



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.

Sheikh Hasina's arrest



The small hour drama at Dhanmondi was naturally a newsman's delight. Hundreds of cops including elite ones defying incessant rain cordoned a house where a lady stays 24 hours under state security. She never came out of her house without the consent of the agencies deployed, nor could anybody visit her without permission of the same agencies. We can very well ask the authorities why such huge deployment was made to arrest an already caged lady. They even arranged a big prison van to carry the frail lady who not only is a former prime minister but also the daughter of our father of the nation.

The government spokes-

person, the information adviser, gave some reasons behind the arrest. But as a lawyer he is himself satisfied with his explanations? Even if it is a legal formality or obligation, couldn't she be released on bail?

We, the law abiding citizens, would refrain from making any comment. But the man on the street has already started thinking otherwise. Reformist politicians of all the parties are making loud noises in their houses and the media, though many of them are known to be corrupt. Conscious people may get wrong signals from such incidents.

A citizen
One e-mail

No one is above the law. Everyone is equal before the law. Therefore, the government should ensure a fair trial for Hasina, following the standard procedures.

The three heads of the four governments that Bangladesh had during the last 25 years are alleged to have been involved in widespread crime and corruption. I am sure people of Bangladesh will be happy to see them behind the bars, and away from the political arena of Bangladesh for good - if they get a fair trial and if charges against them can be proved beyond doubt.

Moreover, I believe people of Bangladesh will welcome a

new leadership.
Razib Mohammad
Canberra, Australia

I have just read your Commentary. Good piece of writing!

But frankly speaking it's not enough! You have to keep on writing and mobilize public opinion. It's very unfortunate that we are AGAIN heading into a dark future.

Surely, Hasina is not above the law, for that matter nobody is! But even a kid understands what is going on. You have correctly said, "Nobody is above the law MUST also mean that law is not the handmaiden of anybody either."

I would only hope that this govt. will immediately shift from its present course and will do what they are supposed to do.

Let the people of Bangladesh decide who will be their leader! It's not the job of the government.

Fuad Rahman

Boston, USA

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina was arrested due to her party's policy.

When this caretaker govt. took charge, it was the Awami League's good luck that they were cleaning up the huge corruption of the immediate past BNP govt. But unfortunately the AL went too far in criticising the CTG.

Sarwar Amin

West Nakhalpara, Dhaka

of tax to be paid is very high, they will rather spend the money instead of paying the tax.

I think the income tax department should extend the date of tax payment and the process should be explained fully through the print and electronic media.

S.M.A. Razzaque

Mirpur, Dhaka

Gordon Brown's job

With doctors trying to bomb, Britain is again facing religion-incited terrorist attacks. It is increasingly becoming clear that even the most lofty profession is not immune from violence in the name of religion. In this context, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown may like to take a look at how Lord William Bentinck wiped out such terrorists in 19th century India.

When Lord Bentinck arrived as

Governor General of India in 1828, the country was in the grip of a great

terror. A group belonging to an Indian religious organisation of murderers and robbers, known as Thugs (the word "thug" derived from them), were terrorizing the

length and breadth of India. In this

way, they were forerunners of many

modern terrorist outfits. Although,

the Thugs had no political agenda,

they used religion to glorify their

violent acts in the same way Al-

Qaeda is using religion to glorify

their acts of violence. The only

difference was that the Thugs

belonged to a Hindu sect.

Faced with such a terrorist threat, Lord Bentinck made wiping out the Thugs his top priority. He assigned the task to Col. Sleeman and Col. Sleeman created a network of informers with the help of loyal Indians. He laid the foundation of an intelligence organisation which came to be known as Central Intelligence Department (CID) -- forerunner of today's CIA in the US. In a series of operations, he rounded up Thugs. Many Thugs were hanged, many were given long prison sentences. The 19th century British justice was swift and ruthless. By the time Lord Bentinck left India in 1835, Thugs were largely eliminated as a security threat.

Lord Bentinck remains an iconic figure in India even today. Women of India will remain always grateful to Bentinck for abolishing the cruel practice of burning of the widows. He made English the medium of higher education. He laid the foundation of the Indian Railways. Bentinck was the founder of modern India, but his greatest achievement was the suppression of Thugs.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown should follow in the footsteps of Bentinck and infiltrate the terrorist ranks in Britain. Terrorists linked with Al-Qaeda are thugs of the 21st century and they can be wiped out provided Mr. Brown is resolute and ruthless. The key to Lord Bentinck's success was loyal Indian informers who helped to track down Thugs. British Muslims can play an equally useful role by helping the authorities to intercept terrorists before they strike.

Mahmood Elahi

Ottawa, Canada

Seven points

Undoubtedly, the present caretaker government has set several examples of combating corruption in the first six months. I, like the majority of the people in the country, appreciate the cooperation from the army chief to this CTG. All the seven points put forward by him

are important, and the seventh point "creating a moral high ground against corruption" is the most important to me for making the campaign sustainable.

Reducing corruption to the minimum level requires cooperation from all sectors of society. But awareness should come first from the family where a child grows up and learns from his/her surroundings.

Then it's the teachers who can play an extremely important role. Do we learn anything in any level of our education that teaches us to be an ethical person?

Lord Wavell is generally considered the best Viceroy and Governor General of India (1941-1947). Not only he had done all his homework before he became the Viceroy but he is also considered one of those British personalities who touched Indian souls and understood them.

He wrote a report to the British government on the field of education in India. "We have done the worst in the field of education of India. We have given them the education of letter but not of character," wrote Wavell. So, here is why this subcontinent can't get rid of corruption. How much effort has been given by the governments since 1947 to reform the education system?

In 2003, a news item in "The Nation", a daily English newspaper in Thailand, attracted me. It was a list of the top 20 countries which had the best education systems at primary and secondary levels in the world. Among Asian countries, only South Korea and Japan were in the top 20. The other countries were from Europe, North America and Australia. If you compare this list of top 20 with the list of top 20 least corrupt countries (published by Transparency International) side by side, you will observe that education system has the greatest influence on the issue. We have been ranked the most corrupt country for five consecutive years. How could we be still far away from concentrating on this sector?

I was listening to an interview of Prof. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal the other day. He pointed out very serious flaws in our education system. Our children can't study without private teacher at home or at the coaching centre. This is far from an ideal situation.

Developing Lord Wavell's "education of character" should be the starting point to reduce corruption on a sustainable basis.

Faruk Ahmed

Asian Institute of Technology
Thailand

Income tax

We, the common people, are very much confused and concerned about the tax department's ultimatum of paying the tax on undeclared money by end July 2007.

Most people do not know what amounts (percentage) are to be paid on the principal taxable amount. Many people had small deposits and now that amount could be taxable and if the amount

is to be paid is very high, they will rather spend the money instead of paying the tax.

We want the CTG to guide us to a better socio-economic order.

Ekram Belal

On e-mail

Politicians

I think the income tax department should extend the date of tax payment and the process should be explained fully through the print and electronic media.

S.M.A. Razzaque

Mirpur, Dhaka

Sheikh Hasina's claim

Hasina mentioned to the media that during her administration people could buy a litre of edible oil for Tk 28. I am just wondering whether she knows the current price of edible oil in the international market.

I am puzzled as to why no journalist asked her if she could offer the same at this point in time. I would kindly ask her to stop these cheap talks to confuse people. If she can offer edible oil at Tk 28 per litre to the consumers, then I would advise this caretaker government to give her the sole responsibility to do so.

Shadhin Ahmed

Canada

Corruption

When this caretaker administration under the leadership of Dr. Fakhruddin took power in Bangladesh, people heaved a sigh of relief as it ended the misrule and corruption of the BNP-Jamaat government. The anti-corruption drive of the government was appreciated much and it was expected that the administration would act neutrally.

The government declared that it would take action against the big fish who were involved in massive corruption, not the small ones. In parliamentary democracy, the prime minister is responsible for all the actions of the government. So, why is the immediate past prime minister not being held responsible for what happened during the Jamaat-BNP rule?

Kamal Mostafa

Canada

Hilsa export

low for money and other earthly possessions. Our ministers, politicians and people who were in important positions betrayed us, shocked us beyond imagination!

There are many rich people in the world, who earn money in fair ways and spend huge amounts of it for humanitarian cause, we laud these actions but what we have seen in our country is just disgusting. We hope everyone has learned a lesson.

Nur Jahan

Chittagong

Better treatment

Somebody (often a politician) is going abroad for better treatment. This is very common news in our daily newspapers. Why don't they have any faith in our physicians and medical facilities?

It should be made mandatory for all politicians to seek treatment in our government hospitals.

Tariqul Islam

On e-mail

Hilsa export



The average price of hilsa in a Bangladeshi grocery store here in the USA is US \$4.50 per pound. Accordingly, a medium-size hilsa costs nine dollars. In Bangladeshi take it will be not more than 650. While watching news on ntv recently, I saw a fish trader at New Market in Dhaka asking for a much higher price of a hilsa fish of the same size.

So, how is Bangladesh gaining out of hilsa export?

First of all, we Bangladeshis living abroad do not have any right to have Bangladeshi fish when it is scarce and costly at home. When most of the people cannot afford it locally

because of export, this item should not be exported.

The foreign currency gained by exporting fish is negligible as compared to spending foreign currency on healthcare. As a matter of fact, the implications of exporting nutritious fish are much more than can be described in a letter.

The authorities should look into the matter and ban fish export to any country in the world, not only India.

Mamun Ahmed

Las Vegas, NV, USA

Reformists or conformists?

It is with increasing discomfort that I watch the political scenario unfolding in Bangladesh. Yes, we needed a major overhaul and a shifting of priorities. Yes, we needed to name the names and prosecute the perpetrators of crimes. Kudos to the caretaker government for taking care of business. But at the same time we need leaders to point out the misgivings and fears of the general people. These days most politicians are hiding in the shadows, too afraid to

be confrontational, lest they be incarcerated. Because almost everyone of them has, shall we say, very dubious credentials.

Some have even opted to take on their traditional role of being sycophants, all over again. So when Sheikh Hasina, not that I am a great fan of hers, voices her suspicions, the (so called) reformists in the Awami League go "shh...don't rock the boat". I find it quite amusing. I ask the reformists, are you actually after democratic reforms or just an express train to the top by getting rid of obstacles? With these politicians destined to take over our govern-

ance again, I wish we had an alternative to democracy.

Unfortunately, we don't have one. I guess we Bangladeshis are forever stuck with "Kana Mama", which is arguably better than "Nai Mama".

Churchill hit the nail on the head when he said, "No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all wise.

Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

Fyaz Shahnoor

Australia

In the present world, globalisation has been introduced with a view to extending a border-less market.

Through globalisation free

flow of products as well as

ideas is possible. Because of

globalisation a country can be

benefited in many ways

including free access to market,

hi-tech information, trade,

commerce, cultural affairs,

employment opportunities

and so on. Mainly, the developed countries are highly-

benefited by globalisation. On

the other hand, the developing

countries are affected

adversely to some extent,

because they lack modern

technology, skilled manpower

and necessary capital.

So, the poor countries are

becoming poorer. A more

balanced view of globalisation

is needed to introduce a just