

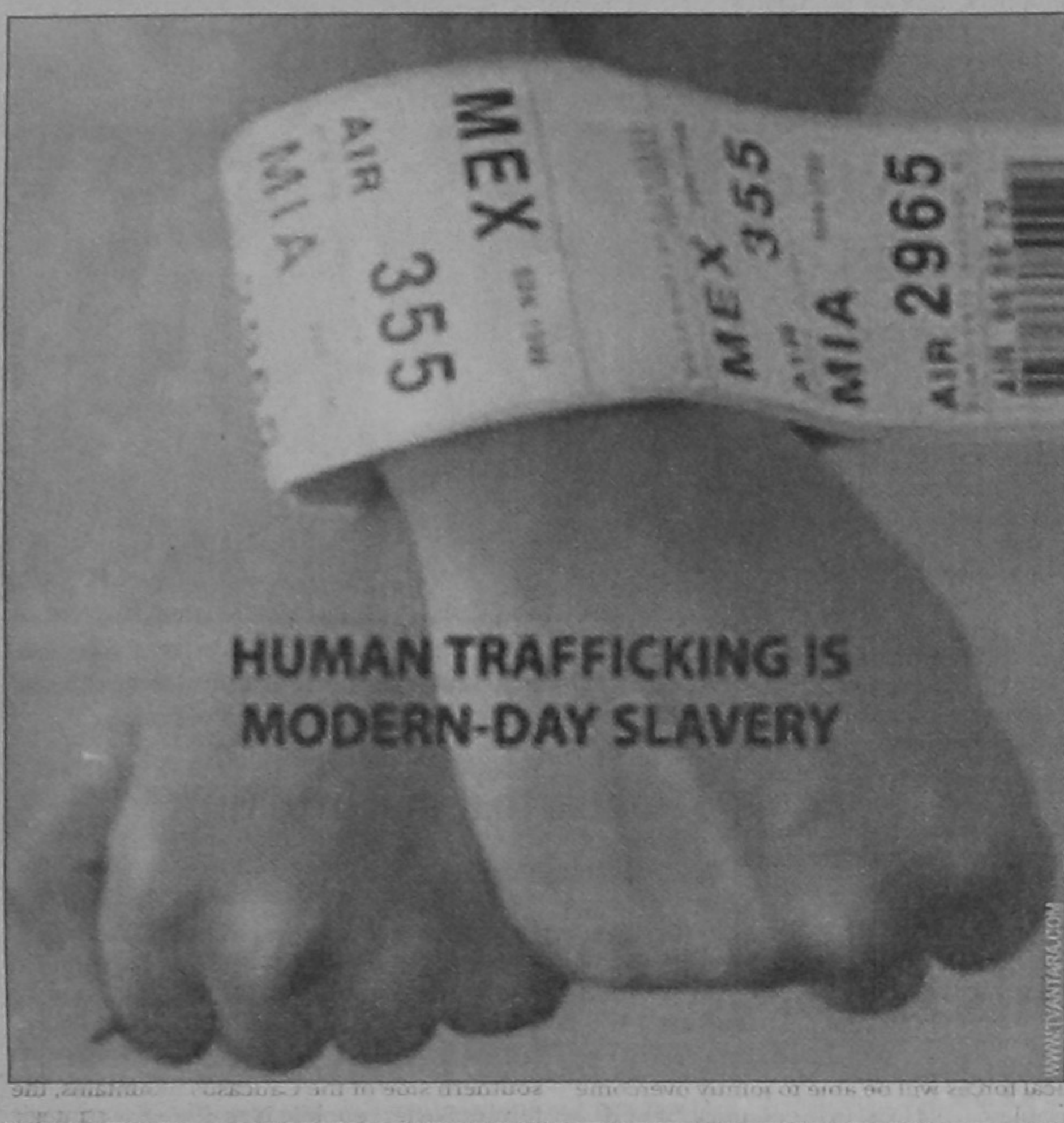
Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Human trafficking

Trafficking is a serious crime and embodies many facets of human rights abuses. Thousands of women and children are caught up in these criminal activities every year, causing them great harm. Over recent years much has been written about the dynamics of trafficking, and many ambitious and well-intentioned statements of commitment to combating trafficking have been made in the international forums. But there is still a big gap between the cup and the lip. Many countries are still lagging behind with regard to ensuring safety and security of their children and women. Bangladesh is not an exception to this. Criminals use Bangladesh as a source of women and child trafficking. As an over-populated country, with a lot of people living below poverty line, it is easy for the human traffickers to lure poor, helpless child and women out of the country with the promise of better lives, work and future. But as we know,

the promises end up in gruelling torture and sub-human work environment and in some cases death. To stop the crime, the government of Bangladesh is committed to making a difference in the lives of women and children vulnerable to trafficking and this commitment is reflected in its various initiatives such as enacting laws suiting the needs of time, setting up high powered one stop crisis centre and multi-level monitoring cell and special courts for trying cases of such offences. Vigilance has been reinforced in the international airports and seaports of the country. People have been sensitised through campaigns, seminars and symposium all over the country. Yet, much more has to be done to ensure the safety of women and children.

Mohammad Rajja
Gono Bishwabidyalay
Savar, Dhaka



Water crisis

Shortage of fresh water has made people of Gopalganj vulnerable. The Modhumoti river which has dried up and important canals like Panchuria, Bedgram, Khatra, Boiragi, Char Sonakur are full of water-hyacinths which threaten the livelihood of people. People of the town are very much dependent on natural water, but still the authorities could not start removing the water-hyacinths from the dead Modhumoti and the canals.

The issue needs to be addressed in right earnest.
Mahmud Ali Kabir
Gopalganj

Proportional representation

This is an opportune moment to consider Proportional Representation (PR) for our voting system discarding the constituency based first-past-the-post system for parliament seats. Voting would be so much easier as it would be only for a party rather than a constituency member for a particular constituency. It would also be easy to allow non-resident Bangladeshis to vote from abroad in the embassies.

No parliamentary seat should be reserved. All seats should be allocated to the parties according to their share of total votes for true PR. Parties then would choose names from their previously published list of candidates and broadly allocate them various areas of the country to represent. The PR system will also eliminate the perennial conflict between MPs and local government representatives. Parliament can then concentrate on the most important area of law making.
Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Rise above petty thinking

Recently, an interesting report published in the DS caught my attention. It was regarding the Chhatra League's installation of a sculpture of Bangabandhu by removing a 31-year old sculpture made by a freedom fighter at a hall of DU. I also found it disturbing that one of the Chhatra League activists has stated that Bangabandhu's sculpture deserves to be on that spot

because Bangabandhu is a great leader, whereas the deposed sculpture of a former female student merely represented the emotion of the artist. Regrettably, these people don't understand that every great leader becomes 'distinguished' in people's heart by respecting the simple emotions and sentiments of the people. We the people make great leaders out of ordinary individuals by inspiring their visions and they in turn must give us enlightening directions. Bangabandhu couldn't become a great leader without the admiration of the valiant Bengalis. As a result, great leaders and their followers should always be generous and self-sacrificing. Unlike greedy dictators, great leaders do not install gigantic sculptures of themselves throughout the country. Instead, they work for the people without any bias or self-interest. That's what makes them even greater. Great leaders respect general people's sentiments and their followers should also strive to uphold the luminous examples set by them. Lamentably, many people in our country fail to grasp these simple facts. In our country, when a political party comes to power it doesn't only politicise the entire administration but it also strives to restructure people's sentiments. In Bangladesh, the ruling political party is often keen to rename many central institutions. However, it usually does little to make them more efficient. Consequently, even though these institutions bear the name of an iconic leader, they fail to honour the greatness of the name. Similarly, the ruling party is generally more eager to hang photos of its eminent leaders in government offices than ensuring tangible changes for the general masses. The ruling party even endeavours to conquer our inner world by rewriting textbooks and by distorting the nation's history. These are certainly not the characteristics of a liberal democracy. These are rather the totalitarian traits that characterize our political parties and their activists. Our political parties must understand the fact that no one is greater in a democracy than the people themselves. Coming back to the sculpture issue, I believe that the Activists should have been circumspect enough to

respect the sentiment of the local residents and the freedom fighter artist of the deposed sculpture. People generally do not like drastic changes, especially if the changes are forcefully imposed upon them. Human heart is mysterious and often the simplest feeling can occupy a very special place in its realm. Every single emotion has its own space in human heart and it's not wise for political parties to disturb that order.

It's quite natural in our country that the activists of the ruling party will tend to view the nation as their private property. They seldom respect the 'ordinary sentiments' of 'the ordinary people', who were idiotic enough to elect them in the first place!
Kh. Asef Safa Kabir
Muhammadpur, Dhaka

Killer pesticides

The lead news 'Killer Pesticides' on the pages of your daily on 5 May 09 had an enormous bearing on the readers and needs to be viewed from a different perspective.

As I am a professional agriculturist working in a similar field, I believe that this is my sacred duty to come forward to share the views expressed by our reporter.

The print media report followed a TV report where mysterious deaths were reported & as a remedial measure the upazila executive officer suggested banning pesticide usage in Dhamrai upazila. Instantly, none could understand the linkage between mysterious deaths and pesticide usage, until recently when this lead news appeared in your daily. The reporter deserves appreciation.

It might have been a case of acute pesticide poisoning as opined by an IEDCR scientist. We all are aware that pesticides are toxic chemicals used to combat insects & pests in crops which need extra care & attention while dispensing, handling etc.

We should train the end users to take appropriate protective measures to thwart any possible hazard and ensure uninterrupted food production. If we are left with no food, poverty and hunger may lead to many such deaths.
Anonymous
One-mail

Sex trade

In most countries, sex trade or exchanging money for sex is legal. Prostitution or sexual gratification for money is perhaps the world's oldest known trade. It is illegal in only a few countries in the world. The reason it is legal is the general attitude that prostitution does no harm, has no victims, and is sex among consenting adults. The changing face of the murky trade has now broadened to include street prostitution, residence sex work, brothel sex work, hotel sex work, call-girl, club sex dance, massage parlour, sex tourism, sex pornography and child sex.

The sex trade is expanding at an unprecedented pace and touching every strata of society. To meet the ever growing and diverse sex demand of the male population, in the recent years, more and more girls and women have been enrolled in this booming market as sex workers.

Sex trade in India is almost the same as in the rest of Asia, involving women and child trafficking and catering to the booming sex tourism. Research shows that most women who enter the sex trade tend to come from urban slums and remote rural areas. High prostitute supply regions in India include Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and some poor North Eastern states. According to a study, over 50% of the prostitutes come from across the border from countries, like Nepal and Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh society, commercial sex is an unwanted profession, which refers to the profession of prostitution. Prostitutes refer to that section of women population who are engaged, legally or illegally, part time or full time, regular or irregular sexual acts for money or for any other material gain. In Bangladesh, the number of prostitutes is on the rise.

Poor knowledge of HIV/AIDS among the population at large contributes to the worsening situation. Education and information on HIV/AIDS prevention, especially for youth, is often limited and inaccessible. In the light of the recent study conducted by Rainbow Nari O Shishu Kallyan Foundation, inclusive initiatives have to be taken on an urgent basis in Bangladesh to empower women and enhance their abilities to face health threats like STDs/STI and HIV/AIDS.

Md. Altaf Hossain Mahabub
Director (Communication)
Rainbow Nari O Shishu Kallyan Foundation
M.C. Roy Lane, Dhaka

Traffic jam and rickshaws

After a brief lull, the call for the total ban on rickshaws is once again being resurrected, this time in DS of 20 March by a resident of Uttara. May I therefore, for his education, repeat the actual facts, why this is not possible.

Is he not aware that Dhaka has only 7% roads instead of a minimum of 25% for any self-respecting metropolis, and these too are in deplorable condition? There are more motorized vehicles (3-4 lakh+) than rickshaws (3 lakh). Into the motorized category

fall private cars, buses and minibuses, CNGs. Only a privileged minority (1-2%) own cars (but occupy 75% of the roads with their empty/half-empty cars), perhaps another 30-35% have the physical ability to use the rickshackle, tortuously designed, ancient buses, minibuses and haulers running only on trunk routes. Maybe 10-15% are lucky to be able to hire and to afford the arrogant CNGs. This leaves a vast majority (approx 50%) of the elderly, women, children, disabled, sick, infirm and people carrying small loads, of the middle and lower classes that totally depend on rickshaws for their mobility (door to door journeys). Yet it is this cheap, easily available, environmentally friendly and productive segment that has been totally blamed for the traffic jams and banned from many main roads. WHAT SORT OF DEMOCRACY IS THIS?

We cannot even think of banning rickshaws until a suitable, cheap, fast (yes, fast), environmentally friendly means of transport is available for about 50-60 lakh people who use rickshaws daily for their only means of transportation in Dhaka. Rickshaws also provide a livelihood for about 20-25 lakh rickshaw related people pumping in about Tk 10 crore into the GDP EVERY DAY. Compare this with the fleet of mostly empty Gas Guzzling Monstrosities (GGMs) that I see every day from my office window illegally parking on the road while queuing up in front of an up-market bakery to maybe buy just a loaf of bread. Good Heavens, that loaf must eventually be costing more than Tk 500 a piece, but then, who cares because surely somebody else is footing the bill.

Rickshaw design has not changed in a century. It is time it was, with its centre of gravity lower than at present. 1) Solar powered, 2) with storage batteries and gears or 3) even with small engines, the rickshaw can still fill the void till we have a mass transit system.

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

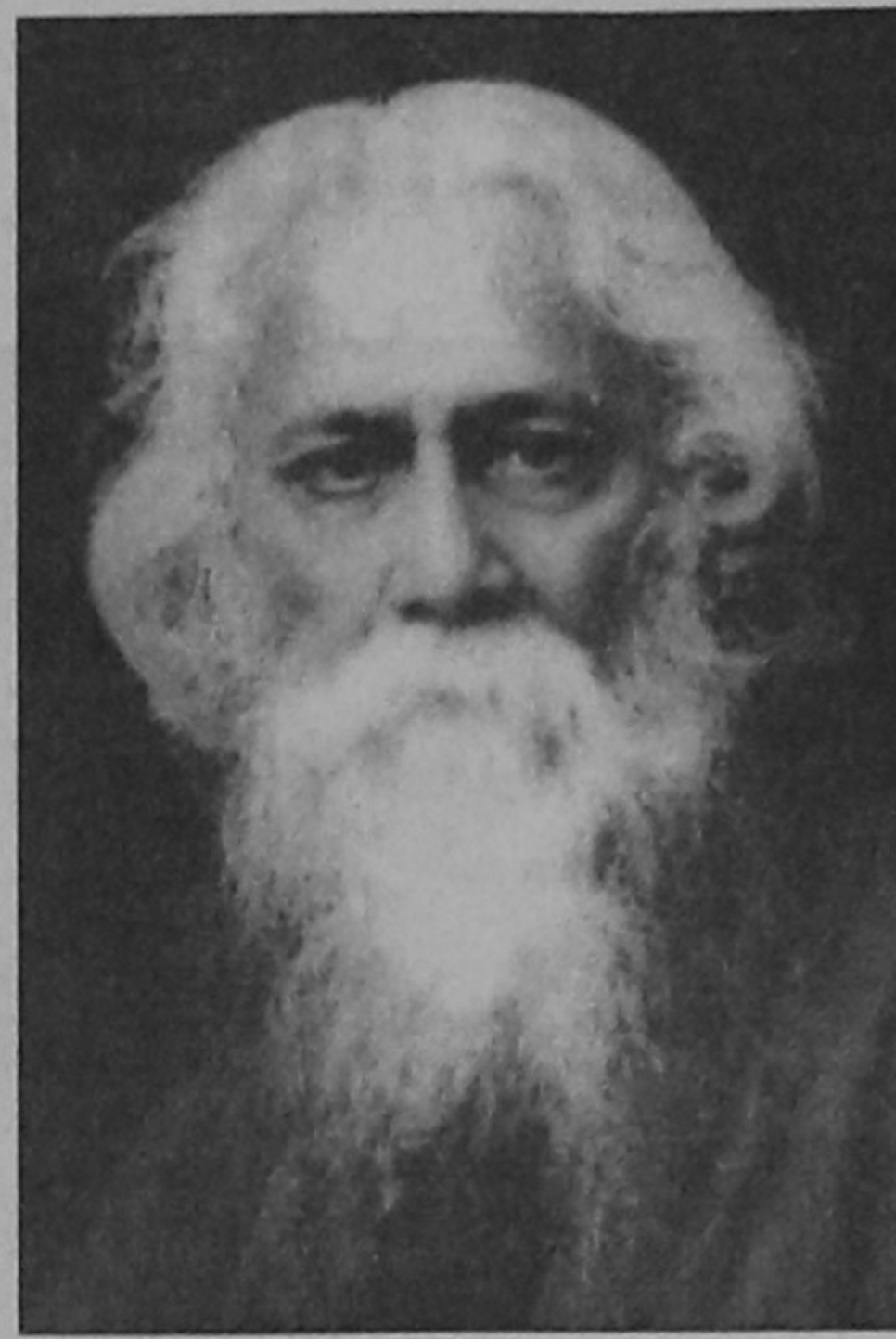
Rule of law

A recent news report in Al-jazeera's website caught my attention. It read "Kenyan landowner guilty of shooting" (www.aljazeera.net/english). The report was about a wealthy and powerful white man - Thomas Cholmondeley who has been convicted by a court for shooting dead a black man, whom he suspected to be a poacher, trespassing on his Rift Valley ranch.

Cholmondeley is also the great grandson of Lord Delamere (one of Kenya's early British settlers and also one of the biggest landowners). Thus there was a common feeling among the Kenyan people that men like Cholmondeley were "always above the law." And at the same time the poor, landless, people of Kenya were also earnestly following this case to see whether the poor family of Robert Njoya (the stonemason who was shot dead) would get justice.

What this judgment has done is bring back the memory of Kenya's colonialist past,

Bangladesh and Tagore



May 8 was the 148th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. Throughout the country, several cultural functions were held. This shows that Tagore has become a truly iconic figure in our national life. He is the symbol of humanity. His popularity is not confined within the boundaries of a country. He served humanity.

We never think whether he is an Indian or Bangladeshi. Tagore said, "The right of serving the humanity is a God-gifted right". Perhaps, in this belief lies his key to success. That's why, though he was not a citizen of an independent country, his creative spirit was never suppressed. Tagore believed in universality. He achieved acceptability in return.

Akash Pradip
Lecturer and writer
BHPI, CRP Chapain
Savar, Dhaka

when under British rule, their best land was mostly taken away by the British government. What this landmark judgment has done is that it has defied the common trend, in poor countries, whereby the rich have always managed to escape the law of the land by their influence and power. In poor countries around the world, we always see the rich getting away, even after committing unpardonable crimes; we have seen the poor being always under oppression and always being victims of unequal treatment. So, what this judgment has proved, in whatever small manner, that even the powerful and mighty can be meted out the punishment they deserve.

Wasif Wahed
One-mail

PM's observation

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told a public meeting which was held on May 1, 2009 at the Paltan Maidan that the BNP-led government had plundered Tk. 2000 crore in the name of generating electricity.

We know that total allocation was Tk. 14046.19 crore during 2001-2006. So, how did they plunder Tk. 2,000 crore?

We can mention some successes during the BNP regime - copying free public examinations, polythene (harmful to environment) free country, black smoke free Dhaka (removing old vehicles from Dhaka city) etcetera but we hardly find anything during the Awami League rule, except political rhetoric.

People were not happy during the BNP regime. They had no alternative, so they had to vote for the Awami League. That is the plain truth.
Sheuly Haque
Tarash
Sirajganj

Parents

The insecurity of the parents is rising in the urban as well as the rural areas, even though in most cases it perhaps is not identified as an issue to be addressed with seriousness. I am talking about the 'parenting issue' that includes the struggle of the cultural transition and its ill outcome (due to open media, unawareness, national policies etc.); the struggle of the youth get-

ting hooked to addictive substances and behaviour and the struggle of the 'home' unable to produce productive values in the young minds.

Where I work, I often hear parents crying in despair that they never knew their son would lead himself to such a crisis and he was never like this, etc. The chances of youth going off track would be there no matter how good a parent is but that chance multiplies with each unintended faulty parenting. Also the fact remains that the child is growing in a place side by side with the parents under the same roof where the parents have so much little to make an impact on his/her child's mind because of the open media, peers and negative trends. The TV set decides, the billboard decides, the radio decides, the internet decides, the movies decide who they are really going to be.

When we, the parents are in such a dilemma, one should really step out of the mainstream trend of parenting and perceive the issue from their own social demography and look into revising their plan of bringing up the children.
Zaiami Bodruduza
Uttara, Dhaka

So-called schools

Nowadays a lot of schools have been established without minimum infrastructures facilities and capable governing body. Some parents run after these schools to get their children admitted.

Basically, these so-called schools recruit unqualified teachers with a low salary. Whatever the standard is, they are getting students. As a result, in the name of education they actually attain their business goals. These institutions are cheating the innocent children and their parents.

Well, if we want to promote our education system, we have to reshape our primary and secondary education first. But, ironically this is the most neglected part of our education.

However, it is quite impossible for a student to cope with his or her higher studies with a poor basic knowledge. Perhaps, this makes the difference between us and the

students of developed countries where the respective levels of education are being treated very seriously.
Aiman Bin Shaoufik Hamid
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong

Education and development

As education is thought to be the yardstick of development, great importance should be given to this sector. And it should have been given in the past. But it wasn't. As a result, after 38 years of liberation our country is still backward in all aspects. And if it is not done in near future, our country will never reach the zenith of development. Besides, it is known to all that the more the nation is educated, the more it prospers. Each and every citizen of a country expects a prosperous life. So, if we want to stand upright among the nations of the world as a developed one, there is no alternative to education. But it is a matter of great regret that no specific education policy has been framed so far.

Moreover, the education policy makers are changing the curriculum again and again.

Md. Abdus Salam
Senior assistant teacher
(English)
Joypara Pilot High School
Joypara, Dohar, Dhaka

Role of BNP

Nowadays I laugh a lot when I see the activities of BNP leaders. They organise processions and meetings where they blatantly blame the present AL government for their failure to provide adequate water supply, electricity and gas to the people. GOD! Give me a break. Aren't these the same group of people who were in power for five years from 2001 to 2006? Aren't these the same old politicians who ruled the country without meeting any of the people's demands?

Why are they shouting now for the people's rights? I would request them to learn from their mistakes and keep their mouth shut.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

Kolkata Knight Riders

Bollywood superstar Shahrukh Khan's team Kolkata Knight Riders was undoubtedly the hugely promoted team of this year's IPL. After the drubbing of the last year, some people thought that this year Kolkata Knight

Riders would be perish the same way, because even before the start of the tournament, the team engaged itself in a big controversy as coach John Buchanan wanted to introduce the multi-captain theory in

cricket. Moreover, the unfair treatment meted out to Saurav Ganguly raised many eyebrows and there was no team unity and team spirit visible under the captaincy of Maccullum. Nevertheless, the hype and support for Kolkata Knight Riders is understandable and people of Bangladesh also joined in the Knight Riders (KKR) because of the inclusion of Mashrafe Mortaza. But all our hopes and expectations were simply shattered because even after losing match after match, the team management of KKR didn't bother to include Mashrafe in the final eleven. They bought Mashrafe at an unbelievable price of 6 million dollars and Mashrafe is also at the pick of his form. So the reason why they are not including Mashrafe in the playing eleven is indeed unclear. The bad treatment which our players like Ashraf and Mashrafe got from this year's IPL was unexpected and disappointing, to say the least.

Kolkata Knight Riders is not a team worth the hype.

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