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New timing

The letter by Rumi Ahmed "Torturous timing" is a very timely one.

- I want to add some points:
1. Ours being a hot and humid country people have adjusted to evening marketing in towns and villages since time immemorial.
 2. In Europe, North America, even in the foot hills of Himalayas Indian, Nepalese and Pakistani towns and villages where evenings are cold round the year, people try to get inside home with the sunset.
 3. In the USA, the government and business community become very concerned whenever retail sell takes a downward trend.
 4. Dhaka city alone boasts of one crore and 20 lakh population out of 15 core total population of Bangladesh.
 5. Spending power is mainly

restricted to city and town people in Bangladesh. Besides well-to-do, even a daily labourer and rickshaw puller's spending is important for our cottage and small industries. If they are forced to become spendthrifts, the market driven force in economy will suffer. When every government the world over is trying to rejuvenate the retail market we are doing just the opposite.

6. The meagre amount of electricity saved in desperation by closing the market at sunset and other measures like daylight saving hours have not appreciably improved the load shedding. May be we only make our judgment by statistics and theory on papers inside air-conditioned rooms and do not look into the practical and social aspects of people.

Sadeque
One e-mail

Patriotism

George Bernard Shaw said "Patriotism is the conviction that your country is better than others because you were born in it." There have been many such writers, political activists such as Leo Tolstoy, Emma Goldman who have described patriotism as too narrow a concept to meet the necessities and ideologies of the working men and women of the world who believe in harmony. In one of her speeches Emma Goldman said patriotism justifies the killing of innocent human beings. Do we all define patriotism as the right to kill in the name of one's country? The more important question is SHOULD we consider patriotism as the act of looking down upon all the other nations and overlooking the faults, atrocities committed by our own nation? Let's not define patriotism in a way which allows politicians, influential people to manipulate us into considering the slaughter of harmless human beings as a noble cause.

When a country's bomb hits another nation's land, lets recognize the true victims and the innocent, silent sufferers before hooting and rejoicing in pride of power. The razed lands of Iraq and Palestine provide strong evidence of the fact that patriotism has been misconstrued on a number of occasions. We should not be numb to the feelings of someone suffering in some other nation just because we love our country too much.

Ansha Zaman
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

KSA woman minister

Appointment of a woman minister by the Saudi King is a bold step towards ensuring women's development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). But it is most unfortunate that a certain quarter has been spreading some propaganda stating that the first ever appointed minister in the Kingdom is under some restrictions to discharging her duties smoothly. But Ms. Norah Binte Abdullah al-Fayez, Deputy Education Minister for female education affairs, KSA vide a recent statement told that she is under no restrictions to perform her job as a minister.

Deputy Minister Norah al-Fayez who is a King Saud University graduate and a post graduate in Sociology from an American university has cleared her position by affirming that she wishes to remain within her religious norms and cultural values while doing her job as the deputy minister. She expressed her firm hope and conviction that Saudi women would also attain the capability to play an important role in society as per demand of the time by acquiring proper education and training.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
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Tale of a child worker

A few days ago I visited Bandarban, one of the lands of natural beauty, accompanied by some of my friends. We hired a four wheeler jeep to enjoy the tour smoothly. Surprisingly, I met a child who was the helper/conductor of that jeep which climbs a number of hills every day. Undoubtedly, it was a risky job, but the boy performed spontaneously. When we

reached the peak of a hill named Neelgiri, 2400 feet above the sea level, I realized the pathetic condition of that child. I called him "Pioneer" because he made me know about many attractive places and hills on the way to Neelgiri. I couldn't resist my temptation to talk to him alone to know about his short but experienced life of sorrow and deep depression. I came to know that he grew up in a tribal family in Bandarban. His father was a jeep driver. His mother was often brutally beaten by his drunken father. He had nothing to do but cry himself. Once his mother was beaten brutally and divorced by his drunken father.

From that occurrence his miserable life became even more miserable.

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Iranian democrats

Reuel Marc Gerecht, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies and an expert on the Middle East, recently wrote in International Herald Tribune: "As Iranians have come to know theocracy intimately, secularism has become increasingly attractive. Iran now produces brilliant clerics who argue in favour of the separation of church and state as a means of saving the faith from corrupting power."

Indeed, most Iranians, especially women and the youth, never accepted the theocratic rule without protest. Iranian writer Azar Nafisi, who was expelled from her teaching position at Tehran University for refusing to wear veil, tells about the resistance women put up against the theocratic rule in her book Reading Lolita in Tehran.

Now all taboos have been broken in Iran and it will be impossible for the mullahs to impose the same rule again. Theocracy might have lost all its appeals even to many who initially supported it. As a consequence, repression in the name of religion can longer be possible. Politically speaking, it may lead to a tectonic shift in the entire region.

Bangladesh should be proud of its secular tradition.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Too soft!

Even though I do not support any political party, I support 110% the views expressed by the BNP parliamentary party regarding the interference of the Indian High Commissioner in our internal affairs. Questioning our water experts in our own country is uncalled for, unacceptable and demands a harsh response. The utterances of our foreign minister are equally deplorable.

We the patriots must raise and make our voices heard against the policy of appeasement by the government towards its Indian counterpart.

Nabil Ahmad Siddiqui
Shadhinota Saroni
Dhaka Cantonment

Drivers or killers?

I fully share the views expressed by Mr. Rahat in your column on 22nd June on the subject. It is very unfortunate to see that the on duty traffic policemen are oblivious of the countless traffic violations that are being committed by the bus drivers of Dhaka city particularly of some specific brands which have the most dented and dilapidated look of their so called public transport.

port. Because of heavy build and very shabby look of their vehicles they could not care less in damaging other vehicles ignoring all norms of traffic rules. Not only the drivers are unruly their assistants are equally if not more unruly as they scream and shout at the small private cars for space at the miseries/panic of private car owners. The rule that says the slower vehicle should move on the left lane and all overtaking be done from right seems to be forgotten all the time. Similarly, taking a right turn from left lanes has become a standard rule in this country. I wonder if the traffic police do know about these rules or if these rules have been written off from the book. I am pretty sure these route permit holders along with their accomplice drivers have an unholy alliance with the on duty traffic policemen who overlook all such violations in favour of personal gains.

Another point that pains us most is the arrogance of the first generation owners. These owners themselves do not know anything about the cars and the traffic laws and are entirely dependent on their arrogant/ignorant/immature and reckless drivers and do not have the guts to tell the drivers to follow the rules. They think that reaching 2-3 minutes earlier by breaking all rules and jeopardizing others is a wonderful job done by their drivers. These kinds of owners/drivers are in fact a majority that have compounded the problem.

The other thing that strikes me also is the reluctance of the traffic police to take any action on damage caused to small vehicles by big vehicles in traffic offences in the fear of causing congestion on the road. Because of no help from police it is impossible to get any kind of compensation from such evil doers- and for no reasons of yours you have to pay from your own pocket huge sums to repair the vehicle and at times for medical assistance to yourself.

Can the city/country expect to get out of this mess or how long will the department concerned remain oblivious of the issues like any other issue and wait until it has become a failed state in its entirety?

S.D. Khan
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Ghoulish crimes

Home Minister Sahara Khatun has claimed that criminal activities have come down considerably. But alas, we see no sign of it. From reports of the media we learned about quite a number of daring crimes.

On June 23, 2009, dacoits tried to rob Amin Jewellers at Gulshan area in broad daylight.

Armed miscreants entered the shop situated at DCC market at Gulshan-2.

On 24 June, a gang of seven, in the guise of customers entered Abdullah Money Exchange on DIT road and looted Tk 14 lakh, the time was 2:15pm. On the same day, criminals shot dead a video cassette trader at his shop and a manpower agent was stabbed to death at his house. Petty crimes are also taking place round the clock, people are feeling very unsafe.

Is not the Home Ministry aware of the situation? To combat the crimes, the government must take adequate steps, the number of law-enforcing agents should be increased manifold.

Intelligence agencies must do their job sincerely.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Disaster management



Bangladesh is a disaster prone country and has been suffering long with effects of various forms of natural disasters like, tornado, cyclone, frequent seasonal floods, tidal surges, earth sliding, earth quakes and incessant rains. The destruction and damage, economic, social and life losses resulting from these natural disasters are so big that these always hinder our economic growth and development and in many cases we have to depend on foreign aid support to survive.

A number of international aid organisations including UNDP, WFP, WHO, UNICEF come forward with various relief support programmes and activities including food, shelters, rehabilitations and repair and reconstruction after the aftermath including starting of immediate rescue operations but still sometimes the complexity and gravity of damage and destructions are

so high and complicated that it takes great expertise and experienced manpower to address and handle the various services that need immediate support.

Over the years, Bangladesh has gained adequate empirical knowledge to handle and deal with such crisis in a well-defined manner.

Time has come now to enhance our expertise through practical and theoretical education and knowledge. We need to establish at least three disaster management teaching and training institutions, at Chittagong, Khulna, and Dhaka, to develop experienced manpower to work in such crisis situations.

This institutional management would help to enhance our capacity to work in such situations.

Nasarullah
One e-mail

Energy saving

It is appreciable that the government has taken an initiative to have electrical energy by changing the clock time. Through this decision maximum utilization of daylight is possible in many built spaces like offices, shopping centres, schools, colleges etc. as these building-users use electricity approximately from 8:00am to 6:00pm.

But is it the effective solution to save electrical energy by utilizing daylight? Are our buildings designed in such a way to use the maximum of daylight in the interior spaces?

If we see the electrical energy consumption data of the PDB, we would find that about 86% of total electrical energy of Dhaka city is consumed by the residential buildings of Dhaka city and only 11% by the commercial buildings (source: Electrical energy consumption pattern of various consumers in Dhaka city, Year 2007, PDB).

The main reason behind the huge consumption of electricity by residential buildings is the 24-hour use of electricity by the users and the structure as well as lifestyle of the families in Dhaka city. The consumption load is also increasing through construction of the huge number of apartment buildings which have minimum setback with the side buildings and many of them have little provision of inclusion of daylight in the interior of the buildings. So the total energy consumption for using only artificial lights is vast in the residential sector.

Most of the office interiors and shopping malls are designed with maximum uses of attractive artificial lights and little provision daylight.

The design of opening or windows of the buildings may play a vital role for daylight inclusion in these interiors. So, the architects should give more emphasis on daylight inclusion and designing energy efficient buildings through manipulating proper built-space volume, openings and setbacks.

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Karwan Bazar killings

This horrifying front page news in all national dailies on 27 June, is a slap on the face of the government! It underlines the strength, ruthlessness and total disregard for law and order by the vicious "Chadabaz". It is a sore challenge to the government!

If the culprits are not found, and swiftly and harshly punished at the earliest, then in time the honoured tradition of democratic government the Home minister should take responsibility of failure and resign. If this does not happen, say in the next two weeks, then what is the difference between a democratic government and a carefree autocracy? The AL should consider this democratic tradition seriously and abide by it to be counted as a real democratic government and not a sham!

As for the police, starting from the IG, the top officials responsible for maintaining law and order in Dhaka must be shown the door. Gracefully, like the Home Minister, they too should resign voluntarily, accepting the failure in their

professional duty.

The factual saying, which cannot be denied is that; "Although murder has no tongue; yet it speaks." For this incident, it should be doubly so, and this has to be proved by the police! If not, then law and order becomes a farce. If this happens, then it will surely herald the beginning of the end for this government; like it or not!

"Uneasy lies the head, that wears the crown." Today this is the fact of life, for this popular democratic government. They cannot allow a gang of criminals to challenge their capability!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

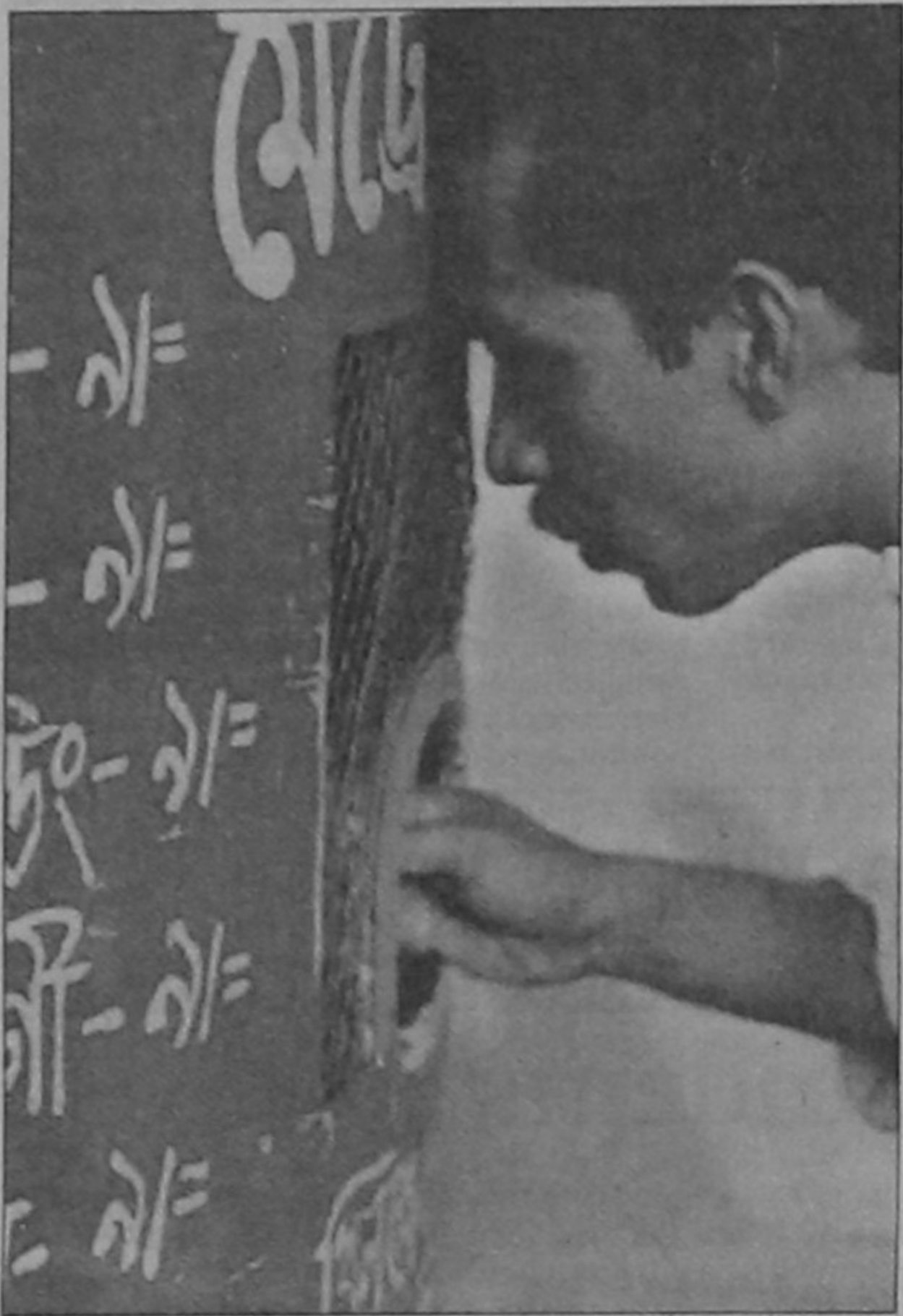
Harassment

Just a month ago, in the Star magazine a sufferer wrote a letter about the ordeal she had to endure at the US embassy during her interview for seeking US immigrant visa. Not only that lady, rather these days the US embassy here in Dhaka is not issuing immigrant visa during the initial interview on most of the occasions. They are harassing the immigrant visa seekers by asking irrelevant questions and it has become a common phenomenon during the time of interview.

I know that the US visa policy is very strict nowadays but it is also expected that the genuine visa seekers would not be harassed in the process of vigorous checking and cross checking. But in reality, most of the genuine visa seekers are being harassed by the embassy people.

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Bus tickets



In Dhaka city many bus companies maintain ticket counters from where people have to get on buses after buying tickets first. But many ticket sellers adopt a different way for their personal benefits. When a bus comes, people are in a hurry to enter into it but on receiving the money the seller instruct one or some passengers to board the bus without ticket. As the conductors and drivers get a portion of the non-issued tickets' money, the passengers generally do not face any problem in boarding the bus. I think some checkers are also involved in this act. If anyone insists on getting the ticket, the seller issues it angrily. The sellers do not do this illegal act for all passengers but they earn something in this way from around 10% of the passengers. It is my estimation.

Harun-or-Rashid
Dhaka

Digital Bangladesh

Digital society focuses on technology where information must be available to all classes of people. It is obviously forward thinking, especially for a poverty ridden and developing country like Bangladesh. Each and every sector of a society should be interconnected through ICT. Connecting people and ensuring Good Governance is a core prerequisite for a digital Bangladesh. Good governance includes different indicators like accountability of the government, transparency of the government, effective parliament, effective democratic system, freedom of print and mass media, independence of judiciary, rule of law, and access to information etc. Effective implementation of the above indicators can be possible when society gets adaptation with ICT. Information should be exposed to mass people that can ensure true communication. Connecting people depends on access to information.

It is our dream to see digital Bangladesh by the year 2021. To me, education is the top most requirement for a digital Bangladesh. In Bangladesh education rate is definitely lower than other developed countries. Our government has adopted different policies in order to provide education to people in every strata of society.

Again our country is a rural based one. Only a few people know how to use computer and Internet. High digital distance is seen between rural and urban areas and the Internet facility is available in a few organisations in urban areas. Digital Bangladesh must ensure Internet facility to all organisations.

So, I appreciate the advanced thinking of our

present government. But the problem lies in the buzzword- "Distance or Gap" Rich-poor gap, digital distance, old-young gap, cultural and technological gap between rural and urban areas that cannot be changed overnight. Our government needs to make their policies and plans by giving special attention to minimizing these distances.

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Country's security

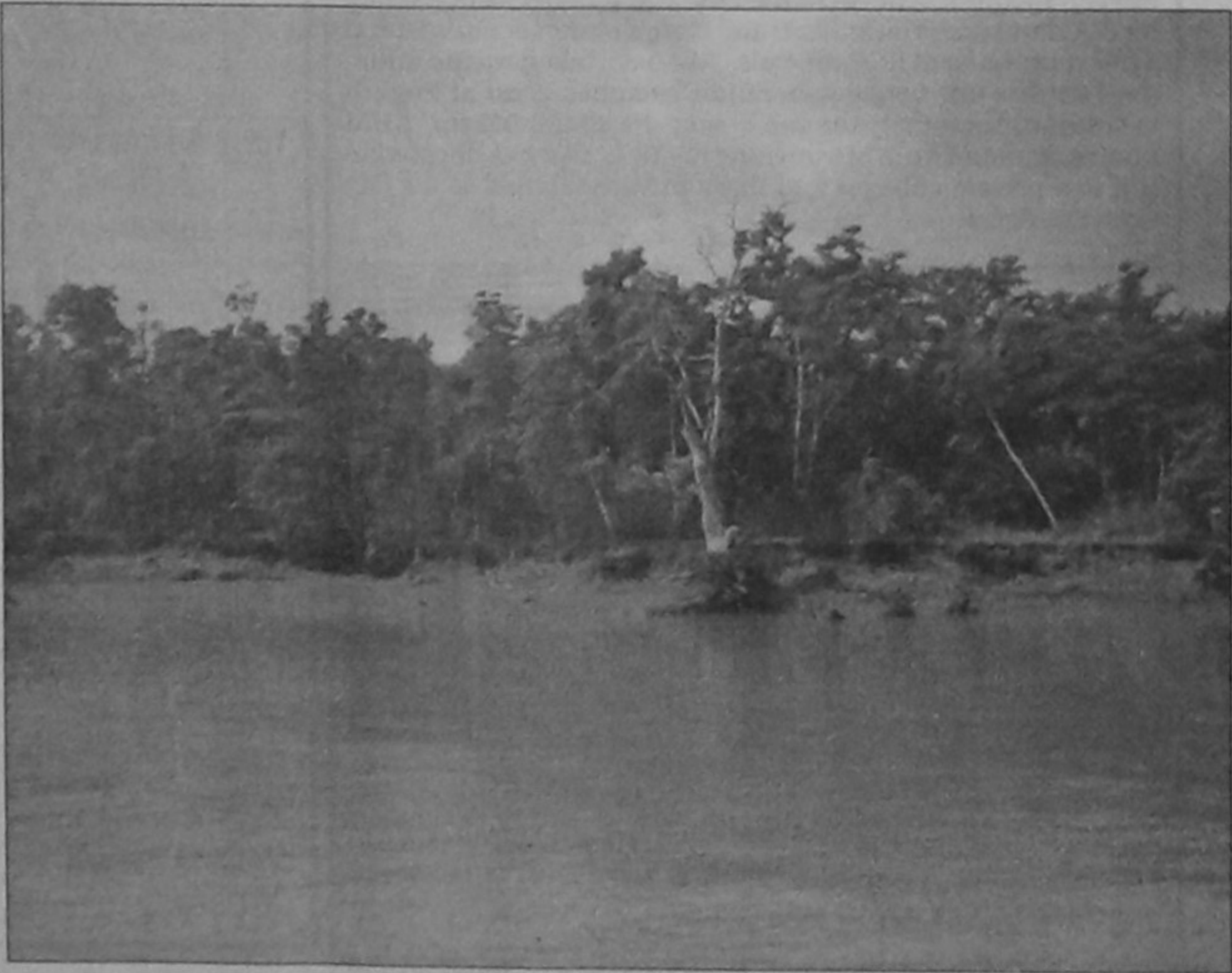
Every state has its own foreign policies. And many of them may not sound decent, but that's the way it is, completely unfathomable. Of course it's not all about high government officials showing their ever-smiling faces in various summits and bilateral rendezvous. This never ever does not bring an end to the story, nor does it resemble the innumerable conspiracies and the vicious abhorrence for one another. But it's just a formality to save your skin in front of the world. So deep down, it's the intricate manifestation of national security that matters the most. A country helped the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, named LTE, by providing them with sophisticated and advanced machineries to consolidate their roots and give the Sri Lankans a debilitating battle to fight. For decades now, it has also been facilitating the 'Shanti Bahini', which tended to give our Bangladesh Army a pulsating headache all the way in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

All these spellbinding array of offensive tactics are an open secret. We are a developing country.

We undoubtedly should also have our own sets of policies.

Waheedur Rahman
DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka

Biodiversity and our existence



It has been estimated that more than 50 million species of plants, animals and micro-organisms exist in the world. Out of these, about two million organisms have been identified so far. Our planet's requirement and services depend mainly on biological resources. Human society depends on biological resources, their diversity and the ecosystem that sustain them. Biological resources not only provide us nourishment, clothing, housing, fuel and medicine but also meet other requirements.

Maintenance of ecological balance, conservation of natural resources and prevention of soil erosion may be considered as the examples of indirect use of biodiversity.

The responsible factors for the loss of biodiversity may be natural or artificial. The natural causes

include drought, flood, storm, land slides, diseases earthquake etc. The artificial causes include grazing, urbanization, industrialization, scientific and educational research, road and dam construction all leading to destruction of habitat and over exploitation of plants and animals for commercial purposes.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) believes the commitment to reduce biodiversity loss by 2010 will not be met. So it is the right time to preserve biological as well as ecological diversity to achieve sustainable development.

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