

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.

Shazneen murder case: verdict is befitting

I had been following the Shazneen murder case for quite a few years now; and I wondered will there be an end to this. Shazneen, as I came to know from The Daily Star, was fifteen and a student of the Scholastica School at the time of the horrible incident. I admire the patience the family of the girl has shown. They believed in the legal system of Bangladesh and it's worth. At last we had the opportunity to hear the verdict. The crime that the culprits have committed is beyond imagination. I, as an individual, denounce it wholeheartedly. I mean Shazneen had her own dreams and hopes, which the culprits took away from her. The verdict is just and I firmly hope that it will set up an example that crime does get punished in the end after all.

Syed Muntazir Zaidi
LACC College, LA, California

Suing authorities for marine disaster

It has not been long since the media was overwhelmed with the demise

tune. Has the government really gone that dumb and blind? I felt a great sense of joy at the High Court's directive on the DMCH and Ramna OC to show cause (DS 02 Sep/P 11) for failing to treat a critically ill person and my thanks go to the compassionate lawyer who filed the public interest litigation. I only wish some compassionate lawyer will take up the launch disasters and the loss of hundreds of lives under the same litigation and move the honourable court to direct the government to pay compensation to victims' families for allowing unfit launches to ply and jeopardising lives of unfortunate passengers.

And, at the same time, a stern and immediate direction must be issued to the government and its respective organs to ensure that the launches, which do not comply with safety regulations, must not carry passengers. I shall be willing to assist any courageous lawyer with my humble knowledge in ships and shipping to institute a successful legal action for the benefit of the poor families who lost their beloved.

Khandaker R Zaman
Allseas Shipping Limiteds, Dilkusha Commercial Area, Dhaka

Arbitration vs farce

embezzle the rest of the money. Even they often boycott the victims. And that is truly unjust and regrettable. In fact, offenders are hardly punished and that, consequently, embolden them to perpetrate crimes.

As long as our law enforcement agencies neglect such anti social activities, actors of these incidents will keep depriving people from justice and earn money illegitimately. Hence our civic society and conscious village people should come forward with pragmatic steps to resist such farce in the name of trial or arbitration. More public awareness is certainly needed in this regard.

Palash podder
Dept. of sociology, Jagannath Hall, DU

Abandoned water-body at DU

Due to indifference of Dhaka University (DU) authorities, the beautiful water-body in the middle of Bangabandhu hall and Kabi Jasimuddin hall is now abandoned. Instead of being a scenic spot for hundreds of students, teachers and employees, it has become something quite opposite. Shrubbery and

advanced farthest and fastest. Yet, the Islamic world as a whole has lagged behind and failed to catch up with the West. It is an irony that the Arab and Muslim scholars, thinkers, scientists, mathematicians, and even statesmen and warriors had, in the bygone centuries, enlightened the people of Europe. Today the Islamic world is indebted to them and depends on their inventions for survival.

The OIC has the opportunity and responsibility to renew and restore what have been lost over centuries of neglect, internal turmoil, civilisational inertia and regression into rigidity and backwardness brought about by a stubborn and misguided refusal to change, adapt, adjust, and regenerate.

The OIC should officially recognise the scholars of the Muslim countries by giving a prestigious award. It will be something parallel to the Nobel Prize. The Prize will attract and enthuse the current generation of scholars, scientists and artisans and re-establish the talents of Muslims in the world of scholarship and research. Above all, it will help to improve the existing solidarity, unity, pride and dignity of the Islamic world.

Dr. Zakir Husain
On e-mail

Dilu road's construction

The Dilu Road has been under construction for last two weeks. But the surprising thing is that the authority concerned didn't put any notice that would warn people, especially vehicle drivers, about the road's repairing. So, many vehicle drivers enter the lane without being totally unaware of the situation and face great difficulties -- once the vehicles enter the lane, it become very difficult for them to leave and thus create chaos and traffic jam. I would request the authority to put a signboard so that the motorists can avoid that lane and save their valuable time.

Mohammed Sohel Hara
Dilu Road, Moghbazar Road

'Standard fees' in Standard Chartered!

I had a very interesting experience with Standard Chartered Bank, where I had gone to deposit examination fees of my daughter who is going to appear in her A level examination conducted by the British Council. As British Council is maintaining its account with this bank, I did not have any other choice.

I decided to deposit the amount in cash, and, to my utter surprise, I was charged an extra amount as service charge. Although the service charges levied is insignificant, the entire idea of being charged for depositing cash has puzzled me.

I am also a banker and in 22 years of my banking career, I have never come across a situation where one is imposed with charges while depositing cash in clients' account. No wonder Standard Chartered Bank is showing such huge profits. I would not be surprised if in future they start charging their customers for talking to their officials.

Through this letter I would like to draw the attention of the authority of Bangladesh Bank and would request them to look into the affairs of foreign banks operating in Bangladesh.

particularly the reason of their high profitability, which is eventually pumped out of our country.

Shahed Jamil
General manager, Mashreq Bank, Rep office, Sena Kalyan Bhaban, Dhaka

Foreign investment

The news of the Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka outlining the hurdles and obstacles for Japanese investors is indeed a national shame as much as it showed the state of affairs in investment institutions of Bangladesh, like those of the BOI, the EPZ and the relevant government departments and agencies. The US Embassy's commercial section has also floated, in their official website, a similarly negative information about investment and the investment climate in Bangladesh.

One understands why the investors always have to bribe. Our officials are paid such meagrely salaries that to expect them to work without incentives would be impractical. However, our officials take the bribes but then fail to deliver.

And we have a government which is projecting the image of Bangladesh as the best investment destination in Asia. I pity the diplomats who are doing the job of making this image.

It is high time that the government pays attention to these complaints, for these cannot just be pushed under the table and forgotten. The prime minister should start with two of the vital organisations named by the Japanese Ambassador, namely, the BOI and the EPZ, since both are headed by her.

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka

Public Library -- 24 hours a day

As the Public Library is a very important public institution, almost all types of people have access to it. So its role to the development of our education is inevitable. The Public Library used to remain open from

Son of a freedom fighter

I write in response to Shamsul Alam Monir's letter (September 3) regarding his father's contribution to the War of Liberation.

Unlike Mr. Monir, my father was based in the UK at that time and wanted to return to his motherland to fight against the occupying Pakistani forces. But my elder brother and I were very young and my mother knew little or no English. So, he decided that he would better serve the needs of Bangladesh by remaining in the UK and was instrumental in setting up an office where collections could be made from the Manchester region. That office did their best to help the Bangladeshi people with food, medicine and military supplies.

As all kinds of communications stopped between East and West Pakistan, one relative in the military who was imprisoned along with thousands of other Bengalis in the West used to send letters to Bangladesh via my father in the UK. Slowly but surely, hundreds of letters were redirected by my father during the war, at his own expense. After the Pakistani military surrendered, letters continued to pour in but my father stopped redirecting them because things got easier shortly thereafter. Many of these letters were unopened and for posterity, they have remained closed for over 30 years since they were never meant for our review.

In December 2000, my mother and I presented these 20-30 'War Correspondence' to Mr. Akku Chowdhury at the Liberation War Museum who, together with the Trustees, have done and are continuing to do, an excellent job in preserving the true account of



Unsung heroes

the war and maintaining a precise record of the thousands of individuals like Mr. Monir's father who contributed to the independence of Bangladesh. These letters I refer to can be viewed at the Museum and I would strongly encourage Mr. Monir plus others in the same situation to visit the Liberation War Museum and ensure that their relatives' efforts are acknowledged.

Abdul M. Ismail
Owner and Chief Engineer
Interplanetary Expeditions,
Mossley Hill, Liverpool, UK

I was touched deeply by Monir's letter (September 3) in this column about his freedom-fighter father. His letter revived in me the feeling long since dead for the freedom fighters of Bangladesh that we once loved and respected as our heroes -- around whom our hopes and dreams

were built.

The tragedy of Bangladesh has been our failure to honour and respect the likes of Monir's father. Worse still has been the fact that we have honoured as freedom fighters instead a large number of people who, unlike Monir's father, participated in our war of liberation from the safety of Indian sanctuary. Even worse is the fact that this large section, not satisfied with what they took from the country by fraudulent means, had ensured that their children too get the same privileges and benefits that they themselves extracted from the country. We have also been told by those who want to give a correct perception to our history for our *projonmo* that it is not Monir's father but those who ran away from the battle field are our freedom fighters!

The strength of the liberation war was the total support

of the people behind the cause. But the actual fighting against the marauding forces was done not by any political group or force but by our heroes. Heroes like Ziaur Rahman, Khaled Moshraff, Taher, and people like Monir's father who fought and after the war was won, quietly left to join the life they had left to fight for their motherland.

Monir's father reminds us not only of the feelings of warmth and pride that was alive once in our hearts for our freedom fighters but also the need for an honest, non-political appraisal and formulation of a list of our valiant freedom fighters. This is what we owe to our country; our glorious history and our *projonmo*!!

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka



Ill-treated

Hospitality, Pakistan style

The report from your correspondent from Multan published in DS on September 2, is an eye opener for us. It shows how the authorities in Pakistan feel about Bangladeshis.

My anger and contempt is reserved for the Pakistan Cricket Board management manned by service personnel may be of the 1971 era. We of the old generation who saw 1971 first hand feel that this is like sprinkling salt to old festering wounds. Is this hospitality or hostility?

I have nothing against the players of Pakistan team. They have played in the norm and spirit of cricket, which is popularly known as a gentleman's game.

My observation relates to the team manager, Mr. M A Laif, who hurt many of us by parading his fluency in Urdu. Is it this fluency that has stirred the Pakistan authorities' contempt towards the Bangladeshi team? Who knows. My last observation is in which class did the team manager travel? Could DS through its correspondent kindly confirm?

S A Mansoor, Gulshan, Dhaka

I am appalled by the news that on their trip to Multan the Bangladeshi cricketers were made to travel in Economy class while their hosts traveled in the luxury of Business class in the same plane. Though I am shocked by the uncivilised attitude of the Pakistani cricket managers, the news is no surprise to me. After all, such bad manners are not unexpected of the Pakistanis! An incidence like this only exposes the meanness of their character. I want only to know

Arbitration frequently takes place in both rural and urban localities of Bangladesh to reconcile friction and disturbance, especially in order to free a person (male or female) from oppression or molestation by the miscreants. To abate individual conflicts or familial dispute, arbitration is also being called now and then. But what happens actually in the name of arbitration? As far I know, it is one of the modes to save culprits from allegations brought by the victims. Because the arbitration that takes place are usually headed by the chiefs of the adjoining locality, in most cases it is seen that alleged people or offenders commit illegal and antisocial activities backed by the local chief. To achieve their personal interest arbitrators or village politicians often set their cadres or hired hooligans to do mischief or harass peaceful people.

Next to that, they call for arbitration in favour of miscreants and that is an open secret. Local residents including young or old plays a secondary role while it is held. Affected people are so helpless that they find no options but to accept the partial verdict. In many cases, the alleged persons get nominal punishments like slaps, caning, etc. Or, often the alleged persons have to pay a certain amount of money. But the money is hardly ever paid to victims, or a little amount occasionally paid. Heads of the arbitration

water hyacinths are there near the banks but the lake now has become a safe habitat for mosquitoes and snakes. A couple of days back, a snake was found on the 1st floor of Bangabandhu hall that created panic among resident students. If the authorities of DU take proper initiatives to reclaim this lake, it will be an attractive visiting spot not only for students but also for the visitors who come to DU campus to enjoy sunsets.

We are very anxious about the authority's intervention and hope that immediate steps would be taken to reclaim the beauty of this place.

Shamsul Alam Monir
Department of Public Administration, DU

Prize for performance in the Islamic world

The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) is probably the single largest entity of the entire Islamic world today. Since its inception, the OIC has done many things to turn the Islamic world into a political and strategic forum; it has brought together countries with Muslim majority and endeavoured to forge a common stand on contemporary issues that challenge the Islamic world in particular.

The world has changed much and is still in changing. Of all things, science and technology have

8:00 am to 8:00 pm. So, many people, specially those who work, could not go to the library within that particular time.

But now the authority has arranged to keep it open 24 hours a day. This is the first time in our country that a library is kept open for twenty four hours. It is a very good sign that many students can come to the library any time after having done with their daily tasks. Even they can study in the library for the whole night if they like.

Now if the authority can maintain the discipline in the library, this decision will be very fruitful for all the learners. In this regard, the authorities can ask for the students' identity cards, visiting cards or other relevant documents if anyone wants to do late night library work.

The emergency department of a hospital remains open all the time, even on the weekend, so that the patients can go there in crucial moments. If the authorities can make it open seven days a week, the learners can get more opportunity to study there.

Pulok Debnath
Ex-student of IUB

Toll-seeking cops

Administration's crackdown on toll collectors at bus terminals is definitely a welcome move. The bus owners and operators must be happy. They are relieved of paying 50 to 100 taka a day. But this hardly saves the owners and the operators from the clutches of government employed toll collectors that is the traffic sergeants. A bus plying in city area must pay minimum 100 taka per trip. On average, each town service bus ply four to five times a day, thereby has to pay 400 to 500 taka per day. Moreover, as buses have to ply between different areas of administrative jurisdiction, on many occasions the toll money increases. Even after that, to meet their allotted quota traffic sergeants prosecute the buses at a regular interval for no profound reason. Private wreckers are used to towing 'rogue' buses adding misery to the bus owner. If a tow chain is joined to

the bus, the owner has to pay 1000 taka as wrecker charge. The owner of wrecker and traffic authority share the booty.

Most of the buses plying in Dhaka city roads are purchased on bank loans. Add to this the cost of route permit, registration, and many other fees that an owner has to pay to different government agencies. Toll collection, indiscriminate prosecution and so-called wrecker charges make the operation a losing concern. Most of the bus owners cannot pay the bank instalments in time.

So, when we congratulate the government for crackdown on bus terminals, we must not fail to urge upon the authority to look into the GOB's sector that levies toll from buses. If the transport business can be made profitable, better services can be provided to the general passengers.

MSH, Dhaka

The media and the GCE and GSCE

results

There is always a hue and cry when the SSC and HSC results come out. The electronic media like the BTV, NTV, and Channel I etc. always cover the news of board results. The newspapers too cover the news with great concern. Unfortunately, the news media does not inform the people about the GCE and GCSE exam results.

Although these exams are taken by a relatively small number of students in Bangladesh, news media must inform the people of news of both the majority and the minority. Through this letter, I would like to request the authorities of different media to cover the news of GCE and GCSE results with the importance they deserve.

Maherin Ahmed
Poribag, Priprangan, Dhaka

Maglev train and Bengali time

Various opinions have been expressed earlier in this section about the proposed installation of the Maglev Train in the Dhaka Chittagong route. The debate was mostly concerning the exorbitant cost of such a venture. As it has been reported, this would be completely a foreign investment, the travellers of this train shall have to pay higher fare and the government exchequer has to pay plenty in foreign currency for the profit and investment repatriation.

Besides the exorbitant cost, I do have an ethical question to raise. Does the people of our country deserve such a

fast train, when most of us do not realise the value of time. We are often late in office not only by minutes but by hours, when we prefer to gossip more during our working hours, again close our pen well ahead of the closure of office hours.

It has become a general trend that most of our government as well as non governmental projects do not conclude as per the scheduled time. Wasting time has become a normal practice in our day to day life. In such a situation, what is the justification of introducing a fast train involving huge investment, which will save our travelling hours, when we are

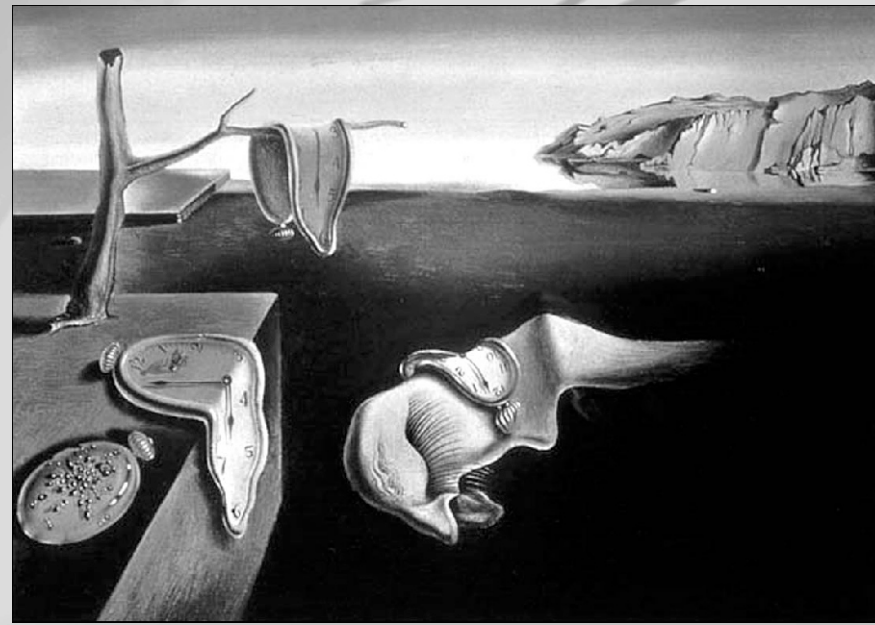
not in a position to utilise those hours for productive purposes.

To the contrary, I would propose the railway authorities to be more vigilant to work for the improvement of our existing railway system. Properly maintained railway tracks, locomotives and compartments will surely increase the quality and decrease the travelling time considerably. Not many years ago, in 1985, the first inter-city train *Mohanagar* was introduced between Dhaka and Chittagong, which took five hours to travel. We wonder, our railway authorities failed to maintain that time even. Now it takes more than six hours to travel by *Subarna Express*.

Further, the possibility could be explored to construct a new rail route from Comilla to Dhaka via Daudkandi and Narayanganj. Construction of a bridge over the river Meghna will be required then. This would curtail the length of railroads between Dhaka and Chittagong and save a lot of travel time. The investment will be substantial no doubt, but not millions of dollars required to build per kilometre of railway track.

Finally, I would urge the railway authorities to take serious efforts to improve the present system by maintaining the tracks properly, running the trains in time, so that we do not have to ask when shall the nine o'clock depart or when the nine o'clock due train shall arrive.

Duncan Chowdhury
Tejgaon, Dhaka



Talking about Bangla time...

Persistence of Memory: Salvador Dali