

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Grameen Phone



We owe due credit to Grameen Phone for revolutionising the communication system all over the country. We know that it was almost impossible to get a telephone connection in this country and sometimes one even have to remain in the waiting list for years. But thanks to Grameen phone. Now we can get a phone-link within two days. It is undoubtedly a great achievement.

Grameen phone have recently reduced call charges on post-paid connections, but for the pre-paid users the charges remained high. And I personally do not support this because I think here the institution is more certain with the money/bill they are getting the money first and then providing the services.

In order to take a more realistic approach we, the subscribers, believe that the Grameen Phone authority should realise that pre-paid

users are paying the total cost in advance, resulting in substantial float of unused part of pre-paid cards; if taken into account which could be substantially large. So we request the GP authority to reduce the pre-paid call charges. This matter certainly deserves sympathetic consideration.

M I Karim
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

I saw in The Daily Star (Saturday, August 16) that Grameen Phone celebrating the day of reaching one million subscribers. Perhaps the only country in the world, Bangladesh, where you can reach such customer base by providing unsatisfactory service. Their mobile connectivity is poor. Between the hour of 5 and 9 in the

evening average try is more than 15 to 20 times when you may finally get through. All because they have perhaps given more connection than the system can take and above all because they have fortunately lamb like customers.

Thank you
M Ahmed
On e-mail

There are four mobile companies in Bangladesh and unfortunately their call charges are very high. But, our adjacent country, in India the call rate of mobile phones is only 50 paisa per minute.

The Grameen Phone has captured our market through providing quality service and other facilities, for example: its network area is larger

than any other company and the reception is also very clear. But sadly, this company is reluctant to reduce its fixed call charges. The founder and owner of Grameen Phone is an honourable and internationally acknowledged person. His intention to alleviate poverty of the rural people through the Grameen Bank is known to all. The whole conception and system of Grameen Bank has already acclaimed fame locally and internationally as a development strategy. Mobile phone service is another social service of Grameen for the people of this poor country. So, I request the Grameen Phone authority, specially the founder, to reduce the call rate of its pre-paid mobile service for the sake of national interest.

Noor Mohammad, Mujib Hall, DU

America may have the biggest stockpile of all weapons, but when it comes to the war of manipulation and lies, the undisputed champion has to be the one and only Israel! Have you noticed how frequently the words "defence" and "security" keeps cropping up in almost everything in Israel?

First Israel illegally occupied Palestine and when Palestinians tried to defend their land, they were killed by Israeli force in the name of "defence". Unarmed children are murdered by Israeli army and when asked for explanation, they say they were attacked and so they defended themselves. Their lunatics hijack Western planes, kill thousands of people and they don't even bother to say "we regret it".

Just like Al Qaida, Israel also has its own terrorist organisation. It is called IDF, which stands for Israel Defence Force (see, there is that "defence" word again!). Just like Al Qaida, IDF also targets unarmed civilians out of pure hatred, racism and extremism. But somehow Al Qaida becomes a terrorist organisation while IDF is considered as a defence force. Israel is now building a great big wall, encircling yet more Palestine's land within. However, this wall is regarded as a "security" wall. Every single Palestinian killed, every single house demolished, every new settlement built; it is all done for defence and security. I wonder if there is any crime in the universe that will ever constitute as an "offence" by Israel.

Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

"Proposal to beef up

short, we have seen this in our own country a year or so ago (with Reporters Sans Frontiers on the minority issue and BBC on the Mymensingh cinema hall bomb blasts, etc.). The present government should realise that it has been the cruel victim of such operations, both during its previous and current terms. It must realise that there are and there have always been forces both within and outside the country to create trouble for the prime minister and her government. Our prime minister must realise that there are both named and unnamed sources and quarters to derail her government. It is interesting to note that these sources and quarters cultivate high-level contacts with the media in strategic cities and capitals in the world. Our experience for the past two years is that there are disinformation plots directed against this government by an organised gang of propagandists. They manufacture lies and fabricate stories to discredit the government.

The question is, how can we counter this negative propaganda? One must concede that the government approaches to counter this negative propaganda has been less inspiring. It has been too insensitive to the issue, to say the least. Perhaps, the government may think that operating such press wings will put a drain on the country's resources. But again, will it be much higher than the cost of negative propaganda that is now being unleashed internationally against the government? Besides, how about the cost of international media isolation? Can we afford it?

In the event, the government decides to open the press wings, it

DCC dustbin plight!

There are many dustbins in the city and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is responsible for cleaning of all these dustbins. Every inhabitant of the city has to tolerate foul smell while passing the dustbins. If any person living in the Dhaka city bothers to look at the nearest dustbin of his area, would be amazed to notice that the replaced dustbins are always placed far away from the original spot. Another disturbing thing is that the dustcarts move without covers in the municipal streets. The mentioned dustbin disarray is harmful to the environment.

I hope that the DCC will change its tradition and do something

language when he held his UN job but did after he quit. What people say while holding positions do matter more than while they do not. We are yet to get such personalities who will resign before telling a lie and/or endorsing a factual deception that they knew. It is unbelievable that after stepping down from their office of profit, persons like Professor Stiglitz or Dr. Blix become knowledgeable all on a sudden.

Sirajul Islam
Pisciculture Housing Society,
Shyamoli, Dhaka

How many Rumis...

This writing is dedicated to the memory of a promising student of

rather a lot of Rumis have committed suicide to make themselves free from such hooligans. I hope the government will pay attention and take stern actions against these miscreants. Our heart-felt solace goes to her family and we are eagerly waiting for an exemplified punishment of the wrong-doers.

ABM Shafiqul Islam
Jahangirnagar University, Savar,
Dhaka

"A personal view"

While reading The Daily Star, the letter "A personal view", published on August 8, caught my attention. The letter was about the movie "Fire", written by Mr. Ali Ahmad Marbrur. Mr. Ali Ahmad's views

husband! The movie clearly shows these two women are not born lesbians, rather they become lesbians because of the traumatic situation created by their husbands. The movie has a ground here. Because neglecting a wife, her rights and desires is a common scenario in the South Asian countries. As the wives remain faithful and loyal usually, husbands often neglect and ignore them and they lead a miserable life.

Again, Mr. Ali Ahmad claims that homosexuality is absolutely prohibited in our religion and society. I am really amazed how a person can say something like that right after watching the film "Waterworld"! As far I can remember, in the movie, there is an explicit scene of the heroine - undressing and later proposing

wanted to depict a complex event. When husbands neglect their wives, their rights and desires; a traumatic situation may evolve and this trauma can even force them to become homosexuals. In addition, homosexuality is not an unsound concept in the twenty-first century.

So I regard showing the film "Fire" is more important than showing the flimsy "Waterworld" as the movie "Fire" has a strong ground and it can raise social awareness of husbands towards their wives. But the social awareness will not be possible as long as people skirt the theme of the movie and shout only about the 'prohibited' homosexuality (let me remind you that 'watching undressed woman' is not prohibited to these persons!).

Shamim
Department of Economics, DU

Learning English

You must know English. That's it. And in this respect although the common public schools have English in their syllabus, people, particularly who are affluent, have a tendency to send their children to expensive English medium schools. In terms of quality education these English mediums are not well ahead, but it is true that a student with an English medium background, in most of the cases, is more fluent in English than a Bengali medium student.

The English medium school culture has its good sides, but at the same time it has created very subtle problems. So, in order to bridge the gap government should take concrete measures to reform our education and provide suitable textbooks on English for general public schools.

Rubab Abdullah
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Who make the laws?

I was really upset by some of the recent decision taken by our democratic government. It seems to me that if you want to make a new law or change a law, there is a "quick and dirty" way. You do not have to talk to any lawmaker. You do not have to talk it in the parliament. All you have to do is get some boys in the streets. Next day the newspapers will write on the *andolonay uttal* campus, and that's all you need. The government

Reply to letters regarding the article on Kamal Das Gupta

Firstly, I thank those who read Das Gupta the legend lives Daily Star on 20 July 2003.

My attention since has been from readers that were printed information on Kamal Das the question about why Kamal in Dhaka leaving Kolkata.

Readers will appreciate that summary of such a vastly sand words [my piece was my objective was to touch upon life, some information about his For instance, Kanan Devi not only sang and acted on ble tunes in films like Jawab [Bangla: Jogajog], Arabian Nights and others, she did not, in her acting career, lip sync to any one else's tunes.

Also, for example, after hearing the inspiring Kadam Kadam Barahe Chal Smt. Sarojini Naidu, then a Congress leader, working closely with Gandhi went on record to say "I could not dream of a better tune than this". This song became the march song for Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's Azad Hind Fouz. So, there could be numerous instances like this, which are still unknown to us.

Kamal Das Gupta used to visit Lahore and Bombay quite regularly during HMV's summer recess and so it is quite possible that he had selected Noorjehan to sing some of his songs for Urdu/Hindi films, as was mentioned in one of the letters.

Kamal Das Gupta's health started deteriorating from the late 50s, which led to my mother Feroza Begum decide at one stage to take charge, and move to Dhaka with the whole family. That was 1967. From then on, at the peak of her career, Feroza Begum looked after Kamal Das Gupta till the day he passed away, and at the same time continued to raise the three children.

Shafin Ahmed
New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka



Kamal Das Gupta

with interest, my article "Kamal on", which appeared in The

drawn particularly to two letters in this newspaper. One with Gupta's work and the other with Das Gupta had come to reside

it is impossible to try to give a successful career in a thou-about that long/short!]. Since different aspects of my father's music had to be left out. [mentioned in one of the letters] Kamal Das Gupta's memor-[Bangla: Shesh Uttar], Hospital

Magnetic train



M Saifur Rahman

I am amazed to read in DS August 11, 2003 that a country like ours, should even consider an expensive, unproven and unreliable system like the magnetic train.

In the 1980's while I was working in the private sector of the UK railway industry, the then state owned British Rail was developing this idea of 'Magnetic Levitation' independently. They did manage to materialise this idea in the form of a 'toy' like coach, which was then commercially sold to Birmingham International Airport, UK and was used to ferry passengers from the terminal building to the aircraft's.

This revolutionary idea of using magnetic levitation, coupled with linear motor propulsion is simple enough, but the technical problems associated with it were not possible to solve at the time. The whole system was highly unreliable. Because the tolerances required for the optimum performances demand constant and expensive mechanical maintenance and at that time it was not easy task from an engineer's point of view.

But the inherent fault at the core of this idea can be summarised by the following comment -- "Magnetic levitation is probably the most expensive way of transporting the least amount of load." -- and as such, unlikely to catch on anywhere in the world except perhaps for certain 'prestigious' projects.

There is no doubt that the country's rambling dilapidated and outmoded transport systems must be replaced soon, but to think about solving that with 'Magnetic Levitation' falls in the same category as that of the drug induced hallucination of Indian Holy men who claim to be able to 'levitate'.

Hazra Mohammed Fazle Awal
C.Eng, MIEE (UK)

I am President and CEO of American Maglev, Inc., one of the companies that has been pre-qualified to submit proposals for both a high speed transportation line from Dhaka to Chittagong and a Dhaka metro system as well.

Regarding the comments from the Finance Minister on magnetic trains, I would hope that there will be an opportunity for the government to carefully consider the possibilities and to evaluate our technology against the German technology so that he may see our advantages. The German train is a testament to great technological innovation, but it is indeed very expensive. Based on the experience in Shanghai, the cost of the German Maglev technology would be much closer to \$60 million a kilometre than the \$2 million suggested previously.

In contrast, our company is focused on building cost-effective transportation options and our Maglev technology runs out at about US\$10M per KM depending on how many components can be manufactured locally. I believe that creation of new transportation is an essential part of the government's fight against poverty. Building a system will create thousands of construction jobs and will link business and industry with the port. A cost-effective system will focus regional and national attention here.

Our company has received many inquiries from all over Asia and the Middle East from governments and private entities seeking the next generation of transportation that is cost-effective as well as "fast, frequent, and flexible." We have now been pre-qualified on many of these proposed projects, and we have an interest in establishing a significant presence in the country for final assembly and testing of vehicles for projects throughout the region.

Our company and our technology are new, and we believe that we can create significant new opportunity for our customers. We urge the government to look at bringing all people together as an integral part of improving the general welfare of the state and all its citizens. We hope we can be a part of a brighter future.

You may please feel free to publish this letter if you wish.

Tony Morris
President and CEO, American MAGLEV, Inc.

positive for the people.
Md. Zillur Rahman
MSS Economics, BB Hall, DU

An irony

Professor Joseph E Stiglitz, once the Chief Economist of the World Bank and a Nobel winning economist in 2001, now visiting Bangladesh as a guest of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies and delivering lectures that The Daily Star commented in its editorial today as "music to our ears". He was telling the useful truths, no doubt, but did not tell these things when he held the office of profit in the World Bank. Is this an irony? The same thing happened in the case of Dr. Hans Blix when he was the chief weapons inspector of the UN. Dr. Blix did not use the

Nazirhat college, Fatikchari, Umme Habiba Rumi, whose suicide has once again shaken the conscience of the nation.

How many lives have to be sacrificed for drawing the attention of the government? Will the government ever try to ensure the safety and security of the female students?

Rumie wanted a solution. She wanted to get out of pains and suffering she was going through everyday. As she could not find any other way she ultimately she chose the path of eternal freedom which left us with a guilty conscious.

According to an article of the constitution, any kind of direct or indirect act leads to sexual attachment, is considered harassment. Rumi's death was a result of one such sexual harassment. She is not the first one to have been victimised

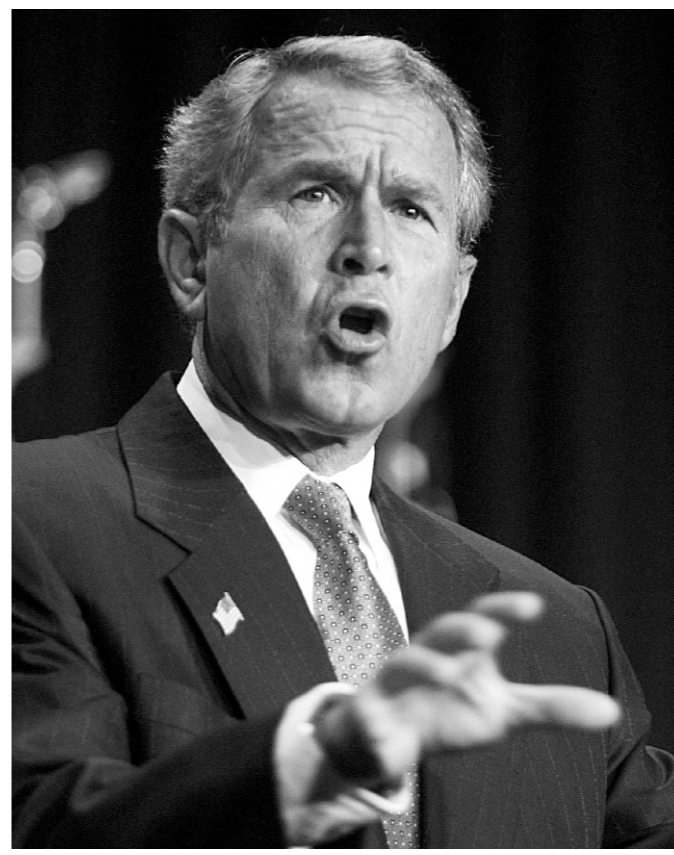
simply surprised me -- the movie's credibility and why the movie should not be displayed in public!

He said that many people of our country works abroad and their wives remain faithful to them. And his point was the movie might affect these women in a negative manner. But I can't see how the movie and the situation Mr. Ahmad described match! Does the movie show that Nandita's husband working hard in a foreign country, all alone, missing his wife and children, and Nandita and Shabana taking the full advantage of this situation and committing adultery? (And the writer is worried that the feelings of our country's faithful wives would be hurt!) Rather, the movie shows how a wife is forced to choose an abnormal relationship with her sister-in-law due to insult and negligence of her

herself to the hero. I wonder, since when "watching undressed woman" has become a part of our society and religion? In which part exactly in our religion allowed watching "undressed woman (except wife)"? And when did really "watching undressed woman" become part of our culture? (My! How come I don't know these thrilling and chilling information!) So, according to the writer, showing the movie "Fire" in public is a conspiracy against our tradition and culture as homosexuality is prohibited in our religion and society but not watching the undressed woman? (Though both scenario are actually prohibited according to our religion and society).

I would like to add that, I believe homosexuality is not the theme of the film "Fire". The director actually

New-killer weapons!



Since the news networks went abuzz with the term "nuclear weapons", it became the word of choice for world leaders for their countless forms of bickering badgering and vocal pelling, and since I am an avid listener of President Bush's many speeches, the term could at best bring me a yawn. Surprisingly it didn't. I found President Bush's way of putting his case through this word a little more than unusual. His utterance of the word "nuclear" was not anything as remotely as normal. The word "nuclear" is an easy enough English word. That an English speaking person could mispronounce such a seemingly innocent word is "palpably absurd" (as Mr. Blair would say). Why a president should choose to twist the pronunciation of this particular word did not make any sense at all. Was it one of his subtle ways of presenting his case to the American people? Or was it his emotional spillover expressing his depth of resolve and conviction on this particular issue? Or was it just another very Bush-like slip up? What irritated me most was whether I was the only one listening wrong or were there other people too with raised eyebrows. I was at my wits end and didn't know what to make of it when Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed's eloquently written article "President Bush's creed: I think, therefore it is" became my saviour. I heaved a sign of relief when I found out that it wasn't just me who was puzzled, the Americans were as puzzled as I was. And very characteristically, they made a pun out of it. It would be quite interesting to hear Mr. Bush the next time he defends his case for going to war. Would he still keep (or insist) on saying "nuclear weapons" as "new-killer weapons"? I am sure it would be worth hearing.

Muhsitul Islam
New DOHS, Mohakhali,
Dhaka