

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.

Unique model

Mirdha's report on the new methodology of handling garment factory issues is clear and something to notice! This matter should be brought to the notice of all garment factory owners. It might be an easy and entertaining approach which might resolve many unnecessary factory disputes.

The idea of the drama format highlighting workers' problems like provision of pure and safe drinking water, as stated in this case, and similar such work related matters can be of great help to the factory management. It could be a noble approach to ease shop floor misunderstandings and tension and for improving worker-management relations.

I believe this unique trend of introducing workers to their rights as well as the duties and responsibilities of the management towards safety and compliance issues through dramas deserve widespread publicity in garment fac-

ories. Congratulations to DRC for introducing this novel concept in easing unnecessary tension in the shop floor.

As stated by the Executive Director of a garment manufacturer, it has simplified their problems through this audio-visual presentation to ensure that compliance matters are understood by all factory personnel. I believe there is a good possibility to extend this novel approach to all other industries to make the workers and their supervisors aware of the issues of safety and hygiene and other relevant areas.

The Inspector of Factories should be made aware of this problem solving tool to take a lead in encouraging the introduction of such audio-visual presentation for the different types of industries.

S.A. Mansoor, Dhaka



Politics of unfinished bridges

The respected Senior Assistant Editor of DS in the above titled piece mentioned that the PWD, RHD and WDB carry out the task of construction of bridges, in places not necessary, due to political desire of the local MPs. There are factual errors in it. First, the PWD is not concerned with construction of bridges, it is mainly the job of RHD and sometimes WDB. Both the organisations are not in the good books of the MPs as they conduct comprehensive feasibility study requiring much time before taking up any project, especially projects like construction of bridges which generally involve high costs. LGED, however, is the eye candy of the MPs as it is famous for its quick implementation with no or little feasibility study and donors also like it as it can spend funds very fast. The finance ministry and the line ministry of the engineering department concerned is responsible for timely disbursement of allocated funds in the four quarters of a financial year. Sometimes progress of work may get hampered as funds are not released in time.

It is unfortunate that the writer tried to give the impression that all the engineers are busy making underhand deals with MPs as he makes sweeping comments like "Before that you, however, assure the engineer shahebs of their cut in the deal" and "...sit down with the engineers and overseers to collect their signatures for clearing the bills (Whew, it's hard work, man!)"

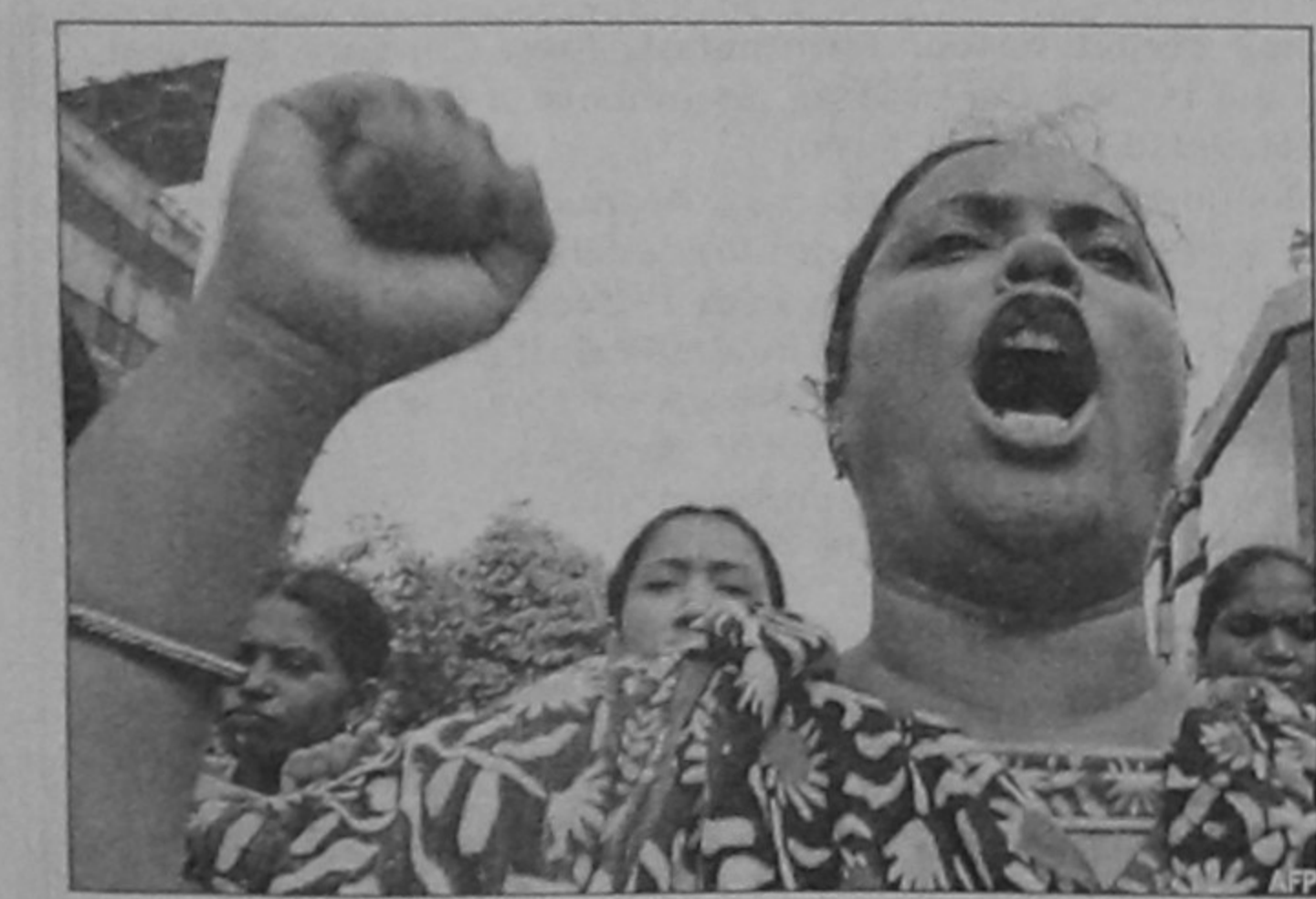
True, there are some engineers who engage in corrupt practices as pawns of big political corruption. But if none other than the Senior Assistant Editor of DS takes the liberty to call everyone of the profession corrupt based on it, the validity of the assertion can be questioned.

The ground reality is somewhat different. Engineers have to supervise the work in site under scorching sun or rain, sometimes convince the unruly contractor with muscle power and political connection to do the work properly, face extortionists under the cover of 'conscious people' or even journalists and send progress report to the ministry and higher offices in all kinds of formats available. And abiding by the undue request of MPs, like construction of a bridge in a place where it is not necessary, will cost the job of any engineer in any responsible engineering department.

It is very easy to weave a diatribe against a particular section of professionals. But it is not that easy to withstand the midday March sun and direct a contractor with political connections to work properly. Engineers are the ones who are responsible for the development works implemented in this country and all they got in return is the epithet of a corrupt person. May be the brightest of the students become doctors, engineers and the like, but it should not make them the bull's eye for sweeping and unjust criticism.

Saif
Dhaka

DEMOCRACY



Democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people (Abraham Lincoln). Democracy is the ruling system by which the will of general citizens gets priority in governmental activities. Democracy helps to foster or sustain the process of good governance which is the latest element of development in the third world countries.

But it has not taken roots in many societies, including ours. Niranjan Malakar
Dept. of Public Administration, DU

Dhaka city

The city usually has about 20 million people during daytime and 12 million at night, as about 8 million people rush to the city and leave it after the day's work. Of the inhabitants of Dhaka city, about 25% people live in unhygienic places and without any good civic facilities like water, gas electricity. It is a matter of great regret that each and every day people are facing serious traffic jams.

While the authorities should take corrective steps, I seek the readers' opinions on the issue. Md. Akbar H Chowdhury
ONE Bank Ltd.
Dhaka

Load-shedding

We need more power to develop faster.

But the matter of great regret is that we are facing acute load-shedding every day. Montasir Mamun
Department of Civil Engineering
BUET

Private universities

Private universities are free of student politics. But, are we to assume that they are free of corruption too? There is a sinister side to the issue that seldom gets mentioned.

My colleague, whose son studies in a private university, has been telling me of the nexus of corruption that is present. As an example, he tells me that when his son registers for courses for a new semester online, there are almost no sections available, due to such a great number of students. So, they have to miss their classes and stand in a queue for a long time to register.

Then, in line they are harassed by the peons and other security guards, who openly abuse them verbally, and have no fear of accountability to the authorities. The authorities give them the power to do whatever they desire to the students including provocation, blackmailing and stealing their belongings! Not only that, the attitude of the staff in the accounts, library and other departments is deplorable. My colleague also says that when he goes to the university with his son to pay the fees, the peons and the guards harass the guardians in front of their children. He says that the internet server of the university is always malfunctioning when the students want to register.

It is time the government intervened to stop the exploitation of students by these universities. Rashedul Haque
Maliabagh, Dhaka

Where is our tea?

Since childhood I am well aware of Sylhet's prominence as 'A land of a bud and two leaves', which refers to the tea, of course. We all know how tea is embedded in our Bengali culture and heritage. No meal, conversation and hospitality is complete without this hot beverage. It also plays an important part in earning valuable foreign currency for our country by being exported. Right?

But which country exactly is our tea exported to? The British are one of the leading tea drinking nations in the world. Living in London, I am yet to see the name of our country in any of the British tea brands, let alone Sylhet. How is it possible? There are 'Assam', 'Darjeeling' and 'Ceylon' tea among the leading subcontinental tea varieties but no mention of Sylhet in sight! In fact, there are 'English breakfast', 'Earl Grey' and 'Lady Grey' among the leading tea brands, all connected to the British colonial past. Yes, the British played a major role in developing the tea industry in the sub-continent. But isn't it about time our country had some fruit of the labour which is long overdue through marketing which the British are claiming by processing and packaging the tea? MMRahman
London, UK

Naeem's article

I particularly loved Mr. Naeem Mohaimen's article on May 19th, entitled 'the usual suspects'. He made some great points (with a great deal of wit as well) about the tendency of the Indian administration of treating Bangladesh as its scapegoat for everything that happens to go wrong. I greatly appreciated his reasoning in the article and it truly was a delightful read!! Samia Seraj
Dhaka

Nargis

It was the responsibility of this government to warn the Myanmar authorities that hurricane Nargis was going to hit them. It was very odd to witness the government being relieved to watch that Nargis was heading towards Myanmar. This is not the way to develop good neighbourly relations. But couldn't this government warn the Myanmar authorities? Maybe such a high cost in life could have been avoided. Cooperation in weather forecasting was necessary. Farhad
One-mail

Congratulations!

Two teams have participated in the BFF election held recently and nearly an equal number of contestants from the two sides have come out victorious. Salahuddin, the country's best and legendary striker, is the new president. On the other hand, Salam, another popular striker who has the record of scoring the maximum number of goals in a single season in Dhaka League, was elected senior vice-president. Not only Salahuddin and Salam but also Aslam, Badal Roy, Helal, Babul, Rupu and many other popular footballers have won this year.

Football was the most popular game in our country. People enjoyed this game very much. They were divided mainly into two clubs i.e. Mohammedans and Abahani. Their happiness knew no bounds when their favourite team won. But now football is not in the field. We were the best team in the Saarc region but our team is now lagging behind even Nepal or the Maldives, let alone India.

For the better development of mental and physical health, there is no other easy alternative to football. So, we have to bring it back.

I think the present bosses of BFF are the best in our history. If they work sincerely and honestly, football will regain its lost glory.

We congratulate Salahuddin and his team. Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Polythene bags

The govt. banned the use and production of poly-bags all over the country on March 1, 2002. But it is a matter of great regret that poly-bags are still available in the market. Both shopkeepers and customers are unwittingly using poly-bags to carry goods.

We all have to understand that we are pushing ourselves towards destruction by using it. So let us boycott it! Rasel Raymond Dio
Saint Xavier Intermediate seminary
Bhatikashore, Mymensingh

Capital city

Obviously Dhaka is choking due to its size. Pressure must be taken off this monster.

This can only be effectively done by a radical Tuglaki manoeuvre. Like Tuglakh, the Mugal Emperor Akbar also wanted to build a new capital at Fatepur Shikri but died before it could be up and running and so the capital and the imperial court remained at Delhi at his death. However, this idea of building new capitals or cities in a well planned manner (unhampered by an existing township which grew helter-skelter) is quite fashionable in modern times. Examples are: Brasilia (from old Rio) and Islamabad (from Karachi). Also our neighbour Myanmar is thinking on this line.

Perhaps a new elected parliament will debate the issue of building a new capital in some erstwhile neglected and impoverished area of the country to take pressure off Dhaka and really develop the infrastructure of the land with prosperity being shared around. A political capital, not immediately in contact with the business world, is also much less susceptible to corruption.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Biofuel or food?

In recent decades, economics studies have gotten us used to seeing our shared property - the atmosphere, the water, natural resources, fauna and flora - as something to be taken for granted. Land and water used in the past to grow food have been allocated for crops used to produce different types of biofuels, and the result has been an increase in food prices that today threatens quite a few countries. Feasibility studies of these projects must take into account the costs which, in the past, we used to overlook. We must decide what we want to consume - automotive fuel or food? Biofuels are a way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions compared to conventional transport fuels and are climate-friendly. "Not all renewable energy is totally 'green.'" Wind turbines, for example, disrupt scenic panoramas, are often a source of noise pollution and harm fauna in their vicinity, such as birds. When calculating costs, a zero cost is affixed to birds, but it should not be forgotten that animals are part of the food chain, and the elimination of one species affects other species of flora and fauna and thus ecological balance is disrupted. Many countries are converting rainforests, savannas, or grasslands to produce food-based biofuels. They are just thinking about the economic benefits and environmental impacts are not taken into consideration.

If increased proportions of food crops such as corn or soy are used for fuel that may push prices up affecting food supplies for less prosperous countries like Bangladesh. Rapidly rising food prices may lead to food riots in the world. Increased use of biofuels puts increasing pressure on water resources in at least two ways: water use for the irrigation of crops used as feedstock for biodiesel production; and water use in the production of biofuels in refineries, mostly for boiling and cooling. Also, extensive use of pesticide for biofuel crops is reducing clean water supplies. In some locations

such as Indonesia deforestation for Palm Oil plantations is leading to displacement of indigenous peoples. The price of land should be determined not according to its value for construction purposes, but according to its environmental value. We should urgently make the distinction between food and energy crops.

Krishna Chandra Das
Dept. of Environmental Science and Resource Management
Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University
Tangail

Drug abuse

I was gratified to offer my expertise on preventing drug abuse among the young kids in a drug awareness programme for parents in a reputed English medium school in Dhaka. We were a four member team who were involved in developing and facilitating the presentation. By the way I am not one of the seasoned social workers or an expert on the public health issues. And being an amateur, I, out of passion, opted to participate. In the back of my mind I always kept a strong wish to synchronize my passion and prior real life experiences to build a professional carrier in this field.

Out of the three hundred parents, 70 signed back the receipt that was attached to the invitation letter indicating they would participate. But on the day of the presentation a poor number of parents showed up.

I was heart broken and the facts in our laptop power-point presentation about the drug scenario of Bangladesh were raising an eyebrow "oops do I match the situation here?" How come only these few intrusive parent groups managed to show up here on a Saturday morning and the rest completely thought not to. Do they think that they are fully protected from drug abuse? It was an intensive 3-hour programme with the few teachers and the parents who participated

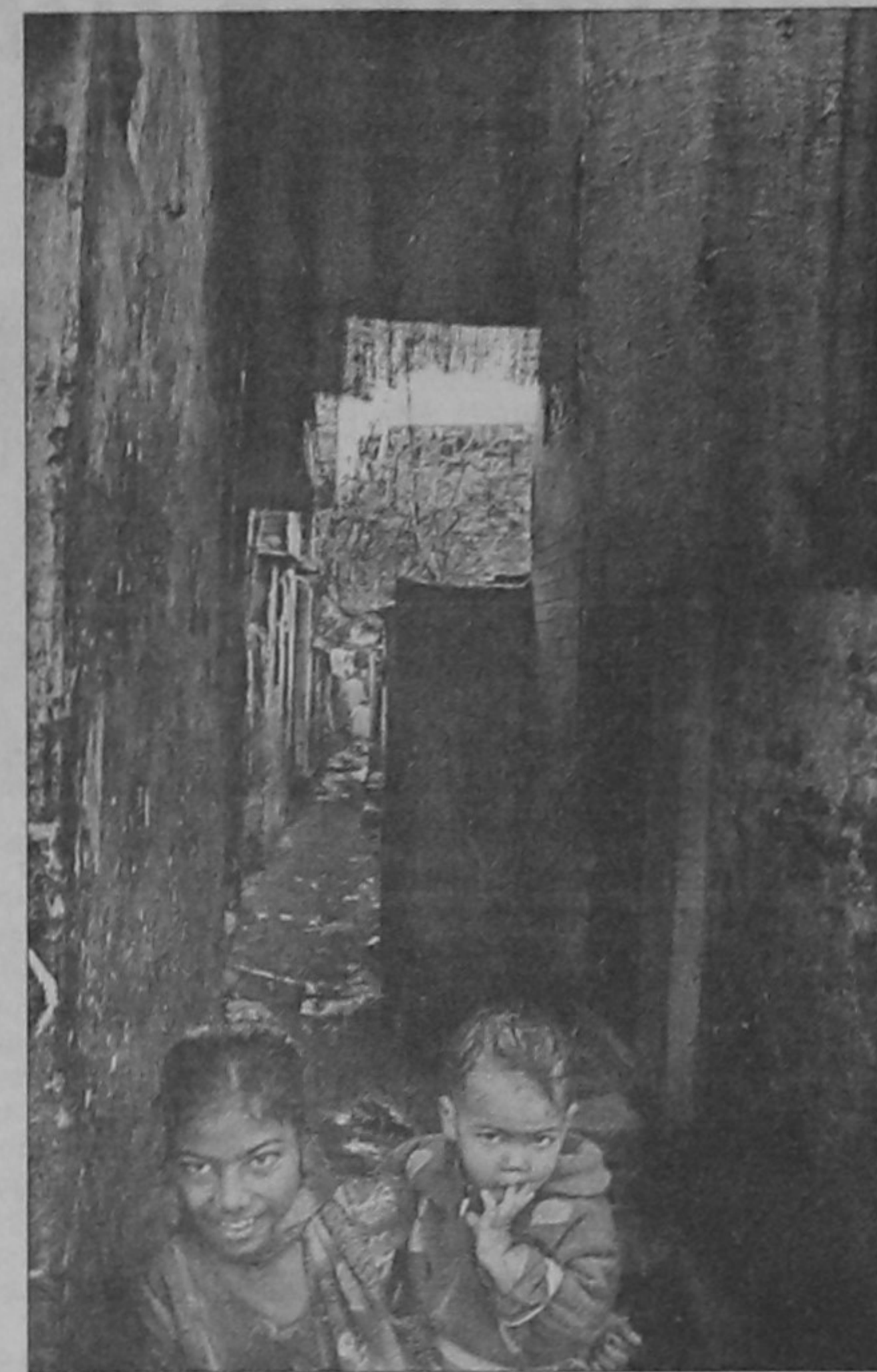
Citizenship for the Urdu-speaking

Three lakh Urdu-speaking people have been declared citizens of Bangladesh. Thanks a lot to the caretaker government, people and the judiciary. Although born and educated on the soil of Bangladesh, I used to feel bad for not having my legal citizenship. My Bangladeshi brothers never reminded me that I was not a citizen of this country, even then I always felt that I am not a legal citizen of this country. This is of course a great day for everyone of us who can feel the meaning of citizenship.

Most of the people who have been given citizenship were born in Bangladesh, as only a small section of the original migrants is still alive, after 61 years of partition of India. This decision could not be taken earlier as some of the Urdu-speaking people were demanding repatriation to Pakistan, but Pakistan never accepted them as its nationals.

It is disgusting that some people are still reluctant to accept this offer. Those who are still claiming themselves as citizens of another country should be asked to leave Bangladesh.

Syed Ashraf Yusuf
Halishahar, Chittagong



MAHABUB ALAM KHAN / DRINKNEWS

enthusiastically. Thanks to those who ensured that our effort would not be a total waste of time. Zaiami Bodrudduza
Dhaka

Free lunch for farmers

The finance adviser while addressing a seminar recently on agricultural credit reminded the farmers that "there is no free lunch". It was a misplaced accusation and at the same time very derogatory to the farming community. The farmers not only feed themselves but all of us by producing enough in all

advertisements. This year's bumper boro and potato harvest is a testimony to the above mentioned fact. So, it is anybody but the farmers who enjoy the so called "free lunch" out of public money. The present Adviser is in the helm of affairs for some time, so it will not be very difficult for him to detect the free-loaders who live at the expense of public exchequer (hint: loan defaulters to name a few). As a necessary evil the non-productive sector cannot be eliminated altogether but can be halved so that it doesn't become a rapacious consumer of public money, and that is the direction towards which the finger should be pointed, not towards the hapless farmers.

While the adviser was making the comment, a number of newspaper editors, civil society members and other experts were present, but so far we have not heard anything from them as a reaction to the comment. AK Shamsuddin
Mississauga
LSN 7E2, ON
Canada

Wasa water

I had to visit the Dhaka Education Board office a few days ago. While waiting there, I went to the canteen to have a cup of tea. To my horror, I found the (so called) waiters filling

water jugs directly from the Wasa tap, in front of everyone. Immediately that jug went to a table, and the water in someone's stomach.

I am not sure, but is the water from the tap purified? Is it coming from a safe source? I guess not. When a part of the government is trying so hard to get people out of this kind of problems, shouldn't the government offices show more concern in this regard? Misha Mahjabeen
Mohakhali, Dhaka

English teaching

As far as English teaching at the SSC and HSC levels is concerned the motto has been communicative English. It emphasises communicative competence whereby a learner is able to produce meaningful sentences in different contexts. In other words, in communicative method, two skills--listening and speaking--get the priority. The irony is that in our country the students of those classes have to sit for a written test where the two skills--reading and writing--are tested.

Again the prevalent situation of most of the educational institutions is not helpful for oral learning activists. As most of the public institutions accommodate a huge number of students, the question of teacher-student interaction remain unrealised. As regards teaching material, the teacher in most cases is equipped with pieces of chalk and a duster only.

From this year the authorities have brought in changes in the syllabus of English second paper at the HSC level. Forty marks have been allotted for questions on grammar and sixty marks for composition. So grammar is back, which shows that in our context it is quite impossible to implement the communicative syllabus. Zabeed Wali
Paharatli
Chittagong

Medical ethics and advertisement

Recently a letter was published in The Daily Star drawing the attention of all with comments on the Ethical Aspects of the medical profession. He is right that medical profession is different from others as a human service within the framework of strong ethical guidelines. It is not a mere provider of service commodities in exchange of money or price, rather beyond that. Advertisements on medical practice and service that are common today are more reflective of general trading. There is dire lack of agreed consensus based moral code of conduct or guidelines in any arena where human interactions take place. Moreover, the little which is there is fast evaporating. Medical practice is one of them. It has been expected that a government should be the prime mover of this matter. But the government of Bangladesh has endorsed the present commercialisation process of the medical practice by imposing VAT on specialized medical practice. This is something new. Nobody in

the country has questioned or raised any voice about its moral aspect. A couple of years ago, the government imposed VAT on diagnostic labs, private clinics and hospitals without any response from any quarter. So, if this

is a commercial venture it will follow the commercial culture and one of them is advertisement. Can we question that? Emran Bin Yunus
On e-mail



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