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## Golden jubilee spree

Last week, we all observed that a number of educational institutions celebrated their golden jubilee programmes in a row, where in some cases our Prime Minister attended as chief guest. Residential Model School & College, Adamjee Cantonment School & College and BAF Shaheen School & College are to name a few. These celebrations reminded us of our glorious past and reunited our long bonds of mutual friendship. These programmes have tremendous effects on our cultural heritage, where the new accepts the old and embraces the warmth of love.

Residential Model School and College and Adamjee Cantonment School & College deserve appreciation for carrying forward this core concept of 'Reunion,' but unfortunately, BAF Shaheen School & College tremendously failed to convey the message of bond between the Old and the New as they did not let the existing students participate even after registering! The authorities broke the hearts of the students for no genuine cause.

**An aggrieved guardian**  
On e-mail

## OMS of rice

A news has been published in the local dailies that the government has started OMS of rice from 25th December 2010 at 37 points in the capital and will begin operation in Narayanganj, Savar and Gazipur soon. This programme has started at a time when the lower income group cannot afford to buy even coarse rice due to price hike. Rice is being sold at Tk. 24 per kilogram under this programme.

In the previous phases of this programme, there were many complaints about the quality of rice and adultery in weighing process. We hope the authorities concerned will take corrective measures. The people who are involved with this programme should not treat this as a mere profit making business, because the objective of this

operation is to serve poor people. The queue should be maintained with discipline. The old women and children in the line should be attended properly.

However, I would like to request the authorities concerned to start OMS of rice in all districts.

**Mobarak Ali**  
RK Mission Road  
Gopibagh, Dhaka

## Local software

With reference to the article entitled "Local banking software lags behind" published in The Daily Star on December 22, 2010, I wish to mention that we are a local company providing core banking software and other banking solutions to the local market. We were surprised that as local banking software you specifically singled out Leads Corporation's BankUltimus software. You must be aware that there are many other local banking softwares in the market. Our core banking solutions Stelar, online Islamic banking software Hikmah, Orbits and e-MICR are running in 6 local banks. These are comparable to any foreign software and have all modern delivery channels like internet banking, mobile banking, tele-banking, Kiosk etc. In addition, we have the only software in the market having the Basel II module so urgently required by local banks. Our user banks are the first in Bangladesh to submit automated Basel II report to the central bank.

We also felt sorry reading the statement "the local software houses are failing to cash in on the booming automation market, which is partly blamed on the mindset of the banking industry as well as a lack of apt marketing of the homegrown IT companies."

We only need patronage from the brave-hearted individuals in the banking sector to further establish our software locally and globally.

**Asif Murad Choudhury**  
General Manager  
ERA Infotech Ltd.  
Dhaka

# Helping the poor



RAJ ANIKAT / DRIKNEWS

To view an Indian film actor from a distance, a lot of people spent money recently, totaling a tidy cash! How much of it was paid to the rich actor, I do not know. However, the sad fact is that while we spend money to see someone in three dimensions from far, we do not collectively donate money to help out a needy person, or enable a poor family to buy a rickshaw for earning or put a roof over their head!

A news item published on December 22, 2010 however, provided a very useful

news about an industrial group that has started giving interest free microcredit loan to needy enterprising people to enable them to improve their lot!

This is an excellent idea and I deeply appreciate the initiative taken by them and their magnanimity.

This is an excellent example of a novel idea, and we need many more such people who have taken this excellent initiative to help the capable but needy people, who given such support can develop themselves. This endeavour deserves widespread

recognition, appreciation and publicity, so that many such groups can be developed, and more families helped to come out of poverty.

It is our moral obligation and religious duty to help the needy in whatever way possible. We should learn more about this interest free microcredit idea that has just been launched. More information on the matter from our dailies will be very welcome!

**S.A. Mansoor**  
Dhaka

# Restrictions on private cars



STAR

The finance minister's recent statement disturbed me much. He claimed that he knew who were behind the recent stock market turmoil. Why didn't he take action against those so-called perpetrators? In another statement, while referring to his strategy for tackling the prevailing traffic jam, he opined that the government would restrict private cars to ply unless four or five persons ride on it. How utterly disappointing! Suppose, I along with my colleagues or friends or family members have to go somewhere and my driver has to return home driving alone, would the traffic police stop my driver, as the seats are empty?

I lived and worked in the UK for eleven years and had always used public transportation for commuting. It was merely in the weekends that I had

to take my Audi out while traveling to friends or dropping at local Safeway for shopping. And parking was not free at all and we never complained.

Now could the finance minister not come up with some innovative projects where he could perhaps outsource the building of parking spaces or draw lines in the streets with metered parking? The same could be built in the residential areas where only residents can park their cars and visitors can park on the streets on designated parking areas at a cost. These initiatives could make people more despondent in taking their vehicles out as they would incur costs, and even if they do, the government could make some revenue.

**Muhammad H. Kafi**  
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

## Migratory birds

Migratory birds flying in the open sky and swimming in the lakes of Jahangirnagar University is a common scene in winter. But this winter the guest birds did not arrive in time. They arrived at the campus in mid-December, five to six weeks later than their normal time of arrival. Normally, they arrive at the campus in November and stay till March.

The migratory birds started coming to JU since 1986 because of the nice environment and the JU authorities declared the campus safe abode for migratory birds. But recently, cutting down trees in a large scale without caring about the natural balance of the campus and commercial fish farming in the lakes have harmed the environment.

The Zoology department's yearly statistical report shows that the number of migratory birds is increasing every year. In 1990, 78 species of birds were identified, 133 species were seen in 2007, 144 species in 2008, 176 in 2009 and 186 in 2010. Of the birds, some 74

species now live in the campus permanently and breed.

Every year the guest birds come to JU from the cold regions of the world including Xinzian, Siberia, Greenland and India. More than two thousand birds including Khanjna, Porchard, Jalpipi, Chamot thuti, Sharali, Gargeni, Lenza and Shouvlr come here to amaze the spectators.

**Mithun Dip**  
Dept. of IR  
Jahangirnagar University

## Safe work environment

The RMG sector of Bangladesh has become a prominent player in the economy within a short period of time. The industry has contributed to export earnings, foreign exchange earnings, employment creation, poverty alleviation and the empowerment of women. During the last fiscal year, this sector's total export was worth \$9.2 billion. In the context of Bangladesh's total export, RMG sector's

contribution is approximately 76%.

But this sector has been heavily criticised because of the poor working conditions. Artificial lighting and poor natural lighting condition produce an intolerably hot work environment in most garment factories. In our country there is no consideration about the design which is very important.

On the other hand, like many other developing countries, occupational health is still a neglected area in Bangladesh. A very few industry managements are concerned about the work place environment and the workers' health. They do not pay any attention to the work place injuries and sicknesses. The workers bear the sole responsibility of their health and safety.

To ensure sustainable economic and social development, the factory owners and managements must take responsibilities. Any development will be meaningless if the poor workers do not have any share of it.

**Sajal Chowdhury**  
Architect & Lecturer (CUET)

# Quality of higher education



BAYAZID AKTER / DRIKNEWS

This refers to an international conference held at Dhaka University last week where the participants stressed the need for improving the contents and teaching methods. They emphasized the need for promoting the research works through collaboration between the professionals in the international arena. The world around us has changed dramatically. But our higher education continues to operate in the old policy frame.

There is a need for a major paradigm shift in this sector which would not happen with small incremental and unrelated changes here and there. The improvement in the

quality of education requires modernization of the system physical infrastructure, intellectual resources, quality of teachers and pedagogical practices. This needs a large-scale investment.

In order to impart a democratic character, the primary requirement is adequate number of institutions, particularly in the rural areas. A matter of worry among educationists appears to be the declining quality of higher education. It is no secret that curricula have almost remained unchanged for decades, have not kept pace with the times, let alone with the extending frontiers of knowledge.

If an egalitarian society is to be realised, as envisioned in the constitution, the state has to intervene in a more decisive manner to control the private agencies to ensure a system of education informed by social justice and equity. In fact, they are the core values that education should uphold.

Despite possible resistance from vested interests, both academic and entrepreneurial, the state has to chart out a new path that would usher in a modern system which is secular in content, democratic in practice and interdisciplinary in method.

**Gopal Sengupta**  
Canada

# USAID's achievement in 2010

Recently the Science Magazine named USAID-funded HIV Research as one of the top 10 breakthroughs of 2010. The USAID-funded research on HIV has produced the first-ever proof of the concept that a microbicide can effectively and safely reduce HIV transmission in women.

In modern days, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has emerged as a serious life threatening disease for the human beings. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) deserves our appreciation for its achievement in Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) research. Meanwhile it is sincerely expected that the USAID's noble efforts would be successful in



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discovering an accurate treatment for AIDS very soon!

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