

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.

Khulna city

I do fully agree that despite being a divisional town and so called 3rd city of Bangladesh, Khulna is still lagging behind in all amenities that should have been there for a city like it. Khulna at the moment is called a Dead City and also a heaven for outlaws. Needless to say, during the last BNP rule the Speaker of Parliament was from Khulna but, regrettably, not a single development work was done.

The government shouldn't ignore the issue any more.

Shahid Hossain
Chittagong

Bangladesh should look East

This is in response to the article titled 'For friendship Bangladesh should look East' written by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed (DS September 12, 2004).

I thank Mr. Ahmed. He deserves appreciation for his straight talk, boldness and factual depositions.

Golam Ashraf
DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka

Effective hospital services management

The ad of Apollo Hospital for recruitment of maintenance manpower (16-09-04, the Daily Star) attracted my attention! The ad has noted all required manpower for better management of an international standard hospital. Their requirement has clearly identified the difference between our national and international provisions. In our National Graduate, Postgraduate and Specialised Hospitals and Institutions all responsibilities are shouldered on senior doctors, without having relevant knowledge! Starting from the Director, all Departmental Heads are medically qualified! From my personal experience, I have noticed that there is one top level post, termed "Medical Superintendent". Unfortunately, this position's responsibilities are not clear to me; though the term indicates a role of overall supervision! But why then almost all national level hospitals, institutions are immersed in so many problems?

If we are totally dependant on International Medical Books for knowledge and all kind of learning, cannot we try to follow their

Subway or sky train for Dhaka



PHOTO: INTERNET

Dhaka is reeling under horrendous, stressful, unbelievable and ever-growing traffic jam. It takes more than one hour to reach Motijheel from Gulshan. One fourth of the working time is lost in transit and commuting. Add to it—loss of physical and mental health, noise, sound pollution, environmental pollution, stressful situations etc. It's a scenario of chaos and confusion leading to decreased life expectancy.

The country incurs a heavy loss in efficiency and productivity in all spheres.

We don't require evolving a unique solution. The solution is already on the board. Dhaka needs to follow the other big cities like Bangkok, Calcutta, Manila, Tehran etc. We learnt from a Consultant of Calcutta Metro that Dhaka soil bears more bearing capacity than Calcutta soil. Some time back there was a computer generated projected display of Subway system in Dhaka which was absolutely wonderful. The Thai prime minister has reportedly offered to build a complete subway or sky train system for Dhaka.

We fail to understand what is stopping the government from taking a decision on the subway system.

Would the PM office and the ministries concerned act quickly and build up a real metropolis befitting a proud developing country?

SN Mamoon, Dhaka

Bangladesh Health System Performance as a Measure to Alleviate Poverty" presented by Syed Jahangir Haider; Chairman and Executive Director of "Research Evaluation Association for Development" (READ) (final draft on January 2001)! I would like the authorities to examine the chapter "Human Resource of Health" of the report (page 30 & 31).

Dr. Lailun Nahar, Dhaka Wari Cemetery: An update

In the recent six-day incessant rain and strong winds, 15 large trees were uprooted in the Wari Christian Cemetery and also a large number of Mahogany trees are bent out of shape due to the winds. The strong winds knocked down one giant Eucalyptus tree; which in turn broke about 30 feet of the boundary wall and also knocked down the electricity and telephone cables. The Wari Street was blocked by the tree for half a day and electricity and telephone lines are still not fully restored in Narinda area.

The Cemetery Board, back in November 2003, cut 14 trees along the boundary wall to prevent the branches from getting into the power lines and causing power disruption. The trees also posed a serious threat during storms—like the one we faced last week. The local people and BAPA at that time complained about the cutting down of the trees and The Daily Star did a feature in this connection on 12 Nov, 2003.

At the time, I had explained our position and highlighted the numerous problems that this 400 year old cemetery was facing. My point is, neither BAPA nor the local people have come to the assistance of the cemetery by extending any sort of support. In fact, now we are facing threats from local hoodlums who want to purchase the fallen trees at give-away prices. At one point we even had to raise about 140 feet of our boundary wall to 12 feet height and install barbed wire to prevent theft and encroachment. A 16- storied hospital has literally been built with its supporting wall encroaching on our boundary wall and their electric lines running through the cemetery. Garbage disposal from the hospital into the cemetery is a regular feature. Please visit our web site <http://dhakacemetery.tripod.com> to see some of the maintenance/development works undertaken by a number of volunteers and also extend your support to save and restore this heritage site of old Dhaka, which dates date to the 16th century.

Joseph Amond
Cemetery Supervisor (Volunteer),
Gulshan Avenue, Dhaka

Equality law

I consider myself moderately right-winged. Even then I wish to see the government take step in creating an "equality law". By equality law I mean to say that a law that states all Bangladeshis are equal despite religious faith and cultural background. A law that protects our minority brothers and sisters from discrimination. Of course such a law might stir up some of our orthodox Muslim communities. Ironically I used to be a part of one such community. I used to think as Muslims in Bangladesh, we deserve the best. However, my points of view changed when I came to the US.

I am a minority here. Because of the anti-discrimination laws here, I can walk head up along with any other American. But there are times when I feel totally oppressed because, despite the laws some people here haven't accepted minorities. They look down at us for our colour and religious faith. That is when I realise how our Hindu or

honest and devoted to their service. But yesterday (14 September 2004) when I was coming back to Jahangirnagar University campus from Dhaka I became astonished to see the behaviour of some police constables at farm gate.

When I got into a bus from Farmgate, I found that the driver was very careful about traffic rules. But a constable signalled to stop the bus and coming near the bus, he accused the bus driver of breaking the rules! Then he asked the driver to let him have a look at the documents of driving and the bus. The driver was helpless and begged to be forgiven though he was totally right. Meanwhile, the constable demanded one hundred taka and when the driver paid the amount he was 'released'. All the passengers of the bus including me were bewildered observing this situation. We could do nothing. A similar situation is prevailing all over the country. The police should try heart and soul to enforce law which they are breaking for their interest.

Rajkumar
Dept. of English
JU, Savar, Dhaka

Voters losing faith

I agree in principle with your commentary (DS Sept 18), and feel that millions of citizens eagerly waited to listen to a discussion on the 21/8 carnage in the parliament. Due to parliamentary technicalities, the opposition did not get a chance to present their views, and the MPs in power got ample time to castigate the opponents too liberally, and in a tone which is not acceptable to most voters. It was a one-sided affair.

During this short one-week session of the JS, this issue was the most important item on the agenda. The right to speak was somehow denied to one side. Our political culture is not at all transparent (subjective), and the political leaders are more dense, and ignore public opinion and feedback.

The concerted campaign is not forthcoming from the leaders of the society (polarised) to snub bad politics. We are poor, we are corrupt (official international rating), and we cannot run politics, not to speak of governing the country. What is the future of this leaderless nation?

What are we fit for, in this leaderless nation? The politicians show ferocity, without moral courage to suffer for principles. Do

Buddhist brothers feel back home.

But my request is not just for humanity but also for all the gains we are likely to obtain out of it. Claiming ourselves as a "moderate Islamic country" is not enough. It doesn't provide freedom for everyone. Come to think of it, with an "equality law" we will get tremendous respect from the Westerners. Anyway, let me not meander but state one more time—for the sake of our people's prosperity by all means we need anti-discrimination laws.

Russel Siddique
On e-mail

Attack on DUTA president's office

I'm condemning the attack on the DUTA president, Dr. AAMS Arefin Siddique, and the procession brought out by the BCL and five left-learning student organisations. Definitely, such attacks are unacceptable and unprecedented because the attackers not only attacked the student activists but also the female students, which was never seen in the past. These most disgraceful, undemocratic, atrocious, behaviours are against all democratic norms and are detested by all. I'd like to mention what the president of the JCD said about the incident, "It was a spontaneous resistance by the conscious students". Really this kind of comment is farcical, as the students of the university, who claim themselves conscious, do not like student politics. Such politics do not reflect the demands of the general students. The students involved in politics are biased and loyal to their parties.

As a student of the university, I'm demanding the arrest of the culprits and their expulsion from the university. Furthermore, the government will have to ensure the security of teachers and students on the campus.

Anis Rahman
Zahurul Haq Hall, DU

Police and bribe

The people of all classes of our society have a very common belief that the police take bribe illegally. I have a different idea about some of the police officers who are very

away with the loud mouths, and those who believe in the party only, and the party first.

I do not feel like casting my vote at the next elections. What for?

Md Abad
Dhaka

Ineffectual politics

Our politicians are running the campus culture, damaging the future lives of the new generation who would be running the country in the coming decades. This type of political divide is the creation of poor leadership. Statesmanship is missing. The party is not above other national priorities.

A similar negative culture is prevailing in the parliament (JS). Hence the mini wars in the campus are not freaks—it is a fallout from the political pollution ghosting the nation for decades. The young generation is being spoiled, and their philosophy of life distorted, while we are shouting hoarse about environment pollution in other sectors! Behind the physical scenarios is the mental approach and attitude (trickle-down culture from the seniors).

Why intolerance has reached such high levels in our homogenous society? Perhaps we care more for personalities than institutions. List the plus virtues of the leaders. I cannot proceed after a noting a couple of items.

When ad hocism in politics will get less priority? When politics ceases to be a profitable business (informally). Materialism and consumerism are raking the urbanites, while the GDP for the rural areas is much below the USD 460 or near about so proudly touted. A microscopic elite is reaping the benefit of the so-called development syndrome, although Bangladesh has some good progress in some areas in the rural sector. We can do more, but some vested groups do not allow it.

The next general elections have no meaning or relevance for the vast majority of voters. Politics as a tool has failed miserably (and so visibly). The response of the leadership is not forthcoming on the points raised above. No use continuing this harangue.

Alif Zabr
Dhaka

Whither Bangladesh?

Ladybird

I saw a small beetle walking on the green leaves of a pinkish-red camellia (Camellia japonica 'Kumasaka') in my room. Yiannis, my Greek friend, and I collected the flowers from Sheffield Botanical Garden for our 'Plant Identification Assignment'. Although botanical garden should not be the right place for collecting flowers but we justified our act by saying to ourselves that many British people did and are still doing the similar things around the world, collecting plants for various reasons.

Anyway, the beetle is a ladybird, seven-spot ladybird (Coccinella 7-punctata), small (¼ inch) with striking red, black and yellow colours. I found it very beautiful. I could appreciate its colour and shape more behind a magnifying glass. I wanted to touch it and took it on my hand. When it was walking on my palm its gentleness gave no sensation to my skin. But when it was walking on the wrist, my short hairy skin sent the message of its presence to my brain. It was wondering around in my hand very slowly, not very slowly but its own pace. I placed a pencil on its way; it waited a while and accepted to explore a hard skin. Then I imagined the pencil like a helicopter for a ladybird for returning to the camellias which were kept in a glass-made small glass, three quarter full of water, on the sill of the only window of my 12 feet x 8 feet room. It walked on the leaf again at the same pace and was keeping on walking, casting little shadow by the eastern sun. It was walking and walking! Why are you walking? Why, walking?... I don't have time to think about this. Here in the UK I'm counting my



PHOTO: INTERNET

time with money. Busy, busy, busy...I'm always busy in a created busy world.

I buried the beauty of the ladybird under my busy thinking-definition of ethnic minority, community garden, nostalgia, culture, trust, landscape ecology, wild flowers, etc, etc, during the day. Next morning, again the ladybird drew my attention by flying from a leaf to the clear double glazed surface of the window. Ooh.... my sweet little ladybird! You are still here!

I shut the window quickly and opened the book for the description of ladybird "The striking red, black and yellow colours of the adult are a warning to predatory birds that they are unpleasant to eat."

As a human I can provide lot of justification of my doings, but now I'm thinking about the intention of my act as a human being.

Khondaker Hasibul Kabir, Architect
House No. 500/G, Road No. 8, Dhanmondi,
Dhaka-1205.



PHOTO: AFP

Names in Bangladesh!

I note we have a propensity to name 'elite' teams (both in sports and law enforcement) after rodents, reptiles and cat-family members. I suggest it is high time we gave the plant kingdom their chance. We should therefore name our elite teams 'alu', 'kumra', 'dharosh', etc. I would suggest that with a plant-kingdom mascot, the performance of the teams will finally start to improve.

In the event that the above fails, we should then consider the pisces kingdom for mascot.

As an alternative, 'real' rodents/reptiles/cats could be trained to do the jobs. The resident mongoose in our flat would make very good spin bowler.

Amit, On e-mail

latter is good enough to tackle modern vicissitudes, but we need political mine-detectors to progress ahead.

AZ, Dhaka

Interacting with neighbours

The decision of allowing double entry visa by Bangladesh to Indian citizens as recommended the home-secretary level meeting, that concluded on Sept 17, 2004, is definitely a milestone in cementing the relationship between the two countries. In fact, things that are happening these days are really encouraging which could not be contemplated a few years back. People of both the countries are gradually understanding each other in a more pragmatic manner. This is good for regional development.

This initiative has opened the avenues for the north eastern states of India, specially Tripura, to have a quick and cheap journey to India through Bangladesh. Bangladesh will also be benefited since those travellers will surely take a tour in Bangladesh and buy something of their choice, favouring our trade and service industries in return. In fact, this was the demand of the people of Agartala for a long time, specifically when the Dhaka-Agartala bus service started its operation.

For a fortnight, Dhaka-Agartala bus service has been suspended due to deplorable road condition on the Bangladesh side. Besides, the number of passengers in this direct bus service is not adequate for which both sides felt discouraged to restore it urgently. We hope our communication ministry will now take the initiative to improve the road condition.

Another issue was the high rate of embarkation fee. It may also be kept in view so that this charge does not stand as a disincentive to the passengers using this route. People on both sides, specially eastern states of India, desire to develop better relationship for mutual benefit. We should avail this opportunity in right earnest.

Annapurna Nath
Dhaka

Indian diplomacy and Bangladesh

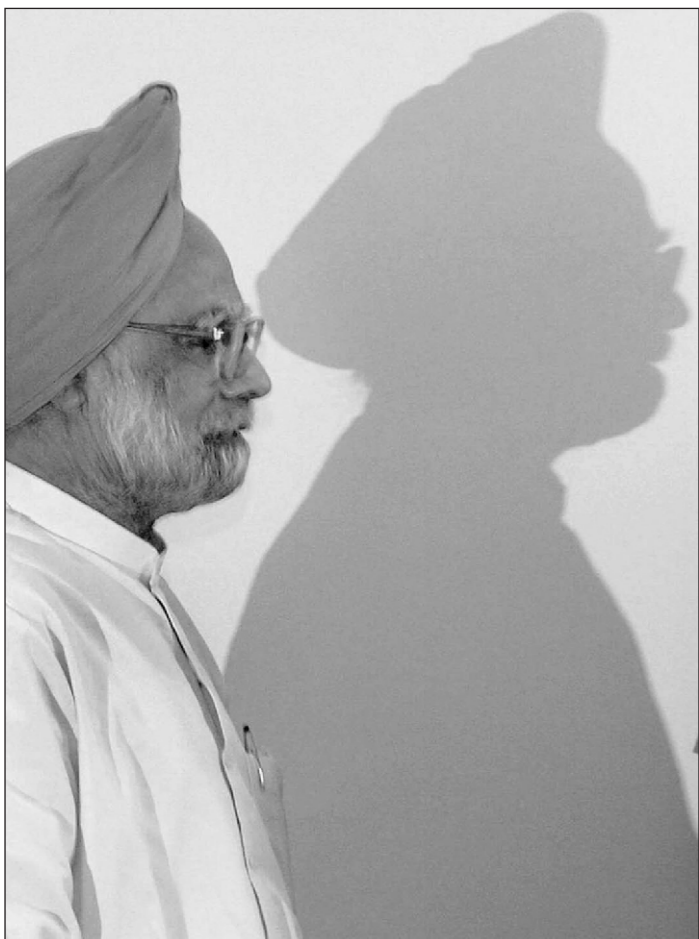


PHOTO: AFP

Most of the Indian government leaders and civil servants have been very gently, politely, diplomatically, mildly, courteously and humbly telling, advising, pleading and requesting us and our various governments of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Ziaur Rahman, HM Ershad, Khaleda Zia, Sheikh Hasina and again Khada Zia to agree to New Delhi's proposals, policies and decisions on various India-Bangladesh bilateral matters, and many a time we have done so. Important issues like sharing of Ganges water, Tin Bigha Corridor, Talpatty, bilateral trade are some of the living examples.

Everybody knows and feels our loss and gain. India always makes promises and pledges but never fulfils them. India also resorts to propaganda against us, including allegation of Bangladesh harbouring terrorist camps. What sort of diplomacy and strategy are those for New Delhi?

Morshed Khan's comments at the young journalist's meeting is not a 'confrontation' with India, it is rather a wake-up call for the people of both India and Bangladesh for mutual benefit, trust and friendship.

Why do not we frame a timetable for solution of every bilateral problem?

OH Kabir
Dhaka-1203

provisions? I believe, as our Bangabandhu Medical University has been upgraded into an autonomous institute, we can try to introduce modern hospital management here. Then it may be introduced in other hospitals also. I can write on the subject, as I came across the report "Assessment of

That report made it clear to me that we have no sound vision on the titled subject! So, despite a junior doctor with a short course on "Hospital Services Management", I urge our authorities to examine Apollo Hospital's ad and the aforesaid report. Why should we be so careless about the health sector?



PHOTO: AFP

Three cheers for rickshaw!

Small is beautiful! Our pedalled cycle rickshaws and rickshaw vans have beaten the scientists and proved its versatility during the 4-day 600 mm (24-inch) rain spell in Dhaka recently (note the photos in the newspapers).

All motorised vehicles failed to wade through the knee-deep water on Dhaka's roads. Besides, these cycle-ricks are environment friendly, defying the weather also. Technology is not LDC-oriented what a shame for the marketing pundits!

Therefore the road restrictions on rickshaws may be lifted, and top priority may be accorded to this industry, still in the informal sector (strange!), suitable for the middle class downwards. It is human labour-oriented, providing jobs to lakhs of daily wage earners. It is a part of the economy of daily life in the third world.

The new design anticipated is cycle ricks fitted with removable floats for pedalling in the flooded waters amphibious. environment-

friendly, flood-proof, run on human energy, and providing jobs to millions. But still there is no standardisation for mass production of cheap parts, components, and spares. It is a huge industry without regulation in many areas of the dynamic system. The production cost of a cycle rickshaw can come down using cheap mass-produced parts. No bank is offering HP facility!

A Mawaz
Dhaka