

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.

Mahatma Gandhi's message

Re: "Mahatma Gandhi" by Ashikur Rahman (Sept. 30). Not only that Mahatma Gandhi's message of non-violence is forgotten, as Ashikur Rahman correctly mentions, he is now being considered as impractical by many. When Toronto's National Post published prominently my letter urging the Palestinians to follow the non-violent methods used by Gandhi to end British colonial rule in India to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, it came under criticism. An Indo-Canadian representing the Canadian Hindu Congress wrote that Gandhi could use non-violence because he was leading peace-loving Hindus, while the Palestinians are a violent people and incapable to act non-violently.

To this, it may be pointed out that the Hindu extremist who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi was hardly peace loving. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi made it clear why he rejected all calls to launch an American-style violent independence movement: "If Indians take up guns to kill the British, given India's great religious and ethnic divisions, they would still be using the same guns to kill each other long after the British had gone. I don't want India's freedom if it meant Indians would be free to slaughter each other. If India makes violence her creed, I will not care to live in India."

The brutality of Hamas toward fellow Palestinians shows that it is essentially a terrorist outfit which will not hesitate to kill fellow Palestinians belonging to a rival camp. This means that even if Israel vacates the West Bank as it has done in Gaza, a new bloodletting will erupt among Hamas and Fatah for control of the Palestinian state. Moreover, if the Palestinians cannot live peacefully with each other, it will be futile to think that a Palestinian state and Jewish state can live peacefully side by side.



US President Barack Obama is trying to broker a lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. For that, he should prod the Palestinians to stop supporting Hamas and opt for a Gandhian non-violent political movement.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Sugar price

Sugar price hike is caused by two very simple reasons. First, we are a heavily sugar-deficit nation. Secondly, the second biggest exporter of the sweetener in the International market, India, has suffered crop-failure this year resulting in less production of sugar and ban on export sale. Meanwhile, in global market sugar price has risen quite sharply. We know in market-economy price of a commodity is solely determined on demand-supply formula, no amount of moral persuasion or punitive threat can hold the pattern in check.

However, in such a situation what the concerned ministry could have done quietly without much ado is to set up an efficient, non-corrupt distribution network throughout the country with whatever little stock of sugar it could garner locally and internationally to intervene in the market to douse the rage to some extent before it is too late.

Nobel Laureate Prof. Dr. Amartya Sen in his famous research findings on the last

great Bengal famine concluded that the famine was not so much caused by food scarcity but by appalling failure of the distribution mechanism then in place.

It is highly relevant to mention here that our next-door neighbour, India's growth-miracle in every walk of national life was made possible, according to their own admission, only by exploiting the immense resources the rural India holds.

Tagore once said if we forget vast rural India and only nourish a few scattered urban spots, progress and development would always remain a far cry.

I trust our policy makers at the helm will not lose sight of this very fundamental thing to usher in a real 'change' in our country.

S.A. Samad
General Manager (Retd.)
Janata Bank
Dhaka

Education then and now

Mr S A Mansoor is himself a magical writer. His gems of

wisdom, advice and anecdotes from a fertile memory, are a must-read for readers and I always look first for his contributions in the Letters Page of DS. His information on the number 9 is familiar to most of us. Many more computations have since come to light over the last 8 decades, but at the moment memory fails.

I had always thought that Mr. Mansoor was a contemporary and he has confirmed that by divulging that he was in Class 8 in 1946 in Calcutta. I was then in Class 6 but since we sat for our Matriculation after Class 8 in St Xavier's School and College (as against Class 10 in most schools), perhaps we both graduated in 1952. This letter is just a stroll down memory lane, so that readers may judge what education was, then, and what a mess it is now.

St Xavier's is run by the Belgian Jesuits and it is acknowledged, at least by Old Xavierians like me, as the epitome for education par excellence. Two small examples should suffice.

1. At least once/twice a week, a student or two would

be invited to see Father Van Buynder, our class teacher, then 70+, in his small cubicle after school (3:00pm). What transpired there was usually not divulged. One day after a tough geometry class, I got the dreaded invitation just when I was looking forward to an hour's practice at the table tennis tables in the common room before going home. Since it was sacrilege to even think about avoiding it, I timidly knocked on his door at 3.30 sharp. Father was already at his desk (after 6 hours in classes) going through the class work. With twinkling eyes, he exclaimed "Ah, Ahmed, you really do not have a clue about that theorem we learnt today, do you?" Head down, I confessed, wondering how the H--- he knew? For the next hour or so, Father patiently went through the theorem and explained it, till HE was satisfied, I had understood. Coaching classes, private tutors, parents doing somersaults at home? None of these ever marred our evenings and holidays as they were practically non-existent and a slur to the dedicated teachers of most of the better schools in Calcutta then.

2. Monday mornings usually began with an hour's essay on a surprise subject that Father wrote on the blackboard. One Monday, he just stood silently for a minute with the chalk in the middle of the blackboard, then he sat down in his chair and started to read without as much as a glance at us. We waited expectantly for what seemed an eternity and then started to fidget while looking at each other. Finally, he looked up. "Anything the matter, boys? Haven't you started yet? You have already wasted 5 minutes!" One of the bolder boys exclaimed "But, Father, you haven't given us the subject." "Of course, I have, its right there in the centre" he said with a smile. All of us shouted in unison "That's just a small dot!" He got up saying "Yes it is, isn't it? Now, let your imagination soar and write your essay on whatever you think that dot represents."

As I look around and see little boys/girls trudging along with back-packs heavier than themselves, schools sans playgrounds, playing fields turned into profitable fair grounds and youngsters playing games on electronic gadgets, while cooped up in their pigeon-hole flats, I feel a twinge of pity.
Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Raped girl

Nupur, a poor girl, was raped recently in a village in Shariatpur district.

Now the question is what is Nupur's fault? Is it the fault of being a girl? Why does she suffer alone still? I hear that the government as well as human rights groups are aware of women's rights, but then why is the culprit still roaming free while the victim Nupur is helpless?

I appeal to every conscious DS reader to do something for this hapless girl. Mete out justice, please.
Kazi Farid Hassan
Naria, Shariatpur

Taxation rigmarole

Needless to say that tax, vat and levy are essential economic factors in the running and development of a nation. However, this indispensable source of economic contribution declines through tax evasions on account of the complicated procedures. Apart from aforesaid rationale other causes of non-compliance are lack of awareness, officials' harassments, complicated law, reluctance to disclose income and assets, venal tax officials, nepotism, high compliance cost and political pressure and so forth. Tax accounts for 80% of the revenue receipts while remaining 20% is derived from other sources. There are very few citizens who pay their income tax to the government while most of us are evading it due to mainly complicated and inconvenient process, lack of awareness and lack of stringent actions against tax evaders. Let us come to the main point: our prime minister has pledged to digitalize Bangladesh by 2021 which needs not only the governments' honest all out efforts but also the assistance of its citizens to make the dream come true. There is no doubt that economic strength is the number one requirement to see Bangladesh as a digital nation. If the figure of tax evaders keeps growing, then it will remain a dream forever.

Hence, I would earnestly request NBR and ECNEC to make all out endeavours to collect tax from citizens through convenient and hassle free procedures.
Hasnat, AIUB
Banani, Dhaka

Scarcity of books

The library facilities on the Rajshahi campus of AUB are not satisfactory. And the reading room inside the library is not spacious. But when the students are admitted here they are informed by the authorities that course materials will be given by them. But many books, especially English texts, are not available in the library. As a result, in every semester the students of English department are bound to buy a lot of books. These books are very costly.

The university authorities should address the issue.

Sheuli Sarkar
Department of English, Asian University, Rajshahi Campus

Students and terror

According to the definition of Oxford dictionary "terrorism" means "the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act". As per the extroversion of international law, there are different types of terrorism viz. international terrorism, national terrorism, communal terrorism, racial terrorism and so forth. But we cannot find any place for "student terrorism" in international law.

"Student-terrorism" is the violent action of the students involved in politics to achieve their selfish goals in the name of politics. As a conscious student, I regularly go through the newspapers. I cannot but be astonished to learn about the criminal activities of those students. We, the students of different institutions, should have the aim of doing well in exams. However, campus violence stands in our way. It must be banished, once and for all.

Md. Rubin Baluj
Law and Justice Department
Rajshahi University

Drug abuse

Drug addiction is increasing at an alarming rate in our country. Like all other problems, this problem also has a solution. Many developed and developing countries are adopting those ways but in our country, there are no special effects of those steps. We are facing difficulties to solve this problem because of the scarcity of caring Drug Rehabilitation Centers (DRC). Though we have a small number of DRCs, they are not trained enough to manage drug addiction.

However, it is a matter of great hope that some DRCs are playing an important role in this respect.
Hasan Al Touaha
Department of Criminology and Police Science (CPS)
MBSTU

BSMMU scene

Ten professors and an associate professor of different departments of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), were dismissed for their alleged political affiliation. The Registrar of the University said that the decision was taken by the BSMMU syndicate.

It deserves mention that some of the professors who were terminated are experts in their fields and acceptable to the doctor community. For the sake of argument, let us say that their termination is valid because they were politically appointed. Now the question arises, what about the Vice Chancellor who was politically appointed? Besides the Vice Chancellor many AL loyalist doctors were appointed during the last nine months.

If the government really wants to save this university, it should cancel all appointments based on political affiliation. I heard that due to political appointments now the number of doctors at BSMMU is more than the number of patients, whereas there is an acute shortage of physicians outside the city.

If doctors are given degree and appointed on the basis of political affiliation, patients will be killed by them instead of being cured!

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

Role of SMEs

SMEs are the driving force behind any growing economy like Bangladesh. When the country is suffering from scarcity of investment, the SMEs are showing great

enthusiasm to invest more, though they are facing hurdles due to the fact that the commercial banks and non-bank financial institutions (NBFI) charge high interest rate on loans.

In many cases, effective interest goes beyond 18 percent. Private banks and non-bank financial institutions (NBFI) are charging 15 to 20 percent, while state owned commercial banks' rate ranges between 12 to 13 percent. Though Bangladesh Bank facilitates refinancing scheme at 5% rate of interest, banks and non-bank financial institutions are imprudently charging such high rates.

Of course, the supervision cost of SME loans is high but that leaves no excuses for banks since they are giving agricultural loans at a lower rate, which have the similar supervision cost. Because of the nervous mood of the businessmen in the last few years, especially during the caretaker government, the banks are now piled up with idle money amounting to about 30,000 crore taka. The banks can make use of this money facilitating the SMEs, which will boost our export business.

Md. Abu Sufian
University of Dhaka
Golapbag, Dhaka

Prospects of tourism sector

Tourism in Bangladesh is a slowly developing foreign currency earner. The country has much to attract international and domestic tourists.

In the northern part, comprising of the Rajshahi division, there are archaeological sites, including the temple city Puthia in Rajshahi; the largest and most ancient archaeological

site, Mahasthangarh in Bogra; the single largest Buddhist monastery, Paharpur in Naogaon; the most ornamental terracotta Hindu temple in Bangladesh, Kantaji Temple, and many rajbaris or palaces of old zamindars.

In the south-western part, mainly the Khulna division, there is the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest of the world with Royal Bengal Tiger and spotted deer. The historically and architecturally important sixty-domed mosque in Bagerhat is a notable site.

In the south-eastern part, which is the Chittagong division, there are mainly natural and hilly sites along with sandy sea beaches. The most notable beach is the longest unbroken sandy sea beach in the world in Cox's Bazar.

In the north-eastern part, Sylhet division, there is a green carpet of tea plants on small hillocks. Naturally reserved forests are great attractions. Migratory birds in winter, particularly in the haor areas, are also very attractive.

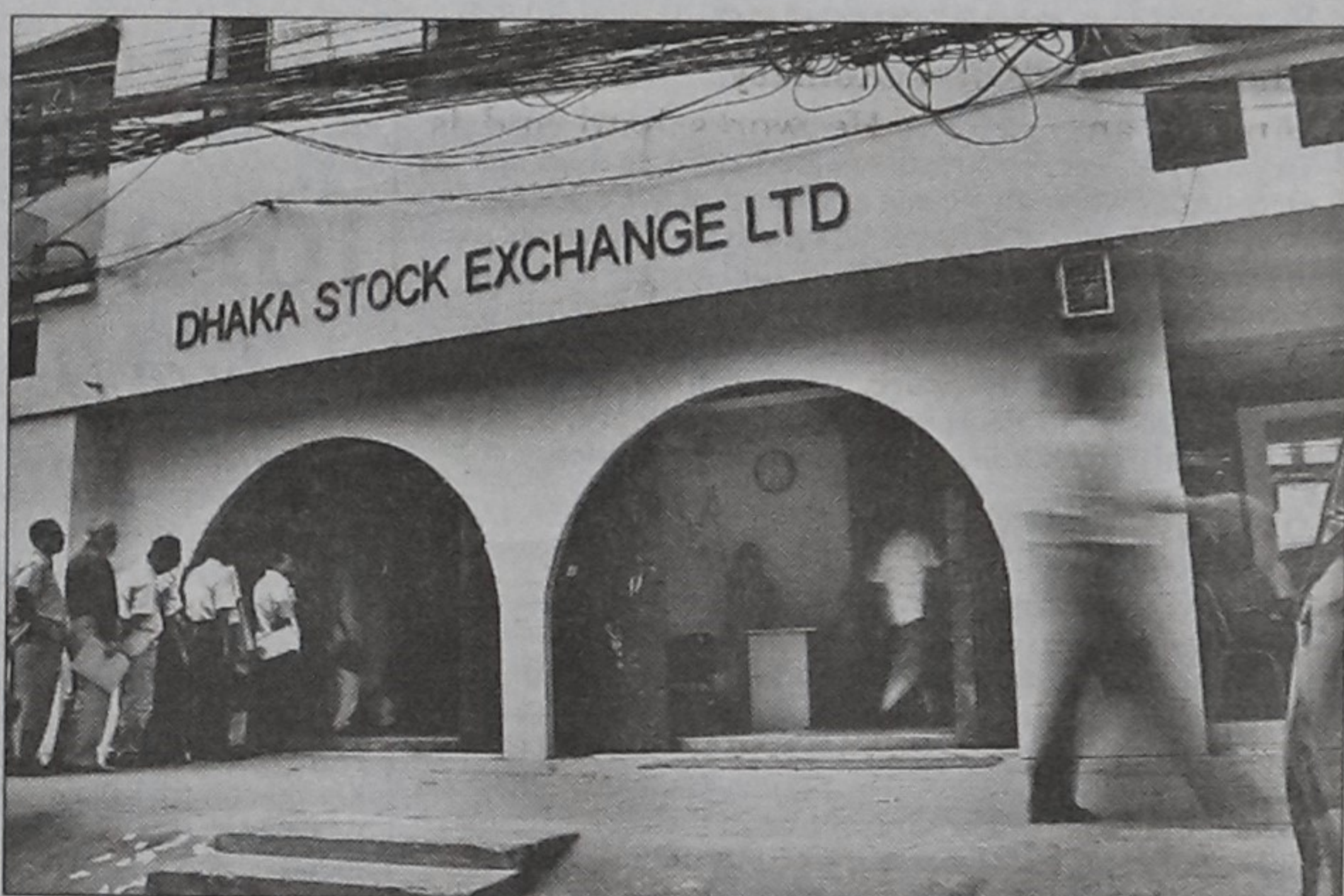
If you ask people what is the importance of tourism, the following answers are likely to be heard:

- (a) Tourists spend money.
- (b) Tourism generates employment.
- (c) Tourism is the fastest growing industry.
- (d) The country becomes popular.

So there is no denying that from Bangladesh point of view, tourism is a very potential and significant sector, which truly deserves both the government and private initiatives to be developed.

Shohag Mostafij
MBA: Stream- Strategic & International Management (SIM)
University of Dhaka

Erratic share market



AMDADUL HUQ / DRINKNEWS

The volume and number of transactions in the market of Stock Exchange is the barometer of the economy of a modern country. Although we are a developing country we have two houses (Dhaka and Chittagong) and we see an increasing trend of the people towards this 'paper' market.

Like other commodities, the two economic factors 'demand' and 'supply' fix the price of any share. But there are some cunning influential men who can raise the prices of a particular share artificially. We observed such an unbelievable increased index during the last regime of AL. At last the artificial market collapsed and thus thou-

sands of small and middle class investors lost their everything. Playing from behind the scene, the price manipulators succeeded in gaining crores of taka.

In our share market there is acute shortage of shares of good and dependable companies. It is a very good sign that the number one mobile operator Grameen Phone has stepped into this market. For making our economy stronger other reputable govt, semi-govt, autonomous, foreign and private organisations should come forward to download their shares for the public.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Talk shows galore

There is a good saying for a man to be a good person -- "hear no evil, speak no evil and see no evil". If we hear no evil, we will be happy, if we speak no evil, we will not harm others and if we see no evil, we will be in peace. In Bangladesh almost every hour of the day there are talk shows in private tv channels, sometimes simultaneously. Whenever, we tune to a Bangladeshi channel, we find a talk show going on. The viewers feel the private channels have no other programmes except ads and talk shows to keep their channels running. We believe, the channel authorities bring in participants from "shushil shomaj" who are experienced, high profile politicians or former high officials.

In this world of freedom none can object to others'

right to express their views and opinions. So, the participants of Bangladesh private tv channel talks shows have the right to express their thoughts. And we have the right to comment on their opinions. Most of the talk show participants are members of different political parties, they see everything in light of their individual party's views. We the viewers never find anyone neutral. They try to find others' faults and cover-up their own faults. Instead of helping the viewers to learn the good sides of events, they spread confusing stories.

The private channels have the right to bring anyone on their shows and we have the right to listen or not to listen to them at all! We are peaceful when we hear no bad news, see no bad incident and speak

no bad to our adversaries. So, hear no evil, speak no evil and see no evil, we will remain happy for the rest of the day!
Shafiqul Islam, NY

Birth anniversary of PM

The nation in general and the Awami League and its front organisations in particular celebrated birth anniversary of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with due fanfare and enthusiasm. But we are yet to know the actual number of her birth anniversary this year. Different TV channels observed her 63rd birth anniversary through news telecast, while The Daily Star in its 28th September, 2009 issue mentioned it as 62nd birth anniversary.

Which one is correct?
M.L. Rahman
Uttara, Dhaka

Population boom

Population of Bangladesh stands at more than 162 million at present. The country is already bursting at the seams. There is a news item in The Daily Star that there will be crisis of the basic tools for population control like condoms, oral pills (OCP), injectable contraceptives etc. in the very near future. It is alarming news, and warrants immediate intervention by the government and the donor agencies.

Any programme of the government is bound to fail if population keeps on growing even at present rate. Bangladesh can not afford to feed, house, clothe, provide quality education and medical services, etc. to such a huge population. We are already experiencing earthquakes, climate changes, less rainfall, deforestation, desertification, diminished agricultural land, power crisis, traffic jams, malnourished workforce, unemployment, rise in crimes and drug addiction, and 'what not' due to our huge population. Optimum population of Bangladesh is 100 millions.

We wonder, how many millions of people our country can contain. Probably we require a two storied country!

Many donor agencies have report-

edly complained that many of our family planning high officials are more interested in foreign travels and its resultant benefits than 'capacity building' of their staffs. They are more interested in 'Nafal' than in 'Farz'! World Bank, ADB, USAID, DFID etc all simply laugh in disdain at such selfish, unpatriotic, unscrupulous behaviours of many officials.

Other than condoms, OCP etc. more people should be encouraged to undergo tubal ligation and vasectomy. There ought to be reward for undertaking permanent family planning methods like preferences in jobs, posting, transfers, school admission, house allotment, fuel, seed and fertilizer allotments etc. The government may also observe 'a no baby year'. More rigid and effective methods are ought to be devised and implemented.

We urge upon the government to give topmost priority to population control issues and act for control and ultimate decrease of population. Else, we will be very soon an abandoned, failed and doomed country.

Dr. SN Mamoon
One-mail



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