

Sheikh Hasina to address the nation!



Hasina: Undemocratic leader?

I am surprised at Sheikh Hasina's wish to address the nation to criticize/challenge BNP's 100-days completion in power. If she wants to make a stance, she already has a venue called the parliament. Sheikh Hasina was elected to the parliament not only to address the mass media, but also to effectively represent the

people and to voice their concerns related to the government actions or policies.

What she is asking for is unseen and ridiculous, because never in the history of parliament democracy, an opposition leader had to "address the nation" like a head of the government through television. May be, she has forgotten the role of an opposition leader and the functions of the parliament. But, as in any other democracies, she does have the right to hold any kind of media session criticizing the current government achievements.

A leader leads by setting examples; unfortunately Sheikh Hasina has destroyed the Awami League by taking the most undemocratic and intolerant approach. The time is very near for the Awami League to usher in a new leader.

N. Karim
USA

Sheikh Hasina cannot demand that the state and private TV channels air her broadcast. Even more so because her address is a partisan and not a national issue.

However, she has every right to buy the time on air and the TV channels must give her that privilege.

MA
Dhaka

Make Arabic compulsory in schools

Language is always an inevitable factor in understanding any idea deeply. To comprehend and to follow the path of 'Islam', perception of 'The Holy Quran' properly and intensely is a necessity. Simply reading the Holy book (without understanding the language) does not create the impression or impact on our mind which it is capable of. I talked to many young girls and boys about their knowledge and notion about their religion 'Islam'; and I came to learn that though they have great respect for their religion they hardly follow the Islamic way of life. They forwarded the same reply and reason: They do not understand The Holy Quran properly for their lack of knowledge and understanding of the Arabic language. Most of them learnt Arabic in their early ages from the Moulavis to the extent of reading, but not actually understanding Arabic. Thereafter, they cease to continue learning the language, instead they got involved fully in so-called worldly modern subjects like: History, Geography, Arithmetic etc.

Analyzing the probable aspects, I have come to a conclusion that the reason is the language barrier. Ignorance of Arabic language is deterring the young people.

As a matter of fact, Arabic as a language is very rich. Recently Arabic has become all the more a potential and prospective language for financial aspects, in particular, for employment opportunities in the Middle East. But we take the Arabic language much casually and optionally while this language enables us to understand the most important book for our life: The Holy Quran! It is really sad that we treat learning of Arabic, as if, a casual, optional and secondary affair.

If Arabic is made compulsory (for Muslim boys and girls) in our country from Play Group to Class XII, it would surely encourage and attract the young generation naturally and spontaneously towards Islam, to the welfare of our both the lives: Life and the "after life" - the most important one and the Eternal one. If English, Arithmetic, Bengali etc. can be taught compulsorily from Play Group, there is no reason why Arabic can not be included in our curriculum from play Group to class XII as a compulsory subject. This noble step would allure and attract us towards Islam and protect us from the worldly sins and vices, purify our soul and would ensure oneness with the Almighty in the eternal life.

May I draw the attention of the authorities to include the "sacred" language Arabic in the national curriculum, from PlayGroup to Class XII as one of the compulsory subjects. If so, we would be able to understand and practice Islam truly and deeply for the greatest cause and benefit of our life.

Mustafizur Rahman
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka-1209

Pakistan was behind the attack?

The first Indian reaction to the Kolkata American Cultural Center incident ran according to the tired old script: Pakistan was behind the

attack. However, this seemed more out of habit than conviction, since the circumstances surrounding the incident are still far from clear. Remember that India has miserably failed in the past to malign Pakistan by these types of knee-jerk accusations.

It may be recalled that the US Secretary of State Colin Powell, during his recent visit to Pakistan and then India, had warned his latter host to expect such 'spoiler' attacks by elements that sought to heighten tensions and endanger peace

South Asia, particularly over Kashmir. This is what has also been highlighted by the visiting Congressional delegation in Islamabad on Tuesday.

Kashmir needs immediate intervention on the part of the Americans. It is a nuclear flash-point, a dispute that can cause yet another war between the two countries.

No matter how much the gurus of Pakistani and Indian Governments deny the possibility of a conventional war converting into a nuclear contest, it exists. The reason for that could be accidental as well.

Stephen Cohen and Robert Wirsing from the American academia, Robert Oakley from the US foreign service, General Zinni (currently mediating in the Palestinian dispute) from the US military - each one of them makes the best American envoy for the region.

If a 54 year old dispute couldn't be solved by three wars and numerous Bi-lateral talks, the only logical choice left is to go for a third party mediation.

Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad
Islamabad, Pakistan

A query

Could you please tell me who gave professorship to Golam Azam and from which college he was rewarded this honour?

Hafiz
London

Terrorists vs freedom fighters

In the current debate about terrorism and freedom fighters, it is necessary to point out the difference between the two. Terrorism is basically directed against civilians because they are easy targets and remain vulnerable. They don't differentiate between civilians and military targets. In fact, civilians remain their preferred targets because they are easy to attack.

Terrorism is always the product of self-defeating illusions. It is a deliberate form of political ideological warfare waged against the civilian population by fanatics with financial and organizational resources at their disposal. This is why terrorist networks need to be supported by some groups or individuals with financial means. This explains why some of the richest countries of the world spawned terrorists during the Cold War era. West Germany, one of the richest countries of Europe during the Cold War, was the birthplace of Baader Meinhof terrorist group, and in Italy the Red Brigades carried out terrorist attacks for years. Japan, one of the richest countries in the world, suffered one of the deadliest terrorist attacks only a few years ago. The terrorists were members of a religious cult coming from affluent middle class. And in all these cases, the targets have always been the civilian population. Similarly, the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center were aiming at causing maximum civilian casualties.

Thus the fundamental difference between the terrorists and freedom fighters lies in their targets. For the terrorists, the civilians are the primary targets. For the freedom fighters, only military targets are allowed because civilians are seen as potential allies to be won over. Most people seem to have difficulty in articulating the difference between the two.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Change of topic

There is something called a "change of topic". I hope The Daily Star would act more rationally in future and apply its good judgement when enough has been discussed on a particular topic.

The letters section should be constructive and informative. Yes,

this is about "Purdah"! Now, somebody has gone as far as calling the Muslims "a race without a face"! This is what happens when an issue is allowed to be dragged on and on. Actually, "we will not publish any more letters on Purdah" has been a line long overdue from *The Daily Star's* side, which they failed to come up with.

A Distressed Observer
Chittagong

Ban on student politics

Students should study and prepare themselves for examinations. No way they should involve in politics.

However, our students have a glorious history in nation building and fighting the negative elements.

During our Language Movement and Liberation War our students were the most powerful force who fought undauntedly and sacrificed their lives to liberate our country and protected our mother tongue.

But the present trend of student politics is absolutely different. The politicians use them for their selfish purpose and the students are nothing but victims of destructive politics. This is high time to ban such negative politics from our educational institutions and save our students from the clutch of student politics. Hope the new government would consider this matter seriously.

Mohamad Rashed
Dhaka

"Banks boards to be bridled soon"

I refer to your lead story "Banks boards to be bridled soon" (January 18). The reporter suggests that the Bangladesh Bank is out to curb the powers of the boards of the directors of the state owned banks and financial institutions.

I regret to observe that the fact is far from the truth if your are really to look in the purpose and the mission of these organizations and the aspect of corporate culture in relation to the historical development of corporations.

Our Companies Law defines the various roles and manner in which a company has to be governed. Regrettably the government corporations do not usually have a structured approach in respect of the various roles. However it is quite clear who and what is the Chairman of a company and what is his mission. So also is true for other members of the board of directors. In substance the role is to frame the policy and to be the oversight to ensure that policy is maintained by the CEO and those who run the day to day affairs of the company. The

Who is to be recruited and promoted and who is not. If there is interference in daily affairs then the very purpose of having an efficient and competent Chief Executive and staff is lost.

Unfortunately we have seen in Bangladesh the emergence of excessive oversight by the board.

opened, probably I would no longer find the paper interesting.

Imtiyaz Husain
Motijheel, Dhaka

DITF 2002

We had recently inaugurated DITF 2002, organised by Export Promo-

Cricketers lack commitment?



Cricket: Learning to lose...

Your editorial on Bangladesh cricket (January 20) caught my attention. Thank you for such a timely piece

It is really unfortunate that our players couldn't display their talent while playing. We do not expect a landslide victory, but we do expect them to exert what they have in them. It is perhaps lack of commitment why they could not show much confidence in their performance.

But we respect them as national heroes and expect them to guard our prestige. Hope that the cricketers don't consider themselves as employees of the team but consider playing cricket as a national responsibility, because every time they play, they represent the nation.

Mainuddin Mainul
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

We have seen the emergence of interference by the Chairman of boards in the day to day affairs of the corporation. But no where in the world non-executive Chairman of state organizations has offices, staff and allotted cars. This unique culture and value set has unconsciously created dual management, which gives the executive opportunity to not only become inefficient but also to cover up, and pass the buck on to the board.

If Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed is indeed seriously considering the proposal, then he is at long last only bridling the wild stallion. He is in no way curbing the powers of the board. In fact Dr. Ahmed is bringing about a proven management reform, which will only ensure efficient and responsible corporate governance in our nationalized banks and financial

tion Bureau (EPB). Would anyone disagree if I compared the fair with a wholesale market? I can in no way find any clue of how this fair is going to increase our export when we have invited over 67 foreign companies to sell their products in our market through this fair.

Though, we have over 250 stalls for the local products, many of them sell imported items. I wonder how by creating a local market for foreign products EPB will increase our export! What is their justification of organising this fair?

A puzzled citizen, on e-mail

"Tears in heaven"

This is a belated response to Pir Shahib's letter (January 11) that discussed the general mindset of

true essence of what Allah Almighty has tried to convey to the human beings in His Quran.

I have read interpretations of these verses from Dr. Muhsin Khan and also the famous tafsir of Ibne Kathir. Both of them explain that the verse (3:85): "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good)" should be considered when trying to interpret the other two verses. The overall understanding regarding this subject is that Islam, the last of the illustrious lineage of all the religions from Allah, is the one chosen by Him from the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) till the end of time.

However, this should not encourage one to shut the door of heaven on anyone's face. The lack of wisdom and clarity of thinking often induce one to indulge in self-gratification and assume the authority of issuing passport to Heaven and Hell. This authority solely belongs to Allah, as mentioned in the letter by Mijanul Akbar from Arkansas, USA (14 January), and no one should even dare contemplate 'this one will go to heaven, that one will go to hell', let alone saying out loud! Even a devout Muslim can end up in the wrong place on the day of judgement.

Studying the Quran and the Way (Sunnah) of the Prophet (peace be upon him) for understanding and implementation is vital in the life of a Muslim. This truth is needed to free us from the asphyxiating nature of Islamic teaching practiced by majority of the clerics in our country. Rather than taking everything for granted from any quarter, one should, according to the best of his/her capability, pursue collecting relevant material (printed or from web), study them with an unbiased view, and engage in fruitful discussion with others to get to the truth.

Raqibul Mostafa
Virginia Tech, USA

Ban all types of polybags

The government has banned polybags in Dhaka. But still a few industries are making polybags claiming those to be 20 microns polybags. But are those really 20 microns polybags? Are those not harmful as well?

Instead of using polybags be it 20 microns or not, the government should promote using jute and paper bags.

Md. Awal Hossain
AIUB

100-days of the

Israel's safety

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres's recent visit to India reflects Israel's worries over its security, particularly its fear from Pakistani nuclear weapons, whose missile range exceeds 2,500 kilometres and could reach Israel.

Israel has been trying for years to destroy these weapons or even seize them.

The U.S., too, has confirmed Israel fears of the nuclear weapons and hopes no Islamic or Arab country will develop such weapons or reach such a level of armament that threatens Israel, even if it is located far away.

For this reason Israel destroyed Iraqi nuclear weapons and is monitoring Iranian armaments.

Israel will also pressure India and try to prevent any close ties between India and Pakistan till the issue of Pakistan's nuclear strength is solved.

However, Pakistan has repeatedly assured the world, that the nuclear weapons were made only for self-defense from India's naked nuclear threat.



Israel: Occupation of the occupied?

Since BJP came to power, India has concluded several military agreements with Israel. Israel is secretly transferring all defence technology to India and recently helped in production of unmanned gunship helicopters earlier possessed only by US and Israel.

The unprecedented supply of state-of-the-art military equipment (like AWACS) has disturbed the balance of power in the region and playing a main factor behind India's continued arrogance and belligerence.

Israel's entrance in South Asia riding on India's shoulders is a big concern to peace, security and stability of the region

and is a bad omen for future of Asia.

All regional countries especially Pakistan should alarm the world of this grave issue. Otherwise like Middle East, Israel will not hesitate to play havoc with the regional peace to fulfil its hegemonic designs.

Sameer Jad
Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia

role of the Chairman of the board is to preside and conduct the meeting. To ensure that the minutes are properly recorded and in the event of dispute it is the Chairman of a company who has a casting vote.

The role of the board of directors is to address the organization's mission, vision, and goal statements, as emphasized in company-sponsored training and company communication. It is not to see who gets or does not get bank loans.

institutions provided responsible and able persons are appointed by the government. I read your newspaper because its produces fair and objective report most of the time. I understand that while a company owns this paper the professional stall and management run the affairs and the board only gives the policy. I wonder what the paper would look like if the Chairman of the company and the board decided what to print or not print each day? If that hap-

the religious clerics of our country. He has pointed out the basic problems of the Huzur/Imams of the mosques in our country.

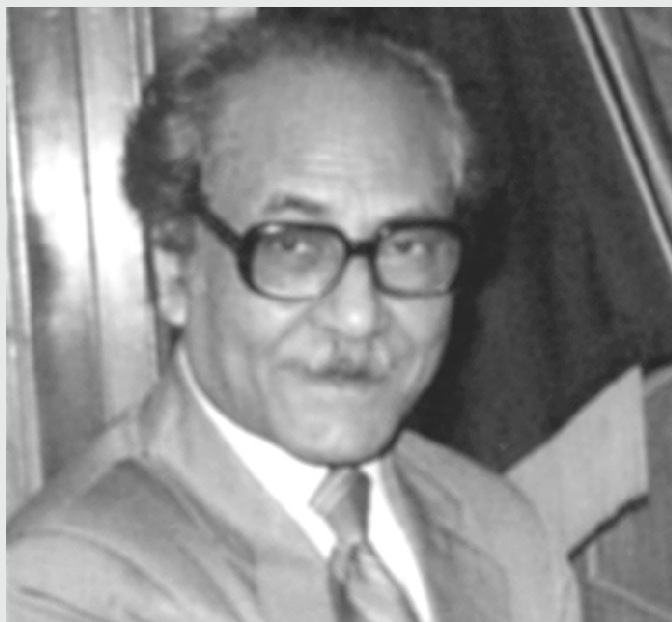
While I agree with the general theme of his letter, I would like to add some clarification on some of the verses from the Quran he used. The verses (2:62) and (5:69) when discussed in a literalist sense may give the impression what Mr Pir Sahib has described. But one needs to go beyond this scope to get the

government

On 26 January the present government completed its 100-days in office. I have gone through your excellent commentary, could you please publish the achievements of the government during the 100-days they were in power and their failures if any?

J. Taher
Banani, Dhaka

Shahabuddin Ahmed-- a super human being?



Shahabuddin: Overrated President?

A large number of *The Daily Star* readers seem to have very high opinion about our former President Shahabuddin Ahmed and some of them even consider him as some sort of a 'super human being' who should be beyond any criticism and negative discussions.

But when I paused and perused his past as a President I was dismayed. He seems to be a very average human being with less than average accomplishments as a President. Apart from being an honest and a person of high moral integrity, Mr. Shahabuddin Ahmed hardly showed any leadership qualities that would make him stand apart from others.

A President without strong and able leadership attributes does not deserve much respect in the eyes of general public. Surely, honesty and integrity, in a country reputed as one of the most corrupt nations, should be appreciated but not to the extent of a "Great Man" status (as some of our fellow readers portray Mr. Ahmed as).

It is understandable that Mr. Shahabuddin Ahmed was under tremendous pressure to act according to the Awami League's political ideologies but he always had the option of tendering resignation if he felt that he was unduly pressurized for something that went against his own beliefs. But he was never bold enough to stand up for his beliefs apart from rendering a few cogent remarks about good governance. He let the Awami League and the care-

taker government bully him over without raising any strong objections to such treatments. His response to wide violence against minorities was muted and he failed to exercise his limited authority as a President.

If I were to judge his accomplishments as a President, he would rank very low as a leader.

Ishtiaq Ahmed
New Jersey, USA

Your esteemed daily has always been an ardent admirer of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed no matter what other people, besides Awami League, evaluate his role since the inception of the Caretaker Government (CTG) in last July. Some of your readers have used your letter column as a venue for pure AL bashing, notwithstanding the fact that AL is still the single most popular party of the country.

Are all the observations of the AL about the actions or inaction of Justice Shahabuddin are devoid of any merit? Consider for instance the promulgation of ordinance (bypassing the parliament) that violates the fundamental right of citizens. Your paper also criticized the said ordinance in its editorial. How did such an ordinance slip the eyes of the two of the former chief justices?

I used to adore him not only as a President but also as the conscience of the nation. My admiration suffered a set back when I

observed with utter dismay his inaction, as the supreme commander of the armed forces, following the October 1 election that resulted in a numerous 'tales of depravity'. It did not end there. My trust suffered a further jolt when I read his speech in the opening session of the 8th parliament that ended with 'Bangladesh Zindabad'. His recent rejoinder in which he has hit hard the AL has also cost him dearly where he has made a very provocative remark (unbecoming of a person of his stature) about the army chief, a valiant freedom fighter.

It was an insult to the neutrality of our beloved President when the CTG promulgated a rule providing him with the SSF security. No other previous (partisan) President, including himself when he was the executive President needed such security. And I always believed Justice Shahabuddin would vehemently refuse such arrangement.

BNP is now lionizing him not because they believe that his Presidency served the nation's interest. If it were so, why did not they find some one like him to install in Bangabhaban instead of the producer of 'Sabash Bangladesh'? Our nation has no dearth of 'Zindabad' former justices who could have gone close to emulate Justice Shahabuddin's honesty if not equaled him.

Sohrab Bhuiyan
on e-mail