

People and police

On 12 April, 2008 for the first time, I could join the above forum chaired and conducted by the senior police officers and executives.

I congratulate the CTG for introducing this gathering to bring the police closer to the general people. It provides an excellent and golden opportunity to understand each other and exchange ideas and views on combating crimes. Among many objective subjects that were discussed, I felt a very vital point was left out - role of an Investigation Officer in dealing with a crime. I humbly suggest to the top Police Administration that on acceptance of a complaint filed by the victim seeking redress, the incident calls for preliminary investigation by an I.O. This very I.O. who is usually of the rank of a S.I. becomes the sole authority to carry out the investigation. He then becomes the most powerful man in the Police Administration, on whose honesty, integrity, and neutrality the image of the police force rests. It is he who alone can ensure justice at grassroots level. He can exercise his sole power either way. He is supposed to be ruthless, rough and tough with the criminals and be sympathetic and kind to the victims. People in and around the location of an incident will either develop their respect and confidence or will get frustrated if natural justice is not seen to be dispensed by him. He is the first point of contact who either commands respect or gets despised by the victims and society. The offenders out of fear, will do anything either in cash or kind to put him on their side and buy his loyalty, resulting in further victimization, humiliation and harassment of the victims and the witnesses.

The Police Administration has to address this most sensi-



TANVIR AHMED/DRINKNEWS

tive part of the administration to win public confidence. There must be a check and balance on his power and he must be accountable for abusing his authority. The victim if subjected to injustice by the I.O. should have the scope and option to seek justice and redress from the higher authorities. If this vital point is tackled by the authorities in a rational way, we are bound to see crime rates falling gradually. Law abiding people in general will feel confident and develop their love and respect for the police force.

The government of the day also has an obligation to provide the police with each and every facility like providing each P.S. with stand-by generators etc. so that they are able to concentrate on their jobs. On their integrity alone, social justice depends. They must be cared for in all respects. The past political governments deliberately deprived them of better pay and service conditions so that they could be purchased. A hungry man will not care for morality. Let the future political government not get the scope of corrupting the police force, a backbone of society and nation. My hats off to the I.G.P. and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner for their sincere efforts to clean up the Augean stables.

The country needs a better and efficient police force more than anything else.

Abul B.M. Zakaria, East Sheurapara
Mirpur, Dhaka

Observing the world around

Every person has a world of imagination and thoughts. I observed keenly from my experiences that the views and thoughts of two minds are never the same. Two mentalities may be similar but not the same. Have you ever thought how logical your views and thoughts are? How much honest you are to yourself? Usually when a person does a work he does it because it's right to him. But every work of a man is not always praised but is sometimes criticized. Sometimes you will notice that your work which is criticized by some people is very fair to you. Why? It's because of the differences

in views. The other problem of ours is that we do not try to understand that a person may have logic behind a work.

What we usually do is throw a comment before knowing an event fully. So, we should try to place everything in the right perspective! Tahmina Khan, One-mail

Police

Nowadays, the police are playing a praiseworthy role in restoring law and order. But people only tend to think about their negative sides.

We should be sympathetic to the law enforcers whose job in a society like ours is really a tough one. AKM Anisul Haque
Department of English
Metropolitan University

Food crisis

Eminent litterateur, politician and journalist Abul Mansur Ahmad revealed the nature and character of Bengali businessmen and politicians in his book 'Food Conference'. There he showed how rice traders and greedy political activists were busy maximising profits during the 1943 famine.

More than half a century later, the nature of Bengali traders has not changed much, though the people have been experiencing acute food shortage. The government and various quarters allege that dishonest traders are hoarding rice for creating an artificial crisis.

Not only Bangladesh but other rice-producing countries like Thailand, the Philippines and India are also facing chaos and mayhem caused by food crisis.

So, the interim government should take necessary steps to avoid a famine like situation.

MAH Nazim
Dept. of Political Science
Dhaka University

Hindi song on Pahela Baishakh

On the hilarious occasion of Pahela Baishakh, a concert entitled 'Nokia Fusion Baishakhi Concert' was held at Gulshan Youth Club. I could not attend that music feast but later came to know which artist performed which songs through The Daily Star dated April 16, 2008. To my utter dismay, James, my most favourite singer since childhood, performed Bhigi Bhigi, one of his popular hits in Hindi, on this very occasion whose spirit is nothing but Bangla!

James has enviably created and given voice to, no doubt, a good number of big hit Bangla songs throughout his long and colourful musical journey. By virtue of his uncommon voice together with inherent talent, he has surpassed many of the singers in terms of popularity and has showed the world once again that Bangladesh can produce world-class singers.

With popularity comes responsibility. In an interview with a leading national Bangla daily, James tells that he enjoys most singing in Bangla, no matter how much popular his Hindi songs are. That sounds really nice but this latest incident made me sorely sad. There are at least ten Bangla songs more popular than Bhigi Bhigi that he could have chosen for the concert celebrating this Bangla occasion - Pahela Baishakh!

I strongly expect that my most favourite singer would act more sensibly in future.

Ahmad Ferdous Bin Alam
Department of CSE, DU

Legal battle between BNP factions

The court has discharged the case filed by the BNP chairperson (in jail now) against the EC's decision to recognise the faction of Saifur-Hafiz to talk with the EC.

Mr Hafizuddin is happy and considers it to be their victory. The real BNP faction represented by Mr. Delwar Hossain is unhappy and thinks that they have been deprived of justice. The EC sees the judgment as a chance for unification of the two BNPs. Now we have to consider the legal issues- legality of the meeting held in Mr Saifur Rahman's home, and the legal status of the chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia continuing in her position. The court is not the place to deal with political parties' internal matters. This was pointed out by the EC's lawyer.

If I am not wrong, the ball is now in the court of the government and the EC to negotiate a compromise formula with both the factions and

move ahead for completing the dialogue for a meaningful general election as promised.

A reader
One-mail

General Moeen's article

General Moeen U Ahmed in his write-up 'Aspiration in the Bangla New Year' has focused on some vital issues for the development of Bangladesh. Among those, I would like to share my views on Hotel Management which is a new but a prospective subject for studying, especially at a higher level. Working in hotels is not merely cooking or serving foods, it is now called 'Hospitality Industry'. This industry is also expanding day by day and Bangladesh has a bright future undoubtedly in this area.

After getting GPA 5 in HSC, my eldest son got himself admitted to a private university in B.A. in Tourism & Hotel Management which I feel is a brilliant and courageous decision.

Hotel Radisson is going to build a training centre in near future. There are many training centres in our country which have been imparting short-term training. But I think we need more long-term education on this subject. Short-term trainings produce lower or middle level personnel having practical skills only but Bachelor or Masters level education will produce top-level personnel having both practical and managerial level knowledge & skills. It is good news that finally Dhaka University has opened this course which is a right and praiseworthy decision.

Our top hotels can easily impart higher education on this subject where students can gain theoretical knowledge and learn practical aspects of hotel management as well. The authorities of Radisson, Sonargaon, Sheraton and other star hotels are requested to consider my proposal.

Harun-or-Rashid
One-mail

No power crisis!

Your Manikganj correspondent's report published on 16 August mentions the deplorable condition of power supply there. The view is shared by all of us. Invariably, we have darkness when we need light; while electricity is drastically rationed in the form of 'load-shedding'! Be it in Bagerhat,

Barisal, Chuadanga, Comilla, Dinajpur or Dhaka. Name any place under the alphabet in Bangladesh, scarcity of electric power is the fact of life!

The only difference is the number of hours that darkness prevails, in each place, because of no electricity! This is the truth of life in Bangladesh today.

In contrast, on the same day, elsewhere in the newspaper, your staff correspondent's report mentions the claim by the power secretary, at a seminar last Tuesday, that there was NO CRISIS in the power sector--an unbelievable statement! Astonished citizen
Dhaka

Decentralization

There has been a lot of debate about different forms of decentralization and their implications for developing countries. Particularly in unitary states, decentralization is considered as a key element of governance. The organs of unitary states are governed constitutionally as one single unit, with one constitutionally created legislature. While political power of government in such states may be transferred to regional or locally elected assemblies, the central government retains the right to

control and abolish the delegated power.

Historically, most developing countries were unitary states and had a highly centralized system of governance. Two factors were vital for the push behind adopting decentralization policies. First, it was realized that decentralization improves governmental performance. Transferring state responsibilities to lower level government authorities in geographically dispersed locations can improve service delivery and facilitate more prompt response to local needs. This form of decentralization is known as de-concentration.

The second major impetus behind decentralization is political. More specifically, it was recognized that socio-economic progress requires active participation of people in the decision-making processes--decisions that affect them directly. This decentralization of power often takes the form of devolution. Devolution is the transfer of resources, tasks, and decision-making to lower level authorities which are democratically elected and are largely independent of the central government.

Even when there is a democratic system at the centre, many regimes have used decentralization to increase their power base in rural areas. In this case, decentralization policy was geared towards creating a vote bank. Therefore, the form decentralization takes is highly dependent on the central political structure. When the democratic structures at the national level are weak, it is unlikely that a truly democratic system will emerge at the local level. In other words, a functional democratic system at the central level is a pre-condition for democratic governance at the local level.

Finally, the political and administrative dimensions of decentralization are not always happy bedfellows. Often, bureaucrats tend to dominate the local councils while elected representatives have to comply with bureaucratic decisions. On the other hand, partisan politics impede smooth functioning of field administration.

Ahmed Tareq Rashid
McMaster University, Canada

BNP's problems

Most democracy-loving people of Bangladesh living in the country or abroad may have concern over the present divided BNP. This concern emanates from the fact that we appreciate the necessity of a functional, bipartisan political system in the country, not so much because a substantial portion might support a united BNP.

Many people are holding the present caretaker government (CTG) and the Election Commission (EC) responsible for this factional problem in the party concerned. But I find more problems with the party itself. The party constitution is more authoritarian than that of the AL. In the absence of the party chairperson, Begum Khaleda Zia, M. Saifur Rahman was chosen as the acting chairman, at least by a section of the party lawmakers; so there is pluralism in this process. The same is true for Major Hafiz as the acting general secretary. But still the general secretary chosen by the detained party chairperson alone has been negating any attempt at unification or even any compromise; his position is that first Major Hafiz must cease to 'act' as the general secretary, just to 'protect' the authoritarian provision in their party constitution.

In November, 2006 I expressed my observation (in articles published both in DS and BO) that so much power in the hands of an amateur (meaning Tarique Zia) was eating up the same person's future in politics. Now everybody can see how much harm Tarique did to himself, to the party and to the nation as a whole.

Frankly speaking, authoritarianism cannot be a substitute for pluralism in a democracy. Charisma alone cannot live long; it is bound to die down in the absence of pluralism.

MAS Molla, BAAS, Dhaka

Politics

Political parties are enthusiastic about elections. It is good to know that the government is determined to hold the elections within this year. We are hopeful that the coming elections will be free, fair and credible all the way. But I think before elections, we need to discuss some political issues. Political parties should redefine the politics that they were practising before. We, the general people, won't like to experience any destructive politics in our country anymore. "No more violence" should be the slogan of all the parties.

They have to honour the mandate of the people and must go by the laws. Prospect of Bangladesh is largely dependent upon them.

We want our politicians to learn from their mistakes!
Mohammad Anisur Rahman
Abdul Gani Road, West Tharnapara
Pahartali, Chittagong

Rickshaws, once again



AZIZUR RAHIM PEU/DRINKNEWS

Ten letters have been written by Mr. Sikander Ahmed of Niketon, Dhaka, and no reply? To reply the 10th letter printed in The Daily Star on April 3, 2008 (As I was not fortunate enough to see the previous nine) I felt the obligation to write something.

I suggest we be more realistic and look for complete solution and understand that it is not about which group of people are bigger, rather it is about the fact that rickshaws are not making anyone happy. I had just written another letter a few days before explaining that we as citizens must feel the sorrow and pain of another human being pulling rickshaw which is by no standard 'humane'.

Apart from that, I strongly feel that pulling rickshaws out of some of the major roads of Dhaka city has definitely made the movement of engine-run vehicles faster and smoother than they would have been had the rickshaws been left there. Do we even remember the condition and chaos on Mirpur Road during the reign of rickshaws before they were made off limits? I guess not, because we are happy.

It is important to accept reality and not simply blame the good government for anything and everything. Being the capital city of a highly populous country, a master plan for Dhaka city traffic control was long overdue. How do we complain about the authorities who in my view are trying their best to come up with solutions but perhaps, take two steps back after taking one step forward because of fear of protest from citizens.

With all due respect, I understand the sympathy he has shown in his letter for the poor rickshaw-pullers. But the fact still remains that Dhaka city can no longer afford the luxury of allowing irresponsible

rickshaw pullers the license to move anywhere/ anyway/ anytime...well you get the picture.

But I agree with his point number 4, where he mentioned that a seemingly double standard is often followed allowing some non motorized vehicles on rickshaw-free roads. This must be stopped immediately. The law should be the same for each and every one of us. Please think carefully. Unless we stop the growth of rickshaws now and stop rickshaws from plying busy Dhaka Metropolitan city streets, we will have no open space left for us to walk. Are rickshaws making it easier to walk on sidewalks where they block each and every entry point to schools, markets, offices, even hospitals? Rickshaws are very dangerous and we must come up with alternatives. Bangladeshi people are intelligent and I am sure we will come up with other options. But rickshaws need to be eliminated from our city streets, and quickly at that.

No other country in the world is moving backwards and by supporting rickshaw's presence in a capital city we are taking that route. It is not possible to have both motorized and non-motorized vehicles sharing same roads. Dhaka city has not even adopted true lane driving yet. If sharing were to work, then we would not be in this miserable and chaotic situation now. So, please let us not get caught up in personal anguish and want to take out the group we hate; rather try to understand the intensity of the problem and take necessary steps, even if they are not the most popular ones.

Mohammed Rahat
DIT Road, Malibag, Dhaka

Report on DU incident



AZIZUR RAHIM PEU/DRINKNEWS

Hats off to the Judicial Enquiry Commission members for their highly constructive and rational recommendations following the unfortunate incidents that occurred in DU in August last year. There is no second opinion in the country regarding the commission's recommendation for banning political activities by the teachers and students on the campus. I believe if a national referendum is sought, the entire nation will overwhelmingly support banning of political activities within the educational institutions. Unfortunately, open involvement in politics of the teachers joining politi-

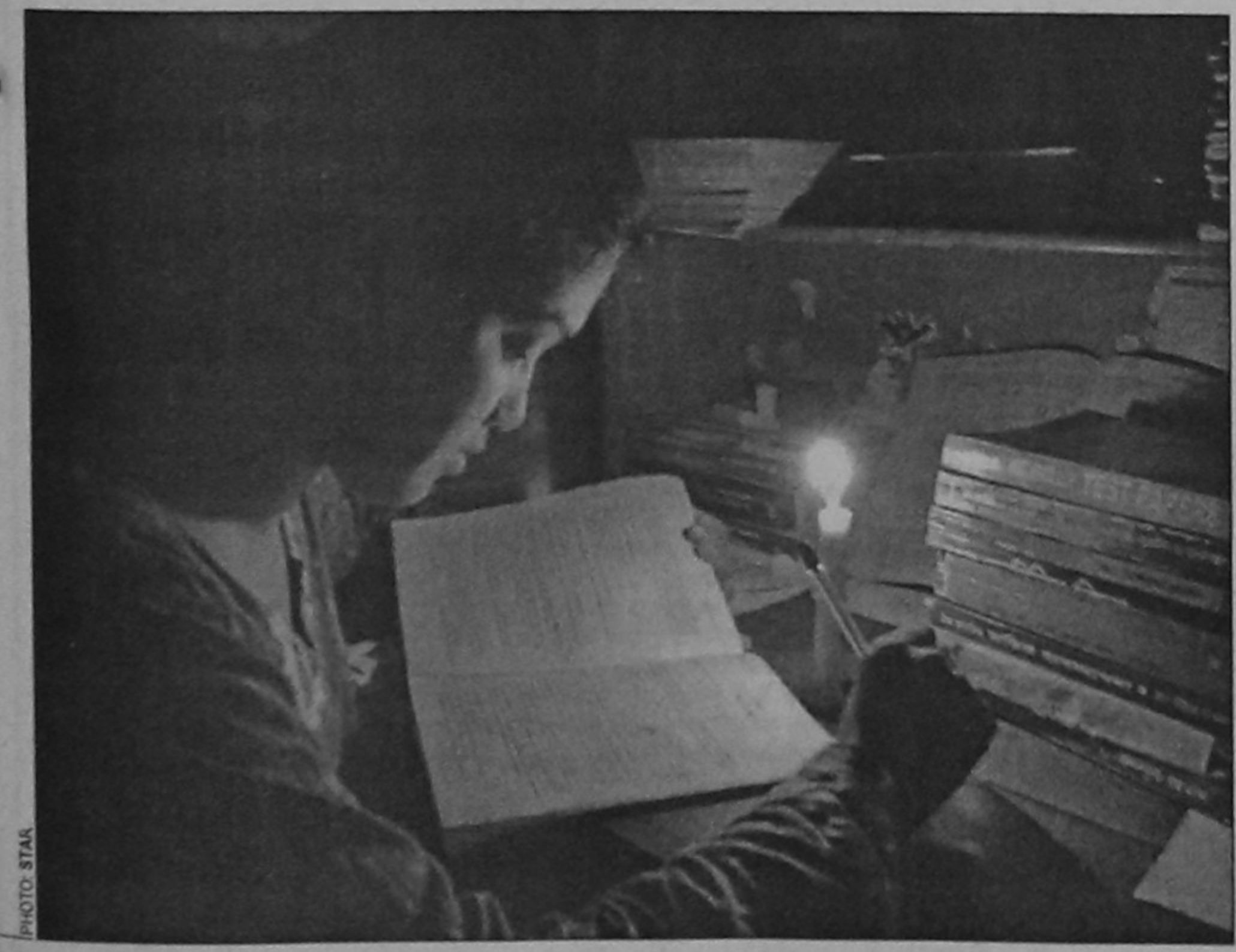
cal wings of the student organisations by wearing black-badges, attending political meetings and signing a joint petition for release of an under-trial political prisoner, came as a shock to the conscious citizens in general. The teachers should pursue their noble profession of teaching only. Involvement in party politics not only brings disgrace to their profession but also ruins the academic atmosphere on the campus as the students, encouraged by their teachers, indulge more in political activities, rather than concentrating on their studies. No wonder, the standard of education

in DU has gone down drastically.

The teachers no longer command respect of the people and the general students, like their predecessors, since they have identified themselves as active members of various political parties, rendering their role as teacher highly controversial. There is no harm in joining politics after leaving the teaching profession to carry out political activities outside the campus to achieve political goals.

Politics and teaching do not go hand in hand!
Mohammad Ataul Hoque
On e-mail

Power failure



JINOTO STAR

With the advent of summer power failure has become a common phenomenon in the cities. People are suffering immensely as electricity is snapped frequently. Candles, chargers, handmade fans--these items have become essential to tackle sudden disruption of power supply. However, it is the students, especially the SSC examinees, who are hit badly by the recurrent power failures. The sufferings of children and the elderly people can also be imagined.

The situation is probably worse in rural areas--farmers need power to run irrigation pumps. The villagers also need electricity at night. As they are paying for electricity, they deserve uninterrupted supply of it.

Unfortunately, they are not getting it. According to the energy secretary, power generation has increased from 3113MW to 3774MW over the last one year. Despite this increase in production, frequent power outage continues to cripple the lives of countrymen.

Zabed Wali, Pahartali, Chittagong