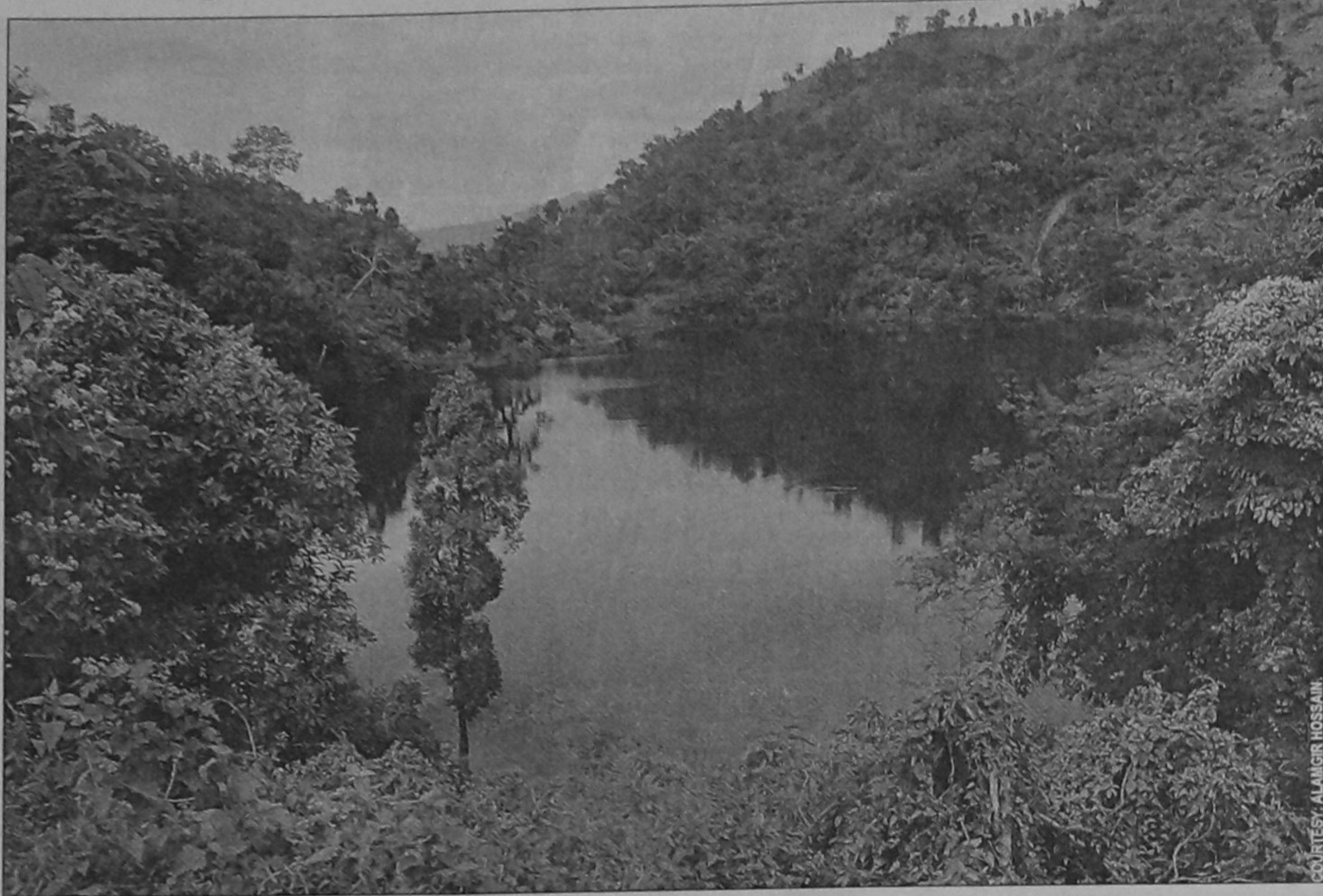


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Bangladesh and eco-tourism



As a destination for eco-tourism, Bangladesh is truly hard to beat. For a small country in South Asia that is only 144,470 square kilometres, there is definitely a lot to see, enjoy and do here.

Located between India to the north and the west and Myanmar to a small part of the southeast, Bangladesh is one of the most beautiful countries in South Asia with tremendous economic potential. Its tropical beach resorts on the Bay of Bengal should be a paradise for the sun vacationers. But the main attraction of Bangladesh should be its opportunities for eco-tourism with its variety of animals, birds, forests, hills and hillocks and aquatic life.

The splendour of its six seasons presents a diverse eco-system. The world's longest natural beach at Cox's Bazaar, the nearby jungles and forests with their rich variety of flora and fauna, the Chittagong Hill Tracts' cloud forests so named because the moisture of the mists

linger on the tree leaves and fascinate tourists. A cable car network at Bandarban would enable tourists observe the plants and wildlife from the treetop level. For the more adventurous, there are places built for the tourists to get the experience of moving from tree to tree using a network of rope attachments. Dry forests in some parts of Chittagong, seasonal variation every two months, and an abundance of canals and rivers can also be an attraction for tourists.

In addition to the many different birds that can be sighted, there is a large number of other exotic wildlife including Royal Bengal Tigers, monkeys, jaguars, bats, deer and reptiles that can be seen during tours in Sundarbans, the world largest mangrove forest and World Heritage Site. Every year, there are sea turtles and oysters that come to certain beaches to nest and this event attracts many nature lovers. The wildlife in

Bangladesh is not only rich on land or the air but also in the Bay of Bengal and in its mighty rivers. For scuba divers, Saint Martin's Island may offer excellent diving opportunities and they would be quite different from the waters in the Caribbean.

The historic capital city of Dhaka is known for its nice ancient architecture. It is also known as the city of mosques. A tourist can go for trips to the various hill stations, historic places and beaches using Dhaka as the base. Chittagong, the port city, is known for its low hills and greenery. It is closer to the resorts like Cox's Bazar. The roads of Bangladesh are more or less good.

There is so much to see and do in Bangladesh!
Mohammad Shahidul Islam
Faculty Member
National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute, Dhaka

Graves of the martyrs

I would like to draw attention to the news item titled 'Freedom fighter Lt. Col. Qadir's grave traced after 36 years' published in the last column of page 16 in The Daily Star of 19 January 2008. In 1971, I was about 13 years old and lived with my parents in Chittagong and had near similar experience as Nadeem Qadir. Now I am working at the Directorate General of Health Services, Dhaka.

First, I congratulate Nadeem Qadir (Antu) for going through all the effort to locate his father's final resting place, Dr Mahfuzur Rahman for taking pains to record accurate events of a time that is getting dimmed and The Daily Star for publishing the news.

I was drawn to the said news because the site described appears also to be the final resting place of my father Major A. K. Amirul Islam, AMC who was shot dead by the Pakistani Army on 4 April 1971 and was buried there along with few others. Besides that of my father, I can give the identity of two others my maternal uncle Dr. Khondker Abdul Wadud, and my father's official orderly Zainal.

The Chittagong Polyclinic at Panchalalish Residential Area, Chittagong was then, in 1971, a

residential building housing six apartments and was named as 'Shukhtara'. My father was then the DADMS in East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) posted at Chittagong, and one of the apartments in 'Shukhtara' was requisitioned by the then government as our residence.

My father, mother (Latifa Islam, died in 1991), three sisters (Shagufta Jabeen, Wajihah Shireen, & I), and two orderlies lived in the apartment. Sometime after 25 March 1971, my father gave the orderlies the option to leave the house or stay with us and face the consequences as my father was involved in treating the injured freedom fighters. One of the orderlies Nuru opted to leave and accordingly left, while the other orderly Zainal opted to stand by my father.

My maternal uncle, who was the Managing Director of the then Dawood Jute Mills at Chittagong, along with his family (my aunt and three cousin sisters) came to our house in the early morning of 4 April 1971 to discuss with my father about the best way to face the situation. At around 11:30 am, the Pak Army entered our apartment, brought us all out on the street in front of the building, and shot at point blank range at my father and uncle right before our eyes. We, the

females were asked by the army personnel to leave the site with just our lives. I went back to the apartment two to three days later, and found everything strewn around, and a pool of blood in the kitchen. The neighbours came forward to see me. They informed me that the Pak army persons had shot the orderly in the kitchen of the house, and that they had buried about seven people including my father, my uncle and the orderly in a mass grave at the site behind 'Shukhtara' beside the main waste water outlet channel. The description of Lt Col Qadir's grave as mentioned in the news appears to fit the site of my father's grave too. It may be mentioned here that both Lt Col Qadir's and our family had social relation. A detail of the sad demise of my father has been published by the Centre for Social Studies, Dhaka University.

Over the years, my mother, my two sisters and I, along with our respective spouses and children, have repeatedly visited the site and prayed for all the departed souls. I came to know that a building was being constructed at the site of the mass grave. I am pleased to know that the location of mass grave has come to the notice of Bangladesh Army, and the construction of the building at the site has been halted.

I hope some sort of memorial will be built at the site for the future generation to recall the history of the glorious liberation war of Bangladesh.

Rukhsana Shaheen, PhD
New DOHS
Dhaka

CTG's efforts

I commend the efforts of the CTG to put out of circulation the corrupt politicians of Bangladesh through the legal process. I also commend their courage to take on the two autocratic ladies who thought they were beyond the reach of the law. When Sheikh Hasina says that if voted to power she would continue the current anti-corruption drive and reform process, its credibility to me is a big zero.

Our last hope is the Election Commission. Let them not deviate from their stance not to give registration to the parties that do not allow democratic practice within the party itself. They should also put into practice the landmark High Court decision to make it mandatory for the candidates to declare their educational and other relevant records.

Nurul Islam
Chicago, USA

Ekushey Boimela 2008

Bangla and Ekushey Boi Mela are integral part of our national identity and pride.

It is natural that our children and young generation enjoy the Boi Mela. A reader
One-mail

Poor postal service

I refer to the news published on page 22 of the Daily Star on 16 Jan. 2008 regarding the present 'Postal Service in Bangladesh'.

We note that the Govt. has recently increased the 'Postal Charges' on certain items. People do not mind paying a little bit more if the service is 'Prompt and Efficient'.

Unfortunately, the Postal Service in our country is really inefficient. It takes a letter a long time to reach the destination. Sometime the letters go missing, causing much agony to the senders.

Many countries of the world provide very good 'Postal Service' at reasonable cost to the people. Our neighbouring country India provides good and efficient 'Postal Service' to people at a reasonable cost. Why not take some 'Technical Assistance' from India to improve our postal services? After all, we are together in Saarc and meet very often. We can also take technical assistance from the UK, USA, European Union and other friendly countries.

As per your report, our postal dept. is losing about Tk. 200 crore every year due to inefficient operation. This is not acceptable. The government must take prompt action to improve the postal services.

I would humbly request our Adviser in charge of the postal department to look into this matter and take corrective measures for improving the postal services in Bangladesh.

Ihsanul Haq
New Eskaton Road
Dhaka

EPR

The lawyers' uniform opinion that, 'trial of a crime, which had been committed before the promulgation of the Emergency Power Act, cannot be held under the ambit of Emergency Power Rules', defies all common sense and appears against all moral precepts.

So, corruption, extortion, murder and all criminal activities committed before the promulgation of emergency cannot be investigated or tried out during the emergency. That seems to be the central opinion of these legal experts!

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

RU students' campaign

It is great to see that the Bangladeshi youth is taking steps to promote two of the greatest natural resorts in the world. Enhancing the publicity that these destinations receive is an important step towards promoting tourism in Bangladesh.

Unfortunately, our government continues to fail us in promoting these natural resorts that could create jobs and bring in foreign currency. It is of paramount importance for Bangladesh to invest to create a strong infrastructure that can manage tourism at these locations. At the same time, we must publicise Bangladesh on the world stage using international media channels. For example, advertisements should be given on CNN, BBC, international newspapers, etc.

These RU students and others are showing us the way. It is now for the government to take the initiative for making further progress.

Faisal Rahman
United Kingdom

Advertisements

Nowadays many people say that they like advertisements, rather than movies. I appreciate it. But my point of writing this letter is that after watching these advertisements, I could guess, that they cannot even remember the name of the product which has been advertised. So, I think the advertisers should concentrate on publicising the qualities of the product or on the theme they want to uphold.

I agree that with the increased amount of products in the market, sellers want more and more attractive advertisements.

Unfortunately, in our subcontinent most of the advertisement makers are actually making short telefilms, not ads. As a result, people remember only those dramas, not the products!

Mr Md Aseer Jubair Khan Majlish
Dhaka

Dialogue

The demand of the political parties to start a dialogue without any condition sounds good but there should be a guideline and well-defined agenda for discussion. The political parties must realise that there is no scope in future to run any government driven by the whims and caprices of the party in power.

The next government should continue the corruption cases and reformation measures started by the present PTG. They must agree to multi-party democracy in letter and spirit. The country cannot go back to the situation prevailing before 1/11. The parties must agree not to call strikes, refrain from using muscle power and showing the clout of money at the time of election and thereafter. Otherwise, restoration of democracy will ever remain an elusive goal.

Kumar Prithwiraj Nath
Toronto, Canada

DITF anomalies

As a local resident, I have been visiting the annual International Trade Fair in Dhaka since its inception. This year I visited the site around noon on 6 January for about two hours, and came back

rather disappointed.

International trade fairs are organised for promoting the exports of the host country and for generating interest about the products offered by the foreign stalls. For Bangladeshi stalls, the focus has to be on export; but the stalls of the exporters could not be distinguished by displays, and lack of data, charts and graphs, and written materials, for publicity. The RMG sector was hiding somewhere (it covers around 75 per cent of BD exports). We have had enough experience for fine tuning DITF to improve the handling every year. No BD pavilion of what we export!

It was surprising to note that the local stalls were selling/retailing foreign goods not manufactured or assembled in BD. The atmosphere was like a local shopping centre. The products displayed did not carry information about the products; for comparative studies. The BEPZA stalls or booths or information kiosks were not easy to locate.

No printed materials were available readily and visibly, for later study and filing. The public address system was blaring with extra loud vocal music, without interruptions for informative announcements.

The field officials were not visible in uniform. Why data and information were being hidden?

The foreign stalls also had no literature for distribution, nor kept in sight for free pick up. The whole show looked like a local affair, with lack of international flavour.

Planning was poor -- no attention to details. It is inexcusable that there was no arrangement for taxi stands, for thousands of visitors daily. One had to walk from a long distance after alighting from rickshaw. Why this patronisation for private cars? Many visitors were exiting with heavy bags of purchases, and had to face the non-availability of public transport. In Bangladesh, there is no respect for the commuter, and the restrictions on the cycle rickshaws are most unjustified (here there were lots of families with children).

The planning appeared to be bureaucratic, and unpractical. The authorities concerned have to clarify the state of affairs.

AMawaz
Dhaka

NGOs and recovery of loans

Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed and Army chief Gen. Moeen U Ahmed have called upon the NGOs to write off the loans or to put off the collection of payment of loan instalments from the cyclone affected people for a period of four months on humanitarian grounds.

Unfortunately, unpleasant reports continue to pour in from various cyclone affected areas that some field employees of NGOs are putting pressure on the cyclone victims for payment of their loan instalments.

We understand that NGOs' field employees draw their salaries from the amount collected from payment of loan instalments. If they fail to collect the loan instalments they (NGO employees) are deprived of their salaries and they are unable to maintain themselves and their families.

We, therefore, feel that our government may in coordination with the NGO headquarters ensure payment of salaries of the NGO field employees and make the noble call of the chief adviser and the chief of army meaningful.

OH Kabir
Hare Street
Wari, Dhaka

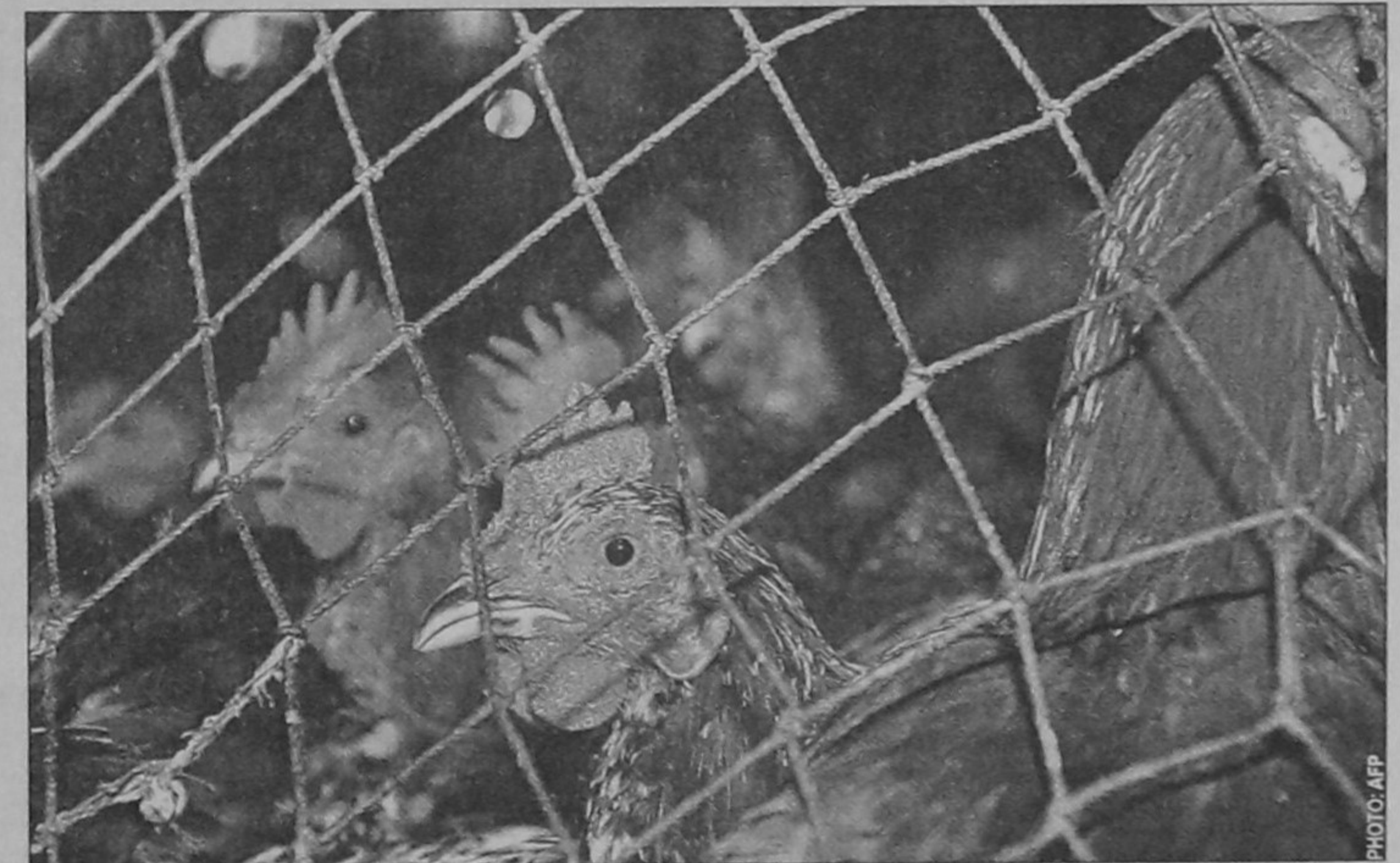
University teachers

I myself am an educator, and once taught at the University of Dhaka. I know from my experience, many of the university teachers in Bangladesh waste much of their valuable time doing dysfunctional politics. I believe time has come for the government and the people of the country to clean up the mess on the campus, bring academic law and order back to the campus, and ensure that the universities can never be used as the centres of dirty politics by the politicians in the future.

The faculty members are supposed to be the role models for the society. I am not sure, if I can tell it for many of my colleagues in Bangladesh.

Mainuddin Afza, Ph.D.
Professor of Management
Fulbright Professor
Bloumberg University of Pennsylvania
Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, USA

BIRD FLU



Bird flu has not only created health hazards but also made a very unfavourable impact on the rural economy, where thousands of affected chickens have been culled to prevent possible transmission of the disease to humans.

Though the farm chickens are the main source of bearing germs through which bird flu is penetrating into the country, the migrated birds may have played a vital role in this respect. Border points are the most unprotected and exposed areas for easy spreading of the deadly disease.

By this time thousands of chickens have been culled in the farms and many preventative methods have been applied to stop further infection.

The government's immediate steps to control possible aggravation is well recognised but what we observe is lack of appropriate initiative in the process of alerting the local people on the possible hazards. There is still a strong belief that this bird flu cannot be transmitted to local chickens and other types of local birds.

Therefore we strongly feel that the government's livestock dept. should immediately take appropriate steps to print easily understandable pictorial displays and circulate the same all over the country in an easy and simple language to make people aware of the hazard and its consequential effects on humans and livestock, especially on home birds and other pet animals. Under no circumstances should the dead or culled chickens be sold in the market. The government should also arrange basic training for the farm owners on the hazard and its management.

Nasar, On e-mail

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Nasar, On e-mail

Smoking

Many smokers argue that cigarette smoking is a gift of modern times, and it is a fashion nowadays. Some of them claim that it increases the concentration to work. But their arguments are indeed baseless. Medical studies have confirmed that there is a direct link between nicotine, which is present in tobacco, and high incidence of heart attack and cancer in smokers. These are dreadful diseases, and even the innocent non-smoking people around the smokers can be harmed by them. So, we have no moral right to smoke in public places.

Smoking in a public place is an infringement on the fundamental right of our fellow citizens, because it violates their right to live. A smoker may argue that banning smoking would violate the fundamental right of the individual. But this is not true, as no one has the right to endanger one's own life and the life of others around him. It is this realisation out of which many advanced countries like the UK and the USA have banned smoking in public.

The consequence of smoking is indeed very grave.
Maruf Ahsan
Dept. of Law
University of Chittagong

What is this?

A picture was published in your daily on January 16: some young boys are pushing an electric pole to block the street. It is astonishing that they are grinning as if it's a child's play.

This people don't understand how they have been pushing the poor economy of our country towards total ruin.

Either the authorities should let them understand through motivation or just net the culprits. Nobody should be immune!

Monzur Rahman
Rajshahi

Our future in Test cricket



Over the past couple of years, Bangladesh cricket team has shown a great deal of promise after the spectacular performances in both the 50 overs and 20 overs World Cup in the Caribbean and South Africa. However, all our hopes were shattered after their dismal performance recently against the Kiwis in New Zealand. Even though they won the T-20 match against the Kiwis, they however proved their inconsistency in the other formats of the game. I think we all know that this young Bangladeshi team is extremely talented, after seeing their amazing performance against great teams like Australia and South Africa, but they are not making the best use of this talent and the reason behind this, according to me, is their lack of confidence and self-belief. The T-20 format of the game is more suited for teams like Bangladesh, as they are used to collapsing suddenly after scoring some quick runs, but this habit of them certainly won't help them in the other versions of the game and we have seen a lot of disasters occurring due to this.

I believe the coaches and the players should concentrate on improving in these formats of the game, especially in Test cricket and we expect better results from them in the future.

Asif Mustakim
Maple Leaf Intl. School
Kakrail, Dhaka