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## Press freedom trampled



I was horrified when I read about the looting of thousands of Prothom Alo copies in different parts of the country.

After I heard the news, I began to think how limited our freedom of speech is. Newspaper is an effective tool of communication and a medium that strongly exercises freedom of speech. But alas! Seeing this kind of malicious looting and burning of newspapers (and that also for just one person), I pity the concern for freedom of speech among some politicians. I cannot stop myself from quoting what a JP leader at Bogra commented about the matter: "Whether Mr. Ershad pays taxes is not Prothom Alo's concern. If it prints such features again, the newspaper will not be allowed to enter the town." What a pity!

M H Haider

Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Patriotism and Free thinking

Mr. Mahmudur Rahman's blatant demonstration of 'power', arrogance and 'monopoly of patriotism' only points out how vulnerable our society is in terms of freethinking, free speech and intellectual exercise. I quote here from Bertrand Russell on free-thinking "What makes a Free Thinker is not his beliefs, but the way in which he holds them. If he holds them because his elders told him they were true when he was young, or if he holds them because if he did not he would be unhappy, his thought is not free; but if he holds them because, after careful thought, he finds a balance of evidence in their favour, then his thought is free, however odd his conclusions may seem". - Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Free Thought".

Mr. Rahman, CPD, TIB and other think tanks are no-less patriotic than yourself or your fellow colleagues in the government. If complacency and denial are yardsticks of 'patriotism', yes, you are the champion. Truth prevailed. So, Mr. Rahman, we will judge your patriotism by your ability to accept the truth, and courage to call a spade a spade. Debapriya, with whom my acquaintance goes a few decades back, need not prove his patriotism. An honest, fair and neutral person, as he is, defied many offers to live abroad. He chose Bangladesh, his beloved motherland, as you call her too.

Others who you have taken to court need not prove their patriotism to you. The nation has tested them time and again, from the days you were a small child.

Chanchal Khan

Fellow, University of Melbourne

Melbourne, Australia

## Anti-crime drive

At present, the law and order situation is not good. One hotel owner, who had partnership business with many, was shot dead at his office-room. That incident has proved that the killers are not really scared of Rab or other crack forces formed to combat crime.

Attempts were also made to contain crime through adopting extreme measures or launching special drives. But the result has not been satisfactory. The criminals come back with greater force once the grip of law is slackened a bit.

People know that many cases are lying pending with the police. The progress that investigators have made to resolve some sensational cases has been extremely slow.

Every political party has a student organisation. It is the tradition of our big political parties. So the Jamaat also has its student wing. They recruited people who were on the wrong side of our liberation war.

The other political parties in the country are responsible for their rise. It is Bangabandhu who pardoned all the raskars immediately after the country became independent.

Sumon dutta, On e-mail

## "Terror currency"

I think it is time for the Muslim world to wage a jihad with the US dollar as their weapon. You do not have to buy a single gun or bomb or stop any oil flow. It can be business as usual, but not using the dollar. Just trade goods and services in exchange of euro or gold. A chain letter to all Muslims and Arabs to boycott dollar until justice prevails should start it. Arab TVs can broadcast this message to all Arabs and Muslims. It will be good if the gov-

## Pesticides in soft drinks?

In the wake of discovery of dangerous level of pesticide traces in some soft drinks, several state governments of India have banned them. The proof appears so convincing that the multinational soft drink companies refrained from their usual rhetoric. From news and discussions of different Indian electronic media, it appears that formulation of some drinks marketed in the U.S. and other developed countries differ significantly from those in other countries. Traces of toxic items like Malathion, DDT have been detected in the drinks available in India.

Obviously, such hazardous materials are not there in the soft drinks in devel-

oped countries. In the international business circle Bangladesh is very much bracketed with India. Shouldn't Bangladesh authorities go for a thorough investigation to find out what is going on?

Every child and many adults in Bangladesh are fond of soft drinks. We should know how good are those to our future and present generations. The government of Bangladesh should immediately look into the matter. Experts and the media may play a major role in this respect.

M. Sanaul Haq

Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

ernments join in, but what is important is that the public should be aware that they could do something to help their brothers and sisters who are being massacred. A people numbering one-billion-plus can, by acting in unison, create an impact in a week.

The idea is not to hurt anybody; it is just not to contribute to the strength of the terror currency of our times, the dollar.

Bob, United Kingdom

## Wastage and corruption

In the past, I noticed the good work your newspaper did through bringing to light some important issues and problems. Due to that exposure several issues have been examined critically. For example, issues like the search for and capture of Bangla Bhai and excessive spending of public money by government officials have been well covered by DS.

Maybe you can do the same for the huge wastage of resources when roads are purposely built in the country during the monsoon.

I have heard from several sources that roads are constructed during the rainy season so that they don't last long and so that those contractors and government agencies keep getting more money from the donor agencies or whatever sources. I have noticed that during the winter months there is no construction or repair of roads. But as the rains started we saw roads being constructed and repaired. Additionally, I have heard that the main ingredient that is used to keep roads strong is not used here in Bangladesh.

I would greatly appreciate if you kindly run some reports on this

important issue.

Tanjina Quazi

On e-mail

## A favourite book...

When I was 18 years old once I went to visit one of my kith and kin in his house in a remote village. After passing some days there, on the day of returning I was waiting at the railway station for the train. The train was a little bit late on that day. However, I was wandering around the platform. After a while I saw a man on the platform with a book in his hand. As I am a book-worm I thought that reading a book would help me pass this boring time. I went to that man and requested him to lend me the book. The man treated me very heartily and gave me the book for reading. I sat on a tool on the platform and started reading the book.

After reading some of the pages I felt that it was a superb book. I was turning page after page and was praying in my mind that the train did not come. But after a while the train arrived in the station and I had to return the book to its owner and felt immensely sorry that I could not finish it. During the train journey I was regretting that. After returning to my hometown, I visited every bookstore but failed to find a copy of that book.

After 10 years, at the home of one of my friends I found that book again. I became so much excited that I instantly started reading the book and this time I started reading it from the first page again. But alas! I quite surprisingly observed that the same book did not seem to me so good on this occasion, which had given me immense pleasure once and which I had been looking for so eagerly. After reading the first few pages I just abandoned it.



Now in 2006, we have no border - as we see in Europe - no border among

the EU countries. But we are suffering from a 50-year old border prob-

lem with India. The two neighbours should address the issue in the interest of

the peoples in the region.

M. Islam, Leiden, NLD

This story of Bonophul (Bolaichand Mukherjee) pinpointed the natural evolution of human mind in course of time. Many things in life which a man might have cherished a few years back may not attract him any more. Thus we can recall that famous quote again, "Human mind scatters its interest as though made of thistle-down and every wind scatters and moves it."

Kamrul Hasan, BUET

## Who should I vote for?

Who should I vote for? A question that I have been asking myself for the last few months. When most of the people in the country are very much concerned, whether there will be an election at all, I am thinking if there is an election who should I vote for? From the very inner core of my heart I am feeling that my beloved motherland is in a position where she has very little opportunity to untie her buckle of captivity. In the next election we will be observing the faces that we have been watching for the last 35 years. Everyone is known to us and everyone has ruled us from time to time in those 35 years. What we have got from them? I do not want to explain that. However, I believe most of us today are looking for someone, who has never ruled us before and who can really give us the service we deserve. A true representative of the citizens of this great country. A leader who does not hide him/herself from the fellow citizens. A leader who talks to his/her people and tells them about his/her plan. A leader who is capable of seeing the country's future before anyone sees it. A leader, who designs strategies and shows his/her people how to implement

them. A leader who dreams to live for the country and for the people. We know we have no other option but to elect our leader through election. But the question is whom should we choose for the next five years? Politicians have divided themselves into two parts in the name of alliance. And no one needs to be an expert to say that our dream leader does not belong to any of these two alliances. Thus, the question is what should we do? Where should we go? How can we find a person who can give us a system, where no single person will be more powerful than others? How can we get a system, where accountability will be the first rule of governance? I know no one can give answers to these questions. If I say that on the Election Day that I will go to the polling booth and I will place my vote by closing my eyes, then no one can blame me because it does not really make any difference if I reject one of the alliances and choose the other.

The end result will be the same. But still we will be dreaming that one day someone will come and rescue us. We cannot change anything by ourselves. We need a leader who knows how to lead.

Z. Islam

Shantinagar, Dhaka

## Why this change?

Please refer to the news item published in your daily on 11 July 2006 entitled, "By-polls in vacant parliamentary seat; Draft bill okayed to extend time limit to 180 days."

To my mind, as a concerned citizen of Bangladesh, the effort looks ominous for the following reasons:

1. The new EC headed by the

much talked about CEC seems to have orchestrated this amendment through PMO with a view to avoiding a test exam prior to the final exam.

2. The law minister refers to 'some countries' having provisions to nominate MPs in the seats falling vacant and to Malaysia with a provision of an approved period of two years for bi-election of MPs. He is, however, conspicuously silent about the provisions of British and/or Indian parliaments to this effect, from where we inherited our parliamentary democracy.

3. The rationale of the benefit of the people to be able to gauge the popularity of the political parties just prior to the general election didn't merit any consideration!

4. The rationale of the benefit of the EC to be able to hold a dress rehearsal prior to the major drama, also didn't merit any consideration!

Wali, On e-mail

## Why the term minority?

"Criminals demand tolls from N'ganj minority family" --Our Correspondent, N'ganj. This story was published in your August 11 issue.

I read through the article and did not find anything that showed that the family suffered because they belonged to a minority community. In Bangladesh this type of incident happens to Muslims too.

I see a lot of harmony among various religious communities in Bangladesh. Whenever there is positive news, the press does not like to mention the term "minority" and whenever there is negative news the minority issue becomes important.

I think the newspapers should rethink on the issue.

Maruf, On e-mail

## Where is Rana?

You can easily recollect that during the last Zimbabwe tour of Bangladesh, when Bangladesh lost the first two ODIs, Manjarul Islam Rana was included in the Bangladesh team for the last three ODIs. Bangladesh won all those ODIs and Manjarul Rana became MoM in two matches.

But that Manjarul Islam Rana has been dropped from the Bangladesh squad on their tour of Zimbabwe and Kenya. The decision is not at all clear to us. Why should a good performer be left out of the team?

ABM Moniruddin

Ibrahimipur, Dhaka

## Bengali for songs only?

Recently, I attended a convocation ceremony of a renowned private university. There were senior teachers as well as a minister of our country. From the beginning to the end, every word, uttered by the speakers, was in English. It was the national anthem and two other songs which were lucky enough to be sung in Bengali. So, at the end, the graduates and I learned one valuable lesson from our pioneer--"Bengali is eligible only for songs." Was it so difficult for a teacher or our minister to say a few words in Bengali? If they have such problems with Bengali language, then they could have used English songs as well.

Couldn't we give a bit more respect to our mother tongue?

Sadi Mostafa, On e-mail

# Lebanon devastated

The disgrace that 'little boy' and 'fat man' brought to mankind 60 years ago is known to all. The atom bomb dome, the only surviving structure of Hiroshima disaster, tells us how ruthless man could be for his own interest. Every year people from all over the world observe 6 August to pay homage to the victims of that day and protest against the brutal attack. But the ruthless course that started from Hitler's "Nuremberg Camp", Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour or Truman's order to destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki is still continuing.

The oil of the Middle East is gradually taking a red hue. The people of the world are watching how the hyenas are aimlessly destroying a country

which is full of natural beauty.

The question of self-defence should not be raised only when Israel's interests are hurt; all other countries in the Middle East have the same right to defend themselves.

Md. Khairul Anam

North South University, Dhaka

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If you take a look at a current map of Israel showing Palestinian areas inside in distinct colours and also the concrete boundary walls erected by the Israeli government around the Palestinian inhabited areas, you would realise why there is so much resentment and animosity between the two sides. The Palestinians simply cannot go around from one area to the

other without facing Israeli check posts, visiting neighbouring Arab countries is out of the question! If the Palestinians are forced to accept the present pockets of Palestinian inhabited areas as their future state, then it would forever be a vassal state of Israel. How could the Palestinians accept it? After all, they were living on this very land for centuries before the creation of Israel in 1948. After that, the exodus of Jews from Europe to Palestine had started and it gained further momentum after the 1967 war. Now European Jews [even their forefathers] who had never lived in Palestine for the last couple of centuries are claiming the land to be their homeland!

Presently, the Israeli forces

are bombarding and killing innocent civilians in Gaza and Lebanon and destroying their buildings including power stations and water supply system on the plea of rescuing three Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah reportedly to swap them for thousands of Palestinian prisoners now languishing in Israeli prisons without trial. If Israel can round up so many people and imprison them with impunity, why can't Hezbollah capture a few Israelis? What is the logic?

The tragic thing is that the United Nations could not even call for an immediate ceasefire; such is the strength of the Jewish lobby! They have allowed Israel as much time as possible to destroy the infrastructure and economy of Gaza

and Lebanon. Should this be allowed to go on?

Strangely enough, the big powers did not seem to be too concerned with the daily massacres of civilians in Lebanon and Gaza, they would rather take up the issue of Iran's nuclear reactors, suspected to be making fissile materials despite Iran's denial. The same thing happened in the case of Iraq, which was also suspected to possess WMD, but after invasion of that country and killing of thousands of Iraqis, no WMD could be found even after thorough search of the country!

With such leadership around, the world is unlikely to have peace in the near future.

Abul Mohsin

Dhaka

