

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Garage your car!

The DS of 12 Oct was a milestone of sorts. My letter "Dhaka's Traffic Mess" was printed without a comma being edited out and then on the adjoining page, Dhaka University's Prof K Siddique-e- Rabbani's masterpiece "Taking Rickshaws off Increased Traffic Jam", in which he has summarized in a short article what I have been barking at in the wilderness in 51 letters over the last two years as the best and immediate solution to our traffic problems. Mr Fazlul Haque's letter "Traffic in Dhaka" on the same page is also couched in the same vein. So Madam Prime Minister, Concerned Ministers, MPs, Experts on Traffic Management, Traffic Controllers, down to the humble, over-worked traffic cops, put away your 5 or 10 years and eternal plans for the free-ways, monorails, Maglevs, STPs, DUTPs, and all other TPs, because now you have a blue print for the immediate solution that can be implemented tomorrow and which is equitable, just, fair, profitable and environmentally beneficial for all Dhakabashis and not just the privileged few.

Want me to spell out the first phase in simple words? 1) No Parking on public thoroughfares. 2) Cars, without valid fitness certificates, tax tokens, unlicensed and more than 15 years old, seized. 3) Empty (only driver), half-empty (one passenger in the back) fined on main/trunk roads between

8:am and 8:pm. 4) Car loans from banks suspended 5) I/T clearance that car is declared in I/T records 6) Private cars to run on petrol only, no gas. 7) Cars restricted to one per family (I know of one having 18 cars for 3 members). 8) All fake driving licenses cancelled. 9) Import of cars in excess of 1,000 cc banned for 5 years. 10) All other existing traffic laws relative to lights, horns, etc to be enforced. If the above are rigorously implemented and the 61 crore potholes, masquerading as roads, filled in/repared, there will be plenty of space for rickshaws, CNGs, buses and other forms of mass transportation for the 'common people' on all public roads. I have a solution for disposal of the resultant surplus cars too.

I appeal to all our 'public servants' (lead by example) and the privileged few to garage their cars and their egos and give Prof Rabbani's suggestions a trial for just 4 weeks. In this context, today's news of the Cabinet okaying 'new timings for GoB, NGO offices, banks, schools etc to solve the jams is, to say the least, hilarious. Two quotations come to mind a) "Who will bell the (fat) cats?" and b) "The ostrich, in trouble buries its head in sand" Only now, the Ostrich residing in Kahn's White Elephant stables is digging deeper into the (quick)sand!

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Why now?

A Dhaka court has recently issued a warrant to arrest former Awami League general secretary Abdul Jalil on charges of tax evasion. This came only nine days after he was dropped from the post of chairman of the parliamentary standing committee of the same party (for whatever reason).

My question is very simple: Where were these charges while he was in the leadership of Awami League? The next logical question, therefore, is: Does it not seem fitting that other leaders too (of any party) be examined also, on such matters? Or are such charges being kept aside to be used whenever needed?

Dr. C. Zaman
Ottawa, Canada

First ten months

It was the crucial time before the ninth parliamentary election when the countrymen were very much anxious being unable to guess what would be the future political condition of the country and the future of their own.

But the anxiety was dispelled by the sweet words of promises in the election campaign of the political parties.

Especially, one of the major and largest political parties of the country, the Awami League, promised in its election campaign to bring about an overall change in the country which revived the countrymen with hopes and aspirations.

Now the Awami League is in power for about ten months.

The people are looking forward to the promised change.

Should not the government be aware of this?

Kshitish Chandra Millan
Assistant Teacher
Bogra YMCA Public School
Bhaipagla Mazar Lane
Bogra

Road at BSCIC area

Road communication from Tongi level crossing to BSCIC industrial area almost came to a standstill because of its deplorable condition. Anybody using the road with his vehicle for the first time

will think twice before venturing for the second trip along the road for safety of his valuable transport from premature damage. As one of the busiest outlets from the mega city towards Narshingdi, Bhaierab, Ashuganj, Maulvibazar, Sylhet, every day thousands of transports ply this road through Tongi BSCIC industrial area towards different destinations. There has been an under construction flyover over Tongi railway level crossing for the last three years, delayed completion of which now poses a great threat and risk to the road users and pedestrians. Who knows when the construction of the flyover will be complete to the great relief of commuters, pedestrians and vehicle users? Work progress on the flyover is going at a snail's speed but the authorities do not bother about the deteriorating condition of the road under the flyover which is the only alternate way to go to BSCIC and other places. Serious traffic gridlock is a regular phenomenon in this

damaged road under the flyover. Incidents of breakdown of transports on the path holes of the road is also a regular feature which make the situation go from bad to worse every day. Instead of reducing public sufferings from traffic congestion with the construction of flyover, inordinate delay in completion of the same added more sufferings to the public.

Condition of road communication inside Tongi BSCIC area is also beyond description. Several ditches and potholes on the main thoroughfares in that area have developed due to negligence of the authorities. To add to the misery, the entire BSCIC area goes under knee-deep water after a slight rainfall posing a great threat to the vehicular movement, and to the great loss of manufacturing industries as a whole. But who cares?

Md. Lutfar Rahman
Faculty of Business
Administration
IUBAT- International
University of Business
Agriculture and Technology
Dhaka

Mobile operators

According to the recent statistics of the BTRC (Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission), over 50 million people use mobile phone at present, which is more than a third of the country's total population. Anyhow, it cannot be denied that the cell phone operators are trying hard to serve the subscribers since their operation began. They often make special lucrative offers and it is notified via media blitz. However, it is a matter of great regret that when those offers are called off, it is not notified even by a single sms or any notification.

S.M. Rumen
Pahartali, Chittagong

DST in our context

Thanks for the article by Kazi Mahbub Hasan on the above subject published on 17.10.2009 in The Daily Star. I would like to add some more points:

1. Two of the greatest populous countries in the world that are environmentally similar to us have used and later on abandoned the DST. They are also in electricity crisis. I don't know whether we have asked them about the advantage and disadvantages of DST.

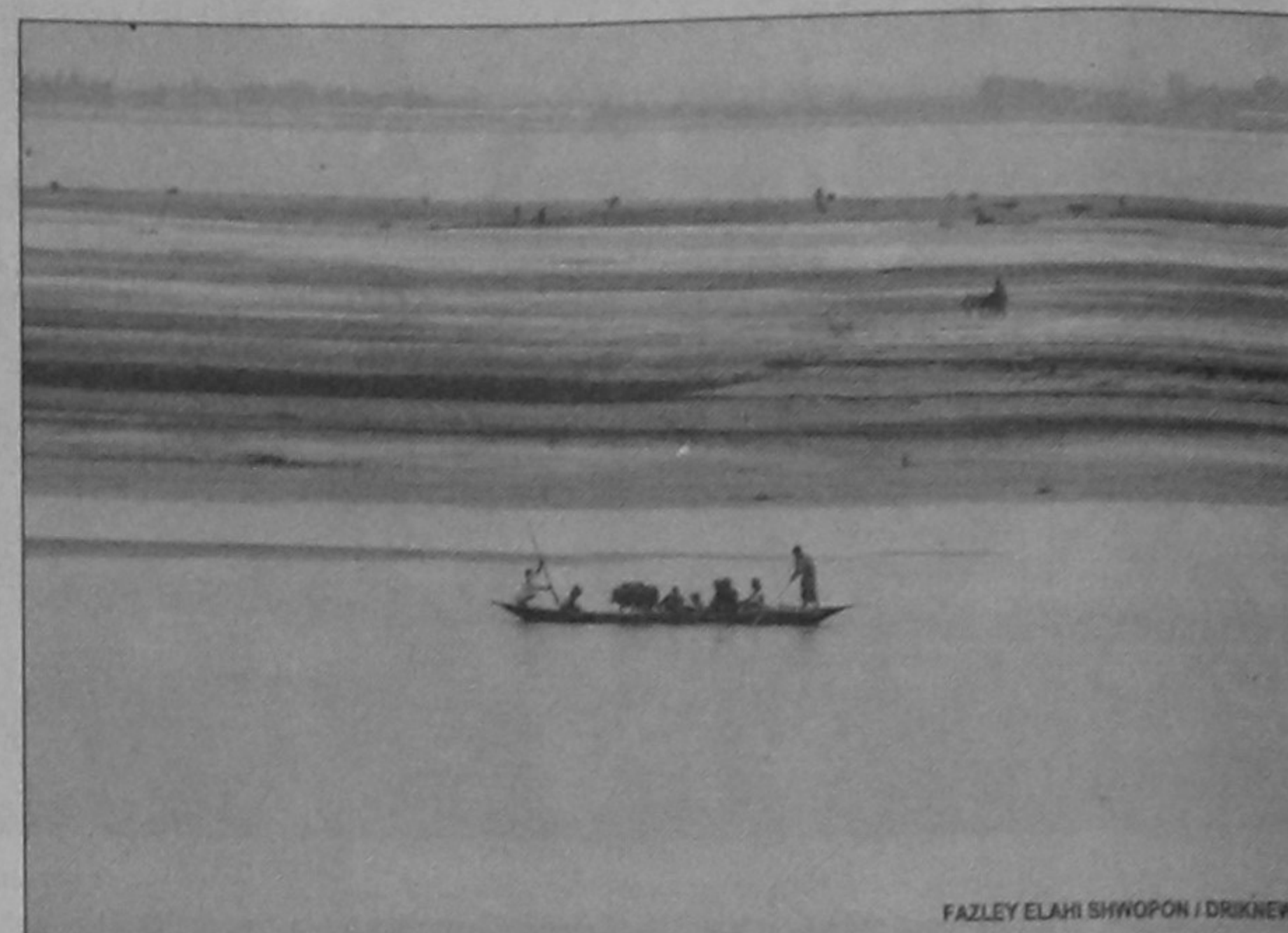
2. Even the United States of America is not using in the DST in those parts of its country where the weather is similar to us i.e. parts of the US which are near the tropic.

3. Example is the part of Arizona, Hawaii, Territories of Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa. They stay on the Standard Time. Some one remarked that "If you have spent any time in the sweltering summer sun in those regions you can understand why residents don't need another hour of sunlight!" Is there any different weather in Bangladesh?

4. Most countries near the equator don't deviate from the Standard Time.

5. A study done by the National Research Council Canada in 2008 on "Effect of

International rivers



FAZLEY ELAHI SHAWON / DRINKNEWS

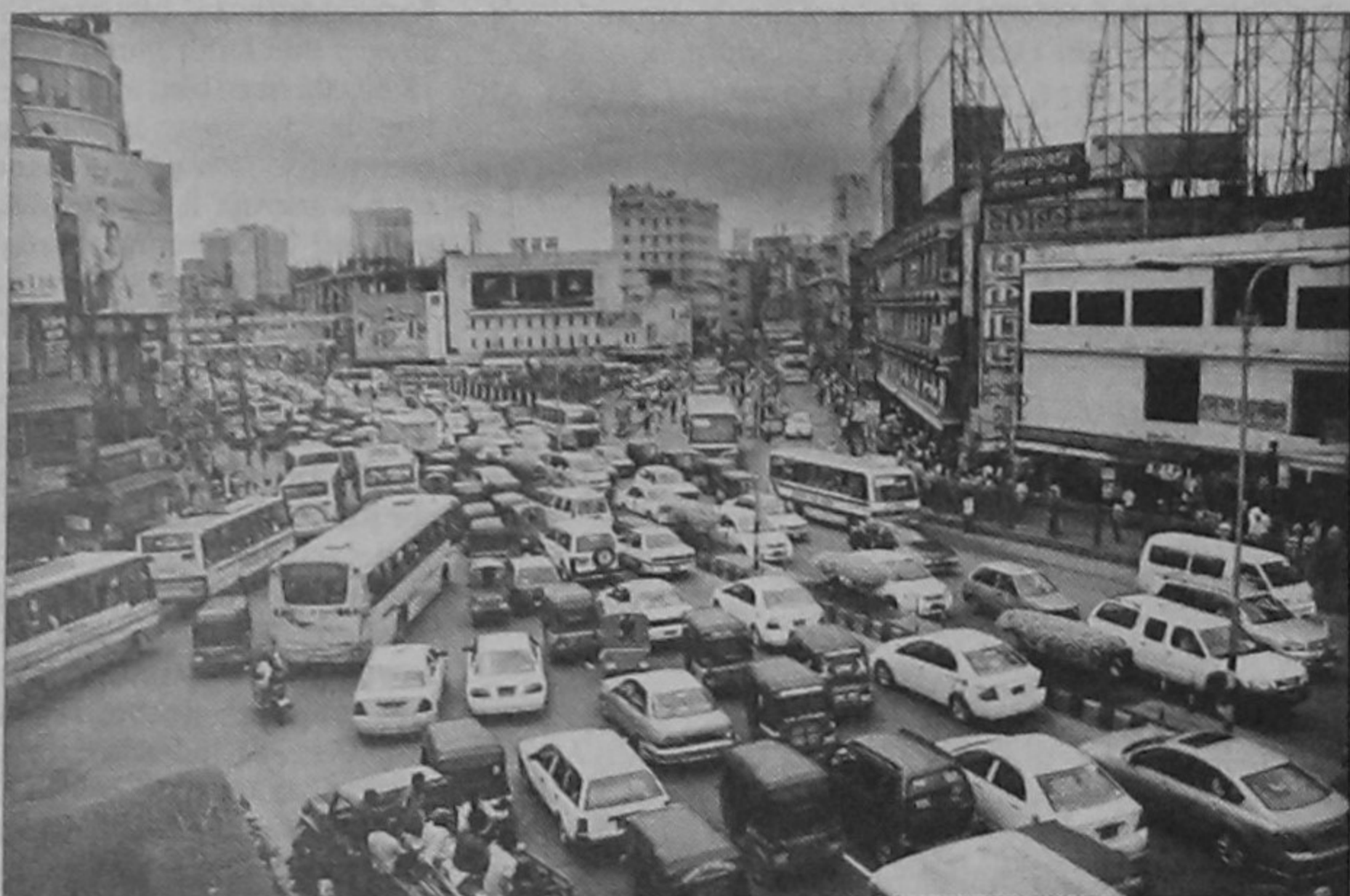
As reported in the press, the govt. of the Indian state of Assam is seriously concerned over the construction of a dam by China on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet, the source of the river Brahmaputra. If this dam is constructed and commissioned, it will terribly affect Assam and dry up the river Brahmaputra and other water resources downstream.

While going through the above news, I remembered about the Tipaimukh dam India is contemplating to build which will adversely affect Bangladesh water resource plus agriculture and environment plus economic life of the people. Previously India had constructed and commissioned quite a number of water

diversionary projects on the rivers shared with Bangladesh, for instance, Farakka Barrage on the river Ganges, Goadoba Barrage on the Teesta, etc.

We do not at all support such inhuman acts by any nation, be it China or India. We would strongly call upon the countries concerned to refrain from constructing such dams violating the natural rights of the people living in the downstream. It amounts to murdering humans, animals, and plants!

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



ANDALU MUJIB DRINKNEWS

Nobel Peace Prize

"Congratulations, Obama!" Everybody is saying this now, but not from the heart. Whether the prize has been awarded to the right person or not, it doesn't make any sense to those people who are dying in Sudan, Pakistan, or in Afghanistan. Obama himself realises that this prize is meaningless and that's why he said, "I don't deserve this". His outstanding effort for planning extraordinary diplomatic practices and establishment of peace are yet not enough to achieve a Nobel Prize which has been achieved by Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi. If the Nobel Committee had determined that they would award the peace prize to those who have some potential to bring peace in future, then they were supposed to give it to every person in this world because there can hardly be anyone who doesn't want peace. Now there is no doubt that the Nobel Committee and its prizes are deeply influenced by international politics. This is really disappointing and it proves that nothing is going to change.

Arup Ratan Paul
Department of Business
Administration
SUST, Sylhet

SSF protection

We only hope that the government and their well-wishers have deliberated quite extensively before making such a law. We can see reason for two living daughters of founder president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to be given the SSF cover. But their children live abroad, even have foreign wives. How the family is defined and to what dimension geographically and extended family wise over the next decades. This is not clear to us. Therefore, this law can be challenged in the court which would be most unfortunate because this might raise the question of security of Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, when away from power, but they deserve to get it as long as they are alive.

This law will only justify the residence of Khaleda Zia to be in the cantonment for security reason. Moreover, their claim for SSF will be more justified since they have also security risk. This is an emotional law and needs further

review and clarification to sustain as a good law. The title of the law can be made more related to facts than emotion.

Areader
One-mail

Foreign minister's comment

It is absolutely shocking to hear our foreign minister quote the Burmese ambassador and take the situation lightly. Of course the Burmese ambassador and government will say the situation does not pose a threat to Bangladesh. But where on Earth do you see a country mobilising troops on such a scale along its neighbour's border for "exercise" alone? Has Burma run out of land to carry out military exercises?

I urge our government to wake up and deal with this very real threat.

Shahenjab Antik
Melbourne, Australia

Business schools

The current economic crisis is a transformational moment for business schools worldwide. The fact is that business schools have been off track, chasing precisely those Wall Street innovations that led to the current crisis. We need to get back to the basics of providing well-rounded education that emphasises real value and wealth creation, rather than focussing on areas that only propagate illusions of value.

Balaram Sengupta
Banker, One-mail

Performing Hajj

Hajj or the pilgrimage is the fourth basic 'ibadat'. It is obligatory only on those who can afford it and that too only once in a lifetime.

Indeed the pilgrimage is a great ibadat. For unless a person really loves Allah and His Rasul, he or she would never go for such a noble trip. Also, the pilgrimage unites the Muslims of the world under the same umbrella of international fraternity.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Chittagong

Another failure?

We are passing through a very difficult time, the country is in total disarray, nothing is going as it should, oblivious to it, the government is busy experimenting with new ideas.

DST is a failure, no one is happy with it, people are

continuously asking to return to the previous timing but we are very disappointed learning that the government has no plan to fulfil people's demand.

Now, the new timing for offices, schools and other institutions has been announced to ease the traffic congestion. We are sceptical about it, we do not know if it will work or like the introduction of DST, it will also be a failure.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

DST misunderstood

The daylight saving time decision to advance the BDST by 1 hour could have been a good decision for which it was intended. Many countries of the world, especially the countries of northern hemisphere, do that from last sat/sun day of March by advancing 1 hour and revert back to normal time on last sat/sun of October.

Bangladesh's decision to change was taken after March this year and therefore to change in June could be justified. But why the government has to revert back on October 1 and why not like all other countries from last sat/sun day of October?

All airlines change their schedule once in March and again in October because of this. If Bangladesh does it arbitrarily on some other day then the published airlines timings will be confusing BD travellers.

This month on October 31 the times will be changed all over. Bangladesh should follow the same schedule.

Khalid G. Rabbany
Abu Dhabi

Barren JS

It looks very pathetic that the MPs are busy gossiping. Sometimes when we watch the JS proceedings we find that the arguments and counter arguments are so weak and irritating that we are forced to change the channel. The roles of the senior parliamentarians are very important here. But we don't see them joining the debate.

The leaders should keep in their mind that they are sent there to discuss about the national issues and to make the laws. They have no right to waste public money.

Amit Khan
Agrani Bank Town
Gollamari, Khulna

Cox's Bazar



MOHAMMAD ISLAM DRINKNEWS

Cox's Bazar is one of the largest sea-beaches and most beautiful spots in the world. Millions of foreigners and Bangladeshis visit this coastal town every year. The sea beach, Cox's Bazar town, and its adjoining areas have a lot of things to attract the tourists. For example, there are places like Himchhari, Maheshkhali and St. Martin's. Miles of golden sands, surfing waves, colourful

pagodas, delicious seafoods-- these are the specialties of Cox's Bazar.

Our country is very beautiful and all we need is to protect such beautiful places and enhance facilities to draw tourists.

AKM Anisul Haque
Department of English
Metropolitan University
Sylhet

markets are closed at 8:00pm (= 7:00pm Standard Time). In summer this is the time of sunset. People miss the markets and shops to purchase, or stroll and gossip with friends. So, they are forced to stay home with continuing use of electricity.

We are very much fixed with the statistics of foreign exchange earning by garments and human resource export. We never think of or calculate the small businessmen's, shopkeepers', ferrywallas', rickshwpullers', tempo-drivers', bus drivers', boatmen's contribution to the economy.

I would suggest that we be frank that we are eating (!) up electricity, more than we are producing. All types of incentives may be given to people who will install solar light. This will save the foreign purchase of costly oils and will be environment-friendly.

Prof. Md. Sadequzaman
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Ads infringing on our values

We would like to voice a joint protest to a new trend in advertising, billboards, magazine and newspaper features that is becoming increasingly prevalent and common these days. That is the new trend of showing female models- or even male models- in increasingly revealing and provocative clothing and images. We would like to ask the promoters of this new culture what exactly it is that they are trying to advocate in way of values, mores and philosophy to our new and young generations.

Surely, the goals of progress, education, secularism and modernity cannot be at odds with the simple concept that a woman's value is more than the amount of skin she shows or how attractive she can look to the opposite gender! And that to every passer-by, be it the poor rickshaw-puller, the tired, angry, frustrated truck driver or day labourer. And we wonder why rape is increasing.

And when these same advocates of Bengali art and culture put women with saris on huge billboards with a piece of cloth barely resembling a blouse, or even a midi skirt or capri pants showing lower leg and ankle, or sleeveless shirts and kameezes, are they actually promoting Bengali culture or a shallow borrowed Bollywood or even global culture? Is it part of our Bengali culture and philosophy for women and girls to be shameless and brazen? Are they sure they are not grossly confused in their attempts to advocate freedom of expression and women's lib by undressing their women that they are not actually devaluing women? Are they sure they are not pushing the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and

norms till the boundaries are pushed beyond limits by our younger generations that even they would not be able to finally tolerate?

Should we not perhaps realize that there are actually better lessons to be learnt from the west or even across the border that would actually benefit our rather misguided nation, instead of taking from the worst of their examples. The only thing to learn from the example of loosening dress codes of nations and cultures overseas is that along with it came, hand in hand, the loosening of many other moral and social norms. At present the western civilization and all those influenced by it have so many social ills that it is hard to keep count. In other words we can only learn from their mistakes and take heed since our youth are already in the fast moving downward spiral of the culture of drugs, sex, early divorces etc. etc. All we seem to be emphasizing to them is that they have to look a certain way and hence behave in a certain way to feel good about themselves while the importance of the inner human being is given backseat. It's all about looks, money, "success", entertainment, fun, fun and more fun at the cost of all that is actually important to improve one's quality of life or attain happiness and peace.

If it is not the fear of Allah that guides our choices and what we stand for - and it is obviously often not - then surely the quick decline of values and mores of our younger generations should at least restrain us from loosening our own standards of cultural norms and traditions. In a nation of majority of Muslims, we as Bengali Muslims are too quick to brush aside our Islamic values. But surely, even the conservative Hindus or Christians of our region were equally conservative. In our efforts to fight the religious extremists are we sure we are not in danger of becoming "secular extremists" where we have become so easily blind to the obvious negative effects our "extreme" secular ideas are having on our youth? Whatever someone's personal way of life may be, when it is being "sold" or "promoted" via advertising in the print or electronic media, it cannot, anymore, be anyone's personal business.

In the light of what we have been saying above, please, let us take a moment and do some serious introspection to think what our misplaced modernity, misguided attempts at freedom and liberation and personal rights are doing as we blindly hurtle down the slope of fast declining social, moral and family values.

S. Kabir
Gulshan, Dhaka