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Menacing Dhaka!

As you walk through the ever-corrugated roads of Dhaka city amidst the cranking of earth-shattering hydraulic horns and the intimidating cling-cling of rickshaws, you are bound to perceive the shapeless bodies moving through the narrow gaps between the adjacent cars. They are of all sizes and all ages. I am sure most of us are familiar with Oscar winning movie 'Slumdog Millionaire', where the cruel array of the begging industry is exposed. The deliberate chopping of the limbs and feet to make it a medium of earning money, I tell you what, isn't at all nonsense though the veracity of the sense may differ to some extent in our country. Yes it's all but true; the next big industry in Bangladesh will be the begging industry. It attracts a substantial amount of people because it's comparatively easy to sit there and beg in the shade instead of sweating your brow and doing something decent. I've once heard that the monthly incomes of 'profound' beggars are equal to income of one regular rickshaw-puller. Many have adopted this as a regular profession, rather than something to be

done at extreme circumstances. Isn't this just ludicrous enough. While Dhaka city gets crammed up day by day, it has become equally difficult to stand there for a while without getting haunted by these menacing beggars. The other day I saw street urchins circumscribing a foreigner and obliging her to grant something more even though she gave them enough money! Due to the irregular development between our big cities, it's the capital which people prefer to come to looking for a job and consequently getting thrown into this fraudulent profession.

So, I would encourage people to spend your money wisely which you give out of humbleness. This may seem a bit tough for you. But there are innumerable NGOs waiting for you, ready to make every penny in this country count.

Waheedur Rahman

*Manarat Dhaka International College
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Dhaka*

Begging is a curse and a social nuisance. One is immediately con-

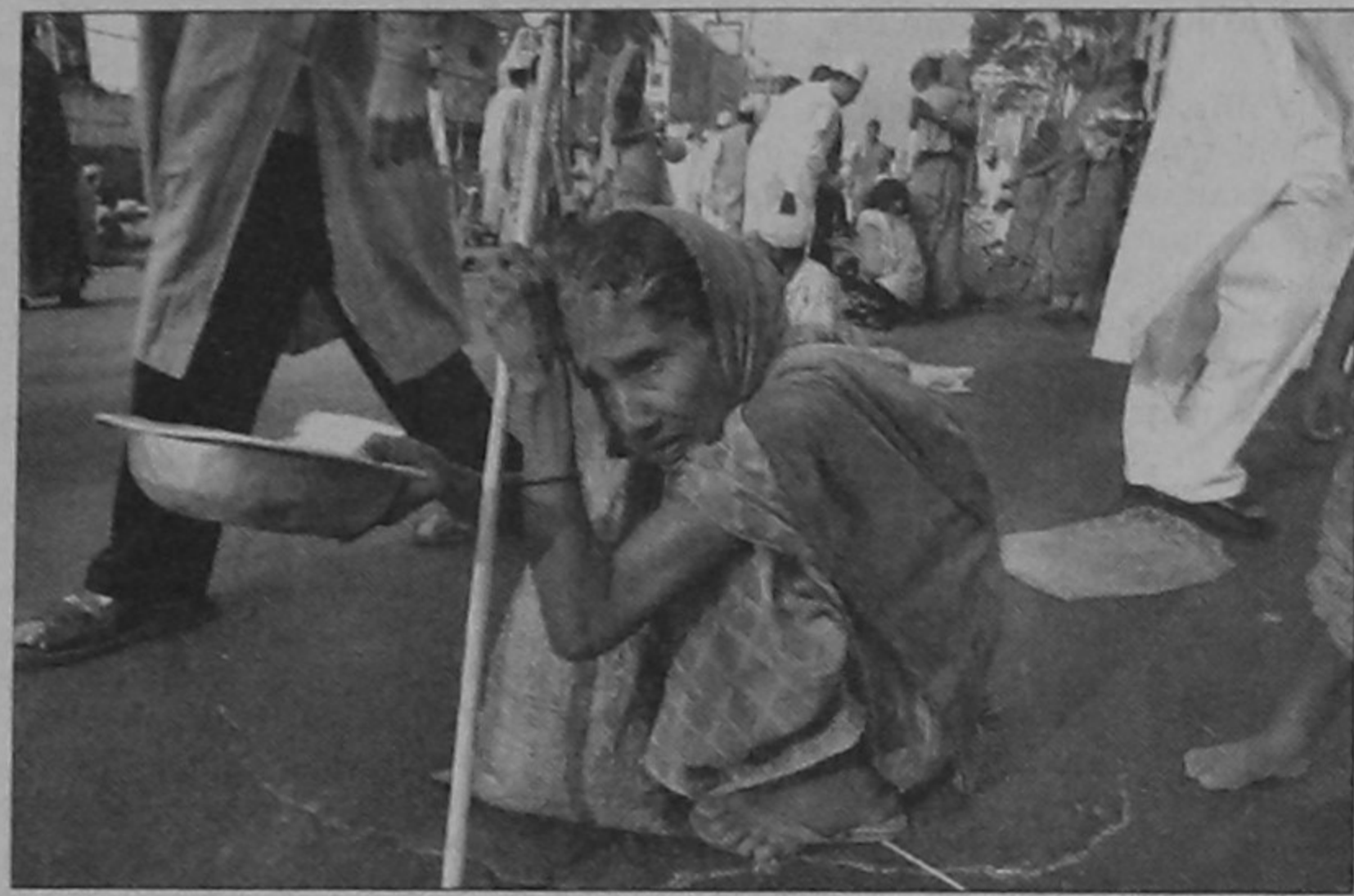
fronted with these half clothed, malnourished and disabled beggars on landing at Dhaka International Airport, Kamalapur Station, Sadarghat launch terminal and in different filling stations and almost everywhere. It is indeed a sorry sight and extremely humiliating and embarrassing. Begging undermines our image and dignity. Knocking and pecking at vehicles, particularly in roundabouts of posh Gulshan, Dhanmondi and in front of Bashundhara and Sheraton is a common scenario. Often, the beggars resort to all types of innovative and 'tricky' ideas. They feign sickness and carry prescriptions of physicians and surgeons. It is really shocking to find 'hired' babies being utilised in this hot summer days to entice passers-by.

Begging should be banned by all means. There are many poor countries in the world but one hardly comes across beggars. The Ministry of Social Welfare has a moral responsibility to rehabilitate the beggars. Only the disabled beggars should be provided with food and accommodation in vagrant homes in every district. Beggars seeking medical assistance should be provided support at these centres. All this can be possible with Zakat Fund or similar benevolent funds may be opened for the purpose. There are many philanthropists in the country but they do not know where to deposit their fund.

The Awami League Govt. has already initiated major reforms in various sectors and it is our expectation that beggars will be socially rehabilitated and begging banned for good.

Shamim Ahmed

*Gulshan 2
Dhaka*



Foot overbridge

We are astonished to see that the construction of an extension from the Farmgate footbridge to a privately owned market is going on. We are confused if it is being constructed at private level or by the government. Those having experience of this area know well, how busy the farmgate overbridge is. Thus bridge connects three important points of as many as five extremely busy roads. The above extension would only increase the rush, creating severe congestion and other hazards. Definitely the extension would help the business of the private market. We do not know if this market would at all pay the government for this additional business. Even if the market pays, we do not know to what extent it would compensate the increased trouble caused to the passers-by. We do not understand who in the government suddenly became so kind to a private market and what made him to favour a market by ignoring the interest of the millions who use this bridge.

In case the city authorities have already approved its construction, as ordinary citizens we have the right to question the validity of their knowledge in ascertaining the people's needs. Even a mere child with mediocre level of intelligence can guess that this branch would in no way ease people's movement, but would severely increase and complicate the same. Do the citizens pay taxes for projects targeted for the enhancement of income of private organisations for creating hazards for themselves?

Bijon B. Sarma
*Professor (on LPR)
Khulna University*

High Commissioner's folly?

The Bangladesh born former British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Mr. Anwar Choudhury arrived in Dhaka on a three-day visit. Some BNP supporters namely Shacheton Nagorik Shomaj and Anti-Represion Student Group staged a protest rally at the airport. The leaders of the protesting supporters of the BNP demanded among others, arrest of this British high profile diplomat. His offences, according to the protesters, are his support to the 1/11 changeover, destruction of democracy in Bangladesh etc.

According to real conscious citizens, Mr. Anwar Choudhury, if had really helped the change over on 1/11, he deserves profuse thanks and gratitude from the people of Bangladesh. Instead of trial, he should have been given heroic civic receptions in big auditoriums in Dhaka during his stay and we should honour him with medals for saving Bangladesh from the brink of an eminent disaster. Let us imagine what he has done. If the BNP could have staged an Aziz-Hasan brand election on an agenda of pre-fixed election results on 1/22, there would have been bloodshed, the BNP would not have been able to stay in power for more than a week or so, democracy would be been killed and the country would have plunged into chaos and civil war.

I think, the leadership of the present BNP has wrongly advised their supporters to organise such protest rallies.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

In response....

A letter published on your daily dated August 3, 2009 by Mr. Sohail Ahmed with the title: "Road network" caught my attention. In the letter, the writer blatantly blamed the present government for not doing anything in erasing the present traffic problems of Dhaka city.

Mr. Sohail should understand that it has been around seven months since this present Awami League government took over power. It is quite absurd if we expect from them to resolve all the traffic problems of Dhaka city within this short period of time. We should give time to our government to eradicate all the problems. We need to be patient!

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

BNP-Jamaat

The AL has been in power for only six months. If anyone is to blame for the progress made by India towards building Tipaimukh project it is BNP-Jamaat since they were in power for five years prior to the caretaker government. It is intriguing why they did not raise the issue as effectively as they do now. Is it because their policy is to appease India when in power and to oppose it when out of power?

So, who are the real patriots?

Farah Khan
Gulshan, Dhaka

Blind support

Blind obedience to the AL and its leader may bring apparent good to the party but may not be good for the whole country. So, statesmanship is needed in selecting leaders.

Toothless parliamentarians or ministers may not be suitable for Vision 2021.

Dr Azizul Karim

GP, Australia

Awami League council

Awami league is one of the biggest and oldest political parties in our political arena. This year it has celebrated 60th birth anniversary. Since its inception it has proven itself to be a party of mass people. From the historic Language Movement to our Liberation War or to the overthrow of autocratic rulers to establish democracy, its contribution is matchless. It has been vocal for change.

However, recently it ended its 20th council but it has failed to introduce intra-party democracy.

Md Zonae Emran
*Dept. of Political Science
University of Dhaka*

Eve-teasing

Eve-teasing is a euphemism especially used in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India for public sexual harassment. It's a form of sexual aggression that ranges in severity from obscene gestures, indecent body language, sexually suggestive comments, inadvertent brushing in public places, catcalls, to outright groping.

Since the mid 90s, women increasingly started to pursue higher education and join outdoor activities such as various official jobs etc. From that time they started to move from one place to another without accompanying male escort. So, now they have to interact more with their male counterparts. Even they have to stay in dormitories, hostels and apartments to pursue higher education or for official purposes leaving their own houses. But the problem they are facing while moving or pursuing higher education is eve-teasing.

Some mentally unsound men are generally engaged in eve-teasing for their own pleasure and fun. Recently, the assault on a RU female student by a BCL activist is a perfect example of eve-teasing. Such type of eve-teasing is usually occurring in

both rural and urban areas regularly.

I would like to say that eve-teasing is one kind of mental disease. This problem can't be solved overnight as it's very difficult to prove. Perpetrators often devise ingenious ways to attack women.

We have to launch a massive social campaign to remove this menace.

Suman Saha
*MBA (Strategic and International Management)
University of Dhaka*

Daylight saving plan

I fully support the views about DST of Dr Q.M. Ohidul Alam which was published on August 2, 2009.

This new timing has not improved the situation, load shedding is going on as before and the change of timing has created confusion in people's minds. Many people have not adjusted the clock to the new timing, they prefer to maintain the old routine. Dr Ohidul Alam has rightly pointed out that in the western countries DST is practiced not for saving electricity, there is no scarcity of it.

In summer the sun sets very late in these countries and they utilize the daylight but in our country the difference between days of summer and winter is negligible, so we do not see any logic behind the DST scheme. The government should abandon DST and concentrate on building new power plants, stop unnecessary use of electricity which we see in shopping malls and in many other places. People also must refrain from wasting it, they should switch off lights, fans when they go out of the room and air conditioners should be used frugally.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Why this violence?

His dream was to educate people around Santos and every part of Bangladesh. If he was alive, this tragic clash would have pained him so much.

Our Mawlana Bhasani Science And Technology University is not only named after him, but is also a fulfillment of his dream.

Shakila Yeasmin Suchana
Student

*Department of Criminology and Police Science
Mawlana Bhasani Science And Technology University*

Proactive attitude

The need for proactive attitude is very important in every aspect of personal as well as national life. If you look at half a glass of water, you can say that half the glass is full, which is true. At the same time, you can also say half the glass is empty, which is also true. Obviously, the first attitude is admirable in the sense that it shows proactive attitude. Elderly members of families often demoralize children saying, "You are a hopeless guy, I cannot see any hope for you. You are a block-head." By showing such attitude and by behaving in such a negative way with our children, we, in fact, destroy the little confidence they have and spoil their potential. On the other hand, expressions such as "You can win, you will be successful, you are as talented as others" will not only encourage them but also bring significant improvements in their performance.

Similarly, negative attitude has eaten up our national life. Some people are so cynical about our country that they will leave no stone unturned to leave the country. According to them, this country is unfit for living, dysfunctional, corrupt, and hopeless, not realizing the fact that it is us who have brought it into this situation. And we ourselves can change it and turn it into a country which will be poverty free, corruption free, and pollution free.

Ghazi S. Hossain
Rahmatgonj, Chittagong

Election in Iran

After rigging the election and brutalising non-violent protesters, Iranian dictator Ahmadinejad is now murdering political prisoners held during the mass uprising after the election. Fears are mounting over the safety of hundreds of political prisoners in Tehran's Guantanamo Evian prison following the death of two political prisoners. Mohsen Rouholamini and Amir Javadifar died in Evian prison due to beatings by the security forces.

Mr. Rouholamini, the son of a prominent Iranian scientist, died from merciless beatings inflicted by his jailers. The same happened to Amir Javadifar who suffered a broken skull after being tortured by the prison guards. Another political prisoner, Isa Saharkhiz, a prominent reformist journalist, is reported to have suffered broken ribs after being tortured for hours.

Campaigners are also concerned for the safety of Kian Tajbaksh, an Iranian-American journalist and scholar said to be under pressure to confess involvement in an alleged Western plot to orchestrate protests.

Prisoners recently released from Evian have described enduring countless beatings. "I was beaten by batons and slapped thousands of times," said one, who spent two weeks in the prison. One recently released man was said to have completely lost his mind.

Thousands are still in prison where they are being regularly tortured to extract "confession" that the protests were a part of a foreign conspiracy. Iran's already divided political establishment has been shocked by Rouholamini's death.

His father Abdolhossain Rouholamini, is a former head of the Pasteur Institute, a leading Iranian scientific organisation.

Mohsen Rouholamini, arrested on July 9, was treated with particular brutality because of his prominent father to intimidate others. One reformist and head of the parliamentary committee, Hamid Riza Katouzian, called Mr. Rouholamini's death "very ugly" and added: "Those who have turned society into a dictatorial state and deployed military measures should be held responsible."

Iranian journalists with an independent mind are under severe pressure from the Ahmadinejad regime. With all foreign journalists expelled, it depends on the Iranian journalists to let the world know the true picture. But anyone reporting real news faces prison and even execution.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada



PHOTO: STAR

HSC results

When commenting on this year's results of Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations, the education minister told that the relentless effort by the students and hard labour of the teachers and guardians paved the way for such good results. He also told that the government wanted to reach the goal of making hundred percent pass rate and ensure quality education.

These are good words and sound convincing. But what is happening in reality? Education quality and learning environment are absent in most of the educational institutions. Now the system is moving forward riding the diligent efforts of the students and their guardians and the commercially motivated undertakings of the coaching centres. Sometimes we hear that the government authorities would take measures to do away with the coaching centres but nothing is being done. The guardians of the students are to spend

a lot of time and money to overcome the shortcomings of the educational institutions. Majority of the teachers are only interested to teach the students in their houses and in the coaching centres they are attached with. The guardians of the students are to find out alternate means to bear the additional expenses for their children.

Besides, before we go for hundred percent pass rate the government must ensure how and where the students will pursue their future education. Let us not count the seats in the private universities, most of which are coaching centres in disguise. Higher pass rate does not necessarily mean quality. Number of GPA-5 achievers was 11140 in 2007 and it is 20136 in 2009. Does it mean that the quality went up hundred percent in this short period?

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

Pass marks to CTG

The out-going German Ambassador in his farewell meeting with the press before his departure admitted that the EU and Europe, on principle, do not support any emergency rule anywhere in the world but in the case of Bangladesh they supported emergency at that moment to save lives and properties and democracy here. This statement clearly supports the view that the security of lives and properties in Bangladesh were in danger before 1/11 and democracy was at stake. We believe, the situation was more serious than he explained just to maintain the norms of diplomatic gesture as a diplomat.

The people of Bangladesh will not forget the caretaker government of Dr.

Fakhruddin Ahmed backed by the Armed Forces which gave the people a free, fair and credible election for the first time in the history of Bangladesh, delivered ID cards and a genuine voter list.

Rightly or wrongly it unveiled the faces of the corrupt who were eating away the vitals of the nation. During this CTG, the former ministers had to whiten black money or untaxed money.

The people believe the present government having a 3/4th majority will not be able to deliver what the two years old CTG has delivered.

Now we see the face of the same people in the TV channels who were arrested during the CTG rule and punished for corruption charges. They are now out to clean themselves and convince the people that

they were not corrupt. They are trying to prove before the nation that the ACC illegally sued them during the caretaker government. They are seeking personal interviews in their own TV channels which frequently bring them to tell their stories.

But I am sure, whatever they say, people do not believe them any more.

People still give pass marks to the CTG which brought qualitative changes in the country by selecting a government of their own choice. People are waiting to see what this government does to root out corruption and also changes in process of selecting their government in the future. The common people are worst sufferers of corruption.

An expatriate, NY

Economic outlook



PHOTO: AFP

Efforts to achieve Bangladesh's macro-economic goals have been problematic mostly due to corruption within the government. The privatisation of public sector industries has proceeded at a slow pace--due in part to worker unrest in affected industries--although on June 30, 2002, the government took a bold step as it closed down the Adamjee Jute Mills, the country's largest and most costly state-owned enterprise. The government also has proven unable to resist demands for wage hikes in government-owned industries. Access to capital is impeded. State-owned banks, which control about three-fourths of deposits and loans, carry classified loan burdens of about 50%.

The IMF and World Bank predict that GDP growth over the next 5 years will be about 6.5%, well short of the 9-10% needed to lift Bangladesh out of its severe poverty. The initial impact of the end of quotas under the Multi-Fibre

Arrangement has been positive for Bangladesh, with continuing investment in the ready-made garment sector, which has experienced annual export growth in excess of around 20%. Downward price pressure means Bangladesh must continue to cut final delivered costs if it is to remain competitive in the world market. Foreign investors in a broad range of sectors are increasingly frustrated with the politics of confrontation, the level of corruption, the slow pace of reform and privatisation and deregulation of the public sector and the lack of basic infrastructure e.g. roads. While investors view favourably recent steps by the interim government to address corruption, governance, and infrastructure issues, most believe it is too early to assess the long-term impact of these developments.

Shohag Mostafij
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