

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.

Eid and the poor



KAZIYER/DRINKNEWS

The essence of Eid is on air and people of Bangladesh undoubtedly burst out into shopping. The television channels are regularly airing programmes regarding the shopping trends. I couldn't believe my ears when I heard the host affirming a sari, costing Tk. 3 lakh! How ridiculous is that now? The other day I turned the pages of The Daily Star, there was a rickshaw puller standing by the alley, selecting dresses from street vendors for his son. This man trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty could not even afford a shirt costing Tk. 200 and the fact

is that in this very same country people are choosing dresses worth Tk. 3 lakh! People, who are affluent can argue back that this is what they have earned with their hard labour, so they possess every right to purchase anything they like, they have every right to enjoy. Well, it is also true enough that people are very much helpless and poor at its lowest level. So, a humble request to all - if you have ability, then help the needy. Eid Mubarak!

Mahbuba Sharmeen Preema
Penfield School, Dhaka

Hazardous chemicals

A front page report on the subject was published in the pages of a local English daily on 31st. August. It summed up practically all the locations where dangerous and explosive chemicals are now being handled and sold. The list indicates that most of these are located in the areas falling under Kotwali, Hazaribagh, Mirpur, Lalbagh, Ramna, Tejgaon, Sherpur and Demra police stations.

Police teams (say 3 or 4) along with first class magistrates should go to these locations, one by one; then hopefully these will be relocated from crowded residential and commercial areas in the next six months or so. It will provide some safety from the present dangerous situation when a tragic fire can occur at any time! The culprits should be brought to book, and penalized and even put behind bars, for such dangerous malpractice putting people's lives at risk.

Immediate laws to support this should be passed by parliament on priority basis in the overall safety interest of the citizen of the country. Similar actions should be taken in all other cities and urban areas of Bangladesh; the sooner the better!

Further, the names of all the parties involved, along with the name of all such dangerous chemicals should be provided to all banks. They should be asked to stop issuing any LCs to any such applicant, and inform the

Explosive Department for punitive action if no Explosive Certificates are provided by the prospective importers.

The above two measures, by informing the banks, and physically identifying and removing such dangerous chemicals from all illegal locations, will ensure safety for the unaware residents in all parts of Bangladesh! This action needs topmost priority from our government!

S.A. Mansoor

Dhaka

Cricket's sad moment

In the most sensational sporting scandal ever, the most of media in a front-page splash under the heading "Caught: Match-fixer trousers £150K as he rigs the England Test at Lord's." The allegations that Pakistani players, including their captain, collaborated with a betting racket during the England-Pakistan Test series could have a debilitating impact on the game. The immediate fallout will be felt in Pakistan, a country that has produced some of the game's finest players. Cricket in that country has been in limbo for reasons extraneous to the game. The fallout of the corruption allegation could be more devastating than the temporary break terrorism has forced on cricketing activity in Pakistan.

Pakistan cricket has plunged to an all-time low with both its worst ever defeat in a Test match and the match-fixing scam. The damage done to cricket is immense. The timing of the latest scandal has not done cricket any good. With major cricket events round the corner, it wouldn't be wrong to say that only cynicism will prevail. The game may very well lose its sheen with incidents like these. The ongoing scandal-a-day saga in the world of cricket reflects the falling standards of morality. Quick materialistic gratification is at the core of such appalling degradation. Cricket was the one institution held in reverence for its values of fair play and high standards. What a fall from grace! Every cricket match played in every corner of the world seems to be attracting the attention of bookies. The Pakistan cricket team must hang its head in shame. The true word came from the Prime Minister of Pakistan: "I am deeply pained. Our heads have been bowed in shame."

Gopal Sengupta, Canada

The veil issue

Too much has been written about niqaab already. It's time we focus on mini-skirts! Mini-skirt is no less extreme than niqaab. Imagine a teacher looking around the class and all he gets is an unwelcome glimpse of the girl's private parts. Is normal interaction possible in this case? Mini-skirt is an impediment to cultural development and spiritual enlightenment. It increases the risk of sexual harassment. We cannot always depend on men to not rape us and expose ourselves for every random person to leer at. We need to be truly liberated. If these girls wearing mini-skirts are advised to wear even the basics of hijab (not niqaab), which is undoubtedly obligatory in major religions, they quickly retort "Hijab cannot be forced. We are free to wear whatever we want." Can the same be said about niqaab? Can a woman be forced to unveil while some girls are given the freedom to roam about in mini-skirts? Can the society itself isolate and rebuke niqaabis so much and overlook these girls donning mini-skirts? There has to be more discussions/writes-ups revolving around mini-skirt and its effects on the "welfare" of society.

Monica Islam
Dhaka

Zakat

All, who take shelter under the flag of Islam, are to carry out several religious duties. Zakat is one of those religious duties, which is a matter of great importance in Islam. It is the third pillar of Islam. In accordance with the teachings of Islam, Zakat stands for regular and mandatory charity, which is given in Allah's name to the poor and the needy by the Muslim community.

According to Islam, the holy month of Ramadan is better than any other time of the year to give Zakat as well as stand by the under-privileged members of society.

M Faisal Saleh
Chunati Hakimia Kamil
Madrasa
Lohagara, Chittagong

Digital Bangladesh!

One hundred new cars are hitting city roads every day. After one or two years you will have to keep your cars at home because you will find no space on road. Solution: education online, job online, banking online, medical treatment online, shopping online, marriage online, raising kids online, politics online, voting online and so on. A digital Bangladesh indeed!

Mumtaz
Shantinagar, Dhaka

Facebook

Facebook has revolutionized both the online world and the manner in which people communicate with each other. According to statistics, Facebook has over 350 million active users worldwide. The Facebook craze has affected everyone. Young children, workaholics, CEOs and elderly people have Facebook account. Facebook facilitates communication, helps people find friends, offers enjoyable games and applications and allows individuals to support causes, organizations and activities. Yet, Facebook can be blamed for some negative impacts. Its popularity, accessibility and information vastness produces some undesired effects. Facebook is responsible for depriving its users of privacy. The term 'Facebook addict' has emerged recently. Many people can sincerely confess that they have become addicted to the platform. Facebook's initial idea was to enable people to get in touch with friends and classmates. Seeing that it has great potential, developers soon added various applications to the platform. The aim of these applications is to keep users online for as long as possible. In this manner, developers created a set of games, quizzes and additional enjoyable activities that can turn a regular user into a Facebook addict. Facebook addicts prefer communicating with friends via the website. Offline communication is no longer seen as desirable. People prefer spending time in front of the computer rather than going outside. The fact is that the website has revolutionized the world of communications. Yet, as every new trend, it could be held responsible for distancing people from each other. Just think of how many people find it easier to wish somebody happy birthday using the Facebook wall rather than simply using the phone to call.

Facebook's addictiveness often affects productivity and keeps people occupied with applications rather than with their job. The gossip factor also plays a role. Facebook allows users to trace what their friends have been doing. Everyone enjoys watching Facebook photos and examining changes in Facebook statuses. The website has turned into a giant gossiping community, allowing its users to find out easily who got married, who gave birth, who is having an affair or is quitting a job. A number of users waste serious amount of time, while exploring the profiles of other users. Facebook today is an immense portal which has virtually brought entertainment and communication in our hands, but we must utilize it carefully.

Tanha Kashfia Kate
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Constitution amendment

The newspapers reports suggest that a constitution review committee has been formed to examine the possible changes that could be made to return to original 72 constitution.

The members have already met in a meeting. It has been reported in the press that there were hot debates and differences of opinions between the members of the committee on issues like whether to keep or delete "Bismillah-he-Rahmanir Rahim" and "Islam as the State Religion", the additions made by past two military dictators Gen. Zia and Gen. Ershad.

Both of them did this just to use the religious sentiments of the people of Bangladesh.

As far as Ershad's state religion is concerned, he equated Islam with other state symbols like "Doel as National Bird, Jackfruit as National fruit, Royal Bengal Tiger as National wild animal, Shapla as National Flower" etc. Instead of glorifying the best religion in the world, he had actually lowered the Islam equating it with other national symbols.

In Bangladesh more than 80% people are rural and 20% are city dwellers. The most of the rural dwellers including some percentage of city dwellers are very much sincere believers of Islam. In this 20th century most of them believe the hawkers who sell their herbal medicines in rural markets telling the people that his medicines are found in dreams, they take pani-para

(water blown by mouth by their imams or pirs) and cure all diseases including cancer. They also believe that if he puts one of his children to madrasa, he will be pulled to the Heaven by this child.

From time immemorial, many pirs, people with religious dresses exploited the people. Not only Zia-Ershad, there are many so-called politicians who are using Islam as their stools to master support from these people.

It is a simple ploy and nothing else. Let them continue their exploitation. At a certain stage these very innocent people will realise that the religious politicians are fake when they will find their real identity of militancy. Only modern education will create awareness in them.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Learning English

Failure in English is a common matter in our country. Our rural students are most affected by this problem. From childhood, the rural students do not get basic knowledge of English. There is a good number of reasons why students of rural areas fail in English. Firstly, English is a foreign language. Rural students do not have the right approach to English. A teacher of rural area can hardly follow a technique. They fail to convince learners that they have to learn four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Most of the teachers of rural areas are not competent and trained.

These are the reasons for which the rural students of our country fail in English. It is high time we did something to save the students from the disgrace of failure.

Joti
Department of English
Bhawal Badre Alam Govt. College, Gazipur

Street children

A dog took away a bit of a poor man's flesh while both were fighting for the same scrap of food. The report says about 120,000 people, most of whom are Toaki, eat rotten foods from dustbins, drink dirty water from water bodies, lack alternative



Iftar and sedentary life

I refer to the harmful effects of chemical additives on Iftar foods sold in many shops (letter 1.9.10). It is not only the chemicals but also the fat and oil of the fried iftar items that is very bad for health. Ramadan is the month of restraint and is an excellent opportunity to lose some weight following religious practices, however because of the tasty and alluring fatty and fried food stuffs, most people put on more weight during this month. It is specially bad for well-to-do people with sedentary habits and life style. A recent health study (widely reported in UK media) has found that beside obesity merely sitting down for any length of time is very bad for cardiovascular health. Men who sit for 23 hours a week have a 64 percent greater chance of

dying from cardiovascular disease than men who spend only 11 hours sitting. Another study found that sitting (like TV viewing, sitting at an office desk etc) increases your chances of dying from any cause, and this is worse for women; those who sat for more than 6 hours per day were 37 percent more likely to die than those who sat for fewer than three hours, regardless of physical activity at other times. Some doctors are therefore advising that in addition to having proper food and exercise we should spend much more time standing on our feet than just sitting down.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

clothes, sleep without a house and suffer from diseases. As a student of Social Welfare, I got a chance to work with such Tokai or Pothokoli and have so far discovered family violence, abandoned by parents, second marriage of mother or father, extreme poverty, trafficking, homelessness caused by river erosion as the causes of their coming to street. But this isn't over. Drug dealers use them for peddling drugs and so-called politicians use them to throw bombs and sometimes shoot them to make an issue of agitation. And thus, they with political backup one day tremor the city as top terrors and drug dealers. Young girls, on the other hand, fall victim to forced prostitution and eventually become an agent of a deadly disease-- HIV/AIDS.

It seems that these ill-fated Tokais are to be harvested, not to be cared. The government has hardly taken programmes designed for the Tokais. Fortunately some NGOs like Aparajeyo Bangladesh, Safety and Rights Society have come up with some help like giving them basic education, training in some vocational and technical fields, healthcare and recreational and counselling facility. It is expected that the government in collaboration with NGOs will launch effective programmes to ensure them a safe and secure life. If they are imparted vocational and technical training and sent abroad as manpower, they may get a decent life.

Anonymous
Lahuria, Lohagara
Narail

Nicknames

Nowadays it is so tough for us to be able to identify someone by name alone. There has been an abnormal proliferation of nicknames as well as the use of names. One's fondness for a person is to be demonstrated in one's behaviour, not by using a pet name.

Once Roman names were all the rage: Lubna, Lucius. These days it is our mother tongue Bangla. One of my friends prefers the real name as it is given by the parents with much care and after finding out the meaning of the Arabic words.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Chittagong

Urban life

Yes, Dhaka city experiences traffic jam inherently but during Ramadan it becomes scarily evident. Honestly, closing down schools is a very poor way of dealing with this scenario.

There are other constructive ways of solving the mess the capital is in. In a report published in The Daily Star, it said 9% of the city constituted of roads. Ideally it should be 25%. If you notice closely, you'll see clearly this city is poorly planned. While walking across a street, just look up high... big black webs the overhead cable jungle waiting to entangle you. And the sidewalks created for you to walk on are actually occupied by vendors so you have to walk on the road. It feels like the city may collapse with the weight of its load.

Man destroyed nature. As the mobs flooded in, forests, rivers nature actually were traded for big skyscrapers. We've heard 'You should cut your coat according to your cloth'. We didn't cut our coat accordingly. We stretched it and ended up with torn patches everywhere a hazardous capital.

Samirah Bint Zulfikar
SFX Greenherald Int'l
School, Dhaka

IPL

There is no doubt that cricket is one of the best sources of entertainment in recent times. And tournaments like IPL and airtel T20 cup have added a new dimension to it. It has also created an opportunity for players of different countries to prove their ability. But there is no doubt that Bangladeshi players like Tamim Iqbal or Shakib Al Hasan are better players than many of the players of other countries.

But for the last few years, our players were being neglected by the teams of this tournament.

Inamuzzaman
Faujdarhat Cadet College

Far from convincing

Law minister Shafique Ahmed's statement that people who exercise state power were involved in corruption sounds as hollow as Prime Minister's repeated warning to BCL. Politicians say one thing and do quite the opposite. Has the government done anything this far to curb corruption? Given the fact

that the government from its inception were busy grabbing the state facilities for its party members, this statement may not be taken seriously. We have seen how they politicised every apparatus of government and used and are now using those to oppress the opposition. Was not the quashing of cases against ruling party members a glaring example of corruption? Thus steeped in corruption, the government has lost the moral courage to launch a campaign against the corruption in customs, ports, taxes, roads, highways, finance, police, bureaucracy, government tenders and other so many sectors. Will not the people rise from the slumber of being accustomed to corruption?

AS
On e-mail

Eve-teasing

Bangladesh, a small and developing country, is beset with multiple problems. Among them, eve-teasing, nowadays, has become a talk of the country owing to its injurious effects on women, especially to the teen aged girls. It's obvious that no conscious citizen of our country is unacquainted with this problem created by evil-doers. Whenever we put our eyes on daily newspapers, we find the news of suicide of any school or college going girl which is the outcome of eve-teasing.

I reckon that everyone knows what eve-teasing is, for which there is no need to define it black and white. Varieties of reasons can be cited. Through satellite TV, the young boys and girls are watching pornography which is directly or indirectly leading them to eve-teasing. It is a matter of great regret.

Most victims of it are women or girls who fail to wear very modest dress. On the contrary, those wearing decent dress are not found to be teased as usual. The previous two sentences imply that not only the evil doer youths, but also the women wearing indecorous dress are equally responsible for it. There is a law against it but law is not enough to solve the problem. Parents should make their children realize the impacts of eve-teasing.

Mohammad Minhaj Uddin
Dept. of English
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Banani-Gulshan Lake



You can kindly see the condition of the lake filled with rubbish & human waste dumped by the shanty dwellers living by the lake side upstream on the south past the connecting bridge. The stench is unbearable & has made the surrounding areas very unhealthy. And the rubbish is very soon going to spread way past beyond the bridge & ultimately the entire lake.

Recently, the government very proudly introduced the DAP that was widely published through the electronic & print media. May I, therefore, ask - is allowing this filling up of the Banani-Gulshan lake with rubbish a part of the DAP?

Ashfaq Chowdhry
Banani
Dhaka

PHOTO: WRITER