# The Daily Star

# TO THE EDITOR

DHAKA FRIDAY JUNE 14, 2002

the sentence, "I come to school

by...." One boy flashed his exercise

book under my nose. I looked at it,

pointed to him and announced.

solemnly, "He comes to school by

aeroplane!" Immediately the class

came alive! They were coming to

school by elephant, by boat, by

train, by tiger! I had to scrap the rest

of the lesson and they enthusiasti-

cally wrote and illustrated such

sayings in their books. Just to keep

the interest in prepositions rolling, I

hopped up and down the classroom,

illustrating the absurdity of the

irregular English expression 'on

The following day, however, they

sat there, muttering, "Syllabus!

Syllabus!" Presumably, they had

shared their pleasure with their

parents who had assumed that, if

the children were enjoying them-

selves, then 'education' could not be

happening! Actually, in the end of

term exam results, 23 of the 70

pupils in this form got between 70%

and 89%. There really can be a

connection between using your

imagination, having fun - and doing

There is also the startling fact that

there is practically no opportunity in

most schools to discuss current

events and world affairs and, in the

process, try to understand why

other people think, talk and behave

the way they do. Yet, is this not a

major aspect of being a citizen of the

world today? I am certainly grateful

for the opportunity to stand beside

an Israeli couple whose parents had

died in the Holocaust and whose

only child, a daughter, had been blown up, with 5 of her friends, in a

ieep on the Golan Heights. We have

no right to have opinions for, or

against, a cause, if we have not first

made an attempt to stand in the

shoes of all of those concerned. In

the same way, none has the right to

promote warfare, nuclear or other-

well in exams!

foot'. We all had a good time.

# Ban student politics, please

The death of BUET student Sabequnnar Sony shows how vulnerable our educational institutions have become throughout the years due to student politics.

Student politics acted as an asset for the country during 1952-1971 period but now it has become a burden for the country and business for many. Some political leaders supply arms and money to some power-hungry students to ensure their authority over the general students. But their arms culture has resulted only in death of many innocent students and Sony is the latest victim of it.

Every conscious people should come forward and condemn this violent student politics. And they must ban political activities inside all college and university campus and increase security in every educational institute. If the students become victim to politics, who will build the nation, certainly not the blood-thirsty student leaders and the power-hungry politicians.

## **Reaz Mohiuddin** Dhaka

# Sony in my mind

The Honourable PM must be the lucky one for she was born in Bangladesh. And the Honourable Home Minister must be the luckiest guy in this lone planet for he still has a job They know that their OWN is to blame. They know not, how to tame their OWN. And hence, in the end, for their own follies, they are to BLAME!

Thus when an angry MP thunders (Daily Star, June 11, 2002), "Quit power if you fail to perform......" he is not at odds with the norm.

But norm is not the name-of-thegame in this teeming town of millions. As if some alien border of chaotic entropy is insinuating in the depth of our very land and mind. Thus we see an impotent internal security force (Police) giving way to the excesses of a border security force (BDR).

Alas! We are falling apart in an incessant onslaught of vile on the perimeters of our social construct.

"Criminals always seek shelter, especially of the party in power, and unleash violence in the guise of party men". (Haris Chowdhury, Political Secretary to the PM. Daily Star, June 11, 2002). Whoa! What a discovery!

Alas! We seem to be our own invaders. Invaders of the border of our own conscience!

### Mohammad Zaman USA

# **Reconditioned cars** are not that bad

Many including me can already visualise the future -- our streets filled with cheap and worthless Indian vehicles. After reading Mr. Bastiat's letter (june12), I agreed with him to some extent, but not all.

Firstly I should like to tell him that BARVIDA stands for Bangladesh Recondition Vehicle Importers and Distributors Association, and there is no word like Export involved.



# "Come here, I want to shoot you"

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam makes the point that for BNP to survive the PM must rid her party of criminals and gangsters. But this begs the question, is she capable of doing that? Even if she wanted to rein in the criminals in her party can she? The commentary does not dwell upon the de facto seat of power that is Hawa Bhaban. Does Hawa Bhaban realise the ignominious blunder their advice to BNP is leading it to? I suspect that both AL and BNP are so rife with criminals and godfathers that their respective leaders will not be able to bring these elements under control even if they had the will to do so. Doubly difficult for BNP as there is a tug of war for the PM's ear between Hawa Bhaban and some senior (mature) cabinet ministers.

The newspapers have published several reports about an

Ali's suggestion

financial implications.

desh being a disaster-prone coun-

try, similar floods in future cannot be

ruled out. Hence, an alternate

arrangement would need to be

catered before implementing Mr.

2. Few thousand crores of Taka

would be needed to construct only a

runway for medium lift capable

aircraft. Land acquisition and cost of

necessary installations required to

operate an airfield would need few

more. Mr. Ali ignored the aspect of

total aviation load of Dhaka will be

shifted to Zia Int Airport. Is Zia

Civil and military jointly uses most

of our airfields in the country. Since

independence we have not been

able to provide a dedicated airfield

for our forces which is a necessity.

Closer of Tejgaon will adversely

affect our military aviation opera-

5. In the past, there were steps to

make Tejgaon runway a National

capable of handling such a load?

if you were to choose between a brand new Ford ikon and a Maruti Baleno to a recondition Toyota Corona (premio), which one would you choose? The decision is entirely in your hands.

Ali Masrur Dhaka

# Jamuna Group and liquor license

I see in your paper that the BNP Government is considering reviewing the liquor licence granted to Jamuna Group by Awami League. It is absurd that Finance Minister

Saifur Rahman knows nothing about the liquor licence granted to amuna Group. Secondly regardless of my ersonal opinions of Jamuna Group they, presumably through large

donations, got the government's permission to set up their breweries. Now just because there is a new government, there should not be a review on moral arounds. There may and should be a review of how Jamuna got their

Parade Square leaving aside Manik Mia Ave, which could be a suitable option for the purpose. Even counpermission in the first place but not tries like Russia. China. India etc. for reasons like being contradictory arrange their National Parades in to the ideals of the 4-party alliance. wide roads closing those for few

# Selling tiger claws on **Environment Dav!**

tions

impending cabinet reshuffle widely expected the dump the current Home Minister. The same reports also mention that one of the prospective candidates for the Home Ministry, M K Anwar will not take on the portfolio with a State Minister tagged along. In this case Lutfuzzaman Babu a nominee of Hawa Bhaban. So far the PM has been sphinx like in her response to the rumours of a cabinet reshuffle. But sphinx like reticence could also be a cover for helplessness.

#### Cervantes Dhaka

I am afraid your advice to the PM to read the press reports about the worst law and order situation in the country since her ascendancy to power with absolute majority in parliament is too little and too late for her to escape from total humiliation as an administrator.

Come on Mr. Editor whom are you advising to read press reports? Even if she reads your comments would she act accordingly to get rid of her worthless and corrupt ministers and party cadres? Never.

**AKKhan** On e-mail

Thanks to Mr. Mahfuz Anam who has become the voice of many in his timely commentary "The PM must rid her party of all criminals" (June 11).

The issues as surfaced by Mr. Anam are of grave concern and need to be addressed right now. But the PM's inertia makes the people believe that, either everything has gone beyond her control or that she is ridding her party not of criminals but of confidence of the people who with high hopes and expectations voted BNP with two-third majority in the Parliament.

If the criminals get immunity from their godfathers, then who gives immunity to these godfathers appearing as ministers, advi-

since 1972 and humbly ask him to re-consider his suggestion. Siddigui Dhaka

# Tax the NGOs!

The letter of Col Shariff Habibur Rahman, psc (Retd.) (June 6) is misleading for it contains wrong information

He says that the NGOs invest donor money mostly in income generating projects which give them 3. On closer of Tejgaon airfield, the guick return on capital, that their profit making investments are clear deviations from what NGOs are supposed to do, that they do not pay revenue to the state and that they charge interest at high rate.

It is a fact that foreign aid receipts have declined for quite sometime both in the public and nongovernment sectors. In view of this, some NGOs started setting up commercial enterprises to generate resource for their self-reliance and sustainability, and to support their basic programmes.

The writer apparently is not aware of the fact that NGOs are neither debarred by law from setting up commercial ventures nor are they given special tax exemption of any sort for such activities. All commercial/industrial undertakings of NGOs are required to pay duties, VAT and taxes including income taxes as per law of the land like everyone else. NGOs are paying income tax although the profit is utilised for their targeted programmes like poverty alleviation, education, health and other elated programmes. So the commercial activities of the NGOs are subjected to the income taxes just as the business organisations are. For instance, in the assessment year 2001-2002, BRAC has deposited Taka 3 crore 68 lakh 57,120 in government exchequer out of which VAT was Taka 1 crore 43 lakh 52,706 and direct tax of BRAC was Taka 1 crore 24 lakh 38.746. The NGOs are, therefore, subjected to the same taxes that the business organisations have to pay and it is, therefore, not understood as to why in view of the writer "commotion and discontent in the private business sector" should arise. The question of "deviation from what the NGOs are actually supposed to do" also does not arise as generating resource is necessary to implement and expand their basic programmes. In comparison to normal banking, the operational cost of microcredit is high. Since the loan amount is small as the loan is taken by the poor people, services are provided by the NGOs at their doorsteps, the weekly dues are collected from the homesteads of the borrowers, inputs are made available to them in their villages for their income generating activities, free training is provided to the borrowers for their skill development etc. The service charge, which has been referred to as 'interest' by the writer, is fixed taking all these factors into account. Donors do not grant any funds to the NGOs for any hours in a year. In contrast we have commercial venture and the writer's spoiled (7000 feet of 10,000 feet) presumption in this respect is totally operational runway and infrastrucwrong. Going for commercial entertures around to be used once (10 to prises by NGOs has become a 15 days) in a year. Do we have this normal practice in other countries as well. For instance, Oxfam owns and 6. Many 'high-rises' in the approach runs hundreds of shops of and take off path of Tejgaon runway readymade clothes in the UK and a are built violating Civil Aviation non-profit institution like the Harvard Safety Regulations. Who are those University has commercial ventures 7. The recent Cessna crash was a like hotels to generate resource. result of severe weather (investiga-It has been appreciated nationtion pending). It is learnt that the ally and internationally that BRAC, Cessna pilot failed to make landing the largest national NGO in Banglain time despite repeated warning desh, which was fully dependent on from control tower. In this regard, foreign donations when it was born, the Civil Aviation Safety Mechanism has steadily become self-reliant. In should be geared up. Closure of 1994, when BRAC's annual budget airfield for such incidents would be was Tk. 307 crore it was only 28 per an unbearable burden for the taxcent self-reliant. In 7 years time in 2001, its self-reliance reached 80 8. Finally, I would request Mr. Ali to per cent with an annual budget of take a look at the statistics of air Tk. 920 crore. crash/accidents vis-à-vis property In a workshop jointly organdestruction around Tejgaon airfield ised by Bangladesh Parliament sors, MPs, party bosses and party fund contributions? Due to the PM's silence on the law and order situation speculation sparks that either she has accepted this frustrating situation or she is fully aware of the criminal activities and also about the criminals but is not interested in bringing them to justice.

The PM must act now and do something about this grave situation. Otherwise, everybody knows that history repeats itself and BNP is sure to suffer for their misrule.

Please let the peace-loving civilians live peacefully or wait until Mr. Anam's gospel has its inverse effect.

Mustafiz Dhaka



# information.

But the underlying reason for this failure of imagination affects the whole of the sub-continent, includng Bangladesh. That is, the failure of so many of your schools to encourage the development of the imagination, disciplined by factual information, so that people are able to understand something of what it

wise, unless they have made an effort to imagine its consequences. It is not only Indians and Pakistanis but the people of every country who need to use their imaginations if they are to learn the truth of the words of Martin Luther King - " We must ready to play. At one stage, learn to live together like brothers lest when the game was slipping we die together like fools.

Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs) St Andrew's Mission, Haluaghat

# Harassment of a minor immigrant at ZIA

I am an immigrant and I live in New York. I applied for my minor daughter's visa, which was approved and she was granted immigrant "V-2" visa by the US Embassy in Dhaka. Subsequently she reserved a Biman seat and was scheduled to leave Dhaka on June 6th, Friday by a direct flight to USA. She was duly checked in by Biman ticket agents who are experienced about US Visa procedures, and issued a boarding pass. However, when she proceeded for boarding, she was stopped by two police officers, accusing her of carrying a fake visa. They confiscated her ticket and passport and cancelled her trip. I consider this to be a harassment and demand an action against these



Economic Reporters' Forum on

May 27 the Hon'ble Finance

Minister has said that next year's

Annual Development

Programme would have to focus

disbursement of the aid in pipeline

was uncertain because the set

He also commented that the

more on domestic resources.

It is 36 years that England won the World Cup in soccer while England was the host. The win against former West Germany was not out of controversy as referee denied the German equaliser. Everybody saw that. Even England Captain regretted to Beckenbauer, 'Sorry Franz'. In the current

their backvard. Wimbledon. It's good not mentioning the hockey. Even in Rugby, they can't come closer to Australia or New Zealand. Let's stop here. However, the English sports commentators perhaps forget all those while criticising other countries and their achievements. If you listen to the Euro-

The power of

imagination

One of the most horrifying aspects

of the tension between India and

Pakistan is the number of people, on

both sides, who are enthusiastic for

a war 'to sort things out'. When it is

pean, particularly the English commentary, you would believe me. Just listen to the commentary between a European and a non-European team. Nothing wrong in supporting own country/continent, but being a commentator, one has to be rational and reasonable. If you are only an active audience, you'll find how they down play the non-European spirit and it's achievements.

Do you want an example?

tors were playing with their

mandibles and as if they were

But, of course. These are people

who have had little or no access to

the noble efforts of many in the

developed world to use the media to

make quite sure that as many peo-

ple as possible do know what even

one nuclear explosion can do, to

people and to the unborn - and to the

environment and its produce - for

many years ahead. The facts are so

appalling that, in practice, it can take

quite a long process of education for

them to be fully grasped - and some

people never grasp the full horror -

their imaginations cannot 'take' the

World Cup 2002 and the English commentators the finals of any major competitions after Chris Evert Lloyd (she is history now), even in out of Argentina, they started murmuring 'Diego Maradonna scored a goal by hand in 1986, everybody saw that.' Not once, they mentioned it several times until the match was finished. The commentary, in

my view, implies that if Maradonna had not scored that goal, England would have won that match. I ask the commentators, with due respect, what about the second goal? Does it irritate you as Maradonna's second goal against England has been judged as the 'goal of the century'? Like you, I would like to mention, 'Everybody saw

that, did not you?' I have no grudge against English sports, but against the media. It is great pleasure to watch Owen and Beckham with their skill, improvisation

is like to be someone else in a real

situation, past or present - to stand

in someone else's shoes - and,

indeed, to want to make that mental

effort. Indeed, unless we all learn to

understand how things are, even

from our enemies' point of view, then

we run the risk of lobbing lethal

weapons over the wall - for 'our

security' which is, of course, pre-

use the imagination. It is a tool.

None of us are, by nature, interested

in anything outside our own little

world. One day, in an English class

with Year 7, I was teaching them the

use of the preposition 'by' for modes

of transport and asked them to end

But we have to be taught how to

cisely the way to lose it.

Journalists Association and

Mr. Bastiat may not be knowing that a vehicle is not only judged by it emissions. A car has to be equally safe, comfortable and pleasant to drive, not to mention that it should also be reliable. I have been staying in India for the last five years and have been the Automobile Secretary of our school, thus had to be always up-to-date and deal with the India made cars making continuous comparisons. The result of it was that these Indian cars only complied with Euro II standards, and the rest of it are all below standard (excepting four to five models of Mercedes and Honda).

Mr. Bastiat had also said that "if Indian cars are really so inferior then why would any one buy them?" It seems that Mr Bastiat have not noticed the two wheelers plving on our roads today. Eight out of ten are India made. The reason is very clear, because there is no other way You cannot expect reconditioned two wheelers, can you? Now that there are no reconditioned vehicles many people will go for cheap Indian cars since they cannot afford brand new Japanese or European vehicles and everybody wants to own a car.

Yes, it is indeed true that we will see more expensive cars plying on our roads. But we will also see plenty of below standard vehicles as well. Indian cars comply with Euro II levels because they are fitted with catallic converters. But without them they are even worse compared to the ten-year-old reconditioned vehicles, most of which have EFI (Electronic Fuel Injectors) system, making it more technologically advanced, more reliable and fuel efficient.

Till now I have never heard reconditioned vehicles breaking down within six months, but yes, have seen brand new Indian vehicles breaking down within months of its purchase. I agree with you that the reconditioned car importers have exceeded their level in cheating their customers. But, it is the customers who are also to be blamed. They can easily get the overall performance of the car's parts and engines checked from Rahimafroz, or Navana or even Power Craft and get a report if its worth buying or not.

If you were to choose between a brand new Maruti 800 and a reconditioned Toyota Starlet, which one would you choose? And then again



# On sale

Last week, ironically on what I think was the International Environment Day, I happened to visit the Sonargoan Pan Pacific Hotel to buy souvenirs of my visit to your country.

I was horrified to see, in one of the otherwise excellent gift shops, tiger's claws for sale. It was a modern, prosperous shop selling porcelain, pearls and gems. On the same day your Prime Minister was promoting the importance of conservation, a shop in your hotel was dealing a trade that contributes to the destruction of an endangered species. In fact a species, the Bengal Tiger, that epitomises all that is proud and good about your country.

I hope your readers will boycott this trafficking in endangered species and bring pressure to stamp out this grubby trade. When I protested to the shop owner, he said he would stop selling the claws, I suspect he did this simply to pacify me

You may wish to send a reporter to see if action has been taken.

luxury?

"Violators"?

payers.

**Chris Minett** On e-mail

Thor

# Dhaka "Cessna Crash"

In response to Mr. T Ali's letter "Cessna Crash" (June 10), I would like to make a few comments/suggestions. First of all I appreciate Mr. Ali's concern regarding safety of the high-rise buildings and adjoining areas around Tejgaon Airport. However, I would like to humbly say that his suggestion to close the Airport is not a pragmatic one and contrary to practical situation on ground because of the following. 1. During 1988 flood, Tejgoan run-

way was not inundated and only airfield around Dhaka that remained open for relief and rescue operations. Both domestic and friendly country's aircraft operated from this airfield to undertake relief and rescue operation which covered almost the entire country. Bangla-

hard to find any English success. Look at Cricket, they hosted four times the World Cup, but could not make it for a single time. Look at Tennis, it is very hard to find that any English player have moved to

sports arena,

it is very

conditions were impractical and pointed out to such people that such unmatchable with the country's a war could be nuclear, they do not seem to have the slightest idea what basic development needs. Hon'ble Minister's observation was this means.

not only in line with what the NGOs have been trying to do but it also echoed a popular proverb of Zimbabwe: "If your hand is in another man's pocket all the time, you have to keep on moving with that person to whatever direction he likes"

BRAC's gradual self-reliance allows it to move in the direction it chooses in the interest of the poor people of Bangladesh.

M Tajul Islam **Director Public Affairs** BRAC

# Shawon--to save a friend

We live in a society where Nawsheen's murderers roam around scot-free, news of launch capsize makes headline and poor Sony becomes victim to crossfire. And we forget about these news the next day. But when the smell of deterioration of moral values and absence of love can be smelt in every corner, a few students made all the difference. A small group of students came up with a view to save Shawon, a 2<sup>nd</sup>-year student of Physics department of Dhaka University suffering from leukaemia and thus established a unique example.

When the doctors in Calcutta recommended an operation in Singapore, which will cost around 40 lacs as his only chance of survival Shawon was heartbroken. Belonging to a middle-class family it was simply impossible for his parents to afford such a huge amount and thus he lost hope. But it was his friends who first came forward to enlighten the hope to live. It was their love and encouragement, which helped him to have the power to fight with cancer. All of them with their limited sources and means came forward and are fighting every moment to save their beloved friend. They are knocking every door possible, standing on roads in this scorching heat to collect money, arranging film shows-- all these to have Shawon back. Their effort and dedication proved that it's no longer a crisis of Shawon's family but a crisis of all of them which they are ready to fight together. But all these are not enough to arrange such an enormous amount. So far only eight lacs have been arranged from various sources of charity. But a huge amount is still needed.

Now the question is if Shawon's classmates with their limited means can come forward then why can't we stretch helping hands towards him to fulfil his dream, which he has nurtured for so long? Can't we who waste thousands of money in various unimportant sources, contribute a little bit in this corner which can

and the scoring and skimming Here it is: I was watching the ability. England played well recent Argentina-England and won the match against soccer match on Australia's Argentina. That's all. channel 9 with a backup BBC commentary. The commenta-Tarik Zaman

Orange, NSW 2800, Australia New York, USA

"Minus the man"

I read The Daily Star everyday to get update news. I was really surprised reading Mohammad Badrul Ahsan's article "Minus the man". Who is she? Is there really somebody like her or it was just your imagination? I am really interested to know more about the fact!

You wrote something that is very inner core of a girl, and difficult to express in words even for a girl! How did you read all these stuff!

Asma, On e-mail

save a valuable life. If we can save Amit can't we save Shawon? Shawon's friends don't know whether they will be able to arrange the money within the limited time, whether his footsteps will ever illumine the university campus but all they believe is-- "love can conquer all and with love we will conquer cancer".

Antara Ahmed Department of English, DU



Conquering cancer with love

I'd like to draw the attention of the appropriate authorities so that in future no one has to go through this kind of bitter experience, which my minor daughter went through.

Tamanna Yasmin

corrupt officers.