VAT. If a person makes 120 minutes local call in a T&T phone, in a month, his charges will be (120/3)= 40 calls * Tk 2 = Tk 80.00 with VAT whereas for same number of minutes mobile charges for local calls will be Tk 120*4= Tk 480 + VAT Tk 72= Tk 552.

The line rent of T&T is Tk 172 per month but mobile's is Tk 575per month. Grameen phone has some concessions but is no match for T&T charges.

In urban life telephone is essential and not a luxury, but BTB has compelled ordinary people to go for Mobile, when there are several thousand pending demands for T&T phones!

It seems BTB prefers to sacrifice its own interest by not expanding Telephone Lines in Chittagong and elsewhere, in favour of such Mobile phone organisation.

This paradox is not discernible because while the government is reducing call charges to abroad and NWD to encourage increase the use of phone to earn more revenue.

Will the authorities concerned look into the interest of general people?

Rumi Ahmed
Little Jewels School, Chittagong

Alternative government

Given the confrontational attitude of both the BNP and the AL, maybe it's time we had a serious debate about alternative forms of governance for our country.

M Ali, on e-mail



Not demon but disease
I noted in *The Daily Star* a photograph of people beating a "demon symbolising the AIDS epidemic" (December 2). Why is it that when people think of AIDS or drug addiction they have to think in terms of "demons"? Doesn't diabetes, dengue, malaria and other diseases cause tremendous hardship and result in the death of many people? But one never sees these diseases depicted as "demons".

I believe this is the result of a bias judgement on the part of many people that it is not the disease that is a demon but the people who are afflicted with these diseases who are considered as "demons". It is a grave injustice to those suffering from AIDS or drug addiction.

All people have a basic human right to be respected as a human being and all have a basic human right to treatment with dignity no matter what the disease they have been suffering from. Unless people change their attitudes about these diseases dignity for all will not be ensured.

Besides as long as people consider these diseases or the patients as demons it will be very difficult for the patients and their families to seek assistance.

A positive approach is always the best method to bring about a correct awareness of any problem-- even for the most deadly and difficult diseases to be treated. Let us treat all with dignity and acknowledge health for all as a basic human right.

Bro. Ronald Drahozal, CSC
Director, APON (Addiction Rehabilitation Residence)
Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka

public consumption since decisions of the authorities in this respect such as; lead free fuel, ban on two stroke vehicles and strict control of exhaust emissions in the city were never meant to be implemented. The accumulated result over many years of negligence by all concerned have now created such a dangerous situation which in the language of one prominent patron of the "Paribesh Andolon" reportedly been described to be soon approaching the condition of a gas chamber!

This is very serious indeed and emergency action like combating natural disasters must be taken to bring down the level of air pollution to acceptable limit. Failure to do so will not only cause many pollution related sicknesses but may also permanently damage the health of many children to the extent of mental retardation.

Remedial steps to reduce the air pollution in big cities like; Manila, Delhi, and Katmandu in the recent past have been widely reported in our press and we should not feel shy to adopt similar measures immediately to save the people of

geance! Funny enough, she forgot that in the democratic process the elected government's duty is to serve society disregarding any other reservation. The moment she said that AL didn't publish white paper although corruption existed, she confessed to the fact that AL failed to perform their duty!

Now as AL is planning to publish white paper on BNP regime (after BNP planned to do so), it's vengeance that's for sure! So, please stop the rhetoric and help to initiate a healthy political process in this country.

Mohsin Talukder
Dhaka

"The cult of Laden in Bangladesh!"

Mr. Theodor B. Goschal's letter ("The cult of Laden in Bangladesh!", November 28) requires a reply, so that he may realise why so many Bangladeshis support Osama Bin Laden who is according to him "a deranged fanatic".

Mr. Goschal says "Is it now wish of the Bengalis to be ruled in future by a Saudi Arabia controlled by

the government to include the contribution of George Harrison in our history books and also in the text books.

Vaskar
Rayer Bazar Dhaka

I was shocked when I heard the news that George Harrison is no more. I am a big fan of the Beatles. I love their melodious tune of music which includes some everlasting songs like "Yesterday", "Free as a bird", "And I love her" etc. We the Bangladeshis should have organised a programme in remembrance and recognition of this legend's contribution during our War of Independence.

His virtuoso performances will always be remembered by music lovers all over the world; one of which is "Just for today". Whenever I listen to this song, all the lovely memories of my younger years flash before my eyes.

I pray that George Harrison's departed soul be blessed with eternal peace for the significant role he played dedicating his life for music.

Syed Tanveer Kemal
Uttara Model Town

The best way to show respect to George Harrison

Why did not George Harrison visit Bangladesh, not even for once? He came to visit India many times, and Bangladesh is only a step away from India. He who so enormously contributed to the liberation struggles of a country had lost interest in it after it had achieved its independence?

Though he never expressed his mind, it is sure that his disenchantment with the sad performance of the newly emerged nation dissuaded him from visiting this country. The best way to show respect to his departed soul is not sending condolence message to his widowed wife but making this country habitable from the view point of human rights as well as prosperous.

Faruque Hasan
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Like millions of people of this country, I like to echo the sentiments and feelings of Mr Kamal Haq (December 2) about late George Harrison. It is a pity that we could not bring George Harrison to Bangladesh during his lifetime to express our heart-felt gratitude to this great personality.

George Harrison would always remain an integral part of our struggle for independence and we must take appropriate steps to ensure that our future generations do not forget the part played by him at a very critical juncture of our struggle. I fervently appeal to

