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Media and rivers

I have no language to express my appreciation of the courageous role played by The Daily Star and Channel i in sensitising the people, civil society and finally the government about the consequences of encroachment on rivers and pollution of water. The powerful people have been grabbing rivers and dumping industrial effluents in them for a long time not only in Dhaka but also all over the country. This has been happening right under the nose of the government and civil society. Occasional newspaper and TV reports have failed to produce any tangible result. This time The Daily Star and Channel i have stubbornly pursued the matter and demonstrated the power of the media particularly in mobilising people's support and compelling the government to listen to a right cause. They have successfully brought together the ministers, parliament members, civil society, and celebrities to compel the government to commit itself to taking action and making necessary laws. The government has already gone into action and we are eagerly waiting to see how much they do to live up to their commitments.

The movement must not remain

limited to river encroachment and water pollution, rather it should also give equal attention to saving our forests, lakes, beels, haors, wetlands, wild animals, reptiles, flora, and fauna because all of them together contribute to balancing the ecosystem. The media has started this crusade in Dhaka but it has to spread all over the country, turning it into a peaceful mass movement. Today all newspapers, electronic media, and weeklies have vigorously joined the movement to identify the sinister activities of unscrupulous people. I hope this movement will become stronger day by day through public awareness so that the land grabbers, polluters, and environment destroyers don't dare making such ventures in future.

The movement must not be allowed to die down. We possibly need a group of well-trained environment journalists to keep a watchful eye on all aspects of the environment. I hope the media and people will continue to stand together for all common causes.

Dr. Abul Hasnat Golam Quddus

Former Professor of Sociology
University of Chittagong

Guardians left out!

After the tragic incident in BDR HQ, the schools inside reopened last month. As security measures, the guardians of the students of Rifles' School and Public School have been barred from entering into the BDR premises since then. As usual, there are many guardians, especially the mothers remaining around until their children finish classes and get out of the schools. These guardians mostly do not have the luxury of having cars or their houses are far off the schools. So they are actually compelled to remain there for 4-5 hours. The BDR administration was sensible enough to erect a shamiyana in front of BDR gate- 4 near Jigatola so that the women guardians do have some sort of comfort. But after some days the shamiyana collapsed in inclement weather and it was never reinstalled. The school timing is such that nearby shopping complex remains closed and there are no other places to take a sit around. The guardians applied to the BDR administration some weeks ago depicting their misery under the scorching sun or during rainy days. But nothing has been done so far.

Don't we deserve a sympathetic gesture from the BDR authorities?

Dr. M.M. Mortayez Amin

Consultant
Lab Aid Specialized Hospital
Dhaka

Plots for MPs

It is disgusting to see the moral bankruptcy of our elected representatives. It appears they wanted to be elected to grab everything while in power. My observation is based on the recent remarks of the State Minister for Housing that the MPs would be allotted Rajuk plots.

What an example of public service!
Iqbal Mahmood
One-mail

Poor performance

Here we go again. A team full of hope, a team backed by millions of fans, and a team which loses 99% of the games! That's right, I am talking about the Bangladesh cricket team. I have been an avid supporter and fan of our team ever since I can remember. What glorious days! We weren't labelled as "GIANT KILLERS" so every time we won, it felt great. Then came the day Bangladesh got the ODI and Test status. Even the smallest road in Bangladesh was transformed into a canvas as we celebrated our presence in world cricket.

Then something went terribly wrong, the team which proved to be so efficient and professional over the years... simply collapsed. No matter who captained the side, the result was always the same.

I, too, like millions of Bangladeshis hoped that we might just pull it off against India, and the match against Ireland was a sure win in the Twenty20 World Cup 2009. But guess what - One thing I totally forgot it's the BANGLADESH cricket team we are talking about, and winning has always been a luxury which we can never afford. Disgraceful performance by the whole squad. Worst of all, the captain, who according to me should be stripped off the captaincy. I don't know whom to blame, the BCB for giving him the captaincy, or Ashrafur himself for the being the worst captain in the history of Bangladesh cricket. He has no knowledge or experience like his counterparts from the other eight nations. He somehow forgot how to bat, and he shouldn't be given a chance to bowl. In fact if it was up to me then I would name Ashrafur the "Man of the match" for both the matches for being so ignorant and helping both the opposing teams win easily.

But at the end of the day, no matter what happens, I will still keep on supporting the national side. Even by chance if we win a game, I would again celebrate, and I guess that day is not far away. But if we do want to get rid of the occasional wins, and be a wee bit more consistent then Ashrafur should be removed, certain players should be changed and the coach should be sacked. But what do I know, I am just another blind cricket fan waiting eagerly for that day when Bangladesh wins a match and I can join a rally of people shouting slogans with our heads high.

Kazi Omar
London, Dhaka

Journalism

It is the basic principle of journalism that the reporters should not report any criminal or civil matter which is awaiting judicial decision in a partial manner. The reporters should be applauded for their courageous reporting but they should also take care not to report any criminal or civil law related matter in a biased manner.

Mufassil Islam
Human Rights Advocate
UK

Israeli settlements and Palestinians

Israeli PM Netanyahu argues that the expansion of settlements in the occupied West Bank is needed to accommodate the natural growth of population in Israel. This kind of argument is not expected from the head of a government! Because, this would mean allowing a country to attack and annex a portion of a neighbouring country if it is militarily possible. Therefore, this kind of argument must be condemned by all.

We are happy to note that US president Barack Obama has strongly rejected such an Israeli idea. Now is the time for the Palestinians to seriously consider and decide whether they would continue with sporadic pin-pricks against Israel which actually do more damage to the Palestinians and achieve nothing for them but Israeli retribution. They should allow the present US govt. to do whatever it can to further the



Palestinian dream of having an independent state which has eluded them for the last 60 years.

President Obama appears to be sincere about his conviction of the two-state formula to resolve this conflict. The Palestinians must not spoil this opportunity by their

futile actions which so far have brought only miseries to their people. Such an opportunity might not come again in the near future.

Abul Mohsin Siddheswari
Dhaka

Vitamin-A

It was with great concern that I read the reports of the death of some children, and of others getting ill, following the recent administration of vitamin A capsules and de-worming tablets.

I will not comment on the de-worming tablets because I have no information on the generic nomenclature of the drug that was used for the purpose.

My search of the literature and the websites (including Pub Med) did not reveal too many adverse reactions to vitamin A. Notable among those reported are rashes, blue or black pigmentation of the skin, headache, diarrhoea, vomiting, swelling of the mouth, face, lips and tongue, dizziness/ drowsiness, double vision, breathing difficulty and tightness in the chest.

I also searched the Health Canada Adverse Reaction Database and was able to come up with only 3 cases (of children between the ages of 2-14 years) since 1965 in which adverse reaction to vitamin A was reported. These included fever, headache, nausea etc.

Adverse reactions may be observed with any medication or supplementation, and it is not unusual that some may be observed following supplementation with vitamin A. However, the two questions that I would like to ask at this point are: (1) Why are there so many reported cases of adverse reactions to vitamin A? (2) What could account for the fact that deaths will occur as the sup-

posed direct consequence of the oral administration of vitamin A?

I am very confident that the highly knowledgeable medical community of Bangladesh will be able to provide the proper answers to these questions. However, in this regard, I would like to draw the attention of all concerned to the following:

- (1) Ensuring accurate notification and documentation of the cases, and determination of the cause-effect relationship.
- (2) Existing nutritional and immune system status of the target population.
- (3) Target population selection criteria.
- (4) Validity of the medication/supplementation.
- (5) Drug quality compromise resulting from transportation/storage.

I am hopeful that the committee formed to probe the matter will be able to provide an acceptable explanation and suggest measures to avoid a repetition of the same in the future.

Dr. C. Zaman
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada

I was frightened to learn the news that a number of innocent children in Madaripur fell ill after taking vitamin-A capsule.

The government should go for a thorough probe into the matter.

Md. Zahidul Islam Zibon
Dept. of English
International Islamic
University Chittagong

Smart Grid

The AP report from Washington on the subject, published by a local English daily on 8 June is of interest to the power sector in Bangladesh. It should provoke our planners in the power sector (particularly the Power Ministry). But will they even go through it and try to understand its impact? Possibly not, as they are too busy pulling and pushing files and filling note-sheets!

The prospect of interconnecting renewable power sources with the distribution grid, and its automated two way power flow provides the key to tap on to alternative energy and other power sources! We should keep abreast with the Smart Grid technological development and applications being installed mostly in the USA and Europe to ensure bringing together various power sources including consumer power back-up facilities to increase grid power availability as a very relevant and cost effective future prospect in the short term!

Smart Grid operation is closely interlinked to high speed Internet capable of monitoring variable grid power demands. It can tap on to various consumers' power sources to the transmission and distribution networks based on regional power shortage or surplus; with very rapid communication and automated load diversion and acquisition capabilities!

Given our sizeable population of in-house power generation and battery back up

power sources including hybrid and electric cars, the Smart Grid can integrate all these to the grid.

Today these potential power sources are totally isolated from the grid, a bank of idle power potential; while our power shortage in Bangladesh increases day by day! It also has the additional capability to monitor and control unknown and unaware power wastage anywhere in the grid network!

All these in effect add additional power to the grid. If we can try to have this facility in Bangladesh soon; then all these advantages put together can provide us savings and availability of between 200 to 300 MW of power from Greater Dhaka alone to meet this area's power shortage. It will be providing much needed relief, particularly during the evening maximum demand period. It is also a far more cost effective option in comparison to the additional capital investment needed for setting up a green-field 200MW power plant and recurring variable cost of fuel, manpower, spares and consumables needed!

We should follow up on this available Smart Grid technology set up; as we are failing in providing additional generation capacity anytime soon. It will also improve our overall electric power utilisation and encourage private investors and industrialists to set up more alternative power resources.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Paper tigers!

Losing to India is not unexpected. Indians are now in their best form. But losing to Ireland, where a handful of assorted amateurs just got together, was a big shock. Ashrafur played even worse than a novice. He got a life and sacrificed it in the same manner. Shakib could wait for two more balls when Johnston would finish his spell. Cricket is not only a game of strokes it is also a game of brain and mind. The whole team needs a psychological check up and counselling.

We believe our young captain needs to be relieved from his too heavy responsibilities.

M. Sanaul Huq
Uttara Model Town
Dhaka

Beware of bureaucracy!

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Mr. Md. Anwarul Kabir for his article entitled, "Beware of Bureaucracy!" published in The Daily Star. I totally agree with Mr. Kabir. Bureaucrats must change their colonial attitude. To bring a real change in the country, our bureaucratic system must be reformed. To have a pro-people bureaucracy the government should immediately chalk out a proper policy.

Taslima Ahmed
Department of History
University of Dhaka

High-rise buildings



The tiny Bangladesh's density of population is one of the highest in the world. Moreover, its agricultural land is shrinking every year. Various development works and construction of houses are eating up the lands. But we cannot give up the development work, and to have a shelter for every individual is a basic human right. Actually, the housing problem is very acute throughout the country, particularly in the cities and towns. In the past people had houses with ponds, gardens, orchards etc. Now the practical situation compels us to live in very small houses or flats. The culture of living in flats in a big building with many new neighbours is not very

old but there is no alternative to it in the cities. In fact, we need thousands of 20 or higher storied buildings to fulfil the needs of people. Many a man has wrong concept regarding high rising buildings. Applying the technique of modern science, it is possible to accommodate thousands of people or offices in one building. Bangladesh is in need of more and more big buildings. Dhaka, Chittagong and other divisional cities should have all 20 or above storied buildings to fight the present and forthcoming crisis.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

War against Muslims

During the Bush regime words like insurgency, fundamentalism and extremism were often used to malign the Muslims. The words have been used against the Muslims deviating from their exact meaning. These words were used by the Bush administration and his cohorts solely to undermine the Muslim people as being indifferent to the exact time and situation. They deliberately resort to misleading use of these critical words.

Iraqi soldiers fighting against the American soldiers are often called 'insurgents.' As if those Iraqi soldiers are terrorists and Americans are doing something sacred to free the Iraqi land. So, the pertinent question is why on earth the Iraqi soldiers will be called insurgents?

Fundamentalism refers to strict adherence to the basic doctrines of religion. So, to a religious person it's a very positive word. Likewise, extremism, meaning extreme views about anything, is used as a weapon against the Muslims, rather than taking into consideration all the extremists of all countries. Followers of any religion can be extremists. If we really want to wipe out the extremists we need to treat them equally by not being biased against any particular religion or country.

To sum up, we should first of all know the meaning of these controversial (!) words to use them properly.

Ariful Islam Laskar
MA student
Department of English
Jahangirnagar University

President Obama

It is amazing and unbelievable that a person could be loved, honoured, looked upon with reverence, irrespective of religion, race and culture. It is my belief that no one else has ever been revered so much like that person--Barack Obama, the President of the United States.

He is benevolent, kind and just, and at the same time he will not hesitate to do the needful.

Obama will bring peace and stability to the turbulent world and make bridges of friendship. May he live long and serve the suffering humanity.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong