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Future of democracy

I appreciate the decision of the government and also of the judges on releasing political prisoners on medical grounds. Unfortunately, politicians are demanding the release of all prisoners even if they are convicted of corruption and murder. I am certain soon after the takeover of power the political government will release all the criminals or will influence the court to release them. I want the political government to take over power as soon as possible and at the same time I am afraid that godfathers will reappear again with their ugly faces and the helpless people will become more helpless. The irony is that I find many so called intellectuals supporting those criminals' release.

I want to be hopeful but the reality is different. I guess many criminals will be again elected as MP in the next general election. The only option left to people is to choose better candidates.

Dr. Mahboob Hossain
Associate Professor
Department of Pharmacy
The University of Asia Pacific
Dhaka

Superman Phelps

US swimmer Phelps made Olympic history by becoming the first swimmer ever to win eight gold medals in one Olympic, overtaking his fellow US legend Mark Spitz's seven gold medals at Munich 36 years ago.

It was thought that Spitz's record would never be broken. But Phelps proved it wrong. To him, records are always made to be broken, no matter what they are.

Congratulations, Phelps!
Astir Faisal
Shah Amanita Housing Society
Sholokhabar, Chittagong

CU campus

The majority of students at CU are not involved with the political parties. Their main intention is to complete the study for getting a good job. But campus violence seriously obstructs their progress.

As a general student, I am deeply concerned about campus violence at CU and my question is, how long will we suffer?

Md. Ziaul Hoque
Department of History
University of Chittagong

you know why you are the most respected woman in this country? Because you are the wife of President Zia (the great freedom fighter), you are the uncompromising chairperson of the BNP. You have earned this position in the hearts of the people by virtue of your status and your strong character. Now what has happened to you? It seems like your party is unable to function in the political arena without the help of the Jamaat.

Please do not move with the party that opposed our independence.

Mohammad Nazakat Ali
Pallabi Ext
Mirpur Share Egaro, Dhaka

Tale of our workers abroad

Yes, the sordid condition strikes us, stirs our senses as well. The expatriate labourers broke down in tears. Returning home they buried all hopes, aspirations and dreams not only theirs but also that of the near and dear ones. Many sold land, livestock, some even living place for bearing the expenditures. Now

27th BCS results

The Public Service Commission (PSC) showed the highest sense of responsibility by issuing a press release on 19 May 2008, clarifying the status of 27th BCS results. This is a rare case of showing respect to the public sentiment by a statutory body like the PSC. The people have the right to know the status of the results. The PSC, before anybody's pointing of finger, disclosed the truth before the public. The PSC, in other words, performed the job of ensuring people's right to information. Every government department should follow the example of the PSC.

The honourable chairman of the PSC has categorically said in an interview with the media that after having the court verdict it will take about two months' time to publish the results. The High Court passed its verdict on 3 July 2008. The chairman's declared time is yet to be finished. I personally believe that the chairman is a man of commitment. Surely, he will go by his words. But by this time, different news items, personal opinions are coming out in various dailies which might confuse the stakeholders and can lead to a misunderstanding in the public mind, undermining the newly created good image of the PSC. One pertinent question related to the 27th BCS is implementing the newly proposed quota system. The PSC can make it clear that the new quota system is not applicable to the 27th BCS, because the condition was not advertised at the time of publishing the recruitment notice.

The PSC is an established organisation. It has excellent computer and personnel set up. If the new marks have been entered in the computer (it was wise to make entry quickly) then it's a matter of an hour to have the results. When the chairman told that it would take two months to publish the results, many thought that marks had not been entered in the computer. The candidates thus lost more than a year not because of their fault but because of their participation in the BCS exams!

Under the above circumstances, may I earnestly request the caretaker government to look into the matter and relieve the innocent students and their guardians of unlimited anxiety and agony by advising the PSC to publish the results of the 27th BCS very soon.

Nasir bin Zahir
Trishal, Mymensingh

Political intelligence office

I congratulate the caretaker government on its proposed Political Intelligence Office. It is imperative for the state to keep an eye on the people who have made the lives of anonymous, hardworking, ordinary people like me miserable, to put it mildly.

We, after all, have to earn a living, and anyone who denies us our daily bread must be constrained and invigilated. If the proposed PIO can prevent hartals, murders, campus violence and other assorted villainies we have come to expect from the political parties, then give even more power to the PIO. It is as though "wild beasts" are about to be unleashed on the people, who seek protection. We (the people minus the politicians) will be eagerly looking forward to the speedy implementation of the PIO.

lftkhar Sayeed
Dhanmadi, Dhaka

Indo-US nuclear deal

The long-term implications of the recent Indo-US nuclear pact have to be carefully analysed by the political players in Dhaka, on future Western ambitions in South Asia. Analysts in the media point out that the deal would open future US investment by more than USD 10 billion, and provide job security to more than 200,000 Americans.

At the same time, China has assured Pakistan of nuclear umbrella services. The other side of the coin is the future outcome of the tentative project of supply of Iranian oil to India through pipeline passing through Pakistan.

Bangladesh has enough natural energy resources to attract the rich industrialised countries. What is more attractive are the energy resources in Myanmar. What could Dhaka do -- what are the options available? The main political parties are battling the CTG and the EC on local issues and technical details. How to handle Bangladesh policy strategies during the coming decade? The coming election campaigns should not make us one-eyed.

Bengal was under the influence of foreign cultures for centuries (mainly Mogul and British). We won freedom and independence in 1971. The question is how long could we maintain it? We are staggering under the load of poor governance. We need two ingredients: the right leadership, and the mass weight behind the policies. How close are we to these basic objectives? We are fighting within ourselves, and had to invent the CTG to prove it. We need extra reserves of civic energy for our foreign policies.

Let us start the house-cleaning afresh, as foreign economic cartels are planning on how to make Bangladesh a colony once again.

A Mahasen

Dhaka

Retirement age

A secretary proposed to the CA that the retirement age of government officials and employees be raised from the existing 57 years to pave the way for them to contribute more. It is good for the officials but bad for the unemployed young generation. On the other hand, judicial officials serve up to 67 and university teachers' retiring age is 65.

To make it more acceptable to everybody, the service length can be considered, like 30 years of total service or 60 years of age.

Mostafiz
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar
Dhaka

Where is Asif?

No doubt Asif could be a legend for Bangladesh. He might have won a gold for Bangladesh. But that has not happened. Let us look back. It was on 2nd October 2006 that we, the people of Bangladesh, were speechless. What happened on that day? Our boy Asif was beaten by the police and sent to court.

It was only then Asif declared while answering a question from a journalist, "Amar kachhe sobkichhu ondohor lagche, ami aar shooting korbona". I am very much shocked that our cricketers are wasting a lot of money every year. What are we getting in return? It is high time to think about it. Why are the other sportsmen of the country deprived? Everybody should enjoy the same rights.

Md. Tarik Ali Chowdhury
Department of English
Leading University
Sylhet

RMG sector

The readymade garments industry in Bangladesh is in jeopardy. It started a few years back -- the unrest, stoppage of work, creating havoc, and damaging valuable assets in and around the factories and even in the streets.

Factory owners were flattened, many innocent workers were beaten, even law enforcers were assaulted. The situation is going out of control.

It is not clear who is fighting for what? Is this the workers' movement against owners' bad treatment or deprivation? If a factory is burnt into ashes, how can workers' interest be protected? If factories that go by the rules are damaged, then a genuine question arises, why?

Unruly workers, leaders and agents, whose negative activities are creating lots of problems, should be brought to justice.

Shakil Monzur
On e-mail



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

Higher education

Knowledge is a shimmering beacon of light. It is a gift from the Almighty "Allah". It is a gift which needs to be embraced not to be thrown away.

So far our nation produced countless meritorious students. But the question is "Does our government provide education to everyone?" The answer is no.

Students try to pursue higher education. Only a half of them gets the chance to study properly in a public university. It is because our country has a shortage of public universities.

The government should be concerned about the inadequate numbers of public universities in our country.

Quazi Ehsanur Rahman
As student

South Ossetia

A conflict over a tiny piece of land has sparked a catastrophe in the Caucasus. The epicentre is South Ossetia.

Ossetians are fleeing the conflict-zone and they talk of Georgian atrocities, including the indiscriminate killing of civilians. Ethnic Georgian villages inside South Ossetia have also come under fire, and could now face expulsion as Russian forces push south. Their future must be bleak. The UN must step forward immediately to end this crisis and to avoid escalation of further violence.

If politicians on all sides had shown more restraint and wisdom, this conflict could have been avoided.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

We need supporters, not slaves

It will appear to any casual observer that in Bangladeshi politics the leaders do not have supporters or followers. They have slaves. These slaves blindly support

their respective leaders, even if such leaders are grossly wrong, corrupt and unpatriotic. These slaves are mostly created by sycophants, and dalals (paid agents) employed by a leader in exchange of undue favour. The media, which in most cases in our country are owned by corrupt businessmen, also play a big role in making a corrupt person a big leader. What is most shocking is that many highly educated members of our civil society and intelligentsia shamelessly enrol(ed) themselves as the slaves of one leader or the other to become vice chancellors, pro vice chancellors, ambassadors, DGs etc.

To establish a reasonably democratic society, we need to come out of our present mindset. We need to judge and evaluate the ideology and the past track record of a party before we support or vote for such a party. If I am a supporter of a particular party I should always try to rectify the wrong doings, wrong policies and wrong leaders of my party. If I cannot do so I should, in national interest and to keep my conscience clear, withdraw my support for the party. We must not blindly follow a leader, or his/her family members. We must not be carried away by the charisma, true or false, of any leader or his/her family members. As long as we fail to do so, no one eleven, even if it is repeated ten times, is going to help us get rid of the corrupt leaders. That is the big lesson learnt in the last nineteen months. Our political parties need supporters, not slaves. Will someone from among your learned leaders kindly tell us how we can achieve that goal as a nation?

Syed Ashrafuzzaman
Mahakhali DOHS, Dhaka

SAU campus

It was a debateable issue since the Bangladesh Agricultural University was established. As formerly BAI was the first agricultural institute, it had the option to become a full university. Due to the nepotism of a

political leader at that time it had to sacrifice that option. But the students, teachers, well wishers did not deviate from their mission of setting up a university.

I do not understand why people are raising the issue of shifting this established university campus to some other place or merging it with some other university. A former student of SAU

One-mail

Tsunami and Bangladesh

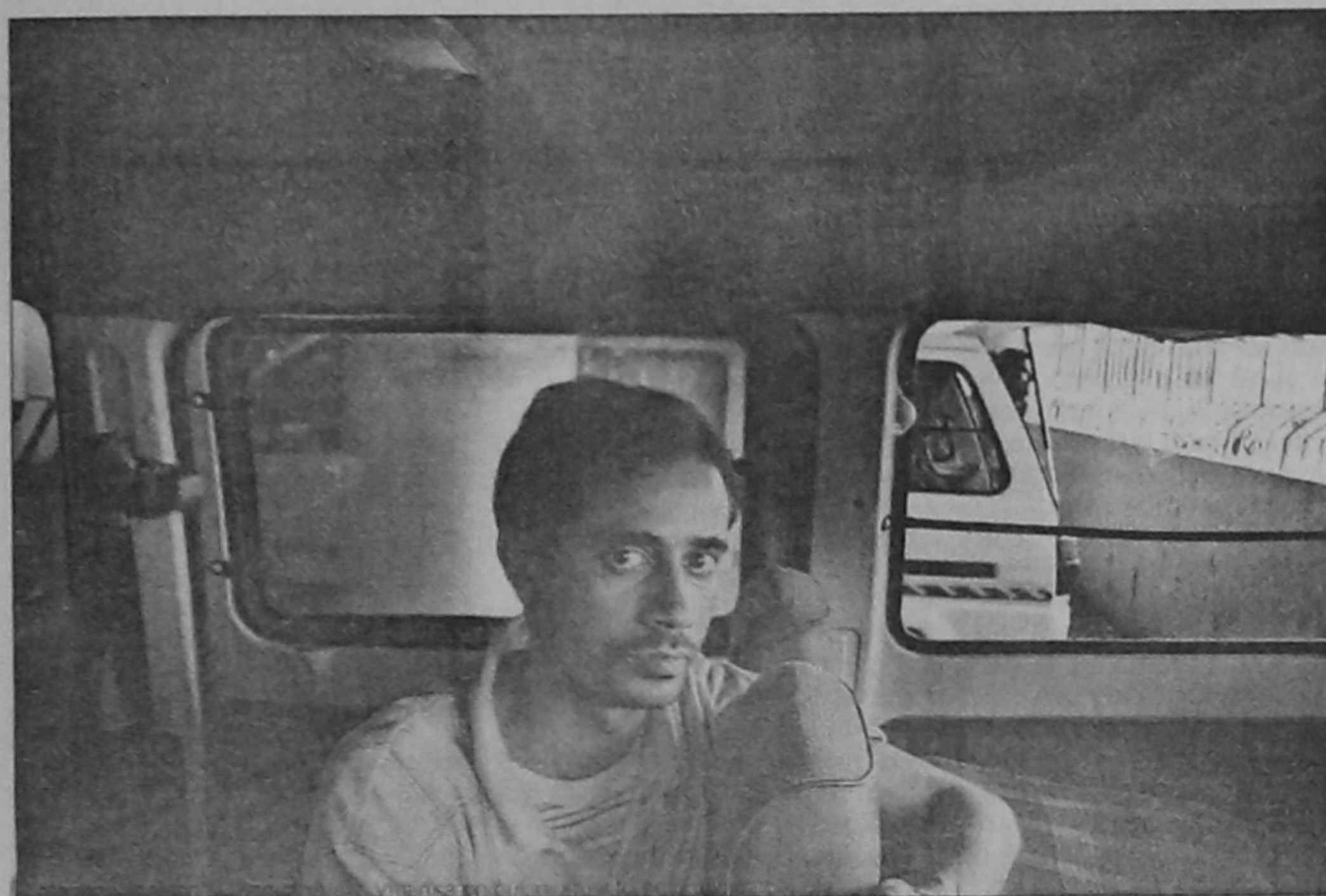
Tsunami is a series of very long waves generated by any rapid, large scale disturbance of the sea or by sea floor displacements from large undersea earthquakes. Thus tsunami is defined as a large destructive ocean wave caused by an underwater earthquake or some other movement of the earth's surface or some geologic processes like undersea landslide or volcanic eruption.

Tsunamis can cause great destruction and loss of life within a minute on shores near their source. They are capable of obliterating coastal settlements, and may cause severe coastal flooding and ecological disruption of coastal areas. It is very hard to escape violent disasters caused by tsunami.

But it is very important to create public awareness, improved tsunami detection, mitigation and warning system for avoiding huge loss of life and property. Experts have suggested the following steps: i. Preservation of coral reef and natural mangrove forests; ii. Afforestation in coastal areas; iii. To keep a pollution free sea; iv. Stop excessive fishing and introduce modern sustainable fish catching methods; v. Public dwellings should be kept at least 500 meters away from a seashore, coastal embankment etc.

Manir Hossain
President of Society for
Environment and Nature Study
(SENS)
MBSTU, Tangail

Poor diplomacy!



TANVIR AHMED / DRINKNEWS

It is a sad truth that our diplomats are not diplomatic enough when it comes to performing their duties. Once again our image has been blurred abroad due to poor diplomacy. The recent "Kuwait issue" is the living example of our poor diplomacy. In foreign countries, particularly in the Middle East, Bangladeshi workers have faced a lot of problems.

On the other hand, hardly we can deny that our economy depends on foreign remittance. It should be noted here that more than five

million workers are currently working in the Middle East.

So, undoubtedly it is a matter of major concern for us. Most of the workers who work in the Middle East come from very poor families. Now it is the duty of our diplomats as well as the foreign ministry to look after these wretched people who are in a deep crisis abroad.

Aiman Bin Shaofiquel Hamid (JASIM)
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong
(IIUC)

School textbooks

Almost every year our school children face a severe problem with their textbooks. The Textbook Board fails to send the books to all the students in the country before end February. Hence many students waste their valuable time for non-availability of new books in their new classes. But the board should make the necessary arrangement so that the students get the books after their annual exams.

Our books are of poor quality. Papers, binding, printing, pictures, nothing can attract our young children. And we all know that the books contain numerous errors.

We urge the present government to set an example in this case so that students get their books immediately after their final exams.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Zia Uddin

Zia Uddin is one of most well-known places where thousands of people either in the morning or evening go for a walk or exercise for health reasons or to breathe fresh air. Zia Uddin, a very cool place, has various kinds of trees and the Crescent Lake on the roadside has made the place even more attractive to the visitors. They usually converge at the lakeside for gossiping, little entertainment in an open place for a few hours.

However, the place needs better maintenance.

Nasir
One-mail

Landslide

Six people were killed in a landslide in Chittagong. It is not the first landslide accident. We hear from time to time the sad news of landslide in Chittagong that results in many deaths. During the rainy season when torrential rain takes place, landslide accidents occur. Yet, the authorities concerned pay very little attention to this issue.

Mushfique Wadud
Department of English
Stamford University Bangladesh

Leaders and their enemies

March 26, 1971. From radio a voice of hope, an announcement of a lifetime, a direction for a nation, a piece of news for the world was heard. A war hero, a sector commander of Mujib Nagar Sarkar, a valiant freedom fighter, who later during the crisis period of the nation again came to the scene and took over power in his hands to rule the country, was speaking. Later he floated a political party to start the democratic process in this country. But he was brutally killed in a failed coup in 1981. This was the brief history of Major Zia, ex President Ziaur Rahman, commander of Z Force during the liberation war. During the liberation war he offered his life, during the crisis of 1975 he also came forward and finally he was killed while on duty for the country. The name of President Zia will ever be remembered with respect.

On the other hand, there is another person we should also know, Golam Azam, chief of a political party, who was totally against the independence of Bangladesh and whose party members were Razakars who took arms against the freedom fighters, killed millions of Bengali people, helped the Pakistani military in killing the freedom fighters, helped the Pakistanis to rape Bengali women. He even did not accept the emergence of Bangladesh and did stay back in his own country Pakistan. They are termed as war criminals. People are raising voice against them and demanding their trial. The name of Golam Azam will be remembered with hatred.

I am not concerned about politics and in fact I do not understand politics as I am not competent to be involved in this matter but one thing I must point out to Mrs. Khaleda Zia with due respect - how come your party needs the Jamaat's support? After the mass movement against Ershad regime, we voted you to power. Do you believe this? Or do you think the Jamaat brought you to power? Do

what they will do is a big question. As time goes on, people fall in different types of difficulties. The old wound will dry up; people will have new dreams. They can recover! I saw in my childhood Asane bhai, local name, our neighbour, collecting money to go to Saudi Arabia. And he went away. Staying there for a few years, he returned home carrying goods and a bagful of dreams! He could restore a bit of lost property. Then he flew for Saudi Arabia again. After that no one knows what happened to him. There's rumour that he went there illegally and the Saudi authorities caught and imprisoned him. After getting released he returned home. But they confiscated his money which he deposited there. He returned in a wretched condition. But where he took shelter no one knew. One night he emerged from somewhere else. People thronged to see him, which happens in villages. He left the village alone and forever! Alas! Asane bhai, the dream he dreamt broke down into debris. But some lessons remain for us.

Zillur Rahman
Lecturer
University of Development
Alternative (UODA)
Dhanmadi, Dhaka

Strengthen family bonds

Children often disregard poor parents and are less interested to visit them even once in a year. Even though "blood is thicker than water," we Bangladeshis evade the responsibility of taking care of poor family members. I believe that harmonious family relationship is the basis of a healthy society. We have to pass down our traditional virtue of respecting our parents, regardless of their income and position in society. Things have changed a lot.

We should think seriously of resurrecting the old values in society.

Bilkis Rahman
Govt. HSS College
Magura

Students in trouble

Shah Jalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, is one of the well-known public universities of Bangladesh. But now it is facing many problems. Students of SUST are facing the problem of transportation, because the number of buses for the students is inadequate. There are nearly 6,000 students. Among them 4,000 are dependent on the university bus. But the number of buses is only 12. As a result, every day students have to struggle for seats. The sufferings of the female students know no bounds. Recently, the three advisers of the caretaker government inaugurated eight 'new' BRTC buses and an academic building. But the eight buses are new only on paper. These buses also have far fewer seats.

The authorities concerned should address the issue in right earnest.

Shahnama
Student of BBA
SUST

