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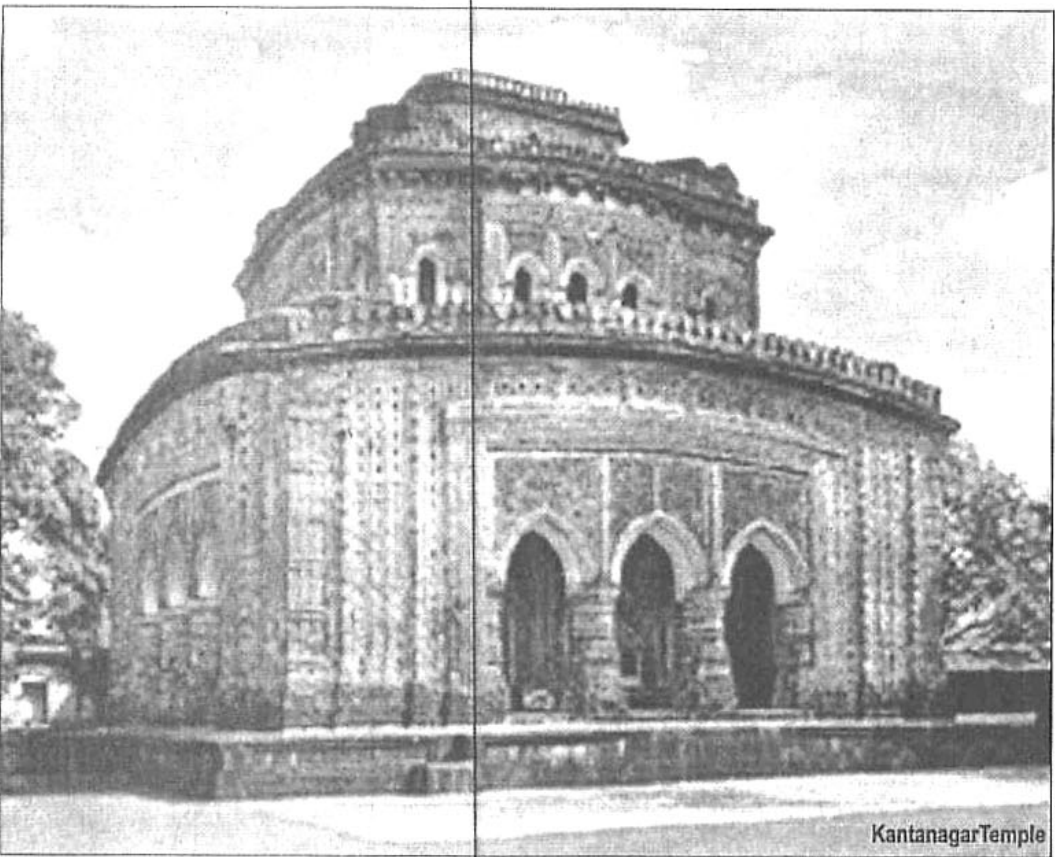
Historical relics

Once upon a time this land was ruled by lords, kings and zaminders. During their times, they all tried to create something in their territory, so that even after a thousand years people could see their wonderful creations. The remnants of those days are still there in many places but most of them are not maintained properly. Lots of palaces, temples, mosques and other religious monuments have sunk into the black hole of time.

The matter deserves a closer look. The time has come for the authorities concerned to awaken from their nap and take proper initiatives to conserve these historical relics.

Sonali Biswas

Kazihata, Rajshahi



Kantanagar Temple

Power conservation

A local English daily devoted a four page section on Power Generation issues (Sept.29). Unfortunately, the major drawback was that none of the lead articles contained anything about power conservation—the key top priority issue for Bangladesh reeling under power shortage! If power conservation issue is positively followed up by our government, then we can easily save over 100MW every year for at least the next ten years or so.

Additionally, if the use of solar panels, bio-gas generation, and power conservation is orchestrated together as a determined government policy backed by a vigorous implementation drive, we could well save and provide an additional 1000MW in three years at most! This is equivalent to setting up two 500MW power plants; with no large scale financial one time investment. Possibly take five crore over three years will give us at least 500MW of available power to the grid! If we concentrate on this effort in the five cities of Bangladesh: Dhaka, Chittagong; Khulna, Rajshahi and Sylhet and the industrial estates; the saving could easily exceed 300MW!

The beauty of power conservation is that it saves power in the house and offices where electrical gadgets are used, and in illumination and electrical drives in factories; unit by unit as funds permit. All that is needed is government's determination,

backed by financial incentive for industries to upgrade the existing drive motors with energy efficient motors. To get large scale savings, we should concentrate on pulp and paper mills, cement manufacturing and grinding factories, each of which on an average may be consuming around 25MW, as the first step.

For permanent savings, we can easily identify and restrict ourselves to using "energy efficient" electrical gadgets in the homes and offices like computers, window air conditioners, fans, office copiers and hospital equipment. BUET can easily identify the energy efficient models of these products now openly imported. To discourage other models, the government can slap a prohibitive "energy surcharge" on these! This will ensure a permanent power saving for all time to come!

South Africa, a pioneer on power conservation, did this, may be well over twenty years back! Their twenty years' cumulative savings till mid 1990s were 4255MW! This is more than what Bangladesh generates today! Their annual saving through conservation is between 100 to 250MW; and the drive still continues; though by and large it has become an effective state policy. Power conservation must be our topmost priority. It needs practically very little investment compared to the power saved!

S.A. Mansoor
Retired engineer
Dhaka

Issues before UN

Year after year, the UN General Assembly allocates to its Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs Committee, commonly referred to as the "Third Committee", agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect peoples all over the world. An important part of the Committee's work focuses on the examination of human rights questions, including reports of the special procedures of the newly established Human Rights Council. UN General Assembly which is in session now must address the nefarious (state-sponsored) remote terrorism, including dreams terrorism and remote electric-shocking, unleashed on their citizens and direct the member nations to stop this kind of anti-people, anti-democratic, inhuman activities forthwith. Silence on the part of this most important world body signals ill-intentions of the UN itself against human beings, irrespective of the country they live in. Those nations that specialise in remote terrorism must be adequately penalised economically, technologically and in all other possible ways.

Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal
Freelancer, India

Local ceramics

In the recent years some cottage ceramics industries have come up producing handcrafted, hand-painted stoneware and

porcelain decorative products in Bangladesh. The range of products includes mugs, vases, show-pieces etc. of high quality. People should buy more local products which will encourage the local industries to develop and contribute to the nation's economy.

We urge the caretaker government to assist these SMEs to expand rapidly for employment generation.
Peter J. Rebeiro
Indira Road
Farmgate, Dhaka

Trade imbalance

Refer to your editorial 'Duty free access for our RMG' that appeared on September 18, 2007, the recently concluded MoU on duty-free access for garments exports from Bangladesh to the Indian market, without any conditionality, is indeed a welcome development. There is clearly a room for many such initiatives to facilitate exports from Bangladesh to the growing Indian market.

Improved access for our products to markets abroad is important. Equally important is the need for diversification of our basket of exportable items, and for our products to be more competitive in terms of price and quality—a fact that you have correctly underscored in your editorial.

Regarding trade imbalance, it is a fact that we have large trade imbalance with India. But not many are aware that Bangladesh has even larger trade imbalance with China. While our trade deficit with China in the fiscal year 2005-2006 was around US\$ 2 billion, it was US\$ 1.63 billion in respect of India. It is a bit mystifying that while there is always a shrill rhetoric against the large trade imbalance with India, not much is written about our trade imbalance with China. The Daily Star is no exception. The reason perhaps seems to be simple; we like (or prefer) to indulge in India bashing. Is this a manifestation of some twisted mindset or ingrained prejudice? Should not we be asking China as well for steps to be taken by them to address the large trade imbalance? More importantly, hasn't time come for keeping rhetoric away from reality, and instead focus on capitalising on emerging business opportunities?

The silence of our policy-makers and the press is disappointing.
Rashidul Haque
Dhanmondi R/A
Dhaka

Women footballers!

Football championship, and if it is world championship, is always a festivity. There is always the ferocity of instinct submerged in the players to outsmart the opposing teams; immensity of expectations in the minds of the spectators in the fields and beyond; the whole earth, as it appears, gets enveloped into some flares of festivity. That very sense of festivity in the minds that actually triumphs over the literal wins or losses comes wrapped in, in essence, in the frames of jubilation. And in the same breath, even on a broader spectrum of beauty, world women football championship 2007 was held and hailed!

The record making German team that beat a fiery Brazil 2-0 in the women football championship 2007 tells the tale in the same spirit! The flamboyant Brazilians went down to The German team as Martha, Pele in skirt, missed the penalty shoot-out that could bring the equalizer. The samba dancers had the sting of bad luck as two of the shots hit the opposing goal bar.

However, many records have marked the championship this time: maximum time without conceding any goal 619 minutes in German possession that was earlier 442 minutes in China's possession. This world championship triumph of the German team over the Brazilians, though in the women section, brings forth, in vivid colour and climax, the sweet sense of a revenge of the event that took place in the world football championship 2003 (Men's), where Brazil outclassed Germany 2-0! (Brazilian superstar Ronaldo scored both the goals).

Amazing had been the skills, fitness and the killer instinct that came wrapped in with every single gesture of the players on the field that, of course, undermined the age old sense of

man-woman barrier! (Considering the spirit). Congrats to the winning team and all the participating teams as well...

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

Monga

A few districts of Northern part of Bangladesh face acute problem of employment, thus shrinking their earning for livelihood during certain period of the year i.e. Sept.-Oct. which is termed as Monga in local language. During this period there is no requirement for labour for agricultural purpose and having no other opportunity for part-time job, a large number of people are rendered unemployed. These are mostly landless farmers having no academic qualification. The total number should not exceed more than a million even by a wild guess. This number may vary with other factors like drought, flood and natural calamity.

Short term solution as carried out by the government and NGOs, that is, doling out money, food etc. is not acceptable as Monga is a regular phenomenon which should not be tackled on a year to year basis. The medium term solution is that the govt. and NGOs recruit more people from these areas. Quota for these areas for the armed forces, police, Ansars and VDP should be increased. The garment factories, which are the major employer of women-folk, should encourage workers from these regions on humanitarian ground.

The long term solution should include improvement in communication i.e. rail, road, more emphasis on quality education through establishing good educational institutions, availability of electricity, providing incentives like tax holiday to businessmen who would set up industries in those areas, inventing new cropping system, providing loan for poultry, cattle, goat, farming, setting up handlooms etc. etc.

Having so many think tanks in the country it is really baffling that the "Monga problem" could not be solved. A concerted combined effort by the govt. and NGOs certainly can send the term 'Monga' to distant memory. Commodore AMA Alam (Retd.) BN
New DOHS, Dhaka

Zakat

Every year as the holy month of Ramadan draws to a close, the sad news hits the front page of the national dailies: deaths of zakat seekers in stampede. The rich or well-to-do Muslims provide charity to the poor. But in our country, overcrowded and poor as it is, this tradition is often accompanied by some hazards.

A long beeline of poorly clad malnourished men and women in front of a palatial house; this is a common sight of the rich neighbourhoods of the major cities. As those distressed people make a rush in an attempt to take alms, the situation turns chaotic and often gets out of control. As it happens some poor folks lose their balance and get trodden by the fellow charity-seekers. It is the elderly ones, especially the women, who get seriously injured in the stampede. Some of the ill-fated people even succumb to their injuries.

We hope that this year the givers will take care to avoid any instance of mismanagement that may result in a stampede.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

Corruption suspects

People's perception about the 80 corruption suspects' list published on the 28th September is somewhat, I feel, short of expectation, not for its lack of authenticity or validity but for some high profiles' conspicuous exclusion.

In Bangladesh high profiles are a few who rose to the present position of fabulously wealthy only recently, not necessarily through honest labour, possibly with rare exceptions, but through dishonest means. The class being so microscopic that we know almost each other's earning modes. Here the common people are either very poor who can ill afford two square meals a day or live at barely subsistence level due to very low level of fair income. On the contrary, conspicuous consumption of a few high profiles does not escape others' notice,

because the country is not a very large one, not to speak of the benefit of the free media we have in Bangladesh.

M.T. Hussain
Ibrahimpur, Dhaka

Open-pit mining

Engr. AKM Shamsuddin has written a very good article on hydro-geological state of art pertaining to open-pit mining in the northwestern region of Bangladesh. It is so well written with scientific justification. I must admit that Mr. Shamsuddin, being a mining engineer, possesses quite a good

simple majority and coalition with the Jatiya Party, in custody, charged with extortion/corruption, awaiting trial.

Besides, many senior leaders/ex-ministers of almost all the above governments are in jail, some convicted and others awaiting trial, for corruption, extortion, misuse of power etc. This is the tragic story of Bangladesh since 1971. Do we deserve this?

Hence 1/11 was necessary and now that the present caretaker government has started to clean up the administration, and started a crusade against corruption, we must allow it to

duty-free access of LDC products, free labour movements, relentless campaign against international extremism and terrorism, meeting the challenge of global warming and its consequences, seeking the international community's support for Bangladesh to recover the money laundered abroad etc.

The initiatives being taken by CTG against corruption are second to none to set the derailed train back on the tracks. So, there are no two opinions for a patriot about the initiatives and contributions of the CTG.

I always define the CTG as unique because of its anti-

Fight for democracy

Mark Twain once said, "History never repeats itself, it rhymes." Countless times in the history of mankind people have resorted to violence for liberty and freedom, with the ineluctable outcome of bloodshed and conflict. Myanmar stands as a witness epitomizing man's imbecility and the failure to learn from past mistakes. Yet another outbreak of protest, with an imminent upheaval awaiting the military regime. The repercussions are inevitable: bloodshed, loss of lives and then the coup de grace, the downfall of the dictator.

It is important to note the cause from which this sudden disturbance stems.

Disparity among the rich and poor, discontent among general population, people living in squalor and poverty, corruption and rising political turmoil have all led to the mass protests. Government officials have amassed incredible wealth due to widespread corruption.

When the question of inequality comes, I must mention that the people there only earn enough so that they can eat for the day. The living standard of people is awful. This situation became impossible to tolerate and out of desperation the monks came out to protest against the Military Junta. In this violence at least four people, including three Buddhist monks, were killed near the holiest place in Myanmar, the Shwedagon Pagoda.

The monks also protested before in 1988 but that

couldn't bring democracy to Burma. General Ne Win, as a superstitious man, wanted only 45 and 90 kyat notes in circulation. This was because they were divisible by nine, which he considered a lucky number. But by cancelling the other notes which people held, much of their savings were wiped out overnight. This outraged the students and led to a huge protest against the government. That was a scene of 1988 but things have not changed much and that is why another protest began in the hope of bringing democracy in the country. Burma is a country full of natural resources, even more than Bangladesh and many other countries in South East Asia. In spite of having plenty of resources, Burma is still counted a least developed country. Higher education is restricted there. The martial law and the restrictions made Burma an underdeveloped country. After the violence and the protests by the Buddhist monks, the government decided to increase the petrol cost by 500%. That will definitely lead to high inflation rate, in terms of cost push inflation and will crush the whole economy of the country. The embargo from America will further aggravate the situation.

So, if this continues Burma will become a history to the people around the world and, therefore, some urgent steps should be taken by the UN and the neighboring countries, especially China.

Sarmad Chowdhury
Uttara, Dhaka



knowledge of hydrogeology. I am absolutely with him to opine that the government in the interest of the country must ask Asia Energy to revise its proposal.

Simultaneously, the government should include a clause banning open-pit mining in Bangladesh in the upcoming national coal policy.
Prof. Dr. Aftab Alam Khan
Department of Geology
University of Dhaka

Fate of our leaders

1. Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed. First Prime Minister of Bangladesh Government in Exile (Mujib Nagar) and Independent Bangladesh till Bangabandhu came to Dhaka. Killed in jail along with Capt. Mansur Ali, Mr. Nazrul Islam and Mr. Kamruzzaman.

2. Bangabandhu Sk. Mujibur Rahman, who fought for the emancipation of the people and pioneered the freedom struggle, Prime Minister and later President was brutally murdered along with several members of his family and others in 1975.

3. General Ziaur Rahman, the declarer of Independence, was assassinated in Chittagong in 1981.

4. Justice Sattar was unceremoniously deposed in a bloodless coup by General H.M. Ershad, the then Chief of Army.

5. President H.M. Ershad had to resign in the face of a mass upsurge and later convicted for corruption and served jail sentence. Many other cases are still pending against him.

6. Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister for two full five year terms and a short stint in between is in custody, charged with corruption, misuse of power, awaiting trial.

7. Sheikh 'Hasina, Prime Minister for one full term with

succeed, otherwise Bangladesh will be declared a "Failed State".

The Election Commission has started a gigantic task of preparing the voter list with National ID card with photo. And it is trying to achieve this by October 2008 so that an election can be held by the end of 2008. I do hope this can be done, but holding of free and fair election may not be the solution. There must be reforms in place—accountability, checks and balance, non-partisan president. The civil service and police must be kept out of political influence, the office of Ombudsman must be in place.

With all that, we must first strengthen the Local Government bodies, the basic foundation of functioning democratic governance.

There must be a clear definition of the role of the members of parliament (lawmakers), otherwise there will be confusion between Upazila Chairman and the local MP.
Wajid Ali Khan Panni
One-mail

CA's address

The Chief Adviser's UN General Assembly address has assured again the people of Bangladesh on the issue of holding a credible election by the end of 2008, which is really admirable. In his 15-minute speech, the CA depicted a pen picture of the bad state of democracy, political violence and rampant corruption in the past.

According to the CA, "Democracy is not an event, it is an on going process. It is not just about casting votes and changing government; it is about social justice, accountability and empowerment of people." For a quarter of an hour, the CA focused on all possible national and international issues like election, corruption, judicial independence,

corruption move to free the country from all sorts of ills.

G.M. Farhad Kabir (Aabir)
BBA (Marketing)
Dhaka University

Idols, images

Mr. Sabyasachi Ghosh laments that there is no suitable equivalent of Bengali "pratima" in English. (Hindu Deities, Letters, October 4, 2007). Allow me to suggest that there is. The word is "image." In fact, it is an almost literal translation of the Bengali "pratima."

It looks rather foolhardy of me, a Muslim, though of very liberal persuasion, to suggest this to his Hindu compatriot. So I looked up Nirad C. Chaudhuri, the puca sahib and quintessential Hindu Bengali. In his Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, the polymath (the Bengali equivalent would be sabyasachi) had this to say on the matter in his unmatchable description of Durga puja in his village home in East Bengal: "The image of the goddess was pleasant enough despite her ten arms and ten different weapons in each of the hands..." And, about the last phase of the festival, or immersion of the images: "But willy-nilly, the throng and, with it, the images proceeded towards the tank..."

So there you have it, from none other than Nirad Chaudhuri. Pratima is image. That should also enable Mr. Ghosh and others to avoid using the word "idol" if they wish to.

O if only life was so simple! The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary has this to say on the primary meaning of the word "idol": "An image or representation of a god or divinity used as an object of worship."

Mahfuzur Rahman
New York, US

Voter ID

We are talking about using technology not available in the country, imported from abroad. We think the authorities are aware that the equipments that would be used would require routine maintenance.

In Bangladesh, a number of new technology based projects are reported to be not operating due to lack of routine and regular maintenance, lack of trained manpower, choice of inappropriate technology etc. We hope the authorities con-

cerned would kindly keep this point in mind and proceed with the preparation of the voter list nationwide in one go.

It is needless to mention that any delay in the preparation of the voter list would affect the current plan for the general election, and would give rise to the blame game seen in our political arena.

A reader
One-mail



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