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Life and politics

We are at it again. We all know that we have a problem and are in deep trouble. The whole nation is traumatised by the spate of grenade and bomb attacks and our political stakeholders are doing what they do best, patronising terror by senseless comments and back biting, contributing to promoting a state of lawlessness in the country. Quality of governance is at its lower ebb. We cannot even find a person to head the Ministry of Home! It's still looked after by a state minister! Opposition is at loggerheads with the Party in power. It's total Chaos and is created by our major political parties. They don't follow their own constitution. They preach democracy but none practises it. Leadership is almost like proprietorship. One has succeeded in promoting an Heir, the other is vigorously trying to match. Democratic process has taken a back seat! And what is more damaging is that our "Sushil Samaj" has apparently endorsed these moves. "Mastans " are a very vital ingredient in political success stories. A whole lot of them are in fact lawmakers. Corruption is an accepted social behaviour. Flashy buildings are dotting the Dhaka skylines. Luxury apartments are snapped up in no time, political leaders are travelling in Mercedes & BMWs, Executives are dashing overseas for holidays, Children of influential people and

Islam at stake in Bangladesh!

Islam is a peaceful religion and this is true about the other religions also. No religion allows killing of innocent people. Although 90 per cent of the total population in Bangladesh is Muslim, people of different beliefs and religions are leading their lives peacefully. Unfortunately, the Jamaat-e-Islam (JI) Bangladesh, which opposed the liberation war and committed crimes in the name of religion in 1971 has been given state power with ministries and some special incentives. These Islamic political parties have been preaching Islam as a weapon of capturing power through so called Jihad for a long time. Of them JI Bangladesh is well ahead of other parties. They have captured many educational institutions. A faction of the ruling party is helping them in attaining their objectives. The evidences convince us that the BNP is more responsible than others for giving shelter to the Islamic militants.

The image of Bangladesh as a peace loving nation has been tarnished beyond measure.

Mallik Akram Hossain, The University of Hong Kong

terrorised and bombed to fulfil their lust for power. They have politicised the usually docile Govt functionaries and reduced them to a partisan lot. Law enforcing agencies are reduced to all engulfing corrupt Demons. Hypocrisy achieved as an art form. A leader calls for Hartal , denies daily wage earners the right to earn but he himself drives to office to count his

indeed!), but away from office all the working hours round how can they cope with the situation? How is it possible to get along with their regular departmental activities? No doubt, such a situation is all against the playing of a successful role by the UEOs in implementing the primary education programme. Will the honourable secretary,



An Upazila Education Officer Narail Sadar Narail

Real charity!

Bangladesh is a developing state and its population is huge in terms of land area of the country.

Interestingly, power and money has been going together in this developing nation since 14 August 1947. The political and the military men in power of our country always patronised their trusted individuals initially, later companies and at present the groups, which also include their own private banks and insurance companies.

Golam Ashraf DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka

Are you his lawyer?

I was returning to my home one afternoon (11.10.05) from Dhanmondi to

Gulshan) by an old worn out black cab driven by a shabby poverty-stricken driver when a new microbus hit the cab from behind, but to my utter astonishment, regrettably the micro's bumper was separated and almost collapsed apart. To this the micro-driver became unfairly infuriated. Stopping his car at the middle of a hectic Bijoy Sarani (near Rangs) he tried to drag the driver out of the cab and demanded his license.

Sensing trouble in a chaotic Dhaka road I suggested the enraged driver to report the matter to the nearest traffic sergeant for a solution. The micro pursued us up to Mohakhali, and we found a traffic sergeant there. I insisted to him that it was not the cab's fault. The quick-witted sergeant inspected both the vehicles, thwarted the demand of the micro, and agreed to let the cab go unpunished. At this an embittered middle aged lady, sitting in the luxurious micro, stormed out of her dear vehicle unexpectedly yelled at me, "Are you his (cab driver's) lawyer?" She queried! The smart sergeant then whisked her to the micro and gestured me to leave! I remained flabbergasted and mullied over "who's whose lawyer?"

Tajul Islam Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Traffic Jam & Scholastica

This is in reference to the letter by Ms. Itrat M. Rahman, Management Staff of Scholastica, published in The Daily Star on 12 October 2005. She wrote that as all other schools have no parking zone, then why would people expect Scholastica to have a car parking lot? She has suggested us to think from the Bangladeshi perspective, as all other schools are not providing parking space. But this is totally unexpected from a School like Scholastica because its fees are too high to bear for the parents.

Parents are in some cases paying much more than American & English schools charge. So certainly they do expect some extra facilities from Scholastica for this 'extra' money! Nazmus Saquib Notre Dame College, Dhaka

Ms. Itrat Rahman found it rather convenient to deflect her own school's fault by pointing out that other schools are guilty of not having parking spaces either. Citizens of Dhaka city suffer equally due to jams outside Vigarunnesa, Holy Cross and Sunbeams but that does not mean one has to bring in their names while complaining against Scholastica. Neither can

Scholastica have the opportunity to defend itself simply by stating that

"Others are guilty too" just as a thief cannot excuse himself by saying that there are other thieves around.

Further, Ms. Itrat accuses Mr Anis Rahman of making demands that are only suitable in America or England. I beg to disagree. If you can charge tuition fees that are affordable only by Bangladeshis who live an 'American' or 'English' life (people from Gulshan and Dhanmondi etc.), then you can also build a car park.

Finally, one fails to see how Scholastica manages to invest so much in nice buildings but stops short of building a car park. Was it due to lack of funds? That would be rather hard to believe given the exorbitant tuition fees charged from its students. One wonders what other activities are given priority over building of a basic facility such as parking lot.

Mishal Ahmed University of Dhaka

The Management of Scholastica (October 12) reckons that as the traffic jams near other schools are just as beastly, it's quite alright to have those monstrous jams around their school as well. Well let us hope the ideals and standards they inculcate among the students at Scholastica are driven by more enlightened reasoning. Mizanur Rahman Banani, Dhaka

"Fame Gurukul's wonder boy Qazi Touqeer"

India's number one reality drama show "Fame Gurukul" is slowly coming to its end & at this stage of the competition, it's getting even hotter! This show has also become a household name in Bangladesh today because of one Wonder boy of this show - The style Guru-Qazi Touqeer!

Qazi Toukeer has shone over every one by his talent, his style, his personality and his whole charming persona. The kind of response he is getting

from the public is proof enough of the fact that how starved people are of something which is genuine-- something which is untouched and natural, something which is fair and honest, something which smells of nothing but fragrance of positivism. This is the reason why Qazi is a hit! Qazi represents the generation which is frank and extrovert and stylish! Qazi represents that son who is out to prove himself to his parents his calibre and authenticity of his own convictions, Qazi represents those singers who are not stereotyped but believe in their natural music talent, Qazi represents those people who are extremely pleasant and want to bring pleasure for others. Qazi has a definite style that was not seen for a long time.

On behalf of all of his Bangladeshi fans, I'm wishing all the very best to Qazi.

Nazmus Saquib Notre Dame College, Dhaka

"Failed state", again

According to the Foreign Policy, (July/August 2005) "U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has warned that "ignoring failed states creates problems that sometimes come back to bite us." French President Jacques Chirac has spoken of "the threat that failed states carry for the world's equilibrium." One of the major concerns of the United States has been how to deal with the so-called failed states. In the last century the major concern of the big powers was other big powers but now it seems that their worry is the failing state. Allegedly, the failed states are sources of drugs, illegal migrants, and terrorism and so on to the stable West. But how far the fear of failed states is real or imaginary? And if the fear is real, what are the forces responsible for the state failure? And, what is the role of the major powers in the creation of the "failed states"?

The definition of the "failed state" is still unsatisfactory. Max Weber, the famous German sociologist, defined state as an organisation with monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Therefore, states without such monopoly qualify as a failed state. Outside intervention can be both a symptom of and a trigger for state collapse. A failed state may be subject to involuntary restrictions of its sovereignty, such as political or economic sanctions, the presence of foreign military forces on its soil, or other military constraints, such as a no-fly zone."

Clearly these attributes of a "failed state" are drawn from really existing failed states such as Iraq, Somalia, and Haiti. The list of the top ten failed states also includes (1) Ivory Coast, (2) Democratic Republic of Congo, and (3) Sudan. Haiti is ranked 10 and Iraq as 11. Sadly, Bangladesh ties the 17th position with Burundi.

The list of 60 states is divided and colour-coded according to their risk of failure. The first 20 countries are coded red, followed by orange, and the last 20 are yellow. Pakistan and Nepal are ranked 34th and 35th respectively.

According to the magazine, "The World Bank has identified about 30 "low-income countries under stress," whereas Britain's Department for International Development has named 46 "fragile" states of concern."

The Fund for Peace, an independent research organisation, and the Washington-based Foreign Policy have conducted a global ranking of weak and failing states. "Using 12 social, economic, political, and military indicators, they ranked 60 states in order of their vulnerability to violent internal conflict. The resulting index provides a profile of the new world disorder of the 21st century and demonstrates that the problem of weak and failing states is far more serious than generally thought. About 2 billion people live in insecure states, with varying degrees of vulnerability to widespread civil conflict."

In order for the government to earn even a semblance of credibility it has to act decisively and fairly to fight terrorism before the problem gets out of hand. If political considerations mar decisions as to whether a crime should or should not be investigated that is as hopeless a situation as it gets. The fact that following the recent bombings the law enforcing agencies could make a number of arrests negate the idea of state failure.

The characterisation of Bangladesh as a "failed state" or seeing 2 billion people at risk by the Foreign Policy may be an exaggeration. But sometimes an error on the side of caution is preferable to denial of an ailment. At one level, I worry about not just a failed state but also a failed world but there is no excuse for not setting our own house in order.

Habibul Haque Khondker National University of Singapore

Bomb blasts and extremists

While I was watching BBC news thousands of miles away from home here in London, I was extremely astonished to see a shocking news on the unprecedented scale of terror attacks throughout Bangladesh. In 30 minutes, at least 459 time bombs in 63 districts across the country were blasted. As Lutuzzaman Babor, State Minister for Home, said, "It is not an isolated incident and was done in an organised way with an objective." Well, obviously it was not an incident; it was a well-organised and planned effort by the banned militant group "Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh." This is not the first time it happened in our country as we had seen bombings several times, and yet another incident of five serial bomb blasts at courts took place. Our government should find out the motive behind the serial bomb blasts. In this case it can be said that the government failed to take any action against the elements responsible for the other blasts. The government should track down and prosecute the people involved in such criminal activities.

Meanwhile, the international community has come to know about the Islamic extremist groups and their activities in Bangladesh. So, I would like to draw the attention of our government and ask it to take action against those extremists. Md Shafiqul Alam Emon London South Bank University, UK

Air pollution

Air pollution in Dhaka city has crossed the limits of tolerance.

The matter deserves immediate attention as we are heading for a disaster.

Tredib Majumber Northern University



A letter to the PM

This letter is addressed to the Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh. I am writing this letter in regard to the "Enemy Property Act", otherwise known as the "Vested Property Act". The Enemy Property Act was originally inherited from Pakistan as a continuance of emergency provisions in the post war Bangladesh. The law was later classified as "Vested Property Act "by the Presidential order No. 29 and was adopted in 1974 without the any amendment of the original contents.

Honourable Prime Minister, for your information, under Section 3(b) (i) of Vested Property Act of 1974, property of a deceased Hindu minority can be designated as Vested Property, and consequently can be seized by the government. Furthermore, if a Hindu minority migrates somewhere outside Bangladesh, his, or her property can also be classified as the Enemy Property. Such law is not only biased but also despicable, unconstitutional, and very well goes against the principles of Islam, and democratic values of Bangladesh.

The majority of the Hindu minorities are law abiding Bangladeshi citizens. They are born in Bangladesh, and sing the same national anthem that you and I sing for our beloved motherland. A minority identifies himself as a Bangladeshi, not as Hindu. Their love and attachment with Bangladesh are no less than that of ours. So, I ask you, why tag them as Enemy of the State? In this 21st century, there can be no justification, or decency to keep such an act on our nation's law book.

Only 16% of the Bangladesh population is Hindu minority. In contrast, an astounding 83% of the population is Muslim majority. We, the stronger, must not fail to protect the constitutional rights of the weaker, and the underprivileged. As a self-correcting democratic nation, we must not turn a blind eye to this sort of systematic discrimination against our own citizens.

I appeal to you to revoke the Vested Property Act of 1974, by power vested and entrusted upon you by the citizens of Bangladesh. I ask you to honour the forgotten souls of all races, and religions, who fought magnanimously against the oppressors & the occupiers for the independence of a small country, where citizens can live side by side with social equality, dignity, and justice regardless of race, religion, and gender. Shadabul Mujib Los Angeles, USA

Impending water crisis

We all are aware of global warming. But, are we aware of the fact that in about forty years from now, all our rivers will have very little or no water flow? The Himalayan glaciers that feed some of the great rivers of Asia are depleting at alarming rates. If the present trend continues, then there will be very little flow in our

rivers during dry season. Water sharing contracts with India for sharing water of common rivers would become ineffective, because there may be no water to share.

If the predictions are true, then it is high time that we start taking actions now to face the water crisis. Otherwise, our survival as a

nation will be at stake.

Those interested may find a paper "Millennium 2000 Thirsty Bangladesh" on water crisis that we are likely to face in very near future. In the paper I have tried to point out some of ways to mitigate the crisis. Engr. A. K. M. Nurus Safa One-mail



leaders are sent overseas for higher education and yet we cannot find the tax evaders! The list can go on forever! We have now started selling seats in the parliament almost openly! Have they submitted their Tax Coupons? I doubt. I am just stunned to find that our major Political Parties are not registered! How do they handle funds? They seem to have access to untold amount of Fortune! We have sampled a bit of it during BNP's ongoing grassroots Grand meetings and Very colourful welcoming extravaganza of the Leader of the Opposition's American Daughter-in-law. I am sure both events were quite expensive. But who dares to ask! Dr. Kamal Hossain is one of the authors of the constitution! What about political ethics he is preaching! How have we defined POLITICAL PARTY in our constitution? Can any body please help me understand this? How are we actually ensuring Accountability of Political Parties? Aren't they accountable for the activities they do? It seems they are not. They can call HARTAL, damage Public Properties, Shut down Educational Institutions at will. They can say whatever they like! Mastans are promoted as Leaders! Corrupt Business Tycoons and Ex-Govt elites are lured to become Law Makers! And we have to believe them! All major parties have done it. Why aren't they talking reforming the very basic process "Definition of Political Parties, Functions and accountabilitys." It is our Political Parties, which are to be blamed squarely for this Unfortunate Mess we are in. We are

profits (should I say Loot?) Practice of Democracy is a distant dream now.

It seems two Principal Leaders have agreed to disagree on anything and everything. Rahim Ahmad Munshi Sydney, Australia

OMS & upazila education officers

An Upazila Education Officer (UEO) is the most important official to implement compulsory primary education programme in the field level. Unbearably overburdened and busy with the duties of administration, management, control and supervision of about 200 primary school and at least 500 teaching staffs concerned, a UEO is imposed upon or self bound to engage in various extra departmental activities. Duties of voters' Registration Officer, Returning Officer in UP elections, and Presiding Officer in Parliamentary or Municipality elections and relief Officer during national calamities are mandatory, because these are given the topmost priorities over all other state activities.

But what about the duty of a supervisor of "Open Market Sale" (OMS) of rice programme? Upazila Nirbahi Officers in some upazilas have issued orders giving such duties to the UEOs regarding the OMS Programme that started on October 1. This programme will be running everyday from 9:00am to 4:00pm including holidays for a PSC-recruit first class gazetted officer (Public Servant

Ministry of Primary & Mass Education kindly look in to the matter and convey necessary directives to the Deputy Commissioners and UNOs to at least, spare the Upazila Education Officers from extra departmental activities, except the most important ones like election and disaster management.

Alarming news



The nations must make determined efforts to check the rot, and save mankind from the impending disaster. Rahima Akter Runa Eden University, Dhaka

Recently, a highly sensational news has been published in a Bengalee daily, that the North Pole is melting rapidly. Needless to say that the news is a matter of great concern. It has been reported that the world temperature is increasing day by day. It is known that carbon-dioxide is responsible for increasing temperature and causing "Green House Effect." Carbon-dioxide is increasing due to the rapid growth of industries and the number of vehicles.

