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Ekushey Book Fair



AMADOL HUIJ DRINKNEWS

February 21 has become synonymous with our collective spirit of an independent nation. The students' rise for the cause of the mother tongue on 21st of this month in 1952 against the Pak regime was the prelude to the subsequent emergence of an independent Bangladesh.

February 21st, thus, emerges as the defining time for the whole Bengali nation; we are independent in our thoughts, speech, and actions and in all our whole being the very blood, the entity. We composed poems, songs in our own language that added much to the essence of our being we have upheld our long and rich cultural mooring since then.

We celebrate this month in a diverse mood-- Ekushey Boi Mela (Ekushey Book Fair) throughout the country is a manifestation of that conviction. The biggest fair that takes place in the capital city Dhaka is such an event that comes each year with a reverberation of that spirit as a nation rich with a colourful variety in all our culture and tradition. The month long fair keeps its doors open to the uncountable visitors, day in

and day out. New writers along with the established ones come up with their new books for the readers. The variety includes, amazingly, books on almost all spheres of our lives: social, political, individual, national and international. Books on fiction and non-fiction; and on poetry keep the readers' spirit reverberating -- we sing of ourselves! As the United Nations declared the day 21st February as the International Mother Language Day, the pride has got its international recognition.

Ironically, despite all these achievements we haven't been able to implement our own language Bangla in all spheres of our lives. The pledges that our martyrs made before and during this revolutionary movement are not materialized-- much to our humiliation. More frustrating is the fact that there are, as it has been observed, certain government high ups who speak or deliver speeches on occasions in English where they could have used Bangla.

The apathy is being injected into the young generations who are studying in English medium schools and colleges. **Rafiqul Islam Rime**
Agraabad, Chittagong

not make a point. On the other hand, the international community should come forward for restoration of democracy in Myanmar and solution of the citizenship problem of the Rohingyas. The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, has a role to play. It is time to see how this organization deals with the Thai or Indonesian authorities compared to their 'pressure' on Bangladesh.

Having the cloud on the scene, Bangladesh should make it clear that the Rohingyas are not Bangladeshi nationals, rather they are the Muslim ethnic group from the western part of Myanmar, known as Arakan (now Rakhine State) and bordering Bangladesh. Since, 1992 thousands of them have fled to Bangladesh owing to persecution by the Myanmar military rulers.

Bangladesh should also make it clear that if any of its nationals is found stranded in the territory of other states it will take back those, subject to confirmation of the identity.

I have been advocating for a long time for a national strategy for Bangladesh to deal with the Rohingya issue. There is a dire need for a national legal framework to deal with the refugee issue, including the Rohingyas.

The people in the ministries concerned should understand that adopting a law does not mean 'inviting refugees.' Rather, it would be an instrument to deal with the problem effectively and justifiably. **Udatta Bikash**
Legal researcher and practitioner
Dhaka

Law and order

I am so much concerned about the law and order situation that has deteriorated after the political government's coming to power. I am really frustrated to see the return of things that we almost forgot during the caretaker government's regime. Almost every day we get news of murder, hijack, roadblock, brawls etc. I don't know what is going on all over the country. I don't know why the administration became slack after the formation of a political government. I think the government should take immediate steps to find out the reasons behind this laxity. If the previous caretaker government could make it happen, what's the problem of a political government?

I hope the government will send a strong message to the law enforcers to bring the situation under control. A stable law and order situation is one of the criteria of a welfare state. So, the government should consider the situation in practical terms, rather than being complacent. **Anis**
West Jharnapara, Pahartali
Chittagong

What is going on?

When I went to live in Road 33, Gulshan 2, in 2007, I was very impressed by the development of the lakeside pathway which extended right up to the

bridge at Kamal Attaturk Avenue. It was an enchanting walk. All human life was there a real glimpse of what I believe is the real Bangladesh - rich and poor, young and old, enjoying the beauty of the scenery. I took lots of photos. Mind you, one naughty builder had put all his building materials at the back of his house, over the footpath, so the paving had not been able to be laid there and one had to scramble over the stuff but I just shrugged and muttered about those determined to spoil honourable attempts to beautify Dhaka.

The building of the new bridge began and the path was blocked off at that point but it still made a nice late, afternoon walk up to the point where one could peer over the barrier to see the progress being made. I rejoiced that the caretaker government seemed to be having a real impact and dared to have great hopes for the future. Last July, I moved house (or, as one says in these parts, 'shifted') but revisited my previous flat recently to collect some mail - and was absolutely horrified to see the access to the lake-side path blocked by a wire fence and someone had built a house over the footpath on the other side of it!

What is going on? Has all this been done with permission? If so, whose? **Angela Robinson**
Gulshan 1, Dhaka

Underground railway for Dhaka

Traffic congestion in Dhaka has assumed such a menacing form that it has become a nightmare. Every day things are going from bad to worse. Successive govts. have been paying only lip service and no sincere & serious attempts have been made so far to address the problem. Economic cost of man-hour lost everyday is simply incalculable.

It is high time that the govt. should be serious about it and find out ways & means to solve the problem or at least reduce it to a tolerable level. The govt. is committed to constructing the Padma Bridge at a cost of over Tk ten thousand cores & planning & designing of the project has already started. But traffic congestion in Dhaka is a much more serious problem which deserves urgent attention of the govt. Some people come out with the argument that soil texture of Dhaka is not fit for construction of underground railway. This seems to be a hollow argument. If underground railway system can be built in Kolkata soil texture of which is not vastly different from that of Dhaka, I don't see any reason why it can't be done in Dhaka. Traffic congestion in Kolkata has been greatly eased after the construction of underground railway.

What seems to be lacking in our case is political will. The project will no doubt require huge funds. If the govt. fails to manage resources the

project can be implemented either through B.O.O (Build, Own & Operate) or B.O.T (Build, Own & transfer) basis. The elected govt. has no right to sit over the problem even for a single day. **Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury**
DOHS Mohakhali
Dhaka

Politically motivated cases!

The reports carried by the dailies of 18 Feb. 09 said that the present government was going to drop cases lodged against some leaders, activists and supporters of their rival parties by the last alliance government which were reportedly framed purely on political motivation. The government has already moved ahead on the issue and constituted committees to examine merits of those cases. Most of the people will support and welcome the move because people believe that none should suffer for not doing any wrong and only wrong doers should face trial and get punishments.

But one thing the present government should bear in mind is that the government does not mean "only a few ministers" who have formed it. During the BNP rule there were BNP ministers, during the CTG regime some advisers were part of the government. The government means all functionaries. After the formation of the AL-led government, only the ministers have been changed but all other components, who are the real wheels, are there. They are permanent and remain in place whoever forms the government. The new government can only change places of postings of these functionaries and has to remain dependent on them. And this can create many problems. The last alliance government set free more than 72,000 cadres and criminals who were charged and arrested by the AL government, calling all the cases "politically motivated". They did not take the time to release them through the judicial process.

These freed cadres created havoc in the law and order situation. They made the BNP's own existence insecure. I believe, the AL government will carefully examine the merits of each and every case individually. **Shafiqul Islam, NY**

We need a change

There was a massive truck collision on 17 February 2009 that left 13 people dead and many more injured. The reason being a truck got stuck up while trying to cross the unprotected level crossing. The High Court has given an ad interim order to the authorities concerned to submit the list of the unprotected level crossings across the country. There are numerous unprotected and unmanned crossings, especially in the rural areas.

The LGRD has constructed hundreds of km of roads across the country. Have they coordinated with the railway authorities about the crossings? What about the road accidents taking place in the highways? Is it the fault of the drivers only? What about the launches that capsiz regularly in the Kirtankhola River? Even if the railway department provides the list what will be the ultimate solution?

Is it possible for them to provide adequate traffic systems at all the crossings? Well, the railway department is also at fault by allowing the passengers to sit in the locomotive's engine. We must enforce the laws against them. Take the cases of myriad underpasses and over-passes in the capital for the pedestrians. Still they are crossing the busy roads!

That reminds me of our parliamentarians who vehemently opposed the ratification of the ordinance that the last caretaker government made, scrapping the free import of luxury cars. Parliamentarians of the eighth parliament deprived the NBR of taxes to the tune of Tk 280 crore.

Can't we use this amount in developing the conscience of the people so that they follow the rules? It's time to change. **Shahin Siddiqui**
Mirpur, Dhaka

A suggestion

The number of satellite channels in Bangladesh has increased rapidly in the last few years. They are arranging different types of competitions. Recently, Channel-i arranged the grand finale of an attractive competition 'Meridian-Channel-i Khude Gaan Raj'. Certainly, it was a good venture of the sponsors and channel authorities. Luckily, the nation has found some 'God gifted voices' for enrichment of our cultural field in future. Congratulations to the competitors, especially the Gaan Raj!

Such programmes in different names and approaches are being telecast regularly. The ventures will discover some quality performers and they will enrich their respective fields. In this regard, Channel-i and ntv are playing a significant role. Recently, Channel-i took the initiative of arranging a recitation competition.

I would like to draw their attention to another aspect. You often tell us that you are arranging these competitions from your sense of corporate social responsibility (CSR). It sounds good to us. The venture which can bring out the real talents is "Khude Biggani".

I hope the sponsors and television channels will consider my suggestion in all seriousness.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Business Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

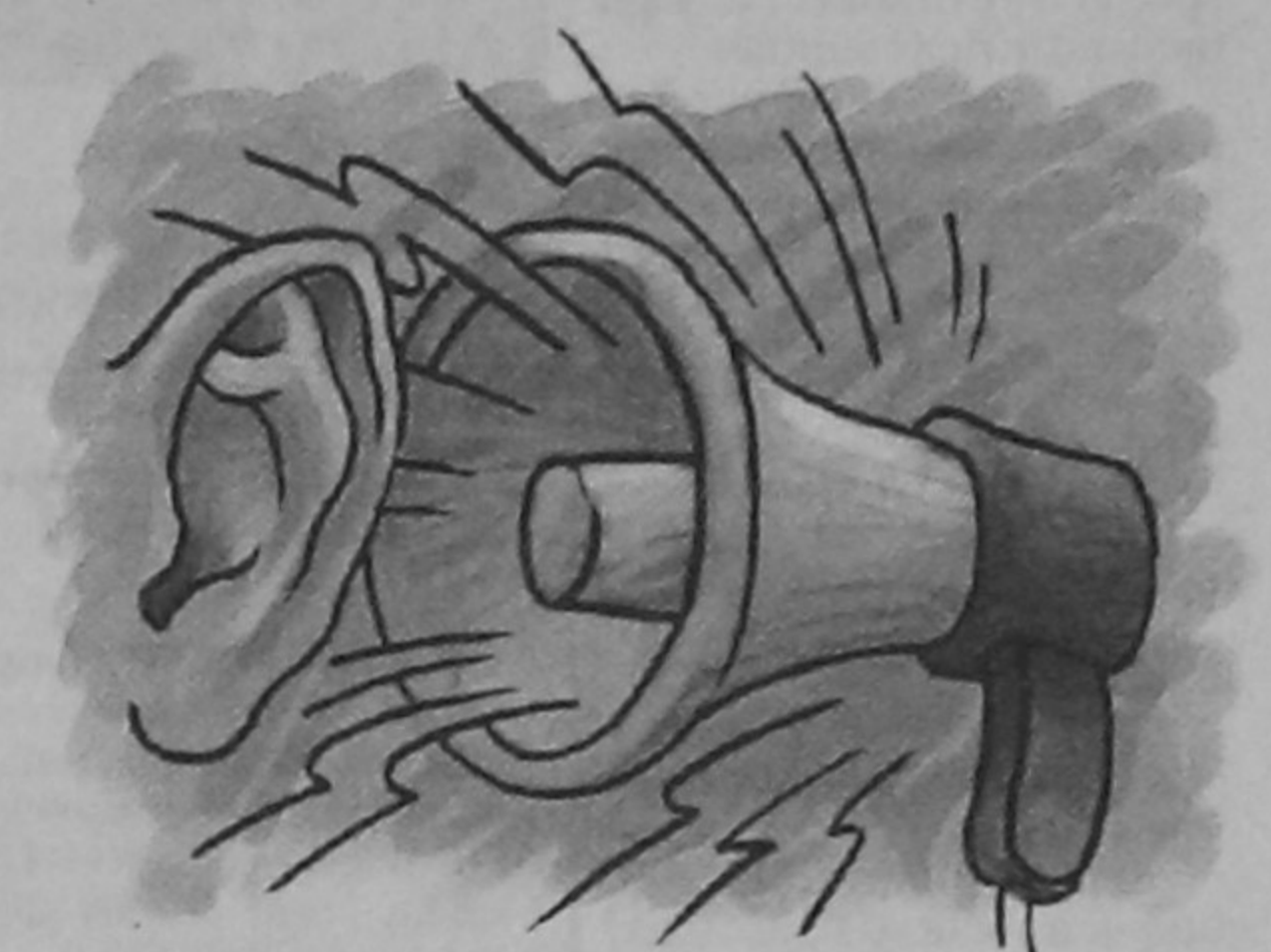
Ads and ethics

The boy was too short. His friends laughed at him and he felt very unhappy. Then the mother of the boy started feeding her son a particular brand of powder milk. Miraculously, the short-statured boy became taller than his friends and the boys began to call him "bhaia".

This is the story of an advertisement (ad) aired frequently on different TV channels. Albeit the story is attractive, it is a very offensive ad considering all themes in it. For hormone and some other genetic reasons a man becomes short or tall. It is definitely wrong to mock at a short or any other physically deficient man.

In all religious perspectives, this kind of fun making is a great sin, no doubt. The innocent boys and girls are learning to get pleasure from an unethical thing. **Harun-or-Rashid**
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Noise pollution



Noise pollution is one of the emerging threats to health. The ill effects of acute and chronic effects of noise are though well known to doctors and scientists, people of Bangladesh are largely ignorant about it. We not only damage our health but also many pregnant women, aged persons and children are badly affected by it. Increasing noise level in public places from various sources, industrial activities, construction, generator sets, loud speakers, public address systems, music systems, vehicular horns and other mechanical devices have deleterious effects on human health and the psychological well being of the people.

It is considered necessary to regulate and control noise producing and generating sources with the objective of maintaining the ambient air quality standards in respect of noise. In order to reduce noise pollution in Bangladesh, we must work together, as media, NGOs, and individuals, to change our own behaviour and to encourage the government to enforce existing laws on noise pollution.

Mohammad Raja
Gonoshasthaya Samaj Vitrik Medical College
Savar, Dhaka

Local government and MPs

A fundamental question is, why do we need members of parliament? The answer seems quite simple. Since our population is very large and they can not represent themselves in state governance, they require to elect somebody to act as their attorneys in the 'Jatiya Sangshad'. So, the only job of an MP is to look after the interests of the populace. But the field realities are quite different from their assigned job descriptions. We find that the public representatives are more interested in cars, jeeps, land plots and other perks.

An independent local body with all the powers is a prerequisite for development of an area or 'upazila'. The MPs seem to be hell bound to sabotage peoples' interest. They are opposing local government body commission in unison as they feel threatened and they are reluctant to relinquish some power. In reality the MPs are acting against the interests of their constituents. A good thrashing by the voters is what they deserve.

The government should not yield to their pressures and do justice to the people in whose name votes are sought. **Dr. SN Mamoon**
One-mail

Smelly Wasa water

I am a resident of Shantinagar/Nayapaltan locality of Dhaka city. For over a month or more, we have been experiencing the worst kind of water quality supplied by Dhaka WASA; the stench and sewer-like smell make it impossible to drink and all kinds of boiling or filtering would fail to get rid of the stench. Food prepared with the water itself becomes smelly. I am not sure of the risk of health hazard as it was not tested but if bad smell is any indication of health risk, this water would score a perfect 10 in that scale.

Now, Mr. Rashed Khan Menon is the honourable representative to parliament from our locality and I don't know how to reach him. I hope this letter (through you) catches his attention, even if the smell (in water) had failed to do so by now. The honourable MP is a seasoned politician and activist and I have seen him take quite a vocal stand in the current session of parliament while congratulating the speaker or the victory of the 14-party alliance.

We hope he would show the same tenacity and persistence in this issue of drinking water and bring us a solution. **Md. Ahsanul Abid**
One-mail

Wretched mothers

ADS report entitled 'Love lost, yet it goes on' was published on 15th February, 2009 which reflected the agony of a wretched mother who is confined to bed and kept under treatment. Her progenies don't inquire about her and left her in a miserable state. I would like to thank DS for publishing such news and making us aware of those hapless persons who are neglected by their sons or daughters in the final stages of their lives. It is a common feature in Bangladesh that parents don't have any individual dream and all the expectations centre on the welfare of their progenies. But in many cases, people are reluctant to provide mental support to their parents and also to pay attention to their medical needs in their old age. It corroborates that nothing can be more demonic than man and nothing can be nobler than man.

Though the government has promised us the 'Health for all' programme but we are still far from its accomplishment. It is difficult for the government to feel the agony

of thousands of mothers neglected by their children. Still we are far from having a sense of solidarity with these hapless people. **Subir Das**
Dept. of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering
BUET

Myanmar nationals

The recent incidents of drifting to the deep sea by the Thai law enforcements agencies of the Rohingya boat peat approaching the Thai shore and their subsequent rescue by Indian and Indonesian navies have created a hue and cry all over the world.

Those people, a persecuted Muslim ethnic group from Myanmar, reportedly reached the Thai shore riding small country boats arranged by smuggling syndicates, risking their lives. They were promised to be taken to Malaysia or Indonesia by those smugglers taking a handsome amount of money. Those syndicates reportedly have bases across the region- in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and China and have linked to a section of law enforcers.

On the developments, in response to their nightmare following the drifting, the Rohingya issue has come to the limelight calling for regional and international actions to seek a solution which is due for a long time.

This is the time for Bangladesh, which has been hosting thousands of Rohingyas and other Myanmar nationals seeking refuge here, to negotiate with international communities and the UN and ask for a permanent solution.

And any solution to the Rohingya problem in Bangladesh should start with their return to their country of origin, Myanmar. Alternatively, Rohingyas staying in Bangladesh should be resettled in third countries as Bangladesh is already packed with its over population stricken with poverty. The developed countries need to show their courage and commitment in this matter.

The issue of burden-sharing also needs to be considered by the developed countries. Merely, a token donation and resettlement of a small number of Rohingyas refugees from Bangladesh do

to hold rallies, demonstration holding the traffic, thus inconveniencing the people who have voted them to parliament. These can be restricted and held on holidays.

Short term solutions, within available resources are to be implemented on emergency basis. An action plan with a time bound programme should be made fixing

responsibilities and regular review should be done for long term solutions like widening and increasing road space, flyovers, underground and overhead pedestrian crossings etc. **Shanti Venkateswaran**
Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue
Dhaka



AMADOL HUIJ DRINKNEWS

Traffic jam

This has reference to article "TRAPPED IN TAILBACK" by Helemul Alam, The Daily Star dated 13th Feb 09, regarding traffic jams.

New automobiles are added to the existing traffic every day, hence it requires phasing out of old vehicles, say, more than 15 years old. Road space has to be increased and existing roads widened as a long-term solution.

CNG (three wheelers) and cycle rickshaw movements should be restricted on main roads. They should be allowed to run along one lane only. Shared CNG (three wheelers) can be introduced from point to point, which will work out cheaper for the people without decreasing the earnings of the drivers.

All intersecting footpaths should be barricaded to prevent public from spilling into main road.

Hawkers and vendors should be relocated away from main roads.

Private car movement can be restricted by allowing odd number and even number cars on alternate odd and even number dates. Car pools should be formed by people staying in multi-storey complexes.

More automatic signals should be introduced.

The authorities are to strictly follow implementation of traffic rules so that it becomes a habit and a way of life for the public.

Courts should not allow political parties