

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.

Well done Bangladesh!

As an ardent fan of cricket, I was simply delighted by the superb performance of the Bangladesh cricket team! After a long time we tasted success and it was really sweet. Though Bangladesh lost two out of three matches, their overall performance was praiseworthy. It seems our cricketers have overcome their "losing with dignity" attitude.

I hope soon we will earn more victories like this in cricket. Hats off to all the players of Bangladesh cricket team and their coach Dev Whatmore. Surly we want more!

Mohammed Sohel

Olympia Palace Restaurant, Sat Masjid Road, Dhanmondi

New police uniform

I have no idea as to who were the inventors of the new uniform for the police, but I want to ask what was the reason behind the invention? Was it just for a change, or for any other purpose? And I want say the change was made for the worse, not for the better.

The other day I was in the middle of a melee near a busy cross-roads and the policemen nearby, who rushed forward to clear the crowd, came under public wrath as people could not differentiate them from the security guards usually at work here and there. If you kindly observe the new make-up, or better say the new dress-up of the police force around your street corner, you will find that the police personnel (in the new uniform) do not look smart.

An observer

Dhaka

City planners

I have noticed with increasing concern the arbitrary and dangerous changes in the road dividers and unnecessary broadening of the islands and the resultant narrowing of the main lanes.

I would like to bring to your attention the chaotic traffic situation that exists at the ZIA roundabout during rush hours. The mayor was saying the other day on television that the DCC now has a new engineering division to look into ways of easing traffic congestion in the capital. But, unfortunately, new island construction and erratic bizarre roundabout construction are creating much bigger traffic problems.

The roundabout at the entrance of ZIA is obstructing the traffic

attack and counter-attack continue and Bangladesh suffers.

To get things right, as usual, our newspapers will write long editorials and people like you and me will write long letters here and there. But who cares about our reaction?

To solve our problems, we need to communicate effectively and make sure the public and the politicians understand each other. For our communication to be successful, we need to speak a language that is understood by both the parties. So now we need to speak their language. And what language do they speak? They speak only two languages: vote and violence. Contrary to popular belief, politicians in Bangladesh don't actually need our votes to win their elections. Therefore, our "vote language" is a non-starter. We tried it in the last three/four elections, it didn't work. That leaves us with only one option: language of violence.

If we could get around a 1-2 million people (we are all aware of our country's population, million is nothing) in a rally where the top leaders will be present and demand the following, the situation may improve.

- 1) Independent judiciary system.
- 2) Complete press freedom with an independent, non-political regulatory body to protect public privacy and maintain standards.
- 3) Total ban on forceful "imposing" of political harts.
- 4) End of student politics and total elimination of student-wing terrorist organisations.

I think it is time for such drastic action.

Azad Miah

Oldham, UK

14th Amendment

The constitution, the supreme law of the land, can be amended in accordance with public demand upholding supremacy of the same. The BNP led four party alliance intends to amend the constitution through the 14th Amendment. Unfortunately, some provisions of the proposed Amendment have created confusion among conscious citizens.

It prescribes 45 reserved seats for women in the JS through proportionate distribution of the seats to the parties. Such a gender biased provision completely overlooks the long cherished demand of women to get elected through a direct vote. Article 10 of the constitution unambiguously says, "Steps shall

The greatest Bengalee?



Subhas Chandra Bose



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman



Rabindranath Tagore

For some time now, the BBC in its Bangla programme is making a special announcement almost every day asking its listeners to let the BBC know their opinion as to who is the greatest Bengalee of all times, all ages?

Is not the announcement confusing and flawed?

Does 'Bengalee' stand for both the people of Bangladesh as well as for the people of West Bengal? Is it meant either for the people of Bangladesh or for the people of West Bengal, India?

However if 'Bengalee' stands for both the peoples of Bangladesh and West Bengal, in my opinion the greatest Bengalee of all times and all ages

is Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, next to him is Poet Rabindranath Tagore, then Poet Nazrul Islam, then Subhas Chandra Bose and then Titu Mir.

The BBC should be clear and definite about using the term 'Bengalee' for the people of Bangladesh who are the citizens of an independent and sovereign country and whose citizenship and nationality is Bangladeshi like Nepalese for the people of Nepal, Chinese for the people of China, Vietnamese for the people of Vietnam, Zambians for the people of Zambia, Indians for the people of India and so on and so forth.

West Bengal is not an independent and sovereign country. It is simply

sector enterprises. It is true that the revenue earning of Bangladesh can be increased many-fold by reducing losses in the public sector enterprises to zero.

The government can increase revenue earnings significantly by arresting corruption and improving the management efficiency of the public sector enterprises. The increased revenue will open scope for expansion of the existing enterprises and mobilise local resources for new investments. In this way it is possible to revamp the economy so that it can sustain the existing

players in the field. They hold key position in the system, where the systems loses are very high. What is practised is known as passing of the buck. WMD has become a whip, and the smaller states have no right to control their natural energy resources. The malaise is deeper than mere bad politics.

There are no operating tools or mechanisms to clean the system. Those that exist are good enough, but the will is not there, as other unofficial attractions distort the vision of good, clean, public service. The culprits are the policy makers themselves. The body is rotten, but the head cannot handle the body. Polarised tops are dangerous, because the sufferers are the majority even those millions outside the perimeters of good governance.

The way politics has been misused is no surprise in the LDCs. The Western systems of the developed countries just do not work in environments where the structures and infrastructures cannot be grounded to reality. In that respect even the UN system is suspect now ignored by the superpower also, employing immoral pre-emptive tactics, for subjugation and control of the resources in the developing countries. The foreign prescriptions and remedial actions are trade and business oriented for economic control, although these tactics are employed in indirect ways, through sanctions, denials and deprivations. The international arbitration bodies enjoy no freedom. Freedom has become an arbitrary and subjective term. When the self is enveloped in stark materialism.

Civilian administration is not against adversaries, but for ordinary citizens, to enhance the quality of daily lives. When the politicians misuse this sacred privilege, normal life is disrupted, and hope loses its bearing.

The novel concept of neutral caretaker government was tried in Bangladesh. But soon the politicians themselves became critical of its role, as the political leaders were sidelined, though for a short duration.

The ambitious political leaders do not believe in taking rest even for a short while. The noise pollution thus created is terrible. Dhaka has set the unique example where the opposition did not attend the parliament for three terms. In addition to that, its corruption rating is one of the highest in the world. And this country is world's most dangerous place for journalists according to the latest international survey.

The HR record is not worth mentioning. And the women's rights are left of the centre (or to the right of the centre?).

A Mawaz

Dhaka

Whither political service?

As a veteran voter, I ask whether we should serve the political public servants, or they serve the public? It is a topsy-turvy world in Dhaka, where the political autocratic propped-up leaders order the janata to carry out their selfish plans for self and party interests.

When fossilised politicians look for survival kits, it means the end of healthy political culture. They have looted the resources right and left, raped moral principles, and go on haranguing the masses with their childish grievances, presenting one side of the coin.

We deserve this sort of self-

inflicted punishment, as we cannot choose the right leaders, and our reactions are laced with past sentiments. The poets have an extra high status in society, and we go gaga over art, but corner the art and science of management and administration. We are practising in a demonstrative way, clamouring for the selection of Mawa bridge site before the feasibility report is out!

This is the general pattern of poor politics in most of the LDCs. So let us get rid of politics for a while, as democracy does not work here due to lack of infrastructure. The time lag of three decades since independence demonstrated the mindset of the weak politicians.

People are happy that the dictatorship by two major political parties (hero-worshipping) is coming to an end. The new third platform cannot solve all the problems, but change is better than no change. Monopoly in politics is not good for the national health.

Deliver, or move clear, do not jam the traffic lanes.

Let us face reality in history. You cannot get freedom in mere nine months. This freak was possible as an outside force intervened.

We still have bitter lessons to learn. Our so-called leaders should sit in the first KG class. Graduation is a long way off. There is no BPA/MPA (degree in Political Administration) course in the universities. The latter have become training centres for educated hooligans (for a minority of the students), who control politics, the campuses, and the black wealth. What is the use of tertiary education, when the teachers are making money on the side? There is no dedication in any sector. The followers lead the leaders; and the latter are photocopies or audio tapes (now CD). Serious mimicry has become a profitable profession. What has happened to the cult of individualism?

No point in writing more, as these types of protests have no effect on those who have ears but do not hear, have eyes but do not see, and have environment-proof hearts which cannot be accessed. Perfect dumb community indifference. We do not need help as we cannot recognise it or use it. We are self-exiled prisoners in our own *matri bhumhi*!

Abdali

Dhaka

Education

A much discussed query-- has the mind of all conscious people-- has the present government been able to bring congenial atmosphere for education in the universities? The on-going stalemate in most of the leading universities very clearly shows that they have totally failed in creating a peaceful environment in the education arena. Not only the universities but the whole country is witnessing deterioration of law and order, insecurity of people and their assets, and political unrest. And the prime cause behind this chaotic atmosphere in universities is the hydra-headed monster of political unrest. Rajshahi University, the last victim of this spectre-like phenomenon, is still uncertain whether it will be reopened on 8 March.

Jahangirnagar University, the only residential university of Bangladesh, has got the bitter taste of this experience and still is not secure enough as the admission tests for the academic year 2003-2004, have been scheduled twice. When the university was about to

run in full swing, it again got entangled in the clutches of the 'monster'. The government is delaying the appointment of a new vice-chancellor. The same thing has taken a more violent shape in the Islamic University where the anti-VC group has been on strike for the removal of the VC.

After the unbelievable and barbaric attack on the eminent linguist and writer Humayun Azad, the teachers of Dhaka University went on an indefinite strike until exemplary punishment is meted out to the assailants and the home minister resigns.

We, the general students, must now take the initiative to bring back discipline to the universities.

ABM Shafiqul Islam

Dept. of English, Jahangirnagar University

Diplomacy in party politics

The lack of leadership acumen in the two major political parties is apparent. The reason is simple: imposed charismatic family leadership. Post-experience is not enough. The followers do not bother to install a mechanism for change in the upper leadership tiers. It means the absence of internal democratic practices. Selling a name is not genuine politics. Umbrella effect is not suitable for mass appreciation. The public have instinctive hindsight for informal analysis, regardless of high-level political analysis by experts and the pros.

Now the current regime is facing disintegration due to faulty high level planning. This has to be

correct; then the details (inside the forest) would be easier to sort out. The use of force by the Young Turks in the party is a grave mistake. Politics cannot be sustained by use of force and mind-bending. The basic support has to be spontaneous. The groups under dispute cannot sit over judgement, and call one another traitors.

Politics is for the people, but the party workers do not take the voters into confidence. That is why democracy is running here on square wheels (not round). Both sides are now desperate for mass support, but the menu shown is not suitable for the local diners--a menu without choice. The politicians are not living in 2004--they take shelter in the past sense and names in the graves. The voters are not for the politicians--it is the other way round. There is no point in getting scared of dissension in society.

Change is not an enemy, but a cleansing process and updating system. This flushing is not allowed in Dhaka, hence the fossilised syndrome of three decades is clinging to the timeless leaders who are not willing to make way and retire. The generation and time gaps have to be identified and recognised. It is the have-not attitude, plain and simple. The leaders should have no personal desires, wants, and agenda. It is the human factor in poor leadership. This virus is not going even after it is pointed out. How long do we have to live with it?

Md Abad

Dhaka

Universities in peril

Thanks are due to Mr. A Bayes for the above article published in your paper. We should not blame politics. We invite politics to embrace us. We like and consume sweets, but forbid others not to take sweets. We were students and there were teachers never wearing white, red, and blue badges. As a result, politics could not touch them. Now our teachers want to get other benefits beyond their means. So they indulge in political activities. So why blame politics?

We earnestly request our teachers to raise their heads above petty politics and rescue the nation by teaching the students.

M Ali

Dhaka

Diplomats meet BNP leader

I thank the diplomats of the 15 countries who called on the senior joint secretary general of the ruling BNP to express their deep concern about the rapidly deteriorating democratic norms in the country.

But I was also quite puzzled when I heard that the ministers were surprised by this visit and termed it as "a protocol-breaking meeting". Here the diplomats have done something which should have been done by the seniors of the ruling party long before. So, without being concerned about the breaking of protocol, they should have encouraged the diplomats to persuade the BNP to stop undemocratic practices.

Md. Mynul Mamun

Dhaka



Mosquito menace

Is not there any way the unfortunate citizens of Dhaka city can find a solution to the constant pains from the terrible stings throughout day and night by the ever-increasing mosquito population? Thanks to the frequent coverage in your daily of the so many bright ideas/plans of the authorities on this dreadful subject, which always seem to end with nothing but poor results.

Everyone having the experience of living in this city will surely agree to the use of any means including for that matter even the extreme case of firing cannons to enable us to live and sleep peacefully. I had the occasion to live and work for some time in Shanghai (PRC) and once asked an old friend if they had such a menace and how they managed to deal with the problem. The answer was very simple--they killed all those dreadful insects just by clapping their hands until none of those creatures was left alive. Recently, on BBC overseas radio programme I heard a news item on the compulsory regular programme introduced by the authorities to clean-up Lagos, the largest city of Nigeria in West Africa, which might have also included the fight against similar menaces. Can we also not consider adopting anything like the above mentioned ways? Our socio-political organisations like CPD / Bikalpadhara/Third force etc with great thinkers in their fold may like to give some time to think about finding a solution to this never-ending menace.

May I also humbly suggest, for the sake of creating awareness and a culture of cleanliness, that our news media carry regular reminders in the front page of each daily in this respect in an appropriate language as may be deemed fit till complete eradication of this menace.

Z Rahman

Gulshan, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

Women's Day

International "Woman's Day" was observed all over the world on 8th March. Bangladesh was no exception. I, along with my friends, went to participate in a rally organised by the 'Prothom Alo'. I had not taken part in such a rally before. In the rally, I observed a pathetic sight which forced me to think

deeply about the whole issue. There were a few females, males and some kids standing with a banner. Most of the females were prostitutes. Was this rally for them only? In the eye of society they have no social recognition. They are the most neglected beings on earth. Who will pay heed to their screams? On the other

hand, our civil society members kept silent. They were just silent viewers. If the civil society women do not raise their heads against odds, how can they overcome male dominance?

Md Shafiquee

Karatia, Tangail

moving between Dhaka and Uttara. The roundabout in my opinion has a totally flawed design and is lopsided. This may lead to major highway disasters in future.

Dr. SZaman Mozumder

Gulshan 1, Dhaka

Speak the right language

Recently, AL chief Sheikh Hasina asked Khaleda Zia -- the elected prime minister-- to resign. The latter didn't listen for obvious reasons and as a result the people of Bangladesh had to endure a number of hartals and the country lost millions. Now Sheikh Hasina has given another ultimatum (Hasina threatens more hartals at month end, 8 Mar, DS), and as usual, the prime minister will ignore it and we will face more hartals. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realise that the opposition cannot force the government out of office. In fact, even the opposition leaders know that! So why are these pointless ultimatums? Well, these are simply excuses to undermine the government, harass the public and further sabotage Bangladesh. And so the

to taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life." It is, however, quite evident that direct participation in election upgrades their political importance and integrates them in national development scheme.

The mainstream political parties can resolve the problem by nominating at least 20 percent women candidates in JS polls.

Md. Al Amin Sagar

Dept. of Law, DU

Retrenchment of employees

The government has taken steps for retrenchment of employees as a remedial measure for salvation of the ravaged economy. Surplus employees are no doubt a factor which causes loss to the public sector enterprises, but it is not the only or the main cause. Public enterprises suffer losses due to corruption, pilferage, and mismanagement. Loss owing to surplus employees represents a portion of the total which needs to be examined. In my view, corruption is the main problem causing significant losses to the public

employees of the public sector and also create employment opportunities for the freshers.

A democratic government has great responsibility to promote welfare of its people. It is, no doubt, a challenging job to handle the situation in a proper way and act according to the socio-economic needs. But sometimes the development partners dictate their policies in such a way that goes against the interest of the people, and the nation has to pay heavily for it.

Therefore, the government is urged to reconsider the issue of retrenchment of employees of different state-owned enterprises. Rather, the government should formulate a long-term pragmatic plan to reform the economy to accommodate its manpower for participation in development activities.

Shamsuzzoha

Pallabi, Dhaka

Cynicism in public life

The politicians and the bureaucrats face a tough time ahead. The public are becoming more and more cynical about the public services offered by these major

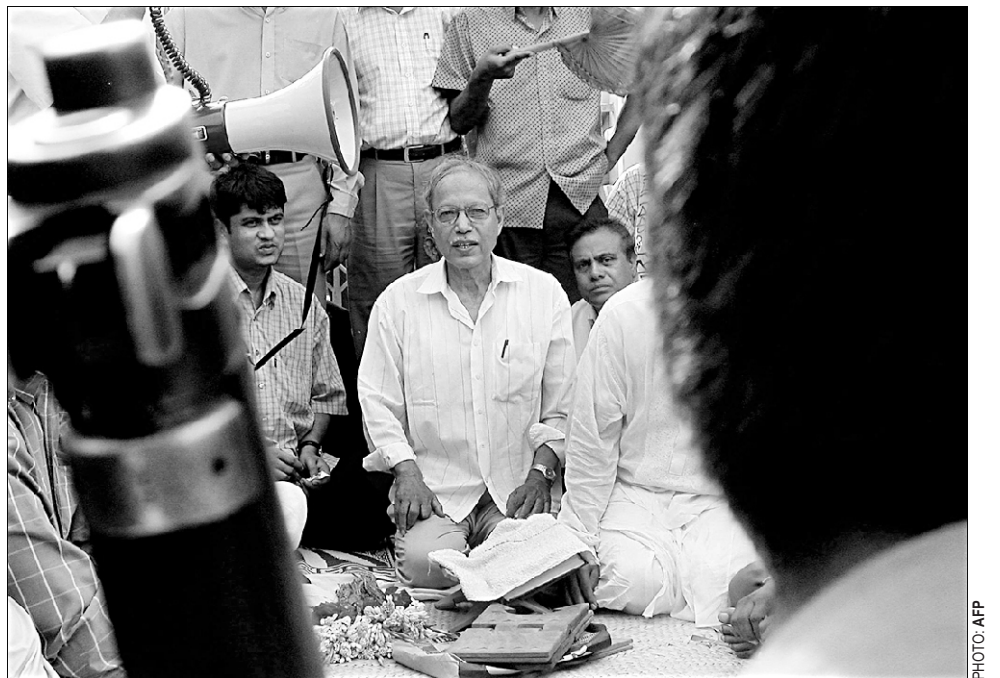


PHOTO: AFP