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ZIA...



TANVIR AHMED/DPKNEWS

Apparently, all international standard airports must have two runways. But Zia International, Shah Amanat in Chittagong, and Shahjalal in Sylhet all have one major runway each. Granted that the latter two's international arrival and departures are negligible, but what about Dhaka? We have seen in more than one instance the whole airport becoming dysfunctional when a mishap happens on the runway (Malaysian Airlines some years back, Saudia recently, and our own Biman DC-10 crash landing in Chittagong) for hours at a time, creating a ripple effect in the flight traffic in the region.

In Zia International, are there any future plans for a second runway to upgrade the airport to international standards? If there are any, how will it affect the high-rises coming up in Uttara in the north and Biswa Road on the south? The government already acquired a substantial amount of land in Kaliakoir earlier this decade for a new airport. Has their been any cost-benefit analysis of the difference in upgrading the existing airport and building a new one from scratch?

Common sense dictates in favour of the existing site at ZIA. Another reason ZIA should

be retained as an airport is that we don't want another urban tumour within Dhaka in the form of an abandoned airport like Tejgaon, as if in an overpopulated city, we have all these lands to spare creating the obstacles to the east-west traffic flow that the city desperately needs.

At the same time, ZIA does have an image problem. After taking off from the super airports of the Middle East or South East Asia, the drab interior of the airport is not very welcome. It lacks the horizontal people movers, making it difficult for the elderly and the children to disembark, and there only one telescopic corridor per aircraft that makes the embarkation and disembarkation a lengthy time consuming process, especially if it's a wide bodied aircraft. The poor lighting, the chaos at the immigration, the pathetic duty free shops, and the last but not the least, the throng of people accosting arriving passengers is not the first impression visitors should get when arriving in Bangladesh.

M.K. Aarif
Architect
Gulshan 2, Dhaka

Pain killing drugs

There was never any lack of understanding amongst the physicians regarding the usefulness of this particular drug oral morphine in treating severe pain. This is particularly true and more useful for cancer patients of whom many are at the terminal stage of their life. It is cheap, affordable and essential drug recommended by World Health Organization (WHO) and International Narcotic Control Board (INCB) for cancer pain. Granted that opioids, the substances from Poppy plant which includes morphine also, are looked upon with scorn due to their addictive nature, but as a medication, these may provide a window of respite, a pain free existence and peaceful exit from life.

Generalists may feel that there are some 'trip wires' in the management of cancer patients especially when there is issue of prescribing narcotic drugs. The drug control board recognizes these 'trip wires' with the fear of spreading addictive drugs nationwide. But it is important to know that addiction involving oral morphine is non-existent for the patient and abuse of the oral form has never become an issue anywhere in the world if the dispensing mechanism is correctly monitored.

There also remains a wrong belief that morphine is only used as "comfort for the dying" and as a "last resort" rather than seeing them as legitimate pain killers that can improve the quality of life. It is also common for people who are trapped between their concern about addiction and their desire to relieve pain to say "So what if they are addicted, they are going to die anyway". This putatively humanitarian approach is entirely inappropriate because it perpetuates a faulty definition of addiction; it unjustly labels the pain patient as an addict and in any case will probably not result in adequate pain relief because of uncorrected knowledge about addiction.

Relief from pain is an act of extreme mercy. If we are to extend this to cancer patients in the country, let it be done freely to all so that "the quality of mercy is not strained." It is not an impossible task.

Dr. Nezamuddin Ahmad
Associate professor &
Project Coordinator
Palliative Care
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University (BSMMU)
Dhaka

Our secondary education

So far my memory goes study seemed to be like an agony for me. Instead of pleasure and amusement it turned into pain and burden. If my memory does not betray me, I can recollect the events of my school life. I think most of the students in our country, have such kind of experience as I had in the past. Our education system, particularly at the secondary level is divided into three parts (i.e. English medium, Bengali medium, madrasa). I think it is a sign of discrimination. In the age of capitalism education is no longer a right, rather a privilege. In case of school level students education appears to be a matter of stress and burden. I think our so-called teachers are partially responsible for this stress.

As they are not properly trained, they have don't know how to teach. If we observe the situation, we will see schoolteachers usually lead a wretched and miserable life. So at first we should address this issue. Yes, teachers have to be well paid and they must enjoy a respectable position in society.

Aiman Bin Shaofiqul Hamid
(Jasim)
Dept. of English
International Islamic University
Chittagong (IIUC)

Commendable UN enterprise...

We came to learn that the United Nations, on the request of the present PM of Pakistan, has agreed to investigate the former PM Benazir Bhutto's assassination. We are indeed cheered at the news because crimes of such magnitude in Pakistan usually go unpunished.

The late Benazir Bhutto has laid down her life for the welfare of her country.

It is our belief that if the UN succeeds in unearthing the mystery, people around the world will feel relieved. We further believe that success of this mission will be a booster to the worldwide campaign against terrorism.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong



Chaotic politics

Just after skimming through the headlines I tucked the FORUM, a supplementary of The Daily Star, into my office bag while heading towards my office. It was kept on my desk, and suddenly I bumped into the one of the early cover pages of the SWM portrayed on its back cover as an ad for SWM. In fact that cover page with a banner heading "JCD UNLEASHED" compelled/inspired me to write this.

Well, let me clear you about what comes into my mind. We have seen a lot of political drama in last two years. We have seen ex-prime ministers, ministers and MP from all the leading parties became headlines as detainees. But we didn't hear anything about the "Shonar Chhele", the hooligans of those political parties. Those roughnecks are untouched during the CTG tenure. We know what they can do when they are unleashed. I would like to mention especially about the rowdy student leaders and workers of the political parties. Of course I would not love

to generalize that all the student leaders and workers of political parties are ruffians but we have to admit that there are many among them who are really ruffians and they do not have any ideology. Now the question is that the detainee ministers, MPs are being freed and undoubtedly they are going to participate in the next national election, and who will ensure that they will not unleash those "Shonar Chhele" again to intimidate the voters. Then what is the use of all this CTG ballyhoos.

The kings got a little shake but the reserved soldiers are untouched. Let's wait for the next election to see which parties' reserves become stronger in the meantime.

Shamim Murad

Shankar

Dhanmondi

Dhaka

General Mustafiz

It is with great sadness that we took the news of the recent death of former chief of Army Staff General Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman, Bir Bikram (may his soul rest in peace). General Mustafiz was, among other things, a fine gentleman, a knowledgeable person, an expert in his field, a pleasant personality, a good orator, a good host and a good listener. Ms. Sarwar Sultana - a former acting cabinet minister (internal administration) of the United Nations administered East Timor and I have had the opportunity to meet the General and his family on a number of occasions during his life time.

In the year 2000, General Mustafiz visited East Timor as the head of the Bangladesh Army. One of the purposes of his visit was to assess and determine in person - how much effective and efficient his engineers battalion was when it came to the battalion's performance in the UN administered territory, I mean East Timor.

In the course of that visit, he enquired about the welfare of battalion members, dined and spent time with them, got himself familiar with challenges his forces had been facing in rebuilding East Timor, discussed relevant matters with the UN administration, influential political leaders and concerned others, reiterated Bangladesh's support for East Timor's rebuilding efforts, and motivated battalion members for better performance via forums such as the darbar, to mention a few.

I can still remember how much pleased he was when he heard about (from the UN administration and other sources) and witnessed in real terms the quantity and the quality of contributions the Bangladeshi forces had been making towards rebuilding East Timor's physical infra-structure.

In fine, I pray to Almighty Allah for the departed soul. May the Almighty give his family and concerned others the strength and courage to bear the irreparable loss.

Dr. M. S. Haq

One-mail

Opening a bank account

Recently, I went through a new hassle in a govt. office. I had to open an account in any branch of Sonali Bank. So I went to branch close to my residence - Mirpur Industrial Branch, Sonali Bank. To open an account, the bank official asked for my national identity card (NID), commissioner certificate, testimony from my office-boss, my academic papers and attestation from any account holder of Sonali Bank's that branch. I got everything ready spending at least three days. And at the last moment, when all the procedures were going to be complete a bank official ordered me to go to any branch

nearer to my office. I informed him that my office was located in Gulshan but I reside in Pallabi, Mirpur. I need an account with this branch. With due respect, I questioned him whether there was any rule, regulation or restriction to let me have an account in that branch. To be noted, I was very polite and sober in my dealing with him. But he was rude from the very beginning. I was astonished. Being disappointed at that I went to another Sonali Bank branch in Mirpur-12 the next day. That branch asked for nothing but NID card and allowed me to have an account number. Completing all the procedures, took me near about four hours. I think it was too much and such hassle is very commonplace in almost all government offices. Nowhere we can blame or report against these irregularities and inconveniences. So our suffering has no end.

Things cannot change overnight. But at least we can expect behavioural change in these offices.

Md. Abdul Malak (Mamun)

Pallabi

Mirpur, Dhaka

Fakirhat

Fakirhat is a union of Palasbari in Gaibandha district, which has the proud memories of 10 martyred freedom fighters. Local people are expecting Fakirhat to be a new upazila, which has been their demand to the government from a long time.

We urge the government to declare Fakirhat as a new upazila.

Sakina Khanam

One-mail

Shame!

A few days back one of our freedom fighters was insulted by a war criminal. I think it is our national shame. But our government did not take any action. If our freedom fighters, who sacrificed a lot for the sake of our country, are not safe, how can we live with dignity?

Mohammad Ali

As student

Sylhet

Smoking

We all know that smoking in public places and any kind of publicity of any tobacco products is prohibited in our country. But people are still smoking in public places and some shops have again started using banners of cigarettes. So, the law is not being implemented properly. That is why, people feel emboldened to smoke openly.

The law enforcers do not ask people not to smoke in public places. As a result, people are taking the Tk 50 fine very lightly. Therefore, I believe the amount should be much higher.

Rizwan Rashid Arnob

A-level student

BIMS

Dhanmondi

Dhaka

CTG's performance

When an incompetent person runs the government and fails, we don't mind. But when Dr. Fakhruddin's administration fails we do mind. People are very much disappointed about the poor performance of the CTG. Although they had all the logistic support and necessary tools to run an administration smoothly and efficiently, they have failed to deliver.

Had they been successful, people won't ask for any political government, for at least another ten years. Now the situation is different, the sooner they leave, the better. And once they leave, they will never be remembered, as they have failed to fulfil the aspirations of the people of this country.

All the bad guys are coming out and running for public office!

Obayed

Dhaka

Militancy issue in RCC election

This letter is in response to the news item published in your daily on August 03, 2008 regarding Rajshahi City Corporation election candidates' reluctance to express a firm stance on militancy issue during their campaign.

AL backed candidate AHM Khairuzzaman Liton defends himself by saying that he expects to draw large number of votes from BNP-Jamaat supporters which could swing if he talks too much against militancy and so it is better not to talk about this issue. Surely he has preferred votes to the spirit he professes to have. His reticence is tantamount to being lenient to the militants. The AL frequently claims to be on the pro-liberation axis of Bangladeshi politics. If he isn't determined to convince the voters of his message, then what's the point of his becoming a candidate (and ultimately winning)? Islam doesn't permit terrorism and militancy and he should have persuaded his voters in favour of him by getting across this message to them.

BNP-backed candidates Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul and Rezaunnabi Dudu showed lame excuses for their silence - none of their competitors has raised the issue, talking about the militancy issue would create disputes among candidates and will not bring them any positive results, rather it would impact negatively on their vote tally. How could they blatantly ignore the voters who bore the brunt of militancy during the last BNP-Jamaat regime and now want to know their stance on militants?

It's really frustrating that people

of Rajshahi had to vote for a mayor without even knowing their chosen candidate's precise position on militancy issue.

Ahmad Ferdous Bin Alam
Dhaka

What I saw in Bangladesh

When I heard my mother was sick, I went to Bangladesh for two weeks but I stayed a little longer than four weeks. My last visit was in 2005 and I noticed after three years that there had been a lot of change. First of all, at the airport everything was good, no hassle, quick service, all in order and everything on schedule. No hartal and no violence and I was able to use and enjoy all my valuable time. The bad politicians were all in jail or outside the country. Most of the people are happy. Factories, industries and ports, all institutions are working in order. The only complaint is that the cost of living has gone higher. Is all this for rule of Emergency? Long live Emergency! People have high expectations of the caretaker government, especially for system development. For example, the police still serve the government instead of serving ordinary citizens. Politics is becoming more open, most of the old political actors and actresses are going back to the stage.

The road show is over, did they find any leaders? Who knows how much money was wasted for this purpose. Nobody knows what surprise will come out in 2009. Everybody, including me, hopes for prosperity and a better future of Bangladesh. In the future, I will write about my experiences again.

Nokib-E-Kibria
Toronto, Canada

Bloodletting and the US

The bloodletting game is a common spectacle in some Muslim countries. After the US invasion in Afghanistan and Iraq, it has been frequently proved that both the countries are pretty vulnerable to violence. Almost every day we find news of suicidal bombings in Iraq and Afghanistan. And the statistics of slain people depict the spectacle of inhumanity!! Mostly Muslim countries are exposed to violence as some of them have become breeding grounds of terrorists. Needless to mention, people of Iraq and Afghanistan are leading their lives amid great fear. Since the US aggression took place in these countries the hellish days began.

Now let's come to the main point, what does actually the US think of itself, does it have the sole right to decide how other countries will behave? And what's the point of the UN being there? It cannot do anything to scuttle US plans!

Hasnat, AIUB
Banani, Dhaka

VAT and customs

We, who are in the private sector and working in manufacturing industries, need to interact with VAT & customs offices on a regular basis.

After 1/11 when the anti-corruption drive started we experienced some positive changes in the behaviour of the officials of VAT and customs officials. Many may agree with me that those running their businesses honestly face lots of problems. I was working in a blade manufacturing plant and was dealing with import, export, local purchase among other things. For their routine work VAT and Customs officials

take "nominal" charges. They do not consider it as extra "income" but "due earning". No favour can be expected against this "due payment".

For "income" they need some flaws in records and documents. Even for "income" customs and VAT officials sometimes ask for some papers that are not required as per rules.

Challenging the officials is too much time consuming and leads to harassment.

These corrupt officials are adding to their wealth day by day.

We must overcome these problems as a matter of priority.

Imtiaz
Chittagong

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Chittagong



PHOTO: AFP

Points to ponder

An ageless saying states "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely!" Corruption in this case does not refer to financial corruption. Corruption covers a vast range of things; in thoughts, words and deeds. It could well be the power driven blindness, based on the principles of "might is right"; which is getting its day at regular intervals in Bangladesh!

This possibly says your August 01, front-page report by Sarkar. With the mandate of authority and power coming from what the late Chairman Mao defined; "from the barrel of

the gun" the CTG set about the task of cutting the coat for the local polls by trimming its political basis and making it a somewhat individual show; dissected from any clear political linkage. After all, our "powers that be" desire that the old and misused model of "democracy" practiced by our politics needs life-saving injections of doses of "Autocracy", which is the current mode of governance in most countries of Asia, barring India; the lone outcast, from this new model democracy (?). One wonders which team will win this crucial game; power or justice?

Voter
Dhaka

Saarc: A lame duck

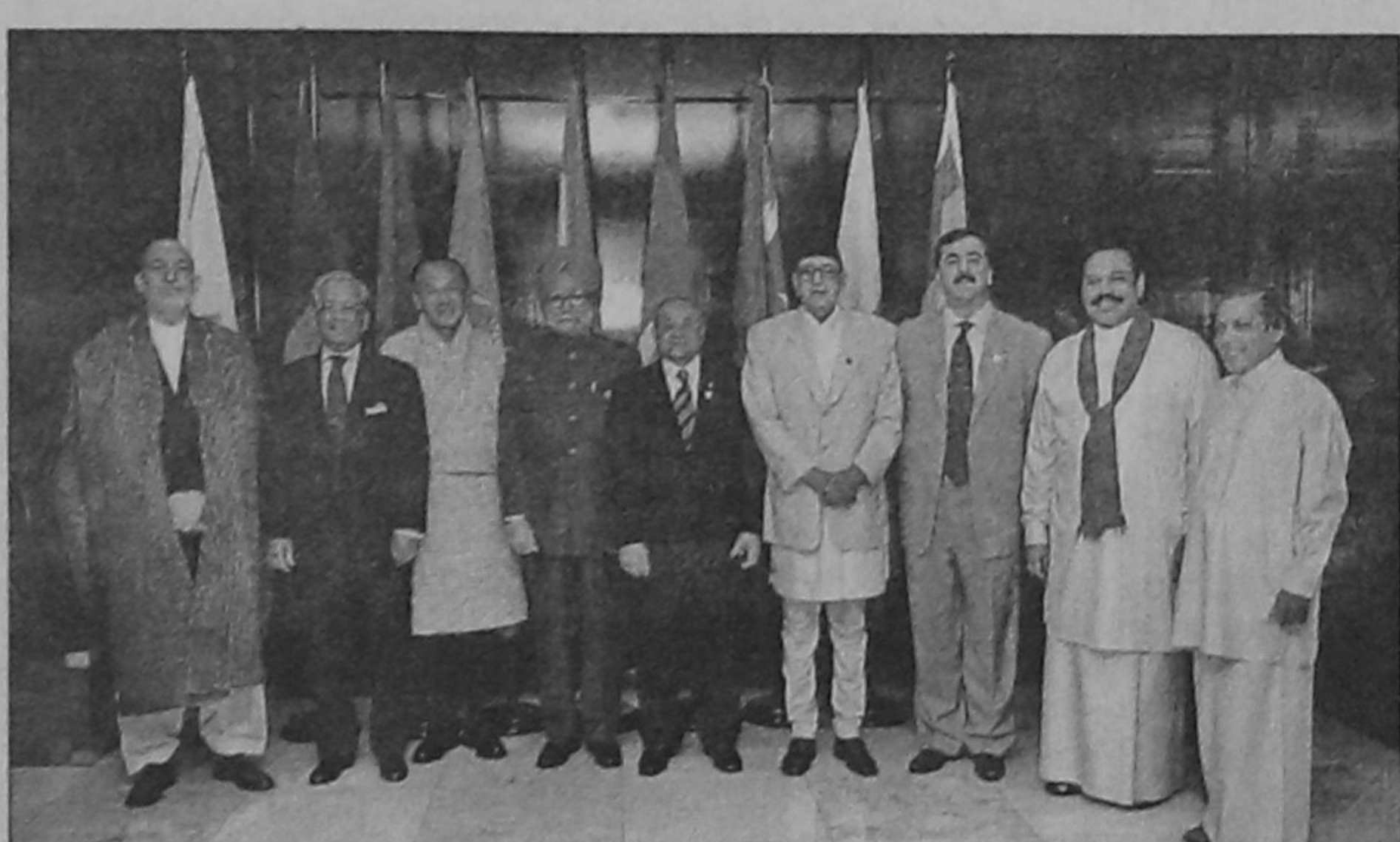


PHOTO: AFP

Saarc has so far achieved no remarkable success except holding meeting after meeting at different levels. Although, we cannot find any remarkable success of Saarc in terms of expectations of the huge population of the eight member countries, the inherent problems are well identified by now. Ideological conflicts, economic imbalance, big brotherly attitude, external influence and lack of leadership qualities are some of the major hurdles standing on the way of achieving any significant progress. The

future is not bright either.

Location wise Saarc countries are closer to each other but they are very different when it comes to priorities. Keeping the same format of Saarc, it would be very difficult to achieve its goals. I think it is time to redefine the goals of Saarc to meet the challenge of religious, cultural and political diversity. Saarc can perhaps be divided into two groups. The group A should include India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan; and the group B should include Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and

Maldives. There might be some other good formula to bring basic structural changes in Saarc, its composition, goal, strategy and input to get the desired output from regional cooperation.

It is no use loading this sinking ship with more observers and members. Give a new and serious thought to these issues, instead of holding any more annual or bi-annual meeting. I might sound very negative, but is there any reason why we should be optimistic? A reader, On e-mail