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## Swine flu vaccine

American authorities are much concerned about the possible outbreak of Swine flu in the coming winter. The assuring news is that a vaccine for Swine flu is almost ready for inoculation. A number of pharmaceutical companies are working on swine flu vaccine. The US Food and Drug Administration has given Novartis and Sanofi-Aventis the green signal to start producing their vaccine strains. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also prepared guidelines indicating five key populations that should be vaccinated against the Swine flu (H1N1) virus. But doubts have also been generated concerning the side effects of the swine flu vaccine. Some in-line experts have expressed fear that the vaccine might weaken the receiver's immune system

and even cause brain damage. As medical case history reveals, in 1976, nearly 40 million people were inoculated with then produced swine flu vaccine but the side effects were of high magnitude which claimed a number of lives and caused huge damage to those who got inoculated. The US government had to pay millions of dollars in liability claims. True, the present vaccine has been said to be safe and with less side effects. Let's hope for the best result.

May Allah protect the human beings against natural calamities and diseases.  
**Professor M Zahidul Haque**  
Chairman  
Department of Agricultural Extension  
& Information System  
Bangladesh Agricultural University  
Dhaka



AMJAHAD/DRINKNEWS

## Decentralise governance

It is easier to solve Dhaka's multifarious problems by switching the current political philosophy or approach to the mode of governance of over-crowded Bangladesh (density of population is one of the highest in the world: nearing 1,000 persons per sq km).

Why not decentralize political power -- go for provincial governance. At least the issue should be examined at length in public forums, to formulate a clear enough public policy on the issue.

Keep minimum subjects at Dhaka (take the good points of federal governance), and let the provincial capitals (the present divisional HQs) handle the rest of the traffic. At present it has become sort of obligatory for all levels of society to come to Dhaka, or settle in Dhaka.

The prices would tumble down, traffic jams would be solved automatically, and the population of the city go down. Why cling to too much concentration of power? Many countries in the region have provincial governance. Why the good points cannot be applied in Bangladesh? Our politics is still passing through the preliminary stages of maturity -- we started without the experience of central governance experience, the alternate assembly sessions in Dhaka was a diversion movement from the rulers in the West (Pakistan).

There are very few incentives for investment outside greater Dhaka (outside the natural raw materials sites), so let the provincial capitals grow and compete with Dhaka's monopoly. With low density of population (say, a desert area) one central government is enough.

The question is: why come to Dhaka to get some work done? First, go to the district HQ, then go to the provincial capital, leaving visit to Dhaka as a last option.

It is the political approach to the national problems which needs attention at the first step, before going into the technical details. The politicians never broach this subject of diversification and decentralisation, because the top is indifferent to the issue. One reason of the apathy is the entrenched dynasty rules, dominated by two political parties, who are hostile to each other in and out of season.

Look at the pathetic state of the JS (parliament) -- the opposition never worked under any regime. Politics attracts attention for the wrong reasons (making a quick buck, misuse of power and position, lack of discipline at the bottom tiers; and lack of positive and visible leadership at the top tiers).

A Husnain  
Dhaka

## Low-grade teachers

It has been reported that a probe body headed by a for-

mer justice has been formed to look into the irregularities in the appointment of teachers and officials in the public universities during the period of previous BNP-Jamaat led government. The quality of university education in Bangladesh has gone down which has been revealed in a recent international survey on world university ranking. Bangladesh universities are far behind others. This is because of the appointment of low-grade teachers in public universities. Induction of substandard teachers started mainly in the 1980s and it gained momentum in the disguise of so called democratic governance after 1990. Both the BNP and the Awami League governments have tarnished the image of university by appointing a huge number of low-grade teachers. So only a probe into the BNP-Jamaat led government will not bring credit to the government. For the sake of quality education in public universities, all irregularities during both the regimes should be probed.

Otherwise, the credibility of the probe committee will be questioned.  
**Mallik Akram Hossain**  
Dept of Geography and  
Environmental Studies  
University of Rajshahi

## Load shedding and exams

Almost two months ago, I appeared in exams in a

renowned public college of Chittagong under the National University. Just then, I faced a bizarre situation. First and foremost, the awful atmosphere of the exam hall. Though hundreds of candidates were taking the exams, there was no special arrangement for instant power supply. As a result, frequent power outages made the hall atmosphere intolerably hot. Furthermore, the exams were taken in a room without good natural light. Secondly, the invigilators did not seem to be dutiful. They did not appear to be helpful either.  
**S.M. Rumen**  
Pahartali, Chittagong

## Directive misunderstood!

Yesterday the PM asked the communications minister to ease the traffic jam in Dhaka city. The PM sent this instruction from the Dhammondi AL office. This (5 Oct) morning I could not come to school on time due to a huge new traffic jam on Mirpur Road because traffic police blocked/fenced the road # 6 yesterday (as a result there was no movement of vehicles between West - East - West. I think without knowing the consequences, the traffic police took this action.

It seems nobody is responsible for the decision. It's completely a misapplication of the PM's directive! It seems the authorities took some action but the result was negative! The authorities should rethink the decision.

Please think twice before making such moves.

**Tumpa Datta**  
Dhammondi, Dhaka

## Gross error

I went through my grand daughter's textbook "Social Studies And Bangladesh." In page 6 of the above book, part II while defining the oceans it is stated that the Indian Ocean surrounds the North Pole and like the North Pole it is always frozen throughout the year. The book was first published in September, 2001 and the fourth reprint was in July 2006. If I assume it is a printing error, question arises why was it not corrected in subsequent reprints?

**Professor Dr. Anisur Rahman**  
On e-mail

## Action, not assurance

While addressing a gathering of expatriate Bangladeshis in New York recently, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured the countrymen saying that her government would not do anything that harms the interest of the country. It is understood that a democratically elected government in all circumstances is oath bound to safeguard its country's interests.

Politicians while campaigning before elections give lots of assurances and make many promises to woo the voters and win. Getting elected some fulfil those promises some do not, because making and keeping promises are two different matters. Mario Cuomo,

former Governor of the State of New York, an orator par excellence expressed it eloquently by saying: We campaign in poetry and govern in prose.

Dr Monmohan Singh after becoming Prime Minister of India for the first time said, "I am in the business of keeping promises not making them," while answering a journalist. Dr Singh realized very well what the implications of keeping promises and understood well what was expected of him and his government, thus he steered the country in that direction which brought a second consecutive victory for his party and the alliance.

In Bangladesh for the last twenty years democratic governments are in power barring short hiccups. But no political party or alliance has been re-elected back to back, a pattern which shows the repeated failure of incumbency.

The present government has come to power with a resounding victory by making lots of promises. From the promised Digital Bangladesh to Trial of War Criminals, the current issues like Tipaimukh dam, BDR carnage, gas export, connecting to Asian Highway, are all very important matters and needed to be addressed as soon as possible. Otherwise, the promises made will be deemed hollow rhetoric and repeated assurances will be taken as mere lip service. At the end of their term, people will judge this government by their good deeds and the misdeeds.

**AK Shamsuddin**  
Mississauga, Canada

## PM's US trip

The year 1601 chronicles the birth of the lofty "Buland Darwaza" to commemorate the conquest of Gujarat by the great Akbar. No - it was no fulfilled trip flanked by a dear sister or spearheaded by an expatriate IT-expert son. Yes, he had his minions, but he knew their exact nature. The trip was incarnadine with real jostling and he really did own. Thus this majestic sandstone gate stands for something real.

Well, our prime minister also returned after a victorious blitz (!) on the banks of Hudson. Let's count the victories:

She spoke in Bangla at the highest of the world forums. Yes, it is a proud moment but I hardly can call it a victory.

Millennium Fund remains in the yonder, thanks to the rampant corruption (Tarique is not to blame any more).

Duty Free access again a "NOTYET..."

And while she was busy with her dizzying victory lap and having quality time with family and cutting her B-Day Cake, one little girl lost her "Nakul" in the hands of a few lustful BCL goons (abetted and sheltered by none other than her own AL-men).

And yet, as the Qatari aircraft (I wish, it is Bangladesh) landed at Zia, throngs of AL-activists inundated the vicinity of the airport, chanting frantically for a little attention from their dear leader never minding the plight of mourn-

ing commuters...

Well, it's not just Gujarat it's the conquest of "AMERICA"! A "Buland Darwaza" may be a little expensive, but hey it's not too bad to chant high at the expense of a few stranded passengers!

**Mohammad Zaman**  
Hannibal, Missouri

## Gandhi, Palestine and peace

While responding to Ashikur Rahman's letter on "Mahatma Gandhi" Mahmood Elahi from Ottawa writes in DS (5th Oct):

"The brutality of Hamas towards fellow Palestinians shows that it is essentially a terrorist outfit which will not hesitate to kill fellow Palestinians belonging to a rival camp. This means that even if Israel vacates the West Bank as it has done in Gaza, a new bloodletting will erupt among Hamas and Fatah for control of the Palestinian state. Moreover, if the Palestinians cannot live peacefully with each other, it will be futile to think that a Palestinian state and Jewish state can live peacefully side by side."

To me it seems that Elahi is meticulously echoing what neo-colonialist politicians or journalists from Europe/North America say forgetting that people under oppression and unjust treatment do lots of things that are brutal and inhuman. Hamas members certainly are not blood thirsty animals, they are human beings like Barak Obama, Mr. Elahi and me and it is the illegal Zionists occupation of their land with money and direct and indirect help from the Neo-colonialists that made them terrorists and suicide-bombers.

Let Mr. Elahi tell us what right the American, Russian, Polish or Canadian Jews have to be in Palestinian land by evicting people from their hearth and home? Am I asking the same question as Mahmood Ahmadinejad asked many times?

An honest and good human being including many Jews will agree with Ahmadinejad and me that Zionists have "NO RIGHT" to occupy Palestinian land evicting the rightful owners from their hearth and home. Palestinian people should not pay for the German and European mistreatment of the Jews and the holocaust. We cannot do much against this crime but I expected that a Bangladeshi born Elahi could understand the simple fact that made some Palestinian people terrorists. His quotation from a member of the Canadian Hindu Congress that "Palestinians are a violent people and incapable to act non-violently" is outrageous, disgraceful and utterly a silly statement. Such remark could be made only by an uncanny racist.

I suggest Mr. Elahi apologetically to racist and ask him to apologize to Palestinian people around the globe for making such horrendous comments. He should read R. C. Mazumder's "Bangladesher Itihaz (History of Bengal)", Part IV, Chapter V, page nos. 107-235, General Printers and Publishers Private Limited, Calcutta and learn how Gandhi's non-violence philosophy worked and was practised in Bengal since Lord Curzon's days and even today in many parts of India.

**Tayeb Husain**  
Lund, Sweden

## OGPC's objectives

Recently we see with sorrow that, the leftists of Bangladesh have shifted from their position to nationalism which indicates that they are also affected by the globalisation or they couldn't escape the effect of globalisation. They are now trying to protect the interest of the neighbouring countries behind the banner of the Oil, Gas Protection Committee subconsciously. Opposing the model PSC doesn't mean the cancellation of the PSC. The OGPC is presenting false information to the people about the 80% export option and trying to hide the impossibility of the export option. So far we know the govt., for the first time, brought the energy company under the tax net by imposing 40% corporate tax.

We have some suggestions regarding the energy sector. The capital of the energy sector must be raised from the local capital market by issuing bonds, shares. The multinational companies must reinvest a portion of their profit into the local market. They must assist us to increase capability of local geologists, engineers and others by assisting universities both financially and intellectually as part of their corporate social responsibility.

**Amit Khan**  
Agrani Bank Town  
Gollamari, Khulna

## Undue pomp

Austerity is of prime importance for this country at the moment, and a little care would lead us to a stronger and better economy. Unfortunately, the intellectuals in the talk shows on television have never spoken about this (I am not sure as I might have missed some).

Construction of 21 large gates, arranging hundreds of motorcycles and hundreds of minibuses for giving a reception to an MP of a district who could manage to be in the entourage of PM Sheikh Hasina sound incredible!  
**Md. Shafiqul Islam Bhuiyan**  
Mirpur, Dhaka

## No more cash for Biman

Our corrupt national airline, Bangladesh Biman, is asking for guarantee from the government so that banks will start lending it money for buying new aircrafts (DS, October 4). What it all means is that Biman will not repay a single penny of the loans and

in the end our poor people will have to foot the bill of hundreds of millions of dollars.

At this stage, we need to ask ourselves just one simple question: what percentage of Bangladesh's population will need food, medicine, shelter, security, etc., compared to the percentage that would ever get to fly abroad even once in their entire life?

If our people can't even afford cooking oil or sugar for themselves, why should they pay hundreds of millions of dollars to an organisation that is corrupt beyond repair and that has been making mind-boggling amount of losses year after year? Give me one reason, just one.

We strongly request the government not to give any guarantee whatsoever for Biman and not a single penny of our money should be given to it. Enough is enough!

**Azad Miah**  
Oldham  
UK

## Dismal failure

I do not know how to define the apathy and attitude of the cabinet ministers with exception of only a few. The energy state minister has no clue or idea about the concept, merits and demerits of the DST. He has said that it is running well, why do we need to put back the clock? He seemed to be talking about the closing hours of shops and big business centre, which might have saved some energy. Surprisingly, nobody, nobody in the government has yet produced any concrete and scientific results of energy saving by the DST. Either they do not have any technical capacity to measure the same or they are happy with the earlier closer of the shops.

I think they have forgotten that as soon as the winter falls our official sunrise will be creating a hell of a problem for the school and office goers. They will be forced to use electricity to prepare for schools and office unless the extra one hour is put back moving the clock as before introduction of the DST. Just to mention that it is a routine exercise neither the government nor the citizen needs to bother about every year.

I think we can not ignore the ignorance of the decision makers. They must be asked to explain their failure and to adopt a regular time frame to change the clock automatically by the citizens. Since it is a very new concept, the media should launch an awareness programme for the citizens. Therefore, we need a fixed timetable during the year so that they can educate the people.

The energy ministry has totally failed like many ministries in running their affairs. The prime minister need not put back the clock again ceremonially. This must be taken out of her official routine programme.  
**Fagru Quadir**  
California, USA

## Volleying back....

Readers' instant comments on The Daily Star Online reports. Log on to thedailystar.net to leave your comments.

### SSF protection for life sought (October 5, 2009)

It is the duty of the government to protect the lives of the citizens. But to protect only a few people by a special law is not acceptable. Who is protecting 160 million people of Bangladesh? Look at the newspaper report and you will find how many people are killed every day.  
**Mobaidul Huq**

Why similar protection cannot be granted to Begum Khaleda and her children?  
**Mohammad Asghar**

What contributions towards Bangladesh these children of Hasina and Rehana did make that they deserve this facility? Let's ask the common people if they want their resources diverted to that end. I would ask this newspaper to conduct an online survey.  
**Mashie Khan**

Yes, very well thought out indeed, because Sheikh Hasina and Rehana and their family members 'blood is more valu-

able than any other citizen's. Why not they pass another bill which will allow them to run the country for life? Please do it.  
**Raz**

I think the idea of providing security for their kids is outrageous. Don't get me wrong, I am not into Bangladeshi politics but I do think it is totally unfair to use the taxpayers' money to fund politicians private security, especially if they are living abroad. I personally think that these politicians take a lot more than their fair share of the taxpayers' money already, so if they want protection they should invest their own money to do so.  
**Hossinur Rahman**

After making this law, the govt should make another law. That law is "Without getting 275 seats out of 300 no amendment could be passed in JS". Otherwise, this law would not remain safe from scissors as usual.  
**Asad Bulbul**

Will there never be any change in Bangladesh??  
**Ryan**

It's funny. We voted them to victory, they never made it themselves without us, unless you ask me to believe what Mr. Jilil has said. I guess the home minister should think more about national security, rather than securing the PM's family members. To the minister, turn around and see, listen, there are hundreds of people dying, save them.  
**Faisal Salehin**

Unethical use of public funds for private purposes. A sad medieval symptom of dynastic rule. Any claim on public security resources should be contingent upon holding public offices only.  
**Anjali Sen**

Is Bangladesh a democracy or a monarchy? Where is Bangladesh's civil society? The proposed law would violate the

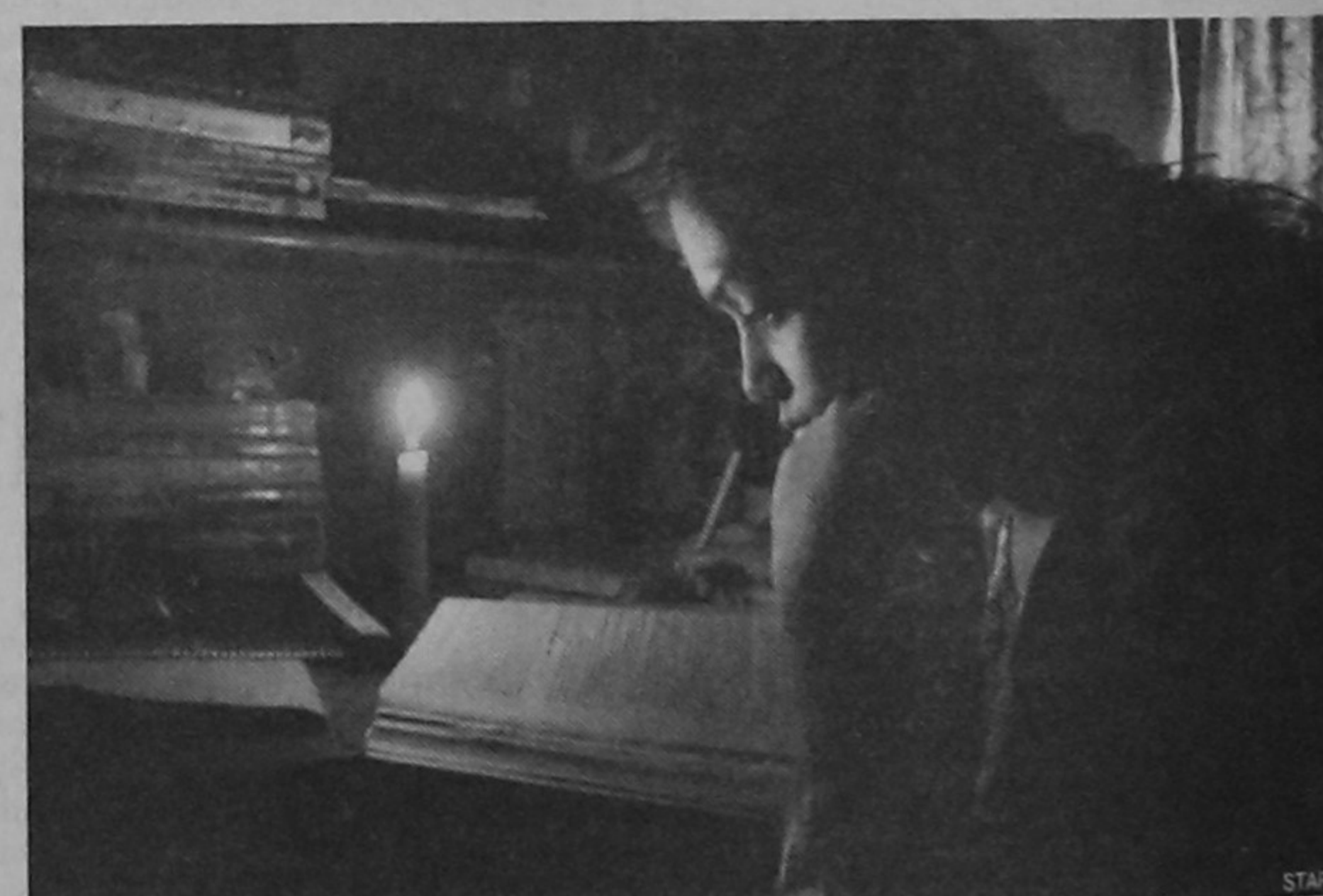
equal protection under the law principle of the constitution, by creating super citizens! This law should be challenged in the court and rescinded by the next government.  
**Sarwar Alam**

These are the indications of doomsday for the AL.  
**Manzoor**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told many times that her govt. was dedicated to providing food, housing, security, education, good health etc. to the people of Bangladesh. Then why do her children need additional security from SSF? This will separate the people from the political leaders or their families.  
**Ismail**

I think the bill is still incomplete. They have forgotten Sheikh Hasina's grand children! These people will never take any lesson from history!  
**Muhammad Sarwar**

## Daytime saving



In mid July, this year, our usual time was advanced by an hour on the plea of availing daylight to complete day's routine work in govt. offices and in various organisations. How funny is the suggestion for our country, where, even in winter days, we have plenty of daylight! Electricity is not only consumed for light but there are fans, air conditioning and many other electrical gadgets! Electricity is consumed not only in offices and workplaces, but there are millions of private residential houses, and round the clock functioning industries!

Many industrial units and garment factories contribute the highest dividend to government earning and even in broad daylight they need electricity not only for light but to run their machines as well!  
Some sycophants might have sug-

gested such an unearthly measure which is causing torturous punishment to people, engaged in various fields of work! School children, parents and teachers undergo routinely punishing drill in the early morning unnecessarily! Bank employees and people from various sectors have to work long after the announced time of closure of work!

All said and done, the punishing drill has not done any good to avoid repeated load shedding!

If like the developed countries, where they need changing time during winter, we also do this, then we are nothing more than a Laughing Stock!

Hope some people are there who would consider and suggest stopping this madness!!  
**Aschool teacher**

**Banani, Dhaka**