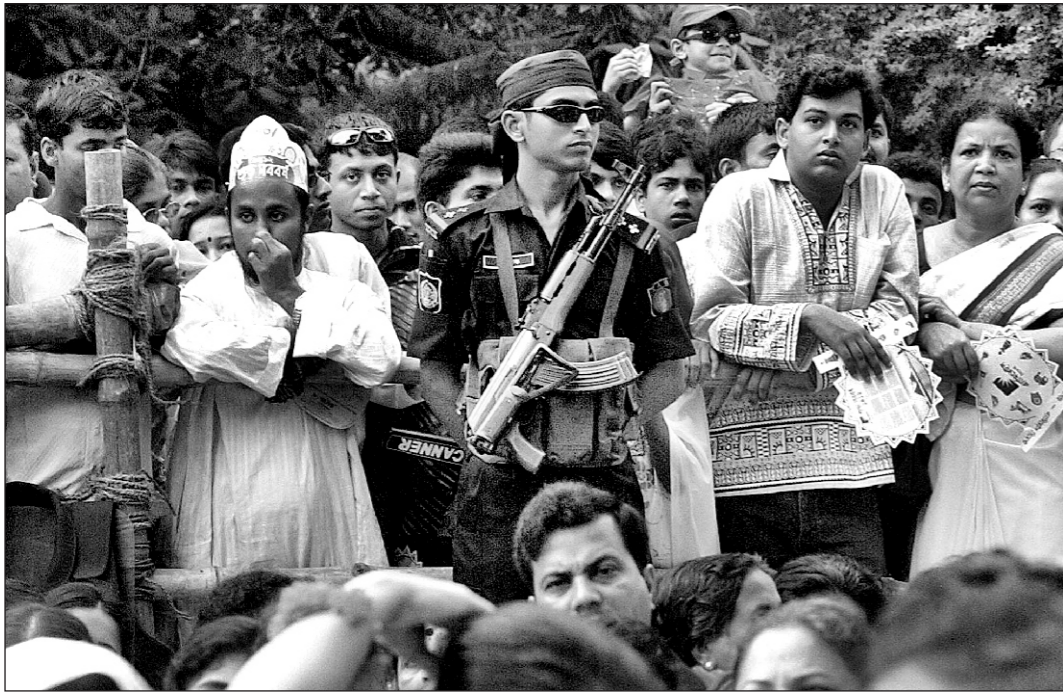


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



The elite force

The whole country was seething with frustration over the failure of law enforcers. In such a situation, the government has organised an elite force which arrested a good number of criminals, extremists, terrorists and almost all of them have been killed in crossfire. This way, by killing them in the name of crossfire, they have deprived the accused of access to justice, rendering the judiciary useless in the process. Innumerable associates of the gangsters are on the run and are now beyond the reach of the law. Thus, this stunt of temporary relief by killing the criminals and simultaneously protecting the godfathers will not help us in the long run. It amounts to violation of human rights. Political leaders, regardless of party affiliations, must remember the proverb "No cross no crown". In our strife-torn country when democracy is tottering on the brink of destruction all political parties have got to continue to struggle for justice with fortitude and unabated patience for establishing the rule of law to acquire the crown of democracy. Farhad Rahman Eastern Housing Apartment Circuit House Road, Dhaka

Grey market: mobile telephones

The mobile (cellular) telephone business is booming with increased competition, and at the same time the grey and black market of smuggling of thousands of mobile telephones is on the rise as per regular news items in the press (not in the government controlled media). At the same time, the government avoids positives, direct actions, on regulating the market. There is a lot of non-transparency in the market for a buyer, and subsequent client. The shops are flooded with mobile sets, but the after sales-services are poor. There is hardly any written literature available during and before purchase, for making comparative studies, and the post-sale literature is scanty in most cases. The names and addresses of the authorised local agents and distributors are not publicised, and clear instructions are not forthcoming on where to go for authorised service. The sales staff are non-technical, and the shop managers do not like questions seeking more information on the products displayed. It is said that the "cheap" mobile telephones are for one-time-use; then throw it away and buy another. This is not possible in developing countries with lower standard of living and income. The capital expenditure has to last longer, and the O&M costs have to be low. This is different from "cheap popularity"! The import duties and levies are said to be classified under "luxury" and non-essential categories, while the reality is just the opposite: now the middle class and students carry mobile telephones, and even some hawkers carry it (photo in newspaper). In the rural areas and villagers, women are hawking mobile telephone calls. News on local assembly is scant in the media (brings the cost down). Why the market is not regulated by BTRC in public interest? Lately the BTRC appears to have gone into purdah. It should be more in the news regularly, as the local market is changing fast. The regulatory codes and the field teams have to be visible, and the new forthcoming budget has to announce measures to make mobile telephony more popular, with more penetration down the economic vertical scales. Those who fall into DCC manholes without covers, can use the



Sectarian violence

Is the regime aware that it is virtually sitting over a volcano, with hate-engine as the prime mover? Anti-Ahmadiyya movement is not a new issue (for centuries). Why it is now allowed to be whipped up in Bangladesh? How the regime (and the people) gains? The government's position should be made clear (by the Prime Minister, if not anyone else). The Hindu-Muslim enmity was a big issue, resulting in the partition of British India half a century ago. Now inside the Muslim communities, there are trouble mongers. Politics and religion have distinct roles to play in governance. Mixing up the head (politics) and heart (religion based on faith) is dangerous. The safe-channelling modes are not being publicised. There should be lack of transparency in official policies (look what happened to the future of Tony Blair-winning is not enough!). Whatever the national issues, these should be solved peacefully. What is the hurry on an old issue? Who are the leaders behind the scenes, and why they are not being officially exposed? This cat-and-mouse game should stop. If the government supports the movement, it should say so clearly, and be prepared for the reactions. There is too much sermonising in our politics. Deliver through positive actions. There should be no beating about the bush (President Bush is doing that!). The vast majority of the citizens are waiting for the right announcement. Perturbed citizen Dhaka

Changing times

Chittagong University has train as its student transport. Some students are used to travelling on the rooftop of these trains. It is considered as a man's job. I have been travelling on the rooftop for the last 3 years. But today for the first time I have seen two female students on the rooftop. Amazing. I was on the same rooftop. I heard them singing, I saw them laughing and they got down comfortably. But many of us didn't love to see that they had made it without any accident. I heard some students saying, "These are hot girls." That boy and his friends burst into laughter as if he had said something funny. Sad. But "the glass is half filled." I think it is not an isolated event. It is a part of the process. Maybe it is not a news making event and we will forget it soon. Yet they made some difference. At least they struck our stereotyped mindset. Saiful Azam Donald Department of Law CU

CCC mayoral election

Congratulations to the unorthodox Mayor of Chittagong. He is not new, but has been re-elected for the third time running, defeating the regime's candidate by a huge margin of nearly one lakh votes. He stood independently, and not under the umbrella of one of the two major political parties in the country. He says he can run the show without frequent trips to the metropolis Dhaka. He lives a simple life (press

Whither professionalism?

The Daily Star editorial (May 10) on professional public conduct (and image) is timely. The political leaders have also to take note, and not sit on the fence. Tribal politics has already ruined many social sectors. It is time that the politicians are not allowed (through public consensus) to meddle in all sectors; and to respect their boundary conditions. Today politics has become an open system, with no holds barred. Are we practising imperialistic politics? this is the politics of the have-nots. How long will it last? Otherwise the various social services would be polarized, denying equal rights to those outside politics. This is open discrimination. It is an abnormal situation, to find high-level professionals in non-political areas depending so helplessly on political patronage. The politicians are already spoiled, and the big national problem is how to clip off their wings, before they do

market for business.

All other leaders have become dui nombor (#2). This is autocracy in the name of democracy. What is ironical is that there is no opposition party to this grey culture. Unless you have political links, nothing substantial could be achieved. This nefarious mindset has to be changed. The majority group (masses) are helpless against the

Election Commission

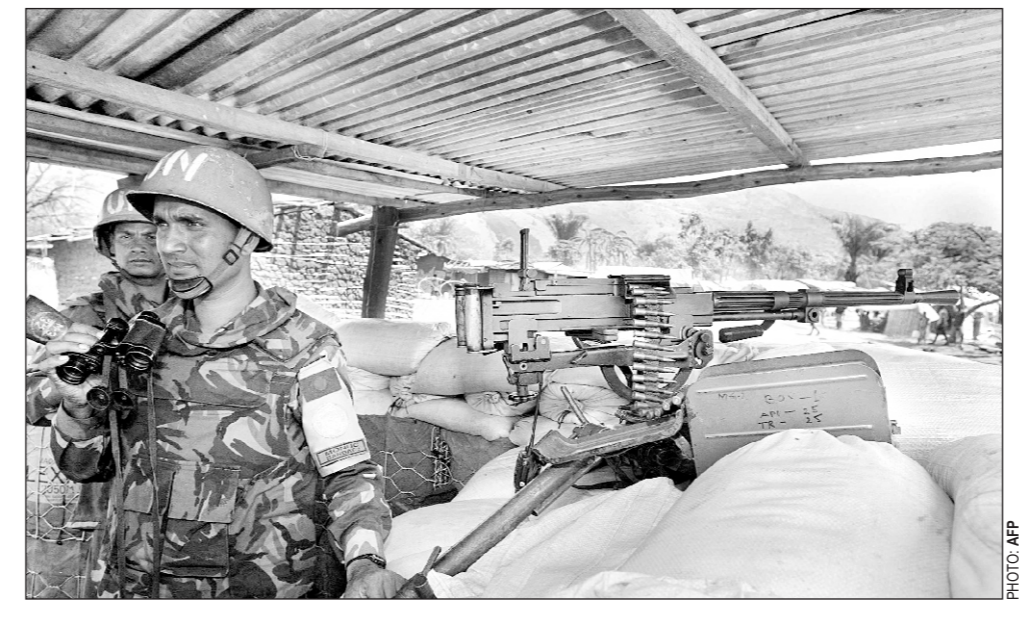
Things at rest like to remain at rest and things at motion like to remain in motion until and unless an external force acts on it. This is nothing but inertia. But we very often oppose changes although time and circumstances warrant those changes. Every change is a development. But frequent changes may make development slower. Time changes. To cope with the changing time some changes are required to be brought to the rules regulations and structures of different organisations. Demands are on the rise to bring some changes in the framework of the rules and regulations of the Election Commission. But reaction that usually follows to a demand for change is in the offing. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. This action-reaction outside the House of Nations has caused so much harm to us. Now the CEC himself has stressed the need for reforms in the Election Commission. No country in the world has this "caretaker government" system. We have it. Necessity is the mother of invention. Our need and necessity led us to invent the system. The political leaders should look at themselves and their failures through the CTG system. Non-political persons who never took to the streets to press their demands have been successful for more than once to ensure free and fair elections which the most experienced political leaders have failed to accomplish for reasons best known

Values and morality

I was taking lunch with some friends and discussing, what not? From caretaker government, Chittagong City Corporation polls to Indian Idol Amit Sana and Abhijeet. Someone remarked, "we have become very insensitive nowadays." We don't care about people any more which we used to do before." As for example, he said, "Look at the incident at Savar. How many of us went to the sight while the rescue operation was going on?" Even the Political Leaders (except the Prime Minister) did not, which they generally do, at least for publicity's sake. How many human rights activists, NGO activists visited the place, stood by the side of the helpless relatives? How somebody even after detection of the cracks 16 hours before the building caved in could not or did not evacuate the workers? Was it only for money or it was complete insensitivity towards people's sufferings and lives. Yes, I also agreed, he is correct. We even observed first day of Bengali Year, "Pahela Baishakh" in the same volume and jubilant manner which we always do at the time when some people of our own country, who are responsible for wage earning for the nation and also enhancing the image of the country, were in a death trap and fighting for their lives in vain. We did not observe any mourning day for them, did not even offer one minute's silence in any of our meetings and

Congo mission

Bangladesh believes in peace and harmony and extends its support to the international community to curb all sorts of subversive activities. As part of these activities, Bangladesh is playing a praiseworthy role in the peacekeeping missions under the UN. But the Bangladesh mission in Congo is passing through some testing times. The mission has lost a number of soldiers who were performing their duties with great dedication. The UN should address the issue so that the security of the lives of peacekeepers is ensured. Md. Rezaul Karim International Relations University of Dhaka



candidate by a huge margin of nearly one lakh votes. He stood independently, and not under the umbrella of one of the two major political parties in the country. He says he can run the show without frequent trips to the metropolis Dhaka. He lives a simple life (press

contribute, and not simply carry flags and names. Stand on your two legs, not more! Today the nation is suffering from the dependency-syndrome. It has no foundation. Super-structures can be seen, but not the foundation. Our leaders are too visible! How they will

further damage to the society and the nation. The problem is that black-money and big business have joined the camp. Politics has sort of become a panacea for all personal ambitions of the individuals, and also it is a big

powerful minority, namely the ruling class, with no professional barriers. This is the tip of the iceberg. Where is Titanic, waiting to be crushed? Our kapal (fate) is to be disaster-prone! AZ, Dhaka

On reading Johnson

Dipping into Samuel Johnson past the middle age is palatable, though not entirely digest-

ible. Dr Johnson is out of date for the nimble-footed information age. The leisurely develop-

ment of Empire English perhaps could be enjoyed during an elephant ride, sitting on the

howdah; or lounging on the tropical veranda, hugging the long pipe of the hookkah, with the punkha-puller dozing at the rope. It is fast food and instant hype in the satellite age.

As one of the architects who laid a solid foundation of the English language in the eighteenth century, today's functional English appears to be lean and bony on a slim diet of semi-starvation (meat not served in the health shops). The grandeur of the Roman (or British) Empire no longer echoes from the fast, synthetic, action-packed sentences of the creator of James Bond, the 007 man, who employed a band of ghost writers to strip the words, sentences and paragraphs into new nuances of transparency and permissiveness. There must be action in every sentence (notice that in the American movies, the talkers are

always moving. It is a sin to be still, if the TV commercials are to be taken at face value) We all got the bug inside us. Notice that the thick novels have made a come-back from the Age of Leisure to the Age of Minutes. Informality has increased, but social mixing has declined. Distracting competition in the mass media has cornered reading as a pastime. The audio-visual options provide the reading materials in more entertaining form, and faster than reading line by line, page by page.... We are now offered better packages than reading books; in fact, virtual reality comes in three dimensions in infinite variety of colours. The pen is no longer mightier. Good bye, Dr Johnson. Rest in peace, you just made it to the other life divine. AMM Aabad, Dhaka



Inexplicable decision

'Youth Forum for Democracy' is a rapidly growing nationwide organisation. Its purpose is to arrange debate competitions among the university students. It organised a debate competition on the topic 'It is impossible to have free and fair election without reforming the caretaker govt.', at the law gallery in Rajshahi University on May 8. But at the eleventh hour the university authorities stopped it. This is of course not an example of free thinking at a high seat of learning. Naquib Nazrul, Mass Communication Rajshahi University