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BNP man wins at last

The 'pro-Israel' lobbying group deprived the BNP-Jamaat nominated candidate SQC of the top post of OIC secretary general. He vented his anger through unprintable remarks towards the international community and the opposition leaders.

In the Dhaka-10 by election, the coalition managed to secure victory for their candidate. They moved heaven and earth, intimidated a judge, threatened the kula adherents, made the EC a comical institution, flouted a HC directive, and what not!

Is the government ready to

meet the consequences of this? Saif Dhaka

The political secretary to the PM questioned the authenticity of the photos published in some newspapers showing fake voting in Dhaka-10 by-election. He has claimed that the by-election was 'absolutely fair'. They never cease to amuse us!

Anyone paying a visit to any of the polling centres in the Tejgaon-Ramna area could get the picture. It became an extravaganza of one party voting. Money, muscle and

biriani were generously all around. People reportedly got tired of casting fake votes!

The prestige of the government has been maintained, but the cost of it is going to be beyond their imagination.

Joy Dhaka

Dhaka10 by-election has been held under a democratic government. There was allegation of widespread rigging. We don't trust our democratic government that's why there is a provision in our constitution for a caretaker government to conduct the

general election.

So, how could we expect a fair by-election under a party government? Fulkam Badshah Mirpur, Dhaka

Before the Dhaka-10 by-election was held I wished our government would do everything possible and take all sorts of necessary precautions to prevent odd incidents.

The task was not difficult because everybody knows who the trouble makers are and how they are operating. Minhaj Ahmed Uttara, Dhaka

opposition street-mongering). Its noble efforts and achievements are not even modestly publicised for consumer awareness.

Of course, it is not an ombudsman for the oppressed shoppers, and its budget appears to be limited for field activities and active presence in the bazaars and shopping centres. It has to emulate some of the successful NGOs.

So far I have never seen or could identify any of its representatives in the market or our door-step (how it conducts field surveys?). Its low-profile would be appreciable if its output were satisfactory. CAB's clout with the authorities is a grey area. The consumers must be made aware of its field presence. The shoppers are true orphans. A consumer Dhaka

Act decisively

The four party alliance government is being criticised day-in day-out for its inept governance.

Kudos to the media, human-right activists and the civil society for exposing its mal-administration.

The prime minister appears unmindful of the appalling state of affairs. She should remember that people hold her in great esteem. She won in five constituencies more than one occasion. That testifies to her popularity but, of late, things are going awry both for her party and the government. She is apparently surrounded by cronies and sycophants who are misleading her.

I suggest she reduce her responsibilities and duties as prime minister for 90 days and take up the cudgels to overhaul the police force, streamline the administration and cleanse her party.

This will certainly help improve the situation. Robert Kader Mehdiabagh, Ctg

No benefit of doubt

Many feel that the AL in future may not get the benefit of doubt after the double-decker bus arson near Sheraton Hotel by unknown miscreants. This coup was pre-planned; and one is reminded of the 9/11 bombing of the WTO building in New York.

After the April 30 ultimatum, this is another setback for the Awami League, (add hartal, and avoiding JS).

Here the politicians are hot-headed and sentimental; and have to cry over spilled milk. How the AL is going to regain its credibility? The current leaders have ruined the historic party. Abdal Dhaka

Mobile Mela

It is needless to say that mobile phone has become an integral part of our daily life. Recently, a Mobile Mela was arranged at Sonargang, Dhaka, sponsored by Grameen phone. It was undoubtedly a superb and prolific initiative of Grameen phone and my all thanks go to them. The mobile mela attracted a huge crowd. The customers purchased their handsets enthusiastically.

A number of handsets and accessories of different price ranges offered by different companies were put on display in the fair to attract cellphone users.

I would like to request the authorities of these companies to arrange such fair every year. Zahid Mollik Dept of English, Karatia, Tangail

SQC

I have been following news, articles and letters published in the DS over the last few days. So far every writer has blamed SQ Chowdhury's candidature as one of the reasons for the defeat and they are happy that he (SQ) has been defeated, knowing well that it is also a defeat of Bangladesh.

It seems something is wrong with SQ's thinking. His comments about Sheikh Hasina and Suranjit Sen Gupta defied all civilised norms and sensitivity. Malay Barua New Delhi

Network marketing

Network marketing is not a new idea across the world where a producer can easily reach the doorsteps of the end users without any advertising or sales agents. It does not need advertising at all because every customer serves as an agent for his or her own sake. A few days ago one of my friends (who is already a member of one such company) took me with him to their office. The local office of that foreign company is offering some products for \$60 which are quite useless, dysfunctional and almost ridiculous where we can get a better one locally with no expense at all. But the main feature of them is if any customer/member can build a network (convincing others to buy their products and each of them will also do the same), for every nine persons he or she will get \$30 from the company. It is alike the nuclear chain reaction. As they briefed us at their free seminar that a laziest person can earn up to Tk 18 lakh by the year end. No wonder people are rushing towards them, mostly students of different universities and colleges, and are falling in the pitfall of temptation. Their number is increasing exponentially. All of them are dreaming of a huge profit. It is true that very few of them have got some money, but the rest are now still hoping to get that some time soon to be rich by one year. Surprise! Surprise! A company sells a product for \$60 (around 3,700 taka) and repays Tk 18 lakh (!) as sales commission. But the bitter fact is

that only a few of thousands of members may get that and the rest deceived people will get nothing when the situation will be saturated. It may collapse like our share market in 1996. The situation would be more horrible and harmful for our country, as all our money will be taken abroad where the amount may be amazingly massive.

Every buyer should mind one thing that those foreign traders came here to sell their useless products to make a good profit from us not to donate or serve our nation. Abir, Dhaka University

Intra-party democracy

In kingly hubris, they even defy the verdict of high judiciary. The path to successful democracy is said to be turbulent, but it really is not meant to be turbulent. The western world has learned the virtue of democracy painstakingly. But our neighbouring giant has learned the same at ease, simply because they are blessed with leaders who had a sense of foresight and a sense of history.

We, unfortunately, are lacking in both. Thus we see matrimonially horizontal or genetically vertical flow of anointed leadership in both major political organisations. An organisation that does not practice intra-mural democracy cannot be and ought not to be expected to follow democratic principles especially when it is endowed (!) with the entire governmental prowess. The Awami League (AL) did it. The BNP just gave it an extra dimension.

No great improvement in the

current political paradigm can be expected until the party-structure becomes more democratic allowing the leadership to grow up from the bottom and not imposed from the top. Mohammad Zaman Cary, North Carolina

A civil servant's salary

I have read with interest the interesting article entitled "How much we should we pay our civil servants?" (DS July 2nd 2004). This was no doubt written in the back drop of a new pay commission that has been announced by the government to enhance the pay of the civil servants.

It was very interesting to read some of the remuneration mentioned in this article of civil servants in the US and Canada but then any comparison with these pay scales and ours would be totally unrealistic and absurd. It would have been more worthwhile if the authors had compared the pay of our civil servants with those in South Asia for a practical comparison.

The only framework for determining pay of civil servants should be the price line in the market. We must also not forget that the poor pay notwithstanding, the civil bureaucracy in Bangladesh exercises as much power as the most powerful bureaucracy anywhere for the simple fact that the arm of the government in Bangladesh reaches and controls every single household in the country. With such intrusive and all encompassing power, the pay that we give to our civil servants is the surest prescription for corruption. Take for example the top most bureaucrat of our country, the permanent secretary. Whatever his power or privilege, he takes home at the beginning of every month Tk 15,000. To take an example from the recent controversy in a Dhaka school, Tk 15,000 is the fees that that school asked from each student.

However, our bureaucrats do not just receive their pay, they receive many perks. Again take a secretary as an example and add up in money terms his house, his car, driver, peon, personal staff, etc, etc and you would be surprised suddenly that the government spends a great amount of money for him. If you look at this dispassionately, you will find that most of these perks are nothing but massive wastage that serves nobody's purpose at all. A rational look at these perks could lead to an adjustment where these could be reduced drastically and the money saved given to the civil servant to make his pay rational and decent and even save the government a great sum of money. A look at housing and conveyance expenses of a secretary would leave no one in doubt with what I am trying to say. The commission must re-examine these perks and make adjustments there.

No matter how much the new pay scales eventually give our civil servants, it would not serve anyone's purpose for definitely the price hike that is bound to take place

will negate any meagre increases by the new commission. The only way to look into this problem, and this problem is massive indeed, is to downsize the bureaucracy, privatise non-essential functions of the government and then give those who remain a salary that they can mention publicly and still save their faces. Shahjahan Ahmed Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

English medium schools

I really don't understand why there is such a fuss about English medium school fees. True, many schools overcharge the parents while hiring unqualified teachers. But then you can choose from a large number of schools these days.

However, there has been a huge growth in the number of schools in Dhaka. When I was in school the system was Sunbeams up to class V and Scholastica then onwards. The only other alternative was Green Heralds. Now there are schools to fit the budget of any parents. There are even schools for religious folks like Manarat, we only had the option of Siddiqui's Tutorial, where you weren't allowed to talk to the girls. MA One-mail

A fellow reader's response

I am indeed thankful to Mr. Muhammad Mustafa Hussain of University of Texas, my fellow reader of DS, for making me 're-knowledgeable' on certain points that were published on 18 June issue of DS under the heading 'About a letter'. But not before I am appalled that some readers do not always go into the depth of any writing and try to understand the spirit and intrinsic meaning of it before commenting.

In my letter published under the caption 'Steve Waugh's comments' (DS 7 June) the whole theme and spirit of my letter was to unmask the double standard of racists. But unfortunately instead of appreciating the point, my fellow reader tried to counter me quoting Murali's mother saying Murali considered Steve as a friend of him. Good enough, that's the way it should be. If one peeps through this statement he would agree that it is the broadness on the part of Murtiah Muralitharan and his mother to think Steve as his (Murali's) friend. Then again Murali's mother also said that she didn't want him to go and play cricket in Australia, politely declining Steve's request. Murali also shares the view. This itself indicates that Murali and his mother have a principle that they don't want to compromise, regardless of whoever they are dealing with. May I remind Mr. Mustafa that Murali recently said that on the one hand Mr. Howard (Australian PM) calls him a 'chucker' and in the next sentence he welcomes him (Murali) to play

cricket in Australia. But Mr. Steve doesn't know that anything like that has been said! What inference one would draw from this? This is sheer hypocrisy. And this is the thing that I wanted to emphasise in my previous letter.

Secondly, may I humbly remind my fellow reader that terms like 'third world', 'poor nation', 'black & white' are the ill products of

when some miscreants hurled bomb on him while he was stepping down from his car in front of his house on Sunday (June 28). The Janajudha faction of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party has already claimed the responsibility of the killing. Such terrorist acts cannot be tolerated for an indefinite period of time. It has been reported that 13 journalists including four

from our political leaders both in power and opposition that the culprits responsible for these heinous crimes would be brought to book. But we have seen very little in terms of action against the criminals.

We strongly condemn the killing and demand immediate arrest and punishment of the killers. MH Bari, Zigatola, Dhaka



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Budget fever

The budget has come, and is gone (for practical application). In the family, nobody is interested. It is too technical, GDP, GNP, growth rate, interest rates, revenue and capital, investment and saving, poverty alleviation, rural thrust, marginalisation, and so many other technical terms are used by the analysts in the mass media. I asked a friend what was the difference between GDP and GNP, and when to apply which yardstick. He mumbled something in code language, which left me no wiser. There are two other unfathomable issues: politics, and reading a woman's mind.

The pre-budget fever is like chicken pox or measles, the itch lasts for a week or seven days, take your choice. Take the news item from Thailand: heavy betting on the coming WC football masala (our cricket is now at the jhaal-moori stage). The prices in the bazaar shops go up, in anticipation of higher taxes, and hoarding and profiteering tactics. Luckily, the experienced FM treated smoking as a minor aberration, and raised the levy by only two taka per Tk 100; perhaps anticipating two percent less smog or 2% more transparency.

In this budget season, the times are sensitive, politics, law and order, and the mysterious visit of the US Defence Secretary. The opposition is more hostile on the streets than inside the House. Marginal cosmetic treatment was expected (in the budget), and it was duly offered. The problem in Dhaka is the aversion to deal roundly with square issues (not the other way round) at the core. That reminds us of the erupting volcano, the sight is more spectacular than the core theories. Our politics is like that, avoiding the core issues.

As head of the family, I have domestic budget problems, like others in the same leaking boat. How the two ends can meet, seamlessly, without a visible bridge (the latter could be sabotaged). But wily critics of the budget always manage to find invisible cracks to plug in their hypotheses. These holiday pranks are forgotten after a while; when Mr Applied Budget knocks at the front door of each home. Salvation or solicitation?

A mid-term budget has to follow the path of the golden mean. It is not Stafford Cripps's years of austerity during (and after) the wartime, when irate half-fed citizens of HM cried "Export Cripps!" Alif Zabr, Dhaka

countries like where he (Mr. Mustafa) is living at present. Captain (ret) Mohammad Shahid Helal Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Killing of a journalist

Humayun Kabir Balu editor of the Daikin Janmabhumi and President of Khulna Press Club was killed

editors were killed in the last 10 years in Khulna region, apart from Humayun Kabir murder. It is unbelievable that criminals behind such activities are not brought to justice. Humayun Kabir's family did not file any case for losing the dearest member of their family, realising the fact that they won't get justice. We have heard many pledges

Consumers on CAB ride!

We have an ancient monument known as the CAB (Consumers Association of Bangladesh), which excels in the competition for holding posts, hobnobbing with the high-ups, and recognising only the press to confirm its quiet presence from time to time, (like the



Bimol Roy

I cannot check the temptation of adding a few more lines to what Mr. Robert Kader has said about the illustrious film director Bimol Roy in your daily of 29 June. Bimol Roy started his career as a cameraman under another great director Promothesh Barua, who became a household name in those days after making "Devdas" and casting himself in the title role. Bimol Roy was the cameraman of the film.



Bimol Roy's first venture "Udayer Pathay" was no doubt a milestone in the history of Bengali films. The main character of "Udayer Pathay" was portrayed by Radhamohan and not A Bhattacharya as mentioned by Mr. Kader. In fact, the main role was being portrayed by Devi Mukherjee in the beginning but when the shooting was in progress, Bimol Roy changed his mind and gave the role to Radhamohan. Radhamohan played the role of "Masterda" in another film "Bhuli Nai" and many viewers of the screen will remember him as the affectionate father of "Mini" in Tapan Sinha's famous "Kabuliwala". Devi Mukherjee was another great actor of those days and became famous by casting himself in the role of "Shabyashachi" in "Pathar Daabi". Bimol Roy found West Bengal too small for his talent and therefore flew over to Bombay where he instantly rose to high acclaim by making films like "Maa" and "Do Bigha Zameen". "Do Bigha Zameen" was adjudged by the cine weekly "Screen" of Bombay as the best Hindi film ever made till then. In the mid-fifties of the last century Bimol Roy entertained the Indian audience with the Hindi version of "Devdas" with the legendary Dilip Kumar in the title role. I have seen all the versions of Devdas including those having Promothesh Barua, KL Saigal, Shoumitra Chatterjee, Bulbul Ahmed and Shahrukh Khan (the least we discuss about Shahrukh's Devdas, the better for all of us) in the main role and I have no hesitation to say that Dilip's performance was by far the best amongst all of them. Even a film Director of Tapan Sinha's stature admitted that he never saw a more natural performance of death as shown by Dilip Kumar in the last scene of Devdas. In the late fifties and early sixties, the Indian viewers had the privilege of witnessing Bimol Roy's remarkable courage and flawless success in films like "Sujata", "Madhumati" and "Bandini". Bimol Roy is no more, but he will live so long as the Indian film industry lives. SRShaheed DOHS, Banarsi



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Bangladesh a weekly review

This week ended with an allegation by Mr. Mannan that Dhaka-10 by-election was unfair. He would take this to the court which is a very good move on his part. Rather than calling hartal or burning buses, he is taking a civilised approach to the issue. I think Bikolpo Dhara is a pioneer in modernising Bangladesh politics. We have to wait and see what the court has to say regarding this election.

"Bangla Bhai" group was active this week. They are continuing their quest to portray Bangladesh as an uncivilised nation. Bangla Bhai gang killed a 22-year old Awami League leader. He claims that he is working for the people by eliminating the Sharbahara Party. If

that is true, how come only Awami League leaders are dying in the hands of Bangla Bhai gang?

Last week the SSC results were out. I don't understand the whole hype about SSC results and GPA 5. First of all, I don't know who came up with the idea of GPA 5. And how come so many students are getting it? That means getting A in all subjects! Our educational system is still in the ancient era. In our system, we praise the best students and forget the rest. But these GPA 5 students will end up working for a foreign country generating revenue for a foreign nation. What about the rest? Zulfikar Ali Minneapolis, USA