

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.

Our "international" airport

This is in reference to a letter titled "ZIA..." published on August 8, 2008 in your daily. I could not agree more with the writer in his observations regarding the poor standard of ZIA when compared to other international airports. However, given the fact that Bangladesh is a third world nation, one does not expect ZIA to be in league with those of Dubai, Hong Kong, Singapore or any other airport in North America or Europe. Nevertheless, one would expect it to have a basic minimum standard since it so proudly incorporates the word "international" in its name.

Though I am not an expert in such matters, I realize from a layman's point of view that any airport should strive to achieve excellence in two vital areas: safety and facility. Are we paying attention to those? It seems from Mr. Aref's letter that we are not.

During my recent one-month stay in Dhaka, I

have had to go through ZIA myself, besides also having to go there a number of times to either receive or see-off other family members. Since space is a restriction here, I will dwell on only a few of my observations relating to the airport in question.

When one is departing, the first thing that hits that person are the scores of individuals wearing bright yellow vests (with the letters "CAAB" written on them) and holding on to all the available luggage trolleys with their dear lives. When I witnessed that, I was left wondering, "Are those their personal trolleys?" "Did they bring those from home?" It turned out that those belonged to someone else (I am sure you can guess who), for when I asked one of them, "Is this yours?" the answer was "No". "So, why are you holding on to it?" "I will carry your luggage for you, that's why". That was very unsettling for me, for as far as I could tell, I was

not an invalid person. I am not quite sure whether or not CAAB has that kind of a role defined for these individuals. If so, it is not befitting an "international" airport. If not, then they should seriously look into the matter. Of course, any airport can have a porter service - in which case it should be regulated, and not rampant.

Gaining entry into the arrival lounge to receive a passenger is like trying to storm a fort. One has to have a "pass" to do so, and strangely, there did not seem to exist any booth of any sort to issue such a pass. So, who do you get it from? From someone sitting in an office INSIDE the airport building. But you can't get inside! Smart - or maybe, dumb! If you would like to prevent half of Dhaka city population from getting into the arrival lounge (this is an overpopulated country, remember?), the least you can do is charge a fee for it. Those "fanatically" eager to receive passengers would not mind parting with a some hundreds (or maybe even a couple of thousands) of taka to do that - and the airport authorities could collect a handsome revenue from it. What could be a better win-win situation than this! On one occasion though, I could manage a pass - through some "connections" (if that was the way to do it). And when I entered the arrival lounge, a sizeable portion (if not half) of Dhaka city was already there! If all of them were here through connections, I'd say that this country was pretty well connected!

Arriving at ZIA during this visit, I knew I had to go to the parking lot, but I did not know how. There were no signs giving me directions, so I had to ask. Thankfully, I speak the language! How can the authorities assume that a first-timer, speaking a different language will know the way to the parking lot? Like an animal driven by some sort of a primeval instinct? Maybe they assume right. Who knows?

Dr. C. Zaman
Ottawa, Canada



STAR

Regular load-shedding

Load-shedding is now a hackneyed subject.

I experienced the worst of it in my village under Dohar Police Station, merely 48 kilo meters away from Dhaka, where I made a sojourn after my return from long stay abroad. I was rather amazed to see the improvements made in the rural communication infrastructure, with many culverts and bridges over brooks and rivers, easing the movements of village folks; a revolutionary change in the way of villagers' living, indeed.

One would definitely love to stay in or make regular visits to village home. But that is shattered by one thing, the awfully persistent, erratic load-shedding. That makes your 'sweet home' a sour one. We have never seen or heard of such frequency of outage which woefully deprives the people of living a modern life. It is a real torture when you cannot return to your bed at ten or eleven for the 'current failure' (the people commonly call it so).

I, therefore, had to move to Dhaka leaving my 'sweet and sour home'. Due to this inordinately scant and willy-nilly supply of electricity there has been a growth of private business houses of generator produced electricity and the well-off families are buying their comforts from them. But what about others?

Pakistan and the US

US President George Bush wants to fulfill all his dreams and very often he shows poor judgement.

Pakistan Prime Minister Yousof Reza has rightly warned the US of the consequences of 'unilateral' action against Islamic militants in Pakistan.

With more than one million US and NATO troops the US President has failed to maintain law and order in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Let George Bush, Barack Obama, Gordon Brown, Ehud Olmert and other leaders know that terrorism will continue until the problem of Palestine is solved.

Undisclosed legal money

It pains me much to know, through the news item "None utilises latest scope of legalisation" published in your daily on 27 July that not a single person holding undisclosed legally earned money has come up yet to avail the tax amnesty. One can easily understand why honest citizens are reluctant to take advantage of this so-called amnesty. An amnesty should not have a threat of 7 per cent fine.

Amnesty with strings attached to it is no amnesty at all.

I fully support the request made to the government by Abdulfah Syed on 25 July through this much-read column, to kindly provide honest citizens with a last chance to declare their legal money and pay due tax without any fine. A total amnesty with full exemption from fine/penalty will certainly inspire hundreds with lawfully earned money to declare their wealth and pay tax. The government will certainly earn more if they can attract honest citizens to pay taxes, instead of threatening them with fine or penalty.

Would the Hon'ble Finance Adviser and the NBR chairman kindly respond favourably to this request?

Abdur Rahman Khan

Crescent Road

Dhaka

Mental liberation

Our mental liberation [change of attitude towards concepts and entrenched behaviour patterns] has not taken place even after three decades since the political liberation in 1971. Poor leadership, dynasty rules, and jockeying for power.

Our social scientists should be encouraged to mount awareness campaigns on improvement of the norms in society. The vertical disparities are too great and diverse, economically, and educationally. The role of the middle class has to be recognised, and rewarded. Today only the politicians have monopolized a nuisance: 'the winner takes all'.

The elections in 2008 under the neutral caretaker government should establish new bases and foundations for enhanced multi-purpose public services, devoid of corruption, nepotism, bribery. It is not enough to play tape records on democracy, regardless of the parties in power.

The politicians do not realise that political services need a different approach in a society with the highest density of population in the world (1,000 persons per sq km). How to fill in the numerous grey areas? The political rulers need some coaching in revealing the other side of the coin - especially when the opposition collapsed during each and every regime. We are powerless without power - contradictory?

Why our politics is dominated by disguised business magnates and lawyers? Why the professionals in other vocations and avocations are so shy? No place in the sun? Ask the leaders.

Our politics is black-wealth oriented - deep and wide in three dimensions. Where are the gardeners to pull up the evil roots and clinging creepers? Our agriculture

is doing fine, against heavy odds, bowing to the mati bhumi. Our culture at the top of the society is bald headed (but note the high cost of cosmetics used).

Since the established leaders cannot lead, we have to pick up the bhalo manush from amongst the masses. Tentatively we are now struggling in that direction; amidst formidable odds. The elections starting in August 2008 is a harbinger of hope. We must not lose steam, or get stranded in mid-stream. But we have to remember one proverb: we get what we deserve politics is a medium -- the message must come through.

The matter should be handled a lot more quickly and efficiently.

Mahbubur Rahman Sheik

Shahidullah Hall

University of Dhaka

Retirement age

Retirement age in government jobs has to be reconsidered with the changes in living standard, general health improvement and dearth of skilled and proficient manpower in the country.

Surging unemployment of the educated youth has also to be kept in mind in up scaling retirement ages. Considering all these, retirement age of the government employees could be raised to 60 at most.

At the same time retirement age of the judges/ justices should be brought down to 65 (not 67 as at present, which was unreasonably up scaled, though, with a political motive by the previous BNP-Jamaat government). Retirement at the age of 65 should not also be straight forward. After attaining the age of 60 for judges/ justices, an objective criterion for assessing their judicial deliveries and health condition has to be fixed to allow them to continue up to the age of 65. University teachers' retirement age is 60 straight forward and up to 65, sub-

ject to fulfilment of some health condition requirements.

Of course, almost everyone takes the advantage of retirement at 65 in the universities. There should also be some objective criteria including number of scientific publications outside the serving university and in foreign journals, and classes taken per week during their full professorship to be qualified to continue up to 65.

The age range of 65 should be selective any way. Wholesales up scaling to 65 is abused now as everyone gets that opportunity and the quality of service is neglected during the extended period.

The government and the University Grants Commission (to harmonise retirement ages at the universities) should look into the matter of re-fixing retirement age seriously and establish the criteria for assessing delivery of services during the extended period for judges/ justices and university professors.

Professor SAM

One-mail

Austerity

After watching people in markets in posh areas, really I am amazed to find how much money they are spending for nothing. If the rich people of Bangladesh observe austerity, they can save a lot of money for helping the poor.

Real contentment in life comes from helping others. And that's the task assigned to us by Allah, the Merciful.

Redwana Damal Munni

Student of class seven

Al-Arafah English Medium

Madrasah

Rural development and women

A probe committee headed by a Justice was formed, after the August 20 campus incidents last

surging unemployment of the educated youth has also to be kept in mind in up scaling retirement ages. Considering all these, retirement age of the government employees could be raised to 60 at most.

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Bangladesh has the largest number of poor people in the world after China and India. About 49.8 percent people don't earn even one hundred taka a day. Most of the people live in rural areas. Especially, the people of rural areas are deprived of their fundamental rights.

Rural development will depend on rural women. In Bangladesh, the wage of a woman in the agriculture sector is 70 percent and in the non-agricultural sector 42 percent of what a man gets. Women are playing an active role in the rural development of our country. So we have to ensure their equal rights.

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REHAB and apartment owners

This is in reference to the letter published in The Daily Star on August 10, 2008 from an apartment owner who described his predicament after buying an apartment from one of the very well known builders. As another sufferer, I would like to express my bitter experience on my way to becoming an apartment owner that is being built by a low-profile builder.

1. Prior to my entering into agreement with the builder, I was a VIP to them. But after payment of booking money (in my case, it was 50% of the full price) & signing of agreement my importance to them started eroding & was reduced to zero when I completed my full payment for the apartment about a year ago.

2. As the apartment is not yet ready (and quite uncertain when it will be), I applied for paying me a reasonable rent for the apartment as per the terms of the agreement. But showing a silly reason they refused to pay me any rent and instead they asked me to pay enhanced costs for the apartment citing the reason of rising prices of construction materials, although there is no such provision in the agreement.

3. Nowadays, whenever I call the person concerned of that company, he fails to recognise me and pretends to be pre-occupied with some other important businesses.

4. REHAB is an organisation of apartment builders and plot developers and it speaks & works for their interest. But there is no such association for the apartment owners. In spite of repeated request I was not given the address or any contact no. of my neighbour in that apartment building for reasons not very difficult to understand.

Reasonably, it is the government's responsibility to enact laws and strictly implement those to protect the minimum interest of the common people who are suffering in the hands of REHAB members.

In terms of registration fees, VAT & other taxes, the government is also earning a lot of revenue from the apartment owners (not really from the apartment builders). So, without any more delay and hesitation, the said draft ordinance needs to be approved by the government and at the same time the ACC should go after the apartment builders to unearth their misdeeds.

A sufferer
One-mail

National Mourning Day

The government deserves our thanks and appreciation for honouring the judgment of the court to observe August 15 as the National Mourning Day officially, and above all for allowing the people and the media to perform freely without intimidation or restriction. We are afraid how long this freedom of expression and information would be allowed to continue to observe the "Sahadat" anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I think this should be a choice of the people to continue in future.

If we deny or distort the contribution of Sheikh Mujib as our national leader of independence, this will be tantamount to denial or distortion of our independence. This will only help to sustain the deep rooted ideological differences that came to divide the nation on August 15, 1975. This ideological conflict is polluting our main stream politics and giving rise to undemocratic rule, and even birth to so called terrorism as a political tool. If we cannot solve the ideological problem that exists today between the two major political parties, our politics will continue to be dominated by the non political forces.

Finally, thanks to our media for playing a very positive role in this respect.

Reader
One-mail

Poisonous fish

Potka (Puffer fish) is a poisonous fish. The skin and visceral organs of Potka fish carry acute toxic substances, named - TTX (Tetrodotoxin) and STX (Staxitoxin). Scientists have shown that these toxins are about 1200 times more lethal than Cyanide, having strong resistance against heat. Very small amount of these toxins require to cause death of a human being.

For avoiding such dangers, removal of poisonous visceral organs and skins of Potka fish should be ensured by adopting proper processing techniques. But consumers rarely follow the methods.

So, besides raising public awareness, the cultivation and marketing of Potka fish should be prohibited throughout the country.

Sohel Nawroz, Student
Faculty of Fisheries
Bangladesh Agricultural University
Mymensingh



Migrant workers

It is our migrant workers who are contributing so much to the national economy. There is no way to ignore these workers. If all the migrant workers are sent back to our country, we will be starving. Even I myself am dependent on the revenue of migrant workers. Though these workers are playing a vital role in our national development, their rights are consciously ignored.

Please do something for them.
Md. Tarik Ali Chy
Department of English
Leading University, Sylhet

Lailatul Barat

I just read your column on Lailatul Barat and as a Muslim growing up in the streets of Dhaka, it brought back some wonderful memories of festivity (Halwa distribution) around Lailatul Barat. However, I always felt bad about the inferior quality halwa distributed among the poor while the better ones were saved for neighbours and friends. What an injustice in the name of Islam that came to re-establish Universal Justice!

To my surprise, as I travelled to many other countries, I found most Muslims (except from Pakistan and

method can be adopted. To some extent some schools may be following a somewhat similar approach. However, to popularise this method of learning, our education officials must be made familiar with it, and they should in turn encourage the schools and colleges to adopt it. This teaching method should also be taught to teachers undergoing training at various Teacher Training Institutes in Bangladesh.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Introduce subway

This is in reference to Engr. Shafiqul Alam's letter dated 10th August. I agree with him that underground rail is the permanent solution for Dhaka. Why is the project still pending? The short-term activities by the government have failed totally and the problem could not be solved.

The concept of BRT & LRT is not suitable for Dhaka for its population & the environmental condition. In the latest budget, the government has included metro rail in the tax free zone & it would be appreciated if the project is started immediately.

Engineer Rashed
One-mail

Russian strategy