

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.



Needed:

CNG station

We don't have any CNG station in Gulshan, Banani. I live in Gulshan-2, but every time I have to take CNG for my car after driving 3 km from my house. I have to take CNG for my car from Mohakali or Badda or Kuril or Tejagon. I don't know why the government cannot set up a CNG station in Gulshan or Banani. There are lots of commercial plots in Gulshan and Banani now. The government also owns some commercial land at Gulshan and Banani.

So the government can set up a CNG station at Gulshan-1 or Gulshan-2 or Banani. Please set up a CNG station for us.
Naimul Chowdhury, Gulshan-2, Dhaka

Passengers' security on autorickshaws

I was shocked to read in your daily that a passenger on a CNG autorickshaw was stabbed to death by muggers at Maghbazar crossing while the auto rickshaw was caught in a traffic jam. Muggers getting into autorickshaws and snatching the belongings of passengers at dagger's point are daily incidents in Dhaka city, many of which go unreported.

Many years ago I saw in New Delhi that the right side of an autorickshaw's passenger seat was blocked up to knee height so that passengers could not get in or out from the right side. This was obviously to prevent accidents as other vehicles pass through the right side. If it is made mandatory for all CNG autorickshaws to block the right side of passengers' sitting area up to knee height and also install a small door on the left side, then incidents of mugging in autorickshaws can be prevented.

It is very surprising to see that almost in all CNG autorickshaws the driver is well protected by a thick wire cage around him while passengers are left vulnerable to mugging.

I would request the BRTA and the autorickshaw owners' association to immediately take the measures to safeguard the lives of passengers and their belongings from the hands of muggers.
Ziauddin Ahmed, On e-mail

Friendship with Japan

The Japanese Universities Alumni association in Bangladesh (JUAAB) together with the Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh hosted an "Orientation Seminar for the Monbukagakusho Grantees 2006" on 26 August 2006 at the VIP Lounge of the National Press Club, Dhaka. This year, 113 awardees (13 recommended by the Embassy, 100 recommended by the Univ. Prof. in Japan) from different disciplines and Hon'ble members from Universities and Institutes attended the seminar. The Embassy of Japan distributed the VISA form among the Grantees.

Basically, JUAAB is a voluntary organisation, supported by the Japanese Embassy, functioning in this country since October 2000. The overarching aim of JUAAB is to build a bridge of understanding between Japan and Bangladesh. In brief, JUAAB activities include promotion of academic, scientific and cultural contacts between

Japan and Bangladesh apart from Japanese language & Ikebana course, organising domestic & international seminars on science and technology etc.

For further information, please visit www.info.org or e-mail to us at: info@juab.org
Md. Tajul Islam, PhD
Education Advisor,
JUAAB

Implications of floor area ratio

On 16 April 2006 the government published the "Dhaka Metropolitan City Building Construction Regulation 2006". In the said publication an important socio, techno-economic issue has been added which is the Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Inclusion of this item in recent gazette notification is likely to bring fundamental changes in the construction industry in Bangladesh. Some people are advocating that it will bring discipline to the construction of buildings and apartments constructed under dubious deals with

vested interest quarters. Some experts are suggesting that henceforth one may go up vertically instead of expanding horizontally. This concept or explanation is not correct and the regulation will definitely affect the people who are now contemplating construction of buildings or apartments. Implications of this issue have not been focused properly. Application of the regulation is being deferred due to the opposition on this matter by some quarters. It is reported that the old rules of construction will be available and treated as legal till December 2006; plans received by that time will be cleared by the authorities by February 2007. No doubt that there is a mad rush of submitting new plans by different developers and in the process some people are probably minting illegal money.

It may be pointed out that this new regulation will affect the land owners in respect of number of flats. As the covered area being fixed by the ratio of area of the land to the width of road (FAR), the covered area is going to be drastically reduced, because under compulsion one has to leave about 50% of the land open. Now when there are two or three 12-15 storied buildings in and around a locality where a new land owner wants to sponsor a new apartments project, implementation of such regulation will affect adversely the said land owner who is just negotiating the deal with a developer. His sacrifice of 50% of his valuable land will make the earlier developers/land owners beneficiaries as the later will get free air, affluent drainage and similar utilities related facilities at the cost of the latest sponsors of the land cum apartment development.

Now why the present sponsors of development projects should suffer for this regulation and make others lucky for the same cause? This will be against the constitution of Bangladesh. The provision of article 27 of the constitution provides guarantee of equality before law for every citizen. The citizens are also entitled to equal protection of law. The regulation, therefore, may not withstand any challenge if made at an appropriate court in pursuance of the article 26(2) PART III dealing with issues of fundamental rights.
M. M. Hossain
Dhaka

Phulbari coal

This refers to the letter of Mr. Mahmoodul Haque (DS, 20.9.06) in response to mine. I am happy to note that there was some reaction to my letter of 14 Sept. Similar reaction to any national issue is healthy and definitely welcome. But may I point out that the 'win-win situation' in case of AEC is not in favour of Bangladesh. According to the agreement with Bangladesh, the country is going to receive a 6 per cent of royalty and tax amounting to 7 billion dollars in 30 years or equivalent to Tk 43,000 crore or slightly more than Tk 10,500 crore a year. At present Bangladesh earns more than this amount per year from

export earnings. Even the remittance made by the Bangladeshis working abroad is about Tk 25,000 crore. I would have termed the deal with AEC a 'win-win' one if the country could secure at least 40 per cent as royalty and taxes, plus compensation for population and occupational displacements of the inhabitants plus cost for environmental change in Phulbari and adjoining areas.

Secondly, on the issue of method of coal mining, I would like to point out that open-pit mining is particularly effective with very large coal seams and in an area that is sparsely populated and also in relatively dry climatic conditions as in Wyoming, USA or places where thick coal seams come near the surface in mountain or foothills as in Canada. Again, land reclamation and regeneration of plant life may be slow after the end of mining operations. Phulbari and adjoining areas have a high density of population per unit area, and the region being agriculturally highly productive with rich biodiversity it is quite easy to visualize the possible impacts of open-pit mining. With a depth of about 150 meter digging down for coal seams, we have little information on impacts of the mining process on local river/drainage system, water table, shallow and deep aquifers both on northern and southern sides of Phulbari, and how to manage problems associated with geo-hydrological conditions when almost whole of northern Bangladesh is susceptible to chronic drought.

Thirdly, I still adhere to the opinion that the Barapukuria coal mining has so far resulted in little damage to other resources, population and the environment. However, there is scope for scientific evaluations as to the demographic and environmental impacts of this mining area before drawing any conclusion. It may be mentioned that in case of shaft mining method, as mining operation proceeds, coal is removed from selected rectangular sections or rooms in a carefully designed pattern, and huge 'pillars' of coal are left to support the overburden above the coal seam. This prevents any possible land subsidence, and the possibilities of subsidence disappears when these chambers are filled-in with sand and water at the end of excavation or switching over to another shaft.

The case of land subsidence, as pointed out by Mr. Haque, is an issue that should definitely be investigated and studied by the mining experts, geologists and soil scientists.
Dr. K. Maudood Elahi
Professor, Dept. of Environmental Science
Stamford University, Bangladesh

Encroachment on water-bodies

People in many places of Dhaka city are not even getting drinking water, and one of the main causes of the problem is construction of roads and construc-

tion of buildings on water-bodies of Dhaka city. The water-body next to the Pan Pacific Sonargoan Hotel is very important for the environmental balance of Dhaka city.

Unfortunately, the government has allowed the hotel to be expanded, despite repeated protests by the environmentalists.

The matter deserves a closer look.

Dr. Mahboob Hossain
Associate Professor
Department of Pharmacy
The University of Asia Pacific,
Dhaka

Embassy at Stockholm

This is in response to a letter by a Bangladeshi in your paper (22 Sept 2006) on the activities of the Embassy of Bangladesh at Stockholm, Sweden.

Thousands of Bangladeshis live in Sweden and they deserve to be served by the embassy personnel.

Unfortunately, that is not the case at this embassy.

Rafiq Ahmed
Stockholm, Sweden

Indian managers

Several letters caught my eye on the above subject. As a professional working in the UK, I believe the reason for employing Indian managers is simple. They must have established a track record of truthfulness, honesty, communication skills and all the business skills that are needed today. The degree is just an entry point, it is the multi-disciplinary quality that is needed to be a successful manager that may be lacking in local graduates.

As for success of Bangladesh managers in big corporations - they must have individual quality needed for the business.

All I am saying is that it is probably best to observe why Indian managers are in demand. Bangladeshi graduates should try to emulate those qualities and I am sure then the businesses will be happy to employ them.

Indians are successful in many spheres of the industry due to their business skills including truthfulness and honesty. I work for a multinational company and we have outsourced works to India due to their world-wide reputation. People in the UK are not rioting for outsourcing work abroad. They know it is part of global business competitiveness.

I suggest that the industries introduce training schemes for local graduates which will impart the business skills necessary for today's world. It is in their own long term interest. The government can also participate in such programmes.
Alamgir
On e-mail

Development held hostage to politics

Your editorial of 21 September 2006 on the above subject deserves attention and serious thinking by all sections, especially the politicians and conscious citizens of the country. It is really

unfortunate that politicians who claim to sacrifice their lives for the well being of the general masses are, in fact, doing the opposite. The two major political parties, for personal benefits of the leaders and the party members, are undertaking the activities detrimental to the interest of the people and the country. It appears that both the parties and the leaders are insincere in all their activities to the extent that they cannot even sit face to face to discuss the major issues. The reason is very clear. They are not concerned about the country and the people and think only for their own personal benefits. They are not learning from the lesson that the people are teaching them through the elections, although, in most cases, people cannot express their opinion at their free will.

Under this circumstances, we, the general people and victims of the misdeeds of the politicians, are watching the political games helplessly. But no one from another planet will come here to rescue us. People can decide to boycott the next general election if the politicians cannot reach a consensus on the matters concerning interest of the people and the country, say holding general elections, law and order situation, corruption, autonomy of radio & TV, separation of judiciary, declaring the assets of political leaders and sources of their income etc.

The politicians must take the responsibility of what is happening and what might happen to the nation.
Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur R/A
Khulna

Politicians and poor healthcare

Starting from the president to members of both the ruling and opposition parties-- all are going abroad for medical checkups. Doesn't it indicate the quality of our health sector? How are the politicians spending foreign currency for simple treatment before providing quality health service for the people of the country? I do not mean being a politician restricts one's right to have better treatment abroad. But why should they go abroad for simple treatment?

My opinion is that there are very good Bangladeshi doctors and some of them are working abroad. The government should take immediate steps to retain them in the country to provide better service to common people.
Md. Jamal U. Tanin
47th CMC, Chittagong

Religion and humanism

It is sad that some religious people today are made to feel that they are part of the problem rather than part of the solution in the world!

Yet those of us who claim to be religiously committed surely have an enormous contribution to make to the discussion of difficult issues because we see them as not just between B and C, with one track between the two along which they

Mother Teresa

In response to "old timer" (letter, Sep 18), about Mother Teresa, I have to concur. The Catholic Church has put her on the fast track for sainthood. She is the one politically correct figure that one dare not criticise in public. But why?

What has she really done? Do the poor and suffering get any better care in the custody of Sisters for Charity than when they die by themselves in the street? The magicians troupe of Penn and Teller investigated the actions of this charity and found out that the poor are expected to die, not get better when they go to the home of Mother Teresa.

I dare say the world will be better off without such saints. Give me an Edward Jenner or Alexander Flemming, and I will show you how to serve the poor of the world.

Yahya
on e-mail

This refers to a letter to the editor that was published on September 18. I was shocked and upset by the author's comments about Mother Teresa. It is true that she was in Kolkata and was confined inside the convent walls from 1931 to 1948; after which she asked her superiors to allow her to leave and devote herself to the poor. The Mother may not have actively voiced her opinion about the communal riots, but it is absolutely wrong to think she did nothing for the victims. At that time she had no funds, but she still started a school in slums to teach poor children. She and her former pupils learnt basic medication and found men, women and children, who were rejected by hospitals, and treated them. She even rented a room to care for helpless people who were dying in the streets. They were Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.

Since then, Mother Teresa dedicated her life to serving humanity. Her order, the Society of Missionaries, has effectively undertaken relief work during floods, epidemics, famine, and for refugees in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Mother Teresa herself travelled all over the world to help people, including the starved population of Ethiopia and the radiation victims at Chernobyl. Obviously, she was not able to reach all the suffering people in the world, but that does not make her work any less noble.

I do not know what provoked the writer to make such unkind remarks about Mother Teresa, but I would request him not to lash out at a pious woman who gave up all earthly desires and turned into a symbol of love and peace; not through donating money to charities, but by personally helping those in need by giving them food, clothing, shelter and love, regardless of race, religion and creed.

Shuprova Tasneem
Dhaka

bang their arguments in an endless game of one-upmanship, like a tennis match which neither can win because there is no umpire. The religious person looks upwards and sees God as the top of the triangle of every relationship. In every good religion, God made us all and cares for all and wants the well-being of all and not their destruction. Thus every relationship can be seen as a triangle or, if you like, a virtuous circle linking those involved. Such relationships enable moral choices and behaviour in everything from family life to national politics.

Without that sense of the Third Party in every relationship, we are, at best, risking impoverished lives, and at worst, in public life, we condemn society to the destruction caused by unrestrained self-interest and greed that think neither of past or future but only of scoring points against those that stand in their way. It reminds me of what was discovered hand-written in the room of Mother Teresa: People are often

unreasonable, illogical and self-centred: Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives: Be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some false friends, and some true enemies: Be successful anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you: Be honest and frank anyway. What you spend years building, someone may destroy overnight: Build anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, others may be jealous: Be happy anyway. The good you do today, people will forget tomorrow: Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough: Give your best anyway.

For, you see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.
Angela MV Robinson (Rev Mrs)
Bandhara, Dhaka

Terrorism in Muslim countries

I am writing with reference to "War on terror -- five years later," by Ambassador Muhammad Zamir (September 23).

Ambassador Muhammad Zamir writes: "A critical survey of the world scene five years after events of 2001 leaves one with a bad taste

in the mouth. A world full of hope and promise has not emerged out of the chaos of Afghanistan or Iraq. Al-Qaeda and some other similar

terrorist groups have not disappeared but continue to weave their grim legacy. In fact, there has been a spread of terrorist groups and 'home-bred' domestic varieties have surfaced. A classical example has been the growth of terrorist outfits in Indonesia and Bangladesh. Fringe groups like the JMB have made their presence felt openly in different parts of our country."

To this it can be added that terrorism in countries like Pakistan and Iraq has evolved into a Sunni-Shiite bloodletting of epic proportions.

The victims of the terrorist outfits in Indonesia and Bangladesh mentioned by Mr. Zamir are mostly local Muslims. Like Iraqis, most Indonesians and Bangladeshis are being terrorised by these extremist elements. Terrorism is now a fact of daily life in most Muslim countries and intramural Muslims killing fellow Muslims is the worst by-product of 9/11.

As such, war against terrorism must be relentless, because terrorists want to enslave their fellow Muslims in the name of their own version of Islam.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada



Worries of an expatriate

I am a Thai living in Dhaka educating the new generation of your country.

I first landed in Dhaka in 2001 and have been coming back and forth. Last year, I finally moved here and have been living my life with fear of

uncertainty in the political arena and lawlessness in general. I never imagined of having a life of wondering if I would be seeing my husband after returning home, as violence seems to be a 'normal' thing here.

However, I know that now my country is under military rule now; yet have you ever seen any peaceful military coup as such?

Sunida
On e-mail