

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.

Earthquakes

A news report was published in a local English daily on June 29. It indicated that according to the survey carried out by Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP); 78,000 out of 326,000 buildings in greater Dhaka is at risk of earthquake damage. Unfortunately, there was no indication, that at what level of intensity (in the Richter Scale of 1 to 10), this devastation is most likely to occur. Not that it will effect the immediate "first aid" level of safety and precaution from being taken; as that is necessary for everyone to ensure safety of his or her own life!

However, the report refers to the fact that we had two or three major tremors in the last 150 years. Again unfortunately it did not mention the year that it happened starting from the year 1860 (2010-150). On these criteria, unfortunately one can conclude that this important report, is rather sketchy and unclear and not technically specific. Will the CDMP kindly take note of

this matter, and provide a more specific report and have it widely circulated through the print and audio-visual media, in overall national interest!

From the risk to buildings as provided in the report; Dhaka is fortunately at a lesser risk, compared to Chittagong and Sylhet-- the next two fast developing cities in Bangladesh. Dhaka's close density of buildings, and the larger number of high-rises has magnified the risk. Possibly the initial DIT height restriction on buildings and the number of stories allowed in a building and the minimum side clearances established back sometimes in the 1950s was safer in this respect.

May I through this letter, request the editors of the dailies to kindly provide more detailed, if summarized information on this important safety matter as spelled out by the CDMP.

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka



MUNIR IZ ZAMAN/DARKNEWS

with the lion's share of the burden of running a household and rearing children falling on women in Bangladeshi society, it becomes much more difficult for women scientists to meet their professional commitments.

A family-friendly environment that provides child-care facilities, accommodation for couples close to or on campus, flexible working hours and sympathetic recognition of the problems facing dual career families helps.

Gopal Sengupta
Canada

Modest dress

Two letters appeared on 30 June on this very important and sensitive subject. Not for any religious edict or guidance, but just as a survival technique it is true that simple modesty like covering the hair while going out on daily work or attending an educational establishment will identify a young woman as modest and she is very unlikely to be a victim of eve teasing.

For young men the problem seems to be a medical one in that there is too much testosterone in their blood streams which moral education alone will not diminish. They need to change their diet to have couple of meat-free (or generally protein free), vegetable diet days per week in a country with abundant vegetables and fruit. This will be also healthy and eco friendly and will conserve the country's resources. I distinctly remember during Pakistan days of Ayub Khan there was a vegetarian day in the week when meat was not available in the market by law.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Government's policy

I am very keen to know whether the government is seeking loopholes of law for using them against those who differ with its opinion, because

1. An Editor (Mr. Mahmudur Rahman) of a national daily (the Dainik Amar Desh) was arrested and detained and the publication of that newspaper has already been stopped. We guess this was done because of his and his publications taking a stand against the activities of the government.

2. Hartal convened by the Bangladesh Nationalists Party (BNP) faced indescribable torture. Injury and detention of BNP activists and leaders during the day of hartal became a matter of concern for every conscious citizen of the country.

3. Jamaat leaders (Motiur Rahman Nizami, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and Maolana Delwar Hossain Sayedee) were arrested and are now under remand. My concern increases thinking the nature of the allegations brought against them.

4. Though Jamaat leaders were arrested on charges of hurting the religious sentiment of the people, now they are shown detained under the cases filed earlier.

5. A lot of Jamaat - Shibir leaders are now under detention.

Why such oppression

against opposition? History teaches us that no action goes without reaction. The government should stop its malicious and undemocratic actions.

G.M. Mahmudun Nabi Bablu
Student of a private university

War crimes trial

The government is always defending this war crimes trial issue to condemn any act of the opposition. If that is so, why not make it more transparent and visible to justify the defence? The news reports coming from various quarters are very uncoordinated and disconnected to find out exactly what is the status of the trial process.

In the meantime, the process of arrest of the alleged criminals is raising two vital questions such as:

a. Can they be brought to justice following all legal formalities which at times fall apart due to legal complications or anomalies; and also for the physiological pressure put on the system by political power of the defendant and the plaintiff.

b. Is the Jamaat becoming more popular and politically powerful to come out successfully and uproot the government with the support of its allies?

In my own judgment the concern for the international community about the legal implications of the law being followed for the trial is basically for the "Preamble" of the law. This extends the law beyond the jurisdiction of Bangladesh to try any alleged criminal for war crimes in 1971 in Bangladesh.

My humble suggestion would be that those who directly or indirectly oppose the trial of the war crime be formally asked to admit or deny the fact of war crime in Bangladesh.

I very much understand the sensitivity of such a direct question and its implications on the trial process. But do we have any other positive and quick alternative to start and finish the trial? Let our legal experts and intelligentsia group (no civil society, please) come up with their clear advice from a formal forum and not a "Round table" funded by the external allies.

Why is the whole burden of the trial put on the AL alone? What about other parties?

Faqrul Quadir
California, USA

Dhaka, then and now

"Expedients, are for the hour, but principles are for the ages."

Henry Ward Beecher.

In the forties of the last century as a school student, I came to Dhaka. We used to go to Wiseghat, and then to Buriganga Embankment. The lively river was flowing in all its majesty.

Dhaka had the natural lakes; the canals and the most extensive open spaces. But then came the independence, and Dhaka became the capital of a province. The flow of people was gradual and slow.

From the newly built PMG's office building, one could see the wide expanse of 'Ramna Green', the large 'dighi', and



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

Equitable power distribution

Bashabo is a large residential area in Dhaka metropolis. Hundreds of thousands of people live here. Most of them are from middle income strata. For the last couple of months, the inhabitants of Bashabo have been experiencing load shedding 5 to 7 times a day. Every time stoppage of power usually continues for an hour.

That is, every day on an average Bashabo does not get power for six hours in a twenty-four hours day. On the other hand, Dhanmondi area is located in the same Dhaka metropolis. There usually one hour load shedding is experienced by the residents in a day. It is believed that as several political leaders live in Dhanmondi area the power distribution company opts for less load shedding there! Is it fair?

Rumor is that the officials of the company are under tremendous pressure by a few unruly political people. They are not in a position to distribute power equitably, which is desirable in a democratic country. But it is also learnt that Honourable Agriculture Minister, Begum Motia Chowdhury, advised the power distributing company not to provide her extra power. She likes to get equitable power like other citizens of the city. Bangladesh needs to have leaders like her.

However, I would like to urge the authorities concerned to take measures to provide inhabitants of Bashabo an equitable share of power like other areas in Dhaka city.

Md. Ashraf Hossain
Bashabo, Dhaka

the beautiful shaded trees.

Dhanmondi was created by the C&B department, along with the ministry to be a fine residential area, where people could live in a natural habitat, with God's gift of lakes, with its flora and fauna. Even in the eighties, the Dhanmondi Lake had clear water, and was an angler's paradise. But then because of our fault, and negligence it has become a poisonous lake.

In the closing part of the fifties, the Dhaka Improvement Trust came into being. The Gulshan plots were leased out with specific conditions. The building codes, municipal regulations, and environmental laws were all in place. The Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association makes some efforts to save the environment, and so does the Paribesh Andolan Movement. But our ruthless greed overcomes all obstacles. We have gone against nature and it is not going to forgive us.

We had natural lakes in Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara, and Uttara. These would have maintained the environmental balance and would have made our planned residential areas livable. But the residential concept has fled away.

We have now clinics, schools, shops, offices, hotels and restaurants at every conceivable corner. With all the multistory buildings, the city of Dhaka has become one of the worst cities of the world, and an unlivable one.

The 'Detailed Area Plan' of

Dhaka tries to save the water bodies, the low-lying areas, and the government lands. If this plan fails, the lives of the citizens will be a nightmare.

Shahabuddin Mahtab
One-mail

Airport

My workplace is very close to the airport from where I hear the roaring of both civil and military aircrafts all day long. Along with that, we the North and South sides are chosen for take off and landing respectively. May be the growing skyscrapers on the south side of the airport, i.e. Banani, Gulshan and Motijheel C/A, are the reason that made the former ZIA such a handicapped airport. Such a functional diminution of an international airport in no way adds to the safe movement of aero-vehicles in and out of it. In addition to that, a new trouble has been added to the system--the ear blasting noise of the jet fighters.

Routine exercise of the air force planes around a civil aviation terminal will leave the wise people numb. Since the take off and landing of passenger planes of lower speed are limited to a lower altitude phenomenon, the flying of a higher speed (supersonic!) pair of jet planes becomes a potential candidate for collision.

We do take a lot of preventive measures only after a series of horrible events or accidents occur, but it never beats the principle of "prevention is better than cure". Let's

put our mind in the establishment of highest public safety to leave Shahjalal Airport for civil aviation only.

KMN S. Iqbal
Faculty
Mechanical Engineering,
IUBAT, Dhaka

Jamaat leaders

I was wondering why the government had been so lenient to the Jamaat till its top leaders were arrested that too on the flimsy ground of hurting the religious sentiment of the public. The Jamaat justifies their Islamic authenticity by the amount of suffering they undergo at the hands of the incumbent. But they should keep in mind that people all over the world were and are being persecuted not necessarily for their belief. As far as I have studied Islam, the Jamaat-e-Islami is not on the right track because they deliberately hide some key facts of Islam. One of them is the special significance of the Ahle Bayet we Sufi Muslims so strongly believe in. Besides, in violation of the Islamic tenets, the Jamaat believes in their dubious version of democracy. As they vacillate in theology, they are seen veering to this party or that party for their support. So people cannot have confidence on them. This is the very submissive nature of Jamaat that prevented them from supporting Bangladesh's freedom movement. I think it is the Jamaat's cardinal crime.

Tinku
Lalpur, Natore

Eve teasing

Whenever the issue of 'eve-teasing' comes up, men usually comment that modern women 'crave' for it. Then they boldly add that the kind of clothes women wear these days in public places invite harassment. The question generally arises what do women wear in public places? Other than few exceptions in the posh zones, what do women wear in public places? Fourteen female students committed suicides in Bangladesh in the last few months. They were teased, harassed verbally and physically while they were going to their educational institutions. If indecent clothing is the reason, then can someone answer how these unfortunate girls wearing school uniform provoke men?

In reality, the men in our region are 'pampered' culturally and socially to the extent that most suffer from superiority complex. Other than the female family members, in most cases they don't hesitate to show disrespect towards the rest of the species either by words or deeds. Furthermore, movies and TV often present eve teasing or stalking as mode of convincing the beautiful tender females to accept love proposals. If girls refuse to accept love/indecent proposals, the men become verbally and physically abusive as if the women have no right to choose what they want. They are 'lucky' enough that they were proposed and so they are bound to accept it or face the consequences. The men have seen the 'game of love' to be played in this manner by other male acquaintances always around them and never a question was raised. The shame and humiliation women face either force them to become vocal and be subject to more harassment or they remain mum and suffer silently as they know there is no remedy. Even the guardians often overlook it as a normal social phenomenon that all adolescent girls and women face in the hands of the 'fun-loving' men.

With opportunities to pursue education and seek employment, more and more women are venturing out of their houses even in the rural areas to build a good life. Whereas the material and visible changes might seem impressive, the social and mental acceptability is declining. The legal/educational institutions are not equipped enough to recognize or address such acts. Moreover, till the reports of female students committing suicides were all over the press, it did not seem like 'eve-teasing' was even in the list of crimes for the police. There are numerous news reports where the police at first refused to take any complaints or actions.

Many civil society organizations are conducting advocacy

and awareness programmers against the eve teasing. In different cities of India a number of young women volunteers have been, in protest of the male's typical accusation and eve teasing, stacking up the usual female wears such as dupattas, sarees, churidars, school uniforms etc on display along roadside. The women belong to Blank Noise Project, a community-public art project, which aims to change the common perspective that women invite to be 'teased' or 'harassed'.

The existing laws need to be revised to address the present situation. Exemplary punishments to the perpetrators can prevent the crime up to a level but ultimately it is the behavioral change that can provide a lasting solution to it. It is essential that men realize that women have a right to walk freely and independently as they do.

Fatema Samina Yasmin
One-mail

Women scientists

There are many women scientists in the world who are credited with discoveries and advances in a wide variety of areas of science. Women scientists have made a difference in fields of biology, medicine, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, and research.

From the dawn of the civilization women and men worked together to make the future brighter. Why aren't

there more women in science in Bangladesh? Their underrepresentation in the sciences is being recognized round the world as an important issue. It is not that they are not studying science. The biological and chemical sciences are believed to have even higher levels of enrolment. At a certain point of the social development process, a few socially determined factors created a cultural hemisphere, which pushed the civilization not to think women as equal to the men. This cultural phenomenon changed the thought process of society and the society started discrimination between women and men and ultimately women become a deprived part of society.

Modern social science looked into the social disorder and termed it as gender discrimination. This discrimination is sharply visible in our social and state level activities and attitude. Family issues play a big part in deterring well-trained women scientists from pursuing science as a career. Scientific training is a long drawn process that involves working for years on a doctorate and then spending some more years in post-doctoral positions. A scientist would then be in his or her early thirties. With their biological clock ticking away, women scientists who wish to raise a family cannot postpone marriage until they have secure faculty positions. But



Readers' instant comments on The Daily Star Online reports. Log on to thedailystar.net to leave your comments.

BCL infighting at JU leaves 33 hurt

VC assaulted, BCL suspends JU unit, expels 13; university suspends 17 students (July 6, 2010)

The golden boys of the BCL are not terrorists. They will establish Digital Bangladesh! All Bangladeshis except these golden boys will be terminated!

Jameel Ahmed

The DS reported that the PM threw cold water on her cabinet colleagues can't the PM throw some cold water on her golden boys and maintain a congenial atmosphere in educational institutions and in society at large?

Salma

There must be a ban on politics in all educational institutions. Enough is enough!

Misir Ali

How long do we have to see this kind of heinous attacks inside an educational

institution? What steps our Prime Minister and Home Minister would take now to eradicate this problem? Can we expect a valid explanation from the authorities?

Hifzur

Power, tender grabbing, extortion! Anyone can identify the pictures & sent them to jail. But the powerful can do anything! Our life & politics are taken over by muscle men.

Anonymous

Hon'able PM, you know in every election, there are some negative factors that influence people not to vote for a party. I am highly confident that the unruly BCL will be one of the evil factors in the next elections.

Kajol

Did our prime minister see these pictures? Did she feel anything after reading the news? Oh, sorry! I forgot that the AL has no relations with the BCL.

Al-Monsur Jiaul Haque

As a Jahangirnagarian, I don't want to see these types of incidents any more. Please stop Chhatra League activities in JU.

Kaikobad Hossain

The Bangladesh Chhatra League proved they are all powerful. They can do anything.

Sumon

The AL cannot avoid the responsibility of such incidents.

Student politics should be banned. Students will develop themselves by education.

Salequ Islam

Impose life ban on those students. They are not interested in studies. They are not fit for society. Please give them exemplary punishment and set an example for all educational institutions.

Kamal

People should wait to know the source of these bullets by which the students were injured, as the authorities claim that RULE OF LAW has been established in Bangladesh. In many incidents, the students were found to be using guns, whereas illegal possession of a gun is a punishable offence.

Azim

BCL activists again got involved in factional feud at Jahangirnagar University. It is really shameful for all of us that our students are fighting with each other for taking control of campus.

Tanvir

Jamaat trio linked with glut of cases

4 of those for war crimes; 16-day remand for interrogation of Nizami, Mojaheed, Sayedee; at least 100 Jamaat, Shibir men picked up across country (July 1, 2010)

I just looked at the crystal ball: till next election the stadium of BD politics will be the court!

Zakir Kibria

No criminals should go unpunished. They are not only the killers of Faruk they are also liable for killing 3 million Bengalis in 1971. Remand should be fruitful.

Auhidul Islam Russel

The Jamaat trio must be unfortunate enough to become devoid of 'freedom', thanks to their defying of the law of the land.

M.O. Gani

May rule of good law prevail in the country!

Nilufar Yesmin Biswas

Finally, the war criminals were arrested.

They deserve capital punishment. AN

Thanks to the Protom Alo for the advice to the government-- how to proceed with the case of the Jamaat leader in the backdrop of the international law for the trial of war criminals of which the government of Bangladesh is a signatory.

No doubt a sound warning. But I think the government also needs full support of the members of society and their positive advice to proceed with the trial of war criminals.

Faqrul

The govt. should keep this momentum going and accelerate the war crime trial process.

Ana Chowdhury

Great news--should have happened 30 years ago, but better late than never.

Akhter Azmi

Arresting and then framing charges one after another, seeking remand after remand for torture and harassment is not acceptable. This nation deserves better than this.

Jumana Sarwar

Such politics create divisions within the Muslim community. Divisions increase hatred and violence. Violence leads to bloodshed. Bloodshed in the name of Islam gives chances to other communities to criticize it.

Kazi Abul Firoz