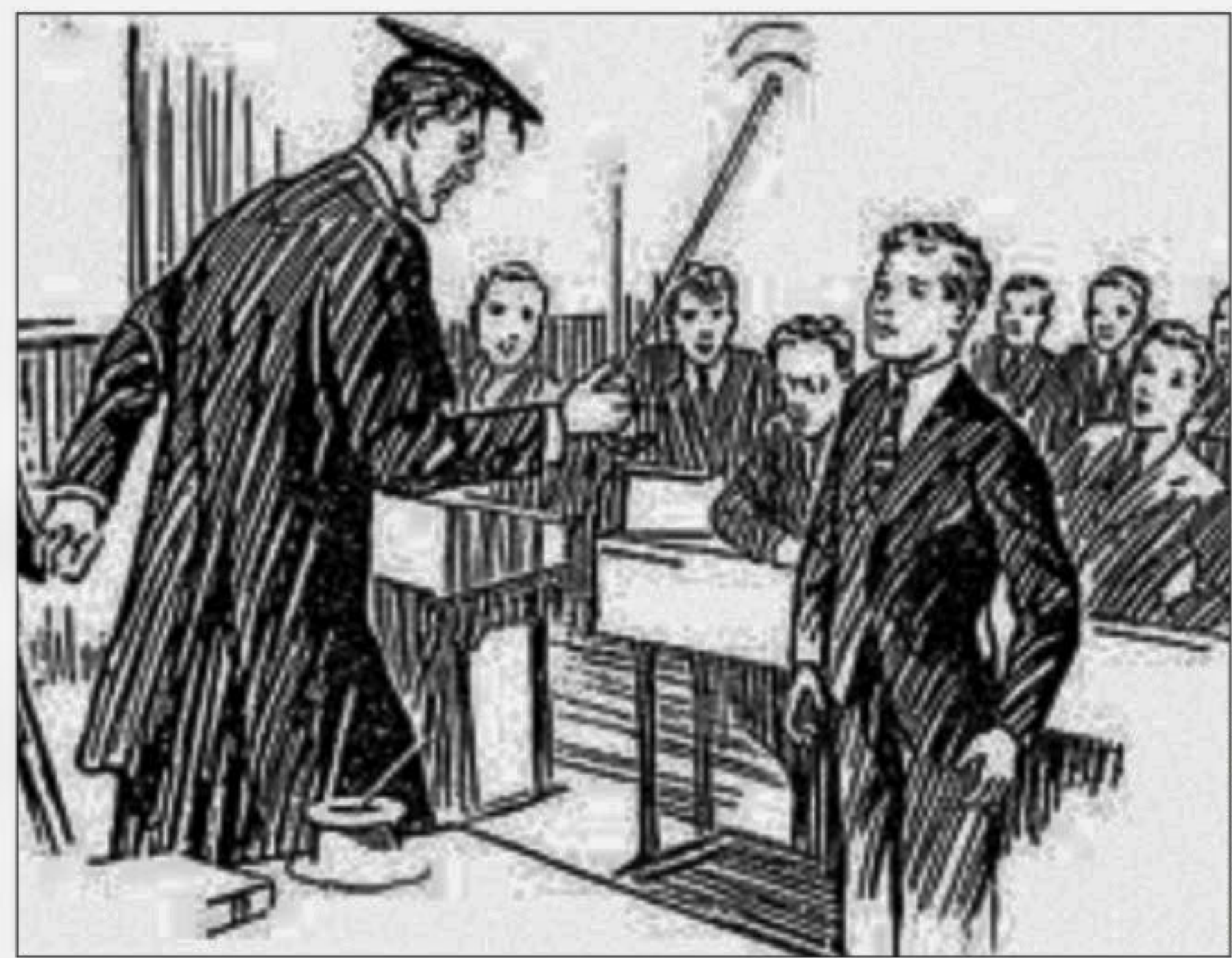


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



SITENAKER UMICHENJUTIF

Corporal punishment

My wife and I love our three children (Amit, Ali and Maksuda) more than anybody else in the world.

Before moving to Dhaka, corporal punishment had been a big issue in our family. Two years ago after one of our sons was severely beaten by a teacher, I confronted the headmaster of the school. The teacher was sacked and it was agreed that in future we would discipline our children and not the school. This arrangement worked because he was a caring and considerate headmaster.

Now, by the blessings of Almighty Allah, corporal punishment in schools has been abolished by law. I read in an English newspaper, however, that the man to whom the school pupils owe a

great debt, Sir Frank Peters, predicts it will continue unabated.

Sir Frank Peters said corporal punishment is so deeply ingrained in the psyche of Bangladeshi culture that it would not be eradicated overnight. He said, "Many teachers see themselves as taskmasters and high above the community in which they serve. In their minds it's their right to decide whether a child should be beaten or not. Some won't be able to stop themselves."

It is up to all parents to take positive action by writing or visiting the schools and making their feelings known. Unless we are hypocrites, we owe that much to the children we say we love.

Dr. Ali
Mirpur, Dhaka

ment with the importing countries, as they could not grow wheat at expected quantities this year. Probably, people in many countries will have to consume less bread.

Bangladesh faces different natural calamities almost every year and our production of rice depends on weather. We have to control our population growth and at the same time increase production of rice, wheat and maize. It is very risky to depend on other countries for meeting our local demand.

Rashid Harun
Dhaka

School inspection

I felt drawn to the letter captioned 'school inspection' by Shahabuddin Mahtab that appeared recently (July 26) in your daily. It was evocative of the olden days when visits to schools by public leaders or high-ups of administration were special days in school calendars, and for good reasons.

Relevantly, the visit of the Chief Minister of Bengal, Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq and Cabinet Minister H.S. Suhrawardy to the Gopalganj Mission School where Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a student is worth recalling. As the two distinguished visitors were departing after the visit, their passage was blocked by some students of the school. The teenage student Sheikh Mujibur Rahman told the visitors that the students were unable to attend their classes as rainwater leaked through the cracked roof. The visitors were much impressed by the courage of the student. Chief Minister Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq assured financial grant to the school for repair of the damaged roof.

On a much lighter note though, here is an episode concerning a visit of the British district magistrate to a school at Sirajganj. It was early thirties, the heyday of the British Raj. The Sirajganj High School authorities were obviously all alert to receive the visitor. After visiting some other classes, the district magistrate entered the classroom where the narrator of the story AQS Wares Ally was a student. The District Magistrate wanted to know from the students seated in front rows what they would like to become in their future lives. As appeared, all the respondent students aspired for becoming doctors, engineers, judges, administrators and the like. The district magistrate seemed rather pleased with their answers. He then asked a back-bencher, the narrator-student what he would like to become in the future life. He unhesitatingly said, 'Sir, I would like to become a minister.' The district magistrate was taken aback. He wanted to know why he wasn't aiming for jobs like his peers. The student replied, 'Sir, I am not as bright as my fellow classmates.' The district magistrate kept quite for some time, and a little later left the school. May be he had some food for thought for the day.

Syed Badrul Haque
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Self-sufficiency in food

As per Comparative Production Cost theory of economics a country engages itself in producing such things which can be grown easily, sufficiently and at comparatively low cost.

We produce almost everything of our need, but as our country is very small and the population is very high, every year we have to import rice, wheat, pulses and many other things. If we have sufficient foreign currency, generally we do not face any problem importing the food items. But, sometimes we cannot import rice and other food items for various reasons. At that time the prices of such things go up.

Some years ago, the price of rice in international market went up very abnormally. Many countries stopped their export considering meeting their internal demand first. At that time India fixed the price of per tonne of rice at \$1000 which was three times higher.

This year the production of wheat in some major countries is lower due to drought. Russia, Uzbekistan, Canada and some other countries will have to cancel their agree-

ment with the importing countries, as they could not grow wheat at expected quantities this year. Probably, people in many countries will have to consume less bread.

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Neglected farmers

Nearly 80% of the people in our country directly or indirectly depend on agriculture for their livelihood. But it is a matter of great regret that our farmers are neglected in every aspect of their lives. They do not get fertilisers, insecticides and electricity timely. Even they do not get proper price of their produced crops. They are the backbone of our economy and play an important role for the development of the country. But they are deprived of basic needs. Many MPs deliver their speeches in the parliament for the sake of the farmers, but their fate does not change. The government has started a new education allowance scheme for the government employees' children. This allowance scheme would help them to continue their children's education. Such steps should have been taken for the farmers' children. To change the fate of the farmers the government should ensure:

- (i) Fertilisers, insecticides and electricity.
- (ii) Proper price of crops.
- (iii) Free education for the farmers' children.
- (iv) Special credit schemes.

I hope the government will take appropriate steps regarding this matter.

Sohel Rana
Pallabi, Mirpur, Dhaka



Leadership

We have some right type of personalities in the society, but non-politicians have hardly any standing in the society, and draw scant respect from the elected representatives in 'democratic' set-up. Powerful vested groups do not desire the right type of changes in political culture (for self-interest).

There is staleness in the culture which is sapping the energy of the young nation. The young generation is being misled, therefore the future of the nation is not bright.

In an LDC, there are two hurdles: the high density of population, and low standard of living. The negative cumulative effects begin to appear decade after decade, as we see in capital Dhaka today. We won the Liberation War in 1971, but freedom of mind does not come in mere nine months.

The misuse of power and position is shocking. This mindset was encouraged by the domination of two political parties during the last four decades (the so-called umbrella effect). Regular elections are no solution, as powerful back door methods prevail.

The question naturally arises in the minds of the citizens: why we cannot produce leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Lee Kwan, Mahathir, Gandhi, Churchill (and others). The current style is selling past names.

The challenge comes on taking the unknown road to the future destination. The concept for CHANGE has been incorporated in the manifesto of the political parties, but the base or foundation has to be examined carefully (motivation and long-term effects). There is the tendency to cling to power by hook or by crook, based on sycophancy.

Today we find that the society has practically disintegrated morally, and violence in all sectors dominate lifestyles. Tolerance in politics and public life is virtually absent, and black wealth rules the day, (while there is no social status for our farmers who feed us).

The main causes for the lure of urban migration are

the injection of capitalism in democracy, and centralisation of power. Plain living and high thinking is possible only on paper, (especially in this global village).

Alif Zabr
Dhaka

Burial services

The Ministry of Religious Affairs may look into the public services offered by the mosques, especially in the big cities, such as bathing of the dead body and hiring of the transport for taking the body to the graveyard. Contact information may be available in the mosques, and the approved rates displayed.

At least about Tk. 3000/- is required for a burial (bathing, transport, and graveyard charges). This might prove a handicap for low-income families.

A publicity and awareness campaign is required for standard services, coordinated by the mosque administration.

A citizen
Dhaka

Savings certificates

A press release quoting Honourable Finance Minister about tax deduction on savings certificates appeared in The Daily Star on July 9, 2010. It caught my attention. In his explanation, the Honourable Finance Minister said "...the new tax rate introduced in this fiscal year would not apply to the savings certificates that matured before July 1, 2010." A statement by an official of the NBR has made it all clear. It said, "It was clearly stated in the money bill that the new

decision would not be effective for the certificates that matured before July 1."

If this is so, why then we continue to suffer at the hands of the relevant authorities, for instance, the Post Offices and/or the Savings Bureau. When approached, they expressed their helplessness in the matter. In the absence of a clear government order to them in this regard, they are not able in any way to have our claims met.

I hope and pray that this would be looked into by the Ministry of Finance and the NBR so that we will not be harassed any more.

Engr. Shaheedul Islam
Former Member, BWDB
Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Erratic power supply

On the auspicious night of the holy Shab-e-Barat, members of my family and I were praying in our home when at around midnight the power supply of the entire locality went off. Obviously, with the power cut, our prayers got suddenly disrupted, and all of us lost our concentration in praying. The next day, the power supply in our locality was all right. I wonder, why?

I am writing this letter to highlight this issue through your renowned newspaper. I still do not know the reason for the extreme disregard by our power distribution authorities for our religious performances. The power supply authorities are showing and proving their illiteracy, callousness and total lack of respect for the religious feelings of the people.

I would expect a clear response from the authorities. Or is it too much to ask?

Akhlaq Chowdhury
Uttara, Dhaka

Electricity

We are neither living in the Dark Age, nor in the Middle Age. This is twenty first century. We are living in a modern world.

Compared to new independent states, perhaps we in Bangladesh are living far behind some of the dark continent African countries.

We understand and we are happy that our present government has undertaken and is executing some giant development projects like construction of Padma Bridge, Jatrabari-Gulistan Flyover, widening Chittagong-Dhaka Highway, Dhaka Elevated Expressway etc of billions and billions of dollars.

We all feel the importance and necessity of all these development projects. But we must remember that Rome was not built in a day. We may execute and implement all these development projects one by one. It is not possible to undertake all the projects all at a time. Slow but steady always win the race.

Time and tide wait for none. Today the first and foremost requirement of our time, nation and country as a whole is the immediate adequate supply of electricity.

Our authorities concerned may kindly give top priority and solve our electricity problem first of all in the greater interest of our sixteen crore people.

OH Kabir
Dhaka

Tourism and MDG



NOOR ALAM / DRINKNEWS

To achieve the MDG, tourism in many countries of Africa and Asia has gradually been getting a momentum as an effective tool for poverty alleviation. Tourism industry of Bangladesh also needs to be developed for generating jobs and reducing poverty in and around the tourism spots. Tourism creates many informal jobs for unskilled and illiterate women. At present about 4 lacs people are directly involved and about 9 lacs are indirectly involved in tourism industry of Bangladesh. This number can be increased by developing rural tourism, riverine tourism, and community tourism. This will help achieve the MDG target- 'halve the poverty margin by 2015'. Special focus should be given in involving women in the tourism industry which will enhance their bargaining capacity.

It is also necessary to follow the code

of conducts set by the UNWTO in 2002 at all the tourism destinations of Bangladesh. The code of conducts advocates for elimination of child abuses and forceful prostitution in tourism industry. Tourism activists should be aware of the preservation and conservation of environment, culture as well as archaeological and natural tourism resources.

In Bangladesh tourism industry should move cautiously so that it will be able to benefit a wide range of people in urban and rural areas. The sense of ownership of community people for protecting tourism resources, their active involvement in tourism planning process and project formulations are to be emphasized. There should be a planned, controlled and well-balanced tourism development in the country that we still lack.

Ziaul Haque Howlader, BPC



ONLINE VOICES

Readers' instant comments on The Daily Star Online reports. Log on to thedailystar.net to leave your comments.

Govt hurries to shut schools, colleges

Orders closure from tomorrow as gridlocks greet Ramadan (August 13, 2010)

At least the government is trying to do something.
Muntasir

This task is massive in this over populated country... I don't know whether the best thinkers could solve this puzzle.
Maya

Thank you, government, for taking this optimistic step and

acknowledging common people's sufferings on Dhaka roads.
Hasibur Rahman

This is cellular phone era. Educational institutes can give the homework over phone or e-mail. The guardians of those who don't have any of this facilities can collect their kids' homework after their office hours. Teachers need to spend

some time in school for their students' well-being.
Nasirullah Mridha

This is the worst decision made by the govt shutting down school and colleges to avoid traffic jam. Education is the backbone of a nation and should be the top priority. The best solution to avoid traffic congestion is to move the capital somewhere else.
Akash

How can shutting down systems be a solution to problems? Are we not compromising on bigger things? Isn't our failure in not being able to deal with problems speaks volumes about our system and society? It goes beyond political affiliations and identity. Simply take a look at the photo of the traffic. There is barely any discipline. We cannot always blame the police - we should be ashamed of ourselves when we ask for police to main-

tain discipline. So what next - what more do we shut down?
Ishfaqur Raza

At this present moment there is no other option to reduce the traffic jams. However, the government should take a long term plan for managing traffic.
Kabir

These all steps are a temporary solution. We must decentralize our administration and factories (garments & leather) also. The govt must understand this.
Asif Ishtiaque

Closing down educational institutions is not a good step to reduce traffic jam.
Mesbah

I do not see any rickshaws in the photo. Main problem is the impatience and disregard for traffic rules.
Javed Helali