

The Needy are Partyless

Some reports have cast doubt on whether the government's agricultural rehab programme would reach out to all the flood-affected farmer households. We are hopeful that the agile and receptive agriculture and food ministry will graciously pay heed to it as something of an early warning — not too early in practical terms though; because the lead time to start the Rabi season was partly shortened by the long duration of the floods and partly lost in determining the modus operandi for the rehabilitation work.

The government's massive rehabilitation package for the peasantry consists of emergency agrifunds, loans and inputs in kind like seeds, saplings and fertilisers approximately valued at Tk 4000 crore, the biggest chunk being Tk 3200 crore earmarked for credit disbursement. The government has put a distribution mechanism in operation and set the criteria for distribution as well. The chairmen and members of the union councils, NGO representatives from ADAB and Department of Agriculture Extension officials will identify the eligible farmers against certain stated yardsticks: Landless, small and marginal groups owning less than 2.5 acres of land. Sharecroppers too, would be entitled to krishi loans without any collateral but they should have guarantors to attest to their capacity to repay, from crops of course.

Some reports have it that the UP chairmen and members are coming out in their true political colours while listing eligible candidates for the rehabilitation support with the result that many flood-affected farmers are left deeper in the lurch. This is tantamount to area-wise discrimination, patently so reprehensible given that those who are flood-hit and needy belong to no political party whatsoever; they are victims of a natural calamity, pure and simple. The government should require the listing to be done compulsorily on the basis of consensus reached among all the components of the distribution mechanism — the local government leaders, NGO representatives, extension officials and NCB and specialised bank functionaries.

Going by the massive size of the undertaking we and the rest of the world would really be sick as a parrot if even a single needy farmer is left out. And, given the stake involved, we do not see why the government should allow the exercise to be subverted through any incipient political tug of war.

Challenge of Snail's Pace

It was on July 4 a barge carrying the generators for the 75mw Shambhuganj gas-turbine thermal power station arrived in Bangladesh. Two weeks later, on July 18, the barge set out for destination which lies opposite Mymensingh town, just across the Old Brahmaputra. Well, the thing hasn't yet made its destination in 82 days since leaving Mongla.

This, more than anything else, is surely a measure of Bangladesh's underdevelopment. The barge could travel up to Mehendiganj in Barisal and then the flood currents proved too much for it to sail up. Two tugs were brought in from Singapore and on August 11 those two, helped in by a small fleet of other locally available tugs — towed the barge up to Bahadurabad. Reaching there on September 19, the barge couldn't make way any further. For with the flood waters subsiding rapidly, the riverway has been left with a depth of 1.5 metres and the draft of the barge is way beyond two metres. It is stuck up there and will remain so till the floods next season give it way.

Beside badly hurting the commissioning schedule of the Shambhuganj power station — April, 1999 — the barge odyssey can earn us only one thing — finding a place in the Guinness Book. Moving heavy-weight plants and machinery is nothing new to Bangladesh. There are much bigger power plants in the land and these all were fabricated abroad and moved to exact site without a hitch resembling the present one.

Involved first in the matter are two contractors, one Japanese and the other French, who are also responsible for reaching the generators to site and erecting them. Then there is the Rural Power Company, the owners of the power station. And on top of it all is the government of Bangladesh. How can we accept the position that a 2,500 ton lot cannot be moved by any means, in one piece or separately, even after the four join their heads and resources together? Whether the barge moves or not, its load must travel up to Shambhuganj where 70 per cent of all work is complete, to get the station operational by April next.

Shameful Conviction Rate

The prosecution to conviction ratio in criminal cases is low in Bangladesh. The share in this of women's repression cases is still less. The rape cases alone stack up in hundreds every year. And over a whole year there is news hardly of one or two convictions. Bangladesh is that rare country where a gang of rapists go about their crime in the full confidence of having never to face the music.

That is why the sentencing of eight persons to life imprisonment in a case of gang rape in a Comilla village becomes a front-page news. And we comment on the news to underline the necessity of improving upon the conviction rate in such cases particularly. If it doesn't, the criminal justice institutions of the judiciary will hardly have any meaning and the nation would be condemned to be a criminals' quarry.

The present case was disposed of by the special court for trying child and women repression cases. That's how the verdict could come in so soon. Otherwise weighed down by tens of thousands of cases dragging on for years, this could be lost without the judge's ever knowing it.

There is more to such cases beyond the usual crime and punishment. It is the social price exacted from the victim for the crime of being raped. The 18-year old girl was married only seven months. After the incident her husband would not let her take up her wifely position. He completely ceased to have any connection with the girl.

In India the courts are already making the convicts pay for the quantifiable losses of the wronged ones. Let it be a food for thought for our courts and lawmakers.

NUMERIC professionals quantify poverty in standard measures of flows of consumption and/or income. According to their estimate around 50 per cent of the population in Bangladesh subsist below the poverty line and the crisis is concentrated in the countryside.

The poor, and the much more numerous rural poor, are not homogeneous. Some poor are "like us" only poorer than us, but the "ultra poor" are different. Suffering from acute physical deprivation, lack of self-esteem and control over day to day survival, they are socially peripheral, sometimes very near to the untouchables. They include the assetless, abandoned women or widows, those engaged in lowly occupations, ethnic minorities, nomadic artisanal fishermen or the floating population like pieces of crumbling eroded land. Many are physically at the fringe, on the edge of or in between habitats. They are the wretched of the earth and therefore hardly visible. They are easily missed out in surveys and even in censuses.

They conjure up the image of the indigents in Paris in 1657, a population without any asset or resource, without social moorings and a mass rejected. On the night of May 14, 1657 the archers of the Hospital General began to hunt them down and herd them into the Hospital. They were allowed to exist, but they must accept the physical and moral restraints of confinement and remain invisible (Madness and Civilization by Michael Foucault).

How many of them are in Bangladesh? Measured by calorie intake of less than 1800 kcal they constitute 36 per cent of the total population, the ultra poor in the countryside varying between 24 and 40 per cent. Call them by whatever name, around 23 million of the poorest of the poor continue to remain outside the development process and are hardly reached by poverty alleviation measures like income generation through self employment or capacity building through

"So Much Alike, Yet So Different"

Some poor are "like us" only poorer than us, but the "ultra poor" are different. Suffering from acute physical deprivation, lack of self-esteem or control over day to day survival, they are socially peripheral, sometimes very near to the untouchables.

access to education, health care and nutrition. Even the social safety nets quite often pass them by.

Poverty reduction has long and rightly been the central focus of national development plans. The targeted and discrete interventions have, no doubt, resulted in a modest reduction in poverty levels. But wretchedness remains. If it cannot be uprooted it is made invisible instead. These invisible ultra poor are very often the missing poor.

The unidimensional concentration on income alone may not be sufficient for meeting the day to day, sometimes hour by hour, survival needs of the poorest. The laudable initiatives of micro-credit for self employment and income generation by the peer groups of the poor have indeed empowered many of the disadvantaged and less privileged women, given their children access to education and health care and provided them with secure roofs over their heads. But, unfortunately, the extreme poor are sometimes bypassed through social discrimination by the not-so-poor. Sometimes they exclude themselves due to lack of time, energy, control over day to day survival and most importantly due to the more agonising fact of loss of self-respect. As mentioned earlier, the social safety-nets elude them. The resources allocated through compassionate public action are more often than not trapped in the nets of the local power holders. What is more distressing but cannot be quantified are the abuses and insults, helplessness and pain or the touching of the feet and swallowing abuses.

There are other structural problems contributing to the deprivation process which are either not taken cognizance of or swept under the carpet. To illustrate some of these structural predispositions let me enumerate a few: gender discrimination in wage-rate and

intra-household distribution of assets and benefits; sudden shocks like natural disaster; loss of assets such as homestead and livestock; death or prolonged illness of an earning member, and many others ranging from seasonal deficits to meeting unforeseen expenses, i.e. dowry. It is nearly impossible to reach nor, rehabilitate the still numerous miserable people without structural change.

Acute physical deprivation is no doubt an important parameter of extreme poverty. But their basic survival needs cannot be encompassed by a focus on income generation alone. Equally important are

Fourth, some are located in places difficult to access or form part of a nomadic population like artisanal fisher folk, squatters, peddlers etc. Fifth, they are, in general, highly vulnerable to catastrophic shocks such as natural disasters, debilitating illness or death of the income earner of the household. Sixth, their common mechanism for crises coping is accessing credit through kinship sources, patron-client relationship or through traditional money lenders frequently by forward selling of their labour.

Food-assisted interventions are supposed to address both the chronic problems of hunger as

health care services, opportunities have definitely expanded. Non formal education initiatives like those of BRAC, have undoubtedly succeeded in reaching the children of the poorest of the poor. Yet, leakage from food for education programme to the non-poor groups is estimated to be as high as 26 per cent. The problem of primary school drop-outs continues to fester and as for the quality of education, the less said the better.

Poor health sector interventions are generally non-discriminatory on the basis of socio-economic status. Expanded programme of immunization has attempted to reach children from the poorest households. But as yet public sector health interventions cover only about 12 per cent of the rural populace. The poorest households allocate 10-25 per cent of their meagre income for private health services. Under nutrition of children is pervasive. Stunting and listlessness continue to affect sizable number of children. That, however, is a silent disaster and not a stuff for media head lines. Micro-credit has no doubt made a difference for the poor. The jury is still out on its accessibility for the ultra poor.

The knowledgeable and compassionate professionals of the civil society are reluctant to be vocal about structural constraints. The need for social transformation must not be pushed beyond the bare minimum in recognition of the high cost in political and social disruption. They take cognizance of structural problems but balk at the high cost of resistance from the power holders, if something has to be done about it.

Quite some time back I wrote in a poem, those who are courageous to the battle-front, I do not have the courage. So, it will be dishonest for me to talk about social restructuring.

My appeal, therefore, which I made in the context of a national disaster like the recent unprecedented floods in this very column, is to the 10 to 15 per cent of the fortunate people of Bangladesh, the more affluent upper middle class and quite comfortable professional-like me. If each one of such households support 5 to 10 families of their ancestral villages and neighborhoods for an eight to ten year time horizon, a difference can be made. A difference in the access of the poorest to social safety-net programmes, to work opportunities for the able bodied, to education and health care for the least privileged women and children and perhaps to their empowerment in real terms and not in rhetoric.

Arguments against such unsophisticated reversion to kinship or neighbourhood ties and responsibilities are many. Could be, as they say, it is a retrograde pipe dream in today's Bangladesh of nuclear families. I have only a question to ask. Those of us like me who are comfortable professionals today may like to take a deep breath and look back to what their parents did. Didn't they embrace their less-fortunate village kins and provide educational opportunities for their children? So, why the apathy of the more fortunate ones today? Is it because, they consider such sentimentality as reactionary or anti progress? Or is it because, they just do not care?

Perhaps they might recall the haunting story by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and I quote: "I have been asleep a long time," Mr. Herbert said yawning. "Centuries," said old Jacob. "I'm starving to death." "So is every body else," Old Jacob said. "There's nothing to do but go to the beach and dig for crabs."

Tobias found him scratching in the sand foaming at the mouth, and he was surprised to discover that when rich people were starving, they looked so much like the poor. (The Sea of Lost Time).



income eroding vulnerabilities, creation of minimal asset bases, capacity-building for absorbing sudden shocks and overcoming structural handicaps. Without such a holistic approach, the wretched of the earth cannot take advantage of micro credit or income generating activities.

Who are these ultra poor? First, as I have mentioned earlier, they are without any productive asset. Their consumption level is less than 1800 kcal and their per capita income is about 60 per cent of the other poor. Second, they have fewer adult earning members with more children below the age of ten years. Third, heterogeneous as they are many belong to the least privileged women headed/managed households, ethnic minorities or occupational groups who are considered outside the sharma (সর্মা).

also the catastrophic crises. Geared generally to crisis situations as those are, the acute food-insecurity during seasonal deficits is not, or should I say, cannot be consistently addressed. Inaccessible geographical areas are rarely reached. Costly as the delivery system is, such intervention cannot promote sustainable livelihood for the beneficiaries unless linked to support services for assisting the vulnerable households to reach a level where they can access both micro-credit opportunities and public goods such as primary health care and education. Further, supported by praiseworthy donor compassion such intervention, to an extent, devalues national or community self-reliance and may not always be cost-effective.

Turning to public action for universal education or primary

To the Editor...

Nothing else matters

Sir, I was amused reading the letter of Mr F Karim from Khulshi Hill, Chittagong, published on 1st October, '98. It is typical of the male dominant world.

He wrote, "A woman has destroyed the most powerful man on earth, Monica Lewinsky has finished President Bill Clinton." But how could a mere intern finish the president if he himself is not inclined to be finished? How could Monica come near to Bill Clinton if he had not arranged the secret meetings, phone conversation and exchange of gifts? According to Mr Karim's observation, Monica was an implant by Clinton's enemy to trap him. So what? Hundreds of Monicas may be implanted but why should the president fall for them? A very intelligent person like Bill Clinton acted most unwisely.

Then Mr F Karim praised Hillary effusively because ignoring her husband's many scandalous affairs she stood steadfastly by his side. But Hillary really puzzles me. Despite being a highly educated and capable person, why is she tolerating all these?

May be nothing else matters to her as long as she could remain the First Lady of the United States.

Nur Jahan East Nasirabad, Chittagong

"Premium" opportunity

Sir, Some people are truly taking advantage of people's sufferings during and after the recent flood!

The case in here is the service of the so-called comfortable "Premium or Metro" buses. Suddenly, taking passengers for granted, they increased their fare in all routes in the city.

They -- without uttering even a single word -- pointed at a notice that said the company has raised the fare.

What a service! Moreover, we Bengalees don't have any self-respect, nobody is supposed to travel in those buses, standing. But it's an every day phenomenon.

We hear there are many more companies waiting for clearance of the authority concerned to "serve" passengers. Why are those companies not given the permission?

Should we smell the same old political rat here?

Ishrat Parveen Mirpur 10, Dhaka

Neck-breaking speed breakers

Sir, The construction of speed breakers in our country are so weird that they have over the years damaged innumerable vehicles and are continuing to do so which are imported at the cost of valuable foreign exchange.

The speed breakers are designed to ensure that vehicles slow down at a particular point for safety reasons. But in our country they are designed to be 'neck breakers' or to be more

precise 'car scrapers'.

My assumption is that most of the engineers assigned to construct speed breakers in our country are only familiar with government jeeps and the height of the speed breakers do not take into consideration that civilisation has reduced the clearance of motor cars — the reason being that the roads are supposed to be smooth and the low clearance gives better road grip to cars.

The designs of the speed breakers at the Chittagong EPZ are low, but having two bumps they are designed to slow down traffic without damaging the vehicles.

The Roads and Highways Department should take note and concentrate on constructing more civilised speed-breakers.

Mahbubur Rashid 110, Moghbazar Ramna, Dhaka

Gas in Bogra

Sir, The news item about possibility of finding gas in Bogra has caught my attention. Although the same sign of coming of gas bubbles has occurred in the past, it will not be wise for the authorities to neglect it again. People in the northern region of Bangladesh, especially the housewives know the hardship of cooking with kerosene stove or LP gas. Those with lower income group are using wood as firewood. This is causing loss of trees in that region.

The authority claimed in the past that the reserved gas in Bogra is not economically profitable. The geologists claim that the geographical structure does not show any possibility of finding gas in the northern region. But the reality is, there is evidence of gas in that region and it came out in the same manner in the past. People of that region believe that it is a conspiracy with them. They think that, when gas and petroleum can be found in the nearby Indian region. Why then should it not be here? This is the question that is to be considered seriously.

The government has planned to transfer gas to the northern region. It now seems very possible when the long cherished Bangabandhu Bridge has been completed. But if gas is found in Bogra, it would be easier.

S.M. Enayetur Raheem House # D-35, Road # 4 Arambag Eastern Housing Section-7, Mirpur, Dhaka-1216

Weakness rebounds!

Sir, A friendly early warning to leaders in all sectors: your weaknesses and compromises will rebound onto yourself, when the time is right, and you cannot do anything about it — the fall would be so swift and sudden. For some transient personal gains, you have deprived many people of happiness and opportunities. Nepotism is an evil, and the price for its practice must be paid.

You cannot get more than what is due to you by your actions, and you are not the judge of your reward. Group pressure, when applied wrongly to right persons will ultimately fail, and the initiator will suffer more than those oppressed. As you sow, so you reap. It is a crime to tear the fabrics of a harmless society struggling to live a decent and peaceful life. Even the high heavens will not forgive transgressors against humanity.

I am penning these thoughts after going through October 5 Perspectives column on this page.

An Elderly Observer Dhaka

Postal toll

Sir, Every post office in Dhaka is charging Taka 20 for mailing the DV '99 applications to Washington, whereas the actual postal fee to the US is Taka 18.

Why is this 2-taka impost? To make people suffer more?

Rubina Sultana Dhaka University, Dhaka

Why no light on rickshaws?

Sir, Would the Home Secretary, IGP, Mayor DCC, Deputy Commissioner (Admin. Civil), Deputy Commissioner Traffic or any other competent authority kindly tell us if there is any law, rule and regulation, secret government order or instruction for the rickshaw-pullers not to drive their vehicle on roads, streets, lanes and by-lanes of Dhaka city with light in the darkness of night?

O H Kabir 6 Hare Street Wari, Dhaka-1203

Is it really a punishment?

Sir, Recently the rape incidence of JU has stirred the whole country. To investigate the incidence the university authority formed a fact finding committee and got a lot of complaints regarding rape. The fact finding committee identified thirteen students including three outsiders involvement in the incident.

But, it is surprising to us that only five accused have been expelled from the university. Now the question is that: is it really a punishment? Is it the only solution and enough to expel the culprits from the university for committing the crime? I think, it's a reward for the culprits for doing this heinous act. The right punishment of those criminals should be death sentence.

Ahmed Imtiaz Mirpur, Dhaka

Crime and punishment

Sir, I have been following the DS reporting on campus rapes intensely. How could these criminals claim themselves to be students? Is it because of their political affiliation that they dared to do so? The moral degradation of that group of students has saddened and outraged us all.

Considering the crime, their punishment is like an affectionate pat on the back and saying, "Be a good boy, don't be naughty." I strongly condemn the rapes on the campus and protest the politically motivated judgement. Where are our intellectuals now? Why are they tightlipped?

Criminal cases should be filed against the seven accused and they should be expelled for life from the university. If Jahangirnagar University authority cannot take these decisions boldly, then they should better resign acknowledging their failure to punish the rapists.

Y Zaman Uttara Model Town Dhaka-1230

"As she is a JU student"

Sir, Few days back, a news published in a Bengali daily entitled "As she is a JU student" drew my attention.

According to the news, the engagement of a girl was cancelled by the bridegroom's guardian, when they came to know that she is a student of JU. But what is she guilty of? Is it just because she is a JU student?

tion for the rickshaw-pullers not to drive their vehicle on roads, streets, lanes and by-lanes of Dhaka city with light in the darkness of night?

If no then why are the rickshaw-pullers committing innumerable accidents one after another hitting, striking and injuring passengers as well as pedestrians while driving rickshaws independently and recklessly in the darkness of night without any light? And why DCC, the traffic police and are other law enforcing agencies sitting idle, deaf, dumb and blind despite hundreds of accidents and repeated complaints from the members of the public and press reports? Is it not the sign of deteriorating law and order situation in the country?

O H Kabir 6 Hare Street Wari, Dhaka-1203

I appeal to all to come forward with an open mind. Please don't destroy their innocent lives.

Mustahidul Reza Chowdhury 209 Zia Hall Dhaka University

Beyond condemnation

Sir, Rape incident in JU is beyond condemnation. I felt bewildered at the extremity of the situation. This bestial behaviour must be stopped. I have become afraid and distressed not knowing what is in store for the victims in future. VC's conduct does not seem his position. Is he a bonafide VC for the female student? How is it possible that he does not know about such a serious matter before publication?

I do hereby beseech Prime Minister's kind attention to the victims and also his golden son's.

AKM Aziz Ahmed 112 Nazrul Islami Hall BUET, Dhaka-1000

Take bold step

Sir, The people of Bangladesh have experienced different types of rape cases, but rape in an educational institute like JU has astonished everyone.

It has been reported that a female teacher of JU while taking photographs of a procession was assaulted by a group of miscreants in broad-day-light.

I think hoodlums, who attacked the procession and the teacher must be the rapists or their accomplices.

The varsity administration must come forward boldly without any delay to discern the culprits and give them an exemplary punishment for the greater interest of the whole country.

Sabbir 207, Rashid Hall, BUET.

Criminals' den

Sir, One feels stunned by the report of the fact finding committee on Jahangirnagar University as published in DS of 26th September. The fact that such a large scale of rape and sexual harassment can take place in a university is simply unimaginable in a civilised world. This is possible only in a savage society devoid of all morality and ethical values. This should not be called a university, it is actually a den of criminals. Poor tax payers of the country are paying through their noses to maintain criminals of worst category.

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury Dhaka

Equity in education system

Sir, The authority of the National University has taken a timely decision to bring into practice the grace system at honours level as well as at masters level.

Though they decided to give three marks and ten marks as grace respectively to get first class and second class both in honours and masters degrees, surprisingly, they have given the grace number only to the students of honours level, passed in 1994. But the students of masters degree, passed in the same year, have not yet been brought under the above-mentioned system.

As a matter of fact, these students are really deprived of the opportunity which is truly unjust. It should also be mentioned that, the grace system is a conventional system which is still being practised in Dhaka University.

Therefore, it is an earnest request to the authority of the National University to bring the students of masters degree, passed in 1994, under the above-mentioned grace system considering the above circumstances, which would be a reflection of their consciousness and justice.

Supan Sultana Kutir College Road, Barisal.

Sharing experiences

Sir, It's very timely and appropriate suggestion by Joseph Jabbar writing from the UK (DS Sept 21, '98) that we should initiate an international conference to share our experiences of the countries that are affected by floods and other natural disasters.

Since we are used to joining many international conferences/seminars, with or without result, we should better utilise experiences offered by other developed countries suffering likewise, may be not to our magnitude, through such conferences.

It's no denial of facts, any more, that we have been attacked by unprecedented devastation of the century. In the words of Michael Elmquist (of UN team) as quoted by BBC that "the total toll of one of the worst flooding of the century could be as high as 20 million and as such we should be very careful and attentive to the aftermath of the flood."

I may mention here that in the American States, emergencies are declared without even consultation of the Federal Government whenever such natural disaster (though no comparison can be made of the loss and damage as done in Bangladesh) befall there.

A F Rahman Dhaka.

Publicity, free of cost?

Sir, The Taslima Nasreen issue is here once again. I would say, she is very lucky. A writer of her class, with no literary calibre is getting so much publicity. Everyday the newspapers are carrying news on her. The fundamentalists are bringing out processions in response to which, the intellectuals are giving statements of resentment. Some Human Rights organisations are monitoring the situation, keeping track of Taslima's whereabouts. Even the Foreign Minister has expressed his view in this respect.

Whereas, the best way to punish Taslima Nasreen would

have been to ignore her absolutely. There is no greater humiliation than being ignored in her own homeland and treated a persona non-grata. On the contrary, the whole country is engaged in popularising her name. In this regard, let us recollect, the issue of Golam Azam. Could anybody do anything about him? He is still living in this country, talking big about nationality and other political issues, daring to criticize the government.

Speaking of religious sentiments, what are the fundamentalists doing about so many anti-Islamic activities going on in the country? Is Islam only for the literate and the well-off? It is high time that these fundamentalists should feel their obligation towards Islam and try to stop the anti-Islamic activities in the villages and city slums where poor people of all ages are being addicted to drugs, poverty stricken families are committing suicide, half dressed mothers are compelled to feed their babies openly, men are marrying innumerable times without their first wife's permission, in-laws are killing women for dowry, women of all ages are raped, and killed or the raped victims commit suicide in fear of facing the consequences. How about making this section aware of the Islamic values and educate them about the honour Islam bestows on the womenfolk than perusing trivial issues like punishing Taslima Nasreen?

Neelima Islam House: 49, Road: 2 Mohammadia Housing Society Mohamunadpur, Dhaka-1207

Hospitals in Bangladesh

Sir, One of the most unfortunate things we, the foreigners have observed in Bangladesh is the conditions and the atmosphere of the hospitals which are terrible.

I stayed in Nawab Habibullah Road for almost a year. My house was just facing the backside of the PG Hospital. It is disgusting to see that almost everybody including doctors, nurses, patients and visitors were throwing out the windows whatever they had to throw in the dustbin. And the worst thing was all those people were spitting as much as they could. Anyone who sees the backside of PG Hospital will not find any difference between a rubbish-dump and the hospital and there were always bad smell, mosquitoes, insects etc. It is very sad to see that both literate and illiterate people don't bother about this. If the PG Hospital is the best of all government hospitals it will not be difficult to imagine the atmosphere of other hospitals.

Recently one of my friends' wife was about to give birth to a child. Since we were advised that Aysha Memorial Hospital, a private hospital in Mohakhali is very good, we went there. Comparing to the other government hospitals it was rather clean. But what we have observed there is whoever took a tensiometer (for tension) entered the room to see the patient. There was no specific doctor or nurse. And we were given a bill of 22,000 (twenty two thousand) taka. They said that each visit of a doctor cost 300 taka. Even the King Elizabeth Hospital of Singapore is cheaper than Aysha Memorial Hospital. Now the question is: is this hospital really expensive or is it just for foreigners?

Mahmud Kaleli A Foreigner, Dhaka