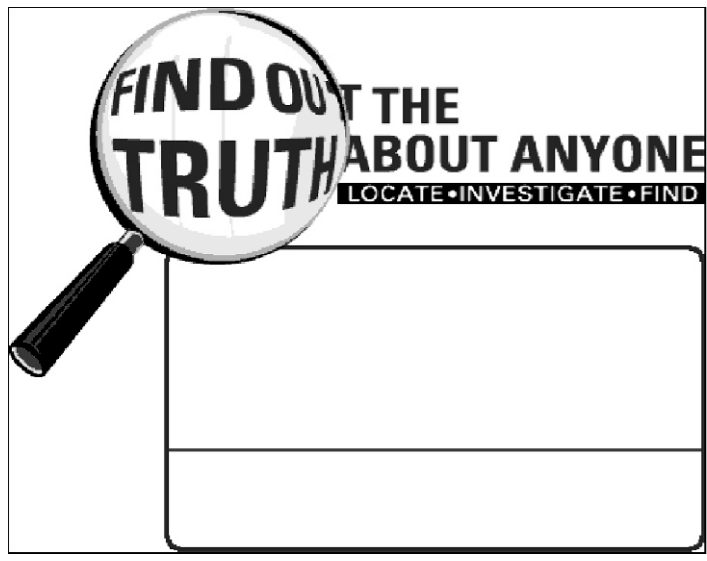


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



SQ Chowdhury, OIC and defamation case

Well done Mahfuz Anam and Motiur Rahman the editors of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo respectively. It is the sacred duty, responsibility and obligation of every journalist to write and tell the truth as well as publish objective news without any fear and favour...

It is really distressing that the nation is passing through a sort of commotion over the nomination of a Secretary General for the OIC, which could otherwise be simply a normal matter.

It's a rare chance for Bangladesh to nominate a Secretary General to an international body like OIC. Everybody expects that the nominee of Bangladesh should be person of international standing...

"Dhaka's growing noise pollution"

The Daily Star report, "Dhaka's growing noise pollution" (June 14) deserves appreciation.

It is true that the media is making all out contribution for reducing pollution. I would like to include one item which causes severe noise pollution in the residential area.

Ziaul Uttara, Dhaka

erly monitored and controlled for the interest of the public. S. R. Hussain Mohakhali, Dhaka

No more posters!

The next time you go somewhere in Dhaka, look around! Take a look at the walls around you. What do you see? You see a million posters.

different forms, in the newspapers (most efficient way), radio, TV, magazines, those huge billboards and so many other ways.

I am sure many of you will say that this has been a tradition and should go on. But think of the people who have to spend heaps in repainting their walls on and on.

Mastermind School, Dhaka Superpower USA

After the Iraq war it has been established beyond any iota of doubt that the only hyper power of the world is the USA and naturally the most powerful man in the world is the President of USA.

looking not so good. The Israeli Army is using helicopter gunships at will to kill civilians in the Ghaza Strip. Earlier it was widely believed that Israel is a dependable foothold for the US in the Middle East...

Israel receives a highly disproportionate amount of aid from the US.

Syed Farhat Ahmad Roomy New DOHS, Dhaka

Converting Muslims to Christianity!

I read with interest, and not a little wincing, the article of Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, concerning the enthusiastic American Evangelicals who see, in the 'conquests' (if that is the right word) of Afghanistan and Iraq an opportunity to convert Muslims to Christianity.

However, it is sad to think of the ways in which such an article could 'wind up' some of your readers, sir. Resurrecting ancient, and not-so-ancient, fears and suspicions might result in those of us who are happily trotting about, doing our bit for Bangladesh, with our Christian 'label' showing, being considered deeply dangerous, needing to be carefully watched and under threat of eviction.

I have to say that, since being here, I have mixed only with the sort of Christians whose attitudes to 'conversion' are strictly correct.

any religion at all, but I do assure you that UK Christians have far more reason for concern about 'conversion' than Bangladeshi Muslims!

Mind you, being tolerant Brits, most of us just sigh and say, "Good luck to them!" Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs) Lalmatia, Dhaka

"South Asian alliance"

I would like to thank Mr. Wahed for his thoughtful reply. It is indeed true, problems are many and there is no magical solution to all these issues. However the impact of these problems could be contained through strong political will and with a series of calculated measures.

I would primarily focus my attention on Bangladesh. The model could also be then applied to all small nations in SAARC.

Life in DU

I have just got admitted into DU. It is a dream of almost every student of Bangladesh to get himself/herself admitted into DU. The students who gets the chance are said to be the luckiest and the most meritorious.

Beside this, there are other factors. There is no control of DU authority over the students and as a result without any guidance some students have chosen smoking. And the political parties are always trying to collect more activists.

The life of DU is enjoyable, it has freedom. But could absolute freedom bring any good to us? NSS Dhaka University

To counter what BSF is doing now, I sincerely believe there is great need for a strong military co-operation between Bangladesh, Pakistan and

Maldives. Later once Afghanistan becomes stable it too could be incorporated. A strong alliance between these countries will act as a deterrent to the activities of BSF. Also to counter the regional threat from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan should government should actively work to set up a Naval Base in Maldives to keep an eye on the growing might of Indian Navy.

The effect of all this will be a more humble India. This in turn will force them to change their big brotherly attitude to a more considerate one.

Once this concept takes shape I am sure all our small neighbours will also try to emulate it which in return may act as a blessing in disguise and be a boost for SAARC itself. K. Wasimuddin Chicago, USA

On Budget 2003-2004

The withdrawal of VAT on travel agencies has got nothing to do with boosting tourism in the country, not even in the slightest sense. If government thinks that it's just and proper to withdraw VAT on travel agencies, it has every right to do so; but it has got no scope to correlating, withdrawal of the said VAT with boosting of tourism in the country.

Yes, it will boost tourism in other countries in the expense of Bangladesh foreign exchequers, as Bangladeshis will now feel more tempted to fly abroad on tourism purpose. It may have some positive impacts on manpower business.

Slashing of import duties on alcohol from 592.19 per cent to 430.25 per cent will have little impact on boosting tourism in Bangladesh. Foreign tourists do not come to this country to taste the taste of alcohol. In fact, their expenditure on drinking alcohol, while in Bangladesh, accounts for an insignificant part of their travelling budget.

Government tax plus service charge, in Bangladesh, on international standard hotels is to the tune of 42.5%. It is 15.5% in Malaysia, 21% in Thailand and 20% in India. The annual foreign exchange earning of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Thailand from their respective tourism sector are ten to forty folds more than the foreign exchange Bangladesh earns a year from the remittances sent by its expatriate workers.

Thanks a lot to our Finance Minister for at least mentioning the words 'boosting of tourism' in the budget. The very mentioning has broken the taboo on thinking as to the development of tourism on the part of our national policy makers.

Faruque Hasan Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Most of the budget reaction appears as mindset remarks. Considering the resource constraint, limitation in our capacities and initiative, also the pressure groups, our government cannot make a budget of their own choice.

Calling the budget 'anti-people', discriminatory, poor bashing, does not sound thoughtful. Like in one daily put it on the following day of budget preparation, all the banners or placards to hail or reject the budget were made ready before its presentation.

If the projected growth rate of 5.5 can be achieved it will be an achievement over last budget, if it is implemented properly it could go up to 6% some one even projected.

ADP historically remains as under-utilised, what is being utilised also a big chunk of it drained as corruption and wastage. Education sector always enjoyed the biggest allocation but the dilapidated conditions and quality tells us something else.

M M Haque Jeddah, K.S.A

When I first saw the 100 per cent point reduction in the duty on alcohol, my first thought was that perhaps there is too large a black market currently and as a result to reduce the size of the black market and increase government revenues the government must have reduced the duty.

I am sorry to disagree with you Mr. Finance Minister but don't you think that tourists do not come to Bangladesh and stay in Dhaka because of the poor socio-economic situation, the deteriorating law and order situation, constant political bickering and the terribly high costs associated with spending time in Dhaka?

Sonargaon bring every single item listed in the F&B department from abroad, thus pushing up costs by at least 20%. I think improving the quality of the local commodities and thereby encouraging the big hotels to use these commodities would make it cheaper for tourists to stay in Bangladesh at the premium hotels at a much lower cost than anywhere in Nepal!

Mohammad Arbaaz Nayeem Mastermind School, Dhaka

Budget for the fiscal year 2003-04 has bewildered the common people of the country. Now it seems that bread is dearer than wine. I would like to ask our Honorable Finance Minister that how many people in our country, has the ability to drink or purchase diamonds. Sir I think you are forgetting that that Bangladesh is still an under developed country and many people starve the day without food.

Road Map to nowhere?



The much vaunted Road Map is leading nowhere; Aqaba summit (with much fanfare) of high rhetoric and a facade of photo-ops soon lapsed into familiar pattern of targeted assassinations and counter violence.

This is amply seen in Israel's expanding settlements (to produce a de facto situation where illegal can be presented as being inalterable and so legal); protracted foot dragging on agreements and accords (with no intention to fulfil obligations); continuing occupation of Palestinian lands; violent suppression of resistance.

The peace process has in effect become a protracted and tortuous exercise in a futile bid to lend a perverted legitimacy to the Israeli strategy to get the victim's consent to torture and surrender of rights. To pretend surprise and shock at desperate acts (the so-called suicide bombings) fuelled by monumental anger and frustration is a kind of cynical hypocrisy.

All parties have responsibility. Before the cycle of escalation hurtles towards a major catastrophe - a catastrophe that is eminently avoidable and should have been averted long ago-Israel must abandon its vision of Greater Israel meaning total capitulation of Palestinian aspiration, permanent expulsion of Palestinian population from their ancestral lands.

Dr. Zakir Husain Dhaka

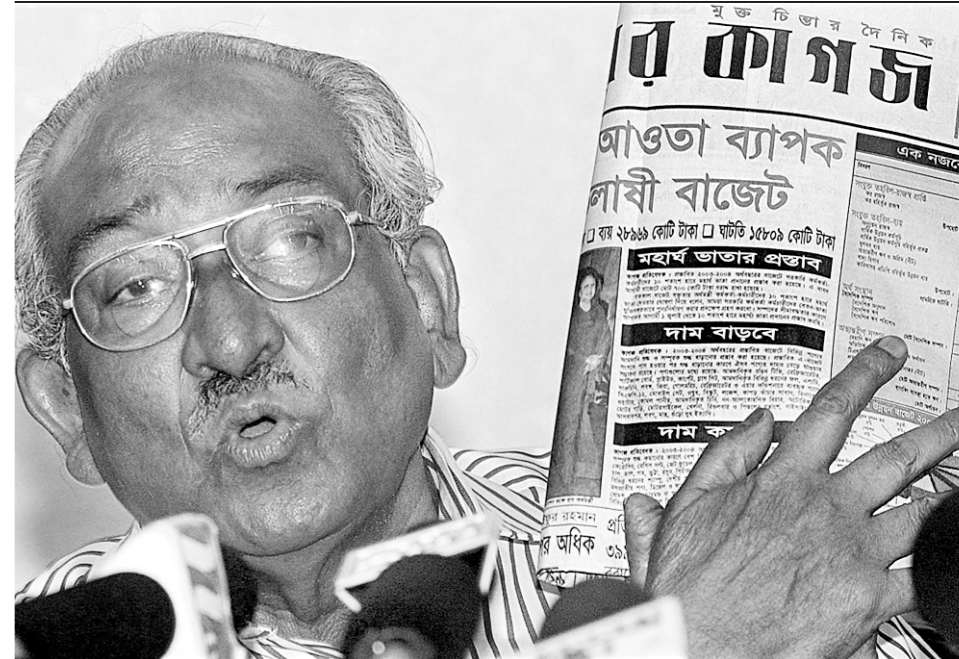
Misuse of electricity

Since we are experiencing paucity of electric supply and loadshedding all over the city it is nothing but a mere joke to use electricity in the shops and newly constructed multi-storey building even during day time.

We all want to live in a neat and clean environment. And the first thing that needs to be done is to get rid of this ridiculous tradition. A "No Posters Allowed" sign wont do, the DCC should act strictly (Mr Mayor I hope you are reading this letter). It is a crime to conquer other people's walls. If this isn't stopped our city will always be known as one of the dirtiest in the world! Jeeshan Mirza

ever actions he takes are legal! But there is one exception the state of Israel. Not so long ago US President gave the Israeli PM a deadline to pull out after an illegal incursion into Palestinian territory by the Israeli Army. The Israeli PM simply ignored the deadline with a mysterious smile. Presently, the US backed Road-Map for peace in Palestine is also

ation while so many people remain homeless on some US streets. But somehow congress is persuaded to send more cash every year. The Israeli PM, Mr. Sharon faces war crimes trial. But the US media are persuaded not to make a big deal of the story. How are such persuasions possible? Why are the US political and media leaders hostages to Israeli will?



A dramatic increase has been noticed on the duty of wide ranged everyday necessities. In these consequences it will be impossible for the middle and lower classes of the country to survive. As because there is increase on the revenues but the income of the masses are still unchanged and cannot adopt to these ascending changes.

Khalid Rahman Dhaka