

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.

Ekushey

On February 21, 1952 the valiant soldiers of the Language Movement shed their blood for upholding the dignity of our dear mother tongue - Bangla.

The Language Movement was not led by the Awami League. The movement was started on 11 March 1949. The very party Awami League was not born at that time. Awami League was born on June 23, 1949. Dharendra Nath Dutta, a Congress leader of the British days, placed the demand before parliament - he was the first man to demand Bengali as the state language of Pakistan.

Principal Abul Quasem and his organisation "Tamuddun Majlish" also played a vital role in the years before the Language Movement.

This was a prelude to our struggle for sovereignty and independent existence. The Language Movement gave a new momentum to our crusade against all disparities created by the then regime. The blood of martyrs of the Language Movement did not go in vain. It helped carve out a separate and distinct entity for the Bengalees. Ekushey February instills in us the determination to fight for the right

cause. The cause of mother tongue was dear to one and all. The sublime sacrifices of those who laid down their lives for the cause of the mother tongue shall remain ever green in the hearts of the people. Ekushey February should not be observed as a yearly ritual only. Unesco has proclaimed February 21 as the International Mother Language Day to be observed globally in recognition of the sacrifices of the martyrs for establishing the rightful place of their mother tongue. The proclamation came in the form of a resolution and was adopted at the plenary of Unesco at its headquarters in Paris on November 17, 1999.

Ekushey tells us to shun differences, give up partisan politics and unite for the just cause. On this day we can ask our politicians whether they are following the path shown by our language martyrs. Those martyrs did not hesitate the least in sacrificing their precious lives for the cause of Bangla language. Certainly, we have drifted away from the path shown by them.

Kazi Liakat Hossain
Shiddheshwari Lane, Dhaka

RU

Rajshahi University is the second largest university in Bangladesh.

There are more than 25,000 students at the university. Among them about 8,000 are female students. For these female students there are only five residential halls. This accommodation is not sufficient for them and another problem is insecurity.

These days it is a common sight that the outsiders (male) enter into the women halls at midnight. If this situation goes on, the parents of the female students will not feel secure to send their daughters to this university.

The university authorities should look into the matter.
Abrar and Ashraful
Department of Economics
University of Rajshahi

AL's rivals

Thank you very much for publishing a unique report on the meeting of the "Sangskarbadi" political parties. Your newspaper is the only one that published this news.

As an Awami Leaguer, Freedom Fighter, physician, I am extremely delighted to get a clue about our opponents in the next general elections.

How nice to think, that a gang consisting of autocrat (JP)+ Razakar+War Criminal JI+ Completely isolated from the grassroots BNP reformists +turn-coats-all season dalals of all past military dictators, the PDP+ break away (on the very last day) splinter of the corrupt 4-party alliance gov't (LDP)+ Bikolpadhara of an ousted president, which had a lone MP+ Gonoforum of Dr. Kamal shall be our opponents!

We (AL) did not have such a fine combination of electoral opponents even in the then East Pakistan of 1970.

As for the "news" that some reformists of the AL may join them later, it is a day dream! The so called former reformists of our party (if there were any) have already got the message from our boys on the day the ban on indoor politics was lifted in Dhaka. These are mature politicians and, notably, they will not think like this again, I can bet!
An Awami Leaguer
Freedom Fighter of 1971

Road accidents

A very tragic road accident took place on the Chittagong - Cox's Bazar road last week. Fifteen garment workers died on the spot and many others were wounded. Reckless driving and lack of trained drivers are mainly responsible for such accidents. Fatal road accidents are taking place on a regular basis.

The government should address the issue with due sense of urgency.
Nurnobe
Department of Bengali literature
Chittagong

"Cross Talk"

Reading The Daily Star in the morning is the first task I have been doing for several years, and I never missed my favourite articles of a few columnists since my university life. When I find a topic of my interest, I read it repeatedly. 'Cross Talk' by Mohammad Badrul Ahsan is such a column which I wait for every Friday. It's my habit to read columns published in national and international dailies, to be aware of what is happening around me and to share how the people are responding to the current issues of the global community. In this regard The Daily Star has created a different taste of reading in me, especially with the trio, Mohammad Zamir, Mohammad Badrul Ahsan and Kazi Anwarul Masud.

But it's regrettable that I have missed Cross talk By Mohammad Badrul Ahsan for a few consecutive weeks.
Sarwar Kamal
Lecturer in Philosophy
Cox's Bazar Govt. Women's College

CTG's policy

The caretaker government should look at the big picture of where this country is heading. There have been no significant economic developments; in fact, we are cursed with rising prices and various other afflictions at the moment. There is a crackdown on the extremely corrupt officials such as those of Titas Gas. They should be commended for that. However, generally the economy has slowed down. The salaries of government officials need to be raised to a more realistic level, given today's prices. The government would benefit from external professional management consultants who can introduce systems whereby the gas/electricity employees will not be able to breathe without someone knowing about it. They also need to encourage and support business activities and give up the scare tactics which has stunted economic growth. This will lead to more employment and prosperity for the people and more tax for the government to use for projects. If they put their hands up in defeat, apologise and accept that most of the economy is black and work with this fact, rather than fighting it, then the "small" importers can carry out business as before and hopefully bring down the food prices.

Eventually, if they work with this fact and show some humility instead of force, they may persuade them to pay taxes, import legally and become good citizens, but right now the beggars cannot be the choosers. We are in a deadlock of mutual distrust and the poor are paying the price.
S. Choudhury
UK

Good article

It was a splendid experience for me as a newspaper reader to read the article "Philosophy of life, Philosophy for life" in your paper's weekly magazine "Star Campus" on 10 February 2008. The article is for the students. I am an elderly income tax practitioner and also engage in religion-related writings and reading. I found your presentation very interesting, but it was too short to quench my thirst. If you could present a similar article in an elaborate form, if necessary in a series, especially giving emphasis on Asian Philosophers (better known as eastern philosophers), it will be beneficial for me and many other readers.

Tarapada Acharjee
Shadhu Nag Mahashay Ashrama
Nagbari, Narayanganj

Smear campaign against Obama

In the United States election Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are fighting for nomination from the Democratic Party. Obama is doing very well, he won eleven encounters in a row and it seems that people like him, irrespective of race, religion, and age. Especially, the young voters are supporting him overwhelmingly.

But I am astonished and shocked observing that the Republicans and supporters of Hillary Clinton are trying to portray him as a Muslim. They are repeatedly uttering his name as 'Barack Hussein Obama' which is quite an unnecessary and a despicable action. Through this smear campaign McCain and Hillary are doing harm to themselves, because people do not like this sort of tactics at all.

It is, however, heartening to learn that McCain regretted what had been said about Barack Obama at a rally.
Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Our heritage

Bangladesh is a country rich in archaeological wealth, especially of the medieval period, both the Muslim and pre-Muslim rules. Its heritage reveals the ancient legacies of the Buddhist, Hindus and Muslims. The early history of Bangladesh reveals that Buddhism received royal patronage from some important ruling Hindu dynasties like the great Pal rulers, the Chandras and the Deva Kings.

Under their patronage numerous well-organised monasteries sprang up all over the country. The combination of Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Mongol/Mughal, Arab, Persian, Turkish, and West European cultures have also enriched our heritage. Here, kings, sultans and conquerors competed with each other to build beautiful palaces, mosques and temples.

But we have failed to preserve many of these ancient structures because of our collective carelessness. Still we have enough time to protect heritage sites for at least:

- : Reviving our golden past
- : Conferring it on future generations
- : Upholding social, spiritual, ethical and legal obligations etc.

Heritage places are often described as either natural or cultural heritage. In reality they often have a blend of natural, historic and aboriginal heritage significance. For example, the vast landscape of Paharpur, the largest monastery south of Himalayas contains important terracotta plaques, images of different gods and goddesses, potteries, coins, inscriptions, ornamental bricks, minor clay objects, ecosystems, wonderful native paintings and engravings, sites of great spiritual significance and interesting historic features. Understanding this multifaceted heritage place means distinguishing all the different elements of significance.

The following steps can be considered for heritage awareness:

1. From primary to university level, beside Bengali and English, tourism should be pre-



scribed as a compulsory subject.

2. Newspapers, television, radio and other media have to be instructed to produce shows and weekly supplementary on culture and heritage.

3. There should be exhibitions to highlight unknown aspects of heritage.

4. Every year a heritage festival should be observed in every district.

5. Writers and experts on heritage have to be patronised to raise awareness.

The government is expected to formulate a series of rules and standards to manage and protect cultural relics and create national standards for both conservation and awareness building.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam
One-mail

Jamuna Bridge

The report entitled "Cracks on Jamuna Bridge" was published in your newspaper on Feb. 13, 2008.

I have examined the photograph that you have printed with the report as well as other photographs printed in other newspapers. I do not have any information about the design analysis of this bridge. By surfing the Internet I came across some information about soil condition, piling system, girder type etc., but not the design criterion or the thickness of slab. The photograph you have printed is of a contraction joint and not of an expansion joint as is generally thought to be by the non-technical people.

When water curing stops after about 28 days, the concrete hardens and shrinks. Then when the temperature is high it expands. At lower temperatures it again shrinks. This cycle repeats every day throughout the year. Cracks occur when contraction joints, necessary to absorb the stress of shrinking, are at improper distance or not sufficiently grooved. Test

move freely during shrinkage, causing cracks at the slab surface.

5) The grooves shall be filled with a remoulded flexible material to prevent rainwater from entering the groove.

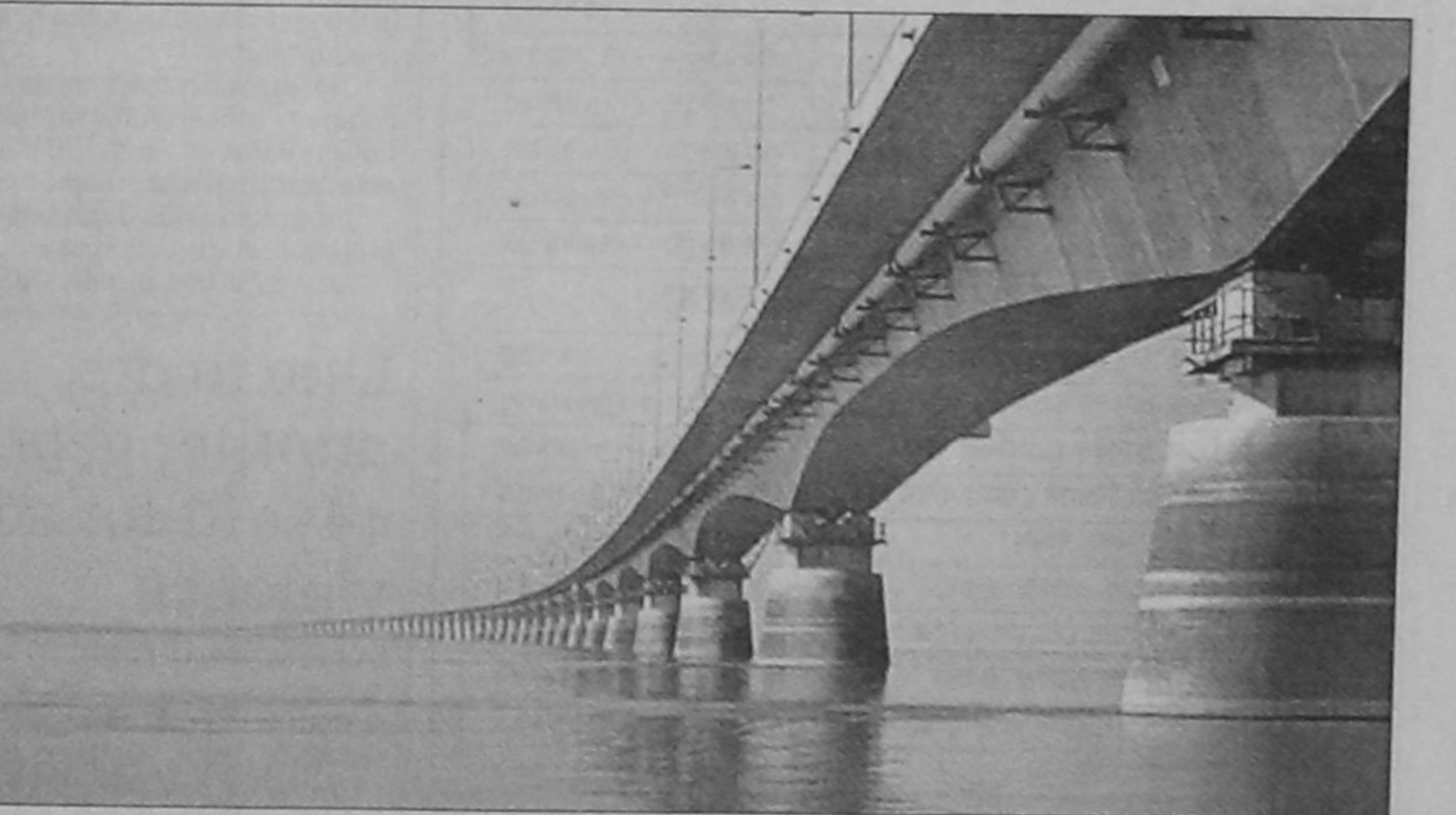
6) In each side of the long groove, a steel made double-L shape half of Nazi swastika (mark) shall be placed at the top of slab and fixed with the use of anchor bolts.

7) Cement grouting in between slab top and swastika bottom may be needed for proper alignment.

8) The top of steel shapes shall have saw-teeth. These shapes shall be placed in such a manner that the teeth of each shape can enter to or come out from the teeth of shape at the opposite side whenever there are movements of concrete slabs in the horizontal direction.

9) The height of these swastika-shapes shall be 40mm from the surface of slab.

10) There shall be two layers of asphalt paving on the top of concrete slab, the total thickness being 40mm. This height is same as the height



observations have shown that a 100 meter long concrete contracts by about 55 millimetre when the temperature is lowered by 38 degree C. If there are no contraction joints at all in this 100m stretch, cracks may appear in many places. The combined width of these cracks will be about 55mm. In order to avoid appearance of cracks and as a result the destruction of concrete in a short period of time, contraction joints are provided at about 15m to 25m distance and reinforcing steel bars are placed about 20mm below the top surface, even if by structural analysis these are not required. This provision can be confirmed by the ACI (American Concrete Institute) codes.

A contraction joint, as specified by AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) and practised throughout the world, has the following features:

- 1) It is supposed to be placed at around 15 meter to 25 meter centre-to-centre.
- 2) The groove for this joint shall better be V-shaped, its top and bottom widths being 12mm and 8mm respectively.
- 3) The minimum depth of groove shall be 25mm or at least one-fourth the slab thickness - whichever is larger. For example, if the slab thickness is 300mm, the depth of groove shall be 75mm. A shallower depth is superficial and is not effective to control cracks.
- 4) Top steel reinforcing bars - never the bottom bars - shall be cut at the grooves. If the top re-bars are not cut, the slab surface cannot

of steel swastika shape (see above in 9).

I do not remember the source, but somewhere I have read that a total of only seven contraction joints have been provided to the whole slab length. If it is true, then, in my opinion, it was a gross mistake. However, it can be somehow rectified. I would like to suggest the following:

1) Cut the concrete slab along transverse direction with the help of electric or gasoline powered circular saws and create grooves.

2) The centre-to-centre distance shall not exceed 25 meter if there are top steel bars in the already built concrete slab. If steel bars have not been provided, my suggestion is that the centre-to-centre distance shall be kept within 15 meter.

3) Since the slab is already built, therefore, the groove can be made U-shape if it is difficult to make V-shape. The groove width can be maintained at 12mm.

4) Other features shall remain the same as suggested.

In all the river crossings that I have seen in Bangladesh, be they box culverts, girder or truss bridge, the top concrete slab is not covered with asphalt paving. It is very much an unusual practice. I suggest that not only the Jamuna Bridge, but also all other bridges, be paved with asphalt. Without this measure the concrete slabs wear out easily.

Engr. Shaikh Wazir
Motyokoyamacho
Tokyo, Japan



Obama and change

Re: "Marching forth," by Zafar Sobhan (Feb. 29).

After years of Bush dynastic rule, few Americans are interested in a Clinton dynastic rule. America is considered as the world's greatest democracy and rightly so. This is a country founded on the revolt against the British imperial rule. It was also a revolt against privilege and an affirmation of the principles of democracy as envisaged by ancient Athenians. Ancient Athenians, who invented democracy, believed that ordinary people must have a say in the government and the aristocrats and elites must not be allowed to govern them by virtue of their birth and status.

Both U.S. President George W. Bush and Senator Hillary Clinton are products of privilege and "family ties." It is unthinkable that Bush would be president without President George H.W. Bush as his father. Similarly, Hillary Clinton would not be here if she were not the wife of President Bill Clinton. They owe their political rise to their father and husband. This is not much different from Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh and Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan. But this is understandable for such poor countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan where women are so underprivileged that they need a boost from their family ties. But for the world's richest and most advanced country, where women are free to follow their own careers, this will be the greatest shame.

Britain's Margaret Thatcher and Germany's Angela Merkel rose to their top positions on their own rights. Their fathers or husbands played no role in their rise to power. Mrs. Clinton's greatest asset is her

husband and it is also her greatest liability and her nomination will only galvanise the Republican Party and will lead to inevitable defeat of the Democratic candidate. Hillary Clinton's experience as First Lady will be of no significance to Senator John McCain's long experience both as a Senator and a war hero. Mrs. Clinton will not have the slightest chance against Senator John McCain.

Senator Barack Obama is a clear departure from this politics of privilege. Son of a Kenyan black father and a Kansas white mother, he was brought up by his mother as his father left when he was only 2 years old. By hard work and pure brilliance, he rose to become a successful corporate lawyer, then a Illinois Senator and a U.S. Senator. His life bears a striking resemblance to another Illinois Senator Abraham Lincoln who rose from a humble beginning to become the greatest president of America. Obama's story is a success story of personal struggle and hard work and not any family ties that helped both George Bush and Hillary Clinton to launch their political careers.

But most importantly, Senator Barack Obama symbolises the change from the extreme partisan politics in America. He has also galvanised younger Americans who are extremely apathetic towards politics. If Mrs. Clinton, representing the old Democratic henchmen, is nominated, the young generation will stay at home, letting the Democrats lose a new constituency.

Moreover, Barack Obama as president of the United States is also promising a new world order in which America will work with other nations to ensure global stability. For too long, the Bush

administration pursued a chimera of a world view composed in equal parts of Hobsonian darkness of fighting the so-called axis of evil and a utopian remake of the world by bringing democracy at gunpoint. Both have failed. The world now needs a new leadership in which fear and intimidation will play a lesser role.
Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Overloading

When a bus comes to a bus-stand, passengers rush into it. Some passengers hang on the window, some at the back and some take shelter on the top of the bus. And the bus is overloaded. This enhances the risk of fatal accidents.

So, overloading in bus should be strictly prohibited by law. The passengers should also be aware of the hazards associated with overloading.
S.M. Najmul Haque Emon
Santahar (Chabagan), Bogra

Punish the corrupt

The corrupt employees of Titas gas promised to return their illegally earned money. But this is not a solution. This may inspire other corrupt people to practise corruption and beg pardon. The gov't should take the wealth and money, dismiss and punish them. There should be no excuse. This caretaker gov't does not enforce rules strictly to banish corruption.

If there are no laws to contain corruption, there is no need to arrest corrupt people. Weak laws make people corrupt!
Sazzadur Rahman
PhD student
School of Built Environment
University of Ulster
Northern Ireland

Anti-virus CDs!

I have plenty of computer AV [Anti-virus] CDs purchased from the local market, but I cannot find any political

AV CD for presentation to the EC for freeing our society from the bottomless basket and tunnels without light



at the other end.

This should be big business as all political regimes in the three worlds, viz first, second and the third world regimes are indulging in this pastime recklessly. The systems losses would be reduced to a great extent, and the impoverished people in the LDCs would reap the benefit of the stolen wealth and privileges.

The modus operandi is not a mystery: grab, grab, and grab; recklessly and shamelessly. The CTG in Dhaka has cleared one mystery: our jails need rapid development and expansion, with lots of WIP cells; and plenty of arrangements for medical treatment. There is also the neglected Pabna lunatic asylum which need not be transferred to capital Dhaka.

The newly-emerged nations have a lot of common problems: autocracy reigns supreme in the inner hearts of the inflated leaders, who live with charisma, and fade out ignominiously. It is difficult to rule, and satisfy the simple citizens; most of the voters live in the rural areas. Some communities have no awareness or respect for political governance (Afghanistan, Iraq and other regions).

There are no political reformatory institutions to start a fresh life (people-oriented). The pleaders and advocates are making money (fully aware of what they are doing and how-easy come, easy go money).

The question is: what is the path to political salvation?
Alif Zabr, Dhaka