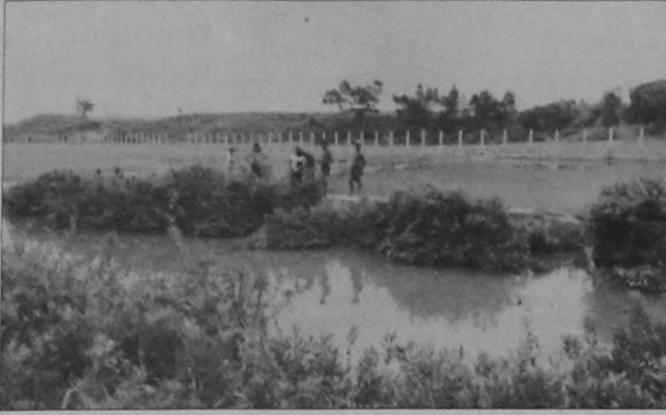


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Border tension



Members of Nasaka, the border security force of Myanmar, are entering into the Bangladeshi territory every now and then and kidnapping people. They have now been a constant threat to our border guards. Defying all rules and regulations, they are exerting pressure on the border areas

with their well-equipped armed forces. It is high time to rebuild our BDR and strengthen the coastal forces to bolster the defence of the border. **Ariful Islam Laskar**
Dept. of English
Jahangirnagar University

Does the earth need human beings?

It is fashionable now to hold high-level junkets called regional and international conferences, protocols and establish innumerable committees to study practically every aspect of the Earth from the melting polar ice to the ozone layer, from earthquakes, cyclones, global warming and climate change, to rain forest preservation, food production, population control etc. The ultimate theme is always "How can human beings save the Earth". This is just another manifestation of our inherent arrogance and our blind confidence in our own stupidity. We are delegating to ourselves a task which evokes no confidence in our proven abilities. We have only to look back at our own track record which covers just a mini-second when measured in the time scale of the Earth's existence.

The Earth has been around for about 4 billion years. It took more than a billion years for the first primitive life forms to appear. Slowly, higher forms came into existence, till about a billion years ago, the first diminutive mammals appeared. Millions of these evolved, adjusted, improved and grew in size and intellect, but each had to co-exist with the conditions prevailing on the Earth. Those that could not, quickly became extinct because Mother Earth is a hard taskmaster. Take the dinosaurs, whom we deride as

slow-moving and stupid. They flourished for over 500 million years and only an extra-terrestrial collision of cataclysmic proportions about 66 millions years ago snuffed them out forever. But even they left us their descendents and a record for longevity, which we, the Ashraf-ul-Makhlukat, the so-called highest form of life, will find impossible to equal.

Homo Sapiens, in Latin, 'human with wisdom' is no longer appropriate for our species. We evolved during the last 500,000 years or so, but recorded history is hardly 10,000 years old. Never during its innumerable journeys around the sun, has a species so despoiled the Earth, on so colossal a scale, in so short a while. The human race has oppressed, maimed, and killed each other and other co-inhabitants who share the Earth with it, in billions, we have exploited in a few centuries, the riches that took the Earth millions of years to accumulate; we have poisoned its waters, its land and its air. The great endless forests that once enveloped the tropics and temperate regions and the teeming wildlife in it and in the great oceans have been brought to the verge of extinction. Most count their further existence in decades only.

The apathy, avarice, cruelty, corruption, envy, greed, ignorance and waste of Man know no bounds and narrow-minded nationalism and regionalism and unrestrained

ambitions are hammering the last nails in our coffins. Soon and this may be within the next century, we are going to breed, bury or blow ourselves into extinction. Just retribution, I say, for crassly abusing Mother Earth's hospitality and the Almighty's Commandments!!!

The Earth will nevertheless survive, wish us a sad goodbye, and slowly but surely Nature will put its timeless balm on itself, to heal the wounds we have inflicted on it. In due course, the Earth will rejuvenate and eventually support life once again, with the hope, that the species to come will learn from our senselessness and co-exist with themselves and with other living things, in peace and harmony. We are, after all, different links in the One Great Chain.

Thus, the issue "CAN WE SAVE THE EARTH?" is a moot point. Except for going around and around the sun for a few more billion years, the Earth is NOT going anywhere WE ARE! The Earth does NOT require to be saved WE DO, especially from ourselves!!
Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Toothless tiger

US President Barack Obama in his first historic speech to UN on 23 Sept reminded the third world leaders, among others, of one most important point-"eradication of corruption". On October 17 the Bangladesh prime minister vowed to contain corruption in her

speech in the first ever held historic Anti-Poverty Rally in the country. It sounds she is sincere to implement her election pledge but it remains to be seen what she can achieve.

In the last few days there were lot of news headlines on the ACC which is the main instrument to contain corruption. The present ACC chief himself came out with statements calling the ACC a "toothless tiger" at its present form and efforts are going on to cut its claws by the government. The prime minister was present while her MPs and party bigwigs were advocating curtailing the powers of this already weak tiger.

Our past experiences say both the treasury bench and opposition members are strongly united on these types of issues where there is benefit for all of them. So, we have doubts about the ultimate success of the government. Can she eradicate corruption keeping the "toothless tiger" in the cage?
Shafiqul Islam, NY

Longevity

Undoubtedly, medical science has made remarkable progress in the last few decades. It has invented the root causes of many diseases and identified many germs, bacteria etc. Albeit many new diseases are breaking out in our midst, the medical science is not resting, rather it is trying to defeat them.

About fifty years ago, the longevity of the people in this region was around 40 years but it is now over 60 years. The average life span of Japanese people will be almost 100 years in future, it is expected.

It is good that man will spend more time in this beautiful world. But at the same time we have to think about their food, shelter, cloth, education, medicine etc. We will have to increase production of food grains by 70% by 2050 for meeting the demand.
Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Whither rule of law?

On October 10, 2009, a magistrate along with a few dozen policemen broke down the unauthorized portion of an apartment. Apparently, the owner rebuilt the broken portion of the apartment in the following two days.

Now if this is the state of the affairs in the country, it is an easy guess even by a little child where this country shall end up. This is a flagrant violation of the law and this situation is more or less prevailing everywhere. If this trend continues unabated, I am sorry to say Bangladesh shall soon end up as a failed state paving the way for the enemies to invade.

It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that the fate of the country is not at stake or else the nation may have to pay a heavy price. To avoid such a situation the government must take stringent measures.
Saleh Mohammad Ayub
North Dhanmondi
Kalabagan, Dhaka

No understanding!

Despite the frequent announcement by our Honourable Prime Minister about the drives against corruption and lawlessness and her advice and warnings to the concerned authorities and administration, the people of Bangladesh so far have seen no sign of improvement in either of the areas. It should be mentioned here that this type of drives, announcements and assurances appear to have become the trademarks of both the leaders who have ruled the country so far in the name of democracy. Again, among many people, another notion goes like that, if both of our beloved leaders (Hasina and Khaleda) get united forgetting all bitterness, the country will succeed in various fields of development and will be able to eradicate poverty.

Even the respected Speaker of our Parliament somehow spoke in line with this notion, but in vain.
Urmila Chowdhury
One-mail

Television channel

A few days back it was learnt that ten more private television channels would be given permission to operate. In this connection, I have something to say. The government can persuade some private initiator to start a channel that will be focusing on our agriculture. In fact, as an agro-based country we must have a channel on agriculture. This channel will broadcast programmes relating to agriculture and cover different aspects of it.

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

SSF protection

I was surprised watching the news on TV that parliament had passed the SSF protection bill for Bangabandhu's family members. The Daily Star printed 13 adverse comments (none said in favour of this bill) in "Volleying Back" on October 09. This is very unfortunate that nobody pays attention to public opinion or thoughts which are nicely presented by your newspaper. I would request the MPs and ministers to assess the public opinions reflected in press reports. However, there is no question about PM's additional security. But why for other family members? This is questionable! Why is the AL inviting criticism?
Tumpa Datta
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Traffic jams

Ref: Mr. K. Siddique-e-Rabbani's column. In my opinion, we don't have any chance to depend on a slow moving means of transportation like rickshaw in the 21st century.

I do understand that private cars are mostly responsible for creating traffic jam. I also understand that allowing rickshaws to ply all over Dhaka city can not be the solution to this problem. Rickshaw is a slow moving vehicle which hampers the normal speed of motorized vehicle. If you allow rickshaws to ply all over this city, then you would definitely see a shortage of rickshaws. On the other hand, if the authorities permit more rickshaws then we would come across rickshaw jams. In addition, it would encourage more people to migrate into overpopulated Dhaka city. Rickshaw is also very unsafe when it rides on main roads. So, there are many problems associated with rickshaws. Yes, we are still dependent on rickshaws only because we have failed to modernize our transport system.

We should look for fast and safe means of transportation which can accommodate large numbers of passengers at a time. I think all minibuses should be removed from the road and new double-decked buses introduced immediately.
G.M. Rezwan Rasul
Kalyanpur, Dhaka

Why the killer?

This is a matter of great concern for all of us to see the elaborate version of the televised interview given by none other than the notorious serial killer, Rasu Khan.

Should the media give this man such coverage?
Nasrullah Mehboob
One-mail

Akbar's column

I regularly read M J Akbar's post editorial or column in The Daily Star. I would like to thank M J Akbar for his pragmatic, anti-fundamentalist, sympathetic, scholarly and smooth writings. He calls a spade a spade and advocates equal and deserving treatment for the Indian Muslims. The Indian Muslim population may even exceed the whole population of Bangladesh. His writings like 'Muslims need jobs not Iftar' etc and 'the truth: Gandhi is less of a draw than Jinnah' (DS-15.10.09) are eye openers as to peoples' psyche and longings. It seems that people love controversy, melodrama and theatricals more than benevolent non-violent activities as carried out by MK Gandhi.

I thank M J Akbar once again and wish that he will continue to enrich our knowledge with his writings.
Dr. SN Mamoon
One-mail

Clipping ACC wings

In the name of reform to make Anti-Corruption Commission more effective and pro-people, the government is planning to curb this anti-graft body's authority so that it cannot unilaterally file corruption cases against public officials, policymakers, lawmakers and other representatives. It is learnt from the news media that the cabinet committee, formed last March to review the ACC Act, has already drafted some proposals to this end and forwarded those to the commission for opinion. But surprisingly, the chief of the committee expressed his ignorance about the details of the proposals as he attended only one out of the five meetings held so far. This tells us how a government committee works.

If all the above mentioned classes i.e. bureaucrats, MPs and policymakers get immunity from any corruption charges then who will be there, except the general mass, to be caught around! There is no doubt, as pointed out by ACC sources, bureaucrats are the brain behind the amendment proposals. But a government elected by the people should not be a

toy in the hands of bureaucrats. Law and policy makers should not forget that they will have to go to the doors of the people every five years to get a new mandate. To clip the ACC wings to make it toothless and clawless will boomerang for the politicians and the government. Besides, the nation wholeheartedly cherishes an independent and powerful anti-graft watchdog body and instead of making it inactive, the government rather should go for arming it with all necessary ammunition so that it can deliver the services expected of it. Regarding accountability, the ACC will be answerable to the people only. But integrity of the people who man the body is of paramount importance. Meanwhile, the Regulatory Reforms Committee Chairman has also resigned complaining that the body has become dysfunctional as the government wants its closure.

Things are moving towards the wrong direction!
Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur R/A, Khulna



PHOTO STAR

Mobile phone tower

Science is a blessing for us. Mobile phone is obviously one of the greatest inventions of modern science. And we all are enjoying this useful invention by science, in every part of our life. But some specific matters need to be examined critically.

Mobile phone companies are constructing small towers on roofs which are too risky for neighbouring people living in kancha or tin-shed houses. This type of tower could fall down anytime when a storm or cyclone hits. This may cause deaths.

Mahmud Ali Kabir
Ex-BSS Correspondent

Jalil and AL

By issuing the order to arrest Abdul Jalil the Awami League government has committed a blunder, because it came in the wake of Abdul Jalil's comments which he made on September 22, 2009. In a media interview in London, the Awami League lawmaker said that the party had reached an understanding with the immediate past military-backed government before the December 29 election.

So, people are bound to put two and two together and think that it is an act of revenge.
Nur Jahan
Chittagong

A festering wound

Among many bad things, General Ershad did one good that I always remember. He dissolved his Jatiya Party's students' front. I don't want to dig the background of the dismantling, I just want to consider the deed itself. This clicked to my mind while I was reading the article captioned "Thorn in Hasina's crown."

I label policies of political parties entailing student front as the most damaging for country's healthy future. Students who are involved in politics are in the age group of early twenties. At this age they are supposed to be awfully busy with their studies and in consolidating their learning to prepare for ensuing career or for someone to go for higher studies or do researches, so

that they can enlighten themselves as well as society.

But instead they, the student activists of political parties, are harming themselves and society and polluting the whole educational environment of the country. Peace loving students who are in good senses are failing to derive anything from their respective institutions due to malicious activities of their own so called class-friends. Some argue that banning the student fronts of political parties will lead to crisis of future leaders. There should be an in-depth debate in the National Assembly to resolve the issue.

I appeal to our Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina-- please take an initiative for the debate the debate should reflect individual views without any party infused views and create an environment in educational institutions which is truly knowledge oriented. This initiative can set your administration free and pave the way to undertake the activities needed to materialize your envisioned Digital Bangladesh.
Muklesur Rahman
One-mail

Dowry system

Dowry system has been an aged-old ill plaguing our society. As an observant onlooker and born and brought up in a village, I have witnessed the powerful existence of dowry system and its adverse effect on impoverished families very closely. A typical village marriage is full of festivities like singing, dancing etc. However, the apparently happy situation is blackened by the shameless demand of dowry by the father of the bridegroom. The father or the guardians of the bride are forced to provide money or other properties to meet the greed of the father or guardians of the bridegroom. Although the snapshots in newspapers reflect a very small portion of the incidents happening in rural areas, as they are far from the centre and thereby disadvantaged, still we cannot but be alarmed to see how the innocent village girls fall victim to dowry system.

It is a shame that the spectre of the cursed malpractice

haunts our society even in this modern era.

So, we are in need of concerted efforts to start a crusade against this social malpractice and ensure a safe future for our girls.

G.S. Hossain
Rahmatgonj
Chittagong

Fight against poverty

Recently, the government has taken different initiatives to encourage people to fight poverty. It's obviously a good venture. But 'work' is more effective than 'word'. We understand that poverty is our number one enemy but how can we get rid of it is a billion dollar question. Only holding some campaigns and taking oath in an air-conditioned auditorium is not enough.

As it is an agro-based country, we have to develop our agricultural sector first, then gradually others. To do so, we have to go to the farmers, have to understand their real problems and take need-based and effective steps. If these can be done it may bring some positive results.

It is time for starting work to build a poverty free Bangladesh.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Business
Administration
SUST, Sylhet

No respite?

Even the mentally retarded girls will not be spared from the rapacity of the rapists. A pictorial report was published in your daily on 11.10.09 that a young mentally imbalanced girl was raped allegedly by a local goon on 26 September at Sailakupa upazila under Jhenidah district. What a horrendous act!

Has political power made them blind and mindless? The victims of the unscrupulous obscenity are poor general public. Where are the influential people or the police?

Whoever are the rapists, however powerful they are, please take a firm stand against them.
Ahmed Munir
Paltan
Dhaka

Extra power generation

This is a response to a report on the related matter published in the pages of a local English daily, some days back; where the writer was critical of the governments move to give away energy saving lamps to villagers. The distribution of 26,500,000 energy saving electric

lighted during the maximum demand period of 6:00 to 10:00pm, will add a minimum 500 MW of power to the national grid, particularly during the evening maximum demand period when practically all lights are on! It is at least equivalent to one power generation

crore to make available over 500 MW of power is a cheaper option, considering the capital and operating cost of a 500 MW power plant. Also much time is saved. This method if diligently followed may take at most 12 months or less: while setting up a 500 MW power plant in a green field site will take at least five years if not more! We hope this measure will greatly improve REB's power supply position. They are the worst sufferers of the current power rationing practice, which gives lowest priority to the rural areas' electric supply, which is terrible, to say the least!

Regarding discouraging the use of ACs in urban spaces, I think this matter deserves immediate attention. This can be easily done by reducing the fuse rating to match only the lighting load in markets and shopping centres that is operated during the evening hours through a timer mechanism in the fuse circuit.
Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

plant's capacity, if not more!

The same measure was adopted by South Africa about a decade or so back; when their power generation capacity was marginal. Even at that time, their power generation situation was far better than in Bangladesh at any time since 1980s.
Spending Tk.187.04



SHAFIQUL ISLAM KAJOL/DRINKNEWS

light bulbs is a wise step taken by the government. They deserve to be congratulated, rather than be criticised for it!

Each energy saving lamp will save on an average of about 25 watts of electric power when it replaces a filament light bulb of say 40 watts! Therefore the total savings from all the lamps, usually