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Deadly deadline!

The government, that sickly child of compromise, is looking surprisingly tough to survive the first serious test following the recent deterioration of law and order, price spiral of the essentials, defection of two MPs, and, finally, scapegoating of some cleaner and capable party stalwarts.

What may really happen by April 30? Just days before the AL deadline, analysts say, a bomb maybe detonated by defection of some treasury bench deputies, and suddenly, the coalition majority maybe on the rocks. This is, however,

pure speculation.

I think the AL is trying to reap maximum benefits out of the weaknesses of the ruling coalition, its strategies and tactics in handling governance issues together with the handling of politics. Politics is meant for the cool headed persons. High handedness in politics is suicidal. We are waiting to see what happens, of course, as onlookers.

Sirajul Islam
Social sciences researcher and consultant
Pisciculture Housing Society, Shyamoli, Dhaka

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The main opposition Awami League (AL) has given an ultimatum to the elected alliance government to resign by April 30. The decision was made at an AL executive committee meeting recently.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told the nation and the international media, including the BBC, that only Allah could help the present government survive after April 30.

Perhaps the AL logic is as follows: The people of Bangladesh have nothing to do since they were very wrong in voting

for the BNP in October 1, 2001 general elections. As the mass people went 'astray', they are to digest what the AL prescribes and does for the nation. The above logic of the AL might work if there was no party capable of running the country at all. But there are some others including the BNP to do that.

Most people would agree that the alliance running the country is not doing well. But the AL was not doing this job better anyway!
MAS Molla
BAAS, Dhaka



Tagore's medal

We are shocked to hear that burglars stole some invaluable manuscripts and Tagore's Noble Medal from Shantiniketan. Tagore is a pride of Bengalees. He was the man who brought international honour to our language. The medal was a prized gift for all of us. The theft certainly vandalised the honour and the sanctity of his contribution to the realm of literature. We are not told how the robbery was committed but we know that the window of the room was broken, which shows that there were security lapses.

The authorities of the university are to blame for this. They must recover the stolen treasure as soon as possible and bring the thieves to justice.
Mahfuzul Haque
On e-mail

puter. Most of them are students, service holders and business people. The persons who are working with computer are mostly single users. Among the computer users, few people are familiar with the multi-user environment and the Internet. So we can get a clear picture of the communication infrastructure of our country. Let's have a look at the current communication infrastructure of financial organisations.

Hundreds of financial organisations are operating here. Among these, 52 are banks. Still most of the banks (public and private) are not going online. In the 21st century, people need to carry hand cash to travel from one place to another in our country. In most of the developing countries, people have to carry plastic cards (VISA, Master, ATM etc.) only. They can pay their utilities bills and check their account status from home. Currently, some private banks are running a centralised online banking system. Some other private banks are trying to implement online banking software. Most of the others are looking for online banking software.

The Standard Chartered Bank is using Radio Link, DDN (Digital Data Network), Leased Line and VSAT for communication. Citibank is using VSAT. HSBC is using VSAT, Radio Link, Leased Line etc. We can see there is no unique and reliable communication media for the banks. Banks are spending a lot of money on communication. If it is possible to ensure a unique, reliable and less expensive communication media for the financial organisations, we could enjoy online banking facilities in our country. Any government or private organisation can also establish a countrywide network.

We hope the government will develop a better communication infrastructure for the country; so that people can think globally.
Engr. Md. Rafiqul Islam (Rafiq)
NCC Bank Ltd, Motijheel C/A

Laboratory wastes

People are very much dependent on the diagnostic laboratories for proper diagnosis of diseases. A laboratory can diagnose any disease, which was quite impossible only a few years ago. A long time was needed for diagnosing a disease and by that time many patients died without proper treatment. Doctors are now relying on these laboratories because they help them to diagnose diseases accurately and they can start treatment without losing any time. As a result, we find a mushroom growth of such laboratories in every city in the country.

In most of the cases, these laboratories have expanded without fulfilling the legal requirements. There is no scientific disposal of the wastes of these laboratories which cause a great harm to our environment.

In a recent incident in Barisal, some school children were affected seriously by burning wastes. That is an indication of the danger that we are exposed to.

Farhana Chowdhury
IUB, Chittagong Campus

News coverage

I'm a regular subscriber of The Daily Star. I appreciate its standard compared to other Bangladeshi newspapers. However, at times I get disappointed with your news coverage. For example, today's (March 30) Star hasn't given any news about yesterday's public meeting in Paltan Maidan organised by the Jamaat. It was a relatively well attended meeting, there were thousands of

accused. It is the same old story--the main culprit always escapes. It is encouraging other hardened criminals to follow suit.

The gory pictures of the slain men shown in the TV news are shocking. We were shown the body parts of the victims in vivid colours. Do these people, those who run the TV channels, have any sense of decency? Out of respect for the dead persons and their family, they should have resisted the temptation of showing such things. What are they trying to prove? That they are objective in their reporting, and therefore any scene, no matter how horrible it is, is a fair display? Or are they trying to improve their TV ratings? Do we have any ratings in our country? With only four channels in the country,

pictures? Report on the scene, show us the pictures of the criminals, show us the pictures of the police force in action, but please spare us the graphic details of the mutilated bodies.

Let this be a wakeup call for the media people.
Salim Akbar
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

Terrorism, suicide bombers and freedom

Have Israel, the USA and the UK ever thought about the main causes of world wide terrorism and suicide bomb attacks?

To call a spade a spade our opinion are as follows:

1. creation of Israel within the state of Palestine in 1948. The USA and the UK immediately recognised Israel. 4. Israel has rendered thousands of Palestinians homeless. It is occupying more and more Palestinian lands day by day, killing Palestinian men, women and children without any compassion and mercy and unleashing a reign of terror in Palestine with the support of the US and Britain.

5. In 2001 and 2002 the USA, the UK and their allies invaded and occupied Afghanistan and it has become another Palestine and Iraq has become yet another Palestine. 6. The carnage and genocide of the Palestinians, Afghans and the Iraqis go unabated by the Israelis, Americans, the British and their allies. The world is deaf and dumb.

7. The sufferings of the enslaved Palestinians, the Afghans and the Iraqis know no bounds. They are compelled and forced to engage themselves in terrorist activities and suicide bomb attacks to avenge the genocide and atrocities of the Israelis, the Americans, the British and their allies all over the world.

So where is justice and freedom?
OH Kabir
Dhaka

Social poise of leaders

As an ordinary, nameless citizen who has been voting for more than four decades, I find it distressing to note the weaknesses in the social poise of our leaders (generally speaking). I feel irritated when I read or see them in the mass media, and do not feel inclined to approach them in social gatherings (I never attend political meetings).

They must reflect why they (the majority) project a negative image to the informed citizens. They are being imitated by new generation aspirants. The current political culture needs deep analysis and shake-up, if we expect a healthy political culture to be re-introduced in this tightly-packed nation.

They have to discard their false super-ego and over-confidence, and cultivate humility. Hate campaigns are absolutely not acceptable. There is a false notion about constructive analysis and criticism. The diplomatic language is forgotten, and the main objective is to criticise the opponents all the time, as if there were no other issues on the agenda of the political parties and the regime. Today the whole nation is artificially divided, remembering the cultural homogeneity in society.

There is no peer-level stance, once the election campaign is over. This is hypocrisy at its best. A queer message comes through: "The law applies to others, not to us!" Most of the evils we see today is a result of this nefarious attitude which is cultivated right, left and at the centre.

Why the leaders talk down to the people and the opponents? The physical gestures at public meetings betray their motivation. Why so many unholy body postures? The tone is emotional, passionate and polarised. There are no signs of an open mind. Closed and half-closed minds cannot run a country. Adjustment, tolerance, patience are part of the game. The cosmetic effect projected through crude propaganda is democratic, but the poise is autocratic (zamindari). The feudal system is still deeply entrenched into our subconscious, judging by the high cost of doing politics in this country. Who can afford to enter politics in these days of 'political business'? Patriotism is nobody's 'business' but everybody's goal.

The percentage of real, dedicated, genuine aspirants is less than one per cent. Then how the leaders represent the masses? Election have no meaning when the cost of being elected is so high. How many committees and commissions have been engaged officially and informally to solve this basic problem of governance?

We overlook the roots and like to prance on the branches. We create new problems, and are not interested in finished products. We got a national assignment after 1971, and we are still tinkering with it. We are, in a sense, "black" smiths! Water evaporates into steam/vapour and offers purified water fit for drinking. Our politics is so hard and solid that we cannot evaporate and purify it! Is that the reason we are so proud of our political stands? Bend with the wind, the wise say, and rise to offer the harvest.

Flag-waving is a popular pastime, but where are the end products (search for three decades)? Our leaders are not being original this is the pattern in the third world of DCs

Cricket for friendship

The world has never seen friendly relations between the two neighbours, India and Pakistan, since their independence in 1947. Both the countries possess nuclear weapons and hyper-voltage tension always runs high between them. But this tension is merely a sham which has once again been proved by the continuation of negotiations between these two countries. Friendly gestures from them for easing this tension have resulted in Indian cricket team visiting Pakistan where they got a big applause and warm reception. Thanks to both the governments for giving priority to the common sentiments and to the unfathomable attraction for each other. They really deserve congratulations as they have taken cricket as the mediator of conflicts. The present tour has proved that only cricket can bridge the gap created earlier. It not only reunites them but also creates a far reaching effect which will be acting as a catalyst in melting the ice of stalemate. They have set up the finest example before the rest of the world that sport can be an arbitrator and it does not follow any conflict. No one could think about the grand success of the tour in which security concern was a great barrier. But the Indian players valued the people's anticipation and thus they not only won the hearts of hundreds of thousands of cricket fans but also beckoned very explicitly that cricket can be the best way of interweaving the apparel of friendship.

ABM Shafiqul Islam
Dept. of English, Jahangirnagar University



people.
Why was it ignored?
Shireen Sami
Dhaka

Media reporting

The terrible killing of a businessman and his son from the old part of Dhaka city has shocked the whole nation. How can a person or persons become so brutal is a question that many people are asking themselves.

According to the newspapers, the police have arrested two persons in connection with this murder, but are still to catch the alleged main

does rating really matter?
It is quite obvious that self-censorship does not work. In that case, the government should impose strict rules as to what can and cannot be shown in TV news. In the last 10 years, there has been a lot of improvement in the freedom of media, but the media people have not waken up to their responsibility. It is quite common to see photographs of mutilated bodies being printed in either the front or the back page of the newspapers, particularly the Bengali ones.

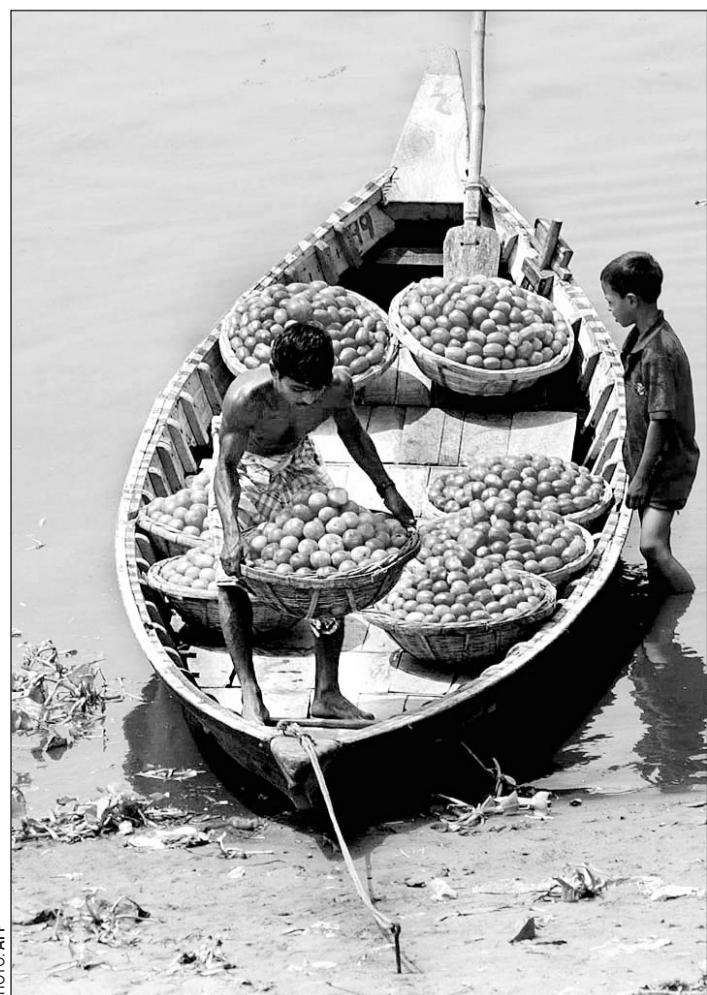
When will these people realise that we are tired of seeing such

1. The Jews in league with the USA and the UK have forcefully and illegally invaded and occupied Palestine and created a state of Israel within the state of Palestine in the heart of the Arab World for over half a century.

2. Israel, the USA and the UK are raising a hue and cry world wide against terrorism and suicide bomb attacks. But, in fact, they are themselves carrying out state terrorism in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq.

3. The Jews assassinated UN Mediator Swedish diplomat Count Folke Bernadotte in Palestine, and violating the international law declared the

Biotechnology policy vision



I was tremendously attracted to the article 'Science and Technology : A Policy Vision' by Prof. Ahmad Islam in the 'Point Counterpoint' page on 26 March. The article was based on policy-making of our future, i.e. our agriculture and economy which are now mostly dependent on biotechnology. It is high time for our nation to take technology in hand to compete with the developing world that is increasing production in every aspect of agriculture and industry. There is much debate on the safety aspect of biotechnology but it is true that proper management can remove the risks.

But how will we approach accepting the technology which is new to us but not quite so to the developed countries? How will we develop skills for this field? The writer has mentioned that our curricula of school, college and universities should be modernised in accordance with needs of the applied field. Yes Sir, I agree with you on the curricula modernisation point. But what about the prevailing curricula of our universities? You know, there are three government universities that are involved in biotechnology education. I cannot say anything about the other two universities. The education here is really memorisation-based as you have stated. We hardly go for practical assessment which is included in our syllabus. Here the laboratories are not even moderately equipped. I can say that practical knowledge of us is almost zero.

I have seen that for a study tour, practical and fieldwork the Biotechnology and Genetic

Engineering discipline and the English literature discipline get the same amount of money. I don't understand how the authorities could grant the same amount of money for two different disciplines, when one is totally research and application based and the other is not. Moreover, the granted money is just insufficient to initiate a practical task. Thus the students acquire only theoretical knowledge.

It is a matter of concern that there is nobody to evaluate the teaching quality and practical works in universities. The universities are running on their own. The universities should maintain a minimum standard of education in comparison with the international institutions.

The article mentioned that the NIB building is ready to go on operation but the recruitment is not done yet. I was astonished after reading the line. Because I saw an advertisement on newspapers for the scientific staff recruitment at the NIB two years ago. But the recruitment is yet to be complete!

There was a great suggestion in the article that the biotech students of universities can be utilised in the research projects that will be conducted in the NIB by the scientists of high track record. If the undergraduate biotech students get the chance to prepare their 4th year's thesis in the NIB projects, it will be beneficial for both the students and NIB projects, as well as for the government.

Md. Tariqur Rahman
Khulna University, Khulna

and LDCs. The emerging leadership is swallowing water to keep afloat. They run the ship of the state or we miserable citizens try to pile up the rescued?

Our sermonisers hardly smile in public; scowling all the time, fighting imaginary mosquito bites (slapping themselves). Political prayers are working overtime, to deny the right to dissent. The fight for elbow room in the arena (of gladiators), is endless. The Dhaka amphitheatre is becoming world famous for cultivating the art of non-productivity in political affairs.

This phlegmatic disposition is taking the nation on a suicidal path (if not civil war). Naturally, an artless minority in the society's leadership is trying to launch a third platform. The coming months, it appears, are going to be a turning point in Bangladesh politics.

A change is better than no change.
A Mawaz
Dhaka

Illegal appointments in RU

We are shocked at the news recurrently coming in the national dailies that 300 staff members have been appointed illegally in Rajshahi University. The selection procedure has been fraught with politicisation, nepotism, and also corruption. Besides, the major flaw is that the appointment notice was not published in any newspaper i.e. the applications were received secretly. It was an utter violation of the equal rights of the citizens.

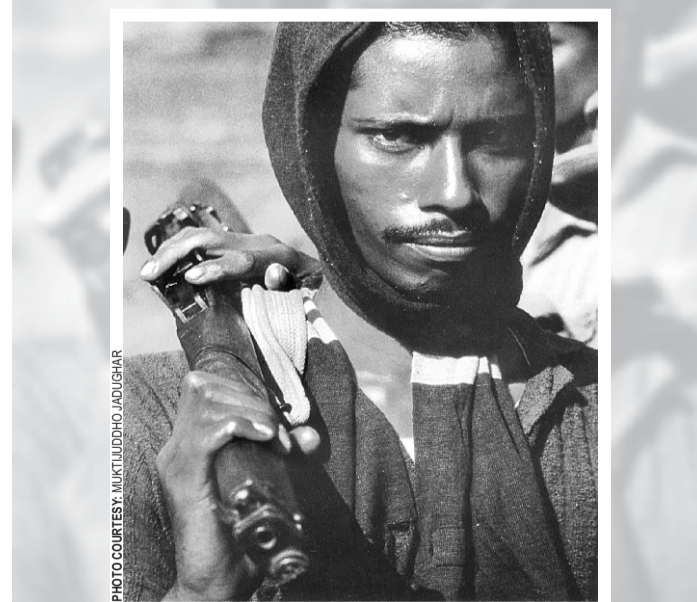
I request the UGC and the ministry of education to intervene quickly in the matter to help the spirit of equity and transparency survive and also request the civil society bodies to raise their voice against this corrupt and discriminatory recruitment policy.

Asad
RU

Story of a patriot



Dreams...



...yet to be fulfilled

I am a regular reader of your newspaper. I am also happy to get the opportunity to thank you for the publication of the 'Story of a patriot' in the Independence Day Special on 26 March, 2004 written by a valiant freedom fighter Mr. Ishtiaque Aziz Ulfat. It was indeed a unique piece. Me, also a member of a *shahid* family, and a next generation citizen of the country feel that The Daily Star has cited a great example by publishing a true story at a time when my country's publishing houses only run after business interests and political benefits.

Our new generation of citizens, who have not seen the liberation war, should feel and know how the *shahid* families fought as individual small units. Besides the supreme sacrifice of the beloved sons of the parents, agony borne by the wife for her husband being tortured day after day was great. The pains of sisters and brothers who had lost their closest friends was portrayed successfully by the author in a very impartial way through his spontaneous story telling style.

Aqiq Ahmed Ansari
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