

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.

Politicisation of the administration

I thank you and the author of 'Politicisation of the administration' published in DS on 1.7.04.

I would like to draw your attention to the figure that a present 2,500 first class government high and trained officers holding the ranks of Additional Secretary, Joint Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Senior Assistant secretary and others have been made 'OSD' mostly on political consideration, when there is a huge shortage of such trained officers for serving the people who pay their salary. The government is spending about Tk 5 crore a month on these OSDs but receiving no service from them. We could have set up 5,000 schools every month with this amount of money. It seems that our government is the richest government in the world!

My question is: Who will be made responsible for this tax payers' money misuse? If these 2,500 officers are made OSD on political grounds, are rest of the officers 'cadres' of the ruling party?

Nizamuddin Al-Hussainy

Dharmundi, Dhaka

It's not abnormal!

It seems completely ridiculous to expect fair election and talk about corruption and fake voting under an elected government. It's rather unconstitutional because "elected

governments can't conduct any fair election" is the basic premise of the much acclaimed "care-taker government" provision of our constitution.

How can we demand and add the provision for a care-taker government to the constitution and expect fair and neutral bye-election under an elected government? If someone ponders deeply he should understand that the provision is a very big barrier in nurturing democratic spirit and culture in our politics.

As a nation we don't know who we are, what we should do, what we shouldn't and what to appreciate. Collectively, we are now happy that we have something in our constitution, a provision for a care-taker government, to guarantee neutral elections. We are content with the thinking that we are unique in the whole world, but we don't even think that we are the nation who don't understand the very basic theme of democracy that elected representatives are the most trusted ones to work for us in all our important businesses.

If we say Dhaka-10 bye-election was not fair and rampantly rigged, then it is congruent with our constitutional premise; and if we say, Munshiganj-1 was fair, then it negates the premise that a care-taker government is needed to hold fair elections!

Dr. Mohammed Giasuddin

New York, USA

"Bikolpa" or "Ekei" Dhara?

We all know the Bikolpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) was launched with a loud announcement that it would be a "true" alternative forum of new politico cultural lines, shrugging off the existing old political culture of Bangladesh, totally different from AL and BNP type politics and it would bring dynamism in the depleted political culture of Bangladesh. But I was completely pulverised to see the BDB begging for the support of the AL for their candidates in the recent parliamentary by-elections. There was nothing wrong in seeking support had they not pronounced to be the alternative political forum, distancing them from two mainstream political parties of Bangladesh. This is indeed a shameful and hypocritical act on the part of the BDB because the very basic principle on which it was formed was a completely unique and progressive one. If they seek AL support, how can they claim themselves to be a Bikolpa Dhara?

One thing is clear, the Bikolpa Dhara Bangladesh has to either field their own candidate against the AL and other parties or lend support, covertly or overtly, to the AL (although the AL doesn't need it) in the forthcoming Gazipur-2 by-elections. What a contradictory politics! One thing I want to emphasise again is that there is nothing wrong about the activities of the BDB but what is disturbing me is their pronouncement as "Bikolpa Dhara". In reality they are the same old "Ekei Dhara". After all, the founder of the BDB, Prof Dr AQM Badruddoza Choudhury, is a product of yesterday's same old politics.

Lastly, may I request the BDB to be brave enough to come out of this vicious circle and turn itself into a truly alternative force.

Captain Mohammad Shahid Helal, psc, BN (Retd)
Dharmundi, Dhaka

About a headline

I would like to draw the attention of the editor about the news item titled "AL walks out as talks on by-polls denied". I felt that the title was inappropriate because if you read the news item, then you will realise that the AL walk out came after a hour of discussion on the unscheduled issue. The issue that they brought up is very important and definitely deserves serious consideration, but the discussion has to be scheduled.

A headline is very important because a lot of people often don't read the news items very carefully.

Shadharan Manush

One-mail

Killing of expatriates

Abduction and killing of expatriates are becoming a daily affair and we are as usual getting used to it. Expatriates who live miles away from their near and dear ones and often undergo back-breaking labour to support their family and also to contribute to the economy long for coming to their motherland. But they return home only to be gotten into the clutches of the local goons. These mastans are always on the



PHOTO: AFP

Sovereignty, what sovereignty?

Although vague and unworkable, references to freedom and democracy figure strongly in the rhetoric of the new Iraq. The new "sovereign" Iraq is supposed to be led by an un-elected man that has "invited" the Americans to keep over 150,000 US forces in the country, yet he has no authority over these forces and they are not subject to Iraqi law (or any law in real terms) for the atrocities, murder and destruction they wreak. Allawi will not have the authority to free the many thousands of Iraqi prisoners held in the American prisons scattered across "sovereign" Iraq, or even to ensure they are given a fair trial. Allawi does not even have control over the purse strings of his "sovereign" nation. Bremer having promised to spend the \$15 billion the US

Congress had earmarked for the reconstruction of Iraq prior to his hand-over ceremony, is no longer there to face any questions over the fact that only \$3 billion has been spent. Presumably the new ruler of Iraq (US ambassador John Negroponte) will spend this money as he sees fit. The Americans certainly saw it as appropriate to spend \$184 million that had been assigned for drinking water projects instead of spending it on the refurbishment of one of Saddam's palaces to house the 3,000 US embassy officials that John Negroponte needs in "sovereign" Iraq. The consumer group Public Citizen highlighted that we are witnessing "massive outbreaks of cholera, diarrhoea, nausea and kidney stones" from drinking of contaminated water -- today's reality in "sovereign"

Iraq. The people rightly have no confidence that they will see any benefit from the enormous reserves of oil that the occupiers are kindly managing on behalf of "sovereign" Iraq.

The formal transfer of Bush's vision of "sovereignty" for Iraq was put forward two days earlier this week. The media focused upon the note that Ms. Rice had sent to Bush as he sat next to Blair at a NATO meeting. Bush rather appropriately scribbled "Let freedom reign" over the note and passed it to his freedom loving friend. Rampant capitalist freedom of ownership and good old imperialist control are reigning in Iraq, and don't let anyone imagine that they are not there for the long term.

Elshamul Haque, Lalmata, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

'Talaq' in the eye of religion

I am highly pleased to read about the above subject, written by Asgar Ali Engineer! Very likely, our country still follows the rule of the Indian subcontinent, constituted before 1945! Therefore we would expect our law authorities to give importance to the Indian rule modification, as well!

I appraise the writer's expressions quoting verses from the Holy Koran. Our nation highly values the religious rules in any regard! Including all his explanation, I am very much satisfied with his very last sentence, "If the women suffer, after all, half of the umma suffers, and the holy book does not permit injustice in any case"

But, the honourable writer has not clearly mentioned the "reasons" of uttering talaq! Can he clarify these to me, a citizen having no knowledge about the existing laws?

Please do!

A victim, Shamoli, Dhaka

proud to know about the arrival of any expatriate and receiving their fair share of money.

The family or relatives sometimes have to keep it a secret and the man has to come stealthily to his own home to get rid of the trouble makers. In one case, one of the expatriates was abducted right from the airport. In most of the cases, the miscreants enjoy political immunity or operate in connivance with the law enforcement. Thus the criminals are shielded from justice and get away with extortion, abduction and even killing while a mother loses her son/daughter and a family loses its earning member.

Bangla Bhai

There are three types of friends: real, friend's friend and enemy's enemy

as it is defined in 'Kalila Va Dimona' a book of anecdotes narrated by two symbolic jackals 'Kalila' & 'Dimona' which was written hundreds of years ago in this part of the world by an Indian wise man but made famous through Persian translation. This is hundred percent true even in present day context. See around, you find practical examples everywhere.

I have mentioned this to project the existent or a non-existent 'Bangla Bhai' from the different angles of political bias which are being honestly followed by different print and electronic media. It is a well known and well established fact that some criminals in the name of so-called progressive political philosophy have unleashed a reign of terror, looting, extortion and murder in a wide area of Bangladesh since the last few years. They have

killed and injured hundreds of men, women & children for factional feud or for extortion of money. Cries of those affected people could not bring as much attention as has been by the man who is challenging them, albeit without any legal authority.

It seems the newspapers which have a leaning towards obsolete communist & secular ideas have at last found a reason to depict Bangladesh as a den of religious extremism and to bring sympathy for their cause from external powers like the US and West European countries. For a mother who has seen her beloved son killed brutally, it is very natural and normal that she will take shelter even from her enemy to protect her other children. Here her best friend is her enemy's enemy.

It is a pity that most of our news papers have failed to project atrocities committed by these so-called progressive criminals in the name of class struggle- a political idea already dead for good. They have failed to identify those leaders of some political parties who are taking share of extortion money as has been told by the captured criminals. This is because all of these leaders belong to the leftist block.

We should be very honest, impartial and prudent to raise such issues which are surely a question of life and death for a vast majority.

The government must give protection to its citizens. No one has the right to put anyone on trial except a legally formed court of law of the government. We must drop our partisan slogan 'Long Live Bangla Bhai' or 'Death to Bangla Bhai' on the basis of our political attachment. The rule of law must be established. And we must extend our support and cooperation to the law enforcement for bringing peace and stability.

External interference?

This refers to a letter published in DS (July 4). I cannot agree with the writer's views. As long as we do something improper, anybody can make comments and ambassadors do not fall under any limitations in this matter. Look, what we have done with the Bangla Bhai issue. Except some fanatics and rogues, nobody in this country or elsewhere can support his activities that include not only taking law into one's own hands, but also becoming prosecutor, judge and executor under his own law, defying the law of the country. If the authorities tolerate (actually eulogise) such a criminal at the official level, then what on earth will deter any person, not to say anything about an ambassador, from criticising that? I am really shocked that in our community there are people who want to go along with that and suddenly become aware when somebody shows the irrelevance by pointing to it, and to these people it becomes external interference. Does the writer like and support what Bangla Bhai does? As long as a definite wrong is pointed out by anyone, internal or external, we should be ashamed and mend it, without

questioning his/her authority to do/say so.

Muhammad Ali, Dhaka

Politics

For some of us politics in Bangladesh is a schizophrenic affair. Once in my dreamy state, I was appointed finance minister. The first initiative I took was to make a formal visit to my predecessor and compliment him on his policies and promise to follow through, and also to inform him that I would appreciate any advice he wished to divulge for the sake of our country. But are the politicians dreaming of doing anything like that?

Samia Hossain
Gulshan, Dhaka

Good news

Congratulation to Abdur Rahim Bacchu Mia for his silent revolution

of cultivating pineapple, replacing harmful tobacco. I very sincerely thank the reporter for presenting such a useful and encouraging article. Bacchu Mia has also developed the unique system for intercropping. I hope and believe that various NGOs and social organisations will highlight this success and encourage farmers to give up tobacco cultivation. Tobacco is spoiling our society, specially young generation. Hundreds of young men start with tobacco and afterwards become addicted to heroin and ultimately die.

I request the newsmen of Bangla dailies to highlight the success of Bacchu Mia, so that other farmers can follow him.

Dr. Mahboob Hossain
Niigata University of Pharmacy, Niigata, Japan



High heel shoes and shackles

Historically, particularly in conservative background from which our roots can possibly be traced, women were shackled, hooded and kept under wraps. From this age old beginning, modern women have come a long, long way. But have they really broken the shackles? The widespread popularity of high heel shoes that adorn the modern women's feet tends to point the other way. Both version of the heavy and sometimes large block heel four-inch or higher as well as the sharply tapered pencil heel have put the brakes on women's foot. It has definitely slowed them down. Though not literally and figuratively shackled, it definitely makes it difficult for them to run away! From the full stop of shackles, high heels have definitely slowed the women down.

May be consciously or subconsciously shoe designers (possibly males) have managed to alter women's perception of shoes albeit with facades of style and glamour which slows their walk considerably; justifying it by calling it poise and grace!

Maybe I am wrong; for not being a psychologist I cannot support my inner subtle feeling with any logical backup. It would be of interest to read what others feel about it? Or am I trampling on dynamite? SAMANZOOR, Gulshan, Dhaka

Football, a lost art?

Euro 2004 has just ended. the Portuguese supporters are still in shock and the land of ancient gods is still restless in sheer disbelief of glory and achievement. By the blessing of modern technology we, being thousands of miles apart from Europe, also felt every moment of the football festival. Many of us, who chose Greece, are cele-

brating and many are shocked like me who were supporters of Luis Figo and Portugal.

The scene of thousands of spectators in the gallery with graceful colours and the scene of millions of fans celebrating outside the stadium raises one single thought in my hesitant mind.... could I be one of them? Our football has a remarkable

history. There are a few names that people still remember. Even in the late nineties the standard of our football was better than that of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India etc.

The teams from Iran, Iraq who used to visit us for international club tournaments also had to fight hard to win over us. But our football started sliding downward and the competitive

attraction of the home league started to fade away -- match fixing, corruption crawled into football.

One of the reasons that football is neglected is our success in cricket. People are now more interested to invest time and money for cricket. Many football fans might argue it to be a conspiracy against the most popular sport of this place.

Football did not see any notable success other than SAAF trophy which is a very localised one.... cricket fans have a point. It is true. But at the same time it is important to dig out why football has failed to live up to the expectation and how cricket has managed to do it? May be the answer lies in our attitude toward the sport. We didn't patronise football as we did cricket. rather football was neglected in such a way that within a span of 10 years, our neighbours have crossed us comfortably. We are still obsessed by the SAAF trophy and the best we can do is to prepare for that.

I don't know what is our present FIFA ranking. Lastly, I knew it was beyond 140 and it is ever sliding. We cannot qualify for the Asian Cup, we cannot cross the pre-qualifiers of the world cup that can get a berth for the qualifiers. All we can do is to play in the substandard domestic leagues. Our Football Federation hardly has any plan to develop the infrastructure, and has no vision whatsoever. The worst of which is that football

has no permanent stadium even today. Leagues are arranged during monsoon and the fields have no drainage system and football looks like mud polo.

This time Greece won the European cup which none had thought in their wildest dreams. In the last World Cup South Korea went up to the semi-finals and ended fourth, Turkey ended third. These teams were underdogs and to many they were unknown. So determined efforts can produce the desired results. When shall we realise this truth?

Md. Bashir Farhad

Mirpur, Dhaka

Congratulations to Greeks for winning the Euro 2004, beating Portugal. Greece is a perfect example of how much a weak team can improve with the help of a skilful and punctual coach. The reasons behind Greece's success are:

1. Excellent teamwork.

2. Strong defence.

3. A very good coach.

On the other hand, we saw stars like Beckham failing to score as he was exhausted by too much of club football. Spain, England, France and Italy where football is like a business, rather than a sport, failed to fulfil the expectations. But Greece, who were the underdogs, played superbly as a team and their talented players scored goals when they needed it.

Nayem Islam

The Aga Khan School,

Uttara, Dhaka