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.

## Observing May Day!



Each year, all over the world, the historic May Day is observed through arranging different programmes. In Bangladesh, the workers feel gratified as it is a national holiday. Nothing additional is achieved or felt by its stakeholders. Is it all about that day of

Where the workers do not get their proper wages, female workers lose their job for getting expectant, breathe their last in the locked up factory premises, don't get salary (not bonus!) before the Eid day, observing May Day, in a festive mood, is quite offending! We all understand that the white collar people are enjoying the output of the disadvantaged workers but they are not eager to fulfill their basic rights.

After 39 years of achieving high paid, much desired, independence we have not been able to develop an acceptable and standard wages policy. Owners of

the organisations, in most cases, pay too little as wage/salary. It is quite impossible for the workers to live in urban areas. Moreover, they have to work 18 hours per day without having proper foods, safety, and a comfortable environment. As a result, gradually they are becoming physically frail and pale. Finally, the authorities kick them out without bothering about their pension, gratuity, or any other allow-

So, on this May Day, the prime demand should be: formulating an up to date, reality based, labour and wages policy. If that is possible both parties will be benefited because the satisfied workers will become an asset for an organisation.

leaders, who find the tip

crowded and unchanging

(lack of ventilation). This is

due to the culture of dynasty

rules, cultivating and patron-

Dhaka for pushing jobs to be

done (undemocratic); and

hand out bribes to the syndi-

cate controllers. Politics today

in Bangladesh has a monopo-

lising effect, affecting all the

non-political sectors. The

backdoors are more crowded

than the front doors! For the

ordinary citizens it is difficult

to run daily lives without

patronizing the political

background, and should not

be a front stage tamasha all the

It is Islam that has compre-

hensibly given womenfolk the

right to education, training

and so on. A good mother

obviously means the one

having proper education as

well as skills to keep pace with

competitive materialistic age

enriched by Information and

Communication Technology

(ICT). Today one's life has also

become harder than before

and the struggle for existence

is grim. Only the fittest will

survive. So, a country can

never prosper or reach its peak

if the fundamental rights of its

The bride's family has to

collect a huge amount of

money for their daughters or

women are ignored.

Chittagong

Dowry

Habibur Rashid Ismail

Jamea Rahmania Madrasa

We are currently living in a

time.

A Mawaz, Dhaka

Politics should work in the

Today, one has to come to

ising the sycophants.

Md. Abdul Hamid Assistant Professor Dept. of Business Administration Shahjalal University

#### Water crisis

A detailed front-page report on the subject was published on 25th April in a local English daily. Unfortunately, it was more confusing than clarifying! There were major errors in it, both language wise and technical. I would like to point out a few glaring anomalies.

To begin with, one wonders what was found 'defective' in the proposal sent by Wasa by the concerned ministry? That has not been stated and the public would naturally like to know about it.

Later in the report, it was stated that Wasa sent a proposal to procure 200 "high voltage"(?) generators! I wonder if Wasa pumps are run by electric motors rated at 3.3kV, 11kV or higher voltage? expect that most pump motors run on normal 3 phase AC power supply at the standard 415 volts, which voltage most normal generators are also rated to provide, be it gas or diesel engine driven. The "high voltage" needs clarifica-

Though it was an important article for public interest, these errors made comprehension of the actual facts difficult! In bureaucratic terminology, the facts were not transparent!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor Dhaka

#### Sheraton Hotel

tion for understanding!

The Dhaka Sheraton Hotel is the oldest five star hotel of our country. Previously, it was called Hotel Intercontinental. It is situated in one of the best locations of Dhaka City beside the picturesque Ramna Park. The hotel is a govt. property and run by a board selected by the govt.. But they have no experience of operating five

About two years ago the Board of the Hotel invited public tenders for a "New Agreement". There was good response from international hotel operators. However, two years have passed and no decision has been taken by the Board as yet after completing negotiations for awarding the tender. This has caused much resentment amongst the parties who have submitted tenders.

Concerned

star hotels.

#### No place for cars

Karwan Bazar Market is in the heart of Dhaka city which for wholesale and retail markets of the central Dhaka area. Previously, there was not much vehicular traffic in this area. But of late with a five star hotel, many large commercial establishments, banks, insurance companies, 2 TV stations, two major national newspaper offices and other establishments, this area has become very

important. Throughout day & night people come here and face a serious car parking problem. Many people are compelled to park their vehicles at any place available which causes a serious traffic jam. In front of the Karwan Bazar there is a "Car Parking" space, but these are all the time occupied by a large "Fleet of Mini Trucks". This is used 24 hours as their "garage." Most of the other places are occupied by vehicles of different companies.

Hence, people are facing a serious problem to get a "parking place" for their daily shopping at the bazaar for fish, meat, vegetables, fruits, rice, dal, sugar, eggs etc. The road in front of the market has been occupied by fruit vendors for many years.

Unfortunately, the police dept. has not taken any step to Rights of women solve the above problem. It is alleged that our police staff get a large amount from the "illegal occupants" every month and they are not disturbed. I would request you to

assign a reporter for investigating the whole matter and publish a report for the benefit Salma Ali

Mogh Bazar, Dhaka

#### Ershad's Suggestion

Former President Ershad, a veteran politician, is bold enough to suggest publicly the formation of provinces in Bangladesh and making Dhaka a federal capital (like Islamabad and New Delhi). But the other political leaders, especially belonging to the two major (dynastic) parties and the MPs won't agree, due to obvious subjective advan-

**Environmental conditions** support this new move. Our density of population (around 1,000 persons per sq km) is one of the densest in the world, and the deltaic region hampers transport and communications, as the IWT sector is neglected, and Bangladesh, an LDC, is subject to natural calamities. The economic holding power of the average voters is low (the majority live in the rural areas, facing severe communication

The immediate concern is the overcrowding of capital Dhaka, making it a dying city (surrounded by water bodies). The districts are not developing as the investment possibilities are not bright. The MPs have a tight control over local politics and leaders, and are apt to misuse their power and

position. Decentralization is a taboo for the political leaders (they like the umbrella effect!). This would open the doors for apprenticeship of young

sisters' marriage. Sometimes they are to take loan, sell their land, furniture, ornaments and even their house to collect the money. They are to lose many things and face many problems due to this dowry system.

It must be abolished at any cost. Md. Tanjil Dept. of Geography and Environmental Studies

University of Chittagong

#### Mindset

Dr. SN Mamoon's letter BNP's Tears" on 26 April caught my attention because it not only illustrates Dr Mamoon's mindset but that of a large majority of supporters of both the parties in particular, and all our political parties in general.

We need to get out of this frame of mind, the earlier the better. It has been proved time and again that mudslinging by political leaders at the top position or at lower levels has given this country absolutely nothing. Their blame game is good reading material or even nice to hear if you support a particular political party but this has no effect on the ground level where we are suffering from shortage of electricity, water, gas, traffic jam, price hike, corruption, law and order, you name it.

Can we not shun this blame game and concentrate on suggesting solutions to these problems, which are acute and causing unbearable miseries to all of us. To the general public it matters little which party in Bangladesh is in power, simply because one party is only a shade better or worse than the other. Therefore, it is of no consequence to us what the previous govt failed to do. We are interested in what the government in power, be it BNP or AL, is doing for us. We want our lot to improve, and improve at the earliest without excuses.

Dr Mamoon has every right to express his views in the light of the party he supports but we, the general public, have no time or energy for blame games. We need action now, irrespective of which party is in power.

Mahmoodul Haque Gulshan Dhaka

#### Stock market

Some endemic problems have been bedeviling the investors especially those who are new and small. These relate to Mutual Funds that were embroiled in a court case for over a year in 2008-09 resulting in non-payment of dividends since 2007. Even after the High Court has given a clear-cut ruling about the issuance of Stock Dividends and Right Shares, some of the lucrative companies are facing problems in payment of declared stock dividends for 2008 and 2009. In fact the oldest of these AIMS 1st Mutual Fund has virtually disappeared from the trading board for well over a month after the SEC vetoed their dividend and right declaration. What is going on here is also not known as both AIMS & SEC are silent? Meanwhile thousands of Mutual Fund

investors are suffering. Non-resident Bangladeshis are facing serious problems in getting refunds. Most applicants prefer to send their applications to the head offices of the companies by post/courier because going to Motijheel to submit it and get a receipt is akin to going to a

foreign country. The postal/couriered applicants never get the receipt after encashment of their foreign draft as the rules of SEC specify on reverse of the application forms. Yet the refund carrying couriers are made to demand this and refuse to hand over the refund warrants. Then the applicant has to make a long and tedious journey to the head office (usually in Motijheel area) to get the refund. This writer had personal experience recently from no less than 7 companies who were holding on to the refund warrants. Why can't the amounts be refunded to the banks mentioned in the application forms as is now being done increasingly for other applications.

The courier services being chosen by issuing organizations are mostly third-rate. Most of them are congregated in a dingy room in the seedy part of Fakirapool. They sit on the refund warrants for weeks then return it to the companies with false notes such as "Not Found", "Receipt Not Available", "Premises Locked" etc. I can testify to this personally. Apart from a few, I have had to go to the offices to get my Refund Warrants. Why not use the services of the banks and dispense with the services of the couriers altogether?

Will the SEC not consider a quota for Senior Citizens in future IPOs say 5% of the shares for those 65 and above? This way we can augment our income honestly and also keep active mentally and physically.

Sikander Ahmed Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

#### Recipe for change

Bangladesh is country of immense potentiality. Despite being so, we couldn't achieve major goals even after 38 years of independence, whereas other countries achieved the goals within a relatively a short period of time. What is the obstacle that keeps us backward with every passing year? The most obvious cause is that we, as a nation, fail to appreciate anything good. We never applaud any positive approach, nor do we nourish goods ideas. We always think about the negative impacts. To be precise, we hardly apprehend anything good. This negative attitude of ours towards everything is the prime cause of our falling behind other modern nations.

Laziness, negation towards positive thinking, giving up responsibilities, playing the blame game, finding out faults with others but not ourselves and neglecting solutions are not going to bring any change to our lives. If we look at the bright side of life, things can improve dramatically.

We just need to take the initiative to accept our responsibilities as global citizens. It is high time for changing our mentality as the winds of change are blowing across the world. Tanha Kashfia Kate

Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

#### Punish the stalkers

It has been observed since a long time that the girls in the streets, villages and even in colleges and universities become the worst victims of the stalkers. It is astounding and alarming news that even in the University of Dhaka girl students are frequently teased and if anyone comes forward

# RMG sector's future

Has anybody gone through the OPEX workers demand list? They are asking for revision of minimum pay scale from Tk.1663 to 5000, attendance bonus increase to Tk.500, & yearly leave encashment, + 6 months' maternity leave (for all those who are not familiar, none are included in our existing factory acts!) So, basically all these demands are over the law requirements. These issues can at best be requests but definitely not demands.

Media should condemn this illogical demonstration by workers, especially when it's affecting not just the factory owners / buyers but the mass people. It's really an irony, that when the whole world economy is at its worst, and most countries' unemployment is hovering at

around 10-15 %, our workers, politicians, & NGOs are making fuss over these extra benefits!! What a timing!

One thing for certain, garments workers in Bangladesh are not forced labourers, so if one doesn't like what he /she gets they can always leave & opt for working in other trades, but to go to streets & block roads for these demands is illogical. No offence, I blame our politicians & media role for the present state in RMG. They are over-sympathizing with workers every time on issues which are not even logical.

If this trend continues, garments owners will be compelled to close their factories for good. Then what will happen to these workers? Mehroz Jalil

Dhaka Cantt., Dhaka



to protest it, he is allegedly attacked by the supporters of the ruling party. Whoever might be those miscreants, be it of the ruling party or the party in opposition, or the sons of the King or any Queen, it is the time to take stiff and stern action against those miscreants, if we really want to save our sisters and daughters from the oppression and torture by those evil forces. The time is not very far away when the people will lynch them if the government fails to take timely and effective measures against those Rajshahi vicious elements of society.

Mazibur Rahman Former Senior Assistant Judge Bangladesh Judiciary London, UK

#### Trip to Puthia

**Barrister Mohammad** 

I looked around, awed, surprised, mesmerized at the temples looming on other side, their reflections on the filthy, grubby water, small polythene bags floating near the edge--not quite an introduction to the estate once governed by kings wearing wide, large turbans -- the impression I had gained from 'Gupi Gain Bagha Bain' movie. It reminds me of the king's moustache, its sheer black depths and it is truly depressing to take note of the fact, that there no longer are the kings, queens and countless servants to obey their orders, except the remnants of the magnificence they have left behind which still continues to hypnotize us by their beauty, and the strength they show standing straight and imposing, regardless of the fact that countless years have gone by and they are in dire need of repairs.

Let me get you acquainted with the towering palace of

Rani Bhuban Mohini Devi, guarded by a tall lion gate, with the great Pancharatna Radha Govinda Temple inside, terracotta plaques engraved on the walls, obviously, those involved in adorning this temple, must have been real genius, without technological support carefully crafting each detail of Ramayana epic.

I was back to Rajshahi in a 45 -minute journey that had surely been rewarding. Shatabdi Biswas A student of O level Paramount school & College

#### Sovereign credit rating Bangladesh has recently got

credit rating by two internationally reputed organisations. It has created positive feelings among the people who want to see Bangladesh as a promising economy and a middle income country within the next few years. Bangladesh has achieved this level for its performance in maintaining stable economic outlook for the last one decade. It maintains almost 6% GDP growth for around a decade. Its foreign reserve condition, restoration of democratic process, macro- economic indices were very much supportive in achieving this rating.

According to analysts and experts, this rating will help Bangladesh in attracting foreign direct investment and portfolio investment. It will also help investors and government in getting loans from foreign sources at a lower rate than earlier. We hope sovereign credit

rating will brighten our image abroad. It will also help Bangladesh in branding itself as an emerging economy. Now

it is our duty to maintain this rating and try to improve this gradually. We should also identify our weaknesses and strengths which can help us in taking corrective measures for further improvement. Side by side, we should not be complacent about this

achievement.

I would like to extend my compliments to those personalities and organisations who have contributed a lot to bring Bangladesh in the rating arena. I hope they will continue their efforts to up our country's position in sovereign rating order. Md. Fakhrul Alam

Deputy Director Bangladesh Betar, Sylhet

### Boro farmers

More than one lakh hector of boro paddy has gone under water due to heavy rainfall and onrush of water from hills across the border (India) in haor areas. This unexpected water washed away all hopes and dreams of haor farmers. The affected haor areas are under Netrokona, Kishorganj, Hobiganj & Moulvibazar districts. Farmers in the affected

areas are cutting unripe boro, fearing further loss as water levels in the haors continue to rise, inundating new croplands. However, it is time to do something for these affected people. The government should provide subsidy to the affected farmers and set up a 'haor department' under the relevant ministry.

Md. Rana Abbas **Tapas Deb Roy** Dept. of Geography & **Environmental Studies** University of Chittagong

# Desertification



Desertification means land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub- humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities, leading to reduction or loss of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rain fed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest and woodlands. Bangladesh experiences long spells of dry weather and moderate to severe droughts are spread over a region of 5.46 million ha. During the 7-month dry season in some regions, the evapotranspiration exceeds the amount of rainfall by a factor of 2.0. Between 1960 and 1991, droughts occurred in

Bangladesh 19 times. Very severe droughts hit the country in 1951, 1961, 1975, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1984, and 1989. Certain physical observations of desertification

(i) Development of continually broken cracks on the dried up topsoil.

(ii) Burnt-out yellowish foliage in the vegetation cover. (iii) Loosening of soil struc-

ture, ending up in the topsoil transforming into a dusty layer

The issue deserves immediate attention. Md. Humayun Kabir

MS in Environmental Science **IFESCU** 

University of Chittagong