

## General Musharraf's regret

It is very confusing to note General Musharraf's regret during his visit to the National Memorial at Savar. So far I've noticed on several occasions that he is a very good orator and his recent comments about fundamentalism has been welcomed everywhere. Moreover, he seems to have a sense of open-mindedness and liberalism, which are hardly noticed in the society ruled by Islamic laws.

He has used the word 'magnanimity'. Being magnanimous he could have used the words 'forgive', 'pardon', 'excuse' instead of simply 'regret'. English is such a language that any word of these three would have made him much more acceptable to the people who suffered the atrocities under the Pakistani forces in 1971. We appreciated his gesture shown during the last SAARC summit when he shook hands with Prime Minister Vajpayee. It was another example of his magnanimity.

**Kamaluddin Ahmed**  
Shamoly, Dhaka

## Views on student politics

I strongly support the idea of banning student politics. Student politics only benefit the so-called student leaders. It supports and shields criminal activities in the country's educational institutions. The so-called student leaders never tried to do anything that might benefit the general student. General students become hostages to these leaders' whims and wishes.

Our teachers instead of running behind the corrupt political leaders should focus on research work and teaching. Our universities rank among the worst educational institutions in the world because of these corrupt and politically motivated teachers. I earnestly hope that the government would take necessary measures to ban student politics for good. Let there be light in our educational institutions.

**Sherif Saeed**  
One e-mail

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I have gone through the letter "Banning of student politics- not the solution" by Arafat Islam (August 4). In his letter, Mr. Arafat blamed 'tenderbaazi' for Soni's death in BUET. Yes, it is true. But where is the root of this 'tenderbaazi'? A single student don't have enough courage to do 'tenderbaazi' and I am sure Mr. Arafat will never be able to show a single evidence where the 'tenderbaaz' is a common student. In the name of student organisation under political shelter some student leaders are doing such 'tenderbaazi' and collecting toll. What are the identities of Mukti and Tagar? Did not the student wings and political leaders support them?

Mr. Arafat also claimed "Because of student politics, the students of DU were able to protest the police atrocity that took place in Shamsunnahar Hall. If there had not been any student politics they should have to keep their mouth shut and wait for more humiliation and oppression in future." I am sorry to find his biased claim. Advocating in favour of student politics he should not give political colour to this honest and dedicated uprising of general students and teachers against police and the authority's atrocity.

It is well-known to all that the recent uprising at Dhaka University against police brutality is not a political uprising - it is the uprising of general students and teachers, which was supported by the common people.

This uprising is also a lesson that campus politics is not needed to protest against atrocity.

**M. S. Uddin**

Japan

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This is in reference to Mr Zakaria Khondoker's letter "Student politics- assorted thoughts" (July 25) supporting student politics. He did really mix-up student politics with students' right to protest any governmental decision for an unknown reason. It seems he just tried to distract people's concern into a different issue.

First of all as an independent person, everyone has a right to say their own words where students are not an exception and government is not against that. It exists all over the world as we can see violent protest over any governmental decision always occurs (Last time in Indonesia for US bombing). But this can not be termed, as student politics cause students are not involved with any political parties. There can be a student council to look after the students' demand.

He says "You won't be able to show me any single example of gun battle caused by student politics in 90s". Well as a university student, I'd like to inform Mr Khondoker that almost 95 per cent of the gun battles in educational institutions are caused by student politics and patronised by the political leaders.

Every negative incident occurring on the campus is directly or indirectly related with student politics and if it is banned, anti-social activities in DU campus will surely be reduced to about 50 per cent.

**Saiyat**

DU

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## Roads of Dhaka

Gusty and strong rains, which have been too strong for being seasonal, were too costly for the city dwellers, as majority roads of the city have developed deep potholes as pebbles, stones and bitumen were washed away with the rain. Majority roads are now left with life risking potholes filled with dirt and stagnant rainwater. Scenarios of these roads change completely during night-time, as motorists have to use their sixth sense to challenge the death traps to reach their destinations with the taste of rocky and bizarre journeys.

Consequently roads of Dhaka are now in bad shape and pedestrians and motorists have been going through immense sufferings. Truly rains took its heavy tolls on the roads and created mockery of the road repair management of City Corporation. If the situation persists it would be a difficult job for the City Corporation to bring the damaged roads back in the useable form. Dhaka City Corporation already announced its development budget but yet has to decide whom to allocate the job. It took too a long time to study irregularities caused in road management and fund disbursements of the past government. Well, it's a consonance that the City Corporation felt pity for the poor dwellers and hastily took some efforts to do something that we can count on and it was a temporary road repair work. Alas it was a poor and half hazard effort as temporary repair work only let people feel good for a while and then once again things moved in the same direction. What is important for such an important Corporation to protect its corporate image is to develop and chalk out a sensible and timely work plan to resolve rising crises. Critical issues such as waste disposal, pollution, traffic management and fighting mosquito men-



Ruined roads

ace cannot be resolved with a dilly delay process.

As time is passing by things are becoming more challenging and hectic and therefore new dimensions have to be added in plan and work priority list. It's time to think in a new way and draft plans, which mean sense for city dwellers. It should stick to the slogan "Plan for tomorrow and work for today".

**M. S. Jamal, Dhaka**

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Have you ever imagined how callously planned Dhaka's roads

are? Almost no roads have any safe means of crossing by pedestrians. Just take a look at Mohakhali, there is no way to cross it apart from running and weaving between speeding buses and the other transportation on the road. But the worst is probably the Airport road. It has houses and factories on both sides of the road and for the most part there is no way to cross. Every night on the way home I am terrified that my driver will hit one of the garment workers crossing the road. With the trucks coming from the opposite direction with their lights on high beam, it's almost impossible to see anything anyway. You just have to hope there isn't some pedestrians with no road sense standing in the invisible divider waiting to jump.

Not surprisingly last Thursday night I saw a truly bizarre and horrifying spectacle. I was driving towards the city in my car. The rear of the one in front of me, a white '96 model Corolla suddenly seemed to jump up as if it was running over something. As the car sped on, remember all this happened in half a second, I saw what I thought was a dog or some rags, but actually a body of a bearded man. He was lying length-wise on the road; the car in front of me had driven right over him. I managed to swerve away in time although he looked quite dead. It appeared that he was hit not by the car in front of me but the one in front of that. I imagine it was that one because he sped away as fast as possible.

So Thursday night someone got away with a hit and run. There will be many more like that until our roads have some safe means of crossing and our people learn some road sense.

**Satyajit**

Dhaka

monitor criminal activities. Is this either necessary or desirable?

It is commonly perceived, correctly I think, that the police are well aware of most of the habitual criminals in Dhaka. Newspapers often report how the police themselves give prior warnings of raids etc. How will installing such an expensive system help stop that?

It is also questionable if we even want the government to have the ability or right to video tape us. The use of CCTVs is a very controversial one, even in Britain where it is now quite common, but as yet of unproven effectiveness.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, an organisation dedicated to defending the Bill of Rights, CCTVs have the following drawbacks:

Surveillance Camera Systems Are Not Effective Crime-Fighters

Surveillance Cameras Displace More Effective Public Safety Measures

Surveillance Cameras Undermine Individual Privacy

Surveillance Cameras are Subject to Great Abuse

(From the statement of the ACLU to the House of Representatives)

Do we really want to give our police the right and ability to take pictures of us going about our lives? The lack of accountability in our law enforcement agencies is already bad enough as it is. Giving them the right to video innocent people is not something that we should add to their growing list of abuses.

**MA**

Dhaka

## On US stock market loss

It is terribly painful to see my 18-years of retirement savings go down so miserably due to corporate greed, corporate cheating and lying. I used to think USA; the technologically most advanced nation on earth in business was the best. I used to think Bangladesh is the worst country when it comes to work ethics and corporate morality.

Unlike the real Bangladeshi

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I must respond negatively when Mr Zakaria Khondoker asks, "When the whole pond is full of mosses can you keep a specific area clean forever?" Many crimes, similar to those occur in the campuses, are occurring outside the campus everyday.

Certainly student politics cannot be blamed for those. The present crisis in our educational institutions must be considered as a sad reflection of core problems of our society. The diseases that have crippled the law and order situation of the whole country cannot be wiped out merely by banning student politics.

It seems to me that the government cannot take punitive measures against those who are involved in extortion or 'tenderbaazi' in the campuses merely because of their involvement in student politics. But how about the criminals involved in extortion, killing and raping, who are not involved in student politics but have allegiances with politics otherwise? Besides student wings, our political parties have many other wings to implicate the young people

provide that right.

We cannot ban student (movement) politics, since it is the individual right to freedom and democracy - but we must ban all forms of crime in the campus.

We must distinguish very carefully between "student (movement) politics" and "student/faculty crime", essentially because honest "student movement" is not a crime. Campus crime in Bangladesh is not linked only to politics. Therefore, banning partisan politics alone will not clean up crime. A lot of major campus crime recently witnessed with "tenderbaazi" and "masti" are often linked with faculty members, teachers and "outsiders".

The solution is to enforce a strong code of professional student-faculty ethics and conduct and disciplinary action, part of which must enact restrictions similar to:

"Faculty and students who involve themselves in criminal acts on school property, off school property at school-supervised events, - and which acts have a detrimental effect upon the maintenance and

But how do you tell apart a Bengali from Calcutta to one from Noakhali? Apart from the accent, but then again they don't check that. Or a fair skinned Pakistani woman from a Sylheti one?

As a matter of fact how do our MPs at the Cantonment Gate know that the *deshi* with the brown face in the car isn't in fact an American citizen who's never even set foot in the country before?

**Joyonto**

Dhaka

## Adamjee closure

Thanks to Syed Akhtar Mahmood for his kind response to my letter (July 26) published on July 28. Yes, I am quite aware of the distinction between the closure of a firm and the demise of an entire industry. Adamjee is not the first one nor it is the last one that has been closed down. 29 jute mills have already been shut down. And Adamjee is the latest victim. Please, look at the report in various dailies on July 29 where World Bank (WB) has welcomed the government to close more such loss making industries. Does the government have the guts to defy the directives of WB?

The *Daily Inqilab* carried out a news on its front page on July 27 saying that the root causes behind the closure of the jute mills have not been uprooted. The causes, according to the daily, are low production capacity (Mr. Mahmood has also mentioned this point), irregularities in purchasing raw jute and selling of jute product, and deficiency of expert technicians. The daily observed that more jute mills might be closed down. Now will the freed up bank credit (which is due to non-absorption by the Adamjee as it is closed now, according to Mr. Mahmood's observation) be of any help to the other ailing jute mills if the above causes persist?

The writer in his article referred to leftist turned capitalist economist Binay Sen's paper "The Anatomy of Closure" which projected that the closed mills are operating well either in this form or another. But I would like to request Mr Mahmood to read eminent economist Anu Muhammad's article on July 23 in *The Daily Star*. The fate of the closed mills is not encouraging according to the previous experience.

At last I'll draw conclusion by attracting the writer's attention to a news item on the *motussil* page in the *daily Inqilab* on the same day (July 27). The Naryanganj district correspondent of the daily reports "The Sub Inspector of Siddhirganj Thana Police M R. Delwar has occupied the Mallika Bhaban (Mallika Building) of G colony of the Adamjee. Army and BDR personnel were there. But they did not stop the SI." This is only the beginning. After this the real estate companies may invade there. This will be the fate of the Adamjee Nagar.

**Protik**

Dhaka Medical College

## Biman Bangladesh Airlines

I am not sure how to react at the news of financial turmoil of our national flag carrier. As an expatriate, I get to see a lot of Biman/Govt staff living and travelling around on Biman's account. Their lifestyle does not reflect the fact that Biman is up to the nose with debt. Our crew and officials indulge in extravagant comforts. They stay in top of the range hotels around the world. They claim meal allowances but regularly pilfer meals from onboard provisions. Routes are designed to suit crews/govt officials. Otherwise how can they justify New York flight? It's common news that Biman incurs a loss of Tk.40 lakhs each flight. That's Tk.80 lakhs a trip. Scores of people are travelling to New York either free or on discount fare. And it's only applicable for govt big wigs or Biman Staff.

These are only a few examples how resources of the national carrier are being looted. Accountability is almost non-existent in the organisation. And almost every section is involved in the loot.

Why do we have to have a national carrier, which does not serve any useful purpose for national cause? Why can't we follow suit like Sri Lanka? It's still a flag carrier but managed and partially owned by a foreign investor airline. And they are doing a lot better.

Biman must adopt life saving measures immediately. Route restructuring should be the first action to be taken. All unprofitable routes should be reviewed. New York flight should be discontinued. Biman must take measures to enhance its image to attract other airlines for code sharing deals. It's an acceptable and widely practised business solution for most of world airlines. Employees (Specially Crew) must be encouraged to accept Cost Cutting Measures. Above all Biman has to purge the organisation to get rid of those people who regard their service as business.

**Abeer Chowdhury**

Singapore

## Bush, Blair and the Middle East

As an English lady who reads *The Daily Star* via the Internet, I would like to agree with the reader who refers to Blair's place in the White House and the new position for the 'once mighty British Empire'.

I am one of the many thousands of British people who are fed up with Blair saying "yes sir" to George Bush's every whim.

Bush is a warmonger and will not be happy until he sees Saddam Hussein wiped from the face of the earth. He wants to complete the job that his father left undone during the Gulf War. He is using the events of 11th September 2001 to justify his dictatorship of the world and is using Blair as support. I truly believe that if it were put to the vote here in the UK it would be thrown out.

In my opinion, Bush is more dangerous than Saddam. He ought to be looking at the problem of the Palestinians in Israel and trying to solve that, instead of making trouble where there is none. Of course it does not suit him to find a solution in Israel, as he may have to offend his Jewish friends. I have recently met English people who have visited Israel as tourists and they are shocked at the plight of the Palestinians. They had never realised the situation they were in until they saw it with their own eyes. This of course is because we see only what the Jewish controlled media in the UK want us to see.

I would hope that Tony Blair also looks into his heart and comes to his senses before Bush plunges us all into a war for no reason. We British have enough to answer for in our past when we ruled the 'Empire'. We should be trying to make amends for or Biman Staff.

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**Syed Hussain**

Atlanta, USA

## Spycams

Recently, I've read in your that the government is considering installing close circuit TVs in various spots to

are left in a catch 22 situation. On one hand we just can not be happy with the reduced rate that we are having because it is harming governance and on the other we could not accept the \$1.25 that we were paying earlier which was one of the highest rate in the world.

To take care of this disparity what Bangladesh government did was to reduce the TARI rate from 60c/m to I believe 20c/m. This was a bold move indeed but sadly as far as I know the New York spot market rate for Bangladesh still holds at 7c/m. Which means that the disparity between the rates of these phone cards and the major carriers will continue to exist. Major carrier can come down to 60 c/m but it will not be enough for the average consumer to switch.

I feel that Bangladesh government has no option but to impose tax on the use of VoIP. That it recently

are left in a catch 22 situation. On one hand we just can not be happy with the reduced rate that we are having because it is harming governance and on the other we could not accept the \$1.25 that we were paying earlier which was one of the highest rate in the world.