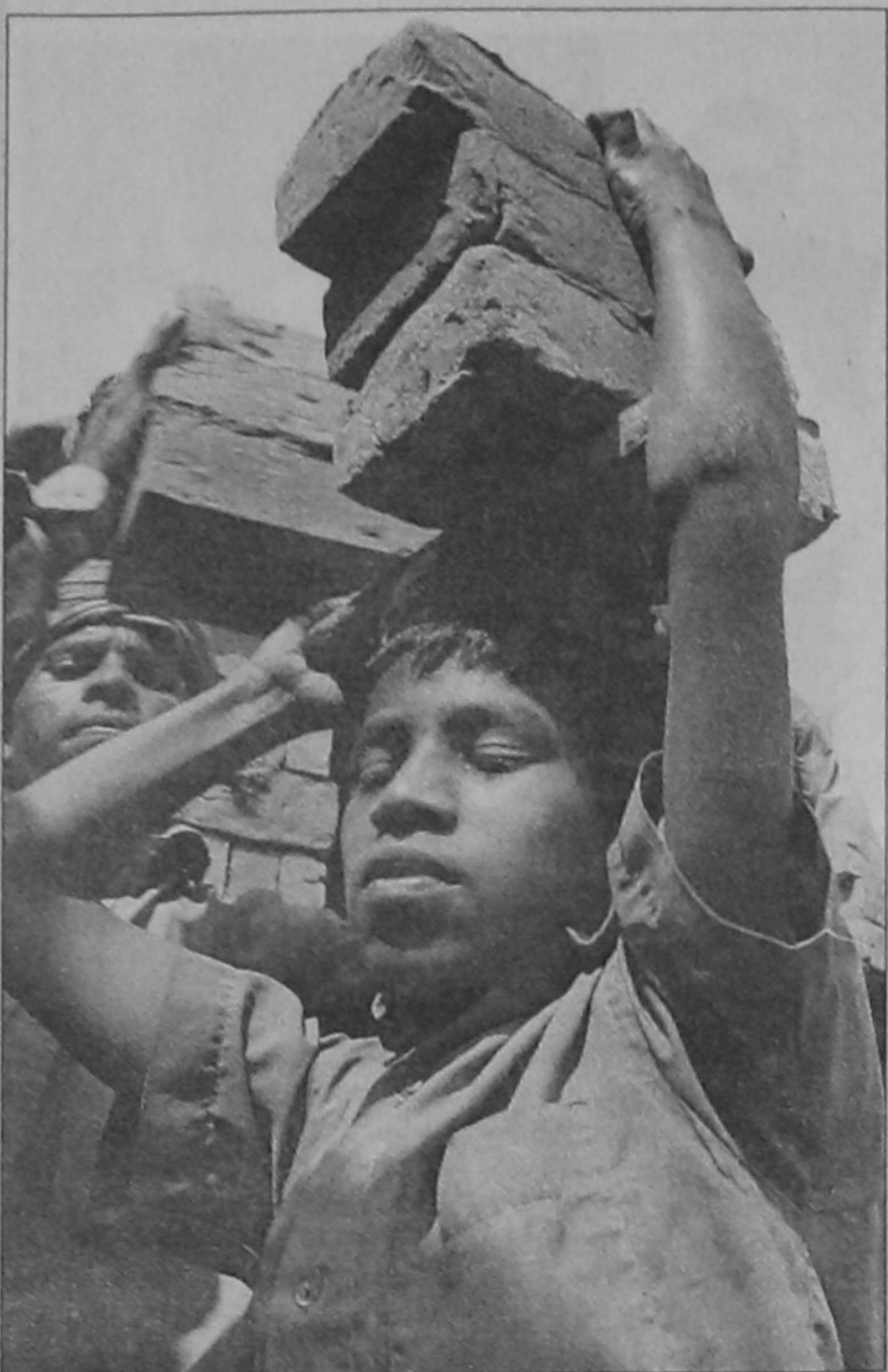


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Child labour



It is universally acknowledged that today's children are the future leaders of any nation. But in our country we see that a lot of children are working in various fields. We often find them as a rickshaw-puller, table boy at restaurant, labourer in construction sites, worker in factories, hawkers, etc. To eliminate this inhuman phenomenon, many NGOs are working hard, but they have not achieved much so far. The number of working children is increasing day by day.

The issue has to be addressed as a matter of top priority.

Md. Kamrul Islam Mishu Kutubi
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong

Russia-Georgia conflict

Russia is trying to regain its lost position. The war against Georgia is based purely on strategic considerations, as Georgia is a staunch US ally which will soon become a NATO member.

However, civilian casualties should weigh heavily in the minds of the Russian warlords.
Bilkis Rahman
Govt. HSS College
Magura

Innocent citizens and organised criminals

On the 15th of this month, when my daughter-in-law and her son came back from abroad, a heart-rending incident occurred. Their arrival at Zia International Airport was after midnight. My son went to receive them, and the driver was on the wheel. Since the driver lives in Gazipur and we live in Gulshan, my son decided to drop him near the bus stop a little distance away from the airport, thinking he would reach home quicker. There the driver got into a baby-taxi ready to leave with three other passengers for Gazipur. Hardly the taxi was in motion when our driver lost consciousness, only to discover himself the next day lying in a field and so were the other two passengers, with their money and belongings gone.

The driver didn't know where he was. Although not in his full senses, he decided to walk and soon he found the Airport Road. Half-dazed, he boarded a Gazipur-bound bus. When he did not turn up the next day we thought he could not make it because he overslept as he did not reach home until after two in the morning. The driver had no access to a telephone; so we had no idea as to why he didn't show up the next morning until he briefly reported the matter on a public telephone. He could not report for duty next seven days, such was the impact of the drug that knocked him out.

When the driver finally reported for duty after a week, we learned the entire story. According to him, the so-called passenger sitting next to the baby-taxi driver was perhaps the gang leader. In complicity with the baby-taxi driver, he conducted the entire operation. On the previous day, our driver drew Tk. 5,000 to deposit a Postal Saving certificate instalment and kept the amount with him, little realizing that he would soon be the victim of such a gruesome incident perpetrated by an organised gang.

Ordinarily the effect of an anaesthetic such as chloroform, nitrous oxide or ether wears off within a few hours but such was the toxicity of

the narcotic used by the gang that the entire system of the victim was paralysed. This is not an isolated incident; such incidents near the airport of robbing tired unsuspecting passengers have been taking place, as we know, for two decades or more. Still fresh in our mind is the hair-raising incident in which the victim of hijacking was murdered and his dead body was dropped from the vehicle carrying the corpse.

Several years ago one of my colleagues at the department of Botany, Dhaka University, fell into the hands of miscreants. At the crack of the dawn, he arrived at a Dhaka bus terminal and hired a baby-taxi to go to the DU campus. On the way, the baby-taxi stopped at the gas station on the pretext that he needed to fill up his tank. Before he realised what was happening he was attacked by some hooligans. They beat him black and blue and threw dust in his eyes and robbed him of what he had in his possession. It took a long time for my colleague to recover from the injury inflicted on him by these thugs.

What I have reported here is almost a daily event. How is it that such an organised crime goes on right in the heart of the city and in the neighbourhood for such a long time, endangering the lives and property of innocent citizens? Why these gangs which operate with impunity in public places can't be caught and given exemplary punishment to make our movement within the city and neighbourhood safe?

There is obviously a link between certain baby-taxi and cab drivers, and the gangsters, who enjoy beating people and robbing them of what they have. My suggestion is every baby-taxi driver and those who rent these vehicles must not only be registered but there must be background check for each and everyone of them whether they have any criminal records and are connected with any crime syndicate.

RAB has been doing a wonderful job in the cities maintaining law and order by giving exemplary punishment to the lawbreakers. If they also turn their attention to stop the activities of these gangsters, I think soon there will be a substantial decline in the number of such incidents, where innocent citizens fall victim to hardened criminals.

The government has done a number of commendable jobs to curb moral turpitude and weed out corruption. We appeal to them to take this undertaking as a mission before they hand over power to the next elected government.

Prof. A.S. Islam
Professor of Botany (retired)
Dhaka University

Civil society and honest candidates

Professor Mozaffar Ahmed, a distinguished personality, while commenting on the just concluded mayoral and pourashava elections, has reportedly opined that even though the election was peaceful and fair, the expectation of bringing in honest and competent people could not be fulfilled. Yes, we believe, we need honest and competent leaders, but how could we bring them in and elect them if they do not surface and contest in the election and reveal their honesty and clean past? People will not go to search for them, they will have to come and tell the people that they are honest and competent.

It is also not the duty of the Election Commission to locate such people and nominate them.

We, therefore, urge the members of Sushil Shomaj to please help find such candidates for the welfare of the country.
Shafiqul Islam
One-mail

English language skills

In the mid-sixties, during my short stint as a lecturer in one of the premier colleges of our country, what I experienced is worth remembering in retrospect even after a lapse of about half a century, particularly in the present social context. In those days, except the vernacular subject, teachers used to deliver class lectures in English. Students generally were comfortable with the language. Their verbal presentation of the subject matter in English was quite satisfactory. In the educated segment of society a good number of people used to read, write and often speak English. Civil servants, especially those at the helm, were at ease with the English language. Their conference speech, press briefing etc were a matter of treat, often punctuated with wit and humour.

But the situation is very different these days.

It is absolutely necessary that our policy makers, considering the greater national interest, address this vital issue on a top priority basis.

SASama
Baramoghbar
Dhaka

Beijing Olympics

It is great news for Asians that the Olympic Games are being held in Asia. We should feel proud of China.

We wish the games all the best.
Mushique Wadud
Department of English
Stamford University Bangladesh

Abbreviations

If Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University is SAU, then what will be the abbreviation of Sylhet Agricultural University? Both the abbreviations seem to be the same to us. The same is true about Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) and Bangabandhu Agricultural University.
Lutfur Rahman
Seoul National University
Korea

Traffic jam at Mirpur

This is to draw the kind attention of the authorities that we are suffering from heavy traffic jam in our area Mirpur, Mirpur-2, Dhaka. There are so many schools and coaching centres in the locality. The renowned school Monipur High School is also situated here.

Most of the school vans are parked illegally on the roads near these schools and coaching centres. I would request the traffic authorities to look into the matter and save us from unbearable traffic jams every day.
Afzal Ahmed
Monipur, Mirpur

Wake up!

Thank you very much for your excellent write-up "Migrants' rights bodies weigh in on Kuwait imbroglio". But it would have been nicer if you mentioned that the unscrupulous manpower recruiting agencies need to be brought to justice. They are really the enemies of our motherland.

The plight of our workers abroad is highly regrettable. The government must look into the matter with a view to finding a solution.
Salahuddin
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

CA programme

A few weeks back, I was watching a television programme on carrier building. An FCA mentioned that there were around 12,000 posts of qualified Chartered Accountants available in different industrial, commercial, trade and other organisations in Bangladesh. On the other hand, less than 1,100 qualified Chartered Accountants were available in the country. It is known to people concerned that thousands of educated youths are suffering due to unemployment or underemployment. Moreover, the requirement of qualified Chartered Accountants will increase with the expansion of business ventures in the years to come. The service of a professional Chartered Accountant is very much essential to management people who make decisions and to maintain financial discipline in any organisation.

In recent years, a huge number of business graduates are enrolling themselves to CA firms to study Chartered Accountancy course. Most of the students complete the course but seldom come out successful in the exams, i.e., qualify as Chartered Accountant. It is learnt that the way of study the CA firms follow to impart CA course is neither suitable, nor rational. During study, the students spend most of the time in auditing different business organisations assigned by the firms where students are enrolled. Usually, they have to remain so busy in audit work in field level that they get little time to study the course contents properly. As a result, frequently they fail to qualify through exams. It is observed that eight to ten years is required to complete the CA course and pass the final examinations after graduation. Considering the socio-economic situation in Bangladesh, students cannot afford to spend

such a long time on a particular course. The course starts after graduation. The students confront pressure to earn money to support themselves as well as their families. It is often seen that most of the students have to accept jobs before passing the final exams. When they start working for earning they cannot concentrate enough on the CA course.

The total system of CA study needs a major reform. A balance is to be struck for institutional universal classroom study and practical audit, like other disciplines at the postgraduate level. If it is done within a couple of years a good number of qualified CAs will be available in Bangladesh. It will reduce the number of educated unemployed people and create a favourable environment for business. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh should initiate a pragmatic reform programme to remove the loopholes in the existing system of study.

Md. Ashraf Hossain
Assistant General Manager
RM Group of Industries
Panthapath, Dhaka

Bring them to justice

It is highly regrettable that the teachers of Rajshahi University were assaulted by Shibir men. Last month, a freedom fighter was assaulted by Shibir activists.

Our civil society and general people were demonstrating for trial of the anti-liberation war criminals. But the demonstrations have not produced any results. Who will address the issue and bring the war criminals and their supporters to justice?

Jewel
West Sewrapara
Mirpur, Dhaka

Integrated solution for water and sanitation

This refers to the UNB report on experts' views on solving city water and sanitation problems in an integrated manner, published in a local daily on 7 August. The basic idea is to recycle the sanitation waste into potable water as practised in Singapore which has a totalitarian type of administration with strict control on everything. Further, Singapore has the reputation of having one of the highest quality standards in the world based on strict and uncompromising technical discipline.

This is something totally foreign to our culture, where quality control is just to stay on the right side of the specification one way or the other. Bending rules, and shortcuts are the order of the day of Bangladeshi style of technical discipline! Given these facts of life, integrating water supply and sanitation, which is recycling sanitation liquids into potable water may well lead to catastrophic health hazard in Bangladesh. I believe it will be far safer and saner for us to keep the two separate, for our overall health safety!

The pragmatic and realistic

City bus service

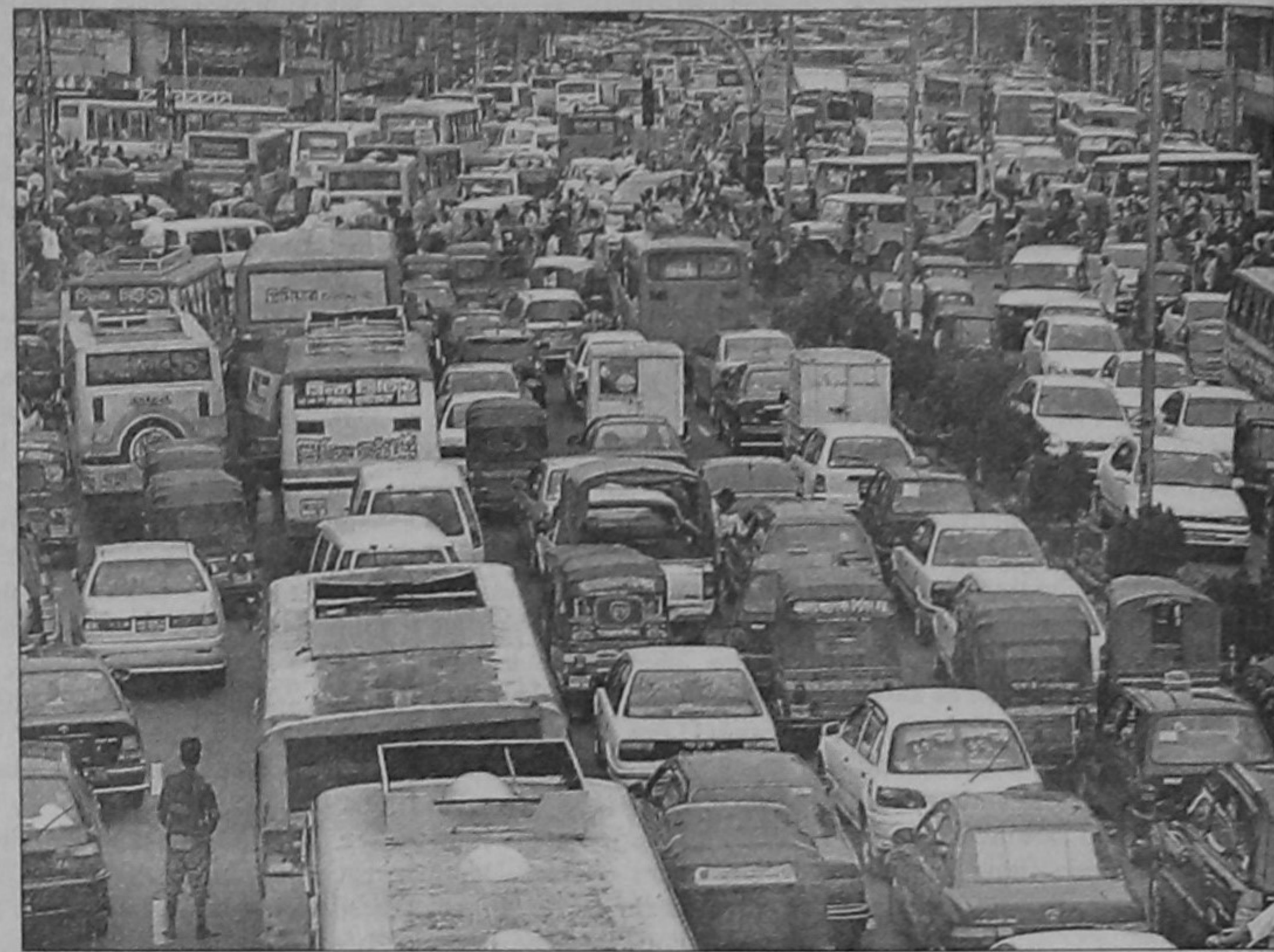
I am a regular commuter of the city bus service, both public and private. For a number of reasons, the authorities concerned should pay more attention to make it user friendly. The city buses simply do not park in the bus terminal or the space designated. Most of them tend to park in the middle of the road and create severe traffic congestion.

The passengers are cramped till they suffer from shortage of air. Almost all the city buses lack proper painting. These are usually discoloured, worn-out and in dilapidated condition. The seats are dirty and in some places the seats are missing. The fans and the lights

are not operating. The floor lay strewn with peanut shells and sugarcane wastes. The floor has not been cleaned or washed for ages. There is no dress code for the drivers or the helpers. Most of them sport dirty clothes.

Some are even found in lungi and ganjee in the driving seat. And to cap it all, reckless driving and yelling of the helpers create a sense of insecurity among the commuters. Of late, there has been an increase in the bus fare but the service continues to be the same!

Shamim Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka



approach could be to go for large scale biogas plant managed in industrial scale from the sanitation fluids and sewage. The final biogas digester solids may be mixed with suitable dried and shredded solid refuse and wastes, mixed with oil refinery sludge to make fuel cakes. This could be a realistic option given our shortage of local fuel resources.

In my opinion, integration of water supply with recycled sanitation waste is a dangerous health proposition for the country in real terms, although it is theoretically viable and justified. WASA's water supply system that we have is (suspended and dissolved impurities) as poor as it could be.

The first and important objective is to ensure that WASA water is really safe to drink straight off the tap, unless you have developed built in immunity to intestinal bacterial infection! This is based on the quality of WASA water we get in Gulshan!
S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Truth Commission and ACC

Recently two autonomous bodies have been established with a view to dealing with corruption and malpractice of the people, politicians, and govt. officials involved in accumulation of wealth illegally. Hence, these two statutory bodies, Truth Commission and the ACC, have been formed to address these issues efficiently.

Both of these institutions' mandates are the same having different modalities to handle corruption cases to create a corruption free nation in the long run.

But it is not clear how the two bodies will work together as they will have to deal with some overlapping issues.

I feel the government has established the two independent bodies with good sense of judgment. We expect that these two national bodies will work jointly in achieving the goals and objectives set by the government.
Nasar
One-mail

Higher education in Barisal

I would request you to run a feature on the government's negligence on infrastructure development of higher education institutions in Barisal division. There is only one medical college for six districts, no dental college, no public university and so on.

The matter deserves a closer look.
Onto Mian
New York
USA

Adulteration or mass murder?

I congratulate Mohammad Ataul Hoque for his letter entitled "Mangoes or poison?" published in The Daily Star. Adulteration of food is a very old practice of the dishonest traders. They were more or less mixing water with milk, adding lower grade oil with mustard oil etc. in the past. These were not that much harmful to health. But now very harmful chemicals are mixed with foodstuff by the sellers for various reasons. These chemicals cause different diseases and may lead to death.

The seller knows fully well the bad effect of the chemicals. So this can be termed as deliberate murder of people and must be treated by law as such. Mr. Hoque suggested severe punishment. I say it must be death penalty. It seems very severe but once one or two men are given death sentence, then there will be no more such crime and no necessity of a death sentence will arise in future. We often demand 'Exemplary' punishment for horrendous crimes so that there is no repetition of the crimes.

The old time adulterations were not harmful for health but were merely 'cheating', so the punishment was not severe. But now it amounts to mass murder. So, there should be 'Death Sentence' as an exemplary punishment.
A sufferer
Dhaka

Earthquake and architecture

I'm writing on behalf of a team of 3 BUET Architecture Department graduates. We recently took part in an International Design Competition to design a Memorial for the victims of the May 12th Sichuan earthquake in China and we won the second prize, beating teams from many countries of the world.
Sandipan Aditya
BUET/2001
Columbus
OH, USA

Advisers on SUST campus

Three honourable advisers visited Shah Jalal University campus recently. One of them came to inaugurate a block of SUST academic building, another adviser was here for handing over the papers of hiring old buses from BRTC.

As far as we know, they don't have the time to attend their office regularly. How could they manage so much time for the trip to Sylhet? Are such trips really necessary?

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant professor
Dept. of Business Administration
Shah Jalal University, Sylhet

More jobs needed

Some months ago 394 judicial officers were recruited and this month 207 judicial officers will be recruited. Only law graduates were benefited.

We the general students are suffering due to unemployment, and are not in a position to show our faces to our guardians. The 27th BCS circular was issued three years ago but the process is still on.

The government should expedite the process, keeping in view the sufferings of students like us.
A frustrated student
One-mail

SAU's location

This refers to a letter of Prof. SAM on the subject in a national daily on 11 August 2008.

It now appears from the letter that the learned professor is in favour of preserving, in a sense, the "mortal remains" of SAU (Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University) at its present location - and not a living SAU along with its historical significance at that location which would enable SAU to continue to operate, to build upon opportunities and to recycle opportunities (to mention a few) from the epicentre of the country's policy-making and developmental programming.

Dr. M.S. Haq
One-mail

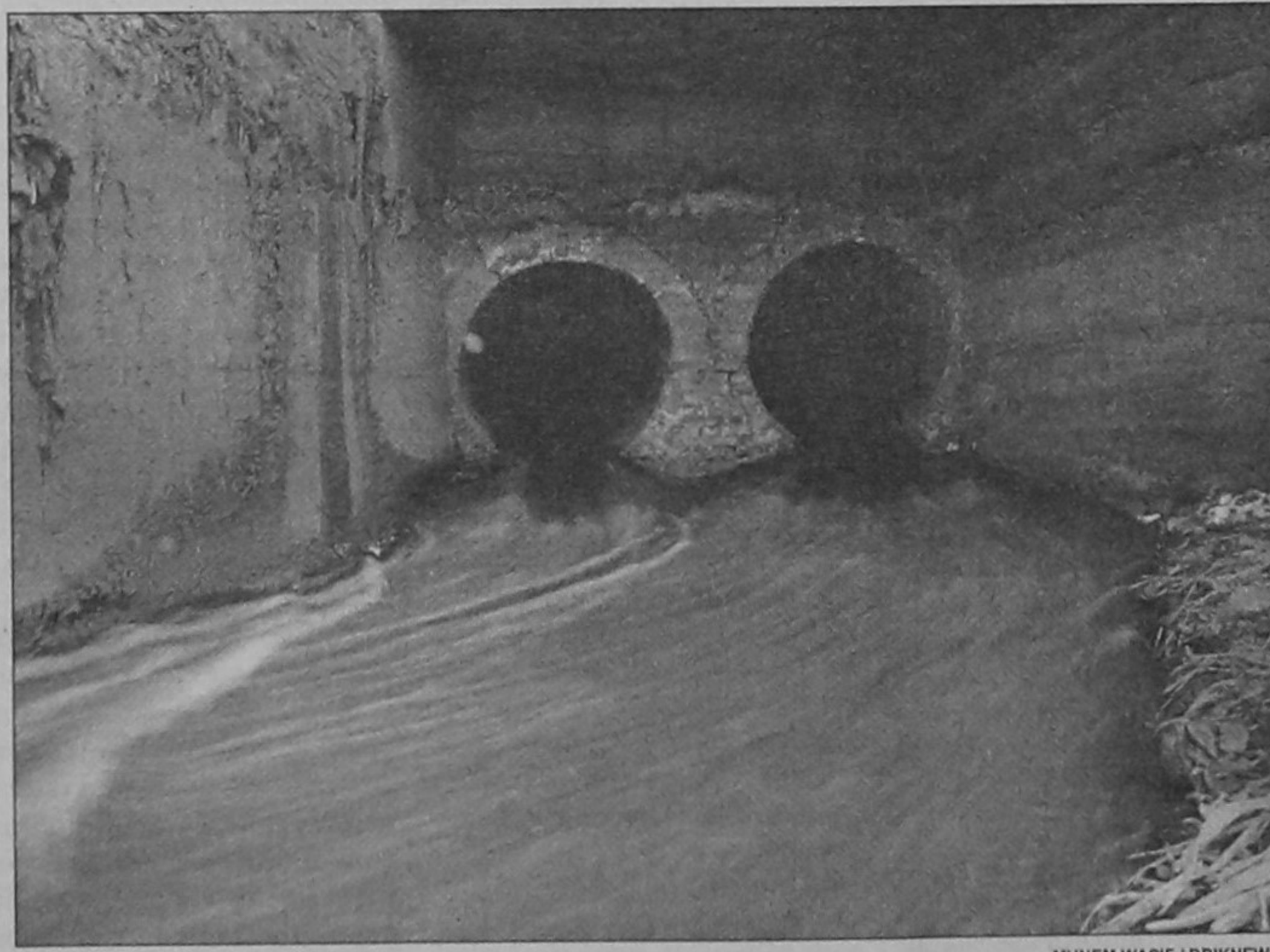
"Ghosts" of executive power

The Supreme Court Bar Association has complained that the judicial magistrates are 'still acting under the directives of the executive' (The Daily Star, 7 January, 2008): a serious allegation indeed! It was hoped that after the separation of judicial magistracy from the executive, the 'impartial justice' would be established and people would get direct relief, as the luminous beginning impressed us in November, 2007. From the above report of the DS, it seems that in Bangladesh 'separation' could not ensure the 'independence' of the judiciary. Where is the problem?

The age-old mentality of yielding to the power-lobby can hardly disappear so quickly. Apart from this, the separation of the subordinate judiciary from the executive is NOT yet complete. The Ministry of Law is still, and by virtue of its functions will be, the executive organ of the government. But the majority of secretariat ranks (from Section Officer to the Secretary) are filled by the judicial officers. Why does the Supreme Court allow the 'officers in the judicial service' to serve under the executive control in the ministry?

We do not know when our judiciary will really get rid of the 'ghosts' of the executive power!
Kamal Choudhury
Jasim Uddin Road
Dhaka

Environmental degradation



MUNEM WASIF / DRINKNEWS

The major environmental concerns for Bangladesh are deforestation, deterioration of water quality, natural disasters, land degradation, salinity, unplanned urbanisation, discharge of untreated sewage, industrial sewage and so on.

The main cause of environmental degradation is lack of appropriate policies and awareness. In Bangladesh,

there is no appropriate system in place to examine and assess our environmental needs. However, the Ministry of Environment and Forests should play the key role to save the environment from further pollution.

Md. Mahamudur Rahman
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka