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Mr. Jalil's 'trump card'

It was pathetic to look at a tired opposition MP when he was speaking to different media during the hartal hours on April 28. He was pale and tired, although he tried to speak with strength to highlight the government's nervousness, instead of his own party being cornered and humiliated by an unkind government's law and order enforcement machinery. The MP really looked helpless when he said that they had even agreed not to chant any slogan!

The drama was staged by none other than Mr. MA Jalil, another hon'ble MP and the veteran secretary general of the AL. It was really surprising when we read in newspapers that many of the AL MPs expressed their ignorance about the much talked about 'trump card' of Mr. Jalil and his prediction on the fall of the government by April 30.

I believe Mr. Jalil has already played his 'trump card'. His 'trump card' was to announce a date for the government's exit after which apparently disgruntled people in hundreds of thousands would come to the streets of Dhaka to give support to the AL call for the government's resignation. Mr. Jalil was playing a blind game. Now tired and embarrassed, he is telling that the deadline of 30th April was given by the journalists!

Now that the game is over, who will pay for the sufferings of the party men and many others in the hands of the law enforcers? AL leadership should have calculated all the options which the government might resort to before they launched such a movement.

I believe Mr. Jalil should think in terms of his own exit from this important position because of his total failure to lead this historical party along the right path.
G Ahmed, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

Where is the martyr of 1757?

I am writing in response to the letters of Mr. Mehboob (April 23) and Mr. Jishan (April 30) on the absence of Sirajuddowla and other martyrs of 1757 in the BBC listeners' list of the greatest Bengalees.

How do you blame this on BBC? BBC has nothing to do with the omission. They asked their listeners to nominate the greatest Bengalees of all time.

If listeners don't choose a particular name, how could BBC include that name in the list. I'm sure if this list were extended to 30 or 50, Sirajuddowla would have been there.

Please stop blaming BBC. This was just a poll, most probably a scientific one based on peoples' choice. There is nothing to complain about it. I was also disgusted to notice that when Bangabandhu's name came on top of the list, some people got upset and complained about it. Similarly, Dr. Muntasar Mamun complained about Ziaur Rahman's inclusion in the list. We should not be partisan about everything.
Zahirul Haque, Kansas city, KS, USA

"NU education falls apart"

A report under the above title published in The Daily Star in its April 10, 2004, issue drew my attention. And my experience of being acquainted with the people (the students and the teachers in some cases) of the NU gives me the same picture. It is now known to everyone that NU education has become something not to be taken into account. The shortage of teachers, their negligence, the acute shortage of classrooms, insufficient infrastructure are hindering the normal activities of the university.

Here I want to reflect my own thinking. The examination system should be changed. A set of general

questions is prepared to test the students who do not find it easy to respond as they have to cover a huge syllabus which is not always completed in their institutions. They cannot answer because teachers of their institutions did not emphasise the questions that they are asked to answer in the exams.

Again, answer-scripts are sent to different places to prevent malpractice. The evaluation does differ as the teachers may hold different opinions which the examiner of the script may not hold. Another thing is that the examiner may not be sympathetic to the writer of a particular script, while he or she may be more sympathetic to his or her own students.

The teachers of the different colleges under NU should be in contact with the teachers of other public universities like DU, RU, CU, BUET etc. and familiar with the courses in those institutions.

The salary of teachers must be enhanced so that they can concentrate fully on classroom teaching. Crimes in the offices of the colleges can be curbed by the NU authorities through legal steps.

Mahfuzul Haque, On e-mail

Brazen politics

Recently, a report was published in an issue of 'TIME' magazine where the reporter earmarked our country as a "State of disgrace". On the other hand, Transparency International published its 2004 report on corruption and ranked our politicians as most corrupt persons in Bangladesh. Both the reports are disgraceful for the people of this country, though not for our politicians, I suppose, because they care little about such things. I am sorry to say, 'Shame on our politicians'!

We the countrymen are like 'puppets' in the hands of our politicians. The aim of our politicians is 'to grab power and cling to it'. If they were thinking about the development of the country, this country would not have been described as a

people-- the jail. It stopped the mass arrests only after the Supreme Court intervened.

If you are living in Bangladesh, you don't have to pay to watch comedy. All you have to do is just follow the political developments. Match me if you can (in foolhardiness) is the message the AL is sending to the government. The government has so far done its best to respond to the call.

Let's not forget we are the very people who made them our 'representatives'.
Joy, Dhaka

Dhaka siege

My brother was supposed to visit me on April 23, the day before the opposition's 'Dhaka siege' programme started. We were very worried about it because there were media reports of mass arrests of Dhaka-bound people. He, however, arrived safely, as he did not look like a troublemaker. My wife was so scared that she did not want me even to go to office.

The mass arrest conducted by the police created some panic among the city dwellers and at one stage the home ministry ordered police to stop it.

While as a Dhaka dweller I am an indirect sufferer of the mass arrests, the question that comes to my mind is, could the government handle it better? The following thoughts came to my mind.

1. The government could let the Awami League and its supporting NGOs to pour millions into the capital. It would probably brighten the image of the government. However, if one million militant activists of the Awami League and the supporting NGOs were allowed to enter Dhaka and carry out what the Awami League activists normally do on hartal days, the ordinary citizens would have been in great trouble.
2. The government could let the Awami League and its supporting NGOs to pour millions into the capital and also gather the supporters of the four-party alliance in Dhaka to tackle the opposition. It would start a hand-to-hand fighting on the streets and the country would experience a situation no better than a civil war.

I could not find any other way of avoiding the Dhaka siege. I think the readers will agree with me that none of the above solutions could be acceptable to the government. I cannot but thank the government and the State Minister for Home Affairs for successfully tackling the situation and saving the country from further anarchy. Failure of the BNP government during 1991-1996 to tackle the opposition anarchy not only hampered the economic growth of the country, it caused enormous sufferings to the

'State of disgrace'.

Habibul Muhiit
OR Nizam Road R/A, Chittagang

April 30 deadline

The BNP-led four-party alliance has failed to arrest the price spiral, check the law and order downside, respond to the allegations of corruption levelled against the Hawa Bhaban and some ministers..... (spaces in newspaper are valuable). The common people are really disgusted with the government. Even the BNP supporters

Isolated children

Day by day society is changing. Now everywhere, in each family, we find individual life-styles. People are being separated from joint families and becoming alienated.

In such families, children suffer a lot. Because in most cases the parents remain busy with their jobs. So, the child has to stay alone at home for a long period of time. This creates some kind of mental crisis for the child and he/she may become rather abnormal.

So, parents should think about these problems. They should not allow their children to become lonely. A child needs a lot of care and love for mental and physical growth. And only a joint family can provide a loving and warm atmosphere for a child.
Hasna Hasan
Department of English, Leading University, Dhaka

(outside the Hawa Bhaban) are irritated with the present situation.

The AL had the opportunity to act wisely and use all these issues to mobilise public support and eventually create a popular uprising. Instead, it issued an ultimatum which had nothing to do with the participation of the common people. The reaction of the government was quick, sharp and outlandish. In a frenzied effort to foil any mass demonstration, it made a unique destination for all the Dhaka-bound

common men who were frequently harassed by the opposition pickets. However, I think the government should have provided better accommodation to the detainees. The government may consider introducing the much talked about identity card system for the Dhaka dwellers. We are not living in a jungle and a citizen has the right to have an identity card.
Imtiaz Ahmed, FCA, Dhaka

Why can't we reject

bad politics?

I didn't see the war of 1971. But I am watching the pathetic war in my country which is going on right now. We are embroiled in bad politics. Do we know against whom we are fighting? We are fighting among our brothers. It's a shame. I don't know what is politics, but I know people shouldn't be treated like this. We consider the Awami League and the BNP as two successful political parties. But what are they doing for us? Why should there be hartal and violence? May Allah bless the people of my country.
Zakaria
University Of Western Sydney, Australia

Two sides of the same coin

Our beloved country is spiralling towards utter disaster because of our brainless political parties and the "selfish" politicians who would rather enrich their pockets than do something for the country. The BNP and the Awami League are two sides of the same coin. The party mandates and their history could be different, but the agenda of these two parties remain the same, right to the core: to cling to power and serve their own purpose and not the purpose of the country. Calling hartals, country-wide total shut-down, mass arrests by the police, ignoring human-rights, subjecting the people of Bangladesh to abject poverty, corrupt officials and ministers - whom do these serve? Can we expect a better governance if the political power shifts and the Awami League comes to power? The opposition leader has on many occasions acted against her own promises. If neither the government nor the opposition can keep their promises and have any desire to do otherwise, then what better future can we expect for us and our future generation?

Would we then be better off with an autocratic regime? At least we would be sure that only a few people are reaping the harvest and maybe, just maybe, some good things might happen to Bangladesh!

Anonymous

Australia

Attention: National University authorities

The results of Honours part two examinations 2003 (held in May/June 2003) Under the four-year Honours system were published a few days ago. Examinees who secured 165 marks in aggregate (33 per cent) out of 500 marks have been declared promoted to part II and those who secured less than 33 per cent have not been promoted

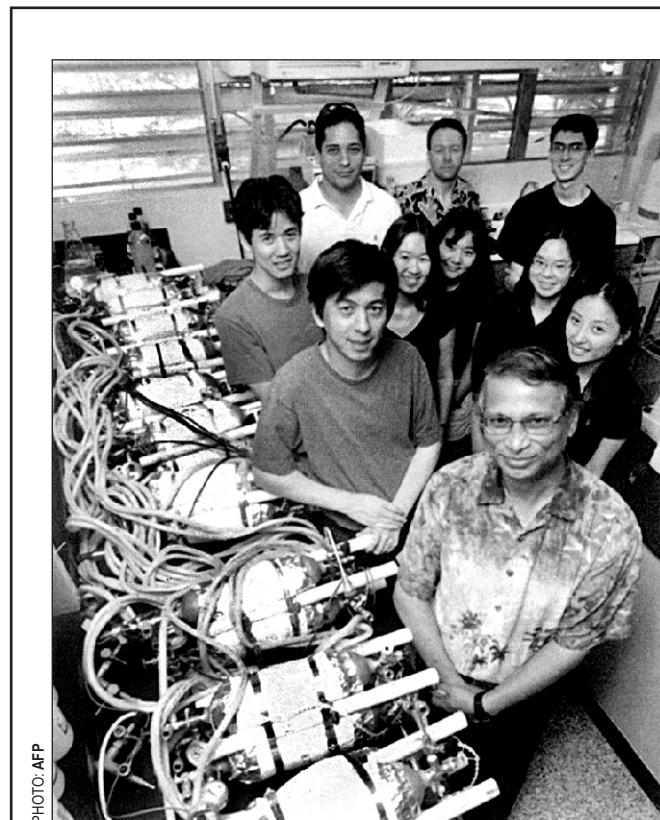


PHOTO: AFP

Our man, our pride

Words fail to express how proud I am to learn that a team of researchers led by a Bangladeshi scientist (Maqsudul Alam, professor of microbiology) has made a discovery that could lead to the creation of a substitute for blood. Congratulations to the man who has made our nation known to the world. Usually, the carriers of the green passports are known for the wrong reasons.

We, along with our politicians, back here are very much busy talking about the image crisis of Bangladesh and blaming each other for it. We are playing the ultimatum game with hartal, hartal-related violence and mass arrests. The government is tormenting the marginal people with price spiral, while the remedial measures like hartal (as suggested by the opposition) are denying them a day's pay and forcing their family to go un-fed.

But it is heartening to learn that there are men who can still make us proud.

Saif, Dhaka

on an average, they will not only suffer financial loss, but also lose a year from their academic career. The minimum pass marks for an Honours paper is 25 per cent and if any paper carries less than 25 per cent marks it is treated as crushed. Now if an examinee passes in all the papers with minimum pass marks of 25, he is actually required to secure 125 marks out of 500 to get promotion to part-II. It is not understood how and why the National University has fixed 33 per cent as the pass marks for promotion to part-II. The four-year Honours comprises four

examinees from appearing at part-II final examinations, 2004 shall not be a justice to them since the publication of results was unusually delayed and they have already reached the end of the session of part-II. They are the first batch under four-year Honours system and they were not informed earlier by any circular of the NU that the pass marks for promotion to part-II shall be 33 per cent, instead of 25 per cent. The colleges offering Honours courses run under various limitations. The NU being the controlling authority cannot claim to have established academic discipline in the colleges that have been allowed to offer Honours and Masters courses. The very few colleges of Dhaka city that are able to fulfil expectations of public university teachers can only meet at best 50 per cent needs of the students. The rest of the colleges of Dhaka and remote areas that use the name of university college are only so named in their signboards and it is clear by now to the members of the public that most of these colleges are hollow inside. A college of Dhaka city that is compelled to teach nearly ten thousand students of an international language called English with only six/seven regular teachers cannot expect to meet 25 per cent needs of the students who study Honours and Masters. Since the NU has not been able to ensure a minimum quality of teaching and academic discipline of the Honours colleges, it is not fair to create problems for the innocent students at the time of finalising their results. Raising the pass marks from 25 per cent to 33 per cent rightly calls for raising the quality of teaching first. The NU that is controlled, so to say, by the teachers of Dhaka University should at least follow the minimum conditions that are followed by the latter, particularly regarding the number of teachers in a subject, the capacity of a section of a class, the number of classes that a course deserves to finish, the tutorials, the viva etc. The first batch of three-



PHOTO: AFP

and they will be required to reappear as irregular examinees at part-I examinations, 2004 in all the five papers of part-I. The publishing of the results took nearly one year and the examinees who by this time got themselves admitted into part-II provisionally have by now completed their course and are taking preparation for appearing at the part-II final examinations. At this stage, if they are to reappear in all the five papers of part-I for having failed to secure 33 per cent marks

parts: part-I, part-II, part-III and part-IV. The class of examinees shall be finalised on the average of total marks of all the parts after the part-IV final examinations. It is therefore justifiable to promote all the examinees who have secured total marks of 125 out of 500 (25%) and allow them the option to appear for improvement with part-I examinees of 2004 in the papers that have been crushed and also in those papers that have less than 45 per cent marks. Barring the

An expatriate's views

I am a chartered accountant and have been resident in the UK for almost 40 years. My family and I instinctively visited Bangladesh every two years on an average. Every time we visited our country we faced hartal nearly once a week. I do not consider any of those hartals as meaningful in any sense. There is nothing for the country to gain out of those disruptive and chaotic situations. Hartals are called just by an announcement without any detailed discussions between the political parties. No sensible persons have ever wanted to respond to any hartal call. It is only the fear that prevents them from defying such hartals. Who gains from hartals? Well, I will leave this to the general people to judge.

I do not need to mention who suffers as a result of hartal. Of course, when elephants fight it is the grass that suffers. An already crippled economy of the

country is only dented further. Day-labourers have to go hungry. I have never found any newspapers that published the true and accumulated cost of every day's hartal to the nation's economy. There is nothing further that I can add to such miseries.

With all this in mind, I call upon the professionals, teachers, students, traders, trade unions to organise themselves and come out on the street in solidarity with a common slogan such as "We shall not obey any more hartal calls".

Let all the disputes between the political parties be confined within the parliament house -- the house that belongs to them only. General people are not interested in what goes on in the house. They want to get on with their struggle for survival undisturbed.

Shaikh Rouf Ahmed
Whittington Road, London

year Honours part-I under NU who had to appear in only one honours paper were also made victim of such an injudicious decision. The pass marks for them for the one Honours paper was fixed at 36 percent. Those who failed to secure less than 36 marks were declared unsuccessful. When the point of 25 per cent pass marks followed by Dhaka University was brought to the notice of NU by some quarters, the decision was instantly revised and those who secured minimum pass marks of 25% were declared promoted to part-II. The case of the first batch of four-year Honours course is just the repetition of what happened to the first batch of three-year Honours course students. This is quite unexpected and undesirable. The NU is requested to kindly review the issue in the greater interest of the students.

M Sadeq
Chairman, Dept. of Management Tejgaon College, Farmgate, Dhaka

RU student

My attention was drawn to the report "HC fines Tk 5,000 for harming student" (DS: April 27, page 12). How was it possible for the RU authorities to neglect the appeal of the brilliant student named Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan (LLB Hons)? It is really unimaginable for those who have a little bit of conscience. I urge the RU authorities to form a probe committee to find out the culprits who were involved in it.

Md. Moshir Rahman
Saradagonj, Kashimpur, Gazipur

Thoughts on hospital administration

Quality of medical care is directly related to quality of the providers (doctor) and ancillary support structures (nurses, pharmacists, laboratory, radiology and even the 4th class employees). Many of my friends are still in the medical-college-systems in Bangladesh. They are excellent physicians with dedication and a real love for what they do. But they suffer utterly from lack of administrative care in providing appropriate ancillary support. The treatment-strategy of any medical illness depends largely on the availability of this appropriate support. In the absence of readily available lab-support (I mean chemistry, ECHO etc), the best of heart doctors will not be able to do his best for the patient. It goes for almost every other disease processes. I have a friend, who holds an appointment as a nephrologist for some time, yet he still has no facility to do a single dialysis... what a waste of money and talented human resources... Proper administration and management thus is the most important aspect of proper health care delivery.

Hospitals are large organisations with groups of peoples doing various things. Hospitals need good administrators with appropriate training both in human relations and business management. Administrators in turn need to learn intricacies of health care that is unlike any other business. The government always ignored this very fact. They always imposed certain colonels or brigadiers as the top man in the hospitals.

Well, I am not saying that they all are the same, but most of them keep on residing in their military cocoons even after their emergence as the top-man in a civilian hospital. This administrative structural fault is easily remediable. I do not want to see a fellow doctor as the hospital administrator. I shall be perfectly happy to see a bright business school graduate or anyone with proven track in management of "men-and-money" as the top man.

The Daily Star in a recent article alluded to the extra power of organised 4th class employees that has corrupted the emergency care and admission process. It is basically a management issue with a significant political fervour. Hospital administrator must use his/her authority to address the issues. If needed, he always can go to the law enforcement authorities and even to the respective minister. An already successful person with stature can always say "no" and in dire situation will have the guts to resign. Only in such a scenario, employees of all creeds shall heed to the helm.

Getting more money and grant from government is always nice, but spending the available money with a bigger bang is even nicer.
Dr. Mohammad Zaman
USA

"Cyprus referendum and clash of civilisations"

Ref: Mr. Wasimuddin's letter (April 30), "Cyprus referendum and clash of civilisations".

Many years ago I met an officer at a Washington reception who introduced himself to me as so and so of the Turkish Army. "A very distinguished Army", I responded. That was my subtle way of reminding the officer that all the glory and fame earned by Turkey was under the banner of Islam. Isn't it time for the Turks to stop toying the Western line, and say good-bye to the European Union?

Asaf Ali Shah
Lahore, Pakistan



PHOTO: AFP