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### BKB branch needed

Koraisi Munshi Bazar under P.S. Dagonbhuyan, Dist. Feni is in dire need of a bank branch for obvious financial reasons. The locality surrounding the markets has the following favourable points for opening a bank branch.

1. The market is located almost in the middle of an area measuring 7 (seven) square miles on an average inhabited by nearly 60 (sixty) thousand people.

2. The market is the oldest and the biggest one in the locality. There are large numbers of business institutions in the market and in the surrounding areas.

3. The people of the locality within the jurisdiction of the market are very much interested to get the benefit of banking facilities, particularly the financial support advanced by the Bangladesh Krishi Bank.

4. There are vast tracts of agricultural land -- almost 90% under-utilised in the locality. There is, therefore, ample scope of commercial utilisation of these unutilised valuable agricultural

lands by setting up agro-based industries such as fisheries projects, horticulture, dairy farm, brick manufacturing etc., which shall require fruitful investment by the BKB.

5. The market is well connected from all sides by pucca roads having facilities of electricity, telephone and police outpost etc.

6. The market offers facilities for office accommodation of a bank as well as residential arrangements of bank officials.

7. The market and its surrounding areas have abundance of potential depositors/clients who require remittances to be transacted through a bank.

8. The locality has a large number of unemployed educated and uneducated young men. There is scope of creating employment opportunities locally for these unemployed people by ensuring intensive utilisation of under-utilised farmland belonging to the local people.

9. The establishment of a branch of BKB will help the people realise and understand the system of banking and investment in

rural economy.

10. The remittances from abroad together with local savings of the people shall accumulate into a huge fund and can be put to effective use for enhancement of farm output, which shall not only make the branch self-sufficient financially, but also turn it into a surplus economic zone.

11. The branch of BKB shall stand as a model financial institution for the people and help them to come forward with investment and banking proposals to suit their real financial needs.

12. In view of the above points, I would request the authorities concerned--Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh Bank & the Bangladesh Krishi Bank to kindly do the needful so that the aspirations of the people are fulfilled at an early date and the locality is blessed with a model banking institution serving the people at the grassroots level-- the lifeblood of the nation.

Prof. M. Sadeq  
Chairman  
Department of Management  
Tejgaon College, Dhaka

## Our pride: the liberation war

In 1971 I was in my early twenties. I had my loving parents, affectionate brothers, hearty friends and also someone to love. I had enviable educational degrees and reserved seat in the coveted Superior Service of Pakistan (selected by Central Public Service Commission). Leaving this rosy life I opted for the uncertain and risky life of a guerrilla fighter, not for anything less than freedom of my nation. My father an educationist bade farewell with a single sentence "Come back with honor". I could not face my mother at the time of departure.

During the days of war I realised the meaning of my father's words. It meant don't return defeated. To me victory was a must and we achieved it. In the war I found other guerrillas, some of them might have been less educated than me but their belief and commitment were stronger than mine. Many of them faced martyrdom with the full belief of liberation of their 'Sonar Bangla'.

War gave us many pains including death. But it gives us more pain, when someone with a nasty past ridicules our patriotism. We didn't join the war for women or wealth, neither to serve the interest of any foreign power. Rather the collaborators joined the war to rape, loot and serve their Pakistani masters.

Now if these criminals are not punished, we the freedom fighters feel defeated. Many of us are no longer in this world, many are crippled and old, still we can be the vanguard of our renewed struggle. But I shall urge upon our younger generation to join us to take our struggle to its logical goal. Otherwise, you will lose your national heritage and pride.

M. Sanaul Huq  
One-mail



## Politics in Pakistan



PHOTO: AFP

The political drama in Pakistan took yet another turn when the government finally allowed former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to set foot on Pakistani soil. This former chief minister of Punjab, who had served twice as prime minister, suddenly seems to be the hero in this game of politics in contrast with the other former prime minister who is said to have negotiated a deal with the ruling establishment. But the real question is what next?

The failure of Pervez Musharraf's dealings with Benazir Bhutto serves a lesson to the current emergency government about the uncertainties associated with dealing with former heads of government. Even though court rulings have validated Mr. Musharraf's imposition of the state of emergency, it appears the situation has turned even more volatile with street pro-

tests and agitations. Now with both former prime ministers in Pakistan are bent on seeing an end to the general's rule, rough times await both the nation and its premier. Undemocratic as Mr. Musharraf's move may be, no one can deny the massive development and restructuring that Pakistan has benefited from during his rule. While both the former prime ministers scorn at Musharraf's unconstitutional practices, their own corruption records are no secret locked up in Swiss bank accounts.

The real task before Mr. Musharraf right now is ensuring that the changes he has made, the modernism he has introduced, the fight against extremism that he has launched are upheld.

Ahsan Mosharraf Barkatullah  
On e-mail

commission, independent election public service commission and separation of judiciary. Under the pre 1/11 corrupt system; any elected government could not have done it in the next 25 years. This government is continuously addressing flaws in our administrative and legal system and trying to implement a better system. Once the flaws in the systems are cleared, corruption will gradually come to an end and economic progress will be ensured. The only failure of this government is in controlling price hike. This is partly due to the government's lack of understanding of corrupt practices of business people involved in importing essential commodities in connivance with customs and port authorities. It is also due to increase in prices of essential commodities in the international market. The government realising its mistake is now tackling the problem in a proper manner so that the supply level of essential commodities is not affected seriously.

I would like to request the people to be patient and not to lose faith in this government. My temporary sufferings will bring long-term prosperity for our nation. Never listen to the corrupt politicians who are desperately trying to preserve their old ways.

Md. Iqbal Hussain  
College Street  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

### A story of 1971

"Hum Namaj parega, Roza Rakhe ga, hum Musalman hai etc". This

was the Urdu reply of my father who was a 60 years old, influential village man with no knowledge of Urdu at all. He had to prove that he was a Muslim to a squad of Pakistani soldiers who were led to our home by a group of Razakars. One of the members of Razakars was my father's brother-in-law. My poor father could not satisfy the brutal Pakistani soldiers by his poor Urdu about his Muslim identity. He was trembling with fear. While the squad was leaving, one of the soldiers hit my father by the butt of his gun on his chest. The pain of this hit on his chest persisted till his death. He was complaining about the pain and I still feel that if I could find that soldier I would have killed him. Even if I face him today, probably I will hurt him if I can't kill him.

I was young at that time. Fearing being killed by the Pakistani army, I was hiding in a bush while I saw the squad coming towards our village. Many other young men like me did not cross the border. We remained in our own area, worked and fought against the Pakistani occupation forces on different fields.

My father's brother-in-law, the above-mentioned Razakar, visited my father several times after that day and advised him to convince me to join the Razakar Bahini or face dire consequences. I personally remember the activities of Razakars and Al-Badr men during the war of liberation. I remember how they led and showed ways to the Pakistani soldiers to the homes of many who did not join those heinous groups. They led the

Pakistani soldiers to the houses they knew where there were young members who did not join the anti-liberation forces and also where there were beautiful women... My father's brother-in-law became very influential in the area because he was a commander of a squad. My father cut off relations with him.

I saw how two villages -- Alampur and Boraitala under Kaziপুর PS in Pabna -- were completely burnt down by the Pakistani soldiers and their collaborators Al-Badr and Razakars. Many known and unknown people gave their lives in the hands of those Razakars during the liberation war. I will never forget my personal experiences till my death.

After the liberation war was over this Razakar uncle (I hate to call him uncle) faced the due backlash. He was caught by Mukti Bahini men and was being dragged away to be killed. It was my father who saved his life. He was, however, severely beaten by the Mukti Bahini members.

Now leaders and commanders of those heinous Bahinis are audaciously claiming that there was no liberation war and there were no war criminals in Bangladesh! Do I have to erase my own memory? Who gave them this audacity, who gave them such arrogance to say so?

If not tried, the war criminals must be stopped from saying so. Otherwise, we would remain liars to our own children. They will not believe the History of our Liberation War and the sacrifices their forefathers made for giving

them a free homeland of their own called Bangladesh.  
Shafiqul Islam  
One-mail

### Eid-ul-Azha and people in distress

The year 2007 will remain as a nightmare for every Bangladeshi, may be for many generations. In 2007 the country witnessed two most devastating floods, one after another, within a short span of time. It devastated lives and properties including standing crops twice. The country has not recovered yet from the losses caused by floods.

Then came the Hurricane Sidr. Sidr has washed away everything from the 13 coastal districts. Thousands of human lives were lost. About 5 lakh tons of crops were damaged. People of these districts are living under the open sky without food, water and shelter. The Hon'ble Chief Adviser has called upon all well-to-do people to stand by the survivors at this critical moment.

The second biggest religious festival of Muslims will be celebrated within two weeks. Every year we observe the rich people joining the competition for buying bulls at high prices, one on top of the other, to show their financial strength to their neighbours. They play with religion. I hope this year, those people will come to senses and contribute a portion of their Eid budget to help the people in distress. Allah, the Merciful, placed the needs of human beings

above all other considerations!  
Shafiqul Islam  
One-mail

### Bush and the world at large

US President George Bush threatens World War III if Iran goes nuclear: George Bush has perhaps forgotten that British forces invaded and occupied Washington the capital of the USA in 1812-1814, burnt down White House and the US President James Madison fled away from Washington like a coward. Later on, the White House was painted white to cover the mark of fire. Bush has also forgotten 9/11.

Benazir Bhutto returns to Pakistan after 8 years with a vow to reestablish democracy. Why was she greeted with bomb blasts that killed 140 persons on the first day of her homecoming. What was the mystery behind the killing of her brother Murtaza Bhutto while Benazir was the Prime Minister of Pakistan?

Nato to send more troops to Afghanistan: The USA attacked and occupied Afghanistan. Why does the USA want to involve Afghanistan to save its (US) own skin?

Rokonuddowlah, magistrate, Dhaka, Submitted unconditional apology for his opposition to separation of judiciary: He is a good and sincere public servant. To err is human!

O.H. Kabir  
Hare Street  
Wari, Dhaka

### Good move

On TV and on newspaper we see the news "CA becomes accessible by email" and the CA's press secretary has said that the CA would establish contacts with complainants and give replies.

None of the government departments ever care to reply to citizen's woes! It is necessary to appoint an Ombudsman so that all complaints against utility service providers can be heard. Interestingly, WASA is sending water bills every month but no water!  
Acitizen  
Dhaka

### Sidr and Grameen Bank

Last year Bangladesh was in the world media because of Nobel Peace Prize. The nation paid its homage to Grameen Bank and its founder Professor Yunus. But where is our Nobel laureate at this critical moment of the country? We have not heard his voice yet, although we heard a lot about his future plans to remove poverty from the country. Sidr has taken away everything from a large part of the country. The affected people's cry gives us a clear signal as to what they need now. Grameen Bank has a large network. Since it has been given Nobel Peace Prize, let us listen from it how the Sidr affected people can lead a peaceful life in future. Only tin-shed katcha houses are not the solution. These people need at least one well built pucca house in a family which can stand cyclones like Sidr.  
Kamaluddin Ahmed  
University of Chittagong

### Regional issues

The US and India are coming closer, with various models of pacts and exercises. For obvious reasons, to contain mighty China's hold on

South Asia, the long-term strategy of America is to form a seamless region, similar to the former British India.

The next phase is to contain Myanmar (huge energy resources, plus neutralizing communism). For this a closer base is necessary, preferably Bangladesh! The Asi Highway and Railway are a part of the game. Arm-chair analysts play with the possibility (in the future) of possible Balkanization of the vast Indian territories, with New Delhi now playing a passive role.

Another advantage to the foreign marauders is the state of discontent in the Saarc member countries, suffering from the after-effects and fall-outs of partition since 1947 (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal). Add the hostile and arrogant attitude of the of the big brother, no webbing oiled by uncle Sam.

These smaller members are so busy in day to day dealings of the entrenched evils in the changing society that the foreign policies do not get enough time or priority to ensure long-term strategies. In addition, for diversion, we are lured by the international and agencies (controlled by the western powers) with packets of goodies for sustainable development. Now watch the revolt against the IMF in Dhaka. When political regimes without self-control run the country, we become weaker, as the priorities shift to ad hoc gains. Thus national unity is not practised; and we cannot get out of this trap. The CTG is an emergency relief measure -- how to prepare the society to cultivate awareness of distant goals? It is not enough to shout whether we are Bengalees or Bangladeshis -- the popularity of a party is not the issue.

We cannot harness one inborn quality -- the gift of the gab. Non-stop debates and seminars are not taking the nation forward.

Concentration of power (in Dhaka) concentrates corrupt practices; and diversification dilutes the field and spreads it (read the White Paper on DCC Ward Commissioners yet to be published, but hopefully under drafting!).

We voters are neither here nor there -- sandwiched between powerful evil syndicates and cartels. These days, in the modern flats, we cannot open the windows and watch the natural sunlight -- the glasses are tinted in the cars!  
Alif Zabr, Dhaka

### Loyalty or vested interest?

About 15 to 20% people of this country actively participate in politics. Except for some minorities, most of them from top leadership to grassroots level activists involve themselves in politics for their own vested interest. Eighty percent people of this country were being exploited under the pre-1/11 corrupt political system. After 1/11 a new era of hope has ushered in. But this new situation has brought misery for most of the political activists. Sensing their political demise, they are desperately trying to save their supreme leaders, most of who are corrupt, so that they can preserve their old corrupt political system. For this reason they are showing blind loyalty and support to their supreme leaders. Nation's interests come last to these political activists. But they should by now realise that their days of exploiting this nation has come to an end under a sham democracy. No matter how hard they try they cannot turn back the clock before 1/11 and deceive this nation any more.

The achievements of the post 1/11 caretaker government are unprecedented. These are, creating an independent anti corruption

## Post-Sidr relief operations



The most fierce and powerful super-hurricane Sidr hit the entire coastal belt of Bangladesh on the night of Nov. 15, 2007 and it ravaged a very large part of Southern Bangladesh and some upland districts over a period of about 12 to 16 hours.

I am presently concerned about the huge task of post-hurricane relief operations in the large affected areas. Assessment of loss of lives, property, crops, fishing and infrastructure is and will be continuing for some time. Total assessment may even take another couple of weeks.

Meanwhile, the affected people are without any shelter -- they are passing their days and nights under

the open sky. They do not have food, drinking water or medicine. The government and many other govt. and non-govt. organisations are doing their best to give succour to the affected people.

Unfortunately, many places are still inaccessible and the far-flung char areas take long hours to reach them even if logistic support can be mobilised.

The United Nations, many other world bodies like WFP and European Union, and many countries on their own are pledging monetary support with promises to offer more if needed. Cash support will be of great use at the time of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the infrastructure and re-starting of the

production activities.

To my mind, we need immediate supplies in material terms like food, clothing and even tents for temporary shelters of the shelter-less people. And they need to be dispatched to the large affected areas by the quickest possible means. I mean a large fleet of helicopters is urgently required for a successful relief operation. Our friendly countries may be approached for this material support.

Secondly, to organise the relief operations systematically the government may consider posting of senior-level officers, at least of the level of Joint Secretary at three or four places like Barguna and Bagerhat for two months to organise, monitor and lead the relief oper-

ations on such a large scale. I remember Mr. Sultan-uz-Zaman Khan, the then Commissioner of Khulna Division, was posted for a month and a half at Barguna in 1991 to lead the relief operation after that year's Gorki. The officers concerned should have co-ordination responsibilities of the total activities of all other govt. and non-govt. organisations. The sooner the govt. considers organising such a field-level organisation, the better.

The people should be reached as fast as possible with all necessary relief materials to avoid further post-hurricane disaster.  
Khorshed Alam  
Former Principal Finance Secretary  
& Former Governor  
Bangladesh Bank