

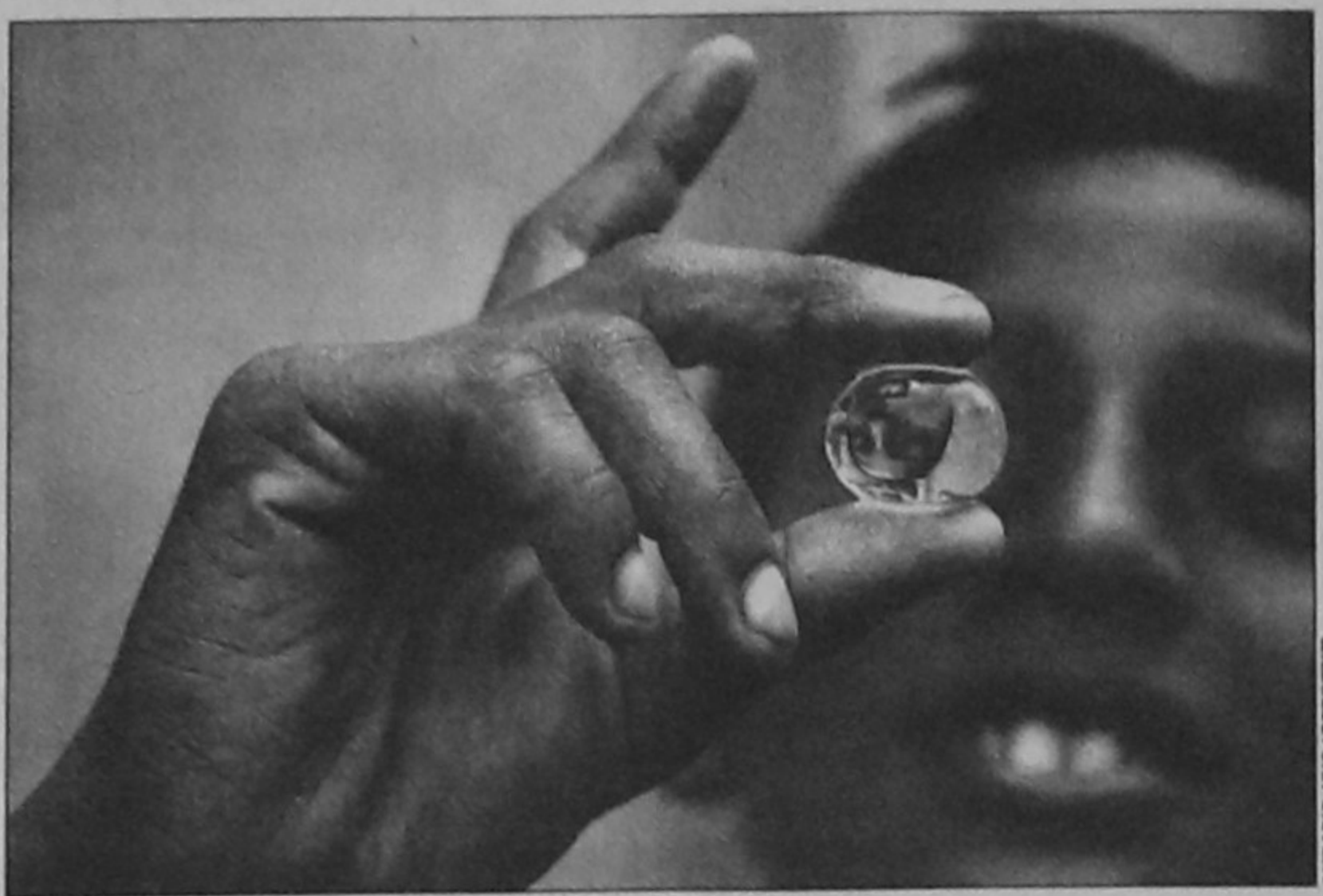
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Rebuilding Bangladesh

Bangladesh faces many challenges. As a small developing country with a colonial past we have to transform our economy from that of a backward primary producer to an industrial country that fully adds value to our natural and agricultural resources.

We have to develop our human resources optimally and also to

global financial and economic crisis and a collapsing market this task becomes more difficult. However, in the process a major impediment, the dogma of neo-liberalism seems to be getting cast aside once and for all, so that the country can build on the foundation that has been laid in the last three years.



build up the capacity to use them fully and effectively, converting the brain drain situation into a "brain gain" one. Our products and services must reach and maintain international standards to meet our own needs, and also capture foreign markets in a highly competitive world market situation.

In the context of the emerging

Bangladesh has to emerge from poverty (which leads to problems like malnutrition, inadequate housing, lack of clean water and proper sanitation, unemployment and underemployment, poor health and so on) and become a developed country as quickly as possible.

Despite many limitations,

Bangladesh has made reasonably good progress and already achieved several of the Millennium Development Goals (which are scheduled for 2015), but we need to do better.

When economic and social development, in the competitive world of today, is technology based, and the poverty gap is a technology gap, it is by generating and using both cutting edge technology and appropriate technology that we can bridge this gap and emerge from poverty.

In the context of the global economic crisis when local SME production has to be considerably increased, especially to reduce imports, the need for both types of technology increases.

The major challenge is to generate the technology to produce good quality products at the lowest possible price. In view of the emerging world food crisis, agricultural productivity has to be maximised so that Bangladesh becomes self sufficient in food and the scientists have to play an important role there too.

It is time we considered seriously the possibility to progressively give up the use of imported synthetic chemical inputs and shift to organic and natural farming, not only from environmental and health considerations, but also from the economic angle.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam
A national tourism worker

We condemn

We condemn the gruesome killings aimed at destroying our beloved country as an independent nation. We pray to the Almighty Allah for the eternal peace of the departed souls of those military officers. The nation will keep their memories alive forever, not only because they were unjustly killed but also because of the restraint, patriotism, maturity and patience the Bangladesh Army has shown in dealing with the crisis. We all express our heartfelt condolence to the bereaved family members for the sad demise of their beloved and pray to Allah to bless them all with the strength to overcome such irreparable losses. We are saddened, stultified and wordless in the face of such inexplicable act of savagery and demand justice through punishing the culprits and monsters who have stigmatised the history of our nation by killing our unarmed brothers.

We are proud of the Bangladesh Army for the extent of patriotism, maturity and patience it has shown in dealing with the crisis.

We now feel more secure having mature officers and soldiers in the job of protecting the sovereignty of our beloved country. I am sure they have glorified our nation by being extremely patient. I am also sure that they are

the most capable warriors who can really keep our country safe for our children.

We are proud of you!
Russell
Program Director
IDEAS
Uttara, Dhaka

It is very likely that we will get opinions from various quarters and persons from their perspectives on this national tragic incident costing lives of innocent and patriotic army officers on duty. The waves of nation-wide condolences are befitting. In the backdrop of this scenario, we can see some mixed reaction while analysing the course of action and reaction of the government.

In my opinion one has to keep in mind that the mindset of an elected government while dealing with a national crisis will be different from that of an autocratic regime. Those who are talking about full-scale military action, would perhaps do justice if they analysed the situation from the perspective of an elected government. Why not imagine the impact of such an action on the whole nation taking into account the possible sufferings of the members of the armed services, ordinary citizen and also the geographic escalation of the conflict and crisis all over Bangladesh? I cannot imagine the scene, and eventually the civil rights could be the final victim.

Everybody has the right to give his/her opinion, but be cautious to use emotion over facts-- the situation is still grave and needs more clarity. The push and pull in the decision making in government is quite evident. We are so unfortunate that we do not have a dozen neutral professional and individual personalities on whom the nation could depend to form a "National Commission for Enquiry". The county is deeply divided on ideological basis. If we cannot address this issue seriously and resolve it, the national unity will remain a far cry. I need not foretell the consequences.

With full respect, we mourn the tragic deaths of our patriotic army officers and others who have embraced "Shahadat" on one of those black days of our history. The families of the slain army officers and others are in our hearts and will always remain so.

An expatriate Bangladeshi
One e-mail

February 25 tragedy

The tragedy that struck on Feb 25 is quite horrendous.

It should open our eyes to the threats that we are exposed to. We must remain united as a nation.

Sheffield Islam
River Research Institute
Faridpur

Build a monument

Hundred plus officers and soldiers have been murdered in Pikhana. So many lives have been lost under most tragic circumstances. The conspirators have struck at the very root of national security. The highest level of discipline shown by the armed forces especially the Army is praiseworthy. A national disaster has been averted. We salute the Army for demonstrating the highest level of discipline. It will remain as an example to our future generation.

The death of so many sons and daughters is a national tragedy. Feb 25, 2009 is a black day. We must take vow that we shall unite and crush any and all evil forces who try to infringe on our national solidarity and integrity. This day has a national importance and should be remembered by us. A monument in memory of the fallen soldiers at Pikhana should be built.

The monument should be given a befitting name. The name "Sringskhola Stambho" (Discipline Tower) may be befitting.
Quazi Salimuddin
Baitulaman Housing Society
Adabor, Dhaka

Party politics and government

I am not a politician and not an expert either on poly-tricks to twist certain things in my favour as many of our politicians do or can do, to their advantage. It will not be out of place to quote here the late Bhutto of Pakistan. To a question by some press people quoted as asking Bhutto, "Sir, it is said that you tell a bundle of lies, one thing in the morning and the other, just the opposite in the evening, what is your comment?", he was quoted to have replied "I am a politician and that is a great quality of a good politician."

Now, as a citizen however, I am politically conscious like many other fellow citizens of our country. In Bangladesh you know, almost all our people are said to be politically conscious and so I am.

I welcome the political party of grand alliance coming to power to form the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh with a great mandate of the people for a five-year term from now. I term it a national government, because once the government is in place to function it ceases to be any particular political party biased. Its role becomes neutral and so the government may be called a national government. As party politics runs counter to a democratic government, so it is discarded forthwith for a healthy political growth, development and culture in the country.
Engr. Shaheedul Islam
Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Anti-terrorism task force

Combating or curbing terrorism is the desire of every peace-loving citizen, no matter where they live. Since terrorism has spread everywhere, beyond all borders and boundaries, it is essential that cooperation among countries is strengthened with a view to making the anti-terrorism drives yield some positive results.

The problem is that not all the countries have the same concept about terrorism. The Chechens who have taken arms to drive out what they call the Russian Occupation Forces, cannot be called terrorists. Palestinians are labelled as terrorists, but not a single Muslim will accept it as such.

While the USA and Israel call the freedom loving Palestinians terrorists, we firmly believe that they are fighting for a just cause. The British interpretation of the word "terrorist" is also similar. So having a common strategy among the countries around to fight terrorism will always remain difficult to achieve.

Before entering into an agreement with any country with a view to working together for eradicating terrorism, our leaders must evaluate whether they all have a similar concept about what is terrorism.

It may happen that what one country terms as an act of terrorism is not accepted as such by another country. In that kind of a situation a concerted effort or action among the countries who have entered into an agreement to work together may not be possible.

We observed with anguish how the UN member countries had failed to agree on a unified statement to urge Israel to put an end to the massacre it was perpetrating in Gaza. We also painfully noticed how the OIC countries failed to come to a unanimous resolution, when Egypt and Saudi Arabia abstained due to their disagreement with some other Muslim countries.

It is natural that man interprets things in his own personal perspective. Personal interest and advantage greatly influence an individual while interpreting a thing. So countries will always find it difficult to agree on modalities to fight terrorism which they do not interpret in the same term and same understanding.

The countries which have strong armed forces, will never enter into such an agreement unless it serves their own purpose, and the weaker countries may find it going against their own interest. Moreover, they send their soldiers to a foreign land on terms some of which are highly objectionable.

The United States enter a country under the pretext of cleansing it of extremism, but then their soldiers indulge in all immoral activities there.

They also kill innocent people of that country with the immunity that they cannot be tried by the country where they commit the crimes. As an eye-wash, they are sent back home to face a trial where the judge, in most cases, declare "not found guilty."

These soldiers derive a wild kind of joy out of torturing and killing people, and they always get away with these crimes. The British defence forces also have learnt it. So entering into an agreement with the British authorities to fight terrorism will not bring any significant change.

Muhammad Abdul Hai
Principal
ABC International School
Narayanganj

Noise pollution

It has become extremely difficult to sleep in peace or concentrate on study or other work in and around Sector 10 of Uttara, Dhaka. Certain businesses are using loud speakers to advertise their restaurants throughout the day. The noise created by these speakers is resulting in suffering of the people living in this residential area. Surely, the elderly and the sick are suffering the most.

We request the authorities to take immediate steps to stop this noise pollution.
Rahat
Dhaka

Jagannath University

Jagannath university crisis is now an open secret to all. The demand of students to get back its grabbed dormitories was expressed as they demonstrated it on the university campus on 27 January 2009. A three-hour long clash between the students and the police left at least 100 people injured, more than 20 vehicles were damaged. The university was closed sine die.

I think the problems faced by the university have to be resolved to bring back a congenial atmosphere to the campus.

Md. Mahbub Hasan
BBA (Marketing)
Jagannath University

Decentralising administration

The new, 'popular' elected political government has some urgent and serious homework for the JS. Discard the "Late Latif" syndrome.

As usual, it has started, hurriedly, with political mega-projects; ensuring self-security for five years' of 'seed-sowing' [need not explain] As usual, the civil service is being 'neutralised' -- to whose advantage?

Here are some priority items, prepared by an amateur voter who has seen, for decades, only one side of the coin of our political regimes' ambitious development programmes. The nasty question arises in the minds of millions of voters: the nation first or the party? Ensure continuity of long-term projects.

We have earned some negative fame for subjective, inward-looking governing styles. Decentralize Dhaka metro; and make lively the districts and the upazilas. Reduce Dhaka's floating population (including the beggars) and discourage regular business trips to Dhaka. How many rush to Islamabad and New Delhi? Our density of population is one the highest in the world.

Spread thin the home works and daily O&M and reduce pen-pushing at the Secretariat [remember the Writers' Building in old Calcutta?].

Digital governance, as promised during the election campaign, is another important issue. We have the potential human resources at the technical levels. Where are the assembly plants in the SEZs and EPZs needed for the IT industry? We have golden forests but why beat about the bush [the American version is gone after 20th January].

Can't wrestle with the powerful and mini syndicates? Who are the godfathers? No idea? Well, practise artlessness. Promise to crush the have-not syndrome at the governing levels. No tax-free luxury cars for the MPs -- make the rickshaws 'luxurious' [notice the advertisements on sale of flats, called apartments].

We could have been using coal two decades ago. What went wrong? Some say we have more coal energy than gas energy. We are not using hydel or tidal power -- only readily misuse political power. What is the deshi definition of leadership? Follow the crowd? We have been taught to live with our fingers crossed. Latest Obamaism; if you keep your palm clenched, then how to shake hand?
A Mahasen, Dhaka

Basic tasks

The 2009 Parliament of Bangladesh is unique in many ways. Among its many uniqueness one that will top the list is its biggest number of fresh and young members. Analysts across the board are full of praise and hope for this new phenomenon. While doing so they are too reluctant even to examine the risks that are associated with inexperience. Such is the predicament of the so-called "brute" majority. People become hesitant to give free flowing opinions.

This government is sitting with lots of agenda on hand.

These range from the very tough issue of trying the Pakistani collaborators to the interesting concept of making a digital Bangladesh by 2021, to employing most of the employable. These are the wishes of the teeming millions. Fulfilling these challenges will also take thousands of quality man-hour. This government is in a better position to achieve these challenges. It has the combination of wisdom of the experienced, and energy of the young amongst its ranks.

However, the danger is that if the government only eyes the eye-catching tasks its basic duty to provide the populous metropolis with clean air, dust free roads, covered drainage system, improving the shattered transportation system, providing well lit streets and footpaths, and supplying safe drinking water may get into a limbo. Any popular government to survive the test of time must ensure these basic amenities for its people.

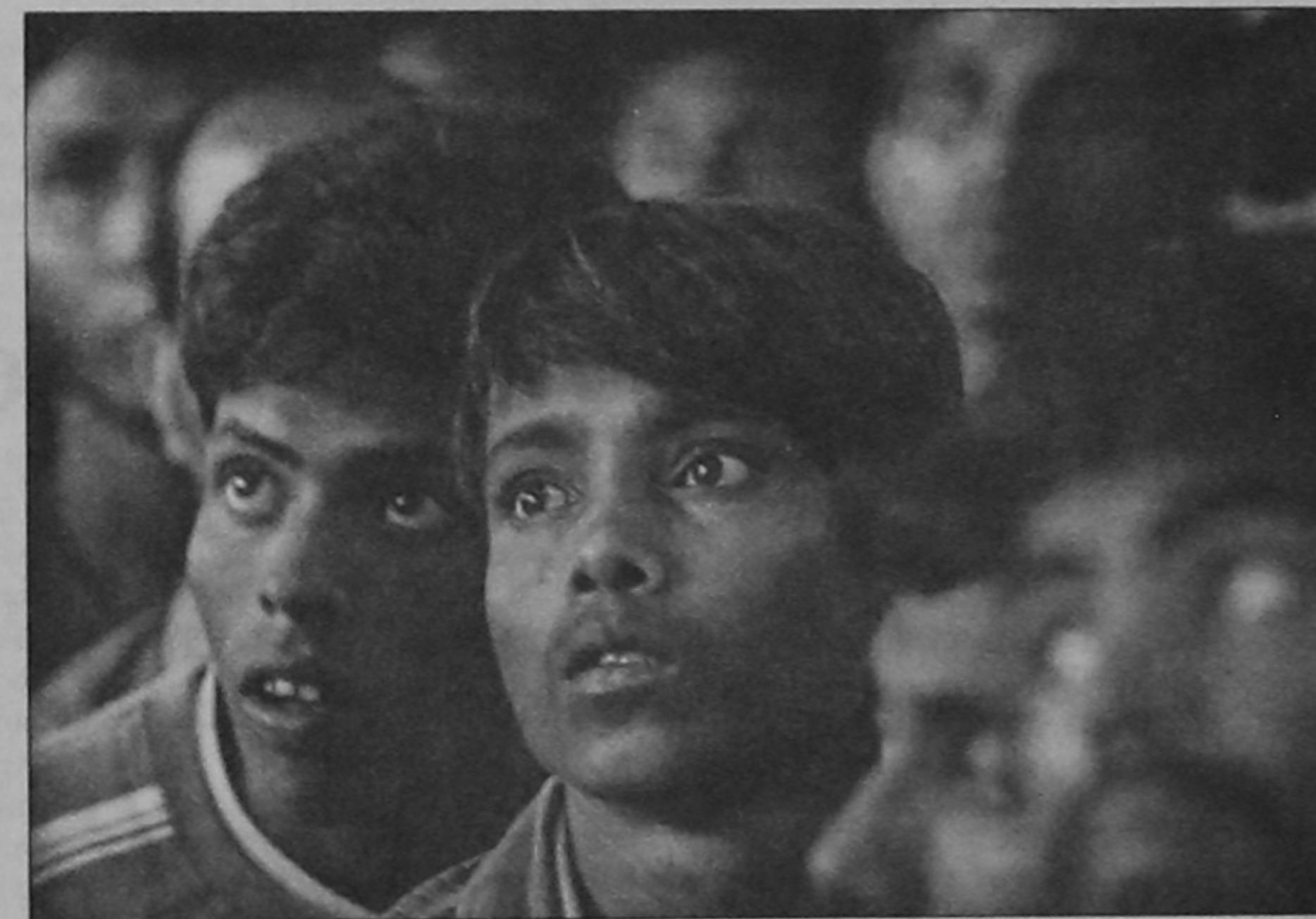
Nurur Rahman
Elephant Road, Dhaka

No room for hypocrisy

The other day I overheard a story which really upset me. A man was going to get married. All was fine. But after the marriage ceremony was over, the bridegroom found the bride to be squint-eyed. The bridegroom's family had gone to the bride's house twice to see the bride. But they didn't find anything wrong with her then. I couldn't find out actually who cheated whom. Marriage is a divine bond between man and woman. But if it starts with such hypocrisy then what will happen in their lives? My honest request to everybody, if you have any disability please inform it to your-to-be partner.

Don't deceive each other. Start a relationship with confidence, fairness and make a blissful ever-after.
Sifat H Ansari
SOS Hermann Gmeiner
College, Bogra

Time to deliver



In recent times, the plight of the Rohingyas has come to light. They have been subjected to extreme inhuman conditions by the military junta of Burma.

They have also been terribly ill treated by the Thai navy. It is now time for the Muslim world to stand up against this injustice. The OIC should exert political and economic pressure on the military junta of Myanmar to end the inhuman sufferings of the Rohingyas. They should cut off all diplomatic as well as trade relations with Myanmar if they do not recognize

the rights of these ill-fated people. The UN should also get involved and give the junta a deadline to end the sufferings of the Rohingyas or else impose an economic embargo on Myanmar just like what Iraq suffered after the first gulf war.

If necessary, the UN should form a 'coalition of the willing' and launch a direct military campaign to oust the military junta of Burma, so that the rights of ethnic people including Rohingyas are realized.

Sameer Ahmad Khan Mojlish
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Women commuters

Consciousness among the female population of Bangladesh is increasing day by day. Moreover, the present socio-economic condition demands more and more involvement of women in the productive fields. Nowadays, most of the women in Bangladesh are very serious about their rights, future prospects, career etc.

They are eager to participate in their families' economic and financial affairs along with their male partners. At present they are not happy with child bearing and caring only. For these purposes, each year a huge number of women come to Dhaka city in order to seek better opportunities i.e. education, employment, skill development and so on.

Various local buses are the most common and comparatively cheaper mode of transport for these female commuters. But to get on and take a little room inside these buses during the peak hours is very hazardous and almost impossible for them. Most of the male commuters hardly show any respect to the female commuters and they often force the bus driver and helper not to take any female passengers in the bus. Although the government sanctioned some double-deckers to carry only the females i.e. students, workers, this opportunity is very limited against the demand.

It is proved that without full participation of the female population the development and prosperity of any country is almost impossible. At present our honourable prime minister is one of the eleven female premiers of the world and two of the



major ministries are under two honourable women as well. We are really proud of that and we hope our present government will realize the problems faced by the female commuters. We shall be grateful to the PM if she takes instant remedial action in this regard. Besides, our male commuters should change their suppressive attitude towards women.
Shahina Akter
Kalyanpur, Dhaka