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# Fire incidents



Once fire occurs many of us do not know what to do. Most of our houses, offices and factories are not equipped with required fire fighting gears and residential buildings have virtually none. In the big cities most of the roads are narrow where fire brigade vehicles cannot

move. Above all, people are ignorant. We cannot really afford the costly fire alarm system and fire fighting equipment. For us prevention of fire incident is the best and only option. If the people know the basics of fire it will help them to take necessary precautionary measures, so that it does not happen. Four things must be present at the same time in order to produce a fire: enough oxygen (i.e. air) to sustain combustion, enough heat to raise the material to its ignition temperature, some sort of fuel or combustible material, and the chemical reaction i.e. fire. The important thing to remember is: take any of these four things away, and you will not have a fire or the fire will be extinguished. Always keep fuel sources and ignition sources separate. To fight a fire you should know what is burning, the nature of fire and have adequate & appropriate equipment and there should be an exit at your back. It is not very difficult to understand and remember these rules which will help us to take necessary safety measures to prevent fire & fight the same if it occurs. Responsible government agencies should regularly carry out (not once in a year only, as is the practice) public awareness drives on this very important issue through radio, TV and the print media.  
**Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque**  
*Khalishpur, Khulna*

## CTG's performance

We are confident that the present CTG's intentions are 100 per cent genuine to put this country on the right track of democracy. It has taken some positive steps since taking over. Just to mention a few, it has brought reforms in EC, ACC, our judiciary is becoming independent, radio and TV are getting autonomy and we have seen some positive and prompt actions on Chittagong port which is now functioning smoothly. It has arrested some big culprits and corrupt people; our political parties are being cleared of the corrupt. It has hanged militant leaders and is trying to curb the activities of the so-called Islamic forces.

Of course, the ultimate goal of this government is to hold free, fair and credible elections in the country. People believe what this government says because they are trying to live up to their promises. I request the honest politicians, especially the leaders of big parties to wholeheartedly cooperate with this government.  
**Shafiqul Islam**  
*On e-mail*

## The Begums

Last week I returned from Bangladesh after 3 weeks of stay. I must confess I returned dejected. It is beyond my comprehension why the two Begums are still relevant after what they have done to our

beloved country over the last 15 years or so. I was surprised to see Sheikh Hasina's triumphant return and Khaleda Zia still approached by her party's power brokers. They had their chances and they failed miserably. They are liabilities to their parties and to the nation. I also don't get it: why this fixation that leaders should have a legacy of lineage behind them. Then don't talk about democracy, go for monarchy. Give up the idea that you have to choose a party leader based on whose son or daughter or wife the leader is. Base it on merit or political acumen, vision and most importantly base it on the person's leadership track record.

Hope the politicians will realise

that the whole nation is at a crossroads now and also that they have to do the right thing.  
**Quazi Tareque Ahmed P.Eng.**  
*Ottawa, Ontario, Canada*

## Donation or extortion?

As a conscientious citizen of Bangladesh I was amused by Awami League Presidium Member Zillur Rahman's statement published in your daily on 4 June 2007, that a certain quarter is trying to destroy the image of his party chief Sheikh Hasina. The veteran politician reportedly also said, "Political parties in our country as well as other countries are run on donations of well wishers. Devoted activists of Awami League bear the expenses for running the party, which can by no means be termed extortion." I and many of my friends have been paying large sums of "donation" to all the three parties since liberation, most of the times not so willingly, which I consider tantamount to "extortion" in every sense of the word. The nation has witnessed the house-wife-like leadership of both the respected ladies. They no doubt served their parties amply. But the nation needs better leadership.  
**Md. Mahmoodul Haque**  
*Gulshan, Dhaka*

## Forest conservator

Tarzan was called the king of the jungle as all the animals and the human beings who lived in the same forest would acknowledge him as their leader. Virile as he was, he wore a piece of animal-skin around his loin. Interestingly he had a Siamese follower that followed him like his own shadow. He had a gift for mimicking the call of animals. In other words, he was able to communicate with the lions and leopards. With all his affinities with the animal kingdom, he was very much human at heart. He was always on the side

of the distressed and he did not hesitate to risk his life in helping others. As we read about the misdeeds of a Chief Forest Conservator, who is all too "human" in appearance, we feel a degree of nausea. As reported in the newspapers that man used to sleep on wads of bills that he garnered through illegal means. It is shocking that he managed to carry on his illicit act for such a long period of time. No wonder, through the good offices of people like the man in question, this country has only 5% of its total area covered with forests.  
**Zabed Wali**  
*Pahartali, Chittagong*

## Medical education

I am happy to learn about the formation of the Accreditation Council for improving Quality of Education. So long, I was concerned about our existing University Grant Commission (UGC). I thought the UGC was responsible for maintaining the quality of education. Anyway, my purpose of writing is to pursue the authorities to look after medical education as well! Quality of medical education has been deteriorating over the years.  
**Dr. Lailun Nahar**  
*On e-mail*

## Signal lights

Proper installation and functioning of signal lights on the road is yet to be ensured. The signal light was set to control the traffic but how far this has been successful is still a big question as the traffic policemen still control it stretching their powerful hands, even ignoring the signal light! When will we find that the traffic is controlled by the signal light, not by the traffic police, or will we find it at all? I think it is not hard to implement it the authorities concerned want to do so sincerely. First of all, the signal light at the turning point of a road should be set consid-

ering the importance of the road and the number of the vehicles, so that we don't have to see that a long queue of vehicles is waiting for green light, while the next road is almost empty. We often blame the untrained drivers and their tendency to violate traffic rules but we do not realise the truth that they are facing many problems. If the authorities deploy traffic police at every turning point and if they punish the signal light violators, they will be forced to go by the rules.  
**Ali Hossain Bhuiyan (Swapan)**  
*South Shahjahanpur, Dhaka*

## Arrested leaders

I can see a pattern evolving when it comes to graft arrests - the moment one is remanded, they tend to fall sick or faint or go to the hospital. Doesn't this seem like cheap theatrics to gain public sympathy? There is a picture of a politician, pushed around in a wheelchair. He seemed perfectly fine a few days ago. What happened? Just wondering...  
**Rahfat Hussain**  
*USA*

## Price hike

Price hike is a serious problem for our ordinary people. People of limited means find it very difficult to cope with. The government should adopt such measures as will help arrest the price spiral, which is making the lives of people miserable.  
**Md. Ziaul Hoque**  
*Department of History*  
*University of Chittagong*

# Environmental issues



We were *mache-bhate Bangali*. I learned fishing before I had learnt alphabets. Fishing was my addiction in my teenage in the 1980s. I grew up in a village where there were canals and a midsize *bil* (sweet water body) full of fishes almost round the year. I still remember one day I caught 23 Katla fish by one pull of my fishnet. The elders with bigger nets used to get many more.

The *bil* and canals are still there, but have no water almost round the year. The water for irrigation was naturally available and the farmers used to apply their traditional techniques for irrigation. Now you will hear the noise of water pumps round the clock to prevent the paddy field from drying up.

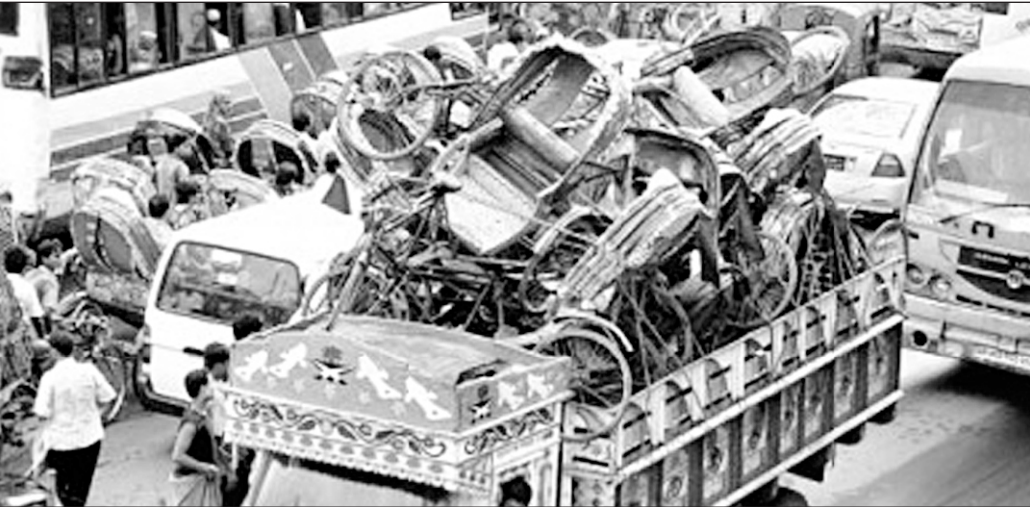
This is the reply from nature for our misdoings. The dams are built for flood protection and better water resource control without considering the consequences at large. The water management in Bil Dakatia is one appropriate example, which has left millions homeless and foodless.

The Padma-Meghna-Jamuna-Buriganga are still flowing but carrying the toxic wastes from the mills. The Sundarbans is still there, but greatly depleted. The air in a town or village is polluted by the smokes from mills and brickfields.

Social responsibility is something that our industrialists do not have. The industrialists are running after gains in terms of money, which eventually results in net loss in the long run our children are growing up in a polluted environment.

The upcoming generation must be given the opportunity to understand the importance of our environmental needs.

**Faruk Ahmed, Thailand**  
*On e-mail*



We have just returned from a two-week visit to Dhaka. We have many outstanding memories of the city. One thing in particular is the number of rickshaws and their hard working drivers- such an efficient and economical way of travel, with no pollution and no carbon footprint (so much in the news today) However, we were most alarmed on two occasions to see the police physically attack the riders and attempt to burst

the tyres of the rickshaws when there was no apparent provocation. This was in the Gulshan area. On making enquiries we were informed that the police were in fact attempting to restrict the movement of rickshaws. In our view this seems a very harsh way to treat what must be the greatest source of employment in the city. It is threatening the livelihoods of hundreds of hard working people.

We found the rickshaw drivers to be very efficient, reliable and polite-and offer a very valuable and attractive service to tourists and local people alike. They play a very important role in making the city of Dhaka a colourful and attractive place to visit.  
**V. Everill**  
**A. Harman**  
*On e-mail*