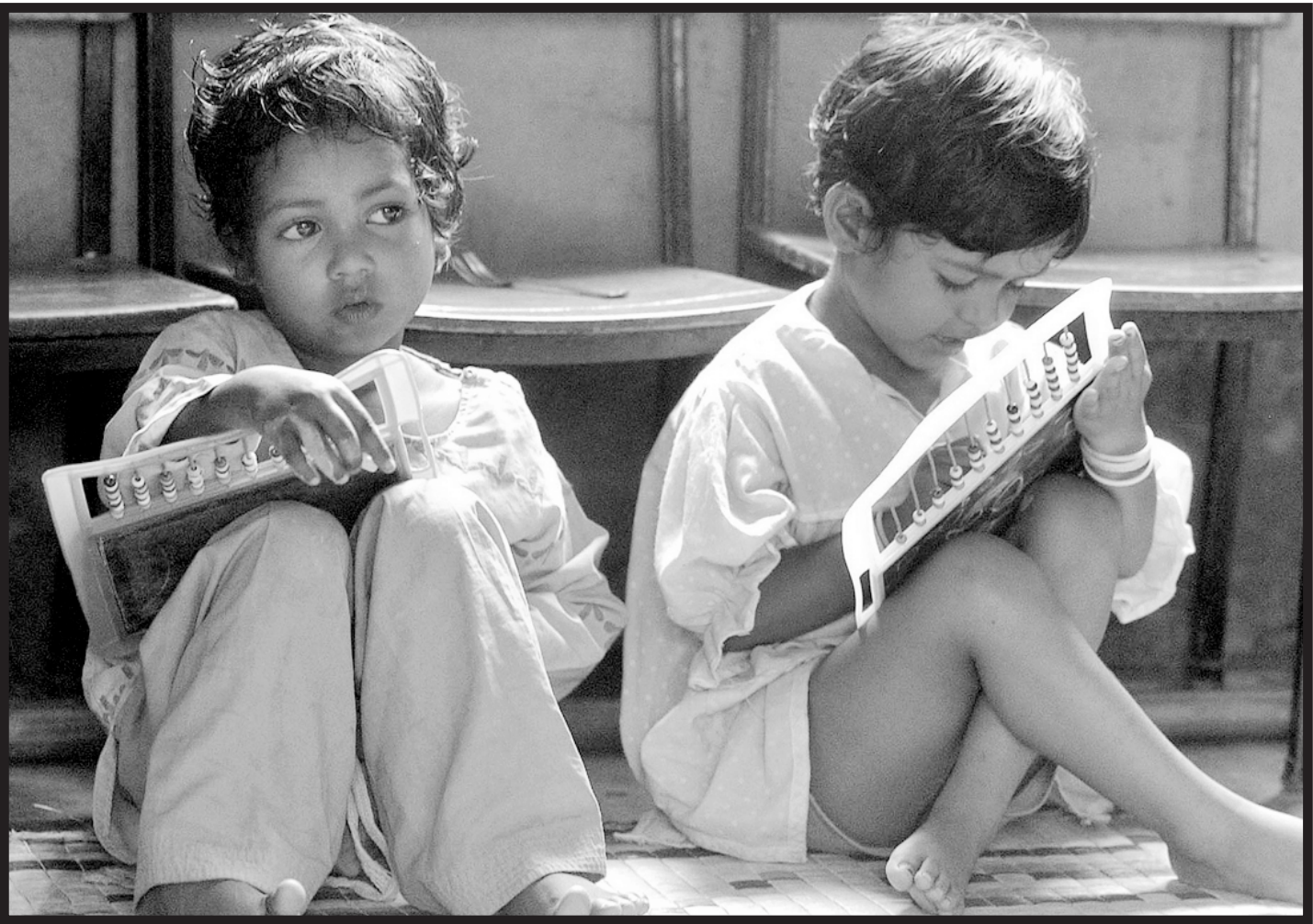


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Education for all

My name is Fahim and I am an eleven-year old boy. I study in class five. I am writing this letter about the educational facilities of children in our country. Many children are illiterate. I do not think that we can blame the poor parents for their children's illiteracy. Some people are really poor and cannot afford much, even when their children also work. They work as domestic servants, helpers in small motor garages, hawkers and so on. If we deeply think about these problems, we may find a solution.

It makes me sad that children do not get the chance of being educated. I hope that the problem will be solved very soon.

**Mohammed Fahim Hara**  
Class-5 BIAM Laboratory School Eskaton, Dhaka



Dr. Mahathir and OIC

I heartily and fully agree with Mr. RD Qureshi that OIC members should persuade Dr. Mahathir to take the position of the secretary general of the OIC. This will certainly rejuvenate the Muslim world and the outside world will start treating it with respect.

The OIC has totally failed to stand up to the expectations of the Muslim Ummah. Its activities are limited to formal, almost useless, meetings and there is no proof of the organisation having played any constructive role. The reason behind the failure of the OIC could be the lack of proper leadership and well defined objectives. In an International organisation like it, the secretary general plays the pivotal role. But the OIC never had a person as its secretary general having any international standing.

**MA Bashar, Dhaka**

Services of non-government teachers

The government has decided to retain services of non-government teachers for four subjects on contract-basis up to five years, after they attain 60 years of age. The subjects for which such extension has been made allowable are English, physics, chemistry and mathematics. The decision has been taken in view of a severe shortage of teachers.

The extension of the services of English teachers is quite justified and none should object if their services are extended even up to the age of 70, if the incumbents are otherwise fit to discharge their functions satisfactorily, but limiting the other subjects to three particular disciplines has got much to be critically analysed. Physics, chemistry and mathematics are not the only subjects taught in the non-government educational institutions. There are a good number of other subjects taught as compulsory and optional subjects in all the non-government institutions. Next to English, the positions of all other subjects are more or less same. Physically sound and academically successful teachers of all subjects deserve equal treatment

cable to only four subjects--English, physics, chemistry and mathematics. It should be mentioned here that physics, chemistry and maths are not compulsory subjects for all students of schools, colleges and madrassahs. As such, there is no strong ground to give special emphasis on these subjects at the diminution of other subjects. We cannot presume that graduates and masters are in abundant supply in the market to take up the missionary job of teaching as a profession. This necessitates the extension of services of all capable teachers, irrespective of subjects they teach. There is dearth of experienced and qualified teachers. It is, therefore, not justifiable to make any discrimination amongst the subjects taught in schools, colleges and madrassahs.

For kind consideration of the Ministry of Education, I would like to offer the following suggestions. (1) Extend the services of English teachers up to the age of 70, if they are physically fit and considered by the managing committee worthy of retention in view of their past satisfactory performance. They should be given salary subsidy up to the age of 70 years. (2) Allow extension up to 65 years to all other subject teachers without any discrimina-

our education boards and universities.

**M Sadeq**  
Chairman, Department of Management Tejgaon College, Dhaka

PM's visit to DU

Referring the above mentioned letter by Dewan G Ahmed published in the DS (Dec 26, 2003), I would like to express my views on it. Although I don't completely agree with Mr. Dewan's opinion, I think the title of that news report should not have been "DU students protest PM's visit." The title was, in my view, somewhat misleading. Certainly not the majority of DU students or a large portion of them protested the PM's visit. So it should not have been titled as a protest by the "DU students." The DS could describe it as a protest by a "section of DU students."

On the question of neutrality, I would like to share my experience here. I have been reading the DS since I was a ninth grade student--almost grew up with the DS. And the question of its neutrality has been raised quite a few times. I think the DS always tries to be neutral and publishes relevant and authentic news. Sometimes I feel that the DS supports the Awami League, while sometimes I feel that it supports the BNP.

that would have gone against Israel. It has not only been marked as a great failure of the US as the only superpower, but has also lowered its image among the Muslim countries.

Moreover, US commitment towards the roadmap is not unquestionable. Since it showed loyalty towards Israel unconditionally, as it had done earlier, the US has lost its neutrality.

However, Washington ironically claims itself to be a defender of freedom. Such double standard would add flavour to the rage against the US, especially in Muslim countries. It would also foil the efforts being made by the US to win the war against terrorism.

**Oli Md. Abdullah Chowdhury**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

Cancun debacle

The Cancun attempt to push the cause of the poor countries collapsed. Bangladesh performed there as the co-ordinator of the LDCs (Least Developed countries). But even as co-ordinator, Bangladesh failed to highlight its own goals. As the economist and intellectuals said, the Cancun mission of Bangladesh was a complete failure and it may have a negative impact in the future.

That said, I take the opportunity to thank the DS for publishing the special pages on the Cancun meet.

**Ashish Barua**  
Chadangarkhill, Chittagong

Rashid Latif's feat!

Rashid Latif is a man who could sacrifice everything for his team. He is a real team man. I think Pakistanis could declare him a national hero. Just think what might have happened if he was sporting enough not to pretend having taken that crucial catch!

On the other hand, what did the Bangladeshis do? Rafiq did not run Gul out when it was the easiest of things to do. His was a great gesture, but it was completely meaningless when the rivals were not appreciative of its spirit.

**Ashish**  
Chittagong

Four-year honours graduation

We are the first non-technical four-year honours graduates from an autonomous university in Bangladesh. When the four-year honours graduation courses were first introduced in our education system, our expectation was that we would get the equivalent value of the three-year honours course plus one-year masters degree. But, unfortunately, neither our university authorities nor the government of Bangladesh confirmed our claim. The general students initiated a strong movement in favour of our claim in July 2003 and, as a result, the Dhaka University authorities decided to accept our demand and announced that these non-technical four-year honours courses would be equivalent to previous three-year honours graduation plus one-year masters degree.

But in practice, we are not being treated by any organisation as master-degree holders, which is creating serious problems for all of us. The university authorities and the education ministry should look into the matter and remove the uncertainty looming large on our future.

**Kamruzzaman Masum, Shahidul Islam and Abdur Rahman,**  
MSS Economics, Bangabandhu Hall, Dhaka University

Selfish US!

Self-interest is the best interest for the US. The US has been criticised throughout the world for its selfish foreign policy.

Some examples of what the US

is doing. The US gives subsidy to its farmers but tells the LDCs through the IMF and the World Bank to withdraw their subsidies. The US advocates open market economy but it imposes the quota system on the LDCs. The US preaches human rights but has many prisoners in Guantanamo Island (Cuba) detained without trial.

Many more examples can be cited to prove the double standard of the US.

**Md. Zillur Rahaman**  
MSS Economics, 311, BB Hall, DU

Pay for hartals!

In 2003 as well as this year, the American Embassy in Dhaka has distributed desk calendars which are not only very handy but contain a wealth of advice in the form of a quotation a day from a distinguished personality in both Bangla and English. The quotations are a very admirable mixture of sane advice, humorous witticisms and sarcastic comments on the follies of man, especially politicians and bureaucrats.

In the light of Saturday's meaningless hartal which only magnifies the intellectual bankruptcy of the people who called it, I recalled the quotation of the great humorist, Will Rogers which appears on the 27 December 2003 page of the desk calendar: "I have a scheme for stopping war. It's this--no nation is allowed to enter a war till they have paid for the last one!" Will Rogers.

I wish there was some way to enforce this on the hartal calling parties. Pay for all the damage caused in the last hartal before calling a new one that is if they have any sense of moral responsibility.

**S Sikander Ahmed**  
Dhaka

Iran disaster

An earth quake shattered Bam, the historic Silk City of Iran a few days back. We all are shell-shocked at this gruesome disaster. Many nations across the world rushed to the aid of the victims. The US, a diplomatic foe of Iran, has come to help Iran. There has been a diplomatic dichotomy between the US and Iran since 1980. Last year, President Bush placed Iran on the "axis of evil" and Iran was under US pressure in many ways. But the earthquake in Bam has brought the US close to Iran.

They may set up diplomatic camaraderie by availing this opportunity as a crutch.

**Molla Mohammad Shaheen**  
Dept. of English  
Dhaka University

Business in a school

I am writing to complain about the business set up by a school in Dhanmondi. The school has specified that students wear school uniform made of certain fabric, available only in the school tailor shop. Otherwise, students wear school uniform which are not 'uniform', as per the school rules.

Not only does the fabric have to be of the same material, the uniform has to be tailored by the school tailor shop too! Needless to say that they charge too much for the fabric, too much for the tailoring, and the quality is poor. Who is to complain? This is Bangladesh, and the authorities can get away with anything. What other business tactics they will come up with next, we parents wonder!

**Masood ur Rahman**  
Mirpur, Dhaka

Our language

As usual, the International Mother Language Day will be observed in February, but we have not been able to implement our language in every sphere. We have come to a realisation, after

watching the live telecast of the SAARC Summit in Islamabad on January 4, 2004, that either our distinguished government leaders can practise reading the English lectures or give the lecture in Bangla. It is always better to render our speeches

in English flawlessly, or speak in Bangla and let somebody else translate later in English. We should do it, for the sake of our national interest and prestige. At the same time, I am requesting everyone not to take it otherwise.

**Nazrul Islam Rizvi**  
Mohanmadpur, Dhaka

Mahi's comments

This letter is regarding the article about Mahi Chowdhury commenting about Nazmul Huda's statement. This seems to be an interesting move, trying to go against a senior cabinet minister. Mahi's intention does not seem to be that clear, specially keeping in mind that his father is planning to launch a new party. A senior minister, on the other hand, jumped on the offence in quiet an amateurish manner, he could have been more political.

A rift in the BNP is what might be in Mahi's or his father's mind. Doesn't seem a bad idea to me. Keeping in mind the condition of

our country, a new leader or a new political party can make a difference.

**Shaddy, Dhaka**

Scientists abroad

Please refer to Eng. Nurul Islam's letter (Jan 8) on the above subject which points towards the anarchy prevailing in the government. It is common knowledge that the sectors or individuals who cannot exercise enough pressure are always deprived. There is a saying "you show me the man, I quote you the rule" and that is happening in Bangladesh. Education sector departments, health sector departments and other scientific and professional sector departments don't get even their due share in appointments and promotions. On the other hand, we see bulk promotions, sidetracking the rules, even when there are no vacancies or sanctioned posts. These surplus (OSD) officials from the secretariat always encroach upon the specialised or professional positions not meant for them as has been pointed out by Eng. Islam.

In Bangladesh, bureaucrats and politicians are experts in all fields, excepting perhaps their own. Under this climate, the government should not expect wholehearted contributions from

the deprived scientists and professionals. Why on earth should the Bangladeshi scientists and engineers working abroad return home to get discriminated against?

**Dr. M. Rahman**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205

Media bashing?

This refers to your editorial (Dec 29, 03) with particular reference to the speech of Justice Latifur Rahman, past chief of the caretaker government. He was quoted as saying, "I humbly request all newspapers to prepare reports based on facts". You tried to refute his observation. My reaction is 'what was wrong in his stating the facts'?

I am one of the devoted readers of The Daily Star. I also feel distressed when I see partisan opinion or biased writings in my favourite newspaper--I could cite examples.

My perception would be evident from only one example of a recent report on the visit of the prime minister to Dhaka University, which was headlined "DU students protest PM's visit." It was a protest by a section of DU students. So the report was only partially true!

**A F Rahman, Dhaka**

Iraq issue

Peter D Feaver, Professor of political science at Duke University in North Carolina, recently pointed out, "The plain truth is that the United Nations does old-fashioned peacekeeping rather well and neo-colonial nation-building fairly well, but only when those missions are not significantly challenged by local militarised groups. If the critics are right that the problem in Iraq is security, then the UN is probably not the vehicle for addressing it."

Rather than looking at the

UN-led multinational force to provide security, the US should look to Iraq's Shias, who constitute more than 60 per cent of the population. Iraq's Shia majority has shown admirable restraint and moderation even after the bombing of their holiest shrine at Najaf. Though most Shias believe the bombing, in which their most respected leader was killed, was the handiwork of Saddam's armed henchmen, there was no backlash against Sunni Arabs who make up only 16 per cent of the population.

The Americans should quickly hand over power to the interim government led by Dr. Ahmed Chalabi and restore order with the help of an Iraqi police force; Shia and Kurdish militias and coalition forces can provide logistic support. This will allow the American troops to stay in the background and avoid combat casualties. Only when the interim government restores order, should the UN join the reconstruction of Iraq.

**Mahmood Elahi**  
Ottawa, Canada



by the government regarding extension of service. In the public universities, like Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi, the extension of services has always been a matter of routine work. No teacher of any public university has been seen to retire until the age of 65 years. As regards government teachers, the authorities have discretion to extend services of any teacher of any subject on fulfilment of conditions as laid down in the service regulations.

Under the circumstances, it will be an injustice to other teachers if the extension is made appli-

cation. They should be allowed salary subsidy by the government up to the age of 65 years and the managing committee of an institution shall be given the discretion to retain them even after 65 years of age, if they are found physically sound and capable of rendering satisfactory service to the institutions. Their financial burden shall be borne by the institutions themselves. It should be noted here that the teachers who have graduated and mastered in a subject twenty years back are far better than those who have been recently produced by

I believe this happens due to my personal feelings for a particular party. After reading the news on the PM's visit to DU, I would like to say again that it was a justified report with a misleading heading.

**Enayet, Ontario, Canada**

US attitude towards Israel

The world has again seen a palpable US failure to play an impartial role in the Middle East. The US cast a veto against a resolution

Save the guest birds



With great merriment and enthusiasm, we welcome and enjoy the visit of thousands of birds from far away countries to Bangladesh every year during the winter.

Our innumerable marshlands attracts varieties of colourful guest birds to re-visit the places. Birds fly-past in the air, their chorus, swimming on the water-courses and chirping sounds are fascinating and enchanting to many bird lovers. It adds beauty to our nature and promotes our national and international tourism.

As a host country, we need to be hospitable to our guest birds, take care of their welfare and ensure their safety and security.

It is very unfortunate that a section of cruel and greedy people are shooting hundreds of birds, catching them by traps and selling them openly in the markets, roads and highways. As a result, the number of guest birds is decreasing fast.

We would request all concerned including our law enforcing agencies, union council chairmen, ward commissioners and the *Gram Sarkar* to bring to book the bird hunters, poachers and sellers to save our guest birds from annihilation.

**OH Kabir**  
6, Hare Street  
Wari, Dhaka-1203

