

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.

Thanks to DS

I thank The Daily Star because, unlike the other newspapers, they cared to mention both sides of the story and at the end of the news-item on the captioned event they added "Traffic congestion at various points in the city continued for about half an hour after the token strike". Well, as I was on the road myself in a car on an urgent errand, I can tell you the traffic tangles continued well past thirty minutes! Now, all I want to say is that, there can be absolutely no "excuse" for blocking roads, whatsoever. We must do away with these types of practices, which are similar to hartals, simply because you really cannot achieve anything but only cause immense suffering to the people who are on the roads (also there being so few roads in our cities!) to get somewhere or do something, urgent or otherwise.

CNR
Chittagong

BB throws spanner

I do not quite agree that Bangladesh Bank try to control everything in a private bank. Banks have definite and defined relationship with its clients, transparently governed by law for compliance of which Bangladesh Bank is the watchdog and it should not cross its boundary. As a depositor to any bank, I wish that my deposits are in safe hands and that the bank performs its obligations to me, by way of providing services and benefits. I demand that Bangladesh Bank, as the regulatory authority for all banks, perform its duty to ensure my rights. As a client I want neat, clean environment in a bank, attended by smart, efficient and competent staff. Frankly, I do not like unhygienic and nasty environment with lots of inefficient and irresponsible staffs as is found randomly in any NCBs. I would rather pay some more to avoid such situations. I don't want to waste my valuable time requesting a third rated staff in NCB. I, therefore, strongly object to Bangladesh Bank's irresponsible attempt to interfere with the functioning of private banks in the name of austerity. The term basic furniture is misleading. Banks' should determine how they should organise their service providing facilities. The ideas and the needs would be different. Consider, if government asks all to wear clothing of basic needs only, no fashion or preference, then what will happen.

The banks are obliged and obligated to operate under law. They have to keep accounts, manage their financial transactions and pay their taxes. After doing all these, with shareholders concurrence, if they buy cars worth Taka ten lakhs or ten million, it should not be a concern of the Bangladesh Bank. Bangladesh Bank should regulate the banks' functions where it is necessary.

I hope, fat and naughty brains in Bangladesh Bank should be stopped to make further damages to the developing private banking sector.

A concerned citizen
One e-mail

It hurts ours pride

With deep sorrow and disgust I am writing to you. I had no other way to express the emotions of many Bangladeshis who are living abroad. I just read the news in your newspaper about the Bangladesh Cricket Manager's URDU interview. I served in the Bangladesh Army. How in this world could he do that? Specially being a member of such an institution like Bangladesh Army. And he totally forgot the incidents of 1952 and 1971.

I know, we should not mix up politics and sports, but this not about mixing up politics and sports. This is about pride of being a Bangladeshi and being able to speak in our own language. If he was uncomfortable in speaking English, he should have done it in Bangla. The whole world does it. When Rashid Latif speaks in Urdu (we know he doesn't speak English). My question to the big shots, "Was he trying to impress his friends (so-called) from PMA?"

Towfiq Rahman
Toronto, Canada

Why this undue outcry?

We have been noticing with great regret that few members of the press are trying to make it an issue that our cricket team manager, Lt Col (Retd) A. Latif Khan has given an interview in Pakistan Television in Urdu. We don't know what difference does it make. If he can give an interview in English or in any other language, why not in Urdu. We know lots of multilingual people who are boastful of their qualities. We would have been hurt if he had said something against our country, our history, our culture or our valiant people. But this retired colonel is well known for his leadership quality, his discipline enforcement quality and above all patriotism. We have also noticed that few people were very critical of the cricket authority for choosing him as the team manager. But the recent spectacular performance of the

The girl child



PHOTO: AFP

Break the taboo

Off springs are the blessings of God, whether a boy or a girl. I am a mother of a girl child and am very much proud of it. When I gave birth to a girl, my mother-in-law was very happy; my father-in-law was happy, but not like she was. She prayed for a girl child. In her opinion the girls conceive the real feeling for their mothers. All our family members are proud of her, love her very much. They show no negative attitude towards her.

Nowadays we all recognise contributions of girls/women to society. But still there are misconceptions among some of us. One of my friends conceived recently. After four months of her pregnancy she came to learn by ultra sonogram that the baby was not a boy. Immediately she started crying. The one who is coming will be her first child. From her husband's side nobody bothers whether it's a boy or a girl but day by day she is getting mentally sick. I think it won't be irrelevant if I add that she is working in a reputed multinational bank. We campaign to create awareness among the people of rural areas where women are blamed by their husbands for giving birth to girls. But now we all know that a father plays the main role here. We know that women were neglected everywhere, in the family and in society. But, those days are over now. Most of the woman could overcome this situation by being a little stronger. Women are now 'expected' and respected. But exceptions will always be there. Now should I say that my friend's case is an exceptional one?

Still there are some people who expect boys but do not show that. They pretend to be ready to accept both a boy or a girl. It amounts to self-delusion.

Advocate Nahid Afreen, Associate of The Law Associates

team after inclusion of the new coach and the new manager should hush them up. We rather should cheer them up for bringing honour for us, something we are waiting for so long.

Mahboob-e-Gaus
One e-mail

Job eludes graduates of some private universities

The news report under the above headline in page 12 of the Daily Star (17 Aug 2003) surprised me by the highly discriminating remarks, both in terms of its headline and contents. Private universities were set up to meet the growing demand for higher education that our few public universities were unable to provide.

The public universities are subsidised by the government, as a result the fees are low. Therefore, students are eager to get admitted in these institutions. The demand is so high that the universities have imposed strict admission requirements. But this does not necessarily

imply that private universities are getting the 'left-overs' or "the intake is not top quality so the end product cannot be better" as remarked by a teacher.

At present the private universities are alternative to public universities. Many feel encouraged to study there because of the better time frames and better facilities. When an IBA teacher makes remarks like "students who fail to get admitted into public universities usually end up enrolling in private universities, so one should not expect much quality from them", I feel disappointed as I am a DU graduate myself. I welcome investment in private sectors for education. Most of the leading educational institutions of Dhaka city are private.

The private universities must be doing good, otherwise teachers from public universities wouldn't have taken lien from their jobs and joined these universities as faculty members or other positions or as part-time teachers.

As far as jobs (which are always elusive) are concerned, the few

students that pass out from IBA cannot be the yardsticks for excellence. They are no doubt good, but private university graduates are not far behind. With a modern curriculum, modern facilities and proper guidance, even average students are able to do well.

In public universities, with long years of session jams and politically academic atmosphere, the "best" that go in may not necessarily come out the "best". So, even if intake is top quality, end product may not be top. I am surprised at the 'grey' (discriminating) journalism that the Daily Star has shown in such a news report.

A highly prestigious newspaper like the Daily Star should always be supportive of good investment. Investment in private sector in education is the need of the time. With proper regulations, private universities perhaps may very soon out-perform public universities. Such discouraging write-ups only show a very narrow outlook of things.

Jahangir Alam
Head/Dept. of English, Sunshine Grammar School and College, Chittagong

"Proposal to beef up press wings . . ."

I am happy to learn that the government has finally decided to shelve the proposal of opening press wings in our foreign missions. I am not aware of the government's reason for this decision but have my own reason to be pleased with the news. To my mind such press wings are not of any value for the people of Bangladesh.

I take this opportunity to share with your readers my own observations on the subject. During the first half of the nineties I travelled several times to Washington DC. I visited the Bangladesh Embassy twice during that time. Once I went there to get my passport renewed and got it in 48 hours, an unheard of event in our country. And again I went there to meet the then press attaché and told him that the Bangladeshi flag on the front of the Islamic Centre at the Massachusetts Avenue, where most of Embassies were located, was discoloured and faded.

All other flags of the Islamic countries looked new and bright. And the pitiable condition of our national flag was very easy to notice. On asking the press attaché about the plight of the national flag I was told that he was very busy to notice the discoloured flag and change it.

In my next visit, however, a new flag was found hoisted on the pole. At the National Geographic Museum the video had a picture of about a dozen of emaciated Bangladeshi people of all ages of both sexes in tattered clothes, each holding a *sanki* (earthen plate) waiting at a desolate open space obviously waiting for gruel to be served. At the embassy there was a room marked as a library. On entering the "library (?)" I found there four chairs and a centre table along with a dump of empty cartons. There was also a book shelf with a couple of old books of no apparent use for them. There was also an old copy of the Daily Ittefaq.

The Embassy issued regular news bulletins. Browsing through the pages of different issues it appeared that it had no other purpose than informing people about the arrivals, holding meetings with the US government functionaries and departures of the PM, ministers and official delegations. There was

no information about the good work by the government and non-government agencies. At that time Professor Eunus's Grameen Bank caught the worldwide attention. Similar was the case with BRAC. These news were not found to be of any worth for the press wing. If these are not important events and issues for the press wing I will wholeheartedly support the concern of Professor Abdul Mannan, (DS Aug 18) as expressed in his letter to the Editor column.

Syed Waliullah
Dhaka

Faithfulness!

This is in response to the letter written by Mr. Ali Ahmed Maburur on August 8, regarding the movie Fire. The letter has already been tracked by Mr. Yahya from USA and he gave a very logical answer. Thanks to him. Now I would like to ask Mr. Ali what does he think about the brothers in the countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and so on where most of our people went for their jobs. If the wives could move towards homosexuality by watching just a movie and become unfaithful to their husbands then what about the husbands working abroad? Don't you think that they have better scopes to go for and that can be questioned anytime? What about their faithfulness? If you are not worried about them please don't be so for the wives. You have already humiliated them a lot. Or you better be worried about both.

And lastly if this movie is a conspiracy against our culture and tradition what about the nasty Bengali movies of our country? How much do they represent our culture?

Tabassum Rahman
Dhaka

Maglev train

Recent news items on Maglev train and some letters to the editor have inspired me to write a few words about the issue and share my knowledge with others. It is seen from the news items that Public Expenditure Review Commission (PERC) submitted a report on this issue to the Finance Minister who did not accept the same 'formally'. What then, did he accept it informally? Earlier, Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda held a press conference in collaboration with only one of the three firms stated to have been found acceptable to him, which has given rise to lack of transparency in the whole process.

Why not the other two firms were also allowed to be present there? During the press conference some wrong data like the cost of 250 km Maglev system from Dhaka to Chittagong would be US\$ 500 million, the running time would be 1 hour and the fare would be taka 1 per km were put forward. Information collected from Internet sources are, however, quite different from the sweet words that Mr. Huda wanted the apparently ignorant public to swallow. It is observed that the only Maglev train outside laboratory test track is a 30-kilometer track from Shanghai city centre to the Airport at an installation cost of US\$40 million per km, one-way fare of 60 Yuan which when converted into our currency comes to taka 15 per km and running time of 8 minutes. Based on this standard, the total cost for 250 km of Dhaka to Chittagong Maglev system would be US\$ 10,000 million (only 20 times higher than Mr. Huda's estimate) and the one-way fare would be about Taka 4000/- only! Running time will of course depend on many

Light goes off

I am writing from Toronto, Ontario, Canada in the middle of the North American power outage.

As you know we have had no electricity since 4:08 pm yesterday (Thursday Aug 14, 03). We were advised to leave work as there was no power supply! Today I am at work but 99.99 per cent staffs have been sent home as the company was running on emergency power supply since Thursday. The generators are running out of gasoline. But I am having to stay as part of the IT department for the company to make sure the network and servers are up and running, etc.

I had to heat up the food at home using firewood collected from bushes and feed my family and myself. Since my house is made of wood like all North American homes it was very hot at night and none of us slept. There's no way that we can just cook or heat up food for the children like we can do during a "load shedding" in Bangladesh. North America relies totally on electricity and artificial intelligence. My car happened to run of gas and 99 per cent of the gas (petrol) stations are shut down due to the power outage and those who are open have at least a couple of hours on queuing up in line until you get told that they have sold out!

I tried and wasted whatever gasoline I had in my car. 99 per cent banks are also

not functioning so people will run out of cash by this weekend. Automated cash transactions are not possible.

So we're all stuck.

Emergency services like Police, Ambulances, Fire Services etc. are running very slow. Hospitals are also almost dead and patients suffering. The backup generators cannot run for more than a few hours and now it has been over 24 hours of total power loss. But I am very shocked to see how "civilised" these Canadians are on the road at traffic lights. Drivers are being polite to each other and letting others pass first, which basically meant that there was less traffic jams on the roads than expected. Even without a power outage and with traffic signals we Bengalis just cause chaos on the streets by "everyone" wanting to go first. The end result being no one able to move. But we are worried about home and business security during a dark night anything can happen.

I am finishing work at midnight and going home by foot. Long walk. To go home and trying to get rest for the weekend. Let's hope they can restore power by this weekend.

Thank you and regards,
Adeeb Kamal
7561 Wildfern Drive, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada



PHOTO: AFP

factors including number of stop-pages en route but certainly much more than one hour. Will this train find any passenger at such high fare even if running time is one hour?

We must bear in mind that even if Maglev Technology is a high-tech one and probably the technology of 21st century, this is not yet a proven technology and no country in the world except China, not even Germany where this technology has been developed, has gone for the same. This gives rise to a pertinent question why is he so much craving for Maglev Train instead of taking steps to rescue Bangladesh Railway from its present deplorable condition? A thing may be good, but that does not mean that we should adopt it without considering its suitability, viability and priority aspects. Shall we always continue to work as a guinea pig for others? Why not the German entrepreneur use the technology in its own country first and then invite others to do the same?

Mr. Huda recently told the UNB that it was pre-mature for PERC to

raise this matter. Shall he be reminded that 'prevention is always better than cure'? He also said that the Commission has no minimum idea about this technology and the Finance Minister did the right thing by not accepting their report. How could he make this observation before going through the report? It is interesting to note that although the Finance Minister did not accept the report formally, contrary to Mr. Huda's observation, he commented that it was nothing but 'madness' as a concept, not to mention the financial aspects of it.

However, if it is correct that the commission prepared the report without having minimum idea about the subject, it may be taken to task. But if it is otherwise, government should give due consideration to their findings and recommendations.

Anisul Huq
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

It seems that logic has prevailed, and plans for the Dhaka-Chittagong magnetic train have been scrapped.

Since there are functioning road, air and conventional rail links between the two cities, such a project would never have been worthwhile.

Perhaps now the government can concentrate on improving the transport situation in Dhaka city, where there is no quick or easy way to get anywhere at the moment. Flyovers will not help this situation; they will just move the traffic jams from one intersection to another.

The solution is to build an elevated train or subway, and thus get people off the roads. The subway line should cover the entire distance from Tongi to Narayanganj, since the whole stretch has now become a single city. If built along the path of current rail lines, the land adjacent to which is already owned by Bangladesh Railway, the project can be constructed with minimum disruption to everyday life in the city.

Zeeshan Hasan
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

Liberalising alcohol policy



PHOTO: INTERNET

I am appalled at the naivety of opinions expressed by some of the contributors regarding the impact of alcohol.

A resident of the UK, I see at first hand the impact it has on the person, his families and society as a whole. Far from the benign environment of freedom, gaiety and prosperity that some of the readers imagine will flow from liberalising alcohol, it has been a serious cause for concern to British society for as long as I can remember. I will try to dispel some of the myths.

Firstly alcohol is a drug -- make no mistake. While researchers have identified some benefits to the cardiovascular system, they come with attendant damage to the brain, kidney and liver (note the Qur'an says that alcohol has some good and some bad, but the bad outweighs the good). Alcohol is also addictive -- more so than drugs such as marijuana.

Alcohol abuse is a major cause of domestic violence, child abuse, break-up of families and financial ruin in this country. Alcohol addiction among teenagers is on the

rise, leading to truancy from school, petty crime and violence. The effect on society is manifold. Alcohol induced violence is a common occurrence on British streets and at public events. The Police struggle to maintain order at weekends -- just imagine how Bangladesh's ill-equipped and ill-disciplined forces will fare. Nor is property safe -- a great deal of vandalism and petty crime can be traced to alcohol addiction. For thirty years British society have struggled with the curse of drink-driving (driving under the influence of alcohol). Every year, hundreds of people are killed on the roads by drunk drivers -- this in a country where driver training, road safety measures and emergency medical aid is infinitely superior to that in Bangladesh. Tens of millions of pounds are spent each year to discourage drink-driving, but the problem persists. While the Treasury does reap enormous revenues from alcohol, far more is spent in coping with the effects of alcohol -- maintaining order, clearing up after road accidents, treating the injured,

rehabilitating addicts and so on. The cost to individuals, families and society is incalculable. Britain struggles to cope with these challenges, Bangladesh will fail to do so. In the rush to modernise, many Bangladeshis seek to ape the ways of the West in the hope of appearing sophisticated and superior. Too often this is done at the superficial level -- by adopting Western clothes, music, fast food and alcohol. Sadly, this impresses no-one, least of all Westerners. Honour and dignity come from the confidence to retain all that is good in our own religion, culture and customs whilst being open to the more worthwhile and deeper aspects of world culture. This is what I strive to achieve -- for myself and my family.

Raqui Shamsad, UK

This is a response to Dr. Syed Nasrullah's letter published in The Daily Star. He wrote in favour of liberalising alcohol policy. I, being a Muslim, am completely against this notion. Bangladesh is a Muslim populated country and legalising anything forbidden in Islam will be a disgrace to our religion. Alcohol is harmful and that is

medically proven. An intoxicated person loses his conscious state and hence may cause a lot of accidents. If he is driving, while being intoxicated, there is a possibility that he will kill himself as well as others on the street.

In the Quran, Allah says that gambling and consuming alcohol are the works of Satan and also says that alcohol keeps a person away from his Lord's remembrance. It may be less harmful than other drugs, but it is also hazardous to health. Alcohol related crimes might increase if alcohol policy is liberalised. Instead of setting up breweries, the government can set up factories producing daily necessities and other useful things. That will also contribute to our economy and alleviate unemployment. If we claim ourselves to be Muslims, we are bound to stay within the limitations of our religion. If we try to legalise this *Haram* (forbidden) drink, then we may subject ourselves to Allah's wrath.

Sameer Ahmed Khan
Mojibh
Dhanmondi, Dhaka