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Baul Samrat

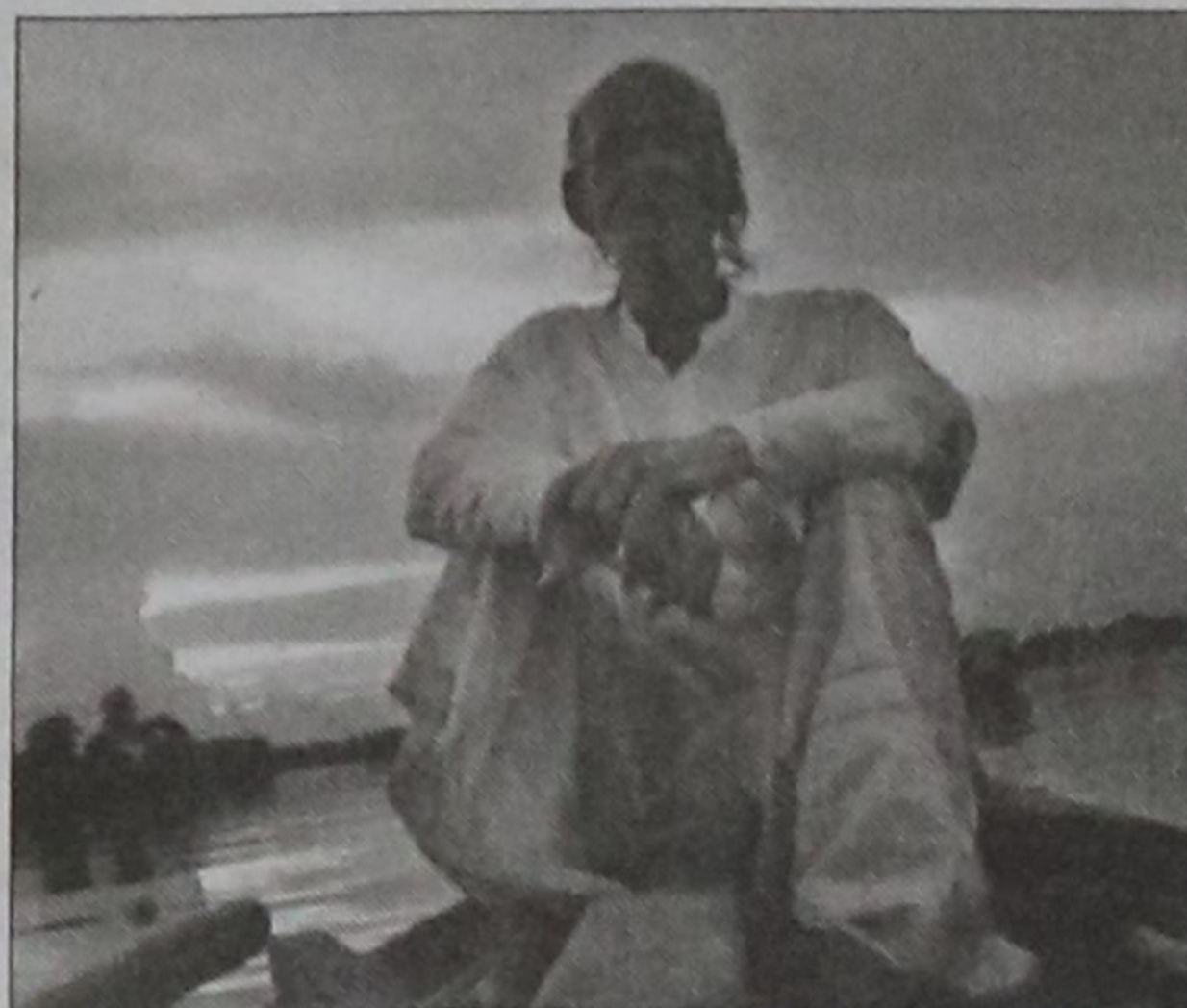
The Baul legend's departure has created a permanent vacuum in folk music.

'Gari cholena, cholena, cholena re.... gari cholena' the mortal engines of the physical vehicle belonging to the great spiritual baul exponent of Bangladesh, 'Baul Samrat' (King of Bauls) Shah Abdul Karim, has indeed come to a halt forever to travel afresh towards eternity at the age of 93.

Born on a Falgun day of 1916 to Ibrahim Ali and Naiorjaan Bibi, in the village of Ujandhol, under present upazilla of Dera in Sunamganj district, young Abdul Karim passed his boyhood amidst sheer poverty and daily hardship. Unlike others, little Karim always felt an alluring pull towards mysticism and folk music. Conventional educational for Karim lasted only a week at a night shift village school. Dropping out of classroom, Shah Abdul Karim got engaged as a cattle-herder and during evening hours spent his time in baul ashors, pala gaan and such. Though his parents never disliked his musical attraction, yet Shah Abdul Karim had to face social stigma and desertion for his love of music.

During the raw years of the Baul Samrat's carrier, his chief mentors included Baul Shadhak Rashid

Uddin, Kamal Uddin and Shah Ibrahim Mastan Baksh of the Bhati (low-lying) regions. The music maestro had equal aptitude in a diverse field of Bangla folk melody including baul songs and spiritual songs in addition to Bhatiali. Tremendously inspired by his wife, Shah Abdul Karim found maximum energy and gusto in his musical activities. His unique compositions of 'Aftab Sangeet' are a great dedication



towards the memory of his loving wife, late Aftabunessa Sarala, whose sudden demise was a great shock for Abdul Karim.

Following the philosophies of Baul greats Shadhok Lalan Shah, Panju Shah and Duddu Shah, the 'Baul Samrat' had written

and composed some 1600 songs

Baul Shah Abdul Karim always fought for the common masses so to say, for the deprived and the oppressed humanity. During the Language Movement and Liberation of Bangladesh, political leaders including Maulana Bhashani, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardi and others

found the rebellious voice of the late singer in strong harmony with Gonosangeetashors.

Through the worldly demise of the 'Baul Samrat', the country has lost a legendary genius. **Aziz Amirul**
Uttara, Dhaka

Tipaimukh dam and other issues

While welcoming the bilateral agreement between the Indian Foreign Minister and our Foreign Minister at New Delhi recently, I feel that what we got on Tipaimukh is "an assurance" and not an agreement to the effect that India would not do anything "which would adversely impact Bangladesh" as reported in The Daily Star of 11 September '09.

It appears that India has not yet agreed to allow Bangladesh to have access into the scrutiny of facts on all aspects of Tipaimukh Dam and its effects / impacts on water availability in the two branches of river Barak i.e. Surma and Kishora passing through Sylhet Division as well as Meghna and all other linked small rivers and canals.

I have in an article under the same title narrated in details the problems being faced by our people on the bank of Surma river in particular ever since 1947. Indian attitude to our country was hostile in those days and it

continued till 1971 and even now. India had deployed their troops on our bank of the Surma claiming that the whole river belonged to them as it was a property of the then adjacent Cachar district of Assam. However, in the Mujib-Indira Agreement of 1974 it was agreed that the mid-stream of Surma would be the boundary between India and Bangladesh. Unfortunately Indian border guards still travel on boat in Surma, drop down at any point of our bank and destroy vegetable plantations by our people. They do not allow our people even to collect water. Since no mention of the Surma river has been made in the briefing of press by our foreign minister, I would appeal to our government to advise our people whether India has agreed to vacate half the Surma river for us to make use of it.

In case this matter has not been raised with India, I would request our government to kindly take up the matter in the next meeting with New Delhi. **Altaf Ahmed Choudhury**
One-mail

Diverse Bangladeshi culture

Bangladesh has a culture that encompasses elements both old and new. The Bengali language boasts a rich literary heritage, which Bangladesh shares with the Indian state of West Bengal. The earliest literary text in Bangla is the eighth century Charyapada. Bangla literature in the medieval age was often either religious (e.g. Chandidas), or adaptations from other languages (e.g. Alaol). Bangla literature matured in the nineteenth century. Its great icons were the poets Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. Bangladesh also has a long tradition in folk literature, evidenced by Maimensingha Gitika, Thakurmar Jhuli or stories related to Gopal Bhar.

The musical tradition of Bangladesh is lyric-based (Baniprodhan), with minimal instrumental accompaniment. The Baul tradition is a unique heritage of Bangla folk music, and there are numer-

ous other musical traditions in Bangladesh, which vary from one region to the other.

We should realize how lucky we are to have been born in such a culturally diverse country. **Shohag Mostafij**
MBA (Strategic & International Management)
University of Dhaka

Jamaat leader's son

Recently, Dr. Alauddin Ahmed, prime minister's advisor, issued a statement that Brig. Azmi, son of Jamaat leader Golam Azam, was sacked from the army on national security ground. This statement appears outrageous that after so many years of distinguished service and career, a person has to leave his service in this manner. Golam Azam should have faced war criminal charges long time ago. However, Golam Azam's misdeeds should not be the reason to inflict any unjust act on his son. Some people responsible for such inconsiderate and morally wrong acts should think again that they will not be in power forever. My request to these people is, please do the right thing. Do not victimise people for actions of their parents. **Iqbal Mahmood, Ph.D., P.E.**
Corona, California

Save small fish

Fishes which grow to size of 25cm or 9 inches in mature or adult stage in their life cycle are known as small indigenous species (SIS). About 144 small indigenous species are available in our country. But today most of the species are going to be extinct in our natural habitats. Due to indiscriminate exploitation of brood and baby fishes, reduced natural habitats, presence of irrigation projects, huge amount of silting, use of pesticides and pollution from industrial wastes, the fish population is dwindling.

So, we should be conscious about SIS and take necessary steps to protect them. **Md. Al-Helal**
Faculty of Fisheries
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University
Dinajpur

VGF card

"VGF bid at stake", the news was published in The Daily Star on 6 September which drew my attention.

The operation of vulnerable group feeding (VGF) programme was politicised almost in every part of the country when it was started weeks ago. Local ruling party leaders took away VGF cards for distributing among their own people. So, the whole purpose of the scheme was defeated. The authorities concerned should look into the matter. **Mahmud Ali Kabir**
Ex-BSS correspondent
Gopalganj

Digital Bangladesh

The government declared that Bangladesh would become a digital country by 2021. If I clarify its meaning, it refers to the initiation of e-governance, e-commerce, e-business and e-fit system around the country. The important thing to implement "Digital Bangladesh" is the electricity. Unfortunately, electricity is not produced as per its demand. Electricity supplied from the national grid is very meagre in amount and load-shedding is a regular phenomenon. But our government is not showing any concern over this issue.

I think the government is not taking effective steps to solve the major problem. If the problem cannot be resolved nationally, we can ask for foreign help in this regard. So, the government should think about this project, so that we can get a digital Bangladesh. **Md. Jubair Uddin**
Department of English
University of Chittagong

Quacks at work

Quacks who dishonestly claim to have special knowledge and skill in medicine are found in the busy streets, railway stations and terminals, selling their medicine. They are, indeed, very popular among the illiterate people. By songs, convincing lectures or by any other tricks, they create a crowd of listeners in order to sell their so-called medicine. They say that they can cure all serious diseases which modern medical science cannot! Now they are distributing their leaflets to people, using microphones, and what not. The simple-minded people are often cheated by them. In the circumstances, the authorities concerned should take stern steps against all these quacks. **Habibur Rashid Ismail**
Chittagong

Asian Highway

It is good news that the government of Bangladesh has decided to join the Asian highway. But the parliamentary committee's recommendations for accepting proposed routes AH1 (Benapole-Jessore-Bhanga-Dhaka-Kanchpur-Sylhet-Tamabil) or AH2 (Banglabanda-Hatikumrul-Tangail-Dhaka-Kanchpur-Sylhet-Tamabil) do not seem to reflect due considerations being given to our national interest. Though UNESCAP proposed these two routes as international, a closer look will reveal the regional nature of both these routes. The fact that both the routes start from and end in India after passing through Bangladesh is an added disadvantage for us.

The proposed route AH141 (Mongla-Khulna-Jessore-Pakshi-Hatikumrul-Dhaka-Kanchpur-Cox's Bazar-Teknaf-Yangoon), which is

dubbed as a regional route, merits more consideration to be treated as an international route than either AH1 or AH2. Bangladesh should start negotiation with UNESCAP and India and Myanmar to treat AH141 as an international route with the following modifications: Benapole-Jessore-Dhaka-Kanchpur-Cox's Bazar-Teknaf-Yangoon.

In my opinion, Bangladesh should choose to join this modified international route of the Asian Highway. **Nuruddin Azam**
Australia

Unfair deals

The AL govt is striking unfair and unequal deals on petroleum and gas with foreign companies without much debate in JS regarding its pros and cons, also there is no debate in the media. If the govt is right, what are they afraid of? Why Anu Muhammad or other economists couldn't be seen in BTV and other channels with open debates before any contract with those US companies was signed? What do they want to hide? This hiding tendency is not compatible with a democratic govt at all. As remitters we are concerned. We need to be convinced before sending further remittance to Bangladesh.

If TV channels and parliamentary committees could solve the problem, there was no need for hartal. **Dr Azizul Karim**
GPAustralia

Corrupt railwaymen

Last July I went to Dinajpur for official work. On the way to Dinajpur by Ekota Inter City train what I saw was beyond expectation. When the train reached Parbotipur station, a good number of passengers got into it. Eventually, I was over there (that compartment). They did not take ticket from the counter. Some time after the train left the station, the Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) came to the compartment and collected money from the passengers who had boarded the train from Parbotipur station without ticket. I stared at his radiant face for a while. When he understood that I kept my eyes on him, he left the compartment without delay. Probably this is the normal practice.

Now it is time to take action against all such unlawful activities.

Md. Shadiqur Rahman
Trainer
Human Rights & Legal Services Program
Brac Training & Resource Centre
Sreemongal, Moulvibazar

Hartal

It is very disappointing that people did not respond to the call of hartal by the national committee to protect gas, oil, mineral resources and power

Industrial pollution



MUNEM WASIF / DRKNEWS

Although Bangladesh is primarily considered an agrarian economy, industry now makes a significant contribution to GDP of the country. There are industrial zones pivoting around principal urban centres of Bangladesh. Besides, various small and medium scale industries are scattered all over the country. A recent survey conducted by the DoE (Department of Environment) notes that more than 1200 industries discharge about 35,000 cubic meter wastes that lead to environmental degradation. In my view to save the environment from industrial pollution, the government should ensure the following pollution control strategies:

- 1) Making policies concerning the control of industrial pollution.
- 2) Emission from industries must be controlled using better, more effective & efficient technology.
- 3) Brick-fields should use clean fuels and be located away from human settlement.
- 4) Industries should not be established near agricultural land.
- 5) Industries should be decentralized from industrial areas of Dhaka, Khulna and Chittagong.
- 6) Modern effluent treatment plants should be established in every industrial unit.

Md. Nazmus Sakib
Student
Dept. of Geography & Environmental Studies
University of Chittagong

in Dhaka city on September 14, 2009.

People should have observed it for the sake of the country, but they are busy with their petty interests, not caring about the greater interest of society. But it is a grave mistake because in the long run, if the government does not abandon its plan all of them will suffer.

I am surprised by the Dokan Malik Samity's declaration that they would keep their shops open because they would incur losses. In Ramadan no one goes shopping before ten or eleven in the morning, the hartal was scheduled to end at 12:00noon, so people who wanted to buy something would definitely go after twelve, it is clear that shop owners would not lose any customers.

All this proves that we are a selfish nation, we cannot see beyond our narrow horizon and one day we will have to pay for it dearly. **Nur Jahan**
Chittagong

Sufferings of students

This year, the honourable education board members decided to make some changes in our education system. As a result, now all the students of class six to nine are taking lessons in the creative system. This system is supported by most people. But this is not all. The main thing is that this system is totally new to the students. As I am a student of class eight, I have seen the sufferings of students closely. Everybody thought that it would bring good to us. But the reality is that the system is not proper for us.

Tanzila Tahera, One-mail

Who is a leader?

It is not the one who leads in politics, nor on the battlefield, nor in say business activities. A leader is undoubtedly the one who gives moral leadership to the nation by his/her thoughts and actions.

Who measures up to this simple standard in Bangladesh?
Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Volleying back....

Readers' instant comments on The Daily Star Online reports. Log on to thedailystar.net to leave your comments.

30,000 trees wiped out in seven days (September 14, 2009)

Well, those in power are always taking care of these sort of people who commit crimes like these. **Iktear Uddin**

I am so shocked by the news. I remember 15 years ago when we were in school in Teknaf, teachers took us to the beach to help plant these trees. These trees grew with me and I felt they are part of me. I am absolutely devastated. We want to know who are these so called influential locals. **Mahbub Murshed**

Such massive destruction of our coastal plantations is very unfortunate indeed. However, I would also like to mention that raising the plantation at the down side of the marine road is not a good idea as, for the tourists driving on the road, it blocks the beautiful view of the sea. For this matter, the plantation should be raised on the other (upper) side of the road. (I don't know if some of the tour operating companies also thought actively in this line!) But, this should be done in a planned manner i.e. new plantations should be raised on the upper side of the road first, before removing the existing stands on the downside of the road. **Abdul Quddus**

It is a picture of sheer lawlessness and greed among the government agencies. Oh! what a shocking picture. The OC's statement is unacceptable. **Mashie Khan**

You have a magnificent country in Bangladesh and a magnificent potential global tourist asset at Cox's Bazaar. Yet, through continuing mindless and unimpeded local bureaucratic actions, a total

lack of courageous and visionary government decisions, ineffective and bureaucratically delivered aid programmes and entrenched corruption on an epic scale, Bangladesh is going nowhere fast and will continue to go nowhere fast. **Bob Johnson**

This so called people's government that rules the sovereign country of Bangladesh is to blame. There will be nothing left to build on by the time they leave power. I think this cabinet and its structure is by far the worst this country has seen. There is no balance in the system. Fire must fear water for a balance to exist. How could they bring down all those trees in broad daylight? **Shafquat Azad**

First of all, punish those who are responsible for protecting forests. **Anonymous**

The govt. should punish the culprits and thus set an example for the rest to refrain them from such activities. **Engr. Saeed**

That's what happens when the first incident is overlooked. I am sure all of you remember the case reported a couple of months back in DS about trees in Sitakunda. **Morshed**

Legal cutters cut trees from the base keeping no basal portion left out because they can't waste the bought or grown wood. Only pirates can leave out bases because cutting from the base takes more time and they don't care wasting because they neither grew them nor spent any money. That is, the several feet tall basal trunk still standing is a strong evidence that trees have been cut by pirates. Now the question arises why such

piracy of plants goes on unabated in many places when a people's government is at the helm? **MAS Molla**

When our prime minister attended an overseas summit on climate & natural disaster, we could not protect our natural wall which would guard us against cyclones. **Md. Alamgir Hossain**

Mathematically, more than 4,000 trees were felled per day...what were the reporters doing during the 2nd, 3rd, 4th days when trees were being felled? **Ashique Mahmud**

It frustrates me to think that people do not understand that places like Teknaf have the natural resources which we can cash on, instead of destroying the assets that we have. This kind of behaviour is quite appalling. **Naaz Fahmida**

Does anyone in power care about this? **Rezaul Karim**

We broke all records of destructive work. **Sharif Hosen**

This group of people must be punished. The punishment should be an exemplary one, so that no one has the courage to do something like this in the future. **Rafiqur Rahman**

My appeal to the govt: take drastic action through your agencies against those people who have committed this criminal act. We demand visible action, no comment or commitment. **Ahsanul Habib**

Traffic signal system made spectator of total chaos (September 10, 2009)

First of all, train the traffic police before deploying them in the road. **Ameer Syed**

Please blame corruption. **Ahmad**

Make the roads, including pavements, more scientifically structured...it will greatly reduce uncertainty that drivers face. **Ferdous Jalli**

One day I met one Sri Lankan guy who had come to Bangladesh for some official work. To him, Bangladesh means Dhaka city, no place of interest; everything seemed to him very funny. No houses, all are flats, congestion, excessive population, dirty etc. What surprised him is that when the green light is on, vehicles stop, and when the red light is on, vehicles begin to move! I couldn't answer. **Sabiha Sultana**

When more than 80% of the road space is always occupied by vehicles and when intersections are close to each other, and when there is mixed land use in every part of the city, and where population is more than double the capacity, NO smart traffic control system available in the world can improve the situation. **Saif Iqbal**

Not only in Bangladesh, but everywhere in the world people do not want to stop at traffic signal, they want to exceed speed limit, etc. But in the civilized countries people follow the rules because they fear the penalty, fine, jail, cancellation of license, etc. **Zack**

We need new roads straight and with proper type crossings. Traffic police also need to be educated on the traffic management including those officers. **Sohel Ahmed**

The traffic police may have a remote 'PAUSE' switch in hand to control the automated signals, which in turn will control the traffic movement. This system will ensure compliance with traffic rules by the on duty traffic controllers. **Muhammad Ali**

I have been driving for three months in Australia without having any pre-driving training and lessons. From my little experience, I can surely tell how smoothly we drive in Australia because of the proper traffic controlling systems and road rules or regulations. However, regarding our problems, I think we need to rebuild Bangladesh from the beginning. Thanks to our low paid traffic police. **Md Nazrul Islam**

Thanks for the story. Some times I feel annoyed with the traffic police including the traffic sergeant, but most of the time I have sympathy for them. At least, we can move! **SM Asaduzzaman**

DS deserves a special commendation for constantly reporting on Dhaka traffic problem. Traffic police, is, of course, part of the issue, not the whole. This issue requires a deeper and coordinated approach that will encompass many related factors, such as road rules, citizens' awareness, quantity and quality of vehicles plying, road network capacity, movement control at peak times, public transport route management, street side shops and so on. After seeing how our authorities act, I now have resigned to the fact that this is one problem we are incapable of solving. **Humayun Kabir**