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Bangladeshi

mountaineers

I congratulate the two Bangladeshi mountaineers, Ibrahim and Khaled, on their recent conquest of Grey's Rock in the Himalayas. However, I can't help refuting the fact that they are the first Bangladeshis to climb any mountain peak. Though he never got coverage in the local media, Intesar Haider, a born and raised Bangladeshi now living in New York, has been climbing peaks for some time. He has scaled the peaks of the massive Mt Rainier (14,411 ft) in Washington state, Mt Vinson (16,076 ft) in Antarctica and other peaks in Sikkim and remote eastern Greenland. This young hero, who works for Citigroup when not climbing, is probably one of the few Bangladeshis who have been to Antarctica.

I salute these brave soldiers of our land and wish them the very best.

Shafqat, Seattle, USA

SSC results: some thoughts

This year's first and largest public examination results have been published, showing a pass percentage of 59.04 against 52.57 last year. The average pass rate of SSC, SSC Vocational and Dakhil examinations stands at 62.22 percent. This year the result came out in less than three months' time. The boards took only seventy-six days to publish the results. That bears a good sign. A record number of 24,384 examinees obtained the highest GPA-5 compared to 17,276 examinees last year. This grading system was introduced in the country's SSC level examinations in 2000 when only 330 examinees secured GPA-5. It is an indication that most of the students, guardians and even the teachers could not gather a clear idea about the grading system. As a result, many bright students had to pay a high price. Our education system has got almost used to it by this time.

The Chittagong Education Board achieved the highest pass percentage of 63.57 which is followed by Comilla Education Board with 63.45 and Jessore Board showed the lowest pass percentage with 48.10%. A total number of 995,123 examinees appeared in the examinations under seven Education Boards of which 619,186 came out successful. The results show some common features as it happens every year. Like the previous year, schools in urban areas particularly those in the metropolitan cities dominated in the GPA-5 category. Among the top ten GPA-5 securing schools six are in the capital city, two in Chittagong and two in Comilla. The highest 591 students of Vigarunnessa Noon secured GPA-5 followed by Ideal School and College with 525 achieving the same grade point. This is a serious aspect, which calls for every conscientious citizen's attention. The pictures of the brilliant faces appeared in the newspapers and on TV screens. Newsmen took their interviews. Then I thought millions of rural talents remained far away from this process. Their talents and hidden treasures remained undiscovered, unexplored and unknown. Who will make them known to the society? When will their talent and potentials be brought to light and utilized for the nation?

The rural students cannot afford to have the needed facilities and they lag behind in the race. Should we allow it to continue? No examinee from 217 of 24,972 institutions across the country could pass. Last year no student

passed from 407 schools. How is it that not a single student came out successful from these schools? What a great national loss! All these institutions are located in villages. What a serious disparity we have created in our educational arena!

Adoption of unfair means in the examinations plagued our education system for long. The pragmatic initiative of our Ministry of Education has almost eliminated this deep-rooted disease. So, some other steps can be taken to narrow the gap between rural and urban education. The facilities of education must be decentralized. The rural schools should be nationalized so that the students can have better teachers and get better education. The urban and city guardians can buy education through different ways and channels. The poor guardians of the rural areas cannot afford to buy it. So only the government can ensure better education for them through bringing the schools under the public sector. Extensive training facilities must be provided so that teachers can impart quality teaching to the rural students.

We cannot expect to go ahead showing this evasive attitude towards the neglected section who constitute the vast majority. Changing their lot will mean a positive change for the country. This truth must be understood by all of us.

*Md. Masum Billah
BRAC Head Office, Dhaka*

SSC examinee's appeal

I appeared in this year's (2006) SSC exams. Though I expected a Golden GPA-5, I scored only 4.88. At first when I saw my result, I was speechless. Again when I saw my each subject's score in the Internet it was a very much astonishing thing to me that I scored A+ in Mathematics, Social Science, Physics, Chemistry, and Higher Mathematics but I scored A grade in Bangla, English, Religion (Islam) and Biology. I correctly answered 49 objective questions in Bangla 1st paper, 46 in Bangla 2nd paper, 49 in Religion. So how could I expect only A Grade in these subjects? This year the results took only 76 days to be published which was



Plant more trees

The World Environment Day was observed throughout the globe recently and Bangladesh was no exception. There were seminars and symposiums all over the country putting emphasis on the vital points.

I would like to urge people to plant trees at large.

Rafiqul Islam Rime, Agrabad, Chittagong

Tipaimukh Dam

The Indian High Commissioner has again made a statement that Tipaimukh Dam will not adversely affect the greater Sylhet areas, but Bangladesh shall rather be benefited in early monsoon and lean periods. She has not said anything about what will happen in the high monsoon period. I am from Zakiganj upazila and have seen floods in my childhood and heard people saying

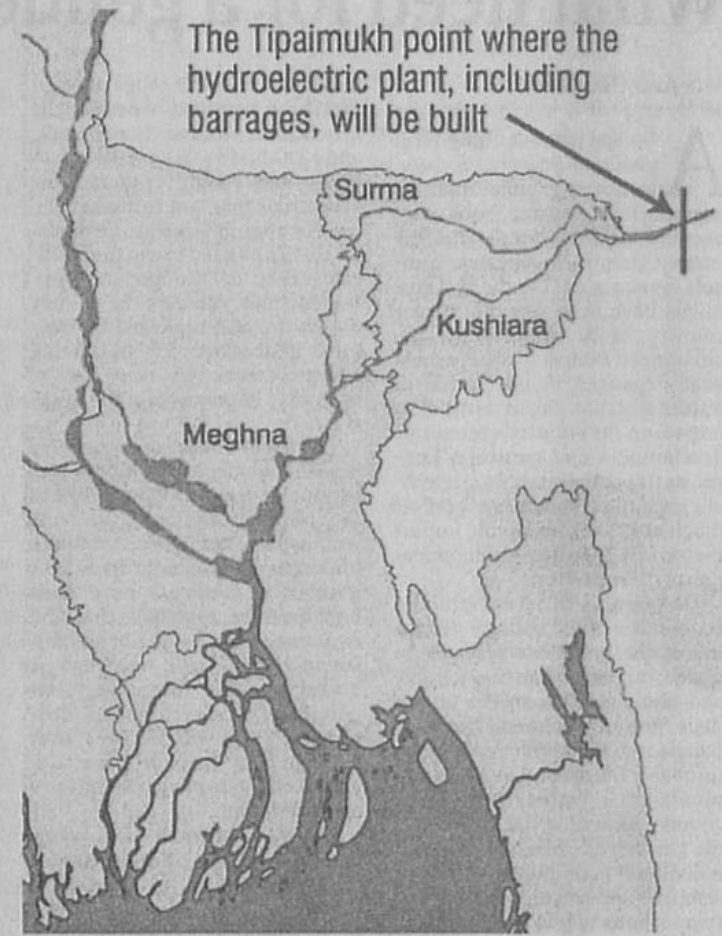
that the overflow at Manipur Band was the cause. I seriously apprehend that excessive rain, which is common in Assam and Sylhet areas, will cause excess water at the dam which will have to be discharged in a short period to save people. This will result in devastating floods primarily in Zakiganj, Kanaighat and Beanibazar upazila and ultimately other districts in Sylhet Division and other parts of

Bangladesh.

In the lean period we shall also be deprived as the discharge of water may not be enough to keep the flow in Kushiara and Surma.

Tipaimukh is surely going to cause great harm to Bangladesh and India should come to an agreement to safeguard Bangladesh interest.

*Altaf Ahmed Choudhury
Zakiganj Upazila*



less than usual. In what way I was scored out is not clear to me. It is mentionable that I was the first girl of Mirpur Bangla High School in Science group. In the test exams I secured GPA-5 but after the results of SSC exams I saw that many of those who did much worse in the test exams secured GPA-5!

I acknowledge that my hand writing is not beautiful but it is clear enough to read. At first the examiners should read the answer, next comes hand-writing. I am not satisfied because my future depends on the results.

I appeal to the authorities concerned to recheck my answer sheets.

*Neshat Masud
Roll No- 111547, Dhaka Board*

This cannot continue...

We are dismayed by the controversy over the voter list though there should not be any. For a free and fair election, door-to-door visit by the election officials is a must; there cannot be any other option.

We are astonished by the Chief Election Commissioner Justice MA Aziz's decisions, we just cannot believe it, it is so complicated.

Much time has already been lost, the Election Commission must act fast, commence making the voter list by going door to door immediately. We request the Honourable President to look into the matter and advise the Election Commission to do the needful without delay.

Nur Jahan, Ctg

Election Commission circus

The tenure of the present government is going to be over before long. Every party is working out its election strategy. For acceptability of election results, elections must be free and fair. A neutral and competent Election Commission is therefore the basic need of the hour. But with all the good will in the world one can't help saying that the composition of present Election Commission cannot give even a semblance of neutrality. The CEC and the other election commissioners have already lost their credibility.

Even if the BNP wins the next elections with the present Election Commission, no other political party will accept the results and the opposition parties will launch a massive movement, which will cripple the country.

So let good sense prevail among all the major political parties if they want to prevent the 'third force' from coming to power.

*Mrs. Momtaj Jahjan
Fulbari, Sylhet*

Dear Mr. Nurul Huda

I have been trying to get through the pile of papers on my desk before my holiday (I am sure you know the feeling!) and there was your article of June 2nd 'Making the ACC functional' - not the most thrilling of titles I remember thinking, but I did so enjoy it.

Thank you so much for the thrill of seeing the Elizabethan writer, Francis Bacon, quoted - my A level English Literature syllabus of 1956! But how alien his concept of 'service' feels in this culture! It became the tradition of at least one stream of the English culture and sometimes I think this once mighty stream has become a mere trickle even in the UK. Every time I go home it is more and more like Bangladesh, you see, no one is actually teaching it! It was one of the old values that was taken for granted by a generation that sneered at all that purveyed those values, particularly good religious education....

Observing the way some of the Bangladesh middle and upper class handle positions of status is very strange for me, brought up in the stream of this tradition of ser-

vice and so being well drilled in the dictum "From those to whom much is given, much will be expected!" That is always a powerful disincentive to becoming a spoilt brat! The assumption here seems to be that the higher one goes in status, the less work one does - in practice, the manager of a bank comes into work later than those lower down the scale! Yet what an influence it is on any place of work when the boss is there with the early birds! Too often here, if something turns up that needs a great deal of effort and skill (and should therefore, one would think, be done by the Person at the Top) then that, being difficult, is given to some underling, who groans and, of course, does it reluctantly - and badly. What an impact it has when it is the Top Wop who actually carries out the key assignments! And what about the mastery of the paperwork? I heard, some time ago, the story of a government minister, who had to ring from his office on one occasion for a man to bring

leaving the field in tears due to severe injury. I was astonished at the improprieties of Dutch and Portuguese players. Though Portugal won the match 1-0, it made a bad precedent in the football arena. It was a bizarre match.

FIFA should take some drastic and corrective steps to ward off further hullabaloo in the field.

*Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Dept of English, DU*

Corruption and governance

Your staff correspondent's write up on the subject identified the lack of government will to undo corruption. In such a dangerous situation where the most powerful people of our country do not desire to remove corruption, what can the poor Anti-Corruption Commission people do? Even they say that the story behind ACC cannot be stated in public for the sake of decency! How indecent the powerful people

rambling in the streets and thronging the corridors of the Bangladesh Secretariat corridor for the last five years in the hope of getting a nook to sit in and a desk to work at.

Now they may have a cause to rejoice as people at the very top are joining them!

*Ifikhar Ahmad
Pilkhana Road, Azampur, Dhaka*

Cause of cancer

As you know chemical released by plastic water bottles can cause cancer (It is not the water that affects you but the chemical released from the bottle)

How to avoid: Check the bottom of the bottle, there should be a triangle sign and there will be a number on it. If the number is higher than or equal to 5 - then this bottle is safe to use. Numbers under 5 will release the chemical. For most bottled water, the number is 1. Remember to check and stop reusing those bottles.

Please pass on this information

New visa policy

The Daily Star recently reported that the State Minister for Home Affairs Babar had said that a new visa policy would be announced simplifying the visa process and helping detect those overstaying in the country.

The minister didn't say how many foreign nationals are now overstaying in Bangladesh but it obviously is a concern to the nation. We have long felt that our government should ask

other countries to overlook Bangladeshis overstaying in their countries. Shouldn't we have the same high standard and say that Bangladeshis overstaying their visa in other countries are not doing the right thing. It's illegal, it shouldn't happen, and we shouldn't be asking for amnesty for Bangladeshi illegal immigrants in other countries.

MM Haque, One-mail

Embassy officials may refuse entry visas to students only on specific grounds set forth in the student visa regulations. This may include conviction for crimes, fraud or willful misrepresentation in procuring a visa, membership of certain proscribed organisations, believed to be prejudicial to the public interest or dangerous to the welfare, safety, or security of the nation etc. But these specific grounds should not be on mere 'suspicion' or 'lack of authenticity' for being ineligible for a student visa.

A precise scrutiny is justifiable before denying a visa to a student. All the embassies and High Commissions, I believe, should think about the issue a second time. "A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste." isn't it?

*Mehedi Hasan
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka*

him pen and paper!

Some of the attitudes to wealth are also very damaging. Many assume that the enviable state of having a high salary means having a lot of time on your hands! Unfortunately, one of the side-effects of this is the deep resentment of the high salaries that some foreigners earn here. Hingsha - jealousy! But many of them work at a pace and intensity that some Bangladeshis simply could not imagine! I think of one of my friends, heading up a major project, who is nearly as old as I am and his car comes for him at 7.00 o'clock six days a week! It is very sad if Bangladeshis only see the foreigners here as motivated by personal greed. In my 7 years of experience here, I have been very impressed how many I have met who are here to serve! Our motivation is to do something, to achieve something. What for? For Bangladesh!

So you are right. To start an article on the impact of corruption by quotations about service is spot on. Corruption is evidence of a gap where the heart should be - and not merely a malfunction.

*Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs)
Principal of The British School in Dhaka*

have become (both possibly in government and opposition) is now anybody's guess!

May be only the fifth estate (the press) may pick up the issue to perhaps make a dent in corruption. Even the press is not beyond the wrath of powerful people; so what can we do?

One wonders if any of the speakers or discussants in the seminar identified the level up to which corruption has reached in Bangladesh. All said and done, the fact remains that we are corrupt by any definition in our thoughts, words and deeds.

A reader, Dhaka

OSD culture at its best!

There are more than five hundred of them, OSDs they are called,

to your friends. Some of you may be in the habit of using and re-using your disposable mineral water bottles, keeping them in your car or at work. Not a good idea.

*Mohiuddin Sarker
One-mail*

Student visa

An ever-increasing number of students from Bangladesh are going for higher or further education programmes around the world, especially to the USA, UK, Australia, Canada and Japan. The growing tendency toward overspecialisation, which is also a national demand, is needed for higher positions in business, industry, and government. Many students over the years after successful completion of Undergraduate,



PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Patricia Coveney

I applaud Patricia Coveney who sacrificed her career for the destitute children of Bangladesh. Though she is an Irish, but I think now she has taken our country as her second home for those

children. Families for Children (FFC) is doing a good job. They deserve great appreciation.

Mosihur rahman, Paribag, Dhaka