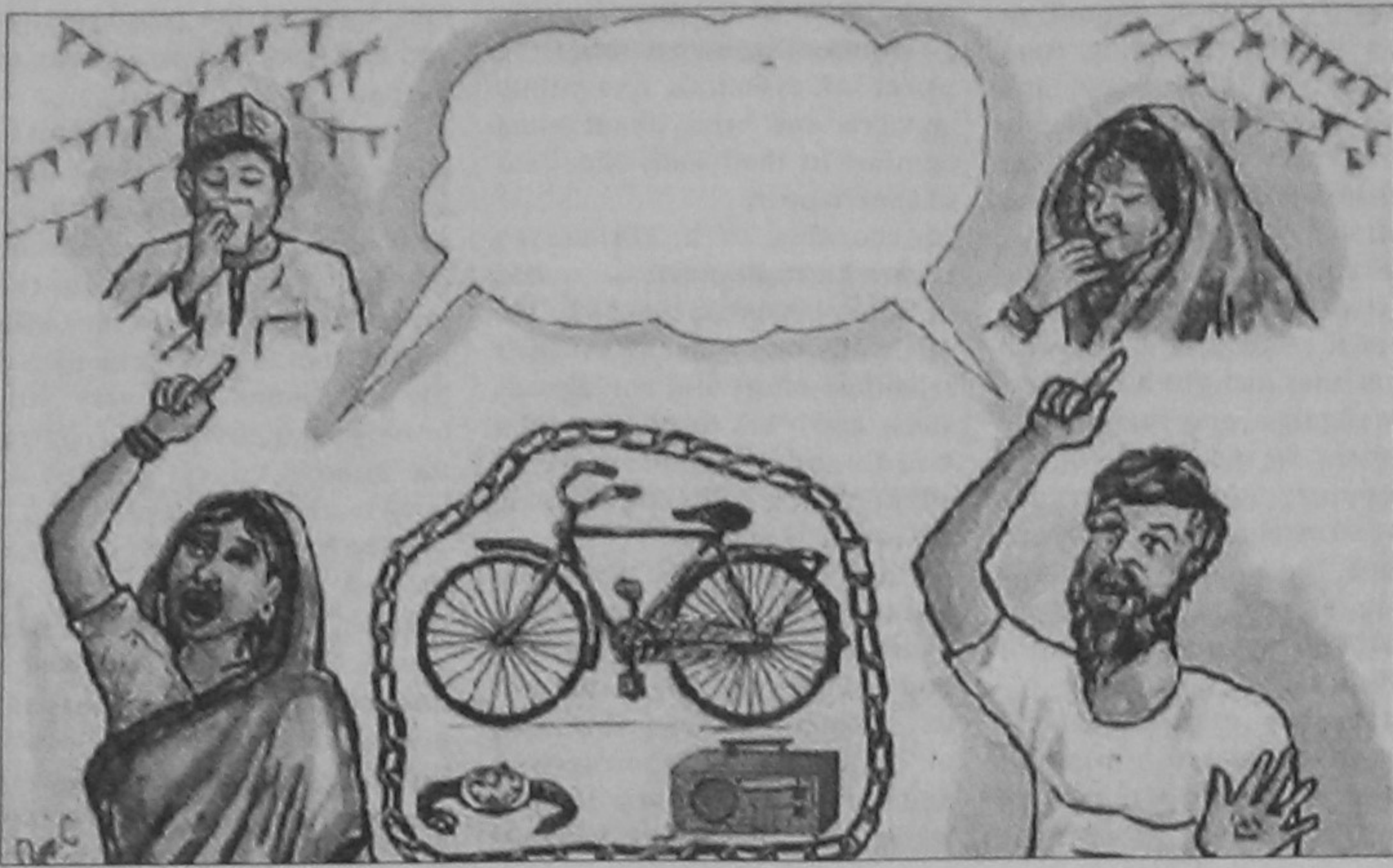


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Dowry culture



Women die after being tortured by their husbands, this is common news in our daily newspapers. A lot of programmes have been arranged including processions to remove dowry from society. Some of those who lead these processions themselves claim money

from the bride's family when it comes to their son's marriage.

But what will the poor do? The curse has to be eliminated from society by changing the mindset of the young generation.

Rakibul Islam, BBA, IUUC

Global warming

Global warming is one of the most talked about topics in the world today. The activities that are responsible for global warming include burning of fossil fuel which contains different gases that are acting in Greenhouse effects, demolition of forest areas that have an active role in the regulation of global temperature. It will be very dangerous for all living beings.

Verily, global warming is a serious threat not only to Bangladesh, but also to the whole world and we must combat it collectively.

AKM Emdadul Haque
Hashuury, Ashujia
Kendua, Netrakona

New seven wonders

We have two places of our country in the list of new seven wonders. Unfortunately, "The Sundarbans" has not been officially supported, which may result in its elimination from the preliminary round.

Being one of the widely read dailies of this country, I would request DS to highlight this area and encourage our tourism organisations to adopt measures to support "The Sundarbans" officially.

Zia Uddin Ahmed
Shaymoli
Dhaka

Russia-Georgia conflict

Although Russia signed the ceasefire agreement with Georgia to stop hostilities in the Caucasus, but peace seems to be an elusive proposition in the region. Russia's aggression continues, despite the West's call.

The UN should make some sincere efforts to stop Russia from pursuing its aggressive policy and bring back peace.

Bilkis Rahman
Political Science
Govt. HSS College
Magura



Mayor's accountability

I have watched the recently held city corporation elections in four cities with great enthusiasm. I noticed what each and every candidate said about their objectives. BBC and BTV also organised a live debate show allowing all the candidates to mingle with the audience of every profession to answer their questions.

I was much surprised to see when the candidates were asked whether they would resign if they fail to perform the duties as mayor, all the candidates willingly and unhesitatingly said that they would surely resign.

We know from the past that our politicians never resign willingly no matter how much they have failed. I expected a more solid answer from the candidates, especially the candidates who have been elected as mayor.

If there is no accountability for the mayor then surely the mayor will find excuses in order to stay away from resigning.

Accountability has to be there for the mayor so that the mayor will think twice about what he promises to people. The best way to achieve accountability is to have a separate constitution for all the city corporations. And within the constitution there will be clauses about the accountability of the mayor.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

Cox's Bazar

Once again, I visited Cox's Bazar accompanied by a few friends. I explore a lot of things during my every new journey to Cox's Bazar. It gives me a lot of pleasure and amusement.

Having such a kind of a place in the country is a matter of pride. As a Bangladeshi, I feel so.

If we observe the countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Maldives, Thailand and even India, we will see that they lay a lot of emphasis on tourism. We should learn from them.

Aiman Bin Shaofiqui Hamid
(Jasim)
Dept. of English
International Islamic University
Chittagong (IIUC)

Musharraf's resignation

Pakistanis have got such a short memory! They have forgotten all the past records of Asif Zardari and Nawaz Sharif. It took Mahatir Muhammad over 23 years to set Malaysia straight. And he did that despite being highly unpopular. We must understand that we as a nation are too naive to understand the complexities of the affairs of the state.

To err is human and Musharraf was no exception but I would still maintain that he was far better than the criminals who rule us now. May God save Pakistan!
S.M. Nabeel Imtiaz
Islamabad, Pakistan

National Mourning Day

Khandaker Delwar Hossain, BNP (Khaleda) Secretary General, while talking to newsmen on the eve of observing National Mourning Day demanded that Ziaur Rahman's death anniversary be also declared what he called "national mourning day". This meant that the BNP supporters want to weigh Ziaur Rahman on the same scale with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation. The amount of individual contribution to the war of liberation varies from person to person. Our liberation war did not start on a single day all of a sudden on 26 March 1971.

It started in 1952 through the Language Movement. So, there were many contributors from among politicians, intellectuals, writers, teachers, students and judges. Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani bade farewell to Pakistani rulers long before March 26.

It was Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who with the help of seven crore people brought the climax and declared our independence. General Ziaur Rahman joined the liberation war from the day of climax. Before that he was a junior military officer in the Pakistani Army. Col. Osmani divided the war front into 11 sectors and Ziaur Rahman was posted as one of the Sector Commanders.

The Bangladesh government in exile returned to the liberated soil and started functioning. The new government rewarded Ziaur Rahman for his contribution and elevated him to the position of deputy commander in chief of the newly formed Bangladesh Army i.e. second to the then Col. Shafiullah. There were 9 other sector commanders who were recognised and rewarded for their contributions.

Ziaur Rahman came to the limelight of Bangladesh politics after the brutal killing of the father of the nation on 15th August 1975. There were many stories of Zia's rise which are known to everyone. The coup plotters, failing to run the country, installed Gen. Ziaur Rahman as Martial Law Administrator. And this is the beginning of his career as politician.

If Bangladesh is to declare his death anniversary as national mourning day and national holiday, there are many of his colleagues who deserve the same rights and privileges from the state.

Shafiqul Islam
One-mail

Athletics in Bangladesh

So it is another summer Olympics capturing the dreams of the world, and we watched China and the USA fighting for supremacy. Korea, Japan and other countries also had medal hauls, so what about us? It is taken for granted that we will never get a medal in the Olympics, and for good reason at that. The Olympic disciplines are mostly ignored in our country. I study in a school famous for its soccer, and it's soccer only. Even though I am not bad in that sport, I would have really liked to train in sports like swimming, gymnastics or pole-vaulting, but that will never be possible!

Jayeed Naseer
Grade 11
The Aga Khan School, Dhaka

Foreign currency exchange rates

I was wondering why there is so much difference between selling and buying foreign currencies in banks in Bangladesh.

The difference is more than 5 (five) percent for most of the foreign currencies. For example, if you want to sell a Euro you get Taka 98.00 and if you want to buy a Euro you pay Tk.103.00 plus service charges. Similarly, there are big differences between selling and buying British Pound or US Dollar. In the past, the difference between selling and buying foreign currencies used to be 1 (one) percent only. I believe in most countries the difference is still around one or two percent.

I do not know if due to the open market policy Bangladesh Bank has the right to interfere and set the selling and buying rates of foreign currencies, but I am sure banks and foreign exchange dealers are having great days in foreign currency dealings. The present big difference in foreign exchange dealings also encourages people to go to the secondary market for better price.

Can Bangladesh Bank do anything about this for the sake of wage earners and travellers?
Ziauddin Ahmed
One-mail

Political intelligence office

Thanks to the DS for the editorial today on the above subject. The politicians have already expressed their apprehension about this new undemocratic step. Those who would support the move, at least, do not believe in political freedom and are opposed to democratic values. These are some of the examples by which the government is determined to achieve their original idea of guided politicisation of the country. One would not be surprised to see how a group of civil society members and some known political faces are defending the step. Just add one more news item with it. The EC has asked the intelligence agency and the NBR to check the fact sheets of the elected candidates of the last 13 local council elections. This is another example of deliberate mismanagement of the election procedures, and puts the burden on the shoulder of the judiciary to give the final verdict. One organisation, a NGO or civil society cadre, I do not know, had been campaigning to initiate such action by the EC. The question is, why these groups and the EC did not complete this clean up process before putting their names on the ballot?

The mindset of the government is difficult to understand. They are publicly saying that they would deliver democratic order, but on the other hand, are encouraging undemocratic steps. Healthy democratic environment ensures that the public servants are controlled and guided by the political system and the politicians. In reality, we can see just the opposite. The government is definitely losing public trust regarding their promise to hold general election by December 2008. The EC is emerging to be the main visible player to destabilise the present peaceful atmosphere in the country. The EC's move to run after the officially elected candidates in the last LC election are nothing but an act of provocation to destabilize the present situation and create a blame game either to stop the general election or to stage a fully guided election with party and candidates of their choice.

We find little time left to organise a credible general election in December 2008, but there are enough scopes to create political commotion making the general election uncertain, putting the blame on the politicians as usual. It is difficult to find any positive aspects in governance. They are taking full advantage of the state of emergency. This prolonged state of emergency has undermined the followings, and added few vegetative aspects to politics.

a. The normal laws of the land have been undermined in spirit and application.
b. The scope and functions of the caretaker government have been changed making the system redundant in future.
c. The prolonged use of the state of emergency has challenged the justification of the state of emergency as envisaged in the constitution.

d. Political perversion has been strengthened.
e. External interference in our internal matters has been encouraged.

f. Laws have been promulgated without reference to public benefit, but to suit the requirement of the un-elected government to govern.
g. The judiciary has been made controversial by prolonged state of emergency and easy law making.
A reader
One-mail

Workers' interests

The Daily Star published in the last page on August 19, "Bangladeshi workers protest again in Kuwait". After reading the report I found out

Exit of a General



He was certainly the most powerful man in South East Asia. With blessings from the West and the armed forces of Pakistan, he held his post quite strongly. Yes, I am talking about General Pervez Musharraf. The general, who survived many attacks on him over the past couple of years, could not survive this attack on his position by 'democracy'. Perhaps, Billawal Bhutto's strong words "Democracy is the best revenge" carried the essence of a 'to-be' politician. General Musharraf is said to be the most popular man in Washington and New Delhi. However, he was the most hated and unpopular President of Pakistan. He had friends all over the world and foes all across Pakistan. He was the most trusted partner of President Bush's war on terror but again he was the least trusted man in Pakistan's Presidential office. He tried too many things to grasp power but he failed to do anything to have some love from the people of Pakistan.

The decision to support the USA blindly and do anything Washington ordered went pretty much against the sentiments of the people of Pakistan. The attack on the Judiciary and the removal of the then Chief Justice was

the beginning of the end for General Musharraf. The brutal attack on Red Mosque, which angered the pro-Taliban section of people, was something he could have avoided. The last blow on the president was the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. He failed to prove himself clean on the issue of attack on Ms. Bhutto.

Mr. Musharraf tried his level best to persuade Washington and the Pakistan Army to do whatever they could to save his back. But, all went in vain and on August 18, 2008 his chapter of ruling Pakistan became history. The man who forced all his predecessors to go into exile is now on the run and looking for a safe haven to spend the rest of his life. This is what karma means, "What goes around always comes around".

This episode of General Musharraf's military rule in Pakistan leaves us (people of Bangladesh) to learn one very important lesson:

Coming to power with the help of ballot is more fruitful than using bullet for this purpose.

Arafat Islam
Dallas, USA

Those who are laughing at the ouster of Pervez Musharraf with joy both in and outside Pakistan must be living in a fool's paradise. The episode is not yet over. There are other mighty dictators in the "metamorphism" of democracy in that country who are vying for power and waiting for the opportunity to come out in their original form. There are already signs of discord in the ranks and files of the coalition government. One faction is vying for installation of family dynasty in the country which is bound to be opposed tooth and nail by the other parties. The coalition government could not yet decide on selection of the next president and the judges of the Supreme Court and serious rift over the choices is likely to emerge any time now.

Therefore, it is too premature to celebrate the exit of one "dictator" while other aspirant "dictators" are waiting in the queue!
Mohammad Ataul Hoque
One-mail

how the BANGLADESHI workers are deprived. We should support them and give positive vibes so that the world can know we are protesting for our rights, not for FUN.

There are so many issues in the Middle East that relate to workers and their rights, especially pay benefits, working hours, leave etc that are inhumane.

Please select the headings to serve the interests of our people.

A loyal reader
One-mail

Western media and South Ossetia

On August 8 we saw Georgia's pro-west President Saakashvili's misadventure in South Ossetia. But western media like CNN, BBC, AFP, AP etc. had launched a vigorous media propaganda from which one can conclude that it was Russia who first attacked Georgia. And they also portrayed Saakashvili as a hero who immediately wanted a ceasefire (only after his US trained army got a heavy beating by Russia's military). Among the number of conflicting interests, one is that Russia won't allow a NATO member at its doorstep and western powers need Georgia to extract energy from that region through the Black Sea. Through western media bias we the general readers, listeners or viewers get confused and fail to learn what actually happened.

We hope that our media will maintain neutrality and deliver the news with headlines after analysing it properly when they get it from different sources.
Muktadir Hussain Chowdhury
Uttara, Dhaka

Publishers

I refer to the Op-Ed article (18 Aug) and agree with the writer entirely. I myself am a writer (In English) of many original scientific and other books (including poetry). As it was not possible to find a reputable publisher in UK (You need literary agent here to accept and then push your books for publication), I fell into the clutches of 'vanity publishers' about 25 years ago who published one of my books here. The vanity publishers are so called because the whole cost of printing, publishing and distribution etc is borne by the author and the publishers have nothing to lose whether any book is sold or not. As a matter of fact their main income consists of selling the book back to the author at a discounted price! These publishers are also well known to the critics and no book published by them are reviewed in any literary journal. So I gathered much painful experience and then set up my own publishing firm and website (www.oaktownpublicatio ns.com) to publish my own rather esoteric books (known as self-publishing as opposed to vanity publishing), which are not in great

public demand anyway.

After retiring from British Civil Service I set up a modest flat in Dhaka a few years ago for regular visits and aspirations to publish some of my books there. After getting in touch with some publishers in Dhaka to my amazement I found that all those that I contacted will be termed as 'vanity publishers' in UK as they have no investment of their own money for the books published or for a new and unknown author, or proper marketing and distribution mechanisms. In other words there is no risk or effort taken by any publisher to assess a book, or to support or establish any young (or previously unknown) writer. Once a writer establishes himself/herself by his/her own efforts and expenditure, then publisher's mercenary instincts will take over for that writer or book!

So as I had to pay for the whole process I have set up a Publishing House myself in Dhaka as well.

Such a state of affairs cannot be good for the country. Publishing houses must be prepared to risk their money and reputation to sponsor young and unknown talented authors by paying them advances and publishing and marketing their work.

Perhaps there are such proper publishers in Bangladesh. However I have not come across them.
Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Childhood experience



Childhood experience plays a major role in shaping a person's character. It has its imprints on the whole life. I have read an article in which it has been disclosed that from womb to five years of age is very important.

What we hear in childhood, however trifling it may seem, it follows us all through the life. When I was a little girl, I heard that if you see a solitary sparrow it was unlucky. The saying goes like this, "One for sorrow, two for joy, three for letters, four for guests".

It seems meaningless, still when I go out and see a single bird I feel uneasy and search for another one. If I do not find another bird I become disappointed!

Nur Jahan
Chittagong