



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.

Chakoria incident

It is a matter of disgrace to the police (a man was reportedly beaten to death by a police officer at Chakoria). The distance between the police and citizens is increasing day by day. The sense of responsibility and humanity has completely vanished from the minds of

police. Most of the time they work for the rich (who give them bribes) rather than poor, weak people. The rate of corruption in the police department is so high that now we can't think of any honest policeman. But the situation was quite different in the past (May be during

the British period). Police used to command a lot of respect at that time. Even at the time of our liberation war, many policemen fought like tigers. But the situation has completely changed.
Mir Abidur Rahman
Department of English
South East University



War crimes

At the heart of the concept of war crimes is the idea that an individual can be held responsible for the actions of a country or that nation's soldiers. Genocide, crimes against humanity, mistreatment of civilians or combatants during war can all fall under the category of war crimes. Genocide is the most severe of these crimes. In the context of war, a war crime is a punishable offence under international law, for violations of the laws of war by any person or persons, military or civilian. War crimes can be committed during international armed conflict or internal armed conflict.

The statute of The Hague tribunal defines crime against humanity as crimes committed in armed conflict but directed against a civilian population. A list of examples is given in article 5: Murder, Extermination, Enslavement, Deportation, Imprisonment, Torture, Rape, Persecutions on political, racial and religious grounds.

Muhammad Kamruzzaman
Research Coordinator
Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University

Patgati bridge

In 1999, the then government started construction of the Patgati bridge over the Madhumati to connect Pirojpur and Bagerhat districts with Gopalganj. Though the bridge would make easier highway links from the southern part towards the rest of the country through Gopalganj, when completed, only two pillars of the bridge have been constructed so far.

The issue deserves immediate attention.
Mahmud Kabir
Ex-journalist, Social worker
Gopalganj

Beggars

The number of beggars is increasing in the city day by day. They make roads and passages unclean and unhygienic. The Bangkok city authorities made the capital free

from beggars and rickshaw pullers since the mid seventies which helped the city to be attractive to the tourists.

We should also address the issue with a sense of urgency.
Prof. SAM
One-mail

Costly errors

Rectifying a mistake can rather be an easy task, but one wishes that the same could be said about errors in judgement as well... especially with regard to politics. If unleashing a lethal political vendetta between two ladies (leading two major political parties in Bangladesh) for years to score petty-political gains (a major political mistake) was an act of political misdemeanour, then the unwillingness of (a grave error in judgement) these two ladies and their surrogates to realise that they are not invincible was nothing but a political felony/crime. And crime does pay very dearly and perhaps unfairly, at times.

Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia may/may not have done anything wrong but their indifference towards wrong-doings didn't help their causes either, although they both have good public support behind them. But they must realise that there is a great deal of difference between enjoying support from some die-hard followers and leading effectively. They should already be aiming for some sort of lasting legacy by their words and deeds while still in confinement and on trial, so that even if they never manage to play in the Bangladeshi political field the way they used to, they would still be judged favourably by history for not causing any further damage to the country. Hope this time they will use their good judgement.
Masud Nowsarul Abdullah
Arlington, TX
USA

Lebanese scene

Recent attacks by Shia Hezbollah on the Sunni-led government of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora in Lebanon signalled the coming

bloodbath between two hostile Muslim sects in the region. Heavily-armed Shiite gunmen belonging to Hezbollah are slaughtering mostly unarmed or lightly armed Sunnis with the aim to establish a Shiite hegemony in Lebanon and unless other Arab countries stop Hezbollah, Lebanese Sunnis might face a mass slaughter.

Hezbollah gunmen went on a rampage in Beirut, slaughtering Sunni supporters of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora. For three days, they attacked Sunni neighbourhoods and heavily armed Sunni militias who suffered heavy casualties. Hezbollah militias also set on fire the newspaper owned by assassinated former Sunni prime minister Rafiq Hariri and the television station run by his son Saad Hariri. Faced with total defeat, Prime Minister Siniora called off his supporters, letting Hezbollah virtually a free hand to run a parallel government.

In fact, they have already declared a war on the Sunni-led government of Fuad Siniora and Hezbollah packs far more firepower than the Lebanese army and police and in any showdown, the Sunnis are likely to face a massacre.
Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Chittagong British Council library

Once Chittagong British Council library boasted a good collection of books. On the cards issued by the library it was labelled as a charity. Hence a good number of students and readers visited the library. Thus the library played an important role that was both educative and charitable.

Unfortunately, of late the institution has switched to money-making ventures such as the IELTS preparation course. It charges exorbitant fees for the aforesaid course. Only the affluent can afford to attend it. In addition, there are some other courses, equally expensive. This certainly goes against the notion of charity. The circulating library seems to

have become the secondary concern of the institution.

A good library can play a vital role in moulding the intellectual make-up of a person. Hence the necessity of a well-stocked library can hardly be overemphasised. We hope that the British Council library will uphold its image and remain true to its name.
Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

Abduction of a Pakistani envoy

It now appears from a BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) report, the ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan - who was reportedly abducted by Taliban militants, a few months ago was released recently by his captors. It should be a piece of good news for family and friends of the envoy plus government of Pakistan, perse.

But the drama (I would like to call it that way) unfolded so far in connection with, and ancillary to the above matters has given rise to inter alia several initial questions. For example:

Whether or not it was a case of abduction? 2. Was it an outcome of planned engineering and execution of certain events in a certain manner or otherwise? 3. What was the motive behind for example, abduction and release of the envoy? 4. Who were and are involved in the process? 5. What was the role of the media (print, electronic) in the process? 6. What are or will be the gains or losses (or both) - for whom and when? 7. Does there exist any link between the on-going war on terror and efforts of Pakistani government plus others (as applicable) when it comes to re-applying political solutions to problems concerning terrorism in Pakistan and adding an additional dimension to anti-terror initiatives? 8. How and to what extent, the information, the experience and the lesson derived or to be derived (or both) from events associated with say, abduction and release of the envoy could be beneficial or not beneficial or a mixture of both to the government, abductors and others against the backdrop of the present day anti-terror efforts by Pakistan, Pakistanis and others? 9. How would the resultant benefits and losses contribute to escalation of the war or de-escalation of the war or otherwise? 10. What are the hidden terms and conditions of 'negotiations' that led to the release of the envoy by the captors? 11. What will be the cost-wise implications for those terms and conditions and who will bear the costs? 12. What are the real identities of abductors - what are their present denominations? 13. Where are they located at present and what are their average areas for say, operation related manoeuvrings? 14. If the drama is a product of planned events - how could then the resultant outcome affect and shape the future of the US-led war on terror in the near future?

Two of the reasons for presenting the questions now to readers and others are: to create an additional space for them to re-explore and re-examine the drama in a more objective and investigative manner, and to assist world people and countries in the efforts towards - how best and quickest they could get rid of terrorism and its ramifications at local, national, global and other levels. One of the underlying assumptions here is - abandoning the existing mode of anti-terror war in favour of a 100 percent political mode of anti-terror war or the application of an unrealistic, as well as unproductive mixture of both the modes could do more harm than good to all concerned under certain situations and circumstances. In that respect, it may be mentioned here that evolving challenges that are associated with food, natural disasters and energy at local, global and other levels and the continuation of those challenges without any significant remedy through the foreseeable future could lead to a natural death of terrorism or a further escalation of terrorist activities or a maintenance of status quo.

The last word: the present day challenges have, in a sense, provided world people and countries an additional rationale for fighting the war on terror in a more united, result-oriented and satisfactory fashion at local, regional, global and other levels.
Dr. M. S. Haq
London

Edward Kennedy

American Senator and a friend of Bangladesh Ted Kennedy is seriously ill with a deadly brain tumour. He is the man who supported Bangladesh during our glorious liberation war, while his country supported Pakistan.
I pray for his speedy recovery.
Solaiman Palash
East Jurain, Dhaka

DU students' plight

I would like to draw your attention on the news about resident DU students living in complete misery. It's a pathetic view of our best university. When the VC is living in a nice building, I guess, his students are sharing floors in a completely dire situation. I don't know how the administrators themselves used to live when they were students, but I think they should be sympathetic and take necessary steps. Since DU is one benchmark and reflection of country's educational system, where can I hide my face when our national dailies reveal such unpleasant truths. I was a student a few years back though not from DU but I feel sorry

Purchase committee

Some former members of the Khaleda cabinet who, being members of the then Cabinet Purchase Committee, have recently been arrested for their alleged involvement in the 'Gato Corruption Case'. Some such arrested former ministers, some 'Talkers' in the local TV channels and some journalists, through their writings and speeches, are trying to give an impression to the nation that the said Cabinet Purchase Committee was nothing but a mere rubber stamp without any significance. As an ordinary citizen, I do not know what is written in the 'Rules of Business' on the duties and responsibilities of the members of the purchase committee. But I can assume that a committee on which sits a number of senior cabinet ministers, and on whose recommendation the prime minister gives his/her decision cannot be a committee on paper only. If the members of the committee conducted themselves as the "domestic aides" of the prime minister and, knowing the prime minister's mind recommended something which the prime minister wanted to do, the committee members concerned cannot escape the responsibility for the wrong doing by the prime minister.
Syed Ashrafuzzaman
Mohakhali DOHS, Dhaka

Dwindling BTTB

This refers to the Star Business report (DS, 23 May) on the dwindling BTTB subscribers. I am not surprised to see its gradual decline. Even making BTTB a public limited company will not be an appropriate solution. As per this report quoting a BTTB high official, it is not the 'limited capacity to accommodate new connections' rather the backward looking and stagnant outlook of the Board that has created this situation. Mind that there is a huge amount of unpaid bills pending with the government organisations and, on the other hand, the individual subscribers are virtually being held hostage by the 'hon'ble linemen' all over the country. And the BTTB has failed to do anything about it as the Board is also being controlled by highly politicised union people.

The BTTB can 'come' out of this situation if it goes 'wireless fixed phone' system, following the examples of the private land phone operators, replacing the age-old jungle of telephone lines and getting rid of the gang of linemen. This will ensure much cheaper and hassle-free service to the subscribers and at the same time bring about operational ease to the advantage of the BTTB.
Dr. K. Maudood Elahi
Pro-Vice Chancellor
Stamford University Bangladesh
Dhaka

US presidential election

Forrest Cookson's gloomy piece predicting that John McCain will win the next US Presidential election may be prophetic. It also is right out of the Republican playbook, despite Mr. Cookson's suggestions to the contrary. I share the view that Mr. McCain has better chance of capturing the presidency than many observers suspect. But the exciting thing is that the rise of Mr. Obama has been both spectacular and unprecedented. Who, six months ago, would seriously have expected him to be ahead of such an establishment figure as Mrs. Clinton? What happens from now on depends on whether Mr. Obama runs a campaign that continues to challenge the conventional rules of US politics, and whether he is able to transcend the past. It is certainly possible that he will do so, and that he will win a decisive victory that may be seen as a turning point. To foretell his failure at this juncture is out-of-touch with the situation on the ground, and is exactly what the McCain camp is counting on. Mr. Cookson's piece is little more than a stealth endorsement for Mr. McCain, and readers need to know that.
Nigel Hughes
Professor of Geology
University of California

Rajuk's role

It is incomprehensible what The Daily Star tried to mean by its very news item captioned "A city itself set to dot Dhaka horizon" dated 15th May 2008. The content of the news item says that Rajuk is filling up wetland with an area of over 2,000 acres in Uttara. The story is also full of pleas Rajuk usually made in the past in grabbing valuable farmland, evicting the own-

Water logging

Water logging is a great problem that occurs (as is common for salinisation) in poorly drained soils where water can't penetrate deeply and that are poorly drained topographically. The raised water table results in the soils becoming waterlogged. When soils are water logged, air spaces in the soil are filled with water, and plant roots essentially suffocate - lacking oxygen. Water logging also damages soil structure. Worldwide, about 10% of all irrigated land suffers from water logging. As a result, productivity has fallen about 20% in this area of cropland. The ultimate results are soil pores have no oxygen, vegetation can turn yellow, growth is stunted and thin, trees and plants can die, bare patches of soil appear, plant species more tolerant of saturated conditions will take over.
Prevention:
• Management of drainage lines for efficient water flow.

Management of surface water-flow to avoid surface ponding.

- Increase deep rooting vegetation for greater utilisation of water from the soil.
- Apply water when necessary--
- When plants have used all available water for growth.
- When the soil is dry to a depth of 15 cm.
- As required in the growing season. Not when plants are dormant.
- Apply only as much as the plant will use. Not when it's raining or just after rain.
- Be water wise and protect our soil.

Afsana Akter Shilpy

Department of Environmental Science and Resource Management (ESRM)
Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University

Population problem



These days many people are found talking on TV on various subjects. There is no dearth of subjects. They talk on dialogue with the parties, jute, price hike of rice and other commodities, increase in oil and gas prices, Nargis and Sidr and so on, but nobody talks about a major problem of the country and perhaps of the world. What is that? Well, that's the 'population problem of Bangladesh'.

What is the population of Bangladesh? Believe me, none can say with authority. I tell you the population of the country is 170 million. You want to have a bet?

The department of Health & Family Planning is very much there, having offices, staffs, salary, recruitment (on May 14, 2008 there was an ad in The Daily Star for employment of Tk 8000.00 worth staff) and what not but not any family planning activities.

You may agree with me that the root of all problems of the country, like crime, unemployment, land grabbing, forest grabbing, scarcity of rice, rise of temperature, loss of forests, loss of natural creatures is over population.

I remember back in the late 1950s, there was a billboard near the western side of the GPO saying 'Every day the population of the country is increasing by 14000'. Now? It is horrifying. On an average, the poor families

are having 5+ children. Nobody bothers. Nobody talks on this serious issue. Why? I really do not know. If someone can get an opportunity to visit any slum or any island in the southern part of the country, he/she may be horrified to see the number of children in every family!

The food production is three times what the country used to produce in the 70s. Still we have shortage of food. The only reason is over population.

Please do something to stop the population growth. Use crude languages for the people who really need to understand the terrible and dangerous side of the issue. Our country is as big as Iowa of the USA but Iowa has only 3 million people! Well we can surpass that figure by the population of Mirpur (Dhaka) only!

Give contraceptives, injections for birth control etc free of cost. Fund? Well, close down some offices like Tula Unnayan Adhidaptar, Paat Gabeshana Adhidaptar, BJMC, embassies in many countries which really do not have any job. Use that money for birth control.

We will leave this world but let us leave a liveable country for our next generation.
Md. Shafiqul Islam Bhuiyan
Mirpur, Dhaka

Water logging

Water logging is a great problem that occurs (as is common for salinisation) in poorly drained soils where water can't penetrate deeply and that are poorly drained topographically. The raised water table results in the soils becoming waterlogged. When soils are water logged, air spaces in the soil are filled with water, and plant roots essentially suffocate - lacking oxygen. Water logging also damages soil structure. Worldwide, about 10% of all irrigated land suffers from water logging. As a result, productivity has fallen about 20% in this area of cropland. The ultimate results are soil pores have no oxygen, vegetation can turn yellow, growth is stunted and thin, trees and plants can die, bare patches of soil appear, plant species more tolerant of saturated conditions will take over.
Prevention:
• Management of drainage lines for efficient water flow.

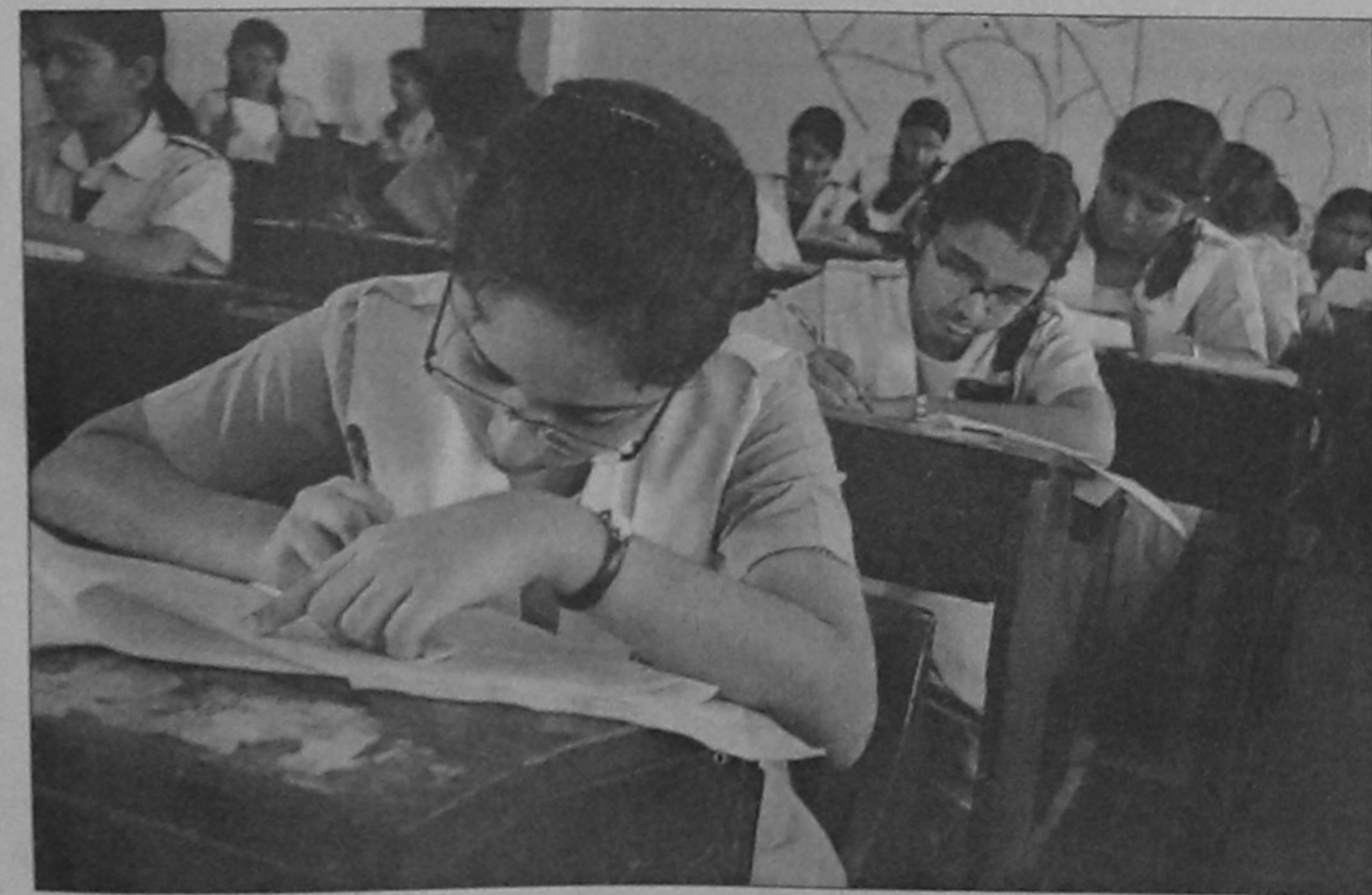
Management of surface water-flow to avoid surface ponding.

- Increase deep rooting vegetation for greater utilisation of water from the soil.
- Apply water when necessary--
- When plants have used all available water for growth.
- When the soil is dry to a depth of 15 cm.
- As required in the growing season. Not when plants are dormant.
- Apply only as much as the plant will use. Not when it's raining or just after rain.
- Be water wise and protect our soil.

Afsana Akter Shilpy

Department of Environmental Science and Resource Management (ESRM)
Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University

Govt high school & college



In Sabujbag residential area, mostly middle and lower middle class people live. But the government has not set up any high school or college over here. The private high school and college in the locality are sub-standard.

We, therefore, urge the government to establish one high school and one college in Sabujbag PS area on a priority basis.
Md. Ashraf Hossain
Central Bashabo
Dhaka

TANVIR AHMED / DRINKNEWS