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Health hazard

We have seen many a time photos published in The Daily Star with the caption 'Hello Mayor'. This was to draw the attention of the mayor of Dhaka to take note and to ensure some action in public interest. But we don't know if at all any action had been taken. When and after what 'grave' incident will his department wake up to redress the plight of the citizens, it is only to be seen.

Talking about the DRAINS of DHAKA! One look will be reason enough to throw out your whole stomach. It is unimaginably stinking and OVERFLOWING! It has indeed become a terrible sight, especially in whole of Banani area.

We often see the drains are superficially being emptied of solid, rotten waste and piled up beside the very drain from where it had been extracted. What a mindless action and resulting sight! For years we are watching the same thing happening. Who will remove those filth, is the puzzling question. It is a total lack of coordination between the departments. The waste removal dept. is to be approached and informed to do their job with men and machine. But it is never done and so the filth is never 'removed', it gets buried in the same place. Simply unbelievable show of IRRESPONSIBILITY! Hopefully there will be a 'change' soon.

As the capital city, Dhaka has abso-

lutely nothing in terms of taking care of its waste. It is not only we common citizens alone, but the govt. officials themselves are aware and see for themselves what the situation is like. Yet they turn a blind eye. Alas! Their priorities are somewhere else!

I am helpless and hopeless, that even after this letter getting printed, not an eyelid will move, let alone any action to practically remove the filth for safe disposal. Dhaka needs an efficient, degradable and scientific means of handling its mountain of waste. Let our waste management officials go on a Foreign Trip to 'learn' how the waste is managed. Yet there will only be a cosmetic action taken, if at all. There should be an effective policy and budget to handle waste efficiently that befits a Capital City. It speaks a lot of the govt. in power.

The situation is so bad that I am bound to draw the attention of our honourable PM to please direct her appointed waste management officials to take action to CLEAN the ROADS and The Adjacent Drains in the effective and textbook way.

Let Dhaka wear a better look in the celebration of its 400th year.

Let the budget allocation be increased to keep the city clean and liveable.

Syed Imtiaz Ali
Banani, Dhaka

Name game

Traditionally, Bangladeshis have a penchant for symbolism. Names, metaphors, slogans have always got precedence over substance. It is an integral part of Bengali psyche and history is replete with such examples. But the present cause of concern among the people lies elsewhere: it is the name changing of public places which worries them. Now people can easily understand that these are not done to show any respect to any of their leaders but to demean them.

The present government has changed the name of Zia International Airport defying opposition from many quarters. The previous caretaker government changed the name of the only frigate of Bangladesh Navy. Before that Khaleda Zia's government changed many names given by the previous Awami League government, thereby, rendering this name changing spree a notorious perpetuity.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and President Ziaur Rahman have their own places in history. They are not among us today, but unfortunately some of their so called admirers and their own flesh and blood are bringing them back to this earth and knowingly or unknowingly maligning them.

Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia came to politics under very tragic and extraordinary circumstances. Yet both earned huge popularity among their supporters and have become prime minister more than once. But, sadly, from the very beginning they are involved in the politics of contention and vendetta.

They may find some solace by taking such revenge against each other, but by doing so they are definitely keeping violence alive. That is the tragic outcome of this mindless exercise.

AK Shamsuddin
Mississauga, Canada

Vicious circle

In Bangladesh, till now no political party has ever won an election; it has always been the case of the other party losing! What makes it worse is that irrespective of who the government is or what their election manifesto was during the campaign, once in power the strategy is always the same:

Shuffle the jobs across the rank and file and justify it saying the procedure was not duly followed by the previous government.

Stamping of party supremacy by their respective student wings across the educational arena.

Releasing and embracing the thugs and goons, suppressed under the previous regime, as political heroes. Simultaneously, filling this empty space in the prison with the opposition members (who will have to wait for their turn to become heroes again).

Finally, rename everything that even sounds like the name of the opposition party's renowned leader, no matter at what cost. It has reached such a frenzied state that an ordinary citizen may wonder if he or she will be able to keep his name or will that be changed too!

As a citizen of Bangladesh, we have been witness and unfortunately a party (after all it is our vote that brings them to power) to this merry-go-round for quite sometime. However, being the optimistic nation that we are, we hope

that at least one, if not both the political parties, will realize that we need to step out of this vicious circle and start addressing the real needs of the country.

Sani
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

SSC exams

The questions of English 1st paper for the students of Dhaka Board was really difficult to answer to the point. The authorities should have special consideration for this paper, so that the students can do well.

Md. Abdus Salam
Assistant Teacher
Joypara Pilot High School
Joypara, Dohar, Dhaka

Renaming ZIA

Please refer to a letter by Kabir Ahmed published in your daily on 1 March 2010. It drew my attention. Renaming or assigning names to different establishments was not in the election manifesto of the Awami League. Rather, their pledge was to change the days by doing a good job for the people. This government took over power more than a year ago. During this period, what change the government has been able to bring?

We witnessed soaring prices of rice, intolerable traffic congestion in Dhaka city, unprecedented deterioration of law and order, unabated killing in crossfire, heinous activities of the Chhatra League, extreme scarcity of gas and electricity, no foreign investment, no steps for employment generation, shrinking foreign job market etc.

Dhaka has been termed the second worst city in the world. We do not see any initiative to make the city liveable. As the evaluation was done by the Economist, the news has spread all over the world. If the situation is as such, then will any foreign investor take interest to come and stay in Dhaka? Please prioritise the tasks based on our real needs and let the people know your agenda.

Matin bin Zahir
Trishal, Mymensingh

US and Pakistan

A poll found that most Americans think Pakistan along with Iran and North Korea are among the most unfriendly countries of the world. At the bottom of the heap is, of course, North Korea, followed by Iran and Pakistan. About 90% of the Americans consider all these countries are a threat to the American security and must be treated as such.

As opposed to this negative view about Pakistan, Iran and North Korea, most Americans think Canada is the most friendly country to the United States, closely followed by Britain at 87 per cent. Germany ranked third with Japan, India and France coming next. While the European countries have always been considered as friendly countries, the emergence of India as one of the most friendly countries to the United States is a new phenomenon.

Increasingly, India is seen as a vibrant democracy and a fast growing economy. Most Americans think that forging strong relations with India should be the priority of all US administrations.

With the Taliban slaughtering fellow Pakistanis while the Pakistanis continue to blame the United States, this should serve as a wake up call. Pakistan can no longer afford to keep a blind eye on terrorist activities directed against America and India while calling itself an ally of America. With anti-American sentiments rampant among Pakistanis, the Americans are naturally sceptical about Pakistan's claim as a strategic partner against terrorism. Pakistan can no longer play the double game of propping up the so-called "good Taliban" who are targeting the American forces in Afghanistan while fighting the "bad Taliban" who are attacking civilians in Pakistan. Normalisation of relations with India will go a long way to convince the world that Pakistan is truly committed to fighting religious extremists who are also slaughtering Pakistanis in the name of religion.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

DESA control rooms

The capital experienced the first Kal Boishakhi storm which caused some damages and inconveniences to the city dwellers, one being the failure of electricity. I live within the jurisdiction of DESA's Shyamoli Control Room. Soon after the rain stopped I started contacting the Shyamoli Control Room to lodge a complaint of electricity failure. The first problem I faced was to get the telephone line as the control room has only one number, i.e. 9146043. Anyway after redialling for about half an hour, I got the line and lodged the complaint. The officer on duty informed me that it might take a few hours before they could restore the power supply. Then after a few hours the electricity came but unfortunately the voltage was very low. Again after trying for quite some time I got the line and complained about the low voltage. This time, the duty officer told me that it would again take some hours to mend the fault as the number of complaints were so high and their men are attending one by one. Mentionable that the control room has only a limited number of technical manpower plus emergency vehicles.

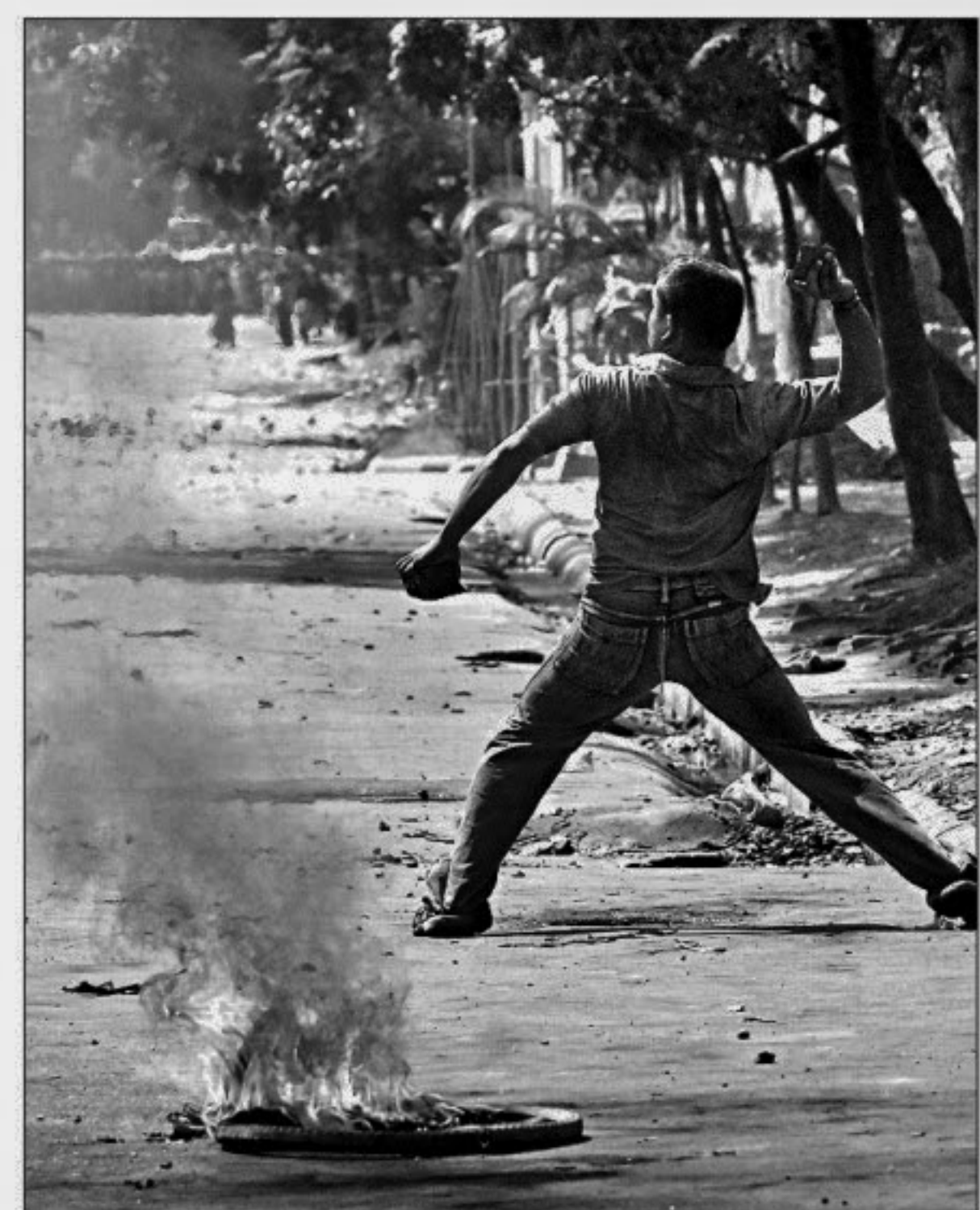
Anyway, the low voltage was put back to normal voltage at around midnight. Of course the duty officer very politely answered to my follow up calls and sincerely took measures to restore our electricity. Although it took more than six hours to get back the normal electric supply but the duty officer and others in the Shyamoli Control Room deserve our appreciation and thanks for their sincere efforts.

Meanwhile, I would like to request the authorities to provide some more telephone connections (including wireless phones), technical manpower plus emergency vehicles not only to Shyamoli Control Room but all the control rooms of DESA in the capital.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Open secret

With the passage of time we are confronting day by day some inevitable questions.



Culture of violence and hartal

The young generation (especially the students at the tertiary level) is being spoiled by the political culture, by encouraging violence and obstructions (hartal). The latest news is that violence has come out of the campus, and riots took place at the International Trade Fair, as the police interfered with the activities like petty thefts from the stalls and teasing of the girls visiting the Fair.

Violent demonstrations are becoming a part of our culture, and the student groups think themselves to be above the law (like the politicians). This is due to the absence of established institutions in new Bangladesh since 1971. We had no experience of running a central government; and the masses were suffering from the fatigue of the nine-month long liberation war. The political leaders live in the past, and do not apply mass psychology in their political strategies. Bangladesh today is isolated from its neighbouring countries.

It is a social and cultural crime to spoil the young generation who will rule the country in the near future. Inward-looking national leaders are a disservice to the nation. We cannot get rid of them (they overstay) as the majority of the voters live a marginal life; and corrupt practices have made a small section of the population rich and powerful. This feudal attitude has to go. Dirty politics has become a national liability. It is the mental attitude of the have-not minds.

The opposition is not contributing to national welfare (boycotting of parliament by successive opposition parties). Time is at standing still for four decades. There is no end to our frustrations.

A Husnain, Dhaka

What can we do if the police compel us to give a false confessional statement? What shall we do if we are arrested and displayed before some illegal weapons and ammunition which actually belong to the police themselves? How can we tolerate when we see the police are being assisted by some terrorists in an operation against some innocent persons? What the police will do if they are compelled by some powerful directors (political big boss) to arrest someone illegally? How can we get the truth if the media supply only partial news and views? How can we continue our education if there is a wide cultivation of terrorism in every educational institution? What will happen to our sisters who are facing the constant threat of abduction and rape?

What will happen to the families of the victims of Palkhona carnage? Perhaps we all know the answers of those inevitable questions. Ours is an independent country having our own laws and regulations. But we are unable to enforce and utilize those bookish laws because of the illegal interference of some "THEY". Those "THEY" are so powerful that our fate, life and

death completely depend upon their intention and mercy.

Those "THEY" direct, motivate, influence, corrupt and finally destroy us and our country. How can we overthrow the tyranny of those "THEY" who are not big in numbers? We must bear in mind that our independence was the natural outcome of deprivation of our basic rights. But surprisingly, the deprivation continues! We have really contaminated the holy blood of our martyrs and freedom fighters. **Mohammad Saifuddin**
Dept. of ELL
International Islamic University Chittagong

Renaming

In the Newtonian universe every 'action' elicits an equal but opposite 'reaction' (3rd law), and the current naming/re-naming in Bangladesh is no exception. Unfortunately, Newton did not get time to work on the next theory about the reaction of 'reaction'.

So, it is prudent to think carefully and practically before starting the first 'action' (and 'reaction'). **M. Emad**
Oxford, UK



Population

Increasing population is a matter of global concern. It is one of the major problems in Bangladesh. Day by day it is going from bad to worse. Nowadays, Bangladesh faces no greater challenge than overpopulation.

The issue has to be addressed with due urgency. **Mohammed Jamal Uddin**
Dept. of English
International Islamic University City.

FFs' children quota

The notice by the establishment ministry on the 30% quota for children of freedom fighters says if the quota is not fulfilled it will remain vacant. The notice disheartened me. I think it also disappointed nearly four crore educated, unemployed youths.

The government should reconsider the decision.

Acitizen
One-mail

Religious sermons

Every Friday comes as a weekly Eid Day for Muslims. It is an important duty to listen to the sermon called Khutba in Arabic. The Imam always reads out some important lessons for the pious Muslims. It is for sure that most of the

listeners do not get the point exactly made for their enlightenment. Though it is obligatory for Muslims to have a little understanding of the Arabic language for the sake of the religion, but it is neglected. Hence the important sermon is listened to but not significantly understood. And Muslim parents of modern societies attach less importance to religious teachings, regrettably though.

Ahsan Uddin Tohel
Department of English
SUST, Sylhet

A cheap shot

A drowning man tries to remain afloat holding even a straw. The BNP's recent manoeuvre through the cocktail scare is much lighter than even a straw for such a big leader of the party. As the issue could not draw any attention from any quarter, the party finally demanded SSF security for their leader.

We don't know who are the advisers of such creative dramas, but definitely it is not helping the party to regain public support. We believe, these sort of silly tricks will not work to help create public awareness and sympathy. The party should actively participate in parliament, raise objections against the government on issues of public inter-

est and not their leader's personal interests like cantonment home, embezzlement case, money laundering cases against the party chief's sons and relatives etc.

The BNP, the second biggest political party in Bangladesh, should not forget that this is 2010 and not 1990. The party could have asked for SSF protection without staging such a drama!

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Contaminated water

Wasa is the sole source of water in Dhaka metropolitan city. But people are observing with concern that in the last couple of years, Wasa has miserably failed to supply safe water to its consumers. A surface water treatment plant was established in Sayedabad that is supplying contaminated water.

The government should investigate the matter. The Bangladesh Standard & Testing Institution (BSTI) should also look into it and impose fine on Dhaka Wasa and its employees concerned responsible for supplying contaminated water.

Mohsin Ali Hawladar
Bashabo, Dhaka

Take rickshaws off

Once again, my friend Mr. Sikander Ahmed of Niketon, Gulshan through his letter dated February 21, 2010 has compelled me to respond. Mr. Sikander himself has accepted that he has been continuously trying his best desperately to 'shut' everyone down whoever speaks sense in favour of banning rickshaws from Dhaka metropolitan city roads (in phases). He has specifically mentioned that he has 'sent off rebuttal' to DS against Mr. Chisti's remark.

I surely, like almost all of us, look for ways to improve our traffic system. I notice that Mr. Sikander mostly points out to complicated numbers and information which often seems to me is an attempt to complicate the simple issue of traffic management. In one of my previous

letters I had specified some short-term steps that would significantly reduce traffic mismanagement. Some of those steps were taken up by the authorities but sadly have now become idle again. One of the keys to maintain systematic flow of traffic is to implement and ALWAYS use automated traffic signalling system. It seems contradictory to me that on one hand DMP is putting up electronic displays that says that a country's image is reflected through its traffic management system, while on the other hand it itself does not use automated traffic signalling system.

We can in the short term: 1. Make marked lanes on every main road, but not restrict all vehicles, only make the left most lanes restricted for buses ONLY and punish vigorously those who

disobey traffic laws with very high fines. 2. Make turn lanes marked by "TURN ONLY" at every intersection. 3. Absolutely ensure that buses do not stop anywhere on the road except at bus stops and surely make specific bus stops first. 4. Let the main roads run by AUTOMATIC signal lights except in times of emergency when a traffic police officer can guide the traffic. 5. Make sure that NO traffic officer EVER encourages any vehicle to "GO" on Red and "STOP" on Green. This practice is systematically ruining our habits even those of us who are willing to obey the laws. 6. Make sidewalks and foot over bridges FREE of illegal occupation and available for pedestrians. (This one step can reduce the traffic jams significantly throughout the city) 7. PUNISH,

severely those who do not use the foot overbridge (where available), keep building more and more 8. Build fences around ALL major roads to separate the road and the sidewalk. There should be designated crossings where people will be allowed to cross the roads. 9. The dividers of the main roads MUST be high enough so that people cannot jump over it. 10. Buses must be made to move mostly on the left most lanes whenever possible. 11. The immediate step: Take rickshaws off the main roads. Do it now.

In my view it should be among the top most priorities of the government to get rickshaws 'on check' and start to control them immediately and gradually get away from them for good.

Rahat
Malibag, Dhaka

