

Start with local tourists

What is this new fad "eco-tourism"? Tourism campaigns would fail if the start from the top of the triangle get the foreigners first. Start at the bottom base and encourage tours by locals first. This will build up the structure slowly, rising to the top level of 4 and 5-star hotels.

Start with more 2-star and 3-star hotels, and no unsocial activities, and the terrorists hanging around

Molla Mohammad Shaheen Dept. of English, DU Congratulations, Telecommunication Ministry!

Our heartiest congratulations to the Ministry of Telecommunication for its being on the top of the draft list in the Audit reports on the 24 ministries, prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office!

What a marvellous achievement on the part of this ministry! Misap-

Telecommunication for its approval. Hope the role played by the previous two governments regarding such a vital sector-- IT sector becomes clear to us all.

Shawkat-ur-Rashid Khan Dhaka

Don't let another accident take another life

The tragic death of my teacher Kawsar Hossain was not a road accident. It was murder. A murder in broad daylight! He did not deserve to die in this way. I fully sympathise with the students who took to the streets protesting this heinous murder.

Don't let the death of our beloved Kowsar Sir go in vain. We can stop many more untimely deaths by taking appropriate steps.

Astudent Jahangir Nagar University

Eulogising suicide?

I write in response to Syed Kamaluddin Ahmed's article "Suicide: A malady of mind or social mayhem" (February 2). As a Muslim woman living in this society I write to express my surprise and profound sense of confusion at what the esteemed writer is attempting to convey.

Nowadays in our society, the media and culture seem to eulogise suicide. Because we fail to teach the young people in our country how wrong it is to kill themselves, victims like Simi and Kashfia become conditioned by this rhetoric.

We sympathise with them and their

do so if we harp on it as an act of bravery. Young people have to be taught that there are alternate means of protests, which can bring about meaningful changes in society.

To conclude I would like to make a number of points: 1. Rapists, eve teasers, and such others will unfortunately not become saints no matter how many women kill themselves in protest, but will instead experience a greater sense of power at how helpless they can make women feel.

2. There is a further implication in such articles that repressive religious norms in our society cause women to feel insecure and lead them to suicide. Such people should take note of Mr. Kamaluddin's statistics that suicide is "one of the 10 most prevalent causes of death" in the Western world where women are "liberated" and free to express themselves. Nor have women in such "civilised" societies found themselves secure from crimes like rape and harassment.

Uzma Sarwar Lalmatia, Dhaka

Frozen food retail market

The frozen food retail outlets (meat, chicken, fish, etc) is a new phenomenon in marketing and shopping in Dhaka, now spreading slowly into the major divisional cities.

There are the large mini-markets and departmental stores (air-conditioned) catering to the microscopic clients in the high-income bracket. The shopping malls and high-rise real estate sectors are facing a minor crisis now due to over-supply.

The next phase is coming up, namely the opening of small retail shops in different localities, as well as grocery shops, which have small freezers to sell frozen food.

In my locality (in Mohammadpur), recently a big industrial concern has franchised the opening of a small frozen food shop (not air-conditioned) selling beef, chicken, dairy products and processed fish ready for cooking. But strangely enough, most of the items sold are in large packages, which the middle class and fixed income groups

"Living death"

I read with great enthusiasm the news item "Living death" (February 1) by Zayadul Ahsan and your timely editorial "Brutal jails harden criminal not reform them" (February 3). I offer my thanks and gratitude to you and Mr. Ahsan for this revealing fact which probably being known for the first time by people who God forbid did not have the chance to experience the harrowing stay in jail.

However, I did have the experience of staying in this "guest house". Whatever you and Mr. Ahsan have said is correct but I want to add a few more from my practical experience. Yes, the food is one-day stale and if you are served dal with rice then there is no vegetable. But if vegetable is served there will be no dal.

It is true that getting to use the lavatory is a Herculean task because in hall rooms known as "khata" there is one lavatory for two hundred persons.

It is true that meat, fish and eggs meant for sick persons of the jail hospitals is sold against either cash or cigarettes. I even found someone taking whisky in the Dhaka Jail. Egg is sold for taka ten per piece.

When a normal healthy person becomes sick in jail the only medicines that is prescribed by the doctors in the jail hospital are Paracetamol and Histacyline. Skin diseases are common.

The Jailor has refused to all the allegations your correspondent made. But does any Jailor visit any person from "khata"? Does he have time to investigate the quantity of food one gets leaving aside the quality, which is beyond description?

Independence days as a fiery student leader, and kept her in the vanguard of all movements for which she had to court jails. Moreover, she also took part in our Liberation War. She stood valiantly against social and political injustices and relentlessly fought for the emancipation of our have-nots from the exploitation of the affluent.

A consumer awareness campaign is necessary so that the communication gap between the shoppers and the new types of frozen food business networks is reduced. The government and the NGOs may take more interest in the frozen food fledgling industry.

AH Dhaka

Live on subsidies?

What is the difference between genuine begging and imploring and living on government subsidies year after year? How to draw the boundary line, and define it?

The Finance Minister does not encourage subsidies (after 30 year of wild-goose chase). He made his intention clear addressing the recent conference on jute diversification (January 24).

This subsidy culture has to be reviewed in depth and some strong national guideline should be introduced to strengthen our private sector, which has now come of age. This is only possible if the government ceases to do business in many sectors.

The telecoms sector may be deregulated, as also many other sectors where government is entrenched in non-profit making business, starting with the sick SOEs. The collective bargaining agents need reorientation in outlook to inject some pragmatic national outlook, instead of harping on old themes like unemployment and loss of jobs.

The political leaders have to take the onus of the proportionate blame. Politics is not mere 'miking', as it appears in Dhaka.

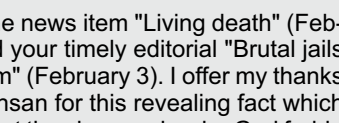
A citizen Dhaka

Disgraceful assault on Matia Chowdhury

I am deeply shocked and moved to see police officers, buoyed-up with the spirits of BNP swooping on the veteran politician Begum Matia Chowdhury and bludgeoning her apparently without any provocation while she was, along with other AL leaders, trying to steer a peaceful procession on the last hartal day.

It is a shame on the part of those at the helm who had given the wink to do the mischief. She is the lady who had put her on her mettle against the Pakistanis in the Pre-

Jumbo size cabinet



Please, slice the cabinet

LGRD minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has defended the jumbo size of the cabinet. He questioned how big the cost is for a minister and many of us would actually like to find that out. We cannot afford to spend money, however little that amount may seem to Mr Mannan or any of his colleagues in the government, to have an unnecessarily large cabinet.

From what he has mentioned, the purpose is to allow people to ventilate their grievances. The leaders running the government must find out ways to become more accessible without the nation's resources being used for such a big cabinet only to be able to ventilate our grievances.

Morevoer, BNP and its allies have majority of the seats in the parliament and it is through them, if no other way is allowed, that most people should be able to ventilate their grievances.

We have heard from the government that half of the number of officials and employees should be reduced as part of an austerity measure. Why not start by cutting the size of the cabinet, which has 73 members now. It is difficult for one to even remember the names of all the ministers. The government should ensure appropriate use of the revenue of the treasury. We would like and appreciate a small functional cabinet.

Rumana Chowdhury Toronto, Canada



Barred from life

Through your daily I request the Home Minister to kindly treat these unfortunate people inside the jails as human beings by following the Jail Code and not as any queer animals from outer space.

Badruddin Dhanmondi, Dhaka

of system losses inside the industry have never been clearly and openly exposed officially to the public by BGMEA and other relevant agencies, for independent analysis and opinion. All the time the central bodies have been pestering continuously with all sorts of demands, without, at the same time, releasing progress reports on their improvement projects.

I will side in principles with the

Amina Asma Babar Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Wrong wording in a Rabindra Sangeet

I have my high regards for Rezwana Chowdhury Banyan, who, as a new generation of artist of Rabindro Sangeet in Bangladesh has helped to broaden the horizon of its popularity by her continuous public performances. She developed purely a personal style and undoubtedly is one of the most popular vocalists of Rabindra Sangeet.

About a decade ago, while listening to an audiocassette of Rabindra Sangeet by Ms. Banyan I was shocked to hear the song "Jokhon porbe na mor paer chinho ei bate" where she voiced a wrong word. I stopped listening to her songs since then.

A few days ago, when in a shop I saw an audio CD (Anondodhara) that includes the same song of the same singer, I was curious to know if she has corrected herself. I bought the CD and was amazed because she again, and this time in a duet with a male singer, made the same mistake. In both the cassette and the CD she sang "Kata lota utbhe ghoror 'dhar' gulae" but the actual wordings are "kata lota utbhe ghoror 'dar' gulae."

In the same song the word 'dhar' has been used but in a different sentence-- "Sheola eshe ghibre dighir 'dhar' gulae" (Ref: "Chiro Ami").

It is not only the inherent beauty of the melody and lyrics and deep thoughts and rich emotional fervour that makes Rabindra Sangeet so unique but also on account of composition of sentence and use of a particularly decorated word at a particular place, which is the distinctive character of Rabindra Sangeet.

Admittedly, Ms. Banyan is among the most popular contemporary exponent of Rabindra Sangeet. It is her mellifluous and rich voice and a clear and cool style, which, I suppose, is the keynote behind her wide popularity. But I believe no singer has any right to torture Rabindra Sangeet - the greatest asset of Bengali culture.

Nazmul Karim Dhaka

"Is milk essential?"

I would like to thank Rokeya Mahmood for her informative letter (January 30) on the value of skimmed milk for heart smart life style. I agree with her opinion regarding heart-smart life style. However I would like to add the following nutritional advice, which I think, would play a useful role to limit the development of heart disease. These are as follows:

- 1. The diet should include plenty of vegetables and fruit, whole bread,



Sorry, no puzzle

Brig Hafiz's plea (February 4) for humane treatment of al-Qaeda prisoners leaves only one question unanswered. Where was the columnist's powerful sense of human rights when these very prisoners of today had enslaved an entire nation, imprisoned an entire gender, and demolished an entire culture a short six months ago?

I read his columns regularly and do not recall him outright condemning the Taliban or al-Qaeda when these beasts were throwing acid on women, shooting young girls as sport in public stadiums, and making mockery of the very concept of human rights. Where was the moral, self-righteous indignation then?

ES Missouri, USA

the joints. Tourists do not like to be followed for ulterior motives. How many local middle-class families go for holiday trips? Less than one-tenth of one per cent (apart from the budgetary constraint)!

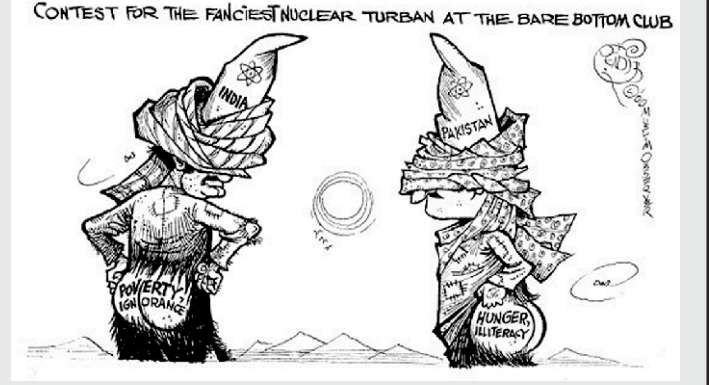
The servicing sector needs many of service personnel. Where is the environment of this tourist industry? First the climate, then the goods, and lastly and the services. News

propriating to the tune of Tk 842 crore in a seven-year time in a poor country like Bangladesh is not a matter of joke! All the previous ministers, officers and employees of the ministry can boast of such an achievement! Sorry for the present minister that he is not entitled to share this joy as he has been in the office only for the last 100 days. We would like to request the

Test of missile by India

When the tension between India and Pakistan are at the highest peak, Indian's test firing of another missile capable of carrying a ton of nuclear bomb is very much significant. India and Pakistan already deployed their troops in the frontier boarder of their country and keep them on highest alert to face any attack from the other side that remains as a cause of tension for the peace loving people of the world.

War may start at any moment. The two-archival countries have already acquired nuclear capability and the future war in between the two countries will bring a havoc and disaster beyond the limits no doubt. The whole world is in tension due to such Indo-Pak volatile situation. In such an extreme moment missile test by the India is surely instigating and a direct threat to Pakistan. To take such an unwanted step by India is nothing but an exhibition of their supremacy in the arm race. Pakistani and the Western leader already expressed their resentment in this regard. Defence analysts termed their concern about the missile test and they apprehend that this will escalate the security tension in south Asia. It may be stated that Pakistan is also continuing this programme and in response to Indian test it is not unlikely that Pakistan will go for another such kind of test. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has justified the



The bottom line

missile test asserting that it was solely aimed to strengthening national security. However, arms race will definitely tension in smaller countries of the Asia and we are very concern about it. The sooner India and Pakistan realise this truism; it will be better.

MH Bari Khulna

reports complain of the poor and unsocial image of the local guest-houses, which the police have to raid frequently. The lower category hotels are dons of questionable activities. The law and order situation in the country does not encourage tourism.

A Mawaz Dhaka

Khoka for Mayor

Mr Sadek Hossain Khoka is one of the few people in BNP (or AL or IOJ) who can be called a professional politician as a compliment and not as a slur.

This fellow is also the only major politician in Bangladesh who had the graciousness and pizzazz to visit the abode of his bitter contender and stuff his mouth with a robust slice of vitriol mollifying cake.

That spectacle alone should warrant him BNP's nomination for Dhaka's mayoral race.

MA Dhaka

The brainchild of Finance Minister

Believe it or not, Bangladesh is an itsy-bitsy country in the globe. And the populace of this country are absolutely autonomous. Yet, they are wrestling with penury. The denizens of Bangladesh are politically independent, not financially I daresay. The World Bank as well as IMF has made this country a banana republic. The Finance Minister's statement in 'The Daily Star' of January 16 has drawn my attention. "The size of the government should be cut by at least 50%," he voiced.

Woefully, I think Bangladesh is nothing but a basket case. It has a plethora of government employees, who are work-shy.

And, ipso facto, the size of the government, especially the size of the current cabinet, a white elephant should be axed by ASAP. Hats off to Mr Saifur Rahman, a stalwart of BNP!

government to name the Telecom- munication Ministry as the 'Ministry of the Decade'. Would the Guinness book of records consider to entry the name of the Telecommunication Ministry of Bangladesh in its book as the most dextrous Ministry of the world in the field of misappropriation of public money?

The telephone connection and call charges in our country are the highest in the world, as far as I know. One has to wait, after having applied, for years to get a telephone connection; this excellent feature of the T&T Board, the mainstay of the Telecommunication Ministry is must to be reckoned of. The sad is that, we the ungrateful people will soon forget the achievement of this Ministry when another sensational news will soon occupy the headlines of our national dailies in a day or two. Ours is the country so prolific in producing sensational news!

Faruque Hasan Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Who is responsible?

I have gone through your report "Privatise telecom sector for growth of ICT" (January 19). Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, the Chairman of BRAC, while talking about the failure of the previous government in connecting Bangladesh with the global information superhighway through submarine cable should have touched upon the role played by them in their field. As he did not, let me say a few words about the matter.

The BNP government (1991-96) did not avail the chance of establishing submarine cable free of cost to put Bangladesh to global information superhighway fearing national security would be endangered. But the Awami League government realising the importance of submarine cable in the IT sector contacted one Singaporean company, compiled a project at a cost of Tk 800 crore to be implemented under BTTB. Dr M Abdul Awal. BTTB's consultant said in the same report BTTB has forwarded the evaluation report to the Ministry of Post and

families but we surely cannot admire them and uphold them or say that they have done "a great job". By doing so we will be diminishing the stature of every woman living in this society who is struggling and fighting against its injustices.

Mr. Kamaluddin says, "since olden days, suicide is always considered an act of cowardice, despair and despondency" and by implication it seems he considers suicide to be the ultimate act of heroism. However, he himself says, "Simi and Kashfia clearly call our attention to address the issue of suicide" but I fail to see how we can

cannot afford, as they cannot spend a large amount of money on a single shopping or marketing day.

It means that the large middle class sector of consumers are being ignored by the management, who are following the dictum of targeting a small percentage of people in the high-income bracket.

This appears to be a misguided policy in the long run, judging by the success of mini-packs of expensive consumer goods (powder milk, tea, cosmetic products, soaps curd, etc). Also the Bengalee households are not accustomed to buy and eat frozen items of fresh food like meat,

Bush's speech

Former ambassador Ziaus Shams Chowdhury, in his column "Bush's state of address: Taking on new frontiers of terrorism" (February 2), makes some interesting points. He has rightly pointed out: "A fierce resolve to continue the campaign against terrorism and a stern warning to nations that are regarded as potential abettors of terrorist movements highlighted President Bush's state of union address. The speech reflects a strong and unambiguous intent to follow up on the remarkable success accomplished in the enterprise in Afghanistan and not let the momentum to flag."

Terrorism is basically the product of self-defeating illusions. It is a deliberate form of political or ideological warfare waged against the civilian population by fanatics with financial and manpower resources at their disposal. One of the illusions is that terrorists are promoting their cause through acts of terrorism; while, in reality, such acts of violence are likely to discredit their cause. This is the greatest difference between the terrorists and the freedom fighters. Civilians are the principal targets of the terrorists because they are easy to attack and terrorists seem to make no distinction between innocent civilians and armed forces. Freedom fighters, on the other hand, try to avoid attacking civilians and concentrate on hit and run attacks on military targets and most civilian casualties are accidental and unintentional, because civilians are seen as potential allies to be won over. The terrorists who attacked the World Trade Centre, on the other hand, clearly wanted to inflict as many civilian casualties as possible. And this why war against terrorism has to be such a priority.

Mr. Bush clearly understood this when he made war against terrorism his main goal. He knows that unless he stems terrorism in its bud, it might grow into a monster to threaten the entire global security. History tells us that because both European nations and America ignored the Nazi threat before Hitler could endanger the global security, the Second World War had to be fought incinerat-



Resolving world disputes?

ing millions of people. Now an American president has rightly decided to wage a pre-emptive war to avert such a catastrophe on global scale. In one sense, Mr. Bush's new strategy simply adds a pre-emptive offensive component to his long-championed National Missile Defence (NMD). Iraq, Iran and North Korea are trying to develop both long-range missile capabilities and nuclear weapons and can threaten mainland United States. Iraq and Iran have already used chemical weapons against each other and Iraq had shown no qualms of using chemical weapons against its own Kurdish population.

This is why the war is not just against nebulous terrorist groups. Rather, countries hostile to the United States will be prevented

from developing chemical, biological or nuclear weapons and prevented from providing sanctuary and support to shadowy terrorist groups. Terrorists cannot operate without a base; they have to be somewhere.

And without regimes like the Taliban, which provided them almost free rein to run their camps in Afghanistan, terrorists could not have launched any large attacks.

The terrorists can also operate cells in Western countries, as they did in Germany and the United States, but these cells cannot be effective without some kind of secured base. And terrorist cells inside the United States and Europe can be broken through intelligence and vigilance.

As for the American unilateralism, it must be understood that most other countries lack both the political will and military means to fight global terrorism and regimes providing support and sanctuaries to terrorist groups. As Zbigniew Brzezinski, former president Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, said recently: "The bottom line is that in facing the challenge posed by terrorism, the heavy lifting will have to be done by the United States largely on its own."

Only an America that can muster the strategic will to wage both a comprehensive political and military campaign can prevail, and that reality is a sobering reminder of the fact that American preponderance is currently the only practical alternative to global anarchy."

In Afghanistan, the United States has again proved that it remains the only power capable of stemming global anarchy. Mr. Bush's speech confirms that.

Mahmood Elahi Ottawa, Ontario, Canada