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Genetic science

Genetic science has a great potential for either serving or degrading humanity. Its proper use requires moral reflection and the establishment of moral limits. Human welfare does not demand that scientists pursue every avenue available.

Science has confirmed with objective certainty that full human life begins at conception with the formation of a genetically complete, self-directing human entity, the embryo.

Reproductive technologies such as in vitro fertilization are morally problematic because they are used to produce embryos in the laboratory where they can be observed and manipulated. Here, a relationship of domination of researchers over their embryonic subjects exists which not only opens the door to new threats against life but is also contrary to the dignity and equality that must be common to parents and children.

Human beings are not raw materials that can be exploited or commodified that can be bought and sold. If a man takes on the power to fabricate man, he also takes on the power to destroy him. The human being has the right to be generated, not produced, to come to life not by virtue of an artificial process but of a human act in the full sense of the term: the union between a man and a woman.

Paul Kokoski
Hamilton, Ontario
Canada

Deeds speak louder

Obviously, a huge number of television channels are playing a significant role to convey us the up-to-date information regularly. Their duty is to collect news. To get, find out or even create news they will trail the potential sources, it is usual. But our key chair holders forget that they hold very important posts. They have to take many confidential decisions which will affect the nation. Astonishingly, we notice, after concluding or even before ending the meeting, a member comes out, stands in front of the microphone and spontaneously speak about what had been discussed or decided. You are doing your job. You are not a newsmaker. So, please control yourselves.

Please realize that you are not so called (!) political leaders now. Your statement has great value to the nation. Moreover, at times they make contradictory statements. For example, one important minister once said that his government would not make TCB active, on the subsequent day his U-turn from his position perplexed us. In case of different agreements he is also giving self-contradictory statements.

Please do your job honestly and sincerely. If you do so for the nation, in the long run you will be treated as the real hero.
Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Business
Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

Are they students?

We, the students of Jahangirnagar University, are greatly shocked at the incident that happened on Monday, 16 February. As an eyewitness to the incident, I still could not believe how a student could beat his student brother in such a merciless way. It is unbelievable that university students could do such a heinous thing.

The university authorities should handle the matter firmly.
Nojum
Jahangirnagar University

Immediate past president

We know that the immediate past President Prof. Iajuddin Ahmed has pro-BNP leanings. So, during the BNP rule and initial period of the caretaker government he reportedly acted as per the directions of the BNP.

Albeit the President is to give the inaugural speech in JS which is written by the ruling party, he can make some changes. But Prof. Iajuddin reportedly followed every word, even comma, and other signs of punctuation in his speech. Actually, he did not want to annoy the AL at the end, though most of the people do believe that he himself does not believe in what he said.

Prof. Iajuddin was a teacher but he played the role of an "obedient student" during his presidency.
Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Currency issue

What is a paper currency? It is a mode of exchange, it is a piece of paper with no value of its own. There are many instances of economies of countries collapsing just due to exchange rates of their currencies.

Today also we see that currencies get strong and weak against the US dollar, creating panic amongst the people. People lose a lot of their hard earned money, just due to this system of paper against a paper. Nowadays US dollar is the international mode of exchange, so many countries have their reserves in USD. If the USD weakens those countries which do not have gold reserves will be brought down to ruins. There are a lot of other disasters that will follow the fall of dollar. Third world countries are the ones which will be the most exposed to this threat.

What is the solution? I think having a common currency all over the world will be the best solution to this problem.
Mohammad Faruk
Nurjahan Road
Mohammadpur
Dhaka

Road accidents

All the TV channels now telecast several programmes to raise awareness regarding AIDS. It is really a positive scheme. A huge number of people of India, our closest neighbour, are badly affected by this disease. In this situation, our TV channels are playing a vital role and deserve thanks from the citizens of the country. It must also be noted that the hazards of AIDS is comparatively less in our country compared to India.

But do we know that in a year we lose three to four thousand people in road accidents? Can't we change the situation? How long will this continue? Are we the people of Bangladesh destined to lead the whole life with the hazards of road accident? Can anyone give me a satisfactory answer?

In my opinion, hazards of road accident are greater than that of AIDS. But why is no step being taken by our TV channels to give the issue due coverage? The media can play a strong role in making the people conscious. Several types of mini-dramas can be telecast to make people aware.

Bangladesh has many challenges ahead. Among

them, road accident is the most burning issue.

I think, we have to fight another war. This war will be against road accident. In 1952, the students of our country fought for the mother language. In the same way, the students in 2009 should prepare themselves for a fight against road accidents.

Akash Pradip
Lecturer in English
BHP, CRP
Savar, Dhaka

Negative politics

All actions and all steps taken by opponents are not anti-state or anti-people.

In the game of political musical chair, one will dislodge the other and will sit for some time and then lose again, that is the rule of this game. But in case of the BNP, its party leaders think that the chair is reserved for them and none have the right to vie for it. Our ears have become used to listening similar utterances of the BNP about conspiracy, selling out of our country to others, tarnishing the image of the country by opposition etc. etc. in each and every public meeting, every time she met the journalists or spoke to foreign dignitaries. According to her belief, the people have voted her but the opponents have manipulated the election results and grabbed state power. So, she cannot digest this conspiracy and accept the result gracefully. She has done what she was expected to do and rejected the election results. Anyhow, she has lost her throne and is now engaged in undermining all acts and steps being taken by her opponents.

She and her secretary general are opposing any trial move of the present government calling it anti-state. By doing so she is trying to create panic in the public mind just to discredit the present government. Such misinformation and misleading activities are destructive and anti-state. She should refrain from doing so. The people will not believe that everything this government is trying to do in public interest is bad.

She is boycotting parliament just because her party members were not given the seats which were allocated by the previous speaker unlawfully. The people have given time to the present government and the BNP should allow them to wait and see.
Shafiqul Islam
NY

Where will they go?

I hardly can remember the exact number of students who, nowadays, get GPA 5 in the SSC or even the HSC since the number is too high to remember!

Maybe, it means the number of talented students is increasing every year which is, no doubt, a green signal for Bangladesh to step forward to cope with the fast moving world. But, this is a very common picture at present, though somehow shocking, that these talented students have to fight a battle to get admitted into well known universities as the number of good universities is not really high.

It cannot be said that all the students who passed the HSC except the GPA 5 holders are not talented, but when the well-known universities are booked by the talented students where will be the place for the rest of the students?
Sabbih Hossain
English Department
Rajshahi University

Price of lentil?

Your front page report on February 10 from your correspondent at Pabna is terrible. It brings back to me, its similarity to John Galsworthy's play titled "The Price of Coal" which I read way back in 1948. The play depicted the tragic death of miners in underground mine accidents. The incident in Pabna, although no accident, is the loss of five lives and injury to twenty persons over quarrel for crop cutting of lentils! That too from a land that is not owned by any of the two groups in the quarrel, as reported.

Small wonder, life is so cheap in Bangladesh. It reminds me of Sheikh Sadi - a renowned Persian philosopher of may be 15th Century or so (I am not sure); who said that the basis of all quarrels are: Zun, Zurya Zamin (In Persian)? Translated it means all quarrels among people are centered round: Women, Wealth or Land!

In this case however the violent quarrel was over a crop of lentils! So, some money (wealth) finally. I do not know what was the lentil's worth. May be it would have fetched six to eight thousand taka. Its final value of course was six valuable (?) lives and possibly untold misery for six families! Was it worth it?
S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Worsening crime situation

The grand alliance government by the Awami League has many priorities. But improving law and order must not be ignored. Heinous crimes are on the rise. Hijacking, mugging even killing are going unabated when so called block raids and special drives are on. Both the ministers appear to be too shy to talk about it. This is a very ominous sign for a government, so enthusiastically voted to power.

A government's efficiency and sincerity is easily judged by road and social discipline. Muggers and hijackers not only loot the valuables of passers-by, they snatch away the very credibility of the administration. Here I do not doubt the sincerity of the government. But the top brass of the home ministry and law enforcing agencies must share the blame.

During the 5 years of brutal misrule of the BNP-Jamaat all the efficient, honest and sincere government officials were sacked. This they did to enable their henchmen to climb to the top positions and facilitate their plan to torture political adversaries and minority communities. Many such officials got speedy promotions. Now all the top positions of the police and other administrations are occupied by them. Many such officials are directly/indirectly linked to the Jamaat/BNP leadership.

But as yet there is no major change in home and police administration. Now the Awami league government plans to implement their policies with such officials! In 1972, the then AL government made the same mistake and paid for it. The government should act now and decisively. They should not be misled by smart artificial loyalty. Trusted and committed officials should be brought in to implement the popular government policies.
A concerned citizen
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Wildlife conservation

With the country needing to find food, water, shelter, energy, timber and medicine for a new mouth every alternate second, our forests and wild landscapes face fresh and bigger threats.

Many of us might not have given a serious thought to wildlife conservation. This should be a hotly debated issue, the tangible and intangible benefits we receive from wildlife conservation directly concerns over 70 percent of our country's population who depend upon the traditional occupation rain-fed agriculture. This apart, it concerns most of us in several different ways both known and unknown. It is time again for all of us to think about the needs of wildlife conservation and pull up our socks to perform the onerous task of conservation on-the-ground.

We need to analyse the various aspects that have affected the future survival of our wildlife species.
Mohammad Rajja
Gonoshasthaya Samaj Vittik
Medical College
Savar, Dhaka

Bangla pronunciation



The article by former UN economist Mr. Mahfuzur Rahman (18 Feb), "In Defence of Standard Bangla Pronunciation" is a timely reminder that the Bengali language binds us in a Nation, and that its standardization in written and spoken form is a must to preserve this unity. This goal has already been diluted by inadvertent slide and confusion between 'Bangla Bhasha' and 'Matri Bhasha'. There is a clear distinction between a 'language or Bhasha' and a tongue or 'Buli'. Bangla Bhasha has a history of at least a thousand years of development behind it. It has an evolved alphabet, grammar, lexicon and literary richness which most mother tongues in the land do not have. But above all it has the singular advantage of being readily understood in any part of our country provided an existing standard, whether written or spoken, is followed.

In any case the richness of Bangla Bhasha or the emotional sweetness of one's 'mother tongue' has nothing to do with the Bhasha struggles and sacrifices that went on in 1952, and before and after. The struggle was to establish Bangla as one of the State languages of Pakistan Central Government, because (and this is the important point of note) Bengalees constituted the majority population of Pakistan. It was therefore their democratic right not to be economically denied jobs and control of the central government helm and activities because of a superimposed language alien to them.

Mr. Mahfuzur Rahman is an economist and he has hit on the truth that the Bhasha struggle was basically an economic and political struggle for establishing the legitimate democratic right of the people and has nothing to do with richness and sweetness of either Bangla or any other mother language anywhere (including Punjabi, Poshtu, Sindhi, Baluchi etc of then West Paki-

stan). Also Bangla was accepted as the provincial state language of East Pakistan and there never was any bar or restriction on Bengalees speaking their mother language or learning their own alphabets.

What the Bengalees struggled for was recognition when the first Constitution of Pakistan was published (Late February 1956) where Bangla and Urdu were both recognized as co-state languages for the Central Government of Pakistan.

Having obtained the success of the Bhasha struggle, the struggle then took a new direction for political liberation from colonial exploitation, which was of course achieved in 1971.

Thus having received all that we Bengalees wanted, the spirit of Ekushey or the development of Bangla became a spent force of 'lip service' and 'token tributes' at various Shahid Minars erected in the country (and abroad by expatriates). Further confusion of 'Bangla Bhasha' with 'Matri Bhasha' has diluted and lost the focus and emphasis and the task of developing a standard Bangla throughout the land to unify the nation culturally has been relegated to a de-facto limbo.

Emotional knots from Bengalee psyche because of our propensity for exaggeration must therefore be untangled for Bangla Bhasha to achieve its heightened glory of a common standardized language of the land (and beyond). Individual Sadhana to achieve this end as described by Mr. Rahman must be combined with public efforts in primary and other educational institutions, as spoken languages and standard pronunciations are best learnt as children in groups.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Statistical error

I was reading one article from your February 13, 2009 edition. In the sports section, there was an article entitled "Messi steals the show" about the France vs Argentina friendly football game. I have noticed statistical errors in it.

It says, "The French had had the lion's share of the chances but Gutierrez broke the deadlock four minutes before the interval, sweeping in right-footed through the hands of Steve Mandanda for his eighth international goal in 25 appearances."

Actually, it was Jonas Gutierrez's first international goal. Besides, I doubt whether it was Gutierrez's 25th appearance for Argentina. Most likely, it was his 20th appearance for the national team. Wouldn't it be better to double check the statistics before posting?
Bazul Wahab Shaheen
Boston, Massachusetts
USA

Scientific education

While the slogan "Science for all" has been appreciated and accepted by most people, and scientific development is going on with the speed of light almost everywhere, the area of scientific ignorance among people of Bangladesh is widening. The situation is worse than even before because the politicians were almost silent as if it is not an important issue. They were more interested in importing science than local creation or innovation. The politicians should not be blamed fully because they became silent observing the previous activities of the responsible scientists in different sectors. It is pertinent to raise an important point here that all sciences are not science and all scientists are not real scientists. The main thing is to give the right person the right responsibilities. Otherwise, he will just pass time and destroy the whole system.

Today, not only Bangla-

desh, the world is confronted with the serious problem of public understanding of science, which is exerting an influence upon mankind on an enormous scale upon economic prosperity, social progress and individual welfare. Science is moving farther and farther beyond people's common sense. It is very difficult even for those with the richest imaginative power to get an exact understanding of modern science and the changes brought about by it. It has also become very difficult for people to judge their values and meaning against the background of their experience and knowledge. The contradiction between the functions of science and lack of knowledge has drawn attention and concern of more and more people, who consider it to be a challenge to the world itself.

Science is an uplifting force that can raise society to a higher moral level. The influence of science on society is determined by the

level of development of science, and by the extent of public understanding of science.

We cannot expect that everybody will be a scientist but they should understand benefits of science. Moreover, it is not easy to become scientist at all stages but it is possible for the public to gain an understanding of science and enjoy the fruits of science.

The new government of Bangladesh should be encouraged to include activities aimed at increasing public understanding of science in their national plans for development. This can be achieved through education, including school education as well as science education for the whole society, so that each member of society can benefit from science education. It is actually a right that everyone should enjoy.

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

Education

Education in the public universities in Bangladesh is turning into a failure: in the world of speed, technology and creativity,



students in the universities are stuck with session jams, horrendous politics and worm-eaten notebooks. Politics in the universities should voice the demands of the students; I never heard anybody talking about the filthy toilets of Dhaka University, poor management of the libraries, age-old system of question formation, just to name a few problems. Nobody says 'sorry' for all the 'unavoidable circumstances' to avoid schedule classes. There is never any research to work out how students can get 'in campus jobs' so that they do not have to live a humiliating life.

The painful, humiliating, time consuming experience of earning a degree extinguishes the hope to achieve something larger than life.

The purpose of a university is not to produce the 'mediocre'; its purpose is to create outstanding personalities who have the confidence and acumen to create the future, no matter how poor and dominated a nation might be.
Rifat Mahbub
Edinburgh, UK

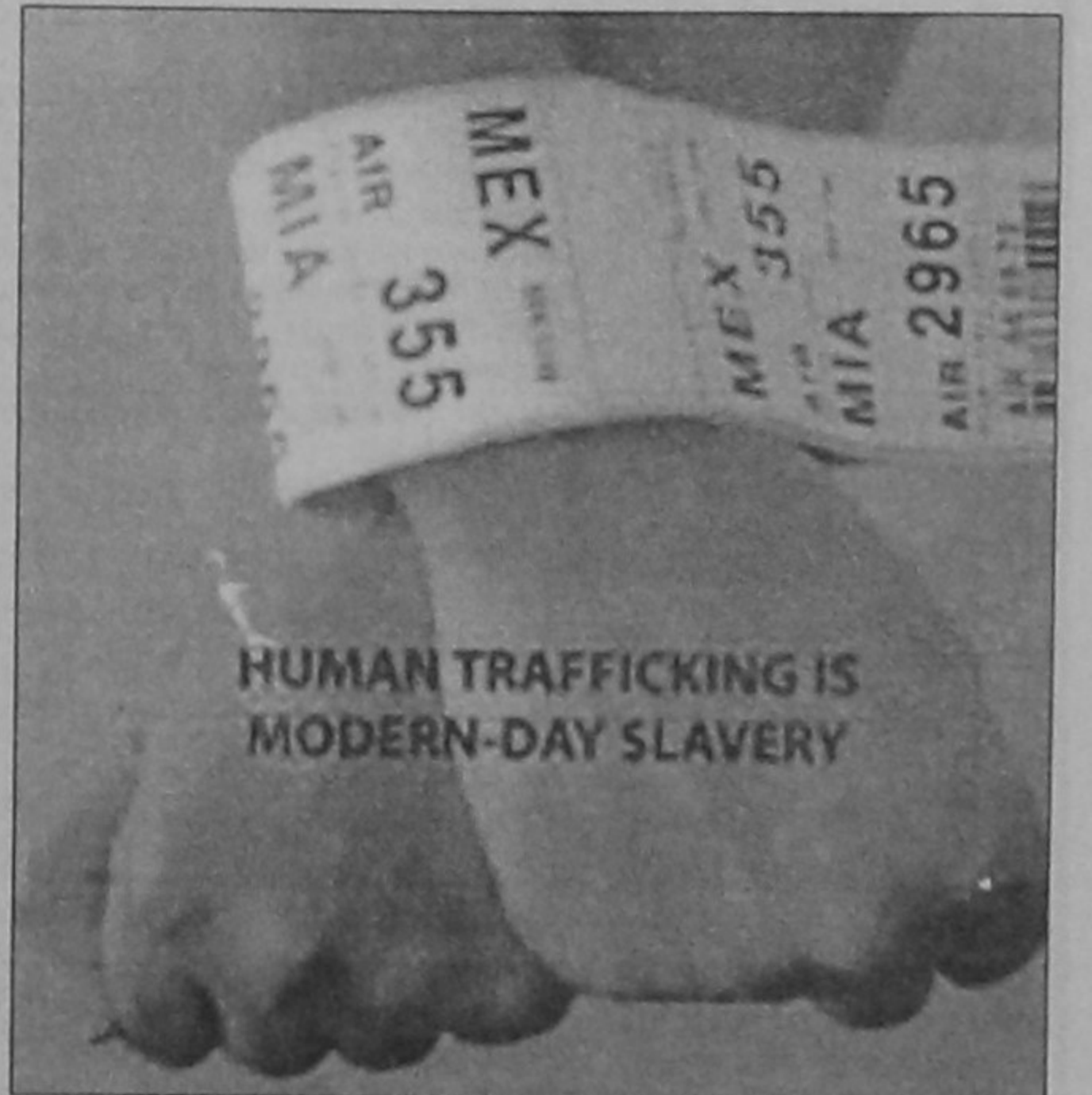
Stop human trafficking

Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, harbouring, or receipt of people for the purposes of slavery, forced labour (including bonded labour or debt bondage), and servitude. The total annual revenue for trafficking in people is estimated to be between \$5 billion to \$9 billion. The Council of Europe states that people trafficking has reached epidemic proportions over the past decade, with a global annual market of about \$42.5 billion. Trafficking victims typically are recruited using coercion, deception, fraud, abuse of power, or outright abduction. Threats, violence, and economic leverage such as debt bondage can often make victim consent to exploitation.

Transcending national boundaries and involving organised crime syndicates, trafficking in human beings is posing a challenge to law enforcement agencies across the world. According to estimates by the US government, trafficking, involving one million people is going on across international borders every year.

In Bangladesh the issue is alarming. The new government should take immediate action to stop human trafficking. This can take on three forms.

- Raising awareness amongst potential victims in the areas where human traffickers are active.
- Raising awareness amongst police, social welfare workers and immigration officers.



-Raising awareness amongst the clients of prostitution, to look out for signs of a human trafficking victim.
Mohammad Shahidul Islam
A national tourism worker