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## "Dinghi" for recreation seekers

The Lifestyle in your March 30 issue caught many residents of Dhanmondi, like me, by surprise. It implies that the recently opened "boat club" represents a conscientious ecological effort aimed at cleaning up the horrifically polluted lake. According to the item at issue, Dinghi is a clear break from the "ghosts of dead fishes" that used to haunt this sad stretch of water that passes for a lake. I have the following observations to make.

Thanks to debris from thousands of vendors and tourists, not to mention sewage defiantly dis-

Daily Star. One of the bodies was that of a suspected drug addict.

It is not only the day-glow of life-saving vests on Dinghi paddle-boats that clash with good taste; it is the whole concept of a "boat club" plunked right on to the middle of a residential area with the intention of luring hundreds of pleasure-seekers for whom throwing away Taka 150 is of no consequence.

Adding to the inherent tastelessness of the project is the fact that it forms part for a larger, misguided scheme to "develop" the Dhanmondi Lake. The result is that this once lovely area for homes resembles a garish mela that offers boat rides, an open air "theatre",

been reduced.

**Sultana Alam, Dhanmondi, Dhaka**

## The Gorai Project

Through your newspaper I would like to request the authorities concerned (The Project Director, Ganges-Kobadak Project, BWDB, Kushtia) to make public the cost-benefit evaluation of the above project which started in 1998 and was supposed to be complete in 2000. This project cost Tk 150 crore and was considered useless by many.

Let the authorities now clear the public suspicion on the above project stating clearly the benefits

attitude towards the West was one of antagonism. Libya since then has been a forbidden terrain for the West. The murder of Yvonne Fletcher and the Lockerbie bombing of 1988 further deteriorated the strained relationship. Libya's refusal to hand over the Lockerbie bombing suspects saw economic and air embargoes being imposed on Libya. Though later it changed its position and handed over the two men to 'the international court of justice' in The Hague. Libya being one of the five countries of the axis of evil was in a constant threat of military retaliation by the US and its allies. Invasion of Iraq further enhanced the chance but in Febru-

private universities are mushrooming at almost regular interval.

As a student of a public university with a well-furnished infrastructure, I think the quality of education delivered here leaves a lot to be desired. I wonder what the conditions of those less known private universities are. Strictly speaking, none of the universities fulfil the rules set by the UGC. But they are operating quite comfortably and charging exorbitant fees from their students. As most of the students are the "blessed sons and daughters" of the rich, they have no problem with the tuition fees and the business of the private universities is booming. But not all the money is going down the

Tashkent has created a political furore by his remark that the repressive regime of Karimov is responsible for the backlash.

There is a renewed fear in Tashkent that the government will use this pretext to persecute Muslims and clamp down on religious practices. The five year campaign by the Uzbek government has led to the persecution of some 7,000 non violent Muslims as well as Muslim dissidents.

Mr. Karimov, who ruled Uzbekistan as party leader before the 1991 Soviet collapse and since then as President, has come under sharp criticism by human rights advocates for repressing political and religious freedom. Uzbekistan came into prominence shortly after September 11, when Karimov allowed the US and its allies to base at least 1,000 troops in his country with the tacit approval of President Putin. Uzbekistan, otherwise a poor country, is strategically located with borders with Afghanistan.

By ignoring the human rights violations of the Karimov government, the Americans are making a big mistake and this will lead to a more explosive and hostile situation. According to a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, US policymakers will be making a grave mistake if they allow shared goals in the war on terror to blind us to the short-sighted and potentially dangerous policies that are being pursued with regard to religion.

**Syeda Akhtar (RN)**  
Gulshan 1, Dhaka

## Costly hartal

The Awami League, the main opposition party, is desperate about calling hartal. Sheikh Hasina, the AL chief, promised not to call hartal even if her party was in the opposition. But she has forgotten her pledge. Now her party is very serious about using hartal as a political weapon. The cost of hartal to our fragile economy is really very high. The BNP-led alliance government is democratically elected; so it cannot be toppled forcibly. The AL general secretary has set a deadline for the government that goes against the norms of democracy.

The AL cannot call hartal to ventilate its grievances and motivate the people. Hartal paralyses normal life and is abhorred by all. I appeal to the AL high-ups to eschew the path of destructive politics.

**Molla Mohammad Shaheen**  
Dept of English, Dhaka University

## Thieves of Baghdad!

Invasion of Iraq was based on a flawed premise. The Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) have not been found till now. The invaders are the lone superpower in the world.

The US administration has claimed that the situation is now almost normal in Iraq. If that be true, why do the leaders of the coalition have to visit Baghdad like thieves? They are dignitaries and as such they deserve state honour while visiting another country. But the way they land in Baghdad suggests that something is going awfully wrong there!

**Md. Zillur Rahaman**  
Aziz Varieties Store, Gandaria, Dhaka

## Is it democracy?

We are now passing through a

## Who are the real terrorists?

As if all these wars and bloodshed weren't enough; we now have a group of Jews beginning new settlements in East Jerusalem. Despite having masses of land in Israel (not to mention America), these people have decided to move in on someone else's land. One of the houses they moved in belongs to a Palestinian owner who was forced out from his own house. Then again, who said Palestinians are human? Who said they can dare to claim the same rights as those supreme children of God in Israel and America? I mean, they are Muslims and that is reason enough to kill them, loot their properties and steal their entire houses. They are just Muslims. They can't claim themselves to be humans!

Those settlers knew that their actions would provoke violence and start wars. They knew that to make room for their settlements, lots of Palestinians will be murdered. They knew it will cost Israel lots of money to give them security. But they still moved in, and not just any ordinary move, but those settlers came with assault rifles on their shoulders (The Guardian, 31 March)! For them, no land other than Muslims' gives them "security"; and no blood other than Muslims' gives "peace".

Of course, when those Palestinians defend their homes, they will be labelled by the West as "terrorists". People should ask themselves, who are the real terrorists here? Those who defend their homes or those who forcefully take over someone else's house? Whose actions are

critical juncture. The democracy that we have is just a mockery. When a party is elected by the people and given the power to govern the country, it becomes autocratic. The parties think that there should not be any opposition to criticise their activities.

The parties cannot brook dissonance as is evident from the recent incidents in which the leaders of the alternative forum came under attack.

**Anwar Hossain**  
On e-mail

## For the benefit of the nation...

I hope you will write to encourage the government to take a strong position to prevent politics of hartal, destruction and deception. We need development. Every party must abide by the rules of democracy. There is no scope for causing any harm to any individual or party in the name of democracy. The government must look into this



PHOTO: APF

matter seriously. If there is no law to curb these unwanted activities, please tell the government to formulate effective laws that will have provisions for paying compensations to the aggrieved parties. For example, if a hartal causes a loss of three billion taka a day, we should have a law to penalise the elements responsible for it.

Parliament boycott is another issue that deserves tough handling, because the MPs are promise-bound to raise the issues of their constituencies in parliament. The boycotting MPs are not doing their job.

Please write editorials and let the government know from your write-ups that we are extremely frustrated with the goings-on. We want a beautiful, peaceful and developed Bangladesh. But the dream is turning out to be a nightmare.

**Salman**  
On e-mail

## What is our future?

There are so many problems in every sphere of our national lives that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the ordinary people to hope for a bright future. Common people never had a smooth life in this part of the world.

When we have such a huge population in a small land without vast natural resources, there ought to be insurmountable problems in our daily lives. What is unfortunate, however, is that instead of acting rationally to resolve those problems, we are in fact compounding the problems only to find ourselves in a worse position than before. The political leaders, who are supposed to guide us towards the path of economic development, are busy fulfilling their own personal agenda. Instead of being really committed to fulfilling the election pledges, the government with its over-sized cabinet fails to deliver the results that people had hoped for. Prices of essentials are



PHOTO: APF

following no economic theory and are making lives of ordinary people almost unbearable.

The poor farmers are facing problems in raising a good crop in the face of a potential drought and the government can ensure neither a smooth supply of diesel nor a reliable supply of

electricity to run their irrigation pumps. The main opposition party is only adding sufferings to the common people by their street demonstrations and frequent hartal calls. One cannot but wonder which way we are heading as a nation. One thing for sure though, other countries in the world would be in

a better position in five or ten years from now and that will only widen the gap between them and us if things remain the way they are today in our own country.

**KM Zubair Sadeque**  
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

charged into the lake by "posh" condominiums, dead fish don't float around anymore in Dhanmondi Lake. The water is so polluted that it cannot support most fish. Like cockroaches, the ones that survive are too tough and resilient to even yield to a nuclear fall-out!

While the bodies of dead fish may not haunt the filthy waters of the lake, those of dead people do. Between January and February this year two bodies were recovered from the lake and reported in The

hiking trails, outdoor restaurants, vending carts etc. all squeezed on to the head of a pin.

Finally, like the open air theatre, the concrete walkways, the restaurants etc., the boat club represents an undemocratic act of foisting "development" on a community without adequate consultation or any concern, on the part of the authorities, for due process. We, who live in Dhanmondi, feel violated by the circus-like conditions to which a place we call home has

gained by the restoration of Gorai.

**Tayeb Husain, Lund, Sweden**

## Swing-away from ideology

Mu'Ammar Gaddafi's leading the revolution of September 1969 meant among many other things the end of a long era of colonialism. Just within months of the revolution Gaddafi pledged to evacuate the foreign military bases out of Libya which later became a reality. His

ary, Libya dramatically announced their unanimous withdrawal of WMDs, which occurred after secret negotiations with Britain.

The recent visit of Tony Blair to Libya saw a pledge from Gaddafi to join the fight against al-Qaeda. The prevalent hegemony of the Bush administration may have prompted Gaddafi to take such a step, but political analysts keep debating his intentions.

**Asif Iqbal**  
Department of English, DU

## Honesty has no substitute!

Hi-tech gadgets like speed camera and smoke analysers are being given to the traffic system to reduce tragedy in the roads as part of a Tk 1.5 crore equipment project. Indeed, this is a welcome move. We have heard about the security cameras to be installed soon.

As a regular commuter of local buses, extortion (especially by the sergeants) from the bus drivers is a common scene to me. Normally, a sergeant charges Tk 100, while the sergeant in the yellow coat (holiday police as dubbed by the helpers) takes a higher amount. During the Eid season, extortion becomes rampant. The bus owners have learned to live with it. Interestingly, sometimes the bus helpers go to the extent of sympathising with their nemesis. They (traffic sergeants) have wives and kids back home, and they had to pay a bribe of Tk 10 lakh to get a suitable posting, why should they not make the most out of it? These are the kinds of comments that I have heard from the bus helpers.

We have an adequate, if not fully-fledged, infrastructure for traffic management. The optimum use of it with sincerity and honesty can hold the key to addressing the traffic problems. The salary structure of the officials can be revised. These are more important than installation of those devices.

As a nation, we have become slaves of corruption. Now we also have mastered the art of living with it. We don't have the resolve to go for any reform to get rid of corruption. Still whenever the TIB gives us the 'accolades', we will shout at the top of our voice against it. Maybe, we will also learn to accept it without much ado in near future.

**Joy**  
Dhaka

## Private universities

Education is one of basic rights of human beings. But the door of education, especially higher education, is not open to all. Public universities are small in number and in most of the cases plagued by the curse of student as well as teacher politics. The number of students seeking higher education is increasing. To cope with the increasing demand, the inception of private university was a welcome move. But, unfortunately, today it has become an innovative business tool to make quick bucks. One or two

drain, their 'connections' with certain organisations are paying dividends to the students. They may not give quality education but do give job assurance because those organisations will recruit only the students of the 'connected' university. A public university student with a better understanding of the subject will not get a job in those organisations.

There is another rather irrelevant point I want to make. As students of a public university we are always reminded by our teachers and well-wishers that we lag far behind the private university students in terms of smartness and presentation skills. I am afraid the standard, in terms of presentation skills, set by the "best private university" students in the seminar is not something to be proud of. If fancy dress-up is the only criterion of smartness, then they are damn smart.

I have nothing personal against the private universities. It will be very nice to see that they are more sincere in contributing to the intellectual growth of young people, even from middle class and lower middle class backgrounds, than making a fortune in the name of higher education.

**Saif, Dhaka**

## A matter of perspective

The April 2 issue carried an eloquent letter by Mr. OH Kabir about the plight of the Palestinians. I have been reading Mr. Kabir's letters to various newspapers for twenty years now and find them quite interesting. That said, I think he forgets that the blame for Palestinian misfortune is spread all over the place, not just one or two countries that he mentions.

There are not too many Palestinians of the last generation who don't remember the streets of Amman running red with Palestinian blood during the late King Hussein's Black December strike on the PLO in 1970. And Syria invaded Lebanon in 1976 for the express purpose of 'containing' the Palestinians which they did with ruthless efficiency: the number of men, women, and children murdered by the Syrians in the Palestinian camps in Tripoli in 1984-85 is yet to be known. And while we are on the subject, let us not forget that both Kuwait and Libya, brotherly Arab countries, threw out into the desert their entire population of Palestinians in the very recent past.

**Esam Sohail**  
Wichita, Kansas

## Uzbekistan scene

Forty-two people dead in three days of attack --the bloodiest scene in the former Soviet republic in five years. Authorities have blamed Islamic extremists.

Both the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizbit-Tahrir have denied any involvement.

All the attacks seem to be directed at police. The police are widely seen as the main instrument of government in Uzbekistan and are very much disliked and feared.

The British Ambassador in



## Banish hartal

The FBCCI, MCCI, BDMS, BGMEA and other associations, common people, particularly the businessmen, must banish hartal, because the political leaders will never reach any consensus on banning or avoiding hartal.

Hartal must be banned because it is nothing but a suicidal programme. None, how much champion he may be of personal freedom, can be given the right to commit suicide or the right to persuade others to do so. For the same reason, we, particularly I, cannot accept "calling hartal" as a democratic right.

If any party wants to call hartal, they can do it. But aggressive picketing for hartal cannot be a

democratic right. Businessmen must launch a movement so that a law is enacted by the government banning picketing. Pressure must be put on the government for enforcing the law to prove their sincerity in adopting an anti-hartal stand. On the other hand, the Awami League has no moral right to call hartal, as Sheikh Hasina herself promised unconditionally to the nation that she would not call hartal even if her party was in the opposition.

So there are two options open to the businessmen. First, to organise a movement demanding enactment of a law banning picketing and if any damage is done during a hartal, then the caller must pay for it.

Second, if the politicians do not accept such a law, the businessmen will have to unite and prevent picketing by the pro-hartal elements. In every market, they will keep *lathi and banshi* (stick and whistle) guards so that they can protect their valuables from picketers and prevent them from vandalising their shops etc.

Time has come to take the initiative against hartal.

So, FBCCI, BGMEA and such forums of businessmen must initiate the movement against hartal, regardless of their party affiliations.

**MU Ahmed**  
Entrepreneur  
MALEE (Make Life Easy, Entertain and Earn) Enterprise

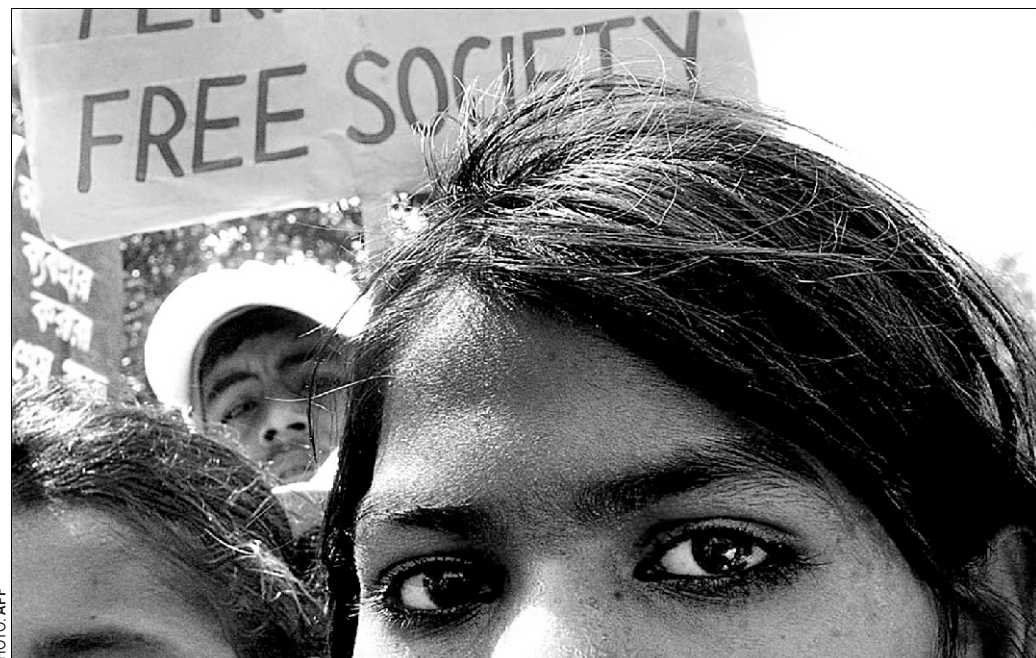


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