

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.

Selim Al Deen

Bangladesh's greatest playwright Professor Selim Al Deen passed away on 14 December 2007 at only 58. He was the founder of the Dramatics Department at Jahangirnagar University. He was also the president of Gram Theatre Project under Dhaka Theatre.

This maestro dramatist wrote many famous dramas that enriched our cultural root with innovative ideas. Great plays like Muntasir Fantasy (1976), Kirton Khola (1980), Keramat Mangal (1984), Chaka (1990), and Jaibati Kanyar Mon (1991) are a few examples of his creativity.

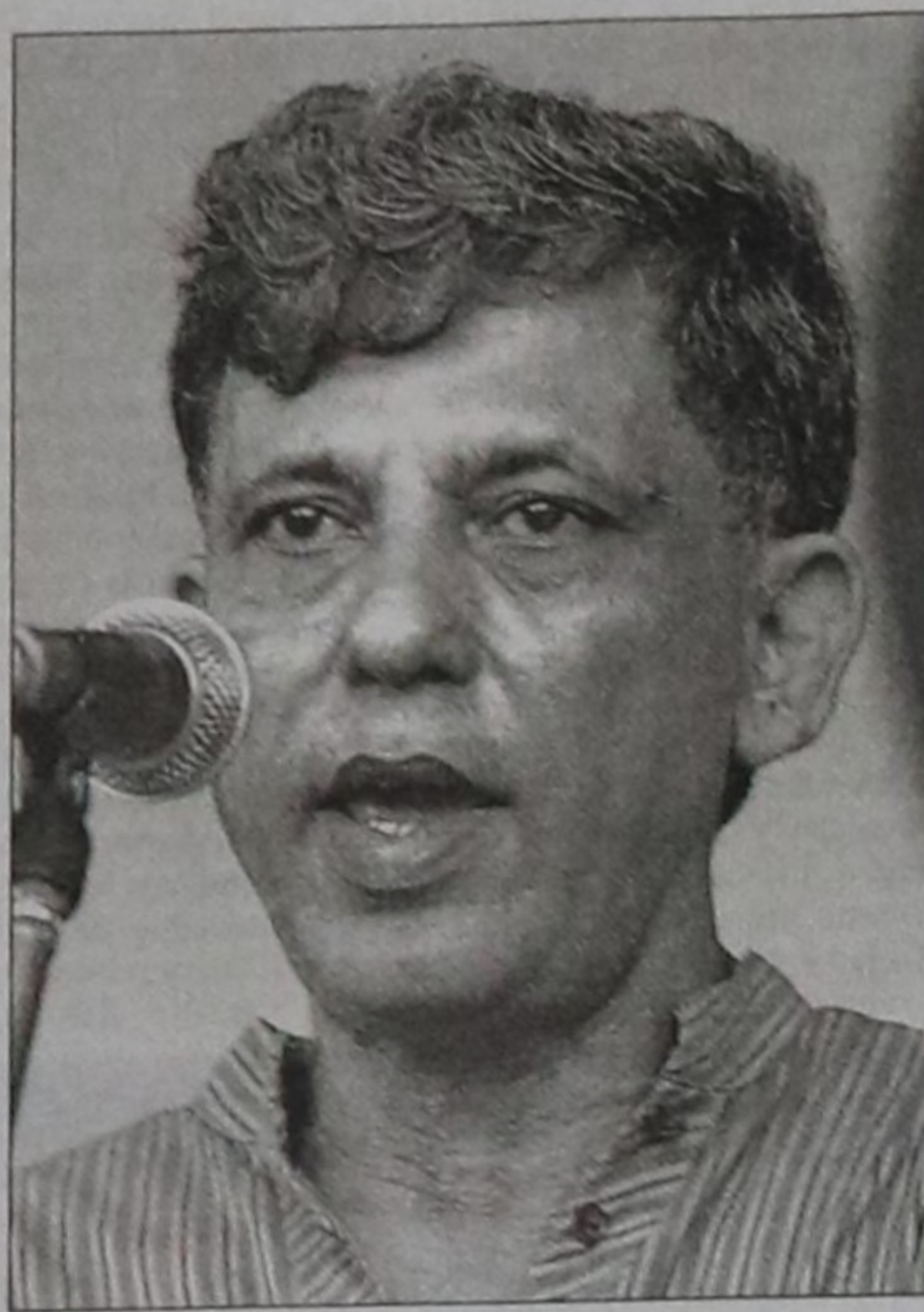
His epic drama "Nimajon" established him on the peak of our cultural horizon. A PhD in "Drama in the Middle Age of Bengali Literature" Selim Al Deen wrote a good number of TV dramas and serials.

He received the Bangla Academy Award in 1984 and other awards from different organisations in Bangladesh.

The passing of a larger than life personality like Selim Al Deen has undoubtedly impoverished our cultural arena.

May Allah bless his soul.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agradad, Chittagong



and inventions like: gun powder by the Chinese, dynamite by Alfred Nobel and Uranium by Pierre and Maria Curie. With these inventions and discoveries, a new era of war and terror began, an era that destroyed millions of lives, homes, countries and cultures.

Will additional wars prevent terrorism, or will additional terrorism prevent further wars? It is impossible to tell, since leaders of war and terrorism believe they are doing the right thing, maybe, as we speak a new war and terrorist attack is being prepared somewhere in the world. However, one thing is clear, people suffer every day because of it.

Ivan Simic
Belgrade, Serbia

Politicians

In our country, the education of a politician is not specified. For this reason, an uneducated man can be a politician or the head of a party.

If an uneducated man becomes a politician, what can we expect from him?

Md. Golam Mostafa
Senior Executive Officer
Prime Bank Limited
IBB, Dilkusha C/A
Dhaka

War criminals

Have we forgotten the 'war criminal' issue? No one seems to like talking about it any more. All societies truly abhor crimes committed during wars. Horrific memories of '71 genocide have left our country embittered with pain and sorrow. This will only heal if we bring all those war criminals to justice.

It is sad to see that after the Liberation War, the war criminals accumulated wealth, while the freedom fighters faced poverty.

We must all come forward and punish the war criminals.

Minhaj Ahmed
Utara, Dhaka

Different stars!

After reading the cover article of The Star Weekend Magazine, on The Bangladesh Special Olympics Team, I was thoroughly moved. All that the team wants is to make their homeland proud. The disabled have just as much right and claim on Bangladesh as we have. They have done so much better than our other competing athletes. All they want is respect. And they have earned that right. Bravo!

Hats off to the athletes, coaches, administrators and organisers.

Amipothik
Athens, OH
USA

Press freedom

Freedom of speech, freedom of press etc. are the pre-requisites of democracy. More or less our press is free. Even during the autocratic rule of Ershad, our press was enjoying freedom unlike many others in the present day world. We are quite happy about it and hope

none will be able to snatch away this right from us in future.

Bangladeshis are a freedom loving people. They made supreme sacrifices, fought and gained independence through the liberation war. So, this nation can never be subjugated. We respect the press which is providing us with information on day to day matters of governance.

I believe freedom does not permit anyone to exploit public sentiments by fabricating stories and false news items. This time we are not surprised because the mouthpieces of certain political parties have no ethics of journalism. We have seen how they were making stories to blackmail the opposition. There are numerous examples of their misdeeds. They acted as the best propaganda machinery of their parties.

Shafiqul Islam
One-mail

Responsible and transparent

Two thousand and eight years After the Death of Christ, the political and economic programmes and processes would be worth mentioning in Bangladesh. Like a train, the caretaker government (CTG) headed by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed is steaming ahead on a railway track with the reformed and reorganised Election Commission (EC), Public Service Commission (PSC) and the separation of the Judiciary from the Executive branch of the government.

In the international market the price of the petroleum products, gold bullions and the food grains are spiralling up due to the worldwide demand as industrialisation is spreading fast in the era of globalisation and the market economy participated by many entrepreneurs, corporations and state-owned enterprises.

The adoption and pursuance of open-door policy, special economic zones (SEZ), and the market economy have facilitated several member-states of the United Nations (UN) to become a country of high growth with gross domestic products (GDP) and higher national income (NI). But in some instances it is also making the natural environment rather hazardous.

From time to time, any country of the world can be affected by any sort of natural and man-made catastrophe and henceforth the essential items, products and services like food grains, lifeguards, life-saving medicines and equipments have to be well stocked in good conditions.

It may be a correct observation of some learned, respected and eminent citizens that the present caretaker government (CTG) has assigned itself too many jobs, but does it not give the impression that the government is more responsible and transparent while discharging its duties?

Golam Ashraf
Gulshan, Dhaka

Suggestions for EC

The forthcoming general election in Bangladesh is going to be a free and fair election mainly due to the use of a voter-list with photograph and photo ID for all voters. The Election Commission and the administration concerned with holding of the election have also significantly changed. However, I would like to draw the attention of the Election Commission to the election procedures, materials and tools.

Ballot Box: Use of transparent ballot box will definitely increase the transparency and fairness of the election. If the commission decides to introduce transparent ballot box, I would suggest to fabricate those boxes in big sizes at least four times the present size; better if the length, width and height are doubled. The present olive colour small-size boxes are very good for playing magical hide and seek to influence results. It is very easy to hide them, replace them and so on.

Ballot Paper: Election centres where rigging takes place are often characterized by high rate of voting. At present, such high rate of voting (as well as the suspicion of rigging) becomes evident only after the counting. To keep track of the high rate voting centres during voting, I suggest use of colour ballot paper. Half the ballot papers in a centre will be of ordinary white colour; one fourth will be printed in light yellow and the rest one fourth in light red paper. Whenever a centre runs out of white ballot papers, it will start issuing yellow paper and will report it to the higher administration so that they can arrange some sort of monitoring and vigilance. The red ballots will not be issued until a more responsible official reaches the centre.

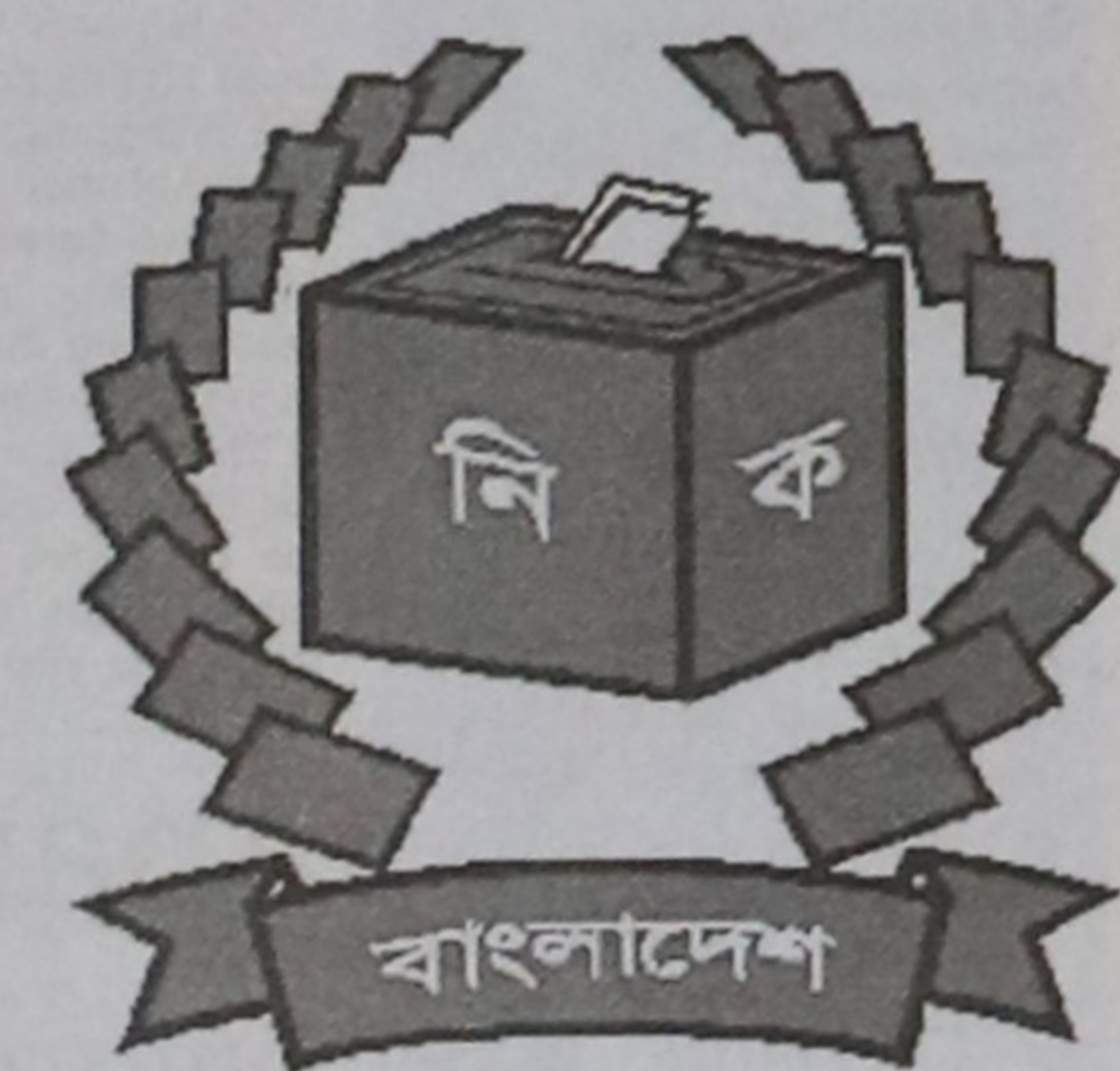
Polling Booth: the EC may think about cutting down the cost of polling booths by using paper-made voting screen on table. I was impressed by seeing use of such hoods in the

last election in Canada. (It reminded me of "Juta Aabishkar" of Rabindranath). These hoods are made of paper boards, can be easily unfolded and fixed on polling table with adhesive tapes; the voter can hide the ballot behind it.

I found that unlike other government offices the EC cares for their website and keep it updated. They can make effective use of the site to publish the results instantaneously during counting. They can make the results available in detail. This will prevent election engineering at district level or at EC and people will be able to tally the results. Usually, local agents who attend the counting receive a copy of local count results. But it is difficult to make sure whether these results are used to calculate the results or the result is engineered at EC or DC office.

U.M. Sharif

Toronto, Canada



Introduce 'Drug Test'

It can be observed with great concern that drug addiction is on the rise in our society and a large number of our youths are addicted to drugs. The government and some non government organisations are trying their best to minimize the problem. But we do not see any visible improvement. Here I present a scheme which could be very successful to keep our youths away from drugs.

The scheme is simple: it is about introducing the 'Drug Test' for any recruitment in government or non government organisations. The details of the test can be prepared by the experts and I am not going to discuss it now.

But the need for passing the drug test to get a job should be communicated to all child and youngsters through a massive campaign which should include the textbooks also.

The logic behind the scheme is 'No jobs for drug addicts'. As most of the students pursue their education to get a job, the thought of not getting a job will instil a fear in their minds before taking drugs. Moreover, children will grow up with hatred in their minds about drugs through the lessons learned from the textbooks. This way we'll get a whole new generation free from drugs.

It is true that questions would be asked about those who are in rehab centres. But we need to think about the majority people. There will always be some 'pockets' which will not be covered by the proposed law and the rehabilitated can be employed there.

Hadi
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Islami banks

I am a regular reader of DS and I

thank you for providing quality news to thousands of readers living at home and abroad.

One thing I would like to bring to your attention - there are now several Islami Shariah governed banks in our country and they are doing a great job in the financial sector. But I think some of them do not respect the country's constitution. Because those banks usually don't recruit non-Muslim citizens.

I worked in one such bank and though I was not involved in recruiting, it was a known fact there. They used to argue that a non-Muslim would not understand or respect the law of Islam, so it was better not to hire them. But to me, this is baseless. What about the foreign banks that also provide similar services?

Above all, everyone should respect our constitution which does not differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Ferdous Khan
One-mail

Terrorism and war

There have been numerous explanations and definitions of war through theories, such as: Historical, Psychological, Demographic, Marxist, Economic, and Rationalist, among others. In one word, war is any large scale violent act which many times resolves in the destruction of one's territory, nation, and lives. War is learned and has evolved through history, these days war is conducted through military campaigns, which includes: armed conflict, intelligence, troops movement, propaganda, aircraft, bombs and missiles.

Terrorism, on the other hand, has been described as the threat of violence, or other harmful acts

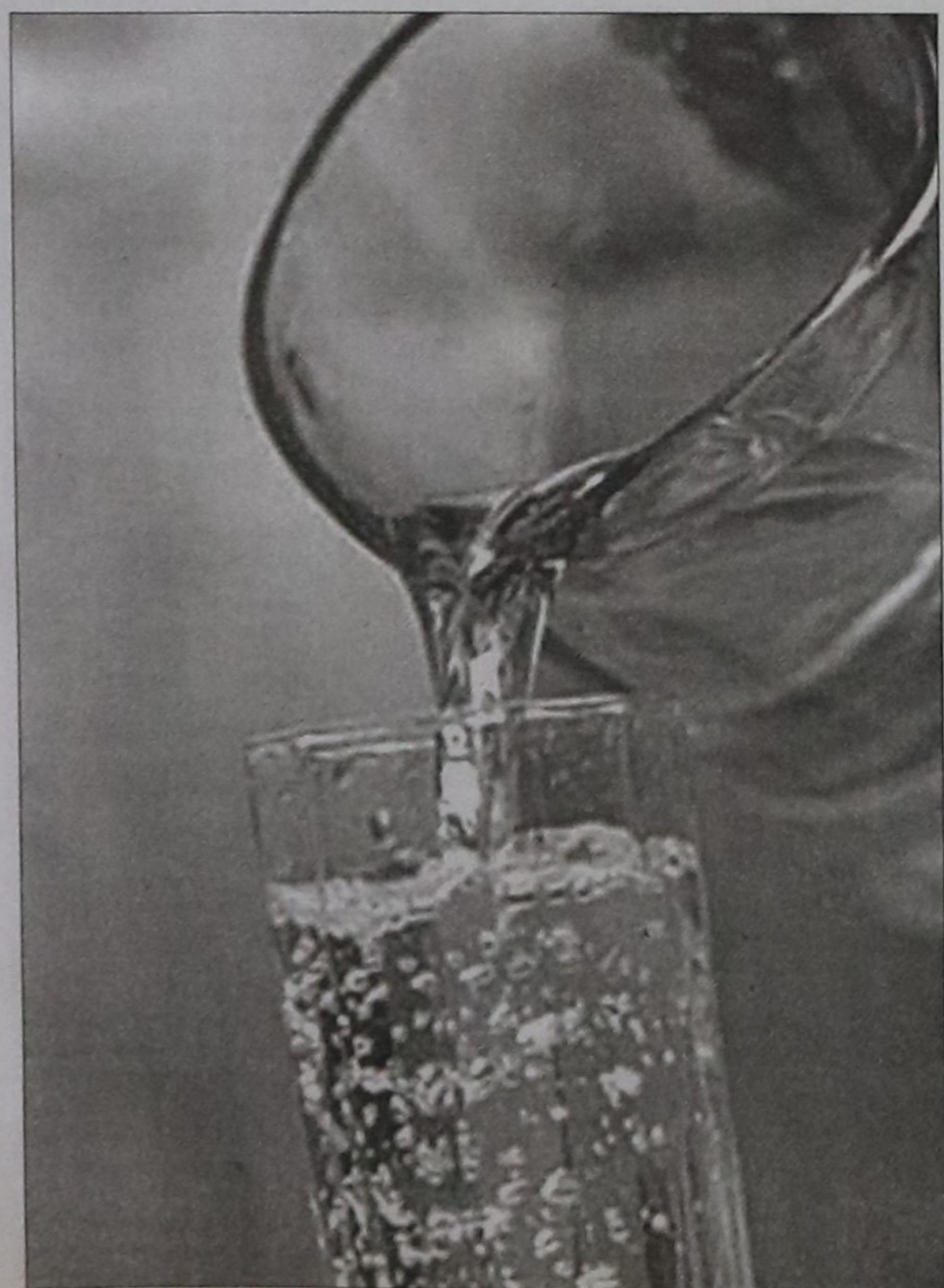
committed for political or ideological goals. The main goals of terrorists are to spread fear among the world population and get global attention for their actions in order to accomplish their goals. Almost every country and organisation have different definitions for terrorism, therefore, it is still impossible to give an official one. Up to now, the United Nations has not accepted, nor given definition of terrorism.

If we compare these two, we can see that both of them have violence as their main subject, also: armed conflict, bombs and missiles, propaganda and intelligence. War has aircraft and troop deployment, while terrorism has believers and people willing to cause harm to their perceived enemies. What makes them different is that war requires mass organisation, governments, countries and thousands of volunteers and military personnel, while terrorism can be performed with just one or two individuals. Maybe the biggest difference is that terrorism sometimes does not choose targets, and as a result, most times, innocent people get hurt and die.

War, on the other hand knows its targets, but in war innocent people also die. They are euphemistically called "Collateral Damage". Terrorism is immature and perfidious, but a highly organised violent act without emotions or regret for loss of innocent lives and without respect for International Laws. Terrorism is usually triggered by war and some sort of dissatisfaction, such as: Political disagreements, retaliation, personal disappointment etc. Terrorists feel like actors, as the more media attention their actions get, the more we are going to see them.

Maybe, the world would be a better place without discoveries

Habit of drinking water



I migrated to the USA in December, 1994. I am originally from Bangladesh and was born at Narayanganj in 1968. There are lots of things I like and enjoy in the USA. However, one thing that has been shocking me since my arrival here is that in my observation here the people do not drink plain water frequently enough. Well, over time, even back in Bangladesh where I go back almost every year to spend my vacation time, these days many people are also getting clogged with busy schedules and I noticed that lots of people, especially who work long hours, tend to drink less water. Drinking less water is becoming a social concern around the world.

My pain started becoming worse when we had to send our son to the day care when he was about 19 months old. Since then I have been observing that it is difficult to convince teachers to promote the habit of drinking water. Most kids here in the US end up drinking juices more than drinking plain water. Most fruit juices here are made tasty by adding an amount of extra sugar. My point is that even if the juice does not have sugar, we find it more convenient to drink fruit juice rather than biting a fruit and eat it, which takes a longer time. We have started deviating from living the natural way. In the old days we used to eat the fruits using our teeth, jaws and the mouth keeping the stomach busy, etc that are needed for a human body to maintain a good healthy life in my opinion. Due to the peer pressure, it has been difficult for our children (6-year old son and almost 4-year old daughter) to drink water more frequently in places where we are not with

them.

Often our children come home from schools with dry lips. Our son stays in two places without us during the weekdays - one is the school classroom and the other is the after-care programme place. I have raised this water drinking matter as a widespread social concern in our last Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meeting at our son's school. The PTO may be planning to do something regarding "promoting water drinking" at his school this year.

In my opinion, one of the reasons we are getting more stressed is that we are not drinking water frequently enough - it is hard to feel that we need water as most of us here in the USA stay inside the air-conditioned spaces so that our body gets dehydrated before we know it. This is what is happening to our children too when they are at school. As you can tell, our young children are going through their early childhood, they are not mature enough to overcome the peer pressure and say to themselves - "You know what - I don't care what others want to do, I need to drink water more often and get permission from my teacher to do so." This is why I requested the teachers at school to think about this matter seriously.

I believe that a dehydrated body leads to high stress - eventually who knows what stress does - maybe it even may contribute to autism and other severe disorders - I don't have the proof but I suspect.

Abdullah Mamun (Mamun)
A Bangladeshi American
Bridgewater, New Jersey

Qatar and Bangladesh

Just came back from Doha, the capital of Qatar. Qatar is a flourishing country, trying to keep pace with the development of other Gulf nations, particularly the UAE.

I was impressed to see a book titled "Doha events 2007", a high quality book, published by the government of Qatar and distributed free. It is available in every room of international hotels in Doha. This book contains all information about Qatar, events and happenings in Doha round the year and the names & contact numbers of all foreign missions and airlines etc.

I was shocked to note that there is no mention of Bangladesh Embassy or the Biman Airlines, though Qatar is home to 70,000 Bangladeshi expatriates. This is my 4th visit to Doha in a span of few years and I have seen how the Filipino and Nepali workers have outnumbered Bangladeshis.

The recent visit of the labour minister of Qatar to Bangladesh is a positive sign. But more interaction between the two countries should have taken place earlier.

Fyyaz Husyn
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Kissinger's comment

Moinul Chowdhury (Letter January 18) is the latest of many to misunderstand Henry Kissinger's awful comment about Bangladesh, which is a great deal worse than 'bottomless basket'. That conveys the notion of some nation or person having endless needs and, actually, if Kissinger had meant that, he would probably have used the more likely English expression 'a bucket with a hole in the bottom'. No, he said that Bangladesh was a 'basket-case' - and the real meaning of that is much more insulting.

In the lunatic asylums of England long ago, they did not understand mental illness, nor had at their disposal the numerous drugs and therapies that are available today. The managers could be at their wit's end to know how to restrain and care for the inmates. Those who were violent were chained or tied up or put in straitjackets. As for those who were passively helpless and hopeless, they were just put into a basket in a foetal position and tied in so they could do minimum harm to others, or themselves. Thus these 'basket cases' mad and incapable of helping themselves - wasted away their brief existence.

It is a horrible picture but we have to face the fact that some Bangladeshis also see their country, much as they may love it, as a hopeless case and try by hook or by crook (or by good jobs and expensive marriages) to get a visa to live somewhere else. Surely the coming general election and how the winning party behave after it - will be a test case for many as to whether they will give up on their country or stay on.

High prices of essentials

The prices of essential commodities, such as rice, dal, wheat, oil, vegetables, etc. have gone further up during the last few days in our country. It is called an agricultural country but nowadays, rice sells at Tk 30 or 35 per kg. It has already gone beyond the buying capacity of the common people. Fish which is now scarcely available in the market is selling very dear. Besides, the prices of vegetables have gone up very high. We the students of a university/university college cannot buy all the necessary things, because we are students and do not have enough money. The rising prices of foods and essential commodities are causing great hardship to the people of all classes.

Something must be done to check this unjustifiable tendency of price hike of essential commodities in the market.

We want to be the people of a country which is free from corruption. The government should take immediate effective measures to keep down the prices of essentials as much as possible.

M.G.F. Rony
The president of EDA
Mymensingh

