



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.

Worldwide poverty

I very much enjoyed the article by Abdul Bayes, Professor of Economics at Jahangirnagar University, on poverty traps. We in the United States are watching the middle class consumers dropping into the poverty ranks. Americans are losing their homes and their jobs and the situation is becoming most unpleasant.

Around the world people look to Americans as rich, but the ordinary Americans are becoming poorer by the minute. They will soon be referred to as the "Poor Americans". Many Americans are leaving the United States and seeking employment in other countries.

We need to assume the basic responsibilities to the poor. We as people of the world need to be humane and show compassion. Anyone can become poor. But we must all stand up and stop this trend.

I am going through all the newspapers in the world to learn how each country is working to reduce poverty. Denmark is the leading country doing the best job in this area. We can look to them for examples and learn from their guidance.

Tamara D'Ipollito
Bloomington
Indiana
USA

Razakar issue

One of your writers stated that it was not befitting for a party founded by a valiant freedom fighter like Ziaur Rahman to include Jamaat in its folds.

Perhaps he forgot that Khaleda simply continued the legacy of the "valiant FF". In 2001, two known razakars became ministers but during Zia's regime a known razakar joined the BNP and became prime minister. Other razakars became important ministers.

In forming his own political party Zia didn't hesitate at all to rehabilitate war criminals and include them in his party. To perpetuate his selfish grip on power Zia used war criminals.

Through a Martial Law ruling in 1975 Zia abolished secularism, the special tribunal formed to try war criminals, the ban on religious based politics etc. This allowed the war criminals and religious extremists to raise their ugly heads once again.

Like Ayub of Pakistan, Zia was the father of military dictatorship in Bangladesh. But some of us only blame Ershad for this. Like Musharraf of Pakistan Zia contested the presidential election remaining army chief and held a controversial parliamentary election under Martial Law.

Wasif Rahman, Lalmatia, Dhaka

A terrorist's stand

"To kill the devil you need an evil. I want to be the one"....this is what came out of the mouth of the renowned terrorist Khondokar Tanvir Islam (Joy). Most interestingly, while he was released from jail on bail and taking treatment from a Calcutta hospital under police surveillance, he spoke freely to the local media about some ground realities. There are a group of people namely opportunist groups of politicians, who are part of our society, same are a big group of bureaucrats and religion based fundamentalists, looting the country for long time...Joy wants to expose these groups of people. I think our government should welcome his return and facilitate his activity, so that he is able to perform those noble duties which the government could not!

I was looking for an opportunity to involve myself in politics. I have met many renowned politicians in their offices and residences, and when I came to know about these politicians...I was not happy to do the politics they do. They all talk a lot of principle, and if you look at their backyard...it is not so clean. Sheikh Monirul Islam, Opee Abu Dhabi

Such a project will create job opportunities in rural areas, develop socio-economic conditions, help environmental development and contribute greatly to the rural and national economy. Syed A. Hasib
Former Director
Bangladesh Tea Board

Muslims and followers of other religions

It is an unpleasant truth that the Muslims in this subcontinent (and in the Middle East as well) are generally 'taught' to hate the Jews. Dr. Syed Ashraf Ali, the renowned Islamic thinker, is perhaps the only Islamic scholar in the subcontinent who over and again reminds the Muslims that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Sm) always considered Islam to be the only Deen chosen by Allah, but he never hated the Jews or the Christians. Dr. Ali has cited a historic incident in numerous television discourses and write-ups. When a bier carrying a Jew's corpse was passing by, the Holy Prophet of Islam (Sm) stood up to show respect. He also urged his disciples to do the same.

We all know that Israel has been committing heinous and unpardonable acts of terrorism and aggression. Dr. Ali points out that these inhuman acts should be condemned by one and all, but these should never be considered "Jewish Terrorism". The genocide perpetrated by the Pakistani Army can never be called "Islamic Terrorism".

Will the impartial caretaker government kindly ensure that BTV viewers will not be deprived of the services rendered by this great scholar?

Abdullah Kaiser
Sher Shah Suri Road
Dhaka

Water resources

Bangladesh is a plain land of alluvial soil. We have canals and water reservoirs (on the sides of roads and railway) owned by the govt. These water bodies/reservoirs can be developed to a high potential water resource for agricultural irrigation in dry season, fisheries etc. It will also contribute to environmental development to a great extent.

The existing canals and water reservoirs are mostly not under any commercial use and are encroached by unauthorized persons of the area and, as such, the govt. is losing substantial amount of revenue. These canals and water reservoirs sometimes

have linkage with perennial water sources or rivers. These generally go under water during the monsoon and come up in dry season.

The developed canals and water reservoirs can be the sources of water round the year. In the dry season, if dried these can be refilled by pumping water from the connecting rivers or from other perennial sources or from deep tube wells to be installed in suitable places under a project.

To implement such a project, a detailed feasibility study has to be carried out with professional consultants consisting of civil engineers, irrigation engineers, social scientists, economists, agriculturists, fisheries and livestock experts. It will be a coordinated project of Roads & Highways, Railway and its development will need the support of the local administration. The developed water reservoirs can be leased out in sections to local educated unemployed youths individually or to the registered youth cooperatives for a minimum period of five years, renewable by a committee consisting of the members representing Roads & Highways, Railways, Fisheries and Livestock departments, headed by the local administration.

Such a project will create job opportunities in rural areas, develop socio-economic conditions, help environmental development and contribute greatly to the rural and national economy.

Syed A. Hasib
Former Director
Bangladesh Tea Board

SSC results and second shift

Going through a daily newspaper on 02-07-08, I learned that the education ministry had asked the principals of established colleges at Dhaka to open second shift in their respective colleges, so that they can accommodate the surplus students who will not be able to take admission in those colleges for want of seats, though they have got A+ in the public exam. The chairman of the Dhaka Board has also urged them to introduce second shift. I disagree with them in this regard. At the same time I would like to request the government to turn the colleges at upazila headquarters into Model College.

Firstly, a second shift means attracting all the students, especially the brilliant ones, to Dhaka. And if all the students go to Dhaka for higher secondary education it will create pressure on the colleges. Besides, the local colleges will be devoid of meritorious students.

The second reason is economic. Students from the districts will have to spend a lot more if they stay in Dhaka. And in near future quality education will become a commercial proposition.

I think the authorities concerned should consider my points. Kutubuddin Khan
Lecturer of English
MA Khaleque College
Kasiani, Gopalganj

Ensure neutrality

Under Tarique Zia's rule (2001-2006), there were illegal promotions/postings and most undue favours.

Now, Heads of such Departments/Directorates which have a network of field offices, can have influence on the elections. Because, they are equipped with the weapons of field officers/staffs and also funds for possible expenditure/diversion to election campaigning among voters.

paing among voters.

So, all those Directors General, Directors and other Heads of Departments whose appointments/postings were made by the last BNP government must be transferred immediately and forthwith. This is because election campaigning has actually been started by the three major political parties.

Md. Musa
Bashabo, Dhaka

Biman's new captain

An ad appeared in your daily that Biman needed an MD to be recruited. This was for the first time that open invitation to fill in the post has been made. Traditionally appointment to the post used to be made by the government mostly by selecting a civil or military bureaucrat without any aviation background, airline operation knowledge and experience in business affairs. They ran Biman like a government office and naturally cut sorry figures. A cost accountant and an Infantry officer were the MD for a good number of years. Efficiency and commercial considerations were sacrificed at the altar of favouritism.

In fact the woes of Biman never were nor are now the much discussed financial constraints, shortage of aircraft or lack of business. The core problem has been the problem of 'Management' that breed uncontrolled indiscipline and boundless corruption at all levels. Biman's recent decision to procure more than half a dozen aircraft at a cost of thousands of crore taka is likely to go down the drain as usual if the chronic and endemic mismanagement is not effectively checked or reduced to bring back discipline and rein in rampant corruption. The move to get a man with professional skill, experience and competence is a step in the right direction. Let us hope that the proposed recruitment to the vital position of the organisation is made properly and without interference or influence from any quarters.

HS Nabi
Uttara, Dhaka

I, a retired veteran employee of Biman, wholeheartedly congratulate the authorities for circulating an open invitation to the aspiring candidates for selection of a CEO for the National Airline. This is definitely a move in the right direction to salvage the sick airline. In fact, we have been suggesting this for a long time that a professional be trusted with the Herculean task of putting the airline back on the right track and steer it on course. Let him alone remain accountable to the government and the board of directors. I sincerely think the government should look for an airline and aviation expert from abroad. But if it has to be one among our own nationals, then I think a retired DC-10 captain, or retired chief engineer or a retired sales and marketing executive may be considered for the prestigious job.

We are optimistic that if Biman is headed by a veteran airline executive with strong academic background, and if the airline is allowed to function independently without any uncalled-for interference from the ministry and self seeking bureaucrats; then, God willing, the national airline will regain its lost status and be a standard one in near future. This will save the airline from becoming a

Dying forests



AZIZUR RAHIM PEU / DRINKNEWS

Once our country was noted for its lush greenery. People from all over the world would call this country the "daughter of nature". But the matter of great regret is that over the years our country has lost its beauty. For example now if we go to Madhupur we will see that most of those Sal trees of this area have been demolished. Only a few Sal trees can be seen in the Madhupur forests. The same appalling situation can be seen in the CHT and in the greater Sylhet district. Unlawful encroachment, illicit trade in forest-produce, incompatible use of forest land, lack of conservation initiatives to protect the flora and

fauna, increased salinity, lack of accountability of the forest officials, absence of people's involvement in forest management all these are the main reasons behind deforestation. This deforestation has severely affected our economic and ecological stability, forest dwellers and wildlife. We know well that a country needs 25% forest on its total land mass. But we have only 8% or 9% forests. So from this we can easily realise that very soon our country will turn into a desert, unless we, the citizens, do something to protect our forests.

Rasel Raymond Dio
Bhatikore, Mymensingh

laughing stock. Biman no doubt in the past suffered in many ways being a government owned organisation. We from abroad want to feel proud of our national flag carrier. A.B. Mohammed Zakaria
Stanwell, Staines
Middlesex, UK

and unacceptable. These workers' remittances are playing the major role in our economy. We have to give our all-out support to every Bangladeshi worker abroad to get rid of their sufferings. Saif Tinku
Baridhara, Dhaka

Garbage bin removed!

Finally, the City Corporation is pleased to remove the historical environment polluting garbage container stationed at the entry point of College Gate on Mirpur road about which this correspondent and all the SAU reporters of different newspapers wrote a lot!

Although it took several years for the City Corporation to take the removal decision, we would still congratulate the officials with a brief note of request "Please be speedy in attending public grievances".

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

BOESL and our workers abroad

BOESL Managing Director in an interview with a TV channel last week said that only 1 to 2 percent or ten to twelve thousand Bangladeshi workers are suffering abroad. And he termed it insignificant.

His comment is disappointing

Teaching English

I have read Ms Angela Robinson's letter on the above subject wherein she made an assessment on the significance of or the urgent need for extra training for the teachers of English and some practical obstacles thereof. I am not fully certain if her objectives were only for the teachers of English medium schools. I support the idea of grounding or exercise of instruction for all who are concerned.

Nevertheless, it seems Ms Robinson did not ponder on some of the far-reaching features.

It is imperative that the teacher should constantly keep in mind the aim of teaching English, for it would help him to evaluate his pupil's standard of achievement in the subject and to avoid misuse of time and energy. The teacher who is aware of the aim of his work is in a better position than one who teaches aimlessly, to concentrate on the definite goal he expects his pupil to reach within the limited time.

As regard the standard of speaking English, it can be said that the pupil must acquire the ability to speak simple modern English with ease and facility. To achieve it he

must have a good vocabulary at his disposal, pronounce words, phrases and sentences intelligibly, and make the best use of intonation pattern. Since the teacher is the only model available to him for imitation, he should acquire these powers of speech by paying minute attention to what his teacher says in the classroom. The effective method or technique of teaching is undeniable.

The learner should also be able to read with comprehension English books.

Lastly, he should be able to write letters to friends, relatives, businessmen and officials. He is also expected to express what he thinks, feels and imagines, and to describe commonplace events of daily life.

Tajul Islam
English teacher
Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Challenges ahead

All the political parties may be invited to submit their party constitution along with written plans highlighting how they will be facing the following challenges:

Democratic system, political unrest, educational system, unemployment, corruption, housing, population control, food shortage, natural calamities, power generation, river & forest management, manpower export management, rural development, natural resource management & climate change.

M.S. Farazi
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Water logging



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

It is a sheer disappointment to see the water logging of Dhaka city after rain. It makes me wonder whether our engineers are aware of the fact that one of the most important design considerations of road construction is drainage. This is needed to remove water efficiently from the surface of the roads to provide a safe passage for all vehicles and pedestrians. Drainage of rainwater minimizes road maintenance cost and hence maximizes the operational lifetime of the roads. It is a simple math.

I live in a city where annual rainfall is only 3 to 4 inches and it gets hardly any downpour. Still, all the roads and highways were built with drainage underneath the road.

I am sure many of our engineers already have training from developed countries on road construction and they know that the drainages are built along with the roads and highways. This is totally absent in construction of roads and highways in Bangladesh. The top bosses simply surrender to the nature as if this is the fate of the people of the country and nothing can be done about it.

Mamun Ahmed
Las Vegas, NV, USA

Missing children

I have been living in Pallabi for the last 7 years. It is my finding that missing child is a serious problem in Mirpur & Pallabi areas. It is for your information that on an average I have heard 100 announcements for missing child every week in the last seven years.

I have no idea if the incidents are reported to the police. I think there is a very strong and organised group active in Mirpur/Pallabi area to kidnap or steal those children. As we all know, mostly low income people live in those areas.

I would like to appeal to the authorities concerned to look into this matter. If a proper investigation is done, you can easily find out the facts about missing children.

We all know that a huge number of minors are being sold or smuggled to other countries by the organised crime syndicates.

The matter should not be ignored any more. Please show due sensitivity to children. Mohammad Nazakat Ali
Pallabi, Mirpur Share Egaro
Dhaka

Upazila elections

The government is holding the upazila elections before parliamentary elections. It is one of the good initiatives by the military backed caretaker government. But the political parties have opposed the plan. Their attitude is undemocratic. The local government is constitutionally non-partisan.

Md. Fauzul Kabir Khan Shaheen
SUST
Sylhet

A mute EC?

After so-called 1/11, this government has taken different initiatives to reform some statutory bodies. EC, ACC, PSC, UGC etc. The motivation behind this venture was to strengthen the bodies, so that they can introduce and implement the rules for the welfare of mass people. We became very optimistic over their verbose expressions. They have arranged so many discussions, seminars, dialogues, campaigns or even finally 'Road show' to form public opinion in favour of them. But what is going on in their 'test case'? In city corporation & municipality elections, are they being successful? The answer is 'no'. Absolutely not.

As we are in the playground, we realize the reality well. The candidates are known faces to us. They are old players of the political field. A statement shows that in SCC, 15 mayoral candidates are competing. Unfortunately, there are 34 cases filed against them! As far as we know, most of them have hidden the relevant information. Stated descriptions of their wealth are not accurate also. Local newspapers are always publishing this news, but what step is the EC taking? Do you believe that it will be possible for you to cancel the result of any candidate after the election? If someone is declared winner, you must not change the results. If you do that there will be a 'riot' in that region. How will you control the massive destruction of wealth & lives of general people?

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant professor
Dept. of Business Administration
Shah Jalal University, Sylhet

Election monitoring



PHOTO STAR

The lead news in The Daily Star internet edition is that "5500 local and international observers to monitor polls". There might be lot of people in Bangladesh who would be delighted to see the news and at the same time disagree with my opinion on the question of observers monitoring the elections in Bangladesh. Firstly, I am totally against any foreign or local observer doing the work; and, secondly, I find it disgraceful to the nation. These events have so far successfully managed to demonise the role and authority of the Election Commission and grown as "orchid" bodies to deter the growth of the EC as an independent and neutral institution, fully capable of conducting and monitoring the entire electoral process.

The present EC is missing those two important qualities plus the courage to act independently. This has given scope to poll monitors to meddle in our election process. Their neutrality and objectives

are not beyond question, at least to me. I am afraid that the poll monitors will only give rise to more controversy and disturb the smooth electoral process that could easily be organised by an efficient EC, and not the one in charge now.

Proper and transparent selection procedures for ensuring the independent and neutral character of EC is vitally important. My final observation is: Over patronising of the NGOs over the last 35 years has made the moribund local government institution further moribund. This has just become a political roadmap for the neo-politicians. Similarly, over patronisation of the poll monitoring events would only cripple the EC and the electoral process. Let the EC stand on its own feet. We need right people in the EC to perform that task.

A reader
One e-mail