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5-year permanent job!

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in her first speech to the nation declared that ministry is not a five-year permanent job. But it seems to me that Shipping Minister Colo-

nel (Rtd.) Akbar Hossain thinks otherwise. If not, how can he say with confidence that, "I am not a person who will quit. If I quit, then who will work?"

In the last launch mishap, it took three days for him to get there in Chandpur and this time after the disaster he vanished for four days until he visited Chandpur. How far is Chandpur from Dhaka? However, it

is his duty as the shipping minister to reach Chandpur right after the incident took place. But he sent his subordinates and servicemen to handle the situation on his behalf. He is an expert when it comes to giving an interview for the media. His sympathy for the launch disaster doesn't reach the grieved families. So it is my request to PM Khaleda Zia to dismiss him

from his five-year permanent job as early as possible before another disaster takes place.

Md. Zillur Rahaman,
Bangabandhu Hall, University of Dhaka,
Bangladesh

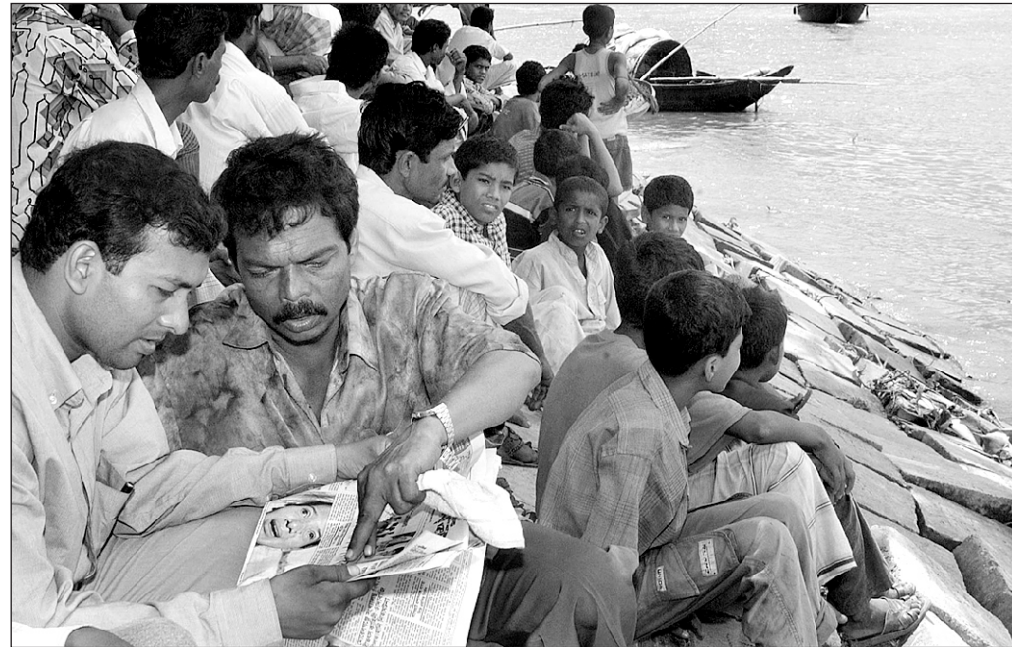
from forces of vested interest group and can certainly be achieved if all concerned sectors co-operate.

Z. Rahman
Gulshan, Dhaka



Only the supreme power can help these stonehearted persons to have compassion in their hearts so that they can realise their negligence and try to stop accidents like this in future.

A distressed citizen
Dhaka



Launch disaster

From all the past inquiries/findings as well as expert opinions on the subject, it is established that one of the main cause of launch disasters is the faulty construction. And it is happening due to the mushroom-growth of shipyards without appropriate equipment and technical personnel to undertake proper construction of such vessels.

So it really does not matter if the authority only control the launch owners and the operators; as indicated in the media, there may not be much tangible results unless the aforementioned root cause is eliminated. Surely we want promotion/development of the relevant industry which can immensely contribute to our economy and also provide employment opportunities

Let there be as many shipyards as the local market permit but it must be ensured that all these yards are qualified and capable to build crafts of correct strength and stability for all weather conditions. This indeed will require a very bold step without consideration of popularity or any fear

An appeal to the Pope

As reported in the 7:15 news in Channel-1, dated 12 July 2003, his Holiness the Pope Paul II has in a message expressed his condolences for the unfortunate passengers of the capsized launch Nasrin-1. Thousands of miles away from the place of occurrence the Pope felt the pain for the lost lives. We the Bangladeshis are grateful to him for his kind gesture. Because of the chronic negligence, inefficiency of the officials, hundreds of our ordinary people have been dying every year due to capsizing of water vessels. What amazes me the most is that we are quite indifferent about it.

From what it seems to me that the authorities have no official, legal, moral or human obligation whatsoever for all those thousands of passengers who travel by launches in Bangladesh. It has become a routine exercise that every time there is a disaster their form inquiry committees whose recommendations, like the past, are never taken into consideration by any parties concerned. At best some posting and transfer of some minor officials are done as eyewashes, and soon the common people forget about the whole thing.

How soon is "now"?

We find our elected leaders regularly making promises like "it shall be done immediately!" And we do not mind their pointless promises. Actually, we are very used to it. This was a common phenomenon until the present government fulfilled some of their major promises made during the election campaign -- introduction of the speedy trial tribunal, actions against the criminals through Operation Clean Heart, banning polythene shopping bags, withdrawing two-stroke three wheelers from the city roads, and the latest a bill to set up independent anti-corruption commission.

The common people at least appreciated the idea that the government did something for the betterment of the existing problems. But if you had followed the news related to the transportation, then you would have noticed that the communication minister promised to adjust the train fare between DhakaSylhet and Dhaka-Chittagong, he said categorically that DhakaSylhet train fare would be lowered immediately. He indicated that the train fare would go down within a week. But nothing has happened to "adjust" the "promised" fare.

The other news item was more assuring. Dhaka cantonment to allow vehicular transportation through cantonment area between 7 AM to 11 PM every day without any hindrance, to ease the already

suffering citizens, until the Mohakhali flyover is completed in 2004. It also mentioned that the cantonment authority would implement this programme immediately. Since the cantonment authority usually implements any decision of the government without any delay, rather in "shock and awe" I must say that nothing has been done so far. Another example of a broken promise.

So, naturally a question comes up in our mind: how soon is "now"? In both the cases, nothing happened "immediately" as was promised. We would like to know if the PMO has any authority to check the non-compliance of its direction by the cantonment authority? We also would like to know if the communication minister is aware of the fact that the train fares are not adjusted yet? We hope, considering the suffering of the citizens the government will take some immediate actions.

Sajjad Waheed
Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)
Dhaka

"Save us from sound pollution"

I have written earlier how badly we are affected by the excessive sound created by the numerous vehicles in our city. Thanks to Mr. Kumar Prithwiraj Nath (DS, July 10th) to bring the increasing hazard again

to the public knowledge and thus trying to draw the attention of the law enforcing agencies, who are probably already deaf!

After living in abroad for several years I have learnt that honking is prohibited almost in every civilised country. Noise pollution is not only a painful nuisance but can also be injurious to your health. I usually put cotton in my ears while travelling outside (which only partly reduces the sound). I wonder what the authorities are thinking about this avoidable hindrance which is impairing our health in many ways. It's not only the hydraulic horns that damages, but also many other boisterous sounds grating to the ear all day long that come out of many cars and from other sources are equally injurious to the health. It's very painstaking when the drivers (sometimes the owners as well) go on honking unnecessarily even if there is a jam in front, the traffic police on-duty does nothing but just stand there. It's all the more shocking when they blow the horns, on and off, right in front of the schools and the hospitals (in spite of prohibitory signs showed in some locations). And this is a condemnable offence. The constables/sergeants standing by never bother to correct the drivers!

I suggest the specialists to write special features on noise pollution and invite the boy/girl scouts to render a little service to the community by forming special squads and try to instruct the drivers and the owners specially "never to

honk" in front of schools and hospitals and urge the authorities concerned to impose fines on vehicles (owners) who are not practising these rules. Let us try gradually to learn these things.

AF Rahman, Dhaka

"IBA (DU) should change...."

This letter is especially to all the teachers and the executives of IBA (DU).

Admission test for BBA programme in the IBA has become really tough and challenging for many students who want to be a business executive. Every year near about five thousand students participates in the test. Among them only 120/130 students are selected from the written test and the rest of the students gets selected on the basis of their SAT/TOEFL score. After getting selected in the written test students have to face viva and only after passing that final hurdle one gets the chance to study in IBA.

The fact is that there is no such of system of waiting list, that exist in other institutions, in IBA and they always takes their admission test before the BUET, MEDICAL or the DU, so the scenario becomes really pathetic. It's because some of the students leave IBA after they get admitted to BUET and a few more to the medical colleges; and some leave for studying in abroad. Every year almost 10-20 students leave IBA for these reasons. Thus a lot of student miss the opportunity to study in IBA.

It's true, in Dhaka there are a few private universities that offer BBA with good standards. But the tuition fee of these universities is very high. That is why it's not convenient for all to get admission. So I think it's high time for IBA to start thinking about the future students who really want to study in IBA. They should change their style of admission test and start the system of at least one waiting list so that some of the students can get chance to study there.

And another important thing is that in the viva board teachers should pay more attention about whether the student is really interested in studying there or not. I hope teachers of IBA should emphasis on the matter and find a more agreeable solution concerning all students. Because it's some students long cherished dream to study in IBA. I will end this letter by wishing good luck for all the coming examinees for BBA admission test!

Samiha
IBA(DU), Uttara, Dhaka

Quorum crisis

We have been noticing frequently the news that the National Assembly is facing quorum crisis. Currently the country's budget for the year 2003-2004 is under scrutiny of the National Assembly where the members are supposed to discuss the pros and cons and participate in arguments with the opposition parties. It is shocking to note that a large number of parliament members are showing a nonchalant attitude towards the budget. Members of the national assembly are pledge-bound to the people of their constituencies to fulfil their constitutional obligation by participating in the discussion in the House.

Their failure to attend the House and participate in its proceedings is the betrayal of their pledge. A few days back a list of members in the parliament appeared in the national dailies as defaulters on account of their telephone bills. The names also include some important positions as the Deputy Speaker, State Minister etc. It is indeed a disgrace for the whole nation that their elected representatives are accused of such misdemeanour. It is high time that our respected Prime Minister should think of steps as deemed appropriate to make the members of the

National Assembly behave properly.

Faizur Rahman Chaudhury
Uttara, Dhaka

I can't explain what is going through my mind watching our representatives passing laws of increasing their own salaries and allowances. After all they are our boss. They need luxurious cars, houses, best of everything. After all they are working hard all day and night for our well being! They need more phone allowances so that no one can accuse them of not paying the bill. They need more residence allowance so that they, being kind on us, don't encroach public property. It's our duty to serve them all these, doesn't matter whether we struggle to buy vegetable, let alone fish and meat.

Maybe that's why our Finance Minister is not happy with the revenue collection, especially in Income Tax division. Our government needs fund for all these expenses, for maintaining and developing the standard of life of system of waiting list, that exist in other institutions, in IBA and they always takes their admission test before the BUET, MEDICAL or the DU, so the scenario becomes really pathetic. It's because some of the students leave IBA after they get admitted to BUET and a few more to the medical colleges; and some leave for studying in abroad. Every year almost 10-20 students leave IBA for these reasons. Thus a lot of student miss the opportunity to study in IBA.

It's our duty to bear the expenses of our honorable Ministers and MPs. It doesn't matter whether the government can provide us the security of life either on land and in the water.

We, the citizens of the country can't ignore our responsibility and cannot always blame the politicians. It is we, who has given this power to them. Now they can do anything they wish and we have nothing to do but to see. I never felt so helpless.

Tariq

Canada

"Recognise the friends"

'Yes', we should do so as soon as possible, it's better late than never. You, Mr. Iqbal do also remind our nation, if you can, about some more of those who have been forgotten or already lost in the oblivion but contributed to the spirit of our struggle of freedom (DS 11 July).

We as nation, never bothered to recognise the contribution of George Harrison and Pandit Ravi Shankar. And we should feel ashamed about it.

Let's celebrate these two jewels' contribution for our homeland.

AF Rahman
Dhaka

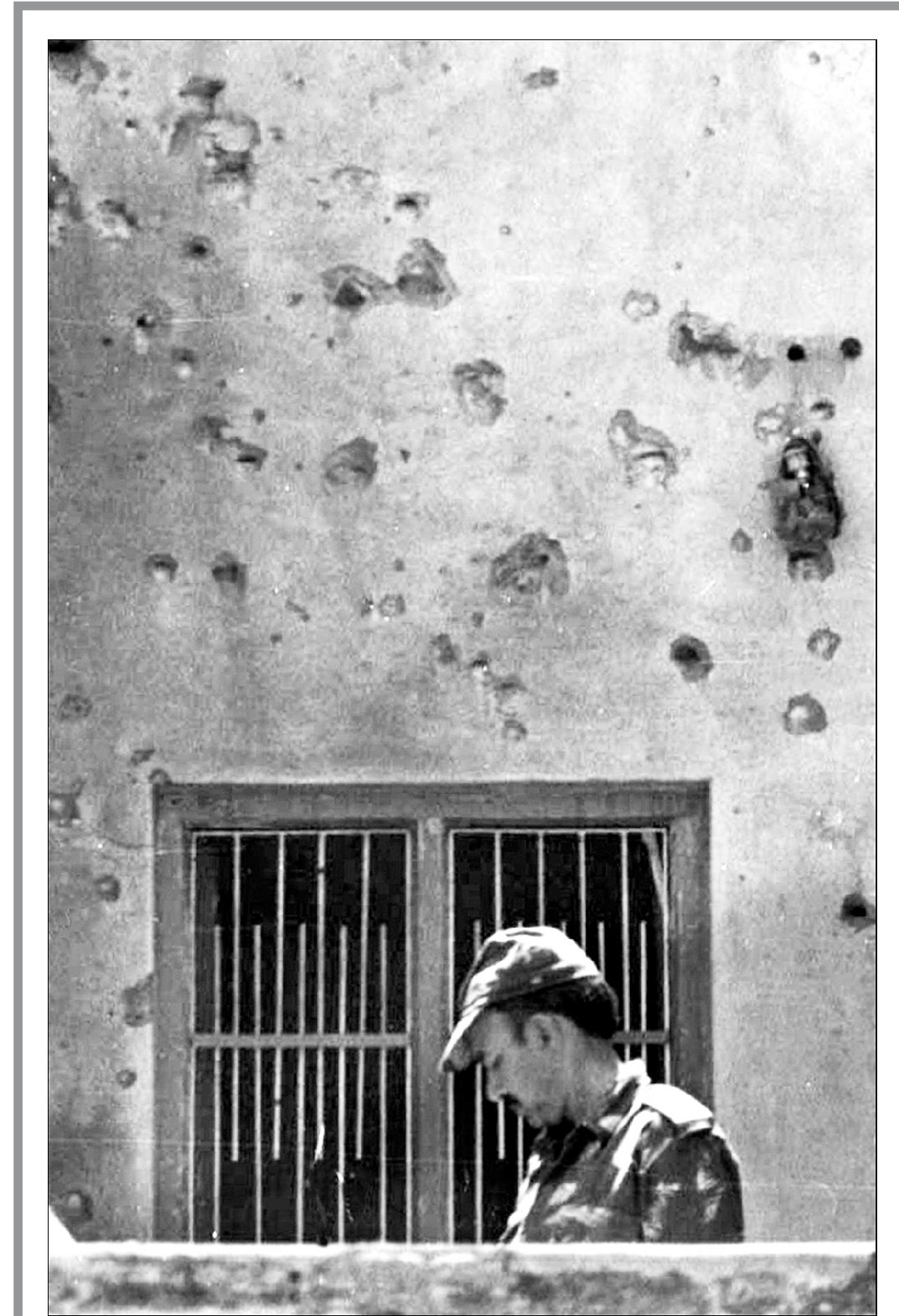
Hide and seek game with Bogra munitions

I think the Bogra haul is definitely going to be the biggest ever munitions haul in the country.

On this sensitive issue, the four party alliance government and the main opposition party Awami league have been throwing mud on each other since the beginning and that has made the situation even more tangled.

The opposition leader Sheikh Hasina made allegations that the ammunition were manufactured in BOF (Bangladesh Ordnance Factory) and smuggled out, but both the honourable home minister and the ISPR (Inter Services Public Relations) termed the allegations as 'totally baseless'.

To them I would like to say (with no intention to back the allegations of AL) that the security forces including the army are never beyond questions and vices, and that I want them to respect. Because the Purulia ammunition haul incident which took place about a decade back at Purulia, West Bengal, India, it was found that BOF and one Bangladesh Army's major general Subed Ali had linkage with it. Moreover, it is suspected that some police personnel are doing business by rent-



How long..

The Kashmir crisis: An old story

The tug of war involving Kashmir between India and Pakistan has now been going on for over 50 years. Kashmir is claimed in full by both India and Pakistan but currently is divided between both the countries. In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, although there are no problems but in India-administered Kashmir, an Islamic insurgency for independence has been going on for the last 14

years. To settle the Kashmir dispute, both India and Pakistan are calling for dialogues.

But in my view, dialogue is not that important. The Kashmir problem is neither of India's nor of Pakistan's but of the Kashmiris'. India took the Kashmir issue to the UN but the UN resolution for conducting a plebiscite in Kashmir hasn't been implemented yet. So, my

advise to India is that if she is really serious in combating terrorism, then she should respect the will of the Kashmiris', and thus arrange the long proposed plebiscite without delay. That would really bring peace for both India and Pakistan and also for Kashmir.

Sameer Ahmed Khan
Mojlish
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

ing and even sometimes, by selling out their ammunitions to miscreants.

However, we hope the government will very soon form a transparent judicial investigation committee to unlock the mystery unlike the previous ones.

Pablo Chakma, Mirpur, Dhaka

The Few United Nations (FUN)

The United Nations (UN) have lost the glory of its name. It should no longer be considered an organisation of around two hundreds nations. Because it no longer acts as an organisation that unites nations, rather it has been serving the interest of few powerful nations

for a long time. The third world nations have failed to be an integral part of this organisation and their interests have always been neglected.

The pro-western nature of this organisation, specially patronising the industrialist countries, has been highly criticised. All these characteristics have made this organisation a complete farce.

An opportune moment has come to rename the UN. The most suitable name can be the Few United Nations (FUN). Nothing could be more suitable than this because the new name really manifests the current character of the organisation.

Khandaker Lutful Khaled
Lalmatia, Dhaka

"Speedy" justice needed

We have been observing for few weeks that the speedy trial tribunal has consecutively delivered verdicts in the murder cases of Ratna, Bushra, Don, Sony etc. In most of the cases the convicts are sentenced to death or given life imprisonment. We really praise the judiciary for its fast move in pronouncing judgement. Now we expect the speedy settlement of the cases under trial and the application of exemplary punishment to be done soon. Otherwise, if justice delays, justice will obviously be denied.

Rubab Abdullah
Dhaka cantonment, Dhaka

Smoking kills

We all know health is wealth and we also know that smoking is a bad habit. People earn money for a better living and spend on things that are not harmful. But for the people who smoke it is a different story. They earn money and spend a lot on cigarettes. In other words they actually buy poison with the money they earn. As sensible human beings we must try to understand how smoking harms us and we should give up smoking.

I am aware of the fact that millions of people are addicted to smoking from the age group of 13 to 50. The smokers can be blamed majorly for the harm they do to others passive smoking is also very harmful. And I believe that it is everyone's duty to help to

create a healthy atmosphere.

Everyday, we see hundreds of "no-smoking" features in newspaper, magazine, and various journals; therefore I request all smokers to stop being ignorant and quit smoking for the sake of the children and for the sake of our environment. Think about a smoke free generation that will pay rich dividends for our nation.

Cigarette contains nicotine, carbon monoxide and many more acidic substances that are injurious to our health. Through every puff from the cigarette these things enter our body and affect our health. Nicotine constricts the size of the blood vessels, which causes blood pressure and

heart attack. Not to mention cancer (it can also be termed as the cancer stick). It contains carbon monoxide, which drives the oxygen out of the red cells in blood. This is why; smoking causes so many diseases. Most of them are fatal that ends untimely in death. Everybody should be warned about the harmful side effects of smoking, which includes passive smoking as well. At least, we can start by trying to stop 'open air smoking', I suggest we do it by declaring the university campuses and other academic institutes in the country as smoking free zones. Then from there we can declare the entire country as a smoking free zone.

Md. Faruque Hassan Sujon
One e-mail

