

Exporter's awe

The government declared 25 per cent cash incentive to the exporters against export made to overseas. That 25 per cent is now reduced to 15 per cent effective July 2002. For the last eight months cash incentive was not released to the exporters as the government considered 'misuse' of the fund by the exporters. The exporters did not get the money but the lending bank took 15.5 per cent interest over the capital borrowed without any mercy whatsoever.

Crores of taka have been accumulated as outstanding from the government but the amount released by the government is so meagre that even the full interest that has accrued over the last eight months cannot be paid or cleared altogether leave alone re-payment of the capital borrowings. We hear tons and tons of money are being miss-appropriated through the purchase of Frigate, Aeroplane, Project commission etc. The exporters of this country are treated as a secondary element, which is so frustrating.

Believe me, not all industrialists are willful loan defaulters. There may be some bad eggs among the very many but I must say that the government's irrational decisions/implications have forced many entrepreneurs into forcible defaulters.

Tayab-ul-Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

A question

From the prevailing political environment, it seems that visiting a burial site has become compulsory. I just wanted to isn't worshipping a grave (*mazar*) *shirk*?

Suraiya Jahan
Dhaka

False and fake certificates

False certificates have been around for long and foreign countries have smartened up to it making immigration employment abroad difficult.

In 1990 there was an opportunity for Bangladeshis to migrate to New Zealand, but the effort went in vain, because a group of frauds came up with false MBBS certificates and even experience certificates showing them as service holders at different clinics. What happened afterwards is the New Zealanders investigated and found out making visa facilities became very tough for Bangladeshis.

The visa officers at the US Embassy, Dhaka after scrutinising most of the HSC certificates of the DU winners found that more than half the certificates were fakes. Different national dailies have reported about these false certificates. But these frauds are still very active in their illegal activities.

I request the authorities concerned to take necessary steps eradicate such illegal activities.

Quazi Raquibul Islam
Dhaka

For the jail teachers

In every central jail (10 central jails) in Bangladesh teachers are appointed by the government to educate the prisoners. A jail teacher is equivalent to the headmaster of a government primary school. But the teacher post in jail is very neglected due to different reasons.

1) It is blocked post. There is no promotion in this post.
2) There is no need for PTI course for the jail teachers. So, they do not get facilities like a govt. primary school Headmaster.

As a jail teacher, I request Education Ministry to take proper steps to improve the standard of jail teachers.

Abdus Salam
Teacher, Central Jail, Mymensingh

"Two days weekly holiday"

I support Ms Nur Jahan's view (June 2) on two-day-weekly holiday. The new office timing of one-day weekend is really inconvenient and absurd.

To say the least, the government officials are ill paid and those who solely depend on their salary (no access to easy money) cannot afford to maintain their families in the cities. These families live in villages. Don't these people have any right to spend some time with their near and dear ones at least once a week? With the prevailing one-day weekend it is virtually impossible.

Isn't there anything the government can do about it?

Nargis Begum
Comilla

Killing of an expatriate

The news of killing of a poor expatriate who died after the mugger's threw him out of the taxicab (July 2) reminds us of how much anarchy is prevailing in our society. The victim Abdul Hye was returning from Malaysia after three years, whose dream was to meet his family remained unfulfilled forever.

I don't know how long these poor people will continue to suffer first at the airport lounge by the white collar people and then at the hands of those so-called taxicab drivers outside the airport. Is it possible for our Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment to open

a 'Free Service Booth' at the airport from where the expatriates visiting their motherland would be provided with all suggestions and supports?

I must congratulate DC (north) Faruque Ahmed, Addl. DC Humayone Kabir and others of DMP for quickly arresting the killers and recovering the goods of the murdered expatriate Abdul Hye.

Jkobir
Mirpur, Dhaka

AK-47 culture

It is really frightening to see in the newspapers that criminals are arrested with all the modern arms. A few days ago I saw in the newspaper that a top criminal from Chittagong was arrested with an AK-56 and on 5th July another person was arrested with another sophisticated machinegun.

Something must be done to stop these illegal arms trade if we want to control terrorism. And also the government needs to re-organise our ill-equipped police department with modern facilities and arms. These days it is very difficult to fight crime with the old-fashioned 7.50-Kg weight gun.

M Tanveer Sami
Nawab Salimullah Road, Dhaka

Judges

I am a bit surprised that our Constitution does not require Supreme Court judges to be "impartial". It is OK as long as they are "independent." It looks like they are not even required to take oath of office as judges although we know they all do.

Don't you think this is strange? I think our Constitution Experts have not taken note of this.

F. A. Khan
Dhaka

Alarming increase in extortion activities

Now-a-days, the extortionists have become so daring that they are frequently killing people for refusal of extortion. It was reported (July 7) that the armed gang of Picchi Hannan, one of the 23 top criminals in the city, kidnapped a trader named Amir Hossain from the Karwan Bazar area and later strangled him after he refused to pay tolls to the gang. In another report, in Gazipur, a woman was gang raped by the extortionists in presence of her husband as her poor husband

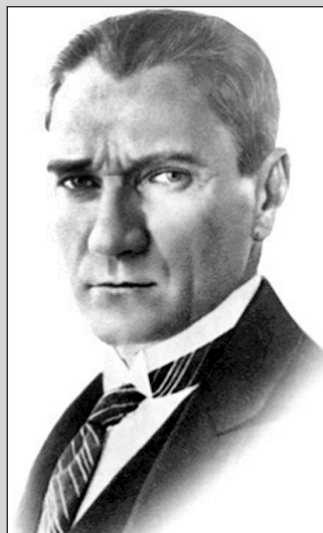
Ataturk the great!

The status of Kemal Ataturk is now almost becoming a debate on the pages of *Star*. Nobody remembers that he was a great figure of history because he defeated the colonial forces in various parts of the world and inspired Indians to fight the British. Remember Nazrul's famous poem, "Kemal tu ne kamal kiya bhai..." (Kemal, you have done a miracle)

Not only that he was the first Muslim who ended the Islamic imperial institution of Ottoman Caliphate, which also ended the Khilafat movement in India. He established secularism and gave freedom from the rule of the Mullahs in Turkey. He was close to what Bangabandhu did for Bangladesh.

We love and respect him for what he did for his people and what he did to the religious theocrats in Turkey. He was a great Liberator of the Turks and not a Mullah Laden of Saudi Arabia.

Nurul Alam
Dhaka



A great leader?

The government is engaged in various constructive (!) programmes like banning reconditioned cars, introducing multi-metering service, banning cable channels but they never bother to do something about frequent load-shedding and the consequent sufferings of people.

It is time for both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia to "GO" because they have no intention of doing anything for the millions of poor Bengali people. It has only been a few months since BNP came to power. But instead of addressing all those important issues, all they are doing is fighting with the opposition.

It is always the same, two parties fighting their war and in the process, they are simply killing Bangladesh!

It is already too late for Bangladesh and it is about time for the people to wake up.

Azad Miah
On e-mail

Green Dhaka, clean Dhaka

I'd like to request our otherwise sleeping city fathers to wake up from their slumber and do something concrete turn our metropolis into a cleaner and greener one.

All obsolete and useless banners should be removed. The city looks like a city of festoon. These billboards and banners should be located atop buildings and along the highways.

More and more trees should be planted on the road islands. And that too should be *oushodhi* trees.

The footpaths should be cleared of hawkers and vendors and should be made user friendly.

The surface drains and covered drains should be periodically cleaned. Sweepers and their supervisors are hardly seen.

The overflowing yellow bins and dustbins should be cleared regularly.

Ananta Ashim
Dhaka University

Indian policy towards its neighbours

There is a mixed concern in the sub-continental diplomatic circle concerning the future of the Indian policy towards its neighbours when the current Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee will be gone. This anxiety has grown further after the recent cabinet changes with L. K. Advani's elevation to the post of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party from a Hindu nationalist party to an all Indian political entity is phenomenal and the role played by Mr. Vajpayee is unique in this respect. The traditional Indian democratic values, despite its numerous weaknesses, were strong enough to mould it into a political force acceptable to the general masses. Mr. Vajpayee has shown himself as a great politically matured person with honesty and simplicity. Religious extremism, which is the ugly side of poverty and ignorance, did not influence his political wisdom.

I had some wrong notion about L. K. Advani as a politician, but during the height of the Indo-Pak military stand off he came to the United States and gave an interview in the television. I found him knowledgeable and absolutely rational. His vision about his country vis a vis the role India would play in the future was unique and understandable. I think if he becomes the next Indian Prime Minister he will play a very responsible role may be more sophisticated than his mentor. His past as a Hindu nationalist will have no negative influence on his abilities to perform his duties as Prime Minister.

Akbar Hussain
Toronto, Canada

On budget

I am from a middle-class family and I'm not very much concerned about whether the tax on new car increases or not. My concern is whether I can buy the necessary household provisions as usual. Like Mr Neaz Al Rahman ("National Budget and Kiwifruits", June 21) I too don't know much about economics. And we are concerned about the 80 per cent people of the country who are struggling for food, for a decent living.

I think the economists must pay attention to these 80 per cent and try to bring a change in the national economy.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Wake up call

It's a wonder to me how Bangladeshis could have gotten such a skewed vision of history. Since when did Kemal Ataturk become such a hero?

I've taken my share of World History classes in my American school and I have never come across such praise for a ruthless, anti-Islamic man. Is this a petty attempt to be "modern"? Do we really believe that to praise Ataturk, George W Bush, and the pro-Western Iranian Shahs, it means that we are "modern and civilised"? Are we Bangladeshis really such docile, brainless zombies, that we will drink in what all that we are told?

You must question where this knowledge comes from, because without questioning there is no truth. Don't allow the West or anyone else for that matter dictate what you believe in. Think. Question. Learn.

Farah Islam
Grade 12

Budget talk

This is in reference to the macroeconomic stabilisation that Finance Minister envisioned in his budgetary speech. A big part of macroeconomic stabilisation requires foreign trade liberalisation for sure. If developing and subsidising infant industry to increase comparative advantage is the goal then it is a theoretically noble idea indeed. But developing two contradictory public policies where, in one hand foreign trade is supposedly "liberalised" according to most-favoured-nation philosophy and on the other hand taxing the same consumer goods leaves no incentives for our domestic producers and further elongates the vicious circle of under-consumption among consumers as well. I am not sure, how a decreased productivity growth would actually contribute to our prosperity and lead us to macroeconomic liberalisation.

However, the poverty alleviation programs vaguely mentioned by the Finance Minister, which will receive a large part of our GDP are supposed to help reduce the budget deficit. Tightening the monetary policies and proposing such programs have one implication in my experience; there will be an in-flow of foreign aid and development loans in the middle of the programs.

I am not convinced how the defence budget has been reduced, given the amorous relationship of the defence forces with the present government's heritage. Here is a simple mathematical relation that may clear the apparent claim; look at the defence budgets of FY 1991-1996 and FY 1996-2000. Compare the increases and decreases and subtract inflation from the sum amount. The finance minister has reduced the defence budget indeed, but close to the FY 1995-96 level. That's not called "reduction". That's the accounting trick students learn in their second day of Accounting 101 class. If I am to presume that the defense forces will do with a reduced fund, whereas the government has proposed to increase the defense programs and forces, I must be missing the influential and powerful linkage.

I have no prejudice against present or past governments of the 90s. The language of economics bears no political ideologies, at least at my end.

Cyrus Zulkarnaian
One e-mail

Help the poor students

Most of the people of our country are poor and live in villages. And majority of the students study in local, non-government educational institutions. Most of them manage their educational expenses with much difficulty. We are happy that the government has given the opportunity for girl students to college education without tuition fee.

We request the Prime Minister to start a stipend for the boy students in every educational institution so that the students can be benefited, especially the poor students will be relieved from the crisis of economic problem.

Md. Jasimuddin
Moulvibazar

Musharraf and a lesson for us

A few months ago, I wrote a letter to this paper, stating the opinion that Gen. Musharraf is doing something unprecedented in post colonial or 20th century history.

Since that time, my obvious admiration of the man has abated somewhat. Although I still think he's the best thing to have happened to Pakistan in a long time in spite of his farcical referendum.

There is a lesson for us here. Bangladesh may well be another Pakistan in the making. Here we also have politicians trying to make capital by stoking communalism and abetting fundamentalists. We also have a corrupt despotic democracy similar to Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. We also have not one, but two dynasties squabbling

I like the new law in Pakistan

A couple of things, which Musharraf is implementing in Pakistan, shows he is a true leader. If the same law is implemented in Bangladesh, it could possibly solve a lot of political problems.

The new law states that no person would be able to hold the presidential office for more than two terms and all politicians must have a university degree in order to run for a sit in the parliament. I know implementing this law in Bangladesh would be rather difficult since a lot of our political leaders have very little educational qualification (or a valid university degree) and they would strongly oppose this.

But if BNP decides to implement these laws for the next Parliament Election it would send a message to the people of Bangladesh that they really do want good political leaders to come to power. I think it would be the boldest and best political decision ever taken. Best of all it would bring about educated MPs in the parliament who would be more equipped to handle the problems of this impoverished country and bring end to political dynasty.

Qazi Rubayet Ahmed
New York, USA

over the spoils. We too have an overlarge military although thankfully not even remotely as dangerous as Pakistan's.

Like it or not our erstwhile compatriots fate may be destined to be repeated here. Watch out.

Bastiat
Dhaka

Road crossing

Almost in every part of Dhaka city, be it the Nawabpur Road, Motijheel commercial area or Dhanmondi residential area -- everywhere road crossing has become really a tiresome, time consuming, risky and dangerous business, especially for school going children, old persons and women.

The DCC constructed several foot over-bridges and underground passes to cross at different places in the city for safety and convenience. But that really has not improved the situation much.

We strongly feel that the DCC and DMP should take effective steps to mitigate the sufferings of the city dwellers.

OH Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

The regime in danger

Unless the listed criminals and their gang members are not only arrested but also prosecuted.

The police must regenerate a positive image with the public, the regime is in danger of very survival.

There is too much political interference in police work. Why?

Sharif Hasan Khan
DU

We want nuclear plant and more budget for armed forces

Myanmar is going to start nuclear plant with the assistance of Russia. India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons. In the nuclear era, nuclear capability is the safety guard of a sovereign country. In the present world five superpower countries are controlling the world. They are the lords because they have nuclear power.

If we (Bangladesh) have to eat grass we would but we have to have nuclear plant. But the present government has already curtailed 141 crore Tk budget allocation for the armed forces. We need more allocation and we should have a plan to start nuclear plant. Even we should have a nuclear plant to produce electricity.

Sohel Bin Seraj
Mymensingh



was suitable President for the country or not. BNP has committed a great blunder by asking a neutral and appropriate President to resign.

Md. Jasimuddin
Moulvibazar

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The political and criminal godfathers behind the scenes must be exposed.

No favour to own members. Whom are the politicians working for-- the party or for the country? There is ample evidence that most of these politicians have amassed wealth through dubious means. How about declaration of asset by the politicians?

Student politics and labour fronts must be banned.

Why is our leadership like a balloon-- high up in the air controlled by a thin fragile string? Sit down and work-- without publicity. The beneficiaries would sing automatic praise in due time.

Abd Dhaka

Tax and development

I am with the Finance Minister when he says that we must pay tax for development. So, a person who earns barely Tk 6,500 per month (and cannot even afford a doctor for his ailing child) must also pay something. Ok I accept it.

Enough is enough

For how long would we watch such nasty political dramas played by the political leaders whom we voted to power and who love to serve their family and friends not the country.

We just cannot let them play with our future. We have been fighting all these years for democracy not for dynasty.

Chowdhury KN
Dhaka

Partisan push-out of the President

Like many I read with shock, if not with total dismay the recent incident of the resignation of the President.

Ironically, the sycophantic BNPPPs that regarded the 'neutral' act of the President as an expression of "disloyalty" simply followed its arch rival AL's lead in party-centric politics. The result has been that together, BNP and AL, have now reduced the political culture of the country into a most abominable level of ruralism, tribalism, cronyism and indeed, cultism.

From the time of the independence of Bangladesh, each ruling party seemed to have used the garb of democracy (sometimes, not even that) and the so-called parliamentary majority to employ the most naked form of sycophancy and thuggery to perpetuate its own hold on power. Enmeshed in this culture of political tribalism, especially the way the two main political parties have now locked horns with each other and the way each is trying to outsmart the other with meaner-than-thou means to regain and remain in power, the outlook for the future is indeed quite bleak. With the current culture prevailing, and the current actors prevailing, scope for reform from within or to expect anything positive to come out of this vicious nexus is anything but bright.

Where do we go from here, then? Is there a way out of the AL/BNP quagmire? What can be done to save the country from the throes of the current self-perpetuating and self-aggrandising political tribalism?

Adil Khan
Brisbane, Australia