

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.



## Bus arson

Last Friday when the people were least expecting it some arsonists engaged by certain political activists set fire to a fully packed double-decker bus resulting in death of ten innocent people and many others sustaining injury. It was the most cruel act to create terror for the hartal the next day. Can the perpetrators of the hartal programme deny their responsibility? What amazes me is that a bunch of people who call themselves intellectuals are silent and not falling over each other to pose for photo session in front of Shahid Minar. Is it because they cannot connect the arson to the forces that they abhor? These are food for thought.

**Iskander Meah**  
Dhaka

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The politicians should take it more seriously that on June 5, 2004 nine people were burnt alive in a bus and I am afraid that, this time too, killers will go unpunished. The reason behind my concern is that the killers seem very powerful, no matter whether they belong to the opposition or the ruling party.

Now it seems that we voted the politicians to power because they have money (no matter how they earned it) and they are good organisers. During the elections we, the laymen, vote a person who has the possibility to win without judging his/her honesty. In this way we cripple the honest politicians and empower the criminals.

If the politicians become honest, the police can also become honest. If I imagine my child as one of the victims of the bus incident, I feel like committing suicide. The reason behind my frustration is that we have completely failed to make our politicians realise that we are also humans. And we at least deserve a normal death!

**Dr. Mahboob Hossain**  
Niigata University of Pharmacy  
and Applied Life Sciences,  
Kamishinei-cho, Niigata, JAPAN

## Flawed democracy

Now is the time to define democracy as "Rule of the people, for the people, by the people". Now is the time to seek out

what a real democracy is. Now is the time to expose the real face of democracy.

I got severely shocked when I saw the arson attack inside a bus on TV. This was such a heinous incident that at that particular moment I was dumbfounded. Here, I will speak neither in favour of a political party nor against a political party. As a matter of fact, here I will speak against the ruling system and that is democracy. For 14 years, we have been watching the impact and influence of democracy on our motherland.

Where is the allegiance of general people? These atrocities committed due to political selfishness deserve nothing but a single amount of spit from me. For 14 years, we have tried to solve so many problems in our country with two main political parties practising democracy. But the result is a big zero.

How long should we wait for real democracy? Is anything really there called real democracy? I guess not.

**M. Mahbul Alam**  
Baridhara DOHS, Dhaka

## Munshiganj by-election

Munshiganj district, especially Bikrampur, has always been a stronghold of the BNP. The AL did not fare well in any national election there. But this time, Bikalpa Dhara, a newly formed political party, has had a landslide victory against the ruling party BNP-candidate in Munshigonj-10 by-election. Mahi B. Chowdhury the newly elected Bikalpa Dhara candidate, giving his reaction, said that his victory reflected peoples' anger against the BNP for its unjust treatment meted out to Dr. B. Chowdhury, a widely respected personality. In my opinion the observation of Mahi B. Chowdhury is only a partial one. There were other important contributory factors to his success. People are frantically looking for an alternative political entity which might help them come out of the clutches of the two major political parties, tried at least two terms in power. The parties both in power and in

ters?  
The by-election at Munshigonj is in effect a reflection of peoples' mind in general.

**Moni Khan**  
Dhania, Dhaka

## Degeneration

The husband of a "bottomless" country's diplomat goes to a "topless" night-club and allegedly spends \$130,000 (Costly night at topless club, DS, 5 June) in just one night! You must see the irony in this.

Do not worry much about it, a lot of bad things are happening in society these days. Every single educational institute in our country is being raped by the criminals of the BNP and the AL in the name of "student wing". Our people are being denied the right to have clean water, the right to a proper supply of electricity, the right to free press, the right to an independent judiciary system and the right to live their lives away from

what is?  
**Azad Miah**, Oldham, UK

## Of a poster

This is a response to the letter of Mr. AZM Abdul Ali published in June 4, 2004. I could not understand the question he asked the three letter writers in his letter but I did understand that he was critical about Hizb Ut Tahrir's call for the rejection of Bush and Blair (B & B) democracy.

I think Mr. Abdul Ali has failed to understand the difference between B&B democracy and the democracy we dream of. Never ever think about the opinion of other people, just do WHATEVER YOU LIKE to do -- this is the definition of B&B democracy. It is sad to see that many people don't even notice that democracy is dead now. Actually, it died many times that we cannot possibly count. Democracy died when the US did not care for a UN resolution to attack Iraq and the UK supported the US-led war

of the Security Council dishonoured the opinion of the majority by showing their muscle power through exercising VETO. The Security Council was thought to be the last resort for the peace loving people to resolve conflicts but thanks to Mr. Bush and Blair and their allies, their so called democracy turned the Security Council into a slaughter house of democracy. So why should we not dump B&B democracy?

Forget B&B democracy, for many years the US and the UK is practising democracy in domestic politics but not necessarily in foreign politics. This trend/tradition or hypocrisy, whatever we call it, is turning this world into a more divided, dangerous and inhabitable place to live in than ever.

Lastly, I want to say that throughout the history of mankind many theories, thoughts and ideologies have evolved and existed as long as those served our necessities. Many of those theories

**Md. Mamunur Rashid**  
Utara, Dhaka

## Role of media

I have a question. Does mass media follow or count source credibility? I'm a student of mass communication and journalism. As far as I know source credibility is a key factor for news.

As we all know the politicians of our country do not show any sense of responsibility towards society. They have come to power only for their own sake. Their children study abroad. It's an old story.

My question is about the responsibility of the media. I'm a student of mass communication. From the first year we know that mass media play the role of a teacher to society. I don't want or expect that role from our media. But at least I can hope that it would accurately project the political situation in the country and the politicians responsible for it.

**Mubashar Hasan**  
Dept. of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka

**Mrinal, Banglabazar, Dhaka**

## Politics in Pakistan

President Parvez Musharraf's rhetoric on "enlightened moderation" (vide The Daily Star dated 02-6-04) can be regarded as a good piece of literature depicting the past glory of the Muslims, but it is destined to fall flat, for his own administration in Pakistan was born in utter immorality where he routed out the elected government of Nawaz Sharif through violent and unconstitutional means. Obviously, no one in the world would term such an act of usurpation of power as moderation, let alone an enlightened one.

It is almost useless to urge the Muslims all over the world to be moderate, tolerant, democratic, unless one takes enough care to materialise those sublime concepts in his own country. The West or the saner quarters of the world intelligentsia are not expected to repose their trust on words or on history, but on the deeds as are

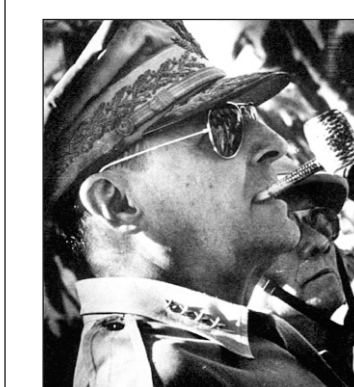
available now. Probably, no one would dispute when President Musharraf says: "We have had a glorious past. Islam exploded on the world scene as a flag bearer of a just, lawful, tolerant and value-oriented society.....we exemplified tolerance within ourselves and people of other faiths." However, in today's world, the plain truth is that out of 52 members of the Organisation of the Muslim Conferences (OIC), there is hardly any single country which can boast of a truly tolerant and democratic set-up. The Muslim countries in general are ruled either by the Kings/Ameers, or by the military and civil autocrats, or by a system of deceptive democracy where the norms of democracy are grotesquely abused in various crude and cryptic ways just to hoodwink the innocent peoples.

If President Musharraf is really sincere about his "enlightened moderation", he should first practise it in his own home, possibly by arranging an electoral contest with such personalities as Nawaz Sharif

and Benazir Bhutto and get the peoples' verdict through a free and fair election to be conducted by an independent election commission. For a perfect example of democratic and tolerant polity, one need not even look to the West, as in the East we already have the largest democracy in India where the Prime Minister is not the head of the political party in power, where the high offices of President, Speaker, Chief Election Commissioner and so on are filled up with distinguished personalities on the basis of consensus with the opposition parties, and above all, where it's not the general in uniform or the political party in power, but the elected parliament is supreme to decide who or which party will govern the country and for how long.

**Hafejul Alam**  
A management specialist  
One-mail

## General McArthur and "Medhabi"



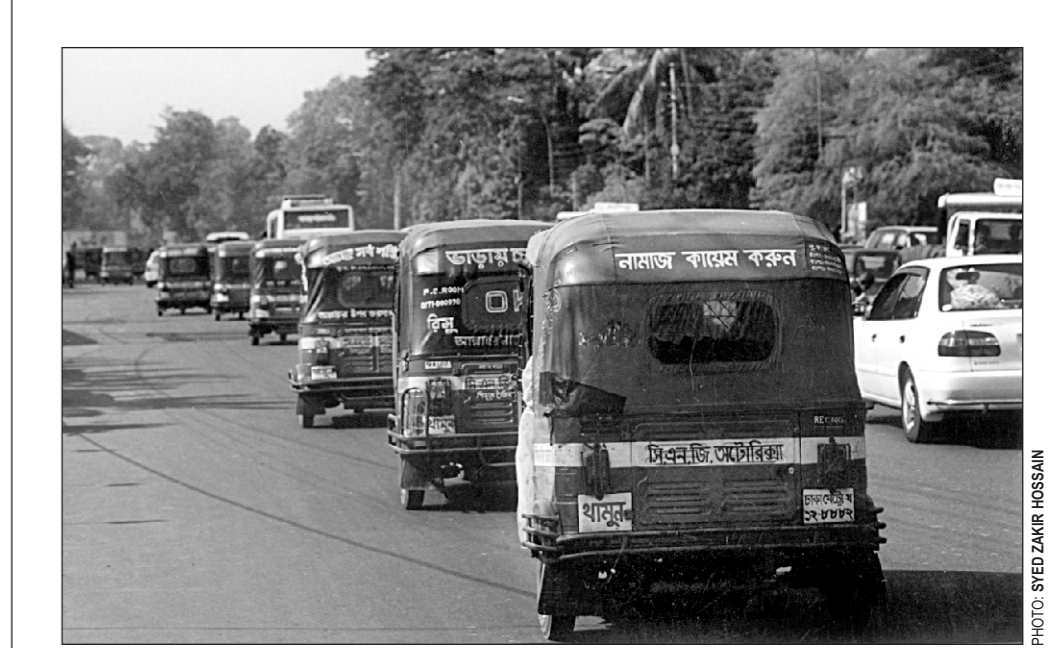
On May 30 afternoon, I was watching the TV quiz programme "Medhabi" on NTV. One of the questions set was "Who was the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces during the Second World War?" The answer for this question was shown to be "General McArthur". As far as I know General Dwight D. Eisenhower was the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Western Europe from December 1943 until the end of the war in Europe in May 1945. On the other hand, General Douglas McArthur was the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces in the South-West Pacific from March 1942 until the end of the war in the Pacific in September 1945. General McArthur was not even the commander-in-chief of the Pacific Front of the war against Japan, let alone being supreme commander of all Allied Forces. In the Pacific Front, McArthur shared responsibility with Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who was the Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Fleet, having control over all Allied forces in the Central Pacific area; and Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, who was the Supreme Allied Commander, Southeast Asia, having control over the India-Burma Front. Neither McArthur nor Eisenhower had full authority over all Allied Forces. However, Eisenhower was in command of a force that defeated Hitler's forces in Western Europe and he was not sharing authority on the European battlefield with anyone. On the other hand,

McArthur was in partial command of the Pacific Theatre of War. From this point of view, we can consider Eisenhower as being the Supreme Commander of a Major Theatre of War. At least, in Europe and in the US, Eisenhower is considered as the Supreme Allied Commander. General McArthur was, interestingly, the supreme commander during the initial stages of the Korean War, (Commander-in-Chief of the Unified Command, United Nations Command, 1950-51). On "Medhabi" that day, one of the participants did name Eisenhower as the answer to this question. He was not given any points for that. I wonder whether the organisers of "Medhabi" really did their homework on that particular question. The programme is no doubt appreciable, but a little bit more effort could have made it almost perfect.

**Ahmed Sharif**, New Eskaton Road, Dhaka

## Can academia fulfil our aspirations?

Dr. Saad Andaleeb's article on above subject (DS: 30/05/04) rings alarm bell on our national conscience. Mr. Z. Islam in the letters column (DS: 4/06/04) emphasised on research and publications by teachers. Just to check the validity of Dr. Andaleeb's and Mr. Islam's arguments, I tried to compare the information available in the BUET's Annual Report 2000-2001 to which I had an accidental access, and was dumb founded to see the crude reality. According to the report there were 457 teachers in 2000-2001 who together published only 249 (pseudo research?) papers during that period. Not even a full publication on an average per teacher over a year? Report shows that a few teachers in fact conduct researches and publish which in turn improves the overall statistics. If the non-UG-degree awarding departments like Physics, Chemistry and mathematics are left out from this statistics than the picture is simply pathetic. Civil Engineering department, the largest one with most PhDs (signifying more scope of research in the area) published least, speaks of the priorities of our teachers. I am sure other universities are not any better. So far as I know university teachers are the best paid in the country. Is this what they pay in return for the tax payers' money? In the words of Mr. Islam, "one or two reviewed research publications per year by a teacher is not a big asking from a person whose job is to study and teach" thereby improving his own quality to contribute and fulfil bare minimum of national aspiration from academia.



## CNG passengers

CNGs were welcomed when they first started to ply the city roads for some particular reasons. The first and major reason was that CNGs are environment friendly; and second reason was installation of metres. It obviously stopped passengers and drivers from bargaining over fairs.

Speaking honestly, everything seems good with the CNG but a proverb goes "There is always cloud under the sun". And we, the commoners have already experienced the cloud.

Now-a-days passengers are facing the problem of being refused by the CNG drivers, especially in the morning, during the office hours. However, the drivers take the chance and demand an extra five or ten taka. As many passengers do not have an alternative, they are compelled to agree because they have to reach office in time.

How long will this trend continue?

## Same sex marriage a religion independent approach

In a number of letters appearing in these columns on the above issue, those in favour of it have criticised the opponents of bringing in religion. Let us have a religion independent view then.

Reproduction and survival of progeny are the two fundamental issues of concern to any life form. Biological evolution of life has found sexual reproduction much more successful than asexual reproduction because the former can bring in many variations in genetic characteristics within a species. Therefore the fundamental and the only reason behind this division into male and female sexes is reproduction, and certain pleasure centres in the brain have been involved in the animal world in order to ensure continuation of this activity. I think this single reason negates the prime argument raised by the protago-

nists that sexual relationship should not be related to reproduction only.

In addition to physical survival, mankind needs to preserve and develop the clearly distinctive capacities of its brain, its emotional aspects and psyche, which are not important in animals. Through thousands of years of experimentation, in which different groups tried out different methods, mankind has found out that a clearly identified family unit consisting of a father and a mother in a society gives the best environment for proper development both physical and mental of their progeny. Thus the institution of marriage was born, and human beings restrained themselves from promiscuous behaviour, a basic instinct prevalent in both animals and humans, as it can harm the family unit.

Therefore sexual pleasure is a secondary issue compared to the primary issues of reproduction and a humane survival of our progeny. The human brain is very creative. It can get pleasure from almost anything animate or inanimate or even in its fantasy, but that cannot be an argument for any behaviour that has the potential to harm the institution of marriage which it has evolved over millenniums. If the Universe is a creation, it is natural that the Creator's guidance would fit the human findings in the long term.

**KS Rabbani**  
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I am writing in response to the letter by Mr. Kokoski published on June 7.

Mr. Kokoski took my state-



ment "the fundamental unit of our society is subject to change and evolution" out of context. That statement was made in

light of the fact that nuclear families have replaced the traditional extended families in Bangladesh clearly indicating

that the definition of family is not necessarily unalterable.

Same-sex marriages are currently legal in the Netherlands, Belgium, three provinces in Canada (Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec) and one state in the United States (Massachusetts). It is extremely difficult to believe that same-sex marriages have been legalised in all these places simply because of "the desire of some same-sex partners to change the definition of marriage!" It is sad that Mr. Kokoski failed to acknowledge that millions of people across the world support same-sex marriage independent of their sexual orientation. I would also like to point out that the supporters of same-sex marriage include people from different religions as well. In British Columbia, for example, the Anglican Church decided to start blessing same-sex mar-

riages last year. People from all spheres of life support same-sex marriage because they believe all human beings are equal. The fact that gay rights are human rights has very little to do with "expression of free love" as purported by Mr. Kokoski.

I find the statement "the family based on marriage is the best way to bring up happy, productive children" questionable. I wonder how many people will agree that a child with two abusive parents is better off than a child with one loving parent. World Vision estimates that approximately twelve million children in Africa have already lost one or both parents to AIDS. In many cases, these children are being taken care of by their grandparents and/or elder siblings. Mr. Kokoski would let us believe that none of these children will grow up to be very happy and

productive whereas I would argue that each of these children is capable of reaching his/her full potential given they receive the love and support they need. Such love and support can come from a variety of sources such as relatives or foster family. How a child is being brought up is more important than who is in charge of bringing up the child. It seems Mr. Kokoski has a very rigid mindset when it comes to the definition of family. Nevertheless, I respect his opinion as he is free to believe what constitutes an ideal family. However, Mr. Kokoski is not free to impose his beliefs in this regard on others. No amount of zealous rhetoric can justify why different types of families should not co-exist in society.

**Omar Sharif**  
Vancouver, BC, Canada