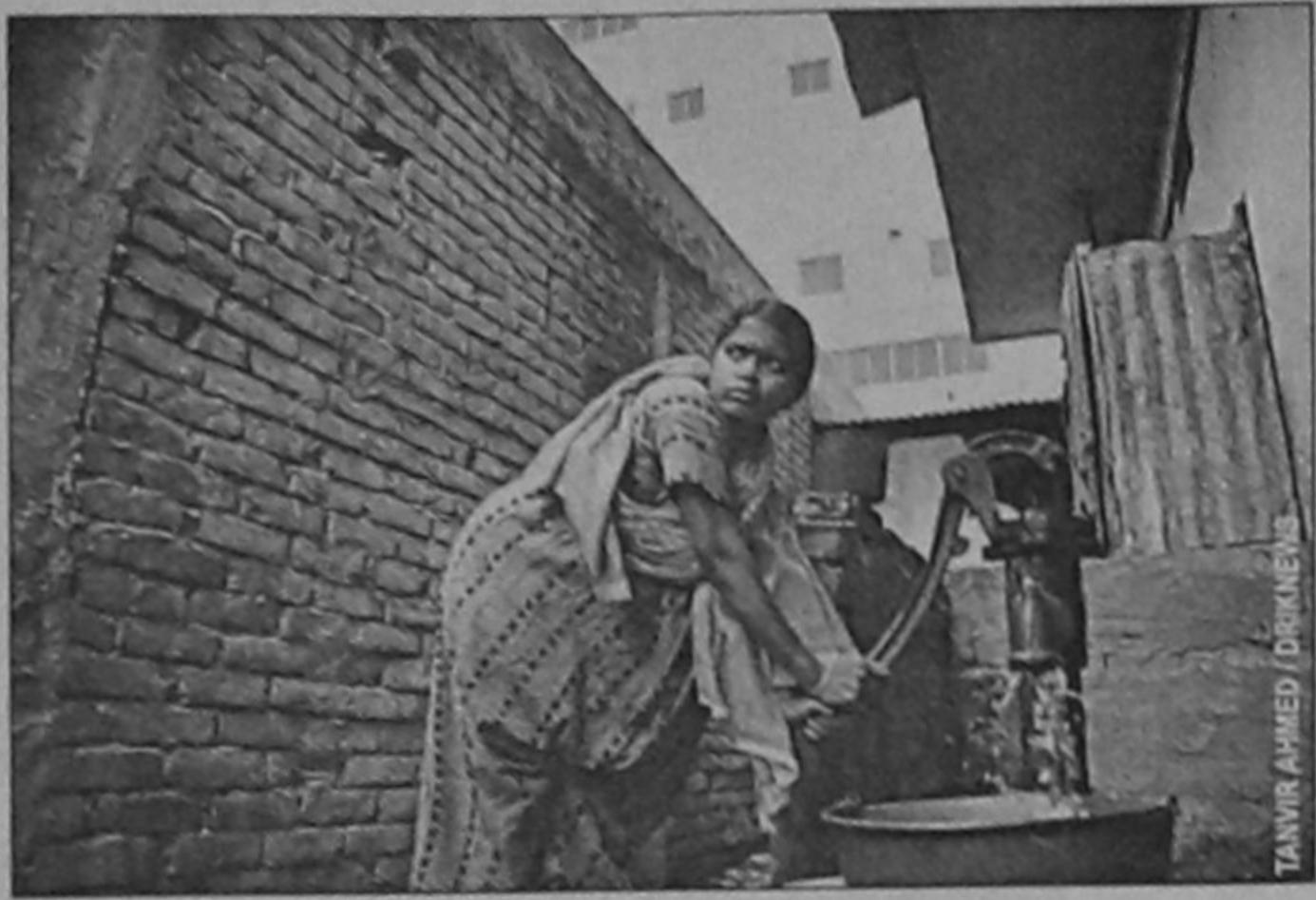


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Wasa's incompetence?



Wasa Chairman talks about deployment of the army at the WASA pumps, saying "Like previous years, they will help us operate the pumps!" Does this imply that the Wasa personnel are not competent to operate their pumps?

The army will provide diesel generating sets on stand-by, to provide electricity to Wasa pumps, when Desa power is unavailable.

It will be cheaper for Wasa to invest in their own gas driven generating sets to provide

power to their pumps, whenever possible, and keep Desa as stand-by. This was stated by Wasa in an article published in a local daily on April 12. The return on this investment will have a payback period of maximum three to four years! It will also release more power for the national grid! This should be the top priority objective for Wasa.

S.A. Mansoor
Rtd. Engineer, Dhaka

Taliban and Italian Mafia

Pakistani journalist Hassan Kilde Bajwa wrote recently in Lahore's Daily Times: "The Taliban wants peace to call for war. Let's say they get the peace with the government which they seek. The very nature of the Taliban's credo encourages conflict and armed opposition. If their message is spread successfully, then the inevitable result will be a population that is spoiling for war. Ultimately, the Taliban will have to resort to armed opposition and conflict with the government if they are to stay true to their purpose."

In fact, the Taliban are no different from the Italian Mafia. When pressed by law enforcement agencies, the Mafia prefers to lie low only to re-surface when the guards are down. The Mafia's very existence depends on extortion and terror. The crime bosses cannot enjoy their high life-style without resorting to extortion and terror. Only constant vigilance by law enforcing authorities can put them on the run although they can never be totally eliminated.

Similarly, Pakistan must remain vigilant against the Taliban and other religious fanatics because they will resort to violence to terrorise people to maintain their grip on the masses. Like Italy, Pakistan is engaged in a never-ending struggle to keep the Taliban out in the wood. It may be interesting to note that the Mafia appeared in the 19th century to help the poor Italian peasants fight the absentee landowners. Now they have replaced the landowners as tormentors.

Mahmud Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Bangladesh Bank's decision

Bangladesh Bank announced recently that it wants to appoint two depositors as directors in each private bank to 'protect the depositors' interest'. But why are the foreign banks exempted from this?

One can argue that foreign banks are incorporated in different countries and hence are not governed by Bangladesh Bank rules. But don't foreign banks take deposits from Bangladeshi clients?

Who is protecting the depositors' interest in this case?

If foreign banks don't want depositors as directors, they should cease to take deposits from the public and instead rely on the cash flow from local banks. I don't see why different sets of rules have to apply to banks, when it is the depositors' interest which is at stake.

Hanif Molla
Student, San Francisco
California, USA

Politics and Dr. Yunus

As per the electoral roadmap, the next election in Bangladesh will be held by December 2008 under the present caretaker government. But we are disappointed to see that the old parties and their leaders will take part in the next election. So we cannot expect much change in the coming years through these fellows who have taken politics as their business.

We were happy to see that our pride Noble Prize winner Dr. Yunus had expressed his desire to form a political party. But after a few days, all of a sudden, he closed down his activities, blaming the people who wanted to join his party but backed out later.

We were astonished. Dr. Yunus should have relied on common people and not on some branded politicians. I still believe that had Dr. Yunus continued his political activities, we could have seen a substantial change in the political arena. It is our bad luck, no doubt.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Shia-Sunni issue

This is in reply to Mahmud Elahi, Ottawa, Canada-letter published on Editor this week!

You wrote the Shia Mullahs of Iran would try to dominate and be a threat to the Sunni-majority Middle East. Is this information based on any research? If it is properly researched, then give the references properly and clearly. I wish you won't mislead people with rhetoric & exaggerations. And in future, before venturing on any letter against Iran or the Shia sect of Islam, I would strongly suggest you to go for an in-depth proper research. For help you may visit the following link: al-islam.org, search and read the book: The Shia Islam & The Shia Philosophy.

Ehsan
One-mail

Benefits of 1/11

It seems that the nation has lost its sense of direction. The memories of pre "One-Eleven" are so horrifying that we never want to look back.

The whole country was literally hostage under the then triangular power struggle between the caretaker government and the two large political parties. To the media in the western world Bangladesh was on the verge of being declared a failed state. Many observers commented that the nation was in the "Intensive Care Unit". The social and economic activities almost came to near standstill.

Indeed, we paid a heavy price for peaceful transfer of power from a constitutionally elected government to the other! Have we forgotten that our car horses don't even look like horses anymore!

If you look back to history you'll see that Dhaka once had very well-bred horses. There was a racecourse beside Ramna Park. It was a big event for everyone. Even people from Kolkata used to come here to take part and see the races. Owning horses was a symbol of aristocracy.

Owning horses and owning the usual farm animal is not the same thing—horses require a lot more in every aspect. Then after independence horse racing was banned because it was a form of gambling. So there ended the tradition of breeding horses in Dhaka. The only ones left apparently went to the wrong hands and now their

Emaciated horses!

Horse carts have been part of Dhaka for ages. It was once a major means of transport. Nowadays you'll only see them on the DU campus on special occasions and in Gulistan every other day. Recently, you might have noticed that many firms are using horse carts to publicize their products. Well that's not really what I want to talk about... a question for all of you... Are we blind?

Yes, we have all seen horse carts but did we ever notice the condition of the horses? Most of them are badly bruised and weak! But yet the person sitting on the driver's seat and even the passengers never seem to notice that. Even if they do I wonder why they are so ignorant. All over the world large horses are used for pulling carts but in Dhaka the horses are well below average size! They are overworked, ill-fed and literally uncared for. The owners are eating with the money earned by these horses but yet they are so reluctant to feed these horses properly. Anyone who has seen well bred horses abroad or the police horses in Dhaka would know that our car horses don't even look like horses anymore!

If you look back to history you'll see that Dhaka once had very well-bred horses. There was a racecourse beside Ramna Park. It was a big event for everyone. Even people from Kolkata used to come here to take part and see the races. Owning horses was a symbol of aristocracy. Owning horses and owning the usual farm animal is not the same thing—horses require a lot more in every aspect. Then after independence horse racing was banned because it was a form of gambling. So there ended the tradition of breeding horses in Dhaka. The only ones left apparently went to the wrong hands and now their

What about muggers?

Shahidul Islam's first hand report in your April 17th issue clearly demonstrates the open house of lawlessness in Chittagong, the second largest city of Bangladesh! Meanwhile our CTG and their backers go around hunting for corrupt suspects and politicians, very few of whom, by the way, have been convicted till date. However, catching muggers and robbers seem to be beyond their capability!

The first person report from Mr. Hakim, ex-President of the Chittagong Press Club, is an eye opener! Lucky for him that he was not bodily harmed.

One wonders if he will remain so, after the publication of this news item.

However, the CTG couldn't care less, for they have only authority and no responsibility about law and order!

In that case, why doesn't the Adviser concerned quit, in the best tradition of democracy taking the responsibility for such crimes? The CTG preaches democracy but when it comes to practice, they are no better than their predecessors. May be the person responsible is the policeman on the beat at the location, and no one else! What should be sauce for the goose (the politicos) is not sauce for the gander (CTG advisers).

What have the IG and the DIG concerned got to say about it, except that the matter is under investigation? In the ripeness of time, when memory fades, it will be swept under the carpet, as one more unresolved case-- with no one to question why!

Where has transparency, the favourite word of the advisers, gone?

Watcher
Dhaka

Blueberry

Are you worried about getting forgetful due to old age? Nothing to worry about! A research team from the University of Reading and the Peninsula Medical School, UK have some good news for you!

A multidisciplinary research team led by Dr. Jeremy Spencer of Molecular Nutrition Department at the University of Reading through supplementing a regular diet with blueberries over a 12-week period found that improvements in spatial working memory tasks emerged within three weeks and continued throughout the period of the study.

The question is how blueberries work in reversing age-related memory problems? Blueberries are less familiar in our country. Although blueberries are native to North America, they are now grown in Europe and Asia too. These are flowering plants in the genus *Vaccinium*. Blueberry plants are shrubs varying in size from 10cm to 4m tall. The fruit is a berry, 5-16mm diameter with a flared crown at the end and takes indigo colour on ripening. Mature blueberries have a sweet taste.

Blueberries contain flavonoids, in particular anthocyanins and flavonols. They also contain certain other antioxidant phytochemicals. It has been found by the researchers of Reading and Peninsula Medical School that these plant derived molecules (of flavonoids) affect the human brain, they have been shown to cross blood brain barrier after dietary intake. As a consequence, they exert their effects on learning and memory by enhancing existing neural (brain cell) connections, improving cellular communications and stimulating neuronal regeneration. Consumption of blueberries lowers cholesterol and total blood lipid levels and control blood pressure. Research findings show that the blueberries are capable of preventing urinary tract infections. Perhaps govt. research stations, private agricultural farms can try to grow blueberries in our country as we have successfully grown strawberries recently.

M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka

Brutality at ZIA

The recent incident at ZIA in which a British Bangladeshi gentleman, Barrister Rizwan Hussain, was brutally beaten up by airport officials for entering a restricted area of the check-in zone of the airport is utterly deplorable and terribly shocking. It is indeed a shameful incident that will scar the nation's reputation, an event that is not just a reflection of ZIA service standards, but also an insult to the citizens of the country. It is my hope that the government makes it a priority to bring the five culprits, who have resorted to such brutal violence against a fellow countryman, to justice as soon as possible. I hope they will be punished accordingly.

Mehtab Ghazi Rahman
St Bartholomew's and the Royal London Medical School
University of London

Bangabandhu

Recently, I read an article on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the first thought that came to mind was the man we saw and heard in the penultimate days of East Pakistan and the man who lead the war of independence. There wasn't the information to match the person we knew.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the man who created a nation and proved to the world that one of the most powerful and disciplined military forces couldn't subjugate and suppress the unarmed and impoverished Bengali nation.

He was the man who stirred the nation out of its slumber, galvanized it and inspired it to turn every home into a fortress, armed with mostly bamboos and antiquated weapons to rise up and free the country from the clutches of subjugation.

He was the man who won a landslide victory in the 1970 elections. People reposed in him the huge responsibility of giving them a direction and showing the way to the bliss of freedom. He was given the power to spearhead the revolution. All these I witnessed in my teens in the turbulent years of the late 60s till the early years of the seventies. Were all these illusions and mirages?

My personal impression is that the writer was in a rush to get it over with the work of writing about the greatest Bengali of modern times. He lightly touched on all issues, sadly missing the profundity and depth he deserved. In a very rushed style he touched on his life, his struggles and his mistakes. He should have gone more into the man, his time, life and struggles. He deserved much more than what was written.

Nadir
Uttara, Dhaka

Power crisis



Every year, at the beginning of the summer a crisis looms large - power shortage. It has been going on for decades and there is no sign of relief in reality other than some vague statements from our leaders, especially political leaders and sometimes from the bureaucrats in order to please their bosses. But I do not see any real action or policy in place that can solve the problem even in the next 10 years. As a professional engineer working in the power sector, I feel for the people in Bangladesh and am worried about the financial impact the crisis is causing (going to be worse in the coming years). It is like a vicious circle, we have to spend more because we do not have enough which drives us to an even poorer level to spend even more. The industries and housing sectors are using expensive generators and we are wasting millions of hard-earned dollars on these equipment and the fuel because we do not have a reliable power system. The production cost of garment sector is higher because they have to use generators and expensive fuel. A reliable power system would lower the production cost of all products and make Bangladesh more attractive to the buyers.

A country cannot make progress of any kind if it does not have a sound and reliable power system. This is the bottom line. If our policy makers do not understand this and think Bangladesh can attract substantial foreign investment, then the future does not look very bright to me.

The power sector should be given the top priority in the infrastructure development. Any compromise in this sector would derail the whole economy.

The successful operation and planning of a sound power system network fundamentally depends on accurate and proper modelling of the network. The building blocks of a sound power system network are Network

Data, System Modelling, System Operation and System Planning. As a state-owned organisation, PDB has all the ingredients as mentioned above. But unfortunately there are no reliable databases, system models, load flow programmes (1 or 2 available for the whole system whereas every operation and planning engineer needs one programme) and finally no coordination. I expect PDB to deny this as usual. But I know very well how PDB works.

I have been working for the last five years with one of the most advanced power systems in the world and did my post-graduate studies in power systems as well. Last year I met two engineers (from PDB and PGCB) and found they are interested in the development of the power sector in Bangladesh. I could not believe a power company has only one copy of professional load flow software which is the heart of any power system analysis. The status of the power system in Bangladesh can be called primitive and the first few companies in this field performed more professionally more than 100 years ago!

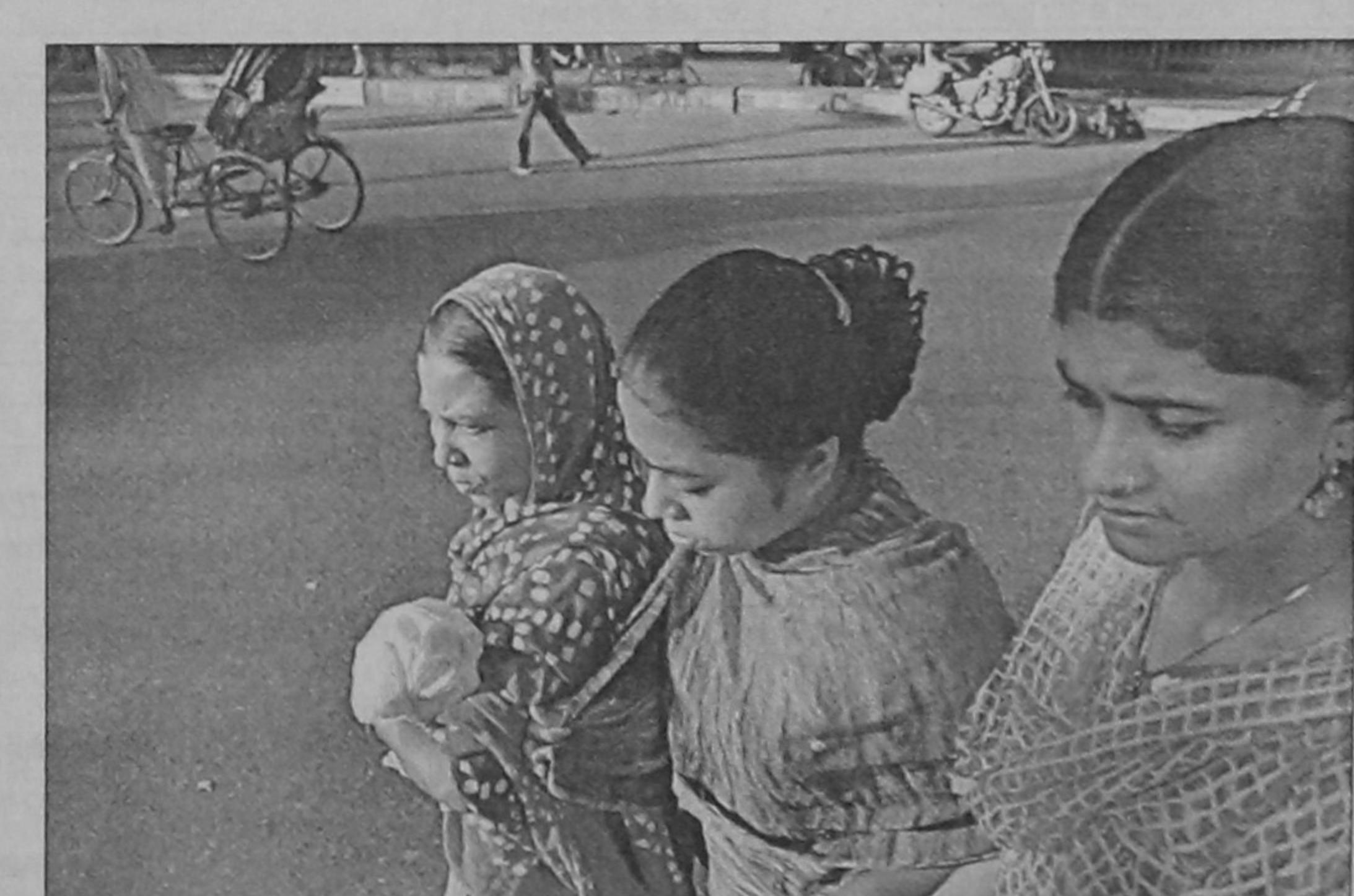
Obviously, there will be question why I am talking so much when I do not contribute to the country (I do contribute in my own ways).

Personally, I do not believe that I have to be in Bangladesh to contribute but it does not mean I would not be in Bangladesh if I have to. I worked for five years in Bangladesh (Dept. of EEE, BUET) and found lack of professionalism in general.

I would request the present government and our political leaders to give highest priority to the power sector and bring it to a level which can be made the base of our economic progress.

Dr. Ashikur Bhuiya P.Eng
Calgary, Canada

Rights of women

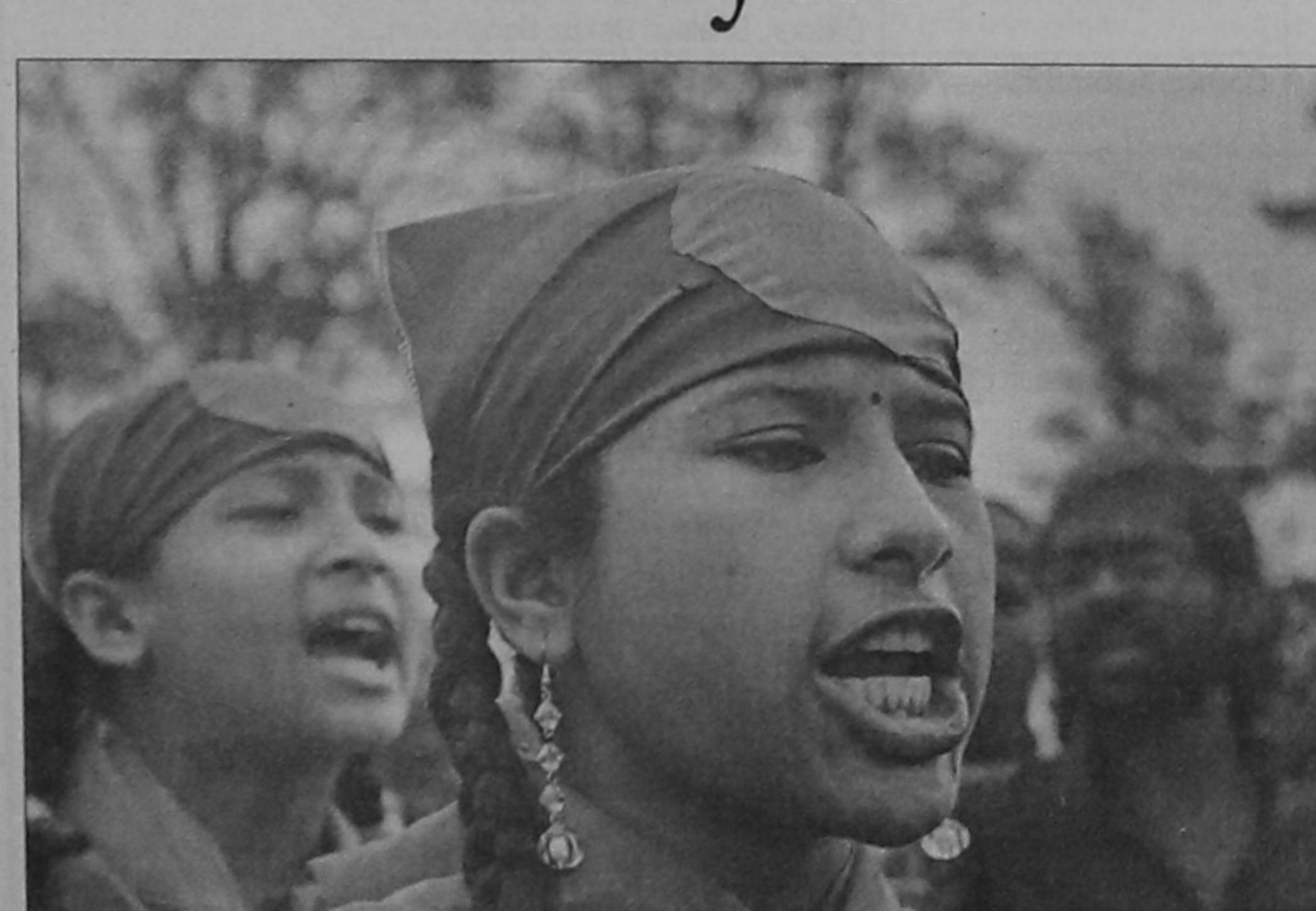


A controversy has arisen about granting equal rights to women. The central issue being a policy formulated by the government keeping provision of equal rights or shares for women in all worldly affairs. It is OK so far it does not contradict any Islamic law. But unfortunately it is learnt that the policy or guideline (as the government prefers to say) contains something that goes against the law of the Holy Quran. The government is playing a mysterious role by not clearing telling the people what is really there in the "National Women's Development Policy" that has been formulated to ensure equal rights of the women.

We have virtually forgot the basic rule that it is Allah the Creator of this universe & its creatures Who knows best what is good or bad for mankind. About inheritance of parents' property there is clear instruction in the holy book and no Muslim can say

do anything against it. To Almighty Allah, men & women & boys & girls are equal. A girl or women gets shares of property from father, husband, brother, mother etc. without any financial liability to anyone. If all shares are added, the total may be even more than what a man or boy of the same family gets with all financial and social responsibility on the shoulder of the latter. Even if a wife earns she is not obliged to spend a single farthing for the family whereas the husband's responsibility is to bear all expenses of the family including his wife. This is what our religion Islam requires. Yet without knowing the details we are claiming that Islam has deprived women of their rights, whereas the truth is just opposite.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna



The overall condition of the country is not at all satisfactory.

The soaring prices of the daily commodities, especially rice, wheat, pulse, oil etc are putting tremendous pressure on the consumers. The government should make all-out efforts to set things right.

Let's change our country in a positive way.

Khandaker Zia Hasan
Business Communication Trainer
Mohammadpur, Dhaka