

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.



Local fruits

Each and every season in our country turns up with its appeal. Wherever and whenever you visit the different parts of country, you will find nature is clad in deep green, trees are laden with fresh, colourful, and mouth-watering fruits. Even if you do not have the chance of visiting rural areas, pay a visit to a local fruit market, you will see a variety of fruits in different times of the year. We should encourage everyone, particularly our children, to develop the habit of eating more and more domestic fruits like jackfruit, guava, black berry, pineapple, watermelon, mango, plum and many other types fruits that grow in our fertile land. It is a widely known fact that the flora and fauna in a region are in-

ex- tricable linked to each other. The fruits that grow in a particular region are very essential for the people living in the area and consumption of these fruits rather than exotic ones increase vitality of people. In other words, we should give priority to our domestic fruits over fruits imported from abroad. Moreover, local farmers will be more motivated to grow more fruit trees which would have a significant impact in reducing air pollution.

Furthermore, we can save a lot of foreign currency as the fruit sellers have to spend a lot of money to import it from foreign countries.

G.S. Hossain
Rahmatganj, Chittagong

women to choose a traditional life style, the US President added "I do believe that a woman who is denied education is denied equality.....And that is why the United States will partner with any Muslim-majority country to support expanded literacy for girls, and to help young women pursue employment through micro-financing that helps people live their dreams". The President also announced an initiative with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to eradicate polio.

We greatly appreciate the feelings and good will the US President expressed in his Cairo speech towards improving relations between the United States and Muslim countries.

It is sincerely hoped that the hostilities and mistrusts existing between the United States and the Muslim world will be significantly dissolved by President Obama's Cairo speech. In reciprocation, the Muslim world leaders should also take initiatives to resolve the crisis between the Muslim countries and the United States of America.

Islam is a religion of peace and restraint. Islam never discriminates human beings for their religious identity. The Holy Quran is explicit about one thing that there is no compulsion in religion.

We sincerely hope that President Barack Obama with his new vision and mission would help the suffering Muslims of the world to establish their genuine rights, for example, the rights of Palestinian Muslims.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System, SAU, Dhaka

Obama's historic speech

The 'FRONTLINES', a publication of the Bureau of Legislative and Public Affairs, USAID in its latest (July 2009) has published the main features of the historic speech which the US President Barack Obama had delivered in Cairo on June 4, 2009. In this speech which has been translated into 15 different languages on the White House website, President Obama said "I've come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect". The US President further said "Americans are ready to join with citizens and governments, community organisations, religious leaders, and businesses in Muslim countries around the world to help our people pursue a better life." Obama pledged US foreign assistance for education, women's rights, democracy and economic development. Expressing respect for the rights of

Lure of lucre!

A front-page report from New York on the large numbers of corrupt officials netted by the police for corruption in New Jersey USA was published in a local daily on 25 July. Is this a new manifestation of the principles of free enterprise? What was however really surprising was the inclusion of five Rabbis (Jewish priest) among the 44 people arrested! Here we have priests, who are considered to be pious and supposed to teach us about good and right living with high moral values, joining the ranks of the corrupt! This only demonstrates what the lust and lure for the lucre can lead to!

Fortunately for us, no Imam or preacher from the church are on this unholy list. What action has the Jewish religious set-up taken about

Road network

With the monsoon setting in, Dhaka's traffic situation is getting out of control and the sufferings of the general public have increased almost three times compared to what it was before the rains came. The city's drainage system is no better than the other utility services which our government is supposed to deliver to the people who have voted them to power. Every day new cars and rickshaws from other neighbouring districts are coming to the city. The city has shortage of parking space as there is no guideline for residential, commercial and industrial areas.

Schools, colleges and universities are growing like wild mushrooms and the authorities concerned, especially the UGC, is giving licence to these universities without looking at the facilities. As a result, none of the private universities in Dhaka has either a campus or proper parking lots, playgrounds.

Like all the past governments, the present government still has not taken up any major programme for making new roads

and bypasses for smooth flow of traffic.

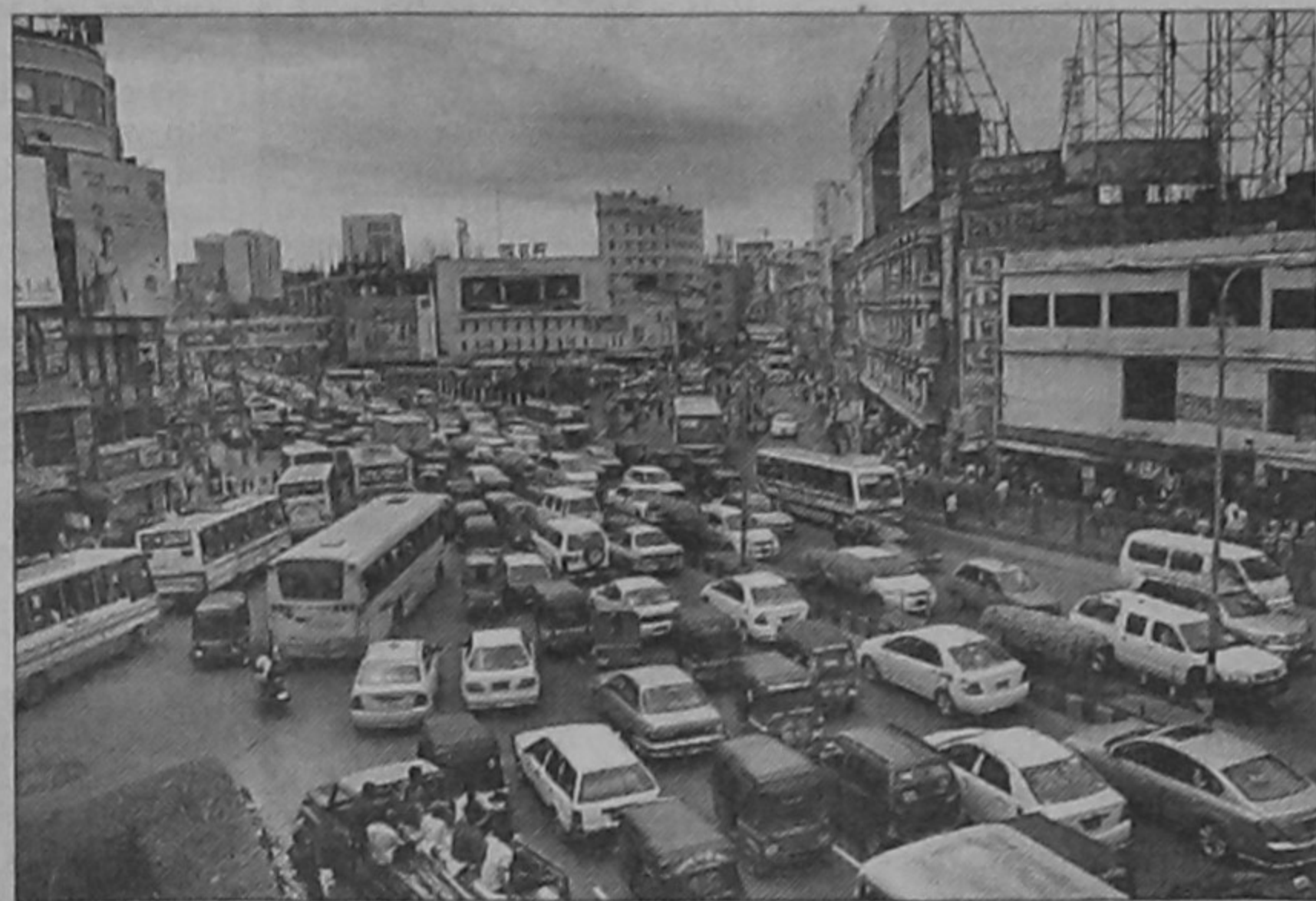
Dhaka lacks east-west connections more than north-south ones. The town developed in the north south direction due to its geographical location as both east and west were low lying areas/wet lands, but unfortunately none of the past governments, including the AL and its grand alliance member Jatiya Party which were in power for 5+10 = 15 long years, did not take any initiative for

constructing the ultimate east west roads, rather all the governments of the past let the eastern and the western side of Dhaka grow in an unplanned manner.

Dhaka needs at least six east-west and six north-south roads which will eventually end up at the ring road surrounding Dhaka.

The government and Rajuk, please wake up before this capital dies.

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka



AMDADUL HUQ / DRINKNEWS

Unregistered cars

I have been driving in Dhaka for the last 16 years. I have seen that unregistered cars are being driven in Dhaka city with no hesitation whatsoever in front of the law enforcers. Surprisingly, even in Dhaka Cantonment these cars are moving freely. Has the government officially allowed people to drive cars without numbers for an indefinite period of time?

Syed Murshed
Uttara
Dhaka

Shipbuilding industry

Bangladesh has entered the export market of sea-going vessels. The shipbuilding industry is now in a position to get a place on the list of priority sectors of the new export policy. The other sectors to be on the list, are agro and agro-processing products, light engineering, footwear and leather, pharmaceuticals, software and ICT products and home textiles.

Now, Bangladesh has become a popular destination in building small sea-going ships as South Korea, China, Vietnam and other countries go for larger container ships. Foreign buyers are now coming to Bangladesh because shipbuilding in East Asian countries has become more costly due to steep wage increases. The country exported its first ship built by Ananda Shipyard and Slipways to Denmark last year under the agreement with Stella Shipping Co. of Denmark. Ananda alone has struck deals worth around \$225 million to build at least 24 vessels, including six ferries for leading companies in Denmark, Germany and Mozambique.

There is a demand of USD 400.00 billion for shipbuilding industry in the global market. The EPB also forecasts that there lies a huge prospect for earning foreign currency as well as employment in this sector by using our available skilled but comparatively cheap labour and expert engineers of the country.

In line with diversification of our country's export base, potential and new sectors should be given preference. The central bank should instruct the scheduled banks to lend to the shipbuilding industries at lower rates and may fix a maximum interest rate ceiling. The bank may also help this new sector by giving cash incentives on exports and bring it under the facility of Export Development Fund (EDF) programme.

Md. Saiful Islam
AVR, EXIM Bank Ltd
Motijheel Branch
Dhaka

Indian HC's comments

I am writing regarding the recent remarks made by the Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravorty which were beyond any diplomatic norms, to say the least. His dismissal of expert opinions regarding the Tipaimukh dam would have been met with outrage if it were in any other country. But this is Bangladesh, and, as usual, the response from our foreign ministry was meek.

I am writing regarding another comment from the Indian HC that approximately 25,000 Bangladeshi visa applicants don't come back from India! My question to him: How did the Ambassador come up with the numbers? Was a professional study done regarding illegal immigration (i.e. what exactly is the attraction etc)? Did the Indian HC also do a survey as to how many Indians are working here in Bangladesh (possibly illegally)? The numbers would be staggering. As usual, the Bangladesh govt. possibly does not even have a clue.

Enough is enough and we need tough/visionary leadership from our foreign ministry. This is high time that we stand up to this kind of unprofessional remarks. This is souring the relationship between India and Bangladesh even further (let alone the Farakka/Tipaimukh issues) and also is not going unnoticed by millions of NRIs all over the world.

Bangladesh-India relationship needs to improve for the sake of the region and the millions inhabiting it.

Yamin Ibrahim
One-mail

How could the Indian High Commissioner call the visa seekers of Bangladesh "touts and brokers"? This is a highly derogatory remark about the citizens of an independent country from a "diplomat". Has he not learnt anything about diplomatic norms before his posting to a sovereign country? How will he react if we term the Indian visa seekers as "cheats and terrorists"?

Acitizen
One-mail

Better service needed

Khulna to Dhaka via Mawa is an important route.

However, better bus service is needed on this route to cater to the ever increasing number of travellers.

Kamal Hossain
Khulna

Drought in Bangladesh

Drought has long been considered to be a hazard responsible for ups and downs of many civilizations in the world. Drought occurs when rainfall is absent for a prolonged period of time, causing earth to parch, wells to dry, underground water to fall, crops to wither leading to crop failure and scarcity of fodder for livestock. Because of meagre supply of water, food and fodder both humans and livestock suffer untold miseries. Drought extends its ominous tentacles slowly but surely. In Bangladesh, drought in the northern districts is very common. The hydrological and climate conditions of Bangladesh are characterized by 'too much water in the wet

monsoon season and too little water in the dry months, creating a drought environment. Now it is the Bengali month of Shraavan and the rainy season is going to be over but there has not been enough rain. Rainfall in June was 37% below average and in July 21-22% lower than average.

The bad weather of this monsoon may put many farmers in a difficult situation. So, the government should take a long-term mitigation programme in order to alleviate the effects of drought.

Md. Mohsinul Hoque
Student of MS
Dept. of Geography & Environment
University of Dhaka



IGBAL AHMED / DRINKNEWS

these Rabbis? Have they been removed from the holy hierarchy? There was no news about this. If nothing comes out, then we may think that such deeds are condoned but not condemned by the Rabbinate! S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Our maritime boundary

It appears that the Bangladesh government is going about it the wrong way. India and Myanmar are being blamed for submitting their maritime boundary limitations to the UN which detract from Bangladesh's fair share of the resources. Did India or Myanmar consult Bangladesh and have Bangladesh's agreement to delimit such boundary and send it to the UN? Obviously not. So why is Bangladesh so eager to submit its boundary limitations after India and Myanmar agree to it?

There is something seriously wrong here! And it is that the present law of the sea as regards coastline (or the baseline) does not apply to Bangladesh as it has no rocky or permanent coast which can be used to define its baseline. Old chars disappear, new chars rise in the delta basin every year and also the river

running into the Bay of Bengal change their courses frequently. So how can Bangladesh put its claim for a baseline to the UN where the definition of the baseline does not fit its case. It must also be remembered that it is the baseline which is all important from which the economic zone and continental shelf zone etc. are measured. If Bangladesh has no registered claim for a baseline, then negotiations about the other lines are meaningless.

Bangladesh therefore must approach the UN body to inform them of this deficiency in the present law of the sea as regards Bangladesh's unique geography and have some other reasonable definition of baseline such as say 6 fathom depth line on the seabed, or a baseline simply defined by latitudes and longitudes at various points. This must be done by Bangladesh alone without any consultation with its neighbours for their agreement, and Bangladesh must submit such a baseline to the UN at the earliest, and move to the International Court for amendment of the present law of the sea. The matter can also be discussed in UN Councils and there may be other countries lying on delta land such as Laos, Cambodia etc. who I am sure would support such an amendment.

After submitting the baseline limitations, then the other zone lines will fall as under the present law of the sea and Bangladesh can submit such boundaries also to UN. If India and Myanmar do not like it then all three countries may sit together for an equitable settlement for these zones (but not the baseline). Equity is a principle that is only applied when the present law is found to be deficient. So it is necessary to claim and show to the UN that the present law is deficient for Bangladesh to define its baseline. The maritime boundary, especially the delimitation of Bangladesh baseline, should be topmost priority of the government.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Poor handling

A proverb goes ---- even a mad man can choose the things which are better for him. It seems we are worse than lunatics. Yes, I am talking about our maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. We know that we have a vast area in this adjoining sea as per international rules. But our two neighbouring countries India and Myanmar want to have a more than fair share of the Bay. They have already filed their claims to the UN. But we are still doing nothing. Some months back, Myanmar tried to install some heavy machinery in our territorial waters to extract oil, gas etc. India often sends their naval vessels into our territory.

We have to handle the issue a lot more efficiently to avoid incurring huge losses.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Baby-taxi

It is estimated that two million people in Metropolitan Dhaka belong to the so called middle-income group. They are facing trouble while commuting in the city. Private car is out of their reach. Taxi-cab service is inadequate and also too costly for them. When a family likes to join in a marriage ceremony, it needs a low cost vehicle to go to a community centre. When a patient is to be shifted to a hospital, an affordable baby taxi is needed. If a family wants to go to shopping to celebrate a festival, a baby-taxi is required. To appear in a public examination hall, a student needs transport service of a baby-taxi. It is the reality.

One cannot move to all desired places by available bus service in Dhaka. But it is unfortunate that the past governments ignored the needs of two million middle-income group city dwellers. Rickshaws are not allowed on all the roads. Then how will they move? The decision makers in the administration are either availing personal cars or government vehicles. They do not feel the acute problem of the people. A lot of restrictions are imposed to stop import and registration of low cost CNG driven baby taxis. The Awami League has assumed power after a landslide victory in the last national election. It must take steps to remove the transport problem of the city dwellers. A baby taxi occupies less space in a road than a car or jeep but can carry the same number of passengers. That can contribute to reducing traffic congestion.

As a member of the middle-income group in Dhaka, I would urge the government to withdraw all sorts of financial and administrative restrictions on import and registration of baby taxi. Definitely, it would help people like us.

Md. Ashraf Hossain
Ramna, Dhaka

Admission tests

Results of the HSC exams have recently been published. We are happy to see the lovely faces of our next generation who have done so well. But the smiling faces will become gloomy very soon, we easily understand, when the dates of admission tests will be announced in different higher educational institutions. They have to run from post to pillar in a very restless manner during this period. The guardians and applicants take it as normal as they know the reality of our country. But the problem arises when the authorities declare that the admission tests will be held on the same day in different universities.

I think it's not fair. The government/UGC should take the necessary steps to coordinate the whole process, so that a candidate gets the option to appear in admission tests of different universities.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Business
Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

Inspiring words

Mr Kajal's letter on our cricket is both inspired and inspiring. From Kolkata he shared the joy of our cricket team's triumph in West Indies.

He has indeed answered the questions raised by the critics of Bangladesh cricket very well. There is no doubt that he is a great well wisher of our cricket team.

The spirit demonstrated by him has to be placed in the right perspective. We, the people of the subcontinent, have many things in common. In fact, Bangladeshi cricket fans are roughly divided into two camps: the Indian fans and those fans of Pakistan. They support these two teams with as much enthusiasm as the Indians and Pakistanis themselves do. Indeed, cricket has brought people closer to each other!

I was a great fan of the Indian team in the seventies when Sunil Gavaskar and Gundappa Viswanath were the backbone of Indian batting. I still remember many memorable innings played by these two.

Finally, thank you, Mr Kajal, for your inspiring words.

Mansur Raja

Dhaka

Traffic and Rajuk/DCC

The DMP commissioner was right to blame DCC and Rajuk for the nagging traffic congestion in the city. If you look around Gulistan which is abutted by DCC and Rajuk offices, you'll find almost all the markets owned by DCC without any space for even a single car. The building designs must have parking spaces with a specified calculation. But unfortunately all the DCC markets- parking spaces have been converted into underground shops forcing the cars to be parked outside. DCC is realizing the rents from these illegal underground shops and the officials concerned undoubtedly got 'something' into their pockets. We don't have any other watchdogs to oversee this abject violation of laws by the people who are entrusted with the responsibilities to enforce it! The other areas notorious for traffic also have the same problem - markets and buildings without parking spaces. I request the JS bodies concerned, as they are the peoples' representatives, to open an enquiry and take appropriate steps, and stern punitive actions against those who are responsible for violating building codes, who do not shoulder the responsibilities to oversee it and who pocketed handsome amounts by allowing these underground shops to operate.

We want to see a free flowing Dhaka city and want a vigilant JS watchdog to save us from wasting numerous man-hours.

Dr. M M Mortayez Amin
Consultant, Labaid Fertility Centre
Labaid Specialized Hospital
Dhanmondi, Dhaka