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Container train

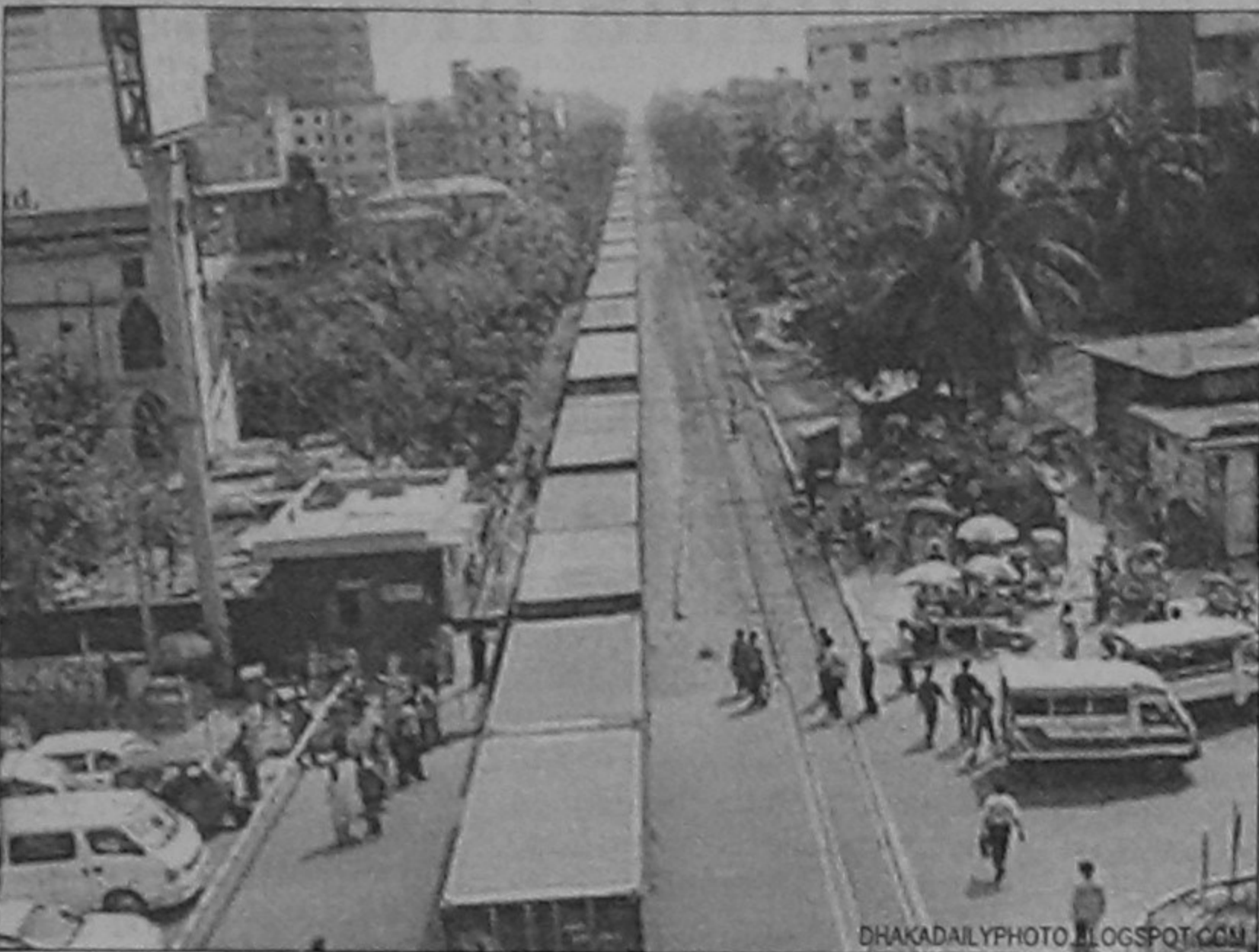
The number of import-laden containers to Dhaka ICD terminal has increased manifold during the last 5 years. The big shipping lines like Maersk Line, American President Lines, Hapag Lloyd, NYK Lines, Evergreen, Cosco Shipping Lines, Hanjin Shipping Co Ltd, Hyundai are the frequent users of Dhaka ICD. The average number of laden boxes of all these lines to Dhaka ICD per month crosses 2,500. Most of these imported commodities are raw cotton, garments fabrics & garments accessories which in fact are being used in most of the export oriented factories in & around Dhaka, Gazipur & Narayanganj. Since railway is the cheapest & safest communication mode, most of the shipping lines are dependent

on Bangladesh railway authorities. Bangladesh railway has been trying to accommodate most of the containers to & from Chittagong & Dhaka for import ex-Chittagong & export ex-Dhaka ICD. They were running two trains daily to carry all these import & export containers. But quite suddenly they have become irregular & have been placing only one train, instead of two trains per day which has created a bottleneck both for importing to Dhaka & carrying back empty containers to Chittagong. There has been a meeting with the DG railway at Dhaka as well as in Chittagong to increase the number of trains to two per day. But the railway authorities have informed

most of the shipping lines that they can't place two trains due to shortage of engines. After reduction of the number of trains, there has been a long queue at Chittagong & most of the shipping lines are under pressure from consignees at Dhaka to deliver their goods and shipment to their ultimate buyers in the USA & Europe in time. In recent times, the shipping lines mentioned above have jointly made a presentation to the DG railway to seriously look into this problem & solve it. But the railway authorities have reportedly told them that they have to wait till 2010 to get new engines & place them in service. If this situation is not improved we apprehend that most of the shipping lines have to terminate their services to Dhaka ICD & discharge all containers at Chittagong port. Since RMG is our number one commodity for earning foreign exchange, termination of services to Chittagong will be a big jolt to most of the factories in Dhaka as well as Dhaka Export Processing Zone. In no way these containers can be brought to Dhaka by road due to the cost matrix.

I would earnestly request the Bangladesh railway authorities to run at least two trains per day to cater to the needs of all. Will the communications minister kindly look into this?

Syed Shahid Hossain
Hanjin Shipping Co Ltd.
Kakrail, Dhaka



Intelligence failure?

As many other citizens, I too was horrified with the BDR mutiny and the loss of many brave soldiers. Does Bangladesh need this kind of tragedy to wake it up to the reality or should it tackle problems before they erupt? It would be naive to think that the Bangladesh intelligence had no idea what was brewing underneath the surface while it was not at all surprising to many of us ordinary citizens, who barely cared about the art of intelligence gathering. It seems tension was there for a long time and nobody really cared to do anything to handle the situation. That raises the question of competency of our intelligence agency and the people (home ministry), who are responsible to deal with such problems. Can we truly rely on their competence?

I see investigation going forward and concluded without anybody being sacked or punished because that has been the standard for the last 38 years! Can things be different under the new government?

Shamol Saha
Boston University, USA

Jhum cultivation

For different indigenous hill peoples, jhum cultivation (slash and burn method) is like part of their culture. They cultivate paddy and other crops through this special type of tilling in which farmers burn all kinds of trees, plants, shrubs etc on the slopes of hills and then they do other necessary works for growing crops. After some years they choose another hill for producing more crops. Actually, a considerable number of hill people live on crops from jhum. They have been doing this from time immemorial. In the past, the size of population was smaller and people did not mind burning some trees. But nowadays we cannot

remain silent watching any harmful act on our environment, as we are deeply concerned about our existence in this planet.

I have great respect for every class of people and their professions. But still I think indigenous people should stop this mode of farming for their own existence too. The educated, wise and modern leaders of these communities must come forward to preach the truth to their own people. They should take up harmless alternatives.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Stop violence

Over the last two decades student politics has become a source of major concern. It is known to all that our student politics has a glorious and unforgettable history. They played a great role in 1952, our liberation war in 1971 and in ending dictatorship in 1990. But the situation is very different today.

The policy makers have to address the issue in right earnest.

Md. Arif Hossain
Prime Bank Ltd
Chapai Nawabganj

Pilkhana tragedy

What does the report of a jeep-load of outsiders entering the barrack and joining the jawans point to? PM Sheikh Hasina's dealing with the most critical situation came and is still coming under fire, especially from the opposition (BNP). But we the people who were glued to the TV from 9:00am on 25 February found her taking every conceivable step; she had to give serious thoughts to disarming the derailed BDR jawans, and saving the lives of the officers and their families. But the betrayers went to the PM and lied to her that there had been no mass killing. We also watched the red-masked jawans replying to the reporters that only one or two persons were killed. So, blaming

the government squarely for the loss of the officers' lives would be unfair and unkind.

We cannot endorse the opposition's stand on the issue.

AH Dewan
Dhaka

Civilians killed at Pilkhana

We are shocked at the unequal treatment being meted out to the civilians killed at Pilkhana. Both the government and the army are giving financial aid to the slain army officers' families but the civilians killed in the mutiny are deprived of any such aid.

We hope all the citizens of Bangladesh would be treated equally.

Mostafa Kamal
Dept. of English
Dhaka University

Rupsha-Bagerhat train

The narrow gauge railway service between Rupsha and Bagerhat was in operation for more than one hundred years. This railway service was the lone communication mode between Khulna and Bagerhat, though during the winter bus service was in existence along the muddy district board road. No bus could ply during the rainy season because of the muddy road. After partition of India in 1947, a moderately good all weather road was built leading to bus service throughout the year. The narrow gauge railway track was converted into broad gauge railway line during the Pakistani days of great disparity.

Unfortunately, the railway service was totally closed nearly a decade back resulting in untold miseries of the travelling people, especially women, children and elderly people because of poor quality mini-bus service. The bus owners are too powerful and BRTC buses were compelled to withdraw. The BRTC bus services from Bagerhat to

other destinations are likely to be shut down due to pressure exerted by minibus owners.

The government should look into the matter for restoring the railway service along with BRTC bus. Incidentally, the prime minister got elected to parliament twice from Bagerhat.

Mahbubur Rahman
Bagerhat

Unnatural deaths

Some BDR personnel have reportedly committed suicide. The authorities concerned need to properly investigate such unnatural deaths of BDR men.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Fadi
Madrasa
Chittagong

Deprived students

We, the students of the chemistry department of Chittagong University, are deprived of modern facilities. It is a matter of great regret that we have no computer laboratory. As a result, in the age of modern technology we are deprived of all sorts of technological facilities i.e. internet facilities, including all sorts of service. For that reason, we the students can't gather any information of the current world. So we can't keep pace with the competitive world. We can't collect any necessary data, information etc. We had a chemical conference last year and our department earned a huge amount of money from contributions made by different organisations. With that money our department has bought some computers only for the teachers. We are trying to draw the attention of the authorities to extend the technological support to the students as well.

It is unimaginable not to have a computer lab in a big public university.

Students
Dept. of Chemistry
University of Chittagong

Khulna gas supply project

This is undoubtedly frustrating news for Khulna, if it is correct. The immediate past caretaker government after seeing the dismal and declining economic situation of the Khulna division, approved the pipeline gas supply project financed by the ADP and the pipeline was to be drawn from Tangail to Kushtia to Khulna and the present government has countermanded the project with a view to using that fund for Sylhet gas project. If this is true, this would be the most disgraceful treatment to Khulna people and a continuation of the process of deprivation.

We do hope the finance minister would look into this issue seriously and would make all efforts to run the Pipeline Gas Project with a view to ensuring gas supply to Khulna by 2010 without further delay.

Nasarullah
One-mail

Failed political regimes

The BDR revolt [insensitive intelligence]: Bashundhara fire [lack of professionalism, training, and resources; campus violence [political rivalry]; the energy and water shortage; concentration of power in Dhaka metropolis; RMG unrest (from time to time); wholesale transfers in the BCS; political witch-hunting exercises; the winner takes all philosophy; etc, etc... all point to one conclusion: our political culture has not matured to run a new nation even after 37 years. The digital mobile telephone has vastly reduced the communications gaps, especially in the rural areas. The crafty politicians do not like it [burqa removed--exposure of vicious cartels].

The lack of confidence in political governance has been proved again and again; but the politicians never want or wish to learn--for obvious reasons!

It is no secret-- subjective governance; first, security of the party for the next five years; then no respect for the role of the opposition; then gathering of funds through corrupt tender procedures and manipulations [bribery, percentages, and corrupt practices].

Central idea: the have-nots cannot rule neutrally. It is due to peevish leadership at the top tiers, and compromising morally and ethically. Position and power are illusionary objectives--- for misuse. Our leaders cannot lead; they wish to be led! Head loads in baskets for public display! Governance is not yatra show for false entertainment!

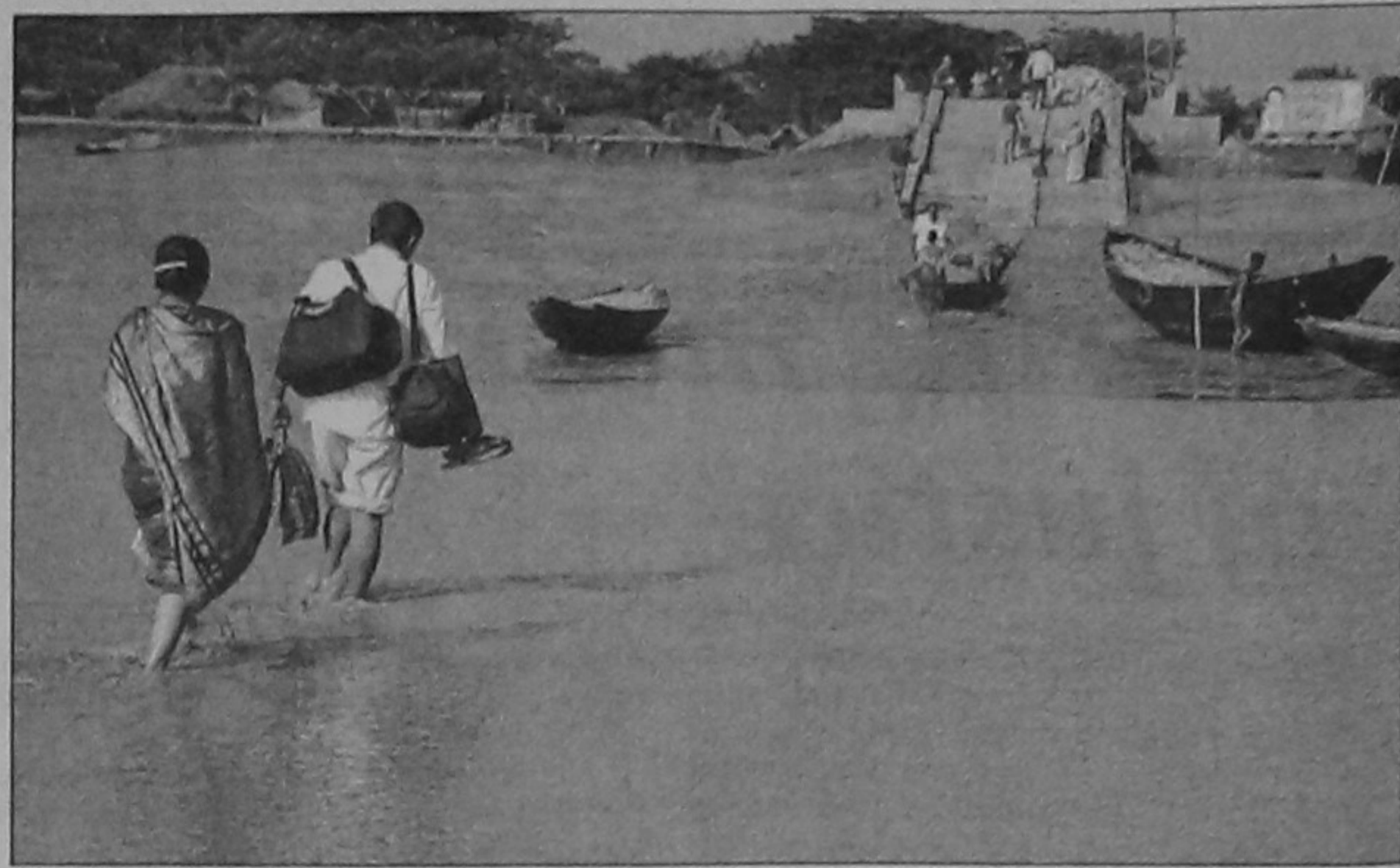
There are no internal democratic processes inside the parties and no disciplinary actions are revealed to the electorate. Sycophancy is a false front---for personal gains.

We have learnt a few basic weaknesses in administration, governance, operation and maintenance, as revealed by the actions of the caretaker government during its two years of extended stay.

No use going into details and getting lost inside the beautiful forest, until and unless the foundation of approach is finalised. Current bases have to be demolished, for a fresh start. No BMRE under corrupt base. Why go for mega projects within a month of taking over power? It is highly suspicious; note another trend, the succeeding regime observes no continuity of projects.

Open your mouth at the right time, to make the right observation.

MWZ, Dhaka



Coastal Zone Policy

Bangladesh's coastal zone covers 19 southern districts with a land area of 47,201 square kilometres. The coastal zone is inhabited by 35.08 million people. The coast of Bangladesh is known as a zone of vulnerabilities as well as opportunities. It is exposed to natural disasters like tropical storm, storm surge and downpour. The mixture of natural and artificial hazards, such as earthquake, water and soil salinity, various forms of pollution, wearing away, high arsenic content in land water, water sorting, risks from weather change, etc, have adversely affected life and livelihoods in the coastal zone and slowed down the speed of community progress in those areas.

To reduce coastal vulnerabilities, improve the livelihood of the coastal people, ensure the optimum use of coastal resources and to create an enabling institutional environment;

the Ministry of Water Resources formulated the Coastal Zone Policy, which was approved by the cabinet on January 17, 2005 and was also published in the official Gazette in March 2005. The Coastal Zone Policy has been developed for all concerned ministries, agencies, private sector, local government institutions, NGOs, and the civil society to put their efforts together for the development of the coastal zone of Bangladesh. The Coastal Zone Policy initiates a process that commits the ministries, departments and agencies to toning and organising their activities in the coastal zone and elaborates the basis for a firm co-ordination mechanism. But so far not much has been done for the development of the coastal zone.

Mohammad Rajja
Gono Bishwabidyalay
Savar, Dhaka

Heroes of peace

For centuries, battles have been fought with kudos won for the war heroes. Violence has been condoned in declared wars, communal riots, religious crusades or hartals; use of arms in defence or offence has been justified. The war heroes have often been glorified along with the cause they defend, whether it is fundamentalism, capitalism, communism or any other ism that moves people to fight for their beliefs. Examples of such "courage and valour" expand in literature and in schools texts as inspirational stories for children.

Today at a time of heedless violence (and violence can only be heedless), let us search our memory for Heroes of Peace who gave their energy and life to resist violence. History has failed to record such examples. Instances of communal empathy during the 1947 Hindu-Muslim massacre when common people from either side went out of their way to help protect the others of different religious community are not remembered. Again in 1971, when similar courage was shown by Bengalis rescuing non-Bengalis and vice versa, we have not honoured these heroes of peace. The most eminent of such heroes is of course Mahatma Gandhi who fought for freedom against imperialism with peaceful ways of Satyagraha (his slogan "An eye for an eye will leave the whole world blind"). A trail of movements for peace exists all over the world (even to this day in Gandhi Ashram at Noakhali where Mahatma Gandhi spoke amidst violence in 1947).

In respect of the astounding courage of these Heroes of Peace, let us read a paragraph from Joan Baez' autobiography: "The problem is consensus. There is a consensus out there it's ok to kill. If you kill inside the country you get into trouble. If you kill outside the country, right time, right season, latest enemy, you get a medal."

Interneecine wars take places to prove the superiority of one nation over the other... The offensive side thinks they are smarter than the vulnerable nation. Thus the winners are the declared heroes in this bloody game.

The war mongers think it is human nature to kill... the pacifist asks, "Then why do men have to go into training to learn how?"

As a pacifist, Joan Baez goes on to say, "The pacifist thinks there is only one tribe... the three billion members. They come first. We think killing any member of the family is a dumb idea. We think there are more decent and intelligent

ways of settling differences and man had better start investigating these other possibilities because if he doesn't, then by mistake or by design he will probably kill off the whole human race..."

Joan Baez (born in 1941) in her charismatic songs is an example of a Heroine of Peace who lured with her voice, the greatest act of peace.

Let us inspire our children by including biographies of Heroes of Peace in school texts, so as to create a nation truly secular and democratic, that will tolerate dissent and advocate a peaceful resistance to violence.

Kay
Siddheshwari
Dhaka

Tribute to Birangonas

I am not a son of any freedom fighter. I did not see the liberation war of 1971. Whatever knowledge I have about liberation war, I have gathered it from books. I never met any Birangona. Perhaps, that's why I am now suffering from a sense of guilt.

In my opinion, the sacrifice made by the Birangonas is not highlighted adequately. The government should take all possible steps to increase the living standards of Birangonas. In our academic curriculum too, their contribution must be included in a bigger way. If we think them to be unapproachable, that would be a great sin. Most of the Birangonas have now become very old. At this stage they deserve our maximum attention and care. Throughout the whole life, they suffered from frustration. Now we should also think about the recreational aspects of their lives. More opportunities should be given to them, so that they can share their grief and sorrow. All these things cannot be done by the government alone. NGOs too have a great role to play here.

A fund can also be created for extending financial support to them. After Sidr, "Prothom Alo" created a fund to help the victims and got a massive response. In the same way, you too can create a fund. The Bangladeshi nationals staying abroad will also be motivated.

There are thousands of people like me in Bangladesh. It is not possible for us to take any step or do anything for the Birangonas. Only a collective effort can help achieve our goal.

Akash Pradip
Lecturer in English
Bangladesh Health
Professions Institute
CRP, Savar, Dhaka

BBC and VOA

Voice of America and British Broadcasting Corporation are inviting public opinions on various matters and subjects on different occasions from us as well as Bangladeshis living abroad and broadcasting these regularly and freely.

We feel surprised, humiliated and disappointed that if foreign electronic media like BBC and VOA can organise and broadcast our public opinions, why can't our radio and television organise and broadcast public opinions of our own people in our own country?

Would our Ministry of Information and MPs kindly look into the matter and take positive steps in the interest of public service and our democracy and sovereignty?

OH Kabir
Dhaka

Trial of BDR mutineers

We demand quick, just and exemplary punishment to the so-called mutineers and dastardly killers of army officials. Investigation is going on and a very competent investigating officer has been assigned with the task. We hope the perpetrators will be identified and duly punished. But some disquieting information is coming to our knowledge which may not make the trial unquestionable. A few BDR personnel have died in unnatural conditions. For fair play and justice, the law has to be followed strictly.

A concerned reader
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

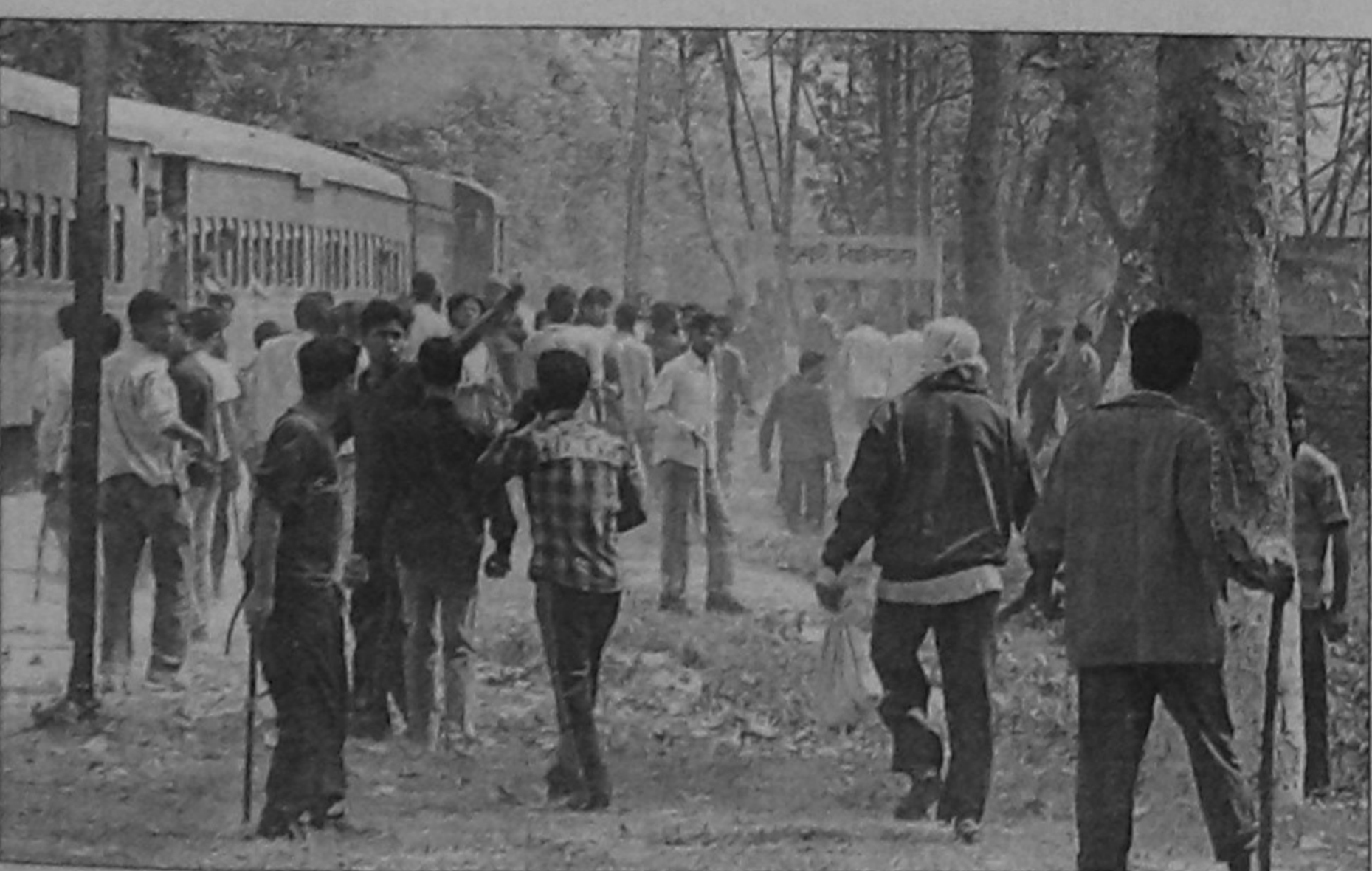
Arms trade

The world is becoming dangerous day by day because of the terrorism unleashed by the goons across the globe. There are many reasons behind the mushroom growth of these terrorist organisations. One reason is the unscrupulous arms trade. World's super-powers are the main players of this trade. Arms deals worth billions of dollars are struck every year.

Unfortunately, behind these formal deals there are some informal deals struck between the traders and terrorist outfits. That is a matter of great concern. The governments across the globe are not in a position to control this trade because of porous borders and the role of influential people in the trade. So what is imperative is that all the countries should sit together to find out a solution in this regard & make the world a safer place to live in.

Syed Muhammed Azim
Nayabazar
Chittagong

Digital Bangladesh or student politics ?



Establishment of a digital Bangladesh by 2021 is the main objective of this government.

But digital Bangladesh might slip back in the absence of a national education policy embracing a secular, scientific, and sustainable system.

I believe that the current position of student politics would deter a digital Bangladesh.

Student politics heavily affects the academic environment. The general students cannot carry on with their studies smoothly due to nefarious student politics. Due to this villainous student politics, public universities would remain in disarray and a digital Bangladesh would hardly be on the horizon.

So, I earnestly entreat our Honourable PM to ban student politics.

The time has come for a change!

Nasir Uddin Tumul
Dept. of English
Chittagong University