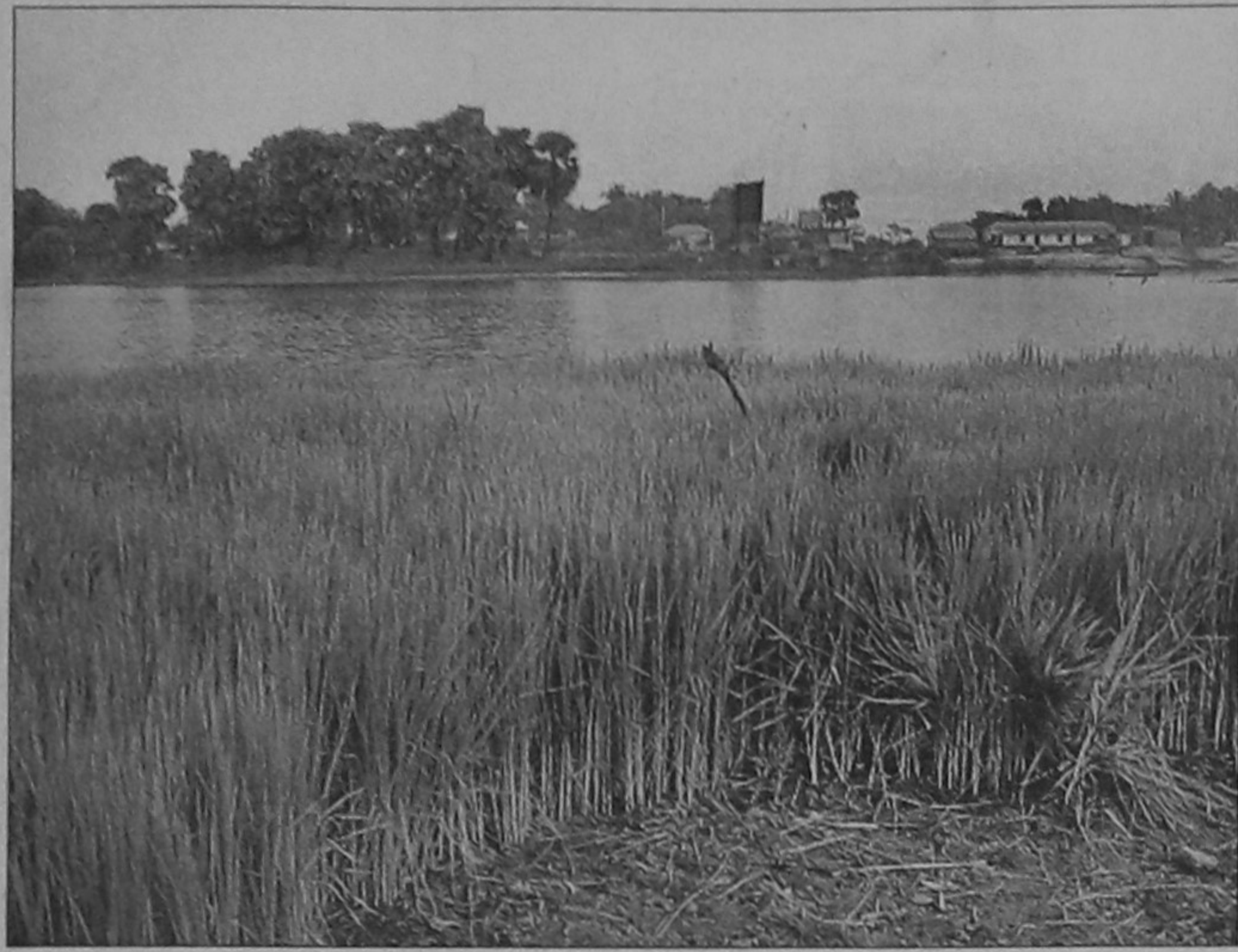




Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Agricultural research

A very significant report was published in the pages of a daily on September 1. It was about the scientists at Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture, who plan to develop high yield variety of oil seeds, pulses and tomatoes as well as identify drought and saline resistant high yield variety seeds. It will be a tremendous boon for our country!

In 2005 the institute reportedly developed two varieties of mug and mashur dal, as well as two varieties of tomatoes. In 2007 they also developed a quick growing aman paddy!

All these are really wonderful reports. I would request all our dailies to give good coverage to this type of news items prominently, pointing out their value for us.

The government should also recognise

and rightly publicise the achievements of our scientists in this essential work in meeting food shortage. Our main news slot in the audio-visual and print media should give more time and space for wider publicity of these nationally important news; rather than harping on the endless 'Banis' and 'Aho-bans' from our high officials and the politicians.

My humble, heart felt congratulations to these unknown and unsung heroes of Bangladesh for their appropriate and desperately needed research work for increasing the quality and quantity of badly needed food.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Traffic jam: finding a way out

Cars crawling in the congested roads in Dhaka are nothing new to our eyes; we all are accustomed to these sights. But now it is unbearable, it is time to say that Dhaka is a standstill city. Everybody is a sufferer whether he is driving a private car, riding on buses or taking rickshaws, and undoubtedly we can say that there is nobody living in this planet who can come up with a solution in the next five years (such a mess we have created). Flyovers, underpasses, ring roads whatever you say will need at least five years to build. Then what will we do in the next five years? We have to think out of the box, something very different as nobody did. I have something to share with you not as an expert but simply as a victim of severe traffic jam.

Keep the schools timings at 7:00am to 1:00pm or some other time, other than 9:00am as the starting time which is the rush hour for office goers. Let us think--how about all the shopping malls and banks opening by 11:00am and all the garment factories by 7:00am? These are all proposals only, and any alternative can be chosen.

The City Corporation should be strict about maintaining traffic rules in Dhaka city area. We know

there is a rule that trucks and any kind of large vehicle cannot enter the city before 10:00pm, but we see that nobody follows the rule.

Shamim Murad
Shankar, Dhanmondi

Akbar's article on Zakir Naik

Abu Imran (August 3, 2008) complained about MJ Akbar's use of the word "evangelist" to describe Zakir Naik. Mr. Imran's objection is that Zakir Naik is not an evangelist in the dictionary definition of the word as it applies strictly to preachers of gospel. While Mr. Imran is not wrong, he's a little misguided about MJ Akbar's use of the term. You see, language is fluid, and words are used in various ways. MJ Akbar knows full well what the dictionary-definition of 'evangelist' is, but chose to use it loosely. One could, for example, construct sentences like "Barack Obama is a prophet for change." Does that literally mean Obama is a 'prophet'? Of course not. Meanings of words flow freely, add to that often usage is ironic, derisive, purposefully exaggerated and so on.

Let's not get so worked up about such things.

Abak
Dhaka

Climate change

Planet earth is our home. But now it is facing a big threat--climate change. Our planet is vulnerable to global warming, the climate we live in is fragile and because of greenhouse gasses and other pollution it is crumbling.

Our planet is getting warmer every day, the glaciers are fading away and soon they will be triggering the sea level to rise at a drastic rate. Recent developments in science suggest that the low level regions of the planet are pretty much vulnerable to this apocalyptic rise in sea level. Those low level regions include Bangladesh.

There are inadequate numbers of climate research centres in our country. The government should set up research centres so that we can be prepared for any kind of climatic disaster. It is quite farfetched to imagine that after a century from now almost half the country will be below the sea level. So I wish and also hope that the government will take some necessary measures in this respect. The government should also address and urge the world leaders to be duly concerned about this climatic trend.

Quazi Ehsanur Rahman
A student, Shantinagar, Dhaka



BNP government in disguise?

What a drama!! Bangladeshis are all amazed to experience the process that the present caretaker government has followed to overturn the poor image of the past BNP government, characterised by highest level of corruption, worst law and order and human right records, politicisation of all institutions including the judiciary and what not....

The caretaker government was formed to save the country by taking people on board, most of whom were the beneficiaries of the BNP government. How come then these people claim that they would save the country from corrupt people when they themselves were active players of that government? Now, things are becoming clearer as to what their purpose was.

If we take the comment of the acting general secretary of the Awami League, the government and their invisible power has certainly lost its credibility by freeing the greatest corrupt on the earth and trying to re-establish its former bosses. Was it the goal that you came with to achieve? Certainly it was... If we analyse a few of the activities of government we would have no other options but to conclude this. For example, in the name of corruption, Sheikh Hasina was first arrested when people knew how serious the corruption charges were against Khaleda Zia. In the process of arrest and her presentation at the court, Sheikh Hasina was ruthlessly insulted while the highest level of respect and loyalty was shown to Khaleda Zia. Sheikh Hasina was barred from seeing her relatives in the special jail while Khaleda Zia was allowed to even conduct a political meeting in the jail! This is called respect and sympathy to the former as well as present (!) bosses. The government arrested at least one leader of the Awami League when they had arrested one corrupt MP/minister of the BNP. In the process of releasing the leaders, all the high-profile corrupt ministers and leaders of the BNP got the priority in getting bail. We have also experienced how the administration openly tried to snatch the victory of the AL backed candidate in Barisal city corporation election. The government's loyalty to the BNP was also demonstrated by the recent public apology of the CEC and a few advisers' serious effort to free Khaleda Zia and her sons.

Like most Bangladeshis, I hate to see that overturning the poor image of the past BNP-Jammat government was the sole purpose of the caretaker government. They were there to save the corrupt and have done everything to give them a clean bill so that they and their bosses never lose power. Based on all of our analysis, we may surely conclude that the caretaker government is another BNP government in disguise!

Abdul Moyeen
One-mail

Poor choice

I was astonished by the Republican presidential candidate John McCain's VP pick. He chose Sarah Palin, the governor of Alaska, quite an unknown figure.

Her acceptance speech at the convention astounded me, Sarah Palin went after Barack Obama with everything at her disposal. It was most ungracious.

I am baffled why McCain decided to make Sarah his running mate as she is not the right person to be the vice presidential candidate. She has not got the qualities such a candidate should have.

Nur Jahlan
Chittagong

Too much for democracy!

The party supporters thronged the hospital pavement to welcome their leader. They were dancing, singing, and chanting slogans. Of course, there is nothing wrong with people cheering on the release of their leaders.

If you feel the heartbeat of common people, you see they are only the lukewarm onlookers of the merry-go-round. More and more whispers are getting muted. Do they think it is too big an issue for their liking? Do some mercurial minds venture an extra mile to get at the truth?

Is it all for democracy because we hate autocracy and love democracy? Let's see where the two have much in common to walk hand in hand deceiving our eyes.

Autocracy punishes people for telling the truth. But in democracy there is more space and people often find themselves in a quandary and don't know what to tell.

We can't go beyond ourselves, only try to outsmart each other with some spasmodic impulse in a sprint before coming back to the starting point.

When we compromise a lot for getting democracy intact, in fact, we compromise democracy itself. So, in the kaleidoscope of reality, what is on the horizon looks like a compromised democracy. Again, we can't see the wood for the trees!

Roney
One-mail

Who is the culprit?

A few days ago I bought mobile phone set from a renowned market, New Market, in Chittagong. One of the shopkeepers allured me enough by showing some video clips of various songs--Mp3 songs, snapping etc. on that handset. Indeed, I was satisfied by the advertisement and bought it. When I had returned home, I, enthusiastically, showed the handset to my only elder brother who supported me. And it was a very embarrassing moment for me because he discovered some obscene video clips of pornography on the brand new handset. I was insulted and punished. He seized the mobile phone set. I became a culprit in my parents' eyes. Moreover, I faced a lot of difficulties in the family.

The question arises in my mind automatically, who is the culprit? Who is responsible for that unacceptable occurrence? Who put the pornography on the brand new handset? Is it part of business? In my opinion, the law enforcers should do something to stop such kind of business.

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

A prayer

In the year 1999, the government recruited 4,000 senior staff nurses under the development budget. It is the government rule to transfer them from the development sector to the revenue sector automatically after three years of service. But unfortunately even after 10-11 years they are still serving in the development sector. They are not getting their salaries for the last three months.

Will the government look into the matter?

Areader
One-mail

Acid violence

In our country acid violence is a regular phenomenon. Many people, especially women, are suffering due to the menace.

This is because the perpetrators are not awarded capital punishment. Moreover, we overlook those unscrupulous acid sellers who violate their trade licence terms. They should also be brought to justice. Our religious leaders, including Imams, should include this subject in their preaching agenda to make people conscious. In the Jumma prayer this can also be made an issue of Khutba.

Syed Muhammed Azim
Chittagong

University and politics

I read with interest the letter captioned, "University and Politics" by Professor Zahidul Haque published recently in your "Letters to the Editor" page. Before partition of India, Dhaka University did mean, "community of teachers and scholars". We had celebrities like the outstanding physicist, Prof. SN Bose; a world class historian, Prof. RC Majumdar; an FRS Botany Professor P. Maheshwari, a Literary Stalwart, Dr. Shahidullah; an erudite Statistician, Professor QM Hossain and so on.

When I joined DU in 1948, the educational and research atmosphere were charged with dedication, albeit on a somewhat abated scale compared to pre-partition days. The lights in Curzon Hall campus were not turned off till late at night. Young scientists worked on Sundays. It was not until the big communal riot in 1949, did many dedicated teachers leave for India creating a void in the academic standard which is yet to return to its former height. Nowadays after 2:00 in the afternoon, hardly any teacher is seen in a science department.

The greatest harm was done by General Azam Khan, Governor of erstwhile East Pakistan. The General would periodically invite student leaders to the Government House to dinner. While leaving the hall, student leaders would come to the provost, not to take his permission but to sarcastically say, "Sir, we are going to the Government House to a dinner engagement," conveying that they were more important to the government than the provost.

Political consideration took precedence over academic excellence including the appointment of vice chancellors. However, some vice chancellors such as the Late Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury

were above corruption. To him what mattered was academic excellence and the level of scholastic attainments of the candidates.

Gradually, the university authorities, as we all know, had to yield to political pressure. Higher teaching posts in a large number such as those of professors and associate professors were created in all universities to satisfy the demands of politically minded senior teachers to whom the position mattered much more than academic excellence. The rules were drastically changed. Even non-Ph.D. candidates and those without publications in peer-reviewed journals outside BD were considered eligible for full professorship. In some universities, teachers not fulfilling the minimum criteria, got promotion using their political influence.

The interest of the party, rather than that of the institute, determined the

appointment of the head of an institute in a university. As a result, a less qualified individual got the top post in preference to a more deserving candidate. It is high time that we change our mindset.

The teaching community appeals to the caretaker government to take adequate measures to revive the glorious tradition of Dhaka University and establish an equally sound academic atmosphere in all other universities; public and private. It is imperative to revise the university ordinances. We desperately need good science laboratories, good libraries, Internet connectivity, and good and dedicated teachers. If adequate measures are not taken in the foreseeable future, the same or even worse type of academic corruption will continue to debilitate the country.

Ahmad S. Islam
Retired professor of botany
DU



Jail killing

We were told that he had been given a long awaited "independence of judiciary"-- a constitutional right which all successive governments had denied. We really could not understand the real meaning of this right. We thought, from now on, the justice seekers, especially the poor victims, would get honest judgement and the perpetrators would be punished after a fair trial within the shortest possible time.

The jail killing took place in 1975, about 33 years ago. Now the court has acquitted all but one. It proves that the absconding killer acted alone, who at dead of night on 3 Nov, 1975 found the central jail gate wide open, entered into it with a machine gun, located the rooms of all the national leaders, gunned them down without any noise and slowly walked out of the jail.

The jail killing is such a horrific incident in the history of Bangladesh that everyone knows about the incident and who the killers were.

Shafiqul Islam
NY, US

Death of a dedicated man

I took the news of the recent death of Quamrul Islam Siddiqui with certain sadness and with a sense of loss. Engineer Siddiqui was a fine gentleman, a solid expert in his field of engineering, a good communicator, and an effective result-seeker and maker in pertinent areas of his life long activities. He had, during his life time, held a number of responsible governmental and non-governmental positions - for example a secretary to government of Bangladesh and a president of the institution of engineers, Bangladesh. In addition, he was associated with certain international organisations. His contribution to development of Bangladesh, particularly in areas of rural advancement, are commendable and lesson bearing. He was a recipient of national and international awards for his good work.

I came to know about him when he was visiting Sri Lanka in early 2002. Ambassador Dowla, the then Bangladesh's envoy to Sri Lanka - one of the effective and efficient Bangladeshi ambassadors (in areas like economic diplomacy) I have come across so far - introduced Engineer Siddiqui to me. Then, one evening - I mean during his stay in Colombo - Engineer Siddiqui called me over telephone at our Colombo Hilton residence to find out whether I would be interested in presenting a paper in the 46th annual convention of institution of engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), scheduled to be held in Dhaka between 10 March and 13

March 2002, both days inclusive.

I thanked him for the inquiry but expressed my inability to present the paper in the convention. I told him my paper might not be able to withstand scholarly thrusts of papers meant for a convention of above nature. He rejected, in a polite manner, my apprehension and encouraged me to participate and present the paper in the convention. I finally accepted his invitation.

Since the convention date was fast approaching, I managed to finish my paper and sent it to Engineer Siddiqui with a copy, as per his advice, to late Dr. Md. Golam Mohiuddin (then alive) who was a professor of the department of industrial and production engineering, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and member-secretary, accreditation committee of IEB - within a week of my acceptance of the invitation. The paper was, among other things, interdisciplinary in nature and scope. The core focus of it - was: futures of quantum engineering, quantum technology and environmental costs in the era of globalisation.

On receipt of the paper, Mr. Siddiqui wrote back to me to let me

know inter alia - how much surprised he was when he found I had been able to produce - within a very short period of time - a substantive paper on matters he termed difficult. Although I could not present my paper in person in the convention at Dhaka but I came to know (later on) from both late Prof. Mohiuddin and him: my paper was the hardest, most up-to-date and ingenuity-laden among all the papers - both in-country and ex-country - presented in that convention. I then shared with them inter alia reasons for making the paper hard.

I thanked them, Engineer Quamrul Islam Siddiqui, in particular, for affording me opportunities for sharing with the convention participants - via a virtual mode, my (the then) thoughts and ideas associated with unfolding matters of quantum and environment in the era of globalisation. I also thanked my mother - Late Mrs. Syeda Sultana Haq - who was alive at that time and whom I consider, up to and including today (06 September 2008), as one of the most important mentors in my life - for her comments on the comments, mentioned above, on my paper.

My short but meaningful interactions with Engineer Siddiqui and vice versa were instrumental in making me investigative and analytical - subsequently - about his other qualities of life. I found him to be an effective motivator, a bold-challenge taker and a good practitioner of diversity at relevant levels of knowledge, understanding and application, to mention a few.

In fine, I pray to Almighty God for the salvation of his soul.

Dr. M.S. Haq, One-mail

American life

The words 'immorality and sin' no longer appear to be a matter of concern to the Americans! They seem to feel honoured and elated in revealing the immoral activities of their sons and daughters! What a shame! Adultery is the order of the day in America now.

People expect the persons holding the highest public offices in the most powerful country, which boast of moral and social values, family bondage, human rights etc. not to encourage immoral activities within their families.

Mohammad Ataul Hoque
One-mail



Hills disappear!

They destroy hills for making houses and supplying mud to the brickfields. As a result, the number of hills is decreasing day by day. It causes great harm to our eco-system. Many wild animals and birds are losing their abodes. Hill cutting causes horrible calamities like landslides. Many people died in Chittagong due to landslides in the last one decade. So, proper steps should be taken to stop hill

razing. Legal action must be taken against those who are responsible for such activities.

We all should come forward to stop hill razing and save our natural resources.

Syed Russel
Dept. of Business Administration
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet