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Ti's most corrupt epithet bleeds my heart

For the third consecutive year, Bangladesh bowed in humiliation as her name hit the bottom of the list, below another 132 countries of the world, in the Table of Corruption, an annual statistical survey report released by the Transparency International (TI). The TI is an international organisation exclusively devoted to curbing corruption around the world. This year's report shows that several countries including France, Germany, Norway, Colombia, Malaysia and Tunisia have improved their respective posi-



Most corrupt; again!

tions with Finland unchanged and on the top. All those countries have curtailed corruption rate compared to the previous year's results. Bangladesh failed to do so and deserved to be pushed at the bottom of the corrupted nations. Argentina, Belarus, Chile, Israel, Poland, the United States and Zimbabwe have lost their earlier positions and went down by several steps in the TI matrix. Coincidentally, countries most corrupt are also close allies of the US. However, the case of Bangladesh seems agonisingly disturbing. Besides corruption, one observes a total breakdown in the basic discipline of our nation, not to speak of the law-and-order situa-

tion that has plunged from the frying pan to fire. The infamous Kala Jahangirs now stalk the country without fear of retribution and, according to a front-page lead report in a Bengali daily (Dainik Janakantha), *mastans* issued telephone threats to kill four World Bank officials in Dhaka if they failed to pay a specific amount of toll. If such an unfortunate situation continues and adds to the existing ills such as bribery, falsification of educational certificates, trafficking, smuggling, hijacking,

the present government in a letter. It has been two years since the ruling party came to power. Still, many expectations of the masses are not met properly as yet. The biggest bomb that blasted just before the election of 2001 was the TIB report marking Bangladesh as the most corrupt nation of the world. The ruling alliance promised to ERADICATE corruption from the country and vowed to regain the status of the country from the TI, if elected. Alas, Bangladesh scored the hat-trick! Should we congratulate the government or condemn it? Terrorism was the other issue on which the voters preferred the present allinace to run the government, instead of the previous ruling party the AL. The present PM, before the election of 2001, promised to ERADICATE terrorism from the society. Nothing much were done. People are fad up with the styles the government adopted to handle the situation. People are paying more tax than before but corrupt politicians and officials swindle to take home our taxes by unfair means. Show me a single politician who is honest and did not become rich in this profession? And, what good the beautification of roads and islands does except making the involved officials and the party-loyal contractors rich? There are hundreds of roads that require urgent repairs and attention. The sufferings of the people are mounting with each passing day.

In Bangladesh, one party could never rule for two consecutively terms. So, some other party shall come to power in the next term. The next PM shall buy precious DOCTORATE degrees with money from the government exchequer, saved by the present finance minister's SAVING SCHEME or "better macro-economic management". One such thing happened when BNP left huge balance after 1996, and Bangladesh Awami League [BAL] went on a shopping spree for their PM's doctorate degrees! Hope the ruling party will take some appropriate measures to keep their promises, and thus earn their trust of the voters, and of the people. Sajjad Waheed Dhaka

Save now to buy PhD(s) later! It is a bit difficult to sum up the achievements or, in general, the performance of

Human resource key to health care success

I am really pleased to observe the special attention of our commerce minister towards the health sector, The Daily Star, on 04-10-03 published this story. I wish to thank Siemen, Bangladesh Private Clinic and Diagnostic Owners Association, DHL, and Novo Cargo Services Limited for the medical equipment shows they'd hosted lately. But we should not forget that we are dealing with a poverty alleviation strategy! Can our poor afford to utilise these or be benefited by them other wise? Another important question is: can the graduate and post-graduate institutes produce efficient and motivated human resources? Human resources are vital for the health sector, as was told by the WHO Report of 2000 (page 77) that the performance of the health care system depends ultimately on the knowledge, skill and motivation of people responsible for delivering the service. This does not mean that medical equipment's role is little. But we should first hone the skill of our human resources by improving the quality of our numerous institutes. If needed, we should produce requisite administrative manpower by sending qualified staff abroad for training. Dr. Lailun Nahar MSC in Health Policy, Dhaka

"Maoists' withdrawal from peace talks": A few clarifications

First of all, I thank Mr. M. M. Shahabuddin for his interest in and concern about Nepal's current political situation, as was reflected in his article "Maoists' withdrawal from peace talks" published on September 24, 2003 in The Daily Star. Unfortunately, a number of factual and contextual mistakes have appeared in the article. For instance, the author says that King Tribhuban established an absolute monarchy from 1960-1990, whereas King Tribhuban had died on March 13, 1955. Second, the author writes, "After the general election held for the first time in 1951..." The fact is, after the advent of democracy in Nepal in 1951, the general elections were held only in 1959 and not in 1951. Third, the article says "King Tribhuban was in self-exile from 1940s". Fact is, King Tribhuban never went out of the country in

the1940's. Fourth, concerning the Royal massacre, an enquiry commission was constituted comprising the Chief Justice of Nepal and the Speaker and the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives. The commission has brought out facts after an exhaustive investigation. Fifth, the dissolution of Parliament should have been put in its context. His Majesty King Gyanandra Bir Bikram Shaha Dev had to dissolve the parliament after the sitting Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba recommended for it, pursuant to the constitution. With regard to the Maoist movement, it began in 1996. The Maoists are opposed to the constitutional monarchy. They seek to establish a Communist state in Nepal. They terrorise and kill those who do not support their ideology. The Maoists have broken the latest cease-fire, withdrawn from talks and unleashed a new spate of violence at a time when His Majesty's Government had put a package of reforms for the socioeconomic transformation of the Nepalese society. Security forces have been protecting the lives and properties of people and defending democracy and freedom. Bhagirath Basnet Royal Nepalese Ambassador, Dhaka

Mismanagement rocks utility services

Management principles in all organisations have at least a broad objective in common, maximising organisational output and consumers' satisfaction. Managers are presumably following the same principles in our country, but without results, particularly in the utility service organisations. Our never-ending sufferings offer some testimony to that effect. Undoubtedly, electricity is one of the basic necessities for all of us, but its delivery system is full of anomalies. A bunch of corrupt team made consumers' life miserable in so far as the electricity service is concerned. Take for instance the power distribution system. Utility service providers in other categories are no exception. Here are some instances of how the service providers cause embarrassment to the consumers: i) Billing is often irregular, sometimes reaching consumers at intervals of one, or two, or more months. Moreover, bills reach consumers, more often than not, at times close to the last date of payment, though the date of issue of the bill is shown 20 - 25 days

early. ii) Rarely a meter reader takes reading himself. He sends his man, usually a private individual, to do meter reading and to distribute bills on his behalf. Besides, on many occasions, he prepares bills sitting at his desk, doing all guesswork, thus preparing and sending out imaginary bills; iii) A recent development is that the consumers are served with computerised bills. These are not hazard free either. If in the process an error enters, it continues to repeat, making it obligatory for the consumer to visit billing office every time for correction; iv) Billing office may be unbelievably irrational, sometimes asking consumers to pay arrears for a period of 10-15 months, dues shown, for instance, for the closing years in the last century plus some

months in '01 -02. The reason mentioned in the memo is that the office ledger has no records of payment of bills for months specified in the memo; a surprise indeed! v) Paying bills in the assigned bank poses another impediment. There is always an unusually long queue, people waiting for ours together in the sun before their bills are received. It is indeed a colossal waste of time for those in the queue, not to speak of their sufferings. vi) Often the staff members involved with service delivery is interested for a deal with the consumers. This is probably the primary cause of what is euphemistically called a system loss. The whole environment is so corrupt that some consumers tend to get into a deal with the office staff. The

Police needs change of heart, not uniform



Recently, a report published in the DS caught my attention. According to the report, the government is going to change the uniform of police. It seems absolutely unnecessary to me. We know that Bangladesh has retained its title as the number one corrupted nation in the world and the police department is at the top of the country's most corrupted organisations. The law and order situation is turning grave, hitting an all time low. Newspaper reports say the police personnel are maintaining liaison with the top terrors of the country. As a result, the criminals are committing crimes safely and are able to avoid arrests. The proposal to change police uniform

sounds like a sad joke under the prevailing state of affairs. The decision will not only waste a huge quantity of money for nothing, it will also open a new way for corruption. The government may think it is time to modernise the police, but modernisation must occur in our police force's heart first. Then, police should be provided with modern arms and equipment. Before that, the whole police force should undergo a spate of motivation to change their existing mindsets. If we invest on that first, all other investments will pay dividend to the nation. Moin-ul Alam Minto road, Dhaka

deal or the arrangement has, however, an obvious merit; it makes going easy with the service providers, though at the cost of national interest caused by revenue losses. Strongly we feel that we haven't opened an avenue to reach the concerned management who might possibly come forward to help at times when we need it most. Management personnel at area offices simply turn their deaf ears to those willing to provide feedback. Nor we know who will find our feedback useful to take corrective measures. Hence this proposal for the management: Utility service providers of all types may open up cells to receive and address information obtained from the consumers of utility services. At the same time, the consumers should be encouraged to come up with the problems they have relating to utility services. Addresses of proposed cells, both mail and e-mail, should be made adequately known to the consumers so that they may conveniently approach the right person with their feedback. It may help management personnel to put a check on wrong doings at area offices. Moni khan Rasoolpur, Dhania, Dhaka

Standard of English in HSC

News reports revealed that the HSC result of this year will be a disaster and the authority is wary of that. Only 32 per cent students are coming out successfully even after being provided with 10 marks grace for the English. Without such a grace, the percentage might have been only 20. It is clear that the result of the English has made the HSC results so disastrous. In this regard, I would like to provide a critical appreciation of the application of Communicative English in our education system; especially in the SSC and HSC levels. There is no doubt that the English is the most useful and familiar language in this age of globalisation as it is being used by about 650 millions people all over the world, whatever the reason may be. Only through learning Communicative English, one may become an authority on this international language. The inclusion of communicative English in our national curriculum is a timely and worthy step. But, it is more importantly that we ensure that this new technique of learning is properly implemented and we are get the intended results.

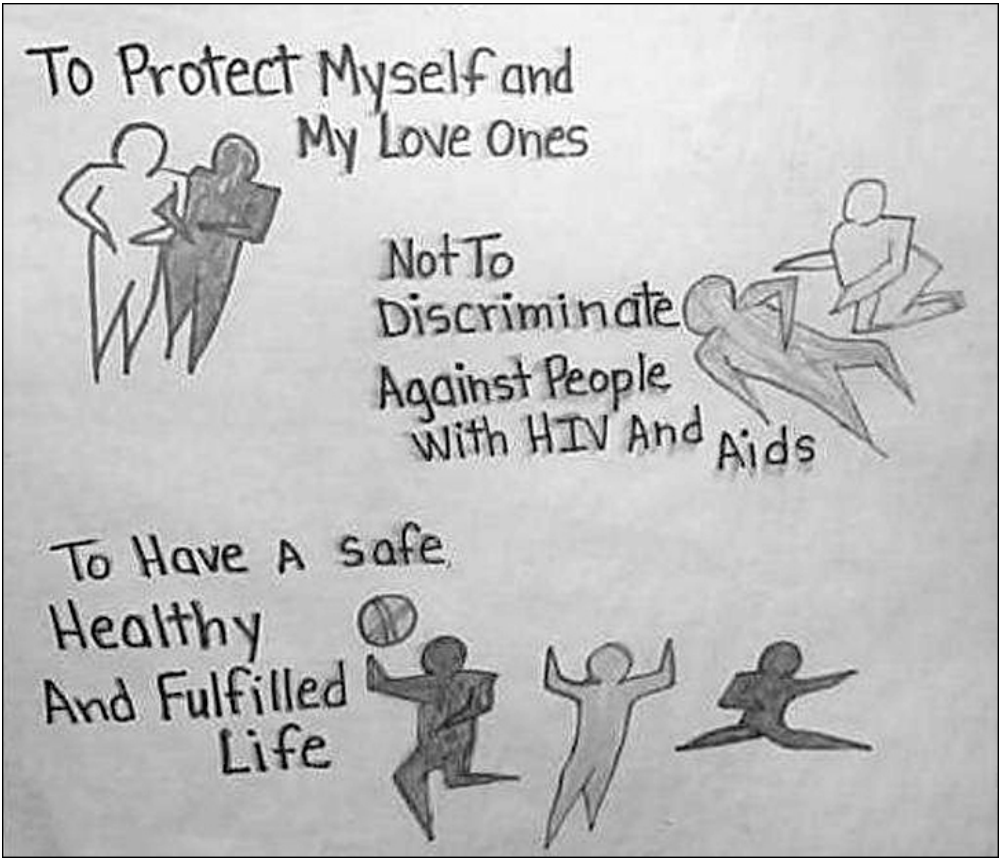
Taking into consideration the results of public examinations in recent years, and the students' poor standard of English, we have to state that the condition is not a satisfactory one. Being weak in English since the very early stages of their student life, our wretched students are facing great difficulties while coping up with the new syllabus and enhanced pattern of questions. Sometimes, many of the teachers fail even to provide any dependable guideline of answering the questions successfully. I

would say that many teachers are in complete darkness about this communicative English. They do not know actually what Communicative English means; how it is totally different from the traditional way of approaching English; what are the effective ways to teaching communicative English; how to make students capable of dealing with English smoothly through adopting this method; and many other important factors related to this. However, most of the educational institutions assign a single teacher for several subjects including English, as they do not have specialist teachers for particular subjects. So, finding no other way out, the poor guardians must depend on private tutors, but can not afford them. As a result, the ill-fated students swell the ranks of the failed students in the public exams every year and cause problems to their family and a great loss to the country. I must mention here that the govt has taken steps to train English teachers of the govt institutions to make the new curriculum of English a success. But the govt should keep in mind that the govt institutions cover only a very small portion of the total students of the country; the vast majority of the students belong to the non-govt institutions. Very few of those care to comply with the procedure to impart lessons on communicative English. I feel that all the educational institutions should get equal attention from the govt. so that they can make the same progress in the new methodology. Another important thing is that the Communicative English also means the Interactive English, which requires full and active participation of both the teacher and the students of the class so that they can intelligibly communicate with each other in English. But this process requires a larger number of classrooms and teachers. If our govt can at least increase the employment of better-trained teachers, it will be helpful in achieving the intended result. Md Arif Sadeq Department of English, Dhaka University

Shame to DU's selection method It's very disappointing to know that the teachers most powerful in merit lost their appointments due to the politically backed teachers (The Daily Star, October 04, 2003 issue). Our question to the DU authority is that, how an institution like the DU ignored the best candidates by compromising moral obligations to uplift those deemed as the best and brightest. Shame to those who have appointed such politically backed candidates for Those vitally important teaching positions. By doing so, the DU authority lost people's respect. We also hate those who ignore merit and provide undue advantages to their so called relatives and other politically backed candidates. Gopal Sengupta, Shyamali Sengupta Barcaly Avenue, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

UN must rein in US and Israel

How shocking and deplorable is the reported US stance as they 'ask both sides to restraint' instead of condemning Israel for its naked attack of Syria on Sunday. Syria is a sovereign state and Israel flouted international laws. While other world leaders have been straight forward to declare that "what happened in Syria can not be accepted", the US went the opposite direction. This is not the first time the US behaved the way it did. May I ask President Bush what's the definition of terrorism by a state?! When the US attacked Afghanistan and Iraq and the Zionist Israel attacks Syria, weren't these acts of state terrorism? For the US, terrorists are those individuals or groups that attack US interests out of frustration caused by the decades-long deprivation and occupations they'd endured. It has been reported that a spokesperson of Israel's PM declared that "all those abet or support terrorism no longer enjoy any immunity, wherever they are". Does it mean whoever supports the Palestinian freedom fighters will be a target of the Israeli attacks? Isn't such a view in an



Fend off HIV infection through education

People die from many unknown diseases. In past we discriminated against and hated patients who were infected with small pox or TB, only some kind-hearted people helped them. Without such generosity, they would have died unattended. This human care changed after scientists invented the vaccine for small pox/TB. Now-a-days, small pox is replaced by the HIV/AIDS, which almost wiped off an entire generation of people; taking away many precious lives including some famous personalities like Rock Hudson, John Curi, Michael Johnson, Michael Benate, etc. There are countries where HIV/AIDS has had catastrophic impacts, but people did not discriminate against the HIV/AIDS patients. However, in Bangladesh, the scenario is different. People here cannot hide their fear (that gradually turns into a kind of phobia) for the HIV/AIDS patients. If the people of any locality get to know that someone is infected with the disease, they virtually outcast the patient or display morbid curiosity about the incident. The patients are usually ostracised by fellow villagers and others in the locality. I know about an incident. A housewife in Bara(Pabna) has been abandoned and deprived from her wealth by her in laws. The villagers also condemned her though she has no fault other than that carrying the deadly disease. She has two children, but other children are not allowed to play with them. The villagers do not even allow them to bathe in the local pond, because she is an HIV positive. The irony is, she got it from her husband, who is already dead. Many housewives in the villages are oppressed by such inhuman practices. Now is the time to change our mindset. Most of us are not aware how HIV/AIDS spreads and how to take preventive measures. We need not to discriminate or ostracise the HIV/AIDS patients if we understand how to protect ourselves from the disease. If we avoid any kind of blood transfusion using syringes; practise legal and safe sex using condoms; etc, we can fend off any HIV infection. We must make people aware about the disease so that they learn how to deal with HIV/AIDS patients. This way, the patients won't fear to disclose their status. This should be done for our own good. We must shun all superstitions and remember that when death draws near to an HIV/AIDS patient, the only thing they desire most is love, not hatred. Dr. Mustafa Abdur Rahim Director, Samajik Shasthya kendra, Mirpur, Dhaka



itself terroristic? The US and its Israeli stooge must realise that their unjust policies have reached a dead end and the game is no more a one-sided one. The occupiers are bleeding in the Middle East and paying for the sins they'd committed against innocent people of Palestine and Iraq. If such blatant violations of universal norms and of the international laws are allowed to continue, this world is sure to grow into a jungle and put all peace loving people on each others' throat. The UNSC must now, and act decisively, to show the rest of the world that the Charter is respected by all the member states. AF Rahman Dhaka

Opposition parties deprived of choices

I disagree with the views expressed by Tariq Abd'Allah in the Friday's (Oct. 3") letter to the editor column regarding the Opposition. With all due respect to the editor, I would like to add that the Opposition too received criticism in the editor's commentary. Mr. Tariq should have read carefully the second part of the commentary and then comment on the issues discussed. It is very easy to sit all the way in Illinois, USA and make abrasive remarks since it does not require of him to support his statements and the readers may excuse his lapse of reality due to his domicile abroad. The opposition claims that its freedom of speech has been taken away by removing the mouthpiece from the Parliament. May I ask Mr. Tariq what other option has the opposition had apart from calling for hartals? Without hartals it is virtually impossible to let the 86 per cent illiterate people of Bangladesh to know about the current situation and the promises that have been broken by the ruling party. Jamshed Taher Banani, Dhaka