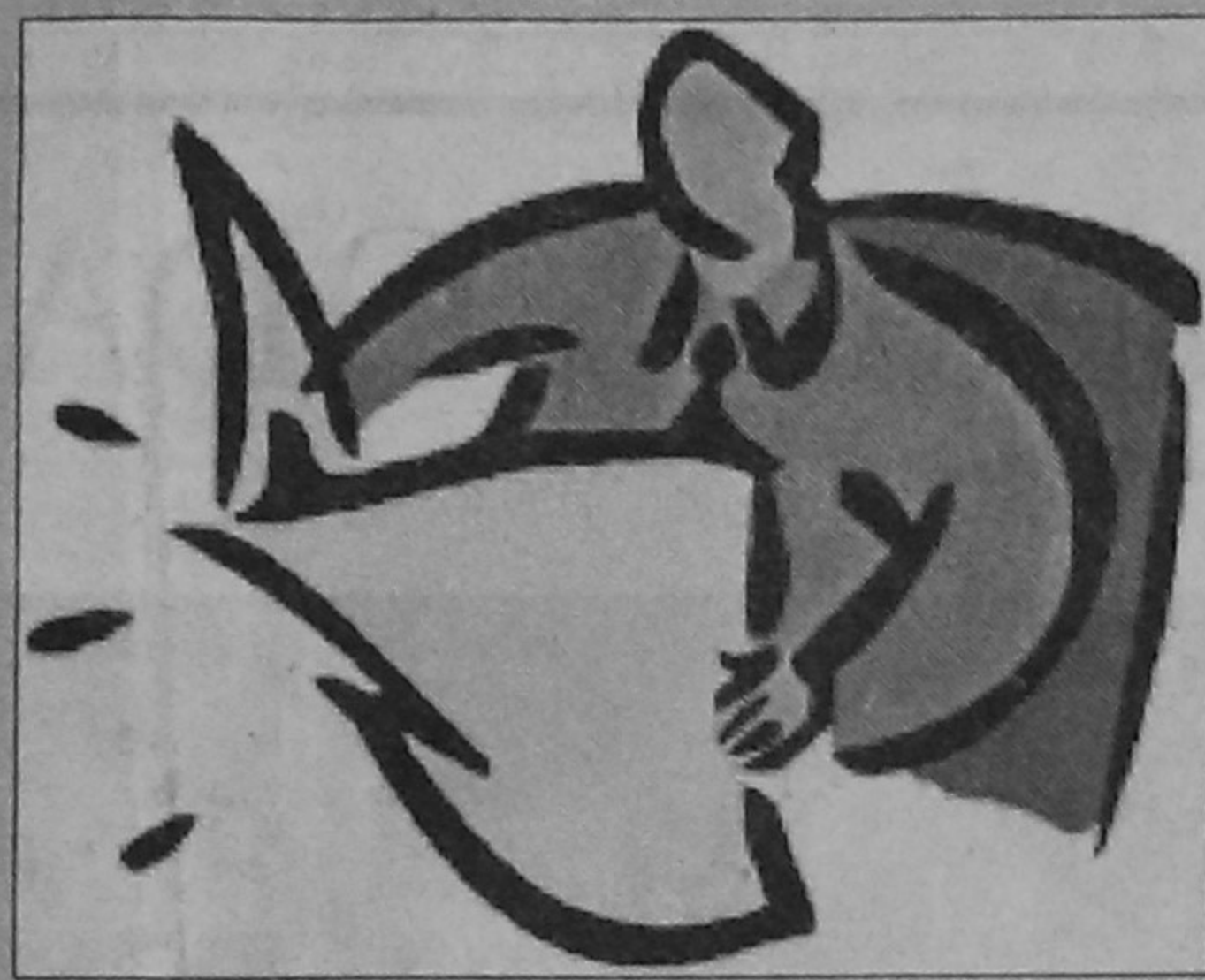


"Letters to the Editor and the reader's right"



Whose letters are they anyway?

This letter refers to "Letters to the Editor and the reader's right" by Ms. Samia Rahman (August 26).

The debates (or I should call reader's view and judgements) in your daily has had always been healthy and purposeful. The debate on "Wrong wording in a Rabintra Shangeet" which perhaps prolonged for the longest time was quite appealing at the beginning but became monotonous at a later stage. The reader's judgement was obvious that the singer Ms. Bannya was wrong.

The reader's views on President's exit was clear that BNP was at fault and opinion on police action (atrocities) on Shamsunnahar Hall was that the police were guilty. There were/are opinions on World Bank, Kamal Ataturk, English Medium Schools and many more where readers have expressed their views but a clear verdict and an end result may always not be probable. Debates should not continue for time without end for a verdict or a result. The Editor must have his authority to stop when he feels that enough is enough. Lubna Chowdhury, California, USA

I fail to agree with some of the readers who have said "... Isn't it better if those who started the debate ended it i.e. the readers?" and "... request The Daily Star not to get involved with the letters and let it go as it is..."

Now, how is any newspaper expected to moderate/manage such write-ups from a vast and unspecified number of people? What is next? Do we expect to see full-page editions on a single debate (as opposed to reaction to a particular incident of national significance)?

The Daily Star might become a "People's Paper" instead of "People's Page"! It is actually the duty of the Editor to apply judgement to decide when to end a certain debate before it takes the proportions of, say a "slam-book".

In a country beset with so many types of problems we also have to make room for the newer and more relevant subjects.

A Distressed Observer
Chittagong

thank Mr Rajib, Mrs. Nicky, Eritra and Mr.ES for their views on Army. A military person
Military Establishment

I think the letter writes in The Daily Star have hit on a very interesting question.

If I understand correctly, the Moakhali Fly Over is a part of the Dhaka Urban Transport Project, which is in part financed and assisted by the World Bank.

According to Frederick T. Temple, World Bank Country Director, "I hope DUTP represents the beginning of a new, integrated approach to overall urban sector development in Dhaka."

Well and good. Now it is clear that despite weeks of letters on this issue the army will not lower itself to comment on why civilian traffic is permitted entry from Banani but not from the Airport road Heroes Live Forever gate.

Now my question is to whom ever in the WB deals with DUTP. When planning the Moakhali Flyover, did you consider using the contentment as an alternative route? Or did that possibility never occur to you? The army will not bother to address mere civilian concerns but the World Bank must reply. Azad
Dhaka

Where is Dr Chowdhury in times of dengue?

A professional cannot avoid responsibilities under any circumstances, and more so if he is a social elite, or a national figure. This statement is true for professionals in any field. In this instance I have Prof. B. Chowdhury in my mind, a household name in Bangladesh, first, as a physician and, second, as a party leader.

Until recently, he was found to have taken great pains in discharging his responsibilities to individuals and to the nation. We heard him discussing health-related issues on BT. Those are still fresh in our mind. We heard him educating, consoling and reassuring us when we were in the grip of a heart racking fear, as in the case of an outbreak of plague in Surat in India. Even in the recent past as President of the Republic of Bangladesh he was seen attending nearly all national and international health related forums in the country. Now we do not hear him any more, although we are passing through a crisis period, with dengue in epidemic form, including maladies of ongoing floods.

We wonder what keeps our great teacher aloof from us. Where is he at the hour of need?
Moni Khan
Dania, Dhaka

Wishful thinking!

I'm referring to our ever-ambitious Minister Mir Nasiruddin's wishful thinking of making ZIA the most modern airport. Has he been to any other airport in the world? I suggest he make a few trips to different airports in the world and realise what a modern airport is before making such ludicrous comments. It is one thing cutting ribbons to inaugurate car parks, cash counters, open seminars and another to actually make a modern airport.

Mr Minister just look at what your student's swing did twice on the same day at the same place in Dhaka? You people can't even prevent a disease like dengue or provide simple treatment to the patients. Look at your records of the last one-year. The whole country knows where we are heading and you come, open a parking (could be done by a small official easily), and deliver long speeches along with all officials wasting a

huge amount of public money and the day. Is this how you are going to build a modern airport?
Mahmoud Saeed
Abu Dhabi, UAE

"Hilsha" or "Ilish"?

As a Bangladeshi, I can tell you that there is no Bangladeshi fish called "Hilsha". Our national fish is "Ilish", which, as far as my taste buds are concerned, is the best tasting fish in the whole world.

The spelling "Hilsha" must be one more of the colonial imprints we are still carrying in our usage of the English language. It would be nice to see a newspaper taking bold steps to throw away the "Hilsha" and start using the proper name "Ilish", the best fish in the world.
Billah
Dhaka

Ekushey Television

Instead of punishing Ekushey Television why not punish its owners imposing heavy fines (to the tune of millions)? Let ETV live to serve the millions of people of the country who have judged the channel as the best for catering the most balanced news and the most clean and tasteful programmes ever witnessed and enjoyed by them.
Wahid Shahi
Dhaka

Jet Fuel

The on going jet fuel scam is too much. They are selling over priced jet fuel to the BPC which is unsuitable. That's amazing.

I want to know who owns Energy International. It would be very interesting to see the connections this company has to BNP.
MA
Dhaka

Where are those sanctuaries?

It was 1948 or 1949, I do not remember the exact time. I was a little child then. My uncle who was a university teacher at that time took me to a students' hall with him. He had a habit of taking his little dear nephews and nieces to important places. Believe me, I at that tender age felt as if I entered a sanctuary. It was like a sacred place where learners and teachers were absorbed in academic as well as cultural activities. In my later life I searched those sanctuaries, but alas! I was disillusioned. I earnestly desire my childhood dream come true again on this very dear campus.
Prof. Ayesha Sultana
Department of Philosophy, DU

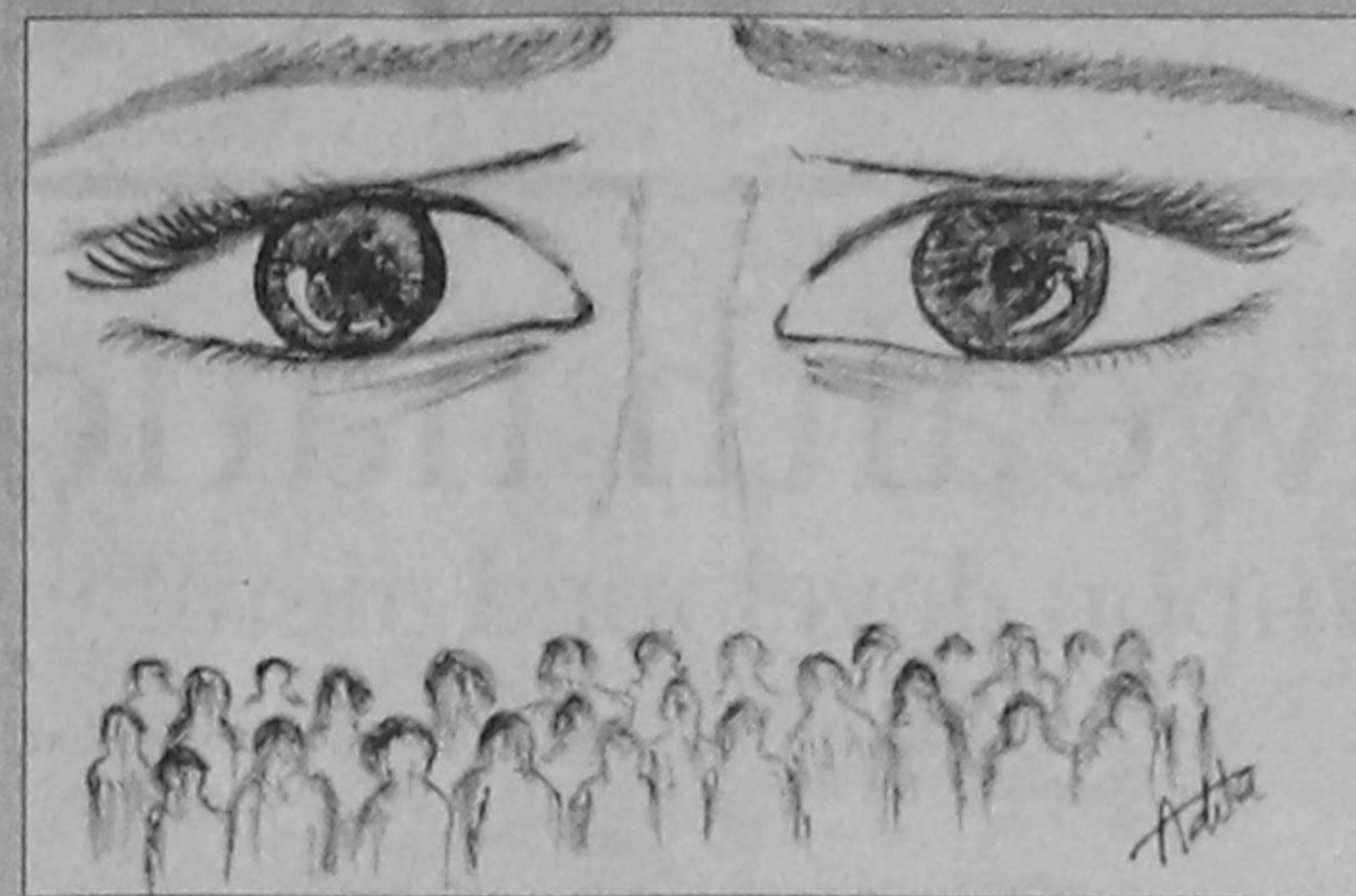
Monorail for modern Dhaka

The letter written by the President of Georgia Monorail in The Daily Star is interesting and so also the reactions of the readers. We all suffer as soon as we set foot on the roads of Dhaka and something must be done about it. But the performance of the planners and controllers of the roads and vehicles during the last say 25 years have been appalling.

So far we have circumvented the traffic problem (any other problem for that matter) by introducing alternative measures instead of solving it at a much less involvement. The monorail definitely is a modern and efficient means for mass transit but such a project for Dhaka city, as it is now, is not only unjustifiable it will add more chaos instead of solving the traffic problem.

Most of our pedestrians are less vocal and do not know what they could have for the tax they pay to the state. You are talking about moving a lot of people per minute in the city in the morning rush hour and the same number of people in the afternoon. But please imagine all these people

Chabi Rani and violence against women



Our blind eyes

Although I am a successful professional woman, my family, children and husband are my first priority. I naturally respect my husband's wishes and those of the elder senior male members of my family in addition to those of the women seniors. I do not remember my mother ever having to tell my brother to respect the women in his life-- but I expect that came naturally because women in my family are also respected immensely.

Recent horrific events in the country, including the Chabi Rani case shows that there has been a complete erosion of values leading to respect of women in particular and of human dignity, in general, in our country. I am not denying that there may be many underlying causes in our social structure. But I think that the time has come that we introduce certain basic concepts in the minds of children so that these are ingrained into their very personalities. Nothing really comes naturally-- I was taught at my school about certain manners, like how to hand over sharp objects, how to say 'thank you', etc.

Course curriculum on how women are responsible for building the fabric of society, important women in our history, sacrifices made by women should be introduced. Some basic slogans should come in our curriculum along with stories to make the point clear. This could even be aired on the radio and TV. For

example, 'The benefits of telling the truth', 'respecting the wishes of elders', 'how wrong it is to give verbal or bodily harm to fellow human beings', 'respecting women because she is either the mother, daughter, or sister of someone just like you', 'helping others who are more vulnerable than you', 'women and men are equal in the eyes of God', 'women have equal amount of brain compared to men', 'ones responsibilities at the job, in the home, to one's country, etc. Concepts of Nationalism, communal harmony, concepts leading to pride in our country should also be introduced. I have heard that in Japan, children are even taught how to cross roads properly and how to clean their classrooms and toilets.

I would like to see violence against women stopped, would like to see women being able to move about freely in public transports, being able to do jobs without fear, being able to walk in the streets without hearing taunts and being molested. Why should only the 'Sammaita Nari Samaj' protest against violence to women? Where are our menfolk?

A concerned woman
Dhaka

I am really dumbfounded after hearing the news of inhuman tortures on Chabi Rani by BNP cadres inside Rampal BNP office of Bagerhat. What is happening in our country? Where is the security for its general citizen?

I am more surprised by going through the news titled "Prime accused sheltered by top BNP leader" (August 20), where I did not find the identity of this so-called top BNP leader. Why wasn't his name mentioned?

Please disclose these so-called dishonest and criminal politicians to save the society from their evil designs.

Any way, my heartfelt thanks to the brave journalists for their ceaseless efforts in informing the truth to the common people as well as in making the ground work for remedial measures.

In the present horrible lawlessness everyone's life is at risk either common people or journalists. If the government does not take exemplary measures, this horrible situation will never improve.
M.S.Uddin, Nagoya, Japan

Spare the patients from spraying

It is appalling to see that mosquito repellent insecticides are being sprayed in a hospital ward with the patients in their mosquito nets and even with their saline dangling (August 26)!

This goes beyond any imaginable insanity! It is fully understood that the dengue scare can lead to desperate means-- but not to this extent! The healthy spray man has his mouth covered-- but the poor patients have nothing to cover up. In the first place, they should have been out of the ward before the spraying began.

This goes against any norm and may even create more health problems for the hapless patients.
Sarwar Ahmed
Dhaka

Great army

I am writing in reference to some of your letters regarding military strategy and property. The writers of these letters such as Mr. Emile, Mr. Kireiti, Mr. Ahmed Hasan, Mr. R Ali, Mr. Biggles, Mr. Abdul, Mr. MAH and many more doesn't know the military strategy, property and the rules and regulations. Hence they came in an argument with these things.

First I want to ask everybody one question: will any one of you will allow any unknown person to trespass your territory?

Mr. Emile and one of his friends were turned back from the cantonment gates on the 16th of July. They are tax paying citizens of Bangladesh, they employ over 5,000 people directly and almost twice that number indirectly and bring in Tk. 120 corers annually. That doesn't mean they have the right to enter the cantonment.

I think Mr. Emile has visited India, Pakistan, U.S.A. and U.K. I would like to ask Mr. Emile that if he visits to these countries again, asks their citizen whether they pay tax or not and whether they are allowed to enter any military base (cantonment)?

Mr. Kireiti I would like you to ask you three questions:

a) How do you know there are only one C-130 cargo, five helicopters and a few Cessna?

b) If you convert the old airport (Tejgaon Airport) into a park where will be the National Day parade and the Independence Day display held?

c) If the Army officers play golf all afternoon, then who goes to the voting centres maintaining law and order, controlling traffic in Dhaka city, hunting the so-called Shanti Bahinis in the CHT, giving security to the V.V.L.P.s?

Mr. Ahmed Hasan, our Army can fight back the foreign attacks but as you know the government of PRB is a peace loving country, the army has orders from the top not to fight back. Don't you remember our BDR jawans killing 14 B.S.F soldiers and wounding many more, in Roumari?

How do you say Bangladesh army officers are the wealthiest? Are the police, the gas meter readers and telephone meter readers all dead?

"English medium students in trouble"



The vanishing alphabets

I am writing this letter referring to "English Medium Students in Trouble" (August 26). Mr. Islam is saying that "There are two important things for the school level students in general: a solid concept on the basis subjects taught in school levels and the capability to express the themes in a clear and easy way."

What is he trying to say? I mean is he saying that these two general are available only in English medium students and not in the English medium ones? I understand that he is trying to say that for higher education one's mother tongue is necessary and I agree. But does it mean that the English medium students don't have good performances in higher education?

I would also like to correct his other sentence saying "performances of Bengali medium students in higher education are far better than English medium students". How does he know that? That just depends upon the person if he will do good or bad whether he studied in English or Bengali medium.
Sanjana, Dhaka

My wife went to her favourite tailor's shop and found two teenage girls dressed as 'western' as possible asking for their clothes in a strange Bengali accent. She thought that they must have been 'brought up in the US, Canada (who doesn't have one or the other relative there?)'. One of them was arguing that the shirt was a wee bit longer than she wanted. My wife thought the shirt must be for a 7-8 year old but was astonished to find that this girl went to the dressing room and was back with the shirt on! The tailor was all apologetic because of the length, and the girls left with a huff.

The tailor explained that their mother had called, asking that first, to refuse the order, and if that fails, the shirt be made long. The girls were of Dhaka, English medium schools, as confirmed by the tailor. This is not true for all students studying in such schools but tells us how far it can go. The dress code in some English medium schools is no less good than what these girls had on. One of such schools even told a colleague's wife who qualified to teach, that she could join their teaching staff only if she did not wear the scarf on her head-- yes, in Bangladesh, not in Turkey or France!

English is an international language. To succeed, we need to be good in English. However, it must not be at the altar of sacrificing our values, culture and heritage.
Sarwar Ahmed
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Some people just need a chance to sling mud on English medium students. They would make up false stories and do anything to degrade us. I have been appalled by the topic. It all started when one person questioned the Notre Dame College authority about its admission system. But none of the anti-English medium people could clarify his point. All they did was damage the schools' reputation. I was disgusted to find some teacher making fun of the Bengali of his students. Then why do you teach in that school?

The worst part is that we are blamed for faking accents. Nobody fakes the accent, it is just the way some people talk and if anyone has a problem with that, please ignore the 'fakers'. Learn how to look the other way when you see an English medium student coming near you. And you know what, I am proud of my accent.
Haji Mohammad Isam
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Biman saga

A few days ago, I wrote to you about my sister's family bribing Biman people for their return flight confirmation to New York. Here is the progress.

August 22. My Brother-In-Law got his flight confirmation because he purchased his ticket with Bangladeshi Taka. He came to NYC, shivering inside the Biman because the flight had only 50 blankets for a passenger load of 300 plus. He had to leave alone because his family was waiting for flight confirmation.

August 23. My sister and her daughter were ready to offer 10,000 Bangladeshi Taka bribe at the suggestion of Biman. But this bribe only gave a promise of flight confirmation not an actual one. She missed her first day of work. Any more delay will result her daughter to miss the first day of High School in NYC.

August 25. She approached some powerful members of Bangladesh Society to help her flight confirmation. One phone call to one Minister did the trick. She is catching the first Biman flight to New York City.

If one dares to fly Bangladesh Biman, please carry your own blanket. If your return flight is open, have some heavyweight friends and relatives in Bangladesh Society. Otherwise your planned trip back to home in the US may be derailed.

I will need a lot of courage to fly Biman.
AG
Santa Clara, California, USA

The government should show similar guts as it did with the Adamjee Jute Mill and let Biman Bangladesh die a natural financial death. Biman has been nothing but a drain on the national treasury, a result of years of mismanagement and politicisation of its leadership. It has proven abundantly clear that the government has no business running an airline.

Instead, private airlines should be allowed to compete and ply routes as those of Biman. A healthy competition will improve the quality of air travel for Bangladeshis. Once things improve, you will see many, who once flocked to foreign airlines, come to these new startups. Everyone knows that many foreign airline mistreat Bangladesh nationals, and most of them would prefer travelling on their own airline but have no choice because of Biman's poor service.

Karim Abdullah
One-mail

No hockey team!

I was surprised to learn that the Sports Ministry is sending boxing, wrestling and weightlifting teams for the forthcoming Asian Games instead of sending a hockey team.

Besides cricket we have potential in hockey. By the by, what is the logic of sending 25 officials in a contingent of 74-member? Is the tournament for players or the officials?
Mohibul
Dhaka

Zakat system

This is a reply to a letter regarding reform of the zakat system in our country (August 19). The writer has really done well by suggesting better ways of giving zakat. I also believe that by using the money of the zakat in creating employment facilities for the poor and the unemployed, we can certainly combat unemployment and poverty problem with success. The government should ban the collection of the income tax and should collect zakat on a collective basis from the zakat payers and then use the fund to create job facilities for the poor and the unemployed.

Also, I would like to give another suggestion to the government and that is to ban the interest system. Most of the Banks give interest to their depositors, which is illegal in Islam. So, I would request the government to ban the system of interest.

What about the police?

It's funny that the comparison between the army and police has reached the level of field toilet (Mr. Kim, 26 August). But if you must know, there is no such thing as 'chemical toilet' for army officers. In the best of conditions, the field toilet for Major and below comes in the form of a 8 feet by 5 feet tent with a plastic pan inside. For Lieutenant Colonel and above the tent is about 12 feet by 8 feet with a high commode. Mr. Kim is very much welcome to visit our field toilets in the coming winter collective exercise.

A sanitary latrine is a matter of personal hygiene. It has got nothing to do with the army and its budget as Mr. Kim's letter appear to suggest. Don't blame the army for all our miseries including lack of public toilets in the city. It's unfair and utterly funny too. And let us keep this long-due debate about the army hygienic, please.
An Army Officer
Dhaka

Would the situation ever improve?

The law and order situation in Bangladesh is deteriorating day by day. Everyday we come across news of rape, murder, kidnapping etc. Nowadays the children have become the targets of the extortionists. Can we ever forget the tragic death of Shihab, Trisha, Bappi, Don and others? Is there any way to console their parents?

But why is this kind of carnage taking place in the country? Because the accused are not punished properly and the social values are diminishing. Sometimes the police catch the criminals, sometimes they are at large. Sometimes the general people take the law in their own hand and try to get relief from the misery. But mob beating cannot be the answer.

We have a police department and we have a democratic government. So where is the problem? It is the lack of honesty in the concerned authorities. Some corrupt police as well as some ruling party people maintain good relationship with the criminals and thus the vicious circle remains.

Another major problem is student politics. Do we need this violent politics at all? People in general will definitely answer in the negative but the politicians remain nonchalant about it.

The pathetic state of our motherland makes the expatriates like me really sad and frustrated. In Japan the situation is almost the opposite. The people are secured, the roads are safe, no muggers, no extortionist, no student politics. When my wife came here for higher studies we were determined to return to our motherland. But now she is reluctant to go back to the country of insecurity. Such is our destiny. We are waiting for the day when the situation in Bangladesh will improve and we would be able to return to our motherland.
Topon Kumar Paul
The University of Tokyo, Japan