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PHOTO: ANK ADHAN SODIQU

## Educating street children

I was much heartened by the article on the education of street children by Dr. Niaz Ahmed Khan which appeared in your edition of Thursday, June 26. I must congratulate all concerned for drawing our attention to this matter.

As a retired schoolmaster, I became quite by chance involved in the teaching of street children when I returned to Bangladesh. Personally, it has been a most rewarding and enriching experience. I would recommend it!

Dr. Khan most accurately describes the

problems related to the education of these children. I have been warned many times by 'respectable citizens' about the criminal inclinations of these children. However, I have always found them to be as potentially intelligent as any other more privileged children.

They are a valuable but neglected national resource and remedies must urgently be sought for society to give them due recognition.

Shahid-ur-Rahman  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Our expatriate workers

Bangladesh, being one of the poorest countries of the world, exports a huge number of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manpower abroad with a view to earning money in exchange of their hard labour. This trend of exporting manpower to foreign countries, mainly developed ones, has been going on for a long time due to shortage of employment in our country.

Amid uncertainty, about 1 lakh wage earners set out for different countries every year in search of a better future, leaving their near and dear ones behind. In most of the cases, their families are dependent upon their income. Just because they send money to their respective families does not mean that they contribute to their families only. They help give our economy a sustainable position.

According to a report revealed recently, they are sending remittances at an average of \$800 million per month from the beginning

of 2008 till April 2008, which may trigger the remittances to reach \$10 billion by the year-end. It may also be noted here that contribution of remittances to our economy is 10 percent of GDP, whereas our neighbouring India has 3-4 percent and Pakistan has 4-5 percent. They are playing this tremendous role as an abstract force being far away from our vicinity. But what are we doing for them? They are often harassed and humiliated in the foreign lands due to lack of proper foreign and diplomatic policy.

It's true that reputation of Bangladeshi workers is not satisfactory as compared to India and Sri Lanka as most of our wage earners are unskilled. So they need more time to cope with different circumstances they face abroad. But they keep sending their sweat money, be the amount smaller or bigger.

The heartrending tales of many Bangladeshi wage earners working abroad, as we often find in newspapers, fill our eyes with tears. Most of the Middle Eastern countries,

including Bahrain and Kuwait, have stopped issuing work permit to Bangladeshi job seekers. Visa transfer has also been made difficult.

But our diplomats and policy makers seem to be blind to the never-ending hassles of the expatriates. Who will resolve their problems? Why can't our policy makers provide them with every legal protection they deserve? It is our duty to make their lives hassle-free abroad. The intervention and all out efforts of the government and foreign policy makers in this regard are a must to put an end to the sufferings of our beloved expatriates.

Sarwar Hussain  
Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering  
University of Chittagong

## No good work!

This caretaker government has not done anything good in the last two years. Begum Khaleda Zia seems to believe that if we go by what she has said. I cannot but list some of the very "bad jobs" done by this government.

This government has saved this country from ruin as planned by the earlier elected government and the caretaker government appointed by it.

It has brought the top bandits to justice.

It has reorganised the Election Commission, Public Service Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, University Grants Commission etc.

It is preparing a reliable voter list and national ID for the people.

It is going to hold the local government elections before the national election to reduce the political influence on it.

However, there may be so many other bad things this government has done and would do. Except of course a few good things such as:

Of late, it has been showing sympathy to the corrupt and most probably contemplating to exonerate the top ones.

It has not undertaken any anti-corruption drive or reforms in its administration. Corruption is rampant there as it was before. Rather, now it is a bit higher in volume. Is the former prime minister not happy with these positive developments?

Molla A. Latif  
Kapasita, Gazipur

## Corruption

Corruption is a much talked about word these days. Everyone thinks that it is uttered whenever necessary. Especially in places like mosques, temples or may be at school. A teacher talks about it with his students, a saint with his followers, an Imam condemns it while talking to the devotees.

Now it is time to change our way of thinking. We should learn to respect wisdom, not money. And only talking about the corrupt won't help us achieve our goal.

Imtiaz Alam  
Narayanganj

## Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela, a great political leader born in South Africa in 1918, fought against racism, violence, oppression, repression and impoverishment in his country. A Noble laureate for peace in 1993, he became the first black president of South Africa.

His 90th birthday is significant as the USA might elect a black president for the first time in its history which is the consequent inspiration coming from this great man's legacy against racism. Facing a stiff prison term for his anti-government activities, in 1964 Mandela made the following statement before the court:

"During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Long live, Nelson Mandela.  
Lutfur Rahman  
Seoul National University  
Korea

## Students abroad

I am going to reply Mr. Md. Zahidul Islam Jibon's letter which was published in The Daily Star recently. I am totally upset with his saying "There is hardly anyone who can accomplish higher education in a foreign university because of high educational expenses. So they do odd jobs." How could he pass a comment like this? These days, lots of Bangladeshi students are studying in foreign universities, especially in the UK. As an educated person you should respect all types of jobs. There is no difference between an odd job and others jobs. You are doing a job to earn money. That's it. Anyway, I want to give you an example. I came to London in 1995 after finishing my BSc. I had to work hard to earn my university tuition fees. But as a college student I was not able to work so many hours a day. So, only during my vacation I could earn a lot of money. Now I am a student of a good university and I am also proud that I am doing my MSc with my hard-earned money.

There are lots of students like me in the UK. So, what is wrong with it?

Mr. Ahmed  
London, UK

This letter is in response to Mr. Zahidul Islam Jibon's letter entitled "Students going abroad" published on June 25, 2008 in the letters column of The Daily Star. Mr. Zahidul mentioned in his letter that there is hardly anyone who can accomplish higher education in a foreign university because of high educational expenses and for this reason they do odd jobs. I do not agree with him.

It is true that a number of students go abroad from Bangladesh to pursue higher education. On the other hand, there are many examples that these students are achieving excellent results in their academic career abroad. Bangladeshi students are also contributing in different research areas. For example, environmental science research, computer science research, health science research etc. Many of the students also secured prestigious teaching and research positions at different universities abroad. You can find many professors of Bangladeshi background who are teaching in the renowned educational institutions like Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge University, Oxford University etc.

It is partially true that students have to take odd jobs due to high educational expenses. I observed that many Bangladeshi students received scholarships, fellowships and research grants by proving their excellent academic achievements. Again, not all the students educated abroad intend to settle in foreign countries. Rather, a good number of students prefer to return to their motherland after completion of studies and contribute to the development of the country. In contrast, it is true that a number of talented students settle abroad due to lack of employment opportunities in Bangladesh. However, our government should act promptly to encourage these students to return to Bangladesh.

Md. Habibur Rahman  
One-mail

## "Spelling"

I agree with Mr. S Rasul's opinion expressed in his letter "Spelling" (30/06/08). I believe, it is possible to change the English spellings of our districts' names which would become much closer to original pronunciation, not dictated by the British colonial rulers. We only need to turn to our mighty neighbour India for inspiration!

The Indian city of Calcutta became Kolkata, Bombay became Mumbai and Madras became Chennai. So why can't we alter the spellings of our cities?

MM Rahman  
London

# Local govt and national elections

We were alarmed to read the news item published in today's (25-06-08) DS that many grassroots level political leaders of major parties including incumbent ward commissioners, who were allegedly involved in criminal activities, are preparing to contest in the August 4 polls to four city corporations. And many of them have already collected application forms for candidacy, although some political parties have yet to announce their acquiescence in the local government polls before the parliamentary one.

Now we understand why the big political parties opposed local govt body election before the national polls. If the big parties can somehow manage national election before the local government election, the winning parties will get an opportunity to free all their supporters and grassroots level leaders from criminal charges, bring them to join party activities and strengthen their hands to reoccupy their lost paradise from the hands of the CTG. We remember, the last 4-party alliance government set free about 14,000 of their goons immediately after coming to power, arrested by the previous govt on criminal charges, calling the charges against them "politically motivated". But later on, these freed goons turned their back to their liberators and created a serious law and order situation in the country and the alliance government had to create Rab to tackle them and put some of them to 'crossfire' -- an anti-crime measure.

They know that if the local govt election is held before national election, many of their supporters, who are their supreme power base at the grassroots level, will be disqualified to participate in any election as per present EC rules.

The political parties, especially the big ones, want to come back with their own men and guns and rule the country as they did in the past.

Shafiqul Islam  
One-mail

## Moral values

In my opinion, the main cause of our present social disorder and moral degradation is deviation of our intellectuals and rich people from the canons of moral living and philosophy of life. What we say or preach, we do not believe or bear in heart! Actual offenders and hypocrites are in safe and sound position, while innocents are being subjected to suffering!

In order to overcome this situation, we have to cultivate moral values in our minds and souls.

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

## Biotechnology

Biotechnology is called the science of 21st century. It has a tremendous potential to solve problems of the agriculture sector, and can be a powerful tool to cope with the existing food insecurity. I talked with the Head of the Dept of Biotechnology (BAU) and national coordinator of ISAAA (Intl service for the acquisition of agribiotech) Dr. KM Nasiruddin about different issues on agribiotech. He said that the ever increasing population, limited cultivatable land and increasing demand for alternative energy sources has led to increasing application of the biotechnology techniques in the Indian agricultural arena. Various research institutes and departments of the government of India and other state governments are directing their efforts on exploring and exploiting newer technologies for

enhancing farm production and increasing productivity. But here in Bangladesh the biotech issue is still not receiving due attention.

In India, with the approval of Bt-cotton for commercial cultivation in April 2002, more and more seed companies are seeking technologies like genetic modification for insect protection. There is also an increasing use of molecular markers in crop breeding.

With the enactment of the Plant Breeder's Rights and Farmer's Rights bill, there is a growing demand for molecular fingerprinting of germ plasm lines to assert one's ownership of crop varieties and hybrids. In India, there is a growing realisation that some of these new technologies will lead to future growth in crop productivity and quality.

The ability to develop or source these technologies will determine the future leaders of the agriculture industry in our country. It is high time to rethink about agribiotech development in Bangladesh. It has tremendous potential to establish food security in this region.

Introduction of high yielding GM crops, efficient techniques such as gene transfer, tissue culture etc. will help scientists achieve the results at the minimum social and economic costs.

Jewel Rana  
MS student, Dept of Biotechnology  
Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh

## Bravo!

Salvation for the Deserving (SFD) congratulates Finance Adviser Dr. Mirza Azizul Islam for his speech delivered on June 24, 2008 at a



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

function of Dutch Bangla Bank Ltd. The Finance Adviser stated, "The government is considering tax exemption on a part of corporate income to be spent on discharging corporate social responsibilities (CSR)." We think that such kind of an initiative would definitely encourage the business organisations to engage them in social development activities. It should be mentioned that SFD has been advocating from its inception in different seminars, symposiums and writing that donation to the organisation should be kept tax free as no nation can survive keeping the 1.5 crore people uneducated, untrained and in improper hygienic condition. The present caretaker government signed the 'UN Convention on the rights of the people with disabilities'.

Furthermore, the national office of the 'National Foundation for the development of the disabled persons' was shifted from the 3rd floor of a multi-storied building to a separate one-storied building. Such kind of initiatives shows the government's benevolence to the disabled and marginalised persons. We express our heartfelt gratitude to the government for such initiatives. We know that, due to limited resources, the government alone cannot achieve the goal of poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Able and affluent people should come forward to shoulder the social responsibilities.

Considering the facts, the speech of the Finance Adviser to encourage corporate houses to carry out their social responsibilities is praiseworthy.

We articulate the hope that the government will take an immediate decision in this regard, so that the corporate houses are inspired to bear the social responsibilities. Further, we appeal to the government to make a rule that every corporate house has to have a Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) Department and spend a certain amount of their yearly income for this purpose.

Nasir-ur-Rahman Sinha  
Founder and Chairman  
Salvation for the Deserving

## People and education

While strolling at Kurfürstendamm in Berlin where Syed Mujtaba Ali (Deshe Bideshe) walked many years ago, these thoughts again came to my mind:

- It is the quality of people which builds a country up. German people rebuilt their country (with a visibly ruined Berlin) after the Second World War. They were supported by Marshal Plan to develop their country into a model nation.

- Bangladeshis could not develop themselves after so many years, even though it received massive support from World Bank and other organisations.

- Isn't there some truth in the remark of Henry Kissinger calling Bangladesh a "bottomless basket" after seeing the misuse of all the money?

This means that to build a country we need the "right people" and to build right people we need "right education" from very childhood-education from family and school together.

N.G. Chaudhury  
Luxembourg

# ACC



I wholeheartedly congratulate the ACC for nabbing the corrupt SI for accepting Tk 5000/- as bribe from an FIR named accused on the promise of clearing his name from the FIR during the course of investigation, as per the media report dated 17 June, 2008. Such crimes by the police officers during the course of investigation are rampant in our country.

This is the area of the police administration which must be reformed to ensure justice at the grassroots level. It's a fact that the IO of a police station when delegated with the power to investigation becomes the most powerful official. During the whole process of investigation, he is absolutely free to act on his own, exercising his power of authority with no one supervising him at the place of occurrence. Here he can turn an accused into an innocent person while putting the complainant/plaintiff into an awkward position. In many cases the IOs investigate the occurrences with the plan of earning easy cash, least caring for justice.

I urge the authorities to evolve ways and means to make the IOs accountable for their actions.

We appreciate and thank the IGP for introducing changes in the police administration, though we have a long way to go. For a just nation and society, there is no alternative to having an efficient police force.

A.B. Muhammed Zakaria  
Staines, Stanwell  
Middlesex, UK

# Monsoon road digging

Road digging in monsoon has become a fact of life as reported in a local English daily on 23 June. This is the result of our way of bureaucratic work. It filters down from any decision to the execution process in a very slow manner. The basic reason for this is that our financial year cycle which is scheduled on July to June basis!

Funding resources for public work is effective theoretically from July 1. However, the department concerned to do the work never receive the funds before October/November of the year. It then meanders its way slowly to the Roads & Highways department by December, at the earliest. At last it goes to the Executive Engineer sometime in February/March of the following year when public tenders are invited for it.

Now the fun and games start. Should the lowest qualified bidder unfortunately not be the preferred party; the work is re-tendered at the drop of a hat. It could be based on fictitious and motivated objections, raised by and supported by powerful quarters. As this re-tender process goes on; there is back door wheeling and dealing among interested parties, resulting in the cost of the work going up! At last faultless tenders are received with few participants to

cover the rule for minimum participation; and the lowest bidder is awarded the work, satisfying the rules; and every one is happy!

This fun and games continue till maybe March/April, and at long last the work starts sometime in May, along with the monsoon! Such is the story of the monsoon-digging episode all over the country!

Since we cannot change the start of

monsoon season; nor the way of how we go about the work, the possible way out may be to change the financial year cycle to October/September. Then possibly the work will start sometime in the following August-- the ending of the monsoon. We can then do the work for the next seven months without any monsoon mess on the road!

S.A. Mansoor  
Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR