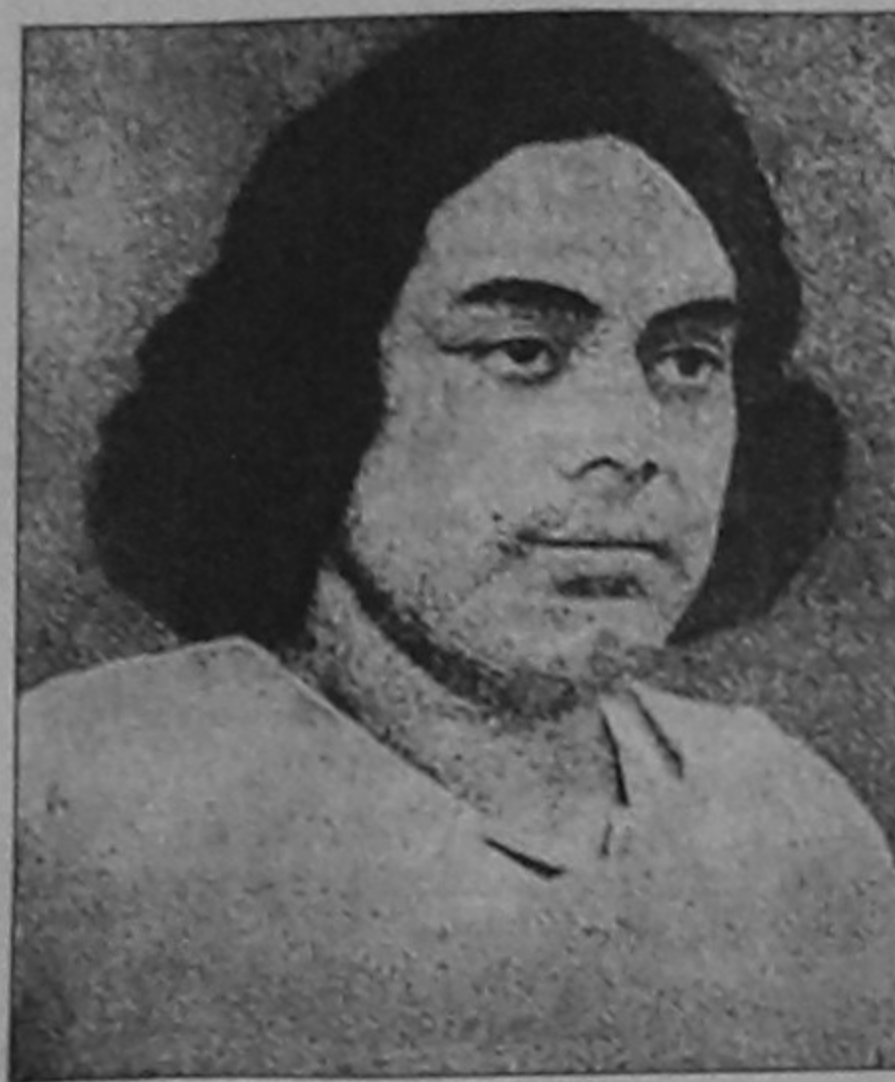


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Nazrul's indomitable spirit



Nazrul's incomparable writings, in a very short spell, established him as a genius in the arena of Bengali literature.

The 109th birth anniversary of our National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was celebrated in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

Nazrul ran off from home at a young age but trouble never ceased to follow him. He worked for a while at a bakery in Asansol, where his literary talent first came to light. At the age of 18, whilst still a secondary school student at Raniganj (in West Bengal), Nazrul thought of joining the World War I. He joined the Bengal Regiment as a habildar (corporal) and was posted in Karachi. Although the regiment was never in the thick of battle and was disbanded in 1920, the lilt of the soldier's parades and marches permeated much of his writing.

Nazrul emerged at a time when the presence of Tagore loomed large on

the Bengali literary scene. He was a great admirer of the latter. Tagore reciprocated by admiring the young talent.

In addition to his poetic corpus, Nazrul, who was a gifted musician, composed over 3,000 songs, which constitute a complete genre in Bengali music today, under the name of Nazrul Sangeet, and remains immensely popular, with a large number of artists and an active recording industry, both in West Bengal and Bangladesh.

Nazrul lived in conflict-ridden times. Communalism was on the rise, possibly fuelled by elements in the British administration. Muslims felt disenfranchised and alienated. There were a number of Hindu-Muslim riots, culminating in a reckless carnage when the British India was divided into two parts on religious lines. Through all this, Nazrul remained secular. He married Pramila Devi, and chose Sanskrit names for his sons. In later years, his liberal views on religion came under attack from the Muslim Right.

Nazrul was a true patriot, humanist and rebel. It is worth mentioning that Nazrul was a fearless voice for the oppressed. It was he who bravely rendered the songs of freedom. He heroically rebelled against the colonial exploitation by the British Raj. People under the grip of colonial rule were deeply stirred by the poet's inspiring works, igniting flames of rebellion.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam
National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute
Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation-NTO

Reports on BDR carnage

It is really difficult for the ordinary citizen like us to find out the bottom line of the BDR carnage story. The government is still tentative on many issues including status of the reports prepared by the army investigation team, government-appointed committee and the CID investigation; moreover the FBI and the Scotland Yard had some kind of technical support role. On the other hand, the media has already leaked out some points of the army report. Interestingly, the media in question are more inclined to look for political aspects or involvement in this tragic incident. Why is it so?

Therefore, as an ordinary citizen I can neither support the government hesitation to be open, nor support the pre-emptive role of some media outlets.

A reader
One-mail

Praiseworthy decision

Undoubtedly, teachers are the torchbearers of the nation. But they are very much neglected here.

We have come to know that our present govt. is going to form a pay commission for the teachers from primary to university level. The govt. is going to allocate enough money for the education sector. These decisions are praiseworthy.
Md. Zahidul Islam Zibon
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong

CNG run vehicles

This may sound funny, insane to many, but I suggest the government ban CNG driven vehicles as the government is so concerned about security and terrorism. Funny but it is true that when a car enters a hotel, hospital or the secretariat, one will notice that a group of people in uniforms will ask you to open the trunk of the car and will certainly look under the car for some sort of explosives or guns/ammunition. I don't know what else. These so-called checks not only delay the entry but also help the congested traffic to clog up at the back. By searching the trunk and the bottom of the car what have they found so far is a question to me and to many others who often face this unnecessary so-called security checks. The security personnel don't bother to look inside the car or the bags kept in the trunk or the seats which are the most likely place of carrying explosives. Also, they never ever check the front where the engine is located. They will check and let you go like the sunrise and the sunset for.

If someone wants to blow it up, it does not take a nuke scientist to carry out such an attack. The gas (CNG) cylinder which 95% of the cars and busses have are good enough as in reality they are the mobile bomb which was legalized by the governments of the past and the present. We have already seen many times what the CNG cylinder explosion can do and if it explodes in a parking lot with 20-30 cars parked, I think it is strong enough to blow up a 6 storied residential building without too much of hassle.

So my question to the authorities concerned is (1). Are we really vulnerable to terrorism or (2) Did you ever think of the CNG factor? If the 1st point is valid then I think all the CNG vehicles should be banned or the cylinders should be taken out so that the terrorists do not get the opportunity to play the devil's role. This will also help reduce the traffic congestion in the city. As fewer people will use cars for short distance to save petrol.

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Rivers around Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

The Daily Star has undertaken a mission to focus on the dying condition of the rivers Buriganga, Turag, Balu and Shitalakhya that encircle Dhaka, the four hundred years old capital city. This bold campaign of The Daily Star for free rivers is highly commendable and society at large must come forward to applaud and reinforce its effort.

It is a matter of grave concern that for a long time the rivers around Dhaka are being polluted by industrial and other urban life wastes and being encroached by grabbers. Voices of environmentally conscious section of the people and the relentless efforts of media should be taken seriously by

the government to save Dhaka from total annihilation. It seems that the government is too occupied with other issues and does not feel the gravity of the situation. Dhaka city dwellers are already suffering from a chronic potable water supply crisis and encounter frequent water logging when there is a little rain. The depleting groundwater level in and around Dhaka is giving alarm about the misfortune awaiting the people living here. The fortunate people who are in the government may have some second home to take shelter but the large majority of the population have no alternative but to bear with the painful life.

The Creator created this earth

will all amenities & support for a healthy life for all human beings and other animals till the doomsday. Rivers, seas, oceans, mountains and other natural gifts are not manmade. So, who are we to make any changes in this natural systems and arrangements? Our misdeeds will accelerate destruction of this planet until we realize what we are doing and stop and reverse the process to make up the damage already done to the environment. It is the moral as well as social responsibility of all the conscious people to rally together and extend support to the timely call of The Daily Star.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

Indian democracy

Success of Indian democracy stands in stark contrast to the bloodlettings taking place in other nominal South Asian democracies -- Pakistan and Sri Lanka. These nominally democratic countries have failed to bring peace and prosperity to their people because of their propensity to resort to violence for political change. India's success in running a relatively violence-free democratic process has been mainly due to Mahatma Gandhi and his legacy of non-violence.

When Mahatma Gandhi launched his non-violent political movement to end the British colonial rule in India, he made it clear why he rejected all calls for a violent freedom struggle: "If Indians take up guns to kill the British, given India's great ethnic and religious divisions, they would still be using the same guns to kill each other long after the British had gone. I don't want India's freedom if it meant Indians would be free to slaughter each other. If India makes violence her creed I will not care to live in India."

Thanks to Gandhi, India, despite sporadic bloodlettings, has remained a basically peaceful and stable nation. It has faced many crises since its inception, but it has been able to resolve these crises without descending to never-ending bloodbath as happened to neighbouring Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It still faces many threats but Indian democracy has proved to be capable of resolving them without resorting to protracted violence. This is evident from the Indian response to recent terrorist attack on Mumbai. Although it was clear that the attack was carried out by extremists based in Pakistan, India's response has been prudent and non-violent. Gandhi's teachings will come handy as India faces extremists who are causing havoc in Pakistan.

India can also help Sri

Lanka to peacefully resolve the conflict with the Tamil minority. Initially India supported the Tamil Tigers' violent movement and then turned against it. India should play the role of a moderator to bring about a non-violent resolution of the Tamil-Sinhalese conflict. It should now prod the Sri Lankan authorities to address the genuine grievances of the Tamil minority. In this context, India can point out that Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu extremist who thought he was partial to the Muslim minority. The success of Indian democracy is a beacon of hope in a region torn by violence and extremism.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Bottled water

I was very surprised when I saw a report on mineral water on Channel 1 on 4th April. The water in the mineral water bottle was completely unpurified. Some wicked businessmen put their company sticker on the bottle, capped and supplied these bottles to many hotels, restaurants, collages, offices, food shops etc. Those companies had no BSTI approval. They filled water directly from the tube well.

BSTI authorities should address the issue with due sense of urgency.

Rezaul Haque Mostafa Chowdhury
Dept. of Microbiology
University of Chittagong

Senior citizens' woes

Please allow me to begin by asking "Who cares for the HAS BEENS? Yes, today's 'Has Beens' were yesterday's major players keeping the country's wheels of economy and government moving. Come tomorrow, today's young Turks will become tomorrow's 'Has Beens' and so on as the wheel of time turns. The

common factor, however, in both stages of one's life is that he is not relieved from the duty of paying taxes till he is stowed in. Thereby, he continues to retain the life membership of the taxpayers' club.

The painful shock comes when crossing over the fence from an active players' role he joins the retirees and suddenly realises that there is no pay check coming at the end of the month. This one eighty degrees change in circumstances throws him completely out of gear and he has to struggle to make ends meet with his meagre investment earnings. Thankfully, while pension has been kept outside the orbit of taxation, he is still exposed to the other levies and surcharges imposed by the government on his savings.

Taking the cue, not from the developed countries but looking across borders to our neighbours, we understand that the poor pensioners and widows have been given due recognition of their contribution during their working life and have been gracefully rewarded with certain concessions.

Pray, our new government and the finance minister in particular, take mercy and look into this grey area and be kind enough to consider the following exemptions to redress the pensioners' pains and widows' woes in the upcoming new budget.

1. Exemption of surcharge levied on interest earned on savings account, fixed deposit account and Sanchayapatra.
2. Subsidized travel rates on national air, rail, road and water transport.
3. Reduced rates on government medical outfits.
4. Reduced rates on entertainment tickets and the like.

National ID cards and TINs may be used as proof of identification.
N. Ahmed
Dhanmandi R/A
Dhaka

Poverty and vision-2021

Our population is predominantly rural, with about 85 per cent of the 135 million people living in rural areas. For their livelihoods rural people depend mainly on the land, which is both fertile and extremely vulnerable. Most of the country is made up of flood plain, and while the alluvial soil provides good arable land, large areas are at risk because of frequent floods and cyclones, which take lives and destroy crops, livestock and property.

Estimates of rural poverty rates now stand between 53 and 43.6 per cent. In general the depth and severity of poverty has been reduced more successfully in rural zones than in urban areas, although rural zones still lag far behind urban areas in terms of development. About 20 per cent of rural households live in extreme poverty. Chronically poor

people suffer from persistent food insecurity, own no cultivable land or assets, and are often illiterate. Another 29 per cent of the rural population is considered moderately poor. They may own a small plot of land and some livestock, but while they generally have enough to eat, their diets lack protein and other nutritional elements. This segment of the rural population is at risk of sliding deeper into poverty as a result of health problems or natural disasters.

We hope that our government will take some effective measures to mitigate rural poverty and then we may reach Vision-2021.

Md. Nur-e-Alam Siddique
Faculty of Agriculture
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University, Dinajpur



NAZRUL ISLAM / DRINKERS

Functions of MPs

In the traditional Democratic system, A State has three organs: Judiciary, Executive and Legislature, having different functions & responsibilities.

Unfortunately, since 1991 in the regime of political governments, MPs and policy makers were busy with the executive functions, influencing the Judiciary and interfering in local government functions. Whereas in the traditional democratic system, they are supposed to be busy with law making/ policy making etc.

Our civil society members often raise their voice in favour of strengthening the local government through decentralization as a holy constitutional obligation. There are some influential politicians who strongly supported it in the past. But after the regime change, recently we observed that some of those politicians opposed strengthening of local government bodies. They are busy framing rules which will allow MPs to interfere in upazila parishad affairs.

Alamgir Sujat
Regional Sales Manager
Mutual Food Products Ltd.
Segunbagicha
Dhaka

Pilkhana tragedy

I love my country from the core of my heart. But my heart bleeds when I see my beloved country is in danger. The Pilkhana tragedy shocked me profoundly as I think that those top level army officers were great assets of our country. We have lost those great sons of our motherland suddenly and out of the blue. It is obviously a great tragedy for many families and the nation.

The core mission of Bangladesh Army is to protect the nation's territorial integ-

They always work to save our country from external forces or enemies. The death of top level army officers are a great loss for Bangladesh and it may cause leadership crisis in our defence forces.

The Pilkhana tragedy left us thunderstruck. As conscious citizens, we need to know everything regarding the actual killers and their real motive behind this killing. Is there any outside force involved in this heinous crime? We need to know. Proper investigation and right judgment are highly desirable to find out the truth behind this carnage.

Faraha Nawaz
Department of Public Administration
Rajshahi University
Rajshahi

Save our rivers

I am a regular reader of The Daily Star. It has become the morning tea for me. In my almost 18 years of readership time, I have been touched, moved, enthralled, enlightened so many times by so many reports it published. The story on river grabbing is one of those.

I strongly support the cause The Daily Star is fighting for.
Kabir Hossain Taposh
Banani, Dhaka

Early marriage

After completing my SSC exams, I went to my native village to meet my relatives and maternal grand parents. By the way one of my cousins took her SSC this year. Though she lives in a village, she is very talented. Moreover, her aim is to become a doctor. But it should be noted here that her parents are not educated. So, they are no longer eager to send their daughter to college.

Instead, they decided to marry her off. But it is a matter of great concern that the bridegroom is nearly forty years old, and he is not educated. The bridegroom works abroad, and earn a huge amount of money.

This is the kind of attitude responsible for backwardness of our women. It must be changed.

Mohammad Mohiuddin Momen
SSC examinee
Halishahar, Chittagong

US and Israel

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not the ruler of Israel. He is the President of the United States! The President of the United States could break Israel in a day. If they'd stopped sending all that money and all those arms to Israel, Israel would have long ago been overcome.

If it were not for the promised protection and the manifest protection of the United States, Israel could not have won a single war with the Arabs.

It was because the US shipped in all kinds of planes, weapons, everything that Israel had to fight with! That's why Israel wins its wars.

Ted Rudow
One-mail

A valiant army officer

Col. Gulzar Uddin Ahmed is no more with us. But the role he played in capturing leading terrorists, will never ever be forgotten. He was a true patriot who loved his motherland dearly.

He risked his own life for bringing down the enemies of the state. Unfortunately, he was brutally killed by the betrayers. Is this what such a valiant army officer deserved? What kind of people are we? As long as the killers of Col. Gulzar Uddin Ahmed and other officers are not found and brought to justice, I guess we will never be safe. This is not one of those incidents we can mourn for a couple of days and then forget everything.

I pray for Col. Gulzar's departed soul,
Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka