

Ban Hartal

During the Pakistan period hartal was called for the greater cause of the country. People spontaneously observed it. Nowadays hartal is being enforced on people through threats and intimidation. If anyone defies it then he is most likely to be sent to hospital dead or injured. Vehicles are damaged or burnt to ashes.

So we have no option but to obey what the leader says. The political leaders who call hartals are VIPs, wherever they go they will get top priority. Moreover, they are economically well off. But what about us who live from hand to mouth?

Frequent hartal cripples the economy of the country, which is already in a shambles. As the political leaders call hartal for their own interest or for silly matter, the hartal has lost its importance. If this sort of hartal culture goes on unabated then the only way left for the government is to ban it.

Iqbal Ahmed, on e-mail

Coconut plantation

About an year and a half ago I visited Bangladesh where I met a coconut farmer close to the Sunderban Forest area, who told me about a special breed of coconut that came from Malaysia that he is planting there. This special breed (Hybrid or Clone) would take seven years to produce coconuts, and it will produce about 600-800 coconuts per year/per tree.

I tried to find out about this special breed but failed to gather any information so far. Do you know whom I can contact in Bangladesh or in Malaysia to find out more about this special breed of coconut tree? Any leads would be greatly appreciated.

Shaikh Sakhawat, on e-mail

We want a clean Dhaka

Eid-ul-Fitr, no doubt, is the biggest festival in Bangladesh. People enjoy this festival with immense pleasure. This social gathering has a great impact in our mind. As we

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 Siddique
NY, USA

Factual mistake

There is a factual mistake in the article "Lest we forget-- Justice Amin Ahmed" (December 6).

Governor A. K. Fazlul Haque was dismissed by a political government of Pakistan headed by Prime Minister Firoz Khan Noon and not by the Martial Law authorities.

Martial Law was imposed by Iskander Mirza, the then President of Pakistan at a later stage.

S. R. Shaheed
Old DOHS, Dhaka Cantonment

Time for soul searching

Sheikh Hasina has left for a month long vacation to UK and USA. She should spend this time in self-reflection and soul searching. I hope it will help her to understand why Awami League lost in the last election.

While in power, one is always surrounded by sycophants and most people succumb to flattery. Unfortunately Sheikh Hasina falls in to that category. It is unfortunate that the top leaders of AL are disunited and it is one of the main reasons why they lost in the election.

If Sheikh Hasina wants to do better in the next election she must get rid of the old guards most of whom are inefficient and corrupt. She must induct honest and competent members in her party immediately.

Abdul Mazid
Wari, Dhaka

The world saved

Since the terrorist attacks on the US, many commentators, especially from the Third World, have

"The Fallacy in Unocal's Gas Export Proposal": Clarification

Unocal Bangladesh conducts all its business consistent with its corporate values of Honesty, Integrity, Trust and Excellence. Our recent proposal "Bangladesh Natural Gas Pipeline Project" is consistent with these values. Unocal has invested more in Bangladesh than any other single private investor.

Unocal has retained the Jalalabad and Moulavi Bazar areas inside Blocks 13 & 14 and continue as the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) holder of these two blocks. Unocal has relinquished the areas outside Jalalabad and Moulavi Bazar because further exploration was not warranted given no domestic market for Bibiyana and Moulavi Bazar discoveries and surplus capacity in Jalalabad field.

Unocal would classify our exploration efforts as successful. Historically, Unocal has participated in 6 exploration wells in Bangladesh that have been drilled in: Kutubia, Bibiyana, Moulavia Bazar, Kapna, Ratna and JB-5 locations. Three out of six were successful discoveries. Kutubia, the first offshore discovery, was discovered back in 1976, and the other five were drilled under PSCs for Block 12 and Blocks 13 & 14. The 50 per cent success rate is greater than the Bangladesh exploration success record of 30 per cent and global rate of 11-13 per cent.

The D&M reserve study is consistent with Unocal's previous statements regarding Bibiyana. The independent D&M reserve study identified proven and probable recoverable reserves of 2.4 TCF and additional possible recoverable reserves of 3.1 TCF and total original gas in place of 6.6 TCF.

Regarding developing Bibiyana for the domestic gas market, Petrobangla agreed in July 2000 that Bibiyana is a "Significant Discovery" which could be developed if there was a market. However no market exists domestically.

Unocal has also submitted the market feasibility study of Bibiyana to Petrobangla in November 2000 as per PSC. The study demonstrated that LNG is not feasible, evaluated other options for Bibiyana gas utilization and found that pipeline export produced the highest value to Bangladesh.

Unocal proposed that Bibiyana's 2.4 proven and provable reserves can sustain 500 MMCFD for more than 10 years from the start-up of the pipeline. The potential \$3.7 billion (200 billion taka) is based on export of 2.4 TCF.

Unocal's proposal is consistent with the PSC for Block 12 and not in violation. The PSC does not prohibit gas export by pipeline. The contract states that if export via LNG is not economically viable, Petrobangla and the contractor will cooperate to identify an economically viable alternative. In addition, as with any contract, any party can make proposals to the other party.

Unocal's assumptions regarding domestic gas demand are based on a study conducted by an international expert who conducts gas studies on a global basis. Our assumptions are clearly stated in the proposal.

Unocal's proposal includes two volumes of appendices which includes a detailed pipeline feasibility study. The study recommends directional drilling for crossing the Jamuna River. The recent river training and bank reinforcement completed for construction of the Jamuna Bridge makes directional drilling feasible.

Unocal agrees development of the Western Zone is important. Our proposed pipeline has a capacity of 1000 MMCFD and the export proposal utilizes 50 per cent of the capacity making 500 MMCFD available for domestic distribution.

Unocal used Petrobangla's initial recoverable reserves number (16.1 TCF) for assessing field growth. Unocal sees significant reserve growth within Petrobangla's field by applying advanced technologies. Unocal has also conducted a resource assessment for 6 selected PSC blocks that were evaluated during the 2nd bid round and provides this information to Petrobangla for their joint resource assessment with USGS.

Greg Gritters
Vice President and Director, External Affairs
Unocal Bangladesh

much of the world.

It was mainly because of American military, political and economic clout that such a catastrophe was averted. Only the United States had the military and political capability to challenge the Soviet Union and China. Neither small European nations or the poor Third World countries had the means or even the will to face the Soviet super power on their own. Similarly, today, only

Jamat-e-Islami.

Different people have different opinions. But for that no one can "Nirmul" (eradicate) another. In India there are Hindu parties, in Europe there are Christian parties then what is the harm if Jamat-e-Islami exists in a Muslim dominated country?

The government should find out who are behind this organisation Nirmul Committee?

Thank you again for your interest.

By the way, I was promoted to Class VIII a few days back, so I am writing Class VIII below instead of the "suspicious" Class VII.

Nabila Idris
Class VIII, Sunnysdale School

First 60-day rule

We are surprised about the reported press conference of Nasim, the former Home Minister. What he did during the Awami League rule is very fresh in our memories. We are well aware of the anti-people politics of Nasim and the AL. Regardless of their position, either in government or in opposition, their major objective was damaging and destroying the country, which the country has witnessed since 1972.

Now again in the name of different unimportant and meaningless issues, they are trying to complete the damage and destruction of the country whatever has left yet. The party, who can call the personality like Justice Sahabuddin Ahmed "a betrayer" and "also partied with conspiracy", for their self and party interest, we have nothing to learn from that party and their leaders and we are not at all prepared to listen what these people are saying as most of these are blatant lies.

Please let them know "they can make fool some people for some time but cannot make fool all people all the time". Their evil ideas, actions and practices have been rejected by the people and it would probably remain so in future.

Nasir, on e-mail

Fighting AIDS

The first case of HIV in Bangladesh was reported in 1989 and the first case of AIDS followed in 1990. Bangladesh is surrounded by countries like India, Myanmar and Thailand. In all these countries AIDS has already become a serious threat. Although Bangladesh still has a low HIV prevalence compared to its neighbours, we still have to be cautious. And we should pay heed to what the directorate of Health Services has to say about the sero-epidemiological surveys undertaken in Bangladesh. If we do not take precaution, we would be in a serious trouble.

Girl Guiding provides a valuable

support structure for girls and young women, by providing information about sexual health, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases together with skills for communicating with partners. Girl Guides can help girls and young women informing decisions about personal relationship and family life. It offers girls and young women opportunities to meet, organize, gain self-confidence and enable them to take an active role in family and community life.

The Girl Guides Association of Bangladesh believes that it is an obligation to provide the young members in Girl guiding with skills that will ensure them a healthy life. Sensitization and awareness education sessions on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS are organized in camps and leaders workshops. Bangladesh Girl Guides involvement in these activities has now developed into project relationship with the GO and the NGO.

AIDS campaign has been a special project of the local Association members of the Bangladesh Girl Guides Association. The members of the Association largely the Guides and the Rangers leading these groups also participate in the government organised discussions and rallies to aware the citizens. They also organised seminar, workshop, poster, rally and special session on AIDS. The Girl Guides Association of Bangladesh includes change of behaviour intervention with target communities' high-risk groups and general population.

Dulia Jannat
Mirpur, Dhaka

Curb rent seeking culture

Government leaders have to monitor themselves and not leave it to others exclusively the undesirable negative cultures infiltrating into our society. One of these, thanks to political patronisation, is the evil culture of rent seeking as a business ideology.

Today all levels of society are hostages to armed brigand of rent seekers and toll collectors, whether it is construction of a building, tendering, shops and highways or what not. The causes, which led to the proliferation of this blackmailing tendency, are well known to the

political leaders. Now it is getting beyond control, as noticed after the recent general elections. This culture increased manifold during the last five years, and the new regime is facing the pressure from its own field activists.

This short-cut to easy earning means that one gets money without labouring for it and earning it without the sweat of the brow. It ruins the character of the new generation (copying and cheating in exams is one example). The quality of work and service, in the public sectors, is going down. There is no respect for professionalism and excellence. Quality means nothing (note the collapse of overhead pedestrian bridges).

The tackling of economic and day to day problems are visible activities, but there are background and invisible hard core areas for eradication. A new regime is saddled with national problems. Marginal measures will not break up the core.

AMA
Dhaka

Ban on old vehicles

As I read the news about the rule nisi issued by High Court on BRTA for banning old vehicles, I was really astonished.

My PhD works in Germany is also on road traffic exhaust and its impact on the atmosphere. From my study and other studies, it is clear that old vehicles, the so-called super emitters, emit several times more air pollutants than catalyst-equipped vehicles. Actually, the emissions from these old vehicles as a whole regulate the air quality.

Therefore, it is not enough only to increase the number of catalyst-equipped vehicles, but it is generally recommendable to remove all old vehicles for the better air quality.

Jewel A. G. Gomes, on e-mail

"Viqarunnisa University"

In response to Mr. Naved Iqbal's letter (December 12), I would like to say that Viqarunnisa School and College has produced confident and competent women who have shone in both male-dominated and female-dominated spheres. We would definitely expect Viqarunnisa University to continue producing the same, if not even better, calibre of outstanding female professionals.

I would like to point out that in the United States, Smith College and Mount Holyoke College, which are both women's colleges, enjoy a reputation that easily surpasses all of their male as well as most of their co-educational counterparts. Does this kind of reputation reflect the ability of women educated in women's universities to be restricted to "an environment comprising of females only"? If not, what is the justification for 'not' opening a women's university?

Samir Mainuddin
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

ISP license fees and Internet rate

The news that the government is going to increase the licence fees of the ISP companies (December 12) is an alarming one. Obviously the companies will pass on their liabilities to the subscribers thereby making Internet rates higher which, compared to other countries in the subcontinent, is already very high in Bangladesh. This proposed step will certainly be another blow to the cause of progress in our race to join the IT revolution. Bangladesh has already suffered and has fallen behind in this area due to some irrational and sometimes backward decisions in regards to IT and other knowledge-based technologies. While most of the countries are trying to reduce the rates of telephone calls and cost of Internet in order to enable everybody, especially the young generation move ahead and join the economic race of 21st century this decision in Bangladesh will take us further backward.

Everyone knows that the world

economy of the current century is a knowledge-based one and human capital is the most important resource. No material resource, not even oil or gas, will play a larger role in shaping a country's economy than human knowledge. Cheap access to Internet holds the key to the gateway of that unlimited resource-pool which in turn will develop our human resource. Let not the BTTB stand in the way to our effort at reaching that resource-base by imposing its narrow and sometime whimsical decisions. The recent stoppage of many ISPs function for a couple of days was one such whimsical decision.

I urge all, especially those HRD conscious people who know the importance of cheap, easy and quick access to Internet to resist such a move by BTTB. It deserves the same kind of resistance as we did show in stopping the felling of trees at Osmani Udyan.

Our human resource is no less important than our physical resource. Providing cheap and easy access to Internet is the only way to develop that resource.

AZ M Abdul Ali
Uttara, Dhaka

Wrong approach

I read with interest about the antics of Rituparana Sengupta in the Songkhata Red Light district of Kolkata.

In her efforts to assist Kolkata sex workers Ms. Sengupta might have been well served if she had chosen to listen to them rather than berate them with platitudes. The inadequate conceptualisation of sex work by the moralising middle class was well represented by her call for sex workers to resolve the problem of financial exploitation by leaving sex work.

She rightly identified a serious issue regarding the exploitation of sex workers, when she stated, "You work and they take the lion's share." However the proven means of overcoming workplace exploitation by pimps or other abusive employers is not to require the workers to leave but to assist such workers to overcome the power imbalance between the employees and employers.

Addressing the problems of workplace exploitation through unions and the collective organising of workers, with the support of sympathetic labour legislation has been successful in various other industries in reducing a variety of workplace exploitation. Work place empowerment is a powerful means by which the exploitation now experienced by sex workers in Kolkata might also be addressed.

It should be remembered that exploitation in the film industry in many countries was not resolved by actors and technicians being "rescued" to be retrained to become garment workers, but through the courageous actions of union activists and enlightened political leaders. If it was not for the actions of such people it might have been Ms. Sengupta and other actresses, who would now require "rescue" from abusive employment.

John Davies
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Not enough

Bangladesh as a nation is grateful for the contribution of late George Harrison during the Liberation War.

I have read in Media expression of sorrow and sympathy expressed by our political leaders on his sad demise.

This is not enough. The best way to express our gratitude to late George Harrison would be if any road or landmark is named after him, for example "George Harrison Boulevard". This way our future generation would also know about him and he will become a part of our Liberation War History.

Aminur Rahman
Dhaka

Ashok Kumar passes away

With the passing away of Ashok Kumar, the Indian film industry has lost one of its great peers.

Ashok Kumar shot to fame by playing opposite the first lady of the Indian screen, Devika Rani in "Achhut Kanya" and later enjoyed a string of successes in movies like "Kangan" and "Bhandan" starring with Leela Chitnis-- a favourite and popular actress of the thirties. Ashok Kumar however took the Indian sub-continent by storm with his film "Kismet" which ran for 192 weeks at Calcutta Roxy cinema during the Second World War. The film is considered as one of the finest entertainers the Indian silver screen has produced.

His histrionic ability and talent had a few rivals and whether he played the role of a hero or a father he performed it with ease and credit. An agnostic, a homeopath and a chain smoker he died at a ripe age of ninety.

Robert Kader
Mehdibagh, Chittagong

Recently the Indian cine world has lost a star. He is the great actor Ashok Kumar. People will remember him for his contribution to the Indian cinema and his outstanding performance on the big screen.

Ashok Kumar, a Bengali by birth was a great actor, but above all a dynamic person. Whatever role he played he made them so realistic that his screen persona never became stale. It was the time of "talkies" when people saw him on screen.

Brother of the great singer Kishore Kumar, Ashok Kumar would always be remembered as one of the greatest actors Bollywood has ever produced.

Anam
Dhaka



celebrate it one time in every year, so we never deny its religious and social value. Hindu, Boudha, Muslim and Christian, all come together to make a peaceful social gathering on this occasion, which brings a new brotherhood and national integration in our motherland. But our Dhaka city remains the same as before.

Who does not know that Dhaka city is a gas-chamber where in every step of life, risk remains. Wherever you go, risk will follow you; whatever you eat risk is there. Dhaka is full of all kinds of pollution-- sound pollution, water pollution, air pollution etc. For the lack of correct policy and quick implementation, our environment remains the same. The situation is deteriorating everyday.

A neat and clean Dhaka seems only a dream for us. We have no interest in taking care of Dhaka rather we are killing the city day by day.

I wonder whether we would ever be able to celebrate Eid in a neat and clean Dhaka.

Hirak K Bala
Banani, 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 behalf of those minorities that are ill treated.

Bad leadership is and has been a chronic disease in our country, and

been blaming the US for bringing on this misfortune through wrong foreign policy initiatives. The US had it coming, their reasoning goes, for being too arrogant and high-handed in dealing other countries.

But critics tend to forget that the United States has its national interest to protect and its national interests may not coincide with others' interests. In international relations, the national interest reigns supreme. They also ignore the fact that though US foreign policy has not been perfect, and American policymakers have made many mistakes, on the whole, US foreign policy has been a success story. Because of strong US leadership during the Cold War, Soviet expansionism in Western Europe and the Middle East could be stopped.

If the United States had decided to withdraw within its borders after the World War II, as it did after the World War I, the Soviet Union, which emerged as the mightiest military power in Europe, would have certainly conquered the whole of Europe and the Middle East in the name of world communism. War-devastated Western Europe would have been easily conquered by the Red Army and communist regimes could have been installed using surrogate communist parties in Western Europe in the same way the Soviet Union established its hegemony in Eastern Europe. Militarily weak, oil-rich states like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and Iran would have fallen easy victims to the Soviet power, and the Soviet Union would have imposed its hegemony over these Muslim states in the same way it imposed its rule over Muslim Central Asian republics, where religion was tightly controlled by the Soviet authorities. Pakistan and Afghanistan, which lie near to the Soviet Union, would have faced a similar fate.

China, in turn, would have moved to impose own brand of communism in Southeast Asia. In short, totalitarian communism would have ruled

the United States has the military and political prowess to save the world from total anarchy that would follow in the event of any American withdrawal from the world, which seems to be the goal of the terrorists.

Instead of criticising, we must thank the United States for carrying such a heavy burden of global security.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Internet crime

I have come to know from friends in Dhaka that a number of ISPs in Bangladesh do not have proper encryption mechanism to save the login passwords of their customers.

Therefore, these passwords are being leaked out, in many occasions through their own staffs, and given to other users who can consume hundreds of minutes from legitimate customers' pre-paid quota. Repeated requests to the ISPs have not improved the situation at all, apart from getting silly suggestions like changing the passwords every day.

One former customer of an Internet company complained about it rigorously, just to find his Internet account disconnected. Unfortunately, in our country we do not have law enforcers dealing with modern day Internet crimes due to the lack of adequate training.

Therefore, I am raising this issue in your esteemed daily so that it can get appropriate attention from the authorities concerned.

Khairul Hasan
Surrey, UK

"Nirmul Committee"

This is in response to Mr. Anup Deb's letter on Nirmul Committee. You are right that everybody has a right to organise. So is doing the

Who are patronising this organisation? What is the necessity of such an organisation? And what do they really want to "Nirmul" (eradicate)?

Kabir
Faridpur

Corruption

This is in response to MS Islam's letter "Hit List" (December 11). I totally agree with his sentiment in eradicating corrupt and undisciplined officers from government service. However, the question is how dedicated and sincere the government is about this? It has been a trend in our political arena to harass officials who are seemingly unsympathetic to the ruling party. Most of the time the true spirit is somehow lost and shrouded in mystery.

We urge our government to be neutral, honest and sincere in bringing the corrupt officials to justice. The "Anti-Corruption Bureau" shouldn't be a vehicle of harassment, rather it should be a true mechanism to eradicate corruption. And therefore, an overhauling inside the Bureau and of its policy are essential.

Zafar Hadi
California, USA

We keep ourselves up-to-date

Mr. Mohammad Zaman's letter (December 12) which revealed interest in my letter was appreciated. It is definitely hard to conclusively prove that I wrote the letter myself as we are continents apart but if one can rely on my words then I can assure all that it was I, and only I, who wrote the letter. Being 7th graders surely does not mean that we'll be blind to world affairs -- after all, we do watch a lot of TV, as any parent with a teenager will assure you!

"Israel has a right to defend itself"



These were the words of the White House spokesman after Israel launched a series of attacks on Palestinian villages, using US-made Apache helicopters and F-16 aircraft. Horrific scenes of mothers running with their infants in their laps trying to escape the approaching missile-equipped helicopters have done nothing to change the minds of the White House planners. And then the Americans wonder why the world hates them so much!

For fifty-three years, the Palestinians waited. They thought the world would listen to their cause. It didn't. Teenage Palestinian stone-throwers were shot to death by Israeli soldiers. Nobody came to their rescue. A ten-year old boy was shot in his father's arms, as his father shouted to the Israelis not to shoot and tried to protect his son. The boy died a few minutes later. The world was horrified to see the video footage, but nobody did anything. BBC presented an award to the French cameraman who made the video of the shooting. But the fate of the Palestinians remained

unchanged.

Everything, after all, has a threshold level. It seems the Palestinians have reached that level. Since they will be shot anyway, they might as well kill a few Israelis in the process. This is probably has become the mindset of the young Palestinians.

Every inch of the soil that the Israelis now call their home belongs to the Palestinians. That is what it looked like before 1948. There will be no peace in the region until the occupiers withdraw from the Palestinian land.

Masood ur Rahman
Shahjahanpur, Dhaka

