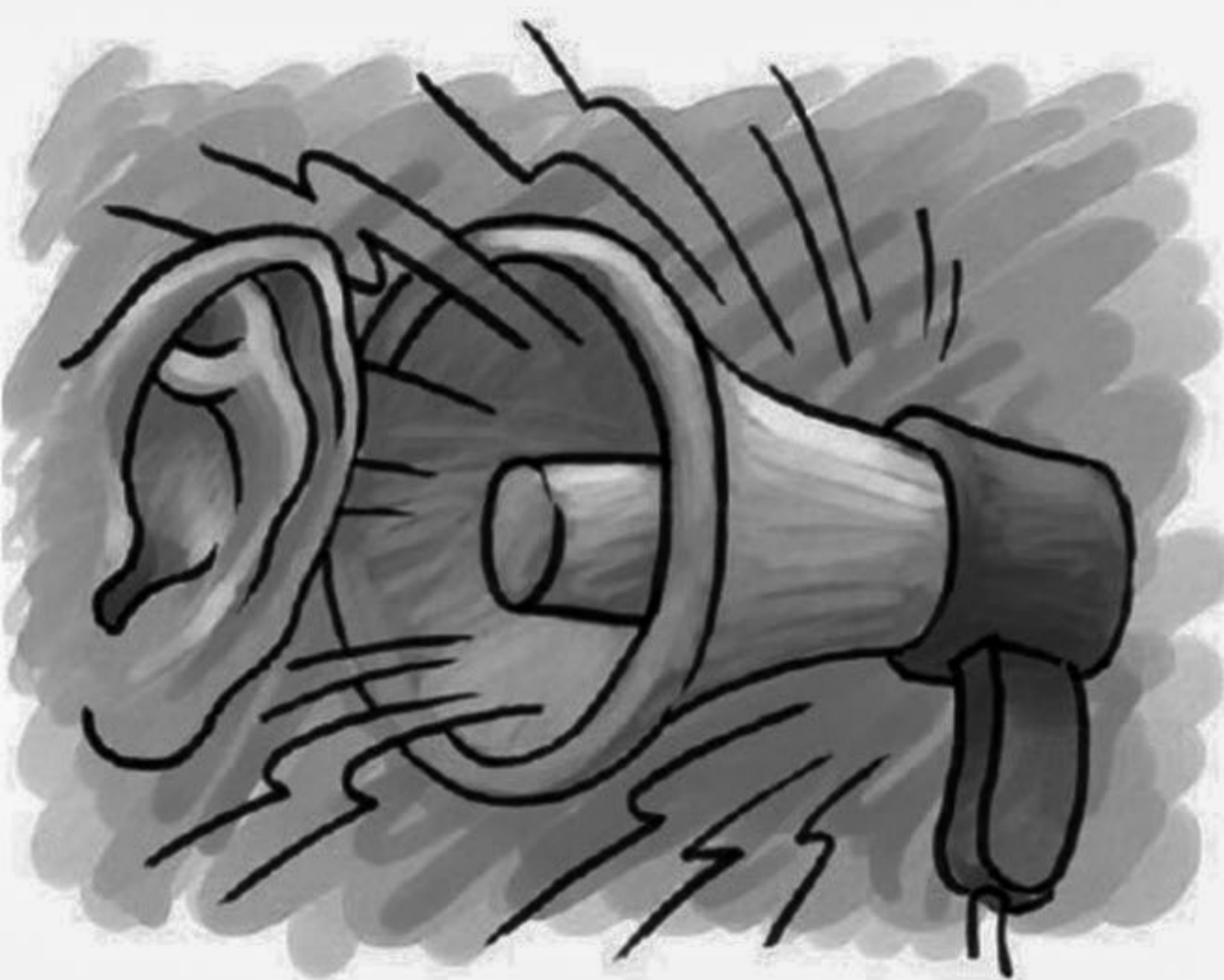


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Hydraulic horn

Hydraulic horns are banned by law in our country. But I am a bit sceptical if there is any implementation of the ban. On the city roads I used to hear the high-powered hoots of the hydraulic horns, especially in the trucks after dusk.

A few days ago I went to Barisal in a bus of a renowned transport com-

pany. But astonishingly we observed that all the way up to the destination city the driver blew the hydraulic horn annoying all the passengers there in and of course, scaring the passers-by all the way.

Nabila Raisa
Muhammadpur
Dhaka

Airport bus service

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to travel to many different countries. In all airports I have seen airport bus services for commuters to travel between the airport and different parts of the city. This service was utilised by passengers, airport employees and anyone who wished to go to the airport to receive relatives or for other purposes. The buses were big, air-conditioned and had designated bus stops for them. These buses also had adequate luggage space. As this service was very affordable, many airports or airline employees did not bring their cars to the airport. This reduced a lot of congestion in the airport areas, traffic jams on the airport roads, and people did not have to worry about parking their cars in the expensive and limited airport parking lots.

Introducing a similar bus service from HSIA to different parts of Dhaka city would reduce traffic jams, consumption of fuel and also air pollution, and would greatly benefit the people.

I urge the government to look into this matter.
Aminur Rahim
New DOHS
Mohakhali, Dhaka

Global competitiveness

Bangladesh has again failed to uphold its global business competitiveness index exhibiting a downward trend that reflects country's miserable investment climate. Except for a few indicators such as training and education, and financial market sophistication, most of the indicators show a deteriorating position. For the economic development of the country, it is mandatory to have a congenial business climate where various factors that are relevant to business and commerce are stable and ensured in the most efficient manner. Major indicators such as macro-economic stability, higher education and training, market size, and innovation have not shown any significant improvement, whereas other indicators have either deteriorated or remained somewhat stable at a lower level. But the major blow was infrastructure that has shown a significant downward trend. Infrastructure is the most important element for the economic development of a country. But it is a matter of great regret that our infrastructure facilities have been rather downgraded over time than to have shown any sustainable, better outlook.

Transportation system remains inefficient. There has been a huge power shortage in the country prevailing for a long time but the authorities concerned have not taken any effective measures yet. We

have to keep in mind that trivial improvement is not the solution, as our competitors, like Vietnam, Indonesia and some other countries, are doing better than us and grabbing all the opportunities. But it shouldn't have happened. We have a huge and cheap labour force along with a sizable demand for goods and services in the country.

Therefore, we expect that our government would take appropriate measures to eliminate all the obstacles in order to have a better business climate in the future.
Md. Anisuzzaman Sarker
Lecturer in Finance
Uttara University

A corrupt nation

The other day (September 21, 2010) turning on the television, I happened to see a treasury bench member speaking on the microphone at the National Assembly on rights and privileges enjoyed by the MPs and the negative attitude of the media towards them. Since it sounded interesting, I kept watching BTv, which was telecasting live the parliament session. Later on, the Honourable Speaker of parliament took over and began delivering his speech. At one point he mentioned that some car dealers met him with the purpose of supplying cars for the MPs and that they would reward him with a sum of Tk. 200 crore if a purchase of Tk. 800 crore is made (not sure about the figure). The Honourable Speaker, being an honest man, got alarmed and decided to refrain from such a venture and refer the matter to the Honourable Prime Minister. With the Honourable Speaker's speech at the National Assembly, it has now become officially established that this nation is indeed a corrupt nation, irrespective of what the TIB says or not. The party in power always denies the TIB report on corruption.

I thank Mr. Speaker for disclosing the unpleasant truth to the nation over the electronic media.
Saleh Ayub
One-mail

Coaching centres

Have any one of you ever tried to understand what is going on in the name of coaching outside the schools in the so-called English Medium schools? I am a poor father of a student of O-level. The teachers of O & A levels in different schools are engaged in coaching outside their schools. Two thousand and five hundred bucks a month is the fee for the Two-days-a-week service. Besides going to their respective schools, many students start to go there for each subject, as soon as they are promoted to grade nine. In the prime effort of the coaching centres is to prepare the students for the exams. As a result, having been utterly

confused, the parents like me are going from door to door for finding out the right (?) coaching centre. The situation of the students is even worse. From 8 am - 2 pm they stay at schools and after that until 9 pm they stay at the coaching centres. Their weekends are also not spared. What a pity that the poor kids are running like a spool in a weaving machine for getting a bigger score in the exams. We, the parents, are indeed responsible for this. It is because of our demand that the coaching centres continue to exist and grow.

We are trapped to do so to avoid the feeling of guilt that our children are not being able to hit a bigger score in the exams because they did not go to the coaching centres frequently.

Shahed Chowdhury
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Good taxpayers

Since the taxes paid by the people to the government for development work can be compared to the blood coursing through the veins nourishing the human body, it is commendable that the government has started to recognise the good taxpayers. On the occasion of National Income Tax Day on 15 Sep 2010, the Finance Minister himself distributed crests to as many as 348 taxpayers from all parts of Bangladesh. I am surprised that no one from Dhaka or Chittagong, the dens of iniquity, was named in the DS report.

Recognition was for highest taxpayer of a district, oldest

taxpayer, regular taxpayer, etc. However, the report did not contain the names of many of the prominent people, whose names were expected to head the list. After all many of these people head large conglomerates and a substantial number had been hauled up in the recent past for their corruption and criminal activities that included land grabbing, forex and local money laundering, VAT fraud, criminal activities, over and under invoicing, smuggling, bribery, etc. So much so that they even abandoned their high-priced Gas Guzzling Monstrosities (GGMs) purchased with black money, on the highways. Anyway, we have proved that crime DOES pay, as most may get all their seized money and goods back. The oldest regular taxpayer caught my eye for a very good reason. He has been paying taxes for 28 years only. This is nothing compared to my own contribution of income tax being paid regularly since 1955 i.e. 55 years without a break. But my contributions are quite modest. At the age of 77 I still work full time to maintain my family and last year paid Tk 12,915/- on the salary I receive. Therefore, I suppose I do not merit any recognition, much less any facilities in this age of materialism.

At the same time I must stress that the Finance Minister has done all senior citizens a disservice by slashing the profit rates on savings certificates and FDRs which was our anchor in our old age and in addition imposing a 10% tax on it. After that people of my age group can well ask the question how much longer are we supposed to keep on paying taxes without getting anything in return from the government?
Sikander Ahmed
Dhaka

Will we ever improve?

When will we improve? Will we ever improve? Though I am an eternal optimist, this particular question has me stumped. The character and general behaviour of Bangladeshis have a lot to do with both the following issues: A bloody clash between the supporters of the ruling party and BNP took place at the John F Kennedy (JFK) International Airport in New York in the USA on last Sunday wounding at least 10. The clash occurred centring the New York visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister wanting to join the UN session. When Prime Minister arrived at the airport and went inside, the bloody clash took place between the supporters of the two parties outside the airport. The NY police controlled the situation.

While the country is booming in all sectors of the economy, we are at a standstill in our basic behaviour, not only at home, elsewhere in this planet we see a blatant lack of courtesy and discipline in all spheres of life. We will never improve unless we have leaders who can serve as true role models. Unfortunately, there is no sign of this happening.
Gopal Sengupta & Avik Sengupta
Canada

Match fixing

From the very beginning cricket has been treated as a gentleman game. But that image is now in a threatened position. Cricketers sometimes fix the result of a match for huge financial benefits. This is the impact of massive commercialisation of cricket. Even the International Cricket Council (ICC) seems to be helpless in this situation.

I am very happy that Bangladeshi cricketers are not involved with such kind of activities. It is the right time for Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to take effective measures to ensure a good environment for our cricketers.

Sushanta Sekhar Deb
Sylhet

Anthrax hazard

According to the latest report, 589 people have been infected with Anthrax so far, since the middle of August. Anthrax was first detected in Bangladesh on August 20 in Sirajganj district. Despite measures taken by the local government, the disease spread into six districts of the country.

Anthrax bacterium is naturally found in the soil and it usually infects the livestock via inhalation or ingestion of spores while grazing. Without quick treatment, anthrax infection often gets fatal in both humans and cattle. Vaccines are available for animals and humans. However, in humans their use should be confined to high-risk groups, such as those occupationally exposed. Antibiotic therapy is also there which usually results in dramatic recovery of the individual or the animal. The government has set up checkpoints at cattle markets, asked the livestock departments and civil surgeons to remain on high alert, and sent emergency veterinary teams to the six affected districts. As Eid-ul-Adha is nearing, something must be done immediately.
Tanha Kashfia Kate
Dhaka

Intolerable!

Traffic jam, load shedding and gas crisis have crippled our daily life. These are the main news of almost all the national dailies of the country. The Awami League cadres assaulted the government officials in Pabna. Chhatra League cadres are doing the same around the country.

The government has not taken any effective step to tackle these issues.

Saharasi
Comilla

JFK airport incident

What happened at JFK airport in New York on 19 September 2010 afternoon is very sad. The activists of BNP went there to demonstrate peacefully against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's totalitarian practices and human rights violations in Bangladesh. If they could demonstrate peacefully, I do not think Sheikh Hasina would be terribly humiliated, because many prime ministers and presidents have to undergo such embarrassing experiences. By attacking the BNP protesters and turning the airport area

Electronic admission process

This year different universities have taken an excellent initiative about undergraduate admission. Dhaka University and many other engineering universities have introduced an electronic system for filling up admission forms and the payment of fees. Using the Internet and the state-owned Teletalk connection, an admission seeker can easily apply for admission to any of these universities sitting at home. No more travelling for hours to get to the university, no more standing in queues and no more hassle in submitting the form and other necessary papers! An efficient way to save papers, and, of course, time. This system has been developed by the teach-

ers of Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet, and this project has rightly earned itself the National e-content award. We also appreciate this innovation. But this achievement has also put the government face to face with some new challenges. Access to Internet has to be ensured. As the payment has to be made only by using a Teletalk connection, many will have to go to shops or mobile phone booths to pay the fees. The charge for providing this service should be minimal and it should be the same all over the country.

Shahriar Kabir, Eskaton Garden Govt. Officers' Quarters
Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

into a battlefield, those Awami League activists dishonoured our beloved country. Sheikh Hasina was also mortified and had to use a 'safe exit door' to leave the airport.
Shimul Chowdhury
One-mail

Communicative English

He is right in saying it is amazing what high grades in English tests and examinations can be gained by those who go out into the world tongue-tied when it comes to speaking the language - but then I have come across English MA's of whom the same can be said! However, how hard it would be to find an incorruptible way of testing speaking ability, considering what has happened to writing ability! In many schools, corrupt systems have evolved via memorised questions and answers and even whole essays learnt by heart - never name copying - all enabled by 'helpful' big brothers, sisters, parents and Private Tutors - and the notorious grammar books and their ilk. Such books, and people, enable some students to achieve what they consider their prime aim - how to get a good mark in the next English test, usually by finding a way in which words can flow from the pen to the paper without, at any point, needing to go through the brain. I have even known parents who, in accusing tones, call 'UNSEEN!' any questions in tests that are not identical to the ones that can be memorised from the student's exercise book or, as it is universally, and inaccurately, called here, their 'copy' - an

unfortunate reflection on how it is often used. Teachers, sadly, are often fully aware of the cheating 'games' that are being played but permit them as if they stand in the way of the short-term aims of such pupils and their parents, complaints may be made to Management and they could lose their jobs. Thus the failure of firm and fair discipline to purify the system and the attitudes and practices in it perpetuate the mess that schools can get into. Giggling and saying, "This is how we do things in Bangladesh and we can't do anything about it," may be factual but it is still an insult. You see, the main problem with English in Bangladesh is surely not the lack of people who can speak English but the shortage of people who can write it! Many are those who can confidently (but usually inaccurately) chatter away but ask them to write anything down and see them disappear...!

In how many businesses is the memo pad never used? In how many businesses are there no pigeonholes for certain employees into which memos can be placed? In how many businesses these days do those who answer the phone never have a letter pad and pen beside them and refuse to take responsibility for taking a message and passing it on but just demand that the caller rings back - when the caller may be a customer who is much busier than they are? In how many businesses, of all kinds, are meetings held with no agendas and no minutes (nor any concept of what these are) and so every meeting is the repeat

of what you discussed last time and you never get anywhere? Who could fail to profit by reading the minutes of a meeting and noting who has said they will do what - and who said something that made a lot of sense? Furthermore, they are the record of the meeting if anyone tries to deny what happened. How many bosses train their secretaries to be Minutes Secretaries?

When even senior managers dare not write a letter in English - or even a memo - for fear of showing up their bad English, then the impact on employees - and on competency - must surely be considerable. How many people are getting degrees in Management, Business Studies, etc. when they have never been tested on their ability to express themselves in English - to draw up a document or write a letter on any difficult or complicated issue? The advent of the mobile, rather than the written word, as the prime tool of management, is surely part of the problem and not part of the solution for good business practice. The issue of how a few people read English for enjoyment and profit is also desperately sad but the really worrying thing for digital Bangladesh is surely how a few people are being made to write it. More people should surely have the courage to say both to those 'above' them and those 'below' - smiling sweetly, of course - "May I have that in writing?"
Angela Robinson
Gulshan, Dhaka

Set up new gas pipelines



PHOTO: WRITER

On September 10th, I, along with two of my friends, was walking through S.M. Maleh Road at Narayanganj in the morning. Suddenly, we got a smell of natural gas. After a while, we discovered that it was coming out of the drain beside the road. Within an hour, we found the same condition in Kutipara road, Nayamati road and Loyal Tank road. It was the day before Eid, so we were just wondering what would happen if anybody would throw a burning cigarette on the road? Our surmise was correct, that at 10.25pm of the same day when we were gossiping on that road, all on a sudden there was something aflame on the road and it was a burning piece of cigarette. The fire spread quickly. After 15-20 minutes, people from local fire service station came and extinguished it.

It is a matter of great regret that still now no action has been taken by the authorities concerned to repair the pipeline. While the whole nation is suffering from gas crisis, industrial and household activities are being hampered, this type of incident represents nothing but the apathy of the authorities. Finally, I would like to draw the attention of appropriate authorities to take immediate steps by replacing the old pipelines with a new one, because repair may not be enough and the same accident may happen again. Any time there may be massive conflagration endangering the lives of thousands of people. The people of Narayanganj have been suffering from acute gas crisis during the last six months. People get gas only for 4-5 hours a day between 12 and 5 am.

So, without further delay the government should take necessary measures to solve gas crisis and let the people lead their normal life.

Satyajit Saha
Tanbazar, Narayanganj