

**Car owners, take care!**

A recent research has revealed that the car dashboard, sofa, air-fresher emit Benzene, a highly toxic compound which causes cancer. Exposure even to low levels of Benzene can cause dizziness, drowsiness, headaches, confusion, tremors, rapid heartbeat, and unconsciousness. Long-term exposure can damage the bone marrow and lead to blood problems, like anaemia and leukaemia. It also weakens the immune system and targets organs, such as kidney, lung, liver, and brain.

The acceptable Benzene level indoors is 50 mg per sq. ft. A car parked indoors with the windows closed contains 400-800 mg of Benzene while a car parked outdoors under the sun at a temperature above 60 degrees F, the Benzene level goes up to 2000-4000 mg, which is 40 times the acceptable level!

So, it is recommended that before entering into the car, the windows and doors should be opened to give time for the car interior to air out.

**Professor M Zahidul Haque**  
Chairman  
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System  
SAU, Dhaka

**Donations to mosques**

Imam of a mosque is a honourable position in an Islamic society. But almost all the Imams of our mosques pay their attention to collecting donations from the devotees. Sometimes after completing Jumma prayer, they ask and motivate the devotees to donate money to the mosque.

We should follow the instructions of the Holy Quran and Hadith. Neither the Holy Quran nor the Hadith supports taking money for such purposes.

**Mufti Habibur Rahman**  
Mohammadpur  
Dhaka

**BTTB**

Suddenly, my residential telephone got disconnected for reasons not known to me. Initially, I thought it to be line trouble. I requested the local complaint centre to restore my telephone line. In the mean time two more days were gone. Neither my telephone was restored nor I got any feedback. Again I contacted the complaint centre. They informed me that my telephone had been disconnected and told me to contact the office for restoration. I sent a man to the telephone revenue office in G.P.O. building to know about the matter but he could not make any way out. The next day I personally went to the revenue office. After looking here and there I got the revenue section room. About 20/25 people sitting face to face in a congested room were working in the revenue section. The situation in the room seemed to me very much chaotic like a kitchen market devoid of any congenial atmosphere for doing office work. Finally, I could reach the upper division assistant of Rampura area and came to know that my telephone had been disconnected for default of payment. I produced the paid bill copies up to April '09 to prove that the payment was up to date. The person told me that the charge due for the month of June '09 remained unpaid. I told him that this was middle of June and normally bill for the month is available during the 3rd week or so of the month. As such, I have not yet received the bill, so how could I make payment? He told me to take a fresh bill from the office to make payment and to inform the office. He prepared for me a bill with a validity up to 30th June '09. However, he agreed to connect my line by the evening. Really I got my telephone restored in the evening. I did not make payment against the prepared bill, rather I waited for the normal bill to come. Yes, it came around June 24th '09 with validity up to June 30th. And I paid within the time. Even after all these things I could

**Joyriding**

The front page news feature on the obnoxious style of car rides commonly practised by youngsters these days (of course encouraged by their loving parents) is not only a social nuisance but also a threat to the safety of all on the road, passengers of other vehicles and especially pedestrians and rickshaws as well.

In addition to the reckless driving at high speed and making unbearable noise from their cars, the extremely loud music also affects the hearing of small children. With such vehicles on the road, all are at risk, from a health point of view as well as safety. This is a serious issue and should not be overlooked. It is not harmless.

I urge the authorities concerned to put a stop to such dangerous behaviour by the irresponsible motorists.

**Anwarul Islam**  
Dhanmondi RA  
Dhaka

**Religious bigots and fatwa**

The recent "fatwa" induced inhuman punishment meted out to a woman for alleged social misconduct on the basis of a mullah's judgment, as reported in your pages on 29 June, is a crude and sadistic act of illegal violence. He should be taken for psychiatric treatment, though he may be otherwise sound in body and mind. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated in a civilized society. In contrast the mullah is a prime example of applying uncivilized "law of the jungle" in Bangladesh!

Society should take necessary steps to stop such perverted acts. Meanwhile, the authorities must also take strong action against those who were a part of the mullah's followers by allowing this uncivilized public behaviour to go unchallenged. The parliament should pass laws to stop such uncivilized acts, and the punishment for such ill-motivated and sadistic crimes should be more harsh with long prison terms plus a hefty fine.

It is high time for women's organisations in Bangladesh to create awareness against such deeds, based on irrelevant "fatwas" all over the country. They will have the support of vast majority of all sensible people, except for some bigots who are either ignorant, mentally or physically unbalanced or criminals masquerading as religious people. Such persons need to be identified and isolated from society. Their right of propagating such unsavoury and unacceptable ideas also needs to be curtailed.

**S.A. Mansoor**  
Dhaka

**US and Latin America**

The ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya vowed to return to Honduras in an attempt to reclaim power. Zelaya was forced out of office and exiled to Costa Rica in a military coup d'état.

There's a communiqué, issued by a popular front against the coup, saying that Battalion 316 is operating again.

Battalion 316. This goes back to the Reagan years with John Negroponte, who was ambassador to Honduras at the time. He was involved in organising the Honduran branch of the Iran-Contra war. And the Baltimore Sun ran a series of articles that made it quite clear that he was involved in the cover-up of a number of death squad executions, over a hundred disappearances, by Battalion 316.

Honduras was effectively an outpost of the United States' worst campaigns during the Cold War. They built a huge air base in Honduras and a training centre there for the Central Americans. The US has always felt it had a perfect right to do anything it wanted to do in Latin America. That was its backyard, and for the sake of better security it had a right to do as it pleased down there!

President Barack Obama said that he doesn't want to return to the dark policies of the past.

It is still not too late. The government should make efforts to change the city with high rise residential buildings, a grid/network of extremely wide cross roads, so that in the coming days if additional flyover/underpasses are required those can be built without disrupting the traffic.

We really do not want to witness the death of this city.

**Ted Rudow**

**One-mail**

**Iranian protesters**

The Iranian people will have to suffer the consolidation of power by a ruthless regime. But by declaring a war on its own people, the regime has been terminally weakened and it will face inevitable demise when most Iranians overcome their fear will send the regime and its armed gangs packing.

**Mahmood Elahi**  
Ottawa, Canada

Vast majority of Iran's women and youth, who are more than 70% of the population, had voted for reformist candidate Mir-Hossain Mousavi and yet Ahmadinejad claimed that he had won the June 12 election. When the news spread that Ahmadinejad had won more than 60 percent of the vote cast, most Iranians reacted with shock. By June 14, the shock and disbelief had given away to moral outrage and the people of Iran took to the streets to protest such a well-orchestrated voting fraud by the regime. Their demands were simple: a re-election or at least a total recount.

Faced with such massive protests, the regime unleashed its heavily-armed Revolutionary Guards or Pasdaran in Persian and their equally brutal sidekick the Basij militias. These armed goons went on a rampage, killing and injuring scores of Iranians. The climax came when one of them shot dead a young woman Neda Soltani who was talking in her mobile phone.

The ferocity with which the hardliners crushed the protest movement stunned the entire world. Tyrants by nature are intolerant of dissent and the Ahmadinejad regime is no exception. The prospect of mass executions now looms over these protesters. In a sermon on June 26, a senior Shia cleric -- Ayatollah Ahmed Khatami -- called for thousands of protesters who have been arrested to be punished "without mercy," branding them as "enemies of God." He declared: "Anyone who takes up arms to fight, is worthy of execution." That statement ignored the fact that the protesters were unarmed and only the Pasdaran and Basij militias used arms against them. Khatami's statement is an ominous sign that the regime is preparing the way for mass executions and the world must stand up to prevent any further atrocities against non-violent protesters.

The Obama administration has been wise to keep a low-key approach while giving moral support to the protesters. The administration doesn't want to give the Iranian regime an excuse to blame the Americans for the uprisings. But Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and his surrogates are already blaming America and Britain for instigating the Iranians. On Friday June 19, Ayatollah Khamenei gave notice to dissenters that any further protests would be tantamount to treason. A prominent Iranian critic of the regime, Amir Taheri, wrote in London's Sunday Times that Khatami's speech meant the end of the marginal democratic charade.

It is time the international community sent a clear message to the Iranian autocrats that any executions will have far reaching consequences for Iran's international standing. The world must show its solidarity by making it clear to Iran's oligarchs that those responsible for last month's atrocities will pay a price. In international law, killing your own people to maintain the hold on power constitutes a crime against humanity.

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Millions of cases are gathering dusts in different courts and police stations in our country, but no one has time for those.

Our poor people have to wait 10/15 years before they get their cases heard by a judge (some people have even passed away while waiting!). Our poor people pay the fees of lawyers and police! It is for this reason I find it surprising that within a few months of the AL government taking office, no less than the highest court in our country found the time to tell us that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman, not Ziaur Rahman, had proclaimed the country's

independence in 1971.

Those lawyers and politicians who were behind this, do they really think that one such ruling would put the matter to rest? The AL government has gone on an overdrive to spend our money and resources to give us the "correct" version of history. Next time when the BNP comes to power it will also give us another "correct" version. In fact, this is what these two parties have been doing since 1991.

Does Sheikh Hasina really believe that all this cannot be, or will not be, changed by another government in the future? I strongly urge Sheikh Hasina to immediately stop wasting our time and resources on this kind of issues and let the people decide for themselves.

**Azad Miah**  
Oldham  
UK

**Stop wasting resources**

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**Md. Humayun Kabir**  
Deputy Manager (ops)  
Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation, Dhaka

**Local government**

In our country, local government structure is not developed enough to contribute to national development. Like any other least developed country, Bangladesh has been facing many problems in the way of its development. Local government may be a strong institution in development. In Bangladesh, the local government consists of three tiers: Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Zilla Parishad.

Among these three tiers, the

Union Parishad can play a significant role in development. The Union Parishad will have some responsibilities like it will maintain birth and death records, it must have information about total land of the respective union and the total arable land. Besides, it will record total crop number and the quantity of crops that are produced in that particular union all the year round. About population, it will have information about the total number of people including their age, profession etc.

However, in practice what we see in Union Parishad is that there is nobody except the Union Parishad secretary and the elected chairman. Things must improve in this area.

**Raju Kumar Das**  
Dept. of Business Administration  
SUST, Sylhet

**Our pride**

It is amazing news for the citizens of Bangladesh because our pride Cox's Bazar & Sundarbans are acquiring the second & third position in seven new wonders of nature. Many people don't know what the wonders are, nor do they know how to cast vote.

We should be aware of the great assets that we have.

**M. Emad**  
Oxford, UK

**Unpunished war criminals**

Mian Tufail Mohammad, the former chief of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP), died in Lahore on June 25. From 1966 to 1972 Tufail was the West Pakistan chief, while Golam Azam in East Pakistan and Abul Aala Maududi (died in 1979) was the all Pakistan chief of JIP. In the name of Islam, these top JIP leaders were directly involved and played a key role in the heinous war

crimes of the Pakistan Army in 1971.

Immediately after the defeat and surrender of Pakistan Army in Bangladesh, they helped the Al-Badr criminals to settle in Pakistan, the Middle East and the West, and launched a worldwide anti-Bangladesh propaganda.

In the late '70s and '80s with the help of a certain quarter in Pakistan, Tufail reorganised Al-Badr and raised several other jihadi groups for Kashmir (India), Afghanistan and other central Asian countries.

Also, these jihadi groups killed thousands of Muhajir/Bihari (Indian refugees in Pakistan) youths and Shias in many places in Pakistan.

It is a great disappointment to see top war criminals escaping justice.

**Azzur Rahim**  
Dept. of Business Administration  
SUST, Sylhet

**Higher education**

Your daily published the news on the protest by students to stop the introduction of evening MA at the department of English of Dhaka University.

The rationale behind the move, so far I know through the report, is to prevent privatisation of higher education. The protesters also alleged that this may cause their existing problems to worsen.

Later, a press conference was arranged and a memo was submitted to the VC in favour of their department and delay in results publication. Let me humbly ask them why do not they go for a protest to solve that problem?

Then take the bigger picture. The internal problem they face is prevalent in most of the public universities in our country, not only in their particular department. Session jam is common. The authorities are trying to solve the problem, but they are not yet eliminated.

There is dearth of the sources of quality higher education. Streamlining the public institutions with the goal of serving the nation is essential where resource utilisation rate is quite low.

At the university of Dhaka some departments are doing an excellent job by providing higher education and attaining a stronger position in service and excellence.

Executive MBA from IBA, EMBA from Faculty of Business Studies, Masters in Development Studies are such examples. They are enriching themselves as well as the country.

Again, privatisation of higher education means publicisation, for general public, of higher education. The concept is that as many people as possible should deserve higher education publicly. But is this possible in our country?

Secondly, they allege that they face problems like session jams in

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