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## Terrorism and public awareness

There is a positive sign that the people are quite conscious about the vicious acts of the terrorists at home and abroad. They are aware and ready to respond to combat terrorists in our country. The government should seize this opportunity to make a very con-

certed anti-terrorist campaign to mobilize the people to wipe out this evil force from Bangladesh.

I think the electronic media and the private telephone companies can and should play a greater role by projecting good and positive educational adver-

tisements/serials to keep up the positive mood of the public, especially younger people. We have already seen their strong and effective creative work in other fields to get across the message to the target groups. It is time for them to launch a national campaign against terrorist acts. The work might seem easy, but I think it is a delicate job to make the message educational and motivational with no political string attached.

One thing is very important to keep in mind that terrorism has no boundary, no religion and no ideology, but has political ramifications if not well defined and appropriately targeted without any political intention or recipe to combat the terrorist acts. The JMB is more powerful than we know about. They might take full advantage of our current political transition.

The politicians are divided and not necessarily concerned about the real danger of playing with the terrorists for political gain.

A reader  
One-mail



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

### Early marriage

The state of getting married before being mature enough to get married is simply referred to as early marriage. Like most of the countries in the developing world, adolescent and child marriage in our country seem to be a strong social evil, mostly for girls living in rural areas. The young girls, the worst victims of forced marriage, are not having a sigh of relief from the malady of early marriage. Statistics show that as many as 75 percent of rural girls in Bangladesh get married before the age of 16 and only 5 percent between 18 and 20.

The drop out rate of female students at secondary level is alarming as far as the newspaper reports are concerned, with about 30 percent dropped out at this level. Early marriage, however, is believed to have been the main reason behind the situation. Among other reasons for the drop out

are inability of guardians to bear the expenses of education and lack of security, superstition and lack of awareness which, we believe, instigate the guardians to marry their daughters off earlier than expected. On top of that, the obsolete mindset of our parents towards their daughters has often been blamed for the social disease, as in most of the cases they feel anxious as long as their daughters do not get married.

Needless to say, much has been done against the ill practice but nothing pragmatic came out. Special law to prevent early marriage is in operation but sorrowfully with no proper implementation. As a result, it has taken a drastic condition, worsening the situation more and more. On an average, girls married off as adolescents attain lower schooling levels, have lower social status in their husbands' families, suffer higher rates of maternal mortality and domestic violence. The consequences of this strong social norm are many, including higher population growth, greater spread of disease, and a higher incidence of orphans.

The socio-economic and psychological effect of the ill custom has always been far-reaching. The inherent development of talent of the young girls meets premature death due to the archaic custom. In no way should the ill practice be allowed to go on. We need to work together to root out early marriage from every sphere of our society.

Sarwar Hussain  
Dept. of Computer Science & Engineering  
University of Chittagong

### New government's performance

People, especially young and first time voters, voted for the Awami League (AL) in a free, fair and peaceful election on 29 December 2008 as the AL committed itself to bringing about a change.

It came up with a manifesto: a charter for change, which is also known as Vision-2021 or Digital Bangladesh. In its manifesto the AL promised to bring down the price hike, try war criminals, establish rule of law, alleviate poverty and establish good governance and so on.

After attaining a massive victory in the ninth parliamentary election, our Honourable Prime Minister (PM), Sheikh Hasina, actually brought about a change during the formation of the cabinet. She picked up comparatively young, honest and meritorious leaders like Faruk Khan, Sohel Taj, Dr. Dipu Moni and so on. They are performing their duties.

However, it is a matter of great regret that we have been observing violence, gun-battle and extortion at different educational institutions perpetrated by the BCL, the student wing of the AL. Our Honourable PM cannot control or is not willing to control the BCL.

It is more disheartening that she blamed a section of the media for criticizing the government too early. She complained, "Their (journalist) pens were not as sharp back then, as they are now."

We all know about corruption, 'militancy', 'price' hike, JCD's violence, extortion, occupying of dorms etc. during the BNP rule (2001-2006). Therefore, the people of Bangladesh rejected the BNP-led four party alliance in the general election.

A proverb goes that morning shows the day. So how the government will be run in the coming days can be understood in the initial activities of the ruling government. Therefore, our media people are cautiously criticizing the activities of the ruling government to rectify their mistakes.

Finally, I would like to appreciate our Honourable PM Sheikh Hasina for initiating some bold steps like giving subsidy on fertilisers, reducing price hike of essential commodities etc. Nevertheless, I would like to request her as a voter to take stern action against those unruly BCL activists because they are damaging the image of the AL.

Alas! Nobody listens to the advice of an ordinary man!

Suman Saha  
MBA student  
University of Dhaka

### Slow poisoning

Once I had the opportunity to meet magistrate Rokonuddullah and he said that in many food shops he had seen textile dye for mixing with sweets and other foods. Like other children my children also love to eat coloured chocolates, sweetmeats, ice creams, soft drinks etc., some of which contain artificial dye. So I avoid giving them to my children. But many of my relatives and friends bring chocolates and ice creams for them. When my children take chocolates, I feel very helpless as I think they are taking poison. In my laboratory I have tested ice creams of some famous companies and some of them contain a huge number of bacteria-- much beyond the normal limit.

Finally, I would like to say if this situation continues millions of people will suffer from cancer or some other fatal diseases.

I appeal to the authorities, especially health and food ministers, to look into the matter seriously.

Dr. Mahboob Hossain  
Associate Professor  
Department of Pharmacy  
The University of Asia Pacific  
Dhaka, Dhaka

### Role of ACC

I highly doubt whether the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC), would ever be able to cure Bangladesh from corruption. It seems to me that the authority may not even be a kosher institution within itself and yet, it is supposed to deal with the problems of corruption.

Why should we, the readers of DS, believe that DS would publish whatever Newsweek has in the basket!

Md. Shaifur Rahman  
BUET

### Call centres

Recently, the DS reported that the potential call centre industry in Bangladesh is facing a lot of policy hurdles. Indisputably, it's our bad luck because we are unable to take this great opportunity. All over the world this is a growing industry, especially in the developing countries. The global market is worth \$450 billion. How much percentage are we getting in this respect?

Study shows that sales growth in India was 89 percent, Brazil 38 percent and in Poland 23 percent in 2007, whereas it was hardly 10 percent in our country. VoIP is still illegal. In such a small country, our authorities have failed to coordinate among themselves. Our competitors are taking advantage of this.

If the government really wants to root out corruption, it should strengthen the independence of the existing law enforcement authorities and judicial institutions. Only that would provide the long-term antidote against rampant corruption!

Shamol Saha

Boston University, USA

### In response...

I am referring to an article entitled "Turkey's Islamists show their hand", where intriguingly the writer launched a campaign of fallacy.

Indeed it's rare that the Newsweek has published an

article of such low standard.

Why should we, the readers of DS, believe that DS would publish whatever Newsweek has in the basket!

Md. Shaifur Rahman  
BUET

### Propaganda or facts?

The BNP Secretary General seems to be upset, about lawmakers asking for information about Koko's illegal money transfer and ex-PM's 400 pieces of luggage while going to Saudi Arabia. Both the facts are verifiable and possibly on record. Koko's money laundering and getting money from Siemens was public news in US papers.

Regarding the luggage going to Saudi Arabia, it should be on the load sheet of the Biman flight on record on the trip when it was supposed to have been loaded. A scrutiny of that will reveal the logic or otherwise of the matter. Finding that from the record is not difficult. It is however unfortunate that both the issues are related to the ex-PM!

If she (ex-PM) considers these to be false statements made in the house, she and her son should take legal action. Mere talking to reporters is not the correct way to stop the rumours, when legal options are there.

S.A. Mansoor  
Dhaka

### ACC vs. government

There was front-page news in many Bangla newspapers on 20 Feb. under the heading "kar katha shattaya". Many people, especially the ones who were charged, arrested and jailed for corruption were the most vocal against the ACC Chairman and DG.

One thing is sure, the people of this country, for the first time, could know the magnitude of corruption that was going on, could recognize the officials and politicians involved in corruption due to the independent working environment the ACC enjoyed during the CTG. This is the very ACC which could investigate the stealing of relief goods, taking of bribes from foreign investors and siphoning of wealth to foreign countries, evasion of taxes, extortion and many more crimes committed by government officials, businessmen and politicians before one-eleven.

The prime minister has declared that the anti-corruption drive will continue as it was going on. For the sake of independence of the ACC, they should be allowed to prove their statements with facts and figures so that the corrupt cannot succeed. The corrupt ones do not want the ACC to remain powerful, they want to see the institution as a tool of politicians, so that they always remain out of the drag net.

A vigorous anti-corruption drive is the pledge of the PM's election manifesto. Any action that might go against this pledge will be counterproductive.

Ramij Ahmad

Department of English  
University of Chittagong

## Let's learn from China

China closed 12 highways around the capital Beijing on 19.02.09 because of heavy snow brought on by seeding clouds with chemicals, according to the Chinese state media. This is exciting news as far as Bangladesh and its weather system is concerned.

All highways were closed in the northern province of China including the one which was directly connected to Beijing. The northern province is seriously hit by drought which according to Beijing is the longest drought in 38 years. Hebei got its first heavy snow of this year on 18.02.09. The provincial weather bureau said that snow too was "enhanced" by artificial seeding.

"The snow has brought moisture to the soil, which will help end the drought," according to a senior engineer of the provincial meteorological observatory. The meteorological office also said that 313 cigarette-size sticks of silver iodide were fired into the clouds



IQBAL AHMED / DRINKNEWS

### Digital Bangladesh

The term "Digital Bangladesh" has become a common one in our national life these days. We frequently hear of this term but almost all of us are ignorant of what it actually means. It has become so frequently used a term that it has affected all. In the near past the word "digital" was only used to mean something modern.

The prime minister has ushered in a new era for the nation by using this term. The present govt. has promised to make a digital Bangladesh within 2021. So everybody wishes to experience what is going to be done by 2021.

Whenever we see something strange or extraordinary in our daily life, then we call it a symbol of digital Bangladesh. What's the truth of the matter? The government should act quickly.

Ramij Ahmad

Department of English

University of Chittagong

### Withdraw

#### restriction

The Bangladeshi ICL cricketers are still disallowed to play in any form of home cricket. Sri Lanka has already withdrawn the restriction on their ICL cricketers. If BCB (Bangladesh Cricket Board) gives them the permission to play in all forms of cricket, then our national team will become stronger. We must not forget that Alok Kapali, Shahriar Nafees and Aftab Ahmed played very well in ICL.

Why should we deprive ourselves of their valuable services?

Ahmed Kofil

Business Administration

Shahjalal University

Sylhet

### Morning shows....

It is just more than a month that the AL-led grand alliance formed the government after its landslide victory in the last general election. Against the opposition & some media reports & criticisms, Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister, told that it was too early to make any comments on the achievements of her government. This is very true but as the proverb goes that morning shows the day, the common people are losing their hearts.

Look at some news headings from DS in the last few days which are: School shut as AL men occupy it for jatra, BCL dissolves JU unit after gunfight, MPs shout, bang desk at

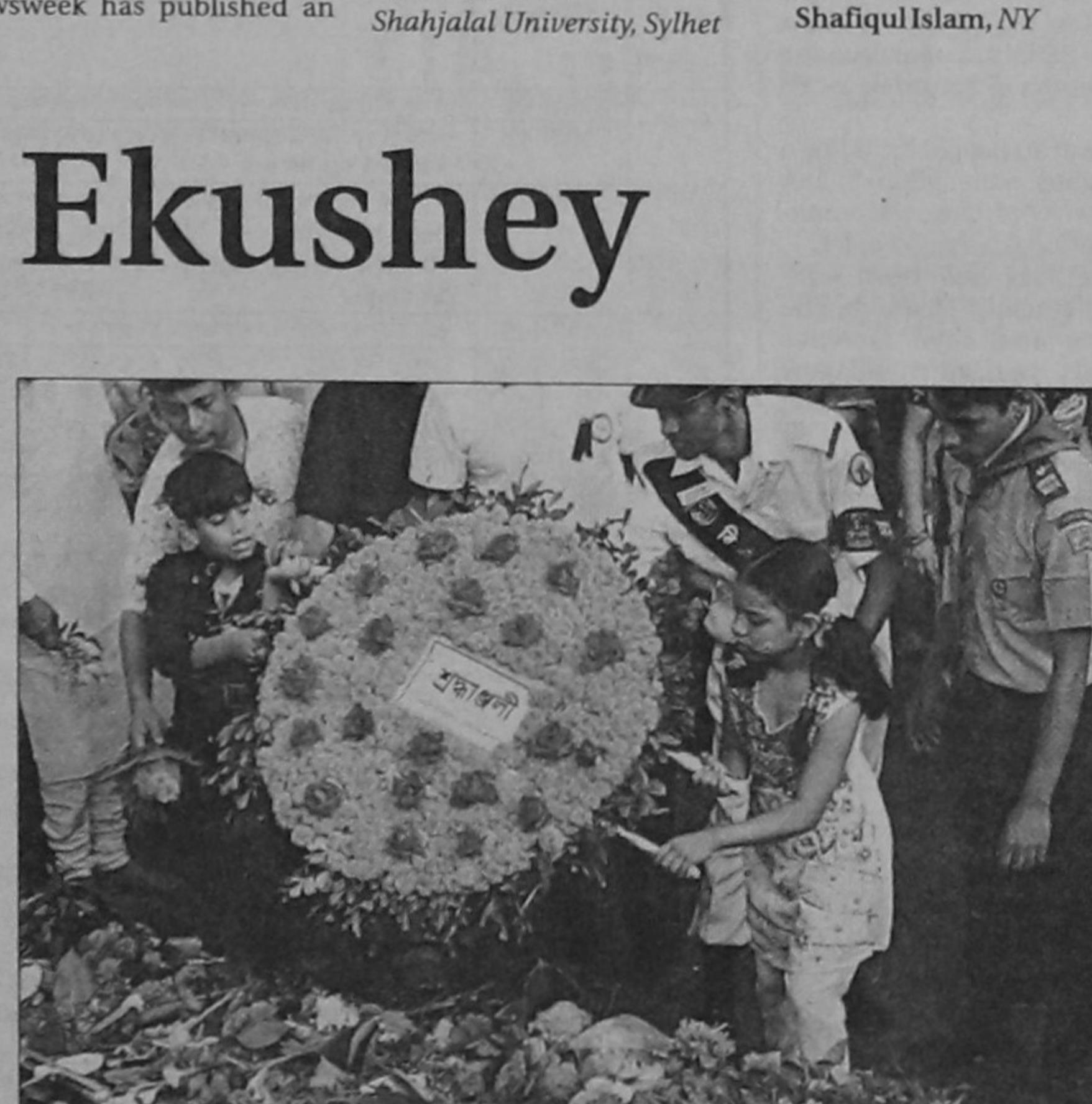
from 18.02.09 night to 19.02.09 morning, that made the snow.

As far as Bangladesh is concerned, we sure do not want snow but to combat the draught which mostly takes place in the northern part of the country due to shortage of water, why can't our government request for help from the Chinese for making artificial rains throughout the dry season so that the farmers who harvest once a year do get the opportunity for a second.

With the additional harvest the growth and distribution of food within the country will also improve. This will also help the major rivers of the country to maintain navigation which often is lost due to the dryness/shortage of water of the rivers.

I hope our policymakers will certainly look into this.

Sohel Ahmed  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka



SHAFIQUL ISLAM KAJOL / DRINKNEWS

Language is regarded as the mainstay of a nation's culture. As an evil attempt to tarnish our culture, the erstwhile Pakistanis tried to impose forcibly an alien language on us by effacing our glorious mother-tongue forever. But on that day our invincible people realized it and came forward to protect our language. The unprecedented incident of Ekushey February is not merely an event but indicates a spirit that we got 57 years ago through the sublime sacrifice of those valiant sons of our soil.

Their supreme sacrifice remind us to be united to work together to build a new nation. Ekushey does not mean songs and wreaths of flowers only, but it also symbolises the determination to rise above selfishness and submissiveness.

Ekushey is our pride, our pledge to uphold our language above everything else.

Harun Ur Rashid  
Student  
Institute of Social Welfare and Research  
University of Dhaka

### EC's decision

My heartiest congratulations to the Election Commission for appointing its own officers as Returning Officers in the December 29 election for the first time in the history of the Election Commission. I served in the Election Commission for 21 years and fought for this cause but could not achieve the goal.

I feel proud that at last the Election Commission felt the necessity to utilise their officers for the purpose they were appointed. I would also request my colleagues, now appointed as Returning Officers, to smoothly conduct the by-elections to parliament and discharge their duties sincerely, neutrally and honestly.

A.S.M. Anwaruzzaman  
Deputy Election Commissioner (Retd)  
Dhaka