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## Israeli aggression

We are deeply shocked by the news that the Israeli army boarded the Flotilla which was coming from Cyprus to Gaza carrying humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. Israeli Defence Force (IDF) came on board the boats and killed at least 10 people who were bringing foods, medicines, and other essentials for the people of Gaza who are in dire need of those.

We condemn this brutality and urge the international community to come forward to help the people of Gaza, the United States of America must stop this Israeli aggression and we hope that US President Barack Obama would look into the matter.

**Nur Jahan**  
One-mail

## Adieu Bangladesh!

The other day in late afternoon, a friend of mine asked me whether I was free or not. As my answer was affirmative he requested me to join him in going to Elephant Road to collect spectacles for his son studying abroad in Japan. After arriving at the designated optician, we found that the spectacles were not ready yet to be delivered. So we had to wait for a while for the delivery.

In the meantime the optician at the store began gossiping. At one stage, as it is almost a common practice in the country, the topic of politics came up. The optician asked me when would we have a Mahathir Muhammad. I did not tell him anything at that time as we would never have a Mahathir Muhammad simply because we do not deserve one.

Over the last one year or so, I have desperately tried to cope with the prevailing situation in the country without success. Everything provokes you to quit. I am going back to Houston, Texas with great dissatisfaction. In all my years I have witnessed both good and the bad. Unfortunately, I fail to see light at the end of the tunnel. Had America been our next-door neighbour instead of India, I am tempted to say that the whole country would have turned into a ghost town. I beg forgiveness of the learned readers, if I have happened to hurt their feelings by my writings.

By the time my mail appears in the daily, I shall hopefully be in Houston, Texas.

Adieu Bangladesh, amar priyo janmobbhumi.  
**Saleh Mohammad Ayub**  
Houston, Texas, USA

## Death on road

Ilyas Kanchan, a famous cine artiste, lost his wife in a tragic road accident. Since then he started a campaign for 'Safer road'. My friend Ekram Ahmed, a senior bureaucrat, lost his teenage son under the wheels of a speeding truck. Ekram is now a 'Safer road' activist. Comparing to the number of motorised vehicles, death toll in Bangladesh roads is the highest in the world. But this epidemic has little impact in our society. Sporadic clashes occur when any student or a garment employee is

killed in such accidents but most of such deaths go unnoticed. In some incidents, cases are filed with police stations. But we have not heard of any punishment in any such cases. It appears that we have become used to such deaths. A few years back highway police was established but we don't find any improvement of the situation.

Now, time has come for some real action to stop indiscriminate 'killings' on road. The present government should take responsibilities of all such deaths and injuries. None should go unpunished. Tougher enforcement of law is required.

**M. Sanaul Haq**  
Uttara Model Town  
Dhaka

## Begunbari tragedy

The recent incident of Begunbari has shocked us all. It again proved that we are living in the unsafe concrete jungle. Rajuk is the top decision-making body which permits any owner to construct buildings in the DCC area. People are now claiming that this organisation doesn't carry out their responsibilities correctly.

Human rights activists should raise their voice to ensure safety of people's life. The government should come forward and take effective measures to prevent such accidents in future. Rajuk should play its role by investigating the plans and specifications correctly. Any unauthorised construction should be stopped to avoid accidents. Violators of the BNBC should be brought to justice and given exemplary punishment.

The ministry concerned should take proper steps in this regard.  
**Eng. Md. Meheeb Haque**  
BUET

## An overdue progress

Your newspaper reported the Prime Minister being one of the first recipients of Machine Readable Passport (MRP) along with fourteen other citizens of the country. Ten of them are quite prominent citizens. The five unmentioned must be the labourers and students. The PM, her cabinet colleagues, the army chief, and the FBCCI president all receive special treatment at

## Government organisations

It is lamentable that most of the government offices of Bangladesh are extremely bureaucratic and inefficient. Most of the government organisations lack the smooth systems needed to serve the general people effectively. Public services in these government offices invariably involve redundant paperwork and unnecessary hassles, which often make people unwilling to ask for their services. Moreover, government employees in most of these organisations are corrupt, rude, uncooperative and extremely inefficient. Instead of helping troubled people, these government employees generally push them into deeper troubles and take advantage of people's helplessness. There's no effective monitoring mechanism, and administrative responsibilities are often handled with utter negligence. General people are frequently harassed by the employees and illegal agents who are good at making money out of people's predicaments. Most of these government offices epitomise the endless mismanagement and exploitations that our public administration is known for.

These conservative employees recurrently stand against all innovative ideas and they never get out of their sealed black boxes. I think there must be effective organisational monitoring systems and control mechanisms in the government organisations such as periodic management reviews, anonymous reporting system, visitor's comments procedure, financial audit and ethics training in order to improve the efficiency of our cumbersome government organisations. With the shift of power we always see major changes in our public administration as this sector is highly politicised in our country.

However, we seldom see any worthwhile change in the level of commitment of our government employees. As a consequence, the quality of work performed by them always remains poor. What happens is that a bunch of inefficient people are replaced by another bunch of even more inefficient people. The vision of Digital Bangladesh can never be materialised unless the government wipes these irregularities out of its offices and set fresh visions, missions, goals and regulations for our key organisations.

**Kh. Asef Safa Kabir**  
Muhammadpur, Dhaka

## The subcontinent

On 29-05-2010 I attended a seminar at CIRDP auditorium arranged under the auspices of PDI Policies and Development Ideas. The keynote paper was read by Engr. TAM Nurul Basher. He described the political history of the subcontinent dating back thousand of years and the partition of India into two countries in 1947 and three countries in 1971. It is true that these partitions brought undue misery to its citizens.

We have European Union, East-West Germany unification, etc. But unification of Indian sub-continent at this stage, is a wishful thinking because our rulers, past and present, have sown the seeds of hatred in such a way that such unification is only a dream.

I would suggest that we may take smaller steps of

cooperation, friendship, mutual assistance, peaceful co-existence and start with smaller items such as:

- 1) Free movement without visa restriction.
- 2) Cheaper telecom and postal facilities.
- 3) Tax free trade of all items.
- 4) Smuggling-free open borders.
- 5) Exchange of students and joint participation in academic fields.
- 6) Expenditure cuts in military and defence budgets.
- 7) Common disaster management.

There are many smaller fields of joint cooperation which may increase friendship and peaceful co-existence among these neighbouring people which may open doors for other bigger issues. These smaller steps with their positive results may encourage us for taking big leaps in future.

**Mohammed Alauddin**  
Green Road, Dhaka

## What is going on?

After the BTRC (Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission) had booted out many of the VOIP equipments terming these illegal and cancelling licenses of some telecom operators, it was heartening to note that Engr. Hasanul Haque Inu, Chairman of Parliamentary Committee, came out boldly stating that the govt. would adopt an open door policy in telecom sector and some 3,000 operators will be given licenses to operate VoIP. This was a relief to people who understand and operate telecom business.

But alas! News came out on 4th June dailies that BTRC has directed all the VSAT owners to submit their equipments to BTRC within 7 days of the receipt of the directive letters issued by BTRC. I fail to understand what kind of a country we are living in.

**Nurul Basher**  
Dhaka

## Break the silence

Road accidents, building collapse, fire disaster, etc, are becoming regular incidents. Most of the incidents are happening for lack of our consciousness. Apart from this, our government could not take any fair steps regarding these incidents. Whom will we blame? How long would we remain silent?

**Kaniz Fatima Sumaiya**  
Department of Accounting  
Eden Mohila College

## Press freedom

The government cancelled the declaration of Amar Desh, a Bangla daily, on 1 June - stating that it has no authorised publisher.

I am very sorry to say that some dailies of the country often go on their own political views and, thus, give priority to their party-related news only. Why is it so?

In fact, we often suffer from or face various kinds of harassments only for our wrong doings. Honesty is the best policy or reward. But, we do not go on this way.

Newspapers are believed or thought to be mirrors of a country. But, regrettably, we do not have the right to expression.

Nowadays, we only think of our own benefits. How will our uplift come if we neglect our own country and think of our own interests only? Why cannot or do we not always speak the truth? We should not forget that truth always goes its own way.

**Habibur Rashid Ismail**  
Chittagong

# Education policy

This pertinent news, reported in all dailies on June 01, is an important achievement of the government. The significant fact is that education up to class eight will be free and compulsory! The idea of common public examinations at class five, eight, ten and twelve is also rational.

This will ensure uniformity of educational standards all over Bangladesh in the days to come!

The moot point however is what will be the mechanism to ensure that education all over the country is actually being imparted compulsorily, to all children up to class eight? One wonders how this is going to be fully ensured, particularly as the very poor, both in urban and rural areas, cannot afford it. Also the children are a potential source of some possible income for these families, which cannot be ignored!

Although even for the very poor children, education will be free; who will provide the books and minimum stationeries required, which needs money?

This is beyond the financial capacity of a large segment of our population. How does the government plan to address this problem? This is an impor-

tant matter, and without solving it, the policy will remain in paper only!

In my opinion, one way, which is quite possible, is for the government to curtail defence expenditure; given the bilateral and multilateral agreements between nations, both on bilateral and regional basis, as well as the political and peace preserving role of the UN, it is quite feasible and logical, to cut defence expenditure. The chances of regional conflict on any large scale or regular war need not be considered.

Given this logical and justified preamble, it will be quite possible for us to curtail investment on heavy equipment. For example, infantry tanks, heavy artillery, naval vessels beyond maritime patrol boats and fighting aircraft need not be procured. These, as well as the required manpower for manning these will not be needed! The funds so saved, can be used to ensure the proper implementation of this nationally very important educational programme. After all, when all is said and done, it is education and not military might, which is the key to national development and progress.

**S.A. Mansoor**  
Dhaka



PRITO REZA / DRINKNEWS

## Poverty

Poverty is the greatest problem facing humanity. Poverty has been defined as being "a punishment for a crime you didn't commit." Millions of children around the world are being punished every day - and their only "crime" was being born into poverty. While most children cry to buy toys or their favourite junk food, disadvantaged children beg to live. Their only concern is surviving each day as it comes.

According to UNICEF, over 650 million children worldwide live in extreme poverty, and those numbers are on the rise. Poverty results in lack of access to basic education, adequate healthcare and a standard life. These three fundamental needs affect the rest of children's lives, define what kind of jobs they end up with, whether they'll be strong enough or have sufficient access to healthcare to fight off even the most common illnesses, and how they develop physically and mentally.

It is appalling and really hangs heavy on our hearts. It is unimaginable that such horrific treatment be imposed on innocent children. Child poverty is unacceptable, it's destructive, and it's an issue that should concern every single citizen. But most importantly, it can be changed. Choose to make a difference! Spread the word around your local community. Educate a child or sponsor a child's education. With compassion, care and a practical approach

that tackles the root causes, child poverty can be consigned to the history books and no longer be a spectre that haunts the modern age.  
**Tanha Kashfia Kate**  
The Aga Khan School, Dhaka

## Double standard

Flouting the international opinion and all norms of humanity, Israeli soldiers killed 9 unarmed innocent peace activists in the international maritime territory while they were on the way to Gaza with humanitarian aid on 31 May 2010. This audacity and boastful aggression has been denounced worldwide. But the saddest part of it is that the USA has failed to understand and evaluate the world sentiment. It has once again failed to denounce the fiend Israeli despot and interposed in taking a lenient resolution in the security council of the UN.

America is the only member country in the Security Council which objected to taking a harsh and effective resolution against Israel this time. When a single Israeli is killed in their country, the USA screeches against any such killing and assist Israel make a netherworld in the Palestinian territory without considering who is innocent. But when their ally Israel massacres hundreds of unarmed innocent public in Palestine they used to either remain dumb founded or eulogise the action.

How long should it continue in the Middle-East? It is high time for the people of the world to rise against the double standards of the USA.

**Monzur Rahman**  
Dhaka

## Land grabbing

The recent reports published in some national Bangla dailies regarding encroachments of land at various points of the Cox's Bazar sea beach are very disturbing. Experience tells us that once such process starts it goes on unabated and some government functionaries responsible for protecting public assets also join hands with the unscrupulous grabbers and create different excuses to support them. The euphemisms for such activities may be joint ventures for development, public-private enterprise and the like. I hope the media and concerned citizens will come forward and voice their opposition to

snapping up of land by wealthy rapacious land grabbers in collusion with dishonest public servants and force the government to take appropriate steps to protect the longest sea beach of the world, one of our national treasures.

**Nuruddin Azam**  
Australia

## Branding Bangladesh

Nowadays, "Branding Bangladesh" seems to be buzzing quite a lot - seminars, round-tables, and other events. I am not against what's going on because at least we are talking, which also means thinking.

I just wonder whether we are on the right track.

Firstly, we need to clean up our image, which has been tainted quite frequently ever since we became an independent state.

We are still unsure of the basics. Who are we as a nation? Bangladesh or Bengalis? Do we understand what democracy means? Can we learn to practise some clean politics? Can we learn to keep our promises? Can we learn to look forward?

Secondly, can we stop tainting our image with more silly ideas and mistakes? At least until we have cleaned up the garbage already piled up? Take the Facebook fiasco, for instance. What happened to our IT gurus? Couldn't they think of reporting abuse, rather than blocking and then asking BTRC to write to FB? Didn't they know that government or regulatory measures achieve nothing other than irking the West? The world is laughing at us.

So, do we at all know what needs to be done to achieve any positive results from the daunting task of building a country's "brand" image? Or are we expecting others to tell us what needs to be done? Aren't those "others" our target audience for a healthy and positive image of Bangladesh?

If that is the case, then only we can do or undo. And no excuses (natural calamities, dearth of resources, etc.) are acceptable! Otherwise, one would probably think that all the buzz is about individual or group gains. My apologies, if I am wrong.

**Nasir U Khan**  
Bangladesh representative at  
ESOMAR-World Research

# Re-designing rickshaw

May I echo Sikander Ahmed's request for the need of a newly-designed rickshaw to be on the streets? Like millions, I love the rickshaw - not only for its convenience and cheapness but the encouragement of a means of earning a living in a way that does not pollute the environment and responds to so many needs. Being able to see the sky overhead - oh, everything about it!

However, when I first got on a rickshaw, I looked around for the safety belt! The narrow sloping seat guarantees that, in the event of an accident, the passenger is thrown out. I am sure I am not the only person in this dear country who has ended up in hospital with a doctor picking bits of road out of the palms of my hands. But, mercifully, that was in the middle of the countryside and not Dhaka or I might not have survived to tell the tale.

I also note the stress and strain on the

back and limbs of the rickshaw-pullers and hear that the medical profession has confirmed it is neither safe nor kind to ask anyone to ride it.

However, I hear that the rickshaw does not need to be re-designed because a first-class job was done on that many years ago by a devoted friend of Bangladesh and a first-class engineer. The only problem is that the adapted design was never officially accepted or put into production. Surely it only needs some heave-ho from some dedicated Bangladeshis and, instead of being lethal, it can become a machine that is truly Bangladeshi, safe and kind to both customer and puller - and reduce the road accident death rate at the same time.

Is there anyone out there to take on the challenge?

**Angela Robinson**  
Gulshan, Dhaka



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