

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.

No hartal, please

"There must be some other means to express your disagreement - without harming others' minimal rights and security" - I am quoting from

Mr. Zakir's post on 'Time to rethink about Hartal'. Please take all other means but not hartal - as we are suffering tremendously.

Educational institutions are also being harmed. For example, Dhaka University must postpone all its exams for the hartal or strike by

politicised groups of students and that leads to session jam. Atiq University of Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

Tribute to Mozart

With Europe and America (27 January 2006), I am also paying tribute to the great musician Mozart on the occasion of his 250th birth anniversary. I also appreciate the news item published in The Daily Star on 26 January 2006 in this regard. Mozart's universality is an important part of my inner life and his music creations have a long footprint in my ongoing life. When I first went to Europe, I passed the sky over Europe inside the aeroplane listening to Mozart's classics as I thought Mozart's music is the inner picture of Europe. I respected that great musician in my own way.

He is young as a boy and wise as an old man - never old-fashioned and never modern, carried to the grave and always alive. Engr. Mahub Morshed Alam Dhaka

Learn from Three Mile Island and Chernobyl

As Iran is trying to develop nuclear power, it should take a look at catastrophic nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl.

The most infamous US nuclear accident took place just two weeks before the release of anti-nuclear film, The China Syndrome, starring Jane Fonda and Jack Lemmon. When the film was released, it was immediately attacked by the nuclear industry for depicting an impossible situation. Yet on March 28, 1979, an equipment malfunction at Three Mile Island, near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, turned

into a drama that mirrored many of the scenes of The China Syndrome.

As Time magazine commented at the time: "Reassuring statements spewed from the plant's press spokesmen, sounding as if they were taken right out of the script of The China Syndrome." As the accident progressed, it became clear that no one had any idea what to do. The Kennedy Commission, set up by then President Jimmy Carter to investigate the accident, later found that complacency had so much pervaded the industry that "we are convinced that an accident like Three Mile Island was eventually inevitable." It judged that a meltdown had been avoided through sheer luck.

Similarly, Soviet scientists and engineers -- like their counterparts in the West -- were confident that there was no danger in the use of nuclear energy. In 1985, a year before the accident, the staff at Chernobyl nuclear plant were interviewed for an article in Soviet Life (an English-language magazine for distribution in the United States) aimed at readers who had grown sceptical after near meltdown at Three Mile Island. Nikolai Fomin, Chernobyl's chief engineer, assured the world that his plant was "completely safe" for both people and the environment.

The article in Soviet Life kept returning to the question of safety. Vasily Sklyerov, the Ukrainian energy minister, told the visiting journalists: "The environment is securely protected. Hermetically sealed buildings, close cycles for technological processes with

radioactive agents and systems for purification and harmless waste disposal preclude any [accidental] discharge into external environment." Vladimir Volosko, the mayor of Pripyat, where the reactor is located, even sounded an environmental note while talking about car parking: "We don't want the cars to squeeze out the people. We believe the town of Pripyat should be as safe and clean as the power plant." The rest belongs to history.

During the night shift of May 9, 1986 at Chernobyl, there were what those who survived initially described as "muffled sounds." There was a hiss of escaping steam. And at 1.23 a.m., a fireball appeared in the night sky over the roof of the turbine hall. The nuclear reactor at Chernobyl had just exploded.

When he was in Moscow in 1979, just after Three Mile Island, the governor of Pennsylvania, Dick Thornburgh, made, it seems, an astute analogy between members of the Soviet nuclear establishment and enthusiasts of nuclear power in the West. He was right to wonder whether the March 1979 accident at Three Mile Island would make a difference in the Soviet Union. Would the unbridled enthusiasm for nuclear power of the Soviet specialists be moved by questions of safety raised by a serious accident -- particularly if it happened on their own doorstep? That question remains germane in Iran today.

Iran also sits on an earthquake zone and it has faced several devastating earthquakes recently. A major earthquake around its nuclear power plant would be

catastrophic for its people and people in neighbouring Pakistan and Afghanistan. Mahmood Elahi Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada

Middle Eastern democracy

In one single day the world's most important leaders may have got confused, thinking what they will say in front of the journalists. All famous writers may have started writing history notes, so that it can be preserved for the future. The truth is history has been made, and Hamas, considered as violent and barbaric has won power by the strength of Palestinians. Will we see "men" dropping guns and taking pens, or we will find denials, annoyance, and disrespect? But whom should we represent as "men", the Hamas, who always aimed to win independence, or Israelis, who always considered Hamas (and maybe Palestine) as their enemy.

The news of victory of Hamas may sound surprising to Europeans and Americans, but the results explain that Palestinians were getting annoyed by the Palestinian leadership, which was believed to be deeply corrupt. Democracy is something that symbolises the voice of its people, and gives them the ability to choose and make harder decisions. The image of Palestinian militants holding rifles may raise some negative concerns, but we cannot disregard the situation when these militants move along the

path of democracy. Tahsin Hyder Maple Leaf International School, Dhaka

Insecure all the way

It is hard to remember that I ever went to college without being troubled. I am pretty much insecure like other girls. On the road, even on the bus, nowhere are we secure. Some dirty guys are always after girls. But we don't have anything to say because our social norms don't allow us (girls) to be arrogant to anyone.

Is it a sin to be born as a girl? Is there anybody who can answer my question? Mansura Rajul Eden Mohila College

Moral issues

Earlier people used to follow the morality and the ethics as those were followed by their mentors. Those were followed accordingly for the sake of good and prosperity. So it was a kind of circle like the cyclic quarter formula. Things were supposed to be good at least. There was less violence in their beliefs. People used to live freely in their mind about ten to twenty years back. And now the whole situation has changed.

What has happened to those minds? Well nobody has the answer I believe, or nobody has the courage to speak up. We are in a situation from where we can't come out. It seems our minds are stuck and our souls are sold to those evils that we fear most. We feel proud to be one of them. We like to be driven by them as we consider them our lords and more-over our real mentors have been kicked out by these new mentors.

Now let's get closer to the point. You want to know about these new mentors? Well, you know them.

they are used to as normal (highways, big cars, high-end telephone service and shopping malls) they often lose perspective that this is only available to a small minority here in Bangladesh. It is not possible to gain an accurate perspective during a whistle-stop tour, on the law and order situation, communal environment, price of staples relative to our wages, health access, and difficulties facing our children's education and power shortage.

These are much more important issues to the vast majority of Bangladeshis than the luxury items now available to a tiny section of the elite, and the overseas Bangladeshis who on their short visits to the country have the spending power to enjoy them. Sanjoy Kumar Nath, Chittagong

Bureaucracy

I read the article 'Bureaucracy: Points to ponder' by Kazi S M Khasrul Alam Qudus published on 23 January in DS. In search of causes behind degeneration of bureaucratic moral values he wrote, "The problem might be aggravated in that meritorious yet unscrupulous persons may become evil geniuses." In fact, this truth applies not only to bureaucrats but also to every segment of society. The definition of scrupulousness varies from time to time in bureaucracy in conjunction with the changing form of government. In British India, unfettered royalty to colonial ruler was the precursor of scrupulousness and in independent Bangladesh scrupulous meritorious bureaucrats may be dubbed evil geniuses in case of being disliked by superior elites. He made a recommendation for the recruitment of candidates to public service as well as other responsible jobs "Phenomena such as family background, track record of behaviour pattern, moral character, and innate propensity



SAMS Kibria

It was a most wonderful gesture on the part of The Daily Star to bring out a special issue in remembrance of the late Shah AMS Kibria. By any measure, he was one of the men who did us proud in everything he did or accomplished in his life. Personally, I have very fond memories of him that I will treasure till the end. I recall that it was through one of his articles in your esteemed newspaper that I came in direct contact with him in the early 1990s. There was a bit in the article where I quite did not agree with him and sent off a letter to you. The publication of the letter led to a very gracious act on Kibria's part. He called me to say how much he appreciated my comments. In a country where criticism is generally not handled very well by those at whom it is directed, Kibria was a rarity.

It was my pleasure to get to know him better in the days he served as Bangladesh's minister for finance. During his visits to London, I was deeply humbled when he called me, soon after he landed at Heathrow, to exchange news and pleasantries. I had occasion to see him defend Bangladesh's interests before foreign audiences not only vigorously but also intellectually. He did not suffer fools gladly and made that part of his personality refreshingly clear on the occasions when I found myself in his company. He was dismissive of sycophancy, something that led people like myself into admiring him all the more.

But let me not digress more than it is necessary. But do know that in remembering Shah AMS Kibria through the tributes to him in your special issue, you have not only helped us recall the giant and decent man he was but also reminded us just how impoverished we grow to be when men and women of his kind pass into the beyond before their time. Syed Badrul Ahsan, Leytonstone, London

Mobile phone

As per the DS issue of 16-Jan, the mobile phone operators have strongly criticised the recent order of the telecoms regulator that asked the companies to discontinue their free-call facilities late into the night. The leading mobile service provider argued by saying: "...free night calls were not really meant for students. The offer was for providing additional benefits for subscribers ...". I think this is a misrepresentation of the truth.

CNR, Chittagong

Recently, a news was published in dailies regarding the government's order to stop offer of free call facilities by the mobile phone operators in our country due to corroding of morality of our youths, hampering of their studies, facilitating of communication among terrorists and above all the acute network congestion after midnight.

Moreover, these days the subscribers of some mobile operators have been facing wrong number problem which has increased at an alarming rate; the frustrated subscribers make the right calls but those connect to different numbers. This is why I believe the government has taken the right step to snap all those offers, but however, a leading mobile operator has given a cool offer of couple sim (I call it so) by which one can talk to a particular talking partner almost free of cost after the first minute twenty-four hours a day. As being impartial, for this couple sim offer I think it should win the battle of revoking all the free call offers, because couple sim partners can enjoy this facility between them and there would not be any chance of random or prank calling by the anonymous after midnight. Shahed Ahmed, Wari, Dhaka

They are our own people. Well, folks, I am talking about our so-called sons of gods. Not clear yet, of course, I am talking about our self-proclaimed politicians who love to spare any person for fulfilling their desires. We observe so many days in one calendar year. There should at least be one day in a calendar so that we can express our hatred towards those politicians who don't mind committing crimes against humanity. Mahmud Hassan AUB, Dhaka

might be given due importance along with the academic excellence and psychological aptitude." It reminds me of the caste-based society in traditional India in which schedule caste members didn't get recruited despite having the qualifications. Roney. One-mail

"None of the Above"

Zafar Sobhan makes a compelling argument about adding a "None of the Above" option on the voter slip (DS 27/01/06). Rather, than be constrained to choose the least tainted among a melange of corrupt, inefficient, and morally bankrupt candidates, I would disdainfully reject them all. Of course, in theory, the same effect could be achieved by abstaining from voting, but where electoral malpractices run aplenty there is a grave risk that my vote might be cast by someone else.

The information value expressed by results on the "None of the Above" option could be of immense significance. At the moment, there is effectively no way to express our disapproval of the quality of candidates offered on the menu. The proposed option provides that my vote might be cast by someone else. Next, just how widespread is the dissatisfac-

tion about the quality of candidates? Is it limited to a few armchair idealists or shared by the electorate at large? The answer would be reflected in the number of votes cast under the "None of the Above" category.

Whether the quality of candidates improves in the future depends largely on whether there is a demand for anything better. In this regard, a high count on the "None of the Above" option just might encourage a better genre of people to enter politics. It might not happen soon, but it has to start for it to happen at all. AVoter for "None of the Above" One-mail

Protect environment

I am delighted to see that efforts by a group of people in the country imbued with the spirit of saving natural eco-systems like lakes, rivers wetlands and forests that still exist have drawn attention of expatriate Bangladeshis as well. I thank Shafiq Islam, an ex-student of BUET now living in California, USA and a host of others like him as expressed in his letter "Protect environment" published in The Daily Star on Jan 19 last for their willingness to help and support the

move that residents of Dhaka, especially Uttara have taken to save Uttara Lake from total death Sadly true, with discharge of domestic and industrial effluents and sediments thrown into the lake from all directions, the lake has turned into a narrow creek giving off foul odour. Shafiq Islam has rightly said in his letter that we cannot live and prosper by destroying the ecosystem around us. The administra-

tion must understand that unconstrained development like building concrete jungles in every available vacant space and over lakes, wetlands and water bodies to the utter disregard of basic amenities like sewer lines, pollution control device, waste water treatment facilities and parks for breathing and walking would bring environmental devastation for tomorrow. Our leaders must do the right thing now to create a thriving environment for those who will inherit this fragile country.

In furthering our efforts to create a healthy environment in the country, may I request Shafiq Islam and others who have demonstrated their willingness to participate in the lake development activities to contact me over e-mail: asad_k@bangla.net. Allow me at the same time to congratulate Elizabeth Dean Hermann, Professor of Landscape Architecture, Rhode Island School of Design for her letter on "Filling of wetlands" published on the same date. Professor Elizabeth, an authority on urban settlement on deltaic region who visited Bangladesh several times in the past has sounded alarm about the catastrophic situation that Bangladesh government's inability or rather unwillingness to protect the remaining wetland might lead to. When will the government, mired in confrontational politics, listen to in spite of the dire experiences that such thoughtless and often illegal filling has brought for the people? Md. Asadullah Khan Uttara, Dhaka

NONDITO NOROKEY

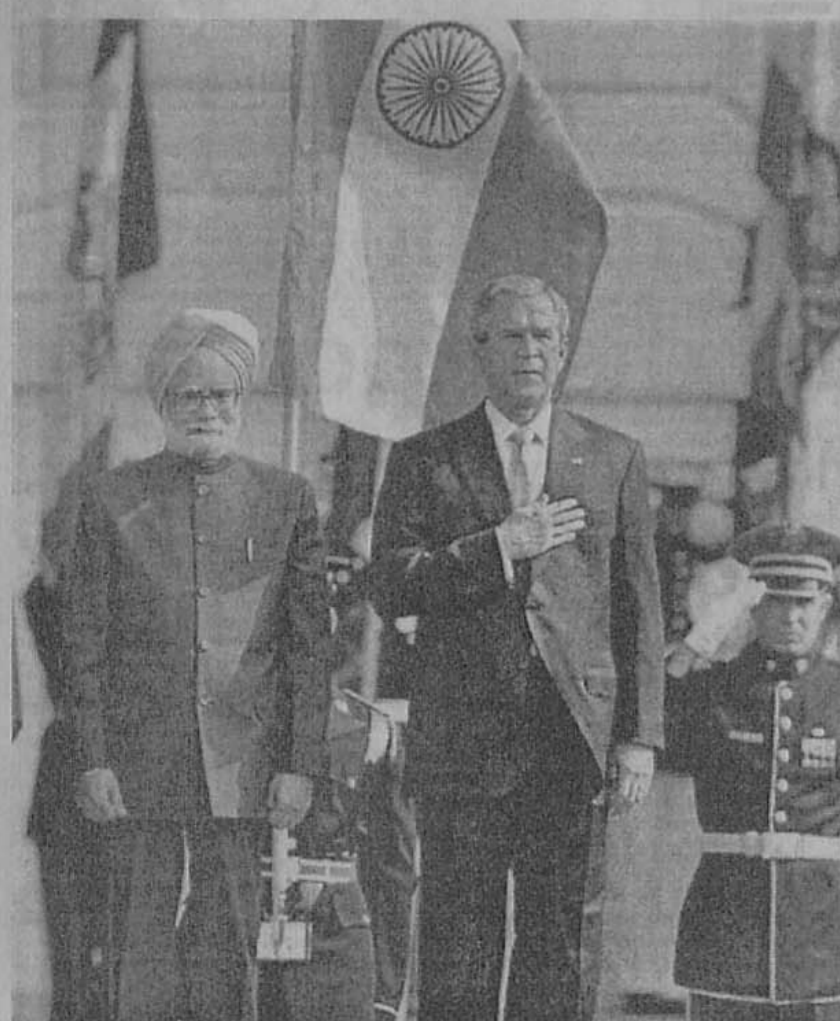
After the disappointment of "Shongkhoneel Karagar", I was apprehensive of another Humayun Ahmed classic being cellularised by anyone other than the author himself. However, after watching Belal Ahmed's "Nondito Norokey" on RTV during the Eid programmes, I wonder whether even Humayun Ahmed himself would have been able to recreate the great story on screen so poignantly.

Arguably Humayun's finest literary work, the film "Nondito Norokey" in its entirety was a superbly crafted production. Based on the life of an easy going lower-middle class family riddled with the starker realities and pains of the world around, the story is very movingly told.

The challenge of filming a well-known book lies in meeting the overwhelming expectations of the readers. In that respect each and every performer of this film stood out. The role of "Rabeya", a mentally challenged young woman was played to perfection by a relatively unknown actress Shoma (I hope that is her name as I missed the title and casting scene and was told by a friend later). Hers and truly powerful performances from Litu Anam, Ferdous, Afroza Banu, Keramat Mowla carry the film throughout. Although, director Belal Ahmed took a few cinematic licenses in some scenes (for example the boat ride), he remained faithful to the original story and that made the eventual viewing an even more memorable experience.

Expectedly, references were made to the popular MTV production of the same story in the 1980s featuring Mita Chowdhury as "Rabeya". In my opinion the current version loses nothing in comparison and in fact is an ideal screen adaptation of a well-known story.

It would be a great injustice to the entire crew of the film if it goes unnoticed by the larger audience in big screen. Reaz Shaheed, DOHS, Banani



Bush to visit Pakistan and India

President Bush has planned to visit India and Pakistan in March. Apparently, his visit to the region does not include Bangladesh. It appears that our country doesn't merit a visit as being a small country in the region and having little or no effect on the war on terror. Pakistan's location next to Afghanistan has given it a significant degree of pull with the current US administration. We do not have nuclear power and therefore we are not a threat to any country other than ourselves (which we have proved over and over again). Our socio-economic condition, political instability and corruption create a negative image for investors. Again the west has little or no vested interest in our country, at least not enough to merit a visit from the leader of the United States. Zeenat Z. Syed, UPS eDeployment