

"To kill or not to kill"

The army has sought permission to shoot an elephant at Ramgargh in Khagrachari after it had killed a soldier and two villagers. Reports claim that this elephant has become "mad," as elephants are noted to, especially with encroaching senility in old age and they make resorts to unnecessary bouts of violence. However the one in question has been found to have an iron chain bound around its leg, suggesting that there might have been some form of cruelty administered towards it during a period of captivity or torture otherwise.

It does not state the age of the animal, neither does it say why it has done what it did. It merely goes on to say the facts in a more or less impersonal manner.

Answers can never be sought if one just skims the issues on the surface, one has to wonder what led this particular elephant to lose its head. The worn out remains of an iron chain stand to signify tortures this animal that cannot speak like us has had to endure at the hands of man. And after all this ought we dare to decide whether it has right to rage against injustices?

A silent sufferer who cannot tell us of whips, toil, starvation, - captivity at its most shallow. How long will this continue? Disagreement between villagers and an elephant name it mad and put it down. Easy means to an easy end, do the elephants have a say? This is as much their world as it is ours.

Why do we always greedily grab the spoils? And why do we always selfishly want to be the ones on top? I cannot make myself believe that this majestic creature rebels without reason plentiful.

*If you spite us, do we not bleed?
If you tickle us, do we not laugh?
If you poison us, do we not die?
And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?*
(-Act 3, Sc, 1 Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare)
Surely if we could ask them, this is what they would say. Pity

animals have not been blessed by the gift of speech, but the manner in which some men decide to manipulate matters, denying evidences and pulling blinds over our eyes, perhaps its more blessed to be silent.

Maybe soon I will awaken to see that permission has been assented to the army to kill this noble victim. Neither the time nor the world will stop at this. But a precious life will no longer be here. Its cries for salvation expressed in rage in life will be muted in an unfair death....

Tomorrow of course is a new day. It rests on our consciences how we plan it to be...

Anika Rabbani
DOHS, Dhaka



To kill an elephant

It is our failure

While speaking at the recently concluded Paris Aid Club meeting, our Finance Minister blamed the previous Awami League government for the miserable law and order situation in Bangladesh. The Awami League is the blood of our blood and flesh of our flesh as like as the BNP is.

So blaming the Awami League for bad governance, corruption etc. in our country does not exonerate us, as a nation, from those sins. The political parties of Bangladesh may blame each other, to their hearts' content, for the failure of bringing positive change in the lot of the country; but in the eyes of the world it's the failure of the Bangladeshi nation as a whole.

Faruque Hasan
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

I would like to re-write the heading of the article as "Natural gas security and security of Bangladesh" Assuming that the present government decides to export gas to India a friendly neighbour with cyclic stress and strain in our relationship. I think we are exposing our country's security and sovereignty to unnecessary and unpredictable external factors. I remember during last Gulf War some leaders of the Western countries considered occupation of Kuwait by Iraq as a threat to the very way of life in the West, so the War was justified.

Therefore, we should be wise and not export gas to India and maintain a good relationship with our neighbour.

A.G. Mahmud
A.V.M. Redd
Gulshan, Dhaka-1212

Dr Moyeen Khan and BNP

Dr Moyeen Khan MP was sidelined because he was principled. And continuing in that vein, he should not take charge of the new ministry, which anyway is a demotion. He should abstain from the cabinet and call the PM's bluff. She will be forced to reinstate him or loose what little respect people have for her government.

It amazes me, but can these people really have such short memories?

Bastiat
Dhaka

"The Sharpeville massacre"

Exactly 42 years ago on March 21, 1960, 69 people were killed and 186 wounded, when the police opened fire at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid "Pass Law" in Sharpeville in South Africa.

In 1989, Canada showed support for the UN declaration by becoming the first country in the world to promote March 21 Campaign.

As a result in 1996 The United Nations declared March 21 the

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in memory of the Sharpeville Massacre.

Since the UN declaration, there has been a further initiative to raise awareness, mentionable are the Martin Luther King Day, Black History Month and European Year against racism. Unfortunately, these initiatives launched by the Human Activists and Organisations were mauled and stamped by interested quarters.

Perhaps, these initiatives angered the prejudiced ones turning racism into a dreadful menacing and loathsome disease globally.

More than four decades have passed since the adoption of UN declaration but during this tenure there have been many incidents of racism that too on a massive scale-- forced exile of Asians from East Africa, the Rwanda massacre's, the

ping handbags in bulk and give it away free of cost and also supply the shops with bundles of such bags with their ads printed for free distribution to customers. It is not possible for every one to go out of the house daily armed with a shopping bag.

Small jute handbags should be disposable after using a few times, and the retail price should be cheap for free give-away, like the free polybags. The shops in the bazaars have no variety in cheap jute bags. The government decision was too sudden, when the consumption was more than a crore polybags daily. It is about time we came up with suitable substitutes of polybags that are cheap and easily available.

A citizen
Dhaka

International

Shareholders' woe

The great Harshad Mehta, responsible for the Bombay share market scandal, died in jail a few weeks ago.

Unfortunately nothing has happened to our genius share market scandal creators of 1996-97 though millions of people were effected directly or indirectly.

Security and Exchange Commission could not perform their duties. Many of the public limited companies managed to have connivance with auditors

so as to hide facts, published wonderful lies in their prospectus in assuring good return on investments, juxtaposed facts and figures, and the shareholders' money were plundered systematically.

We must take lesson from the US and how the Senate Committee is investigating the Enron scandal.

Would our Finance Minister take initiative in this respect and do something positive for the share market and the poor

information to all the respective administrative and judicial offices in Bangladesh with high priority so that further latches and irregularities due to ignorance of law do not continue to take place.

Dr M Khatoun
Secretary,
Society for Information
and Research on Business Intellectual
Inventions (SIRBI), Dhaka

Cigarette ad our responsibility

It is common knowledge that all magazines, including daily newspapers will definitely contain different kinds of advertisements. We also know that in Bangladesh, advertisements for cigarettes can be found everywhere starting from television to newspapers since there is no law against such practices.

Advertisements for cigarettes are required to include a statutory warning stating that smoking is injurious to health (although this is a very vague sentence and it grossly understates the actual effects of smoking).

In spite of that, one can't help but feel disappointed to see such advertisements being featured almost everyday in reputed dailies like *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo*. There may be no law against it, but there is something called ethics and social commitment. The readers of *The Daily Star* and the *Prothom Alo* like to believe that social objectives are as important to these dailies as their commercial objectives.

Also it was quite shocking to find that Zahid Hasan, a popular TV personality of our country, is now a model for a certain brand of cigarette. Young generations are greatly influenced by TV stars and many youngsters consider them as role models. So an artist's job is not just to provide entertainment and earn money for it but also to make a contribution to the society and earn respect. It was completely indiscreet and disgraceful on the part of Zahid Hasan to take part in such an advertisement. Well, different people have different values and principles and I guess for some people money is more important than dignity.

S Hossain
University of Dhaka



Where are our bulls?

Shareholders? Mahubur Rahman
Dasani, Bagherhat

"Zia and service within"

I read Mr Ghaziur's letter with interest. It is a very common experience to be shouted at in Bangladesh. Seeing one of my close friends (who is a government official) shouting at a man I asked him why did he had to shout! His reply was that nobody takes notice of you if you don't shout. I asked him whether it is worth trying in normal voice to start with. My friend teased me for being in a foreign country for too long.

I have no idea how to break this vicious circle!

Waheed Nabi
Sheffield, England

Thanks for the interview

The interview of Dr. Imtiaz Habib by Ziaul Karim has come as a relief to the readers at a time when interviews are rare in the paper. Mr. Karim has done an excellent job by bringing one of the good scholars of Bangladesh to light.

During our English Department days, Dr. Imtiaz was simply the best

as far Shakespearean studies - and literature - are concerned. The Star Literature page should keep in constant touch with this venerated man, who still has a lot to offer.

Thanks again to *The Daily Star*.
Ekram Kabir
Dhaka

Secularism: Eastern versus Western style

According to the Webster's dictionary, "secular" means: worldly or not belonging to a religious order and "secularism" is defined as: the belief that religious influence should be restricted, and in particular that education, morality, the state etc. should be independent of religion.

Bangladeshi older-generation intellectuals love to stick to this academic definition of the word. They think or rather used to think (since a lot of them have already phased out by the tide of time) that talking about religion is out of culture. As a result many of them consciously exiled religion to the remotest corner of their life. I have a number of near and dear ones who don't even know how to pray salah (namaj) because their parents believed learning about religion means backwardness. (Yes, I cry for them.) Our colonial masters conditioned them that way. Not only that our colonial masters systematically vilified our religion to glorify their one; English literature and intellectual dissertations are a treasure-trove of distorted information and defamatory stories about Islam and Muslims. No wonder our educated class feels embarrassed and apologetic and wants to distance themselves from Islam.

When I came to the West I was totally overwhelmed by the religious overtone every where. Each and every hospital kept copies of Bible in each and every cabin/room in a drawer next to the bed. The same is the case of each and every room of a motel or hotel. The museums are full of paintings and artefacts of religious import, imposingly on display. TV-shows, movies, sitcoms talk about Christmas or Jesus in such a natural way that no one would forget for a second that religion is intertwined with their lives. This is not the end - on Sundays TV channels would broadcast programs of church and evangelists almost the whole day. Some shops in the mall have shelves full of Bibles (e.g. Walmarts in California) apart from bookstores. On the street I would see people wearing crosses as pendants or earrings displaying their love for Jesus.

In the office my colleagues never forget to mention 'my Christian teaching compelled me to do this' whenever he/she does some kind-hearted act. While relaxing on a weekend after a busy week the doorbell would announce an unexpected visitor a smiling face of a missionary with an extended hand holding a Bible, ever ready to guide me to paradise. Please visit our church he/she would insist; we have many new members from your part of the world. During my holiday while walking past the Star Walk and shops of the Hollywood Boulevard a young enthusiastic missionary would stop me and ask "Do you want to go to this place?" showing a church brochure with a biblical paradise printed on it.

While browsing through the mall on my lunch break, a shy but friendly elderly woman would hand me a copy of 'Gospel of John'; my headscarf convinced her that I need 'light' badly.

A recent study showed that it takes a maximum of three generations for a Muslim migrant family to completely dissolve into the melting pot of the Christian way of life. We can verify the statistics looking around us among our near and dear ones.

But this aggressive proselytising at the home front is not enough for the Christian missionaries. Frank Graham said in his inauguration speech in 1996 when he took over the responsibilities of his father Billy Graham's evangelistic organisation: "There are some dark areas in the East where the light of Jesus haven't reached yet, my first priority is to bring light to those people".

Bannya replies



Talking and talking Tagore

I had sincerely hoped that this vexing issue of wrong wording in a Rabindra Sangeet would come to an end. At least that is the impression I got when you yourself indicated so sometime back. It appeared that as an Editor you have used your prerogative. So be it.

Since this matter does not seem to be dying any sooner I wish to take the liberty to make a few remarks not so much on the wrong wording or the Rabindra Sangeet itself but on the response made by Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya. I find that irrespective of the contents of the letter more than anything else it is representative of our social values.

It is my impression that Ms. Bannya had engaged some writer to do this on her behalf. The expert thereafter went into all kinds of intellectual peddling to confuse the public.

It is evident from the contents of the letter that Ms Bannya simply tried to come out of the controversies for which she and she alone is to blame.

Ms. Bannya herself could have ended all controversies by simply saying the she takes all the blame for any confusion created and that she earnestly hopes that people would continue to listen to her songs. But this was not to be.

There is one other matter I wish to bring to your notice. You have published the photograph of Ms Bannya on two occasions I believe this is not necessary unless she herself desires it.

In conclusion I would like to state that let us have the honesty to distinguish between a failure and a success and the wisdom to admit a failure at any time. Contrary to popular belief admission of a failure merely enhances the image of a person rather than degrading.

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka

I fully agree with Mr. Reaz W. Shams (March 20). So where are the so-called 'experts' and 'gurus' of our cultural arena? Much has been discussed in this page regarding Rabindra Sangeet but not a single 'guru' has come out with his/her 'bibriti'.

It is high time that the so-called 'experts' and 'gurus' of our country made a 'bibriti'.

If they are not willing to give their 'valued' comment on the 'wrong word' sung by Ms. Bannya they can at least make a comment on the 'reply' of the singer.

Another surprising aspect is the silence of Mr. Nazmul Karim who has originated this discussion. Why now why he is not commenting on Mrs. Bannya's reply? Or is it that he is another 'guru'?

Mrs. Selina Haider
Berlin, Germany

I am a regular reader of *The Daily Star* since its inception. I must say that no other letter to the "Letters to the Editor" page other than the one from Mr. Nazmul Karim (February 6) could draw so much attention of so many readers from so many countries across the world. I also must say that the reply of Mrs. Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya was the largest ever rejoinder ever published in the "Letters to the Editor" page.

Bravo Mr. Karim and Mrs. Bannya.
Milia Rahman
Danville, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

(The Toronto Star)

I found all this excess religiosity very interesting and noticed them with an extra amazement because of my background. I was brought up in a secular intellectual environment of Bangladesh among people of different faiths living in harmony that never discussed their religion with one another. I saw my father reading the Quran every morning after Fajr prayer. While preparing myself for my exams, I saw him pray tahajjud prayer regularly late at night. But never did I see him trying to influence or talk about Islam to those Hindu carpenters working in our backyard or our non-Muslim

friends and neighbours. Because to him religion was a very 'personal' matter, his colonial masters did educate him successfully like all others of his generation.

Certainly eastern and western ways are different; so is the definition and meaning of "secularism!"
Shukia Mirza
USA

"Natural gas security in Bangladesh"

The article "Natural gas security in Bangladesh" (March 19) by Mr. Nuruddin Mahmud Kamal deserves attention of all concerned. He has given credible statistics on our gas reserve and possible export.

Grab a spade



Calling spades a spade?

I agree with the Prime Minister. Why don't we just grab a spade throw some of that garbage on to an open top truck, to be driven to the outskirts of the city all the while with bits a pieces of filth being blown off on to the road and the cars behind and then dumped in a huge festering pile in the open air to be picked at by urchins.

All the new garbage trucks are nice and shiny Volvo's. Why are they open topped? Why does the DCC allow the World Bank funded garbage containers to just lie there day after day without being cleaned? What is the bizarre rationale of having sweepers walk around the streets with brooms sweeping dust into nice little piles just to leave it there?

How is Dhaka going to be a clean city when all the sewage is just dumped into the rivers? When does the government plan to start sewage treatment plants?

What happened to the fish farming in lagoons of raw sewage that was reported in the Prothom Alo several times?

This anti-litter campaign is a joke. The PM is trying to evoke the same spirit as her predecessors.

MA
Dhaka

obligations of Bangladesh

Bangladesh became signatory to The Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property (1883) on March 3, 1999 and to The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886) on May 4, 1999 as required for becoming a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) following its signature to The General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) in 1994. Since Bangladesh is a signatory to the above documents which are parts of universally recognised international laws, it is an obligation on the part of Bangladesh to truly implement the provisions laid down in those laws both at administrative and at judicial levels.

In spite of the membership of the World Trade Organisation if any office under the Bangladesh Government deliberately fails to fulfil the required obligatory provisions of the conventions then even the attention of the World Trade Organisation may be drawn by the other member countries.

Lately it has been learnt from the officials of the Bangladesh Trade Mark Registry in Dhaka that they were not aware of the official association of Bangladesh with the above Conventions/International Organisation (i. e. the WTO) and the basis of such remark was due to the fact that no formal notice was given to the Bangladesh Trade Mark Registry Office by the Ministry of Industry or any other Minister or through a notice published in The Bangladesh Gazette. It is universally known that ignorance of law is no excuse and it should be applicable not only to the public in general but also to the administration as well as judiciary of the country.

We take this opportunity of referring to the fact that Bangladesh has been elected head of the Committee of Trade and Development of the World Trade Organisation for the year 2002 and is being represented by Mr Taufiq Ali, ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh at the UN Mission in Geneva.

In consideration of the above we strongly feel that the respective Ministries of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh should immediately draw the attention by furnishing the required

Billy I Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

The art of masterly inactivity

The Awami League has fine-tuned the art of masterly inactivity. Now the AL MPs have decided to resign from the JS. Saving face or democracy?

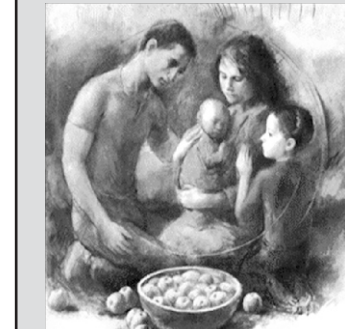
AMA
Dhaka

Cheaper jute products

The strengthening of the JPDC (Jute Products Development Centre) under BJRI is to be welcomed, as its practical findings could make a difference of thousand of crore taka in the jute market at home and abroad, as an environment-friendly substitute of plastic products.

The manufacturers of mass produced consumer goods may be persuaded to buy small jute shop-

An American perspective on Bangladesh



Family's are for caring

I have recently visited Bangladesh. It was my first time visiting as an adult and I went with the intent of learning as much as I could to help me understand the way my parents were brought up, in turn, helping me understand the way they think and view the world. Since I was young, and as a result of being born and brought up as an American, I have always cherished certain values as inalienable. For example, the right to speak my mind and to be viewed as an individual with opinions opposing what my family or the rest of society believed in. This has been something that my parents, to this day, do not seem to comprehend and vice versa, I cease to understand why they do not value individuality.

I saw, on approaching, that many of my relatives all lived in the same house, cousins, an aunt and uncle, their kids, and of course my grandfather and grandmother. My mother, brother and sister, all accompanying me on this trip, added another mass of people to this group and, to my surprise, no one seemed to mind the extra four people staying with them for two months.

I wondered why they did not just ship us off to stay at a fancy