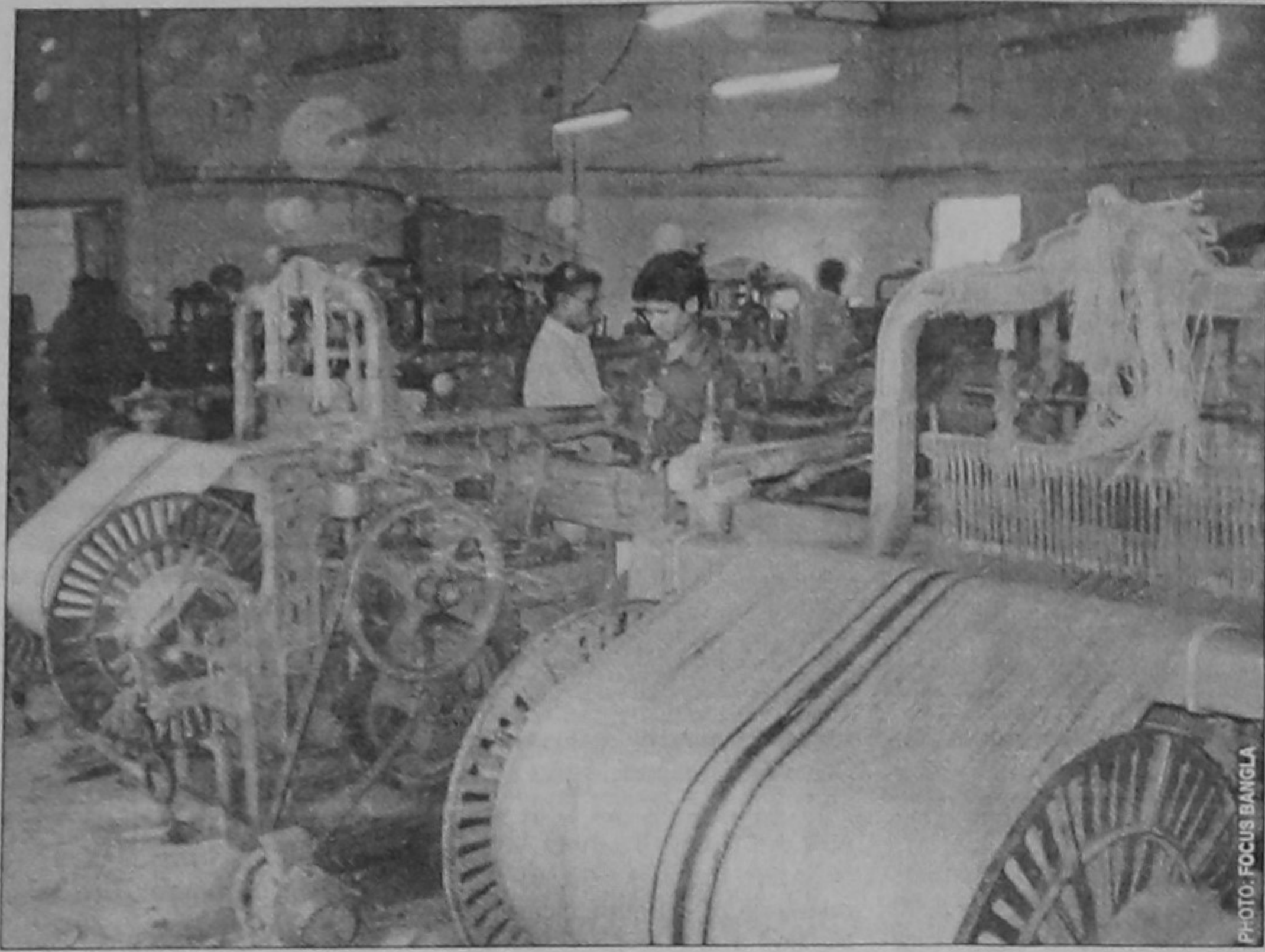


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Jute industry



With the closure of the world's largest jute industry, "The Adamjee Jute mills" the jute sector of the country has been passing through a crisis. Besides the Adamjee Jute industries, some other jute industries located at Jessore and Khulna areas have faced closure. In the last two years, two-three public sector jute industries have been closed.

Jute was once our number one foreign currency earner. Those good days are over now

with the mismanagement and malpractice in the jute sector. As a result, once the most flourishing jute industries are now on the verge of elimination.

The issue deserves a closer look since the industry can still contribute to our economy. What is needed is proper planning.

Nasar
One-mail

A good government!

Bangladesh has been ruled by bad governments for decades. Past governments apparently were the results of so called democracy. Unfortunately, those governments proved to be complete failures in fulfilling the aspirations of the general public, in putting this troubled nation into a path of somewhat brighter future. Instead, the so-called elected leaders have brought the nation to its knees by abusing their authority and power in the government.

Now that the current government is planning for another election and the same old leaders are again preparing for competing there in order to grab power, we are afraid that the same old bad government will follow under which we will have to go through the same ordeal for decades!

Bangladesh needs a good government, and that is more important than a mere democratic government. Poet Iqbal once said, "You cannot expect the intelligence of one human being from two hundred donkeys." I beg pardon, I am not comparing anyone with donkeys but there is some merit in that saying that we need to ponder about.

Trouble with democracy is that when good people do not actively participate in the government they are ruled by bad people, and needless to say, that is what is happening in Bangladesh. If we have to have a democratic government, we must create the atmosphere that can attract good people to run for

election.

The present government must be given the time by all concerned to create that atmosphere. Rushing to an election will not solve the real problem.

Enamul Huque
Michigan, USA

Trial of war criminals

Recently, there have been demands from certain quarters for the trial of the "war criminals". Perhaps it is necessary to find out first if the law of the country is equipped for trial of war crimes and what is the definition of such offence given in the provisions of law. Recently, the court discharged a case filed against certain individuals on allegation of being war criminals. I am not against trial of any individual for committing war crime. I belong to a shaheed family that suffered immensely during the liberation war. Therefore, trial for committing war crime is also my foremost demand. But to term those individuals "war criminals" before conviction might give rise to various legal complications. As such it may not yield the desired result. Trial could be sought against any specific crime committed either against the country or any individual after collection of enough evidence needed to prove their involvement which in my opinion would be very difficult to get now, after a long time. Otherwise, if all those evidences could not be produced, I am afraid, the case will not hold good. Everybody knows the AL govern-

ment was instrumental in declaring a general amnesty to the people once opposed to the creation of Bangladesh. The AL, the Jatiyo Party and the BNP should be held responsible for their failure to try those opposed to the creation of Bangladesh during their 36-year rule.

The most interesting part of the episode is that, lately the surviving Sector Commanders also have come up in a strong way demanding trial of the "war criminals". Many of them were active members of both the AL and the BNP so the question remains what they have been doing during the last 36 years?

We have seen newspaper reports and photographs of many freedom fighters; some were disabled, passing their days in acute poverty along with their families. Some of them became rickshaw-pullers or even beggars. It is a great shame for the nation that it failed to do enough for those who sacrificed everything to bring independence to our beloved country. Is it not the special duty of the Sector Commanders to try to do something good for their brothers with whom they fought shoulder to shoulder to liberate the country, rather than only seeking belated trial of the war criminals after such a long time?

Let us do something fruitful and constructive which will benefit the country and its people.
Mohammad Ataul Hoque
One-mail

The sub-continent

What has gone wrong with Bangladesh and Pakistan? Why India (all a part of the former British Indian Raj) escaped such historical afflictions we are experiencing today? Pakistan, after the Partition in 1947, was without a capital and experience of central government governance. Besides Rawalpindi, (later, Islamabad), the Pakistani capital was far away from East Pakistan. The communication, cultural, and distance gaps were huge; with a hostile, huge country in between. The separation of East Pakistan (Bengalees) was a foregone conclusion. East Pakistan was replaced by sovereign Bangladesh in 1971, in just one generation. Today both Pakistan and Bangladesh are limping; and India is emerging as a giant in Asia, next to China.

We migrated to Dhaka from Calcutta soon after partition, but some of our relatives did not. Today the presence of Muslims in Indian West Bengal is hardly noticeable in the Indian satellite TV channels (within the news, social and cultural events as seen from Dhaka on the screen). The wounds have yet to heal.

The horrible standard of our political culture is no surprise the have-nots cannot rule. There is no moral restraint to resist temptation misuse of power and position. In Dhaka, how many vips (not VIP in capitals) do you find who display the motto of plain living and high thinking? The powerful minority has displaced the good majority. That is the birth of the neutral caretaker form of government. Are we proud of this novel invention? Even the earlier contaminated CTG had to be replaced.

We have experimented for 36 years (one generation) calculate the cumulative systems losses for 120-130 million people. We have a demographic problem, the highest density of population in the world; plus no provincial governance, and local self-governance is cunningly avoided by the successive political regimes.

I speak as a [double] pensioner. I am wondering about the future of our son-circumstances made him a virtual citizen of the world. Born in Dhaka, he had his primary education abroad (in an Asian country); graduated from Dhaka; worked for a few years in Dhaka (as a young executive in the private sector); got fed up; and has gone abroad with his own funds (saved), for the Master's, and possibly PhD. How many of our young educated generation come back (patriotism) the grass is greener on the other side [Western Materialism]?

Asia, Africa and S America are full of examples of struggling new nations coping with the options Western Democracy has to offer. The superpower is not making it easier for the Third World to chart a decent plan of living. Bangladesh today is a hidden target of powerful vested foreign cartels, due to the shifting sine wave of civilization, now moving from the West to the East. God gives a chance to everyone!

Back to local technicalities of governance in overcrowded Dhaka. Political governance has lost its credibility, and it is not going to be restored soon (the healing and reformatory attitude). Our past perverted leadership has created an unnecessary and avoidable gap. Why cyclone Sidr had to come now? Life is a mystery; but there are traps and solutions. The divine Law of Compensation cannot be side-tracked it would take its toll. Many alleged corrupt persons are living in cells now, and black wealth cannot help at the time of their special needs.

The year 2008 looks gloomy and uncertain.
AMawaz, Dhaka

Pertinent questions

The saying is: "Do not create or make law from the bench, just understand, interpret and apply the law". This is how we need to prove that the judiciary is independent and has the capacity and will to operate independently. When a government is not elected and run by emergency rules suspending major rights of the citizen, the only hope and shelter for the powerless peoples lies in the court of law.

I think the DU case should be an eye opener and lesson for those who are operating against the will of the people. I regret to mention that due to weak handling of the corruption cases more and more sympathy is growing for the defendants. In effect the "corruption charges" are losing support of the people, and clearly taking the turn of a political propaganda and even political blackmail in some cases when we see fingers are now pointed to the bureaucrats.

The very source and authority of power of this government is under question. I think they have the political acumen and authority to judge the current unstable situation which can only be handled by an elected government. Therefore, kindly sit with the politicians as quickly as possible and get a consensus to proceed with the promised election without further delay. Kindly ask the Election Commission to complete the draft voter list followed by the final list as soon as possible but not later than June 2008. The EC is apparently suffering from indecision, and needs guidance from the government.

Areader
One-mail

Catharsis!

Being a student of a private university, I am used to facing different kinds of strange questions and each time they left me with utter despair...the other day I met one of my friends, who directly asked me, "Hey, I heard that in your university students attend classes standing! Is that true?" This was so much choking for me that I started babbling and only after gathering enough strength to talk again I was capable of saying only, "No, you heard it wrong". Once one of my relatives asked me, "Do you appear in examinations, or it is not needed?" I just managed to answer, "No we are not that much lucky yet". These are some very general inquiries about private universities as well as their students.

Okay, I have no problem to admit that we are not 'A' grade students as we didn't get 'chance' in Dhaka University. How many of the students get 'chance' in Dhaka University or any other public universities? And those who don't get 'chance', then they even fail to sustain the 'chance' to be treated as only 'students'...now we are only left with the quotation, "Frailty, thy name is chance" and out of this 'frailty' today Bangladesh is the proud nation of having 56 private universities...

The problems that we are facing today have arisen out of the increasing number of universities. There are many universities which don't have even rooms to hold classes, don't have permission for professional courses, don't have any regulation or transparent agenda and so on. When people see such universities, then definitely they will raise question about the real picture. There are some good universities which are really providing quality education, but their achievements are not recognised because of the 'tail-end' universities.

Today I have just tried to express what it feels like when people question your credentials as a student.
Nasreen Sultana
One-mail

The naming business!

Perhaps nobody relishes seeing the signboards that introduce many institutions named after Begum Khaleida Zia and they all have been done to portray her as an 'extraordinary' leader, but without thinking if such naming was at all fitting for the incumbent PM who, I say without any malice, could hardly evince any leadership acumen to deliver anything exemplary for the well-being of the people, or for that matter of the nation, that people regardless of their race or religion would go remembering her as a worthy PM the nation had ever had after it came into being. If dispassionately judged, apart from her discredited and disgraceful position as of now, she had done nothing remarkable as twice PM of Bangladesh. She left no marks in the political precincts, the only area she could throw herself in because of the death of her husband. She rather destroyed the edifice of redeemed and resuscitated democratic polity in Bangladesh by her and her party's absolute rule (the elected president of the country was sacked arbitrarily; the nation's parliament, the seat of democracy was practically reduced to BNP-Jamaat's hub for exercising their exclusive rights and privileges, especially for hurling diatribes against the opposition or belittling the latter's proposal so that it would abstain from democratic process and, made its speaker a 'stooge'), vitiated every institution and establishment with naked wholesale politicisation. And as you know of the abyss of unbridled and unprecedented corruption the whole administrative apparatus of the country has been let to sink during her last tenure. People felt disgusted at her enduring efforts to bring her two sons, brother(s), sisters, nephews and nieces and their cronies into the sphere of power.

Of the hundreds, these are the only four instances of her glaringly bad governance. Begum Zia could easily insult a dead poet by withdrawing the poet's name from the Central Public Library!
Ahmed Niaz
Mohammadpur
Dhaka

Bogra-Sirajganj road

I would like to draw the attention of the authorities to the on-going construction work of Bogra-Sirajganj highway at Majhira in Shahjahanpur. The construction work was started approximately two and a half months ago, but is yet to be complete. The commuters are suffering a lot not only for the incomplete and almost postponed work of the road, but also for the dust generated from it.

I don't know why the department concerned is overlooking the issue.
Gopal
One-mail

Police station needed

In Mymensingh district, Atharabari union under Ishwarganj thana is a very important commercial place. We need a police station at Atharabari which is situated 15 kilometres away from Ishwarganj thana. There is a railway station, bus station, bank, school, madrasa, college, telegraph and telephone office and many saw-mills here. Atharabari Rayer Bazar is the biggest market in the area. But there is no police station here. When a criminal incident occurs police can't come in due time.

We, the people of this union, would request the authorities concerned to set up a police station at Atharabari.
Md Abdul Jall
Ishwarganj, Mymensingh

The chess legend

On January 17, aged 64, the chess legend Bobby Fischer left this world. It was from the very early days at Marshall Chess Club in New York City, where he used to spend hours reading through old file-cards of 19th century games, than it was in the New York Public Library, where he learned about chess history, about different strategies of chess through reading numerous books. It was also in his family flat in Brooklyn where he used to spend hours playing chess with himself at his bedside table.

He was, in other words, not interested in anything except chess. Then came 1972. The "Match of the Century," against Boris Spassky at Reykjavik. Despite the fact that Spassky was receiving advice from 35 Russian Grandmasters, in between the match, Fischer won. It was Fischer's intelligence; his extraordinary chess skills that helped him defeat Spassky that too at a time when the Cold War was still on. But after 1975 i.e. after he had forfeited his world title by refusing

to defend it, he decided to roam around the world, and in the process, he started openly criticizing his rivals. It was learned that he stayed in Iceland for a while. Then again in 1992, he played against the same old foe Spassky--but this time in former Yugoslavia and he won there too. But the US govt. was unhappy with him for that rematch as according to them it was illegal (post-Cold War tensions). And that is why Fischer, later became a critic of his own country.

Bobby Fischer once said that for him chess was life and there was nothing more. He also said that his aim was not only to defeat his opponent but to make sure that his opponent had to squirm! His win at all cost tactics: attack, defence, capture, sacrifice and his chess legacy are things to think about forever.

He was truly the chess genius.
Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Medical education

I read with interest the letter by Mr. Nasar (15.01.08) on Medical Education. I wholeheartedly agree with the views expressed by him.

I visit Bangladesh every two or three years and each time I see yet another signboard for another medical college. I am reliably informed that there are as many as fifteen medical colleges in and around Dhaka, and there are others in the districts. I have never been inside any of these institutions, though some of them are owned and governed by my friends and contemporaries. I cannot help feeling that these institutions are primarily run as business concerns and have nothing to do with medical education of international standards.

The main responsibility for the quality of medical education lies with the Bangladesh General Medical Council (BDGMC) and I just wonder whether they have set

any minimum standards for opening such institution(s).

I was a medical student in the early sixties and your elderly readers would remember that in those days there were two types of registered medical practitioners (a) LMFs or Licentiate, those who qualified from the medical schools of which there were four in the then East Pakistan (Bangladesh), (b) MBBS or the graduates who qualified from the medical colleges. In order to attain parity, the govt. of the day very wisely abolished the medical schools and upgraded them into medical colleges and LMFs were given the opportunity to become MBBS, by being admitted to the short course.

I am not aware that the BDGMC or the govt. has any policy of maintaining parity or a minimum standard required of the students passing out from these "private medical colleges"
Dr. M.A. Wajed
Consultant Rheumatologist, UK

Dealing with bullies!

Bullies are aggressive people who are very astute at reading the cues. Workplace bullies share a common goal to advance their position in the company at the expense of a co-worker, often called the target (one who is bullied). The most destructive thing about office bullies is that they tend to target co-workers who are the best and brightest employees. Workplace bullies tend to drive out colleagues they view as threats: those who are competent, independent, possess good social skills, and have strong ethics. Bullies are a dark and destructive force at the workplace. We all need to have physical and psychological safety in the workplace.

True, most bullies are not liked. It is always best to treat others the way one would like to be treated.
KS Nazmul Hasan
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Banning rickshaws



Many thanks to Mr Sikander Ahmed for his letter published in The Daily Star on 15 January 2007, pointing out the plights of the majority of commuters due to ban on rickshaws in Mohakhali to Gulshan road. I remember the day I was thrown out from a rickshaw on a rainy day on this road by a traffic policeman too keen to implement the ban on rickshaw. It was not very nice to walk the rest of the way to my office all soaked in rain. One reason for rickshaws being blamed for traffic jam and banned is probably that it is easier to implement restriction on the poor and weak! In the last ten years in Dhaka I have seen several times traffic policemen puncturing tyres of rickshaws as a punishment for disobeying traffic rules, but have never seen them do any such thing to the cars that clearly ignore traffic rules. True, rickshaw-pullers do not obey the traffic rules and create jams frequently. But the same is

true about cars, buses or any other motorised vehicles. Nobody appears to be aware of any traffic rules relating to overtaking, changing lanes, right of the way, parking and such things. It's more like doing whatever you can get away with and of course you can get away with almost anything!

So, banning rickshaws would not solve anything unless people on the road - pedestrians, rickshaw-pullers, drivers of motor vehicles - learn to follow the very basic traffic rules. If I can think of ways for rickshaws to coexist without creating traffic congestion using common sense, the so called planners should be able to think of better solutions than banning rickshaws, without offering any alternative to the common people.

Shahriar Khan
Uttara, Dhaka

Hilsha export

I am an expatriate Bangladeshi and would like to express my views on hilsha export to foreign countries from Bangladesh.

Recently purchased a medium sized Padma hilsha (in an already processed form) from a Bangladeshi store in Lakemba, Sydney, Australia where most of these stores are located.

The fish was purchased for 19 Australian dollars which is high. I was just reading an article on hilsha export on The Daily Star internet version. I came to know about the recent price hike of hilsha in the local markets of Bangladesh after the removal of ban on its export and the difficulty the local people are

facing in buying it. I sympathise with them. Although hilsha is one my favourite fish, I feel it is unfair to export it overseas without fulfilling the demands of the local people. My view is that hilsha should not be exported until there is adequate supply in the local market and its price comes down to within the reach of the common people of Bangladesh. We expatriate people have other fishes to choose from and do not feel obliged to eat hilsha depriving many people residing in Bangladesh.

Dr. Haider Mannan
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Sydney

