

Education in Production

Production-oriented education as referred to in political parlance is a misnomer, most of the time. Making education meaningful in all respects is what really counts. Today's reality has forced us to evaluate education on the merits of its employment opportunity, no doubt about it. The competitive edge provided by education however has little relations with the real production. That is what education is all about, at least in the system we are following now. It is the artisans, the workers and farmers who have been closely associated with production at the field level, not the educated white-collar people whose job it is to make the most of the elitism-biased social situation.

Against such a backdrop, when Prime Minister Khaleda Zia calls for linking education with production, she just reiterates the ritualistic. But there is a point in that it ought to relate life in the best possible manner. Given the endless volumes of paperwork required to be done by the oversized bureaucratic set-ups and the perks enjoyed by the elite cores in society, a work culture never gets the patronage it should. Education surely has to be productive but not in the conventional sense of the term. Literature, philosophy, history and basic science are no less productive in terms of human quality.

So there is no point talking of employment-oriented education alone and unless this has been backed by appropriate policy measures. Since the emphasis till now has been on producing graduates with little practical knowledge for application, it is the system that ought to be given a shake-up. A government bent on bringing about a qualitative change in the present education system must be ready to exactly do that. Allocation, though highest on papers in the sector, it is in reality too meagre to reach the level where its benefits could be most spectacular. It is the primary and secondary levels where things ought to be brought in order. The Ministry of Education at these stages must seek to, first of all, address the problems of physical infrastructure, teaching staff and drop-outs. To match the need of the time, there is a need for reorganising the curricula with enough emphasis on the practical lessons alongside the general education. The question of acquiring language skill, basic knowledge of enumeration or mathematics and some rudimentary ideas of geography, history and science will have to feature in the system of education all the same. Because without such a complementary knowledge, a student tends, to be almost wholly self-seeking and less committed to society than what would have allowed all people to live peacefully.

Therefore, the key question is to provide benefits to maximum number of people through a most effective educational system. And the challenge exactly lies there. It is at this point that two other vital issues — poverty and population boom — so inseparably linked to education, call our attention. Argument may go endlessly as to which of these three is more responsible for our woes, but the essential truth remains that investment in education pays in spades. To get out of the morass, a strong political will is most required; because without which education for all will continue to elude us as ever. What we should do is to establish the dignity of labour — one that has to be complemented by information, well-researched knowledge and experience. However much a nation may produce, the benefit will be negated if social disparities continue to widen leaving the productive forces on the sideline instead of ensuring their legitimate share. Real education must impart lessons on developing human values to tide over this psychic barricade.

Hamidur and His Minar

If a single piece of artwork ever managed to express the intense nationalistic feelings, struggles and aspirations of an entire nation, then the Shaheed Minar, built on the spot where martyrs of the Language Movement fell on Feb 21, 1952, was it. Yet, the full vision of the immortal sculpture's creator Hamidur Rahman, whose third death anniversary passed yesterday, remains unfulfilled to a large extent even today. Hamidur Rahman's design, which was chosen out of a hundred back in 1956, was never fully executed for a number of reasons, including political difficulties during Pakistan days and bureaucratic bungling and shortsightedness in post-liberation times.

However, when we wish to pay tribute to the creator of this extraordinary piece of work on his death anniversary, we ought not to brood over what went wrong. Rather, it should be our resolve to see how the wrong can be righted and the Shaheed Minar expanded and established in its fullest glory. In an article published in this paper on Feb 21 this year, the departed artist's brother Sayeed Ahmed had mentioned that a substantial documentation of the Shaheed Minar's basement mural, as planned and drawn by Hamidur, was preserved in the Department of Art of the University of Philadelphia in the United States. Re-creating the basement as well as the research library that Rahman had included in his overall plan of the Minar would be a proper way to remember the artist who had given us a sculpture which served as the most powerful symbol of Bengalee nationalism throughout our struggle for freedom. In addition, the Dhaka University authorities should ponder over the contribution made by sculptor Novera Ahmed to the design, by including free-flowing water and open-air sculptures in the Minar complex. Ahmed's contribution was an integral part of Hamidur Rahman's overall scheme, and they would form a crucial part of the beauty of the place.

This would mean following Hamidur Rahman's design to the letter and not only in spirit. The worst mistake that can be made would be to change the design in a misguided bid to "improve" the structure. It should be remembered that the Shaheed Minar, even in its incomplete form, has been replicated all over the country and become a truly people's monument. While we aim to complete Rahman's work to show our gratitude, we must not commit aesthetic murder by tampering with the original design.

THE press, as a powerful medium of communication, has to play a significant role in building up society and helping the people achieve their national objectives. Much has been said and written about the freedom of Press. There is firm belief that freedom has to be conceived and expressed in the perspective of greater national interest and the well-being of the people. The freedom of expression is an inalienable right; the concept of freedom of expression encompasses freedom of speech and freedom of the Press.

The press, and for that matter free press, is inseparable from democracy. It is at once an essential attribute of and an indispensable pre-condition for democracy. The utility of the press appeared so much to Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers and the third president of the United States of America, that he went as far as to state his unhesitating preference for newspaper without a government to a government without newspapers.

In the democratic society, the people should be allowed the freedom to hold opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas to enable them to exercise their rights as citizens and participate intelligently and effectively in the governance of the country. The press is by far the best suited medium for the purpose.

In fact, freedom of press could not be conceived in absolute term. Freedom carries with it duties and responsibilities. Freedom implies obligation of the individual as well as of the society and also of the nation.

Therefore, the role of the news media in informing, alerting and inciting public opinion is absolutely critical. One feels tempted to quote what Prime Minister of

Too Many Newspapers: Do They Cater to the Needs of the Society?

by Mohammad Anjad Hossain

Bangladesh Begum Khaleda Zia told editors of national newspapers on 7 October, 'a patient may die for wrong treatment, but the distortion of a news can cause damage to the entire country'. This is a statement of fact indeed which is particularly relevant in the context of the developing countries. Unlike other industries the entrepreneurs in the newspaper industry are not in business to earn money alone. Other motivating factors are propagation of ideas, enhancement of social prestige and a desire to contribute to the welfare of the community. The news and views carried by newspapers strive to satisfy three basic requirements of the readers i.e. information, education and entertainment. Sensationalism and gimmicks may help boost sale of newspapers, but resort to such practice is more an exception than the rule. Newspapers tend to render service to the society by reporting the fact, projecting the truth and espousing the cause of the people even under difficult conditions.

Here it would be relevant to quote from Walter Lippmann, who wrote, far back in 1922, "if we assume that news and truth are two words for the same thing, we shall, I believe, arrive nowhere". According to Lippmann, "function of news is to single out an event and function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which men can act". Therefore, a journalist is called upon to find the hidden fact and to present an objective picture of what is happening in the society. In our poverty ridden society, there is hardly

any honest attempt to project the hidden fact or the fact behind the event. In the Western society, by and large, a journalist does not hold any brief or report in such a manner as to extract favour of the elite or the power. If he holds biased attitude, it would spoil the credibility of his report or he may face a charge in the judicial court.

Political Leaning
In Bangladesh, a careful study of the daily newspapers, both Bengali and English, reveal the fact that a large number of them either toe the line of one political party or extend support to another political party directly. A few of them have tilted in a subtle way. A few newspapers subscribe to either religious or socialist ideologies. It is an irony that many of the working journalists are identified with political parties. Therefore, one can hardly expect an objective and unbiased reporting and comments from them. Apart from this trend, editors and owners of many newspapers are non-professional. The news and comments appearing in these newspapers, therefore, tend to reflect lopsided views. Against this backdrop, it is amazing to note a large number of daily newspapers, — numbering 127 — are being published in Bangladesh. This number, of course, include English dailies. Of the 110 million population, (although there is a big question mark about the population statistics in Bangladesh), adult literacy rate is 35% as per Human Development Report, 1992 of UNDP. That means

38.51 million people can read and write.
Some of our foreign friends are puzzled to see the growing upward trend in the number of newspapers either in Bengali or English. They were told that this reflects freedom of press existing in Bangladesh and people irrespective of caste, creed or colour are expressing their opinion freely, without fear or favour. Foreign friends in their reply say this kind of freedom which at times appears to be irrational or whimsical or devoid of sense or reality tantamounts to misleading opinion forming circle in the democratic set up of a country. It is a fact that the concept of 'pure' journalism did not evolve over the years in Bangladesh. This is really an unfortunate phenomenon.

Circulation and Readership
The circulation of newspapers appear to be fluctuating with the political and religious issues and behaviour of nature. According to newspaper managements, circulation of the newspapers goes up if the political issues of important nature, which, even include political murders continue to persist. And the circulation goes down if hartal (strike) for takes place or there is disruption of transport system due to heavy downpour and floods. At least one management attributes the decrease of circulation to the increase of price of newspaper. While one management claims that the circulation increases between ten and fifteen thousand because of the reasons stated above.

Majority of them, however, do not hold such views. According to sources close to the managements of Dhaka dailies, the circulation of both Bengali and English stands at about 600,000. Of these, the circulation of English dailies is 92,000, in good faith I accepted these statistics, but the seem to be inflated as has been ascertained from hawkers, newspaper and magazine sellers and people from different walks of life.

Dhaka dailies also travel to divisional and district headquarters. Apart from Dhaka, newspapers are also published from Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Kushtia and Bogra. If the circulation of Dhaka dailies, as provided by the managements, is relied upon, the readership stands at 600,000. And if it is presumed that one newspaper is shared by an average of five persons, newspaper readership comes to 30,00,000. The price of a daily is Taka 4/- (four Taka) and the minimum wage is Taka 1045/-, as per statistical year book 1991. The middle class and low income group can hardly afford to buy a newspaper under prevailing economic conditions. Therefore, logically, the circulation of newspapers is confined to a sizeable population, who is politically and ideologically committed or conscious. High rate of illiteracy coupled with low per capita income and spiraling increase of price of essential commodities have made the growing population incapacitated to buy daily newspapers.

What emerges from the recent seminars on the management of the newspapers is

that there should not be any apprehension about the growth of newspapers and a system should be evolved to train the editorial staff and column writers to develop professional standard.

My personal feeling is that democracy does not mean granting of total licence to bring out anything one desires.

Not a Healthy Sign

Against the backdrop of high illiteracy rate and lowest per capita income, mushrooming of daily newspapers is not a healthy sign for the society. Newspapers is the mirror of the society. Therefore, this underdeveloped society needs responsible journalism which can cater to the needs of the people strictly on the basis of ideal journalistic ethic. A very few Bengali and English dailies could deliver the quality goods if the standard of journalism is improved. My suggestion is that reporters and editors should receive intensive training on coverage of human interest, socio-economic and scientific developments instead of stereotype reporting on political issues, mainly. A mechanism could be evolved for granting a bonus for writing serialised stories, scoop news and feature write-ups. The journalist union or press club may consider introducing annual award in different fields of journalism to improve professionalism.

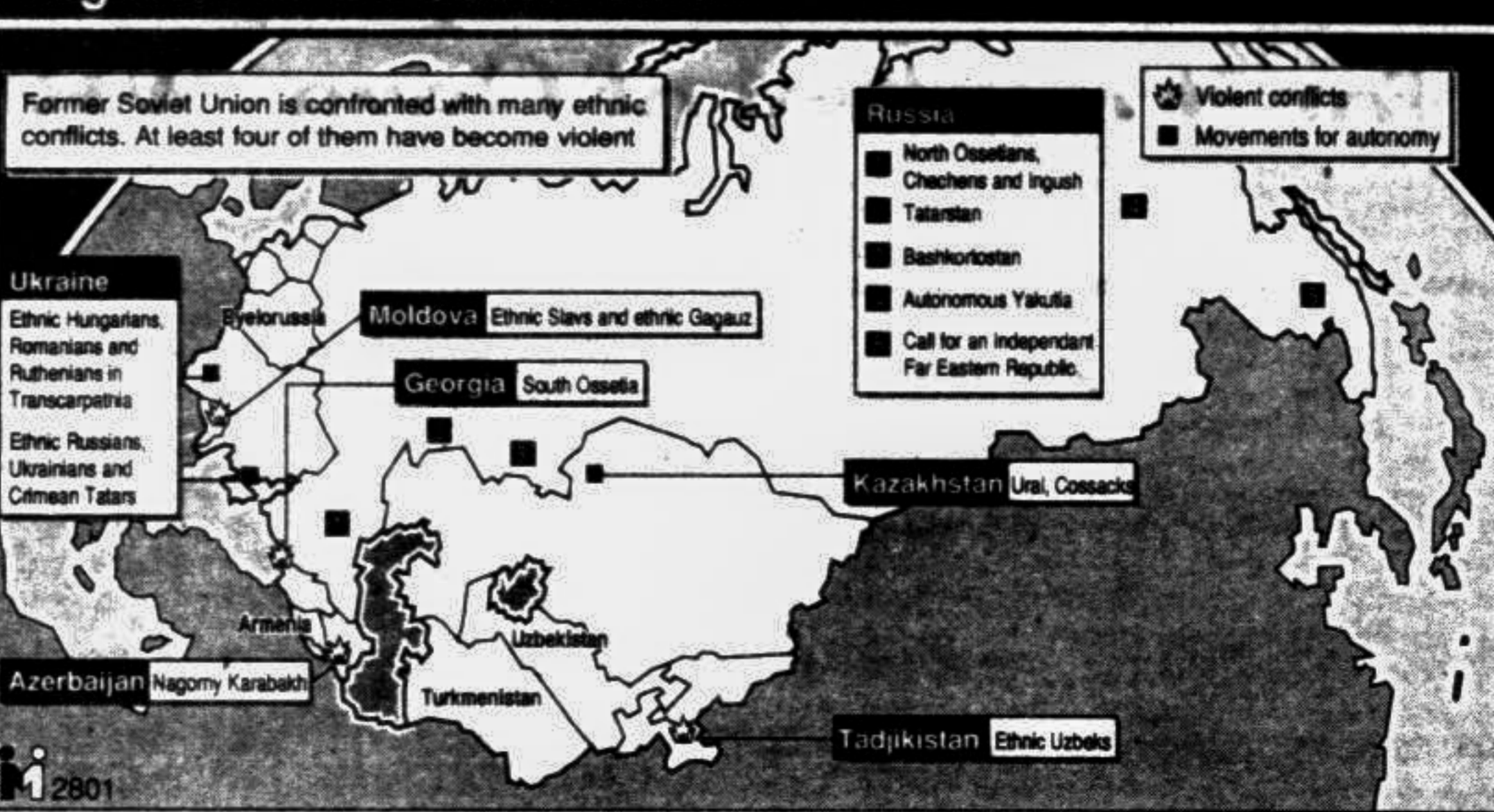
From long and varied experience in journalism and meeting journalists world over and studying the media in depth, both in the capitalist and socialist blocks, I can say that the media in Bangladesh has expanded widely and is dishing out stories and views much more freely than many countries of the world, but unbridled freedom poses a danger. Therefore, there is a need for a balance.

The Four Men who Seek to Undermine Yeltsin

Andrew Wilson writes from Moscow

From the Caucasus to Tatarstan, nationalist leaders and "private" armies are threatening Yeltsin's Russia. Monthly inflation, now running at 25 per cent, and mass unemployment undermine the President's economic policies. Resentment against the democrats is growing and observers are now openly talking about a coup. On December 1, the Congress of People's Deputies — which has power to change the constitution and challenge the presidency, opens. Yeltsin's survival will depend on its decisions.

Legacies of the Soviet Union



tem and bring back a version, albeit reformed, of the previous regime. But despite signs of disillusionment and a strong showing (25 per cent) in the two-year-old Congress, the former communists are far from inspiring confidence in the country at large. The more liberal among them, like Roy Medvedev's Socialist Party of Labour, accept the reality of their situation and, so far as a return to power is concerned, are prepared to bide their time.

The second possibility is a move by right-wing nationalists and some disappointed "democrats" to set up a "government of national salvation." Among the prime actors are firebrands like Vladimir

Zhirinovskiy, leader of the so-called Liberal Democratic Party, who once campaigned for president on a "vodka" ticket and portentously offered himself as an "alternative to civil war."

No less than the reformist ex-communists, they lack support from the mass of ordinary people, whose only concern is to get to the end of the economic nightmare, and who see no solution in the hands of fanatics.

The third possibility — amounting to nothing less than a coup in current Russian political terminology — is the installation of a firm government of technicians in which Yeltsin, or his presidential successor, would be reduced

to a mere figurehead.

Four prominent personalities are being mentioned in connection with this scenario — a group half-jokingly called by political cognoscenti the new SCSE, (State Committee for the State of Emergency), set up by the leaders of the coup of August 1991. They are:

- Arkady Volsky, 60, head of the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, the ablest official yet to emerge from among captains of the former Soviet military-industrial complex.
- Nikolai Travkin, 46, head of the Democratic Party of Russia, an authoritarian worker-politician once hailed as Russia's "Walesa."

Ruclan Khaabulov, 50, Chechen-born speaker of the Russian parliament and former Yeltsin ally, now the leading protagonist for a "parliamentary republic" in which the President's powers would be sharply curtailed.

Aleksandr Rutskoi, 45, Russian Vice-President and former Afghanistan fighter pilot. In 1991 he organised the defence of "White House" and he openly attacks Yeltsin's "undemocratic tendencies" and swears to see the last of the President's young advisers.

Political insiders and military officers now add a fifth name — that of Gen. Pavel Grachev, chief of the Russian armed forces. Grachev is a former airborne forces commander, promoted for his loyalty during the putsch. His tacit backing, and that of his soldiers is regarded as indispensable to any plan to ditch Yeltsin and install a firm government capable of extricating Russia from its present crisis.

Grachev is no politician, but, according to General Staff officers, he would almost certainly go along with any well-prepared move that promised to restart the economy and restore Russian staidhood — notwithstanding the fate of his Soviet predecessor, Marshal Dmitry Yazov.

On October 27, Yeltsin struck a pre-emptive blow by imposing a ban on the National Salvation Front, an umbrella organisation of nationalists and ex-democrats, whom he accused of demanding "the overthrow of legally constituted authorities," i.e. his pres-

deny.

Twenty-four hours later he ordered the dissolution of a "parliamentary guard" sent by Khasbulatov to take over the office of Izvestia. The Speaker claims that the newspaper is parliament's property.

Such moves, now paralleled almost daily, are signs of Russia's increasingly volatile condition. But any suggestion that the coup will be armed force or violent constitutional surgery is likely to prove mistaken. The likelihood is more subtle.

In the social conditions expected by December — of hyper-inflation, increasing food shortages, mass lay-offs and shortage of heating fuels — the technicians expect to be in a strong enough position to dictate terms. They can require Yeltsin to dismiss his "liberal" ministers — the acting prime minister and economist, Yegor Gaidar, whose theoretical market policies are held responsible for growing unrest and industrial run-down, and the Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, who is regarded as too "soft."

In their place, the technicians will take over industry, restore production, and introduce a programme of economic and social development less subservient to Western opinion and the International Monetary Fund.

The core of the technicians' scenario is that Yeltsin will be given an ultimatum. If he refuses, his opponents will threaten constitutional changes, stripping him of authority — or office. If he agrees, he will be given the chance to stay titular head of state, with all the trappings to which he has so quickly grown accustomed.

— GEMINI NEWS

ANDREW WILSON was for several years staff correspondent of the London Observer in Moscow. He has just made an extensive tour of several regions of Russia.

To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Anti-Terrorism Ordinance

Sir, Men are by nature selfish and they very much want to enjoy certain facilities which they do not like to share with others; and to avoid any possible conflict they sit together, agree to certain common principles and delegate an authority on one of them, so that such a selected leader will, for the greater good of the common people, form a principle of governance, which he will himself follow and enforce its strict observance by others. That is why in every village or mohalla such a leader enjoys confidence of others and exercise obedience from them. This seems to be the essence of democracy also. But

such a leader when proves himself to be self-centred, despotic and tyrannical, then befall miseries on the commonmen. Although unfortunate, it is true that most of the anti-social acts viz. theft, dacoity, high-way robbery, atrocities on the weak and the peace-loving people that occur here and there in the length and breadth of the city and suburbs are perpetrated under the passive, if not active, support of sort of leaders who apparently command authority on others. And for the commonmen in such circumstances, it becomes well nigh difficult to save themselves from the wrong doings. In course of time, such lawless elements become so much powerful that they tend to flout the authority of even

the law enforcing agencies, as it is observed. The boundless activities of such unruly elements have become so much widespread that the peace-loving people and the law enforcing agencies fail to effectively control them. Life and property of commonmen stand in jeopardy to such an extent that government has promulgated Anti-Terrorism Ordinance, providing exemplary punishment to contain them.

Some opposition circles have come up with criticism against it, for obvious reasons. But it is as much certain that the government cannot be a passive onlooker when terrorists have intensified their activities beyond proportion causing large scale misery of commonmen. Their very existence of a stiff law is itself a good check against such heinous acts. There is law in Saudi Arabia for amputation of hand for theft, which effectively curbed that offence there and there are few people who are losing their hands there. With the promulgation of the ordinance here, there

has been substantial check in crime by this time and that is the instant success of Govt. If the Ordinance is enforced as given out by the government, it is hoped that the law and order situation will be improved to a great extent to offer the much needed peace and tranquility for the peace-loving innocent citizens.

M H Shalck
Senpara, Dhaka.

are also extremely limited. So this kind of patients have to wait for a longtime for operations.

In developed countries, the stones are removed through a procedure which is called "Lithotripsy". It is a scientific and non-invasive procedure to disintegrate kidney and ureteric stones without surgery. This procedure breaks up the stones into fine sand like particles which are subsequently passed out with urine. This procedure is safe and it does not involve a lot of money. So every year the rich patients from our country go to foreign countries for Lithotripsy treatment.

Now I come to my main point. In our country Lithotripsy machine has already been brought which is being kept in ICGMR, Dhaka. I request the concerned authority for quick installation of the machine with the help of which the above mentioned patients may get proper treatment.

M G Mustafa
Madartek, Dhaka

West Asia, not Middle-East

Sir, The people and the media of the western countries refer to the region of Asia comprising Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Israel etc. as the Middle-East, quite rightly because this region is in the middle of the East in relation to the western countries.

But it is surprising that the media and the learned politicians alike, of the countries in the south and east Asia including Bangladesh, also refer to the above region as Middle-East! This is definitely a mistake. The Middle-East, (in relation to the West), is actually West Asia from the geographic/hemispheric situation of the south and east Asian countries including Bangladesh. Hence, we should refer to the above region as West Asia and not Middle-East.

M Nazmul Haque
Dhaka