

One child policy

Before our Liberation War in 1971, the population of Bangladesh was 60 million as opposed to the present figure of 150 million. It is pathetic and frustrating to discover that within less than 40 years we managed to increase our population by 150 percent, while retaining the position as one of the least developed countries with a poor literacy rate. Did we, as citizens, think about the consequences of this population boom? The present

scarcity of food, road space, educational and medical resources and the rising unemployment leading to degradation of law and order situation is caused by the population boom.

I request all the citizens to wake up and the government to introduce the one child policy to stop the runaway population growth immediately.

Rashed
One-mail



PHOTO: AMINUL RAHMAN

Non-utilisation of ADP

I would like our govt. to carefully understand the following problems they are shortly going to face:

Prices of steel materials are static for the past 2 months or so and will remain so till the rainy season is on. The main reason for prices of steel being static is that the entire economy is at a standstill, thanks to the most conservative policy being adopted by our policy planners. They do not want growth for fear of inflation! Anyway that is the choice every govt. has to make.

My idea of writing this letter is that the govt. must immediately think rationally and start buying steel rods from quality steel manufacturers for their projects. Once market picks up, the rods prices will raise and the govt. will come under the vicious circle of contractors backing out and thus non utilisation of ADP. They need not pay for the same.

They simply have to calculate their rods required in their projects for, say, the next 3 months and buy rods under open public tender with stipulations that their contractors duly authorised by the relevant govt. department will pay and buy the rods from these mills within a stipulated time frame every month for which the govt. will have to give guarantees. The govt. can at best advance the contractors 80% of rods prices against receipt of rods at construction site. In such a depressed market the govt. will get

rods at a competitive price and this way no ADP projects will suffer in the next three months.

After three months they can keep repeating such tenders. Today even imported rods at lowest duty ever will cost Tk. 85,000 per ton as against rods available in the market at Tk. 62,000 per ton of commercial grades, majority of which is consumed by the govt. projects.

If the above suggestion is implemented the ADP projects will not come to a standstill as they have during the past 6 months and thus the day labourers will be getting their labour wages regularly and industries set up to cater to such demands will keep running at full capacity, which they are not at the moment. Remember, the govt. is the largest spender of public money and the largest buyer of steel in the country.

Alihussain Akberali FCA CIP
Chairman
BSRM Group
Chittagong

"Derailed train"

"The train has derailed and we have to just place it on the right track."

We became glad to hear the optimistic statement from our honourable army chief. The voices of the advisers echoed the same optimism. But is the train running smoothly now?

It seems the same old politicians will participate in the coming

election and many of them will come out victorious. Will that mean any significant change?

Harun-Or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Indigenous knowledge

A letter from a very distinguished professor in your daily's letter page suggesting use of indigenous knowledge to resolve local problems has drawn my attention and encouraged me to write this letter. I appreciate his suggestions and would like to add my suggestions to be evaluated by the authorities for implementation to resolve the problem of water logging and water shortage in Dhaka city.

Now, we should consider collecting rainwater in every house of our city, especially in Dhaka city by making two underground reservoirs and overhead tanks to collect, lift and use the water. This way we will be able to reduce our consumption of fresh water and improve the water logging situation.

Mk Uddin
One-mail

Drug abuse

My twin sister and me were going home after attending one of the monotonous classes. Waving goodbye to my classmates, I started my journey home with my dear sister when suddenly something unusual caught my attention. A well-dressed boy was sitting all alone in the footpath holding a

packet of white powder. I did not pay much heed to it first, but then the boy took some in his hand, smelled it and then gulped a whole mouthful of it. That's pretty weird because I had never seen such food before, neither did I saw any advertisement of such peculiar food. Out of curiosity, I walked a few steps towards him. GOD BLESS MY SOUL! I MUST BE DREAMING. THAT IS DRUG. He was having it in broad daylight in a public place not bothering to maintain privacy. I was stunned. People walked past him, acting as if he did not exist. I was helpless too. Taking ALLAH'S name I started walking. In the course of my journey, I cursed myself for believing that my country was one of the least developing countries. I was under a deep illusion. Being a spectator of this incident I can surely say without any hesitation that my country BANGLADESH is not only developed but well ahead of others....

Anthea Taplette
Maple-Leaf International School

Billboard issue

This is a reply to Mr. Aminul Hoque's letter - "Where are those billboards?" (in response to Mr. Zakaria's letter). I am a Muslim and I have always made sure that people from other religions never feel uncomfortable in anyway because of the way I talk about myself. In fact if I am not mistaken that is one of the virtues of Islam - giving everyone their democratic right and space.

If we put these billboards up with verses from our holy book, shouldn't we also respect other religions and put up verses from their holy books too?

Rafi Mustafa, One-mail

"Road show"

"Road shows" may bring better opportunities for some of our policymakers and administrators for showing their success in the last 19 months. And it may raise the awareness of the people against corruption.

But children should not be forced to remain in the street for six hours at a stretch on a rainy day!

Mohammad Alam
One-mail

Price hike

Price hike is a common word these days. It is not a problem for the people in the top echelon of society. But it is putting the people of low and limited income groups in distress. I am a student and I know how difficult it is to survive.

Please do something about this price hike.

Molay Kumar Chakraborty
Dept. of English
Southeast University
Banani, Dhaka

Use waterways

We are quite aware about the chaotic situation in our inter-district communications system. Every year a lot of money is being expended from our national budget for road construction and maintenance. But have we seen any remarkable initiative to ease or lessen traffic congestion? To mitigate the problem we should use alternate waterways, as we have a very good waterways system throughout the country.

Every year we spend a lot of money for the maintenance of the existing roads. With this amount of money we can dredge our rivers starting from upstream.

Against this backdrop, we have to take up a crash programme to set things right.

Nemo
Alipur, Faridpur

Neglected Khilgaon

I have been living in Khilgaon for over 25 years. Unfortunately, I have never seen any development in this area. All sorts of works were done without any long-term thinking.

We expected much from the two previously elected Members of Parliament from two leading political parties. But Khilgaon has become a haven for the drug dealers, the traffic jams have increased and there is no sign of any improvement. People feel insecure to get out of their homes after evening. Crimes have increased at an alarming rate. Unplanned construction of buildings has created further problems. The land grabbers illegally piled up soils on Banasri Lake for construction of buildings and the authorities have not said a word about it. And, of course, there is shortage of water and electricity.

Now, I would request the citizens of Khilgaon to elect someone new in the upcoming general election, because we are really sick and tired of the false promises made by our politicians.

Akbar Hossain
Khilgaon, Dhaka

Humour at its worst!

During the rule of Shaesta Khan, Subedar of Bengal (1664-1688), one could purchase 8 maunds (about 300 kilos) of rice at a cost of Tk 1 only, I repeat Tk 1 one only. While commenting on the present market price of rice and other essential commodities which have gone all time high and far beyond the buying capacity of common people, our finance adviser Dr. Mirza Azizul Islam has reminded us that this is not the age of Khans. You better not ask for a better price than what you are enjoying (?) now, Tk 40 a kilo to be specific!

We must thank our finance adviser for his frank admission and also for reminding us of the stark reality. We must also admire his knowledge of history. We cannot, however, appreciate his sense of humour. Our rulers have always exhibited great sense of humour whenever it came to the task of mitigating the sufferings of the common people. The question is, as a humourist, who is the best, General Ershad, Begum Zia, Air Marshal Altaf Hossain or Dr. Azizul Islam?

General Ershad began his journey to the office of the president with a bi-cycle and ended up with a Rolls Royce. He served five years in jail on a graft case. Even now a dozen of graft charges are hanging on his neck. Yet as an octogenarian he has the sense of humour to claim himself as the most honest and capable candidate to lead the nation at this critical juncture of our national life.

When child Nowshin sitting in her father's lap was shot dead by a goon of the party in power, the then home minister Altaf Hossain had the wit to console the unfortunate father by saying, 'Allahr maal Allah niegese'.

When Begum Zia, standing in the dock on graft charges, says that her sons can do no wrong or that her tenure as the prime minister of BNP- Jamaat alliance was the golden era, one cannot but feel pity for her poor sense of humour.

And now when we are told by Dr. Islam that this is not the age of Shaesta Khan, we should not expect the price of rice coming down, we cannot be sure whether he is trying to outscore his predecessors in being humorous. Thank God, to win the race, he has not, like former finance minister Saifur Rahman, tried to suggest cabbage as an alternative to rice!

Until recently, we had the idea that our politicians were more apt in cutting jokes or playing with the misery of the people of this country. Now we see that the bureaucrats/technocrats turned advisers are not far behind!

Capt. Husain Imam
Paribag, Dhaka

Poor road management

Every year in the rainy season the roads become death traps. Not even a single road is good for transportation. It is really sad to learn that these roads were made of poor bricks and other substandard construction materials. That's why the streets are easily damaged by rain. We know that every year the government spends a lot of money for road repairing and construction but it is an irony that we don't see any improvement.

The matter should not be overlooked.

Mohammad Anisur Rahman
Seamark (BD) Ltd
Pahartali, Chittagong

Unified English texts needed

Often my students and others ask me which book or manuals should be used for improving English language proficiency.

In fact, the market is currently flooded with several books on English language learning and there are some pirated publications too! What I strongly feel, and hope many would agree, is that the government should undertake a special project involving our local and international experts to prepare a unified set of very relevant texts aided by audios and videos plus a handy and easy teacher's guide to help students and others learn and practise English.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

SAU

This university is continuously demanding that its VC be appointed from within itself, although this is a relatively new university. I don't find any rationale behind such a demand.

A public university is a country's asset. So, the VC should be appointed in the country's interest, not SAU's interest alone.

Krishnab Mahbubur Rahman
Magura

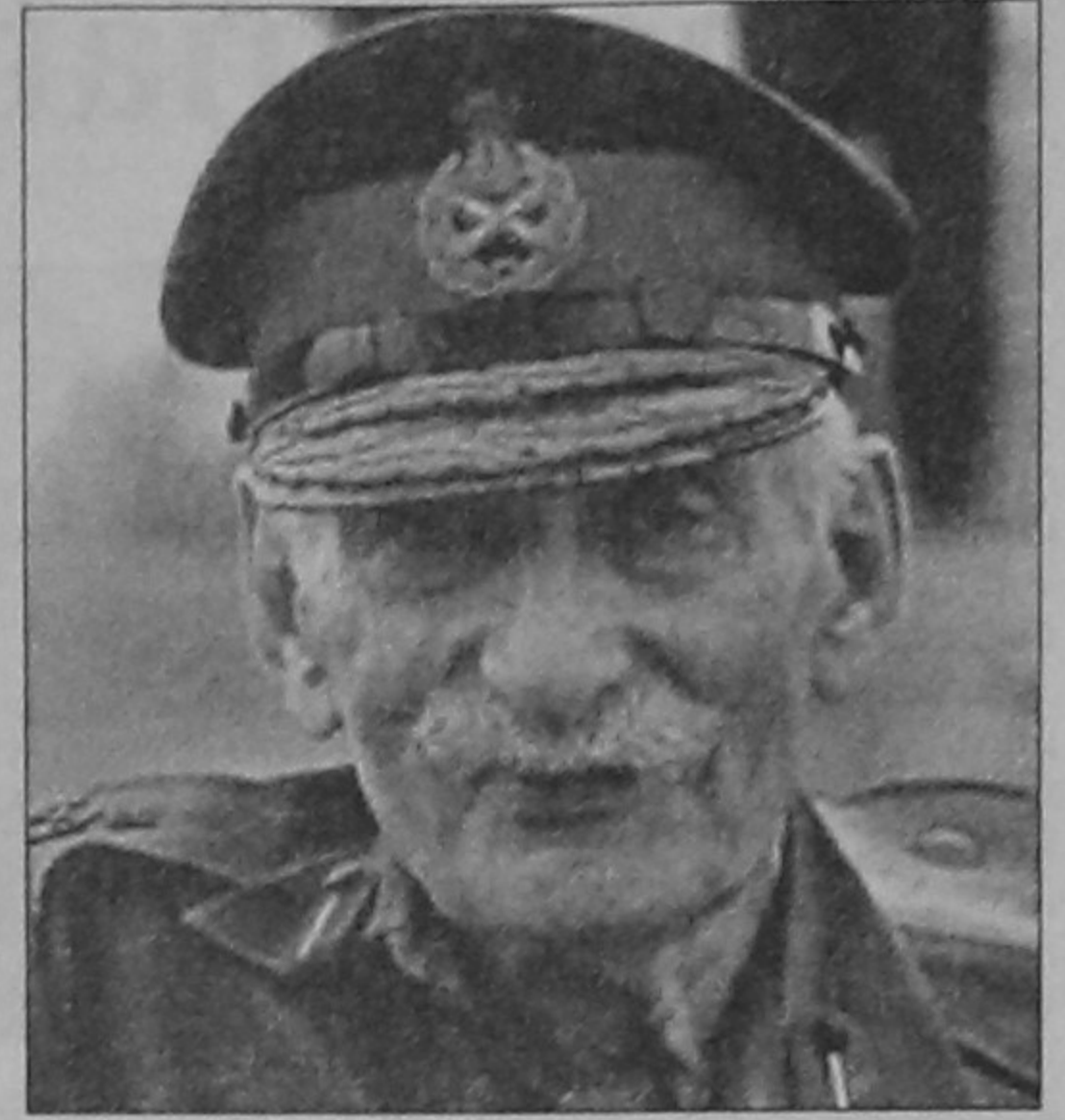
Tribute to Manekshaw

With a heavy heart, I would like to pay the highest tribute to the top commander of the joint Bangladesh and Indian forces of 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, Field Marshal (then General and Indian army chief) Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw (1914 - 2008) and all his brave 'boys' (and also the Bangladesh and Indian Army and Air personnel of '71) for swiftly defeating the organised evil of the Pakistan army in Bangladesh. They acted under the wise leadership of premiers Indira Gandhi (India) and Tajuddin Ahmed (Bangladesh) in a hostile international situation. Shrewd war planning and its execution by Manekshaw's team saved millions of innocent lives from the hands of the Pakistani troops.

Being an eyewitness of the 25th March night (and the following 9 months of '71) in Dhaka city, the news of Field Marshal Manekshaw's death (June 27, 2008) immediately evoked the memories of 1971 in my mind.

My father - a student activist of 'Pakistan movement' of the '40s in Calcutta and thereafter a non-political person - was scheduled to be picked up by the Pakistani collaborators on 18 December as part of their plan.

Keeping the South Asian tradition of 'total obliviousness to history' alive, we did not



give him due respect, though our armed forces honoured the late Field Marshal to some extent and his funeral was attended by three officers from the three services. The defeated Pakistanis over the years tried (unsuccessfully) their best to defame Field Marshal Manekshaw a humble man of great personal qualities.

M. Emad
Oxford, UK

Law and order

Now, the government seems to be slightly reluctant about improving the law and order situation. We general people are experiencing incidents like hijacking in the busy roads of the city. The so-called "Molom party" and "Ogyan party" are coming into the scene again. The marked criminals are just waiting for the favourable time to start their activities. We don't know why our news media is silent on the incidents happening in the city every day.

The present caretaker government is trying to create a situation so that they can handover power through election. We don't know the exact plan as to how they will proceed and which political parties will be taken into consideration. Apparently, we guess that they will screen out the leaders who were involved in corruption and unethical activities in the past.

Whatever the plan is, the general people, especially middle class and the poor, are seriously affected due to the recent price hike of essentials. Hence, the popularity of the caretaker government is declining day by day and that is weakening their strength as well. But this is not a good sign. They have to complete their mission in the interest of the people and the country.

Most of the countries in the world are facing the price hike now, but they have many ways to meet the crisis - we don't have. As a result, people have to take the load on their shoulders. At a certain level, some people have no way to survive.

We can live on less food but we need security and safety in the roads. The present caretaker government was taking a very hard line to keep the law and order situation under control. Hope they will continue to uphold this position till handing over power to the next elected government.

Zahir U. Hyder
One-mail

Train service

We all know that the train is a cheap and safe mode of transport, or mode of mass communication. But today we can call it cheap, but cannot say that it's safe. A few months ago, I travelled on Intercity Ekota Express and Nil Sagor Express to Dinajpur and Syedpur respectively. But these days I fear to travel on train because of frequent accidents.

I have to travel by the train because of lack of cheap transport system. Can't we make the train service safe and cheap as well as profitable? After the liberation, the railway track increased from 2800 to 2845km. Only 45km has been added.

The authorities concerned should make some special efforts to make the train service safe and reliable.

Asaduzzaman Titu
Motijheel
Dhaka

Re: stray dog

The letter published on July 6 entitled "stray dog" has caught my attention. I would like to convey

my thanks to Mr. Hasib for his effort towards saving a stray dog which is generally an unwanted object!

All of us should try to understand the sufferings of the animals as they can't speak it off. The fact that some people become good advisers at some point of time is true. We have to continue our generous efforts nonetheless!

Moinul Alam
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Jamaat swindlers

Your frontpage exposure (July:7) of Jamaat's murky deeds is an eye opener; something beyond belief! They steal from the poor, not taking bribes from the rich as the politicians from the AL and the BNP do. It is beyond imagination that they could cheat over five lakh poor farmers over a number of years!

This is a new format of micro-stealing patented by the leadership of Jamaat!

So much for their integrity and honesty, it is all an illusion. They are practising inverse micro-financing, by financing themselves! Of course they will deny it, swearing on everything holy, but the cat is at last out of the bag!

The CTG and the ACC should go to the root of the matter. They must ensure that all the perpetrators of the crime against the poor are caught and punished. They should also try to recover the funds, so that the hard earned savings of the poor can be returned to them.

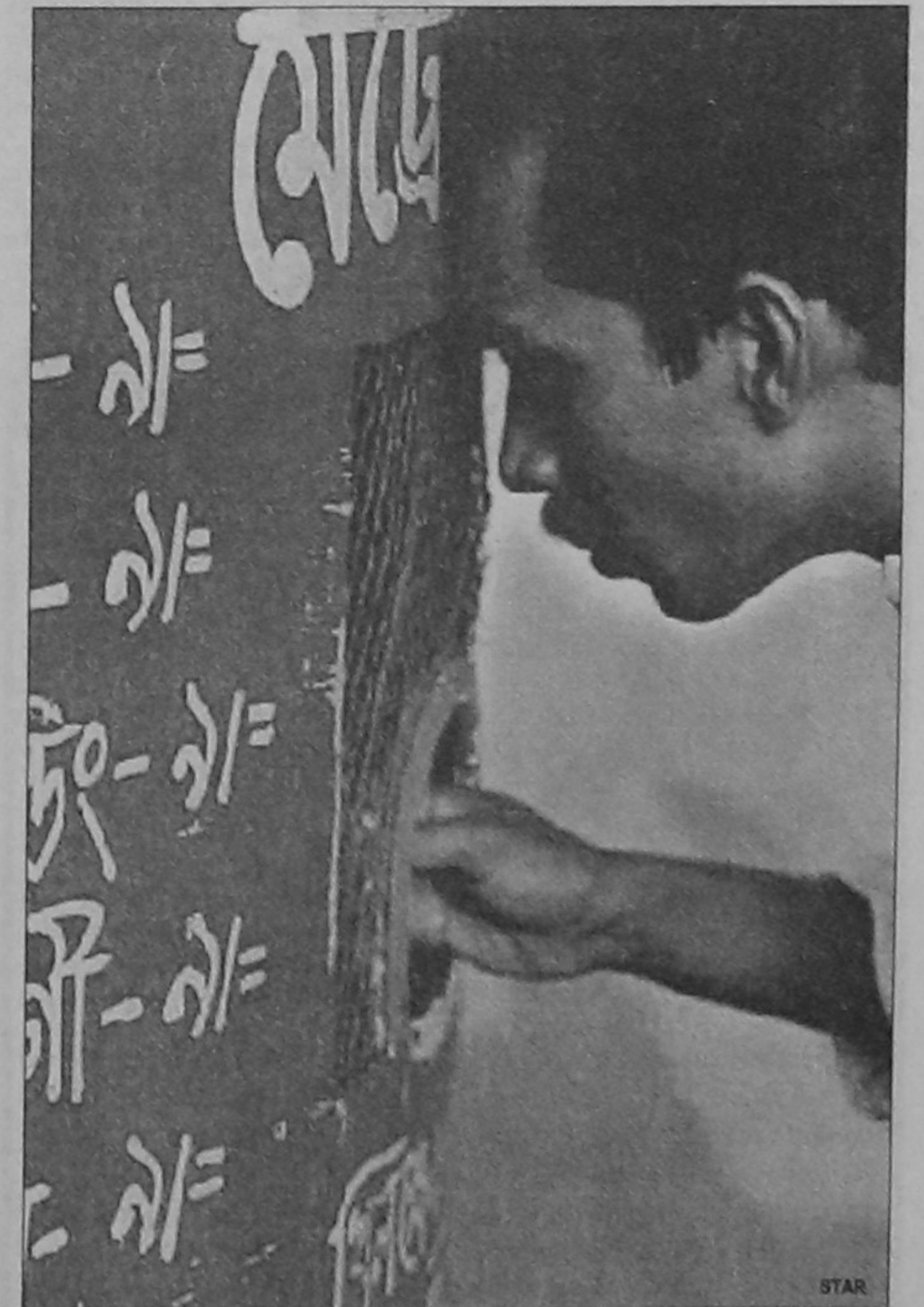
A disgusted person
Dhaka

Fare hike

With a deep sense of helplessness and regret, we observe and undergo, on a regular basis, the perils of commuting. Take the bus fare and the new system introduced for the commuters' convenience, for example, in Chittagong. There are as many as four to five bus routes here, but the number of buses operating appears to be extremely inadequate. As a result, along with the new arrangement for buying tickets, passengers have to undergo some unprecedented trouble: a passenger on the route 10, for example, has two or three different bus services available.

Now what is most appalling is that the passengers have to pay the increased bus fare, and have to wait for the buses on the roadside narrow footpath, if any, or on the road in a state of extreme uncertainty.

These being the horrendous cases on the roads, there is another peril waiting for the passengers of the CNG driven taxis. With a tight traffic system imposed on the roads for quite a long time back the taxis started, though reluctantly, the meter-based service. These days, however, in the wake



of the fuel price hike, they, the taxi drivers, charge some staggeringly high fares.

Small wonder, perils in our land, however, keep on piling and mounting in

diverse ways. We strongly urge the government to take effective measures to save the commuters.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong



STAR

Water logging

Water logging is a common sight in Dhaka city in the rainy season. And no effective and sustainable measures are ever adopted to prevent it. The situation has become critical. Dhaka is surrounded by various rivers but there is no way to discharge water through the drainage system into the rivers.

Another major problem is the unplanned and unauthorised growth of the city. Some areas of Dhaka are low-lying. The areas that were selected as

Dhaka city in the great plan of 1961 are not maintained and it expanded without proper planning with a large area of industrial zone. Forty per cent area of Dhaka city is flooded after normal rainfall, and it goes up to 65-80% after heavy rain.

The whole issue has to be handled efficiently to prevent the situation from worsening further.

Siddiqur Rahman Apu
Soil Science Discipline
Khulna University