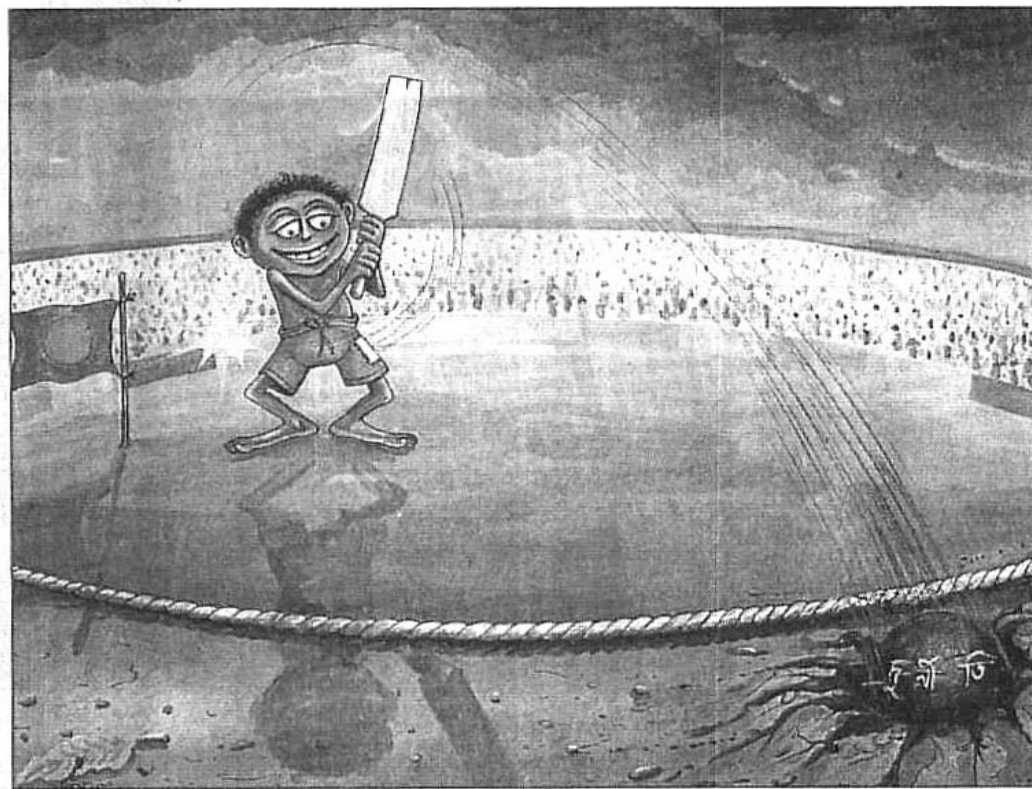


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Eliminate corruption



Bangladesh has, in recent years, been categorised as the most corrupt nation in the world by reports of various donor agencies. While we may disagree with the validity of the assessments and question the methods used for reaching such a conclusion, there is no denying that corruption is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. It is also beyond dispute that corruption is the main reason for which Bangladesh has been unable to achieve its expected level of development. It is of prime importance that the issue of corruption is addressed with an iron hand in order to attain a faster rate of economic development.

We have plenty of opportunities ahead. The caretaker government is pledge-bound to

eradicate corruption. We have seen that the ACC is working under a very able leader. If the ACC can function freely and gets support from all quarters then it is possible that we will be able to see a different Bangladesh.

During the tenure of the 4-party alliance government, the ACC was becoming more than a toothless tiger. Now it has become a tiger with teeth sharp enough to bite any big shot. And that is the only reason why some quarters are trying to demean the ACC and questioning the validity of their act of asking for wealth report.

If you are OK, you can submit the wealth report. Why play hide and seek?

Kazi Nasim Ahmed
Zigatola Notun Rasta, Dhaka

Rajuk's plan

I am a resident of Road no 30, Gulshan 1. Recently, the caretaker government took a good initiative of protecting the Gulshan Lake by erecting walking pathways on both sides of the lake. Accordingly, the work has started on Gulshan 1 Lake from next to Warid Telecom Office up to the Mohakhali Road on both sides of the lake.

However, very strangely on the eastern side of the lake the pathway construction has stopped on Road no 32. The workers/contractors appointed by the Rajuk who were using piling at the end of Road 30 recently stopped the work and being asked why they stopped the work they said that there is a plot allocated by Rajuk on the lake at the end of Road 30, hence they could not continue the work.

We, the residents of Road 30, know that it is an illegal encroachment, as the 'alleged' plot is well inside the lake.

We request the press to do some investigative reporting on this issue, so that the whole thing is exposed and we, the residents of Road 30, enjoy the walkway at the end of our road.

Asif Ibrahim
One e-mail

Students in China

Students in China once played an important role. It has gone down in history as the May 4 Movement.

During the Cultural Revolution, it became apparent that students could be made to respond to any kind of stimuli bad, as well as good. That is to say, they were only human.

Having learnt from experience, the authorities crushed the student movement of Tiananmen Square with an iron hand.

Iftakhar Sayeed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Submarine cable

It's quite unfortunate that despite repeated breakdown of submarine link, the BTB is paying less attention to creating a backup connectivity. After the much awaited launching of the submarine link, most of the ISPs have withdrawn the satellite link. As a result, when the submarine cables goes down, most of the users in Bangladesh are deprived of using the Internet. It not only affects the home users but also affects the businesses as all the business houses rely fully on the Internet to carry on their day to day activities.

We hope that the authorities will look into the matter and ensure uninterrupted connectivity of the submarine link by having a proper backup strategy in place.

Danesh Osman
Hatkola Road, Dhaka

Where are those people?

Our CTG is cleaning the atmosphere by punishing and eliminating a few corrupt men.

But where are the real people to replace them?

We do not see any sign of decent and honest men coming on to the scene.

Do we have at all any good people to serve the country and not their pockets?

N.G. Chaudhury
Luxembourg

Biman

A "citizen's comment was printed in the letters column of a local English daily on 19 August. His proposal for the Biman Board of Directors was better than the all secretary based board prepared by GoB (possibly engineered by the secretaries' informal backscratching forum serving their interests). Otherwise, with a professional board, every decision will be stuck up in a secretary's desk till the incumbent and his extended family get free return tickets by Biman. Considering this to be the standard operating practice; do the people have a choice?

In this connection why does not Biman publish a list of all the persons with their designations who enjoyed free or concession tickets along with their extended families during the 2006-07 financial year? I am sure it will make interesting reading for all the readers. Why does not the CTG ask for this list, or are they too shy?

Another interesting information will be the list of tickets issued to government and public sector personnel for which payment is still outstanding. This could cover the period of the last five years at least.

Maybe, the CTG can ask for this one and have it published. These two pieces of information will give the clue to the financial and cash flow problems of Biman! This could be a public audit tool!

Another phenomenon is the upgrading of tourist class tickets to business class for most government functionaries, and political bigwigs, who really made Biman "Their home in the air". Meanwhile, the normal revenue passengers were offered what was left of "Take it or leave it basis".

I wonder if these facts will ever come out! These are treasured state secrets!

A citizen
Dhaka

Professional bankruptcy?

Sadia Hassan's essay on the subject (Aug:20) provokes interesting thoughts. Quoting the writer "Our bureaucracy siphons off millions of taka through mismanagement(?) and corruption of 'Locally Raised Fund' popularly known as LR funds. These funds have been kept outside the purview of audit to breed corruption". These few lines underline rich layers of gold: through proper bureaucratic channels!

The very creation of this fund speaks volumes for the bureaucracy's imagination. After all this was done in proper format; starting from nothing, to comments from various bureaucrats of many ministries. It was put up through the appropriate bureaucratic "proper channels" till it was incorporated in the appropriate rules for the benefit of all bureaucrats who have access to this "gift of the gods". It has in a way made corruption legitimate, if not anything else!

It speaks volumes for the self-centered creativity of our bureaucrats, who in such activities are

second to none! Who says they are bankrupt? They are full of knowledge and creative ideas; which has opened the doors for self enrichment (wealth-wise) not only for them; but their political mentors too! For every crore that a minister has managed to acquire, his or her able, capable and very loyal bureaucrats around have managed at least twenty five percent of the lucrative goodies on offer!

Who will catch them? When thieves get together they find out ways and means for sharing the goodies, and how to get their hand on more goodies, not undoing themselves. Can one professional and committed bureaucrat go out to put his or her colleagues to trouble? You can bet on it; it's just not done! For making and getting goodies in cash or kind; including overseas holidays in the line of duty; none can beat our bureaucrats! After all, they are the cream of the cream; as they claim! In this area of expertise; our bureaucrats are: Able, bold, capable, determined, efficient, forearmed, go-getters, ... so on and so forth; till x, y and z of the English alphabet, and yet some more! You can then try,

Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and more of Greek alphabets to tag on to their unlimited capabilities in these areas!

May be there are some exceptions, but they can't last long.
Bureaucracy Watcher
Dhaka

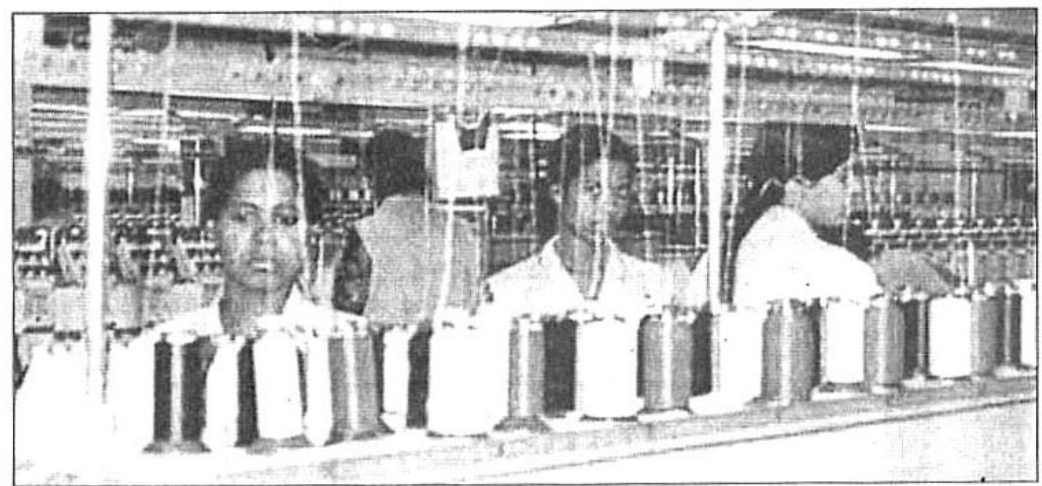
DU violence

I am saddened to find our students in pain and anger. I cannot respect or accept any external forces interfering in any academic environment. I have spent 33 years at different universities in Europe, the US and Japan, and I have never found students being exploited by the politicians, to destroy public properties or to express their anger and dissatisfaction.

I urge our students to wake up to value their integrity, and not allow themselves to be guided by the corrupt politicians, many of whom never made it up to the university to understand its value.

Dr. Mannan Mridha Ph.D.
Professor of Biomedical Engineering
Stockholm, Sweden

Garments sector



Nothing can be more alarming than this poor state of the garments sector. We lost our historically vibrant jute sector due to the immature political decision of nationalisation and mismanagement and now again we are heading for the similar consequence due to the misdeeds of the visionless politicians, who hardly cared for national interest. The relentless and vigorous hard work of the entrepreneurs took the garments sector to the pinnacle of achievement in the presence of stiff competitors like our immediate neigh-

bour and others in South-East Asia. "Survival for the Fittest" being the order of the day, we have started lagging behind due to self-created conditions and unstable state of our national affairs.

It should be an eye opener for those political leaders including their beneficiaries, who wanted to fish in the turbulent water, that the imposition of timely curfew by the caretaker government (CTG) and reciprocation by the peace loving citizens in maintaining the same has proven beyond doubt that they are no longer accept-

able. It also calls for careful vision of the CTG to squarely address the soft issues that might give a chance to the opportunity seekers in their bid to destabilise the present state. There cannot be any place for complacency for the present government. The garments sector is one which needs to be looked into with complete care and maturity. It must not go beyond our sight that the fate of millions of workers will be at stake if its conditions continue to deteriorate.

Brig Gen (Retd) Ali Hasan
Old DOHS, Banani, Dhaka

America and oil

We are confused and are not sanguine about the aims, objectives and activities of World Bank and IMF.

Many underdeveloped and developing countries owe billions and billions of dollars of loan to World Bank and IMF which they are bound to repay along with millions and millions of dollars of interests consistent with the rate of change of foreign currency the US dollar.

We fail to imagine how long, how many years, decades or centuries it would require for the underdeveloped and developing countries to repay the colossal loans.

Thus the poor countries would go on becoming poorer day by day for an indefinite period.

We are surprised why there is no annual report on the activities,

accountability and transparency of World Bank and IMF.

It is also hard to understand why World Bank and IMF, both with their headquarters in Washington, US, insist on the underdeveloped and developing countries to raise the price of oil from time to time.

The US has invaded and occupied one of the world's biggest oil reservoirs in Iraq. Is it not true that the US is looting and plundering the oil resources of Iraq and dictating the world market price of oil through World Bank and IMF to meet the payment of salary and other heavy expenses for stationing US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan?

All the underdeveloped and developing countries should demand in the UNO an international enquiry into the matter.

O.H. Kabir
Dhaka

unrest. Also the state of emergency has caused decline in business and FDI's might reduce as political uncertainty can result in MNCs refusing to invest in Bangladesh. So, gradually people's faith in the CTG seems to be fading.

I, too, was very confident that this government would help to revive our country from the pathetic state prevailing in the last three decades. But although they deserve praise for the crusade against corruption, and making the ACC more transparent, the limitations of the government are now, it seems, outweighing its positive points.

Therefore, we hope that the CTG will not let us down and go by their commitment to the people.

Best of luck!
Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS

CTG's job

The CTG's problems seem to mount every day as the latest issue of concern for the incumbent government was the countrywide student protests. These students, including the professors and lecturers of respective universities, were demanding withdrawal of the state of emergency. In addition, the present caretaker government also has to bear the brunt of floods because as the floods die down, the already high-prices of daily essentials will further skyrocket due to the adverse supply situation which is likely to continue. Hence the public's agitation will further rise as prices of essentials will continue to show an upward trend and eventually criticism of the CTG will also rise. The rehabilitation of these homeless flood-affected people needs proper attention as the govt. has to rebuild their destroyed homes. To make matters worse, uncertainty looms over the future of the elections as ban on indoor politics has not been lifted yet. The closure of jute mills is another negative point of the CTG as the workers of these mills are yet to receive their arrears wages and their future look bleak. Eventually, conditions such as these can provoke social

CTG and politicians

I could not convince myself about the government's measures that it adopted after it had taken over power in January. All they have done so far is criticising the politicians in the name of eliminating corruption, although they overlooked the fact that Bangladesh politics has been dominated by the army which ruled the country for decades. The government's journey started with arresting the most corrupt, however, the intensity of their drive slowed down later.

However, there has been no dearth of commitment and efforts on the part of the government to embarrass Sheikh Hasina. It seems that the government's drive against corruption is now focused on destroying her and her party. What is the reason? She has been the only one leader who criticised the government for their wrongdoings. Nobody protests when the government allows the ex-prime minister and finance minister to convert their black money into white.

Did we expect this from this (non)political government?
Abdul Moyeen, Ph.D.
Australia

Gender based discrimination



Many analysts, researchers, development professionals have stated that levels of economic development, growth are lower in the countries where gender based discrimination, inequalities, violence occur frequently. Such perceptions are inaccurate. Women are also assaulted in developed countries and South Asian states such as India, Pakistan are more stable and prosperous than Bangladesh. However manifestations and levels of gender based violence, inequalities, discrimination are more widespread in India and Pakistan than Bangladesh. However, the socio-economic-cultural status of women in West Bengal and Pakistan is better than other parts of India and Pakistan. This is manifested by trends and indicators such as increasing cases of dowry related violence, high income groups incurring extravagant dowry expenditures, social pressures created by these groups on other people to imitate them, monetary transactions to exchange wives, sex slavery, early or child marriages, female infanticide, adverse sex ratios etc. Female infanticide in particular is a serious socio-cultural problem. Statistical data and empirical evidence indicate that the situation is alarming and worsening. It is causing a demographic imbalance. Statistical data indicates that in India, the national average is 929 females per 1000 males. In Punjab and Haryana the sex ratios are 795 females per 1000 males and 820 females per 1000 males respectively. In Bangladesh and West Bengal, the sex ratios are 1000 females per 1007 males and 934 females per 1000 males respectively. Hence, contrary to widespread misperceptions, levels of gender based discrimination, violence, inequalities are not lower in the countries that are more developed or prosperous!

Faisal M Rahman
On e-mail

In response....

I found "Adivasis in trouble" in the letters to the editor page. In this letter it was mentioned that the Forest Department people are destroying the beauty of Madhupur forest by eliminating banana and pineapple orchards. Is it a true statement? Do you think that these banana and pineapple orchards are the beauty of Madhupur forests or are they black spots?

Those who knew the situation of Madhupur well, know that both exotic trees planted by the Forest Department and orchards (banana, pineapple, ginger, turmeric etc.) cultivated by Adivasis are equally detrimental for Sal forest of Madhupur. We honour the sentiments of Adivasis as long they are associated with their tradition. These orchards are not the tradition of Adivasis. Rather, some influential or so-called educated Adivasis involved common Adivasis in converting Sal forest lands (may be in most cases in connivance with the Forest Department). So one should not blame only the Forest Department people for their miseries. So called enlightened Adivasis are also responsible for the miseries of their fellow Adivasis. So my request to Adivasi leaders is: be united against

the Forest Department people's detrimental activities and also against detrimental activities of some Adivasis who are turning their beloved forest land into banana and pineapple plantations.

So, let us make an integrated effort to save our beautiful Sal forest!

M.K. Roy

One e-mail

The sleeping Tiger?

Regarding the 'independence' of India and Pakistan, I have to mention that 'undivided' India or Bharat was always independent and had outstanding economic, academic and cultural excellence until the 'British finished' trading and ruling, the foundation was laid not for two but three countries: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Unfortunately, Bangladesh became abandoned at birth although once Bengal was one of the richest regions on earth. Today the European colonialists once racing to grab the Indian resources are united under 'EU'.

But there is also a mighty shine fiercely emerging from the united South Asian platform under 'Saarc'.
MM Rahman
London

Renaming the frigate

We are really shocked that the navy frigate named after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib was renamed as Khalid bin Walid. The past BNP government, out of their jealousy and malice against Bangabandhu, let the frigate remain as a lame duck for long five years. The BNP withdrew the word Bangabandhu from the name of Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge and did also remove his picture from the currency. The BNP as we found, instead of showing Bangabandhu the due respect, did relentlessly try to dwarf him or obliterate him from the history of hour liberation from Pakistani occupation. They wanted to install their leader Ziaur Rahman in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib's place.

By changing the name of the frigate, the present CTG just did something that borders on lowering the dignity of the father of the nation.

Khalid bin Walid was a great Muslim warrior and we could name some other naval war machine after him.

A.H. Dewan
South Kafil, Dhaka Cantt.
Dhaka

Help the flood victims

It comes as an urgent call when the world must come together as one. There are people dying, it's time to give a hand by providing

food, medication and financial support. Millions of people are affected by the devastating floods.

Your contribution, no

matter how small, can save lives of others.

Peter J. Rebeiro
Farmgate
Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR