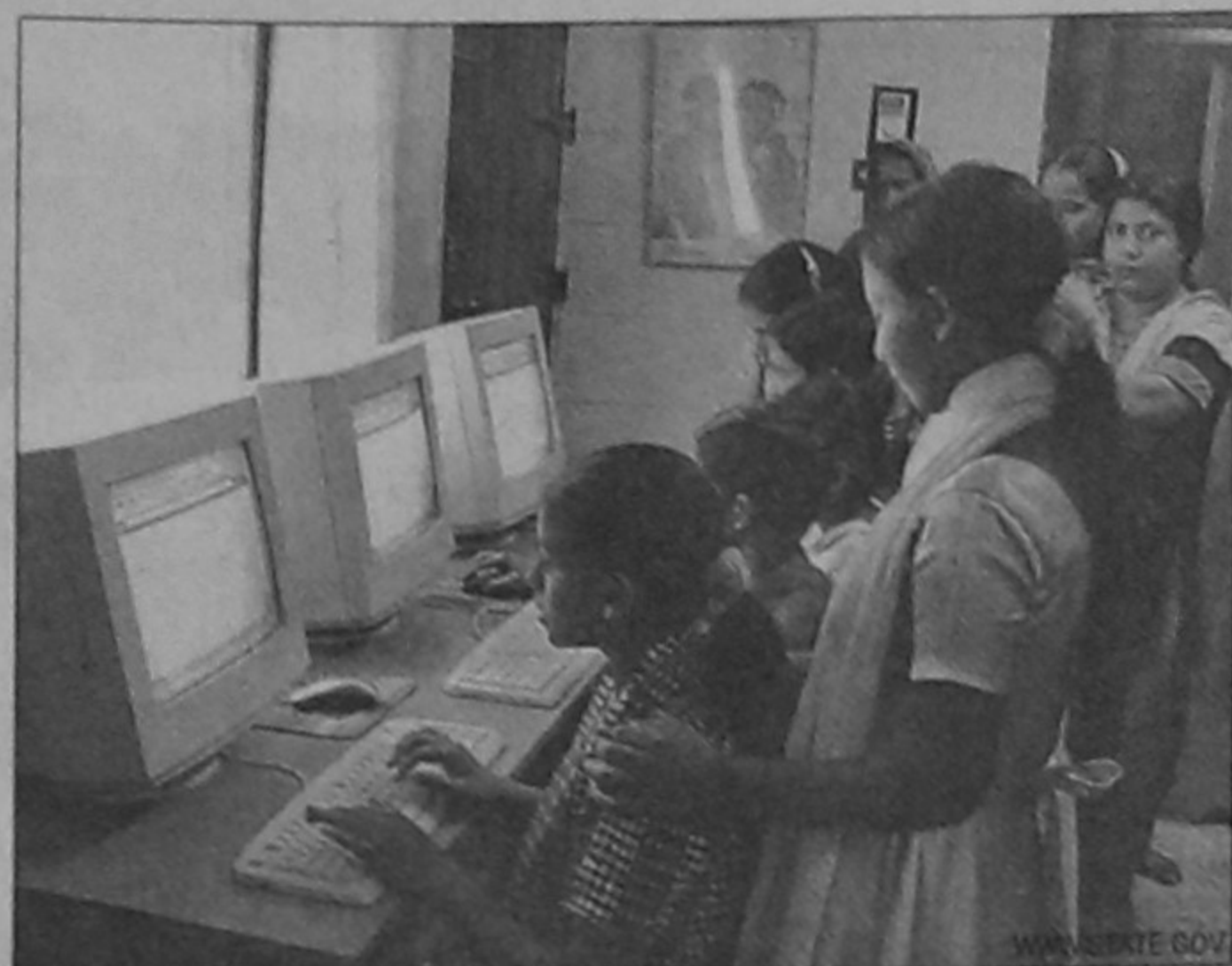


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Internet facilities

Internet has become the life-blood to modern civilization. But in Bangladesh this great opportunity has not reached all the students due to the shortage of computers. It is true that nowadays a lot of institutions based on Internet have emerged but the number is still not enough.

The extensive use of Internet is a precondition for the development of our country.

AKM Anisul Haque
Department of English
Metropolitan University

Admission battle!

More than 7 lakh students have passed the SSC exams this year. And now it seems that it is a fault of theirs! They are now suffering, because they are not getting the opportunity of admission to a good college or a college at all. Thousands of students have achieved very good results. And generally these meritorious students want to get admitted to a good and renowned college. But the reality is that the colleges cannot accommodate the students. This problem is getting serious year by year. The situation makes the students frustrated. The problem must be addressed as a matter of top priority. The government should take the initiative to increase the number of quality educational institutions.

We have to win this battle.

Oyon
Brac University

Caged students!

My vision got glued into many pairs of little hands sticking out, holding the steel rods of a heavily ribbed closed front gate of an English medium school at Uttara the other day while I was passing by to meet an urgent piece of business. The time was during the tiffin break. I could only manage to see some dark figures of those caged children holding the gate, it seemed as if they were trying to breathe some fresh air.

Our tiffin break was a time when we used to break free after the fourth period to explore areas of our own interest under the open sky facilitated with gigantic school premises, basketball courts, football fields and what not! Now my question is whether going to such an English medium School is the sole option which lacks the indispensable facilities for a healthy environment for our kids to grow?

Zaiaim Bodrudduza
CREA, Volunteer
Uttara, Dhaka

Letters column

The letters column is the most interesting and instructive column for the curious and serious newspaper readers. It covers almost all subjects imaginable; from the ridiculous to the sublime! It's an interesting melting pot of ideas covering every imaginable theme, and written by people of various hues; serious, curious and even quixotic and sometimes witty.

It is a pot-pourri of words and phrases; logical, philosophical, and historical; covering subjects, sometimes even from the unclear and undefined fourth dimension!

Unlike other pages, which is usually the updated news of happenings and events of the day before, already well covered globally by various international audio-visual media; now common and popular; the letters column always comes as an unexpected surprise package! Except for the editorial, and articles related to current affairs; and other subjects, most of the things printed are stale - covering yesterday's events! In contrast, the letters page is always fresh, hence attractive and covers a wide range of subjects that can be imagined; with often some unimaginable surprises thrown in for good measure!

Since "surprise is the spice of life"; I would earnestly request the editors to provide it more column-inch space. Any other ideas on it readers?

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

Citypolls

Most of the contestants in the city and municipality polls have questionable credentials. They were orchestrating to comeback and take away the country to the position before the changeover. The voters have no alternative but to vote for the corrupt candidates because there are very few candidates with a clean image. The ray of hope is fading away...

Sarwar
Dhaka

Saarc and people

After a long time of its inception, if we try to justify the existence of Saarc, we have to think for a while to get the right answer. This regional organisation is always busy arranging formal meetings among the leaders. But the ultimate achievement is a big zero.

Mushfique Wadud
Department of English
Stamford University Bangladesh

Truth Commission

The revised ordinance has made it possible to compose and commission the long awaited Truth Commission (TC). The chairman of the TC during his short interview with the satellite television channels apprehended that if the proceedings of the commission were made public through the media, the targeted beneficiary might be discouraged to appear before the TC. Therefore, it might be camera sessions with no public access to its proceedings.

The chairman is a retired justice of the HC. We did not expect such an apprehension from him. If his brief interview in the television channels reflects the intent and modus operandi of the commission, we regret to note that the fundamental right of the public for freedom of information is denied. We do not know whether the superior courts would continue to retain their inherent constitutional powers to seek the details of the proceedings of any case of the TC, if a writ is filed by any aggrieved client of the TC. The media might also play their neutral role in covering the news of the TC. This is a new system of justice being tried in Bangladesh. We need more and more information than denial of the same.

Areader
One-mail

NRBs

Finance Adviser Dr Mirza Azizul Islam has called upon the NRBs to send more remittances. Well, we are trying our best but the government needs to change a number of existing policies that discourage NRBs to come and invest in various sectors.

In 1989, while I was working in the U.S. I applied for a small plot in Uttara and deposited around a check of \$1150 in favour of Janata Bank as the security money. I never received any information from RAJUK about the status of my application. Since I did not push and lobby for the plot, I have not

received it. Recently, I went to RAJUK to withdraw my money. Though I was able to process the withdrawal of the check from the local RAJUK office without paying a penny, I was surprised to hear from the Finance Director of RAJUK that I would get only Tk 55,000. In fact, if this money was put in the NRB account, in last ten years I would have received around Tk 2 lakh by this time. Instead, I would have to incur a loss of around 25,000 based on the current dollar value. It was my money and the government deposited the money in the bank and used this money for the last ten years without paying me a penny. Instead of giving me the current market value or the money with all accrued interests, I am about to incur a loss of Tk 25,000 or even much more because of the government's wrong policy

that will discourage the NRBs to apply for any plot in the future.

I hope that this letter will be seen by the respective higher authorities and they will take appropriate action for the sake of fairness, justice, and the country's future development.

Dr. Jamir Chowdhury
One-mail

ACCA admission

ACCA (The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) is the oldest (more than 100 years old) professional accounting body in the world. Its acceptance is world-wide and still it is growing. Some people call it 'British CA' as this degree-holders can conduct audit work in England like CAs (Chartered Accountants). Knowing its goodwill and reputation, Bangladeshi students are becoming interested in enrolling in this course. More than 10 local tuition providers are imparting this course in our country so that students can participate in it staying in his/her country.

We know British O and A-level are considered to be equal to our SSC and HSC respectively. An HSC passed student can get himself/herself admitted into bachelor's degree of local and foreign universities. But in the case of ACCA, HSC passed students cannot enter into it directly, though an A-level passed student can. For admission, ACCA demands our bachelor students or an HSC passed student has to complete CAT (Certified Accounting Technician) under ACCA or HND (Higher National Diploma) under Edexcel. All such cases need more time, money and energy.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Standard of teaching

It has come to my notice that some teachers of English medium schools in Dhanmondi and other areas are not at all qualified. Recently, I went to admit my daughters at a renowned school in Dhanmondi and to my surprise I was baffled after meeting with the teachers. The attitudes of the teachers clearly indicated that they were merely housewives who have joined schools to pass their time.

It is not fair that unqualified teachers are being recruited to teach our young children. We are paying to the renowned schools a great deal of money to provide our kids with proper education. If the faculty/teachers are amateurish then I believe that they are tearing down the expected strong foundation of our children.

These days the technology has improved greatly, so fake documents can be verified easily. So, I would strongly urge the school authorities to look into the matter.

A concerned parent
One-mail

For a better Bangladesh...

A few recommendations to our government for our growth and prosperity.

Free the economy from any restriction - Free economy. Total denationalisation of state owned entities.

Build our own capital markets. Eliminate entry restriction for people and capital into the country. Issue visa at port of entry and empower our embassies to promote trade and investment.

Hire lobbyists to promote our interest in the USA and European Union. Hire consulting firms to improve our image and brand of Bangladesh.

Go for performance based promotion instead of age.

Use expatriates in government and private sectors (they know how to play the game in world stage).

Ekram Belal
Look-East Club

Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait

The recent torture on the poor Bangladeshi workers by the Kuwaiti government is outrageous. Reports say that hundreds of Bangladeshi workers were tortured and sent back home, within this week, with no pay while they were demanding an increase in payment. We have also seen the video footage of how the Kuwaiti police were torturing these workers who went to this foreign land to make a few dollars to support their family back home. Some sources say that these workers are getting about \$30 a month. Wow! Only one dollar per day for 8 to 10 hours of hard work. It is hard to believe what this oil producing nation of the Middle East is doing to the people from the poor nations. As the citizens of the world, we condemn both the physical abuse and the unfortunate low payment to these workers, and we demand an increase in their salary.

Please read the following and send your condemnation to the nearest Kuwaiti consulate:

"South Asian workers in Kuwait, including hundreds of Bangladeshis, staged demonstrations and went on strike Saturday demanding better working standards and pay."

Newspapers in the Gulf kingdom reported that some workers were paid as little as 8 Kuwaiti Dinars (\$30 or Tk 2000) a month. Since the incidents of unrest, the Kuwaiti government has said it would increase the minimum wage of foreign workers to 40 Dinars (\$151 or Tk 10,300).

However, The Kuwaiti authorities also announced that they would examine video footage and photographs of protesting workers to find out those responsible for damaging vehicles and attacking police, and deport them.

Kuwait police arrested at least 800

Bangladeshi workers during the demonstrations, of whom 300 were later released as no charges could be substantiated against them.

The Kuwaiti government has assured Bangladesh mission officials that all "innocent" workers will be spared after investigation.

Meanwhile, two top trade union leaders of the country have urged the Kuwaiti trade union movement to extend a helping hand to Bangladeshi workers facing repression in Kuwait and deportation by the authorities.

In a joint letter sent by email, Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal president Nazrul Islam Khan and Jatiya Sramik League general secretary Roy Ramesh Chandra made the appeal to the

president and general secretary of Kuwait Trade Union Federation.
Hassanal Abdullah
Editor
Shabdaguchha

In a recent case of rare protests against the various cleaning companies in the State of Kuwait, a group of mainly Bangladeshi protestors became violent. I personally believe that violence can never produce any fruitful result, but the deportation of protesting workers is not the solution.

At the end of the month some are lucky enough to receive a salary of KD8,000 (approximately about 2000 taka), in a country where a basic decent meal can cost about KD 0.50

to KD 1.00. The thing that confounds me is that to maintain a decent life with Tk. 2000 per month is quite difficult in Bangladesh, let alone Kuwait. Whereas there are many others who don't even get their salaries for months. There are some who are known not to have been paid for the past nine months. I do not understand why the Kuwait authorities neglected the issue.

These people turned violent during the protests because they were severely frustrated and driven to their very limits of sanity. After all, these people are our brothers and when they suffer we should try to help them.

Asaduzzaman Mohammad
On e-mail



Price hike

Nowadays, price hike is a common phenomenon. The market prices of commodities have gone beyond the purchasing power of common people. As a result, a kind of inflation is emerging in our economic system.

Most of the people live below poverty line, price hike appears as a curse to them. On the other hand, the present caretaker govt is showing some lame excuses, like international market, business syndicates, etc as being responsible for the price hike. The main thing is that they have failed to control the commodity market.

We, the poor people, want to survive. So, it is a crying need for us to buy things at a reasonable price.
Aiman Bin Shaofigul Hamid
Dept. of English
International Islamic University
Chittagong (IIUC)

Extra-judicial killing

We are anxiously observing the incidents of extra-judicial killing by the law-enforcing agencies. This savage and barbaric act of killing in the name of crossfire was introduced by the last four-party government, but such things exist nowhere in the modern world except Bangladesh. The criminal also has the right of self-defence and has to suffer a punishment if convicted or proved to be guilty by a legal court of justice. But, interestingly, Razakars are safe in our country.

We believe that the present government is a neutral government and has no political motive. Therefore, in line with many human rights groups we also demand that such unlawful activities be stopped immediately and criminals, whoever they are, brought to justice according to the law of the land.

Md. Shahjahan Mia
Development professional
Satmasjid Road, Dhaka

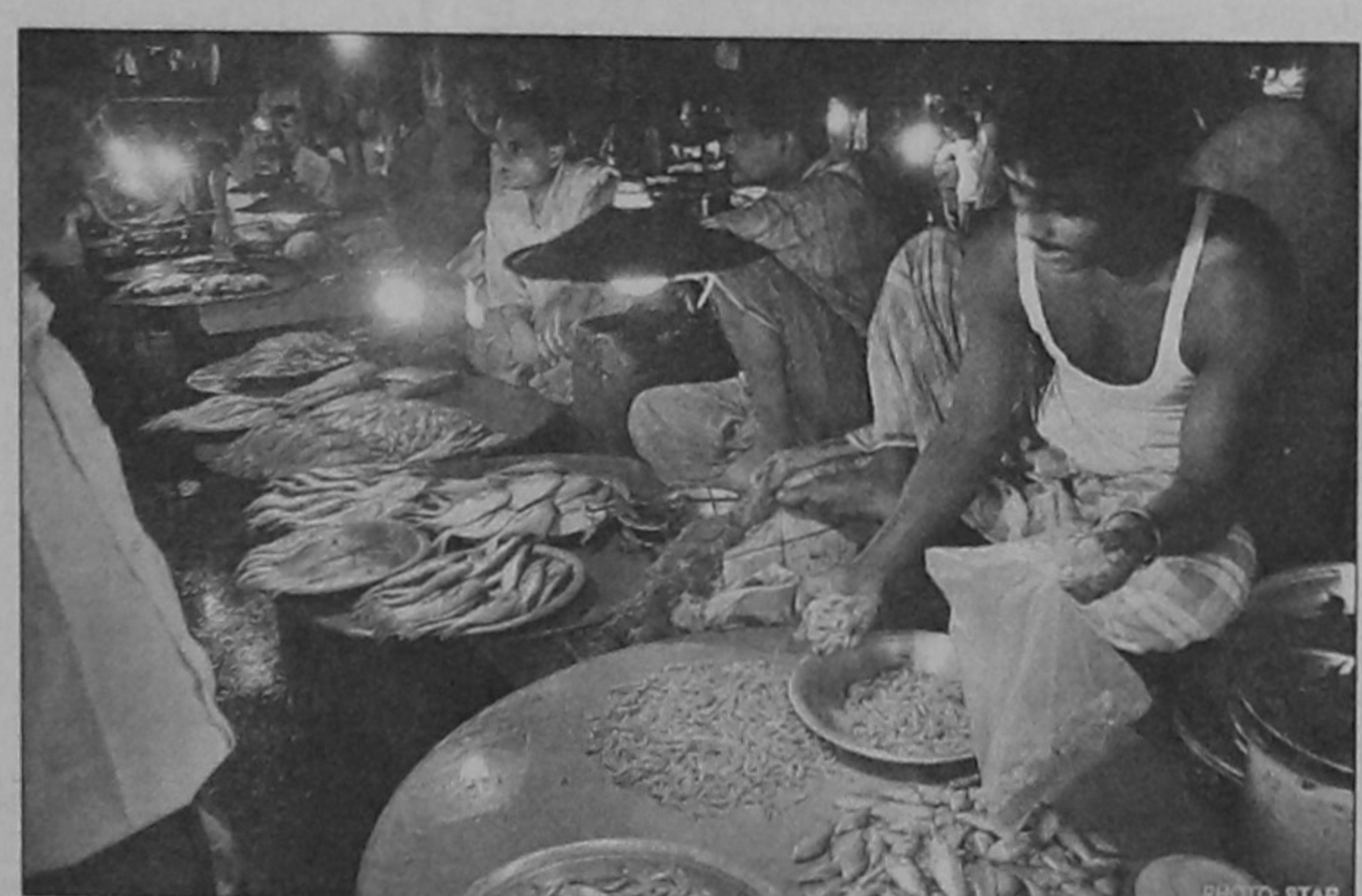
Crimes against humanity

Radovan Karadzic is now facing trial for committing war crimes including genocide against Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat civilians during the Bosnian War (1992-1995). But Bush's murders are sophisticated with the pre-approval of the United Nations! During the tenure of senior Bush 500,000 Iraqi children died due to the unjust sanctions. In the recent years, people of the globe observed that for a non-existent cause millions of Iraqis are dying. Why is the world so imperfect?

Saif Tinku
Bariadara, Dhaka

Adulteration of foods

Adulteration of food has taken a serious turn. The unscrupulous elements are taking advantage of the absence of any provision for strict punishment and administrative supervision for implementation of the same to discourage and deter them from such heinous and dreadful activities. Pouring of various types of chemicals for preservation and ripening of various kinds of foods, edible oil, fish,



vegetables, fruits etc. is the order of the day with very little resistance from the administration. Use of DDT on dry fish which is a poison is very common these days. The consumers are totally helpless before these traders or businessmen in the absence of any support from the country's legal system and the administration. Some casual

drives are made occasionally by the administration in some places here and there and imposition of nominal fines or three months' simple imprisonment hardly made any lasting impact on the dishonest traders and their heinous activities are going on unabated. Food adulteration is a criminal offence of highest magnitude and, therefore, would warrant maximum punishment for the offenders

months back the maid servant of a relation of ours left her job as she got a better job of "pushing injection" in watermelons with coloured dyes! Imagine persons taking those watermelons with raw coloured dyes, what kind of serious health hazards they were virtually exposed to! The most dangerous part of the story is that those syringes used for injecting the coloured dyes must be the used ones collected either from the private clinics or from the dustbin! I cannot imagine if there is any instance of serious crime of such nature which is worse than murder, is prevalent in any other part of the world. No wonder diseases of serious natures such as cancer, kidney and liver ailments, AIDS and all other incurable diseases are alarmingly on the rise in the country.

Therefore, it is high time our age old legal system is revised and death penalty is introduced with no scope for appeal for the adulteration of food items. But simple revision of the punishment is not enough, quick trial and proper implementation of the law is also a must for eradication of such crime by those dishonest traders and businessmen. Side by side special task forces with administrative support should be formed at the city and district levels comprising magistrates, police and civilians to visit the farmers, aratdars (stock holders) and middlemen and advise them of the bad effect of those chemicals on the public health which also include their families as well.

Mohammad Ataul Hoque
On e-mail

Let me cite an example, a few