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# Bangladesh and we



PHOTO: STAR

## Solidarity of journalist community

Editors of newspapers, leaders of journalist unions and senior journalists held a meeting at the National Press Club on February 26 to express concern over the killing of Khulna journalist Sheikh Belaluddin, continued violence against newsmen by terrorists, and to take a strong joint stand to ensure the safety and security of journalists across the country. With this end in view, the meeting expressed solidarity with the journalist community, particularly with those in the Khulna region where at least 15 journalists have been killed by terrorists in 13 years and they formed a "Forum to Protect Journalists."

The very word 'Federal' (BFUJ) implies something central rather than local. Before 1971 there was only one Federal Union of Journalists which was called Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ). Now our question is when there are two groups of Federal Union of Journalists in Bangladesh, then how will they maintain solidarity of the journalist community?

It is very easy to express solidarity, but it will not be so easy to maintain it unless the BFUJ is united. If BFUJ is not united the activities of the forum will be futile. We hope the leaders of the journalist unions will realise the reality of the day.

**Saifuddin Chowdhury**  
South Dhania  
Dhaka-1236

## Delhi's response

Mr. Zafar Sobhan is quite right (February 18) that the Indian Foreign Secretary's statement of 14 February was aimed primarily at intimidating and threatening Bangladesh. He goes on to make the colourful, and entirely convincing, claim that this statement represents India's second punch, following the first punch which was the refusal to attend the Saarc summit. But if this is the case, it raises some intriguing questions about this two-punch attack.

It seems clear that the second punch, the statement, had been in preparation for some time and that India only needed a context in which to launch it. This context was provided by the first punch, the last-minute withdrawal from the Saarc summit. But what was the trigger for the first punch? None other than the horrible outrage of the cold-blooded assassination of Mr. SAMS Kibria.

So are we to believe that India's carefully prepared two-punch policy was totally dependent on the killing of Mr. Kibria on the very weekend before the Saarc summit was due to take place?

**Concerned citizen**  
One-mail

## Cricketers

This letter is dedicated to the remarkable improvement of our cricketers in their recent series against Zimbabwe. They not only earned laurels for themselves, but also made the whole country proud of their achievements.

By winning their first ever Test match and thus the series they astounded the whole world and it is quite clearly visible that our players are gradually maturing and are able to take the pressure of playing against much better sides.

The performance in the one-day matches was simply outstanding. The way they recovered and then won the cup after a 'two down and one to go', is exceptional. Not many teams in the past achieved this remarkable feat. Now if we could only match our performance and reputation with consistency, hopefully we will be able to show the world the strength we have within us. I would like to thank all the players for their hard work, and the

patriotism they showed in performing so well. I would also like to thank the BCB for the labour and time they put upon our cricketers, and for undertaking several programmes to improve the quality of our cricket, even at the lowest level. And finally credit goes to Mr. Whatmore who has become a hero to us.

Previously, I used to support other countries in international cricket, but now the performance of Bangladesh is so good that I take pride in supporting my country and can argue with others whenever they speak against Bangladesh in international cricket. I hope from now on our home team will not disappoint us and will emerge as a competitive international team in world cricket.

In order to further improve our team performance the teams for ODI and Tests need to have variation. Since one day cricket is about scoring maximum runs within limited overs, we need that sort of batsmen who can hit the ball accordingly and the bowlers maintaining tight line and length preventing too many extras and keeping the pressure on the opposition. I really have to congratulate our bowlers for that since they hardly gave away extras and kept the pressure on the opposition, pretty professionally.

However, in Test cricket the batsmen have to be more patient and need to rotate the strike if boundaries are hard to come by. One thing our batsmen lack is concentration. They need to develop the skill of staying at the crease and bat throughout instead of getting out after scoring a quick fire 50 or 100 runs. This is how we can hopefully improve our average score in both one day and Test matches.

For sustainable improvement of our cricket, long term pragmatic planning and its implementation should get the highest priority.

**Md Shams Al Arifee Chowdhury**

Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Violation of diplomatic norms

We often hear in the meetings and conferences our politicians and leaders telling people that "we believe in friendship towards all on equal footings and non-interference in each other's internal affairs." But can our leaders stick to their words in the face of pressure from the countries that give us aids and grants? We are flabbergasted at the remarks of EU Ambassador in his press conference on 14 February, 2005 about the crossfire deaths during operation of the elite anti-crime force, Rab. Is it not tantamount to interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign country? Does it not go against all norms and practices of

diplomatic ethics?

We are also surprised that our foreign office did not call the ambassador to explain the comments that violated all diplomatic norms. Our lawmakers also remained silent on the issue.

**Prof Shamsuddin Ahmed**  
Banani, Dhaka

## Kibria's killing and hartal

I was deeply shocked at the sad killing of SAMS Kibria, Awami League leader and former finance minister in a bomb attack on an Awami League meeting in Habiganj. This heinous crime that also left four others dead struck my heart a lot and threw me into the abyss of deep trauma. I take this opportunity to express my heart-felt condemnation of the brutal killing.

These atrocities bring in the minds of the people a sense of disappointment, observing their beloved country in disarray.

**Md Shahidul Islam**  
Dhaka

## Bangla 'proper'

A sentence in Mr. E. Mohammad Sultan's letter in The Daily Star dated 02 March, 2005 intrigues me: "The locals speak a language which is not Bangla proper." He is perhaps referring to the Kutty dialect of old Dhaka. I came to Dhaka to work as a Creative Director in an advertising agency in 2001 and discovered few Bangladeshis speak "Bangla proper" standard Bangla. Standard Bangla is generally accepted as the dialect prevalent in Shantipur in Nadia district of West Bengal or at least, that is the base. The dialects of Bengal did not develop from Shantipuri Bangla; they developed independently. The Shantipuri dialect gained supremacy at a time when the region was considered the seat of learning and culture. The Assamese language, in fact, is more nearly related to the Shantipuri dialect than the Chittagong dialect is. As a copywriter writing in Bangla, what I found strange in Bangladesh was the obsession with standard particularly 'sadhu' Bangla. Everywhere in the world, the language of advertising is the language that your target audience speaks the colloquial spoken by a particular group. Here, advertisements tend to be written in stilted, strange Bangla. My family originally hails from Narayanjan district; in my childhood, I heard the dialect spoken at home. I was therefore not entirely unfamiliar with the language I heard on the streets of Dhaka. However, when I presented an advertisement created in dialect for a product to be sold in semi-urban and rural markets, the response was, "Bhashata boro gramyo hoise!" the language is too rustic. When I pointed out that it was deliberately done keeping the

I would like to draw the attention of the Leaders of the Two Main Political Parties to the political reality of our country today.

Let me narrate some of my personal experiences of life. Bangladesh got her freedom after a long struggle and sacrifice. Though our county is poor and still struggling for a minimum development level, but its People & Nature are unique combinations which cannot be compared with any other country in the world.

As I have already mentioned, our country is still struggling to become a Developed Country. We are facing many obstacles on the way to development, but people are still keeping their fingers crossed. I know our most experienced and educated politicians will point to each other for the failures, but the reality is we all failed and we all have to explain why we

could not play our due role.

A volatile political situation is prevailing in the country right now, there is political unrest. Economic problems are there and the law and order situation is alarming. The government is trying to solve the problems, but the situation has not really improved. In my view, bombing of public meetings is the most alarming problem today.

Now all the political parties have started to make an issue out of this according to their own party needs. My question is, can't we all try for once to become united and put an end to this type of crimes? Why can't our politicians see that the situation is getting worse day by day?

If the leaders of Palestine and Israel can sit together for Peace, why can't we sit together to stop crime?  
**Mosaddek H Khan**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

desired market in mind, I was asked, "Kintu... amago imaz-er ki hoibo?" what will happen to our image? That was my first exposure to the bundle of contradictions in Bangladeshi nationalism. Bengalee first or Muslim first? Do I represent the Bangladeshi nation or the greater Bengalee nation? And so on... I personally believe it is wrong to tie

form of language, that should be accepted with pride. As it is, the difference between the Bangla developing in Bangladesh and that in West Bengal stems from a strange dichotomy based on the religion of speakers who use a different vocabulary even when they resided side by side. 'Jol' and 'pani', 'dawat' and 'nemontonno' the list is

## Victory Day and our culture

It seems embarrassing to imagine that a gulf of difference appears just before our very eyes between our works and words. We stringently promise to keep our prestigious Victory Day alive and fresh and expect to keep our culture prevalent all over the country. I want to illustrate it citing an instance from my own experience while observing the Victory Day celebrations at

certain places. While speaking on the stage, the bigwigs talk pretentiously but motivate the others to adopt foreign culture, songs, ceremonial cult and exotic fashions. Some performers entertained the spectators unexpectedly by exposing themselves in an abysmal way. The untidy women commercially perform on the stage. They create a suffocating situation in the concert for

the elegant and elderly spectators.

I cannot ventilate my feelings in words so flatly. I think the vicious culture leads the new generation to destruction and push them towards obnoxious practices throughout the country.

**Md Hafiz**  
Titumir College, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

# Greenhouse bluff!

The mighty US did not sign the Kyoto protocol and the subsequent agreements on global warming, demising the calibrate rituals and pseudo science (press reports), although it generates the largest percentage of environmental pollution. On preemptive military strikes also, it has defied the UN system. There is none to tame the US to toe the global agreements.

Scientific bluffing through sustained propaganda is one of the old tricks of the imperialist nations. The Yankees are trying to reincarnate a new version of the old British Empire. The

pre-conditionalities imposed by the foreign donor agencies is a farce (subjective advantage).

The Saarc region can easily hit back at the dying industrialised nations by concentrating on regional trade and business—enough scope for catering to the needs of one and a half billion people. In RMG we have the upper hand, as well as in some raw materials. It is a game of strategy, depending on internal cooperation.

Are we game for it?  
**AZ, Dhaka**



PHOTO: INTERNET

down a language. Chain it in classical fetters, and it dies. A living language will change and evolve. The "Bangla proper" of Bangladesh is already evolving away from the language of Tagore and Bankim. Indeed, even the standard Bangla of West Bengal has come a long way from those times. Dialects are not a matter of shame they enrich the language with their diversity. And if, through the course of history, a region or a nation evolves a different

endless. Then there are differences of regional forms or terms. The hawker in front of our Kaighat Metro Station would look blank if you asked him for 'boro' though he has a basket piled high with the fruit. His counterpart in Dhaka would take some time to understand what you want if you asked for 'kool'. No Sir! Let our language evolve the way it will. Let us borrow words and steal, let us exchange vocabulary, let us turn the religious to the secular. Let

genuine Bengalees. Last year, when the BBC conducted a poll for the greatest Bengalee, a colleague opined that if more Bengalees from West Bengal had voted, Sheikh Mujib would probably not have voted to the top. "But," he hastened to observe, "You're not real Bengalees... you're Indians." "There, I think, you have lost some objectivity in becoming a homogenous nation. I am a Bengalee and proud of it. I am an Indian and proud

of it. I take pride in India's diversity. I respect all the nations Panja-ba-Sindh-a-Gujarata-Maratha-Dravida-Utkala-Banga that went into making our country great. In this I follow Tagore and Nazrul and all else who made Bangladesh one of the richest languages in the world. It makes me able to love and respect Bangladesh. It makes me love and respect India.

Bangla is my mother tongue. I would have no other. Whatever be your mother tongue, you should feel that way. If I have got it right, that is the spirit of Ekushey.

**Ranajay Gupta**  
Kolkata 700042, India

## Bangla base

As a citizen, I have gone through the articles in the DS Ekushey supplement, and heard BTV talks on the International Mother Language (IML) Day and the historic Ekushey.

The government, it appears, is not doing enough to initiate a modular master plan (series of dev projects) to strengthen the foundation for improving written and oral Bangla at the various vertical layers of the society, for different age groups, with varying levels of literacy.

What is noticeable is the sentimental approach to some annual rituals as emotional outlets. This powerful public feeling has to be channelled into formal outputs and exercises; now that the UN has recognised the mother language as a symbol of universal brotherhood.

It provides a scope for international technical assistance at the national level.

The Bangla Academy has done some work, but the image of the integrated output has yet to reach the public awareness level. This issue is no longer at political divergence, hence consensus would not be wanting.

The society is changing fast (too fast for the pen-pushers in the Secretariat!) in this ICT age, hence the use of English has its attraction (and competition) for the urbanites and the cosmopolitans in the higher-income-group families.

Outsourcing of office work, products and services to the developing countries may rise exponentially in the coming decades; hence migratory tendencies of Bangladeshis to the industrialised countries might slow down. Bangladesh has the advantage of huge human resources, provided a large percentage of the same are literate and educated enough to handle these incoming businesses.

This is a parallel national exercise, compared to the steady development of the deeper uses of Bangla at many levels of local employment and services. There are islands of entrepreneurship flags fluttering around. These have

to be coordinated at the national level, specially at the initial phases, to keep the systems losses low.

A national debate would input many valuable suggestions, to enable a subsequent commission to draft a Master Plan.

**A Mahasen, Dhaka**

## Intolerant society

My head bows down in shame on hearing that Taslima Nasreen sought citizenship of India to live in West Bengal. We forced her out of the country for her non-conventional thinking.

It is imperative that the conditions are created for writers like Taslima to return to their homeland. The society should be more tolerant.

**Shah**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Psychology of hartal

As an aged (and hopefully mature) citizen victimised by a spate of hartal calls by a particular political party for eight to nine years while it is in the opposition, I am wondering about the psychology of continued, long spells of hartal (strike) on the millions of voters, and their subconscious reaction during the next general elections.

Would the majority of the sufferers vote for this party? Our experts on psychology may enlighten the masses on the hartal psychology, and its positive and negative implications (long-and short-term). Hartal is effective when it is spontaneous and non-violent, and others are not disturbed.

As far as I can guess as a laymen, the current spate of hartals is a vengeance weapon directed at the people, to make them realise that the current regime is unable to control the situation. Make them angry and irritated, time and again.

The other aspect is that violence and destructive activities (by hired hooligans and secret directive to party workers) have been deliberately planned secretly, to discourage people to go about their normal daily routine activities. It reminds us of the dog-in-the-manger policy.

The point is that enforced hartals have the opposite effect or reaction. It has to be voluntary to be effective, and countable. Why an individual's right not to observe a particular call by any group is not respected? How to have confidence in such undemocratic leadership, which forces a person, offices, shops, or transport system to be immobilized against their consent and cooperation? Call a referendum on hartal?

Then again, what are the alternatives or options to hartal of violence, intimidation, and coercion? Why these leaders do not go to jail voluntarily by breaking the law, without disrupting the normal public life? It is an easy way to be famous? Why we citizens have to carry the donkey's load?

The message is: You observe hartal, and I will watch it, and may or may not participate in it. Why my private vehicle or business property has to be damaged, and buses burnt? Why politics cannot be conducted in a non-violent manner by the politicians only, if others (non-politicians) do not join? It means that the spectators in a gallery in a stadium have to enter the field and play the game too. Sounds absurd (in particular examples).

When the political teams cannot follow the rules of the political games, why harass and involve the public (voters) forcibly and against their will?

Why drink alcohol and force me to follow? This argument is out of context, but how to drive home the message from the dissidents to the hartal mongers? I will not vote for any of these parties indulging in unnecessary hartal.

**A victimised citizen, Dhaka**

# An asset or a burden?

Seeing the heavy construction of the Mohakhali Flyover, one question has always struck hard in my mind that is 'what is the main purpose of undergoing this bulge of enormous construction?' I guess it was built to combat the horrible traffic jam at the Mohakhali railcrossing. So the main purpose was to remove jam from that road, that is, to lessen the sufferings of the city-dwellers to some extent.

But the real picture after its construction is quite shocking. Albeit it has removed jam from the rail crossing, it has introduced a huge traffic jam

between the landing pathway of the flyover and the traffic signal situated in front of Rangs. It is going worse day by day and it has gone completely beyond the tolerance level. Though it is a very important road, city dwellers have to suffer helplessly a delay of 25-30 minutes while passing through this road.

I guess there were some talented and ingenious planners behind this huge piece of construction work. But one thing is not clear to me. Were those talented planners blind or were they so clever and creative that they forgot about all

the consequences, or else was it built to enhance the beauty of Dhaka? I think the engineers and planners do know good answers to these questions or else they would not have taken the risk of such an unplanned construction work.

Despite knowing well that all these useless words are going to fall in deaf ears, being a regular sufferer I could not resist myself from writing this letter.

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