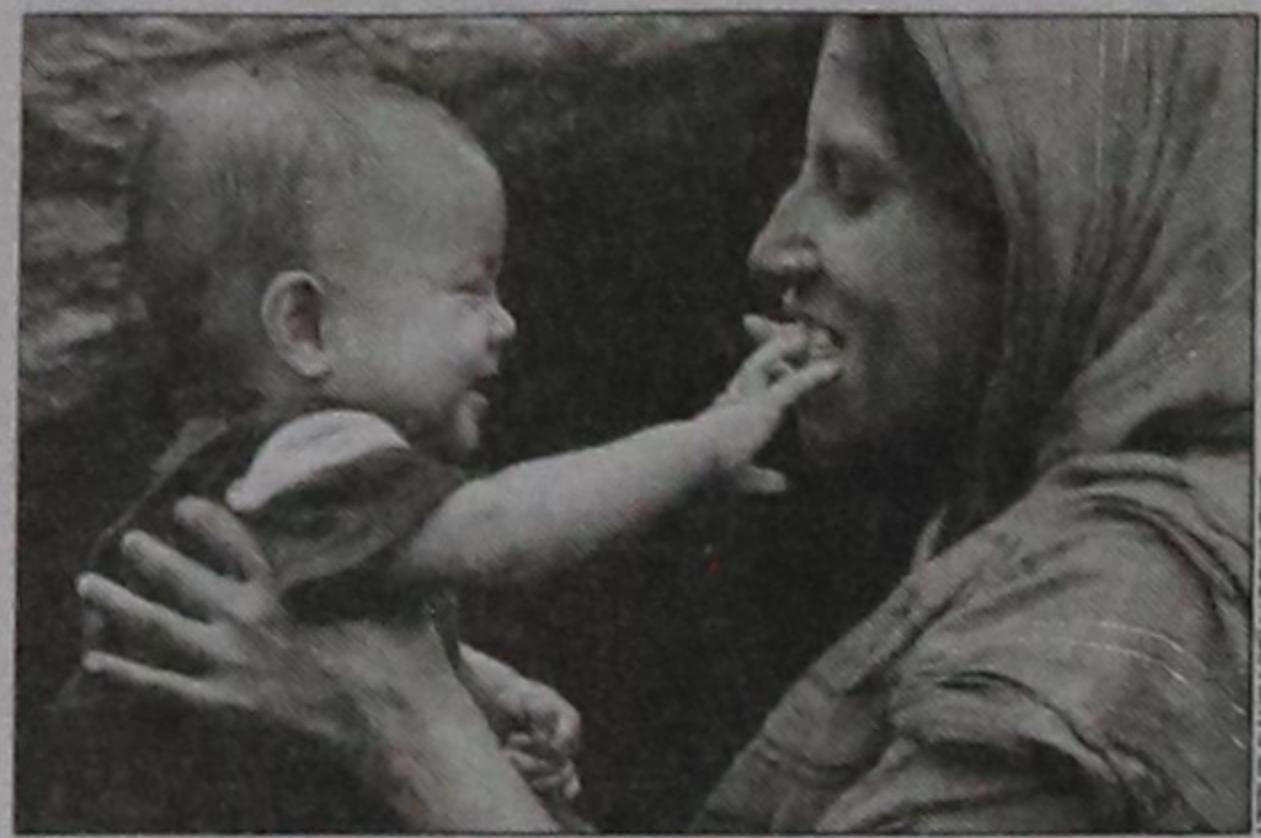


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Maternal and child health



facility, delay in receiving prompt and appropriate care after reaching the hospital and lack of transportation.

Disorganized health care with lack of prompt response to emergencies is a major factor contributing to a continued high mortality rate. It is widely understood that maternal health care relies on the entire health system. However, little empirical, country-specific, research has been done to trace out the ways in which health system elements can shape maternal health outcomes.

There should be nurses and midwives with tools to effectively participate in and influence health care planning and policy-making.

Mohammad Rajja
Nepal Student Society
Dhaka

Knowledge and practices relating to the newborn period, is needed in the development of interventions to reduce Maternal and child mortality. Although fatalism and cultural acceptance of high mortality have been cited as reasons for high levels of neonatal mortality, families seek to protect newborns in several ways.

Socio-cultural and health service factors are associated with maternal

deaths in rural area. Reviewing cases of maternal deaths of women who had sought medical attention, it is found that factors associated with maternal deaths included bad experience with the health care system, prolonged transportation, seeking care at more than one medical facility, underestimation of the severity of the complication, delay in reaching an appropriate medical

A-bombing of Japan

I am writing with reference to the letter: "America's role," by Harun-or-Rashid (Sept 19).

Like most observers, Harun-or-Rashid fails to realize that the atomic bombs dropped on Japan were not to defeat the Japanese but to send a message to Soviet Russia and its dictator Joseph Stalin.

As I have already mentioned in my letter published in DS on Aug. 16 ("A-bombing of Japan") of the account left behind by Dr. Leo Szilard, a top atomic scientist at the Manhattan Project, about his meeting with Secretary of State designate and Chairman of Senate Armed Services Committee James Byrnes on May 28, 1945. In the meeting, Mr. Byrnes made it clear why the bomb would be dropped on Japan. Here is the account:

"Byrnes was concerned about Russia's post-war behaviour. Russian forces had moved into Hungary and Rumania. Byrnes thought it would be very difficult to persuade Russia to withdraw its troops from these countries and that Russia would be more manageable if impressed by American military might. I shared Byrnes's concern about Russia's throwing around its weight in the post-war period, but I was completely flabbergasted by the assumption that rattling the bomb might make Russia more manageable..."

"I was concerned at this point that by demonstrating the bomb and using it in the war against Japan, we might start an atomic arms race

between America and Russia which might end with the destruction of both countries. ... I was rarely as depressed as when we left Byrnes's house and walked toward the station."

Thus atomic bombs were dropped on Japan to demonstrate America's awesome military might and warn Russia that it would face atomic annihilation if it tried to invade Western Europe. After the end of the Second World, the Soviet Union had emerged as a superpower and only America was in a position to challenge it. It can be argued that if America didn't drop the bomb on Japan, the destructive power of the bomb remained unknown and the Soviet Union, which was the biggest land power, might be tempted to militarily threaten Europe, thinking America as a distant power lacking the capacity to project power. If this happened, the United States would have no other option but to use its nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union.

But why not against Nazi Germany? The answer is: before the bomb was ready to be deployed, Germany had already surrendered. But Japan continued to fight, taking a heavy toll of American lives by its suicide pilots. Also Japan is an island and it is extremely difficult to invade an island as developed as Japan. Japan was prepared to cause a heavy toll of American lives if invaded. Japan wanted ceasefire, not surrender. Moreover, dropping atomic bombs on Germany would have prompted the Germans to surrender to approaching

Russian forces who would look like saviours. At the final stage of the war, both the Allied and the Russian forces were trying to beat each other to conquer Germany and the whole purpose of containing Russia after the war would be lost if the bombs were dropped on Germany.

Now that the Cold War is over, America should apologise to Japan for using it as a showcase to send a message to Russia. Japan has apologised for killing millions of Chinese during its occupation of China. It is now America's turn.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

BNP's dilemma

Our memory is still fresh to look back at the incidents of political/legal battle fought by the BNP leaders to maintain the status quo of the cantonment house donated by the then government after the death of president Zia. The house is in the most restricted area, and public entry is either restricted or subject to permission of Begun Zia. The news is not clear whether Begun Zia sent any list to the cantonment security to allow her guests to visit her on Eid day.

It is also important to note that Begun Zia is abstaining from attending parliament due to security concerns. Therefore, one should not draw any simple conclusion as the Secretary General of the BNP has done through his statement to the press for public information. The cantonment security can and should tell us their story of the

incident.

I think it is irony that a national leader, twice prime minister and opposition leader, is more eager to stay in the cantonment area and continue her political briefings and oversight of a major political party from the cantonment, a known restricted area all over the world. It is high time for her to re-evaluate her decision to continue to stay in the cantonment area and fight necessary eventualities politically and legally.

If my memory is not wrong, I remember Sheikh Hasina, the then opposition leader, was not allowed to visit a seriously sick educationist who was admitted in the Combined Military Hospital located in the cantonment. He ultimately died in Germany.

I think it is the policy of the BNP to protest all actions of the AL, right or wrong, and put blame and the ball in their court. We hope that BNP is not going to the court to establish their right to practise democracy in the restricted area.

The BNP seemed to be in deep trouble in reorganizing the party because of total policy disarray. Our advice to the BNP SG would be to allow the cantonment authorities exercise their right to security arrangement they consider appropriate for a political leader and her family living in the most restricted zone and should not drag the cantonment into their political survival strategy.

Areader
One-mail

Fashion?

We have been observing, albeit silently, an incremental yet disturbing trend among the burgeoning fashionists in today's Dhaka city. Apart from the sheer mockery it makes of the holy month of abstinence, the fashion ads smeared across the magazines and billboards reek of over-exposure of the feminine form, in complete denial of our treasured cultural identity. Our collective cultural identity had long been embedded in the notions of modesty and grace, and these are traits and values we are and should take immense pride in. Even The Daily Star for certain features in its Lifestyle and weekend magazines may stand accused of implicitly endorsing an ethnocentric view, when it is pivotal for a national daily not to lose sight of the fact that Gulshan-Banani-Dhanmondi views on trends and fashions do not necessarily reflect the collective values of the entire city, let alone the country as a whole. Many people echo this view in inconspicuous settings in fear of being branded a fundamentalist, but as social engineers our elected authorities indeed have a responsibility to nurture and preserve positive aspects of our cultural identities before they go awash in prevalent global tides.

Zaki Omar
Banani
Dhaka

Child trafficking

Whenever we turn over the pages of the national dailies, we come across many headlines on "Child Trafficking". The illegal traders have included children in their list, like commodities. They make the children fall into their trap. The illegal traders normally offer an angel like child candy, apple, sweets and what not. The children, who are basically poor, respond to their call. The traffickers catch them. They sometimes buy children from local agents at a very high rate. The unscrupulous traders sell them outside the country. Hundreds of parents go mad losing their sons and daughters. The law enforcing agencies are there. Still, the traffickers carry on their inhuman business year after year. Again, we know the sufferings of a child after he has been sold. We just shudder at hearing the unbelievable, unimaginable and inhuman stories.

The government should adopt tougher measures to stop child trafficking.

Mansura Akter
Maulana Bashani Science
and Technology University
(MBSTU)

Law and order goes haywire

In an impoverished country like Bangladesh our progressive dreams of socio-economic development are the only route to national prosperity. However, vicious social cancers like crime and corruption often prematurely trample our budding dreams and grossly contaminate our perceptual world with their filthy nightmares. It's absolutely undeniable that despite all the seemingly compelling promises of the governmental policy makers, the overall 'law and order situation' has deteriorated significantly over the last few months. The relentlessness and ferocity of crime have made us utterly speechless. We hopelessly witnessed the vivid blossoms of our collective peace and safety being ravaged by the outrageous outburst of violent crimes that literally made us vulnerable in every corner of the country. It appears that we have been hurled back to a medieval age of sheer lawlessness where the value of human life and liberty was absolutely negligible. Murders, muggings, extortions, kidnappings, robberies and rapes have almost become an unannounced norm in Bangladesh in the recent times and it appears that our representatives in the government are either shamelessly incompetent or they really lack any sincere determination to resolutely counteract the monster of crime. It seems that the incumbent government is represented by a bunch of uncreative sycophants as they are recurrently failing to devise feasible and effective plans to curb crimes.

I think in our country crime needs to be counteracted at multiple levels. First of all, we must fight crime at the political level. We know that our politics is an apparent source of crime. Many of our leading politicians are veteran criminals; whereas many others are infamous patrons of criminals. We must get rid of this naked 'criminalisation of politics'. Moreover, our law-enforcers themselves are often labelled as the 'bigger criminals' and they must strive not to live up to their forgettable reputation. At the policy level, our 'Judiciary' must act more efficiently and prudently to counteract crime. Additionally, different interest groups, including the media and NGOs, must carry out creative awareness-campaigns to fight the vicious curse of crime at all stages of the society, which will obviously create a mass reaction among people against the uncontrollable eruption of crime. We must make people hate crime and this "mass-hatred" must be able to terrorize the terrorists. We, the people, must be courageous enough to take an intrepid stand against crime. Most importantly, we must fight crime at the 'social level' by taking a 'prevention approach' alongside the 'cure tactics'. To achieve that objective, we must consciously monitor and combat the evident sources of crime like poverty, illiteracy, influence of alien cultures, drug-addiction and unemployment. In addition, we must ensure that our elementary educational institutions can endow our children with realistic ethical trainings at a budding stage. These are just some of the countless initiatives that we can take today and it's apparent that as a nation we will enjoy their fruits in the long run. Today, we are entrenched in the bleak darkness of crime. Let's not be scared to hope for an enlightening tomorrow.

Kh. Asef Safa Kabir
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Sound pollution

It is one of the worst forms of environmental pollution. It has great impact on the human body and mind. But it seems that some unscrupulous people are completely oblivious to this fact.

They play loudspeaker literally whenever and wherever they want - thanks to the inaction of the law enforcement agencies and lack of relevant laws. They torture the innocent people in the name of advertisement, cultural activities etc.

Laws should bar playing loudspeakers after 10.00pm for any purpose excepting some extraordinary cases so that infants, ailing and old people, pregnant women, etc are not disturbed.

Syed Muhammad Azim
Ferozshah Colony, Pahartali
Chittagong

Hartal and BNP

Ms Nur Jahan in her letter published in DS on 18 September expressed her utter disappointment at the response by the people towards the hartal called by the national committee to protect gas, oil mineral resources and power in Dhaka city on September 14. But I am quite surprised that she did not utter a word against the main opposition party BNP and its close ally the Jamaat for not giving any support to the hartal. Opposition parties are duty bound to the nation to check the government misdoings, if any, by voicing protest in parliament or on the streets or both. But the BNP has miserably failed to do the same mainly by abstaining from parliament for a childish demand for more front-row seats initially, though gradually adding more demands which include the issue of Khaleda Zia's huge palatial complex at Dhaka cantonment. It is obvious that people are now allergic to hartal because of its frequent use and misuse in the recent past. If we want to develop as a democratic country we, irrespective of our political inclinations, should encourage/pressurize the political parties to debate all national issues in parliament in open public view on

Butchered greenery

I feel saddened by the news of thirty thousand jhau trees being felled by the ruling party men at Teknaf beach.

The AL activists may deny committing the crime but except them no one will dare to do such a thing. How could they perform such an inhuman act, it is just unbelievable. I am watching with fear and hopelessness how the hands of the ruling party men are reaching out everywhere, committing all sorts of heinous crimes.

I am surprised that these AL activists are not afraid of Prime Minister Sheikh

Prospect of jute



FIROZ GAZI / DRIKNEWS

Due to heavy losses a good number of jute mills have been closed down. The world's biggest mills Adamjee faced the same fate during the last BNP regime. The present government now wishes to reopen the mills.

Our jute industry was the number one foreign currency-earning sector in the past. A huge number of people were working in this sector. But owing to the greed of some union leaders as well as some management people, this sector became the 'white elephant' of the country. The government had to incur heavy losses every year.

At the same time we see that many new mills have been set up in our

neighbouring India. Though the demand of jute is decreasing, India is setting up mills one by one. How is it possible?

Adamjee was a very big mill where a huge number of labourers and employees were engaged. And it is very tough to manage such a huge number of people under one management umbrella. So, we can divide some parts of this mill before re-opening it for better management and control. I am also in favour of private ownership(s) of the mills instead of state ownership as the former would work hard for making profits.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

radio and TV channels.

Besides private TV, radio channels can enlighten the public on such national issues through talk shows and discussion sessions which will be a better alternative to hartal, considering its destructive aspects to economy and social peace.

Group Captain Habibur Rahman psc (ret'd)
DQHS Mohakhali, Dhaka

Daylight saving

It is nearly three months since the new timing was introduced. Unfortunately there are lots of problems with that. The problem is much bigger, especially for the students who are taking exams in the morning session. For instance, when an exam starts at 9:00am of the present time, the problem arises. The candidates do not get enough time for their final revision.

More importantly, the decision and implementation of the daylight saving system have not made any difference. The frequency of power outage remains quite the same. Frankly, this idea is not applicable to our country.

S.M. Rumen
Pahartali
Chittagong

Moon sighting

Kazi Mahbub Hassan's article on the subject, published on September 20 is a rational analysis about our regular confusion about moon sighting.

The astronomy based calculation of moon visibility, irrespective of the sky or weather condition, is the logical and accurate way to determine the first day of Ramadan, Eid and other important Islamic festivals.

Unlike Bangladesh and many South Asian countries, weather and cloud cover is a reality, whereas in dry and rainless Saudi Arabian climate the sky is clear, and naked eye visibility of the new moon is not a problem. Even then, they go by astronomical calculation and confirm these religious days in advance, so why cannot we do it also?

Logically, given our seasonal weather, we should use astronomical reality for predicting the date of appearance of the important new moons without any unnecessary confusion that happens more often than not. Result is that probably every year, one can easily celebrate Eid on two days in Bangladesh! An intriguing, but actual fact of life here!

In Bangladesh we should include three representatives in the "Moon Appearing Date Committee" (proposed name, in place of the present Moon

Sighting Committee). One could be the representative from the Navy, another from the Weather Bureau and finally one from the Department of Astronomy from a University. This will ensure that the first day of the appearance of the moon is based on proper scientific method and not on someone seeing the moon from one corner of the country to determine the day of Eid.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Open letter to Susan Rice

The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of West Bank and Gaza must end. The Goldstone report fairly and accurately documented violations of human rights and international law, war crimes, and possible crimes against humanity committed before, during, and after Israel's December 2008-January 2009 assault on the occupied Gaza Strip. This report is obviously an eyesore to the Israel-lobby within the US government and the Congress, including the APAC, who are trying to bury the fact-finding report at the UNHRC level where it will be discussed on September 29 so that it is not referred to international bodies with enforcement powers such as UN Security Council, General Assembly, or International Criminal Court, as the report recommended.

From your statement condemning the unbiased report, it is obvious that you have caved in to such pressures. I strongly deplore your statement. It's a shame that the United States government appears to be shielding Israel once again from any accountability for its heinous war crimes in international forums. It's also painful to notice that when the United States, for the first time, assumed a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, it has chosen to make a mockery of its declared views that it will not look the other way in the face of serious human rights abuses.

Dear Ambassador, the truth must be told, the facts brought to light and the consequences faced. When we compromise on such basic principles, we do a terrible disservice to our humanity - we essentially become a party to the crime and lose credibility around the world.

It is time for the United States to correct its past mistakes and make sure that the consequences are faced by the rogue Israeli state for its gross violations of human rights. We simply can't endorse Israeli crimes anymore.

Dr. Habib Siddiqui
Human rights and peace
activist

Eid for all



KAZIER / DRIKNEWS

The holy Eid-ul-Fitr has been observed with due religious fervour and solemnity. People all around the country have celebrated this joyous occasion. Ahead of this largest religious festival the people who left Dhaka for sharing the festivity with near and dear ones experienced unbearable sufferings at the terminals. This is assumed to be no pain since they have shared their joy and happiness with their beloved ones.

Eid is not an occasion of pleasure for everyone in society. There are a lot of people in our society who live from hand to mouth. They can't even manage their daily needs, so how they can celebrate. We, who are affluent, can be sympathetic to them. Especially, the

proper and rational distribution of zakat can eliminate the economic discrimination created by the capitalist society. The teachings of the holy month of Ramadan should inspire us to be more compassionate to the destitute segment of society.

I think Eid arrives each year to remind us that there are the poor and deprived who do not have the capacity to celebrate this day in a festive mood. Eid comes and goes leaving the message to us that Eid is for all; from the rich to the people who are suffering from hunger. Our small sacrifice can help the poor to smile during the Eid.

Md. Abu Sufian
University of Dhaka