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400 years after...



Dhaka, a city of historical importance, is now celebrating 400 years of its existence.

Today's Dhaka has grown into a megapolis but its population has outgrown it. The poor infrastructure, poorer drainage and sewage and so on, are absolutely in a dilapidated, too dirty condition.

I strongly feel that this is the most appropriate time and 'excuse' to clean up Dhaka. The most opportune moment!

A clean Dhaka will broaden its roads and lanes. People will be able to breathe, children will be able to play and walk in a clean Dhaka.

To really bring a 'change' in the character of Dhaka and the character of its inhabitants we need a CLEAN Dhaka and a Dhaka with traffic law abiding motorists (relatively speaking) and other users of road, pedestrians included.

When one is ready to hit the road in the morning, he/she will find a clean road, and a traffic flow that is orderly and smooth. Automatically he/she will be in sync with the 'mood' of the road and its surrounding, and slowly even the careless soul will be in tune

with the environment around, and soon he/she will 'change' into a decent, responsible city dweller.

The city fathers need to seriously plan and improve the garbage removal system. Allocate appropriate budget and penalise the defaulters for its indifference towards piling up any garbage in front of any building, homestead, or shop etc. So, the garbage disposal system has to be redesigned with sincerity and effectiveness.

The CA and his team can really leave behind a memorable stamp and Gift for the Dhakaites if they plan and execute the 'Clean Dhaka' project that will last for years to come, and a maintenance regime to follow it up.

Honourable Chief Adviser, can we hope to get this gift along with a disciplined democracy that you have envisioned for the nation?

Now is the time to rise to the occasion and leave behind the stamp of hard work.

Syed Imtiaz Ali
Banani, Dhaka

Discouraging youthful talent

A front page report published in a local English daily on July 21 was simply unbelievable! How can we consider more age as a qualifying criterion and lower age in passing SSC examination as a disqualifying criterion for admission; where college seats are scarce, particularly in good and established colleges? This is a sad reflection where age is preferred when scholastic performance is identical! It is one of the absurd decisions that we have in Bangladesh governance and the military backed CTG is no better.

In fact, this decision is the worst ever taken in the education sector, one can imagine for whose benefit!

It reflects the short-sighted attitude that discourages the young and talented students.

All things being equal, the younger the applicant, the more preference he or she should get for being admitted. If SSC marks are identical, then the school history should be the logical selection criterion. For example, how many years has the applicant taken to cover class VI to class X. Naturally, it should be five years. Anyone taking more than that should automatically get lower marking for admission.

Do we imply that given the same SSC marking, someone doing it at, say, 25 years of age is preferred over someone who did it at fifteen?

If that be so, then by the time the person finishes Master's examination he or she will be aged at least thirty-one years, if not more, given our usual delays and session jams!

How sad and sorry a state of affairs it is for the talented youngsters, receiving unfair treatment and getting discouraged for finishing SSC at a younger age! It should be the other way around; encouraging them to do better and earlier. Nothing could be worse than this.

We are becoming a quixotic nation that prefers mediocrity to talent and youthful intelligence!

We are opening the path to incompetence; wasting national educational resources. Meanwhile,

USA, Palestine and Israel

The so called 'two state' Palestine and Israel policy is farcical.

The state of Israel within the state of Palestine was forcefully and illegally created at the instigation and conspiracy of the USA and the UK in 1947.

Today the state of Israel is there but where is the state of Palestine for over six decades?

Most of the territories of the state of Palestine have been occupied and millions of Palestinians were killed, wounded and abducted by the Israelis. The remaining portion of the state of Palestine has been cut into two small pieces West Bank and Gaza without any road link with each other, surrounded and barricaded on all sides by Israel and the Palestinians have been made third class citizens without any human rights.

The Palestinians and the Israelis are fighting for decades. There have been many wars, ceasefires, meetings and conferences for solution of Palestine-Israel conflicts and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, but all in vain.

Whether Israel is right or wrong, the USA always supports and protects Israel militarily, diplomatically and economically.

We wonder if Israel is an independent and sovereign state or it is one of the states of the USA, a US colony, a US military base or a US agent to look after and protect US interests in the Middle East?

Is not the USA using Israel as a scapegoat in the Middle East?

Is it not true that the USA waged the Gulf war in 1991. The USA invaded Afghanistan on December 9, 2001 and occupied Iraq in 2003 and now it is instigating and using Israel to attack Iran.

We are greatly concerned with the present world situation. We sincerely believe and feel that in this changed world of modern age if the black and white people can live together in South Africa and other African countries, if millions of people of different races, colours, religions and nationalities can live in the USA, East Germany and West Germany could be reunited, why can't the Palestinians and the Israelis live together.

OH Kabir
Wari, Dhaka



all our bigwigs in the government desire capable and talented persons to lead the nation. What an example of absurd and transparent double standards!

S.A. Mansoor

Gulshan

Dhaka

Nuclear energy and Bangladesh

With the looming energy crisis, the importance of utilising nuclear energy as a possible replacement of depleting bio fuels is quite evident. Nuclear energy is being harnessed

in more than 30 countries to produce electricity and this figure is projected to escalate substantially in the years to come, especially in Asia. According to World Nuclear Association (WNA), Asia alone may be producing one third of the total electricity generated using nuclear power by the year 2020. Though a mammoth task, the idea of setting up a nuclear power plant on our very soil for the sole purpose of being in compliance with our burgeoning energy demand is by no means a utopian scheme.

Previous governments though had expressed their intention in this regard, hands on initiatives are yet to come. As Bangladesh has already received IAEA's approval to establish a nuclear power plant, it's time that we make expeditious efforts on a time-frame basis towards materialising this prolific source of energy. The cost and efforts involved are to be gigantic, but it would for sure not surpass the brunt we might have to bear in case we end up being a country which relies on the energy produced by others.

Zunaid
Banani, Dhaka

Count Tolstoy's immortal story

"How much land does a man need" is a widely read short story by Count Leo Tolstoy, who is adjudged by the literary critique of the world as the greatest novelist of all times. One should therefore be more careful in using similes with such a story and the characters portrayed therein to emphasize the greediness and the corrupt activities of the politicians of our country.

The story by Tolstoy is about a man named 'Pahom' and his discontentment about what he had in his possession and his greediness to expand his property by acquiring more and more land. Finally, in the quest of expanding his landed property to the maximum he accepted the conditions set forth by the Chieftain of a tribe known as Bashkirs, to become the master of that much of land as he could go around on his feet in a day in exchange of 1000 rubles only. Pahom accepted the conditions and gained vast tract of land but in the end fell short of his breath and succumbed to death because of exhaustion. The story reached its climax when the servant of Pahom dug a grave long enough for Pahom to lie in and buried him in it.

Narration of the conditional generosity offered by a rich man to a poor friend of his as done by Mr. Shafiqul Islam in his letter to you published on last Sunday is just concoction and can very well be described as a figment of his imagination. That said, I cannot but wholly agree with what he has said about the BNP stalwarts. After going through the story, I was groping for the guilt we, as a nation, might have committed in the past to have such a family in power!

Rezaul Karim
Banani DOHS, Dhaka

BSF atrocities

If you are a regular reader of The Daily Star and have access to the

Internet, why not do some cyber research? Asking on what? Why not linguistic research? It's fun, I guarantee. Just go to DS home page (<http://www.thedailystar.net>) and write "BSF kills" in the space provided for search. You will be amazed at the harvest of human crops reaped by BSF at regular intervals. Please do it just to understand how cheap, easy and fun shedding Bangladesh blood is. Not many intellectuals and media people in Bangladesh are interested in writing on this harvest of blood. But that's quite alright. Not everyone's blood is equally important to everyone.

Obaid, Brisbane

Attention: law enforcers

I was so scared that I did not even bother to go to the law enforcing agencies. It would have been even dangerous for me and for my kids. But I could not tolerate it anymore. I thought that writing to you might help me a bit.

I live in Taltola, Khilgaon. I am living here for nearly 17 years. In recent years, crimes have increased dramatically. Young people take drugs and at night they get involved in various sorts of crimes. It was several years ago that one day I tried to protest when some young boys were teasing some girls of the area. I protested several times. These boys were all in their mid twenties. I think it was the biggest mistake of my life. They not only threatened me but even laid their hands on my servant one day. They told me that I should not speak about this to anyone and let the things go on. They even told me that they are the workers of the local Member of Parliament who happened to be also the adviser to the chairperson of a leading political party.

I cannot live in fear anymore. Hope we will get justice.
S. Ahmed
Khilgaon, Dhaka

Teachers' demand

Some of our colleagues are sitting in front of the administrative building of Shah Jalal University for more than two weeks. They have demanded 'Upgrading' of service. All of them have achieved their Ph.D. and other required degrees. About one year ago they were eligible for promotion. But the authorities are delaying the process. It's disgraceful for the teachers that the upcoming professors are sitting on the ground.

Please take necessary action without further delay.
Md. Abdul Hamid
One-mail

Drive against corruption

Corruption in the two major political parties is known to all and supporting it in some way or the other is to be condemned by all. Those not happy with the action being taken against the corrupt elements should see the DS report "Shamim rode on Biman".
Abdul Gaffer Chowdhury
One-mail

Waste management

The disposal of domestic rubbish at certain places selected by the DCC becomes a vital task to get rid of an unhygienic ambience. In every civilised country, people dump these materials into dustbins in a safe manner. What is most appalling in our country is the lack of our spontaneity to handle the garbage materials properly. In most of the cases, people throw away the waste materials anywhere! Horribly enough, I have seen people throwing domestic garbage from high-rise buildings on pedestrians' heads!

A fruitful solution to the problem can't be found only by transferring all the responsibilities to the authorities concerned. Citizens have to cooperate with them!

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

Working for the poor

Ref. Zafar Sobhan's "Deep in the heart of nowhere" which appeared in your issue of July 25. It appears that Zafar Sobhan has been misinformed that Friendship is "the only organisation, governmental or other, that works together with the people of the islands to make their lives safer and more secure."

I would like to set the record straight. Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP), a programme sponsored by the Rural Development & Cooperatives Division of Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives and funded by the UK's Department for International Development has been working in 5 districts of the Jamuna River Basin since 2004.

Working through local government at Upazila and Union Parishad level and through over 20 NGOs, including Friendship, by the end of the programme in 2010, CLP's assistance will have raised homestead plinths for 100,000 families above the highest known flood level and provided assets, usually cattle, to 55,000 of the poorest families.

Training on cattle rearing and homestead gardening is also given to the beneficiaries who attend weekly social development group meetings at which they learn many subjects which assist them to live a safer and healthier life. Primary schooling and community based health care is also provided in the island chars.

It is also worth pointing out that, in addition to its normal development programme, during the floods of 2007, CLP, through its NGO partners, provided two rounds of relief supplies to 125,000

families in the flood affected chars. Md. Aminul Haque
Programme Director (in-charge)
Chars Livelihoods

ICMA admission

The Institute of Cost & Management Accountants of Bangladesh (popularly known as ICMA) has been playing an important role in the fields of accounting, finance, management and business in our country. This institute produces every year a good number of professionals who later contribute to their respective fields. Minimum requirement for entering this course is a bachelor's degree which should be changed, I think.

In our country Chartered Accountancy (CA) is another popular and honourable professional degree in which brilliant A-level and HSC (GPA-5 both in SSC & HSC) passed students can get admission.

An A-level passed student can also enrol in the world famous British ACCA (The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) course. Besides, as far as I can remember the entry requirement of CMA was HSC in the initial period. In the past it needed two or three years which needs three or four years now for degree (pass) and bachelor's degree holders (with honours) respectively. After graduation a student has to look for a job or a bride/bridegroom. So it is hardly possible to think about CMA then. But we need a huge number of professional accountants.

So, HSC/A-level should be the minimum entry requirement for CMA. It will save time, money and energy of the students. An elementary course of six months can be introduced for HSC/A-level passed students.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag
Dhaka

Car owners' predicament

Recently, I went for my car fitness certificate renewal (previously done by others). While the present government is trying to simplify the service sector, the BRTC is unnecessarily complicating the process. First, I filled up three pages of BRTC deposit book of Tk.445 (45 for label sticker) for depositing to local Gulshan P.O. After about half an hour in queue, I deposited Tk.445 and the man at the counter wrote another set of receipts and returned one copy of this receipt + 2 copies of BRTC book. Then I went to the BRTC office in Mirpur at about 11-30am, again after half an hour they gave

an application form (why?) to fill in and told me to give the photocopies of current tax token and the previous year's chalan deposit (both are already in their file) + TIN certificate. (I had). Finally, the car was inspected in 5 minutes and I got the certificate without a sticker label (but a rubber stamping- no label was issued though Tk 45 had been deposited) at about 2-30pm i.e. after 3 hours.

Surely, the process can be simplified and duplication of receipts and photocopies etc. avoided. If any necessary paper is needed like TIN certificate it should be displayed in P.O. so that one can take them without waiting to be told by the BRTC staff.

K. Ahmed
One-mail

BCS

The HC rejected the writ petition filed by a few successful candidates challenging the decision taken by the government to cancel the final result of the 27th BCS exams. The new results will be published soon.

We know there are vacant posts in the cadre services. I acknowledge a few candidates took the path of corruption but for that reason the majority cannot be punished!

Mohammad Masum Miah

Department of Sociology

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Gas prices

The Daily Star reported recently that The Petrobangla had made a proposal to Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) for enhancing the fuel gas price. From the report, it has been revealed that nine widely varying rates have been in force for different groups of consumers buying the same gas.

The constitution of Bangladesh upholds the principle that every citizen is equal in the eye of law. So, the BERC authorities should look into the matter.

Md. Ashraf Hossain
Central Bashabo
Dhaka

Three problems

Global warming, political instability and inflation are three main problems plaguing the world nowadays. Global warming leads to natural disasters.

Political instability causes economic backwardness.

Inflation is the most serious problem all over the world. This is a challenge that we have to face successfully to survive.

Bakul Chandra Kabiraj
University of Dhaka

Price hike and poor management

The majority of people of our country are very poor. Their living standards and lifestyles are of very poor quality due to low income, under employment and unemployment. The ever increasing price hike of commodities has affected the lower, middle and fixed income groups, severely aggravated their condition and prolonged their indescribable sufferings and pangs from starvation. The prices of foods and other essentials have more than doubled in a year and gone beyond the purchasing capacity and affordability of the majority of the people. The people are to spend more than 70 percent of their daily income only for food purchase. The skyrocketing prices of essentials have pushed about 60 percent people of the country under the poverty line. Eight lakh school teachers have demanded food rationing. The school-going children are seen stand-



ing in the long queues of BDR run shops during school time. We cannot forget the mad rush of the poor people to the BDR run shops from the early morning to buy rice at reasonable price. The exorbitant increase in prices of commodities has resulted in reduction of daily calorie intake and of baby food consumption, ingestion of sub-standard foods and starvation in the extremely poor families are causing serious malnutrition and ill-health. The bulk of the people are struggling to enhance their purchasing capacity and affordability to cope with the prices of foods and other essentials.

The government had time and again assured the people that the price of rice would fall after the boro harvest. But, the bumper boro harvest could not arrest the upward trend of rice price. Inadequate market monitoring and regulating, insuff-

affordability, if it were prudent and efficient enough.

To extenuate the magnitude of chronic poverty, the government should conduct sufficient economic activities for the enhancement of people's income, generate employment, expand social safety-net programme, reintroduce food rationing system in limited scale, launch food for work programmes, provide the farmers with modern agricultural equipments and proper training to use them, provide agricultural inputs in subsidised rates and ensure availability of fertilisers to achieve food autarky. The government should also conduct a drive against hoarders who create artificial crisis in the market.

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