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# Hartal and its impacts

While we strongly protest the brutal killing of Advocate Khorshed Alam Bachchu and demand bringing criminals to justice, we also protest the call of hartal by the Awami League. Considering the future of the HSC examinees, they could call the hartal a day later, if it was at all necessary.

This is unfortunate, if the AL claims that they are doing people's politics, they should stay away from such anti-people decisions.

This was just playing with the fate of more than half a million students.

**Nurul Amin**  
Dhaka

There has been much debate on the issue of 'hartal' at home and abroad, and even in the parliament whether a ban on hartal should be imposed or not. The leaders of our country have exhausted themselves in arguing for or against the issue which has now turned out to be a Frankenstein for one and all. However, it does not come to my understanding why this time-consuming debate is still raging. Any kind of development is conditional on a strong economic basis. But hartal, as it is found nowadays, always stands against our long-cherished economic emancipation. Besides, the destructive aspects of hartal, needless to mention, are known to all of us very well. Furthermore, the decent image of the country is

getting more and more bruised in the outer world because of this hartal and suicidal politics. To be plain, I firmly believe that none can point out a single positive thing in favour of hartal if the development of the country is prioritised. Then, why this unbearable procrastination in banning hartal? Human wall has proved to be more effective in showing disagreement with any rash decision of the government than hartal.

I fervently appeal to the government to ban hartal without any delay to retain the smooth flow of development and thus rid the nation of the ugly chain of hartals.

**Ramprashad Banik**  
Jahagimagar University

Our son's 'A' level examination was supposed to be held at 3-30pm on 18th May. Due to the sudden hartal called by the Awami League it was rescheduled at 1-30am, past mid-night. When we returned home the clock struck 4:00am. HSC and other university examinations were postponed. Our son and all the other examinees spent a sleepless night. Mosquitoes at the St. Joseph School bit me. So were the other helpless parents, held hostage by the wildcat 'hartal'.

What did the Awami League achieve by calling 'hartal' during the examination days--other than bad publicity, disdain, anger and hatred? They even exhibited the audacity of calling

another 'hartal' on Saturday-hyped by Chittagong victory. It was Mohiuddin backed by the Nagorik Committee who won the election, not the Awami League. People should not be taken as fools.

Killing of Advocate Khorshed Alam is really sad and deplorable. It's a great loss to his family. But does this incident warrant a 'hartal'-certainly not. It shows how insensitive the political leadership is. There is no precedence of relinquishing political power in our country before the term is complete. So, there won't be any exemption this time too. The Awami League could have waged peaceful and people friendly political demonstrations.

We condemn 'hartal' in the strongest terms and if required would file a public interest lawsuit against calling of 'hartal' and form committees for prevention of 'hartal' at 'mahalla' level, 'hartal' is not at all a democratic right, rather it is anti-people and anti-work.

**SN Mamoon, Dhaka**

Our political parties have again proved that they are doing politics for themselves. They had called a hartal on 21/05/05 around the country. They had done it because one of their leaders was murdered. It is of course a sad and terrible thing. But on the same day a launch sank with hundreds of common people. But they did not talk about it or didn't bring any pro-

cession for it because most of them were poor people. Are they thinking that the people of Bangladesh are fools?

Are they doing the right thing? Doesn't it prove that they are doing politics for themselves only?

**Syed Ashek Ahmed**  
RUET, Rajshahi

I read in The Daily Star dated 20 May, 2005 that the Awami League had refused to withdraw their call for the nation wide hartal on Saturday despite pleas from HSC students and their guardians. To me it appears that the opposition is hell bent on regaining power, irrespective of the cost. The Star report has mentioned that the education minister had also urged the opposition to withdraw this hartal. Have they paid any attention to it? And surprisingly in national dailies including The Daily Star, there has not been any editorial on this issue advising the opposition on the folly of their actions. If the opposition shows restraint and compassion for our students, for national interest, there is no reason why they cannot come to power in the next election. But the question is, do they have this sort of vision?

**M. Rubaiyat Kibria**  
The University of Sydney  
Australia

The countrywide hartal called by the Awami League in



PHOTO: AFP

response to the brutal killings of one of their leaders on last Thursday makes the government solely responsible for the crime. It shows opposition's anguish and dismay over the government's inaction to contain crime and bring the culprits to the book. However, calling a countrywide hartal on Saturday was in no way justifiable when the opposition knows that it would create serious problems for the examinees who are appearing in the HSC examina-

tions. Not only it is the HSC examinees that would bear the burnt of it, the English medium school students would also face the same situation. This definitely shows that the Awami League doesn't care for the future generations of this country.

Moreover, a fervent appeal from their 11-party alliance went unheeded. We cannot term this a democratic way of doing politics.

**Humayun Hyder**

**Zigatola, Dhaka**

I struggled with your editorial on hartal (May 20). And what a struggle it was! I read the first paragraph. Read again. Looked hard at the parade of phrases. Far from enlightening me, your "repugnant to public sensibilities", and "champion of public rights to turn against these by thoughtless politics" seemed to choke me. Breathless, I raced to the second paragraph only to bump against "It was not on the

public mind at all that the hartal syndrome could return with such vengeance".

As a regular reader of The Daily Star, the premier English newspaper of the country; and an occasional contributor to it, I kept thinking that should we be expecting more of such wondrous obfuscation in the future?

**Mahfuzur Rahman**  
New York

## Building collapse

Building collapse has regularly been taking place in Bangladesh and causing lots of casualties, like the one at Savar on 11 April 2005. It is interesting to see some common developments immediately after this type of incidents i.e. formation of an investigation committee. But the efficiency of these committees is always questionable. Things are going wrong in many areas. Most importantly, we need rules, regulations and their strong enforcement to guide such building constructions at the very beginning. For the existing ones, authorities should identify those buildings that are in very bad condition and take appropriate measures to demolish them with proper compensation. Instead of blaming the garment factory owners as responsible for the incidents, the authorities should take appropriate measures so that we do not lose any more lives in future.

**M Harunur Rashid Meer**  
NTU, Singapore

## Ban student politics

I completely say 'yes' with Cantara Wali, for her letter captioned "Ban student politics" that was published in The Daily Star. Student politics is something where students play the main role. It exists in a vibrant form. But we can't claim that it is on the right track. Indeed, student politics played a vital role in all progressive movements. In 1952 and 1971 students saved our language and motherland.

But the current state of student politics is extremely frustrating. Things may improve only if brilliant students join politics.

**Md Toufiqur Rahman**  
Rothkola, Kishoreganj

## We expect rational actions

The news item published in The Daily Star on April 27, 2005 "Opposition plans to match the '96 agitation," has upset us and it is a sign of turbulent days ahead.

It has been disclosed that the mainstream opposition parties are



## Hygiene needs

Most of the people ignore the hygiene factor. As we live in a country where we have lots of serious problems, hygiene consciousness does not figure prominently in our lives. But our government should take immediate measures to build awareness among general people about good health and hygiene needs. Most of the diseases spread through water. So the authorities have to lay due emphasis on 'safe

drinking water'. We see that people drink water on the streets from wherever they can collect it. But they expose themselves to all sorts of maladies in the process.

If the authorities can give assurance of safe drinking water in all public and general places, then we can hope that people will not take water from unhygienic sources.

**Zishan, Dhaka**

planning to launch street agitation to match 1996 agitation programmes. We have become tired of all these activities and want some respite. The four party alliance government's tenure is almost at the end; so why can't they be a bit patient?

By announcing these sorts of agitation programmes the opposition is doing more harm than good to itself. Because people have begun to think that the opposition must have realised that in a free and fair election they have no chance to win so they must resort to other ways to topple the government. But they are making a mistake. People are not with them on this undemocratic

policy. The opposition must try to win the hearts and minds of the people and that is the only way by which they could achieve their goal.

**Nur Jahan, Chittagong**

## In response to "Nagorik"

The fundamental structure that holds together the entire human civilisation is the structure of family. If homosexuality were not a disease then it would have been part of this age-old family structure. How do you homosexuals plan to raise a family? Before you go on to defend

your sexuality by hinting adoption, what right do you have to deprive a child from a normal family (a father and a mother). Same sex couples are not the social or natural norm. Influence of a male and female parent is vital for the development of a child.

If you are a believer of any faith, fear your Lord as He has forbidden it with His unlimited wisdom. Rigid judgement of WHO or any other human organisation is irrelevant. If you are not a believer, then show me how homosexuals will breed to sustain a social structure for generations to come. Your natural inability to do so is itself a

wish of nature that you should perish.

You need no homosexual rights, you need help.

**Syed Rubaiyat**  
Melbourne, Australia

## EU resolution

I would like to express my views on the European Union Parliament's recent resolution on the situation in Bangladesh as to why should it matter to us. European Union is one of the most influential international organisations in the present world politics. No other regional body has such an extensive co-operation as well as almost state like institutions like the EU. It has its own currency as well as its Central Bank.

It has a common single market with an overall market output that is 20-times more than the US, Canada and Mexico (NAFTA) combined. It has its own policy initiation body and a legislature, and it has the European Court of Justice, which is the ultimate appeal court of all the EU member states. It provides for a common platform of European nations.

The tie those member states have between them and the organisational obligations member states take upon entry are tantamount to compromising certain economic and political sovereignty of the states. For example in the UK where the common law had been holding parliament as the only sovereign body for centuries, now it is understood that laws passed in the parliament cannot ever be in conflict with the EU treaty obligations, and if it does then those laws would be null and void. If the EU is not a state as a single body, it is a "super-state" much like a large federation. So when one talks about the EU, one has to take these very subtle and significant issues into consideration.

And for developing countries such as ours, it is a rather big potential in economic terms. The resolutions, which the EU parliament passes, are of enormous persuasive value for the 25 member states' policy makers. Considering all these, one cannot simply state that

the recent resolution passed in the EU parliament on 'the situation in Bangladesh' can be side-stepped and ignored.

It is certainly true that the resolutions, which the EU parliament passes, cannot be enforced anywhere outside Europe, and has almost no direct legal implication under International Law. However, it is also true that even UN General Assembly's resolutions are analogous to the EU resolutions; they are not binding on any country.

The EU resolution in this case simply suggests that they are only anxious as to the situation in Bangladesh. But does it then mean that, we, only for arrogance's sake, ought to turn a blind eye on it? I doubt we can afford to.

International politics requires us to make friends, and not disown them.

**Chowdhury Mohibul Hassan**  
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK

## Irony of fate!

A Danish author's fairy tale, The Emperor's New Clothes came handy to epitomise the political ugliness and sycophancy in many countries, old and new. But this time we find an Emperor, who has really no clothes per se, his picture in underwear drawing attention world wide. Yes, I am talking about Saddam Hussein.

His marvellous statues used to glorify the landscape of Baghdad.

Situation has changed. Now his picture in underwear is not amusing anybody. Is he a pure victim? Are we just watching world wide phenomenon where all the universally accepted norms and conventions are withering away? Or is the Providence acting in a mysterious way using him as a bad example?

Our world is still full of Saddams and Udays and Qusays. Is there any lesson to be learned from them? The arrogance of power and prestige can be dangerously deceiving. It is just happening in front of our own eyes.

**M.A.Islam, US**

## TV commercials

We see very competitive TV advertisements in our local channels these days. Multinational giants spend a lot of money in advertisements, and we are getting the taste of it indeed. Weeks ago Coca-Cola launched their newest TV advertisement in a very unusual manner. In the commercial, a man calls another person, "Hey old man." These seem simply abusive. Then he asks him, "What is your father's name, what is your village's name." These lines sound very cheap.

**Tahsin Hyder**  
Maple Leaf International School  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

I saw a new Coca-Cola ad on TV. The ad was about a girl and some local teasers who wanted to impress her when she was buying cold drinks.

However, the ad seemed offensive to me because, the local mastan was calling the salesman "oi rongila buira", which sounds really odd and disgusting.

This is not the way of talking to the elderly ones! Should we show this kind of things on TV? If we do, the teenagers will try to imitate the "Mastani" style and will say "Oi rangila buira, ekta thanda de". Think about it.

**Cantara Wali Ruhi**  
BBA, Dept of Mgmt, DU

This is in response to the letter of Rafiqul Islam Rime published in The Daily Star on 21 May.

In his letter the writer has criticised the recent Flexi Load advertisement of Grameen Phone which is now being telecast on all private channels. The writer has written that the whole advertisement was built on a vulgar concept and that the ad was a farical one!

I had the privilege of meeting with the actors of this ad--Marjuk Russel & Hasan Masood at Nandan Park a couple of weeks ago. I was astonished to see a large number of viewers taking photos with them and they highly congratulated them for performing brilliantly in this ad. I was also happy to talk with Marjuk Russel and he said to me that from the beginning he is getting a good response from viewers.

But it is making no sense to me how anyone could describe such a nice and entertaining ad as a vulgar, farical one!

**Nazmus Saquib, Notre Dame College, Dhaka**



PHOTO: AFP

## Launch disasters

Launch accidents are common in Bangladesh where a network of 230 rivers provides daily transport for more than 100,000 mostly poor, rural people. Over the recent years, thousands of people died in launch mishaps. Newspapers have published many reports on how the mishaps are occurring.

It is evident that the authorities concerned have failed to do anything to prevent deaths in launch capsize.

**Mallik Akram Hossain**  
The University of Hong Kong  
Hong Kong

There are various types of vessels plying the rivers and coastal areas of Bangladesh. Of these, the pas-

senger and cargo vessels are highly vulnerable to mishaps during the rough season! It is imperative that launch and ship owners fix viable passenger fares and cargo freights, while the Director, Ports and Traffic, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and Harbour Masters of Chittagong and Mongla ports should keep strict vigilance so that passenger and cargo vessels do not exceed their seat capacity and the load-line mark.

**Golam Ashraf**  
DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka

We have just witnessed two unfortunate lunch disasters--one in Galachipa and the other in Aricha. It has transpired from the

news that delay in salvaging the sunken launches is causing more loss of life and increased sufferings to the affected family members. And it is also difficult to determine the death toll correctly. I do not know how many salvage-vessels Bangladesh has, at least we always hear the name of the HAMJA, and the report says it is on the way and will take a long time to arrive on the spot for salvation work.

I saw a few letters, both for and against, on our need for F-16 aircraft. I wish we could evaluate our priority and work out that we need more salvage vessels than sophisticated combat aircraft.

**A Bangladeshi**  
On e-mail

## Social malaise and we

We the Bangladeshi people are living in an intolerable situation. Our lives are governed by corruption, negative ideas etc. We don't find any light of hope easily around us. If we focus on each face of our society we can only find frustration, pessimistic thoughts and expressionless attitudes. People's goodness is just like curse for themselves. Those days are not far when honest and sincere people will feel shy for their honesty.

Social malaise is seen in every sphere of our society--not a single field is free from the bad impacts of corruption, unhealthy competition and unfair means. Now we have to

work harder to keep away ourselves from the infective touch of this malaise. Every day we have to hear about murder, accident and corruption. We cannot give rest to our ears or eyes from watching application of force on the poor, forceful grabbing of wealth, all types of injustices etc.

Should we allow the social malaise to triumph over us?

**S Yasmin, Lalmatia, Dhaka**

