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Mayoral candidates

It has been reported that the big parties are not finding good mayoral candidates, which seems to be a problem. They encouraged the corrupt people to be in politics in the last 36 years and sidelined the good people. So the parties have created this problem.

The political parties need to select good people. Otherwise, the same murky situation will arise once again.

Mahmudul Hasan
Engr, Texas Instruments
Dallas, USA

Youthful at 42

People, mainly in the western parts of the globe, are of the opinion that life begins at forty and they act accordingly! There have been many people from many disciplines proving that point right!

Today, however, I feel like sharing my wonder with the readers as to the great Bollywood actor Shahrukh Khan at 42 now! This is indeed amazing to notice a new Khan with all his vitality revived at a new height --- with an amazing & vibrant physique! Khan, the flamboyant performer, does appear to be there in the cine screen with a new dimension that is awfully magical!

People like Khan and others of his kind do remind me of Mark Twain's words: "Always do right--- this will gratify some people and astonish the rest!"

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

In memory of Flora Husband

Flora and Captain Richard

Husband came from Scotland and lived to work in Dhaka. They lived in Bangladesh for ten years till 1969 when they returned to their home in Norfolk, UK.

Captain Richard Husband was the Chairperson of IOWA in East Pakistan. They had three children all of whom were studying in Dhaka.

Flora and Richard were known for combining professional excellence with social commitment. Flora was an active member of the British Women's Association and Women's Voluntary Association of which she was the first elected president.

Her friends will be sad to hear that Flora passed away on 12 November after a prolonged ailment. Her funeral was held at Holy Trinity Church, Ingham UK. She is survived by her children, Mary Louise, Bertha and Allan Cameron.

She will be remembered in Dhaka as a respected welfare worker who gave much of her time working in slums, helping people to become self-reliant. As a sincere friend of Bangladesh she played host to many of her Bangladeshi friends who were stranded in London in the seventies.

She stood by their side, helping with resources and hospitality without any reservation.

Flora's tenacity in times of stress, her support for those in need, her warmth and trust will always be cherished by all those who came in contact with her wonderful loving personality.

In Flora's passing away we have lost a personal friend and Bangladesh a trusted well-wisher.

Khurshed Erfan Ahmed
Dhaka

Sidr and Sundarbans



These days most newspaper columns are replete with stories of the cyclone hit areas depicting peoples' struggle to put their lives together. Various agencies, particularly Bangladesh Forest Department, are already making an assessment of the damage to Sundarbans as a result of cyclone Sidr. Some experts voiced their opinions on the recovery strategies. Nonetheless, it is important that the ecological

dynamics of Sundarbans be taken into consideration before putting any such strategy into action.

The Sundarbans mangrove is an ecological playground of nature. Unlike plantations, processes such as diurnal ebb-tide, episodic disturbance like the cyclone Sidr, have been shaping this magnificent forest over many centuries, if not thousands of years. Forest

management including recovery activities, e.g., salvage-harvesting and cleaning of debris from the forest floor should, therefore, be in symphony with these processes, in order to maintain a sustainable ecosystem.

Over time, Sundarbans will recover from the wounds of the cyclone.

Abu M. Nurullah, Ph.D.
Olympia, Washington, USA

Sidr and television coverage

Two odd things caught my attention when the southeastern part of the country was devastated by the deadly cyclone Sidr.

One is the dress code of our top civil servants. They were suited-booted at the scene. It shows how insensitive they are to people's miseries.

Second, the regular TV

programmes on the day of cyclone Sidr. The storm was advancing towards the land according to the weather report. Everybody was anxious about the storm but the TV channels were broadcasting 'Glamour World' and dramas. They should have cancelled regular programmes and kept people updated with the current status of the storm. Even after the storm, they did not bother to put a hold on regular programmes. During this

time, the TV channels could have brought in the celebrities and ask them to help raise funds for the cyclone victims.

I am just pondering when good sense will prevail upon us.

Mamun Ahmed
Las Vegas, NV, USA

Yaba addiction

I came to learn from the newspaper about Yaba addiction among the young boys. Even the girls are

getting addicted to it. It is a new addition to the world of drug abuse in our country.

The drug peddlers who are smuggling yaba into Bangladesh should be arrested without further delay.

It is time we paused to ponder over the matter and started doing the needful in the greater interest of the nation.

Panna Deb
Raynagar Darjeepara, Sylhet

Trial of anti-liberation forces

The letter from Mr. M Ferdaus Masud, UK, on the trial of anti-liberation forces referred. Mr. Masud has made several observations that deserve response from the discerning citizen of Bangladesh, more so at a time when our beloved Bangladesh is passing through a phase that will determine the future for the better or worse, depending on how the majority of the people think and act now. Whilst there is absolutely no problem with agreeing to the comments and views of Mr. Masud, however, in the final analysis he has given ample reasons to discard his recommendation as to the current course of events vis-à-vis priorities of the nation. For clarity, let's look at Mr. Masud's comments one by one.

Firstly, newspapers are coming forward with great enthusiasm on the trial of anti-liberation forces. He questions what were they doing in the last 36 years? By the same token, he finds it ridiculous to see everyone asking the CTG to try the war criminals which no previous govt. did. He has gone on to observe this as a sign of decaying political norm in Bangladesh.

Secondly, the corruption issue has taken the center-stage. Common people want that to be dusted first. Politicians have lost their credibility--the BNP and the AL are accused of unprecedented corruption and using the Jamaat for political gains. General people are no longer interested in what those politicians say.

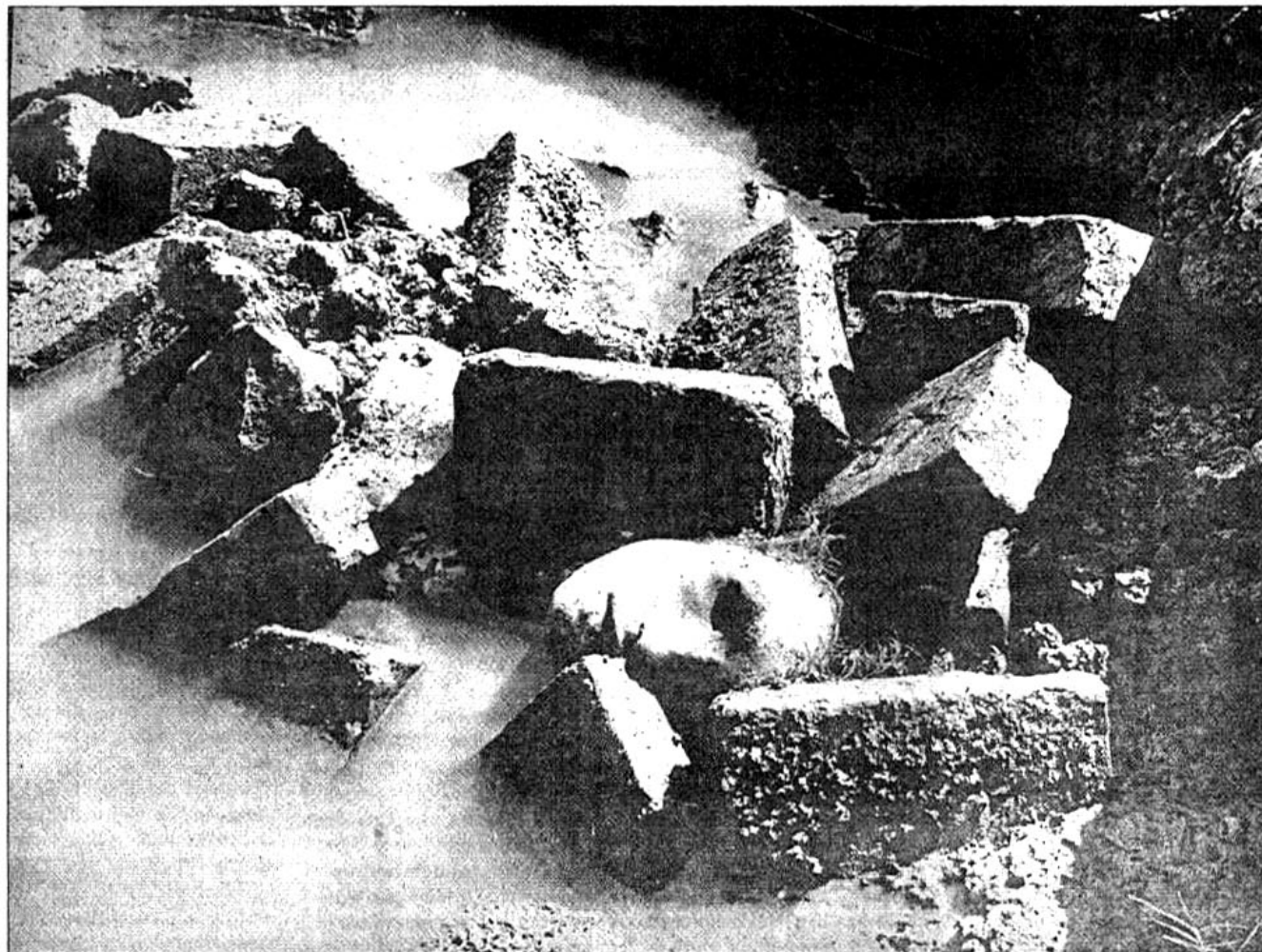
Thirdly, our country needs stability; hence, democracy is to be restored. Then came his recommendation to the main political parties that they show leadership and refrain from polarizing the nation. Or else, he warned them of unwanted forces to be benefited.

Dear Mr. Masud, I hope you do see inconsistency and contradiction in your above pattern of thinking. I want to believe that you love Bangladesh as much as we all do and you are equally concerned with the betterment of the country. Then tell me why do you think that after a certain number (36) of years our newspapers should think that the demand for trial of anti-liberation forces is no longer an issue to be reckoned with? Likewise, why our

politicians, though they let us down, have lost their moral ground to join in a national demand such as the trial of the anti-liberation forces? Why do you consider trial of the anti-liberation forces less important or in other words conflicting, at this point of time, with other priorities of the CTG namely, fight against corruption? Why and how the trial of the anti-liberation forces comes in the way of taking Bangladesh into a better future? And finally, though you put this question to all those sharing your views, why do you consider and advocate that demand for the trial of anti-liberation forces is a threat to the unity of the nation?

At the end I shall quote Einstein, "The World has become a dangerous place to live, not because of the evil people but because of the people who do not want to do anything about it". Better late than never. We want the TRIAL OF ANTI-LIBERATION FORCES to be initiated by the CTG without any delay.

Moinul Chowdhury
Gulshan, Dhaka



Muralidharan -the greatest

It was the most tense and eagerly awaited moment for Sri Lankans as well as the cricket lovers all over the world to watch Muttiah Muralidharan, the wizard of both off and leg spin which he called dursra, getting the highest number of wickets in Test cricket, breaking the record set by the legendary Australian Shane Warne. Muralidharan surpassed Shane Warne's record of 708 wickets by taking the wicket of Paul Collingwood of England in his home ground in Kandy. He leveled the record when he took the wicket of Ravi Bopara. But Murali had to wait patiently for his prized possession because rain delayed play. However, luck finally smiled on him.

We all congratulate him for his wonderful performance and hope that someday our boys will also create history in the cricket arena which will make us proud. We also know that records are made to be broken and the record set by Murali may be surpassed by someone in the future. But it is important to mention that the great Shane Warne has congratulated Muralidharan saying he is a wonderful player and he had all the potential to achieve this wonderful feat.

Humayun Hyder
Zigatola, Dhaka

Restructuring of local government

The report submitted to the government by the Local Government Reformation Commission suggested making each unit of Local Government self-sustaining. It means the Union Parishad or Upazilla Parishad will have to impose taxes on residents at higher rates for all development works and other poverty reduction programmes. With this end in view, the UP Chairman will impose taxes mainly on small traders, marginal farmers and his rival party supporters heavily and intentionally as we observed in the past.

All influential persons of the localities will evade taxes in connivance with the members and commissioners as before.

Almost all development works so far were in fact, engineered by the LGED, Facility Department,

Health and Social Welfare Department considering the demand of the area after much deliberation. Maybe, there were some discrimination and political domination in decision making but the check and balance was visible.

The new suggestion might create a total deadlock in development work and generate bitter tension and distort local harmony.

The Local Government Commission of three members as proposed must go into the depth of the matter and prepare an effective working system, so that the decentralisation functions in line with the expectations of the public at large.

We should not forget that our local bodies are age old institutions having the mandate of the

Kumar Prithwiraj Nath
Toronto, Canada

Digital maps

University of Alabama at Birmingham Associate Professor Akhlaque Haque, Ph.D., is in Bangladesh on a mission to create that nation's first comprehensive digital maps, starting in the capital city of Dhaka. Haque, a Bangladeshi, says that currently, there are no digital maps of the city available to the public.

Haque and a team of graduate students at BRAC University in Dhaka, a city of about 11 million, are traveling through the city's streets carrying hand-held GPS units capturing data on the location of roads, police stations, hospitals, government buildings, etc. They will download the location data into computers using Geographic Information Technology (GIS) in order to create the digital maps.

Why this project is important:

1) Haque will be able to determine alternative routes in and out of the city. This will be especially important for police, rescue workers and aid workers.

2) There is a need to develop a generation of GIS professionals in Bangladesh. Currently, there are few trained GIS professionals in the country.

You can learn more about Dr. Haque's work and about GIS at www.uab.edu/bangladesh

Gail Short
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Office of Media Relations

Ban on religious parties

Recently, some political parties have appealed to the EC to ban religion-based political parties from participating in elections. They argue that the founders of the religion-based parties are war criminals and also that allowing such parties to contest in elections will go against the secular nature of the state. Well, I am not writing in support of any proven war criminal, but I want to assert that the founders of all religion-based parties are not proven war criminals. The spirit of our liberation war was to ensure that every individual has the right to practise his/her respective religion peacefully. The constitution of Bangladesh also guarantees different political parties having different political ideologies to contest in polls with the common people reserving the right to decide which one of them should rule the country.

We know that different political parties have different ideologies. Similarly, the Islamic parties believe in the political ideology of Islam. Islam is a religion that caters to all aspects of human life including political life. We know that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ruled Medina according to the Islamic constitution and this legacy was carried by the subsequent Caliphs of Islam.

It is up to the people to decide whether to vote for them or not. It will be entirely undemocratic if these parties are not allowed to run in national elections.

Many people have a misconception that in an Islamic state the non-Muslims are not permitted to practise their respective religions peacefully. This is a gross misconception. Islam teaches its followers to deliver others the message of truth but if someone rejects it then Islam doesn't give its followers the right to coerce that person to accept it. So, having Islamic rule in a country doesn't go against the definition and practices of secularism. I do not support political parties who use religion as a bait to hoodwink people and go to power but I do not support any move to bar a party from contesting in polls simply for its ideology. It is absolutely undemocratic.

So, I would urge the EC to bear these facts in mind and not to become undemocratic by banning all religion-based parties from running in polls. Remember, this move goes against the very constitution of Bangladesh.

Sameer Ahmad Khan Mojib
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

36 years under scrutiny

After 36 years of independence a section of the population complains of total failure of Bangladesh's entire state system--socio-political and socio-economic. Unfortunately, they are correct to a certain extent. What is extremely unfortunate is that the exponents of this theory do not want to recognise even whatever little we have achieved under adverse circumstances.

I am interested in socio-economic issues, rather than socio-political matters. Socio-political issues are difficult to evaluate, because globally its parameter is so huge. One or two examples should explain the predicament. In the west, the gay movement gets considerable, if not equal, political attention as does the issue of tax cuts. The next US presidential election will be fought mainly over Iraq and Illegal Immigrant issues. Over what issues our next parliament elections will be fought? It will surely be

interesting to watch!

We have already missed a chance to hold our scheduled national election last year over issues such as absence of level playing field, alleged election engineering, defective voter list, nature of ballot boxes, and above all unreliable guardians of the election process. Hopefully, these concerns are taken care of.

Political discussions are always inconclusive, hence, endless. When the most powerful country in the world, the USA, achieved all its might through presidential form of government, parliamentary form of governance is still popular around the globe. Socio-economic issues however can be conclusively narrowed down to a certain degree of concurrence.

As a watcher of TV talk shows, where eminent personalities take part, one wonders the reason for their outright negation of whatever little socio-economic progress our dear country has achieved so far. There is no scope to ignore some of the advancements. We have reasons to be proud of ourselves. The fact that our development partners are still willing to work with us is good enough argument for our positive attitude towards socio-economic development that we have shown so far. Why then is the apprehension?

Other matters such as increased number of cars on the road, private universities, shopping malls, availability of branded goods, development of garments and textile industry, mushrooming of hotels and restaurants are but simple indicators of rising economy. The availability of mobile phone technology; computers, Internet etc are the result of our accessibility to global market and increased buying power. Furthermore, the growth of private sector healthcare cannot be ignored too. Though these are mainly city based--it has to start from somewhere.

If we could properly we have not got full 36 years to build our nation (there was political turmoil on a few occasions). The truth is peace and progress can only be brought through a peaceful process keeping the momentum of development alive all the time.

Nurur Rahman
Elephant Road, Dhaka

Our prime ministers

There is always a good timing to do everything in life. If anyone can hit the perfect time, he will get the best score in his life. Taking great decisions and accepting real facts of life, anyone can make his or her life peaceful, and can create a nice world.

Our last two prime ministers have already seen the "Lal Dalan" (prison) after facing different charges. In fact, they did not commit any crime against a single person or against a single family; it is crime against the whole nation--millions of people have paid for the greed of a political party or some people's lust for money. However, those people, who made people's lives miserable, have already got enough money to live a first class life in Bangladesh.

I would like to thank the present caretaker government which has arrested the most corrupt people. However, the general public is not educated and they get easily deceived.

We can say that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made a mistake when he granted a general amnesty to the war criminals, and maybe, therefore, we have to see their faces in our national papers or TV channels. Now, if you cannot raise your voice against the corrupt people and the war criminals, God knows what will happen to this nation.

Audree
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada

Undemocratic

I strongly feel that the war criminals should have been tried long before, but the demand for such trials appear to have come at a wrong time and from the wrong people. The people who virtually established the Jamaat in national politics have now suddenly become vocal and want to put the gun on someone else's shoulder to wipe them out. One gets a strong feeling that the Jamaat, by now, has already made inroads into national politics and even if they compete independently in the coming election they are likely to become a force to reckon with. Keeping this in mind they are now out to eliminate the Jamaat on some pretext or the other. Let the people decide whether they should be eliminated or not through the ballots. The Law Adviser has rightly pointed out that they don't want to be a scapegoat to handle such a sensitive issue and those who have not tried the war criminals in the last 36 years should be taken to task first.

I also condemn the irresponsible utterances of Mr. Mujahid. A conscious citizen
One-mail