

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

A great initiative

A few days ago, we observed the International Women's Day. Women are constantly facing repression and injustice. Among these, acid violence is the most deplorable form of crime against women. School and college going girls often become the victim of acid violence. To raise awareness a commendable programme is being telecast at the initiative of Dutch Bangla Bank. Dutch Bangla Bank deserves appreciation.

Often students send the message of love to their classmates. Being rejected, they cannot absorb the shock. As a result, they try to take 'revenge'. These 'Romeos' do not know what is the meaning of love yet. There should not be mercy for these so-called students. Parents can easily understand the mental condition of their son. If they find anything wrong, they should strictly handle the matter.

Acid violence cannot be removed overnight. We have to go a long way. Our eyes have become too tired of watching acid violence and road accidents almost regularly. If we do not feel safe outside the four walls of our house, we can never build a "Happy Bangladesh".

Akash Pradip
Lecturer and writer
Bangladesh Health
Professions Institute
CRP, Savar, Dhaka

The National Water Policy will be reviewed periodically and revised as necessary. It will guide management of the country's water resources by all the ministries, agencies, departments, and local bodies that are assigned responsibilities for the development, maintenance, and delivery of water and water related services as well as the private users and developers of water resources. The National Water Resources Council is accountable for coordinating all aspects of water management.

The National Water Policy sets new paradigms for the water sector. It has to be implemented in right earnest.

Mohammad Rajja
Gono Bishwabidyalay
Savar, Dhaka

Who is responsible?

A group of undergrad students of certain level of our university recently left a note of greetings (of course in a different style) with a marigold flower pasted on our doors with transparent adhesive tape saying "Baromasher Semester, Salam" (Twelve months' semester, greetings).

Well, the duration of a semester is normally six months. But due to some internal problems our semester is lagging behind. Now the question is, who is to blame for this delay in semester completion?

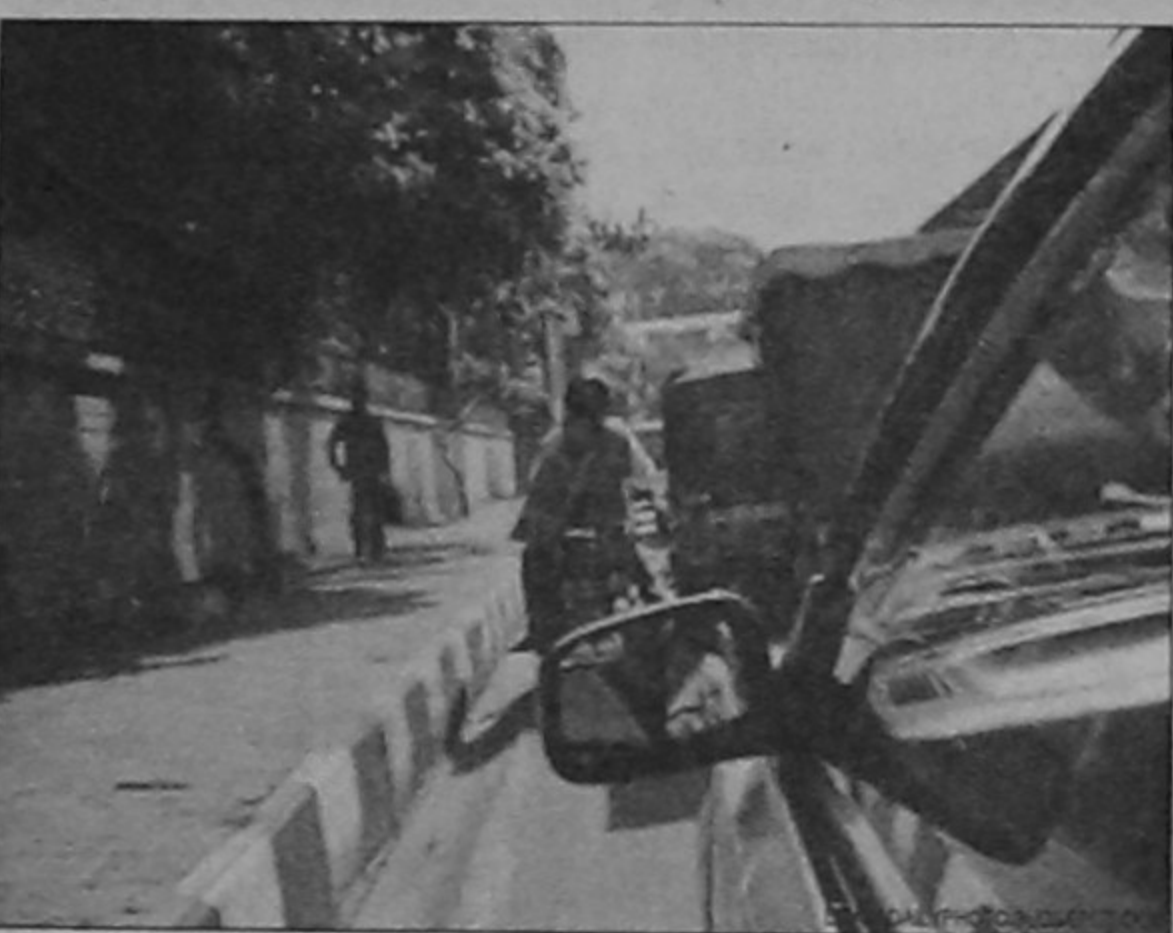
-Me or my colleagues (teachers)?
-The students?
-The administration?
-The prevailing situation on the campus?
Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural
Extension & Information
System
SAU, Dhaka

National Water Policy

The National Water Policy, promulgated in 1999, provides policy direction for the water sector. Water resources in the country are facing a great challenge. The most significant of these are alternating floods and water scarcity.

Footpath luxury

Markets, bazaars, pharmacies at every street corner. But how do I get there? There's the option of taking a rickshaw, but that would cost money. What about taking the car? Don't want to get stuck in the traffic jam. Or there is another option...walking. Yes. That's a good idea. Doesn't cost money, can get some fresh



air, and exercise.

Excellent idea. One problem. To walk I'd have to immerse my feet in the many layers of spit, rotten fruit remains, dirt and the identifiable brown substance which always line the streets of Dhaka. Easy solution to that. I can just use the footpath, no? No!

Many suburbs in our capital city lack this one necessity. A footpath. Footpaths are something humans use to travel from one place to another. What if we want to take a morning jog? Or a stroll along the neighbourhood? Or just walk to our hearts' content? No. To do that we'd have to dodge the many objects lining the streets, the dogs, the overflowing drains, and the flying plastic bags which have decided to suffocate us. A footpath, for many people would mean that they can complete their day to day necessities, without coming home in a very bad mood just because they now have a smelly substance on the heel of their shoes.

Those of us who are blessed with having a footpath near our front door can let out a sigh of relief. Or can we? We can step outside, raise our legs vertically and hope that we can reach the top of the footpath. Yes, I agree that at least we have footpaths, but if all this money was spent to build the things, why in the entire world did the government make them so damn high? Doesn't making a footpath that high cost that much more money?

A footpath would also ensure that buses letting off their passengers immediately get on the footpath, without dodging the many road vehicles which they have to when the bus drivers kindly drop them off at the middle of the road. Signposts at regular intervals would signal the bus drivers where legalised bus stops are. Unlike some countries we don't have the problem of signposts being vandalised by street gangs.

A normal height footpath can ensure that pedestrians are safe, clean and generally in a pleasant mood when they are walking to their destinations. It can also help lower traffic jams, reduce carbon emissions, and health risks as more people will walk. Not because they have to, but because they want to.

How about we give the deprived simple but okay paid jobs such as keeping the streets clean or say planting more trees. There's no need to look down on such simple jobs. Every small job matters!

Mayesha Tashnil
Uttara, Dhaka

Obama and NATO summit

With the end of the G-20 summit in London, President Barack Obama arrived in Strasbourg for attending the two-day summit marking the 60th anniversary of the birth of NATO. After his talks with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Obama said "This is not an American mission, this is a NATO mission, this is an international mission." These words reflect the fact that the US definitely is seeking more European help in dealing with its war against Afghanistan. In other words, Obama is basically trying to convince the European nations to pledge sending more troops into Afghanistan. And if not military troops, Obama expects that they will at least provide more non-military aid in terms of helping to train the Afghan army and police; sending civilian experts to assist the Afghan government and providing financial aid to run these schemes.

However, the European leaders naturally are not that confident about maintaining their presence in Afghanistan, particularly due to the fact that at home, they face rising opposition from their constituents (the anti-NATO riots in France are a fair indication). Hence we see that the Dutch intend to withdraw their troops by the end of next year and France will not be sending any more troops this year. All this goes to show that the US must realize that trying to win the war in Afghanistan is an extremely difficult task. Obama must take lessons from the Iraq war, where the US has forcefully tried to set up a regime of their choice on the pretext of spreading democracy. In the process, they have killed countless civilians. The same thing has already been happening in Afghanistan.

Obama must realize that their withdrawal from Iraq is surely a defeat for them. And in Afghanistan's history, they have never bowed down to foreign forces. So, Obama must no longer waste his resources and rather try to take more pragmatic steps as the US presence will only inspire more militants to take up arms both in Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

Wasif Wahed
One-mail

BCS written exams

I have passed the 28th BCS preliminary. I noticed in some daily newspapers that the PSC is going to start the 28th BCS written exams from April 30. On the other hand, HSC examinations will start from April 16. In the past, the PSC never took the BCS written exams during public exams (SSC and HSC), because some of the candidates are now serving in non-govt colleges. Most of the teachers of non-govt colleges will be engaged with the HSC exams.

I would like to request the PSC to take BCS written exams after the HSC exams are over.

Tanvir Ahamed
Meherpur

State minister's comments

The state minister's comments on the corruption charges against some politicians are an eye-opener to the people. Moreover, his concern about public money and his wish of filling the vacant position of ACC chief with a "GENTLEMAN" is highly appreciable!

Suhel
One-mail

Power management

DST means resetting of time in the summer. At the very beginning of the summer, the clock time is to be advanced one hour and at the end of the season it will be set as it was.

DST was first started in the UK on 21 May 1916. Then Russia, Australia and Canada adopted it. Now many developed and developing countries practice DST system to save daytime.

We should consider the option in our country also. **Md. Obyedul Kalam Azad**
MS student
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University
Dinajpur

Poorly managed tourist spot

We went to visit Shalbon Bihar (Maynamati, Comilla) on Friday, 27th March 2009. We hired two minibuses from Mymensingh to make our journey. This was the first trip for all of us to Shalbon Bihar. Naturally, we all were very excited to have a close look at this renowned historical place. We reached Shalbon Bihar at 12:30pm. We got down from the bus hurriedly to buy tickets for the entrance. When we reached the ticket counter we found it closed, nobody was around. Upon checking with the guards at the main entrance, we were surprised to know that the tickets won't be available till 2:30pm. And we also noticed a signboard on the right side of the gate where it was written that the gate would remain closed from 12:30pm to 2:30pm on Friday. I would like to ask the authorities-- how have you introduced such a timing on the weekly holiday? To add to this, when we tried to visit the museum in the afternoon at 4:45pm, we found it closed too, as the man in charge was not around.

Do they have any idea how to maintain and entertain tourists in a historically important place? If you think you people are not capable of running the office, why don't you just leave and let qualified people come forward to maintain these places properly.

Nazakat Ali
One-mail

Police and magistracy

It has been reported in an English daily that police wants magistracy power in the metropolitan areas. The concept is against the principle of separation of judiciary from the executive. We think the provision will break the fundamental principles of justice that policing and magistracy should not be vested in one authority. Bangladesh throughout its 38 years of journey has passed and practiced undemocratic norms of legal and policing functions. We can see the emergence of district police officer as equal to district magistrate, an issue which never came up for compromise in the past. The police department has already earned the privilege to be equal to the executives. Now they are asking to share the judicial powers as magistrate. The question is how one looks at it. The dictators, and undemocratic governments will always look for support from the law enforcing agencies and would always agree to enhance their power and privileges violating the fundamental principles of justice. I do not know what provision exists on this issue in a democratic country like India.

Fire safety measures

The DS-IBA round-table on the matter, published by you on April 1 is quite welcome. It is good that public awareness about fire hazard is increasing after the recent Bashundhara fire. About the recommendations of the round table, I would like to add a few ideas which can be introduced by the government to increase protection against fire disasters.

To increase frequency of inspection and training, traffic police officials of the rank of sub-inspectors and above, should be trained on Fire Safety and Fire Protection rules and regulations along with basic fire fighting skills. They should then have a regular programme of inspecting all buildings where about 100 people reside or work or go for shopping and recreation. The programme should be on a surprise basis on a working day, carried out say once half yearly. Their findings should be recorded

in a Fire Safety Inspection Register to be maintained at the premises; duly signed and dated and sealed. This register must be readily available on site; failure of which will result in an official call to the police station, and the owner or his or her representative duly fined a sum of say Tk.1000 in the first instance. For a repeat offence, the fine will be doubled!

Such visits should be more instructive to begin with and all possible suggestions recorded in the register. Subsequently, this should be corrective, and if needed punitive! An incentive be paid at Tk.500 per visit by the owner, and this must be duly recorded and signed and sealed by the person inspecting the register.

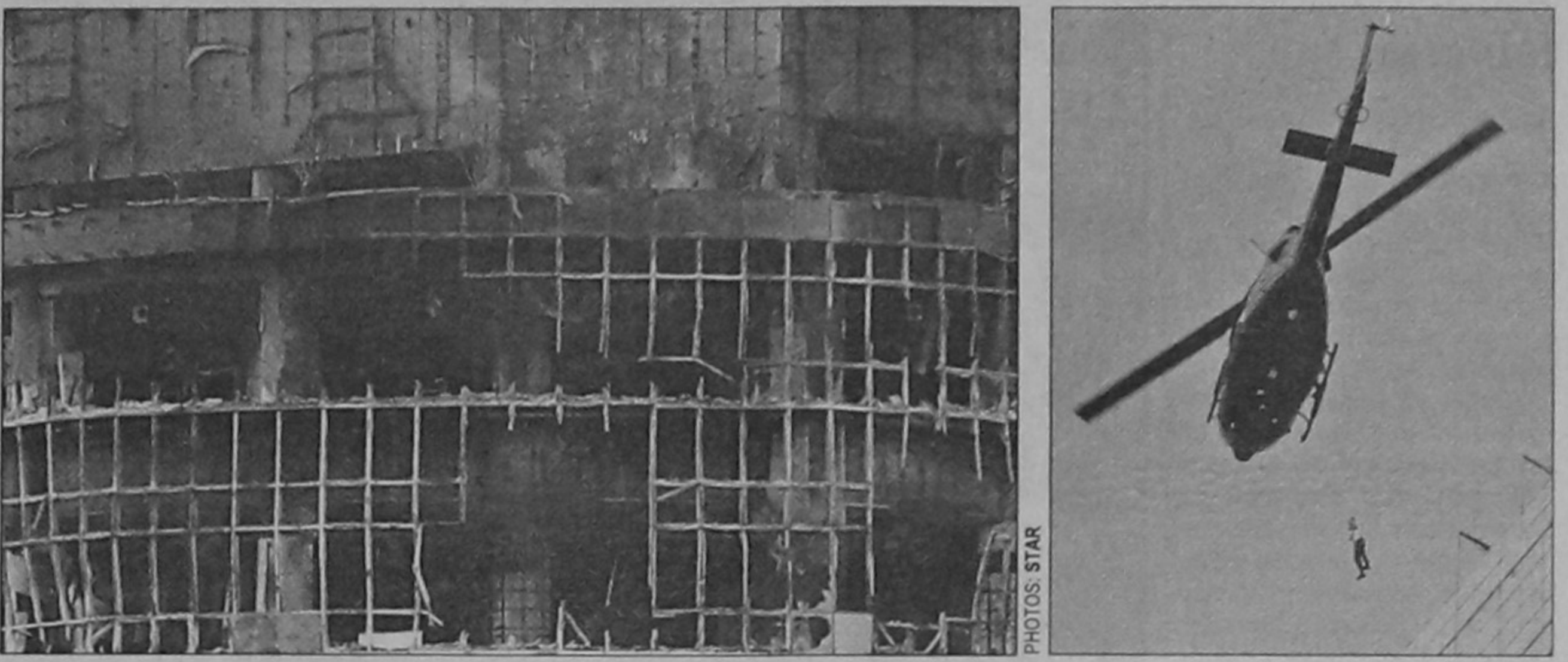
Any building, residential, commercial or offices; irrespective of the number of floors; must have an emergency stair-way in addition to the normal one which has a floor

area of over 3500 sq. ft. in any one floor.

This is an addition from what may be stated in Fire Safety Rules. In high rises, having more than three lifts installed; every fourth lift must have battery operation provision capable of operating on batteries for at least one hour minimum. The lift in case of power or battery failure, should go down to the ground floor and the door open, and remain so automatically.

All public buildings should have portable masks and backpack type portable air cylinders for resuscitation of smoke inhalation. The number of these must cover minimum five percent of the people occupying the whole building at any time. This must be easily available in the ground floor. The security staff there must be trained in proper operation of these breathing apparatus.

S.A.Mansoor, Dhaka



Nevertheless, I think the principle should get precedence over individual needs. The issue needs to be reviewed at all levels of the government.

Areader
One-mail

Preparing for exams

Studying without aid is one of the most effective approaches to prepare for exams. It enhances not only the personal study skills but increases the ability to handle some critical study-related issues. Though it is quite difficult for some students, it can be fruitful if they stick to it.

Anyhow, there is a trend among most of the students in our country which is that whenever they are going to enrol for a new course or study a subject, at first they think of a coaching centre, rather than pondering about self-study. It is all right to take help from the study aid, but it does not mean that students should be fully dependant on them. They should concentrate on studying at home by themselves. The reference study-materials can be helpful in this context.

Generally speaking, once the students start self-study they will improve their learning capability gradually.

S.M.Rumen
Pahartali, Chittagong

Reckless driving

May I make a modest suggestion to help in the slow and essential process of holding the owners and drivers of vehicles accountable for how they are driven? In the UK, the backs of many trucks, buses and other vehicles on the road display a telephone number

and a notice 'Driven well? If not, report to...' After all, bad driving not only threatens life and limbs but the profits of a business...

Recently, while my car was stationary and waiting to turn right on Kamal Attaturk Avenue, a school 'van' crashed into it whose driver, in a line of such 'vans', had decided to overtake the one in front, ending up far too far over on the right of the road. Considering his precious cargo of children, I considered the school, whose name was on the side, was worthy of a visit.

Seated in the Principal's office, I discovered, to my surprise, that 'it was nothing to do with them' as the person who ran this little transport business was independent. "But they are YOUR children!" I protested. Later, my driver (a young man of initiative) marched in with the offending 'van' driver whom he had discovered outside the school - so I was at least able to make sure they knew who the offender was. But what was the name of the school doing on the side of the 'van'? It should have been the name of the proprietor of the 'van' business who was, presumably, making money out of the parents of these children but doing so, secure from critical feedback!

Encouraging people in this non-complaining culture to do something about dangerous driving is going to take time. A lot of people have not registered that fatalism is not sweet acceptance but a horrid pagan practice. On my Thursday bus-rides to Mymensingh from Haluaghat, for over two years, many was the time I praised a driver as I

got off or, on the other hand, marched down the aisle and tapped him on the shoulder when he was driving like a maniac and then reported him at the other end. Although this is not common practice, I considered it far more shocking that men were sitting there, with wives and children beside them, saying nothing, even as we passed the wrecks of buses that had crashed, with terrible loss of life, on that far-too-smooth-and-lovely road. Surely, the reaction of passengers must be an incentive to drive nicely and a disincentive to drive badly...why should bad drivers keep their jobs? Everyone can play their part in this!

I applaud the proposed campaign to prevent driving licences being handed out like sweets or not bothered with. I carry a nice little scar on my chin from a teenager who turned over my CNG by driving his parents' car into the side of it...

Angela Robinson
Gulshan 1, Dhaka

Nuclear power plants

Bangladesh has started negotiation with Russia to set up two 1000mw nuclear power plants. This is most welcome news for all of us. Nuclear power is the cheapest, cleanest as well as one of the most sustainable power sources. But there are two important tags attached to such projects. Initial installation cost is huge and secondly, and perhaps most importantly, safety aspects are very important. For a poor but densely populated country both aspects need careful study. Cost-wise may be

Russia will give a better offer but as far as safety is concerned perhaps we should consider the French power plant as an alternative. France has the most advanced nuclear power technology where almost 80% of their need is met by nuclear plants with an enviable safety track record. Our policy planners may search other alternatives as well. But we must keep in mind that safety comes first, particularly when we deal in anything nuclear.

M.Sanaul Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

Rising salinity and agriculture

As I travel to the southern parts of Chittagong, I can see acres of waste land --tracts of land lying idle. There is little sign of green--the landscape looks almost grey. In the past, the farmers used to grow crops in those lands during this time of the year. Unfortunately, the scene of lush green paddy field is now a part of the memory. In fact, one can see only caked earth covered with dead stubbles and weeds.

According to the news reports, it is the rise of salinity of the water of the Karnaphuli and the connected canals that have forced the farmers to leave their lands idle. The crux of the matter is that the water is no more suitable for agriculture.

As the sea level is on the rise, saline water is creeping into the interior of this land. This is a major environmental issue that calls for immediate action.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

Environmental degradation



The Dhaka city environment with scarcity of safe drinking water, fresh air to breathe & the mosquito menace is almost a hell for many of its dwellers except a very few fortunate people. One has to just see the state of the rivers; Buriganga & Shitalakha to realise the extent to which we all are so indifferent to allow such dangerous level of pollution. Polluted air with unabated mosquito breeding everywhere are examples of total failure of the civic authorities.

We believe People of China soon after the red revolution tackled such basic problems with sheer human efforts without resorting to any mechanical/chemical aids. On a visit to our nearest neighbour, the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, it was seen that the students/teachers of schools join together to clean-up the city

streets/drains regularly on holidays, thereby contributing towards basic health & hygiene of the citizens in addition to the good work of the normal municipal manpower.

Cleanliness is the fundamental requirement of Islam.

Can we, the conscious citizens of this mega-city, along with the support of our govt. of the day with the pledge for "Din Badaler Pala", embark on creating awareness to prevent the situation from deteriorating further? We do not need foreign aid to do so. What we need is a band of willing people to create awareness among the young/old for our survival as decent human beings.

Z.Rahman
Gulshan 1, Dhaka