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# Bangla New Year



With a "Shuvo Noboborsho 1416" to all I begin!

A new year has dawned on our horizon with hopes and aspirations. It is the long held tale of the togetherness of Bengalis at large; from the peasants to the urban dwellers, and more from the rich and the poor in the muddy, fertile and friendly soil where our forefathers had their proud footprints, where many civilizations once had come visiting. It is a land that speaks, very proudly indeed, of many valiant tales: those of the language movement in 1952, of our glorious liberation war in 1971, and many more! Many poets, singers, social scientists and the scientists of international repute have been lucky to be a part of this land.

On this New Year, we go taking new resolutions for us and for them, others around, namely the poor. We go further into our speculative journey into the near and distant pasts that signify our glory, dignity and the self-esteem as a nation. We celebrate our proud existence in all colours and the moods of festivity. We welcome the new year of hopes and prosperity forgetting the pains of the previous year. Business-people start their "halkata" on this very

day, with sweets and flowers they spread their love and concern with great expectations for the business to bloom! People, irrespective of age and cast, creed and credential, go singing "Esho, hey Baishakh" they embrace the new dawn with a mind that is free from all the prejudices.

We seek in our earnest peace, happiness and prosperity for all across the globe. Shuvo Noboborsho 1416!  
**Rafiqul Islam Rime**  
*Agrabad, Chittagong*

Pahela Baishakh is the greatest carnival for us. We wait for this day the whole year. When we are tired and bored in city life Pahela Baishakh reminds us of the nature of Gram Bangla.

Moreover, this is the first day of Bangla year. We forget all bad things of past and plan for the New Year. From this day we get the spirit to continue in future.

This Pahela Baishakh has another feature, we have elected a new government. This govt. came with a mandate to change.

**Mahfuzur Rahman Manik**  
*IER, Dhaka University*

## Upazila issue

Thanks to the ntv for presenting an informative and thought provoking talk show. I hope the government has listened to these guests with due attention and purpose. The question of power sharing with the MPs should be left for further consideration of the government and the relevant quarters. My brief reaction to the bill is as follows:

a. The bill will only introduce diarchy in the UZ planning, execution and over all decision making, curbing the fundamentals of the independent LG institution at the UZ level.

b. The authority of the MPS is being ensured by the bill but their accountability is not ensured for misusing their power while overseeing or interfering in the UZ activities.

c. There are UZs where the opposition MPs will apply his or her power with an elected UZ chairman of the ruling party. We can apprehend a conflicting situation unless they agree to share together good or bad activities and performance in the UZ.

d. It is very important to scrutinize the removal power of the chairman and or of the MPs, who is empowered to remove a UZ chairman, and what procedures would be followed. What is the role of the MPs and the UZP and the government in removing an

UZ chairman? Will it follow democratic principles or arbitrary law of the government? This issue is very much important to sustain the system.

e. The most important issue of financial viability of the UZ needs more attention than power sharing as seen now. If an UZ cannot have sufficient financial resources to run its affairs, the UZ would be subject to government's control, MPs' control.

Those are my very initial reactions listening to the talk show.

**Areader**  
*One-mail*

## Struggling with strategic fallout...

The piece, written on the above subject by Brig Gen Md. Abdur Rashid, psc, G (ret) with Mr. Francis Arif, appearing on 4 April 2009, is interesting reading. I would like to give my compliments to the authors through the courtesy of your column for their brilliant write-up.

I am not as learned as to offer my comments critically on such a piece of theirs as this. It gives me, however, great pleasure in the sense that it covers a wide range of strategic issues in simple language, yet in great depth. Very many lines in it will remain as 'quotable quotes' in our minds as future reference and guidance.

I am impressed so much, as if it echoed the feelings and sentiments of many people, nay also of mine. Their in-depth detailed and qualitative analyses seemed just appropriate. I feel the same way they have felt. The only difference may be is that they could express and bring out their points nicely in black and white, the way it deserves. Anyway, I am very much enlightened. I think, it's a must read for all.

Before the cat is out of the bag or before investigation is complete, the political parties should not have engaged in an undesirable blame game with one another spreading rumours here and there. Interestingly enough, the NY Times is stated to have reported in regard to BDR carnage, "Conspiracy theories are a national sport in Bangladesh." These must be stopped. Else, more harm than good to the country will be done. National unity is the crying need of our times, so as to bring the culprit or culprits to book.

Now, in the words of above writers, I conclude, "The government must do all it can, to create a freer and kinder society where political opposition will become a tool towards creating a national unity."  
**Engr. Shaheedul Islam**  
*Former Member Bangladesh Water Development Board*

## Magistracy powers

Many opinions have been passed on this subject. I am not an authority on criminal law but common sense suggests that Magistracy Powers of 'remand in custody pending trial or authority to enter and search a property etc,' should not be confused with judicial powers of actual trial. Police has wide powers of arresting an individual, however it can only hold such a person for a very limited time without any charge and must produce the arrestee before a magistrate for remand for further interrogation etc, and provide evidence to magistrate as to why this should be given. The magistrate may or may not agree to this further detention, or if there is sufficient evidence may agree to charges provided by the police to hold the arrestee for remand and trial before a judicial court. The same goes for granting 'search warrant' by a magistrate as this is not a judicial act and the number of judges are very few and they would have much more onerous duties.

So, all in all magistracy powers are not judicial powers and the nation would be benefited if the House grants such powers to executives of certain ranks. However, this must not be given to any police officer, no matter what the clamour, as that would open a door to unbridled tyranny and corruption.

**Engineer Shafi Ahmed**  
*London, UK*

## Is it fair?

What we have been watching is that many employment notices require three first classes, it means at least one in undergraduate level/ post graduate level. It is easily conceivable that it is very tough for those who passed in the class/division system. Those who have passed in the grading system, it is easier for them to get 3.00 in the scale of four than those who passed in class/division system. So, it is a clear case of discrimination. As the division/class system is on the verge of elimination, I would request all the employers to consider this particular aspect before issuing any notice for employment. It is gross injustice to us who have passed in the division/class system and couldn't get 1st class in graduation or master's level.

Earlier, I saw it required two first class results in all academic exams, but now we see that three first classes are required for many positions. It is my solemn request on behalf of those who have passed in the traditional division/class system to the employers to give us a chance to apply for jobs.  
**Md. Rahat Hossain**  
*One-mail*

## Abdication of responsibility

In the ninth parliamentary election, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina declared 'Charter for Change' as her election manifesto in order to build up a progressive, developed 'Digital Bangladesh'. The triumph of the Awami League with an unpredictably overwhelming majority apparently reflected the people's wishes and expectations. The violent

activities of Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student wing of the Awami League, has, however, created a reign of terror in different educational institutions which has within three months, resulted in the deaths of two students, injury to about thousand and the closure of thirty educational institutions for an indefinite period of time. The violent activities of the Chhatra League on the campuses of different educational institutions; repeated inter-college brawls, tender businesses, rehearsal with arms and firearms in the dormitories for supremacy and hall occupation, have raised numerous questions in the people's minds, and further raised the concern of the guardians and made the whole situation bleak. Consequently, Sheikh Hasina stepped down from the position of BCL's organisational head. The retreat of Sheikh Hasina from the organizational responsibility of the Chhatra League has put it in uncertainty. The guardian-less Chhatra League may consequently become much more reckless, unbridled and arrogant. Through reforming the organisational structure, developing qualitative leadership by council, setting up committees of different educational institutions, the Hasina led government can bring back stability and peace to the educational institutions.

**Zulfikar Jewel**  
*One-mail*

**An appeal**  
I would like to draw the attention of the honourable minister for housing about the sloppiness of Rajuk in managing their land projects. I applied for a piece of land in the Uttara Third Phase project in early 2004 along with many other university professors. With lot of uncertainties in the era of alliance government and the caretaker government, Rajuk finally sent us letters indicating their decision to allocate us land in the middle of 2008, 4 years after the submission of application! Accordingly, I paid the amount for the first instalment by 30th of September, 2008. We were advised that the actual letter of allotment with the plot number would be given to us soon. Unfortunately, no further communication was made by Rajuk yet. In the meantime, Rajuk has called for another application for land for their Uttara and Purbanchal projects.

I would request the honourable minister to take necessary steps to direct Rajuk to complete the plot allocation process and handover the necessary documents of allotment to the buyers before they take up any new project.  
**Dr. Abdul Moyeen**  
*One-mail*

**Stolen mobile phones**  
In the United Kingdom if a mobile phone is lost or stolen and the matter is reported to the mobile phone service provider, the SIM of the lost mobile phone is deactivated. The mobile phone itself is locked and cannot be reused by any other person. In Bangladesh scores of mobile phone are lost or snatched away by muggers every day. It has taken an epidemic form.

Mobile phone service providers are as much aware of the daily reports of lost or stolen mobile phones. Sometimes last year the former Chairman of Bangladesh Telephone Regulatory Commission (BTRC) had mentioned in a conference that the system of locking stolen mobile phones would be introduced in Bangladesh to deter crime in this sector.

As a corporate social responsibility, it is the duty of the multinational mobile phone service providers in Bangladesh to come forward with the solution like locking stolen phones and help curtail street crimes. I am sure the subscribers will have no objection paying some extra amount to ensure that their lost mobile phones are totally disabled in case it falls into wrong hands. The technology is available, so why wait?  
**Ziauddin Ahmed**  
*One-mail*

## Income tax

With the development of market economy throughout the world, the importance of income tax as the source of income of the government is increasing.

For a sustainable and mass development of a nation like us there is no alternative but to be self-sufficient economically.

The government can ensure such development by utilizing the national resources like human skill, technology, natural resources such as gas and coal, and overall, which is the most important, transparent and efficient monetary management of government funds.

For the sake of market economy, taxes on import items, especially the raw materials hinder the possibility of developing industries both small and large.

Now the income tax can play a vital role to generate the much-needed funds for the government. It is true that most of the people are reluctant to pay tax because it is

paid directly in cash. The second problem is the harassment a taxpayer faces while paying tax. Those who go to the tax office regularly know what the suffering is.

The third problem is that income tax rules are not clear to most of the people as the return form is too long and contains too many questions with some complicated calculations. It is true that literacy rate of our country for understanding the rules is very low. The government has not taken the matter into account. It is not fair that every taxpayer requires to know all the rules and has to pay penalty for not knowing the rules.

Recently, the self assessment procedure was introduced but it also limited the scope of utilization by the conditions a taxpayer has to fulfil to get the benefit.

The recent caretaker government has introduced the universal self assessment procedure that looks better for taxpayers.

The tax department calls the taxpayer for 'hearing'. It looks like the tax paying is a

judicial procedure where the tax office is part of a dispute and it is also the judge. So how can we expect a fair judgment on the dispute? Another interesting thing is that they do not have to prove anything, they just give a decision and it is the responsibility of the taxpayer to fight against the decision in 'appeal' and 'tribunal' and, interestingly again, justice is sought from the tax department which is part of the dispute.

It is time to think whether tax paying method can be changed and be handed over to the bank to collect income tax from the taxpayers who will pay it by self assessment procedure. It is the demand of time to ease the tax rules. It should be a payment procedure rather than a 'judicial procedure'.

Any complaint against the taxpayer should be left to the court which is free and thus the taxpayer will be equal part of a dispute as the tax department.

**Amzad Ali Sarkar**  
*Ibrahimpur, Dhaka*

# Traffic jams

Albeit we are expressing apprehension and shouting for a resolution on a regular basis and the government is striving to mitigate the traffic congestion, this crisis is looming large, why? It's simple to comprehend that when things are high in number the procedures for supervision and control become complicated. There are actually many reasons behind unbearable traffic congestion and one of them is excessive number of cars. The number of cars is increasing rapidly. Let's now come back to the main point, how do cars actually cause traffic jam? Easily one can figure out by looking around while remaining stuck on the roads esp. during traffic congestion that merely two-three big and some small buses are stuck whereas hundreds of cars are queuing up all over the road. And each car is carrying either a single or two-three passengers at a time. It's like using an entire building not an apartment for a single nuclear family. Lately, the UAE govt. has made the provision for moderately-long way journey from one place to another by comfortable as well as affordable giant buses to ease the traffic congestion.

And people are getting interested in it as it costs them less and provides them safety and saves their time too. However, our respectable rich citizens can come forward to help ease traffic jam by phasing out the unnecessary purchase of new cars. And we had better avoid using cars unnecessarily. If we think deep down we'll find that these cars are one of the causes behind traffic jam and responsible for air pollution, squandering of time, money, fuel etc. However, the government also needs to think about actual number of foot-over bridges as needed, widening of roads, underground rail-crossing system, setting discouraging tax rate on cars (to lessen the statistics), launching more double-decker buses like-- Volvo, more flyovers on busy avenues, no approval for industrial buildings like garments factory and other manufacturing industries within the capital city in order to ease the traffic system in the capital.

We are indeed in need of changes before the problems get further aggravated.

**Hasnat, AIUB**  
*Banani, Dhaka*



PHOTO: STAR

# Land of treasure

Bangladesh is so small that it becomes tough to find it in a global map. But the Almighty has blessed the country with many hidden treasures. Obviously, the culture and heritage is quite unique and rich. In fact during

festivals like Eid-ul-fitre, Pahela Baishakh, Ekusey February, etc Bangladesh takes a new look. This country is very different from other countries as it has six different seasons. Each season has its own beauty.

We have many beautiful tourist spots and the land here is very fertile. So, why should we not prosper as a nation?  
**Md. Mahbubur Rahman**  
*Student of European Standard School, Dhaka*



## Enforcement of law

Nobody is above the law. Is the Bangla proverb true? It is not, at least not in Bangladesh.

It exists only on the lips of people and politicians or in the manifestos of political parties. We have lost confidence on this proverb from practical experiences. I am giving a few examples for the information of the readers of my letter.

Some high profile political leaders who are proven guilty of various corruption cases and jailed for more than 10-20 years by lower courts, are not only free, they are now trying to put the very officials who uncovered their corruption to jail. The high profile leaders are out now to bring those officials before them to explain their official actions and face charges for suing, arresting and then bringing them before the trial courts. Are they not above law? They are.

Corruption cases of some Ministers or Lawmakers of big political parties were unearthed by the ACC during the CTG rule. They were tried

by the special courts, many of them were proven guilty of corruption like possession of illegal arms, alcohol, taking bribe for saving a killer from indictment, siphoning off money abroad, stealing of relief goods, grabbing of lands, illegal kick-backs from foreign investors and many more highly offensive activities, are free and speaking in loud voices against the people who charge-sheeted them. They are demanding arrest and trial of those who caught them red-handed!

The weak are not above the law, only the powerful ones are. Let us amend this proverb from now on and say "Only the powerful are above the law." Poor people seldom get justice from courts.  
**Shafiqul Islam, NY**

## Deprived students

The letter entitled "Deprived Students" published on 5 April in this page drew my attention. Thanks to the anonymous students for writing it. I strongly support their demand. I was also a student of the chemistry

department of Chittagong University and received my MS degree last year. Students of this department are not only deprived of all sorts of technological facilities but also practical knowledge, which is the key criterion in the job market. The laboratories of this department have no modern apparatus. Scarcity of essential chemicals and equipments are a very common phenomenon here. So what is the consequence? Students' research activities are badly affected and they complete their course without sufficient practical knowledge. As a result, they cannot survive in a job race. Can anybody believe that even without a UV-spectrometer, this department gives Ph.D certificate? Our research students pursue their task in BCSIR lab or elsewhere. Most of our teachers are indifferent in this regard.

The situation must change for the better.  
**Rauful Alam**  
*A concerned reader*