

## Using trains for drug trafficking

*Collusion of officials must be investigated*

A report published in this paper on Thursday revealed a damning picture of how trains are being used to transport drugs across the country with the alleged collusion of railway police and staff. For example, the Egaro Sindhur Provati, the express-train from Kishoreganj, was seen to be slowing down half a kilometre before the Tejgaon Railway Station, undocking individuals with sacks on their heads. The train driver claimed this was done for the benefit of train passengers who wanted to get off at Tejgaon, which is not a designated stop. But, the report cited sources who claimed that drug traffickers were using the 17 trains that travel between Dhaka, Brahmanbaria and Bhairab, and these unscheduled stops were for dropping peddlers and contrabands off.

If this is indeed the case—and the details of our report point that it is—then it would implicate both the railway police and staff. The details reveal a very organised system of collusion. Drug traffickers gave testimony to the fact that paying Tk 150 for each pair of Phensidyl bottles or Tk 800 to Tk 1,000 for every kilogram of marijuana, they are allowed to carry on their business. Even when the traffickers are not on board, their packages, marked by certain tags, are dropped off by railway staff at selected locations.

This is not simply a matter of turning a blind eye, but of active abetting. Authorities have been quick to deny the allegations, and claimed that such drug trafficking has decreased due to their drives. But, the evidence to the contrary is overwhelming. We urge that instead of blanket denials, authorities act on these charges. Investigation and punishment of railway staff and police found guilty need to happen first if we want to check the drug trade.

## Woes of Eid travellers

*Management and planning amiss*

EVERY year before the Eid holidays hundreds of thousands of people leave the capital to celebrate Eid with their friends and families outside of Dhaka city. The rush of people leaving Dhaka right before Eid, therefore, is a common and predictable phenomenon. But because of poor preparations on part of the authorities, their journeys are never made easy and, in fact, often turn tragic.

Tailbacks on highways are again making life difficult for those leaving the city this time around. Although the authorities have given many assurances of having taken enough measures to ensure adequate transports, transport operators themselves seem less optimistic, particularly in the event of bad weather. And as this newspaper reported, people were already caught in long tailbacks between Meghna Bridge and Bhabar Char Bazar for several hours on Wednesday, as well as on other major highways, even before the real rush to leave the capital began.

To cope with the mad rush, rickety vehicles on roads and dilapidated boats on river routes are frequently allowed to operate, risking lives. Time and again this has been the main cause of accidents and deaths. Yet, the authorities never seem to learn from past disasters, which continue to lead to the loss of more lives.

We understand that people want to reach their homes on time to celebrate Eid. But in order to make that happen, safety should not in any way be compromised. The authorities should pre-plan how to handle the rush of people leaving the capital, instead of allowing broken down transports to run and increase the chances of accidents.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Celebrating a secular Bengal

Whenever the holy festival of Eid ul-Fitr is on the horizon, my mind goes back a quarter of a century when I was in college.

A significant number of our hostel boarders used to be Muslims. Two of our close friends used to invite us to their village to celebrate Eid. Nestled amid coconut trees and bamboo groves, a small white mosque welcomed us, surrounded by cheerful villagers of all ages. I can never forget the warmth and hospitality of the villagers, or the delicious dishes that our friends' parents served us!

Similarly, two other friends from the hostel would guide us during the celebration of Saraswati Puja. I also remember how our friends would visit my sister on *Bhai-Phonta*.

This is my Bengal - enriched in the secular humanitarian legacy of Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. Rogue elements in every society try to vitiate the environment to meet their vested interests. They exist in Bengal also. But sanity and rationality demands that along with Bengal, all societies of the world stop those negative elements from conquering the inherent humanity imbedded within us.

Kajal Chatterjee  
Kolkata

### Safety of holiday-makers

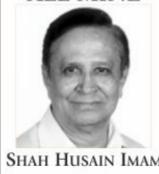
Thousands of people travel by buses and trains to celebrate Eid at home, with some people mounting the roofs of the vehicles. Drivers drive recklessly to overtake buses, while others use unfit vehicles. All of this is made more dangerous by the potholes on the road.

We hope that road safety is given highest priority this year, and that homebound travellers reach their destinations safely.

Zabed Wali  
Chittagong

# Cricket is a great teacher

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

A British-hosted reception a few days before the finals of the ICC Champions Trophy at the Ovals, Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli said, "People want to

see England and India play in the finals." Clearly, it was part of a mind game, rather a tactical ploy directed at the Pakistan-England semi-final knock-out game to cheer the preferred side. You couldn't be cherry-picking a finalist in a highly combative cricket arena.

The eighth ranking underdog Pakistan in the meanwhile, had bounced back after a humiliating defeat by India in the first encounter. Pakistan coach and South African cricketer Mickey Arthur termed that debacle an "aberration". So the team went on to successively win against Sri Lanka and South Africa to reach the semi-finals against England. England, the host of the tournament, was to go down to an

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eight-wicket defeat at the hands of Pakistan. A believer in sportsmanship, England didn't consider it an upset but a deserving win by Pakistan.



SOURCE: HEIDELBERGCRICKETCLUB.COM

Thus, a perfect scene was set for a resurrected Pakistan team and an undefeated Indian side in the tournament with second best ODI ranking for a 'dream' final. But it turned out to be one-sided with India having been outplayed in all departments of the game. A connoisseur of cricket marvelled at the feat on the part of a side with virtually no first class cricketing structure and ten years in a limbo not having hosted any worthwhile international match on its soil.

On the global stage, there are lessons to be learnt. The first one is that there's nothing called invincibility in world cricket. For the good of cricket, you nurture respect for all teams; see how Afghanistan and Ireland are coming up! Besides, the concepts of invincibility and of uncertainty and unpredictability in cricket are mutually exclusive. Secondly, the better side on the day wins. Third, and of cardinal importance, you have to train hard, attain skills painstakingly to fire up between the overs 11 and 40 and strategise for both placid and bouncy wickets to be victorious at the end.

Just as there are competitive,

entertaining, commercial and nationalistic sides to cricket, the relational and human aspects to it cannot be lost on cricket managements and authorities. The *Hindustan Times* carried a story rich in sentiments thus. While Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed's uncle and other relatives living in UP in India congratulated the Pak skipper on their victory, they made clear their loyalty to India adding that all of them supported Team India in the finals.

In Bangladesh, a youngster betting for India on a big sum of money lost the wager. Failing to pay up the winner he reportedly threw his life away before a running train! A tragic end to a surreal cricket passion!

Given this context, in order to encourage better understanding across South Asia, cricket matches on bilateral and trilateral formats may be arranged among India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. This way cricket can be harnessed for soft diplomacy, better people-to-people cooperation and not insubstantial generation of gate money and advert revenues.

That said, you have to contend with an inevitable task of self-inquiry. What

# Emergency should never be forgotten

BETWEEN THE LINES



KULDIP NAYAR

STRANGE, in the process of selecting who should be the next President of India, the nation has forgotten the emergency which was imposed some forty-two years ago. More than one lakh

people were detained without trial. The media which could have reported the conditions prevailing was muzzled. Civil servants obediently issued the orders, which came from Sanjay Gandhi, the extra constitutional authority that ruled the country in the name of his mother, then the Prime Minister.

The judiciary caved in and upheld that Parliament could suspend the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution. Even the imposition of the emergency was justified. Only one judge, Justice H.R. Khanna, gave the dissenting judgment. He was superseded. It is another matter that the country punished the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, when she was ousted from power, lock, stock and barrel in the elections that were held. Similar was the fate of her son, Sanjay Gandhi.

What disappoints me is that the Supreme Court never passed a resolution or did anything to register its criticism against the judgment which had given the judiciary a bad name. Even now it is not too late. The Supreme Court has liberal judges on the bench. They can make up by passing a resolution that their predecessor bench was wrong in having endorsed the emergency.

At least the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet should say sorry on behalf of the Centre for the excesses committed by earlier government during the emergency. The then Attorney General, Niren De, had even argued in court that the right to live was forfeited during the emergency.

There was so much fear among Delhi lawyers like Soli Sorabjee from Mumbai and V.M. Tharkunde from Delhi who argued the habeas corpus petitions filed by my wife. Still I spent three months in jail.

The two judges, Justice S. Rangarajan and Justice R.N. Aggarwal, who gave the judgment, were punished. The first one was transferred to Guwahati where people still remember him for his impartiality. The second was demoted and sent back to the Sessions Court. This did not, however, deter them and they carried on their work boldly and independently.

Probably, the pressure on the judges has lessened in recent years because of vigilant media. But the worse is happening in appointments to the benches. They are being made according to the whims and wishes of rulers. This began with the Congress government and has continued with the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in power.

I recall that the process started when Indira Gandhi had superseded three judges — Justices J.M. Shelat, K.S. Hegde and A.N. Grover — to appoint Justice A.N. Ray as the Chief Justice. She had been unseated from parliament and disqualified for poll malpractices for six years. Instead of accepting the verdict

parliamentary system of governance and has deterred every ruler since then not to tinker with the judiciary.

Ultimately, the independence of the judiciary depends on the quality of judges. In the US, the biggest democracy, the Supreme Court is divided between the Republican and Democrat judges. Since the tenure of the judges is for a lifetime, the appointees of one party have risen above their old loyalties and become independent and impartial.

In India, we had the best of judges when the government appointed them. But now party politics has crept in. At least it has been seen in High Courts

government. This factor has been decisive in refusing to appoint me." He withdrew from the race.

In fact, it was at his insistence that the Gujarat police was forced to book a murder case in the Sohrabuddin fake encounter matter. When the prime witness, Tulsiram Prajapati, was liquidated under suspicious circumstances, Subramaniam had recommended the transfer of the case to the CBI. Significantly, Subramaniam also admitted that it was on his suggestion that the Supreme Court, while granting bail to accused Amit Shah, now the BJP president, had barred him from entering Gujarat.



Supreme Court of India.

PHOTO: AFP

with grace, she imposed the emergency and amended the election law itself.

The excesses which Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi committed during the emergency may be part of history, but to me they are recalled by not only those who suffered but also those who supported democracy. It was the Janata Party, which came to power after defeating Mrs. Gandhi that changed the constitution to make the imposition of the emergency impossible. And Justice Khanna's dissenting judgment that the basic structure of the constitution could not be changed was accepted as the norm. This has ensured the

that the party in power has not appointed the best of lawyers but those who owed allegiance to a particular political party. Even in the Supreme Court, some appointments come under the shadow of doubt.

Some examples of the past are worth praise. Take the case of former Solicitor General Gopal Subramaniam whose appointment to the Supreme Court was stalled by the Narendra Modi government. Blaming the government for blocking his appointment, Subramaniam said his "independence as a lawyer is causing apprehensions that I will not toe the line of the

Most pathetic was the role of the media. I recall that when the emergency was imposed there was anger and more than a hundred journalists assembled at the Press Club at my bidding to criticise the emergency. But when I tried to pick up the thread after my detention, there was hardly anyone to support. Mrs. Gandhi had created so much fear in the minds of journalists that they were more worried about their jobs than the freedom of the press, which they otherwise cherished.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.