

**A murky millionaire**

We are astounded to read about the massive corruption by a metre reader of Titas who has been a millionaire overnight with the help of some unscrupulous industrialists. But the news becomes more shocking when we learn that an influential government policymaker is advocating for this corrupt meter reader. The BNP government should remember that people voted them to power to eradicate corruption, not for taking sides with the criminals.

We urge the government to bring this marked culprit to justice to set an apt example of their transparency and accountability to the people who voted for them.

Finally my heartfelt thanks goes to *The Daily Star* reporter Zayadul Ahsan for this excellent report.

**Al-Amin Mahmud**  
Zahurul Haq Hall Staff Quarter, Dhaka

My heartfelt thanks to you for publishing an important investigative report "Murky way to millions" (May 15). Corruption has penetrated in every sector of our country. Our deteriorated economy and the worst law and order situations are the direct results of corruption.

I am happy to see that after publication of this report, Petrobangla and Energy Ministry took some positive steps. I hope you will come forward with similar investigative reports in other sectors, like police, income tax, customs etc for the betterment of our country.

We notice that some political leaders are always patronising such corrupt practices and act as godfathers to the criminals. Please publish the identities of these so-called politicians for complete eradication of corruption from the society.

**M. S. Uddin**  
Nagoya, Japan

The type of investigative reporting that *The Daily Star* is now doing with the revelations of corruption in Titas Gas is just the kind of journalism we need in Bangladesh. I particularly appreciate knowing that the government I voted for is condoning and probably participating in the pillage of our national resources through their unions.

Sheikh Hasina screams blue murder when her father's portrait was removed. Yet she and her fellow travellers are silent on this issue.

Here we have a perfect example to state sponsored thieving. If this article is correct AL can even claim to have been better at controlling their unions than BNP. This is the kind of issue that a real opposition would take up and flail the government in parliament for.

Now that *The Daily Star* has made these revelations, it cannot end with Titas Gas alone. All other government bodies should also be investigated until every corrupt government employee knows that he can be exposed at any minute.

I was also wondering about a curious thing that was mentioned regarding the millionaire Meter Reader Mahub, an earlier article in *The Daily Star* said he was thrown off the third floor of a building. And why was that?

**Dorji**  
Dhaka

My father, who retired from a high ranking government position, was, as it were, an 'honest' officer. Translated, it meant a childhood of modest meals, a broken TV and no certainty of new clothes for Eid. But financial insecurity and suffering did not ever deter them from following that straight path and upholding the responsibility and sanctity of the chair they served from. And they are not alone.

Even today in any given government office, one can still find a surviving number of non-corrupt officers, albeit unsung, unpatronised and marginalised. But their numbers are dwindling in the current and tumult of the flow of 'black' cash.

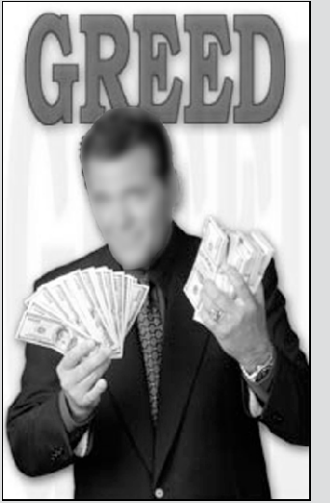
The last thing one needs to read on the pages of *The Daily Star* is the story and of the riches of the Titas Gas meter reader. One had been increasingly aware of such situations, but now that the facts are in newsprint, let the strongest protest be heard. We are sick and tired of the greedy, corrupt minority who today rules the frustrated majority. We are through with the sugarcoating of words and shall accept only direct, uninterfered action. Let no Finance Minister seek refuge in taxing the economically disadvantaged

millions when there is single such case to report.

The hope that the government, any government, will do sufficiently to combat crime and corruption has long been lost. The seats of government are occupied by despicable characters who are themselves monuments to corruption. Only a revolt of the masses, spearheaded by media, pens and voices of those aroused, can bring down the great bastions of corruption that stand invincibly and grow rancorously in all spheres of our political and social life.

*The Daily Star* and the reporter cannot be commended enough. Demand is made for continued investigation until such time as this and other cases come to a conclusive and judicial end, acceptable to the public and exemplary to those who even contemplate similar vice.

**K**  
Lalmatia, Dhaka



**Merger of BSRS with BSB**

It appears from press reports that the Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha is going to be privatised soon. Although it has some stuck-up loans in its portfolio, the BSRS is still on a sound financial footing because of restructuring effected in 1988.

By looking at the present classified loans in those portfolios of BSB and BSRS, one should not evaluate their contributions to the industrial development of Bangladesh. In fact whatever industrial base has been created in the territory, it has been fathered by BSB and BSRS.

Most of the commercial Banks I worked for are not adequately staffed with appropriate skilled hands to cater to the industrial financing. Obviously long term financing is by nature risky and hazardous. BSB and BSRS, on the other hand, do have quite a good number of skilled experienced hands such as financial analysts, economists and engineers who are required to appraise industrial projects for providing and monitoring long term loans. There is need for at least one strong industrial DFI in the public sector to continue to support the industrialisation of Bangladesh. This can be achieved by merging the BSRS with the BSB.

I believe that the proposed restructuring of BSB and the merger of the BSRS with the former would go a long way to develop a very strong and viable industrial DFI for providing long term financing of industries in Bangladesh.

**Ghiasuddin Ahmed**  
Banani, Dhaka

**Image of Bangladesh**

Let me at first thank you for creating such a wonderful place, especially "To the Editor" section. For the nature of my work I started to keep a very popular Bengali newspaper but frankly speaking I discovered a thirst for reading the editorial column and also "To the Editor page" of your Newspaper. I really missed your paper, as a result you can understand I am back to *The Daily Star* and have started again to enjoy the beauty of reading.

I am referring to the letter of Nafees (Image of Bangladesh). "Taliban Test Status, Super Star of Corruption, attack on Hindu community, HRCBM's cyber lies, fear of FEER, unpalatable Danish, ferry disaster..." and the list goes on.... As a Bangladeshi, even to read that my heart breaks. These are images of shame, my shame because whether I try to remain as a good person or not, on top of everything my real identity is I am a

poor. Our education system is a total disaster. Despite the fact, there are educated people, why do we have to know the frustrating image over and over again? Self-evaluation, soul searching, these are much needed corrective measures. Everybody understands everything; nevertheless the ultimate result is zero. We need to have compulsory moral classes to be included in our education system to grow the awareness that we are dying. We are in a state where we need to help ourselves.

**Shahrin Hussain Tania**  
Old D.O.H.S Banani Dhaka

**"Talk and let others be listened to"**

I believe it is relatively easy to comment on anything or everything from a safe heaven thousands of miles away from Bangladesh. However, without going into lengthy details, for us, who live here and are aware of the events right from day one with regard to our neighbours vis-a-vis Bangladesh, our armed forces are very close to our hearts. Irregularities and corruption by few individuals should not be the standard to judge the whole armed forces establishment. Any one who does - obviously does so with a motive - that's anything but fair.

Similarly, those, who now advocate abolishment of our armed forces, are apparently singing the same song as some policy makers from across the border had very forcefully tried to impress upon the newly formed government of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the early '70s. Bangladesh Army almost became a non-entity - playing second fiddle to the dreaded Rakhi Bahini as a result - till the change over in 1975. So, you see Mr. Bangal Chele from US (May 15), anyone, trying to promote the idea of an armed forceless Bangladesh with only a paramilitary force for defence, may have little prospect for 'literary behaviour' in accordance with your intellectual standard. What happened to Sikim and its ruler is still fresh in our memory. And our apprehension grows further when we watch our close neighbours Bhutan and Nepal. Myanmar is not too friendly either whose armed forces are now reported to be comparatively bigger and better armed.

However, a 'constructive intellectual debate, as you suggest can be really meaningful with the prospect of a Bangladesh without or with a token armed force when we have neighbours, like Switzerland or Canada or such other countries have elsewhere in the world.

**Ashfaq Chowdhury**  
Banani, Dhaka

**Amnesty to criminals**

I have a suggestion for the govern-

ment of Bangladesh in dealing with the law and order situation. It is underscored that the root cause for such disarray in security of life and property is due to the absence of a permanent solution.

It is widely speculated that the present law and order situation is primarily due to the political shelter that notorious criminals receive from a section of the high ups in the

not take his creations through murder or terrorism, is it? He also asked whether a stray bullet killing a 20 month old child, a kidnapping of a schoolboy, a husband murdering his wife and two sons, were wills of Allah or not. How do we know what Allah's wills are?

He also said that all these happenings are taking place as law and order is deteriorating. Well, it's the

**Street children**



Street kids: Death is on the next lane

Rather than fighting over portraits, we should pay a little attention to the street children. These children lead their life as nomads. Some work and some beg. Some have parents who never take care of them, and some are orphans. They are deprived of all kinds of rights that every child deserves.

How can we call ourselves civilised unless we take care of these children?

**Md. Dulal Hossain**  
Tangail

BNP and the Awami League.

To counter this problem, my suggestion to the government is to make an announcement that any listed criminal who can identify their (political) godfather with hardcore evidence will be acquitted from all or a significant amount of their alleged crime.

**AA**  
California, USA

**"The Home Minister is right"**

Mr. Zenith was shocked at the words of Miss Fatema Nasreen, although I have no idea what is so shocking in her words. Zenith's words suggest that he is not fully accustomed with Islamic ways. Allah wants us to sacrifice, "Qurban", that's why we have to slaughter a cow or goat or camel. Again, in Saudi Arabia, where they follow Islamic rules, a poor man, if he steals bread to feed his hungry son, will be penalised by having his hand cut!

Mr Zenith said that it isn't written in the Quran that Allah will take back his creations through terrorism or murders. True, but it is also not written that in the Quran that He will

public's fault that Naushin was killed. Why, tell me, why, didn't the public let the robbers rob the shop and leave the place, without hurting anyone. Why did they charge after them knowing that they were armed and would shoot?

You surely don't expect the robbers to kiss your cheeks instead of shoot when you are planning to catch them and send them to jail, after beating them. It was only natural for them to shoot. Then again, an extremist killed his wife and two sons. What on earth has law and order got to do with it? You can't keep police officers in each and every house, and find out which man kills his wife and sons, can you?

Lastly, this is a democratic country, and every individual has his or her freedom of speech, and that I believe also includes the Home Minister. What he says is his birth-right and you can't deprive him of that. And moreover, what he said is true. Life and Death are in His hands. That's the sole reason why some people go on and live for 100 years or more and some are born dead.

**Amer J, On email**

It is reassuring to read the letters of Yamen and Farjad regarding the Home Minister's silly comments. There's nothing absolutely nothing quite as much fun as going after a politician who can't control his tongue.

But regarding Yamen's letter, she/he doesn't actually tell us what it was that Alexander said to Selucas. All I know is that Selucas Nicator was one of his generals, but what did Alexander say to him?

**MA**  
Dhaka

**Visa juggernaut**

We are very happy to know that our government has refused nearly 200 foreign nationals to enter into Bangladesh since the government imposed new restrictions and immigration procedures on April 18, 2002.

We have several recommendations before our government regarding issuing visa for foreign nationals:

- 1) What is the visitor's purpose to visit and who is the sponsor from Bangladesh and what is the relationship between the sponsor and the visitor?
- 2) All foreign nationals must apply for visa before their upcoming trip to Bangladesh to the Bangladesh High Commission or Embassies in their respective countries and must prove their identities, professions including recent tax return slips and authentic reasons for visiting Bangladesh.
- 3) Bangladesh High Commissions/Embassies aboard will make sure through its contact with the applicants, Bangladeshi sponsors, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs before granting visa and the duration should not exceed more than 15 days. If needed to extend visa, the aspirant applicant must appear before the personnel of the immigration department for an interview and explain why that applicant wants to extend his visa.
- 4) The visiting foreign national while departing Bangladesh should be checked by airport immigration officials either the outsider has brought some documents, film, photographs and foreign currencies and other valuable documents or materials showing large excuse of tax exempted and a gift item etc.
- 5) Our government must update its web site regarding changed policies in advance.
- 6) There should be a well co-ordinated efforts in between the concerned ministries and other related bodies to handle any matter in a befitting way so that no foreign national and its respective consulates in Bangladesh may claim that s/he is a victim by our newly introduced rules regarding immigration.

**Gopal Sengupta**  
Montreal, Canada

**English Medium Schools**

I read Mr T Ali's letter regarding English Medium Schools with great interest, since I am the product of one of Bangladesh's finest English Medium Schools I must say that I agree with most of the things he had to say in response to 'an aggrieved parents' letter'. It is true that the fees in some English Medium Schools border on the ridiculous, but most of them are justified. For example, schools like Scholastica, Sunbeams and Aga Khan School are among the most expensive in Dhaka, but they also provide a standard of

Medium schools are run. Regards curricula, well, the government cannot interfere anyway, since all English Medium schools follow either the London University or Cambridge University GCSE syllabi, and the curricula are also determined by those Universities. So, the government cannot interfere in that anyway.

Finally, I am confused about one thing. I am studying Civil Engineering in the University of Massachusetts now, having completed my A Levels in Bangladesh a year ago. I remember that being called GCSE A Level. I wonder what Mr T Ali meant by introducing GCSE in Bangladesh

**Our politicians follow the Gresham's theory**

Economist Sir Thomas Gresham's theory on monetary circulation is "bad money drives good money out of circulation" is tantamount to the prevailing political arena where bad politicians are girding up their loins to oust the good politicians from the political ambience. The arcadian and law-abiding politicians irrespective of party affiliation are stymied to see the cool-headed amputation of democratic norms and values. They brought to bay politically due to the political arthritis.

The bad politicians are ambidextrous. They use their right hand for so-called altruistic deeds and activities at broad daylight. On the other hand, their left hands become amaranthine by the nefarious as well as subversive plans and schema done surreptitiously. The ray of the established democratic institution is going to be obfuscated by the political philanderer. The delicate flavour or taste of the verbal-dish of the bad politicians is responsible for upsetting the stomach of our beloved nation. To get rid of from this queasy situation we need specialist (good politician) not quack (bad politician).

The myth of the good politicians of our country is found at the nadir of depression. Let them shackle the chain of naivety. I urge the ruling elite to hinder the inglorious feat of their party-men for the better interest of the nation and open the door for the dedicated politicians to serve us keeping mind the definition provided by Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg.

**Hierophant, Dhaka**



education unlike any other school in the country. And, if the fee was that much out of reach, then these schools surely would not be so packed. No matter how high the fees, the number of students in these schools keep increasing, which can only be good for the future of our country.

I completely agree that the government should not, in anyway interfere with in the way English

and not the outdated A Level. I thought that they were the same thing, although the British have a different format of the exams for themselves and a different one for overseas students. Maybe he meant the format used in UK should be used in Bangladesh too, I do not know.

**Yamen Hoque**  
Massachusetts, USA

**Regarding landlords**

My landlord does not write the amount of the rent received in his monthly receipts. Moreover, he never affixes revenue stamp as required by law. Therefore the money receipts are technically and legally invalid, I presume.



Landlords are lords too?

He got the agreement signed ten years ago on stamped paper (therefore legal), where the amount of the rent was mentioned. Now the rent has gone up by 40 per cent (mutual agreement). He is a retired government officer, and should be familiar with the government rules.

Where to seek redress? The Rent Controller's office (if any) is conspicuous with non-notices, non-visits, and absence of advertisements and announcements. This office should carry out random surprise checks on the landlordism practised in Dhaka and elsewhere.

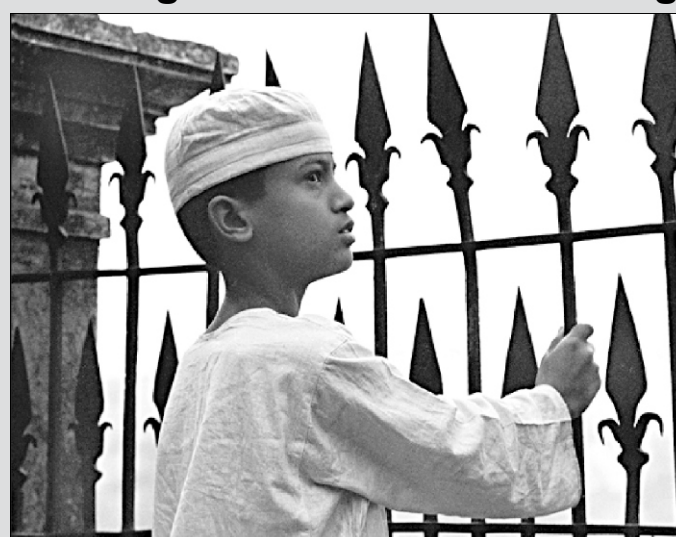
**A harassed tenant**  
Dhaka

There is, however, need for restructuring of the BSB particularly by rationalising the staffing of the BSB which carries on its pay roll a large number of unnecessary non-professional hands. Such unnecessary non-professional hands can be got rid of by resorting to golden handshake.

Bangladeshi but under such condition I don't feel like saying I am proud to be a Bangladeshi. This is torturous for me because I simply just can't ignore my own identity.

We always talk about these problems and the solutions as well. But nothing works. I feel our main problem is our ethical side is very

**Banning Matir Moina: won't the government ever learn?**



Matir Moina: Caging a bird

Just finished work... gridlock on the roads... naturally, I turn to the radio (BBC Radio 5) for solace. I hear news about Bangladesh, which excites me, but my excitement is followed by disappointment when I hear that a Bangladeshi film by Tarek Masud 'Matir Moina' has been banned by the Bangladeshi Government (Film Censure Board).

The radio commentary said that the film was being screened at the Cannes Film Festival in France to great acclaim. The report was complimentary to Bangladesh as a country and society; however, it questioned the wisdom and motive of the government. The report further added that the film portrayed Bangladesh in good

light.

It seems that the Bangladesh Government is very good at promoting a negative image of itself! Well done, once again!

I have just read your report on the issue, which highlights the arbitrary workings of the Censure Board. When are we going to have accountability and transparency in our government institutions? If we do not do something soon, spurious decisions like this will kill the credibility of this beloved country, which millions gave their lives for.

**Abdul Malik-Ahad**  
Oldham, United Kingdom

I refer to your editorial regarding banning of *Matir Moina*.

You've been kind to the Censor Board in saying that a malice deeper than cinematic ethics is at work there. The general public senses something more crude at work. It smells of pure vindictiveness. That Mr And Mrs Tareq Masud have been honoured by the past AL government, is not their fault, if it can be counted as such. Their film on the Liberation War, was not made at the request of AL. That AL decided to use it for their purpose, is no fault of Tareq or Catherine. This type of senseless reprisal was typical of the AL regime; and is most unexpected from the BNP government.

I have not seen the film but judging from your editorial, Tareq's film is a timely reminder of the urgent need to revise the curriculum of the madrassa system of education as is being done in Pakistan. For far too long this has been permitted to continue to harm the minds and souls of our youngster in the villages. Any survey will show that the madrassahs are churning out narrow minded bigoted young men deeply suspicious of science and modern civilisation, dived with a large doze of inferiority complex which does no good to the society to which he belongs or to himself. I would go so far as to say that the product of the madrassa system of education as it exists in our country, is contradictory to that envisaged by our

Prophet (psuh).

I would end by repeating you request to the film censor board to revise their ruling and permit this film to be viewed. There is much that ails our society and we do need to make a concerted effort to improve matters.

**A Rahman**  
Dhaka

It is a shame to learn that the authorities have banned, at least provisionally, the film "Matir Moina" directed by Mr. Tareq Masud and Ms. Catherine Masud. I do hope that the authorities will withdraw this ban and allow the people to see this film and judge for themselves the artistic and aesthetic qualities and the technical merits of the film.

A film is work of art, a powerful medium of expressing a viewpoint. To ban a film is to curb citizen's freedom of speech. I would remind the authorities that the Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." In banning a film or a book, the authorities are curtailing the rights of the citizens. It also reflects a silly form of foolishness. With the available technology some people in the county should soon be able to easily watch videos in the privacy of their home and/or obtain access to the film through various sites in the Internet as soon as some people put pirated version of the film the World Wide Web.

Of course the net effect of such banning will be depriving the makers of the film any scope to cover their costs and to discouraging creative, artistic and young from producing new and innovative films. With such acts, we will remain confined to watching the idiocy of third-rate Hindi films and CNN propaganda.

**Tanweer Akram**  
Alexandria, USA

I am appalled. The ban on *Matir Moina* and little protest against this horrifies me. I am shocked to see no editorial in *The Daily Star* protesting the ban. When FEER publishes the report I didn't want to spare time to read it, but when FEER was banned my curiosity rose high enough to make me read this on the web. I am sure more people read the report than it would have been without the ban.

Banning *Lajja*, *Naari*, FEER or *Matir Moina* can't make others blind. Those who ban think they have done a great job making it inaccessible to public. Alas! Everybody else does not join the chorus. More people copy the books or CDs, download from the web, surf the Internet, or borrow from friends to read or watch.

When *Lajja* was banned in early '90s, the first question came to my mind was 'why was the book banned'. Intense curiosity made me search the book. One fine afternoon I went to the TSC and found a guy who has a copy of the book. A group went to the Nilkhet and made several copies. Almost all my friends read the book after it was banned. The reason was the same-intense curiosity.

Similar thing happened to *Naari*. I was not able to manage my time to read the book. But, when I saw the news of banning my curiosity rose sky-high. I managed to borrow the book from some of my friend and managed enough time to read. I could not find any reason why the book should be banned.

Banning does work, but in the opposite way. It makes a shoddy book famous, a fiction in FEER credible.

**Zakaria S Khondkr**  
Raleigh, NC, USA