

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.

## Price control and traders

There is a tendency among us to look down upon traders, industrialists and, in general, people involved in trade and commerce. Historically, trade and commerce have been the foremost and primary occupation of the human race. All other branches, like armed forces, bureaucracy, etc., were formed to safeguard, protect, sustain and enhance commercial activities. All wars were fought to protect or to expand commercial interests. The East India Company used to have its own forces and also was the precursor of the Indian civil service. Jonathan Company of the Netherlands had its own civil-military outfits in South Africa. So, there is no scope or rationality to look down upon 'commerce people'.

Recently our commerce minister rightly outlined the policy of the present government towards the traders. We cannot achieve our goal of reducing food prices by intimidating the traders. The policy ought to be to take them into confidence, show them due respect and honour and get the job done. We

remember that the Awami League very successfully kept the prices of essentials under control during its last tenure. The government had control and enjoyed the confidence of the 'bazari people'.

Revitalizing the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh may not be a good option. Past experience shows that the TCB was never effective in bringing down the prices of essentials. It was rather a hotbed of corruption, inefficiency and only benefited the bureaucrats.

The government should be watchful over and helpful toward the markets. It ought to coordinate rather than 'control'. Control is a negative word. It puts the stakeholders on the defensive and also on the offensive. The government can only 'soft control'.

We would urge this government to work in tandem with the traders and that will yield good results.

We wish the present government all success.  
**Dr.S.N.Mamoon**  
One-mail

## Mismanagement in Lawachhara?

A friend of mine and I visited Lawachhara National Park on 23 January and would like to bring to your notice certain glaring aspects of mismanagement and corruption at the Information Office there.

1. Entrance ticket: We paid Tk. 60 for 3 persons (including driver) and got one ticket. My friend just kept it in the pocket without examining it. On returning home to Dhaka I find that the ticket is a counterfeit with the staple mark on the left and is a used one. The serial no is 11493 and was used once for 2 persons on 1.5.08, and again for 3 persons on 23.1.09. The figures 2 and 3 and the dates are written by hand on either side of the ticket. Groups of visitors were coming in. We saw no control or counting.

2. Trails: The notice board says that there are 3 trails of half, one, and three hour durations. We wanted to take the 3-hour one, but were told that it was not available. So we opted for the 2-hour one. It got completed in one hour.

3. Guides: There is no rate chart for the guides on the notice board or anywhere else. We were told to pay Tk. 500 for the 2-hour guide, which we did. We were also told that there would not be any receipt given for this amount. However, if we wanted one the guide would write it on plain paper. We were allotted Mr. Benedict Daring as guide "on serial basis". He was helpful and friendly. After completing the official trek (in one hour as mentioned above) we made a private arrangement with him and he took us on a nearly 3-hour hike through Lawachhara, Khasia Punji and Jagchara and Maizdhi Tea Estates, which was most enjoyable.

4. Guide Books: We bought two sets of three guide books @ Tk175 per set, but were given receipt for one set only (receipt no. 2431 dt 23.1.09).

5. Road Sign: The sign board on the Srimongol-Maulvi Bazar roadside mentions the distance to the Baikka Beel Bird Sanctuary in Hail Haor as 10 km, but the actual distance from the main road to the watch tower is more like 18 km.  
**Juned A. Choudhury**  
Eco-travel consultant

## Pakistan thoughts

I would like to respond to the article, "Bridging the divide", by Syed G.B. Bokhari and published in your daily on January 20, 2009.

Yes, all ordinary people of this subcontinent wish to live in peace and harmony with one another within and with those beyond their borders.

No nation can keep itself hostage to its past and expect to move forward. The important thing is to learn lessons from history and choose the right course. But the irony is that, as Air Marshal (ret'd) Asghar Khan once said, we never learn from history.

Bangladesh had a general election over a month ago and a new government has taken the oath of office after winning a landslide victory. Pakistan could have sent an envoy to Dhaka as a goodwill gesture. So far we have not heard of anything like that. Even the Pakistan High Commissioner in Dhaka did not make a courtesy call yet on the new Prime Minister or Foreign Minister.

Any cooperation or people to people contact can only happen when governments from both sides create the environment with open minds. We look forward to that.

**AK Shamsuddin**  
Mississauga  
Canada

## War crimes trial and UN

It was with some amusement that I read the Jamaat's "willingness" to "admit and apologise" for the "party's stance" in 1971; but NOT an apology for the war crimes committed in 1971 by Jamaat leaders and their cohorts. And that Jamaat is ready to accept "the verdict of any trial conducted and supervised by the United Nations"!

Let me please point out to both the UN and those in Bangladesh who feel the UN needs to be involved in any war crimes trial to be held in Bangladesh, that the trial of the war criminals that is being demanded by the public in Bangladesh, is for the trial of Bangladeshi citizens, to be held on Bangladeshi soil, for crimes committed against the people of Bangladesh. What role does the UN have to play in that trial, if I may be audacious enough to enquire? When we demand the extradition of the Pakistani military officers involved in war crimes in our country, (a list of 195 such officers already exists, I would like to remind the UN) then we might approach the UN for assistance. Until then, the UN would be wise to keep out of any legal matters in this country. And the Jamaat would be wise to stop whining for the UN to save its skin.

However, if the UN is determined to be of assistance in any shape or form to Bangladesh, they might first consider declaring the horrendous events of 1971 in Bangladesh by the Pakistani military, a genocide. It is long overdue.

**Parveen Haque**  
DOHS, Dhaka Cantonment  
Dhaka

## Industrial pollution

Industrialisation is necessary to boost our economy and create employment opportunities. But industrialisation cannot be brought about at the cost of our agriculture, fishery, forests, animals and human health. It is a matter of utmost concern that many

# Congrats, Shakib!

Our cricketing all rounder Shakib Al Hassan has been ranked number one by ICC this season for his outstanding performance with the ball and bat recently. It is such scintillating news for the cricketers along with the viewers or cricket lovers in the country that they, in their cricketing slumber caused by the inconsistent performances of the team over the past years, will have hope rekindled, spirit rejuvenated and dream once again revived in them. They can now think yes, they too can! Shakib has scaled the coveted position leaving quite a good bunch of stalwarts like Andrew Flintoff, Jacob Oram and some many from the world cricket behind. Consistency, however, the vital force in almost all the games, in our cricket namely, was going missing in almost all the players of the team except a few-- Mashrafi Bin Murtaza and Shakib, to mention the vital two!

The Bangladesh team has recently won ODI series over Zimbabwe at home; fought consistently against Sri Lanka, with the spirit in the young tigers boiling to excel an unwavering temperament that leads players to the desired heights.

Shakib, before the press, expressed his joy in a very humble way. He appeared to be happy and serious about his consistency than the others, saying that his performance would encourage others to perform well and thus the

team will triumph all the way. This very positive and clear mindset in the young but mature cricketer shows us a ray of hope at the end of the tunnel. Shakib Al Hassan will remain an icon for the upcoming players.

We were happy noticing the reward for him and others by the BCCB in the form of money. It will surely help motivate the whole team in the future!

**Rafiqul Islam Rime**  
Agrabad, Chittagong



## Reflections

Our mornings become reflective with the gift of the Daily Star. Such recent gifts included such items as those relating to people's euphoria over elections, activists' demands for rights and even cryptic comments on legalities of leadership. All these make one reflect on the trusting common voter.... the expectations of the activists.... and the logic of the cynics.

Activists' demand such as "Ensure Human Rights in 100 days" "Repeal Gender discrimination laws provision", with judgmental predictions of "Bangladesh can hardly ensure rights" are supposed to act as a pressure on the elected government to adhere to these oft repeated pleas, as the people have reasons to feel that a government voted to power with a popular mandate is expected to deliver justice and equity so long denied to the people of Bangladesh.

Views on elections also reflect cynical expressions that look at the process rather than the results. Prof Muzaffar wonders at the legality of the leadership of persons charged and convicted or bailed and awaiting judgement. This may also hold true of leaders convicted and released after serving their jail terms.

The SCBA lawyers have given assurances, with their claimed "legal expertise", that a person not convicted of crimes, but charged stands innocent until proved otherwise in a judicial process. "The presumption of innocence" also holds good for all those on parole or bail.

With special respect for Prof Muzaffar's courage and uprightness and his feeling for ethics of legality, one is sad to note that we live in a world where popularity overrides morality and jurisprudence.

We may wish to reflect on this with Ogden Nashian humour: "In the land of mules there are no rules". Or in a compromising mood we may look at these legal queries, as not an uncommon quality of forgiveness in our world.

With reference to Zafar Sobhan's "Democracy 3.0 Straight Talk" in the Daily Star, he coaxes us to have "a little faith in Bangladeshi people" and asserts that "People do not want lousy candidates but if their choice is between lousy candidates and unelected govt they will take lousy candidates."

We agree with Sobhan's editorial forecast, "that perhaps this time around they will get what they deserve." That is indeed the evolutionary price we pay for a democratic system -- that, in full control of our voting rights, this time round "we deserve the leaders we elect."

**A reader, On e-mail**

## Brominated vegetable oil

Several types of synthetic and natural food additives are available. They are used to preserve fresh and packaged foods, medicines, and other consumer products. Brominated Vegetable Oil (BVO) is used as an emulsifier in citrus-flavoured soft drinks for preserving natural fat-soluble citrus flavour in the soft drinks. BVO is also used in bakery products and some brands of pasta.

Brominated Vegetable Oil contains bromine, which displaces iodine and depresses thyroid function. Bromine is a member of halogen group of elements, other members of the group are fluorine, chlorine, iodine, and astatine.

Iodine is necessary to produce thyroid hormones for the smooth functioning of our body system.

Consumption of bromine containing products increases bromine content in our system that ultimately competes with iodine and causes iodine deficiency thereby creating a condition called "Brominated Thyroid". Bromine is a potential carcinogen and causes a number of disorders starting from simple headache, fatigue, weight gain to cancer, heart and kidney diseases.

The advanced countries of the world have already imposed restrictions on the use of BVO and other harmful food additives. In our country, we should also test products to determine if the bromine or other halogen elements are at an acceptable level.

In reality, the presence of abnormal levels of bromine in

human body cannot be detected through standard blood tests. So physicians should advise patients to go through specific bromine concentration tests in case iodine related disorders are suspected.

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

## BIRDEM elderly patients

BIRDEM is not only a hospital but also a research centre. It is rendering excellent service to thousands of diabetic patients free of cost, which is really commendable.

I understand there are a number of diabetic patients whose history of diabetes is very old. They provide an excellent opportunity to doctors where research is concerned. I suggest that patients with 35 years or more of diabetes should be given special treatment by BIRDEM through the opening of a separate counter for them. They may be provided with special care and facilities, like prompt investigation, free medicine, free hospital beds and free operation whenever needed. This will be helpful not only to elderly patients but also to BIRDEM for developing the expertise of its doctors, dieticians and other staff. Will the BIRDEM authorities give a thought to the proposal?

**Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury**  
DOHS Mohakhali, Dhaka

## Punish the culprits

A private TV channel reported that a little girl was recently raped and killed by some so-called human beings! What a shame for us! A girl who was only about 7seven years old could not see the beauty of world but was killed watching its bad side. What was her fault? We know children are innocent. Then why did she have to die?

Such harassment and violence as teasing, raping and killing of children are increasing at an alarming rate. As a result, some girls stop their studies and others commit suicide. We still remember Trisha, an 8-year-old girl, who committed suicide because of teasing. It is my request to the new government that it metes exemplary punishment to the criminals involved. Please, save children, save humanity.

**Shahnama Jahan Chowdhury**  
Dept. of Business Administration  
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology  
Sylhet

# Gaza morale unbroken

With utmost bewilderment I was watching Israeli troops being pulled out of Gaza a few days ago. On their way home, these soldiers didn't forget to take advantage of the photo op by raising their finger in victory signs. But what victory are they gloating over? After killing more than a thousand people - of whom more than five hundred were children and women - and destroying schools, mosques and the already dilapidated infrastructure of Gaza with an unprecedented brutality, what kind of victory have they achieved?

Any military expedition usually has distinctly set goals before the operation and a failure to achieve those is not considered victory; or it may be perceived as a moral defeat for the Israeli leadership

with all their sophisticated weaponry against the refugees in Gaza. Those refugees had nothing much to lose anyway. Three things Israel tried to achieve; first, to destroy completely Hamas's ability to fire missiles into Israel; second, to strengthen Fattah in the Palestinian territory by weakening Hamas; and, third, to justify the issue of "self defense" before the international community. However, we all know that none of these objectives has been achieved by the Israeli regime. In Israel, intense debate has been going on as to whether this can be called a victory or not. Moreover, Israel has lost its support and moral ground before the international community.

In the 1967 war Israel defeated

three Arab nations in six days. But it couldn't break the morale of thousands of Gazans in more than three weeks by continuous assault with deadly weapons. Even in the US, its staunch supporter, public opinion has been divided on this issue and there are signs that Americans are waking up from their slumber. For the first time in the US, many Jewish groups have started expressing their anger against the brutality of the Zionist regime openly. Many Jews are concerned now that people may start equating Judaism with Zionism, which already has earned a bad name for many peace-loving Jews around the world.

**Zafar Hadi**  
California, USA

