

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.

The Rohingya problem

The Rohingya refugee problem in Bangladesh is a long pending issue. A long period of more than a decade and a half has passed; however, there is no solution in sight.

There are now some 26,000 plus refugees in two official camps in Cox's Bazar. The government of Bangladesh manages these camps with assistance from UN refugee agency, UNHCR. These refugees are the leftover of an estimated 250,000 refugees who left Myanmar fearing violations of human rights in the hands of the military regime during 1991-92.

According to an official claim, so far about 237,000 refugees have returned to Myanmar. However, local people believe the opposite: almost all of the so-called repatriated Rohingyas came back to Bangladesh later on and continue to live here and there in

greater Chittagong district. Birthrates among those Rohingyas, whether in the camps or outside, are reportedly very high.

Some estimates suggest that there are about 300,000 nationals of Myanmar (mostly Rohingyas) outside the official camps who are 'illegally' staying in the Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and Chittagong district.

The Rohingyas are an ethnic group from the Northern Rakhine State (formerly Arakan State) of Myanmar. They are Muslim. They are persecuted in their home country, Myanmar. Out of about the 2.5 million Rohingyas, two million are reportedly now out of the country of their origin. They are in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, India, Thailand, USA and in different Middle Eastern and European countries.

It is very unfortunate that the international community

including the UN and influential States like the USA, UK, China and India have failed to perform their due role with regard to restoration of democracy and human rights in Myanmar.

There has been no repatriation of the Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh since 2006. In 2005, only 92 persons went back. On the other hand, there is an attempted move to make the problem linger. Some vested and interested groups including some religion-based local political parties and international agencies are behind this. They are reportedly negotiating with the government of Bangladesh for an arrangement to have permanent shelter for the remaining Rohingya refugees here.

The government of Bangladesh, which has provided shelter to the Rohingyas, should be vocal against any

proposal for having permanent shelter for them in Bangladesh. The government should extensively talk with its Myanmar counterpart for taking back the remaining Rohingyas now staying here in Bangladesh recognised as refugees. The developed countries (so-called developed partners) should come forward in this regard without any vested interest and share the burden through resettling a significant portion of the remaining refugees in their respective countries.

The Adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, is scheduled to visit Myanmar (from 25 April). He should raise the long-standing issue of taking back the Rohingyas while talking with his Myanmar counterpart.

Udatta Bikash
Freelance Researcher
Shyamoli, Dhaka

Petrobangla, and the IOCs. History suggests that this may be asking too much.

Scott A. Barber
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

Interim government's performance

The joy and hope for the better days that the interim government brought to people (like me), are about to run away by worries of power abuse. Unarguably, the interim government's activities and reforms would surpass any of those undertaken by previous elected governments. They undertook bold steps that we never even imagined. People in Bangladesh will remember and respect them forever. However, their recent steps like trying to send Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia to exile would definitely raise eyebrows for two reasons. First, the interim government was about to slaughter their own philosophy that they have been trying to transplant at Bangladeshis' hearts: no one is above the law. If anybody breaks the rules, involved in corruption, they must be brought to justice. The procedure would be fair. So the interim government itself should not break any rules. How do we expect to create examples for the future?

Secondly, by kicking anybody out of the country against their will would bring the old sickness in our mind that we have been suffering for ages. One of our major problems is the lack of confidence. We never had a chance to be optimistic about our potentialities. Is this interim government also suffering from the same problem?

M. Anayetul Islam
Concordia University
Montreal, Canada

Exile plan

This concerns the attempt to send Khaleda Zia to exile and the similarly forced ostracism of the Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina. Although I support the caretaker government's vision of ending dynasty-based politics in Bangladesh, the manner in which it is being put into effect raises grave concerns for the rule of law in the country.

As any citizen would appreciate the rule of law prevents unnecessary abuse of power in society. In its absence, society may easily backslide into chaos. With people in authority forcefully moulding society into one that they desire, no matter how noble their intentions may be, it generates discrimination. The authorities may be promoting the rights of some over others.

Now, the question is, on what authority are they working? The CTG has put forward the argument, quite convincingly, that it is the people's desperation to break free from misrule; the citizens have finally spoken and tacit acceptance has been given to the CTG to do what is necessary to find a remedy. With Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina being the two party heads, it is they who are single-handedly responsible for the fate that Bangladesh has been driven into. Therefore, it is logical, that they be driven out of politics.

I disagree with this point of view. Firstly, it is too broad an argument to make that two people are solely responsible for the dire state that Bangladesh is in.

I, therefore, appeal to Dr.

Fakhruddin, that suitable alternatives be sought to end dynasty-based politics.

Saadi Chowdhury
On e-mail

Pertinent questions

There has been various articles in The Daily Star on how Khaleda Zia and her family have abused power. If there is proof, why is she not being questioned and charged, instead of being allowed to go abroad.

This act will convince the politicians that they will be able to commit crime in Bangladesh and when their time is up they will just fly away to another country to live off the money they have stolen from the people of Bangladesh. Furthermore, this act of generosity will have a negative impact on its credibility. The public of Bangladesh wants to see the criminals punished and not released to live a life of luxury.

Will it be possible for DS to produce a table of all those arrested? This table could hold information such as, name, political affiliation, criminal charge, funds stolen from Bangladesh, status of charge, final conclusion of charge i.e. guilty or not guilty, amount of funds/assets recovered for the people of Bangladesh. This information could be provided in a tabular format and will allow the readers to visually keep track on the progress of their trial.

Imam Uddin
London

Badrul Ahsan's article

Mr. Badrul Ahsan has written a piece on the teaching of false history to our children, in which he suggests a fate "worse than perdition" for a nation that permits it. The main thrust of Mr. Ahsan's article is not disputed, that the attempt to distort and reshape the historical record by the four-party government was reprehensible. However, Mr. Ahsan goes on to do a little reshaping of his own when he describes the roles played by Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy and Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq in the struggle for Bengali independence.

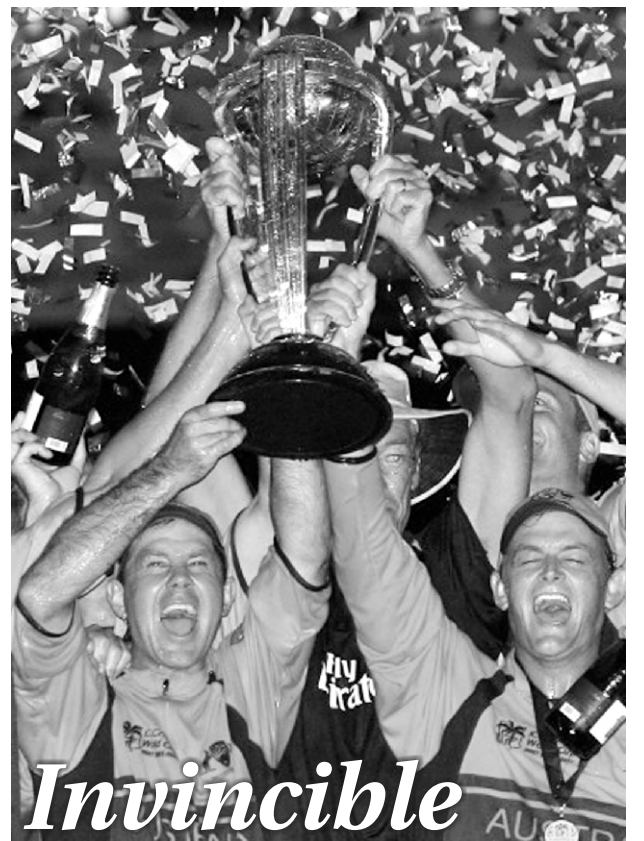
History did not begin in 1971, and there would not have been a sovereign Bangladesh had there been no 1947. The struggle for that, in which these two leaders, as well as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took a part, led finally to the eventual creation of Bangladesh. All of them worked within the framework of the Pakistan ideology, although it is known that Mr. Suhrawardy also for a time subscribed to the notion of an independent, united Bengal.

Mr. Ahsan dismisses Mr. Suhrawardy as "controversial" and Sher-e-Bangla as "erratic" without providing a shred of support to his observations. He would do well to reconsider these terms lest we be inclined to view his writings as erratic and consign them to a fate "worse than perdition".

Syed Hamdeli
The Nawab Palace
Bogra

Top two

We all know at home and abroad, what the two ladies are capable of doing to the nation, society, education sector and especially the economy! They have done it in 'collusion' with each other.



Invincible AUSSIES

What will we call the Aussies now? Incomparable, inconvertible, indefatigable, indomitable, infallible,

ingenious, insuperable or invincible? I don't find the appropriate adjectives. After winning three consecutive World Cups they have lifted their standard so high that no team can face them confidently now. Their batsmen showed their supremacy so much

that their no. 9, 10 & 11 never got a chance to bat. Most of the top order batsmen averaged over 70 with an astonishing strike rate of over 100. Their four main bowlers got countless wickets.

We eagerly wait for another superpower that will pull down Australia from their

pinnae!
Solaiman Palash
East Jurain
Dhaka



UK ought to be responsible

The Nicholson's report, as finally adopted by the Foreign Affairs Committee of European Union (Parliament) on 21 March and officially released on April 26 (which will go to plenary for full parliamentary vote during the week of 21 May) is a document which reflects the insensitivities of UK (ex-ruler of India including J&K and Pakistan) with which it allows EU to play with the Kashmir problem.

The Kashmir problem is the result of political confusion & legal bungling of India as given below:-

(1)- As per the website of Indian Embassy "UNCIP adopted a resolution on August 13, 1948, divided into three parts. Part (3) of the Resolution to be implemented after parts (1) and (2) stated that both India and Pakistan had reaffirmed their wish that the future status of Jammu and Kashmir shall be determined in accordance with the will of the people".

(2)- A person even with a rudimentary knowledge of law understands that if the title of J&K was already accepted with India then where was the need for determining the status of J&K in accordance with the will of the people.

(3)- But this confusion on the part of India is due to:-

(i)- India was partitioned mainly on the basis of census and after conducting pre-partition plebiscite, based on religion, in western and eastern part of British India.

(ii)- As per Indian Independence Act, 1947 princely states (like J&K) were given freedom to accede to either India or Pakistan. The then ruler of J&K opted for India. Hence as per law J&K belongs to India and any person or functionary of the government of India who participated or was involved in the said proceedings of UN plebiscite resolution, he committed an offence of sedition as per section 124-A of Indian Penal Code.

(iii)- But despite having legal advantage as per Indian Independence Act, the government of India participated in these plebiscite resolution proceedings of UN due to political tangle where India had already violated this 'Princely State Ruler's discretion' doctrine in the case of Hyderabad by taking an excuse of territorial continuity.

(iv)- Hence J&K having territorial continuity with Pakistan and having majority Muslim population (a basis of religion based partition) led India totally confused politically which culminated in the said legal bungling.

But now lot of water has flown through Jhelum. Hindu majority India is simply not interested in retrieving its lost territory of Pakistan side of Muslim majority Kashmir. At the same time India will never accept the violation of its sovereignty & territory (including POK) in any manner.

The UK instead of merely sup-

porting the said resolution mooted by Nicholson (which is nothing more than sermons to Pakistan for democracy and to India for human rights along with some futile pious declarations) ought to take a proactive & humane role, through EU (and ultimately through UN), in solving Kashmir problem (UK's ethical responsibility) which was left behind by them in the tearing hurry of leaving the subcontinent due to debilitation caused to them by the Second World War.

Hem Raj Jain
New Delhi, India

Stop audio piracy

Lack of enforcement of existing laws is giving an alarming rise to music piracy that reached such a level that more than 95 percent CDs sold in the market are found pirated. Albums released before festivals like Eid and Bangla Nababorsho are very popular in the market, but a very few customers know that all these are pirated products. Dhaka is virtually a gold mine of pirated CDs. It is very hard to find a brand CD of English songs if we want to buy one.

Previously, such piracy was Dhaka-based but now it has spread to other cities and towns. The main piracy hubs are in Comilla, Chittagong Bogra, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Mymensingh. Music piracy is destroying our audio industry. Many production houses were shut down in the last few years due to the loss they incurred to audio piracy. Pirated CDs are the only form of music piracy, other forms are music websites, CD compilation and singing other artists' songs in concerts. The idea of piracy started with the era of compact discs (CDs) with the advent of CDs, people started copying them at home and on commercial basis. A brand CD is first converted into mp3 format and then 20 pirated copies can be produced in 2 minutes through a machine called CD tower. Flimsiness, low bit rates and sub-standard sound quality are some features of these CDs sold at low prices. These CDs do not contain the address of the company.

The government is not addressing this issue seriously and losing Tk 0.25 per brand CD. Imposing hundred percent tax on CDR (CD recordable) and embargo on importing CD tower are some of the steps that should be considered.

The highest punishment for piracy is a fine of Tk 5 lakh, which is not enough according to many. The situation has improved after raids by the joint forces but the role of the police is not active enough. When someone seizes pirated CDs and hand them over to the police, most of the time the accused get the lot back by bribing and the CDs are back to the market. This is very frustrating. Piracy is slowly eating up the music industry. Singers and producers put their efforts in making a piece of music. Their intellectual rights should be protected. At the international level,

artists are paid royalty based on the sell of their albums. But in Bangladesh the major music companies retain total ownership of the album after giving one time payment to the artists. So artists hardly bother to protest in case of piracy.

Sharmin Rashid
Department of English
Lalmatia Girls College, Dhaka

Response to Nuruddin Kamal

My letter is in response to Mr. Nuruddin Kamal's write-up regarding the current state of affairs in the gas industry in Bangladesh. During my two-year tenure in Dhaka I always enjoyed Mr. Kamal's write-ups and it is good to see that he is still actively investigating possible misdeeds in Bangladesh.

I would caution Mr. Kamal with some advice offered by Napoleon Bonaparte: Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence. One reason that the size of Titas field reserves remains murky is that Petrobangla historically was never allocated sufficient funds to properly delineate the field through additional exploration wells. To determine

the extent of a reservoir, engineers typically attempt to drill exploration wells on the outer fringes of the geological structure ("the flank"). These wells are risky endeavors since they may (or may not) be convertible to production wells. In the past, Bangladesh was forced to go hat in hand to the World Bank to seek funds to drill wells to produce gas needed for power and fertiliser production. Since the World Bank was reluctant to fund risky delineation wells, the wells were typically drilled in the safest part of the reservoir, on the top of the structure, where the wells were expected to find and produce hydrocarbons. As a result, the true extent of the geological structure was never determined, and reserve levels remained an educated guess. This pattern was repeated at all the other assets under administration by Petrobangla.

I suspect that the issue of gas security could be clarified if the government would allocate funds sufficient for Petrobangla to properly delineate and model the huge assets now under their administration. To alleviate what Mr. Kamal considers to be his country's pending gas crisis, Bangladesh needs to adopt a new model of cooperation between the government,



Wolf in sheep's clothing

George Bush has a new dog in the kennel; a bulldog joining his old pet poodle! In between Iraq is torn and shredded to pieces between the wolves and dogs of war; let loose by Bush; the dog keeper. The sensible and foresighted democrats in America are pressing for US withdrawal from Iraq. However, Howard wants to continue with killing and mayhem in Iraq (Dateline: Sydney, Apr. 27). Howard's longing for destruction and killing; possibly goes back to DNA traces of unknown convict heritage of many Australians; the historic convict colonies of the old British empire!

Both Bush and Howard may have traces of similar ancestors; coming from old criminal banishment destinations of USA and Australia! Decades later now these "birds (or wolves) of same feather flock together".

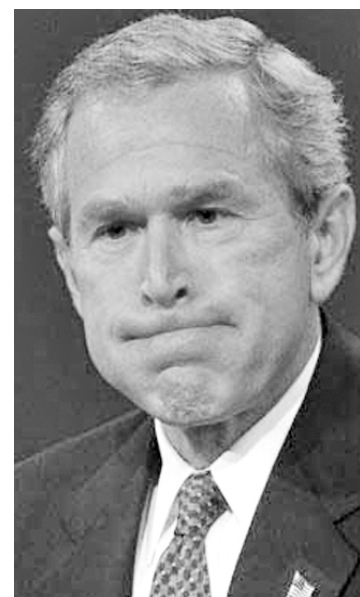
Pity poor Blair. He can neither swallow nor vomit his master's meaty sandwich of sand and dead human flesh and blood. He is impatiently waiting for his time to run out. Possibly only then, the troubled people of Britain may have a sigh of relief; free from body-bags!

Meanwhile, pseudo warriors of the Bush and Cheney clan; having never

been near any battle, or lived through the destruction of war's aftermath; are licking their lips in anticipation of Iran. These hounds of war are looking forward to chew and swallow more flesh and blood; while their war industries and investments swell and burst with ill-gotten criminal profit and wealth.

Can we think of any worse perversion than this in our so-called civilised world, with such ferocious hounds of war; roaming freely as wolf in sheep's clothing!

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka



Nowhere in the democratic world, the opposition is constantly opposing, sometimes very violently, expressing democratic rights by wrong doing, to say the least. And all this damage is done simultaneously, indeed mindlessly!

Economy and social peace and order was the last thing in their mind. If they had one of their own!

Isn't it high time they decently and judiciously decide to 'leave' politics, and do some visible social work to enable themselves to 'continue' to do service to the society but no more in the govt.? They are indeed hell-bent on grabbing power once again, to do the unfinished 'job'. Holier than thou, huh?

The constitution should ban any 'popular' leader to contest general election more than twice. Like the USA.

Place should be made for more efficient, knowledgeable and capable people to take over the nation's responsibility and form the government. Let there be honest, transparent and accountable people. Please let us come out of darkness.

Enough is enough! The new century demands new breed of political leaders who are educated to lead and face the requirements of the time!

When the emotion will die down, history will not excuse anyone. Everything is well documented, all we need is to re-educate ourselves to see things through and look to the future.

I hope they personally realise through some introspection and leave with residual dignity, and by apologising to the nation for their wrong-doing.

The nation might still forgive and forget.
Syed Imtiaz Ali
One-mail

Caretaker government

I am very happy to see all the work the caretaker government is doing.

So, far I trust that the government's work is based on good faith.

I live in the US now, I am originally from Barisal. Since I left Bangladesh, lots of events took place that I am not aware of. But, I am very surprised not to see any action on the current government's part against political godfathers of Barisal town.

Kazi Ahmed
One-mail

Be courageous

At last the caretaker government has withdrawn the embargo that was imposed on the arrival of Sheikh Hasina and the restriction on the immediate past prime minister. The decision taken by the government can be hailed cautiously, but I will urge them not to deviate from the path

through which they are moving and they must reach their target at any rate. It is the present government which has done some tasks that were much expected by the people of the country. Prior to this government people could hardly see anybody on whom they could rely but now they can dream what they didn't dream in the past. Khaleda and Hasina may be the two top leaders of the country but you, the chief of the present government, know that they don't represent the entire population. Of the 15 crore people only 2 crore are directly and indirectly involved in politics and most of them are thugs, terrorists. Both of them came to this position by way of inheritance, not by merit and competence. One of them is talkative and the other is incompetent. It is we who are the victims of their misrule. They always work in their self-interest, not in the interest of the country. They often turn blind to the main issues.

We want to be led by the honest and competent leaders. Our country doesn't lack competent persons and we have proved that once again through winning the Nobel Prize. Political parties threaten us with hartals and demonstrations that are enforced by the terrorists and tokais. We don't want to be the helpless spectators to their activities.

Anis Rahman
Zahurul Haq Hall
University of Dhaka

DS Roundtable

I am delighted with The Daily Star roundtable initiative on "State of Our Polity: Views of the Young Generation" published on April 2007, where a number of successful young professionals at national level (so called city centered!) gave their intellectual thoughts on several important issues. The initiative of the young generation, as I believe, is definitely path breaking for building our future Bangladesh when the entire nation is striving for a free and fair election.

I strongly believe that the builders of Bangladesh 2021 would be the young professionals of this generation. But is capturing the views of young professionals from the capital city enough? There are lots of enlightened young people such as local leaders, business entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs, etc. working at local level (union, upazila and district). Their intellectual inputs might be valuable if these are properly addressed. Similar dialogues to know the views of young generations will be fruitful on the occasion of the coming national election. If The Daily Star takes the lead, I believe, many organisations will welcome it.

Mohammad Abdul Malek
Graduate School of Agriculture
Yamaguchi University, Japan