

Is there no end to this session jam in CU?

I'm a first year (new) student of Chittagong University, there is another first year, which is first year (old), and there is another first year going to be admitted this year, which will be called first year (baby). Seems ridiculous but this is the reality of CU.

I've got admission in the session 2000-2001, the duration of the session is over but we've not yet finished the half of the syllabus because of the unwanted strike and political unsuitability. There is a long session jam in every department and the students have no idea how long will it take to pass from this university? Will it take eight, ten or twelve years? Nobody knows. We are not worthless students, we have potentiality but we are losing our merit and time day by day. It really hurts me when I see no one is worried about us except the newspapers and our guardians.

The university authority has no headache so is the government. But I want to ask who will take our responsibility? Almost 16 thousand students of this university have been suffering for seven months. We don't know what will be our future. Being a student of CU I'm very much frustrated and have lost all my dreams and ambitions.

I request the government and the university authority please take immediate steps to open the university and let us study because we don't want to spoil our life.

Jummi Department of English, CU

Biman passenger's plight

I honestly would sympathise with the doctor's daughter and other passengers' plight on that journey. But the attitude of the lady in question leaves much to be desired. Has she ever thought what any other airliner could do given the fact that there were sick passengers in Dubai, a technical fault resulting in emergency landing in Turkey and Biman having no facilities there.

Her facts are sketchy at best and leaves a lot of gaps between these. Let me assure everyone that an aircraft never moves unless it is found and declared completely safe. Yet accidents do take place. And Biman Alhamdulillah hasn't had too many of such mishaps. We can be proud of that. But there is no denying the fact that Biman has been callous in handling such cases of emergencies. But does that really merit her last comment? "Never again in Biman."

This only reminds me of a famous observation by a foreign journalist in a newspaper here. He said he had seen only one nation proud of castigating itself and everything it has. Do I need to mention the name? This disease is more rampant with the fortunate NRBs who always eat the cream and yet blame everything on this poor land while themselves living in the cosy environment

US and Bosnia



Battered Bosnia

I would like to disagree slightly with Mohammad Zaman's comments on US involvement in Bosnia (January 10).

For first three years of war, while the Serbs were getting their full supply of military hardware from Russia, USA and other western nations had placed a strictly implemented arms embargo against Bosnia. Several Muslim countries including Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan tried to supply arms to the Bosnians, but USA denied them to do so. Finally Turkey and Iranians were ready to send their troop to protect the defenceless Bosnians and again they were stopped by the same powers.

What is troubling to most of us is this that USA knew about the genocide of Bosnians and existence of concentration camps through satellite surveillance, but didn't take any action nor allowed anyone else to get involved.

Asim Ahmed USA

abroad). By the way, most airlines are replete with such stories. I, being a widely travelled person can vouch for that.

Finally, do we stop going to our doctors in spite of the horrendous treatment we get from them?

Ahmad Kamal Abu Dhabi, UAEates

We need healthy competition

I was glad to read in Star Business page article "SIA to continue spreading wings despite setbacks".

It's encouraging that Singapore Airlines, considered one of Asia's best airlines is still expanding after the events of September 11. As a frequent flyer between Kathmandu

and Dhaka, I would urge SIA to reinstate its former Singapore-Dhaka-Kathmandu route, which was suspended a few years ago. As it stands now, Biman has a monopoly on that route, and whenever there is no competition, the monopoly-holder usually offers mediocre service, as in Biman's case.

Singapore Airlines, on the other hand, goes out of its way to keep passengers on its South Asia routes happy, and offers perks like free playing cards, postcards, toilet amenities, good food and smiling attentive service-- all of which are conspicuous by its absence on Biman. Let's ask SIA to come back to extending its Dhaka route to Kathmandu and give Biman healthy competition and a run for its and our money.

Daniel B Haber Kathmandu, Nepal

IMF preconditions: let's swallow the bitter pills

Personally I don't find the preconditions tacked to its loans by IMF illogical. So let's swallow the bitter pills.

Fulfilling those conditions will only increase the volume of works of our public servants and make our government leaders thrifty. The state coffers belong to the public, not to the people in power. Transparency in the public expenditures is not the demand of the IMF only but of the citizens of this country as well.

Why should we bear the burden of the ever-losing state-owned enterprises for years? After the political change in 1991, Russia could privatise thousands of state-owned enterprises with in a sort span of time. We may learn the lesson from them.

Faruque Hasan Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Help us

Recently the government of Bangladesh has ordered to stop financing the Bangladeshi students abroad (UK, USA and Europe) who were involved in research and development projects of Bangladesh government and ordered them to return back home.

This is absurd! Such a decision will destroy these students' career. These students are involved in research projects in many renowned universities and if these students complete their course it would be extremely beneficial for the country. We need competent people to lead the nation forward. But if the government is not supportive how would it be possible?

Some distressed students UK

Be impartial

This is in response to Akbar Hussain's comment on the letter, "Take this", (January 4). I have a few observations on Mr. Hussain's

"Has BNP been elected to take revenge...?"

Thank you for your commentary on the January 9 incident. It is true that Awami League took repressive measures against the opposition during its 5-year rule. For this people have already punished the party and voted BNP to power for a change.

However, we have not seen any change in the pattern of governance. AL took repressive measures against BNP in the name of protecting public property. Now BNP is doing the same. So what is the difference?

People have a right to protest against price hike, against increasing crime rate etc. But the protest should be peaceful. From newspaper reports, I've learnt that AL's protest was peaceful and they were not damaging public property. Police action against such peaceful demonstration reflects the autocratic nature of the government. We should condemn such behaviour for the sake of democracy.

Abdul Hannan Ontario, Canada

I have read Mahfuz Anam's commentary on the 10th January and I do share his statement to some extent.

BNP does not need to act like AL when they have been given such a massive mandate by the people for change. In a democratic society it is always desirable to have opposition who comes in with their own comprehensive arguments and suggestions for the betterment of the society. Unfortunately AL has made their intent all too clear right after their debacle. During this hartal, the earlier ones and the ones to come AL will only be trying to test the water and nothing else while trying to stir sympathy for their so-called politically tortured party workers.

Difference between the previous AL rule and the present BNP rule is, BNP acknowledges there are problems which needs to be dealt with in accordance and as we all know there is no easy fix solution for any of the problems the country is facing now. Rather AL had it easy and blamed all ills to its previous past government.

Socially, economically, environmentally the country is in dire straits and we all have to be united and think big and reasonably while supporting the present government on its endeavour to lead us out of this shambles instead of doing the reverse.

ST, one-mail

Mr. Mahfuz Anam's commentary (January 11) was well-thought and pierces right through the very eye of our national political plight. Here are some of my disjointed and personal thoughts:

After more than a decade of living abroad, I managed to go home two years ago. Naturally I was eager and anticipating. After all, it was home..... but alas! It was a hartal that greeted our two bewildered daughters and us. They really enjoyed their maiden trip to the city under police protection (as graciously arranged by our hotel). On the day of return, we had to sneak to the airport before dawn, and you know why. Another hartal. Thanks to Khaleda Zia, leader of the then-Opposition. If some haughty police officer, even unlawfully, had beaten Khaleda Zia on those days, believe me, somewhere, in my heart I would have condoned

tension pursued a policy of nuclear brinkmanship, warning Pakistan repeatedly of dire consequences if cross border terrorism by Pakistan was not stopped and those responsible in Pakistan were not brought to task.

Every sane person detests terrorism and the unfortunate incident in Indian Parliament was definitely a terrorist act. However, before going for extreme actions both sides could have shown some restraints. India could have taken the lead in this case by accepting Pakistan's proposal for joint investigation. Instead, we have been observing troops movement, mass mobilisation, war posture, etc on both sides of the border. Few weeks back there was open discussion by the Indians on BBC, measuring all possible military actions against Pakistan including possible fall out effect on Indian capital Delhi if the Pakistani city of Lahore was hit by nuclear bomb.

Sarwar New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka

Don't politicise sports

It is a shame that the BFF has been banned from International Football by FIFA. It is a shame not only for BFF but for the entire nation. Now, the Chittagong Zila Krita Sangstha included 3 gynaecologists on the medical team for the second cricket Test against Pakistan. The CJKS officials defended this action by saying 'gynaecologists are also doctors'. So are veterinarians. Would they go ahead and include a couple of them, too? Why are the governing bodies of the different sporting organisation adamant upon making our country the laughing stock to the world?

Last week sudden changes were made in the personnel of BCB's development committee. This was done to install the Prime Minister's son, as the Chairman of the committee. This is ridiculous. The government should keep themselves out of sports. We can see around the world, how sports suffer when the government tries to meddle in its affairs.

The Sports Minister should be ashamed of his actions in getting BFF banned from the International arena. He should have enough courage to apologise to the citizens of Bangladesh for creating such a mess, and promise never to meddle in this fashion again. The government leaders need to realise this also, and insure that sports are kept clean of politics. Let the best players play the sport, and the best administrator run the governing boards.

Waseem Khan Los Angeles, California, USA

Wishful thinking part II

Mr. Saeed Ahmed in his letter "Wishful Thinking" has suggested that Pakistan would have remained united if Musharraf was head of state and Khaleda Zia Leader of the Opposition.

It is exactly this kind of mentality that divided Pakistan in the first place. How about Khaleda Zia or

Sheikh Hasina as the Head of State and Perviz Musharraf as Leader of the Opposition? Also while we are "wishfully thinking", Dhaka as the capital and Islamabad as the second capital.

Last and certainly not the least Bengali and only Bengali shall be the state language of Pakistan. If Mr. Ahmed and his fellow countrymen agree to all these then we can talk

Hitler a patriot?

I really enjoy reading your letter column. But I must say that some people write ridiculous and most weird things and I wish I the time to answer those.

Today I decide to answer at least one where the writer declared Hitler as a patriot.

Doesn't the writer Mr Minhaj know history and facts? Hitler was not a patriot and 90 per cent of the German people will tell you the same thing. Hitler was nothing but a cruel criminal and a demon possessed man.

Otherwise how can you explain a man who was responsible for the death of tens of millions of people?

One last question Mr Minhaj: what if the six million people that Hitler exterminate in the concentration camps around Europe were not Jews but Muslims, would Hitler remain a patriot in your eyes?

G.M., one-mail

further about his far-fetched fantasies!

SAbedin New York, USA

Changes in textbooks

I was shocked reading the news of changes in the textbooks on Jan 14. I felt to write something and draw the attention of the concerned authority.

How long shall we play with the facts of independence? And with the new generations, young learners? It is ridiculous that each time government changes the truth changes also. Let the truth be revealed and people make their own choices.

I plead, for heaven's sake, do not play with education. Prepare the new generation to face the challenges of the modern world and needs of time. Do not confine yourself in the cage of selfishness, power and narrow politics.

Leo J. Pereira Portland, USA

India and Pakistan should reciprocate

Pakistan has banned the organisations spreading hatred, violence and intolerance in Pakistan.

India should reciprocate by banning all the Sangh Parivar outfits like the VHP, the Bhajrang Dal and several others that are spreading hatred, violence and intolerance in India. The Sangh Parivar's shishu mandirs are preaching hatred and intolerance against Islam, Christianity and the minorities.

Places of worship of minorities like the Idgahs, Mosques, Churches and religious places/shrines like the Dargahs of the Sufi saints) are either being demolished, desecrated, burnt, looted or grabbed.

Indian Madrasas like the Darul-Uloom which contributed a lot to India's freedom struggle and which

that. Having the dice reversed, now the actors were different. Nothing much had changed. Just like Mr. Mahfuz Anam, I felt sad as I saw two of our ex-ministers prostrated under the police club. But believe me, somewhere again in my heart, I again condoned that unsettling sight.

The ex-ministers had the democratic right to protest and demonstrate. On the same vein, a common citizen had the right to mind his own business. No political party had the right to enforce the closure of the daily activities of an individual. Such enforcement was tantamount to encroachment on the right of others and hence, innately undemocratic and illegal. Did any one believe that the cadres of a political party (Awami League in this case) calling for the Hartal would have stopped short of enforcing a standstill in public life, if they could? If the answer was "no", then the police had the right to preserve the right of a common individual.

How famous they might be, the rights of the ex-ministers were



Revenge?

no more sacred than those of a rikshawala, or of mine to go to my hotel without intimidation.

Mohammad A. Zaman North Carolina, USA

I want to express my outrage at the assault on Motia Chowdhury! I am also amazed as to how people can justify this brutality on her. How low can we go as a nation to allow this?

First I would like to make it clear that I do not subscribe and therefore have no preference for any political party. Like most Bangladeshis, I hope and pray that we elect representatives who can improve the lot of the people. Unfortunately from what I have seen, the political leaders are all the same. Our wretched nation manages to elect representatives who fancy themselves as "kings" and "queens" and who compete to accrue what they can within their allotted five years.

my opinion Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed is the best president we have ever had.

Justice Shahabuddin is the man who conducted first free and fair general election in Bangladesh in 1991.

He is the man whose sincere influence as an acting president led BNP a party that had a manifesto of presidential government system, to



The image of a patriot?

fabric and converting it into a theocratic Hindu state by distorting the Indian History.

Bangladesh should also ban the organisations responsible for committing atrocities on the minorities.

Syed Tanveeruddin Mysore, India

The best President

Who is the best president Bangladesh ever had? Many people would go for 'Sheikh Mujib' or 'Zia', but to

join hand in hand with Awami League to introduce the parliamentary system in our country in 1991.

Justice Shahabuddin is the first (hope not the last) president who spent only about half of the money sanctioned by the government for his expenditure in Bangladesh.

He is the man who escaped unfruitful foreign visits to save this poor country's economy.

Justice Shahabuddin is the man who talked about the destructive student politics.

I agree with the gentleman that on principle our elected representatives should not get any special treatment for breaking the law. Having said that, I am not sure which law was broken, but I would think that there was a "legal" way to deal with this "non-compliance" short of inflicting corporal punishment on a woman who could be as old as your mother! - a woman who has reportedly never abused her power for personal financial gains and who has devoted her life to change the lot of the common people.

Personally I could care less if it was Khaleda or Hasina who lay prostrate in the pavement covering under those 'policemen' with their batons in the air! Imagine a scene like that for a change! I probably should not expect too much of these policemen, but we need to find out-- who authorised this savagery and bring him or her to justice!

Wazi Chowdhury California, USA

I read the letters by Shaheen Karim from Sydney, Tarun from Bandarban and cohorts in response to your commentary (January 11) and I resolved, which dawned on me from long since that we the people of Bangladesh are getting what we deserve in all spheres of life-- particularly from our politicians.

Our so-called politicians and leadership are flipping and tossing around the populace freely and merrily at their will and whim without any responsibility, accountability whatsoever and blissfully enjoying their life with family and friends solely and surely because of the unbridled and unrestrained commitment of the politicians to support and die for them no matter what they do as long as they are (my party) BNP or AL bla bla...

Our so-called leaders and cohorts are confidently going about things whatever way pleases and suits them lying on the comfy couch cushioned with the unsolicited absolute loyalty of their party supporters without having to worry about a thing. Because they (BNP/AL Khaleda/Hasina) know for sure that the supporters are committed to go the extra mile (killing opposition supporters and extremists...) to make sure that their party (BNP or AL) and leaders (Khaleda or Hasina) always stay in the front. They (BNP or AL) don't need to worry a thing!

Until and unless we come out of this buffoon metaphor as a nation we have no chance to change our lot for the better. Meanwhile, BNP or AL will continue to operate from the safe haven created and safeguarded by us, the buffoons and give us GOOD RUN for our money.

Sorry Shaheen and Tarun, nothing personal rather very much symbolic - we the entire nation are collectively responsible for this sorry state of our most beloved Bangladesh and it is us who together will have to take the necessary bold steps to make things happen in order to come out of this mess.

Accurate problem identification is paramount and we have to be honest sincere while going about it. After all our intentions are good we all love our Bangladesh.

Khokon Chowdhury Magbarar, Dhaka

He is the man who asked teachers to concentrate more on teaching and research than politics.

He is the one who is concerned about people's wellbeing and never served self-interest.

Abdus Wahed North Carolina State University, USA

Wake up human rights activists

I am shocked to see the photograph of police clubbing former ministers Nasim and Motia Chowdhury (middle) during the hartal hours on 9 January.

May I know what is the next step against the human rights in Bangladesh?

J. Taher Banani, Dhaka

Respect other religions and religious practice

It is disturbing to learn about the incident of attack and damage of a deity of a goddess of the Hindu community ("Procession, rally protesting damage of deity," January 10).

Such attacks are shameful and completely contrary to the message of tolerance that is taught in Islam, the principles of fundamental human rights, and the country's secular culture. The authorities should immediately bring to justice those responsible and punish them in accordance with the law. The police should provide protection to communities that face potential threats.

The country and its people need stability for prosperity and development. Let us seek tolerance of all faiths rather than communal disharmony and violence. Such atrocities are very much avoidable if the authorities and the people are determined to resist violence and intimidation of cultists.

Tanveer Akram Alexandria, VA 22314

Parliament website

I was horrified by the fact that when I visited the Bangladesh Parliament website only to be greeted by some sleazy, dirty, naked photographs.

What is the government and its IT advisors doing?

Muyeeduz Zaman, one-mail

Where are we heading?

I am currently visiting Washington DC, but make sure to read the DS everyday. With the recent events reported by your paper, I am apprehensive about returning to Dhaka. The US in no way attracts me to overstay my visit, but your commentary just reminds me of what I am returning to; all our gov't are old wine in a new bottle. And the ban by FIFA is just another example.

Does anybody know where are we heading?

Joseph Amond Springfield, VA 22150

Aid in Bangladesh

We shouldn't worry about who give how much aid to Bangladesh. We don't need aid anymore, we need more foreign investments. Aid does not create jobs; most of the aids either goes to politician or government officials' pocket.

Let's talk about low interest loans and direct and indirect investments.

KK, one-mail

Poverty, purdah and Islam



Who speaks for the 'Muslim miskins'?

Your letters page is a good example of the state of contemporary Islamic world. What moves most of you is the (im)modesty of women-- a dominantly sexual question-- but not a word from any about poverty in the so-called Muslim world. You are all full of quotations on how to keep women covered but you never quote anything about how to feed the poor and the hungry. You are gloriously happy about the democratic rights of a murderer called Osama who happily kills other innocent Muslims. You abuse the USA when they attack this murderer in Afghanistan but you keep talking of Palestine because you don't know how to respond to that. You don't mind killing as long as it is in the name

of Allah.

You are so insecure about your identity that you are proud that Islam is the quickest growing religion in the West amongst women but you have no idea that impoverished Muslim women increase everyday in far greater number than the converted Caucasian. You don't ever complain about the extreme wealth of the Arab world who never share it with their Asian and African brothers but whine about how the West treats you all where many of you have by choice gone to enjoy a better life.

With this kind of a mindset, do you realise why you are the inferior compared to the West? You don't need crusades to put you down. Your jehads are quite good enough.

Nasreen Nabil Dhaka

I read Mr. Muksitl Islam's letter with interest, which he wrote in reply to Mr. Ashraf's letter. I don't want to enter into the argument about the history of purdah, which came to Arabia from Greece. I only want to ask why are we discussing about it? It should be left to the individuals to decide whether they want to practice it or not. We Muslims all over the world have more important things to worry about.

For example, why are the poor Muslims from Bangladesh are called "miskins" (beggars) in Saudi Arabia when according to Mr. Ashraf all Muslims are brothers to each other? The relationship of religion and nationality is a complex issue, which we should think carefully.

The reality is we can't go backwards even if we want to do so. So, why don't we think and discuss about the ways of going forward?

Wahed Sheffield, England