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Save the people

Once Bangladesh was supposed to be an emerging tiger. Then the development surge pushed the country into the Bay of Bengal! Bangladesh became the most corrupt country of the world four or five times. After a severe political turmoil, the state of emergency was declared. People heaved a sigh of relief. The loathsome activities of the politicians and their henchmen who were at the helm of affairs for the last 15 years came to limelight. The caretaker govt. was trying to do something good. But what is going on now? We learn from the print and electronic media about graft charges, extortion cases and other criminal acts of the so-called bigwigs and their accomplices. Some are being tried in the court and some are detained. What are the resultant effects? What about the

common people? The lots of the common people remain the same. The poor people have become poorer, the prices of essential commodities have gone sky high. The country is engulfed by the devastating floods. Agricultural land with standing crops has gone under water which may lead the country to a famine-like situation soon. The common people are not interested in political reforms or graft cases and court verdicts. They want two square meals for their survival! They want essential commodities within their reach at reasonable prices. Would the caretaker govt. care to give attention to this matter to save the poverty-stricken people ?
Dr. S.M. Rahman
On e-mail



Rangs Bhaban
I am in no way associated with the Rangs Bhaban, a beautiful commercial building & one of the tallest in Dhaka's rising skyline. But I am appalled to see the way it is being torn down by Rajuk. It is the same Rajuk that saw (and allowed willfully or not) the construction of this building. After the SC ruling that cleared the way for Rajuk to demolish the unlawful structure beyond the sixth floor, the Rangs Group appealed to the government to allow 15 days for shifting its machinery and other goods. This building was constructed at a cost of about Tk 700 crore, there is machinery worth Tk 300 crore, it housed 30 companies. So how could this 22-

story building be vacated within hours? Television pictures showed people carrying goods on shoulders like the way hawkers vacate the footpath when police chase them. Many things & materials of this huge structure can be reused & recycled if properly dismantled. This costly building could be demolished at the end stage of the proposed road construction that probably will take a few years. In the mean time the government could allow the Rangs Group or any third party to use it on rental basis. However, the CTG deserves thanks for this job, like many others, which the former political governments failed to accomplish. But the comment "We do not do

anything out of anger" of the PW adviser is not really understandable!
Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

Although I agree that Rangs Bhaban has broken the law, I don't agree with the way the demolition was handled. The Supreme Court verdict was given one day and it was broken up the next, it seems the government is a little "hammer happy" at the moment, the haste with which they want to use their hammers seems to defy logic. What harm would there have been in letting the occupiers vacate the premises with their equipment? In the rush to maximise publicity the authorities were set on demolition with the vengeance and spiteful-

ness of a small child, this is not appropriate for a governing authority. How does it benefit the people if Grameenphone (one of the occupiers) give us a disrupted service because they would not allow them enough time to move their equipment?
Although most would agree with the decision that the building had to go, they would also disagree with the brutish manner in which it was handled. If the joint forces want to win our support, they will have to behave with a little more professionalism than this.
I, among others, started to feel sorry for the Rangs Bhaban and its people.
Safina
Dhaka

After much waiting and anguish, the tearing down of the Rangs Bhaban comes as a huge relief!
If there is a single meaning to be attached to this act it is that the CTG is serious about finally doing something about the unconscionable rape of Dhaka by none other than the very ministers and officials responsible for protecting the city and its inhabitants from the grubby "over-commodification" of land; and our so-called business "elite" who ride over the city's Master Plan and people's need for a rational transport system, even as their progeny attending Wharton and the Harvard School of Business regurgitate textbooks on corporate responsibility for the greater good!
Well done, CTG!
Sultana Alam
Dhanmondi

I was horrified to see the manner in which the Rangs Bhaban is being demolished. No matter whoever paid for the construction materials and interior decoration, ultimately everything belongs to the country. I cannot understand why a few days time could not be provided to salvage materials before the actual demolition began.
Let us make our decisions in the interest of the country.
Acitizen
On e-mail

Your report on Rangs Bhaban on August 3 at one stage calls it a 'beautiful' building. I wonder how the reporter came to that conclusion.
Does it not also reflect a kind of bias on your part?
Fuad Mallick
Gulshan Dhaka

Neo-colonialism
Neo-colonialism is a concept which started its journey after the era of colonisation ended. The main intention behind colonisation was to

grab the land of the native poor people through the weapon of oppression and subjugation. Bu the main purpose of neo-colonisation is to get the resources of the country and to destroy it economically in a very shrewd and subtle way.
Arif Laskar
Dept. of English, JU

Mass hysteria
I have read with interest your report on the above subject. In fact, you are talking about collective obsessions, which is a socio-psychological phenomenon having manifestations similar to hysterical symptoms by more than one person. It may begin when a group witnesses an individual becoming hysterical during a traumatic or extremely stressful or frustrating event. A potential symptom is group nausea, in which a person becomes violently ill. This situation triggers a similar or sympathetic reaction in other members of the group. A recent occurrence was in Bransley, UK as reported in the Times of 6th December 2006. Thirty pupils began feeling ill after watching a widely used biology video. Others who had heard of the occurrence also showed similar symptoms.
The similarity I see as a student of human behaviour is that while it is difficult sometimes to find the cause-effect relationship but in all the cases (girl students in various rural places and in Bransley) they were in teens and may have been undergoing the hazard of physical puberty changes which is a very stressful period of life. The restrictive society especially in our rural areas was probably suppressing their normal sexual development process and may have triggered the hysteria as an alternative behaviour in the form of a defence mechanism in order to cope with the physical changes in their bodies. Defence mechanism, under the Freudian concept is the ways the human mind takes compensatory action to overcome the stressful or difficult situations. There are many forms of defence mechanism such as denial, displacement, rationalisation, sublimation etc.

Throughout centuries mass hysteria has caused havoc in many forms, big and small. The witchcraft trials and witch hunts of Salem to Anthrax scare, McCarthyism in the US, the intolerable Spanish Inquisitions of the middle ages and many big and small manifestations and accidents in which people acted irrationally. It can also manifest in situations where there is a problem that is endangering society, but the people want to find a scapegoat and take out their frustrations out on him often fatally to the scapegoat, instead of looking for the cause of the problem and potentially finding themselves to be guilty. This is not



Adulterated foods

Urea is very harmful when consumed directly. Formalin, a toxic chemical (used for preserving dead bodies) is used to make stale fish look fresh which can cause serious health hazards to

humans. Fruits are sprayed with calcium carbide to prematurely ripen them. Foods in restaurants are often made with used oil which is toxic. What can we eat that doesn't have poison

in it?
The government should be tough on this issue.
Sharmin Akter
Department of English International Islamic University, Chittagong

the first time that we have faced this phenomenon. There are many instances-- big and small, national and regional.
Perhaps the biggest instance of mass hysteria was that of the share market crash of 1996, totally misunderstood by the government and the media. In November 1996 when the stock market bubble eventually burst, there was mass hysteria because many people could not rationalise the fall in the already abnormal price rise. The eventual result was to blame this fall in the prices of shares on market operators.
What is necessary in all the cases for the government is to set up trauma control centres for the victims.
Imtiyaz Husain
Gulshan 1, Dhaka
Shibir at RU
It is well known that the campus of Rajshahi University has turned into a heaven for Islami Chhatra Shibir. For this, the students of DU brand us as the students of the largest

'madrassa'. Actually, students politics and the Shibir are inextricably linked at RU. Despite the state of emergency, the Shibir is active on the campus.
We seek protection from their nefarious activities. The authorities concerned should look into the matter.
A student, RU

The third view
In two recent emails published in DS (August 2, 2007), Mr. Mamun suggested that we should look at the 'big picture' and another writer anonymously congratulated the caretaker government (CTG) for the arrest of Shiekh Hasina, which according to him/her showed that "no one is above the law". While this pro and anti CTG proponents have merits in their statements, I belong to yet another group of skeptics, who form the majority of Bangladeshis both at home and abroad.

The increasing trend of corruption and nepotism cannot be

solely linked to one party or one form of government. For example, we did not see a decline in corruption during 1996-2001 between the two terms of government run by Khaleda Zia (1991-1996 and 2001-2006). I am sorry to say to Mr. Mamun that most of us do not see a 'big picture' like him because we are starting to witness inconsistencies in the practice of law. Although the jargon "no one is above the law" sounds justifiable; in fact, often it is quoted when some people are allowed to remain untouched by the law.
Towhid Salam
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