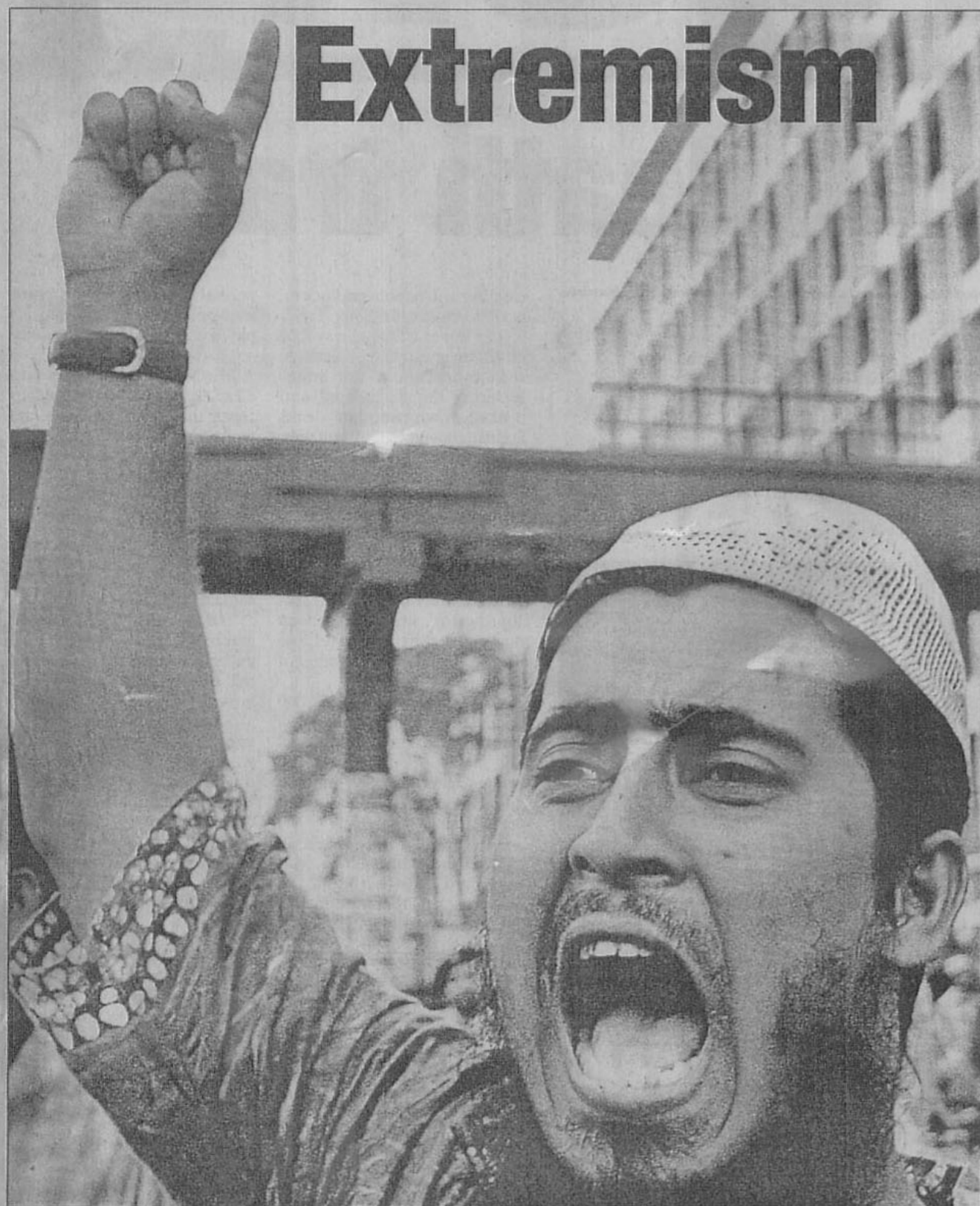




Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Extremism

Terrorists are terrorists, and extremists are extremists. It's better not to bring any religion's name in this matter. We will have to keep in mind that those groups who are committing crimes in our country definitely have an evil motive. And they are using the banner of religion. Either they want to give Islam a bad name or they want Bangladesh to be a Talibanised country. The point to be noted here is who will be benefited if Bangladesh really ever becomes a country like Afghanistan. There might be several parties who will be benefited -

1. Those people who commit crimes in the name of religion.
2. The people who want to have money and power under political shelter, no matter which party rules.
3. Certain groups may not be related directly, but they will be benefited if any foreign power tries to overthrow the ruling party and political instability persists here.
4. Fanatic groups (in most cases uneducated), who are aggressive towards the minority groups.

It is very clear that the Jamaat directly or indirectly has a close relation with the militants. Otherwise, who patronised Bangla Bhai? How come people like him have so much clout? Who are giving him support? There is a possibility of international conspiracy having a role here.

What amazes me is that in 1971 these people were proved guilty. There is no question that they should have been relegated to such a position that would have reminded them of their shameful past. While they should have been punished, they are behaving like kings in the present Bangladesh. It is really beyond imagination that they are still part of the government. It is high time the government of our country took a bold decision against the Bangladeshi Taliban.

Cantara Wali Ruhi
Dhaka University

PHOTO: AFP

Soaring oil prices

The third world countries have reasons to be perturbed at the rising trend of international oil prices (DS July 3). The rich industrialised countries can manage for a while (more staying power), but relocation of factories to the South won't solve the problems. What is the big secret game?

Are oil prices politically controlled to a large extent (it cannot be zero percent non-control)? Is it a secret plan to retard the industrialisation of the developing countries (like the questionable Greenhouse Effect, to which the mighty US is reluctant to sign the protocol)?

The Muslim nations control a large percentage of the energy resources of the globe. What role are they playing in the different camps? To OIC this looks like a purda-nasheen or taboo topic.



The rich oil-producing countries have their bank vaults in the US, which is advantageous to the Yankees for credit business and control.

Nature also has a sardonic sense of humour: oil in the desert, but no workers available to set up factories. But there could be hidden lessons in these divine tests. The Muslim nations are not united, and it tells a lot. It is time to consider a common Islamic currency, to break the monopoly of the dollar the Euro came too late for global benefit.

A Mawaz, Dhaka

It has been everybody's concern that oil prices are soaring up. Political as well as

civilian fall out is making a topsy-turvy situation in the country. The government has said that it has nothing to do with the rising oil prices in the international market, rather it is adjusting its domestic value again and again. It is crystal clear that the effect of oil price is enormous and it does affect everything in our society. Political parties are getting an issue to make their voice heard to the people and they get benefits from it. My concern is, what are the poor people of our country getting from this price hike? Oil prices are making everything costly in the market.

So the poor people are bearing the brunt of it. Md. Harisur Rahman, JU

Weekend debate

With the religious bigots gaining from strength to strength, the debate on one or two day weekend and keeping Friday outside the purview of that weekend is probably going to remain out of question for a long time to come. The Finance Minister was also so correct when he said that if Friday is made a working day with a mid-day break, then people in the name of 'salat' will leave their premises and never return to work, turning it effectively into a three-day weekend. What he failed to mention was that from our past bitter experiences, with the currently earmarked days of weekend, the people are going to enjoy a three day weekend anyway by leaving midday on Thursday and returning midday on Sunday. Old habits die-hard and we don't have to reinvent the wheel.

While deciding on the weekends, we need to think of certain issues. The first and foremost is why do we need weekends and should that be in line with what the others are doing.

Frankly, if we care about economy, we cannot remain dissociated from the rest of the world in these days of competitiveness and globalisation. There is no doubt that we need time to relax and carry out family chores to become productive in our routine work, be it in the government or otherwise. It took ages to determine that 40 working hours per week are perhaps ideal and anything more, or less makes it counter-productive. In order to stick to the 40-hour schedule, in the none too distant past, it was proposed in the USA that they might work 10 hours daily and enjoy a 3-day weekend. So, even the two-day weekend can also be altered if the country so desires. However, for some reasons that did not materialise. What I want to emphasize by this is that we, in our country, should adapt to a regimen that best suits our needs and at the same time takes care of our bad

attributes.

What is so wrong in working from 9:am to 5:00pm with offices closing down at 1:00am on Fridays and Saturdays and having a holiday on Sunday? This gives us a 40-hour working week, people don't leave early on some pretext or the other and stops the early leaving and late coming culture when given a two-day weekend. This should make the business community happy too, who have made very caustic and justifiable remarks while wanting only Sundays as weekend.

Can we not shift away from traditional thinking and make adjustments to suit our needs?

Mamun
One-mail

Phew!

Bus fare has gone up almost double, after the government declared the oil price raise a few days ago. Local transport owners have fixed up a new exaggerated fare schedule on the pretext of oil price hike. Commuters are really in a dilemma due to conductors' unreasonable demands. In most of the cases it leads to quarrels.

Passengers are facing a lot of hassle. Owners of the buses are not abiding by the rules anymore. The government earlier asked the Bus Owners Association not to raise the fares before 15 September, but who cares about the government order!

Anyway, the sooner the government looks into the matter, the better it will be for the commuters.

Md.Zonaed Emran
Dhaka

Hospital fee drama

Your staff correspondent's report (12 Sept) is indeed not funny! In all aspects however it appears we have a "Boro Natokio Proshashon" which possibly by coincidence or otherwise is the acronym for the government party! No wonder, under the circumstances the right hand does not know what the left

hand does.

Can one imagine the time and money spent in meetings, minutes, approvals and preparing papers and finally the circular, which is now of no effect! Again repeat the cost of the reverse exercise for preparing another circular to negate the earlier circular! But then in this land of the free who cares about costs? Anatokenthusiast
Dhaka

New weekly holidays

This is about the new weekly holidays and working hours. It appears whatever the weekly holidays are, working period would be less due to geographical distance between the countries concerned and the consequential time difference. For example, when the week starts from Sunday morning in Dhaka, say at 9:00am, it would be Saturday night in New York, and so on. Again, it is on our weekdays that we could be in touch with persons in their office in European countries for a limited period as we are five hours ahead. The same thing happens in respect of countries in the East.

Japan is nine hours ahead of GMT and Philippines is 8 hours ahead of GMT.

It is therefore obvious that there can hardly be any ideal weekly holiday system and working hours. Therefore if we wish to enjoy two days weekend, we have to depend more on the Internet, Email, phone, fax etc., which could be made more effective by the use of cellular phones, and by making arrangements for attending office telephones.

S.M.S.Zaman
Member (Retd.)
National Board of Revenue

Dignity of Judiciary

The Judiciary is one of the indispensable organs of the state. The Judiciary becomes more important as it is the ultimate custodian of the constitution. But in

recent times the Executive has tarnished the image of the Judiciary because of too much intervention.

Separation of Judiciary is a long standing demand and it is because of this fusion between the Executive and the Judiciary, that the Judiciary is apparently helpless. In a recent historical verdict the High Court (HC) declared the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution illegal. But the government's role has made everything controversial.

Generally, the government does not hesitate to say that it honours any verdict by any court. But its reaction to the HC verdict says a different story.

Moinul Alam
Eskaton Garden Road, Dhaka

Response to Mr. Gomes' letter

This is in response to a letter written by Mr. Thomas Gomes Bhura. I think it would be foolhardy to assume that Dr. Kamal Hussain would call for the ouster of this or any other government through extra constitutional means. None of his previous activities have ever indicated that.

He has a clean track record. His call for ousting the government obviously is meant through constitutional means. The constitution is written and becomes effective through peoples' mandate. Therefore, if a government fails to govern in terms of managing the economy, law and order, education, health and attending to the inherent right to democratic protest against the misrule, the people have every right to unseat a government through a mass upsurge. That is definitely within the ambit of the constitution. As for "no confidence" in the parliament, we all know what kind of a parliament we have. Is there any democracy within the parliament? I think not. The government had also introduced voting through secret ballot on crucial issues within the parliament. I think, during their past term. Please correct me if I am wrong.

So the parliament exists only to give a seal of 'yes' to its leader's decision.
Farhana Intekhab
One-mail

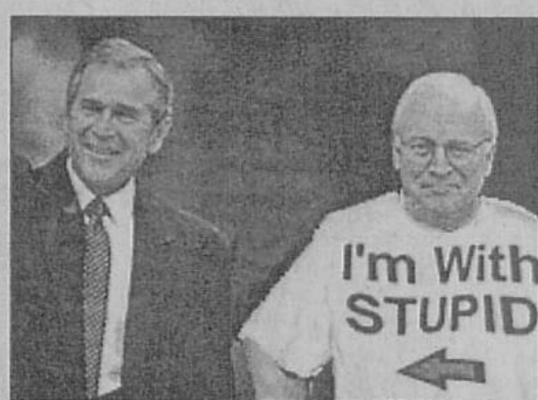
English medium education

To the best of my knowledge, every English medium school still has a few things taught in Bengali. The books used for these classes are similar to those used in Bangla medium schools and allow students to read the writings of famous Bengali writers and poets. Our country is a young one having attained its independence 34 years ago. Documentaries, newspapers, and popular shows are still very much involved in writing and depicting the events leading to our independence and even if English medium school students are not taught these in school they have more than one way of obtaining this knowledge.

Now come to the issue of parents who believe that their children will be at a disadvantage if they did not go to an English medium school. That is merely a matter of opinion. If they can afford what they believe a good education who are we to judge otherwise?

Also, because the parents of these children obtained their education from Bengali medium schools they should consider what they had gained in terms of knowledge and re-think their strategies in educating their offspring. I believe that is what one contributor asked for. Needless to say, the form of education our parents obtained from schools in their youth was of a much better quality. I am still astounded when I hear my father reciting poems of Milton that he read for his SSC. The point is, the method of teaching was much better, the system was much better.

Zeenat Z. Syed
GA, Atlanta



DICK CHENEY

Richard Bruce Cheney, known as Dick Cheney, is currently the 46th Vice-President of the United States. In his high school he was a solid football player as well as an above average student. In the mid 60s he received both his bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Wyoming in political science.

Cheney began his public service career under the Nixon Administration in 1969 and till now played an important role in American politics. Like

every simple person, he always didn't make right decisions. When he was a Congressman he voted against the creation of the US Department of Education, and against Clean Water Act and so on. When George Bush Sr. took office in 1988, Cheney was appointed as the Secretary of Defence and strongly supported the Gulf War. The US troops were deployed in Saudi Kingdom, as a result Bin Laden declared jihad against the West.

During the Clinton Administration, he tried to test his luck in business. He became the chairman and CEO of a company named Halliburton Corp. and made millions leading the massive oil industry construction company. When he was nominated as the Vice-President, he quit Halliburton and accepted \$13.6 million as a going-away gift. For rebuilding Iraq, Halliburton was granted a \$7 billion no-bid contract. From the time he became the Vice-President, Dick Cheney has faced extreme challenges. He saw the World Trade Centre falling down, two bloody wars and natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina, and strongly believes that the casualties in Iraq are in the last stage, but will America remember him as a perfect Vice-President?

Tahsin Hyder, Dharmondi, Dhaka

Violation of labour law

The government has declared two days - holiday effective from 10th September, 2005. It is highly disappointing for us to work in some silent commercial areas, when all of our next door personnel are enjoying a long leave. We are surprised and ask, is there any Ministry of Labour in the country, more precisely, do we have a government? Private companies don't have any sort of human resource policies. There is no limitation or frame for work hours. Several IT firms open up at 9:00am and end at 9:00pm.

Due to the crisis in the job market, the IT professionals are victims of the situation created by software firms. Unfortunately, lack of professionalism, corporate ethics as

well as social responsibility are strongly persistent in this sector. Despite the government's overall friendly policies, the IT firms' inhuman treatment of the professionals can be compared to the treatment of day basis construction labourers.

Poor salary structure, to put it accurately, the salary range in the IT sector is among the lowest in the market without any overtime. In this regard, we, the miserable workers of the IT industry, can expect that the media will probe this matter and ask the government to initiate an action against these unscrupulous IT businessmen who are not only violating the labour laws of the country, but also doing injustice to skilled manpower.

Mushfiqa Nazrin
Dharmondi, Dhaka

Conference on Bangladesh bombings

Recently I attended a conference on "Bangladesh bombings - a conspiracy against its people" which was held in Brady Centre in London and was organised by MAP. The organisers invited the representatives of different political parties from Bangladesh. All of the speakers expressed their anger, anguish and strongly condemned the attacks of 17 August. There were some grief-stricken speeches.

Most of them, without criticising or blaming the ruling party, tried to find a way out so that this is not repeated in future.

Mahmud Hussain
UK

Our image

I read the article positive press for Bangladesh in America by Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed. He wrote Bangladesh, a democracy, is also known for women's empowerment. For the last 15 years, both the nation's Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have been women! I do not know of another country in the world, including the US, which can boast of having women both as the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition at the same time for fifteen years.

In the very context of woman's empowerment he made the comparison with aplomb. But how it represents the reality of our society?

And reportedly, woman MPs for reserved seats had to pay a huge amount of money for getting nominated. They haven't been elected but selected. Is this woman empowerment for the sake of itself or some thing else?

He also wrote Bangladesh isn't a banana republic. His expression isn't without demur considering Bangladesh's slanted position to donors' conditions and prescriptions. He wrote, "Every time I visit Bangladesh I am amazed at how much it has developed into a modern state." Here his tone is self-contented. Does the modern state only include Dhaka and Chittagong? Does he know that munga-affected people borrow at more than one hundred percent interest from moneylenders?

Roney
On e-mail



Rickshaws at night

All over Bangladesh rickshaws use light for driving the vehicle at night, but why this exception in case of the capital city of Dhaka? We are greatly perturbed, disturbed and disappointed as to why DCC, DMP and other authorities concerned are allowing driving of rickshaws at night without any signal light on the front and rear sides of the vehicle?

Is it not a violation of traffic rule? In the darkness of night the movement of rickshaw without

any light or lamp is hardly visible and traceable. And as such innumerable accidents are taking place especially while crossing the road, on road sides, road corners, streets, lanes and by-lanes at an alarming rate causing injuries to the pedestrians as well as rickshaw drivers and passengers. Would the DCC and DMP kindly wake up and take necessary steps without further delay for the safety, and security of the city dwellers, commuters and pedestrians?

O H Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

PHOTO: AFP

PHOTO: AFP