

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

Have we done enough to address the problem of drug abuse?

THE OVERTON WINDOW



ERESH OMAR JAMAL

ON May 27, The Daily Star reported that detectives had claimed to have seized LSD, an extremely potent hallucinogenic drug...

how LSD has been smuggled into Bangladesh from the Netherlands since 2017 using the government's postal service.

A number of reports have recently come out on this topic, mostly due to the much-publicised death of a university student who allegedly killed himself under the influence of LSD.

This series of events perfectly describes the main problem when it comes to drug abuse. We as a society often say that the best solution to drug abuse is greater awareness.

The theme of this year's International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is "Share Facts On Drugs, Save Lives", which aims at promoting and sharing the realities on drugs.

Well, here are some facts: According to data from the Department of Narcotics Control, total seizures of yaba pills in Bangladesh went from being 36,543 in 2008 to 812,716 in 2010...

been said, both officially and unofficially, that other deadly drugs such as cocaine, ice and LSD (recently confirmed by law enforcers) have also started to enter into the country.

Due to the lack of data, the number of drug addicts in Bangladesh continues to remain unknown. However, estimates (that are somewhat outdated) range from 100,000 to 4 million.

The fact that this has happened is quite revealing. It reveals something very important about the demand side of the drug problem: that drug use is fuelled largely by various social factors such as poverty, isolation from friends and family, loneliness, desire to escape from stress, peer pressure, etc.

People who are addicted to drugs need empathy and love to overcome their addiction. These are the two most common threads—along with professional help—that can pull them out of the quagmire of addiction.

In Bangladesh, young people tend to become dependent on drugs the most. But what is driving them towards addiction? Alienation, depression, and an inability to relate to community and culture could be some of the reasons—problems that are much bigger than drugs, but are leading towards their usage.

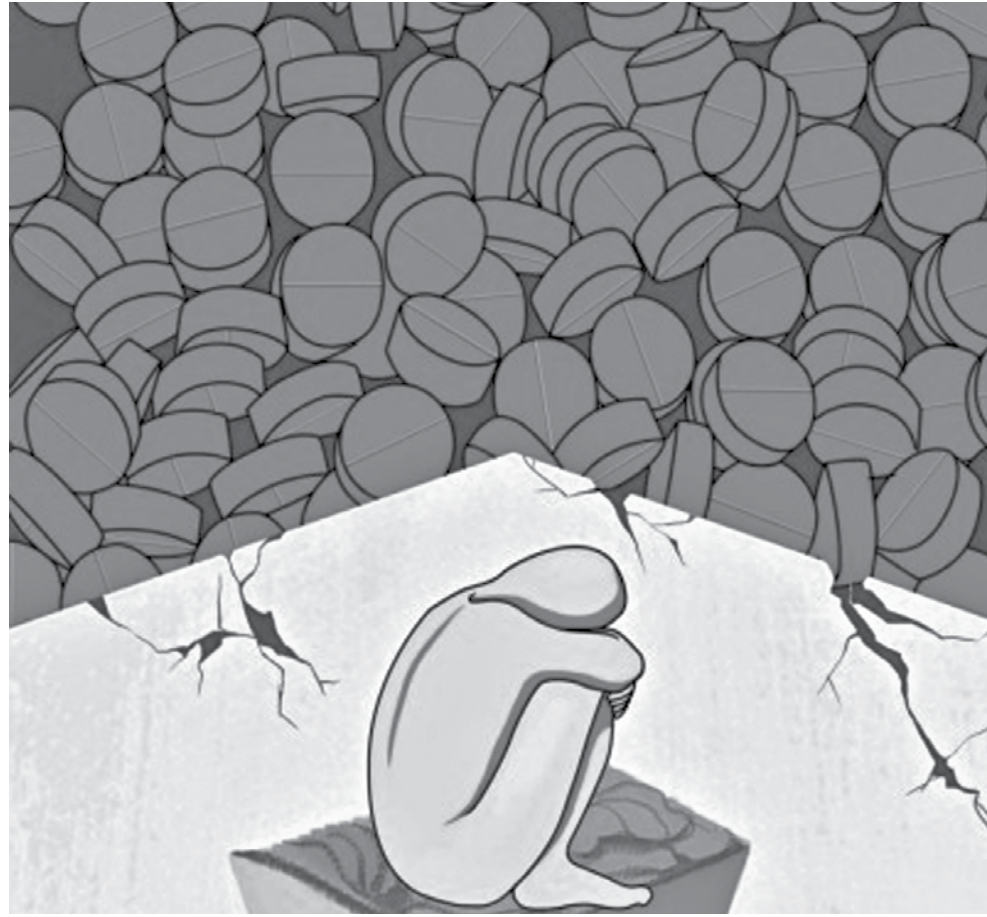


ILLUSTRATION: NAHFIZ JAHAN MONNI

absence of such belief, people tend to get involved in self-harming activities, despite knowing the dangers that these activities pose to their lives.

We have failed to understand the drug problem at a much deeper level than just this, however. For years now, we have seen the government wage its war on drugs, leading to the loss of hundreds of lives and incarceration of small-time dealers and users.

example) wage similar drug wars, but to no avail.

Bangladesh is a country that has always suffered from the curse of poverty. This means that there have always been people desperate enough to become small-time dealers to survive.

The only explanation for such failure is that these masterminds are well-connected

and protected. Consequently, the drug trade is among the most lucrative businesses in the world, meaning that paying off people in power to continue looking the other way happens frequently when it comes to the drug trade.

Nevertheless, if we want the curse of drugs to stop plaguing our youth and our nation, it is something that must be done. The real masterminds behind the supply of drugs must be identified and punished.

The problem of drug use is not a problem exclusive to Bangladesh. Every country around the world has faced it. Some of them have done so successfully, others have not.

Eresh Omar Jamal is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star. His Twitter handle is: @EreshOmarJamal

M Ayubur Rahman Bhuyan: A great scholar and soul

SYED M AHSAN

MUHAMMAD Ayubur Rahman Bhuyan, a long serving faculty member at Dhaka University's economics department (1970-2004), was an outstanding colleague to fellow academics, a dedicated teacher, and an eminent scholar.



M Ayubur Rahman Bhuyan (1938-2021)

His primary field of expertise, springing from his doctoral research, was international trade in all its dimensions. He was perhaps the pioneer in articulating the mutual gains of regional cooperation in trade in the South Asian context.

of liberalisation talks, the latest in its wake, ended unsuccessfully in 2016 after a 14-year attempt as the negotiators failed to bridge the demands of the developing world.

Ayub bhai, as he was fondly known to colleagues and friends, began writing on trade issues with an enormous sweep, starting with the nitty-gritties of export and import demand, exchange control and domestic prices, foreign aid, trade creation

effects of a free trade area—he quickly delved deeply into the larger issues of the economic impact of free-trade agreements (FTAs) and, in particular, the idea of a Customs Union for the South Asian region.

Though trade reforms and policy, foreign aid and economic development had been his core competence, he did venture into the issues of agricultural growth, budgetary process (revenue generation and expenditure priorities), third-world debt crisis, rural-urban migration, environmental and ecological aspects of poverty, sustainable development, and the economic fallout of terrorism.

In the early 1990s, Professor Bhuyan, a man of unwavering faith, became squarely involved in what has come to be known as Islamic Finance and more broadly, Islamic Economics.

Though dedicated to teaching and

scholarship, he did not shy away from sharing in the administrative chores befitting a senior academic. He served, among others, as Chair of the Department of Economics (1983-1987), Director (1987-1990) and later Chair (1994-1997) of the Bureau of Economic Research, University of Dhaka.

Even in "retirement", Professor Bhuyan remained active both in affiliations with some private universities in Dhaka as well as by rendering consulting services for the European Commission on a study of bilateral potential FTA between BGD and India.

Last, though not the least, we note that personal charm, a caring nature, and gentle manners were all hallmarks of his great

personality. These personal qualities were among the first reflections of many of his former colleagues upon hearing the news of the loss. Some quotes are necessary to impart an impression. "He was a gem of a person and always ready to help people who needed it."

While we are all mortal, some of us are lucky enough to leave behind a legacy of knowledge and personal virtues for others that remain. Professor Bhuyan was among such a group of souls who keep on living beyond their time on earth.

Syed M Ahsan is Professor Emeritus, Department of Economics, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

QUOTABLE Quote

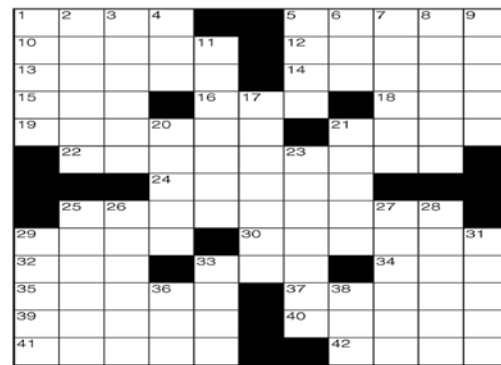


MORIHEI UESHIBA Japanese martial artist (1883-1969)

Your spirit is the true shield.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS 1 Start a hand 5 Rough push 10 Bars on cars 12 Sheets and such 13 "Hush!" 14 Make better 15 Ivy League student 16 Play part 18 Notice 19 "Raging Bull" star 21 Even 22 Cub Scout leader 24 Deceitful 25 One born under the zodiac sign of Cancer 29 Contented sound 30 Ventilate 32 — loss 33 Copier tray abbr. 34 GI-entertaining grp. 35 Scope 37 Singer 40 "Wake Up, Little—" 41 Flight units 42 Patch up DOWN 1 Stunned 2 Driven out 3 Like edelweiss 4 Oahu garland 5 Thin board 6 Yonder fellow 7 Infant outfit 8 Furniture layer 9 Cut off 11 1984 Jeff Bridges film 17 Jazz fan 20 Due to get 21 Belonging to those folks 23 Souvenir shop stack 25 "X-Man" sort 26 Marigold color 27 Lake of Alberta 28 Warren's "Ishtar" coster 29 Louvre location 31 Carried 33 "Why don't we!" 36 Rep.'s org. 38 Mai tai base



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