

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.



Babies on bridges

You can see small babies lying on the busy overbridges of Farmgate every day. Someone has to take the responsibility and initiative to do something about these babies on the bridges before they die out of cold, hunger and diseases. If you are an adult bachelor or childless couple earning enough to support the life of an infant, please support these infants. Banks, private organisations can help them and can gain popularity through advertisement. Standard Chartered Bank is already doing something for eye treatment by sponsoring operation theatre. EBL, Prime Bank, Bank Asia and so many other banks and organisations should also do something for the under-privileged. Rehabilitate the young, old and disabled beggars.

The organisations will gain popularity among the common people. The main thing is that these poverty-stricken people can survive with a little help and the poor children can hope for a better future.

Abbar
Farmgate, Dhaka

Won't somebody help us ?

Saddam standing for Democrats!

Forgive me for asking, but if Saddam was to contest the forthcoming election (no, not the Iraqi election, but the US presidential election!), who do you think will win: Bush or Saddam?

If you ask me, I would say Saddam will win by two-thirds majority - hey, this is America, anything can happen! Imagine there was a live TV debate between Bush and Saddam, and suddenly Saddam brings up all those weapon dealings and dirty contracts from the past. All those dollars paid into Bush's account by oil and defence companies. It may well be Bush who will be looking for bunkers in the Area 51! Think about it. Even better, if Saddam wins, we can have 'Comical Ali' as the White House spokesman.

I am looking forward to an exciting 2004 election between Saddam and Bush.

Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

Lack of sportsmanship

A Bangladesh Test squad has been named for the forthcoming Zimbabwe cricket series with batsman Habibul Bashar as the new skipper and Rajin Saleh as his deputy.

Notable omissions from the team include previous captain Khaled Mahmud who showed quite a lacklustre performance during the recent past.

But keeping aside other topics, one particular issue could be discussed -- the sudden and hectic decision of the retirement of Khaled Mahmud from international cricketing arena which he announced within an hour of the naming of the new eleven.

As per press reports, Khaled Mahmud mentioned about the reason of his retirement as some kind of psychological incompatibility in playing the game.

No doubt, Khaled had been a regular and dependable player, and later captain of the Bangladesh side but, as it would go with each and every cricketer at some point of his career, he had to be left out from the team, not to speak of captaincy only due to lack of physical and sometimes mental fitness. But that certainly did not mean that Khaled had to quit cricket completely and lead a life of celibacy away from the game. This has happened, as it seemed, only due to an outburst of the cricketer's true personality, one that lacked any sense or degree of true sportsmanship.

This kind of attitude in one's character seems to be quite shocking, something which is rare among players of other cricketing

nations. We find lots of senior and top cricketers of foreign sides making regular entry and exit from Test and one-day sides at the sole will of the selection committee. But none of the international players who have been left out or have been taken off from captaincy could be found quitting cricket out of anger or frustration.

AA
Uttara, Dhaka

English medium in cadet colleges

Recently, the government took the decision that English will be the medium of instruction for the cadet colleges. The decision has been taken, according to the press, to increase English language proficiency of the cadet college students. Cadet colleges have been running around for 40 years in Bangla medium and English has been given preference from the very beginning. The overall English standard in cadet

teaching staffs in cadet colleges can be one of the reasons for the fall of the standard. It is the fault of methodology of teaching, not the medium of instruction. Without going at the root of the problem, the government is only thinking of changing the medium. It is not a good idea. The students of cadet colleges are doing very well in their professional life. If the cadets can perform well by studying in Bangla medium, it is not clear why the medium of instruction has to be changed.

Cadet colleges were set up basically for producing qualified personnel in different fields by the military rulers of Pakistan. Field Marshal Ayub Khan took the first initiative to set up cadet colleges.

If cadet colleges are run in English medium, disparity and discrimination will be further widened and they will turn out to be a system for the elite class only. If there is any fault in English teaching in Bangla medium, the teaching method should be

ment schools must also introduce English medium. The government seems to be worried about the standard of English of cadet college students, but is the government thinking of overall English standard of our educational institutions? The overall English standard of cadet college students is far ahead of other government schools.

If the government has to increase the English proficiency level, government school students must be taken care of before others. The overall educational standards and English proficiency level are really frustrating in government schools. The government should give special attention to them. Cadet colleges do not need English medium.

Golam Kibria
Dhaka

National University

I fully endorse the views expressed by Mr Shafique (DS, 24th January, 2004). There seems to be a great inertia at the NU. If

privileged section is taking full toll of some quarters' ignorance. And the frequent use of horns is equally bad.

Now, who will come up in favour of the hapless pedestrians? Government bodies, ethics or the sufferers themselves?

Shamim, Uttara, Dhaka-1230

Lankan gesture

I read the news about the friendly behaviour of the Sri Lankan navy towards 14 Bangladeshi fishermen who lost their way due to a natural calamity in the Bay of Bengal.

Although they found them in Sri Lanka's territorial waters, they treated those fishermen as their own brothers. I am delighted to know how my countrymen were treated by the Sri Lankan people and I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Sri Lankan government as an ordinary citizen for this highly appreciable gesture towards Bangladeshi citizens. In my personal life, I will remember forever this friendly treatment and if I ever get a chance to serve any Sri Lankan in distress, I would be delighted to do my level best. Once again, please convey my sincere thanks and greetings to the Lankan navy, diplomats, and countrymen who were involved in the whole process of saving those 14 fishermen.

Muhammad Mizanur Rahaman
Researcher
Water Resources Laboratory
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Media flayed

We are really disappointed reading the above news item published in the DS on January 23, 2004. The BNP parliamentary party keeps in mind, memory and works out that politics is all about communicating and so is the media. And for every action there is an equal and opposite - and often negative - reaction. Politicians do not concentrate on the five Ws: who, what, where, when and why. Media concentrate on the five Cs: controversy, chaos, conflict, confusion and crisis. Another principle is, "Always anticipate the reaction". When politicians cum policy makers give their comments on a situation they would always have in the back of their minds what the reaction might be. Because it's not the statement that makes the news, it's the reaction to the statement that sets the ball moving.

Virtually any issue they deal with, that they might think is in the public good, is bound to have a negative reaction. Even if it's perfect, 30 percent of the people fundamentally oppose them.

Now a vital question may arise from the above: What do they (BNP parliamentary party) hope their legacy will be? The legacy they want to leave is very simple. They want Bangladesh to be a country with no debt; no more award such as most corrupt country for another term; a country having a sustainable, affordable and quality programmes in health, education and protection of the environment; safe streets, nothing fancy. To put it in a nutshell, they want to leave a country that is pretty well on autopilot - that not even the opposition could mess it up!

Gopal Sengupta/Shyamali Sengupta
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CANADA

"My architects, Kahn and Khan"

Sorry, but I do not get the point of the writer's view published in the DS (23/01/04, "My Architect, Kahn and Khan"). Please enlighten us: what is so 'dubious' about Luis Kahn in creating an architectural masterpiece for

Killing of journalists

A wave of torture and killing of journalists has been witnessed recently. Some days ago our prime minister gave the impression in a Dhaka university ceremony that her government would uphold freedom of speech at any costs. Now, nearly all leaders of the BNP, top to bottom, have launched an apparent campaign to bash journalists. When top leaders say that they do not believe in journalists any longer, then what will their followers do?

Strangely enough, even after the killing of Manik Saha, the government did not commit itself to saying anything more than the routine words that all killings and torture of journalists would be prosecuted. The government does not apparently like the journalists because it seems a fraction of the irregularities (the actual volume is immeasur-

able. Without organised corruption we couldn't have got the title 'champion of corruption' for the third time) are published in the prominent dailies. A few days ago, the government banned the Ahmadiyya books under pressure from religious zealots. By banning books of a religious sect, it

has violated their constitutional rights.

Police cannot ensure their own security, let alone that of the journalists.
Md. Masrur Hossain
Physics and Astronomy
University Of British Columbia, Vancouver



colleges is satisfactory. Then why is the government now thinking to change the medium of instruction from Bangla to English? Why is the English language proficiency decreasing among cadet college students? If the standard of English has really decreased then it means once the standard was good. Poor teaching method and degradation of standard of

changed and modernised, without changing the medium of instruction. We are not against learning of English. We want to learn English in our own mother tongue not in English medium. We will also learn English for communication only, not for any other reason.

If cadet colleges adopt English medium, then all the govern-

the universities want autonomy, it must be granted; but if they want unlimited freedom to play with the future of thousands of students, they must be made answerable to someone.

It is simply insensible that they cannot publish the results in six months.

MZ Islam
DOHS Baridhara
Dhaka-1206

Hapless pedestrians

I live in a model suburb in the northern part of Dhaka. I usually go out in my area for an evening walk or mild exercise. I find a few more people joining me from the neighbourhood and we enjoy our walk. On my way, the most nagging issue that I encounter is the headlight of the vehicles plying around. Every vehicle, irrespective of its size, and requirement never forgets to keep the dipper ON.

They care less about what happens to the people who either are on rickshaws or walking through? In the late seventies, when I came to this town, I learnt vehicles cannot put their headlight on in high-beam mode in the metropolis except in case of emergency. Also there was a regulation to paint the top half part of the headlight in black, nowadays it is 100% clear and the

Geisha--What does it mean?



It was fascinating to read 'Kyoto is like a Kimono' written by Mr. Kazi Khaled Ashraf published in The Daily Star of January 21, 2004. At one place he wrote: "The area is also known for the geishas. One travel book mentioned that if you are lucky, one just might have been sighted. One drizzly evening, as I was returning from dinner, I saw her, perfect in her lemon-yellow Kimono, her hair in a stylised setting, and her face lit by makeup. She came out of a restaurant, and the two men reverently holding an umbrella over her, hurried her onto a waiting taxicab.

She was gone. I did not know the term 'geisha'. Instantly I opened the Oxford and found it there defined thus: "A Japanese woman who is taught to entertain with conversation, dancing and singing." If so, then Geisha is most likely to be seen performing in the restaurants, clubs and cabarets. But Mr. Ashraf mentions her as a person of rare sight. This is not clear. Would Mr. Ashraf or anybody come up with what the word 'geisha' actually means?

M. Kabiruzzaman
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The Star 'robbed' my morning walk

In love heart grows more in absence. This is, however, no less valid in case of living continuously far away from home on duty with only a brief interlude. This may be a kind of 'homesickness'. Diplomats long to know in detail what is happening inside the country and more so in the immediate family. This syndrome has its panacea in diplomatic bag. It carries besides official communications, personal mails and bundle of newspapers and periodicals. The frequency of diplomatic pouch between Foreign Office and Missions varies according to importance of the Post, distance and air communication facilities.

The Head of Chancery opens the bag, distributes the official letters according to the addressees on the cover of the newspapers. There is demand for certain newspapers, but the least wanted is the newly published paper.

In late August 1991, the Counsellor in Stockholm Embassy laid his hand on a packet of newspapers for which there was no reader. The paper carried the mast of a Beirut daily; letters of the title were like those of a Bangkok English newspaper and landed in the Bangladesh Embassy in Sweden! His amazement was over after seeing the Dhaka dateline and the name of the editor of the newspaper. The bundle contained the maiden issue of the newspaper, which was dated, January 14, 1991 and a set of following issues for fifteen days. The style of news display, the get-up and commitment carried in the editorials were a mark of maturity and thorough professionalism. "What a refreshing departure from the traditional newspapers of Dhaka?" He exclaimed to himself!

The name of the editor of the newspaper evoked his memory of March 1979 in the Bangladesh Embassy in Bangkok. The Second Secretary thought of bringing out free of cost a supplement on the occasion of the National and Independence Day of Bangladesh. He went to see the supplement editor of the premier newspaper of Thailand, the Bangkok Post. He had no other effective tool to convince the editor except to introduce himself as a diplomat from the country of SM Ali. It had an electrifying jerk. The chemistry became perfect. He called a meeting of the sections-in-charge of advertisement and of the achieves.

A plan was worked out to raise the costs of the supplement through advertisement from the companies doing business with Bangladesh as well as from those of the paper's own contact points. The Bangladesh shelf in the archives was full of disaster news clips and photographs. The editor asked the Bangladesh diplomat to provide appropriate materials.

A multi-coloured supplement came out on 26 March at a cost of nearly one hundred thousand Baht that was roughly the same amount in Bangladesh currency without any cost to the exchequer. It was a service extended to the country of SM Ali who had served Bangkok Post as its Managing Editor. The staff simply remembered SM Ali, a magnificent man to serve with!

SM Ali reared up The Daily Star in his own image. The paper created its own readership. It also turned up to be 'bold and beautiful' over the years. A full-page letters to the editor column is an innovative approach to encourage differing opinions in the society to come to the fore. It has become a forum for public participation with a message for the authorities. Weekly Law and Human Rights page is as educative as it points out a finger to those authorities that are systematically violating basic rights of the citizenry of this society. Cry for justice is reflected in this page. At a critical time like this devoting a full page on Human rights appeared to be fully vindicated.

However, re-naming FOCUS on editorial side with POINT AND COUNTERPOINT seem to take away sharpness of the subject matters under this page that call for public scrutiny and to draw attention of the authorities. In any case, this page has not been devoted to debating issues. Perhaps Full-page letters to the Editor could be renamed as that, with a few exceptions. Lengthy articles most often become eye sore to the readers and are left half way. The Daily Star may consider publishing small articles of substance that would also provide space to accommodate more writers.

These are a few thoughts of an abiding reader and an occasional contributor to The Daily Star.
M Shafiqullah
Former ambassador, Dhaka

Bangladesh. Is it the misuse of taxpayers' money or his design did not reflect people's aspirations?

Ayub Khan is not a praise worthy man nobody is disputing that, but despite his own agenda, the fact that he decided to commission such a work in Bangladesh but not in Pakistan is a fact and let's not criticise him for that. I think we have the right to be emotional and be proud that such a landmark architectural piece was built in our own country, just as the Egyptians, Indians and Cambodians take pride in their Pyramid, Taj Mahal and Angkor Wat. All three were slave-built. None reflected then common people's aspirations. None were 'proper' use of taxpayer's money.

If we are concerned about misuse of public fund and cultural reflection, let's pick more relevant topics: Airport Road beautification project and the neon signboards beaming from the top of our airport, but not Kahn and Khan.

Shuvo Rahman, M Gulshan, Dhaka

Pedestrian corridor

On Road 103 in Gulshan-2, near where I live, DCC/DUTP-appointed contractors have been working for nearly a year to construct a pedestrian footpath along

one side of the road. After many months, without any visible progress in the works, the footpaths were finally completed about four weeks ago, though even then no proper clean-up was done to remove construction debris from the spot. It would, however, appear that the owners/operators of a children's recreational park, a commercial implant in the heart of Gulshan, have other designs for the footpath that borders on their property boundary on Road 103. For the last several days, contractors -presumably engaged by them -- have been busy at work to fill in the difference in height between the footpath and Road 103 with tamped down earth and construction debris.

Along the Gulshan Avenue, the park has already been permitted to convert what would otherwise have been a footpath into parking spaces for their visitors. There, pedestrians must now walk at some peril on heavily trafficked Gulshan Avenue because the footpath has been converted to a

free-of-charge parking lot. It does not take much imagination to foresee that the same is now in store for the more recently completed footpath along Road 103.

With so many traffic policemen standing by right on the corner of Gulshan Avenue and Road 103, it is amazing to see that

an encroachment on a public road and appropriation of a newly constructed public footpath for private-use vehicle parking is readily tolerated. "Would the concerned authorities please look into it?"

Petra Osinski
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Parking lot

A couple of days back on the TV and recently in the newspaper, I saw an exciting (!??) news.

It said that the prime minister had laid the foundation stone of the tallest building of the country in Motijheel. The news also said that this building will solve the parking problem of Motijheel, accommodating around 400-500 vehicles.

I was surprised at the news as a building of such a size will itself be needing a parking facility for 400-500 cars. Then how will it solve the parking crisis of Motijheel!!

And, if my memory serves right the location of the building was chosen earlier for a multi-storied car parking facility. How come all of a sudden it turns into a multi-storied commercial building, we wonder!!

Taufiq Zahidur Rahman
82/C North Dhanmondi
Dhaka

South Asian writers



Vikram Seth: Golden boy!

I take this opportunity to thank Yasmeen Murshed for her excellent column on books. Her column ('Post colonial fiction,' Saturday, 24/01/04), was a very good reading. In fact, the whole range of writers in English from South Asia, right from RK Narayan to Jhumpa Lahiri, have enriched the world of literature. I agree with Ms Murshed that Vikram Seth is one of the best, although

I have other favourites like Manohar Malgonkar's 'The Princes', Anita Desai's 'Baumgartner's Bombay', not to mention some fictions by the grand old master, R K Narayan and others. Rushdie's 'Haroon and the Sea of Stories' is good but certainly not one of top class.

My admiration for Vikram Seth has been growing since reading his

first fiction in rhyme, 'The Golden Gate' to which my attention was drawn after reading a review by Khuswant Singh who was almost lyrical in praising the first fiction by an Indian (Vikram by then had written his other book 'From Heaven Lake' a travelogue on Tibet) written in English.

AZM Abdul Ali
Uttara, Dhaka