

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.

Bumpers are befitting for our roads

DS deserves high appreciation and applause for publishing the public opinions and concerns. Some staff reports regularly deal with these issues. But sometimes the reporters fail to provide a balanced picture of the problem that they deal with and get carried away by the prevailing public sentiments.

The point in question is the extra bumpers in the motorised vehicles, especially in private cars and taxis. These are portrayed as veritable weapons of death and destruction, overlooking the real causes of accidents. The photo on page 12 of last Friday's DS (Sept. 19, 2003) showing the entanglement of a rickshaw wheel with the bumper of a car explicitly paints the bumper as the villain and shows frustration at the High Court's stay order.

If one examines the photo more closely, one can easily see why the cars have extra bumpers. There is something called Braking Distance in any standard Motor Driving Manual. But, unfortunately, many of our motorists and nearly all our rickshaw-pullers are unaware of it. Most of the rickshaws pull brake by impacting on the rear of the vehicle ahead of them. The extra bumpers take the impact without seriously damaging or scratching the body of the vehicle.

Rickshaws do not require any insurance cover to be on the roads and a motorist can not extract any compensation from a rickshawala for a damage caused by him. On the other hand, a driver runs the risk of being manhandled by the mob who would invariably side with the 'helpless' rickshawala even if the latter caused the accident.

Until all the users of the public roads and highways act sensibly, there is hardly any point in just removing the extra bumpers and exposing the motor vehicles to daily scratching and denting. Of course no one should advocate for the upkeep of those bumpers that are projected out of the normal dimension of the vehicle.

The extra bumpers do not add to the beauty of the vehicles and they cost money to put on. All sensible car owners would do away with them if our roads were safer for everyone. That would be possible when all users of roads and highways are aware of traffic rules and made to obey such rules without discrimination.

MBZaman
Utara, Dhaka

It has been noticed that The Daily Star printed a picture (in colour) of a car bumper getting entangled with a rickshaw, or another car bumper. The message is clear: car bumpers are likely to cause accidents, so the government order banning bumpers should be allowed to be in force. I could not help adding my views on the matter, which, I am sure, many will agree.

Yes, it is true that car bumpers may cause traffic accidents. But then, will their removal stop the occurrences of accident? Those who drive cars or ride in rickshaws in Dhaka know very well that reckless driving, overtaking and random road-crossing by pedestrians are the major causes of road accident. Why then pick on one issue--car bumpers--only? The editor himself, being a car user, should know that every time a car stops suddenly at a road crossing, or at traffic jams, it is prone to be hit from behind by a rickshaw. Car bumpers are the protection, for without them, cars are likely to be damaged from the rear by rushing rickshaws and other cars!

I request that in the interest of the safety of cars and car users, the tirade against car bumpers by your esteemed paper be stopped henceforth.

Md. Ghulam Murtaza
General Manager, Dept. of Research, Bangladesh Bank, Dhaka

every fields. Apart from that, in order to meet the social obligations and get some relief, one day as weekly holiday is not enough for the working people. So, Saturdays and Sundays should be declared as weekend holidays to keep pace with the world market as well as to rejuvenate our tired souls.

Rubab Abdullah
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Service extension for non-government teachers

The government has decided to retain contract-based services of non-government teachers of four subjects up to five years after they become 60. The subjects for which such extension has been made are English, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics.

In view of severe crisis of teachers, the extension of the services of English teachers is quite justified and none should disagree if their services are extended even up to the age of seventy, provided the incumbents are otherwise fit to discharge their functions satisfactorily.

But limiting the other subjects to three particular disciplines has to be critically analysed. Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics are not the only subjects taught in the non-government educational institutions. There are a good number of other subjects taught as compulsory and optional subjects in all the non-government educational institutions.

Next to English, the position of all other subjects are more or less the same. Physically sound and academically successful teachers of all subjects deserve equal treatment by the government with regard to extension of service.

In the public universities like Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi, the extension of services has been simply a matter of routine work. No teacher of any public university has been seen to have retired until the expiry of 65 years of age. As regards government teachers, the authority has a discretion to extend services of any teacher of any subject upon the fulfilment of conditions as are laid out in service regulations.

Under the circumstances, it will be an injustice to other subject-teachers if the extension is applicable to the four subjects -- English, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. It should be mentioned here that Physics, Chemistry and Maths are not compulsory subjects for all students of schools, colleges and Madrasahs.

As such, there is no strong ground to give special emphasis on those subjects at the diminution of other subjects. We cannot presume that graduates and masters are in abundant in the market to take up the missionary job of teaching as a profession. This necessitates the extension of services of all capable teachers irrespective of subjects they teach.

We also don't have the luxury to deny the fact that there is a dearth of experienced and able teachers. It is not justifiable to discriminate amongst the subjects taught in the schools, colleges and Madrasahs. For kind consideration of the ministry of education, I would like to offer following suggestions.

(1) To extend the services of English teachers up to the age of 70 (Seventy), if they are physically fit and considered by the managing committee that they are worthy of retention due to their past performance. They should be given salary subsidy up to 70(seventy) years of age.

(2) To allow extension up to 65 years to all other subject teachers without discriminating between the subjects. They should be allowed salary subsidy by the government up to the age of 65 and the managing committee of the institutions shall be given the discretion to retain them even after their 65th birthday if they are found physically sound and capable of rendering satisfactory services to the institutions, and, their financial burden shall be borne by the institutions.

It should be noted here that the teachers who have graduated and mastered in a subject twenty years back are far better than those who have



The UN needs reform

Good news, the UN responds

An earth shaking UN reform has been overdue for a long time. UN had, in the past, initiated and implemented several reform initiatives in its work areas. But outcome of those initiatives is not adequate for ensuring the continuity and progress of UN through the 21st century.

In the article "Donor Assistance: More theory than practice" which was published in the Bangladeshi dailies in June 2003, I discussed, among other things, the need for a radical change of UN against the backdrops of evolving geopolitics and globalisation-in-progress, among others. The article contained a number of management proposals.

Among the proposals, the key ones were: (1) the holding of a global conference on the future of the UN; (2) the re-structuring of field-based UN agency headquarters to make them lean but more productive; (3) the strengthening of UN's regional commissions; (4) the promotion of a more productive and sustainable UN-World Bank nexus for world development; and (5) the ways and means of improving donors' accountability to UN.

I shared the published article with the offices of Mr. Kofi Annan (UN), Mr. Shashi Tharoor (UN), Mr. Wolfensohn (World Bank) and Ambassador Koldy (UNDP Executive Board), among several others.

It now appears from the New York Times report of 18 September 2003 that Mr. Annan will outline plans for reform as the General Assembly gathers next week. According to the Times, Mr. Annan said only "radical" revisions in the institution are likely to preserve it.

It is an encouraging development. One of the expectations is: a

continuing UN effort in pertinent areas will eventually culminate in a solid UN reform in the near future. But the success of UN would depend, among other things, on how better and sooner the world body could strengthen its neutrality. After all, UN derives its power from an interdependent and committed global power pool.

The world community should take cognisance of the fact that the nurturing of a poorly empowered UN would be of a little help to promote "common good" world-wide in the foreseeable future. It would rather generate wastage of world efforts and resources in pertinent areas.

On the other hand, a highly competent, committed, innovative, competitive, reasonable, forward looking and result-generative UN can provide meaningful support to world people and countries in their journey through uncertainties of the current century, unless a new arrangement can do that better than the present UN.

Since there exist no such arrangements besides the UN, the best alternative would be for the world community to consider the empowerment of the UN morally and politically. An overhauling of the UN would require, among other things, a comprehensive review of its mission, role, structure, function, process, system and power matrix in the context of creating a better future for the world body and for world people.

Let the world renowned visionaries, experts and consultants in relevant areas take the technical charge of preparing a draft proposition for the future of the UN. For UN to rise above the occasion, its usefulness must be enhanced and widely acknowledged.

Dr. M. S. Haq
New York



Business education Vs. basic education

The prospect of business education is very bright in the context of the ongoing globalisation process. Bangladesh is a potential market for multinational companies and grooming local business firms. In the present context, everybody with a good BBA or MBA can manage a better earning than a person studying other subjects. This situation is prevalent not only in our country, but in the whole world.

That aside, people have lost their interests in research and basic fields studies. Nobody now wants to study physics, botany, zoology, mathematics, history, literature or psychology. This is because commerce has taken over everything. Basic research and pursuit of pure knowledge and novelty is absent everywhere. The whole world is heading towards an unhealthy situation.

Undoubtedly this situation is ominous. If we subtly observe the advances of this situation, we will find the contribution of the basic fields of knowledge. But, I am afraid, the fate of commercial education too will meet the same lot as that of the computer education all over the world.

Not very long ago, any person with a diploma in computer could get a very good job. But that situation has been

changed radically. Shouldn't we emphasise on research and development of basic fields of studies again instead of mere job oriented degrees?

Mohammad Kamal Uddin
Assistant Controller of Examination, IBAIS University

Decay in BUET

As a graduate of the erstwhile Ahsanullah Engineering College (which became BUET), I am saddened by the decay and deterioration in the academic atmosphere of this once-famous institution. I wonder how Mr. Khalid Hasan ("Forgery" by Mr. Khalid Hasan, DS, 21 September, 2003) knows more about the case than the Syndicate before which all papers were presented.

Engr. ABM Nurul Islam
Gulshan, Dhaka

Wisdom of indigenous people

Some 29 indigenous Kock families living in the Modhupur forest for over eight generations are threatened by the forest officials for planting fruit trees and bamboo plants instead of the donor dictated acacia trees under a rapid a reforestation project! (DS September 20, " Forestry project all right, but where will they go?"

The fruit (mango and jackfruit)

trees that the indigenous people planted within their homestead happen to fall under the forest project, they provide them their livelihood. It also fulfills the government objective of the project -- to attain 20 per cent tree coverage of the area and replant barren lands. The indigenous people showed greater wisdom but are now being harassed by government forest officials for not conforming to their dictates. Haven't they made a better judgement?

Zarina Hossain
Onemail

Weekend holiday needs two full days

Like the western world, many developing Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, China, Singapore have two holidays per week i.e Saturday and Sunday. Whereas people of Bangladesh have to observe only Friday as their proper weekly holiday (although Thursday is half working day).

These countries have better communication with foreign investors and leading importer countries such as the UK, Canada, US etc. If you consider the situation of Bangladesh, our country is failing to do that due to the weekend-related complexity.

Practically, we are four days back in trading, buying, banking and almost in

been recently produced by our education boards and universities. It will be beneficial for the country's devastated education to retain the services of the dedicated and proven hands in the educational institutions of our nation.

M. Sadeq
Chairman, Department of Management, Tejgaon College, Farmgate, Dhaka

"Our changing Bureaucracy: The last 12 years"

My heartiest congratulations to the editor and publisher of The Daily Star for arranging a timely roundtable on "Our changing Bureaucracy: The last 12 years" Almost all speakers expressed grave concern about the present state of our bureaucracy and identified increasing politicisation, gross corruption, inefficiency, centralised power, poor salaries, large size of bureaucracy and lack of quality recruitment and training in the civil service as the major stumbling blocks to good governance.

I fully agree with all the above mentioned factors as causing the good governance crisis and the deterioration of the quality of our bureaucracy.

In this context, I would like to add with you an extra factor that is, "prescription by the world Bank, IMF and

other International Donor Agencies." We need home-grown prescription or policy, not outsiders' advice.

In the roundtable, some discussants observed politically recruited people becoming bureaucrats. Yes, we can call them strong activists of certain political parties, not civil servants. They are less qualified and have no lobbying capacity in the international arena.

I also congratulate Awami League MP Faruk Khan for admitting that political leaders did not give right leadership to the bureaucrats. He said the politicians need to be better equipped with knowledge and experience to run the government.

My suggestion, in this regard, is for the less educated MPs. They should be given adult education as soon as possible. And they should also be taught necessary etiquette as to how to speak in the parliament. We are totally upset hearing the speaking style of our elected MPs.

Mohabbat Khan suggested reduction of the bureaucracy's size. Actually, to compete in the era of globalisation, we don't need a large size bureaucracy. We need computerised and reasonable sized bureaucracy. Hafizuddin Khan advocated for Independent Anti-corruption commission. Well suggested.

But what we observed in the context

of our other constitutional bodies like the BPSCT. Actually we need ethically high standard politicians, bureaucrats and finally a nation with strong morality. Why can't we change ourselves sooner?

Shamsul Alam Monir
MSS in Public Admin, DU

Extremism is no laughing stock

My attention is drawn to a report published in your esteemed Daily on 21 September under the caption "18 extremists held at BNP Leader's". I find the news alarming.

Surely the ruling class does realise that it is playing with fire which may lead to disastrous consequences not just for themselves but the entire nation. With the prevailing situation of ever deteriorating law and order "incidences" like these, the fear is heightened further.

Frankly, from the very moment I read the news item, my mind raced to that "controversial" story "Bangladesh a Cocoon of Terror" published some time back in the Far Eastern Economic Review. During those days I too joined others in condemning the report and its authors simply because I believed then as now that "Bangladesh is one of the freer and moderate societies amongst the Third world countries."

But I am no longer sure if the present government realises the gravity of the situation. To me it appears that there is an element of wilful negligence and complacency on the part of the government in dealing with such situations. Incidences of this nature must be dealt with extreme severity if we do not wish to see ourselves in a state in which Pakistan finds itself today.

We simply cannot, I repeat cannot, see ourselves involved in incidences like those which took place in Bali in Indonesia or routine incidences of violence which continue to take place in Karachi and other cities of Pakistan. More importantly, Bangladesh is placed at a more vulnerable state of economic and strategic disadvantages compared to those of either Indonesia or Pakistan. Therefore, one single incidence may plunge the country into disaster both socially and economically.

As I see it, these are ominous signs with potency for much disastrous consequences than routine criminal acts or violence. I therefore urge the government to rise against all such acts and stem the tide.

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka

Bharat Shah presents

Devdas

a Sanjay Leela Bhansali film

Nation and cinema

A few days back, there was an article in your newspaper about some eminent people protesting about the Indian diversion of water, causing drought in northern Bangladesh. I voice my support with them.

River and culture are very intricate. I read in your DS about the film festival in Dhaka. Many of the cinema's are about rivers.

Can we not protest by not including Indian cinema and India? Can we not for once be united as a nation..... and support the people of our country.

Mr Azam Chowdhury
Azampur Colony

Raise the status of women

The other day, I came across an article about how women are not given their due respect. In many places, especially in the rural areas, women are still beaten up by their husbands and 'in-laws', usually for reasons that we all know. The word "in-law" includes both the mother and the sister-in-laws and it is usually they who create such nuisance more, than the husband and the male in-laws.

Let alone less developed regions of the country, I have seen a lot of educated persons who have both good educational and family background but consider women to be of the "weaker sex". This is utterly an unjustified viewpoint, but who cares when the society's wrong perspective comes to one's own needs? When it comes to oneself, everyone,

both male and female, looks for theories that support their standpoint. It does not matter whether it's right or wrong.

Females are definitely not given their due respect though both the prime minister and leader of the opposition of our country are female! These two honourable persons cannot come to a conclusion of their disputes; but can't they do anything about the horrendous position of female in our country since they have one characteristic in common?

This is a much talked about topic, but since this issue has been brought to light, nothing changed and that is what hurts me the most.

Can't we treat women as human beings first and then as



female? Can't we give them their due respect? I ask this question not to the prime minister, not to the city mayor or to any powerful people of our country. I leave this

question to be answered by the conscientious people of our society.

Maherin Ahmed
Paribag, Priprangan, Dhaka