

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.

Vehicles on footpaths

Hundreds of thousands of people of Dhaka city every day use the footpaths to travel from one place to another. These walkways are not really commuter-friendly, many of them having cracks and others having layers of all sorts lying here and there. Still a good number of people use them either to save time or money or both as travelling by other means ensures getting stuck in traffic jams. But it seems that people now have to find an alternative to walking on footpaths,

because a new trend is on the rise—parking and driving vehicles on footpaths. Now-a-days people are often seen riding their motorbikes or bicycles on footpaths causing immense discomfort to commuters. If the roads are congested, these bikers simply drive onto footpaths. Astonishingly, some policemen are appreciating this outrageous act by performing it themselves. It is extremely dangerous to drive a vehicle on footpaths. The driver can easily injure himself or others.

Besides driving, some people also use footpaths as parking places. Parking cars or bikes on footpaths compels people to get down from the footpath, which can lead to accidents. All these can be avoided if everyone respects traffic laws and tries to abide by them. And if someone does not, the law enforcers should be on hand to take action. Vehicles are meant for the roads, not for footpaths.

Shahriar Kabir
Eskaton



United Airways (BD) Ltd

Recently I had the opportunity to travel by United Airways (BD) Ltd. from Dhaka to Kathmandu. It is encouraging to learn from their brochure that the United Airways has made remarkable progress as a private airliner after its inception in 2007 with only one Dash 8-100 aircraft. Now the airlines have a number of jet aircrafts with its routes to several domestic and international destinations. It has been stated that the United Airways has plan to increase both of their fleets and flights in the near future.

Meanwhile, I have found their in-flight services quite passenger-friendly. But their ground services are yet to get a jet speed, for instance, the check-in process is too slow. The passenger lifting system from boarding gate to aircraft and vice versa is also very unpleasant. The return flight No.4H594A was delayed for more than an hour and when the flight arrived at Hazrat Shah Jalal International Airport from Tribhuvan International Airport of Kathmandu, it was raining and a group of passengers got stranded inside the cabin as only one vehicle was carrying passengers to the arrival gate. At one stage, the cabin crews stopped disembarkation of passengers through the first exit and asked the ground staff to open the tail exit to disembark passengers. It looked like as if an emergency evacuation of passengers from a mayday aircraft was going on! I would suggest the United Airways to make arrangements with proper authority so that they can use the boarding bridge to embark and disembark passengers.

I sincerely wish further

accomplishments of the United Airways (BD) Limited. **Professor M Zahidul Haque**
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Innovation and creativity

Is promoting maths and science education the best way to stimulate future innovation? This was a question asked at an international debate moderated by a respectable weekly. Well, the answer can be both 'yes' and 'no.' Of course, maths and science play an important role. But I believe that true innovation comes from a solid education, which includes liberal arts as well as economics, business and various disciplinary fields with different worldviews. Improved education in all fields might have a more successful result. Learning to develop thinking does not necessarily come from highly structured classes of maths and science. Many innovators in history were philosophers. There are many examples of innovations by the men who did not have maths and science education. Aristotle's views about science were remarkable though he was not educated in science. Gottfried Leibniz was educated in philosophy, but he had contributed a lot to maths and science. Einstein did not start out in math. He said that imagination is everything. These are just a few examples of where innovation and creativity comes from.

Sirajul Islam
Shyamoli, Dhaka

MP's gun and media

Ibrahim died in a dubious situation. The case got dispro-

portionate media attention as the alleged murder took place in the jeep of a ruling party MP. The gun used in the killing belongs to the same MP. Police after unusual reluctance lodged a murder case and promptly arrested two persons who immediately made confessional statements implicating themselves. The case appears to be solved and ready to be tried in the court. But media and general public appear not fully convinced. They want to know whether the police version is oversimplified or something is being concealed. The state minister for law who is also a lawyer at one stage indicated that the MP may be charged for unauthorized use of his licensed gun. It also appears that at initial stage some attempts were taken to hide the facts and even destroy evidences. The victim was taken to a private clinic in old Dhaka area, the blood stained seat of jeep was washed, dead body was left at DMCH emergency as unidentified and at last an unnatural death case was started by the killer driver himself. These irregularities need careful examination. Investigators should not jump to conclusions quickly. Provisions of arms act and regulation should also be analysed. In certain situation absolute custody of licensed arm is necessary.

So far the government has shown total neutrality in the case. Media should also play a similar neutral role. Trial of any case should take place in appropriate court. Media trial is a very dangerous trend. Law should take its own course lest we forget everybody is equal in the eye of law.
M. Sanaul Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

False cases

Filing false cases is another sign of our social decay. This is an effective tool for a wealthy and powerful person to harass another person by using law. It is observed that the law enforcers' responses to the false cases are prompter than that of the genuine cases. May be one day the falsely accused persons would be proven and declared innocent by the court, but in the meantime his family would be destroyed. However, I believe that at least the law enforcing agencies, through their sincere and honest investigation, can reduce the number of false cases.

Mobarak Ali
Shahid Tajuddin Ahmed
Sarani
Dhaka

Sorry state of CTV

As many TV channels are being operated in Bangladesh, we are getting many high standard programmes on different channels. The competition is so tough that if the viewers find any distasteful programme on any channel, they can change the channel at once. Therefore, every channel authorities are careful about the standard of their programmes. But CTV (Chittagong Television) is different from other channels where some unskilled persons are making low standard programmes. The inhabitants of Chittagong who do not have satellite connections are bound to watch it. I think it is a complete waste of money and time. The government can utilise that money in other development works. I think either skilled people should operate CTV or government should ban this channel.
Mohammad Zia-ul-Haque
International Islamic University Ctg

PM raises war crime issue

Our prime minister deserves kudos for raising the war crime issue in the United Nations. She was also vocal in enumerating atrocities by her rival parties to her family and party members quite forgetting what her party men are doing now to the opposition all over the county. We are very pleased that she uttered the word 'justice' in her speech. I hope she will do justice to her utterance of justice by administering justice where breaking the laws by the ruling party has become the norm.

Abdus Subhan
One-mail

Helping the Palestinians!

From the news telecast by CNN on September 27, 2010, I learned that a Jewish boat is heading towards Gaza carrying aids, despite the Israeli blockade, there are ten people on board including Jews and other nationals. A passenger of the boat Yanatan Shapirai said that all Jewish people do not support their government's actions against the Palestinians, they think it most unjust and they want the world to know it. He also said that let the Israeli authorities handcuff them and the whole world will see the event.

It is very heartening to know that there are people in the Jewish community who are sympathetic to the Palestinians. We praise those people, may their endeavour be successful and may all the people of Israel come to their senses.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Bring them to justice

We were stuck with awe and astonishment to read in the news that a group of pro-Awami League doctors from Swadhinata Chikitshak Parishad (SCP) and Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) allegedly assaulted Professor Dr. Pran Gopal Dutt, the Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), after not being selected for the posts of medical officer. Moreover, these outsiders had a meeting with the leaders of SCP and BMA at the academic council room of BSMMU violating the rules of the university. It has become a norm of the ruling party men to swoop on responsible people who do not cater to their petty and unjust interests. Even an eminent medical professional like Professor Dr. Pran Gopal Dutt has not been spared. We deeply resent the attack on this prominent personality of the country and demand that those responsible for the heinous act be brought to justice.

M. Rukanuddin
Dhaka

Age limit

At present, a person in the country can apply for a job in public services till 30 years of his or her age. However, for the offspring of freedom fighters the age limit is 32 years. Those who did not register their real age in SSC or Dakhil level are thought to be conscious, even lucky ones. Because, they will get more chances to apply for jobs than those who did not reduce their age during the registration. It seems that the truthful failed and the untruthful won the race!
Habibur Rashid Ismail
Chittagong

Miscreants on loose!

Over the last few days many local dailies reported the litany of violence and killings all over Bangladesh. It seems that even the police are beating up and sadistically killing people! One wonders if "Law & Order" has forsaken Bangladesh in General and Dhaka in particular?

In the newspapers, except for one or two reports on other issues, all the other news reports were directly or indirectly related to violence and killings, including the week-long saga of violence that has unbalanced Pabna district administration! On Dhaka University, it was reported that BCL men have taken up procedural duties. Thankfully this was not violence related!

Statistically, as reported in one daily, 7285 crimes were recorded by police between 1st January and 31st July 2010. In my opinion, many more crimes might have gone unreported. Based on police records, this works out to an average of 34 crimes a day! Including un-recorded crimes, this could well exceed 70 crimes daily! So much for law and order!

The surprising part is police's contribution to it! In Chittagong, it was reported that a rickshaw puller was mercilessly beaten in police custody, and was hospitalised. Another died while in police custody. Police claimed that he died of over indulging in drugs, while in police custody. It is simply unbelievable! It seems that police discovered the fact only after his death. Did he not have a post-mortem? No chemical examination was carried out to trace drugs in his body! Meanwhile, the long drawn Pabna saga, has a new twist! High AL officials, including the Hon. Home Minister officially stated that 'Jubo League' and 'BCL' are not their associated organisations! With whom then are they associated with? BNP or Jatiyo Party? If they are orphans, then they must be very powerful orphans indeed! Given this scenario, small wonder that BNP blames AL for mismanagement of law and order situation in the country! Can AL put the upset 'House of Law' in order? Or is it a tall order, beyond their ken?

Acitizen
Dhaka

RTI Act

It refers to the published editorial in The Daily Star on September 28, 2010 entitled "Right to Know Day, Reap the benefits of RTI." The Right to Information (RTI) Act is no doubt a progressive instrument of democracy empowering citizens to obtain information. At the same time, the government cannot be faulted for proposing to exempt file notings from the Act's purview. As rightly pointed out by the media experts, the disclosure of file notings will harm the process of decision making as officials will refrain from rendering objective advice. The best course would be to have a full-fledged debate on the issue before introducing the amendment. The government's withdrawal of the move to dilute the RTI Act is doubtless a significant victory for the people of Bangladesh. Who would want to dilute the Act except those who have something to hide? RTI activists should not become complacent though. Like a dormant virus, the amendments can reappear with virulence. In order to exercise the freedom of speech and expression effectively, we need an informed public opinion. The



Trapped miners

With the arrival of the specially designed equipment, hopefully the 33 trapped Chilean miners shall soon be rescued. It is heartening to know that after an ordeal of couple of months, the trapped miners shall finally be rescued, as reported by Al Jazeera Television. It would require almost a day to rescue all the trapped miners, said the report. May Almighty Allah save their lives!

Saleh ayub
One-mail

right to knowledge includes the right to information. The right to information thus flows out of freedom of speech and expression.

The Right to Information Act is not the repository of the right to information. Its repository is the constitutional right to free speech and expression. The RTI Act is merely an instrument that lays down the statutory procedure in the exercise of this right. It is, therefore, necessary that all exceptions and denials or exemptions and denials of the right to information must necessarily conform to restrictions that bear a nexus to those mentioned in the act. On the bureaucracy's stranglehold on the decision-making process, I cannot but quote a passage from Franz Kafka's 'The Castle'. "All governments are subject to one international order the bureaucracy. It considers itself omnipotent and backs itself up. The ideological system may change, but the bureaucracy continues to function without a hitch, because, free as it is from any value judgments, it has no difficulty in integrating itself with any system... Even in the midst of political turmoil and uncertainty, it will trust its own law and endure. Not even its smell will change." Government files are of two kinds note file and current file. The note file covers the entire process of decision-making while the current file comprises only correspondence which is ordinarily accessible. If the notings and discussions in the note file are made accessible to the public, officers and ministers will be forced to treat issues impartially. Some notes may be irrelevant or digressing bits. Any exposure to the notings alone will be misleading and will give room for distorting the truth. The writer of the note intends it for the decision maker and not for public reading. It will be unfair to him if it is made public. His rights also need to be pro-

ected. Further to the note approved, I wish to bring to light some other methods followed in government offices with respect to file notings. When files are put up with notes to some officials for orders, they write "P.I." (Personal inspection) or "speak" in pencil. After their demands are met, they call for the files, erase the pencil marks and approve the notes. If they make the remarks in pen they write "inspected" and "spoken" beside the original observations and approve the notes. The ruling government has shelved the amendments to the RTI for the time being. The all-powerful bureaucracy will be waiting to push them through. Political witch hunting has become the rule every time a new government assumes power. The people have a right to know what compelled the government of the day to embark on retrospective review of cases. The file notings will expose the real intentions. Of course it will be a different matter if an issue is decided orally with the help of pliable officers.

Gopal Sengupta
Canada

RMCH scene

Rangpur Medical College and Hospital has lost its past glory. On 26th July 2010 I went to RMCH to see my ailing brother. I found him lying in a dirty bed of a general ward along with other patients. I had been there for quite some time but no doctor or nurse visited the ward to enquire about the patients.

I found almost all corners of the hospital building unclean. There were a few lifts for the patients. But only 2/3 lifts were working. Only a few intern doctor were moving around.

Would the authorities concerned look into the matter?
Mahbubul Haque
Chowdhury
Dhaka

Physical punishment in schools



Corporal punishment is still being practiced in the classrooms, as Sir Frank Peters predicted. I have received many phone calls from the upset parents who were telling me that there has been no change in the teachers' attitude and they continue to beat the students, as if they are above the law. After all, they are the 'highly-respected' teachers - the supreme power in a classroom.

Many teachers who are punishing the students physically are academic failures with no teaching abilities or training of any kind and undeserving of the honourable title of a teacher. My request is - don't abide by the law and send them to jail, if necessary. Such 'teachers' will only bring disgrace to this noble profession.
Dr. Sorif Khan
Chittagong

Build flyovers

Traffic jam in Dhaka city is getting intolerable day by day. The government is planning for building mono-rails, circuit rails or metro rails which are in fact quite ambitious and time consuming ventures. If the govt. builds some flyovers in some key points of Dhaka instead, traffic jam will be reduced obviously.

Flyovers can be built within a short time and at an affordable cost. It would be pertinent to mention here that before the year 2000, Kolkata city had no flyover, but at present there are twelve flyovers in Kolkata, built during the last ten years, which reduced traffic jams significantly.
Durdan J Ahmed
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

