

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.

Plant a tree

Greenhouse Effect and global warming pose a real threat to countries like Maldives, Bangladesh etc. The rise in water level may reduce these countries to once-existed in the world map. Though the developed countries are responsible for manufacturing the CFC and the other gases detrimental to the ozone layer, the underdeveloped or the so-called developing countries have to bear the brunt of it.

Apart from the global issue, plantation of trees can be a good investment. The government sponsored three-month long National Tree Plantation Campaign should ensure the participation of the common people. The NGOs and other organisations can play a vital role in it. Our consorted efforts will bring back the greenery and ensure our existence.

Joy
Dhaka



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Bangladesh team for Asia Cup

It was nice to hear through your newspaper that Javed Omar has been selected in the team to open the innings for Bangladesh. Although we do understand the concern for the opening pair to set a formidable score but we should not forget that in today's ODI game you need to have a player who can support the other opening partner to score freely in order to take advantage of the first fifteen overs which is a must to win a match. Javed has the ability to stay in the wicket and look for ones and twos which is equally important.

What our players need is to place the ball in gaps which is still con-

sidered a weakness watching many of their games. Hard hitting during the hour of need is another concern. I am sure our learned coach and players are fully aware of that and would devise some mechanism to improve in the above areas.

Most important is to develop the culture of keeping the wickets intact as long as possible and all players must remember that they must have the ability to play the full 50 overs with a decent score.

May I request the selectors and the coach to see if Javed and Habibul Bashar could be a better opening choice than Javed and Ashraful. Ashraful is a talented player but lacks the right approach to use his skills in the opening position and at times gets tempted

and loses his wicket cheaply. Of course, one has to remember that it is always the best bowler who bowls the opening overs and the batsman must have equal talents to face him.

Basher, on the other hand, has an aggressive approach, particularly in sports arena should be defined as, "mass lunacy regarding misuse (consequently abuse) of words and terms like "third world", "poor nation", "black and white" to exploit public emotion. In the age of apartheid, South Africa was barred and rejected by the international sports associations.

Lastly, I wish them the best of luck and success in the Asia Cup.

Minhaj
Wichita, Kansas

Mr. Huq's column

Mr Monzurul Huq's article on the tainted image of Bangladesh (June 2-June 4, 2004) is not objective writing. I would like to ask the readers and The Daily Star to comment on this letter. Please note the following:

1. Japan had a favourable image of expatriate Bangladeshis for their diligence, hard work, and sincerity. Are expatriate Bangladeshis hardworking, or are there hardworking people also in Bangladesh like the working poor?
2. Bangladesh is a rotten place, but crimes like school shootings, the treatment of poor Philippines and Japanese women in bars, and other terrible things also happen in Japan, right?
3. Japan has become the number one donor for Bangladesh and it is viewed as a developing country. (If it is a developing country, then why do some people continuously horde money, build high rises and do not help the dirt-poor people? Why does Japan have to be a donor and view us in a beggar image?
4. Shattering the image of Bangladesh to the core? What about Japan's image?
5. Japan is a country less "tainted" as a terrorist one (Really? What about World War II and other violent crimes and activities in Japan?)
6. Pakistan and Bangladesh maintain brotherly Jamaat ties, but these are not the only countries with fundamentalist elements.
7. If he writes "our" nation, why is he always living in Japan and not going to rural areas in Bangladesh or helping children in the city slums? He is living in Japan. Bangladesh has struggling, hard working people. It also has lot of corruption. So does "Tokyo". Bangladesh and Japan are not "harmless" and Japan should have an image of the extremely hard working poor who live on physical labour and poor pay.

Ms Seraphim Sufia Chisti
Gulshan 2, Dhaka

Dirty politics
The bus arson before the hartal day is a heinous example of the dirty politics in our country. And yet the cruel blame game has already started-- just blame it on the other party.

Did the criminals who did this realise what would happen if the only earning member of a family dies, how it feels like to see your dear ones burnt to death or how bad it hurts?

Nayeem Islam
The Aga Khan School
Uttara, Dhaka

About a letter
A recent letter to the editor shows that letter writers are not always well informed.

The letter was on Steve Waugh's comments. Without having any doubt in Muralitharan's genius and clean action, I respectfully

want to say, please see Murali's mother Mrs. Laxmi Muttiah's comment. Although he gets telephone calls from there every day from his friends like (Steve) Waugh asking him to come, we don't want him to go.

However, the modern day racism in sports arena should be defined as, "mass lunacy regarding misuse (consequently abuse) of words and terms like "third world", "poor nation", "black and white" to exploit public emotion. In the age of apartheid, South Africa was barred and rejected by the international sports associations.

Muhammad Mustafa Hussain
Doctorate, Solid State Electronics,
University of Texas at Austin

Letter to the PM

With this letter I hope to bring a great concern of mine to your attention and to ask for your help. Please thus allow me to respectfully address the case of Dr Qazi Faruque Ahmed and David William Biswas.

It is with grave concern that I have learnt about the arrest and incommunicado detention of the Proshika leaders Dr Qazi Faruque Ahmed and David William Biswas.

Hope that what has come to my attention is incorrect. I have read that prisoners may be coerced by torture or, in any case, ill-treated and that some prisoners are even deceived into making 'confessions'. I have also read that the accused may not always be granted legal assistance and that confessions are sometimes even obtained under torture.

Herewith I thus urge the Bangladesh authorities to ensure that under no circumstances the above two men are tortured or subjected to other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. I further call upon you with your powerful position to ensure that Dr Qazi Faruque Ahmed and Mr. David William Biswas have access to their lawyers, family, and any medical attention they might require.

Finally, I implore you to call on the authorities to ensure that legal safeguards against arbitrary detention in Bangladesh law and international human rights standards, including the right to obtain release on bail as appropriate, are provided to the prisoners without delay.

Sanne Deurloo
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

New tax structure

The DS in its June 12, 2004 issue published a news item under the caption "Income tax riddle". It draws a conclusion, "The new income tax structure proposed in the budget for FY 2004-2005 has come as a blow to lower income groups but as a boon for higher income groups" but the basic analysis in the background of this concluding remark is not clear. Under the proposed tax rate, a person with an income of Tk. 100,001 will pay only 1.5% percent of his income as tax, as against 1.2% in the last year whereas a person with an income of Tk. 550,000 will pay 10% of his income as tax. A person with an income of Tk. 1,000,000 will pay 15% of his income as tax. It means a person whose income is only one lakh taka will pay 1,500 taka as tax. A person whose income is Tk. 550,000 will pay Tk. 10,000 on every lakh income and a person with an income of Tk. 10 lakh will pay Tk. 15,000 on every lakh. Is it a blow to lower income group or rationalisation of the tax rate as the finance minister in his speech has mentioned? Probably in the analysis the difference between a "marginal tax rate" and an "effective tax rate" has been ignored.

Shibli Sajeed
Canada

Same-sex marriage

I am writing in response to the letters by Mr. Huq and Mr. Malik both published on June 10 as well as the letter by Mr. Rabbani published on June 11. I appreciate that more people are participating in this dialogue given the fact that homosexuality has long been considered taboo in Bangladesh. I also applaud "The Daily Star" for publishing the letters pertaining to this topic.

If I understand Mr. Huq correctly, many religious leaders nowadays approve the use of birth control measures contrary to their past stance on this issue. This clearly indicates that religious interpretations are not necessarily unalterable which in my view is consistent with Ijtihad, the process of making decisions by independent interpretation of the sources of Islamic law. I agree with Mr. Malik that one should not "take decision fully depending on science all the time." Perhaps it is also fair to say that one should not take decision fully depending on religious faith all the time either especially when

Our finance, our Mps and us

Our outspoken FM is very busy mending the awful state of economy inherited from the AL. We the common people don't understand much about economy; whenever a new government comes it always takes a fragile economy from the prior, while the outgoing FM says economy was in the fast lane when he was in office.

Our present FM has done a lot, he has imposed new taxes, increased taxes, extended the tax net, cut the interest rates. We the common people are getting less money, but paying more and more every day. We don't know if the economy has become stronger at all or to what extent, but we sure know our tax money is being used for increasing the perks of the MPs.

Sumon
Dhaka

Budget of FY2004-05

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman placed our national budget in the Jatiya Sangsad on June 10. The Tk 57,248 crore budget is really a colossal budget for our country. My feedback on the proposed budget is positive. The budget may be ambitious but it is realistic. Without being ambitious we cannot energise our economy. The education sector has been prioritised with 13% allocation in this budget. The agriculture sector has drawn attention and sympathy, thanks to BJP's election debacle in India. Poverty eradication, economic stability are highly impossible, if we ignore our agriculture sector. So, Tk 850 crore farm subsidy in the proposed budget deserves praise. But the money should reach the farmers. Though the Tk 22,000 crore ADP is huge, for overall development it is urgent. But it should be materialised without any ulterior motive. In FY2004-05 budget, revenue collection is really going to be challenging. But to be self-reliant, it is very essential. If the govt



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we know that religious interpretations can change over time.

I further agree with Mr. Malik that theists outnumber atheists in Bangladesh. However, that does not mean that theists can dictate how atheists should get married. An atheist should have the right to get married to "accept the usual norm of society to legalise one's sexual bond" as pointed out by Mr. Huq in a non-religious manner. Note that the option to get married in a non-religious manner does not jeopardise marriage based on religious rituals. It only provides people with the freedom to choose how one wants to get married in accordance with one's belief. The same is true for same-sex marriage. The recognition of same-sex marriage by the state will only ensure that a person has the right to get married to "accept the usual norm of society to legalise one's sexual bond" independent of one's sexual orientation. It won't violate or compromise the freedom of any-

one because at a personal level, people will be free to decide whether or not they will endorse same-sex marriage in accordance with their religious faith. The recognition of same-sex marriage by the state also won't harm "the procreation process" or "reproduction and survival of progeny" as straight people will be free to get married and raise family according to their beliefs.

Omar Sharif
Vancouver, BC, Canada

I would like to point out that the issue of gay marriage in developed countries is politically quite complex. The secular and democratic culture of these countries makes it very difficult for anyone (Christian, Jewish, or Muslim) to question gay rights; any attempt to do so is seen as prejudiced, narrow-minded behaviour in the same way as racism or sexism. Gay culture, like South Asian culture or even Mus-

lim culture, has become an accepted part of Western culture.

Given this fact, it is not obvious that Muslims in the West should oppose gay marriage. Indeed, Muslims already consider it their duty to encourage men and women around them to form stable marriages, and discourage them from having extra-marital sexual relationships; so perhaps they should also consider it their duty to support gay marriage as a way of limiting extramarital homosexual activity. Certainly extramarital sex carries with it the same public health issue of HIV/AIDS infection regardless of whether the couples involved are straight or gay. In fact, the absence of religion in state culture in the West dictates that the issue of marriage be seen as a secular public health issue rather than a religious one.

Zeeshan Hasan
London School of Economics

Those visits



As a newspaper reader, I still cannot fathom out the sudden trips of the Bangladesh foreign minister to New Delhi, and the urgent necessity of the high-profile and extremely busy US Defence Secretary to agree to visit Dhaka. What's the game?

The visit to New Delhi was too abrupt, too early, and premature (diplomatically); before the new regime was given some time to settle down. There was nothing so urgent to discuss. Bangladesh was the first official visitor from the neighbouring countries (Saarc). What is the visible output, for immediate use, by either side?

Why the US Defence Secretary's personal and physical presence was necessary in Dhaka for a few hours, even if Dhaka was near the return flight route?

What the press was told was the usual PR and diplomatic snack food. There might have been pointers in the background, not yet ready for public announcement. Was Dhaka politely advised to follow a certain line?

The lack of political unity at the national level is very much visible in Dhaka, which the foreigners cannot miss. It is rather tempting to try some divide-and-rule policy by some vested groups, local or foreign (it is a standard practice).

It is hoped that our press media would offer some leads in the analytical reports appearing in the newspapers.

AMahseen
Dhaka

A dreamer's world

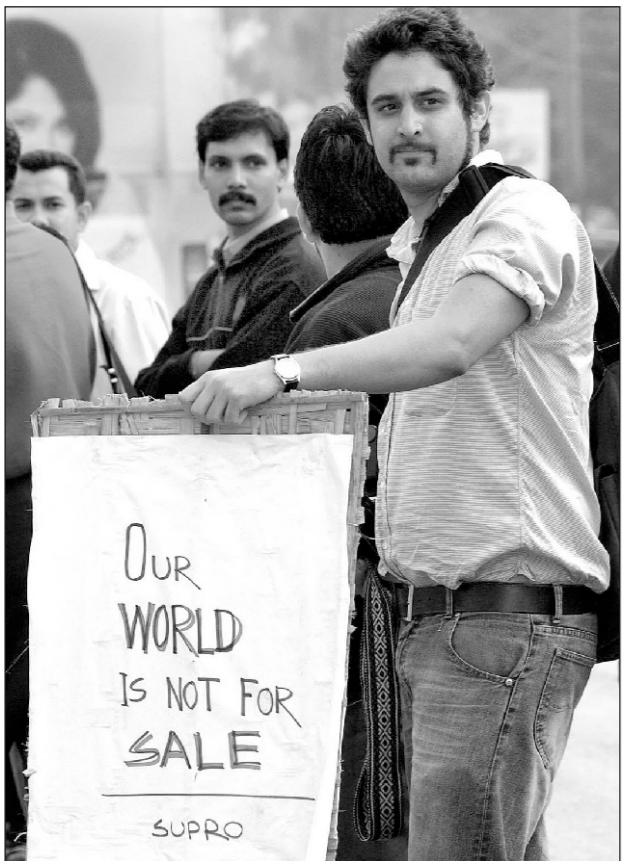


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I have a dream. I know that it is not only mine. All the optimistic people around the world dream like me. Nowadays, not only we, the people of Bangladesh, but also the whole world are longing for peace. Gush! If there were no war, no discrimination, no poverty and no scarcity, life would have been much better. This world would have been a better place to live in.

Tell me.....what would have happened if all the world leaders had worked for the sake of the mankind instead of being domineering, if both of our main political parties had worked in peace and communion, if there were no hartal, no bomb blast, no firing, no clamour and no genocide.

I wish our opposition and government could stand each other, the Gujarati word "hartal" were obsolete to the opposition!!

No, I don't bear any grudge against anybody, any political parties or something and I don't have any motive of taking anybody to task. I just want to say that when people choose someone as their parliament leader it means a great responsibility for him. He should never do anything that demeans his stand. But what we see in our country? Both of the parties disobey the parliament by doing obnoxious things; such as, attending the parliament once in a while, walking out of it, giving digressive speeches against the others. Unfortunately it is true that it has become our tradition.

You may ask me, "Who are you"? Well, I'm one of the populace.

Definitely, I don't have any chip on my shoulder so that I've to be resentful to anybody. To whom should I be? Someone once told me that corruption has reached our blood vessels, that nothing can be changed until Qayamat. Reading this column you may say the same.

But I don't think so and I'm still optimistic about our future. Because I believe that it's never late to turn a new leaf.

Cantara Wali, RUHI