

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.

Private cars in Dhaka

Let us return to the private car. Whatever convenience and comfort it provides comes at various costs. Cars are the main source of pollutants worldwide. There is no such thing as a clean car; cars just vary in the amount they pollute. Despite increasingly stringent emissions control standards over the decades in the US, cars pollute more than they used to because people are driving more.

It is difficult for us to appreciate just how much cars pollute. The air in Dhaka city, after all, improved dramatically after the banning of two-stroke baby taxis, and again with the introduction of unleaded fuel. However, this is by no means an indication that the air in Dhaka is clean. Any trip to the countryside is a reminder of the pleasure of breathing clean air. Even in Dhaka, if we wake up early and take a walk, we can experience a bit of the pleasure of fresh air as each car passes, we can also understand just how much each car pollutes the air. As the streets fill with cars, the pollution rises. On hazy days, despite large numbers of people moving about the city, the air is fresh and the city (violence aside) is quiet. Cars and the wide paved roads needed to accommodate them also emit a great deal of heat, making Dhaka even more insufferable in the many hot months.

Cars also are the main cause of noise pollution. A full 97% of students in Dhaka in a survey on noise pollution said that their studying is disrupted by car horns; 96% of the general public interviewed mentioned car horns as the main cause of noise pollution in Dhaka. [1] When rickshaws



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were on strike in October 2004, there were no rickshaws on the streets, yet the streets were as noisy as ever.

We would argue that since cars only transport roughly 10-20% of travellers, they should only have access to 10-20% of road space, for moving and parking and should respect the rest of users, as well as the right to some peace and quiet of all the people working and living next to roads.

Presumably, one component of civilization is respecting the rights of others. The attitude of drivers who represent the wealthiest portion of

society that they alone should have full access to roads is anti-democratic, anti-civilization, and disturbingly elitist. A society in which people fail to respect the rights of others, and in which the rich believe they should have special privileges on the roads as well as in every other aspect of life, is a society destined to fall into crime, selfishness, viciousness, and lack of the neighbourly friendliness that allows people to live comfortably together.

Syed Saiful Alam
Volunteer of Save Environment Movement

Price hike in Ramadan

The holy Ramadan is the month for self-correction and self-sacrifice. But what we are observing in this month -- instead of going down, the prices are going up. This is too bad for us, especially for our poor and low-income people. This is a sad truth that when Ramadan comes traders and hoarders hike the prices of essential commodities. The people have nothing to do. They are bound to buy the essentials. The policy makers and the market controllers are blind to this situation.

If the government cannot control the overall situation, the condition will worsen further.

Md. Khayrul Alam Ababeel
Executive - ICT Division
Sylhet Office - Dhaka Stock Exchange Ltd.
R.N. Tower, Chowhatta, Sylhet

School timing

The government's declaration that the schools will all have to start at 7:30am is good news to me. At least the government is trying to come out of its negligent attitude. Some schools (and their students) know very well to whom I am referring to, keep their students locked up in long, unnecessary lessons. The government should also have mentioned a suitable time for schools to close for the day.

In Ramadan, students like us need to have our working hours shortened--another aspect I would like the state to look into.

Jayeed Naseeree
The Aga Khan School
Dhaka

English spellings

Bangla has a great heritage and a rich history full of struggle. There is no other language as Bangla which has a similar history. We sacrificed some priceless lives on 21 February 1952 to establish the right of Bangla as a state language of the country. Now 21 February is the International Mother Language Day.

We have some names of our famous places in Bangla that are really wonderful. But in English we are using a new word which is neither Bangla nor English. In Bangla we call it Bagura--but when we write in English we are writing Bogra. In Bangla it is Moimonsingh but when we write in English we are writing Mymensingh. I think we should write those names as they are pronounced.

I am requesting the present caretaker government to correct the English spellings of the names of the places mentioned above.

Mohammad Sazzad Hossain
Joypara
Dohar, Dhaka

Parade of failure!

A very interesting and appropriate headline on the chronic failure of the Bangladesh cricket team. The blame is due for the entire system, the BCCB, selectors, team management including the coach and finally the captain. We only hope that cricket would be governed and run by the cricketers and be kept above the current trend of politics in sports and games.

Cricket is a game of uncertainty. Unfortunately, our team captain is fully dependent on that aspect plus his own thoughts on performance failure time and again. He has typical excuses to explain his and his team's failures. I think those who understand and love cricket may kindly give a clear message to our team captain that it is time for him to make room for new leadership to allow our very limited success story sustainable. He has done his job. Let the new blood take over.

A reader
One-mail

Traffic chaos in Dhaka

There has been extensive coverage of the terrible traffic situation in Dhaka city. One can only sit and read these and feel like "strangling" someone at the total frustration and helplessness we commuters suffer from!

There is one very significant question here--who is responsible for traffic control and where on earth is that person? We read about all big talks and comments about the police going to do this and that blah blah! But who is accountable? He or she should not be in a job and get paid with public money if they cannot do the job! They should resign. It is immoral and dishonest to sit and get paid for a job which one is not competent enough to do. When will our sufferings come to an end?

Dr. Shabnam Huda
United Hospital
Gulshan-2
Dhaka

Stop student politics

My elder brother is a student of SUST. He has completed his honours course this year. But it has taken seven years to complete this four year course due to session jam. Student politics is responsible for such jams. In our country, it takes much longer than usual time to complete our academic life. So we can't apply for government jobs in time.

We hope the government will take the initiative to stop student politics.

Umme Kulsum Urmy
Department of Business Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

Day of national mourning

August 15 has been observed as a day of national mourning. On this day in 1975, the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, President of Bangladesh, was brutally killed along with some other members of his family during a military coup. The coup leaders also killed four national leaders in jail on 04 Nov 1975. August 15 is definitely a black day in the history of Bangladesh.

We should also recall that the subsequent events like the counter coup on 03 November 1975 and the soldiers-people uprising on November 7 brought some changes in the country. The reign of terror, large scale killing of political opponents, family rule, one party rule etc came to an end.

No more autocracy, no more dictatorship, no more coups, no more bloodshed.

A senior citizen
Dhaka

Ill-fated mother?

I will try to say something about the ill-fated mother whose letter was published on September 5, 2008. I was surprised after reading her letter "No way out". I couldn't understand how a mother calls herself ill-fated when she has two golden super-talented children. Yes, it is painful that her daughter could not manage sponsorship. But why should we think that nothing more is left in life? And why should we think the USA and the UK are the only places for a brilliant student?

Our country is poor but there is enough opportunity for a talented student to build a good career here. The mother should feel proud of her two children and look forward to their bright future.

Nipun
Student of BIFT
Uttara, Dhaka

ACC's job

While there is no question about the integrity and honesty of Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury, the way the ACC is working towards its stated goals of uprooting corruption from the country needs to be reviewed. Except the NAICO and GATCO cases where procedural irregularities along with financial losses were taken into account, every case so far I know was filed for amassing illegal wealth or concealing information about the wealth when the ACC asked for it from an individual.

The movement of files and bureaucratic process in the secretariat ensures the involvement of more than one person in the corruption process, I am sure Hasan Mashud Chowdhury knows it well. He declared his all out crusade against corruption. We hope he tightens screws around the noose of decision making and plugs the loopholes of government/organisational rules and regulations by taking stern actions against the decision makers and high-ups. In doing so, the ACC may also form a committee or advisory group comprising honest people having public administrative experience who will observe the cases the ACC is investigating and suggest overhauling in administrative rules and regulations and then put forward for government to implement those recommendations. It will complement the Administrative Reform Commission. We should remember that primarily it is the NBR which should look into the illegal wealth of a person.

I am sure if the ACC and the NBR demarcate their line of actions and combine their efforts in fighting corruption, it will produce better results.

Dr. M. Mortayez Amin
Dhanmondi
Dhaka

Our priorities

What do we need now? What Bangladesh needs most now for its 140 million people and their future? A "BRIDE" we need now! It is a symbolic term here! The political parties, elections and the government are the ornaments of the BRIDE!! The bride is nothing but the "POLICY" of the country which is the most important thing for us now!! It is not important who wins the election and who sits on the opposition benches in parliament, what is important is the right "policy" which must be followed strictly in order to get the proper democratic system started in our country for the first time in history. A policy, which is 100% for the welfare of the general public, nothing else. A policy which will ensure the following most required three things -

- 1) Education for all (to educate mass population)
- 2) National Healthcare System (health for all)

3) Independent Judicial System (for law & order).

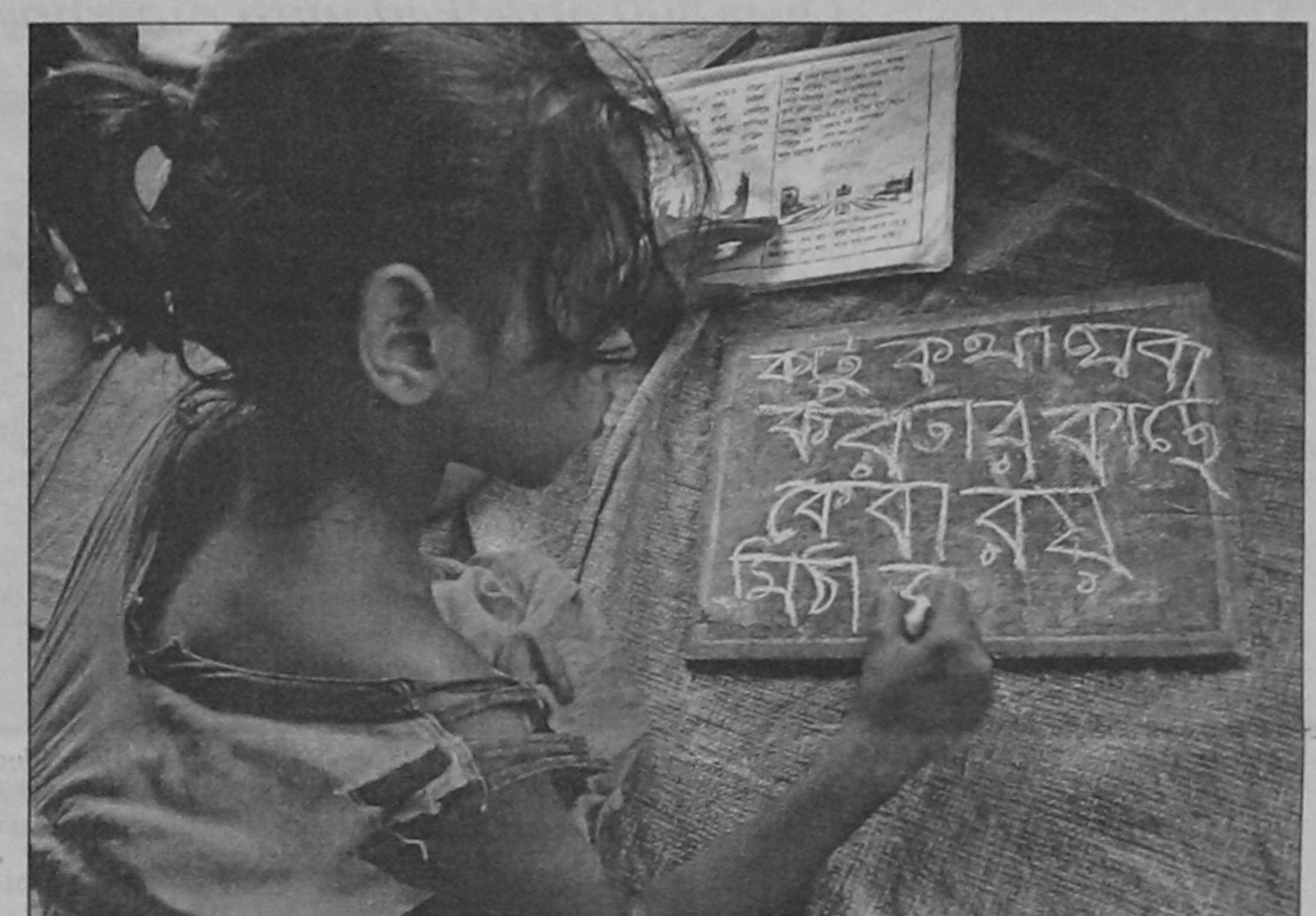
If the policy can ensure free access to education for all and we can educate the 140 million people, what else do we need? If we can give 140 million people proper access to the quality doctors & treatment through the National Healthcare System, what would be stronger than a healthy happy population of the country? If our policy ensures keeping the Judicial System 100% independent from any outside or government influence all the time at any cost, then who will dare to corrupt our society, victimise any citizen or misuse power in future ?? Each and every person will be under the same laws and will follow the same constitution of the country for good.

It is not easy to implement the above mentioned three points in a poor country like Bangladesh. However, it is

not impossible either. The last point (3) involves no extra money, but only good will. The first two points involve huge funds indeed. The question is, where will the huge money come from? We need to think properly and logically now. Bangladesh needs healthy, educated 140 million people in a sound peaceful social setting. We've been wasting a huge amount of government fund for wrong reasons during the last decades.

We must remember that the resources of the country belong equally to each and every citizen and everyone has got their birth right to claim and enjoy it. This country is not a personal property, neither a property of any department or sector. This country belongs to 140 million people. So, it is time to do something for the citizens.

Shabbir Saad
Swinton, Manchester
UK



AMADUL HUQ/DRI/NEWS

Prices shooting up

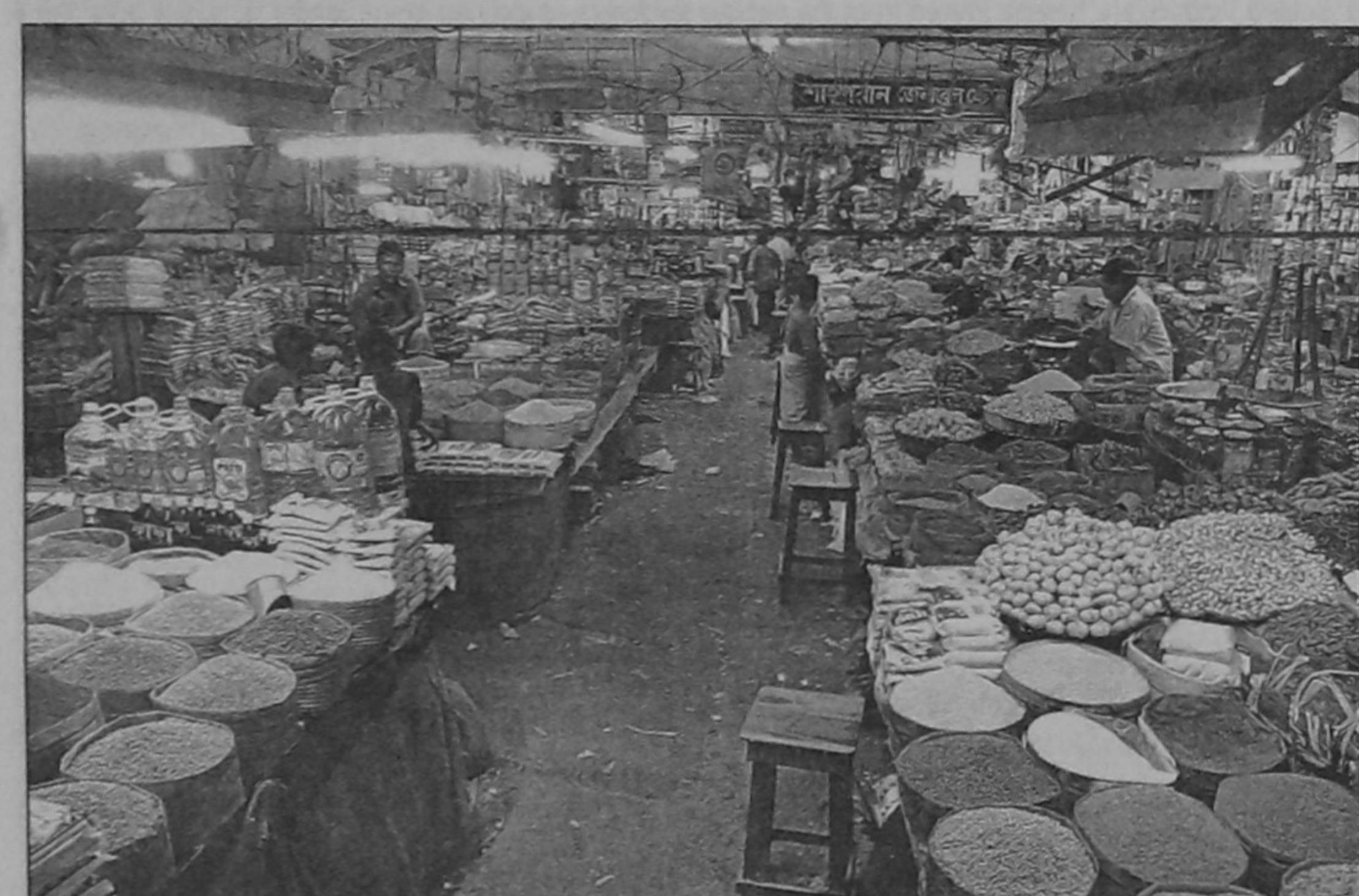


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We have a department, a ministry, an adviser and above all a powerful government. They have all along informed the people that such and such steps would be taken to control the rise of the prices of daily necessities during Ramadan. The result is opposite. The latest move by the FBCCI has failed, and they are planning to call for the support of the law enforcing agencies like RAB, BDR and police. The success of the new move is doubtful and might create a panic in the mind of the traders having the same result we saw in the early days of the CTG adopting the terrorising strategy. The efforts to neutralise the terror effect on the market and the traders are being continued by the CTG. The FBCCI has perhaps a major role in pursuing such a reconciliatory move by the CTG. Therefore, they should be well aware of the pros and cons of using the tactics of intimidation and force against the wholesale and retail traders as identified by them.

I am a little concerned by the way the news has come in the media that the FBCCI is going to call the law enforcing agencies to control the price spiral at least during holy Ramadan. The FBCCI is perhaps overstepping their line of responsibility without making a creditable analysis of the market situation. If they have been empowered to call for such assistance, the institutions or offices I have mentioned to start with seem to be either ineffective or non-functional. Cooperation, coordination and sharing responsibility between public and private institutions are welcome in the free market economy; but is Bangladesh with more than half of the population being ignorant and below poverty line fully ready to cope with the so called free market force? The most unfortunate aspect is that we have been bestowed with a group of protagonists of free market economy preparing the poverty alleviation strategy and plan, and ready to live with

the fact revealed by a research group that regional disparity of allocation of resources is evident from the records. Higher percentage of resource has been allocated to the comparatively less poverty affected division. The immediate reaction of the government is more disappointing.

The FBCCI represents a powerful interest group. If they can operate like an alternate government calling for the assistance of the law enforcing agencies when the reasons of price spiral are not well defined and identified with certainty, the FBCCI might be encouraged to call for support of bigger forces to handle a major crisis which might affect the country and their group interest. I think we are making too many experiments with economy and politics. The country is surely fed up and want to see an end to all the experiments currently undergoing in those two fields.

A reader
On e-mail

Trading everywhere!

I usually go out early in the morning for a walk, since I developed some symptoms of diabetes, and get a chance to look around, especially wall writings and posters. I have recently noticed there are some talented singers participating in competitions in the electronic media, although I must appreciate it but I feel bad when I see some posters on the wall with the participants asking people to vote for them by SMS. Those who are interested in watching these

programmes may send SMS if they like their voice, but it is not clear whether the participants should use posters for this purpose. Is it the proper way to be a popular singer?

Sumanta Sarothi Halder

Senpara

Rangpur

Hope fading away

The people of Bangladesh never got so much hope before, except our great win in the liberation war. A real hope, a great dream & a bright future we could see in the

"Obama effect"

There is a growing concern that the "Obama effect" currently changing the face of politics as usual" in the United States by propelling an increasingly large number of Americans, especially the forward looking, educated and young across the colour and racial divides, to cast their precious votes for their candidate of choice, who represents a quantum leap and paradigm shift towards a post-ethnic and post-modern national and international leadership, may turn out to be an euphoria and an "Audacity of Hope" that is intrinsically ephemeral. In retrospect, would this be construed simply as a "pleasure principle" that took the United States by the storm briefly, but was eventually caught up by the "reality principle" implicit in the "Bradley Effect," also known as "Wilder effect" or "Dinkins Effect," in which the margin of lead in the primary election enjoyed by yet another very promising African-American candidate was significantly wiped out in the final election because the White voters, who posed as independent and swing voters to conceal their racial affiliations during the primary reverted again to their true colours in the final election



www.BARACKOBAMA.COM
Faridul Alam
Staten Island, NYC

unashamedly? Could we bet on Obama's White half-ancestry to tip the balance in the final election to be able to declare that we had finally moved beyond the "phenotype" incontroversibly entrenched in the US psyche for generations? What would be the impact of "Palin effect" designed by Karl Rove, a guru of the neo-cons, who was instrumental in effectively stage-managing and delivering the two successful presidential elections for GWB? How would we look back at the transformed Senator McCain, who morphed from a maverick on the bipartisan tightrope to a prisoner of partisan politics electrifying his otherwise disavowed base with fear mongering, false hopes, zingers and even cognitive dissonance without charm, eloquence, wit and salience. When the election would be lost and won and the dust settles should we return to H.L. Menken to put everything in perspective to quip, "Democracy is the art of running the circus from the monkey cage?"