Role of media

It has now become apparent that some newspapers work as silent supporters of some political vision and modulate the readers' minds in the direction of the political philosophy of a chosen political party. As a television viewer, one is subjected to the same experience as that of the print media. The media may have a liking for some political philosophy but the problem arises when it becomes blind. The role of print and electronic media is found to serve the purpose of different political parties. They make programmes focusing on the party interest, whereas the media should have guarded the interest of the people without any compromise. The media by their unbiased, pro-people role, through their news, editorials and programmes, can make people aware of their legitimaterights.

Without the support of the media, the political parties would not dare to indulge in undemocratic anti people activities. For a democratic Bangladesh, a committed and determined pro-

people media is a must. Md. Delwar Hossain East Rampura, Dhaka



Congratulations!

I am really proud that Fazle Hasan Abed is to be knighted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This is a worthy achievement. He is not only the founder of Brac but also one of the most influential personalities of our country. He has shown the world his quality only through his work. My greetings to Sir Fazle

Hasan Abed. Mir Abidur Rahman Department of English

South East University

Pre-primary education

It is a matter of great regret that primary education is in bad shape in our country. In the developed countries the authorities give more emphasis on primary education because it is the foundation of student life. We have learned recently that the present government is going to reshape primary education by setting up more schools, recruiting more teachers, providing tiffin facilities at a cheap cost, giving 100 taka to every student per month, distributing learning materials, etc. And a decision was taken to start pre-primary education within two years. Basically, a student cannot cope with the curriculum of class I at an early age of 4 or 5. An orientation is needed at that age. And not every student comes from an educated

So, pre-primary education is essential in the context of our country. Not only that, proper monitoring is needed for a smooth education sys-

Md. Zahidul Islam Zibon Dept. of English International Islamic University, Chittagong

Banning religionbased parties

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed's statement that the Awami League regime will ban religion-based political parties is unfortunate. I think such a move will create further acrimony and disunity among the people of Bangladesh. Subsequent political crisis and clashes may claim lives. Instead of addressing such touchy and unnecessary issues, the government should work hard with the help of the people of Bangladesh to advance our economy and our national standing in the international arena. Whenever we step out of our land, our national pride meets disillusionment, as we become

behind other nations in terms but also fake pharmaceuticals. of good educational and political culture and prosperity. Perhaps, our standing in international politics is one of the lowest in the world. The political parties that have been in power are largely to blame for this. Banning religion-based parties will not give us bread and butter. Let us address the pressing issues of poverty, illiteracy, corruption, campus violence and other social and political ills, which have been crippling the nation ever since its birth.

Banning religion-based political parties may not meet the objective the Awami League has in mind. Turkey has put such a ban for a long time, and that did not stop the pro-Islamic AK party from coming to power. If the Awami League bans Islamic parties in Bangladesh, people involved in those parties will emerge with "secular" names and will continue the same political activities they have been doing under religious banners. What is more, such a ban is undemocratic and is absent in the western world.

Europe has a tradition of major Christian parties. For example, Germany has been ruled on-and-off by the Christian Democratic Union. Other Western countries also have Christian political parties. For example: Australia has Christian Democratic Party; Canada has Christian Heritage Party; Norway has Russia has Christian Democrats; the United States of America has Christian Coalition, Christian Coalition of Florida, and Christian Falangist Party of America.

These seem okay and nobody goes for banning them. The problem seems to occur when Islam is associated with political parties. This is unfortunate and part of the process of demonising this noble religion. The Awami League may receive accolades from western governments for such a move to ban Islamic parties in Bangladesh; and this will only add to their big list of double standard poli-

IbneYounus Elephant Road Dhaka

Quack doctors, spurious medicines

Some days ago we watched in a TV report that some dishonest traders have been supplying adulterated medicines to several pharmaceuticals. We have come to know that there

aware that our country lags far exist not only quack doctors The present situation seems to be like "all thieves are cousins".

Though the quacks cannot prescribe perfect medicine and appropriate doses they are treating the patients without any fear. The unaware people take the medicines prescribed by the quacks and become further sick.

Besides, there are the brokers who take the patients to the particular clinics to get commission. These quack doctors, fake

pharmaceuticals and the brokers can be punished under the existing law. Therefore the authorities should take quick action for the benefit of the people. Advocate M. Saiful Alam Anandanagar Savar, Dhaka

Sea level rise and Bangladesh

Climatologists predict that in the middle of the next century, the temperature of this earth may rise by as much as 4 degree Celsius. This could catastrophically reduce food production, destroy or severely damage wildlife, raise sea level and thereby flood

coastal areas and farmlands. The alarming news about Bangladesh is that due to the rise of the sea level, the lower southern part of the country may one day go under water. The main reason for global warming is carbon dioxide gas Christian People's Party; produced by the burning of fossil fuels and forests, and the pollutants such as methane and chlorofluorocarbons.

We can minimise it by raising public awareness. Habibur Rashid Ismail Chittagong

Textbooks

The government has claimed that they have been able to distribute textbooks to all primary and secondary school students in the country. But the reality is different.

Students have not got all the books for all the subjects, many students have not received even Bangla, English and Mathematics books. Some schools are distributing old books. Some new books are already in the market for sale, according to daily newspapers.

In Gopalganj some students have received books stamped with a line "book delivery programme 2005."

Many students have complained that their schools are asking for money for the books. Though it is prohibited for the government schools to

take money from students, this is going on in front of the law enforcement agencies. People behind such activi-

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

ties should be given exemplary punishment. Mahmud Ali Kabir Ex-BSS correspondent Gopalganj

High speed train

This refers to a news item published on the 28 December 09 in The Daily Star about China unveiling world's fastest train link a train travelling at an average speed of 350 km per hour. Well, that's China. They have the resources and the willingness to serve the people. What about us, the people of Bangladesh? Would it be too much to expect High Speed Train (HST) service from Bangladesh Railway between Dhaka and Chittagong? Let's try to dream of travelling from Dhaka to Chittagong in about three hours or so. Well, that would not be high speed train, but that of medium speed. By definition, HST in China, Japan, some of the Asian countries and in Europe have a speed of 250 to 300 km per hour or so. In France, it is called Train a Grande Vitesse (TGV) having a speed of 280 km/hr. However, test runs have achieved 400 to 500

km/hr around the world. Let's face the facts. We, in Bangladesh do not expect trains travelling at 300 km per hour. What about 120 km per hour or so? Even at that speed, we would be able to travel Dhaka to Chittagong in about three hours; the distance covered being 346 km. This shall be reduced by 81 km via Laksham as per proposed Railway Improvement Project. In that case, the travel time could be less than three

hours. If that be so, what improvements are required? For moderate speed, overhead electrification may not be required. What is required for sure is the introduction of improved double railway tracks, the other being fast/medium speed engines. Reducing curves, level crossings and perhaps few over passes could also be required. Is BR in a position to do these and that too at a reasonable and affordable cost?

If fund is the question, the private sector may be involved. Asian Development Bank and other funding agencies would take about 10 to 12 years compiling all their formalities of project appraisal and so on till the completion. On the other hand, if private sector is allowed to participate, project of this magnitude could be completed in four to five years.

Having seven to eight high/medium speed trains between Dhaka to Chittagong would significantly increase BR earnings. Goods train may also be introduced. This would significantly reduce road traffic load. At present hundreds of luxury and ordinary buses ply between the two cities. Except for the week ends and peak days (Eid holidays etc), most of these buses run at their 30 to 40% capacity. If that be the case, some of these buses could be asked to ply in the city areas (Dhaka & Chittagong) and a few may ply in the shorter routes, say less than 40 km, one hour travel time. CNG three wheelers should not be allowed to ply in the national highways. All these factors would significantly reduce traffic load in the highways, reduce incidence of accidents, reduce travel time and save foreign currency. This would indi-

rectly increase our GDP. As taxpayers, could we expect or dream to have high/medium speed trains

from Dhaka to Chittagong in about three to four years? Subsequently, such trains could be introduced for other routes. Would the authorities concerned please try to throw some light on this? Gazi A. Rahmani Bailey Road, Dhaka

Dearth of energy

resources The nation is now experiencing shortage of gas, water and electricity in different parts of the country. These problems have become very acute. According to experts, natural gas is depleting at an alarming rate, which requires the government to take the necessary initiative for the future fuel provision. Amid these acute crises, we all are expressing apprehensions. We are frequently asking and putting blame on the government for these ordeals. But is it only the government failing to cope with these problems? In fact, the government alone cannot bring any positive change unless there is cooperation and collaboration of its citi-Water level is going deep

down due to excessive felling of trees in not only coastal areas but also in many other regions. Misuse of natural gas is going on, as we keep our burners on just to save one match stick! Unnecessary power consumption like keeping the light and other heavy power consuming electronics gadgets on is partly responsible for load shedding. However, to make our nation digital, proper utilization of natural resources is a must. And merely hurling challenges and blaming the government won't bring any blessings for the nation.

Of course, the government has a great responsibility to do something effective to keep things under control.

Hasnat American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB)

BDR mutiny report

I have doubts about an authentic and accurate final report on BDR mutiny being published.

I expect that the government will publish an unbiased and true report in this respect. Md. Abdul Wahab

BBA (IUB) **Independent University** Bangladesh

Loan disappears!

A surprising BSS report was published in a local English daily on 3 January. It reported government high-up's statement that Tk.107 crore loaned to Jatiyo Matshajibi Sambaya Samity by the previous government cannot be traced! This is the most surprising news of this New Year! One really wonders how could such a thing happen? However, apart from this bomb-shell statement, nothing else was mentioned about the matter. This too is surprising; given the investigative

trend of our newsmen. The matter is very serious, and it needs to be investigated and transparently reported through the national news

To begin with, the background under which such a loan was issued represents an unacceptable level of financial irresponsibility.

This matter needs to be thoroughly looked into.

Unfortunately, this news item was not published in other English dailies and one wonders why! I bring this to the notice of all readers. S.A. Mansoor

Dhaka

Ship-breaking yard

The ship-breaking yards of Chittagong have become death traps for the hapless workers. Fatal accidents are very common there. Though the owners of the yards earn huge amount of money through this industry, they are indifferent in ensuring security for the workers. Despite the recent tragedy, yard workers are compelled to work without gloves, safety costumes, etc. Moreover, these ship-breaking yards are a great source of environment pollution. By this time Faujdarhat and Bhatiary, nearby areas of Sitakunda,

have become worst affected by pollution. In those areas 21 species of fish have become extinct and some 11 species are on the verge of extinction.

Bangladesh is the chief buyer of 2172 old ships from the European countries. So, the ship-breaking yard owners should be responsible enough to ensure facilities for the workers and at the same time they should use pollution free technology. Mohammad Zia-ul-Haque Dept. of English

International Islamic University Ctg



Inclement winter

Winter can be very inclement. So, our well-off society, please come out from the dreamy world and carry out your duties! If you don't give them money or shelter, then at least give them a single warm clothe which you don't wear now and which is left to you uselessly. Accept the reality and help

the victims. Johura Alam Mitu Lalbag, Dhaka

Anatomy of one-eleven

I believe, our leaders and

eminent personalities have totally forgotten the environment under which the oneeleven take over took place and it was a welcome happening that brought a sigh of relief to the people of this country as a whole. Had there been no one-eleven, the masters of election engineering would have staged an election on 22/11 and the pre-fixed election results would have been declared. There could have been street fights if not a civil war between the pro-andanti election supporters. There would have been loss of lot of lives and properties. The engineered winners would not have lived more than 1 or 2 months and the country would have been in deep chaos and confusion.

Even the foreign governments who were watching the developments in Bangladesh politics were apprehending this situation. The representatives of those friendly countries where shuttling between Bhaban to House for a peaceful solution. During this crisis we did not see these people, especially the critics of 1/11.

For the general people of Bangladesh, 1/11 was a blessing in disguise. But for the people who siphoned off money, stole relief materials, evaded tax, became owners of more than 100 flats in Dhaka overnight, the people who had to deposit their stolen money in the govt bank, the people who could openly take bribes, could go with a free-hand extortion, who could ask and get percentage on govt works, the people who raised and reared militants to keep away their opponents, 1/11 was A BIG CURSE.

If we summarise the whole thing, the leaders of 1/11 gave us a genuine voter list in place of a fictitious one and staged a genuine election.

The CTG not only did this favour, it helped identify the faces who earned us a title of "most corrupt nation in the world". So, 1/11 is an eye opener for us.

If the present government takes examples of 1/11, initiate a genuine election after the end of their genuine tenure as did the 1/11 heroes, and do not try to stay in power through an engineered election, I am sure, democracy will set its feet on our soil and

we will prosper in future. I also remind the critics-where were you when the country almost reached the point of civil war? Shafiqul Islam, NY

Combating corruption

The chairman of Anti Corruption Commission Ghulam Rahman has said that to mitigate corruption in our country the politicians and their followers have to prove themselves to be honest their activities, otherwise it is not possible.

The politicians should listen to what the ACC chairman has said. Raju Kumar Das Dept. of Business Administration Shah Jalal University of Science and Technology Sylhet

Great recognition

Through your columns, I wish to offer my heartiest and profoundest congratulations to Fazle Hasan Abed of Brac on the announcement that he will be conferred knighthood (Knight Commander) by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of his most noble services to the poor, deprived and disadvantaged of Bangladesh and elsewhere. May Fazle Hasan Abed live

long, in good health and in happiness. Sir Frank Peters Gulshan, Dhaka

Hillary on Copenhagen

US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in her recent remarks at the United Nations Convention on Climate Change held in Copenhagen, Denmark has very critically appreciated the consequences of climate change on Bangladesh. She said:

"I am deeply concerned about the consequences for developing countries - from Bangladesh to the Maldives, from the Caribbean to West Africa and the Pacific islands if we cannot secure the kind of strong operational accord I've described today. We know what the consequences will be for the farmer in Bangladesh or the herder in Africa or the family being battered by hurricanes in Central America. Without that accord, there won't be the kind of joint global action from all of the major economies we all want to see, and the effects in the developing world could be catastrophic. We know what will happen. Rising seas, lost farmland, drought and so much else. Without the accord, the opportunity to mobilize significant resources to assist developing countries with mitigation and adaptation will be lost".

(ref: US Department of State, 17 December 2009)

The above mentioned remarks by Secretary Hillary Clinton has very aptly revealed the major consequences of climate change on Bangladesh and other developing countries. While sincerely appreciating Secretary Hillary Clinton's concern, I would like to request her to take a personal initiative towards ensuring enough technical and financial support to Bangladesh so that it

climate change and protect agriculture and farmers towards securing food secu-

rity for its people. Professor M Zahidul Haque Department of Agricultural Extension & Information

System Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University Dhaka

BNP and **JS**

I am utterly disappointed by the BNP politicians. They got elected by the people and it is their sacred duty to attend parliamentary sessions to highlight the problems of the people of their elected areas. But instead, they are finding excuses not to attend JS sessions. People are unhappy with the attitude of these BNP members of parliament. Now they have come up with a 10point demand in order to return to parliament. This is

absurd and ridiculous. If they have any grievances, then it is their task to go to parliament and highlight their issues. Before election did they ever say in public that even if they get elected and fail to form government they would not go to parliament? Minhaj Ahmed Uttara, Dhaka

Blind supporters I refer to Mr. Palash's letter on

BNP's policy published on 4 January in your daily and regret to observe that many knowledgeable citizens in Bangladesh are yet to get out of the AL-BNP syndrome which is harming our beloved country greatly. Our daily life revolves around questioning and counter-questioning every thought that is aired and anything and everything has to do for or against these two parties even when dealing with external issues.

Being so engrossed fighting amongst ourselves we are forgetting that outsiders are infringing on our national sovereignty be it India or the USA.

In Bangladesh we place our leaders above our country so much so that the interest of the nation is lost in our quarrel to place one leader above the other. The two party followers are like the supporters of Argentina and Brazil football teams. For no personal gain they support their teams blindly. Likewise, our party supporters go into a kind of trance in loving their leaders at the cost of loving their country and lose sight of national interests.

We have to convert our "Bekti-prem" into "Deshprem." We must understand that Bangladesh needed a Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a Ziaur Rahman, AHM Ershad, Sheikh Hasina, Begum Khaleda Zia and whosoever comes in the future. Each had a role to play in nation building. History will speak of their contributions in building Bangladesh.

Party leaders will have to genuinely love Bangladesh as do their voters. They have to shun their present mindset and show their voters that they place national interest above party interest. For national interest to voters is far above party or deceased heroes. Md. Mahmoodul Haque Gulshan, Dhaka can face the consequences of

Good films

In old times watching films was the main source of entertainment for the general people. In those days they used to go to watch movies with whole family to celebrate any event. But with the passage of time the scene had changed and the educated people stopped going to the cinema. Because most of the films were full of obscenity. But the scene is changing gradually with the

watched some good films like "Monpura," "Third Person Singular Number" and we want to watch these types of films more. If such types of films are made, I do believe that people again will throng the cinema halls.

tremendous effort of some filmmakers. We have

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Chittagong