

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.

New timing

The letter by Rumi Ahmed "Tortuous timing" is a very timely one.

I want to add some points:

1. Ours being a hot and humid country people have adjusted to evening marketing in towns and villages since time immemorial.

2. In Europe, North America, even in the foot hills of Himalayas Indian, Nepalese and Pakistani towns and villages where evenings are cold round the year, people try to get inside home with the sunset.

3. In the USA, the government and business community become very concerned whenever retail sell takes a downward trend.

4. Dhaka city alone boasts of one crore and 20 lakh population out of 15 core total population of Bangladesh.

5. Spending power is mainly

restricted to city and town people in Bangladesh. Besides well-to-do, even a daily labourer and rickshaw puller's spending is important for our cottage and small industries. If they are forced to become spendthrifts, the market driven force in economy will suffer. When every government the world over is trying to rejuvenate the retail market we are doing just the opposite.

6. The meager amount of electricity saved in desperation by closing the market at sunset and other measures like daylight saving hours have not appreciably improved the load shedding. May be we only make our judgment by statistics and theory on papers inside air-conditioned rooms and do not look into the practical and social aspects of people.

Sadeque

One-mail

Patriotism

George Bernard Shaw said "Patriotism is the conviction that your country is better than others because you were born in it." There have been many such writers, political activists such as Leo Tolstoy, Emma Goldman who have described patriotism as too narrow a concept to meet the necessities and ideologies of the working men and women of the world who believe in harmony. In one of her speeches Emma Goldman said patriotism justifies the killing of innocent human beings. Do we all define patriotism as the right to kill in the name of one's country? The more important question is SHOULD we consider patriotism as the act of looking down upon all the other nations and overlooking the faults, atrocities committed by our own nation? Let's not define patriotism in a way which allows politicians, influential people to manipulate us into considering the slaughter of harmless human beings as a noble cause.

When a country's bomb hits another nation's land, lets recognize the true victims and the innocent, silent sufferers before hooting and rejoicing in pride of power. The razed lands of Iraq and Palestine provide strong evidence of the fact that patriotism has been misconstrued on a number of occasions. We should not be numb to the feelings of someone suffering in some other nation just because we love our country too much.

Ansha Zaman
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

KSA woman minister

Appointment of a woman minister by the Saudi King is a bold step towards ensuring women's development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). But it is most unfortunate that a certain quarter has been spreading some propaganda stating that the first ever appointed minister in the Kingdom is under some restrictions to discharge her duties smoothly. But Ms. Norah Binte Abdullah al-Fayez, deputy education minister for female education affairs, KSA vide a recent statement told that she is under no restrictions to perform her job as a minister.

Deputy Minister Norah al-Fayez who is a King Saud University graduate and a post graduate in Sociology from an American university has cleared her position by affirming that she wishes to remain within her religious norms and cultural values while doing her job as the deputy minister. She expressed her firm hope and conviction that Saudi women would also attain the capability to play an important role in society as per demand of the time by acquiring proper education and training.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
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Tale of a child worker

A few days ago I visited Bandarban, one of the lands of natural beauty, accompanied by some of my friends. We hired a four wheeler jeep to enjoy the tour smoothly. Surprisingly, I met a child who was the helper/conductor of that jeep which climbs a number of hills every day. Undoubtedly, it was a risky job, but the boy performed spontaneously. When we

reached the peak of a hill named Neelgiri, 2400 feet above the sea level, I realized the pathetic condition of that child. I called him "Pioneer" because he made me know about many attractive places and hills on the way to Neelgiri. I couldn't resist my temptation to talk to him alone to know about his short but experienced life of sorrow and deep depression. I came to know that he grew up in a tribal family in Bandarban. His father was a jeep driver. His mother was often brutally beaten by his drunken father. He had nothing to do but cry himself. Once his mother was beaten brutally and divorced by his drunken father.

From that occurrence his miserable life became even more miserable.

Md. Kamrul Islam Mishu

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Iranian democrats

Reuel Marc Gerecht, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies and an expert on the Middle East, recently wrote in International Herald Tribune: "As Iranians have come to know theocracy intimately, secularism has become increasingly attractive. Iran now produces brilliant clerics who argue in favour of the separation of church and state as a means of saving the faith from corrupting power."

Indeed, most Iranians, especially women and the youth, never accepted the theocratic rule without protest. Iranian writer Azar Nafisi, who was expelled from her teaching position at Tehran University for refusing to wear veil, tells about the resistance women put up against the theocratic rule in her book Reading Lolita in Tehran.

Now all taboos have been broken in Iran and it will be impossible for the mullahs to impose the same rule again. Theocracy might have lost all its appeals even to many who initially supported it. As a consequence, repression in the name of religion can longer be possible. Politically speaking, it may lead to a tectonic shift in the entire region.

Bangladesh should be proud of its secular tradition.

Mahmood Elahi

Ottawa, Canada

Too soft!

Even though I do not support any political party, I support 110% the views expressed by the BNP parliamentary party regarding the interference of the Indian High Commissioner in our internal affairs. Questioning our water experts in our own country is uncalled for, unacceptable and demands a harsh response. The utterances of our foreign minister are equally deplorable.

We the patriots must raise and make our voices heard against the policy of appeasement by the government towards its Indian counterpart.

Nabil Ahmad Siddiqui

Shadhinota Saroni

Dhaka Cantonment

Drivers or killers?

I fully share the views expressed by Mr. Rahat in your column on 22nd June on the subject. It is very unfortunate to see that the on duty traffic policemen are oblivious of the countless traffic violations that are being committed by the bus drivers of Dhaka city particularly of some specific brands which have the most dented and dilapidated look of their so called public trans-

port. Because of heavy build and very shabby look of their vehicles they could not care less in damaging other vehicles ignoring all norms of traffic rules. Not only the drivers are unruly their assistants are equally if not more unruly as they scream and shout at the small private cars for space at the miseries/panic of private car owners. The rule that says the slower vehicle should move on the left lane and all overtaking be done from right seems to be forgotten all the time. Similarly, taking a right turn from left lanes has become a standard rule in this country. I wonder if the traffic police do know about these rules or if these rules have been written off from the book. I am pretty sure these route permit holders along with their accomplice drivers have an unholy alliance with the on duty traffic policemen who overlook all such violations in favour of personal gains.

Another point that pains us most is the arrogance of the first generation owners. These owners themselves do not know anything about the cars and the traffic laws and are entirely dependent on their arrogant/ignorant/immature and reckless drivers and do not have the guts to tell the drivers to follow the rules. They think that reaching 2-3 minutes earlier by breaking all rules and jeopardizing others is a wonderful job done by their drivers. These kinds of owners/drivers are in fact a majority that have compounded the problem.

The other thing that strikes me also is the reluctance of the traffic police to take any action on damage caused to small vehicles by big vehicles in traffic offences in the fear of causing congestion on the road. Because of no help from police it is impossible to get any kind of compensation from such evil doers- and for no reasons of yours you have to pay from your own pocket huge sums to repair the vehicle and at times for medical assistance to yourself.

Can the city/country expect to get out of this mess or how long will the department concerned remain oblivious of the issues like any other issue and wait until it has become a failed state in its entirety?

S.D. Khan

Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Ghoulish crimes

Home Minister Sahara Khatun has claimed that criminal activities have come down considerably. But alas, we see no sign of it. From reports of the media we learned about quite a number of daring crimes.

On June 23, 2009, dacoits tried to rob Amin Jewellers at Gulshan area in broad daylight.

Armed miscreants entered the shop situated at DCC market at Gulshan-2.

On 24 June, a gang of seven, in the guise of customers entered Abdullah Money Exchange on DIT road and looted Tk 14 lakh, the time was 2:15pm. On the same day, criminals shot dead a video cassette trader at his shop and a man power agent was stabbed to death at his house.

Petty crimes are also taking place round the clock, people are feeling very unsafe.

Is not the Home Ministry aware of the situation? To combat the crimes, the government must take adequate steps, the number of law-enforcing agents should be increased manifold.

Intelligence agencies must do their job sincerely.

Nur Jahan

Chittagong

Disaster management



TOMIZO MOLICK / DRKNEWS

so high and complicated that it takes great expertise and experienced manpower to address and handle the various services that need immediate support.

Over the years, Bangladesh has gained adequate empirical knowledge to handle and deal with such crisis in a well-defined manner.

Time has come now to enhance our expertise through practical and theoretical education and knowledge. We need to establish at least three disaster management teaching and training institutions, at Chittagong, Khulna, and Dhaka, to develop experienced manpower to work in such crisis situations.

This institutional management

would help to enhance our capacity to work in such situations.

Nasrullah

One-mail

Energy saving

It is appreciable that the government has taken an initiative to have electrical energy by utilizing daylight in these interiors. So, the architects should give more emphasis on daylight inclusion and designing energy efficient buildings through manipulating proper built-space volume, openings and setbacks.

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professional duty.

The factual saying, which cannot be denied is that; "Although murder has no tongue; yet it speaks." For this incident, it should be doubly so, and this has to be proved by the police! If not, then law and order becomes a farce. If this happens, then it will surely herald the beginning of the end for this government; like it or not!

"Uneasy lies the head, that wears the crown." Today this is the fact of life, for this popular democratic government. They cannot allow a gang of criminals to challenge their capability!

S.A. Mansoor

Dhaka

Harassment

Just a month ago, in the Star magazine a sufferer wrote a letter about the ordeal she had to endure at the US embassy during her interview for seeking US immigrant visa. Not only that, rather these days the US embassy here in Dhaka is not issuing immigrant visa during the initial interview on most of the occasions. They are harassing the immigrant visa seekers by asking irrelevant questions and it has become a common phenomenon during the time of interview.

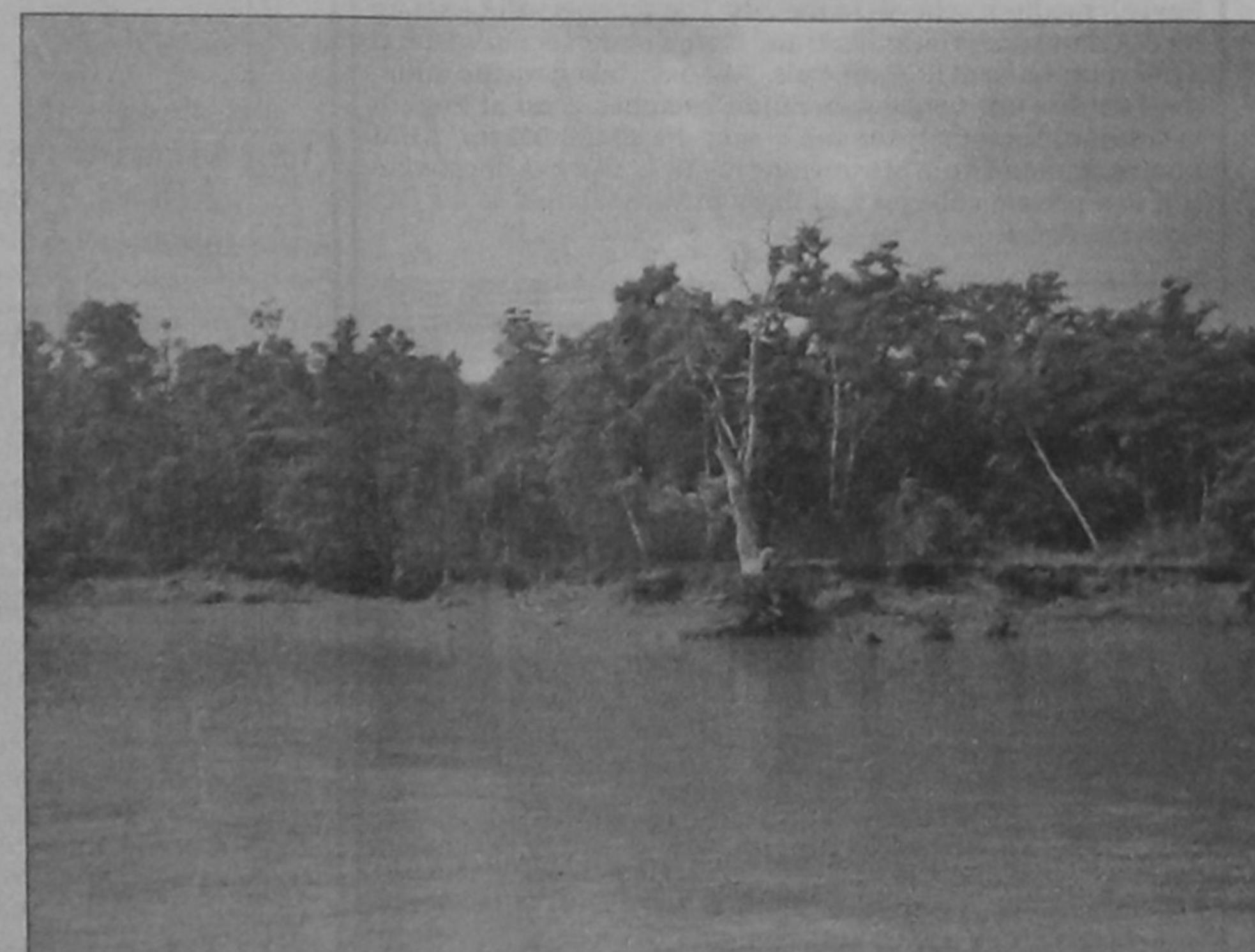
I know that the US visa policy is very strict nowadays but it is also expected that the genuine visa seekers would not be harassed in the process of vigorous checking and cross checking. But in reality, most of the genuine visa seekers are being harassed by the embassy people.

Sheikh Iraj

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Biodiversity and our existence



It has been estimated that more than 50 million species of plants, animals and micro-organisms exist in the world. Out of these, about two million organisms have been identified so far. Our planet's requirement and services depend mainly on biological resources. Human society depends on biological resources, their diversity and the ecosystem that sustain them. Biological resources not only provide us nourishment, clothing, housing, fuel and medicine but also meet other requirements.

Maintenance of ecological balance, conservation of natural resources and prevention of soil erosion may be considered as the examples of indirect use of biodiversity.

The responsible factors for the loss of biodiversity may be natural or artificial. The natural causes

include drought, flood, storm, land slides, diseases, earthquake etc. The artificial causes include grazing, urbanization, industrialization, scientific and educational research, road and dam construction all leading to destruction of habitat and over exploitation of plants and animals for commercial purposes.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) believes the commitment to reduce biodiversity loss by 2010 will not be met. So it is the right time to preserve biological as well as ecological diversity to achieve sustainable development.

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