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Hizbut Tahrir protests

We note with grave concern that The Daily Star, in its issue of Sunday, 21 September 2008, carried a misleading editorial regarding Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh. The editorial is baseless and clearly motivated. On behalf of Hizbut Tahrir, we register our protest at the editorial. The following is our response to some of the comments made in the editorial in question.

The editorial states, "Everybody must have the right to practise his or her own religion. But nobody can impose it on others..." Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh has never been a believer in the use of force or compulsion. We have always believed that all acts of terrorism or militancy are against the Holy Quran and Sunnah. Hizbut Tahrir is a political organisation believing in and upholding Islamic principles. Its goal is to restore the Khilafat and thereby bring back the Islamic way of life for its followers. The principles laid down by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) are the constitutional basis upon which the restoration of the Khilafat is envisaged. As it aims to re-establish the Khilafat, Hizbut Tahrir rejects armed movements, terrorism or militancy as a means of achieving such an aim. Hizbut Tahrir spreads its ideas peacefully and only through leaflets, public relations, speeches, discussions, conferences, processions, etc.

The Daily Star editorial further states: "The teachers arrested in Rajshahi the other day were carted off to prison because they happened to be distributing leaflets propagating the overthrow of the government..." There can be no denying that the contents of the statements and leaflets coming from Hizbut Tahrir are a frontal assault on the constitutional process and democracy. It is values --- those symbolised by the ideals of free speech, tolerance, equality, etc --- that are now under threat...

This is an absolute untruth. The central leaders of Hizbut Tahrir had gone to Rajshahi from Dhaka to hold a press conference and not to distribute any leaflets. Our aim was to explain the subject matter of the leaflets and respond to the false propaganda being carried on against Hizbut Tahrir. We now ask --- when the government does not allow us to hold a press conference, then where is the Daily Star's vaunted idea of freedom of speech? The Daily Star states again: "...the outfit has been proscribed in a number of countries in the West as well as the Middle East. The question, therefore, is why?"

Let us make it clear that Hizbut Tahrir has never been banned in any country because of militancy. Everyone knows that all kinds of political activity are banned in the countries of the Middle East. No one can prove or show that in the last fifty years Hizbut Tahrir has preached its ideas through terrorist or militant activities. In some countries, such as Uzbekistan, Syria, etc., Hizbut Tahrir is banned because the rulers of these states have been carrying out repression against their people and have clamped restrictions on anyone protesting their activities. In the West, it is only in Germany that

Hizbut Tahrir is proscribed because there our party had voiced its protest against Israeli aggression against Palestine. Former British prime minister Tony Blair, despite doing his best to ban Hizbut Tahrir in his country, did not succeed.

Mohiuddin Ahmed
Chief Coordinator & Spokesperson
Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh

Our response

We have noted the points made by the Chief Coordinator and Spokesperson of Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh. However, we do observe that he has made no reference to the threat (which we mentioned in our editorial) made publicly by the organisation to the effect that no one would be allowed to live in peace in Bangladesh if the teachers arrested in Rajshahi were not freed in forty-eight hours.

Neither does the letter have anything to say about the Hizbut Tahrir threat to overthrow the Bangladesh government in light of what happened in Rajshahi. The organisation has openly and contemptuously rejected democracy, which quite belies its contention that it does not force its opinions on anyone.

We believe the charges that Hizbut Tahrir has carefully chosen not to answer are serious ones and the organisation owes it to the country to clarify its position.

Acid throwing
On 16 September another barbaric incident of acid throwing took place. This time the victims were a two-year-old infant Ashiqur and his mother. The baby was seriously and the mother was partly burnt. It was utterly shocking news.

After that event, many questions are popping up in my mind. Will the government not take any exemplary actions against the criminals? How many times will it happen in future? Do the throwers not think once before committing the dastardly act? The government should pay special attention to enforcing the law against the perpetrators of the heinous crime.

S.M. Rumen
Invigilator, Exams Services
British Council, Chittagong

Fuel prices

When fuel price was higher in the global market, the govt. increased the price to reduce its subsidy. And we are the worst sufferers. Our monthly income or salary was not raised. Now in the global market fuel prices have gone down to 97-100\$.

We are requesting the present interim govt. humbly to reduce the fuel prices. We believe this will be appreciated by the people in general.

W. Islam
One-mail

Load shedding during Iftar

It is no better a government than its predecessors. The CTG was supposed to set examples of capability and efficiency and clean out all corrupt practices! Now it seems that they need cleaning up badly; while we head on towards God

knows where. Living behind the Gulshan First Market, our power is shed regularly without fail for the last fortnight promptly at 6:00p.m., and comes back when they wish. We break our fast and offer namaz in total darkness! This Iftar time blackout for us is religiously sustained by DESA. For the rest of the day, power availability is at the mercy of the power distribution centre. Continuous power, an essential service, has now become a scarce rationed item that brings back childhood memories of rationing in wartime Calcutta in the early 1940s! Even then, however, except during air raids, power was always there!

Does the Adviser in charge of power accept the responsibility? No, that is not in the CTG's unwritten manual of democracy which they plan to introduce!
CTG watcher
Dhaka

Health policy

Very recently I read an article on "updated health policy" by Farhad Mazhar. We are surprised by the fact that the task force has been sent to DG Health office and at the same time health policy has been updated in favour of multinational companies. Very confusing steps. There was no discussion with conscious citizens. I watch all the channels of TV including BTB. Why this confidentiality? We are also not against privatisation in a controlled way. But preserving the rights of mass people is very important.

If current policy makers or bureaucrats want, we can send a balanced proposal for sustainable, cost effective health policy, based on our poor economics.

For the last few months people are vocal against corrupt doctors and hospitals. I think we have got other big players behind the curtain.
Mohammad Karim
Hira
One-mail

Crackdown on Hizbut Tahrir

The crackdown on Hizbut Tahrir has apparently proved the fact that many militant outfits are still active in Bangladesh, which can be a potential threat to our sovereignty in the future if they are not nipped in the bud at the earliest possible time. Regrettably, three of the men arrested were 'respectable university teachers', who are supposed to be our ideal role models. We should carefully underscore the fact that these people have the scope and ability to influence the youth and they are capable of persuading them to adopt their destructive principles. It's also perplexing to wonder how such an extremist group was allowed to exist in our progressive political milieu, even after so many fatal terrorist attacks that virtually shook the foundation of our national security. Similarly, I don't understand why in a democratic nation this fundamentalist group should be allowed to hold a press conference and permitted to announce an audacious ultimatum that demanded the release of their detained associates within the next 48 hours, who were actually convicted of drawing the foun-

South Asia in trouble



Lately, the noise and disorder levels in South Asian countries have risen, especially in the countries forming the former British India-- India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka. It is curious to note that this

could hardly be a coincidence. If there is a blueprint behind in the background, one would not be surprised.

The foreign political and diplomatic VIPs are visiting the region at more frequent intervals; and the coming general elections in Bangladesh seem to be of intense concern to our foreign friends. The papers are full of free advice if not interference. Pakistan is also transiting after a tough general election. In Nepal, the leftist control should be worrying the western capitalist countries.

In the Middle East, there is no slowdown in the disturbing foreign interference and threats. Afghanistan, a country with a poor economy, continues to draw headlines with the

latest visit of G Brown to Kabul. In India, the latest labour strike is very noticeable. West Bengal in India is always in the news. The Dalai Lama was not present during the opening of the Olympics.

Why the disorder and noise levels are increasing week by week? In the hot tropical DCs, the winter is a season of discontent, when political and other public demonstrations are very much visible. The regimes in the above countries are under stress, handling local and foreign pressures.

We should not relax after the general elections in December, as the check list of home works is overflowing. The political parties have to switch on to long term focus for the survival of all.
A Mawaz, Dhaka

dational blueprints of multidimensional terrorist activities. Don't we have any standard codes of law and order in this country? It really doesn't matter what enlightened principles these 'overexcited' people are adhering to. The 'means' they have chosen to achieve their objectives should be viewed as absolutely unacceptable in this liberal era of democratisation.

If such radical zealots are allowed to expand their fundamentalist ideologies unhindered, then someday they will go beyond control and threaten our socio-political stability. We already have a great magnitude of political uncertainty in our country. The growth of such radical syndicates will inevitably make our political scenario even more uncertain. In the past, our policy makers often displayed an odd tendency of gaining awareness regarding this issue when it was already too late to take any fruitful initiative.

We should not let history repeat itself!
Khandoker Asef Safa Kabir
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Enforcement of traffic rules

Too often we hear complaints of insufficient laws and rules which contribute to the chaos and nightmare on the roads of Bangladesh in general and Dhaka in particular. I would rather contend that whatever rules we have are not enforced, resulting in the arrogant attitude of drivers and owners. I have driven in the US for over 14 years and 9 years on the streets of Bangladesh. I have been ticketed in the US for changing lanes too abruptly and for driving above the speed limit. However, the streets of Dhaka are more like jungles of Africa, where herds of animals roam the plain freely, than the streets of a modern city, where traffic laws would rule the roads and courtesy should rule the hearts of the drivers. Being ticketed for changing lanes without signal is a joke. Instead of writing a long article on what is wrong and how to fix it, which would probably end up being a 10-chapter book, I list five violations for the police to look at...let's start somewhere...

1. Set good examples - the police and Rab - should follow the law strictly. Teach us drivers how we should drive by virtue of your example.
2. Do not let cars/buses drive in the wrong direction - fine vigorously. When driving the roads, one nuisance is looking out for vehicles driving in the wrong direction - who does it just to save the trouble of a U turn. I often see police and Rab doing it.
3. Fine heavily buses that stop in the middle of the road to pick or drop passengers. Do not let violators off easily - we do not listen to the police until it hurts our wallet/the bottom line.
4. Penalize cars heavily that double park. Given that most owners do not drive their own cars, they do not feel the pain of the jungle like environment on our roads. When the police officer scolds the driver for infringing, owners shrug it off as a temporary nuisance - make the owners feel the pain.
5. Do not create laws that are not enforceable, nor reasonable. No horn on the roads - well, excuse me, I will sound the horn, otherwise the buses and taxis and cars will be riding all over me. The horn has saved the car too many times. I would rather pay a few hundred taka fine for the horn than have to pay thousands for a dent because a bus shoved a car on the rear (a real event for which I have filed an FIR).

Md Ishfaqur Raza, PhD
Associate Professor, Dept of EEE
EastWest University, Dhaka

Flood affected people

Although the rainy season is a blessing for us but it is not so all the time, particularly when floods occur. At present, many places and roads have gone under water due to floods. Many people have already lost their homes, cattle and crops.

Now they need food and rehabilitation. Please come forward to help the flood affected people.

Lucky
Shahjalal University
Sylhet

Hypocrisy

How can we relate sociology, politics, religion and economics to each other? I am a bit puzzled.

In Bangladesh and the greater Indian subcontinent, we can see bad coins are replacing the good ones. This law of economics is operating nearly in every aspect of our life.

Corruption and pseudo-religious practices are going hand in hand in Bangladesh, Pakistan and "democratic" India. This must come to an end.
Dr Azizul Karim
GE, Australia

Undue favour

To favour a student illegally is one kind of corruption. Every student should be judged on his or her performance, what he or she achieved in the exams or any other evaluating task. Of course judgment should not go over the essentials.

Because of lacking true potential, the unduly favoured students fail to achieve the expected level of performance in their job or any other workplace deal.

The teachers who favour certain students for any reason other than academic excellence actually encourage the dominance of the inefficient over the proficient. If the process continues, society as a whole will be adversely affected.

Md. Mofakhrul Islam Shah
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University
Gazipur

Education

Today parents are spending more time and money for their children's education. Even in a village a farmer is found sending his children to nearby school or any educational institution. This is a positive and pleasant picture in Bangladesh.

Their efforts should receive due recognition and support from all concerned.

Khitish Chandra Milan
Bogra YMCA Public School
Bhaiyaga Mazar
Bogra

A failed mission?

Has our caretaker government headed by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed failed in its mission?

Whither our administration, whither our politics, the economy of the country?

Who is our competent authority in the country - our president at Bangabhaban, Chief Adviser of the caretaker government, some advisers, secretaries to the government of Bangladesh? We find no consistency, accountability and transparency in our so many powerful authorities.

What is the goal of our country, our government and our fifteen crore people?

The sufferings of our people go on increasing. The rich getting richer and the poor poorer. There is no solution to the problems, difficulties of the people. When will we come out of the darkness?
OH Kabir
Dhaka

Only Two?

I wrote a letter titled, "Back to square one" that was published in The Daily Star on 9 July, 2008.

That was just after release of AL chief Sheikh Hasina where, like many others, I expressed the apprehension that the same story was going to be repeated for BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia. On the second day of her release from VVIP jail, Khaleda Zia called a meeting of the BNP standing committee that decided that she would lead the BNP for life. In that meeting there was no discussion about Tarique Zia who, as advised by his mother, would remain out of politics for the time being due to his health condition. On the other hand, AL General secretary Abdul Jalil finally opted for political rest following party

President Sheikh Hasina's advice.

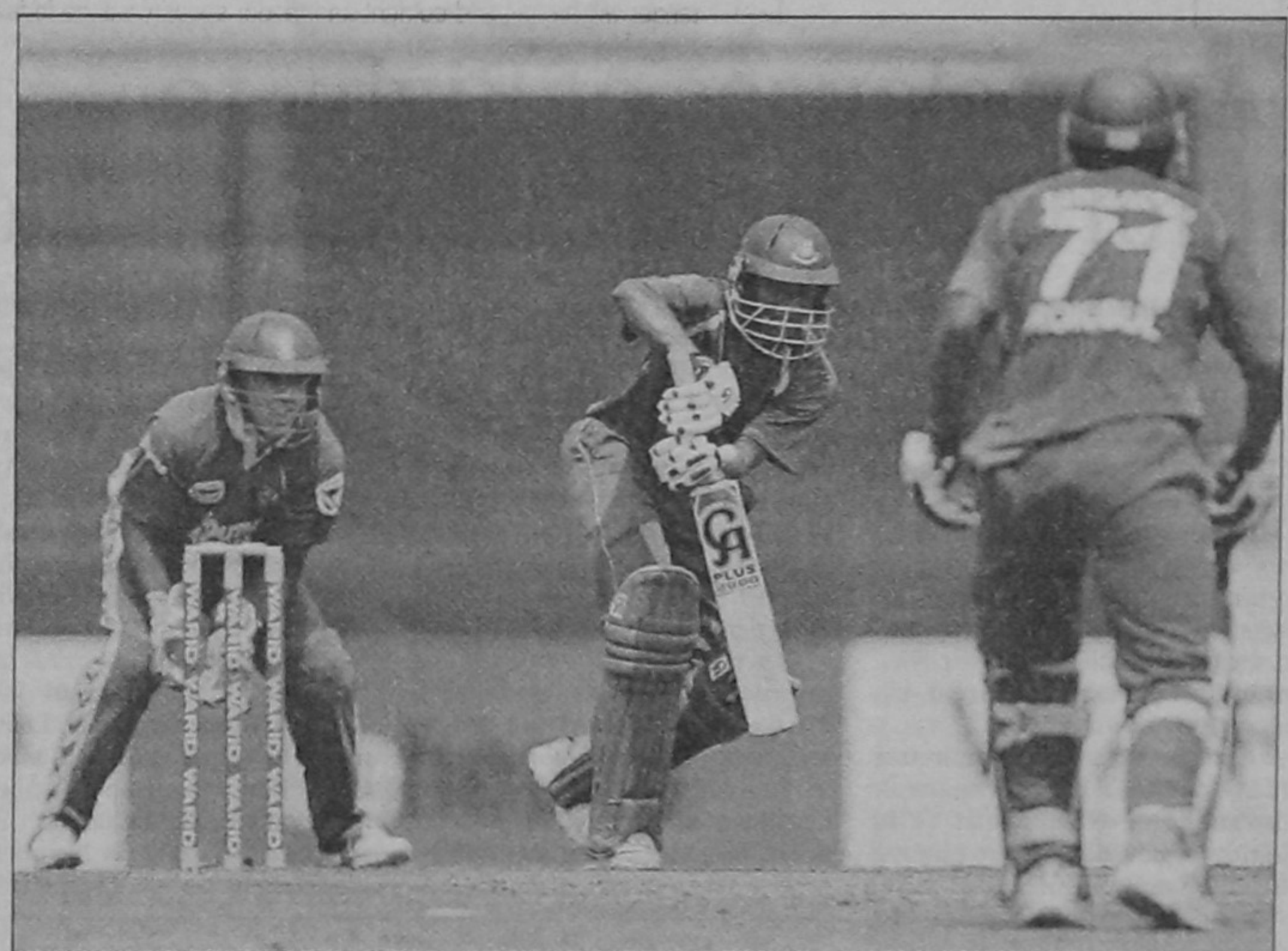
The prevailing situation in the political arena proves that the CTG has failed to bring about any meaningful change in the political culture of the two major political parties, let alone overall improvement. The much talked about "Minus two" doctrine has now turned into "Only Two" reality. After about two years of relentless efforts, the CTG has realised that they cannot do anything about reforms in political parties and eradicating corruption that is ruining all other achievements, if any.

What an adviser is trying to explain to the media is their failure to bring about any positive changes to salvage the nation from the crisis that befell us on 1/11 although he is using pre-

defined words not to disclose the truth. According to the adviser, the law is naturally following its own course, whereas the nation is witnessing something very different!

The nation's conscience is bleeding. In Pakistan, the democracy has crowned Mr. Asif Ali Zardari (former Mr. Ten Percent) as president of the only Muslim country having nuclear weapons. In Bangladesh, the next December election will present us the "old wine in old bottle" We are so unfortunate that we cannot even expect the something in a new bottle. The only way to get out of this vicious circle is to pray for divine guidance & act to make us worthy of that.
Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur
Khulna

Dhaka Warriors in ICL



The recent drama with the cricketers and the BCB officials regarding ICL is creating a huge controversy. I have got mixed feelings about the whole issue as I see strong points both in favour and against these players. I will try to share my points of view and concerns which are solely my personal opinion. I don't expect everyone or anyone to agree with me; I am just trying to bring a different perspective into the issue:

Why call them rebels? These cricketers have already been termed as 'Rebel' cricketers. But before giving them such a harsh title, we must understand that the so called rebel cricketers will represent Bangladesh in ICL. Millions of viewers around the world will be watching them and any good performance by them will bring laurels for our country. The national cricket team's consistent dismal performance is forcing the cricket pundits to consider a League B of international teams consisting of Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. If that happens, then Bangladesh will slip away from the international scene for some time as no one will be interested to watch them play in that league.

The problem actually lies with two groups in India, both of whom are actually trying to bring a new dimension to cricket as an entertainment by injecting a lot of money and also by giving opportunities to young talents in their own country along with some international players. IPL is headed by Lohit Modi and ICL by Kapil Dev. The lack of agreement between these two parties has created this mess. It's a very tricky situation - The Indian Cricket Board has given its nod to IPL, while ICL did not get the recognition. On the other hand, ICC has given a green

light to IPL but quite diplomatically has not banned anyone from taking part in ICL. They are saying that the countries will decide individually regarding their players taking part in ICL. If we take away the tussle of power between the two parties, then what difference does it make if a player takes part in IPL or ICL?

Having said all of this above, I do feel that the cricketers in question may not have handled the situation smartly. First of all, they should have discussed this with the BCB officials and asked for advice. Since ICC does not ban anyone from playing in ICL, I am sure a solution could have been found. Secondly, the decision to retire from international cricket was poor.

By their own admission, BCB did come to know about the ICL offers sometime back and did nothing about it. Either they were ignorant or they underestimated our players. This is the first time in our sports, be it football or cricket or any other major sports, that anyone has ever taken such a bold step. BCB officials may have been taken by surprise by the players' decision eventually, but there were alarms everywhere and they should have taken things seriously.

Since ICC does not talk about banning players taking part in ICL, then why ban these players at all? BCB should have allowed these players to play in ICL with an open mind and overturn the sanctions.

On a different note, like the Lahore Badshahs, the name of the team could have been Dhaka Zamindars..... 'Warriors' sounds too common!
Niaz Pir
A cricket lover

Polythene coming back



It is matter of great concern that the polythene bags have staged a comeback after a gap of six years. Thanks to the strict measures taken by the authorities, the production, supply and consumption of these bags were brought to a minimum level. Consequently, the environment became a bit cleaner. But of late the situation has taken a turn for the worse.

Choked up drains, fields strewn with polythene bags, riverbanks covered with the substance--all these highlight the fact that the situation is getting out of control.

In all probability, the vigilance on the part of the authorities is non-existent which is why the use of these bags is so rampant.

It is a matter of sorrow that we have failed to promote jute, an environment-friendly material, as an alternative to polythene which is non-biodegradable. Recycling of these bags could lessen the magnitude of the pollution caused by polythene.

It is time the media started a campaign against polythene bags.
Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong