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Accidents and vandalism

Some accidents are unavoidable and some are due to human errors. In Bangladesh, road accidents are very rampant. The accidents do not always occur due to the fault of drivers. Sometimes the victims are also responsible for accidents due to careless crossing, walking or treading on the roads. In the developed world the incidents are spot examined by the traffic control officials and insurance men. Nearby people do not rush in like bees and attack the driver! The traffic managers take charge of the situation and the question of violence or vandalism doesn't arise.

I think the time has come to think how our law enforcers could tackle such situations. There should be some laws to protect those not responsible for any accident.

Shafiqul Islam
One-mail

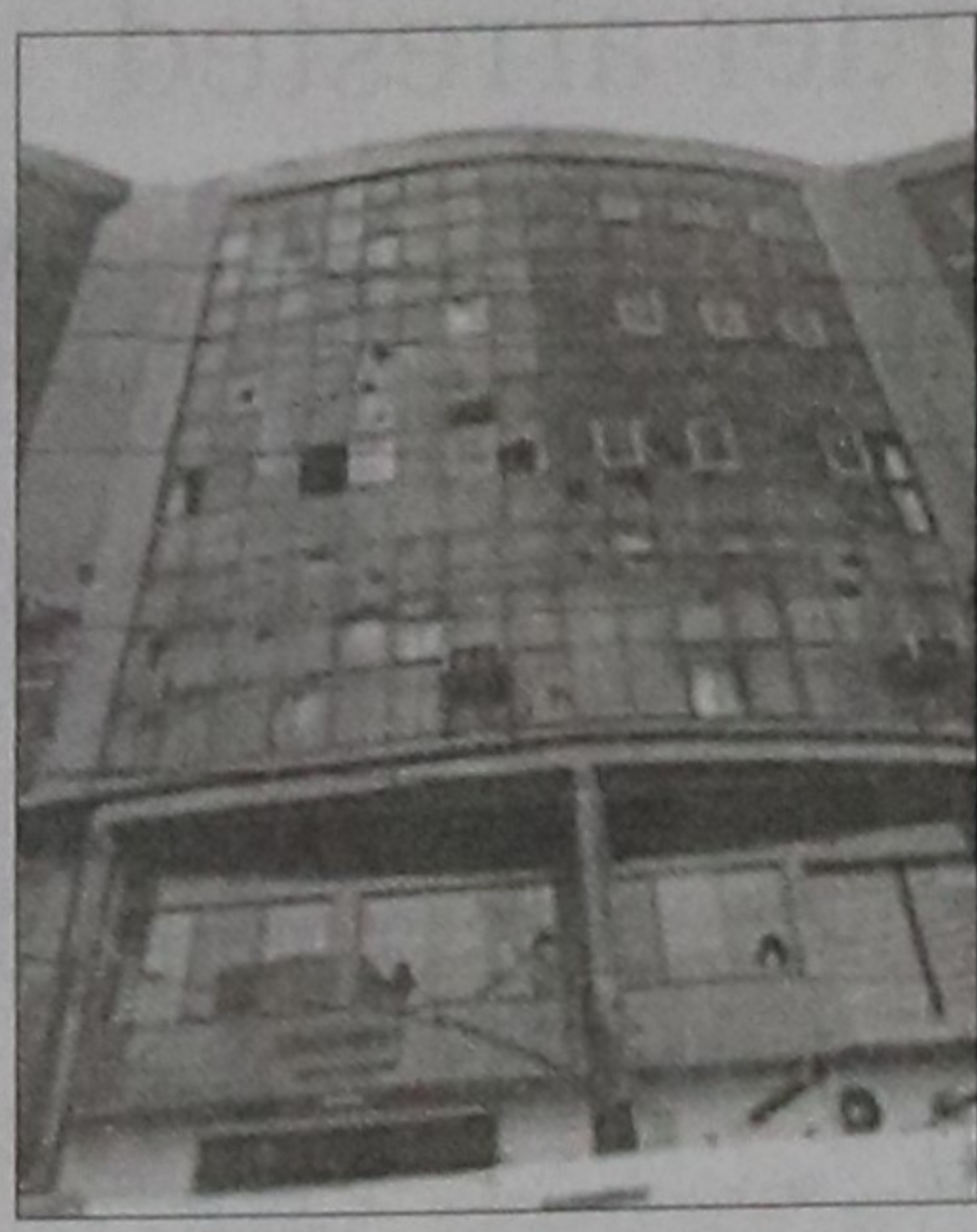


PHOTO STAR

Learning English

Here and there, everywhere we see lots of coaching centres and teaching homes. Knowing English is a matter of pride today. That's why the profitable business is to establish an English coaching centre. We must acquire the basic knowledge of it. But the ultimate result is totally different. Unexpectedly, in the on-going HSC exams, a record number of examinees didn't appear in English 1st paper. Why this fear?

I think our education system is not capable of teaching English properly. We don't have the chance to attain knowledge of it in the existing system. The authorities should take corrective steps in this respect.

Mishu Kutubi
Dept. of English
IUC

Top two

I read your article, "Medical board examines health of Khaleda" with interest. I seriously hope that the government is not trying to find excuses to remove Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia from politics by sending them abroad. This would undermine everything the caretaker government has done so far.

I suppose the two parties-- the AL and the BNP-- do not want their leaders tried. They perhaps want the two women to "ESCAPE" before they are found guilty and sent to prison.

It's also sad that the ordinary citizens of Bangladesh don't have access to foreign medical treatment like the ex-prime ministers and have to be satisfied with the local doctors. The other question that comes to mind is how do ex-prime ministers afford treatment abroad?

Fareha Chowdhury
London, UK

Export prices

A report was published in a local English daily on June 8, focussing on problems faced by our exporters due to declining prices overseas. It is an oft-repeated scenario in our export trade. Meanwhile, prices of whatever we import go on rising steadily! For example, in the last six months, oil prices have nearly tripled, but has oil consumption increased in the same ratio over the last six months?

This is possibly the result of underhand secret manipulation between the Arabs and the Jews, who between them control over seventy percent of global crude oil production and sale. No wonder, no one is bothered about the Palestine issue, except for lip service, while Israel quietly goes on gobbling Arab land wherever possible!

The whole oil scenario stinks of underhand dirty political bargains and counter bargains. Unlike the EU and the US, all the Middle East Muslim states are in a muddle; with divide and rule and endless quarrels as their state policy! They have not till date managed to have a comprehensive policy to safeguard their common interests. This has resulted in the creation of Arab and Jew Trade Lords (as distinct from warlords), a new breed of cartels and syndicates, with one purpose-- corner the international energy and fuel market!

Compared to this, our exporters are toddlers in the world market. But for us, export trade is our life or death, economically and as a corollary politically! We must persist doggedly for export volume expansion.

The government must adopt long-term support policies in this matter, on priority basis, ignoring the prospect of having some rich and wealthy export based merchants in our trade scenario. In the long run, it will be for our common good.

Meanwhile, our exporters must concentrate on productivity and energy efficiency as their key objective. In this connection, the government must allow enhanced depreciation, or soft loans for the replacement of energy inefficient plants and equipment in all export based industries and subsequently for export substitution industries. This option should be available for all manufacturing industries that do value addition to local raw materials, with different level of benefits for the export and home markets. The top priority should be the agro-based industries that support our agriculture.

S.A. Mansoor
Engineer, Dhaka

Coaching centres

Coaching centres are mushrooming in Dhaka as the education sector is becoming a big business nowadays. For a reputed school, many coaching centres are established. In Siddheswari Road alone, there are no fewer than fifty coaching centres. It seems that students need not go to school or need not study at home, rather they just need to go to coaching centres. As a result, they cannot learn many basic things.

So, the authorities concerned should look into this matter immediately.

Mushfiq Wadud
Department of English
Stamford University Bangladesh

Bus route needed

From ward 27 of Dhaka City Corporation, no buses ply to other parts in the city. Local people of Bashabo, Goran, Madartek, Nandipara etc. have been facing communication problems. It is not possible to rent taxi or CNG autorickshaws regularly as their fares are too high.

I would urge the authorities to start a bus service covering Bashabo, Goran, Madartek, Nandipara etc.

ANM Nazimuddin
Madartek, Dhaka

"Missing" stipend money

Your leading article on June 4 informed your readers of the Tk 346 crore of missing stipend money from government schools in Rangpur that have managed to 'overlook' 13 lakh 'pupils'. The extent of the fraud is shocking but not the existence of it, as some of us know that, in some government schools throughout the country, little interest is taken in the children whose names appear on the school list.

When I was teaching in a government-funded school I remember finding a tattered piece of paper with government regulations on it and informed my colleagues that the duties of the Class Teacher included checking the reasons for poor attendance, even to the extent of visiting the children in their homes. I got laughed at - until a big government project put our school on their list and asked us to investigate the reasons for school dropouts. Then all sorts of interesting truths came out! For instance, in our school, three little girls from the Primary section had left to be married, which made us wonder whether, if their class teachers had been more 'on the ball' by knowing the families better, we could have used our influence to discourage this. In another area, a girl was found to have her name down in 14 schools, thus providing a nice little income for her family!

The education business has, as one of its aims, producing young people who are 'disciplined' as part of what it means to be 'educated'. Those who prove themselves as lying and cheating employees must surely also be disciplined, and not have their criminal activities swept under the carpet and no effort made to retrieve the crores of taka that went into private pockets. Is it too much to ask that they be 'named and shamed', dismissed and replaced by those more worthy? Otherwise, what sort of role-models are such 'educationalists' to their precious pupils and what do the processes of the law, or their absence, after such an exposure tell those children about the country they live in? Could The Daily Star do a follow-up story on this and, hopefully, cheer us all up?

This story also heightens the suspicion that plenty of money goes into the education sector but not enough of it actually serves the purposes for which it was

Future of Bangladesh

We have learnt to live with the harsh realities of the day-to-day struggles.

We dream of that day when a great leader will smash through that wall of thick corruption and rescue us from falling into the black hole that we're heading for.

The crime rates have increased alarmingly, prices of basic commodities are getting higher and higher, the rate of unemployment has skyrocketed. And due to the lack of proper ethical and moral teachings, the young generation of today will not give a second thought when it comes to getting involved in crime, alcohol and drugs.

The young people say that the ways of the older generation must change. And the senior citizens believe there is no patriotism in the younger generation.

We don't have young, energetic and patriotic politicians but it is also true that there are young people who truly feel for their motherland. There are young Bangladeshis who love their country more than our so called politicians do.

There are various groups in facebook concerned with how to make Bangladesh a better place to live in. And some websites are fully dedicated to this cause. The members are mostly young, educated. Betterbangladesh.org is just one of the many sites whose contributors actively post messages and ideas about how to build a Golden Bangladesh. It is reassuring to see the youth taking an active interest in



our beloved country. And this is something we must all actively encourage.

The future of Bangladesh is surely in the hands of the upcoming generation.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

Metro rail

The Chief Adviser has once again addressed the issue of mass transport system to mitigate traffic congestion of the capital. Earlier in January 2008 he declared in his speech to the nation that metro rail would be introduced after the approval of the project by the CCEA.

Introduction of underground mass transport would solve all those problems & eventually make the city liveable. The metro rail project should be started as soon as possible.

Engr. Rashedul Islam
One-mail

Arrests, yes or no?

The two contradictory front page reports on June 4 make a mockery of the reported mass arrests published by you earlier! While the IG of Police calls it a routine measure (daily, weekly or monthly routine?), and also adds that "there is no deterioration in law and order", contradicting the adviser of the CTG makes the whole matter murkier and murkier!

Meanwhile, the Commerce Adviser told the reporters that arrests are being made to prevent violence in the run-up to the local and general elections.

One of these two gentlemen seems to be ignoring the realities.

The IGP's statement contradicts both the Adviser and your reporter! The Adviser, last Monday, even defended the arrests as an operation to check deterioration of law and order! He further added "the crackdown has been ordered to control the operation of the criminals as the situation was worsening". I am sure, that holding an eminent position in the government, he was being factual.

Among the three statements, the IGP's statement appears to be the one in contradiction. His statement under the circumstances does not hold water.

His denial has made the government look treacher and cheap! A truth seeker
Dhaka

Oil price hike

Oil price hike round the world is looming large threatening industrial growth and economic development, especially in the developing countries. Last week international market experienced a surge in oil price leading up to 135\$ per barrel which is nearly 90% increase compared with the prices in July

last year when it was 72\$ per barrel.

In Bangladesh our govt. imports 38 lakh metric tonnes of crude oil per annum expending Tk 17,000 crore and BAPEX suffers a huge loss of around Tk 8,000 crore as the govt. keeps the prices low for domestic use of petroleum compared with the international market.

We must avoid the dependency on petroleum and search for alternative fuel sources. In addition to the traditional energy resources like gas, coal, biogas, solar energy etc. we should now think of nuclear power plant which IAEA has recently approved. Similarly, for a large population's transport facilities the expansion of railway network is a demand of time. Railway transportation can remove pressure on thousands of motor vehicles.

Again harvesting fuel crops without hampering the production of food crops can be a good alternative and thus ensure a good utilisation of our arable land. Agriculture researchers can do a lot in specifying well planned bio-fuel cultivation seasons which will not affect food production.

To sum up, we must make proper use of our energy resources and avoid uncalculated wastage of the same. The policy makers must think of solutions in the context of Bangladesh's economic condition and future development.

Ehteshamul Haque
Abdul Halim Road, Jessore

SUVs

While driving around in Dhaka, the sight of government, NGO, and international organisation SUVs (sports utility vehicle) are quite common. Given that Bangladesh has to purchase oil with hard earned cash and scarce foreign exchange, I do not see why public money should be spent on vehicles that cost about 5 times more than a comparable sedan, has fuel efficiency which is 4 times less, has significantly high maintenance costs, and requires greater space for mobility on our limited roads. This rule should apply to all public offices and projects, including grants and loan funded projects financed by foreign agencies and governments.

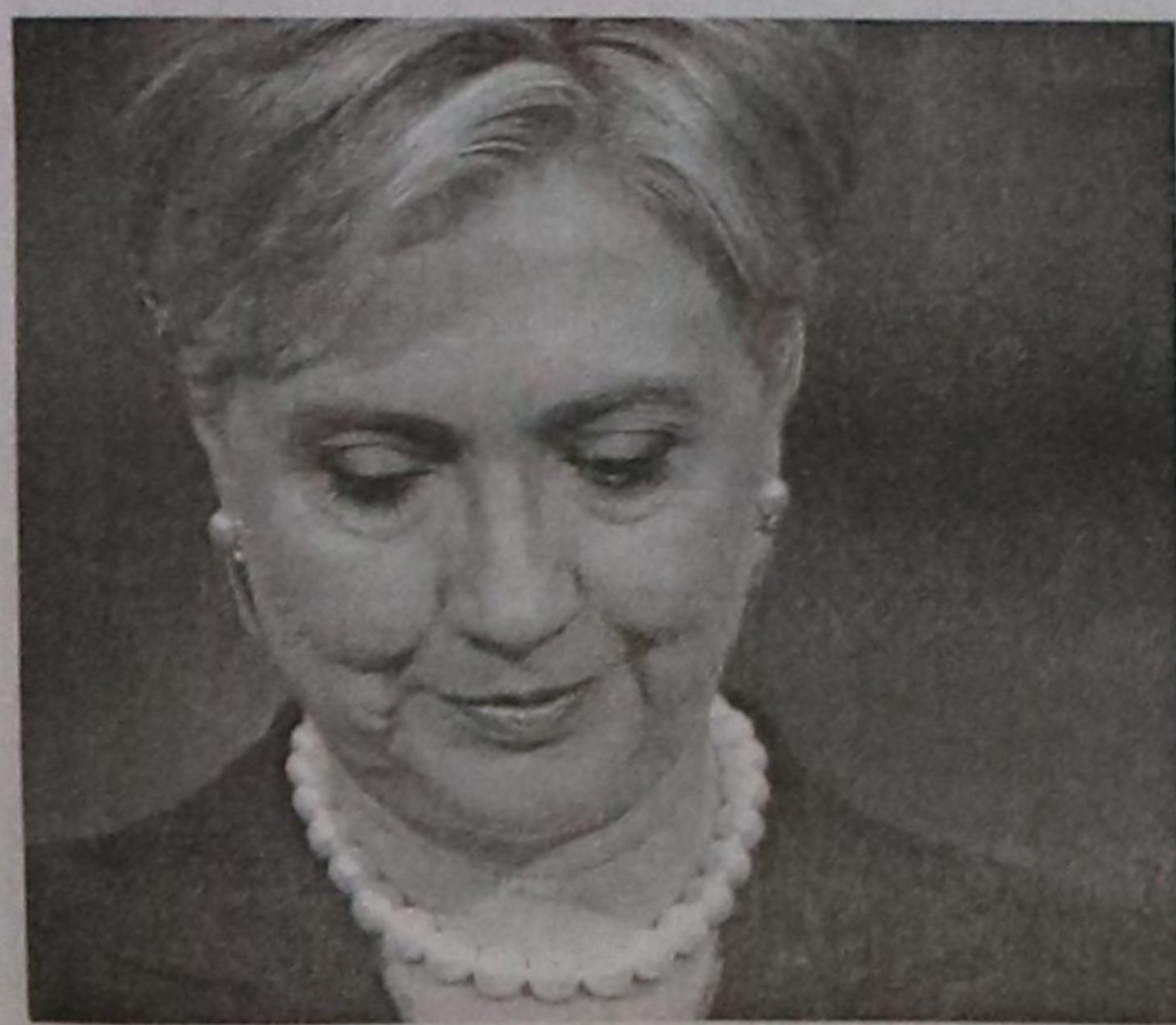
Some might cite reasons such as need for 4WD (four wheel drives) and stronger vehicles for reaching distant places that do not have good roads. Waivers could be put in place for cases that have been scrutinized. The government should also have high taxes levied on such vehicles that are obtained with private money.

Hillary Clinton

It is really unfortunate as well as shocking to note that the United States will need some more decades to have the first woman president. Democratic candidate for the presidential nomination Senator Hillary Clinton could not collect the expected number of votes in the primaries.

Meanwhile, I appreciate Sen. Hillary Clinton for the courage and determination she has shown during the race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
SAU, Dhaka



Saline water intrusion

Salt water intrusion into fresh groundwater formations generally results inadvertently from activities of man. Most large sources of fresh groundwater are in close proximity to the sea, to natural bodies of saline groundwater, or to salts from effluent wastes released by human activities. The occurrence of saline water intrusion is extensive and represents a special category of groundwater

pollution. Water in the aquifer has a high concentration of salt, which currently makes it unstable for irrigation.

The coastal areas of Bangladesh have already been facing salinity problem which is expected to be exacerbated by climate change and sea level rise, as sea level rise is causing unusual height of tidal water. In the dry season, when the flows of upstream water reduce drastically, the saline water goes up to 240km

inside the country and reaches Magura district. Presently, around 31 upzillas of Jessore, Satkhira, Khulna, Narail, Bagerhat, and Gopalganj districts are facing severe salinity problem.

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TANVIR AHMED / DRINKNEWS