

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.



## Rights of Palestinians

So Mr. Arifur Rahman, the world is built on inequalities - when you are rich you have some advantages and rights - something which the poor don't have. Why don't you ask yourself that when you're on your AC car, and going for a nice 50USD lunch at Sonargaon where are the rights of the slum dwellers right behind that hotel? Right to shelter? Right to education? Right to defend from police beatings? Right to eat? Right to live? So what do the slum dwellers do -- they stay the way they are

and don't try to shout for their rights as they know things will only get worse. The case with the Palestinians is that not only are they poor --- they are also poking the Israelis. Just like a rabbit poking a brutal beast. What happens? Obviously the beast will beat up the rabbit -- how dare it poked me? The fact that one soldier's life is resulting in death of 100 civilians just matches the rabbit and beast incident. Bottom line-- rabbit should realise that it is a rabbit and stay quiet in its cage and quit

poking the beast. Just like when you go for lunch and the beggars outside the Sonargaon don't revolt -- they just ask for money and if you don't give them anything they move on to the next car. It's time Palestinians come to face the fact that they are powerless / poor and helpless and be happy with what they are given and try to prosper with what they have, instead of fighting for what they don't have. **A concerned Muslim**  
On e-mail

### Field candidate for UNSG

I fully endorse the views expressed by Abdul Hannan and Talukdar Maniruzzaman for fielding a candidate for the post of the UN Secretary General. Now that China has made it known that it will not support any major Asian country, it is imperative that we contest the election. Should Bangladesh decide to take out a claim for the post, the motivating factor should be to serve the national interest by nominating the right candidate who has the best possible chance to win without allowing any extraneous factor to be a part in it to impair our maturity as a nation. **Syed Badrul Haque**  
Lalmatia, Dhaka

### CEC, politics and government

Do they have the right to waste time and money of the people? Do they have any right to make one constitutional institution a farce? Talking about the CEC and his activities! Let me start with the related phenomena of how the public bodies are performing. They are misusing public funds and institutions. We used to watch BTV to be refreshed and have some fun from life. You won't find any terrorism, problem, damage, hunger, price hike, disaster, power failure, gas / oil fertiliser scarcity, corruption and manipulation etc, etc. BTV is telecasting the documentary of the government's development works! Once a foreign diplomat said, while watching news on BTV, that he wanted to watch news, not documentary on development! This way things are happening. If the private channels cover real news the government says that they present negative news!

The situation must change!  
**Sharif Nishat Hussain**  
Dhaka

### Disgraceful comments

The Italian Senator, who made such derogatory comments about

the French football team, is a disgrace to the image of Italy. We think of Italy as the country of Pope John Paul II, a spiritual leader, who had preached equality and brotherhood among the communities. Hence by saying that the French team has "sacrificed its identity by fielding a team of blacks, Muslims, and communists", the senator has defiled that image of Italy in our minds, and should resign, as such a man is not fit for a public office in a democratic country. Just as such a comment from the Italian Senator hurts peace loving citizens from all over the world, possibly the great Zidane was provoked in the final, with an equally bad comment. The question that lingers on everyone's mind: "Is this an Italian trait of racism"? **Saamiya Seraj**  
Austin, Texas

### Fantastic, but...

People of the world are getting closer day by day. We are now getting the opportunity even to share our emotions instantly through a little gadget called mobile phone. Along with the modern world, our country also does not lag behind in the sphere of telecommunication. Recently, a mobile service provider has introduced world wide mms service and for that they are giving the chance of sending free mms up to 31 July. This offer has created a huge buzz among the teenagers of our country. Not only the young generation, but also the seniors are getting interested in it. Though this offer is really a superb one, but we should remain alert against abuse of the facility. **Shoaib M. Siddiqui**  
Shephant Road, Dhaka

### Sharia laws

I think people who call for amending Sharia laws cannot fully grasp the belief in the Hereafter. The Holy Quran & Sunnah are the final divine guidance & laws for Muslims until the end of time. And therefore there is absolutely no scope of amending & changing these laws. **Syed Husain**  
Old DOHS, Dhaka Cantt., Dhaka

# Sufferings of people during hartal

During the recent Aborodh (seize) and Hartal (strike) programmes of the opposition, the media gave a good coverage of the pickets and police action on them. It seems that the

are suffering the most. But the media has failed to give the true picture of the situation. It focused only on the opposition and the government. I won't mention anything about the



mission of the media (both print and electronic) was to compare the strength of the police with that of opposition pickets. TV reporters stated that the opposition might take a more violent course to overthrow the government. Even the call for strike and seize was publicised widely.

All the agitation programmes were launched in the name of the people and the government is facing those in the name of people's representation, since they have the mandate to run the government. When AL supporters and ruling alliance activists are facing each other, we, the common people,

economy as its altitude is very high. But when my children cannot go to school what kind of answer I have for them? Again, I have to take them to the school on Friday/Saturday (nowadays schools are kept open on Fridays following the hartal). I cannot take my ailing family members to the doctor, nor can I see my ailing relatives in hospitals. But television reporting failed to cover these aspects of our lives. **Ahmed Sujon**  
Dhaka

# High rise apartment buildings

Just recently a friend forwarded me some information on a project incorporating some fifteen storey high rise apartment buildings being designed and scheduled to be built by the government exclusively for foreign wage earners. The information included an application form and some schematic drawings of floor plans of the various unit types to be incorporated in this project. The project will be built somewhere in the Gulshan-Baridhara area. The prices appeared reasonable-considering the recent explosion of costs of apartments in Dhaka- and with the recent reported sale of apartments in New York by the Rehab team amounting to Tk 150 crore (ntv)- this reasonable "offer" is sure to stoke interest from expatriate Bangladeshis. As I looked at the plan, I could not believe my eyes and therefore cannot refrain from speaking out on one issue: that of Fire and Life safety of the occu-

pants of these proposed buildings. Notwithstanding the quality of design of these buildings that can be addressed and debated separately- what is alarming is the issue of 'Fire and life safety'. Through the recently beamed interview on ntv, I came to know that the government intends to incorporate the International Building Codes very soon. Sadly- the layout of these buildings only confirms that there is no scrutiny of these designs and the basics of Fire and Life Safety codes are not understood. I would like to believe that Bangladeshi Architects and Engineers are smarter than that! Here are the most flagrant violations that I saw in the plans: Typically, for any multi-storied building- all codes that are worth emulating-require two exit stairs/ways. The purpose is simple. You want an alternate path of exit in case of emergency. Secondly- the two required exits

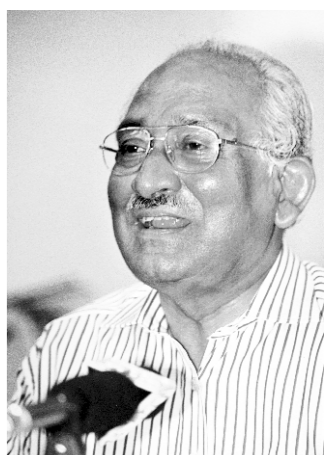
are normally totally enclosed- so that in case of emergency- fire and smoke cannot get into these stairway shafts- that may otherwise work as chimneys in case of a fire and is sure to spread it rapidly throughout the building resulting in huge casualties. I would think that one would consider what happened on 9-11 when the Twin Towers came down. The largest number of casualties resulted in the compromise of one stair totally and the other one had a few floors in between taken out. The occupants had no option but jump to their deaths. The exit stairs are therefore "sanctuaries." For that reason, the doors to these exit stairs are required to be self-closing- which ensures that they cannot be kept open even by accident- and always incorporate automatic closers that should be available in Bangladesh. Thirdly- the exit stairs are required to be spaced from each

other at a distance greater than half the largest diagonal distance of the floor plate. This provision allows people from a corner of a building to take advantage of the closest exit stair to escape. The stair shaft and the Elevator shaft too are required to be separated from each other by a rated assembly. A 5" brick wall can provide around 1-1/2 hour rating. Again, if they are in the same location, the elevators hoistways are required to have an additional door (in addition to the elevator door itself) that segregate it from the rest of the exit corridor. Realistically you cannot keep opening two sets of doors - and therefore, the elevator hoistway doors in the US are normally "held-open" with magnetic door holders that are released when triggered by a fire alarm system. Since it may not be possible to have a State of the Art fire alarm system in Bangladesh- the least responsible

thing to do is to ensure that these shafts are secured from each other and allows the occupants to escape without getting "fried" like the garment workers trapped with the exit doors chained we have been witnessing of late. My intention is not to pontificate on how architects ought to design buildings in Bangladesh although I could possibly talk about the "practical" issues and contribute to such a discussion separately if such an occasion arose. I enjoy the various articles on architecture that are published in your paper- which often include contributions by expatriate professionals and academics. But I believe that it would be prudent to emphasize the practical aspects of architecture and focus on Fire and Life Safety of buildings once in a while- rather than concentrate on theoretical aspects of architecture that the lay person can neither understand nor partake from. Twenty five years in

this profession has also made me realise that there are sub-cultures within this profession who are acutely tunnel visioned. Ironically, in this State of California, one is not considered an architect until he or she passes the exams and understands the rudimentary requirements of ensuring safety to the building occupants. Consider that the State Licensing Board does not even talk about "Design" (you cannot legislate taste") but says the following: The California Architects Board (CAB) was created in 1901 by the California Legislature to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public through the regulation of the practice of architecture in California. **Wazi Chowdhury, AIA**  
Architect, California USA  
Member of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, State of California

## Finance minister's statement



I have read with interest the following statement by the Finance Minister published in DS, July 12. "Bangladesh's bureaucracy is not efficient enough to deal with this sort of cases (Tata's investment proposal) quickly and that is why more time is needed, he explained". But this is hardly any surprising outcome. Under the four-party alliance rule, the criteria for promotion as secretaries have been the following: (i) Being a Jamaat cadre (there are several of them); (ii) Being linked with the alternative power centre ; and (iii) Being blessed by a powerful minister or one of the senior bureaucrats at the PMO. A variant of Gresham's law, "Bad officers(money) drive good officers(money) out of circulation" is in vogue in Bangladesh bureaucracy today. Officials who could have provided informed response to Tata's proposal were unjustly denied promotion. Cleansing deadwoods from top echelons of bureaucracy and injecting professionalism in it should be a priority task for the incoming caretaker and the next elected government. **Ananya Salam**  
Mitcham, Surrey, UK

### Help Justice Rahman

Your staff correspondent's report (DS: 14 July) on Justice Rahman's plight has moved me profoundly. I fervently hope that our government does something for an upright judge who because of his honesty is reduced to dire want. I would request you to kindly set up a trust fund from public donation to look after this upright and honest gentleman in his hour of need. **S. A. Mansoor**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

### Subway in Dhaka city

Dhaka city saw many initiatives to ease its transportation problem. But the situation has not improved. We all know that Dhaka city lacks an adequate number of roads and there is no provision to expand the road network. I was excited to hear about the 52 km long subway, but I was shocked to observe that there was no feasibility study for that. We had bad experience about our flyovers. The government is not spending any money on this, they will hand it over to a private company. But what will be the impact of its construction on surface traffic? There is a strategic transporta-

tion plan for Dhaka city and I am wondering whether the subway is part of that plan. Will the route of this underground railway cover all the busy locations of Dhaka city? What about the future expansion of the underground railway? Is there any provision for that? There is no indication of the type of train that will be available and the speed of the train. The subway should also have proper protection against flood and earthquake. The fare is also a matter of concern, because as we can see the private bus operators are charging exorbitant fares and the government has no control over them. Considering all this, I think the government should conduct a proper feasibility study before giving the final nod to the proposal. **A.K.M. Fazlur Rahman**  
Dhaka

### Enjoyable articles

Two articles in 'Point Counterpoint' page written by Professor Manzur Rahman of San Diego University, California, were very interesting and enjoyable and might I say relaxing. The first was 'A Bengali Jajabor in the Middle Kingdom' (3 July) and

the other was 'Visiting Home' ( 9 July). May we see more such articles from him or other jajabor academicians. **Shafi Ahmed**  
London, UK

### Muslims pitted against Muslims

On the eve of Mumbai bombing, it comes to mind another bombing a year ago when a group of young British Muslims of Pakistani origin carried out a dastardly bombing of the London subway, killing 52, including a young Muslim woman from Bangladesh. Her father, only identified as Shamsul, was interviewed by the NBC a day after. Clutching the picture of his beautiful young daughter, Shamsul was at a loss why these Muslims murdered his 16-year-old daughter. Shamsul was aware that the people who "did this" were Muslims, but he didn't understand why? That evening in a pre-recorded video the bombers claimed that they were simply retaliating against the killing of Iraqi Muslims by the coalition forces. "Unless you stop bombing, gassing and torturing my people, we will not stop the fight," vowed

one of the bombers. Someone should have told them that it is extremist Sunni Muslims who are systematically murdering fellow Shiite Muslims in Iraq. Sunni extremists have bombed Shiite mosques filled with worshippers. They have bombed schools and markets crowded with children and women. Recently, these Sunni extremists destroyed the Golden Mosque, one of the holiest Shiite shrines. And the only person responsible for gassing Iraqis is Saddam Hussein, who used poison gas against the Kurdish Muslims. And Saddam Hussein and his Sunni clans were bombing, gassing and torturing fellow Shiite and Kurdish Muslims long before the American-led military intervention. Now the Shiites are retaliating by attacking Sunni mosques and killing Sunni clerics. And Muslim killing by Muslims is not limited to Iraq. In Pakistan, Sunnis and Shias have been butchering each other for long. Only yesterday (14 July), a Sunni suicide bomber blew himself up outside the home of prominent Shia Muslim cleric Allama Hassan Turabi, triggering a riot in Karachi. Pakistan has been blighted for years by violence among Sunni and Shia

Muslims, targeting each other's mosques and religious leaders. Killing of Shamsul's daughter and murder of Allama Turabi by fellow Muslims are a part of a bigger war - Muslims murdering fellow Muslims while blaming the United States and Israel. In Iran, as Iranian author Azar Nafisi says, the ruling Mullahs "regularly hang people in the streets." In fact, Muslim victims of Muslim violence dwarf non-Muslim victims. Muslims have murdered millions of Muslims in recent times. After a recent visit to Iraq, Democratic Senator Joseph Biden described Baghdad as a city in the throes of a "nascent civil war." **Mahmood Elahi**  
Ottawa, Canada

### Exorbitant price of guava

It has been reported in a Bangla daily that this year there has been a bumper production of guava in the southern districts. The price of around 40 kg guava in Barisal is Tk. 150 to 160. This means the per kg price is around Tk 4. Therefore if we include the transportation cost of Tk 1 per kg plus a reasonable profit for wholesalers/retailers, the

selling price in Dhaka city should not be more than Tk 10 per kg. But I found that the retail selling price of guava per kg is Tk 50 to Tk 60 at Karwan Bazar. At a Department Store in Dhanmondi I found the price was Tk 90 per kg. It is clear that the fruit traders of the city are charging a very high price for a local fruit, which is unreasonable. I would request the government departments concerned to look into this matter and take appropriate measures against the dishonest traders who are charging such high price for a local fruit. Due to high price of local fruits the parents are unable to give fruits regularly to their children. This is affecting their nutrition and growth. **Ihsanul Haq**  
Dhaka

### Awami league and Islamic parties

The Awami League and the BNP have almost same characteristics. For example, they both believe in capitalist democracy. But when it comes to the election, the BNP is always one step ahead. One of the reasons behind this is the hostile relationship between the Awami

league and Islamic parties. It is unquestionable that Islamic parties control a considerable amount of vote and the BNP is taking advantage of it. So, I think, it is time for the Awami League to build up a good relationship with the Islamic parties. **Sagar Ahmed**  
Dhaka University

**Asad finale ...**  
Italy has won the World Cup, but it has not been a glorious win because I think Italy have played dirty tricks on France. In the final match Italian defender Marco Materazzi intentionally insulted the mother and sister of French captain Zinedine Zidane, so that, Zidane became angry. As a result, Zidane hit Materazzi. This was clearly the result of provocation. Zidane was expelled from the field. And France lost their best player. Therefore, Italy got the advantage and won the match. This was not a fair deal. **Rajeshwari Koikay Siddique**  
School of Development  
Alternative (SODA)  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka