

Hartals harming economy



It's been four months into the year 2013. The world at large has put all these months to good use. But in Bangladesh, half of every month is being wasted because of hartals. As a least developed country, we are already in a disadvantageous position among the nations of the world. And the internal political instabilities are making things worse. Some sectors have just shown a beacon of hope for the economy. But all the political parties are for their political gains only and not thinking for the common people. But, we, the common people, on the bother hand, are also responsible for not raising a strong voice against these suicidal

political programmes. Today there are dozens of political parties in Bangladesh. Even some unfamiliar parties are also calling hartals. Seems like all the political parties are in a mood of showing off how many hartals they each can call. Evil forces paralysed Bangladesh once in 1971. It can't happen again. Bangladeshi people want to work. Those who are calling hartals should be considerate about their country. **Md. Ahsanul Kabir Palash**
Department of Marketing
University of Dhaka

Restore caretaker system of govt.

We, with deep concern, observe that the country is moving towards a virtual deadlock because of the opposition's demand for restoring the caretaker system of government. But the ruling alliance has not moved an inch from their previous stance. The incumbent government wants to hold the next general polls under an interim government which will be headed by the premier Sheikh Hasina. As a result, the whole country has dipped into an utter political anarchy. Reactionary forces have begun to emerge which threatens our democracy. We have to remember that our freedom and sovereignty were dearly bought. We can't let them be harmed in any way. So, we request the government to change its stance and restore the caretaker system of government to the constitution for the smooth functioning of democracy in Bangladesh. **Md. Sairul Islam**
Lecturer in English
Jahangirpur Girls' School and College
Mohadevpur, Naogaon

Avoid being another domino in super-power's game

They have been a prey to America, and have been battered about and besieged on all sides, economically and militarily. So as Iran has been a tool in a hammer, it shall also endure suffering and pain, and attack by America. This shall drive a great wedge between America and Europe. But this tool is not enough to balance things, and as has been written by the journalists, Iran knows it shall be targeted, as Iraq was targeted and as Libya was targeted. Those that are targeted and have been targeted have a unity in that they have been victimized by this threat, this superpower, America. So listen not,

hearken not to those that cry, "Peace, peace," for there shall not be peace. There shall not be one world brought about through peaceful means. But there shall be one world that is a result of war, economic collapse and disasters. The Arabs and Muslims of the world think it's unjust--and they're right! The U.S. is simply picking on a stubborn little trouble-making individual and country which most of the rest of the world doesn't like either, so they figure they can get away with it without any big problems. If that domino falls, then you may well see some Arab and Muslim nations fall as well, further polarising the world. **Ted Rudow III, MA**
Encina Ave, Palo Alto, CA

Govt. won't gain by making people suffer

We never thought that we will have to pass through such a difficult period with fear, anxiety, uncertainty and all sorts of negative emotions taking hold. From March to December in 1971, people passed their days in such a state, but that was totally a different reality. Why in an independent country we have to suffer like this? What is our fault? In the meantime, on April 6, 2013 Hefajat-e Islam, a religious group held a rally at Shapla Chatter in Dhaka. Though the government gave them permission, it put every effort to obstruct their entry into the capital, which is a despicable act of the government. In spite of the obstructions, lakhs of people joined the rally. They had to walk long distances to reach the venue. It looked like the ocean coming into the land. People offered them food, water, and whatever assistance they needed. The government should realise that inflicting sufferings on others would only make them more unpopular. **Nur Jahan**
Chittagong

S M Iftekhar Ahmed
People are not stupid; they know the 'Islamic party' face that the Hefajat has put on, behind which lies the fanatical elements of Jamaat-Shibir.

Sageroit
If the BNP as a political party wins the 2014 elections, the party will be forced to play second fiddle to Islamists. Khaleda Zia is slowly becoming weaker as a political leader; Jamaat-Shibir and Hefajat-e Islam are now becoming forces to reckon with. That means chaos and instability for Bangladesh.

Tonmoy Ahmed
Very nice. Awami League wants Hefajat to be a part of politics. And this will limit the vote bank of BNP-Jamaat. If Hefajat men occupy the chairs of our cabinet, I can guarantee that US the army will be in our land within the next 10-15 years.

A win-win idea for all
In an article published in the daily Prothom Alo in 2005, the author Humayun Ahmed had expressed deep frustration about the rise of fundamentalism in Bangladesh. He was lamenting how we could explain to the young students of madrasas that sculptures and deities are not the same thing. He appealed to the intellectuals, particularly experts on Islam, to join the effort. Likewise, I have sunk into deep depression having witnessed recent events, marked by unprecedented violence. Today reading the departed writer's piece, I was wondering, "What can we do today? How can we persuade these religious people that violence is not the means to a win-win solution?" Then it dawned on me that we could use the occasion of Pahela Baishakh to implement my plan. We must ensure that Baishakhi events are peaceful and non-violent. Let us not deprive the aggrieved nation of the fun of this festival. We could deliver a 'single' message toward achieving two goals --- non-violent protest to the government or to any authority for any issue or demand as well as celebration of any national or cultural event, such as Baishakh, if all the media --- newspapers, TV channels --- work in a coordinated fashion. We could launch a series of Public Service Announcements (PSA), of course non-partisan. Can we not bring together renowned personalities from different fields? Then we ask them to do a PSA, either

individually or as a team. These personalities could be actors or educators, or artists or business persons or experts in theology (Muslim and/or non-Muslim). The PSAs do not have to be long 30 seconds to one minute, maybe. The primary goal is to broadcast them simultaneously on all the TV channels and publish them in the leading dailies. Certainly, this massive effort will require money. However, money should not be an impediment if we all volunteer to play their part. Speakers will devote their time; TV channels will offer a few time slots; newspapers will allot one column each; the directors will invest their time, talent, and energy all for free. Can we not do it? Then the business community could step forward and donate some money to meet the incidental expenses. Would this not be a win-win situation for all? If we cannot do it by the first day of Baishakh, still we can do it as soon as possible. We cannot just sit idle and give ourselves to melancholy at this critical juncture of the nation. We must stem this bleeding. We must not allow violence any longer that takes away food from the very poor people on whose shoulders the larger portion of the national production rests. Procrastination now will leave us feeling guilty forever. **Mahmood Hussain, PhD**
Associate Professor of Marketing
San Francisco State University
California, USA

War crimes trial a big challenge

Awami League government and its allies have repeatedly told that they would complete the trial of all war criminals at any cost. Different civil society bodies echoed the government's stance and demanded completion of the trial. But people know that both the Awami League and the BNP did make alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami in the past. As an ordinary citizen, I am shocked to see the death and destruction in last several weeks. I hate all kinds of destructive activities of Jamaat-Shibir men. At the same time, I am also shocked to see how police fired on general people which

killed over hundred people and left several thousands injured. Police should show maximum restraint. It seems to me that government and local authorities were not willing to handle the mob carefully because these people belonged to Jamaat. In addition to that, terrorists have torched many houses, business organisations and temples of the minority people across the country. How much price will we have to pay for completing this trial? **M.A. Kashem**
Mohammadpur, Dhaka



Why this ridiculous rule for rickshaw drivers?

Lungi is the most comfortable cloth for men in Bangladesh. We feel proud for our national dress, culture and tradition. More than 90 percent people of our country wear *lungi*. There are hundreds of thousands of rickshaw-pullers in Dhaka city who wear *lungi*. But the recent decision of Baridhara Society that rick-

shaw-pullers can't enter Baridhara wearing *lungi* has surprised us. We know that the area is only for upper class people but they are also Bangalees. How could they impose such a whimsical decision on hard working rickshaw-pullers? **Hasan Khan**
On e-mail



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Binod Bihari Chowdhury (1909-2013)
The passing of a warrior
(April 11, 2013)

Reaz Hassan
One more memorable piece of history is lost in the passage of time. Contributions of such revolutionaries furthered the cause of the independence movement. His association with Masterda Surjya Sen in the Chittagong armoury raid will always remain enshrined in our minds. May his soul rest in peace!

Rashed Chowdhury
Rest in peace, Dadu. I am so fortunate to have had a chance of knowing you personally. Some of the most beautiful days of my life were spent in your house learning English grammar. I will miss you. We have lost a Bangalee who truly devoted his whole life to the country.

Dev Saha
The last one has finally fallen.

Hefajat eyes bigger role
Moves to expand network across country
(April 11, 2013)