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Cultural identity



We have a very rich culture. If we just think about 'Pahela Baishakh' we will understand that we do not have to borrow anything from the western world. But it seems that we are ignoring our own culture. Our dress is getting westernised and we have lost faith in family values which were once the foundation of society. However, the worst thing is what we are doing in the name of so-called individualism. Culture is very important for a nation. But it cannot be retained by observing only some events on some days. We have to treat it as having a lot to do with our identity.

Mushfique Wadud
Department of English
Stamford University Bangladesh

condition. They never listen to what the students may have to say. I think all this is true about some other universities as well!

ABBA student
SUB

Upsetting the democratic trend

The wise remarks of the former chief adviser Justice Habibur Rahman at the National Citizen's Dialogue as reported in most papers on 7th April are a very timely and relevant advice to the present CTG and its mentors. We could have on a short-term basis involved the men behind the scene in an anti corruption operation, and cleaning up of the police establishment with no strings attached. But influencing governance from behind the scene is not the proper method to adopt. Authority without responsibility is the harbinger of instability and other serious issues that destabilise democracy in the long term; though appearing very rosy in the short term! This is unfortunately happening in Bangladesh. It is a fundamental political and governance issue that the nation must resolve, if we want democracy to survive and flourish in the long-term.

ABangladeshi
Gulshan, Dhaka

Cruelty to animals

Our treatment of animals should be kind. Animals are often mistreated or killed unnecessarily. A few days ago I was stuck and unable to move at Uttara at around 10 am and I witnessed the cruel act of a man. I had dropped my daughter to school and was waiting for the traffic to clear up. I noticed two goats tied tightly to the roof grill of a bus. It was sunny, hot and crowded and the goats' owner ensured that the goats did not fall down. The two ropes were pressed round the necks of the two fragile animals pressing against the arteries. I reckoned it would have been better had the goats' waist or legs (say 'wrists') were tightened.

Just then an abrupt jerk made a goat, which was standing precariously on the uneven or ragged roof, fall and remain hanging (as tied to ropes) from the edge of 'Skyline Transport' bus. Some passengers uttered words of warning about the imminent death by strangulation. Finally, the owner came down from the bus to salvage his possessions in danger of death.

There are many gifts that are unique to man, but at the centre of them all lies the ability to draw conclusions from what we see on what we do not see. Please use thin ropes to safeguard animals. Be kind!

Tajul Islam
Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Trial of politicians

It is more than a year, the caretaker government arrested the politicians on charges of corruption and misuse of power. But till today the jailed leaders have not been tried.

And prices have gone up unexpectedly. Poor people are unable to buy foods and other essentials due to high prices. People have started to talk about the caretaker government. The government has failed to control prices of most essential commodities. If the prices of essential items are not brought down within the reach of the common people, the success of the caretaker government will soon be questioned. It is true that law and order situation in the country is quite good and appreciable. People wanted to see that the corrupt politicians got due punishment. These politicians with their 'chamchas' are trying their best to make the caretaker government

fail. If the caretaker government fails (Allah forbid) than these selfish politicians will again loot everything.

There is no time for the government to lose. I would appeal to the caretaker government to adopt some special measures to bring down the prices of foods and other most essential commodities.

Mohammed Abul Hashem
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

People's plight

Recently, the daily Jugantor published an article "Will the people survive?" The news didn't escape the eyes of voracious newspaper readers like me. Nowadays, such articles flood the front pages of the dailies with awkward but colourful and lively photos where we see a long queue of hungry people standing in front of any BDR outlet. Who doesn't know that a huge number of people are now passing their days amid great uncertainty? How long can they fight to survive?

Md. Asifur Rahman
Teacher, St. Joseph Higher Secondary School
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Gulshan traffic

At the crossing of Gulshan Road No. 50 and Kamal Ata Turk Avenue, traffic coming from Kamal Ata Turk Avenue is allowed to turn right. Also traffic coming from Road 50 is allowed to turn right. For some unknown reason, traffic coming from Gulshan 2 is not allowed to enter Road 50. Instead, that traffic is required to make a u-turn at Banani. The crossing at Banani serves in-coming and out-going traffic of Road No. 11 and also the traffic of Road No. 27 of Banani.

Therefore, this particular place is hazardous. I hope, the traffic authorities will look into the matter and allow the traffic coming from Gulshan 2 to enter Road 50.

Dhakabashi
Gulshan, Dhaka

Price hike

It is timely & praiseworthy that the govt will consider increasing the salary of govt officers & employees. Along with this, the govt should think about the needy people who are in serious trouble now.

Shammy Akter
Department of Applied Nutrition & Food Technology
Islamic University, Kushtia

Sheikh Hasina's treatment

Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is now imprisoned. We know that she is suffering from ear problem as well as other ailments. All Awami League leaders, including Sheikh Hasina herself, want her treatment abroad. According to them, proper treatment of her diseases is not possible in this country.

It is a matter of great regret that while they were ruling this country they claimed that world class medical facilities were available here.

Where does the truth lie?

Munadil Fahad
One-mail

Remove the dustbin

I would like to draw the attention of the authorities concerned to the dustbin lying on the east/Sukarabad side of the Mirpur Road near the BRAC Bank (Dhanmondi Branch) and Daffodil International University. Beside the dustbin there is a narrow pavement which is fenced by a wall on its eastern side. Over the pavement, there are hanging electrical wires. A flock of crows always remains sitting on the wires in the hope of collecting foods from the dustbin. Hundreds of people

including school going boys & girls, office going people and others have to walk along this pavement every day, but often they face an odd situation when the crows....

So, I would request the authorities to remove the dustbin to a more suitable place.

Harun-ur-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Help the farmers

We have to remember that if agriculture fails, we will be doomed. It is time we took some initiatives to help our farmers. The following needs to be done in the interest of the agriculture sector.

1. Ensure transfer of technology from Research Institutes to the farmers.
 2. Ensure availability of diesel and fertilisers in the market at acceptable prices.
 3. Make seeds available.
 4. Arrange agri-loans for the farmers at low interests.
- Mohammad Shahidul Islam**
Agriculturist
Breeder Seed Production Centre
BARI
Debiganj, Panchagarh

"Histological" examination of history

It appears from one of the news items of today's (12 April 2008) DS: Prof. Anwar Hossain of the history department of Dhaka University noted, "It is not history, rather information on the liberation war was distorted." The professor was speaking at a book publication ceremony at Liberation War Museum in the capital. Eminent jurist Dr. Kamal Hossain also reportedly spoke on the occasion.

I believe: one, factors such as, information via inquiry (for example) provide among other things, a critical mass to history in relevant areas; and two, the quality and the quantity of that critical mass is directly or inversely (or both) proportional to the quality and the quantity of the resultant history - relative to time, space and other variables, though. At a histological level (used in medical sense), it implies, a distortion of information could be considered inter alia as a distortion of history, either in part or in full - whether or not that history exists physically at a given time or in a given form, among other things.

It will not be out of place to mention here: contaminants of information act like a virus when it comes to attacking systems of history at various levels of its development and maintenance, per se. Further, the attack has so far continued through intra, inter and other generational levels - in varying degrees, relative again to time, space and other variables.

The last word: the above presentation should be considered and examined against the backdrop of the truth that not all information is history and not all history is information.

Dr. M. S. Haq
One-mail

GM foods

Nowadays GM (Genetically Modified) crops are a much talked about subject. Of course it is more productive than local crops. But we should also not forget that quality is often more important than quantity. Still we don't know we are consuming some GM crops. This may expose us to certain physical disorders.

Md. Obyedul Kalam Azad Pekule
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University
Dinajpur

Women's rights

It is very sad that some people in our country do not know how to think outside the box. If women get equal rights in every aspect, everyone in our society benefits because these women are either our sisters or mothers. When my mother gets equal share in her parent's property, I benefit from that. My sisters and I are born of the same parents; sharing parental property with my sisters only makes me happy because it helps my nieces and nephews.

I cannot imagine Allah the Merciful sending us to hell for sharing our properties with our own flesh and blood sisters. There are other issues these zealots need to worry about now.

Mohammed Rashed
One-mail



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

Evicted slum dwellers

Near the newly built posh BIAM Center at New Eskaton, on 5th of March, 08, I was wondering about the unusual gathering of a large number of Hatirpool slum dwellers. While still getting deeper to BIAM, I found a contingent of police, some of them were right inside the slum to ensure safe eviction and some others outside were probably waiting for a provocation. I soon then realised the very purpose of the helpless congregation. The sight of the poor driven out slum dwellers was very sad and pathetic. Some little children were seen playing around the gathered shabby belongings of theirs. The bigger kids were seen really upset and sharing thoughts with their elders "Where shall we go?" The moments of tension made it appear more pathetic and unveiled the cruel reality. Their half starved physical appearance and popped up eyes looked helpless. The eviction of this old slum was either to construct a road for easy movement to posh BIAM Center-Cum School where mostly wards of quick rich governments' officials make the most out of it, or make a way for posh apartments for quick rich people. We condemn this inhuman act of bulldozing the slum.

The authorities may have served repeated warnings but where will the helpless poor go? We hope some international agency would come forward for a final solution.

Moinuddin
Dhaka

Rickshaws

I would have found Mr. Mohammed Rahat's letter on the subject in DS of 10 April 08 and earlier, his and that of Mr Farzand Ahmed of Bangkok, hilarious, if they had not dealt with the very serious problem of Dhaka's traffic jams so flippantly. These two gentlemen seem to be living in an illusory Utopia, with their heads in

the sand like ostriches. Mr. Rahat brushes aside the existence of rickshaws and those connected with them with such demeaning expressions as "cancer, nuisance, inhuman, epidemic" and calls for their 'elimination' shades of Auschwitz!

Are they aware that the 2 lakh + rickshaws sustain the livelihood of 3-4 lakh pullers and perhaps 15-20 lakh family members? And that they are responsible for the mobility of at least 25 lakh rickshaw users including the poor, old, infirm, sick, women, children, disabled, traders etc every day? How will they get around their daily work, routine/emergency visits without them?

Mr Rahat is surely a car owner, so he does not even talk about cars or buses (few city routes with rickety buses usually jam-packed), CNGs (mostly lining up at gas stations and if found, not inclined to talk if you are not going to Uttara or Narayanganj and willing to pay through your nose), taxis (the less said the better). Together with Farzand of Bangkok, Rahat dangles the lollipop of MTS, subways, freeways, etc all of which are decades in the future, while calling for the 'elimination' of rickshaws NOW. They do not give a single constructive suggestion as to how both motorized and non-motorized vehicles can co-exist on Dhaka roads AS THEY CAN? It is surprising that they did not refer to any of my 10 previous letters on the subject in the DS and refute the assertions made therein, if they were not practical.

Now for some hard facts that both the gentlemen have neatly evaded. Dhaka's roads constitute only 7.6% of its area as against the minimum requirement of 25%. These can somehow accommodate about 1.5-2 lakh vehicles as against the present 10.2 lakh (with 125-150 new cars being registered every day). Cars occupy 70-100sqft of space and most move about empty/half empty. They pollute,

waste foreign exchange and are gas-guzzling monsters with an insatiable thirst for fuel presently above \$100 per barrel. In contrast, rickshaws occupy only about 24sqft of space and usually carry 1.75 passengers cheaply, comfortably and YES, speedily if they are not hindered by over zealous cops. Earnings remain in-country and support lakhs of people. There is no pollution!

Monsoons are imminent and when your car gets stuck in flooded, polluted water, Mr Rahat please do not use the cancerous rickshaw but slog your way home on foot. The very real picture next to your letter is already a blunt reply if you are capable of appreciating facts that are logical and practical. There is no doubt that many of us belong to that fast growing breed of Bengalis who had totally disillusioned the illustrious Tagore in his last years as vividly described by Mohammed Badrul Ahsan in his candid and thought provoking article "Take it from Tagore" in the DS of 28 March 08.

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan 1, Dhaka

Rice scarcity

Last week, I visited some BDR shops and saw the situation of our country. The queues of people in front of BDR rice selling centres in capital Dhaka and other major townships across the country turned longer this week with increasing number of people joining them. While visiting some BDR outlets, it could be noticed that the majority of the people in the line for rice were women, some cradling their babies in their arms in the unbearable summer heat.

The situation is turning critical as prices of rice are not coming down.

Md. Mahamudur Rahman
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

TIBET ISSUE

Brigadier Hafiz's concerns for the Chinese sound hollow from this side of the Atlantic!

I am an Indian American who has spent a long time in the US. I am also very familiar with Bangladesh having spent a total of several months over my younger days, on business and social visits to Dhaka.

Americans do not look at Tibet purely in terms of power politics. Rather, they significantly reflect a lingering sense of guilt at the way European settlers treated the Indigenous Native Americans (or "Indians" as they were once known). There is widespread acceptance that a sort of cultural and ethnic genocide did take place. Clearly, the US is an advanced country, with great respect for individual rights: nevertheless people are acknowledging the costs incurred en route. They see a similar

process under way in Tibet.

The amazing Tibet Railway is a tribute to Chinese engineering and commitment of resources. However, Brig. Hafiz surely does not believe this was done for the benefit of the Tibetan people! It was obviously done to: maintain control; to give the ethnic Han people, "Lebensraum"; and to further Chinese international policy.

Interestingly, in my first years here as a graduate student, I noticed that all my Chinese friends - whether pro-Taiwan or pro-PLC, were unanimous in their belief that Tibet was a part of China. We in South Asia are surely familiar with the point of view that some little bit of territory or the other "is really a part of X"!

Dilip Adarkar
Manhattan Beach, California, USA

Save Buriganga



The Buriganga river is dying. Do we care? I do not think so. While the dwellers of Dhaka city are neglecting this issue, the river is slowly losing its life day by day. We ourselves are to be blamed for this. It was because of us that Buriganga river is drying up. The government is not doing anything to stop the industrial units surrounding the river from spewing out dangerous chemicals into the river. The government must take appropriate steps to stop further pollution of Buriganga water so that the aquatic lives are saved.

It is time for us to help and protect Buriganga.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka



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