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Child deaths from drowning



S SARWAR / DRINKNEWS

A recent UNICEF report, published in this daily, says that more children drown than die of diseases like measles, polio, whooping cough, tetanus, diphtheria and tuberculosis in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand. One of every four children between one and four years dies from drowning in these countries.

However, drowning-related death among children in Bangladesh has also remained undetected as a significant health issue, though this is emerging as a leading cause of death for children. In fact, the actual death toll from drowning is higher in Bangladesh than reported because children dying in this way are not taken to health facilities whereas the figures published in the media rely on reports from hospitals and health facilities.

Anyway, most of such deaths are preventable, as they tend to occur within 20 metres of the home, when unsupervised children stray and fall into local water bodies.

Of course, adequate supervision is the only way to stop child drowning. In addition, a report says that deaths among children aged four years and older could be reduced by 90 percent just through giving them swimming lesson.

We, therefore, hope that the local government authorities would take the matter seriously and encourage the local entrepreneurs to establish ample crèches as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the villages for the children of working mothers. We urge the authorities concerned to do the needful for creating public awareness in the villages before the coming rainy season when more children gets drowned than in any other season.

Mobarak Ali
RK Mission Road, Gopibagh, Dhaka

Corruption the evil

Just a few weeks ago the US Ambassador in Dhaka attended a business function organised by the elite business groups in Dhaka. While he was talking to the businessmen he cited a few reasons why the foreign investors are not interested to come and invest in Bangladesh. Among others he mentioned reasons like shortage of energy supply, insufficient infrastructure, bureaucratic red-tapism, political instability, frequent hartals and most importantly corruption. Except corruption and political instability, all other reasons that can be addressed if the government seriously wants it. But corruption is an incurable disease which is deeply rooted in every spheres of our life. The very people who are responsible to curb corruption are themselves corrupt.

The foreign investors need to follow some formalities before their entry into the country with funds. Instead of getting spontaneous assistance from the departments concerned, they get a long list of requirements to be met before coming to Bangladesh. The intending investors feel discouraged when they fail to meet the requirements including anticipatory extra costs.

In Bangladesh teachers sell question papers, religious gurus sell dua for money, businessmen grab public lands, bureaucrats keep files under tables for months, judges pronounce date after date to hear a case, politicians take politics as business and so on. Even our intellectuals join politics after their retirement or become writers who write in favour of the politicians they support. There is only One who can help us-- the Almighty.

Shafiqul Islam
On e-mail

Pedestrians must follow traffic rules

I have regularly seen at Gulshan First Circle that pedestrians cross the road defying traffic signal! Is this deliberate, or are all pedestrians illiterate? They deliberately walk across the stream of moving vehicles when the traffic light is not green! This results in the moving vehicles being forced to stop in the middle of the crossroad, causing unnecessary traffic foul-up. This is the result of the people deliberately violating traffic rules on busy crossings at their whim, illegally exercising their 'right of way' and disregarding traffic laws!

This has to stop; and the only way it can be stopped is for the traffic police to arrest all violators of traffic laws, and fine or put them behind bars, as needed! Without such harsh steps, I believe, our people will not learn. Groups of traffic policemen may be deployed at different such busy four-way crossings, to make the errant pedestrians learn and respect traffic rules.

If necessary, such programme may be preceded by a few days of audio visual and print display of the need to observe traffic laws, in the overall interest of safety of pedestrians. Surprisingly, despite such thoughtless ways the people violate traffic rules, serious accidents due to such violation has been few and far between!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka



A.M.AHAD / DRINKNEWS

AL should not hoodwink the people

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on May 26, 2012 said that the next general election would be held in a free, fair and neutral manner and as an example she pointed out that Awami League (AL) had arranged 5175 elections including 12 by-elections and polls to city corporations, municipalities and union parishads in a free, fair and neutral manner. She asked why the next general election cannot be held in a similar manner.

Prime Minister, other ministers and leaders of the AL are constantly reminding us about their success in holding these elections forgetting that the general election cannot be compared with the above mentioned elections. We have become tired of hearing her success story again and again. People have their own assumption about the elections; they think that AL should allow elections run on their own course so that the opposition may not have any objection against the next general election.

Therefore, the government must realise that caretaker government is not only the demand of the opposition, it is also the demand of the people.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Brutal attack on photojournalists

Journalists play a pivotal role in building the conscience of the nation. All over the world they are treated with respect but Bangladesh is an exception in this regard. In our country journalists usually face much obstruction in their professional life and they often experience oppressive treatment by the government.

The recent attack on three photojournalists by the police was really barbaric. This behaviour of the police force is also a threat to democracy.

It is sad to notice that almost no action is taken against the police whenever they attack the journalists. Only closing and suspending the police personnel for some months are not enough to prevent such type of inhuman attack by the police.

It is the duty of the state to prevent the recurrence of such brutal incidents. We demand exemplary punishment of those policemen for the sake of democracy and freedom of media.

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PHOTO: STAR

On this Environment Day

5th June is going to be observed as the World Environment Day. Many organisations and clubs will probably bring out processions and arrange different programmes to observe this day but how about we take some personal initiatives this year? Let's plant a tree from each household and take care of it for the next one year. We don't have to choose 5th June as our only day to be environment conscious persons, we can plant trees anytime during this month or this monsoon for that matter. These small actions at individual level will hopefully return huge revenues in the future.

Shahriar Kabir
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Friend or foe?

Police are known to be friends of people. People do have respect for their work. But it is a matter of great regret that quite often the members of police are found to abuse people. Of late, three photojournalists of a national daily were severely beaten up by some members of police without any apparent reason. Such occurrences are not isolated. Very often we go through this kind of situation. The major task of the police force is to implement the executive orders of the government properly, not to misuse the power given to them. However, it should also be a major concern of the government to provide more facilities and better environment for the police so that they get the inspiration to work for people's good. But the guilty policemen should not be shown any favour. We want their severe punishment.

Khondoker Rezwan Tanvir
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Gardening book by Michelle Obama

Launching of US First Lady Michelle Obama's first book titled "American Grown: The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens across America" has created immense sensation and interest among the Americans and people around the world. A non-political masterpiece, the book is a technical guide on kitchen gardening. Socially conscious Michelle is committed to ensuring social welfare. Her book contains so many tips on growing backyard fruits and vegetables and how to engage children in gardening pursuit so that they can work and exercise in gardens which will also help in combating child obesity, number one health problem in America.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation of US First Lady Michelle Obama for her book which will not only encourage Americans to do backyard gardening but people all over the world including Bangladeshis. Because, kitchen gardening is not only a hobby but a source of nutrition and extra income. I wish wide circulation of the book.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Dean
Faculty of Agriculture
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Sunday's The Daily Star news report headlined "Media absolutely free"

Anonymous
The fate of Sagar-Runi tells the whole truth.

Probashi
Should we laugh, or cry?

Saidul Islam
Journalists Sagar and Runi were killed brutally. Prothom Alo photojournalists were assaulted in the capital by the police. So, how are journalists free?

Dr Islam
Our PM's observation about media is unfortunate. Constructive criticism is very important for democracy and proper running of the government. Blaming the journalists and denying the reality will not help anyone.

Anonymous
Everybody knows what is happening around us. Government hides lots of information and does not allow the press to publish some reports. But people have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Nasirullah Mridha, USA
If the media is free then why are the media persons subjected to torture and harassment by the police when they are on their duty? According to Hasina's speech, the country is now a paradise of happiness.

A Rahman
Let the people judge and express their opinion about the claim of the PM. After all, the PM always claims to be working for the people.

Mohammad Nurul Hoque, Malaysia
Criticism will give direction to the government. It works as a real adviser.

Jay
PM has said that her government has not curbed media freedom, but we are observing otherwise, that journalists are being murdered and attacked. I wonder whose interest is being served by attacking the media. However, I am so delighted that the AL is working for the welfare of the common people! The rice that I have grown has no value; the price of daily essentials is skyrocketing. So, where have the pledges of AL gone which were meant to support the common people.

Sraju
Yes, Honourable Prime Minister, your government is doing whatever it can to improve the quality of life of the village people. Besides, there are so many good and positive things that we are proud of and it's true that most of the journalists do not write about these positive things. The reason why they do not write about positive things is that people expect more development, less politicisation, improved law and order, respect for the opposition by the ruling party, controlled Chhatra League, ministers to refrain from saying con-



PHOTO: WRITER

Shops eating up pavement!

This photo was taken in the last week of May 2012 which shows how the shops at Gulshan-2 area are grabbing the pavements and as a result the pedestrians are forced to walk on the main road choking the room for the vehicles which contributes to traffic jam. I wonder how this is happening at the VIP zone of the capital city where all the foreign missions have their offices. Who should we blame -- the police or the city corporation? Don't the chancery head of police as well as the city corporation of this part see this nuisance that is jeopardising our image at the hub of chancery? Is it very hard to seize all the stuff of these shops and give them exemplary punishment like huge monetary penalty or seven days' rigorous imprisonment? What is needed is a firm decision and its quick implementation. And that may give the pedestrians their pavement back and help ease traffic congestion.

Khandaker Zia Hasan
Communication trainer & freelance journalist