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Overhaul the education system

Amid the poverty, political turmoil and violence, there is no more volatile place than the universities in major cities of Bangladesh. As the leading educational institutions in the country prepare students for jobs that do not exist, the university has become a breeding ground for hopelessness and frustration. Its walls and corridors are scrawled with giant, multicoloured political graffiti. Its teachers, fearing violence, lock the doors of their campus homes.

Governments have come and gone and made claims on improvement of education but with no results. Education can only be improved by educationists who must realise the need for a change, then come together and start a mass movement to reform the existing education system.

Reforms should be made by starting the semester system from classes IX to XII as well as in degree colleges. Making teachers regular, punctual and controlling copying are really difficult jobs and are major hindrances to improving education. In order to root out the hindrances, every district should be given the status of a separate board which should carry out daily inspection on a regular basis to keep check and balance over teachers while conducting examinations. Examining students in three hours after six months or one year is totally absurd. Marks, therefore, should be assigned to attendance, assignments and class participation. There should be a common but standardised syllabus throughout Bangladesh that contains more practical work.

If we value independence, if we are disturbed by the decline of knowledge-based education, of values, of attitudes, which our present system induces, then we may wish to set up conditions of learning which make for uniqueness, for self-direction, and for self-initiated learning.

Avik Sengupta
Marianopolis College
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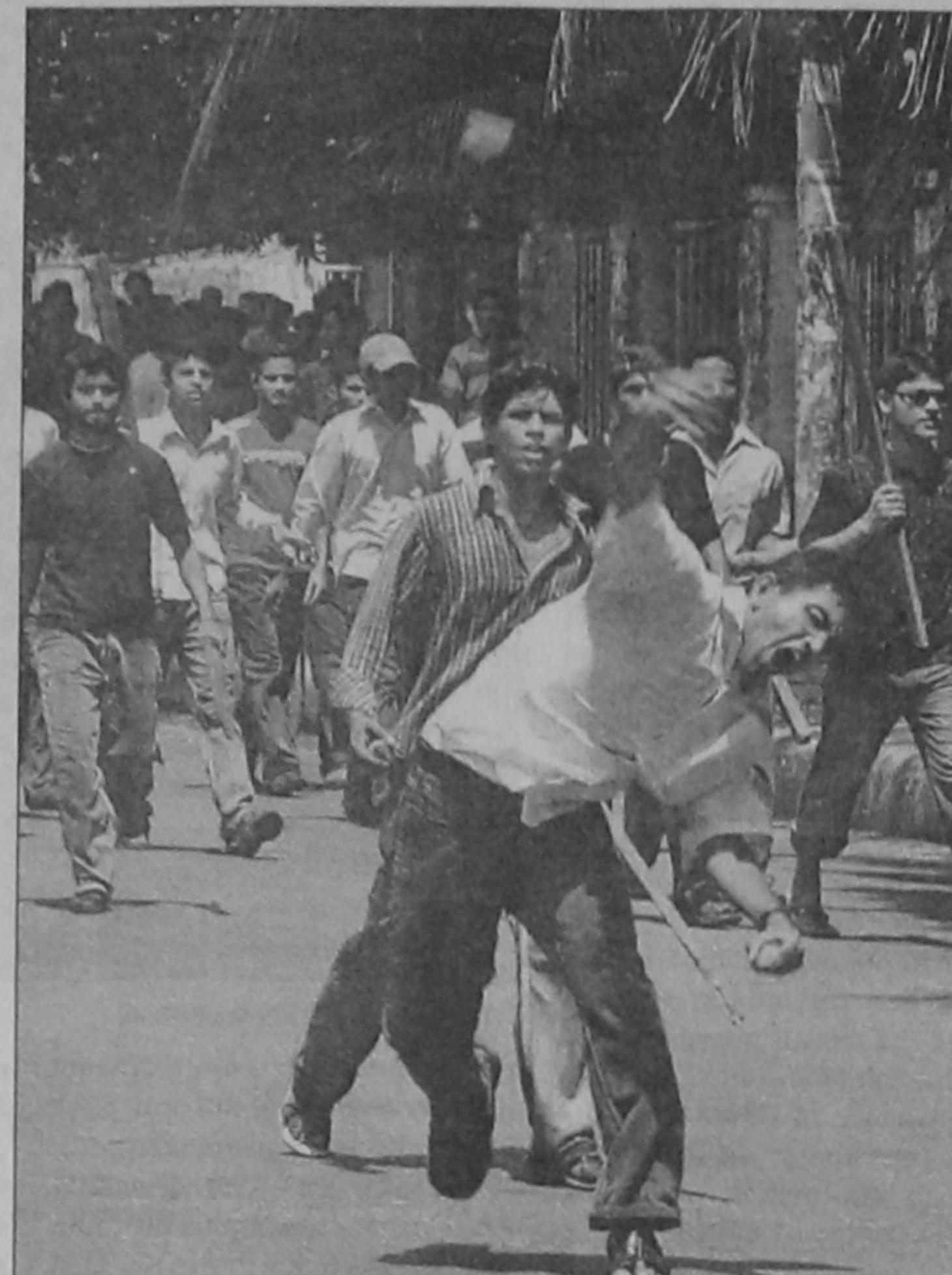


PHOTO: AFP

Traffic jam

I wish to share my thoughts with you on the problems of traffic jam in Dhaka city. To be honest, the road network in Dhaka is not scientifically designed. Most of the junctions are responsible for heavy traffic jam. It will take a long time and a lot of money to take care of that problem. Meanwhile, we have to make the best use of the roads we have by bringing some small changes and enforcing discipline on the road.

Rickshaw : I have been observing through many reports in all the newspapers that the government is taking measures to get rid of traffic jams in Dhaka city. Lot of intelligent people will offer their ideas and opinions. But I am surprised to note that nobody ever talks anything about the "Rickshaws". In my opinion rickshaws are a real menace on the road. First of all, they occupy an average area occupied by many mechanised vehicles, while carrying only one or two persons, which is a waste and misuse of space. Secondly, the rickshaw pullers care very little to follow any kind of traffic rules and mostly do not even know the rules. Thirdly, being a slow vehicle and because they occupy the whole road in many places, other fast moving vehicles have to follow

them at the back wasting costly fuel. In many important areas and spots of Dhaka city the rickshaw comes from the opposite direction in a single way lane, riding on the right side of the road, creating real chaos, endangering the lives of the passengers and creating danger and difficulty for the ongoing flow of traffic. In many spots, this happens in front of the traffic police. Nobody seems to be interested to solve this problem. Instead of having patience when there is a signal or stoppage for any other reason, the rickshaw pullers just keep on pushing through any small opening that they get, which in turn creates a severe knot and all the traffic gets stuck for a long time.

Apart from this you can hardly find any car without scratch on the side which is created by the protruding axle rod of the rickshaw. The rickshaw puller does not have to pay for damaging a car because he is poor so they don't care, but the car owner has to spend a fortune to get it fixed. Invariably, in every corner of the roads or lanes the rickshaw pullers park their rickshaw and wait for passengers making it difficult for other vehicles to pass through.

Bus : There should be designated bus stops made in such a way that normal traffic flow is not disrupted and the buses should

Violent politics, again

Tarique Rahman got hurt in police custody, and some BNP-linked students on DU campus demonstrated for his immediate release. They put taxicabs on fire, and an innocent man was killed at Nilkhet. The same type of violence was seen near Dhaka College also. What will happen to the families of the person who was 'killed'? And what about those who lost their earning capability by losing their taxicabs?

This type of violent politics must be prevented. The people responsible for today's (25.08.2008) incidents must be punished. Otherwise, personal gain oriented politics can't be stopped.

Astudent
Department of Mass
Communication and Journalism
University of Dhaka

Uphold spirit of Ramadan

The group of companies and the business houses controlling the prices in the country should come forward and declare voluntarily prior to the month of Ramadan that they would do business in this special month with minimum profit.

I think this is the best way the business community can respond to our needs.

AFM Hassanuzzaman
Baridhara
Dhaka

REHAB and apartment owners

This is in reference to the letter published in The Daily Star on August 10, 2008 from an apartment owner who described his predicament after buying an apartment from one of the very well known builders. As another sufferer, I would like to express my bitter experience on my way to becoming an apartment owner that is being built by a low-profile builder.

I had an agreement with a developer in 2002 that they will hand over the apartment in 2003 and I have to pay taka 16 lakh (excluding the registration fees and others). Firstly, they took taka 8 lakh as down payment and they spent the money for other business instead of constructing the apartment. In 2005 they agreed to return my money but before that they wanted me to return the deed of agreement which I refused. Then in 2006 they demanded another seven lakh taka (i.e. I had to pay 23 lakh taka instead of 16 lakh taka as per the agreement) and I paid that money taking loan from my relatives, banks and other sources. At last I could register the apartment at the end 2007 but the developer after taking all this money is not giving electricity yet and my wife and me are spending Tk 20,000/- per month for nothing. Readers may ask why I did not go to court. The answer is that the developers hire more efficient lawyers (with our money!) that we common people cannot afford.

REHAB claim that they are clean and not corrupt, then why are they

How can we protest this type of unwanted death due to unwanted politics?

We have no words left to condemn such politics of vandalism and killing.

A frustrated citizen

One e-mail

An economist's comments

An economist recently observed that Bangladesh was galloping forward on the economic front. Iraq is galloping away at 7% GDP growth rate (faster than Bangladesh ever did).

Would the economist like to live in Iraq - or perhaps visit the two rivers as a tourist?

Iftekhar Sayeed

Dhanmandi, Dhaka

SUST students

We, the students of SUST, are facing serious shortage of seats in the halls. Will the university authorities look into the matter?

Jony Khan

Department of Business
Administration

Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet

so critical of the government move? If they are clean and have no intention of cheating people, they should have rather congratulated the government for making such a law.

Asufferer
One e-mail

RPO

Much debate has recently been going on regarding the recently promulgated RPO (Amended) 1972 Ordinance. Some provisions in the RPO may face legal challenges and some are difficult to be implemented by the political parties due to time constraint. For instance, the new electoral rules had given an opportunity for the loan defaulting contestants to participate in the upcoming polls through rescheduling of their loans six months prior to the submission of application for candidacy.

But due to delay in promulgating the RPO, loan defaulters' bid to run in the polls is over as the stipulated timeframe of rescheduling their loans has ended. Legal experts have opined that such candidates may challenge the provisions in the courts for not providing the stipulated opportunity to them for remedying their disqualifications and there is a good chance that they may win the legal battle as it is indeed the fault of the government that it could not provide them with sufficient time.

The case of party registration can also bring in more legal battles. For instance, in order to meet the criteria for registration with the EC, the parties are required to revise their constitutions and elect new committees through national councils. Under the state of emergency, this seems a difficult proposition. The parties will also have to sever ties with their front organisations and chapters abroad. The idea of bringing the parties under registration is welcome but if the parties file a writ petition with the High Court, challenging the legality of the provision to do away with front organisations, then things will get murkier.

And then the government is also not barring those convicts from polls whose appeals are pending with the higher courts and thus the CA's recent call for electing "clean and competent" candidates rings hollow. Now it appears that the government and the EC may ultimately have to bow down to the pressure of the political parties to move forward with the electoral process and this will only weaken the image of the government. So

despite the fact that some of the provisions of the RPO are praiseworthy (registration of the parties, disallowing civil and military bureaucrats and heads of NGOs from participating in polls till 3 years have elapsed, option of "no" vote etc), the delay in promulgating the electoral laws may hinder proper implementation of the laws.

WasifWahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Niketon roads in bad shape

Niketon residential area has been developed fast with many high-rise buildings near Gulshan. Its population is more than 150 thousand. A well-known real estate company has developed the area near Gulshan residential area with an aspiration that the inhabitants will get the opportunity of sharing the facilities of its neighbourhood. They, however, did not provide facilities like playground, roads and drainage system etc. After a little rain, the entire area is inundated and the condition has worsened during the rainy season.

Most of the inhabitants have their own cars. However, the roads of the housing are not fit for driving as those have ditches filled with thick slippery mud that ruins the cars. Alternately, walking is not possible due to road conditions and if someone prefers to take a rickshaw ride, the amount of jerk/s/he will get is sufficient to damage the spinal cord or hip joints!

We would request the DCC to develop the roads of the area without further delay for the benefit of the residents.

Mujib Rahman
Niketon, Gulshan-1
Dhaka

Russian aggression

It is quite clear that the Russian authorities were displaying their capacity to commit brutal acts against humanity through their invasion of Georgia. Their aggression not only questions diplomatic norms, but such behaviour is in essence against world peace and it reminds us of the German occupation of Poland which resulted in World War II. As a member of the global community, we must denounce such military aggression and as a human being I send my helpless condolences to the families of those who have lost their loved ones. We hope Russia will withdraw its troops from the occupied Georgian territory and

Formalin in food

I bought some fish from Karwan Bazar wholesale market and found that formalin had been applied to it. I bought fish several times in the past and the same thing happened every time. Who is responsible for this? I think traders are taking the chance as there is nobody to check the matter.

My suggestion is: appoint permanently two well equipped teams headed by two magistrates for wholesale markets of Dhaka city who can check fish, fruits, vegetables and other food items regularly.

The govt should take the necessary steps immediately to protect the consumers.

Nazrul Islam
Dhanmandhi, Dhaka



ordinary people's lives.

Ashikur Rahman
Research student
London School of Economics
UK

Obama's choice

Joe Biden was announced as the running mate of presidential candidate Barack Obama on August 23, 2008. It is a good and a bold decision by Obama in a sense that Biden is not only Delaware's longest-serving Senator but he is also the chairman of the foreign relations committee in the 110th Congress.

Biden has much depth of knowledge when it comes to foreign policy and this will boost the confidence among the Obama supporters because Obama's opponent, John McCain, has always labelled him as being weak in foreign policy.

Biden is an expert in foreign policy and he will definitely be a source of strength for Obama.

We wish all the best to Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

Minhaj Ahmed

Uttara

Dhaka

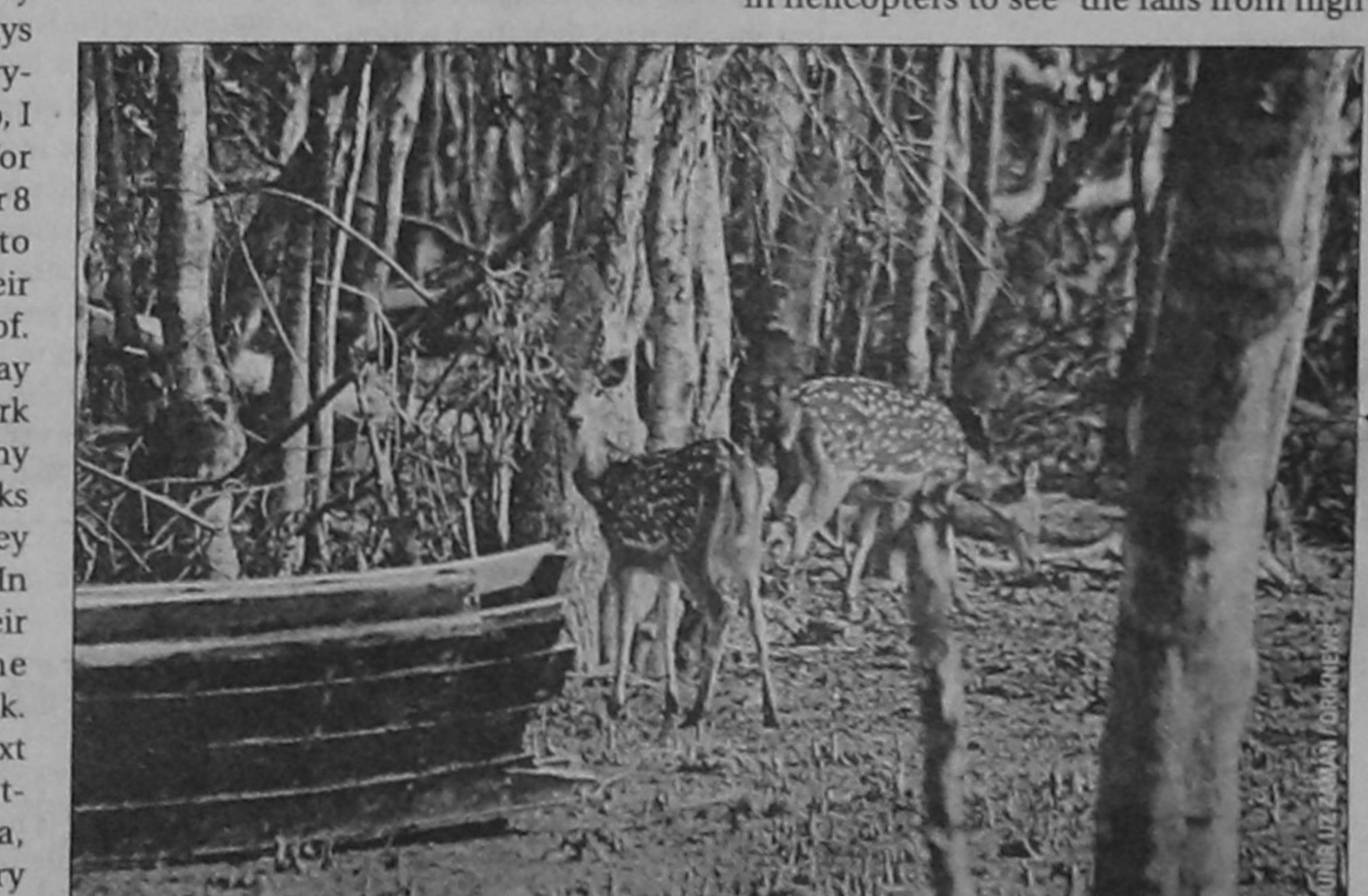
Neglected tourism industry

When I heard that Cox's Bazar and Sundarbans were nominated to be among the new seven natural wonders of the world, I felt great! I have already voted for the two spots. Last year many people, including Bangladeshi celebrities, walked more than 100 kilometers along the seashore from Teknaf to Cox's Bazar. If I had been there at the time, I would have liked to join them. Travel is my number one hobby. On many occasions I had the chance to travel to many countries, which I did in Asia, Europe, Australia, and the Middle East. Tourism is a huge industry, many countries earn billions of dollars through this business and thousands of jobs are created. First of all, we have to understand the key ingredients of this business. Nowadays nobody travels like Ibne Botuta, everybody is busy working. Here in Toronto, I have been working for a corporation for quite a few years. In my office every 7 or 8 weeks, people take a week off to reenergize and break free from their daily routine that they are tired of. Although we work for 40 hours Monday to Friday and it's not hard manual work but I still get bored. Sometimes I take my annual leave for the whole year, 6 weeks all together and go to Bangladesh, they never think about doing it that way. In the summertime they go north to their cottage, down to a resort in the Caribbean, or on a cruise for a week. They always make plans for their next vacation a month ahead. This is the western lifestyle, in Europe, America, Australia and Japan, the lifestyle is very similar. Travel agents provide us with brochures, so people will know which country costs how much and can choose their own affordable vacation.

In Asia, well known tourist destinations such as Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia are very popular. Even Maldives, Nepal and India have very developed tourism sectors. Unfortunately, Bangladesh is not there, our only activities are seminars and conferences. We have many beautiful natural places but we never developed them according to international stan-

dards. The government has to make a plan, find the right investor, give 4 to 5 kilometers of land to the investor for development, build huge hotels and clean up the seashore to match international standards. When people come here for a week they must be able to enjoy every moment. The Cox's Bazar airport needs little upgrading, so that an international chartered flight full of tourists can land here comfortably. Tourists can come from Stockholm, Oslo, Frankfurt, Paris, Tokyo and even Sydney to Cox's Bazar with a direct flight that takes only 10 to 12 hours. Bangladesh has private airlines that can have a business of chartered air. In the

standard but the tourist resorts are secure. Many Canadian investors open businesses there, people go there for holidays from all over the world. The same way, in Bangladesh private investors can create their own security with the cooperation of government law enforcement so that the tourist and resort area can be safe and secure from vagabonds and unwanted people. When the reputation builds up, tourists will come automatically. Bangladesh can also open many new tourist sectors, there is Sundarbans, Kaptai Lake, the huge Jamuna River and many other places we can make into beautiful tourist resorts. In Niagara Falls, tourists can ride in helicopters to see the falls from high



beginning we need lots of advertising and promotion, travel agents can do this for extra percentage of profit. After a few years when the business is fully running we can easily make this area like Cancun (Mexico), Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt), or Gold Coast (Australia).

Cuba is one of the popular vacation places to people of Canada, only a three hour flight from Toronto, five or six days for hotel, food, and airfare, everything included, is \$600 to \$700 per person. Overall, Cuba has a very poor living

up in the sky. How far is Mount Everest from our Tentulia? In the future, maybe, some investor will start tourist helicopter rides from Tentulia to Mount Everest, it's not a bad dream!

As a hard working and peace loving nation, we need honest, strong and good leadership because smart and serious decisions are very important for developing the tourism industry. Let's start working!

Nokib-E-Kibria
Toronto, Canada