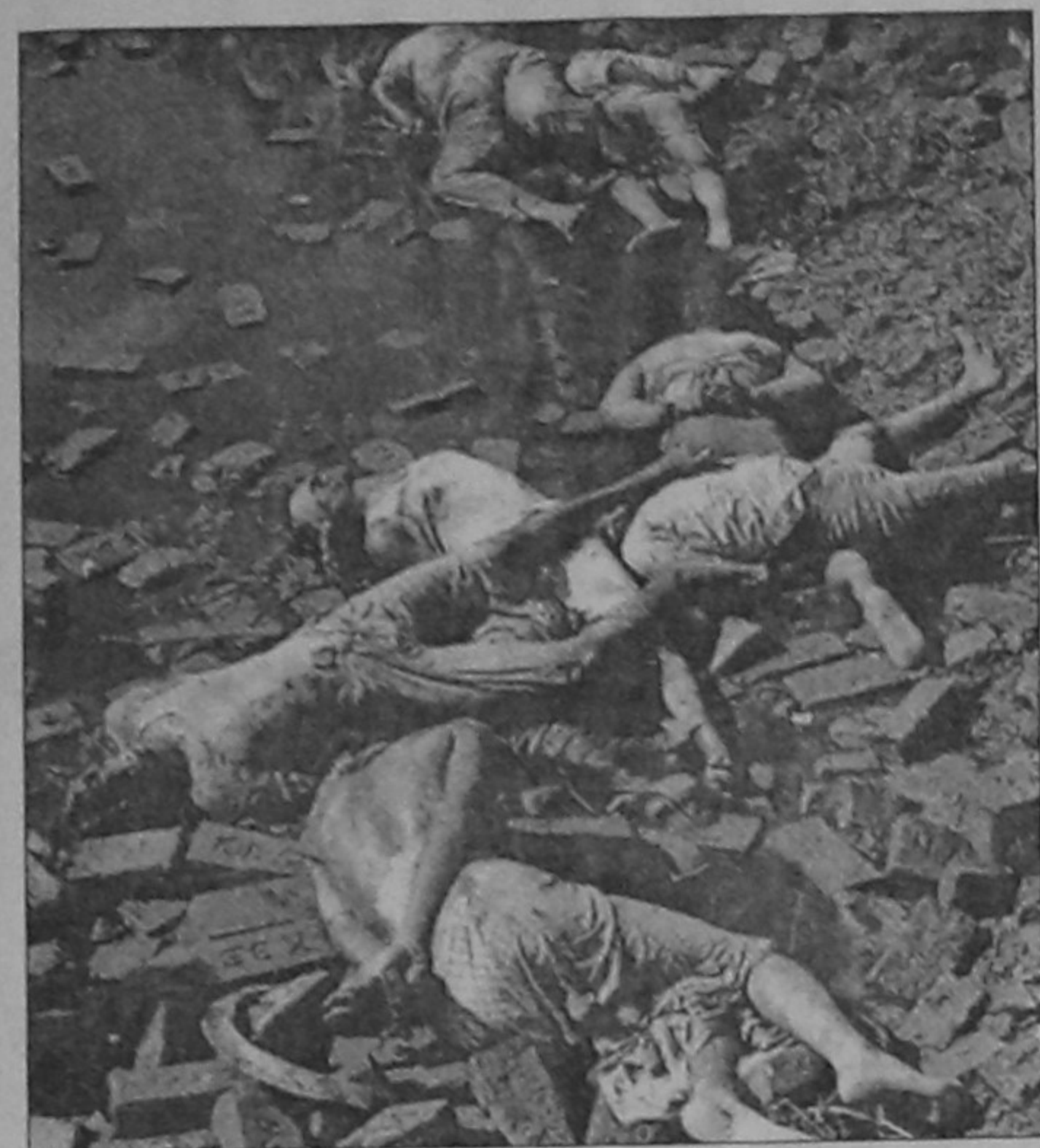


letters@thedailystar.net

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.

Disgraceful!



I was not born in 1971, but that doesn't mean that I cannot have any say in matters pertaining to our liberation war or cannot represent those who fought for our motherland. Bangladesh lost hundreds of thousands of lives in the liberation war in 1971, fighting the Pakistani Army. In losing so many lives, few of our own so-called Bangladeshis helped the Pakistani army whom we call raskars. However, they used to call themselves member of the Peace Committee where their manifesto was to provide help and support to the Pakistani army to capture the freedom fighters, rape their wives, mothers or sisters and take over the possession of their land, houses and other assets. I live in Australia, far away from Bangladesh, but my mind is always with my country. We always hear about the war criminals facing trials worldwide and getting the justice they deserve, unlike Bangladesh where it's a different picture. We reward our war criminals in many ways!

I felt so sorry for my beloved country when I read in the newspaper that the road in front of a jail had been named after someone who was a notorious raskar. After reading the news, I was shocked and my sixth sense is telling me this is very wrong. This man should have stayed in the jail, but instead of that we are naming the road in front of the jail after him.

This is not something new for Bangladesh. We saw raskars as government ministers using the national flag in their cars, the flag that they never wanted to exist in the first place. How shameful we are!

Murad Hossain
Canberra, Australia

2008 Olympics

We, Bangladeshi people, heartily congratulate the Beijing 2008 Olympic Organising Committee, for holding the "Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, which started on 8 August and ended on 24 August 2008, with a most attractive and colourful ceremony in the Bird's Nest in Beijing.

The modern Olympic Spirit is symbolized by the Olympic flag, featuring five interlaced Olympic rings at the Centre on a white background.

The Heads, the Prime Ministers, veteran sports men and women, famous singers and others joined in the opening and also the concluding ceremonies of the Olympic Games, as a symbol of ONE WORLD.

Mohammad Anwarul Quadir
Advocate and Journalist
Masterpara, Chakdev
Noagaon

The cave in Iraq

Ancient human beings used to live in caves. They had no knowledge and essential instruments to construct houses. But hilly caves, for them, were just like houses, which saved them from hot, cold, rain and wild animals. One hundred thousand years ago the human beings were a bit different!

Some years ago a group of scientists found a cave in the mountains of Iraq which had a history of human habitation from the rock age to the present. This is called "Shanidar Gufa". In this cave Kurd farmers live nowadays. It is a great discovery that human beings have been living here for one hundred thousand years!

Scientists were fortunate that the people who lived there were not fond of neat and clean living. They used to engrave their waste things in the caves. These things have been engraved one after another in piles. Therefore the scientists have dug the floor of the cave and become successful in finding out the history of human civilization.

The outermost layer tells about the present age from seven thousand years back. Pieces of soil utensils, stones, grinder of grains, bones of tamed animals show that the people of that time knew about cultivation and taming animals.

The second layer is supposed to be twelve thousand years old. This layer doesn't give any evidence of cultivation and taming animals. The third layer is supposed to be forty thousand years old. There was a difference of thirty thousand years between these two layers.

There was a trace of progress in human civilization at that time. At last the fourth layer of Shanidar Cave takes us one hundred thousand years back. It gives a glimpse of primary age of human race in ancient times on the basis of these evidences. There are some drawings of human beings found in the caves which are supposed to be twenty-five thousand years old. Who made these figures? How did light come in the dark caves? These mysteries are still unsolved.

But probably it can be said that these carvings were done by some unknown artists of the Stone Age.

Mohammad Rajja
Nepal Student Society, Dhaka

Poor students

After the results of the SSC exams were published, we saw some news-reports containing pictorial illustrations of a good number of brilliant students belonging to the extremely poor families in the national daily newspapers. Even after facing grinding poverty and having no facilities at all and remaining totally deprived, their excellent results cannot but surprise us.

Many of them used to work as

day-labourer putting their labour in the paddy-fields, some of them used to pull rickshaws, could not purchase new books, collected old and torn books from their classmates and friends. They used to take one meal a day, instead of three daily meals.

The children of well-off parents will be provided with all sorts of facilities to continue their studies properly. But the poorest students don't know whether they will be able to continue their studies. Who will look after them?

Under the circumstances, the departments concerned of the government and welfare oriented organisations should come forward to help them.

Md. Mizanur Rahman
Bhola

Two years lost!

The present political scenario in our country has turned out to be a good one for reasons more than one: i) The CTG is heading towards elections. ii) The major political parties are reforming their parties and going to sit with the CTG on election issues. iii) Two major leaders of the major parties are preparing to sit face to face, of course not with indignation, but with a view to reaching a harmonious co-existence politically and thus enhancing the mutual thinking for the welfare of the country.

Amid all this, one wonders over the point that we've lost or wasted two long years to shape or reshape a situation!

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

Unbearable load shedding

I live in Sonagazi upzila under Feni district. I am a student. But it is a matter of great regret that at night we get only one hour or at best two hours of electricity supply here, which causes serious problems for the students. This situation persists during daytime also. We can't say or do anything.

The matter deserves a closer look.
Pabel Sonagazi

Be discreet

We congratulate our caretaker government, the Election Commission and all concerned on the wise, conciliatory and unanimous decision that the parliamentary election will be held before upzila election consistent with the demand of our two major political parties -- the Awami League and the BNP -- and also host of other political parties.

In the past we made many mistakes. We have done inexplicable damage to our country and the sufferings of our people know no bounds.

We all must take lessons from our past mistakes, greed, braggadocio and vengeful activities, rectify ourselves, follow a pristine and serene path and save our country and people from ruin.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh envisages and guarantees equal rights to all citizens of Bangladesh, protection of right to life and personal liberty, democracy and human rights, freedom of thought, conscience and of speech, protection in respect of trial and punishment and what not?

It is time for action and not contemplation. Would Sk. Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia kindly realise the gravity of the situation and make the noble mission of Mr. Rafiqul Huq a success?

OH Kabir
Dhaka

Low birth weight

The health situation of children in our country characterises that of a developing country. More than 1 (one) out of every 3 (three) children or 1.03 million babies each year are born with low birth weight according to UNICEF. The survey reveals that low birth weight is a major public health concern in Bangladesh. Children born with low birth weight are likely to suffer developmental impairment and have risk of illness and premature death.

Low birth weight is a problem that has to be attended with due seriousness.

Md Alamgir Hossain
BA (Hons) in English
Narayanganj

Andrew Jameson's remarks

The letter "Parochial politics" by Andrew Jameson from London, UK published on 22 September 2008 has drawn my attention. I am really astonished how he had been frustrated seeing developments in our Bangladeshi politics. Is he a Bangladeshi national? I think certainly not. He may be the citizen of a developed country like the UK.

Till now, Britain's collaboration with the USA is killing millions of innocent civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq in the name of cleansing the Taleban activists. In Bangladesh, people face natural calamities like river erosions, floods, cyclones, climate changes, drought etc that occur due to global warming. Ecologists say the developed countries are responsible for global warming. Nevertheless, Britain ruled over and exploited our country for about two hundred years and left it with skin and bone only. We became independent in 1971. But after 38 years of our liberation, we are not free from financial control -- "a ghost ruler" like the WB, IMF and other donor agencies which are always imposing various plans and policies on us. There is a saying in our country, "Those who deserve criticism, should not criticise others." Have a look at the mirror first!

MZ Haider
Ghorasal, Narsingdi

A conspiracy against our cricket?

Why are the Bangladeshi cricketers behaving the way they are? Returns are important in life. There cannot be one-sided love. A big politician's love for his party ideology inspires the activists of that party. The big politician is dedicated to the party. But he becomes a rebel when he is not properly evaluated, does not get nomination for election, or is left out of the cabinet. The same thing might have happened to the country's cricketers.

Shahriar Nafees might feel that his past contribution has been forgotten. He might feel neglected by the cricket board and unhappy with the experiments of the new coach. It can be painful for a player like Shahriar Nafees. The other cases seem rather intriguing. An injured Aftab is waiting to be in the best 11 for the next tour. He cannot be termed a rebel. Why then did he take the suicidal decision to retire? His decision is baffling when one comes to know that he earned more than Tk. 10 million in the last three years. Why then did he send the letter to the BCB seeking retirement? Is he greedy? Or is he a victim of an ominous scheme for destroying the Bangladeshi cricket?

My personal observation is only for Nafees and Aftab, the top payers of Bangladesh cricket. But Dhiman Gosh is just learning cricket. At this stage, his decision may kill his career. Basically, the plot of mass retirement is a lesson for the BCB. The mass retirement is an alarm bell for future handling of players.

One cannot be blamed for playing cricket for money. But it should not take place at the cost of national cricket structure and image.

Now the foremost thing is to find out right away how and why all this, could happen? Who is the godfather behind this treacherous act? Is there any conspiracy to destroy Bangladesh's budding cricket?

We need to enact strict sports law like Pakistan immediately, so that we do not have to see a repeat of it.

Mohammad Shahidul
A tourism worker

Better resource management needed

We are the inhabitants of a developing country, whose natural resources are very limited. Due to the growing population and fast dwindling land resources, we are facing serious problems. The only open source to meet our increasing demand is the least investigated Bay of Bengal. Most of the islands and maritime nations are largely

Approved textbooks

Sometime back in the "The Star Campus", The Daily Star published an article on the "State of Science Education in Bangladesh: Current Status and Future Trends." The material for this write-up was generated from a Round Table Conference jointly organised by The Daily Star and the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences. While agreeing with most of the viewpoints expressed in that conference by the eminent scientists of the country, I will focus on one major factor; i.e., lack of good textbooks that, in my opinion is one of the reasons why the students are gradually losing interest in science. To illustrate my point I will discuss about one textbook that I came across the other day. The name of the book is: "Paribesh Parichiti Bigyan," prescribed for Class V by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

Since I am basically a biologist, being a Botany teacher in Dhaka University, I read with a good deal of interest, the first two chapters of the book, namely, Chapter I and II which begin from page 1 through 17. The two chapters contain 11 pictures. None of the pictures were correctly drawn without any regard to the proportions of different parts of the plant body. For instance, in fig 1, the buds have been shown to be much larger than the leaves. A Cycas plant looks like a coconut tree; a fern plant closely resembles a flowering herb. Marigold, jasmine, gardenia cannot be recognized by their drawings. They look like a combination of a lotus and a flower of similar shape combined. The rootless moss plant has been shown to have true roots and in size shown much smaller than a regular fern plant. The picture does not create that impression in the mind a student about a fern plant vis-à-vis a

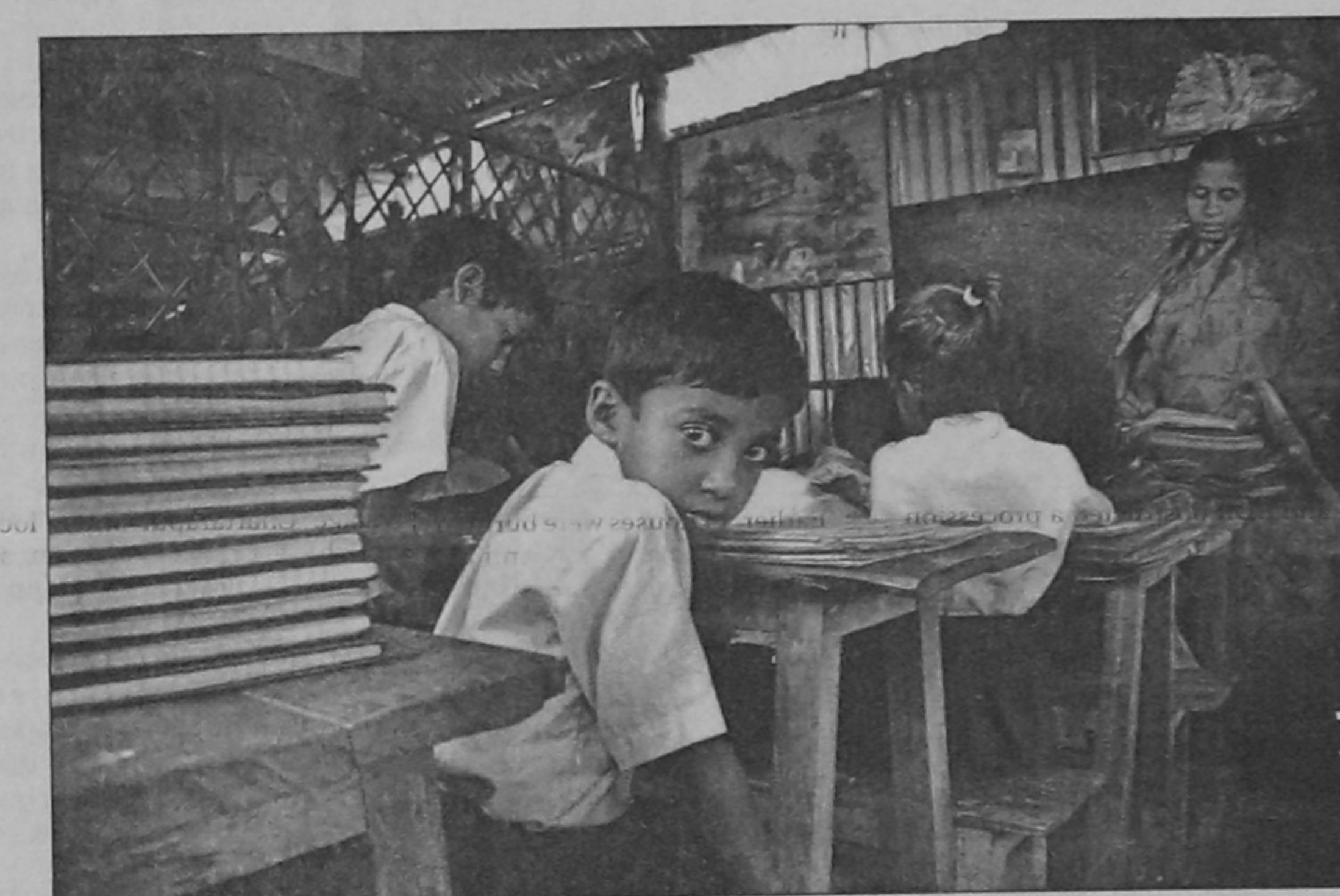
tested with students and revised in the light of feedback from the students and reviewers alike.

My disappointment prompted me to contact the Chairman of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board. He listened to me carefully over the telephone. To verify what I was saying he took out the specific book and opened the pages containing the figures I was referring to. He immediately realized the gravity of the situation and assured me that he would soon embark upon a project on publishing accurately illustrated well-written textbooks for which he said adequate funding would be available.

Our approach toward implementing such a project within a minimum possible time will have to be radically different from the current government procedure. Whether non-resident Bangladeshis or local experts, a number of them need to be hired with the following terms: a) with the help of a graphic artist, two of the team members would prepare an illustrated draft of each chapter prescribed in the syllabus, b) review them in pre-determined periodic sessions with a minimum of three experts, c) approve the final draft on individual chapters, d) submit the final draft to the copy-editor.

Such an academic team of experts need to have the support of an efficient secretarial staff with 24 hours Internet connectivity not interrupted by load shedding.

If the Textbook Board wants to publish attractive textbooks, the present system of getting them printed through tenders cannot



moss plant. The picture about grafting/cloning does not give a true idea about "kolom". It's at best an example of vegetable multiplication.

Attractive Textbooks are the NEED of the day. Early in the 1960's, some American top educationists realized that the textbooks followed in high schools were out of date in view of the rapid progress and advancements in every branch of science: mathematics, chemistry, physics, and biology. In order to face that challenge, they recruited top class scientists in the above disciplines and assigned them the task of writing three versions of textbooks: Green, Yellow and Blue. Among other disciplines, the outcome of such an endeavour was the publication of three textbooks in biology: Biological Science: Molecules to Man (1963), Biological Science: An Inquiry into Life (1963), High School Biology (1963). Although written with a different emphasis, the three versions were all aimed at emphasizing the importance of inquiry to both classroom learning and scientific research. All the three textbooks were released in 1963 as hardcover after being

be followed. The necessary rule governing printing may have to be relaxed.

In order that the authors can pay undivided attention without being interrupted by any kind of diversion, they may be put up in a self-contained resort away from the city so that they can finish their assignment within the allotted time, say three months. A number of such resorts are now available on rent. About the cost of such textbooks, a part of may be subsidized by the Ministry of Education, GOB.

I am not in favour of hiring foreign experts not familiar with our flora, fauna and educational environment. In the past hiring of foreign experts for this purpose did not produce any fruitful results.

What I have suggested is nothing new. It is the standard practice in many countries where quality and accurate educational material have been delivered to the students within minimum possible time.

A. S. Islam
Retired Professor of Botany, DU
Gulshan, Dhaka

Outdated traffic system

Everybody living in Bangladesh faces traffic jam throughout the day and in almost every place. Although we have reached 21st century where technology is progressing everyday and new innovation has captured the whole world, but Bangladesh is nowhere in this race.

Our traffic system has to be modernised to cope with the needs of our times.

Md. Mahbur Rahman
European Standard School
Dhanmondi, Dhaka



Political prisoners?

Both the big parties are demanding release of all "raj bandis" before election i.e. the leaders belonging to those parties who were arrested and charge-sheeted for corruption, extortion crimes like murders, helping murderers from prosecution, siphoning of state wealth to foreign banks etc. If those arrestees are glorified as "raj bandis" meaning "political prisoners" then what should we name others who are not members of any political party but involved in the same kind of activities like our so-called "raj bandis"? I think, our writers should find some new definitions exclusively for the latter to differentiate with the former.

I am not concerned what we call or name these "raj bandis", but we are very much afraid of them and do not want them back any more because the last 23 months is not a very long time and our memory is not that short that we have not forgotten what they had done in the pre-one-eleven era. We, especially the people of low income group, were the sufferers during those days. Even our fellow small traders like paan and tea stall owners had to share their day's sale proceeds with police, local mastans and followers of those big "raj bandis" on a regular basis.

Now they can go home at the end of the day with whatever money they could make. So, in the last few months of this CTG regime the people of low income group were happy, in spite of the huge price hike. Their only consolation was that they were not being subjected to harassment by goons of political parties.

I believe the people of this group do not bother much about politics. They want security, and free workplaces to earn their livelihood. The wholesale release of all "raj bandis" has, in fact, created fears in their minds like, what will happen if the same people return and re-occupy the places where they were before 1/11.

Reform or no reform, election or no-election, the majority of the people, who earn and live marginally, want certain assurances from both the present CTG or the political parties who are likely to come back. They want only one thing "no more pre-one-eleven", no more extortion, intimidation etc. If the same situation arises they will never be benefited from 1/11.

Will the politicians give us some hope before they approach for votes again?
Shafiqul Islam
NY, US