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Protest rally in Pakistan.

Recognising Israel

Refer to Choudhury Hasan's letter titled "Recognising Israel" in the October 3 issue of DS. Pakistan is recognising Israel for the same reason Pakistan does anything else: its own security and military concerns. The Pakistani reasons for recognising Israel are, in a Machiavellian sense, sound but they are not a reward to Israel for its withdrawal. Bangladesh, and other Islamic countries, should not "reward" Israel for creating a ghetto in Gaza. The beleaguered people of Gaza have no access to the world outside their land, economically or physically. They are on Israeli currency. These people are an island in an Israeli ocean. The Palestinian Muslims, Christians and Jews are our brothers and sisters. Like us, they have suffered because of the West's imperialism. Recognising Israel before the Israelis allow the creation of a viable Palestinian state is tantamount to selling Bangladesh's Islamic soul for some American table scraps.

Ridwan Khan, *Hirakata, Japan*



Biman flying low

What is wrong with our national carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines? Lately nothing seems to be working in favour of it. Our airline has been notorious for delays due to technical problems, last minute cancellation of flights and bad landing. Crashes in Sylhet and Chittagong caused colossal loss to the airline. Fortunately, nobody died. I have been in the Bumrungrad hospital recovering from a surgery and I have just heard on the Bangladesh TV, that a Biman aircraft is stranded at Frankfurt airport owing to engine trouble.

May I ask the highest authorities of the government what has gone wrong with the Biman Board. The other day, over BTV again, I heard of the Biman Board's decision of unloading 60% shares to the public and it also decided to look for a strategic partner, in order to operate the airline efficiently. If the Sri Lankan Airlines could find a working partner like Emirates---where is the hitch in our case? It is time we thought of the interest of our country first. Surely there are honest and patriotic Bangladeshis who do not believe in "kickbacks".

Finally, I feel we must maintain a fleet of modern planes for our international routes, and if required permit the private sector airline like GMA or any other company to concentrate on the domestic sector. This will also encourage the private sector to operate more profitably.

I hope my appeal will be considered by the government.
Rasul Nizam
Bangkok

Not a failed state

In recent times, an attempt by the media to project Bangladesh as a failed state to the outer world is being clearly noticed. The media, especially those of some aggressive foreign countries, are spreading subversive and false propaganda against our country and thus posing a massive threat to us as a nation. As a matter of fact, there is no country in the world where terrorism is not prevalent. And frankly speaking, the present government has failed to curb terrorism because of its beating about the bush, instead of dealing with it seriously, irrespective of parties, creed and religion. But who is to bell the cat if the administration itself is involved in mischief? This does not necessarily mean that Bangladesh is a failed state. Rather this chaotic and anarchic situation of the country may be called a "systems failure" which means the discipline of administration has broken down or collapsed; for which the country cannot be held responsible in any way. To proclaim a country as a failed state means denying the very existence and sovereignty of the country concerned.

We cannot deny that terrorist activities are prevalent in Bangladesh. But the terrorism of the US and UK is far more terrible than that of Bangladesh. Those countries, so to speak, themselves are terrorist countries that are conducting terrorist activities upon other countries, committing carnage and killing thousands of innocent people most ruthlessly.

Since the inception of this country as an independent state, the evil foreign powers have been trying heart and soul to find out a plea so as to intrude upon the sovereignty of the country. They are trying to establish a political hegemony and even military hegemony for their own interest. As a part of their overall strategy, they are now attempting to mark our country as 'a failed state' or 'dysfunctional state'. We need to be conscious about this kind of media terrorism right now.

I, on behalf of people, would like to request the international community to speak for us as well as Bangladesh, because our country never supports terrorism.
Ramprashad Banik, JU

Political cancer

While the political rulers wax eloquence over various forms of cancer in the human body (and mind?), they naively overlook the signs of cancerous

growths in the body of politics. Transparency in politics is not encouraged for obvious reasons!

Surely the politicians (all over the world) are not angels! Why this intentional cheating? Even honourable lapses are not condonable in public life, as the long-term negative effects could retard the right type of development. Diplomats lie low for the state; but political deceptions fly high!

Look at the way the academic environment, specially at the university level, has been polluted politically. Now even some of the teachers openly indulge in politics, and in various dubious ways of undesirable extra-curricular activities. Who will regulate the regulators?

The virus is easy to name: vote-bank! The lust for power, and misuse of it---time and again! There is no permanency in politics. What the students, at the final stage of higher education, are learning and unlearning? The effect on character at the late formative stage of youth is permanently damaging and the politicians should not be held, even indirectly, responsible for this umbrella effect on character formation!
AliFZabr, Dhaka

Cult of ad hoc policies

The democratic regimes since 1991 are indulging in a spate of ad hoc policies to gain cheap popularity. The latest is the 2-day weekend holiday (5-day working week).

It is acceptable if the small daily practical details of essential public requirements and daily services are

sorted out. The policy-making offices can go on a 2-day break, but not all the day to day services (operation and maintenance, like the essential utility services which are open 24 hours).

Shift duties, at least six days a week, may be introduced as and when needed; and the staff concerned may be given off days sometime during the week (like night post offices, for example).

Islam is a practical and simplified religion, and the remembrance of the Almighty Lord can go in macro and micro modes, even while performing one's daily mundane duties. A baby won't understand if it finds that he/she is loved in different ways on different days of the week, at different times (the mania for insisting on religious rituals). There should be no extremism in religious practices. We pray to the Creator, and not to the human spiritual leaders; and the latter cannot sit over (divine) judgement.

The philosophy (approach to an issue) of ibadat comes first, before getting lost in the details (as in the forests!). Our political leadership, to whom we millions of citizens are hostages, should reflect on the long-term effects of policies (the nation comes first, then the party or self-survival of politicians).

Our politics are utterly under-developed, and foreigners cannot provide technical assistance. Nowadays there is a tendency to do hair-splitting on religious practices ("I am a better Muslim than you are"). We have too many tutorials and phony guardians! Beware of the dangerous mis: religion and politics (or, politics and

religion).

Is Bangladesh going to become another Palestine or Vietnam in the next few decades? Look at what is happening in Iraq, and the non-Muslim pressures on Iran and other ME countries. OIC has yet to set up beacons for navigation.
A Husnain, Dhaka

Rank cowardice

I draw the attention of the masterblasts behind the August 17 bomb blasts. What exactly do you mean to establish by such a heinous act? To me your actions are just a stunt. As a patriotic citizen of Bangladesh, I am prepared to sacrifice my own life for any real and genuine cause.

You have to be selfless heroes to do something good for the people, not only for your own country but the whole world. Sacrifice in any form is essential for any good cause as we did for our language and independence movements.
Thomas Gomes Bhura
Monipuripara, Dhaka

Nirmal Sen

Better late than never. Thanks to our Honourable Prime Minister for showing the sympathy that the veteran journalist Nirmal Sen deserves.

No one is immune to diseases. But if a patriot and honest man like him has to face financial crisis at this stage of his life, it is certainly tragic.

In our Constitution all basic necessities are guaranteed to the citizens. Article 15 (a) describes the basic needs as the provision of basic necessities of life, including food, cloth, shelter,

education and medical care. Though all citizens are equal before law according to article 27 of Bangladesh Constitution, some citizens must be specially considered, to be cared for by the State for the greater interests of our country and Nirmal Sen is one such person. To know that he went to the extent of taking his own life because of our apathy is a national shame. We see many intellectuals, politicians, writers and journalists taking benefits from the State. They do everything for their patrons. But Nirmal Sen is not in their class. Such people are honoured, only after their death.

Though our prime minister has a very tight schedule, I would request her to pay him a visit.
Habibullah Mizan
University of Dhaka

Some suggestions

I would like to put forward some suggestions to the President of BGMEA. It is constantly making observations and recommendations to the government of Bangladesh and the opposition leaders on this, that and the others things related to good governance and constructive politics. How about some soul searching. Every year the BGMEA organises BATEXPO at Sonargaon Hotel. In the last few years, this has become a big source of trouble for the public for several reasons. To name a few : 1. It compounds the already maddening traffic congestion on the surrounding roads of the hotel. 2. Causes pandemonium all around in the hotel due to hundreds and thousands of people swarming in and out endlessly. 3. Overtax and abuse hotel infrastructure and resource that deny the rights and privileges of other guests and regular patrons who have paid for it. 4. Causes inconvenience created by visits of super VIPs in the name of security.

In the absence of other suitable venues, citizens are willing to put up with it for the greater interest of the country. So long we did. But now we have a fantastic venue i.e. the BANGLADESH-CHINA MOITRY SHAMMELON KENDRA. BGMEA will probably try to justify that foreign buyers lodge in Sonargaon Hotel and it is thus convenient for them. I don't think they would mind travelling a couple of more miles in Dhaka.
Moinul Chowdhury
Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Next election

For fourteen years the country was governed in a democratic system by two female prime ministers, Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina.

We cannot work out who will win the next general election but we may ask---why people must vote for these parties, BNP and AL, and give parliamentary seats to them. Is it just for the sake of democracy or is it our ill fate? It seems the prime minister strongly believes she will be re-elected, but she must start thinking about her team's strengths and weaknesses. In Bangladesh, most of the citizens are from middle and lower classes. They mostly think about food, shelter and clothes. The real situation is, people do not have other alternatives to choose from. The opposition leader Sheikh Hasina had a break but she was unable to utilise it decently as time went by.
Tahsin Hyder
Maple Leaf International School
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

A demented cow!

The other day, I was returning home from Panthapath to Banani by a CNG scooter. As usual, I was confined by the never-ending jam in Manik Mia Avenue. I was shriveled and exhausted by the scorching heat and the flaming sun. It seemed to me that my whole body was scalding as I couldn't move my parched lips because of extreme thirst. My every breath was wasting like a burning candle as I was losing my vigour and endurance. Suddenly, I saw a black, furious and mammoth like cow rushing towards the footpath as it had escaped from its owner's grip. The startled passers-by were moving

The results of the Higher Secondary Certificate Examinations are the turning point in a student's life. With the passage of time, the results are soaring high gradually. This year the country has seen highest number of GPA-5 holders numbering 5509 and overall pass percentage stands at 59.16, as against 47.74 in the previous year. This figure is the highest in the last five years. Definitely it's an optimistic sign.

Politicisation in the name of government aid and help is eating the vitality of our non-government education sector. Politics is for the welfare of the country, it is for the welfare of common people. But the politics of party benefit, individual benefit harming the interest of the nation never can bring good to the nation, and people never expect it. Local pseudo leaders grasp the educational institutions not for promoting the standard of education but for making individual and party gains. The steps taken by the present government in the field of education deserves appreciation in the midst of manifold problems. But the continuity of dominating the local schools and colleges by local touts calls for government intervention. The educated people suffer for the unwise and unreasonable decisions of the committee members who always try to influence the normal and peaceful activities of the educational institutions. The teachers remain passive and helpless before their dominating activities which continue year after year, causing irreparable loss to the stream of education of the country.

Only ten colleges of the cities don't reflect the genuine scene of education. Actually what happens in the famous (?) educational institutions? Students are enrolled in these institutions through hard, tough and sometimes unreasonable admission tests. Only the top successful candidates are enrolled and almost all the students are compelled to receive private coaching in almost all the subjects. In my teaching life, I noticed this tradition was a severe punishment for the students. Suppose, the class breaks at one

away from the direction of the cow. A young man and his girlfriend were strolling and weren't conscious about what was going on and unfortunately, the cow jabbed at the back of him. The cow thrust him near the footpath but he wasn't seriously injured. How could such things still happen in a city?
Faisal Khan
Banani, Dhaka

BCS and parental information

This is on the query of Mr. Ahsan on inclusion of parental information in the application forms of BCS entrance examinations. Mr. Ahsan probably wants to find the political affiliations of the parents of the candidates.
Anika Khan
North South University
Dhaka

Indo-US joint statement

US President George W Bush spoke to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on telephone on Friday and discussed bilateral ties covering the landmark nuclear deal between the two countries.

"Developments in the region, bilateral issues and the Indo-US joint statement (signed by India and the US during Singh's visit to Washington in July this year incorporating the nuclear deal) were reviewed during the ten-minute telephonic talk between Bush and Singh", the Indian Prime Minister's media advisor Sanjaya Baru said in a brief statement last night.

Bush's call to Singh came close on the heels of the US appreciating India's support to the European Union resolution at the International Atomic Energy Agency's meeting in Vienna last week on Iran's controversial nuclear programme.

The call came at a time when the Indian Prime Minister is under strong attack from his government's Leftist allies on India's vote against Iranian nuclear programme. The Left parties also demanded reversal of India's

or two o'clock. After the break students start private coaching with three or four teachers. They wait for them till the late evening. Definitely they cannot digest all the lessons in empty stomach. Students don't have the time to have lunch. Only a few students are seen having junk food in the lunchtime causing serious harm to their stomach. I talked to many students who claimed to have already developed stomach pain and duodenal ulcers. No place for creativity, no place for real learning, just ruminating the subjects with private teachers and that will bring some better GPA for the students.

What about the rural colleges where students' securing pass marks in the public exams matters, let alone securing A or A+ . We take pride in securing A+, we take pride in seeing an increased number of GPA-5 achievers. Do we ever think of the rural and neglected educational institutions and learners who have been deprived of all sorts of educational facilities which they deserve as citizens of the country? These students don't have access to better teachers, private coaching, laboratory facilities, ideal classroom situations etc.

The positive sign this examination bears is that the pass percentage of boys stands at 60.13 and girls 57.84. The girls are not lagging far behind. This is another positive and encouraging outcome of the steps the government has taken to promote female education. The problems plaguing the education sector are certainly very big. Nobody can solve them overnight and the expectation to see radical change will not be reasonable as well.

I do hope the points cited in this writing will sensitise the authorities concerned and help them take pragmatic steps to address these issues. The country belongs to us, similarly the problems also go with us all. Only our collective and patriotic efforts can help overcome these hurdles.
Md. Masum Billah
Material Development Specialist
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Shifting of Ramna Kali Mandir

The protest registered by different Hindu religious organisations over this matter is fully justified.

When the Babri Masjid was demolished, there was a hue and cry in our country because it hurt our religious sensibilities.

Hindu must not be treated as a minority, but as equal citizens having a rightful share in this country.

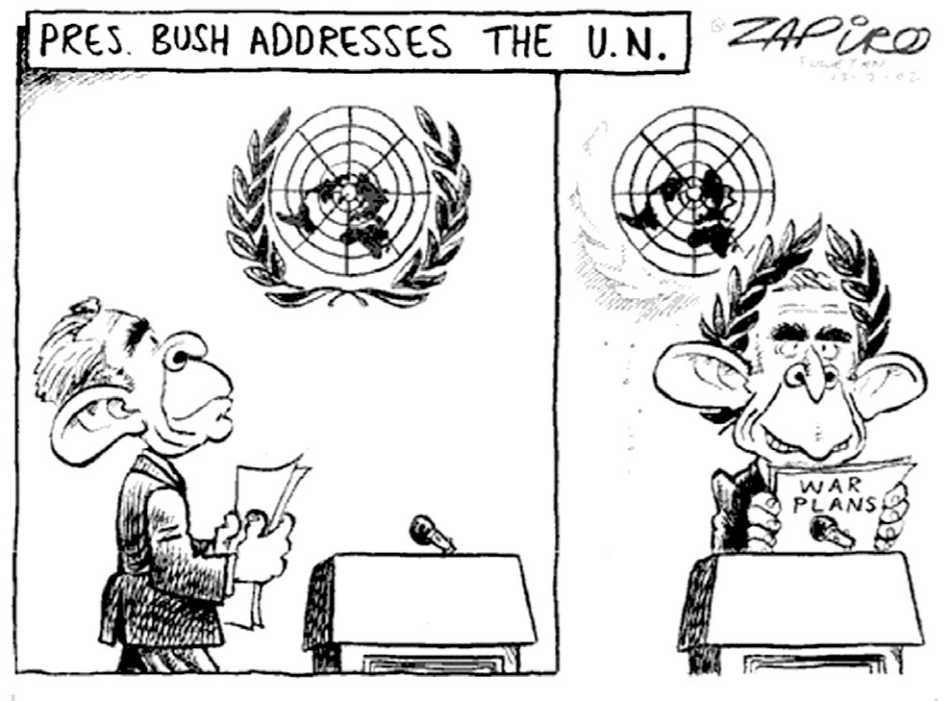
Democracy, secularism and rationalism must be brought to the frontline and religion relegated to the background. The government must not hesitate to deal sternly with troublemakers and mischief-mongers who are grievously injuring the feelings of our Hindu brethren.
Robert Kader
Mehdibagh
Chittagong

Good report

I appreciate the courage shown by The Daily Star reporter for his investigative report, published on September 30, unearthing the corruption that has taken place in recruiting JCD leaders and workers in different government offices.

I would appreciate it even more if a follow-up of this investigation is carried out by you. At the same time, may I also suggest that The Daily Star publish similar figures and statistics regarding corrupt recruitment of BCL students and cadres in government jobs during the tenure of the Awami League. Recruiting unqualified students into highly responsible posts by political parties in power seriously undermines the administrative capability and management quality of the government.
Khairul Hasan
Surrey, UK

While supporting the above demand, I would urge the authorities to urgently complete the task of constructing the railway tracks from Joydevpur to Kamalapur railway station. This will ensure smooth and profitable running of trains between Dhaka and Rajshahi and other northern districts.
Professor M. Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University



UN and USA

The USA manufactures and stockpiles thousands of nuclear bombs, possesses enormous quantities of sophisticated arms and ammunition, war planes, tanks, warships, rockets, missiles, helicopter gunships and maintains a huge army. It dropped atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, invaded Korea, Vietnam, occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, supports Israeli atrocities on the Palestinians, kills millions of people, destroys cities, towns, villages, dictates many countries and installs puppet governments in Asian, European and African continents, and finally dictates the United Nations at its sweet will.

So the US is the most powerful and the only superpower in the world. And, therefore, US

President George Bush sheds crocodile's tears for human rights, freedom, democracy, destruction of nuclear weapons, war on terrorism and what not?

The US calls for building a new world order but in reality it creates a total disorder, chaos, confusion, hatred, economic inconsistencies and despair all over the world.

On the occasion of the 60th session of the UNO, 175 heads of state/government assembled in New York to make the much needed and historic reform of the United Nations and to free the world from the excesses and abuses of the power of the US, but the US sabotaged the 60th session and the mammoth gathering of 175 heads of state/government of the world ended in a fiasco.

"There is no such thing as the UN. There is only the international community, which can be led by the only remaining superpower, which is the United States", said John Bolton who is now the US Ambassador to the UN.

It is imperative that the UN Headquarters is sifted from the US to any other country, say Kuwait in Asia or Slovakia in Europe, to save the world body from the clutches of the United States.

Would the leaders of Russia, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, France, China, Brazil, Germany and Japan kindly wake up and save the world civilisation from US domination?
OH Kabir
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