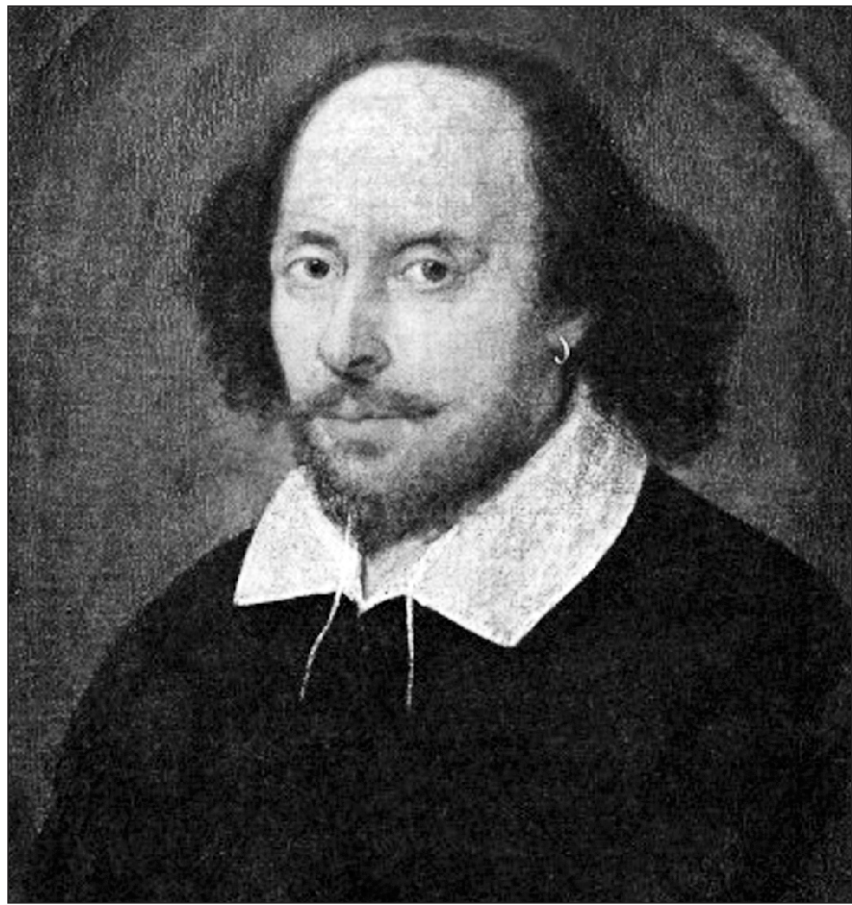Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Shakespeare

William Shakespeare's 434th birth anniversary has been observed with due reverence here in Bangladesh and across the globe. The connoisseurs of literature have coined many words across the globe; many poets composed poems to celebrate the historic day in the calendar with a view to recalling and rejoicing the birth of the genius who is, as pundits of today happily find, "already there"! That is, Shakespeare with all his literary presentations that are marked with a keen insight into the human psyche is, to a happy amazement for the readers, researchers and the literature lovers, located everywhere: in the modern day perspectives that deal with literary works from different angles. The postcolonial theory, the post modernism and the literary theoreticians find Shakespeare to be "already there!"

Works, dramas and the sonnets, of this genius are in fact the reflections of the human behaviour, for Shakespeare never had the "Didactic" approach in him. He just laid bare the human mind that is a manifestation of good, bad and ugly --- he just stuck to his observations of things.

Though he had to conform, to an extent, to the confinements of the "Queen's England" of the Elizabethan era that was, to the literary critics, a " Police State" to an extent, and that he had to keep the "groundlings" (the common men) in his mind; and that he produced some great "fools" in his plays to render some comic relief to the audience, he remained successful in his endeavours he spoke of the "universal humanity" even through the lives of the kings and queens!

If one is keen enough, one finds that ambitious Macbeth, whose ambition is whetted by many other external forces, in the societies around. One happily finds in one's very self the eloquence of love that Shakespeare's characters most eloquently deliver in his comedies with all their follies and frivolities! Thus he says: " poets and lovers are lunatics!" this trace of lunatic in you is found none other than yourself when you are in love! And again these traces of grandeur lunatic are outlined in you, and you go missing them, as you are all engrossed in creating things in your imaginative world!

The human dilemma that is or as it appears to be an eternal crisis with the people of extreme intricacies is very vividly seen in case of a modern mind Hamlet. This absence of a decision at a decisive moment in time is, my belief though, an outcome of being wise or overloaded with things that weigh beyond the human sensibility -- - " To be wise is to suffer" is an echoing phenomenon!

Human pathos is at its peak in Shakespeare's depiction of an " every in a king" Lear. Lear's sufferings, in his state of getting reduced to a non-entity to suffer the ferocity of the storm in sheer cold, though the external pains do not matter to him, as does the internal have been afflicting the liberal minds of his readers for ages. For he has the gross lapse in judging his daughters' love for him that ultimately, of course through a series of ordeals, leads him to be wise at the cost of everything that he held dear --- his loving Cordelia and his own life.

This universality in the maestro dramatist is what the defining factor in us to bear with him. These are the joys and the sorrows that we encounter in our daily steps that range from the layers of childhood to old age!

Shakespeare's contributions to the English language itself is huge; as he invented nearly ten thousand words that were not in use in any surviving English language before him. He wrote nearly 38 dramas that include famous tragedies and comedies along with his sonnets.

Shakespeare will be living through his works --- people across the globe are making an effort to relish his works everyday.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

To the Chief Adviser...

It is very sad that confusion about the 27th BCS has been created deliberately by certain quarters using the print media. What they are writing is unscrupulous, unjustifiable and far from the actuality.

I am a candidate of 27th BCS. I applied in 2005. Everybody discouraged me to apply reminding me that it was decided by certain Bhaban. If you do not have any good connection it is futile to try. My philosophy is different -Optimism. I am for 'trying till the dead end.' I applied, sat for the exams, waited for the results. Every time, (preliminary, written) results got published, I felt heavenly pleasure... I faced my viva voce during the caretaker government regime. By the blessings of Allah I had an excellent viva. Again wait.... At last the day came, one of my friends called me to go to the PSC, I left my office earlier, rushed ... Reached the PSC.. I can't express that moment in words.

Sir, I am watching lots of writings in the newspapers on BCS. There are two broad categories: 1) PSC itself, 2) 27th BCS. I do not have much to say about the PSC. There might be many anomalies. Can I ask a question politely? In our country which institution was in right shape in the past?

The PSC has scores of limitations, to mention a few -a) appointment procedure of members and chairman b) Internal administrative organogram 3) employees working in PSC for 30/35 years 4) Quota system 5) Exam procedures and marks distribution etc.

The 27th BCS was conducted in a completely modified system. Some major changes have been made according to the suggestions that were over due for a long time. Compulsory 300 marks has been abolished and integrated with Bangla, English and Bangladesh Affairs. Change has also come in the question pattern. Viva marks has been curtailed to 100 from 200. Anybody, having a minimum sense, should understand the difference.

Some people are demanding cancellation of 27th BCS. I think the demand is not justified.

I do not know what others did, but I know what hard work I did to get this success.
Mohsin
A successful candidate of 27th BCS

An interesting story

The caretaker government has taken many bold steps to put our country on the track but it has yet to take any initiative about the Public Service Commission (PSC). In this regard, I have an interesting but pathetic story to tell.

We used to call him AB , though it was not his real name. We called him so because he completed his honours and master's courses in eight years instead of four. Though he wanted to prolong his student life, his departmental teachers compelled him to end his studentship. A special permission was granted in his favour so that his department could become free of the aged student. AB was a liability of the department. But he had political clout and nobody could say anything against him.

Thanks to leakage of the 27th BCS question papers, he is now a government officer. How wrong and foolish I was about that man?

Being a general and non-political student, I feel that I am making a great mistake in spending my valuable time in academic activities.
Fazle Rabbi Joy
University of Chittagong

Favourite columnists

Banker Mohammad Badrul Ahsan, Shahnoor Wahid, Zafar Sobhan and Praful Bidwai are my favourite columnists. Not necessarily in the order I have stated their names, I have the highest regard for their extremely intelligent analysis of issues. They write, without fear or favour, interesting and absorbing columns on topics and issues which enlighten the readers.

On April 06, 2007, Mr. Badrul Ahsan wrote under the heading 'That Other Building'. I could not agree more with his views. We read in your daily that a decision would be taken on April 14, 2008 on the issue. We have not seen anything since then. We the ordinary citizens are curious to know about the govt. decision on the issue. Of late, the government's drive against land encroachment and unauthorised construction seems to have been stalled. Imagine the amount of time, energy and waste of costly imported fuel caused by traffic gridlock due to 'That building'.

By the way, why the laws should be directed to the unauthorized construction of buildings as seen in the newspapers and in the electronic media. What about unauthorized slums and shanties? Have a look on the lakeside (read polluted water bodies) of Banani and Gulshan. New shanties are growing on both sides of the lake. Those are not only unauthorized, they are also polluting the environment since all wastes (including human excreta) are dumped in the water bodies. I am not affected personally, but then do we have separate rules for the poor people. Reminds the story of the railway station coolie who was chewing tobacco and spitting on the platform. A passenger rebuked him and asked why he was spitting on the platform. 'Hajoor, garib admi', came back the reply.

Talking about law taking its own course, how come the hot shots, reportedly most corrupt who have siphoned billions from a poor resource-constrained country are being permitted to leave the country and live happily ever after. Seems to be a fairy tale story.

Shahnoor Wahid's piece on a slimy, slithery character, published on 16th April, 2007 was very good, describing, with a bit of humour and wit, how a man sold his soul to the Satan. Mr. Wahid, please continue to delight and enlighten us with your writings.
M. Hossain
Banani, Dhaka

"Animal Farm" syndrome

Loan defaulters are getting a windfall opportunity, notorious murderers are getting amnesty.........the ominous Animal Farm syndrome (Zaki Wahhaj, April 30, 2007) is getting more and more evident as days are passing...........how much is going to be the price the nation has to pay to find a cure?
A.K.M. Saifuddin
Dhaka

Top two

It came to me as a shock---the news of blocking AL chief Sheikh Hasina from coming to Bangladesh and letting BNP chief Khaleda Zia to leave the country. If these decisions are taken for the sake of the country's interest, then why this "hide and seek" game by the advisers? Can't they be bold enough to talk about this to the nation if it is really going to help the country.

I am also not convinced, why these two political leaders should not be brought to justice if they are directly involved in corruption? Why should they be allowed to be above justice? I still hope the chief adviser will keep our dream alive which he showed us in his earlier two months of power.

God bless all the people of Bangladesh.
Majbah Ahmed
Edmonton, Canada

Be discreet

Shiekh Hasina and Khaleda Zia are the two most powerful women in the country.

The dichotomy between the two is who did what. If we don't shy away from flipping through the very metamorphosis when popular demand for caretaker government and electoral reform by the AL intermittingly met police brutality over the years, and at the height of it emergency was declared, it was the agitation for the just against unjust, rights of people against the arbitrariness of a few.

Surely, the army-backed interim government has public support. But discretion is the better part of valour!
Roney
On e-mail

Counter productive

The recent attempt to get rid of the leaders of the two main parties by the interim government will hinder democracy in this country. By this act the advisers themselves are meddling in politics.

This is all too reminiscent of George Orwell's "Animal Farm" that I had read in high school.
Sami Afzal
On e-mail

Dr. Yunus' decision

Dr. Yunus declared a few months ago that he would form a political party to change the picture of Bangladesh politics and eliminate poverty and corruption from society. Suddenly, he has given up his efforts, we don't know why. His declaration has created frustration among the general people of Bangladesh. We thought he would be a hero who would save our nation. But he has lost his interest in politics.

He should always be optimistic!
Habib Faruqui
DELL
Premier University

Good decision, Dr. Yunus

Nobel laureate and Grameen Bank founder Dr Muhammad Yunus has declared that he will discontinue his plan of forming a political party. It is a very good decision. It shows that he is a modern person who accepts failure and then moves on. Very well done. What's next? Based on the principle "You should do what you are good in doing" I have a few suggestions for this man:

Environmental campaign inside and outside Bangladesh. Ask big western polluters (car manufacturers for example) to pay to the people of coastal belts like Barisal who are suffering from the consequences of global warming. Campaign to improve the wage of garments workers. Campaign to improve quality of education in rural schools. Join hands with the Anti-Corruption Commission to encourage people to speak out. (Set up a radio station where people will talk only about corruption!).
M F Fakhru
Cambridge

Congratulations!

I would like to congratulate you on being elected chairman of ANN.

Keep up your good work.
Peter J Rebelro
Farmgate, Dhaka

Corruption

The remarkable courage and zest that the caretaker government is showing in arresting corrupt politicians is to be highly commended. But as one with similar experiences of martial law in 1958, makes me wonder whether this is another one of those 'high drama' stints that will fizzle out after a while, without making any differences to the current economic picture of the country. Arrests, well, they are good newspaper material, trials, well, they are rather dramatic, and who wins or loses depends very much on who has more dough to give out to the lawyers, witnesses and officials. So the conventional path to justice is perhaps very predictable and probably well scripted by now.

Besides, the end to this high drama has probably already started if we look at the example of the illegal Baby Taxi Stand in Khulna city. It was moved a few weeks ago when the purge started, but since allegedly it generates revenues for those in power in Khulna City Corporation, it has been moved back to its illegal location - a repeat of 1958 perhaps?

So how do you take care of these super rich, super powerful people who had nothing a few years ago but now they are owners of huge wealth because of their recent positions close to government and are part of a political process that treats Bangladesh as its own 'zemindari'. You know they are guilty yet you have to go through the long, laborious, frustrating process of that illusive word called the 'law' and the very process can kill off any zest in anyone.
Hazra Awal
Cambridge, UK

Electoral process

I would like to welcome the activities of the caretaker government in guiding the nation and preparing the country for the next election when the time is ripe. I would like to put forward a few suggestions.

It would be worthwhile to give due consideration to making the government's duration four years instead of five years which seems to be too long. Secondly, the President and the Prime Minister should not hold office for more than two terms, which will help new leadership to grow in future.
A citizen
On e-mail

Reform issue

Unlike most of the opinions expressed in this daily in the last few days, I would like to hail the present government's effort to reform the EC and, more importantly, the effort to reform the political parties.

Have you ever imagined the BNP being run by anyone other than Khaleda Zia or her sons? For the past several days, I was trying to fit someone else in her position, someone other than Khaleda Zia or her sons. And interestingly, I have found no one! This left me wondering whether slowly for the past 15-20 years, we, the citizens, have become the victim of severe family oriented politics? Maybe, so much so that it has become unthinkable for many of us today that the major two political parties can be run without the two families or their children. If this is true, then how it is different from monarchy? For the last 15 or 16 years, we haven't seen any democratic practices within the parties, so, how can they offer the blessings of democracy to the people of the country? The agreement of the AL with 'Khelafat Majlish" is a clear proof of this, where majority of the party members were completely unaware of it or against it and yet it took place and went forward.

Year after year, we have seen the same persons leading the two major political parties. This, I believe allowed the power to concentrate on one single person or persons surrounding them, created more rigidity within the structure of the parties and gave rise to another form of dictatorship within the democratic framework. This is no way near the democratic practices that are the main driving forces for the most developed countries, and on the contrary, gained us the "Top corrupt country of the year" award for multiple times.

So, I believe it is up to us, the people of the country, to change our attitude and mindset to produce a change and let not anyone think that this country is anyone's inherited property. And with this approach, collectively, we can force the reforms to happen within the parties and the country eventually.
Shah Galib Habib
Texas, USA

Political crisis

The downfall of the BNP is not merely due to corruption, but their attempt to rewrite the history of the liberation war in 1971. It is wrong to give equal status to both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia because these two Begums are totally different. I think Khaleda is very weak in understanding political and administrative matters, while Hasina is outdated, stubborn and aggressive but courageous, and more democratic.
Henri-Andre Aye
France

We don't know!

Further to our political crisis in Bangladesh, I would like to appeal to the government that, if the culprits have committed any crime they should be punished or it should be proved first what they have done.

Until now we don't know what exactly they have done.
Hasan
U.A.E

ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL REFORM

1.Registration of political parties must be made mandatory. No political party should be allowed to contest the next election without registration.

2.To be eligible for registration, certain criteria have to be sorted out in consultation with the political parties and the cross section of society.

3.Registration of those political parties who will get less than 3 percent vote in the next national election should be cancelled.

4.Every political party must have a written constitution of its own complying with certain mandatory requirements of the EC, such as holding of council meetings, annual meetings etc.

5.The leaders of the party should be elected by the council members at regular intervals through secret ballot under the supervision of the EC.

6.The EC has to be powerful and independent administratively as well as financially. They must have their own budget and secretariat free of the influence of the executive authority.

7.The returning officers should have ample time (may be 7 days) for proper scrutiny of the nomination papers of candidates.

8.The EC should have the final authority to accept or reject a nomination paper. Similarly the EC should have the final authority to accept or reject an election result.

9.Officials of government organisations, NGOs, teachers of public universities and similar other organisations should not be allowed to contest election for at least three years after their retirement or resignation from service.

10.No candidate should be allowed to contest in more than two seats at a time.

11.At east 10 percent candidates nominated by a party must be female.

12.If the Speaker is from the treasury bench, the Deputy Speaker should be elected from the opposition bench.

13.The parliamentary committees must be constituted in the first session of the parliament with proportional representation of the parties holding seats in the parliament.

The chairpersons of these committees should also be in the same ratio.

14.The tenure of the government should be 4 years instead of 5 years.

Some of these reforms may need amendment of the constitution. This may be done through presidential ordinance after having a tripartite agreement between the CTG, the EC and the main stream political parties, similar to one the then three alliances had in 1990 to oust autocrat Ershad and have an elected democratic government in power.
Capt. Husain Imam
Paribag, Dhaka

Woes of migrant workers

The Daily Star of 7th April 2007 published a report "Unskilled Job Seekers Abroad". The reporter who disclosed the fact on the basis of a study report run by Mr. Mizanur Rahman of Asia Research Unit of Singapore National University deserves special thanks for benefiting the readers of The Daily Star. I think the reporter talked to many migrants from which he has narrated a few. He has pulled out the miseries of Manzur Ali of Keranigonj in Dhaka and Uzzal of Gazipur. Such a story is a common phenomenon today, thanks to the contribution of the print media & electronic media.

The report pointed out that the migration incurs a hidden cost, thanks to middlemen in the total procedure of visa and visa related tasks. It escalates the financial sufferings of the migrants' families and they bear it for a long time. The report also pointed out that a Thai worker roughly pays equivalent to Tk 90,000 for migrating to Singapore while a Bangladeshi worker pays nearly Tk 3,15,000 for the same. It also witnessed that Bangladeshi workers more or less pay Tk 4.20 lakh and Tk 2.10 lakh to go to Korea and Malaysia respectively, while a Filipino roughly pays Tk 1.75 lakh and Tk 1.05 lakh respectively for the same.

A huge number of recruits both skilled as well as unskilled are working across the globe and contributing immensely to our economy. We, therefore, would request the CTG to look into the matter immediately on a priority basis to lessen the sufferings of the migrant workers.
Siraj Ud-Daulah
A Banker