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Make Parliament effective

A few days ago our democracy was at stake. After two years of hiatus, we have again embarked on the road to democracy through the Awami League's winning a landslide victory at the elections. The result is unprecedented in our political history. Having the earlier experience of the BNP regime vivid in our minds, we are worried that this absolute power could lead the AL to an unfair exercise of power and consequently dysfunctional democracy.

It has been said that absolute power corrupts absolutely. In a democratic system there is a governing party and an opposition party. Both opposition party and ruling parties have a significant role to play in making the democratic system work. In the new parliament, we have a fragile opposition party. So to make parliament more effective, the ruling party can

offer the opposition party some posts such as deputy speaker and so on. It will set a new trend in our politics.

Md. Zonaid Emran
University of Dhaka

Having spent two years in a very turbulent situation, we are very much optimistic that the present parliament will run smoothly and will be a pivotal place to deal with all political issues with the lively participation of both the ruling and opposition parties. In that way, the aspirations of the people of the country can be fulfilled. The ruling party should be magnanimous enough to allocate ample time and opportunity to the opposition for discussion on the issues in parliament. Moreover, the speaker should allow sufficient time to the opposition to address all those notices that will be served either by

the opposition or the ruling party.

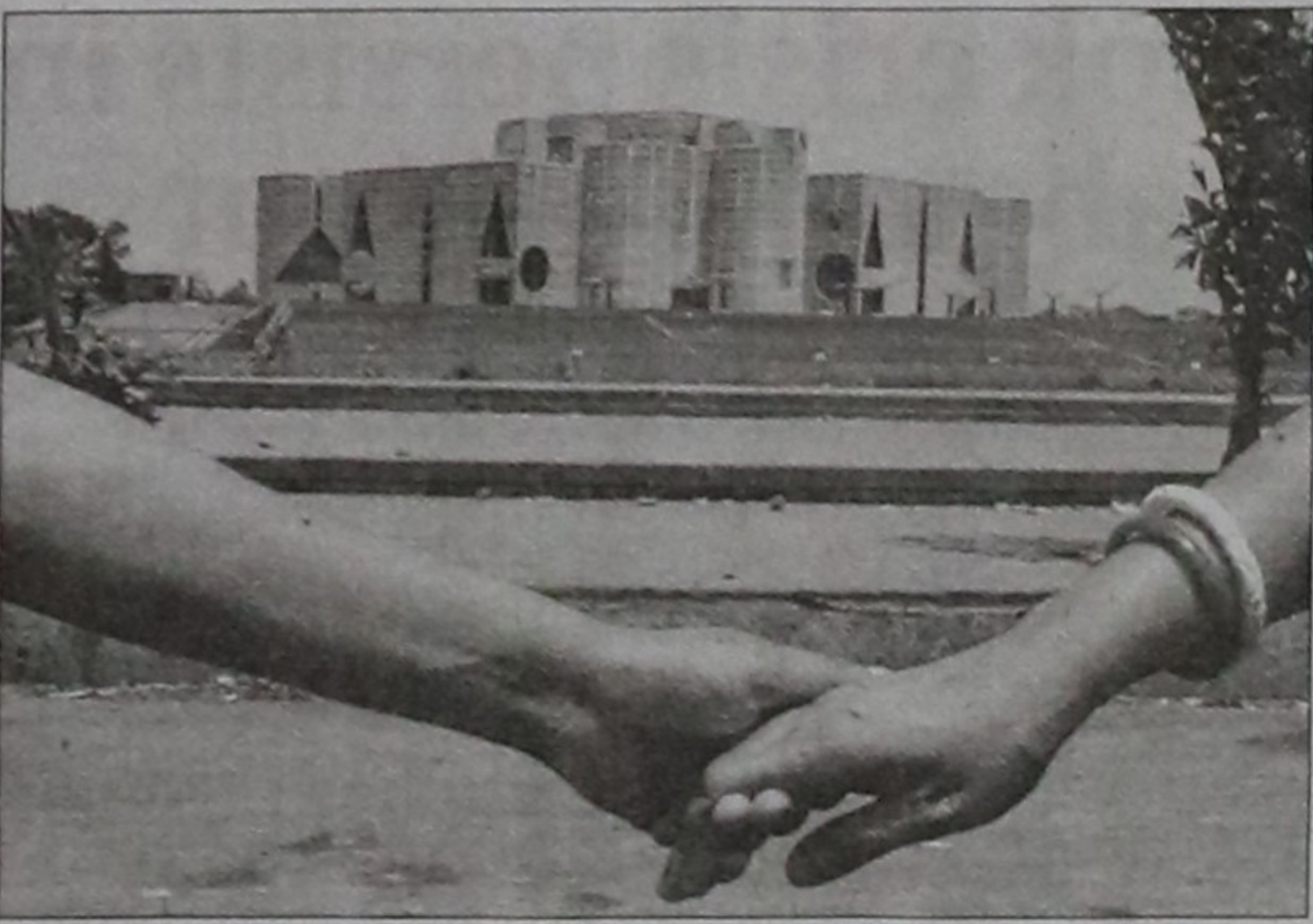
To make parliament more functional and effective and a centre for all political discussions as well as enactment of laws and rules of business, where both ruling and opposition parties will give their valuable in-depth insights by participating in open discussions and stating the merits and demerits of the issues before they go for final placement for voting.

We know the ruling party is stronger now and with its numbers it can even go for any change or enact any law without the support of the opposition bench. But I am sure the ruling party would not go for such an approach.

In line with democratic principles both ruling and opposition parties are equally responsible in parliament for any rules and laws enacted and hence accountability will be equally shared, if it goes right or wrong. One of the main mechanisms in the parliamentary process to oppose any decision of the ruling party is a walkout and this is adopted in case of extremely unfavourable situations when an issue placed by the ruling party could lead to pernicious effects on party politics or does not call for opposition support.

In order to make parliament a place for a resolution of all political issues, let emphasis be placed on building a harmonious relationship between the ruling and opposition parties. Only that will ensure development, peace and prosperity.

Nasarullah
One-mail



Emerging university in Pabna

It is learnt from The Daily Star (26 January 2009) that Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST) is going to admit 200 students under two faculties. The subjects that will be taught are Computer Science and Engineering (CSE), Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE) and Mathematics under the faculty of Science and Engineering. The other faculty is Business Studies, with the subject Business Administration.

The subjects chosen are appreciable in respect of global demands. Perhaps this is the third university of science and technology in the northern region of Bangladesh after liberation. The main objective behind the establishment of PUST has not been mentioned in the newspaper report. Surely, there are good reasons for setting up such a technology-based university in a district town. It is also true this university can be an effective tool in the northern region for the creation of digital Bangladesh as desired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

There are two other public universities, in Rajshahi city, in addition to those three public universities in the region. What impressed me much is the name as Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST) that was the name of the first science and technology university in north Bengal. The university was established about a decade ago in village Thengamara under the district of Bogra. The name of that university also was PUST (Pundra University of Science and Technology) and the academic activities there commenced under two similar faculties. The only difference between the two is that the Bogra-based PUST was a private university and the Pabna-based PUST is a public university. PUST at Bogra was shut down along with other seven universities by the BNP government at the end of its tenure.

PUST was established in a rural atmosphere with the objective of empowering the new generation with modern technology in cooperation with science and technology related international organizations like Commonwealth Science Council (CSC) and the Texas-USA based ICTE. Other objectives were to make available the benefits of digital technology to the people living on islands (chars) or those living in Chalan beel passing

through three districts of northern region. Due to the closure of PUST, the hopes of thousands of people of the region were nipped in the buds. Due to the ignorance of some people, closure of a technology university is just like suicide for others. PUST in Bogra is a great lesson for PUST in any other region.

Prof. Lutfor Rahman
Founder Vice-Chancellor
Science and Technology
University in Rural
Bangladesh

Digital Bangladesh and new generation

The Trans-Eurasia Information Network (TEIN) is one of the new initiatives endorsed by ASEM III (October 2000, Seoul, Korea) to connect research networks between Asia and Europe by linking EU's GEANT, the pan-European gigabit research network, with Asia's research networks such as the APII Testbeds in order to promote information exchanges in research and development and education.

At ASEM III, Korea, the European Commission (EC) and Singapore jointly proposed the TEIN project. ASEM leaders emphasized the need to establish and expand information and research networks between the two regions and among ASEM partners in order to facilitate the flow of knowledge and information as well as research endeavours.

This initiative aims to contribute to enhancing exchanges and cooperation between Asia and Europe through increased and more effective information flows; enhance and diversify research exchanges and cooperation between Asia and Europe; expand and diversify speedier and more powerful telecommunication connections between Asia and Europe.

On 8 December 2009 TEIN 3 will be installed in Vientiane, Laos, and will go online in 2011. Countries like Laos, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam will get benefits from it. TEIN 3 has broadband capacity with velocity up to 2.5 Gbit/s.

Everybody who uses Internet in Bangladesh experiences how slow it is. If somebody likes to search something on Google or to download something from Internet or is looking for her/his mail with attachment, she/he has to wait and wait and wait until the line is disconnected or she/he has no patience. If this situation is not changed we will lose a chance to update

our knowledge and we will not be able to get our share in the international IT business. There is a big potential for Bangladesh to earn million of Dollars through IT sector.

The new government must take the initiative to update our IT system and try to get access to TEIN 3. It will help to increase Internet connectivity for research, education and business between Europe and Bangladesh via high-speed direct links to GEANT2 and improve intra-regional connectivity across Asia.

Dr. Farid Majumder
Darmstadt, Germany

Banani noise

Road 11 in Banani has become a nightmarish highway of sorts!

Ever since the Banani/Gulshan bridge was inaugurated for vehicles, the roar and speed has tremendously increased along with the volume of traffic. All sorts of vehicles have started using the connecting bridge.

This has also given rise to seemingly unnecessary loud honking. The relative peace and quiet of Banani has been shattered. Both sides of Road 11 have residences, and such noise pollution defies all or least considerations for the people living here. Students, patients and senior citizens are all miserably disturbed. Sleep is now a distant cry!

Maybe the authorities can restrict vehicles after 11 pm to restore some quiet and the feel of residential living, and some sleep perhaps. Otherwise our motorists, who do not have any courtesy or respect for the environment, will make further mess of the situation. Please rescue us residents from this nuisance, at least between 6 am and 11 pm.

Syed Imtiaz Ali
Banani, Dhaka

Mujib and Zia

In politics, no ruler or politician is above criticism. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has faced multifarious criticisms, particularly over the actions of his administration after our liberation. There are people who believe that he was a first class leader but not an administrator of that rank. But we all ought to admit that he was the main architect and founder of our country.

Like a comet, Ziaur Rahman appeared in our political sky after Mujib's assassination. People started gathering en masse behind him. Zia's dynamic leadership inspired the whole nation, such as his call from Kalurhat Betar Kendra in 1971.

Whether we support one of

them or not, the influence of these great two leaders cannot be wiped out. We should evaluate them properly and place them in their proper historical places.

Rabindranath is the greatest poet in Bangla literature. It is folly to try to avoid this truth. It is also folly to try avoiding Nazrul. Mujib and Zia are the Rabindranath and Nazrul respectively of our political arena.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Obama's call to Muslim world

CNN recently released an exclusive interview of US President Barack Obama with Al-Arabia Television. This interview is considered as part of President Obama's commitment during his election campaign to improve relations between the US and the Muslim world.

In his interview, the President was mostly on the

back foot. Unlike President Bush, Obama showed a great deal of politeness and eagerness about the success of any peace process in the Middle East. At one point he even mentioned that some of his family members are Muslim. President Obama strongly suggested that peace between Israel and the Arab world is only possible through the creation of an independent and sovereign land for Palestinians and ensuring a better life for their children. Then only will children in Israel not have to grow up with fear of attack by their neighbours. He also mentioned that ever-lasting peace is possible only when both the parties will look forward and forget the miseries and tragedies in the past. He said, 'It's not easy, but very much possible'.

The interview was published at a moment when people in Pakistan are frightened by the US missile attack along the Pak-Afghan border region.

President Obama's interview is a message to terrorists that the so called 'war on terror' is over and everyone should make the world a better place to live. If terrorists fail to appreciate this good gesture, then they ought to prepare for the worst.

Imon Hussain
Washington DC, USA

Not bad at all!

I was not at all surprised. I have rather been trying to look for the benefits from the DU teachers' greeting spree! Though students missed their classes, with this hands-on demonstration on "political science" the students can learn "constructive politics" and master the art of succeeding in traditional Bangladeshi Politics. Not bad!

Enamul Huq
USA

University in Barisal

Although Barisal is one of the six divisions, it has been neglected by all governments. All previous governments made promises but their words did not come true. Education is imperative for all development activities but there is no university in Barisal city. If we look at all other divisional cities, we will find a different picture. Even many district towns have public universities. Doesn't it bear testimony to the unequal treatment meted out to Barisal? Although the present government has already treated Barisal badly not including anyone in the cabinet from the region, we hope it will set up a university in the city in order to make Barisal a part of Digital Bangladesh.

Md Habibullah Howlader
Dept of English, CU

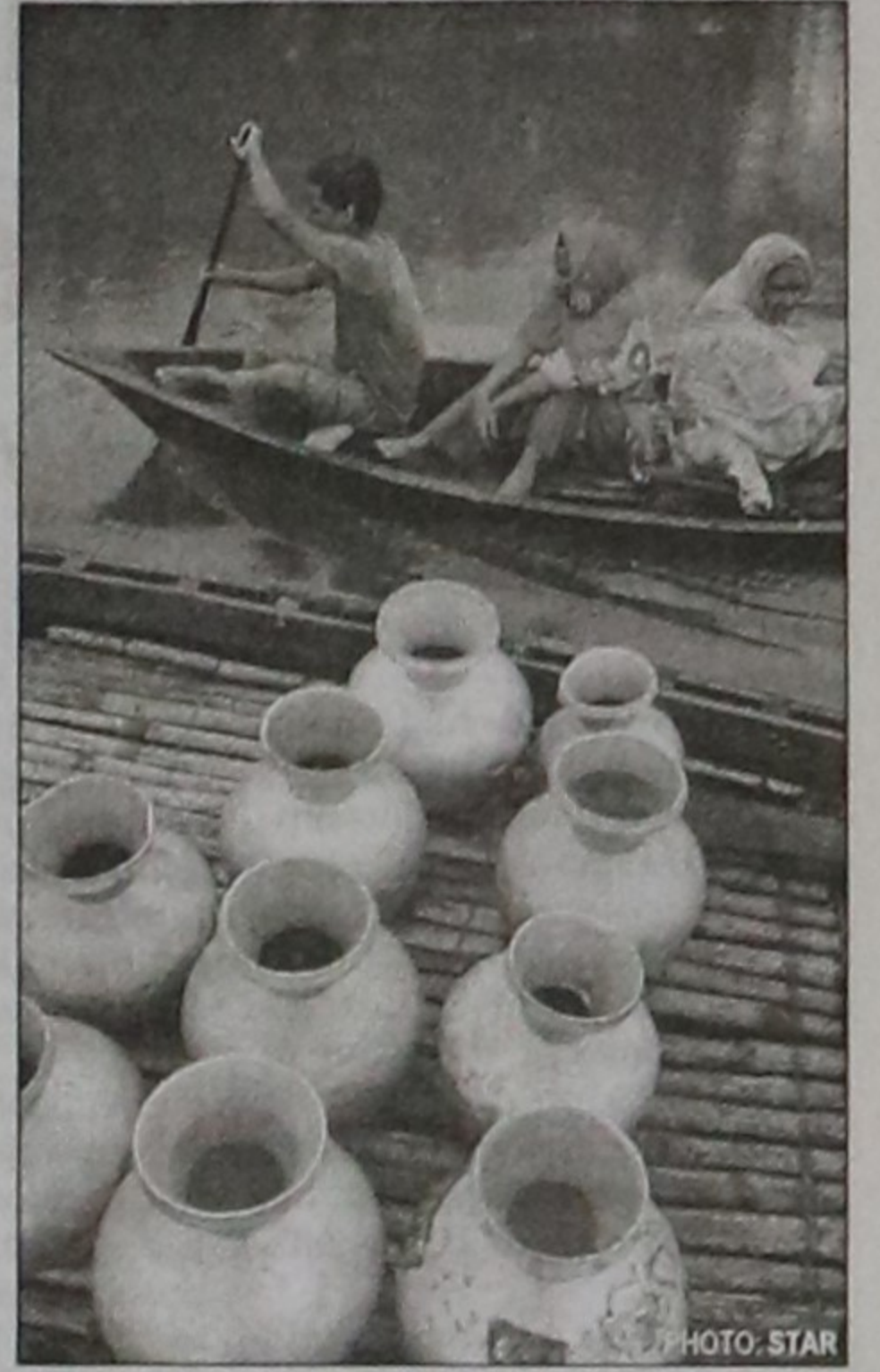
Waste not, want not

Energy resources like water, gas, electricity and petroleum crude oil are indispensable in the running of a country. In our daily life we use them for making our lives easier. But the thing is that our manner of using these is indiscreet, as we do not hesitate squandering them carelessly. For instance, let us consider water and how we misuse it.

In the morning we basically wash our mouths in the basin whereby we necessarily require a good amount of water to gargle. Let us say 1500 ml of water is enough to get our whole face and mouth cleaned, but we start brushing by keeping the tap on. As a result, quite a few litres of water are wasted. Besides, we spend at least 3000 ml of water to flush our commodes. We also soap our bodies keeping the shower on.

Now, what about natural gas? We misuse it also in a very intentional manner. To not spend one matchstick, we keep our burners on even after cooking is done. The same goes in terms of electricity.

Many of our citizens are a bit indolent and are actually responsible for unnecessary power consumption. Keeping the heavy power consuming electronics device on for hours unnecessarily doesn't bother them at all. On the other hand, when we are stuck on the road because of a traffic jam, we do not stop our car engines. If we had at least a discreet member in every single family then, I think, unintentional water flow from tap drop by drop throughout the entire night, unnecessary burning of gas and forgetting to turn off the lights in toilets, we would save a huge amount of energy resources. These propensity of mis-



ing of energy resources has been going on for decades, thus depleting our precious resources.

In Islam it is said that one who squanders anything is considered as the brother of the devil. Other religions do not support misuse or wastage either. I hardly find any TV channel creating awareness concerning these issues among citizens. In this regard, the newly elected government has a great responsibility to do something effective to inculcate in the public mind the spirit of not misusing anything. This can be done through the electronic as well as print media.

Hasnat
AIUB
Banani, Dhaka

'No' to 2nd deputy speaker

The AL said before the election that it would appoint the deputy speaker from the opposition. Within days of winning the election the AL has forgotten that pledge. We feel disgusted, but we are not surprised. Clearly, what was once a "pledge" has now become a "lie". And to cover up that lie the AL is now planning to create a new seat for a second deputy speaker!

Having a second deputy speaker will not solve any problems. If anything, it will create more friction and disagreement. But there is another important factor that we must take into consideration: the cost. Who is going to pay this extra deputy speaker's salary? The AL or the taxpayers?

Being a poor and small country, we can't afford a huge number of speakers, ministers and MPs. We have got so many other problems that need

immediate government cash. Besides, why should taxpayers pay to make up for the AL's lie? Clearly, this whole "deputy speaker storm" has been created by the AL. Why should our poor people pay for it?

I will ask the BNP not to accept any such arrangement. The AL must apologise to the people for not honouring its pledge and immediately give the deputy speaker's position to the opposition. Our political parties must understand that it is time for them to be accountable for what they say and do.

Azad Miah
Oldham
UK

Weekly holiday

There is an unnecessary obstacle in our economic sector.

In the international market, weekly holidays are Saturday and Sunday; but in Bangladesh weekly holidays are Friday and Saturday. Obviously our economy is disconnected from the international market for three days.

For that reason the Bangladesh economy has to lose twenty thousand crore taka every year.

In the modern world, economy is more important than religion. We cannot fall behind only because of some fanatics.

So we hope the new government will declare Sunday as our weekly holiday in the interest of our economy.

George L Boidya
New Eskaton
Dhaka

Mohakhali foot overbridge

A few years ago Mohakhali Railway overbridge was constructed and it has facilitated traffic movement on the road to some extent. But a big problem still continues to afflict the residents of the area. People of Mohakhali DOHS, Shahinbag, Arjat Para, etc., have to go to Mohakhali kutcha bazar everyday with big serious risks to their lives as they cross the road. This is an everyday hazard which puts a lot of pressure on their nerves. Hence a foot overbridge connecting Mohakhali kutcha bazar is a long felt necessity.

It is reported that the Kawran Bazar wholesale vegetables market will be shifted to Mohakhali in about two years' time. Hence the overbridge should be planned in such a way so that it may connect both Mohakhali kutcha bazar and the under construction wholesale vegetables market if possible. The

proposed foot overbridge will be a great relief to the people of Mohakhali DOHS, Mohakhali proper, Shahinbag and Arjat Para.

I therefore appeal to Dhaka Municipal Corporation to rise to the occasion and construct a foot overbridge urgently to reduce the risks and hazards posed to the people of these areas for which act it will earn the gratitude of the people of the area.

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury
DOHS Mohakhali
Dhaka

Balance of merit

A daughter of mine recently got her Ph.D from Harvard and came home for a few weeks to meet family and friends before returning to Harvard to do research as a prestigious Swartz Fellow in the newly established Department of Neuroscience. Her sponsors were so keen to have her that they paid a huge amount of money as special fees, so that her H-1B visa for a temporary worker could be processed in only two weeks. The embassy here too was very cooperative and gave her a visa within two days of the interview.

However, when she checked her visa she was horrified to see that it was valid only for one year, though Harvard had explicitly asked for the usual three-year multiple entry permit. She is required to attend conferences in many countries as part of her job, and so asked the visa officers in the embassy about it.

They politely told her that they could not unfortunately do anything about it, as this condition of issuing a one-year visa followed a reciprocity agreement between the governments of the two countries. Since the USA gives a three-year multiple entry permission to most other countries, it appears that this reciprocal clause must have come from the insistence of the government of Bangladesh.

Are we to understand that, since before the financial crunch, highly skilled Americans have been queuing up in throngs to work in Bangladesh, endangering Bangladeshis, so that the government thought it was to this country's greater advantage to put restrictions on Bangladeshis going abroad than allow the universally allowed period to Americans reciprocally?

We would love to hear the Foreign Ministry's version.
Dr Ahmed Shafee
Physics Department
University of Dhaka

Child labour



Though children's labour may be necessary to the survival of some families, it does not represent the ideal for children or their families. Putting children to work too early can stunt their development socially and educationally as well as expose them to physical risks. This does not even factor in the daily peril faced by children working as prostitutes or soldiers.

Movements for universal education and for an end to child labour seek to better serve children and provide the opportunity for children to escape poverty through education, which ultimately benefits both individuals and society as a whole.

Child labour is the employ-

ment of children under an age determined by law or custom. This practice is considered exploitative by many countries and international organizations. However, sanctions against nations using child labour have been found to lead to even worse conditions for children.

Thus, the resolution of this issue remains contentious as humankind seeks to achieve a world in which the human rights of every person, adult and child, are respected and a life of prosperity is available to all. We urge the present government to take more initiatives to put a stop to child labour.

Peter Rebeiro
Indira Road, Dhaka