



PHOTO: AFP

Stop killing Bangladeshis at the border

Indian authorities have repeatedly assured us that they would exercise restraint in the border areas and would not use lethal weapons. But despite their assurances, BSF keeps killing unarmed Bangladeshi civilians in the border regions. According to Odhikar, a human rights organisation, from January to September 2011, BSF allegedly killed 21 and injured 51 Bangladeshis and abducted 12 other people. They have killed about 900 Bangladeshis in last 10 years.

On January 7, 2011, a 15-year-old girl Felani was shot and killed by the BSF; her body had been hung on the barbed-wire fence for about five hours. If anyone illegally crosses the border then the punishment should be according to the law. But this law has been violated by the BSF consistently.

Bangladesh government should protest strongly against the inhuman and brutal killings by BSF to protect its citizens' right to life. There will be no meaning of friendship if BSF continues killing Bangladeshis. We expect friendly and responsible attitude from India as a big neighbour.

Yeasir Arafat Nadim
Dept. of Economics
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BRTC bus service for women and children

It is good news that BRTC has imported about 300 double-decker buses and will import more single-decker buses to serve the need of common commuters. In Dhaka, a few bus services are available from Jatrabari to Uttara via Sayedabad, Mugda, Shabujbag, Bashabo, Khilgaon, Malibag, Rampura, Badda, Nutanbazar, Noadda, Joarsahara, and airport. Some buses also ply from Signboard to Tongi via the above mentioned route.

Thousands of passengers use these bus services every day. People with limited income are benefited from these bus services as there are no other cheap public transports. But the number of buses is inadequate for the hundreds of passengers. Especially, the kids and women suffer most. They fail to get on a bus because of uncivilised behavior of some male passengers. In this route, there is no BRTC bus service.

To rescue hundreds of suffering kids and women passengers, BRTC should introduce a few dozen buses on the above mentioned route.

Mohammad Tahmid Ashraf

Revitalising our railways



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

The induction of a ministry for only the railway should bring some positive results. There is much talk on the subject, along with advice in the audio-visual media, and the newspapers have not remained behind. This is another addition to the list, but hopefully it is rational, though with a technical bias. However, the ideas are pragmatic and need to be addressed with urgency.

Two items, according to the order of priority, top the list. First and foremost: the passenger fares and goods tariffs need to be rationalised in line with current cost base. Next: the proper repair and overhauling of the locomotives (diesel and diesel-electric) to ensure their reliable operation. These two issues should be given highest importance by the minister, and once these are resolved, attention needs to be given to improving the existing inter-city railway links. Given the bottlenecks and the frequency of tragic road accidents, there is every scope for rail transport to attract passengers. There is the potential of also cutting down passenger travel time compared to time normally taken by inter-city buses! With improvement in punctuality and improving general cleanliness of the passenger coaches, there is no doubt that railways will

regain their lost popularity and position for transporting people.

With these two main objectives I am sure that it will not be long before railways generate surplus revenue for the government. This is quite feasible; and if needed, once the advantages are realised, more capital should be provided for the railways, as it becomes the main artery for passenger and goods traffic!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor, Dhaka

As Bangladesh is a densely populated country, the railway should be the most convenient means of transport. But during the past decades the government has closed many routes, shut down many stations and retrenched the workforce. While in India, the railway is a profit making organisation, in our country it has remained a white elephant. During the festivals the passengers depend heavily on railway to travel to their destinations. Passengers crowding even the roof of the trains have become a common sight.

Now that railway has been made a separate ministry, we hope to see modernisation of the whole organisation. It is high time the authorities refashioned the antiquated infrastructure. The railway cannot continue as a losing concern anymore.

ZabedWali

Trial of war criminals

You are innocent until proven guilty. But it seems to me that pro-government Bangladeshi media have already passed their verdict by demonising the accused war criminals. I am very upset by the cartoon depiction of the leaders of the Jamaat by The Daily Star. It looks like it has already given its judgment.

I was a university student during that time under the banner of Students Union. We fought for an independent, just democratic country. It saddened me to see how Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leaderships are destroying the country. Both these parties have corrupt and inept politicians. The media houses of Bangladesh are very biased and change their affiliation with the change of power. I understand that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had forgiven all the collaborators during early seventies for the sake of national unity and integrity. That's what the great leader Nelson Mandela did after the defeat of the most oppressive apartheid South African white regime.

Muhib Reza

On e-mail

A new civil society

The news of launching a new civil society under the leadership of Barrister Rafiqul Haque is obviously encouraging to the peace-loving people. This civil society must have people from all walks of life and professions. It is the people's right and desire that the country will be led by honest, capable and efficient people. Our country has experienced enough gimmicks by the two existing political families. And people have fewer alternatives than these two political parties when the time of parliamentary elections come.

May Allah grant this impoverished country new political leadership with a team of patriotic, honest, capable and highly energised people to lead the country forward and overcome all the past pitfalls.

Mashudul Haque
Central Road, Dhaka

Money knows no class

This has the reference of the letter of Minu Ahmed Khan published in the DS recently titled, "Middleman's Sorcery," where the writer was disheartened by the middlemen's supremacy in acquiring wealth in our society. She was astonished at the price difference of a cauliflower in Bogra and Dhaka which sells at Taka 1 apiece in Bogra and Taka 20

in Dhaka. The growers hardly get the production cost, especially, when those glut the local markets during bumper production. It is sad that the city dwellers have to buy those with exorbitant prices. Taka 19 goes to the middlemen's pocket without much toil.

The writer rightly reveals the trend of middlemen's windfall gains in the country in comparison to the pittance that we get as earning. She ironically wishes if she were a trader. In this context, I recall my civil surgeon's comment in a district hospital where I used to perform post-mortem examination as a junior medical officer. Our 'Dom' (deadbody dissector) used to forcibly take Tk. 500-1000 for dissecting each deadbody publicly. At that time, I used to draw a paltry salary of Tk. 6500 a month. Being a young doctor I was frowning at the Dom's income, which to me was huge and unjust. My CS pacified me smilingly, "Money will prevail all the time but he (the Dom) is never on a par with you." Perhaps this message is the only solace to us.

Dr. Md. Zahid Hussain

Consultant, Urology
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Please do something positive

Since assumption of power, the incumbent government has been doing things that are not beneficial to the country and the people. The renaming of the international airport or the Novo theatre has nothing to do with the welfare of the nation. Of late, its has splitted Dhaka city into two only to facilitate the party people's gaining control of the city corporation. It is feared that the party people may not stand a chance vis-à-vis the opposition party men in gaining control, if the city corporation is kept undivided.

Many a people across the globe are not even aware about the existence of a country named Bangladesh which stepped into its 40th anniversary and for which the prime Minister (PM)'s late father Bangabandhu suffered imprisonment and torture. So the PM should try to portray Bangladesh in a positive and befitting manner rather than indulging in unproductive and unrewarding things. Please implement the dreams of the Father of the Nation into a reality.

Bangabandhu wanted to decentralise the country into either 50 or 60 provinces. The PM should realise the importance of such an action which Bangabandhu envisioned about three decades ago. May his soul rest in peace forever.

Saleh M Ayub
Houston, Texas
USA

Why relocate schools away from home?



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

I gave up business because I couldn't pay bribes. Instead, I chose to be a humble tutor of English, teaching a limited number of students in my apartment. I earned disrespect from both my family members and friends. If I had been a businessman paying generous bribes, I would have been successful and praised by both family and friends.

Now, I learn from our area committee that this activity is illegal. My heart goes out to the schools that are being asked to vacate Dhamondi. When I was in London as a child, my school was in the middle of a residential area, it had to be so. This was the catchment area. Local children were expected to walk a short distance to their local schools.

Are the schools expected to move to a specially designated area, such as Tejgaon? "Tejgaon Academic Area" has a ring like that of "Tejgaon Industrial Area." Are our children to be herded into industry-like compounds?

What is galling is that the millionaires who have made dubious fortunes are calling educational establishments "illegal". What an irony! They have the money and the time to hire lawyers. I don't. One can only look towards Heaven for justice.

Iftekhar Sayeed
Dhanmondi
Dhaka

ties on humanity.

Naabaj

Answer to Manzoor Ashraf: you have given good suggestions. BNP should be in the parliament and talk about the country's problems. But almost everybody observed that they are not allowed to speak in the parliament. Secondly, any judicial help also seems a far cry given the government's attempts at influencing even the justice system.

Anonymous

We are stunned, confused and baffled. We want democratic and non-violent movement. It looks like madness. The government actions one after another are being watched by the public. But the opposition must not add fuel to the fire by following in their footsteps.

Abul, UK

This is our political culture to blame each other for any kind of destructive activities. Nobody wants to take the responsibility for any incident. Both the parties want to take advantage of the situation. It is very clear to all why the BNP and Jamaat brought a procession at 5:45am in the morning under cover of darkness. Every party has the right to hold its

political programme but not in the dark. Now BNP has forgotten all the things that had happened during its rule. Now they show their respect to the freedom fighters along with Jamaat, the main collaborators of the Pakistani army during 1971! We condemn all the parties who are involved in such kinds of heinous activities.

Hasan Masud

In a democracy space must be given to opposition voices. The denial of such space by the ruling AL, which is becoming increasingly autocratic in the manner in which it runs the country and tends to become very strident in its proclamations, is the leading cause of such outbursts.

Raihan Sharif

All crimes should come under law for judicial decision. AL formed government in the past but was not that much vocal for the trial of war criminals as it is now. Do they sincerely want justice? Or are they doing it for political gains?

AKM Ziaul Huda

Why do Bangladeshi people still vote these same parties to power? Are you at all frustrated at all these civil unrests? Why not bring competent

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leave your comments.**

Morning chaos rattles Dhaka

1 killed, 14 vehicles set ablaze as opposition launches surprise showdown; another killed in Sylhet; BNP, govt trade blames over violence
(December 19, 2011)

No street protest, please. It is bad for business and bad for the economy.

Sellma

This is not democracy but mob rule. BNP and AL must grow up and get back to work at JS.

Jasmina

It is really sad that our political parties do not behave in a civilised manner like elsewhere in the world. BNP and its allies must stop all these street agitation programmes that ruin our image and damage our economy. BNP and other opposition parties should raise their concerns in the JS and they must fight AL's misrule through the courts too.

Upfront

The country's independence and democracy are at stake. These are the evil designs of Pakistan's ISI-backed disruptive tactics to halt the trial of the hated war criminals. Please resist these anti-liberation activities and wage another war against these collaborators and perpetrators of barbaric atrocities.

ZabedWali