

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.

Fundamentalism in Bangladesh

I concur with the writer of the letter on this topic published a few days ago. Madrassah education needs to be upgraded to the same standard as public school. In addition to religious studies Madrassah students ought to learn science and technology and follow the curriculum of public school so that they can enter the field of higher education and become a productive contributor to the society. As great proponents of "Look East" we can be a prosperous nation.

Free economic policy will help us become a developed country and the rest will take care of itself.
Ekram Belal
One-mail

Congratulations to Sachin

Indian master blaster Sachin Tendulkar is still showing his brilliant performance. He scored his 35th Test century against Sri Lanka in the second Test in Delhi. My heartiest congratulations to him as he surpassed Gavaskar and became the highest century maker in the history of the game. Now the question is how far will he go? When will he stop?

Let's wait and see more from this cricket legend.
Muhammad Bin Abdullah
Cox's Bazar

Bomb blasts

Life is the most pretty artful work of Allah and is also a divine gift. All the preparations and arrangements are for life, but there is no safety and scope for better living in Bangladesh.

Many people have died in bomb blasts in the recent past. And the situation is still very tense. The government should take note of the situation and handle it discreetly for the well-being of all concerned.

Fatema Tuz Zohra
IUC

Playing with fire

The Netrokona massacre occurred on December 8, 2005, one day before its liberation in 1971 and it has been termed by the State Minister for Home Affairs as a new dimension. The minister within an hour claimed the identity of the bomber as a Hindu, namely Yadav Biswas. The family of Yadav straightaway denied his involvement in such a heinous crime and said that he was a simple spectator. The injury mark on Yadav's body does not suggest that he carried the bomb. The witness could not confirm that the two bombers carried out the attack and Yadav was one of them. On the other hand, witnesses confirmed that they saw one bomber on a bicycle. Rezaul Hossain Suman, a witness undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital stated, "I was standing just a couple of feet away from the cyclist and saw him approaching the crowd. As he was trying to reach the crowd, a policeman asked him where he was heading for." the eyewitness described. The cyclist then went back several feet, pulled something from the bag he was carrying and the bomb exploded. This was published in newspapers and ATN, NTV telecast the same on the night of 8 December.

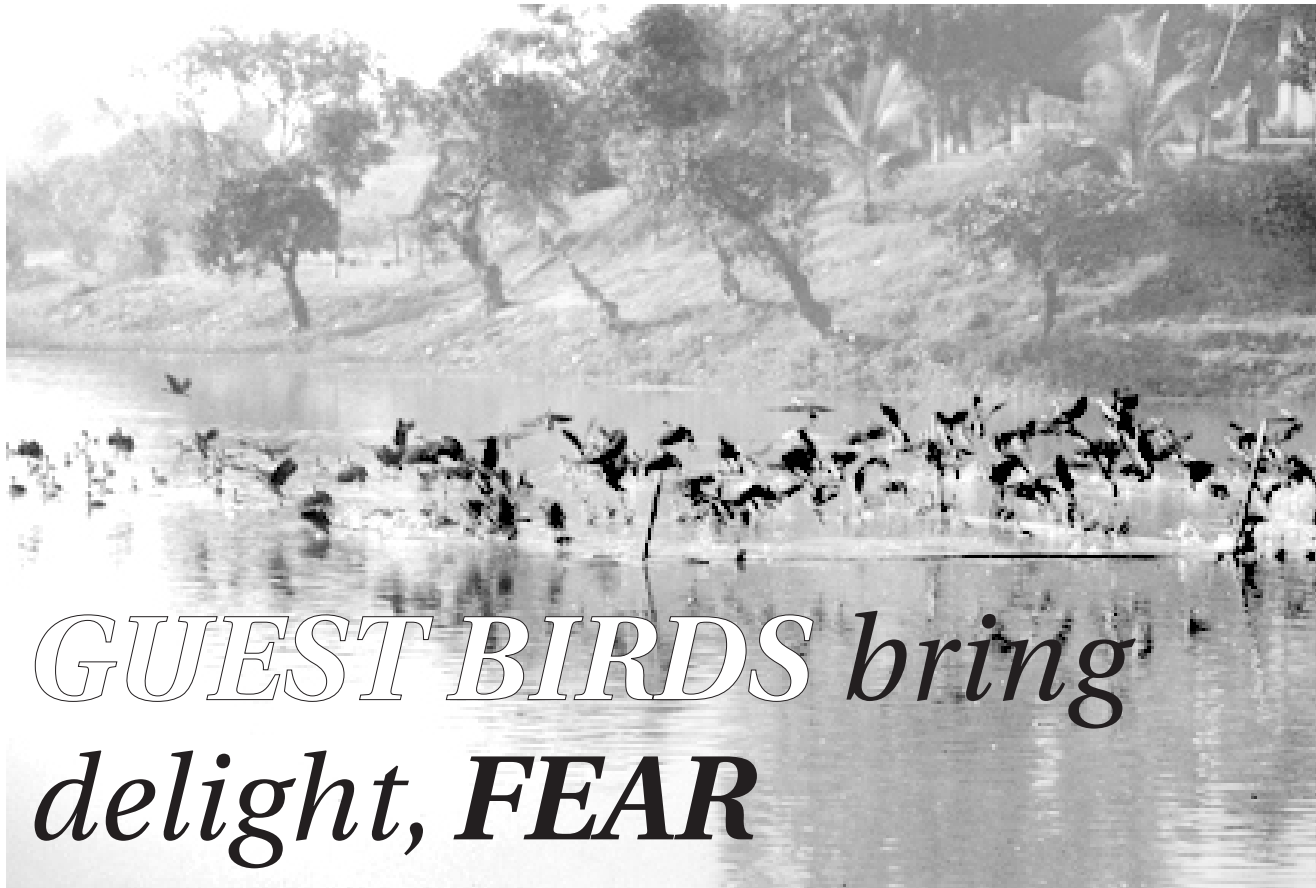
Besides witnesses, local people told reporters that they knew Yadav, a motor mechanic and his behaviour never seemed to be suspicious. This was perhaps the first time a locally known person was found to be a bomber as identified by the Home Ministry.

It is very surprising that the minister very quickly concluded that Yadav was a JMB man and claimed that a Hindu bomber in JMB was a new dimension. At the same time, a bureaucrat quickly echoed his minister and stated that the suicide bomber named Yadav conducted the bomb attack at Netrokona. In fact, this is a new strategy of the Home Ministry to divert the public attention towards a different destination.

The government should know that they are playing with fire by encouraging communalism and hatred in the country. In 2001, immediately after their win in the election, BNP people killed, looted the houses of Hindus throughout the country specially in Barisal, Bagerhat and Khulna.

Fanning communal feeling in this soil is an old technique followed by Pakistanis, but it proved useless and rather acted as a boomerang. They are in fact playing with fire without understanding its consequences. We request the politicians to refrain from adopting such heinous tricks for the sake of 140 millions people's welfare and national development.

Nobody has the right to jeop-



GUEST BIRDS bring delight, FEAR

The news items with the subject heading published on 12 Dec 2005 (pg. 20) drew my attention. I must mention here that the Coastal & Wetland Biodiversity Management Project (CWBMP) has initiated awareness campaign for the prevention of bird flu and protection of migratory birds against illegal hunting and trapping. CWBMP is a GEF/UNDP funded project implemented by the Department of Environment, Ministry of Environment & Forests working for the management of Ecologically Critical Areas (ECA). Hakaluki Haor was declared as an ECA in 1999 under the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995. CWBMP organised a public meeting at Talimpur, Borolekha on 29 Nov, '05

with a view to making the community people living in and around the Hakaluki Haor aware of the dangers of the bird flu and how they can take precautionary measures. The meeting was, among others, attended by Mr. Ebadur Rahman, MP; Mr. Eunusur Rahman, Deputy Commissioner, Maulvibazar; Mr. Mustafa Kamal, Upazilla Nirbahi Officer, Borolekha; UP Chairmen from four Unions and many others from various professions, including journalists, students, members from the local villages. Several other awareness campaign meetings addressing bird flu are currently underway that will cover all the eleven Unions within the Hakaluki Haor ECA.

The local people are being advised to

refrain from hunting or trapping migratory birds and from eating migratory bird meat; keep their ducks and other poultry and cattle away from the haor so that mixing of domestic and migratory ducks is limited/restricted; not to drink or use water from the haor; not to touch any dead bird that they may encounter and report to the Upazilla Livestock Officer. Leaflets/pamphlets highlighting the "DOs & Don'ts" to make the local people aware of the risks involved with bird flu have been printed and are being distributed all over the Hakaluki Haor ECA.

I believe the media can play a role in getting the message across.
Dr S. M. A. Rashid
Department of Environment,
Paribesh Bhavan
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

ardise the national independence and destroy the values of our hard earned democracy.

Suman Debnath
Sutrapur, Dhaka

Bitter-cane!

It's a déjà-vu of colonial era indigo plantation. A magistrate and police went to seize farmers' alternative, "illegal" sugarcane crusher in Daulatpur, Kushtia, where they took the wrath from protesting villagers. ("Magistrate Assaulted, Police Van Torched", DS, Dec 7, '05). When such bareknuckle display is rare, sugarcane farmers' discontent is there for long.

In the sugar mill area, which includes all of Kushtia and beyond for state owned Kushtia Sugar Mills Ltd., farmers do not have the freedom to sell their own harvest as they wish, such is the law. They have to sell it to the mill, only at a price fixed by the state. This year, they will get Tk 50.99 for 40 kilogram of sugarcane they deliver at the nearest buying centre, Tk 51.99 if they deliver at the mill gate. Half the price will be paid within 7 days;

the other half takes 3 to six months. At each stop of the process, from recording weight of their cartload to taking payment, they face bureaucratic run around and do guess how to get things done. By the time they get final payment, as the Bangla saying goes, their profit sugar has been eaten away by ants.

Thanks to the forces of market, farmers have an "illegal" alternative. They can sell their harvest to molasses maker, who juice them in crude crusher, the kind that police went to seize, and cook them into molasses. They pay farmers Tk 55-60 for 40-kilo sugarcane. That is about 4 to 9 taka higher than mill rate. Add to that the comfort of selling from their village and getting hassle free immediate money for their sweat.

Comparing these two options explains why mills need to use police at taxpayers' money to force farmers' harvest into their rollers. Market economy is not at work here, not at work in our constitution, which in section 42(1) guarantees individual's right on his properties as

Fundamental Rights.

Farmers should not give subsidy to the mill. Let's take the straight jacket off them, let them choose their best deal from the market.

Footnote: with such monopoly, sugar mills are making a lot of money, right? Wrong. They are perpetual losing machines. Cumulative loss of BSFC mills stood at Tk 400 million (DS, Sept 2, 2004).

Ashish Ahsan
Uttara, Dhaka

GDP Growth

The Honourable Finance Minister's observation that the country's GDP growth will be 7% this fiscal year is something that, if actually achieved, would be a pleasant respite from the continuous stream of bad news in the national arena. Given the recent social and political turmoil that the ordinary people are going through, this will give them at least a ray of hope for a better future.

While economists stress the importance of having at least an

8% GDP growth rate in order to alleviate poverty from this impoverished nation, the country has been reeling under a GDP growth of 6% for years. For a developing country like ours, this is not nearly enough to achieve any significant breakthrough in poverty alleviation and economic emancipation.

But like many other people of the country, I find it rather hard to believe that the economy is really going to achieve the rate projected by the Finance Minister. There are reasons to be sceptical particularly when Bangladesh Bank's projections are in the range of 6.4-6.8%. The projected GDP growth rate that the government announces in its annual budget has, to the best of my knowledge, never been met.

The Finance Minister's observation about the outdated baseline of BBS statistics may be a genuine observation, but it calls for scepticism. The last thing the country needs is political manipulation of the economic indicators in the name of updating them.

I just hope that the Finance

Minister is correct and the country really achieves a 7% GDP growth rate this year. We need some good news at this moment when the nation is going through one of the most turbulent periods of its history.

Zubair Sadeque
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Our potential

In spite of apparent dangerous situations prevailing in Bangladesh now, the world is looking towards it with keen desire to invest in different sectors of its economy. Not only a number of big overseas companies have started negotiations in this respect, renowned investment organisations have predicted about the enormous potential of our beautiful country.

Let us all pray to the Almighty to give a little good sense of responsibility, honesty, dynamism and strong positive attitudes to our leaders so that they can create a conducive environment necessary for big investments.

M. A. Sobhan
Gaibandha

Asian Highway Treaty

Bangladesh should sign the Asian Highway Treaty. This is not the only game in world stage. You have to learn how to play big boys if you want to be a player on the world stage. In order to play it you have to be in it. The world is watching a small player who wants to grow. They will be on your side if you know how to play. You just made the list of Next Eleven of US Investment Banking giant Goldman Sacs, the only thing you need is a sustainable 7% growth for the next 10 years and the world will listen to you. At that time you could build your own Look East Highway from Dhaka - Rangoon - Bangkok - Singapore - Kuala Lumpur with your initiative. You can spend your own money to build anything you want, not only Highway.

Acitizen
One-mail

Inadequate facilities at ZIA

I have been using the Zia International Airport (ZIA) for a long time. During my several visits to Bangladesh, I noticed that women along with their children had been waiting in the queue for hours. To make matters worse, the average processing time at the immigration counters is unusually high.

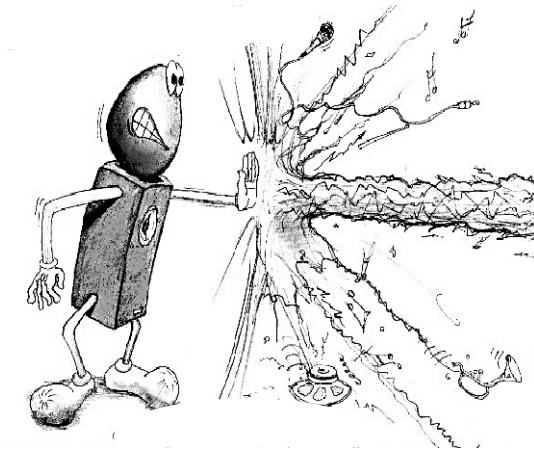
A little change at the immigration counters can address this problem. Designating one counter for women and children will certainly improve the services and image of the airport to thousands of travellers. I hope the concerned authorities will take the matter seriously.

Fida Hassan Rana
Islamic Development Bank
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Disturbed

There was a letter in DS about the missed call disturbance. I wrote a

Sound pollution



Most of us are certainly thinking about Greenhouse Effect, and other crucial or rearmost environmental crises. At the same at least a small part of the urban people are also anxious about the widely underestimated but serious environmental issues like sound pollution. That is a major problem in our cities.

It should indeed be a great concern for people who are living in urban areas. Urban people are disturbed by a variety of noises coming from automobiles, construction equipment & plants, loud speakers, bomb blasts, hydraulic horn, aircraft sounds & so on. As a matter of fact, sound pollution has crossed the limits of tolerance. But in the cities of the developed world use of horn is strictly prohibited -- people simply do not create any public nuisance.

Needless to say, most of us are obviously unaware of the effect of noise & don't take any preventive measure against noise pollution, resulting in a considerable waste or damage of potential human energy and productivity. It affects our health but we are willingly or unwillingly ignoring the matter all the time. Time is running out. We cannot ignore it any longer; we have to know the consequence of sound pollution.

Otherwise, it may cause high blood pressure, heart disease, headache, ulcer, mental disorder etc.
Md. Toufiqur Rahman, Rothkola, Kishoreganj

letter last year about the problem, but nobody paid any heed to it, rather some wanted to make the issue controversial. Why?

Some claim that missed call is usually given to make the recipient know that "right now I'm missing you". Or it's given to remind the recipient of anything. But actually it has no use except disturbing others. If necessary we can send SMS to give a call. Why should we be so miserly as not to spend a bit of money for a call?

Cantara Wali Ruhi
Dhaka University

Yadav's death

We watched in horror as the deceased Yadav Biswas' memory was dishonored and his family, instead of being permitted to grieve and perform last rites, was humiliated and harassed. It represented a new base level to the already pathetic situation our country now finds itself in.

But I find tremendous hope and optimism. The minute this dirty game was started, our country's media and common people rose up against the conspiracy.

And Yadav was not a big political leader or business person that vested quarters got involved for personal gain. I feel like the nation will always rise up against intolerable situations. We have done it in 1952, in 1971, in 1990. On each occasion, we did not become defeated by thinking we are facing an invincible opponent.

Perhaps another glorious date is not too far away for our next big victory.

Sanjoy Kumar Nath, Chittagong

Dismissal of two state ministers

I am a regular reader of The Daily Star since it has come out. I would like to draw the attention of the government through your daily about two state ministers who had to quit because of their incompetence.

Is it the end of this game, will the government start probing in detail into their activities? I have doubt, because the Anti-Corruption Commission is now crawling!
Shamsul Islam
Dhaka

Do we really need Jamaat?

Do we really need Jamaat in politics? If so why? What is the achievement that Jamaat made in these years being active partners of the coalition? Presumably, the main goal of Jamaat was to slowly grab the state power by breeding, sheltering and inciting a section of insane, ruthless and murderous religious zealots and turn the whole country into a hotbed for Islamic bigots and compel the government of Khaleda Zia to surrender power to them. And eventually in due course of time Jamaat would transform the country into a Taliban style state. How the government will justify the killings of so many innocent people due to its sheer negligence and indifferent attitude towards the militants who unleashed a reign of terror under the direct and indirect patronage of foreign and local influential people, despite repeated alarm raised by media specially the newspapers of the country. It is quite unfortunate that some ministers holding important portfolios blithely termed the bombings as normal incidents that are occurring globally. The government must come up with a reasonable explanation as to why and for whom this important issue has been neglected for so long and not been handled properly. If it was done in the beginning, so many lives could have been saved.

We sincerely want expulsion of Jamaat and urge the government to form an independent commission to bring the perpetrators of ghastly crimes to book.

Humayun Hyder
Zigatola, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP