

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.

Independence Day

The war of Independence is our pride, our source of dignity. The events of 1971 are looked upon as dark episodes in our history. Our earlier generations were ready to sacrifice their lives to gain Independence, and ultimately it was achieved. That is why, we can claim 'Ami Bangali'. We have not seen the War of Independence with our own eyes, because we are youngsters. But we are able to differentiate the present Bangladesh from the then East Pakistan. Our freedom fighters wanted to get rid of the bondage. Now, if we look at our society, there is no freedom at all here. We have failed to retain the spirit of our glorious Independence. Besides, our 'Muktijudho' was a fight for democracy and basic human rights. Basic human rights are something that are becoming scarce in Bangladesh.

There is still time to make a change, we cannot let the blood of the great freedom fighters go in vain. Let's fight for our rights and make our country a much more stable one, one that adds substance to the ideals that the freedom fighters died for.

Finally, we have to recall the famous saying of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, "Great things are achieved through great sacrifices."

Zahid, Karatia, Tangail



PHOTO: AFP

Beware of new drivers!

Problems and problems these days. You buy a new car, and recruit a new driver. Now crime syndicates have started implanting their men as drivers, who later try to do some mischief.

That does not mean self-driving is safe. Even before you start the car, it may be hijacked while you are washing it one fine morning, as it happened to a doctor living in Uttara who bought a new car just three days earlier (DS report March 24).

I sold my old second hand BMW abroad before returning to Dhaka. Too much metallic kissing in public!

AZ

Dhaka

Bangla calendar

I have noticed that the online version of your valued paper has no Bangla dates or the names of any Bangla months. Yes, we do realise that this is an English paper, but it comes from Bangladesh and hence it is only sensible to have the names/dates of our Bangla calendar. So why are they missing?

Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

A disarmed people

When anti-liberation forces strike (and they will strike just as in 1971), they will be able to take over a thoroughly disarmed and dispirited Bangladesh and rape her without fear of retaliation as even licensed arms had to be deposited last year. What is the job of our national leaders? To facilitate the loss of liberation or to defend it? Are they unaware or are they willing to let us lose

A heinous attack

Hamas founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was killed in an Israeli missile attack outside a Gaza Mosque on 22nd instant, following the direction of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The PM (Ariel Sharon) also ordered to kill all other leaders of Hamas. The killing of Yassin threatened to escalate the Israel-Palestine fighting.

This was a heinous act. Only a cold blooded

murderer could have committed such a crime.

My appeal to the UN Secretary General as well as all other authorities concerned is that they take effective steps to give exemplary punishment to those who were involved in the crime.

Md Rezaul Karim (Reza)
Dhaka University



PHOTO: AFP

students of our session in all Bangladeshi universities, except DU, will get this opportunity. We, the helpless students of DU, have become victims of the political turbulence which compelled the DU authorities to reschedule at least 3 or 4 examinations of all departments. We are very unlikely to get the chance to appear in the BCS exams.

So we strongly urge the PSC authorities to take a lenient view of our problem and extend the date for application.

Aminul Islam
SSHall, DU

Delaying tactics

The lawmakers and official planners have pointed out (DS Mar 25) that the utilisation factor of the ADP funds has been very poor by the BTB, considering the high disparity between supply and demand. The reasons are obvious: Time is needed for unofficial bargaining (and to hide the same).

The public sector mobile telephone project is being delayed time and again in revising and updating the project documents, while the import duty on mobile telephones is one of the highest in the world, as telephones are officially classified as a luxury item! Note the grey and black markets thriving in Dhaka (two lakh sets smuggled, without literature and authorised servicing centres). BTRC is a lame duck? No transfers in BTB.

The tendency has now become the general practice in politics and bureaucracy. The overall systems losses are very high; including nepotism and corrupt practices, plus use of hartal and violence by the players when things go otherwise. The ministers keep mum on root analyses and are chasing the opposition all the time, as if there were no other problems of governance.

When political culture fails to deliver, why support the politicians and have elections? The FBCCI chief was rather blunt on the high cost of doing business in Bangladesh (DS Mar 25). The other issue is a parallel secretariat in the PMO's office. Bureaucracy always expands it is in-built (no quotes are needed).

Self-governance starts with the self, that is, each and every individual clamouring to provide public service. The local cosmetic politics should be peeled off layer by layer, to expose the contaminated conscience. We see the soul or sole of politics?

Ironically, many frustrated citizens, who are not supporters of the AL, are going to keep a close watch on April 30 deadline (DS Mar 25). Our politicians need tension to keep them fit and mobile so far it has been a one-way traffic for those in power. When one God can be shared by six billion people, what is wrong in sharing political power with patience and tolerance?

Md Abad
Dhaka

Destruction of Dhanmondi

I would like to thank Mr. Badal Hasib and Ms. Sultana Alam for their concern about the day by day worsening (voiced by their letters) of Dhanmondi Residential Area. I would like to reinforce their protest through my letter and place it before the residents, so that they can come forward in a practical and bold way.

Let's take a micro look at Road No 31 (old) and Road No. 32 (old). The buildings/structures facing the Mirpur Road are all illegal. The construction irregularities of the shopping mall involving RAJUK and the builders were raised in 'The Daily Star', but to no result. The footpath has become the virtual car parking facility of the business centres along this (Mirpur) road stretching along from Road 27 to Road 1. The alignment of this footpath has been manipulated, tampered and tapered to cater to car parking at random. The inside footpaths are also no exception. The cars failing to avail parking in these buildings and footpaths take refuge inside the residential area and create various problems. Many untoward incidents have taken place due to regularly irregular car parking. The gardening areas in front of the houses and the drains have been purposely covered for that. In this connection, may I remind the residents of the order of the High Court issued to the police to clear all the footpaths.

There are seven schools and one college-cum-university operating in this small stretch of Road No 31 (old) and Road No. 32 (old). It is mysterious how they obtained permission from the Ministry of Education and other offices! Just imagine or practically see what happens when hundreds of cars honking horns and some in full music mood coming to (and going out of) these educational institutions. Recently, these schools have

managed to make these roads one-way during morning time to suit their purpose in collusion with police.

Most of the (once) houses have been taken over by the real-estate companies. Most have flouted the RAJUK rules like under capacity car parking, excess flats, flattening the front footpath, introducing sub-basement parking (actually this is a trick to fool customers and increase one more floor), showing one apartment plan while selling and giving another when delivering, lessening the side areas which are to be kept open and vacant, etc., etc.

We used to hear birds chirping all day long. But they are not found any more as the trees on these roads have been cut slowly and methodically. The rest of the trees are counting their days.

Another regular nuisance which starts from early morning till night are the training sessions of the driving schools which take place on these roads. Many a school going children with their guardians, pedestrians, cars, etc. have been knocked down by these trainee drivers. Even after several complaints to the police, they manage to come back every morning.

Our worries and woes keep on increasing with the continuous addition of newer business centres and activities in the Dhanmondi Residential Area. One school, one shopping mall and one bank are enough to destroy civilisation in Dhanmondi!

A resident, One-mail

Repatriation of stranded Pakistanis

Self-respecting nations, developed or under developed, never keep their nationals stranded in other countries. Bangladesh, despite being ravaged and in a stage of infancy in 1972, brought back its nationals from Pakistan. Pakistan also followed the same suit. But Mr. ZA Bhutto stopped the on-going process of repatriation on the plea that further repatriation would upset the demographic balance in Sindh and would have a negative impact on the economy of Pakistan. This did not fit in with the

of 14 crore Bangladeshis as well as other Muslim countries. For its recalcitrant attitude, international pressure started mounting on Pakistan. Under pressure Pakistan changed the tone and rhetoric from its earlier stand on repatriation.

The unanswered questions- who are they, what is their nationality etc. started looming large on the horizon of the world. To avoid abrasive international reaction, Pakistan agreed to take back its remaining nationals on "humanitarian ground". The stranded welcomed the gesture. So many rounds of meetings between the prime minister of Bangladesh and the president of Pakistan were held in Islamabad and Dhaka but there was no breakthrough. Under pressure from Bangladesh, a token repatriation was made which was considered a prelude to total repatriation. But whenever total repatriation of stranded Pakistanis looks like a real possibility, negative things start happening in Pakistan. Similarly, "Repatriation" has become an irritating factor in the relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

We hope sanity will prevail and all the stranded Pakistanis will get the opportunity to go back to Pakistan.

ZH Ansari

Chairman Ad hoc relief committee, Hailshahar Non Locals Camp, Chittagong

Natural resources

I would like to focus on an important issue, gas we know that gas is one of the most important natural resources of our country. Natural resources play a vital role in development. So the facilities for using gas should be increased. For this purpose, more gas lines should be set up to fulfil national demand. Most of the people of our country are still deprived of it. At the same time, those who have got this facility should use gas properly. But it is a matter of great regret that most of the families use gas whimsically. They do not control their usage of gas. They never switch off their burner after using. Citizens should be conscious when they are using gas. I believe more advertisements should be telecast in order to make people

Tale of a 'Golden Land' ?

Still after 34 years of the War of Liberation, we, the ill-fated children of the free country, Bangladesh, find us gagged, bound and blindfolded. Any kind of dreadful nightmare is now a reality and atrocities like rape, abduction and murder, not to speak of lesser crimes, are a routine affair. Political rivalries among leaders with an ever-increasing tendency of dynastic reign in zenith posts continue to thrive more than ever. Godfathers backed by politically influenced quarters groom up potentially intelligent youth forces into 'zombie-type criminals', who, instead of turning into professional killers, could otherwise help build the nation with their wit and ability.

Children born during the struggling days of the War of Independence have to watch and hear with shame and disgust the pathetic collapse of Dr. Humayun Azad on the doorsteps of a top literary institution. They have to painfully observe in silence the devilish ascension of Kala Jahangir and Ershad Sikder.

It is a great pity that priceless martyrdom of millions of Bengalis today results in recovery of sliced chunks of human torso from within busy metropolitan areas in broad daylight. Moreover, such gruesome mutilation is being carried out on the very day of the anniversary of the country's independence.

The nine-month bloodshed for a Golden Bengal, after three decades, aids brands like BMW and Lexus to the elite but only at the expense of the hapless commoner who is thought to be best fit under the wheels.

Could anyone, who was a direct victim of the torturous days of 1971, presume that the ripe fruits of Independence would be so bitter and toxic, so to say, in the present-day form of social annihilation?

Aziz Amirul, Dhaka

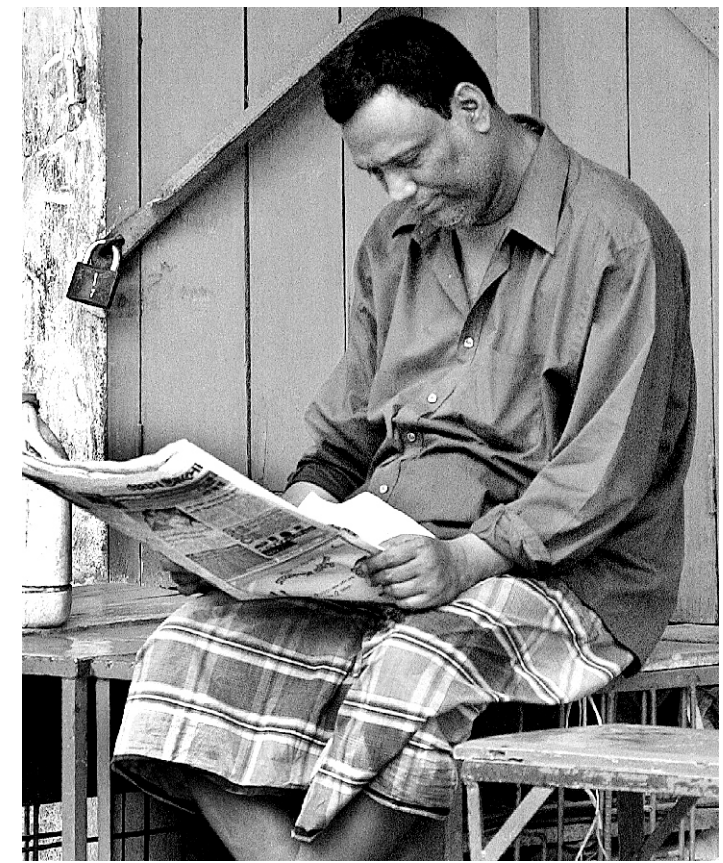


PHOTO: AFP

Power of women

Women, once considered to be the weakest part of society, are now probably the strongest. From politicians to actresses, from singers to journalists, from engineers to scientists, from dress designers to film producers, everywhere women have been successful. Some amaze us with their mesmerising beauty while some attract our attention with their extraordinary personality and dignity. The first person to get two Nobel Prizes was a woman, the one and only Marie Curie. With her extraordinary talent and knowledge in science she managed to gift the world with two very useful radioactive elements - radium and polonium.

Politics is no fancy. It is billion times more complicated and nasty than it looks. Many can be politicians but very few can be rated as good politicians. If we take a glimpse at the politicians of our subcontinent we can find out that 60% of all good politicians are women. Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto and Chandrika Kumaratunga are still considered to be three of the most successful politicians of all time. They overwhelmed us with their capability to govern a country properly.

Things get more interesting as we come down to the entertainment world. Most people of this earth have managed to take in music as one of their greatest passions but very few have succeeded in making use of it. Yes that's right I am talking about the singers. And when we are talking about music we can't help talking about the one and only Lata Mangeshkar. This Indian singer is not just anybody. She has been singing for the last 45 years and has been continuously providing us with heart-warming songs. Her voice can't be defined but can be described. Even at the age of 75 she sings so well that we have to sit down and wonder whether age really has got anything to do with singing. Yes, it does but the power of women has always been indefinable and amazing.

We always don't need to talk about famous women to define the power of this gender. Nowadays in banks, schools, shops, and even garment factories we come across female employees and that is because of only one fact--the unseen and growing power of women.

Fiona Khandoker

Bara Magh Bazar, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

strategic vision of the visionaries. Since then, all the successive governments in Pakistan maintained a fatal silence on repatriation ignoring the fact that Mr. MA Jinnah had allowed mass Muslim migration from India to Pakistan in 1947 when all important components of the newly born state were in shambles.

The stranded Biharis are peace loving people. As long as Pakistan flouts the legitimate right of Stranded Pakistanis to return to their country, it will remain embroiled in a political trauma. Pakistan should develop a political culture on the basis of the forgotten ideology; otherwise its stability will always remain at stake. For all the disconcerting and frustrating years, the stranded in Bangladesh remain die-hard Pakistanis languishing in 66 camps.

Repatriation has the support

aware of the value of gas. By wasting our assets we cannot gain anything. Our development will be possible when we all learn to value our natural resources. Wastage of gas should be prevented at any cost.

Zaminur, Karatia
Tangail

Attack on women

A quick look at today's papertwo girls raped, one takes her life after she is reprimanded for going out alone and the accused gets only 20 lashes, 16 women burnt by acid last week. Every day brings a host of similar stories. And though I don't have the statistics to provide but it seems that there are so many more stories like these days than there has ever been in the many years that I've lived in Bangladesh.

Dowry deaths, gang rape,

(most) acid throwing have one thing in common they are all forms of violence against women perpetrated by men. Maybe, instead of looking to the women for answers, instead of blaming the victim, instead of casting her out of society because she was raped, it is time people took a hard look at the MEN in this society and ask what is it about the way they are raised and the beliefs they have that cause them to rape and kill and throw acid.

It's time blame was put where it belongs on the privilege and status and deference granted to males throughout their lives in this culture, where men can do whatever they want and in the current state of law and order, where justice is just another commodity that can be sold to the highest bidder get away with it.

Anonymous expatriate

Banani, Dhaka

No light...

People voted Begum Khaled Zia twice to power, once in 1991 and again in 2001, getting frustrated with the bad governance of Sheikh Hasina. This time around the country is facing serious problems -- down sliding of the economy, complete breakdown of law and order. People say the government has failed to deliver. But what is this new stream Bilkalapa Dhara going to do?

It is difficult to believe that it will be any different. It is also dominated by two individuals, the father and the son.

Sohel Ahmed
Shewrapara, Mirpur