

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.

## A question...



The fear that Bangladesh might turn back to the 1/11 era is suddenly back in people's minds. The leading political parties hardly seem to realise why we are no longer a democratic nation, why all the big heads of our so-called democratic politics are behind the bars. They are opposing the local election for obvious reason: it would hamper their way to establishing illegal power at the grassroots level which plays a very vital role in determining the results of our national elections. The reason might be clear to us but it seems that

even intellectuals, like university teachers, fail to understand why the present govt wants to hold local elections first.

It would be utterly frustrating if you can't use the opportunity to reform our politics. Let us be true to ourselves: do we really want to go ahead or are we happy to go back to that era where democracy was just a puppet in the hands of some dishonest, uneducated politicians?

Rifat Mahbub  
Edinburgh, UK

## A university for women

At the beginning of the 20th century it was very difficult for women to obtain university education. In 1870 Emily Davies and Barbara Bodichon helped to set up Girton College, the first university for women. But nowadays every country has a special university for women. But in our country, we have no such university even after 37 years of independence. In Japan, there are at least ten women's universities, among them Nara, Mukogawa, Kochi, Bunka, Showa and Jissen universities are mentionable. In Korea, there are five universities for women.

Without a university degree it is very difficult for women to enter any profession. Half the total population in our country are women. Without their development, the country's development can't be achieved. On the other hand, our society is a conservative one. If a special national women's university is established, then

more women will be encouraged to obtain higher education. Besides, a special women's university will enable women to live with dignity. Some incidents in recent times at DU and JU should make the point clear.

Eden College has all facilities to be a women's university. The authorities concerned should consider the point.  
Dr. Sakina Khanam  
Kobe University  
Japan

## Leaders

We don't really know how we find our leaders, we never asked ourselves where they were born, where they come from etc. But we all support someone as our leader, and we blindly follow him/her, and even sometimes sacrifice our lives on their calls. We voted them to power believing their hollow promises before election. We do not even mind fighting among our fellow brothers. We make them political hero without questioning his/her identity or past records. Banking on

our, I mean the people's unstinting support, these leaders sit on the dais of power. Then they totally forget us and start doing whatever they need to do, to change their own fortune unless and until he/she is in trouble created by opponents.

We don't know how the leaders of democratic countries attain leadership quality in those countries. As far as our country is concerned, and experience goes, we have seen how our leaders gained leadership from the bottom. Within a few years of our independence, especially after 15 August 1975, some leaders were born through the barrel of the gun. Thereafter, many more systems emerged.

As I have already said, we do not know how the leadership quality is imparted to the prospective future leaders. I have no suggestion for ourselves as to how we should make our future leaders. I believe the process should begin from the school level. The future leaders should grow up as honest and patriotic citizens.  
Shafiqul Islam  
One-mail

## A microbiologist's view

As a microbiologist I feel it is my responsibility to write after reading the report "Fatal Bacteria Found in Drinking Water in Rajshahi Div" as the report (published on 21 June 2008) has wrong information and misinterpretation.

Firstly, coliform is not a single bacterium, it is a group of bacteria. Secondly, coliforms are not fatal and not the main cause of stomach disorder. These bacteria are quantified in water as an indicator of fecal contamination of water. That is, if coliform is found in water, it means that the water is contaminated with human faeces and may contain pathogenic bacteria such as Shigella and Salmonella which cause dysentery and typhoid. However, presence of coliform in water does not necessarily confirm that water is contaminated with faeces. Hence only coliform count is not reliable information for predicting the risk of drinking water and is not used as the sole indicator of water quality. Moreover, a professor of medicine is not the right person to give opinion in this regard. A microbiologist or a doctor specialized in microbiology is the right person to give his opinion.

Monir Uddin Ahmed  
MS Student  
Department of Biotechnology  
Swinburne University of Technology  
Melbourne, Australia

## Closure of BDR shops

Closure of BDR low price shops is a poor decision on the government's part. When the poverty-stricken people are struggling to manage one meal a day due to sky rocketing of prices of essentials, this decision was not expected. It is the government's responsibility to fulfil the basic needs of the people.  
Mushfiqul Wadud  
Department of English  
Stamford University Bangladesh

## Our dreams and politics

We became independent after a nine-month long struggle against the Pakistanis. Though we got independence after nine months but our struggle for it had begun during the British regime. During the Pakistani regime, we were exploited in many ways.

But things can change only if the politicians show a sense of commitment to the nation.  
Md. Humayun Kabir  
Deputy Manager (ops)  
Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation

## Is this patriotism?

After her release from the sub-jail, our former prime minister Sheikh Hasina travelled by a BA flight to London, on her way to the USA for treatment, but not by Biman, the National Flag Carrier. This is just normal for the former prime minister. It is on record that she never travelled by Biman while travelling abroad privately at her own cost. But in contrast to this, during her tenure as the prime minister she travelled throughout by Biman, since it used to be at state cost and with very special arrangements organised by the national airline.

Once she showed her utmost disdain to the national airline, when she visited Bahrain to offer condolences to the bereaved royal family members of the late Amir of Bahrain. Biman had a scheduled flight to Kuwait and Bahrain on the day of her departure, but she turned down the proposal of the airline to travel by the passenger flight and opted to travel to/from Bahrain exclusively by another DC-10 aircraft. No wonder, Biman is at this stage today!

This also reminds me how disgusting it was to watch when on her return from the USA, after attending her son's marriage with an American citizen, she boldly and proudly told the media at ZIA that her daughter-in-law was a number one American and not number two!

Leave the ex prime minister alone, all our high profile civil servants and the dignitaries always try to avoid Biman, while travelling abroad at state cost. They feel proud to travel by foreign carriers. Such is their complex and love for the country! I think like in K.S.A, our government also should make it mandatory for the officials, both civil and military, to travel by Biman, whenever the state takes care of their travel expenses.

I only hope our politicians, MPs and other dignitaries would adhere to what they preach for others i.e., love for the country. A true politician has to have the basic quality of sincerely loving the country and the people.

In this regard, I have got no opportunity to comment on the other former prime minister Begum Zia since she never travelled abroad privately except soon after assuming power when she in a body travelled to New York for treatment of her knees at the cost of the state exchequer, which she could have easily avoided.

I only hope our leaders would take their lessons after all this turmoil and set examples of honesty and integrity and thus earn public confidence.  
A.B. Mohammed Zakaria  
Stanwell, Staines  
Middlesex, UK

## Commercialisation of Gulshan

Gulshan Model Town was the forerunner which was conceived to be an ideal township & a showpiece designed for planned urbanisation of a very progressive cosmopolitan Dhaka. Alas! It was not to be thanks to Rajuk.

No doubt things have worsened due to lack of concern of the service agencies like the Metropolitan Police, City Corporation, Wasa, the Department of Environment and the concerned Ministry.

Gulshan area has now become a mess-up of unplanned urbanisation as evidenced by unparalleled traffic overcrowding & id caused by inefficient & undisciplined traffic, heaps of dumped rubbish, overflowing sewage, potholes in roads, etc. This is because Rajuk has allowed unplanned mushroom growth of shops, offices, banks, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, restaurants, guest houses, car showrooms, community centres etc, adjacent to private residences. Law and order in the locality is also poor.

We request the police to please act before the law & order situation worsens. It will just need minimum effort from the top brasses of the police department. Environment and rights organisations (active in the area) also need to make concerted efforts to mitigate the common plight of the unfortunate residents.  
Sultana Ahmed (Ila)  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Hillary's campaign

It's commendable that Hillary would campaign for Obama, despite being defeated by him. How is it possible for a political leader? Yes, this is only possible in a true democracy.

Will our politicians learn anything from it?  
Debbirata Biswas  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## City and municipal polls

Your editorial on 22 June is an excellent balanced exposition of the situation. All sane people must urge the disgruntled parties to take part in democratic polls whenever and wherever it is held and thus act in a positive manner for the furtherance of democracy and the country. The days of negative attitudes and actions like boycott and hartal due to immature emotional silliness, or some legal technicalities in the Constitution (which obviously and of necessity is in temporary abeyance) must be banished. However, it remains a holy obligation for the government to ensure that all the polls are fair and credible to the nation and are adjudged as such by the foreign observers.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed  
London, UK

## Judicial magistrates

The CTG has done a commendable job in implementing the long overdue separation of judiciary from the executive branch of the government. This has already been yielding excellent results. Disposal of cases has been expedited and the volume of transacted business has gone up substantially. The Supreme Court has asked the government to provide the judicial magistrates with all facilities. The immediate need of judicial magistrates is residential accommodation. Hence, I would request the caretaker government to provide funds and arrange residential accommodation for them urgently in all district headquarters to enable the magistrates to discharge their functions smoothly.

The next political government will not show any interest in the matter, because judicial magistrates will not toe their lines!

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury  
Dhaka

## Local body election

In the last fifteen days, I talked to about fifty of my friends and relations who are not blind supporters of any political party about election in local bodies. All of them supported the move of the present govt. to hold election of local bodies before the national assembly election. I asked for their reasons to support such a move and the interesting answers are:

1. As the major political parties (the AL has changed its stance) are against such election, it is well understood that local body election will make the situation difficult for the political govt. to go back to their democratic (!) governance, as they practised before one-eleven against the very interest of the nation.

2. Local bodies' election will bring accountability to the elected representatives.

3. Development of our country cannot be accelerated without decentralisation of decision making authority to implement development projects with transparency.

4. If the election is not held now, this will again give the corrupt politicians the chance to force the agencies to construct thousands of bridges and culverts just to feed one house as done in many villages during their rule.

5. As the political parties did not fulfil their pledge to hold election at upazilas during their 15-year rule, they will never do it when they go to power again.

6. When the present government can take a number of measures for good governance, then what is wrong in holding the election of local bodies in the greater interest of the nation?  
Zabedini  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

The local government elections (four city corporations and nine municipalities) that are going to be held on August 4 is a step in the right direction. The two major political parties the AL and the BNP appeared to be against the polls but we cannot afford to bear any further delay regarding holding of the local polls (particularly, upazila elections). If there are doubts as to whether the caretaker government is planning to run their "hand-picked" candidates in these polls, then holding of the local government elections will, in effect, act as a signal to the people as to whether the polls are held in a farcical manner or not.

The simple point is that the two major parties feel reluctant (the AL has changed its decision) to hold the local polls as they fear that their influence at the field level will be lost. The fact that they have not held upazila elections for more than 15 years and that the MPs had the final say in local matters are sufficient reasons to believe that when elected, these parties are unlikely to hold upazila elections. In other words, the lawmakers will once again continue to wield their influence in upazilas and continue to plunder national wealth by constructing un-finished bridges, taking bribes from contractors, awarding tenders on the basis of nepotism and favouritism. We

# Decentralising Dhaka

A report published in your daily dated: 22-06-2008 stated that at a roundtable discussion the speakers emphasised the need for decentralisation of power and spreading out the economic activities across the country in order to save Dhaka city from any disaster. This is a good approach if it is done efficiently as this will create employment opportunities for people. Dhaka is already overcrowded and the people of the entire country depend on Dhaka one way or the other.

This approach must be changed. How much wise it will be to develop underpass railways at this point in time is a debatable issue. The speakers at this roundtable discussion have also recommended banning the movement of private cars from 8:00am to 10:00am and 4:00pm to 6:00pm, the daily office hours, and widening of footpaths with a view to reducing traffic jam in the city. Well, I do not know whether this will work or not. It is not feasible to stop private cars from 8:00am to 10:00am and 4:00pm to 6:00pm. This cannot be the solution. We just need to think strategically. We need a properly planned lay out of constructing roads in such ways that traffic jams will go once and for all.

Minhaj Ahmed  
Uttara, Dhaka



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

cannot afford to let that happen.

In addition, the terms of the five city corporations have also ended which in itself is a logical reason to hold the polls to city corporations right now.

Wasif Wahed  
Old DOHS, Dhaka

## Deep seaport

We Bangladeshis are one-track-minded people. We have put all our eggs into one basket in Dhaka which now has become an unmanageable city. We have developed only one port to meet all our trading needs. The country is now in an economic take off stage. I am sure that if our politicians do not mess it up, then we will surely be a middle income country in the next five to ten years, and during this period our trade will increase manifold.

Under political government, our port is unable to perform satisfactorily and cannot meet the trading needs of the country. If the situation remains as is common during political government, we will not be able to handle our trading needs and the country's trade will come to a standstill.

It takes about fifteen to twenty years from ground breaking stage to have a reasonably operational port. There is no magic wand that

can cut that time down to two to three years. So if we have to have uninterrupted trade then we have to start building the deep seaport without any further delay.

We could take Chinese help to develop our deep seaport. Chinese have helped Pakistan to build a deep seaport at Gwadar in Baluchistan coast. They are helping Sri Lanka to develop a port in the southern coast of Sri Lanka. They are also helping Myanmar to build a port in the Bay of Bengal side of Myanmar.

Efficient port facilities are very important for any developing economy and we just cannot afford to ignore this fact if we want to see our country as a developed country.

I would suggest that along with the deep seaport we have a Special Economic Zone comprising the districts of Cox's Bazar and Bandarban. With the deep seaport a big airport capable of handling largest aircrafts should also be constructed. The SEZ will have to be under a self-sufficient governing authority as that will help decide matters quickly and will be attractive to the foreign investors. If we develop the deep seaport with the SEZ it will create job opportunities for millions of Bangladeshis and this will help us become a prosperous country.

ous country.

This SEZ will be a economic hub for the region and the deep seaport could handle the trading needs of our neighbours. We could even be a main line container terminal port. This will eliminate the feeder service cost and our goods will be more competitive in the international market.  
Salahuddin Ayubi  
One-mail

## Arsenicosis

Arsenic is a poison that can take our lives. At present it is found in most of the tubewells in Jhenidah district. The arsenic contaminated tubewell water must be avoided for the safety of our lives. Arsenic causes a disease called arsenicosis. The person affected by it suffers from various complications. The patient loses stamina, the skin becomes rough. Soars are also found and bleeding is common. It causes stomach disorders and even cancer.

We have to avoid drinking arsenic contaminated water. As an alternative, we can collect rainwater and pond water.  
Md. Taj Uddin  
Department of Environmental Science and Resource Management  
MBSTU

# Cricket in ruins

This is a reply to a letter published in The Daily Star entitled "Cricket over-publicised" which appeared on 23 June. I cannot acquiesce in the opinion of Mr. Sohail because I feel he has just made his statements rather sentimentally. Immature players overburdened with expectations from the media and fans are according to him the main reasons for the poor performance of the Tigers. But he has overlooked that young Tigers have taken Bangladesh in the Super Eight stage of last year's 50-over World Cup where Bangladesh defeated India and South Africa while one of the most senior members of the side Habibul Bashar failed to deliver. Not giving debut to young cricketers would be like giving indemnity to senior cricketers despite their poor performance. The selectors are given the responsibility to choose the best team and not the "oldest team" for the country.

And without constructive criticism of the media and from fans the Tigers will not be even

inspired to do well. We have seen recently how criticism has often been the impetus to do well for teams like India and Pakistan in cricket and for Germany and Italy in football. The idea that people should wait ten years to see their team perform well is simply ludicrous because Bangladesh frequently play international cricket against tough opponents these days, whereas India and Pakistan in the past decades had very limited opportunities of playing international cricket.

It is really difficult to say why almost all members of the national team are playing so poorly nowadays. But it is not difficult to see that our industrious cricketers under Jamie Siddons are now only playing to lose against higher ranked opponents. Such attitude is going to lead to more ignominious defeats for the Tigers!

Nayeem Islam  
Class-12  
The Aga Khan School, Dhaka



# CORRUPTION

The tree is still alive. Though it has lost some branches and leaves, it is still luxuriant with leaves. And there is no dearth of people who sprinkle water on its roots, put fertilisers and make sure that it remains in good shape. In all probability, the tree will grow taller day by day and continue to bear poisonous fruits.

Yes, I am talking about the menace of corruption. According to the recent report published by TIB, the tree of corruption is still there. In terms of magnitude, the corruption situation has not improved much. Though the ACC has roped in some big shots, corruption is still rampant among the people of different departments--police, land administration, the judiciary and so on.

It is really shocking that it is the law enforcers who top the list.

The present caretaker government assumed power with a battle cry against corruption. It has done a lot to bring to book many high profile figures who thought themselves to be above the law. We hope that the drive against corruption will go on and the common people will benefit from it.

Zabedini  
Paharatali, Chittagong