

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: STAR

## Microcredit and poverty alleviation

The innovative, widely publicized microcredit system for poverty alleviation has not been universally acclaimed as a wonder. According to the supporters of microcredit system, it is a form of banking for profit earning. In terms of percentage of credit recovery, this is a very successful modern banking exercise. Very few of even those who do not like the NGO culture, disagree on this point. But the actual help reaching the needy small creditors also worries general people and even governments. Added to this is the worry that monetary aid through microcredit does not benefit the poorest of the poor. So the actual extent of poverty alleviation cannot be significant.

Recent research on microcredit and its so called 'success' carried out recently in Bangladesh by qualified experts has revealed the fact that the best beneficiaries of microcredit are not the real have-nots but those living above the poverty line (vide interview conducted and broadcast by BBC about a month ago).

Even Amartya Sen, the Noble Laureate economist, openly admits that the index of success, in conventional economic terms, of microcredit does not reveal the actual micro-economic picture. Therefore we should not have complacency about the success of the microcredit system.

According to the Bangladesh researchers, providing small loans does not solve the problems of the real poor. Instead of cash credit, they prefer to have new jobs.

Application of "technology for human welfare" would provide the most effective means of helping the poorest of the poor who form the bulk of the disadvantaged people in the third world.

AKAI-Quaderi, Dhaka

## Art of cooking

Bangladeshis are proud of the achievement of master chef Tommy Mia, who has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Arts, London, under the patronage of HM The Queen, for his masterly display of the art of cooking. Art is not confined to the pen and the brush, but the doi, Shisk, Khurchan, and the Karai have their humble contribution from the hot backroom kitchens.

Earlier press reports said that curry and kabab have become national food of the Britons, thanks to the hundreds of Bangladeshi (and Indian and Pakistani) restaurants which sprang up in the UK during the past half a century.

There is nothing like Mughal and Bengali food for a change, specially for the foreigners. Food in the hot tropical region is spicy (for scientific reasons), compared to the tepid palate of the inhabitants in the Temperate Zone. In French, they will advise you (the lhaal-Marich connoisseurs) to wait for five years before appreciating the natural taste of French cuisine, sans spices.

Good that now Bangladesh is on the world food map. Salivated cheers for our Tommy Mia!

A Mawaz  
Dhaka

## Zia's place of birth

The life sketch of late President Ziaur Rahman published in the special supplement of DS on his

death anniversary (May 30) drew my attention as the same made no mention of his birthplace. The sketch begins, Ziaur Rahman nickname Kamol, was born on 19 Jan, 1936. It follows his grand parents were those from the famous tea family of Jalpaiguri. Permanent residence was at the village Bagbari in Bogra. Zia's father, a chemist, resided in Kolkata before 1947 and after partition in Karachi with his wife. Ziaur Rahman started his formal education at Hare School in Kolkata. During the Second World War he studied for two years at a rural school in Bogra.

If you carefully read the above you will be curious to ask questions like these, where, since when and finally when at the end of some sentences. You will definitely want to know when the parents of Zia migrated to Bogra to reside there permanently, before partition (1947) or after? Had he had his formal education at Kolkata as a resident of Bogra or Jalpaiguri? Please note that Zia was born in 1936. Doesn't this call his place of birth as Bogra in question? I would not have insisted on the question of his birthplace had it not been written as Bogra (Bagbari) in the compulsory reading of students at primary and secondary levels. And that too is couched in florid descriptions. Then why a sort of quibbling was resorted to in the life sketch sponsored/authored by the government itself in respect of his birthplace? Ziaur Rahman was one of our great freedom fighters and

presidents. So he occupies a very important place in the annals of our history, which must include his antecedents with complete fidelity, and the young learners must not be baffled with this.

I remember having read a letter in this column about two years back where the writer claimed that Zia was born in a village in Jalpaiguri (the name of the village too was quoted) and he had invited others to refute his claim. I did not read any letter nullifying his claim, even from any of his brothers (if the letter did not escape their attention). It makes no difference where one was born and where one achieved greatness. So skipping Bogra as his birthplace is starkly elusive.

Ahmed Niaz  
Dhaka

## The hall incident

I was talking to one of my Shamsunnahar Hall friends on the incident of July 23, 2002. She was trembling terribly. "I was on the brink of death. Sometimes I feel it was even worse than death. I had to hold my tongue for a long time... so that no sound of screaming could come out." It is known to all by now that the brightest girl who stood first in our honors exams (Dept of English) was among the arrested girls and was tortured by the police in custody. The government formed a judicial inquiry committee. The respectable judge identified the persons and through the submission of a report

our government somehow escaped its responsibility of ensuring security of university students.

The authorities concerned should look into the matter in the interest of justice and fair play.

Sheikh Sabina Alam  
Deaf and Dumb  
University of Dhaka

## Bomb blast at shrine

Bangladesh is not a plutocratic country. In our small country, there are many political parties. For our antagonistic politics, we are always falling behind at every step. Now-a-days, many abhorrent episodes are coming about in broad daylight in this country. A few days ago, a bomb was blasted at the shrine of Sylhet which killed three persons and more than 70 people were seriously injured, including the British High Commissioner. Fortunately, he narrowly escaped what could have been a great tragedy.

This inhuman incursion was quietly aimed at the British High Commissioner, even though he is the son of our soil. For this barbaric attack Bangladesh received calumny from the international community which also stirred the whole nation. These brutal invasions are destroying the image of our beloved country. In spite of this, our demagogues are always half-hearted in ferreting out the real lawbreakers. As a result, the culprits are never caught and they continue to commit one misdeed after another. Earlier, a similar incident took place at this holy shrine but the law enforcers failed to dig out the truth. Now it seems that they have been given political shelter. So the government should do its homework on the issue. Failure in this regard will raise many unpleasant questions.

I would like to urge the government to leave no stone unturned and to arrest and give exemplary punishment to the men who perpetrated this heinous crime.

Md Shamim Khan  
204, Sail-Sabil Cottage, CU

## Poor-TV commercials

As an irritated viewer of local TV commercials, I would like to point out a few unprofessional practices (lack of basic principles and knowledge) which have apparently escaped the notice of the senior managers on both sides (the clients and the advertising agencies). These advertisements are meant for the viewers, hence we have the right to comment.

- Pretty faces and body movements do not sell a product. Give information about the product. How is it different from others? Why should we buy it? This difference is basic or marginal? Updates are out; herbals are in.

- Do not use adjectives (self-praise); let the consumers judge.

- Display the brand name of the product in one corner of the screen all the time. Frequently the name in print is shown long after the verbal publicity. Too many chara (jingles). The spoken name brand cannot be deciphered most of the time due to ambient noise level (in the drawing room) and differences in pronunciation. Show the packet and the name, so that the buyer can recognize it in the shop! In some commercials the name brand is shown for less than a second-no time to read! Where these copy writers were trained? I remember, long ago, one American advertisement (in a magazine) mentioned in small type face that the model (beautiful young lady) shown was not for sale!

- Most of the products have no seals for protection against imitation and fake products. The MRP is missing in many products. The country of origin is suppressed frequently; and local assembly or packing is not directly mentioned (for example, reconditioned

## CNG vehicles

Communication is the prerequisite for even development of any country. For smooth and unhindered low cost movement of goods and services across the country, the government should put its utmost effort to keep the prices of transportation, including fuel, to the lowest level. Many welfare-oriented governments have offered subsidies in this sector for the greater benefit of the country's balanced development. Communication is the key to progress in this age of highway communication.

After the withdrawal of one-stroke engine vehicles, compressed natural gas (CNG) run three-wheelers were introduced in the city. The Ministry of Communications tried to create the impression that these vehicles were pollution free and at the same time would provide low cost transportation.

But surprisingly, it has been gathered that these three-wheelers are now sold at an unbelievable price of Tk 1.50 to Tk 2 lakh, which is more than the actual market price.

Now who will come to the rescue of the poor public of this wretched country? How many fronts the middle class, who is on the verge of elimination, could fight for its survival in these hard days when prices of daily necessities are soaring high day by day?

It is heartening to note that a parliamentary sub-committee has recommended investigation into the alleged corruption in import and distribution of CNG three-wheelers. Things must be set right.

CF Azim  
Gulshan



freezes and motor vehicles). Why this hide and seek *chhalaki*? (For example, the hawk says the apples are from Australia. Then on questioning, he admits the seeds came from a foreign country. When, he does not know—several years earlier. Apples are never grown in Bangladesh!). Be transparent—all buyers are not duffers.

- The manager who approves an advertisement should have basic knowledge of the advertising concepts. They have to be trained, for which the management is responsible!

There are other points, but this short letter is not a tutorial.

AMahasen  
Dhaka

## Zebra Crossings, overbridges

Your pictures on page 17 of the 24 May issue, highlighting the absence of Zebra Crossing and overbridge in busy streets, doesn't give the whole picture. Do we really use these facilities where they are available? Unfortunately, my experience shows we do not. I can give you a specific example. There is an overbridge in Kalabagan for pedestrians. But every morning when I pass this spot hundreds of people, specially garments workers, cross the street in the most haphazard way, endangering their lives and at the same time creating chaos and delay. All this happens in front of a number of police officials. At the same time, the pedestrian overbridge remains empty. At the same spot in Kalabagan, not only rickshaws but motorized vehicles also, sometimes driven by apparently educated persons, drive in the wrong lane in order to take a short cut, right in front of traffic police. I would like to use the good name of your newspaper to request the authorities to ensure the use of overbridges and prevent joy walking in busy streets. Motorists, too, have their rights!

Prof. Anisur Rahman  
Bangladesh Medical College  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Shrine blasts

I was deeply shocked by the news of the powerful bomb blast at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet on 21 May. Two people were killed and the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Anwar Choudhury, was among the injured in this dreadful bomb blast. It was the second blast at the shrine this year, five people were killed and 30 others injured on January

12. Our prime minister and president expressed their profound sympathy for the British envoy and others victims. But that is not sufficient to compensate for the loss of lives. In the last five years, 140 people have been killed and at least 1,000 injured in bomb attacks, but no attackers have been brought to justice. It clearly indicates that our law and order management is highly flawed.

The political godfathers have to be wiped out to bring peace to society.

Zahid Mollik  
Karatia, Tangail

## Rehabilitate the lunatics

There's a narrow gutter behind our apartment building and every night when it's pitch-dark a mad man appears in the gutter and he stays there till dawn. He makes weird noises by hitting on the walls with his hands. Most of the times he wears nothing except a scanty piece of cloth across his waist. Sometimes I've seen him retiring from the gutter on the early hours of morning after passing a lonely night in the darkness and obscurity. He has dirty, rough hair and unshaved beard of thousand days on his face. He makes nonstop hitting sounds and local people say he does that in order to get rid of the ants that interrupt him continuously. I guess the ants rather live in his mind. The loon's eyes are full of deep-rooted disturbance and

something bizarre is visible there, which is indescribable in words. He comes to the gutter no matter how the weather is, we get the crazy sound of hitting the walls even in the heavy rain and during bitter winter when it's unimaginable for a human being to pass a night in the cold, wet drain. There are thousands of mentally ill men and women in the city who roam on the streets and live an utterly inhuman life. Sometimes they also can get hazardous for the people around them.

The government should take the necessary steps to rehabilitate these mentally disordered men in lunatic asylums where they could get psychological treatment and a better life. Or else it's also possible that some day these promptly increasing mentally sick men will demand entry to the parliament house to demonstrate for their human rights, which all of them deserve as the members of the species known as 'the greatest creation of God'.

KH. Asif Safa Kabir Upal  
Lalmatia, Dhaka

## Ronald Reagan

Queen Elizabeth II said in her condolence message on the death of former US president Ronald Reagan that he was a truly great American hero. US senator Bob Graham mentioned, "A man who changed history, and Jim Gilmore eulogized, "He won the Cold War without firing a shot." Ronald

Reagan passed away at a crucial moment when American image and foreign policy are highly censured throughout the world. Bush and his fellow Donald Rumsfeld are the 'heroes' of this undermined image and damaged foreign policy. Ronald Reagan won the Cold War without firing a shot, but Bush's occupation forces are firing thousands of shots on the freedom loving Iraqis.

Md. Zillur Rahman  
DIT Plot,  
Gandaria, Dhaka

## Obscene films

Needless to say that the quality of 'Bangla film' is degrading day by day. We have been assured by the FDC many times that they will present us a decent film, but the promise is hollow. In the name of producing a good film, they continue to produce obscene films. Moreover, the hall owners also set 'cut pieces' especially in rural areas. Most of the hall goers are teenagers. These teenagers are spoiled by these films.

On the other hand, our filmmakers are not good at making heart-touching films which will mould our characters.

The FDC should do something about it.

Md. Shafique  
Tangail



PHOTO: AFP

## Little things

Little things do not become easily visible. Some little things are so little that without microscopic help they do not become visible.

Little grains of sand do not matter much. But they constitute a vast desert. A drop of water does not matter much but makes the vast ocean. Little things we ignore. But if we care for little things we may arrest the tendency of aggravation. Little holes can easily be stitched by small needles. But if the hole becomes bigger and bigger it does not remain in repairable stage. Let us cite a very common example. In some places very small cracks are noticed on the road. If immediately the minor injuries of the road are repaired, the life of the road is increased. But we ignore them. The small crack widens and becomes bigger. Rain water logs into it, bad odor chills nostrils. It pollutes the environment.

After a long time we extend our hands wide open for help or take a big budget to repair. But we could repair small holes with smaller funds.

History testifies that we were rich. We were robbed by the invaders. We became poor. We became poor but had self respect. Now we have assumed the status something short of a beggar. we beg for each and everything. We firmly believe that no one gives us anything without any interest. This way or that way the donor looks unto his/her own interest. Exception may be there but that exception does not become easily visible. However, let us try to do little things with our own available resources.

Rainy season is not far away. Dhaka city roads have side drains. These drains are adequately deep. But most of the drains have been silted. One hour's

heavy rain will flood the roads. Rain waters cannot freely flow through these drains. Mention may be made to drains on both sides of Rokeya Sarani. The depth of the drain is about 2 (two) meters or so. But today only 6/12cms has been left to flow water. These drains require to be cleared before the rainy season.

To clear the drains the DCC has manpower. No big equipment is needed to clear the drain. Mere will or determination is enough. But it is a little thing. Should we concentrate our valued attention on such a little thing? But while rain water will flood our carpeted roads then all eyes will be on it. These little things will cause harm to many in many ways.

Tapader Md. Khalilur Rahman  
Mirpur  
Dhaka

## Monroe



PHOTO: INTERNET

The write-up "Marilyn Monroe: A troubled star" was highly absorbing. (DS 1.10.044). The "suicide" of Monroe and the assassination of John F. Kennedy remain shrouded in mystery. Numerous reports and books have appeared giving different versions, but the cobwebs surrounding their unfortunate deaths have not been removed.

In the fifties and sixties, Marilyn was so popular that some Americans used to joke that they preferred 'Monroism' to Marxism.

Marilyn, however, was a complicated person. She went through a bad childhood and on attaining adolescence appeared nude on a calendar which caught the imagination of many advertising agencies as well as talent scouts.

She then appeared in a small role in MGM's 'The Asphalt Jungle' where her magnificent figure was exploited in more than one way. After that she only saw success and appeared in numerous films some of which left an indelible mark on her movie career.

Though your cultural correspondent has catalogued a number of her famous movies, he did not mention one of her best films "Niagara" - a thriller in which she played against the versatile actor, Joseph Cotton. Marilyn Monroe's liaison with the Kennedy brothers and her broken marriages are widely discussed, but little is said about her being a bi-sexual. A recent film "Norma Jeane" a movie based on her life story shows a glimpse of her preference and dependency on a same gender companion.

Robert Kader, Chittagong