

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.



PHOTO: STAR

Indiscreet politics

Awami League, the main opposition party in parliament, has declared that it would oust the elected government by 30th April, 2004. No single party has the right to topple a government through any undemocratic means. Only the people have the right to do so. If the Awami League wants to return to power, it must wait till the next general elections scheduled to be held in 2006 and surely it will have to get a majority in that elections. It doesn't have any other option open to it.

So we, the people of Bangladesh, request all the political parties to shun politics of personal aggrandisement and to put an end to all undemocratic practices.

Md. Safiqul Islam Monju

Department of Finance and Banking
Zahurul Haq Hall, DU

AL deadline

The AL secretary general Abdul Jalil glibly announced that the alliance government would fall by 30th April, as if the angel of information had covertly apprised him of the deadline. After the debacle in the last elections, it was widely expected that the grand party's top notch would be reformed. The party acted accordingly and Abdul Jalil replaced Zillur Rahman. But there has been very little qualitative change in this regard. On what basis, he announced a deadline? What will happen if the alliance govt does not fall by April 30? There is apparently no reason why such a big development will take place.

Aminul Islam

SS Hall, Dept. of Economics, DU

Gore of a sure victory by interfering to stop recounts. In the prevailing global election situations, our leaders did a marvellous job by evolving an unique system of caretaker government which is the best possible way out for a country like ours, and at least on this count they deserve our profound thanks. All they need is to accept the election verdict in good grace, work for the betterment of the people and wait for their turn in the next elections.

Murshid Alam
Uttara, Dhaka

Television license

The BTV has now started broadcasting through satellite. I do not use my TV antenna anymore. The local cable operator provides me all the channels including BTV. The cable operator pays all the fees as applicable.

I want to know if I still need a license for my TV receiver. In case I need one, then why from BTV alone, why not from NTV, ATN or Channel-5 as well?

Faruq Husain

Mohammadpur, Dhaka

US, Arafat and Sharon

The US strongly advocates and supports people's elected leaders. But we are stunned and shocked that on the one hand the US President George Bush is blindly supporting the people's elected Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel and is bluntly rejecting the people's elected President Yasser Arafat of Palestine on the other. The US President George Bush is meeting with Ariel Sharon several times in a year but he is refusing to meet with Yasser Arafat even for a single time. How then there can be comprehensive peace in the Middle East and how when the US propagated roadmap for peace will be implemented?

The Israelis and the Palestinians can never live in harmony unless and until the US gives up its inclination towards Israel and its aversion towards Palestine.

freed by the US led forces why this discrimination against Palestine for over half a century?

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon must know that the universal demand for justice is 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. Everyone has to expiate his crime, his sin. The illegal occupation of Palestine and the macabre killings of Palestinians and Israelis must come to an end.

OH Kabir
Dhaka

Arms haul

The people of the country witnessed the biggest ever arms haul in its history. It is a direct threat to sovereignty of this country, whoever was linked to these arms and ammunition has the strength to fight a country's army, the experts opined.

But the people also witnessed another phase of the blame game. The state minister for home affairs blamed the opposition a few minutes after the recovery, for he thought that the ultimatum for the toppling of the government was related to the arms haul. The opposition replied swiftly saying that they were being blackmailed by the government.

Nobody would disagree that the politics of the country has become ridiculous and abominable. The politicians are always trying to make gains out of any situation. They have taken politics as a profitable business.

The people are the scapegoats who can do nothing but watch or register a humble protest by writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper, as I am doing now.

The arms haul should be handled cautiously and carefully. It happened in the past many a time. The investigations into those arms hauls did not make any headway. They rather made some speculations. So the people investigating this time should be more careful to identify the culprits—the past experiences can come in handy.

Mahfuz

One-mail

Shaheed Minar

The Central Shaheed Minar is a symbol of the nation's respect for the martyrs of the Language Movement. It reminds us of the supreme sacrifice of the golden sons of this soil who laid down their lives for the sake of our dear mother tongue, Bangla. It is a concrete structure stained with blood.

It has a great significance which cannot be described within the small space of a letter. The UNESCO announced 21st February as the International Mother Language Day to be observed globally with a view to giving the due recognition to the great sacrifice of the language martyrs of Bangladesh. It can be marked as a great achievement that has made us proud. On every 21 February, 188 countries of the world observe IMLD in a befitting manner. Various programmes such as seminars, symposiums and cultural functions are organised on this day.

But it is a matter of great regret that Shaheed Minar which symbolises this

achievement has turned into a place for undesirable elements like drug addicts. It has also become a kingdom of street children, found around the place almost always. It was April 13, 2004. I was having a chat with one of my friends sitting on the pulpit of Shaheed Minar. Abruptly, we got bad smell. I looked around curiously and found a few people smoking ganja. My mind was filled with a feeling of disgust. Do we have respect for the martyrs who gifted us our mother tongue in exchange of their lives? Can't we spare a moment to think about it?

I think we shouldn't allow this situation to continue. I want to draw the kind attention of the authorities through my letter to the dismal situation prevailing in and around the 'monument of glory'.

Muhammad Selim Hossain

Department of Geography
University of Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

Exploitation of professionals

We often see news items about exploitation of labourers or semi-skilled workers of Bangladesh by manpower exporting agencies (sometimes called *Adam Bapari*). Some of these news items are simply very painful. A personal sells all his earthly possessions to go to a Middle Eastern country or to Malaysia, simply to find that he has entered into an agreement of virtual slavery. Fortunately, the government is taking strong steps against this type of exploitation in which a person is practically sold for slavery and at times all his property and money are taken by the *Adam Bapari* through cheating.

What most of us, including the government agencies, are not aware is how in the name of consulting business a few very clever individuals with the help of international agencies are cheating the professionals of this country! A consulting company providing professional manpower to execute donor-funded projects, often pays these professionals very low wages and keep most of their salaries and wages in the name of "Overhead" expenditures. Perhaps it will be easier to understand the point if I give an example. Say a Consulting Company provides a "Design Engineer" to a project for a duration of five years and charge Tk 1,50,000.00 per month. The Consulting Company is going to give the Design Engineer a maximum of Tk 50,000 per month, no other additional benefits like, bonus, leave with pay etc. The clever owner of the Consulting Company in the name of "Overhead", "Social Charge", "Consulting Fee" etc. keeps the rest of the money. In reality, the owner of the company has nothing to do once the engineer is assigned to the project. The Team Leader of the Project is responsible for all administrative and technical operation of the project. The owner of the company as a middleman, month after month and year after year, will be collecting twice the salary of the engineer, doing nothing. Well, I may be slightly wrong here by saying, "Doing Nothing".

Now if you look at it fairly, by helping the engineer to find a job, the owner of the Consulting Company can charge a "Finder Fee" which can be one-month's salary for each year. Why it should be more than the salary of the engineer and not for one or two months but for the full duration of the project? This is where the help of the organisations like the World Bank and the ADB is needed. Without their direct help, (and may be a direct take) this exploitation cannot be stopped.

A Concerned Person

Banani Model Town, Dhaka

Rape news

I would like the opportunity to add to the letter of Humaira Malik entitled "Rape News". For a good example of development, one might look at how such crimes were reported in the 18th century England (see the search facility below) <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/search/> and then compare those news reports with the way such stories are usually (not always) reported in the

newspapers today. You will notice a big difference. Are we moving forward or backwards?

Zabidur Rahman

One-mail

Biman service

For a long time, I have been hearing from people what bad service Biman offers to its customers. People pay money to travel by Biman and you provide service which is far below their expectations. Several members of my family are stranded in Dhaka right now (April 19), they have not been able to get on the flight BG017 because you have overbooked.

Members of my family have paid money for this flight. I do not see why they have to suffer for the incompetence of an airline. Please don't reply saying, "We are sorry." This is not enough.

Shapla

London, UK

AL and BNP

I am writing in reference to a recent article in DS. "So, what you have proved?" The said piece was timely and extraordinary. But I want to add a few things to your well written piece. For the sake of argument, if the AL wins the snap polls, provided the BNP government falls as a result of continuous hartal/agitation as per the wish of the opposition party, what happens next? The BNP surely will indulge in similar tactics during the half way stage of the next AL government. As it will be an established practice/procedure then, nobody can and will question or desist BNP from carrying out similar types of activities to unseat an elected government. So we will have to opt for another mid-term

election? Is this the way the country will continue to rotate over and over again on the issue of governance? We think that the people of this country have better things to do other than voting at two-year intervals when the main opposition party starts boycotting parliament and calls hartal after hartal once they are out of power. It is my thinking that AL has a better chance in the next election due to the anti-incumbency factor, only if they behave in a proper way. People in general may now suffer quietly in their daily life and watch who does what for them and who acts how, but they will speak their mind loud and clear by voting somebody in and somebody out at the time of elections.

Our election under caretaker government is unique in this world. Yet Sk. Hasina is trying to destroy this credibility by accusing a president, a chief election commissioner and other election commissioners. They were all accused of co-operating with the chief of the caretaker government in bringing her downfall! This is just amazing! This is beyond all logic. Sadly, I have not seen our journalist community dwelling on this point much. In the next elections all these people will be BNP appointees. Only God knows what she will say then if she loses again. Where will she get the angels who would take her to her dream heaven?

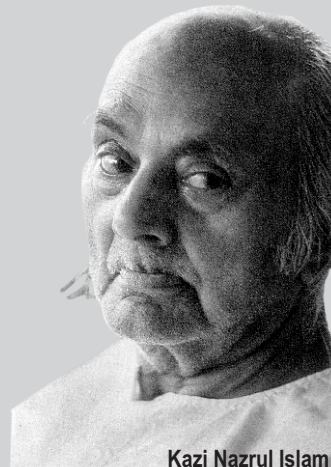
Apart from some European nations, complaints against elections are common in many countries including the United States. We should not forget how Democrats lost the complained bitterly of poll rigging at Florida and some other centres by the Republicans in the last presidential election and how their judiciary deprived Al

Greatest Bengalee

When we place the names of the political personalities besides cultural and intellectual luminaries for a list that will reflect the opinions of radio listeners in order of their popularity, we are in a race beyond appreciation.

What is to be noted here is that only political personalities gain through votes, not persons above politics. So it is very strange to see Golam Azam amongst the greats like Rabindranath, Kazi Nazrul and Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar. It's like a comedy of errors, where Churchill is getting the top slot ahead of Newton in the list of top Britons!

Md Anwarul Kader
West Nakhapara,
Tejgaon, Dhaka



Kazi Nazrul Islam

Confused students

Being worried about the HSC examinees, I am writing this letter for getting a clear idea about what they should write in the answer scripts. The new 'communicative method' for the HSC students is not so easy because the system is alien to them. Besides, some confusions about how to answer correctly and appropriately have baffled them. The appropriate guideline of answering the English questions is a crying need for the students. Particularly in the question no 12 (Re-arranging), students are misled by different guidebooks and teach-

ers as they are telling them to write the whole story. But as far as I know, the NCTB gave a sample question and answer where they instructed the students to 're-arrange' mentioning only numbers in the right order. The students are greatly confused.

Will the students write down full paragraph in question no-12 (re-arrange) or only mention the serial number in the right order? 'In fill in the gaps', is it necessary to write down the whole passage, or only the appropriate words? We know that like many international exams, including IELTS, GMAT SAT, TOEFL etc, our new syllabus of English tests the students' capacity to comprehend. If we want to follow the international standards, we should do so properly.

P Chakravarty

Teacher
Natore

motifs and patterns of tasteful designs. What is more worrying is that instead of opposing, some of the old modestly dressed religious personalities have also gone for such changes. This type of dress does not reflect the simplicity which our religion teaches.

Mohammed Alauddin

Dhaka

Road accidents

The government is beating about the bush regarding the alarming rate of road accidents in Bangladesh. The accident rate can be brought down immediately by following two inexpensive steps:

1. Do not allow drivers with fake or no license to operate. Catch them and prosecute them legally (their number is pretty high).
2. Do not allow unfit vehicles to ply the roads (thousands of vehicles involved, including rickshaws). The owners should be fined heavily say, four times the cost of repairs. Recast BRTA and BRTC (similar to BTTB and Rajuk).

Bad drivers can kill and injure others. Who gave them this license? Our highways mostly have two lanes, without a fast passing or overtaking lane, the untrained drivers have a poor sense of judgement which can be fatal when they overtake other vehicles. The second factor is the poor technical condition of the vehicle—it cannot accelerate fast enough to avoid collision.

There are too many head-on collisions. The authorities are ignoring the 'human effects' in the transport system. All holders of driving license must be educated to a certain level, to be able to read training book (let's independently. The government

may open driving schools in each divisional headquarters, and strictly supervise the private training institutions. Out inspection system is weak and corrupt as is our political philosophy.

The solutions are there, but the regime is not interested in routine operation and maintenance. Too much self and party publicity; the civil service is spoiled and is no longer neutral. The same deplorable management conditions exist in regard to port security, and in the academia. The traffic accidents are a part of the body of this diseased society. We are apparently unable to govern ourselves!

A Mahasen

Dhaka

Star business report

My attention has been drawn to the above-mentioned report published in your daily, involving four existing/former SEC officials including me, reportedly based on a CAG report. So far I can remember, the IPO in question was approved by the Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC) consisting of, among others, a retired Senior Secretary (SEC Chairman), a then Secretary (part-time SEC Member) and a then Deputy Governor (part-time SEC Member).

It was based on audited financial statements, physical verification by SEC officials, and thorough analysis of evidential documents carried out in 1996-97. All these approvals, financial statements, physical verifications, and evidences should be in the relevant SEC file(s). There was no question or scope of any "malpractice"; as the IPO was approved on the basis of approved procedures in a transparent manner.

No IPO Department of any SEC can predict beforehand post-IPO acts/failures, if any, of any listed company at the time of IPO. It seems to me that your/CAG report relating to matters that happened eight years ago might be based on misconception and "half" information. I would request you to publish these facts.

Dr. AKM Sahabul Alam

FCS, FCMA, FCA, PhD
Dhaka

Our report was based on an audit of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) which held responsible the four officials mentioned in the news item published in DS business page on April 2 for overvaluing assets of Mark Bangladesh Shilpa and Engineering Ltd during initial public offering in 1996. The asset overvaluation surfaced after an investigation by Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology found that the real asset of the company was 978.44 percent lower than the value stated in inspection report by the four officials of the Securities and Exchange Commission. We have nothing to do with the CAG report.

-- Editor



PHOTO: AFP

Iraqis are uniting

The Shiite-Sunni united front in Iraq appears to be a divine blessing towards the long-awaited rise of the beleaguered Muslims after a long period of gestation. The sun is rising.

The aggressive and materialistic West is naturally perturbed, as this new trend in the Muslim world might spread out rapidly, providing a united shield against pre-emptive strikes by the enemies of Islam. The divide-and-rule policy in the Middle East is now on a hard test. The rich Muslim states have to take a long-term stand and send the message to the developed countries who bank more on industrialisation than divine exchanges between the

Creator and the created.

There are hidden saints in each nation for guidance, working indirectly. This beginning of the new millennium is a century of changes. Bangladesh is not excluded. Evil can hardly hold the front stage for long it lurks in the background.

The leaders, including our local ones, have to review the situation on a long-term perspective. The rise and fall of nations would now accelerate. Hence current leadership needs more elbow space to hold their ground. Only the knife edge is sharp, in contrast to compassion and piety.

Abdali
Dhaka