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.

Save our City!

This letter is in support of Architect Kashef's letter ("Save the JS complex", May 23rd) on indiscreet construction at the Sangsad

It really takes my breath away when I see such apathy and myopia (towards such an architectura masterpiece) of certain people who are supposed to be on the driving seats of our nation. One doesn't need to be an architect or planner to apprehend such a simple matter that we need to live in a good and healthy urban environment. Any educated person with mere social consciousness can understand this very fact that we cannot cram buildings together wherever we find an open space. Apart from aesthetics, we need some breathing spaces as well as spaces for our children to play.

In a city like Dhaka, where rate of urbanisation creeps up above the alarming level every single day and unplanned developments take place by leaps and bounds, density should be a very important factor to be reckoned with. Although RAJUK has some setback-rules in terms of individual lots, however it doesn't show any true concern on controlling density of dwelling units per acre. Absence of a strong density control policy is already taking its toll heavily on city's age old infrastructure system which was planned to serve much lower number of people per area than it is serving today. Severe traffic jam, flooding of some roads even after light rain or reduction of underground water level, all are instances of such tolls.

If our people in govt. offices still don't get into this simple fact, then God forbid, dire consequence may await in the near future. People at RAJUK, City Corp. and other concerned agencies should shed their Prima Donna attitude and start listening to the professional groups like architects, planners, engineers etc. in order to save our city from a potential man made disaster.

Zafar Hadi California, USA

Efficiency and **Bangladesh**

I fully agree with Alice Akram ("Exam hazard", May 27) and consider ourselves as one of the most inefficient people. Accountability is one word which is completely absent in our psyche. The people at the helm of affairs never consider themselves accountable to the people who have put them to

I have noticed people complaining on countless issues in this very Letters Page but never did I see any of the authorities replying to it. Why this apathetic attitude?

Sabrina Khan Dhanmondi, Dhaka

I don't agree with Alice Akram when she complains about our policymakers comparing them with the British Council authority.

British Council is a small organisation comparing to the responsibility bestowed upon the government of an entire country. It is easy for British Council to reply promptly for the very reason that they have to deal with lesser people meaning lesser problems. But just think about the government of a developing country! Everyday, they have to deal with corruption, inefficiency and not to mention millions of problems of the weirdest nature. They are trying their best. If we cannot support them at

Our perception of life



During the 80s when I was very young (but old enough to understand the value of money), people in the government services used to live a plain and simple life with the paltry amount of their salary income. Government secretaries or engineers working in government agencies used to drive old cars in dilapidated conditions and live in small apartments with only the basic amenities that the government could provide them with. Their lifestyle stood as a testimony to the limited source of income opportunities that they had. I am not saying that corrupt officials were not there, but they were few in numbers who were treated with a general sense of disrespect and incongruity.

Gone are the good old days. Now the 'high-ranking' government officials who cannot send their children to an English medium school or own residential apartments for each of their children are considered as 'outcasts'. Government secretaries have to send their sons to the US (or UK or Australia) for higher education. Their daughters have to be married with Bangladeshi engineers (plus MBA) working on

Our perception about life has changed to the extent where we do not really care about the distinction between right and wrong, honesty and dishonesty, legal and illegal. All that matters is accumulation of wealth. No one worries about paying taxes to the government. There are people taking care of tax issues whose job is to make sure government gets the minimum amount as taxes. Giving taxes is considered a favour to the government, not considered a duty as a rightful citizen. The whole economic, political and social system of our country is giving an easy ride to those who want to make huge money through unfair means.

KM Zubair Sadeque Duquesne University, USA

least let's not find fault with them

on a regular basis And I don't get it when people like Alice Akram consider the everbusy authorities to scan every Letters Page of The Daily Star (they don't have so much free time as Ms Alice has) and reply to each and every problem. Ms Alice may find Letters Page very important and interactive but others may not find it so readers' friendly which is most of the time full of ruling party bashing by the ever nagging people of Bangladesh

Jamil Reza Lalmatia, Dhaka

"George W Bush is a man of vision'

I fully agree with Mr Mahmood Elahi (May 27) and want to reiterate with him that President Bush is indeed a man of vision. Only if we had a leader like him, the fate of this impoverished nation would

have been much brighter. What I like about President Bush is that his top priority is his own people and country. The rest to him is a secondary matter. This is exactly what should be the case with other leaders. All Saddam Hussein cared about is himself, not the people. And look where he has

ended now. And the least said about our leaders is better. They care about everything else except for the welfare of the people and the nation. Our leaders are more interested in what's happening in Irag, on their toe to comment about each and every international issue and completely unmoved when law and order in their own country takes the lowest dip, people are killed on a regular basis, dacoity, extortion, corruption are everyday affair.

I wish our leaders took some lessons from George Bush regarding how to prosper the nation and how to win the countrymen's

Shamsad Ali Mohammedpur, Dhaka

How much interest rate can stimulate our economy?

In light of our economic history, present insistence of lowering interest rate by our business people leaves lot of rooms for the validity of their argument. BCI has urged to lower interest rates, they have suggested that "...lending rate should be brought down to 78% while interest rate should be

3-4% on savings" as to contribute to our GDP, decrease unemployment, and increase export (Star Business report, "Businesspeople call for lower interest rate" May 22). However, all monitory policies have range of issues considering the outcome of individual economical fluctuation. Unfortunately, our industrial growth is lagging behind because of our inefficient and fragile banking systems, which have crumbled periodically to oversee and to

investigate while getting back to

the prior investments. The reality however, as we all know, is that most of the borrowers have plenty of political influences and loopholes to pretext as to cherish their luxuries. Our monitory policy cannot stabilise our short run economy or expand it into long run industrial growth by lowering interest rates unless the banking sector is efficient to monitor and take effective measures against the bankrupts. Moreover, lowering interest rate affects the government reserve requirement and the availability of funds. As we are well aware that we have been depending on foreign funds, but have we thought about taking necessary procedures to reduce our debt?

Therefore, we should revive and take effective actions regarding our existing investments before pushing our economy forward new ventures. We should rather increase interest rate in order to encourage people from all walks of life to savings so that we don't only relieve us from depending on foreign funds in the future, but also have sufficient funds of our own for further expansion our economy. Since our economy is not a healthy one, lowering interest rate wouldn't dramatically boost the GDP at this moment. Therefore, we should not encourage sweeping investments unless we can guarantee strong banking systems to manipulate and identify long-term productive sectors for investment. **SM Gofran**

(MIS) Webster University

"Passport fees"

What's wrong with it if the Bangladesh Embassy in UAE charges a bit more as passport fees?

Bangladesh is a poor country and the expatriates in UAE earn quite handsome amount, I'm sure. So if our embassy charges more comparing to India and Pakistan, 1 don't consider it as highhandedness rather as a means of strengthening the economy of our poor motherland. And the expatriate Bangladeshis should be supporting it, not complain about it!

Shuja Khondokar

On Banglapedia

I was browsing the Banglapedia to find the name of my grandfather, Indra Lal Roy, who made a great name as a revolutionary activist in East Bengal as a member of Dhaka Anushilan Samiti. But to my disappointment I have not found his biography in Banglapedia. But my disappointment was more than redeemed by finding another personality of the same name, Indra Lal Roy.

A son of Barisal, Indra Lal Roy, as the Banglapedia article goes, was the first Indian fighter pilot in the British Royal Air Force. He led many sorties in the sky of Germany during the World War I and destroyed many German aircraft. While returning from his final sortie, his own aircraft was shot down and he was killed. Indra Lal

Roy was posthumously awarded DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) in 1918 for his brave role in the air

Indra Lal's story has been illustrated by his photograph as well. I only expect that many more surprise information like this would be found in the Banglapedia. I congratulate its makers and personally rank them among the most patriotic sons of the soil.

Hiral Lal Roy Chowdhury Uttara, Dhaka

Bombings in Saudi Arabia, Časablanca...

I have read with dismay the utter lack of knowledge and one-sided views that readers have with respect to the bombings in Saudi Arabia and Casablanca. One reader replies from the UK that since military support people were hit, that this is okay. NO it is not okay, it does not matter who it was these were civilians.

Another reader thinks that there is a conspiracy that Al-Qaeda is not the real culprits. Wake up - there is a war going on and it is going to be waged for a long time. I hope that the US breaks the backs of these arrogant and hypocritical terrorists. They have forever destroyed the good name of honest Muslims living in the West.

S.Khan

"Anti-American double standards"

This is in reference to Mahmood Elahi's letter "Anti-American double standards" (May 24).

Mahmood Elahi seemed to misinterpret the point about America's role in 1988 when Saddam gassed thousands of Kurds. The 1988 incident was mentioned to prove that the US did not care about the Iraqi people as opposed to saying that the US should have intervened back then. Had the US really cared about the people of Iraq, it would not have thwarted the efforts of Peter Galbraith to put sanctions (which is not the same as invading a country!) on Iraq instead of protecting American companies doing business with Iraq back then. "Operation Iraqi Freedom" was carried out to protect the interests of the US, not that of the Iraqi people.

People are being killed in great numbers in certain African countries (Congo comes to my mind right away) as well as in certain parts of Micronesia. The US won't bother about it unless it identifies its own strategic interests in those areas. Too bad most of Africa (with the exception of Nigeria) and Micronesia are not rich in oil, nor do they offer any strategic advantage to the US. I guess people living in those areas will have to remain oppressed for many years to come as they cannot pay the price of freedom and democracy to the great saviour! Talk about civilisation, talk about democracy, talk about freedom, talk about how much progress we have made over

As for criticising the US, if the US $\,$ adopts a foreign policy similar to that of Canada or Switzerland, I will be the first one to shut up!

Omar Sharif Simon Fraser University, Canada

Vulgar 'Bangla' mov-

Recently, our film actors, actresses, directors and distributors have

Rayer Bazar Monument Road



Monument for martyrs!

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for publishing the story on "Rayer Bazar Martyred Intellectuals Monument" in your Star City supplement. Importance of the monument as a source of inspiration, especially to the young community, is very much known to The Daily Star. As an architect of development of the country this daily is significantly contributing in building public opinion since long which is praised by all

Though the Rayer Bazar Intellectuals Monument has been constructed on the outskirts of the city, by the side of the city flood protection dam, on an area of about 5 acres of land; yet the site remains neglected and out of sight of the common men because of its location. In order to bring the national monument to limelight it is needed to construct a road to link the same with the main city.

I propose to develop the road from the Satmasjid Road Physical Training College point to the monument via the old Banyan tree which has reference to the heinous killing of the intellectuals on the eve of our independence in 1971. Required land for the road may be acquired easily, without incurring any net financial expense, from the Physical Training College and Commercial Art College which are government owned compounds. Of course, it will be required to pay some compensation to a few private-holding owners to acquire land for the road. However, there is public land owned by the government around the Banyan tree and to the further west leading to the monument. The approximate cost Tk 1.00 crore for land acquisition, is very much justified considering the impor-

In this backdrop, we would like to request you to examine y the proposal for development of a boulevard from Satmasjid Road to Rayer Bazar Intellectuals Monument and to recommend the same to the government and the authorities concerned. Kazi Zillur Rahman

Rayer Bazar, Dhaka

started demonstrating against the video piracy of 'Bangla' movie. As a part of this demonstration, they even decided to shut the cinema halls on 21st May to protest film

But it makes everyone very surprised that in spite of struggling to stop the making of vulgar movies which are destroying our children's moral, our social image and specially tarnishing the true image of our early movies, they are fighting against film piracy! They should play the role of conscious citizens taking proper measures to stop making of vulgar films because through films the true image of a nation can be reflected. Faisal Hassan

Paltan, Topkhana Road, Dhaka

UN in Iraq:Vital or central role?

Predictably, the UN Security Council on 23 May, adopted the revised US led coalition's resolution on Iraq lifting the over 12 year long sanctions on Iraq. That is good news. To be honest, speedy lifting of these sanctions is motivated by commercial interests of the occupation regime than by humanitarian concerns. This resolution also gives legitimacy, grudgingly or willingly, to the occupation of Iraqa unique first in the history of the

UN to have accepted as legitimate the naked invasion and occupation of one of its member states by

The debate over the "central" or vital" role of the UN has been at least temporarily compromised; the title of the UN official in Iraq has been changed from" coordinator" to "Special Representative". What this official will actually do is left unclear. From what is told by the media correspondents, the participation and role of the UN specialised agencies for example WHO, FAO, ILO are not apparent. While the sale of Iraqi oil is imminent, its control and use are left mainly in the control of the US with its ally the UK. There is no timetable set for transfer of power to a

But this resolution is welcomed, not so much with relief (except for the Coalition, and certainly not for the UN or more importantly for the Iragis), but with abundant caution. The international community (in the Security Council) apparently has been compelled to accept the doctrine: "what is done is done"; so the Council saw no other way but to move on and be compliant without too much fuss. The "international community" (whatever that has come to mean after 9/11 and thereafter) shall indeed do just that, but better do that with greater

vigilance and strength and not merely for "pragmatic realism" or 'unity of purpose" or even mutual accommodation of national interests of the Big Five in the Security Council. Anything less or contrary will leave the Council with even less credibility, and soon make it

redundant. Dr. Zakir Husain Dhaka Shukla Mirza Doha, Qatai

Law and order

Law and order have once again deteriorated alarmingly. Everyday we see in the newspaper, news of murder, dacoity and all sorts of criminal activities of the cruellest magnitude and the authorities concerned remaining as apathetic

If things were again to take such a negative turn then what was the use of deploying the army then? We wanted a respite from all sorts of lawlessness permanently, not temporarily. Does it mean that the government we have elected democratically with so much high hopes are incapable of ensuring safety and security to people! And they have to depend on others for running the country!

Ananda Sarkar Green Road, Dhaka

"Exam hazards"



EXAMINATIONS

I am glad to see that my simple letter (May 19) raised so many views. What could be more pleasing than to see that Mr Mark Bartholomew, the Examination Manager is also concerned? But Sir, I am disappointed to see that you failed to understand what I wanted to convey with my earlier letter. I did not ask the British Council to make provisions for parents/guardians waiting for candidates. I asked for better premises where people could at least stand (keep aside sitting) without creating trouble for others and for

themselves. Premises like AIUB, HURDCO, or the University of Bengal have been appreciated by little, and I am sure the majority cannot be wrong. HURDCO does not have ANY place where the parents may sit (where would British Council place the chairs I asked for?), and it is quite understandable because it is a school and not a place for holding serious examinations. Fortunately, the authorities in AIUB allow parents to enter inside the university once the examinations begin. Nevertheless, the inefficiency

Mr Bartholomew has asked us to bear with the British Council and 'logistical problems of operating in Dhaka'. Sir, we are bearing with all the problems, otherwise the number of candidates taking the exams could not have increased at a galloping rate over the past few years. We are outsiders, and I do not think selecting or even voting for 'better premises' falls within our responsibility. It is simply your duty. Because the premises and timings are new, students are already at a disadvantage adjusting to it. Under such circumstances, if the invigilators were talking to each other, at times receiving calls in their mobiles and unnecessarily passing comments during exam hours; candidates would feel most uneasy and fail to give in their best.

I am not saying the British Council is irresponsible, or fails to take exams properly. EdExcel's examinations are superior in

quality and perhaps the best in the country right now. That is why so many people, despite the hardships (not to mention monetary) appear for it every year or every six months. Frustration only arises when we see that even after paying such huge fees, the authorities act rather irresponsibly. Arani Siddiqi IBA, DU

I have been keenly following up the correspondence on the above subject since it first appeared on 19th.May 2003. It is high time we all reconsidered the necessity of this costly alien system of education and certification.

When English medium education was not available in Bangladesh (Secondary and Higher Secondary level between 1974-2000), this system of "O" and "A" level was a preferable alternative to a small yet important segment of our society. However every parent desires the best education for their children, as a result this system was gradually chosen by even lower middle class of the society and they were very justified in doing so. English is definitely the language of this millennium.

This trend helped mushrooming of home-grown English tutorials and O and A level examination enrolment grew from less than 50 in 1974 to over 1700 in 2003.

Realising the importance of English as a medium of instruction, recently our Board of Education has re-introduced the previous system of students being able to take SSC and HSC examination in English like we did before and some schools in Dhaka and all the cadet colleges are now offering English as the medium of instruction.

'O" and "A" level examination even though very costly is not suitable for our higher education system, children educated in this system are not able to pursue higher education in our own country. If we look into our universities, medical colleges and technical universities we would see that these children very often do not qualify to sit in the entrance examination and they have either to get into the private universities or find their way to foreign countries for undergraduate studies.

Our SSC and HSC examination is time proven and most suitable for our own requirement. Student passing HSC can also sit for TOEFL and SAT and qualify for undergraduate study in foreign countries.

I therefore think traffic jam, pollution, exam centres, lack of lift facilities are not really the hazard but this system itself is.

The Daily Star being a leading English daily could play a vital role in organising a dialogue on this issue like they have done for many important national issues.

Arshad M

Gulshan, Dhaka

This is in response to the letter by Mark Bartholomew, Examination Manager of British Council (May 23). He has offered explanations for the exam venues and their 'solution' to the 'clash' problems faced by the students who had chosen English Language and English Literature. The explanations are not, however, satisfactory.

The 'clash' students had to wait in one room without talking or relaxing for a long three hours that by the time the next exam came, they were too exhausted and weary to give their best. Mr Bartholomew says that the other students may have wanted the long break rather than take the text immediately after the first one. That is not true as there were only two students concerned and both were expecting only a ten-minute break and were agreeable to that. It is unfortunate because their performance will be assessed along with all other students around the world who did not have to undergo such pressure.

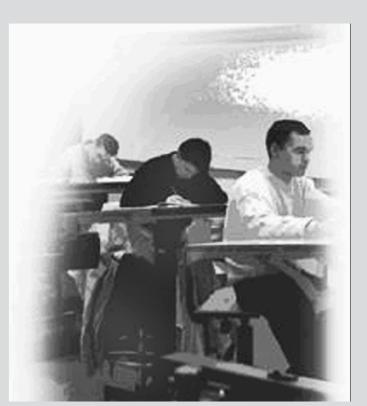
Actually, the British Council officials had initially come up with a schedule where there would be only a 15-minute gap between the two tests, but in the last minute they changed that.

Uttara, Dhaka

Thanks to the British Council authority (BC) for their reply. But I have got some queries. I agree with the BC of the problem of accommodating huge number of candidates and hiring of the venues twice a year for a couple of months.

But I do not understand why the BC is arranging the A' Level practical at the St Joseph school although there are large number of schools with modern lab facilities available in Dhaka! Firstly, it is difficult to take exams of these huge number of candidates at the St Joseph, thus the exams are taken in three groups with two sessions in each group. The exams do not start at the right time. There is no place to wait so most of our attention and energy is simply lost, (especially in hot summer days). Secondly, the apparatus we are provided with is not of good quality. As a sufferer I know many of those go out of order during the exam and we were given extra time. As a whole the students are not satisfied with the lab facility at the St Joseph although they have paid enough for the practical exams.

Minto Road, Dhaka



Exam experience