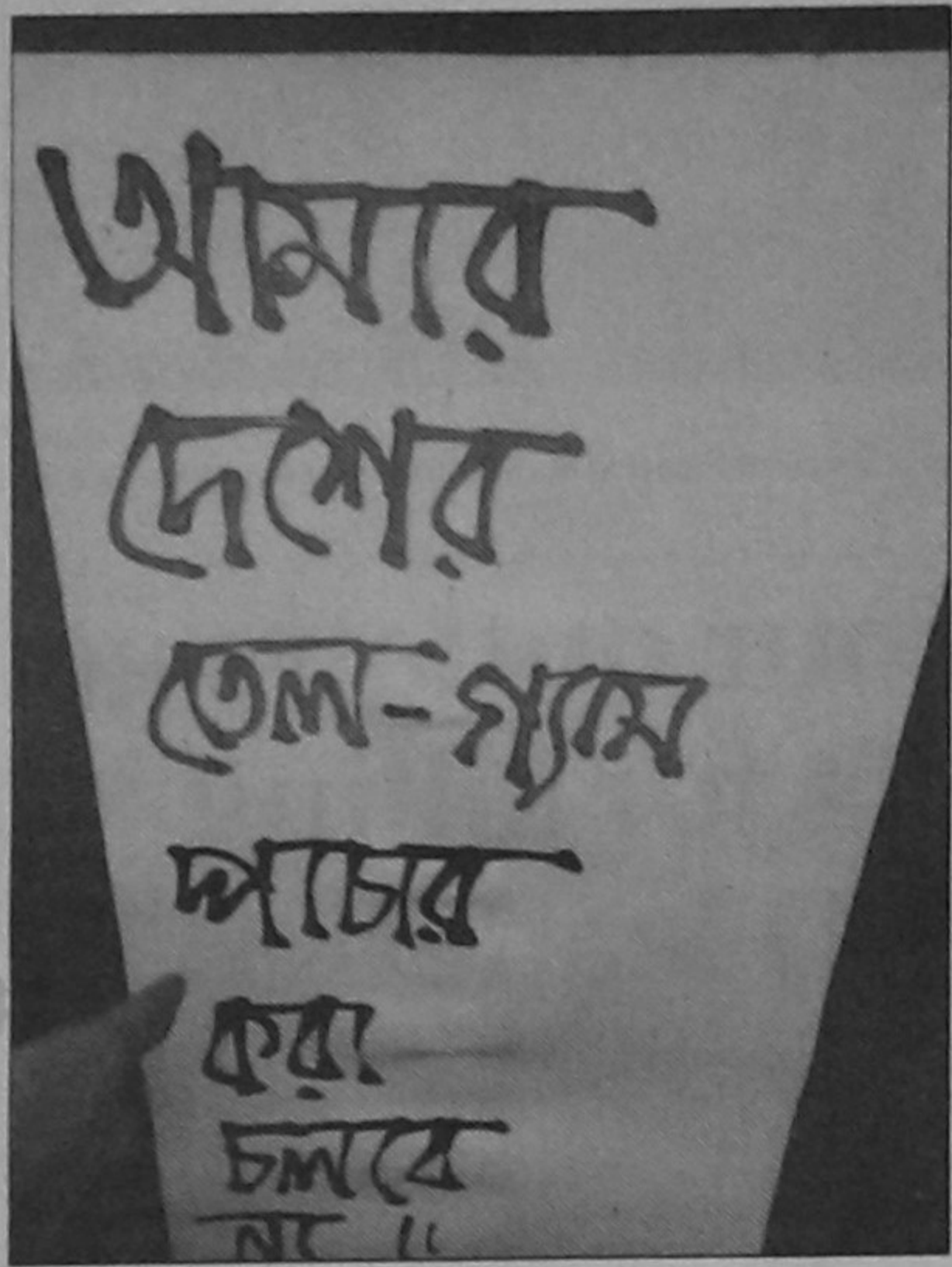


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

## Oil and gas issue

Police attack on the activists of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports is really very unfortunate. People who want to protect the resources of the country should not be treated in such a way, rather the government should have co-operated with them. I am shocked to see Prof Anu Mohammad in the hospital



and asked myself whether we live in Bangladesh or in East Pakistan. This AL government always claims that it is a pro-people and pro-independent force but in reality the government has awarded an Ireland-based company the shallow water block SS-08-05 and a US oil company deep sea blocks DS-08-10 and 11 in the Bay of Bengal for oil and gas exploration with agreement, empowering them to export 80% of the gas at a time when the whole nation is facing serious power shortage. Many African countries have huge gas and oil reserves but still they are poor because of the anti-people agreement between their corrupt governments and multinational companies involved in the exploration of oil and gas.

We must not make such a blunder like African governments. There are many companies which will agree to look into the interest of Bangladesh and we can get technological help from them as well. The decision on the export of gas and oil has to be taken by the people of Bangladesh or by the government if it is really pro-people.

When Sheikh Hasina was the leader of the opposition she said that we should export gas, keeping reserves for 50 years. Now after becoming prime minister she agreed to export 80% of the gas to be explored.

Regarding the attack on the peaceful demonstration, I demand punishment to the person who ordered police to do so.

**Dr. M. Mahboob Hossain**  
Associate Professor  
Department of Pharmacy  
The University of Asia Pacific  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Saifur Rahman's death

Mr. Saifur Rahman was a very respected senior politician and a witness to the development of our economic progression. He had always been sober in his appearance and had always been careful about his image before the public.

I, like many, have been shocked by his death in an accident. But I was also disturbed by the television camera crew covering the last attempts of resuscitating his life. It was not honourable for such a senior men's lifeless body to be shown in public television in such a helpless state. A minimum standard of decency must be maintained by the television channels, which is so frequently forgotten by many news hunting journalists.

**Mufasssil Islam**  
Human Rights Advocate  
UK

The locals said the driver lost control while trying to avoid running over a stray cow, according to your B'baria correspondent.

More often than not it's driving at a breakneck speed when the man at the wheel loses control over the vehicle, he is not aware if the weight of the car is multiplied by the speed what a lethal weapon it becomes on our not so wide highways. They have to be trained how to manoeuvre a vehicle, slow it in an emergency and face unforeseen situations. With the increase in the number of public transports and private cars we often hear of similar situations.

Perhaps it has become imperative for BRIA to establish real Driving Schools to impart most rigorous training to the drivers.

**SMS ZAMAN**  
Member (Retd.)  
National Board of Revenue  
Dhaka

## Standing committees

Our constitution (Article 67) has the provision for forming parliamentary standing committees. Successive sub-articles describe its formation, function, authority etc. The aim of parliamentary standing committees is to establish transparency and accountability of government institutions.

The AL government empowered the MPs as standing committee chairmen, instead of ministers. Some opposition MPs have also been given this position. I think it is a good gesture on the part of the ruling party.

**Md Zonaid Emran**  
Dept. of Political Science  
University of Dhaka

## Two questions

All the newspapers including The Daily Star headlined, on September 11, almost the same with the two ladies' photographs on the front

page. At the iftar party, the Prime Minister also urged the Opposition Leader to return to the JS.

Now my questions:

1. Why request the opposition to come to the JS where they need to be present spontaneously?

2. Why are we so happy when the two ladies meet each other (whereas they always need to meet each other in order to discuss the nation's problems)?

**Habibur Rashid Ismail**

Chittagong

## Overflowing OSD pool

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister disclosed in parliament that 81 government officials including 20 secretaries and additional secretaries have been kept as officers on special duties (OSD) for various reasons. On 07-09-09, the government also promoted 494 senior civil servants and asked them to join as OSD at the establishment ministry as there is shortage of the required posts / jobs for them. It is learnt that this large-scale promotion is a part of a major reshuffle plan of the government and these promoted officials were mostly overlooked in the last seven years.

Everybody knows that an officer on special duty actually does not have any official-duty although he / she is entitled to all benefits and privileges. It is not difficult to understand the reasons behind this action of the government, but it is least expected considering the very recent history that the politicians had to digest. This government is doing the same thing that its opponent did i.e. giving promotions and other privileges to its own people and keeping aside those of other views. Neither over-staffing nor under-staffing is accepted in case of an efficient organisation. Dr. Akbar Ali Khan, the former cabinet secretary, is right in his apprehension that there would be unfair competition among the promoted officials to get better posts and they would then end up getting involved in politics. In addition, as stated in an editorial of the DS, that 526 officials who have either been superseded or denied consideration, will not be sitting idle.

But the question is how long would this unhealthy practice be the normal course of action by the political governments! The people always elect a political party with the hope of getting a reasonably fair and impartial service from their government but in reality the general people are being deprived while the government only looks after the interest of their party-people. On the other hand, the government employees who are the servants of the republic have miserably failed to remain impartial and thereby created scope for the political party in power to play this

damaging game.

**Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque**

Khalishpur R/A, Khulna

## Don't allow it

This govt has made noticeable progress in allowing Indian access to our Ctg port and also in the transit issue in the name of Asian Highway. But can the port fulfil our requirements, is the road network good enough for our traffic? The answer is no. Then why our govt should allow access to a neighbouring country when they have large number of ports of their own. This is regrettable that the govt is doing so much for India, without getting much in return.

**Rupom Mahmud**  
Central Road, Dhanmondi  
Dhaka

## Promotion en masse

Your editorial on the impetuous promotion of the civil servants of the republic (on 09.09.09) should be appreciated though the language was soft in consideration of the impacts it would have on the civil service as a whole. How could we make the Honourable Prime Minister understand that this sort of unscrupulous decisions would plummet the credibility of the present government. It's no secret that the BNP alliance government did the same thing before. But what is the difference and where is the change then when the vaunted activities remain the same or even worse?

May I request Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to be aware of the formidable partisan coterie and clip their wings at once, so that loss of popularity can be averted.

**Opurba**

Dhaka

## Oblivious Bangladeshis

Let us not say, "Let bygones be bygones" rather say, "Let not bygones be not bygones". In fact it was the all out driving force generated by the last CTG against venality in order to drive out evil spirit from venal human soul and psyche.

As forgetfulness leaves a second chance for the perpetrators committing the same crimes they did in the past, let us not be unmindful and keeping the past in mind let us help the nation prosper avoiding possible ordeals ahead.

**Hasnat, AIUB**  
Banani, Dhaka

## Our problems

Some problems are created in Bangladesh because of ignorance. I can give you two examples:

1. Sugar is a high priced commodity in Bangladesh not only during Ramadan. In western countries this is the

cheapest commodity because people understand bad side of consuming Sugar. Media played the role. Currently in Bangladesh TV channels are busy with songs, dances, ads while the country goes mad for sugar.

2. Beating up Anu Mohammad and other patriots are a national tragedy. Why is the JS failing to talk about that? Why is the media doing nothing about it? National interest should weigh more than AL-BNP interest. If the media and JS parliamentary committees can solve those national problems, then hartal might not be needed.

**Dr. Azizul Karim**  
GP, Australia

## Things going wrong

Despite all efforts, traffic jam in the city-Dhaka is still an endless source of bewilderment as well as harassment for almost all those who have to go out for work or shopping. The cops seem to be fighting a losing battle and yet not giving in. It appears as though the city will heave a sigh of relief only during Eid-ul-Fitre and not before that. That implies the authorities couldn't come to the rescue of the suffering public at a time when they needed help very desperately.

Just like the above, prices of essentials that soared sky-high on the eve of the holy Ramadan, couldn't also be reined in. As a result, the people suffered as usual as they suffered in the past. There is no doubt unlike other years, this year we saw a lot of meetings, threats to bad businessmen and efforts by the TCB to address the situation, but all in vain. Some softening of the situation occurred only after the second week of Ramadan thus yielding no real benefit to the hard-hit low and middle-income people.

The law and order situation especially in the southwestern region of the country seem to be improving somewhat, following massive police-Rab hunt for the outlaws.

They had, in fact, made life hell for the innocent masses in the entire region mentioned above. However, the law enforcing agencies would do well if they could catch the culprits live wherever possible. The situation appears to be tolerable elsewhere in the country, if not excellent.

Let's hope the government's determination to curb extortion all over the country will soon materialize and improve the overall law and order situation further. It has to be noted that the avowed change (Din Badal) of the govt will see the light of the day only after the misled ones are brought to book without caring about who they are and what party they belong to.

**Faruquddin Ahmed**  
Former Economic Advisor  
Bangladesh Bank

## TV and radio

Recently, the Indian information minister said that they would soon form a committee to look after the programmes of the television channels and the fm radio stations as allegations are rife that sometimes these television channels and fm radio stations broadcast such types of embarrassing programmes which go against the Indian culture and tradition. In the present context of our country, I also truly believe that we too need to form such a tv-radio censor board because these days most of the private television channels and fm radio stations are airing programmes with vulgar words and gestures which totally go against our culture. If we have a censor board to control the cinema, if we have the press club to look after the activities of the print media, then definitely we also need to form a committee to look after the activities of the tv and radio stations. There seems to be a culture of impunity prevailing in these sectors and therefore many radio jockeys these days are misguiding the youths with ill advices and TV stations are copying programmes being inspired from the west.

I think enough is enough. The information ministry needs to form a tv-radio censor board in order to check the activities of tv and fm radio stations. None should be allowed to derail our youth.

**Nazmus Saquib**  
Dept. of English  
Stamford University  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Follow their example

The inspirational report on the contribution of the blinds of Nilphamari to our society published in your daily has made me abashed. The blinds have shown us the path. (Blind, yet they set green mark: The Daily Star: September 4, 2009). They showed us that we should do something big or small for the well-being of our country. They have shown us that every individual has some responsibility to society, to the nation as an individual and as part of society. If we are sincere to our responsibility and have commitment to the country and its citizens we can contribute something positive for the nation.

My hats off to the leaders of Jaldhaka.

**Monzur Rahman**  
Dhaka

## New three wheelers

Though it would need to be recharged by electricity but still it's friendly to the environment. This new transport wouldn't pollute the environment but it would be huge pressure on electricity if it is uncontrolled and innumerable on the street. Any way, it has become a popular transport.

I saw a few weeks ago in the town of Gopalganj that some of this kind of transports had already been on the road and I learnt about their utility. This three wheeler's fare is as cheap as rickshaw's.

## Untapped sites

While tourism continues to grow at a rapid pace the world over, it has not been able to gain much ground in Bangladesh. Over the years there has been so much talk over the 'tourism potential' of Bangladesh. It has become a cliché. It is the absence of serious planning and execution, coupled with the unprofessional approach of the government authorities that has been a perennial stumbling block in the realisation of the region's tourism potential. Mere observance of the World Tourism Day is not going to make any difference unless the irritants plaguing tourism in Bangladesh are addressed. Since Bangladesh has diverse attractions to offer to the tourist in the form of its pristine natural beauty, forests and wildlife, rivers and mountains, and a unique multi-cultural heritage, it is indeed baffling that tourism continues to be a non-starter amidst such potential.

We have erred on several counts in transforming this potential into a reality. A number of constraints -- from the lack of a sustained publicity campaign to poor infrastructure continue to hamper the growth of tourism. The connectivity of many of our tourist spots naturally

raises questions over the sincerity of the government's oft-repeated commitment to tourism. World Heritage Sites like Paharpur and Sundarbans do not have proper link roads. Basic infrastructures like all-weather roads and hygienic accommodation besides proper upkeep of the sites are imperative for a sustained flow of tourists.

Tourism today is a product that needs to be hard-sold to the outside world through aggressive marketing. While the government effort may not be enough to harness the region's prospects, the authorities could become facilitators by roping in private investment. The government machinery will have to change its mindset and exhibit the professionalism. We would do well to take a leaf out of the flourishing tourism industry of Britain and strive to replicate its success. Tourism is one industry that can ensure benefits to all its stakeholders from a taxi driver to a five-star hotelier. It is time our efforts went beyond the old rhetoric of the country being a tourist paradise.

Concrete action, and not words, will change the face of tourism here.

**Mohammad Shahidul Islam**  
Tourism Worker, West Midland, UK



PHOTO: MOHAMMAD SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Many poor rickshaw pullers have already started to suffer because of its great demand to the passengers.

Although, the three wheeler is on the street; nevertheless, it has not been recognised officially yet. The authorities should figure out how the three wheeler must be identified.

**Mahmud Ali Kabir**  
Ex-BSS correspondent  
Gopalganj

## VAT on commercial space

In the last budget the govt imposed 15 percent VAT on commercially rented space, establishment and machinery. VAT or value added tax introduced by late Saifur Rahman was aimed to collect more taxes from the business people. It is a different form of sales tax. It really baffles us all how a commercially rented space adds value to the business of the tenant or the owner. The owner is already paying ATS (tax at source), City

Corporation tax, income tax at increased rate, an amount which eats up a major portion of the income. The tenant engages in business and pays VAT again on products sold, his or her turnover, income tax etc. The owners have been directed to collect VAT from the tenants and deposit it to Bangladesh Bank. If they fail to collect VAT from the tenants the owners have been ordered to deposit VAT from their own pocket. What a mad, desperate, illogical, illegal and sick directive!! How our tax people can justify VAT on commercially rented space? In their bid to expand the VAT net the overzealous tax people have taken undue liberty. This is a totally illegal tax imposed on persons concerned.

We would request the finance minister to review the matter and withdraw the illegal VAT imposed on commercially rented space immediately.

**Dr. SN Mamoon**  
One-mail

## Endless suffering

Advancing the clock by one hour has not improved the power shortage at all, in fact it has deteriorated further, from bad to worse and now worst.

In the past, the situation was not like this, we used to have an uninterrupted power on Fridays and on Saturdays, load-shedding was occasional. Now throughout the week power cut is going on unabated, it has become part of our life and a very disturbing one.

We do not know what is happening because in the past we did not have to suffer like this, the country was not in such a condition. What has gone wrong, people have got the right to know, nothing is as it should be.

Criminal activities have gone up, prices of essentials are skyrocketing and power supply is going down.

We have had enough, the government must take steps swiftly, there is a limit to people's patience.

**Nur Jahan**  
Chittagong

## Unfair fares

Three-wheel human haulers are one of the most popular means of transportation in our country. But these have become a tragedy for the people depending on this transportation system. During the holy month of Ramadan the service that the citizen is getting from

them is a matter of real concern. Not only in the capital city but also in metro cities like Chittagong the residents are getting robbed by the drivers of these three wheelers. The government has set rules that the drivers of such haulers are bound to carry passengers where

ever they want to go. Meter has been set too so that the passengers can pay a certain amount of fare. But in Chittagong none has ever seen any taxi driver going by the rule. They always show excuses like their owners force them to take extra amount of fare or they cannot cope with the heavy traffic jam. Today I had to go to Probotok Shoroni from Halishahar H/E and I had to wait for an hour to get one CNG baby taxi. The vacant one that I got was asking for 100% extra fare and was showing excuse that it's the month of Ramadan or there is a huge traffic jam ahead. But the fact was that the traffic was like a regular day. Seeing no option, I had to pay an extra Tk 40 to reach my destination.

I also asked for help from some policemen who were standing next to me. But no help was provided. Is this what Ramadan teaches us?

**Md Farhis Hossain**  
North South University  
Chittagong

