

## Signs of a medium-size flood being read

Stepped up preparedness need of the hour

HERE has been a further surge in major rivers. Waters are flowing above danger-marks in several of them. Flush floods into the north-east of the country are a reality. Heavy downpours have been reported from the upper reaches. Also, within Bangladesh, we have had incessant rains for days together now. Yet, luckily, the outlook is certainly not of the bleak kind we had seen at this point in time in the worst flood years like for instance, in 1988 and 1998.

At present a medium size flood is predicted. "Yet, one never knows, given the unpredictability of the monsoonal behaviour and the global warming factor, the latter having to do with sea tide levels. And, in terms of preparedness it is always better to aim higher.

The disaster relief ministry is said to have rethought its strategy; in fact it has decided to effect a 'paradigm shift'. Preparations mean rolling up our sleeves in advance rather than taking a plunge after the floods have hit us in full fury. This is good thinking but we must start seeing it on the ground. First and foremost, the marooned people are in a dire strait to be evacuated to safety without a loss of time. For, if we fail to take a firm grip of the task early enough, engulfing waters can only complicate matters. Speed boats and mechanised country-crafts will have to be kept ready. Steps must be taken for emergency food and medical supplies, including vaccines, ORS and water purifying tablets, to reach the affected areas on a short notice. Breaches along embankments will have to be repaired expeditiously. Landslides have already presented a communication problem in the north-eastern region. This requires to be addressed urgently.

The floods have already started exerting pressure on the price-line, although the communication network by and large remains operational. Price of rice is up. Vegetables particularly are selling at exorbitant prices. Price-jacking is marked across the board. The tendency towards trading in human miseries needs to be guarded against and stamped out before it snowballs.

The Prime Minister's call for keeping a tab on prices and preempting further rise in them through a dialogue with the business community could not have come a day earlier.

## Mayor promises minor repairs to major roads

Please co-ordinate with other road diggers

DHAKA, the city famous for mosques and muslin is also gaining infamy for its mosquitoes and pot-holed roads. In fact, those who have to move on them swear that there are few cities that can compete with it in terms of bad roads. Rains alone can't be held responsible for the state of the roads. The city corporation, the various government organizations and the general sense of ambling along inefficiently all together do their best to kill the roads.

The situation has become so bad this year that people are asking if there is an urban administration or not. Partly, this is true. This being an election year, most of the energy has gone in election management and then taking office as a result of which the development and recurring activities of the DCC have suffered. Now temporary repairs have been promised and 'permanent' or more sustainable repairs after the rainy season is over may be expected.

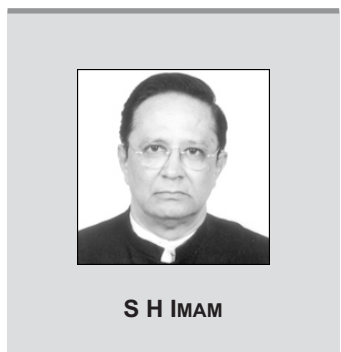
The move announced by the Mayor of Dhaka is quite dramatic and his plan is to work at night with 200 designated workers for six days at a stretch starting from July 25. The focus will be on the six roads which have become so damaged that they are not fit for use. One does hope that the efforts meet with success because the main beneficiaries of this move will be people who have to jerk and bump their way through these roadways of hellish discomfort.

At the same time the problem of coordination was glaringly obvious when the Mayor said that no work would take place on those roads where WASA is working. It so happens that it's working on 35 kilometres of Dhaka roads for the last few months. As WASA owes little for making Dhaka road-worthy they have been taking their time. Unless this source of mismanagement is taken care of another agency will soon come and dig up the roads as soon as the Corporation manages the minor repairs it has promised.

Amidst all this is, of course, the sordid smell of corruption. Many of the roads in which body holes have been discovered were actually done up rather recently but have reappeared with festering sores within a very short time. Sadly, this is not news to us. We don't expect a radical change in the corruption profile, we just want roads which befit the image of a capital city in a developing country.

## 'Pack of wolves'

But are they not our children?



S H IMAM

ONCE I was waylaid, cornered to the dead-end of a city block and robbed of the watch and Tk 350 I had on me. Thank God, I had just about enough to pay for my passage to safety.

The footnote uttered by one of my tormentors was a touch sympathetic in the typical Bengali way of chivalry towards a crest-fallen: "See, what a gentleman like you have worked yourself into!"

**Rusty goodness**  
For a moment I thought it might have been a conscience-saving remark: the inner goodness fleetingly coming out from the rusty recesses of their mind.

Or was it that they relished their act so much that they could spare a thought for decency in jocular mood? Speaking of paranoid sense of achievement, this comes to mind from how the other day TV viewers were stunned by the effortless ease with which Ripon, one of 13-year-

old Shihab's killers, explained the 'need' for the latter's body to be decapitated for "the sheer convenience of disposal".

### Desperado pranks

Just sample another untold story of hilarity coming from a sense of invincibility: mastaans swooping upon an elderly man in his residence at 11:00 pm performed elaborate rituals to put their machetto to his neck. In what eventually turned

and dissuade them from chasing him.

The reason why he was not finished off was because of the commiseration from their seniors; they just put up a show of ritual killing to ventilate their anger at the fact that the gentleman had at all gone to their mentors for an intervention.

### Graduation to gangsterism

First, the peer pressure catches on with the uninitiated taking to the macho including smoking, drug

clusters of lads along roadsides picking on them. And where daughters have no brothers in the family how gnawing their sense of insecurity can be!

### Demonstrations without a focus

After Trisha's death we have formed human chains to show our anger and held a half-day hartal in Gaibandha to protest it. We know what these demonstrations of

hands off terrorism by saying, "terrorists are terrorists, they do not belong to any political party." Why not we all own them up and try to reform them cutting across political lines?

### False sense of achievement

After each mentally devastating incident we demonstrate our anger with such an outpouring of emotions as tend to instill a sense in us that what we did on the subjective level

their notoriety? Such bloated sense of self-glory is the price we pay in a context where criminals have had dozen odd cases filed against them yet the arm of law is too short to reach them.

### No constructive holding factor for the youth

Today the youth form groups with vicious motives. But in the past, their predecessors had set up sport clubs, libraries and cultural bodies to compete each other in attaining excellence in various fields. Where are the playing fields and nurture grounds for better youngster generations to emerge? The motto of youth health clubs of the older vintage used to be: "Don't use your strength to tyrannise the weak and helpless."

We have to give our youth force the outlets for constructive self-expression. We have to engage them in community services during holidays and, above all, give them work as they drop out of academic institutions or finish studies. Even our 'bad boys' make a huge difference to their lives when employed abroad. We must know how this happens.

Where is our society stuck today? Is it decadent? Is it in transition or in a state of atrophy? None knows for sure and nobody has a remedial recipe either. That's how a good friend underscored the predicament of our times.

S H Imam is Associate Editor of The Daily Star.

## JUST ANOTHER VIEW

We have to give our youth force the outlets for constructive self-expression. We have to engage them in community services during holidays and, above all, give them work as they drop out of academic institutions or finish studies. Even our 'bad boys' make a huge difference to their lives

out to be a mock display of an impending murderous assault, they had had him bathe, sit down on his cot bare-bodied, say his final prayers, even utter his last wish. As he did all their bidding, goons sharpened their weapon pressing it against a piece of wood like they do in a butcher shop and sprinkled water around his bed with a show of spouting some 'mantra' -- as though a replay of some tribal African video number was on.

The gentleman's faults were he had gone to his hometown to sell a plot of land, resisted repeated extortionist advances of the goons and urged their seniors to weigh in

addition, making passes at girls and the like. Then there is the vague grouping phase and finally we have the gangsters with well-defined territories, godfather connections who vanguard the desperado subculture. They are called 'pack of wolves' in Brazil or in Colombia.

### Girls without brothers particularly vulnerable

What did elfin and squirrel-eyed Trisha's drawing in a pond as some leery-eyed scum looked on, mean? It has served a notice on us about a matter we had chosen to ignore so far: In mufassil towns and hamlets movement of growing up girls has become extremely difficult with

outrage are directed against, but against whom we don't have the faintest of idea about it.

On the one, hand we say it's collective social failure, on the other we blame it out on poor governance and police debacle. In public perception, the mastaans pay protection money to the police and the businessmen buy their security by greasing the palms of mastaans; so that it's the triumph of criminalisation that is guaranteed. Above all, the politicians keep them alive. The literature on political or social criminalisation is too full of all these to admit of any repetition. The political parties try to wash their

was the best we could under the circumstances. We could go back on any number of outrageous incidents of the past to realise how true this is.

Express our solidarity with the victims' families we must, even the call for social resistance is okay provided the enemies of the society have been properly identified and targeted. But beyond this, it will be necessary to remember that we consider a damning exposure of the hooligans' vile acts may be revelled in by them as some publicity of their names after all. Don't they pride themselves on 'fantastic' nick names they have acquired through

## Prescription - murder!

SAGAR CHAUDHURY

NO, it is not the title of a best-selling 'whodunit', or that of a hit Hollywood thriller. It actually refers to the handwork of Britain's most notorious serial killer in recorded history. Harold Shipman, the family doctor with a large practice, respected and trusted by all those who came to him for treatment, became obsessively addicted to death. Instead of treating the ailments of his patients with pills and potions, he began to prescribe for them the ultimate cure -- **Death!** Behind the mask of a benign General Practitioner lurked an unscrupulous murderer who systematically and deliberately took the lives of hundreds of his patients over a period spanning twenty-three years until, finally, he was caught, tried and sentenced to life imprisonment. That was in 1998 and a formal judicial inquiry into Shipman's murderous career was launched next year and the preliminary results of this inquiry have been made public only recently. The High Court judge who presided over this inquiry revealed that Shipman's victims included at least 215 of his patients, probably 45 others, thus making a final toll of 260. "He betrayed their (the patients) trust," the judge said, "in a way and to an extent that I believe is unparalleled in history."

Shipman claimed his first victim in 1975, just a year after he had started practising as a GP, by means of a lethal injection, followed by six more deaths in the same year and 71 more in the next fourteen years. By 1994 he had added another 143 victims to his list and by that time he had become so addicted to killing that he "he needed to kill more frequently, killing male and female, the healthy and the sick, the elderly and the not-so-elderly." The strange thing is that, although so many of his patients died no one suspected anything and he continued to be extremely popular with patients, especially the elderly, and getting on to his list of practice was "like winning the lottery" as one of his patients said. But the biggest unsolved riddle in Shipman's killing spree is his motivation. Was it just his insatiable lust for death, or was there a more mundane, pecuniary motive behind his actions? He was only stopped in

1998 when he clumsily forged the £300,000 will of one of his female patients in his favour before killing her. But for that, according to the Chairperson of the inquiry, his crimes might never have been detected. Some psychiatrists, however, are convinced that Shipman was driven by "low-level necrophilia, obtaining sexual gratification by being in the presence of death." Others claim that it was simply a lust for 'control' -- the "act of playing God." The psychiatrists also suggest that Shipman's other personality traits, such as "aggression, conceit and contempt for those he considered intellectually inferior" also fuelled his lust for death.

Shipman is now serving life in Frankland Jail, County Durham. The cell -- called the Goldfish Bowl -- in which he is confined is similar to

so desire, to attract better staff in order to improve their performance levels. But following the Chancellor's announcement of the plans, the Education Secretary, Estelle Morris, revealed a 'sting' concealed in them. In a statement made in the House of Commons, Ms Morris explained that the new grants -- termed "leadership incentive grants" -- will only be awarded with no strings attached if school governing bodies can show that their schools are being run properly. The Headteachers will be held ultimately responsible for ensuring this and if they fail to do so, the governors might have to sack the Headteachers in order to win the money. In return for the annual £125,000 direct aid, school governors will have to sign up an "action plan" that would include the Head's replacement if he or she was judged

spokesperson also said that instead of helping teachers to improve performance levels of their schools, the plans would swamp them with new targets and an immense amount of red tape. "When will they learn that micromanagement from the Centre is not the way to create world-class schools?" he added.

Meanwhile, an independent body called the Institute of Directors (IoD), which represents some of the most influential business leaders in the country, is bringing out a report on the relationship between the education system and the state of business and industry. Prepared over a period of six months, this report is expected to declare that falling standards in schools and universities are one of the most critical problems facing Britain today. The Government plan is to

a target based on our best labour market forecasts."

### 'Holy dagger' ban partially lifted

IN the wake of the terror attacks on the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC last September, security and safety measures at all ports of entry and exit -- including both airports and seaports -- all over the USA and Europe have been greatly enhanced, with travellers being subjected to the most thorough examination of their persons and hand luggage at more than one stage before boarding planes or ships. I myself had a taste of this when I travelled to the USA in October last year and again in May this year, and some readers may have had the same experience if (and when) they made trips to these parts

gion, to carry on their bodies at all times. This is a more than three hundred year old tradition that Sikhs everywhere follow and a departure from it is unthinkable to them. It was as early as 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Guru, made it compulsory for Sikhs to wear the "5 K's" as an outward expression of their faith. In Punjabi (Gurmukhi) language the "5 K's" stand for: *Kirpan* -- ceremonial sword, *Kesh* -- uncut hair, *Kanga* -- comb, *Kacha* -- underwear and *Kara* -- bracelet, and together they represent the Sikhs' never-ending struggle against subjugation and injustice. But the latest security measures forbade passengers to wear the ceremonial sword beyond the Customs barrier and the ban also included staff working at all British airports. Sikhs not only make up the largest ethnic minority group working at London's Heathrow airport -- reputed to be the busiest airport in the world air traffic-wise -- but they also make very considerable contribution to British economy, controlling, among other things, the major share of the electronics goods market in Britain, and they were gravely offended that they were not able to follow their religion because of the ban. But, as a result of intense lobbying from the Sikh community ever since the ban came into effect, the Department of Transport has now relented and Sikhs in future will be allowed to wear the *kirpan* at British airports. The lifting of the ban, however, applies only to staff -- passengers will not be able to wear their *kirpan* on any flight and will have to pack it in their luggage carried in the aircraft's hold. Following the Department of Transport's decision, a spokesperson said: "Sikhs will be allowed to wear the *kirpan* as long as they are less than three inches long and are worn discreetly under their clothing. This applies only to staff and not to passengers or other travellers. We feel this strikes a balance between security and the rights of individuals." While welcoming this concession, a representative of the Sikh Missionary Society said: "This is not a (total) victory.... We will not be happy until passengers are allowed to wear the *kirpan* on flights as well."

## LONDON LETTER

the one used to incarcerate Hannibal Lecter (played by the famous actor Anthony Hopkins) in the film *The Silence of the Lambs*. It measures 12ft by 8ft with three brick walls and a fourth wall made of clear Perspex so that the inmate can be watched by wardens. An overhead camera continuously films his every move. To prevent any suicide attempts, Shipman is provided with plastic cutlery to eat his meals. In the film, however, Hannibal Lecter manages to break out of his 'escape-proof' cell. But it is hardly likely that Harold Shipman will ever succeed in duplicating the same feat in real life.

### Cash bonanza - with a 'sting'

THE Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Gordon Brown, has unveiled plans for huge Government spending -- an extra £14.7 billion pounds to be exact -- on schools, colleges and universities, a large chunk of which will be in the form of direct annual grants ranging from £50,000 to £125,000 awarded to secondary schools. This is very good news for schools indeed, because, in theory, the schools will be free to spend this money in whichever way they choose, entirely on salaries if they

an obstacle to success. Ms Morris said: "The way you turn around failing schools is very often the leadership. But some schools say they cannot do that because of the cost. What we are saying is, if you want to use this money to change the leadership, you can", adding that: "Every school needs to be different." And the country's best Headteachers will be able to act as "Chief Executives" of a federation of schools bound together under a single governing body, and may also be called upon to apply their proven ability in raising standards to help under-performing neighbourhood schools.

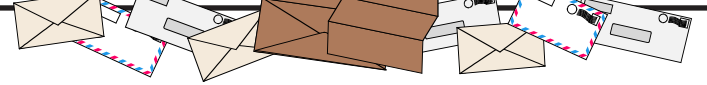
The Chancellor's announcement and the Education Secretary's elaboration drew rather lukewarm reaction from teaching unions. The General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers dismissed Ms Morris's move as "old-fashioned bargaining", saying: "All schools benefit from good leadership from Headteachers who are often faced with impossible demands.... I look to training, not punishment to support Headteachers' needs. I find it incomprehensible that Ms Morris and her Government have seen fit to crank up the number of targets set for schools." The Tory Education

put at least 50 per cent of all school students into higher education by the year 2010, but according to the forthcoming IoD report, this target is "ludicrous" because it amounts to nothing more than pushing too many students into sub-standard university courses and encouraging them to choose 'soft' subjects, thus significantly lowering achievement levels. "When it comes to general education standards, the country is simply not world-class," warns the report, adding: "The labour market cannot satisfactorily overcome some very fundamental basic skills deficiencies in literacy and numeracy." It also suggests that Ministers should try to improve vocational training instead of sending more school leavers into second-rate degree courses. IoD's Head of Policy said that young people should be given a "real choice" rather than being pushed into university because of this fixation with higher education.... Students are being sold a false future. Many of these degrees do not increase employability." The Department for Education and Skills, however, rejected several of the IoD report's conclusions. The Higher Education Minister said: "I am astonished that the IoD, which wants the economy strengthened, has come out against

of the globe in the last ten months or so. These security measures have imposed a blanket ban on all objects that may be looked upon -- or used -- as potential weapons, including, naturally, knives of all sizes, scissors, even knitting needles and nail clippers. Food served aboard the aircraft is now accompanied by plastic cutlery, steel knives and forks are no longer allowed. Passengers have, almost without exception, accepted these new rules and restrictions knowing that they are not really a violation of their rights but the instruments for ensuring the safety of all concerned, even though they mean that they now have to turn up at the airport much earlier than before and face longer than usual queues.

A particular section of people, however, were not able to take kindly to the imposition of the new restrictions all the way. They are the members of Britain's sizeable Sikh community and the cause of their dissatisfaction was the rule banning any object that may even remotely look like a weapon from the vicinity of an aircraft, because that included the *kirpan* (pronounced 'kripan' in Bangla) or ceremonial sword or dagger that all male Sikhs are obliged, by the tenets of their reli-

## TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



### Janakantha

I see in the paper that the Home Ministry is trying to harass and persecute the *Daily Janakantha*. I don't get it. Everyone in this country with the exception maybe of the PM knows that most if not all governmental transfers are done on payment. Forest officials pay lakhs to be sent to wherever they can loot the timber or customs to the lucrative Benapole posting. Actually did you know that the Benapole posting is usually the last one before retirement? That's because it's used to save up for the flat in Gulshan or the farmhouse outside Dhaka.

The Home Ministry is leaning on the Janakantha to reveal its sources in a blatant attempt to stifle free speech. If Watergate had happened in Bangladesh no one would ever have found out. Woodward and Bernstein would have had to reveal Deep Throat and then the government would have set up an internal committee and that would have been the end of it.

The *Daily Star* should print the allegations reported in the Janakantha as a show of support and to defend our right to know.  
Shonku, Dhaka

### 4-year bachelor's degree - terminal or not?

Recently most universities in the country have switched to a 4-year bachelor's degree course without apparently giving adequate thought on the subsequent plans. As it stands now, these students will have to take one more year for their master's course. This means they will have to take 17 years of formal schooling, i.e., one more year instead of the 16 which is standard throughout the world. This means a student will have to spend one more year before getting into a job, parents will have to spend more, and the universities will have to recruit more teachers, arrange for more laboratory and class-room facilities at public expense.

With 16 years of schooling a student should be adequately prepared for taking the general responsibilities as demanded by a nation. For specific job oriented programmes like MBBS, students are already required to take 17 or more years of schooling in different countries, but for general core subjects like Bangla, English, Phys-

ics or Chemistry, is there any need for the extra year? Besides, in certain subjects it becomes difficult to formulate a syllabus for general teaching at this level. The level is too specialised, and it would be hard to get appropriate teachers even. The master's degree in this system should be restricted to only those who opt for higher studies and research, and in fields where expertise is available.

The first batch of students of this 4-year degree course from a number of universities including Dhaka University is going to come out in a matter of months. Will they be able to compete with master's degree holders from other universities who had a 3-year bachelor's course?

### Dr. K Siddique-e-Rabbani Dhaka University

### Can we have Bengali names please?

I do not know why and since when we started to name our children by Arabic-Urdu names. Although, we have rich Bengali culture for some unknown reasons the parents name their children by some words which are meaningless in our language

and culture. There is no contradiction in being a Muslim and having a pure Bengali name.

### Sohel Hasan Singapore

### Good police and TI

I am a life member of Transparency International and I deeply believe in the goals of this organisation.

Recently a report was published by TI, which identified corruption among the law enforcement agencies as the worst of all that was surveyed in Bangladesh. But in spite of all that is wrong with these organisations, especially the police, there are some positive developments.

Several of my friends have commented on the fact that the police are very active these days against illegal parking in Kemal Ataturk Avenue. In another incident my friend left her mobile in a rickshaw by mistake. A sergeant riding by saw the rickshawpuller speaking on the mobile, he actually stopped, called the dial laded number and personally returned the phone. Amazing.

Yesterday my own chauffeur bumped into an Inspector throwing

him on the road. Rather than beating up my driver, which is what I'd expect and extorting a huge bribe, which I would have paid, I was allowed to leave with not much more than only the simple admonishment to discipline my chauffeur.

To be honest I was amazed. Just goes to show that in spite of all attempts to the contrary by our government and the ministers, state ministers etc., there are still some decent people in the force.

### Kireti Dhaka

### "Section 54 recommended for chastening"

I have just gone through your editorial of July 16 regarding the government's proposed revision of certain sections of the Section 54 reportedly too harsh and have been in existence for ages in this country.

I could not agree more with the contents of the editorial in its entirety. However what prompted me to comment on the editorial is somewhat different in its perspective yet relevant. This is a matter on which I have written to you on earlier occasions.

Your daily is doing a great job of putting forward quality news, views and information to a certain section of the people who are able to comprehend and understand the contents of an English daily.

Given the state of law and order situation prevailing in the I felt that *The Daily Star* should publish the Act Cr, Pc 54 indicating at least the salient features. Access to such information will give us a better insight into the so-called violations and abuses of the rules of procedures by the government, reports of which are so frequently published in your esteemed daily.

### Shamsher Chowdhury Texas, USA

### The Daily Star and the letter writers

There's no doubt that *The Daily Star* is the largest circulated English daily in the country and it is acclaimed by the readers. *The Daily Star's* special attraction is its letters column. It has been able to create a good number of letter writers, which enhances the attraction of the page to a great extent. Kudos to *The Daily Star* for allocating more space to the readers.

The letter writers have got a special significance for the newspaper. They sometimes prove to be great thinkers and at times write many bold and logical pieces which help the readers a lot. The letter writers express many news and views, which remain often uncovered by the newspaper reporters.

I don't know whether the letter writer's news, views and appeals are getting proper attention from the relevant authorities. I earnestly urge the Prime Minister's office to kindly pay special attention in this respect.

### M.H. Bari Khulna

### Ban student politics

Much has been said and written on banning student politics. But we failed to reach a consensus about it. I admit that student politics has glorious background. But things are not the same any more. In course of time these glorious events have become history. These days, in the name of student politics students get involved in various antisocial activities. It has been decades that the universities have become the den of terrorism and violence. There is no healthy and congenial atmosphere for education. The general

students are suffering a lot. Apart from this, illegal occupation of the halls has been a common feature in every campus. And such incidents just cannot go on. For the betterment of the nation ban on student politics is the demand of the day.

### R Jahan, Dhaka

Nothing is more agreeable for me, at least in my student life, than the Prime Minister's proposal for 'ban on student and teacher's politics'.

Student and teacher's politics is one among the major causes that hampers congenial educational atmosphere. The prevailing condition of the dormitories is terrible. The general students are always frightened of the so-called student leaders carrying arms and escorted by cadres.

Often our campus turns into a battlefield. And the most frustrating part is that support and even patronise it. They seem to have forgotten that their entity covers a greater area than that of 'white teachers' or 'blue teachers'.

### Md. Shahidul Islam Zahid DU