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Anthem glitch and CPA conference

The failure to play the national anthem at the inaugural conference of the CPA was a national shame. We have heard about the forming of an enquiry committee to find out the causes of this failure and who's responsible for this. As the news paper report goes, the enquiry report has already been submitted to the government. But the report has not been made public and the authorities appear to be tight-lipped about it.

Since the incident of national anthem in the aforementioned ceremony is a very serious failure, the citizens have the right to know what actually had happened and who were responsible for it. Will the government share the enquiry report with the people of the country?
M.Hafizuddin Khan
Uttara, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

In memory of Captain Basher

It's a great news for all (DS, 18th October, 2003) that a memorial will be built to express reverence to an outstanding liberation war hero, Shaheed Captain Basher. According to the report a gate costing Tk. 6,00,000/ (six lakhs) will be constructed at the entrance of Nilphamary district town, naming it Shaheed Captain Basher Gate. State minister for education, ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon, who is in charge of the district, gave his consent to the project and promised fund disbursement..

I wholeheartedly appreciate the initiative of building the memorial. But, according to my layman view, establishing a 'memorial public library' would be more coherent and apposite than to building a gate spending more than Tk. half a million. In support of my stand, I have some arguments.

Establishing a library tantamount to establishing a hospital for soul. Besides bearing the reminiscences of the martyr, it will go on enlighten-

ing and healing the souls of the people of that area. Thus it would be a boon and a bonanza for those seeking moral tranquillity in these days of degradation. It would also be in concert with the mission of Shaheed Basher's honourable father who was a noted headmaster of Nilphamary High School.

To the contrary, spending such a huge amount from the public exchequer to build a gate might not result into a far-reaching output for the nation.

Mizanur Rahman
Dept. of IS, AUB

Oversized cabinet undercuts PM's efforts

Time and again I asked myself whether Khaleda Zia has the ability to run the administration smoothly and efficiently while so many around her are busy in making fortunes for themselves. The result of the 1991 election, which was in favour of the BNP, had baffled top ranking leaders of the party including it's chairperson Khaleda Zia. As she has had no previous experience

in running a government, or as a Member of Parliament, she found it difficult to run the administration and that too in a parliamentary type of government.

WE thought things will be different this time. But we proved wrong. Although people voted the BNP led alliance overwhelmingly and it formed a government with more than two-thirds majority, an oversized cabinet seems to have tied her hands. I feel strongly that to please other leaders of her party, Khaleda Zia formed a jumbo-sized cabinet. Here the quantity has supplanted quality. May be that's why the government is performing so poorly in running the country. The PM should trim her cabinet an empower those most needed to fix the nation's concerns.

Iqbal Ahmed
Dhaka

Military gets raw deal from RAJUK

RAJUK must be a welfare oriented and farsighted organisation to be able to serve for the betterment of the people of the country. It

announced the final allotment of about 22000 plots at PURBACHAL new township for all categories of people. Anybody could apply, such as government service holders, officials of the autonomous bodies, officials of three defence services, freedom fighters, other bona fide citizens including foreign expatriates. Now, amazingly, we find only eight thousand plots allotted to the public and more than three thousand to those who applied from outside the country. It is learnt that about 36000 people applied in the first phase.

An application fee of Tk. 500 per applicant brought RAJUK about Tk. 1,80,00,000.00. If an average of Tk. 75000.00 were taken from all for different sizes of plots, then it accumulated about Tk. 270,00,00,000.00 crore. And now I do not know why RAJUK has allotted only 8000 plots? It was apprehended that enough applicants were not there at the first time. But to our knowledge, many did not get plots even after applying first.

By our assessment, if the plots are given in phases then the applicants who applied early should have been given priority. RAJUK should not make money out of middle class people who have a lot of trouble collecting money for the initial instalment. However, those who applied once should be given preferential treatment for future allotments.

If RAJUK asks for application again and makes a big amount of money, that will be quite disappointing. An organisation should not make business out of one's hard earned money.

We also observed that lot of businessmen, government officials and employees of autonomous bodies got plots but defence service personnel were allotted with an insignificant numbers of the plots, being only about 70 in total. Many Bangladeshis living outside the country have got plots irrespective of rank and status. Government, no doubt, needs to earn foreign exchange, but the defence personnel too earned foreign currencies in missions abroad and at least 5 per cent plots should have been given to them. That would have made their total to about 390 to 400.

Meanwhile, if anyone cares he can go to <http://www.rajukdhaka.org> and can see for himself the distribution of total plots at PURBACHAL.

RAJUK authority should look into the matter seriously and do its best to maintain uniformity. The military indeed got a raw deal from RAJUK. Only few outside the military know that plot from the military is only given to those who meet strict criteria with respect to the length of service and rank.
Md. Sabbir Ahmad
Jacksonville, USA

We and 18th century novelty

One of the basic characteristics of the 18th century English writings is satire. Either mild or harsh, the writers and poets of this period used their writing as weapons to attack the follies and hypocrisy of the time. Writers and poets like Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, William Congreve made fun of the life style of the English aristocracy in their respective writings.

The fragile reputation, the obsession for outward beauty of woman, scandal monger society, flippant man-woman relation, all these characteristics of that society were portrayed in literature to ridicule the

aristocracy's colourful world of deception. While studying these pieces, what strikes me repeatedly is that our modern society is an imitation of the 18th century upper class English society.

Are not scandals our favourite topic of gossiping? Don't we judge people (especially woman) mostly by their looks and outfits?

Are not we too serious about our dressing tables and in competing others in buying foreign cosmetics? Don't the younger generation take man-woman relationship (sorry for generalisation) as mere games? Like then, it still feels nice to have a date with someone from the opposite sex.

Rifat Mahub
Dhaka University

Are we an economic out-cast?

Albeit Bangladesh is practising a parliamentary democracy without the opposition's participation. May be that's why FDI is dwindling day by day. If we dare to diagnose, we might find that poor law and order, bureaucratic bottleneck and the criminalisation of politics impede

the flow of FDI. Many foreign entrepreneurs said goodbye to us and choose to invest in Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

In Pakistan and India, FDI is handsome despite political turmoil. In Myanmar, military rule is on, but law and order is satisfactory. In Bangladesh, corruption, abduction and terrorism are too rampant to attract FDI. In this era of free market, economic prosperity is impossible sans the FDI. It is the lifeblood of materialism. I hope the Board of Investment will be more dynamic and effective to attract FDI so that we do not become an economic outcast in the region.

Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Dept of English, Dhaka University

We shall overcome

These days I hear the song, "We shall overcome" being used in a commercial on TV. This song has great historical meaning and is often used today to energise the morality of those facing seemingly insurmountable difficulties. The words of this song have great meanings for those struggling.

I feel that it is very inappropriate

to use this very meaningful song for commercial benefits. It belittles the history and meaning of the song and reflects in a negative way on those who use it for personal commercial benefit.

Bro. Ronald Drahozal
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Higher Education, Privatising Knowledge and needs of better scope for researches

Sincere thanks and gratitude for the letter of Md. Anwarul Kabir, Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science of AIUB, published in the Daily Star (www.thedailystar.net) on October 23, 2003. We fully agree with the contents of that letter and request our teacher communities (from primary to university level) to act upon as per Mr. Kabir's guidelines..

Universities have not been ivory towers; they have been remarkably attentive to the needs of the society that supported them. They evolved and took on new tasks as society required, particularly in the last 20 years when they expanded to accommodate mass education; created professional schools; and became research institutions in service of the nation.

Nevertheless, universities have always had core tasks and core ideals that allowed students and concerned quarters to transform lives with new-found knowledge. Their central task is to teach moral education. Professors have responsibilities to teach, to research. Universities must be committed to knowledge.

The universities and civil society are parties to a social contract. In each era, this social contract must be adapted and renegotiated.

Critics claim that professors in Bangladesh and other developing countries neglect teaching and research. They do research in favour of their own interest to gain more money through government/donor agencies/private companies/NGO researches.

Our gratitude to Dr. Subhash Mojumdar, a scientist, who has contributed his free and fair thoughts in re-writing this article.

Gopal Sengupta and Shyamali Sengupta
Barclay Avenue, Montreal, Quebec

Canada

WASA and RAJUK: Put your acts together

This refers to the WASA's notice (DS Oct. 24, 2003) which warns of the penalties for using extra motor for drawing water from WASA line. Water supply of the motor users would be disconnected for good, never to be restored in any circumstances. They would also be prosecuted under the CrPC.

However, the law by which a citizen would be permanently deprived of water supply has not been stated clearly. Of all the utility service providers, WASA is undoubtedly the most mismanaged one. It cannot keep the pumps functioning and ensure adequate supply of water. Even bills are not made regularly. Meter readers very rarely visit the holdings and bills are prepared just on the basis of guesswork. Complaints in this regard simply go unheeded. This is my experience in zone-3 where I live.

Before going into action as per the aforesaid notice, WASA should first fulfil its own obligations. Once the pumps are operated properly and enough supply of water is ensured, nobody will resort to using-extra motor.

And, there would be no shortfall in water supply if pilferage is stopped and public consciousness awakened about the economy of water use. A system of maintaining record of meter readings with the consumers also should be introduced and those making excessive use/wastage of water should be reminded of their civic responsibility. A standard quantity of per capita consumption of water should also be set realistically and widely publicised.

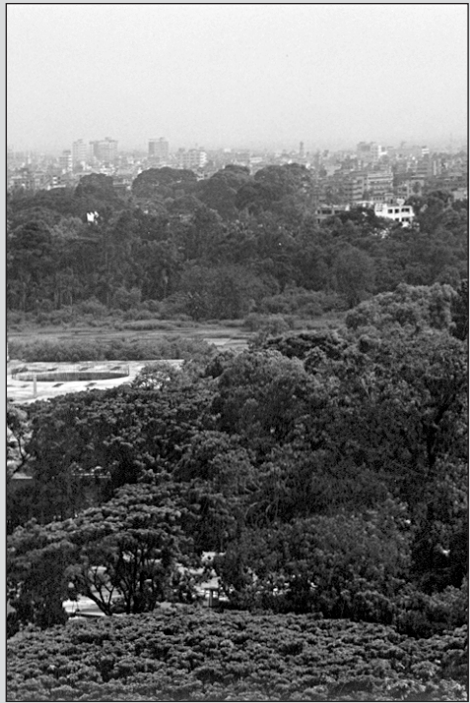
RAJUK also has a responsibility in this regard.

WASA's failure has made people cautious and they now tend to construct underground mega-tanks to store (actually hoard) huge quantities of water, thereby creating shortfall for others. The RAJUK must specify the size of underground tank for each building according to expected number of inhabitants and enforce it strictly.

A consumer
Ring Road, Dhaka

Partisan politics cripples monument construction

The Star City issue of October 13 gave us three pieces that shed light on the depravity of the Suhrawardy Udayan and its pigeonholed project for the construction of an Independence Monument. My concern is for the latter, the monument, which is a work of great architectural beauty and splendour but has fallen victim to partisan politics.



Reportedly, seventy per cent works of the monument is completed. One of the write-ups, captioned 'to be or not to be' divulged the flaws in awarding the works involving huge amount from the public exchequer.

Same thing happened in the past and is happening now. Nevertheless, the importance of such a monument needs no emphasis. A monument with a 150 feet tall glass tower would give our capital an illuminated identity, and would draw a large number of visitors.

The monument sits in a place (the then Race Course) where on March 7, 1971, tens of thousands of people gathered to hear Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman deliver a speech that would remain alive in our heart for ever. This is where on December 16, 1971, our victory day, the Eastern Command of Pakistan Army surrendered to the Allied Forces composed of the Mukti Bahini and the Indian Army. And, after returning from Pakistan on January 10, 1972, Bangabandhu made another historic speech in the presence of a huge gathering of people. No government should treat it as a partisan issue, least of all a government headed by the widow of Ziaur Rahman who was a valiant freedom fighter.

AH Dewan
South Kafirul, Dhaka Cantt, Dhaka



PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

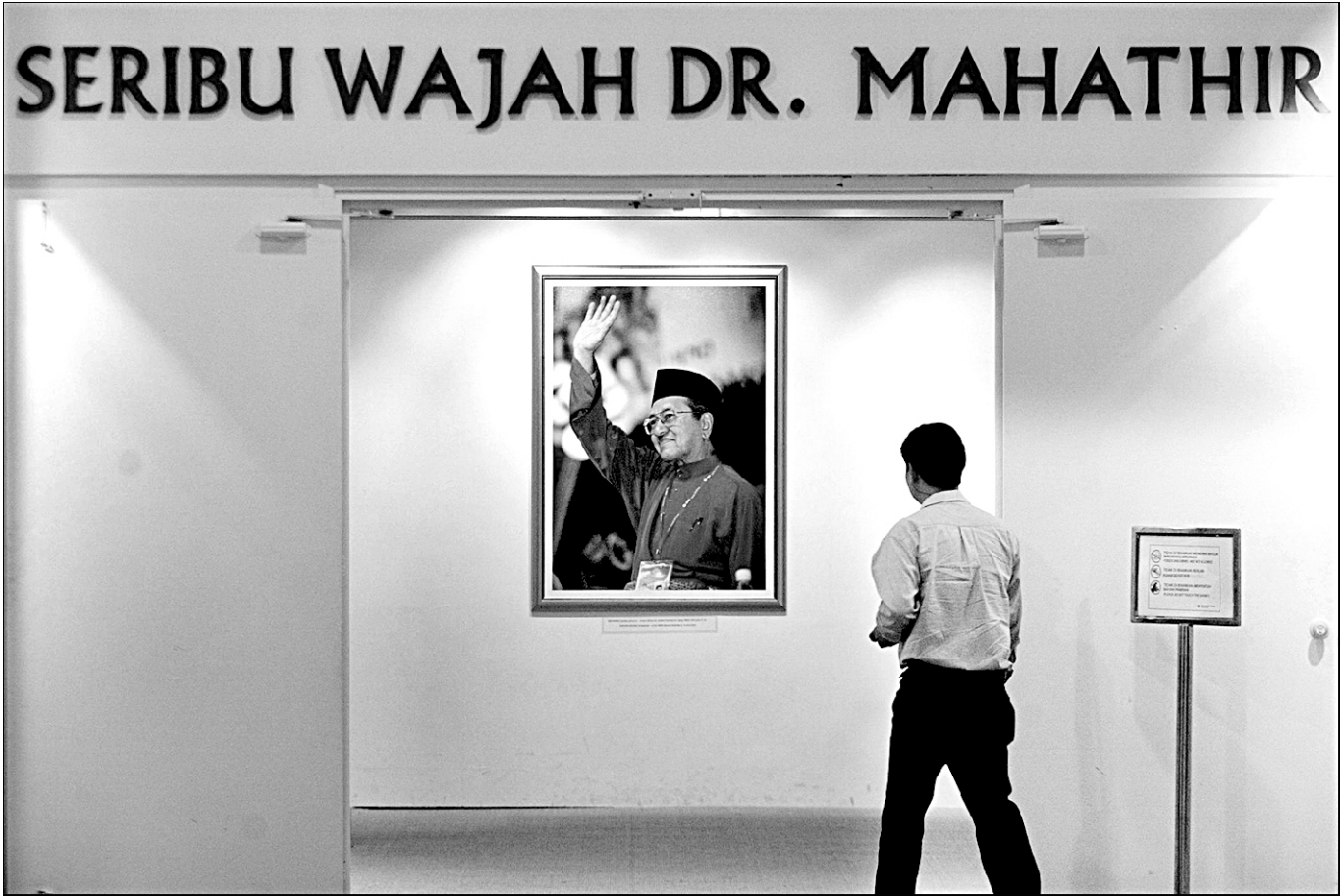


PHOTO: AFP

Mahathir is simply great

Mahathir is an exception. He is also an exemplary leader. Exception, because he is not the kind of leader living on rhetoric alone, his true popularity lies in the works he did for his country, Malaysia. Leaders of other countries, where majority of the population are Muslims, should learn from him.

He has constantly criticised the policy of the West, directly and indirectly. His recent comment in the OIC summit is indeed a thoughtful one. It is neither driven by emotion nor by anger. Rather, it was a carefully written speech aimed at revealing an "open secret" known to almost every sane person.

Indeed the Jews control the US administration, particularly its foreign policy. Many of the prominent donors in American politics are Jews, as are many government officials. And one may surmise that they control the world by proxy by controlling the affairs of a nation that now rules the world.

The US attacked Iraq on Jewish lobby's advice and maintained silence over the

outrageous declaration by the Israeli administration to kill Palestinian leader Arafat. Iran is in the axis of evil and maybe the next target of the Jewish lobby as is Syria. In short, whoever is Israel's enemy is an enemy to the Jewish controlled US too.

But all the Jews do not fall into the same class -- Mahathir also admitted that in interviews. But collectively they are responsible for many chaos and problems. One very crude example relates to illegal Israeli settlers -- they are coming with their women and children and occupying Palestinian territories. As a means to protect their homeland, Palestinians are blowing themselves along with so-called innocent (but illegal Israeli settlers indeed) Israelis.

It is a pity that women and children are being killed in battles, but who is actually responsible for putting them in the firing line? Israelis know that they don't belong there and the land truly belongs to the Palestinians. Why not they pullout from there peacefully. They will not, because they believe that they are Jews and this land

belongs to them -- what a crazy idea!

After being wiped out from Europe -- where they actually belong, they eyed on the Middle East, causing unrest and chaos in there and killing Arabs and Muslims. Then they began to bully relatively weaker neighbours, constantly defying UN resolutions. The catalogue of their misdeeds is indeed long.

Often unaddressed issues like these are causing agony in the minds of Muslims, because Europeans are not annoyed or angered by persecution of Muslims by Jews, rather they are ashamed that they displayed brutality in a larger scale toward the Jews. Before Muslims, these Europeans tamed the Red Indians of America, the aborigines of Africa and Australia, and the natives of Asia. Mahathir just highlighted those facts. He is simply great.

A Muslim in agony
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