

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.



Whither constitution?

Sound pollution

Dhaka city is full of motorised vehicles. Some of these vehicles are using high-sounding horns that are creating sound pollution. The horns trouble the pedestrians and sometimes people travelling by CNG autorickshaws and rickshaws. Their eardrums come under tremendous pressure.

I would like to request the vehicle owners not to use blaring horns. I would also request the authorities concerned to control use of such horns.

Manzur Hossain
Tejgunipara, Tejgaon, Dhaka

Tribute to Hrisikesh Mukherjee

Hrisikesh Mukherjee's films were a blend of artistic and commercial Hindi cinema. Bimal Roy brought him to Mumbai where he edited his 'Madhumati'. Hrisikesh was a product of 'Bimal Roy School' of direction. His debut as director was 'Musafir' which was adjudged the best film in Indian national film awards. Dilip Kumar had a role and also played back in it. He didn't charge anything. His second venture 'Anari' was a super hit. The film would be remembered for performances of Raj Kapoor, Nutan, Motilal, Lalita Pawar and music of Shanker-Jaikishan. After that there was no looking back for Hrisikesh. He earned respect from all the actors and everybody was eager to work with him at a discount. He gave Rajesh Khanna a once in a lifetime role in 'Anand'. The film will also be remembered for the acting of Amitabh Bacchan and Johnny Walker. There was hardly anybody in the audience who didn't have moist eyes after the show. He gave the then struggling actor Amitabh a powerful role in 'Namakharan'. It also starred Rajesh Khanna. Ironically, this film heralded the beginning of the Amitabh era and the decline of the Rajesh era. Dharmendra, the he-man, would be ever grateful to him for the subtle role in 'Anupama'. He brought Utpal Dutta to Mumbai and showed the whole industry what a great actor he was. Utpal Dutta brought a new dimension to comic roles in Hindi cinema in 'Golmaal', 'Naramgaram' etc.

Hrisikesh's death has left a huge vacuum in Hindi cinema and it would be hard to fill in the near future.

Dr. Bakul Sultan

Indira Road, Dhaka

Muslim world

I am writing with reference to the editorial: "Mounting violence in Iraq," and Post Breakfast: "Is Britain tired of its multiculturalist mantra?" by Muhammad Zamir (September 2).

As a prominent Pakistani journalist Kamal Ahmed recently wrote: "In Sudan and Somalia, Muslims are killing Muslims. In Afghanistan, Muslims killed Muslims in the civil war before the world moved in with daisy-cutters with a UN legal cover. In Pakistan, Muslims kill Muslims then blame it on India. ... Muslims have learnt to kill in many ways. When convenient, they blame it on America."

Muslim extremists are not only trying to bomb London and New York, they are also killing fellow Muslims in their own countries. The sad thing is that very few moderate Muslims have spoken out against such slaughter of fellow Shia Muslims in Iraq.

Muslims should realise that extremists among them are responsible for their present predicament. These extremists are to be blamed for the failure of Britain's multi-culturalism. US President George W. Bush might have bungled in Iraq. But the slaughter of Iraq's Shiite majority had been going on long before the American invasion. During Saddam Hussein's reign of terror, the minority Sunnis ruled by brutalising the Shiite majority. Now the Sunnis have lost their grip on power. But the slaughter of the Shiites goes on unabated. Unless Sunnis and Shias stop hating each other, the American withdrawal will not change anything. In fact, the American withdrawal at this stage might trigger a wider Shia-Sunni war involving other countries. Just look at Pakistan which has been blighted for long by attacks on extremist elements among Shia and Sunni sects, targeting each other's mosques and religious leaders. The attacks often lead to rioting. No American troops are there to fight the local insurgents.

Let's put the blame on the extremists for the present predicament in Iraq. Let's call a spade a spade.

Mahmood Elahi

Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada

Fountain drying up!

The fountain at the crossing of Zia International Airport, which was constructed soon after the BNP came to power and inaugurated by the then Civil Aviation Minister Mir Nasiruddin, is now

an abandoned structure with wild grass growing all around it.

I believe over Tk 1.5 crore was spent to build this fountain (though it looks like a mazaar!).

I think if you publish a report (with photos) on this wastage of public fund, it would be of interest to your readers.

The roadside garden along the Airport Road is also turning into wild bush.

I look forward to your report on such wastages.

Ziauddin Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

Campus politics

There are only 16 public universities in our country. And those are the highest educational institutions for students. There is always a rush for admission in the public universities.

But if you look at the present condition of the public universities, then you will surely discover the evil influence of politics on them. Session jam is the inevitable result of campus politics and it is the students who have to pay a heavy price for it.

The ruling party and the opposition should address the issue in the greater interest of the nation.

K Amin, Chittagong

What are we doing?

We need to be pragmatic and look over Return of Investment (ROI). Usually, ROI is based on years of operation and if we are sloth in processing big investment, I think none will invest in Bangladesh. To me, my country is more important than a few gatekeepers.

Above all, our people are hard working and they deserve a better life.

Sarfraz Khan, Colorado, USA

Suffering pensioners

It's a matter of great regret seeing the aged pensioners who are over 65-70 years of age standing in long queues and waiting for hours just to withdraw their monthly pension—the amount of which is insufficient to maintain themselves, leave alone their families. Sick, tired or weak no matter what condition they are in, these people are compelled to stand in the long queue.

Not only that, sometimes these elderly gentlemen are treated very badly by the officers on duty. A slight mistake on the part of the senior citizens usually invites gross misconduct. Some of the pensioners are coming from miles away, especially the ones who live outside Dhaka

city. On the first day of every month, more than 500 pensioners gather at the GPO. Most of them arrive by 7:00am just to be the first one to submit the form. The payment is made through a counter where the man takes his own time (slow as a snail) counting the money several times and the most intolerable is that five officers have to sign one pension form before the pensioner withdraws his money.

In these modern times, cash transaction has become one of the most sophisticated services in the world. But not in our context!

People are withdrawing huge amounts in minuets from banks and other financial institutions that have to deal with thousands of customers. Why do the pensioners have to suffer just to draw their monthly pension, after working for many years in the public sector? The authorities should consider the pensioners' position and take such measures as will make it easier for them to draw the pension money.

Peter J. Rebeiro
West Rajabazar, Tejgaon, Dhaka

Our bureaucracy

On August 8, 2006, the audience and hosts of Agamir Kontho (The Voice of Tomorrow) stated that in the future the quality of the bureaucracy would be mediocre, because meritorious students are reluctant to join the Bangladesh Civil Service. Desire to immigrate and pursue higher studies abroad, fear of being posted outside Dhaka, conducive working conditions in non-government agencies, corruption and a recruitment system characterised by anachronistic examination methods, leakage of question papers, nepotism, manipulation, long waiting periods were cited as some of the factors which discourage them.

Such perceptions do not accurately portray the quality of prospective civil service candidates or people serving in the bureaucracy. When Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan, people primarily with a liberal arts or science background appeared for the examinations. However, now people who have studied engineering, medicine and agriculture also take the examinations. There are also a larger number of people competing for each available post. As a result, obtaining a job with the civil service has become extremely competitive. This ensures that barring those who are recruited on the basis of quotas, not the best are

The Prime Minister in a recent rally in the city underlined the basic principle of democracy and said that the country would be run according to the constitution, and not according to the whims of any individual or group. It is a praise-worthy realisation. But has she or her government allowed the country to run like that? Is it not an alternate powerhouse that is running the affairs of the country? Is the crossfire a constitutional process? Is the repression of opposition politicians and their freedom of speech constitutional? Is the BNP running according to its own constitution? Moreover, the constitution is not a holy book. It can be amended if the situation demands.

We would like to see Bangladesh being run by people's representatives who are genuinely elected by a popular mandate and not through unfair electioneering. Any process, which will ensure free and fair election, must be welcomed. If the PM is so confident about returning to power, why her party is not going for positive reforms? Any other process will create anarchy and chaos. If the government is thrown out of power by a mass upsurge, there will be massive disorder and loss of property and lives, which is not at all undesirable.

The custodians of democracy must realise that harsh truth.

Salque Sufi
Melbourne, Australia

selected. Educational and training opportunities are also provided to recruits in Bangladesh and abroad, some people who have attended training or educational programmes overseas have migrated, candidates receive training on a diverse range of functional skills and state of the art technologies/techniques methods and many obtain employment abroad. These factors have attracted people with commendable academic records. Furthermore, widespread corruption, nepotism, manipulation takes place under the façade of job reservations for women and minorities in development financing institutions, NGOs, commercial organisations, research academic institutes. As a result, recruitment procedures are inconsistent and the quality of people working in these institutions is questionable. Commercial enterprises, MNCs, NGOs and development financing agencies also post employees outside Dhaka. Hence contrary to the views expressed in the programme, Bangladesh will not have a mediocre bureaucracy in the future. Civil service personnel are well trained, educated and continue to perform well, despite being poorly paid.

Faisal M Rahman
On e-mail

'The voting right'

The 'voting season' has approached. It's not only our 'leaders' but also the common people who are exited about the upcoming election. It seems very ridiculous to me that the ignorant 'leaders' (most of our present political figures are) and the unaware citizens would decide who will run the country for the next five years. Isn't it funny that those who have no knowledge of economics, international relations or even political science etc (related to governance) are exercising their so called voting right to decide the country's future. How come it's so easy to get the voting right in this 21st century when we need to achieve everything including the water we drink!

I firmly believe that if we really want to practice 'democracy' in Bangladesh, we should introduce a prerequisite test leading to the voting right for the citizens as well as the uneducated political 'leaders'. At the same time, we should not pay any heed to any other countries where 'democracy' is practiced as long as this prerequisite is effective for

us. If it happens, it is true some people would lose their so-called voting right, but I think the citizens would also appreciate this idea if they could lead a better life.

Shaifur Rahman
London, UK

Gory images in newspapers

The recent trend of publishing gruesome, bloody pictures of dead bodies or severely injured persons in daily newspapers is unsuitable for the small children in a household. Those horrific pictures being printed in the media in colour with blood all over the person's face and body make it even more unendurable.

In a household, the daily newspaper is accessible to everyone including the children and we, as parents, definitely do not want our kids to be exposed to such cruelty in print or in person.

It is, in fact, somewhat uncouth and ungraceful to publish such frightening images to make the story sensational.

Halimul Mannan
Monroe, Louisiana, USA

Traffic jam

I am a permanent resident of Uttara. I face terrible traffic jams when I try to get out of my home. I face a huge traffic jam near Sector-1, where two new gas stations have been set up. The traffic police have failed to do anything to ease the congestion.

Another traffic jam occurs regularly at the intersection of the roads running from Kuril, Khilkhet and Baridhara.

Can't the authorities do anything to reduce the above mentioned traffic jams?

Samiha Esha
Uttara, Dhaka

Dialogue, at long last

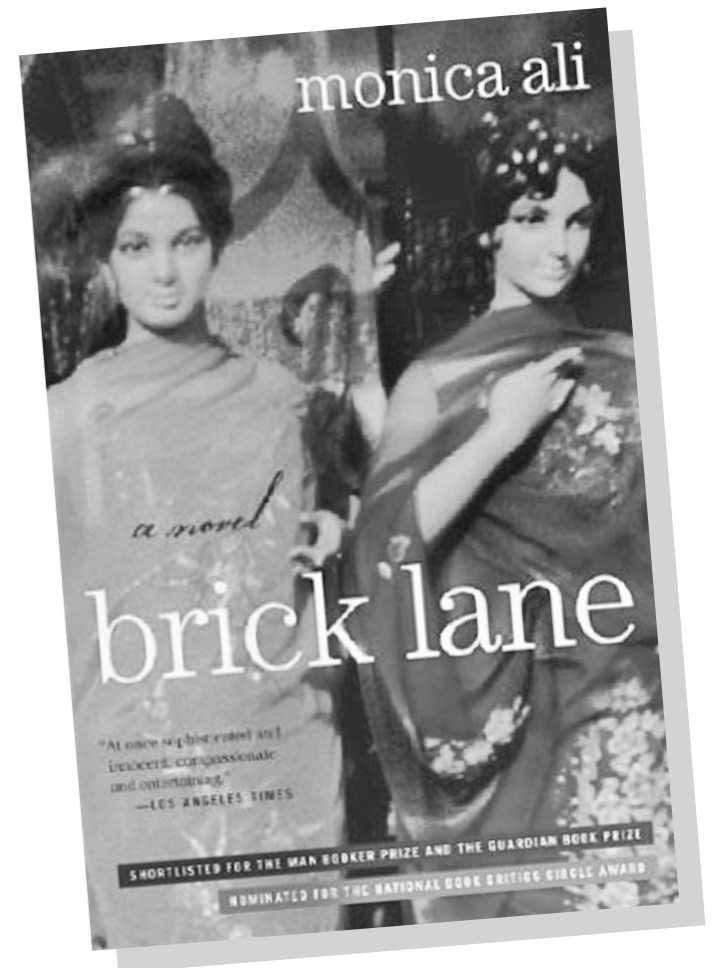
We became tired to the bones by the row over the dialogue between the government and the opposition political parties, it was going on and on. Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil said that his party was ready to sit for a dialogue if the government made a formal offer. Clearly the ice was melting, but we were dismayed by the words of BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan when he said that he did not feel the necessity of sending a formal letter.

We hope that a fruitful dialogue will be held between the two parties.

Nur Jahan, Chittagong



CONTROVERSY OVER 'Brick Lane'



As your readers may be aware, there seems to be a brewing controversy over the book entitled "Brick Lane" by Monica Ali, a female writer born to a Bangladeshi father and raised in Britain. Some of the Sylheti residents of Brick Lane (mostly middle aged men) are said to be up-in arms about the book's rendition into a movie. Their slated feelings against the writer are so strong that these have manifested themselves into street protests in Brick Lane in London.

As an expatriate Bangladeshi who lived in London for over a decade, I have to admit that I enjoyed reading Ms Ali's book because I could relate to the events, the places and the characters of her book both in London and in Bangladesh. As a Bangla interpreter for the British courts, social, health, prison and immigration services, I have come into closer contact with the Sylheti community in London that most other "Dhakaia" Bangladeshis might otherwise do in the course of their stay in the United Kingdom. It is therefore with some degree of confidence I can state that characters like Nazneen and Chanu, the doctor, Nazneen's lover, her neighbours really do exist however much painful it may be to accept it. I have met young, battered Bangladeshi women in shelters still in their teens and twenties who were married off to people twice their age; a Bangladeshi man who was serving a custodial sentence for the murder of his unfaithful wife as well as children whose alcoholic Bangladeshi mother had been fighting a custody battle with the grandparents.

Having now crossed the Atlantic, and made the United States my new home, I have equally enjoyed reading Jhumpa Lahiri ("The Namesake" and "The Interpreter of Maladies"), a talented female writer of my generation who was born to Bengali parents but grew up mostly in the East Coast of the US. I have a three-year-old daughter who is American by birth, and British, Irish and Bangladeshi by heritage. I am sure some day she will grow up and want to know about all her forefathers. Essentially, writers like Lahiri and Ali help reconcile the cultural gaps between the first and second-generation immigrants that have naturally emerged in the Bangladeshi/Bengali diaspora in the UK, US and elsewhere. I don't expect to impose any cultural values over my daughter but hope to guide her to become a well-rounded, confident and successful person who can be proud of all her heritage. My daughter is the embodiment of a world that is increasingly becoming a melting pot.

So what is this foul cry in Bangla Town's Brick Lane really all about? It's about that age old evil called "power".

The Sylheti community in Britain has been one of Bangladesh's greatest exports; they have made Bangladeshi food the national food of Britain. Not only did they play a crucial role by raising public awareness of the atrocities committed by the Pakistani army against us during the war of independence, but they continue to be a major force in transforming Sylhet into one of the most developed places in the "old country".

Shabbir A. Bashar, PhD
Vancouver, Washington, USA

BIMAN - a bottomless basket



This refers to your editorial of 6 September. While agreeing to most of the contents, I am not sure why you are pleading to save Biman. It's

almost like the government's scheme of rewarding the criminals with an opportunity to change the colours of their money to white. Your editorial

does not tell about getting those criminals on the docks or establishing accountability of poor taxpayers' money. Putting more money into Biman's basket will not solve its problems; looters and unions always remove the basket bottom.

Do we have to have a National Carrier? At this cost? Whose purpose will it serve? Lots of people are making lots of money using Biman. It's no secret. Pumping in more money would be a waste. It's time we deregulate our aviation sector. Just look at our neighbour India, the aviation sector has taken off with a BANG after deregulation. State owned carriers announced reforms to stay in the races. Indian private sector airlines have ordered more than two hundred aircraft so far. It has grown at such a pace that they had to hire hundreds of resources like pilots / engineers from overseas. Our

private sectors are dynamic too. Our RMG/knitting/textiles, ceramics and pharmaceutical industries have shown that we can do it. Our telecom sector has probably revolutionised the way we do business today. It's overall contribution to our GDP is staggering.

We can do it with the aviation sector as well. Our biggest asset is we have a very hard working young work force. What we need is the CORRUPT government to stay away from it. Aviation is not about shuttling passengers only, aircraft maintenance business has a huge potential as well. With our young and cost effective work force we can offer very competitive services. Biman could have excelled in this specialised sector, but the looters took away everything. For the records - Biman's biggest expenditure is its aircraft maintenance. That's where the newly

infused funds will go. Vultures are already screaming for their unpaid bills!

What we need is a reformed New Biman. We may even consider changing its name. It has lost its brand value. It has an adverse negative image. A business savvy management is the call of the day. It has to be restructured to have a sensible aircraft-employee ratio. The recruitment policy has to be streamlined. Can we do all these under government ownership? Probably not. I am sure foreign carriers will show interest if it's privatised. They stayed away from the government offer when it intended to retain the majority share.

Do it now. Privatise it. Do not spend my money to fill looters' coffers.

Imran Ahmed Sarkar
Singapore