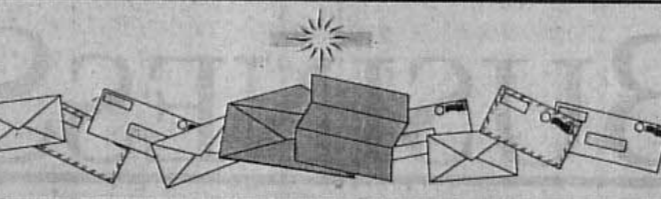


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

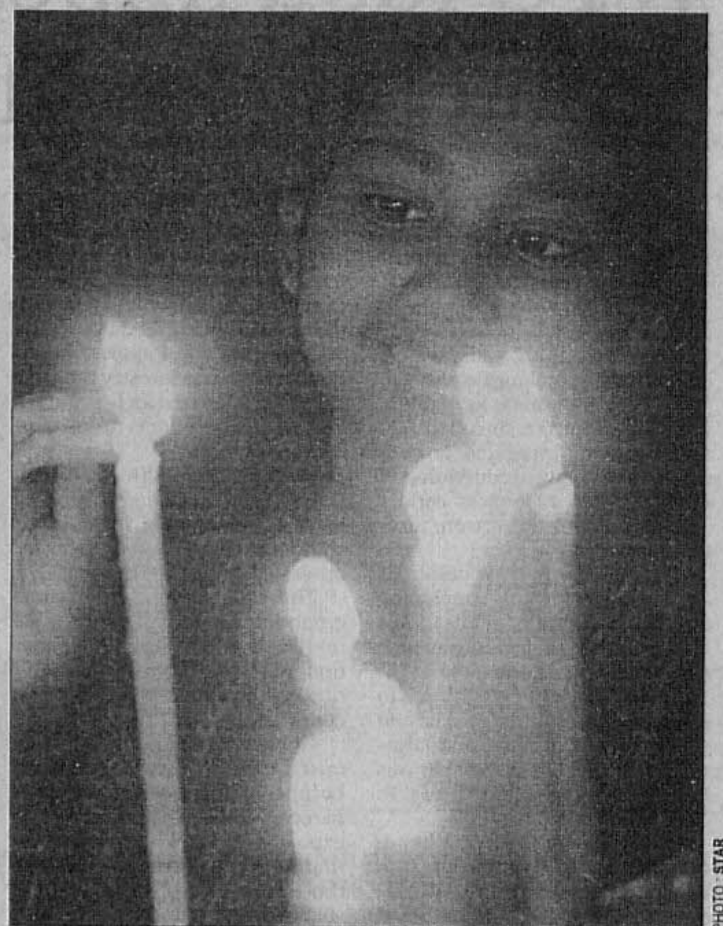


Burden of portfolios

When I contemplate over the size of our present government, juxtaposing with the newly formed congress led UPA government in India, I really feel puzzled, may be for the moral consciousness of mind. I don't know whether our government could ever think over this matter. India, being the second largest country in terms of population and the seventh largest country in terms of size, is downsizing its cabinet, that consist of only 30 ministers to govern the country. On the other hand, in comparison to India, Bangladesh is 1:28 in terms of land and 1:11 in terms of population. Nevertheless, it is a matter of shame and regret that our tiny and poor country is being governed by around 70 ministers in the cabinet of the government. If India would have followed our country, I think it would have a cabinet consisting of 2,000(!) ministers or so. That is quite absurd for any democratic country, although our government has exemplified this kind of sordid mockery. If their moderate cabinet of 30 ministers can govern a country like India why we need so many ministers for our country? To maintain our heavy weight cabinet, the government has to spend a huge amount of money, which is really an unbearable burden for the country.

I think India is a burning example for us in this context and by following this example our government should downsize its cabinet for saving a huge amount of money. If it is followed then the saved money can support many of our development programmes lacking sufficient funds to be completed in time. It is my earnest expectation that our government will follow India and form a cabinet of reasonable size in future.

S.M. Akramul Kabir
Aligarh Muslim University
India



The Melody Queen

The write-up on Melody Queen Noorjehan was informative and took one down memory lane.

The iconic Lata Mangeskar on hearing Noorjehan's death in an emotive tone mentioned that she used to be inspired by that great crooner's voice and songs in her early days.

Even the saffronised leaders of the BJP like L. K. Advani and Shusma Swaraj averred that they were enthralled by the songs of Noorjehan blossoming into a full actress by playing the leading role in Pancholi Art Production's movie "Khandan" (1942) in which she co-starred with Pran. The latter became Hindi film's master in playing roles connected with vice.

Your cultural correspondent has rendered Noorjehan with all the Kudos relating to the memorable song "Awaaz dey Kahan hai" rendered in Mehboob Khan's highly successful movie "Anmol Ghadi" (1946). But the fact remains that the song was a duet and the male singer, yesteryear's hero Surendra, sang half the part. Unfortunately, Surendra, a good singer in his own right, hardly received any accolade for his contribution to the aforesaid melody.

And though one can endlessly cite the numerous melodies that the mellifluous voice of Noorjehan has rendered, there are two more songs besides "Awaaz dey Kahan hai" which thrilled millions of musical buffs. The songs being Noorjehan's solo rendition of "Badnam muhabat konkarey" in the film "Dost" (1944) and the unforgettable duet with the matchless Mohammed Rafi titled "Yaha badla wafa ka bewani hikey siwa kya hai" picturised in Shawkat Hussain Rizvi's celebrated film "Jugnu" (1947).

Robert Kader
Chittagong



departments of the government. But the response was very negligible. The government should immediately redress the problems of Nur Chala which are causing a great deal of trouble to the local people and also to the foreigners living around the place.

Md. Masum
Dhaka-1212

The campus dilemma

All regimes are very keen on the development of education at all levels. The effort is very much visible, in the budget, and at the stone-laying foundation ceremonies. There is not enough publicity (for awareness) on the investment return.

How to count the political systems losses in the education system (at the higher tiers)? Combine it with the systems losses in our political culture, and the resulting scenario is grim. The net balance is positive or negative?

That is the political side. There are other unethical activities. How far the current degrees are for ornament rather than knowledge? The various aspects of the social environmental pollution in the campus have to be analyzed more deeply, as the long-term implications have far-reaching negative cumulative effects. But are the political masters listening? Good politicians are also good listeners.

But what is happening in the background: the subtle political indoctrination at the university level? Even the teachers fall willingly into the trap, presuming some sort of freedom. The affected students (the student bodies of the political parties) are making their presence felt in the campus (and outside) in a strong positive way. Is political approach to life the end goal of higher education? It is a monstrous thought!

Education is also a tool for discrimination, integrity, and discretion. Other rising nations are also passing through similar phases. What are we learning from the global situations?

The philosophical outcome is disturbing there is no market for neutral observers and analysts. Is it inferiority complex, or market opportunism? Earn one's living by the sweat of the brow, or brow-beat others into submission? We are weak in monitoring, and afraid of pointing out the negative implications. The syndrome is not new please the government!

These lines are a Preamble to the Introduction of the massive report in the pipeline(?), which would be ceremoniously archived for non-achievement!

A Mawaz
Dhaka

action against the vulnerable buildings. These are the main reasons for which the cave-in resulted in 18 people getting buried under the giant piles of debris. Following the Shankharibazar tragedy, Rajuk and the DCC should identify highly vulnerable buildings and demolish them immediately. As per the identification, the government should take immediate corrective measures for ensuring compliance with the safety regulations and the building code.

Sadik Mahmud Shobuy
University of Dhaka

Post-budget thoughts

For the last few years, I have been watching the phenomena of post budget criticism. There is a group of intellectuals who could go deep into a budget's pros and cons when the budget presentation was not even half way through. This we observed recently when our finance minister was presenting his budget. These intellectuals have a very wide coverage through newspapers & TV and, as such, they have a great impact on the general public. I fail to understand how the labour of a whole team of the ministry working for months together could not foresee what these intellectuals grasped within hours. To make a long story short, I propose to our finance minister to employ these few intellectuals on a contract basis for a few months for assisting in preparing a flawless budget acceptable to all, including the critics. This will not only help the ministry but also the people of Bangladesh who find themselves in a dilemma as to whom to believe and what to believe. We don't want to be dragged into despair as the help of a few intellectuals can assist the ministry towards presenting an acceptable budget.

Here I exclude the criticism by the opposition parties because they are mandated for constructive criticism of the party in power. I hope the finance minister will consider my proposal.

Mohammed Alauddin,
Dhaka

Bangladesh in doldrums

After securing a record first place for consecutive three years as the most "corrupt state" enrolling itself as a "suspected terrorist state," failed state, state of disgrace, our country has added another new feather to its cap, (the news covered by DS, 16-06-04).

Bangladesh has been blacklisted for failing to adequately fight women trafficking. It has opened the way for possible sanctions.

After all these adjectives going to our credit, can we consider

ourselves as a self-respecting nation? Is this the end result of our liberation war which we proudly consider the biggest, the brightest and the most precious jewel in our crown of national achievements?

Where do our leaders want to take us through their confrontational politics, practised by them in the name of so-called democracy? Our two major political parties fight and invite foreign diplomats to settle matters involving internal affairs of our state. Don't you think it's a disgrace for a sovereign country to let outsiders meddle into the affairs of our state, unheard of in the annuals of any other sovereign country in the world? Where is the conscience of our nation? What answer do we have for the posterity?

CF Azim
Gulshan, Dhaka

the absolute authority to command and enforce obedience over all individuals or associations within the state. In fact, the Iraqi government neither has unitary control over security agencies that is to say coalition forces in driving operations against guerrilla attacks, nor in oil management and its export. Prompt disposal of power is not being but Bush's political strategy to regain his lost popularity, eyeing the ensuing presidential election. Fear of huge coalition casualties and having a diplomatic win by getting logistic support from NATO leaders are other reasons behind the handing over of 'sovereignty'. Experts believe that the early handover was planned to deprive the Iraqi authorities of having unitary control over the coalition forces. Although the main task of the Iraqi government is to represent a united

Trial of Saddam Hussain

If President Bush and his defence secretary Rumsfeld can avoid facing trial simply by expressing "sorrows" to families of the Abu Ghraib prisoners for the brutalities and sexual abuses committed upon them by their troops/subor-dinates, Saddam Hussain should also get away from facing trial by expressing "sorrows" to the families of those who were subjected to brutalities by his men.

That will ensure fair trial of Saddam Hussain.

Sk A Wadud
Kalabagan
Dhaka



Spurious sovereignty!

Sovereignty is the supreme power of the state as well as the will of the nation organized in that very state. But surprisingly the US-UK coalition has undermined its significance providing 'fabricated' sovereignty to Iraq in the name of handing over power to the Iraqi government two days before the stipulated 30 June deadline. Such instant disposal of power strikes my mind with some queries.

Is Iraq actually sovereign now? The answer relates to internal and external aspects of sovereignty. Internal sovereignty means having

and reconstructed nation, it has to confront with two-fold challenges namely, US-UK pressure and guerrilla attacks. The US is just playing experimental games with executive, legislature and judicial organs of Iraq, imposing its own style of democracy which would most probably start with martial law (!) State administration is always a sensitive issue in Iraq due to political, social, religious, economic and geographical perspectives of the Middle East. Freedom loving Iraqis will never tolerate direct or indirect foreign interference veiled under so called sovereignty. It is the Iraqi people who have the right of

It's not a failed state

Hats off to you Mr. Editor! you have echoed the voice of the nation. Such an ill-motivated smear campaign of brandishing Bangladesh as a failed state for quite a while is actually an insult to the innumerable martyrs and millions of creative people, who are fighting every day for placing our beloved country out of the present impoverished state. True, we have numerous problems, poverty, corruption, lots of anomalies, but they, in no way, make this country a failed state. You have very rightly, and in very clear terms, established that.

Having said that, it is also our collective responsibility to ensure a better image of our country through improved performance in every sector. There cannot be any excuse. We cannot shrug off our responsibility after so many years of independence. This country is not a property of any particular person, party or group. Hope you will continue to echo the voiceless millions of this country in your own capacity and in your own matchless, emotion-packed but impeccable language. Carry on, please.

Adnan Mustafa
UK

Who is the top terrorist?

An anti-war South Korean angry protester held a placard saying, "Bush is No. 1 Terrorist". (25/06/2004, DS international page). The US Senate Judicial Committee recently published its initial report that there was no relation between al-Qaeda and former Iraqi dictator president Saddam Hussain's government before the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers or later. Mr. Bush got another jolt before, when a report said, "There were no Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) at the disposal of the Saddam government." So it is clear now like the blue sky that President Bush started a war based on a fallacious dossier. For this, The Washington Post, the renowned daily, recently published an editorial requesting Mr. Bush to apologize to the whole Yankees for his so-called war on terrorism! But Mr. Bush is not convinced. When will he realise that he has committed a grave blunder?

Md. Zillur Rahman
Gandaria, Dhaka

Those deplorable words are damaging to the image of the BNP, we hope Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will advise her party men to be restrained in their behavior; otherwise her party will lose the respect it used to have.

There is a quotation which is very enlightening, it says, "You behave with others courteously not because they are gentlemen but because you are one." I think everyone should remember it.

Nur Jahan
Khaled Road, Chittagong

A neglected road

Nur Chala is a densely populated area. It is situated just behind US Embassy's Ware House and Japanese School on Pragati Sarani. Nur Chala is under Badda Thana and Bhatara Union. The nearest area is Baridhara J Block. The People of Nur Chala are suffering a lot due to the bad road, which connects it with Pragati Sarani. This year with the advent of rainy season the sufferings of people have crossed all limits. It is because the municipality & Baridhara (J Block) authorities are treating Nur Chala main road as a drain. The Khilbari Tek area and J Block's main drain has ended on the Nur Chala Road. As such a huge quantity of water is coming down to the Nur Chala Road. Due to this, the local people are suffering. People of Nur Chala on several occasions tried to draw the attention of the concerned

Deaths in debris

It was 3:50 am. All the members of households were asleep at the building no 81 in Shankharibazar. Suddenly a big bang, as loud as thunderbolt, broke their sleep and resulted in a chunk of debris with 18 dead bodies within a few minutes. This is a brief picture of the tragic event occurring on June 9, 2004. Who will take the responsibility of these deaths? Why the two government bodies, Rajuk and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) are accusing each other for the tragedy? Ultimately, all responsibilities go to the two government institutions because of their paying no attention towards the dilapidated buildings in Old Dhaka. Newspapers say that there exists 32 buildings that are highly vulnerable among 142 buildings in Shankharibazar alone, and they may collapse any time. Notwithstanding this vulnerability, the two institutions do not possess any specific lists of these high-risk buildings. On the other hand, due to lack of space, most of the owners of old buildings built up more structures on the rooftops of buildings in an unplanned way. Moreover, some officials of the two institutions reportedly received bribe from the owners for not taking

One-currency Saarc?



The cat is out of the (Western) bag now ADB (Asian Development Bank) has informally suggested adoption of one currency in the Saarc region, as in the EU, for faster development of S Asia (break the gridlock).

The idea must have some validity, otherwise it would not have been floated by a big international agency. It greatly suits the export and trading interests of the industrialised countries, with less hassles, formalities and paper work, and faster movement of raw materials and finished products.

The regional partners or players have two main problems, to start with making the system take off quickly (lot of pin-pricks) for internal movement (sys- loss); and overcoming import restrictions in the countries of the foreign buyers, both developed and developing.

This time-lag is worth hundreds of billions of dollars; one losing, and the other gaining. The UN agencies cannot cope with the cunning devices of the superpowers (of Iraq). WTO is a glorious failure (as anticipated).
Abu Abd, Dhaka

determining what form of government they want in their country. Plebiscite is the best method of determining public opinion that can be held on consensus among Shias, Sunnis, Kurds and other communities. And this plebiscite must be held under the supervision of UN peacekeepers that can only ensure a smooth atmosphere, no coalition forces. Otherwise, bloodshed will continue in Iraq year after year.

Md. Al Amin Sagar
Dept. of Law, DU

Beheading of humans

I felt ashamed and greatly shocked when I saw the scene of Norman Berg being beheaded and Kim Sun crying out loud in vain to beg for his life. As usual in this world of heartless executions, nothing could stop their inevitable deaths. The head of the US government didn't care for thousands of Norman Bergs and Johnsons when he waged the war and the Koreans too did nothing but being deaf and blind when Kim screamed for his life. Their excuse was that they would not negotiate with the 'terrorists'. I wonder, whether they could do the same if President Bush's daughter or children of the Korean prime minister had been captured in place of Berg or Kim. I guess in that case it would have been a completely different story. These world leaders are no less emotionless than those who commit crimes in the name of religion. As a member of the Muslim community, I express my uttermost grief and sympathy to the families of the people who had become victims of extremism in the name of Islam. I feel sorry that our civilization is not mature enough to create a better world full of humane values and compassion. The ruthless creatures that behead human beings do not know that by beheading innocent men they are beheading one of the core

principles of Islam, and that principle is--'Respect for humanity'.

KH. Assif Safa Kabir Upal
Lalmatia, Zakir Hossain Road
Dhaka 1207

Target of world politics?

Bangladesh was defeated in OIC, it is believed, due to its wrong candidate selection. Mr. SQ Chowdhury is known for his irrational talks and again he showed his performance. Whatever he said about Sheikh Hasina and S. Gupta should be condemned. He termed Turkey's win a victory of Zionists. It was a conspicuous violation of international norms.

Some analysts say that the wrong candidate selection is the principal reason behind our defeat in OIC. But I do believe that Bangladesh is a fresh target of dirty world politics. Pre-summit incidents at home and abroad support my impression. Mr. Bush's promise was half-fulfilled because he was only able to conquer Iraq and Afghanistan. According to his previous comments Syria, Iran, Libya and North Korea are the next states to be attacked. Libya made a compromise. On the other hand, N. Korea is on the way of compromising. So, the next five or ten years are going to be crucial according to the developments of world politics. Capitalist America and the Zionist groups, who knows, may have made attempts to retain control over the OIC.

We have to realise that nothing is circumstantial or incidental in the world of international politics. So, I would like to say that Bangladesh's candidate selection was wrong. But it is not the only and principal reason for our defeat. Rather, our long cherished desire was slaughtered under the heavy blade of world politics like a "guillotine".
Rizwan-ul-Huq,
Department of English, Khulna University.