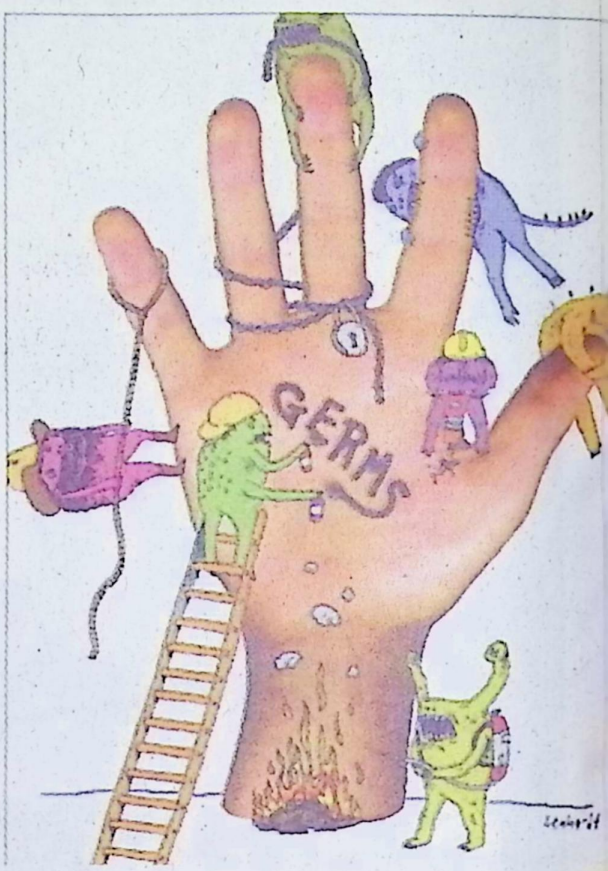
A Simple Life-Saving Practice

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Most of us agree that *'cleanliness is next to godliness'* and proper hygienic practices are essential to the wellbeing of not only ourselves but that of others. Yet some of the hospitals, medical centres and even doctors' surgeries in Bangladesh appear to agree only in principle.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Badda General Hospital, Dhaka Medical Hospital, LabAid in Gulshan, Popular Diagnostic Centre in Dhanmondi all of these popular medical establishments et al that I have visited over the years have one thing in common: there is no soap to be found in their washrooms.

And you dare not dry your hands on the filthy towels (if any) in fear of awakening and annoying the highly-dense population of disease-carrying bacteria that inhabits them.

People take diseases to hospitals to be cured of them, not to adopt more and take them home!

Appallingly, the very establishments that ought to be teaching good and proper hygiene practices by example do the exact opposite.

If hospitals, diagnostic centres, doctor surgeries, and such cannot set this simple example in hygiene, what does it say for them? What does it say for all the other medical services they provide? Perhaps that is one of the reasons why Bangladeshi politicians, and people with money, are continuously leap-frogging over each other to get their required medical service in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

If you visit any hospital or medical centre in Bangladesh for any reason, go prepared by taking your own soap and tissues or a cloth to dry your hands, as a precaution.

Giving credit where it's due, Apollo, United and Karamtola Christian Hospital all deserve a pat on the back for their hygiene practices and their washrooms are void of the all-too-common putrid 'knock-me-over' smells.

The washrooms at most government offices leave a lot to be desired. They all show appalling disregard for hygiene and for the people who use their facilities. In their defense they say staff and people who use the washrooms steal the soap, but even if they do, that's still a weak excuse.

The loss of a bar of soap is much cheaper than the employee taking a day, a week (or longer) off from work through illness or spreading a disease like wildfire among his/her colleagues resulting in incalculable work hours lost.

Countless people suffer unnecessarily in Bangladesh from diarrhoea, dysentery and other stomach ailments as a result of ignorance and improper hygiene practices. And if hospitals and suchlike are not setting a good example, what can you expect from Greasy Joe's fly-infested food stall (usually next to an open sewage) in Dhaka's side streets?

It's time for Bangladesh to stop the rot in bad hygiene practices before the rot stops us.

A plethora of dangers to our health, unseen by the naked eye, lurks silently and menacingly in our everyday environment, continuously threatening our health.

It is common knowledge that hand hygiene is of vital importance for the overall wellbeing of society and washing our hands is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.

Washing our hands regularly with soap and clean running water (hot or cold doesn't matter)