



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.



ZIA

ZIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Zia International Airport has set new standards in insensitivity to passengers' needs bordering on inhuman treatment and in utter violation of human rights of citizens. My wife (60+) and I went to ZIA last evening to see off our daughter who had just undergone surgery, and our two grand-children (one a very active 2 year old, the other one month old). They all had chance tickets, so were obliged to wait till the last moment.

The first shock was that my wife and I could not enter the check-in area on payment of concourse fee of Tk. 250/- each as previously allowed. We wanted to take care of the children and help to check-in the heavy baggage. This was denied to us at the entry gate. No senior officer was present to hear our pleading and 'security' at the 2-3 gates repeated parrot-like that the 'authori-

ties' had ordered him or her not allow anybody to get in. A notice to this effect, signed by the 'authorities' was pasted on the ticket counter.

We had to wait standing for over three hours in hot and humid conditions, while my daughter frequently came to the other side with the children to convey news. Finally, the airline was good enough to issue boarding cards to them which enabled us to leave. During this time there was a milling crowd of people mostly elderly, seeing off their loved ones who were frequently pushed roughly by batons to leave the gate which was the only place from where some communication was possible through sign language. Even this was difficult as our ears were continuously assaulted by dozens of whistles being blown.

Ultimately, I had to stand my ground and tell the 'security' to do their worst as I would not leave because if my children could not board, I should be there to take them back home.

How do the airport 'authorities' expect the old, infirm, women with small children, handicapped, to cope with the requirements of bureaucracy all in the name of 'security'. To be frank, I did not see a single individual who was bullied by the 'security', to have even a semblance of being a 'terrorist'. Will the airport 'authorities' explain how hordes of 'chamchas' manage to get into the sacred portals of the airport whenever their leaders travel? Is this a new way to channel legal revenue into the pockets of airport staff?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Dhaka

structure can be to a situation that developed from a mere demand for electricity to that of mindless killing of innocent villagers is for all to see. In everything that goes wrong, the government smells opposition politics and manipulation only. It does not bother to look for remedies and address the core issue (typical of the Paki days we witnessed for long 24 years). Such an attitude borders on hallucination and has now come to be notoriously known as 'the phobia' for BNP-Jamaat ruling alliance.

I would also like to thank you for your summary of the political situation that you so aptly described during the recent TV show hosted by BBC on Bangladesh. As a viewer, I thought you took the words out of our mouths and spilled the beans for those who tend to walk blindfolded.

Sentinel of '71
Dhaka

before the corrupt practices can be eliminated from society.

Ranju Rahman, Mirpur, Dhaka

PM's interview

The PM's recent interview with the Time quoted her saying, "We did not know they were there. After the August 17 bomb blasts we know. And we cracked down on them." It drew attention of the citizens making it the talk of the town and there is a surfeit of write-ups, letters in the DS and other dailies. And so we have had a pungent but scintillating review by Shahedul Anam Khan (Rtd. Brig-General) in his article (DS April 13) "Neither is ignorance bliss, nor is it folly to be wise." Though the article leaves no room for others to add further, I could not help saying that I was shocked by the interview. The rise of Islamic militants and their nefarious activities had been the talk of the country since long before the August showdown by the militants. And when the media's relentless reports could not be dismissed the PM was reported to have ordered arrest of Bangla Bhai. This was long before the August incident that struck the nation dumbfounded and was perceived disastrous for the nation's security.

Even after the August incident, not to mince matters, the government did not relish to go for a crackdown. The

nation also witnessed and swallowed that in bewilderment. Till then Rab, the elite force, was not ordered to bust the dens of the militants, though there were some arrests made in a passive manner. Only when the lives of two judges at Jhalakhati were snuffed out and the suicide squads perpetrated carnages at court premises of Gazipur, Chittagong and Netrakona did the government feel it imperative to crack down on the militants. Had there been any crackdown in the wake of bomb blasts, the nation would not lose so many innocent lives.

While addressing a public meeting in Noakhali on 6 April, the PM snubbed the opposition for demanding reforms to the EC by questioning why the AL did not go for the same while in power. Can she elude people or divert their attention by blaming the opposition alone?

The people are grounded by price spirals, soured to death by load-shedding; terrorised by ruling party cadres; and are scared that many of the Islamic militants are still at large. They are crushed in the jaws of abysmal corruption, and deficiencies and anomalies. The government needs to come to terms with itself that blowing its own trumpet will cut no ice as people cannot be fooled for all times. So please find out how the wind blows and take stock of the whole

situation earnestly 'calling the spade a spade' and deliver to better the situation before you behold many and many more Kansats.

AH Dewan
South Kaftrul, Dhaka Cantt., Dhaka

Ancient settlement

I was pleased to read the news of the discovery of a 4,000-year old settlement in Narsingdi. Discovery of such old settlement is a very rare achievement for Bangladesh. It can be compared with the rich ancient Egyptian civilisation. The ancient history of Bangladesh might have to be reviewed after this major discovery. Now we can learn about the inhabitants' lifestyles, culture, architecture, and environment etc. We hope that more hitherto unknown and interesting information will come out very soon.

Senjuti Shuvu Ahmed
Dhaka College, Dhaka

No mobile phone in border areas!

The recent directive by Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission to the mobile phone operators to withdraw coverage from border areas will deprive a large number of people living in those areas from availing mobile phone service. In some of these places mobile phones are the only telecommunications service available.

We understand the security concerns of BTTC, but a technical solution to restrict coverage in the border areas may be possible without removing base stations. Thus, we request BTTC to look into such a solution without depriving people of the border areas of the essential service.

Dr. Abdur Rahman
Satkhira

Valuable minerals

Our eminent scientist Dr. Kudrat-e-Khuda discovered the valuable minerals in Cox's Bazar in the 1950s. I found vast deposits of the minerals in Cox's Bazar and its surrounding areas in 1970. In December 1975

Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission declared that they had discovered heavy minerals worth five hundred crore taka in Cox's Bazar. They are also reported to have set up a mineral plant in Cox's Bazar with the help of the Australian government. During last thirty years, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission has spent crores of taka but they have failed to utilise the valuable minerals commercially. As a result, millions of tons of minerals have been washed away and lost in the sea.

About three years back, our Ministry of Energy and Minerals Resources signed a contract with International Titanium Company of Australia for extraction of valuable minerals from the sea beach sand. The Titanium Company said that minerals Rutile and Zircon could be extracted at a rate of 2.49 per cent and 0.46 per cent respectively, which is the highest in the world.

We do not know the international price of Rutile, Zircon and other valuable minerals. We are in the dark about the terms and conditions of the contract with the Titanium Company. We are also not aware of the royalty the Titanium Company has paid to the Bangladesh government.

Let us exploit, utilise and export our valuable minerals within our own

means and technical know-how without any involvement and financial aid from a crowd of foreigners, who only want to loot and plunder our natural resources.

OH Kabir
Hare Street, Wari, Dhaka

Problems of city mayors

It was amusing to read the interview of DCC mayor in the DS supplement on Cities (10/2/06).

Governing the over-grown cities has become a severe management and administrative problem.

Powerful, honest, and strict mayors are not enough. The laws and rules have to be changed and modernised.

The various systems losses in any city corporation are very high due to many reasons, which is an open secret. But officially no reforms are being undertaken, after proper feasibility studies. There are several such studies in the archives of the secretariat. Only politically motivated projects get priority.

Let the people decide how to "reward" our "noisy" politicians.

AMawaz, Dhaka

Yearning for a change

The balance sheet of achievements and failures of the last 35 years is not pleasant at all. During the period the expectations and dreams of the common people have been shattered in most cases.

Thirty-five years is not a little time for a country to achieve remarkable development. Many countries in the world like Malaysia have developed within a period shorter than that. It could be equally true for Bangladesh. But we have seen failure to reach such a point. We are sure that the prospect of Bangladesh in the post-independence period was not less. But our goals have not been realised due to a lot of problems. People now believe that all the problems are rooted in political leadership. If the leadership could play the right role the other problems could easily be addressed.

The common people have now become frustrated with the present political trend. The condition is worsening day by day. People believe that the present trend of power shifting from BNP to AL or AL to BNP will not bring any good for them if the positive changes among the political leaders do not come.

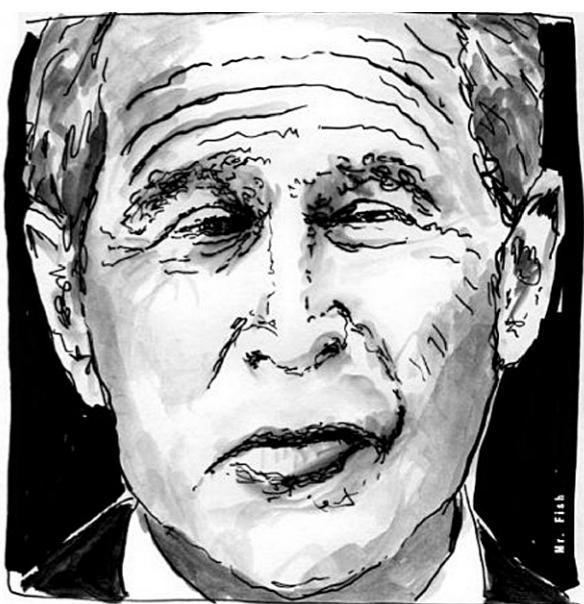
In fact, Bangladesh is now crossing a critical time, which we expect to be the turning point for a better future. The present condition cannot continue any longer. But how is it possible to overcome the problems?

Who will take the initiative? It's true that if any individual either political or non-political takes an initiative for the betterment of people, he will get the maximum support of public. Because people now do not trust most of our so-called political leaders.

We should start right now. The civil society can certainly play the pioneer role in this regard. The conference of civil society held on 20th March 2006 organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), The Daily Star and the Daily Prothom Alo was a significant moment for us.

Let us work together with the initiatives planned by the civil society. Let us turn it into a social movement.

Md Kamal Uddin
Lalbagh, Dhaka



Immigration law & President Bush

US President George W. Bush in his recent weekly radio address defended his plan to regularise some of the undocumented workers. This has sparked serious protest in Los Angeles.

In his address, President Bush said "America is a nation of immigrants, and we're also a nation of laws. And our immigration laws are in need of reform."

Well, when President Bush has already admitted that America is a nation of immigrants, it means the immigrants whether legal or illegal have made a significant positive contributions in building today's America. And these immigrants are undoubtedly law abiding citizens and human beings!

True, the immigration laws need reform, I mean not for creating fear and havoc but for reducing discrimination and racism.

Will the honourable and of course mighty President of the United States please take an x-ray of the matter on a humanitarian plate?

Professor M. Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka



Use of poison in fish

A TV news report showed a magistrate inspecting "Fish" at a Karwan Bazar shop and he fined the fish trader for using the poison "Formaline" in fish. Although this is a normal practice by traders for years to sell fish preserved with such poison in all the major markets in our country, it's the first time that a fish trader was caught and punished. The fish customers are compelled to buy such contaminated fish from traders which is ruining the "Health" of people. I think mere "Fine" will not deter such culprits from continuing their "deadly practice" all over the country.

I understand many harmful "chemicals" are also used to ripen fruits like banana, pineapple, guava, and mango. Even imported fruits like apple, pears, grape etc. are also ripened with poisonous chemicals regularly. This is also badly affecting the health of children and sick people.

Further, it is learnt that deadly chemicals are also being used in wheat, flour, ata, dal, mustard oil, coconut oil, soyabean oil and powdered masala to increase the weight and make extra profits.

It is time the government took stern action to stop such practice of the dishonest traders. If necessary new "Laws" should be enacted to award "Death Sentence" to these criminals. If we have such laws, let us enforce it to save the lives of millions of people.

M. Ali
New Eskaton Road, Dhaka

Face the challenge



"Why is Bangladesh looked down by other nations as a weak and poor country?"

This question has been buzzing in my mind for a long time. Is it because of the physical structure of our motherland that makes us inferior to others or is it because our nation is infected by corruption, poverty and violence? The question mark fluttered for days and months around my head until I asked a question to myself and came to a conclusion.

"What makes a country?" Is it the trees, the roads, the buildings and the birds? No, it's the citizens and so they should be held responsible for making our country what it is now. It's the lack of unity, determination and the will power of the citizens, and the most important thing that we lack is nationalism. This nationalism is the key to our economic and cultural growth. We can't always keep blaming the government, but we

have to keep in mind the fact that a country is never perfect, it's always in progress.

We can't leave it, as it is we have to

think big. Each one of us is responsible for making it a prosperous country. Every small thing we do has an impact on the country.

People may think I'm a dreamer but there are millions who dream and all these can only come true if we stand together to face the challenges.

Adnan Bin Ahmed
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

