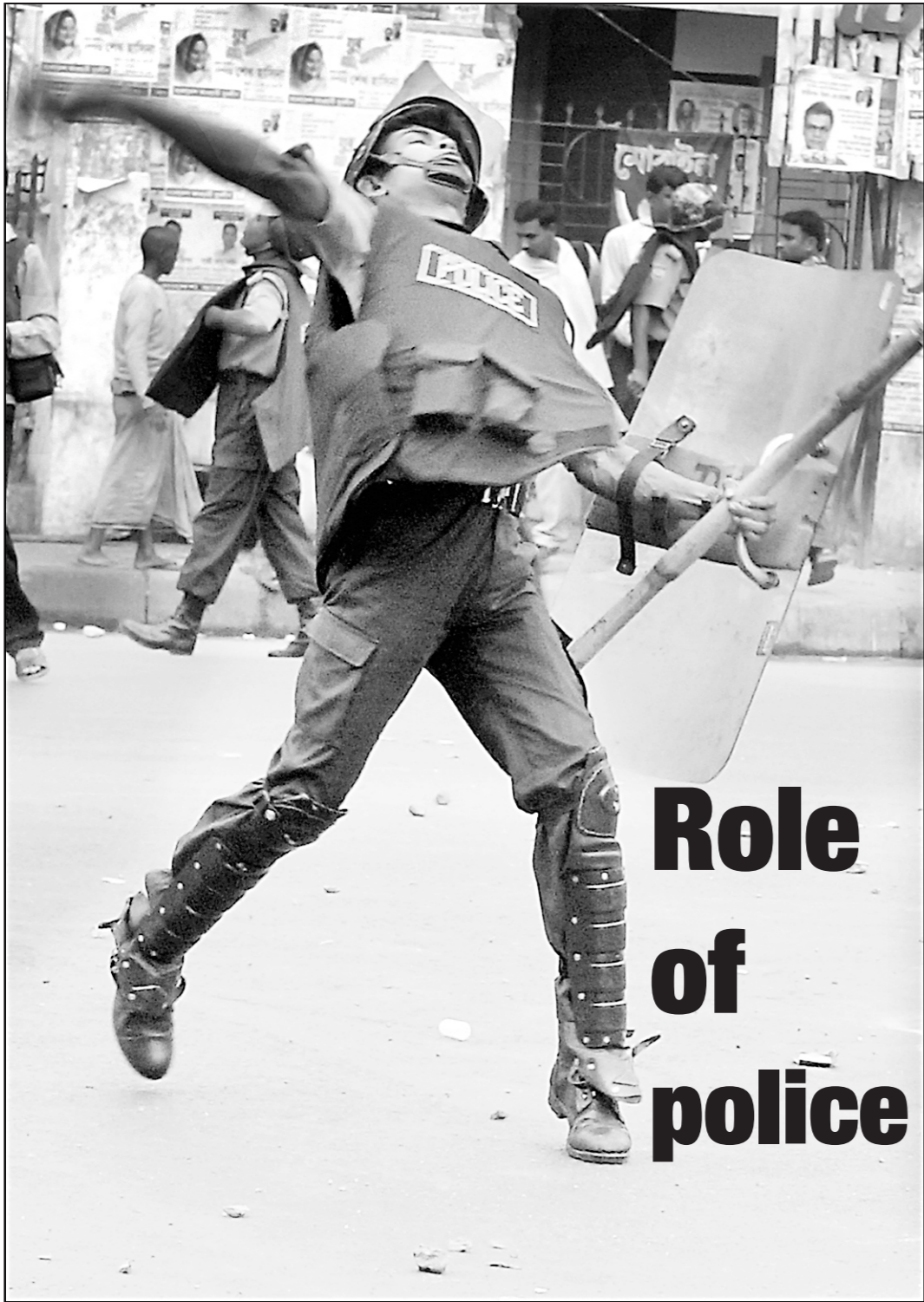


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Role of police

PHOTO: AFP

Police department is the first and most important law enforcement authority, which enforces law in society in the interest of people in general. That is, their duty is to keep society free from any sort of violence. In a growing democratic country like Bangladesh, police should help the development process of democracy. Therefore they have to work independently and impartially.

In the context of Bangladesh, the situation is just opposite. Here police have been politicised, which is indeed a dangerous proposition.

Abu Bakar
Rupnagar, Mirpur, Dhaka

Bangladesh became independent in 1971 with the dream of establishing DEMOCRACY in every sphere of the state. We dream of such a state where we would live like free citizens and would express our opinion without any fear.

But, after three decades and a half of our independence, we, the new generation, find Bangladesh a police state in the guise of democracy.

Md. Shohel Khan
West Sanarpar, Demra, Dhaka

A valuable fish

Hilsha is our national fish and by exporting it we earn a big amount of foreign currency. So measures must be adopted to stop catching of small hilsha known as jatka.

Mehedi Hassan



Nepalese

speak

After weeks of popular protests, the Nepalese monarch collected all his garts and tried to dramatise the situation by calling the seven party alliance to come forward with a candidate for premiership.

It is noteworthy that he had made this appeal before also when the general people had for some months accepted his move. He had called the general people to list their name for premiership, and of course people had responded. But is the monarch so foolish to give such a lacking-in-all-sorts type of address when people are dying on the streets asking him to get

lost! The call could have been heard properly if he had spoken earlier, but the streets are too noisy now and people are too conscious of their fate under his rule.

The political parties and the general mass dismissed his call for talks branding them as 'his tactics to divert the people's sentiment from him to the parties.'

All credit to the popular movement, and my countrymen. We took time, but it is never too late for us. If it is getting late, it is for the monarch to step down.

Umesh Gautam, BUET



PHOTO: AFP

Indian TV channels

In my view, the call for banning Indian TV channels (Letter, April 24) is counterproductive. I was struck by the use of the phrase "to save our children from intrusion of foreign culture and ideas" in particular. Such sentiments are more at home in authoritarian societies and not in a liberal democracy. I do agree that Indian TV channels are peddling trash as culture. However, the cultural upbringing of children is the responsibility of the parents and not the state.

We should not adopt national policies that absolve the parents of their responsibilities. It is the duty of the parents to shelter their kids from harmful influence. On the other hand, some parents may view Bollywood as the epitome of cultural advancement and want their kids to imitate that particular way of life. Call me a libertarian but we should not restrict the rights of the latter group by imposing any form of state sponsored censorship.

One has to ask the question, when it comes to entertainment why such prevalence and popularity of the purrifer? Is it because of the restrictive nature of our society that leads to individuals seeking relief through means that are essentially vulgar? It certainly is symptomatic of something troubling deep within the collective psyche of the society. Merely treating the outward signs (such as appetite for Bollywood trash) by means of state sponsored censorship would result in self-denial.

We do not need an authoritarian nanny state watching us while we watch the idiot box.

Yahya

Onemail

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) is in desperate need of 330 million dollars to buy necessary fuel to run the country for the next two months. For that BPC is literally begging both Janata and Agrani Bank to lend them the required dollars but both banks are reluctant to comply with BPC's request on the plea that they don't have the required foreign currency in their reserves. BPC assured both the banks that it would pay them in local currency but that too is not working. It is worth mentioning here that most of the nationalised banks owe lots of money to BPC and hence they are cautious to lend money to it. In this respect it is not actually the fault of BPC that it is incurring a huge loss. It is the wrong policy of the government that is compelling BPC to lose huge amounts of money. The government in order to woo the poor and a section of people of the country instructed BPC to sell all types of petroleum products at a much lower cost than their actual prices.

And, as a result, BPC is suffering such huge losses. In order to offset the loss the government is contemplating hiking prices of petroleum products but are not sure when to do that. Because the much-vaunted election is round

the corner and the government must not do something that upsets the sentiment of the people. What a crazy idea! When prices of everything can go up in this country without any logical explanation why not petroleum products! It is high time that government fixes the prices of all petroleum products in par with the international market in order to save BPC from suffering colossal losses. Furthermore, as soon as the news of increase of prices will reach the people involved in this business, they will raise the prices even before the authorities do it.

Furthermore, this will also stop smuggling of gasoline to other neighbouring countries taking advantage of our cheap prices.

Humayun Hyder
Zikatola, Dhaka

Cell phone

As the use of mobile phone increases, I am afraid people are developing the bad habit of telling lies. People easily mislead others over mobile phone regarding his/her whereabouts and sometimes pretend to be busy while actually they are not.

Among many bad practices, this is another one we are experiencing due to emergence of this particular technology. Discarding cell phone is not definitely the right idea, however, we should try to avoid developing bad habits.

Bulu Ahmed

One-mail

Preserving historically important sites

We have miserably failed to preserve our heritage. I would like to mention the following three cases which should have been preserved for the sake of posterity:

- The Arts Faculty Building and adjoining areas including the famous Amtala and Beltala from where the language movement originated and gained momentum;
- Hotel Shahbagh The first standard hotel of Dhaka has been converted into PG hospital. In every city the oldest hotel is a sign of the past and is valued much.
- Bangabandhu National Stadium was built to host the first cricket Test match between India and Pakistan in 1955. This stadium has immense historical value.

Tarun Ali

Dhaka

Police and politicians

I am a reader of your daily. The editorial, the comments on different issues and the pictures that are published in this paper are my only source for getting news, other than the TV channels.

We, the common citizens, are now worried about the political situation. Do these politicians really care for their people? They care for their "party men" first, and then the "countrymen".

I feel sorry for the members of police. For a

long time the impression given by our politicians about this police force is - they are bad, so throw stones at them! They are not honest, they are an oppressive force. Time and again the politicians have portrayed the police not as custodians, but as enemies of the people.

I earnestly request the politicians, the journalists and all others concerned to take steps to promote the idea that police are here to help us. This education is a must now in this chaotic modern world.

Yes! Those policemen who misused their power in Chittagong committed an unpardonable crime. But this is not desirable in any democratic society.

Areader

Hizab

I think the time has come to educate the politicians to have tolerance, to listen to others' opinions, and to show respect.

I am worried mostly about the lack of respect. Respect for the country, respect for institution, respect for the system.

When people comment on "hizab" they comment with disrespect. It is totally a personal matter.

I watched the television programme where the issue of "hizab" was taken up. Muslim women have been instructed to cover their body and head. As Muslim women, we are expected to follow this religious instruction.

Lovely Patwary

Purana Paltan, Dhaka

Pollution in residential areas

Air and noise pollution has increased tremendously in the residential areas in recent times. Every new six storey building has lift and generator and as soon as there is power outage, which occurs a few times a day, all generators start in unison. Within a few minutes, even before we can close the windows, the whole area becomes smoke filled and smelly from the noxious fumes and noise. Within a few minutes the streets become filled with smoke. This is a health hazard for the poor caused by the rich and wealthy.

Will the sleeping ministry of environment or the Dhaka City Corporation do anything about it?

Acitizen

Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Building code

In view of the recent building crash and passing of a bill in the parliament, it is imperative that we come up with a constructive building code that ensures the well being of the public.

We can also study some of the international building codes and try to implement those in our own context.

Choudhury Hasan

One-mail

A laudable enterprise

"Maroof Sharmeen Smriti Sangshad" -- a signboard can be seen at Jatramora near Kanchpur intersection. It is located at Ruggonj in Narayanganj. Anybody can see it sitting in the bus as it is close to the Dhaka Sylhet highway. But nobody knows how many humanitarian activities are going on through the Smriti Sangshad. The founder of the Sangshad is a local philanthropist. He has established a high school and a public library. In the meantime, he has introduced scholarship for the poor and talented students of the primary schools, madrassahs and high schools. As a result, the students are getting inspiration and they are trying hard to get scholarship.

The examples set by him are worth emulating.

Afroza Akter Riba

Rokeya Hall, Dhaka University

Myth about BNP

Every myth about the BNP is exploding. It has failed to take the responsibility of leading the country along the path of democracy.

That is a failure for our political system as a whole.

Dr. Ujjwal

Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital, Dhaka

New kid on the block

Bangladesh politics will never surprise us. Now we have a new kid on the block. This young man seems to be tired of the life in the States. Why bother! Just move to Bangladesh and the kid can have a very lavish life!

Shabbir Choudhury

Stockholm, Sweden

Kansat killings

The way the police put down the people's united movement at Kansat, which left as many as twenty people killed, shows that the government cares little about the lives of its citizens. The people of the village stood up to press a rational demand, namely the uninterrupted supply of electricity. Instead, they were brutally persecuted, thrown out of their houses and killed like animals. Is it the way a democratic state handles a delicate situation?

In other words, it seems that the state is still run in a primitive way. At least judging by the action of the police force, we cannot but conclude that these so-called law enforcers are still acting as their counterparts did during the colonial times.

Since the creation of Rab, the country has witnessed many extra judicial killings.

One wonders if the country is heading for a situation when the civil laws will become secondary things. It seems that the government is more interested in using its repressive organs to keep the people under control. Is our country turning into a police state?

Md. Zabeed Wali

Khulshi, Chittagong

CHERNOBYL TRAGEDY: 20 YEARS AFTER

Twenty years have passed since the accident occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. It is known as, till date, the most horrible tragedy in the history of nuclear power. The recent terrible picture of the surrounding areas after two decades demonstrates how severe the incident was. Radioactive pollution affected huge areas of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. About 60% of the radioactive fallout landed in Belarus. The accident discharged 500 times the amount of radioactive material and the disaster is ten times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, resulting in the evacuation and resettlement of over 330,000 people. In fact, what happened is beyond our comprehension. The tragedy occurred in 1986, while a special test was being conducted in the No. 4 reactor. The explosion destroyed most of the building housing the reactor. Safety regulations were neglected during the test and the reactor had structural faults. Both

in human terms and economically, the worth of the Chernobyl catastrophe was devastating.

A U.N. report in autumn last year said about 60 fatalities were confirmed as a result of the accident and an estimated 3,940 people will die in the coming years. But Ukraine and other affected countries condemned the report as underestimating the true toll. The nuclear plant accident in Chernobyl is, however, not the only one in history. On March 28, 1979 in America a nuclear power plant located at "Three Mile Island" suffered a core meltdown and on October 10, 1957 the graphite core of a British nuclear reactor at Windscale, Cumbria, caught fire, releasing substantial amounts of radioactive contamination into the surrounding area (known as Windscale fire). In Argentina, there was a nuclear accident on September 23, 1983. Today, Japan is producing more than 30% of its electric power from nuclear power plants and it has become the third largest nuclear



power nation in terms of civilian powerplants.

The accidents that occurred in the past in the superpower (old and new) states teach us that the

nuclear plant is not safe at all. Even terrorists are trying to possess nuclear arsenal for subversive purposes.

People depend on fossil fuel

(petroleum oils) by and large for energy. Recently, the oil price has soared up to \$75 per barrel in the global oil market. Amid stubbornly high oil and gas prices and

growing environmental concerns (global warming), the developed countries (such as USA, UK, Japan, Germany, Australia) and developing countries (such as

China, India) are looking for alternative sources of energy.

Following the accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, nuclear power generation declined abruptly. However, there has been growing interest recently in nuclear energy due to the soaring oil and gas prices, oil crisis, high oil demand of the energy-hungry countries (China, India, etc.) and negligible emission of greenhouse gas. Many countries are active in developing nuclear power. The Japanese government is now in the final stage of drawing up its "New National Energy Strategy", which will call for, among other things, promotion of nuclear energy, as well as reduction in the nation's oil dependency rate to 40% or less by 2030.

But the contemporary technology for producing energy is, nonetheless, debatable because of the problem of nuclear waste disposal, grave radioactive contamination from accident and last, but not the least, the possibilities of nuclear proliferation for arse-

nals (some countries such as India, Pakistan, Israel already having it and some countries trying to possess it such as North Korea and Iran).

With such growing concerns over nuclear power, the assertion made by Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev is remarkable. He said that the nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl 20 years ago this month, even more than my launch of perestroika, was perhaps the real cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union five years later.

The Chernobyl catastrophe reminds us that we should not forget the horrible lessons taught to the world in 1986. We should do everything to make all nuclear facilities safe and secure. We should also start seriously working on the production of the alternative sources of energy. The fact that world leaders now increasingly talk about this imperative suggests that the lesson of Chernobyl is finally being understood.

M. Emdadul Hoque
Saitama University, Japan