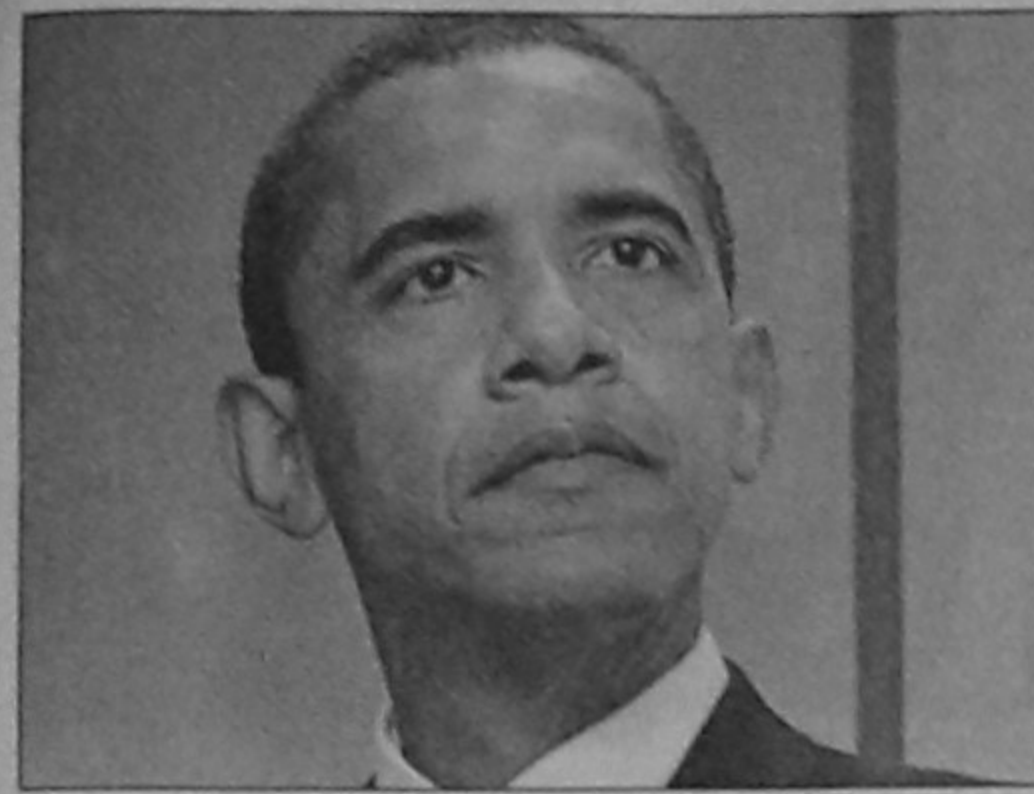




Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

US presidential election



The Democratic Party will choose a candidate to run for president and the candidate would be either a woman or an African American. Is there anyone in the Democratic Party worried that come election day their candidate would find it difficult to cart off the "stigma" of belonging to the African American and "Women" category, two of the more resourceful, successful and ever powerful yet "minority groups" who perhaps would not convince or inspire the war weary electorate that the time has come to elect a "minority" candidate, and not a male white politician.

The fact that candidates should be elected based on some specific and definite criteria like policies and past records may escape most, including even people from the minority communities. People may think that in times of war and economic downturn, it is perhaps wise to vote for a candidate who would be strongly placed to work with the majority community and Congress to bring about some changes in business and body politic and lead the country back to economic prosperity. The American electorate has shown themselves unable to vote for women and an African American when the stakes have been very high. However, the fact remains that there is always a first time for everything. Hillary Clinton and

Obama have the respect of so many of their countrymen. Nancy Pelosi led the Democratic Party to win the Senate elections that gave the party a majority in Senate after a long gap of 12 years and she is now the speaker of the Senate, the first time a woman has taken that coveted position. But electing the President of the United States is something different.

The process of selecting a candidate in American elections is of course different from the subcontinent or for that matter many parts of the world. The party leader is not the automatic choice like in Britain. Seniority or the dubious populist eligibility factor or being the relative of some departed leader, likely to have departed in a violent way, doesn't play any role. In America, anybody can contest the elections but normally a candidate needs to have a certain kind of acceptability based on family name, fame from being an actor or some kind of "notoriety", interest in politics and capacity to attract followers from the rank and file of the party. But the overriding concern remains just one factor - the ability to generate campaign funds! The candidate must be able to attract donors to fund a campaign.

The party supporters who register in their own constituencies select the candidate and vote from the choice of several candidates from the two major parties. There are occasional marginal instances of a third candidate of some kind who is usually an independent with scant followers. There may be other candidates from some fringe personal or independent platforms but they can only hope to influence the election by splitting, getting enough disgruntled voters to vote for them and thus depriving the more serious candidate of much needed votes.

It is time to predict who will win the election! I did that last time with success. I think America is ready for a change. My call is Barack Obama!
Ershad Khandker
Dhaka

Women's rights

About a week back we were suddenly stuck to a big headline carried in almost all the dailies of the country. The meaning of the headlines was the same, but some looked at first sight extremely worrisome.

The inside story under this banner was much more worrying. All the leaders of pro-Islamic political parties have jointly declared the present government as "anti-Islamic" and threatened to call for jihad. However, after the clarification from the government the matter has cooled down, at least for

the time being. The Adviser of the Religious Affairs Ministry while explaining the matter told the press that the Islamic leaders have reacted without reading the draft law this government was intending to promulgate giving equal rights to women.

Bangladesh is a secular state and there are followers of different religions living in harmony. All state laws are within the values of religions and there were no clashes. Laws are required to discipline bad people and to help the good ones to live peacefully. In our country there are lots of incidences of abuse of

women. The Holy Koran also gave women equal rights and there were many instructions from the Holy Prophet (Pbuh) on how to behave with women. Even then, the women are being abused and the state cannot sit idle and watch it. So, the state has its own law alongside the religious restrictions to protect the women from abuse and trafficking. The latest such law is "Woman and child repression law" which has reduced women and child trafficking and unnecessary talak (divorce). The law has also reduced the unfounded FATWAS by some religious zealots.

More than 50 per cent of the country's population are women. Keeping this half indoors the nation cannot prosper. So it has become necessary to give equal rights to them. Secondly, the girls are doing better in the academic fields than our boys. Both boys and girls are our children. Your today's young daughter is tomorrow's woman and somebody's wife. She also needs security which you will think of. The educated girls must work along with their husbands.

"Desh Prem" or patriotism is the part of Iman (belief). What some so-called religious people did during the liberation war was totally against this value. Islamic religious leaders issued fatwas during the British rule and kept the Muslims backward.

So there should be a good law to be enacted by the government to give our girl children equal rights in all spheres.
Shafiqul Islam
One-mail

Pollution

We are facing the serious problem of pollution because of the large-scale industries and the negligence of people. Pollution causes sickness and death. Nowadays, the capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka, is a highly polluted city. Everywhere there is garbage. The pollution has crossed the limits of tolerance.

The authorities concerned should address the issue in right earnest.
Mohammad Rajja
Gono Bishwabidyalay
Savar, Dhaka

Passengers of Titanic!

I am not only shocked but alarmed as well when I see newspapers describing how Bangladeshi citizens are dying in seas, deserts and prison camps. They are fleeing this country as if they are onboard a sinking Titanic. Why is this happening? Are we so much after money that we don't hesitate to take the risk of death.

Who will look after this country if its youth finds it an unworthy place to live in?
Mohammed Alauddin
Green Road, Dhaka

Water management

22 March is the World Water Day. Certain points need to be considered on this occasion.

- Water must be safe from pollution.
 - Water requirement must be fulfilled.
 - Wastage of water has to be prevented.
 - Everybody should be aware and self motivated to solve the problems concerning collection and use of water.
- Montasir Mamun
Department of civil engineering
Sher-e-Bangla Hall, BUET

Cricket



One Test cricketer has exposed his level of temperament recently while passing through the fans. He does not have the capacity to control his temper. What a shame! I am a cricket lover from the very early days of Pakistan, and used to follow cricket on radio and TV and also attended matches in the field at home and occasionally abroad. I can definitely place myself with the cricket fans of today. They are enjoying endless opportunities to watch cricket all over the world and almost all the year round. These fans are life-blood of our cricket. They support the good performance and look critically at bad performance of the team and individual players. This is a normal pattern of relation between the players and the fans. I strongly feel that the players who showed bad temper and manner in public should get punishment from the appropriate cricket authorities as provided in their laws.

Now coming back to the main purpose of my writing this letter, I would like to mention a few basic weaknesses of the Bangladesh cricket team and the players. These, according to my judgment, are:-

- a. Physical fitness compared to Test players from other countries.
- b. More emphasis on style than shot selection.
- c. Lack of physical and mental stamina to play long innings consistently.
- d. Lack of experience.
- e. Lack of capacity to evaluate team or individual performance.
- f. Psychological weakness against big rivals.
- g. Captaincy is mainly based on performance, personality and leadership quality is often compromised.

I hope our readers, cricket players and fans would kindly consider my observations.

A reader
On e-mail

"Collared" tigers

This letter is in response to K. Ullas Karanth's letter dated 23rd March 2008 in this section titled "Collared" tigers.

K. Ullas Karanth's letter in defence of his colleague is understandable, but we would still like to hear from Mr. Adam about our so called misdirected concerns? Mr. Adam has collared two tigers so far and both of them are dead. According to the research of Mr. Karanth there is a 20% mortality rate in the wild population of tigers, therefore one in every five tiger would die of natural causes. Mr. Karanth tries to rationalise the death of the two tigers in Mr. Adam's hands as normal.

The percentage of mortality in this case is not 20% but 100%. Both of Mr. Adam's collared tigers died within a span of seven to six months. Do Mr. Adam and Mr. Karanth feel that there is no relationship whatsoever to the collaring process and death of the two tigers? Perhaps there is none, but shouldn't one at least try to find out if there might be a connection? Yet we find no indication of an investigation, and this is where our concern is. Mr. Adam restarted the collaring process without evaluating what happened to the two tigers. Furthermore, he tried to hide the fact that his second collared tiger was also dead. In the documentary called "Ganges" by BBC you can clearly see the condition of the second tiger. Mr. Adam chooses to re-tranquillize the second tiger to take the collar off in this film, while the narrator implies in the film that Mr. Adam is actually tranquilizing the tiger to put the collar on. But freeze the part where he fires the dirt gun and you see the tiger is already collared. So why is he removing the collar?

Is it to retrieve the data? But the collar is supposed to disengage on its own and then collected. Or is it for the sake of filming for BBC? Perhaps he chose to remove the collar sensing impending death of the tiger. Whatever his reasons maybe, he choose to put his priorities ahead of the tiger's. No matter what Mr. Karanth would have us believe, tranquillization is not without its inherent risks, and Mr. Adam chose to put this already very sick collared tiger to further risk that perhaps ended its life.

Mr. Karanth's analogy of bird banding with tiger collaring is quiet laughable. And I am quiet sure there would be a great uproar if you tried to band a bird like the Jerdon's Courser knowing there was even a 10% risk of killing it.

The days of killing your subject for the sake of science are gone, especially with species like tigers where there is already the pressure of poaching and, according to Mr. Karanth, a 20% natural mortality rate. The method employed by Mr. Adam to tranquillize the tiger involves snaring the tiger with cables first. This is an extremely cruel process that can severely injure a tiger.

We have nothing against genuine tiger research, but there should be a proper mechanism to monitor and evaluate the process. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh we haven't seen that so far. Mr. Karanth advises the government of Bangladesh to heed the lessons from across the border. I think it has heeded foreign lessons for too long.

We have lost almost all of our Sal forests to Acacia plantation due to foreign consultants, our coastal wetlands to intensive shrimp cultivation, and many more. It is time we decided on our own what is best for us.
Ronald Halder
One-mail

Indian visa hassle

For two consecutive days, I have unsuccessfully stood in queue for submitting my application for Indian visa at the Indian Visa Application Centre at Gulshan, Dhaka, and returned home disappointed and sick. I joined the queue very early in the morning but found hundreds of others in queue since midnight. Being an elderly person it was a torture for me to stand in queue for hours and then return home disappointed. Adding to my woes while in queue was pestering of brokers who were asking for Tk. 2500.00 for getting you a visa or Tk. 1000.00 for placing you forward in the queue!

After my disappointments and failures, I was wondering in this world of Internet Technology and hi tech, why doesn't the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) think of providing facilities to applicants to get appointment through Internet for submission of applications. Maybe IVAC can launch a website wherein an applicant on providing his/her name, address and passport number can get an automated reply showing his date of appointment for submission of application form for visa. After every five hundred appointments, next appointment can be for the following days and so on. An applicant will show up at IVAC with a copy of his/her appointment note to submit his application. Application for medical cases, diplomats, govt. officials, VIPs may be dealt with separately.

Interestingly enough, I found out while talking to fellow applicants in queue that like myself none of them needed visa urgently and were willing to wait for a few days for granting of visa. The urgency is for submitting the application. Many have expressed fear that after the commencement of train service, rush for travel to India will increase manifold. I am sure IVAC can find out ways to lessen the miseries of applicants in this age of hi tech.

I hope my letter will get the attention of the Indian High Commission and IVAC. Meanwhile, my sympathy goes to residents around IVAC who must be passing through nightmares round the clock.
Ziauddin Ahmed
One-mail

Flights from Sylhet

There are thousands of passengers travelling from Sylhet to the Middle East and London. Many a time they do not get tickets at the time they want to fly. Moreover, the present fares of Biman and other airlines are too high. Recently, the Civil Aviation Department accorded permission to a foreign airline to operate cheap flights from Chittagong to the Middle East which has proved to be highly successful. There is no reason why the same type of flights should not be operated from Sylhet to the Middle East. Apart from being convenient to passengers, this will boost manpower export.

I would request the Ministry of Civil Aviation to take immediate steps to start such flights from Sylhet to the Middle East and the UK in national interest.
Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury
DOHS, Mohakhali
Dhaka

Constant exasperation

Nowadays, my mom seems to suffer from constant headache and grumpiness. Why? Well, it's not actually easy being in her shoes and run around with me to the coaching centres each and every day. Also that includes having to stand in the middle of the road for



The month of March

Fiery March is a memorable month in the history of the nation of Bengalees. On the night of March 25, 1971, the Pakistan army pounced upon the unarmed Bengalees. They killed millions of innocent people. But the Bengalees had the courage and undaunted spirit to face the challenge. And after nine months of war, we became independent. Today we are free only due to the supreme sacrifices made by the valiant martyrs. We

have our own culture and heritage. March gave us the spirit of liberation.

People still remember the martyrs and have great love and respect for them. Their dreams will be fulfilled only if we can build a prosperous country.

AKM Anisul Haque
Department of English
Metropolitan University

like hours and shouting, "Aye CNG! Dhanmondi sathas number road jabe?" It's unbelievable how I have to get out of my house each day almost one and a half hour early to reach the coaching centre due to the traffic jams that increases the time of the route by twenty to thirty minutes and bless the "CNG-wallas" who refuse to go wherever you ask them to.

Okay, so I can bear the traffic jams like all other citizens already have (although ignoring the fact that these traffic jams too are easily manageable with a little effort from the management authorities), but what's all the "CNG-wallas"? First of all, they don't even stand if we call them. And luckily if they do, before we can completely announce our destination, they indifferently drive away without saying anything (this is supposed to be their way of saying "no"). Again, if they happen to stand even after we speak, they'll ask for two or even three times more than what comes in meter.

Citizens! Being part of the modern Bangladesh, how can we accept such nuisance? Can't we see that we ourselves are the victims of this constant exasperation?
Turin Haque
A-level student
Mohakhali DOHS, Dhaka

A freedom fighter's thoughts

I was there on 7 March, 1971 in the Race Course Ground. As a young medical student of Dhaka Medical College, I went there to hear (frankly) as to what would be the future course of events, I wanted to know, if I could finish the first professional MBBS exams that were postponed after March 1. I had a dream like all middle class young men to have a prosperous future, but by the time I heard him out, all dreams were overtaken by only one dream, that is to fight for a free, democratic, and exploitation free Bangladesh. With that end in my mind, I later traced my way like millions of my countrymen to freedom struggle.

Sir, physician I became. I am

immensely successful in my personal life, but I feel my life is a failure. Because despite the heavy price this nation paid in blood today my country is under a government that decides its own term of office, that exercises all the Legislative and Executive Powers of the State, that WE CREATED!!!

I feel upset when I hear that our valiant freedom fighters like Mr. Jali have been made to lose kidneys, condemned deliberately to life long dialysis or a very risky transplant. The DAUGHTER of the great man who spoke out that fiery March day in 1971 is COMPELLED to slowly and steadily trace the way to her death without the treatment she so badly needs.

Did you hear the physician saying that since last Monday HASINA is leaning to the right to keep her balance and that she is losing sensation in one side of her face? It means her balancing system is eroding because of gradual damage of her auditory system, if

left like that she will be unable to stand on her two feet, she will be irreversibly DEAF too. Dr. Modasser says the pressure in her eyes has increased, it means she is developing GLUCOMA, if left like that she will go BLIND. Dr. Abdullah says, her blood pressure is fluctuating and there is puffiness of her face, it means the kidneys are failing, they are saying she has allergy, I pray to the Almighty, that it is simple allergy, but when I hear that this is continuing and permanent changes are taking place in her skin, I am afraid, it can be an auto-immune mechanism, when destroyed body tissues evoke antibodies. Such complicated cases must be treated abroad.

Get rid of all these through a free, fair and credible national parliamentary election as soon as possible. If you do otherwise, you will be betraying Bangabandhu, us and the nation.
A freedom fighter
On e-mail

Villages



Rural people are being deprived of their fundamental rights. All our plans and programmes are for the development of the urban areas.

This must come to an end for ensuring the overall development of the country. The economists should come forward with specific plans for the rural areas which are lagging behind.

Arif Khan Swadheen
On e-mail

Unused overbridges



I would like to thank The Daily Star for printing a photo of pedestrians crossing the street (March 24, 2008, Star City) right under the new foot overbridge at Bangla Motor. This is a picture that can be seen anywhere in the capital where there is a foot overbridge. Traffic police, though present, act like helpless spectators. This increases the death/injury risk to the pedestrians, causes disruption of the traffic flow and also add to the pollution as the engines have to run longer than necessary. Thus, the final impact comes on the fragile economy which has to bear the burden of all the associated additional costs.

It's time that this is put to a stop. We must learn to respect the law for our own good, and if we cannot embrace the carrot then let it be the stick to teach us what is good for us. I propose that the govt. institute a provision of on the spot penalty. A mere Tk 10 for every crossing would do and a part of that money for the traffic police should also ensure that they will remain sincere to prevent people from doing such things. The govt exchequer will also benefit from this. Let good sense prevail and let us learn to live in a more civilised way.

SR. Chomok
Dhaka