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### Pahela Baishakh

We love our culture and tradition. One of our traditions is to celebrate "Pahela Baishakh". It is really nice to welcome the New Year in a colourful way.

I hope everybody will enjoy the day this year.

Md. Zahir Hossain

DEPZ, Dhaka

### Islamic extremism and Bangladesh

Mrs. Nazli Kibria, the daughter of the late SAMS Kibria, wrote an article in the Los Angeles Times on April 5, 2005. This is one of many similar letters she has recently written to a number of major newspapers in the United States. Filled with frustration at her father's miserable death, she repeatedly pointed out how lawless our country has become. Sadly enough, she also invested a major portion of her energy in drawing attention to the rise of Islamist extremism in Bangladesh. Mrs. Kibria went ahead without any hesitation to call these spawning groups "Bangladeshi Taliban" and asserted with certainty that they do maintain links with "international terrorist organisations". With her conclusion of the existence of this extremism in Bangladesh, she felt an urgent need for US intervention as part of the solution. "Even as the US has expanded its war on terrorism across more and more of the world, Bangladesh has escaped attention," Mrs. Kibria wrote. In a similar letter

Finally, I agree with Ms. Kibria's stated goal. I dream for the day when no one will dare to claim Bangladesh

now, rather than later. In the same article, she cast 'no doubt' that the assassination of her father is part of a larger and systematic campaign of terror in Bangladesh, "one that seeks to destroy the forces of moderation, democracy, and freedom, and convert Bangladesh into a 'Muslim state'." The central theme for all of her letters is the urgency of taking action now since she believes price of inaction will be high in the long term. "Are we better off dealing immediately with a problem that can most likely be solved through firm international diplomacy or waiting for a later time when we may be contending with a rogue state that lends aid and comfort to Islamist extremists?" Mrs. Kibria asked.

While I do not know certainty how strong is the presence of what she calls "Bangla Taliban" in Bangladesh, I do question the judgement of any patriotic Bangladeshi who labels her own country using vicious words like 'Taliban' and 'militant Islamist extremism', and openly invites foreign intervention. Are not we smart enough to deal with such problem on our own, if they do indeed exist? Have not we seen the brutal face of American diplomacy in Iraq and Afghanistan? Do we really have to experience the 'firm international diplomacy' that Mrs. Kibria is inviting? Will we ever learn the lesson?

Finally, I agree with Ms. Kibria's stated goal. I dream for the day when no one will dare to claim Bangladesh

"Disabled" means unable to use one's body properly because of disease, injury, impaired hearing, speech, walking etc. Disable people are part of our society. Many disabled persons are neglected, so they can't think about better life or rights.

They have their rights and of course they want our love and affection. They also can render their service to society if they are trained. But they are neglected and a negative attitude is shown to them. We should allow them to do what they are capable of.

Md. Toufiqur Rahman  
Rothkola, Kishoreganj

### Bring them to book

Good to see three great lawmakers from Massachusetts getting involved with investigation and legal proceedings in the Kibria killing. It is high time for the Bangladeshi government to come clean with all such political killings. The government should take firm action against the culprits. It should do the right thing by ordering independent and transparent investigations into all the grenade attacks.

Lies and deceptions would not take us anywhere.

Dev  
Boston University, US

### Is our patriotism event based?

We got our independence through a bloody war in 1971 with supreme sacrifice. Being a member of the pre-1971 generation, when I watch our life style before 1971 through cinemas, dramas, it seems to me that there is a sharp fall in our patriotism and its application after 1971.

February 21, 25 and 26 March, 16 December etc are important days in our life. So, when those months arrive, from the very first day it becomes perceptible that a great day is ahead. Because the newspapers recall the memories of the events which occurred in the past. Different cultural organisations and even the government take various steps to mark the day. The symbols of glory, such as Shaheed Minar, are washed and given a new look! Is it because we believe in publicity?

But, what happens, when the event is gone? The newspapers forget everything. There are no patriotic songs, or steps to recall our sacrifice in 1971 or to recall the events of 1971! If we go to Shaheed Minar it becomes clear that the sanctity of the place is badly compromised. Why is it happening? Has our patriotism become event based? Isn't it heartbreaking?

It is applicable to me as well. We set our National Anthem as the ring tone on our mobile, but do we stand up when the phone rings? The answer is "no". But why? It may be argued that holding programmes throughout the year is a costly proposition. But if we want to demonstrate patriotism through our activities, will it cost us anything? We can do it in many ways, from putting the garbage in the bin to keeping ourselves corruption free!

disruptive activities. Faculty is divided in coloured 'panels' that create divisions within them. Most of the activities that harm the academic atmosphere usually go unpunished, triggering further protests and disruption. This occurs due to



attacks against itself, consequently there was no constructive debate on the issue in parliament.

At the universities corruption, having a lot to do with politics, is condoned if not encouraged. Most students are likely to follow in future what they are learning now, why come you dream of a corruption free country?

In reference to the proposed reform of caretaker government, BNP's stubborn opposition may jeopardise the formation of the next parliament. What we need most is consensus on national issues above everything and that is most crucial. Political parties should pay attention to our real needs. If the

prime minister and opposition leaders in the neighbouring country can consult with each other, why can't our leaders follow them?

After 34 years of independence and fourteen years of going parliamentary democracy the political parties are expected to be more civilised.

Roney  
On-email

### Why should we shed blood?

In a seminar on Indian Inter River linking project arranged by Nadi Bachao Andolan, the Pro-VC of CU

performance. However ground realities are a different matter. I hope WASA improve their response to leakage and damage reports, for these are also a large source of water loss. My personal experience in this connection has been unfortunately rather disappointing.

During my regular early morning walk on March 1, I noticed water leaking out adjacent to Gulshan Road No. 28, at the corner where it meets the Gulshan Avenue going north from Gulshan First Circle. It is in front of the showroom of International Office Equipment premises located there. I telephoned WASA after a day or two when nothing was done for repairing it and gave them the

## Indigenous people

Most of the people in our country are not familiar with indigenous people. Their ideas about them are not positive. They think that they are an underdeveloped, uncultured and illiterate lot. I think only a few people know about them. Indeed, indigenous people are trying to develop themselves. But indigene is an obstacle. Racial discrimination makes their life uncomfortable. They have lost their resources.

It is very important to mention that the recent cultural festival on indigenous people that was organised by the Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) reflected on the culture and life of those people. Indigenous people have a rich culture. If we focus on the Chittagong Hill Tracts we will see the diverse kinds of indigenous people with their own language and culture as well as stunning landscapes. Attractive scenes of waterfall, vast areas of forests, rivers, evergreen paddy fields, mountains, natural tunnels and zigzag roads are examples of landscape in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Any tourist is greatly impressed after visiting these places. Actually, those areas are suitable as tourist resorts which may become a source of revenue earning for the government.

We are neglecting indigenous people when most of the foreign countries are proud of such people. For instance, Australia has awareness programmes on their indigenous people. They arrange many cultural displays on them (indigenous) in their embassy.

To enrich our country's culture we need to study the lives of indigenous people closely. Teachers and students of social sciences or equivalent subjects as well as cultural organisations should take the initiative in this respect.

Thiunumong Marma, Rajshahi University



said, "We gave blood for language. We gave blood for our independence. We will give blood for water."

Why does he think these three are similar things?

It is not a fight between India and Bangladesh. It is a fight of the sentient community against the Indian water management policy.

Not that only Bangladesh will be affected. The processes of sustainable development of the whole region and, for that matter, the whole world will be impaired. The Indian government is violating international law. As Bangladesh is the first and direct victim of this violation, it's our duty to create global consensus and ensure proper implementation of international law in this respect.

Are we a weak nation? Why does the question of giving blood arise? May be some people are trying to gain cheap popularity in this way. We should remember that citizens of an independent country are not supposed to shed blood in the streets. They are supposed to donate blood for blood bank only.

Salif Azam  
Dept of Law, CU

location of the leak. I was pleased to get a polite and appreciative response which was rather surprising coming from our autonomous authority. Unfortunately, the matter ended there. Even this morning water was still leaking and the quantum of water flow has markedly increased since last fortnight, and the showroom has spread bricks between its door and the footpath to allow access without dirtying one's shoes.

If such be the state of operations, then we need to develop a fast response capability of WASA to repair leaks and damages to its large network of pipelines.

I hope these matters are also incorporated as part of the systems loss assessment. Very conservatively estimating, this small leak alone has caused loss of over 250,000 litres of potable water.

S.A. Mansoor  
Gulshan, CU

### Making election free and fair

Recently the prime minister told in a public meeting that the next election would be in accordance with the constitution. I think this is a good announcement. Demands of the opposition can be met within the constitutional framework. The opposition's main concerns are the appointment of former chief justice

as next chief of the caretaker government and also appointments of election commissioners. There is no binding in the constitution that former CJ must be appointed as the next caretaker government chief.

The constitution allows appointment of any other acceptable person as the chief of caretaker government. I think the ruling party and the opposition camp should sit together to solve this problem. However, everything depends on the good intention of the government. An alliance, which has two-thirds majority in parliament, should not be afraid of facing free and fair election. Right?

Nazmul Hasan, Ontario, Canada

### Popular daily

Weekly Bangla magazine Jai Jai Din and the English daily The Daily Star are very popular among the Bangladeshi in Denmark. We talked to some Bangladeshi people who are living in different parts of Denmark like Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense. Most of the Bangladeshi people said that they love to read Bangladeshi newspapers in the internet on a regular basis. They like to read The Daily Star first because it comes into the internet by 8:00pm (Danish time) at night.

Mostafa Sohel  
Nordic Agricultural Academy  
Odense, Denmark

### Caretaker govt chief

I can understand why opposition will not accept the past Chief Justice. The ruling party will not accept the opposition's choice to lead the caretaker government.

So what we do? I am a non-resident Bangladeshi (presently visiting Dhaka) who has studied and researched the background of many former justices, secretaries and other distinguished personalities of Bangladesh. We have to find a personality acceptable to both the government and the opposition.

Fardin Istaque  
Gulshan, Dhaka 1212

## Politics-free educational arena

It is not difficult to establish a link between good governance and a solid distortion free education system in a country. Good governance leads itself to many forms but one interpretation. It is a system and style of governance that seeks to increase human welfare and uphold the laws of the country. The term itself has come into vogue now and has become somewhat cliched. Yet its basic import is that those who govern should do so with an accountability and responsibility that are the hallmarks of any democratic system. This is sorely lacking (and has been lacking!) in Bangladesh. Public representatives have remained non-responsive to people's demands. Once elected the concepts of exercise of power, accountability and responsibility take a back seat for these representatives. The

enforcement of accountability has remained poor as the institutions required to carry out this task remain under government control, underdeveloped or non-existent. Under such conditions the process of bringing in "Good Governance" is caught in a vicious circle. The only way to ensure such governance seems to be an external stimulus in some form (Donor countries, IFIs etc.). Education has been worst affected by this sorry state of affairs. Education, be it at the primary or university levels, has been politicised in some form or the other. In higher institutions of learning politics is indulged in by both teachers and students. A case in point is the premier seat of learning - Dhaka University. Political parties have active student wings that operate on campus and often indulge in

the imbalance between power and responsibility that prevails in a highly politicised atmosphere.

DU reflects the functioning of most institutions of learning in Bangladesh. This scourge of party politics unfortunately

corrupts education, which would have increased the nation's capacity to do better. Student leaders often go on to become national leaders and continue the same irresponsible practices that they indulged in during their student life.

These matters divert attention from more important issues such as education reform. Such reform is vital and necessary to ensure the future of the country. The retarded and disrupted education received by many deprives the nation of enlightened human resources that could have become the harbingers of innovative new ideas to put into practice the concept of 'Good Governance'.

Good Governance, if practised in educational institutions, will ultimately be reflected in the national arena as well.

Navil Mansur Chowdhury

### WASA and water loss

Your city correspondent's write up (DS: 6 April) that WASA plans to reduce the systems loss by 30 percent is good news indeed. Even if they can reduce it by 15 percent by end June, one can consider it a good

