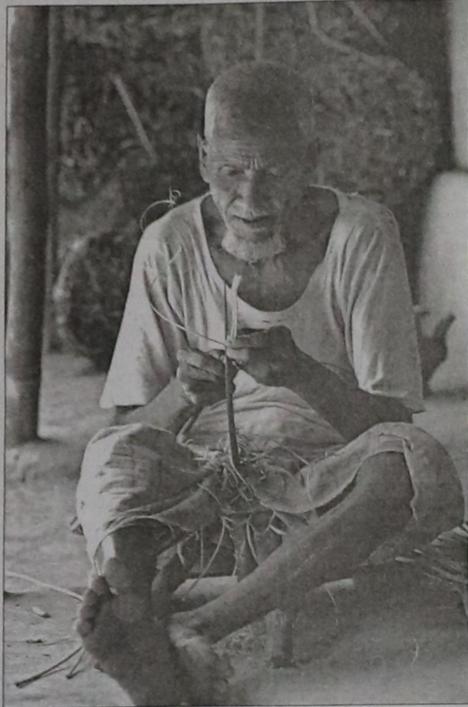


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



RAJAN KATY BURINENS

over their lifetime. In many countries insufficient laboratory capacity to test drug-resistance is a serious impediment in scaling up TB programmes. Developing laboratories to provide rapid diagnosis of anti-TB drug-resistance, particularly for PLHIV, is of utmost importance to improve TB responses.

Many countries, including Bangladesh, are making impressive gains in treating people living with HIV, but this investment and progress is squandered by a preventable and curable disease—TB. New strategies and tools are urgently needed to tackle the challenge of TB/HIV co-infection. WHO-recommended collaborative TB/HIV activities must be accelerated, and research stepped up to deliver a new generation of effective anti-TB drugs and diagnostics to keep co-infected people alive. Closer coordination between national TB and HIV programmes and services is vital.

Bobby Ramakant
Recipient of World Health Organization (WHO)'s Award for the year 2008

Expensive bread

The price of bread has increased rapidly during the last few months. The price of a medium sized bread was Tk 15 each. This has now increased to Tk 45 to Tk 50. This means an increase of 300%! This is too much.

We know that prices have gone up but the prices of wheat flour and other ingredients have not increased much. Hence an increase of say 20% could be reasonable.

Therefore the government should look into this matter and refix the maximum retail price of bread for the benefit of the common people. The rush to make quick money at the expense of public should be stopped.

Rita Khan
Tikatooly, Dhaka

Indian visa

This is a special request to H.E. Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh. Please set up a separate entrance for people aged over 60 years at your visa office.

This will be a great service to elderly people like us.

Mushtaque Ahmad
Uttara, Dhaka

Menon's comment

I am writing with reference to your report on the statement by Rashed Khan Menon that Sheikh Hasina should be released because her arrest was for political reasons. Mr Menon is a veteran politician and has also been a student of law, so he must surely know that the charges filed against Sheikh Hasina allege several cases of corruption in procurement, approval of tenders,

accepting payments etc. She has not been arrested on political charges of sedition, dissent etc.

Most citizens would be very relieved if the court finds her not guilty, but if she is released under political pressure from her party and supporters, there would be lingering doubts in our minds about her integrity. What Mr. Menon is saying by asking for her release is that politicians should not be accountable for their actions. They may be very popular but democracy has to do with more than popularity. It has to respect the rule of law and popularly elected leaders should not place themselves above the law.

Navine Mahmud
Shantinagar, Dhaka

Our politics and NRBs

As expatriate Bangladeshis we are earning foreign currency and remitting it to Bangladesh. We don't know how that money is spent in the country.

Secondly, although some have dual citizenship, they want to be part of national development in future. Are the current and future politicians and non-politicians thinking of rehabilitating them with their expertise and experience of both worlds?

Thirdly, today and tomorrow political parties are coming back to power. How will their priorities be influenced by the last 18 months' bitter experience?

Dr. Azizul Karim
GP, Australia

Workers in the Middle East

The remittances of Bangladeshi people working abroad are the main source of foreign currency of our economy. Without this income Bangladesh has no future. The recent news that our people in some countries are in serious trouble is cause for extreme concern. The Bangladesh govt. must take some strong action to improve the image of our country.

The govt must first look into the condition in which our people are working in those countries. One of my colleagues was in a Middle Eastern country and saw how the foreign labourers were working there. He described the working condition as miserable, inhuman and unacceptable.

The govt must talk to the embassies of those countries about the working condition. Most of our people going outside for work are coming from villages and rural areas. Before they fly to those countries they must be informed about the host country, particularly the culture, the laws and how to live and behave in that country. They must attend a seminar dealing with these issues and must have a certificate from there. Without this certificate the foreign embassies in Bangladesh should not give any working visa to the people.

Dr. Farid Majumder
Darmstadt, Germany

Parochial demand

A section of teachers, staff of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University and also Khulna University have demanded that the VC be appointed from their own university. Any eligible citizen of the country or even from abroad should be able to apply and may be recruited for the position including the SBAU or KU if found best. What BNP cadre VCs did could not be a reason for restricting competition.

Everywhere competition should be ensured to get the first best in every position. The universal principle of competition in recruitment should not be abandoned by the government and the search committee.

Prof. SAM
One-mail

What's going on?

Dr. Hossein Zillur Rahman has been found active on dialogue. He is the one speaking to the media most of the time. As the two main political parties of Bangladesh refused dialogue with this government, keeping their party chiefs in the jail, the government immediately filed a case against a senior leader of the Bangladesh Awami League, Mr. Tofail Ahmed.

We can feel the pulse of the government. They are making the situation more complicated!

Arman Mirza
Dhaka

English question paper

I happened to come across an unsuccessful degree student who failed in the compulsory English paper (subject code 105) of the examination. I found the girl too weak to pass but what appalled me is that the said English question paper had no less than three printing mistakes, and when I asked the girl if these mistakes were pointed out and rectified by the invigilating teacher in the examination hall she answered in the negative. She even could not think of any mistake creeping in the question paper.

It makes me painfully disturbed that teaching of English from elementary to secondary levels is not pursued with the very objective that the students must be taught basics of how a sentence is framed with proper placement of subject, verb, complementary and predicate/object and following the rules of Tenses and the use of the verb-to-be according to the time. Many innovative ideas have been pushed in many times as tests and trials to make the students learn English comprehensively and cheers and applauses have been showered, but everything seems to have gone in vain.

Ahmed Niaz
Shekherak
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Pope's initiative

I wish to commend Pope Benedict XVI for his most recent liturgical initiatives. Some may recall that a few months ago the Pope celebrated Mass in the Sistine Chapel facing the East rather than the people. More recently, on the feast of Corpus Christi (May 22, 2008), Pope Benedict XVI, for his papal Mass outside the Basilica of St. John Lateran, had a kneeler placed at the foot of the altar and distributed Holy Communion to four dozen communicants—all of whom knelt and received the Eucharist on the tongue. This latest initiative is in keeping with those orthodox practices which the Church strongly recommends. Archbishop Albert Malcolm Ranjith Patabendige Don, secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, commented on the significance of the pope's gesture saying: "I hope this practice spreads."

Pope Benedict XVI had previously pointed out that "the man who learns to believe learns also to kneel, and a faith or a liturgy no longer familiar with kneeling would be sick at the core."

Paul Kokoski
Hamilton, Ontario
Canada

Foreigners and we

On May 6, 2008 we saw the photograph of Mr Anwar Chowdhury the out-going British High Commissioner in Bangladesh calling on the BNP Chairperson's nominated Secretary General Khondkar Delwar Hussain at his residence. On May 7, 2008 we saw another photograph of Anwar Chowdhury calling on the acting Secretary General of BNP (SR), Major Retd Hafizur Rahman, at his residence.

In both the photographs the British High Commissioner looked very cheerful but both Delwar Hussain and Hafizur Rahman appeared gloomy.

What was the significance of these activities of the former British High Commissioner?

The US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher flew from Washington to Dhaka and discussed our internal matters with the head of our caretaker government, Chief Election Commissioner and many of our top govt officials, political leaders and VIPs. What is the status, rank and position of Boucher?

OH Kabir
Dhaka

Four years in Dhaka city

This is just to express my feeling about Life in Dhaka City as an expatriate. I am from Bangkok, Thailand and have been living in Dhaka for the last 4 years. Before coming here, what I heard about Bangladesh was mostly about the unfortunate natural disasters, the violent political strikes and the sunken overloaded ferries. Of course the scenes of poverty and hunger were also common on international news channels.

After stepping my foot on the land of this Bengali speaking country, I was stunned with the lives I saw by the road sides; people were just everywhere, and so it was never boring to me to have a rickshaw ride just to expose myself to the open sky, the sun and the lively streets in Dhaka city. When I started working here, I travelled mainly by CNGs, public buses and rickshaws as I did not have a car like many other Dhakabashis. People here are amazingly nice and kind though they did not seem to smile much. I struggled with the language in my first few years here and some people wouldn't mind turning them-

Water pollution

Water, the vital element, is being polluted in different ways. Industrial effluents, pesticides etc contribute to the aggravation of water pollution. Whereas human waste is biodegradable, industrial waste requires treatment. Untreated waste causes damage to the ecosystem and leads to many problems. In addition, polluted water poses great health hazard.

Many people across the world are suffering because of the scarcity of freshwater. Due to pollution many rivers are in death throes. According to a study, last year the Yellow River, a lifeline of China, failed to reach the sea on several occasions. Although Chinese economy is growing at a great pace, its environment is suffering.

In the context of our country, water pollution is a burning issue. You just have a look at the canals and rivers in and around the cities and the industrial areas. The murky colour and the stench of those water bodies bear testimony to the fact that water pollution has taken a turn for the worse and the situation calls for immediate remedial measures.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong



PHOTO AFP

selves into impromptu interpreters and helped me through. However, I was also warned about the hijackers on the road.

What I faced was some arguments which turned to be a fight on public buses, like once one bus boy was smoking on the bus. The passengers started scolding him and some people started beating him up. Another time, I was talking with my colleague (in English of course) on the bus, and a man sitting in front was telling us 'chup koro' as he was annoyed, while another time, a young man shouted at me to be quiet as he couldn't take a nap on this A/C bus. In this later incident, a university student who gave me his seat and standing beside me, questioned and argued with that man who shouted at me as anyone should have the right to talk on the bus!

This morning I took a CNG from Dhanmondi to Mohakhali to work. The same thoughts were running in my head. I got stuck as the train was passing by under the Mohakhali flyover. It was about 10.15am and getting very warm. Many beggars were passing by asking for money. Among them, I pointed out a tall young man walking towards my CNG. He stood out the crowd because he did not look like a beggar, relatively fair complexion, thin and very tall. I saw him looking at me as he was approaching our CNG. Then he suddenly stopped at me and asked for money in a threatening voice. Being shocked, I was motionless. My Muay Thai lessons didn't become useful as I was lost for a second. On the other side of the CNG, another old female beggar was asking for some changes. Two strangers standing on both sides of my CNG with the same aim: getting my money, but with two approaches. The man threatened me more and shouted when I would give him the money as the traffic would move soon. I then said 'Ok ok, dibo.' I wouldn't mind giving him whatever I have but as he had one hand in his pocket, I had no idea if he would hurt me. As I was planning to jump out of CNG, he suddenly walked away and left me still shocked and puzzled. The CNG driver told me that the man left and he rushed away from that spot. I lost neither my belongings nor my blood, but I lost strength and confidence. My hand was shaking as I paid the CNG driver and he was sad as he couldn't do anything. Is that really true that WE cannot do anything, at all?

Two colleagues of mine concluded that it must be the same guy who tried to rob them. It was at the same spot and same type of man: tall, thin and fair. One of them had to give her money or he would hit her. Can't police do anything about such problems?

Sunida Witayakarn
Dhaka

Our achievement(?) in smoking!

A press report from Geneva, published in a local English daily on May 31, ranks Bangladesh among the top ten tobacco smoking countries! If use of chewing tobacco was

included, we could well have ranked among the top five!

Frankly it is not an achievement to be proud of.

In contrast, we are bracketed among the bottom countries in terms of per capita income. The combination of top and bottom; both in the wrong places, gives us a dubious reputation. Too poor to buy enough food, yet indulging in tobacco smoking; an outright disgusting habit!

The CTG despite all its sound and fury has not done anything positive towards containing smoking! This is an area, where harsh positive action would have been appreciated by the people. The CTG however is totally indifferent to this real issue; having all the authority, but no moral responsibility for this civic duty. All its efforts (how far successful?)

Is directed against bribe takers (police and such like excluded) and politicians of different parties. Elsewhere it is inaction at best; while murder, robbery, mugging and such crimes are going up and up!

Just for curiosity; are the CTG meetings non-smoking? Has smoking been stopped in all government and public sector offices? On budget; why not drastically increase duties and taxes on the tobacco sector like cigarette and biri manufacture? At least this will result in a dent in the profits of the sector responsible for directly and indirectly spreading diseases among the people of the country.

The CTG must do something positive to stop or reduce this evil

habit of smoking, that affects both smokers and non-smokers alike. This will set a good example for the future government. The popular saying is; "If there is a will, there is a way". Does the CTG have the will for this deed?

Anon-smoker
Dhaka

Eve-teasing

I am pleased that people in Gaibandha or anywhere are campaigning with marches against 'EVE-TEASING' but surely the first thing that needs to be done is to abandon this ridiculous expression!

'Teasing' is a word that can be used for perfectly acceptable provocation in minor and playful ways that can be fun for both parties. What is going on that we all deplore is SEXUAL HARASSMENT. (If someone can think of another expression that can convey its total unacceptability, then fine.)

Moreover, wicked boys and men can use the expression as an excuse to say, "It's all HER fault! I was only having a bit of fun!" Sexual harassment can be totally destructive of a girl or woman's well-being and is a key factor in parents feeling, rightly or wrongly, that the only thing they can do is to take their young daughters out of school and marry them off to anyone who will have them in order to protect them against rape.

I demand a ban on the expression 'eve-teasing' in the press. After all, if a journalist has his fingers mashed you do not call it 'journalist-teasing'...

Angela Robinson
Gulshan, Dhaka

River erosion

River erosion is a serious problem in Bangladesh. The three mighty rivers—Brahmaputra, Jamuna and Padma—have swallowed up about 3970 hectares of land, 530 hectares of settlement, 2,020 meters of roads in districts and 2,390 meters of roads in villages in 2007. According to the reports, these rivers also devoured 40 educational institutions, nine market places, five government offices, one non-government office and two health centres during the period.

The authorities concerned should take immediate steps to protect land from river erosion.

Nazir Sabri
Asian University
Uttara, Dhaka

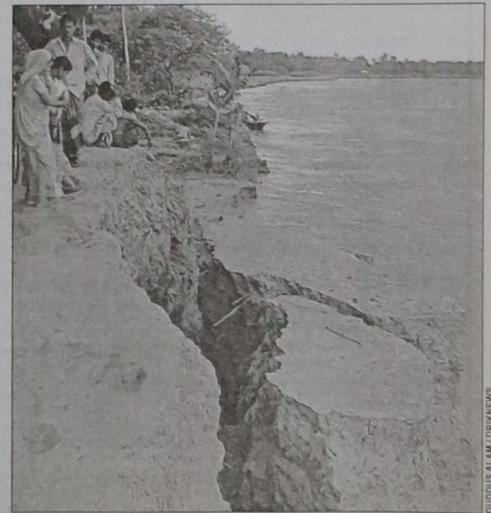


PHOTO ILMU BURINENS

Upcoming budget

The 2008-2009 budget is going to be announced very soon. There are great expectations among the people from the budget. I think that the budget should be pro-employment, because the burden of unemployment is growing day by day in our country. Besides employment, the budget should be pro-education, pro-agriculture, pro-investment & pro-development. The industrial & telecommunication sector should be emphasized. The size of the ADP should be reasonable. Utilisation of funds, transparency & sustainability should be ensured. And both formal & informal sectors have to be given due importance.

Rezaul Haque Sumon
Dhaka

TB/HIV co-infection

On June 9, for the first time, governments, public health and business leaders, heads of UN agencies and advocates are coming together at United Nations (UN) Headquarters to acknowledge addressing HIV/TB as an urgent priority. This first HIV/TB Global Leaders' Forum, convened by Dr. Jorge Sampaio, the UN Secretary-General's special envoy to stop TB, seeks to galvanise leadership at all levels.

The 2008 "Anti-Tuberculosis Drug Resistance in the World" report and the 2008 "Global Tuberculosis Epidemic report of World Health Organization (WHO)" clearly mandates much heightened urgency in responding to TB-HIV co-infection.

Bangladesh continues to have the 5th highest TB burden in the world. TB is the leading cause of death among people living with HIV (PLHIV). Approximately one-

third of the nearly 40 million PLHIV are also infected with TB. In high TB and HIV burden settings, up to 80% of TB patients may be co-infected with HIV, and half of AIDS-related deaths are caused by TB.

Without proper treatment with anti-TB drugs, approximately 90% of people living with HIV die within two to three months of becoming sick with TB, even if they receive anti-retroviral treatment.

Worldwide, nearly a quarter of a million people die from HIV/TB co-infection each year. This dual threat is a barrier to keeping people healthy and productive, and impacts poverty reduction plans and the broader development agenda. However, adequate treatment of TB in PLHIV can prolong their life by at least two years.

HIV weakens the immune system and makes it more likely that latent TB infection will progress to active TB disease. PLHIV are up to 50 times more likely to develop TB



Rickshaw free capital

Thanks are due to Mr Qamruddin Chowdhury from Kuwait for his letter in DS on 25 May 2009. He has undoubtedly provided the 'mother of all solutions' to our worst nightmare, the traffic jam and more than justified this and my previous 16 letters on the subject. He advocates:

1. That rickshaws must be eliminated not only from Dhaka but the whole of Bangladesh as they are not needed.
2. That pulling rickshaws make pullers weak physically and financially so they should have alternate means of livelihood.
3. All rickshaw-pullers live in slums and all slum dwellers indulge in illegal activities, including drug peddling, hartals etc etc and so they should all be eliminated.
4. Mechanized transport systems are more time

efficient and less expensive, so we should have metros, elevated express ways, monorails, underground and on the ground shuttle railways.

5. Comfortable footpaths for walking to make everyone healthy, besides eliminating harmful emissions.

Mr Qamruddin, we all know that Kuwait is a very hot country in summer. It is evident that you have been out in the sun too long. However, I wonder if you could do something worthwhile for your country. Please go to nearby Baghdad and borrow Aladdin's Lamp for a few days, so that we can work the Genie hard to get your 'solutions' in place before your next visit to your homeland.

Sikander Ahmed
Gulshan-1, Dhaka