

"Cigarette and our responsibility"

Regarding S Hussain's (March 22) charges made on cigarettes and their promotion, I feel there are certain things we should consider before making such drastic comments.

We all know that cigarettes are demerit goods and every government has its own policies of charging the producers and distributors of tobacco to compensate for the probable harmful effects. For example, there are special restrictions over advertisements of cigarettes and they are not aired frequently like commercials of other products.

But it is totally unfair when Ms Hussain is charging reputed dailies like *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo* for featuring such commercials. For a moment I would like her to treat cigarette as a simple product that has a right to be promoted and made aware of. Of course, there already exist different bans, restrictions, and how much more pressure can be exerted on the distributors of tobacco?

Ms Hussain claims that the young generation is greatly influenced by the models and actors and that many can pick up the bad habit of smoking from commercials. If she thought on a broader spectrum, then I could remind her of the famous Benson and Hedges Star Search sponsored by a tobacco company every year. This pageant is totally concentrated on the youths and is a form of promotional tool for cigarettes. Aren't youths at the risk of being influenced here? And where she is stating that "it was completely indiscreet and disgraceful on the part of Zahid Hasan to take part in such an advertisement" I would also like to remind her that every star/individual has his right to choose which product he is going to model for; and that is definitely not unethical to do so. If we put ourselves in the star's shoes, we might think that he probably wanted to change his image and hence went to promote such a product. Money, definitely is NOT the sole cause to divert a star to model for such products.

Yes, cigarettes are harmful for the public health, and every pack of cigarette and every commercial of cigarette accompanies the statement that smoking is injurious to health. But if the issue involves the risk of encouraging people to smoke more with a new commercial that was aired in television, Ms Hussain should not forget that the commercials put up on billboards, the various promotional tools taken up by the tobacco companies are equally influential to enhance smoking. A simple commercial would play little role in increasing the number of smokers.

With so many campaigns going around, people's awareness has increased over the years. Those who smoke, do so at their own responsibility. Is it not a bit unfair to

pers and our TV and film stars have responsibility to establish a healthy society which they are ignoring.

Moreover, it has been proved at molecular level that smoking causes cancer by inactivating p53 gene, which prevent cancer and more than 70 per cent lung cancer patients are found to be smokers. In this situation *Prothom Alo* which talk against acid throwing should not publish any cigarette advertisement and if it does it will be considered as an act as hypocrisy.

Dr. Mahboob Hossain
The University of Asia Pacific Dhaka

The wind of change

The wind of change is always behind the civilisation. As nothing is permanent in life, the same is with civilisation. In the metaphysical sense all our pleasures are the children of our pain. A child is so dear to his mother because she delivers the child after much pain. In this age of science and technology when we are being bombarded by new idea everyday, our traditional values are being questioned by our younger generations, constantly. In the Western world where affluence and wealth has become the barometer of happiness, many values and traditions has become a matter of personal convenience. But the amazingly I have discovered a few new realities during my long stay in this society.

The ancient Indian philosophical magic, which was discovered by Romaind Roland through the genius of Tagore, is taking its root in the western thinking mind. They are taking interest in moulding this into their fast paced lives.

But an opposite thing is happening in the poorer countries where there is tendency to shed all the traditional values and embrace whatever comes from the West. In the pessimistic human mind the lure for a noisy and shiny object is always irresistible. This tendency is a sign of desperation. The guardians of the society do have a very big responsibility to try to halt this degeneration. We can not replace *sitar* for a drum, the *anchal* of a *saree* can't be replaced with a skirt, rap can't be a replacement for *raag bageshri*, we can't say that a cousin is not a brother or sister and we can not send our old parents to the old home when we live in the house they built for us. Some of our traditional values must be preserved.

Akbar Hussain
Toronto, Canada

Duty drawback

The government runs an admirable program allowing exporters and certain thrust sectors to apply for VAT refund on electricity bills and clearing and forwarding charges.

Although a very useful program and a boon on these trouble times, since it is not well publicised it is under utilised by many eligible firms.

Of Video Connection, Kintuki and other memories



Memories are made of this

When Gulistan Cinema Hall was torn down by developers, there was quite an outpouring of nostalgia from middle aged people. Although the Gulistan of their memories had been long gone.

A month or so ago the Gulistan of our generation finally went away for good as well. Video Connection, for all intents and purposes, is gone.

Do you remember 1984? Kemal Ataturk Avenue was just a narrow street lined with trees and large houses. Gulshan-2 was a pleasant roundabout.

Video Connection, when it opened in '84, was the first place where you could check the print of your tapes before renting them. The original owner was also the first person to bring original videos to Bangladesh and even when he copied them, amazingly for that time, it was always on to new tapes and not recycled like the others. His taste in movies was unparalleled and I owe my fine taste to him. He introduced a whole generation to the classics of Humphrey Bogart and Kurosawa as well as St. Elmo's Fire and the Breakfast Club.

Right next door was Kintuki, at that time the best place to go on dates.

All that's left is a high rise slum. Dhaka was a beautiful place to live in. Before we ruined it.

My final farewells and thanks to Video Connection and Kintuki, growing up wouldn't have been half as entertaining without them.

326
Dhaka

else a model, a daily or someone else responsible for a bad habit taken up solely by an individual at his own stake?

Arani Siddiqi
Dhaka

In her letter of March 22, S Hossain has raised some questions on cigarette advertisement and our responsibilities.

Like her I also feel that newspa-

But just for the information for anyone, who is planning to avail this system, the bribe used to be 17 per cent of the receivable.

Now it's 25 per cent and take it or leave it.

Talk about inflation. Only wish our FOB's went up that fast.

Dorji
Dhaka

The government's

1971: An honourable struggle

Having studied and later taught politics, history, and international affairs, a few things annoy me more than the brazen attempts by pseudo-intellectuals to categorise the Bangladeshi independence struggle as 'another' national liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Personally I have never found gratuitous violence to be an acceptable means to achieve noble ends like liberty, justice, or equity. Hence, without taking away from the legitimate grievances of other oppressed people, I cannot but submit that the War of Independence of 1971 was hardly just 'another' such liberation struggle.

The War was not launched by a bunch of guerrillas sitting around a Beirut cafe who just decided to go for a putsch. Far from it, it was the last option after all others had failed. Even then, the decision to go to war was decided upon by an assembly of representatives chosen by the Bengalis in free and fair polls. This conclave of representatives also co-opted an all-party advisory committee to help with the prosecution of the war effort. Throughout the nine month long war, all the elements of the freedom movement in the field kept intact their allegiance to this elected assembly which became known as the Provisional Government of Bangladesh (Mujibnagar government). Few are such examples of discipline and democracy in the annals of national liberation movements.

The spearhead of the freedom fighters itself, the Bangladesh Army, was no rag-tag band of marauders either. A small force that had demonstrated its professionalism amply in the 1965 defence of Lahore, this force took upon itself to train and integrate the irregulars into its formations while keeping up the discipline and elan of a regular uniformed force.

In that struggle, some of these brave men gave their lives, many lost fortunes, but none gave up their sacred honour. Save the unfortunate stray incidents of misdirected reprisals during and immediately after the war, our War of Independence involved no planned assault on civilians, no targeting of foreign nationals, no hijacking of planes, and no blowing up of Pakistani embassies abroad. And when the War was over, our government and society rushed to protect from harm those who had sided with the enemy. Though many lives were lost in the immediate retaliatory attacks after December 16, 1971, history bears witness that there was no *en masse* 'settling of scores' with the erstwhile collaborationist element, unlike the brutal treatment visited on the Ukrainians by the Russians or the Sudetenlanders by the Czechs in 1945. In a perversely misplaced act of our national magnanimity we even pardoned the most outspoken anti-Bangladesh elements and let those accused of the most heinous war crimes go home.

Yes, it was a different kind of a national liberation movement. In an endeavour where ends are often supposed to justify the means, we did not take that low road. Our Independence was paid for by our blood, sweat, and tears. Our honour, however, was left unsullied and unspent.

On this 31st anniversary of the birth of Bangladesh, let us not

responsibilities

One of the fundamental duties of a state is to ensure the safety and security of its citizens. Unfortunately, under the present regime of BNP and Jamaat, the right to life, liberty and property-- the fundamental rights of any citizen-- are all at stake. This is evidenced by the number of rapes, murders, attack on minorities, unlawful arrests of Awami League leaders and supporters, and lifting the special security arrangements for the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina. The recent incident at the Chittagong Court speaks for itself. Without an independent and impartial judicial system, there can be no democracy in any country.

The Prime Minister has gone to the extent of blaming all law and order violations on the Opposition, thus exonerating her own party cadres for their crimes. This will further encourage the BNP-Jamaat cadres to continue their atrocities because it is the Opposition who will always be to blame-- what a convenient judicial system!

Based on the aforementioned reasons (there are actually many more but these should suffice), it would be prudent for the government to throw in the towel and just resign. If the government believes the October 2001 election was free and fair, and the Opposition is responsible for the deterioration of law and order, then there is nothing to fear but the fear of winning even more seats in Parliament.

Dr. Aref Chowdhury
Springfield, New Jersey, USA

Bannya's reply and Rabindra Sangeet

My God, for how long do we have to endure this silly topic? I thought you have some editorial staff. But I was mistaken obviously. No sane person can continue wasting so much time on such trivial matters. Looks like Bangladeshis (especially the ones residing abroad) have no other useful pursuit other than showing their deep knowledge of Tagore songs.

We have had enough of this rubbish. Please spare us this agony or just ask us to stop reading your newspaper.

Ahmad Kamal
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

I have nothing to add to this debate. But I am really pleased to see that there are Bangladeshis in Halsingborg (?), Sweden and Lisbon who listen to Bengali music and follow what's happening back home.

With Bengali New Year coming up, I hope more of us here would be lucky enough to participate in the cultural events.

MA
Dhaka

So at last we have the clarification from the singer. "Then I got a copy of the cassette and found out that as a result of making multiple copies from a master copy the songs, the cassette have become over-used and the sound quality deteriorated to a sub-standard level. As a result Mr Nazmul Karim and many others heard 'dhar gulay' in place of 'dear gulay'."

I wonder what did she hear? She did not explain. Frankly speaking I never expected such an immature

explanation from such a matured singer.

Looking forward to the observation of Mr. Nazmul Karim on Mrs. Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya's clarification.

Mrs. Nasreen Abbas
Sydney, Australia

I must thank the singer because she has acknowledged the song was sung by her and at least she did not

forget that we are inheritors of a tradition of honour seldom matched and rarely emulated in human history.

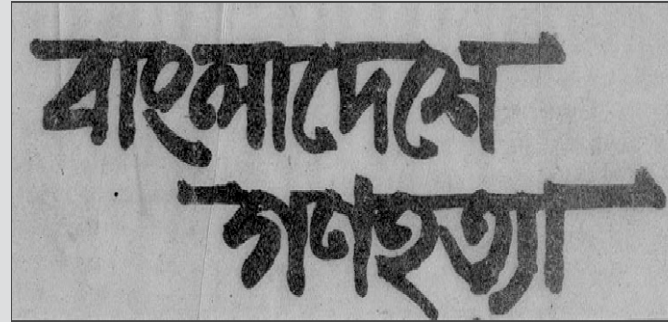
May Bangladesh Live Long guided by the sense of honour showed by the heroes of 1971.

Esam Sohail
USA

On the occasion of 26th March, huge contingents of our armed forces are camped at one end of the National Parade ground for the last few weeks. They are hard at work drilling, driving tanks and jeeps escorted by choppers back and forth.

Ironically they are camped almost opposite a slum, one whose residents have no access to potable water (but a great view though). Just a few minutes ago I saw swarms of ragged women and children cross the shallow lake separating the two parties, carrying pots (*kolshi*).

Then I noticed that there was a water tap installed for the



A time to recall

jawans next to their latrines and these people were trying to get some water. I was quite pleased to see that our *jawans* were sharing their fresh water with our poor brethren.

That was like two seconds before they were all driven back to the lake. Oh well, you live and learn.

Bastiat
Dhaka

Bangladesh celebrates its 31st Independence Day this year and although many of us are a thousand miles away from home, it is important that we still take time to bear in mind what is perhaps the most poignant moments in our history.

In Australia the prosperous land of milk and honey, it is easy to get caught up in the excitement of the present and the anticipation of the future. Australia being the first nation to be lucky enough to win it's birth and independence with a "vote and not a gun" it is a society that is rich with opportunity and the prospect of a thriving future.

Should I ask my son to come back?

My only son left Bangladesh on the fourth of April 1989 for USA. My wife and I begged of him to stay back. Our concern amongst many others was that he was then a man of twenty years of age and had just crossed high school. He left without any fixed targets in that vast sea of foreign land.

Highway deaths vs Rabindra Sangeet

I wrote letters on highway deaths a several times over the last few months with the hope that other fellow writers would pick up on the que and try to send a message (?) to the authorities by writing more on the matter.

As much as I can recall, not a single person followed up on it. Even the letter was not published right away, maybe the deaths of a few poor bus riders don't matter much to anybody anymore.

The last two letters I wrote followed two very gruesome accidents. This one follows, if anyone cares, the recent accident on Cox's Bazar highway.

I sincerely hope that people will show similar energy they showed over the last several weeks, debating over a silly mistake in an equally silly Rabindra Sangeet, and protest against the government's negligence in reducing the causes behind all these tragic accidents.

People please try to get your priorities right, debating over Rabindra Sangeet will never get anybody anywhere, so, my fellow letter writers, shape up and do something about all these accidents before one claims somebody who will not be just a statistic to one of you. I have seen how these accidents can destroy a dream in matter of seconds.

If you all want to experience what I did then you all are most welcome to write some more about the Rabindra Sangeet. if you don't want to explain to your wife how her 20 year old brother died

say that "some one else have sung this song and it is because of the 'bad recording' and 'because of a mechanical error that crept into the cassette" that the readers thought it was her voice."

Mrs. Sayeeda Rahman
Uttara, Dhaka

To cover-up one wrong, Ms. Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya has taken the shelter of many wrongs. Her explanation did not have minimum foresight and she lacked the wisdom to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong.

I wonder how she came to the conclusion that the readers can never distinguish between a wrong word sung by the singer and the distorted pronunciation of a word because of bad recording, unless he/she was a student of Santiniketon?

Humayara Chowdhury
Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi, India

So where is the end of the tunnel sir? This seems to be a never-ending process.

Yes, this is quite unfortunate that the 'experts' and the 'intellectuals' are silent on this topic.

Well, this is not the first time they have acted this way as they are acting now.

Unfortunately this is the nature of our so-called intellectuals.

What a nice topic it was for the 'intellectuals' to issue their 'valuable comment' and 'crucial statement'.

Any way I would like to hear from Mr. Nazmul Karim regarding Bannya's reply.

Suzana Rahman
Tennessee State University, U.S.A

cal science trading on the human miseries?

6. Will he be able to rest and sleep in complete safety and security after a hard and stressful day?

7. Will he be spared of the ever deteriorating sights of law and order by way of murder, mugging, looting, arson, rapes etc?

8. Will he be able to withstand total inaction by the law enforcing agencies in bringing to book the perpetra-

Hospital in Gulshan. Authorities had allowed commercialisation of Dhanmondi in last 30 years and recently the same being done to Gulshan. The molestation had begun under President Ershad's regime and the rape has been committed over the last 10 years under patronage of RAJUK who was supposed to have protected the peaceful environment. RAJUK has commercialised Gulshan Avenue

which was gradually upgraded to college and now to an international university. Unlike Uttara Model School Manarat did not have playing ground mandatory for school and now whatever small space remained is being used for parking school buses.

With patronage from Manarat and Govt Fisheries department road No.106 was extended eastward over the lake as a barrage for fish culture mainly for the officials to enjoy fresh fishes, Manarat school looked forward to get more students from Shazadpur on east of the lake.

The extended road no.106 has only rickshaw lanes to link at lake and streams of rickshaw pour into Gulshan in the morning when scores of private cars, baby taxis, motor cycles clog the road no.104, 106 and 112.

There is long space along the road no.104 along the Western Wall of Manarat school but neither the school nor the school itself made any effort to develop it as parking. There is chaos at the cross point of road no.104, 106 and 112 during the morning and mid day.

Recently the said Z. H. Sikdar Women College and Hospital, which was built in about six months and the neighbours had to endure noise not only during the day but also during the whole night so that six storied building could be completed within certain time.

The building was supposed to have basement parking but they have built nurses' quarter. The cars of the doctors and patients are parked at the front, washed and cleaned thus creating a chaotic situation during the whole day and also in the night.

As many as 30 cars and its drivers block the way to miseries to the residents around.

The chaotic behaviour of drivers, horn and noise have turned the entire area almost into a bazaar.

Rajuk must pay compensation to the residents for having allowed the setting up of the hospital, which is purely a commercial enterprise.

You are requested to investigate, and report accordingly.

A.S.Ali
Gulshan

tors of crimes?

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka

Environmental degradation and our residential area

Thank you for your photograph and report on traffic chaos on the road in front of Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in Dhanmondi.

Similar situation is in the office at road no.104 in front of Z. H. Sikdar Women Medical College and

although two distinctly de-marked commercial area at circles 1 & 2 were reserved and were and are sufficient to meet the needs. Commercial business enterprises and commercial schools and hospitals have been allowed almost everywhere and Rajuk appear to be out of control.

In contrast to Uttara provision for a school at Gulshan was not adequate. A piece of 8 bigha land was earmarked for a secondary school on the south of Road No.106 and east of Road No.104. The plot was finally awarded to Manarat School

A letter from a concerned American

First, let me say that I read the Web edition of your newspaper to learn of events in your part of the world that are seldom reported here in the United States of America, and I really appreciate the job that you do.

We have a problem here in the USA. Our President, perhaps drunk with power, perhaps through bad advice from those he has appointed to run the aspects of government he does not understand, is actually advocating the use of nuclear weapons as a tool of foreign policy.

As the media in this country is firmly under the control of the President's party, it may seem to people in other nations that the American People actually support this insane policy. I am writing to say that we do not. None of my friends, co-workers, or commercial contacts think that the President's new policy on the use of nuclear weapons is either sane or wise. Many of us also do not support either the continuation of the "war" in Afghanistan or the widening of the war to include Iraq.

I write both to tell you that the American People are NOT unified behind the administration of President Bush, and to warn you that, until a new government can be elected here, the United States of America is not to be trusted.

I pray that the other nations of the world can prevail upon this man to halt these deadly policies. Good luck to all of you.

Ben Burch
USA



Bush is not America