

Hartal

Thanks to Sheikh Hasina I had to take a rickshaw from Uttara to work. It took me two hours to reach my office. So there I was crawling along in my rickshaw with speeding buses passing by.

Just when I was good and mad, the police stopped my rickshaw and pulled me over to the road opposite the Twin Peaks Complex at the old airport. Why? Because the PM was coming to work from her residence in the Cantonment. This is by the way at 11.30 in the morning. All slow traffic was stopped for twenty minutes.

Standing in the hot sun it occurred to me that you can judge a police state by the size of their ruler's motorcades and the degree of inconvenience they cause to the general public. Funny enough the police also thought it was silly to stop all the traffic but they are just following orders. As one constable reminded me, we voted for them.

If the PM had glanced outside while passing by sitting in her air-conditioned armour plated Mercedes, she would have seen my rude gestures.

We are just pawns in this game for power. Vassals, slaves, cattle, that's how they see us.

Beowulf Dhaka

Uttara over-bridge

In spite of several deaths, repeated newspaper articles and several letters to the editor, the incomplete concrete guillotine is still up there in Rajlaksi, Uttara.

This is an obvious and certain hazard to the thousands of people passing underneath it everyday.

Has the DCC, Gaffur Bhuiyan MP or anyone of the 60 odd ministers done anything? Even our Mayor elect hasn't said anything about it.

The only difference I see is that some campaigner put graffiti on it! So while you're praying the damn thing won't fall on you remember to vote for Jahidul Islam Jahid for the post of 1st Ward Commissioner.

Dorji Dhaka

Foreign investment

The news of opinion exchange between journalist and PDB chairman published in The Daily Star on April 4, 2002 has created lots of confusion among the investor interested in power sector. During the previous government, most of the power plants were built on supplier credit by giving the reason that foreign aid or foreign investment was not available for power sector. As per as my own experience ("A pathetic Bangladesh and Foreign Investment", April 3), the reason of taking the supplier credit to build power plant was not com-

Mohammedan Sporting Club and Nigerian football players

Unfed footballers

Recently I met three Nigerian football players in New DOHS area (House # 390, Road # 29,3rd floor) and I came to know that Mohammedan Sporting Club hired four Nigerian football players for the previous National League. They played the league but after finishing the league the Mohammedan Sporting Club refused to pay the players.

It's about eight months ago and the players are still jobless as well as penniless. Moreover, their house rent is not paid by the club for five months which is about 70,000 (seventy thousand) taka and so their electric line is cut off and so as the water supply. They are in a miserable situation in a foreign country. They cannot go out for they have no money again they cannot stay inside their house for there is no light or water.

If any other foreign players come to know about this, will they ever agree to visit Bangladesh? Will MSC officials please respond?

A citizen Dhaka



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pletely true. The total power demand in Bangladesh will even exceed 6,000 MW in the next five years, if real industrialisation starts with improvement in government policy, infrastructure, law and order situation. PDB Chairman has indicated the possibility of joint venture initiative with Russia, India and European country. He has not mentioned whether the joint venture power project will be operated by PDB or private sector under BOO basis. PDB should not build any more power plants on supplier credit and operate. All power plant should be built and operate under private sector, PDB might keep minor stake in the project.

"Beware of Bangladesh"



Reacting to FEER

The story is obviously by a person with superficial knowledge about our society. This again must be the most charitable way of looking at it, for the lurking suspicion remains that he has been motivated to serve the interests of those quarters, who for some reason or the other, do not wish Bangladesh well.

Admittedly, there are quarters in Bangladesh where religiosity dominates the political thought process. But the conflict between religiosity and ethnicity in the Bengali ethos has long been there, which the genius of the writer could not fathom with a modicum of objectivity. The existence of over-zealous elements is an attribute of any vibrant society. It is only when they take the driving seat and are allowed by the authorities to do so as in the case of Gujrat in India, that dangerous situations are created. Taliban ideas in Afghanistan have existed for ages. The tragedy occurred when they seized state power encouraged to do so by shortsighted yet powerful and self-proclaimed conscience keepers of the poor and

Industrialisation and power development are heavily dependent to each other. Future power plant development should be linked to downstream manufacturing industries. This linkage can be done only in private sector. There should be some accurate relation between power generation and power consumption. Without industrial consumption of energy, the difference in power demand during peak period and off-peak period will remain very high. Even the energy demand in summer and winter will differ a lot. A few years before I was in Malaysia for a few months. Malaysia should be a model country for Bangladesh to follow. There, most of the energy intensive operation of an industry run in off-peak period, and thus minimise the power load difference between peak and off-peak period. This co-ordination can be done effectively only by private sector. All future power plant projects should be linked to industrial consumption of power in addition to domestic consumption. In 1999 during my visit in Bangladesh, I have visited a small factory that was producing activated carbon from rice husk. There I saw stand-by power generator worth of few lakhs of taka. According to the owner, in Bangladesh, most of the

Contrary to what the ambassador implies, the dubious and complicated system of proportional representation is neither a panacea for parliamentary ills nor especially suitable to a country where three fourths of the voters are illiterate. On the other end, it produces volatile governments and shaky coalitions dependent on fringe parties for sustenance, like in Italy, Israel, and Weimar Germany. The learned diplomat is also on shaky turf when he describes the US system as 'presidential'. It is certainly not 'presidential' in the sense that Bangladesh has known the term. In fact, the American system is a delicately balanced contraption where Congress, President, and the courts share national political power and none of the three branches of government is constitutionally supreme to the other two. If serious parliamentary reform is indeed what Ambassador Karim is looking for, he needs look no further than the confines of Louis Kahn's edifice in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Let him convince his party bosses to respect the Constitution of the country and the bylaws and traditions of the parliament. If he is successful, he would have reformed the system more than anybody else since the re-establishment of parliamentary democracy in 1991.

ES Missouri, USA

MIG's and helicopters

It was interesting to view Mr. Dorji's letter about Mig-29's. If Mr. Dorji has any idea he should know Migs are fighters not helicopters. Indian Air Force has Mig-29's as well. Mig-29s are better than Chinese aircraft and even US fighters. It is also cheap than the US fighters.

Indian Air Force may be stronger than ours but US Air Force is the strongest in the world. But other nation even tiny country like Singapore has an Air Force. They have F-16s, which we do not have. Burmese Air Force was weaker than ours few years ago. Do Mr. Dorji wants our Air Force to be weaker?

Sabir Abdus Samee London, UK

"Perhaps this is my last trip to Bangladesh"

I would like to record my reaction on the letter "Perhaps this is my last trip to Bangladesh" (April 5).

Mr. David Swartz does not like to visit Bangladesh till Begum Zia decides to change! He has not cited any bitter experience, which he was subjected to, and take such a harsh decision! The only reason that one can dig out from his letter is his friends' insecurity in Bangladesh. He is visiting Bangladesh for last 20 years for business purpose though it appears that he is more concerned about politics than business. I like to make it clear to my honourable visitor to Bangladesh, it is our country, we are proud of it, Begum Zia is an elected leader, and we respect her. Any derogatory remark by a foreigner cannot be welcomed. If you want to come for a visit for business purpose, you are welcome. If the purpose is politics I would humbly suggest not to venture. Our country, our leaders both are dear to us.

Commodore AMA Alam (retd.)

the weak nations.

The writer of the article seems to be unaware that in our Parliament there have always been members of religious (not fundamentalists) parties. For instance, there were 18 members of the religious parties in the 1991 Parliament as against 17 in the present one. And this, in a House of 300. In the outgoing 1996 Parliament, there were only 6 of them. This seems to have caused the writer concern. But he must understand that changes in party representation is a part of any democratic process. One should appreciate the fact that it is good to temper extremist ideas within a moderate and democratic framework, rather than forcibly suppress them. I think we in Bangladesh are going about it the right way and better be left alone to pursue our own devices. There is of course room for criticisms and improvements. Constructive criticism helps, whereas distortion of facts hinders any healthy process. And in this case distortion of facts have been spewed on the pages of a prestigious journal such as the "Far Eastern Economic Review".

The correspondent conveniently ignores the fact that the killing of Muslims, still continuing in Gujrat, has not caused any ripple in Bangladesh, not to speak of a backlash. The isolated post election incidents were largely caused by a handful of miscreants, operating in an unsatisfactory law and order situation, which the authorities here, have so far regrettably failed to fully control. But it has to be observed that Muslims are as much victims of the situation as are the Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. The writer, who talks of middle class "apathy" in Bangladesh towards communal actions has had apparently no access to our secular and vibrant media. To say the least, it was painful to read this superficial, and what may well be a motivated article, that does not deserve a cover story in the Far Eastern Economic Review.

Faruq Choudhury (Retd. Ambassador Ex. Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh), Dhaka

Parliamentary reforms

Mr M M Rezaul Karim's views on parliamentary reforms (April 7) seem more to be an exercise in avoiding the real problems rather than solving them. Instead of writing an academic treatise, Ambassador Karim can help initiate real reforms if he can convince his party colleagues to attend parliament regularly, give autonomy and oversight powers to parliamentary standing committees, and have straight answers to questions posed to ministers.

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DCC Elections



Scribbles on the wall

The Far Eastern Economic Review has done quite a favour for this government. By publishing that silly article it has given the BNP a drum to beat on and something to distract people with.

But we should not allow such an obvious ploy to divert our attention from the upcoming DCC elections, which are already more like a beauty contest for terrorists.

Unless I missed something, Sadek Hossain Khoka has so far

necessary steps in this regard.

M.H. Bari Khulna

Digital dilemma

Recently some analogue telephones of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar exchange starting with '32' digits have been converted into digital system. But the subscribers have not been provided with the new compatible phone sets, which gives the provision of locking the outgoing calls to avoid tampering.

When we contacted the exchange, we were told to buy new sets on our own. Moreover those connections have been converted into digital, using the existing old cables, most of which are faulty and no more suitable for use. After a good shower, water enters through the leakage of the cables and creates noise, causing both telephonic conversation and Internet browsing almost impossible. I would like to draw attention of BTB at least to change the existing old cables and install new cables, for the convenience of the subscribers.

Mohammad Faizur Rahman Indira Road, Dhaka

What are we supposed to do?

I have been following the Letters to the Editor for quite a few months and I just couldn't keep quiet any more. How many people have died in the past few months? How many girls have been raped and tortured? How many mothers have lost their son? Frankly, I don't know. But whatever the number is, it is not supposed to be that.

We are too scared. We are scared to shout out our anger towards the government. We are scared to ask for our rights. I know some people are thinking that this letter has no point. Well, they are right because I don't know what to write about. There is chaos everywhere. And it seems that the gov-

with a cost to both donor and recipient. He says, developing countries lose some of their best and brightest minds.

The in-migration adds to a swelling American population. According to the US Census Bureau, the US population will grow from its current level of 285 million up to 600 million during this century, due in large part to immigration.

M. A. Obaydullah Banani, Dhaka

Whom to give credit for the declaration of Independence?

There seems to be a constant struggle between two groups of people pertaining to 'who' exactly proclaimed Independence. The answer is simple.

The first declaration was by Sheikh Mujib, whose recorded voice was transmitted via a faint radio signal from a ship sitting off the Chittagong Harbour. Not many people heard the initial declaration, which Sheikh Mujib organised in the case that he was arrested and detained. (If Mujib declared Independence during the Speech at Ramna, the Pakistanis would have tried and executed him for treason).

The second, and more 'popular' declaration, was made by the then Major Ziaur Rahman, who captured the Radio Station at Chittagong, and transmitted a declaration of independence (a few days later) declaring himself as Head of State.

A third transmission was made when Maj. Zia corrected and re-transmitted the message and declared independence on behalf of Sheikh Mujib, Head of State (in absence).

The problem is, there is no 'official' version of history available because every government tried to promote their own people's participation while distorting the facts of the opposition. In order to ascertain some form of unbiased cohesion with the events that took place, you'll have to do what I've been doing for over 10 years and that's to collect as many books on the subject and try to piece together what happened.

A citizen, on e-mail Should I go home or not?

Modernising Bangladesh

I respect the decision taken by the Honourable High Court that ETV was operating without legal authority. ETV can now appeal to the Supreme Court for redress.

However, to modernise Bangladesh we need at least one private TV station and one radio station at every Upazila. The government controls BT and Radio. Therefore, these two state-run media cannot play any positive role to meet our needs. In our Constitution there was commitment to build up rural electrification and develop rural life. But it was ignored. So people started to come to Dhaka for better life. And they created serious problem as Dhaka is now overpopulated.

To send back these people to their own areas we need to provide them modern facilities. I request Bangladesh government to pass a law to make it easier to set up private TV and radio station in rural areas. We have many affluent people, they can take up this task easily. In this regard, the responsibility of the government would be only monitoring it.

Mohammed Mohiuddin Dallas, America

National Board of Revenue

Often I find many advertisements and notices of the National Board of

children and when these children become teenagers, the parents ask themselves where did I go wrong? Would you believe if I say 60 per cent of the arranged marriage in US Muslims gets divorced in the first two years of marriage.

With the care and love of a child's parents, grand parents and relatives, a child has a better chance to grow up with dignity in Bangladesh than growing up with Nintendo, TV, guns and drugs.

Mijanul Akbar Arkansas, USA

Only America can guarantee global security

The September 11 attack on the United States was an opening salvo by brutal atavistic forces against the world's only super power. As they cannot face the American military, the terrorist groups, led by bin Laden and his followers, have declared their war on America's civilian population. These terrorists want the US to withdraw from the Middle East allowing them to impose their atavistic rule in the region.

Afghanistan, under the fanatical Taliban who banished what they considered pernicious Western influences like television, cinema, music, sports, female education, was the model. The terrorists think that if America is forced to withdraw from the Middle East, they can easily overthrow the pro-western governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Kuwait and Talibanise the region.

But we know that any American withdrawal from the Middle East would lead to total chaos. Such a withdrawal would be immediately followed by a new invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein who will not let such an opportunity to slip. The second Iraqi conquest of Kuwait would raise the fear of Iran, which was a victim of Iraqi invasion before, and Iran would be prompted to strike at Iraq. Others are likely to join and states in the Middle East would be at each others' throats, endangering the global oil supplies. Most European countries, Japan and non-oil producing Third World countries would face an economic catastrophe, which would affect all.

Only the United States has the military and political clout to stem this global anarchy that will follow in the event of an American withdrawal. As former US President Jimmy Carter's National

Revenue (NBR) in your esteemed daily. I also notice the web page address. I have visited the web page with interest to know my income tax status. I thought that every TIN holder should have the latest information regarding his/her income tax. Unfortunately no such thing was found in the page.

NBR can introduce TIN based individual sheets for each TIN holder and his/her (or company's) latest income tax related matter should be included in these sheet. Each TIN holder should have an ID, which will be protected by individual

Please don't kill each other



Israelis and Palestinians please stop killing each other. The God of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) is the God of Muslims and Jews alike. When they follow the same God, why should they let their quarrel drag on indefinitely? Please live as good neighbours, if not as good friends. Please replace hatred and vengeance with respect and love. One should not let the past history blind oneself.

If Israel needs more land for new settlements it can reclaim it from the Sea as Netherlands and Singapore are reclaiming new lands. The lands designated to the Palestinians by the UNO should not be encroached upon by it.

No city, even if it is Jerusalem, can be holier than human blood. So please don't kill people in the name of fighting for the Holy City.

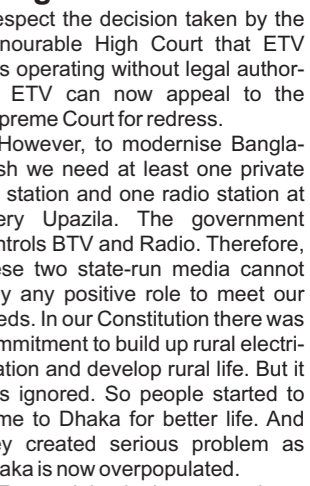
Faruque Hasan Dhanmandi, Dhaka

password, so that only the TIN holder can have an access to it.

This will help identify each TIN holder's position and he/she can check his/her status at any time. During the age of IT, things should be like this. Hope the NBR considers this matter seriously.

Sekendar Uttara, Dhaka

Does the US want to save the world?



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