

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.

Deaths in Spain



The al-Qaeda has accepted the responsibility for the recent bomb blast in Spain. If that is so, then I must say that it is working against the whole human race. If it can kill so many civilians, then it must be an organization of fanatics patronised by some rich men.

We should be united against these kinds of violent acts and destroy these organizations. At the same time, the US should also stop waging war on sovereign countries in the name of destroying al-Qaeda networks.

Star, the headline of a news item, '96 hr hartal if govt quits not by March' jolted me -- it was almost like a physical blow. Despair, anguish, anger and all sorts of emotions took hold of me. We did not elect the government and opposition MPs to become victims of such injustice. If they really desire people's welfare, why don't they sit down together, discuss the problems and find ways to solve those?

There is a limit to people's patience. I think time has come for the common people to protest the unbearable situation, compel the prime minister and the opposition leader to sort out the differences so that people can live in peace. We have had enough and we want stability in the political arena.

Nurjahan, Ctg

What happened in Harare?

We are very upset. We have just seen the innings of Bangladesh team. Before the game started we heard the news that Rafique, who is the best bowler of our team, had been sent back home, the reason being breach of discipline. But we want to know what kind of breach of discipline forced the manager to send him back to the country. As we knew this match was very important for us as we were close to the first ever victory in a one-day series. What we have seen in the match? The players were demotivated. There were lots of reasons to unsettle the team.

Why did Habibul Bashar bat at number 6? We found lack of team spirit in the match. So we want to know why these things happened. We want to know the details of the incident that compelled the team management to take such a harsh decision.

Why did the BTV cover the news repeatedly without saying anything about the cause behind Rafique being sent back?

The way the players behaved even after failing to perform up to our expectations looked rather surprising.

Please delve deep into the matter and let us know what happened in Harare. After all, we have missed a golden opportunity of winning a one-day series. We hope The Daily Star will cover the developments extensively.

Chowdhury Mohammad Haider Ali

On-e-mail

How much and how long?

This refers to the lead news in the DS on March 14, 2004. Bangladesh was the only country which did not sign the BIMST-EC FTA on February 8, 2004 at Phuket, Thailand, citing many good reasons for not doing so. Now, it is going to sign the same agreement, without any change, thus greatly embarrassing the entire nation. It is an example of poor "home work" that Bangladesh does before attending important meetings of international forums.

The shameless attacks on freedom of speech and association have shown that democracy is still nothing more than a slogan in our country. The bare-faced use of the state machinery for attaining petty party objectives through foiling assemblies and supporting young goons of the party in power demonstrates the inner weaknesses of the parties. By the way, this intoler-

Muktangon incident

All eyes were focused on Muktangon on March 12 where Dr. B Chowdhury was expected to deliver his speech. But the ruling party activists made sure that the speech was not delivered.

I think the ruling alliance has committed a blunder by launching attacks on the Bikalpa Dhara processions. The alternative force will only become popular if the ruling alliance sticks to its policy of suppression. It is a very sad example of democracy nose-diving in our context.

Sarker Pabitra, On-e-mail

I am afraid...

Dr. B Chowdhury is a former president of Bangladesh. The president is supposed to be a neutral person who upholds the honour of the esteemed office and is respected by all. Yet the former president was attacked in front of the police! By what rationale can this be condoned? By what rationale can the ruling party's young activists say that this is punishment for him for defecting to the BNP? And who are these so-called Young Turks? Why can't we name them? Are we so afraid of being harmed for asking questions and speaking the truth? If so then we no

longer live in a democracy. Why is the inspector general of police mum about all this? Is it not his duty to uphold the law, irrespective of the political affiliation of the person under attack? We as a nation have lost moral authority. Not one person from the government had the courage to stand up on B Chowdhury's behalf and ask for an inquest into the attack on his rally. And there has been an attack on Mannan's business interests! How can anybody simply stand by and condone this. All because he wanted to take a decision based on the best interests of the nation.

We are becoming a nation of hooligans. If the former president can be attacked simply because he took a different stand, then the rest of us have little hope of justice or even safety. God help us all.

Ziaul Haque, Canterbury, UK

Democracy, a far cry...

The current political stage in Bangladesh is really very volatile and obviously a matter of great concern. President Ziaur Rahman introduced the multi-party democracy in the early 80's. The party founded by him is

now ruling Bangladesh. It is also true

that it is their third term in power.

The party was voted to power for its strong commitment to restoring democracy, establishing law and order and curbing corruption to a minimum level.

But what are we observing today? They are nowhere near fulfilling their election pledges. On the contrary, they are very busy with street politics, the ultimate objective of which is to foil the activities of the opposition.

And very recently, they were embarrassed with the formation of an alternative force led by Dr. B Chowdhury and hence they tried their best to halt any progress that the force might have made if it was not obstructed. Moreover, BNP activists beat up the supporters of the alternative force on the streets. It's simply barbaric. If the BNP believes that it is a democratic party and is practising democracy for the betterment of Bangladesh, it should welcome any move by the dissenters. If we have many parties, people will be in a position to choose from them. Can't we expect harmony in politics in Bangladesh? How long should we wait for the restoration of democracy in our beloved Bangladesh. Since 1971, 33 years have passed, is it not enough?

Md. Rabiul Hoque Chowdhury

BUET, Dhaka



IMF and the World Bank

I have read the rebuttal "BB dismisses allegation of IMF's control thru 'advisor' with interest. It uses the same old justification: advisors were also used in the past - a reference to follies of the previous government! We already have a former World Bank executive as the BB governor and a number of talented Bangladeshis are working under him. Still why do we need an IMF advisor? Having such an advisor in the past should be the justification for not having any now, not the other way around. Next to the pervasive corruption, IMF and World Bank (Bank-Fund) stranglehold on our economic affairs is the primary reason for our continued backwardness. The Bangladesh Bank governor is not alone, all our ministers, secretaries have become dependent on these so-called Bank-Fund advice. However busy our senior-most functionaries are, they will make time to meet even the lowest ranking Bank-Fund staff. In fact, there are allegations that appointments of the top officials in the financial sector require consent from the IMF and the World Bank! A very competent secretary at the Economic Relations Division was reportedly withdrawn after a week because he refused to toe their line. Both multilaterals and the government are hierarchical institutions. A simple policy for meetings between Bank-Fund staff and GOB functionaries should be adopted: Bank-Fund staff, Sector Manager/Deputy Director and below, should meet the concerned Deputy/Joint Secretary; Directors should meet Additional Secretary/Secretaries; and Vice-President and above, Executive Directors of the Board, can meet Ministers. The current practice of ministers and secretaries meeting junior staff of Bank-Fund poses a serious problem for systematic and objective evaluation of Bank-Fund policies at appropriate technical levels and leads to adoption of programmes that either do not work or are detrimental to the country's interests. Instead of devoting an inordinate amount of time to meetings with staff of multilateral organisations, our ministers, principal secretary, and secretaries should start thinking on their own; start working with our own officials to seek solutions to the multitude of problems that the nation is facing. The myth of lack of competent professionals in the country needs to be exploded.

Farzana Akhter, UK

Women's participation in parliament

Thanks for publishing an article on the most talked about issue of "Increasing women's participation in parliament: What is the best alternative?" (March 14, 2004). I was anxiously waiting for such a write up from my favourite daily, The Daily Star. Thanks also to Dr.

Badiul Alam Mujumder for enlightening us once again with his thought provoking write up on participation of women in parliament. His 'alternative proposal' seems to be the best one for ensuring women's real participation in parliament. Definitely, the proposed system would create some women leaders at the grassroots level. In our earlier experience, we have seen no one knows who is her/his woman parliamentarian. Women parliamentarians need not go to her constituents for soliciting votes. We have seen women winning a parliament seat just for her spousal support or as sycophants, or for having some close relatives of the ruling party's high command, thanks to the selection system.

The recent decision of the cabinet is not going to change anything. The old system has been retained. The ruling party has proposed

indirect election for the women MPs. Women coming through this process would not be aware of their constituency's demand. They would be nothing but the ornaments of the parliament dominated by male MPs.

Surprisingly, the opposition parties are not seriously objecting to the new plan. They are perhaps happy with the prospect of getting their share of seats under the proposed system. I would like to draw the attention of all concerned to raise their voices against the decision of increasing women's seats in parliament without bringing about the desired changes.

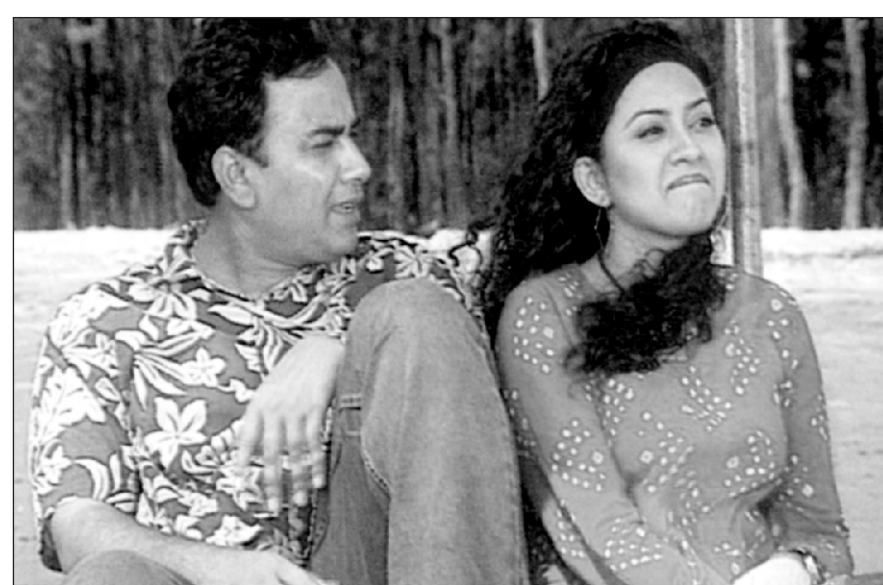
M Mamunur Rahman, Dhaka

Ninety-six hour hartal!

In the March 10 issue of The Daily

Bangladeshi television programs in different satellites

To meet the needs of overseas Bangladeshi viewers, the Bangladeshi television channels (government and private) are telecasting Bangla programmes over satellites. There is no question that we, the Bangladeshis living all over the world, are benefited due to this kind of satellite telecasting of the Bangla TV channels. However, the TV channels should also consider whether their goal of reaching large sections of overseas Bangladeshi viewers has been achieved or not. There are three major



Bangladeshi TV channels in satellites, which are ATN Bangla, Channel-I and ntv. Moreover, the BTV is going to start telecasting their programmes through the satellite. The main problem is all the TV channels (4 including the BTV) are using different satellites. The current positions of all 4 satellite channels are as follows: Channel-I- PanamSat 4, ATN Bangla - Thaicom, ntv-ApStar, and the BTV will use AsiaSat3.

Now, the problem is a difficult one for

the viewers, but can easily be solved by the TV channels. Normally, a person or family own 1 (or rarely 2) dish antennas (normally one for Ku band and one for C band). As all current Bangladeshi TV programmes are in "C" band, therefore, a person or a family can adjust their "C" band dish antenna only toward one satellite (to PanamSat 4, Thaicom, ApStar or AsiaSat 3). Moreover, almost all dish antennas are a fixed system, i.e. if it is set for one satellite, it cannot be moved or re-aligned to another satellite

"C" band) two years ago, the technician set it toward the Thaicom satellite. We could use it to see only the ATN Bangla (also "Tara Bangla" channel from India) along with other foreign channels. However, after 8-9 months, we summoned the technician for re-aligning our dish antenna toward the PanamSat 4, so that we could watch the Channel-I. For the realignment of the dish, we had to pay the technician. However, due to re-alignment from Thaicom satellite to PanamSat 4, we can't see the ATN Bangla any more. So, we had to sacrifice two Bangla channels for Channel-I. Recently, the ntv came into operation into a different satellite, namely ApStar. Unfortunately, we cannot watch it, until we call the technician again and sacrifice the Channel-I programmes. So, we preferred to stay tuned with PanamSat 4, rather than going to pay the technician again to re-align the dish for ApStar (ntv channel). Bangladesh TV (BTV) has started their trial broadcasting through AisaSat 3 satellite. We are very eager to see the BTV programmes, but can't do so for the same technical reason. We need to call the technician again and pay him for re-alignment toward AsiaSat 3, if we want to see the BTV satellite broadcast. I am sure that most of the overseas families will decide the same way not to go for re-alignment of the dish again and again and pay the technician every time a new Bangla channel starts telecasting through a new satellite. However, it is a very simple problem that could be solved by the television channels easily. If all the Bangladeshi TV channels broadcast their programmes from the same satellite, then with only one dish alignment, overseas Bangladeshis can see all the channels and can choose and enjoy their favourite programmes. The system can be followed by most of the European, American and even the Middle East TV channels.

I would request the television channels in Bangladesh to consider my point.

Dr F A Talukder, Oman

ance is nothing new, as same treatment was meted out during the formation of the NAP back in the 1950s! The other day, I wrote about the Taiwanese Trade office issue. In this case also, the reported closure of the office is another example of poor handling of sensitive diplomatic issues. The inefficient politicians are taking the whole nation to a destination where national honour and dignity will be totally lost. Millions of people desired, struggled, fought a bloody war and made supreme sacrifices in terms of lives and dignity and honour of our mothers and sisters not to see what is happening all around us now. The avowed razakars are moving around with our national flag as ghosts and monsters of pre-liberation and war period, reminding us of our brittle commitment to the principles which form the basis

of our nationhood. Some of their accomplices are trying to be champions of democracy and human rights but they do not want to look back to the past, because the past is wrapped in darkness only.

Here, a word of caution for the politicians will not be out of place. These razakars are very likely to sink the ferry that they used to cross the turbulent river. I can only wish and pray that a turn-around on the part of the patriotic forces will take place soon.

Muhammad Ali, Dhaka

Don't shorten the name, please

I am a regular reader of The Daily Star and its magazine, and I have recently observed that you have shortened the name of Professor Badruddoza Chowdhury to 'B Chy'. It doesn't sound good. Please write the full name of Dr. Chowdhury instead of B Chy.

I hope you will agree with my opinion. We have great respect for the physician-turned-politician.

Jamshed, Banani, Dhaka

From the holy places...

The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz Al-Saud said on several occasions, "I have given all attention so that Makkah Al-Mukarramah and Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah would be among the most beautiful cities in the world. This applies to the Holy Mosque and the Mosque of the Prophet (peace be upon him)". By the grace of the Almighty Allah the blessed efforts of the custodian are crowned with tremendous success. I performed Hajj this year and during my stay there I was simply overwhelmed to see the magnitude of progress and development that took place particularly in Makkah and Madinah. I am told King Fahd undertook a \$11 billion project to extend and improve the quality of facilities at the two holy sites. The overall size of the Masjid Al Haram, the sanctified Mosque in Makkah, has been doubled to 3.5 million square feet with space for one million devotees. The total size of the Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi, the Prophet's mosque in Madinah, has been expanded ten times to accommodate half a million devotees. Spectacular achievements have also been made in various sectors, namely, roads, highways, airport buildings, water supplies, transports and health facilities. Bottled water, milk, juice and boxed lunches were distributed before, during and after the pilgrimage period. Makeshift dispensaries were established, ambulances with first aid items were kept in strategic places. Health education videos were shown and posters were displayed.

It was my long cherished desire to see the illustrious Islamic University of Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah, but I could not do so due to shortage of time. Although I

am far away still I can hear the sonorous voices of the Imams leading the congregations in the two holy mosques. In my lonely moments whenever I close my eyes the memories of the two holy sites flash through my mind. The Mina tragedy, however, saddens me. I pray to the Almighty Allah for those who died so that their soul may rest in peace. I returned home from the holy cities with a mind full of love, calm, quiet and tranquility.

Mir Musharrif Hossain

North Jatrabari, Dhaka

Mindless political game

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has promised to topple the government by enforcing a series of hartals. I think she is risking her party being detached from the

people, as everybody hates hartal now.

Yes, the government is not the one for which the people voted. It has failed in different areas. The law and order is continuing to deteriorate, price of essentials are shooting up, yet we treat hartal as a harsh thing because it affects the general people more than the government. Hasina's demand for mid-term election is not a reasonable one. She must understand that holding two general elections within three years is nothing but a luxury for this poor country.

We cannot even afford the loss caused by a single hartal. The opposition should find some non-violent and effective alternative to hartal, otherwise it will be impossible for them to persuade the people to rally behind them.

Shams Md. Naved Noman, Dhaka

Minimum second class?

The imposition of the condition of 'Minimum Second Class' in all public examinations to be eligible for applying for any job does not bear any justification if the merit of a candidate is adjudged through taking his total marks and grade points into consideration. The total marks and grade points of two candidates, X and Y are given below to show how injudicious and ridiculous it is to demand minimum second class in all public examinations to become eligible for application for a job.

Name of Exam	Name of the Candidates					
		X		Y		
	Class	Mark	Point	Mark	Point	Mark
SSC	First	780	3	2 nd	450	2
HSC	First	790	3	2 nd	450	2
BA(H)	Third	403	1	2 nd	405	2
MA	Second	237	2	2 nd	225	2
	Total	2210	9		1530	8

From the above it appears that the candidate X has 2210 marks and 9 grade points; whereas the candidate Y with all minimum second classes has 1530 marks and 8 grade points. Evidently, the candidate X does not demonstrate better academic records than the candidate Y in respect of aggregate marks and points. The candidate X lost his second class in B.A.(H) for two(2) marks. Unbiased and impartial scrutiny of the position of the two candidates shall testify that the candidate X is better than the candidate Y although the former may logically be termed unlucky for missing the second class in one public examination very narrowly. No sensible man will say that the candidate X is inferior in quality to the candidate Y. All second class with poor marks and points cannot elevate the position of a candidate over the merit of the candidate with exceedingly good marks and points. As far as we know, the ministry of education has kindly reviewed the issue in the above perspective and has been kind and judicious enough to withdraw one-third class bar for appointment of teachers in non-govt. educational institutions. In spite of the clear guidance and instructions through an official circular of the ministry of education, it is rather surprising to see some educational institutions still imposing the condition of "minimum second class in all public examinations" in their advertisements for recruitment of teachers. We don't know how the ministry of education would treat such behaviour of these educational institutions who are intentionally violating the govt. instruction by imposing the limitation already relaxed and withdrawn by the government in greater public interest. In conclusion, we would fervently request the ministry of education to kindly see that its instructions regarding withdrawal of third-class bar is duly honoured by all the educational institutions and punitive measures are also meted out to the violators of the rule.

M Sadeq

Chairman, Dept. of management,