



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.

Political developments

I think we had quite a number of news reports on the prospect of the election to be held in December 2008. I put them down as I consider them to be very disturbing to get a definite answer whether the election is going to be held on Dec 18 as announced. These are:

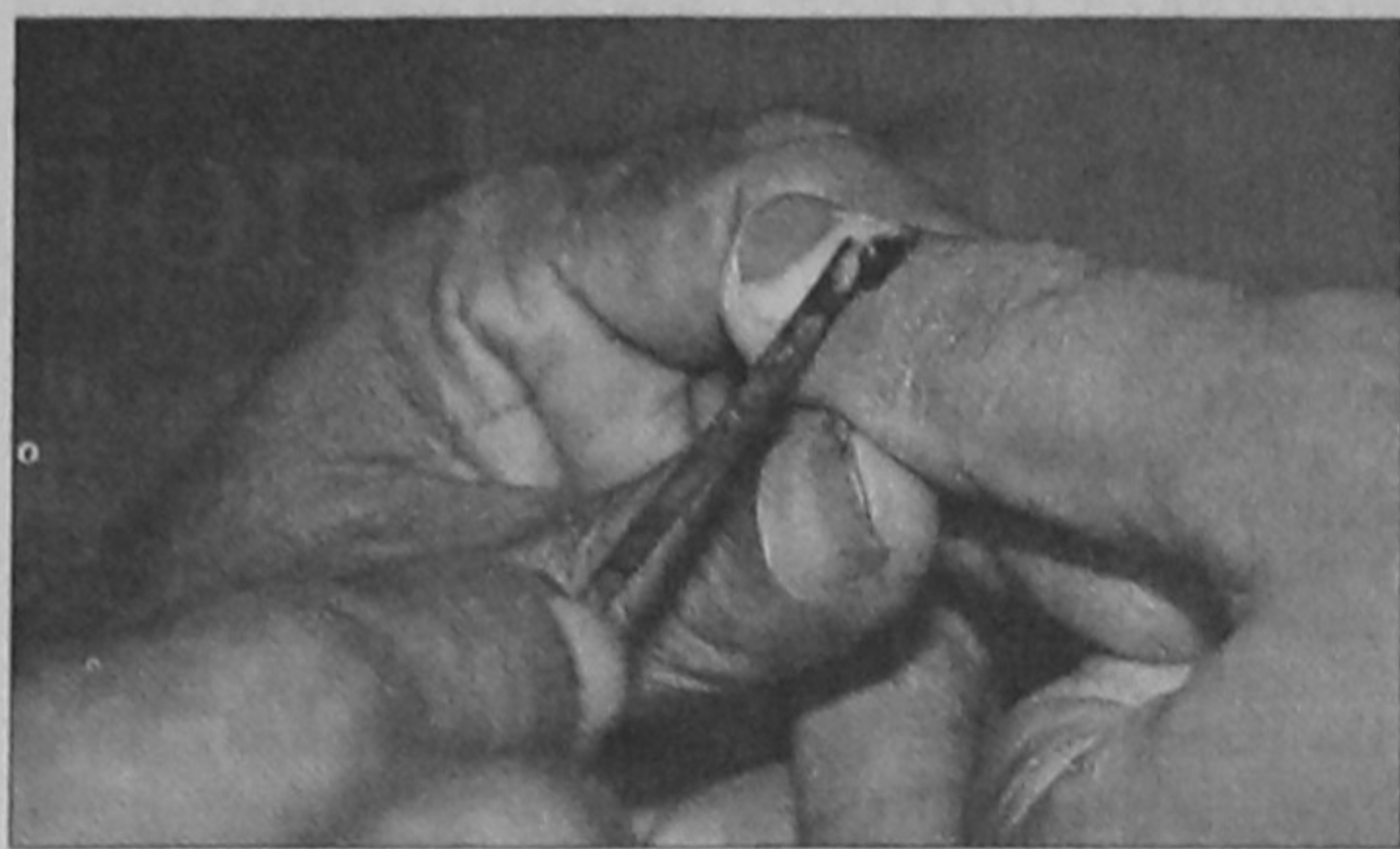
a. One election commissioner has remarked in a press briefing that the "Election Commission would not be responsible if the election is delayed or postponed due to court verdict or otherwise on the pending writ of the delimitation issue". This sounds like abandoning your beloved child as you cannot afford to take care!

My humble question to the Commission is: Why have you not dared to delimit the upazila boundary which has much more diversified and unequal demographic distribution? You people want the upazila election at the cost of the general election which is the government's priority and not that of the political parties and of the people.

b. A foreign diplomat has

expressed the fear that the security situation is deteriorating as election dates are approaching. The acting secretary general of the AL is asking for better security of their leader now abroad for treatment.

My question to them is: do



you think that the state of emergency should be continued till the elections are over and a new government takes over? How a free and fair election can be held under a state of emergency?

c. The secretary general of the BNP is claiming that a

level playing field has not yet been created, and some major issues on RPO are still not discussed with them and agreed to. The uncertainty of election is present here also.

d. The spokesperson of the government has just returned from his foreign

the government might act as a facilitator. People may smell lot uncertainties in it.

e. In the meantime, the CA has reiterated in a New York reception meeting his plan to hold election as announced.

f. A very interesting talk show was aired by the Channel-i where they invited a former secretary to the government, known for his outspoken character and tough bureaucratic behaviour. The former secretary expressed his scepticism about the election. His view on the election arrangements, general election and upazila election, deserves serious consideration. He has given very brief but convincing reasons why the sequencing of election is wrong from the administrative point of view.

My comment is: if the government does not listen to these new developments as mentioned above, that would only demonstrate their careless approach.

Reader
One-mail

Time to act

Since its birth in 1971 Bangladesh has passed through many a tumultuous year to reach today's stage where we are set to see a "reasonably free and fair" election. I say this because the main data from which the voters exercise their right of franchise—the voter list—is for the first time a "genuine" one. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the personnel of the armed forces and the Election Commission and their focused approach.

If we recall, in 1970, the per capita income of Bangladesh and Korea was at par, down the road after a gap of 38 years the per capita income of Bangladesh rose but not 20,000 times as that of Korea, which now ranks as a developed country. This big disparity is mainly attributed to the activities of the politicians which obviously is credible but the general public (us) should also be blamed for such a state of affairs.

It is a common perception that to be a developed country it needs time but this is not correct as we can see from the examples of Egypt and India which are more

than 2,000 years old. Countries like Canada, Australia and New Zealand are only 150 years old and can boast to be rich and developed. The other perception of a developed country is to have available natural resources which could be exploited; this again is also another fallacy—if we look at Japan which has only a tiny piece of land with mountainous demography which is not suitable for any kind of use like agriculture but yet it is the second strongest economy in the world the way they achieved that was being ingenious about methods of manufacturing where they imported raw materials and exported top quality manufactured goods. The other example is Switzerland where they don't grow cocoa but are the best chocolate manufacturers and exporters.

Moving on to the quality of human resources we notice that the executives from developed countries who interact with their counterparts coming from non developed/poor countries do not have significant intellectual difference and race and colour are also not a factor as has been illustrated by the millions of immigrants who

have migrated and enriched their host countries with wealth by serving in those countries—this then brings us to the fundamental question of "What is the difference then?"

The difference is the ATTITUDE of the people, framed along the years by education and culture. If we analyse the behaviour of the people in rich and developed countries we find that the great majority follow the following principles in their lives:

1. Ethics as a basic principle.
2. Integrity.
3. Patriotism.
4. Respectability.
5. Respect for the law/rules framed by the state.
6. Respect for the rights of the other citizens.

In Bangladesh and similar under-developed countries only a minority follows the above principles in their daily lives and the overall impact is therefore very negligible. Hence, we are still struggling as an under developed country. So, if we are patriotic and love our country let us reflect about this and take a solemn oath to CHANGE AND ACT.
Amanullah, *One-mail*

The ICL and BCB response

Bangladesh cricket has already absorbed a shock after the loss of 14 players.

Before going to ICL, the 14 cricketers or others who really still opt for playing for Bangladesh should have discussed the proposal of ICL with BCB. But they didn't. There is a sign of lack of patriotism.

On the contrary, the BCB should not have taken such a punitive action when ICL is still not banned by ICC & other cricket boards. BCCI banned it for its own interest.

I think BCB did not want to displease BCCI by allowing those players to play in ICL.

Lastly, I hope both sides will be able to rectify their mistakes and reach an understanding for the benefit of cricket.
Md. Nurul Alam Shuvo
Dept. of Accounting & Information Systems
Faculty of Business Studies
University of Dhaka

A letter to mayor

This is my first letter to the Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation, Mr. Sadeque Hossain Khoka, also a Member of Parliament, to draw his kind attention to the terrible traffic congestion from Airport station to Rajlaxmi complex. I request the Mayor to take immediate steps to relieve the people from a daily traffic congestion during daytime, especially on the way to office, and while returning from office from 8:00am to 2:30pm.

Would you please look into the matter?
Tommy Anwar
Chairman
Inspiration Coaching Centre

"Art" reflecting a decaying society

A disgustingly offensive statue, labelled as a work of art, displayed in a Gateshead gallery, is indicative of the moral decay of Secular Britain, and its inability to create a cohesive society that can accommodate people of any religious faith. It is sufficient to say that any Muslim who has stumbled across the description or image of it could not but be hurt, offended and outraged.

Some Christians are outraged. Others have come to accept the insult of their faith as a fact of life, and turn a blind eye.

Some celebrate the freedoms in society that allow these types of attacks. One Christian woman is currently prosecuting the gallery for displaying the offensive image, in what may be a good intention. Yet the fact is that the system in Britain—indeed in any secular society—will never prevent such works from being shown. The freedom to provocatively insult that which is sacred to others, to debase the pure and good, is a right in secular societies. If societies in the Muslim countries adopt these standards and values, this is the result people should expect.

It should not surprise people that society in the west has become so decayed and immoral that antisocial behaviour and disrespect are rife. Britain is predominantly a Christian country. There are huge numbers of Muslims who look up to the Prophet Issa (Jesus) as one of the greatest humans that ever lived. Even atheists who look at the biblical teachings of Christianity, changed and altered over the centuries, view them with some respect. So the question emerges: why would anyone take something that is widely regarded as good and pure to debase and denigrate it? That is the action of vandals and hooligans. Yet, this society celebrates such vandalism and hooliganism as art. Why, then, is it surprised that vandalism and hooliganism, antisocial and disrespectful behaviour, are now endemic in Britain.

Moreover, millions are spent and pages are written about Community Cohesion, and about the bonds that should hold a diverse society together. How does anyone expect a society to remain cohesive if the secular liberals insist on using their right of freedom under the law to insult and offend others? If the feelings of Christian believers are viewed as worthless, what should we expect for the feelings of Muslim believers in Britain and Europe?

It is often asked if art is supposed to reflect life, or life reflect art. The world should look at Britain this week, and know that this particular work of "art" speaks volumes for the decayed values of society and the diseased mind of such "artists". We pray Allah protects societies in Muslim countries from slipping down this dangerous road.
Muhammad Bakhtiyar
One-mail

American presidential election

It is amazing how the American election has gripped the attention of the people of Bangladesh. Leading newspapers are carrying news, views, and observations about the possible outcome of the election. People are discussing about it everywhere. They get up early to watch the programmes, which are being telecast live on CNN. It is almost like the advertisement on the CNN, "DO NOT DISTURB, WATCHING CNN".

This is an unfair tactic, which McCain has adopted and we hope Americans will not be deceived by it.
Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Overseas education

In the last four-five years, the number of the consultancy firms for overseas study has increased significantly in the country. But most of them can often be deceptive. What is commonly seen is that at first they compel students to open a file charging a considerable amount of money, which is one kind of cheating. They also manage fake sponsorship for the students which fails to provide support. In some cases, it is revealed that the full amount of the tuition fees is not paid to the foreign institutes. Consequently, students face great difficulty abroad. They have to repay the unpaid amount for their courses.

So, it is suggested that the interested students gather the necessary information before accepting any offer.
S.M. Rumen
Invigilator, Exams Services
British Council, Bangladesh, Ctg.

Why ban cricketers?

OK, some Bangladeshi players have joined ICL for money. No crime has been committed as far as I can see. What would be so sinful if these players can earn some money by doing things that they do best.

The question is who are these Brahmins who can banish these players for life? Who has given the cricket authorities the sweeping powers? Obviously, there is an Indian hand (Indian Cricket Board), which is working behind the scene to keep the monopoly alive. It hates competition.

I do not think these ICL bound players are any less patriotic than our flag carrying officials or national players. Let the players have their free will to choose as you would too!
Dev Saha
Boston University
Boston

National Health Policy

A new version of National Health Policy has been published and is available on website. It contains many elements that can introduce several good things in the health sector. It has a proposal for reactivating Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council. Actually the Medical Council of all the civilised countries controls health services much more than the government does. But the irony is that about fifty percent of the doctors serving in government and non government organisations are not registered. The proposed policy also contains the element to control the quality of drugs, that may go against some manufacturers. Actually the quality of drugs produced in the country still requires control. It has one unique element to strengthen the referral system and also manpower development.

Manpower development is very essential in health service.

Dr. Md. Aminul Islam
Auckland
New Zealand

Failed cricket?

Since I have expressed my feeling about the "Parade of failure" by our national cricket team under the leadership of Ashraf, a lot of events have occurred in our failed cricket. The ICL issue, action of the board, comments of the cricket lovers in the media, and today we had the opportunity to listen to our captain in his usual style. He seems to have forgotten that he had the responsibility to inform the board and the countryman immediately after he had received a very lucrative offer from the ICL which he turned down in the national interest. What a stunt to justify his integrity when his captaincy should be at stake. I think he is suffering from moral crisis which demonstrates

that he should not take the responsibility of leading the national team. He is perhaps waiting to hear what he needs to do now.

My suggestion would be to give up the argument to continue with the captaincy, and vacate the position to a new leader to take over and give a fresh effort to put cricket back in the field from the political manoeuvring of the officials and push and pull of the powerful lobbyist in the captaincy selection. The present captain should try to regain his record as a dependable run getter to inspire his teammates instead of guiding the team which seems to affect his batting ability.

The selectors should relieve him of the task of captaincy at least temporarily and then watch how he does as a batsman being relieved of the captaincy. A lot of high profile international cricketers have gone through this physiological trail to improve their performance in their specialized field. I am also sceptical about the credibility of Ashraf along his team mates. We are already in the midst of a crisis, why not try some good alternative. There is nothing to lose!

Acitizen
One-mail

CTG

A few days back a report entitled "Hydra raises head again" made me a little frightened about the destiny of this crippled Bangladesh. Despite big changes brought about by the CTG in different sectors and launching of a drive against terrorists and criminals, why should society still limp?

I earnestly request the CTG to be bold and straightforward.
Ariful Islam Robin
Dept. of Law
South East University

Save trees

Deforestation is a word that is understood all over Bangladesh. We, the people of Madaripur, have no familiarity with deforestation for lack of forests in this area.

However I was shocked when I came to know that our district administration had declared that they wanted to cut the precious trees for increasing road width.

We must show greater sensitivity to the issue.
Jony Khan
Department of Business Administration
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet



Population boom



The letter "Population boom" written by Engineer Shafi Ahmed was published on 22 September '08. It correctly emphasised the successful family planning programme to limit the size of the population. Please refer to Gen Moeen U Ahmed's recent article on Food Security in the country where he touched on the issue of population boom and consequent problems. I think this issue is very important and the nation should consider it seriously.

Definitely, this is the "number one" problem of our country. Due to continuous political crisis, our nation could not think about this issue seriously, I mean both the government and the opposition failed to do something positive to limit the population boom, which creates a lot of problems in Bangladesh, like unbearable

traffic jam, environment pollution, food adulteration, public health problem, food shortage, poverty - what not! And the problems are getting worse day by day.

I know international development communities/donors put a lot of money for containing the population boom and improving the family health situation, especially among the poor segments of people since independence of Bangladesh, particularly after the late seventies. However, during the last eight years, the focus has been a bit diluted. We have many success stories in the health and population sector—but still the absolute number of population is growing at a faster rate compared to the resources, time and energy and efforts given. This is because there is no clear and consistent national strategy on health and

population control. It's focus changes due to change of the party in power. Sometimes a reverse policy is adopted by the new govt (just to oppose the previous government's policy). As a result, our success has been limited.

Although we have a lot of Bangladeshi experts in the health and population sector, but we could not utilise their knowledge and wisdom due to political rivalry. Now the opportunity has come to the CTG to take the initiative and do something better for the nation, which I believe will be accepted by all because this is a non-controversial (non-political too) national issue. So everybody will sincerely contribute to the formulation of an effective and result-oriented national policy.
Nikhil Datta
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Automobile menace

"Why is it that men and women, normally courteous and considerate...should all of a sudden revert to selfish, snarling savages the minute they get behind the wheel of an automobile?"—Miller McClintock.

Free parking is a local benefit or cure that harms the whole city.

Free parking increases the demand for cars, and more cars increase traffic congestion, air pollution, and energy consumption. More traffic congestion in turn spurs the search for more local remedies, such as street widening, more freeways, and even higher parking requirements. Off-street parking requirements quietly create citywide problems that are far worse than the local ones they are meant to solve.

The list of problems caused by free and under priced parking is long:

Car dependency: Free parking encourages people to drive more, rather than seek alternatives.

Discouragement of environmentally-friendly transport: People who own cars are less likely to walk short distances, since there is no economic penalty for driving; the increased cars in the street make walking and bicycling more unpleasant, and clog the roads used by buses, thus making bus service slower.

Traffic congestion: Encouragement

of driving simply increases traffic congestion, as more people buy cars and use them for all trips, even very short ones.

Energy waste: More cars, and reliance on them even for short trips and solo travel, wastes fuel.

Accidents: Cars parked in the street cause accidents when cyclists hit an opening car door.

Air pollution: An increase in car traffic means an increase in air pollution, given the cumulative effect of each polluting vehicle.

Global climate change: An increase in air pollution contributes to global climate change. Vehicle emissions are already the main contributor; we need to discourage, not encourage, travel by motorized vehicles.

Increased housing prices: Since the price of parking is included in the price of homes, homes become more expensive.

Unjust subsidies for cars: Only a few people drive, but everyone pays.

Social inequity: When the poor and middle class subsidize the rich, social inequity increases; social inequity in turn leads to poor health and increased crime.

Distorted choices in transportation investment: A focus on providing infrastructure for cars, not people,

leads to investment in roads and parking rather than mass transit, NMT, or affordable housing and liveable cities.

Degradation of the environment: More space for cars means less land available for planting trees and for other green spaces.

Increase in impervious surface area: Parking lots, and increased street surfaces due to the need to provide more road space for the increased number of cars, means that more of the city is paved over, leading to greater prob-

lems of storm water run-off.

Reduction in land values: Parking is probably the least profitable of land uses; more parking means less value of the land, since virtually any other use would bring in more money.

In some cases, zoning requirements for parking can mean that older buildings that fail to provide adequate parking cannot be converted into new uses. This is one main cause of urban degradation in the US.

Farjana Afrin, Mirpur, Dhaka

