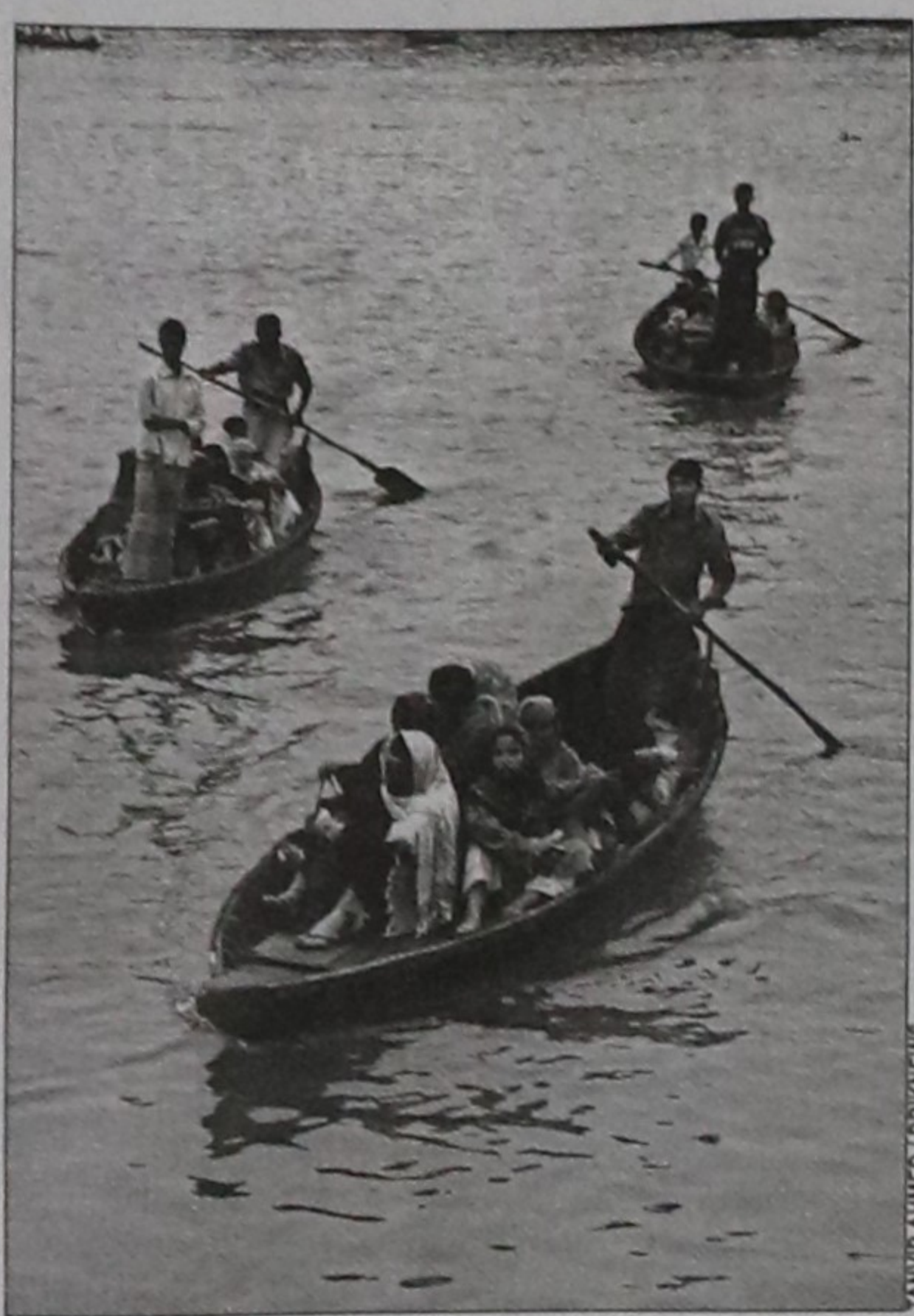


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Save the rivers

Capital city Dhaka is surrounded by four rivers -- the Buriganga, Shitalakhya, Turag and Balu. Geographically, its location is unique in the world. But unfortunately these rivers are dying.

Pollution around the capital has reached such a level that the water of the rivers cannot be purified anymore.

The authorities concerned have to take necessary steps to save the rivers. Otherwise, we will soon face an unprecedented environmental disaster.

Rana Abbas
Dept of Geography and Environmental Studies
Chittagong University

Root cause of extremism

Bangladesh is facing the threat of extremism. Extremists are getting themselves heavily armed. Their capability of producing fatal weapons came to light after the law enforcing agencies unearthed a madrasa cum ordinance factory in Bhola. In the name of religion they are planning to carry out lethal attacks on the civilians. In order to extirpate extremism, the govt. is leaving no stone unturned. Even foreign help has been sought. Rumours of probable attack by the extremists are also afloat in the country. Has our govt. achieved any real success in extirpating those headstrong elements from our country?

Bangladesh is an example of sky-high inequalities. Half the population are still living below poverty line. The people living below poverty line can be easily motivated as they have nothing to lose.

Poverty is the ultimate cause of extremism. If the present rate of poverty is allowed to grow higher, it will be self-destructive for Bangladeshis. Many powerful countries in the world map have failed to tackle extremism. Extremists are controlling many tribal areas of Pakistan. The USA and its allies have failed miserably in Afghanistan, despite their military might.

In order to stop recruitment by the extremists, the govt. must work on reduction of poverty. Paying only lip-service will not do. The govt. must not work for a handful of industrialists and businessmen. It must try to minimise the gap between the rich and the poor. This will be the most effective cure for extremism.

Mostafa Kamal Molla
Dept of English
DU

Terrorism

When the JMB was operating in the northern part of the country, the BNP govt kept their eyes closed. A team from the US came and visited that area and they also failed to smell anything fishy. But the media kept on reporting dispassionately. And at the end the JMB announced their presence by exploding bombs in 64 districts within a span of 30 minutes. Any way... this made the govt wake up. And they launched an all out drive to nab those terrorists.

Right after the Pilkhana incident, the JMB issue has taken a new turn. The law enforcing agencies were claiming that the terrorists were not that organised to cause any problem. But now they are searching for the terrorists in their nightmares.

A tribute to Dr. Wazed Miah

His presence was seldom felt but he was there. In Bangladesh any person distantly related to any power, radiates so much that some times he or she supersedes the source. Dr. Wazed Miah perhaps was the only exception. Being the husband of the chief executive of the government, he lived the life of the most ordinary person. But he was not an ordinary soul, rather a meritorious student, an eminent scientist, a responsible husband and a caring father. He steered the whole family most efficiently when crisis loomed over. Again when the family came to limelight he took shelter behind the wings. Such selfless persons are rare not only in our country but also all over the world.

We pray for his departed soul.
M. Sanaul Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

Obama and summit of Americas

Barack Obama's greatest breakthrough was not in Berlin before election or in London in the G20 summit after his poll victory. It was in Port Au Prince in Trinidad in the summit of Americas. Here he stood with eleven Afro-Caribbean heads of state, showing that change has come to the Americas. The people of Afro-West Indies have the same root as Black America has. But they were separated and divided creating mini states. They are the worst affected poor states whose citizens often try to smuggle themselves to the USA.

This inhuman situation is connected with poverty and desperation and racism. Obama, the son of an American father, grew up amidst this situation.

Obama's standing with the heads of those eleven micro states was more significant than his dramatic overture to Hugo Chavez--another exponent of change. Latin America in general has welcomed Obama's stand of change towards Cuba. But it was Anglo-America that welcomed his historic initiative against poverty and sufferings of the underdeveloped regions. He wanted to include them in the global stimulus plan.

It is said that the poor are the worst enemies of the poor. That led to the self-elimination of the black people in the USA. In fact more black people were taken into USA in the flow of slave trade, than free white immigrants from Europe. In the 1850s in some part of the USA there were more black people than whites. This demographic factor led the anti-slavery forces under Abraham Lincoln's leadership to their epoch victory in the American Civil War. Many among the oppressed in the USA see Obama as the present day Lincoln. That gave him the historic victory in the polls.

Demographically black and coloured people in the United States are rebounding. Their commanding position in the major American states made Obama's victory possible.

Class struggle and ethnic struggle are interconnected. That is a historic reality. Here the poor and the weak in order to survive turn to the strong and rich. In the process they defend the interests of the strong and rich against their fellow poor and weak.

But this circle comes to an end when the rich and strong lose their power in the course of events in history. Here the poor unite because they have nothing to lose. That is what Maurice Bishop, the immortal leader of Afro-Caribbean and martyred prime minister Grenada had asserted.

But the forces could not face the mighty armada of the United States. But that came in Port Au Prince when an American President, a black President, came to tell them that the time of disunity was over. A great dawn has knocked. Most of the black Afro-Caribbean states were former British colonies. The French territories of Guadeloupe and Martinique are part of Metropolitan France, so they were not represented. Someone joked that if Mr Sarkozy, another advocate of change, was invited there could be a historic trioka. The Dutch West Indies were not represented. Today Holland is a great scene of European race politics. Abu Muttalib, a Muslim and Arab, has been elected the mayor Rotterdam, Europe's biggest port city. Many hope that he could turn into a European Obama.

Obviously, power relation in the world is not so simple. Mr. Obama cannot make changes, even if he wants, overnight. A constitutional democracy has many bindings. But one can not ignore that the first gigantic revolution in America was the American war of independence. Before that there had been skirmishes between the slave traders and slaves, between the indigenous people and the colonialists.

The journey of Obama is not an end in itself. The American war of independence is a 200 years old saga. To many, the greatest event in the Americas in the last century was Cuban Revolution. And Cuba has single-handedly faced America for the last half a century!

The Afro-Caribbean leaders have good relations with Cuba. Obama has promised, he will open a new chapter. But most important is his promise of equal partnership. Though we are far away, we must acclaim it.

Nehal Adil
Dhaka

Containing militancy
Former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia recently said that the country is now free from militants, and militancy does not exist any more. She means all militants were arrested during the BNP-led 4 party alliance government's rule.

Well there is no doubt about it as Shaikh Abdur Rahman, Mufti Hannan and many others were arrested and brought to Justice. The Bangladesh government can cheer as the country has been dropped from the

United States' watch list of the countries deemed to violate minority rights and deny religious freedom. Positively, anyone could exercise his/her religious rights in Bangladesh without fear. Militants and militancy were more than just an issue. The BNP-led government was able to make a dent in it. It is all good and credit goes to the last BNP government.

We congratulate the United States Congressional Panel's decision as Bangladesh is removed from the list for 2009. I personally would like to remind them that during the Awami League rule from 1996 to 2001 militancy actually increased.

The Awami League, regrettably, was unable to control militancy during their rule.
Mahmud Ali Kabir
Journalist
Gopalganj

Iran scene
I am writing with reference to Op-Ed: "Double standards," by Chaklader Mahboob-ul Alam, (May 10).

Mr. Alam quotes Iranian President Ahemadinejad criticising Israel for violating human rights of the Palestinians. But Mr. Ahemadinejad may be reminded that the Iranian Mullahs, who control the government, have been brutalising Iranian people, especially women for long.

Last month, the Iranian government sentenced Iranian-American journalist Roxana Saberi on trumped up charges. At first, she was charged for buying wine and then the charge was changed to espionage. She has gone on hunger strike in protest. A few years ago, Iranian-Canadian journalist Zohra Kazemi was murdered for taking a picture of Evian prison.

Prof. Azar Nafisi, who was expelled from her teaching position at Tehran University, tells us about the brutality of the Iranian regime in her book Reading Lolita in Tehran. Her story of Iran is a country where ruling Mullahs "regularly hang people in the streets" -- a country where educated women are being considered as enemies of the state. As she writes: "The streets of Tehran are patrolled by militia, who ride in white Toyota patrols, four gun-carrying men and women, sometimes followed by a minibus."

They patrol the streets to make sure that women wear their veil properly, do not wear makeup, do not walk in public with men who are not their fathers, brothers or husbands. ... In the course of nearly two decades, the streets have been turned into a war zone, where young women who disobey the rules, are hurled into patrol cars, taken to jail, flogged, fined, forced to wash toilets and humiliated."

Early this year, thousands of Iranian women were arrested in a crackdown for wearing simple makeup and not wearing proper veils.

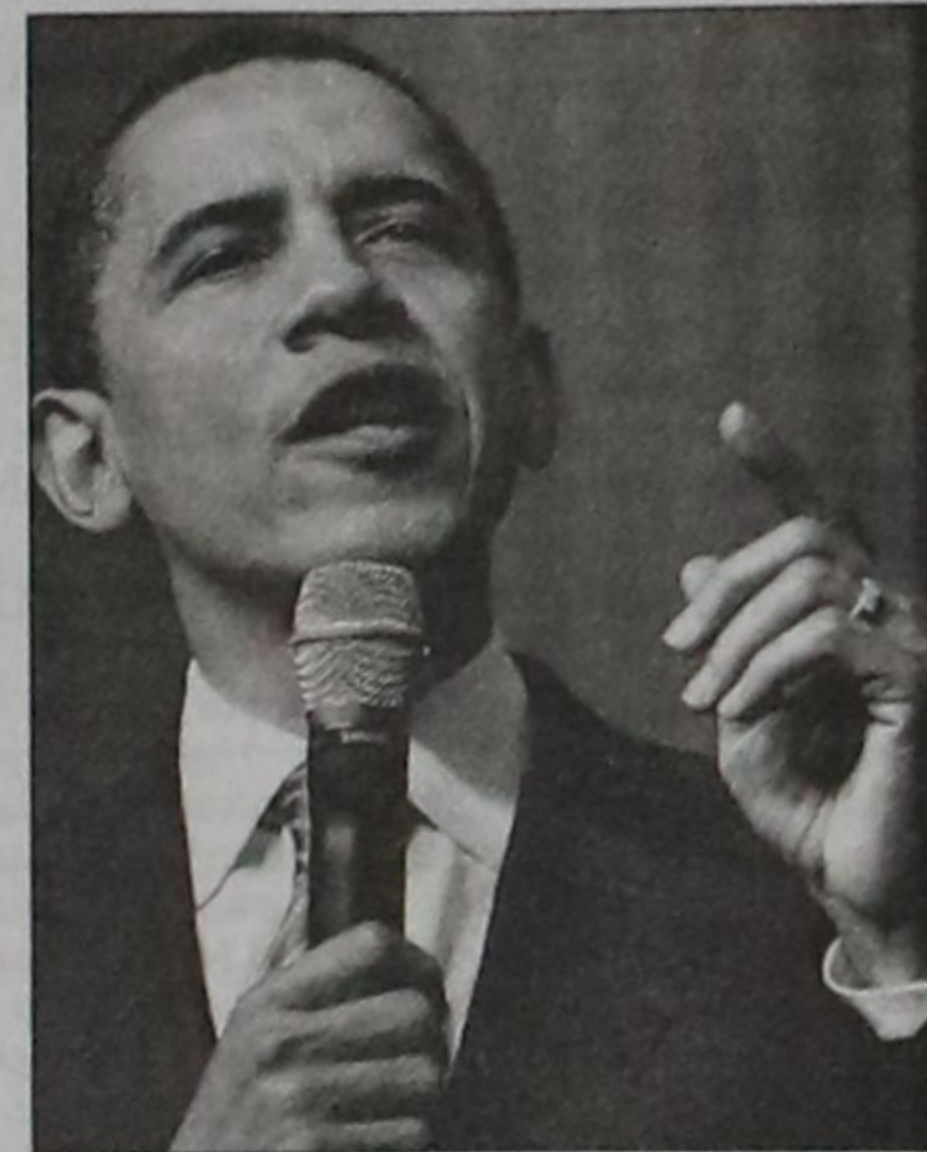
Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Obama's leadership

M. Serajul Islam's article headlined 'Obama's speech in Turkey and hope for a better world' (The Daily Star, 9 May 2009) aptly echoes the concern of Obama lovers around the globe, who would earnestly wish him success in his vision for a 'clash of civilisation'-free world. Yes, in our desperation for a new world order, Obama symbolises hopes of majority of the human race for a safer world-- a vision shaped more by a scientific global outlook for a positive changes in the new millennium than by self-defeating dogmas of the right, left, neo-cons and religious fundamentalists of all hues.

But to say whether President Obama lives up to the expectation is putting extra burden on him in that it is also for us, wherever we are, individually and collectively, to work for the future we would like ourselves and our posterity to be in. After all, Obama was a global candidate for the USA Presidency as against a Republican, representing narrow thinking of US voters, which failed to recognize not only the emerging global reality but also the very American realism that makes the USA, nay, the Americas the torch-bearer of world heritage.

The anxiety, enthusiasm and bated breath, with which the whole world-- from the first to the last, from the First Lady of France to the unknown rural youth of Bangladesh or, for that matter, of Asia, Africa and Latin America, waited for election result, itself made history by uniting the whole world on



a national issue! That was the moment God in His infinite mercy consigned not Bush, but indeed all that he represented as anti-progress anti-American realism, to the dustbin of history. Thank God, He did it. And thank Mr. M. Serajul Islam for articulating it so aptly. It is perhaps safe to assume that in spite of doing his level best, President Barack Hussein Obama's success in living up to the expectation of Obama lovers (and not the least, Obama haters!) will continue to be debated- during and beyond his tenure in office.

But the incontrovertible fact remains how an apparently impossible global dream triumphs over the forces of evil.

Syed Md. Habibur Rahman
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Renaming BDR

I strongly protest against the plan to change the name of the BDR and its uniform. Let there be trial and justice will take its own course.

Changing names and its uniforms will not bring discipline.

We cannot justify some retired army officers' advice to change the name of BDR.
Iftakher Khalid
Sultanganj Road
Rayer Bazar, Dhaka

Women's cricket

It was really shocking to watch a news report of the ntv on a women cricket match. I think that those who like and love cricket must have seen and felt totally disappointed at the management style of the BCB. Some of the problems were highlighted by the players and the most devastating one, the pitch and the outfield, was shown on the tv screen. What a shame for the BCB!

There is no need to make a big story out of it. The fact remains that women cricket is neglected, deliberately or otherwise not known to us. The media might find that out in the follow up process of the news. I want to say unequivocally that a separate Bangladesh women cricket control and development board be set up with the right leadership, policy and funding so that women cricket can develop in Bangladesh by its own merit and not on the neglected support of the BCB. I think there is no alternative to this if we want women

cricket to survive and develop in Bangladesh. The media should come forward with full support and pursue the promoters to pay attention to this game like they are doing in other games.

Promotion of open women games and athletics add to education, cultural change, empowerment of women etc.

Quadir
California, USA

Wasting wastes

The issues discussed by a writer can be divided broadly into national and individual levels. I shall like to suggest some possible ways to ameliorate the situation at national level.

Those that can be undertaken at a national level are the ones where upazila chairmen and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) can be involved. If the ministers concerned and top officials sit with these people first in Dhaka and subsequently at division level and motivate them on the importance of garbage collection and burning the vegetable wastes to generate biogas, we can achieve positive results. To motivate them further, presidential awards may be introduced.

The female Vice Chairmen may be entrusted to motivate the school children on the importance of conservation and cleanliness, right from the lowest grade of schooling through their teachers. All religions encourage cleanliness through the age-old adage, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness."

The VC with some of his colleagues and the engineer concerned may take upon the responsibility of garbage collection and their utilisation into biogas generation and thereafter into electricity. Some students with natural leaning toward harnessing modern technology would be eager to help.

Another useful technology: electricity from solar energy, not suggested in the correspondence can work satisfactorily in remote villages under the patronage of Grameen family dealing with this sector. This can form one of the important programmes of Upazila Parishad.

The PM has declared 2021 as Digital Bangla. Perhaps waste utilization may constitute one of the sub-programmes. It is always achievable when we set a target. Human nature is such that they become frenzied until they achieve the target.

Ahmad S. Islam
Retired Prof. of Botany, DU

Digital Bangladesh!

Establishing a digital country by 2021 is one of the important electoral pledges of the Awami League, which was announced by the honourable PM herself. After the election, we heard speeches from her where she assured us of working above party and personal interest, showing tolerance and respect towards the opposition, and continuing the fight against corruption through strengthening the ACC. But the reality is something different for us.

The government has failed to go by its commitments in many areas. The prime minister should take stock of the latest situation and assess how many of her party's pledges have been fulfilled so far.

Liton Roy
Dhaka

Plant trees

Bangladesh is an agrarian country inhabited by 150 million people in a meagre land of 56,000 square miles. Eighty per cent of the people directly or indirectly depend on agriculture for their livelihood, which plays a predominant role in our economy. In a populous country like ours, the importance of tree plantation cannot be overemphasised.

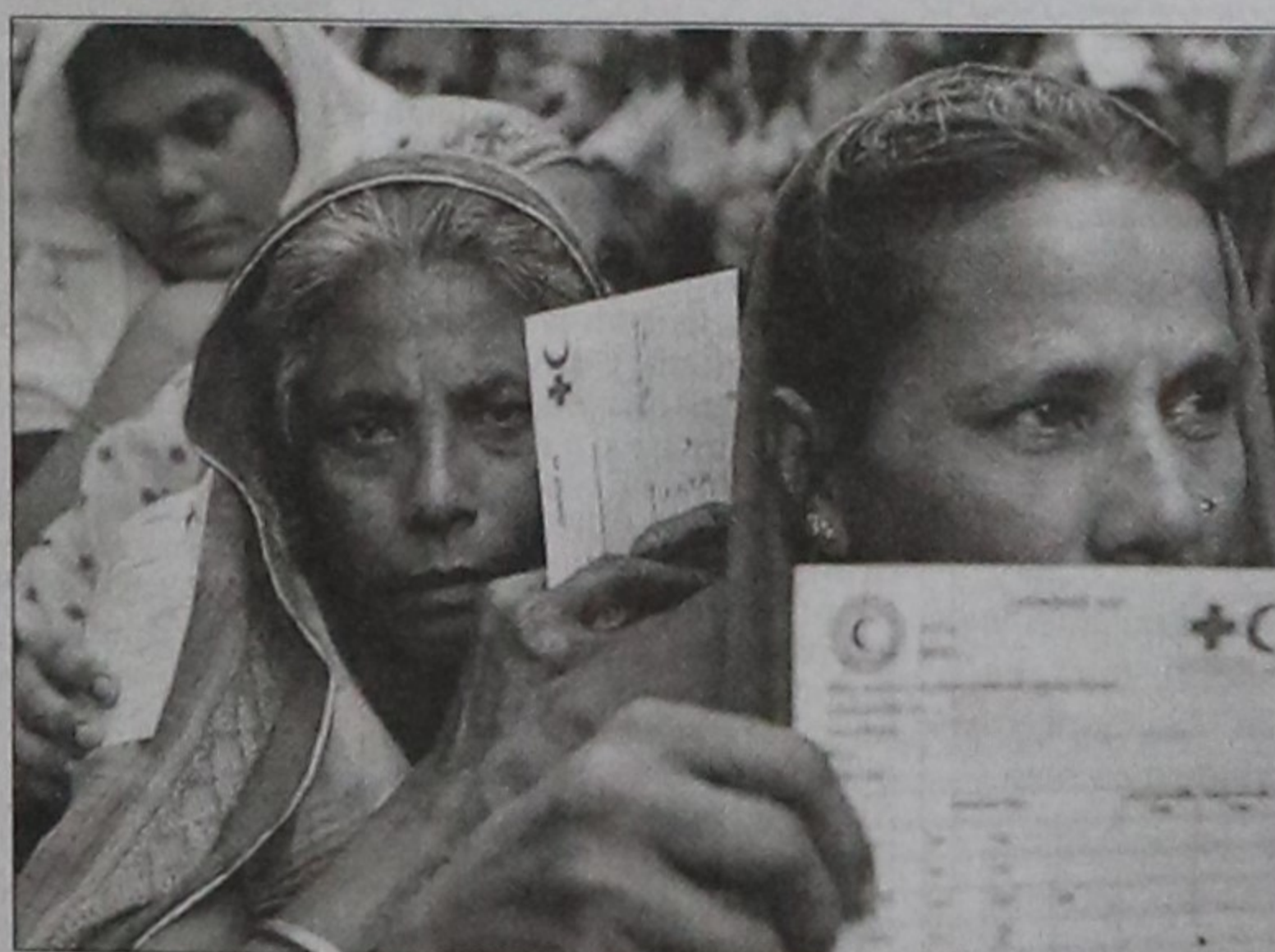
The govt may undertake a project entitled 'Green Bangladesh' in the next ADP and allocate a sizable fund for it. A tree plantation month can be observed throughout the country during the monsoon. In the mean time, for this year we may cut some funds from the ADP and divert the same to the programme.

Nazrul Huq
Deputy Director (Rtd)
BRDB, Dhaka

World Red Crescent Day

We joined the World Red Crescent/Cross fraternity in paying homage to Jean Henry Dunant, its founder, on the occasion of his birth anniversary on May 8. This day has been accepted as the World Red Crescent/Cross Day. It was an important milestone in the evolution of the movement. It will be fruitful to evaluate the achievements, plan for future and to rededicate ourselves to the noble cause of Red Crescent/Cross on this day.

At the international level, relief and succour have been provided to millions of victims of colossal natural and manmade calamities. South East Asian region, the Latin American countries and African countries, have been the areas of intense activities. Red Cross/Crescent has



achieved spectacular success in improving the quantum and quality of services its renders throughout the world in general and in our country in particular.

So, observance of the 'World Red Cross/Crescent Day' is a very important event

for us. This is one occasion when all national societies join hands and participate universally in an international theme chosen by our world federated body in Geneva and introduced simultaneously by all Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies on

May 8.

Around 963 million people across the world are hungry, every day almost 16,000 children die of hunger-related causes. More than 1 billion people in developing countries have inadequate access to water, 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation.

The root of all these disasters is climate change. Not to satisfy our need but to fulfil our greed we are destroying our ecology and increasing the pollution in every sphere.

Therefore, time has come when we have to make our move and we need to change our way of life. We shoulder the collective responsibility of making, our world a better place to live in.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam
National tourism worker