

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.

For a fairpoll

I am looking forward to the by-election in Dhaka-10 constituency that will be held on July 1. We do not expect any kind of allegation of rigging in the upcoming by-election. Because, common people have to have the right to vote for the candidate of their choice. I hope that not only the EC but also the home ministry will take proper steps for holding a free and fair election. Besides, they will also have to be strict in dealing with any kind of political pressure during voting. As a common citizen, can't I expect that?

Dulchi Fatema
BRAC University, Dhaka

DB men and our security

A detective branch police team led by a sub-inspector allegedly looted the house of a fish farm owner and arrested the housewife and implicated her in a false case. The team entered his residence and confined his wife and five children at gun-point. Even his contractor's licence and the registration and admit card of his daughter were also taken away. The activities of the DB men bear all the hallmarks of that of dacoits.

There is a popular belief that each police station has to pay a fixed amount of money to the high ups every month. Rumour also has it that some unbelievable amount of money has to be paid to the right place to get a transfer or a job in the DB. The latest incident only strengthens the popular belief.

We like to think that we live in a civilised world where police is the friendly force to safeguard the security of the citizens from the anti-social elements. However, in reality we are more afraid of police than those bandits. One of my friends commented that if the police department is dissolved, ninety percent of crime will just vanish into the thin air. I think it is all but true.

Saif
Dhaka

Our candidate's merit

After the debacle in the election for a new OIC secretary general, our FM claimed 98% of the votes, had the voting been on the basis of a candidate's merit.

If the set-up of the election for a new OIC secretary general, were like that of our MP elections, our FM's prediction would have come true. The candidates might have thought twice before facing a man like SQC.

Joy
Dhaka

Mystudents

The other day, my office door kept opening and closing while I was



Mypapa's vision

There was a time when society used to consider a girl child an economic burden and spending money to bring up a girl child as a perfect human being to face the hardcore challenges of the 20th century is almost rare even today in the social arena of our country. But my father proved it to be wrong which is the most lively truth of my life today. Both papa and I are the devoted children of the economic idealism and oppose the social backwardness leading to many injustices made towards the women community in our society. My papa has got two daughters and he brought them up in his own idealism. Being a father of daughters, he even had to face many hardcore social truths the society came up with. He was accompanied by the traditional circle of the so called friends, colleagues, relatives who were always against providing freedom and spending money in female education. But I saw my papa as a different reality. Although he came up from the so called conservative arena, he sacrificed his own happiness in preparing his two daughters as individual entities. This incident occurred when I was passing through my third year in my undergraduate programme in Economics at North South University. I came up from a mixed background of English and Bengali medium possessing academic excellence all through my academic career. I even hold an unbeaten record of achieving a CGPA of above 3.5 in all the semesters. When I was crossing my 78 credit hours, my papa suffered a severe business shock which put the entire family into a great uncertainty. Many people rebuked him for spending so much money for his two daughters' education. But nothing could dissuade him from his mission of attaching due importance to his daughters' education.

Today I am an Award holder Graduate in Economics from the most reputed institution in our country. Three cheers for my Papa the Great.

Azreen Karim
Baridhara DOHS, Dhaka

shouting down my mobile to an ex-student from Haluaghat. The shuffling and whispering indicated a deputation waiting to enter. When the call had finished, four little girls from Year 4 burst in and fell at my feet, with a bad attack of examination nerves. "Pray for us, Ma'am," they cried.

I put my arms around them and prayed, solemnly, "Dear God, please help these little girls to do

their best in their examinations. Amen." They thanked me happily and skipped out.

Excuse me, but did I do anything wrong?
Angela MV Robinson (Rev Mrs)
Dhaka

AL's volte-face

The political situation in Bangladesh is going to be normal again. The Awami League, the main

opposition party in the Jatiya Sangsad, has joined the parliament proceedings. Their decision is a sign of political maturity. They are eager to join the parliamentary standing committees. Actually, their perpetual parliament boycott paralysed the House.

We hope the Jatiya Sangsad will be rejuvenated again through the bonhomie between the ruling and the opposition parties.
Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Dept of English, DU

Biman 'Umrah' ticket

A number of seats go vacant in almost every Jeddah flight of Biman. It is better to earn some revenue by issuing subsidised Umrah tickets to high government officials along with their spouses. I suggest that Joint Secretaries and above may be allowed return Umrah ticket at the rate of Tk. fifteen thousand per ticket. This will be a good incentive for the officials and at the same time add some revenue to Biman against prospective vacant seats. Will the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism give a thought to it?

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury
DOHS, Dhaka

Biggainer?

Our Foreign Minister on return from the OIC meeting at Turkey mentioned that Bangladesh gained a lot, even though Bangladesh's candidate lost the election for the OIC secretary general.

Each time our cricketers are defeated in a match, as a routine exercise the officials say Bangladesh gained a lot from this defeat.

If Bangladesh keeps on gaining from each and every defeat, then what's the point in trying to win? Let Bangladesh be the biggest gainer by continuing to lose in every field.

Aminur Rahman
Karwan Bazar, Dhaka

Saif is right, but...

I agree with Saif. Really we badly need to be united. This is the high time.

Here, first of all, we need to pick out the injurious inborn faults we have. No doubt our politics is harmfully politicised, and we the scapegoats have become crippled in fear of a few but foremost musclemen. We are only running after our personal safety. But if we really want to come out of this sooty atmosphere we have to stop all kinds of mudslinging just now. Though we all realise the call for a spiritual force to be gushed forth from ourselves to uproot all sorts of maltreatment, in most cases we fail to escape from our own political bias. As we saw in the letter of the sensible and 'disgruntled' reader. He blamed the opposition for being crazy and doing heinous

activities through out the country after the April 30 famous (!) 'Dead-line' mockery. Believe me, the common folk of Bangladesh truly long to watch severe punishment to those that are violating the rules & regulations. My question is how could Saif be so sure that the AL activists launched the arson attack? It might be. Yet we could think of some other probabilities.

The fanatics might be guilty who are now terribly expanding their destructive and dirty network in our religiously tolerant country and why not think of sabotage with an aim to trap the opposition? Whoever is the culpable person or gang, should be punished ruthlessly. I am with you Saif; we should not any more let our children to be burnt alive. We want every cell of every individual to be ignited as soon as possible to wipe out the foggy darkness of our somewhat dysfunctional country. But before that we need to be impartial and sincerely honest.

Alam Sheikh Sabiha
One-mail

The OIC debacle and our foreign office

The defeat of our candidate in the election for the post of OIC secretary general was a national humiliation, to say the least. For all we know, it was ours for the asking after we withdrew the name of former Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, in the last election some four years ago. How we could make this mess is anybody's guess but then there has to be an answer to explain this embarrassing and humiliating defeat.

The BNP has blamed the AL for its negative propaganda to explain this defeat. It is also being said in BNP circles that the dispatch of a pro Awami League ex-diplomat to Turkey during the foreign ministers' meeting was another reason for our defeat. This is wishful thinking. It is time that the BNP wakes up and accepts the responsibility for its actions. It is true that the AL did involve itself in negative propaganda against the candidate. But then there are many valid reasons to do so for everyone except the few people who chose this candidature. The candidate lost because he had no credentials for the post. He has no exposure to international diplomacy; nor has he any exposure to the Arab world or for that matter in the Muslim world. His opponents had far better credentials in diplomacy against his ex-ministerial credentials that were of no consequence for the post for which he was contesting.

Then there is also the crucial matter of Malaysian wrath against our candidature for it had requested us to withdraw, but we did not and Malaysia has the ability to rub us the wrong way on the manpower issue. Did the foreign ministry take this into consideration? Then the FM visited Turkey on a bilateral trip and came back and gave an upbeat assessment of our candidature. He should be questioned why he had no clue that Turkey had indeed launched a formidable candidature. Then we need also to put the Ambassador in Turkey on the dock. Did he know that Turkey would run away with the post like it did? Finally, why did the Saudis not back us? The Bangladesh Ambassador in Riyadh has a lot of explaining to do. We spent close to Tk 22 crore on this venture. This is public money and we need answers.

Rashed Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

An overbridge needed

The main road in front of Zoar Sahara bus stand of Dhaka city is a death trap. Though this bus stand is adjacent to Dhaka Cantonment but road accidents happen here very often. Some unskilled drivers drive their cars with limitless speed and do not care about the rules and regulations of driving. In fact, there is no one to check, monitor or control it. People are afraid of speedy cars and face difficulties to cross the road at this bus stand.

In last 30 days three persons died at this bus stand and many people became wounded at the time of crossing the road. Especially, the women and children. On June 10, 2004 we lost our dearest colleague Fariha Afrina (28) forever, an employee of Helen Keller International (HKI), Bangladesh. She was hit by a running bus at the time of crossing the road on her way to office.

This is why we beg attention of the concerned authorities to kindly build a foot overbridge at Zoar Sahara bus stand as early as possible considering the need to prevent accidents.

Parvez Babul
Helen Keller International (Bangladesh) DOHS, Baridhara, Dhaka

A perfect result

I was one of the happiest persons when I heard that SQ Chowdhury failed to become the general secretary of OIC. This is simply ridiculous and I still cannot understand how come a person, who was against the independence of this nation, got the nomination to represent Bangladesh for becoming the general secretary of OIC.

Minhaj Ahmed
Utara, Dhaka

Moral support for The Daily Star!

The British Secret Service, MI6, has just reported (no, it wasn't sexed up) that the office of The Daily Star has gone underwater. Oh dear! At this time of the year in Bangladesh, heavy rain is not unexpected. But I didn't think it will become that shameless. Lets hope that all DS staff know how to swim. Watch out for sharks and crocodiles. But my main concern is with those old computers in your office. Please do your best to protect them because without them we will all be stuck here without any news. I don't think they will work underwater, but you could always test them out by pouring a bottle of water on one of them! As for a long term solution, I am sure Mr Bill Gates is already working on computers that will work underwater. Besides, with all the global warming and raising water level, it is only sensible that Mr Gates boldly takes his business where no business has gone before: underwater!

But look on the bright side, guys. The

rain provides you free water for bathing, drinking, sanitation and even a good cup of tea. Back here, we have to pay all kind of bills: council tax bill, income tax, national insurance, road tax, car insurance, gas bill, electricity bill, phone bill, mobile phone bill, water bill, rent, mortgage, life insurance, pension and so on. The only thing that is still free is the air, but we aren't holding our breath. Blair *mamuji* has been telling us for the last seven years that he hasn't got any reverse gear, and who knows, one day he might turn around and say sorry guys, but I don't have any exhaust either. Which means the British public will have to pay for the air they breath. Oxygen tax?

Anyway, here in UK, it is all sunny, shiny and hot. So why don't you guys join me for an ice cream? Oh you must be getting jealous now.

Azad Miah, Oldham, UK



PHOTO: STAR

Oklahoma City, OK, USA

Correction

I would like to bring an error in your June 21 issue to your attention. The mistake was in an article in the Point Counterpoint page.

In the second paragraph, Alexander Hamilton is referred to as "President Alexander Hamilton." However, this American Founding Father never served as President of the United States. The highest governmental position he attained was Secretary of the Treasury. He was the first Treasury Secretary under President George Washington.

Anurag Pugalía

OIC and democracy

It is indeed good to see that OIC has finally gone for election to choose its secretary general. I still wonder how far this organisation has been able to prove its impact on this modern complex world. Sometimes it seems it is a forum of speeches only, not deeds. This was for the first time that democracy was practised in the meeting. And we are all happy to see that a learned, knowledgeable and liberal man has been elected by the members. Once it seemed that OIC did not work except when one very powerful country in the Middle

East wanted to. Then it was not an elected post, but rather an appointed post. As an appointed post it was more concerned about supporting the status quo (many of its appointees represent dictatorships unfortunately). So for the age of globalisation what is needed is a true international universal accountable body elected by all the people. Only such a body would be accountable, effective, truly representative, and functional.

Kamaluddin Ahmed
Shamoly, Dhaka

Introduce 'rickshaw ambulance'

Your article (Star City June 20: Rescue efforts falter in Old Dhaka alleys) graphically portrays the difficulties faced by the crews of emergency vehicles when trying to reach the scene of an incident through the narrow streets of old Dhaka.

Street widening and proper access for modern rescue vehicles are obviously the ideal long-term solution. But such processes are expensive and problematic, as your article makes clear, and will doubtless take time.

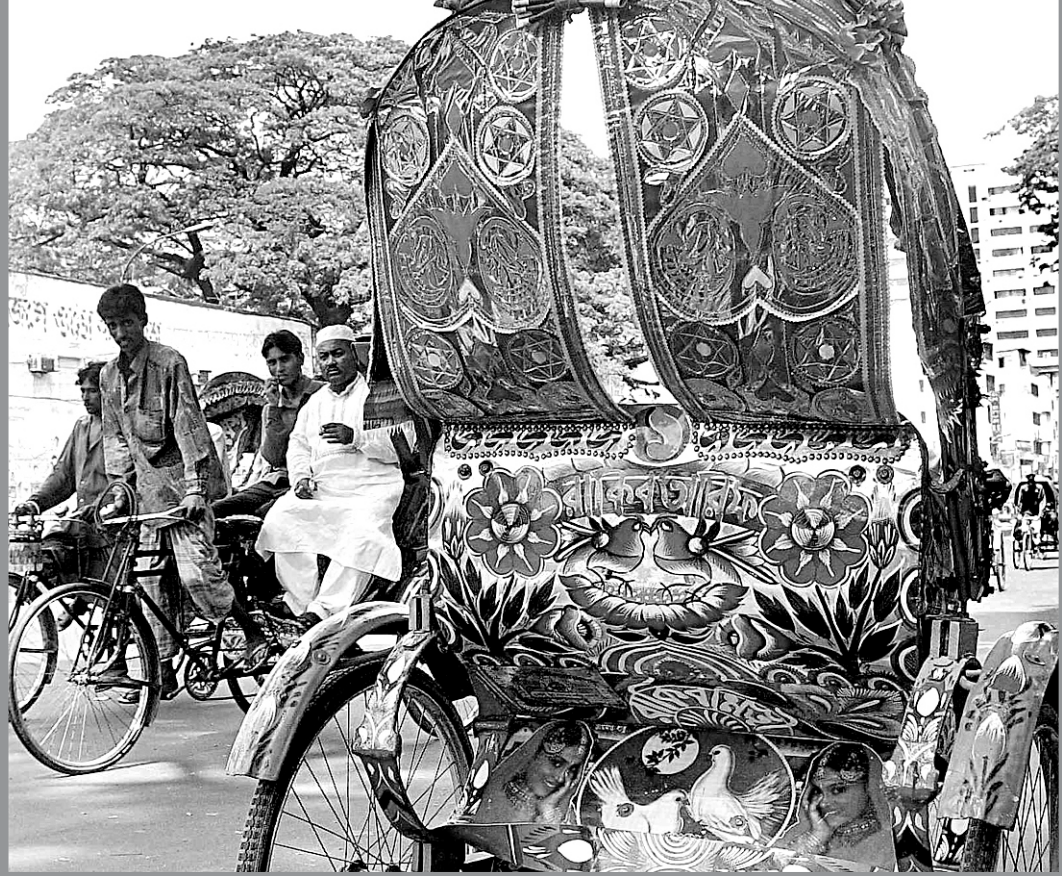
Meanwhile, in the event of another catastrophe such as that at Shankhari Bazar on June 9, many more people may die because of the critical delay in reaching the care that could save their lives.

Given that rickshaws alone seem to be able to move freely in these parts of the city, a simple solution suggests itself. Why do the authorities not acquire and equip a fleet of 'ambulance rickshaws'? Such vehicles, piloted by trained staff and carrying first-aid equipment, could easily be adapted to transport injured or sick people out of the maze of alleys, to a transit point where more conventional ambulances would be waiting to take them to hospital.

Ambulance rickshaws could be developed and maintained using skills and equipment already in Bangladesh, with no need for imported vehicles or foreign expertise. They would be inexpensive to buy and cheap to keep on the road.

In a world obsessed with technology and modernity, it would be easy to dismiss such a proposal as a backward step. But prejudice has no place where lives are at stake. For the injured of future disasters such as that at Shankhari Bazar, such a simple idea might just make the difference between life and death.

Matt Bannerman
Banani, Dhaka



Obscene



PHOTO: STAR

I am shocked and appalled to read the remarks of a politician holding the rank of a minister and was a candidate for OIC secretary general. I thank heaven that he was not elected. I cannot reason how this gentleman could make such obscene remarks of such low taste about another politician. I don't want to justify who is right or wrong...my question is, are we safe in these hands?

SRK
California, USA

Mr. SQ Chowdhury should be congratulated for standing for the post of secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the prime minister should be congratulated for having the courage to support him. Mr Chowdhury polled as much as another contestant in the ballot and has nothing to be ashamed

of.

We should welcome the fact that a secretary general was elected to the OIC for the first time, rather than be chosen by consensus and that Bangladesh played an important role in such a historical event.

Imran Ispahani
London

I had the unfortunate experience of watching the most distasteful press conference on channel I last Monday (21.6.2004) of SQC trying to justify all his vulgar comments which he made earlier against his fellow lawmakers belonging to the opposite bench of our parliament. He is the one who once, not so long ago, made derogatory remarks about the BNP chairperson and was expelled from the party to be reinstated again soon thereafter.

How can a man of his past

reputation and the way he always conducts himself both in as well as outside the parliament be allowed to keep going in any society even with the basic minimum standard of civilised behaviour? Perhaps it is only possible in a country like ours, where there is no quality control for anything.

The best thing for everyone including our media is to ignore such a character like it had been done in the case of Enoch Powell by the British people to allow him waste away naturally.

Z.Rahman
Gulshan, Dhaka

Though it was unfortunate news for Bangladesh that it could not win in the OIC, it was good news that the OIC rejected the controversial man, SQ Chowdhury. The OIC seemed to know the real history of Bangladesh and honoured the Liberation

War'71. It was not defeat at all, it was a win for Bangladesh.

Kazi Firoz
Bratislava, SR

I have been amazed and ashamed for some people have rejoiced and hailed the defeat of SQ Chowdhury, as the Bangladesh candidate, in the race for the top OIC post. I want to ask what those people would have done if he (SQ) was elected, as was expected, by the support of those (over 30 member countries) who lent their endorsement and committed support. It's indeed a defeat for all of us, and not for him alone, as the Muslim Ummah got divided and derided the election! It doesn't need a PhD to understand the reasoning. How someone claiming himself a Bangladeshi claimed that the "OIC was saved" and "it would have been wrong morally" to have SQ Chowdhury elected in the OIC's coveted post! Shame on you for not supporting the country's own candidate but you are not the bulk of the majority who voted you people out of power while you are lurking to come to power by any means. But please don't do anything which shows your narrow partisan attitude and demeans the country's respectable image.

AF Rahman
Viae-mail

I am writing from Sydney.

We have read about the dirty talk of SQ Chowdhury at Dhaka airport. It is really unfortunate that a man holding such a position could talk in that language.

Abdus Sadeque
International Affairs Secretary, Central Executive Committee, Bangabandhu Krishibid Parishad