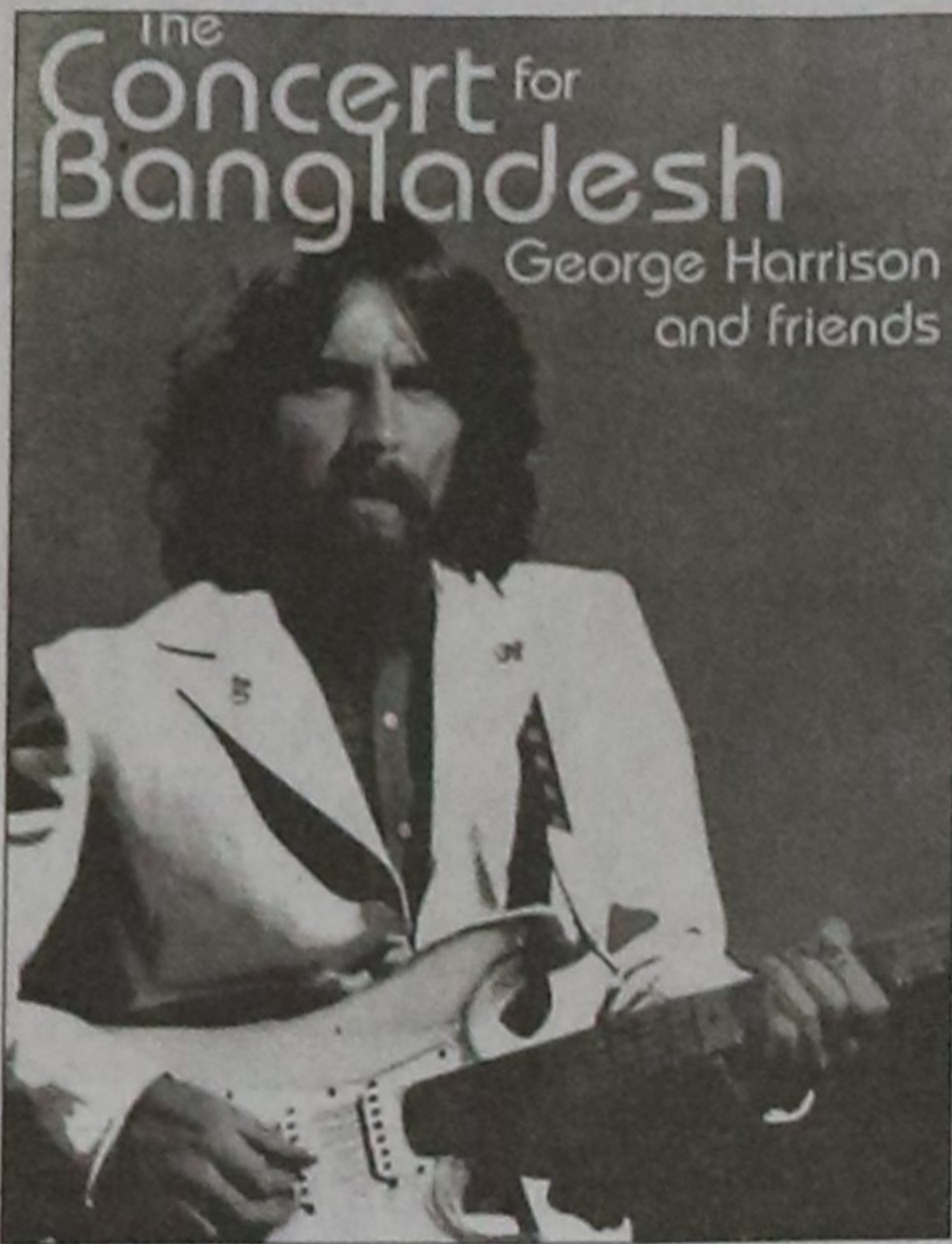


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Concert for Bangladesh



"A friend came to me, with sadness in his eyes, told me that he wanted help before his country dies, although I couldn't feel the pain, I knew I had to try, now I am asking all of you, help us save some lives. Bangladesh,"

Bangladesh where so many people are dying fast." These are the words of George Harrison, also known as the "shy Beatle", a popular British guitarist, singer and songwriter, whose contribution to the Bangladesh War of Liberation can not be denied. In 1971, when George Harrison was approached by his friend the great Ravi Shankar for help for flood and war ravaged Bangladesh, the concept of superstar concert benefit didn't exist. But Harrison wanted to help, and he had more than a few superstar friends he could call upon. The result was the Great Concert for Bangladesh that not only focused worldwide attention on the plight of the small South Asian nation, it also became the model for large scale big name benefits that are common today.

Since we now have a democratic government in Bangladesh, and the government is trying to re-write the correct history of the war of independence, I would request the government and the ministry of education and cultural affairs to include George Harrison's name as a contributor towards our war of independence.

There should be a formal recognition given by the government to George Harrison for the concert. The young and future Bangladeshis should not be deprived of the right to know about the correct history and the contributors behind our war of liberation.

Soheil Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Textbook crisis

It is that time of year when students in secondary schools should be walking into classes with new textbooks in hand. Unfortunately, as much as fifty percent of them simply cannot do that because the number of books printed so far is far short of the requirement. In other words, it is the same old problem, which comes up on an annual basis, but it has come about in a much aggravated form this year. The authorities are now saying that those students who do not have textbooks need to wait for two or three months. I would like to request to the ministry, NCTB and the printers to put their heads together to rework the schedule for additional printing, and deliver the textbook on an urgent basis.

Himel Aziz
Dept. of Business Administration
Shahjalal University

Phulbari election and open pit mining

In an editorial of 25th January a local English daily stated that the Phulbari election result reflects the opinion of the people against open pit mining. It actually reflects the clash between self-interest and national interest. It also reflects that popular views aired by leaders to build their vote bank override all national, strategic and economic interests.

Will the Phulbari people therefore prefer an underground mine like Barapukuria? Or do they want the coal to lie where it is, unexplored, while we go on importing our fuel requirements?

If underground mining is their choice, then we can refer to the first page report published in your January 18th issue. In that report, it was stated that about 4.2 square kilometre near the underground mine site will subside up to two meters (over six feet) and a big lake will be created!

Land subsidence is a natural consequence of underground mining; however the matter was omitted in the planning and approval of the mining project in early nineties! Because of this deliberate (?) omission, no financial allocation was made for compensating the people for loss of their land and property, who would be affected by the sudden subsidence of topsoil so long as the mining continues underground. However, the location, size and intensity of destruction, because of land subsiding without warning, cannot however be forecast accurately.

These subsidence being sudden and unannounced, the loss of land, household and property is that much more damaging, and the sudden need for rehabilitation increases the misery and also physical and mental anguish for the sufferers. It is believed that many people have been reduced to poverty and have become landless because of this in Phulbari.

In stark contrast, for open cast mining, the mine area can be clearly demarcated in advance, and the people provided alternative land or

compensated even before mining starts, in a planned manner. Once the coal is extracted the pit can be refilled by the soil burden left over from the excavation, and the pit redeveloped and made available for habitation. There is no danger of sudden subsidy and loss of land and property.

I am sure if this is properly explained to the people of the locality in a clear manner, and the government publicly declares its intention to have planned relocation programme rather than sudden misery and helplessness, I believe the people will then appreciate the advantage of open cast mining. I would request the government to pass this programme of rehabilitation and compensation in the Jatiyo Sangsad, and then start open pit coal mining in Phulbari which is needed to reduce our dependence on imported fuel. This proposal deserves top priority for declaring the policy and implementing the open cast mining of coal which is far more cost effective than underground mining.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Baitul Mukarram incident

The third round of mishaps in the form of shoe throwing inside our national mosque is hurting its sanctity. It is the place where Muslims offer their prayer; it is thus a place where the devotees express their gratitude to the Almighty Allah through their prayers. This needs complete harmony, peace, quietness and tranquillity of mind, free from all forms of meanness and prejudices. Perturbing is the fact that some people inside the God's House are tarnishing the sacredness of the place. Such appalling acts not only pollute the mosque but also affect the minds of people who believe in the faith. The government should also act quickly to put a stop to this.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

It is a matter of regret to see pictures of people jostling and throwing shoes inside the Baitul Mukarram Mosque on the pages of national dailies. We should remember that creating hue and cry in the mosque denigrates the sanctity of the mosque deserve punishments in the eyes of Islam. It is, above all, tarnishing the image of the religion. We appeal to the government to take necessary steps against both the parties- pro and anti- Khatib parties. We don't want to see the same picture again in the newspapers on the next weekend. A new Khatib with a transparent image should be appointed.

Kamal
One-mail

What happened the last three weeks in Baitul Mukarram, the national mosque of Bangladesh, is very pathetic. This clash should not linger any more. The government should take immediate steps to stop this type of incident.

Md. Mahfuzur Rahman Manik
IER, Dhaka University

Campus clashes

To keep my promise to my two children I took them to Jahangirnagar University on Jan 16 to show them winter birds. Getting down from the bus we took a rickshaw. "This is the university campus where you will study," I told my children, showing them the large campus.

They looked around with great interest! My three-year old daughter said she too wanted such a campus to study in. However, within minutes of our ride on the rickshaw we heard people shouting. The first impression was that there might be a football match going on! "These 'dhawa-paltadhawa' among two groups of students have been going on for the last three days," our rickshaw puller said.

Then it was my turn to explain to my children what these clashes among students were and why they do so! All their questions were centred on why such an unsafe place would be their educational institution?

"We will not be hurt," the rickshaw puller assured! My wife got angry with me - why such a "foolish step" I have taken to take my children there! We stopped by the lake and found a small number of birds there. Even the chirping of the birds could not submerge the din of the ongoing clash among the students. From the other side of the lake we got glimpses of the chase! We didn't risk staying there any longer and left. Before that, my heart was filled with hope as three students of the university came up with their small calendar to sell to raise money for their cultural event. Their mild approach impressed me!

Amio James Ascension
Dhaka

It is a common phenomenon to see the fighting over taking of possession of different halls of public universities by the student wing of the ruling party. It is like "Char Dakhol." With sticks and other arms the so-called students attack their "enemies" to drive them out of the halls. These sights are visible after every transfer of power.

Actually, these acts are related not only to politics, but also to economics, as the halls bigwigs can earn huge amount of money investing their power. The ruling party appoints their supporters as the VCs and other important posts. I suggest that, as the universities are the highest seat of learning, all posts including the VCs should be filled in with the non-partisan teachers so that all students can get unbiased behaviour from them.

The existing regulation should be reframed to cut the power of the ruling party to recruit their followers. We want a good environment for learning we do not anymore want violence, killing, hijacking, tendering in the universities.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Digital Bangladesh

Both manifestos submitted by the two parties, AL and BNP, emit more of a jocular tone. AL, who overwhelming defeated its opposition in the ninth parliamentary election, have sworn to present the nation a 'digital Bangladesh'. This is a bit ambiguous representation that we observe in many cases. As large percentage of our population is illiterate and cannot be expected to understand the meaning of the word 'digit', so it is very ridiculous to present us the so-called Digital Bangladesh.

Apart from the uninformed, even scholars are unable to find the point behind this ambiguous phrase. According to OXFORD DICTIONARY the word 'digital' expresses a group of meanings. 'Displaying readout in digital form', 'pertaining to numerical analysis', 'available in electronic form', are some of the meanings of the word. In order to gallop towards the ultimate goal the present government should be astute enough to move through a well planned way.

To build a Digital Bangladesh the government must provide electricity all over the country. Otherwise it can be interpreted as 'unavailable in electronic form'.

Subir Das
Dept. of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering
Ahsan Ullah Hall
BUET

Avoid blame game

Blame game is an old practice in Bangladesh politics. Any incident that happens anywhere in Bangladesh, the party in power will immediately jump to conclusion and blame the opposition party for it without even a preliminary investigation. The party in power believes "all good work are ours and all bad work are done by the opponents"

Let me cite some incidents that happened during the last alliance government. Immediately after the incident of grenade attack on 21st August, the BNP government

squarely blamed the AL right in the parliament; in the Mymensingh cinema hall bombing incident, the BNP government arrested some prominent opposition leaders and tortured them; Bangla Bhai was media creation, said an alliance partner party chief; we heard hundreds and thousands of time slogans like "unnoyaner joar, 'conspiracy to tarnish the image of the country', 'conspiracy to sell out country's sovereignty' and many more.

At least a preliminary investigation should be done before putting the blame on anybody.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

An open letter to Khaleda Zia
I wrote an open letter to you which was published in this paper on 11 December, 2006. I am writing this open letter to you to express my views and feelings about the post general election situation.

There was a common belief that your party i.e. BNP would lose the December 2008 election, but the election outcome was a shocking surprise to many. People were expecting a balanced parliament so that no party could boast that they gave them a free-to-do-anything mandate. But unfortunately, thing happened that way and probably this is one of the demerits of democracy.

Anyway, it seems that you and your party have succeeded in digesting this humiliating defeat and are now going to reform the party. In this respect I would like you to consider the following facts that may help BNP to regain its lost strength and image. It is for democracy and the country that we need a strong opposition in the parliament.

The day you decided to appoint your elder son Tareq Zia as the Senior Joint Secretary of BNP, you also sowed the seeds of internal rivalry in the party that finally surfaced through the reform effort under the leadership of former Secretary General Mannan Bhuiya, who very reasonably believed that Tareq Zia was going to replace him. While your party was in power during 2001-6, you did not take any action against the widely known misdeeds of Hawa Bhavan where your son Tareq Zia was the C-in-C. People were referring to him as Mr. ten percent. You have closed down Hawa Bhavan, the alternate power control centre, but it is too late.

AL Chief Sheikh Hasina took a clever decision by punishing the reformers but keeping them in the party. But you did not take any step to unite the BNP when it was needed very badly for the national election for which your opponent was in a far better position.

It is good news that at last you are also thinking of bringing young and dynamic leadership at the helm. The BNP needs a young, dynamic and an impressive personality for the position of Secretary General. Also please elect other leaders following democratic processes. People do not make mistake in giving their verdict in an election and will do the same in future. So, please learn from your mistakes. Keep those around you who have the courage to differ with you and tell you the truth. Above all, please do not forget the day of final judgement.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

Thai Ambassador explains

On the issue of illegal immigrants in Thailand, I would like to update you on the recent steps taken by the Royal Thai Government to solve this issue.

On 23 January 2009, as instructed by H.E. Mr. Kasit Piromya, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, invited the Ambassador of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Malaysia as well as the Charge' d' Affaires of Myanmar, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for consultations on the issue of Rohingya illegal migrants. At the meeting the Permanent Secretary highlighted that the issue has a regional dimension affecting various countries, especially the countries of origin, transit and destination. Thailand has become an entry and transit point, with flows numbering several thousands each year. Although Thailand is not the intended destination for Rohingyas, it is estimated that up to 20,000 illegal Rohingya migrants have entered Thailand over the years and remain within the Kingdom, as distinguished from recent arrivals of whom none presently remain in Thailand. It is believed that smuggling and trafficking networks are involved in organising or facilitating these flows.

Also at the above-mentioned meeting, Thailand proposed that the six countries concerned cooperate in order to jointly address this issue. Intelligence and information, including on each country's standard operating procedures (SOPs), should be exchanged. In this connection, Thailand offered to host the first working-level meeting among the six parties, should the proposal receive support. The participating envoys welcomed the Thai proposal and would convey it to their respective capitals for consideration.

In the longer term, for a

lasting solution to be achieved, the root cause of the problem would have to be addressed, including the situation of the Rohingyas in the areas of origin. In this regard, Thailand believes that the UNHCR could play a role in mobilising resources from the international community to help promote better livelihoods for the Rohingyas in their areas of origin. With such information for your reference, I am, therefore, looking forward to even closer coordination with your correspondents concerning this issue in the future.

Chalermpol Thanchitt
Ambassador of Thailand

Our expectation from the new DU VC

Heartiest congratulations, Prof. Arefin Siddique. The students of DU are hoping that you will be able to bring a congenial atmosphere in the campus. As you know, there are a lot of students in DU that have different views, values and standpoints. We, the students are like your children and now you are our guardian. Sir, as now you are the highest authority of DU as well as our guardian so we have great expectations from you. We know that you might have completely different political views and standpoint, but think about one of your own child who has a different political view and for being different, should he be ousted from your house by one of your other child who feels stronger because of having the same standpoint as yours? Don't you have anything to do in this regard? Shouldn't you take any initiative to protect your weak child? I know that you have all the answers to these questions.

I would like to thank you and convey my gratefulness for declaring your intention to hold DUCSU election.

Hasanbin
BBA Programme
University of Dhaka

BFTI



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute, a non-profit research and training institution, has been given the task of monitoring the prices of essential commodities, by the government. The government also wants it to act as think-tank dealing with external trade issues and with internal ones as well.

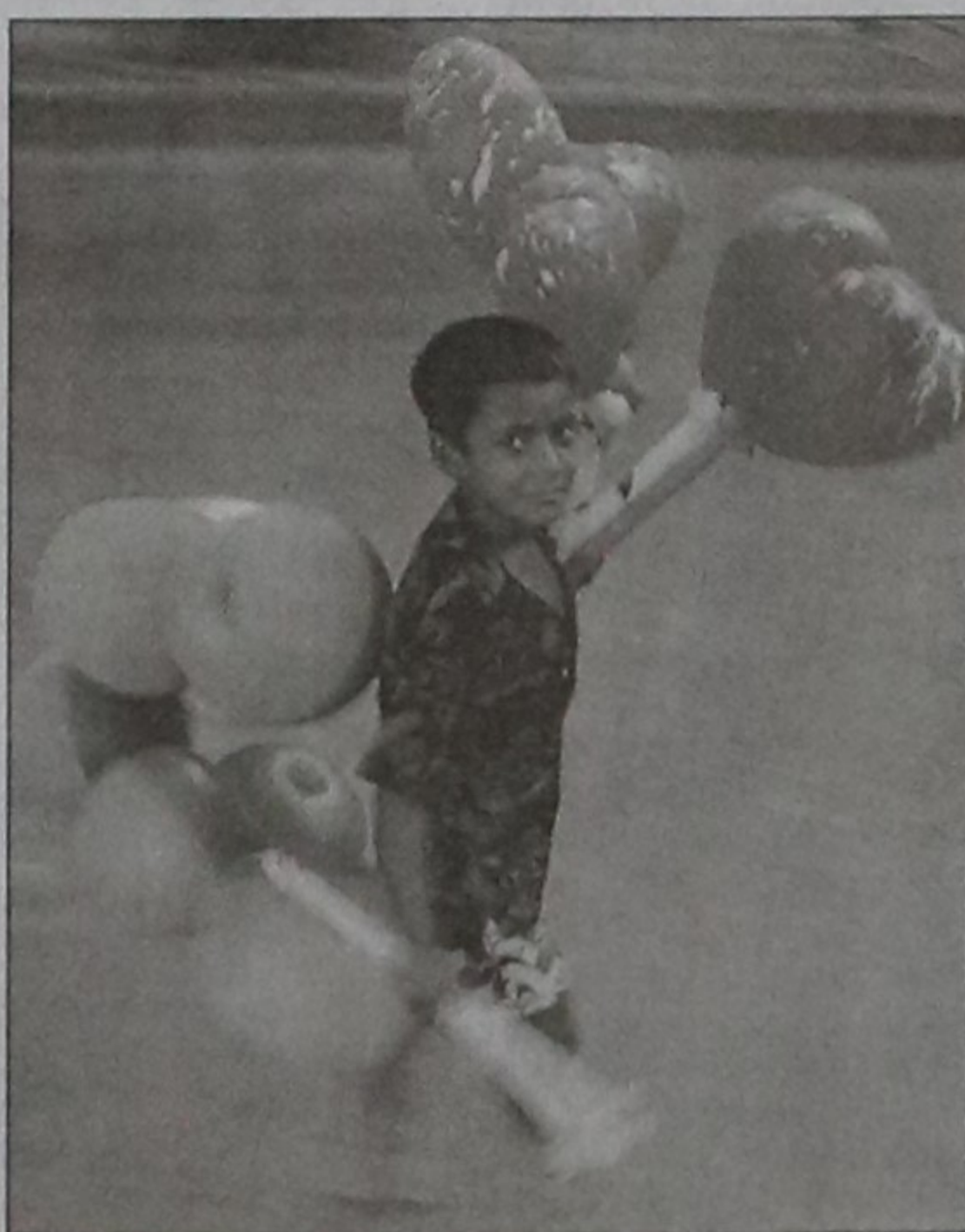
BFTI, as depicted by its name, has no experience of dealing with internal trade issues, especially in essential commodities. As such, as an ordinary citizen, I would like to offer it the following points for its consideration: Find out, the reason for the gulf of difference in prices in the producer-end and consumer-end, especially for vegetables,

the reason for abnormal price difference of essential commodities from season time to off-season time; determine how to facilitate the producer to get the price with reasonable profit over production cost, state how to regulate the middlemen to limit their sky-high profiteering.

As the BFTI now gets the vital job of dealing with internal trade issues for the nation, I think it should be got more experts and should be renamed as Bangladesh Foreign and Local Trade Institute, BFTLI.

Saif Tinku
Baridhara, Dhaka

Child development



All children are born as human beings but all cannot be good citizens. Which child would be a good citizen? One who would be physically fit to work, always hard working and responsive in all respect? One who would bear a good personality, morality and honest mind? One who would be good decision maker, creative thinker, intelligent and good learner? One who would speak well, mix easily with everybody, well behaved and committed to the society, family and friends?

It is not always possible that every child would have all these good characteristics unless she or he is well nurtured from very early in life. How much opportunity and care a child gets determine what he or she would become eventually. The child grows through various stages which include

intra-uterine (embryo and foetus), infancy (up to 12 months), toddler (1 to 3 years), childhood (3 to 9 years), adolescence (10 to 19 years). So it is clear that change comes through different stages. Here two terms are very important to understand, that is -- growth and development. Growth includes physical change and increase in size (height, width, length). Development includes acquisition and maturation of skills, behaviour and values. There is no substitute of a good citizen to make the country well developed. And a good citizen is created through early care and intervention.

Md. Zahir Uddin Akanda
Occupational Therapist
Masters in Early Childhood Development
BRAC University