

What do you have to say now?

I am an Anglo-Indian who was born in Bangladesh, lived there for 35 years and now migrated to Canada. My feeling for my birthplace is so much so that I cannot start my day without reading your newspaper. I admire you for your honesty and the commitment you demonstrate through your commentary and editorials on a range of subjects.

I know you as some one who advocated against the hartal culture and for a meaningful parliament where people's wishes could be reflected. You have been writing, pleading and advising our opposition leaders to join the parliament and shun the path of hartal. They have joined the parliament, a good sign indeed.

However, in order for this climate to sustain, we need the genuine collaboration of the ruling party and its leaders. I have been reading with great dismay the provocative remarks made by Begum Zia and his ministers in the parliament which no doubt is unhealthy for a democratic institution to function in its true spirit. I quote some of the recent comments made in the parliament castigating the opposition:

1. "Since AL is now detached from the people, they have decided to join the parliament."
2. "They wish to save their seat and salary within the 90 days and therefore they are in the parliament."
3. "They need more 'gom' (wheat) for their MPs and hence they are here."

So, what are these? Do these comments help in any way that we want to achieve? Can you blame AL if they walk out of the building and don't return?

Mr Editor, it is easy to criticise AL for calling hartal but what options do they have in a situation when their presence in the parliament is under constant provocation and cynicism. Where else can they go?

Bruce Burnwell
Ontario, Canada

Our position has been and will be that hartal cannot be a response for it hurts the people, and not the ruling party
Editor

Well done Daily Star!

I have to say I am very pleased with the internet publication of *The Daily Star*. I have been depending on internet news for the last four years to know the daily incidents in Bangladesh. I found your paper to be most neutral in terms of its news as compared with any other Bengali news publication in Bangladesh.

I am very fond of your "Letters to the Editor" section. It gives me a fair idea about what my fellow Bangladeshis are thinking. No other paper publishes the view of people with neutrality as *The Daily Star* does. The people of this daily have truly shown what a great newspaper is really supposed to be.

Keep up the good job!
Qazi Rubayet Ahmed
NY, USA

Timely editorial

Thanks for your timely editorial on the PM's conspiracy theory in her budget speech. Since then an interesting development has taken place. Retd Army Chief Haroun has been given an appointment with the Foreign Ministry with promises of an ambassadorship to the land down under.

It seems to us that the government is having trouble justifying the forced resignation of the President. Since the *mazar ziarat* excuse didn't cut any ice with the public, the PM brought in the new conspiracy theory.

The public meanwhile are left wondering what sort of hypocrites are at the helm of affairs in the nation.

Abu Sufian
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Venice in Bangladesh!

During the rainy season, the

Malibag area stretching from Malibag Railcrossing to Mouchak Market has earned the proud distinction of being compared to a lane in the city of Venice, floating on water.

Waterlogging has reached such proportions that the local residents have started planning to buy boats and canoe to navigate this unending perennial problem as because the Govt. is rendering not only a deaf ear but also a blind eye to their misery. And to add to this, the innumerable number of invisible, underwater ditches and potholes act as a source of accidents and embarrassments. The traffic sometimes comes to a standstill for hours.

The other day, we saw the Associate Editor of *The Daily Star* wading through water as because his vehicle got stuck-up in the traffic congestion.

Would the new Mayor of Dhaka city corporation or any other higher official please take the trouble of passing through this road after a moderate shower so that they themselves can practically experience our agony and sufferings and perhaps a solution can be brought about to this persistent problem.

Munir Hassan
Malibagh, Dhaka

Degrading TV commercial

TV commercials are adopting the Western culture of misusing women's body for promoting their commodities. In the West despite claims for equality among genders, women's semi-nude body is displayed in TV ad for selling everything from nails to trucks. This is a total disregard to the intellect and dignity of women.

All conscientious women should stand up against this naked abuse of a women's body in the TV ad. I fervently request all concerned to borrow the good work ethics from the West and not the obscenity, which portray women as a thing of

AJM closes down

It has taken 30 years for government of Bangladesh to succeed in demolishing the Jute Industry.

On the eve of the Liberation the owners of the Jute Industries predicted that Bangladesh government would not be able to continue with an independent policy and will have to succumb to the pressure of India to shut down all Jute Mills.

The start has been made by the shutting down of Adamjee Jute Mills. The balance of Jute Mills operating will also shut down by 2005. Then we will go back to 1947 where we had no jute industry and only supplied jute of India.

Today one million bales of raw jute are being smuggled to India and another 5,00,000 bales being purchased officially.

Khairul Masud
Eskaton, Dhaka

Adamjee Jute Mills has been shut down. Now what to do with it? The land can then be turned into Science or IT industrial park. The government should develop it like an EPZ and then sell it to private sector entrepreneurs. Similarly principle and modality may be followed for other loss making SOE's with large chunk of valuable developed land. The redeveloped Science/IT Park may create up to one lakh new jobs.

Will the Privatisation Board and/or Ministry of Industries give it a serious thought? Current modality of selling off SOE's by Privatisation Commission is not likely to work, as it failed in the past.

M N Alam
Moghbazar, Dhaka

After Adamjee, Why not Biman?

Finally the shutters have been pulled down on Adamjee Jute Mills and about 20,000 workers walked out into darkness with heavy hearts. From news reports we gather that it is no fault of the workers that AJM had run into losses for years but due to mismanagement and corruption of the mill officials and politicisation of the workers that have brought the shutters down.

destabilise Muslim *Khalifat* by planting seeds of nationalism among educated Turkish youths.

Anyway, I think it is about time we recount the 'achievements' of Kemal Ataturk. Here's a list of his glorious 'achievements' in the name of modernisation, which he brought about ruthlessly by the use of excessive force and coercion of his peo-

ple of prayer in Arabic (later revoked).

9. Introduced Western hat as opposed to fez (Turkish cap) (1925).
10. Activities of all religious sects were banned by law (1925).
11. Religious attire was prohibited in public (1934). According to this law, religious personalities, irrespective of the religious groups they belong were not to wear religious attire in



The good-bye hour

It is a good news from a limited point of view and BNP should as well thank Awami League that they did not turn it into a national issue and called hartals. Perhaps it also had a tacit approval of AL.

For years we have been reading reports on mismanagement of Biman Bangladesh Airlines that ashamed the nation at home and abroad. Four million US Dollars given by World Bank during the rule of the previous government to assess the possibilities of privatisation of Biman also went down the drains.

My question is if 20,000 workers of AJM can walkout into an unknown future without any noticeable protest why can't the government first axe the 6,000 employees of Biman, clear all liabilities and then go for privatisation of the airline?

Ziauddin Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

their days in hardship. Can they expect any justice from the law enforcing agencies or can they survive from any threat when a minister is not spared?

Most surprisingly it is understood that this businessman continued his predominance during the past government and has been continuing the relationship with the BNP as well. From this sort of incident only speaks of that if you have money you can do and undo anything in this country whether you are right or wrong.

Shahid Hossain
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Lawyers fighting among each other!

On July 1, I came to know about scuffles that broke out between lawyers belonging to the BNP and AL factions in regards to the appointment of a few judges to the Supreme Court in Dhaka. I have found this news really amazing.

Lawyers fighting among each other—has it ever happened in other civilised country? Oh, yes, once in Pakistan when Mian Nawaz Sharif threw out the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. So, does Bangladesh want to emulate Pakistan in this matter? Aren't lawyers supposed to uphold the law?

R. Kalita
Canada

Terrorism against photography?

On July 2, I visited the "Terrorism against Humanity" photo exhibition being held at North South University by the cultural wing of the US Mission here. The scenes depicted in the pictures were disturbing, but, as a Bangladeshi, I found the scene outside the exhibition to be more so. 12 uniformed policemen were sitting in the lobby of the building doing, what to my untrained eye appeared to be—absolutely nothing.

If these men are protecting the photographs, why are they withdrawn at night? If they are protecting the students as they claim, why are they not establishing their presence outside and around the buildings instead of sitting in the lobby? And what are they protecting the students from?

I am not a Member of Parliament, so I cannot voice my opinions on the Budget. I am not the Home Minister, so I cannot decide on where police-

men are most needed. I am not even the OC of Gulshan Thana. But if I were in any of these positions, I would think harder of how to better allocate our scarce resources.

S. Chowdhury, Dhaka

Getting used to "killing"

Everyday when I read *The Daily Star*, I see dozens of reports on murder, shooting, acid throwing etc, which leaves a bad taste in my mouth. Here are some of those reports published in *The Daily Star* issue of June 30:

"Khalina Jubo League leader gunned down"; "Bullet-hit Jubo Dal leader Kaikobad dies"; "Hotel owner shot dead by extortionists in Cox's Bazar"; "House wife shot dead in Laxmipur"; "Acid sprayed on woman in Sirajganj"; "Contractor, trucker shot for tolls" etc. to name a few. And we are to assume that the law and order situation in Bangladesh is improving!

Is the government so powerless that they cannot deal with the rise in crimes? In Western countries, the Home Minister would have resigned a long time ago if faced with the same scenario. I guess it is too much to ask for the same in Bangladesh. Are we then to summarise that we are getting used to all these killings?

Rubaiyat Kibria
Sydney, Australia

Fearful regime

I am a great fan of the martyred President Ziaur Rahman, the man who restored multiparty democracy and political pluralism in Bangladesh. It is because of that, not in spite, I cannot but find the shenanigans of his political 'descendants' to be so disgusting.

They ousted the late President's top lieutenant from Bangabhaban because the latter was not supposedly loyal enough to Zia's legacy! For all his faults, Ziaur Rahman was known for his prickly sense of honesty. His party's ministers today obviously have a different take on the concept. They champion the idea of having an information technology revolution but slap duty on computers. They shout loud about freedom of the press and then turn around to impose the most stringent customs restrictions on foreign periodicals in the free world.

I am an admirer of Ziaur

Rahman's BNP. It is a party that apparently has ceased to exist. It is a pity because that was a great and noble party.

ES
Missouri, USA

Dhaka transport plan

As part of a transport plan we would need to bring in the following technical points

How do we stop policemen taking taka 100 bribes from trucks, taka 50 bribes from baby taxis, taka 10 bribes from rickshaws?

How do we ensure that all highways are wide enough for two vehicles to pass safely?

How do we ensure that ferries designed for 100 people don't carry 200?

Do our university transport departments study these sophisticated technical issues?

Ezajur
On e-mail

'An Epitaph for Adamjee'

I was deeply moved by the column "An epitaph for Adamjee" by Afsan Chowdhury (July 2) following on the heels of a picture on the previous day showing a group of school girls crying, trying desperately to make sense of why one of their school-mates has fainted.

I was overcome with a profound sense of anguish, and then shame and then a growing sense of anger. Could I have done something, however small? Could our politicians have done something? Don't get me wrong; I have no love lost for the closing of an institution that primarily served the corrupt interests of a few. If there is anything good that will come out of this, it will be closing the taps on powerful vested groups who have bled both Adamjee and our national treasury. But must this happen at the cost of plain human misery? Who is to answer for this? The BNP governments over two periods? The previous Awami League government? The Ershad regime? The bureaucrats in-charge of running

must be forthcoming. And a final few thought on the girl who fainted because her school was being closed-down. In search of justice, can I request *The Daily Star* to conduct a comprehensive survey of where public and civil servants send their children to school and university? Most of us already know the answer, but it would be good to get the facts out in the public sphere and make our public and civil servants squirm in embarrassment. Let us see whether those who purport to govern us have real moral authority or whether they are morally bankrupt as most of us suspect them to be.

Faisal Hussain
Dhaka

Mohakhali and liberty

Every morning from 8 am right through the whole day Mohakhali is a mess. Every commuter coming to and from Banani, Gulshan, Baridhara and Uttara have an interminable wait wasting valuable time. In the mornings I routinely spend about twenty minutes getting from Chairman Bari to Rawa Club.

Yet the alternative route through the Cantonment is free from much traffic and off limits to tax paying Bangladeshi citizens. Only retired military officers, Ministers and the PM can use it.

Well I for one don't like and will not stand for this state of affairs. I pay taxes in this country and I want to use that route. The argument about security concerns is all stuff and nonsense.

So for all you Uttara residents, here's the trick. Trust me it works. Use that marbled "Heroes live Forever" gate otherwise known as the Staff Road, I think. Tell the MP (remember not to speak until he greets you in the correct manner) you are going to the CMH. Just make up the name of any colonel. Doesn't matter what name you give, there's bound to be one by that name and the MP wouldn't know anyway. You can also say that you're going to the club and not elaborate further. That always confuses them because they don't know which one you're talking about

US' shameful mistake

I don't find any befitting language to express my indignation over the killing of the innocent civilians in Afghanistan joining a marriage ceremony by the US forces bombing.

I know that no one would dare to protest this unforgivable crime. Neither the present rulers of the Afghanistan have any guts to do anything about it. What is termed as a mere mistake by America is a terrible tragedy for Afghanistan.

Dead are now those people of a war-torn country who went to join the merriment and wanted to forget the agony of life for some moment. America should learn from the history and thereby refrain itself from enraging the Afghan blood, which might turn savage any time.

Mamun-Ul-Ala, Lalmatia, Dhaka



Adamjee? The comfortable people sitting in the World Bank or IMF? Who? There must be a search for humane justice for the poor victims of the Adamjee closure, which must include compensation, help in readjustment, and the bringing to book of individuals and government ministers (past and present) who have allowed Adamjee to fail. Justice must be demanded and

and will let you through. My personal favourite is saying that I'm going to the Kurmitola Golf Club. And why am I going at eight in the morning? Because I have an appointment to see general what's-his-name.

Asterix
Dhaka

VAT net catches magazines

The government has increased its VAT net to increase its income and it's worth doing so to increase dependency on local resources. But what is agonizing to watch is looking for justification of imposing VAT on certain items such as educational magazines and periodicals.

It has been learnt that government has slapped 50 per cent VAT unanimously on all sorts of magazines and periodicals without bothering to know who their users are. For instance Business World and Business Today are used by Research firms, consultancy firms, educational institutions, training institutions and moreover are used by Business executives, teachers, trainers and think-tanks for their self-learning purposes.

Due to unreasonable high cost these scarce updated information enriched materials will disappear from our country which would hamper our development and educational programme tremendously and its long-term effect would be irreparable losses in terms of development of knowledge.

One of the important conditions of development of the country is the development of knowledge based industries and for that reason many countries allow import of books and research journals on zero duty status. We urge the government to reconsider its decision about its newly imposed VAT and allow free access of these valuable magazines for the betterment of the nation and economy.

MS Jamal
Dhaka

It's now confirmed. Bangladesh is ruled by a group of illiterate and insecure people. Who else would demand a PSI on magazines? It's not like we buy Playboy in Bangladesh that there might be something offensive. Although personally I find it offensive that it's okay to show colour pictures of the dismembered bodies of chil-



Free-doomed...

dren in the front pages of newspapers but not pictures of scantily clad women.

Does BNP have some sort of suicidal death wish? Why else is it selectively targeting different segments of the populace and alienating them? Banning reconditioned cars, increasing income taxes on the middle classes, increasing the prices of essentials and

taxing computers made not much of a difference to me, but robbing me of my issue of Time and Economist makes them my enemy.

It's only when you've voted for a change that you realise that it was so much better before.

Bastiat
Dhaka

The Daily Star's quest and yearning for knowledge is commendable. This was evident from the lead story of July 2 and the second editorial the following day. You have been agonised by the government taxing on knowledge.

Pause for a moment and visualise a situation like this. The government allows, say the import of the Statesman, as was the case during the Pakistan days, without imposing any tax where will *The Daily Star* stand? The Statesman at tk.5 and *Daily Star* at tk.7, which one the reader will opt for? Even if the price is even *The Daily Star* will have to breathe twice the present level to resist the competition from the Statesman. Please don't rush into a hasty conclusion on all issues. Kindly weigh all options before pronouncing your "valued" judgement.

I have been an avid newspaper reader for past 40 years and have been fortunate enough to lay hand on prestigious newspaper like the Times, New York Times and the Washington Post. I have hardly seen any newspaper printing letters on a report the following day as *The Daily Star* did, on the commentary written by its Editor on the resignation of the president. The feat was quite amazing, the promptitude of the letter writer, I mean. There seems to be a ceaseless flow of letters to *The Daily Star* and many from outside the country. This is something unusual.

Is not *The Daily Star* beginning to lean towards the Awami League abandoning its avowed neutrality.

Tahmeed
Dhaka

Ministry of Finance and National Board of Revenue have recently slapped heavy taxes on the import of foreign magazines and journals. The pre-shipment inspection is also made compulsory. The decision to slap huge taxes on imported magazines is not only tantamount to stifling the growth of knowledge but also is a very insensible one.

Insensible because no country in an ever-increasing globalised world has set such a precedent of imposing taxes on the imported journals. Even Military ruler in Pakistan allowed the import of foreign magazines in that country to be total tax-free. Thus, such amount of taxes on these magazines for an infant democracy like Bangladesh at this stage will do more harms than good.

For, many among the ordinary educated people in this country, reading these magazines and keeping in touch with the global affairs is an indispensable way of increasing their knowledge.

In addition, students and scholars require these magazines for scholarly research and pursuit of knowledge. The imposition of hefty taxes will simply deprive them from having these popular magazines in their disposal.

Frankly, the magazine publishers or owners will not lose much even if the market of subscription of any of these magazines is stunted in Bangladesh. Then, who loses? We, the citizens of this country. The Ministry of Finance has to find other way of augmenting its exchequer than imposing taxes on imported journals.

AFM Mohiuddin
Dhaka