

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.

Congratulations to Hasina and Khaleda



PHOTO: AFP

We are pleased to see Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia together and having a conversation at Sena Kunja Program. It happened after two years. The nation always expects to see such scenes. Congratulations to Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia!

We know how these two ladies have sacrificed for our nation. Through the struggle and sacrifice of this two ladies democracy was given a hold in our country. One is the daughter of the Father of the Nation and another is the wife of a brave warrior and founder of multi party democracy. Together they were the prime minister of the country for 15 years by turn. So their qualification is proven. We do not understand why it is so that they are not in talking terms.

We saw in recent election of the USA

how Hillary and Obama debated with each other to seek nomination. But after being defeated Hillary helped Obama to win. In the same way, we saw between how Obama was greeted by McCain after the election. They debated for a long time. But after being defeated McCain promised to work together for the sake of the country.

With such examples in the world, why our two leaders cannot even greet one another when they come face to face somewhere? We believe these two ladies are capable of facing the challenges and solving the problems as is expected from them. If the welfare of Bangladesh is the common aim of both then why can't they do this!

Md. Maidul Islam
Project Engineer
Nokia Siemens Networks

BSF jawan

I am utterly shocked to know that the BSF jawan who was captured after the brutal killings of a mother and her sleeping sons inside the Bangladesh territory will now be handed over to the Indian authority (Prothom Alo; November 18, 2008). He and his accomplices had entered Bangladesh illegally and committed a heinous crime. Jawan RP Singh does not deserve our mercy and should be tried according to the law of our land.

As a sovereign nation this is the minimum we can do to protect the rights of our citizens.

Monzur Murshed
Montreal, Canada

Ashraf's consistency

They say, form is temporary but class is permanent.

Ashraf just proved the saying again. Although his batting was not up to the mark in the test series against New Zealand, his performance in the ODIs was decent and consistent. And now in South Africa he just played a genuine innings in the first ODI. He also started well in the T-20 match against South Africa before throwing his wicket away. In the first ODI, he played some glorious shots that remind us what he is capable of. Recently, his batting style was under a lot of criticism. The batting form he is starting to regain will stop all criticism. Let us hope he becomes consistent from now on.

S.M. Shamim-Ur-Rashid
Tushar
Department of Business
Administration, SUST

Political activities and traffic jam

Last Friday evening as I was taking a stroll near GEC crossing, the nerve-centre of Chittagong town, I came across a number of buses loaded with political workers. Though it was a holiday the presence of so many buses created a traffic congestion in that area. Those who sat on the roof of those buses were chanting slogans in chorus, thereby causing noise pollution. The event was occasioned by the arrival of the chairperson of a major political party.

The return of political activities is welcome as it foreshadows the coming back of democracy. But in no way should criminal activities—arson, damage of public and private property and so on—pass for political activities. The major parties should rid their folds of miscreants and criminals.

What the common people want is peace. Surely, they don't want to live in a society where a criminal goes scot-free, courtesy of his political connections.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

This week we have witnessed several election campaigns. They are marking the commencement of the parliamentary election. However, to me, they mean long traffic jams.

I do not mean that traffic jams are some rare events in Dhaka. However, political rallies and processions will make conditions worse.

On Nov 6, when AL president Sheikh Hasina returned home and thousands of party workers jammed streets, I had to walk miles to reach my destination. This meant I had to walk along the pavements, where some motorbikers and rickshaw pullers felt free to ride on.

I hope we will get some respite from campaigners in the next two weeks. But I

Melamine in milk?

Following detection of melamine in milk powder some imported brands of powdered milk have been tested and presence of melamine in them has been confirmed. But what about the locally produced milk powders and various brands of condensed milk?

Meanwhile I have some doubts about the channel of entering melamine in milk. I have scientific reasons to believe that melamine, an organic base containing 66 per cent non-protein nitrogen (NPN) is transferred to milk through plants and animals long before its detection and it was already above the acceptable range. Some pesticides/herbicides, disinfectants, bleaching agents containing cyromazine when ingested by mammals convert into melamine through metabolism. In the same way, when plants intake cyromazine through pesticides melamine is produced and enters into the food chain.

Moreover, Cyanuric acid present in some non-protein nitrogen additives used in animal feed and drinking water also converts to melamine after consumption. Melamine in low dose is non-toxic but intake in higher amount particularly by the children can cause fatal kidney stones due to the formation of an insoluble melamine cyanurate.

In my opinion, instead of killing time in unjust debate on determining what percentage of melamine is present in which brand, it is better to devote nationally and internationally to find out means to get melamine

out of milk as well as from the food chain.

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

Tigers & Smith's comments

This is in reference to the sports article dated 11 Nov 08 where it was reported that the Tigers were angered by the South African Captain's (Smith) comments. In my personal view, Smith was absolutely right. The so-called Tigers should learn how to take criticism in a positive and constructive way and improve on their game. Winning one game once in a blue moon does not show any signs of improvement or prove anything. I think the Tigers should stop crying about Smith's comments, get their acts together and start producing results because this indeed is not good for cricket.

Aminur Rahim
New DOHS, Dhaka

Thakurgaon Airport

Thakurgaon is one of the northern districts of Bangladesh. It is beside Panchagarh, the northernmost district of Bangladesh. There is an airport in Thakurgaon but most of us do not know about that. The airport is located at Shibganj in Thakurgaon. During the 80's it was used as a domestic airport. But afterwards, for the lack of air passengers and maintenance facilities it was closed down. But now the situation has changed. The income level and standard of living of Thakurgaon people have improved considerably. Their capability in earning has also increased. Normally it takes eight

hours to go to Dhaka by bus. It also takes many hours to go by railway. So, the local people feel the reopening of the airport. It is to be mentioned here that Thakurgaon is a district of economic possibilities and opportunities, therefore it is expected that the respective authorities will take necessary steps to make the airport ready for operation.

Rezaul Haque Sumon
Dhaka

Dual policy?

After a prolonged hunger strike, candidates of the 27th BCS first time successful have got an assurance from the government concerning their recruitment. Meanwhile, second time successful are being recruited. Now a very simple question may arise in the minds of the people regarding the policy of PSC as well as government. Are they not pursuing a dual policy?

Many candidates have already suffered from similar case of recruitment complexities before. Thus, in order to prove transparency of PSC, government should take an effective step as soon as possible.

Md. Sarwar Hossain
MS (Agronomy)
Nazrul Hall
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural
University
Dhaka

Telephone operator

I like to file a serious complaint about your telephone operator. I have called twice to enquire about your fax machines. I was trying to fax some documents and none of the fax machines were responding. I called your main number and requested the operator to find out. He flatly told me that these fax machines are always on. I told him that I know that I am having diffi-

culties please check it for me. He hung up the phone on my face. I called back again 10 minutes later and he said the same and hung up again.

I am disappointed that a renowned daily English newspaper operator doesn't speak properly (I know it's Bangladesh) or doesn't greet anyone when answering phones and hangs up when he feels like. You will lose business to others if your employees behave like this with clients.

Mustafa
One-mail

Rickshawpullers

Rickshaw is a favourite form of transport both in cities and rural areas. Rickshaw cannot create much problem in rural areas as the number of vehicles is less there. But in cities, rickshaws cause traffic jams. Rickshawpullers believe that road rules are not for them to abide by. So they pull their vehicle however they fancy, without showing any concern for safety. During rough weather like rain or storm they charge exorbitant amounts. Again, during school, college or university time they ask for double the fare. In such cases girls become the worst sufferers as they do not jump on a rickshaw like the boys or bargain with a loud voice.

If the traffic policeman on duty keeps his eyes open, girls would not face such problems. Again, I feel it would be beneficial to modify the designs of rickshaws to make them less vulnerable to accidents. It would also have features to make it more comfortable to passengers.

The relevant authorities should come forward to do the needful.

Tamanna Ferdous Monni
English Language &
Literature
International Islamic
University Chittagong
(IIUC)

Melamine free powder milk

We agree that there is no substitute of breast-feeding for human baby. But in practice when a baby does not get enough milk, we have to arrange for supplementary food suitable for a baby. Cow's milk is the best supplementary baby food known to us. In Bangladesh scarcity of cow's milk is an established fact. The government has imposed excess customs duty, VAT and supplementary duty to encourage production of milk in the country but in last two decades no significant development has been achieved. Very insignificant quantity of milk is produced here.

Most of the babies in Bangladesh are deprived of fresh milk owing to exorbitant price tag. Babies belonging to the rich and the middle classes depend on imported powder milk. In recent times, unacceptable amount of melamine, an industrial artificial protein has been found in imported powder milk. As a result, import and marketing of most of the brands of milk that were available in the country have been banned by the relevant authorities. Babies who do not get

sufficient breast-feeding opportunity are faced with difficulties.

Since the importers have stopped importing powder milk it is now necessary to import full-cream and half-cream powder milk by government agency like Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) directly through government-to-government negotiation. For the next three months TCB should import 30,000 M Ton of full-cream and half-cream powder milk to supplement the present shortage of milk in Bangladesh. Every fortnight one consignment of 5,000 M Ton of powder milk in airtight poly packs of 2kg, 1kg and 500grams should be distributed for the next three months. It may be mentioned that the Chinese government has taken measures against melamine contamination in milk.

Our government should also take up steps with the Chinese government to import uncontaminated powder milk from China.

Md. Abul Mansur
Paikpara, Mirpur 1
Dhaka

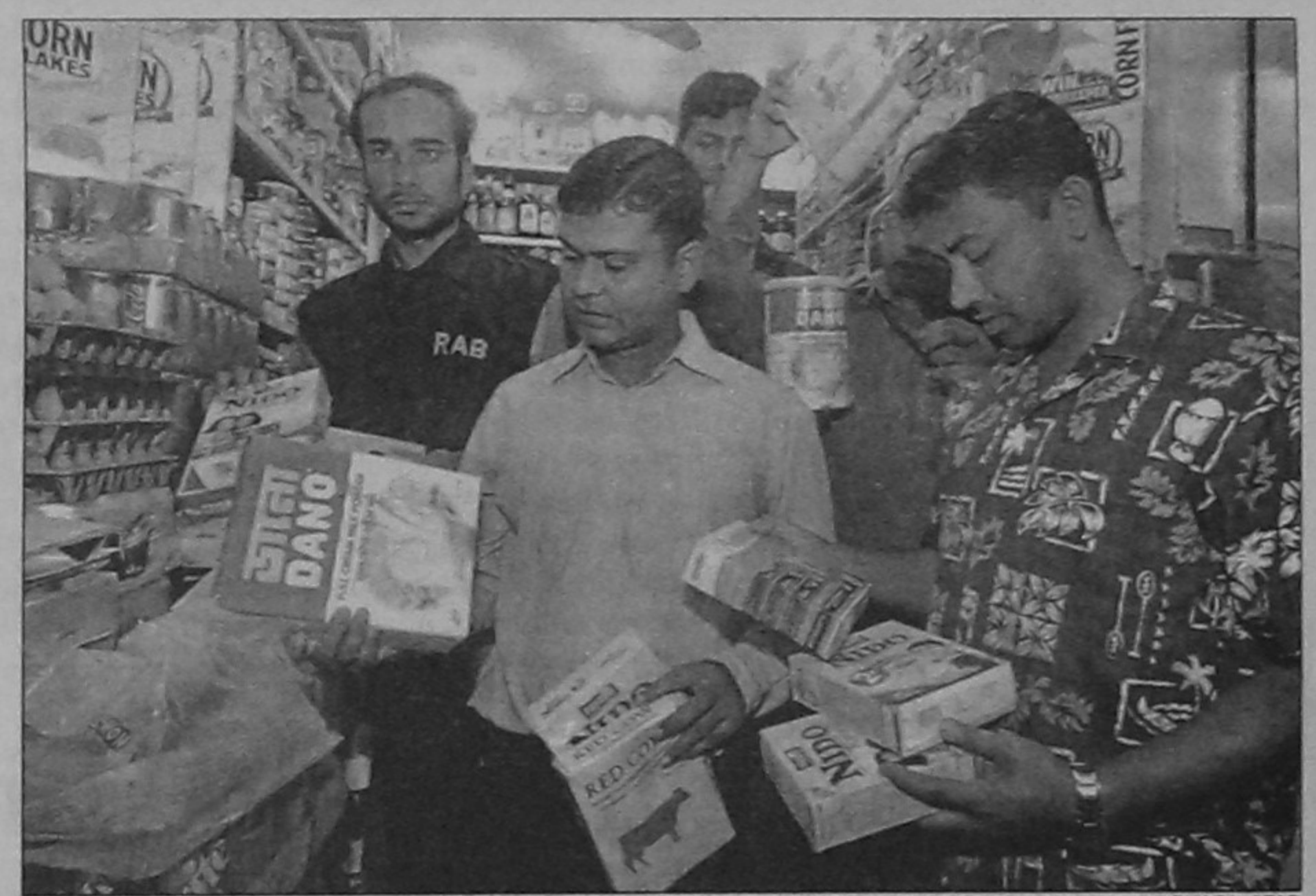


PHOTO: STAR

Scientists in politics

National election is expected to be held very soon in Bangladesh. Names of possible candidates with their short profiles are coming in the newspapers. As a conscious citizen and voter of the country, I believe I have every right to comment, criticize and advise the politicians who are going to take responsibility of serving the nation as members of parliament which is a very sensitive and important position. Some of them will take responsibilities as ministers of the government of the peoples' republic of Bangladesh as well. It has been observed from newspaper report that very few women are participating in election, though the male candidates are coming from different educational and professional backgrounds. It has also come to my notice that very few scientists and technologists are taking part in the upcoming election.

Governments as well as international donors have at last grasped the reality that science and technology are crucial to building a nation's institutions in areas such as transport, agriculture, health, law and industry. An assessment of the state of science in a country can shed light on how successfully it is developing and will

develop in the future, particularly a nation's ability to make use of advanced technologies. China, for example, accounts for 3% of the world's trade in high-technology goods and services, which is the highest percentage among developing countries. India accounts for 1% of global trade in high-technology goods and services, which is the second highest percentage among developing countries. What is our position in respect of high technology?

Science can be the most important means to level out the immense social and economic difference, which now exists in the country. We must have faith on scientists who cannot be greedy. Scientific achievements should be used for the benefit of humankind, for maintaining peace and for creating prosperity. The great scientists can also be the great thinkers of the country who are able to create a relationship between science and society. We must believe that the 21st century would be ruled by science-based technology. Without technological capability, sustainable economic growth remains a faint hope. This is high time for the political leaders to explore the real patriotic scientists and to include them in their mission who will bring a significant benefits to the

nation. Barack Obama was supported by 76 Scientists Nobel Laureates in recent election held in USA. We are obliged to learn from the world political situations.

Prof. Lutfor Rahman
Former VC of Sc & Tech
Varsity

Revenue policy

To make government's revenue policy adequate, I think govt. should give emphasis on revenue from land. Land may be divided into several categories such as commercial land, industrial land, residential land and agricultural land. Revenue rate of agricultural land should be least whereas, business and industrial land revenue should be high. Calculating on the basis of total land government should impose tax on landowners. Income tax rate should be uniform and should be minimum as a result tax-paying attitude of people will grow. VAT policy should be discarded because it created scope for misuse and corruption. Income tax rate should not exceed 10%. Tax on industrial land, commercial land, business land should be higher than that of agriculture land. I hope the government will think about this matter.

Parimal Chandra Das
Advocate and Social Analyst
Purba Razabazar, Dhaka

End of a corrupt politician?

Recently visa of former Thailand prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been revoked by the British government. He is reportedly heading towards the Philippines which announced that they will refuse him entry to Philippines. It seems that Thaksin is looking for a safe place to live. Warrant has been issued by the Thai government for his arrest.

I lived in Bangkok for quite some time. A Bangladeshi businessman living in Thailand for more than fifteen years narrated to me the interesting story of the rise of Thaksin, the thug. Thailand is divided into four parts—north, north-east, central and south. The north and north-eastern parts are more populated, poorer, less educated and more mountainous than central and south. In the north opium is grown and smuggled to the western countries. It constitutes a part of the 'infamous' golden triangle for opium cultivation and smuggling.

Thaksin was a police officer from a modest background. He reportedly amassed huge wealth through dubious means like drug, gun smuggling along with a few friends. He then started his own business, trading, industries etc and thus multiplied his ill-gotten capital. He also started to harbour political ambitions. He along with his old cronies founded 'Thai rak thai' party. He found that north and north-eastern regions have more seats in parliament than the rest of the country. He concentrated on getting more deputies elected from above mentioned two regions which would give him

majority in parliament. 'Thai rak thai party' aimed at securing all the rural seats of north and north-east regions. His party was not popular among the educated urban population of Thailand, Bangkok and other big cities. During election time his party, its candidates resorted to some unique ways of buying vote. They would transfer money to



PHOTO: AFP

voters' bank accounts, lend them credit cards to buy goods etc. The poor rural less educated voters were kept happy as they looked for short-term benefits. Thaksin got elected, his party secured majority in parliament and eventually plundered the country. Many financial irregularities were committed by him. Political and financial power made Thaksin more ambitious. He challenged the power and authority of the president of the privy council of the King, Prem Trisulananda. Prem is reputed to be a very honest person in Thailand. He chairs the advisory council of the King. In Thailand the King is revered as next to God for his benevolent nature and public welfare activities. At any given situation King's decisions and gestures are final and binding. King usually does not involve himself or interfere in politics unless in cases of utmost necessity. Thaksin committed the fatal error of challenging king's inner council. It prompted his decline. We know the rest of the story.

A very corrupt, ambitious and greedy politician named Thaksin Shinawatra along with his family is now running from pillar to post for asylum. All his ill-gotten wealth is unable to help him or bail him out from this situation.

His case along with that of Marcos should serve as an example for our politicians and other politicians of the world as to the ultimate fate of the corrupt ones.

Dr. SN Mamoon
On e-mail