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Swine flu

Swine flu is taking an alarming turn as reported in the media. But it is very difficult to trace any serious and coordinated effort of the ministry to combat the situation taking both preventive and curative measures with appropriate speed and to increase the public awareness on the issue.

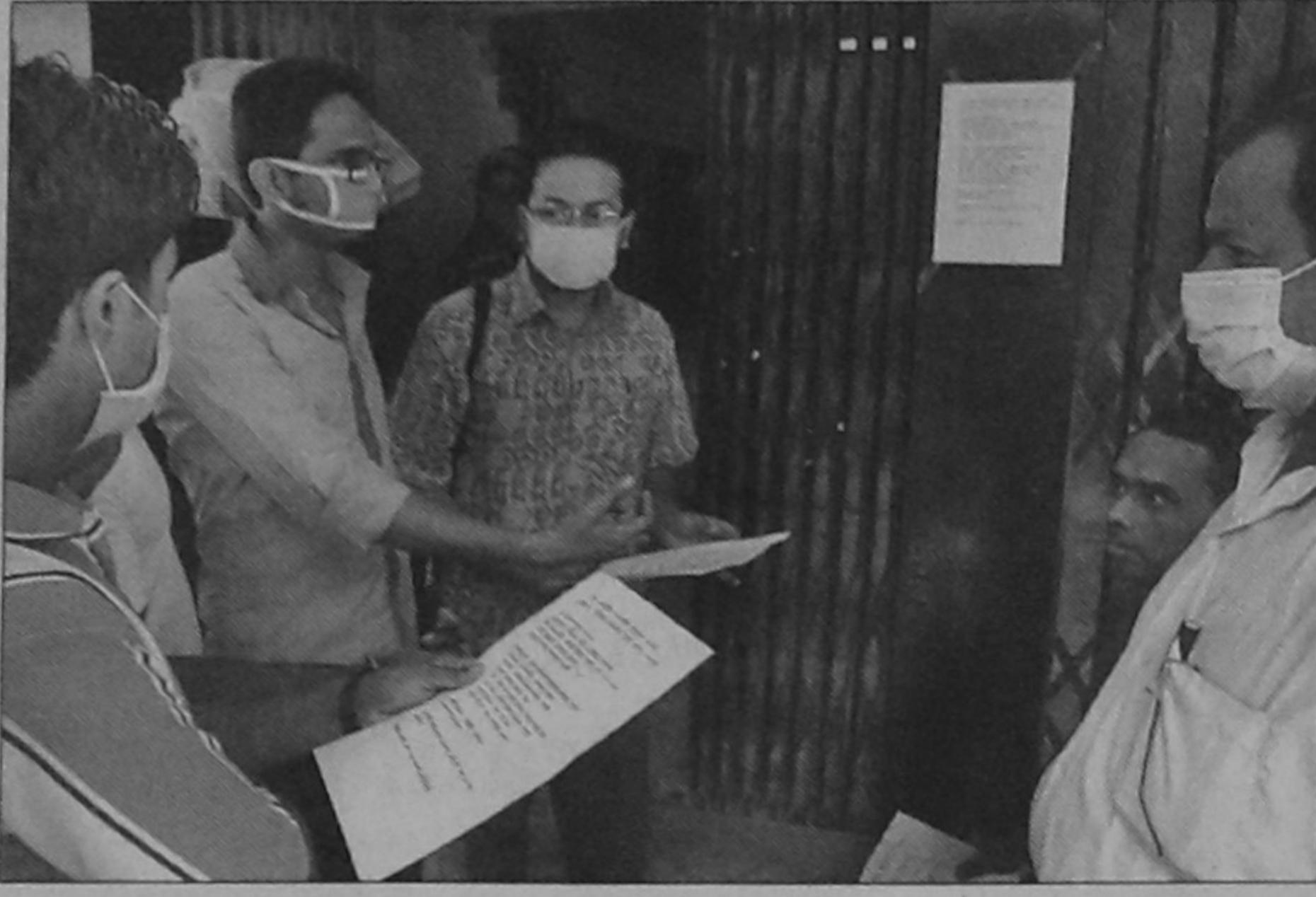
There are enough reasons to close the schools in the city, such as:

- a. Spread of swine flu.
- b. Ramadan.
- c. Summer heat.
- d. Possible traffic jam beyond tolerable limit which needs some remedial action from the government. Closer of the

schools could at least contribute to certain extent to mitigate traffic jams and possible spread of the swine flu. The students are more vulnerable than aged men and women.

I think both the minister for education and the minister for health are slow decision makers. They can not anticipate the problem well enough to initiate action before physical proofs are brought to them. The death of the Savar woman should be enough for them to close the schools.

Quadir
California, USA



Mob justice

I felt obliged to write in reference to the news item "Rab man beaten to death in Habiganj" published in The Daily Star on August 29, 2009.

This is not the first time I read in The Daily Star the words "good beating" to refer to the act of beating someone by the mob. Often, we watch in horror on the Bangladeshi TV during even news programmes the pictures of mutilated bodies of dead persons, including even children. It is indeed very sad and painful to see such poor choice of words or pictures by our news media.

What kind of message does it send to the general public citizenry? At least, it desensitizes the citizenry for the worst so that would soon, if not happened already, consider even the most immoral and inhumane acts as normal happenings. At this time of history, all human societies should consider such mob acts to be far more despicable than any act of crime, however heinous it may be, by a criminal. Any person, even the worst of the worst criminals, should not face such extra judicial and inhumane treatment in any society at this time and age.

Any person suspected of committing a crime or even if caught red handed by the public should be handed over to the proper authorities to face the law and justice. Of course, rampant corruption in our law enforcing agencies along with almost all other government entities and almost complete lack of the rule of law in our country are as responsible as the mob for this type of uncivilized acts.

I respectfully urge our political leaders to be conscientious, to rise above today's petty politices and personal gains.

Engr. Mohammed Shafiqul Islam, Ph.D.

Folsom, California, USA

T20 cricket

During the only T20 match in the West Indies, Mr. Atahar Ali Khan asked Mohammed Ashraf after he got out about what their strategy was towards this particular game. His answer was to get at least 60 runs in the first 6 overs. This was done however at the cost of losing 5 wickets and they were not able to hit the big shots towards the end of their innings and get a decent score.

In my personal opinion, this was a wrong strategy. During the IPL, I observed some of the bigger teams playing with a moderate run rate of 6-7 RPO during the first 15 overs. During the last 5 overs, with wickets intact, they began to open up and hit boundaries and end up with a score in excess of 170. Therefore, in a T20 game, play moderately with a run rate of 6-7 RPO and keep wickets intact for the first 15 overs.

From the 15th over, with wickets in hand hit boundaries and end up with a decent score.

Aminur Rahim
New DOHS
Mohakali, Dhaka

Court directives

The front-page report on the matter, published in the pages of a local English daily on August 22, is a very serious matter. One usually associates illiterates and criminals who tend to ignore court orders, but not responsible public and private organisations as such.

From the report, and two other reports published alongside, it seems that private organisations like BGMEA and BGFEA too have disregarded court directives!

The same is the case with public and private educational institutions too! It only reflects the indifference of the management of these large number of institutions, who think nothing of flouting court directives!

These guidelines were laid down by the High Court on May 14. Till date over three months have gone by, with no compliance from anyone! This indifference shown by the government departments, autonomous bodies and educational institutions, reflects sadly on the state of affairs in Bangladesh; where lawlessness has permeated to the highest level! Small wonder, breaking the law has become a common and everyday matter in our so-called civilized culture!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Overbridge

Different measures have been proposed for reducing traffic congestion at Asad Avenue of Mohammadpur, Dhaka by different organizations including Dhaka Metropolitan Police. But one point missing from those proposed measures. That missing point is that Mohammadpur has become an educational town. There are many schools, colleges, and universities in and around Mohammadpur.

Just to mention a few are Saint Joseph Higher Secondary School, SFX Greenheal International School, Mohammadpur Preparatory Higher Secondary School, Lalmatia Women's College, Bangladesh People's University, University of Bangladesh, Northern University of Bangladesh and so on.

Moreover, there are quite a few number of institutions on both sides of the Asad Avenue for which many students and their parents have to cross Asad Avenue everyday.

This road-crossing by a huge number of people, especially when schools sit and give over, creates intolerable traffic congestion resulting in blockage of the whole Asad Avenue, Iqbal Road, Sir Syed Road, Noorjahan Road, Salimullah Road and other connected lanes and by lanes of Mohammadpur. By lanes of Mohammadpur.

Trial of BDR personnel

As a layman, I agree with many experts that the rebels cannot be tried under the Army Act which was made for the Army. It is inequitable to pick and choose portions of the Act for prosecutor's convenience; for instance, application only of the penal provisions but not the beneficial provisions of the Army Act which gave better salaries and promotion structure to army personnel and allowed them to go abroad for UN duties.

So, what is the problem in dealing with it under normal criminal law of the land? Engineer Shafiq Ahmed London, UK

English medium students

Before going into the main point of my letter, I'd like to thank the The Daily Star for providing exposure to the hard work we do. With us I mean the students who are studying under an international curriculum or the so-called 'English medium Students'. I think it's an excellent effort of the The Daily Star to encourage the students to do better by awarding the exceptional achievers with the 'The Daily Star' award. It stands out singly in recognizing the achievements of English medium students in this country.

We are deemed as brats of well off families who attend expensive private schools and go abroad for higher education and permanently settle there. We are unfairly blamed for brain drain. I won't go into the matter why our parents decided to give us an education that is valued worldwide and not the so-called Bangla medium education, this has long become a cliché.

First, let me make it clear that I am not knowledgeable about the grading system of the Bangla medium education, correct me if I am wrong that any score above 60% is considered to be A whereas in our grading system 60% is considered C. You see there is an enormous amount of difference. This bit of information is important for my argument below.

After finishing our high schools we face the admission tests to get enrolled to the reputed public institutions in the country. Almost all the public institutions have the same admission system; there are 100 marks for your previous education and another 100 marks for a written test.

And I should better inform you that the questions in the written test are based on the HSC syllabus. That means the long gruelling 12 years of education that we acquired is obsolete here. And to add to our woes BUET for example requires Three 'As' in A level, anything otherwise you won't qualify for the admission test. So think an HSC student who has scored 60% marks will be considered as having A and for us A means score above 80%.

I can justifiably ask whether we are getting a fair deal here. And some institutions have age limits. For example, at the armed forces medical college you don't qualify for admission if you're more than 20 years of age. I mean even in a highly developed country like America where the medical education is very much controlled and maybe restricted, they don't mind your age as long as you pass the medical admission test and it doesn't matter even if you don't have any science background either. And now let's talk about double standards, the armed forces medical college has an age limit of 22 years for foreign students whereas it is 20 for the citizens of this country.

The next problem is preparing for the written test. The first problem we face is studying in Bangla, it doesn't mean that we can't read and understand Bangla as well as an HSC passed student can do. The problem lies in understanding the jargons and the technical terms.

I'd like to request the authorities to arrange separate admission tests for English medium students based on our syllabus, and make a level field for all so that we can compete fairly. I'd really appreciate if the 'The Daily Star' arranged a round table discussion on these issues.

HT
One-mail

Chittagong Medical College

The neurosurgery department of this medical college is the first if its kind outside Dhaka and second established in Bangladesh. This department was running very smoothly until recently, serving the people of south eastern part of our country.

Now it is in very bad shape due to the absence of doctors.

We the people of Chittagong hope that the highest authorities concerned will look into the matter.

S. Kabir
One-mail

On discourse

Discourse is a natural extension of two logical minds of differing philosophies as they interact and strive to interject some cohesion. Successful discourse is constructed upon a good dose of healthy

respect for "opposing partner". Although it sounds oxymoron, I am choosing the term "opposing partner" deliberately to emphasize the fact that a discourse is not for a hot-headed philistine who can not bear the smell of opposition. "It is no time to discourse, so Chrish save me; the day is hot, and the weather, and the wars, and the king and the dukes: it is no time to discourse." (Shakespeare: King Henry V, Act III, Scene II).

I surf a lot of net. Being a member of a few deshi forums, I noticed a tremendous amount of knowledge and talent in flux. To me, some are lovable while some are odious. This is all right. But a discourse without a sense of commonsense is nonsense. A discourse has to undulate our mind like a gentle stroke of a finger-on-a-harp. A discourse that creates aversion is no discourse at all. It's okay to bite and scratch and draw blood as long as there is sense and sensibility!

One who writes, by definition is vocal, and intends to modulate the hearts and minds of those readers who make up the silent majority. A discourse that brings such aversion, to my mind, is not the right course of discourse.

A proposition, a concept or a statement that materializes no sensible consequence in the minds of involved, whatever vainglorious it may be, is of no meaning. A noun is nothing but a noun unless a verb is there to undulate it.

Mohammad Zaman
Ellisville, Missouri

Cricket on right track

It is pleasing to see that our Bangladesh cricket team is finally playing to its potential. First of all, BCB made a wise decision by stripping Ashraf off captaincy. Though Mortaza was appointed captain, it was Shakib Al Hasan who led the team against the depleted West Indies side and Zimbabwe because of the former's injury. Shakib not only captained the team brilliantly, but also his all round performance must have inspired his fellow team-mates.

It is the first time in Bangladesh cricket history when our batsmen are batting more consistently. Tamim, Zunaid, Ashraf, Mushfiq, Shakib, Mahmudullah, Naeem Islam are playing good knocks. Only we should look for consistent batting display from Ashraf. Many a time he plays unnecessary shots that bring his early downfall. I hope he will be more sensible when he bats.

Finally, it will be wise to



Golden fibre

I strongly believe that there is ample scope for reviving the past glory of our golden fibre the Jute. What is needed is a pragmatic action plan plus strengthening the research and extension activities of Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI).

On the 18th June last, I attended the meeting of the Agricultural Research Committee (ARC) of BJRI as one of the ARC members. In the beginning of the meeting, the Chairman of ARC and DG, BJRI in his opening address told that quality jute seed was the main factor of fibre production. He informed that Bangladesh needs about 4,000 tons of jute seed per year of which BADC and other agencies supply only 10-12%. Rest of the jute seeds are being made available to the farmers from other sources. There is the scarcity of jute seeds which need to be met up. The BJRI has so far evolved a number of jute varieties, the latest are BJC-2142 (white jute) and O-795 (tossa jute). These two varieties have already been released by the National Seed Board (NSB) for commercial cultivation.

Meanwhile, it has been observed that due to the lack of effective extension service, the BJRI is constrained to spread its huge improved jute production technologies including improved jute varieties developed by BJRI to the farmers. As a result, expected production of jute is hampered. Since the govt. Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) has their own extension tasks, the jute farmers are being deprived of getting proper extension intervention and knowledge support. So, it was resolved unanimously in the ARC meeting that the BJRI should have an Agricultural Extension service of its own to make jute cultivation technologies evolved by BJRI quickly and effectively available to the door steps of the jute growers. Hence it is expected that the higher authorities will take immediate steps to create an Agricultural Extension Wing or Division at BJRI.

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

and international trafficking.

Child trafficking is one of the greatest forms of child abuse in the world today, and in Bangladesh it is widespread and increasing. It is an extension of the very serious hard or illicit labour problem. The poverty levels of northern side of Bangladesh, along with the border it shares with neighbouring country India are the primary reasons why women trafficking takes place on such a scale. Dinajpur is one such bordering district in the north-eastern part of Bangladesh. Four upazilas (Hakimpur, Birampur, Nawabganj and Ghorahat) out of 13 upazilas of the district have borders with the Indian state of West Bengal. It is also reported that children are assembled here from other parts of the country and trafficked through these ports to India, Pakistan and Middle Eastern countries. Naturally, the traffickers exploit the women, girls and children by using sex trade and illicit labour.

World Concern's anti-trafficking programme was developed with the expectation that basic interventions can prevent children from being trafficked, so they can live meaningful lives in their home communities among their families. Rainbow Nari O Shishu Kallyan Foundation in Dhaka offer children opportunities for education and work with families who are considering migration to another region, which is common among families living in extreme poverty. They are offered information about the dangers of trafficking and are made aware of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

The traffickers, often known to the families, act as agents who offer lucrative jobs to the girls and promise to take them to the cities.

Mohammad Khairul Alam
AIDS Researcher
M.C. Roy Lane
Dhaka

Nijhum Dwip story



For nearly 40 years I have been writing against the activities of the Forest Dept from Chittagong, in a series of over 120 letters in the 70s, 80s and 90s mostly entitled "The Green Gold of our Hills" and "The Rape of our Forests".

Although front-paged in the national dailies and vehemently supported by the late Bobby Islam of the Morning Sun, these stark exposés of the corruption of forest staff with names, dates, facts and figures had absolutely no effect.

Ultimately in the face of threats to myself and my family, I was forced to wind up my 40 years (1952-92) establishment including Bangladesh's first initiative in agro-forestry on 30 hilly acres (100,000 trees, plants, shrubs etc) near Chittagong, in a matter of days and flee to Dhaka. To my misfortune, I exchanged a bio-diversity jungle (nominated in 1984 for the Swiss

Rolex Awards) for the concrete jungle of Dhaka. The Farm was decimated within months.

It is therefore, no surprise to read about the dark dealings and outright and flagrant wiping out of valuable timber in the Reserve Forests of the Hill Tracts as highlighted in your daily over the last few days. It only proves that the process of the "Rape of our Forests" continues unabated. The Forest Dept has over the years, evolved corruption into an institutional masterpiece, whereby the very forest laws act as a shield for their open corrupt practices. The loot recovered during the CTG period from bad old Osman Gani's house is proof enough. I suppose he has been reinstated with full honours by now.

This letter therefore is in praise of those who were responsible for the proliferation of Spotted Deer in Nijhum Dwip, if indeed it was the

poorest people who protected them up to now. I would suggest that an appropriate number be netted at Nijhum and transported to the few patches of virgin forests still left in Bangladesh. The names that come readily to mind are the Madhu and Matamuhari Reserve Forests, Thankhyong, Remakri, Tindu Mouzas, Sitakund, Chunati, Harbang, Alutila and Ruma. Madhupur, the hills in Sylhet, Lowacherra and along the Jamalpur, Netrakona and Sunamganj borders etc. The Sunderbans could also be restocked where the deer population is depleted. After an interval excess leopards and tigers with a little orientation could also be released. I saw what could have been the last tiger in the Hill Tracts, about 5 miles upstream of the Chema Jiri in 1963. Sikander Ahmed Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka