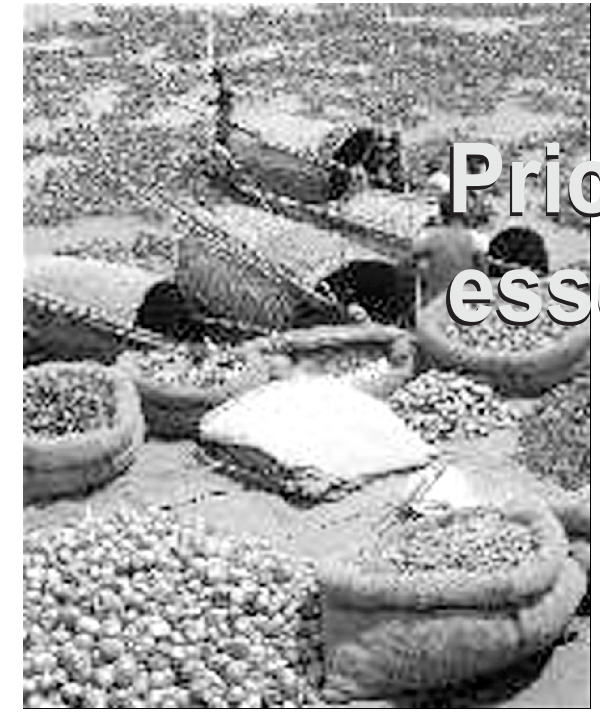


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



BSF firing

With great pain and a bleeding heart, I write to you that BSF continues killing Bangladeshis along our common border. BSF killed two more peasants in our northern district, Dinajpur, a few days ago. The dead body of another peasant was discovered in Hatibandha, Lalmonirhat. Every week, there are some incidents of BSF brutality. Forceful abduction of our nationals (by BSF) is almost a routine affair. My question is: Is India an ineffective state? How come ordinary BSF jawans resort to killing of citizens of another country bypassing democratic institutions? Or has India deviated from the line of OHIMSA, encouraged by signing of a treaty with the bloodthirsty US? Our newspapers are not playing an assertive role in this case. These newspapers report the incidents in single columns, in pages that are overlooked by most readers. Internet versions do not carry anything at all. **Engr. Mohammad Mozammel Ali, PEng.** Dhaka



Prices of essentials

The government should try to have control over the market, as its erratic behaviour has become a source of great trouble to the people in general. **Haroon Ur Rashid** Mohamadpur, Dhaka

Dangerous!

There are obnoxious HIV positive carriers around us. They will intentionally inject you with a HIV virus contaminated needle, without your notice. They will leave you with a tag written, "Welcome to the world of AIDS".

I'm not joking. Some people have already been victims of these criminals. This information is still unknown to the media and public. By the time they get to know, it might be too late. So it is my duty to make you people aware of such acts, usually taking place in areas like New Market, Chadnichauk, Gausia and other public places.

Please take it seriously, otherwise you or your dear ones might be the next victim.

Come forward and make people around you aware of this deadly behaviour as soon as possible. It is now a part of your duty.

Well wisher
On e-mail

successive lines of an army entrenched to ward off intruders. When we are angered or frightened, our nervous system does not wait to evaluate the cause; instead it prepares the body immediately to face a major disaster. Heart action and respiration are speeded up. Sugar for quick energy is released from the liver into the bloodstream. Adrenalin is liberated to tighten blood vessels and increase blood pressure.

The Almighty Allah created us so ingeniously, yet we do not appreciate it. We abuse our body, become vexed with trifling things. When we fall ill we promise ourselves not to bother about trifling matters. But alas, we forget our promises once we get well and go back to the same self-destructive life style.

I feel it is essential to heed the

needs of our health, take good care of us and avoid things which are harmful.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Draft voter list

We fail to understand why it was necessary to go ahead with the preparation of voter list pending decision of the SC. In my view it is the responsibility of the EC to prepare the voter list without any controversy. Instead, the EC has put the responsibility on the poor public to get their name enlisted if omitted, and also to identify mistakes, if any, and draw the attention of the EC for rectification.

Why will the people or the political parties take these responsibilities?

A Bangladeshi abroad
On e-mail

EC

In a democratic country, EC contributes a lot towards the development of democracy. EC has to keep itself above all sorts of controversies. And it has to work independently. Because the transparency and acceptance of election depend on how EC works.

But our EC has proved its organizational incapability by making a controversial voter list.

Siddique
BUBT, Mirpur, Dhaka

Patriotism

I cannot call myself patriotic by any standards (Letter, May 06). The constitution proudly proclaims

"nationalism" as one of its main pillars. Notwithstanding the fact that right-wingers of all nations are intensely fond of the word, how can we espouse civic duty and nationalism at the same time?

Historically, advocates of patriotism and nationalism had always been out to victimise vulnerable groups in society. If you disagree with the status quo, then you are a non-conformist and essentially opposed to the nationalist creed. Before you can blink, you are labelled "unpatriotic".

Words like patriotism and nationalism are diametrically opposed to words like "dissent" and "non-conformity". I am not asking that the latter duo be made the mainstay of national debate (that would be missing the point entirely). My point is that those espousing patriotic fervour usually succeed in criminalising dissent. This should never be allowed to happen in a liberal democracy.

Yahya
On e-mail

Lofty promises

This forthcoming election would change the political situation of Bangladesh. The situation could be worse than now or it could be a bit better. Everything depends on our political masterminds.

They are making lofty promises. Can they live up to them?
Rajni Hasan
Sydney

Two letters

Two letters on 6 May drew my attention. One came from India, while the other was from right here in Dhaka. Entirely independent of each other, yet they felt similarly. Hem Raj Jain stated, "In Bangladesh the armed independence struggle was not mainly by its own people but mainly with the help of the armed forces of India."

The reason for highlighting two separate letters is that one thinks Bangladesh was born not from the sacrifice of Bangladeshis. The other unwittingly supports him by calling it 'unfortunate' that he ended up here. Such a person is calling on Bangladeshis to wake up? Wake up and do what? Revolt against the corruption and unethical society to establish another corrupt and unethical society? By the looks of things here, most people treat all the problems like their wardrobe. It's good if its red, but it should not be blue. Or maybe the other way round. Who cares? Right?
Ahmed Waris
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Honest politicians

Politicians have to be self-less in the first place to steer the nation forward. They ought to rise above their self-interest to fight corruption, nepotism and other ills.

With a few months to go before the general elections, we all have to stand united on this basic proposition and stay ever vigilant.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

Listen!

After a lot of unnecessary bloodshed and muscle flexing on the part of the police and security forces, the general people of Kansat got relieved. Notwithstanding the continuous drum beating of the government about its achievement, the situation is getting rather worse. Now people don't care anymore about their loyalty to any particular party. They just want a normal life unhindered by the whims of the political leaders. Look at the situation at Demra and the party in power should take the hint.

The way people all over the country are victimised by the random blackouts and price hike, I am afraid that the whole country is getting heated enough to be another big Kansat.

Drive as you please!

I was riding a bus on the national highway, built with ADB's funding, supposedly the best in the country though no way fits the highway criteria. Geometric design of the road, capacity in-built, traffic move-

ment pattern, traffic control system and overall discipline all seemed to have been taken and applied from 'Gopal Bhar's book.

The driver asked me, whether he was not driving in the right manner, I just said, "Had you used your radars rightly you would have noticed me how I was seated (or standing) all through." The maximum speed was hardly beyond 70 km. Same average speed I have noticed on the same high way while travelling in my brother's 1600cc saloon car.

Thank goodness, I do not need to travel by launch, using my freedom of choice, I ended 16 years of unbroken loyalty to Biman a few years ago.

I cruise around the city at 80km, on the highways minimum 120km/h (never dared to drive even one kilometre when back home). Saudi Arabia has a population of around 25 million (including foreigners). All major highways are fenced in from both sides and divided by another fence, having 4 to 5 lanes on each side and equipped with radar and patrolled by traffic police equipped with automatic rifle or sub machine-gun in a high speed vehicle. Total accident deaths average between 3 to 4 thousand every year.

China, having a strict regime of discipline and control, with its billion plus population lose about 7,000 people yearly.

In the number game we are still better considering the overall qualities

of our road networks and our demographic and social conditions?

One would get thrilled to know that the road structure itself poses a big danger. Vehicles that ply on the roads are on default rampage as the untrained drivers are in control of those vehicles fitted with broken or malfunctioning gears.

Traffic system that is being put in place can be violated unnoticed and can be tampered with easily.

That is not all, the attitude of the drivers and psychology of the passengers are above the danger level on all counts.

Hope good sense takes over the prevailing all-dimensional dreadful conditions. Please remain alert while you travel.

M M Haque
Jeddah, K.S.A

Buy natural gas from Myanmar

In the recent days we have been seeing reports appearing in both print and electronic media that we have enough natural gas that will last till the year 2020, if no new gas fields are discovered. If our gas situation is so acute then we should actively consider purchase of natural gas from Myanmar, our next-door neighbour. Myanmar is selling gas to China, India and Thailand. As our consumption of natural gas is going to increase substantially in the coming years, I feel it will be prudent for our government to sign an agreement with Myanmar for purchase of gas from them on a long-term basis. In case we ourselves strike large deposits of gas then we could sell part of our own gas to India or any other third country or liquefy and export as LNG. So signing of a gas purchase agreement with Myanmar will be a very good decision in the long run, whether or not we strike gas. This opportunity of buying gas from Myanmar will not remain open for an indefinite period. We have to grab this opportunity now or we will miss the boat and will have to regret later. This purchase agreement has to be transparent.

This Myanmar gas could be the fuel for the development of a "special economic zone" in the southern half of Cox's Bazar district.

Our planners must look at these possibilities, particularly development of "special economic zone" at Cox's Bazar. If this happens we will be able to attract a lot of foreign investment needed for rapid development of our country.

Salahuddin Ahmad
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Savings Certificate

Last year, the government started the Pensioners Savings Certificate with an interest rate of 11%, which was higher than the interest rate of other instruments at that time, and duration of 5 years. The intention was noble i.e. to financially help out the senior citizens in the last years of their lives. I along with some of my fellow pensioners bought some with our life's remaining savings. But alas! In a few months' time the

government increased the interest rate but we continued to receive interest at old rate and the rate was even lower than the rate on other kinds of savings certificates. Government savings certificates give pathetically low return if encashed prematurely and we, the poor pensioners, found ourselves in a financial trap and lot of anguish. We could hold on to the savings certificates and accept lower return for a long time or encash it prematurely at a loss and buy new ones. But five years is a long time and may be there will be another rate increase and we will face the same situation all over again. Finally, as soon as the certificate was one year old I encashed it at 7.5% interest. All in all, it was a big loss I could ill afford and undoubtedly a bitter experience. I vowed never to step into these traps again. This is an example of pig-headed schemes authored by the government that creates adverse and unintended consequences.

Finally, may I suggest that if the intention is to help out the pensioners, the Pensioners Savings certificate should:

- Not have a fixed rate of interest and if there is a rate change, the higher of the initial or the current rate should be given.
- Have 3 three years maturity period.
- Should have small penalty for premature encashment because health condition may create sudden demand for cash. In case of death it should be immediately encashable at maturity rate of interest.
- Should be accepted by banks as security for loans.

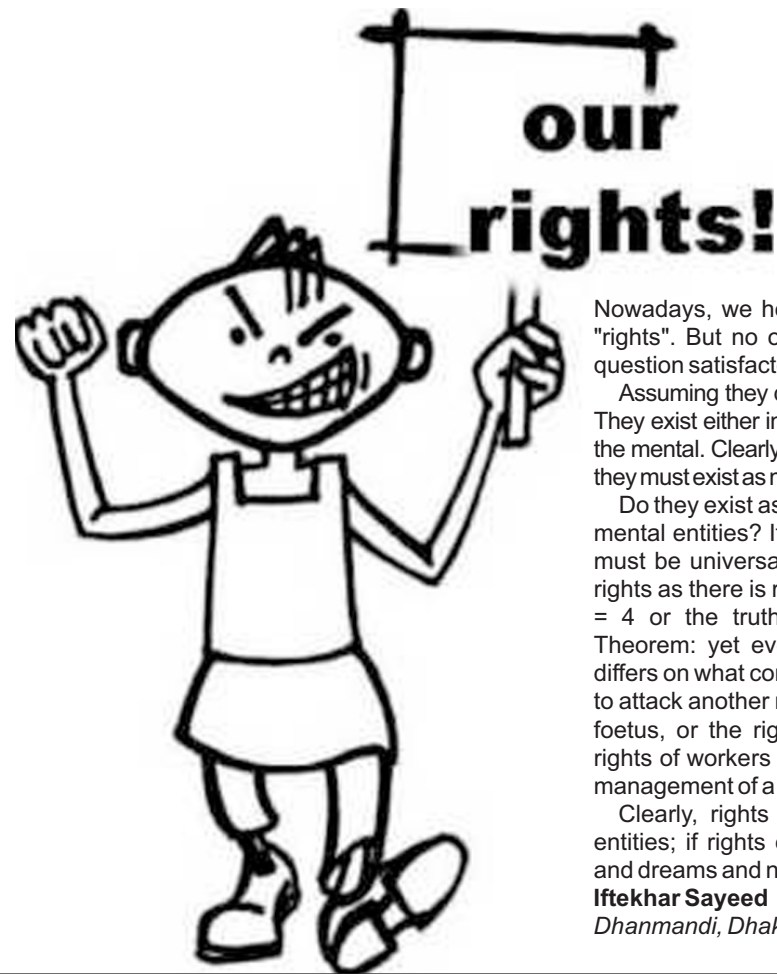
A pensioner
On e-mail

Life style is important

Every morning we wake up from our sleep refreshed and ready to do our daily chores. No one really knows what sleep is or what exactly causes it or exactly why it is needed. The process can only be described.

The Supreme Creator has made our body in such a way that a large number of organs are doing their jobs constantly but we are not aware of it, unless we become sick. Even a speck of dust in our eyes makes us very uncomfortable. We are not conscious of the miracle within us; the organs of the body have a reserve that can be called upon on need. When a man suffers from tuberculosis, part of the lung is destroyed but he has a great deal more lung tissues than he needs. When one kidney is removed, the other kidney doubles in size to take over the function of the removed kidney.

"Not sickness but health," a famous doctor once remarked, "is the greatest of medical mysteries". Every day our body is assailed by millions of germs, many of which can cause illness or even death. Yet we stay well. Through decades of study scientists have been slowly finding out our health is safe guarded by an ingenious series of defences arranged in depth like the



Nowadays, we hear a great deal about "rights". But no one has answered one question satisfactorily: do rights exist?

Assuming they do, where do they exist? They exist either in the physical world or in the mental. Clearly rights are not things, so they must exist as mental entities.

Do they exist as objective or subjective mental entities? If the former, then there must be universal agreement regarding rights as there is regarding, say, that 2+2 = 4 or the truth of the Pythagoras' Theorem: yet even western civilisation differs on what constitutes a nation's right to attack another nation, or the rights of a foetus, or the rights of animals, or the rights of workers to job protection or the management of a firm.

Clearly, rights are subjective mental entities; if rights exist, so do unicorns - and dreams and nightmares!

Iftexhar Sayeed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Face the challenge



There is criticism, from time to time, that the letters page is dominated by "BNP or Awami League haters" and their ilk. Indeed, it is known in some circles as the losers' page.

Bitter and twisted though some of my fellow correspondents may be, I think describing them as losers is an unnecessary reminder of the fate of their favoured political party.

I wonder, however, how many of them have considered doing more than pronouncing pithy judgement on the perceived failings of the government before settling back into their seething pit of despair.

Public comment is an important feature of the democratic process but it is the selection of those who represent us that has a more immediate effect on what is done to or for us.

We live in a time when membership of our major parties is dwindling, despite a rising (and chattering?) population.

Can't stand the thought of another year with the political party in charge. Then why not face the challenge and attempt to discover a credible alternative?

In this way we might start to see a return of politicians who have actually lived in the real world before taking up the challenge of government, not just products of party machines and spin doctors whose only talent and expertise is in the business of getting re-elected, elected and re-elected. All the politicians should consider the unbearable sufferings of the powerless citizens starting from the treatment by 'so-called' security guards in the airport to unthinkable price of petrol and not to mention the steep rise in the price of sugar in the last 12 months?

Najeeb A. Rahman
New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

Bangladeshi star

It's very good to see the Bangladeshi star Nagar Baul James performing in the movie Gangster, presented by Mahesh Bhatt production.

James performed very brilliantly; the song has very good lyrics and sounds good with the brilliant background music. The movie is based on the painful love story of a gangster. The meaning of the song is intense and suits very well with the theme of the movie.

James has performed in a music video based on the same song too.

Cantara Wali Ruhi
DU

