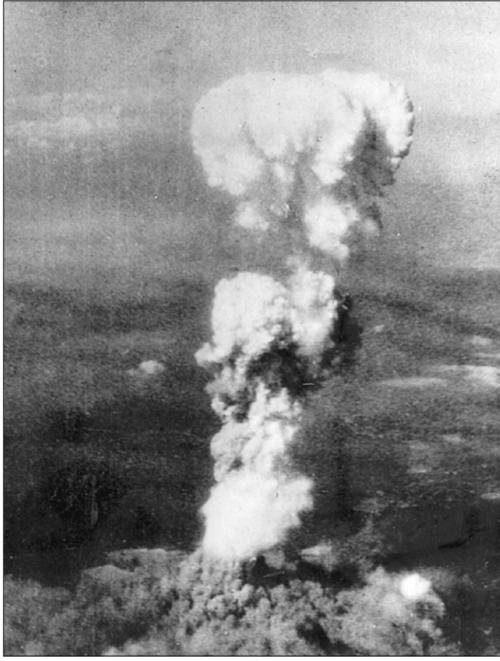


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

August 6, 1945 ...



Mankind suffered the worst barbarism on August 6, 1965, as America dropped atom bombs, for the first time in history, on the Japanese cities: Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The bombing of the Japanese cities that brought deaths to thousands of innocent humans including children and women, and thousands more were indiscriminately maimed-- post nuke explosion affects are still there-- was an act of unspeakable hatred. We, today, remember the dark day with a sense of triumph, for we've been sustaining our very humane spirit till then, and pray for the departed souls that might be cursing us in quiet desperation. Let the "Good" prevail over the evil. Rafiqul Islam Rime Agrabad, Chittagong

Housing for middle class

We appreciate the central bank's decision to disburse Tk 300 crore against purchasing flats up to 1225sqft for the lower and the middle class people. Housing is a basic need. The middle class people have to pay a big share of their earnings on house rent. When they become owner of a flat, they feel a lot more secure. We waste crores of taka in the name of different unproductive schemes. The government should come forward with the above mentioned type of projects for the betterment of the middle and low income people. Harun-ur-Rashid Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Ill-gotten wealth

Recently, the caretaker government (CTG) hit headlines for forcing certain sections of our countrymen who are corrupt and wealthy into disclosing their wealth. Upon finding discrepancies in their so-called 'wealth statement' and their evident wealth, the CTG seized many of their properties. Up until now, the CTG has not entirely revealed its plans for the seized properties, other than scant mentions of depositing liquid assets with the Bangladesh Bank. If the CTG has yet to formulate a concrete plan as to how to make use of these funds, I would like to suggest a novel solution. The steel magnate Andrew Carnegie had said

that, "There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration." Since the plan of the CTG has been professed to be an experiment in shoring up democratic principles, this may be important to note that in a country of 150 million people, Bangladesh has no nation-wide free circulating library system. A free library system is the bedrock of democracy as it allows people, regardless of class and rank, to gain knowledge of the world beyond the horizon. It frees up any limitations or obstacles to moving up the ladder of success in life. Carnegie also practised what he preached. He built 2500 libraries in the English-speaking world. The New York Public Library system, one of the greatest free circulating systems in the world, was created with the help of the generosity of individuals like Carnegie, Astor, Lenox and Tilden. Since the wealthy in our country have the unfortunate tendency to leave their gaudy amounts of wealth to their children only, let the CTG use this opportunity to use some of the ill-gotten wealth of the rich and corrupt to establish a free library system which will help create a more egalitarian society. Mahmud I. Hasan Bronx, NY, USA

Flood victims

The plight of flood-affected people is getting worse day by day. Thousands of them have been marooned. Some of them are living at the flood shelters and under the open sky. Many of them are getting infected with water-borne diseases. Floods have rendered them unemployed and homeless. Thousands of hungry faces have been

waiting for relief materials for a long time. But the relief materials supplied by the government are not sufficient. Immediately they need dry foods, water purifying tablets, medicine and baby foods. It is a matter of great concern that flood affected infants are not getting adequate milk and baby foods. The government sponsored relief materials are

too inadequate. They need more relief for their survival. Various organisations, humanitarian bodies, NGOs as well as international agencies should come forward to help the flood victims. Shailla Solaiman M.S.S. student Dept. of Government & Politics, JU



PHOTO: AFP

The budget

Focusing on the budget speech thoroughly, actually I can only define it as the statement of World Bank or Asian Development Bank. Off course, tackling inflation, spending on power infrastructure and supporting agriculture etc are highly laudable but the implementation of the plans is a different story altogether. Farhad Kabir BBA (Marketing) Dhaka University

Mining options

Sarwat Chowdhury's prompt response (Aug.9) to your two-part report on open pit mining in Germany, does not appear very convincing or objective. For Bangladesh rerouting of underground water to enhance water table levels as practiced in Germany should be the top option; and revitalising canals and water bodies could be secondary. It all will depend on the surrounding area's ecology. The long one sentence paragraph ends with the words "environmental impact of open-pit coal mining on our limited arable land, water bodies, and underground water tables will be far-reaching both in terms of area and time" Regarding cost subsidy for mining, is the writer aware that all our liquid fuel "petroleum products" is subsidised in foreign exchange? Natural gas prices too are subsidised and do not reflect the true local equivalent of foreign exchange costs involved in exploration, gas well development, gas transmission and distribution. So why this sudden biased objection to coal prices only? This statement is neither impartial nor based on ground realities. Doesn't the writer know that even the simple work of gas compression to maintain distribution head pressure is also a total foreign exchange affair? Does anyone look into this? Handling of underground water is necessary both in open-pit and underground shaft mine. For Bangladesh re-routing of this water back to sustain underground water table as stated earlier is the preferred option.

The critical and costliest issue in underground mining is below surface accidents. This happened in Barapukuria, and a few days back, in the USA. The US mine is still closed, and despite all their resources; the miners trapped! Such accidents caused by unpredictable soil subsidy, happens in technically advanced and rich country like the USA, and is a fact of life in underground mining. The cost that will be needed for immediate rescue efforts and to restart the US mine will be beyond our comprehension! Can Bangladesh afford the resources, mostly foreign exchange, to deploy such funds for these events; a reality in underground mining; but totally absent in open-pit mining? If we pragmatically list out the plus and minus points, without any subjectivity; for both mining methods, then open-pit mining will clearly be evident as more manageable and risk and accident free. The huge resources and the time required for revitalising underground mine after soil collapse or water breakthrough alone will eliminate this option. This has been the fact in Barapukuria, and the reality is there for all to see. Unfortunately for us we are not the people to be "once bitten twice shy" in our misadventures! I hope the "experts" of the "Energy Panel" have properly done their homework before penning their views in public! Broad opinions about coal policy and management may be all right for generalists, but ignoring technical realities is taking things too lightly! We cannot afford such misadventures when critical technical issues are being considered. S.A. Mansoor Metallurgical Engineer One-e-mail

A new Bangladesh



Social networking

When DeWolfe and Anderson launched Myspace, social networking was limited to chatting and instant messaging. Five years later, with the advent of new players on the arena like hi5 and Facebook, online socialising is a revolution to say the least. We Bangladeshi youths are ardently keeping up the hype by adding a plethora of users eager to make new online friends. However, our contribution to creating such innovative concepts is negligible. Without being a face in the Facebook, doesn't any of us get the impulse to design a new site to try to join the ranks of Chad Hurley and Jawed Karim? As the web becomes more interactive than ever, concepts like social networking are lucrative businesses, with

popular sites like Youtube being bought for princely sums like \$1.5 billion by giants like Google. Pioneering sites like Google and Yahoo are established limited companies dominating cyber users. We are still the dices in this game, getting hooked at every new site that gets hot. However fun it is, the real winners are people like Zuckerberg and DeWolfe while we are just following their trail. It is high time we stand up and be active members of the industry. Ananya Das A Level student Cephalon International Dhaka

Computer education

Along with other subjects at the Primary Level, I feel that computer

literacy also plays a pivotal role in students' career these days. The increasing demand of the computer literate employee in all sectors implies the future need of manpower in the country and abroad. Today's students are the future of the nation and, thus, I believe that primary education is shaping up the nation's future. Tomorrow, these kids will play a significant role in the country and, thereby, in development of the world. Hence, introduction of computer as a subject at primary level education will provide them an opportunity to prepare themselves, so that they could comfortably compete with other students whenever they are asked to prove their potential in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the computer as a subject to incorporate in the general education curriculum. Of late, many organisations have shown their interest and have taken the initiative to spread awareness regarding the importance of this subject. However, individual effort cannot make a big impact. Therefore, planning at the government level should be adopted regarding this. At least, the government should make a sincere effort to organise things and thus they can bring all the organisations, which are making an effort in this direction, together under one umbrella. The implementation of any programme at the primary level education cannot be successful keeping the teachers, who are implementing the plans at the end level, away from it. Thus, the first step towards achieving the goal should be to train the teachers,

The alternate regimes of the twin demoniac have been shattered, thanks to the initiative by the interim caretaker government. The new nation suffered from rules. Proxy leadership is phony. Why live in the past? The young generation has to learn the bitter lessons; and apply it in public interest; otherwise the citizens would ditch them. Change for the better. But the powerful black-wealth syndicates are still controlling the kitchen markets-- just to take revenge. The term for changing the evil foundation is too short. The battered harangue of the wily politicians is laughable-- language was given to man to conceal his thoughts! It is difficult to govern transparently in a have-not society. A Mahasen, Dhaka

before this new technology takes a place in the curriculum. Mithilesh Singh Center Head, Grameen Star Education Grameen Bank Bhaban Mirpur, Dhaka

Political drama

At the outset, my apologies to your readers for expressing some political thoughts when our country is facing a humanitarian crisis due to onrush of floodwater, engulfing at least 42 districts and affecting more than 4.5 million people so far. More damage is feared. The government has already expressed serious concern and is working to save the marooned people in cooperation with the armed forces and the non-government organisations. In the backdrop of this, political activities and actions are going on. The scenario emerging surrounding the two leaders and their parties needs some careful analysis because I am of the opinion that whatever political drama the nation has witnessed so far has two aspects or parts. The first part is the "corruption history" which is now basically for the consumption of the majority commoners to remain engaged in the corruption phobia as I can see. The second part is more for the political thinkers to analyze and look at the process of politically changes that have taken place since the caretaker government took charge in late October 2006, and also the events prior to that. With due emphasis and support on part-one, one can presumably say that the political drama in Bangladesh is closing up, and soon the nation would have the chance to view the interim-final episode. This means that the fate of the two leaders would be clearer and look certain. The ongoing political alignment would take a clear shape, and the political thinkers would feel more

comfortable to draw the political roadmap regarding general election by December 2008. Despite some feeble concern which I also share, the policy makers might opt for the local bodies election first, which would hopefully indicate the impact of the various reforms initiated now, and might also be indicative of the trend of political powers and local leadership emerging in the country. One can predict that the present leadership of the BNP might prevail with more democratisation in party structures including the policy making process. The present leadership might opt for a position where the sole decision making power would not be in existence. The position of the secretary general would be shaky and uncertain. The AL issue cannot be ascertained fully now unless the present leadership is getting a breathing time and atmosphere to think and act. However, internal reforms in political parties would come whatever happens to the two leaders. The precise conclusion is that the BNP is doing better, and the AL is a little battered and would have to resort to their usual role of political struggle to reestablish the party politically, provided there is no major division in the party. The only party safely moving ahead is the Jamaat, and with the grassroots strength they will maintain their demand for political alliance. It is difficult to predict now where they will go, if possible with the "New BNP" or, who knows, with the emerging "PDP". Reader One-e-mail

Plundered Biman

It is tragic that the national airline should come to such a deplorable state, despite having so much of commercial potential both at home and abroad. The airline initially grew fast through the dedication of the majority of employees. Soon it drew the attention of the outsiders, who started getting in by virtue of influence but without any airline background and irrespective of their professional knowledge and capability. During the regime of President Ershad, retired personnel of the armed forces got appointed directly thus depriving and blocking the future of Biman's own staff. They had the upper hand and imposed their own way of administration not befit-

ting a commercial airline. The employees got frustrated. Then the former president himself dealt the biggest blow by purchasing ATP aircrafts from Britain. So did the other political leaders and their goons in many ways thus paralysing the growing airline day by day. The airline had to bear the brunt of it all. Internally, a number of unions mushroomed. Corruption crept in due to lack of administration. Check and balance disappeared. It became a paradise for the looters. Union leaders and their cohorts numbering a few hundred used to be above the law. They drew salary, overtime and earned promotions without any work. They used to flex their

muscle and get their way. The management used to remain wary of them. They used to interfere, dictate, humiliate and even manhandle the officers. The union bosses used to lead luxurious lives. Guess how? The pilots so vocal today should do their own introspection. They, without any mercy for the airline, used to humble the management and get one after another agreement executed hardly realising the airline's financial viability. Their strong union used to play dirty tricks to realise their demands. They would come up with numerous demands during Hajj and put the brakes on. Under those circumstances, the political governments had to give in unconditionally. They have one of the best service conditions in this country. In this respect, one will notice a gulf of difference between them and the rest of all the employees. The CTG should look into each and every agreement and make those viable. Biman as a commercial airline should be left alone, free of interference to compete with other carriers. But before anything else, the national flag carrier should be protected by procuring a modern fleet of aircrafts. Else, it may be too late for the dying patient to survive! An ex employee of ZIA Hounslow, Middlesex, UK



Save the public universities

I am in Japan for one year and doing research in Kumamoto University. Everyday I am learning about the disciplines, morals and patriotism of the Japanese. Here in Japan, it is very tough to be a teacher in a university because the candidate needs extremely high academic qualifications coupled with a Ph.D., demonstrating admirable research skills and publications in world-class journals. But now in Bangladesh the situation is quite opposite. Being a teacher of a public university in Bangladesh for about eleven years, I have been observing it very closely that a heinous trend has been set in all public universities, which is breaking the backbone of higher education in Bangladesh. This trend is to appoint teachers' wives as teachers in the universities. For this purpose, the husband-teachers play a very nasty role. First, they maintain close relationships with the so-called group or political leaders and then demand a reward i.e. the appointment of their wives as teachers. If the mis-

sion fails anyhow the leaders advise the husband-teachers to admit their wives into the M.Phil. courses, which is used as a credit in favour of these low-rated candidates and also it paves the way for the authorities to eyewash the critics or to overcome any other obstacles. What a shameful and heinous mutualism at the cost of a nation's talents and quality education! However, these greedy husbands are often the junior teachers who are inspired by the mechanisms followed by their senior colleagues and deprive the potential and meritorious candidates who achieve good results through rigorous studies. These so-called teachers set their targets and spend their times for the group leaders even ignoring their duties in classrooms and laboratories. How lucky they are! At the end of the day, the universities are undergoing an acute vacuum of merit and the students are being deprived of quality higher education. Unfortunately, this trend is increasing in all the universi-



ties but nobody is raising voice against it. Some intellectuals are writing columns and editorials pointing out the corruption and negligence of duty by university teachers, demanding "Unified Umbrella Law" etc., which are appreciable,

but transparency in the appointment of teachers is the foremost priority to save the public universities. M.G. Mustafa Kumamoto University Kurokami, Japan