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Power supply disruption

At present after traffic congestion, power cut is the second gravest problem in Dhaka city. On a daily basis, we have to suffer at least 4-5 hours from persistent electricity disruption. However, it's no longer a new issue in Dhaka city. It's been discussed many times, but no effective measures have been taken to solve this problem. We see many experts talking about nuclear power generation, but so far nothing effective has been implemented. Are all these experts supposed to only talk on this issue or can they be utilized to fix this problem through implementing the nuclear project by means of government's direct intervention?

Now let's discuss our power supply capacity. The country needs 5200mw electricity per day but against this requirement our capacity is only 4,000mw. The sad news is that our power generation sector produces less power than its real capacity.

This is high time the government thinks about nuclear power generation on a priority basis.

Hasnat
American International University-Bangladesh
Banani, Dhaka

Children with disabilities

Entrance of children with disabilities to education is limited. An unequal educational structure, inflexible & unfriendly education programmes, lack of consciousness of parents, compounded with the insufficient knowledge of teachers and the inhospitable environment existing in the majority of the institutions, have done incredibly little to support education of children with disabilities in Bangladesh.

The nation has an estimated 1.6 million children with disabilities within the primary school-going age, but the total number of children enrolled in special & integrated education programmes is estimated to be far below 5,000. In terms of manpower in special education, 15 post-graduate teachers are trained each year through the Department of Special Education under Dhaka University. With all these efforts combined, only 4% of children with disabilities within the primary school-going age have so far been enrolled in education.

The education of the children with disabilities is under the purview of the Ministry of Social Welfare, which plays no part to attain the universal goal. Among the staggering 96% children who are still out of education, a major (70%) portion could have been enrolled in the standard national education programme with very little effort. This could be brought under a planned Inclusive

Education Programme. The remaining 30% could be enrolled under Integrated and Special Education Programmes. But this has not happened.

Mohammad Rajja
Gono Bishwabidyalay
Savar, Dhaka

Not really funny

This is a very ordinary event and may have escaped attention. But I was shocked and surprised. I cannot forget it. It has a continuous presence in my mind although I did not see this incident myself - a visitor threw a chocolate in front of the cage of a bear in Dhaka zoo. The bear for nearly half an hour tried through the small hole of the cage with its outstretched tongue to catch the chocolate and eat it. It looked like the bear brought out his tongue about a foot to reach the item. He finally failed. Nobody helped the bear to get it. People witnessing this would surely have been jubilant at this 'funny' scene. But was it a fun? I feel bad when I think how hungry the bear was. Is it not cruelty? This is one example. There are countless incidents of cruelty meted out to the animals and birds of zoo/circus and in other places. Imagine how it would be like if we hear this type of 'fun' made with helpless starving children! Do the authorities of the zoo properly feed captive animal/birds? Do they take care so that the visitors do not disturb the zoo inmates?

Now I appeal to the animal rights groups- please launch a campaign to stop cruelty to animals and birds. Keeping pet animals should also be stopped except domestic ones. No matter how seriously they take care, the animals/birds in captivity cannot live well. Rather, we can promote natural habitats/safari parks where they would roam/fly freely.

A.K.M. Harunur Rashid
Program Officer
Grameen Trust
Mirpur-2, Dhaka

Carpetbaggers?

It is a common practice for the leaders of political parties to stand for elections in as many as three constituencies. If they succeed in obtaining multiple seats, they have to retain one and surrender the others. This paves the way for by-elections, and in most cases other local candidates submit their nomination papers. In Bogra this year, two of the Opposition Leader's seats have fallen vacant and thus there will be two by-elections, as she has chosen to retain her seat in Feni.

The Awami League has chosen two veteran politicians of the party in Bogra who have been politically active here for decades. The BNP, on the other hand, have nominated the former Speaker, who hails from Panchagarh, and the law minister of the last BNP government, who was in prison

until recently, and whose home district is Noakhali. How can such people understand the aspirations, or represent the interests, of their constituents in the Bogra area?

In the United States, arising out of the circumstances of the post Civil War period of reconstruction, people who were outsiders attempting to gain political office in areas to which they did not belong, or have connection with, were called "Carpetbaggers".

This term derived from the carpet rolls in which they carried their belongings to their new area, and it carried unpleasant connotations. I believe we are now witnessing the emergence of a modern generation of Carpetbaggers in Bangladesh.

Syed Hamde Ali
The Nawab Palace
Bogra

BDR mutiny

In order to avoid mass killing, the prime minister's speech to the nation, particularly to the BDR mutineers, was perfect and timely. The speech definitely expedited the process of the mutineers' surrender. The PM's decision to negotiate with the leaders of the mutineers was absolutely correct both diplomatically and politically. But now that some officers unearthed their untold sufferings and are arguing in favour of raid by the armed forces soon after the attack, many people are in confusion and are passing the comment that the government decision was probably late and wrong.

The PM wanted an amicable solution avoiding a large scale massacre which could happen if the army had raided the place to arrest the mutineers. But if she knew the real situation of mass killing, looting and vandalism by the criminals, I am sure she would not take much time to take the decision to launch a quick commando operation.

We have no language to console the families of our martyred officers. We are equally shocked over the loss of the worthy sons of our land. We pray to the Almighty Allah for the eternal peace of their souls. At the same time, we urge our patriotic armed forces to be more patient and cognitive without paying attention to the rumours and propaganda. They should understand that it is a deep-rooted conspiracy against the country as a whole. Another thing they should always remember is that the 15 crore people of the country are the main force to fight against our enemies whoever they are and whatever their power is.

Finally, I make a fervent appeal to the opposition, particularly the BNP, to extend all out cooperation to the government to find the facts behind the massacre and bring the real culprits to justice.

Md. Sirajul Islam Molla
Kanthal Bagan, Dhaka

Pakistan-a failed state

It is clear that Pakistan is about to fall in the category of a "failed state". Since its birth, the military has been dominating over everything including governance. In the past it looted the wealth of its East wing (now Bangladesh) - at present they are involved in fighting with each other. Who is ruling the country? President, army or some other force? No one can say.

In Swat region, Taliban-type fanatics have captured power.

Some days ago, they tried to kill Lankan cricketers. Even a lunatic cannot think of murdering a sportsman. The rulers of Pakistan have been committing many sins. Is it natural justice?

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Reorganise BDR

I wholly support former president Hussain Mohammad Ershad's view with regard to disbanding the present BDR.

It is irrelevant whether it was a mutiny or a conspiracy. If it was mutiny the fact remains the Jawans supported them willingly or unwillingly. Who is to know which of the Jawans was an instigator or a victim of circumstances? Keeping them, without knowing who they really are, is a threat to national security. Trust once lost can hardly be regained!

On the other hand if it was a conspiracy and the BDR men were mere pawns, it raises deeper questions of how much the BDR can really stand up against their enemies. What is evident is that when it came to protecting their own officers, (if they were willing) they were woefully inadequate. How are we to expect that these Jawans would stand up when it comes to protecting and safeguarding our country's borders? We are told that there were thousands of them stationed at Philkhana during those black days, and in spite of such an overwhelming number they miserably fail to protect their own commanding officers and their families from thirty to fifty odd killers!

This is trying time for all of us. Unless we all remain united and vigilant against conspiracy, the country's sovereignty will be threatened. All of us should be mindful of what we do or do not do. This is not the time to be emotional. Every decision we take, especially by those at key positions, should be evaluated in light of their long term consequences. I believe, and I sincerely hope I am wrong, that the BDR issue is a tip of an iceberg.

The thing that unnerves me most is not the mutiny, nor the lootings, not even the gruesome killing of the officers but the mutineers' audacious belief that they could get away with it!

Sani
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Iraq's orchards

It is heartening to learn that the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Future Agriculture Development Organization (FADO) have undertaken a program to help invigorate Iraq's horticultural industry. As a part of this programme, 50,000 high-yield

grape vines and fruit tree-stock grown in California nurseries are being distributed among the farmers to assist them revitalize their once vibrant orchards and vineyards.

It may be mentioned here that agriculture is the leading industry in Iraq after oil which is the single largest employer. Most of Iraq's arable land surrounds the Tigris and Euphrates rivers where earth's agriculture through canal irrigation started.

We sincerely hope that the war-worn Iraq will be successful in revitalizing their orchards and vineyards soon!

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Role of MPs

I would like to convey my gratitude to Md. Anwarul Kabir for his recently published article, entitled "Role of MPs in light of constitution". In this scholarly write-up, Mr. Kabir has rightly pointed out the constitutional role of our MPs. Unfortunately, in our country, deviated from the constitutionally defined role, the MPs are very eager to involve themselves in local development work. Mr. Kabir has revealed that the major motivation on their part to be MPs is to be millionaire within a short span of time by indulging in corruption and the local development works give them such opportunity. This culture must be changed. The Honourable Prime Minister has called for changes in her electoral pledge. We want to trust our leader. So, for the better future of the country, we would like to urge the prime minister to empower the local government, especially the upazilas and let

In 2007, we had a huge fire in a large multi-storeyed building at Karwanbazar, and we had seen our shortcomings though our fire fighting personnel had shown great courage, strength in handling the fire.

Time has come to contemplate moving fast with immediate procurement of modern

equipment for handling such fire, especially in the high-rise buildings and we need to have real expertise on this also, keeping in mind that the city is moving forward fast with hundreds of multi-storeyed buildings and apartment blocks.

We also need to make a very comprehensive investigation of the root causes of such fire.

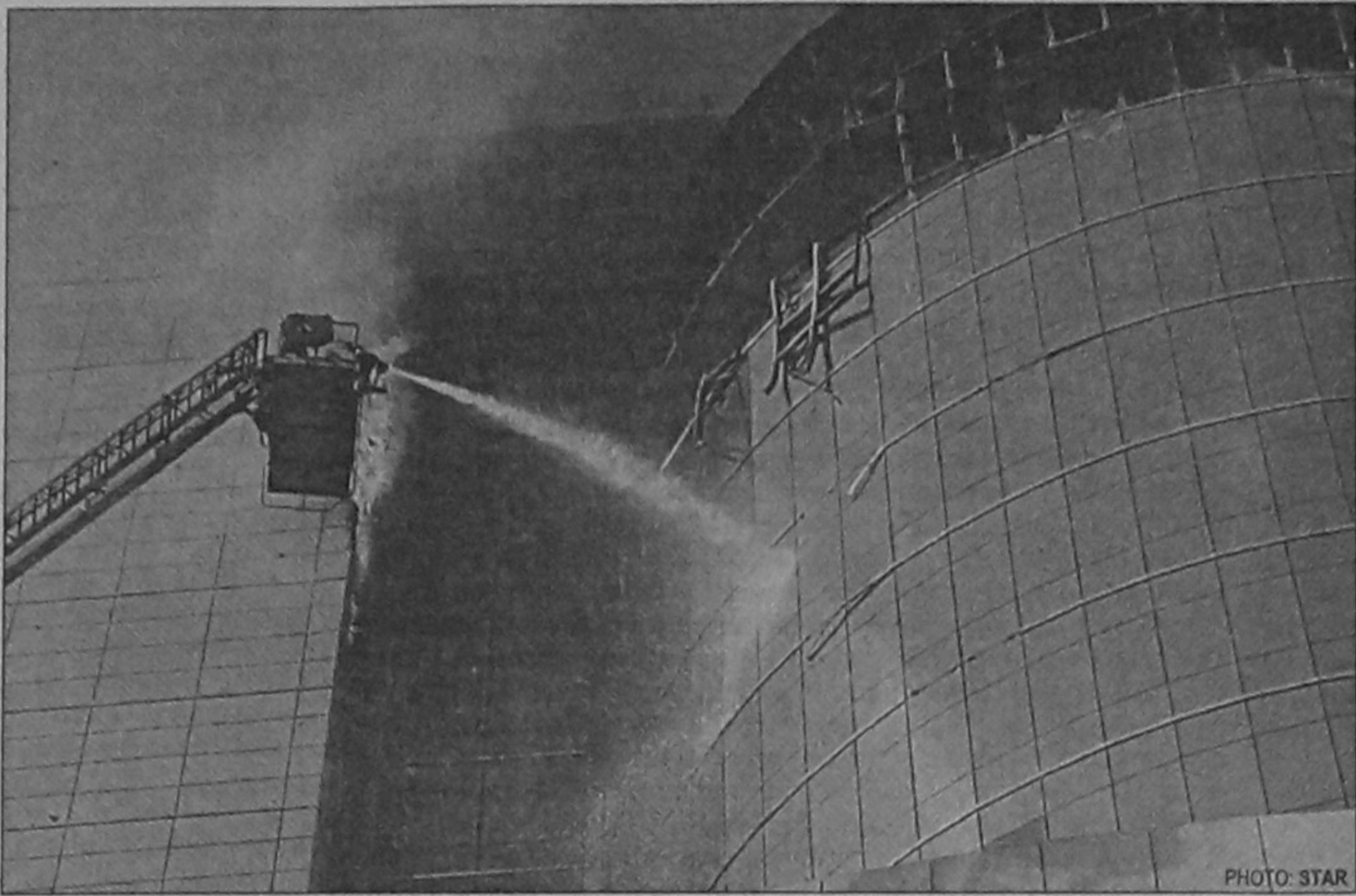
The country has been passing through a time of adversity and we hope to have providential mercy.

Nasarullah
One-mail

Our fire fighting arrangements are not adequate for the capital city. There is only one fire fighter for 30,000 people and the fire service has only one long ladder. Actually it is unbelievable for a city of high-rise buildings like Dhaka. Successive governments neglected the need for building an efficient fire fighting system.

A lot has to be done in this respect to set things right.

Jobyda Khanam
Department of Business Administration
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology
Sylhet



backwards. Will they again say that they will make a digital Bangladesh?

By banning youtube, our government has completely violated people's freedom of expression.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

Traffic congestion

Yesterday, when I was going to my school early in the morning I was facing a lot of problem going through the road. There was a huge traffic jam in sector 11. I had to wait for half an hour to go through this traffic congestion. And I missed my math exam. During this traffic jam I saw that the students of Mastermind and Milestone were heading for the same sector, which was sector 11 because both the schools are on the same road. There were no traffic policemen to resolve this traffic congestion.

And so, we, the students of Mastermind are requesting the government to take urgent steps to end this problem.

Syed Ishtiaque Hossain
Student of Mastermind

Hostage crisis management

Mr. Muhiat Rahman certainly deserves thanks for his write up published in the editorial page of 12 March 2009. Like many, it appears that Mr. Muhiat had been a keen observer of the recent Pilkhana incident and burnt midnight candle to gain knowledge on the Hostage Crisis Management. But to me it appeared that he had been rather unkind in making certain comments.

While quoting and commenting on the hostage crisis management in Russia and America, the writer overlooked to flash back on the excellent hostage crisis management done by General Kabir in Khagrachari a decade

back. In such case, he would find a readymade example to cite in addition to recent internet browsing. General Kabir rescued the district administration officers from the hands of hostage takers through prolonged negotiation and not storming into it. If the writer has the time to go through the chronological development of the Khagrachari Hostage Crisis, he would find how the principles of such incidents were adhered to, i.e. ICER (Isolate-Contain-Evaluate-Report) by Bangladeshi military officers. We still have such trained and experienced generals in the armed forces to manage any hostage crisis.

Comments on the standard and preparation of the security force (if he meant the army) to manage crisis had been rather harsh, which reflects narrowness in vision and knowledge regarding our national armed forces. If I may have the audacity to remind of the standard and preparation, the Bangladesh armed forces have earned international acclamation in the Peace Keeping Exercises around the globe where, they have been managing such crisis quite frequently. Hostage Crisis Management does not necessarily need sophisticated equipment and elite units and anything better than what our armed forces are equipped with.

With regards to emotional outburst, it was but natural because of unique comradeship and fellow feeling which may not be visible in many institutions. And they do not hesitate to go for sacrifice of any level in times of crisis (without emotion can we identify ourselves as human being!). What we must look at is, they have acted on the political decision and direction despite the bleeding in their hearts.

Brig Gen Ali Hasan (Retd)
One-mail

Pre-monsoon drive

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the pre-monsoon city sewerage and drainage systems cleaning drive used to be a major annual activity of Dhaka City Corporation and Wasa. This operation helped prevent occurrence of water logging of Dhaka streets during monsoon. It is not known why such an important operation was abandoned resulting in flooding of the city streets during every monsoon. Lest the new govt miss this impending crucial problem through oversight, I would like to draw the attention of the MPs concerned, before it is too late, to the crux of the problem. It is believed that the following cleaning operation in a professional and concerted manner would greatly reduce the intensity of the Dhaka city water logging during the coming rainy season.

Pre-monsoon activities should be complete by 30 April:

1. All surface drains must be thoroughly cleaned up of solid waste/garbage. (City Corporation).
2. All city streets, lanes & by-lanes must be properly cleared of construction materials, solid waste, garbage etc. (City Corporation).
3. All drains canals, culverts etc must be thoroughly cleaned, (City Corporation).

4. All storm sewers must be cleaned up of deposits, dirt, solid waste, garbage etc (Wasa).
 5. All domestic sewers must be cleared of settled materials, dirt, solid waste, garbage etc. (Wasa).
- Activities during monsoon:
1. All development works requiring road cutting must be stopped. (Dhaka City Corporation).
 2. Continuous supervision & monitoring of both organisations to ensure no resistance of water flow in the sewers, drains, streets

and canals must be ensured. A realistic work plan must be prepared as early as possible to complete the tasks in time. City dwellers must be sensitised about their roles & responsibilities through the media. The entire operation should be frequently revised at the ministry level.

Engr. Abu Shahjalal Azad
Former Executive Engineer
Dhaka WASA &
Retired Senior Project Officer
UNICEF



Irrigation with waste water

A very interesting report from Narsingdi, on the subject was published by a local English daily on March 4. It is a positive reflection on the initiative of BADC officials there. They have managed to utilise the waste cooling water from two power plants for irrigation! With their initiative, they have arranged to irrigate around 45,000 acres of land for rice plantation which is expected to produce about 78,500 tonnes of Irri and boro paddy!

Such exemplary initiative in the area of food grain cultivation deserves government's recognition. The feat should be widely publicised in our audio visual and print media both by the government and private (Private TV Channels) initiative, to encourage and motivate the persons concerned.

Usually, they are not recognised. This initiative to divert the cooling

water, instead of going back to the river, for productive utilisation is an excellent work indeed.

Personally, I congratulate the BADC officials there who took up the task, and completed it successfully. They arranged to dig channels and drains, the required sluice gates and culverts and foot bridges where it crossed roads and walkways, to bring the water to the farmland. The water that was all along going back to the river has now been put to productive use in the overall national interest by a group of dedicated officials. Till date they are nameless.

Your newspaper may follow up on it, and produce a pictorial article on a subject of common interest for all readers.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka