



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

# Relocate the tanneries

I live near Hazaribagh Government Leather College, Dhaka. We cannot sleep well at night because of the noise coming from the tanneries. The noise becomes louder at dead of night. About 90 percent tanneries of the country are located at Hazaribagh. So nobody wants to stay here. Even the tannery owners do not live in the area.

Re-used chemicals from the big factories are being used by the small factories which is more dangerous for the workers as well as for the environment. The most dangerous chemicals used in the tanneries are Manganese, Chromium, Sulfur, Lead, and Copper.

These chemicals damage lungs and cause respiratory diseases such as asthma and bronchitis. These toxic substances also damage our eyes and the nervous system. Toxic wastes are thrown here and there on the roads and get washed away when it rains. They block the sewerage system and flood the roads and pavements.

We are the citizens of an independent country. We pay taxes. We abide by the rules of the country. Then why should we suffer? I would like to draw the kind attention of the prime minister regarding shifting the tanneries from this area as soon as possible.

M.H.I. Khan  
Hazaribagh, Dhaka

## BCL leaders' attempted rape

I was worried to learn the news of an attempted rape by two top leaders of BCL in Satkhira recently. Many a time, the leaders of BCL in different institutions committed this kind of heinous crime. In most cases, the culprits went away unpunished. The BCL is embarrassing the present government repeatedly. We know that our PM has special feelings for our women and children. She is also vocal against repression on women. But it surprises us when we hear that after such a barbaric incident, the BCL committee of the district concerned has been dissolved only. Is that the punishment for a crime like rape?

Dr. Md. Zahid Hussain  
Consultant  
Shahid Sk. Abu Naser Specialised Hospital  
Khulna

## Making students e-textbook savvy

It is commonly believed that digital or e-textbooks would significantly lower the cost of pursuing education. But a recent study at the Daytona State College, Florida, United States found a quite different result! Students who purchased e-textbooks could save only one dollar compared to those who purchased traditional printed materials. The study however identified some problems on the way to using e-textbooks which include lack of necessary computing skill on the part of the students and often faculties, difficulties in opening digital course materials during lectures, etc.

Meanwhile, experts are hopeful that through training and proper pricing, e-textbooks would soon replace the traditional printed textbooks.

Prof. M Zahidul Haque  
Dean, Faculty of Agriculture  
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University

# We need cautious optimists

Depending upon the lens through which one analyses Bangladesh's current economic development, anyone will arrive at different conclusions. This is similar to the parable of four blind men who conclude differently as they touch different parts of an elephant's body. The one touching the tail compares the animal with a rope, the one feeling the trunk thinks it to be a snake, while the one touching the body decides that it must be like a wall. Like the blind, we also miss the big picture if we fail to recognise the different lenses and conclusions. At one extreme are the optimists who embrace free trade, free markets, liberalisation, and privatisation.

Bangladesh needs leaders and policymakers who can see the whole picture at the same time. They have to be cautious optimists. Extremism has made things worse. Extreme optimism has led to a serious backlash that can put economic development on hold. Extreme pessimistic view has maintained the status quo of poverty and desperation. Cautious optimists recognise that inclusive economic development, managed liberalisation and global trade are necessary steps to have sustainable progress. Foreign capital and technology are necessary to create jobs, become efficient, and compete effectively. Cautious optimists recognise that meaningful development cannot be achieved without broad-based investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare.

However, the rich needs to be sensitive and compassionate. They have a greater opportunity to make a difference in the society. We must engage different viewpoints and temper extreme views for a meaningful development. We need cautious optimists to move ahead.

Gopal Sengupta  
Canada



## Why make OSDs?

Byron's last page report in your January 7th issue defines OSDs as those who are officially called as Officers on Special Duty, which many jokingly refer to as 'Officers Searching a Desk'! However, there is contradiction in the report. In the first paragraph, it is stated that OSDs "are considered to be in a state of punishment"! This naturally pre-supposes that some fault or mistake has been committed by the officer. In contrast, in the eighth paragraph, officials from the public administration say that "civil servants are made OSDs mainly for two reasons - they get promoted but are not given any posting and for political reasons"! It adds that "these officers get full pay and all fringe benefits, including official vehicles where due." This therefore precludes any state of punishment! Although no statistics are available, it is estimated that the government spends several crore taka a month on OSDs! Assuming that it is ten crore taka a month, it comes to hundred and twenty crore taka every year, spent for "no work with all pay"! In contrast, low paid workers in the production sector work on "no work no pay basis"! Is it not a gross injustice? If OSDs are being made as a measure of punishment, then government should consider reducing their earned leave by half the number of days they are posted as OSDs. This can be adjusted against their usually large accumulated leave during payment of final dues at the time of retirement. That will have at least some monetary effect of the punitive measure taken.

S.A. Mansoor, Dhaka

## Ridding the nation of graft

I was undergoing a three-day training programme at the local Mazda Dealership with a view to becoming a professional sales person. On the second day our trainer, a veteran sales person, during midday recess, inquired who parked his car at the place designated for the customers. I replied that it was me. Then he asked me to remove the car and park it on the alleyway adjacent to the Mazda Dealership during the next break.

I complied with his request and parked my car in the alleyway adjacent to the Dealership but in the wrong direction. As ill luck would have it, a cop turned up and found my car parked in the wrong direction. After the training, I came out of the Dealership and found a ticket on the windshield of my car. I was found to be guilty of parking my car in the wrong direction and was made to pay a fine of forty dollars by a check payable to the City of Houston.

The citation stipulates, if I fail to pay the fine within the specified time limit, my car would be booted, which left me with no choice but to comply with. If anything like this would have happened back in my hometown Dhaka, I would have definitely tried to bribe the cop and get out of the undesirable situation. Now I do feel that things need to be changed for the greater interest of the nation. How about rescuing the nation from the curse of graft?

Saleh M Ayub

# Dangerous trends in the economy



PHOTO: STAR

Inflation rate in Bangladesh is now prevailing at a double digit figure, approximately twelve percent. Inflation rate is considered one of the most important macro-economic indicators. Bangladesh's economy is at its worse at this moment. There are scores of reasons for rising inflation such as, demand-supply gap, poor monetary policy, lack of proper government regulations and policy decisions, excessive expenditures on non-productive sectors, import-export imbalances, etc. Inflation contributes to the loss of purchasing power, decrease in real income and a prolonged negative impact on investment. Given that we have twelve percent inflation rate till date, our savings rate remains somewhere around twelve percent or below. Now consider its consequences. We invest in different savings instruments with the sole objective of a good return whereas we end up with fewer amounts compared to what we had before in real terms! This is a nightmarish situation for any economy that exhibits a very dangerous trait if we consider the market dynamics such as multiplier effect, people's expectations, and demand-supply equilibrium. It is hard to survive in such a situation where people are struggling to obtain their basic needs. Hence, it demands drastic measures on the part of the policy makers.

Mohammad Anisuzzaman Sarker  
Management Trainee Officer  
Mutual Trust Bank Limited

Kamal Ahmed Majumder, who assaulted a female journalist recently, is known for terrorizing people who dare to speak against him using his goons. He is the president of the management committee of the reputed Monipur High School & College and is allegedly stealing money from the funds of the institution.

Already annoyed at the mismanagement of the school, I have further learnt that he was using the innocent children of the school for conducting his political propaganda. My younger brother, a student of Branch-1 of the school, was forced to attend a human chain, formed to protest what Kamal Majumder termed 'conspiracy' to ruin his reputation, along with many of his classmates in the scorching sun for two hours without any food or drink! When the television cameras arrived, the students were forced to speak in favour of Kamal Majumder. Not only were these acts morally wrong, the students unwilling to participate were threatened with corporal punishment, which itself is illegal!

I understand that the teachers who forced the students into such acts were themselves forced to follow the orders from upper quarters in order to save their jobs. I am gravely worried about the future of the school.

Khaled Mohammed  
Ex-student  
Monipur High School & College  
Dhaka

## READERS respond

*Here are some comments that came in response to Tuesday's The Daily Star news report headlined "JU student killed in BCL infighting"*

### A concerned guardian

How many more young and valuable lives will be lost by this madness of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL)? The BCL men involved in this murder should be punished.

### Amdem

This is very sad. We have been talking about the violent activities of BCL for a long time. I think it is time to do something about the BCL activists. Students come to a university for study, not to get killed.

I think issuing warnings to them will not work. It did not work in the last three years. If the government cares about the young generation of the country, student politics in educational institutions should be banned immediately. Enough is enough.

### Zerosopher

Student politics should be banned in all educational institutions because the real principles of politics are not followed by the students involved in it.

### Anonymous

Three students were expelled from the university for only one year. Whose interest is the VC serving?

### Sujon

These boys will be the future ministers if people do not boycott them right now.

### M. Shafiqul Alam

Student politics has taken an ugly shape in recent years. Pundits favouring student politics must come up with tangible proposals to tame the unruly student leaders and guide them properly. This nation can not afford to squander time and money on violence-riddled campuses. On the other hand, only worthy professionals should be groomed there. The potential of our bright boys should not be misused further.

### Shohely

These meritorious students must hate this kind of politics. They'll not gain anything from it. They should think about this before entering politics.

### Anonymous

BCL, the second well-armed gang after police, is practicing war game among themselves because a real battle is awaiting them. The PM will not feel the agony of Zubair.

### An ex-student

When I was a student of JU, I witnessed many clashes between Bangladesh Chhatra League and Bangladesh Chhatra Dal cadres and between the factions of BCL and BCD. But no student was killed, as far as I can remember. But things are getting much worse now. Now the BCL cadres dare to kill a student in broad daylight! What a shame for the university and the ruling Awami League!

### Reaz Hassan

I sincerely pray for the salvation of his departed soul. May Allah give his parents and members of

# Kamal Majumder's excesses



PHOTO: PATASH KHAN