

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.



PHOTO: AFP

Honourable PM

History books will remember you and your name will remain at the top of the list for this generation and the next, which is yet to come. It is because you are the first woman prime minister of our land.

The day you took oath as prime minister of Bangladesh, the whole nation looked at you

as if you were their ideal.

It is indeed true you achieved a remarkable progress in terms of industrial output, Bangladesh people will always give you that credit.

But the situation has changed, particularly when it comes to law and order.

What is taking place today is the result of failed politics. You cannot blame the people, nor can you hold the foreign governments responsible for not listening to your calls.

Saleh Ahmed
A private citizen of Bangladesh,
New York City USA

IELTS coaching

We are writing in response to Mr. Kabir's letter published in DS on May 20 on the above-mentioned subject. We do agree with his views that most of the IELTS coaching centres in Dhaka do not really know the strategies and techniques of IELTS preparation. But there are a few institutions that maintain the required standards.

So we should not rush towards any conclusion, rather the students should find out the coaching centres which have the required standards.

Ashiqur Rahman, Shabana Shubir and others
Dhaka

Global market

We need attention by our policy makers on this issue to stay competitive for survival in the global market and our media should focus on this. Recently, there was

news that Bangladesh Railway would spend millions of dollars for installing new signalling systems. But do you know that a consignment from Korea comes to Chittagong port in 20 days, whereas it takes more than 25 days to reach the ICD, Dhaka, from Chittagong port by railway? That results in unbearable loss of production and failure to honour commitment to the buyers at home and abroad.

This not only causes loss to an importing company but also to manufacturers and exporters of garments and textile products. Nowadays, buyers are interested in shorter time schedules not exceeding 45 days which could hardly be met if the port's and the railway's efficiency is not increased.

Business of Bangladesh will automatically move to other regions, if we fail to keep pace with global trends.

Sayedeh Rahman, One-mail
Bank loan for purchase of jewellery

If credit facilities for perishable household consumable items can be extended by banks, it is more feasible and justifiable to do the same for purchase of durable items like gold ornaments. All commercial banks may come forward with this type of loan scheme in the greater interest of the middle class / lower middle class buyers and the manufacturers and traders of jewelry. It may be stated that the bankers who may provide credit facility for purchase of jewelry items can also provide the same facility for purchase of gold bullion from the authorized dealers to the bona fide goldsmiths who possess valid license from the competent authorities. The gold license issued by the deputy commissioners of

Savings scheme for pensioners

I have read in DS of 01 June '04 about a Special Savings Scheme for retired government officials coming up in the next budget. It has taken me by surprise. What have the honest tax-paying citizens of the private sector, who have sincerely been paying taxes, done in the eye of the honorable finance minister to fall from his grace? I am confident that a person like Mr. Saifur Rahman, who has the courage to call a spade a spade and does not mince words, will not be unfair as to have a step-motherly attitude to one group of the retired fraternity.

After all, why discriminate between retirees who are all in the twilight zone anyway?

Retired company executive
Dhaka

About quota phasing-out

Our research into India as the world's 'Next Big Thing' slumped a little after we discovered that we really didn't like saffron... and the children refused to watch any more films from Bollywood. "Oh no," they screamed in unison when we suggested one. "They're just so dopy... with all that singing and dancing..." "And all that killing of people..." added their mother. But India was in the news recently. The Italian woman whom everyone thought was running for the nation's top office decided she didn't want it after all. Perhaps she remembered that the last woman who held the post - also named Gandhi - was assassinated in 1984.

Her son, Rajiv, was knocked off 10 years later. So, it appears that having the name 'Gandhi' in Indian politics is a ticket to both high office and obvious dangers. Sonia, the latest Gandhi, decided she would turn the job of prime minister over to a Sikh who is known to be the architect of India's economic reforms. This, along with oil at \$40 a barrel, brought the Bombay stock market its worst single day in history.

Towheed Hussain
Dhaka

respective districts and the trade licences issued by the city corporations in Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Khulna may be accepted as security for the loan in addition to the personal guarantee of any responsible figure like members of the parliament, Class-I government officers, bank officers, government and non-government college teachers and the renowned business-magnates having transactions with the banks. There are a large number of goldsmiths in Dhaka metropolis alone who possess valid licence of goldsmithing (manufacturing and repairing gold ornaments). It has been established from a field survey that they are in dire need of working capital for running their age old trade. A loan to the extent of Tk. 1 lakh can easily be sanctioned to a bona fide goldsmith on the security of his licence and personal guarantee. The terms of repayment of such loan may be fixed at 50 monthly installments of Tk 2,000. This will be a good, safe and sound investment for the banks on the one hand and shall create scope for income-generation to hundreds and thousands of goldsmiths, who are dependent on this profession for decades.

The commercial banks, particularly the private banks, may consider the issue in right earnest.

M Sadeq
Chairman, Department of Management,
Tejgaon College, Farmgate,
Dhaka.

The quota system in international trade will come to an end by 2005. It's a very sensitive issue for the LDCs. To them, it's like adding insult to injury, after the WTO's Cancun Summit. If quotas are removed so early, global textile and garment trade will be monopolised by a few countries such as China. Well, we need a good relationship with China, but not in this perspective. The consequence will be massive job disruption and business bankruptcies in dozens of countries, including Bangladesh, which are dependent upon textile and garment exports.

The rich countries never think about the pathetic condition of the LDCs, then why is the WTO needed?

Arif Rahman
Dept. of EEE
Selim hall, RUET

Undemocratic norms

Bangladesh is a democracy. But there are some provisions and amendments to the constitution that do not comply with the democratic norms. I would like to draw the attention of the lawmakers to the following points.

In the electoral process, one person can compete from five constituencies. A member of the parliament represents only one constituency and therefore when a person is elected from all five constituencies, s/he only holds one constituency and re-election is held in other four constituencies. It is incongruent with the notion of democracy because every member of the parliament has equal status as far as election is concerned and a member, who cannot represent all the five constituencies but is elected from those constituencies, can claim supremacy which is undemocratic and it only helps to form government. Nothing good for the nation is done and personal charisma prevails over gross collective interest. It is both unethical and undemocratic.

An astronomical amount of money is spent for election and therefore the re-election process should be avoided. Playing an 'election game' with the money of the poor people of this land is also unethical and undemocratic.

Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as a process of the people, by the people and for the people. This existing process tends to change the definition to something like: of the personal image, by the personal image and for the personal image. Moreover, the form of democracy in all the democratic countries is not alike. We

want a truly Bangladeshi democracy.

In our parliament, a legislator cannot vote against his party's decision over any issue even if it is detrimental to the welfare of the people of his constituency. This is by no way 'democracy', rather it is democratically chosen 'patriarchy'.

I hope the policy makers will ponder over these issues and give us, the people of Bangladesh, a truly ethical, welfare oriented democracy in near future.

Tawhid Shams Chowdhury

BRAC University

Sylhet bomb attack

It was a sad day for Bangladesh when someone hurled a bomb on the British High Commissioner. People of Bangladesh condemned this heinous act and demanded that the culprits responsible for this attack be punished.

But, unfortunately, immediately after the criminal act some national newspapers tried to put the blame on some Islamic parties without any solid proof and without any justifiable reason. Nowadays, it seems that if anything goes wrong anywhere in the world, then there must be some Islamic party or a Muslim responsible for it. I wonder why it is so.

Newspapers should play a significant role in uncovering the facts and bringing the real culprits to justice, and their duty is not to blame a Muslim or an Islamic party for any terrorist act without proper investigation.

Ehteshamul Haque
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Handing over of 'sovereignty'?

The coalition forces in Iraq are now looking forward to handing over 'sovereignty' to the representatives of Iraqi people. If you want to hand over something, first you have to own it. Does the coalition, or more accurately the occupation force, possess the Iraqi sovereignty? They occupied an independent country by ignoring the UN and the rest of the world on the false pretext of WMD. After scouring the whole country they found no trace of the smoking guns and now they are 'rewriting the Geneva Convention' in the Abu Ghraib prison and other undisclosed locations and trying desperately to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people.

Does these activities make them the owner of the Iraqi sovereignty? If some dacoits storm into your

house, beat the shit out of you and grab the key of the safe, does that make them the owner or the respectable elder of the family? A former spy has become one of the representatives of the Iraqi people without much ado. But the nominee of the president post has ignited a furor. 'We are nominating an Iraqi president, not an American president' -- this response of one of the 'American appointed' members explains the situation.

It is really interesting to follow the developments in Iraq and trying to fit it with the statement / wording of the western media or US spokespersons (attention philologists: these two are becoming synonymous).

How long will the world weekly watch this farce?

Saif, Dhaka

University teachers and politics

Teaching in government universities is the most prestigious profession and it is definitely one of the most noble. University teachers are role models, because they are most qualified persons, contributing effectively to stimulate students' intelligence. They have conjured the image of reverence not only for imparting knowledge but for giving the nation selfless guidance in times of need.

But it is regrettable that the dubious political influence has been spoiling the image of teachers as the allies of morality. Their ideals for social reforms and devel-

opment are being pushed to take a back seat on account of politicisation of the academic atmosphere.

We see that most of the teachers are divided into groups on political lines. Actually, there is nothing wrong to have political ideologies or political affiliations in the right perspective. But following a party actively or joining certain political stream for building individual future or fulfilling one's own dreams is not a good idea at all. That's why, it is now seen that when a party comes to power, its followers among teachers enjoy privileges, favouritism and preferential treatment denied to others.

So, in order to retain our faith in the noble profession, teachers should keep themselves away from politics and discrimination.

Rubab Abdullah
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Outrageous!

Why are we silently witnessing these barbaric and heinous crimes against humanity associated with so-called 'hartsals' without any possible ground, which are victimising the innocent people again and again (refer to burning buses)?

Why cannot the people, directly or indirectly responsible for the crimes, be brought to justice? Where are the human rights organisations? Who will speak for these hapless victims of violence?

Manik Lala, Dharmamandi

Marlene Dietrich



PHOTO: INTERNET

It was a delight to read that the legendary German-born Hollywood actress Marlene Dietrich's life will be made into a feature film, starring Gwyneth Paltrow (D.S. 29/5/004).

Marlene Dietrich was well-known for her husky voice, acting prowess and, above all, for her beautiful long legs.

Marlene's leggy rivals were Rita Hayworth (who married and later divorced Aly Khan) and Betty Grable Twentithet, the last century's actress-cum-super dancer. In those days, Betty's legs were insured for one million dollars by her famous studio!

Marlene Dietrich shot to fame by her performance in that unforgettable film "Blue Angel".

Besides popularity, Marlene Dietrich attained fame for refusing to go back to Nazi Germany, in spite of Adolf Hitler's persuasion.

Robert Kader
Mehdibagh, Chittagong

BUDGET



The government is going to announce the budget which is an important thing for the country's economic management. I would like to make some observations in this respect.

Defence spending should be decreased. Instead we should invest the money in development of our agricultural sector. We cannot invest money in the field from where we don't get any return. Production, production, and development! We should abstain from spending money in the sector which is unproductive. Successive governments have allowed too much spending on defence.

The government can arrange a referendum when people will decide whether they want an increase in the volume of the army or not. To my mind, we need a small army which can train up people to ward off any external

threat. If we invest money on agriculture and can encourage educated people to have farming as their profession, the nation will gain a lot. The developed nation is itself a soldier which can defeat any invader.

We must think about development of science and technology in our country which is lagging far behind the developed nations.

What about our teachers? They are not playing their due role in nation-building.

We can also invest money in tourism and film industry. I believe we have a lot of creative people who can make their mark in film-making.

Finally, I request the government not to think about today only but to be farsighted and make plans for the future of this nation.

Kazi Firoz
A Research Asst, Slovakia