

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.

### Railway woes

I had gone to the railway station to buy a ticket to come to Chittagong from Dhaka for Eid. The earliest ticket I managed to get was for the 11th February. When Eid was announced to be on the 13th it was fine but then it was changed to 12th and I was forced to change my ticket because I had to go from Chittagong to my family home in Sylhet the day after. After a lot of hassle and requests I finally got a ticket for the 9th. I went to the Kamalapur station at the stated time 4.00 pm on 9th February and found out that the train had not yet arrived. Some other train had been derailed and it was announced that my train (inter-city Shuborno Express) would leave at 6.00 pm. Being a single girl on my own, I went back home and decided to come back later. I came back at 5.40 pm and found to my utter dismay, the train had already left the station. I was shocked and at a loss of what to do. After many hours of stress and at a much higher cost alternative arrangements were made by my parents.

Will the Railway authorities please answer why the train left 30 minutes before the time announced on the public announcement system and who will be held responsible for this error? I want compensation for the ticket and all the inconvenience, all the hassle, all the stress, all the worry that my parents had to undergo for their stranded daughter alone in unsafe Dhaka city, and all the money that was wasted in the process.

**Mahreen Murad**  
Chittagong

### Valentine's Day



It was very amusing to see all the protests in South Asia about Valentine's Day. Some columnists in Bangladesh also wrote venomous articles denouncing the celebrations. Surely, post-modernism did not have hatred of Love in mind.

Truly, Love had not had a more difficult time. Who would be heartless enough to

become a self-declared enemy of Love?

As for banning the practice and "preserving" our "pristine culture", I must say it would be a draconian approach. I do think that if anyone stays within the boundaries of the law and practices their personal freedom in celebrating (or not celebrating) the day, no one has the right to inter-

vene. If you do not like it, fine; but that does not give you the right to ban others from celebrating it. If someone is gullible enough to be lured into the commercial appeal of the day, let him/her be. Every one is entitled to make a fool of him/herself in the name of Love.

**Yahya, USA**

brought to the notice of our highest authority in the light of performance of shipping till early '80s. And for its positive role to be appreciated by all concerned for the future.

**Z. Rahman**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

### Shipping in the present market economy

Shipping industry in Bangladesh started from a scratch with a great deal of success and can be rightly said to have done very well to serve the nation at a crucial time soon after the Liberation War. Perhaps it will not be an exaggeration of fact to say that the B.S.C which had come into existence under presidential order No.10 as a public sector corporation largely contributed to the movements of export and import so essential at that time for our infant nation.

Although like many other third world national flag carriers it also had to follow the path of decline with the advent of mega-shipping under direct/indirect support and capital of mostly rich/developed world, it continued to keep going even under the fierce market conditions till early '80s.

With the potentials, past background and the scope of vast trained manpower resources; above all the exact/dynamic entrepreneurs having the aggressive marketing skills as we see in our country today are indeed big asset and most encouraging. Given the due support that these new generation of young ship-owners need so badly from all quarters the earnings in terms of foreign exchange from shipping ventures can be increased many times more than the RMG industries. There is every possibility for Bangladesh to have the size of a fleet of respectable tonnage even in these difficult times if we have the vision and pragmatic ideas particularly for our policy makers to let the right type of people to conduct operation freely without unnecessary interference. Let this matter be

decided by our highest authority in the light of performance of shipping till early '80s. And for its positive role to be appreciated by all concerned for the future.

**Z. Rahman**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

### The real United Nations

UN is supposed to be an organisation that stands for equality, peace and security for all its members. How can this organisation provide equality, when it has five members called "permanent members" who have more power than the rest?

The Daily Star continues its tirade against the possibility of war against Iraq. Like many other people in this country, it also fails to see that the UN has comprehensively failed in controlling Saddam Hussein.

Ten years of sanctions and no fly zones have yielded nothing but poverty for Iraqis.

There also seems to be great fear that the war will not be as easy this time around. Everyone, probably including this paper, said the same when the US was bearing down on the vicious Taliban. Remember all

that.

**Hasan Tarek**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

**Split in NATO?**  
BBC world reports a "split" in NATO on mutual self-defence - this time regarding Turkey. US demands anticipatory defence for Turkey in the event of an attack by Iraq. But reality check tells us it is the US that is planning and preparing to invade Iraq and is roping it a reluctant Turkey into giving US troops safe sanctuary. Is that anything other than a "ganging up" exercise" against Iraq?

What is so wrong if France objected immediate and anticipatory self-defence? What is the true prospect of Iraq invading Turkey when it is under attack itself by the US? Indeed France will likely sup-

port invocation of the mutual self-defence clause if and when it comes under attack - a remote likelihood at best.

**Hussain, Dhaka**

### Banking reforms vis-à-vis national reforms

Recently the Banking Reforms Commission headed by noted economist Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmood has made certain recommendations fixing the criteria for being eligible to be a Director of a bank. The conditions include, among others, that to become a Director of a bank, the person must be having minimum graduation degree as educational qualification, ten years of professional experience in his line of business and no past record of having been implicated in any unlawful activities. Since banks deal with public money, the recommendations of the Commission should be implemented without least delay.

While I fully endorse the recommendations of the Commission, I would like to request, through your columns, the Election Commission of the country to actively consider fixing similar criteria for intending candidates to be eligible to become a lawmaker (Member of the Parliament) as well as minister. This is necessary for greater public interest.

**Asadul Islam**  
Oldham, UK

**War in Iraq**

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