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Mobile snatching



Snatching of mobile sets is a new avenue for pilferers. It seems so easy to sneak away with this small, talkative gadget and sell it in the ready market. Recently two snatching incident took place in our family, one belonging to my brother-in-law; while the other belonged to my nephew (a consultant) who flew from London for a short visit.

I used to lose my sunglasses in the early days, till I learned to put it in the pocket while not using it. Now it's the mobile I have to take care of.

The IT industry has to come up with theft-proof micro mobile telephone sets, which are slim and foldable. The current mini models are too bulky. Otherwise because of the fear of the sets getting stolen, the users will lose their interest in using mobile phones and that is certainly not what the cell phone companies desires.

Alif Zabr, Dhaka

Arundhati Roy, in her book 'The God of Small Things', depicts a police station, where on the wall behind the inspector of police, a red and blue board said: Politeness, obedience, loyalty, intelligence, courtesy, efficiency these are the real strength of the police! We think our policemen should also have all these qualities.

Nur Jahan, Chittagong

Expansion of the Parliament

My attention was drawn recently to your editorial on expansion of the parliament. I agree with the views expressed, as I am sure any right thinking person in Bangladesh would.

I really do not understand this government. At a time when the country is looking to the Prime Minister for answers to issues of law and order, corruption, and

rising attacks on minorities, she chooses to focus on the least of the nation's priorities. Has she forgotten that for the last 12 years, thanks to her colleague, the Leader of the Opposition and herself, the Parliament has been reduced to the least important political institutions? Is she doing this so that we can have a larger number of people living on the government exchequer without contributing back even a cent that they take out of the people's pocket?

Then again, how can she in her right mind think of passing such an important amendment to the constitution without the opposition on board? It is true that her party has two third majority. But someone please remind her that the AL received votes of 40% of the people in the last election. There is no question that her action will be counterproductive, and may I add dictatorial, if she chooses to go ahead with this expansion without a consensus of the major political parties.

The task ahead of you Madam Prime Minister is not to try and expand the parliament by this bulldozing method but making the existing one work. If you cannot do that and would like to blame the opposition for it, then better concentrate on issues that we the public have desperately tried to communicate to you, namely, law and order, corruption and attacks on minorities.

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmandi RA

Dr. B and the third party

I had been following with interest the new political proposal floated by Dr Kamal Hossain and Dr B Chowdhury about the third force in Bangladesh politics. The development or formation of a third force in a system where two major parties dominate is not after all a bad idea. A third force in a system where two parties play political musical chair have historically played constructive roles in some well-established democracies.

The Liberal Party in Britain, The Australian Democrats in Australia

where this writer lives and there was one short-lived in New Zealand, are a few worth mentioning.

The Australian Democrats (AD) as a political party was formed and launched by one Mr Don Chipp who was a long time member of Liberal Party (one of the Australian major parties which is ruling party now) and an MP in the lower house where the government is formed. He had been a minister in late 60's and early 70's. He had a fall-out with the next Liberal PM Malcolm Fraser and was not included in the next ministry. He then resigned from the party and contested his seat as an independent but failed to win. He then decided to form and launch his own party, Australian Democrats and contested upper house senate seats in various states. He won with one or two others in other states. The senate elections are run in a different system in Australia which is another story that can be told some other time.

Over the last few years, the AD party had strongly contributed to the Australian political system and is still continuing to do so. Don Chipp while launching his party was asked as to why he was doing this while fully knowing that he would never be able form a government. His simple answer at the time was "to keep the bastards honest". Since then AD had maintained a balance of power in the senate, the upper house of review in the Australian parliamentary system. Both the major parties all along had to negotiate with AD for the passage of their bills. Senate is the house of review in Australia and the bills can be rejected and sent back to lower house for amendment.

I regret to say, in the absence of true honesty in Bangladesh politics and a unicameral system, one wonders what sense will it make for third force in Bangladesh. New Zealand is a unicameral system, the third force has failed as it evolved. AD as a party is in decline among Australian public mind right at this moment because of internal leadership squabbles. The founding leader Don Chipp has long retired from politics. Another force, Australian Greens is growing fast in its place.

Dr Kamal Hossain and Dr B Chowdhury are two very highly respected veterans in Bangladesh political arena. I have no doubt about their honesty, patriotism and integrity but I have some doubt about how successful they would be in their endeavours. The public may view that they were part of the current system during their life time. However, anything that can be done would be a start and I wish them goodluck.

Fakhruddin A. Chowdhury
On E-Mail

Potential of Local Government

Salute to Dr. Badiul Alam Muzumder (Country Director of The Hunger Project) and the Daily Star editor for letting us know the finer aspects of local government's necessities in an article appeared in DS on December 28, 2003 under

"My Architect", Kahn and Khan

DS articles 'Philadelphia and Dhaka' of 19/11/03 and 'Finding Dhaka in New York' of 24/11/03 both based on a documentary 'My Architect' by Nathaniel Kahn are quite emotionally charged. For the writers it was reflective patriotism that prompted them to write and for Nathaniel it is the eternal feeling of attachment that a son has for his father that found an expression in his documentary. So far it is understandable but when you dig a bit deeper you find two dubious characters in Luis I Kahn, the architect of Shere-e-Bangla Nagar and Ayub Khan who conceived Shere-e-Bangla Nagar to deceive Bengalis. Both Kahn and Khan had their own agenda while creating Shere-e-Bangla Nagar and it has nothing to do with the 'nation's dream of democracy'. Kahn created (may be) a master

piece in Dhaka at a huge cost of tax payers money, that he could not create, as Nathaniel says, in Philadelphia and Khan tried to pacify and distract the people while siphoning its wealth for the creation of Islamabad. Kahn and Khan had their own perceived view of the people which not necessarily reflected their aspirations. Nathaniel and Bangladesh had one thing in common, the son knows how he was deprived by his father Louis Kahn and the people of Bangladesh know how they were deprived by Ayub Khan. Yet we tend to admire and eulogise the father and his creation based on deceptions.

Let us call a spade a spade; as a nation we need not be so emotional.

Jewel, Khulna University, Khulna



Luis I Kahn



The caption "The government deserves praise for correcting its mistakes". DS once again deserves special thanks for raising such vital national issues and putting it forward for the people's judgement. Local Government is a major issue duly enshrined in our original constitution commensurate with the fundamental policy of 'people's empowerment'. Unfortunately, the system has been victim of the incumbent government. They have used it to gain their party interest. No difference was with the present government. Introduction of controversial Gram Sarkar (GS), selected by government officials, raised hue and cry from all quarters. It happened, to some extent, in cases of two recent circular imposing restrictions on the movement of the Chairmen of Union Parishad. Initiatives of DS with other media to protect the LG were obviously worth mentioning.

We want the full freedom of UP chairmen as per constitutional right. Chairmen at present are being used as the subservient of both UNO and MP. As a local leader

he needs to mobilise local resources to make his union self-reliant. But the present government imposed a restriction on using the local water body (Jol Mahal) by the Union Parishad. We have not heard any voice against it. Unfortunately our chairmen have been kept busy with distribution of VGD and 'wheat'. They know these are their works. It's worth mentioning here that women members of UP have been made the adviser of Gram Sarkar. Rather the previous male leaders who are not elected not even selected in the GS are taking decisions discarding the elected leaders.

We urge through this column the authority concerned to take immediate measures to allow the UP body use its full constitutional rights.

M. Mamunur Rahman
Pangsha, Rajbari

Terrorists rule the State by proxy

The government is very vocal about the freedom of local newspapers in the country. But the people behind the newspapers who work day and night in the quest for the truth...to deliver the facts, at our door everyday are now in the line of fire. Manik Saha, a veteran freedom fighter of Khulna is the latest victim to the fallen journalists' list. His death is not an isolated brutality rather a well-planned conspiracy to extinguish the sincere people working as a mirror of the nation. In Barisal, Jhalokathi and Patuakhali, journalists are constantly being targeted, they are fleeing for their lives.

The information minister has declared that no short cut will be accepted in the investigation of the murder of Manik Saha, his killers will be brought to justice and the attack on the professionals will not be tolerated. With all due respect I would like to ask the minister -- what was the outcome of the previous murders? What has he done about the bomb blasts at Ramna botomul, Udichi programme, in the triple blasts of Mymensingh cinema halls? What did the government do all this time? What has the home minister done so far, why is he being paid his salary, allowances, house rent, telephone bills and so many other amenities from the poor people's pockets?

The Prime Minister in her first address after the election acknowledged the consent of the people as a silent revolution. We the poor people always struggling to survive, dreamt for a better tomorrow. That dream has apparently turned into a nightmare. Life has become the cheapest commodity in this land of anarchy, the state sponsored terrorists rule the state by proxy. Does this statement offend our lawmakers? I think they have crossed that level of conscience, nothing can offend them. I really wonder how long the general people can afford to bear it. Some day their patience is bound to break down. Do our lawmakers foresee it?

Romeo Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Why were they heroes

This refers to the article "Why were they heroes" by Mohammad Badrul Ahsan published on DS January 9. I fully endorse his views on the subject. The army officers who met accidental death surely died like victims, not like heroes. There is of course no harm in giving them a heroic burial.

But then the question arises why don't we do the same for the hundreds who die in launch accidents

and other natural disaster? Those unlucky ones are also victims of calamities. Is it because those are commoners who do not have any voice in the administration of the country?

Ours is an unlucky nation. We crave for heroes but seldom find them. We need those who will outlive their work to be remembered forever.

Thanks to the writer to point out the way this nation is cheating itself.

Baku Choudhury, Dhaka

Manik Saha

I'm writing this letter with a heavy heart. Some miscreants killed a renowned journalist Manik Saha last Thursday in Khulna, just two days after a bomb blast at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (Rm) at Sylhet. It's a matter of grief that twelve journalists were killed in Khulna in last nine years. If you write something against criminals in newspaper, you get punished by getting murdered by them. Such incidents reflect the sad state of law and order situation in our country.

Dr. Chowdhury Jalal Uddin Murshed (Rumi)
Medical Officer, Diabetic Hospital Sylhet

Election manifesto and our destiny!

Thanks Mr. Zayadul Ahsan for the news analysis "Vital poll pledges caught in foot-dragging" published on 19th January 2004. Mr. Ahsan hits four key election pledges of the ruling coalition BNP government.

One government takes leave, another government sets foot, but the of public does not change. Election comes, political parties make commitments, but most of these don't see the light of the day after the election victory. Giving state run radio and television autonomy was BNP's election commitment in 1991 election manifesto but they are yet fulfil this vital election pledge as Mr. Ahsan mentioned. During Awami League's tenure, BNP strongly criticised the then government's ineffective steps in this regard. But

and if the four commitments are implemented, their corruption will be end.

If we can eradicate "corruption" from all sectors, Bangladesh will not be far behind from countries like Malaysia or Singapore. But to reach that spot, our political leaders should ardently discharge their duties to meet public demand according to their election manifestos.

Md. Zillur Rahaman
Gandaria, Dhaka-1204

PERC slams airport road facelift

I had been reading with interest your reports on the PERC published (Jan. 19 and 20). The Public Expenditure Review Committee (PERC) should be congratulated for a job well done, particularly against the popular perception that committees are created only to buy time with the sole purpose of killing any or all issues controversial and have the potential of causing embarrassment to the establishment. Looks like this committee report has seen the light of the day in its true colour and perspective.

What I find most interesting is that the report also mentions the involvement of the secretary of the concerned Ministry in the said corruption scandal. This report also confirms the findings of an earlier independent report about the state of over all corruption in Bangladesh, which had indicated that, higher the level of authority, more the corruption. What to speak of our lawmakers even the civil bureaucracy is now competing with one another in corrupt practices.

In all this what shocks me is the rationale or the mindset which prompts individuals to resort to such practices particularly people who have already amassed considerable resources to last a second generation and beyond. To me it is nothing but a reflection of their greed and lust for more and more.

The present government for its own sake should take serious note of the committee's findings and take stern corrective measures on an urgent basis. I find it absurd that an order of a democratically elected Prime Minister of a people's republic is ignored and set aside and that no one even the PM herself bothered about it.

Shamsher Chowdhury
One-mail

Declare hartal illegal

It is defiantly an act of illegality to keep mass people illegally confined - a legacy of the colonial era. The freedom fighters adopted hartal as an instrument to immobilise the colonial government.

After the achievement of political liberty and emergence as a sovereign and independent state an instrument of colonial past cannot be dragged on afterwards. The respected leader of the opposition and daughter of the father of the nation promised to the people

A Train of Hope



Better late than never!

The Samjhauta Express -- a train of understanding and hope crossed the Wagah border near to Lahore heading for Atari on January 17, 2004, with a great expectation. People at large in this sub-continent believe this train of hope will open a new horizon of cooperation and compromise since Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee announced this initiative as his final bid for peace with Pakistan in his life time.

In fact, Mr Vajpayee during his tenure as foreign minister of India took commendable endeavour to normalise the relation between the two hostile countries who fought three wars against each other. Of course, there were many opportunities to draw a conclusion and achieve a win-win position during Tashkent and Simla declaration. But every time, politicians and diplomats were committed to crisis management and intentionally avoided a long lasting solution. Even now, General Musharraf, who fought the Kargil war has taken this soft approach to get a diplomatic advantage since he realised the extent of terrorism in Pakistan

after the attacks on his life. A few critics feel that this might be his way of winning the confidence of the super power and buy some time to get himself ready for next advantage. Similarly, Vajpayee might also has taken the approach of reconciliation in view of the ensuring general election to win the heart of 18 crore pro-Pakistanis living in India.

It is obvious, secretary level meeting, going to take place shortly, shall not be able to evolve a way out to resolve such a long disputed problem. However, the train of hope that carried the message of compromise could be a reality, provided a super power plays active role of umpiring in the background. The possibility of settlement appeared to be a visible one in view of the remarkable change in the world scenario.

Leaders of all Saarc countries may consider involving themselves somehow or rather to make this mission of train of hope a realistic one this time to uphold the spirit of Saarc and peace in this sub continent.

Kumar Prithwiraj Nath, Dhaka-1209

Shushikkha andolon

I welcome the news of launching a forum to help promote education called 'Shushikkhya Andolon' by Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud and Professor Abu Saeed. Both, in my consideration, have very distinctive standing in our civil society. Unlike the so-called members of civil society, their political alienation is less visible. Their action and speech has reasonable acceptance to greater public and they have good contributions towards our society. They do have real

success in their career as well.

When these personalities engage themselves in this kind of initiative, it looks real and hopefully will go a long way to improve the level of education in terms of quality and conditions of the education institutions in general.

One should appreciate the fact that this is a Herculean task to make a breakthrough against the strong traditional coteries and weak infrastructure of the

institutions. This noble cause should be supported by all so that they can effectively promote and attain the objectives.

I would like to make a small financial contribution to help launch 'Andolon's' own Web Site. Should it be acceptable, I would appreciate if full banking and contact details are kindly forwarded.

M M Haque
Jeddah
Mmhaque@isdb.org



Each one reach one

As far as I know, no one was either accused, arrested or punished for these killings. The police administration totally disappointed us in maintaining law and order situation.

With my deep condolences to Late Manik Saha's family I demand exemplary punishment of those miscreants behind all this killings.

what are they doing now?

Corruption is the key hindrance of our enduring development. The donor agencies and Transparency International pointed out it many times. To eradicate corruption from all sectors, Mr. Ahsan's suggested four key election pledges are essential to implement. But the main problem is that our pragmatic politics is already corrupt

not to indulge in hartal any more but then she retreated from her pledge. The hartal and the boycott of session of the parliament is an act which is definitely illegal and betrayal to the nation. The political parties must refrain from hartal as it is making colossal loss and damage to country's economy.

SM Khalid Chowdhury
Dhaka