

Dealing with dengue
The honourable Health Minister instructed the doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) to take proper care of dengue patients. Now, let us examine the word "proper care" in the perspective of facilities available at DMCH. The hospital, which is one of the premier medical institutions in Bangladesh, cannot be considered as an ideal hospital. Stagnant water, considered as ideal breeding places of the Aedes mosquito, can be easily found around the hospital premises. Blood transfusion department does not have enough blood bags let alone concentrated platelets or fresh frozen plasma to meet the need of the inpatients. Sharing the same ward with patients with dengue fever along with ideal breeding places for mosquitoes make it even more possible for the disease to spread within the hospital.

As an understaffed, under equipped treatment facility, the doctors of DMCH are already providing the best possible level of care to their patients. Health Minister's speech to the doctors is like beating a dead horse and I believe that this will not bring about any change in the way the patients are getting treated at DMCH or in any other hospitals for that matter. It is a failure of the government in implementing proper vector surveillance and control methods in past few years during which time people are getting killed every year. It is appalling to observe over and over again that whenever some disease break out as epidemics, the politicians complete their duty by advising others about what to do but not performing their own duty.

As we are emphasising the need for better supportive care for the patients, we must not lose sight of the fact that prevention is the only hope to control this dreadful disease and providing better treatment facilities is the only real way that will enable the doctors to render "proper care".

Dr. Towhid Salam
Los Angeles, California, USA

With a catastrophic history and warning for the future, dengue fever has set foot in the city again. This time also, although the situation is not as drastic as it has been last year, it is with great aggression that has already caused many to move into hospitals for coming round and others to remain threatened.

Before the election of a new mayor for Dhaka, we have had our ears tired of hearing about the measures that the present elected person had vowed to quench the havoc of dengue in the city. As far as the present situation is concerned, any remarkable progress has barely been made concerning the promise, except for exertions to break it.

Samir

Dhaka

Violence in Malibagh and mosques

Soon more will be revealed about the violence in Malibagh over the possession of a mosque.

Anyway I am sick of the profusion of illegal mosques in Dhaka. First of all most of these mosques are built on illegally held land and are expanding at the cost of public land. Secondly and I don't mean to insult

anyone's religious sensibilities but I doubt if God ever intended to use loudspeakers five times a day. With mosques every thirty feet, the sound of competing muezzins is extreme. If you must give the azan, then at least regulate it so that only one mosque can call for prayers within a certain radius.

Mosques built on public land and those encroaching on parks and roads should also be demolished. There should be a regulatory section within Rajuk to govern the number, size, etc. of religious places.

T Ali
Dhaka

Withdrawal of baby taxis: Where is the alternative transportation?

I wish the people in Dhaka were aware of the removal of the baby taxis from the streets of Dhaka from some time before. If that had been done, those not so young office workers who cannot find bus routes to go to places like Hatkhola or Karwan Bazar from places like Dhanmandi and Uttara would be

based on "one's right to live". Like the banning of polythene bags, this decision of the government is no doubt commendable. We just want the government to go the extra mile by implementing the above recommendations based on "the consumers' right to pay fair prices and due respect".

A Thinker
Dhaka

"Add meter on CNG-run auto rickshaws"

Fazley Elahi Mahmud and Shaheen's letter (August 16) has raised two very important issues which need to be dealt with immediately for the consumers' interest to get the maximum benefit and protection out of the banning of two-stroke auto rickshaws.

It is absolutely essential that the government goes through an immediate due diligence exercise and implement the following for all CNG-

run auto rickshaws: a. A fare structure that is justifiable. b. Mandatory meters. c. Same rule made for taxicabs that they have to go to any destination the passengers want should be applicable for CNG-run auto rickshaws as well. d. A code of conduct for the drivers. e. Any infringements, a consumer should be able to identify the driver and report the same to a specific authority.

A vicious circle

So, another countrywide hartal called by the main opposition party, Awami League, on August 15 to press its demands passed off.

Like any other hartal, this one also could not touch the hair of the people in power, only harmed the economy of the country. Now BNP (with its minor allies) is in power. Does AL think that BNP people are so patriotic that if it (AL) can harm the economy of the country by calling hartal, they (BNP) will meet its demands to save the country's economy from being harmed?

If it is so, then it's a solace to the weary people of this country that our political parties may publicly hurl abusive words and make grime to each other, and accuse each other of being unpatriotic, but in the core

helplessness, but I surely can relate to their feelings. I loved to teach and wanted to be the best teacher in the whole wide world. And believe me there was and still are many others like you and me. People would tell me that I really did not need to go to work everyday, as I was a Dhaka University teacher.

Most people do not and did not realise, how much work a teacher has to perform in the form of teaching, research, grading, supervising, doing administrative work etc. I remember many of us going to the university even during summer vacations. Certainly, there were times when we used to chat and have lighter moments, but more often than not, we were busy with some kind of work.

There is no dearth of talented students, or dedicated teachers. However, there is a lack of efficient teacher-student relationship. The students need role models in teachers and fellow students, with whom they can relate and emulate. The channels of communication must be open and based on fairness. Students are rarely given credit and responsibility. The mere fact that they are Dhaka University students is a major achievement, given the competition in the admission process.

Too many people have played with their raw (at times naïve) courage and vulnerability. Once I had asked a student of mine why he was into politics. He responded by saying that he had come straight from the village, and without politics he would never get a seat in the hall. I was speechless and also sad, because I had no power to arrange a seat for him using fair means. They have been used as pawns for larger ulterior motives. It is true that a microscopic proportion of the student community thrive on these activities. All this has earned too much bad publicity for Dhaka University, as a whole, for too long.

It is time that the university population and the larger, general population realised that this still is the largest learning institution in the nation and probably one of the best in the land. It gives me hope that, with more teachers like these opinion writers, all is not lost. Let us take out all the superficial colours and labels and be nothing more, or less—good old teachers.

Mahmud Huq Khan
New Jersey, USA

Aren't we frustrated?

As a student of Dhaka University it is turning out to be an utterly frustrating situation.

After the Shamsunnahar Hall incident I wondered how could that brutal act take place in a female hall inside university campus. At the same time I thought that the government would take proper action and the offenders would be punished right away. My wonder knew no bound when I realised that no, this does not bother the government a bit and that it is acting like a blind man. What a country we live in! The police are not there to protect the students but to beat them up and the government is there to protect the police!

Has the removal of the VC and Proctor ensured the security and educational rights for the general students? The university has been closed for about a month and no

sign of reopening as yet. We the general students are going to be the extreme sufferer of the so-called session jam and our valuable academic time is being lost. Is this the precious gift that the country has to offer us, to the future nation builders? Who will pay for our lost time, who will make sure that the students get the congenial atmosphere in their educational institutions? I can certainly say that by playing with the lives of the students the politicians are playing with the future of the country.

Naureen Sofia Rahman
Department of Economics, DU

What about excess tax?

In recent days our Finance Minister is "blasting" the Private Banks about "excess profit". But, what about the excess taxes that he has imposed in the name of broadening the "tax-net"?

It is now becoming increasingly difficult in this country to serve honestly in an organisation or to conduct a legitimate business on your own. And the other regrettable side of the whole thing is that the government does not even seem to have the proper system/mechanism in place to ensure that the huge amounts collected all over the country, say in the name of 15% (a high rate in itself compared to the developed countries) VAT, goes to the treasury in time or deposited at all!

A Distressed Observer
Chittagong

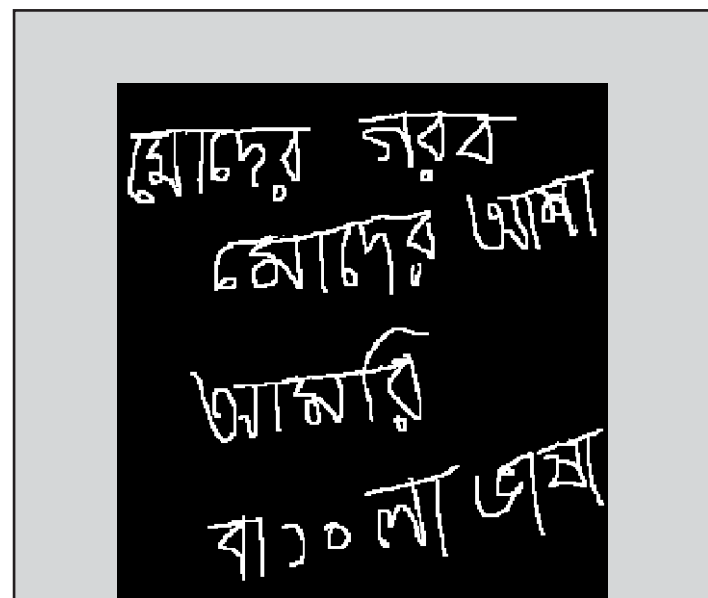
A few good men

The much awaited book by the Chief Advisor of the last caretaker government, Justice Latifur Rahman titled "Tatabadhyak Sarkarer Dinguli O Amar Katha" (Days of the Caretaker Government and My Story) is finally out. The book is not only tremendously enjoyable for those of us who take a deep interest in contemporary politics of Bangladesh, but it also goes beyond that.

In the first part, Justice Rahman speaks about his childhood, education, family background and his early struggle as a rookie lawyer. Sounds almost like a fascinating John Grisham novel, the difference is that, this is fact not fiction. Many young people especially those who have just started out in the legal profession would certainly find encouragement from this book.

The most interesting part for me was how Justice Rahman didn't secure second class because of falling three numbers short from the second class mark. This initial setback changed the entire course of his life if not that of the nation as he decided to study law as his result could not secure him a job in the service sector at that time. We should all get encouraged to learn that there could be minor setbacks in life but they might sometimes lead to better and bigger things, sort of like the "Road not Taken" by Robert Frost.

In the second part of his book, Justice Rahman gives a day to day description of his 88-day tenor at the highest office of the nation. Just like his administration, Justice Rahman is honest, candid and puts out his views in simple sentences that even a child would understand. This lets us enter the mind of a Chief Execu-



"English Medium students in trouble"

This refers to the letter "English Medium students in trouble" (August 16). In Notre Dame College admission test, the questions were in Bengali and the answers must be given in Bengali as well. The problem expressed in the letter was regarding the examinees from English medium background.

The writer hinted that the above type of candidate lack in Bengali language and for that reason they could not do up to their expectation in the test. Does this mean that the English Medium students don't know Bengali? This is a very grim picture. We have to know English as well as get education in English to cope with the pace of the world. But by neglecting our own language! The authority concerned should look into the syllabus of English medium schools in this regard.

M Abdur Rab
University of Alberta, Canada

tive of a nation and how to face the difficulties and challenges that a government with limited tenor and responsibilities face everyday. This should also inspire future Prime Ministers to write their autobiographies so that history could judge them taking into consideration their acts in response to the needs of that particular time. I must admit that sometimes the book becomes monotonous when Justice Rahman describes his day to day meetings, this he could have left out and instead focus on the key issues, challenges and personalities that he had to deal with. We admire Justice Rahman when he admits the dilemma that he faced with certain government officials at that time due to their questionable loyalty and efficiency. Yet he talked to them, gained their commitments and eventually gave us a free and fair election that we were proud of. Of course, he had to go through the initial transfers to show as Professor Yunus wrote to him that, "he means business" and done his necessary homework before assuming office.

Often people feel frustrated with today's quality of political leadership. We heard comments like, "Why can't we have the caretaker government longer? Why do we have to wait for 5 years to get good governance just for 3 months?" While we may not get a leader like Justice Latifur Rahman to head a political government in Bangladesh at least in near future, we can always be proud of the fact that there are still a few good men like him left in our society who could show us light during the passing of this dark hour. While we will have to wait for good governance and mature leadership to emerge, Justice Rahman leaves his legacy for the future generation to follow through this book. He deserves another round of thanks from us for this "must read" book.

Parvez Murshed, Birpur, Dhaka

Zakaat system in our country

We need a better Zakaat collecting and distributing system in our country. Zakaat doesn't mean that we only give saree and lungi to the poor, it is also a good system to buy poor people some equipment so that they can earn their livelihood themselves and become Zakaat-payer. Here are some ideas:

1. By reforming the Zakaat Board we can collect Zakaat in the form of money in a more organised way and buy earning means like taxicabs, sewing machines for the unemployed and poor population in our country.
2. Mainly due to poverty, the younger generation indulges in crime, if we can provide them some means to earn their bread the increasing rate of criminal activities would decrease.
3. Zakaat will help minimise the economic difference between the rich and the poor. We have Islamic Scholars in the ruling alliance party, so we can hope to introduce the correct Zakaat law and a Zakaat board.

Reaz Mohiuddin
Notre Dame College, Dhaka

Benefit of doubt

Why is it that whenever we face a point of difference, we have to resort to the path of hatred and mistrust? Everyone is either with us or against us. Personally I will give every Bangladeshi the benefit of doubt because underneath all the cynicism I am always found unconditional love for the country. Am I being too naive to think that when every Bangladeshi loves Bangladesh, it should not be hard to hold hands and work together?

What Bangladesh needs now is unity. Irrespective of what our differences are, we need to work together. It is time that we created pressure on our political parties to build bridges between them. A single act towards that end can start a process of progress.

We the privileged ones, the educated ones, have the onus of leadership. We need to be what we want our leaders to be. We can start building bridges and start setting examples. These examples can give us the necessary confidence to change the negative aspects of the society.

With enough sobriety amongst us we might learn to love us as one and create a better tomorrow for all.

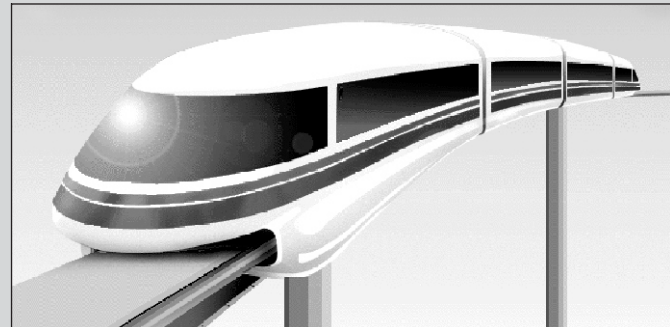
Syed Hussain, Atlanta, USA

Justice
The Mayor of Houston city, who is also in charge of the law enforcing authority, was ticketed for his role in a minor traffic accident recently. A few days ago, the daughter of the governor of Florida was fined and jailed for using a false prescription at a pharmacy.

Do we have to learn anything for the authorities concerned in Bangladesh from this kind of news?

Tawfiq Rahman, On e-mail

Dhaka monorail



Tripping Dhaka's rail-fantastic

If the people of Dhaka want a better transport system, they should embrace the HighRoad dual-sided single beam monorail proposed jointly by the Georgia Monorail Consortium, Inc. (USA) and Associated Resources Management Company of Dhaka.

Rather than 500 buses with a cost of at least USD 200,000 for a chassis and final construction in Dhaka, totalling USD 10 million from the Treasury (collected as taxes on the people), the GMC/ARMCO monorail would cost the Treasury and the people nothing except the right to build and operate the system. Construction money comes from international sources.

Further, with 500 buses moving 120 people per hour

each at 15 miles per hour (average) for 12 hours per day you provide transport for a maximum of 720,000 people per day at a slow speed. To move as many people as the monorail, you would need over 2,000 buses in the city streets, adding to the traffic.

With the GMC/ARMCO monorail you could move up to 3,110,000 people at 35 miles per hour for 12 hours per day, all above the traffic.

Not only would the buses cost more initially, but they have to be replaced at 12-year intervals, adding to local taxes.

Support should be for the GMC/ARMCO monorail, not against it. It's better for the people of Dhaka.

William E. Owen, P.E.
President, Georgia Monorail Consortium, Inc.
Marietta, Georgia, USA

well prepared for the drastic steps suddenly taken up by the government. Without adequate notice to the sufferers who cannot and do not own cars to go far distances to their work places in time this is going to mean serious problem. A month's official notice is not sufficient for saving up to buy a car which would cost at least Taka 3 lakh and on top of which would be the chauffeur's pay which would swallow up a large portion of one's salary.

We are told on TV by Communication Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda that there would be enough CNG vehicles plying the streets, but as such, till today, there certainly aren't enough CNG vehicles for the thousands of office goers who once went to and from their work place in baby taxis.

Already, on hartal days, when I've traveled by rickshaws, often there

of their hearts they hold each other patriotic. When AL was in the power and BNP, in the opposition, it would call hartal at its sweet will, with the same conviction its political foe held against them. It's nothing but a vicious circle.

Faruque Hasan
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

"A rude awakening"

It was very difficult to resist the temptation of not responding to the thought-provoking, nostalgia-evoking opinion, of a group of young teachers of the Dhaka University (August 4). They all have touched my heart. While reading the opinion it seemed to me that the writers were echoing my sentiment as well. I will not be able to reciprocate the eloquent way that these young faculties have expressed their

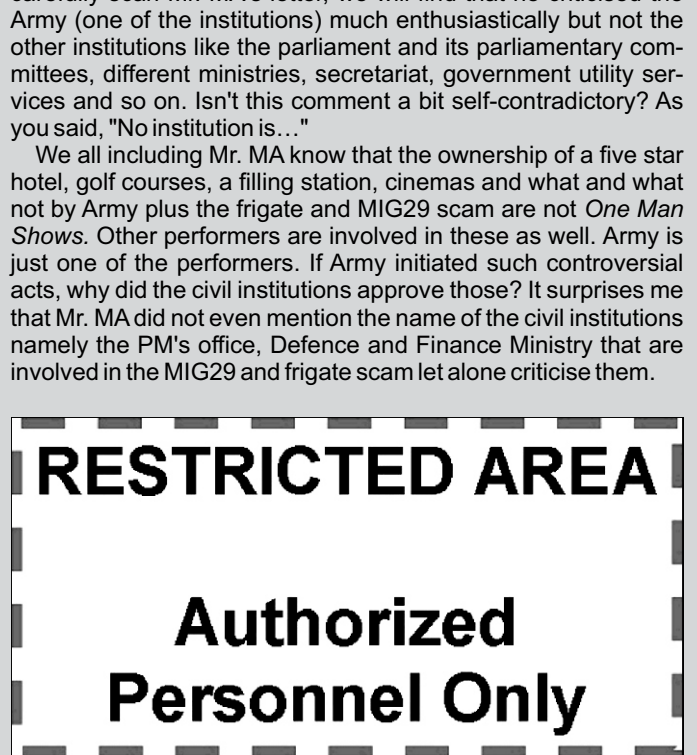
housing complexes for them.

Vox Populi, Dhaka

"No institution is above criticism or civilian oversight". I do agree with Mr. MA's comment (August 15). This comment is one of the interesting parts of the letter of Mr. MA also. Why? Because if we carefully scan Mr. MA's letter, we will find that he criticised the Army (one of the institutions) much enthusiastically but not the other institutions like the parliament and its parliamentary committees, different ministries, secretariat, government utility services and so on. Isn't this comment a bit self-contradictory? As you said, "No institution is..."

We all including Mr. MA know that the ownership of a five star hotel, golf courses, a filling station, cinemas and what and what not by Army plus the frigate and MIG29 scam are not *One Man Shows*. Other performers are involved in these as well. Army is just one of the performers. If Army initiated such controversial acts, why did the civil institutions approve those? It surprises me that Mr. MA did not even mention the name of the civil institutions namely the PM's office, Defence and Finance Ministry that are involved in the MIG29 and frigate scam let alone criticise them.

Reading Mr. MA's allegation anybody can think that all civilians are prohibited to enter the Cantonment. But from letters written by other sufferers it is clear that only individual civilians are facing problems to enter the Cantonment but not those civilians who enter the Cantonment by BRTC buses and other four wheeler tempos. So Mr. MA may I ask you; who are the civilians according



to your definition.

In one paragraph Mr MA said, "Army is relentlessly swallowing up the land" and in another line of the same paragraph he said, "Army is buying land". Do the words buying and swallowing convey the same message? If Army is swallowing the land like ordinary land grabbers keeping the original landowners starved, it's really a problem, I admit but when Army buys land it means Army is compensating the real landowners. If there exists any constitutional restriction/law that prohibits Army from expanding their land, why do our judicial system, parliament and the land department of the government approve that?

In the second last paragraph Mr MA said, "With our finances in such dire straits, wouldn't this be a good time to cut the defence budget?" My question is; will cutting defence budget solve our current economic crisis?

Now come to the foreign investment scenario of Bangladesh. While foreign investment is increasing exponentially in China and India, we are experiencing long lasting draught of foreign investments. Reasons? The most common complaints made by investors are bureaucratic tangle and worst kind of law and order situation. There are other critical problems that exist in other civil institutions are to be resolved along with cutting the defence budget to revive our economy.

Lastly, I would like to request Mr. MA to criticise fairly. Hanging one of the gang members and letting others totally unpunished will not solve the core problems ever.

Rajib (A civilian)
Kalabagan, Dhaka

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