

We didn't have any choice

I live far away from Bangladesh but I go through the Bangladesh daily, especially *The Daily Star* and ProthomAlo regularly.

I have read your commentary on BNP taking revenge on the opposition. I disagree at one point with your comment. People did not vote BNP but they gave their vote against Awami League because we had no alternative.

The ruling party and their cadres always think that the country is their sole property (it's true for both AL and BNP). No party cares for people and for the country. As the govt party, our govt officials also think that the office occupied by them is their paternal property and they can do anything as they wish.

Expect to read more constructive editorial and commentaries.

Shimul Canada

Re BTTB/Alcatel rejoinder

Who are the agents or lobbyists for Alcatel in Bangladesh? Therein, I think, you will find why BTTB was so generous.

MA Dhaka

India's 'war on terrorism' against Pakistan

This is in response to Brig Hafiz's article (January 17). It is a well-known fact that Kashmiri militants are trained by ISI and other government agencies of Pakistan in Pakistan and POK. All these Pakistani based militant groups have huge networks, which are covered under the so-called Muslim religious organisations. Everybody knows Taliban is a product of that policy of Pakistan.

Brig. Hafiz said that without giving evidence and even without any enquiry India held two Pakistani-based militant organisations, Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad responsible for attack on Indian Parliament. Without getting any evidence why President Musharraf is banning these organisations and arresting its members and leaders? Till now they have arrested hundreds of militants all over Pakistan who are members of various militant groups who wage their terrorism against India. Does not it mean that Pakistan is the base for all these militants and many of the militants are actually Pakistani Nationals? There are other people who are from other Muslim countries came to fight Jihad in Kashmir. How is it possible for other country's nationals to come to Pakistan and wage war against India without getting any help from Pakistani government or ISI? What explanation does Brig. Hafiz has on that?

It is also absolutely wrong to say that most of the Indians do not follow the same view as BJP. In fact all the political parties in India are supporting the way it is handling the situation. All main political parties Congress, SP, JD, AGP, CPI(M) have extended their full support to BJP to handle the crisis.

S. Chakma India

Atrocities on minorities

17 people including three children were killed in a communal attack on the Bengali minority in the Assam State in India. (Prothom Alo, 14 January, 2002) We condemn this atrocities committed to the minority in that country.

We hope some Indian intellectuals should come forward to take VDO on the victims of that communal attack, and some Indian opposition leaders should make complaints to the leaders of the western countries.

HM Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Faceless race

Much has been written against and in favour of Purdah. Whatever maybe the pros and cons of Purdah, one thing is for sure: it deprives women of their identity. It makes them look like a shapeless, hapless zombie.

If you look at the Burka clad women of Kabul, you would agree that they appear nothing dissimilar than an upturned shuttlecock. Why women should wear Burka?

A Pakistani's "Wishful Thought"...

Dear Mr Saeed Ahmed, you probably wrote a tiny letter but surely that expressed your intimate involvement with Pakistani culture and heritage. 30 years have passed, but you gentlemen still want to feel superior. No matter if it was Khaleda Zia or Hasina Wazed, why do you take them as opposition leaders of (formerly East) Pakistan? Why not the leader of the state? I don't have any comments on General Pervez Musharraf. Military occupation is not a new idea in your country, I don't mind because that is completely your internal problem. But can you tell me why you Pakistanis still can't (or want to) accept our leaders as you treat the Prime Minister (if they were) of your country? In my point of view, whether it was Khaleda Zia or Hasina Wazed, Pakistan would never remain united for its own brutality, injustice and of course for domineering and aggressive ruling policy. Thanks God we are no more occupied by Pakistan.

Tarun Dhaka.

Warmonger Advani will let us down

We as a nation have a dream to become the permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and join the club of Big Five. But at the same time our BJP rulers have the desire to start and win a war against Pakistan before February State elections. Why do the hawkish Advani and the Bharti Janta have two conflicting targets?

It is important for us to do some introspection and consider why we have quarrels with all our neighbours, why we have so few friends and why we annoy as many as we do.

If the Indian government were asked to count how many friends it has, it would be hard put to too many numbers.

It cannot be that the whole world is wrong. There must be something that we ourselves are doing wrongour Kashmir policy and growing friendship with Israel to name a few.

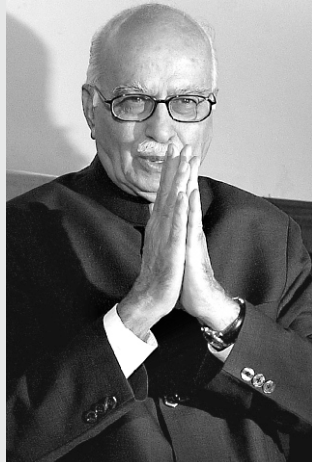
If India were to move a resolution to declare Pakistan a terrorist state, how many would side with us? Let us be clear, when it comes to the reality, we have few supporters.

That is so because we are dirtydirty the way we run our politics and dirty the way we run our diplomatic relations.

Our claim for Security Council seat is like that of a man who pleaded clemency on the grounds of being an orphanafter killing both parents.

We pride ourselves on our democracy, expect that our much-tattered brand of democracy will cover a multitude of sins. It is time we disillusion ourselves.

India's political leadership appears to be virtually unanimous



Advani: Monger mongering...

on a policy of confrontation with Pakistan.

International opinion appears to be equally unanimous that we compromise with Pakistan. Politics being the art of the possible, our government should consider carefully whether it is feasible to reject world opinion and take on Pakistan

"If you have to lick someone, lick him good the first time, so you don't have to lick him a second time," goes an American adage. We could have licked Pakistan good in 1965; we couldn't. With less probability, we could have tried in 1971. We didn't. Can we lick them good in 2001 knowing their nuclear edge?

If we cannot, is it worth starting a war with them?

Chairman Mao used to advise that one should not attack except with ten to one superiority. He was a great military strategist; his opinion should be treated with respect.

We had better not be like 'Abhimanyu' who knew how to get into a battle but not how to get out of it.

If the BJP thinks it is the only way to stay in power, it is most welcome to start a fight, whether physical or verbal, provided it is sure it knows how to get out of it unscathed - after UP elections.

One wonders therefore who poses us the greater threat - Pakistani or our own political mess?

Ravi Krishna Manama, Bahrain

Because we men are lusty. Do the megalomaniac Islamic community fail to understand that women also have lust and they have all the right in the world to eye us in the same way we eye them. A woman can come out of Purdah only in front of her husband. Why? Because he can satisfy his lust. Purdah has nothing to do with sanctity but everything to do with perversion. Why Islam is such a male-centred, male-favouring religion? Why women of this faith are doomed to darkness? Why women of this faith are treated like unidentifiable non-entities? Truly Muslims have become a race without a face.

Some of my Muslim friends told me that it is okay to curse, humiliate, beat or even to rape a fallen woman, i.e. a woman does not preserve her sanctity with Purdah. I pray to Lord Almighty that may the day come when a man will be whipped, spat upon or gang-raped by women if they find him in shorts instead of trousers. And that day has to come if Islam has to survive.

Partha Banerjee, on e-mail

Publilius Syrus who in the 43 BC said, "a small debt produces a debtor; a large one, an enemy.

Imtiyaz Husain Dhaka Stock Exchange Bldg Motijheel, Dhaka

Role of Armed forces in election

Bye-election of five JS constituencies was held recently. Awami League officially boycotted the election. According to the newspapers reports voter turnout was extremely low. However, as usual, the election result suggests huge turnout of voters!

My point is the role of army in this bye-election. Before the election AL candidates in Borguna constituency made allegation about misbehaviour of Army personal. Different newspapers reported that on the Election Day army was mainly found in Awami League strongholds. It was also reported that minorities were obstructed to cast vote by BNP supporters (Jugantar, January 19, 2002).

rule by more than one regime.

Now each of the two major political parties are behaving in a similar mannerinitiating a 5-year plan to oust the regime. How long will this negative politics continue?

People are getting fed up of the tantrums of this type of inward leadership. The names which are etched in history will remain, whether the incumbents are living or not, or whether the parties fade out or undergo cyclic ups and downs. It is independent of the propaganda and anti-propaganda campaigns. The weaknesses are learning processes.

The society and the politicians seem to live in separate camps. So let there be intensive debates for a while on charismatic leadership. The politicians cannot hold the nation in ransom over petty personal agendas of vendetta. We need a new type of politics for a new Bangladesh, fresh and clean, out of the entangling cobwebs.

A citizen Dhaka

Shorter pipe dreams

There is pressure on GoB to export gas to India through pipeline, and the general public opinion is to cling on to the gas for home use.

If split into phases, it may be examined whether it is feasible to export gas through pipes to the nearest terminals, for example, first to Agartala, India; and then to Calcutta. The external PR (public relations) and goodwill would be enhanced to some extent between neighbours across the borders.

The situation may be reviewed, after a short interval, for lengthening the pipeline outside the country (i.e. export more gas). The two cities mentioned are very close to the borders, and the investment would be much less and most of the pipes would be within Bangladesh, widening the local network.

AMA Dhaka

Communicative treatment

There is misgiving in the press and hate campaign in reality that the present regime is tough on the opposition, the way it is using unnecessary extra force to tackle the law and order situations in the metropolis. Some photographs have appeared showing former ministers blocking roads encircled by the police.

The former regime is getting a taste in retaliation of its excesses for long five years. Now the situation has degenerated into plain tit-for-tat, and human nature being what it is, it is likely to continue for some time, because the human element is involved in administration.

The opposition has declared to pull down the regime, and the DS editorial has castigated the attitude. Lame and old reasons are being put forward by the opposition for not attending the JS. It is all a part of the practising political culture. The politicians will not reform themselves voluntarily, because the stakes are high for quick returns, unless public pressure is exerted

What was the role of army? Were they deployed to protect the BNP supporters?

What was the role of army on October 1 election? We know that Khaleda Zia was very much vocal about early army deployment.

May be after many years we will know the answer of all these unanswered questions. At this moment lets console ourselves that army is a sensitive issue.

Abdul Hannan Ontario, Canada

Parliament without opposition

Bangladeshi politics is experimenting with a new type of parliamentary systemwithout the opposition! This unique project started in the early 1990s with the ousting of autocratic

from outside.

The law and order situation is not improving, and the cabinet looks rather complacent. Perhaps an experienced politician as Home Minister would have excelled in more excesses. Now the choice is between lesser and greater evils.

Abul MAhmed Dhaka

New record indeed

As per different newspaper reports and reports of different Human

economic balance has been disturbed and it will take some time for the oscillations to stabilise. Our garments business is already in trouble as the importers are going under an unstable economic condition.

The whole global economic pattern is changing with bearish markets all over. The US is planning more attacks on the countries (mostly Muslims) suspected of hiding anti-American terrorists.

Under the circumstances, a large number of Bangladeshis working abroad soon would return home and we should be prepared to face that. To make people aware of the recent fluctuations in employment trends abroad our media has to play a major role. Hope things will get better soon.

ABangladeshi Dhaka

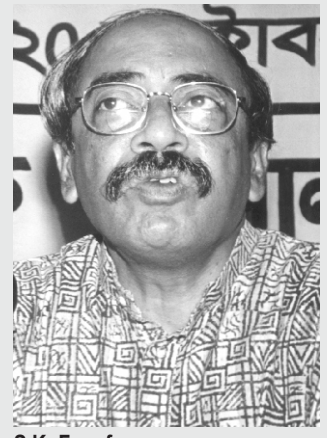
Indian aggression

Indian aggression is destroying the two Muslim neighbouring countries i.e. Pakistan with its military force and Bangladesh with its marketing strategy.

From the western side it is spreading venom to tangle Pakistan and on the eastern border it is trying to paralyse our economy, refusing to allow zero tariff to 25 items as promised by the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and barring Bangladeshis items to enter the vast Indian market by imposing 20 percent tariff.

In fact, India never valued any deal or pact it has signed with its neighbouring countries especially with Bangladesh. My request to the incumbent government is to deal with India on 'Tit for tat' basis. Otherwise India's urge for 'more' (land, money and power) will cross the limit and we would find ourselves in an awkward and helpless situation.

Shahriar Kabir's bail



S.K: Free for now

My congratulations to the High Court for finally granting bail to Shahriar Kabir. All law-abiding citizens owe the judiciary a debt of gratitude for foiling the government's unjust harassment and imprisonment of an innocent man in this case.

My only criticism is that it should not have taken two months to arrange bail when the charges against Mr. Kabir are so trivial.

Zeeshan Hasan Dhanmondi, Dhaka

The US is absolutely silent on their own weakness. The severe attack on Afghanistan proves US government's motive to control this "strategic" areaTalibans has just been made a scapegoat. The escalation of the Indo-Pak tension also creates suspicion for its timing. Another foreign news agency, the AFP is carrying on propaganda through excessive publicity of tension areas (DS front-page, December 26).

The apparently naive US foreign policy has to be cut down to credible levels. People who are conscious guess that Pakistan will face the greatest political disaster and the time is not too far away. Now the US government is interested in terminating the Kashmir issue, and soon both Islamabad and New Delhi would be left without any option. Sooner or later, whether the caves of Afghanistan are cleared or not, the terrorists will make more attacks. Because that is the way it has been planned.

Now terrorism has become a standard for invasion, a war pattern,

is the non-enforcement of regular transfers in the services, within and outside the station/city/town. This transfer usually takes place during the third year of posting. There are many advantages of the transfer system, which need not be enumerated here. It is a healthy practice, and it works for public interest. Now you have to bribe to get a business posting. Greed and temptation have derailed the administration. The new regime is silent about the administrative and judiciary reforms.

The politicians come and go out of regimes never bother about the basic approach of public administration; and violate the core concepts of decision-making, which has been built up in a couple of hundred years in the developed and under-developed countries. Economical hardship cannot be any excuse and junior officials can be transferred locally within a district, or division; even in the same district or divisional head quarters.

Public sermons would be mere wastage of time unless the management principles are followed.

AZ Dhaka

Booming development!

Who says Bangladesh is not developing? The cellular mobile telephones in the private sectors have outstripped the fixed wire phones in the public sector. In last few years corruption has reached so far that it can be compared with the atmospheric pollution of Dhaka city. And now it is out of control.

The amount of imported newsprint paper is increasing constantly, thanks to the failure of the government newsprint factories. The methods of cheating in the examination centres exceed the latest IT techniques, beating up of the invigilators as well. The areas around the municipality zones are increasing and the thanks goes again to the government.

The number of cases pending in the courts has surpassed the past records, and the cases of the terrorists taking years to be disposed off. Every regime is scared of initiating the necessary moves on administrative and judiciary reforms.

The universities are the most convenient places for practising politics and violence at the same time. Even the senior politicians roam around the streets in the name of demonstration. Thus, the parliament habit is not being cultivated at all and maybe within years we would be competent enough to run a democratic country without a parliament! Bank loan default is now a part of our culture.

The major political parties proved their inadequacy and we really need something magical and new to happen.

No doubt we are developing fast but only in the negative direction. We are in search of something positive, but the chase seems elusive so far.

Alif Zabr Dhaka

Regular transfer of officials

The Minister of Housing and PW is tired of corruption in the relevant departments (PWD, Rajuk, and others). The same is the plight in other government and public offices. One of the common factors

Why make a fuss over gyness?



Bangla cricketers: Need a coach or gynaecologists?

The Daily Star is a spoilsport in the literal sense of the word. There was no need to make such big fuss about the appointment of three gynaecologists for the cricket test match, which has led to their replacement by more conventional doctors associated with the sport. The idea was a brilliant one.

Imagine the Rawalpindi Express lying on the ground with a pulled muscle and three burly gynaecologists with forceps and other associated instruments descending on him to give him the treatment he deserves. He would have fled for sure, along with his teammates. And that would have ensured Bangladesh its first Test victory!

Bazlur Rahman Basabari Lane, Dhaka



Khaleda and Hasina: Why not chief of Pakistan?

Hitler: Patriot or racist?



Hitler: Heil patriot

This is in response to a misguided letter published a few days ago about Hitler's patriotism.

Hitler never considered Germans to be the master race. Hitler considered white, Anglo Saxon Germans or "Aryans" to be the master race. The German nation, however, comprises people of many colours, belief and ethnicity.

If Hitler had considered Germans to be the master race, he would never have sent the German Jews to the concentration camps. The German Jewsdespite the difference in religious belief with the majority Germans--nevertheless were German nationals. But to Hitler and his cohorts difference in caste, creed or colour was not acceptable. To them, these people were Jews and therefore had no right to be in Germany. There were perhaps many people who thought like that, the Nazis progressed that concept of non-acceptance of cultural or racial pluralism to its ultimate conclusion in mass murder of anyone who did not fit the acceptable racial profile. This

Rights Organisations the "Golden Boys" belonging to the BNP-Jamaat led alliance had broken all previous record and set up new records in killing, raping, extortion, torturing in the last 60-days rule. Their heinous activities continue unabated till date. We are surprised to observe that instead of preventing them from committing such heinous crimes and bringing them to justice the ruling party is blaming the opposition and terming the newspaper reports as fabricated.

But we, the general people don't live in a fool's paradise. We have very good knowledge of what is going on around us. So instead of pointing finger at the opposition please control your people. Please take lesson form the last election and take necessary steps to restore law and order of the country. Otherwise history will repeat itself.

HA Chittagong

Overseas jobs in bearish markets

The governments in the third world countries are very keen to send their men abroad to explore job opportunities, and to earn some foreign exchange. But after the USA's declaration of war in September 2001 against terrorism there is every possibility of dwindling of job markets abroad, due to continued recession in the industrialised and affluent countries.

The early warning system (EWS) of Bangladesh government is poor, because it was never planned. Politics is tainted to a damaging level and the politicians have proven their disability to serve people.

Statistical reports testify that the annual growth rates are down and unemployment rates are creeping up everywhere in the USA, Europe, Japan and Singapore. The global

Sultana Zaman East Nasirabad, Chittagong Energising the system loss!

More than half a dozen PDB service associations banded together to criticise the government and the donor agencies for the disorder in the electrical power sector (December 31, 2001). But some critical observations have been left out.

The presumption may be correct to some extent that the foreign donor agencies might be interested in opening up the distribution, production and transmission sectors to the private sector, and their recommendations time to time, of creating separate agencies might not work locally as efficiently as assumed.

There are several types of system losses. The technical losses are more transparent, but no one comments on the system losses of human beings, on corruption, practised by the members of these service associations.

The people, the government, the politicians and the media are aware of it and this issue has been publicised fairly well. Silence on this point cannot bestow or restore the benefit of doubt. These associations may come out openly with all their weakness and ask the government to settle the disorder.

Hus Dhaka

The hidden agenda

According to the AP news the Syrian foreign minister suspects a hidden agenda in the terrorist attack in USA on September 11. This sort of highly sophisticated attack could not have been carried out by the Bin Laden group alone without any kind of technical assistance within the US. Recently there was another incident with an American airline flight.