

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.



Rights of women

The United Nations has earmarked 8 March as International Women's Day. Charity begins at home! If at least 50 per cent of the positions at the United Nations headquarters are occupied by women, starting with the president of the UNGA, secretary-general, security council members, general assembly representatives, then it would cause worldwide trickle-down effect.

The UN headquarters is located at UN Plaza, New York. The United States of America is the largest economy and the most powerful nation-state in the world. This trickle-down

effect would enable the US women to hold positions in the White House, Old Executive Office Building, Capitol Hill, Supreme Court, Federal Reserve Board, Department of Treasury, Department of State, Department of Defence, National Security Council, National Security Agency, National Intelligence, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, US Secret Service, Internal Revenue Service, Immigration & Naturalisation Service etc. in equal numbers.

Gulam Ashraf
Gulshan, Dhaka

Hasina's ailment

The media's reports on the former prime minister's ear problem are very confusing.

Thousands of questions arise in my mind when I hear the comments from the experts-- politicians, physicians or journalists.

The exact ear ailment is yet to be known or evaluated by the media, unfortunately.

Personal physicians, including the ENT specialist, who are known to be bipartisan, are talking like politicians and some journalists are talking like ENT specialists! Hard to digest that Florida is the place of excellence for ENT treatment or the hub of the best ENT specialists in the world.

The ENT physicians of the highest academic institution of the country should be consulted to evaluate the hearing problem of the ex-PM and if needed arrangements to bring ENT specialists from India, Pakistan or the USA can be made to evaluate the case.

The demand for sending a political prisoner to the USA just for unclear and unspecified chronic ENT problems is unacceptable by any standard.

However, initial measures should be taken for her treatment not necessarily in the USA but in Bangladesh with the help of modern technology and non-partisan ENT specialists.

N. Ghani MD
Grand Forks, USA

Two former presidents

It is interesting that two former presidents have formed a coalition to fight in the next election. In fact, Dr. Choudhury was once very critical about the misdeeds of Ershad as president. Now they are speaking about the national government, which is inconsistent with the provisions of the constitution.

People in general understand their objectives and obviously will show it through ballot in time! Unfortunately, it appears that the process of reformation could not bring about any change in the attitude of some politicians.

Kumar Prithwiraj Nath
Toronto, Canada

Public reaction

Based on the recent media reports that I have read and seen, I have the following questions:-

a. Does the government care whether the country is heading towards complete chaos? Is it going to help or hurt them to proceed with their political roadmap?

b. Do the parties concerned keep record of what they told the people yesterday and what they are telling them today?

c. Whether the Transparency International, Berlin, has any plan to release a quarterly report on corruption in Bangladesh, instead

of the yearly one? This quarterly report would be a more effective tool for prevention of corruption. The annual report is becoming a rhetoric and has already lost some effectiveness. The TI may kindly try to come out from generalized reporting, as for example, GDP Growth, Per Capita Income, which do not reflect the impact on various socio-economic classes/groups of people in Bangladesh.

It is also necessary to classify the corrupt groups. Now we can see at least three main groups-- politicians, businessmen and bureaucrats. Further segmentation of the groups into sub groups might be more useful.

d. Is the ACC dealing with corruption cases of the distant past? If they have not yet started this basic work, they should start the process immediately.

A reader
One-mail

Price hike

The price hike has ruined the lives of common people. The prices are shooting up every day. That puts unbearable pressure on the general consumers.

The government should address the issue on a priority basis. Montasir Mamun
Civil Engineering
Sher-e-Bangla Hall
BUET

Food habits

March 15 was 'World Consumers' Rights Day' and the theorem was 'Keep your child away from unhealthy foods', which was observed throughout our country. It's was really a praiseworthy & timely effort. But it is sad that when any special day comes then we all become aware regarding that, which is just confined to that day! Afterwards we forget that. Very sad!! To keep our body fit & improve our immunity, we should practice it throughout our lives.

However, let's come to the main point, that is, unhealthy or junk or fast foods such as soft drinks, potato chips, hot chips, hamburgers, hot dogs, pastries etc. These foods have little nutritional value. Generally, the pre-school & school going children are very fond of these foods. But unfortunately, nowadays school-going children are taking a lot of junk foods as culture or in the name of fashion or as a symbol of modern life. These foods contain too much fat, too much salt, too much sugar, & also chemicals. These consequently make them vulnerable to diarrhoea, hypertension, cardiac diseases, obesity, etc. If anyone wants to increase weight then he/she should take natural foods in higher quantity, if necessary. Actually weight increment is not important, the main factor is body fitness (a slightly under-weight person can also be very fit). Since, the children are not aware of the impact of unhealthy junk foods, so the parents should make them aware & remain conscious about their eating habits.

The next responsibility goes to the institutions, especially the media. The schools which generally supply junk food as snacks should give fresh fruits and vegetables and all such foods which are comparatively cheaper than junk foods. Other effective approaches include a social campaign and colourful ads in the print and electronic media.

The main problem here is that we know but do not follow the health rules. So develop the habit of taking natural foods, instead of men-made junk foods. Shamy Akter
Department of Applied Nutrition & Food Technology
Islamic University, Kushtia

EC's responsibilities

The BBC Bengali service aired a phone in programme recently. A gentleman from the north has raised a fundamental question about the constitutional mandate of the Election Commission regarding its sphere of responsibility. According to him, the EC has the mandate to conduct the general election and not the local government elections. Violation of this constitutional mandate, according to him, is tantamount to corruption (?).

We would appreciate if the authorities, such as the ACC, the EC, the ministry of law and religious affairs and the ministry of LGRD would kindly respond to the opinion of this gentleman, and set right the public perception of corruption which seem to be enlarging with the new dimension of institutional corruption, as perceived by this gentleman.

A reader
One-mail

Driving schools needed

Driving as a profession has good prospect for lower middle class and poor people. Qualified and trained drivers can ensure better safety on roads for both people and vehicles. We did not give due importance to these factors in the past. Trained Drivers can go abroad and earn money for themselves and for their families. Their foreign currency remittances can have a positive impact on the existing deficit balance of payment. The Bangladesh government has been spending a huge amount of money for general education, religious education but not much for technical and professional education. A big amount of foreign exchange is earned by expatriate Bangladeshis. Most of the Bangladeshi workers perform manual jobs abroad.

Millions of people in Bangladesh are unemployed or under-employed since long. It is an acute problem in Bangladesh. A good number of them can be trained as drivers and sent to foreign countries. When the plan is materialised, the amount of remittance will definitely increase, which in the long run will contribute to the economic development of the country. Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, Technical Education Board and Man Power Ministry can establish a few driving training institutes in every city to train people in driving and provide driving licenses to them.

I would urge the government to establish 20-30 driving institutes in the cities. Md. Ashraf Hossain
Central Bashabo, Dhaka

Role of media

It is regrettable that the media and all those journalists are asking the government to release Khaleda Zia and Hasina and all other so called politicians. Why can't they tell the nation about everything these two ladies did to the country? Why don't they tell what the two sons of Khaleda Zia did and what inheritance money Zia left for those two? The BNP founder brought the Razakars to power. Why are the journalists so scared to tell the truth?

No one is above the law. Criminals are criminals, regardless of their background and social status. Sawgat Chowdhury
One-mail

DS award ceremony

I felt privileged to be part of this prestigious ceremony, held at Shaheed Suhrawardy indoor stadium, organised by The Daily Star, as a parent of one of the awardees. I was very glad when my son and the other awardees were listening to your motivating plea for them to be dedicated to the country's development as well as to strive to achieve their personal aims of academic and professional excellence, no matter where in the world they are.

This was a very timely reminder for our budding talents who need to be guided in the right direction. I would like to thank The Daily Star for this commendable initiative.

But I also felt that some parts of the event could've been organised better to add to its overall success. The speeches that followed yours were too long and repetitious. One of them was just too long and unintelligible to retain the audience's patience, which I think was tried a little too far.

The guests had been requested to 'be positively seated' by 8:30 which most of them did. I was one of them and it was 2:00 when I came out. The programme lasted nearly six hours due to the late start.

Jesmin Chowdhury
Sylhet

CNG price

What are we the general citizens supposed to say or do? This is the sector where thousands of crores was looted by the corrupt officials. It has been proved. We the citizens paid this money by paying more and more for general commodities. This price hike is the result of the money drained out of the economy by the miscreants. Those people are being punished now. Fine. By checking these grafts the economy will flourish and the citizens will get their cut. At this point what is driving you, the advisers, to impose new punishment on us? Or do you think we do not deserve to be served good with the only affordable resource of our own? Have you raised the pay scale to meet our daily transport fares resulting from this price hike? The transport fare is already irrational.

When there is a 2% increase in the fuel prices, the transport union goes for a 44% fare increase, irrespective of petrol or gas and you cannot control it.

The proposed 87.5% price increase for CNG will result in a 21% profit cut for a CNG three wheeler operator, but they are sure to ask for a 90% increase in the fare structure. Every corner of the economy is going to be affected and we, your general citizens, are going to suffer.

You cannot control businessmen, you cannot control trade imbalance, you cannot chalk out a good bargain from the World Bank, you fail to understand UN policies and you are on the verge of jeopardizing the only promising sector of our country. We are very proud of your anti-graft operations, we are proud of your reform activities.

Help us lead a decent life! M Zahid Hossain
Uttara, Dhaka

The "endangered" Tigers

Our recent series against South Africa has laid bare the weaknesses of the Tigers like an open book like it had on numerous previous occasions. Are we taking lessons from it?

Our batting does not complement our bowling. We lack a sound opening pair, and have a meek middle order. No amount of extraordinary bowling or brilliant fielding can ever make up for such a lapse. If you do not have a total, what do you protect? We had a wicket tailored to our needs, and yet we floundered. The crack is so obvious, it's literally screaming at us. I am no expert. I leave it up to our pundits to read the writing on the wall. I can only hope they are literate enough to read it.

Our captain, otherwise an acclaimed batting genius, has been performing poorly since being made the captain. Is he under pressure? Is the burden of captaincy and the expectations of the nation curbing his natural flow with the bat? Is this the "Sachin

Obama stands for change

Being a fan of Barack Obama, it was certainly disheartening for me to see him lose in two important states--- Ohio and Texas---which were vital states in the sense that a victory for him in these two states would have made him the clear front-runner. But now the race is once again wide open. And this is certainly Hillary's "comeback" moment.

Wins for Hillary notwithstanding, in the delegates count, Obama is still leading her by a slim margin of 86 (according to CNN politics.com). I really hope that Obama can fight back strongly, particularly in Pennsylvania. The very fact that Obama supports a more pragmatic foreign policy he is ready to hold talks with Raul Castro, Ahmadinejad and he is ready to bring troops from Iraq--- makes him a more viable candidate. His domestic economic policies are also more sensible than those of Hillary. Besides being very charismatic and inspirational, he is ready to heal America's tainted reputation as a product of Bush's illogical policies--- around the world. Young voters have flocked to the polling stations in numbers never seen before to vote for him.



And most important, polls show that against John McCain, Obama has the edge. That is, if Hillary wins the nomination then even the conservative voters of the GOP who have been reluctant to vote for him are likely to vote for McCain. But if Obama wins the nomination, then he'll be able to grab the votes of the independents a vital group which also supports McCain and even the votes of disenchanted Republicans. No one would certainly want a war-mongering candidate like McCain to eventually become the president. McCain's administration will basically be an extension of Bush's.

Obama is gradually coming under greater scrutiny from the media. He can expect the attacks on him to intensify in

the coming days. From "3 am" adverts to leaked memos to shady fundraiser Tony Rezko, he can also expect the Clinton camp to come up with more scathing attacks against him. Obama has to deal with these hurdles cleverly and he should avoid getting irritated during press conferences as he did in a press conference in San Antonio to ensure that these "alleged" negative attacks do not land him in jeopardy.

Then one really hopes that the super-delegates who now seem to be the ultimate judges do not become "undemocratic" by voting for Hillary, despite the fact that Obama has won more states and has more pledged delegates.

Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

BCB

Following the deplorable defeats in Test & ODI matches of our cricket team against the South Africans, it was expected that the whimsical selectors would resign, but instead of resigning, they boast of making ODI players play Test cricket in place of genuine Test players having patience, experience, form & fitness.

The whimsical selectors did much harm to our cricket. They themselves don't know the differences between a Test cricketer & an ODI cricketer. They forced our ODI cricketers not to learn the basic differences between Test cricket and ODI cricket. As a result, our genuine ODI cricketers failed to perform in the big matches. If our experienced Test cricketers like Javed Omar, Belim Golla, Khaled Mashud Pilot, Rajin Saleh, Aloke Kapali, who are in form, could play

in the first Test, the result would have been different. The selectors are destroying our cricket.

This shouldn't be allowed to happen. As they didn't resign and still boast of being selectors, they should either be asked to go or undergo an academic course or training for realising the basic differences between Test cricket and ODI cricket.

It is to be remembered that great Test cricketer Sunil Gavaskar was not a successful ODI player. On the other hand, the ODI genius Michael Bevan was not selected for Test matches. Following a great pause, Test batsman Hashim Amla of South Africa was selected for ODI matches.

Our selectors should take note of all these truths of cricket! ABM Moniruddin
Nabaratra Villa, Ibrahimpur, Dhaka

Police station, schools and environment

I am having bad experience, getting the bad smells from Uttara thana everyday, as I have to pick my child from Scholastica School. Uttara thana, which is located in Sector 4, is causing serious health hazard to everybody, especially to the school children of the area. A number of renowned schools like Scholastica Junior cum Middle Section, Uttara School, RAJUK, Turkish Hope, etc are located near this police station. But it has become almost impossible to walk in front of this police station, as all the drivers, who come early in the morning to pay fines to this station, use the drains as urinals. More than that, you will find all the wrecked vehicles in front of this police station, as if it is a junkyard. And nobody is removing the junks even after several years.

A police station is for the welfare of the

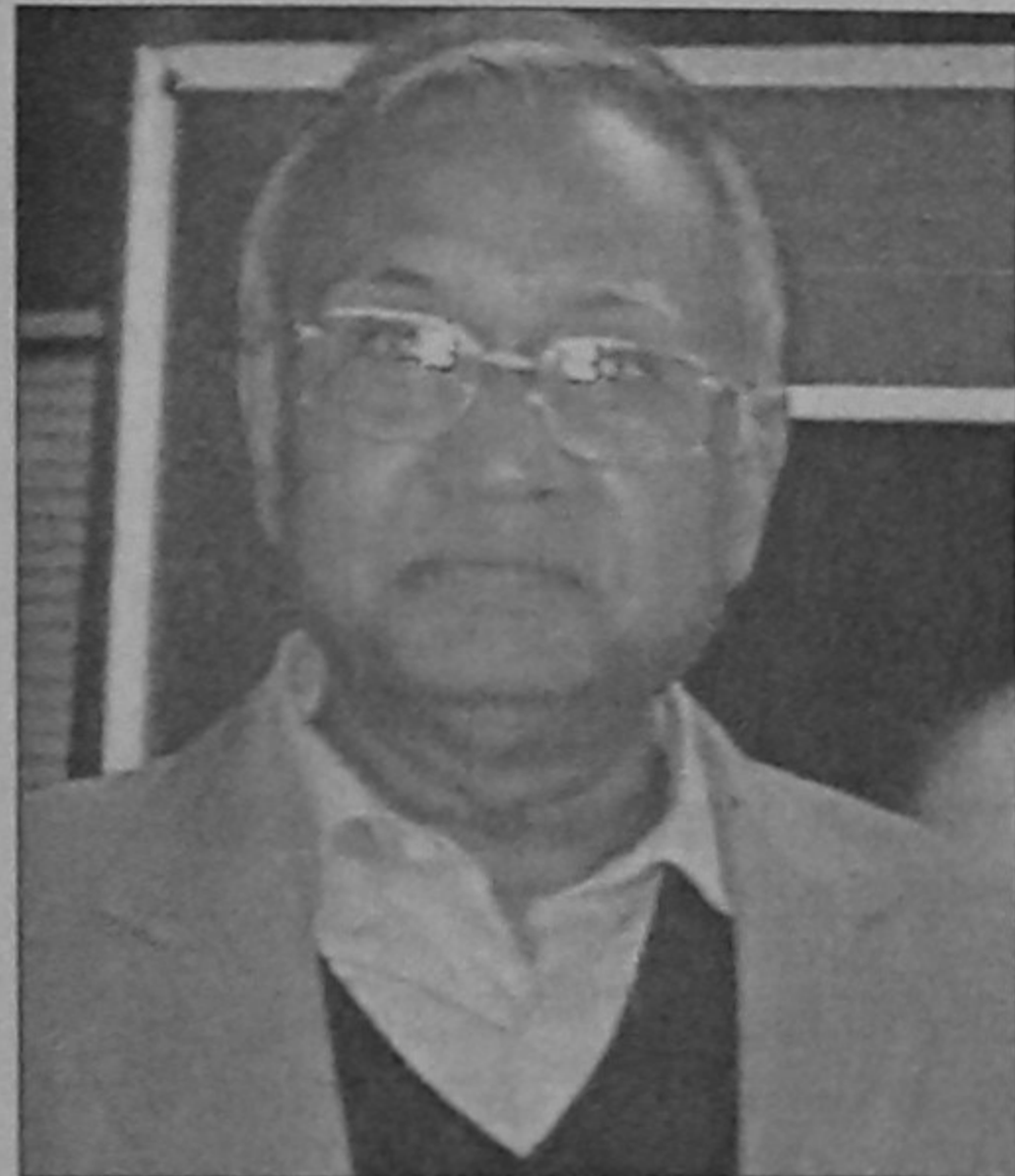
people, not to create problems for its neighbours. It is the duty of a police officer to keep the environment clean, these officers should be more responsible, as they are well educated. At the same time the English Medium schools in the area are causing serious traffic congestion, air and sound pollution.

I would request the private schools to remove the schools from this crowded area, which has very narrow roads that cause traffic congestion every day in the morning. Especially, the Scholastica Junior cum Middle Section should be removed from an overcrowded area like Sector 4 to a comparatively less crowded area like Sector 3, which has broader roads.

Babul Akhter
Uttara, Dhaka



Bazlur Rahman, a good journalist



Bazlur Rahman was an enlightened man of our times. It was enlightenment that he brought into the profession of journalism. But his life came to a sudden, quick end. Throughout his life, Rahman epitomised the sense of aesthetics. If he had not died young, and sixty-seven years is being relatively young when one observes the large canvas on which men like Bazlur Rahman work, he would definitely have further enriched the world of Bangladesh's media. Despite all that, however, in more than six decades that he lived, Rahman surely made a difference.

And he was able to do that by holding on to the idea that journalism was a vocation based on principles. As editor of the well-known Bengali daily Sangbad, he made it his

consistent goal to keep himself focused on the necessity of truth being carried into hearts and homes on the strength of objectivity. There was a liberal dose of decency in him, the vast scale of which came to be reflected in the gentle yet determined manner in which he carried on his interaction with others. Like any morally driven, committed journalist, Bazlur Rahman made it a point to listen to the opinions of others before he would come up with his own views on the social and political issues that stirred minds in Bangladesh. And, as a person believing fully in secular democracy, he was careful never to force his opinions on others around him. That was surely why he was always respected by his colleagues and by all those he came in touch with.

Bazlur Rahman was all his life a committed political being; and his politics solidified the world of his journalism. In his youth, he dabbled in communism, before moving on to the socialist ideals espoused by the Muzaffar branch of the National Awami Party. He then moved on, soberly and quietly, to the thought that politics works best when it prepares men and women to live in healthy accommodation with the rest of the world.

In the death of Bazlur Rahman, we have lost a big part of ourselves. But we will remember him, and by doing so we may yet build on the professional richness that his journalism has left for us to emulate.

Sharmin Rashid
English department
Lalmatia Girl's College, Dhaka