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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. Zakir 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 urging 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

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 certainly 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. Toufiqueur 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 Bangladesh 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 it's 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 heart breaking?

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 all 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!

It has already been 34 years of our independence. If we compare our expectation with achievement, it is frustrating indeed. The main reason behind the failure is lack of patriotism or what should be called true patriotism. And if we take oath to do everything with a view to contributing to our motherland, there is no reason, why should we lag behind. And it is the only remedy, which could ensure progress of our country, despite political unrest, corruption and violence.  
Moinul Alam  
Ramna, Dhaka

### Pope's death

When the world is passing through a complex time with the beginning of a new century and under the threat of third world war, as the lone superpower is showing an intolerant attitude towards some countries which it considers as its rivals, the Pope has left this world. He was the spiritual leader of the Catholics. He was the man who wanted to develop a good relation among different religions and was sympathetic to the oppressed people. He was the first Pope who unhesitatingly visited the holy places of Muslims and Jews. He was against Iraq invasion by America and condemned it in clear terms. Only love, he said, could make the world happy. He dreamt of a world where people of all faiths could live in peace and harmony. He was a force that worked relentlessly for the well being of mankind. His death is an irreparable loss to the world.

Manirul Hassan (Shimul)  
University of Dhaka

### Political education

Political parties in democratic countries play a vital role with respect to imparting political education to people by presenting their viewpoints through which people get to know about the qualities and drawbacks of each party and various problems facing the country.

In our political culture many people aren't aware of their democratic right guaranteed by the constitution. Religion has been brought into the political arena to hypnotise and exploit the simple-minded moderate Muslims as well as to bank on selling it as a cheap commodity.

Every political killing, grenade attack brings forth blame counter blame and while the probe into it doesn't make any progress. The AL was blamed for carrying out these

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, how 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 on 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 Andolon, 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

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 Bangladeshis in Denmark. We talked to some Bangladeshi people who are living in different parts of Denmark like Copenhagen, Arhus and Odens. 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 Agriculture Academy  
Odens, 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 Istiaque  
Gulshan, Dhaka 1212

## World Health Day 2005



Wordsworth said "Child is the father of the nation". The slogan for World Health Day 2005 is "Make every mother and child count". In developing countries, pregnancy and childbirth are one of the leading causes of death of women of reproductive age, and one child in 12 does not reach his or her fifth birthday. So everyone has to take care of the health of the Mother and the Child. Governments and the international community need to make the health of women and children a high priority. The wellbeing of societies is directly linked to the health and survival of mothers and children. When mothers survive and thrive, their children survive and thrive. When both mothers and children survive and thrive, the society where they live in will prosper. Too many mothers and children in the world are dying or suffering from ill health due to poor nutrition and inadequate health care.

Each year more than half a million mothers die during childbirth. At the same time 10.6 million children under the age of five years die from a handful of preventable and curable diseases. Nearly all these deaths occur in low and middle-income countries - and mainly amongst the poorest of the poor. Every minute a woman dies from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. That means 1,400 women die every day - more than half a million women die every year. Every minute, 20 children under the age of five years die. That means nearly 30,000 children die every day.

The issues deserve immediate attention.

Shashi Khan  
Bottala Bazar, Bottala, Tangail- 1900

to the Boston Globe, dated March 7, 2005, she wrote, "the current political crisis in Bangladesh has not, thus far, attracted much attention in the United States". She urged anyone with positions of power and influence in the US to put Bangladesh on their radar screen

a terror country. I hope and pray that the killers of Mrs. Kibria's father will be brought to justice. As a nation we can not repay the greatest loss we have suffered, justice is the minimum we could offer her.

Neamul Haque  
Minnesota, US

# 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

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

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

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 very 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.  
Saiful Azam  
Dept of Law, CU

### 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

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, Dhaka

### 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

### Cantonment in metro Dhaka

Public feedback is appearing in the local press for reviewing the possibility of partial shifting of Dhaka and Peelkhana Cantts outside the DCC limits, to the nearby greater Dhaka perimeter zone, and/or down-sizing the existing cantonments within the city, in public interest.

It would greatly and immediately ease the nasty traffic congestion in the overcrowded capital. These areas eat up a huge part of the expanded city (population above 10 million) at critical crowded localities (near New Market, traffic to the airport and traffic from Mirpur). The old airport strip is also occupying a large area in the centre of the metropolis. Give up a part of it for wider public roads.

Changes have to be reviewed with the changing urban scenario every decade; as there is no point in being inflexible to dynamically changing local situation.

Expert committees can find the best solutions. Let us talk about it, for public awareness, barring the security aspects, which need not be revealed. It is a part of town-planning exercises, on paper, and in real time.  
Alfa Ahmad, Dhaka