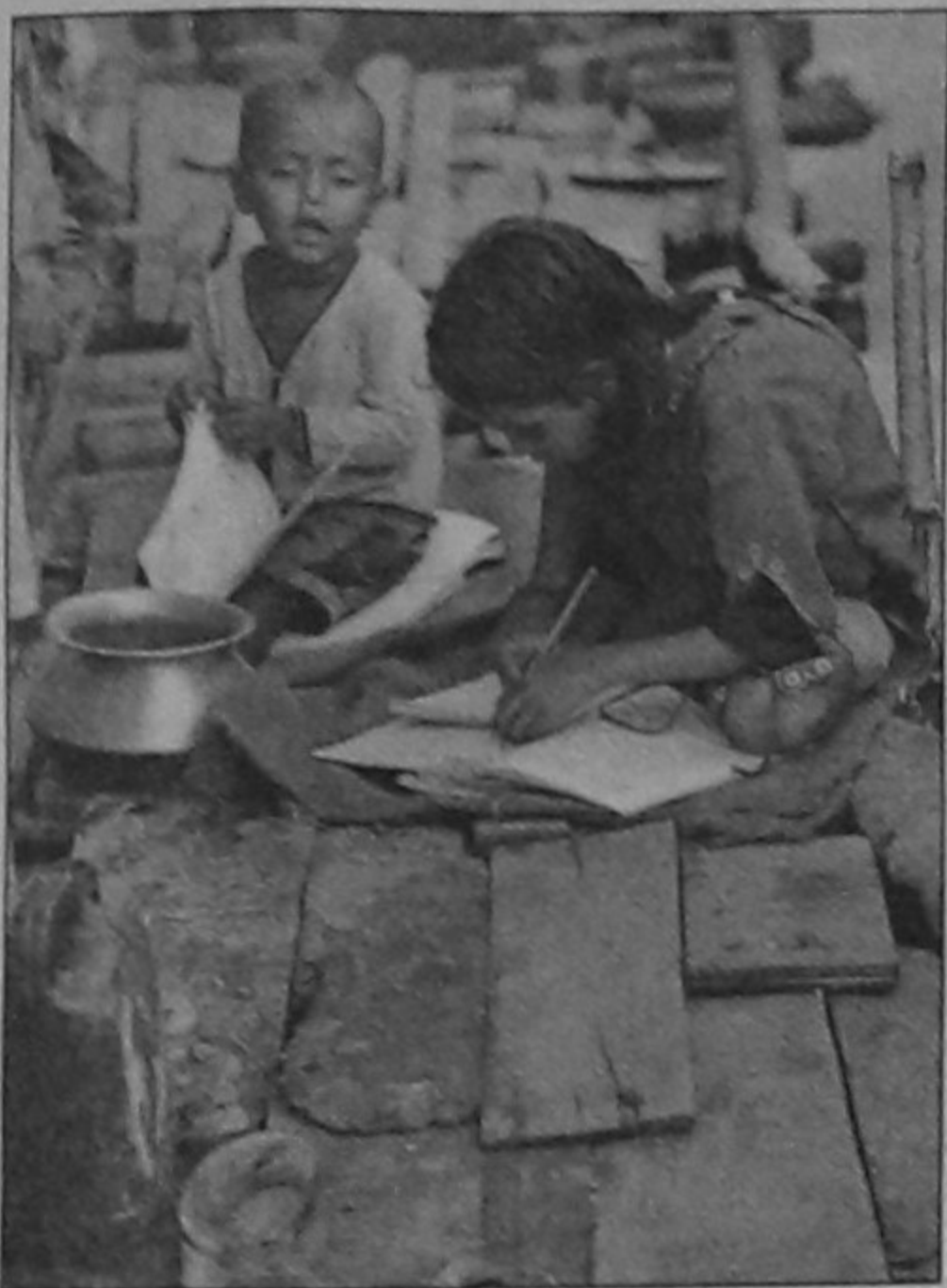


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Rights of the poor



Everyone wants to see their country in a beautiful and powerful state where there will be no problems at all. But the dream does not come true until the whole nation works hard with honesty. Unfortunately, Bangladesh is only for the rich people.

Our education system is in a complete mess. Many students do not get admission to good institutions only because they cannot bribe the head of the institute and they cannot even afford the private schools, colleges and universities.

If we look at the private hospitals they are really good and provide modern treatment and all possible com-

forts. But if we go to any government hospital we will see a large number of people waiting and the patients are all poor. People receive harsh behaviour from all the staff and there is also corruption.

We have a hazardous transportation system. The public buses running in the city are in deplorable condition. There are no trains inside the city.

Often we blame the government, but we are the ones who should be blamed because we have learned to live with trouble and have not fought for our rights.

Myesha Choudhury
Old town, Dhaka

Win against West Indies!

After Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was injured many of the cricket lovers in this country were shocked watching the new captain leave the field. But it was Tamim's hundred that pulled supporters back to the game. He scored a patient century and was well supported by his top order teammates. It seemed Bangladesh would take a massive lead. But the lower order batsman had no answer to West Indies fast bowlers and they got bundled out giving the West Indies more than a chance to win the Test. But it was debutant Mahmudullah Ryad who took five wickets and the support of his standing captain Shakib Al Hasan that clinched the issue in our favour. Congratulations, Tigers.

Tausif Choudhury
Purana Paltan, Dhaka

I would like to congratulate all the players and management of the cricket team and hope they will bring great success for the country in the future.

Seefat Kazol
One-mail



US-Russia summit

On 6 July, President Obama arrived in Moscow for a summit with his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev. Possibly this is the first ever US Russia summit and Obama inaugurated the long expected summit with confidence 'predicting extra ordinary progress'. Mr Obama said in a statement that 'The US and Russia have more in common than they have differences'. In response to the journalists the Russian President said, "We will have a full-pledged discussion of the relations between the two countries, closing some of the pages of the past and opening some of the pages of the future." This visit of President Obama will definitely cut a good figure in the history of diplomacy.

However, much will depend how the two countries handle some important strategic issues.

Tonmoy Anowar
Utara, Dhaka

Callous people and traffic

Just about a month ago, we witnessed a horrific accident at the Moghbazar rail crossing. A bus was rammed by a speeding train and it created havoc. It was not only the negligence of the responsible ones at the crossing but also the hastiness of the pedestrians and travelers, who defy all the rules while moving on the road, that caused the incident. It was expected that at least some sense would prevail and we will be more careful while crossing those level crossings. But unfortunately, there is no sign of improvement. The buses still fight to get on the tracks and cross it at the last moment, the pedestrians move to and fro on the rail lines even when the train is just moments away, cars and rickshaws try to come from other side of the road to take a turn creating gridlock. And most shockingly, the traffic policeman stands there and literally does nothing. If this is the situation, such incidents will continue to occur. Building the flyovers on the rail crossings and moving the rail lines away from the busy city roads look like possibilities far away, but at least till then we can ensure locking the level crossings with adequate time in hand for all the vehicles to stop at a safe distance and ensure that people comply with traffic rules.

Quazi Munira Rahman
Niketon, Dhaka

Holy Miraj

Miraj is the direct proof of 'Tawhid' as well as the expression of 'Shan-e-Resalat'. Distrust in Miraj means distrust not only in 'Resalat' but also in 'Tawhid'.

Miraj is, for humankind as a whole, the direction to the truth as well as the light of life. Iman and Miraj are undivided.

Miraj after Eid-e-Azam is the highest pleasure and reward of believers. Be included in the significant pleasure of Miraj. Also be united with the aim of forming a Resalat-centred life, society, state and global system.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Fadil
Madrasa
Chittagong

Who is the highest authority?

The speaker constituted a parliamentary committee to investigate the alleged corruption, misappropriation and financial irregularities of the former speaker, his deputy and chief whip. The speaker did not act alone, he was authorised to make the committee by the House. After a long tireless investigation, the committee has submitted the findings of their investigation before parliament. The investigation has reportedly found proof and hard evidence of corruption and misuse of power by all three during their office.

The former speaker deputy speaker and chief whip, now popularly known as the 'trio' did not accept the recommendations of the committee saying that this committee was constituted without lawful authority and they are not compelled to accept it. All of them have also denied the charges and blamed the government saying that this government has done this just to harass them and their party politically. Their party, BNP, has officially challenged the legality of the committee and rejected the committee's report.

So far we know, parliament is the highest authority in any democratic country. The people of the country send their representatives through countrywide election to this parliament to run the government and make laws for them. According to the above 'trio' and their party, parliament has no jurisdiction to investigate irregularities of any individual or individuals, then who have the authority and jurisdiction to investigate such matters?

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Saudi Arabia and Iran

In an editorial: 'Green light to bomb Iran,' The Washington Times wrote on July 7: "Even the Saudis know something has to be done to stop Iran's nuclear programme."

In fact, Saudi Arabia has more reasons to worry about nuclear-armed Iran. Although the biggest exporter of oil in the world, Saudi Arabia's population of about 25 million is a fraction of Iran's 75 million. Iranian armed forces are many times bigger. Shiite mullahs of Iran have long made it clear that they want to end the Sunni domination of the Middle East. Moreover, restless Shiite minority in Saudi Arabia look to Iran as their leader. As such, a nuclear-armed Iran might spell disaster for Saudi Arabia.

Already America is in retreat in Iraq where the Shiite majority now control the government. In Lebanon, the Shiite Hezbollah is far better armed than the Lebanese army and Sunni-led government of Prime Minister Saad Hariri remains at the mercy of the Hezbollah. In Iran itself, the Shiite mullahs are bent on crushing the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people. Atomic bomb in the hands of the Iranian mullahs will give them the power to intimidate their adversaries at home and abroad. As the Washington Times puts it: "The strategic lines can be drawn with precision. Iran is nearing the stage where it will be in a position to test a

nuclear weapon. A nuclear-armed Iran is an existentialist threat to Israel, Saudi Arabia and other states in the region ... Israel has the best-equipped forces to undertake the mission, though we assume that other regional actors will cooperate on covert operations that no doubt are already taking place."

If Saudi Arabia increases massively its oil production (say another 3 to 4 million barrel per day), it can bring down the oil prices from its current level of \$70 per barrel to \$30 per barrel, depriving Iran of massive oil revenues, and the Shiite mullahs will be forced to give up their nuclear programme. Otherwise, they will not be able to pay for massive subsidies and face the discontent of the rural people whose support they now need more than ever to retain their precarious hold on power. Instead of bombing Iran, Saudi Arabia may be prodded to use its oil weapon against Iran.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Giant earthworm!

Under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Jodi Johnson-Maynard, a team at the University of Idaho is searching for the giant Palouse earthworm or giant Washington earthworm which has taken a mythic qualities in the vast agricultural region that stretches from eastern Washington into the Idaho panhandle. Giant Palouse Earthworm (Driloleirus americanus) is a rare, large as much as 3 feet long pinkish-white earthworm which has been seen only 4 times in the past 110 years. In the late 1800's, they were abundant around the Palouse, a region of the north-eastern United States which is a major wheat-producing agricultural area. Locally also known as GPE, these earthworms live in burrows as much as 15 feet deep and secrete a lily-like smell when handled. The GPE has already been declared as an endangered species in the United States.

Earthworms are said to be the natural plough. They are tireless tillers of our soils and their castings are the richest and best of all fertilizers. It is hoped that Dr. Johnson-Maynard's team will be suc-

cessful in finding and preserving the giant earthworms. Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
SAU, Dhaka

Road construction

I am writing on the conditions prevailing in the US. LANE RENTAL charges (a charge in addition to Liquidated Damage) are introduced on many important road construction projects in USA to reduce public sufferings during construction. In brief it works as follows.

1. A User Delay Cost (in dollar per day per lane, this is the rent for closing a lane for a day or part of it) is set depending on traffic volume and importance of the road. It is an estimate of the loss in dollar by the road users due to use of a longer detour, longer travel time, congestions etc during construction of a section of a road.

2. While bidding, the contractor is required to bid in 2 sections,
A= Total for the contract work items, and
B= Total Lane Rental amount = Number of days he needs to complete the job x UDC

The contractor with the lowest (A+B) amount gets the job. This way a contractor with a higher A can get the job if his B is low enough to make him the low bidder.

Keep in mind, A+B amount is only for the determination of the low bidder and not for payment for contract work items. With the progress of work, as he closes the road/lane Lane Rent is deducted from his B amount at a rate equal to the set daily UDC.

3. (a) If he finishes the work by his bid time he will be paid per A with no deduction for lane rent since his total rent will be same as his bid amount for B. (b) If he fails to complete the project by his time and completion is delayed the contractor is paid (the amount due for his completed work) minus (UDC x No of days delayed), thus costing him the rent for extra days he took to complete the work. (c) If he finishes the work and opens all lanes to traffic before the completion time, he is awarded an incentive in addition to his dues for work items.

This amount is usually equal to UDC x No. of days he saved. This incentive is usually capped to a reasonable maximum amount.

4. Provisions are kept so that the Department and the Contractor can come to a consensus on extension or reduction of completion time in case a critical work volume changes or if the contractor cannot work due to unusual circumstances beyond his control (like rain/flood etc.)

This way the contractor is awarded an incentive for his early completion and fined for his delay to complete a project.

Of course, all these measures can work if, and only if, the field records of lane closures are honestly maintained signed by the Engineer and the Contractor or their authorized representatives on a weekly basis. If the same old practice of manipulation of records of Tar Boiler/Roller Rentals in favour of contractors continues then it will neither benefit the public, nor the departments.

Enamul Huq
Michigan, USA

Fair journalism

I was sick to my stomach when I saw a television report about atrocities committed on child by a family where she was working as a servant. Disgusting as it might have appeared and regardless of however much I might have condemned such treatment of any human being, I did not appreciate the irresponsible television reporting of the matter. It has become a usual scene of major television channels in Bangladesh to parade alleged criminals or apprehended individuals before the cameras in a media cell.

In my many years if legal practice around the globe, I have never seen any such arrangement in any civilised nation where the alleged criminals, even before or after the charge sheets were submitted, would be paraded before such a media cell. Every person must be treated innocent until proven guilty. I was also shocked to have seen the alleged guilty individual, a lady in her middle-age, was being forced by the female television reporter to show her

face to the cameras in order to name and shame her before even the trials were even initiated. In the developed countries, regardless of the gravity of the alleged crime, the accused are given the option to hide their faces from the media. The media do run high risks of being slammed with several serious litigations if any such reporting is proven to be false in the court of law later.

We must remember that it is the basic principle of equity laws to 'let 100 criminals go by but not to punish a single innocent' and any such wrong reporting may destroy a whole family from re-integrating with society later. The reporters must play a neutral role in exposing their findings and I believe they do require basic legal training in this matter.

It seems we often forget that even the worst criminals have human rights too and that is the mark of human civilisation. Irresponsible journalism often gives rise to hidden agendas emanating from yellow journalism.

Mufassil Islam
Human Rights Advocate
UK

Green chilly

I was shocked to listen to the response of the commerce minister on current market situation, especially the very high price of green chilly. How can he forget that this is the only item which each and every Bangladeshi consumes every day, irrespective of where he is living and what is his or her economic condition?

I think it has serious political sensitivity. We must not forget the exit of former food minister/adviser Mr Tapan Chowdhury of the last caretaker government for careless comment on the price issue.

His comment about the ability of any government in the world to control/contain the price of green chilly is simply unwarranted. He should have consulted his most efficient colleague Mrs Matia Choudhury and prepare his response. The production and supply have direct relation to market operation of any product.

Why didn't he invite a few actual traders from the local market and from the supply point before going to address

the issues. He likes to talk to the electronic media. Fine. He could ask some experts to find out the real cause of the sudden rise in the price of green chilly in Dhaka retail shops.

Quadir
California, USA

Great example of honesty

On July 17, 2009 a news report was published in The Daily Star under the heading "Rare example of honesty" and I learned that a rickshaw-puller returned Tk 2.5 lakh to its owner.

Such news makes me glad and at the same time sad by the hard fact that human beings are basically dishonest, otherwise we would have heard about acts of dishonesty once in a while and such news would have been cited as rare incidents. It would have been a different world altogether!

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Bangladesh is a poor country. More than 40% people are now living below poverty line. It's a country of cultural and religious harmony in which different cast, class and religious groups live peacefully.

Capitalism inextricably linked with globalisation ignites socio-economic disparity. As a result, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Besides the existing socio-economic system encourages us to be more individualistic.

Now most of our thinking is self-centered rather than mass-people oriented. It results in a disintegration of family bond; now more and more extended families in many countries like Bangladesh are turning into nuclear families.

Dhaka is developing day by day into a concrete city. People from all the regions of Bangladesh are flocking to the capital city with a view to looking for jobs.

Most of them become rickshaw-pullers, day labours and domestic helps. Rickshaw-pullers suffer through an inhuman life. They have no permanent place to sleep at night. The so-called civilized society does not consider them as human beings.

But there are also a few people who are poor in terms of wealth but richer than wealthy people in terms of honesty and integrity. Once again we observed this in the capital city. Rupchan, a rickshaw-puller in the capital, has set a rare example of honesty by returning Tk 2.50 lakh to its custodian which he found abandoned on the road near Nilkhet on Wednesday. So we should appreciate him for his honesty because many of us might not be able to do it.

So, finally we can say there are not only dishonest people in society but also a few honest and upright men. They are our only hope.

Suman Saha
MBA (Strategic and International Management)
University of Dhaka

Our 2nd Test win...

Like many other Bangladeshis, I was ecstatic by our 2nd Test. However, before basking in glory too much we need to be mindful of a couple of things. First, we need to remember that it was almost West Indies "C" team which we got our victory against. Secondly, the team had to keep in mind that the series was not over yet.

I am not trying to belittle the hard earned victory by our cricket team; rather I am as a fellow citizen and well-wisher trying to caution us from indulging ourselves with too much gratification. Because as a nation, it takes a little for us to be over emotional and be oblivious in the very next moment.

Therefore I think we need to take a deep breath and figure out how we can sustain this success in the future as well. Amid all of our shortcomings (as one of the poorest and most corrupt nations in the world) this kind of success is a breath of fresh air which enlivens our hope as a nation.

We need to take this success with guarded optimism and transform it into action; i.e. how to improve our cricket more at the grassroots level or how to make our organisational structure for cricket more efficient and accountable.

We all wish to see more golden days.
Zafar Hadi
California, USA

Tourism development



Bangladesh has huge possibility to develop itself as an attractive tourist destination. But due to lack of government initiative it has not been possible so far. After the selection of Mr GM Kader as minister for tourism, we are hopeful that something significant will be achieved. The minister in a recent talk show on a private TV channel looked aware of the situation. What I feel is Bangladesh needs to address the following issues to be a very attractive tourist destination:

- Construction of roads in the tourist spots.
- Taxi service.
- Hotel/Motel with professional people and clean environment.
- Traditional cultural/religious fairs to be arranged at the spots.

- Langalbandh at Narayanganj can be developed as a very good tourist destination for West Bengal Hindus if it is advertised in West Bengal media with due coverage.

- Also the birthplace of Thakur Anukul Chandra Dev and other Hindu saints should be highlighted.

- The Bhawal Mandir at Joydevpur can also be a good tourist spot.

- Sundarban, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Rangamati, Bandarban, Ali Kadam etc should be well connected with other places.

Hope the above would be looked into and Bangladesh will have good tourism industry.

Kazi Nasim Ahmed
Dhanmondi
Dhaka