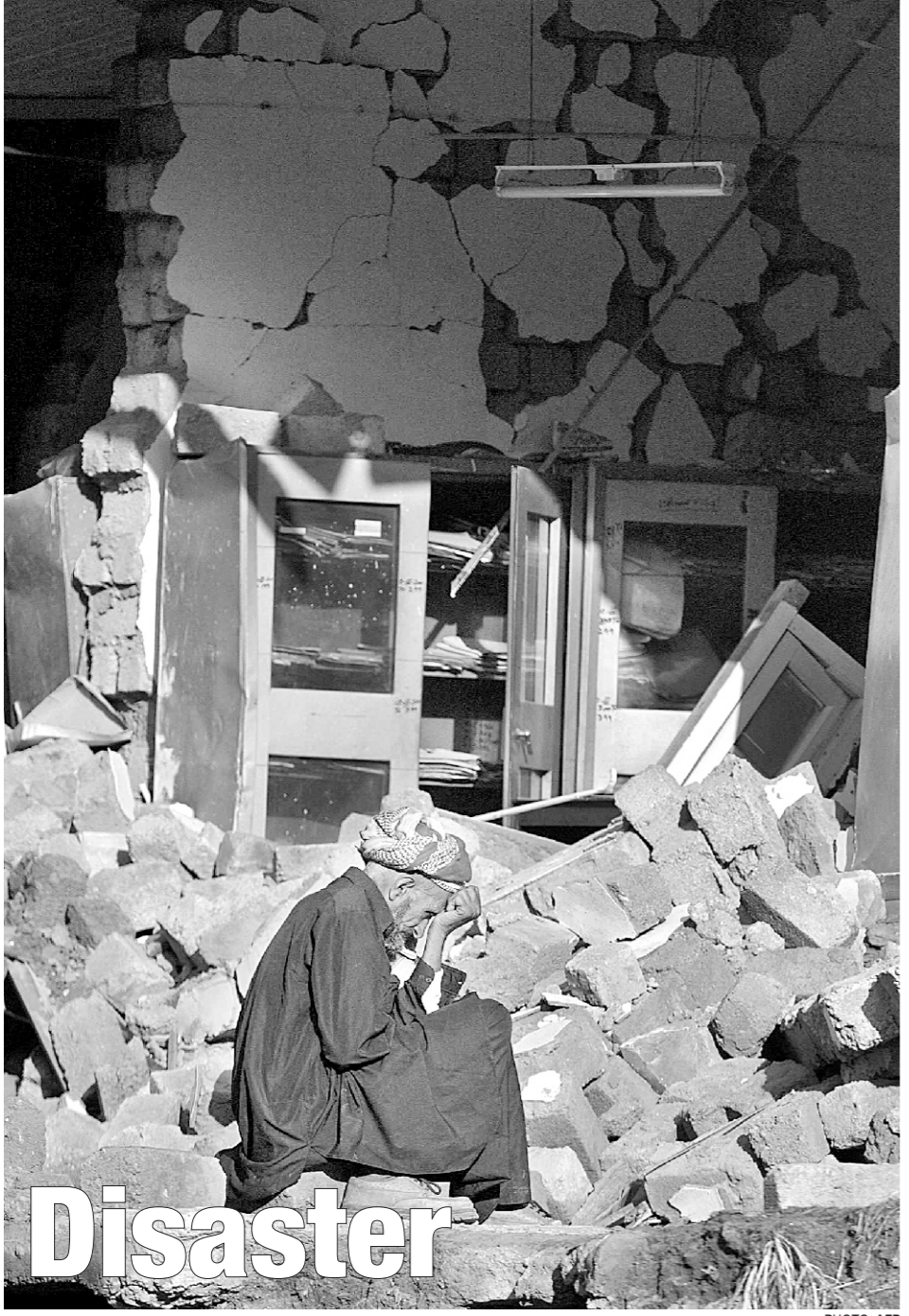


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



# Disaster preparedness

We saw destruction by Tsunami on 26 December last of material and non-material assets in many Asian countries. On 26 December no arrangements were available in the Indian Ocean to know about the Tsunami. The Tsunami is reported to have taken over 200,000 lives in 13 countries of Asia. Over \$13 billion had to be spent for reconstruction and relief for the Tsunami victims. Now we have seen another natural calamity in the form of earthquake in Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. Several aftershocks followed. In most of the affected places, people started to rescue with bare hands the trapped people in the collapsed buildings. A huge number of people are suffering terribly in the Southeast Asian region with very little help coming their way. We should also remain prepared for such a disaster, as Bangladesh is located in an earthquake prone zone. **Sayed Ahmed Mirpur, Dhaka**

find Awami League President Sheikh Hasina-- her 14-party alliance leaders, also Dr Kamal Hossain of Gono Forum and Dr B Chowdhury of Bikalpa Dhara-- sitting on a common platform and speaking in the same tone. They demand reforms in the caretaker government system and appointment of Chief Adviser of the caretaker govt. and Chief Election Commissioner on the basis of consensus of all political parties. They also want to transfer the power of the Ministry of Defence from the elected President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the temporary unelected Chief Adviser of the caretaker govt. They threaten and warn that if their demands are not accepted they would not only boycott but also oppose holding of the scheduled general elections in 2006. But unfortunately they do not suggest any system or procedure, rules or regulations as to how the Chief Adviser and the Chief Election Commissioner would be appointed on the basis of consensus of all political leaders and what is the definition of a political party and a political leader. We are also surprised that Dr Kamal Hossain of Gono Forum and Dr B Chowdhury of Bikalpa Dhara demand dissolution of the alliance government of BNP-Jamaat and formation of a national government for holding the scheduled general elections. They also do not explain to us on the basis of what rules or regulations and constitutional provisions the national government would be formed. They do not tell us as to who would become the prime minister and how the ministers of the national government would be appointed. The ruling BNP-Jamaat coalition is adamant to hold the general elections in 2006 under the caretaker government, as envisaged in our constitution. Are not the Awami League led 14-party alliance, Gono Forum and Bikalpa Dhara Company and BNP-Jamaat coalition moving in three opposite directions in a dark tunnel with no light at the end of it? We would humbly request our top political leaders to kindly sit together, exchange views and opinions, make a correct decision on holding of the uncertain and doubtful scheduled general elections in 2006 and save our country from chaos, confusion and civil disorder. **OH Kabir, Dhaka**

### Telephone problem in Dhanmondi

I am writing on behalf of the residents of Road No 3A, Dhanmondi. It seems the telephone linemen and their superiors have imprisoned us. Our telephone lines go out of order without any reason and remain so for a long time. All our family members keep calling them to fix the line but our cries go unheard. We talk with the linemen's head with such respect as we do with ministers or high level officials knowing that a single mistake of behaviour can prolong the suffering. They roam with such arrogance, which makes us envy them. Our cables get stolen every other month and we have to pay them to make our lines all right. Despite complaining to the higher authorities, none seems to work and as a result of complaining I got my NWD line disconnected last November and am yet to get it back. We have become the subjects of mockery to them. Their behaviour is unimaginable. The government is taking so many steps to reduce people's inconvenience. I think it is high time to take action against those culprits who intentionally put people into trouble for some extra income. Rab can take action against those people and teach them some lessons of decency. **Badal Hasib, Dhanmondi**

### Wireless telephone system

According to a recent advertisement in the press, a couple of local companies have introduced fixed wireless telephone system (to compete with the third-class service offered by the T&T). But several choices are denied to the customers/clients/subscribers. Only desk-top telephone sets are offered, and not portable or mobile sets (like the traditional cordless hand set), for outdoor use within a couple of hundred yards. Also, why buy from the operator company, and not choose a set from the open market? Another quiz is that the pre-paid rate per minute is higher than post-paid payment of bills. Two factors have to be reviewed: Transparency in the services offered by the new companies; and healthy competition in the open market. **Abu Abd, Dhaka**

### Modern culture and modernism

Cultural integration into the social psychology and modernistic ideology has been nowadays the apogee of rational development in the human beings, countenancing the ism that human development is hugely incumbent upon what magnitude of cultural education they have steeped themselves in. Development --- both rationalistic and epistemological--- in human beings could only be expedited, says Roger Scruton in his mind-provoking book "Modern Culture", through cultural education, by which they can patently look at and into their inner lives and get to know their true credentials. It is really very intricate and somewhat uncomprehending to plumb the matrix of our mental constitution, upon which the standard of our moral lives depends--- to put it simply, it lets us know where we stand as human beings! It is a very perilous journey to set out for finding out the harbour of our mind and read it. But, as rationalistic, but biological animals-- specially when we think that we are better than any other animals on the earth--- we do have to ascertain the apparently inexplicable mental condition and existence just to be sure of our status as human beings. Definition of culture is not limited to what we learn and understand from society, rather it is colossal and one needs huge range of intellectual properties to understand it. Once you can fathom out the inexplicable, but ineluctable reality of your life, you acquire that mental enlightenment. You become free of your mind and only then , much-coined pairs of words, "Free will" can play its role in germinating a true sense in you. This sense is culture. The traditional postulation of modernity is just an illusion--- a temporal phase that germinates more woes and pains unnoticed and unbeknown to us. To sum up, we can say, a true modernism is a construction of our ethical life and culture is the pillar that laces that construction with aestheticism. **Sulav Chowdhury London, England.**

respectable position. The other point is that Pakistan does not have a good relationship with India; both countries are spending a huge amount of money on defence. Their armies face each other. So Saarc doesn't appear to have a bright future. **Masood Khan, Chicago, US**

### Insurgents or freedom fighters?

There is news everyday on Iraq in print and electronic media where the Iraqi people, fighting for the liberation of their motherland from Anglo-American usurpation, are described as insurgents. But are they really insurgents? If yes, then who are the freedom fighters? Now we need to judge whether the fighting Iraqis are insurgents based on two questions: a) Which are the authorities that they are fighting against? b) Why and how are they insurgents? Here the authorities they are fighting against are the US led occupation forces, which have no legal validity to conduct any kind of operation in Iraq. The Americans are here as an imperialistic illegal usurper. The Iraqi government made by Bush is nothing but a puppet. The US led illegitimate occupation forces are calling Iraqis insurgents who are fighting against the usurper only to liberate the nation. They cannot have any other objective behind the fighting. It is the holy duty for a nation's sons to liberate it from the occupation forces, as did the Americans in 1770s and Bangladeshis in 1971. Both the Americans and Bangladeshis who fought to liberate their respective nations are still called freedom fighters. Then why are the Iraqis fighting for a noble cause, to free their country of foreign occupation, are not freedom fighters to the press? Isn't it a media propaganda engineered by the US? **Md. Munibur Rahman Lecturer in English Jessore Govt. Mohila College, Jessore**



### Noble Peace Prize

Amidst suspense and criticism, Dr. Mohammad ElBaradei and his agency IAEA were given together the Noble Peace Prize for their role in the campaign for nuclear nonproliferation. He and his organisation were chosen from a list of 199 candidates including founder of our Grameen Bank Dr. Md. Yunus. On hearing the news one understands that the head of IAEA must have been delighted and felt encouraged to pursue more vigorously the cause of nuclear nonproliferation around the world. The decision to give the Nobel Peace Prize to Mohamed ElBaradei has evoked a mixed reaction from both his supporters and critics. Some critics observed that the IAEA chief could not do his best to prevent the countries from developing nuclear arsenals, as it should have been done by his side. In my view, the decision made by Noble peace Prize Committee to honour ElBaradei came to many as a big surprise. **D. Nabi, Dhaka**

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### No government control over LP Gas?

Still most of the people in towns and cities, except some blessed ones having natural gas supply through pipeline, use Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as cooking fuel all over the country. But it seems that the government has no control over the price of it that concerns millions of people. The skyrocketing price of LPG perhaps surpassed the recent unabated price-hike spree of essentials. In August, before the latest increase of fuel price by the government, I bought a cylinder of 12.5kg LPG for Tk. 520 when the actual government rate was Tk. 450 a cylinder. But when the government increased the price to Tk. 475 last month, I along with all other people in Jessore had to buy a cylinder of LPG of 12.5kg for Tk. 580, which was Tk. 105 more than the government rate. More surprisingly, with the onset of Ramadan the price of a 12.5kg LPG cylinder has been raised to Tk. 670 (as on 9 October 2005), which is Tk. 195 (41.05%) more than the government rate. A local dealer informed me that it would be Tk. 700 tomorrow (10.10.05) when a new consignment of LPG would arrive. Then the new price will be Tk. 225 more than the government rate. So when the price of anything is 41.05% more than the actual one, there simply arises the question "Is there any government policy/control over this?" If the government has any control over LPG or has any reason to explain the maddening price hike, it should explain it to the people. **Zakia Sultana Assistant Teacher Patibila government Primary School Chaugachha, Jessore**

### Caretaker or national government?

We are surprised that sometimes we Saarc, an analogy from EU can be drawn for education. Before that it is worth mentioning here that a good position in a job or profession can neither be secured by the language skill in Bangla alone nor in Urdu/Hindi. In the EU, people are encouraged to attain a second EU language skill next to their native language. This is to raise greater integration within EU among other things. Those who believe in Saarc or in regional cooperation or integration, have to learn to respect the languages of other communities in the same region. There are many kids in Bangladesh who have much better skill in Hindi, thanks to the contribution of dish or cable TV, than in English or in German. Therefore in my opinion people in Bangladesh who raise such backtracking abortive arguments should be asked to explain their position under a new Act or Regulation such as 'Anti-Chaos Act' like 'Anti Terror Act', or in a civil term, 'National Harmony Act' or 'Citizens' Code of Conduct Act'. I would personally recommend for the 'Citizens' Code of Conduct Act', defining how citizens should behave or interact in public and in community. **Abdullah Al Mahmud UK**

### 'Joy' and 'Jindabad'

I was reading the letter on 'Joy' vs. 'Jindabad' slogan published on Oct 9, 2005. I would like to comment on some points from the perspective of 'Emotion vs. Reality'. I shall not be using any name for clear reasons known to all in Bangladesh even if not expressed. However, historically speaking the mammoth role and contribution in the independence of Bangladesh by the former heads of two major parties in Bangladesh cannot be ignored. As such trails of theirs, both in philosophy and legacy, remaining with the people cannot be questioned. Plainly speaking, both of them were right in their own rights. However, question certainly could be raised about the elements, whether in power or in the public, who from time to time, cast doubts over these issues. People in Bangladesh keep on using both, 'Joy' and 'Jindabad' terms alongside with no harm. They have embraced them spontaneously. These are now the undelatable legacy of the two mega 'figures' in the political history of Bangladesh. Technically speaking both the terms, 'Joy' and 'Jindabad' are also common in neighbouring India. Even then the two terms become neither 'Indian cousins' nor something having 'Pakistani flavour'. When people in the region hold the spirit of

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# No regulation in bus route permits

In Dhaka metropolis, there are too many buses plying on the main routes, and too little on the side routes. The daily passenger cannot travel in four directions of the city uniformly (as pointed out in DS Oct 5). Both the elected reps and bureaucracy are responsible for nepotism. The daily routine operation and maintenance of various public services are being neglected and left to the clerks, and the officers appear to take advantage of the atmosphere prevailing in the government offices. Both DCC and the transport ministry are lured by mega projects, while the road maintenance and repair works are left to verbal orders. When our politicians (very verbose) would learn to govern in a transparent manner? **Abdali Dhaka**



# PRESS FREEDOM



By now it is known to most of the people of our country that press freedom has been threatened by the BNP-led four party alliance government. As a conscious citizen, I truly believe that media should have the freedom of speech. Now, we all know that TV channels are controlled by the government of our country. BTv can be described as a channel of our ruling party and also I am surprised to see how the ruling party controls other Bangladeshi TV channels. I sometimes ask myself why those channels show the 'News at Ten' from BTv. I do not find any logic in this case. However, I know that some newspapers publish news without fear or favour, though it is not an easy task. I would like to thank all the newspapers which give us a chance to know about the real Bangladesh. **Md Shaiful Alam Emon London South Bank University, UK**