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The rain...

The morning is dark and grey. I got ready with my travel clothes, trousers, vest and hiking shoes. I climbed the hill, went down the trail and went to the lake. I got on the boat and sat there on the lake. At 10 o'clock, this morning it began to rain. I cannot see the day. It has been raining all day. The rainwater flooded the streets. Rain flooded the land. I'm walking on the pavement and it is raining. I'm drenched by the rain showers. I hear the rain falling. I see the water all over and wonder about the land which is all covered with water and now looks like a sea instead of land. Beneath the water is another fascinating, colourful and mysterious world. Rain pouring on the Atlantic Ocean. I climbed the stairs to the building and went up to the roof and saw the rain. Rain drops all over my skin. I'm sitting next to my window on the edge of Nantucket Bay and it is raining. Rain continuously falling. Everything was silent, except for the sound of the rain. It seemed like the rain was coming down in torrents, pouring onto the entire planet. Sometimes life is like a storm, some-

times it is like the continuous flow of the rain. Sometimes it is like the icy cold touch of the rainwater on my skin. Everything has stopped. The whole world has stopped because the rain has arrived. The rain falls forever. The roses are covered with shimmering drops of rain. If the rain stops tomorrow, I will take a paper boat and let it sail on the water. The river overflows. The wind howls. The storm continues. The sky is shedding too many tears. The rain continues in the evening. At 12 midnight, I woke up to the sound of the rain. I sat in the dark and listened to the rain at night. The rain said that it has been visiting the planet for a long time. The rain is historic. Is there an answer to the questions of life? The rain said that it was flowing continuously and to stand still on the stream and let life pass. All things are passing. The rain is continuously passing. It is four o'clock in the morning and I did not sleep because I was listening to the rain.

Estelle Mahnuma
On e-mail



PHOTO: STAR

write just like an English man does, there is no alternative to reading and writing.

Sanzia
Dept of Women's Studies, DU

Police administration on contract

Bangladesh police never enjoyed much confidence of public. The lower strata of the police department remained incorrigibly corrupt since long. But many senior officers of the department earned considerable respect of the people when they were in office and also contributed to different sectors even long after their retirement. Tradition of immaculate discipline in life and job, diverse experience, strenuous training at home and abroad with strong ethical norms made them good officers as well as perfect gentlemen. Most of them were honest. Many retired officials of those generations are still active in various social sectors.

But the present scenario is different from the earlier times. Though the situation in the lower ranks remained unchanged, the situation in the upper strata has degenerated to an alarming one. Total politicisation has eaten up the moral strength of the force. A serious blow came when the present government, ignoring the tradition of the department, decided to appoint two important police officers on contract. An officer on contract naturally will serve the political whims of the government, and not public interest.

MS Huq
On e-mail

"A misunderstood religion"

For the West, the value of any religion is minimal. Whether westerners understand or fear Islam is not the issue. The issue is: should a few individuals be allowed to hijack the religion and do whatever they want in the name of religion? That's where we need to focus! If Muslim moderates stay on the sidelines and think that the situation is going to get better on its own, they are making a big mistake. It's their duty to explain the beauty of Islam and show that it can coexist peacefully with others!

Dev
On e-mail

A perfect way to learn English

How can I be a master of English? It is not only a problem faced by school children but all of us face it in some form or the other. Most people are worried about their English.

Now I am trying to describe what is the best way to learn it. Can't we think about our mother language? How have we learnt it? How many rules of grammar of Bangla we know? How many paragraphs we swallowed and how many coaching centres teach Bangla? The answer is not at all. So if we want to read and

on this issue. We do realise that English is our second language without which we cannot play our due role in the international arena. But in spite of that the standard of English learning is going down day by day, but why? I believe things have gone wrong in several areas from the education policy of the government to the classroom management of the teachers.

Mamun Ali Khan
CMA (Final Level), ICMA

Reform essential for our police force

It is true that in the eye of common people police is the most notorious department of the government. The reason for this imputation is the consecutive failures of this organisation to trace the criminals behind bomb blasts and their underground connection with the outlaws. We cannot evade such speculation of the common people but at the same time we should realise that only police cannot be held responsible for those failures. In spite of many limitations still they strive to ensure our safety. Where the terrorist possess AK 47 rifles, hand grenades and many other modern arms and ammunition, our policemen have outdated rifles. Moreover, those rifles do not work all the time. Therefore, the death rate of police while performing duty has increased at an alarming rate. Besides, they do not have an adequate number of vehicles, communication support and forensic support to operate against the criminals. All these deficiencies bar them from investigating properly and revealing the mystery. Another obstacle is political influence which hampers investigation. Political abuse of the police force has lowered the morality and ethics of the police department. In my opinion, the main culprits are the politicians who manipulate the police for their own purpose.

Putul
Department of Law, DU

English: Looking for the lost language

The Article under the caption "English: Looking for the lost language" written by Dr. M. Aminul Islam, pro-Vice-Chancellor of National University and published in the Daily Star on Sunday, September 12, 2004 has drawn my attention. At the very beginning, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the writer for his excellent writing regarding the importance of learning English as well as valuable suggestions to improve the situation.

In addition to what he has written, I would like to write a few words

lots of excuses. They are not always responsible for these excuses. For example, many CNG drivers refuse to go to the lanes and by lanes of Dhaka city due to insecurity. So, ultimately the law and order situation plays a significant role here. And the responsibility goes to the law enforcing agencies, that is to say, the government. Among all these factors, the victims are the target group, the little earnings are the target group. Will the concerned authorities pay attention to the matter?

Farhan Hossain
On e-mail

Hijab

Mr. Mamoon's letter on the hijab reeks of bias. To say it is an outdated custom and today's progressive society does not need that, simply means that Mr. Mamoon is totally uninformed on this matter. My family and I live in a small town in the US. My wife began wearing the hijab a few years ago on her own volition. So do many women in our Muslim community. Here in the US personal freedom for all is guaranteed and protected. So your argument of male domination and coercion is not convincing.

Mr. Mamoon, if you don't want the women of your family to wear the hijab to show how "progressive, equitable and liberal" you are, feel free to do so. But please do not try to undermine those who don't share your views.

Khan Kabir
New York, USA

Internet speed

I use the internet service of two ISPs BTB and HRC technologies. Most often one of the service is always down and I have to switch to the another to do my little necessary things as soon as possible to keep the bill as low as possible. The super fast speed on the advertisement and the 'low' cost slot are the things that generally attract people.

For the last couple of weeks, the so called internet service has become something like a mental torture. I could not even check my e-mail despite trying 15 minutes. It is outrageous. I checked modem connection and others necessary things in my computer.

At the end of the month I will get a bill to pay although all those damn 30 minutes (I tried 15 minutes each on both services) I waited with a kind of disbelief that the services can really be that poor.

Saif
Dhaka

Evasive CNG

This is really pathetic that the decision makers of our country often take decisions which in the long run fail. The CNG driven vehicle which was brought on the road for the people who use rickshaw as transport. Definitely these people are the small earners. However, this vehicle is not serving its target group. The CNG vehicle drivers had a few excuses to refuse people to be hired. Now they have lots and

who are more interested in British English than American English, but do not have the opportunity to get advised or practise conversation. Their written English is alright but they face difficulty to speak in correct pronunciation, let alone the accent. Maybe, the object of teaching language has taken a back seat and making hefty amount of profit has become the major concern.

(joy_2k5@yahoo.co.uk) will be grateful if anyone could give information about a radio service in French (like there is BBC for British English) and any French-Bangla Dictionary with pronunciation in Bangla (like the Samsad English-Bengali Dictionary).

Joy Dhaka

Love



A real paradox

A write-up, "Love is not an equation" written by Mohammad Badrul Ahsan published in The Daily Star on September 24 captivated me a lot. The article was very witty, metaphoric, paradoxical and aphoristic indeed. Love is not an equation. It fluctuates very often. Some people purify love and others vulgarise it.

All cannot evaluate love with due deference. Some think that love is seraphic but some think it is a bane. Some practise platonic love and some practise the amorous one. After all, love is always dynamic and playful. It gets neither bored nor sluggish. It has no particular format but it is an individual phenomenon. Love makes some people Byronic and others Tennysonian.

Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Dept of English, DU

at a price, outrageous price. (I remember a short course on internet which involved teaching how to browse and set the TCP/IP etc was tagged Tk. 500.) It is not possible for more than ninety five per cent of the population to get a taste of the BC because of the fees they charge. I know many people

The frontline English newspapers play a silent but vital role in teaching quality English. The quality and standard maintained by the newspapers are really something to be proud of.

French is another language that is slowly but surely securing its position in the world. I

A death and some questions

Being a student of the university I am ashamed, shocked, embarrassed and feel it's an impingement on the security of the students, especially we, who are living in the dormitories of the institution. Mahabubul Islam Khokon, a student of political science & resident of Zahurul Haq Hall, was killed a few days back in his hall. Nobody came forward to save him. Khokon was involved in student politics and was reportedly killed by his associates with whom he had a close relation before.

Why was he killed? What did he do? What crime did he commit? We have every right to know the answers to these questions.

Anisur Rahman
DU

I am a resident student of Zahurul Haq Hall of Dhaka University. I was greatly shocked by Mahabubul Islam Khokon's unnatural and tragic death. As far as I know about him, he was a very temperate man. Usually students involved in politics are known to be arrogant. They are seen to misbehave with other students over trivial matters. But he was an exception.

The killers of Khokon must be brought to justice.
Monju
DU

Rape of Rahela

We are shocked to know that Rahela, a garments worker of Savar EPZ, lost her life at the hands of miscreants. The picture of Rahela's mother in the front page of the DS (September 25) caught our attention. The report narrated how Rahela was raped and then burnt with acid by the criminals, while she was returning to her house near Jahangirnagar University campus. The incident has proved once again that working women are facing many hazards.

We hope the organisations working for the rights of the poor will come forward to help Rahela's family and also that the criminals will be brought to justice.

M Mamunur Rahman
LLB Student, Northern University, Dhaka

Silly prejudices

Even in the age of reasoning and scientific thinking nobody is absolutely free from prejudices.

But the way some people in our country practise their prejudices and sometimes impose them on others is not a wise thing to do. I remember on an occasion of gaye halud (pre-wed ceremony) of one of my acquaintances, some senior members strongly held a prejudice about a prematurely widowed woman's participating in ceremo-

nial rituals, considering her as inauspicious. A large number of divorces takes place in the western countries but those women are leading a normal life. But that is not the case here in Bangladesh.

Numerous examples of prejudices without any reasonable basis are found even within the educated people. In fact, people fall easy prey to these when they do not have enough confidence to meet a challenging situation. We must give up the silly beliefs that lower our humanity.

Rubab Abdullah
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Pitfalls of looking East

I find Mr. Ahmed's argument very pessimistic. I am shocked at how some people are finding FM's criticism over India "too daring for us". The FM spoke out most of our minds, and rightfully so. He should have done it before. Mr. Ahmed's comment about India being the dominant power and we have to learn to live with it is too submissive. Just because we are an impoverished country we do not have to submit to any bigger foreign country's unreasonable will.

Mr. Ahmed's reason why Bangladesh should not try to join ASEAN is pathetic -- again I see the fear of the mighty in your tone.

Russel Siddique
On e-mail

GP service

GraminPhone is the leading mobile phone company in our country. They are the pioneer in this fast growing technology sector. Recently, they have reached the milestone of 20 lakh subscribers. This is indeed a great success for such a technology based company in a poor country like Bangladesh. The most popular service of GP is its pre-paid service. But the call rates are much higher than post-paid services. The company should look into the matter.

Md Khairul Anam
Dept Of BBA
NSU, Dhaka

Rain forecast in September

Weather forecast by weathermen during the recent excessive rainfall in the capital city was anything but consistent. It is a fact that weather forecasting is not an exact science. Yet, responsibility of weathermen cannot be overlooked just like that, especially in this age of weather satellites, instant data transmission/reception, accessibility to high technology, internet, etc.

Hopefully, our weathermen will try their best to overcome the genuine problems, if any, and be more reliable in future.

Syed Farhat Ahmad Romy
New DOHS, Dhaka

"We love English"

Quality of food



PHOTO: AFP

Being a citizen of Bangladesh, I felt it is my humble duty to remind the government that for any government in the world, it is a sacred responsibility to ensure that the quality of food and drinking water is good and healthy for the people. But during my recent visit to Bangladesh, I was really shocked to see that the quality of different food items including atta/maida (flour), edible oil, etc. along with drinking water has gone down to the lowest ever level. It seems that there is no agency in the government to look into it or to take any action. While in Bangladesh, I could not eat Roti or chapati because every time I bought atta in packed condition or loose condition, I got very bad smell in it and my stomach was often upset. A

couple of days ago, I read in some newspaper that police have seized a huge quantity of rotten wheat at Syedpur railway yard which was imported by some unscrupulous flour mill owner. It is obvious that the mill owners are always active to earn a sky high profit by importing all rotten food grains from abroad. Importation of rotten rice can be detected easily as it comes to the market without any processing. But rotten wheat cannot be easily identified by the consumers after it is milled and sold in packets as atta or maida.

Moreover, it was shocking for me to see that wheat grains are not sold in the market to facilitate people to buy quality wheat and get it milled after cleaning it by themselves. I

tried different markets in Dhaka to buy wheat, but couldn't find any. There are so many atta mills in every corner of the towns or cities. Why the government cannot ensure marketing quality wheat in open market and let the people choose the grains before they buy it. After all, it is their food and they can expect better quality of food on payment. Why should they be kept blindfolded and atta or maida be sold in packets where any rotten materials can be marketed.

I would like to draw the attention of the relevant ministry of the government to this very important sector of food administration.

Engr. Q. Enamul Huq, Canada

Is war necessary?



War is sometimes perhaps necessary. But in too many cases it degrades the fighter and his cause. The resort to force is too often crudely instinctive, as in Iraq, despite the thinness of the arguments for war. In this latest case, the lack of sophistication of the Russian troops, first in Chechnya and now, horribly, with their mad, undisciplined rush to free the children, has allowed animal instincts to overcome all rational behaviour. Undoubtedly, the European Union's greatest achievement has been to cement the warring nations of Europe into a peaceful whole. Most recently, the lure of Europe has compelled the Turks, after years of savage warfare, to parley with the Kurds in a way that Russia could do well to emulate with the Chechens.

For the first time in history, a not insignificant number of states have been free from war for the best part of two centuries. In Europe, there are Sweden and Switzerland, both despite a long tradition of warfare. In Latin America, Venezuela, Costa Rica and Brazil have now lived out a century without war. Indeed, an entire region of our planet has escaped internal war for over a century North America most importantly. Neither Canada, Mexico nor the US maintains troops on each other's borders. Likewise, the South Pacific has long been peaceful, apart from a brief invasion by the Japanese in World War II, and by relatively small-scale conflicts in East Timor.

Over time, wars have become less frequent and the number of years in which an average country has been involved in war has declined over the centuries. We see from our modern perspective that the reasons that wars were fought for were not issues that would now engage most of us. Would people fight to keep their head of state in power nowadays? Most of them certainly do not, and it is extremely doubtful if modern people would fight to expand the territory of their country.

Putin and Bush, the soul mates, are throwbacks to a bygone age, and seem to have taken a leap backwards, into a history that has now moved on for most nations.

Sirajul Islam
Social sciences researcher and consultant
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