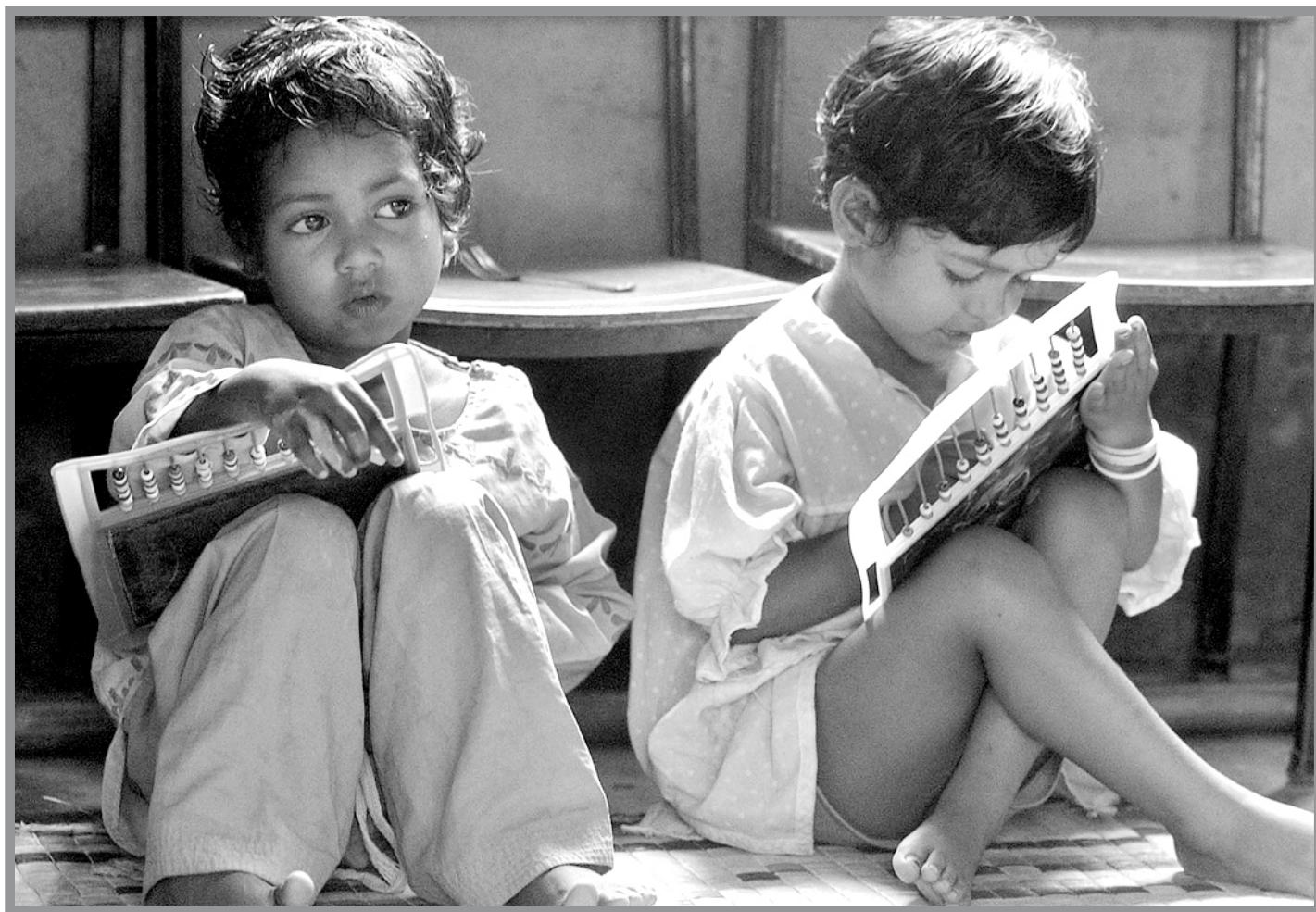


# Uni-track education system



It refers to the piece published in the opinion column of your daily on 12th October, 2005 by Mr. Shamsher Chowdhury ( "Will the PM kindly tell us what is happening?") This was a very bold write-up, covering almost all aspects to be mentioned. I would have been rather more impressed if the writer added another most important national issue, the change of secondary education system from multi-track to uni-track. The system which the government is going to implement in 2006, may affect millions of students, if it goes wrong. The multi-track system is age-old and has proved effective and it is running very nicely since over half a century, why does it all of a sudden become a national need to change the system ? Is the cabinet fully agreed on this, or is MoE's unilateral decision? If the government wishes to implement this system, it should give more time to the nation to think over its pros and cons. Don't implement it hurriedly. **MAS Uttara**



## A month of extortion?

We are well aware of the religious importance of the Holy Ramadan. There is not much necessity to dwell upon that subject. But we, the ordinary mortals and citizens, are subjected to endless extortion in this month by some unscrupulous elements. Yesterday I went to the kitchen market and bought eggplant @ Tk 30-40/kg, cucumber for Tk 32, carrot Tk 40, etc. Add to the list the soaring prices of chicken, mutton, beef. The appreciation in price as compared to the week before Ramadan was between 25 to 50%. For some items it was even more. We are forced to pay more fare to the autorickshaw-wallahs, taxis, rickshawpullers. The extortion and the accompanying mentality speak volume for the population of the delta who believe in quick money making. I wonder whether we are the descendants of the "Thagis" of the British period! There seems to be two remedies of the malady - one is peoples' boycott of the Ramadan extravaganza and the other one is more pragmatic- stern control by the government and local bodies. **SN Mamoon, Dhaka**

### Our export to India

We are very much intrigued at the news that appeared in your daily captioned "Delhi's term too difficult for Dhaka." The Indo-Bangla Chambers joint study revealed a frustrating picture of Bangladesh export to India. The Bangladeshi exporters have to obtain ISI certificate from the Indian Standard Institute for which numerous steps have to be crossed through. The exporters of Bangladesh have to submit factory plan, design, layout plan, production flow, road map leading to airport or railway stations etc. Besides all these documents, the BIS officials will visit the export unit concerned to assess the viability etc. These conditions reveal a negative attitude by India to thwart Bangladesh export to the country. It is clearly an attempt to discourage the exporters of Bangladesh to export to India. After all what is the need for all those conditions of production plan, factory plan, layout, production equipments, flow chart, road map etc.

We never heard of any country in the world setting such conditions in matters of import of their products. Has India set those conditions to import from other countries of the world as well?

How much foreign exchange Bangladesh will earn by exporting to India as against their huge volume of exports to us which amounts to over a billion dollar without any conditions set for our bulk quantity of imports from India? The government should reconsider our position on the issue. **GMF Abdur Rob Cantonment residential Area, Dhaka**

### Traffic jam near schools

This is in reference to the letter by Ms. Itrat Rahman of Scholastica School published in your daily on 12 October '05. Ms. Rahman refers to traffic jams in front of various renowned schools and defend Scholastica's position. Most of the schools do not have any parking lot.

Ms. Rahman has tried to defend something that creates problems for all concerned. **Nasirullah Mridha Salim Dhaka**

### Corruption and incompetence

All I seem to read in the local papers is Corruption, bribe and incompetence, as the government is always saying that Bangladesh has to make itself richer in every way.

How long must the poor people put up with this continuous never ending situation ? Why does the government not decide to put an internationally recognised organisation like Price Waterhouse (or some other company from a country that is bound by anti-corruption legislation) in charge of all projects and let them deal with all issues like issuing tenders, accepting bids, deciding winners etc? **Zabidur Rahman Toronto, Canada**

### Scholastica's reply

This is in reference to Scholastica's reply to the issue of traffic congestion in front of their school published in The Daily Star dated 12th October 2005. In a word, it has shocked me. A reputed school like Scholastica has taken the stand "You do it, so I will do it too." I read the previous letter on the same matter. I was definitely expecting some responsible answer from the authorities concerned. But they

explained their fault by pointing fingers at other schools.

I would request the Scholastica authorities to go and visit the International School Dhaka. True, they do not have a full fledged parking lot, but they do have proper arrangements for car parking. Even if no school has any car park, we expected Scholastica to take the initiative to arrange it, so that other schools could follow their example.

**Mashukur Rahman Onemail**

### Law must...

The former Motijheel Police Station Officer-in-Charge, Rafiqul Islam, whose name had appeared in the FIR, as being the mastermind in the killing of Dhaka Commerce College student Momin, surrendered to the Court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge.

My congratulations to The Daily Star for its relentless coverage of the issue to bring the perpetrators to book. The law must take its due course. **Humayun Hyder Zigatola, Dhaka**

## Comparison of fuel prices



One of the local satellite TV channels has compared the fuel prices of Bangladesh with those in India. However, in doing so it should not be deemed enough just to consider the currency exchange rates, the standard of living indices (i.e. purchasing power of the consumers of the respective countries) should also be taken into account.

Otherwise, it cannot be considered as a "fair" comparison. **CNR, Chittagong**



## Environmental CONCERN

The devastation wrought by the back-to-back hurricanes along the warm Gulf of Mexico waters with more likely to follow soon were the direct consequence of the wrongs that we, the planet-dwellers continue to slap on mother nature so mindlessly. It is more than focused now how insignificant and helpless we human beings are before the fury of nature. It is a wake-up call for us to live before long in harmony with nature's protocol. Consumer conservatives lulled into immediate comforts or benefits must no longer drag their feet to drastically limit carbon emission to rein in global warming which has turned out this moment a genuine planetary emergency.

We, however, need to shun country-specific attitude and prioritise actions to tackle environmental concerns of our dear planet that shelters life ungrudgingly, if not indulgently, from the standpoint of one humankind. For, Earth is our home, irreplaceable and non-negotiable at any price. **Syed Badrul Haque Lalmatia, Dhaka 1207**

### Immigrants and British values

I respond to the above captioned letter by Mr. Shafi Ahmed. Not being in England in last 20 years it is perhaps presumptuous on my part to comment on the issue.

Fifty years back, Mr. Shafi Ahmed and myself were studying together in England and the picture then was different. Reeling from the devastation of the WW II, the British people in general were a lot poorer than now but were big-hearted. Their politeness and honesty were very much evident. Their obsession with football and football pool was quite amusing and a refreshing change from their usually taciturn bearing.

In the last half a century things have changed a lot. The Brits are officially now multi-racial and multi-cultural society. Level of honesty has also become diluted. Among several of the British values, there are two which the immigrants can accept unhesitatingly. These are, respect for rule of law and tolerance for others' religion, culture and views.

It is under the umbrella of these values that our hard working South Asian community in The UK has prospered in business, education and service. Most Asian origin parents have given highest priority to education for their children and it is paying off now.

It is our great satisfaction to note that our 'diaspora' in Europe and America is climbing up, albeit slowly, the professional and business ladders.

The immigrants should appreciate that they are in another country where the people have opened their doors and they should be loyal to that country.

They treat us a lot better than any country under "Muslim Umma". **Sakhawat Hossain Gulshan, Dhaka**

### Gas crisis in Tongi

We are one of the export oriented textile industries in Konabari area of the Gazipur district. We have the backward linkage factories for both knit and woven fabrics. The machines of the factories run from the power produced by the gas generators. So, gas is the only and single most important energy source to run the factory. We are not the only company that produces power from gas generators but almost all the other industries use this gas to produce power in order to run their factories. In our area we have many knit composite factories and few woven composites and spinning mills. For all of us gas is the one and only source of power.

As export oriented factories, we all have deadline to meet -- but in the present situation it is becoming more and more difficult to meet the deadlines. As a result of which we may lose our customers. Already we have had to postpone a few shipments and the customers are not willing to make any more adjustments. They want their goods delivered at the right time. If the buyers who visit Bangladesh frequently, come to know that the problem is permanent it is for sure that we will lose our customers. It will be a great loss to us, to our community because many people will be jobless, and last, but not the least, country's economy.

From the report of The Daily Star we have learnt that the energy advisor Mr. Mahmudur Rahman has met Honorable Prime Minister Begum

Khaleda Zia about the gas crisis of the Tongi-Savar belt. We appreciate very much that she has the situation under consideration and has already formed a committee to solve the problem. We have had gas supply problem before but the magnitude of the problem has increased since the 6 October. The gas pressure has been nil since the past few days resulting in the shutdown of the machines. It is appreciated that the government has set up a new power station at Tongi but this should not be at the cost of shutting down gas supply to the export oriented industry belt. The report in DS shows there has been talks about rationing the gas. Since there is a big gap between the supply and demand of gas there is no other option available, other than rationing. But the gas rationing has to be very planned and logical so that we can get enough gas to run our machines and export garments from Bangladesh.

We invite reporters to come to our factory in Konabari to see the real problem. If this problem continues we are in real danger of losing our customers and goodwill. We look forward to your support and coverage on the issue.

**Shahrier Ahmed Director Islam Garments Ltd. Zarun, Konabari, Gazipur**

### Poor in the city

On October 12, 2005, two very important letters appeared in this page. First, "Slum dwellers" by Yasmin Chowdhury, and the other letter was written by Tuhin Rahman from Malibagh, entitled "Street Children."

Villagers come to Dhaka with hopes, thinking a change of location will change their lives as well. They come with their youngsters, who eventually become gangsters, living in the streets.

The best way to make the prospective slum dwellers' life better is to create jobs in their home town/ village. It is the democratic government's duty to protect all rights of its citizens, which of course include the poor people. Solving these problems will take time and needs massive planning. If people of lower classes find a more friendly environment in their own village, I believe they will prefer to stay there.

Sending children to streets and homes for money must be considered as a crime on the part of the parents. Free school hours can be increased to engage children more in schools. These schools may also offer a monthly scholarship for poor children. Their must be an "anti child labour" act to save the children. Free primary schools can be also introduced for street children.

**Tahsin Hyder Maple Leaf International School, Dhanmondi,**

### Divide and rule politics

I agree in principle with the analysis in the DS of Oct 05 (by a retired General) that the religious extremist groups have taken advantage of the 15-year old wide rift between the two major political parties, to carry out the 500-bomb bursts all over Bangladesh last August (not to kill, but to send a strong message of the ominous presence of this do-or-die group). Religious beliefs are ruled by faith, ie, the heart, and politics and secularism by logic (head); hence suicide bombers are no surprise. More incidents coming after the Ramadan (DS report Oct 14). Another unbelievable trend has

emerged in Dhaka student politics (DS Oct 14): the AL and BNP student bodies have joined to chase the Shibir demonstrators from the JU campus. [Another news item: the Pakistani and Indian troops are reported to be helping the quake victims through joint efforts.]

Common danger or calamity is a human leveller. In modern politics today, the human effect is missing, hence all the trouble in red areas all over the world (Sudan, Palestine, Kashmir, and you name it). Business politics is not voter-friendly.

The message is clear: the terrorist zealots have taken advantage of the weak political base patronised by the two dynasty leaders. This chasm or gap has to be filled in by outside forces (nature does not encourage vacuum). Reap as you sow! There should be political consensus on national issues, in Approach and Policies. The local politics is myopic ["We can't see outside our camp!]. The mist of egoism prevails; or is it burqa?

The coming general election is not going to be smooth sailing for any party. Public awareness and consciousness is rising fast (corruption, high prices of goods and services,

insecurity syndrome in the innocent section of the population, etc).

Deliver, or wait for deliverance from the political evils of the day. **A Mawaz, Dhaka**

### Politicisation and terrorism

I read the letter 'stop nasty politicisation' by Molla Mohammad Shaheen published in the DS, 1/10/2005. I agree with him. The present situation of ordinary people is like the local proverb 'bag and rope' (chhala and dori). Because, everywhere and in every sphere of life the nasty politics occupies so much space that actually there's little scope to be neutral. Mr. Shaheen's letter informs us that recently 150 JCD cadres have been appointed as Upazilla Election Officers through PSC. How disgraceful!

When the election officers are appointed politically by the BNP government, they will canvass in favour of the party. And in this way we're trying to establish democracy! We're politicising everything job market, election, tender, work per-



## Solar electricity for rural areas

The BTV documentary (Oct 14) on the use of solar cells (panels; Grameen Shakti) for electric power in rural homes and small establishments is welcome.

Sustained publicity campaigns are needed for creating mass awareness. The NGOs and the private sector have to come in a big way. It is a big potential market, but the government has to play a dominating role initially, till the take-off period is reached.

The mass production stage has to be aimed for, to reduce the cost of installation. The import levies have to be marginal, as this is a part of essential public service.

Except the solar panels, most of the other components and fixtures may be fabricated locally. Visibility of the project has to be ensured. Financial incentive is a must, for single or group buyers' users.

The wind turbine culture has also to pick up. Biogas energy has already drawn some popularity. More attention has to be paid to mini hydel projects in the isolated areas. Operation and maintenance should not be big problems (we are already exporting wet batteries). The laying of gas pipelines is very costly (capital cost), hence the waiting period is very long; but mini LPG cylinders/containers are not being pushed in the market in a big way.

A Coordination cell could play a positive role. Financing may not be a problem. But sales have to pick up by reducing the cost (HP schemes may be published). The role of the village cooperatives is vital for logistics support, but, unfortunately, there is a poor image prevailing (thanks to the politicians' role). The positive effect on the GDP would be noticeable within in less than decade. **MD Abad, Dhaka**