

**An Act of Hooliganism**

The disgraceful attack on the Chinese embassy complex at Baridhara on Thursday evening by an unruly mob has put the whole country to shame. In condemning the incident in the strongest possible language, we share the view of a cross-section of our people that it has, hopefully only temporarily, tarnished the image of our country as a hospitable host to members of all foreign missions based in our capital. We shall, however, reserve our judgement on the motive behind the attack, whether or not it was aimed at undermining the excellent relations which exist between the People's Republic of China and Bangladesh. However, subject to the finding of the enquiry which has been set up by the government, we are inclined to think that the attack, probably pre-planned, was the work of a group of miscreants — or perhaps of a single one — who organised some hooligans by spreading totally baseless and sickening rumours to launch the assault.

If, in case, any one had hoped that the attack would drive a wedge between the two countries — China and Bangladesh — he must know by now that the friendship between Beijing and Dhaka which has stood the test of time cannot be that easily shaken by an act of sheer hooliganism.

As expected, the authorities have set up an enquiry into the whole disgraceful episode. We demand that the investigation be as thorough as possible and be conducted by an independent body, preferably headed by a sitting or a retired judge, rather than by officials of the Home Ministry. Questions have already been raised about alleged slackness not only on the part of policemen guarding the Chinese embassy complex but also of the nearest police station. How could a mob of several hundred people (as suggested by an official), if not of nearly two thousand, as reported by several newspapers, including this newspaper, march down the main roads of Baridhara towards their target without being questioned and stopped by police? Again, we believe that once the mob had reached the embassy complex, it should have been more firmly dealt with before it damaged any part of the newly-constructed building of the mission. Then, some from the mob raided a nearby guest house and beat up a Chinese resident. How could the police allow this to happen?

The thorough probe should lead to an early identification of culprits who must be made to pay, and pay dearly, for the crime they have committed, or for their negligence regardless of their position in the Police Department. It is good that the authorities have stepped up the security arrangement around the Chinese mission complex and other Chinese establishments. However, it is important to review such arrangements in and around other foreign missions, especially in Baridhara-Gulshan-Banani area, and take necessary steps to ensure maximum possible safety of all foreign nationals in various diplomatic missions. United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations. Let the authorities make sure that what happened on Thursday evening will never happen again. This is the best apology we can offer to the Chinese Ambassador Chen Songlu and members of his mission — and indeed to the entire diplomatic community in Dhaka.

**Improving Health Service**

Of late hospitals have come under severe criticism. That is not at all surprising. What is surprising is the fact that they did not come — as they have for a particular reason this time — under so closer scrutiny earlier. At least two dallies — one each in Bangla and English — have carried recently pictorial stories to give some ideas of the physical environment of two of the hospitals in the city, particularly with regards to cleanliness. One of them is known to have maintained a high standard, at least the people are so inclined to believe. But contrary to people's belief and expectation, the pictures present a most foul and detestable condition. When hospitals themselves set a standard so dismal in the disposal of garbage and filths that pile up every day, it is both alarming and shocking.

Compromising health rules at facilities like Holy Family Hospital points not only to the dismal state of affairs in garbage collection and disposal but also to the poor quality of the delivery system of the country's health service. Some of the materials in the garbage are outright health hazards, others are potentially dangerous and still others are less so but in the absence of a safe disposal can pose threat to health all the same. It is not just the question of technically sound method of dealing with the more hazardous elements or refuse from the hospitals but the attitude of the hospital authorities to the issue that counts. If Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Holy Family Hospital fail to be equal to the task, records of the ones not so fortunate enough to receive generous government doles and help from outside of the country can better be imagined.

When the system of disposing garbage suffers from such in-built inefficiencies and shortcomings, the condition inside is neither expected to be any better. A recent incident, in a rather unexpected manner, corroborates this view. The incident concerns Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's directive to shift the journalists wounded in police brutalities from DMC to Holy Family Hospital. This is an indirect admission on the part of the Prime Minister of the poor quality health service rendered by DMCH one that is certainly better than many other health facilities but worse than Holy Family Hospital. If the service there is so questionable, where can common people go for treatment? Not all are fortunate enough to seek treatment at the efficiently and impeccably managed private clinics and hospitals.

Public health service must improve if even a semblance of health-for-all programme stands any chance of success. Surely, the public deserves better. Health service has been made costlier and there is no reason why it should deteriorate. In a country like ours, health service cannot be a complete commercial venture. It may not be a welfare society but the state must bear the expenses, to a substantial extent, of the treatment at hospitals.

UNTIL a couple of months ago, most observers of the 1992 American election campaign expected it to follow the time-tested traditional pattern. The Democratic Party, having lost the White House in 1980, has so far failed to come up with a charismatic candidate to regain the Presidency.

This year more than half a dozen relatively unknown hopefuls joined the gruelling process of primary elections to reach the final stage of the race for nomination. Despite many pitfalls and setbacks, the young and handsome Governor of Arkansas has emerged as the finalist. Gov Bill Clinton's national appeal is still somewhat limited. He certainly is far less known nationally compared to the incumbent President George Bush. Bush did face a challenger — Mr Buchanan — but nobody seriously thought that Buchanan had a chance. In keeping with the tradition which favours the incumbent President it was almost a foregone conclusion that Bush would get the Republican nomination in due course. The race was almost a set piece. Bush versus Clinton. Of course there are still many factors still to be taken into account. For example, who will get the nomination for the No 2 spot with Clinton? Is he going to strengthen the ticket? Unlike the presence of Quayle in the Republican ticket who has not added much to the Bush campaign a good candidate for Vice-President might have a positive impact on the Democratic campaign. Given the deep and long recession in the American economy it is a conventional wisdom to assume that Clinton has a fighting chance to win the race if the economy fails to pick up

**The US Presidential Elections and the Perot Factor**

**The Perot phenomenon brings up the worst and the best of the American political system. It shows how the ordinary voters are disillusioned with the two main political parties. Professional politicians, who control and often manipulate the parties have lost, in large measures, the respect and perhaps the confidence of the voters.**

well before November.

The appearance of Ross Perot in the scene has changed the picture so completely that a fresh look at the situation is necessary. Gone are the confident calculations of the pundits who usually flourish during this season in forecasting and predicting the election outcome. A Texas billionaire — Ross Perot seems to have upset the apple cart for both the parties. He is campaigning as a non-party candidate entirely on his own. As a self-made billionaire he has been able to appeal to the American psyche which reveres success and enterprise. No one thought that such a maverick initiative will get off the ground. All the pundits have been proved wrong. There is tremendous ground-swell of support for the Perot candidature all over the country and surprisingly, among supporters of both the mainstream parties. It is no mean achievement for an individual candidate to achieve a higher approval rating in the opinion polls than both President Bush and Governor Clinton. Are the poll ratings going to remain that way till election time? Will the electorate really risk putting an inexperienced man like Perot in the White

House? According to constitutional experts a three-way race may lead to a deadlock and the Congress may have to resolve it by voting on the three candidates to elect one. One wonders if the American people with their long and successful democratic tradition will plunge the system into such uncertainty. However the nervousness in both the Republican and Democratic camps is so obvious that political ana-

lysts are seriously thinking about the implications of the Perot factor. Observers with long experience in analyzing American political scene believe that the "Perot phenomenon" is a form of protest among voters. When individual voters who selected Perot on the ballot are questioned about their motivations, a good proportion of them say that they do not seriously envision Perot as President. Republican voters are disillusioned with Bush due to the economic recession, many are also angry that he reneged on his pro-

grammes for what he would do if he was elected President. Yet he seems to have a powerful appeal among the ordinary men and women who see him as a symbol of American values. Many Americans believe that a man who can advance his own personal fortunes so well is bound to run the national economy well. He presents himself as an extremely pragmatic, no-nonsense type. Most importantly, his anti-govt remarks appeal to many Americans who traditionally distrust a large bureaucracy and a strong government. His attacks on bureaucratic privileges are very popular with the ordinary voter. His main message so far seems to be that he will "trim" government expenses by making officials behave like "normal" people. It may be recalled that Reagan also used anti-govt rhetoric to win popular support.

The Perot phenomenon brings up the worst and the best of the American political system. It shows how the ordinary voters are disillusioned with the two main political parties. Professional politicians, who control and manage and often manipulate the parties have lost, in large measure, the respect and perhaps the confidence of the voters.

Politics must reflect their hopes and aspirations. The "system" has become far too distant from the day to day problems of life faced by the voters. Ross Perot is really articulating their concerns and giving them an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the professional politicians. Regardless of the ultimate outcome of the Perot campaign the parties and their official candidates will have to take fully into account the issues raised by Perot.

Both President Bush and Gov Clinton are obliged to look deep and hard to fathom the reasons for the voter dissatisfaction with them. The ultimate outcome may or may not be changed by Perot candidacy. But there is no doubt that he has created a big stir in the normal pace of American politics which will not be exactly the same after all this is over.

Professional politicians cannot afford to remain complacent about the voters' sentiments or manipulate the agenda for national action. The emergence of Perot shows the vitality and vigour of the American political system. It is a mature democracy in which the parties are accustomed to play their assigned roles. But once in a while a departure is possible if an individual is brave enough to take it upon himself to stand up for the common men and women. Perot may eventually fail to get the Presidency but he has certainly shaken up the system and sensitized it about the problems which afflict ordinary people in their daily life. It is no mean achievement for a single person working against the established system. He will certainly leave his mark on American politics.

**ON THE RECORD**

by Shah AMS Kibria

lysts are seriously thinking about the implications of the Perot factor.

Observers with long experience in analyzing American political scene believe that the "Perot phenomenon" is a form of protest among voters. When individual voters who selected Perot on the ballot are questioned about their motivations, a good proportion of them say that they do not seriously envision Perot as President. Republican voters are disillusioned with Bush due to the economic recession, many are also angry that he reneged on his pro-

grammes for what he would do if he was elected President. Yet he seems to have a powerful appeal among the ordinary men and women who see him as a symbol of American values. Many Americans believe that a man who can advance his own personal fortunes so well is bound to run the national economy well. He presents himself as an extremely pragmatic, no-nonsense type. Most importantly, his anti-govt remarks appeal to many Americans who traditionally distrust a large bureaucracy and a strong government. His attacks on bureaucratic privileges are very popular with the ordinary voter. His main message so far seems to be that he will "trim" government expenses by making officials behave like "normal" people. It may be recalled that Reagan also used anti-govt rhetoric to win popular support.

The Perot phenomenon brings up the worst and the best of the American political system. It shows how the ordinary voters are disillusioned with the two main political parties. Professional politicians, who control and manage and often manipulate the parties have lost, in large measure, the respect and perhaps the confidence of the voters.

**SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT FOR DHAKA CITY — II**

**Collection, Disposal and Recycling Need to be Efficient**

by Mohammad Nurul Islam

SOLID waste collection has yet to emerge as a well organised programme among developing countries like ours. Traditional methods with marginal inputs of modern concepts appear to be the common practice.

The collection of refuse is labour intensive. Hence, the manpower requirement for collection, transportation processing and disposal of garbage could be represented per million inhabitants served. In most cities of India, 1,000-2,000 workers serve a million of population. In Dhaka city, about 4,700 workers are engaged directly with refuse collection.

Optimum utilisation of the labour force is a pre-requisite for an effective performance. When the performance is assessed in terms of collection efficiency as evidenced by cleanliness and promptness of service, it is seen that the number of employees involved in this activity has no direct correlation with the cleanliness and promptness of service. Good results can only be obtained when effective organisation and management are provided.

In most towns in the Indian sub-continent, this job is supervised by either a Medical Health Officer or a Conservancy Officer, but the trend is towards entrusting the job to a suitably trained engineer. As much of the expenditure (80-95%) on solid waste management is incurred on its collection and transportation, which are basically engineering functions, it is felt that suitably trained engineers would be able to obtain better results (for example in Singapore).

Solid Waste Collection can be categorised as (a) Street Sweeping (b) Refuse Collection.

**Street Sweeping**

Sweeping of the roads is normally carried out manually. The labourers work in gangs. Normally, every worker is assigned a specific area known as a 'beat'. Sweeping of the roads is carried out by using a short-handled broom made out of a bunch of fibre (usually coconut left-stack or bamboo-stack). The sweepings are either taken to the street gutter or collected from the road surface by using a flat blade shovel. While doing this work, the labourer has to bend which (i) strains his/her back and (ii)

exposes him/her to the dust which gets airborne diseases during the sweeping operation. The material so removed from the road surfaces and gullies is collected in heaps at a number of points from where it is conveyed in a local made bamboo basket to the nearest dustbin.

**Refuse Collection**

In Dhaka, refuse is not normally collected by house-to-house method. Refuse produced from individual households is rarely stored for more than a day and is normally taken to the community dustbin or, in many cases, just deposited on the adjacent roadside from where it is collected during sweeping of the road.

Community bin system is the most widely used system in Dhaka city wherein storage bins, owned and maintained by the Dhaka City Corporation, are provided at reasonable intervals along the roadside. When the bins are inadequate in number, kept at longer intervals, as in the case of large sized bins (depots), people tend to throw the waste at any convenient point like the water of ponds, ditches, lakes or, surface drains. The total number of bins in Dhaka city is about 3,800 which is not sufficient at all.

Workers with hand-carts collect the wastes from the bins around and deposit it at a suitable place. Every refuse vehicle is provided with 5-7 labourers in addition to its crew. The vehicle moves and collects the deposited refuse until it is full.

Transportation of refuse is carried out departmentally by the Dhaka City Corporation. In a large number of cases, 5-7 tonne open trucks are used. Presently about 200 trucks are engaged in the transportation of refuse of which 120 are open and 80 are covered. Most of the trucks are observed to be uncovered and, during journeys and frequent starting and stopping, the material tends to spill on the roads.

It has been observed that these vehicles, when new, are detailed for other works and sent for refuse transportation after few years' use. Further, these vehicles have to start and stop a number of times during refuse collection, have to travel over rough and inhospitable terrain, and since they are already old, their operation becomes uneconomic.

The city refuse has a high

initial density, and the compaction type of vehicles are not able to give a high compaction ratio and hence are not so economically feasible. Since the refuse vehicles are not equipped with a tipping arrangement, the labourers have to travel with the vehicle to unload its contents to the disposal site.

The large organic fraction contained in city refuse decomposes quickly at high temperatures encountered, unless it is removed quickly. Frequency of collection must be higher than in Western temperate countries; high temperatures and humidity cause refuse to decay and decompose very quickly and this introduces health and hygiene considerations quite different from those in temperate climates. Flies and rodents are ever-present problems and waste must be removed quite quickly from home surroundings. It is claimed by the Dhaka Municipal Corporation that refuse is collected daily from the dustbins and in some cases twice daily.

**Problems Arising from Non-collection**

In summary the following problems may be identified as arising from the non-collection of solid waste: (a) waste dumped in streets favours the development of infectious diseases such as dysentery, worms, enteritis typhoid fever, hepatitis, and cholera; (b) children and such animals as chickens, goats, dogs, and cows often play on the waste, thus making direct contact with the contaminated matter; (c) waste eventually creates dust in the streets, which in turn may cause lung infections; (d) waste is the origin of pungent odours, particularly during the hot season; (e) the appearance of the town becomes unsightly; (f) rains will take waste to sewers, if any, causing them to be blocked; (g) during sweeping or shovelling of waste there will be a dust cloud which may be hazardous to the health of the sweepers.

**Effects on Workers**

In the present system the worker comes in contact with dust at a number of points, namely during sweeping, transfer of refuse to hand-carts, dustbins, vehicles, and unloading from vehicles, thus

exposing him to infection. Since Dhaka city is not completely sewered and due to a huge number of slum and floating population, night-soil is often deposited and gets collected along with refuse. Through hospitals are expected to provide incinerators for their wastes, it often reaches municipal dustbins. Thus, workers are exposed to infection at a number of points.

The results of a study, undertaken in India in 1971, are shown in the table below. Stool samples were collected and analysed for a test group (refuse workers) as well as a control group (having similar social and economic level and engaged in similar activity in another field).

Results of Analysis of Stool Samples

Test Group	Control Group	
	No.	%
Total persons examined	70	
Total positive for parasites	49	32.9

It is evident that most of the refuse workers suffer from at least some parasitic infection; it was seen that a much higher percentage of individuals in the test group were much more infected than those in the control group. The microscopic analysis also showed that while 84% of the test population were heavily infected with two or more parasites, only 2.9% had this type of infection in the control group; clinical examination of the test group as well as control group showed that: (i) workers were suffering from more than one ailment; (ii) the incidence of respiratory and skin diseases was strikingly higher among the worker than the control group; and (iii) the incidence of jaundice, trachoma and eosinophilia was significantly higher in the test group.

**Recycling of Solid Waste**

It is a paradox that, whilst in Western Europe there is much experiment and pontification on the desirability of refuse recycling and reclamation, this is practised to a very high degree in the poorer parts of the developing world. As in the case of many developing countries, there is

little scope for recycling as part of any national waste disposal plan, scavengers and beggars perform the service very efficiently. They are aided by the extensive use of communal storage of waste while it awaits collection.

Storage in a variety of bins, oil drums, concrete drainage pipes and purpose-built ground drums, waste dumps, allows an excellent opportunity for hand sorting and recovery. Sometimes whole families of scavengers support themselves by living at collection points or on landfill sites and dumps and little of value is thrown away. Bottles, tins and other things have several life uses and western peoples, as they face the realities of diminishing reserves of metals and fossil fuels, could learn from their less prosperous brethren.

One can be impressed by the resource and ingenuity with which people (with little formal) training and almost no access to technical support services) are using waste materials to overcome the costs and shortage of raw materials which characterise countries that lack either in foreign exchange or indigenous raw materials. The principal opportunities for recycling of wastes are paper and cardboard, steel scrap, non-ferrous scrap, glass, scrap tyres, plastics, textiles, ferrous metals, agricultural wastes etc.

The scavengers are perhaps the most notable feature of recycling activities in Dhaka city. They are extremely poor, uneducated, and generally disorganised — whose only livelihood is the recovery of recyclables from refuse. Some of them pick from litter bins in street and parks. Huge numbers live on the refuse dumps, in appalling insanitary conditions, mobbing each refuse vehicle as it discharge to try and get the best material ahead of the others. Their condition of health is pitiable as a result of living among vermin and their own excreta as well as the refuse, without adequate drinking water, sanitation, health care, or housing.

The scavengers live in a feudal community, totally controlled by powerful mafia bosses who take huge profits from the sale of the recycled materials. Ignorance, illiteracy, inability to collaborate among themselves, and often heavy indebtedness to buyers for

loans at heavy interest to buy a cart or pay hospital fees, all combine to create a weak bargaining situation in which they are inevitable losers.

**Solid Waste Disposal System**

Neither sanitary landfilling nor controlled tipping is practised at all in Bangladesh. Dhaka City Corporation, which is responsible for solid waste management within Dhaka city, is presently disposing of solid waste by uncontrolled dumping in low-lying land, water ponds, ditches, and disused "tanks" as part of land reclamation in and around Dhaka city. Usually, bulldozers are engaged in levelling and compacting the dumped wastes without following any standard specification. No soil cover is provided between the waste layers. It is seen that wastes are sometimes thrown indiscriminately on to open land within the city areas.

The physical and chemical characteristics of city refuse show 40-60% of it is compostable and that it has adequate nutrients, moisture content of 40-50%, and a carbon-to-nitrogen ratio of 25:1 to 40:1. This indicates that composting of city refuse can produce good quality organic manure and soil conditioner as a cost which is much lower than that of artificial fertilisers. It should be mentioned here that these types of manure and soil conditioner are environmentally friendly and more acceptable now-a-days. The scope, need, value, and importance of the conversion of city refuse into organic manure, in the interest of both agriculture and sanitation, demonstrate the urgent need for undertaking the pilot compost plant as well as pilot marketing of the products by Dhaka City Corporation.

Furthermore, a number of low-lying area, measuring thousands of hectares, are available around Dhaka city. Dhaka City Corporation could use these low-lying areas as sanitary landfill site (s) by employing the appropriate technology. Although here it must be recognised that many areas are subject to flooding and the implications for water quality must be considered.

The third and concluding instalment will be published tomorrow.

**To the Editor...**

**Best of the lot**

Sir, Mission is accomplished and Bangladesh dominates the South East Asian ICC Associate Members Championship fightout. Once again, Bangladesh have returned back to where they belong — Asia Cup tournament — with emphatic decisions over affluent Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore.

With this impressive victory, Bangladesh, plagued with drawbacks, have virtually crossed one more milestone on their way to test berth; and who knows for sure this country won't play in the World Cup before this century is out?

Since nothing is impossible in this space age, the potentials of Bangladeshi cricketers

can also be developed to the highest standard with the required facilities made available and corruption-free cricket management.

M Rahman  
Zila School Road, Mymensingh

**Palestine is a reality**

Sir, No one can deny any fact. Arab-Israeli dispute is true, Israel is practical, Palestine is a reality and the Arab-Israeli wars in 1948-49, 1956, 1967, 1973-74, 1982, the United Nations resolution 242 of 1967 and 338 of 1973 are all facts.

Long before the much publicised Middle East peace conference began in Madrid on

October 30, 1991, the Palestinians in a meeting held in Algiers on November 15, 1988 had recognised the State of Israel and also declared the establishment of an independent state of Palestine.

At the Madrid peace conference Israeli Premier Shamir had gone 'mad' and he threatened the Palestinians of dire consequences if they talked about peace in exchange of land. But finally the people of Israel have 'got rid' of Shamir on 23rd June 1992 general elections. The exit of Shamir and the entry of Rabin has confirmed the 'desire of the Israeli electorate for peace'.

We urge both Israelis and the Palestinians to forget and forgive their past misunder-

standings and bitterness and dissolve their differences through heart-to-heart discussion. Let a new era of freedom and peace shine in the Middle East.

O H Kabir  
Dhaka

**Tin sheds in Gulshan**

Sir, It is mandatory to get the drawings of a proposed building approved by RAJUK before any construction can be taken up anywhere within Dhaka city. There are certain rules laid down by RAJUK which must be followed when preparing the drawing. But till the recent past, one could get any kind of drawings approved

by RAJUK if he/she only knew the art of how to manage it and also had resources. I thought now such malpractices would stop. But seeing what is still happening I changed my opinion.

Near the Gulshan No 1 and 2 roundabout permanent tin sheds are being constructed on top of buildings. The people of Gulshan would like to know how RAJUK has permitted this 'fantasy' in the Gulshan area. With the tin shed the area shall lose its status with consequent loss of value of land. RAJUK in its latest advertisement for lease of land has asked for Taka five lakh per katha. People would not like to see tin sheds in the lands which they are going to buy at

such a high price. If RAJUK has given approval to the tin sheds, then I shall say, "BRAVO, RAJUK — it is only you who can do such a thing?"

Whether the sheds have approval or not, these must be removed and this is the demand of the Gulshan people. It is a matter relating to the general residents of Gulshan. The skyline of Gulshan must be free from such shabby things.

Gulshan is one of the prime areas of Dhaka. Gulshanties must impress on RAJUK that it must stay as such. If RAJUK is not stopped now I am afraid to think where they will lead us to.

A Gulshantia