

"The mystery of rising crimes is finally 'solved'?"

Congratulations on a most brilliant piece of commentary in recent weeks. Your article on the Prime Minister's statement that all terrorism is unleashed by the opposition (March 11) makes me feel quite good about the future, now that the government has been able to solve this mystery quite swiftly and the management to pinpoint the "terrorists" most efficiently!

If what the Prime Minister suggests is true then why don't we immediately dissolve the opposition altogether? I am sure both leaders of the two parties will agree that the opposition is the root of all evil so it is best to nip it at the bud. Problem solved in all sense of the word, no opposition-no terrorism-no need to join the Parliament!

You went on to say that the government should concentrate on global economic issues but I feel that you are undermining the mammoth tasks the government is faced with at present. The most important issues that the new government has to address is make sure that all past policies and projects are shelved, charge-sheeting the past lawmakers, arresting terrorists who are disguised opposition activists, preparing "White Papers", appointing the "right"



Blame game Part II

Blame it on the opposition

The Prime Minister said she has information that the opposition is conspiring to deteriorate law and order situation. Maybe she should share some more information (some true ones of course) with us, and substantiate her statements so that we have a better understanding on the rapid deterioration of law and order in the country that has occurred in the last few months. We would like to see some action based on the proof that she has. This does not mean that we are ready to see arrests and political harassment on opposition leaders and workers who are not responsible for this. And no eyewash please. Let there be some sincere effort to mitigate the sufferings of the people as we have seen enough to say that the government is absolutely incapable of preventing such sufferings.

Only a day after PM's passing on the blame to the opposition, a labour court in Chittagong was attacked. It was a result of a fight between two factions of BNP labour front. Mahima was gang-raped by a few JCD activists. Every time a criminal activity is carried out by the ruling party terrorists, the government tries to convince us that it was only an isolated incident. The Prime Minister's remark has in effect been a message to the ruling party terrorists that whatever they do, the blame can be passed on to the opposition. But the outcome will not ultimately be a desirable one for the government as there is a limit to how much the people can tolerate.

Khaleda Zia lauded the police and her government for no backlash in the country after the communal riot in India. Would her government care to do some more commendable work for us? Our police are capable of doing many good things for the nation but it is important that the ruling party political leaders allow them to do so.

While BNP was in opposition, we were not fortunate enough to see them holding a convention on the human rights violation during the rule of Awami League. Now they suddenly feel the need to hold one. It seems like they are not able to take any timely action ever. But for the terrible situation that is prevailing in the country, an immediate response is nothing less than a necessity.

The government must take full responsibility for its failure of not being able to control the prevailing state of lawlessness. Please ensure that the existing laws bring criminals to book. It is not worth enacting

worry about murder and rape because crime has been substantially reduced by the BNP government.

However, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia does not agree with the Home Minister. She admits that there has been a rise in crimes but she is very confident that all crimes are being committed by the opposition. This is really hilarious but the PM should at least realise that this is a very poor timing for such a joke.

Kibria's open letter

I refer to the former Finance Minister SAMS Kibria's open letter of 8th March wherein he has pointed out: "Do you know Mr. Huq that Justice Shahabuddin signed an ordinance knowing fully well it was unconstitutional and that it violated fundamental rights of the citizens? He also knew that the CEC and the chief of the caretaker government had ulterior designs in promulgating

singular action of Mr. Kibria gave the bureaucracy the initiate to temper with electoral laws. In 1690, John Locke had warned the parliament of the day: (Lawmakers) "can have no power to transfer their authority of making laws and place it in the others hands" (the bureaucrats). In India, the British started giving the Viceroy sweeping powers to make rules and regulations because India was too far away from Westminster. In Pakistan and Bangladesh the

people etc. Kudos to our politicians and leaders! If there was an achievement award on how efficiently a country can be brought to ruins and disaster, our political leaders would win it without contest!

Farhan Quddus
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Brilliant response by the editor Mr. Mahfuz Anam in the commentary of March 11, 2002. But I wonder, whether this will have any affect on our government or the opposition. Apparently, members of neither of the parties have the basic "intellect" or "sense" to differentiate between right and wrong, just and unjust, moral and immoral, and the list goes on. They probably think Bangladesh is full of illiterate and "moral-less" people who are behind them all the way.

Let's just hope they get their "lost senses" back soon because, our patience is really running out.

Asifur Rahman
U.S.A.

Major Cabinet Shake-up

This refers to your lead news item "First major cabinet shake-up as demand for change grows" (March 12).

Your Staff Correspondent mentioned of speculations about changes in the cabinet without referring to any ministry in particular except for the Home Ministry. If you would kindly recollect that at the

to take up the post of Home Minister and can do a better job!

Ashfaq Chowdhury
Banani, Dhaka

So who's going to get the Home Ministry? It would appear that everyone wants a change there. *The Daily Star* should prepare a shortlist with the profiles of the possible candidates for this hot portfolio.

Apart from the Home Ministry, the PM seems unlikely to be interested to do anything substantial. A real reform would be to drop half the ministers, for most of whom being a minister is only a status symbol. The elected servants of our nation want their flag car, VIP status, official residence, priority in land grabbing and of course the open doors.

Dorji
Dhaka

Revamping of ADAB

Being a former Executive of one of the largest International NGOs in the country and deeply interested in the NGO philosophy of development I would like to take the liberty of making a few comments aimed mainly at the NGO community in particular and the government at large.

To begin with I would like to congratulate Mr. Fazle Hassan Abed the founder of BRAC for having taken the move for a dialogue amongst member NGOs to discuss the issue .A timely move indeed.

I would strongly recommend that the following issues be considered most seriously before and during the deliberations and dialoguing in the proposed meeting:

ADAB has often been criticised of being a body that represents only the well known and the largest of the NGOs with little or no scope for the smaller NGOs.

It is my impression that slowly and surely the NGOs are for good or worse loosing its democratic character in their own operational style and technique.

A serious gap exists between the government machinery and the NGOs. This should be an agenda treated with utmost priority. One way of doing that would be to incorporate an ex-office member into the ADAB Executive Body of the rank and status of no less than a Deputy Secretary to the government, if not already in force.

No NGO should be involved in partisan politics of the country directly or indirectly at any time. This will include among others dialoguing with any political party without prior information to or concurrence of the relevant agency of the Government, in this case the NGO Affairs Bureau. The purpose of such a move however should be aimed at retaining and strengthening the role of the NGOs as the country's foremost neutral private development agents in poverty alleviation and rural development. Although this will not be an easy task given the long missing links of understanding between the NGOs and relevant GOB agencies. However I leave it to the experts to work out the modalities. The NGOs are passing through a critical phase of their existence. Considering the ongoing socio-political scenario of the country, the NGOs, I believe are heading for bad times unless they put their acts together on an urgent footing. This would among others mean giving a special drive towards NGO co-operation, NGO/GOB co-operation.

Though not of immediate relevance the NGOs should seriously

"By the rivers of Dhaka ... I sat down and wept"

Salute to Afsan Chowdhury for this vivacious article (March 12). After 12 years of culturally destitute semi-academic to professional life in US, this is probably the first time I drowned in nostalgia with a vividly mixed emotion.

As I started to read the column I could hear my heartbeats as it gave the description of the boys at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. There were times when as a student and as an internship trainee doctor I had to encounter similar scenario. There were many occasions where we found wandering kids or '*tokai*' being victim of auto accident or stray bullet or machinery accident.

One evening, we were at the Emergency Doctors' Room basically passing time on a leisurely *adda*. A baby-taxi pulled over and a young boy was carried in semiconscious state whose left arm was missing. The bleeding was secured in a primitive but essentially effective way. Another younger chap followed the small crowd with a bloody bundle of newspaper. Wrapped within was the severed arm, upon uncovering was still twitching! Unlike my current work environment, where we probably would call a reconstructive surgeon, the friends of the victim instead were instructed to bury the body part with desirable religious etiquette. From the history, it was revealed that this kid was working in a factory dealing with heavy equipment. His parents were to be notified by the factory owner. That very day, the incident was just another accident.

I was reasonably active in students' politics and climbed my ladder to the top of one student front in Dhaka Medical College Campus. At that time, my comrades and me used to think we were the progressives. I kept thinking we were fighting for the right cause but after reading this article I feel ashamed of using the '*tokais*' for unjust cause and also feel enraged for being used by the 'leaders'.

My political leaders never educated me then what I learned being in this country about that young kid who will spend all his

life without one arm. No one is being held accountable for this epidemic scale use of children, from making bombs to child labour. This epidemic is plaguing the whole third world. Who will stand and speak for them?

We cannot bank on the hypocrite developed world, who in one hand is the voice of human rights and on the other hand harbour corporations like NIKE and makes China the most favoured nation in business. In the past two decades, they have spent more in birth control than in child education giving rise to a hopeless generation.

They are our children. "When we fail with children we truly fail. It isn't just our future that we kill and brutalise, but ourselves too."

Asad Zaman MD
Chicago, Illinois, USA



Waiting to die?

Not only is she trying to hide the utter failure of her government but she is also desperately looking for excuses to harass the opposition leaders and activists. The common people are not interested in Khaleda Zia's detective work. They want security and protection of their rights. They want murderers, rapists and terrorists to be punished no matter which political party they belong to. We are not expecting any favours or any miracles from our government. It is the government's prime responsibility to ensure

such an ordinance. The ordinance was so blatantly tailor made to favour a particular party that some obviously unconstitutional provisions had to be withdrawn by promulgating another ordinance. He was thus a party to plan by the CEC and the caretaker government to change the basic electoral law of the land without parliamentary approval."

I have no comments to make in respect of Mr. Kibria's extra-sensory ability to detect ulterior motives of people. But I would like to know where was his conscience and concern regarding the fundamental right of the people when the Chairman, Securities & Exchange Commission, the present CEC brought to him the black provision of Section 2CC of the Securities & Exchange Ordinance 1969-- a law annotated by General Yahya Khan? Where was his concern regarding the fundamental rights and the constitutional rights and harmony?

Mr. Kibria approved and launched a law, which gave the SEC all rights to make rules and regulation without consulting the Ministry of Law, or the Ministry of Finance. Our SEC now has the powers to make even gross regulations, which may abrogate other laws e.g. the Companies Law etc. It is said that the Chairman SEC pointed out that the USA-SEC had similar powers.

True, the US-SEC has the rule making powers but these rules and regulations have to be eventually passed by the US Congress. This

tradition continued subject to the approval of the regulations by the government. It is about time someone gave back the powers of all regulations to the parliament.

I am sure history will not forget or forgive them if there is any truth in Mr. Kibria's revelations about the motivated acts of the senior most officers of the state. History will also determine and not forget Mr. Kibria if he has, as many believe, used and misused authority at every given opportunity. 017-526-325

Intiyaz Husain
Dhaka Stock Exchange Bldg
Motijheel, Dhaka

Mortein Advertisement

This refers to the promotional advertisement of Mortein published on the front page of your esteemed daily on the 4th March of 2002.

My colleagues and I have taken objection to exploitation of a sentiment the painfulness of which can only be understood by the child whose misfortune it is to grow up without a mother. It is not only unfeeling and thoughtless but also unethical to try to exploit such painful sentiments. We also think this is of very poor taste. There should always be a limit to commercialisation.

We object to such a wanton display of utter disregard for human sentiment and values.

Ahmed Hasnat Sabery
Dhaka

Condemnation or commendation?

On Tuesday, January 29, 2002, long retired erstwhile Professor of Dhaka Shishu Hospital Dr AFM Masood "successfully" as claimed by himself operated on Siamese twins.

To us, the laymen, success of surgery means completely recovered babies presented to happy and relieved parents. I am not sure, how many paediatric surgeons would differ with this definition; but, I am sure, most, if not all parents and public would disagree with his (Dr Masood's) definition of "successful" surgery, particularly when the sad and aggrieved parents are returned with two dead bodies in less than 24 hours of surgery.

The surgeons get the medals, respect, reception (at least, one we know of is from Mirpur Shishu Hospital, where Dr Masood is a part timer in a tiny new surgery department) and commendation, and the poor parents...! Maybe, all the "success" here belongs to the surgeon and not to the surgery.

Let me quote from the article "Brief report: Separation of conjoined twins..... After planning with three dimensional modelling" at Brigham and Women's Hospital at Boston, USA "MRI images were obtained in the axial, sagittal, coronal planes..." Only in the last April, "successful" separation was carried out in Singapore on famous Nepalese twins Ganga and Jamuna who had more complicated attachment, of thousands of shared blood vessels that looked like a "tangled serving of spaghetti." Dr Goh, the team

leader of this surgery mentions 6 months preparation and planning and used extensive MBI and 3-D images before indulging in the surgery.

No one expects such sophisticated logistics in Bangladesh, but, the minimum we expect from our surgeons is proper planning and total commitment to the well being for the patients.

On the contrary, the unjustified hurried approach to the surgery, absence of crucial investigations, which are available in Dhaka (like MRI, Cat-scan, HIDA scan), the non-existent of any preoperative discussion and planning of the problem nationally or internationally only reflects-- the apathy or ignorance of the surgeon concerned towards the problems involved in the operative procedure.

If anyone adds to all these, presence of self hired-camera crew and non medical non technical journalist in the operation theatre and the hurriedly called interview by Prof AFM Masood even before the patients could be transferred to ICU a reflection of a total different initiation emerges.

May we request the surgeon concerned the seven-hour video which his camera crew recorded for him to make available unedited to a panel of experts? May be, the video will tell us, the reasons requiring volume of blood transfusion triple the total blood volume of unfortunate twins combined during the surgery,

look into their own operational practices which to my mind happen to be unduly autocratic in nature. The NGOs must practice what they preach. In more than most of the management hierarchy of the NGOs inequality of treatment do exist between their own in-house cadres of staff. The proportionate salary and benefit structure amongst the various cadres of their staff indicate little or no existence of any democratic character and fair play. While the officials placed in the main core of the Management Body are ensured a comfortable living with extraordinary salary and benefit package the mid level officials and the staff at field levels who are responsible for execution and delivery of bulk of the operational responsibilities hardly receive salary and benefits commensurate with their job responsibilities. A reversal of this situation must take place sooner than later for the good of the NGOs themselves keeping in view their long-term interests.

Finally, the question of transparency of operations of the NGOs particularly financial aspects of operations should be dealt with utmost importance. There is no denying of the fact that much anomalies do exist here.

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka

"Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya replies"

1. I'm at a loss how one of the poorest nations in the world can afford to waste so much time and energy on such a subject like "wrong wording in a Rabindra Shangeet". Indeed Tagore has described the Bengali nation aptly in his famous writing

Thanks to Rezwana for her most detailed and extensive explanation of the so-called wrong wording in one of her songs. The artist is humble and dedicated in her expressions. I hope this will bring an end to this prolonged debate. I also like to thank *The Daily Star* for its role in allowing to continue this debate which was never boring. All the participants of this debate have shown their love for Tagore songs, which is an integral part of our culture.

Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya is a respected and established proponent of Tagore songs and we all love her sweet voice. I consider all the singers of Tagore songs as a bunch of unique persons graced from heaven. The kind of mood and philosophy Tagore tried to insert into his songs is not a very light thing. To understand and appreciate this mood, one needs a special kind of devotion and power. Bannya has attained this. In her voice the spirit of Tagore is so vivid that it overwhelms our emotion. Rabindarnath Tagore stands tall in our minds, he shines like the north star. Tagore is not a name alone, he is an institution by himself.

The personality of Tagore and his message is well depicted in his songs. We are grateful to anyone who sings Tagore songs and our love and respect for them can't be measured in words. Those of us who live abroad, Tagore songs are a strong link between our homeland and us. I remember this song "*Koto ojanarey janailey tumi, koto ghorey diley thai, durke koriley bondu porkey koriley bhai.*" **Akbar Hussain**
Toronto, Canada

The wrong was pointed out by Mr.

"George Bush: America's finest ambassador"



I would like to thank Mr. Esam Sohail and *The Daily Star* for writing and publishing such a great article on President Bush. Issues like right to life, social and economic equity, privacy rights, small government and more economic, social and political power to the citizens were some of President Bush's political agenda during the last election. These issues are also cherished and welcomed by the freedom loving and moral-minded people from all over the world. And because of this, 80 per cent American Muslims voted for President Bush. But unfortunately for some strange reasons Democratic Party's liberal agenda is very popular among Bangladeshis home and abroad.

It is true that for Bangladeshis the word moral politician is an oxymoron. But given the choices, I don't understand why we need to support the corrupt politicians. No one wants to live in a world where the government controls their daily life, mothers are allowed to kill their infants, some people gets more rights than others because of their ethnicity, sexual orientation and economic background.

I am not claiming to be a republican, as I recognise that President Bush also has personal flaws like any other human being. I am also not claiming that all democrats are evil; President Jimmy Carter is a great human being despite his political failure. But it is very puzzling and surprising for me to watch that coming from a conservative society, so many Bangladeshis support and vote for the issues like third-trimester induced abortion (when the baby is viable to live outside mother's womb), human cloning, social discrimination giving special privileges to homosexual citizens and many more.

Mahmud Zaman
San Diego, California, USA

"Library".

2. For God's sake, "Stop this rubbish". We have more important things to do than pick holes in someone's sleeves.

3. Finally, congratulations to Khaleda Zia for finding the solution to all our law and order woes. What's the problem? Go get hold of the opposition and banish them forever. And the *Shonar Bangla* will be delivered on a platter.

Ahmed Kamal
Abu Dhabi, UAE

Nazmul Karim on February 6 and it took only 5 weeks for Ms. Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya to realise that it was a mechanical error that distorted her word '*dar*' into '*dhar*'. Oh, my God. What an explanation!

So Mr. Karim should better learn about mechanical engineering before listening to a song. Shame, shame and shame on the listeners!

Mrs. Taheera Shakawat
Gulshan, Dhaka



Twin questions

the reasons for the sad demise of the patients in less than 24 hours. Let the same panel of experts decide what is due for this surgery: condemnation or commendation.

Dr Masbahuddin Sarker
Paediatric Surgeon
Kualalampur, Malaysia

'Two questions'



Selling "Sales"

I was wondering if we have a law in Bangladesh as to what constitutes a "Sale" in all these malls. With the boom in western style shopping malls and supermarkets now going on in Dhaka, there always seems to be a Sale somewhere. Several department stores have permanent signs displaying Sales. In Europe, for example, goods have to be on sale at the price from which it has been discounted for a specified number of weeks before the store can hold a "sale" on it.

Do we have any sort of consumer protection covering this?

My second question is what did we use for a question mark in Bengali before the English came with the Question Mark?

MA
Dhaka

fresh laws, which will not ultimately benefit us. The Prime Minister should try to refrain from making irresponsible statements, if she wants her statements to have any credibility at all.

Rumana Chowdhury
Toronto, Canada

It seems that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and the Home minister thinks that all the people of Bangladesh are as obtuse and insensitive as themselves. Why else would the Home Minister try to 'comfort' us by asserting that crimes are decreasing although cases of murder are increasing? There is no need to

security of the citizens and restore law and order and there can be no excuses to evade this responsibility.

The BNP-led alliance promised that they would put an end to the acts of terrorism that had made the previous government so unpopular. But as soon as they assumed power, they unleashed a new and unprecedented 'reign of terror'. In a country where rape is used as a political weapon and rapists are supported and sponsored by the government, it really does sound absurd when the government points fingers at the Opposition.

Some frustrated citizens, on e-mail