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## Polluted Buriganga

The river Buriganga is used for river transportation, fishing and maintaining links with southern river ports of Bangladesh.

Now the river has some problems of navigation from Babu Bazar, Mitford area to Munshiganj ghat as the water in between these two points has become polluted due to filthy water carried by WASA drains. So the vessels plying from

Sadarghat to the southern districts are affected by the highly polluted water. Passengers who travel by launch, steamer, country boat, barge etc inhale the polluted air.

So, immediate measures must be taken for stopping pollution of Buriganga water.

HR Meah  
Bakerganj  
Barisal



AMJADUL HUQ / DRINKNEWS

### Sound pollution

We, the city dwellers, are highly conscious of the necessity of providing the required education to the children of our country and appreciate the establishment of big, medium and small schools, colleges and universities all over our cities. These institutions are functioning, due to lack of any alternative, in the residential areas.

The establishment of such institutions is taking a heavy toll on our already congested, disorganised and highly unruly traffic system. This results in huge traffic standstills and jams during the opening and closing hours of such schools, as a matter of routine with no remedy in sight. The dwellers in these areas quietly undergo the extreme daily inconveniences without any complaint.

Of late, these schools have started the daily use of microphones in classes just when they are brought into session around 07:30 or 08:00am in utter and total disregard of their neighbours. Facing this onslaught on a daily basis has become an intolerable event for those who fall in the senior age category and, especially, who suffer from medical complications - some of which are quite serious, like, high blood pressure, cardiac ailments, post-operative convalescence, etc - apart from the fact that these onslaughts disturb the basic civic decorum and peace in these areas.

I seek the urgent assistance of our appropriate authorities to take the matter in right earnest and impose necessary restrictions on the management of such schools - banning, at least, the use of microphones in such residential areas and ensure that the sounds in classes remain confined to their physical boundaries.

M. Rahman  
Uttara, Dhaka

### First session

Having just watched the proceedings of the first session of the national assembly as a veteran citizen, many hopes and dreams arise, as with millions of my fellow countrymen and women, on the expected changes we were starved of during the preceding decades.

How to play the game when the players (politicians) also umpire the games, leaving the citizens in the no-man's land. Change of heart has to be imbibed internally first, before offering the new wares and goodies to the 140m patrons.

The new elected regime has three basic priorities: (a) Make up for the last time; (b) Create a congenial environment during the current life of parliament; and, (c) Create a national consensus on the future national goals. We are beating about the bush; and we have to get out of the vicious circle (of unacceptable political culture) without external pressures.

The initial motivations are cheery enough; but the proof of the pudding lies in the eating. You can't have the cake and eat it too. Here, in Dhaka, the winner takes it all. The political parties have to

respect one deterrent; accept the rejection by the electorate.

How to keep the young and new generations neutral in their outlook of national goals - regardless of the players elected to run the nation? The Americans have shown the way: try changes (in approach). How to change the mindset of the public figures? Not through sermonizing (our weakness), but through realism. Act, but no acting please! Real politics is not a yatra show.

The AL-led grand alliance has three to six months to prove its fidelity (BB's dream). We just cannot afford the continuation of political systems losses. The current and future missions are going to be tough for the errant political parties - to be in power is not enough. Deliver!

A. Mawaz

Dhaka

### Education

In view of the recent horrendous massacre at BDR headquarters, repeated attacks by JMB, excesses by Jamaat et al, killing of SAMS Kibria, Ahsanullah Master, grenade attack of 21st August etc, it has become absolutely necessary to impart certain education to the students. They are our future. The idea is to catch them young when they can form opinions.

This kind of education is called personal development. It should include chapters on patriotism, terrorism, violence, religious extremism, religious tolerance etc. and the devastating effects of certain phenomena on the economy, agriculture, industries, trade and commerce, reputation of our country etc. It should be started from class one and continued up to class 12 and will include all schools, all types of madrasahs etc. Personal development education will have far reaching positive effects on our future generations.

Personal development education is imparted in Australia and many other countries.

We request the Education Minister and policy makers to give serious thoughts to the matter and it can be included in the curriculum from next year.

Dr. SN Mamoon  
One-mail

### Unacceptable!

This is unacceptable! As if our country does not already have enough problems. And who has created these problems? The very people who are supposed to protect us and our country. How are we to trust them with guns again? If they had issues, then there are ways to handle this. Killing people, looting valuables are the work of professional criminals, not border guards. I always thought no matter how poor we are as a nation, we were still better off than those living in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia etc, but now I am beginning to wonder.

I sincerely hope the authorities will take stern action and ensure that this does not happen again.  
Aminur Rahim  
New DOHS  
Mohakhali, Dhaka

### Save innocent Sri Lankans

It is a matter of great concern that thousands of civilian in the northern part of Sri Lanka especially in the Tamil inhabited areas have been suffering in the wake of a civil war between the Lankan govt. forces and the LTTE. Every day we are hearing the news of people's sufferings in terms of death, loss of houses and properties and in lot many ways. Whenever there is a war, there will be immeasurable sufferings for the peace loving general civilians who are innocent and always like peace and abhor violence. They are the victims of any kind of war whether it is domestic or international. The situation in Sri Lanka is so severe that different aid agencies operations as well as medical services have become impossible to run. People are leaving their homes and valuables to escape death.

So, it is imperative that the Sri Lankan govt. take necessary steps in order to protect those innocent people. Different international organisations should be more active to save the innocent victims of the war.  
Anisuzzaman Sarker  
MBA (Finance)  
University of Chittagong

### Violence against women

It is really sad that violence against women is taking place on a regular basis.

When a girl comes out of home, she hardly feels secure.

We have liberated our country, but we could not still make ourselves civil.  
Habibur Rashid Ismail  
Jamea Rahmania Fadal  
Madrasa  
Chaitenyarhat, Chittagong

### PM's decision

Prime minister in her question hour informed the House that the government in implementing one of her election pledges will rehabilitate the

illegally forced retired officers. This is a most welcome move. The PM specified that dues would be given to the deprived officers. But is that enough? As we know most of such officers winning the court cases are already eligible for such benefits. Perhaps now the payments and post facto promotions will expedite. To rehabilitate and also to derive benefit from this move the government may utilize their services; they may be re-posted to sensitive positions where the government needs honest, sincere and committed officers. As we know the present bureaucracy was highly politicised by the past BNP-Jamaat alliance government for which they resorted to "ethnic cleansing" forcing exit of brilliant non partisan officers.  
M Sanaul Huq  
Uttara, Dhaka

### Reduce salt intake

Human body needs salt but that is a very little amount less than a tea spoon or 5gm every day. Salt is used mostly in the processed foods. Fast foods and Chinese foods also contain excessive salt. Excessive intake of salt increases the risk of high blood pressure.

High blood pressure again leads to heart disease, heart attack, stroke, heart and kidney failure, paralysis, blindness. Recent research has shown that 80 percent of the population will not suffer from high blood pressure if the people consume less salt. Get rid of it, we should use minimum salt while cooking foods, avoid extra salt in diet and remove salt from the dining table.

So, reduce salt intake to have a sound health!  
Zaki Uddin Ahmed  
Department of Pharmacy  
Jahangirnagar University  
Savar, Dhaka

### Rural secondary schools

The 306 non-government rural secondary schools in 64 districts across the country will be model schools under a project. It is undoubtedly a good and timely initiative when the standard of education in the rural secondary schools has deteriorated. In 2007, no one could pass the SSC exams from 248 secondary schools and all are rural schools.

Under this project, infrastructure, teacher recruitment, modern laboratory, ICT facility and teachers' training would be provided.

My opinion is that something more has to be one to ensure quality education in schools.

Teacher's accountability should be ensured (at least 70% students will have to pass in the first year and the next year it should 80% ...90%). That is how the teachers will be responsible for their students' performance.  
Md. Tofazzel Hossain  
Kushtia

### A question

We could not co-exist with the British, the Hindus, the Muslims and now we cannot co-exist with the Bengalis that we ourselves are!

What is next? Are not the most ferocious of wild animals living deep in the most inaccessible jungles less fierce than most of us, the Bengalis?  
Nazma Yeasmeen Haque  
Radiant International School  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

### Wildlife conservation

Our forests and wild landscapes face fresh and bigger threats. Most of us might not have given a serious thought to wildlife conservation. This should be a serious issue, the touchable and intangible profits we receive from wildlife conservation directly concerns over 70 percent of our country's population who depend upon the traditional occupation rain-fed agriculture.

It is time again for all of us to think about the needs of wildlife protection and pull up our socks to perform the onerous task of conservation on the ground.

Mohammad Rajja  
Gonosasthya Samajvittik  
Medical College  
Savar, Dhaka

### Polybags

The use and production of polybags do a great deal of harm to our environment and drainage system and to air, water and soil. In our country, thousands of pieces of polythene are being used every day. This huge amount of polythene is neither being re-used nor being decomposed in a natural way. Most of the bags are just thrown out after its first use. They find their way into the drains. Then the polybags block our drainage system, barricade regular flow of water, obstruct the rainwater flowing into the drains etc. As a result low-lying areas in the cities frequently go under water. Flood occurs every now and then. Whenever, these polybags go inside the cultivable land, it loses fertility and crops do not grow in such lands. Polybags remain unchanged like a curtain through which nothing can pass.

Polybags are burnt to get rid of their direct effect but smoke emitting from poly-fire pollutes our air in a massive way. Such pollution is very harmful for human health. Because of large-scale use of polythene our traditional jute and cloth bags have lost their market. Jute and cloth bags can be used several times whereas polybags are used only once. So polybags are a waste of money.

So, the government should make sure that polybags are not used in any form.

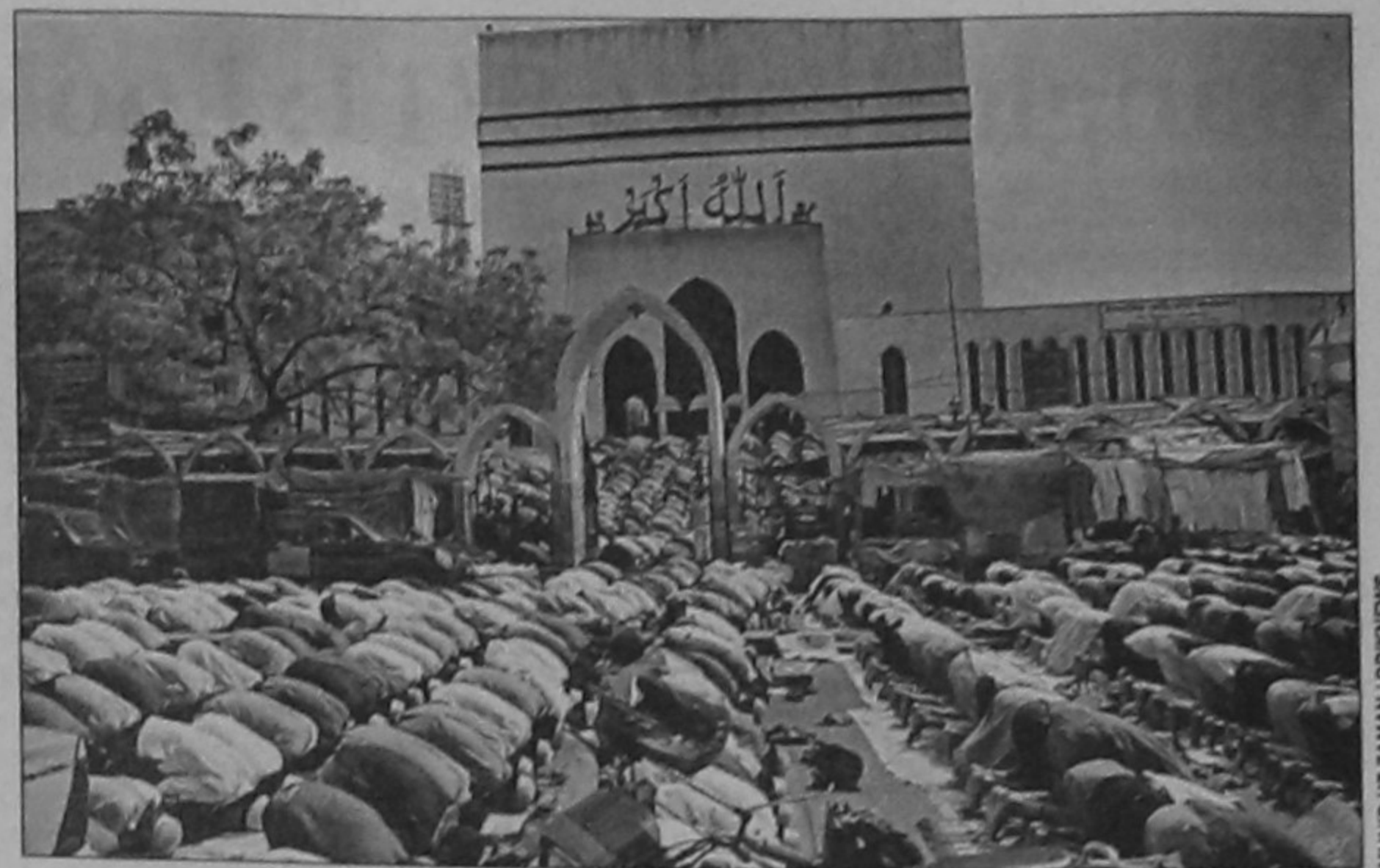
Shahina Akter  
Kallyanpur  
Dhaka

### JNU dorms

The fresh protest of Jagannath University students to recover the illegally occupied halls exhibits the awareness of getting their rights established.

University students today are being used mostly for political gains. In the midst of various political activities, typically harmful for their academic studies, JNU students' show of courage deserves admiration of the students, teachers and the government. If recovered, the dormitories will accommodate a huge number of students and it can be one of the university's most notable achievements since it has been transformed to a public university.

Mir Faziya Rabby  
Dept of Mass Communication  
& Journalism  
University of Dhaka



## National mosque

An editorial titled 'Sanctity of the national mosque' appeared in The Daily Star of January 18, 2009. What was happening there at the mosque every Friday since the beginning of this year is a shame for all of us.

About the involvement of the government in the appointment of a Khatib, I have a question. Why should the government get involved in the management of a mosque? Is it managing the religious institutions of the other major religious communities of the country, the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Christians? I wish to raise some questions fundamental.

(a) If we are a nation of Bangladeshis, we can not have a national institution for the Muslims only. The leaders of the Hindu community at Dhaka wanted their Dhakeshwari Mondir to be called 'national' mondir. If that demand was accepted, and Islam calls for 'Insaf' (fair treatment) to all, the Buddhists and the Christians may ask for recognition of their prayer houses as 'national' ones.

(b) Are we Muslims prepared to call the Dhakeshwari Mondir our national mondir or place of prayer of the nation of Bangladeshis? If not, why then the

Hindus or the people of other religious communities in Bangladesh are expected to call our mosque at Baitul Mukarram 'national'?

(c) As for the piece of land owned by the government for all Bangladeshis that is called the 'national' Eidgah, is it called so legally? Muslims may say their prayers there on Eid days but can not claim ownership of the land without paying a legitimate price for it. That is a legal requirement of Islam too.

(d) On the occasion of Eids, special flags are hoisted throughout the city of Dhaka and that too is a deviation from remaining impartial to all religious communities of the country.

As for 'taking out procession from the mosque compound and organising political rallies outside the gate' mentioned in that editorial, all mosques, Baitul Mukarram and others, should surely remain out of bounds to partisan politics. But the management of such holy places and the persons who conduct prayers in those places should also be acceptable to those who attend these places regularly for prayers.

R. D. Qureshi  
Uttara, Dhaka

### Tourism

Bangladesh has great tourism potential. The only thing we have to do is make the best use of our resources through proper planning.

We can attract tourists from many countries.  
Farhat Jamal  
Sydney  
Australia

### MRP programme

A few days ago, there was a news report published in almost every major daily of the country regarding the machine readable passport programme (MRP) taken up by the Bangladesh government. With vision of the modern days it is a must for countries like Bangladesh which are LDCs to have MRP as it was learnt that from April 2010 most of the developed countries will not allow the present manual passport which is issued by the government for visa/travel and immigration clearance purpose. From the past experience of our different Bangladeshi governments, we have seen that whatever they do, they do it at the pace of a snail and they fail to meet the target on 95% of the time and many excuses are given by the concerned authorities and departments. Compared

to the total population of the country, the users of Bangladesh international passports are probably 8-10% at the most (It's a guess as we do not have any data available of the passport holders of Bangladesh). By number this may sound small but it is very important that the present government prioritise this issue and keep our different foreign offices up to date so that Bangladeshi wage earners who are living abroad and those who are planning to go before or during this transitional time do not face any difficulty with the foreign immigration departments. The project is also very crucial for our businessmen who are frequent flyers for meeting different buyers for export of readymade garments and other items.

According to the dailies the project will cost around Tk 350 crore for introducing machine readable passports (MRPs) which is on the way for clearance from the Planning Commission (PC) very soon. Now "This very soon" has to be truly very soon as our business community and wage earners need them on top priority basis, so that they do not face any problem while flying. The MRP will also prevent having

multiple passports for one person, stop fake passports and will certainly help our immigration and secret services.

We are a country which is heavily dependent on agriculture imports and textile export and export of manpower which are the main arteries for the country's cash inflow system and by giving priority to the MRP it will only help this poor country to keep pace with the international market when it comes to selling our products.

I hope the AL government will give more than 100% for implementing the new passport system much earlier than the international cut off date; otherwise we for sure will fall a lot of steps behind in the national development process.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has issued warnings to all countries including Bangladesh to replace their manually processed passports with MRPs by April, 2010. Manually processed passports will become obsolete after 2010 and such passports would no more be acceptable to immigration authorities across the world.

Sohel Ahmed  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Israel's atrocities



Israel's latest offensive is Gaza is not an isolated incident. They seem to be very much enthusiastic about killing the innocent Palestinians, even on a lame plea. The Israeli armed forces call themselves a moral force. The type of morality they have shown through their brutal actions against the Lebanese and the Palestinian people is far too evident. In an aggression on Lebanon in 1982, they killed more than seventeen thousand people most of whom were innocent people. In the same year in a genocide, almost one thousand and seven hundred people were killed in 'Slabrashatila' refugee camp in Lebanon. In Kana mass killing in 1996, 106 people were killed more than half of them were children. It is worth mentioning that all those killed in the camp were under the shelter of the UN. In 1997, an Israeli helicopter killed some innocent Palestinians in an attack on an ambulance. The Israelis claimed there were Hamas members in that ambulance which was a com-

plete distortion of truth. During the latest offensive on Gaza, Israeli soldiers carried out an attack on the refugees taking shelter in a UN school killing at least 40, not to mention the total number killed and the trail of destruction left.

Israel, an epitome of defying the UN and of violating the human rights, is not a cause of headache to the world power, especially the US. Their atrocities are not termed as terrorist activities. Instead they are encouraged on the plea that they have the right to defend themselves. Obviously, they have the right to do so. But this doesn't mean that they should use bullets in response to stones. The most disheartening thing for the Muslim world was the complete silence of US President Barack Obama.

Will the US stand on the Middle East change in near future?

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