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# Beggars and DMP's role

The present Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner had promised to the city dwellers that the DMP would take appropriate measures to evict beggars from the main thoroughfares of Dhaka. But as a matter of mockery, today the number of beggars, paupers, vagrants and tramps are more than any previous year.

These menacing ill-disposed beggars swarm all the traffic signals, intersections, crossroads and junctions in the city. They tap (knock) the car windows to draw the passengers' attention, extend their hand(s) and beseech for charity (money). If quietly obliged they rush to the second waiting target. If not, they get on one's nerves by pestering till one move or drives ahead.

These beggars are not always handicapped or crippled; some women in their thirties or forties with sickly babies on their laps pretend that they need the charity for the 'poor dozing' babies. As reported, these babies are sometimes drugged, with sedatives to 'display' the feeble state to persuade generous people. Thus these kids are bound to suffer from incurable diseases in the long run or as unemployed youths they will be criminals. In both ways they will be a bane and burden for society and the economy in future. But we hardly realise the penalty that we will eventually pay for them.

Any pedestrian, onlooker, bystander or com-

muter regularly witnesses how expatriates are hassled by beggars but there is none to care and come to the rescue of foreigners. This also severely damages a country's image but we consciously remain indifferent to the plight and the DMP is nonchalant about the annoyance being caused and suffered, and seems least bothered despite the predicament of the citizens and their foreign guests. Here comes the role of the DMP, along with DCC, which can effectively evict these uncouth acts in the recently beautified Dhaka. Beggars, after all, do not augment Dhaka's beauty! The DMP is fully aware of the mess they create on the contrary. In fact, they can pose serious threat to security, as our intelligence agencies seem oblivious of the potential hazards that criminals in disguise may cause. In order to keep our beautiful city hassle-free, graceful, and orderly, steps should be taken to evict 'professional' beggars from all the major and prominent city thoroughfares immediately and rehabilitate the deserving ones. I would draw the attention of the DMP commissioner to this serious problem once again. Our capital, as the prime minister rightly pointed out, is becoming an attractive city; it is our duty to keep it free from public nuisances.

Tajul Islam, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

## Changing Pakistanis

We used to know and interact quite often and freely with the non-Bengali Pakistanis in pre-liberation days. Our next-door neighbour in the Azimpur Colony was a non-Bengalee mohajir family hailing from Patna and Calcutta. We played cricket, football together with the children and freely visited each other's house, without any tension or strained relations. Our encounters with Pakistanis of Non-Bengali origin were numerous. Normal relationship continued to prevail.

Our father, an official of EPWAPDA, an autonomous body constituted in late fifties for development of water and power had many non-Bengali friends and colleagues of Mohajir, Punjabi, Pathan origin. Most of them were retired army officials employed in the autonomous body. All of them were normal human beings with average normal religious activities. Interestingly, I was again lodged in the same hostel room with a Punjabi inter-wing student in Dhaka Medical College in the late sixties. We hardly talked politics although the situation in the national arena was warming up. Our Pakistani classmates were normally active, 'not more than usual' religious fellows. There was not a single bearded student among them. I provided protection to our roommate friend in the tumultuous months of February/ March '71 as he was afraid to venture out alone.

During the liberation war three of our close relatives were killed by the 'Army/Al-Badr/Al-Shams combine'. Two were in the missing list, and third one, a promising surgeon's body was recovered from a culvert in Motijheel area with a mutilated face and battered body. He was picked up in mid-November and brutally killed by the beastly Al-Badr. I was among the few relatives who buried him.

We graduated and plunged into the 'real working world'. In 1977 I was maltreated and harassed by a Pakistani immigration official in Karachi airport while flying back from Amsterdam. A kind lady official of KLM came to my rescue and bailed me out of the situation. I travelled to the Middle-East on employment in early eighties and found me in company with Pakistanis, Indians. I noticed certain qualitative changes in their attitude especially about religion, its practices etc. Most of the Pakistanis would be overtly extra-religious, serious, intolerant, aggressive type. Influence of 'Wahabism' was slowly percolating into the body and the society of Pakistan. The

influence was changing their views, attitudes, mindset, interactions with others with different views and religion. Beards were being sported in increasing numbers, more 'Dawat' for going to the mosque, participation in religious activities etc was offered. The number of such people kept on increasing. Pakistan underwent rapid qualitative changes in mindset and attitude during the regime of Gen. Ziaul Huq, son of a small town Moulvi from Jullundhar district. Now, we find more soldiers and law enforcing agency people with beards in present day Pakistan than united Pakistan days. The same is true for the common mass population, and the smiles have been replaced by 'Jangi-joshi'. In the present Pakistan cricket team five or six players are sporting beard, which was unthinkable only a few years back. Pseudo-religiosity is a harmful addiction. It takes out the humanity from one's soul and body and the empty shell or robot obeys command of the criminal terrorist minded mentors. Alas! Islam, our 'Paigambar', Imams, Sufi saints, all the God's men, propagated, preached humanity, love, tolerance and performance of good deeds.

SN Mamoon Dhaka

## Education

It is education that accompanied man in peregrination to civilisation directing, beckoning and sanctifying. In the inception of query of man's inquisitive mind education was individualistic, later followed by institutionalised dispensation.

Today so many standards in our country have students stratified to a great extent. The matter should be addressed in right earnest.

A Reader One-mail

## Those rankings

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index has been published and has again created a stir. Is the sensation justified on logical grounds?

Firstly, it is logically necessary that, in any ranking, some members should be at the bottom and some at the top - this is the meaning of a ranking.

Secondly - and this is more important - the statement 'Bangladesh is the most corrupt country in the world' says nothing about Bangladesh. To maintain that it states a quality of Bangladesh is to confuse a relation with a quality.

Let me illustrate. 'Everest is the highest mountain in the world' says nothing about Everest. It is not a

quality of Everest that it is the highest mountain in the world. It is a relationship between Everest and other mountains. On the other hand, if I say 'Everest is 29,029 feet high', then I'm stating a quality of the mountain. I'm saying something about Everest, and not about other mountains. In short, the former proposition states a relation; the latter states a quality.

Therefore, the statement 'Bangladesh is the most corrupt country' says nothing about Bangladesh. If we observe that 'Bangladesh is a poor country', or 'Bangladesh is a tropical country', then we are stating its qualities. Unfortunately, we seem to believe that TI's finding that Bangladesh is the most corrupt nation says something about Bangladesh. Nothing could be further from the truth. It says nothing about Bangladesh. Therefore, the entire exercise on the part of TI is a vacuous enterprise.

As one philosopher put it, "The worse your logic, the more interesting the conclusions."

Iftexhar Sayeed Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka

## Intimidation and property rights

Across our cities, a frightening new phenomenon is quietly becoming commonplace. With pitiless disregard for the rule of law, our properties and rights are being snatched from right under our noses through extortion and violence

What is the guarantee that our own house will not be the next target of those powerful people who broke into Mr. Akbar Ali's Gulshan house (reported in newspapers) and threatened him and his family with certain death if they failed to comply with their demands of handing over their property to them? If this can happen to a respectable family man like him, what is there to stop this from happening to any property owner in Bangladesh?

We are passing through difficult times and the overall situation is not at all conducive for property owners in Bangladesh. How can we progress and develop as a sovereign nation state without our citizens being able to exercise their basic human right to own property without persecution and intimidation?

Amer Junaid

Caulfield, AU

## Jail-killing Day

The Daily Star is the most favourite newspaper of mine and obviously I am a regular subscriber of it. I like most of its news, features, articles and editorials. The article of the daily that I like most is the 'News Commentary' by you. When you write some commentary, I read it first without any pause and eyeing on any other news items. Your most recent commentary on "Burying our heads in the sand, living in the world of blaming others" is an example of a bold attempt to let people know the ill characters of our politicians both in the government and the opposition.

However, the news of the 'Jail-killing Day' published on 3 November 2005 did not get much importance. It was a one-column news and was printed at the bottom of the front page on 3 November which I think got very little priority. After reading the small news I went to the editorial page with the hope that the news had been given due attention in the editorial, but alas, it wasn't! The two items on the editorial column were 'Wishing all a glorious Eid' and 'Lackadaisical traffic campaign'. The first one was perfectly all right, but the second item though timely, could come a day before 3 November or later after the Eid holidays, and the 'Jail-killing Day' should have been covered in the editorial.

While the country is being ruled by the people whose predecessors gave immunity to the killers; the history of our liberation war is being distorted frequently; the Bangabandhu Murder Case is not making any progress and many other things against the spirit of liberation war are happening. The people of the country expect due honour for the great sons of this land.

M. Sirajul Islam Molla Green Road, Dhaka

## No government work

"No government work" which has been declared is nothing but a bolt from the blue for the promising unemployed. The parents of the educated students have been panic stricken hearing the pronouncement. They are optimistic that their sorrows will be over one day, if their children get jobs. Many students come from the villages to pursue higher education. They parents have to sell their belongings to make their children educated.

What will the educated do other than jobs? As they have no capital to run a business they will have no way of living unless they get jobs

Roksana Akter Rupgonj, Narayanganj

## Crudemobile culture

A couple came to see us during the

Eid. The husband's mobile phone was ringing every few minutes. I politely suggested to him what he would lose if the mobile were switched off for a while. His defensive reply was vague and not credible. Some minutes later I asked him how he had managed the situation (away from a fixed line telephone) in the earlier years.

The psychology is not difficult to fathom--self-importance through technological gadgets. It is a new and affordable status symbol. A person likes to be the centre of attention. I got a taste of it when last year our son, (out of the university and in a new job, building up his career), gave me a clear hint (I am a civil service pensioner) not to offer him unsolicited advice, and he would like to handle his problems himself. Fine, I thought, as he was my type (DNAY chromosome, as the books say). He got his PC himself while still a student; and also managed to run a second hand car while working part time. Looks like our younger generation has got the entrepreneurship spirit.

Back to our nascent mobile culture. It is the fastest social virus spreading through the society like an epidemic. The growth rate of mobile connection is fantastic, for a fast developing country, spreading, into all age groups; including the students. As for an old fossil like me, I avoided handing incoming telephone calls in the office (too busy), and asked my PA to screen the incoming calls.

The foundation for new culture hazes time to be established, as is also apparent in the fashion and cosmetic industries, where the West is aped without shame or conscience. The old order has to surrender some space to the new. The question is how much (the rate). It is the IT bug, which has reduced time and distance in this world of virtual reality.

Now cheaper fixed wireless telephone nets would swamp the rural areas; while the village mobile owners would rely on solar panels to recharge the batteries. The global village is now a reality, (Bush can penetrate faster into remote regions!).

The same mobile nuisance is on public display outdoors; inside the public transports, and right on the middle of a street young men are hollering to handle emergency calls! Romancing has been digitized; but the output of life is analogue. What is coming next-GE Bangladeshis?

Alfa Ahmad, Dhaka

## Congratulations!

Congratulations to you for your bold commentaries published in DS of the 17th and 21 October 2005. In response to your comment "Answer lies in the mirror and not media" I would like to remind you of our school days when we read a story of a wretched and cruel woman who would look into her magical mirror on the wall of her house and ask "Mirror, Mirror on the wall who is the fairest lady of all?" "The answer inevitably was always the same "YOU, My Lady, the fairest of all." Not only the main political parties but also even those smaller parties would get the same answer from their Mirror and for those who don't have a Mirror, the sycophants will give the same answers.

Now I request you to look into your Mirror and ask where lies the solution to the citizens' demand for their basic requirements of life and security in an INDEPENDENT BANGLADESH. Please do share with us the answer

You get from the Mirror in your wall. The Daily Star does write

# Flood problem

A flood is a natural calamity like an earthquake, 'draught', 'storm,' 'tornado' or 'cyclone'. Of them, the flood is a great threat to us, as it causes a great havoc

to our lives and properties, particularly in villages. Then the villagers do not get fresh foods, medicare and shelter. As a result, the prices of necessary com-

modities go up alarmingly.

However, we must take necessary steps so that our people do not suffer so much during floods.

Sarwar Ali, Dhaka



boldly in a balanced manner against the political system, policy and procedures but it is a "Surprise of all Surprises" that that the elected members of the parties, in power and in opposition, are getting rich while the citizens voting for them continue to receive only promises of a better future and find it difficult to cope with the challenges of a reasonably good life.

It's time for the media to ponder over the issue seriously.

Badrul Islam Uttara, Dhaka

## Religion in politics

This refers to Mr. A. Mahasen's letter, "Secularism in Politics" appearing in this column on Oct. 5 where he first in advising the Awami League to ditch Secularism admired the moral courage of Md. Hanif for his apostasy from his long held belief in secularism and also for his suggestion to his political plank AL to eschew the same. Mr. Hanif, a veteran Awami leaguer with the dossier of mayoral stint just preceding the incumbent, is no peer that his suggestion would be making a sway in his favour. Neither it would cause any further dent in whatever the least of secularism that the AL or other progressive parties in Bangladesh still religiously foster and practise. By this time he has come to taste the same as few discussions recently held in the capital glorified secularism and observed that in the

absence of communal harmony as fallout of deletion of secularism, the nation's progress and image will continue to suffer. Mr. Hanif sensing to be cornered in AL's Dhaka politics just before the next general election raised a sensitive but settled issue as a claptrap for the opposite camp. He has already received attention from the mouthpieces of the Islam-salvation parties.

Secularism is one of the most glorious ideals which this nation was born with and proud of having had it enshrined in the constitution, and people of this nation until 1975 witnessed no clash between secularism and religion in particular of the Muslims who are the majority, as the people knew/know that religion is a personal matter and has nothing to do with the State (functions). There was no instance that secularism had affected any individual's religious rights or rites, neither had it interfered in the dispensation of State curricula. The religion is a divine aspect and an individual will face his divinity to have his retribution on count of what he leads his life like, whether according to the precepts of the scriptures and observes his religious rites in personal life or not. The State's duty is to safeguard the religious rights equally for citizens of every faith without any prejudice. And that spontaneously breeds peace and harmony among the

people of different faiths as it also allows them to feel and find (themselves) equal before the State. And that even let those of the minority feel belonging to the nation state equally as those of the majority and thus brotherly relations, fellow feeling and peaceful co-existence grow and get rooted among them and hatred and mistrust to one another dies out. Those are the fruits of secularism though its perspective is much wider in national aspects and humanity.

As we know every man is born with equal rights. And being born on the same land under the same sun why should the State need to divide ourselves as majority and minority, and with religion of the majority as the only religion of the State, why should we let the minority feel discriminated, and like aliens living in their own homeland with fear and insecurity to their life and property? But the die was already cast by late President Ziaur Rahman by deleting secularism from the constitution, and the last nail was put by HM Ershad, another military ruler, by incorporating Islam as the State religion. In fact since then the image of Bangladesh as a nation of sterling communal harmony has been on the wane. What now persists is in words of our leaders in office. May I ask a naive question, "Did the nation leap forward to prosperity or its people changed from worse to better because of Islam as a state religion?"

Still we have teeming millions under grinding poverty, uneducated, unclothed, unemployed and half fed. Dishonesty, moral decadence and corruption have eaten into the vitals of the whole nation and the nation won the deserved rank "most corrupt country" five times in a row. There is no silver lining that religion pursued by the State will shortly change people's inveterate characteristics of lust, greed to mint money by any means.

Mr. Mahasen, however, rightly said a religion (any religion) is more a medium than a message. So every religion as it upholds truth, tolerance and humanity paves the way for one medium to live and let live. His other views on development, on what is retarding our development and on the fossilized political leaders need to be reckoned with as abiding tips.

A.H. Dewan One-mail

# Saarc: Road to prosperity

With much interest I have gone through the EDITOR'S NOTE by you which was published in the informative special supplement of The Daily Star (dt.12/11/2005) on the occasion of the 13<sup>th</sup> Saarc Summit under the title "Saarc: Why neglect it--when we have no alternative."

True, we should take advantage of the Saarc spirit for strengthening regional cooperation and understanding.

The two positive developments as outcome of Saarc are: (i) Significant development in the relationship between India and Pakistan (ii) Development towards strengthening regional grouping to promote economic activities among the Saarc member states. We are confident that if Saarc strategies were implemented successfully within the next couple of years, the Saarc nations would find themselves in a better position to achieving peace, progress, and prosperity.

Professor Zahidul Haque Dhaka

