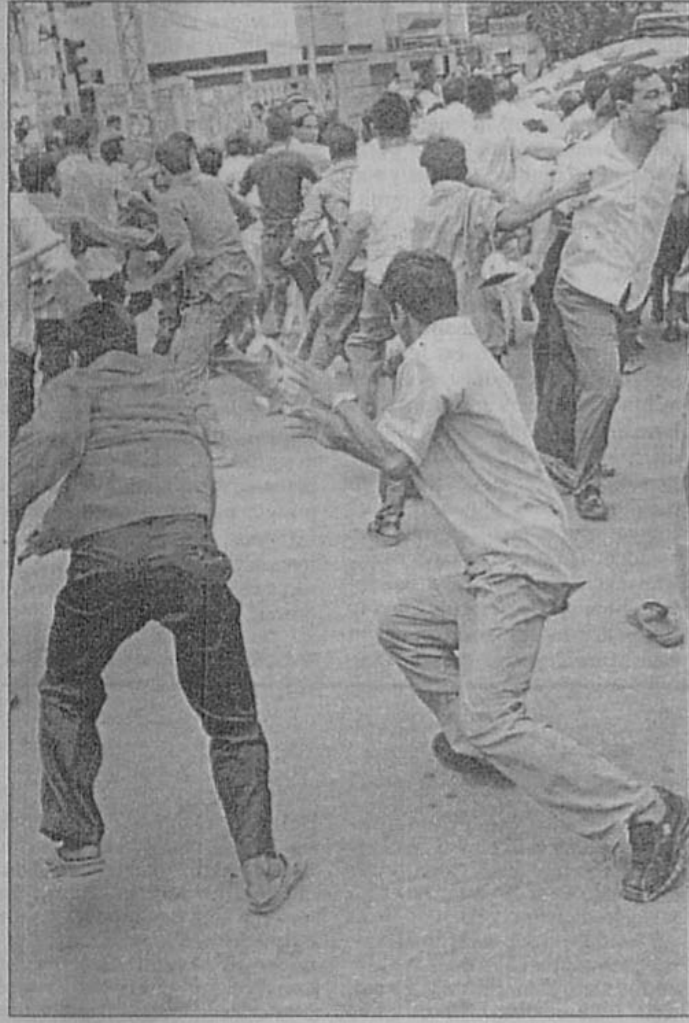


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

# No violence, please



Just a few days after the violent labour unrest in the country's garment sector, we had this 36-hour general strike. It's comprehensible that the opposition party likes to have some electoral reform but we have a parliament to address such issues. Go to parliament and have some constructive dialogue to reform the electoral system - get off the street and let the common people live.  
Maksood Mohiuddin  
One-mail

**On police & policing**  
"Never get tangled with police!" When growing up in rural Bangladesh, we often listened to this wise advice. We eyed the khaki-clad, from a distance, with a weary awe. This unfortunate relationship is a continuation of the colonial mindset, developed during the centuries of Union Jack, where police was akin to an extension of the white flagellum. For long, the white is erased, but the flagellum remains, still bent to tame the people. A remnant of colonial mindset, this adversarial relationship needs

to be mended, if one desires to make the police effective and accepted.  
Apart from this unfortunate mindset of adversarial relationship, there are other issues. Police is generally portrayed to be corrupt and brutal. Our police being in such a precarious pit of disgrace, a rescue mission is in order. This heavy lifting needs a political will and commitment of resources on the part of the government.  
And this has to be a multi-pronged approach addressing three primary issues:  
a) Building a bridge of good will between police and people: This can only be achieved through education and re-orientation of the police, as to the noble mission of policing.  
b) Uplifting police morale by a fair pay structure: Nothing is more important than a fair pay scale that can provide a decent living for all members of the police force. They should be able to afford modest housing, education for their children and an optimal status commensurate with their education, experience and expertise. With the current pay structure, blaming police for being greedy and less than moral is rather immoral on the



part of tall-talking politicians.  
c) Non-interference from politics at large: This issue needs no explanation. This has a lot to do

with police inertia in apprehending the bad guys. What is the point of apprehending a criminal only to see him getting

back to the street through the backdoor?  
Without the benefit of an effective and honest judiciary,

effective policing is doomed to degenerate into a fool's utopia.  
Mohammad Zaman  
One-mail

## Poor pay and corruption

The all-pervasive corruption prevailing in the bureaucracy of Bangladesh largely emanates from poor pay. Poor pay is the cause corruption the effect. But ironically, we do not hear much about eradicating the cause, rather we hear of drastic measures against the effect. But the harsh reality is that keeping the cause intact, the effect can never be eliminated.

Salaries of the public servants in Bangladesh are very poor not commensurate with the needs of decent living. So, many of them become corrupt against their will. If most of the people start disobeying law law cannot be enforced. Therefore, the anti-corruption measures do not bring the desired changes in bureaucracy. They need to increase salaries of the public servants several times more. If such better pay is provided, most of the public servants will shun corruption. Then, it would be easy to make all our efforts to prevent the small number of civil servants from resorting to corruption. Thus, remarkable changes can be expected.

We have heard very little regarding how to pay the public servants a reasonable salary. But this point should have been given utmost importance to ensure good governance. Our government does not have the financial strength to increase the salary of the civil servants significantly at a time. Such huge resource mobilisation from domestic sources is almost impossible. In the present international context, it is easy to collect funds from donors. Moreover, it involves harsh conditionality sometimes very sour to devour.

Then, should the situation continue? Is there no way out to pay the civil servants a reasonable salary to set them free from corruption? In the backdrop of non-availability of domestic and foreign resources, a mechanism can be instituted in at least the public offices, which are providing services. A certain amount of facilitation

fee can be imposed against provision of services that can be paid by the service takers to the public servants providing service. The facilitation fee can increase pay to the public servants significantly. Thus the public servants can be motivated to work better. Under this mechanism, since provision of services would be speedier, the service-takers would be happy to pay the facilitation fee. Firstly, to test its efficacy, this mechanism can be instituted in several offices. If it works well, it can be extended to other public offices as well.

Mindless persistence with the old notions would lead us to ruin. To bring changes in our bureaucracy leading to people's welfare, let's start thinking up something new.  
Dr. Md. Abdur Rouf  
Associate Faculty  
Dhaka Center  
Royal Roads University, Canada

**Our leaders**  
The leaders of our country baffle me. Both our Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition like to present themselves as mother figures, hugging children, comforting injured victims by stroking their heads in the way mothers do in our country, and so on.  
Yet, I am frequently shocked by the insensitive remarks that they make about their political rivals. Is this the behaviour we expect from our mothers?  
Sanjoy Kumar Nath  
Chittagong

**Tata's investment plan**  
I fully support the views of AFM Moinul Islam expressed in his letter, published on June 13, 2006.  
I have been following the write-ups of many eminent citizens who explained it clearly that Tata's investment in our country will not help us in any way; in fact, it will be disastrous. Experts say that the gas reserves in our country will last another 15 years only. If the government allows Tata to invest, gas will be devoured in no time, then what will happen to us?  
We urge the government to drop

the plan of accepting Tata's proposal.  
Nur Jahan  
Chittagong

## Why not a mega serial on 1971?

The nature of entertainment in the electronic media is changing in accordance with its commercial needs. Sometimes the contents of a single drama are being stretched to un-ending episodes. It seems there is an acute shortage of good stories or shortage of talents in this field, which are affecting the quality of television dramas. It could be the impact of Indian drama serials where characters with heavily made up faces, wearing all sorts of jewellery and heavy dresses, perform as poor village women or housewives. I strongly believe our history, society, and culture have enough potential to be a good source for great serials which can be commercially viable as well. A mega-serial on our Liberation War will be a valuable addition.  
Kabir Hossain Taposh  
Paribag, Dhaka

## Tata's steel plant proposal

Much is being written on the subject in your letters column, which is not technically accurate.  
The question of using natural gas for melting iron ore or sponge iron for steel making is not in Tata's proposal which uses the reaction process followed by electric furnace melting. The electric power for melting will come from Tata's proposed coal fired power plant. The lacuna of Tata's proposal is the finished product mix. Bangladesh needs more longs (billets) rather than flats (sheets). Only sheet production is proposed by Tata which is to be exported. It has no scope to produce longs. I had earlier suggested in one of my letters on the subject that Tata should revise the proposal changing their product mix and use coal gas as the reducing medium, instead of natural gas.  
Regarding the CSM proposal,

## A disappointing Brazil

The whole world was waiting with great enthusiasm to enjoy the match of Brazil, which is considered the country of football artists. They are the top seeded and hot favourites this year. But the star-studded team disappointed football fans.  
From the very beginning of the competition, there was a huge expectation from Brazil. This actually influenced their game negatively. As the tournament is not over yet, the Brazilians should concentrate on their game and prove that they are the very best in the world.  
Shoaib M. Siddiqui  
Dhaka City College



in those days I was the Chief Executive of CSM and I strongly opposed the (MECON) Indian proposal to produce sponge iron using our natural gas and export most of it to India, and melt a small quantity in CSM in electric furnace using our scarce local power resources! It was a way of value addition for India using our natural gas resource at a cheap price. The proposal as it then stood did not benefit Bangladesh at all. Thankfully, it was stopped, though certain authorities were very upset with my strong opposition to the proposal.  
S.A. Mansoor  
Gulshan 1, Dhaka

about the status of the indigenous people of Bangladesh. He ended, "If they are indigenous people, then who we Bengalees are?"  
As a British racist, I sympathise entirely. We live in the British Isles - I really do not like the expression 'United Kingdom' as many of the Irish, Welsh and Scottish people are inferior races to us Anglo-Saxons although they occupied the land before we did. We are the true British people and I object strongly to all the attention that is paid to minority rights etc. For instance, the Welsh language is truly impossible and the poor children who go to school there have to learn it and the taxpayers are subsidising this!

Moreover, we have all these immigrants coming into our country who make us feel that the country is no longer truly ours. Why, in some parts of London, you walk down the street and people with white faces are now in the minority! This is true of several areas in our big cities!  
This is a disgraceful state of affairs. Why should they have their rights as minorities, and make us, who are still, thank God, in the majority, feel, "Who are we?" Our sense of identity is being disturbed.  
Britain for the British, I say and Bangladesh for the Bengalees!  
Angela Robinson  
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Discussing about our country and came to the conclusion that we have to do something drastic. But the most reticent friend of mine burst with a piece of information at the end of the discussion session. He asked us whether we knew that the Malaysian government had confiscated an astronomical amount of black money of a Bangladeshi citizen.  
Later in our discussion, we suspected foul play in our submarine cable connection. What could be done free of cost will now be done at a huge cost. Who is responsible for squandering the hard earned money of our people? Will the top level policy-makers still go untouched?  
Whither justice!  
Tawhid Shams Chowdhury  
BRAC University

## Corruption at the top level

It is no longer a secret that we are the most corrupt nation in the world. But every malady has a remedy. We are fortunate that corruption is not an incurable disease like AIDS. Just a few years ago, I read in a newspaper article that corruption spread in China like an epidemic.  
But the Chinese authorities applied the theory of velvet glove on an iron fist. They executed several top-level officials and the result is known. They were not only successful in curbing corruption but it added an impetus to China's progress towards prosperity. China is now the second largest economy in the world.  
I and some of my friends were

Dirty democracy!  
Since the victory of the right wing Hamas in the Palestinian parliamentary election, the so called free world and democratic powers started taking revenge on the people of Palestine.  
Unfortunately, the role of the world powers remains confusing in this complex situation. What on earth would convince them that their actions are not helping the cause of democracy.  
Sabbir Ahmed  
University of Dhaka

An appeal to the opposition  
I'm a student currently appearing in my A-Level examinations under the University of London, United Kingdom. Our exams are currently being held in Dhaka and other major cities in the country. However, there is a possibility that the opposition parties may decide to observe a 48-hour/ 72-hour hartal in the coming weeks.  
If such is the situation, then our exams for this session will be cancelled.  
As a result, we will lose one entire year. Besides losing a year, the financial expenses that our parents/guardians have borne will

be wasted.  
This would also mean that we have to take admission in the school again and also go for coaching classes for another year. This will be an immense expenditure on our parents, especially for the middle-income families.  
Therefore, I would earnestly request the opposition parties to kindly consider the situation and postpone any strikes until the end of the exams in end June.  
A. Sultana  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Road accidents

There should a comprehensive road and transport policy in Bangladesh. The road policy should follow the construction method of developed countries and take into account the current situation in Bangladesh. The policy should look into the following:  
1. On the highways there should not be any shops or stores within 200 feet.  
2. The highways should have rest areas and stores can be constructed in that space for passengers.  
3. Highway police should be equipped with modern gadgets to improve safety.  
The government should look into the matter.  
Choudhury Hasan  
One-mail

## Good defence!

The match Trinidad & Tobago vs. Sweden was an example of how defensive play could help the weaker side hold their own. Costa Rica had the same problem against Germany, though they played loosely and couldn't really stop the incoming left and right mid-fielders from making crosses. Trinidad & Tobago learned the lesson and saved the match.  
Sweden must say it was not really their fault. They played well but their opponents frustrated their moves.  
Tahsin Hyder  
Maple Leaf International School  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka



## NEW BUDGET

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman proposed the budget of Tk 69,740 crore for the FY 2006-07 in the parliament on June 8. If we examine the pros and cons of a budget, we can determine whether a budget is pro-people and visionary or not. To me, the proposed national budget of Bangladesh is visionless, over-ambitious and lacklustre. I read the full text of the budget exhaustively, but it seemed to be very traditional and mundane. It lacked high-yielding economic innovations, sophistication and acumen. The Tax Revenue (NBR) income target is 58.9% which may be ambitious. But it is positive that we are going to minimise our dependence on foreign donors. The most objectionable aspect of the proposed budget is its elephantine ADP of Tk 26,000 crore. I think it is nothing but a political bonanza for the ruling party rank and file to loot the state coffers. ADP does not incorporate any

visionary project that will bring long-term returns for the country. The proposed budget lacks farsightedness in farm subsidy. Tk 12,000 crore has been earmarked for agricultural subsidy, but our Finance Minister did not mention how the allocation would reach the farmers. The politically powerful middlemen can avail this opportunity. The proposed budget has no special allocation for power generation and creation of employment opportunities that are vital for the country at present. Plus, in the proposed national budget there is no specific allocation to buttress SMEs and rejuvenate the moribund capital market. Mr. Saifur Rahman admitted that mere duty rebate couldn't check the price hike. To control it rampant corruption, extortion and syndicated market manipulation should be eliminated simultaneously. But Mr. Rahman did not address these issues in his budget. I think the proposed budget is not supportive at all to materialise the PRSP and fulfil the MDGs. The fuel price hike will exacerbate the skyrocketing inflation that will punish the marginalised people. At present our country is suffering from acute power crisis. So, we hoped that the power sector would be underlined in this budget. Actually, to boost industrial productivity and woo more FDI, we need to revamp our power sector with urgency. I hope the Finance Minister will pay heed to the concerns and post-budget feedbacks of the taxpaying people, opposition parties and renowned economists.  
We hope that post-budget parliamentary discussions will be more vibrant and productive.  
Molla Mohammad Shaheen  
Dept of English, DU  
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The budget has been subjected to severe criticism. The focal point of this

criticism is block allocation, which if not utilised properly could be a means of political exploitation. A new programme "Government Safety Net" would be taken up to allocate the money as a form of loan to the unemployed and poor people. I think if this programme is successful it would be a step forward to poverty alleviation. The question of decentralisation has come under focus in the recent years. Most of the development works are getting concentrated in Dhaka. It is not good for the country's overall progress. So, if this safety net programme is duly operated in the rural areas for educational as well as development process it, it may produce good results. But the problem in our country is the lack of integrity of the people at different levels of governmental activities. So caution is needed.  
Sayla Sowat Siddiqui  
Elephant Road, Dhaka