

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.

## End of Aussie hegemony?

The recent disasters of Australian cricket team clearly indicate the end of their hegemony as a cricketing superpower. We've been eagerly waiting for this for a decade. We're tired of watch-



ing the Aussie juggernaut. It's true Australia is passing through a transitional period after so many great players retired & they will overcome this in near future.

The rise of South Africa & India as fierce rivals of Australia is good for cricket. The tripartite contests for the pinnacle of glory will increase the popularity of cricket. If South Africa & India continue their excellent journey to the apex, the next decade must be the most exciting cricketing era.

But the other teams are quite disappointing. England is forever an overhyped team, Sri Lanka has lost the momentum, West Indies is a Brougham (here the horse is Chanderpaul) and Pakistan is a pariah. Not to mention the name of Bangladesh & Zimbabwe-- they have a long way to go.

Solaiman Palash  
East Jurain, Dhaka

### Indian visa hassle

For two consecutive days I have unsuccessfully stood in queue for submitting my application for Indian visa at the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) at Gulshan, Dhaka, and returned home disappointed and sick. I joined the queue at seven in the morning but found hundreds of others in queue since midnight. Being an elderly person it was a torture for me to stand in queue for hours and then return home disappointed. Added to my woes while in queue were pestering of visa brokers.

After my disappointments and failure, I was wondering if IVAC would consider the following suggestions to mitigate the sufferings of visa applicants.

1. A counter should be set up by IVAC where applicants will be provided with a date for submitting his visa application.

2. Applicants will report to this counter with his/her passport and duly filled in application form and after noting down the details of the applicant a date will be provided to the applicant to submit the visa application in person.

3. The counter will stay open from morning till late afternoon on all working days.

Interestingly enough, I found out while talking to fellow applicants in queue that like myself most of them did not need visa urgently and were willing to wait for a few days for granting of visas. I am sure if my suggestion is implemented the rush and chaos for submitting visa applications at IVAC will become less and will ease the tense role of IVAC.

I hope my suggestion will draw the attention of the Indian High Commission and IVAC for due consideration.

Ziauddin Ahmed  
Gulshan, Dhaka

### What does he stand for?

Have you heard what OBAMA stands for? This is now making the rounds in America as a popular topic in light hearted office gossip!

The initials of Obama's name is said to be an abbreviation for:

Original Black African Managing America!

However for the vast number of poor Bangladeshis, OBAMA may well stand for:

O BAP MA (of course P remains silent) This will, if Obama comes to know of it, create a soft corner in his heart for Bangladesh, which is normally friendly to America.

S.A. Mansoor  
Dhaka

### India and Obama

When Barack Obama became President of the United States, people around the world became euphoric because they were looking forward to the change he will bring about - a welcome relief from Bush administration.

But I am very surprised to know about India's reaction to Barack Obama's presidency, which was published in DS on February 2, 2009.

It said, 'India wary of Obama's South Asia's focus' and 'India is keeping a wary eye on policy changes'. Former Indian ambassador to Washington Naresh Chandra said, "When it came to India former President G.W. Bush was exceptional. When any matter on India reached him, Bush overruled his team to address Indian concern. I don't think we can expect that kind of personal commitment from Obama."

What a thing to say, it bares the insensitive and selfish attitude. When everyone was happy to see the exit of Bush, India is lamenting his departure! Bush has been termed the worst president and his

popularity is the lowest. People will remember him as a cruel person, who has no feelings for human beings. How could India praise him in such a way?

By the way, I want to inform former Indian ambassador Naresh Chandra that G.W. Bush failed to tell the name of the Indian prime minister when asked during an interview!

Nur Jahon  
Chittagong

### Second best joke!

DS of 27 Jan 09 featured your commentary: "Best Joke of the Year" on the front page. After a long interval, it was a welcome resumption to the usual home truths by you. I wonder, however, if anyone noticed the 2nd Best Joke of the Year, that appeared on the 2nd page with a picture on it on the last page in the same issue.

This was the appearance of the Dept of the Environment on Dhaka's road and the news that 27 cars were hauled up, Tk 19,000 extracted as fines and 13 hydraulic horns seized (from about 4 lac vehicles). Duty done, perhaps for the next decade, they will now resume their idyllic inertia leaving the population to become deaf gradually.

Noise pollution is one of the most potent causes of degeneration of public health as acknowledged by most experts and it needs to be controlled as soon as possible. What prevents the DoE from taking the following actions after setting the limit of noise permissible in decibels (say 40 dcb or the equivalent of a rickshaw bell whichever is less)?

- 1) Ban import of horns above the permissible limit.
- 2) Check the dcb of the horn in each vehicle at the port at the import stage.
- 3) Check the dcb of the horn in each vehicle before renew-

ing road permits.

4) Fine the culprits a minimum of Tk 1,000 for each 5 dcb or part above the limit, if caught on the roads during regular checks.

5) Check complaints from the public (with vehicle number) in this respect. Seize the horn after fining the owner as in 4.

6) Threaten vehicle owners with cancellation of road permits if caught for this offence twice.

If the DoE does not have the gumption or guts to do this, they can easily lease out and franchise some private operators to do their work for them, thereby generating employment for quite a few educated youth. The same principle can also be adopted for preventing air pollution by harmful emissions from vehicles and can be done simultaneously. All that would be required would be some decibel and air emission instruments to be given on hire to the franchise holders. Of course honesty, dedication, hard work and non-interference from vested interests would also be required and one wonders where we are going to get them!!!

If we ever get this on song, we can easily tackle the problem of traffic jams and tailbacks on the basis of existing traffic laws with just a little fine tuning. Are there any takers?

Sikander Ahmed  
Niketon, Dhaka

### Outgoing president

President Prof. M Iazuddin does not draw any respect from anybody in Bangladesh. Last year when my son graduated from a private university, I had to attend the convocation where Mr. President delivered the chancellor's speech. I saw no mark of respect in anybody's face. Students, who received the all important certificates, walked mechanically, guardians cheered in the same way. When he walked up and down many even did not stand to show respect.

He broke his oath of office in flouting the constitution when he assumed the office of Chief Adviser.

M. Sanaul Haq  
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

### Regional transit

Please refer to a write-up published in the business page in your daily dated February 2, 2009 entitled "Trade analysts see benefit from regional transit". The subject is very sensitive as far as Bangladesh is concerned. Nazneen Ahmed rightly pointed out that things have to be considered dispassionately. Regionalization in western countries & South Asian countries is different. It purely depends on the role of the big country.

What I suggest is that the government deeply think on the issue.

Anonymous  
One-mail

## New government's tasks



HABIBUR RAHMAN / DRINKNEWS

The 2009 parliament of Bangladesh is truly unique in many ways. Among its many uniqueness, one that will top the list is its biggest number of fresh and young members. Analysts across the board are full of praise and hope for this new lot. While doing so they are too cautious even to examine the risks that are associated with inexperience. Such is the predicament of the so called "brute" majority. People become hesitant to give free flowing opinions.

This government is sitting with lots of agenda on hand. These range from the very tough issue of trying Pakistani collaborators to the interesting concept of making a digital Bangladesh by 2021; from employing most of the employable, to lowering the prices of basic commodities. These are the wishes of the teeming millions. Meeting these challenges will also take thousands of quality man-hour. This government is in a better position to achieve these challenges. It has the combination of wisdom of the experienced and

the energy of the young among its ranks.

However, the danger is that if the government only eyes the eye-catching tasks, its basic duty to provide the populous metropolis with clean air, dust free roads, covered drainage system, improve the shattered transportation system, provide well lit streets and footpaths, and supply safe drinking water may get into a limbo. Any popular government to survive the test of time must ensure these things for its people.

Interesting enough, the new sensation of the world, Barack Obama's presidency of the mighty America - to which comparisons are made to our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's present premiership - puts its full efforts to mend the economy and make the average American financially comfortable. His interest lies in affairs of, as he says, the "main street".

It is indeed fascinating to listen to the new President of the most powerful country when he promises to build new schools, new roads and provide jobs for his

people with a decent wage. Being the richest and the mightiest he is not forgetting the basics that his citizens need.

Being in the league of poor nations, let us also focus on very basic public amenities like clean roads, drainage systems, drinking water supply, ticket counter for buses, hazard free footpaths, re-establishing meter based taxi and three-wheeler, creating jobs in the rural areas to minimize city slum dwelling and turning the primary public schools truly into educational institutions: at least in the major cities, to begin with.

As there is no dearth of able parliamentarians of all age groups in this government a few of them may be assigned to do these tasks. People know that these are not easy jobs. But other nations have done it. If we could build a bridge over the Jamuna River and planning to construct another over the Padma, why cannot we do the very basics here right in the cities for a decent and healthy living?

Nurur Rahman  
Elephant Road, Dhaka

### Letter to Sheikh Hasina

Please, step into your father's shoe. Correct his mistake and glorify the father and the daughter and the nation at large.

Now that the nation has given you the most clear and loud verdict with more than absolute majority, please, return us the 1972 constitution that the father of the nation gifted the nation with. The biggest mistake Bangabandhu made despite peoples' admonishing was to assume the premiership instead of "Gandhism".

Remain the party chief. Be the peoples' leader in the core of their heart. Play the opposition party's role as the opposition party is reduced to virtual non-existence. Nothing remains empty. It may be filled in by any extremist forces. Create opportunities for the training of leadership in the party and the government. You have equalled the record of your rival Khaleda (two times elected for premiership); enough is enough (once was enough for Corazon and Mandela). Establish absolute democracy in the party first, then in the government.

Keep up the reforms that already have been taken up. Make even stronger and self-reliant institutions: local government bodies, police, judiciary, defence service, bureaucracy, central bank, EC, UGC, PSC, ACC, Radio-TV, bi-cameral parliament etc. Everything cannot be done in one term. But if you start with, I believe, you will be given any number of terms so long you keep on the track of reforms along with good management of law and order and the economy. It is doable only by you, now, in Bangladesh. Nothing is impossible here.

You can then make another, yet better Lee Kwan or Mahathir.

Prof. Jawad R Zahid  
IBA, DU

### No consensus!

This refers to the question of understanding between the two major parties in our parliament. After the last

American elections a friend of mine drew my attention to the speech given by John McCain and said, "See how civilized they are?" There is no problem between the two candidates any more. Why can't our politicians learn from this? I asked him three questions.

1. Do Obama and McCain agree that the founding father was George Washington? He said, "yes". 2. Do both of them believe in the fact that the Americans fought against the British colonialists? He said, yes. 3. Do both of them believe that the American independence was achieved through an universal declaration of independence? He said, yes. I said, "See? Though we have all these, our party in opposition does not agree. Now, if you deny the basis of your independence then, first of all, do you qualify as a citizen of this country and secondly how can you be taken seriously in matters of consensus?"

Fahmida Intekhab  
One-mail

### Padma bridge

We just noticed a few days back that the present democratic government have given the consultancy of "The Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project" to a renowned consultant - MANUSELL AECOM. It appears from their record that they are a well reputed consultant having experience of working in Australia, New Zealand & Asia region with good reputation. After taking over office after the just concluded parliamentary election in December 2008 the present government has kept their word of giving top priority to construction of this mighty & longest bridge in Bangladesh. Within one month, they have signed an agreement for design & consultancy of Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project & awarded it to a reputed consultant to prepare design & other related things.

As we have seen in the past, Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Project completion took almost 8 years. On the other hand, the design, drawing & other related works as per the agreement made a few days back would require 24

months, then how could this project be completed in next three years? If this government is serious enough to complete this gigantic project by 2013 then it must ensure that drawing & other related works are completed by December 2009, so that tender & other related jobs are completed by the first six months of 2010 to commence actual work also by 2010. Would request the ministry concerned to look at these points & deliver the actual time period for completion rather than a political commitment which will not only tarnish their image but will erode people's confidence in this government, as people have voted them to power with very high expectations.

Syed Shahid Hossain  
HR Bhaban  
Kakrail, Dhaka

### Stop human trafficking

Sexual trafficking of children, women and girls through commercial exploitation, is a fundamental violation of their rights. It is a universal and complex problem, which defies both simplistic analysis and easy answers. It encompasses a range of abusers, different forms of abuse, and differs in the type and degree of impact on the victim. Every year, more than 1 million women and children worldwide are reportedly trafficked and sold for a variety of different purposes - many end up in the sex trade. This number comes to nearly 3,000 women and children per day.

Trafficking & HIV/AIDS is interrelated. Especially women and girls are trafficked for use in sex industry. Traffickers use 20 main points in 16 western districts of Bangladesh near the Indian border. Kushtia district is very safe for traffickers; some villages are used as stations for the traffickers. Rajshahi border villages of Bidirpur and Premtali are used because there are fewer checkpoints. Jessore border is also very convenient for the traffickers.

Since the human trafficking trade is going on openly,

the law enforcers should be able to contain it. The question is, are they trying?

Mohammad Khairul Alam  
AIDS researcher  
MC Roy Lane  
Dhaka

### Darkness in Swat

During the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, women were not allowed to go out of their houses. Female doctors had to quit their jobs; girls were not permitted to go to school. In fact, all girls' schools were closed in the face of threats from Taliban.

Recently Taliban type leaders of Swat, a region of Pakistan, have ordered to close down all girls' schools. Though education is Farj (compulsory) in Islam, irrespective of male or female, the derailed religious fanatics want to deprive women of education.

Swat is compared to Switzerland for its beautiful landscape. Many tourists visit this area every year. But now it is without any tourists.

The fanatics are trying to move the hands of the clock backwards. Such fanatics are also present in our society who fear new ideas and knowledge.

Harun-or-Rashid  
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

### Shab-e-Barat

The above mentioned letter by Mohammed Alauddin was published in DS on February 8, 2009.

According to the writer, 'Since Shab-e-Barat is not mentioned in the Holy Quran and since its status is disputed by the ulema groups, so we should not observe the day as a govt. holiday.'

In reply to the writer, I'd like to say that Shab-e-Barat is referred to in the Holy Hadith. Actually, the Holy Hadith is explanation of the Holy Quran. Though everything exists in the Holy Quran, we can hardly realize those without the interpretations given by Holy Hadith.

Habibur Rashid Ismail  
Jamea Rahmania Fadil  
Madrasa  
Chittagong

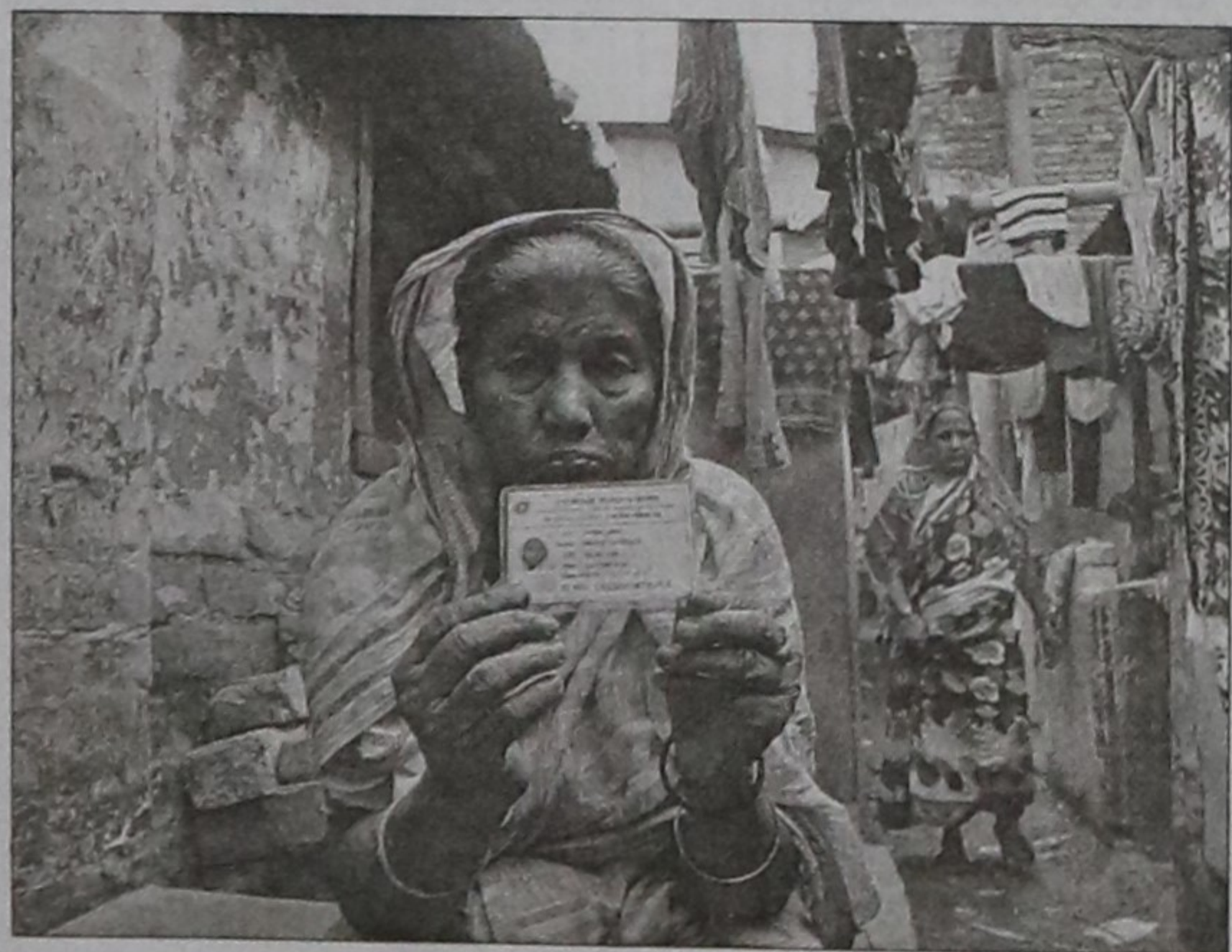
## Use of national ID

It is very unfortunate that the chief election commissioner has recently discouraged the use of national ID number on the plea that it is not hundred percent complete and there are some errors in some of them.

Maintenance of national ID over 70 million people is undoubtedly a continuous process and it will never be hundred percent complete and error free. Even passport system is not hundred percent error free as there are some "throat-cut" ones.

On the other hand, the use of the unique national ID number of any person in the banking system will certainly stop the loan giving to the non-existing project as done in the last decades and it will definitely reduce the prevailing record-high loan default rate in the country which is one of the main causes of our lower economic growth.

In this connection, I would like to make some comments on a few other issues too. In Bangladesh, the past regime's initiatives are frequently and indiscriminately shelved by the next regime that incurs unrecoverable losses. After the liberation of Bangladesh, cricket was discouraged on the plea that it is a Pakistani game. That's why Bangladesh cricket had been in a long pause. However, Bangladesh managed to become a Test playing



NOOR ALAM / DRINKNEWS

country in 2000.

The health policy and the ICT initiatives of the Ershad regime in the late 80s were not followed up by the next governments. So, the "Health for All" by the year 2000 slogan went in vain.

In the early 90s, the chief election commissioner, Justice Abdur Rouf, initiated a pilot Database Voter List Project in a union in Mymensingh. But it had also met the same fate because his successors failed to continue the project and it took over one and a half decades to get

our country an electronic voter and national database.

So, I think, to accept the continuity of the good thing, to move ahead for the good governance and to join the digital/ information era with the globe, our country must use national ID number in every possible area. It is also high time to go for electronic birth registration database for the nation to lay the foundation of information driven modern Bangladesh.

Saif Tinku  
Baridhara, Dhaka