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Loan defaulters

Kindly allow me to ventilate my views on the above subject through the columns of your esteemed daily. The capital market is a very important tool for the development of a country. So the general people should have confidence in those who are sitting in the management of Stock Exchanges. But unfortunately many of the directors are big loan defaulters. How can the public repose their confidence in the share markets when the management of the Stock Exchanges lacks transparency. Of late, Bangladesh Bank has made regulations to the effect that if a Director of a Bank becomes a loan defaulter he cannot sit in the board of directors. This is an excellent provision in the interest of transparency.

I, therefore, urge the Ministry of Finance to make a similar provision in the case of Stock Exchanges so that general investors may have confidence in the management of Stock Exchanges.

Ahmed Hussein
Gulshan, Dhaka

Bhavan politics

My attention was drawn to the editorial "Hawa Bhavan- Shudha Bhavan face off" (DS April 12th). I agree with the view that Hawa Bhavan and Shudha Bhavan are not the same, as one is a political office and another a residence. I also share the concern of the editor that the call by the BNP to gherao the Shudha Bhavan is laden with very serious and dangerous consequences for our country.

However, I could not help detect the bias of the editor against the BNP as seems to be the case in a lot of editorials and commentaries that he has been writing lately. The editorial starts condemning the BNP for its decision to lay siege to the Shudha Bhavan and, surprisingly, the editor tells us that the country is brisling with the prospect of "imminent danger of an unprecedented scale". What the editor seems to be missing in criticising the BNP is a lack of perspective on the matter of

cause and effect. The BNP's decision to lay siege to the Shudha Bhavan comes as a consequence to the AL's decision to siege the Hawa Bhavan. After all, it just does not make sense to expect that the AL would be undertaking a series of measures, most of them unconstitutional and illegal, while the BNP would just sit back and allow themselves to be pushed against the wall.

Coming to the differences that the editor has made to make the case against the BNP, there are a few points to be made that would show that the distinction made is not that simple. First, the Shuhda Bhavan is not the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition but one she owns personally. Second, some of the activities carried out from the Shudha Bhavan are, like those for which the Hawa Bhavan is being blamed, unconstitutional and illegal, like planning hartals. Therefore, to expect that the BNP would let this AL decision to siege the Hawa Bhavan go unchallenged is expecting two standards; one that allows the AL to adopt unconstitutional means for a political objective while disallowing the BNP the same.

Unless the AL gives up its agitation and destructive politics, and works within the system, there will be no respite for Bangladesh. Blaming BNP for our national misfortunes would be putting the cart before the horse.

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmandi RA,
Dhaka

Our politicians and we

Present politics in Bangladesh has become a brutal game of power, a power struggle between the Awami League and the BNP or, more specifically, between Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia, while the general people of the country are the victims. The opposition party is trying to rouse the people against the ruling party with a target to unseat it but without any success. The opposition has failed to establish any political ideology in

favour of the ongoing movement, which they are trying to build up. That is why they are getting poor response from the people. In the absence of political ideology, the movement cannot gather momentum.

But the worst outcome of the political warp and woof between the ruling and opposition party is that the conscious people of the country, starting right from administration to police to intellectuals, are divided into two camps. Division among the civil and police administration as well as among the intellectuals has led to the malfunctioning of the administrative machinery, resulting in extreme deterioration of law and order, the direct victims of which are the general public and not the political leaders. Because of this situation the TIME magazine could publish a story on Bangladesh captioned "State of Disgrace".

It has been observed that this power game started in 1991 from whence democracy in true sense has come into existence in this country. If we recall the wise saying "Democracy is for the people, by the people and of the people" and try to reconcile it with the situation prevailing in Bangladesh, we would be disappointed. Because common people are not getting any benefit from democracy, rather they are the worst sufferers.

It is no wonder that an adverse opinion against democracy is growing among the common people. Time has come for the politicians to think over their activities and the consequences. They should rectify themselves and try to serve the people.

AKM Fakhru Alam
Siddeshwari Lane,
Dhaka

Hartal culture

I believe that people in general consider hartals to be an infringement on their rights to pursue their daily lives particularly when these are forced upon them. I am sure if people were not coerced, none would participate in hartals. This is

Media's role

I'm referring to your editorial 'PM's word of advice: Media has to report what's happening'. I fully appreciate the principle you laid down for news coverage.

However, the problem is you don't seem to follow this principle of news coverage all the time. For example, I heard from BBC and VOA that big demonstrations were organised in Dhaka by Islamic and left parties against the American genocide in Falluja. But The Daily Star didn't cover it. On April 11, the DS covered an Iraq story in the front page without any photograph, whereas most other newspapers came out with photographs of Iraqi resistance.

Kias Mamud
Uttara, Dhaka

not to say that most of the people are not frustrated with the way the things are. Total absence of law and order, spiralling rise in the prices of basic commodities, and rampant corruption would frustrate anyone. Yet Hartals are not the answers that people want. At least, not yet.

We need to stop these hartals and I think it is now time for judicial intervention. A couple of months back, the West Bengal High Court issued a rule (I am not sure about the exact judicial terminology) barring processions through certain streets as those were hindering transportation of patients to hospitals as well as interfering with movements of the office goers. So why can't our top judiciary take cognisance of the untold miseries of millions of people and stop these insane acts? We know that hartal is a democratic right but with the right comes the obligation of not curbing the rights of others.

Living here in the United States, one cannot truly fathom the inconveniences being faced by the people. I only hope that sanity will prevail, somehow.

Concerned Bangladeshi
New York, USA

Street light power saving

This refers to your correspondent's write up on the subject (DS: April 12). Based on the estimated loss of Tk 90,000 for 1,000 streetlight per hour, the annual loss would be Tk 27.6 lakh. Even if this is halved with better supervision and control, and considering not-working lights and power disruption it could well be around Tk 14 lakh per annum.

It is possible to practically eliminate this wastage totally by installing electronic timer controlled street lighting hours with UPS back-up for control circuit. This device can be seasonally adjusted according to longer darkness is winter and considerably shorter in summer to achieve maximum power economy.

Consider the fact that despite best intentions a person may forget to switch off lights, if at that time the power is off. Losses in these circumstances could be much higher than Tk 90, 000 per hour.

By adopting a timer base control with UPS back-up, not only will money be saved but also manpower, which can be usefully redeployed by the DCC in other much needed areas. The cost of incorporating the change may possibly not exceed Tk 1 crore, so recovery through savings can be achieved within five years.

May we request the DCC to carry out a feasibility study of the proposal to analyse the cost-benefit advantage and decide accordingly?

SAMansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

The leaders

No doubt Sheikh Hasina is desperately trying to return to power. The

people of this country democratically elected the present government, but Hasina is planning to start a movement and defy the decision of millions of people in her pursuit of power. But the real question is, what good will come if Hasina takes office? We have seen how pathetically she handled her last term. But more importantly, as soon as Hasina takes office, the opposition BNP will begin their programmes (rightly too, because if they couldn't finish their term in office peacefully, why should they let the AL off?) of hartals and vandalism.

This poor and overpopulated country can't take it any more. I believe the most effective way (without spilling too much blood) to save this country is to put an end to politics dominated by certain families.

Some people might be infuriated by my suggestion and argue that banning them from politics would violate their human rights. I agree with them. But you need to ask yourselves whether the people, who have been violating the rights of millions of citizens for the last 12 years, should be lecturing us about those rights? Most importantly, should we destroy the future of our children and the very existence of this country for a few politicians?

My answer is a straightforward NO. No more monkey business.

Azad Miah

Oldham, UK

Caution money?

My son's school board "decided" to increase the caution money, from a one-time deposit of Tk 6,000 to Tk 8,000 last year, to Tk 10,000 this year. This is in addition to the ever-increasing annual and monthly tuition fees.

From what I know "caution money" is a security deposit that is taken from students in case of damage of school property, to be refunded in full when the student leaves the school. There can be only two reasons for the increase in security deposit:

a) If the school has statistical fact to prove that there has been too many property damage in the past and in order to alert the parents / students it is necessary to raise the caution money.

b) This is an easy source of income, which is there for the asking. The first case is a definite NO since we parents would have known about it if this was true. If the second case is true then it is good business for the school. Tk 10,000 per student multiplied by at least 2,000, put in a bank yields Taka 12 lakh per annum, at a minimum interest rate of 6%. All the board has to do is "decide" - the rest is easy and money will start pouring into their bank accounts without hesitation, all in the name of quality education!

What is the difference between a hijacker, who holds a gun at me and takes my money, and a school of this kind? In both cases I give in helplessly without any complaints. I know many parents will agree with me, and many are as helpless as I am.

A disgruntled parent
Mirpur, Dhaka

A storm is brewing

When a cyclone threatens Chittagong, through radio, television and newspapers, people are being warned. According to severity, warning signals are announced, when the cyclone is very strong, people are warned with 'Great Danger Signal no. 10' and asked to take precaution accordingly.

Now a violent storm is brewing in our political field, what could be the signal number of it, it is far more dangerous than the cyclones. This political storm will affect everybody, everywhere. We, the people of Bangladesh have become deeply frightened, anxious and threatened not knowing what is going to happen.

We do not understand why the

House fly: a dangerous vector



Everyone is familiar with house flies in Bangladesh. Recent research has demonstrated the epidemiological potential of house flies to disseminate microorganism (bacteria, viruses, and parasites), that causes various diseases, greater than initially suspected. The house fly (scientific name: Musca domestica) is a well-known cosmopolitan pest of both farm and home. The house fly exploits bad hygiene practices. House fly, besides being a nuisance, is a prime carrier of disease. Its entire body swarms with millions of microorganism which are often transmitted to the food we eat. More than 100 different pathogens associated with the house fly may cause disease in humans and animals, including typhoid, cholera, bacillary dysentery, tuberculosis, anthrax, ophthalmia and infantile diarrhoea, as well as parasitic worms. Pathogenic microorganisms are picked up by flies from garbage, sewage and other sources of filth, and then transferred on their mouthparts and other body parts, through their vomitus and contaminated external body parts to human and animal food. Flies multiply at an enormous rate. Warm summer conditions are generally optimum for the development of the house fly, and it can complete its life cycle in as little as seven to ten days, and as many as 10 to 12 generations may occur in one summer. Adults usually live 15 to 25 days. Favourite breeding sites are dung heaps, exposed human faeces, all sorts of droppings, rotting garbage, and carrion. The effective house fly dispersal range appears to be ½ to 2 miles, but distances as great as 10 to 20 miles have been reported. In more developed



countries, modern sewage systems, refuse removal, and general cleanliness have had a marked effect in controlling the insect's numbers. Good sanitation is the basic step in fly management. Food and materials on which the flies can lay their eggs must be removed, destroyed as a breeding medium, or isolated from the egg-laying adult. Since the house fly can complete its life cycle in as little as seven days, removal of wet manure at least twice a week is necessary to break the breeding cycle. Locate and eliminate all possible breeding sites. Move all trash receptacles as far from house as possible.

Dispose of all moist garbage, rotting vegetation and animal faeces in bags; dispose of bags in proper receptacle. Keep all dumpsters and garbage containers clean and dry; all dumpsters need tight fitting lids and should be emptied in a timely manner. Seal all possible entry points to exclude flying pests from homes and businesses. House fly control will significantly reduce disease prevalence in the community.

M. Jahangir Alam
Department of Entomology, Kansas State University, Manhattan, USA



Awami league has given the ultimatum to the government to step down by April 30, 2004. We know that crimes of all sorts are on the rise and the prices of the essentials have gone up, but that do not make it compulsory for an elected government to step down. The opposition parliament members have also been elected by the people; they should go to the parliament and voice their grievances. Hartals and siege will make the situation worse, attacks and counter attacks will go on between the opposition and the government, and people will have to bear the brunt of it all. What have we done to be the victims of such injustice? Are we to be blamed for voting for them? With empty eyes we are watching the political scenario, there is no hope for us, we are a ruined nation.

We fervently request the opposition parties to be patient, this sort of agitation will only make them unpopular. The government, for its part, must deal with the opposition in a wise and sensible way.

Nurjahan
Chittagong

Frustration of a reader

With rapt attention, yesterday (9/4/2004) I read The Daily Star. Well, it has improved its international page -- on Friday it publishes two full pages "The World", so it

gives the people what they want. The Star Weekend Magazine has also improved. But a sad news for me! On April 9, I needed a copy but failed to buy one. The hawk gives me a copy every day but unfortunately he didn't come on that day.

Normally, I don't get excited or enraged, but I lost control on this occasion. First, I went to my hawk's agency office. I really became frustrated and angry, and I really needed a copy. There was a letter of mine published in it.

Md. Armful Islam
Electrical engg, Lt.
Selim Hall, RUET

Let's we pray for a better future

Almost all the writers and some of the readers of the DS have already written a lot about the present day politics of our country. The last commentary written by the editor himself was quite nice to read and, most importantly, it was written from a neutral point of view. But I want to add something to his observations. The Awami League's presidium member Mr. Abdul Jalil had threatened to topple the present government by April 30. His plan was not based on logic. The alliance government has won the last general election with two-thirds majority. It's a democratically elected government. People have voted them to

run this country for a five-year term. I never thought that the AL had the power or any support from the people to oust this government by April 30. Rather, their cacophonous comments and agitation programmes are proving their languidness to people. I hope they will say good bye to politics of confrontation, anarchy and return to the JS.

I also hope that the government will be more broad-minded when it comes to the opposition in the coming days. We don't want to see violence and politics of anarchy, confrontation in our beloved country. We only want peace, peace and peace. Can't our politicians deliver it? I believe they can, but maybe they have no wish to do so!

We do want to look forward. We are hoping for a better future.

Nazmus Saquib
Mayakanan, Dhaka

Gulshan Lake

I am very glad to note the photograph, printed in your April 6 edition, of wooden poles demarcating the encroachers' filling of Gulshan Lake.

Leading real estate companies are now found in the role of encroachers. I hope the media will play a strong role in the movement against them.

Ms. Farzana Khair, Banani

Buriganga issue



The river that flows through the city, Buriganga, seems to be at the receiving end of all-- the local population that lives on its banks, the government and the steamers and launches that ply on it. Everyone seems to be determined to put Buriganga to a premature death.

Take the issue of land encroaching and land filling. Time and again we have seen efforts to remove illegal construction on the banks of Buriganga. If one looks at the demolition of the so called illegal establishment (DS: 13/04/04), then one would certainly question how could these be illegal structures. For the establishments that are being demolished are not make-shift shanty structures, they are solidly built double storied buildings, probably used as shops and warehouses.

We have seen time and again the government making efforts to clear the banks of Buriganga of illegal occupation. This was taken up as a promi-

nent issue during the time of the caretaker government. The present government also took steps from time to time to clear the banks of Buriganga of all illegal structures.

My question is that once the illegal establishments have been cleared, why are not trees planted and vigilance mounted so that the encroachers cannot come back. It is certain that two storied buildings cannot be constructed overnight. It will take at least six months or more to do so. What were the concerned authorities doing during that time? Are we to believe that all government agencies are so corrupt that one can construct a two-storied building on an encroached land?

It is time we woke up from our slumber and took concrete steps to clear the banks of our beloved Buriganga, once and for all.

Salim Akbar
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

Suggest an alternative

As a regular reader of your commentary, I did not miss the last one. In the "Post-hartal question to Sk. Hasina", you criticised the consecutive hartals sponsored by the Awami League and pointed out the losses suffered by the nation due to hartals. But it seemed to me that you avoided the question of what is the real alternative to hartals. You only brought the example of the initiatives taken by the traders of old Dhaka. They took several actions which included agitation on the road. My question is, how much could it affect the government? You said that we, the people, are well aware of the 'misdeeds' with the help of the print media and our daily life-experience. But you did not mention what should be our role to get rid of this situation. Do you recommend us only to watch all the misdeeds and wait for a natural cure? Hartal is bad for the country. Yet, is there any effective way to make the government know that life is becoming unbearable day by day?

Mithun
Kabi Jasim Uddin Road, Kamalpur, Dhaka

