

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.

Tips to resolve Maglev controversy

This is in response to the letter of Mr. Zaidur Rahman (Aug 29, 2003) on Maglev trains.

I think Mr. Arif Huq (Aug 25) was correct when he said that the only commercially run Maglev train was the 30km track from Pudong Airport to Shanghai city in China. But because of technical problems, the full service on this line will not begin until next year.

Transrapid, the German company which has built the Maglev Train in China, has got a test track of 31.5km long in Emsland, near Hamburg.

After scrapping both the proposals of commercial Maglev Line

financial crisis and technical problem. The students at Old Dominion have their own name for the futuristic vehicle lying idle on the track "Magleft".

The readers would be benefited if Mr. Rahman could tell us the location of the long track in Japan operating for many years and the commercial tracks in operation in USA.

Bashar Baset
On e-mail

By train from Dhaka to Lahore

A very interesting proposal having far reaching effect on the relationship between the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh has come forward

desch and India. This will reduce the travel time plus make the journey less cumbersome. The traveller will also enjoy the scenic beauty en route and the mouth-watering cuisine of the different places whenever and wherever the train stops.

I am thrilled with the idea and despite my age I would love to avail yet another opportunity to travel through the heart of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

I do hope the idea will be received well by the public as well as those who are responsible to give it a go.

S. Faiyazuddin Ahmad
Leicester, UK

Muslim Nobel laureates meet

The assassination of one succeeded and of the other failed by chance only.

I am afraid the track record of OIC members in regards to scholarly performance is rather tragic.

Esam Sohail, Wichita, KS, USA

Kidnapping in Chittagong

Law and order situation in the city of Chittagong has deteriorated alarmingly. The city dwellers are terrified and their lives and properties are unsafe amid consecutive kidnappings in the city. A man has already been killed after being kidnapped and three others are yet to be rescued. Zamaluddin, a busi-

All these demonstrate that we face social ruination. The prevailing condition proves that values and ethics are just fine prints of books.

I believe that we all are waiting for a change. A significant one.

MM Haque, Jeddah, KSA

WTO razzmatazz

WTO fiesta is going to be commenced in Cancun, Mexico on Sep 10. The gathering of the 146-member organisation is significant and vital for the LDCs. To maximise the pecuniary returns, the LDCs need to be united and decisive. The LDCs should emphasise the 16-point Dhaka Declaration adopted in June by the LDC trade ministers. Bangladesh, a frontline LDC, can play a pivotal role in the coming WTO talks.

It will have to focus on duty-free market access. The LDCs have to be diplomatic.

Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Dept of English, University of Dhaka

We are really happy to know that Bangladesh did not sign the draft of the World Trade Organisation document relating to the Cancun meet, because the draft doesn't match with the interests of the Least developed Countries like us. Commerce Minister Mr. Khaosru, the coordinator of LDC's Asia region, sent it to the WTO seeking Inclusion of the interests of the LDC's. As Mr. Khaosru described, Bangladesh wants to increase 'Non-farm products' and Movement of Natural Person' everywhere. More particularly, Bangladesh is trying to get market access or equal opportunity for its own products. We have to thank Mr. Khaosru for not saying that it is a bad agreement.

Mamunur Rashid
Premier Cement, Dhaka

Traffic jam at Dahnmondi road

Can any body tell me the 'traffic logic' behind the present status of the way the vehicles pass from Dhanmondi Road No 2 towards Elephant Road by taking No 2 left turn and No 1 U turn, though this could be made straight without making any turns?

I guess this arrangement was planned earlier to keep Dhanmondi area as a calm zone as it was declared a residential area. But recently that area has turned up as a trade and commerce centre as well as it accommodates a large number of shopping complexes, educational institutions, apartments, buying houses, clinics and lot of other offices which can be compared with Motijheel + Moulavibazaar jointly. The residential status virtually does not exist here at all.

We observe most of the time, specially in peak hours, that traffic jam by a large column of vehicles starts from Dhanmondi Rd. No. 3 and stretches up to Zikatola. Clearance of this situation takes long hours. Impact of this jam is also witnessed in other roads. This causes enormous suffering to passengers, lays waste to valuable fuels and results into environmental degradations.

Due to taking the No 2 90-degree turning and the No 1 U turning for going to Elephant road, the vehicles move very slowly. The government is eliminating rickshaws from the main roads branding them as 'slow speed vehicles', but their system is making the fast speed vehicles even slower.

I suggest that if a cut way with necessary signalling arrangement

is made, linking the Dahnmondi Rd. No 2 and Elephant Road straight as far as possible, the vehicles will be able to move faster and that will improve the overall traffic situation. If necessary, a part of the island in Rd No 2 may be modified. This will give some relief to the citizen. I hope that the authority concerned will think over this idea.

Kabir Ahmed, Dhaka

Power supply failure at DU

It is very frustrating and boring that even the DU is suffering from daily power failure. Especially in the evenings, the whole campus, including all the residential halls and teachers' quarters, turn into a dark island. We have never experienced such horrible situation before. Rather we have experienced a superb feeling about the power supply at DU.

In the past, lights never went off here, because this is the hub of our total educational system. It needs no elaboration that the DU must have good power supply facilities.

Power system at DU should be made more effective for a greater cause. Because near about twenty five thousand students are seriously dependent on the DU power supply. The system should be uninterrupted and smooth. The authority concerned should make some immediate moves in this regard.

Saumitra Sarder Piklu
LLB final year, Jagannath Hall, DU

Suicide attacks are a backlash to US policy

Suicide attacks are increasing day by day throughout the world. The death of Sergio Viera De Mello in Baghdad has hurt all peace loving people. I express my deep condolence.

All suicide attacks are unacceptable and regrettable. No religion in this world supports suicide attacks. The Japanese first started suicide attacks during the Second World War, which was known as *kama kaji*, and now it is just going on one after another. Psychologists and Sociologists find many reasons behind suicide attacks but the current incidents are totally different.

These attacks you may say are the results of the present US foreign policy. Whilst the Israeli army attacks the Palestinian with heavy machineguns, tanks, mortars, helicopters etc., the Palestinians counter-attack with their suicidal zeal. Not that I support it, but if we think about it, the reasons become clear -- these attacks are the results of the US foreign policy. The same case is with Iraq.

Md.Zillur Rahman
MSS Economics, BB Hall, DU

OIC and Bangladesh

There has been a lot of confusion and controversy over the nomination for the post of SG of the OIC from Bangladesh.

In 1971 when the Pakistani army committed inhuman atrocities on the Bengali men, women and children, the role played by our OIC friends (?), excepting perhaps a few, has not been forgotten.

Looking at the feather of the birds, don't you think our nomination very logically fits the crime?

Fayaz Khan, Joar Sahara, Dhaka



Tapping telephone calls and busting e-mails

This refers to a news item published in your esteemed daily of 4th September captioned "Move to tap telephone calls".

I am simply appalled and alarmed! I have the following comments to offer:

1. Surely our intelligence agencies must have better things to do. Some one rightly pointed out that our country is slowly and surely turning into a 'police state'. Enactment of such a law will merely serve as a convenient way for intelligence agencies to hide their "failures" and at the same time create an unrealistic enhanced power base for themselves.
2. Enactment of such a law will tantamount to infringement of one's fundamental rights and hence it is undemocratic.
3. One argument put forward is that, this is needed for ensuring national security, etc. The question is, when the so-called information is being collected or collected, who decides what is anti-national? What constitutes a breach of national security, etc.? As a student of history I can assure you that from time immemorial such laws have been popular "instruments" of terror in the hands of both modern day dictators and kings and emperors of the times gone by.
4. To me it looks like we are heading towards formulation of a law or an act having similar characteristics like those of the Department of Homeland Security and the Patriot Law recently introduced in the USA.
5. If and when the government decides to go for enactment of such a law, it must be up front and the terms of reference for gathering public opinion must be made public.
6. Finally, I urge The Daily Star to publish a full page "Letters to the Editor" soliciting opinion from the general members of the public covering the specific subject only, similar to what was done earlier in connection with the Mymensing bombings.

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka

Eavesdropping is unconstitutional

If the government amends the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act' 2001, allowing intelligence agencies to tap telephone calls or bust e-mails, it will severely breach the privacy of individuals. This amendment is going to be initiated in the interest of the security of the state. In my opinion, there is no actual threat to the national security of our country. In India, rebels of Kashmir strike every day in national life. Vis-à-vis, no exceptional insurgence movement has been identified in any part of Bangladesh. I acknowledge that law and order situation is deteriorating day by day owing to political turbulence and normal criminal activities, but this is hardly an exceptional situation. So, amending existing law in the name of national security is totally ludicrous.

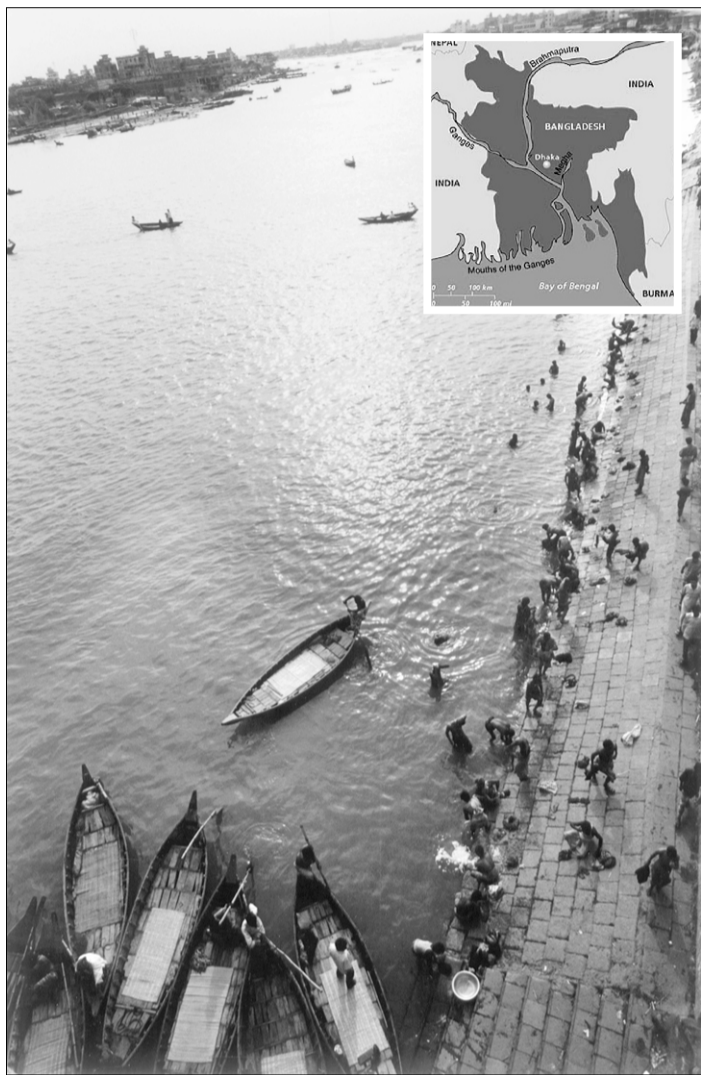
In practice, government enacts laws with a view to suppressing activist of opposition party or curbing anti-government movement. It is also a prevalent practice among incumbent government that they abuse power, which is empowered by specific tyrannical law.

As for example, the government detains thousand of political activists using the Special Power Act'1974. Police arrests on the basis of suspicion in accordance with section 54 of the Cr.P.C. These give rise to controversies in all time. I am almost sure that it will increase risk of abuse of power on the part of government. Finally, this will be a potential weapon to crash opposition party, nothing else.

Constitution framers could realise the importance of the privacy of individuals as is enshrined in our constitution. Article 43 sub-clause (b) lays down that every citizen shall have the right to the privacy of his correspondence and other means of communication subject to reasonable restrictions imposed by law. If the intelligence agency can tap all telephone calls or read e-mails, their power will be unfettered.

Such restriction can never be regarded as reasonable. This gross infringement of privacy will amount to total ignorance of this constitutional provision. I suggest that telephone tapping can be acceptable only when the intelligence agency obtain permission from court. For this purpose, a Judge will order the concern authority to conduct investigation. However, we don't want to be slaves of a police state. We hope this amendment should not be introduced.

Bivuti Tarafder
Department of law, DU



River Inter-linking will bring disaster

With the implementation of such a project, which requires the withdrawal of water from their natural courses and common rivers, we believe that it would greatly harm not only the delicate ecology of Bangladesh (as well as neighbouring Indian states such as West Bengal, Assam etc.) but also its economy. It will put millions of people at risk.

It is also obvious that diversion of water from the rivers such as the Ganges and the Brahmaputra would drastically affect the agriculture of our land in the dry season in particular.

Further to this, the inter-linking of rivers is likely in some or other way to destroy UNESCO's world heritage sites in Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal. Such sites are the Sundarbans (an indigenous forests nurturing flora and fauna) at the lower delta region, Paharpur Buddha Vihara and the historic mosque city of Bagerhat, etc.

Also, because of the river Inter-linking in India, salinity will creep up in the delta all over the southern part of Bangladesh, damaging agriculture. The long-term effect of such increase in salinity will surely wreak havoc among Bangladeshi folks living in the coastal area because this will also impact fisheries, which provide livelihood to many poor folks in that region of Bangladesh.

We hereby strongly suggest that the Task Force for the River Inter-linking Project should initiate bilateral talks with the expert groups of Bangladesh before undertaking such huge project. In this regard, we also hope that the government of India would respect all the relevant international laws [the U.N Water Convention (1997), Biodiversity Convention (1992) and Helsinki Rules (1966) etc.] pertaining to the use of water from the common rivers and other conventions on bio-diversities.

No project is so important that it should threaten the livelihood, environment and heritage of West Bengal, Assam and a neighbouring country such as Bangladesh. Please preserve the delicate balance of nature. While inter-linking rivers in India may make sense from an Indian perspective, it does not bode well for the people Bangladesh. Let good sense prevail. Nip this ill-conceived project in the bud and save the humanity.

Avijit Roy
Research Scholar, Department of Mechanical and Production Engg, The National University of Singapore

(Berlin-Hamburg line and Dusseldorf link) the only project in Germany, which is still existent, is the short distance planned link between Munich's city centre and the airport.

The only Maglev track in Japan is the 18.4-km double tracked Yamanashi Test line (north of Mt. Fuji) which has been in operation since April 1997. This test line has been built on the alignment of the proposed Tokyo - Osaka Maglev line -- the decision on which is expected by the end of this year. Both the German and Japanese technology will cost between US\$ 40 and US\$ 80 million.

The only known public project undertaken by American Maglev, which claimed to have a technology that will cost only US\$10 million per km, is a 1.3 km line on the old Dominion University Campus, Virginia, designed for a maximum speed of 67 km/hr. (40 m/hr). The project has been stalled because of

from Bangladeshi intellectuals, as was reported by the Associated Press of Pakistan in today's papers with dateline Dhaka. The proposal is to run a direct train between Dhaka and Lahore via India. Of course this idea cannot come to fruition without Indian agreement. I feel in the present atmosphere of building bridges, may be India agrees to it as it will also be a unique opportunity for India to promote itself and enhance the selling of commodities and services throughout the region.

It may be interesting for your readers to know that the undersigned had had four occasions to travel by rail from Dhaka to Lahore and back. At that time there was no rail bridge over Barhamputra in Bangladesh and as such, we had to cross the river by ferry and then board a train for Calcutta and then from there direct to Lahore.

However, now a direct train can run from Dhaka to Lahore because of railroad improvements in Bangla-

tragic ends

I sympathise with Dr. Zakir Husain whose letter on September 5 called for the establishment of a Nobel-type prize for Muslim scholars. Unfortunately the OIC member countries have been anything but receptive to scholarly achievements by their citizens. The first Muslim to win a Nobel Prize, the late Dr. Abdus Salam of Pakistan, was promptly declared a non-Muslim by his government and denied the right to say simple things like 'assalam alaikum' and the kalima under Pakistani law. He died as a broken hearted man in exile. No mention of his name or fame is found in the buildings, institutions, or textbooks of Pakistan.

Professor Salam would probably take cold comfort in the fact that the two other Muslims who won the Noble Prize, Egyptians Anwar Sadat and Nagib Mahfouz, were also declared apostates by the Ulema and condemned to death.

ness magnate, was kidnapped more than a month ago. Despite repeated commitment by a few ministers, even by the top of the police, the ill-fated magnate is not rescued yet. People are confused about the role and the capability of the police itself.

Md. Abu Musa
Auto Fashion
Muradpur, Chittagong

Nation needs a change

Random acts of violence, killing and kidnapping cause anguish and frustration among many, but surprisingly not all.

The university teachers are too busy with making money from outside consultancy. The government doctors have their own clinics.

Newspapers differ in their reports. Clear objective news and analyses are rare.

Now, where do we go? Who shall we trust?

The FM and his tall talks

The Foreign Minister's 'Face-to-Face' interview (September 6, DS) with journalists in Chittagong was an excellent reading. This is where our ministers and politicians excel most, when they speak of themselves as the FM did at this interview.

His interview is a classic zero-sum event. He has blamed the spiralling crime in the country on the nexus between politicians and the criminals, which is true, and we did not need to hear this from him. We would instead have liked to know where he stands in all this. We assume that he is not a part of this nexus. Then comes the crucial question. Is the party he belongs to a part of this trend? His statement leaves no doubt that it is.

Then, what has he done about this? If he believes his party is a part of this nexus and he does nothing, then both under the eye of the law and conscience, he is as guilty of the acts committed by his colleagues who are directly harbouring criminals. Without taking this responsibility he better not point fingers or give the public the information that they already know.

His interview and his utterances encourage me to focus on our foreign policy in the light of what he said. Bangladesh is a small country and the rest of the world is more or less aware of its conditions. And no one expects Bangladesh to play a role over and above its natural limitations and capabilities. Bangladesh's role as an international peacekeeper is acknowledged, but this is not a very important issue in

international politics and there is no reason to give this more value and importance than it deserves.

The look-east policy is an initiative that deserves recommendation but then it has owed much also to the desire of the Thai prime minister, as far as my knowledge goes. It is the Thai side that took the initiative and we just responded positively.

The state of our foreign policy needs, in my view, to be judged by what we have been able to achieve in our neighbourhood, particularly with India. Here we can plainly see that our relations with our most important neighbour are at its lowest ebb. On all key issues such as water, trade and border, we have moved backwards under the BNP. The new issue of linking the major rivers' upstream is a dangerous development that needs tact, art and patience to tackle.

It seems the FM has left this important matter with just a diplomatic protest. Then, the prime ministers of the two countries have not even exchanged a bilateral visit and the BNP is completing two years in power! There is no doubt that India is a bullying neighbour. This makes the efforts of people like Mr. Morshed Khan that much more difficult. In the past we have seen that provoking India, even on issues where they have been blatantly wrong, have caused us more problems and discomforts.

The only way to change the Indian attitude is to work with India, not without, and put across our



views simultaneously through the official diplomatic channels as well as from contacts at the top, contacts involving our prime ministers, our foreign ministers, and ministers.

Track Two diplomacy is also very relevant. We should also now look seriously to what India needs from us, like the transit, use of ports and gas and accommodate these requests and link them to our needs

from India such as water, market access, etc. to bring the element of reciprocity in Bangladesh-India bilateral relations.

Finally, the Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka has recently given to the finance minister a paper outlining what he perceived as obstacles for Japanese investors. He has simultaneously endorsed copies of this to all diplomatic missions in

Dhaka. The latter act was no doubt a direct interference in our internal affairs. What has Mr. Morshed Khan done about this? Has the Ambassador been summoned to the Foreign Ministry and reminded that he has acted outside the norms of diplomatic behaviour?

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka