

Troubles within

Rowdy BNP, JCD men eating away govt's credibility

THE fierce gunfights between intra-party factions of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) at Munshiganj and its student front, the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), at Sylhet on Sunday have once again raised the troubling question: does the ruling party leadership have any control over its activists down the hierarchy? With reports of fierce infighting and hooliganism perpetrated by the cadres of the ruling party, and its student and youth fronts, pouring in at regular intervals, people are increasingly inclined to believe that it does not. If it is not some JCD leaders and activists beating up transport workers and even opening fire on them (as they did at Munshiganj on Friday), it would be JCD or BNP factions engaged in fearsome gun battle between themselves (as was the case at Sylhet and Munshiganj on Sunday).

Worryingly still, neither the government nor the ruling party central command appears the least perturbed by what has now become a regular feature in the nation's day-to-day living. While such incidents have assumed ominous proportions, there has virtually been no move to discipline the rowdy elements in the ruling party ranks. On the one hand, police have been circumspect when it comes to acting against the BNP, JCD or the Jubo Dal hoodlums, for obvious reasons; on the other, the attitude of ruling party high-ups to the happenings has been one of indulgence. Consequently, more people with the faintest links with the BNP and its front organisations have been encouraged to unleash terror in their respective localities.

What the government appears unaware of is the fact that unbridled highhandedness by leaders and activists of the BNP, JCD and Jubo Dal is telling on its credibility. There is no reason for it to believe that people nurture the same trust in the party as they did when they voted them to power with absolute majority in the eighth Jatiya Sangsad.

With the two-thirds majority in parliament and the AL in an organisational lethargy, intra-party squabbles and rowdy elements within the ruling party ranks remain the only thorns on the government's path. It should be resolute and ruthless when it comes to weeding them out.

The government should realise that credibility of the ruling party is fundamental to its own credibility. It has recently dealt with iron hand the case of Chhabi Rani by promptly arresting 15 BNP elements. Also, a few police officials have been suspended. Now, it remains to be seen whether similar stern measures are taken to rid the ruling party of the rowdy elements. It can be done no doubt. The question is whether the government and by implication the ruling party wants to.

Foreign investment hoax

Who were we hoodwinking save ourselves?

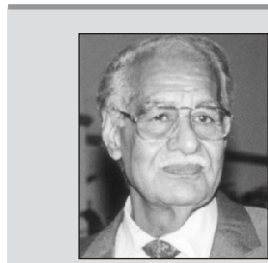
THE Board of Investment (BOI) has done some self-analysis and found out startling things: it was not only living in a make-believe world but also giving us all a ride through an illusory garden-path for the last one decade. A survey carried out by the BOI's Investment Implementation Monitoring Cell (IIMC) reveals that 41 per cent of the investment proposals registered with the Board from July, 1991 to June, 2001 has turned out to be mere paper-work. It's not simply that these have not materialised, rather the registration itself had been flawed as it was based on incomplete, distorted and, almost certainly, unverified information. Hardly surprising that the present BOI administration finds itself at a loss to track down the many so-called foreign companies that had registered their names with it but have since vanished.

So, the figures reflected on the 41 per cent of the 'proposals' like the data in some other important sectors of macro-economic management were juggled by successive governments to create a false impression of achievement.

The make-believe approach predictably led to resting on the oars of complacency and not following up on proposals that had been entered with the Board. On this point, the BOI has woken up after a decade rather than monitoring the status on a year-to-year basis for which it is obviously blame-worthy. This would have enabled timely follow-up action on the proposals, some of which may have been really intended ones, perhaps well before these went extinct.

Here on, we would expect the BOI to have a regular monitoring mechanism to ward off such huge discrepancies between investment claims and results on the ground which amounted to a perfidy on a raised public expectation level. This is required for two reasons: First, in order to pursue project proposals; and secondly, help accelerate the 'frustratingly slow rate of implementation' of investment projects that are live.

A wild goose chase



KULDEEP NAYYAR
writes from New Delhi

THE Kashmir Committee, chaired by Ram Jethmalani, was a non-starter from day one. It began functioning after the elections had been announced. And all its efforts were concentrated on making the different parties participate in the state polls.

How could they do so when New Delhi had promised only "free and fair elections?" This was relevant till the 1987 polls. That was the last election the Kashmiris wanted to see whether New Delhi or Srinagar had learnt any lesson from the past and whether they would hold an independent election. When it turned out to be a rigged one, a lot of the youth lost faith in the ballot box itself. This was when they picked up the guns Islamabad was too willing to supply.

The expectation from the Kashmir Committee was not the reiteration of free and fair election, but the political package it could offer. It seems that Jethmalani had no brief from New Delhi on that point. He had jumped into the fray on his own. Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani did not think there was any harm if he threw in the government's name as long as he talked about elections and a subsequent dialogue.

True, Jethmalani got all the publicity and attention. That was because people in Kashmir cling to

even a straw of hope in the sea of disappointment. But he has messed up the chances of any other unofficial team which the centre may want to have to talk to the separatists. It would be suspect in their eyes. Talks through unofficial channels have become a joke because New Delhi has used too many -- K C Pant, A S Dulat and Wajiatullah -- to offer too little.

The Jethmalani committee has not broken even new ground. The

are credible and look to be so. But the continuance in office of Farooq Abdullah at Srinagar and that of his son, Omar Abdullah in New Delhi, creates doubts. They must resign to stop the wagging tongues. The presence of foreign observers will help because they will be able to see whether fear keeps away the voters from the polling booths or whether they are themselves boycotting the election. The violence in the valley may make foreign observers appre-

focus on is autonomy. The state joined the Union on certain conditions. In the instrument of accession, the ruler of J and K transferred to the centre only three subjects: defence, foreign affairs and communications. Article 370 was included in the constitution to recognise the separate status of the state. The Union has no authority to hog more subjects on its own. Only the state can do so. Sheikh Abdullah agreed to go beyond the original terms

Even a person like Jawaharlal Nehru committed the mistake of detaining the Sheikh and running the state as New Delhi's colony for more than a decade. The latter's fault was that he wanted New Delhi to make the undertaking given to Srinagar good. Nehru realised where he went wrong but died before he could rectify it.

Nehru also realised that without the association of Pakistan, the problem could not be solved. Even

has defeated the letter and spirit of every agreement.

Probably it is that realisation which has made General Musharraf drop the reference to the Shimla Agreement along with the UN resolutions. Once Pakistan foreign minister Abdus Sattar, when he was the High Commissioner in New Delhi, said that Pakistan had responded to India's protests by mentioning the Shimla Agreement and the UN resolutions together. The change was visible when he was the foreign minister under Musharraf.

By crossing out the minutes of the Shimla Agreement, or the Lahore Declaration, Islamabad does not help the situation. It is the violence and cross-border terrorism which must be eschewed -- whichever agreement gives it validity. One bad thing that has happened over the years is the communalisation of the state. Some of the Hurriyat leaders are as much responsible for it in the valley as are the Sangh parivar in Jammu. Neither Islamabad nor the Hurriyat leaders realise the effect on the subcontinent if the Muslim-majority valley were to secede from India. Firstly, will any government at Delhi allow it? Secondly, can a government doing so stay in power?

In fact, the main difficulty that the Hurriyat faces is not on the question whether New Delhi is prepared to have a dialogue with it. Its main problem is that after promising Kashmiris independence, how does it participate in the election which gives no such hope. The Ram Jethmalani committee should have realised the Hurriyat's limitations as well as its own.

Kuldeep Nayyar is an eminent Indian columnist.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Nehru also realised that without the association of Pakistan, the problem could not be solved. Even though there was no cross-border terrorism at that time, the pro-Pakistan feeling was substantially visible in the valley. When the Sheikh proposed ideas like a condominium or federation at Islamabad, General Ayub Khan, then Pakistan's President rejected them. He reportedly argued that Pakistan would not accept an arrangement where it was at the mercy of the majority.

Hurriyat's 'no' or Shabir Shah's 'conditional no' was already known. To run down the Hurriyat, as Jethmalani has done after the talks, is neither here nor there. Its credentials are not hidden. How representative is the body is in the valley can be judged from the fact that every-one from Delhi makes a bee-line to the Hurriyat's headquarters. That the Hurriyat has Washington's blessings may create problems for New Delhi in the days to come. America's intentions are far from pious. Had it put pressure on the Hurriyat -- on Pakistan as well -- it would have participated in the elections. Secretary of State Powell's statement that Kashmir is on the international agenda is ominous. Against this backdrop, it is all the more necessary that the forthcoming elections in Kashmir

ciate the dangers New Delhi faces because of cross-border terrorism. If the foreign media is there, besides representatives of foreign missions, how foreign observers can have an adverse effect on the Election Commission's autonomy -- a point made by New Delhi -- is difficult to comprehend.

Jethmalani has also, unwittingly, underlined the separation of the valley from the rest of the state. The committee never visited Jammu or Ladakh. The Sangh parivar is advocating a trifurcation thesis. He should have denounced it. Dividing the state into Muslim valley, the Hindu Jammu and the Buddhist Ladakh is a communal proposition which will damage our pluralistic polity beyond repair. The committee should have made it clear.

The point that New Delhi has to

during his talks with Lal Bahadur Shastri and G Parthasarathy, Mrs Indira Gandhi's representative. If any more authority is required by the state, the assembly must endorse that. During the last session of parliament, both Advani and opposition leader Manmohan Singh said that there was no going back to the original status. That is not for the Union to decide. The assembly's concurrence is essential. New Delhi will be renegeing on its promise to the state at the time of integration if the state's autonomy is chipped off without its consent. In fact, New Delhi is mainly responsible for today's state of things, first having its own nominee at Srinagar and encroaching on the state's rights and then not creating the democratic character which the other states in the country enjoy.

though there was no cross-border terrorism at that time, the pro-Pakistan feeling was substantially visible in the valley. When the Sheikh proposed ideas like a condominium or federation at Islamabad, General Ayub Khan, then Pakistan's President rejected them. He reportedly argued that Pakistan would not accept an arrangement where it was at the mercy of the majority. However, before any other proposal could come up, the Sheikh returned to New Delhi because of Nehru's sudden death. Many things have happened since to dent New Delhi's confidence in Islamabad. The latter violated the undertaking it gave -- first at Tashkent (1966), and then at Shimla (1972) -- not to try to change the status quo by resorting to arms. From the 1965 war to the current cross-border terrorism, Pakistan

Constitutional amendments in Pakistan

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

PRESIDENT Pervez Musharraf has announced to the Pakistani people and to the world his decision to incorporate 29 amendments to the 1973 constitution of Pakistan. Theoretically the new Parliament born of the coming October elections could undo the amendments. Should that happen, he warned, "then I will decide whether I should quit or they should go". Except his cronies and sycophants all are opposed to the amendments. Political parties, Islamic groups, legal bodies and civic societies uniformly rejected the amendments. Pakistan People's Party described the National Security Council as "a device to re-write the civil-military equation on military terms", which no civil society can accept. Benazir Bhutto, still insisting on returning to Pakistan to take part in the polls, found it shocking that General Musharraf has given himself dictatorial powers and has renamed dictatorship as democracy. Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) felt that there could not be a bigger injustice to the constitution and the mandate of the people than the amendments announced by President Musharraf. Jamaat-e-Islami rejected the amendments as unconstitutional and undemocratic and felt "President Musharraf has darkened the future of democracy in Pakistan".

International reaction is still forthcoming. President Bush giving his reaction said, "He (Musharraf) is still tight with us in the war against terror and that's what is our priority and which I appreciate... However we will continue to urge Musharraf to promote democracy, give people a chance to express their opinions the proper way". White House Spokesman Ari Fleischer told reporters that US expects Pakistan President to fulfil his promise to hold free and fair elections. Philip Reeker, Deputy White House Spokesman, expressed US concern that the amendments could make it difficult to build strong democratic institutions in Pakistan. Mixed

US reactions to the constitutional changes reflect a growing rift among the foreign policy establishment -- some feel that Pakistan President has abused the good will earned by his steadfast support to the war on terrorism. Others apprehend that the deliberate marginalisation of the established political parties could pave the way for an alliance of fundamentalist and moderate Islamic political parties to gain sizeable number of seats in the next

democracy is not end of democracy but to improve it". Adrian Leftwich of the University of York raised a very interesting question in his article ON THE PRIMACY OF POLITICS IN DEVELOPMENT (*Democracy and Development 1996*) "why are regimes which were previously supported now being told to change their ways? I think there are four main reasons, and they are all political: legitimization of conditionality (or leverage) as an instrument

occasions through ballots or bullets has never been true of Pakistan despite the myth of Pakistanis being of "martial race" till their ignominious defeat in 1971. Pakistan has seen many palace coups resulting in mainly change of personalities than revolutions or mass upsurge. The revolution in essence being raw power struggle between political elite in control of state power and resources and revolutionaries, increasingly belligerent and bent

accentuating popular perception of the regime's illegitimate claim to power (*Politics and Society in the Third World-Mehran Kamrava*). History of Pakistan does not give hope of transfer of power through mass upsurge as had happened in Bangladesh. Power in Pakistan has been transferred through military coups (Ayub Khan, Yahaya Khan, Pervez Musharraf) or sudden death of the ruler (Zia-ul Huq's plane accident). Somehow the feudalistic

odious and repugnant to Indian culture of pluralistic secularism. The most recent example of Indian Foreign Minister and Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs meeting at Kathmandu to mere handshake is a glaring testimony. This is not to gloss over the other factors involved in the Indo-Pak tension. While India remains adamant that any dialogue with Pakistan must precede total stoppage of cross-border terrorism Pakistan insists that despite withdrawal of state support infrequent slippage of terrorists cannot be totally stopped along the porous border in Kashmir. Concurrently one can be oblivious of the October elections in Pakistan, elections to be held in Indian Kashmir, and a possible election in riot-torn Gujarat. In all these elections adversarial relations and not co-operative alignments with India/Pakistan are expected to be main election planks.

In the second week of September both the Indian Prime Minister and the Pakistani President are scheduled to address the UNGA. Prime Minister Vajpayee is leading a strong delegation for his meeting with President Bush as well. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage has just visited South Asia. Indians were pinning their hope on Armitage convincing President Musharraf to totally stop cross border terrorism. But given President Bush's lukewarm reaction to the assassination of democracy in Pakistan, it is difficult to be optimistic of American determination to impose strict conditionality for President Musharraf to mend his ways. Be it a triage or holistic approach by President Bush in his combat of terrorism we have to learn to demythologise the US and perhaps the entire Western world as Mother Teresa of democratic values. So far as the constitutional amendments are concerned South Asia has to wait for the events to unfold in Pakistan to their logical conclusion.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a retired Secretary to Bangladesh government and former ambassador.

President Musharraf is acutely aware of the necessity of "unity of command" and of the centrality of state's control of societal resources... Whether in time he would face crisis of authority translated into inability to justify continued hold on power remains to be seen. Pakistan may, however, see "continued and persistent demands for greater political participation or increased economic gratification, or a neglect or abuse of sources of symbolic importance... History of Pakistan does not give hope of transfer of power through mass upsurge as had happened in Bangladesh.

Parliament fraught with unpredictable impact on the war on terrorism. Hussain Haqqani of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former Pakistan ambassador to Sri Lanka quoted a recent article of American Strategic analyst George Parkovich in which Parkovich spoke of President Musharraf's bewilderment as to why anyone should question his actions because "Musharraf sees his intentions as the criterion for judging his actions. And since, in his view, his intentions are good, he cannot understand why anyone should question his actions"(Hussain Haqqani-*The Indian Express*-23.8.02). Haqqani accuses President Musharraf of "reviving the notion of divine right of rulers in suggesting that he (and his intentions) is the only check needed in Pakistan's constitution". Surprising, how the change of guards at the White House can dramatically alter perception of national interest. Barely two years ago President Clinton advised the Pakistanis in the following words: "Clearly the absence of democracy makes it harder, not easier, for people to move ahead. The answer to flawed

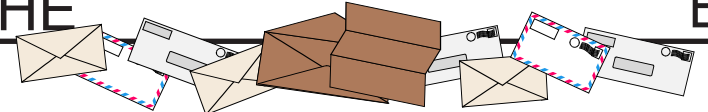
of policy; the ascendancy of neo-conservative or neo-liberal theories and ideologies of political economy in the West; the collapse of Soviet Union and its client states; and the growth of democratic pressure in some developing countries". Clearly, strong relationship exists between good governance, not only in managerial sense but also in the sense of democratic institutions, and economic development. Political scientists are however unsure as to how to effect such a system which will encompass competitive party system, regular and fair elections, an independent judiciary, a free press, and protection of human rights. They are skeptical that heavy doses of "externally imposed conditionality" will yield good governance in either managerial or democratic liberal pluralist sense in countries, for example, in this case, in Pakistan. In the environment of King Louis XIV's famous remark: *L'état c'est moi* (I am the state) what avenues of redress are available to the people of Pakistan? Evidently Bangladesh as a case example where people expressed their disapproval of autocrats on several

upon replacing the elite, which happened in neighbouring Iran, would never be a possible scenario in Pakistan. The West is so very much engrossed in winning the war on terrorism; the principal actors of which appear to be mobile, elusive and lacking fixity (as of today whereabouts of Osama bin Laden or his health status is shrouded in mystery); that any turbulence in its immediate neighbourhood (Pakistan is now an immediate neighbour) would not be tolerated.

President Musharraf is acutely aware of the necessity of "unity of command" and of the centrality of state's control of societal resources viz army, police, bureaucracy, economic resources etc being essential for the running of the country. Whether in time he would face crisis of authority translated into inability to justify continued hold on power remains to be seen. Pakistan may, however, see "continued and persistent demands for greater political participation or increased economic gratification, or a neglect or abuse of sources of symbolic importance, such as religion or nationalism" significantly

social structure and tribal system in Pakistan prevented growth of secular-libertarian values closely associated with modernisation. While it may not be easy to chart a normative paradigm of Pakistani political culture in today's post-Westphalian hegemonic world order, it is possible that Pakistan could be facing the distinct possibility of subnationalism i.e. fragmentation of the state due to ethno nationalism. Fragmentation does not have to be physical, it can be linguistic and cultural. The very fact that Pakistani authorities cannot emphatically state whether Osama bin Laden is in Pakistan or in Afghanistan is a testimony to the uncertain writ of the central government over the whole territory. Repeated imposition of autocratic rule in Pakistan possibly is due to the realization of the elite of this yet sub-terrestrial centrifugal force. On a practical plane President Musharraf's edicts described as "annulment of the principle of an elected Parliament" (*The Daily Star* 23.8.02) would also impact extra-territorially. India always found dealings with military governments

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Taxicab rally

Did you happen to catch the Taxicab rally on August 23? Every single one of the cabs in the rally were badly damaged. All of them had dents, broken lights, cracked windshields, loose hubcaps, and so on. If the government is intent on permitting more taxicabs then there should also be a law regarding how long these cabs are allowed to ply the city streets.

Frankly I am amazed that anyone is making a profit out of this. The cars are wrecked within a year. 10,000 more taxicabs will mean 10,000 more eyesores on Dhaka streets. I think the worst of the lot are the black beetle-like Fiats, followed by the Hyundai and best of the sorry lot being the Corolla's.

Kishore Pasha Dhaka

What about river air pollution?

We appreciate that the government is considering of conversion of trains and ferries into CNG-run ones as part of its on going move to

minimise environment pollution. In this opportunity I would like to request the government to pay heed to the air and noise pollution in our rivers.

The smoke emitting from shallow engine driven boats is polluting the river air. The air of Buriganga and Sitalakha has really become poisonous due to shallow engines' smoke as well as the smoke emitted by the brick-fields situated on the bank of the rivers. To make things worse, the boatmen use burnt petrol as fuel for their shallow engines.

The shallow engines of these boats not only emit smoke; they also make high sound causing tremendous noise pollution. The noise of shallow engine boats destroys the tranquility of village life.

These shallow engine boats have given speed to our riparian life. Can these boats be converted into CNG-run ones? And can the boatmen be compelled to use silencer to tone down the noise? Side by side with Dhaka City we should think about our villages as well.

Faruque Hasan
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Sonali Banks's negligence in duty

Sonali Bank, in their website and in other advertisements, proclaims that it delivers foreign remittances to the beneficiary within three days. I fell prey to their proclamation and sent some money from Tokyo to "Court Building branch, Comilla" to my mother's account.

Unfortunately, 33 days have gone by and my mother is yet to receive the money. I myself went to the Bank in Tokyo to know the fate of my money and they informed me that they had notification of receiving money by the Dhaka branch of Sonali Bank within three days. My mother went to the branch at Comilla and was informed that they had not got anything from Dhaka branch.

The Finance Minister is trying to do many things to ease the way of foreign remittances in the country but does he know about the actual situation?

Mohammad Nazmul Islam
Tokyo, Japan

Open University's

SSC result

Open University is indeed a noble concept for pupil like me who dropped out from traditional schooling system for various reasons.

This year I appeared in the SSC examination through Open University and I completed my exam in the middle of April. Since then five months have passed still I am waiting for my result!

I earnestly request the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to publish the SSC result immediately and save us from this predicament.

Anando
Tophkhana Road, Dhaka

"Biman: Time to change"

My honest answer to Mr. Faruque Hasan's question (August 22) is that I can't afford to fly Biman, because I need to have a reliable and hassle-free mode of transportation.

I barely get three weeks vacation time in the winter (only after saving through the whole year) and I can't risk to lose a single day. I wanted to fly Biman last winter on my yearly

trip home... the Travel Agent himself suggested otherwise "If you don't know anyone in Biman, you won't be able to reconfirm your return from Dhaka (unless you are willing to bribe someone)!" And there's also the chance of getting stranded in a European airport in one of our technically incompetent DC-10-30s.

It is indeed high time that Biman was overhauled. Biman needs a transparent management, improved customer service and ground handling, a CEO (not some BAF officer on deputation who knows nothing about business), reorganised flight structures and scheduling (after proper market study), well-trained staff and a modern fleet. Now is the best time to shop for aircraft as the prices are at their lowest in a decade because of the global downturn in air industry. I am glad that the present administration is considering buying Boeing 777's.

I'm sure most of the expatriate Bangladeshis would LOVE to fly Biman at any chance if they are given a reasonable service for their money. In this competitive world, we should not expect Biman to survive

solely on patriotism.

Shafaq
USA

"Zakaat system"

I would like to thank Mr Reaz for his letter regarding better introduction of Zakaat system and its management.

A country practising Zakaat system properly surely a nation of true identity and success. Zakaat is neither a man-made system nor is it a malpractice like many others. If people start thinking that in the wealth of rich the poor has a fair share, it will change the life of the deprived dramatically.

If Zakaat is well understood and well practised in our country, the essence is the permanent removal of poverty nation-wide. So, let us have better knowledge of Zakaat system, and its implications.

G. M. Javed Anwar
Melbourne, Australia

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When Chairman of U.S. Federal Reserve Board or CEO of 500 largest Corporations of the world

cannot resolve the present day financial upheaval worldwide, we can turn to Holy Quran for guidance.

Almighty Allah recommends us every year compulsory giving away two and half per cent of our earnings to the have-nots without any question or condition. Let G-8 nations give the calculated 2.5 per cent amount of their yearly earnings to the developing nations without any condition or check so that these nations can be saved from poverty and be able to fight various calamities including floods, droughts and dengue.

Golam Ashraf
On e-mail

Bus service needed

An excellent road links Kachukhet with Banani but its full potential is left unutilised. There is no bus service linking Mirpur with Dhaka Cantonment, Banani and Gulshan. BRTC can easily utilise this link road to connect Mirpur with Gulshan.

Residents of Mirpur will be greatly benefited if this service is started now. At this moment passengers from these points have to come to Farmgate to catch a bus for

Gulshan/Mirpur. The Cantonment authorities will have no objection to allow this service since a BRTC bus service between Motijheel and Uttara via Cantonment already exists.

QS Ahmed
Mirpur, Dhaka

"Empty mosques"

Thank you for the letter "Empty mosques" by Haji Mohammad Islam (August 22). I am a regular reader of your daily but I'm sorry to say that I usually don't see religious article, feature, column or letter excepting a few on religious festivals like Eid, Shab-e-Barat etc.

I always wonder why haven't you taken any initiative to introduce a page on Islam whereas you have regular pages like Law & our Rights, Focus, Environment, Letters to the Editor etc. I would like to know whether you have any plan to introduce regular Islamic feature or a page which I'm sure would be appreciated by a lot of your readers?

Md. Abu Mugira
Dhaka