

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.



Why blame them?

The article "Modern day kids" Published on July 4, according to the author, was based on the research that was done with a group of students going to English medium schools. The author seemed to blame the system for the children lacking knowledge of Bangla and the history of our motherland. I oppose this totally. I am an English medium student myself. But my knowledge of my motherland, (despite the fact that I was born and brought up in a foreign land) and my communication skill in Bangla is better (if you permit me to say so) than

the adults who claim themselves to be close to our culture. Why is it that English medium students are always blamed when such topics are discussed? What about the Indian channels? How many people today watch the great dramas that are aired on our channels? How many have preferred to watch the Close-Up1 of Bangladesh that is recently organised when given a choice between "Indian Idol" or "American Idol"? These are just a few common things that I have noticed and the list is endless.

I have been abroad for a while. During this time I met people who came to the US for education and within 4 months they were struggling to talk in Bangla! The irony of this is that most of these students come from Bangla medium schools. I am not here to debate about our system. But culture is something that grows from home. I am sure that if one is proud of heredity and identity, then it does not matter which system they obtain their education from.

Aneeqa Khan, US

North Korea

The last thing we need is war. Yes, the North Koreans have carried out missile tests. But the United States should not react to it aggressively. The US would make a great mistake if it treats North Korea like Iraq or Afghanistan.

Nurul Abrar
University Of Miami, Florida

Telephone users in trouble

We are businessmen from Mohakhali new DOHS and have been facing many problems with telephone lines, which remain cut off frequently despite regular payment of telephone bills. Whenever we go to local linemen with our problems they do not respond. They say that the have nothing to do about line problems and then if something is given to their pocket everything becomes all right. Sometimes we observe that linemen willingly cut off telephone lines in the hope of getting some bribe from businessmen and inhabitants of this locality. If we complain against the irregularities to higher authorities, the local linemen become even more hostile.

We, therefore, draw the attention of the authorities concerned to take effective steps so that we may get rid of this problem as early as possible.

Sumon
On e-mail

Bangladesh passport

I have read the news today regarding the machine-readable passport scheme.

It is very interesting to notice that Bangladesh passport does not mention anywhere in the book whether the bearer of the passport is a male or a female. In 2003, I wrote a letter to our Embassy in Washington regarding this issue and the first secretary of the mission acknowledged the letter and promised to raise this issue with the proper authorities so that they can add the information in the passport in future. So far I haven't seen any change.

I am requesting you to bring this issue to the notice of the authorities concerned and help to add the information to the new passports.

Rafiqul Khondakar
On e-mail

Tata investment plan

In response to queries from the BBC reporter, the adviser of the ministry of petroleum expressed the opinion that it would not be possible to finalise Tata's proposal in view of the limited time available at the disposal of the government. The adviser virtually said that Tata investment plan would not be finalised now and be left for the next government to decide. The main arguments of the adviser not to go for this project now were:

a. The election is very near at hand and at this point if any agreement is

(a)TATA investment would be the biggest FDI, so far, to the tune of 2.5 to 3 billion USD. Our economy will receive a big injection of foreign capital.
(b) It will give the right signal to other investors.
(c) It will create jobs in the north and western parts of Bangladesh and speed up local business and small enterprises. That part of the country is endowed with broad gauge railway system, good road network connected by the Jamuna and Pakshi Bridge and the latest Rupsha Bridge, and is ready to take off if we plan it right.

TATA had clarified that their products would not compete with local industries. Rather, they can buy from TATA the steel plates they import. It must be said that buying from TATA will deprive them the benefit of over-invoicing and some customs officials will be poorer.
(g) GOB will have 10% equity and hence 10% share of the profit.

We should realise that Bangladesh cannot support a population of 140 million and we will remain dependent on importing our daily necessities. In order to create employment and increase purchasing power we have to go for rapid

points I may be wrong in some of my contentions and would therefore welcome free discussion and some enlightenment from knowledgeable quarters.

Sakhawat Hossain
Gulshan, Dhaka

Jatiya party

Both the BNP and the Awami league want the Jatiya Party in their coalition. But I don't think the Jatiya Party has much support anymore to make a big difference in the election results. It is true that they won in some constituencies in Rangpur

ades.

Surely, such brawls between the opposition activists and police are nothing new. During the 90s, it must have been much worse than what happens these days, but back then, the only channel was the BTV and there was no reason for it to show anything that went against the interest of the government (ironically, BTV still hasn't changed much even after so many years).

It is definitely not entertaining to those whose near and dear ones become victims of police atrocities during such political programs. The death on July 2- a local leader of an opposition party and an SI of the police - is heartbreaking. I keep wondering what great cause would be achieved by the loss of the two lives.

Perhaps my few years of staying abroad has changed my mindset to the extent that I find activities of our political parties utterly nonsensical. Two lives were lost on July 2; many more were lost before then in political unrest at a time when the country is ruled by neither a foreign ruler nor a dictator.

When will human life become a little more precious in this country? Prices of essentials have skyrocketed in recent years. What has not gone up however is the price of human life. Human lives are as cheap as before, perhaps even cheaper.

Zubair Sadeque
Elephant Road, Dhaka

Learning English

I've read articles and letters published in DS on learning English and standard of Bangladeshi learners' English.

Except English medium and some famous Bangla medium schools in the cities, the standard in general is not at all satisfactory. Students are interested only in crossing the hurdle of exams.

Roney, On e-mail

Why the expressway?

The proposal of building an expressway between Dhaka and Chittagong that will cost \$889 million to shorten the path or to save time stunned me.

I think such saving of 1 or 2 hours is not very important for us, rather we should concentrate on more important areas.

Md. Mahbubur Rahman Khan
IPE, BUET, Dhaka

I commend Pope Benedict XVI for pulling the plug on electric guitars and modern music in the church. Pop music is aimed at the phenomenon of the masses, is industrially produced, and ultimately has to be described as the cult of the banal. Rock music is the expression of elemental passions, and at rock festivals it assumes a cultic character, a form of worship, in fact, in opposition to Christian worship. People

are released from themselves by the experience of being part of a crowd and by the emotional shock of rhythm, noise, and special lighting effects. Here there is little chance for the sober inebriation of faith to take place. Rap music has a downward deflection that is condescending in nature. Traditional choirs and Gregorian chants, on the other hand, possess that solemn cadence capable of creating the correct

ambience for perceiving God's mystery.

For those Catholics tired of the empty freedom experienced through pop music at Holy Mass and other liturgical events the Pope's latest condemnation of modern music is both refreshing and welcome. May leaders of other religious faiths follow Pope Benedict's good example.

Paul Kokoski, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

finalised, this would give rise to controversies, questioning etc. b. More analysis of the project is needed and basic infrastructures are not ready yet for such a big project.

Things appear to be a bit hazy!
A Reader
On e-mail

Tata investment

I was greatly dismayed when the newspaper started speculating that the TATA investment proposals are dead. But latest news gave us some hope that all is not lost and GOB will sit with TATA on 10 July to discuss their proposals. Therefore, I put forward a few of my thoughts on this.

In the last few months there had been unending series of writings and lectures on the grim possibilities of TATA investment. Some people rarely see anything positive in it. From my layman's point of view I note the following silver linings in this so-called dark cloud:

(d) We have to face the reality that GOB will not be able to meet our power shortage, which will continue to grow worse as more areas are electrified. The Private sector should be encouraged to invest in a big way and utilise our coal to be mined by Asia Energy. For, every MWT electricity that is supplied to the farmers and small entrepreneurs will bring back a return of about 10 times, while at the same time failure to do so will also cause similar damage to the economy.
(e) In last 10 yrs there had been no new fertilizer plant. There is a big gap between demand and supply and GOB has to import urea at international price. When required GOB can buy from the TATA Fertilizer plant and it will save freight and avoid congestion of the seaports.

(f) There is a hue and cry from the local steel plants and re-rolling mills that TATA steel plant will put them out of business. Time and again

industrialisation. For this Indian capital will play a big part and TATA is probably the most progressive investor. Let us be guided by our heads and not by emotion, prejudice and phobias. Mixing business with politics is dangerous.

The main stumbling block in the way of TATA investment is the supply guarantee of gas and the gas price. Of course, the price offered by TATA is rather low and hence not viable. Why not allow TATA to negotiate directly with the IOC like UNICOL or Nikko and reserve their 2.2 tcf of gas. This will also boost gas exploration by the IOC.

Lastly, I refer to the recent article in The Daily Star on this subject by Mr Tanwir Nawaz, a noted urbanist, where he referred to tri-national gas pipeline between Myanmar, Bangladesh and India. I fully agree with his view that Bangladesh should welcome this project unconditionally and gain in a big way.

While I put forward the above

region by manipulating public sentiment. But now people are becoming more conscious and withdrawing their support from the Jatiya party. On the other hand, in other areas of the country they do not even have organisational activities.

I think the Jatiya party is turning into another Muslim League.

Sagar Ahmed
Dhaka University

Most entertaining TV program!

If someone asked me to name the most entertaining TV program these days, I have to confess that I find the TV coverage of the political activities on the streets most entertaining. The numerous private TV channels that have come up in the last few years give extensive coverage of the tug of war that take place between opposition activists and the police during political programmes like hartals and block-



420-Oil tanker disaster

This refers to the letter in your issue of 3rd July on the subject by Z. Rahman, along with the picture of the stricken ship, "Banglar Shourav".

Points as well as the questions raised by the writer are considered most pertinent and relevant to public interest in so far as it concerns the safety of life & property in our territorial waters in particular. The owner/authority must come out with the answers, which I repeat for clarity/easy reference, as follows:

1. Was the tanker gas-free & fit for maintenance; hot-work/chipping etc as was reported in the press to be the case during the explosion?
2. Did the explosive, or any other department supposed to be responsible, issue a certificate to the effect that all spaces were fit before commencement of the nature of work with particular reference to an oil tanker as was the position stated in the numerous press reports after the tragedy?
3. Since it was a case of loss of valuable lives/assets of great value for the nation, the people of this country have the right to know that the ship was duly covered for both hull & P&I insurance in all respects.
4. Was the ship classed with an internally recognised classification society to ensure safe operation at all time?

We have many coastal tankers operating in our coastal waters and many similar ocean going ships of national/international flags frequently visit our ports/anchorage. 'Shourav' incident must act as a wake-up call for all concerned to follow the maritime rules/regulations in the interest of everybody and to ensure that our territorial waters is safe for ships. The official inquiry in this case should not be like what we see for the launch disasters that occur in our inland waterways so frequently every year. As a member of the International Maritime Organization we should also seek assistance in this regard since we have many shortcomings of resources.

M.E.Hoque
Chairman, CNC Group
Agrabad Commercial Area, Chittagong



Rokeya Sakhawat Swarani Samity

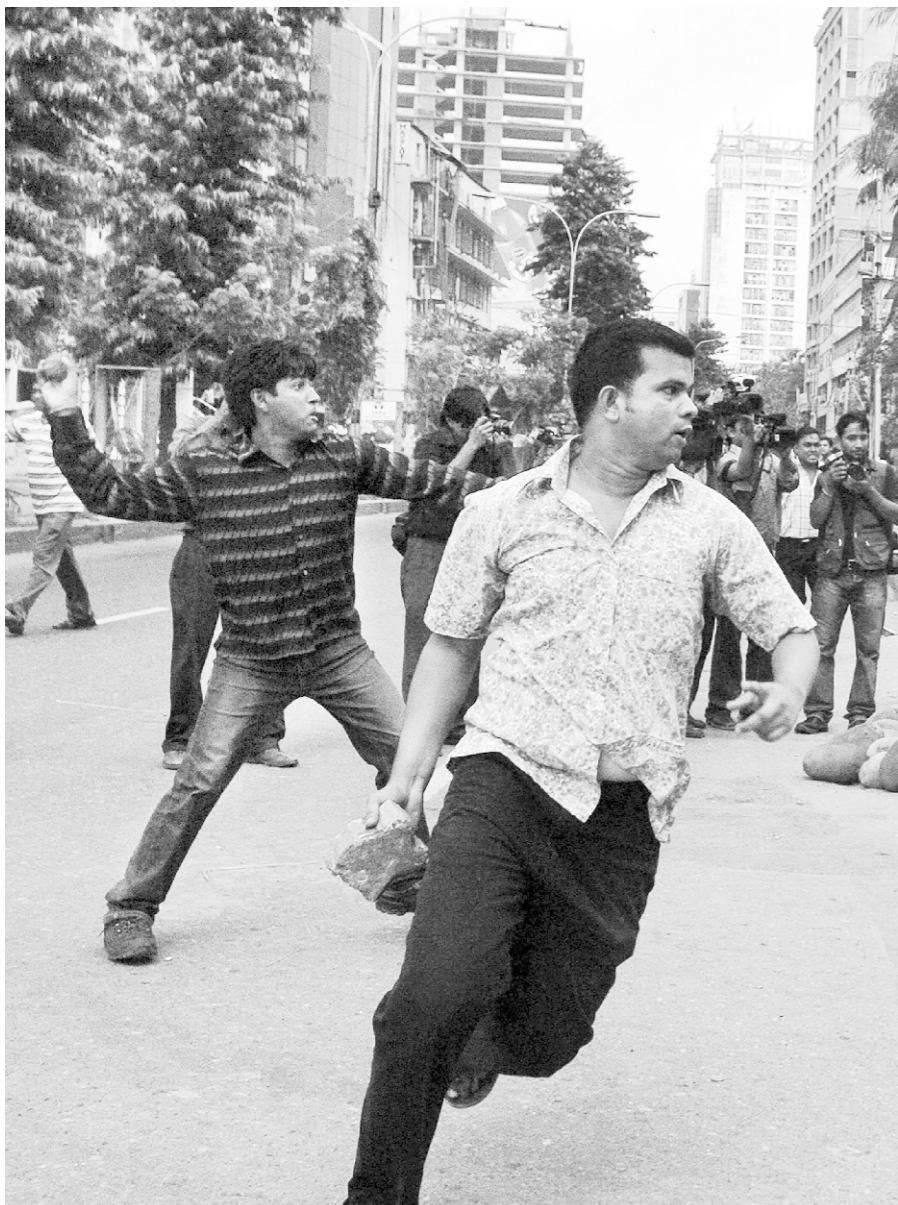
I went through Ms. Rubal Abdullah's letter on Begum Rokeya published in The Daily Star on 4th July 2006. Please allow me to add a few more words to bring out the real achievements of Begum Rokeya.

Her life and work is a great chapter in the progress of our womenfolk, especially in the field of education. She did not stop with the 'pathsala' at Bhagalpur but continued to establish a full fledged high school named after her illustrious husband who had encouraged her to learn English and bequeathed some funds for her school. Begum Rokeya went on undaunted with the gradual progress of the school, requesting members of the families to send their children to the Sakhawat Memorial School until it became a registered High School. It is still functioning in Calcutta.

She was self-educated and wrote many articles in Bengali and English full of exhortations for the advancement of women of Bengal and exposing the hypocrisies of those against the education and liberation of women.

Not only the people of Bengal but entire India watched with admiration her pioneering efforts to bring education to women. Till her dying day she worked for greater success of women in all spheres. We can draw inspiration from her example and try to encourage the emergence of hundreds of Rokeyas in Bangladesh society.

Fauzia Karim, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka



AL and new generation

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Anwarul Kabir for his intellectual explanation of the relation between the Awami League and the new generation, and he is right. I think another reason is there for the distance between the AL and

the new generation--- the current activities of the AL. Nowadays, the AL is observing programmes that terrify the general people and harm us a lot. If we take the HSC examinees as example, they faced lots of hartals and blockades. They

had a disastrous exam, which may make them suffer for the rest of their lives.

The AL should quit the path of hartal and blockade.
Shoaib M. Siddiqui
Elephant Road, Dhaka

