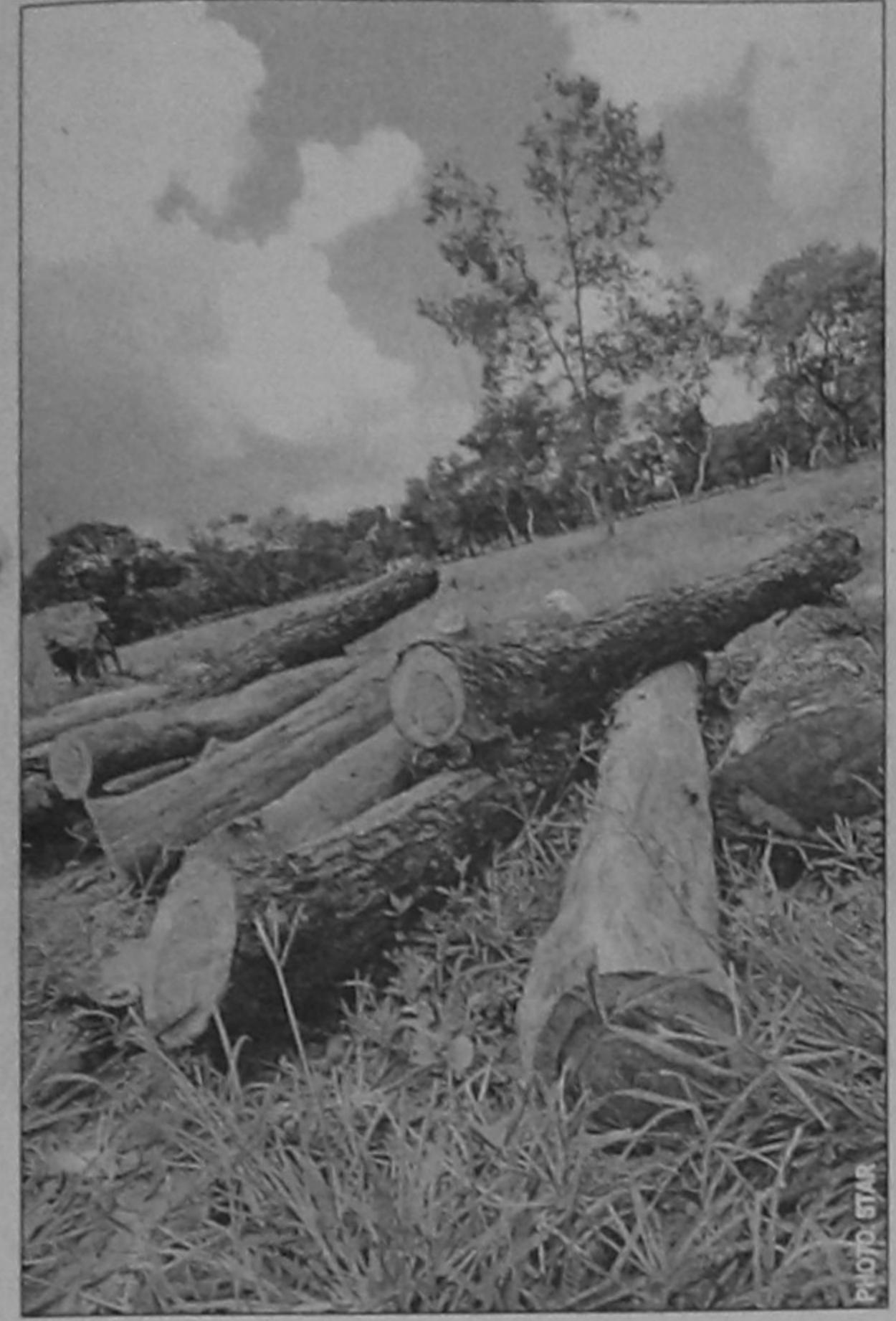




Global warming



Today in the 21st century the biggest threat to the world is global warming, especially for a low lying country like Bangladesh. If we ponder deeply over the matter we will realize that this is due to massive cutting down of trees. Trees are useful for us and we cannot live without the trees as our life is directly and indirectly dependent on trees. No doubt trees increase the beauty of this earth and another fact is that it purifies carbon dioxide and produces cool oxygen which is a necessity for all living beings to survive.

Md Mahbubur Rahman
Student of European Standard School
Dhaka

Banking policy

In an instant reaction to the government directive to cap the lending rate at 13%, the BB chief stated the measure would lead to reduction of the deposit rates by the commercial banks, as the public deposit was the "only" source of their funds. I think the remark was unfortunate, incorrect and not in the spirit of the government's honest intention. Instead of accepting the challenge gracefully at the government move to augment investment, he preferred to offer his counter strategy to offset the spirit of the move.

Our only request to the central bank would be to strictly ensure compliance with their directive with effect from the date of the announcement not only for the new loans but also for the existing loans. Otherwise, the commercial banks would try to delay or even deny the implementation to the borrowers on one excuse or the other as seen in the past.

Mohammad Ataul Hoque
One-mail

Foreign currency reserves

It is a good news that our US dollar reserves have reached a new peak of 6.23 billion and the taka is getting stronger. Now the Bangladesh Bank is buying the US dollar from the local market to hold the exchange rate. But, has the government considered that if the taka gets a lot stronger due to the fall of the value of the US dollar in the international market, it will reduce the value of our reserves substantially?

Considering the current crisis in America and the world economy, Japan and Britain hastily revalued their currencies, speculating the fall of the US dollar, but it proved to be too early. But the fear of a falling dollar is going to come true soon without prior notice as the recession and depression continues.

So, if we have more US dollars than needed, then we should start to invest in

metals and minerals to support our reserves and avoid the adverse situation in future.

Mohammad Faruk
Nurjahan Road
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Windmills

Colourful windmills should be constructed in Cox's Bazar sea beach to make it more attractive to tourists and to produce renewable energy as well.

Saif Tinku
Baridhara, Dhaka

Metro rail

Over the last couple of years, we have been reading and hearing many interesting news on the planning of establishment of metro rail in Dhaka city and the people have been very passionately waiting to commute by the metro rail, which to many of us is a great dream. The metro rail, elevated rail are all excellent ideas and a very ambitious plan but to lessen the heavy traffic rush of the city we need to proceed fast to get rid of traffic mismanagement. It is a huge, large, expensive and highly technical project.

However prior to implementation, we need to ensure and assert its durability with efficient management that should be thoroughly reviewed in the best possible ways taking into consideration the impact and implications as well as the hazardous situation the people and the city dwellers would face and suffer for a few years during the early implementation phase.

We hope the government would proceed fast taking into consideration all viable options including cost components, sufferings of people, fare, effectiveness, efficient management, construction and operational modalities before its approval and in no way the project should be stopped at the halfway mark.

We are afraid, we don't want to fall into the same trap—the way the Bangladeshi railway is operating.

Nasrullah
One-mail

Belligerent BCL

The Honourable Prime Minister has given up the position of the 'Head' of the BCL as she was annoyed with the present activities of the organisation in many educational institutions in the country. But I think it is not the solution to tackle the situation.

They have to identify the causes behind it. Some causes are extortion, control over tender for development works with support of the 'big' leaders of the BCL, the Juba League, the Awami League or even the MPs and sometimes ministers. The general activists of the BCL are used by the so-called leaders. They (leaders) inspire them (activists) or their silence embolden the BCL activists to commit crimes.

So, the AL high command must break the link between the activists of the BCL and the so-called leaders, so that the leaders can not use them. It is the duty of the BCL itself to rebuild the organisation. The culprits should be driven out.

Awazaf Islam
Chuadanga

Foot overbridge

On the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, Rayerbagh is an important place as the surrounding areas are growing fast. Every day thousands of people including school going children cross this busy highway risking their lives.

On public demand for a foot overbridge/under pass, the authorities were kind enough to construct a foot overbridge at Rayerbagh point and accordingly construction work was started in 2008 which was due to be completed in December, 2008. But the work has been stopped and nobody knows when the bridge will be ready for use.

We urge the authorities concerned to look into it and complete the bridge without further delay, so that people can cross the road safely.

Momtazul Islam
Mohammad Bagh

Kadamtali, Dhaka

Teaching mathematics

Many students are afraid of mathematics. And if it is not so, they at least find no interest in this subject. The main reason behind their fear or disinterest is that they are not taught properly. A general perception among the students about math is that it means memorizing some formulas to solve problems. It's not a fault of the students, rather it is teachers who are responsible for presenting the deduction of the formulas in front of the students. As for geometry, illustrative discussion is a must. But in our context, the teachers very often go through a geometrical problem without elaborating.

Again the students are hardly informed of the use of math in practical life which also leads them to feel disinterested in this subject.

Actually, the fear or disinterest of the students towards math begins with their primary level education. With the crossing of new classes the situation deteriorates as they are not taught the basic concepts of math. So, it is easily comprehensible that the main reason behind the students' math fear is lack of efficient teaching.

Math is called the nucleus of science. Without proficiency in this subject one may not go far in the field of science. Taking into consideration the importance of math and the helpless condition of our students, the authorities concerned should take proper steps in this regard.

They should provide training facilities to the teachers to increase their efficiency. Again the teachers are ill-paid. The education authorities should consider the matter in right earnest.

Golam Mostafa
Dept of Mathematics
Jahangirnagar University
Savar, Dhaka

Bloodbath in Sri Lanka

Now, as the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) is fighting for a Tamil state in the north and eastern part of Sri Lanka, the country is on the brink of a total disaster. I am wondering about the future of major separatist/insurgent movements in South Asia in the coming years.

Sikhs, Kashmiris, Tibetans, Balochis, Arakanis etc have unsuccessfully sought various degrees of autonomy for decades. Almost all these movements originally had a socio-political-economic basis but were later adopted or hijacked by a radical religious ideology.

Deeply worried Tamil faces in Oxford and London in the last few weeks remind me of the terrible mental agony of my parents in the hopelessness last week of March and April 1971 in Pakistan army occupied Dhaka city.

With the greatest respect, I remember Bangabandhu and Tajuddin Ahmed for their wise political leadership during that crisis.

M. Emad
Oxford, UK

Some pertinent points

Recently, the commissioners of the ACC in their statement told the newsmen that they would not be summoned by the cabinet, as the ministers have no legal authority to summon them. As far as I know, all the government affiliated institutions are supposed to follow the government decree from top to bottom for establishment of complete accountability and transparency.

The citizens of Bangladesh have the right to quiz the government officials regarding their activities and go to court if they are involved in illegal deals.

Secondly, I would like to draw the attention of the government to the activities of the officials in the education sector. Sometimes, some officials behave like despots showing their power gotten from the above.

Teachers who are involved in politics should not treat the opposition student activists in a different way.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the government should come forward to investigate the administration of the rural areas where most of the underprivileged people live. They voted this government to power with a huge majority.

Mohammad Anowar
Hossain
Development worker

Governance

Our TIB is doing some good work quietly in the background. The recent findings in BRTC and BTRC are appalling. Add two more entrenched establishments: Rajuk and DCC, (not to speak of the energy and power sectors). The activities of the ACC became very much visible during the tenure of the caretaker government during the past two years; but the new political regime is bringing about changes in the environment [Medical University, to start with...].

A glaring question arises: whether the quality of the output of the various privatisation efforts; and the improvements in performance standards of the semi-autonomous corporations? Who are reviewing the functions, for BMR or BMRE? There is no report on the impact of digital governance, [note the reactions to digitalised national/voter ID cards; and now the necessity of machine readable passports].

Changes in organograms or flow-charts hardly make any difference, so long the human factors in the chains are suspect of human errors and immoral activities and unethical practices. The tools and the operators have to be examined separately.

This human indoctrination by powerful cartels and syndicates start at high political levels, and filter down in the chain. How to break such chains?

Monitoring suffers from the same symptoms: the system and the human operators. We are not strict about reward and punishment criteria. Honesty is not rewarded, and dishonesty is

not detected and/or punished. Add politicisation with change of regime; and the never-ending cycles are recycled. We have to get out of this trap.

The British colonial system worked as the transfer, system was strictly enforced. As a student I remembered that my father, an educationist in the civil service, was transferred every second year in former British Bengal. What about Rajuk and DCC today? There is no municipal service; and the non-gazetted staff were also transferred locally [change of post].

Where to start? The political culture has to change—the very approach to beliefs in political philosophy, technology, methodology, and daily routine operation [the winner takes all]. But there is no national consensus yet amongst the political parties, and the parliamentary proceedings are a farce.

A martyr?

A martyr is someone who dies for his religious faith, as stated in the Cambridge dictionary. President Zia was killed when Bangladesh was already established. He was killed as a result of internal power struggle within the army, through which he even headed the country! Given these very clear views, the former speaker's terming him a great martyr, as published in your and other dailies on 10th April, is misleading and not based on facts.

There were many martyrs in 1971; who lost their lives, and their families are now living in hunger and deprivation. Many more were seriously injured, and they and their families have been reduced to poverty; they are the real martyrs; not President Zia by any stretch of logical facts.

It is an easy task to utilize the fallow land with the labour of women, children and elders of a family and produce crops for their own consumption and. A study shows that a family of four can easily be maintained with only 30 square meter of land through cultivation of vegetables.

So, we should treat the matter seriously!

Pekule
Hajee Mohammad Danesh
Science & Technology
University
Dinajpur

Education and politics

Acquiring knowledge is the prime objective of education. Unfortunately, the state of our education is poor.

In rural areas, the picture of education disheartens us. The teachers at our primary level are not so skilled. As a result, the students cannot learn properly and it is the same story at the secondary level. There is a gap between village and city students. The government should take drastic measures to bridge the gap.

In response, the BNP declared nationwide protests. The common people will suffer due to the confrontation between the government and the opposition political parties. We are

Scourge of arsenic

Arsenic is a toxic constituent that can contaminate water, land, crops and the overall environment, finally affecting human health and welfare. It occurs in nature in diverse minerals. Natural phenomena, collectively with human performance, are accountable for its discharge into the atmosphere, soil and water. Individual exposure risks are mainly restrained to regions where pollution of natural possessions such as water, soil, and air is occurring. There are two major ways in which humans are exposed to arsenic. First, directly through arsenic-laden water that people drink; and secondly indirectly, through food crops grown on soils polluted by long-term irrigation with arsenic-rich irrigation. Arsenic may also affect animals if they are fed with high-arsenic straw, which can be an additional indirect hazard for humans. The most dangerous aspect for humans is the release of arsenic into underground water from sediments through natural chemical and biochemical processes like the oxidation of arsenic-rich sulphide compounds and the reduction of arsenic containing iron oxides.

Arsenic cannot be smashed in the environment; it can only change its form and location of accumulation. For instance, rain and snow remove arsenic dust particles from the air, but it then accumulates in the soils, becoming a threat to crops. Arsenic can be easily removed from drinking water by treating the water with iron compounds, but the waste disposal would contaminate the soils. Some plants, such as ferns, can absorb large amounts of arsenic from the soils, but the poison returns to the soil through recycling of the plant residues. Arsenic is naturally removed from human and animal bodies through excreta, but the arsenic so released ultimately ends up in the soil or water.

Irrigation with arsenic-contaminated groundwater leads to elevated levels of arsenic in soils, which may lead to increased concentration of arsenic in plants. Ingesting very high levels of arsenic can result in death. Arsenic causes acute and chronic adverse health effects, including cancer and lower levels can cause nausea and vomiting, decreased production of red and white blood cells, abnormal heart rhythm, damage to blood vessels, and the sensation of "pins and needles" in hands and feet. Breathing high levels of inorganic arsenic can lead to sore throat or irritated lungs.

To diminish risk of exposure farmers should wear trousers to avoid direct contact with high-arsenic mud in the fields. Caution should also be taken while handling pesticides. Safe levels of arsenic in drinking water according to the World Health Organization's safety level is 0.01 mg/L maximum and should be ensured through the use of safe water sources.

Mohammad Rajja
Gonoshasthaya Samaj Vittik Medical College
Savar, Dhaka



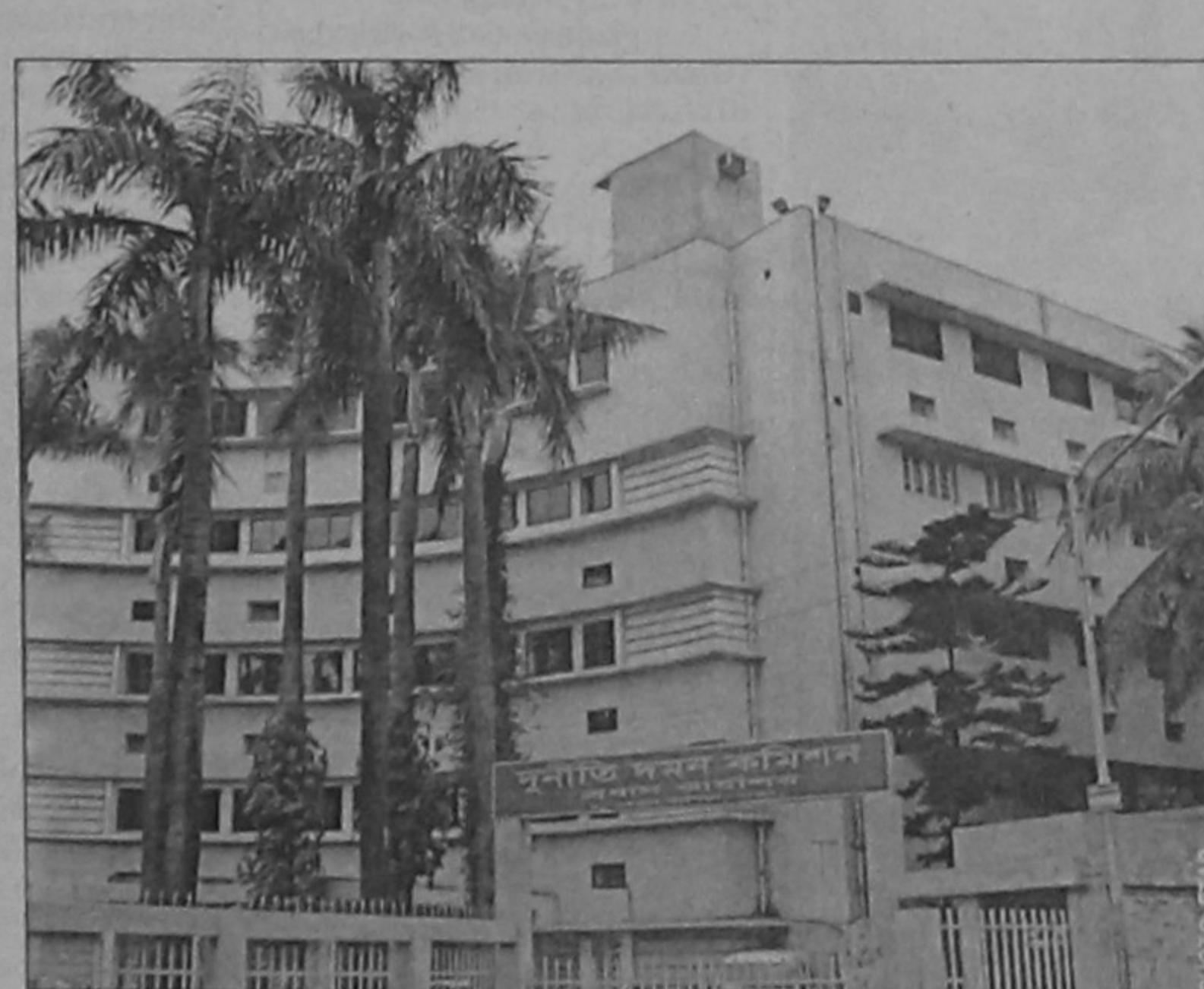
ENVIRONMENTAL CHRISTIAN

Let ACC survive

We all were shocked at the sudden departure of Lt. Gen. (retd) Hasan Mashhud Choudhury, the former chairman of the ACC. He is a man of moral rectitude and professional commitment. He showed us a ray of hope through his endeavours and patriotism. But in his resignation letter he very categorically mentioned that it was very tough to work in the changed situation under the political government. His abrupt and unfortunate exit connotes that the AL led politically elected government has made him resign. I think the political leaders have done it for personal reasons. After the election, the ACC is not functioning properly. It has lost the momentum that it had got during the caretaker regime. Actually, the political leaders do not want that the ACC perpetuates its legal proceedings and the anti-graft drive against the corrupt people. The AL has come to power on the promise of rooting out corruption. But it has failed to keep its promise. The government is rehabilitating the corrupt people in society again.

A cartoon of Shishir Battacharya published in the front page of the Prothom Alo on April 14 could be a wake-up call for all of us.

No change... how ludicrous!
Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Lecturer, Dept. of English
Leading University, Sylhet



DOS STAR