



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

Population control-our first priority

The root of all our problems is the huge population burden. The population increased to 140 million from 75 million in 1971, and 55 million in 1962. Arsenic problem, flood, law and order slide, food, space, environment pollution etc. can all be attributed to population growth. In my work place in Bara Maghbazar, I render specialist treatment to patients from lower and lower middle economy class. Only yesterday a garment worker told me that they are nine brothers and sisters! Another one informed that the number was seven. Obviously they belong to the "hard to reach" group, but this group is proliferating at a tremendous rate. Bangladesh has highest population growth with very low level of conjugal life satisfaction. The number of children is not related to a happy sexual life, lack of which gives rise to various mental, emotional problems which need to be addressed too. Although the TFR is around 3 and growth rate is 1.54, the efforts are not enough and dynamic. Our land can sustain a population of 50 million.

The government should give first priority to all efforts leading to rapid and sustained fall of TFR and growth rate. Then comes education, proper age of marriage, curbing of traditional "mullah" power, confidence building and motivation of Imams and religious teachers, equal share of food, facilities etc.

SN Arbab
Banani, Dhaka

Recently, I had an opportunity to read his novel "Pak Sar Zamin Sad Bad". Me as a layman in literature and a moderate Muslim had mixed reaction in my mind. I could not help asking myself again and again as to what on earth inspired him, a Dhaka University teacher, ideal and icon of many students, to write a novel like this. What could have motivated him to write such a story and how could a vernacular daily with wide circulation publish it? May be my values are old styled, but I could not get an answer for myself.

However, now that the dust has settled down and lot of water has flown down the rivers of Bangladesh, I would dare make some comments with due respect and regard to the writer. I feel that if he had to write a story like this he should have used a pseudonym.
Syed Farhat Ahmad Romy
New DOHS, Dhaka

Blasts in Sylhet

The most recent bomb blasts in cinema halls in Sylhet have caused concerns amongst all of us. Your editorial (August 7th) and a detailed report carried the same day articulated our concerns.

However, we need to be cautious here in drawing hasty conclusions. The western press are sniffing to find connections, both real and imagined, between such acts and al-Qaeda in Bangladesh and unless our press is cautious, we could play into their hands.

Sylhet, for some odd reasons, has been the centre of such unlawful acts predating 9/11. If memory serves me right, a now forgotten Islamic group in Sylhet served the death notice on Taslima Nasreen that caused Bangladesh great damage. The group now does not even exist which proves how wrong the western press was in relating the Taslima incident to fundamentalism in Bangladesh. While Taslima got world wide publicity as Salman Rushdie, in case of the latter the *fatwa* was given by no one less than Ayatollah Khomeini and thus with the sanction of the government of Iran.

Reading from DS reports, I gathered that since 1997, there have been 14 blasts in Sylhet causing 24 deaths in 7 years. In one of these cases, the person accused was a former AL lawmaker and AL is considered by everybody as a secular political party. The points to note here are as follows. Unfortunate as the incidents are, these acts are perhaps not connected with international terrorism. But then the blasts are serious cases of deterioration of law and order and should be treated as such. One of the Sylhet blasts even involved an attempt upon the British High Commissioner that the Scotland Yard investigated. The investigations did not turn up any al-Qaeda or international terrorists links.

Therefore, in treating the incidents the press owes Bangladesh a responsibility. They must draw the line; dismiss these incidents as acts unconnected with al-Qaeda and then put the responsibility upon this government for its failure in bringing anyone to task for 14 blasts in question. The AL here should remember that this failure is also partly theirs for some of the blasts occurred while they were in power and in their case. The reason I am asking for such caution is because I was surprised at the suggestion in the editorial calling for international assistance to resolve these acts. By doing so, we would just be allowing the international press to brand Bangladesh for what it is not. Bangladesh despite the government's utter failure in bringing anyone to task for the many blasts, is not a state where terrorism of the Islamic fundamentalist type is in existence.

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

Honesty is a concern?

I can't appreciate the views of Mahfuzul Haque, a Dhaka university student. He has written the letter "We are not honest", (DS, August 6) which is totally a one-sided interpretation of things. His thinking is too far away



PHOTO: AFP

from the reality. It is our fault that we observe a memorable day once a year and after it passes we forget about it. But he can't blame all the boys and girls for attending the celebrations.

He said that boys go there on the special days (Pahela Baishak, Independence Day, Victory day, Bashonto Baron) to see the girls only. That's not true, Mr Mahfuzul Haque.
Mamunur Rashid Tomal
Dept of English, DIU

Style, taste, money

A few Days ago while I was passing through the Science Laboratory Police Box Square, an electric Billboard displaying pictures of some mobile sets of a renowned company caught my sight. The sign was showing three newly launched elegant and costly mobile sets. One of the sets had a writing "Style is all about taste, not money" - I had to stop to think what it means. Does it mean that only the moneyed people are privileged ones to enjoy stylish life? They do not mean it directly as far as I can understand. Literally, it says a person of taste, of

labourer crave to buy a rose, doesn't he long to buy a chocolate for his little child and a trivial gift for his wife when he is coming back from his hard work? It is to be agreed that this person possesses a refined taste, but he cannot do what he wishes to do because the little money he has earned has to be spent in buying a little amount of rice, pulse, chilli and salt.

We are certainly in the age of 'capitalism' - perhaps this is more than that-we are all self-centred, money-making, crooked people. Money has become the measurement of everything, even the aestheticism, the sensibility of mind.
Mahfuzul Haque
Department of English, University of Dhaka

Drinking water crisis

Everyday we see, in print and electronic media, a lot of people suffering due to the devastating floods. Safe drinking water scarcity is one of most acute problems in the flood affected areas. Every day many people including young children are dying of diar-

construct some tube wells above flood level, (for emergency use only) then we can save many lives. I hope our scientists will think about the problem and soon come out with some solution.

Mohammed Sohel Hara
Tophkhana Road, Dhaka

Lack of discipline everywhere

Discipline is the essence of success in every aspect of life. Bangladesh being a late starter in the development fields, there is lack of discipline in many sectors. We have noticed that most of the signboards in the streets have different size and shapes. Most of them look perfectly ugly and improper. They vary in width and come in different colour and shapes. The length is no problem. The DCC can enact a regulation as to the width of a signboard so that they look uniform and beautiful.

The next point is our names. Some of the names are too long, defies all logic. In the western world and America they have three name system. In Iran Shahenshah Reza Khan promulgated an ordinance as to the system of

denoted his ancestor's occupation or special title.

We can have a three name system like the Arabs/ Europeans. Discipline in all spheres is the key to success and prosperity. And it's beautiful too.
SN Mamoon, Banani, Dhaka

Mohakhali flyover

In reference to a letter on this subject, I remember a story told by a friend 5-6 years ago. The story goes like this. Japan which is almost double the size of Bangladesh in area had almost the same population size of about 140 million. If you just swap the population of Japan and Bangladesh and allow Japanese to live in Bangladesh and Bangladeshis in Japan, the outcome in 10 to 15 years is expected to be..... I leave it to the readers to guess.

The theme of the story is that the people are the most important factor in sustainable development. Even the most developed country can pull back to poverty and what not, you know, if people's active participation in sustainable development is not forthcoming.

gauges of democracy too. When open, accountable local governments operate according to the rule of law, foster public scrutiny, and invite citizens' participation, they can better handle any local crises than any outsiders do. Well-developed local governance teams help create accurate financial systems, improve citizens' abilities to address their concerns with officials, and promote open government-citizen communication. Democratic efforts and behaviour develops transparency that also helps combat corruption. Bribery, cronyism, and fraud do not thrive in governments that, for example, report revenues and expenses based on standard accounting methods, ensure open tender and contract processes, and publish decisions. For helping people in disasters or in any other development efforts, it is best to integrate transparency into governance of all institutions, private or public. It also helps reform legacies of corrupt practices. Even after thirty-three years of our independence, and three democratic elections, neither violence nor cor-

Flood donation drive

In the last 96 hours, I was travelling like a spin ball in Toronto to collect donations for the Flood victims in Bangladesh. I am overwhelmed with thankful feelings for those peoples. I, myself haven't think about such a reaction and such a feedback from my fellow non-resident Bangladeshis. It started with a simple two-minute speech in their meeting where I go once in a blue moon. I went there just to make them aware about what we should do about the peoples fighting bravely with flood. And I was remembering myself the days of 1998 floods, when we were working for the peoples being students of BUET.

It was simply amazing to work with them and work with my other friends studying in different countries. Within five days of campaigning, we gathered a handsome figure which will be donated to our country.

I am hereby thanking all the persons who worked for the drive, the kind hearts who donated generously. This feeling once again made me remember the dream I am cherishing for a very, very long time in my mind. One fine morning I will be back again to Bangladesh where there will be no muggers, no traffic jam, no corruption and no grid-locked government procedures.

M. Sabbir U Chowdhury
Lecturer, Dept. of Civil Engg,
The University of Asia Pacific

Pakistan again?

It is difficult to believe that an 'Islamist

group' called Mujahideen al-Islam, in a sovereign country, Bangladesh, professes the theory of turning Bangladesh into an Islamic state of Pakistan and openly issues death warrants to the prime enemy of Islam and the 'barriers' to achieve their goal. Is it not the deadly indifference of the coalition government that is giving so much leeway to these so called Islamist elements?

It is just a matter of time when the Frankenstein created by the government will turn against its master.
Saif, Dhaka

Humayun Azad's book

Frankly speaking, I am one of those who had never read any publication of Dr Humayun Azad and do not know him personally or otherwise. But I was very much shocked and saddened at the life threatening attack on him. Not only because he is one of our respected intellectuals but also because he is a teacher in the Oxford of the East i.e. Dhaka University. A teacher of Dhaka University is held at very high esteem by all in Bangladesh. It was heartening to see most of our intellectuals sympathizing with him after the ghastly attack on him. It was also nice to see the government taking utmost interest in his medical treatment including treatment abroad. By the grace of the Almighty he is reported to be alright now. But again it was most disturbing to hear about the attempted kidnapping of his son. I sincerely hope and pray for the safety and security of him and his family.

Tigers do take time

This letter is a response to all of the people who claim that the Bangladesh cricket team is not competitive as compared to teams like India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan etc. I think we are being too impatient with the players of the national cricket team. Everyone says that if Bangladesh have adopted the title "Tigers" they should play like them. But remember tigers, when they are young cubs, are not able to search for their kills unless there are experienced like their seniors. Young Tigers take their time. If this example is not enough for my suggestion then I must review some points, some of which are; New Zealand took nearly 18-20 years to win their first Test match, and some 20 years back Sri Lanka were in no position to win tournaments like Asia Cup. It takes time. We should try to think from the players' point of view; how difficult it is to play in the ground and how easy it is to comment on their defeats!

So from this what I want to say is just that we will have to wait with patience for the tigers to evolve into fully grown up predators! I, therefore, request the sports lovers of Bangladesh, disappointed with Bangladesh's performance, to have patience.

Mohammed Fahim Hara
Universal Tutorial, New Eskatan, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

cultured mind, of delicacy does not bother about the price of any highly priced thing. It definitely indirectly proclaims that a person of wealth is the possessor of delicacy of mind, only a man whose wallet is thick knows the value of elegance and beauty. Is it really so? Doesn't a low-paid day-

rhoea and other water-borne diseases.

If we could provide safe drinking water to the flood affected people, we could have saved many valuable lives. But unfortunately most of the tube wells, which are only source of safe drinking water, have been submerged in floodwater. But in future if we

name. So, now all have a family name at the end and a definite naming code. In Turkey, Atatürk also enacted a similar code. Arabs always had a three name system in the following order-name proper, father's name, and grand father's name, which may be followed by another name which

ing. The traffic management is also part of it.

Therefore, I keep my fingers crossed for positive changes in traffic management in Dhaka as planned and expected after the completion of Mohakhali flyover. Honestly speaking, I am not very optimistic like many in Dhaka. I will be happy if I am proved wrong.

Anonymous, One e-mail

A wartime president?

Recently, there has been a great deal of coverage regarding the detainees in Guantanamo. The US administration insists that they are "enemy combatants" because as the American Secretary of the Navy pointed out, "there's no declared war between the countries."

Now, based on that logic, how would the American authorities react if the American bounty hunters in Kabul were declared "enemy combatants", not given access to American officials, and tried in special secretive tribunals? We know that there was no declared war between the US and Afghanistan.

On a separate note, if there is no declared war, why is President Bush so fond of calling himself a wartime president?

Rashid Chowdhury
Virginia, USA

Local bodies and disaster management

Local governments are one of the most effective instruments in responding to any disaster. Functioning and proper presence of these institutions are

ruption has decreased. In fact, corruption remains a serious problem. Fraud, favouritism, and a preference for family political power suppress opportunities for open, representative governance. Our oversight mechanisms are weak, and citizens do not have effective avenues to address corruption. Developing transparency to create accountability at the national and local levels of governments and to engage citizens in community-based governing actions is the key to development as well as effective emergency responses. Local government servants should learn to plan a budget and the procedures to follow for objective auditing, and financial reporting systems.

We have initiated democracy and a market economy, but the former power structure retained extensive influence, and bribery within government and business continue to thrive. This pervasive corruption has undermined citizens' trust in government and stifled economic development. Corruption makes people inefficient, and its becomes bare when the country needs emergency responses.

The concerns should lead the parliament to approve a suite of laws that ensures citizens' access to national and local government information and officials, and that improves the accountability of budgets.

Sirajul Islam

Social sciences researcher

and consultant, Shyamoli,

Dhaka

Deployment of troops in Iraq?

Who have started the crackdown to curb the root of terrorism by creating havoc all around, destroying the tranquillity of this beautiful world? Undoubtedly, it is the honourable president of United States of America, George W Bush and his associates Tony Blair and Aerial Sharon. During the Democrats' Convention, John Kerry, the presidential election, also figured out Bush as a "King of the battle".

No one will attack our country, but we will commit suicide by sending our troops to Iraq and soon we will be the hot target of the ongoing guerrilla attacks, backed up by al-Qaeda and other Islamist radical groups. As soon as our troops depart for Iraq, Bangladesh will be put on a state of high alert for possible threats of terrorists attack.

We are just sitting back and watching the spectacular show of killing and witnessing the worst form of humanitarian crisis through satellite channels. A recently published report of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), report of British Intelligence MI-16 and 9/11 Commission report have found no evidence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq, rather they blamed Bush for his immature battle plan. The US couldn't wait for the report of UN inspectors led by Hans Blix and launched an attack with massive firepower against Iraq.

The US approached Bangladesh in many ways asking for troops to aid the coalition forces in Iraq. Should we subject ourselves to such a great controversy?

Our soldiers have toughness but are not trained like the US troops-the ultimate killing machine. Why should our troops go to a controversial battlefield to support US-led coalition forces?

Shafqat Rana Sayed

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PHOTO: AFP

