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Car owners, take care!

A recent research has revealed that the car dashboard, sofa, air-freshener 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

Dying city



The capital city is dying and it is dying fast. The four rivers surrounding the city are already dead and now they are drying up and losing both depth and width. The underground water level has gone down to a record low and could result in a devastating earthquake. The city's electricity supply is in dire straits. The traffic situation is the talk of the town. Carjacking and mugging are increasing every day and on top of that more used cars are imported and unauthorized rickshaws are legally back on the streets.

According to reports, the government has approved the Tk 2,000 crore 04 lane Dhaka Chittagong highway project which will help the city to see more traffic in the coming days. The 1st gridlock will start at the end of Kanchpur bridge and will continue all the way to Gulistan and it will probably take 2-3 hours to cross this road, which is already clogged up with heavy traffic and the misery will only increase when the Dhaka Narayanganj (Signboard to Narayanganj town) road expansion (4 lanes) project will be complete. The way the capital is going to be connected in the coming days, without proper networks of roads and bypasses, it will certainly come to a standstill by the end of the present government's tenure.

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.

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi, 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

not understand as to why my telephone was disconnected putting me in trouble and thus deceiving BTTB from revenue earning.

What is going on in the telephone department?
Md. Delwar Hossain
East Rampura, Dhaka

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 fun.

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 physiologically unbalanced or criminals masquerading a 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.

We hope that Obama will be honest and do the right thing.
Ted Rudow
One-mail

Iranian protestors

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 protestors. In a sermon on June 26, a senior Shia cleric -- Ayatollah Ahmed Khatami -- called for thousands of protestors 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 protestors 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 protestors.

The Obama administration has been wise to keep a low-key approach while giving moral support to the protestors. The administration doesn't want to give the Iranian regime an excuse to blame the Americans for the upheavals. But Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini and his surrogates are already blaming America and Britain for instigating the Iranians. On Friday June 19, Ayatollah Khomeini 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.

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 overcoming their fear will send the regime and its armed gangs packing.
Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Failed parliamentarians

It is very sad that most of the parliamentarians of the country are not serious about their duties which has been revealed by the TIB. The report says that almost Tk 5.5 crore got wasted due to quorum crisis in the first session. What I want to say is that it is the main duty of the parliamentarians to modify and formulate laws, being present in parliament, and they know it very well before being elected, but soon after they get elected they forget their main duties and become busy with their personal business, leaving their main task incomplete. This way the main target of democracy remains unfulfilled. A few days back one of the veteran ruling party lawmakers exhorted the opposition lawmakers to resign their position as they are not joining the parliament sessions. One reasonable question arises here: the Awami League led government won more than two thirds of the total number of seats and if one third of their MPs join parliament sessions on time, there will be no quorum crisis. Do they perform their duties properly?

Anis Rahman
Zahurul Huq Hall
University of Dhaka

Patriotism

The government is going to change some books of primary and secondary schools at a time. The intellectuals of Bangladesh said that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is not underscored in those books, rather importance has been given to Ziaur Rahman. It is really a gigantic task.

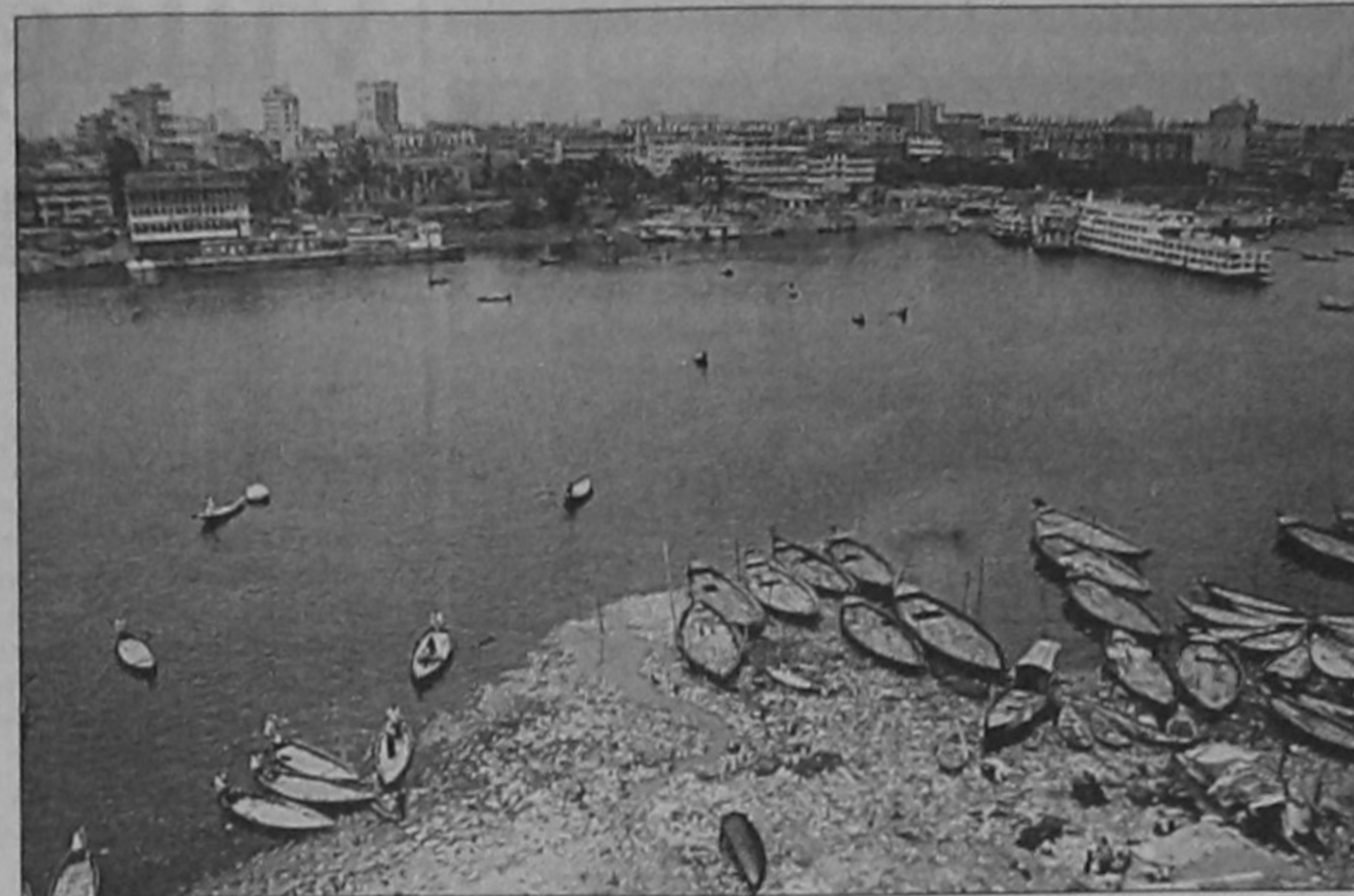
All the governments always consider everything in their own perspective. We, always found lack of patriotism at all the levels in our society.

Something should be inserted in the books to make our next generation honest, sincere, active and patriotic.
Karisma Kibria
Student of Rajshahi University

Stop wasting resources

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 Mujibur Rahman, not Ziaur Rahman, had proclaimed the country's

Grabbers back in business



AMDAUL HUQ / DRINKNEWS

A photograph in the front page of The Daily Star of 4th July issue drew my attention. Again river encroachers have started to fill up the water bodies near Ashulia Bridge on the outskirts of the capital. Just a few days ago, the government demolished some illegal structures on both sides of the Turag river and took vow to drive encroachers once for all at any cost. When this operation was going on, I was thinking how many days it would continue. After a few days we saw the eviction operation coming to a halt due to legal complications and some other unknown reasons. It was proved again that "We can start but cannot finish". Demolition work created further obstruction to free flow of river water.

My question is why the government went there to demolish the illegal structures spending public money. The government could give orders to the encroachers to remove the illegal structures at their own cost within the stipu-

lated time and to return the water bodies to the original form. After the stipulated time, if anybody does not remove illegal structures, the government should take stern action immediately. Local chairman or ward commissioners should be held responsible for any illegal structure or encroachment on rivers and roads in their respective areas.

In my opinion nothing will be effective until and unless we become self inspired to protect our environment. We should create public awareness in different ways to protect our environment. We need the law and strict enforcement of it. Our ruling and opposition parties have vehemently protested the construction of the Tipaimukh Dam. That is good. But they do not protest when the land grabbers grab our rivers and water bodies.

Our political parties should raise their voice jointly against all such activities.
N.S. Chowdhury
Gopibagh, Dhaka

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

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, Upzila 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.

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

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.
M. Emad
Oxford, UK

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 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.

Raju Kumar Das
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 demand.

Let me first ask the protesters what they mean by privatisation of higher education, a term often used, in my opinion with no knowledge or little knowledge. Privatisation of public programmes instead of privatisation of higher education could have been their target, I guess.

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

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

I think the English department should not be an exception.

Asraf Ali
One-mail



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