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Ban on hartal

When a political party assumes power, it calls the opposition party troublemaker, and asks them not to observe hartal. The situation reverses when the opposition party comes to power again. This is our political culture. The politicians reap the benefits in such a culture. Politicians never think of the well-being of the country and the welfare of the common man.

The grand alliance government has come to power with an absolute majority. It is the best time for them to ban hartal forever, so that their commitment, with the slogan "Din Bodoler pala," to the nation is fulfilled.

We, the common people, have no interest in hartal, whether it is called by the BNP or the Awami League.

Md. Mosharaf Hossain
One-mail

Our inspirations!

In 1952, the Pakistani rulers tried to force Urdu as the only national language of Pakistan. But the sons of our soil, without even hesitating a little about their lives, protested that move. 'Bangla is my mother tongue' was the slogan of our people. When our protest got stronger, the Pakistanis open fired and killed many of our Language Movement protesters. At last we gained our right to speak in our mother language.

In 1971, our freedom fighters fought with their ultimate strength and bravery,

and after nine months of bloodshed, the Pakistanis were forced to give up. Three million people sacrificed their lives for this country. We achieved our freedom on December 16, 1971. We salute our freedom fighters! They are our inspiration.

Shafeen Mahmood
Little Jewels School
Chittagong

William, not Charles!

The recent news item published in all the dailies over the last few days, reporting the British public's

preference for their next monarch, is just 'Hot Air'! I feel that it will only remain more as an opinion than any thing else!

The century-old British tradition of hereditary, which governs the tradition of royal succession, is not going to be based on the ballot box, whatever the public might feel or fancy!

Like it or not, if Charles is alive, he will be the next king; and there will be no 'ifs' or 'buts' about it! Crowning the grandson, while the son is alive, is just not 'on', in any way!

Monarchy in UK is steeped in tradition, and till they do not do away with monarchy, they have to live with it! It is more about pomp and ceremony than anything else, as the crown has no power of governing the UK! That is the parliament's business, with the Prime Minister appointed to head the government. All the news and views shown on TV or printed in the news media is just 'news' and 'views', nothing else! That is the bitter truth!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Smoking

Is there an obvious answer to why people smoke? Some say it relieves us from tension, others say, it is a habit and may be the so-called 'coolness,' for the youngsters. Well, I would definitely not re-mention the drawbacks that are being advertised all the time in symposiums or radios, because those who smoke don't give a damn about it; and this is why in economics when it comes to the example of a product that is inelastic, the example is always cigarette. Some things depend on mentality, undoubtedly.

Though smoking in public places is strictly prohibited, who listens? I agree that smoking is just a habit and only smoking doesn't make one bad either, but smoking in public places with lack of common sense does make one look bad. One should possess the minimum common sense not to smoke in public.

Mahbuba Sharmeen Preema
Penfield School, Dhaka

The govt. must reinstate Khaleda Zia

We are watching with deep anguish the current situation in our country. It seems that sense and sensibility has departed, total disarray has set in. We are very ashamed at the eviction of Begum Khaleda Zia from her house. The whole world must be laughing and looking down on us for this cruel act.

Awami League is saying that BNP cancelled allotment of Gonobhaban for Sheikh Hasina and a house for Sheikh Rehana. These were allotted when Sheikh Hasina was in power, how could it be compared with the house of Khaleda Zia who was only a housewife at that time. The Awami League govt. is saying that Begum Zia is not entitled to have two houses, as she has a house at Gulshan Avenue on 32 khathas of land. The govt. could have taken that house instead of ousting her from the cantonment house where she has been living for almost half a century. The cantonment house was a gift to Begum Khaleda Zia when she became a widow with two under aged sons. That gift was snatched from her in the most abominable fashion.

We want our govt. to be wise and just, otherwise it will not be able to bring any good to the country.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Clash on Korean border

The recent artillery clash on the border of two Koreas threatened the peace loving people across the world. News was published that North

Save Royal Bengal Tigers

The Sundarbans is now on the final list of the new Seven Wonders of the World. But it is a matter of great regret that the Sundarbans is being ruined gradually. The hunters are killing tigers for their skin, teeth, bones and fat and selling those to foreign countries. India and China are the buyers. The tigers are being killed by shooting, trapping or poisoning. The tigers come to the human habitats being provoked by the people; they destroy the village and kill humans.

As per the UNDP survey, in 2006, there were 442 Royal Bengal Tigers in the Sundarbans. Since 2000, tigers have killed more than 193 people, while 29 tigers have been beaten to death and a few others were found dead in the forest, as per the official records of the forest department.

Premiers of ten countries, including the Bangladesh Prime Minister, have attended the International Tiger Conservation Forum in St. Petersburg on November 21. This is the first time that world leaders have come together for saving the tigers. The government should take pragmatic steps to make their habitat secure and thus protect the famous Royal Bengal Tigers; otherwise, we will lose the tigers, and the Sundarbans' reputation, for good.

Lutfur Rahman
Ghoraghat, Dinajpur



AMDADUL HUQ / DRIKNEWS

Korea first fired dozens of artillery shells at a South Korean island, and then South Korean troops fired back. Pyongyang, however, said South Korea was the first to fire, which killed two marines and injured 18 others. The United States vowed to defend its ally South Korea after North Korea rained artillery shells. Whoever fired first, that doesn't matter. We are afraid that it is the term for balance of power in Asia!

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Tourism - a developing sector

Tourism has experienced continuous growth and diversification to become one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world over the past few decades. Bangladesh is a country with the fewest arrivals and the lowest revenue earned from tourism industry. There is no doubt that tourism is an effective development tool, especially in rural areas of the developing world. It helps the economy as revenue is generated. Tourism promotes better cross culture understanding.

Development of sustainable tourism has always been a big challenge. UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) defines sustainable tourism as "Tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future." The Planning Commission prepared the PRSP entitled "Steps towards

Change: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction-II" for the financial year 2009-11 which included "Development of Tourism" in the section 4.3.7. It said, "The main goal of the tourism sector is to develop tourism for providing accessible, comfortable and safe tourism services to people, both local and foreign."

The government will have to be the main driving force in developing tourism in Bangladesh.

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Saga of a postage stamp

I've been following closely the Musa Ibrahim postage stamp saga ever since Sir Frank Peters presented the excellent idea following Musa's Everest conquest. Much has been written on this subject; one writer in particular, Hamza Gazi, asks why the government is dragging its feet in honouring this brave young son of the soil who brought such great honours to Bangladesh. The stamp concept is excellent. I know, because I am a father of three children who are avid stamp collectors.

This topic has now become such a 'hot potato' and so controversial that it will most likely become a political issue.

The government is yet to acknowledge the people's viewpoint regarding Musa Ibrahim's picture on a postage stamp. They are making a terrible mistake.

Al-Hajj Prof. Faruq Aziz
Chittagong

Earthquake preparedness

At any moment, an earthquake can destroy Dhaka city, in fact, the whole country. Experts say all the non-engineered structures in Dhaka will collapse even if a moderate earthquake hits the country.

Did we learn anything from Haiti? Despite the fact that buildings are collapsing here and there and experts are saying that Bangladesh faces high earthquake risk, have we given the matter the importance it deserves? The issue should be addressed at the national level with urgency. As it cannot be prevented from happening, we should be well prepared for minimizing the loss to life and property.

Although we are hearing about a lot of projects, none has been put into action. We urge the government to implement these projects.

Tanha Kashfia Kate
Uttara Model Town
Dhaka

Calling off hartal

The Daily Star has carried an editorial under the caption "Call off hartal, shun the practice for good" on 24th November 2010. The paper has rightly suggested. But I personally believe BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia did not call hartal for her personal interest only. She was compelled to do so under pressure from her party men. At this point, she is totally unable to shun the practice of calling hartal. The BNP leadership is in a difficult situation.

The recent eviction of their leader from her cantonment residence has created the possibility of having more

violent days in future. Many of the top BNP leaders are weak in their respective constituencies; most of them are old and dependent on their chief. For example, Barrister Moudud Ahmed failed to get elected from his own constituency in the last general election. It was Khaleda Zia who brought him back through a by-election. He cannot afford to displease his boss. Barrister Nazmul Huda tried and was expelled.

At present, Begum Zia has no other alternative. To keep her party leadership active, she desperately needs to stay in the cantonment house. There are cases against her sons, trial of war criminals, investigation of 10-truck arms haul case, grenade attack case, etc. She needs to create unrest in the country no matter what happens to the nation. At this juncture, her house is an issue before the country and she will have to continue this fight.

Shafiqul Islam
NY

Corruption at all levels

The attempted bribing scandal by an ex top brass, appearing in The Daily Star on November 25, 2010, under the heading "Shock offered to media" reminded me of an incident several years ago at a personal level.

A friend of mine, residing in San Diego, California for about 3 decades, lost his mother and came to Dhaka to pay his last respect to her. As he happened to be the only child of his parents, he became the sole inheritor of whatever his late mother left behind.

In order to claim his inheritance, he needed a death certificate and a succession certificate from the authorities concerned. I told him to get the death certificate from the city corporation at Nagar Bhaban and the succession certificate from the court. As he went to Nagar Bhaban to collect the death certificate, he was told to pay (bribe) for the job. He got frustrated; I told him that it was not USA, and that he had to go by the rules of the land. Subsequently, he yielded to their demand and got the job done.

The situation has become such that in order to get a job done from a government office, the first thing that ever comes to people's mind is, how much it would "cost" to get the job done.

Almost 40 years into independence, nothing has changed for the better, rather everything has gotten worse. No wonder Bangladesh tops the list of the most corrupt nations in the world.

Saleh Ayub
One-mail

JU residential halls at risk



Different buildings of Jahangirnagar University are at great risk of collapsing. This is due to lack of proper maintenance and renovation. The most vulnerable buildings are Al Beruni Hall, Meer Musharrif Hossain Hall, Nawab Faizunnesa Hall and Fazilatun-Nesa Hall. Students are residing in these buildings risking their lives. Cracks on the walls and roofs are a common scene. Chunks of plaster fall very often frightening the students. Water leaks into the room from the top floor during rainy season.

Some other buildings are also at risk.

Generally, repair works are done only on the outsides, but the rusted rods remain inside. Sewerage pipes of different buildings are also damaged which are polluting the environment. These need urgent repair to make them liveable.

JU authorities should bear in mind the Jagannath Hall tragedy of Dhaka University. If the authorities do not take proper measures to repair the vulnerable buildings, the second tragedy might happen in JU.

Mithun Dip
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Population growth

Yesterday (22-11-2010) while going through the international news in The Daily Star, I came to know that Iran has reduced the marital age in order to enhance its population growth! The UN Statistics says the population of Bangladesh was 160 million and that of Iran was only 73 million in 2008.

Searching Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' (BBS) data, I have come to know that BBS survey was last conducted in 2001 and about to be conducted in 2011. Is it not a proper opportunity to teach our ignorant population about population control? The media

can circulate warnings against having more than two children. Being trained, people who will be engaged in conducting the survey can inform the respondents about the facilities provided by the government for having only one or two children.

The government should look intently into the rural areas, where our poor and ignorant people are residing mostly. My understanding is, children of rural areas, being deprived of their basic needs, get involved in various crimes.

Highly populous China has succeeded by applying a vibrant measure in the late 80s

of the last century. Now China's population concentration is 140 per square kilometre, while in Bangladesh it is 1100 per square kilometre (source: World Statistics Book, 2008).

The UN expected our growth rate would be 1.4 by 2010, but we are satisfied with the existing 1.7. Therefore, a strong measure is needed to control our population growth.

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